

A SURPRISE TRIP



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This book was written thanks to the sponsorship of GSK



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For all the people who have to face an unexpected path, a path with shadows and lights.

In this new story, we invite you to meet Dani, Marcos and their family. Together you will be able to share their story and learn about their fears, frustrations and anxieties, but where there is also room for joy, dreams and hopeful anticipation.

Life itself is a surprise journey, with its ups and downs, but always with a path to hope.

Ready?

The number of cancers diagnosed in Spain in 2022 is estimated to reach 280,100 cases and by 2040, the incidence will rise to 341,000 cases (1). The most frequently diagnosed cancers in women in Spain in 2022 will be breast, colon and rectal and gynaecological cancers (1). In Spain, gynaecological cancer is the third most common cancer among women (1,2). Among gynaecological tumours, endometrial cancer is the most frequent, followed by ovarian cancer and cervical cancer (1).

Beyond the data, we should know that a diagnosis of cancer does not have to be synonymous with death. In our society, an increasing proportion of cancer cases are being cured and in a significant number of cases, their symptoms can be adequately controlled. Research is increasingly being focused on this field, always seeking the cure for different types of cancer or aiming to improve the quality-of-life of people suffering from it (3).

Patient Relations Area of GSK Spain

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“Look, Dan, a competition!” exclaimed Marcus. “Shall we enter it?”

“Why would we enter it? Come on, be serious!” I answered my brother, trying to make him forget the idea.

“Why not? Look, read this!” he insisted as he read the school notice out loud.

“Can’t you see, Dan? It’s as if they had organised it just for us. We have a story to share! You write so well too! We’ve already finished our exams, it’s Christmas next week, you’ve got more than enough time. It’s the perfect moment!”

**1st CHILDREN’S STORY WRITING
COMPETITION**

**Write your story about
A SURPRISE TRIP**

If you have an unforgettable story to tell, this competition is for you.

Aimed at 3rd and 4th year secondary school pupils

SEND TO:
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SUBMISSION DEADLINE: 4 weeks
PRIZE: The winning story will be illustrated by one of the best cartoonists in the city and it will be published on social networks.

I read it again: "...and it will be published on social networks". I focused on this phrase. I started to imagine what it would be like if, by some slim chance, our story was to win the competition and be read all over the world. This was the reason that spurred me on to take part.

"Alright, alright, don't be a pain, you've convinced me! But... are you thinking about the same thing as me?" I said pensively.

"Yes, of course I am! Mum's journey!"

"Right, but it's not really a trip."

"It depends how you look at it, Dan. Every trip has a beginning and an end, doesn't it? Well, mum's journey began four years ago and, if everything goes well, it will soon end."

"You're right, Marcus! It's a different kind of trip..."



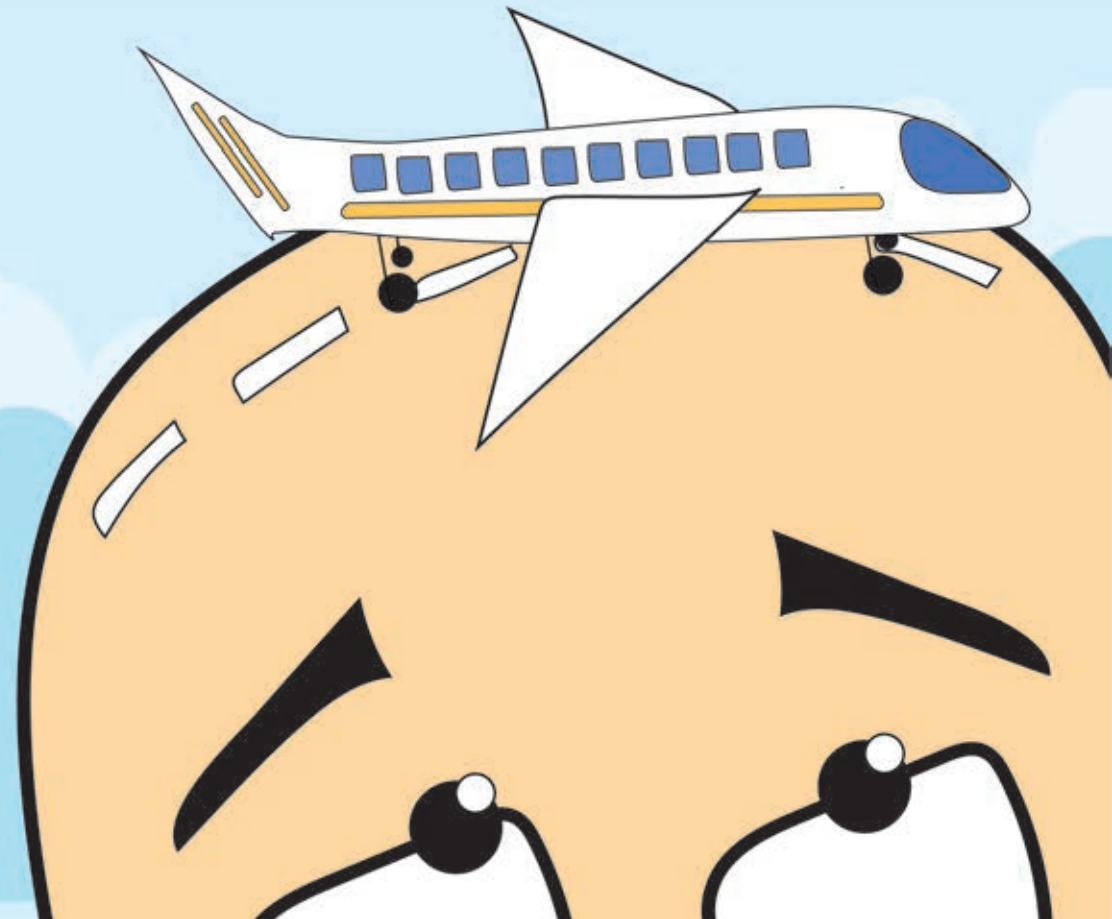
That was how my twin brother convinced me to enter the competition. If it wasn't for the fact that we are physically identical, no one would say that we were brothers. We are so alike and so different at the same time... He is more daring and driven than me. What's more, he has the gift of the gab, I don't know how he does it, but he's one of those people that everyone likes. The thing I like most about him is that he always tries to see the positive side. In other words, Marcus is the life and soul of the house. I suppose that that's the reason why, when mum started out on her journey, I started to write in a sort of diary that we had both been given for our birthdays, and since Marcus was always looking for an excuse not to write in his, he gave it to me. Another thing! We have a little dog that is called Nell. Uncle David gave her to us when we turned seven. Uncle David is mum's brother, and apart from being our Godfather, he's my favourite uncle. He helped me a lot with what was going on with mum. Marcus, on the other hand, distracted himself with Nell.





