

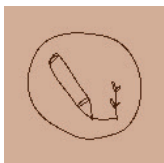
- A kid's grief book that hugs, helps, and gives hope. -

# I Can't Believe They're Gone



Karen Brough  
Hiruni Kariyawasam

For the ones who have lost someone dear,  
Please know that you are not alone.  
I pray you are comforted during this time.



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Many thanks to my family and precious editor helpmates, thank you for helping this book to become what it wanted to be. I appreciate and love you dearly. xxxxx

Inside this special book, you will find hidden hearts along the way.  
I wonder, how many can you find?





# I Can't Believe They're Gone

written by Karen Brough

illustrated by Hiruni Kariyawasam

– A kid's grief book that hugs, helps, and gives hope. –



“I can't believe they're gone.”  
Everyone said the same thing as they walked around in a daze.





Mumma mouse shook her head in disbelief.

Papa mouse groaned, "Why, oh why, did it have to be them?"

Big mouse yelled, "It's not fair; I didn't want them to go!"

Small mouse reflected, "If only I had been there,  
maybe things would be different."

Tiny mouse was silent.







Mumma headed outside to find Wise Old Bear.  
“Why do I feel so sad?” Mumma asked.

“You’re sad because you’ve lost someone you loved,”  
Bear replied.

“You know... emotions aren’t good or bad, or  
right or wrong—they just are.”

Mumma breathed a sigh of relief. “Thank you, Bear,”  
she said, and strolled back inside.







Mumma snuggled under her blanket,  
crying as she prayed.



Papa mouse got busy fixing things  
around the home.



Big mouse banged and crashed about,  
not knowing what to do.



Small mouse cuddled her favorite  
teddy and whispered  
all her thoughts.



Tiny mouse stayed in bed  
and was quiet.



Papa headed outside to talk to Wise Old Bear.

“Why do I feel so flat?” Papa asked.

“Maybe that’s because you’ve used up a lot of energy with all that has happened,” Bear replied.

“You know... emotions aren’t good or bad, or right or wrong—they just are.”

Papa breathed a sigh of relief, gave Bear a nod and a wink, and stepped back inside.



Mumma reflected as  
she baked  
muffins for everyone.



Papa mowed the lawn and  
distracted himself.



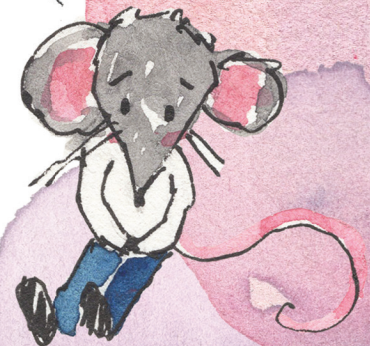
Big mouse played the drums  
and released his energy.



Small mouse expressed the  
**BiG** feelings in her heart.



Tiny mouse tried not to  
think at all.





Big mouse headed outside to visit Bear.  
“Why do I feel so angry?” Big mouse asked.

“Maybe because you’ve lost someone dear, you miss them terribly, and you can’t do anything to change it,” Bear replied.

Big mouse nodded, thankful for having a reason for feeling the way he did.

“You know... emotions aren’t good or bad, or right or wrong—they just are.”

“Thanks Bear, that makes me feel better,” Big mouse said and scurried back inside.





"I know! Let's do something  
to remember them,"  
Mumma suggested as she pulled  
out her easel and paints.



Papa went outside to do something  
useful with his toolbox.



Big mouse took out his soccer ball  
and kicked it about,  
remembering how they used to play.



