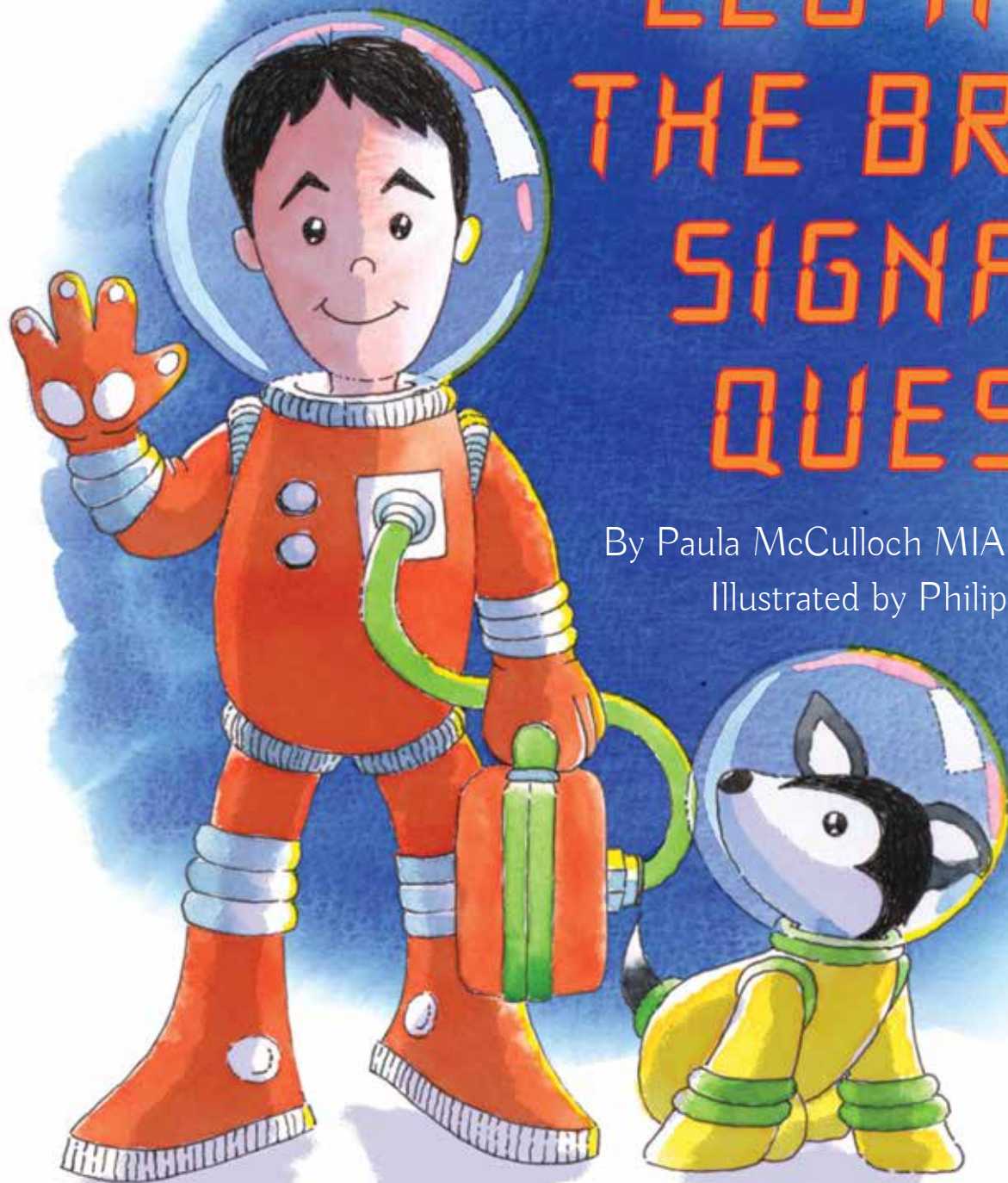


LEO AND THE BRAIN SIGNAL QUEST

By Paula McCulloch MIAPTP, MEAIP.

