

HERE'S GRANDMA!



TOMÁS
LEON

Illustrations
by POLA
HOFFMANN



© of this edition: Servicios Editoriales Azafrán, 2023
Santiago, Chile
www.editorialazafran.cl
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That's me, Diego, and the lady with the big smile and kind eyes is my Grandma Marta. My mum took the photo with her Polaroid camera about 3 years ago when she came home from work one day and caught us sneakily scoffing sweeties.



Grandma and Me

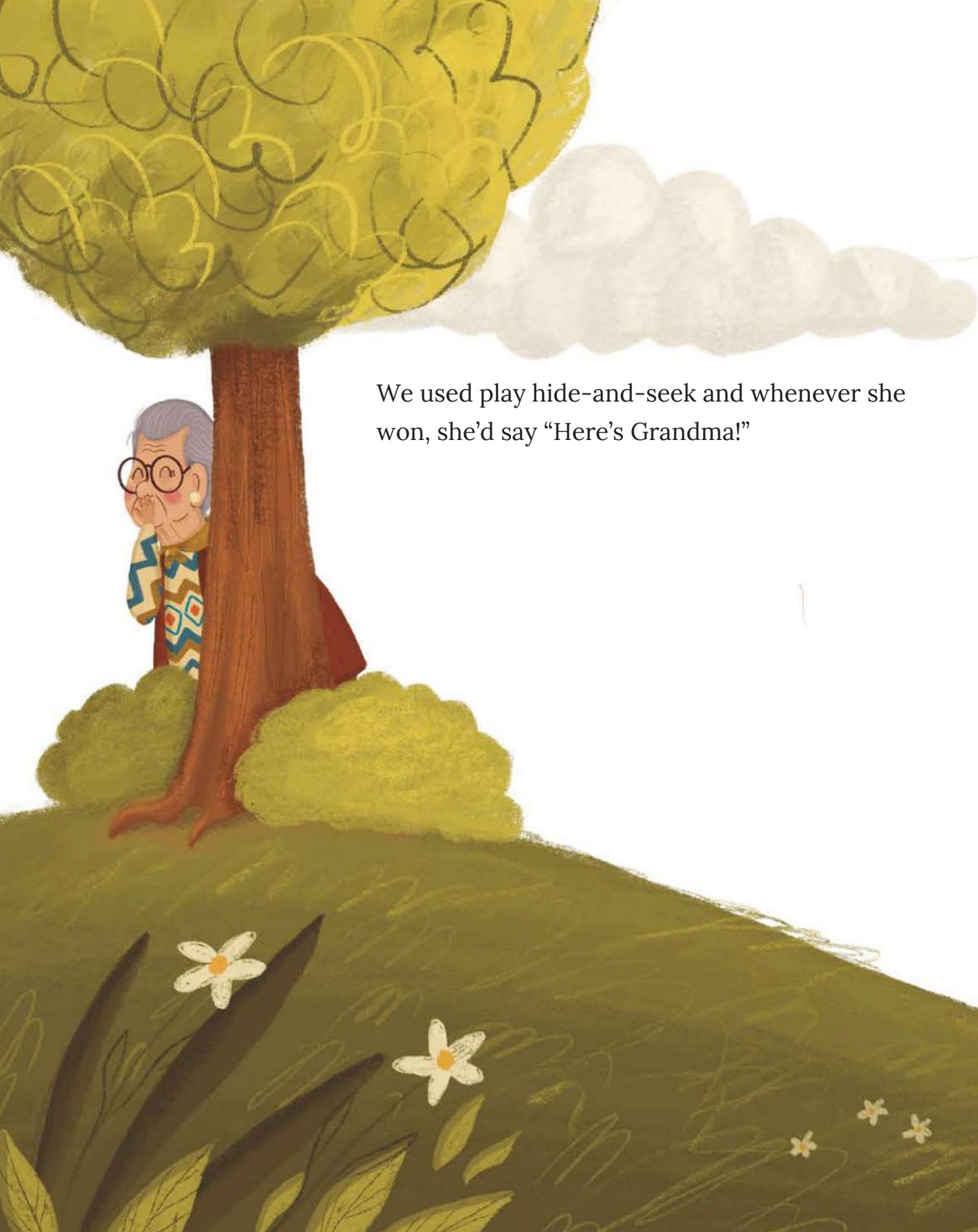
Grandma Martha is the best grandma in the whole wide world. My parents had to work all day, so I'd spend the afternoons with her when I got home from school. We used to bake and eat cakes and she would help me with my homework.

But she would always put her finger to her lips and whisper: "Don't tell mum and dad. This is our little secret."





HARINA



We used play hide-and-seek and whenever she won, she'd say "Here's Grandma!"

As time went on, we played less and less. She would get tired quite quickly and couldn't always find me. Sometimes she even stopped looking and I thought she'd got upset with me.



She didn't laugh at dad's jokes like she used to and sometimes we'd even have to explain them to her.

When she got up in the night to go to the toilet, she'd sometimes get mixed up/confused and come into my room. I'd wake up and say, "Here's Grandma!" She'd smile, put her finger on her lips, and softly close the door. It was our new secret.



