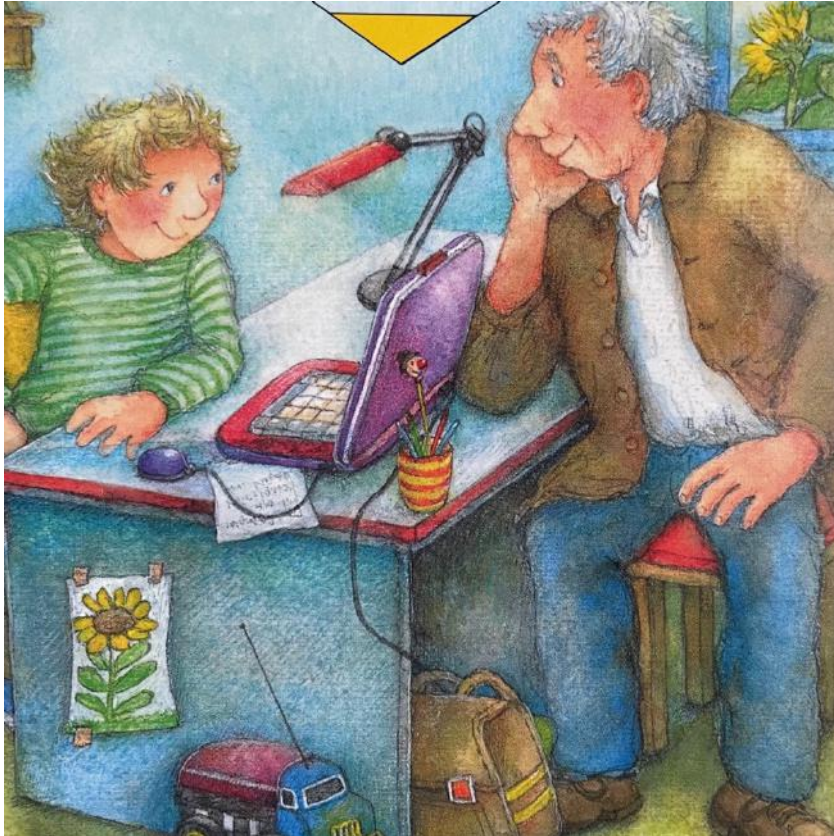


Grandpa's amazing computer



A story by Ursel Scheffler
Illustrated by Ruth Scholte van Mast



1

"Hello, Ollie! Mail for you!" the postman calls, when Ollie comes home from school.

"Mail from grandpa!" says Ollie with a smile. He opens the envelope.



2

Ollie runs into the kitchen,
where his Mum is preparing spaghetti for dinner.

"Mummy, listen to what Grandpa writes!"
he shouts excitedly.

"He wants me to visit him
during the autumn holidays!"



3

"Autumn holidays? That's already next week!" answers his Mum.
"All the better," says Ollie and takes another spoonful of tomato sauce.

"You'll have to travel on your own, though, because I have to go to the computer fair with Dad," says Mum.

"No problem!" says Ollie. "After all, I'll be eight soon."



