

Fundación **MAPFRE**

# Julia, Penguin and the Spy

Carlo Frabetti

Illustrations by Mónica Calvo



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CARLO FRABETTI was born in Italy and lives in Spain. He has been writing in Spanish for many years. He is inquisitive, observant and incredibly skilled at merging seemingly unconnected worlds. He combines his mathematical background with his passion for classic stories, humor with narrative rigor, complex novels for adults with successful collections of children's books and scripts for well-known TV programs.

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# JULIA, PENGUIN AND THE SPY

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Penguin isn't a penguin, he's a dog. But as a puppy he was very clumsy and when she saw him walking, Julia's grandma used to say, 'he's waddling around like he's got two left feet', and although his real name is Saturnine, everyone calls him Penguin. Now Penguin is one year old and he's not clumsy anymore. Quite the opposite — he jumps and runs with great ease and even catches flies mid-flight.

Julia loves to take Penguin for a walk and they usually go to the park near her house. Penguin is a very friendly dog and he never attacks anyone, but Julia always keeps him on a leash in case he scares someone or runs off all of the sudden. On the way to the park and on the way back home, Julia always looks both ways before crossing the street — even at crosswalks and green lights, a careless driver could give them a fright or Penguin might even frighten the driver.




She also tries not to get too close to bicycles going down the bicycle lane because if Penguin were playing around he might jump at them and make someone fall off their bike. There's a very narrow street with no sidewalks close to Julia's house.









Julia walks along the left side of that street because that way she's facing the oncoming traffic and can see if there are any cars.

And she keeps Penguin on a tight leash, almost holding him by the collar.

She also usually takes a street that doesn't have any crosswalks or traffic lights. Julia knows she has to cross close to the corner and not in the middle of the street.

Penguin has learned that too and pulls Julia towards the corner.

Julia never crosses in front of a bus or any other large vehicles because there might be a moving car on the other side that she can't see.

Penguin knows that and doesn't pull on the leash until the road is clear.



If it rains or it's an overcast day, Julia puts her red raincoat on. Not just so she doesn't get wet, but also so drivers can see her better.

And she's even more cautious than normal when crossing the street because cars don't brake so well when the ground is wet. Penguin doesn't mind getting



wet, and living up to his name, he even splashes in the puddles.

When she's wearing her hooded raincoat, Julia imagines she's Little Red Riding Hood, Penguin is the wolf and that instead of walking through the city they're wandering through the forest.

One day, on her way to the park with Penguin, Julia thought a suspicious-looking man was following her.





He looked like a spy from a spy movie with the collar on his trench coat pulled up and his hat pulled right down to his eyebrows.

To see if the man was following her, Julia decided to make a detour instead of going straight to the park. She even went around the block twice. Penguin gave her a baffled look since he noticed that they weren't taking the usual route.





Even though she felt a little nervous, Julia didn't run or do anything rash. She finally convinced herself that no one was following her and went to the park.

She walked among the trees for a while as Penguin sniffed at everything he saw and peed on the tree trunks to mark his territory.

And suddenly, there he was! With a shudder, Julia saw the man in the trench coat sitting on a bench, reading the paper. Or pretending to read the paper – that’s what spies tended to do in the movies Julia had seen.

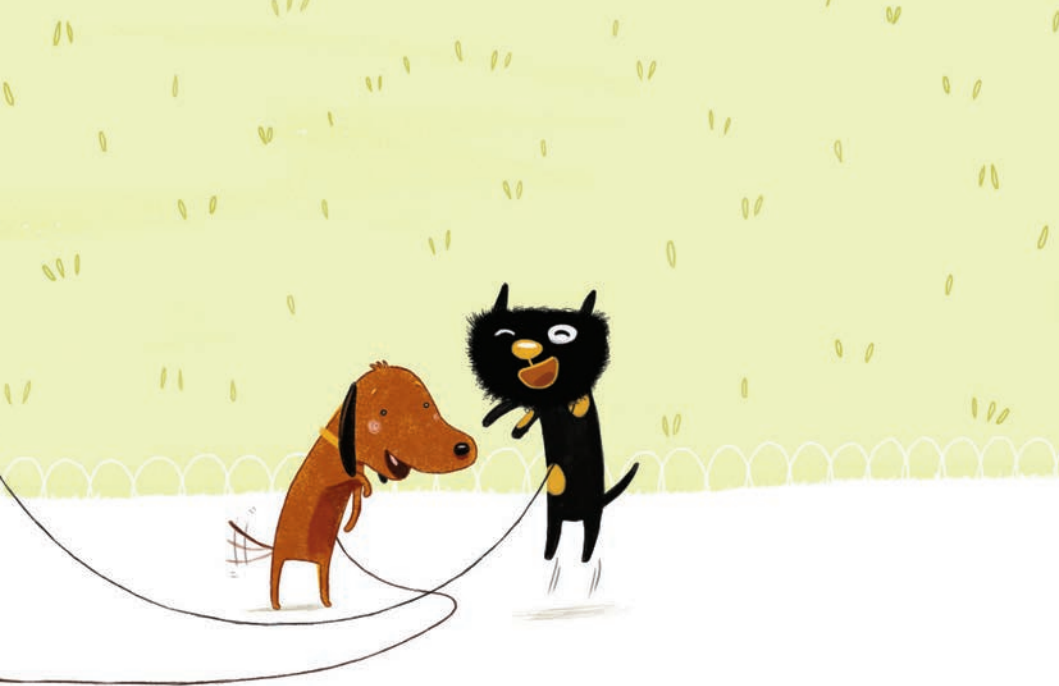
Penguin also seemed to recognize the man and tried to go up to him but Julia stopped him. That man could be dangerous. Luckily, Julia spotted Antonio – a neighbor who also usually took his dog, a friend of Penguin’s, to the park. He was quite an old man and a little absent-minded, but he was very big.





