

The Great-great-greatest

by Cassandra Tse

CHARACTERS

BENNY LIM

(Lily's older brother)

LILY LIM

(Benny's younger sister)

GRACE CHEN

(Angus's twin sister)

ANGUS CHEN

(Grace's twin brother)

MUM

(Benny and Lily's)



Scene: *The Chinese Association hall, dinner time. BENNY and LILY are hiding in a storage room among all the chairs.*

LILY. I'm bored.

BENNY. Shhh. Someone will hear – and I think they've forgotten about us.

LILY. So can we stop hiding?

BENNY. What? Do you want to be stuck in the kitchen, peeling garlic and chopping potatoes all night? Trust me, Lily, this room is the best place to be. No one will find us in here ...

GRACE and ANGUS enter in a hurry.

BENNY and LILY (getting a fright). Ahhh!

GRACE and ANGUS (getting a fright). Ahhh!

There's an awkward pause.

GRACE. Sorry, we didn't know anyone was in here.

LILY. We're hiding from kitchen duty.

ANGUS. Us too. Have you ever had to chop garlic?

BENNY (nodding). That's why we're here.

He and LILY shuffle over to make room for the newcomers.

BENNY. Is this your first time at the C.A.?

GRACE. The what?

BENNY. The Chinese Association.

GRACE. Oh, that. Yeah. We've just moved down from Auckland.

LILY. We come for the banquet every year. The food's yum as. But it's always late.

BENNY (nodding in agreement). Hours and hours late. Anyway, my name's Benny, and this is my sister, Lily.

GRACE. Nice to meet you. I'm Grace.

ANGUS. And I'm Angus. We're twins in case you're wondering.

GRACE. Ever since we were born.

They all laugh.

BENNY (*looking at his watch*). I wonder when it'll be safe to leave.

ANGUS. Wow. You wear a watch. Old style!

BENNY. I know, right. It was my great-great-grandad's.

GRACE. That's cool.

BENNY (*nodding*). My great-great-grandad is like a family legend.

GRACE. Really? How do you mean?

BENNY. He was a kung fu master.

He stands and begins to act out some kung fu moves.

He was famous across China for his incredible skills. He trained with the Shaolin monks and mastered all five styles. Crane –

He balances on one leg.

Snake –

He makes a snake with his arms.

Leopard –

He gets into a fighting stance.

Tiger –

He punches the air.

And Dragon.

He kicks, accidentally hitting one of the chairs.



LILY. Anyway, what Benny's saying is he was probably the coolest person who ever lived.

GRACE and ANGUS *make eye contact.*

ANGUS. I mean, he sounds pretty cool ...

GRACE. But our great-great-grandad was pretty cool, too.

BENNY *raises his eyebrows.* **LILY** *coughs.*

BENNY. Pretty cool? How?

GRACE. Our great-great-grandad was a kung fu master *and* an amazing inventor.

ANGUS (*nodding in agreement*). He was mostly a genius.

GRACE. This was way back ... like a hundred years ago, when they didn't even have cars or anything.

LILY. Well, actually –

GRACE (*not letting Lily interrupt*). That's when our great-great-grandad invented the first-ever bicycle-powered washing machine. People would pedal like crazy, and the clothes would spin in soapy water. No electricity necessary. Soon, every villager in Guangdong wanted one.



LILY. But *our* great-great-grandad was an inventor, too!

ANGUS. What? No way!

BENNY (*insistent*). He was!

LILY. Once he finished training with the Shaolin monks, he moved all the way to New Zealand. Over the years, he invented heaps of things.

BENNY. Automatic watering cans ...

LILY. The electric hairbrush ...

BENNY. Anti-sandfly pants ...

LILY. Never-melting butter ...

BENNY. Wearing jandals with socks ...

LILY. Pavlova with kiwifruit!

ANGUS (*skeptical*). He invented pavlova?

LILY. Well, no – but he was the first person to put kiwifruit on top.

ANGUS. That's not really an invention ...

GRACE. Anyway, our great-great-grandad moved to New Zealand as well.

ANGUS. He moved to Canterbury and became a champion vegetable farmer.

BENNY. But –

ANGUS (*not letting Benny interrupt*).

He broke the world record for the biggest pumpkin ever grown.

GRACE. It was so big it took all of his family to lift it!



ANGUS. The people from the *Guinness World Records* book flew over to take his photo. Great-great-grandad and his giant pumpkin were in newspapers all over the world!

LILY. But –

ANGUS. Dad says that he chopped it up and gave a piece to everyone in town ... and there were *still* leftovers!

GRACE (*very confident*). So I think it's clear whose great-great-grandad was the coolest.

ANGUS. Not that there was ever any doubt.

BENNY. But it was *our* great-great-grandad who grew the world's biggest pumpkin! (*He waves his wrist in their faces.*) He's wearing this exact same watch in the photo!

ANGUS (*rolling his eyes*). Oh, sure.

BENNY. It's true!

GRACE. No way.

The two pairs of siblings eye each other suspiciously.



ANGUS. Have you been spying on us or something?

LILY. What? More like *you've* been spying on *us*!

BENNY. This is *our* great-great-grandad we're talking about. Our mum and dad told us the stories.

LILY. *And* our nan and pop!

GRACE. So I suppose *your* great-great-grandad once ate fifty cha siu bao in ten minutes?

LILY. And *your* great-great-grandad opened the first Chinese restaurant in Timaru?

ANGUS. And *your* great-great-grandad brought a real live cricket in a cage –

BENNY and ANGUS (together). On the boat from Hong Kong all the way to Wellington –

BENNY. For good luck!

ANGUS. How did you know that?

BENNY. Because that was *my* great-great-grandad, not yours!

ANGUS. Nuh-uh!

BENNY. Uh-huh!

GRACE. Stop stealing our stories!

LILY. Not until you stop stealing ours!

The two pairs of siblings are interrupted. Benny and Lily's mum walks in.

MUM. What's going on in here? Benny, Lily, I've been looking for you both everywhere. (*She spots Grace and Angus.*) Oh! Hello, you two. (*She looks back at Benny and Lily.*) I was planning to introduce you to your cousins. They've just moved down from Auckland. But it seems you've met already.

LILY (confused). Cousins?

MUM. Yes. Grace and Angus are your distant cousins. You have the same great-great-grandfather!

The kids look at each other. There is a long pause, then they all burst out laughing.

MUM. What's so funny?

BENNY. Nothing.

MUM. Well, whatever you're up to, we need help in the kitchen. Come on, there's a big pile of potatoes to peel.

MUM exits and the cousins follow. ANGUS and LILY are the last to leave.

ANGUS. Did you know our great-great-grandad invented the potato peeler?

LILY. He did?

ANGUS. You tell me ...

illustrations by Jez Tuya