4

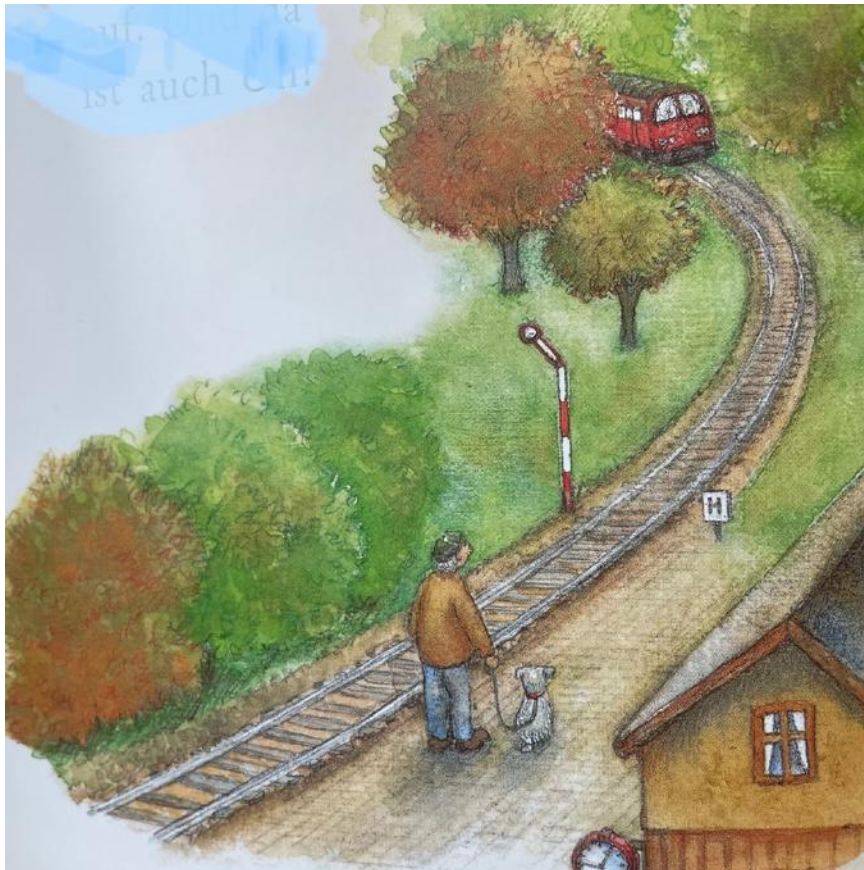
Right after lunch, Ollie goes to his room and writes the answer to Grandpa on his little computer.



5

The next Sunday at eleven o'clock, Ollie is on the train!
He keeps looking at the piece of paper,
on which Dad has written down the stations.
Grandpa's is the seventh.

When the conductor checks the tickets, he says:
"You have to get off at the next stop!"
"I know," says Ollie. "In Forest Hills. That's where my grandfather
lives."



6

Unfortunately, the train is fifteen minutes late.
Grandpa is already waiting anxiously on the platform.
Did Ollie get off at the wrong station by mistake?
Finally the train arrives!
It stops with squealing brakes.
A door flies open. And there's Ollie!



7

"Grandpa!" calls Ollie and hops onto Grandpa's arm. He points in surprise at the little dog that Grandpa is holding on a leash and asks: "Who's that???"

"That's Mr Major," says Grandpa. "A surprise for you! He's staying with me for a while because my neighbor is away for some time."

"Then there are three of us. That's great! Can I hold the leash?"

"Sure, but give me your bag!"



8

Grandpa lives on Forest Hill. Mr Major knows the way exactly.
He pulls and tugs.

Ollie has to hold the leash quite tightly.

"Grandpa, do you still remember the story about the man with the
magic dog you told me last year?" Ollie asks while they walk along.
But grandpa can't remember it.



9

Ah, well! thinks Ollie with surprise. It's the first time that grandpa doesn't remember something.

Grandpa sighs and says: "I've told so many stories all my life - and I'm afraid my memory isn't the best anymore."

Ollie laughs smartly and says:

"Grandpa: all you need is a computer! Computers have lots of memory."



10

"A computer? Me of all people?" exclaims grandpa in horror.

"Yes," says Ollie. "Dad has one and so does Mum. It remembers everything. Numbers, dates, letters, stories and other important things. If Dad or Mum have forgotten something or don't know something, they just ask their computer."

"Well, that's fine," sighs Grandpa. "Your dad thinks computers are good, for sure! After all, he sells the stuff to other people," grumbles Grandpa.

And it sounds like he doesn't quite share Ollie's enthusiasm for computers.



11

"Here we are!" says Grandpa a moment later and looks for the house key.

As they climb the stairs to the first floor, Ollie sniffs and asks, "Grandpa, what's that funny smell?"



12

"Oh dear! My cake!" exclaims Grandpa, startled. "I forgot to turn off the oven before I went to the station!"

Ollie wrinkles his nose and says, "Mum has a computer oven. It switches off automatically when the cake is ready!"

"You and your computers!" grumbles Grandpa, annoyed.



