

Jack

by Saskia van der Linden

For a couple of weeks I've been exchanging messages with Jack. He's thirty-four and works as a relationship counsellor.

We've already agreed on a date when Jack posts some new pictures of himself. I have to swallow. Hard. In four days Jack's become twenty years older!

On Thursday, a boyish thirty-something was smiling at me from my PC. This Monday I find myself staring at a stern fifty-year-old's face in disbelief.

I vaguely remember a film that starred Robin Williams. In this film, Robin Williams suffered from an illness in which he aged at dubb speed. At the age of four, he had to start shaving.

At the same time, his personal development didn't keep up with the changes in his appearance. The inner Robin Williams was still at primary school, so to speak, when he turned grey.

I'd always assumed this was about a fictitious disease, but Jack's visibly suffering from it, too. Children or even grandchildren, that's not the question anymore. He'll be lucky to see his toe nails grow up!

I realise there's no time to lose. Our date's on Friday. I've worked out that Jack'll be seventy by then. And the average Dutchman doesn't get much older than seventy-four.

Suddenly, what I'll be wearing on our date doesn't seem quite so important anymore. Something black will be just right.

