



Josh and Mia Hear Sad News

Josh and Mia raced each other home from the bus stop after school. It was Friday and that meant pizza for dinner, followed by a movie and popcorn.

“I won!” shouted Josh as he pushed open the front door.

“Only because you are taller and can run farther than me,” Mia said breathlessly as she followed behind him into the kitchen.

They dropped their backpacks on the floor and called for their mom.

“We’re home!”

Mom usually had a snack already laid out on the counter, but it was bare. Josh and Mia looked at each other with a question in their eyes. They walked into the living room and found Mom on the phone with her back turned to them. She was nodding her head and whispering into the phone. Her shoulders moved up and down and she grabbed a tissue from a box on the table beside her.

Mia walked over to her Mom and put her hand on her shoulder.

Mom turned and Mia saw her face red and splotchy. Mom said a quick goodbye on the phone and put it down.







She walked over to the couch and said, “Come, both of you and sit with me.”

“I have some very sad news to tell you about. I was just on the phone with Dad and ...” She wiped her eyes with the tissue, took a breath, and said, “Grandma had a heart attack earlier this morning. The doctors did all they could to help her, but she didn’t make it. I’m so sorry to say this ... Grandma has passed away.”

As she spoke, Mom’s voice cracked, and she started crying again.



Mia said, “Heart attack? Passed away? What are you saying?” She jumped up, eyes wide, and raised her voice and repeated, “What are you saying?”

“She died, sweetie. I’m so sorry.” Mom wrapped both Mia and Josh into a hug.

Mia felt a rush of tears. “But I just saw her yesterday ... we baked cookies ... she was fine ...” she choked out.

Josh pulled away from Mom’s embrace and muttered, “I’m going outside.” He went into the hall closet and grabbed his basketball. They heard the door slam and the sound of a ball bouncing against the driveway.

Mom sat down on the couch with Mia and held her tight. Time seemed to stand still. They were each wrapped up in their own thoughts and memories about Grandma.

“I didn’t get to tell her about how my art project turned out for school,” Mia whispered.

Her mind started swirling with all the things she wanted to say to her grandmother. Then she remembered how she was supposed to spend the weekend at Grandma’s house, doing their favorite thing together: painting.

She felt so sad, her heart hurt.





Mia stood up and said, “I think I’m going to go lie down.”

Mom looked at her with concern, hugged her, and said, “I’ll come check on you after I make some more calls.”

Mia slowly made her way up to her room where she crawled into bed. Her favorite stuffed bear lay next to her, its fur matted and worn. Grandma gave it to Mia when she was born, and she’d slept with it ever since.

Mia grabbed the bear and held tight, whispering, “I’m going to miss her so much.”



Josh kept shooting baskets and missing each one. He turned at the sound of a car and saw his father pull into the driveway. He turned away and tried another shot. He missed again.

Dad got out of the car. His eyes were red, his clothes rumpled after spending much of the day in the hospital. He walked over to Josh and said, “Hey, buddy. How’re you doing?”

Josh frowned and said, “I keep missing.”

Dad said, “I mean about Grandma.”

Josh hung his head and said, “Mom told us. She and Mia are pretty upset ... and I ... I keep thinking ...” he muttered something that Dad couldn’t hear and dribbled and went in for a layup.

Dad sat down on the bench, patted it with his hand, and said, “Come and sit next to me.”

Josh flopped down and the ball rolled away on the ground.



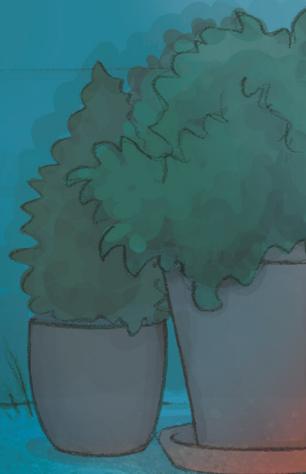
“Grandma’s heart attack came as a big surprise to all of us. I keep thinking of things I wanted to say to her. While I know she is happy in heaven with Jesus, I’m just so very sad she’s not here with us.” He cleared his throat and swiped his shirt sleeve across his eyes.

Dad sat waiting for Josh to respond. Then he asked, “What are you thinking about?”