Illustrated by Philip Elliott



About Leo and the Brain Signal Quest

This book has been produced by Epilepsy Ireland and written by our member Paula McCulloch, MIAPTP, MEAIP.

Paula is a qualified and practicing Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist and Play Therapist, and a mother of two. Her area of special interest is in the development of trauma-sensitive services for children across Ireland, and through her work she has developed what she terms ‘Therapeutic Procedural Preparation Stories’, stories designed with a trauma-sensitive perspective to help children predict, understand and manage medical interventions.

These stories are intended to serve as a creative and supportive way to prepare and reassure children before medical procedures. Paula believes that preparation through clear, child-centred communication is critical in supporting children undergoing medical interventions, helping to reduce distress and build a sense of safety and control.

Paula’s inspiration for this approach came from her eight-year-old son, Leo, whose curiosity and courage during his own experiences inspired the creation of Leo and the Brain Signal Quest. Together, they wanted to share this story in support of other children to know beforehand what happens during a sleep-deprived EEG, supporting psychological comfort and safety during this intervention.

Leo has chosen to donate this story to Epilepsy Ireland in appreciation of our work in supporting people with epilepsy and their families across Ireland.

Thank you to Paula and Leo for producing this story which we hope will help many children with epilepsy across Ireland and beyond. A huge thank you also to Philip Elliott for masterfully illustrating the story and for bringing the book version of Leo to life!

Remember – whether you are living with epilepsy or supporting a loved one with the condition, our services are here for you. If you need any information or support about epilepsy or want to learn more about the services we offer, visit www.epilepsy.ie, call us on 01 455 7500 or email us at info@epilepsy.ie and we will do our utmost to support you on your journey with the condition.

Together, we can achieve a society where no person’s life is limited by epilepsy.

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Leo was seven, curious, and full of imagination.
He loved pretend missions and knew
everything about space.
He even had a cuddly rocket sidekick named Rua,
who slept beside his pillow every night.