Uncle David lives near us. He's single. He loves children, which is why he's such a good teacher. He's also really into planes, he's always reading about different kinds of planes. Sometimes, when we were little, he would take us to the airport so that we could see them take off and land. He would tell us all he knew in great detail: where one model had been made, how long it had taken to make another, how many passengers they could carry... In the end, he told us so much that he managed to pass on his passion to us. Do you know what the funniest thing about him is? Well, Uncle David is bald, so bald that even his head looks like a runway! I've never seen a single hair on his big head. He is definitely the baldest bald person out of all of the bald people in the world. Don't be thinking that he has no hair, it's not that. The thing is that he likes to shave his head. He's always said that it brings him luck.

He told us that if we touched his bald head, it would also bring us luck. So, ever since we were really little, my brother and I stroked his head, whenever we wanted to pass an exam, for example. It always worked for me, but less so for my brother, because he sometimes failed. My brother thought it was because he hadn't stroked Uncle David's head properly.



I remember the day that I asked him why he shaved his head like that. I would have been around nine years old. He lifted me up and sat me on his lap, just as he always did when he was going to tell me something important, and he said,

“Dan, you know that I have always told you that bald heads are lucky, don’t you? Well, that’s not the reason why I shave my head.”

“What? I don’t understand.”

“Let me see if I can explain it to you, buddy,” he said as he looked for the best words to use. “You know my friend Joe, don’t you?”

“Yes, the one with the long hair?”

“Yes, that’s him. Well, he has that long hair that you are talking about now, but there was a time when he was bald, and he suffered an awful lot.”

“Did he have cancer, Uncle?”

“Goodness, Dan, here’s me thinking about how to explain it to you and you simply come straight out with it.”

“Only because my friends and I were talking about cancer yesterday at break time. Isabelle told us that her grandad has post..., post-date cancer or something like that.”

My uncle laughed, “Prostate cancer, Dan, prostate,” he corrected me.

“Oh, that was it! I think that because she started to tell us that the medicine he was going to take would make his hair fall out, I didn’t listen to the name properly.”



“Of course you didn’t! That’s exactly what happened to my friend Joe, although he didn’t have prostate cancer, he had lung cancer. The medicine that you were talking about, which is called chemotherapy, is so strong that it makes your hair fall out. Afterwards, when the treatment is finished, it takes a while for it to grow back, but when it does, it is stronger than before. That’s why Joe is so proud of his long hair now.”

“Yes, but what has this got to do with the fact that you’re bald?”

“Well, you see, the thing is that in the same way that you tell me things, my friend was having such a bad time, especially in the beginning, that he confided in me and told me how he was feeling. I think the worst day for him was when he decided to go to the hairdresser’s and have his hair shaven off. “I don’t want to watch it fall out bit by bit, David. Tomorrow I’ll get it shaven off,” he said to me.

That was when I, trying to play down the importance of the moment, said to him, “Tomorrow? Why not now? I can shave off your hair; I’ve got my clippers here. I’ll get them.”



Joe looked at me in surprise. I didn't even give him time to respond because I went to the bathroom immediately and returned with the hair clippers straight away. "I told you! Here they are! I'm ready, how about you?" I asked him. He froze and remained silent, not saying a word. I didn't know what to make of his fixed gaze. Then he surprised me with an emphatic and cheerful response, "I'm ready, David! But be careful! Don't make a mess of it!"

And that was how I shaved my friend Joe's head. When I had finished, he looked in the mirror and when he saw himself he was unable to hide his sadness. That was when, without even thinking, I picked up the clippers again and as I passed them to him I said, "Here, now it's my turn. I'm ready too!" "But what are you talking about, are you crazy?" he replied seeming a little angry. "Come on, I want you to shave my head," I repeated. And my friend Joe shaved my hair off, Dan, and ever since then I've been bald just like you always say. Don't be thinking that I had given it much thought. It just happened like that, in the moment. It was a way of supporting him at a time that was so hard for him."



Do you see? When I say that my Uncle David is cool, I mean that he is really cool. When we were little, he nearly always took us to school because he works there. That way, Mum could go to work earlier. Uncle David and Mum were born in a small village, Monfuentes. Our house there is in the village square, and Uncle's house is in the street behind ours, just next to the park. Every child should have a village. Marcus and I love going there. Being in the village is like being in another world. It's close to the city and yet far from the noise and the clock-watching. We mainly go to the village in spring and summer, but sometimes when it snows we also head there for the odd weekend. In the village, Mum and Dad let us go out on our bikes by ourselves. They always tell us that the village is not as dangerous as the city. One of my favourite moments is when, at the end of the summer, all four of us head out on our bikes and pick those enormous blackberries which, according to Mum, can only be found in the village. I think she's exaggerating, to be honest, and so does Dad. When the summer comes to an end and we get in the car to go home, we are so sad and down and my brother always asks Dad the same question:



“Dad, can we come back next weekend?”

“Woof, woof!” Nell often barks, as if she also wants to return.

And before Marcus finishes asking his usual question, Dad always answers him in the same way.

“We’ll see, son, maybe we can, maybe we can’t! Who knows what will happen next weekend! Let life surprise you, Marcus. We have to live day by day.”

That’s one of Dad’s favourite phrases, “We have to live day by day.” Maybe if I hear it often enough, one day I’ll learn, won’t I? Dad was right, life can certainly surprise us. In no time at all, we had two surprises one after the other: a good one and a bad one.

