

— *Part Two* —

Navigating Young Loss



When the Whole Family Grieves

—  —
KONTINA VANESSA CLARK

Section Four

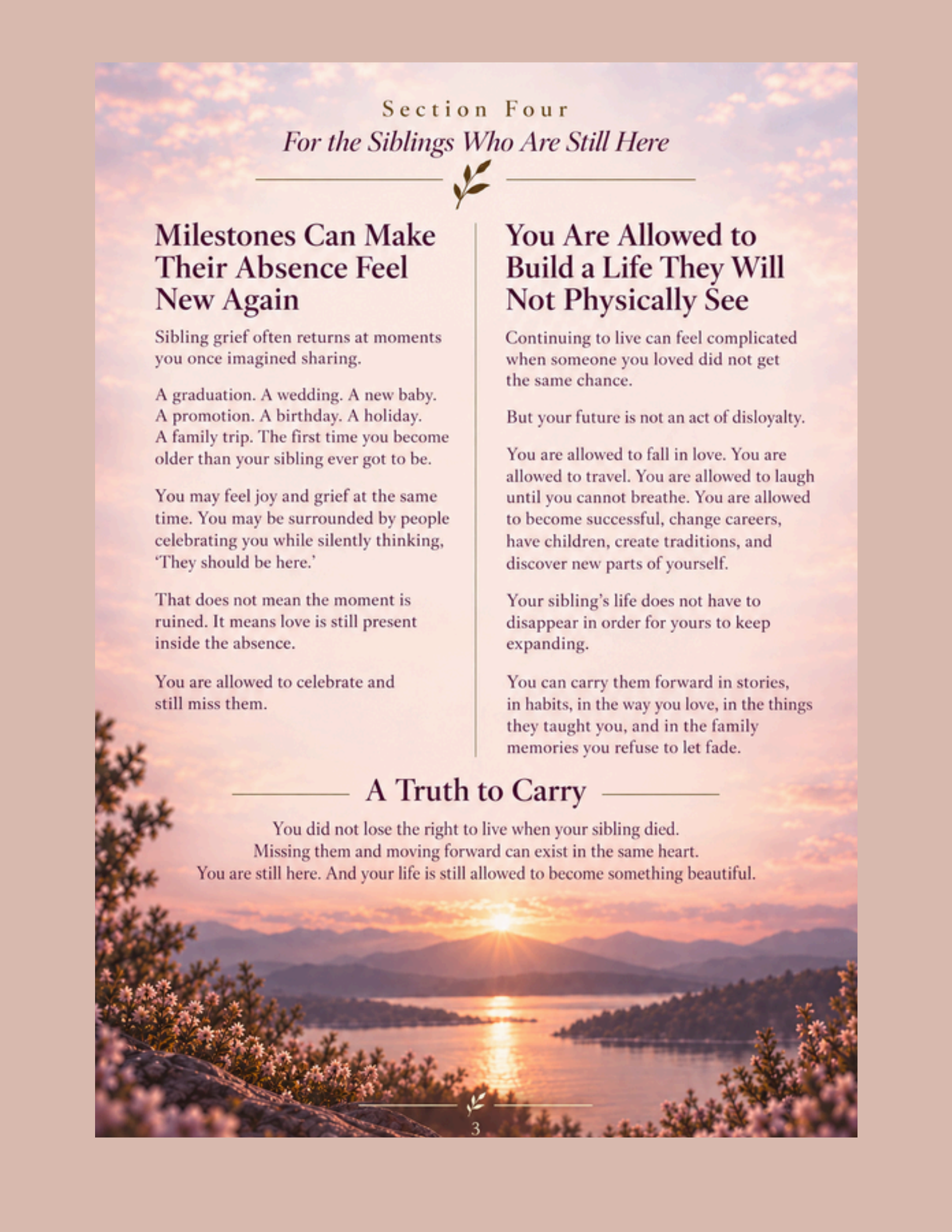


For the Siblings *Who Are Still Here*

The loss of a sibling changes
the shape of your life, too.

Kontina Vanessa Clark





Section Four

For the Siblings Who Are Still Here



Milestones Can Make Their Absence Feel New Again

Sibling grief often returns at moments you once imagined sharing.