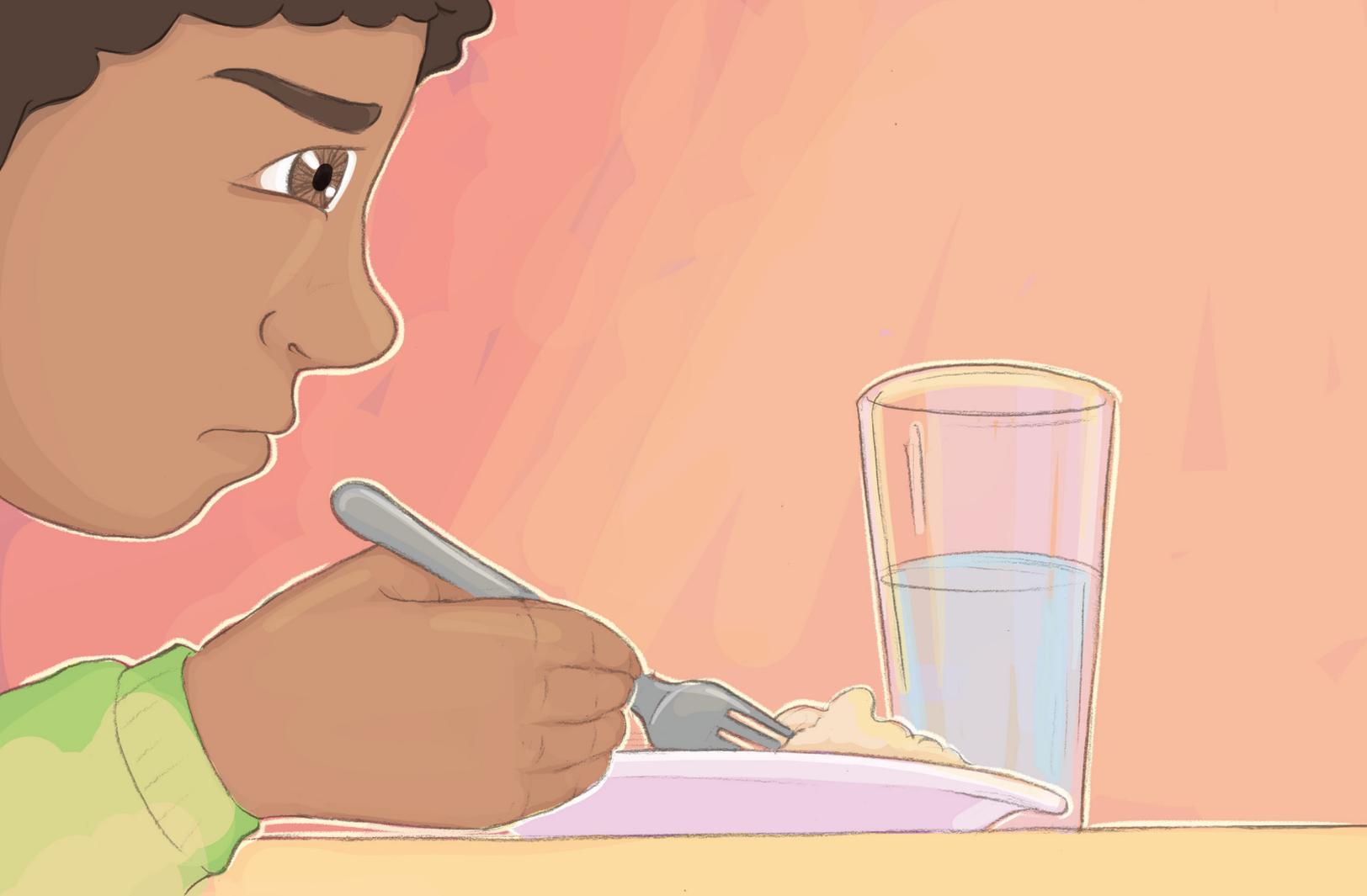
Josh turned to his dad and said, “Yesterday I invited her to my first basketball game ... and I was excited for her to come ... and right now, I feel mad that she won’t be there. Is that bad? Shouldn’t I be crying like Mia right now?”

Dad wrapped his arm around Josh and pulled him in tight. “When someone dies, we feel lots of different emotions. It’s normal. Right now, you feel some anger, later you’ll feel something else. What’s important is that you talk about it with us. Okay?”

Josh nodded, got up, and grabbed his ball and started shooting again. Dad wearily got up from the bench and walked in the house.