WE HAVE TO LIVE DAY BY DAY

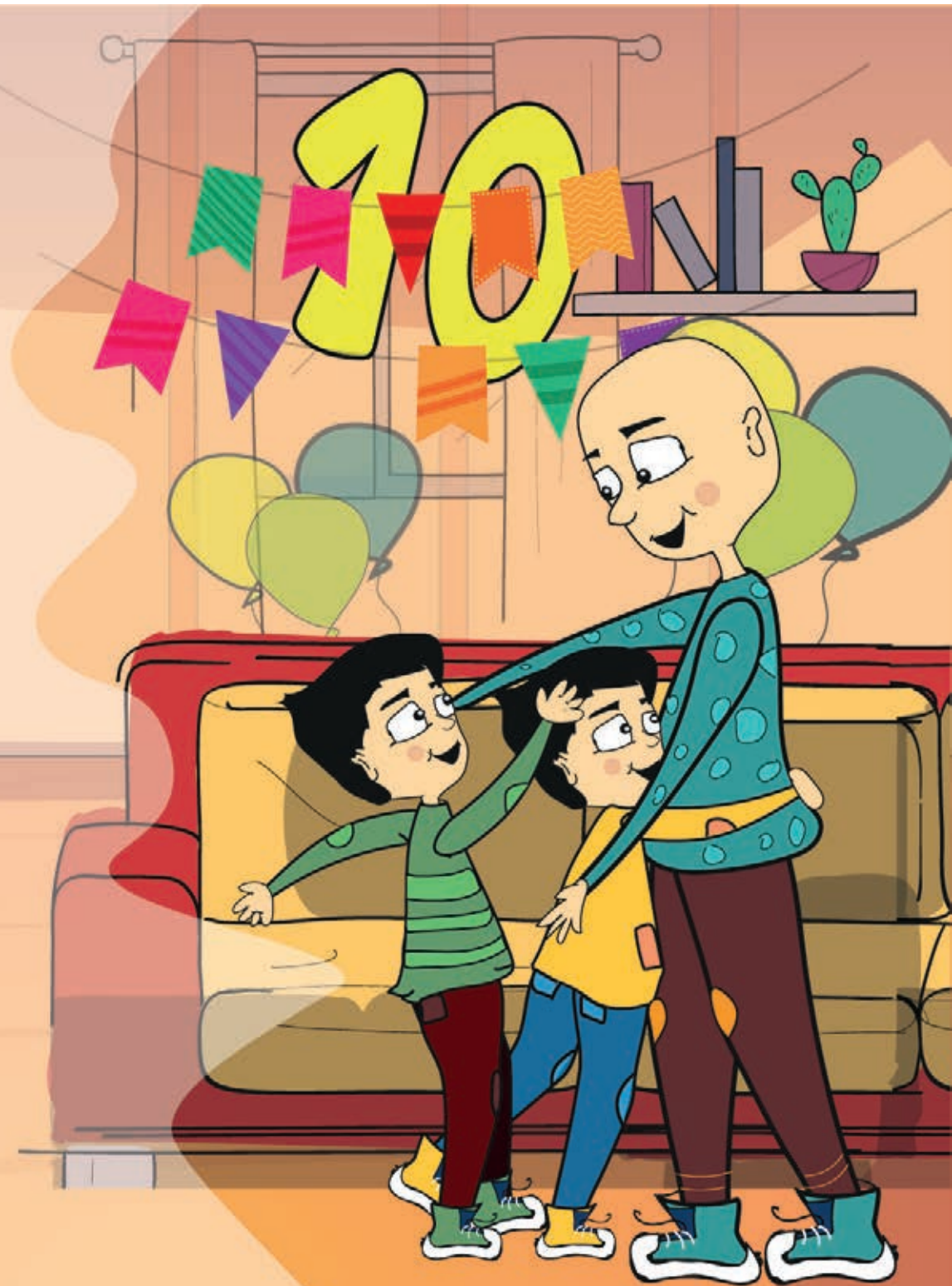


The good one appeared on our tenth birthday. Uncle David was usually one of the first people to wish us a happy birthday, but that day, since Mum and Dad took us to school, we didn't see him. He didn't ring us either, which was strange. I think that Mum and Dad knew what was going on because they didn't even mention it. That afternoon, we had a party at home. Our friends were there and so was Mum's best friend, Maggie. When our friends had left, Mum sent a message to Uncle David to tell him to come over. That's what he told me afterwards, because I had no idea at the time. When the doorbell rang, Marcus and I ran to open it.

"Uncle! At last! I thought that you had forgotten our birthday!" exclaimed Marcus.

We jumped on top of him and gave him a big kiss. He wished us a happy birthday and joked that he and Dad would give us the bumps later.

"As if I would have forgotten, that's impossible! I remember your birthday before my own!"



Uncle David said hello to Mum, Dad and Maggie, who he also knew, and he asked us whether we had saved him a piece of cake.

“Of course, Uncle, this huge piece is for you!” I told him.

Marcus came towards me and whispered in my ear that it was very strange that Uncle David hadn't brought us a present. Mum saw us and told us off,

“Boys, don't whisper, it's rude! What were you saying?”

“Nothing, Mum, sorry!” exclaimed Marcus.

“Leave them alone, they're not up to anything!” said Uncle David in our defence.

Mum insisted that he ate something other than cake, but he didn't want to. As soon as he had finished his cake, he got up and went to the coat rack, taking two envelopes out of his bag.

“It's time to give my boys their present! This is for you!”

“An envelope?” asked Marcus impatiently.

“An envelope and... what is inside the envelope.”



Marcus and I opened the envelopes carefully.
Each one contained two small pieces of card...

“What an unusual present, Uncle!”

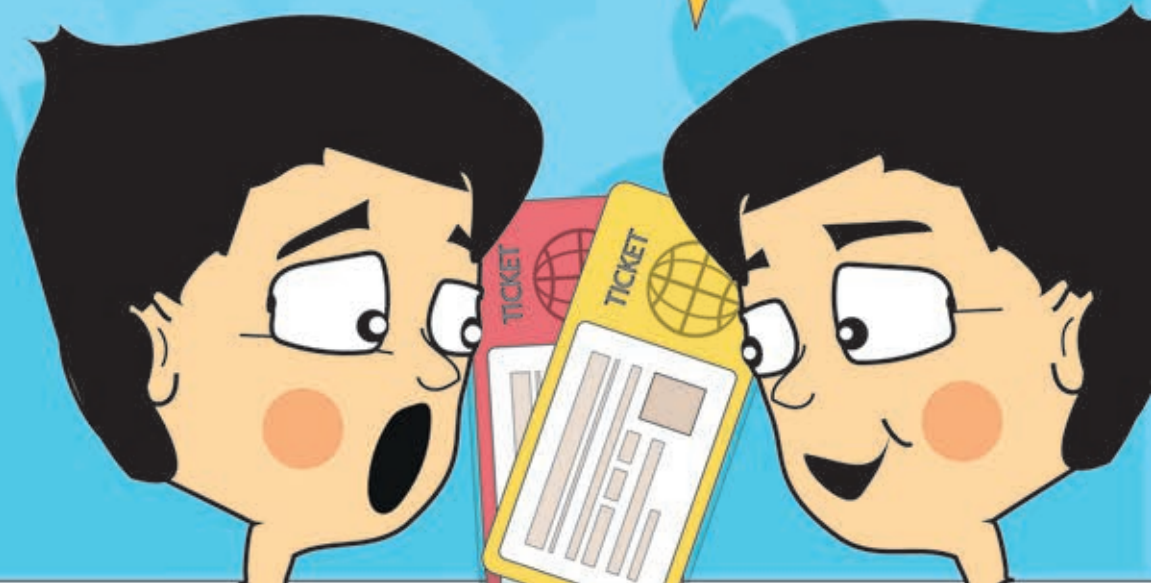
“You have to read what they say!”

We started to read them and... we couldn't believe it!

“Mum, Dad, they're plane tickets!”

“Thank you, Uncle, you're the best!” I said, over the moon.

Mum and Dad were just as surprised as we were. They hadn't known anything about it. The trip was just three weeks away. That was when Mum took the tickets and showed them to Dad, pointing at the date.



“Is there a problem?” asked Uncle.

“It’s nothing, I was just looking at the date, and I thought it was the same day as a doctor’s appointment, but I was wrong. What a great gift!”