13

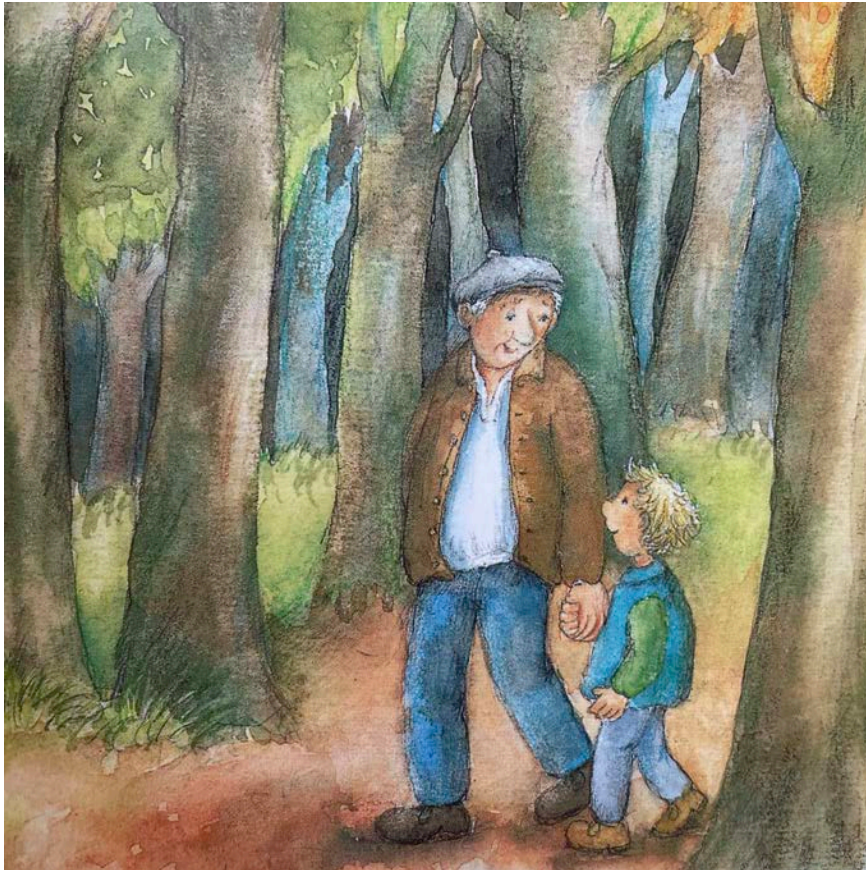
At lunch Ollie asks, "Grandpa, tell me, when you were a kid, did they have computers?"

Grandpa thinks for a moment.



14

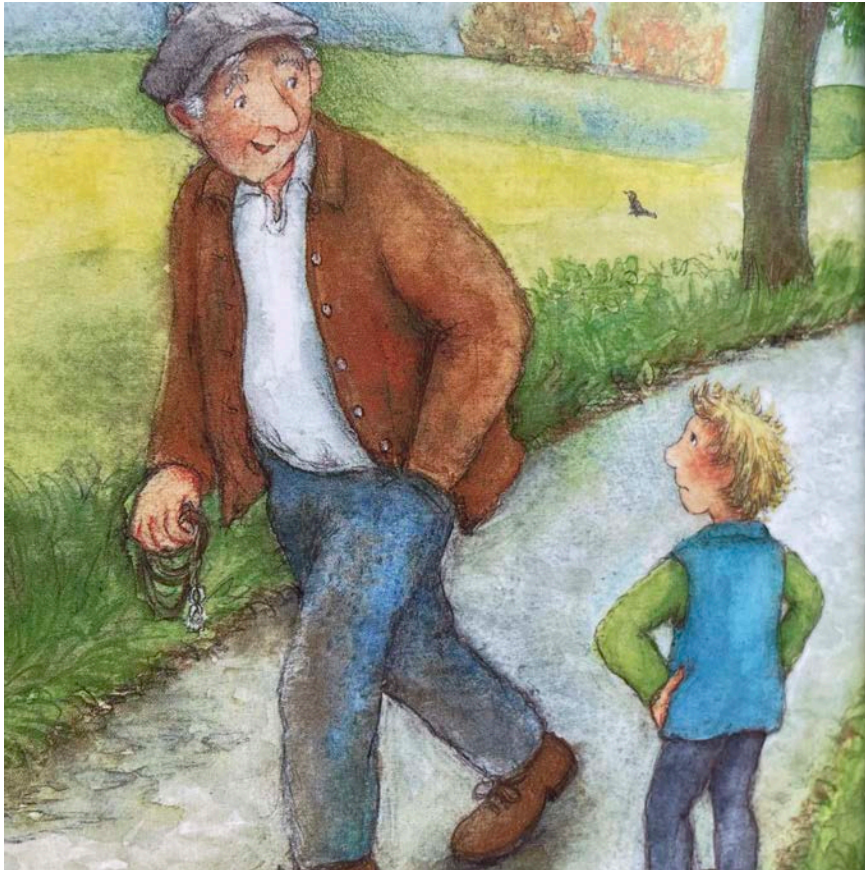
"Hmm, sure there were. You know what, after lunch we'll take Mr Major for a walk in the forest. And then I'll explain to you that modern computers are actually old stuff."



