

# MY GRANDPA IS A STATUE

TOMÁS  
LEON

Illustrations  
by POLA  
HOFFMANN







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@editorialazafran

Author: Tomás León

Illustrations: Pola Hoffmann

Proofreader: Eduardo Guerrero

Translators: Final-year Modern Languages students  
at the University of Surrey, UK

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Sundays were always reserved for football. And we always supported the “Spanish Union” team.

“You have to shout for our mother country, in the stadium or at home, with or without a crowd” my grandpa always said. And it didn’t matter what day it was; we never missed a game from the national team.





We shouted at all the goal attempts and our house felt alive with excitement. “We are passionate people,” Grandpa Kike told me. And, instead of bedtime stories, Grandpa and I would talk excitedly about all the football plays before I fell asleep at night.



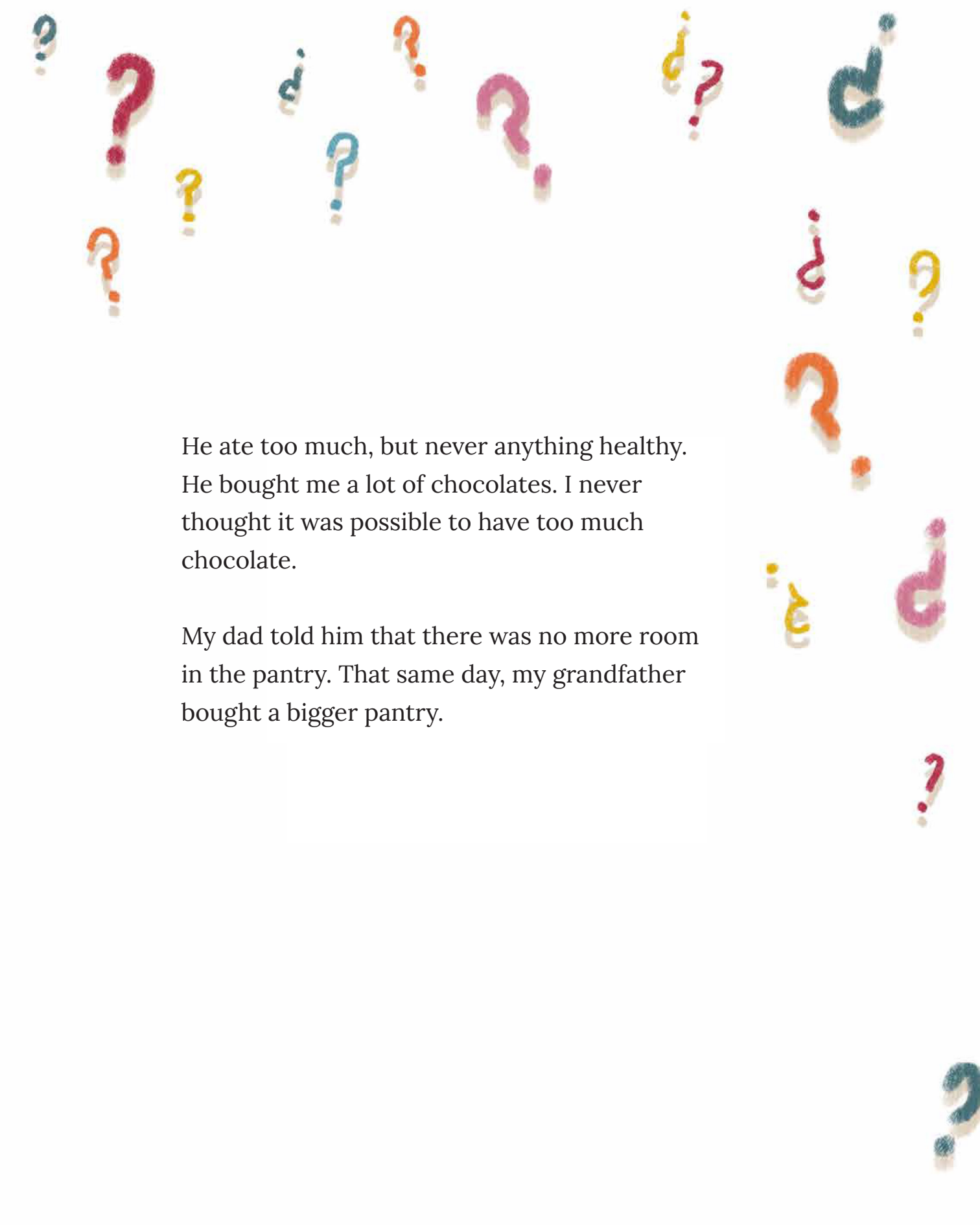
But as time went on those football Sundays and Grandpa Kike changed. Sometimes, he would act strangely. On some days he would be full of energy laughing and jumping around the house. And, on other days, he would get angry very quickly. He snapped back at Mom making her cry, and sometimes even got aggressive.





