



# IBASHO SG

Find your Ibasho

“a place where you can feel like yourself” in Japanese

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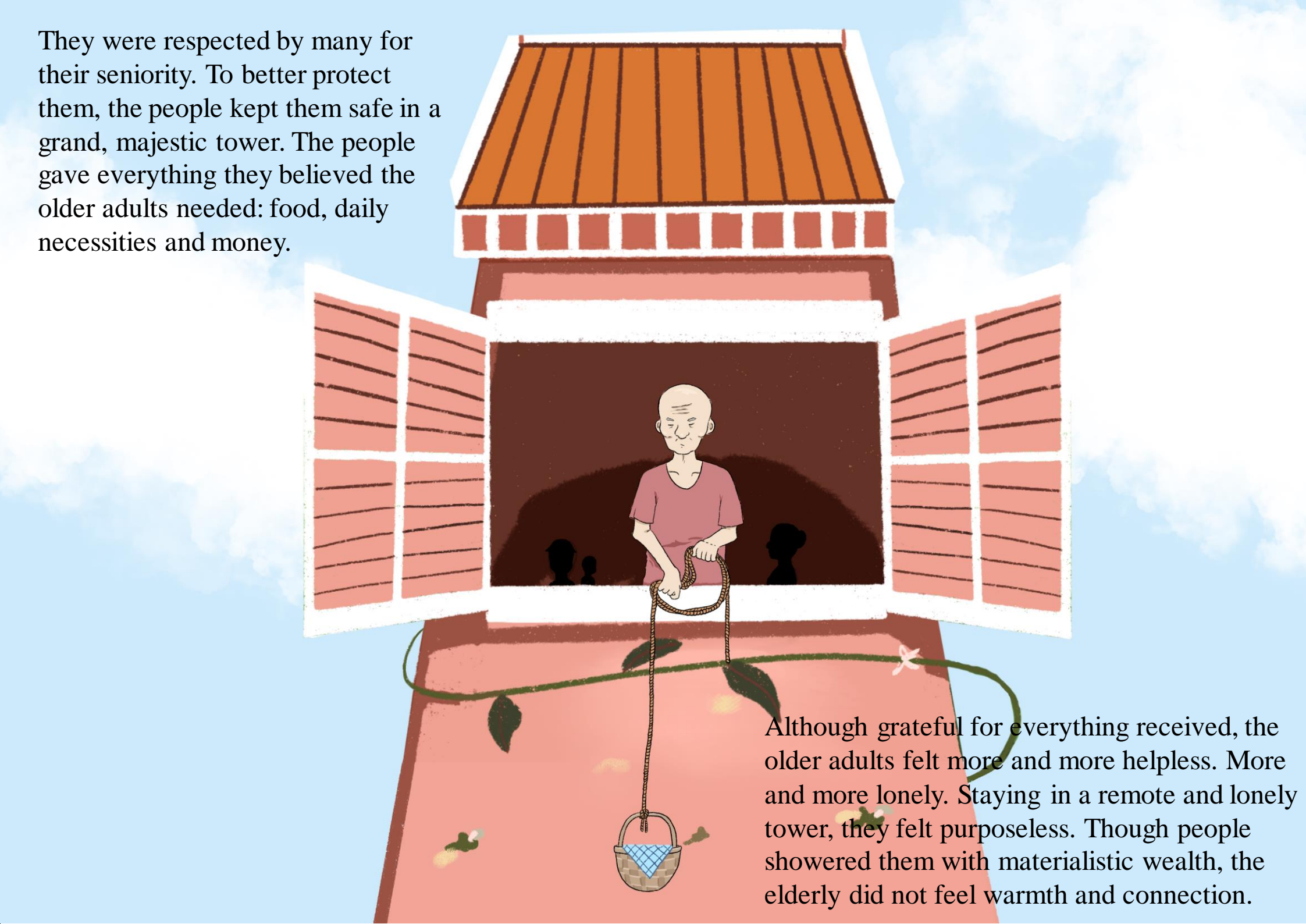
Mentored by Dr Kelvin Tan.






Once upon a time, in a land not so far away, there lived a group of older adults.

They were respected by many for their seniority. To better protect them, the people kept them safe in a grand, majestic tower. The people gave everything they believed the older adults needed: food, daily necessities and money.



Although grateful for everything received, the older adults felt more and more helpless. More and more lonely. Staying in a remote and lonely tower, they felt purposeless. Though people showered them with materialistic wealth, the elderly did not feel warmth and connection.





