

The Big Goodbye

A STORY BY ARKEDELIC

Note to Parents



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Tiara loved the butterfly.

Not just any butterfly. Her butterfly.

Orange wings. White dots. A tiny tear on the left side —
“like a whisper,” she once told Kimaya.

Tiara called her Flit.

Every morning, Flit danced near the red hibiscus
by Tiara’s tree.

She never landed on Tiara, but she always came close.
Close enough to feel like a hello.
Close enough to feel like a secret.



Then one morning... Flit didn't come.
Tiara waited.
No flutter. No flicker.

"Maybe she's on a different flower today," said Max.

"Or still sleeping," Zeldon added.

"She'll be back tomorrow," said Danny, already running
off to play.

But Tiara didn't feel sure.
She went back the next day.
And the next.
Still no Flit.

On the fourth day, she climbed up the termite mound
to look farther.

On the fifth, she didn't climb at all.

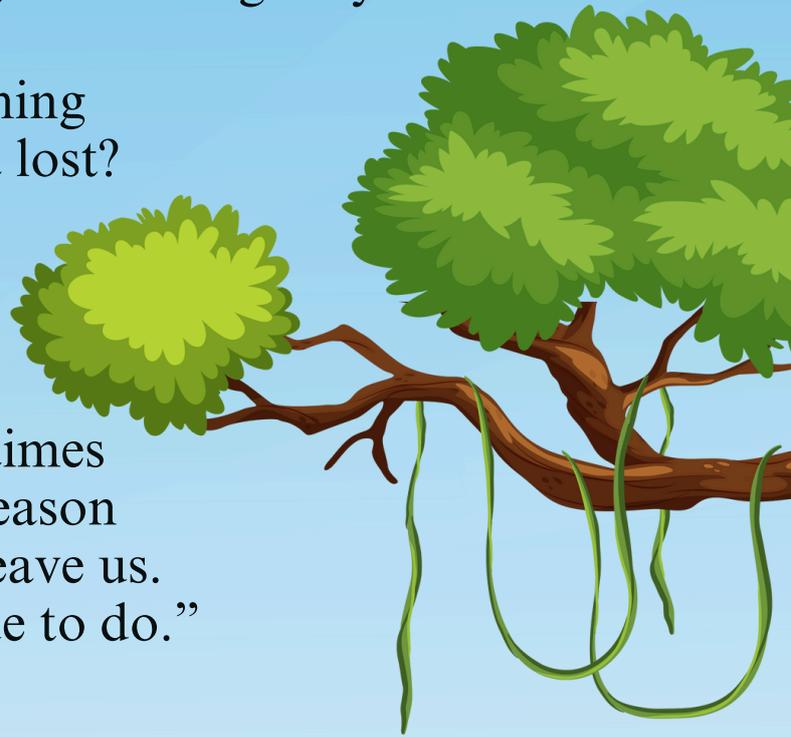


“She’s not coming back,” Tiara whispered one evening, hiding behind her tree.

Kimaya found her there, curled up small.
“You haven’t bounced in days,” she said gently.

Tiara blinked. “What if something bad happened? What if she got lost? What if she forgot me?”

Kimaya sat beside her. “Sometimes butterflies fly away when the season changes. They don’t mean to leave us. It’s just something they’re made to do.”



Tiara's chin trembled. "But I didn't get to say goodbye."

Kimaya took her hoof. "That's the hardest kind of goodbye.
The one that's silent."

That night, Tiara asked,
"Can I sleep near you? Just for tonight?"

"Of course," Kimaya said. "Or every night, if you need."

Tiara crept close. She didn't close her eyes for a long time.



The next day, the others were playing puddle-leap.

Tiara sat near the hibiscus, quiet.

Danny called, “Come on, Tiara! Let’s splash!”

She shook her head.

Zeldon blinked. “You’re still sad? It’s just a butterfly.”

Tiara didn’t answer.



