

CHILDREN OF GENETICS

Sonia Goerger and Élodie Garcia

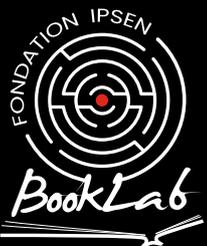


Willi,  
the Little Grizzly



European  
Reference  
Network  
for rare or low prevalence  
complex diseases

Network  
Intellectual Disability  
and Congenital  
Malformations (ERN ITHACA)



Sonia Goerger and Élodie Garcia

*Willi,  
the Little Grizzly*  
CHILDREN OF GENETICS





Today morning, Willi is ecstatic. It is his first day of school. Although he is a little worried about this big change, he is delighted at the idea of making new friends ... because Willi is a lonely little grizzly.

He is a bit different from other grizzlies. His hands and feet are small, which contrast with his big eyeglasses and round belly. He has an insatiable appetite and he always wants to eat, all around the clock. Other grizzlies his age often mock him for being overweight.





But what saddens and anger Willi the most is that he has trouble learning and remembering what people try to teach him. Even though he did his best, he never could go to school because of his learning difficulties ... until today!

After drinking his bowl of milk and eating his two brioches. Willi takes his schoolbag and leaves home, impatient to finally become a student like any other.

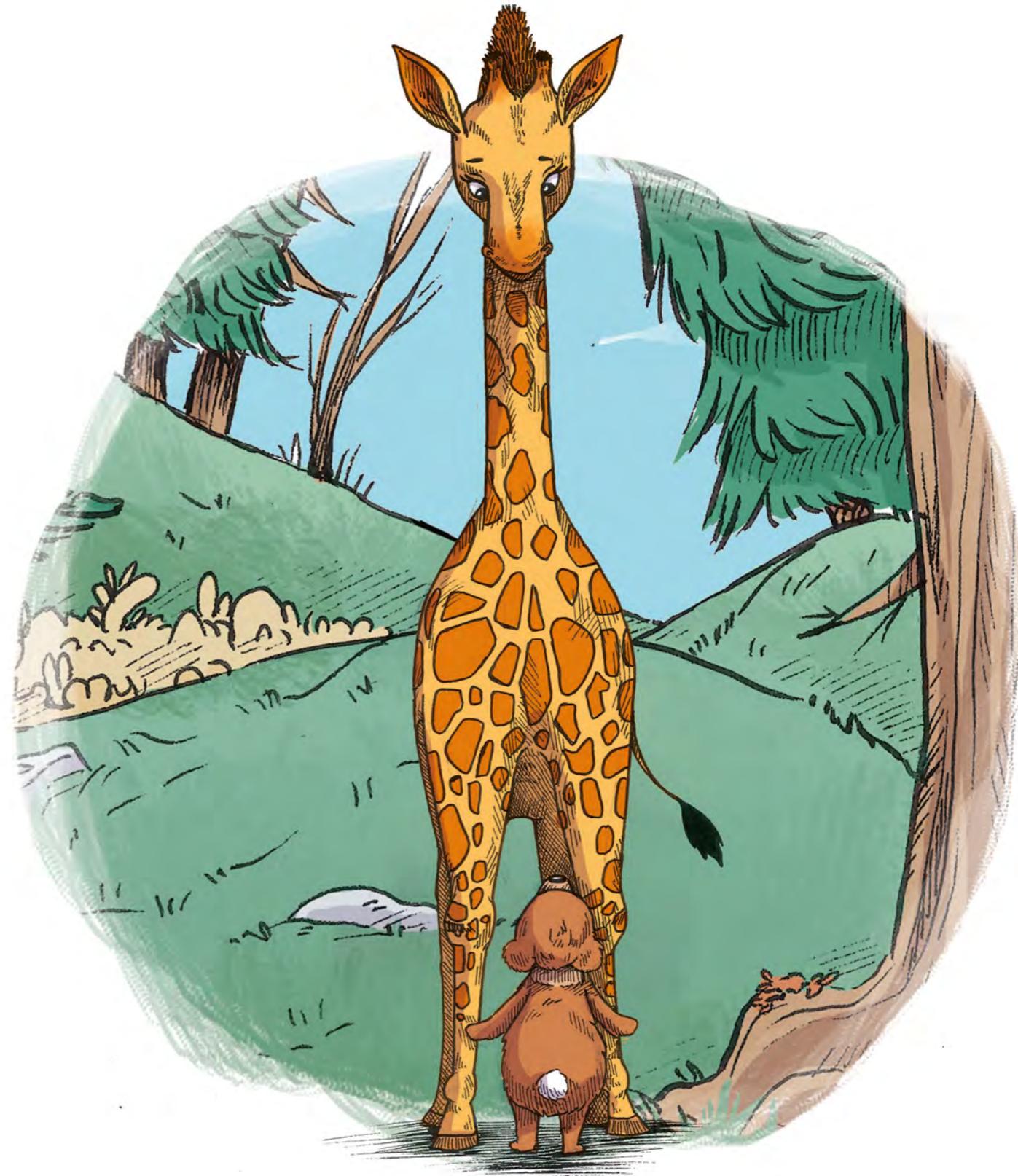
In front of the school gate, he meets the director Ms Giraffe. She looks at him, intrigued.