“A doctor’s appointment? Is there something wrong?” he asked her, looking worried.

I noticed how Mum looked at Dad, and how Dad nodded. Then Mum answered, “I’ve got a little lump in my breast, I’m sure it’s nothing, but my doctor has referred me to a specialist just to be sure.”

“I’ve got an appointment next week. So before long we’ll all have peace of mind!” said Dad. “Boys, don’t you have homework for tomorrow? Say goodbye to Maggie and to Uncle David and go and do your homework, come on.”

“Yes, Dad.”

We went off to our bedrooms feeling extremely happy. We were going to travel in a plane for the first time! My brother and I were so excited that we almost forgot about what Mum had told us. That day was the first time that we had heard her say that she had found a lump and although we both knew that there were good lumps and bad lumps, my naïve brother tried to convince me that Mum’s lump would definitely be of the good kind because he was sure that Uncle David’s bald head, our lucky charm, would always protect us.



The next day, at school, we told our friends about the trip. My friend Paul told me that it wasn't such a big deal, that he had already travelled by plane twice, and that I was making something out of nothing. It reminded me of what always happened with Mum and the blackberries in the village. Marcus's best friend, Valerie, told him that travelling by boat was much more exciting than flying. It felt like they weren't happy for us.

When we got home, we told Mum what had happened and she soon reassured us,

"Don't worry, boys, it's to be expected! They have already been in a plane, but they aren't lucky enough to have an uncle like Uncle David who tells them everything that he knows about planes."

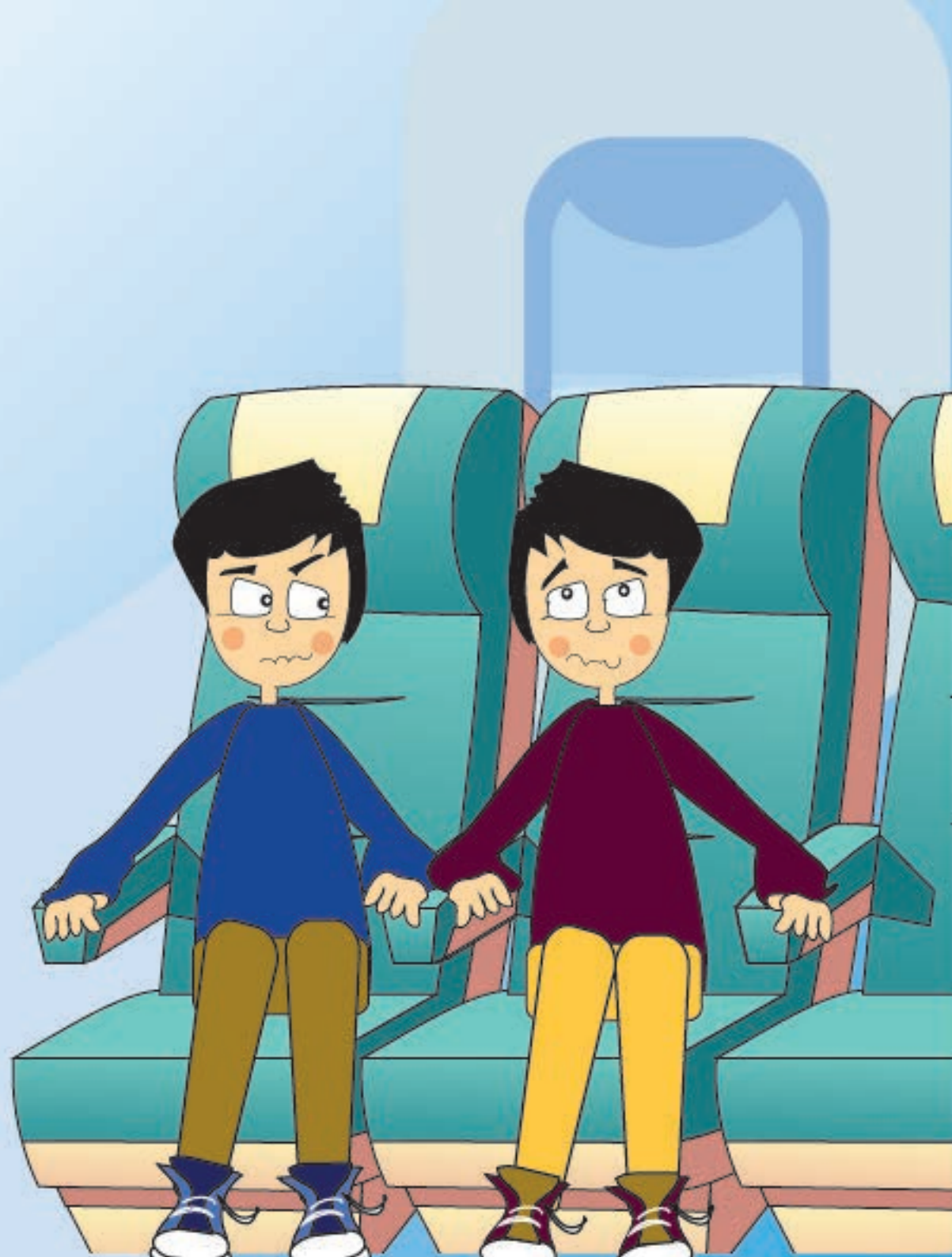
"You're right, Mum!" I replied.

"Dad and I are also very excited about the trip. It's going to be fantastic, you'll see!"

"What will happen if we feel sick on the plane, Mum?" I asked her anxiously.

"Knowing how much you like going zip-lining, I doubt that you're going to feel sick!"

"You're the best mum in the world!" my brother exclaimed.



It's true that she is the best. When Dad comes home, sometimes he's angry about work, he tells Mum about what has happened and she soon manages to calm him down. When something happens to my brother or me, we don't even have to say anything because she already knows. It's as if she wears glasses that can see inside us, I think she has a superpower.

Mum has always enjoyed taking care of herself. She tries to do some sport two or three times a week. A few years ago, she decided to take up running. When she was able to run five kilometres, she convinced her best friend to go out running with her. Now, they can both run twelve kilometres! That's my mum for you! I tell her that she is the queen of doing things step by step. Her favourite phrase is that, "everything happens for a reason and the most important things in life are always achieved step by step."

Mum hasn't mentioned her lump to us since our birthday. She hasn't been running either, which is very strange.

"Mum! Aren't you going running with Maggie this evening?"

"No, Dan, I'm not. I don't feel very good, I'm a little tired. It'll be because of work. Let's see if I feel better next week, I'm sure I'll be fine."



Mum tried to hide it, but she wasn't very good at doing that. I knew that, if Mum wasn't doing sport, it was because she was actually ill. I told Marcus who was a bit worried about her.

“What if the lump means that Mum is ill, Marcus?”

