



Grandpa's Little Follower

A Full English translation is available.

阿公的跟屁蟲

Author: Audrey Yuang **Illustrator:** Audrey Yuang **Publisher:** Commonwealth Education

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I love my grandpa the most. I was always following him, his little shadow. We read storybooks together and cooked the fried eggs I loved. But my favorite thing of all was the fragrant egg cakes we'd buy after hiking. Every birthday, Grandpa would take me to that little corner shop for two portions of egg cakes.

Today, though, I must go alone...

Inspired by the loss of her own beloved grandpa, Audrey Yuang dedicates this story to all who have experienced the pain of losing someone dear. It gently asks: Are those who left us truly gone? The tender, bright, and hand-drawn illustrations suggest that shared memories never leave, and a lost loved one still remains here with us.



Author **Audrey Yuang**

Audrey Yuang spent half of her life happily living with her grandpa. She loves the color green, forests, and animals most of all. She graduated from the Department of Applied Arts at Fu Jen Catholic University and works as a full-time illustrator, though she now prefers to call herself a "storyteller."

Since 2016, Yuang has been creating handmade books, gathering inspiration from everyday life and experimenting with different binding and book formats. To date, she has made more than ten books of various sizes. She is committed to approaching each story with sincerity, and hopes to share and enjoy these stories with those who resonate with them. Her work has been selected for the 3x3 International Illustration Show.

Painting Grief in Bright Colors: Reading *Grandpa's Little Follower*

by Tzu Ning Huang

From the very first page, the reader's perspective follows the young boy as he opens a door. Light streams into a darkened room, illuminating the elderly man sitting at the foot of the bed—the boy's grandpa.

In Taiwan, grandparent-led caregiving is common, and there are many stories that depict intergenerational bonds. What makes *Grandpa's Little Follower* stand out, however, is the abundance of details that invite careful reading and repeated reflection. These elements add a layer of intrigue—almost like that of a mystery novel—beneath the story's warm and tender tone.

When we read a book, we usually follow the pages in order, naturally

forming a fixed narrative timeline. Yet the author, Audrey Yuang, weaves in subtle and thoughtful design choices. Through nuanced shifts in color, changes in the characters' physical forms, and other visual cues, what appears to be a story unfolding in the present is, in fact, gently revealed to be a series of cherished moments that already belong to the past. At the very beginning, the corners of the room untouched by light suggest a quiet disarray, as if they have not been fully attended to; the only clearly rendered figure is Grandpa himself. This disparity quietly signals to the reader that the time depicted has already slipped into memory. Like a translucent filter laid over recollection, Yuang uses her brush

to shade in the darkness and sorrow of memory, while also highlighting its beauty and emotional weight.

Drawing from her own memories with her grandfather, Yuang created this poignant and engaging story. One episode, in which the grandpa takes the boy hiking, draws directly from the author's childhood, when her grandfather would take her and her younger brother up the mountain to play. For young children, mountain paths always feel especially long, and without something to hold their attention, it can be difficult to complete the hike. Fortunately, her grandfather possessed a kind of magic that made hiking fun. He encouraged them to look for insects along the way—butterflies, caterpillars, cicada shells, and sometimes even lizards and squirrels. Observing these creatures helped the children forget their fatigue, and before they realized it, they had already reached the summit.

In the earliest conception of the story, fried eggs were the grandpa's signature dish. As the story evolved, the "egg" emerged as a key thread tying everything together: the grandpa's cooking lessons, the dinosaur egg in the storybook they read together, and the egg cakes from the neighborhood grocery

shop. Eggs are often seen as symbols of new life, and intriguingly, in Taiwanese Hokkien, the pronunciation of "egg cake" closely resembles that of "birthday cake."

The egg thus becomes a hidden detail that the author quietly weaves into the narrative. The boy and his grandpa actually share the same birthday, symbolizing the intimate friendship between them.

That this boy must confront death on a day of "birth" creates a deeply moving contrast. It not only invites reflection on loss and grief, but also draws attention to what remains behind. The passing of a loved one may bring unavoidable heartbreak and inner rupture, yet this book shows us how we might savor our shared memories and transform the details of those interactions into treasures of life. In doing so, these memories can become a source of strength that helps us move forward.

Tzu Ning Huang is an editor at Books from Taiwan. She loves to listen and tell stories, enjoys conversations and encounters with others, and appreciates time alone. She also loves to use photography and writing to explore the world.

"Once upon a time,
up in the mountains,
there lived a wicked dragon..."

"Grandpa, there are so many
dragon eggs! Have you ever
cooked a dragon egg?"

"A weak dragon?
Did the dragon forget to eat?"
"Not weak — I said wicked.
But... yes, it sure looks hungry!"

We end up making up a whole new story
that's not in the book. It's so much fun.



"Buddy, want to go hiking?"
Grandpa asks me, all of a sudden.



Grandpa and I go hiking together a lot.
The paths to the mountain feel sooo
long and tough!

"The stick insects on the trees, the frogs
hiding between the rocks—
you have to walk slowly to see them.
It's okay to go slow. Grandpa's right here
with you."

I remember everything
Grandpa says to me.





When we reach the top of the mountain,
I sit down beside the old tree stump where a big
tree used to grow.
"You did it again, little one!" Grandpa says.

But it was *you* who walked slowly with me.
We did it—*together*.