“Good morning, little one. Where are you going? she asks.

- I am going to school!” Willi answers proudly.

- Ah! I am sorry, little one. You are way too short to study at my school. My students are all very tall. You should head for Mr Crocodile’s school instead.”

Although he is a little surprised and disappointed, Willi calmly leaves and goes a few streets away, to Mr Crocodile’s school.





In front of the other school, he rings at an already open closed door. A huge crocodile opens the door.

“Yes? What is it about, he asks with a deep voice.

- Hello’ Willi answers, impressed.
- I want to study at your school.”

Before answering, Mr Crocodile takes some time to look at Willi from head to toe.

“In my school everyone must be athletic. You do not meet this criterion, Mr Crocodile says.

- Go to Mr Monkey’s school. Maybe you will find your place there ...”

Willi’s initial enthusiasm has now turned into deep sadness. He is leaving again, with is back bent and his eyes looking down.

Mr Monkey has already been told by Mr Crocodile about this curious visit. He is waiting for Willi in front of the school, on the steps that lead to the entrance. Without even letting Willi introduce himself, he starts to speak.

“Good morning, child. You are searching for a school, aren't you? Unfortunately, my school is only for super smart students, you cannot study here.”

Rejected for the third time in a row, the little grizzly leaves without a word, but with a heavy heart.





Sitting on a nearby rock, Willi is bawling his eyes out when an old elephant comes to him and asks:

“Come on, why are you crying?  
What is your name?”

- My name is Willi ... he answers in between sobs. No school accepts me. I am too short, too big, and not smart enough to study anywhere ...” he adds before crying again.

The old elephant smiles tenderly.

“Nonsense! Don’t worry and stop crying. I think I have the solution to your problem. Follow me!”

Willi and Mr Elephant arrive in front of a big wrought iron gate. Mr Elephant opens it with a cheerful expression.

“This is my school!”

It is playtime. In the school yard, some kids are playing with the ball while others are seated in small groups. They all look different from one another.





There is a tall and frail gazelle, a squint lion cub with little teeth, and even a zebra without stripes.

"In my school, all animals are accepted with their differences. Teachers are there to take their difficulties into consideration, help the students learn and improve at their own pace." Mr Elephant explains.

"Welcome to my school, Willi!"

Willi is pensive: he looks at the students and starts to imagine all the games they could play together. Suddenly, a young tiger holding a ball comes up to him.

“Hi there! A player is missing in our team. How about you come to play with us?”





The whole team looks at Willi. Some players are smiling and nodding, as if they were trying to convince the young grizzly to join them. The young tiger hands Willi the ball.

"So, what do you think?" he asks kindly.

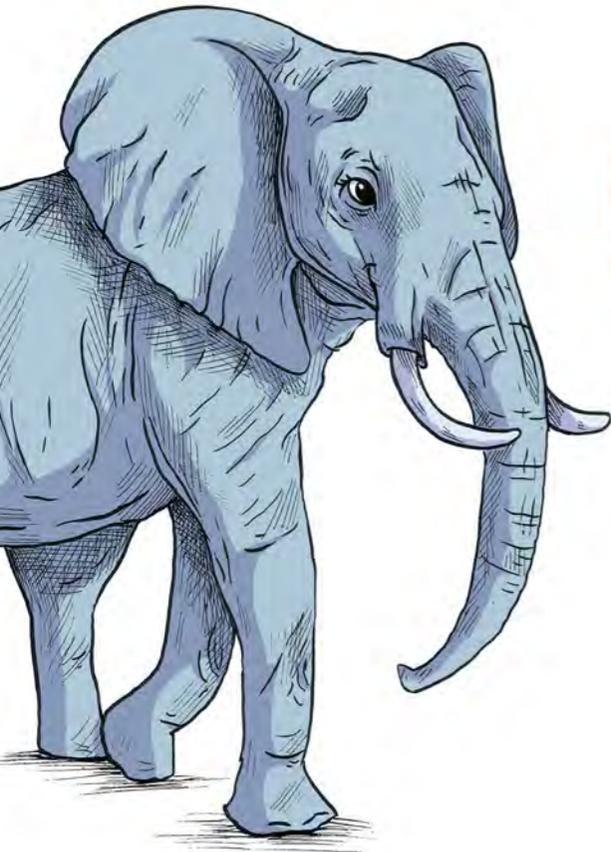


After hesitating for a little while, Willi warmly thanks Mr Elephant and, he ecstatically joins his new playmates, who will soon become his best friends.

**Open the debate!**

Continue the story with the children!  
The questions on the next page will help you think about it.





What do you think about Willi?



### About his learning difficulties

Do you know someone at school who struggles to learn and to understand the lessons?

