



BEARHUG

Griffin calls to come and kiss him goodnight
I yell ok. Finish something I'm doing,
then something else, walk slowly round
the corner to my son's room.
He is standing arms outstretched
waiting for a bearhug. Grinning.

Why do I give my emotion an animal's name,
give it that dark squeeze of death?
This is the hug which collects
all his small bones and his warm neck against me.
The thin tough body under the pyjamas
locks me like a magnet of blood.

How long was he standing there
like that, before I came?

by MICHAEL ONDAATJE

Excerpted from *The Cinnamon Peeler*
Published by Alfred A. Knopf