I did not understand what was happening. His change in personality scared me. I didn't like bad Grandpa.





He ate too much, but never anything healthy.  
He bought me a lot of chocolates. I never  
thought it was possible to have too much  
chocolate.

My dad told him that there was no more room  
in the pantry. That same day, my grandfather  
bought a bigger pantry.

Then, one day, suddenly, he seemed to switch off, just like my robot, when the batteries were dead. I thought, “Grandpa has turned into a statue!!”



He ate very little, spoke strangely, and did not even want to bathe. Nothing made him happy anymore, not even when the Spanish Union won.

My dad tried to get him to visit the football stadium to see a game, but he didn't even want to move from his chair.

I tried to cheer him up by telling him some very funny jokes that I had learned at school, but he barely laughed; it seemed that he did not understand them.

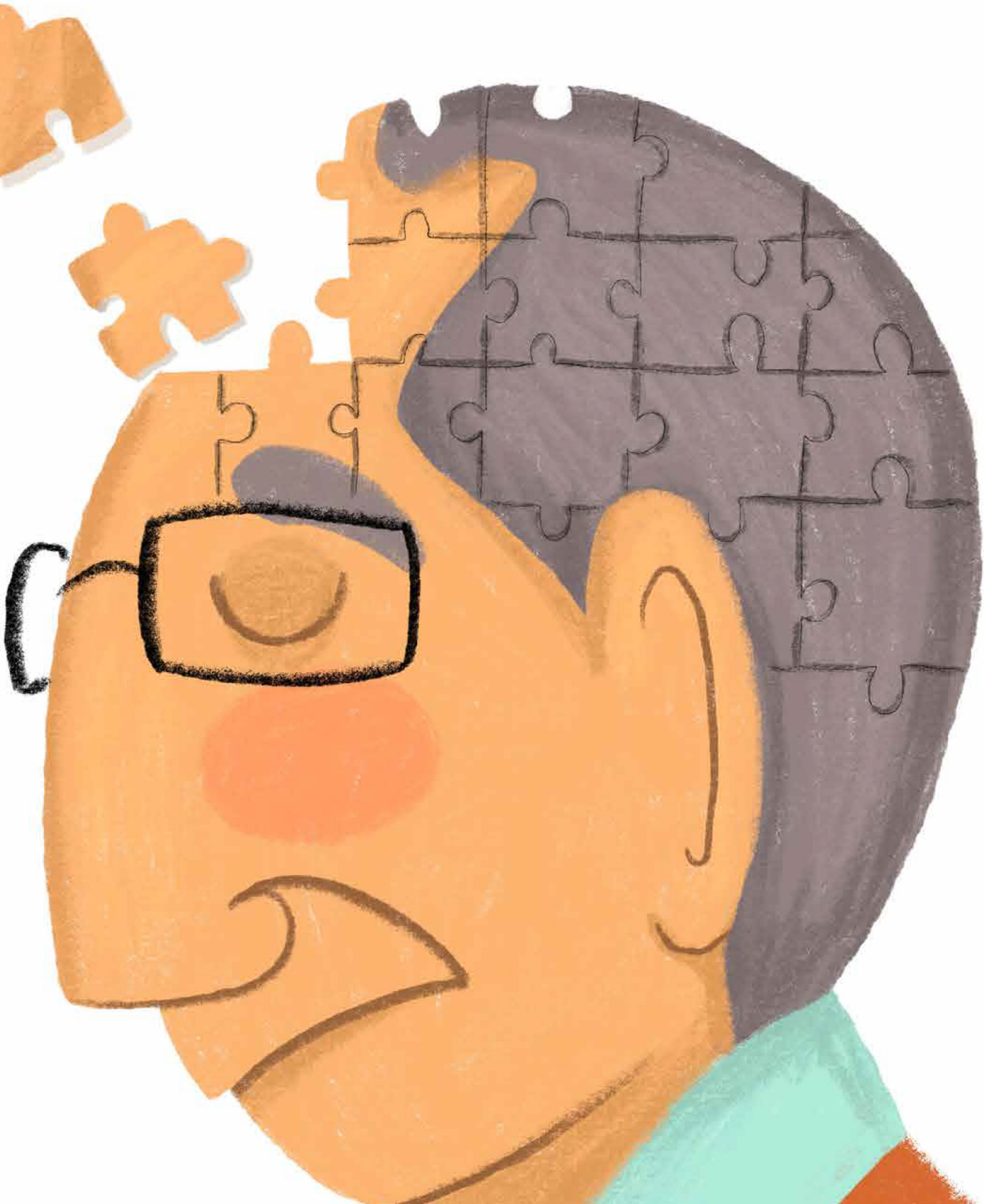




Grandpa Kike always told me that he felt fine, but when I jumped up to tickle him, he didn't respond.

I overheard Mom say to Dad that he seemed depressed. "He doesn't care about anything." My dad took him to the doctor, and the doctor told him that Grandpa's brain wasn't working properly, he mentioned something about dementia. "What's that?" I asked, concerned.

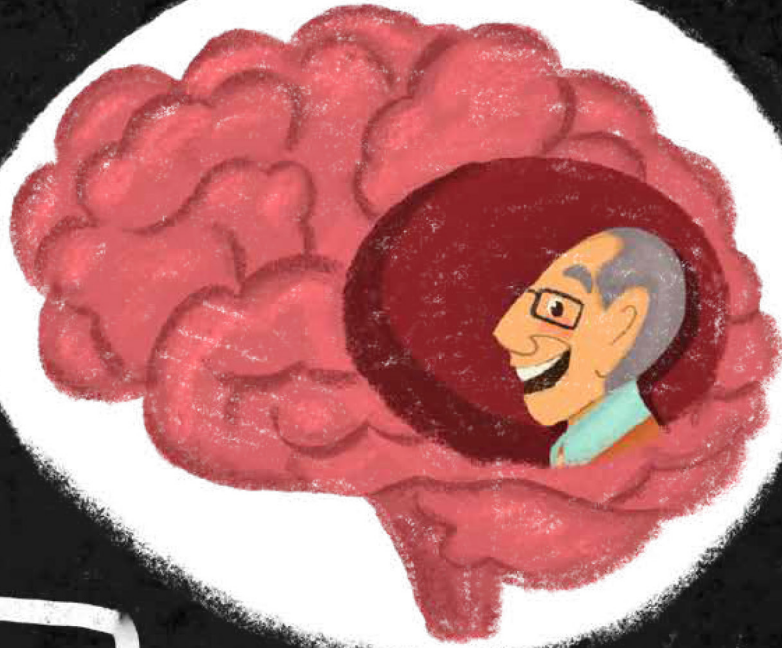
Dad thought for a minute, "The truth is that I don't know very well either, but the doctor told me that some parts of Grandpa's brain have gotten smaller, and some bad things have built up in his brain, they are damaging his brain and making him behave in a strange way."