15

"Now what was that about the computer and the old stuff?"
inquires Ollie as they walk through the forest.

"Believe it or not, there were computers even when I was a little boy," says Grandpa. "If I'm not mistaken, there must still be one of those ancient things lying around somewhere in my garden house."



16

"A computer? In your shed? I don't believe it," says Ollie. "Did you make it yourself?"

Grandpa laughs. "No, it was built by someone much bigger than me."

Ollie looks up at his grandpa. He is six feet tall. With a cap six feet one. Someone even taller? Wow!



17

Grandpa smiles mysteriously and says, "I can even show you the factory where these computers are still being made today!"

"Huh? A computer factory? Here in Forest Hill?"

"Why not?" says Grandpa. "The company has already been existing for thousands of years."

"Grandpa, - are you kidding?" asks Ollie. He feels uneasy that Grandpa suddenly knows more about computers than he does.

"It's true! I swear!", grandpa assures him with a serious face.



18

They leave the forest and come to the meadows by the river.
There are many small gardens. One of them belongs to grandpa.

"Is there really a computer in the garden house. Wouldn't it rust?" Ollie fears.

"My computer does not rust!," says Grandpa cheerfully.

"I hope you haven't forgotten the key?" fears Ollie.

"No," laughs Grandpa. "It's under the flowerpot, as always."

"Even now that the computer is inside?"

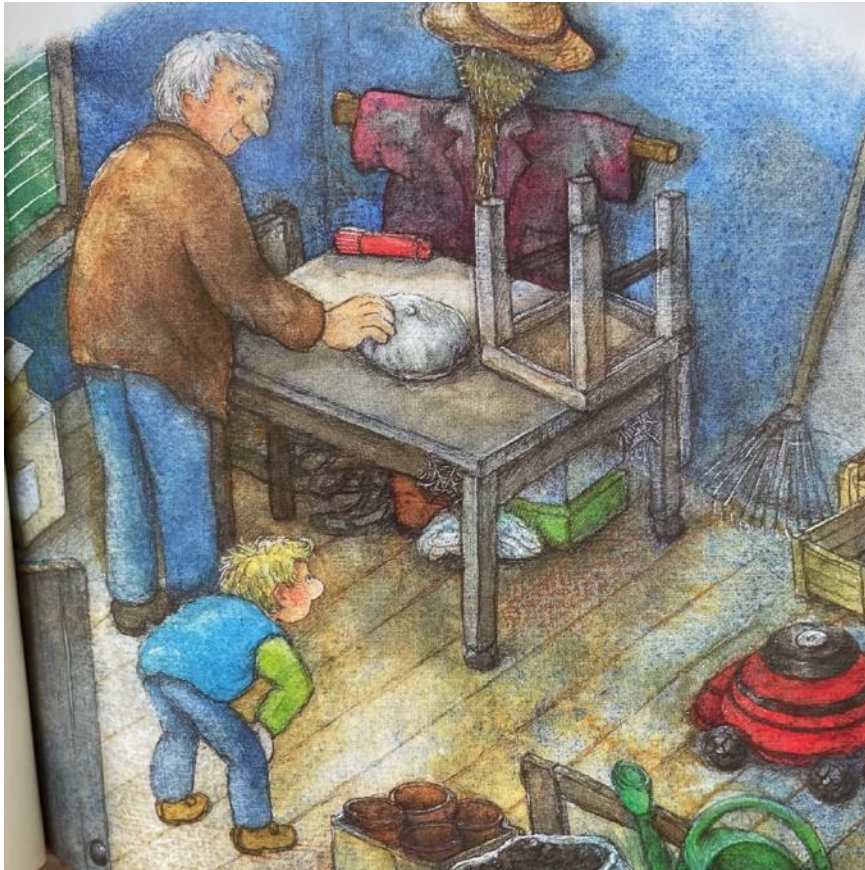
"Even now," says Grandpa.

