

Serena Lim

REMEMBERING FOR THE TWO OF US







Remembering For the Two of Us

Serena Lim



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Editor: Zoe Toh

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167 Jalan Bukit Merah

#05-12 Connection One Tower 4

Singapore 150167

Tel/Fax: (65) 6273 7623

Website: www.candidcreation.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CandidCreationPublishing

Email: enquiry@candidcreation.com

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Supported by



Jesus,
the Author and Perfecter of our Faith

Mum,
whose magnanimity of heart still shines through

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Foreword

I am honoured to be invited to share my thoughts on *Remembering for the Two of Us* by Serena Lim.

I am excited about this book. I can see myself using it to support students of different ages in relation to the severity of the condition being experienced. It holds many potential conversation starters which will help to address the confusion, fear, embarrassment, sadness, and sense of loss and helplessness that young children struggle with in facing a grandparent with dementia.

In my capacity as someone providing pastoral care and support for the social-emotional development of school children, I often encounter students who approach me for help to deal with their pain of losing a grandparent to dementia. Oftentimes, it is the parents who refer their children to me. It can be just as hard for parents to address the same loss their children are experiencing, as they too may be equally affected.

Not only will students get to understand more about dementia through the story itself, the set of activities at the end of each chapter is a superb tool for facilitating meaningful connections between the young readers and their grandparents in the midst of the changes that dementia brings. Students may see this as a form of self-help. It can empower them to become more creative in establishing new and meaningful bonds with their loved one over time.

Ultimately, this could facilitate a healthy acceptance of the loss of the grandparent they once knew, without losing their own identity and relationship with their loved one. Most of the students and their families I had the privilege to journey with find great strength and comfort in knowing that even when their loved one may no longer

recognise them one day, their identity as the person in question's grandchild and/or children will remain unchanged. The activities in this book help build precious memories which will certainly be treasured for life.

It is my delight to commend this work to you.

Chan Huang Meng

Master of Social Science (Counselling)

Bachelor of Arts (Social Work)

Note to Young Readers

Do you know that you're holding a very special book in your hands?

Yes, indeed! This book is going to help you grow, well, not physically, but as a person. It'll help expand your mind and enlarge your heart to love others more! How marvellous is that?

This book will help you to understand "dementia". What's dementia, you ask? You'll find out in the very first chapter.

Remember, if there's any part of the book that you don't understand, just ask Mummy, Daddy, your teacher or another trusted adult to explain it to you.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find a special surprise—fun and meaningful activities to do on your own, or better yet, with Grandma, Grandpa, Mummy or Daddy. I'm sure they'll enjoy spending time doing the activities together with you!

Enjoy the book!

Note to Adults

According to the World Health Organisation, dementia affects 50 million people worldwide, with 10 million new cases being diagnosed every year. By 2030, dementia will affect more than 103,000 people in Singapore (Source: Dementia-Friendly Singapore). What this means is that many of us, including children, will know someone—a grandparent, a neighbour, an uncle, an aunt, even a parent—with dementia. This book seeks to help children make sense of the often bewildering mental, emotional and behavioural changes affecting those with dementia.

How to use this book

You could use it as a conversation starter by inviting young readers to discuss the story:

- What do they see? E.g. What do you see happening with Grandma and Agnes? Why do you think Grandma is behaving in this manner?
- How do they feel? E.g. How do you feel about what is happening with Grandma and Agnes? Do you feel the same way Agnes does? Why?
- What can they do? E.g. If you were Agnes, how would you try to help Grandma?

This See-Feel-Do discussion can help children make sense of what they are witnessing and for adults to understand how children are coping so that you can navigate this journey together, with wisdom and grace.

At the end of every chapter, you will find fun and meaningful activities that promote inter-generational bonding and reinforce the See-Feel-Do process. Do encourage children to do these activities with their grandparents or with you. The objective of the story and activities is to replace helplessness and confusion with knowledge and empathy. As young readers learn through Agnes's story, they discover how they too can make a positive difference by helping persons with dementia live with dignity and purpose.



Chapter 1 Where Are Grandma's Spectacles?

"Where are my spectacles? I can't find my spectacles!" shouted Grandma.

Grandma rarely shouted. Agnes immediately stopped what she was doing and ran to Grandma's room, calling out, "*Are they on your head, Grandma? You often prop them on top of your head.*"

Grandma felt the top of her head. "They're not here."

Scratching her head, Agnes wondered: *Where could they be?*

Could they be in the kitchen? Grandma sometimes left her spectacles next to the kettle after making a cup of *Teh-C* (tea with evaporated milk).

Agnes searched the kitchen.

There was no sign of Grandma's spectacles anywhere.





Could they be in the dining room? Grandma sometimes put her spectacles on the dining table after reading the newspaper.

Agnes checked the dining room. No sign of Grandma's spectacles there either.

Where could they be? Agnes scratched her head, a little harder this time. Could they be in the living room? Grandma sometimes left her spectacles on the coffee table after watching television.

Agnes went to the living room. She shifted the magazines on the coffee table. Again, nothing.

"Here, specky, specky! Come out, come out, wherever you are," Agnes called out to Grandma's spectacles, as if she were playing hide-and-seek with them.

All the searching was making Agnes feel like having a snack. Reaching for the chocolate ice cream in the freezer, Agnes saw something sticking out from behind the ice cream tub.

"Grandma, I've found your spectacles! They're in the freezer!"





How strange for Grandma to leave her spectacles in the freezer, thought Agnes.

"I can see clearly again," Grandma smiled as she put on her spectacles. Then, she frowned. "Oh, dear me! How did my spectacles end up in the... the... the..."

"Freezer?"

"Yes, that's the word—freezer. The word just slipped my mind."

That evening when Agnes's parents arrived home after work, Agnes told them what had happened. Mummy and Daddy exchanged worried glances.

Grandma had been acting quite strangely lately. Just the other week, she left her favourite earrings on the spice rack. Two days ago, she left her purse in the sink and yesterday, she forgot all about her weekly karaoke session at the neighbourhood community centre.

On top of that, Grandma had also been repeating herself a lot. "Have you eaten your breakfast, Agnes?" asked Grandma for the fifth time in 10 minutes.

"Yes, Grandma," replied Agnes. ***"Didn't I just tell you I've already eaten my breakfast?"***

Why was Grandma asking the same question over and over again?

Mummy decided to take Grandma to the hospital for a check-up. The doctor and nurses tested Grandma's memory. They also took pictures of Grandma's brain using a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanner, which is a large, tunnel-like machine that takes pictures of the insides of a person's body and brain.



Agnes stared hard at the MRI images. **"That's not Grandma!"** she exclaimed, a little startled at the strange black-and-white shapes with empty spaces in between them.



The doctor laughed. "That's an image of your Grandma's brain. That's what a brain looks like. Well, maybe not all brains..." he smiled weakly.

The doctor kept using the word "dementia" while talking to Mummy. **What did the word "dementia" mean?** Agnes had never heard the word before. The word was making Mummy sad.

Mummy was silent all the way home. Agnes didn't dare ask Mummy for an ice cream treat. Instead, she kept very quiet and held Grandma's hand tightly.

At home, Mummy and Daddy had a long talk in their bedroom. Agnes had a strange feeling in her tummy. The last time her parents had a talk like that was when Grandpa was very, very sick and went away forever.

When they finally came out from their room, Agnes went up to Mummy, her eyes now welled

up with tears. **"Is Grandma going away forever?"**

Agnes couldn't imagine life without Grandma. Grandma cooked her favourite meals, told her stories, sewed her party dresses, took walks in the park with her and watched television with her. Grandma was her BFF (Best Friend Forever)!



"Grandma's not going away, my dear," said Mummy, hugging Agnes.