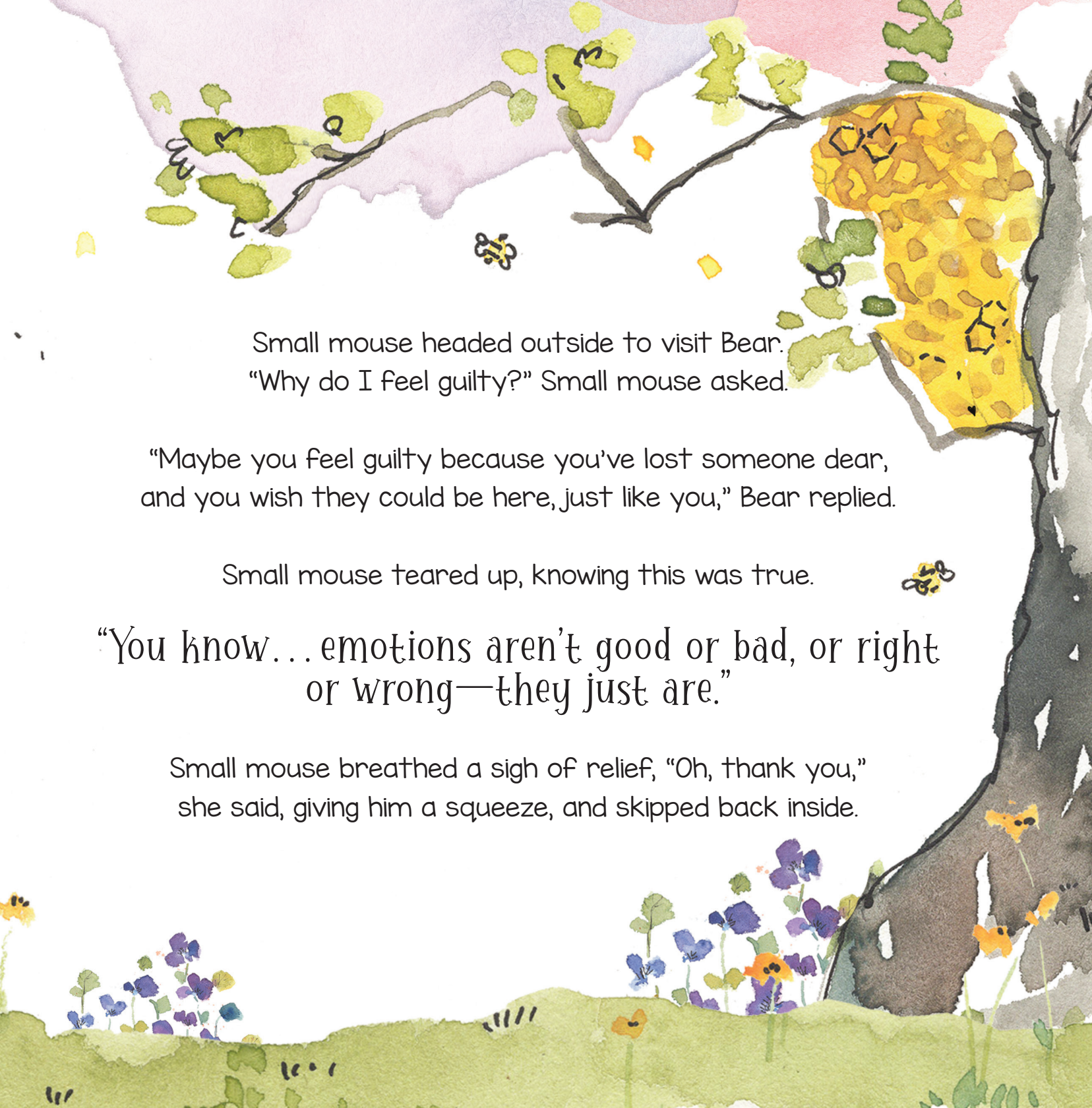
Tiny mouse hid away  
upstairs and was  
quiet as quiet can be.



Small mouse shared her thoughts  
using her coloring book and pencils.







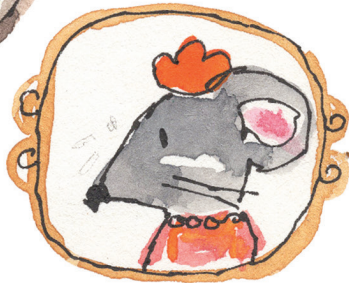
Small mouse headed outside to visit Bear.  
“Why do I feel guilty?” Small mouse asked.

“Maybe you feel guilty because you’ve lost someone dear,  
and you wish they could be here, just like you,” Bear replied.

Small mouse teared up, knowing this was true.

“You know... emotions aren’t good or bad, or right  
or wrong—they just are.”

Small mouse breathed a sigh of relief, “Oh, thank you,”  
she said, giving him a squeeze, and skipped back inside.



They all met for dinner that night, but no one felt like eating much.

Mumma served up the meal.

Papa chewed slowly.

Big mouse ate quickly.

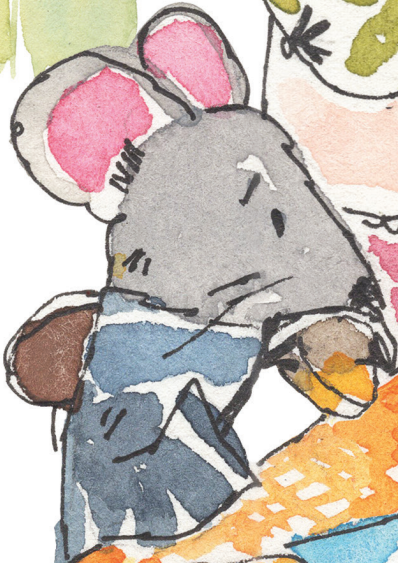
Small mouse moved the food around on her plate.