A graduation. A wedding. A new baby.
A promotion. A birthday. A holiday.
A family trip. The first time you become
older than your sibling ever got to be.

You may feel joy and grief at the same
time. You may be surrounded by people
celebrating you while silently thinking,
“They should be here.”

That does not mean the moment is
ruined. It means love is still present
inside the absence.

You are allowed to celebrate and
still miss them.

You Are Allowed to Build a Life They Will Not Physically See

Continuing to live can feel complicated
when someone you loved did not get
the same chance.

But your future is not an act of disloyalty.

You are allowed to fall in love. You are
allowed to travel. You are allowed to laugh
until you cannot breathe. You are allowed
to become successful, change careers,
have children, create traditions, and
discover new parts of yourself.

Your sibling’s life does not have to
disappear in order for yours to keep
expanding.

You can carry them forward in stories,
in habits, in the way you love, in the things
they taught you, and in the family
memories you refuse to let fade.

A Truth to Carry

You did not lose the right to live when your sibling died.
Missing them and moving forward can exist in the same heart.
You are still here. And your life is still allowed to become something beautiful.

Section Four

For the Siblings Who Are Still Here



Sibling Grief Is Its Own Kind of Loss

When a brother or sister dies, you do not only lose a person. You lose a witness to your life.

A sibling may be one of the few people who remembers your childhood from the inside. They may know the family stories no one else remembers, the private jokes, the old arguments, the nicknames, and the versions of you that existed before adulthood changed everything.

Even when siblings are not especially close, the relationship often carries history, identity, and an assumption of more time. You may have expected to grow older together, laugh about childhood, care for aging parents, celebrate each other's children, or simply know they were still somewhere in the world.

When that future disappears, the loss can feel like part of your own story has gone missing too.

People May Ask About Your Parents Before They Ask About You

After a young person dies, attention often turns naturally toward the parents. Their grief is enormous. But surviving siblings can become invisible inside the same loss.

People may ask, 'How is your mom?' or 'How is your dad holding up?' before anyone asks what it is like for you to wake up without your brother or sister.

You may understand why people are concerned about your parents and still wish someone would remember that you lost someone too.

Your parents lost a child. You lost your sibling. Both losses deserve room.

You do not have to minimize your pain because someone else's grief looks bigger from the outside.

*You are not only the child who survived.
You are also a person who lost someone you expected to keep living beside.*



Section Four

For the Siblings Who Are Still Here



You May Feel Pressure to Be Strong for Everyone Else

A surviving sibling can quietly become the person who tries to hold everyone together.

You may check on your parents, protect younger siblings, answer questions from relatives, help with practical responsibilities, or become the one who refuses to fall apart because it seems like everybody else already has.

But strength can become a hiding place.

You are allowed to have days when you are not the strong one. You are allowed to need comfort instead of giving it. You are allowed to say, 'I miss them too.'

You do not have to become emotionally invisible in order to protect your family.

Guilt Can Show Up in Unexpected Ways

Sibling grief can carry questions that are hard to admit.

Why them and not me?

Could I have called more?

Why was our last conversation an argument?

Why did I get to keep living?

Why am I laughing today?

Why did I not know how bad things were?

Sometimes guilt attaches itself to things that were ordinary before the death: a missed call, an unfinished conversation, a season of distance, or simply the fact that your life continues.

You may even feel guilty when something good happens to you because your sibling is not here to experience their own future.

Guilt does not always mean you did something wrong. Sometimes it is grief searching for somewhere to place what cannot be changed.

*You are allowed to remember the whole relationship—
not only the last conversation, the last day, or
what you wish you had done differently.*



Section Four
For the Siblings Who Are Still Here



Sacred Pause

Making Room for Sibling Grief

Before moving into the next section, pause here.

Losing a brother or sister can leave questions, memories, and emotions that are hard to explain.
This page is a place to tell the truth about what you miss, what has changed, and what you may need.

What do you miss most about your sibling in everyday life?

What has been hardest about grieving them while life keeps moving?

Have you ever felt overlooked in your grief? If so, what has that felt like?

What milestone, memory, or future moment do you most wish you could still share with them?

Finish This Sentence

One thing I wish people understood about losing a sibling is...

