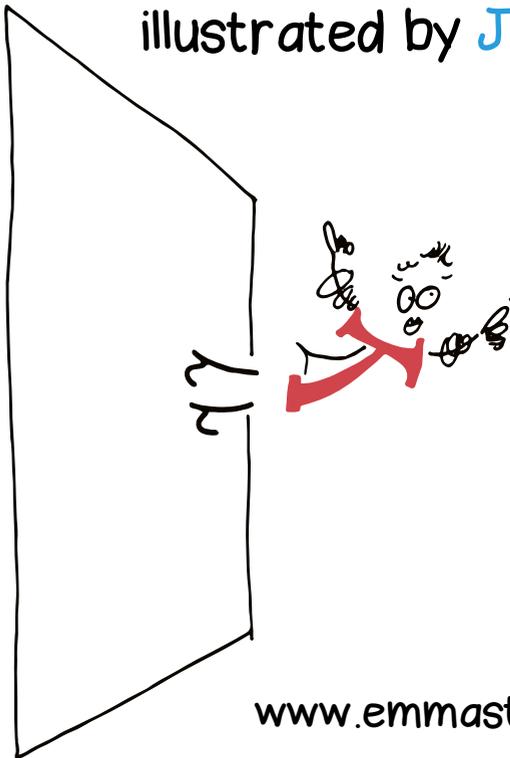


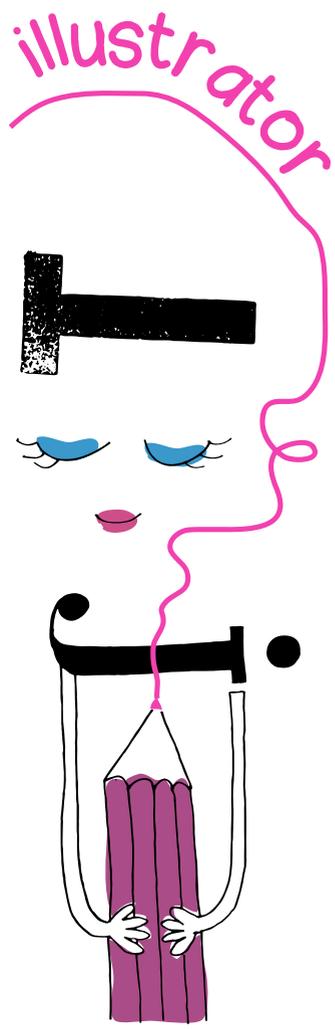
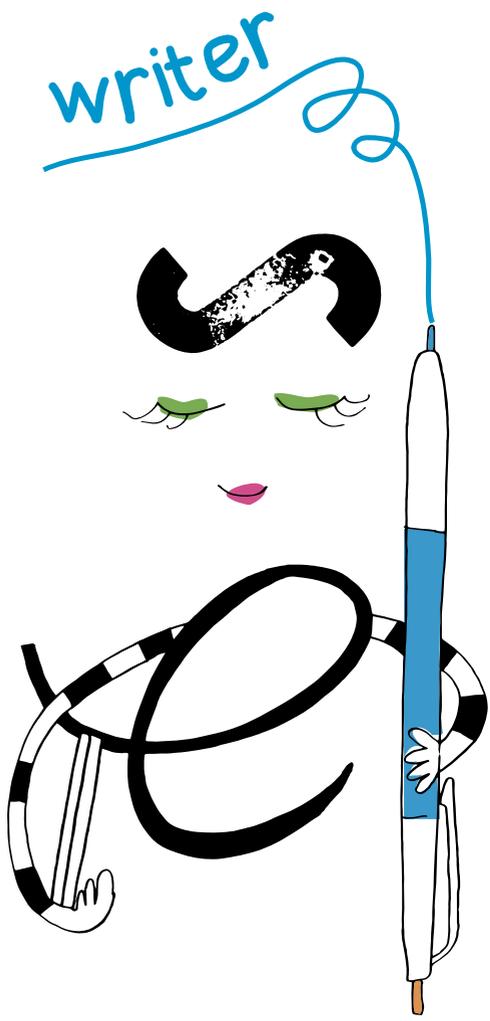
Gran spreads her wings

a story by EMMA STORRIS

illustrated by JANS TEEN



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The writer insists that the granny Thea in this story is strictly fictional. The fact that there is a granny Thea in the writer's family is sheer coincidence. As a result that particular granny Thea cannot be booked for aviation shows, not even when she is wearing her red cardigan (which she does own).

