



Rain

雨

Author: Hsu-Kung Liu **Illustrator:** Hsu-Kung Liu **Publisher:** Les Gouttes Press

Date: 09/2023

Rights contact: bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

48 pages | 29.7 x 21.5cm

Volume: 1

Awards: The 48th Golden Tripod Awards, Children's & Youth Adult Book Awards
2023 Openbook Best Children's Book of the Year

BFT2.0 Translator: Michelle Kuo

This meditative story flows like scenes in a film, enhanced by author Hsu-Kung Liu's hand-painted calligraphy a universal pursuit of mindfulness, beauty, and zen-like peace.

It follows a young monk raised in a temple by an elder monk. One rainy day, feeling restless, the elder monk gives him a brush and asks him to write the word "rain." As the young monk carefully writes each stroke, he finds a sense of calm. From that day on, he writes "rain" every day, a practice he continues for twenty years.

As the little monk grows into an elder monk, a great drought strikes. Together the monks decide to descend the mountain to pray for rain. The elder monk brings with him the countless "rain" characters he has written. At the grand altar, adorned with golden decorations, the monks argue and blame one another. The elder monk, holding up one "rain" character after another, reflects on the past, his tears falling onto the paper. Like a miracle, rain begins to fall. This story invites deep reflection and leaves a lasting impression.



Author **Hsu-Kung Liu**

Hsu-Kung Liu was born in Taipei in 1973. A graduate of the Civil Engineering Department at National Taiwan University, he started to work in picture book illustration after taking part in the "Lucy Chen Handmade Picture Book Classroom." His works have won the Hsin-Yi Children's Literature Prize, China Times Openbook Awards, the Golden Tripod Award and have been selected for exhibition at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. He has sold works in English, Thai, Japanese, French, Swedish, Korean, and Estonian.

Unchanging Intentions, Consistent Practice: The Gentle Yet Powerful Force in Hsu-Kung Liu's Picture Books

by Huang Xiao-Yin
(originally published on Okapi)

Hsu-Kung Liu's works are warm and soothing, offering neither grand lessons nor sharp critiques. They evoke the serene feeling of sitting quietly in a bamboo forest, observing the world with a calm mind. His latest work, *Rain*, beautifully reflects his humble character and creative journey. It reminds us that, no matter the challenges, a meditative practice can help us navigate both art and life.

Rain tells the simple yet emotional story of an orphaned little monk who is brought to the temple by a rabbit and raised there. He leads an ordinary life, performing daily chores and even smiling when teased for his illiteracy. His life flows like a gentle melody, always returning

to a calm balance after disturbances. The source of this balance lies in a consistent practice that he has done since childhood. Inspired by the elder monk's calligraphy, the little monk has written the Chinese character for "rain" every day, regardless of the weather. This daily practice continues for twenty years until he eventually becomes the elder monk himself.

Rain showcases Hsu-Kung Liu's skill in using simple moments to convey deep meaning, blending calm atmospheres with intense emotion. One day, the elder monk and his companions leave the temple to pray for rain to end a drought. Unable to recite scriptures due to illiteracy, the elder

monk offers the stack of "rain" characters he has written over the years as his prayer. These characters carry his memories, hardships, and a deep connection to the temple. Each stroke brings him back to his original intention, continuing his journey with quiet strength.

The temple's peaceful daily life is especially moving. Unlike the busy plazas filled with incense smoke and kneeling devotees, every scene in the temple radiates vitality in its stillness. The growing monk hones his heart through daily tasks, a process reflecting Liu's own creative journey. Creation is a long and often self-doubting journey, but through persistent experimentation, the answers gradually emerge. Despite its challenges, the process is deeply fulfilling.

In Liu's works, readers witness a profound search for meaning, capturing both the process of seeking and moments of clarity. Through his experiments with color, he creates distinct atmospheres in each piece.

Rain is a story about calligraphy, kindness, and quiet strength. After the drought ends, the monks silently don their raincoats and leave, a moment filled with deep meaning. Their quiet return to the temple and steadfast dedication to their practice hold immense value.

