



# The Secret Path

## 尋找祕境

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Have you ever been to a "secret realm"?

Rebecca, who lives with two big cats, is passionate about traveling. One day, she comes across an online post about a must-see view, instantly captivated. She packs her bags and sets off with her two cats, Brownie and Lulu. And so, they board the last train of the day, embarking on a journey to find the secret realm.

Transcending cultural barriers and resonating across different age groups of readers, the story leaves little clues for young readers who love to explore and discover.



Author **Yu-Lin Chen**

Yu-Lin Chen, a two-time selected for the Bologna Illustrators' Exhibition and recipient of the Golden Tripod Awards, holds a Master's degree from Utrecht School of the Arts in the Netherlands. She enjoys walking, nature, and talking to cats. She is also the author of *Samishi's Frustration*, *Olympics*, *Taiwan's Most Beautiful Places - National Parks Map*, *Taiwan Map*, *Seeking Hidden Gems*, and *The Angry Mountain*.

# From “Here” to “The Heart”— Yu-Lin Chen’s *The Secret Path*

by Charlene Lai  
(originally published on Okapi)

Children listening to stories often ask, “What happens next?” or “Is there more?” But once the ending is revealed, what comes after that? Every ending, in fact, marks the beginning of something new. So what is the “secret path”?

Reaching the secret path raises important questions: what lies ahead, and what would our map look like? A regular map shows us where we are in the world, but a “life map” is far more intricate. Life’s landmarks are shaped by our experiences—while the past is fixed, the future remains unwritten. In *The Secret Path*, the station sign shows that “here” to “there” is 100 km, while the previous stop, “the heart,” is 9,999 km away. Does this suggest the heart is a vast distance away, or could it be closer than we think?

The story begins with Rebecca, a girl who loves collecting souvenirs during

her travels. One day, an advertisement on her computer screen catches her attention, promising a breathtaking secret place—much like the enticing ads we often see in our daily lives.

Captivated by the idea, Rebecca, accompanied by her two cats, sets off on a journey to uncover this hidden destination. Armed with a map, Rebecca sets off, traveling through forests, past golden trees, and across vast oceans. Along the way, she barely notices the unicorns, the fragrance of flowers, the vibrant rainbows, or the majestic whales. She’s solely focused on reaching her destination—and convinced that the secret place will have a souvenir shop where she will find treasures. But when she arrives, the secret place is nothing like she imagined.

This mirrors a story from Eastern

Europe about an old man named Isaac who dreams of treasure buried beneath a bridge near a palace. Although initially skeptical, after dreaming about it three times, Isaac decides to travel to the palace. When he reaches the palace, a guard reveals that the treasure is actually buried beneath Isaac’s own stove at home. Though seemingly improbable, the story reminds us that the treasure we seek is often closer than we realize. For Rebecca, the secret path was right outside her window.

The book’s large format highlights Rebecca’s smallness in relation to the vastness of nature, inviting readers to feel as though they, too, are stepping into the world, experiencing both the grandeur of nature and the humility of being human.

Yu-Lin Chen’s illustrations garnered international acclaim and been selected

for the Bologna Illustrators Award and the World Illustration Exhibition. Her artwork appears on products such as bottled water, masks, and even inside Taiwan’s Google offices. In *The Secret Path*, she invites readers to join her on a journey.

*This essay has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.*

*Charlene Lai, a writer and picture book critic, became involved in picture books through reading with her children. She promotes picture book reading by organizing groups, writing columns, planning events, facilitating international exchanges, and supporting local creators in connecting globally.*



After crossing the high mountains,  
a beautiful scene appears before them...  
but Rebecca is still in a hurry.

*“Lulu, stop thinking about eating.*

*After we pass through this meadow,*

*we still have to row the boat across the big lake!*

***Hurry, hurry!”***



Is that edible?

Wow!  
It's so pretty.





I want to rest.


So many big fish!

"Brownie, stop playing!

We've only come halfway.

Come help row! **Hurry up!**"







This is much bigger than  
fish from a can!



You all look so hungry—  
here's some food for you!



"You two, pay attention! We still need to  
switch to a smaller boat up ahead to get there.

*Hurry, hurry!"*