



REVIEW

IF—

AUTHOR Rudyard Kipling **ILLUSTRATOR** Giovanni Manna **IMPRINT** Creative Editions
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"... evokes feelings of existential solitude ..."

When April with its showers sweet hath the droughts of March pierced to the root, it must be National Poetry Month. Once again we have an excuse to try to captivate children with the beauty and surprise of this infinitely variable art form. New illustrated collections and two reissues offer sublime and amusing points of access for even very young children....

By way of visual contrast, the Italian watercolorist Giovanni Manna evokes feelings of existential solitude in his paintings for Rudyard Kipling's 1909 poem "If." Written for the author's 12-year-old son—an introduction reminds us that the boy would die in World War I a few years later—*If* pairs Mr. Manna's suggestive illustrations with Kipling's beautiful words of counsel. "If you can keep your head while all about you / Are losing theirs and blaming it on you, / If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, / But make allowance for their doubting too...." We are borne along on the famous cadences and, if we are reading aloud, may be sobbing by the time we reach the conclusion to the poem's many ifs: "Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, / And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!" This tender edition ends with a painting of Kipling's son, still a boy, running with a kite and his dog across a verdant Indian lawn.

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