"Quite careless," thinks Ollie.



19

Now they are standing in front of the garden house.
Grandpa bends down for the key and unlocks the door.
Ollie slips curiously through the door.



20

Ollie discovers old garden tools, a scarecrow, cobwebs and dusty furniture.

Among all this junk there is supposed to be a computer???

Grandpa opens the shutters. But even in the sunlight, Ollie cannot discover a computer.



21

"Where is it, your computer? And anyway, how is it supposed to work? Without electricity?", Ollie doubts.

"With solar energy!" says Grandpa.

Ollie is impressed. Grandpa really is on the cutting edge of technology.



22

Grandpa rummages around and mutters:

"Oh dear! Don't tell me a mouse has eaten it?"

Ollie looks at his grandpa suspiciously. Now he is really confused!

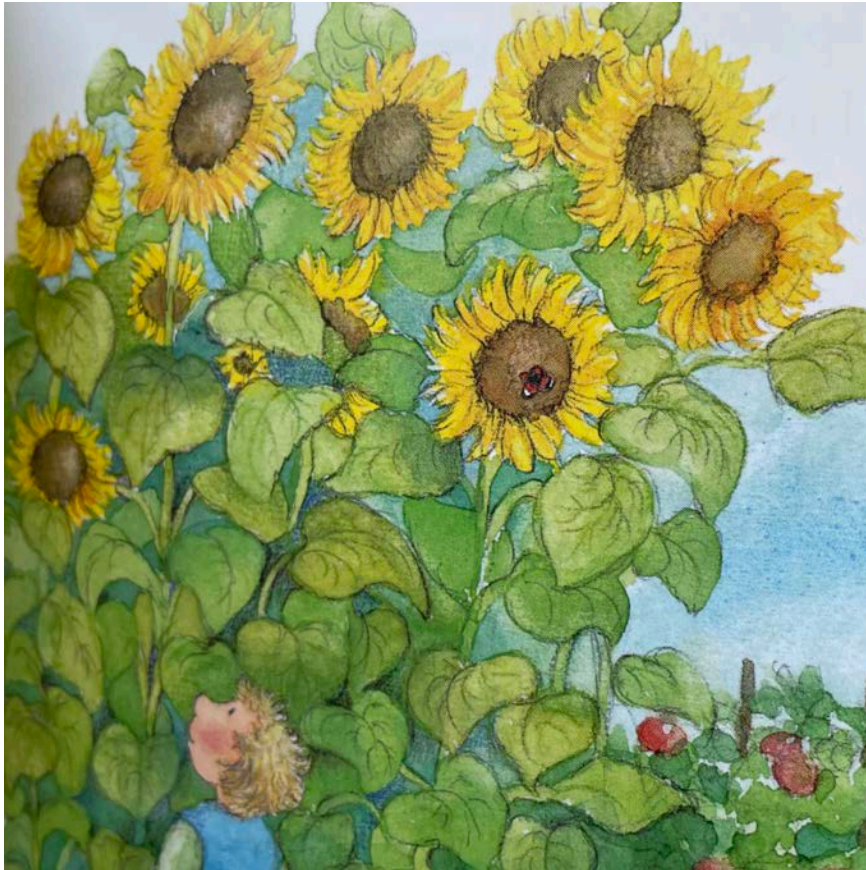
He knows a computer mouse. But a mouse that eats a computer?

"Come on," says the grandpa. "I think I have to explain the secret of the ancient computers outside."