Today, I most need permission to...

Carry Their Name

Write your sibling's name here: _____

Write one thing about them you never want forgotten:

A Truth to Carry

Your grief matters too.

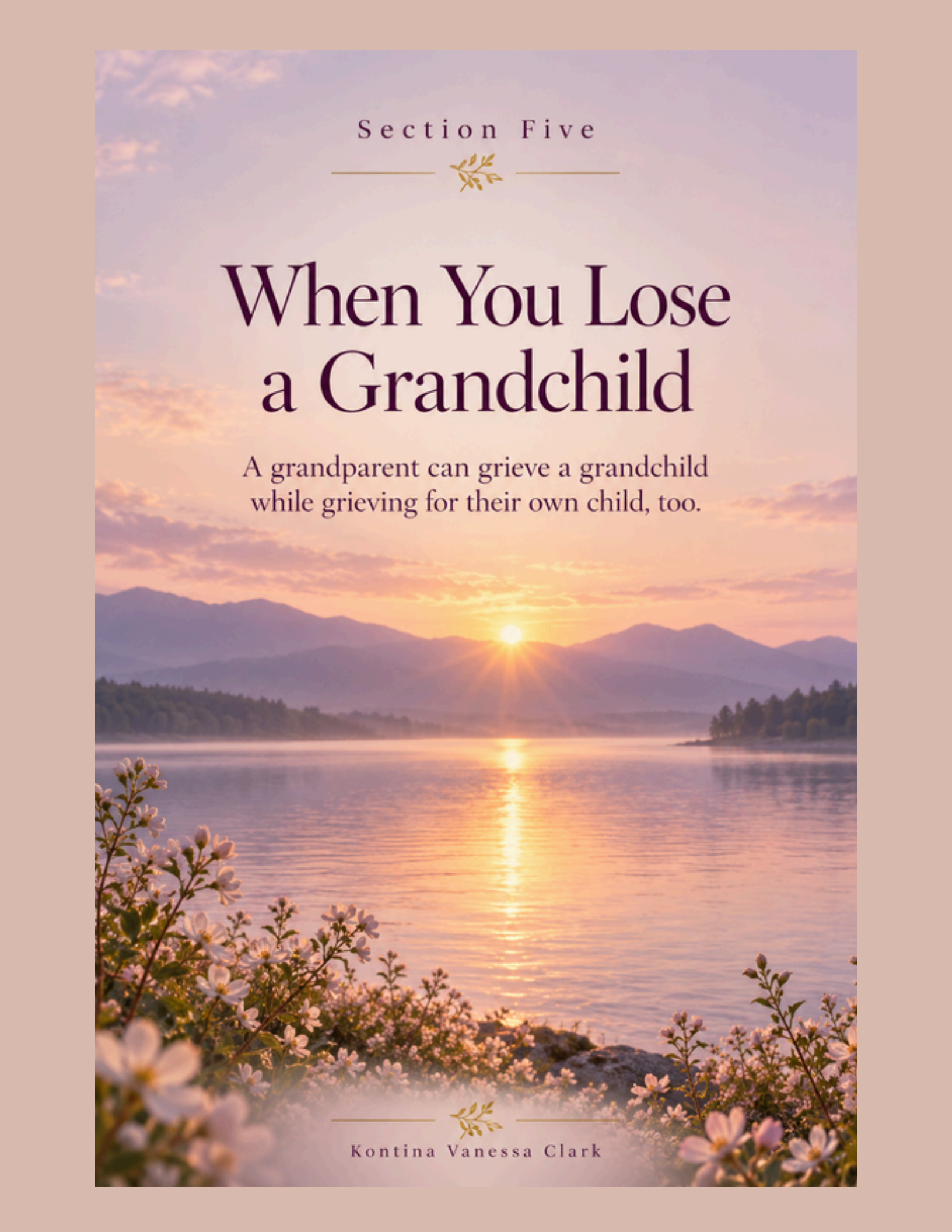
You are not less affected because you were not the parent.

Love, history, memory, and identity live in sibling loss.

You are allowed to miss them, to speak their name, and to keep living.

Pause here as long as you need.





