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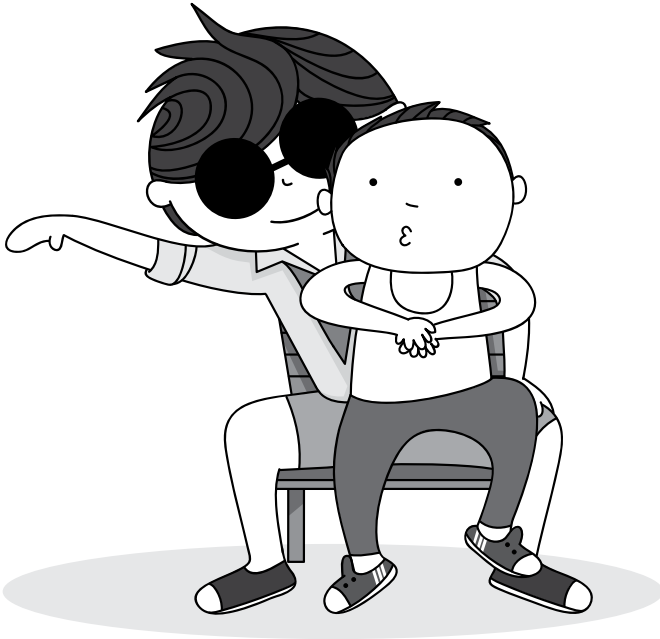
SEOUL SEARCHING!

THE TRAVEL DIARY OF AMOS LEE



ADELINE FOO

Illustrated by STEPHANIE WONG



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SEOUL SEARCHING!

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If anyone were to ask me to describe my family, I'd say, "They are mad".

My brother, Everest, is only seven years old. He is obsessed with the Jjang Choco Pie. He's out to win the Jjang Choco Pie Eating Contest being held in Seoul, South Korea. What's the big deal, my friends ask. Well, to enter the contest, you have to send in coupons cut out from Choco Pie boxes. To improve your chances of getting picked as a contestant, you have to eat A LOT OF Choco Pies in order to get your hands on the coupons.

If my brother were doing this by himself, I wouldn't be complaining. But he had to rope in the ENTIRE family to help him. My parents avoid fatty and sweet foods in general. "Not keen on developing diabetes," they'd say. My sister is careful about what she eats, as she's afraid of growing fat. That leaves only me to help Everest with his mission. Between us, we have eaten something close to 1,566 Choco Pies for breakfast, lunch and dinner—and sometimes for supper, too! That's A LOT OF Choco Pies eaten in the last SIX MONTHS. So, is my brother mad?

What about my sister? Whoopie, aged 11, wants to grow long eyelashes. She says she wants to go down in the *Guinness World Records* as the first human to beat the Lhasa Apso, currently the breed of dog holding the record for the world's longest eyelashes. She says, like the Lhasa Apso, K-pop stars also have pretty long eyelashes. Really?

Now for Mum. She is mad about all things "K": Korea, K-pop, K-dramas, *kimchi bokkeumbap* (*kimchi* fried rice) and *kimchi jjigae* (*kimchi* stew). In fact, she's so mad about Korea, she said she's buying an entire carton of Choco Pies to support Everest's quest to enter the Choco Pie Eating Contest! Mad enough?

As for Dad, work is all that he cares about. As he is the only breadwinner in the family, work is all we see him do. He's always checking his iPhone to see if his boss has a question or a task for him. So yes, Dad's mad—about his job.

Back to the Choco Pie. To be honest, I don't enjoy eating Choco Pies. I'm doing it for another reason. I love indulging Everest in posting selfies. Just look at ALL the cute photos he posts on my Instagram account! I'm amazed that I've got so many followers! Even people I don't know are following me on my Instagram account. Maybe there's something about seeing a chubby kid eat Choco Pies with his big brother that gets people to "like" our posts. There's no denying that I'm so, so, so popular now. But the best part? All my friends think I'm AWESOME!

So if I have to adopt some madness to blend in with my family...maybe this. I hope to use my brother to win the IPPY award. That's the Instagram Prize for a Popular Youth. No one from Asia has ever won this prize! Imagine, I'll be the first if I can find that one fantastic post to garner the MOST likes! Maybe I'll find it in Seoul, who knows? And if it means I'll have to eat another couple of hundred more Choco Pies to get there, I'll do it. Anything to win the award!

#EatChocoPie

#ToSeoulWithLove!