What do you think this person feels (frustration, anger, sadness, feeling out)?

And you, have you already faced troubles to learn and understand your lessons?

### About his difficulties to find a school

Why do you think Willi is not accepted in these various schools?

What do you think about it?

Do you know there are schools like Mr Elephant's, for children with learning difficulties?

What do you think about Mr Elephant's school?

### About learning and/or behavioural troubles

Learning and/or behavioural disorders are problems that many children with rare genetic diseases face. For these children, it is sometimes difficult to find a school that meets their needs and adapt to their differences. Some programs are implemented to help them adjust and have a regular school curriculum (they can be helped by a school life assistant for example). Specialised schools and classes also exist. For these children, access to teaching may prove to be long and complicated. As for *Willi the Little Grizzly*, health professionals can support families in their search and help them find the best solution to meet their child's needs.

### About the Author

Sonia Goerger is a medical secretary who has been welcoming and meeting many genetic patients for several years. This inspired her to create the "Children of Genetics" book series for children.

The books in the series deal with the difficulties that patients may experience in their everyday lives, using simple words and endearing characters. To bring them to life, Sonia Goerger collaborated with Christine Juif, a clinical psychologist who assists patients with genetic diseases and their families during the diagnostic process.

### About the Illustrator

A graphic designer for several years, Elodie Garcia is an author and illustrator of children's books and comics. The delicacy of her line allows her to approach, in a gentle way, difficult subjects. By illustrating the "Children of Genetics" book series, she hopes to help families facing rare diseases.

## About the ARGAD Association

The Association for Research in Genetics and Support for Families and Professionals of Dijon-Bourgogne (ARGAD) is a non-profit association under the 1901 law, created in September 2010.

ARGAD engages in numerous activities:

- Improving reception and care conditions for patients with rare diseases in Burgundy, within the Genetics Centre of Dijon CHU;
- Raising awareness among health professionals in the Burgundy region, and among the general public regarding rare diseases;
- Contributing to a better and improved training of health professionals involved in rare diseases;
- And, supporting clinical and biological research activities in the field of genetic mutations associated with abnormalities in development and intellectual disabilities in Burgundy.

To support the ARGAD Association and its mission, visit: <http://www.translad.org/>



## About Fondation Ipsen BookLab

Dedicated to the greater good and committed to fostering a more equitable society, Fondation Ipsen BookLab publishes and distributes books free of charge primarily to schools and associations. Through collaborations between experts, artists, authors and children, our publications span all age groups and are available in multiple languages. Our work is centered on education and awareness of topics pertaining to health, disability and rare diseases.

Visit us at [www.fondation-ipsen.org](http://www.fondation-ipsen.org)

Book # 10.7  
Have your say!



ISBN: 978-2-38427-147-4 (printed book\_French version)/ 978-2-38427-152-8 (ePub\_French version)/  
978-2-38427-148-1 (printed book\_English version)/ 978-2-38427-153-5 (ePub\_English version)/  
978-2-38427-149-8 (printed book\_Spanish version)/ 978-2-38427-154-2 (ePub\_Spanish version)/  
978-2-38427-151-1 (printed book\_Chinese version)/ 978-2-38427-155-9 (ePub\_Chinese version)/  
978-2-38427-150-4 (printed book\_Ukrainian version)/ 978-2-38427-156-6 (ePub\_Ukrainian version)

© Fondation Ipsen, 2024  
*Fondation Ipsen is under the aegis of Fondation de France*  
[www.fondation-ipsen.org](http://www.fondation-ipsen.org)

Text: Sonia Goerger (with the kind collaboration of Christine Juif)  
Illustrations: Elodie Garcia

Scientific editing: Association for Research in Genetics and Support for Families and Professionals  
in Dijon-Bourgogne (ARGAD - Association de Recherche en Génétique et d'Accompagnement des familles  
et professionnels de Dijon-Bourgogne)

Translation: Junior Isit  
Editorial direction: Céline Colombier-Maffre

First published in French, in September 2023  
Original text: © Sonia Goerger, 2023  
Original publication: © Fondation Ipsen, 2023

Act No 49-956 of 16 July 1949 on publications for young people,  
amended by Act No. 2011-525 of 17 May 2011.  
Legal deposit: February 2024

Print on demand, by Fondation Ipsen, Paris, France  
ePub Conversion: [www.flexedo.com](http://www.flexedo.com)

Not for sale - free book

Willi the lonely little grizzly is getting ready for his first day at school. But one after the other, all the doors close in from of him because he is different. Then he meets an elephant who knows about being different ...



“Children face many challenges in their lives. Disease is hard to discuss. These books explain that every child is powerful and that their spirit is greater than any disease.”

– **James A. Levine**

MD, PhD, Professor, Fondation Ipsen, President  
[www.fondation-ipsen.org](http://www.fondation-ipsen.org)



**Book # 10.7**  
Have your say!



ISBN:  
978-2-38427-148-1 (printed book)  
978-2-38427-153-5 (ePub)

Not for sale - free book