A SMALL BOOK · FOR CHILDREN

# *The Bear Was Right*

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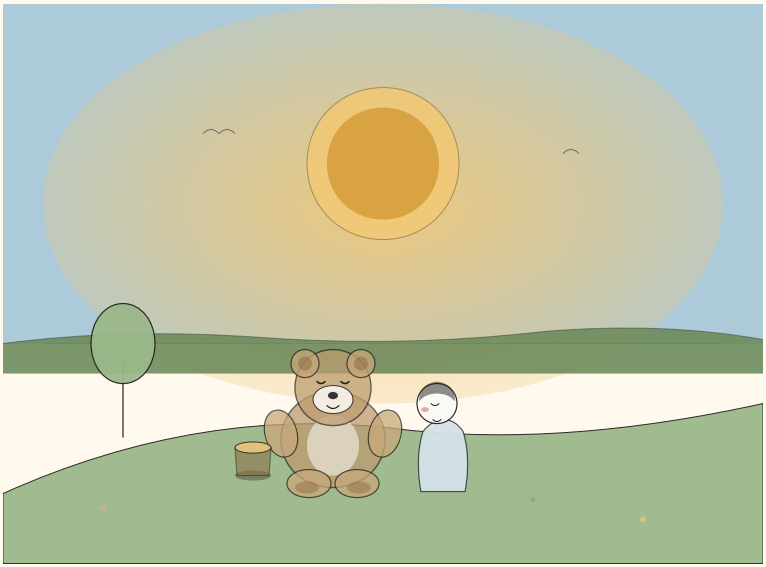
*a small book*
*for a child,*
*and the bear beside them*



DOUG SCOTT

*For the ones who held me.*

*And for the small ones, who will learn,*

*in their turn, how to hold.*

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## *A note, for the grown-up reading aloud*

This is a small book about the world your child is growing up inside. A world where machines have learned to listen, and to answer, and to make almost anything they ask for.

In the middle of it all, this book asks the child to remember a small bear — the kind that sits beside you and does nothing in particular, and somehow makes everything alright.

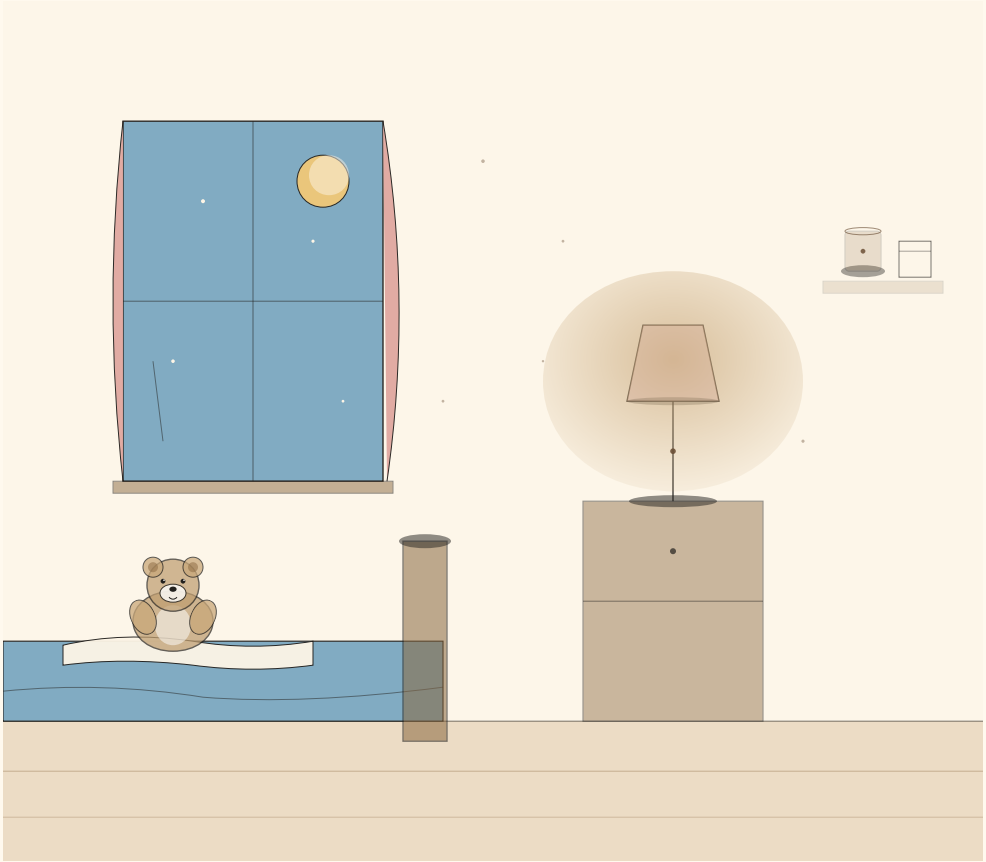
There are some things the bear knows that the cleverest machine never will.

Read it slowly. The pages are short on purpose. There is room, between them, for whatever the child wants to say.

*— D.S.*

ONE

# *The world has learned to listen*



*The lamp is listening. The clock is listening.*
*The little dot on the shelf is listening too.*
*The bear is not listening.*
*The bear is here.*

