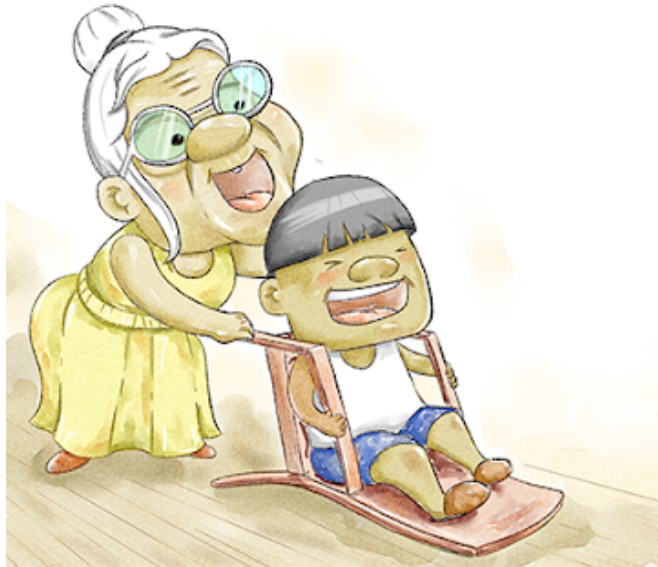




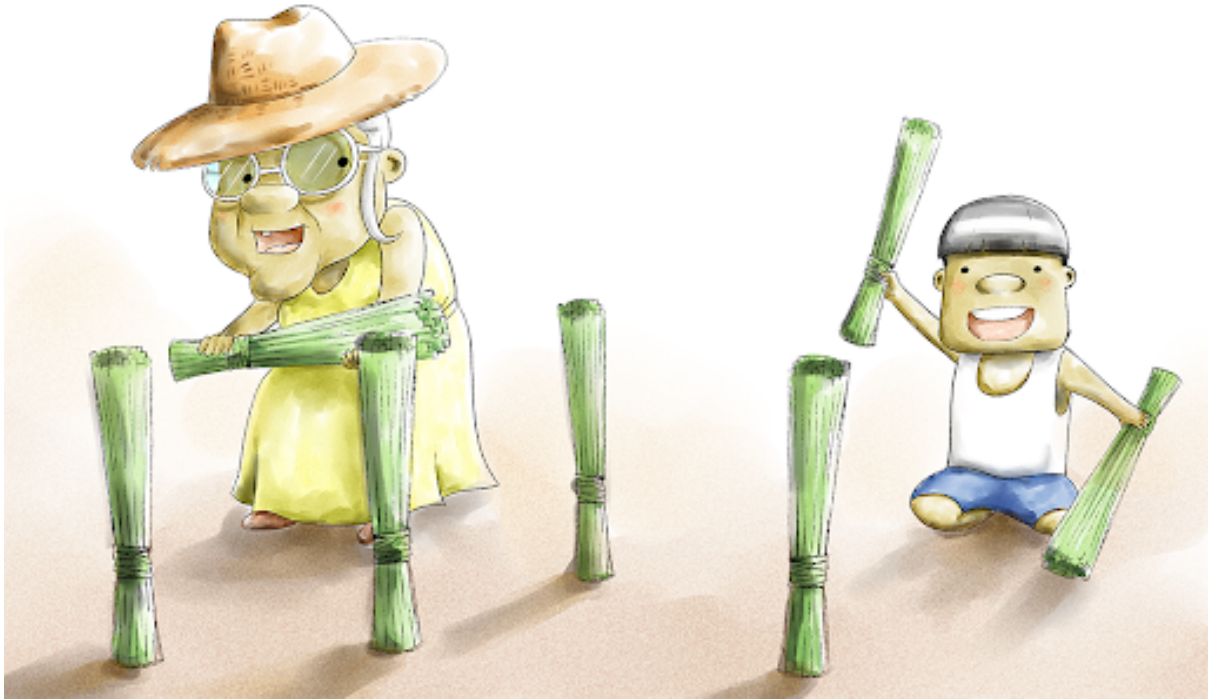
Grandma Sula
Emmylou Charmaine Salazar
Carlo Niño M. Arizala



 The Asia Foundation



"We've arrived. Thank you for taking the Grandma Sula's taxi," Grandma Sula announced as she pushed our makeshift taxi to a stop.



Grandma Sula and I loved to play together. One time, we became farmers. We planted brooms as if they were trees in an orchard. "Maybe they'll grow coconuts soon," I had joked.

Grandma Sula is my beloved grandmother. Any day I spend with her is so much fun. She's my favorite person to play with.



Another time, Grandma Sula and I became fishers. We fished for slippers in a tub in our backyard.

