



Where's Grandma?

EDMUND LIM

Illustrated by Tan Zi Xi



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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

This edition has been reformatted and re-illustrated from the original book of the same name published by the Alzheimer's Disease Association (Singapore) in 2005.

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The Fall

“Grandma, where are the keys?” I asked.

“They’re in the second drawer of the cabinet,” she replied, smiling.

I knew I could count on Grandma’s help. I went to the cabinet, pulled open the drawer and rummaged through its contents.

“I found them! Let’s go to the park now.”

“Alright, give me a minute,” she said as she shuffled to get her walking stick.

Thin and tall, Grandma walked slowly but steadily to the door. I held her arm as we walked towards the lift and kept the door open as Grandma tottered inside.

For the past month, we had not been to the playground. Instead, we went to the neighbourhood park. For fifteen minutes every day, we would stroll together so that Grandma could get some fresh air and light exercise.

Grandma has always stayed with us. She lives with Dad, Mum and me in our four-room apartment in Toa Payoh. Grandpa passed away when I was a baby. In the day, Grandma used to take care of me because Dad and Mum had to work.

Grandma was a wonderful cook. She made lunch for both of us. I could eat two big bowls of Grandma’s delicious potato curry. I will never forget the smell of the curry and her tasty, chewy home-made ang ku kueh—absolutely mouth-watering.

When I was little, Grandma took me to the nearby playground every evening. She would hold my hand as we walked through the void decks and car parks. When we approached the playground, I would dash to the swings and then feel Grandma’s warm palms pushing my back as I soared into the sky.



Grandma would then sit on the bench and keep an eye on me. Sometimes, when I did not have a friend to play with, she would sit on the other end of the see-saw, her wrinkled, dry feet bracing herself as we bounced up and down.

Grandma would also be around to help when I fell. She would check if I was alright and encourage me to get up on my feet. If there was a wound, she would quickly take out her handkerchief to wipe away the blood.

Grandma did not only take me to the playground. When I entered Primary One, she took me to school too. Hand in hand, we would walk to school which was on the far side of the housing estate. While we walked, we would talk about the things we planned to do that day. I liked it best when she took out her special album of black and white photos and told me stories about her childhood in a small kampong in Penang.

Every morning at the school gate, Grandma would give me a big warm hug and say, "Study hard, Luke. See you later." At the end of the school day, she would be at the gate waiting for me. That was my dear Grandma.

Things changed after the fall. It was Grandma who fell. While coming out of the toilet, Grandma slipped and crashed onto the floor. Kaboonk!

I dashed to the toilet. Grandma was groaning softly. Blood oozed from a deep gash on her forehead. She had also sprained her left ankle. That happened almost two months ago. Although Grandma recovered, she walks with a slight limp and a walking stick.

Grandma's fall was just the beginning.



Author's Note

In Singapore, Alzheimer's disease affects about three per cent of people over sixty-five.

People with this disease suffer from memory loss, poorer coordination and mood swings. There may also be changes in behaviour like becoming withdrawn, temperamental or disinterested. As the disease advances, they also face challenges in performing familiar tasks and difficulties with language.

We can help them by using a daily schedule, having a routine but keeping it flexible, giving them enough time to do their activities and to rest, encouraging them in their efforts, showing them patience, and giving them love and care.

