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Heaven

By Angela Johnson



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You never know what's gonna come down -- in Heaven.

At fourteen, Marley knows she has Momma's hands and Pops's love for ice cream, that her brother doesn't get on her nerves too much, and that Uncle Jack is a big mystery. But Marley doesn't know all she thinks she does, because she doesn't know the truth. And when the truth comes down with the rain one stormy summer afternoon, it changes everything. It turns Momma and Pops into liars. It makes her brother a stranger and Uncle Jack an even bigger mystery.

All of a sudden, Marley doesn't know who she is anymore and can only turn to the family she no longer trusts to find out.

Truth often brings change. Sometimes that change is for the good. Sometimes it isn't. Coretta Scott King award-winning author Angela Johnson writes a poignant novel of deception and self-discovery -- about finding the truth and knowing what to do when truth is at hand.



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Heaven By Angela Johnson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As in her *Gone from Home* (reviewed above), Johnson here explores the themes of what makes a place home and which people family. Fourteen-year-old Marley's tranquil life in Heaven, Ohio, turns hellish the day her family receives a letter from Alabama. The note (from the pastor of a church that was destroyed by arson) requests a replacement for Marley's baptismal record, and reveals that "Momma" and "Pops" are really Marley's aunt and uncle, and mysterious Jack (an alleged "uncle" with whom Marley has corresponded but doesn't remember) is her true father. In this montage of Marley's changing perceptions, Johnson presents fragments of the whole picture a little at a time: images of people, places (the Western Union building "1637" steps away from Marley's house) and artifacts (a box filled with love letters between her birth parents) gain significance as Marley begins to make sense of the past and integrate her perceptions into her new identity. The author's poetic metaphors describe a child grasping desperately for a hold on her reality ("It was one of those nights that started to go down before the sun did," she says of the evening the fateful letter arrives). The melding of flashbacks and present-day story line may be confusing initially, but readers who follow Marley's winding path toward revelation will be well rewarded. Ages 12-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 6-9-Life is Heaven in Heaven, Ohio for 14-year-old Marley until she discovers that the people she thought were her parents are actually her aunt and uncle. The man she thought was her Uncle Jack turns out to be her biological father. Angela Johnson (S&S, 1998) takes Marley on a journey of self-discovery as she must redefine who she is, and who her family is. Marley becomes an astute observer of other families and their relationships with one another. By seeing the love between other families, she knows that the love of her parents is genuine. Narrator Andrea Johnson makes the characters come alive in this Coretta Scott King Award book by giving each their own unique voice, especially the booming sound of Uncle Jack.

Instructions at the beginning and end of each cassette make the transition from side to side smooth. A fine addition to any collection.

Todd Dunkelberg, Deschutes Public Library System, OR

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 6⁺-10. In *Humming Whispers* (1995) and *Gone from Home*, Johnson writes powerfully about deep family sorrow and loss. Here she writes about happiness despite sorrow, about a teenager whose life has always been heaven. Marley, 14, lives in the small Ohio town of Heaven, rooted in her loving African American family, close to good friends, and part of a caring community. Then she discovers she is adopted-- Mom and Pops are really her aunt and uncle, and for a while, Heaven seems like hell. The paradise setup is too idyllic, and in the anguish of Marley's discovery and upheaval, everyone is absolutely perfectly supportive and understanding. And Marley's real dad comes home at last. What saves this from being generic Hallmark is Johnson's plain, lyrical writing about the people in Marley's life. Everyone has secrets. There are all kinds of loving families. Marley baby-sits for a devoted single-parent dad. The owner of the general store is like a mother to the neighborhood. In fact, the most troubled family is the "perfect" nuclear one of Marley's best friend, who needs as much support as Marley does. On the news, they hear about people burning churches, but Johnson makes us see the power of loving kindness. *Hazel Rochman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Roberta Granger:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important take action, like looking for your favorite reserve and reading a reserve. Beside you can solve your short lived problem; you can add your knowledge by the book entitled Heaven. Try to face the book Heaven as your close friend. It means that it can to become your friend when you really feel alone and beside that of course make you smarter than previously. Yeah, it is very fortunated to suit your needs. The book makes you much more confidence because you can know every thing by the book. So , we should make new experience and knowledge with this book.

Irene Allen:

Is it you actually who having spare time subsequently spend it whole day by means of watching television programs or just lying down on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This Heaven can be the reply, oh how comes? The new book you know. You are and so out of date, spending your extra time by reading in this new era is common not a geek activity. So what these textbooks have than the others?

Kelley Hardy:

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Ricardo Hempel:

What is your hobby? Have you heard which question when you got scholars? We believe that that question was given by teacher to their students. Many kinds of hobby, Everybody has different hobby. And you know that little person including reading or as reading through become their hobby. You have to know that reading is very important as well as book as to be the point. Book is important thing to provide you knowledge, except your teacher or lecturer. You will find good news or update about something by book. Amount types of books that can you choose to adopt be your object. One of them is this Heaven.

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