Section Five

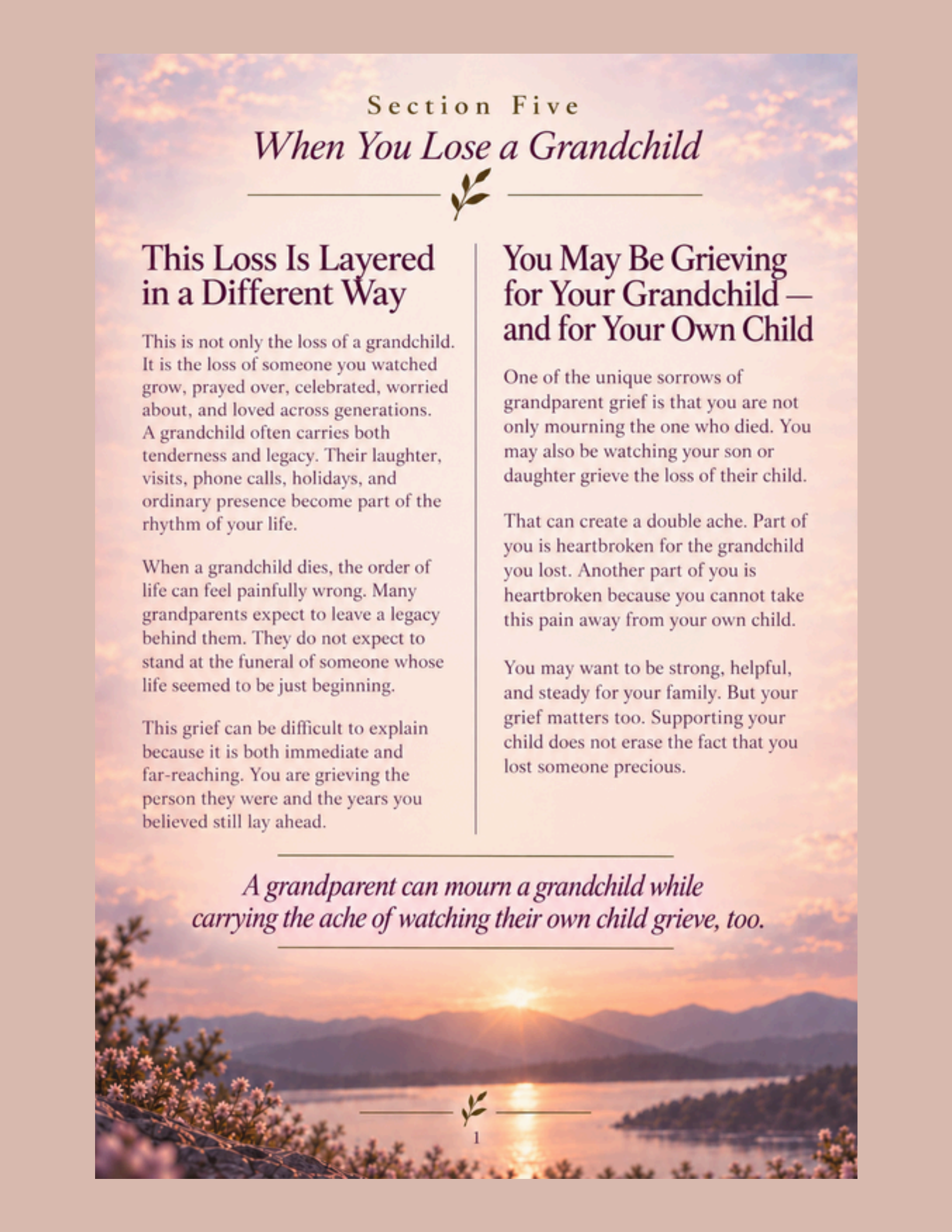


When You Lose a Grandchild

A grandparent can grieve a grandchild
while grieving for their own child, too.



Kontina Vanessa Clark



Section Five

When You Lose a Grandchild



This Loss Is Layered in a Different Way

This is not only the loss of a grandchild. It is the loss of someone you watched grow, prayed over, celebrated, worried about, and loved across generations. A grandchild often carries both tenderness and legacy. Their laughter, visits, phone calls, holidays, and ordinary presence become part of the rhythm of your life.