"Grandma has dementia. The word 'dementia' refers to a set of symptoms caused by changes to the brain, which makes it hard for the brain to do all the jobs it has to do. That's why a person with dementia may find it hard to do things we take for granted, like remembering, thinking, talking and walking. That explains why Grandma has been forgetting what she just said or where she left her things of late."

"Can Grandma take some medicine to get better?"

Whenever Agnes was unwell, Mummy would give her medicine to help her get better.

"Medicine may help slow down Grandma's dementia, but doctors are still trying to find a cure for it."

"Can we catch Grandma's dementia?" asked Agnes, recalling the time the whole family caught the flu bug from one another. She didn't mind missing school for a few days, but she did mind missing ice cream treats for a whole week!

"No, Agnes. We can't catch it. I'll be attending a Dementia Care workshop to learn how we can help Grandma cope with what's happening to her mind and body. As a family, we must help Grandma as best as we can, okay?"

Agnes nodded.

Poor Grandma. If dementia was changing her brain and her body, would Grandma become a totally different person? Mummy said that Grandma would need love and help from everyone in the family.

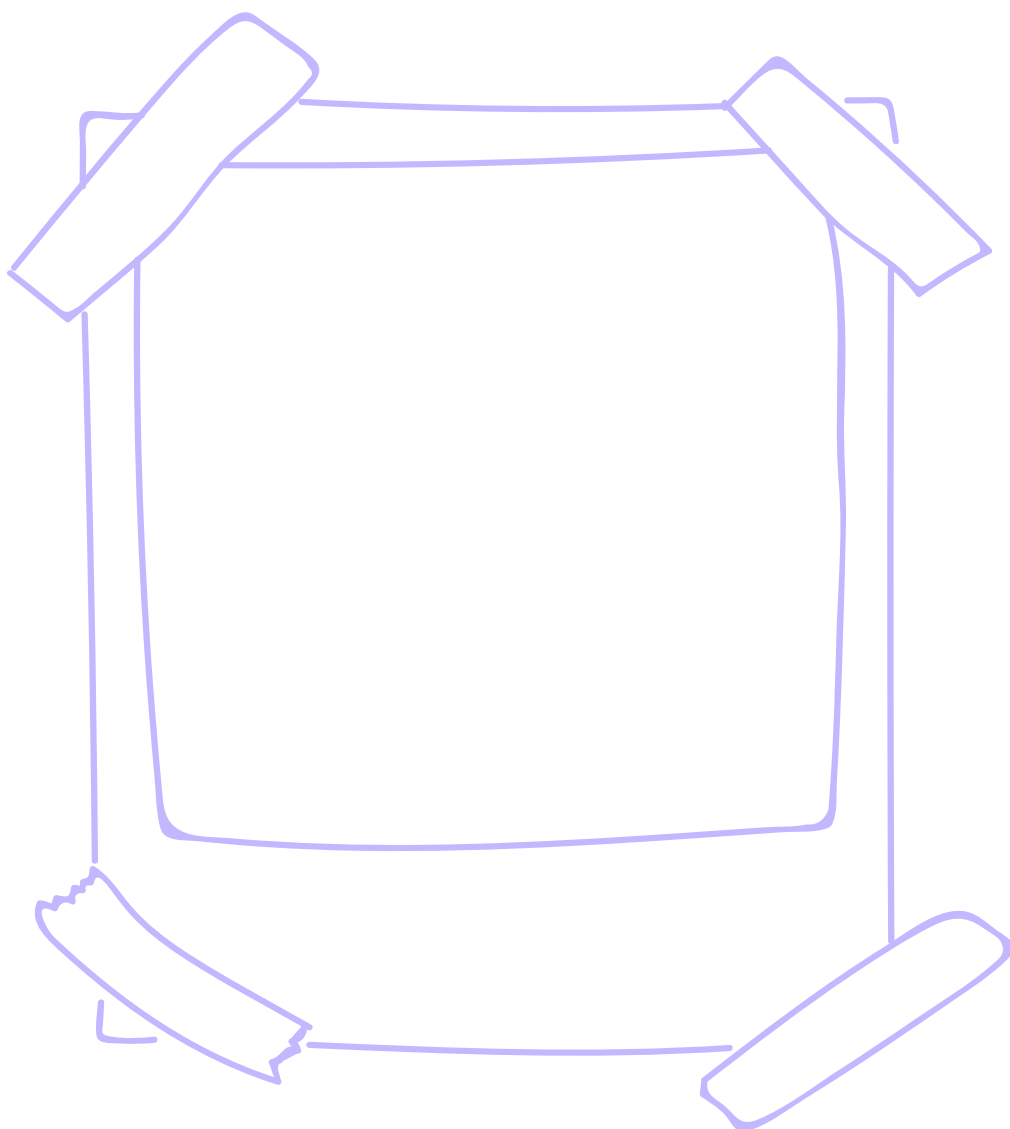
At the thought of it, Agnes ran into Grandma's room and gave her a big hug. It was her turn to look after Grandma.

Fun and Meaningful Activities

Talking about their memories helps those with dementia remember better.

Activity 1: Reminisce

Find an old photograph of your grandparents. Paste the photo or make a drawing of it in the picture frame below. (Remember to ask the owner of the photograph for permission first.)



Next, ask your grandparents to tell you more about the photograph. When was it taken? What was happening in the photo? What do they like about it? Write down what you find out in the space below.

What I Learnt

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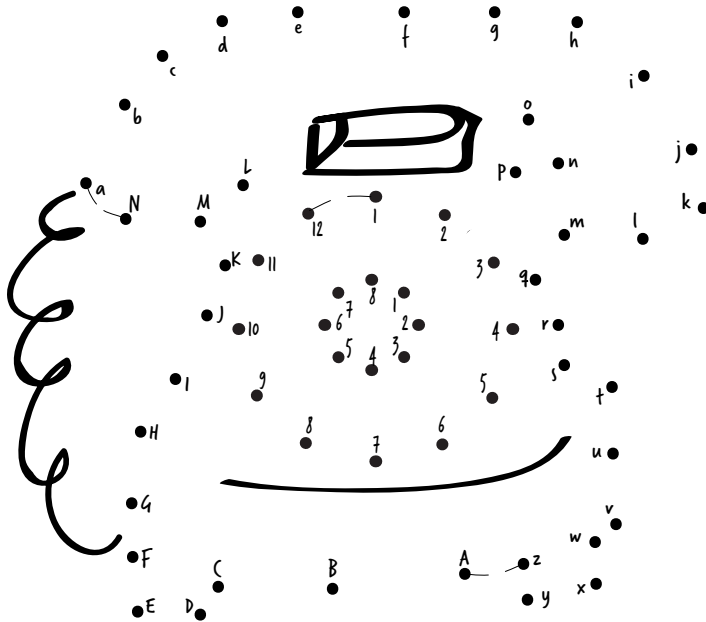
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Activity 2: Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to discover the instrument your grandparents used to talk to each other with when they were young.



Ask your grandparents to tell you more about the instrument. Write down what you learn in the space below.

What I Learnt

The instrument is a

.....

My grandparents used it to

.....

.....



Chapter 2

Where Are You, Grandma?

"Where's Grandma?" Mummy asked Agnes when she got home early from work one day.

"She's out buying her favourite afternoon snacks. You tiao (fried dough fritters) and tau huay (soya bean curd) — the usual, you know." Agnes replied.

"When did Grandma go out?"

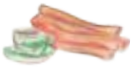
"Not too long ago, Mummy, about three o'clock." Agnes glanced at the clock and saw that it was now 4.30 p.m.! The time had passed so quickly!

Grandma usually got home by four o'clock, in time to watch her favourite soap opera on television. The hawker centre was a mere 10-minute stroll away and Grandma walked the same route every day. **Surely, she wouldn't get lost coming home,** thought Agnes anxiously.