“No, Dan, don't even think about it, she'll be fine, you'll see! She's so tired simply because she never stops. It's three days until she sees the doctor, isn't it?”

“Yes, on Friday morning.”

For those three days, the only topic of conversation at home was the trip: the weather we were going to have, the clothes we were going to pack, the places that we were going to visit and, best of all, Dad didn't stop showing us the photos of the theme park that we were going to go to that he found on the internet. It was going to be amazing! That week went on and on, it felt like time had stood still... until finally the day arrived when Mum came home from her appointment with the specialist, the oncologist, and then she gave us the second surprise, the bad one...



I can remember it as if it were yesterday. That Friday, my brother and I didn't walk home as happily as we usually did. We were nervous, obviously. Just as we were about to reach the door to our apartment block, Uncle David received a message from Mum telling him to come upstairs with us. Dad had already opened the door and was waiting for us.

"How are my boys? How was school? Hi, David!"

"Hi, Dad! Where's Mum? What did the doctor say?" my brother asked him, barely taking a breath between each question.

"Come on in! We're going to tell you everything, we need to talk."

I don't like those four words at all. When someone says 'we need to talk', it means that what they are going to say is bad, doesn't it? It happens in films too. We went straight into the living room without saying a word. Mum was sat in her usual place. We gave her a kiss and my brother and I sat on either side of her. Dad sat on the sofa opposite, and Uncle sat on the other one. Then Mum started to tell us just what we hoped not to hear,



“Well, you all know that I haven’t felt like myself in recent weeks. I wanted to believe that it was simply accumulated tiredness, but that’s not the case. The oncologist has confirmed that the little lump I have in my breast is a malignant tumour, so the treatment needs to start now.”

“However, at least,” my dad went on, “we’ve caught it early, and that’s good news.”

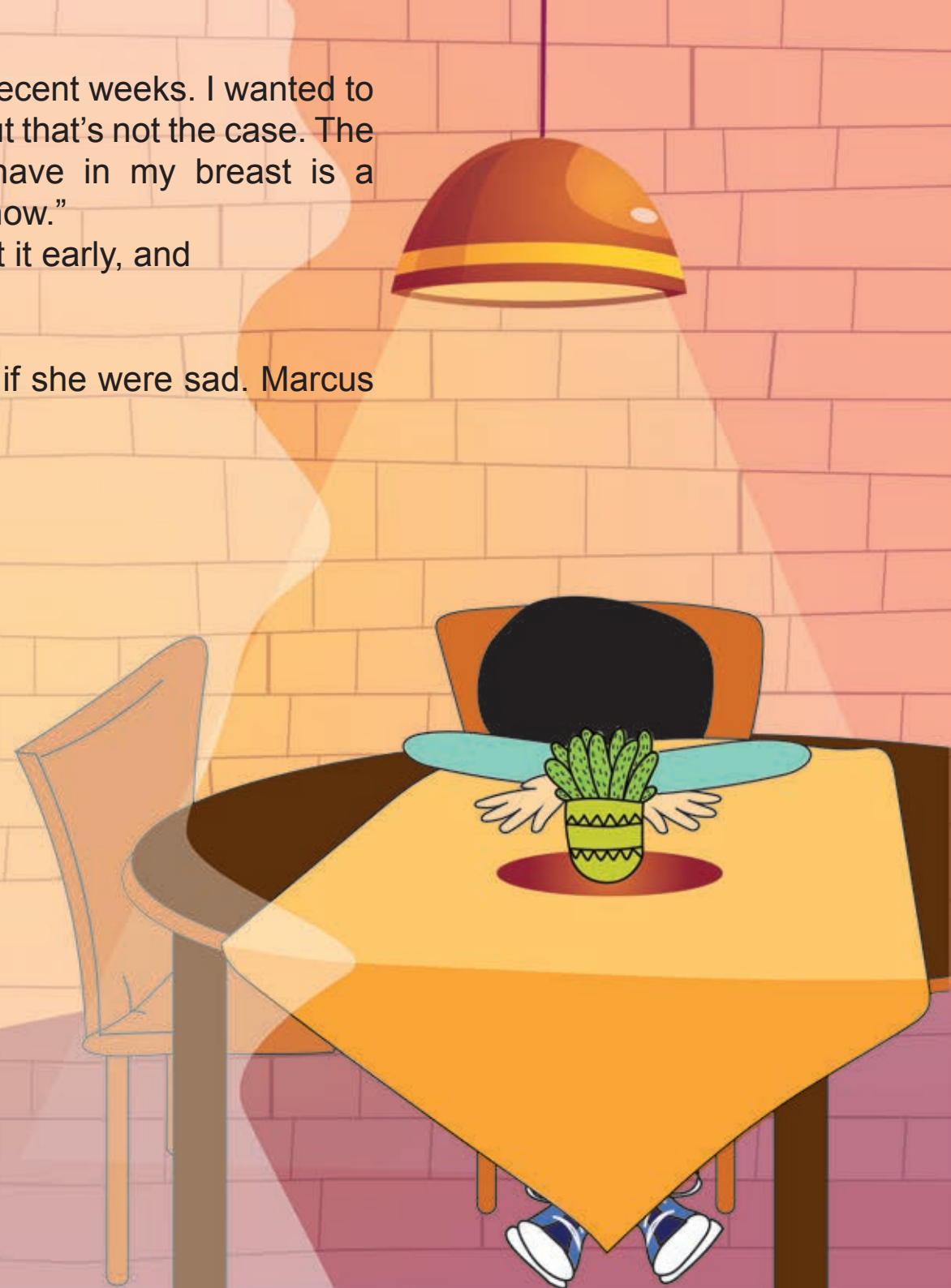
Nell, who was lying at Dad’s feet, whined a bit, as if she were sad. Marcus was angry about what Dad had said.

“That’s not good news! Having cancer is not good news!” he exclaimed.

“He’s right, the fact that Mum has cancer is not good news, Dad!” I said, holding back tears.

“Of course it isn’t! I mean that it is very important that it was detected in time,” Dad explained.

“It’s true, boys. Calm down,” Mum added, defending Dad. “You both know that cancer is one of the most common diseases and, although there are many kinds of cancer, science has now reached the point where many types can be cured. What Dad means is that if that lump hadn’t appeared, it’s possible that the cancer wouldn’t have been detected until it was more advanced. It really is good news, can’t you see?”



Once again, Mum almost managed to convince us although my brother and I were still a little bewildered, and didn't know what to say. That was when Mum continued, "Dad and I wanted you to know from the very first moment because our life is going to change a bit. I'm sorry, boys, what breaks my heart is that we are going to have to postpone our trip. David, do you think you'll be able to change the flights?"

"I'm sure I can, I'll pop into the agency tomorrow and see what they say."

"Don't worry about the trip, Mum, we'll go when you are better, right, Marcus?"