When a grandchild dies, the order of life can feel painfully wrong. Many grandparents expect to leave a legacy behind them. They do not expect to stand at the funeral of someone whose life seemed to be just beginning.

This grief can be difficult to explain because it is both immediate and far-reaching. You are grieving the person they were and the years you believed still lay ahead.

You May Be Grieving for Your Grandchild — and for Your Own Child

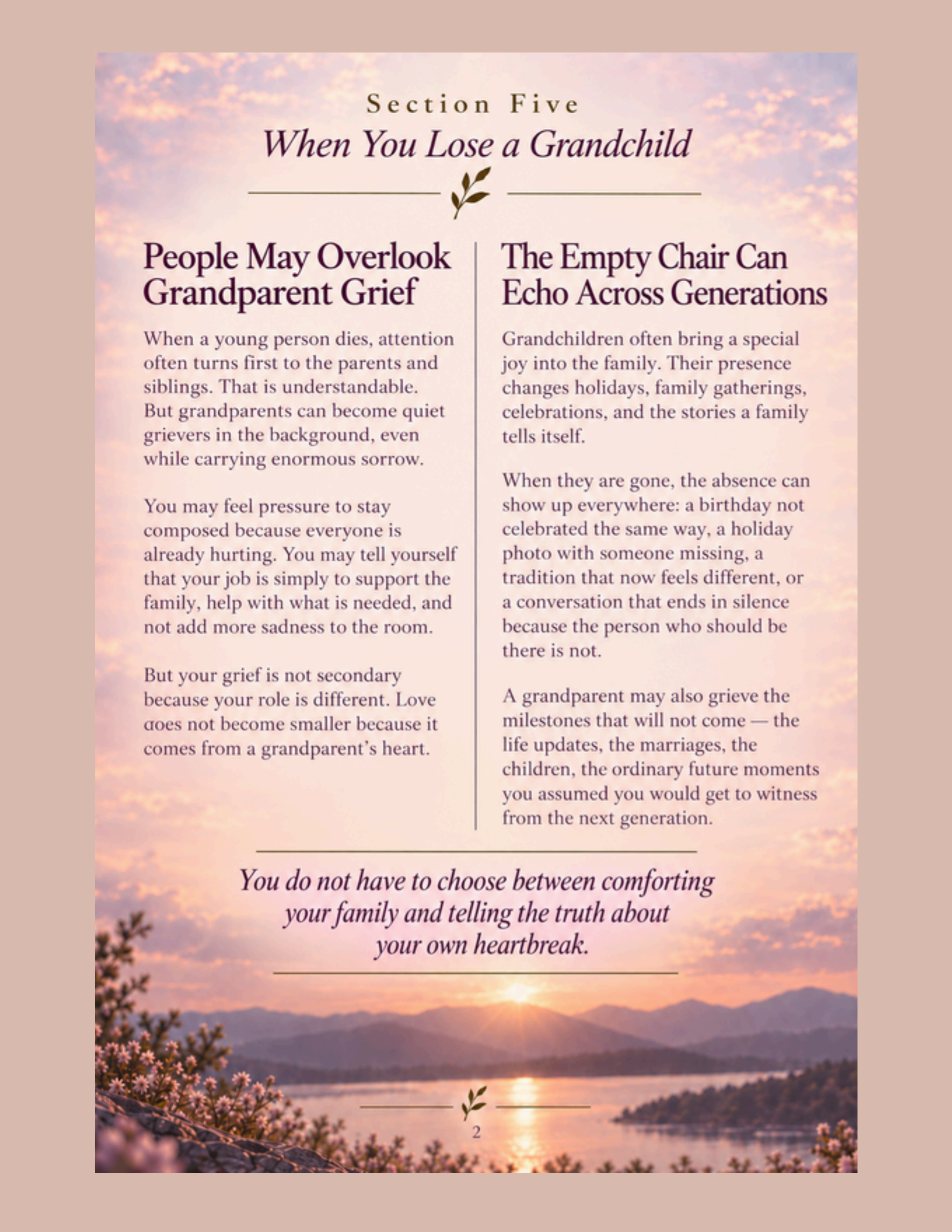
One of the unique sorrows of grandparent grief is that you are not only mourning the one who died. You may also be watching your son or daughter grieve the loss of their child.