After waiting 10 more minutes, Mummy decided to go look for Grandma at the hawker centre with Agnes. They headed straight for the you tiao stall.

"Did you see my Ma this afternoon?" Mummy asked the you tiao seller.

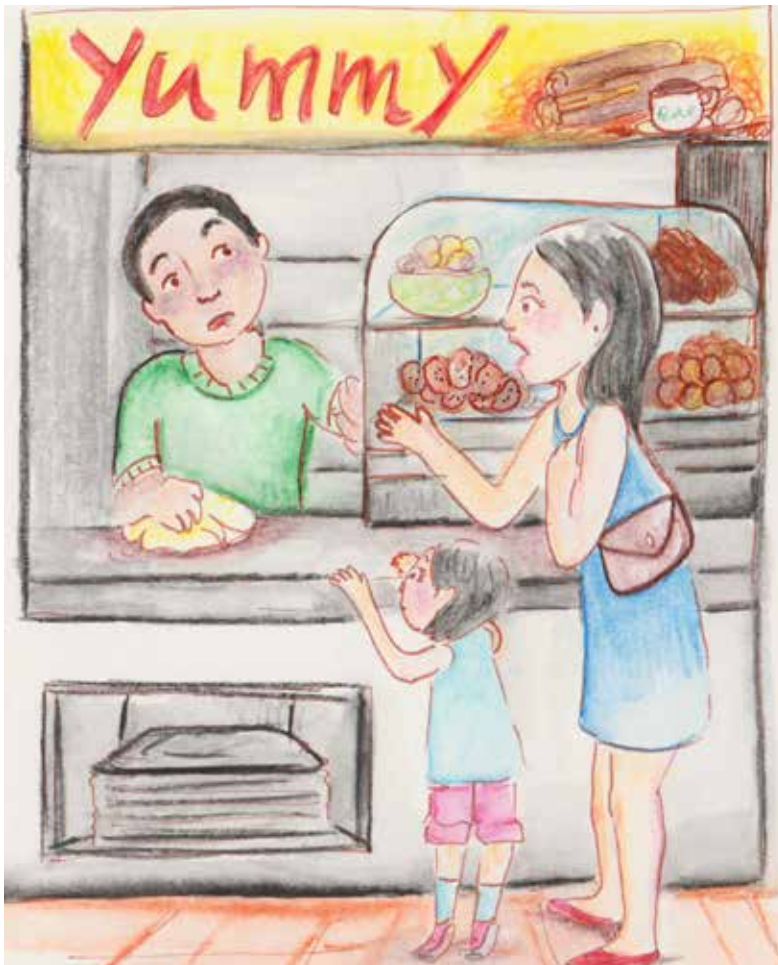
"Yes, she was here at her usual time, about 3.10 p.m.," the man replied, recognising Mummy and Agnes.



"Did she say where she was going next?" Mummy asked.

"The *tau huay* stall. You know how much your Ma loves her *you tiao* and *tau huay*," he said.

Mummy and Agnes walked to Grandma's favourite *tau huay* stall at the far end of the hawker centre.



"Did you see my Ma just now?" Mummy asked the *tau huay* seller.

"Yes, she came here after going to the *you tiao* stall. She told me that besides buying *you tiao*, she also bought a *butterfly* (sweet dough fritter



in the shape of a butterfly) for her granddaughter," the *tau huay* seller replied.

"Where could she be? Could she be lost?" Mummy wondered aloud.

"Don't worry," the *tau huay* seller comforted Mummy. "Why don't you check at the Go-To Point at the neighbourhood eldercare centre?"

Mummy's face immediately brightened. "Oh yes, we'll look for her there! Thank you!"

As they hurried to the eldercare centre, Mummy explained to Agnes that their neighbourhood was a dementia-friendly community. Many people who lived and worked in the neighbourhood were trained to help those with dementia. One way to help was to take a lost person with dementia to the nearest Go-To Point. There were over 200 such Go-To Points island-wide that acted as "safe return" points. Their neighbourhood eldercare centre was one of them.





“Grandma!” Agnes immediately called out when they arrived at the Go-To Point.

Grandma was sitting at a table with two teenagers. The lady on duty at the neighbourhood eldercare centre, Madam Rosemah, had tried to contact the family, but Grandma couldn’t remember her home address or family members’ names and contact numbers. She was about to post Grandma’s photo on Dementia-Friendly Singapore’s Facebook page so that members of the community could help to identify Grandma and reunite her with her family through the social media platform when Mummy and Agnes showed up.

“How did she get here?” Mummy asked Madam Rosemah.

“They brought her here,” replied Madam Rosemah, nodding at Grandma’s young companions, Deepa and Kok Seng, two Secondary 2 students who were on their way home from school.

“Hello, Auntie,” Kok Seng and Deepa greeted Mummy.

“We found Grandma walking in circles at the neighbourhood playground, looking confused,” Deepa said.

“We attended a talk on dementia awareness in school last month,” Kok Seng added. “We learnt how to help lost persons with dementia. That’s how we knew we needed to bring Grandma here.”

“Thank you so much for your help!” said Mummy.

To thank them, Mummy treated Deepa and Kok Seng to ice cream. Agnes got to eat her favourite chocolate ice cream cone while Grandma had her favourite sweet corn ice cream sandwich.





The next morning, Mummy called Deepa and Kok Seng's school Principal to tell her about their good deed. She also contacted the Alzheimer's Disease Association to get Grandma a Safe Return Card, a kind of identification card informing people whom to contact should they find Grandma lost and wandering about on her own.

"Agnes, dear, Mummy and Daddy will be attending a dementia awareness workshop next week. Would you like to come with us?"

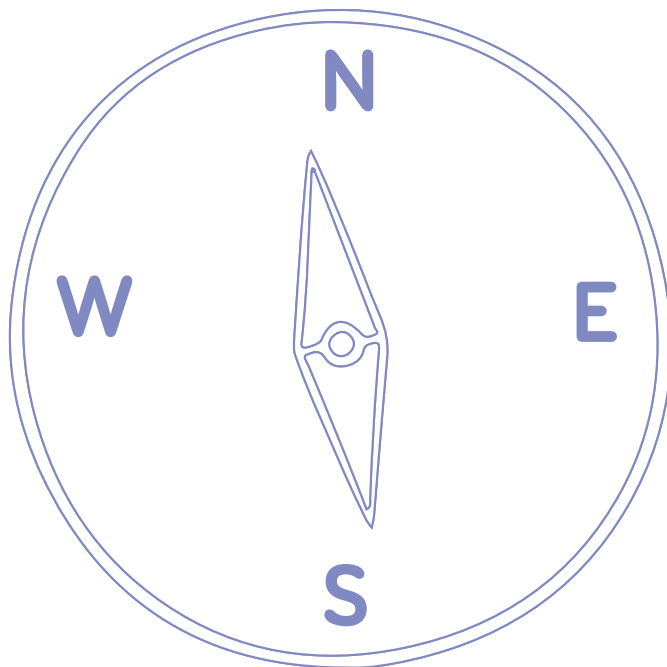
Agnes nodded. She had seen how Deepa and Kok Seng were able to help Grandma when she got lost. Like them, she wanted to learn how to help Grandma and any uncle, auntie, *ah gong* (grandpa) or *ah ma* (grandma) with dementia.

Fun and Meaningful Activities

Those with dementia tend to wander and may get lost. Let's keep a lookout for them so we can help them get home safely.

Activity 1: Find the Way Home

In the story, Grandma got lost on her way home from the hawker centre. Thankfully, Deepa and Kok Seng accompanied Grandma to the neighbourhood Go-To Point. It's now your turn to help Grandma find her way home from the hawker centre.





Activity 2: Favourite Snacks

In the story, we learn that Grandma's favourite snacks are you tiao and tau huay. What are your grandparents' favourite snacks? What are yours? Tell your grandparents about your favourite snacks and ask them to tell you about theirs. Write down what you find out.