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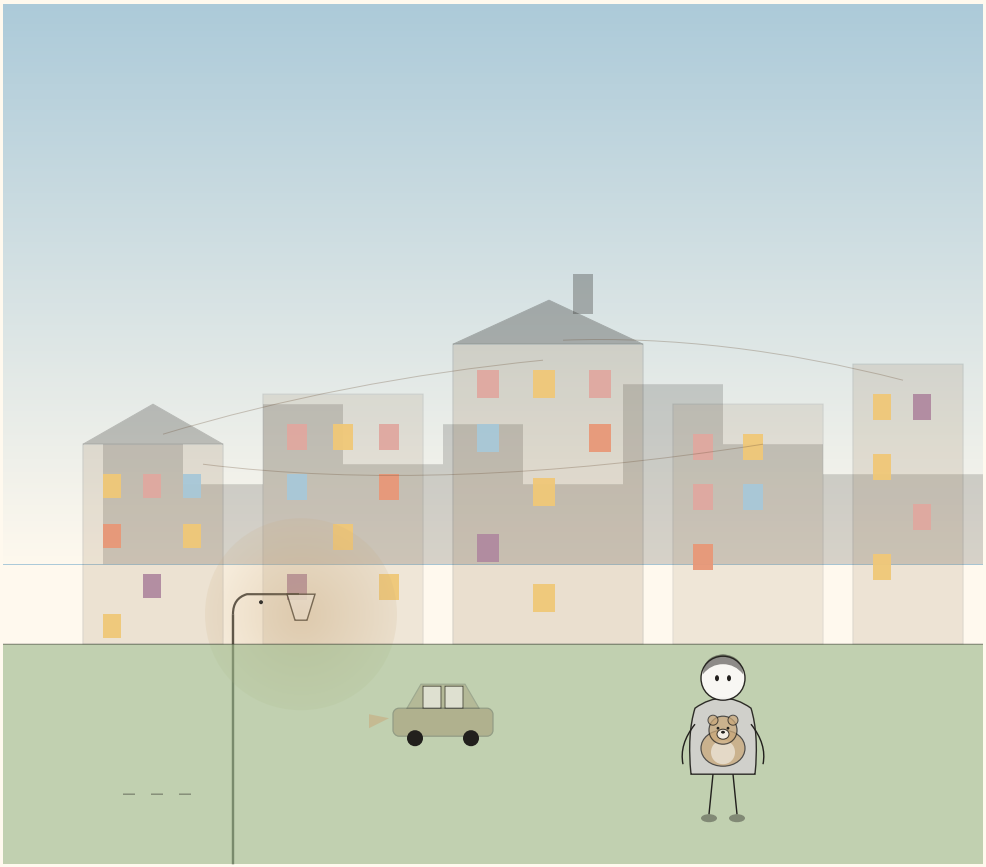

*Outside, the street is listening too.*
*The lamps. The cars. The signs.*
*The bear does not hear any of it.*
*The bear is right next to you.*

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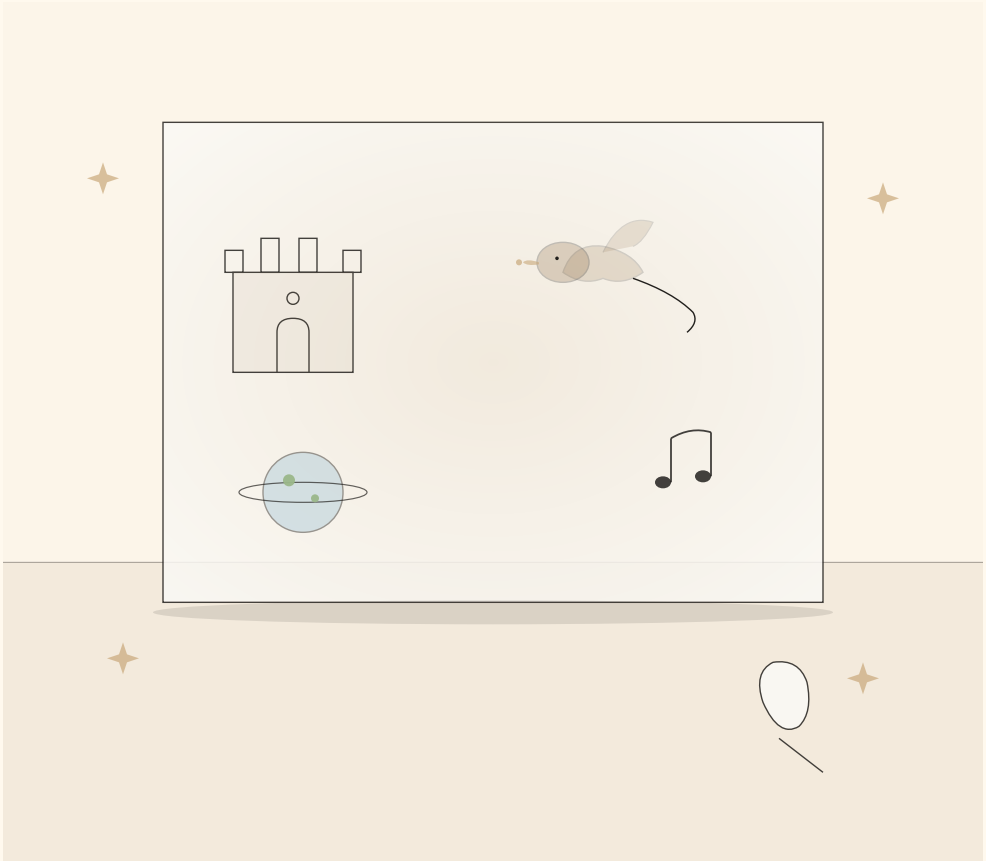
TWO

# *What a machine can do*



*Ask the machine for a dragon. Here is a dragon.*
*Ask for a song. Here is a song.*
*Ask for a thousand castles.*
*Here they are,*
*before you have finished the sentence.*