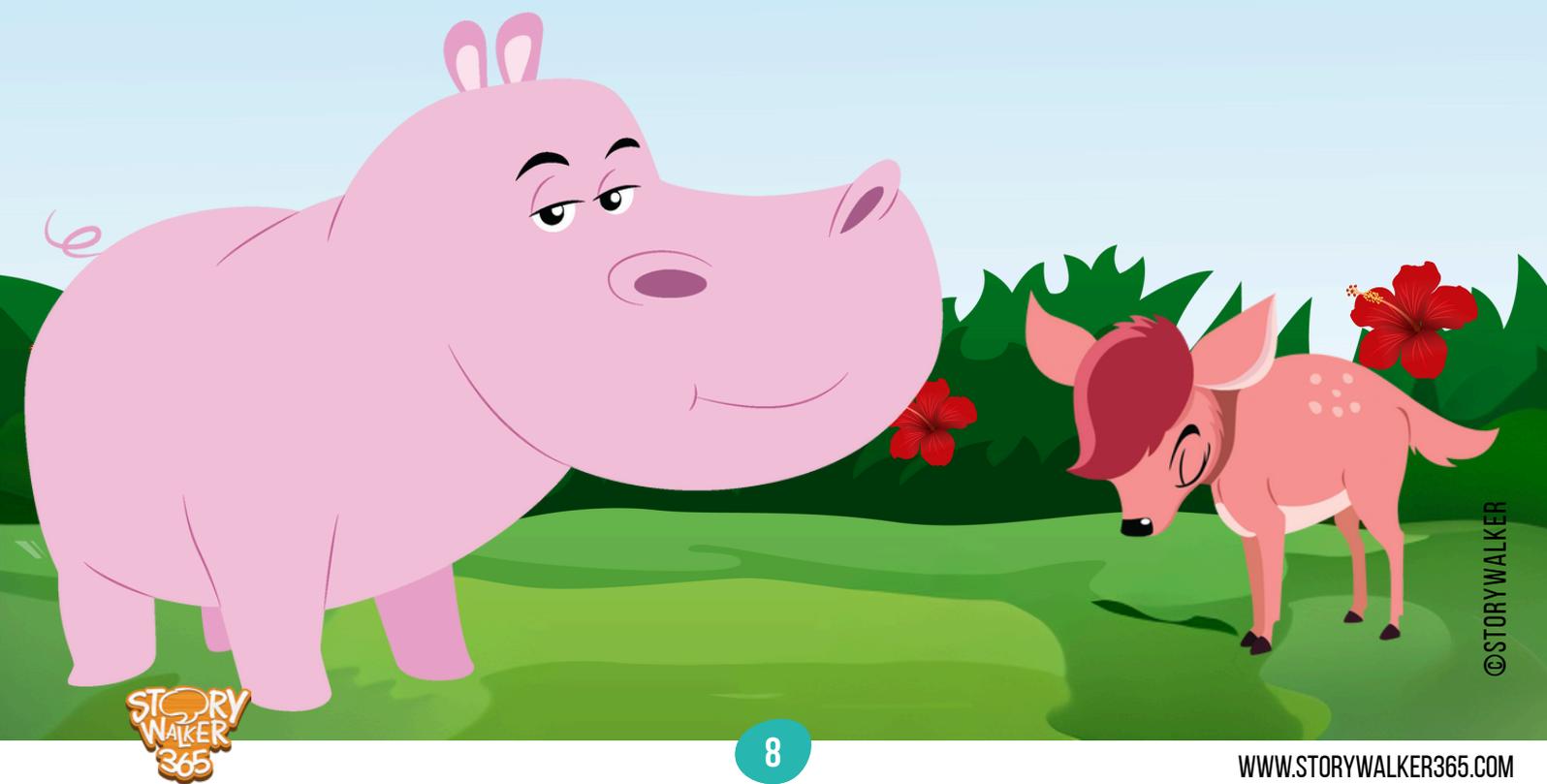
Later, when the game ended, Mombino found her sitting by herself, nose low, ears droopy.

“I miss her,” Tiara murmured.
“And no one sees that.”

Mombino nodded slowly.
“Sometimes the world gets busy and forgets. But I didn’t.”