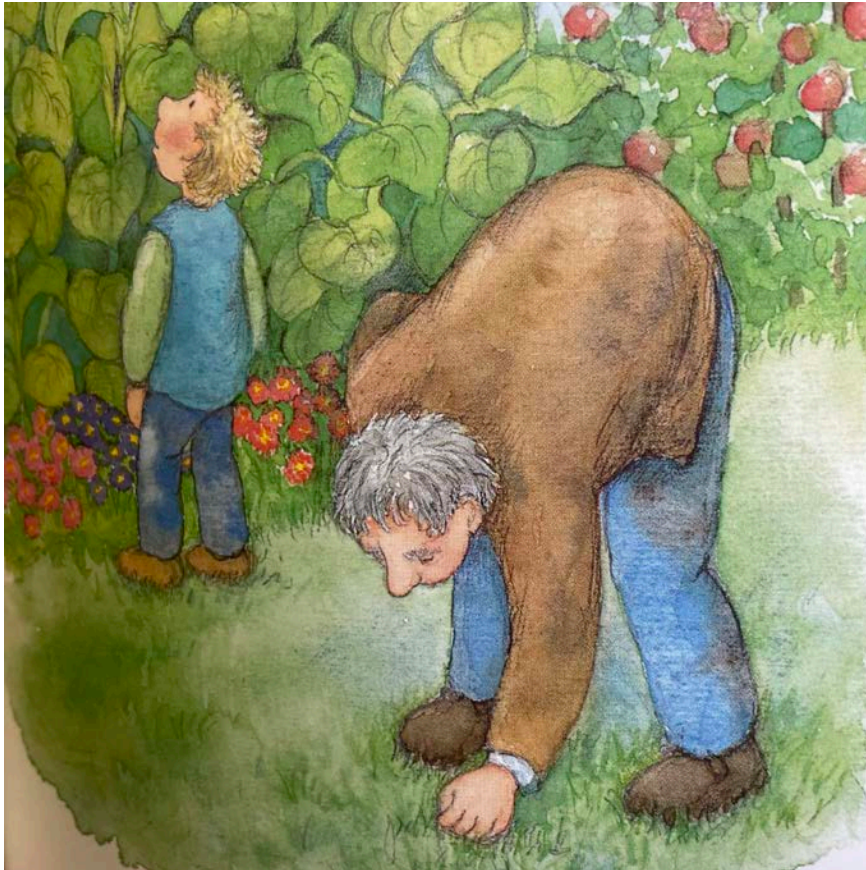
23

Mr Major is watering one of the mighty sunflowers by the garden fence.



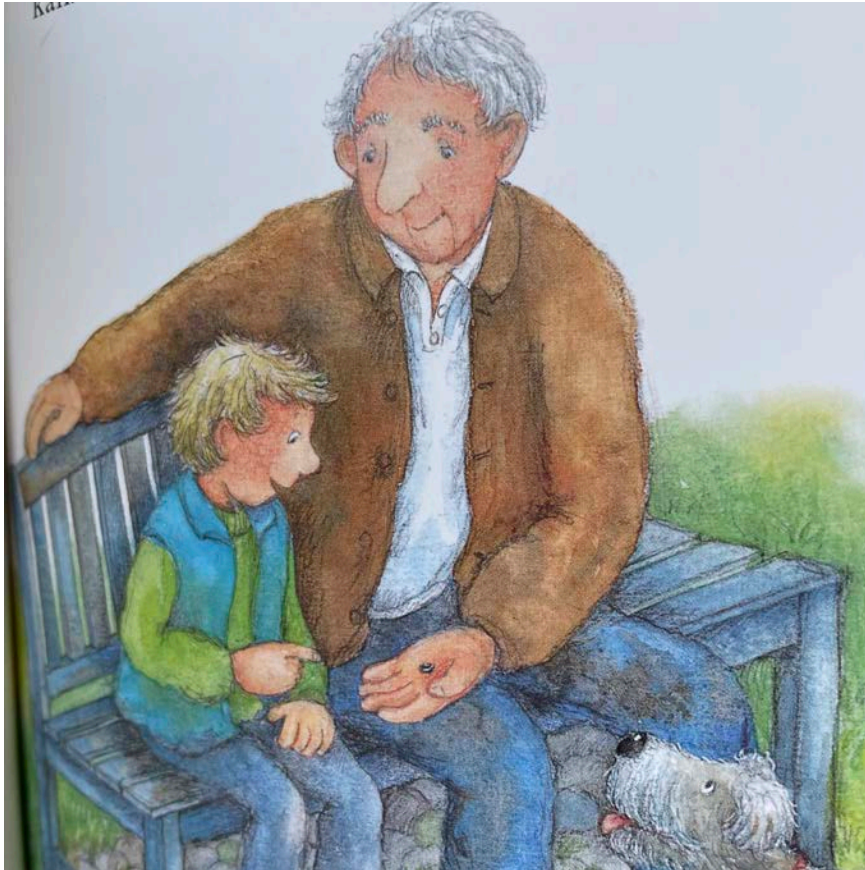
24

"Wow, they're much bigger than you!" marvels Ollie, stopping in front of the sunflowers.