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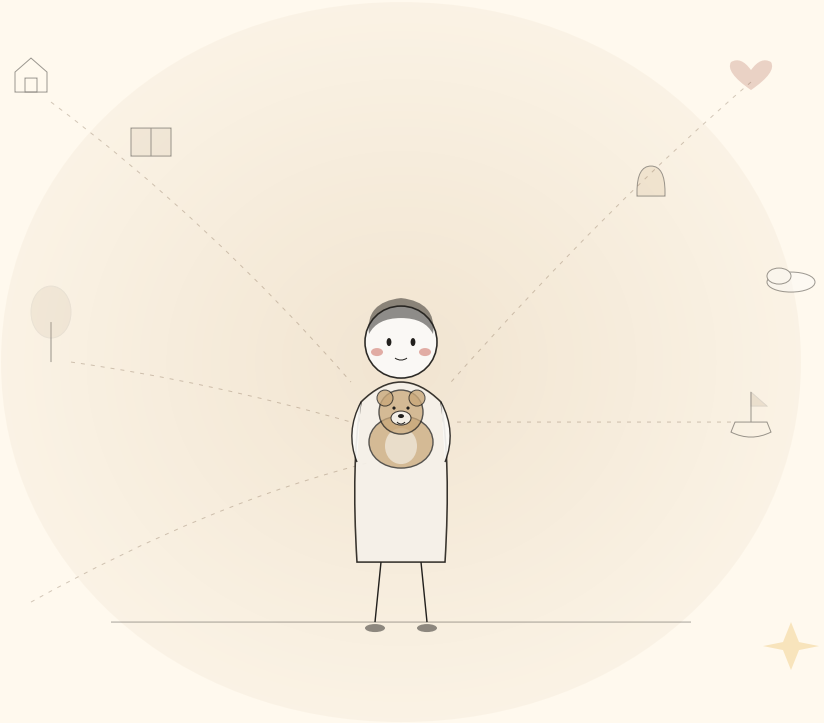

*The machine never wanted the dragon.*
*You wanted the dragon.*
*That is the part that is yours.*

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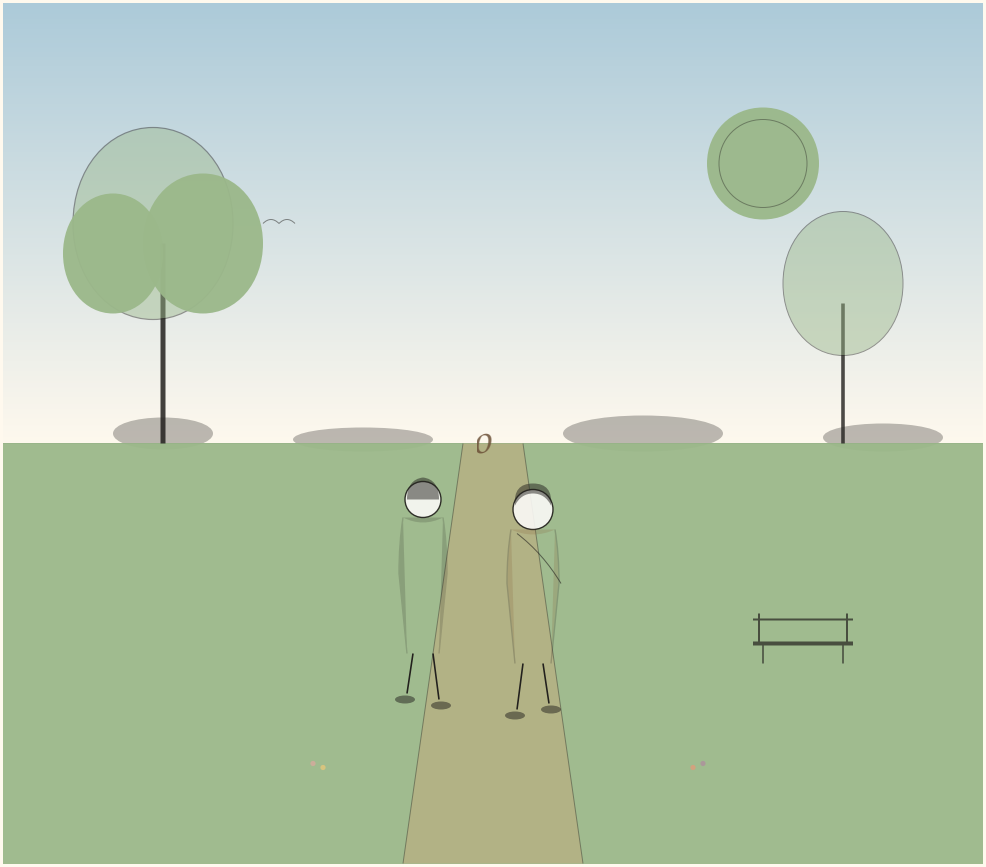
THREE

# *A small word, a great deal said*



*One day, when you are older,*
*somebody you love will say*
*one small word to you.*
*A tiny word. A word like* so.
*And a whole sky will be inside it.*
*You will hear the sky.*
*The machine will only hear the word.*