Tiny mouse was still so quiet, and barely ...

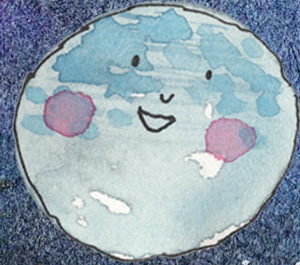
nibbled ...

a crumb.

Then they went to bed.







Mumma slept on and off, waking during the night.

Papa snored extra loudly, exhausted after feeling so many emotions.

Big mouse tossed and turned and got tangled in his sheets.

Small mouse didn't move a muscle ... all night.

And Tiny ... well, Tiny didn't ... sleep ... a ... wink.





In the morning, Tiny crept outside to visit Bear.

“Bear, why do I feel so ... so ... numb?”




Bear could see that Tiny was struggling.

“Come sit with me.”

Bear enfolded him with a gentle hug.

“Feeling numb means you’ve lost someone dear ...  
and you’re trying to work out what life will be like ...  
without them near.”





A watercolor illustration of a landscape. The top half features large, soft-edged washes of pink and yellow. A small blue butterfly is perched on the yellow wash. The bottom half shows a green hillside with various green plants and small orange flowers. A pink flower is also visible on the left side.

A single, glistening tear crept along Tiny's bottom eyelid.

The lonely tear slid down his furry cheek.

And after one tear made its way out,  
they all seemed to want to come.

*One after another, they flowed.*



When Tiny had shed many tears,  
he finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Bear suggested they do something to remember the one he loved.  
Tiny knew instantly what he needed to do.



He headed out and began to snip and cut and clip.  
He remembered the fun they used to have doing this.  
And as he did, he found himself smiling and crying all at once.

And this made him ... **laugh.**





Later that day, Papa suggested that they have a picnic  
to share their memories.

Mumma brought the muffins.

Papa carried the table he had built.

Big mouse brought his soccer ball.

Small mouse brought her poem.

And Tiny ... well,

Tiny placed a big, beautiful bouquet of roses in the center of the table.



And they shared,  
and although they were still sad ...

they were together.





## - Author -

Karen Brough is an award-winning author and former teacher, who calls Australia home. As a wife and a mother of three, she writes with a teacher's heart for children. Karen always knew she would write a book about processing loss and grief, so she became a student of the science of grief. When Karen lost a beloved friend in 2022, she turned to writing as part of her grieving process.

This story is the result—a hope investment from her heart to yours. She believes it will help others know they are not alone in their loss and reassure those who feel stuck with all their big emotions.