My parents must have discovered our secret because one day they told me that Grandma wasn't going to live with us anymore.

"I can look after her," I told them.

"But she'd be on her own when you're at school and we're at work", my mum explained. In her new home she'll be with other grannies and grandads who get mixed up like she does and there'll always be someone there to help her when she gets lost or forgets something. You see, her illness is going to get worse as time goes on.

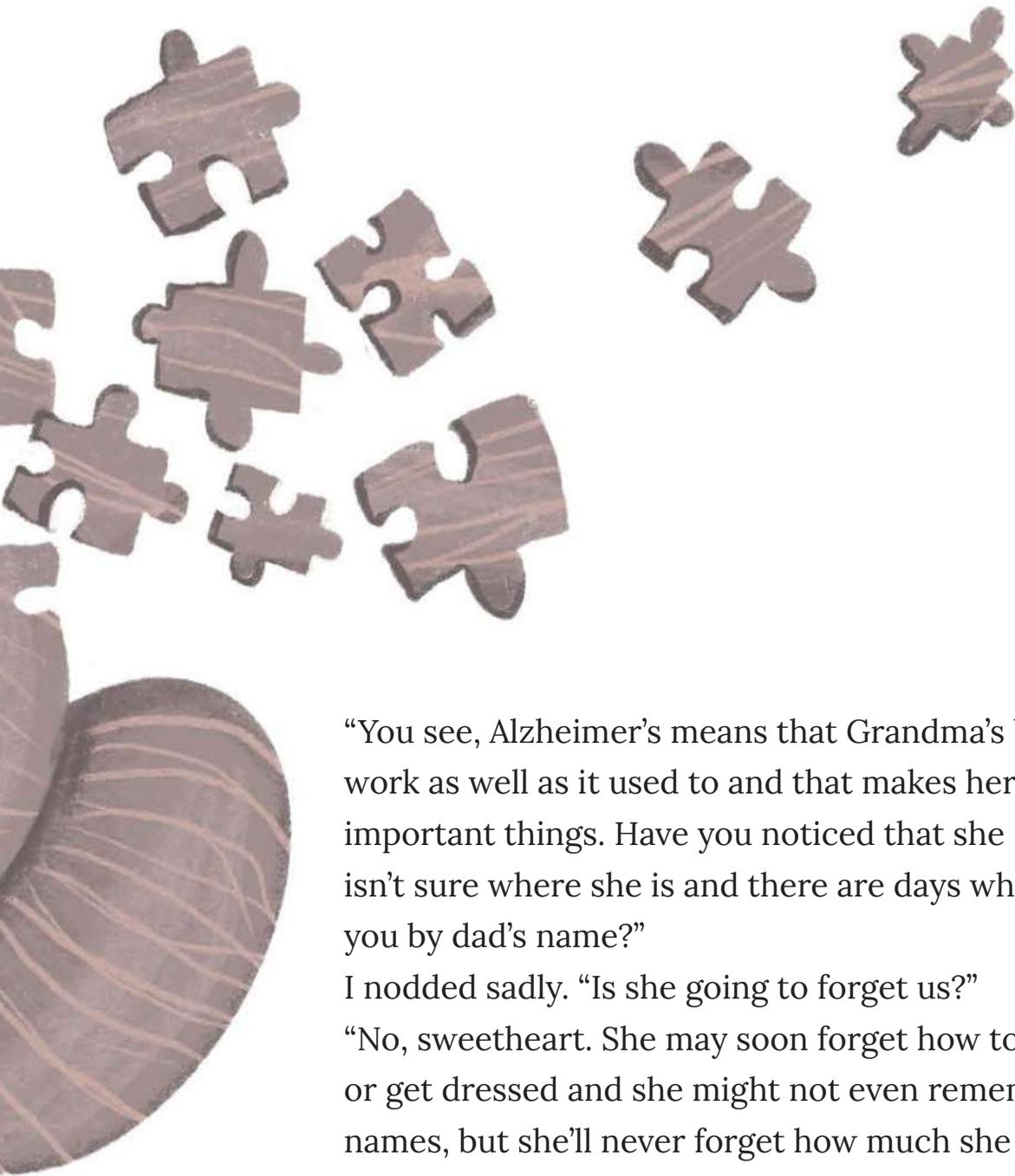


“Illness? What illness?”

“It’s called Alzheimer’s disease. Have you ever heard of it?”

“No.”





“You see, Alzheimer’s means that Grandma’s brain doesn’t work as well as it used to and that makes her forget important things. Have you noticed that she sometimes isn’t sure where she is and there are days when she calls you by dad’s name?”

I nodded sadly. “Is she going to forget us?”

“No, sweetheart. She may soon forget how to have a wash or get dressed and she might not even remember our names, but she’ll never forget how much she loves us and, even if she does, we’ll help her remember, won’t we?”

“Yes, mum. We will.”

We took Grandma to a really big house with lots of bedrooms and an enormous lounge. Mum was right! There were lots of older people having fun together! I had been feeling sad, but I was really relieved to know that my Grandma would be surrounded by so many nice, new friends.