"Of course! Now it's time for another journey: a surprise trip, Mum. We're coming with you. We'll go on this journey together too!" exclaimed my brother.

"I know, son, you two are the best! Although, I'm afraid that there will be a few bumps in the road..."

I'm so proud of my brother, what beautiful words! Mum got a bit upset and shed a few tears. We hugged her tightly and Nell came closer so that we could stroke her.



“Woof, woof, woof!” she barked, wagging her tail.

“Right, enough sentimentality. Can you take Nell out for a walk, boys?” said Mum, drying her tears. “She’s not been out since this morning. We’ll talk more about this at the weekend, alright?”

Uncle David stayed with Mum for a while longer whilst Dad, Marcus and I took Nell for a walk.

“David, I start chemo next week. I would like you to help me to cut my hair when you have a minute. I would rather that you shaved it off before it falls out. I thought I might buy myself a wig. This weekend, we’ll tell the boys what the oncologist told us, and what the treatment involves... I didn’t want to overwhelm them on the first day. You know, I think it’s better just to accept it...”

“Step by step, you’re right of course. The boys are big and responsible now. They’ll be fine, you’ll see.”

“Yes, I hope so. That said, it’s a difficult situation for everyone.”

“You’re strong and right now, you just have to worry about yourself and do everything that the doctor tells you to. You have to try and remain as relaxed as possible. If you want, I can take the boys to the village for the odd weekend. It will do them good.”

“Let’s see how things go. It’s a good idea, David. Thanks for everything, you’re amazing.”



The following day, whilst my brother and I went to the supermarket with Dad, Mum stayed at home. We helped Dad to put the shopping away and then Dad made a nice hot coffee for Mum. Then we all sat down and continued talking about the situation. Nell was fast asleep.

“Enough of the sad faces, boys, I’m fine! I start chemotherapy next week.”

“Already? So soon?” I asked her anxiously.

“Yes, Dan, the sooner the better. You already know that chemo is made up of the drugs used to treat cancer.”

“Isabel’s grandad only had radiotherapy, Mum.”

“How do you know that, son?”

“Isabel told me one day at break time. Uncle David also told me that his friend Joe had lung cancer...”

“I see, cancer is more common than we think. There can’t be many people who don’t know anyone who has cancer. The thing is that there are still families who prefer to hide it from their children when they are little. Dad and I think that the best thing for all of us is to talk about it.”

“If you want to ask us anything...” Dad added.



My brother didn't hesitate to ask the one question that had no answer:

"Will the chemotherapy that you're going to have cure you, Mum?"

"Well, chemotherapy contains the drugs that will treat my cancer, and it will help it to go away. However, the truth is that it is so strong that it will make my body very weak. Do you know why?"

"No, why?" we both asked at the same time.

"Well, because chemo doesn't just kill the bad cells, it also kills the good ones. This lowers a patient's defences and, as a result, their body becomes weak. Chemo, as well as helping the cancer to disappear, also helps to ease the symptoms of the disease, to reduce the risk of it coming back and to help people."

I listened carefully to everything that Mum was explaining to us, unlike my brother, because he couldn't wait to ask his next question.



“So, your hair is going to fall out isn’t it?” he said.

“Yes and no, Marcus.”

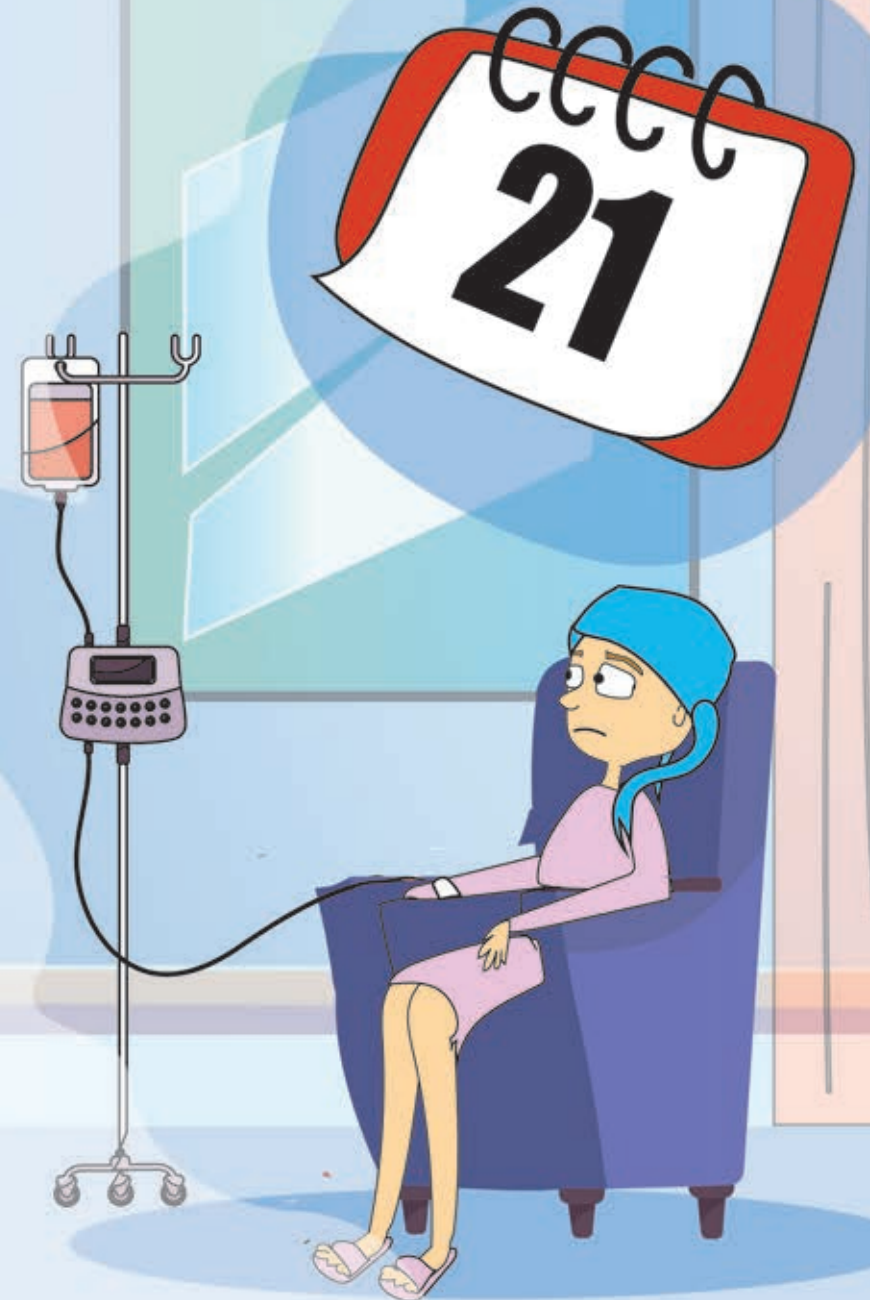
“Sorry?”