Tiara looked up.
“Why does it feel like the sadness doesn’t stop?”

“Because love doesn’t stop either,” Mombino said.
“But we can hold it in softer ways.”



That evening, Mombino brought
a little pouch made of woven grass.

“What’s that?” Tiara asked.

“A memory pouch,” said Mombino.
“Wanna fill it together?”

Inside they placed:
A red hibiscus petal.
A stone Flit once rested on.
A soft feather Tiara had found nearby.
And a tiny leaf shaped like a wing.
They buried it under the hibiscus tree.

Tiara whispered, “Bye, Flit. I still love you.”





That night, Tiara didn't ask to sleep near Kimaya.

But halfway through the night, she tiptoed over and curled up next to her.

Kimaya smiled in the dark. "Still close?"



Tiara nodded. "Just for a bit."

And that was enough.



A few days later, Tiara was back at puddle-leap.
She wasn't bouncing quite as high.
She didn't laugh the loudest.
But she was there.

And every morning, before playing,
she stopped by the hibiscus.

Sometimes, she'd whisper.
Sometimes, she'd hum.
Flit never came back.

But Tiara had learned something quietly big:
That even little hearts can hold big goodbyes.
And when someone notices your sadness...
The missing doesn't feel quite so heavy.

—THE END—



Building Beautiful Inside

VALUE LESSONS FROM 'THE BIG GOODBYE'

HOW DO I SUPPORT MY CHILD THROUGH LOSS OR SADNESS, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY IT HAPPENED?

Context in the Story: Tiara's butterfly companion, Flit, suddenly disappears. She has no explanation — only a confusing silence. This absence brings a deep sense of loss, and Tiara struggles to process it. The story holds space for that confusion and shows how Kimaya and Mombino respond not with answers, but with presence, softness, and rituals of remembering.

Real-world Connection: Children may face losses that feel small to adults, a pet gone missing, a favourite teacher leaving, a broken toy, but are deeply significant to them. Without a clear 'why,' the sadness can linger and confuse, especially if others brush it off or try to rush the recovery.

How parents can use the story: This story helps parents understand that a child's sadness doesn't always need a fix — it needs witnessing. When a child experiences loss, even one we might see as "minor," the story reminds us to meet that moment with empathy, not logic. Like Mombino and Kimaya, parents can slow down, offer quiet companionship, and honour the child's emotions through simple acts: memory rituals, shared storytelling, or just staying near. The story gently models that grief has no timeline — and what children need most is the safety to feel what they feel, without being hurried out of it.

Building Beautiful Inside

VALUE LESSONS FROM 'THE BIG GOODBYE'

HOW DO I HELP MY CHILD FEEL SAFE AGAIN AFTER A SCARY EXPERIENCE — EVEN IF IT WASN'T A “BIG” THING?

Context in the Story: The sudden disappearance of Flit shakes Tiara’s emotional safety. She begins to withdraw, loses her usual bounce, and seeks physical closeness at night. Even though nothing dangerous happened, her inner world has been disrupted — and that disruption matters. The story gently shows her journey back to emotional safety, not through explanation, but through care.

Real-world Connection: Children often face moments that feel “big inside” but look “small outside” — being ignored by a friend, losing a familiar object, or even a sudden change in routine. These moments can create quiet anxiety, clinginess, or regression, especially if the adult world doesn't recognise their weight.

How parents can use the story: Tiara’s reaction is a mirror for any child who’s feeling shaky after something unspoken. The story reminds parents to watch for signs of inner unease: sleep changes, withdrawal, emotional clinginess. It offers a model of comfort that doesn’t rush the child to “be okay” but slowly rebuilds trust in the world. Sleeping close, creating shared rituals, and showing up with steadiness — these are powerful tools that don’t require big talks. The story tells parents: just because the experience wasn’t dramatic doesn’t mean the impact isn’t real — and healing begins with being seen.