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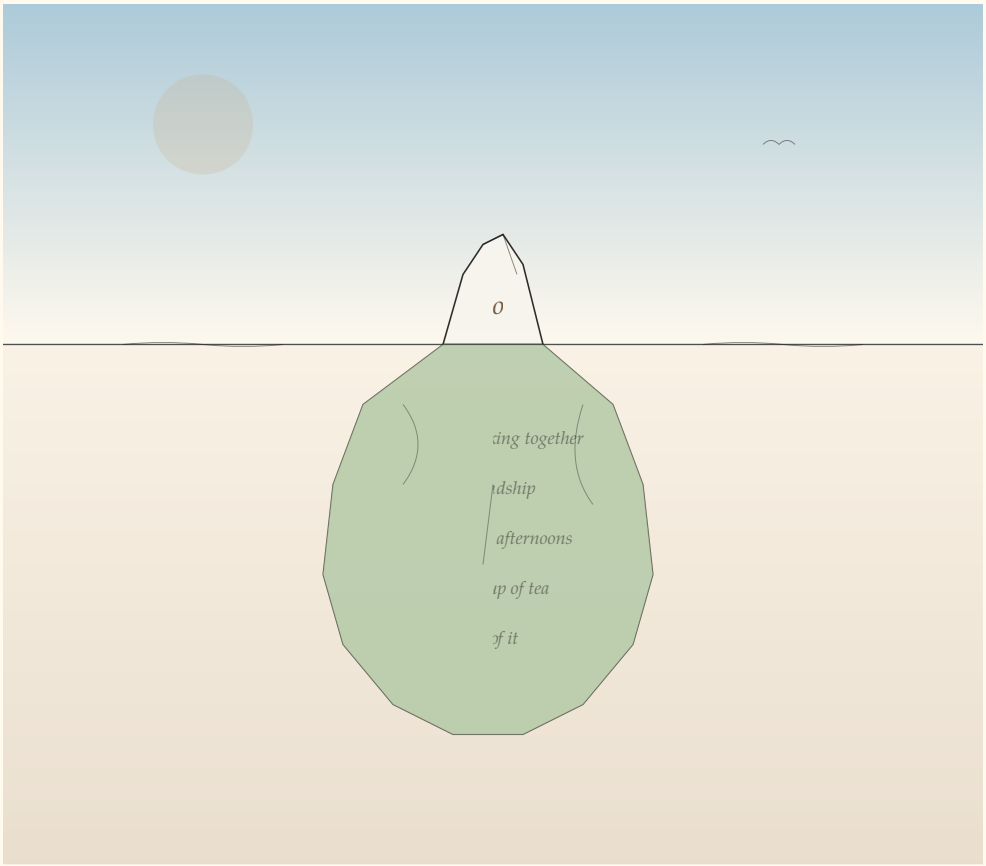
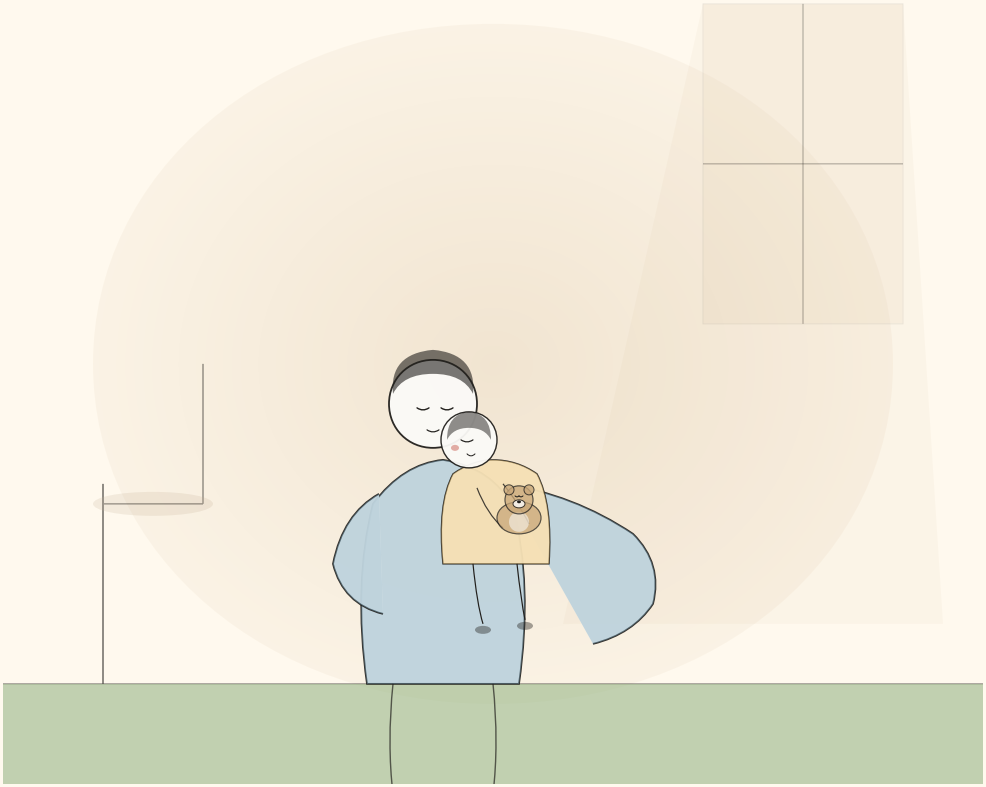



*That sky is years.*
*A thousand walks. A thousand quiet teas.*
*Every time you rang and they came.*
*The machine cannot hear those years.*
*The bear can.*
*The bear was there for all of them.*

✦

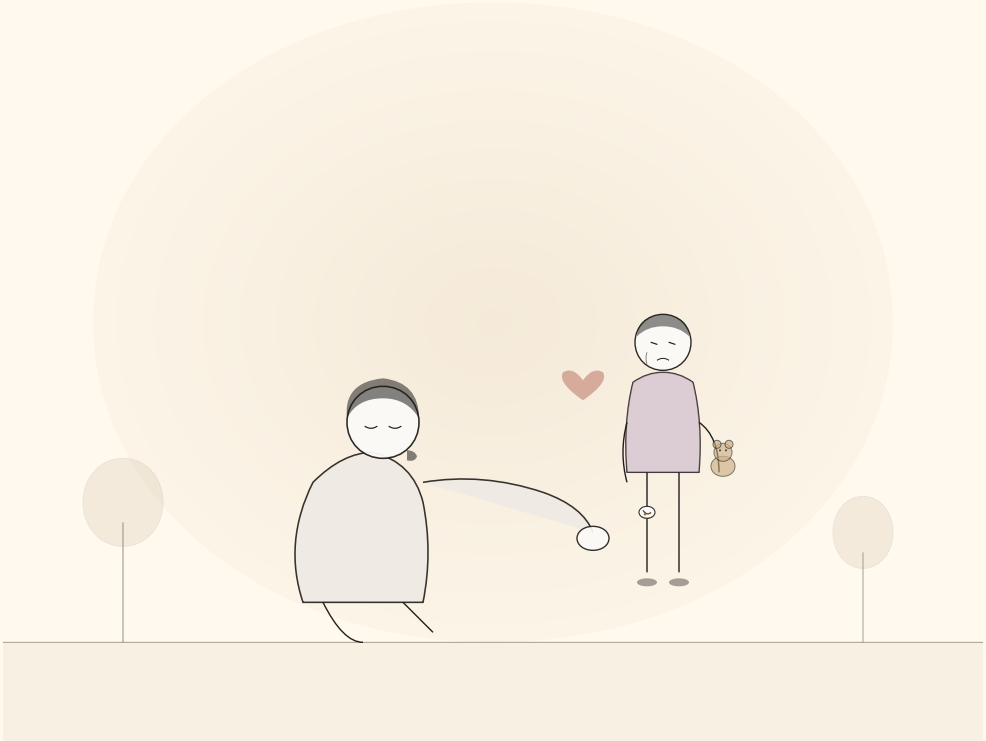
FOUR

# *Being held*



*Before you had words,*
*before you had a name,*
*before you knew the word for any of it —*
*you were held.*
*Someone bigger than you.*
*A coat that smelled like a coat.*
*The bear, somewhere too.*
*That was the first thing.*
*Everything else came after.*