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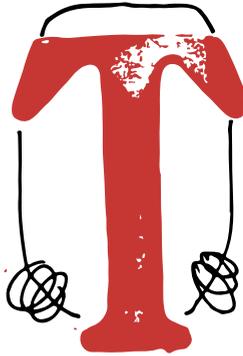
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GRAN SPREADS HER WINGS

*To my mother and grandmother:
two supergrans who never lost their sense of humour*

* motto = live you life like there's no tomorrow * favourite drink
vodka, no ice * doesn't like hoovering * favourite animal = crow
* loves travelling * favorite clothing = her red cardigan



GRAN

Bing stuck his head out of the window.

'Bibi, get over here. Hurry!'

'What's wrong?' Bibi shouted back.

'Gran is on top of the wardrobe and she won't come off.'

Bibi sighed and walked towards the kitchen door. In the meantime she straightened her pigtails. Gran again. She was always up to something. Bibi wondered what it would be this time.

She opened the door and went inside. Bing was waiting in the hallway.

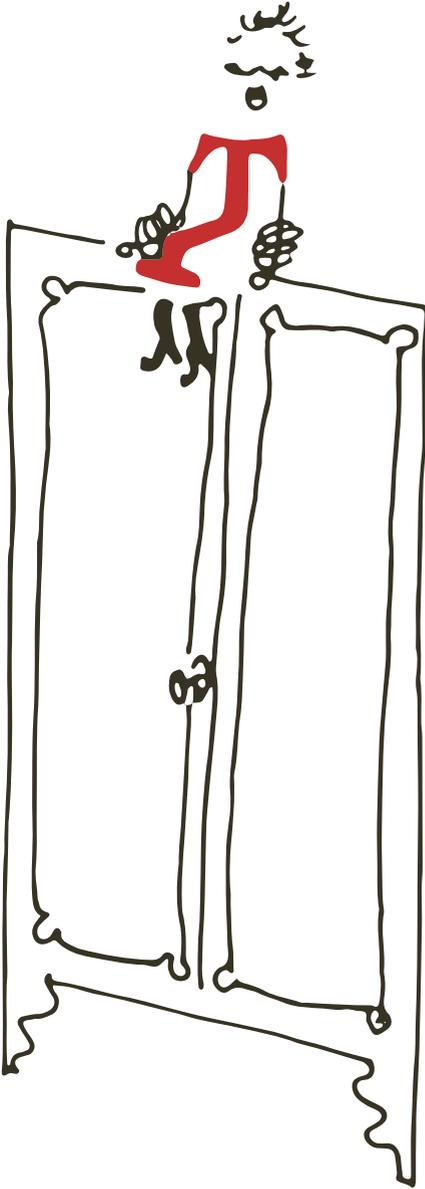
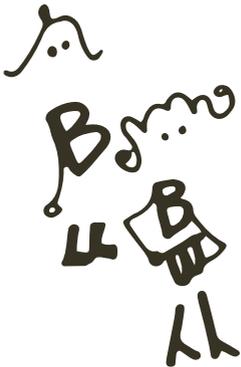
'It's the wardrobe in the bedroom.' he said.

The siblings climbed the narrow, floral carpeted stairs. The door to grandma's bedroom was open. Bibi stepped forward and stood in the doorway with her hands on her hips.

'Granny Thea, what on earth are you doing on that wardrobe?'

'It is easier to fly off from up here.' granny Thea answered.

Her short reddish brown hair was sticking up on all sides. Her cheeks were flushed with excitement. Her bracelets jingled as she moved her arms up and down.



Bibi stepped back onto the landing and looked at her brother questioningly.

'Gran has apparently stolen the flying ointment... again.' Bing said, rolling his eyes. He held out his hands to show the open jar that he had just retrieved from the bedside table.