Building Beautiful Inside

VALUE LESSONS FROM 'THE BIG GOODBYE'

HOW CAN I MAKE SURE MY CHILD DOESN'T FEEL UNLOVED OR OVERLOOKED — EVEN WITH BOTH PARENTS WORKING FULL-TIME?

Context in the Story: As Tiara grieves, some friends brush off her feelings — not out of unkindness, but because they don't notice. “Still sad? It's just a butterfly,” one says. It's only when Mombino truly sees Tiara's pain and validates it that Tiara begins to soften. The story powerfully illustrates how feeling overlooked can deepen emotional wounds — and how simple attention can begin to heal them.

Real-world Connection: In families where both parents work full-time, children may not always voice their feelings immediately. Their sadness can be quiet, their signals subtle — and if no one notices, they may begin to believe their inner world doesn't matter as much.

How parents can use the story: This story gently reminds working parents that presence isn't about hours — it's about attunement. Even if time is limited, small intentional moments can make a big emotional impact. Like Mombino, parents can learn to notice what lies beneath the quiet: a change in energy, a missed bounce, a shift in tone. Tiara didn't need anyone to solve her sadness — she needed someone to see it and sit with it. For busy parents, this means creating small rituals of connection — a check-in at bedtime, a few minutes of undivided attention after work, or simply pausing to ask, “What was the hardest part of your day?” These gestures, done with consistency and care, help children feel loved, held, and truly seen — even when the schedule is full.

Building Beautiful Inside

VALUE LESSONS FROM 'THE BIG GOODBYE'

WHAT DO I DO WHEN MY CHILD CLINGS TOO MUCH OR REFUSES TO TRY BEING AWAY FROM ME?

Context in the Story: After Flit's disappearance, Tiara asks to sleep beside Kimaya. Later, even when she returns to her own space, she quietly creeps back for closeness. Instead of being pushed to 'get over it,' she's allowed to stay as close as she needs — and in that freedom, she finds comfort and emotional strength to eventually return on her own terms.

Real-world Connection: Clinginess often shows up when children are feeling vulnerable, insecure, or overwhelmed — even if they can't explain why. It's easy for adults to feel frustrated or respond with firm distancing, but that often intensifies the need.

How parents can use the story: Tiara's gentle pull toward safety mirrors what many young children go through. The story encourages parents to meet clinginess not with correction, but with connection. By offering closeness without pressure or shame, Kimaya creates a safe landing for Tiara — which ultimately gives her the confidence to return to her usual rhythm. Parents can reflect on when their child's need for attachment may be a quiet cry for reassurance. Responding with calm availability — even temporarily adjusting routines — can build emotional security that lasts far beyond the moment.

Assessment Questions for 'THE BIG GOODBYE'

Five assessment questions to encourage children's understanding and emotional intelligence:



1. Supporting a Child Through Loss

Purpose: To help children understand that it's okay to feel sad when someone or something special is gone.

Question: “Why was Tiara so sad when Flit didn't come back?”

Follow-up: “Can you think of someone or something you've missed a lot — and what helped you feel better?”

2. Feeling Safe Again After Change

Purpose: To show children that closeness and comfort can help them feel safe after something upsetting.

Question: “Why did Tiara want to sleep near Kimaya after Flit was gone?”

Follow-up: “Who do you like to be close to when you're feeling sad or worried?”

3. Making Sure Feelings Are Not Overlooked

Purpose: To help children see the value of noticing and caring about others' feelings.

Question: “How did Mombino show Tiara that she noticed her sadness?”

Follow-up: “What’s one way you can show someone that you see they’re feeling sad?”

4. Keeping Memories Alive

Purpose: To encourage children to find gentle ways to remember someone or something they’ve lost.

Question: “What did Tiara and Mombino put into the memory pouch?”

Follow-up: “If you made your own memory pouch, what would you put in it and why?”

5. Love Stays Even When Goodbyes Happen

Purpose: To help children understand that the love they feel can remain even after a goodbye.

Question: “What did Tiara say when she buried the pouch under the hibiscus?”

Follow-up: “How can thinking about the happy times help when you miss someone?”

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with another interesting story!

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