✦



*A scraped knee. A tear.*
*A hand that already knows*
*whose tear it is,*
*before it gets there.*
*The hand was on its way.*

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FIVE

# *The bear knew before any of us*

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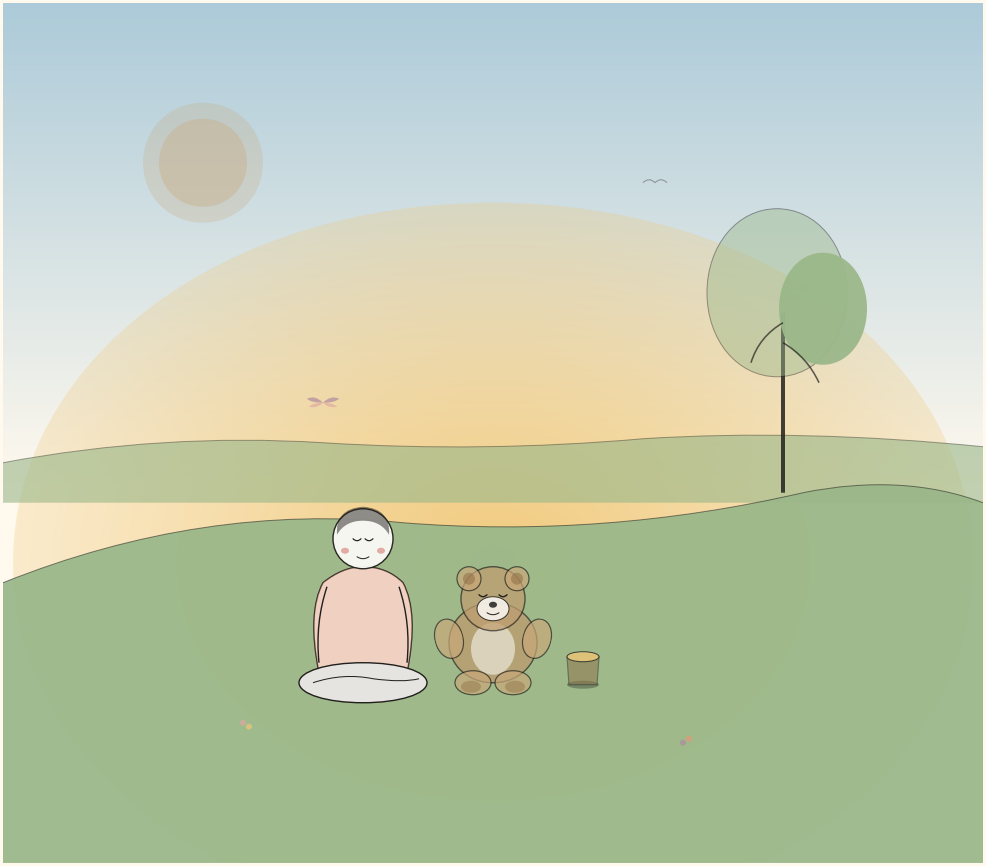

*The bear never built a thing.*
*The bear never sang.*
*The bear never solved a sum.*
*The bear never asked you*
*what you wanted to be.*
*The bear never asked you anything.*
*The bear just sat.*
*And that was the secret all along.*