"Look Grandma, I already caught one," I had said, holding up a slipper.



Grandma Sula had abruptly thrown her fishing rod down and sobbed, "I'm really useless." She had left their game, looking angry. Mama Lita talked to her and helped her calm down, showing her old photographs.



Today I asked Grandma Sula if she would play hide-and-seek with me. Grandma Sula was so excited to play.

"*Tagu-taguan, maliwanag ang buwan*," I sang so that Grandma Sula could hide. "One, two, three! Here I come!" I said as I finished the song.

Tagu-taguan, maliwanag ang buwan: *hide and seek, the moon is bright*



Now it was time to find Grandma Sula. I looked in the kitchen, in the living room, and in the bedroom. I looked all over the house, but I couldn't find her anywhere.



"Ma, I can't find Grandma," I cried to Mama Lita.

We looked together and we still couldn't find Grandma Sula.

We went to our neighborhood police officers and asked them for help.

I heard someone shouting, "Bula! Bula! Bula!"



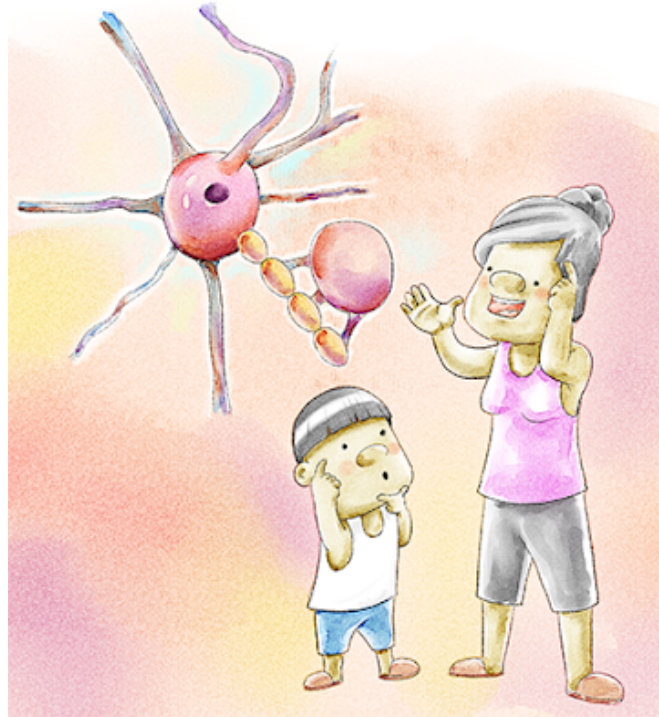
"That must be Grandma Sula," I told Mama Lita.

We went to Bula Crossing and saw Grandma Sula standing at the corner and shouting. I ran to hug her.

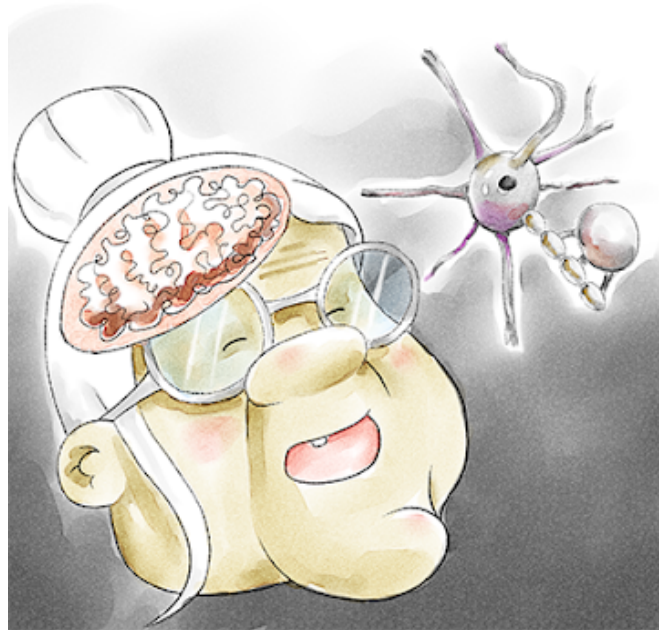


We headed back home with Grandma Sula. When we arrived home, I asked Mama Lita, "Why did Grandma Sula wander off? Why did she seem so confused?"

Mama Lita told me that Grandma Sula had Alzheimer's disease. It's a disease that can effect people's brains, especially as they get older.



"Neurons carry messages in our brain, Ador," Mama Lita explained to me. "Neurons are what allow us to understand the things around us, like what we see. People with Alzheimer's, like Grandma Sula, have neurons that are damaged and dying."