'No!' Bibi put her hands up to her face in fear. 'You can't be serious. Not again! The last time she got her hands on that stuff we had to pick her up a hundred kilometres from here.'

Bing nodded with a grave face.

'I know. It looks like mum didn't hide the jar well enough.'

'Shall I get the fishing net?'

'Yes, please. In the meantime I will try to close the window.'

Bibi ran down the stairs two steps at a time. She speeded straight into the shed next to the house, where she found the net. The large oak to the side of the shed was right in front of grandma's bedroom.

Bibi shinnied up to the branch that almost touched gran's windowsill. As soon as she was firmly seated and had her net in position, she gave Bing a thumbs up through the window.

Grandma was still on top of the wardrobe, staring into space while she kept flapping her arms as if getting ready for take-off. Bing crawled like a tiger towards his prey, trying to get to the window unnoticed.

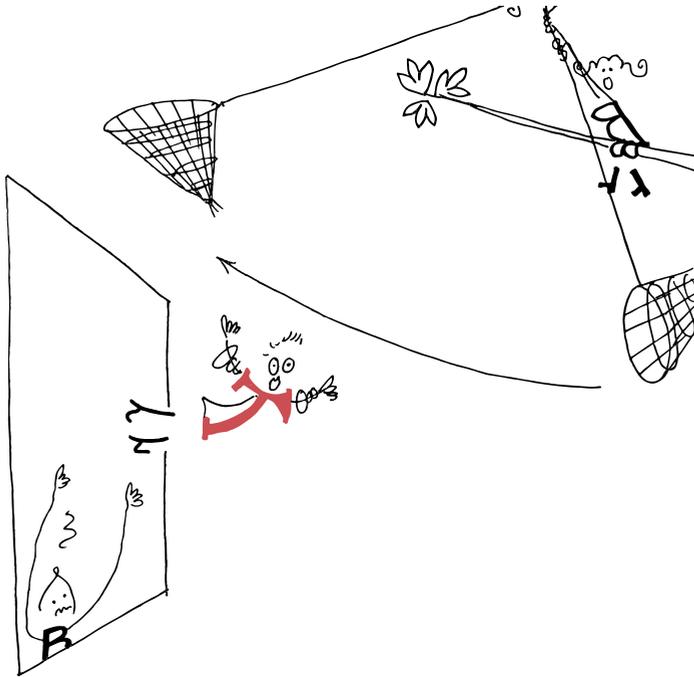
He almost succeeded, until his foot got stuck behind a chair while he was attempting to evade a lethal pair of dirty knickers on the floor. The chair tumbled over with a crashing noise. Gran looked down and understood right away what he was trying to do.

'You won't succeed, mister.' she said 'Granny is off!'

And with a loud 'woohoooo!' she pushed off from the wardrobe and flew towards the window. With an elegant curve she soared through, just before Bing closed the window with a bang. Bibi moved her fishing net down, but missed grandma by a hair's breadth.

Cackling with laughter, gran whooshed past the tree. She turned a looping, waved at her grandchildren and flew towards the front of the house.

'Bye, bye!'



Bing had opened the window again by now and slid down the drain at top speed. Bibi got down from the tree as deftly as a monkey. They ran towards their bicycles and followed grandma. Fortunately, she was wearing her red cardigan so they could see her well, even from a large distance.

They sped past their own house, which was right next to gran's. Their father was working on a statue in the front yard.

'Look! Gran's flying there, dad. She can't be

stopped.' Bing yelled.

Dino looked up and dropped his hammer and chisel. He ran to his motorbike, hopped on and rode down the path on his hind wheel. Grimm the housewolf, followed, barking loudly. He liked a bit of a contest.

They made such a racket that Zaza, Bing and Bibi's mother, came outside. She shook her head when she saw her mother up in the air.

'Mum is always up to something.' she muttered.
'Must have found the flying ointment.'

Calmly she got her first aid bag and mobile phone and followed her husband and children on her purple bike. The colourful ribbons on her handlebars streamed behind her festively.

There they went in a merry procession through the forest towards the inhabited world. Granny Thea flew up front, high up in the air. Every now and then she would turn into a looping or a corkscrew while making loud whooping sounds. Behind her came Dino. Because he was looking up all the time, he had almost hit a tree a couple of times. His children were peddling like mad to keep up with him, while Zaza seemed to follow leisurely.