My Grandparents' Favourite Snacks

My grandmother's favourite snack is.....

.....

She likes it because

.....

My grandfather's favourite snack is.....

.....

He likes it because

.....



Chapter 3

What Is Happening to Sweet Grandma?

At the dementia awareness workshop, Agnes learnt that persons with dementia go through many changes in how they think and behave. Still, she wasn't prepared for what happened next.

Grandma made all of Agnes's party dresses. Agnes's favourite was a pink satin and lace dress with purple tie-back ribbons. They had gone to People's Park Complex to pick out the materials together and Grandma spent a whole week sewing Agnes the prettiest pink dress. Whenever Agnes wore this dress, Grandma would smile, give her two thumbs up and say, "You're so beautiful, Agnes!"

This time, things were different. When Agnes twirled around in her favourite pink dress, instead of smiling and giving Agnes two thumbs up, Grandma growled, "Your dress is so ugly!"

Agnes burst into tears. Grandma used to be the sweetest person she knew. She always knew just what to say to make those around her feel good.

"You're the best!" were Grandma's favourite words of encouragement to Agnes.





"You're the best person I know!" Grandma would say, hugging Agnes in that special way only a grandparent could.

Everyone missed sweet, cheerful Grandma.

"Your cooking is so tasteless," Grandma started complaining to Mummy at dinner time. Agnes could tell Mummy was hurt. She saw Mummy muttering something under her breath before inviting Grandma to eat just a little more.

As the family sat down to watch Daddy's favourite television programme after dinner, Grandma grumbled, "What a lousy show!" Agnes heard Daddy sigh, mutter something under his breath, before asking Grandma,



"Would you like to watch something else? I thought this was your favourite show too."

Agnes was puzzled. *"Mummy, why is Grandma so mean to us? What were Daddy and you muttering to yourselves? By the way, I love your cooking. You know that, right?"*

"Thank you, dear," Mummy said as she hugged Agnes. "Grandma can't help herself. She doesn't mean to be mean. Grandma's dementia is changing her personality. We need to be patient with her. That's what Daddy and I were doing—reminding ourselves that Grandma can't help herself. That's what you should do too, if you find yourself getting upset with her."

"Grandma can't help herself," Agnes repeated to herself. She was determined to follow her parents' example to avoid getting upset with Grandma. However, she soon found out that she had to put it into practice sooner than she expected.

The next day, Agnes and Grandma walked to the neighbourhood hawker centre for lunch. Grandma went to buy fish porridge while Agnes queued at the chicken rice stall nearby.

Suddenly, she heard Grandma shouting, "You silly man! You gave me the wrong change! Where's my money? How dare you cheat me!"

"Ah Ma, I gave you the right change. The fish porridge cost \$4. You gave me \$10. I gave you back \$6," the hawker explained patiently.



"No, you didn't! You gave me only \$4! Don't you know how to count?"

Grandma glared, as she waved the change in the hawker's face.

Agnes ran to Grandma. *What was happening?* Grandma hardly ever raised her voice and here she was shouting at the fish porridge seller!



Agnes noticed Grandma holding three \$2-dollar notes. ***Oh, no!*** Grandma was the one who hadn't counted her change correctly and she was accusing the hawker of cheating her!

"So s-s-sorry, Uncle," Agnes told the hawker. ***"Please don't be angry. Grandma can't help herself. She has... dementia."***

It was the first time Agnes had said "dementia" out loud in public.

My Grandma has dementia, she can't help herself. Tears began to fill her eyes.

"It's okay," the hawker replied gently. "I know your Grandma has dementia. I'm not angry with her. Here's her fish porridge with some extra slices of fish."

"Thank you, Uncle!" Agnes smiled, wiping away the tears from her eyes. With a huge sigh of relief, she remembered that their neighbourhood was a dementia-friendly community. The fish porridge seller must have learnt about dementia and how to speak calmly, patiently and kindly to persons with dementia.

Agnes then turned to Grandma who was now smiling away, as if nothing had happened.

"Here, Grandma. Let me help you," said Agnes, carrying Grandma's fish porridge to an empty table.

Whether it was sweet Grandma, mean Grandma or even moody Grandma—sometimes, Grandma refused to talk to anyone—Grandma was still her Grandma and Agnes would always love her.



Fun and Meaningful Activities

Those with dementia may be moody or mean because they find it hard to express their thoughts and feelings, so let's be patient with them!

Activity 1: Top Five

What are the top five things you love about your grandparents? List them in the box below, then share your list with your grandparents.

What I Love About My Grandparents

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Activity 2: What Changes Have You Noticed?

What changes do you see in your grandparents? How do you feel—happy, scared, angry, unsure, etc.—about these changes? Write down what you see and feel in the box below, show it to your parents and talk to them about it.

The Changes I See in My Grandparents

1.
2.
3.

How I Feel About These Changes

.....

.....

.....

.....

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Chapter 4

Why Is Grandma Imagining Things?

Grandma and Agnes were watching television in the living room one afternoon when Grandma said, "Agnes, go upstairs and ask my *da jie* (elder sister) to come watch television with me."

"Grandma, our flat doesn't have an upstairs and Grandmama isn't around anymore."

Grandma frowned, then seemed to forget all about their conversation as she turned her attention back to the television programme.



What was Grandma talking about? There was no one else at home. Why was Grandma imagining people who weren't there? Was there a ghost in the house? Agnes wondered.

Agnes waited impatiently for Mummy and Daddy to get home. When she heard their footsteps, she threw open the front door and blurted,



"There's a ghost in our flat! Grandma said her sister was upstairs, but Grand aunt isn't around anymore!"

"Slow down, Agnes," said Daddy as he held her gently.

"We have a ghost in our flat!" Agnes repeated as she told Mummy and Daddy about her strange conversation with Grandma.

"There's no ghost, sweetheart," Daddy reassured Agnes.

"Dementia can make it hard for someone to tell the past from the present," Mummy explained. "Grandma was probably remembering her childhood home when she told you that her elder sister was upstairs. She just got her past and present mixed up."

"Don't be afraid," Daddy comforted Agnes. "When Grandma gets caught up in the past, we just have to go along with her because telling Grandma she's imagining things will just upset and confuse her. We don't want that, do we?"

From then on, whenever Grandma asked about Grand aunt, Agnes would say "she's gone out, Grandma" and Grandma would just nod and smile.

On some nights, Grandma would wake up at 3 a.m. to get ready for "work". The family would coax Grandma back to bed by saying, "It's Sunday. You don't work on Sundays." Some days, Grandma would cry, "This is not my home. I want to go home. Please take me home." The family would gently reply, "Rest now and we'll take you home tomorrow."



One day, Grandma mistook Agnes for someone else.

"Come here, Nancy. I want to show you something," Grandma said. "Why are you still standing there? Come here."

"Who's Nancy?" Agnes was stunned and stood rooted to the spot.

"You! You're cousin Nancy. Don't you know your own name? We always play together in Ah Gong's (Grandfather's) fruit farm in Sembawang. Look at this!" said Grandma, pointing to a picture of a rambutan tree in her magazine.

Agnes was confused and upset. How could Grandma mistake her for someone else? Agnes would never mistake Grandma for someone else. Grandma was her BFF.

Then, Agnes remembered what Mummy and Daddy had said about playing along. From then on, whichever name Grandma called out, whether it was "Agnes", "Nancy" or "Mei Ling"—Grandma's best friend from primary school—Agnes always responded.

Agnes would be whoever Grandma needed her to be.

