



DEDICATED TO

Donald, my best friend
Kelsey, my sweet laughter
Tyler, my forever song
Sean, my silly heart
Josh, my gentle giant
EJ, my first chosen
Austin, my miracle boy
And to God Almighty,
who has—for now—blessed me with these



A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Not long ago my little son Austin ran to me, jumped into my arms, and wrapped his legs around my waist. We rubbed noses and he whispered into my ear, “I love you, Mommy.”

Then he slid down and ran to play.

As he left, I realized that he was almost too big, too heavy for me to hold him that way. I looked outside at my oldest son, Tyler, on the verge of middle school, and I thought back. At some point Tyler ran to me and jumped into my arms like that for the last time.

The very last time.

And that’s when it hit me. We spend our children’s days celebrating their firsts. First step, first tooth, first words. First day of kindergarten, first homecoming dance, first time behind the wheel. But somehow, along the way, we miss their lasts.

There are no photographs or parties when a child takes his last nap or catches tadpoles for the last time. For the most part, it’s impossible to know when a last-moment actually occurs. Nothing signals a mother to stop and notice the last time her little boy runs and jumps into her arms the way Austin—for now—still does.

Then I wondered a bit more, and Tyler came to mind again. Would I have held on longer if I’d known it was the last time? And so I began to write. Sometimes with tears in my eyes, I chronicled the life of a child and all the last times we might miss along the way.

In the process, my first children’s book was born.

The beautiful illustrations in *Let Me Hold You Longer* are fun and lighthearted—so that your children will laugh and giggle while you quietly ponder the speed of life. This is a book for kids, a gift for graduates, a treasure for anyone who has ever loved a child.

Most of all, it is a labor of love from me—a mom of six kids who knows all too well the short time we have with our little ones.

Karen Kingsbury

Visit Tyndale’s exciting Web site at www.tyndale.com

Copyright © 2004 by Karen Kingsbury. All rights reserved.

Cover illustration copyright © 2004 by Mary Collier. All rights reserved.

Interior illustrations copyright © 2004 by Mary Collier. All rights reserved.

The material in this book is based on the poem “Would I Have Held on Longer?” taken from the text of an adult novel titled *Rejoice*, coauthored by Karen Kingsbury and Gary Smalley.

Edited by Betty Free Swazberg
Designed by Julie Chen

Published in association with the literary agency of Alive Communications, Inc., 7680 Goddard Street, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, CO 80921