I begged them to give him a pill for his brain, like the one he took for his blood pressure, but they said that pills like this don't exist yet, it's harder to fix the brain but lots of clever people are trying.







My parents explained to me that the old Grandpa Kike is still inside, but that part is very small, hidden inside his mind and that it is difficult for him to come out and play with me.

Now when the football game is on TV, I turn the volume up very high so he can hear the goal attempts. My parents sometimes get angry with me for doing this, but I know my Grandpa Kike is still inside and he would celebrate with me if he could.





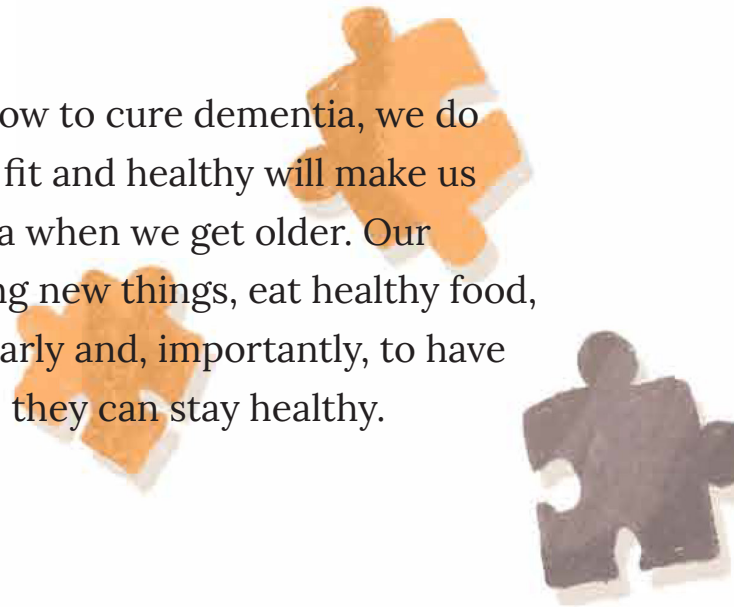
## What are dementias?

Dementias are a group of diseases which change the way the brain works.

People with dementia might be forgetful, they might find it hard to pay attention, they could see things which aren't there or find it hard to do every-day jobs around the house. These problems may get so bad that the person won't be able to live alone anymore.

We don't know how to cure these diseases yet, but scientists are working hard to find out how to do this. We are also learning how to support people living with dementia to stay connected and active in their communities, neighborhoods, and families. Dementia is most common in older people, like your grandparents, but it can also happen to young people too.

Even though we don't know how to cure dementia, we do know that keeping our brains fit and healthy will make us less likely to develop dementia when we get older. Our brains need us to keep learning new things, eat healthy food, get good sleep, exercise regularly and, importantly, to have fun with friends and family so they can stay healthy.



## Frontotemporal dementia

This disease happens in younger people, usually between 40 and 60 years. These people often have unusual changes in their personalities, sometimes becoming angrier or losing their “filter”, and saying hurtful or strange things they they would never normally have said. Sometimes they also become very quiet and no-longer want to do the things they used to enjoy. Doctors call this “apathy”. At other times they might speak strangely, forgetting words or not understanding what is said to them.

You have to be very patient with them because even if they do strange things or are rude when they speak, they don't mean to do this, it's just a problem with their brain.







My grandpa Kike was a very passionate man, a huge soccer fan, and a great grandfather. However, one day he started to change. Sometimes, he would do very strange things and even become violent. Then, he would simply shut down, as if his battery had run out. My parents say he has a brain problem, but I'm not sure what's wrong with him. Can you help me figure it out?

My grandpa is a statue that is part of a book collection that deals with dementia and seeks to accompany children whose grandparents suffer from this disease. This is the second volume and it is about Frontotemporal Dementia.

