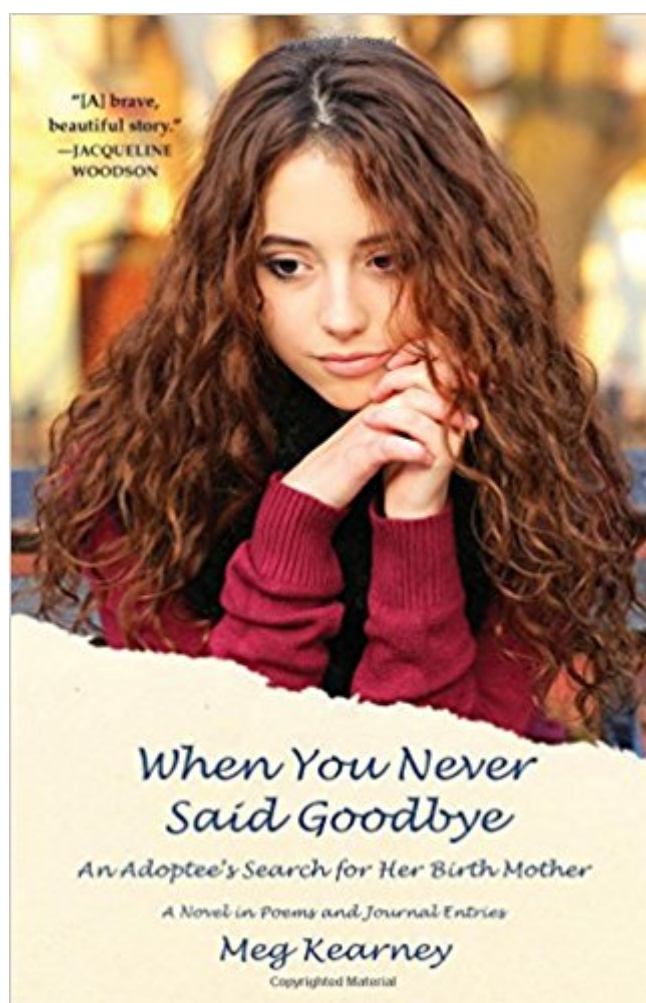


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# When You Never Said Goodbye: An Adoptee's Search For Her Birth Mother: A Novel In Poems And Journal Entries



## Synopsis

Against the odds, eighteen-year-old Liz McLane, adoptee and aspiring poet, searches for her birth mother in this sensitive and daring novel told through her own accessible and moving poems and journal entries. A student at NYU in Greenwich Village, Liz McLane is pursuing her dream of becoming a poet and, at the same time, determined to find her birth mother, no matter what the results may be. Through her journals, Liz records her struggle to navigate adoption bureaucracy and laws. In spare and poignant poems, she confides her fears and her prayers. Could her birth mother be the unknown guitarist in Washington Square Park, who sings a soulful song in a strangely familiar voice? Against a backdrop of college life—classes on Alice Munro and Billy Collins and an active social life—and with the help of her sister, friends, and a private investigator, Liz summons the courage to face the truth about her mother and herself. This is an unforgettable novel full of heart that addresses the primary questions all adoptees must answer for themselves: who was the woman who gave me life, and why did she decide to give me away? Based on author Meg Kearney's own experiences.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Meg Kearney takes you into the heart of this story and holds you there. I loved everyone I met in these pages and felt every moment of deep love and deep loss. When You Never Said Goodbye is a gift to the world, a book you'll want to read slowly, savoring both the eloquent writing and the brave, beautiful story." - Jacqueline Woodson, author of *Brown Girl Dreaming*, 2014 National Book Award winner...poet Kearney draws 18-year-old Liz McLane's

years-long search for her birth mother to a close.. Lizâ€™s first-person account unfolds in a series of sincere and succinct (often no longer than a page) journal entries, haikus, villanelles, letters, and more. While the search itself no doubt fuels the narrative, Lizâ€™s flourishing friendships, depictions of an ever-bustling Big Apple, and dogged devotion to her craft of poetry add considerable depth to the already gripping journey... suggested reading, including guides to poetics as well as adoption registries, clinch this oneâ€™s status as both an enlightening resource and an all-around sparkling story of self-discovery.â€• - Booklist (Starred Review)â€œThrough journal entries and varied styles of poems, Kearney sensitively conveys Lizâ€™s journey of discovery; the answer sheâ€™s been seeking, though unexpected, brings her peace of mind.â€• - Publishers Weeklyâ€œThoughtful and brimming with justified teen angst, Kearney's fast-paced tale offers illuminating insights into the perils and rewards of self-discovery.â€• - Kirkus Reviews