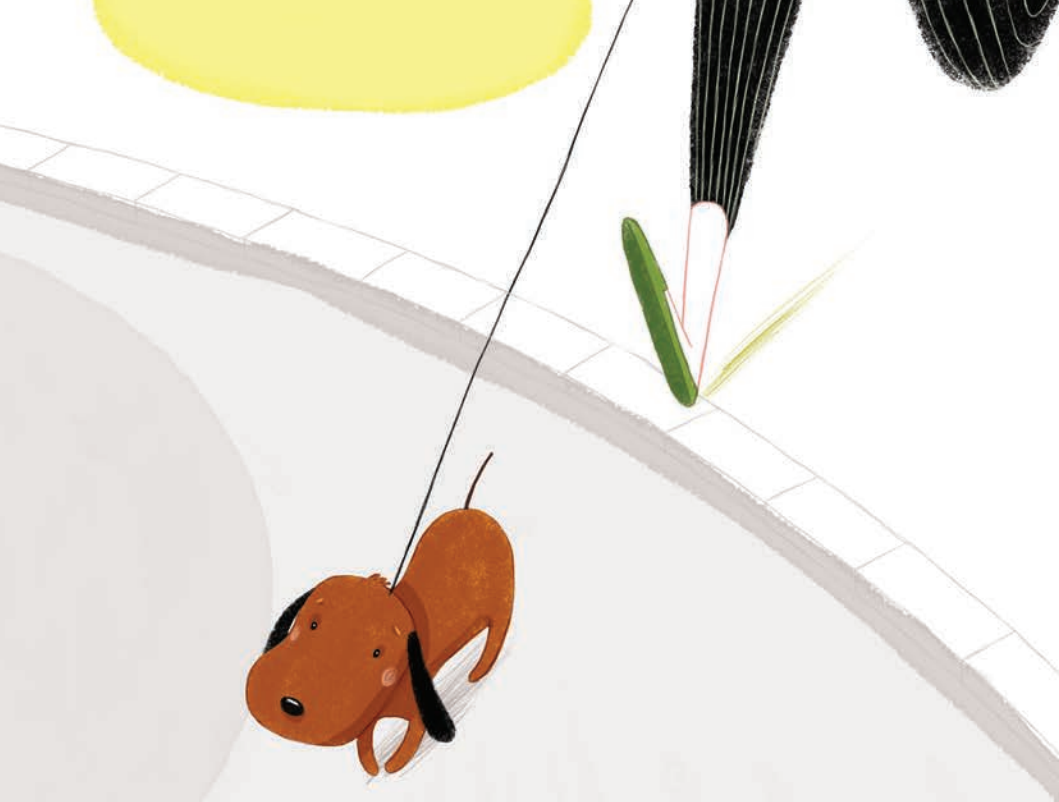
The man in the trench coat certainly would not dare to do anything to her if he saw her with Antonio.

And anyway, Julia had her cell phone ready. It was a special one for children. Following the safety instructions given by the police and the firefighters, the first name in her cell phone's address book was «Amom». The «A» before



«mom» stood for “Alert”. But no one would need to alert her mom because she kept the phone in her hand ready to call her herself at the faintest sign of danger. Her neighbor, Antonio, was very kind and friendly and thrilled to see Julia.

Antonio’s dog, Luna, was also happy to see Penguin.



