

Super Cool Books: MEET THE AUTHOR: DARYL KHO, author of *Mistbound: How to Glue Back Your Grandpa*, published by Penguin Random House SEA

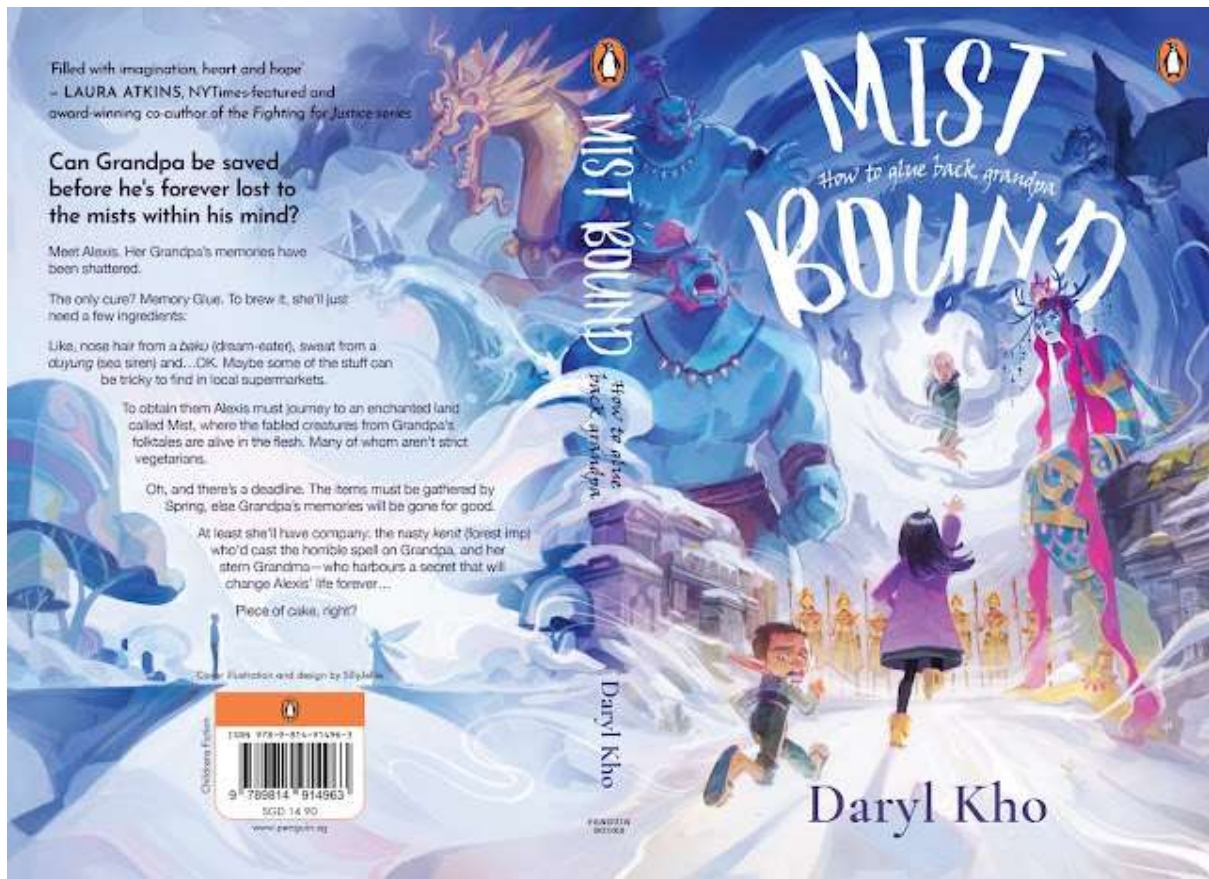
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Note: This showcase features five kids' fiction authors, all proudly published by Penguin Random House SEA. When the pandemic is over, we'll get back to in-person book launch events. But for now, enjoy this virtual version. [More info here.](#)

Please introduce yourself!