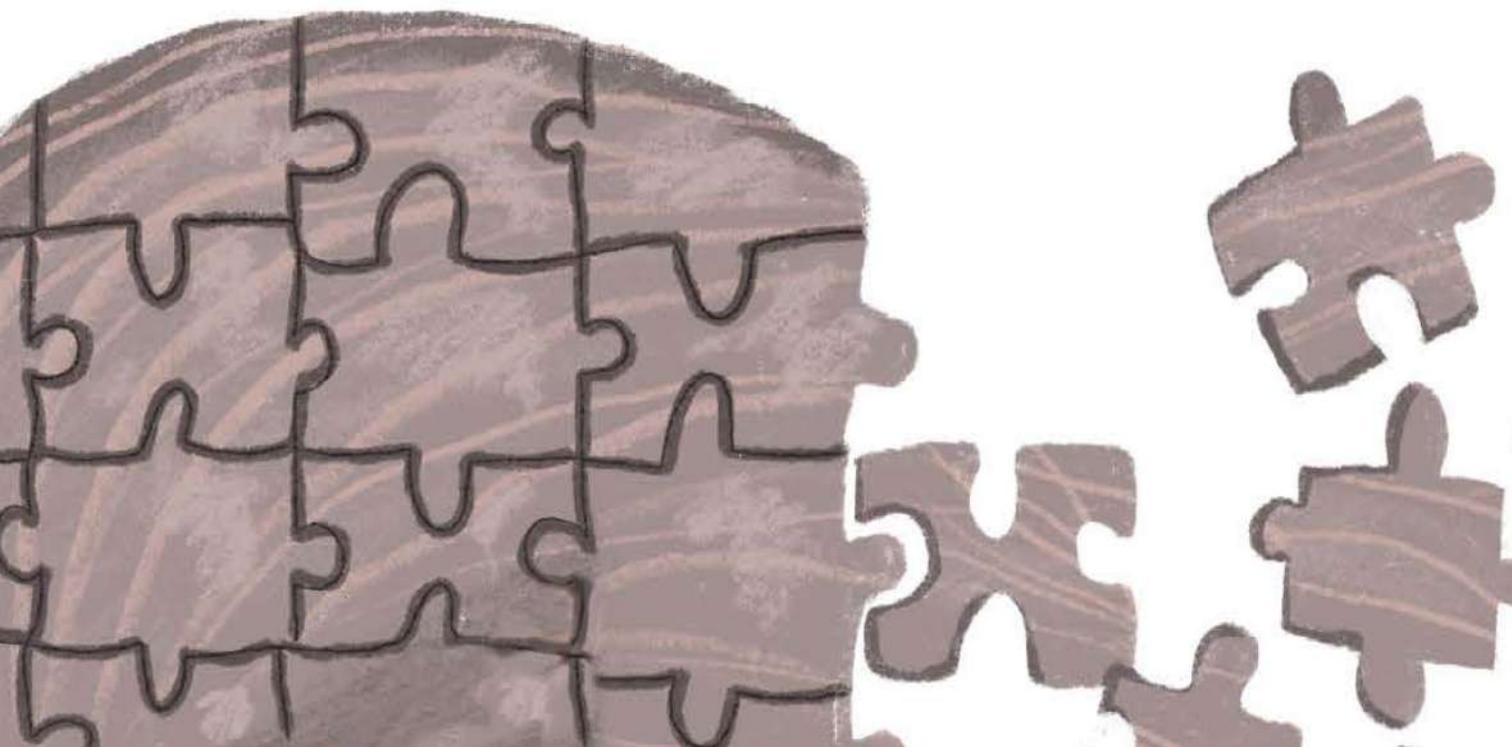


Before we left, I took a copy of my favourite photo of us out of my backpack and gave it to her. “Here’s my little Diego”, she said. I pointed to her smiling face in the photo and said: “Here’s Grandma!”

What is dementia?

Dementia is a group of illness that make things start to go wrong in the brain. People with dementia have trouble with their memory, can't always focus and struggle to plan for the future. These problems can become so bad that the person can no longer live on their own. Dementia can be caused by lots of different illnesses, but most of them are incurable and slowly get worse over time. Dementia is more common among older people, like your grandparents, but young people can also be affected.

The most important thing is to try to prevent dementia by having a healthy lifestyle, doing lots of activities with other children and exercising your brain by learning.



Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's Disease is the most common type of dementia and mostly affects older people. At the beginning, the person with Alzheimer's might forget little things, but they will gradually forget more important things, like how to get dressed. They might experience changes in their behaviour, have problems sleeping and be bothered by strange ideas. They might even see and hear things that aren't really there. They'll need more and more help as time goes by with things like going to the toilet.

Even though people with Alzheimer's might forget things or even people, they never forget how much they love the special people in their lives.







My name's Diego and I love spending time with my Grandma. She takes care of me after school, we cook yummy things, play hide-and-seek, and do my homework together. But recently, Grandma has been getting more and more tired and forgetful. I'm not sure what's happening to her. Will you help me find out?

Here's Grandma! is part of a collection of books about dementia aimed at children whose own grandparents are living with the disease. This is the first book in the series and is about Alzheimer's disease.