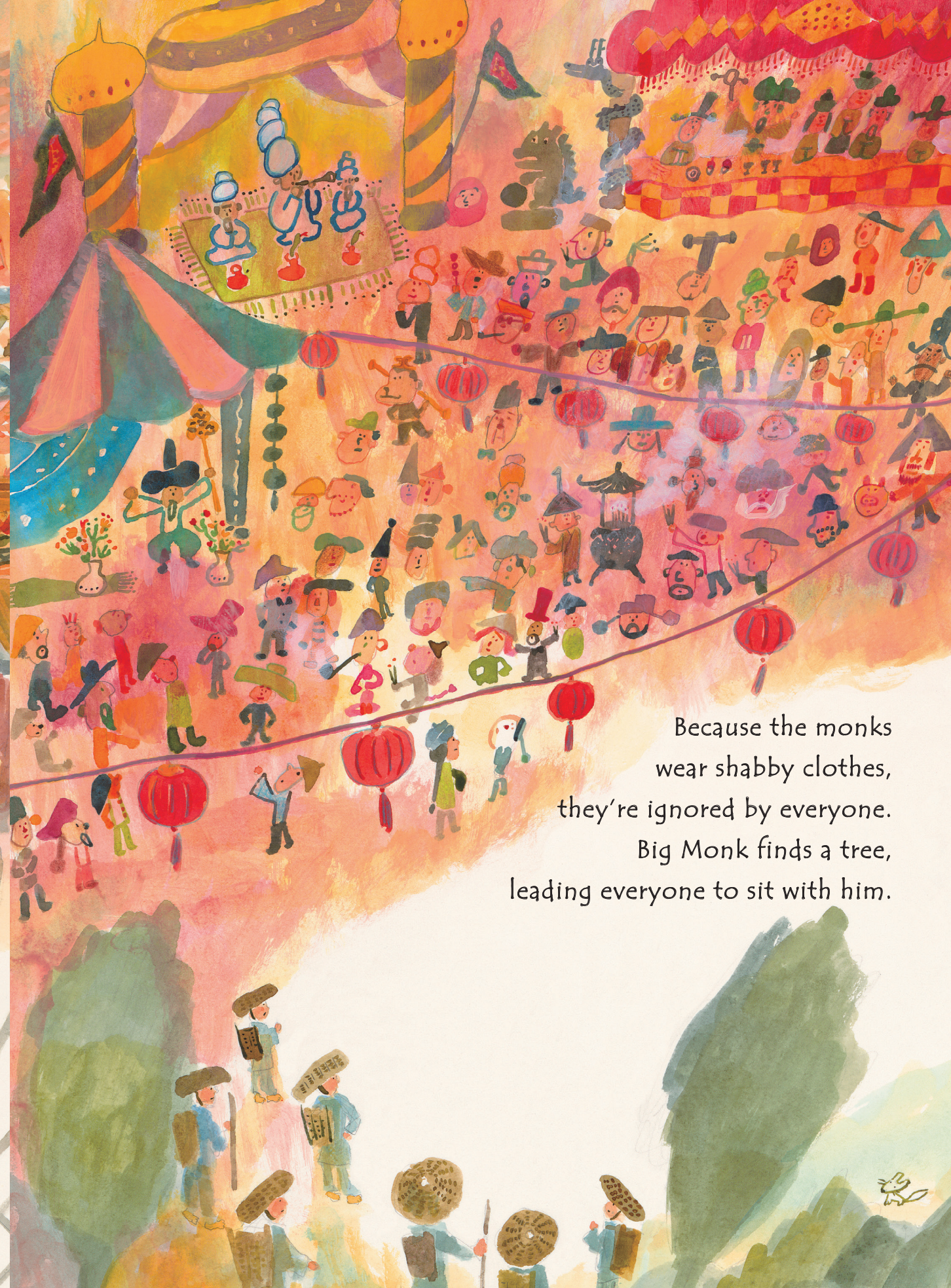
Liu's sincerity shines through in every work, reflecting his unchanging intentions and dedication to his practice.

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

Huang Xiao-Yin is a former editor, translator of around 150 picture books and young adult novels. She served as a judge for book awards and wrote reviews for picture books and other reading materials. In recent years, she has written columns promoting picture books, YA novels, and the joys of parent-child reading.