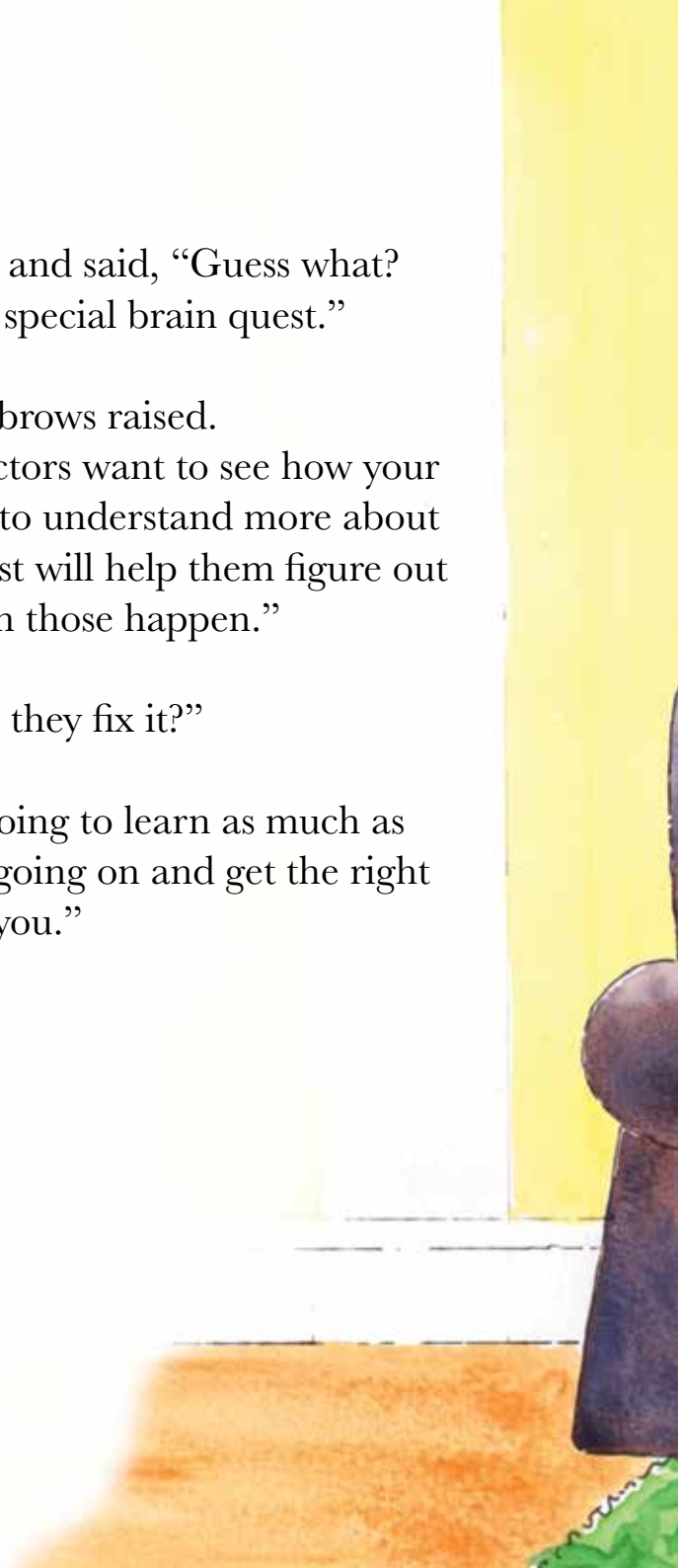


One afternoon, Mum sat beside Leo and said, “Guess what? Tomorrow, we’re going on a very special brain quest.”

“A quest?” Leo asked, eyebrows raised.
“Yes,” said Mum. “A team of brain doctors want to see how your brain talks when it’s sleepy. They want to understand more about the seizures you’ve been having. This test will help them figure out what your brain is doing when those happen.”

Leo tilted his head. “Will they fix it?”

Mum hugged him gently. “They’re going to learn as much as they can so they can figure out what’s going on and get the right medicine to help you.”







That night, things felt different. Leo was only allowed a short sleep before waking up in the middle of the night.

At first, it was exciting, he got to go on a night time walk with Mum and Dad. But after a while, it got harder, especially during the drive to the hospital, his eyes felt like heavy pebbles.



“I feel strange,” Leo mumbled.

“Like I want to laugh, cry, and sleep all at the same time.”



Mum gave him a warm hug.

“That’s your body being tired. It’s okay to feel wobbly or different. We’ll be together the whole time.”

Even though Leo was a little cranky and his head buzzed like a tired bee, he kept Rua close. “We can do this,” he whispered.







After a long drive, they arrived at the hospital.
It was quiet and smelled different. Leo's heart was beating fast.
He felt unsure.

A friendly doctor bent down to his level and smiled.
“Hey Leo, we have been waiting for you. Today, we are going to
tune into your brain's radio station!”

Leo blinked. “You can hear my brain?”

“Sort of,” she said. “We use tiny sensors to see the signals your
brain sends, especially when it's sleepy.
That way, we can understand more about the seizures
you have been having.”

“But will it hurt?” Leo asked. “Not at all,” she promised.
“We use soft paste to help little buttons stick to your head.
No needles, no pokes, just a bit of cool gloop and some
tickly wires. It might feel a little cold, but nothing scary.”



Leo sat in a comfy chair while the doctor gently cleaned small spots on his head. Then came the stickers, round and flat, with little wires attached.

“You look like a space robot!” Mum said, giggling.