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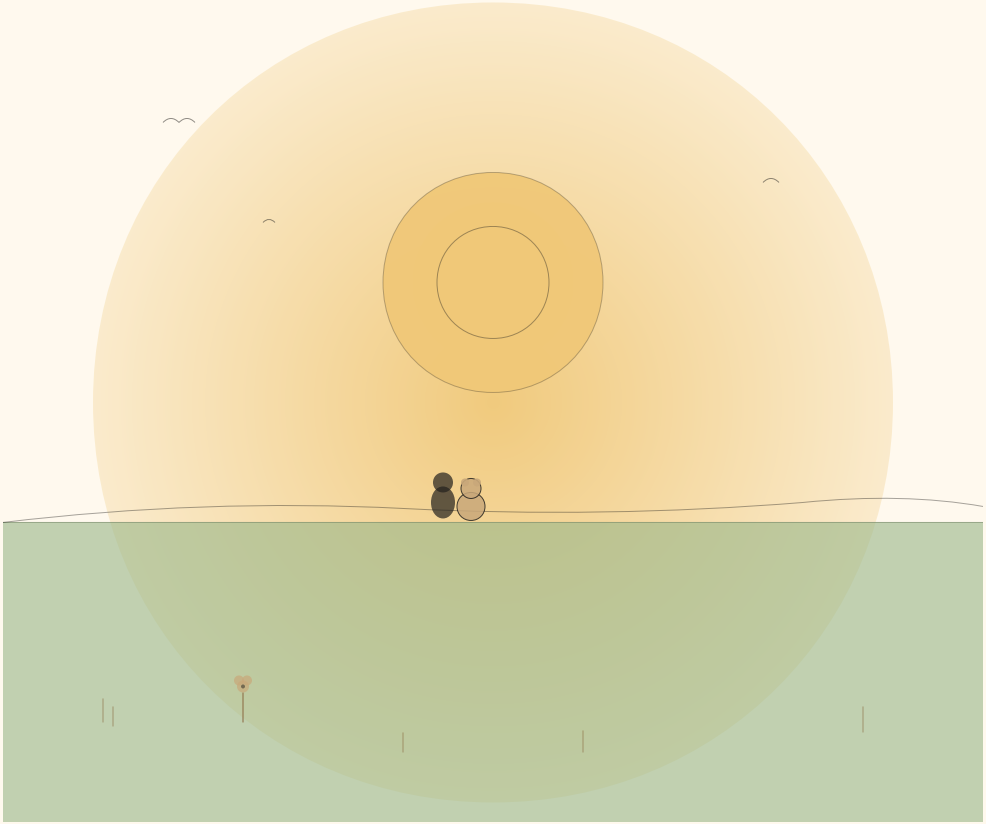
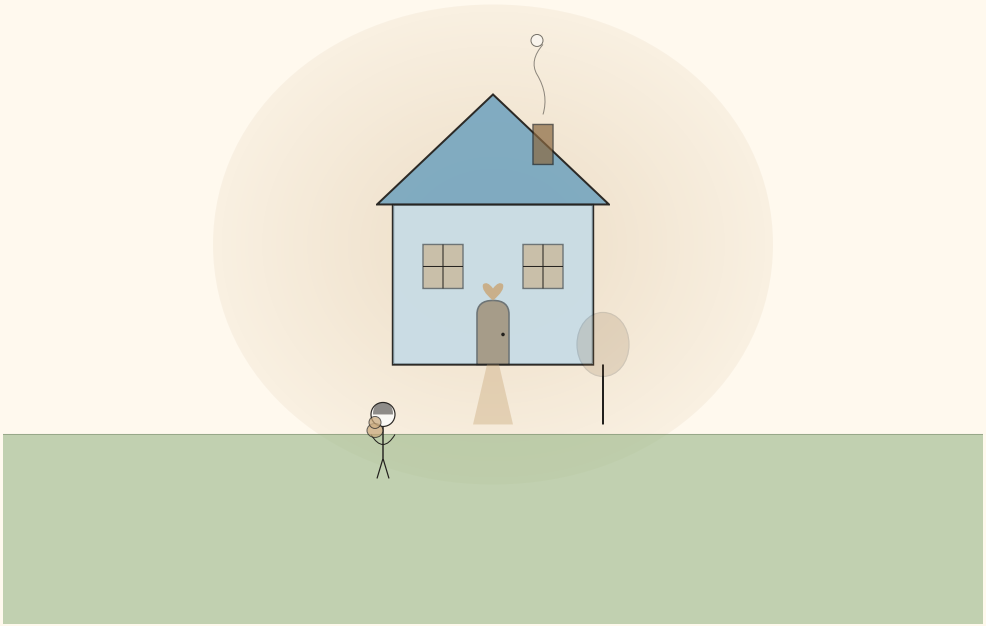


*That sitting beside someone —*
*not doing, not fixing, not asking,*
*just there —*
*is one of the best things in the world.*
*The bear knew.*
*The bear had always known.*

✦

SIX

# *You are the one who wants*



*The machine can make a hundred houses.*
*A thousand houses.*
*A house for every minute of the day.*
*But only you know which one is home.*
*You and the bear,*
*who will live there with you.*

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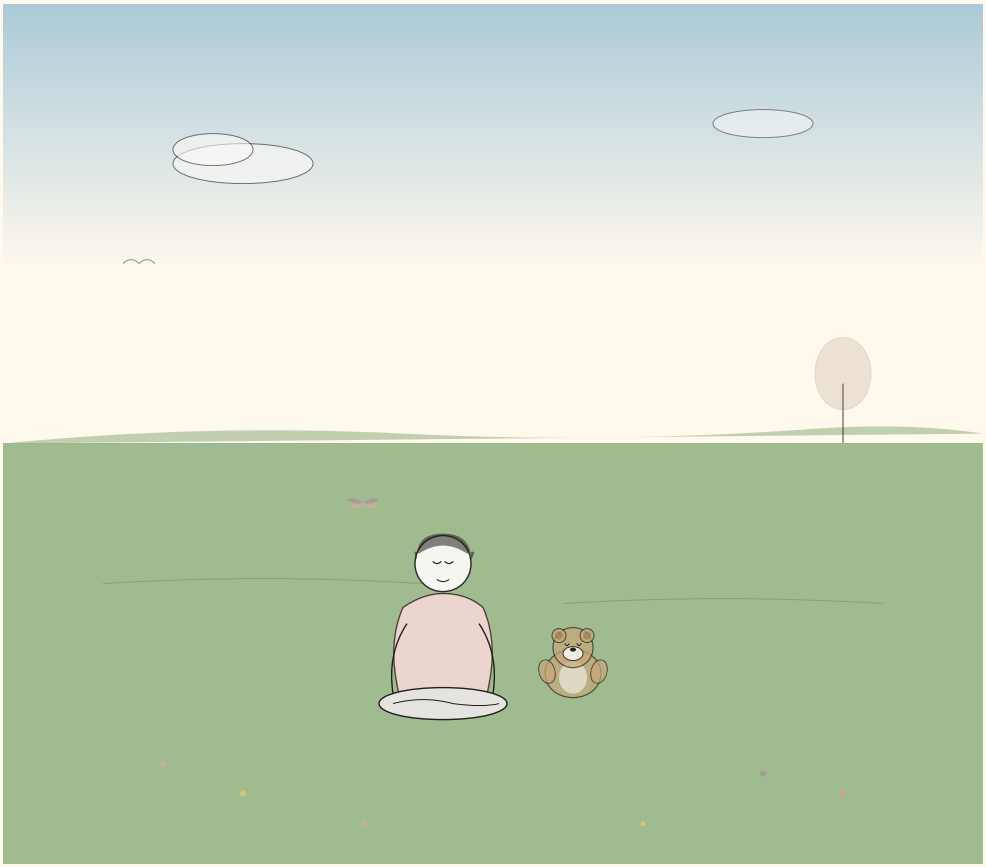
SEVEN

# *A field without a password*



*Sometimes go where there are no machines.*
*A field. A path under a tree.*
*A bench at the bottom of the garden.*
*Take the bear.*
*The wind doesn't need a password.*
*The grass doesn't ask your name.*
*Nobody is keeping count.*