Amos Lee



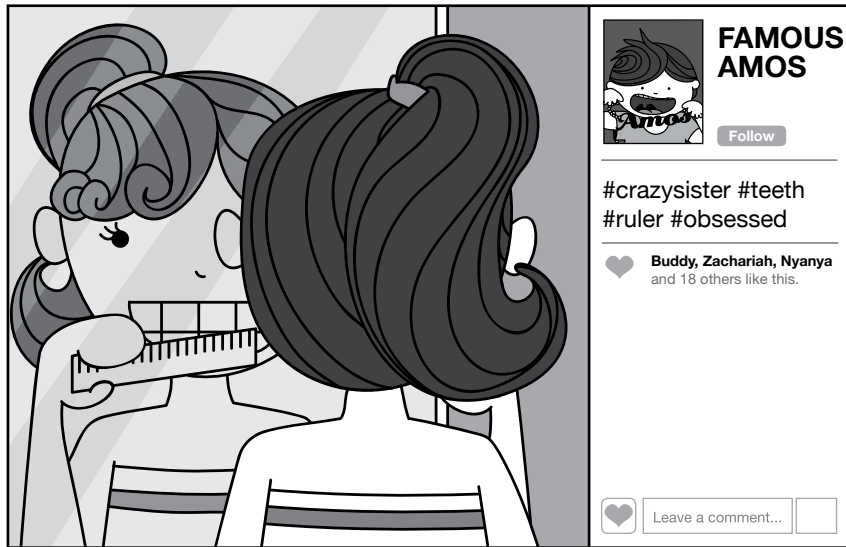
A CALL FROM BEIJING

Last evening, we had a surprise phone call from China. It was Grandma, and she sounded really upset. She said she's having trouble living with Grandpa. Huh? They've lived together since I was born, and for years before that...maybe even since last century—they are so old now! What's she talking about? I could tell Mum was worried after the talk. She said something vague about Grandpa going through some behavioural changes. Who, my Grandpa? Are they talking about the same person?

Just a few years ago, when Grandpa was living in Singapore before his retirement, he was my swimming coach. He was so FIERCE and REGIMENTED in training me! "My grandson, a wimp to swim champ!" he used to say to all his friends. I'd given up swimming ever since my grandparents moved to Beijing to live with relatives. "To stretch my retirement savings!" Grandpa had quipped before they left. I missed Grandpa, but he was quick to learn to tweet and Skype, so we never really felt he was far away. Hmmm...having said that, I haven't heard from him in the last few months. Maybe he's just been busy.

I can't imagine Grandpa as a different person. A behavioural change? I know someone in my family who's going through that: Whoopie! She has been acting strange. Once, I caught her staring hard into the mirror to check her teeth, with a ruler! I asked what she was doing; she said she was making

sure that they were straight. With a RULER?! Isn't that stupid or what? It's like checking the temperature of a glass of water by sticking a thermometer in it. If it isn't her teeth she's fretting over, it's her hair, or her eyelashes. She's only 11 for crying out loud!



Just before bedtime, I asked Mum if maybe Grandpa isn't well. She said he's all right. Then she surprised me when she suddenly announced that maybe she could get Grandpa and Grandma to go on a holiday with us. Seriously? Much as I was secretly hoping to go on a free trip to Seoul if Everest gets to enter the Jjang Choco Pie Eating Contest, er...a LARGE family holiday isn't exactly what I had in mind. Oh well. It's not going to happen. Of the millions of people in the world eating Choco Pies, surely there are thousands hoping to win the free trip to Seoul. My little brother can't be that lucky.

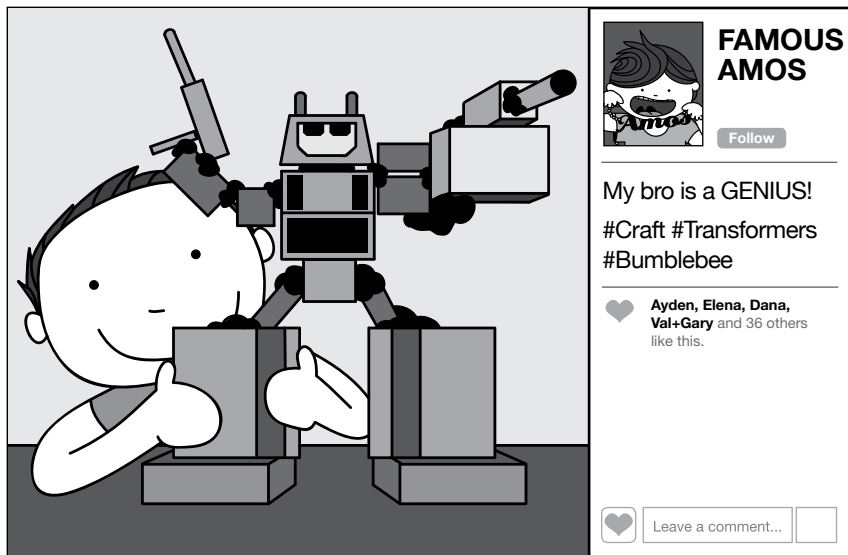
MYSTERIOUS STUFF LYING AROUND THE FLAT

I had been seeing these things lying around our flat. I wonder what they are for.



Hmmm...it looks like someone at home is into arts and crafts. Since when are Dad and Mum into creating masks and *Transformers Art*? I didn't know ash could be made into a mask, or mud used as glue—that's awesome!

This afternoon, Everest and I decided to experiment with mud glue. It was a big mess trying to get the mud thickened to the right consistency. But we persevered and managed to glue all of Everest's plastic blocks and empty toilet paper tubes together. It took close to two hours before we got everything to look right. It was quite fun, if you ignore the mess. Just look at my brother's creation: Bumblebee, made entirely out of blocks, cardboard and mud! What a genius. He takes after me, obviously.



SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT WOMEN

Grandma called again. She complained to Mum that Grandpa has been acting strange. For example, he has been losing his things. Why is that strange? She said he had lost his toothbrush a couple of times. Maybe “misplaced” is a better word. Just buy a new one! She said he had also lost his wallet. Who has never lost a wallet before? It’s common, isn’t it? But I did think it was weird that Grandpa had lost his dentures once. How do you lose something like that?

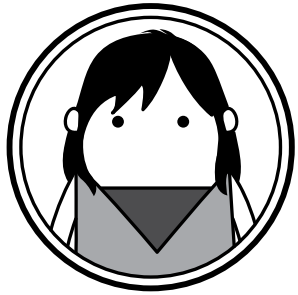
Grandma asked Mum if they should fly back to Singapore to get Grandpa to go for a medical check-up, to see what’s wrong with him. That sounds serious; I wonder why she’s reacting so negatively. Of course he’s fine! Grandma should

stop being paranoid. He’s just been losing “everyday” stuff around their flat, except for the dentures. Nothing strange, compared to what Mum has been putting herself through.

I caught Mum using our leftover mud from fixing up Bumblebee. I sniggered when Mum yelled accusingly at Whoopie, “Stop playing with the mud!” Good thing Whoopie was busy and didn’t hear Mum blaming her for something she didn’t do. Then my glee turned into shock when Mum slapped mud on her FACE! Eeeiuwww...why would she put GLUE on her face? What if she wakes up in the morning and finds her FACE stuck to the PILLOW?! Really!

Talk about family members acting weird. Whoopie acted strange at dinner, too. I thought there was something different about her, but I couldn’t figure out what it was. It wasn’t her hair or her clothes. She kept grinning at me, looking smug. For a moment I thought she had rigged up something in my room to prank me. But when I went to check, all my things were untouched. I only discovered what she was up to when I took a shower after dinner. I found a discarded stick of glue (real glue, not mud) in the dustbin! The instructions on the tube read, “Glue on for perfect eyelashes!” What?! That silly girl, no wonder I thought she resembled something...now I know, the Lhasa Apso! Batting her fake eyelashes at me as I chose the best part of the chicken to eat during dinner.

Disgusting.



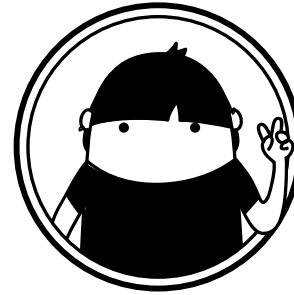
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adeline Foo is an MFA graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, Asia.

She has 25 published children's books, including eight national bestsellers. *The Travel Diary of Amos Lee: Monkeying in Malaysia!* has been shortlisted for the 2015 Hedwig Anuar Book Award, and *The Travel Diary of Amos Lee: Lost in Taipei!* was the first runner-up for Popular Reader's Choice Award in 2014. *The Diary of Amos Lee: I Sit, I Write, I Flush!* won the inaugural Red Dot award for 'Best Junior Fiction' presented by the International School Libraries Network (Singapore) in 2009 and the Popular Readers' Choice Award in 2011.

The Diary of Amos Lee is also published in India, Indonesia, China, Slovakia and Turkey. It has also been adapted for a 10-part TV series on Singapore's MediaCorp children's channel, okto.

Visit www.amoslee.com.sg for more details.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Stephanie Wong is a graphic designer and illustrator. She is the illustrator of the best-selling children's series, *The Diary of Amos Lee* and *The Travel Diary of Amos Lee*. She has also illustrated a picture book titled, *The Little Nightingale Who Can't Sing*.

Beside books, Stephanie illustrates for magazines and collaterals, and has participated at numerous exhibitions and workshops in the ASEAN region. Her recent projects include conducting doodle wall sessions for children at the Bookaroo Festival in Kuching, Malaysia, exhibiting and holding workshops at Penang's George Town Festival and at the Singapore Writers' Festival.

For other adorkable projects, check out her website www.steffatwork.com.

Steff would like to thank the following for their awesome Korea photos: Jacqueline Chan, Jess Goh and Eirma Webster.



SEOUL SEARCHING!

THE TRAVEL DIARY OF AMOS LEE

We were off on our first family holiday ever, to Seoul, South Korea! But everyone was caught up in their own thing: Dad kept checking his work emails. Mum and Grandma were chasing down K-pop stars. Whoopie only cared about growing long eyelashes. And Everest was set to win a Choco Pie eating contest.

As for me, I just wanted to win the Instagram Prize for Popular Youth! But when Grandpa went missing, our holiday became a living nightmare. He was lost in a city of TEN MILLION people—how were we going to find him?



Changdeokgung Palace
Grander than the Istana

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in Seoul for
shopping
and eating

SEOUL

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Airport
Korea, are you ready?
The Lees have landed



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