One day, as the people were delivering food to them, a strange incident occurred. The basket of food started speaking!


"Hi, I'm Ottah!"

A lady lifted the cloth covering the basket. To everyone's surprise, an otter lay beneath it! The older adults marveled in wonder.

"Why is there an otter here?" All were confused.

"I'm here to help you find your purpose!"

The older adults stared at the otter, astounded. What did it mean? Did Ottah know something about how they felt?



From then on, the otter would sneak into the tower, day after day. Be it chatting with them or bringing stories from other parts of the world, Ottah would never fail to make the older adults' day.

Over time, the older adults started to realise different possibilities. Ottah's stories showed them how older adults from different places were living meaningfully and unleashing their full potential. They also imagined how they could use their own skills to add value to the community.

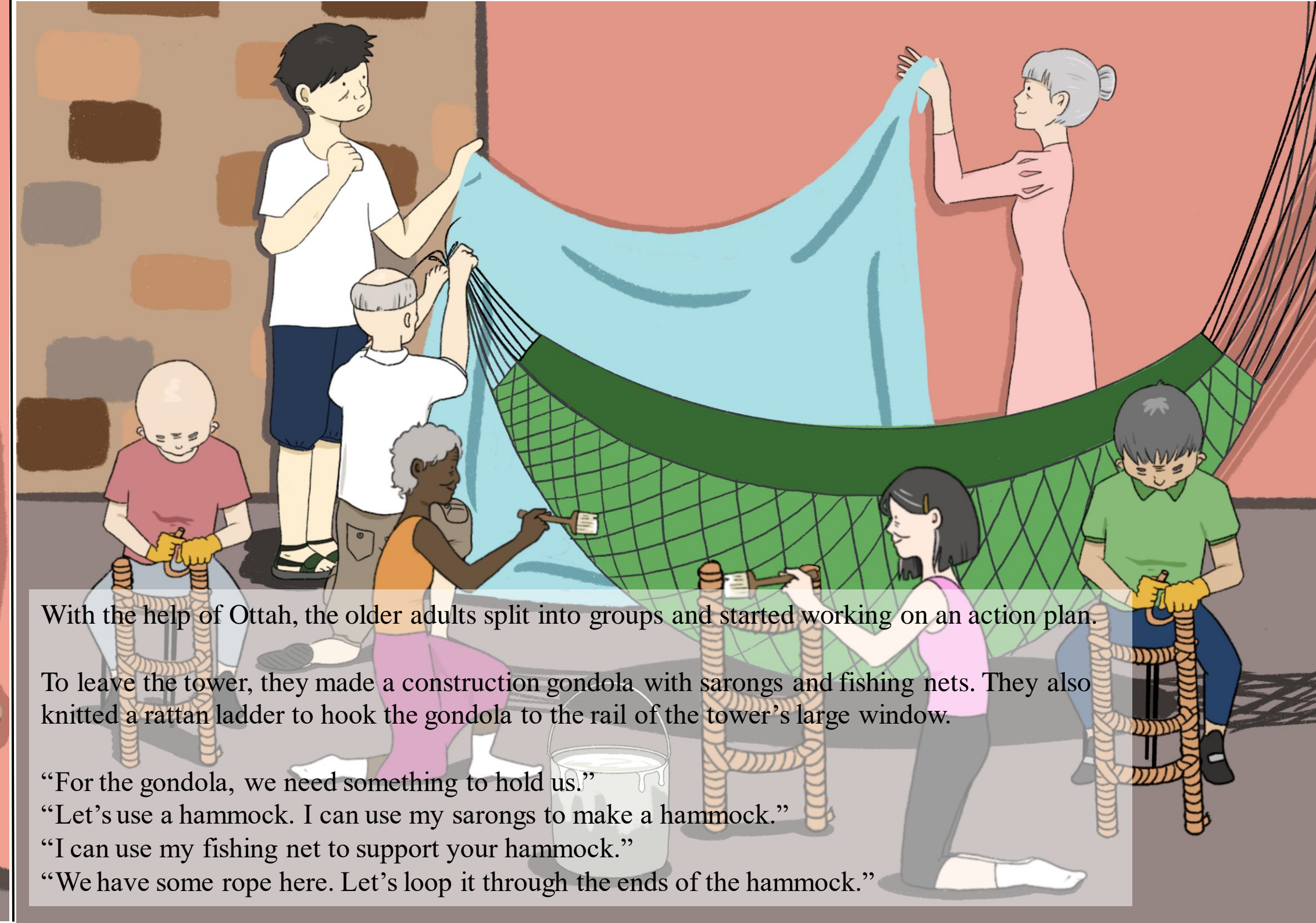




As the older adults grew closer to the otter, they started opening up about their true feelings. They had received so much love, and were thankful for it. However, they did not want to only receive without doing anything. They wanted to give back.