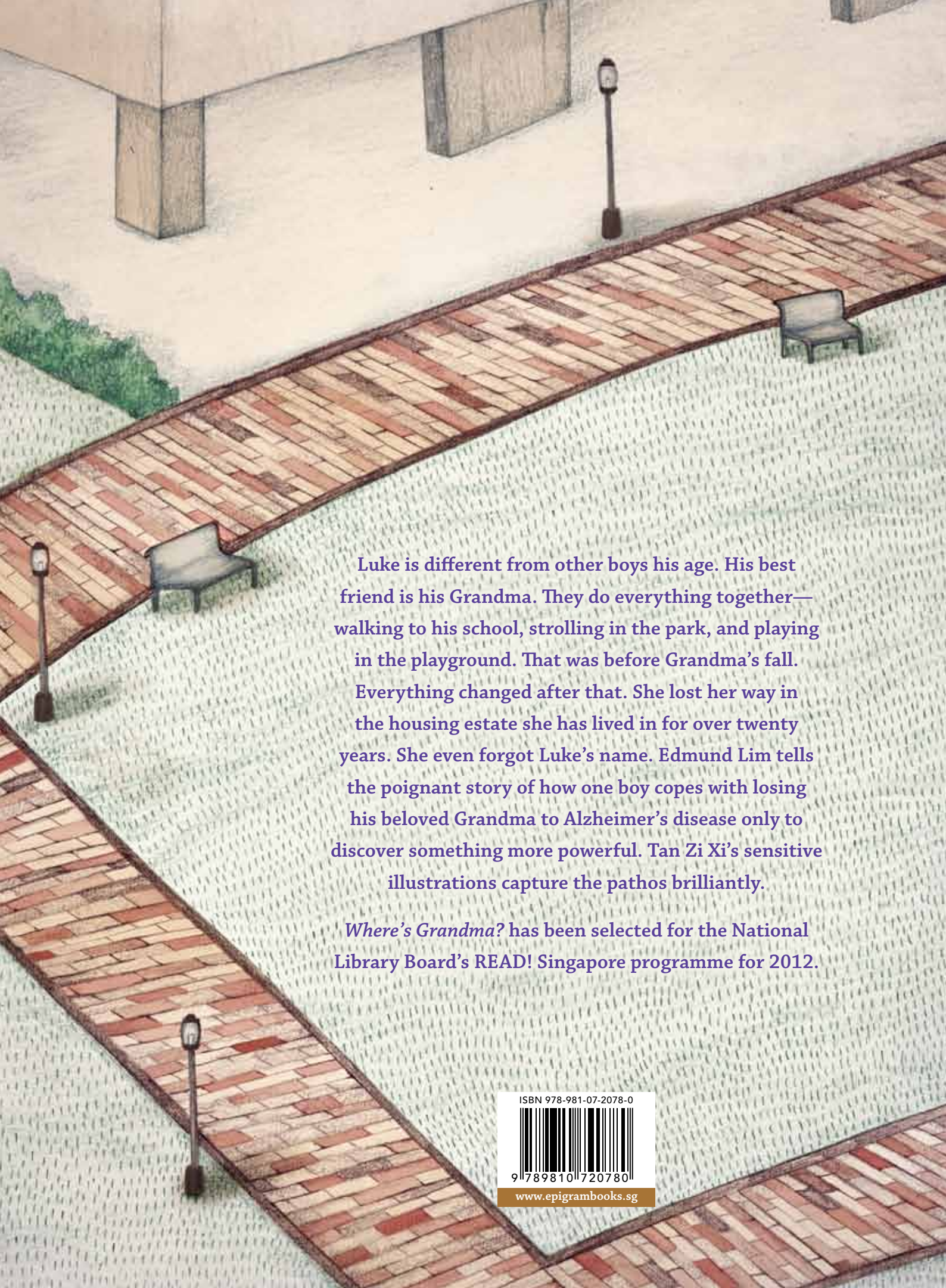
People with Alzheimer's disease remain the people whom we love, even though the illness has affected them.

You can get more information from www.alzheimers.org.sg.

EDMUND LIM is an educator who has taught at the National Institute of Education (Singapore). When Edmund is not busy working, he enjoys reading and typing out his ideas. He writes for both children and adults and hopes that his children's storybooks will engage and inspire readers, young and old. His love for his grandparents and family, along with his desire to educate children inspired him to write *Where's Grandma?* His next book *How's Grandpa?* is about Parkinson's disease.

TAN ZI XI graduated with a major in Illustration from Central Saint Martins, London in 2006. In 2010, she won the London Creative International Competition's "New Talent of the Year" award. When she is not busy illustrating, Zi Xi loves to document her breakfast experiences to share with friends, creating whimsical visuals with her vast collection of quirky cutlery or she could be zipping around the city on her bicycle, Molly. To view her work, visit www.messymsxi.com.





Luke is different from other boys his age. His best friend is his Grandma. They do everything together—walking to his school, strolling in the park, and playing in the playground. That was before Grandma’s fall. Everything changed after that. She lost her way in the housing estate she has lived in for over twenty years. She even forgot Luke’s name. Edmund Lim tells the poignant story of how one boy copes with losing his beloved Grandma to Alzheimer’s disease only to discover something more powerful. Tan Zi Xi’s sensitive illustrations capture the pathos brilliantly.

Where’s Grandma? has been selected for the National Library Board’s READ! Singapore programme for 2012.

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