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
ISBN: 1-4143-0055-7

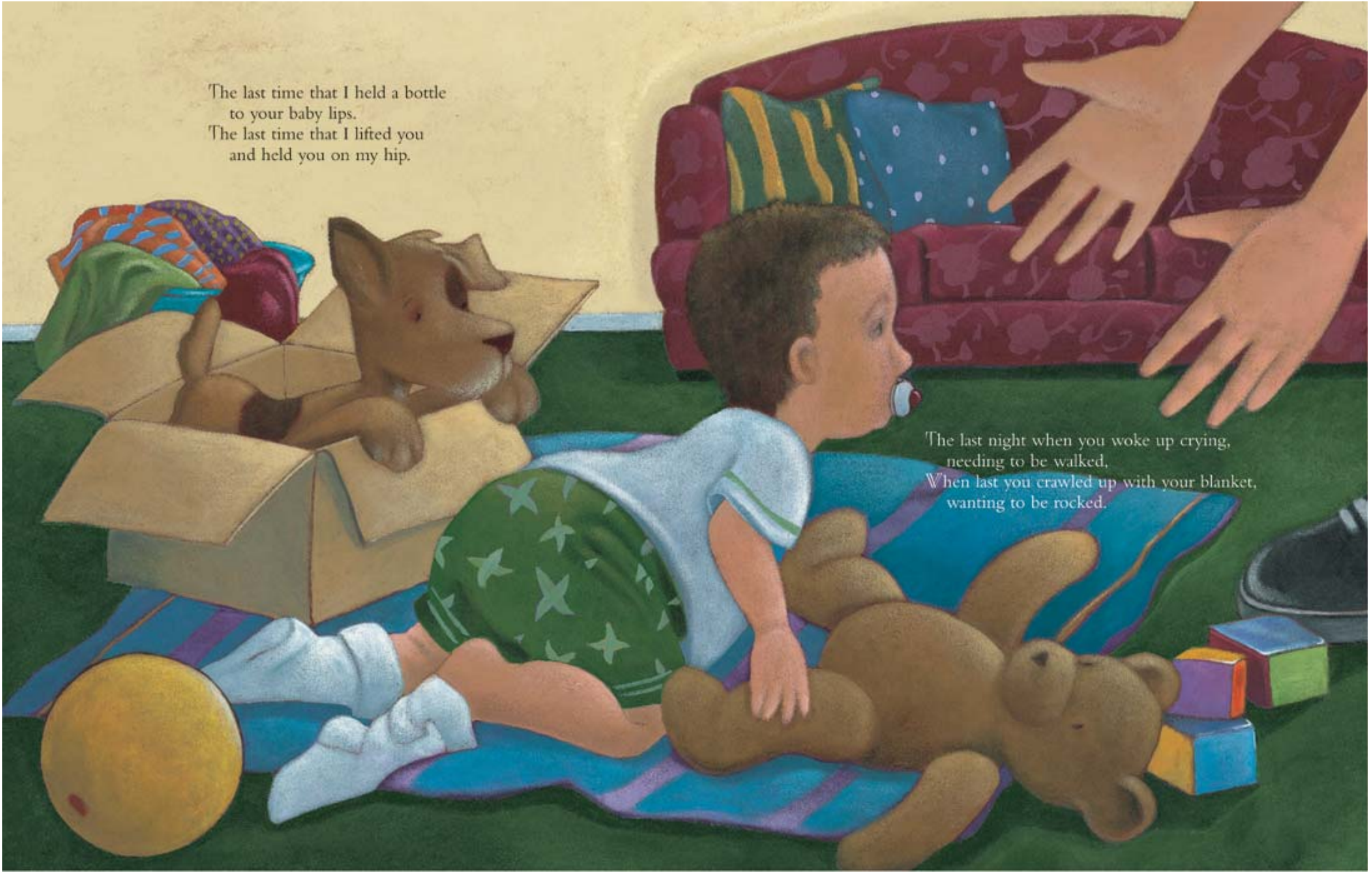
Printed in Singapore
13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Long ago you came to me,
a miracle of firsts:
First smiles and teeth and baby steps,
a sunbeam on the burst.
But one day you will move away
and leave to me your past,
And I will be left thinking of
a lifetime of your lasts . . .



The last time that I held a bottle
to your baby lips.
The last time that I lifted you
and held you on my hip.

The last night when you woke up crying,
needing to be walked,
When last you crawled up with your blanket,
wanting to be rocked.



The last time when you ran to me,
still small enough to hold.
The last time that you said you'd marry
me when you grew old.
Precious, simple moments and
bright flashes from your past—
Would I have held on longer if
I'd known they were your last?