Leo peeked in the mirror. He did look pretty awesome. Once everything was ready, the doctor had some fun games for him to do, like blowing a pinwheel, before he lay down with Rua beside him. The lights in the room dimmed, and the room was quiet. His eyelids fluttered like butterflies.

“Can I fall asleep now?” he asked.

“Go ahead,” said the doctor. “That’s what we’re hoping for.”

Leo closed his eyes. Even with all the wires, he felt calm. The strange day, the tiredness, the feelings – all of it melted into dreams.



When it was over, the doctor gently removed the wires and cleaned his head. It felt cool and a little squishy, but not bad.
Leo smiled.

“Did my brain send cool messages?”

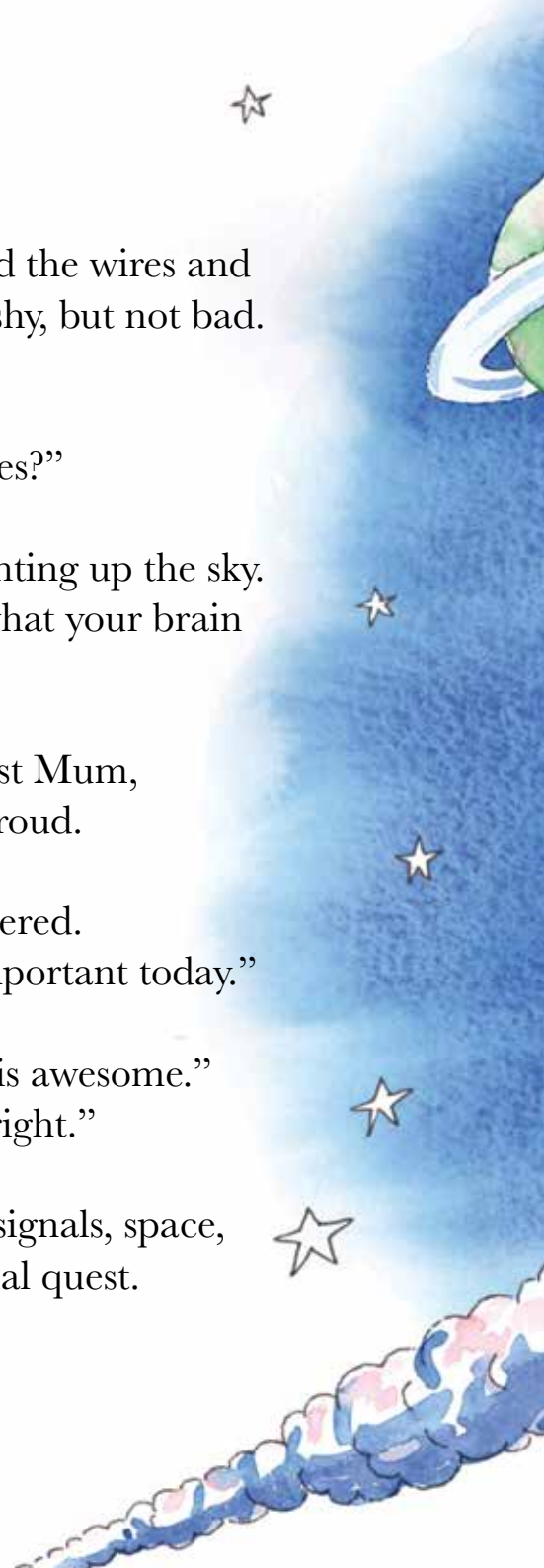
“Absolutely,” she said. “Like shining stars lighting up the sky. The doctors are going to learn a lot from what your brain shared.”

On the drive home, Leo rested against Mum,
his head still fuzzy but his heart proud.

“You were so brave,” Mum whispered.
“You helped the doctors learn something important today.”

Leo nodded sleepily. “Rua says my brain is awesome.”
Mum laughed. “She is absolutely right.”

And Leo drifted off to sleep, dreaming of signals, space,
and the quiet magic of the brain signal quest.







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