

# Everything That Once Was

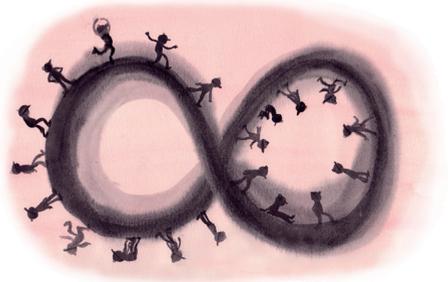
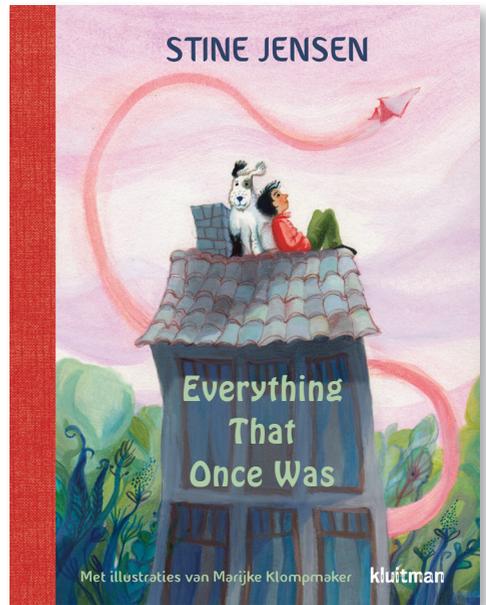
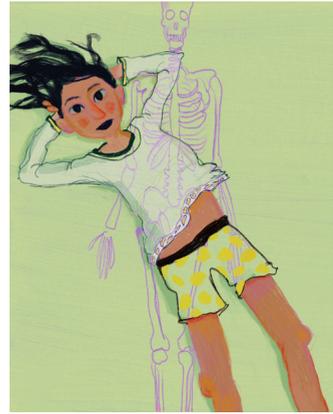
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Stine Jensen & Marijke Klompmaker

Saying goodbye to a person, an animal, a place or a situation... Every child has to face these difficult goodbyes. But how do you deal with it? How do you cope when you miss someone? And what can you do when someone you love is sad?

Death is probably the biggest form of saying goodbye. What exactly happens when somebody passes away? Is it scary to die? What does death tell us about life?

*Everything That Once Was* is a unique book that helps children to become aware of their feelings and stimulates them to reflect on those feelings. It offers them ways to talk to others about sadness, change and everything related to letting go. Saying goodbye can be really difficult and challenging, but there's also something beautiful about it. Because, when you say goodbye to something, you're making room in your life for something new.



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# Introduction

Every day we say “goodbye” to something, but not every goodbye is the same. Saying goodbye can be easy or hard; sometimes it’s a small event and sometimes it’s big, sometimes short and another time long. Sometimes you already know in advance that there is going to be a goodbye, for example when your holidays are almost over and you will be going back to school or because you know that you are moving. Sometimes a goodbye can take you by surprise and you aren’t prepared for it.

Saying goodbye can be difficult and sad. When your pet dies, you can be heartbroken about your loss. However, goodbyes are not always sad. When someone has been ill for a very long time, or very old and dies, you can console yourself with the thought that he is no longer in pain, or that he has lived a long life. A goodbye can also be the beginning of something new and exciting. Like the transition from primary school to secondary school or saying goodbye to your parents when you are going for a stay-over at your friend’s house. Saying goodbye involves lots of different emotions and sometimes all at the same time: sadness, anger, anxiety, happiness, relief, astonishment, loneliness, nostalgia, and despair.

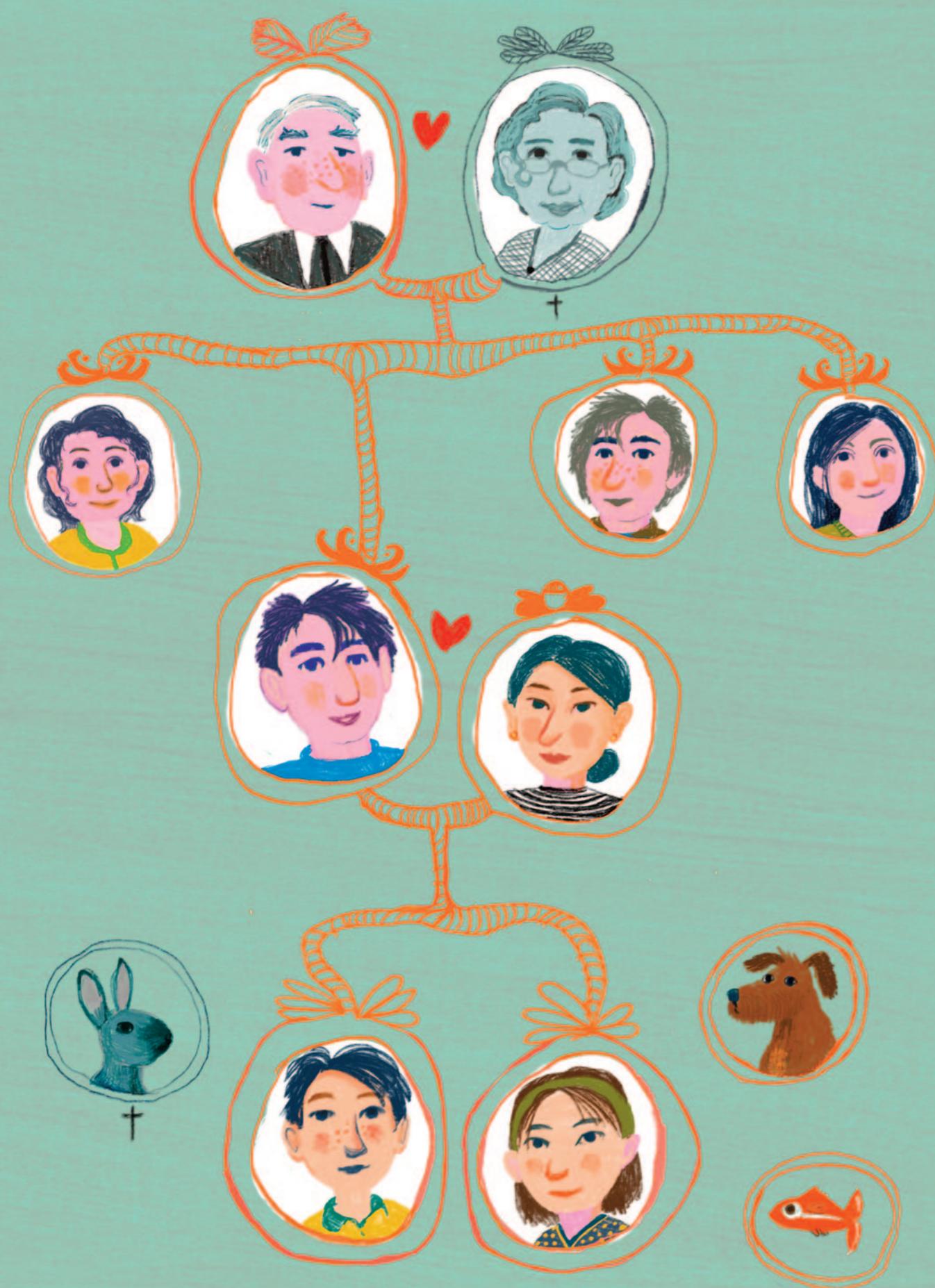
In school we aren’t taught how to say goodbye. What we do learn, is saying “goodbye” in many different languages: *au revoir*,