That can create a double ache. Part of you is heartbroken for the grandchild you lost. Another part of you is heartbroken because you cannot take this pain away from your own child.

You may want to be strong, helpful, and steady for your family. But your grief matters too. Supporting your child does not erase the fact that you lost someone precious.

*A grandparent can mourn a grandchild while
carrying the ache of watching their own child grieve, too.*





Section Five

When You Lose a Grandchild



People May Overlook Grandparent Grief

When a young person dies, attention often turns first to the parents and siblings. That is understandable. But grandparents can become quiet grieverers in the background, even while carrying enormous sorrow.

You may feel pressure to stay composed because everyone is already hurting. You may tell yourself that your job is simply to support the family, help with what is needed, and not add more sadness to the room.

But your grief is not secondary because your role is different. Love does not become smaller because it comes from a grandparent's heart.

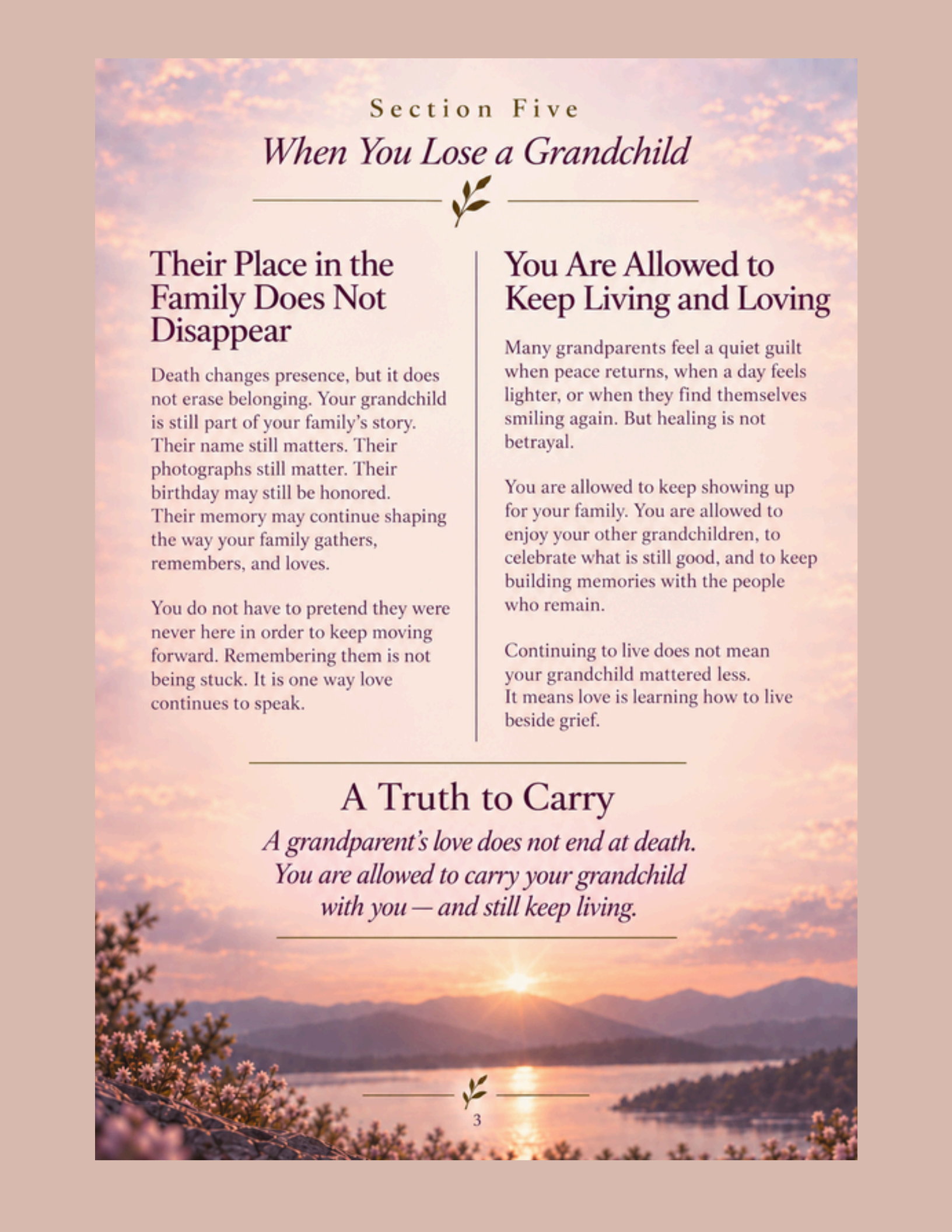
The Empty Chair Can Echo Across Generations

Grandchildren often bring a special joy into the family. Their presence changes holidays, family gatherings, celebrations, and the stories a family tells itself.