“Ottah, how can we give back to the community? We don’t want to stay in this tower forever.”

“We don’t want to be a burden. We can be useful too!”



With the help of Ottah, the older adults split into groups and started working on an action plan.

To leave the tower, they made a construction gondola with sarongs and fishing nets. They also knitted a rattan ladder to hook the gondola to the rail of the tower’s large window.

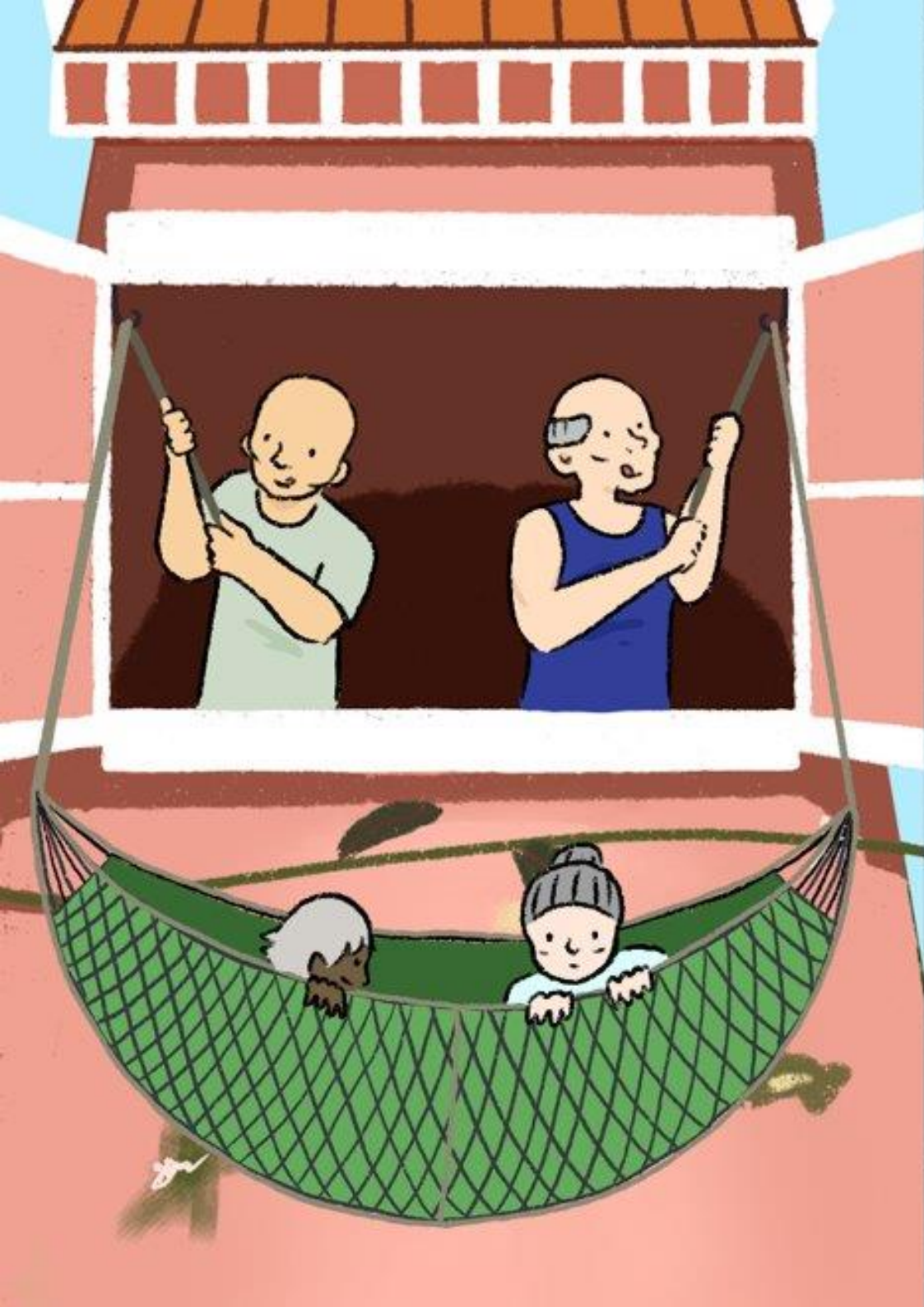
“For the gondola, we need something to hold us!”

