



Far Away from the Tigers: A Year in the Classroom with Internationally Adopted Children

Jane Katch

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Over the past three decades, more than a quarter of a million children have become citizens of the United States through international adoption. Kindergarten teacher Jane Katch recently found herself with three such children in her class: Katya, born in Russia, Jasper, from Cambodia, and Caleb, from Romania. Each child had spent early years in an orphanage, and each had unique educational and emotional needs. How Katch came to recognize and respond to those needs makes up the journey of discovery in this moving and insightful book.

Interspersing vignettes from the classroom and conversations with the children's parents, *Far Away from the Tigers* first explores Katch's misunderstandings and mistakes as she struggles to help the children adjust to school. As Katch learns more about each child's preadoption past, she gradually realizes that they were deprived of some basic learning experiences and she needs to find ways to fill those gaps. Before Caleb can learn to read or write, he must improve his verbal skills by learning nursery rhymes, stories, and songs. Katya, who came from an overcrowded orphanage, now needs to be the center of attention; before learning how to form real friendships, she first must gain control over more basic functions such as eating and sleeping. And the youngest, Jasper, needs steady encouragement to play with classmates instead of sitting alone practicing his handwriting.

Slowly, through trial and error and by drawing on the deep understanding and intense commitment of the children's parents, Katch discovers the importance—and joy—of allowing each child time to develop in his or her own way. Beautifully told, wise, and candid, *Far Away from the Tigers* is a gift for parents, teachers, and anyone who cares for children growing up in a new home.

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