I work in the regional TV industry where I sell other people's stories and ideas for a living. I live in Singapore with my wife as well as the heroine of my book - my daughter. I'm originally from KL, but my paternal grandpa was from Indonesia, whilst both my grandmothers were Peranakan (paternal was Singaporean Nyonya, maternal was Penang Nyonya). So I guess I'm pretty much Southeast Asian. Until this book, I'd actually NOT been writing anything other than business emails and Whatsapp texts. Not since my student days which was over two decades ago when I used to churn out poems, songs and plays.

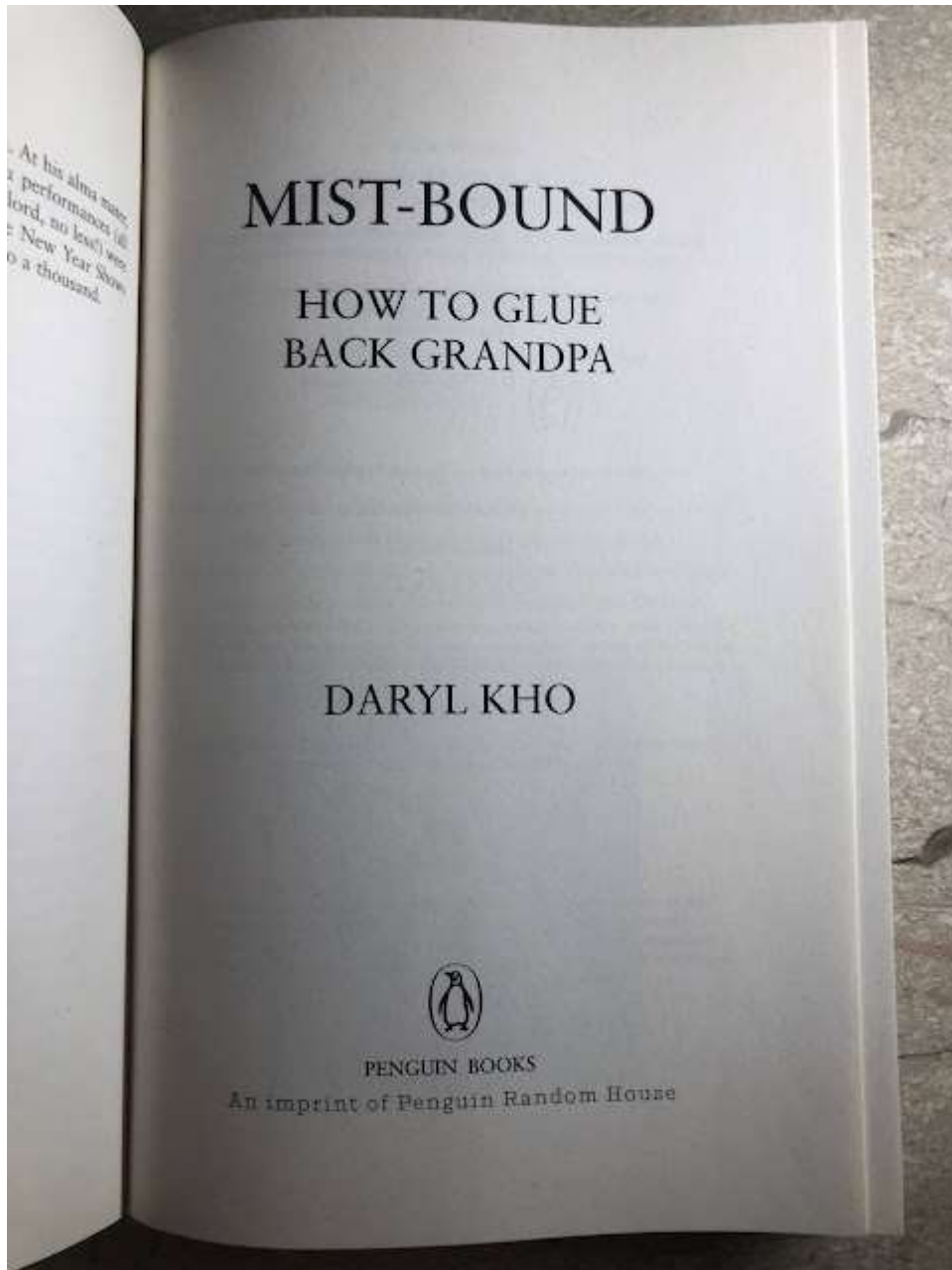


Tell us about your book.