Julia didn't say a word about the spy. She just walked next to Antonio until he looked at his watch and exclaimed, 'I didn't realize how late it was! Luna and I need to get home.'

'Well, Penguin and I do too', said Julia. And the four of them went off together. The man in the trench coat remained seated on the bench, reading the

newspaper. Or pretending to read it...

Antonio was a bit scatterbrained. A few times he tried to cross the street when the traffic light was yellow but Penguin barked at him and Julia stopped him.



‘There’s not enough time to cross, Antonio,’ she warned him, ‘and sometimes the cars shoot out when the light turns green for them.’  
‘You’re right,’ he agreed, ‘It’s just that Luna’s impatient and pulls on the leash. Sometimes I wonder if I’m the one walking her or if she’s walking me.’

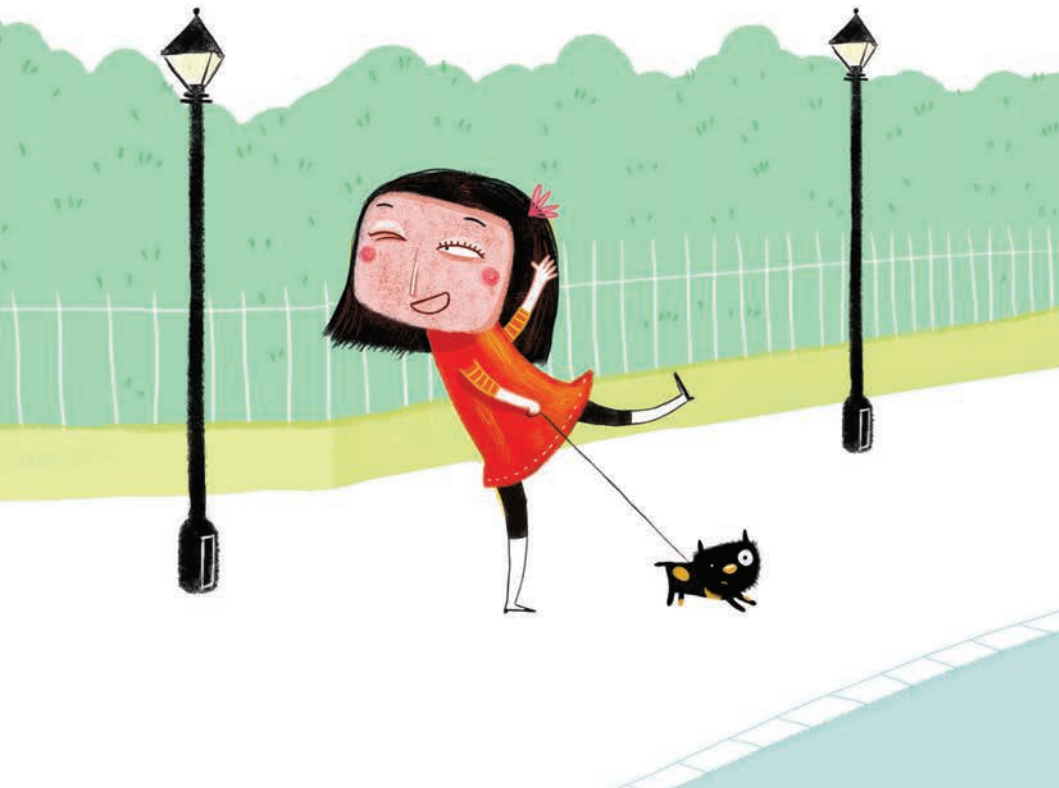




Her neighbor was also about to cross in the middle of the street where there was no crosswalk.

‘You have to cross close to the corner, Antonio,’ Julia reminded him, ‘where cars go more slowly and pay more attention.’

A few minutes later they had arrived. Antonio and Julia lived on the same



# CAFETERÍA



street, right next door to each other.

‘Well, Luna and I will say goodbye here,’ said Antonio, stopping at his door.

‘Thanks for keeping us company the whole way home.’

‘Thank you for protecting me from spies,’ said Julia, and he laughed, thinking the girl was joking.