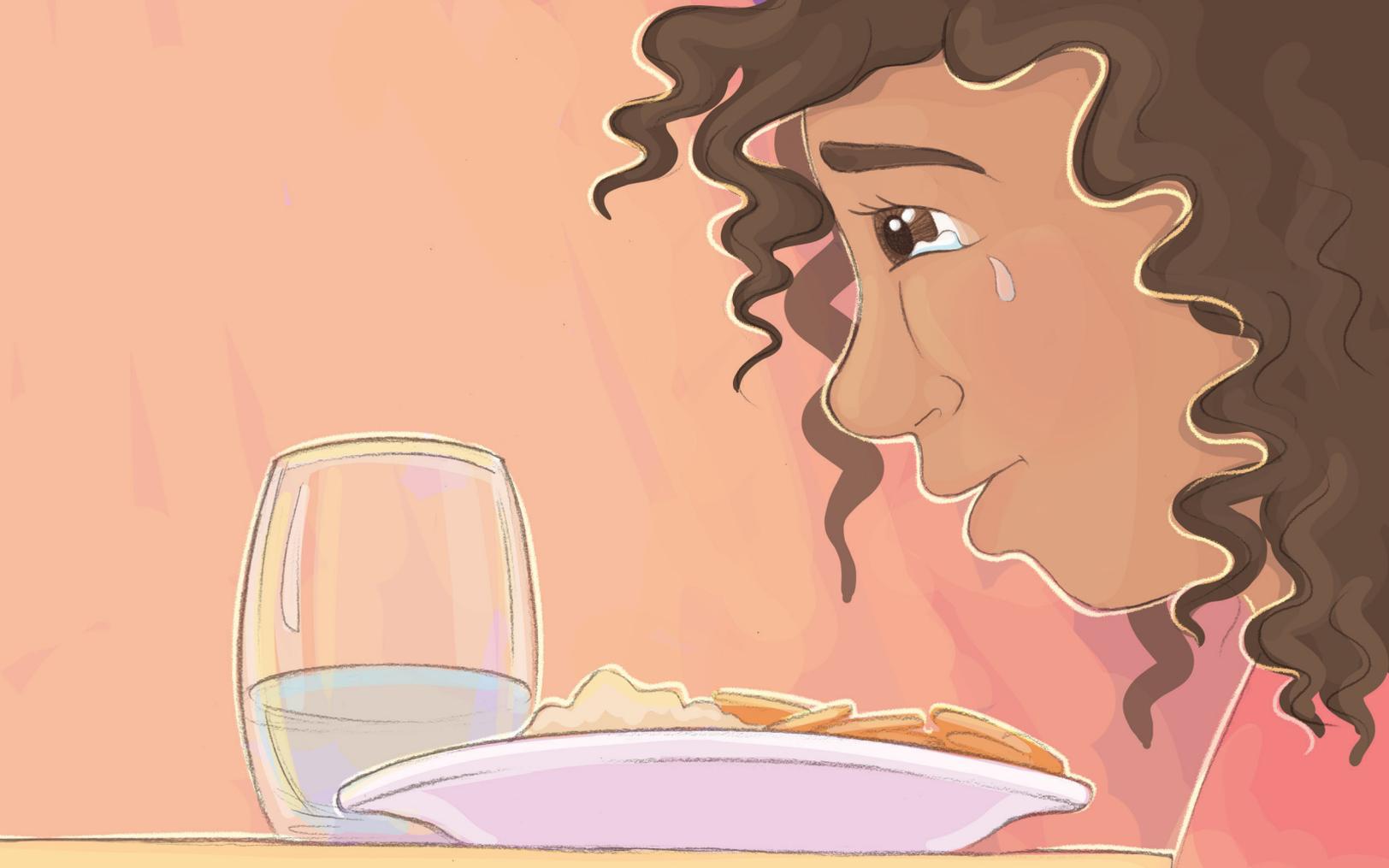




A couple nights later at dinner, Mom said, “I’m sorry dinner isn’t much to speak of tonight. I just didn’t have the energy. I’ve been on the phone all day again with people checking in on us and sharing how sorry they are about Grandma.”

Josh sat at the table, pushing food around on his plate.

Every few minutes Mia would say something about Grandma. “I loved how she was always teaching me new things. This weekend we were going to experiment with some new painting techniques ...” She teared up again and grabbed a tissue.



Mom smiled gently and said, “I know, Mia. This is a hard loss for all of us. It’s good to talk about how much we love her. And it’s okay to cry.”

Dad nodded and said, “We all love her and miss her. It’s right to feel sad. Death is something that shouldn’t happen. It’s part of the curse from when Adam and Eve sinned. Did you know that in the Bible, they took the death of someone so seriously, they even hired people to stand around and cry?”

Mia shook her head. “No, I didn’t know that. I can’t imagine walking down the street and hearing a group of people crying loudly.”

Josh pushed his plate away. “Talking and crying about her isn’t going to make us feel any better.” He shoved his chair under the table so hard, Mia’s water glass shook.

As he stomped his way up to his room, Mia watched him go and asked, “Why does Josh seem so angry? And why isn’t he crying? Isn’t he sad that Grandma died?”

Mom paused for a moment and then said, “Not everyone expresses their sadness the same way, Mia. He’s hurting about Grandma’s death too. He’s just showing it differently. Let’s give him some space to grieve, Mia. We should pray for him.”

That night, Mia got out her journal, the one Grandma gave her last Christmas. She had told Mia to use it draw how she was feeling, to practice writing the Bible verses and to record her prayers. Mia flipped through the journal and spotted a verse she had written down a month ago. “In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me” (Psalm 86:7). Mia prayed in her heart for Josh that God would comfort him. She prayed for Grandpa, Mom, Dad, and all her family.

Mia yawned, grabbed her stuffed bear, and before falling asleep whispered, “God, thank you for hearing my prayers. Please help us all as we are so sad right now.”