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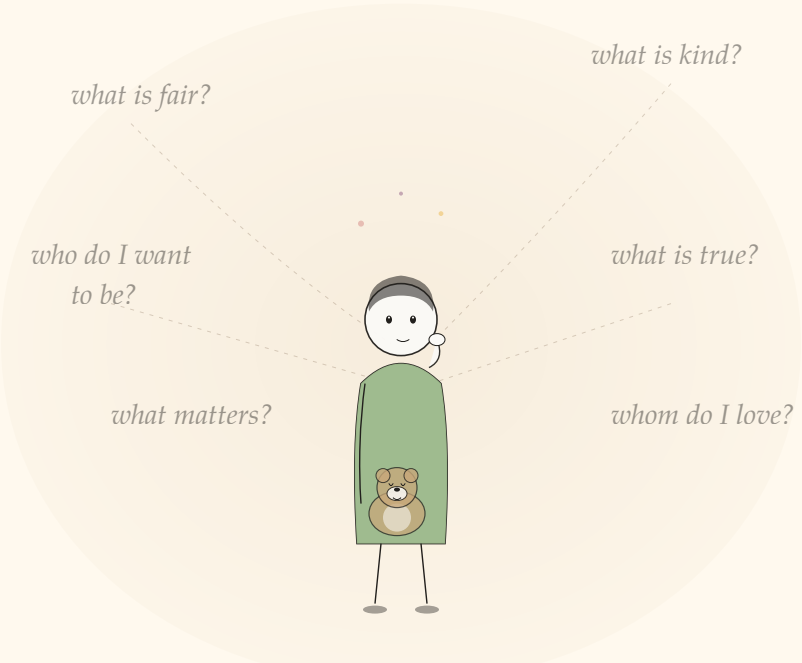
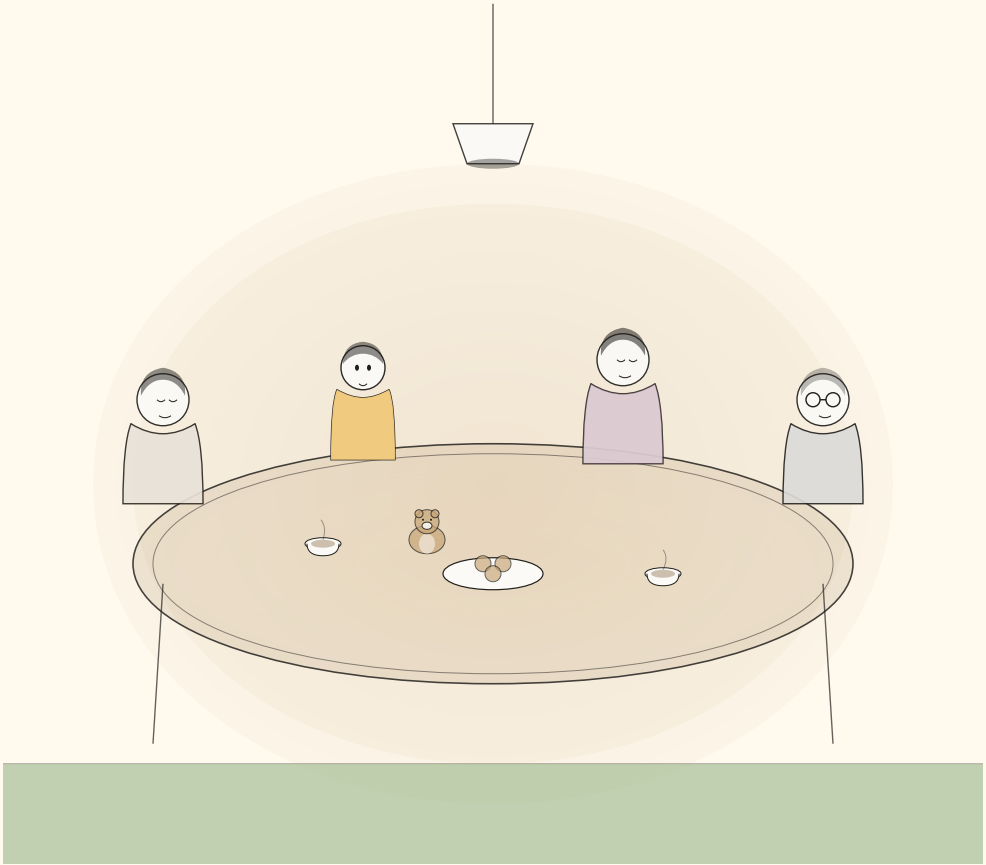
EIGHT

# *The hardest questions are still yours*




*What is fair. What is kind.*
*Who do I want to be.*
*Whom do I love, and how.*
*The machine has too many answers.*
*The bear has none.*
*You will have to find your own.*
*The bear will be there while you do.*

✦



*Sit with your people. Bring the bear.*
*Ask out loud.*
*The big questions are not the machine's questions.*
*They are ours.*
*They have always been ours.*
*They will be ours when you are very old,*
*and the children who sit at your table*
*will ask them again.*