*auf Wiedersehen*, and *tot ziens*. Many of these expressions alleviate the parting because you assume that you will see someone again. With a final farewell you often hear the word "farewell", which also occurs in other languages: "vaarwel", "farvel" or the beautiful French word "adieu" when someone commends another to God, "May the Lord be with you".

Much has been written about the biggest farewell of all; death. What happens when someone dies? Where has he gone? What remains? How do you say goodbye? How do you cope with all your feelings of grief? If you are a believer in God, you have different thoughts about death than if you are a non-believer. This book is about all sorts of goodbyes.

I personally think that you can practice saying goodbye a little bit at a time. You can imagine it, think about it and talk about it. It is not without reason that people say: "Goodbye is part of life." Everyone will have to deal with farewells in their lifetimes. In this book we will philosophize about it.





# Grieving

**Oscar (11):** 'The more you like someone and the longer that person is gone, the harder it is to say goodbye. For example, when my grandmother passed away, it was goodbye forever. I really struggled with the knowledge that she was no longer here. I cried a lot in the beginning. Sometimes it just happened when I was doing something else and I suddenly thought of her. But after a while I slowly got used to the idea that she wasn't here anymore.'

## QUESTIONS

Did you ever experience the death of someone who was near and dear to you? Who was it? What did you feel? What did you do at the time?

When someone dies, you can feel very sad. Do you know that you can also become very angry or feel lonely, relieved, powerless or tired? For all those emotions you feel after you have lost someone, there is a special word: grief.

We do not only grieve when people die. There is still a loss and you can grieve even if your pet dies, if your parents separate or if your best friend moves away. There are many different sorts of grief; small and big, short and long, light and heavy. It is often said that grieving is raw. This means that grieving isn't easy, because it evokes very strong emotions. At the most unexpected moments you can burst into tears, become angry or feel alone, because you miss someone so much.

The severity of your loss depends on how deeply your emotion is felt. It also depends on who you are and how you usually react.

## QUESTION

Are you someone who cries easily and talks to other people about what is bothering you, or do you bottle it all up inside?





# Goodbye



Saying goodbye can be very sad. Perhaps you feel that everything around you is shrouded in darkness. You feel like you want to cry all day. It's like no one really understands how you feel or knows how to console you. Your whole body can feel sadness; your shoulders droop, your head, your eyes, your arms, and your feet. Every part of your body feels heavy. It's

like having a dark rain cloud hanging above you, following you wherever you go. Perhaps you get angry about that and question where the sun went. Is it hiding from you?

When you feel sad for a long period of time, it doesn't feel good. You may want to suppress your pain because you are afraid that people will feel sorry for you when you start crying again, or think you are a whiner when you talk about it again. You may have thoughts that your grief has been enough and want the sadness to go away. We "man up" as the expression goes.

"To man up" is a strange expression, as if becoming a man means that you can't cry anymore. Is crying something reserved for girls or women only? Boys and girls are often treated diffe-

rently when we talk about sadness or grief. To boys, we say that a big boy or a real man doesn't cry. That is nonsense, of course! As a boy you can also show your pain. And just because you are a girl doesn't mean it's always easy for you to show your feelings.

In the Netherlands, a child is often encouraged to "buckle down", "cheer up", "stop crying" and "keep going". If a child falls and scrapes his knee, he is comforted for a while and then encouraged to continue playing, as soon as possible. On one hand, that's good, as it teaches perseverance, but on the other hand you can also start to think that pain is just childish behaviour. That is not so smart because when you are really sad, you start to think that you should get rid of your sadness as soon as possible. But it is okay to be sad.

Allowing yourself to grieve is something you can practice. If you feel like crying, be kind to yourself. That's called having self-empathy.