25

"Much bigger," says Grandpa. He stoops to pick up something.
Ollie looks at him expectantly.
Grandpa says nothing for a while.



26

"The computer!", Ollie reminds him. Grandpa's memory is really slipping!

"I know, I know. I already have it here in my hand!" says Grandpa.
"Come on, let's sit down and I'll show it to you."

As they both sit on the bench in front of the summer house, Grandpa puts his right arm on Ollie's shoulder. Then he slowly opens his left fist and says, "Abracadabra, here it is. Black with white stripes. Handy size, tiny and streamlined!" On Grandpa's palm lies - a sunflower seed.



27

"This?" says Ollie disappointedly. "That's supposed to be a computer? That's just a sunflower seed!"

"Well," says grandpa. "You're right about that. But don't underestimate my sunflower-seed computer. It can run the most amazing programmes! You'll be amazed at how memory is stored in that little core."

"Like on a hard drive?" inquires Ollie.

Grandpa nods: "Exactly! This tiny core knows the complicated blueprints for leaves, roots and flowers.

It knows how the stem has to be constructed so that it doesn't bend over in the wind.

It knows how to transport the water up to the flower. Without a pump!

It also knows how to prepare the nutrients a plant needs to grow from water, light and soil."

"Wow!" says Ollie, impressed. "That's really great!"



28

Grandpa stands up. He cuts off one of the sunflower blossoms and puts it in Ollie's hand.

"The stem is all hollow inside!" marvels Ollie.

"Exactly. Because then it's lighter and more pliable and won't break off at the first gale!"

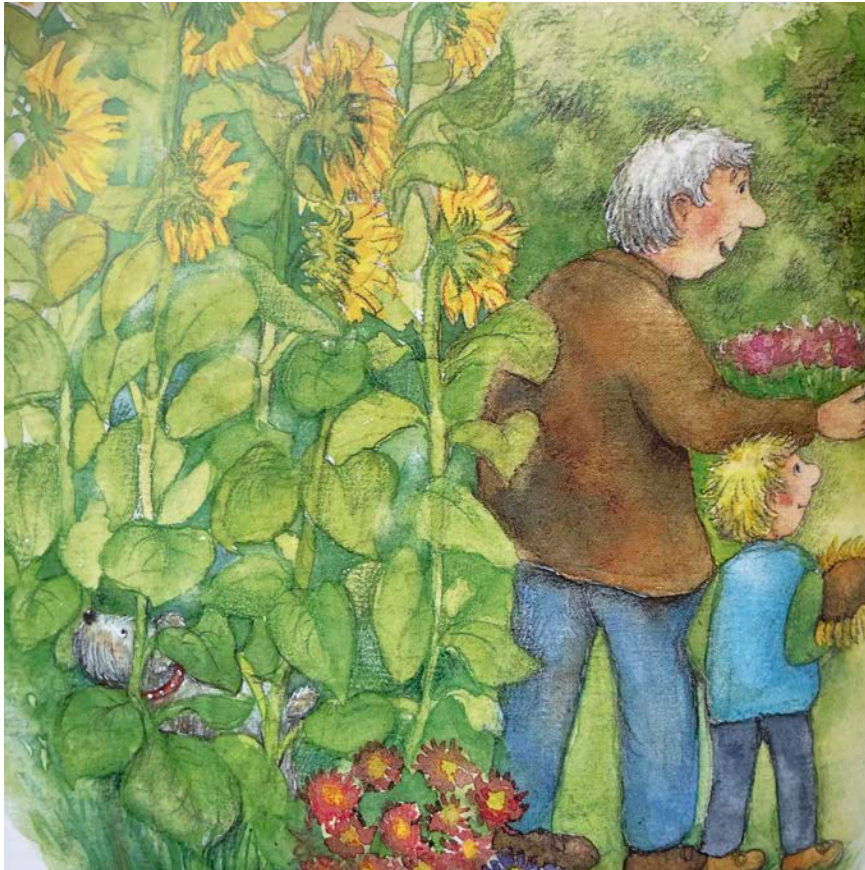
Grandpa rocks the heavy plate of golden-yellow sunflower blossoms back and forth in his hand, with the seeds sitting in the middle.