Fun and Meaningful Activities

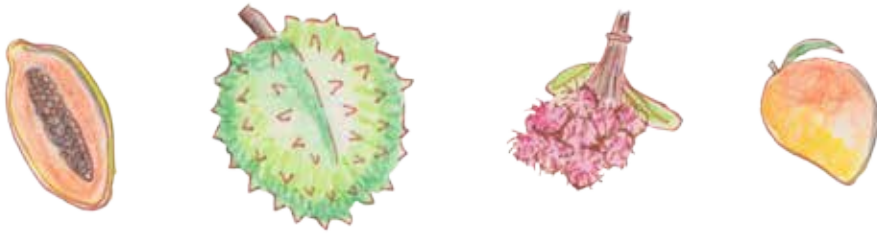
Those with dementia often confuse people, dates and places. Don't upset them by insisting that they're wrong.

Activity 1: Spot the Differences

Agnes's Grandma lived on a fruit farm when she was a little girl and often picked and ate many of the fruits there. Here are some of her favourite tropical fruits. Can you spot eight differences in the two pictures?



What is your favourite fruit? Tell your grandparents about it and ask them to tell you about theirs. Write or draw what you learn in the space below.



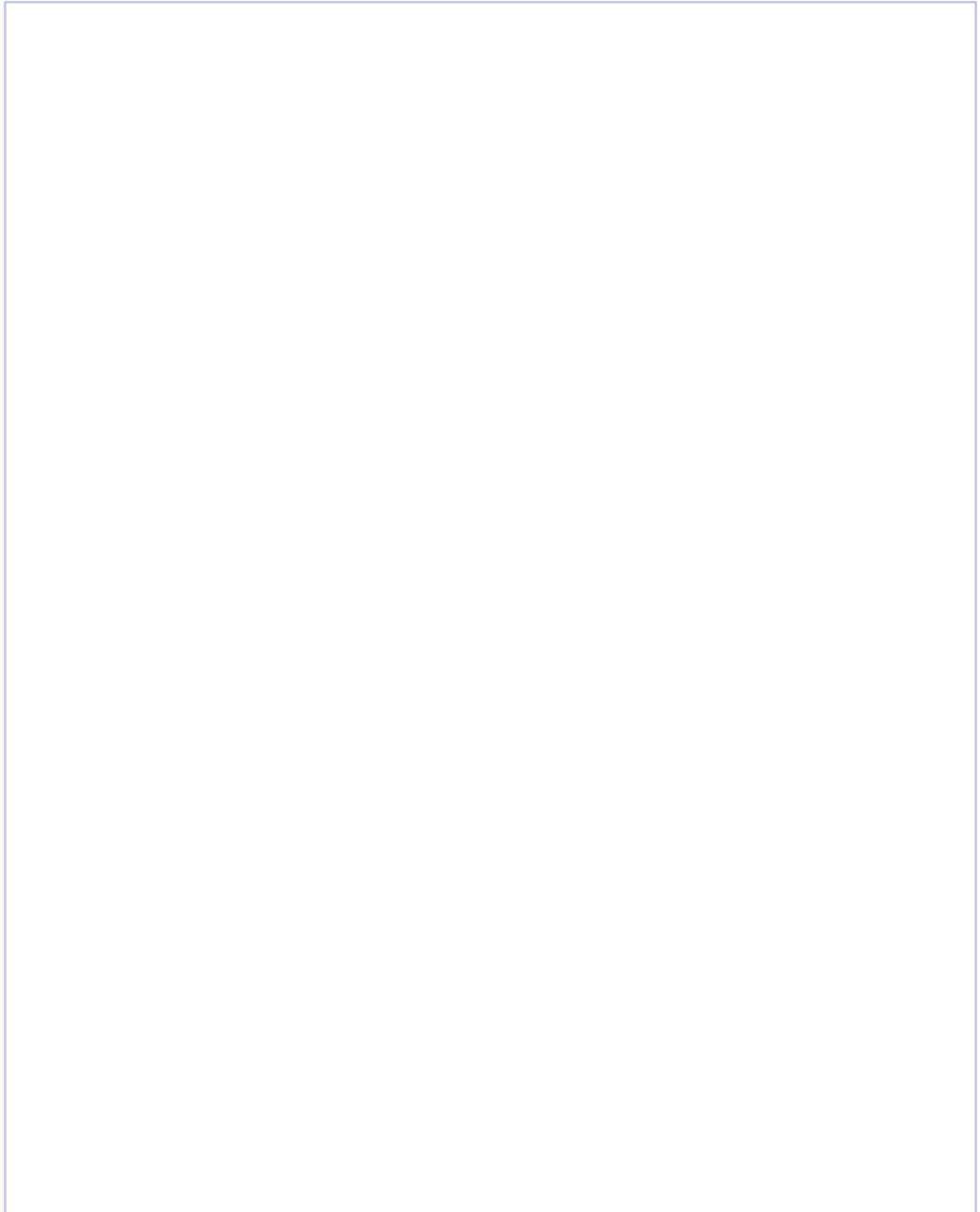
My Grandmother's Favourite Fruit and Why She Likes It

My Grandfather's Favourite Fruit and Why He Likes It

Activity 2: Childhood Home

Ask your grandparents to describe their childhood homes. Write down what they say and draw a picture of each home in the space below.

My Grandmother's Childhood Home



My Grandfather's Childhood Home





Chapter 5

What Is Happening to Grandma's Legs?

It was a Saturday morning. Grandma and Agnes were out for their weekly walk in the neighbourhood park. Agnes loved going on walks with Grandma.

Grandma grew up on a fruit farm and knew a lot about plants. She often pointed out the different trees and flowers as she told Agnes stories about her childhood.





"Look, Agnes! Here's a frangipani tree. There was a frangipani tree in my school compound. My classmates and I loved to pick up the flowers that fell to the ground. One day, all of us decided to wear the flowers in our hair when we returned to class after recess. Imagine our teacher's face when she saw us!" Grandma laughed as her mind drifted back to the past.

Agnes laughed and ran to pick up a frangipani flower that had fallen to the ground. She tucked the flower behind her left ear and turned around to show Grandma.

"See what I have in my hair, Grandma. ***Grandma! What's wrong?***"

Grandma's legs had buckled all of a sudden, causing her to fall. Shocked and scared, Agnes quickly ran towards Grandma.

"Grandma, are you okay?" asked Agnes.

Grandma winced in pain. Thankfully, a kind passer-by let Agnes use her phone to call home and even waited with them until Daddy arrived.

Daddy took Grandma to the family doctor. The doctor said that persons with dementia tend to lose their balance more easily because of changes in their brains that affect movement and balance. As dementia progresses, some may even lose their ability to walk. Some persons with dementia may also forget that they are unable to walk and fall when they try to do so.

"Grandma needs to strengthen her legs. Physiotherapy and exercise will help strengthen her muscles and improve her balance. I will place Grandma in a physiotherapy programme," the doctor said. "Meanwhile, it's safer for Grandma to use a wheelchair when she goes out."



"I don't want it," Grandma said stubbornly, refusing the wheelchair.

Dementia made it hard for Grandma's brain to control her movements. Dementia also made it hard for the family to reason with Grandma. The family was sad to see Grandma struggle to walk. Not wanting to fall or use the wheelchair, Grandma refused to leave the flat.

"Come on, Grandma. Let's go out. I'm a strong girl, I'll push your wheelchair," Agnes said, but Grandma shook her head.



"Come on, Grandma. Let's go to the park. The ice cream cart will be there soon. You always have the sweet corn ice cream sandwich," Agnes persuaded.

"I want the red bean ice cream sandwich!" Agnes smacked her lips, which always made Grandma smile.

But today, Grandma just sat on the sofa, expressionless, staring blankly ahead.

"Good try, Agnes," Mummy said. "Perhaps Grandma will go out with you tomorrow."

Tomorrow arrived, but Grandma still refused to go to the park with Agnes.

Then, Agnes had a brainwave.

Searching through the family photo album, Agnes found what she was looking for and ran to Grandma, clutching a handful of photos of Grandma and Agnes at the Singapore Botanic Gardens and Gardens by the Bay.