“I think it will, yes. What I mean is that I have already arranged for Uncle David to shave it off on Friday afternoon. Will you help him? If you want, you can both cut it a bit shorter for me first, and then, he will shave it right off so that I look like Homer Simpson! Oh, and another thing! I will buy a wig even if I only wear it when I go out.”

“Maybe it will be better for you if you stay at home, Mum,” I suggested.

“Let’s see how the chemo goes, Dan. In principle, my idea is to lead as normal a life as possible. I imagine that I’ll be a bit poorly for the first few days, but I’ll try to maintain my usual routine. If I can’t run, I’ll walk. The important thing is to keep going... and with the people I have looking after me, I couldn’t be any luckier!”

Mum was amazing, it was actually her trying to lift our spirits. She had done it again: she managed to turn a difficult moment into a special one. She told us that they were going to give some cycles of chemotherapy.



After that day, my brother was a little strange, he wasn't himself. It was as if he were angry with the world. He barely spoke and looked for any excuse to hide away in his bedroom. So, without him realising, I would open the door carefully so that Nell could go in. He was happy to talk to her and I would hear him whispering everything that he didn't dare to say to us.

That Friday afternoon, we walked home with Uncle David. It was the afternoon that he had arranged with Mum to shave off her hair. Marcus went straight to his bedroom, although this time it was him that left the door ajar. Mum tried to convince him to come out with the excuse that she wanted to take a selfie. It didn't work. Dad and Uncle got everything ready in the living room. I pretended that I was fine, but the truth is that I wasn't fine at all. We started to cut Mum's hair. First Dad, and then, me. We were dreadful at it! We didn't even cut it straight...

"Guys! What are you doing to me?" she laughed.
"Dan, sorry to break it to you but you'd struggle to make a living as a hairdresser!"



Mum tried calling Marcus again. We heard the door, as if he was going to come out, but it was a false alarm. Marcus stayed in his room. He wanted to join us, but he couldn't.

“Now it's my turn!” said Uncle David. Are you ready for the lawnmower?”
“Ready!” exclaimed Mum.

So, he began. It took him less than five minutes to leave Mum's head just like his own. At that moment, I remembered the day that Uncle told me the story about his friend Joe and him. Without even thinking, I exclaimed, “I want to have my head shaved too! Shave my hair off like Mum's, please!”



Mum and Dad looked at each other, their eyes wide open.

“Absolutely no way, Dan! Don’t even think about it, it’s not necessary.”

“Please, Mum, I want to shave my head. That way, my hair will grow back stronger!” I exclaimed looking at Uncle, as if that were the real reason.

Uncle David looked at me in a way that showed he was both touched and proud. He was the only one who knew the true reason why I wanted to do it. Suddenly, Nell appeared in the living room and we could hear someone’s footsteps behind her... it was Marcus!

“Me too! Uncle, I want to go after my brother. I want you to shave my head like Mum’s!” my brother exclaimed, his eyes sparkling.

Mum was very happy to see Marcus. At that moment, the five of us finally took the selfie that Mum wanted so badly. Well, not just the five of us, there were six of us because Nell was also in it. It wasn’t easy to convince Mum and Dad to allow Uncle David to shave our hair off, but, in the end, we managed it.



At last, from that moment, my brother stopped being angry with the world. He stopped talking to Nell alone and started being his usual self again: the life and soul of the house.

That weekend, Mum bought her wig. Just as the doctor had told her, she didn't feel very good for the beginning of chemo, and suffered from sickness. However, after that she went about her life normally and if it hadn't been for her hair. When Mum told us that she had cancer, I didn't really understand what she meant about bumps in the road. Now, I know that she was referring to the chemo.

Mum went to see the oncologist once every three weeks. The day before her appointment, she always had to have blood drawn. Mum loved telling us how nice all of the outpatient care staff were at the day hospital where they put her on a drip containing the chemo.

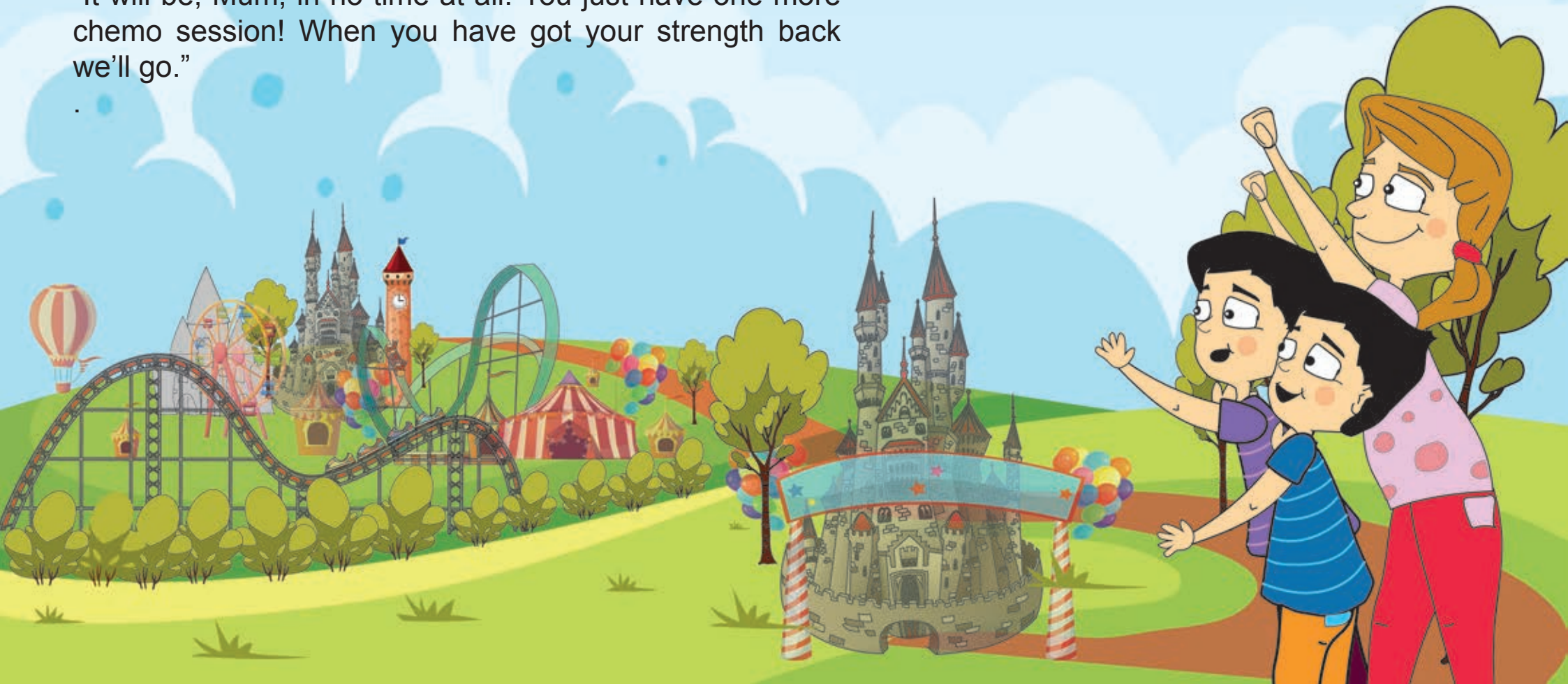


“I had such a lovely nurse, boys! Ellie explained all of the side effects that I might have with chemo to me right from the very first day. Another day, when she wasn’t there, it was Helen who recommended that I continue to do gentle exercise, and that I should come to the hospital feeling relaxed... And my oncologist, well... you just can’t imagine how wonderful they all are. Do you know what I love to think about in order to relax before

“No, Mum,” my brother said, intrigued.