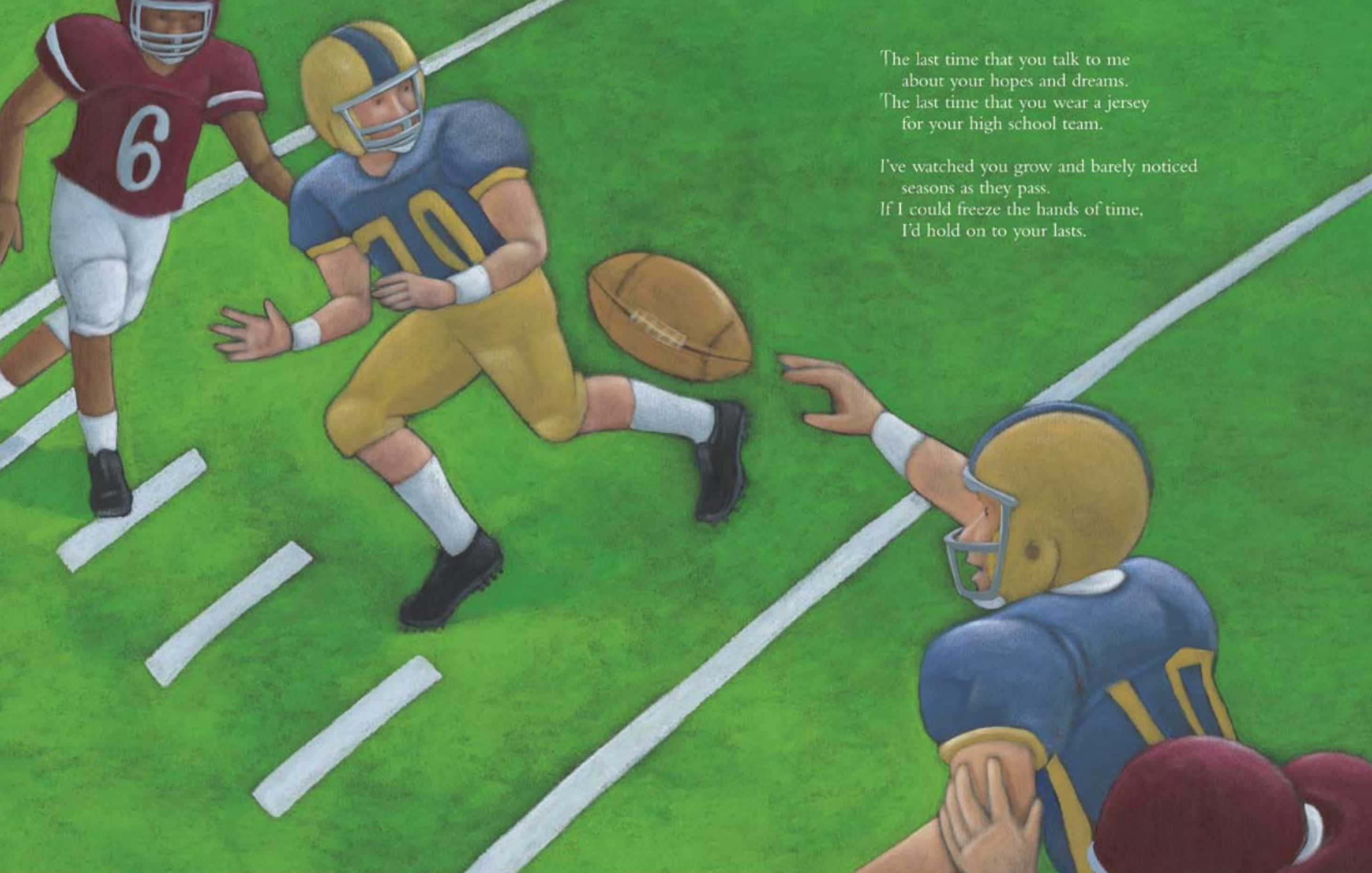


Our last adventure to the park,
your final midday nap,
The last time when you wore your favorite
faded baseball cap.




I never said good-bye to all
your yesterdays long passed.
So what about tomorrow—
will I recognize your lasts?





The last time that you talk to me
about your hopes and dreams.
The last time that you wear a jersey
for your high school team.

I've watched you grow and barely noticed
seasons as they pass.
If I could freeze the hands of time,
I'd hold on to your lasts.



For come some bright fall morning,
you'll be going far away,
College life will beckon
in a brilliant sort of way.
One last hug, one last good-bye,
one quick and hurried kiss.
One last time to understand
just how much you'll be missed.
I'll watch you leave and think how fast
our time together passed.