

ENRIC SENABRE

LAIA PLAYS

WITH
HER

PHONE

ILLUSTRATED BY
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bromera

Keys for responsible
mobile use

Laia and family

The Romeu Vilavella family was a normal family, although that isn't saying very much, because all families are different and all are normal; there are those that have two fathers, others that have two mothers, as well as those that live with the grandparents, those that have two houses because the parents are divorced and those who live with just one of their parents because the other is longer there or never existed. Laia's family was formed of her mother, her father and Aina, her sister. Then there was Grandma Maria, her father's mother, who looked after them when their parents couldn't. Oh, and her invisible friend, with whom she shared all her secrets.

Since she was little, Laia, who was slender, pale-skinned, blonde and always under the weight the

paediatrician said she should be at her age, had always been a reserved girl who didn't speak a lot. Perhaps due to timidity or shyness, she preferred to be alone and, therefore, she needed the company of someone to play with and share her obsessions with. Her secret friend went everywhere with her and with him she felt confident and secure, even though no one knew him, only her.

Aina, her sister, who looked completely different, her hair and skin darker and smoother, her character more outgoing and sociable, knew how to be the centre of attention of any gathering and was the leader of her friendship group. However, for Laia, she was a pain, because she was older and thought she knew everything and could boss everyone about, even though she didn't have her invisible friend and didn't know what he explained to her.

Her mum and dad were also a pain, always on top of her, keeping tabs on her phone, asking her if she'd done her homework, if she'd eaten or slept. Sometimes they even came close to discovering her invisible friend, but then they didn't quite find him. The best was her grandma, who came to their house to look after them and fell asleep and Laia could do whatever she wanted the whole time. Her parents, on the other hand, were a drag, always worrying, except when they had work to do, then they forgot to tell her off for a while. In that sense, her family wasn't

so normal, because her friends' families weren't so annoying.

She also wasn't in the majority when it came to the issue of phones. Her parents controlled her phone use, they only let her have it when they didn't want her to bother them or when she'd already done her homework or read for a bit. And so her afternoons often seemed to drag, and more so because they had installed a system which managed the time and apps she could use. Her friends' families weren't so watchful; some of them had even given them their own device and let them have it pretty much whenever wanted, with fewer controls than she had.



Do you already have a phone or haven't they bought you one yet?

Don't worry, there isn't a minimum or a maximum age for having one and it depends a lot on what your family thinks and on your maturity. And, even if you don't have one, I'm sure you can understand the situations we'll be talking about in the pages that follow.



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Trapped by the phone

That afternoon, Laia was concentrating hard while playing on the old phone she had at home, a really ancient one her dad had given her because it barely had capacity to install anything on it. She could use it on the house Wi-Fi for the few games it had, as well as for one or two other apps she'd been able to download. When she did, she was captivated by the device and didn't notice anything else that was going on around about her, it was as if she entered the game and the rest of the world disappeared. On this occasion, her dad had been talking to her for a while, but she just heard a distant voice and paid no attention. Until a hand shook her firmly. It was him, wanting her to listen to him.

‘Hey, pay attention! Listen to me! Come on, put down the phone for a second and let’s talk, I’ve got lots to tell you.’

‘Done? Have you finished playing? Did you make it to the next level. Ok, great. Well done! Look, I want us to talk about what you’re holding, yes, that device you enjoy so much, that makes you laugh, excites you and connects you with all your friends.’

‘Dad, this again?’ she complains while rolling her eyes like the WhatsApp emoji.

‘No, no, wait, you can carry on with the game in a minute, first we’re going to chat a little bit. What were you doing? You were completely absorbed; you didn’t even hear me.’

‘I was playing, and about to reach the next level, you wouldn’t want me to leave something half done!’

‘No, no, but it was as if you were on another planet.’

‘I heard you, but I couldn’t stop.’

‘And do you think that’s okay? Don’t you reckon you should consider there are other things to do?’

‘But I like playing with the phone! Why do I have to do other things. Anyway, I have my friend I compete with and I want to win.’

‘I’m not saying you shouldn’t, just not all the time, because if you get lost in the phone, you forget to play with the new toys you got as presents, and you’re disregarding me and your sister and your other friends.’

‘What if I prefer the phone? Right now I don’t want to play with my toys, and Aina is using hers too, and I can choose who I spend time with.’

‘But you’re younger and you need to learn lots of things and have lots of friends.’

‘Today I don’t have any homework and I don’t want to do anything else.’

‘I’m not saying do homework, just that you should have fun with other games that aren’t on the phone. That’s enough now, give it to me and go do something else.’

And just like that, her dad took the phone from her and left her bored stiff. Recently, she’d been able to talk to her invisible friend, who’d appeared in the game. It was such a joy to find him, because they shared their tricks and secrets in the chat. When he told her that he was a special friend who no one could see, she immediately decided he was her imaginary friend and she’d never felt less lonely. That’s why it annoyed her that her dad so seldom let her play, because she was left without her friend. Nevertheless, for a moment she stopped thinking about the game and went to her room, where she started doing a jigsaw her friends had given her for her birthday and she was so focused that it was dinner time before she realised it. After all, having her phone wasn’t so necessary, playing other things was also fun, but she didn’t realise it until she put it down and entertained herself with something else.