Meg KearneyÂ is the author of *The Secret of Me* and *The Girl in the Mirror*. She has written two prize-winning poetry collections for adults and a critically acclaimed and popular picture book for children, *Trouper* Â (Scholastic). Before becoming founding director of the low-residency MFA at Pine Manor College (Chestnut Hill, MA), Kearney was Assoc. Director of the National Book Foundation, sponsor of the National Book Awards, for 11 years.

Meg Kearney does so many things at once in this book, and all of them come together, well, as a poem does, making its way until the arrival is both what you could not have guessed, and yet what you knew had to be. There is real story here, deep and touching and often surprising, emotionally. The prize though, is the language: tight yet generous; lovely yet controlled; surprising and satisfying and resonating. Perhaps not so many readers will have had the experience of searching for a mother, but everyone has longed for something that seems ever out of reach. That is the well Kearney dips into, and what comes up is crystalline. A wide age-range can enjoy this book, nothing gets in the way, but there are layers, too.

I read, *When You Never Said Goodbye, An Adoptee's Search for Her Birth Mother*," in just two sittings, on the edge of my seat the whole time. Through poems and journal entries, we travel with Liz McLane to NYU in Greenwich Village, where she studies poetry and carries out an emotional search for her birth-mother. Lizzie's inner strength and passion make her any young adult's favorite sleuth, and this sixty-year-old's favorite also. In a pantoum, author, Meg Kearney, deftly describes Liz's inner and outer dialogue at a meeting with a social worker at The New York Foundling, where

her mother "surrendered" her. "My life, I think, is lying on that desk. / My first, secret life, hides in that brown folder. / I'm so glad you came, Sophie says. I smile, / that folder like a sleeping animal between us." There, Lizzie learns her first clue, which is a doozy. There are surprises at every corner, some wrong turns and some right. This book is a must for any adoptee, and an insightful, sometimes angst-filled, sometimes uplifting, but always honest journey for everyone else.

Really good writing helps us feel less alone: sometimes because we see ourselves in a book's pages, sometimes because those pages give us a new understanding of people different from us. *When You Never Said Goodbye* does both. Adopted readers will recognize their own ambivalence and longing as they follow Liz McLane on her search for her birth mother. Those who were not adopted will feel like they finally understand how the questions surrounding a closed adoption can permeate an individual's entire life. Through beautiful (and skillfully crafted) poetry, Kearney takes us by the hand and by the heart to walk awhile in Liz's shoes and confront the questions. Could she be my mother? How could my mother give me up? Will I be disappointed when I find out who she is? Kearney provides a satisfying yet unpredictable conclusion to the Liz McLane trilogy, one that will stay with you long after you have closed the book.

This last book of Meg Kearney's trilogy is a well-wrought story. I like how she sets the reader up with Ruth and Louise, among other subplots. After I finished, I began wondering if this book alone, would work with a Poetry I Creative Writing class, as novice writers will be able to SEE poetry gestating and coming to fruition over the course of the book through the poems Liz writes. I also wondered if this would work in an Introduction to Poetry – a Gen Ed course we have – that introduces poetry to students from across the university. Anyway, I am thinking of acting on that with some colleagues who teach this Gen Ed course. (I teach the Poetry, Creative Writing classes.) In any case, I will use the trilogy in my YAL class, for sure. The trilogy provides a thoughtful, panoramic view of the intellectual and emotional growth of a young adult. This book, along with the other two, should be used not only in high schools but in college lit. classes that teach YA literature. These books belong to the small cadre of book for YA's that actually teach young people how READ poetry and to come to terms with language.

This is the last book in a meaningful and beautifully written trilogy. I use this book with teens and adults in my private practice as a psychotherapist. Meg's words resonate with clarity and truth about adoption and also about growing into adulthood.

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