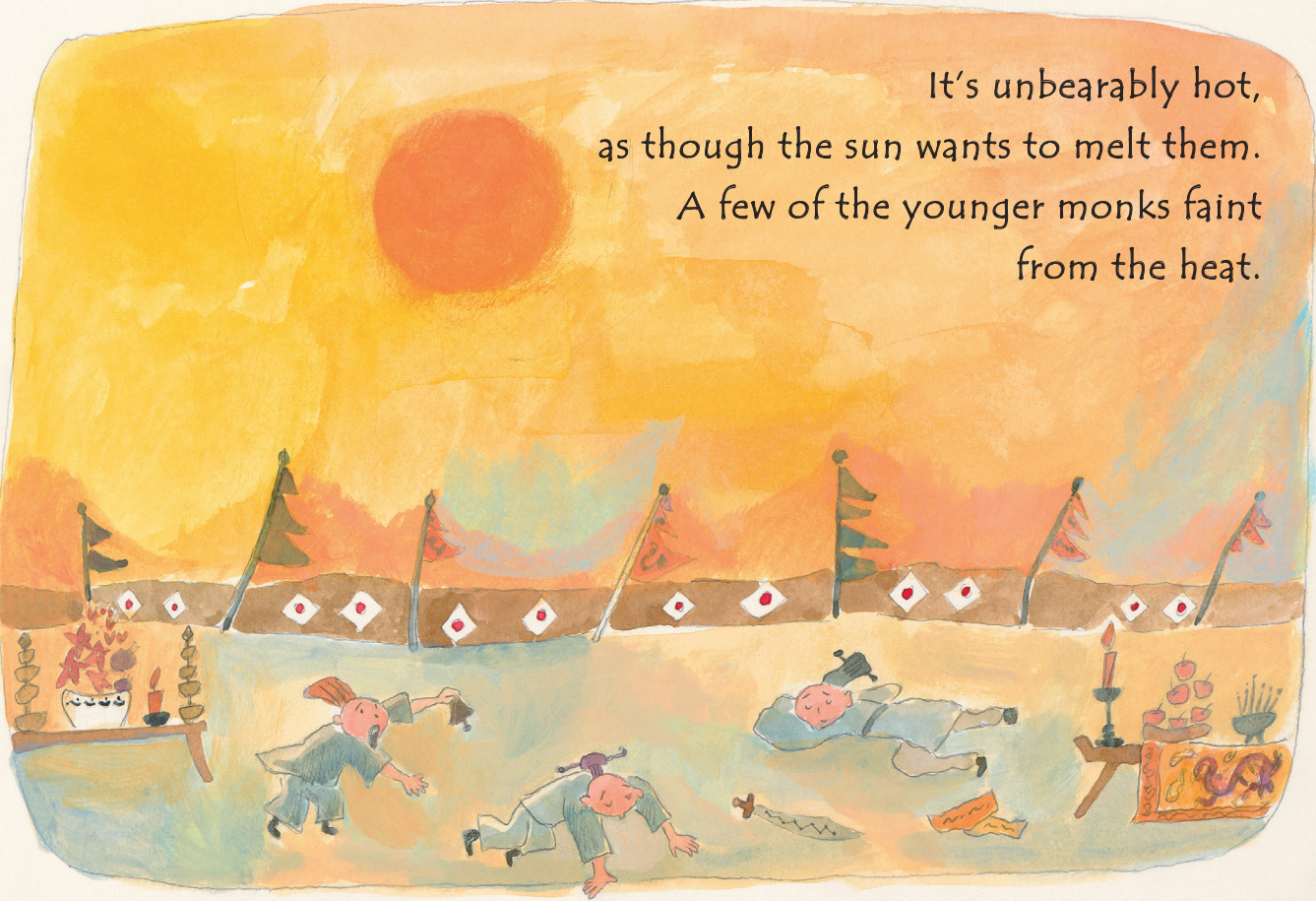


Everywhere in the plaza,
there are grand altars;
even the emperor's here.
Many masters and priests
lead rituals,
while people kneel and pray nearby.