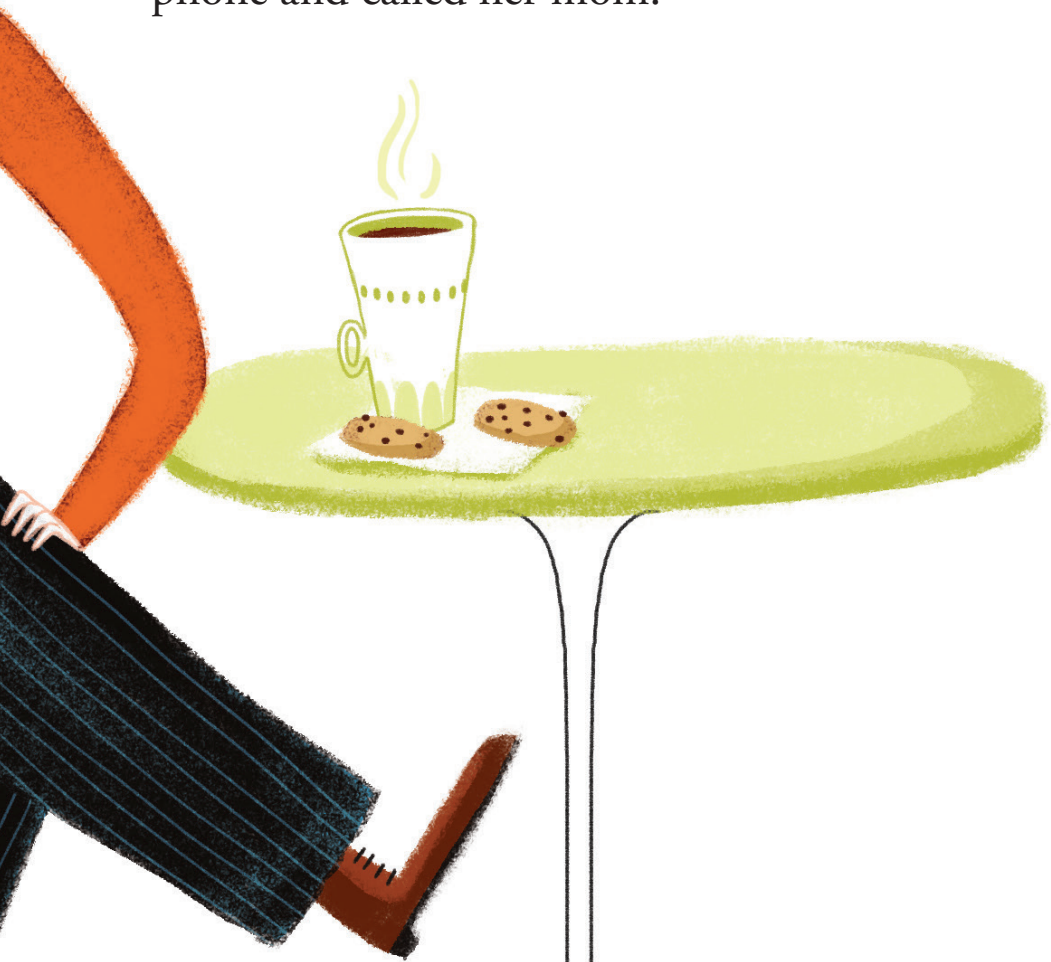
She started to think that maybe it was all in her head.

But when she was just a few steps away from her door, the man in the trench coat appeared from around the corner and started walking towards her.

Penguin made a low growling noise and stood in front of Julia to protect her.



Just then, they were passing in front of a café and without giving it another thought, Julia jumped inside. 'No dogs allowed in here, kid,' said one of the waitresses, but Julia replied, 'It's an emergency', and she whipped out her cell phone and called her mom.



‘Mom, I’m at the café close to our house,’ she said, ‘Please come right away.’ Her mom didn’t ask any questions. All she said was, ‘I’m coming’, and three minutes later she was there with her.

‘What’s wrong, Julia?’ her mother asked.

‘You scared me.’

‘Did you see a man wearing a trench coat and a hat, mom?’



‘Yes, he’s standing right outside. It looks like he’s waiting for someone.’

‘He’s waiting for me. He’s been following me this whole time.’

‘Are you sure, honey?’

‘Absolutely.’

Before Julia could even tell her mom to be careful, she was already outside, standing up to the man in the trench coat.

‘Are you following my daughter?’ she asked him, not beating around the bush.

Julia ran out after her mom.

To her surprise, the man took off his hat and said with a smile, ‘Yes, madam, I’ve been following her for quite a while.’

‘Would you mind telling me why?’

‘Of course, madam. You see, I work for a company that conducts surveys and we’re following some children to see whether they stick to the road safety rules.’

Realizing that he wasn’t dangerous, Penguin stopped growling at the man, who went







on to say, 'I must congratulate you, madam, because your daughter got a perfect score. She even helped a scatter-brained adult follow the rules... Here's



my card. If you call my office tomorrow, I'll tell you where you can pick up the prize your daughter has won for her exemplary conduct.'

When they got home, as she was putting food in his bowl, Julia said to her dog, 'It's funny, Penguin - people usually get followed for doing something wrong and we got followed for doing something right.'







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