“Let’s use a hammock. I can use my sarongs to make a hammock.”

“I can use my fishing net to support your hammock.”

“We have some rope here. Let’s loop it through the ends of the hammock.”





They planned out how they would leave the tower. A pair would sit in the hammock while the rest lowered it to the ground. They would reverse the direction of belaying for the final pair leaving.

When the sun went down every night, the older adults shared stories of their time. Baritone voices and melodious tunes filled all's ears. From elegant spins to rhythmic moves, they had it all. They basked in the smell of gravy, broth, and rice. The pots were always hot, and their hearts were always warm.



At last, the day had come. Long hours of preparation were for this very day. The older adults would leave at 11am, 2 hours after the young people had left the basket of daily necessities for the day.

“Second pair!”

“Third!”

...

“Last one! We can do this!”



On the long walk to find the young people, the older adults picked edibles that they recognised and ignited fires to cook lunch.

“I can’t wait to bring back Pasar Malams!” “And karaoke sessions!”

“What do we do when we find the young people? How do we show them how we feel?”

“Start a cafe and organise activities...? The young ones can join us. ”

“Or teach children how to cook!”

“Hmm...maybe a community kitchen. Or a Pasar Malam? Our profits can be donated.”

“And caring for our environment. We want to give our future generations a beautiful planet.”

“Good idea!”



They chatted and laughed over lunch as Ottah sat with them.



Meanwhile, the people were going about their daily lives, oblivious to the older adults’ disappearance. Just then, they saw a group of people approaching them.

“Is that grandma?”

“That’s my father!”

“Are those...the older adults?”





With that, the young people took a step back and worked with the older adults to plan, construct and carry out their wonderful plans. Different generations poured in their strengths, with big dreams and even bigger hearts.

Though imperfect and built with flaws, everyone embodied unique values and unique skills. The older adults and the younger generations worked hand in hand to conceive Ibasho Singapore.



The young people were surprised that they were not in the tower. The older adults smiled and sat the young people around a table to share their plans.

“But what if you fall?” The young people asked concernedly.

“We are extremely grateful for all the help. We would also like to help you now.”

After much discussion, the young people realised the older adults’ true feelings and their intangible value that they had previously overlooked.





Age should not determine one's worth and identity. Despite their seniority, older adults have immeasurable value and experience they can contribute to the community.

Ibasho Singapore aims to empower the older adults to maximise their potential by using what they know to carry out activities.

And they all lived happily ever after.

**The end.**





# Dedications

Dear grandmother:

Thank you for being a huge part of my life! You were the one who played made up games of fairy tales with me all day long, who constantly indulged me in my requests, and comforted me when I felt sad. I love you so much!

Charmaine

Dear grandfather:

Although you are all the way in China, you still mean a lot to me! Thank you for being so bright and encouraging and I can't wait to visit you soon! Stay healthy and stay safe!

Yuexin

Dear grandmother:

You have always been my source of inspiration. I truly admire your passion for work. I have always admired your presence as you sat behind your desk, recording financial statements with such familiarity. Thank you for always stocking up the fridge with Yakult when we come over. I love you!

Bing Xuan

Dear grandfather:

I don't recall much about you as you passed on when I was rather young. But from what our family says, you must have been an interesting person! I enjoy hearing stories about your life. Wherever you are, I hope you're doing well.

Kirstin

The time to be happy now, the place to be happy is here, and the way to be happy is to make other people happy." I found this quote in an elementary school in Bhutan when I was working on a senior housing project for Buddhist monks. This quote resonated with me because it captured the gap between our current approach to elder care and what elders want. The Ibasho approach recognizes elders as valuable assets to their community, empowering them to be change agents who challenge the prevalent narrative of aging and the social role of elders. The four young women and a wise mentor for this story book project shared their views on how each of us be a part of co-designing a shared future for elders across the globe in which aging is not something to fear but an opportunity to appreciate the potential within us all for meaningful growth throughout our lives. I hope you can join us to create the better future through multi-generational learnings.

Dr Emi Kiyota

Wished that I could have learnt the beautiful Chinese calligraphy and strategy of Chinese chess from grandpa and generous cooking of veg dishes from grandma!

Dr Kelvin Tan



Special Thanks to Dr Kelvin Tan & Dr Emi Kiyota.