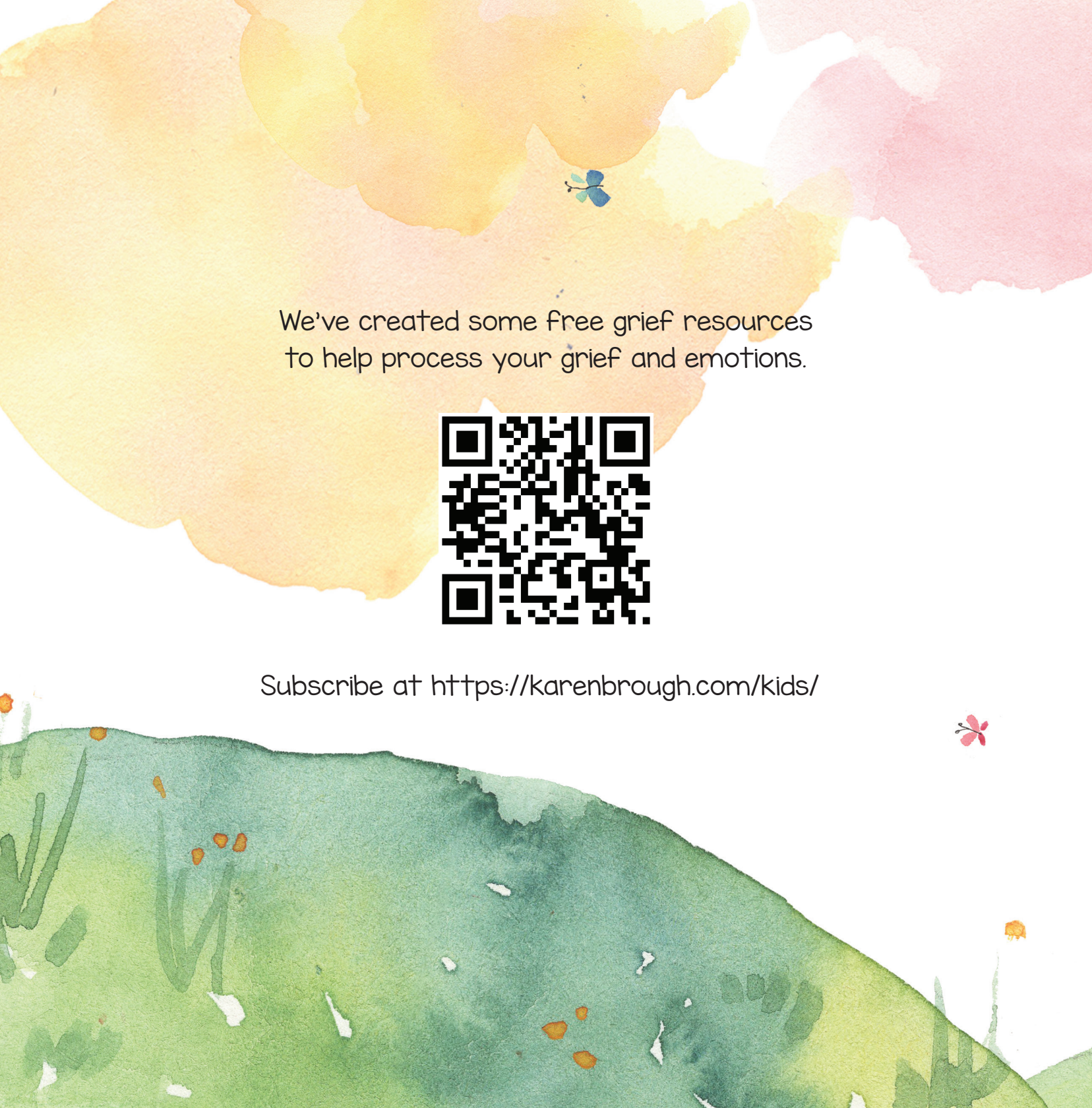


## - Illustrator -

Hiruni Kariyawasam is from Sri Lanka. She graduated from the *Bachelor of Fashion Design at Moratuwa*, one of the leading universities of Sri Lanka. She enjoys painting, drawing fine illustrations. Hiruni loves to create unique children's book illustrations. Her pictures bring joy and delight to readers all over the world.



She lives happily with her parents in her hometown of Ambalangoda. Hiruni enjoys beach holidays and adventuring with family and friends.



We've created some free grief resources  
to help process your grief and emotions.



Subscribe at <https://karenbrough.com/kids/>

## ~ Endorsements ~

"Parents, carers, teachers, and therapists will find this little gem has the gift of healing broken hearts and helping make sense of our responses in times of loss."

Charmaine Holmes - Clinical Social Worker and Family Therapist. BSW . AMHSW

"Karen's book confronts the issue of grief in a gentle yet profoundly moving way. The characters each experience their own emotions in ways we can all relate to in seasons of grief. For a child to read this at a time of loss, it will bring a deep sense of being understood and heard... a chance to reflect and share safely with those they trust. I think this is a wonderful resource for therapists, supporters, and families when a child has lost someone they love. Bravo, Karen."

Rachel McGregor, Registered Psychologist - AMAPS

" 'I Can't Believe They're Gone' is a solid book about grief and loss, and ways of channelling and handling emotions while incorporating the stages of Grief. The author shares her grief surrounded by the loss of a loved one and uses appropriate coping skills. This book reminds us that healing, and learning to acknowledge and create space for grief are an essential part of the healing process.

A great book for someone who is going through the experience of Grief."

Dr. Crystal Russell - LPC

"The emotional literacy of grief is scarce. Carefully crafting this tale, Karen creates space to acknowledge the internal turmoil of grief, as an alternative to awkward silence or dismissive statements. Karen gently guides the reader through a wheel of possible emotions, validating their response and expression. It is in the safety of normalizing emotions that the reader is supported to explore creative ways to journey through grief to resume a healthy life after losing a loved one."

Victoria Roberts

State Nurse Coordinator supporting improved health outcomes after the impact of Trauma