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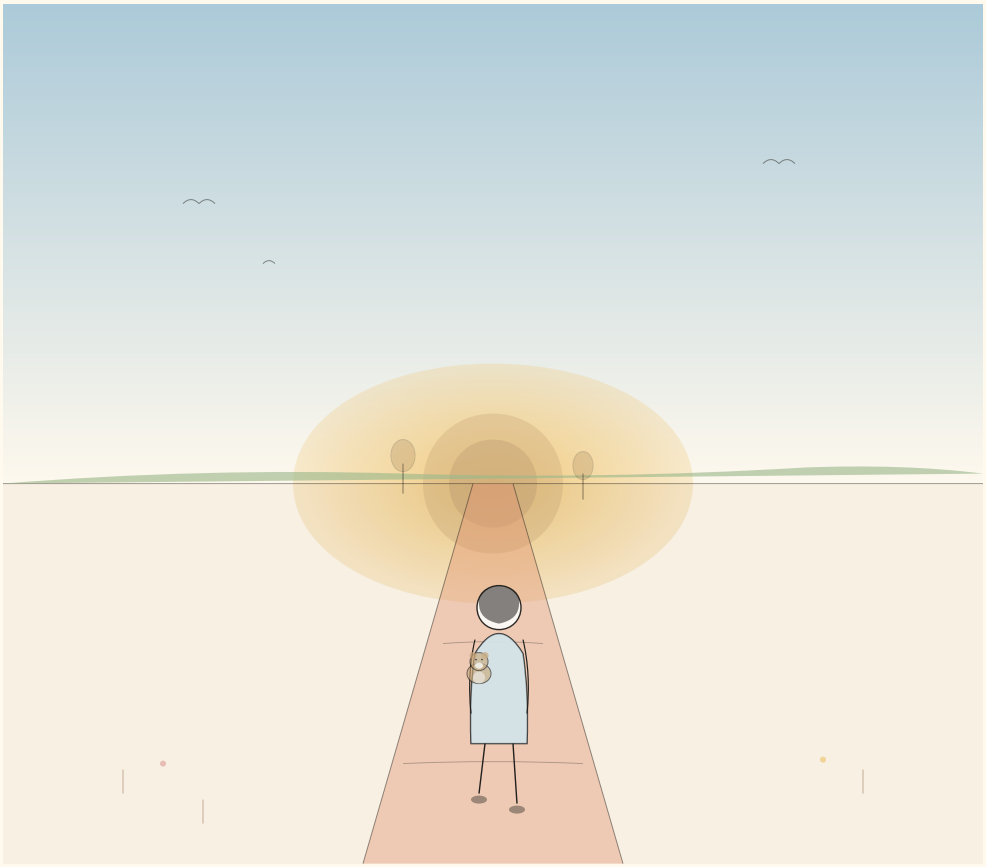
NINE

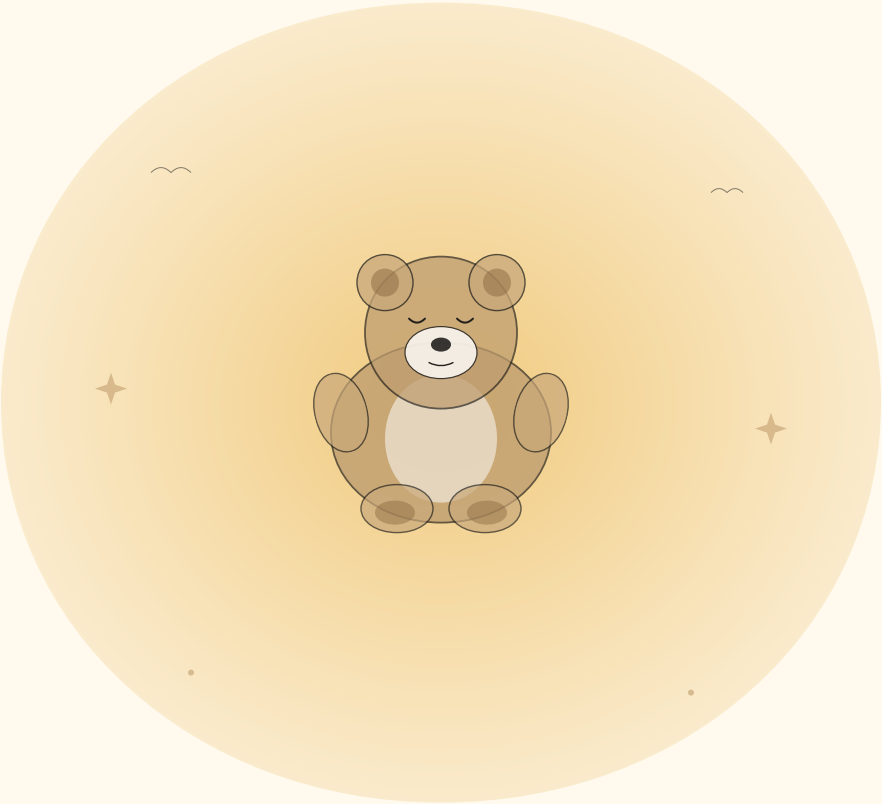
# *The bear was right*

✦



*We made all of this —*
*the lamps that listen,*
*the dragons in a minute,*
*the streets that count —*
*without quite knowing what we were making.*
*We did not know how to make it more slowly.*
*We are sorry, and we are not sorry.*
*You will know things we never could.*
*Take the bear with you.*
*He has been waiting for you all along.*

✦



*Go gently.*
*Stay curious. Stay kind.*
*Hold what is worth holding.*
*Be held.*
*And when you are older,*
*and someone small needs the bear,*
*pass the bear on.*
*The bear was right all along.*
*The bear has always been right.*

✦

# *A note for the grown-ups*

*It is probably late. The child is probably asleep, or close to it. The bear is probably under one arm, or fallen out of the bed, or being dragged along the floor by an ear, which is what bears are for.*

This is the small companion to a trilogy of books for adults — *If This Road*, *orphans.ai*, and *theheld.ai* — about the machines we are now building, and the parts of being human those machines cannot reach.

At the heart of it is the bear — every soft, patient, sit-beside-you bear that has ever been pressed into a child's arm at the end of a long day.

The bear, it turns out, knows things the cleverest machine never will:

— that the bear is not listening, the bear is here;
— that the part you wanted is the part that is yours;
— that one small word from someone you love can hold a whole sky;
— that the hand was already on its way;
— that the bear never asked you what you wanted to be;
— that the big questions are ours — and will be ours when the small one at your knee is old, and a smaller one sits at theirs.

Read it slowly. Leave the pages open. Let the child say what they want to say. And if there is a small honey-coloured bear nearby, all the better.

*If it reaches you,*
*and you want to write — doug@thebearwasright.com*

✦

*For the ones who held me.*
*And for the small ones, who will learn,*
*in their turn, how to hold.*

A small companion to *If This Road* (the wake),
*orphans.ai* (the diagnosis),
and *theheld.ai* (the disposition) —
and to *The Bear Loved*.

ifthisroad.com · orphans.ai · theheld.ai
thebearwasright.com · thebearloved.com

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