It's about a young girl named Alexis who has to go on the journey of her life in a race against time to save her Grandfather's broken memories. His memories had been shattered by a terrible spell, and the only thing that can put them back together again is a potion called Memory Glue. But to make Memory Glue, Alexis needs to gather a bunch of weird ingredients: stuff like some drops of a duyung's (Malay for mermaid) sweat and strands of nose hair from a Baku (Japanese dream eater). So not exactly stuff she can easily find in Sheng Siong or NTUC Fairprice. Not even Amazon. No, to get them, she has to travel with of all people, her no-nonsense strict Grandma, to a whole different world. One where magic exists, and where the mystical creatures from all the folktales and fairytales that her grandpa used to tell her, are alive in the flesh (and mostly flesh-eating too). And she has to do this before the start of Spring, or else her grandpa's memories will be lost forever to the mists within his mind.

My book is a fairytale for families, based on a true story about a family: mine. It was inspired by our experience with dementia, which my father suffered and eventually passed away from. The story's implicit themes about dementia, inter-generational relationships and the importance of family (which keeps us glued together, hence the term "family bonds") are why organizations like Dementia Singapore, TOUCH Community Services Singapore and the Alzheimer's Disease Foundation of Malaysia

have partnered with me, to raise reader awareness and kickstart conversations within families around these salient topics. Not least, Mist-Bound is also a celebration of stories and storytelling, as it is peppered with folktales, fables and magical creatures predominantly from Asia. There is much space for more stories from Asia for Asian kids. And hopefully this novel will help spark curiosity amongst kids to learn more about mythologies from our own backyard, and from within the memories of our elders.



What was your creative process like?

For the most part, I had no process and that was why it took me so long

to complete this book. Powered by adrenaline from the initial spark of inspiration, the first full draft took about six months to complete. Thereafter I had a 3-year-long writer's block. Time and everything else in life just flew by with little progress made book-wise, whilst I moped around waiting for the next bolt of inspiration to strike. I received a kick in the pants again when my father passed away. That's when I realized my procrastination had gone too far, as he was one of the key people the book for meant for in the first place. That's when I drastically altered my approach, and treated this book like a second job instead of a side hobby. I laid out a firm routine and got organized.

Seven months later I finally completed the second full draft, which after a round of edits, was submitted to and finally signed up by my publisher, Penguin. My epiphany was that you can't passively wait around for the spirit of inspiration to visit: you have to actively schedule that meeting with her. Book writing is like running a marathon, or sticking to a diet. You can't just rely on muses or mood for motivation. It requires discipline and routine: it needs to become a habit.

Has the pandemic affected your book promotion?

For me I think book-wise, the pandemic brought more upsides than down. Sure, it caused publication to be delayed by maybe a year, and significantly affected the bookstore rollout schedules. Also I wasn't able to do a physical launch with fireworks, champagne and lion dances. But on the plus side, it was a boon not having to travel for work. Otherwise, I definitely wouldn't have been able to do all the immense pre-launch legwork like setting up a website, strike partnerships with TOUCH and Dementia Singapore, set up and run a pre-order campaign etc. It'd also not have been possible to work on and complete all the many pieces of chapter artwork with my illustrator. The increased digitalization brought about by the pandemic has also enabled more avenues for marketing, including being able to do Zoom sharing sessions and Instagram Live chats in Malaysia without having to leave my house or put on proper pants.



Any advice for aspiring writers who want to write or launch a kids' novel in the coming year?

Learn digital marketing! Gosh, I'm still trying to figure out Instagram.

LINKS

Author website: darylkho.com

Instagram: [ig.darylkho.com](https://www.instagram.com/ig.darylkho.com)

Facebook: [fb.darylkho.com](https://www.facebook.com/fb.darylkho.com)

[You can check out the other four authors here, they're all eager to tell you about their lovely books.](#)