When they are gone, the absence can show up everywhere: a birthday not celebrated the same way, a holiday photo with someone missing, a tradition that now feels different, or a conversation that ends in silence because the person who should be there is not.

A grandparent may also grieve the milestones that will not come — the life updates, the marriages, the children, the ordinary future moments you assumed you would get to witness from the next generation.

You do not have to choose between comforting your family and telling the truth about your own heartbreak.



Section Five

When You Lose a Grandchild



Their Place in the Family Does Not Disappear

Death changes presence, but it does not erase belonging. Your grandchild is still part of your family's story. Their name still matters. Their photographs still matter. Their birthday may still be honored. Their memory may continue shaping the way your family gathers, remembers, and loves.

You do not have to pretend they were never here in order to keep moving forward. Remembering them is not being stuck. It is one way love continues to speak.

You Are Allowed to Keep Living and Loving

Many grandparents feel a quiet guilt when peace returns, when a day feels lighter, or when they find themselves smiling again. But healing is not betrayal.

You are allowed to keep showing up for your family. You are allowed to enjoy your other grandchildren, to celebrate what is still good, and to keep building memories with the people who remain.

Continuing to live does not mean your grandchild mattered less. It means love is learning how to live beside grief.

A Truth to Carry

*A grandparent's love does not end at death.
You are allowed to carry your grandchild
with you — and still keep living.*

Section Six



Cousins, Step-Siblings & the People Outside the Immediate Circle

Family grief is not always defined by title alone.



Kontina Vanessa Clark

Section Six

Cousins, Step-Siblings & the People Outside the Immediate Circle



Grief Is Not Measured by Proximity Alone

Not every meaningful loss comes from the immediate household. Sometimes the person who died was your cousin, your step-sibling, your niece, your nephew, or a relative whose title sounds distant even though the relationship was not.

Families are not always defined by neat categories. A cousin may have grown up like a brother. A step-sister may have shared holidays, secrets, laughter, and years of life that made her feel fully woven into your story.

When someone like that dies, the grief can feel confusing because your love was real, but the world may not immediately recognize the depth of the loss.

That does not make your grief smaller. It means relationships are more personal than titles alone can explain.

Some Relationships Live Beyond the Label

A person does not have to fit someone else's definition of "immediate family" to matter deeply. You may have called them your cousin while knowing they felt more like a sister. You may have called them your stepbrother while knowing they were part of your everyday life, your shared history, and your sense of belonging.

The bond may have been built through years of growing up together, showing up for one another, navigating family changes, and sharing the ordinary rhythms that make people feel close.

When that person is gone, you are not only grieving who they were. You may also be grieving the part of your own life that made sense because they were in it.

*Love is not always explained by family titles.
Some losses come from the people who grew up beside you.*

Section Six



Cousins, Step-Siblings & the People Outside the Immediate Circle

You May Feel Like Your Grief Has No Official Place

One of the hardest parts of this kind of loss is feeling as if your grief does not know where to stand. The parents are grieving. The siblings are grieving. The grandparents are grieving. And you may quietly wonder whether your sorrow is allowed to take up space too.

You may hesitate to speak because you do not want to make the moment about you. You may feel unsure about what role you are supposed to play at gatherings, at funerals, or in conversations where everyone seems to know where they belong.

But grief is not a competition for importance. Pain does not have to be ranked in order to be real. If that person mattered deeply to you, your heartbreak deserves room too.

Being Outside the Immediate Circle Can Feel Complicated

You may find yourself grieving while also feeling slightly outside the center of the family's attention. Important decisions may be made without you. Photos and tributes may focus on other relationships first. People may overlook your pain simply because they do not fully understand the closeness you shared.