Whistling like she was on a nice spring outing, she cycled on, admiring the view with a smile on her face.

'Look over there... a falcon.' she shouted at her daughter.

'Mum, look up there... gran!' Bibi shouted back, 'In a minute she will have disappeared.'

'Ah, surely not,' Zaza said, 'she won't get far. The flying ointment will not last more than another ten minutes.'

'What?' Bibi's eyes went wide with shock.

'The flying ointment...'

'I heard you the first time.' Bibi interrupted impatiently. 'How can you stay calm knowing that grandma will come crashing down?'

'See gran's red cardigan?' Zaza asked.

'Yes, of course, it is hard to miss.'

'There is a parachute built into that cardigan. When the ointment loses its potency, she only has to pull on the little cord and she'll whirl down slowly like a leaf from a tree. You didn't think I wouldn't take any precautions after the last time this happened, did you?'

'Mum, you're brilliant!'

Bing, who had heard it all, smiled broadly at his mother.

'I know, I know.' Zaza said modestly.

And surely, after about ten minutes gran started flying less smoothly. It almost seemed as if she had an engine that was stalling and stuttering. Every now and then she even seemed to be just hanging there, frozen in time.

'Ma, pull yer rope.' Dino said through the megaphone that happened to be in his saddle bag.

'Not a hair on my head!' grandma cried back. Using the remnants of the flying ointment she moved towards a nearby church. She landed on the edge of the tower roof.

'Give me more of that ointment.' she demanded.

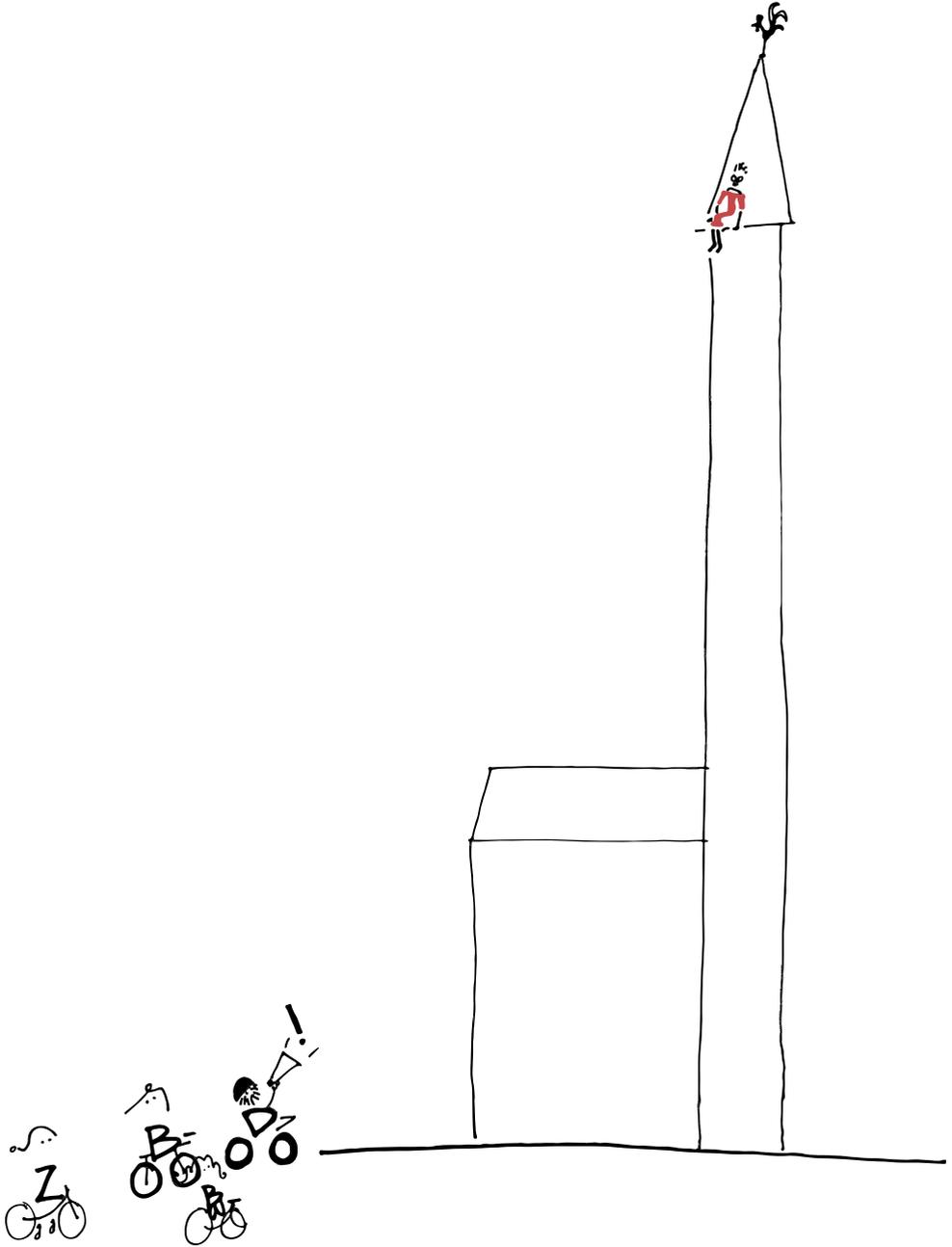
'Yeah, sure, so you can fly on to the Cologne Cathedral, right? We are not that stupid.' Zaza said.