As Grandma looked at the photos, she began to smile.

"Don't you miss our walks in the park, Grandma?" Agnes asked.

Grandma nodded.

Agnes was overjoyed to be able to push Grandma in the wheelchair to the neighbourhood park.



"Look, Grandma. Don't we look pretty?" teased Agnes as she tucked a frangipani flower behind both their ears. Grandma smiled and gave Agnes two thumbs up.



Fun and Meaningful Activities

Doing activities that they enjoy keeps the minds of those with dementia active and helps to slow down the progression of dementia.

Activity 1: Traditional Games

The six words listed below are games that were often played in the past. Can you find the hidden words in the wordsearch puzzle below?

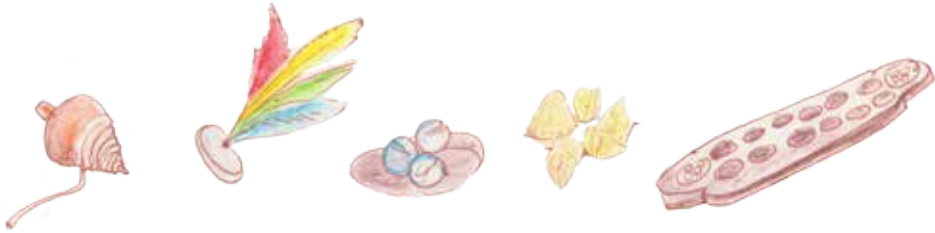
CAPTEH
HOPSCOTCH

CONGKAK
GASING

FIVESTONES
KUTI KUTI

A	D	G	F	H	G	P	M	C	K	K	U	H	R	A	L	P
R	O	S	I	J	U	J	S	F	U	U	O	L	A	R	H	M
E	L	A	V	Y	U	H	D	R	O	T	F	W	D	M	R	S
Y	U	U	E	I	O	K	I	F	G	I	L	O	L	O	W	X
H	O	P	S	C	O	N	G	K	A	K	O	O	P	S	M	P
M	H	S	T	T	C	V	X	G	A	U	R	F	T	W	C	M
P	S	S	O	O	P	K	A	I	L	T	S	D	Y	H	R	S
Y	U	P	N	R	O	S	Q	E	R	I	U	J	E	R	Y	U
A	D	G	E	H	O	P	S	C	O	T	C	H	R	A	L	P
W	Y	U	S	U	J	U	J	S	I	A	O	W	L	B	H	M
K	M	N	O	K	H	M	J	N	A	O	L	I	O	L	R	S
R	F	W	I	H	G	A	S	H	N	G	A	P	T	E	W	X
H	G	A	S	I	N	G	A	P	T	E	H	O	X	M	J	P
R	O	S	O	R	F	T	G	Y	U	J	I	O	P	L	C	M
H	G	R	R	J	Z	C	A	P	T	E	H	X	M	J	N	S
J	Z	C	E	H	X	M	J	H	G	A	P	T	R	O	R	X
S	I	N	G	A	P	O	R	E	E	R	Q	W	E	Q	G	P

Your grandparents would have played many of these traditional games. Ask them to describe their favourite games and how to play them. Write down what you find out in the space below.



My Grandmother's Favourite Childhood Game and How to Play It

My Grandfather's Favourite Childhood Game and How to Play It

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for the student to write their response to the prompt above.

Ask your parents to find some traditional games that you and your family can play together.

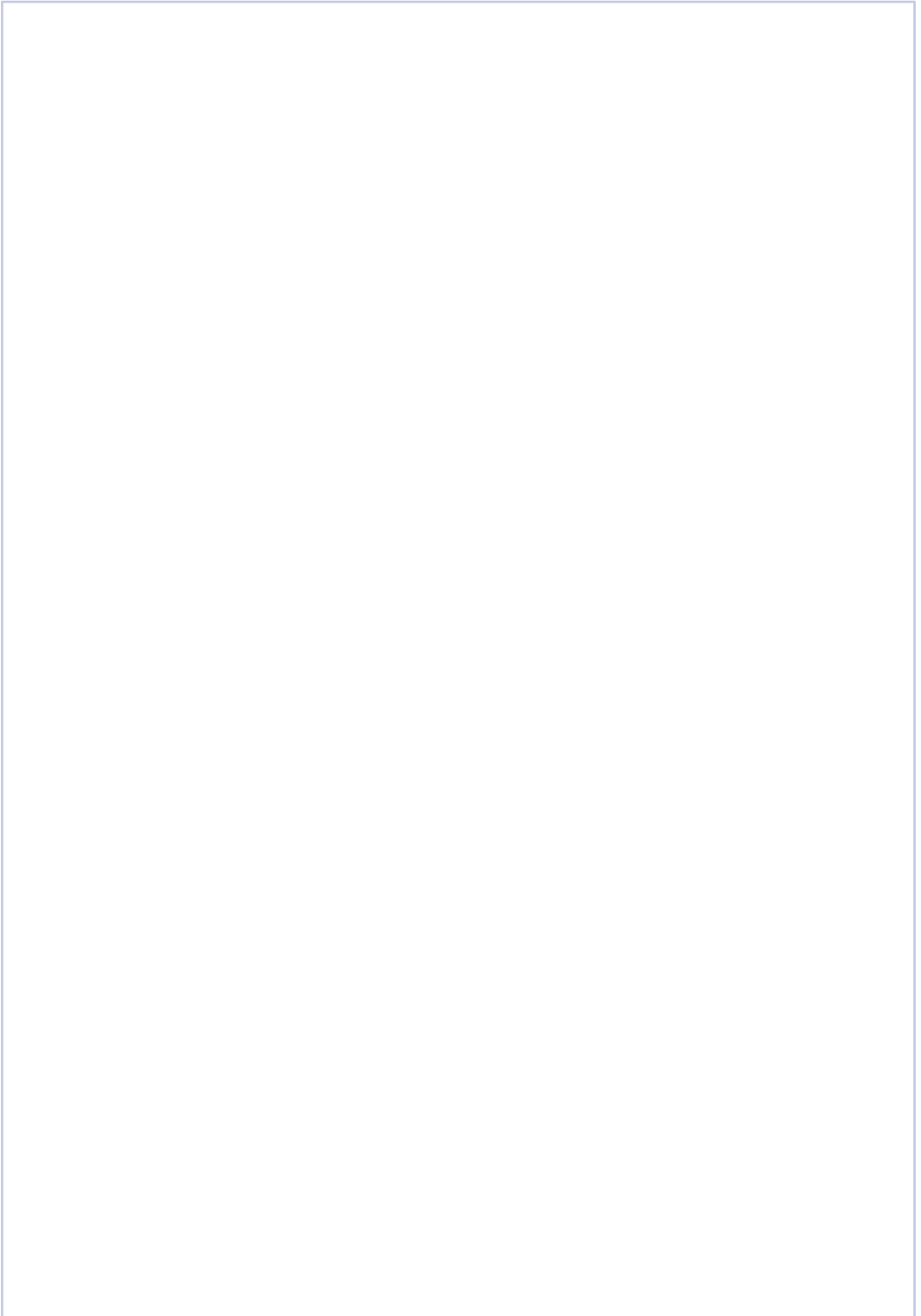
Activity 2: My Grandparents' Childhood Tales

Ask your grandparents to tell you a story about their childhood. Write down their stories in the boxes below and include some photos or drawings.

A Tale from My Grandmother's Childhood

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for writing a story or including photos and drawings.

A Tale from My Grandfather's Childhood

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for the student to write their story.



Chapter 6

Why Is Grandma Playing with My Things?

Agnes scratched her head. Her colouring book had been on the coffee table in the living room when she left for school that morning, but it was no longer there. She was only halfway through the book. She had just completed the flower section and was looking forward to completing the animal section next.