"It looks like a cake!" thinks Ollie.



29

Grandpa laughs: "And our little core knows exactly how long to bake this cake! It's a computer cake, because every autumn many hundreds of new little sunflower seed computers ripen in each flower and can make copies of themselves. No computer in the world can do that!"



30

"And next autumn, those hundreds of sunflowers will each make many hundreds more, and the year after that.... Wow, you could soon supply the whole world with your sunflower seed computers!", marvels Ollie.

"Yes," smiles Grandpa, "if it weren't for the birds!"

Ollie is silent. He thinks. "Is it like that with all plants?"

"Something like that," says Grandpa. "Tulips have a bulb computer and asters grow from tiny seeds. Cherries, peaches and nuts have nuclear computers ..."



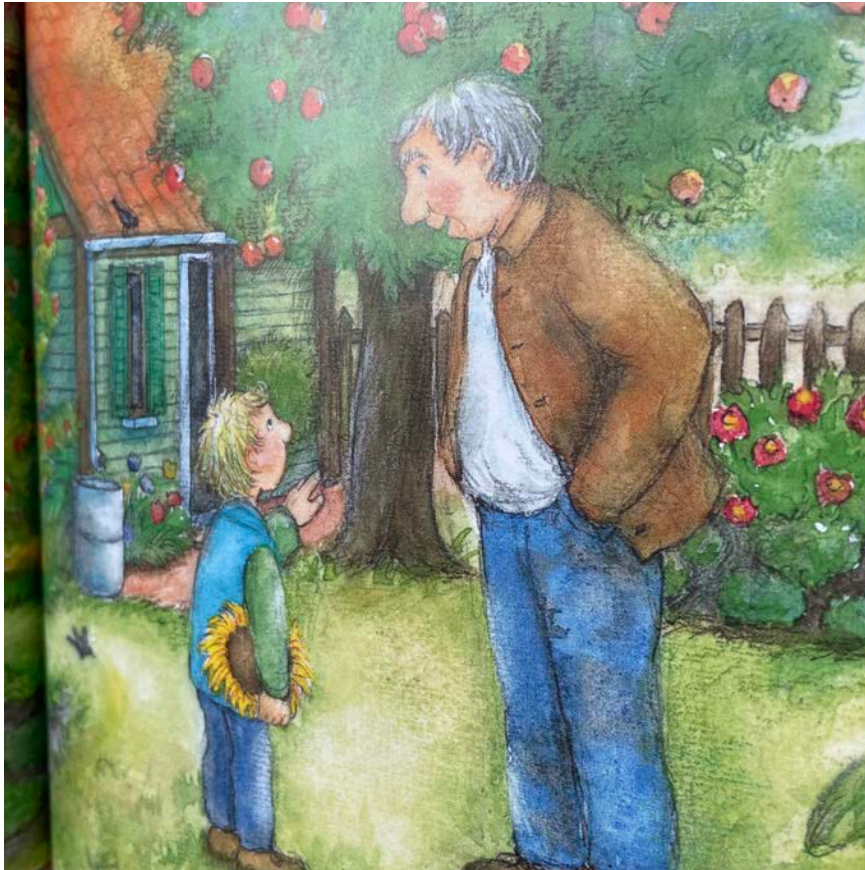
31

Ollie points to the apple tree standing in the middle of the garden and says:

"That means, doesn't it, that in every tiny apple seed there is the programme for a big apple tree? With blossoms, fruit, roots and everything?", asks Ollie.

"Exactly!" confirms Grandpa.

"Wow! That's really amazing!" Ollie is thrilled. He now understands what grandpa means. And he has an idea!



32

Ollie picks up an empty nut shell, fills it with soil and presses a sunflower seed in it.

"Now I know what I'm going to bring Dad and Mum from the trip!" says Ollie.



33

"I'll tell them it's a sunflower-seed computer, in a nutshell!"

"Good idea!" says Grandpa. "And ask your parents if any of their computers is as amazing as this one."