"As more and more neurons die, the person becomes more forgetful, has a hard time recognizing faces, and might get angry more easily. If they leave their house, they may have a hard time finding their way back home," Mama Lita said.



"That's why Grandma Sula forgets my name sometimes! That's why Grandma Sula suddenly cries or gets angry sometimes. That's why Grandma Sula didn't come back when we played hide-and-seek," I realized.



Grandma Sula's brain was changing a lot. But despite these changes, I knew Grandma Sula could still do a lot. So I came up with new games to play with her.



Every morning, I combed Grandma Sula's hair, just like her mother did when she was little. After I combed her hair, she would comb mine too.

"You're so lovely, Grandma," I told her.



Every day at noon, Grandma Sula and I would play waiter. We'd set the table with glasses, plates, and spoons, When she was younger, Grandma Sula helped set out plates for lunch every day.

"You're amazing, Grandma," I told her.



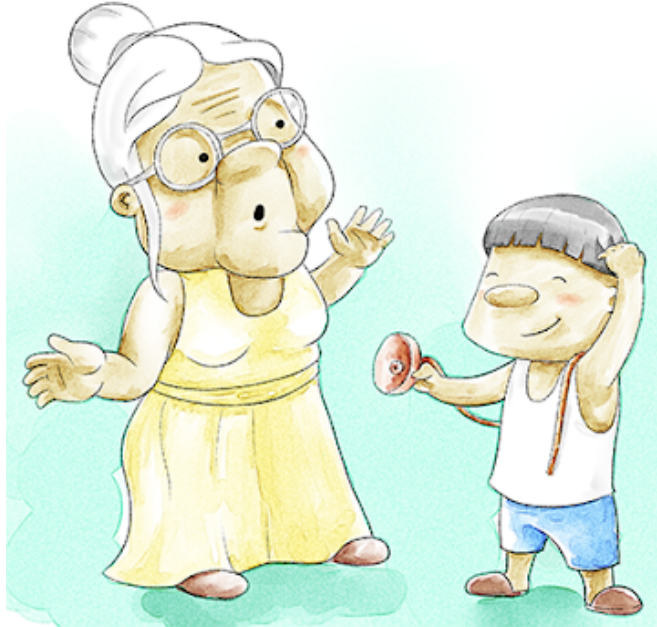
Every afternoon, we looked after Grandma Sula's duck. We led the ducks back to their cage. Grandma used to pick fresh duck eggs to eat when she was a kid.

"You're fantastic, Grandma!" I said.



Every night, Grandma Sula would tell me stories. Even though Grandma Sula often told the same story many times, I still enjoyed hearing her stories.

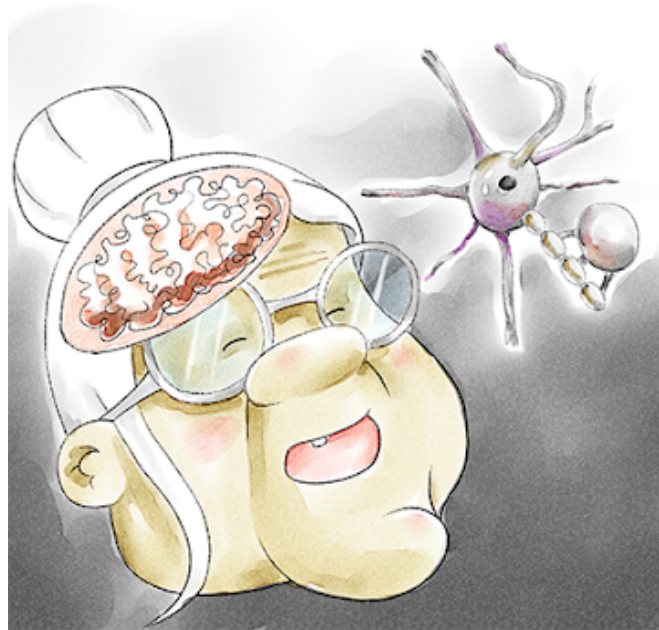
"You're the best, Grandma. Just don't forget that," I said.



I told Mama that when I grow up I want to become a doctor. Then I could help people like Grandma Sula who have Alzheimer's disease.



Even though Grandma Sula and I played different games now, I still had so much fun with her. She was still my favorite playmate. Even though Grandma Sula couldn't remember everything, I hoped she always felt how much I love her.



Wonderful Words

tagu-taguan, maliwanag ang buwan:
hide and seek, the moon is bright



ABC+: Advancing Basic Education in the Philippines



The Asia Foundation

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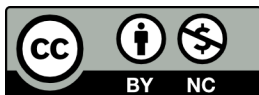
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Original Story

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