Agnes looked high and low in the living room, but could not find it. Perhaps she had left the book in her bedroom. She sometimes did her colouring there.

As Agnes walked into her room, she noticed her *masak-masak* (toy cookery) set strewn all over the floor. *What happened? Did a strong wind sweep across her room and mess up her toys?*

Then, Agnes saw Grandma sitting on her bed, holding her colouring book in one hand and an orange colour pencil in the other.

"Grandma, what are you doing?" asked a puzzled Agnes as she took her colouring book from Grandma. She saw shaky orange lines everywhere, even on the pretty roses she had coloured pink just the day before. Her book was ruined! Agnes was so angry with Grandma.



When her parents got home, Agnes told them what had happened.

"I know you're upset, Agnes, but Grandma can't help herself," Mummy gently reminded Agnes. "Dementia affects each person differently. Some people become quiet and withdrawn, some become loud and fierce, and others become childlike and messy."

"Is that why Grandma was playing with my things?" Agnes asked.

"I think so. At the Dementia Care workshop, we learnt the importance of respecting Grandma's needs. Every person with dementia is unique. Try to discover what Grandma enjoys doing. Then, do it with her. But don't just watch television with Grandma. Passive television-watching won't help her mind or body."



"What's the point? Grandma won't remember what we do anyway!" lamented Agnes.

"Grandma may not remember, but you will. You'll remember how you helped Grandma enjoy your special moments together. Besides, doing activities she enjoys can help slow down her dementia."

How could she interact more with Grandma? Agnes wondered. An idea struck her! Agnes then took out all her toys, games and activity books.

Over the next few weeks, Agnes tried each of them with Grandma. She discovered that Grandma liked drawing, colouring, doing simple wordsearch puzzles and jigsaw puzzles, and playing Bingo. And, like Agnes, Grandma loved colourful stickers and singing. Tralala!

Agnes was happy that Grandma was still her playmate and BFF! She continued to spend time with Grandma whenever she could, after school and on weekends. She always tried her best to interact with Grandma.





Sometimes, Grandma would not respond and Agnes would feel sad, but Agnes always remembered her parents' words: *Grandma may not always remember your name or who you are, or respond to what you say or do, Agnes, but always remember that Grandma loves you very much. That will never change.*

Once in a while when Grandma did talk to Agnes, she would play along.

"I just went to the *pasar malam* (night street market)."

"Did you, Grandma? What did you buy?"

"I bought some *kachang puteh* (assorted roasted nuts and beans in white paper cone)."

Sometimes, Grandma would talk about Wang Sha and Ye Fong, her favourite comedians from her teen years. "Wang Sha and Ye Fong were performing their *Lao Fu Zi* stage show."

"What was the show about? Tell me more, Grandma."

"It was about the adventures of Old Master Q and Mr Potato," Grandma would say, smiling happily.

When Grandma could no longer complete her sentences, Agnes completed them for her.

"We went for a walk at..." Grandma's voice would trail off.

"... the park, Grandma."



"Oh, yes! It's such a..."

"... beautiful day!"

Back and forth, Agnes and Grandma wove stories together. Agnes grew to enjoy this game of storytelling with Grandma who often looked excited and happy when they did this.

As Grandma's memory faded and her voice became a whisper, Agnes told Grandma stories instead—stories Grandma had told Agnes and stories they had created together. Agnes had written all of those stories down so she could read them aloud to Grandma.

I'll have to be the one to create new memories for Grandma and me, Agnes thought to herself.

I'll just have to do the remembering for the two of us.



Fun and Meaningful Activities

Persons with dementia are unique individuals. Be patient as you try to discover what they enjoy doing and do those things with them.

Activity 1: Colouring Activity

Agnes's Grandma enjoyed going to the *pasar malam*. Here's a picture of a *pasar malam* for you and your grandparents to colour together.



Ask your grandparents to tell you about their favourite *pasar malam* stall. Write down what you find out in the box below.

My Grandmother's Favourite *Pasar Malam* Stall

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for the student to write their findings about their grandmother's favourite pasar malam stall.

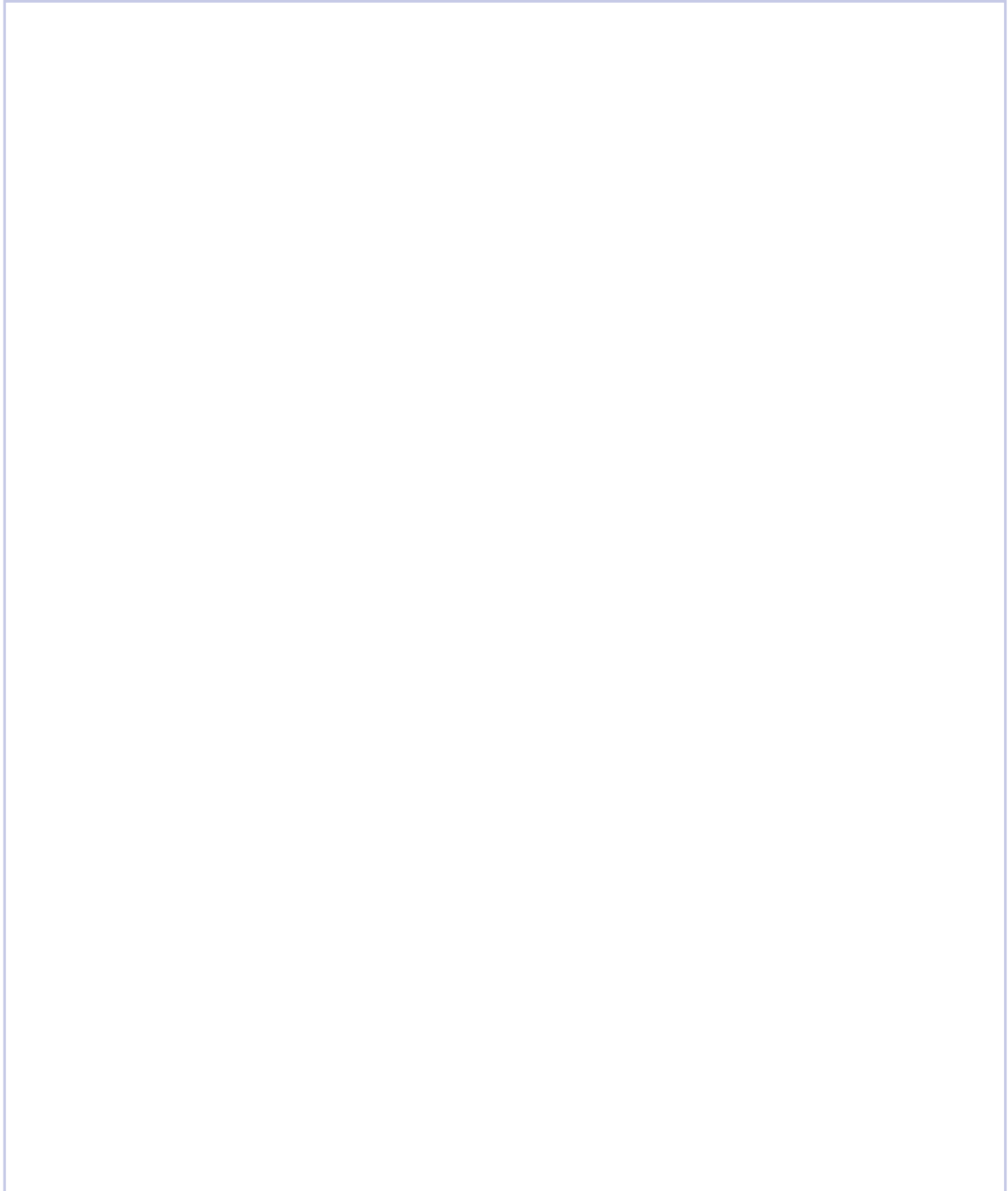
My Grandfather's Favourite *Pasar Malam* Stall

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for a drawing or a detailed description of the stall.