'Why do you care where I fly to?' grandma asked defiantly.

'Because... we'll have to go over there and pick you up.'

'But I don't want you to pick me up.' gran said.

'Why wouldn't ye want 's to pick ye up?' Dino was positively puzzled.



'Because you treat me like a pensioner.'

Grandma had turned red with anger. You could hardly see where she ended and her fire engine red cardigan started.

'Gran, watch out, you might fall. Ma, eat yer veggies, else yer bones will become brittle.

Granny, won't you go to bed, you need your sleep. Mum, shouldn't you get up or else you won't sleep tonight. Gran this, gran that. You all drive me bonkers!'

Dino and Zaza stared at each other. They hadn't seen this coming.

'But you are an old age pensioner. We are only worried.'

'Well, you don't have to be. I'm not disabled, my hair's only turning grey. And just because I dye it, doesn't mean the dye has wrecked my brain or anything. I know exactly what I want and when I want it. I want to have some fun in my life while I still can.'

Bing and Bibi shook their heads in disbelief. They had never realised their gran felt this way. They loved her very much. If they could they would keep her covered in bubble wrap so nothing would ever happen to her. However, after hearing this, they did understand. She didn't

want to sit at home, staring at the outside world from behind the potted plants. She wanted to go on adventures, just like they did. Life is short enough as it is.

In the meantime Zaza had applied some flying ointment herself. She always kept a jar in her purse, just in case. Slowly she flew up along the ancient church walls towards where her mother was perched. She sat herself down next to her. 'Here.' she only said, while handing the jar of ointment to granny Thea.