“Well, I think about... our trip! I visualise us at the airport, boarding the plane, having fun at the theme park... and it makes me so happy to think about it that sometimes I even believe it’s real.”

“It will be, Mum, in no time at all! You just have one more chemo session! When you have got your strength back we’ll go.”



Two months after finishing chemo, Mum's hair started to grow back. She looked so beautiful! It's curlier now than it was before. Little by little she got stronger and since everything seemed to be going fine, she now only had to see the oncologist once every three months. We started going to the village whenever we could. We had missed it so much! Since Mum's cancer diagnosis we had only been three times, with Uncle David, to go for a stroll, as the grown-ups say.

The day arrived when Marcus and I turned twelve. This time the adults really had planned our present together.

"Come on, boys! Don't you want to open your present? Where are you?"

"We're coming!" shouted Marcus from his room.

"What's all this? What big boxes!"

"What have you bought us?" my brother asked, taken aback.

"Don't be fooled by appearances!" my Uncle said, smiling.



My brother and I started to unwrap the two enormous boxes. After removing the paper from the first one, there was a second one inside, also wrapped up. Then there was another one, and another one. We kept going until we were left with a tiny box which had an envelope inside!

“You really tricked us!” my brother said.

“It hadn’t even occurred to me! The thing with the boxes was your idea, wasn’t it, Uncle?”

“You know me too well, Dan!”

“This time we’re really going!” exclaimed Mum. This trip has been my strength, my dream... The time has come, hasn’t it, darling?” said Mum, winking at Dad.

“Of course, we have to live...”

“Don’t start, Dad, please,” my brother complained, stopping Dad from finishing his favourite phrase.

Marcus and I took the four plane tickets out of the envelopes excitedly.

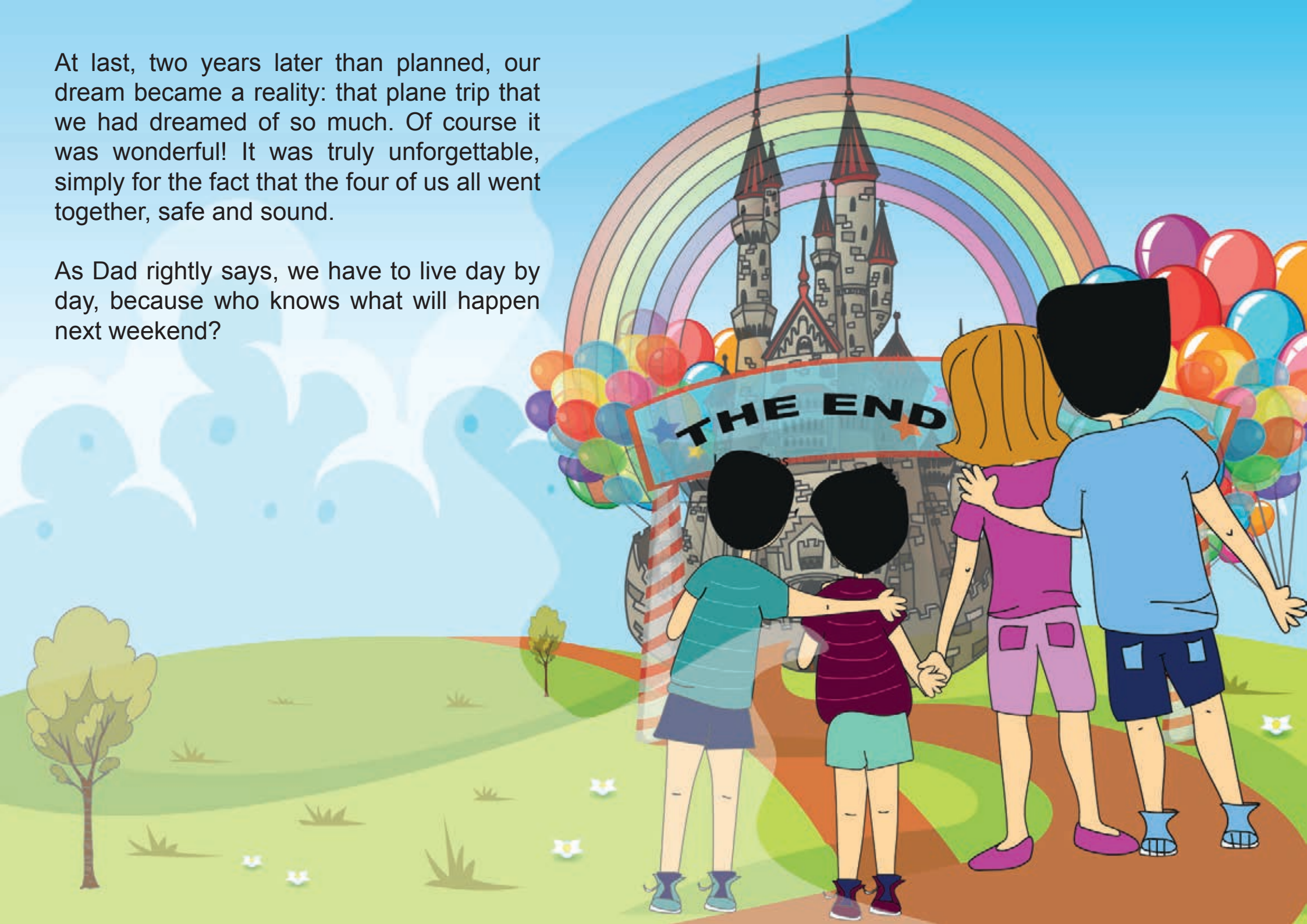
“We’re going in three weeks’ time. Uncle David is going to stay with Nell,” said Mum.

“Woof, woof!”



At last, two years later than planned, our dream became a reality: that plane trip that we had dreamed of so much. Of course it was wonderful! It was truly unforgettable, simply for the fact that the four of us all went together, safe and sound.

As Dad rightly says, we have to live day by day, because who knows what will happen next weekend?



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