Activity 2: My Story

You just read about Agnes and her Grandma. Write a short story about you and your grandparents in the box below. Then, read your story to your grandparents.

My Grandparents and Me

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for the student to write their story about their grandparents.

Acknowledgements

Writing this book has been a learning journey for me. I've had the opportunity to connect with various individuals and organisations. Some were brief encounters, but all those interactions have shaped this book in meaningful ways. Like any traveller on a quest, I've been spurred on to complete my journey through the support of those who recognised the value of this book. For that, I am deeply grateful.

This publication is made possible through the support of **Our Singapore Fund** and a corporate sponsor whose preference to *sound no trumpet* I find both refreshing and humbling. My heartfelt appreciation also goes to Dementia-Friendly Singapore for giving me invaluable feedback and suggestions on this book project.

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Ms Chan Huang Meng, MSocSc in Counselling—Your extensive experience as State School Chaplain (Western Australia) reflects unique insight into children's minds and hearts. Your response to my initial draft—that you and your social work counterparts in Singapore would want to use this book in your work with children—was sufficient motivation for me to see this project through to completion. I deeply appreciate your continuing care and concern for me and my book project.

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Thanks and praise be to God, from Whom all blessings flow.



About the Author

Serena Lim is a seasoned educator with over two decades of experience teaching and writing for post-secondary and tertiary audiences. *Remembering for the Two of Us* is her first children's book, birthed from a desire to create awareness amongst children and families about the pressing issue of dementia in a rapidly ageing population, such as Singapore's.

Serena was thrust into the role of caregiver five years ago when her mother was diagnosed with dementia. She understands first-hand the struggles faced by caregivers and is thankful for the support received from medical personnel and fellow caregivers, especially those from her support group at ProjectCare (projectcare.co), as well as extended family, friends and BFFs.

Serena spends as much time as she can with her mother, enjoying simple pleasures. When the going gets tough, she chooses to see the lighter side of things, following the simple credo: When you don't know whether to laugh or cry, choose to laugh.

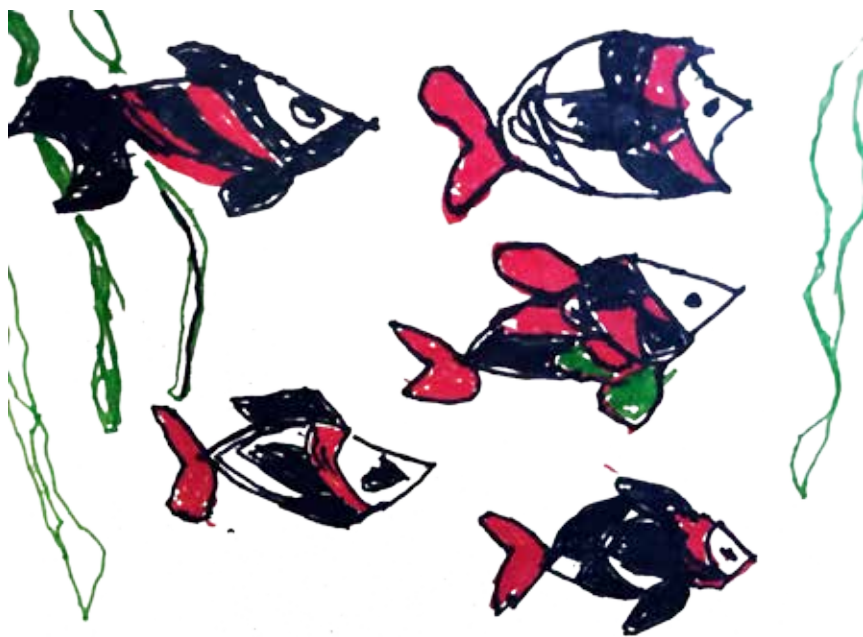
Serena enjoys travelling, writing and reading, and draws inspiration from many gifted faith writers. Food also holds a special place in her heart.



The author, as a child, with her mum, Mdm Amy Lee Phit Fang.

Write to the Author

I'd love to know what you liked best about Agnes's story and how it's helped you and your family. Children, I'd also love to read your stories about you and your grandparents (see Chapter 6, Activity 2). Send an email to me at remembering4the2ofUs@gmail.com. Please get a trusted adult to help you.



Drawing by Mdm Amy Lee Phit Fang.

Resources

If someone in your family has been diagnosed with dementia, know that you are not alone and need not go through it alone. Resources are readily available to help you understand the medical condition better and how to engage with and help those with dementia. Listed below are several resources to help you on your caregiving journey.

Dementia Friends App

Developed by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) as part of the Dementia-Friendly Singapore initiative, this app provides handy guides on the signs and symptoms of dementia, as well as support for persons with dementia and their caregivers. The "Resources" tab answers commonly asked questions, lists support services and financial assistance schemes, and offers tips on managing wandering behaviour. It also includes island-wide Go-To Points, enabling you to locate the Go-To Points nearest to you.



You can download the Dementia Friends mobile app on:



Online Caregiver Resources

Singapore Silver Pages

www.silverpages.sg

A one-stop resource for seniors and their caregivers.

Agency for Integrated Care

www.facebook.com/AICSingapore

An online community for caregivers to share information, resources and experiences.

Caregivers for Elderly

www.facebook.com/groups/CaregiversSupportGroupSG

An online group by Touch Community Services that provides caregivers with information and emotional support.



Drawing by Mdm Amy Lee Phit Fang.

Caregiver Helplines

Singapore Silver Line: 1800 650 6060

Toll-free national helpline in English, Malay, Tamil and Mandarin for information on all eldercare and caregiver support services available.
Monday to Friday: 8.30 a.m.-8.30 p.m. | Saturday: 8.30 a.m.-4.00 p.m.

Health Promotion Board Dementia Infoline: 1800 223 1123

Toll-free national helpline for caregivers of persons with dementia.
Monday to Friday: 8.30 a.m.-5.00 p.m. | Saturday: 8.30 a.m.-1.00 p.m.

Dementia Helpline (Alzheimer's Disease Association): 6377 0700

Helpline for caregivers of persons with dementia.
Monday to Friday: 9.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m.



Drawing by Mdm Amy Lee Phit Fang.

Caregiver Support Groups

To prevent burnout and be of genuine help to your loved one with dementia, you will first need to look after yourself and check in with your children to make sure that the whole family is coping well. Caregiver support groups typically comprise spouses, family members, friends and care partners who give and receive support in various ways, including exchanging useful information and helpful suggestions. You may contact the organisations listed below to find out more about their caregiver support groups.

Support Groups	Contact Details
Alzheimer's Disease Association (ADA) Caregiver Support Centre	Tel: 6377 0700 Website: www.alz.org.sg Address: 70 Bendemeer Road #03-02A Luzerne Building Singapore 339940
Filos Community Services	Tel: 6242 5978 Website: www.filos.sg Address: 38 Chai Chee Avenue #01-177 Singapore 461038
Project Angels	Tel: 6274 6904 Website: www.montfortcare.org.sg Address: 27 Telok Blangah Way #01-1018 Singapore 090027

Printed with permission from "Living with Dementia—A resource kit for caregivers" developed by the Agency for Integrated Care.

Grandma has lost her spectacles and needs Agnes's help to find them. After searching high and low, Agnes finally finds them in the... freezer! What a strange place for Grandma to leave her spectacles! Grandma's recent spate of forgetfulness and odd behaviour prompts Mummy to take her for a check-up. The family soon learns that Grandma has dementia.

What is dementia and what is it doing to Grandma? Read the story to find out. Learn how you, like Agnes, can help those with dementia.



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