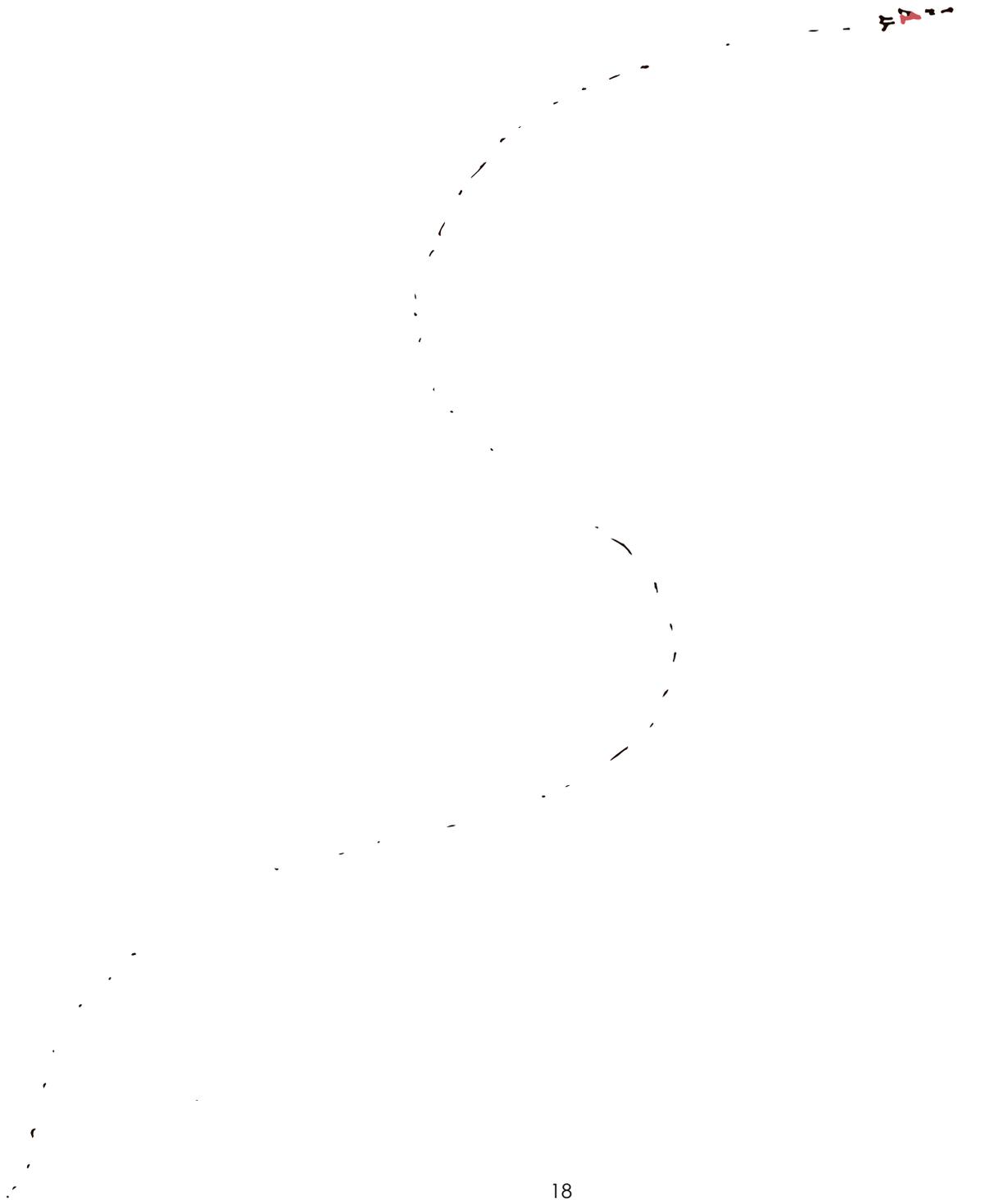
Gran looked at the jar in her hand and hugged her daughter.

'I'll always have my parachute.' she said quietly. She patted her cardigan. Zaza nodded. Together they flew down.

After a long group cuddle granny Thea promised she would stay in touch.

She kissed her grandchildren on their foreheads loudly.

'We'll meet again!' she shouted cheerfully, while she was taking up speed. And, whoosh, off she was, direction Cologne. They kept looking at her until she was a tiny red dot far, far away.



About Bing and Bibi

Bing and Bibi are the main characters in the book Bing and Bibi and the Dark Forest. This book is suitable to be read by children between the ages of 8 and 11 or to read to younger children. It is different from most books, because it isn't quite finished yet. The story is there, but the illustrations are incomplete. The thing is.... we would like to see what happens in YOUR head. So grab your pencils, crayons, paint, whatever you like and come along on this adventure.

Or just read it, that's also fine. Whatever you want...

Bing, Bibi and their family live in an extraordinary place in an extraordinary house with extraordinary housemates. It is the kind of house that you would surely like to live! They didn't always live there though. One day something happens which changes their life forever. A veritable giant shakes up their house and lives. He has fled the forest which he lived in and does not know where to go. Of course, Bing and Bibi do not hesitate for a second and offer to help him. This results in an exciting adventure in endangered forests with talking animals and downright dangerous situations.

And know what? All children with a lot of imagination can come along. So that means you too!

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Want to know about Bing and Bibi? Check out the website:

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