



Dad, You've Got Dementia

Conversations with my father

Kristen Phillips

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112 pp memoir / creative non-fiction

- story of the author's father, Don, and living with dementia
- focuses on Don and the connections he and his whānau made despite his dementia
- told in short lyrical pieces that are like snapshots of the experience of living with dementia, resources included



Kristen Phillips grew up in Te Awa Kairangi Lower Hutt and recently returned to Aotearoa after thirty years living in London. While there, she came first-equal in the WriteNow poetry competition and founded a long-running poetry group.

She lives in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington with her partner, the writer Mia Farlane, and works for Dementia Wellington.

'Lyrical, honest, unfailingly loving: a portrait of the power of connection, even when there are no more words.'

—Charity Norman, author of *Remember Me*

When Kristen's father, Don, was diagnosed with dementia the signs had been there for five years. He'd gone out less and less, given up driving and table tennis and relied increasingly on his wife, Penny. Conversations went in circles.

Kristen started trying different ways to get her dad back – not the dad who could recall what was said or retain facts about his family, but the one who was patient, curious and funny. Who said, 'I could talk with you for hours.'

She realised as he searched for words that weren't there and reached for new ones, that the words he was finding and how he fitted them together felt like poetry. And Kristen, a poet, began writing it down.

Dad, You've Got Dementia is not about what is being lost on a daily basis but what there is still to find. It shows people living with dementia and their whānau that it's possible to stay connected with those they love.

'This book will aid and encourage people caring for someone with dementia (whether family or professional) to listen and attend to the person who, despite the inexorable changes, is still there.'

—Dr Chris Perkins, author of *Dementia: What You Need to Know*



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