That can create a second hurt on top of the loss itself. Not only are you missing the person, you may also feel unseen in the missing.

If this has been part of your experience, hear this clearly: you do not need permission from other people to acknowledge your grief. You are allowed to mourn honestly, even when your place in the family feels complicated.



*You do not need a title that makes sense
to everybody else in order for your grief to be real.*

Section Six



Cousins, Step-Siblings & the People Outside the Immediate Circle

Their Place in Your Story Still Matters

Death changes presence, but it does not erase significance. The cousin who felt like a sister, the stepbrother who grew up alongside you, the niece or nephew who filled the room with life—they still matter in the story of your family and in the story of your own heart.

Their name still belongs in the conversation. Their photographs still matter. Their birthday may still be remembered. Their memory may continue shaping the way you gather, the stories you tell, and the love you carry forward.

You do not have to minimize their place simply because the relationship is harder for other people to define.

There Is Room for This Loss Too

Healing does not require you to act as if the relationship was less important than it was. You are allowed to speak their name, to honor their memory, to cry on the days that feel heavy, and to keep living with the love they left behind.

You may not be the parent, the sibling, or the spouse. But you are still someone who loved and lost. That matters.

Grief is not reserved only for the innermost circle. Sometimes some of the deepest sorrow lives in the relationships people overlook most easily.

A Truth to Carry

If they mattered deeply to you, their death can wound you deeply too.

Grief is not reserved only for the immediate household.

Love gives people a place in the story.

SOME PEOPLE
GRIEVE QUIETLY,
BUT THEIR LOVE
STILL ECHOES
LOUDLY.



THEY
ARE STILL
PART OF
THE STORY



Grief
expands the circle
of love.

KONTINA VANESSA CLARK

SECTION SIX

Sacred Pause

REFLECT • RELEASE • RECEIVE

A quiet space to process, honor, and hold what's in your heart.

- 1 Who outside of your immediate family has been grieving alongside you?

- 2 How has this loss impacted extended family members (cousins, step-siblings, aunts, uncles, or close friends)?

- 3 Have you noticed anyone in the extended circle whose grief has been overlooked?

- 4 What can you do to create space for their grief while also honoring your own?

- 5 How can your family stay connected and support one another through this shared loss?

- 6 What is one way you can extend grace—to others and to yourself—in the midst of different grieving journeys?



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

*One way I can show up for my
extended family during this season is...*



A TRUTH TO CARRY

*Grief doesn't only live
in the immediate circle.*

*Cousins, step-siblings, and the
people outside the family circle
hurt too.*

*There is no right or wrong way
to grieve, and everyone's pain is real.*

*You can honor their grief
and still tend to your own.*

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

GALATIANS 6:2 (NIV)

You Are Not *Alone*

Grief can make you feel like the world stopped, but you're expected to keep going. This guide was created to remind you that healing is possible, support matters, and you don't have to carry your grief alone.

Whether your loss is recent or years ago, this pocket guide offers compassionate insight, practical tools, Scripture, and gentle encouragement to help you navigate the hard days and honor the love that remains.

*You can grieve deeply and still live fully.
There is grace for both.*

HEALING DEEPLY.
THINKING BIBLICALLY.
LIVING COURAGEOUSLY.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kontina Vanessa Clark is a nurse, author, speaker, and founder of The Kovac Collective. Through her writing, teaching, and creative work, she helps women heal deeply, think biblically, and live courageously after life's hardest seasons. She is passionate about turning pain into purpose and creating spaces where healing and hope meet.

Kontina Vanessa Clark ♥

FOUNDER | WRITER | CREATIVE | KINGDOM BUILDER

STAY CONNECTED



The Kovac Collective
TheKovacCollective@yahoo.com
TheKovacCollective.com

KOVAC 

THE KOVAC COLLECTIVE

KINGDOM-ORIENTED VISION AND CREATIVITY

*"There is beauty
on the other side
of grief."*



© 2026 Kontina Vanessa Clark
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission from the author, except for brief quotations in reviews or articles.

Published by The Kovac Collective.
Printed in the United States of America.

HEALING PEOPLE. IMPACTING GENERATIONS.