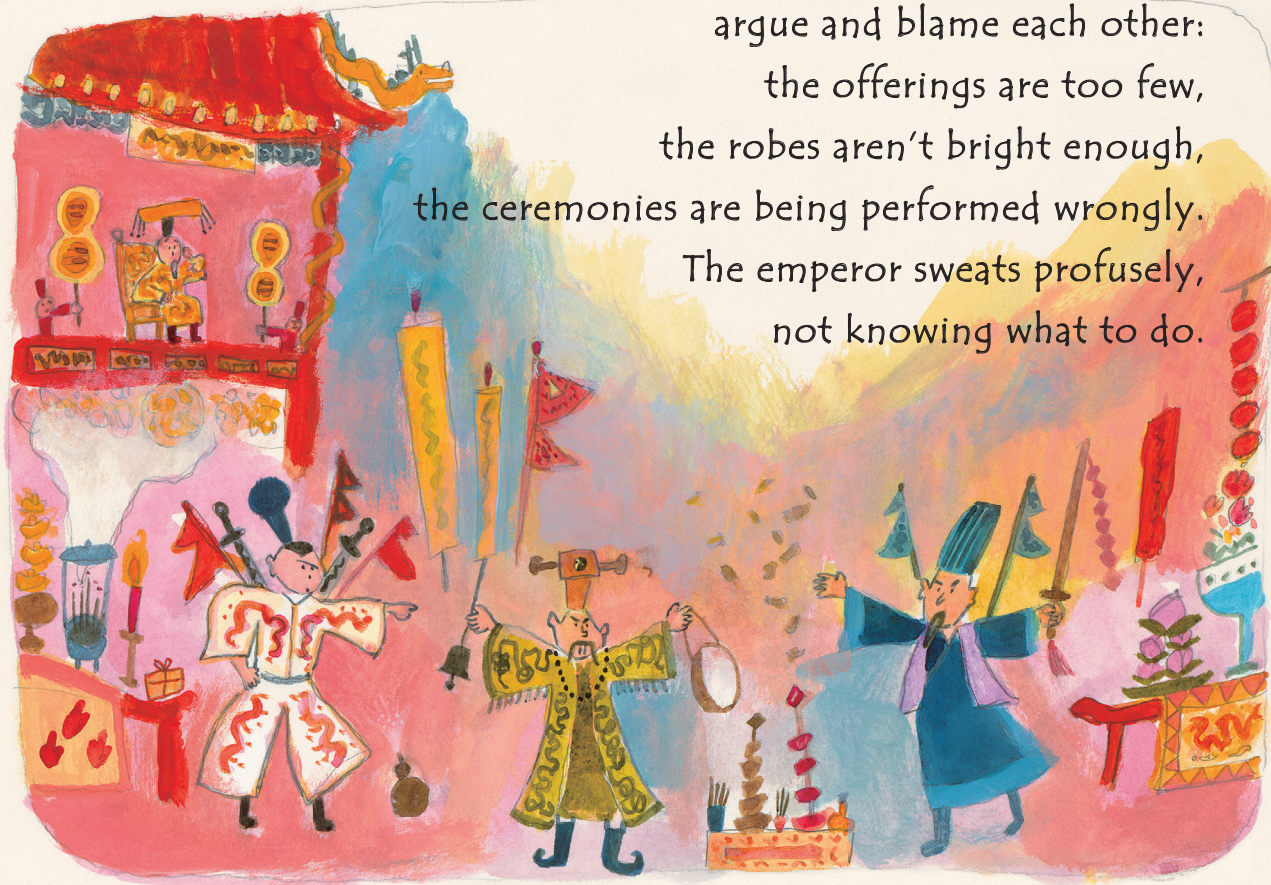


Because the monks
wear shabby clothes,
they're ignored by everyone.
Big Monk finds a tree,
leading everyone to sit with him.

It's unbearably hot,
as though the sun wants to melt them.
A few of the younger monks faint
from the heat.



At the altars, the masters and priests
argue and blame each other:
the offerings are too few,
the robes aren't bright enough,
the ceremonies are being performed wrongly.
The emperor sweats profusely,
not knowing what to do.



The monks
lift their prayer books
and begin to chant,
pleading with the heavens
to bless the people
and send some rain.

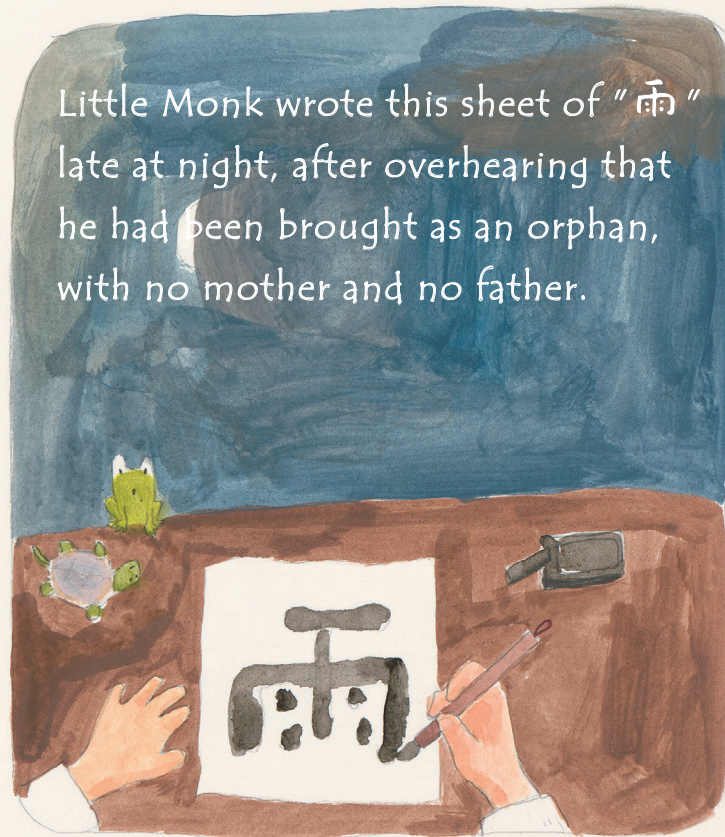


Big Monk cannot read
the prayer books. So he
opens his bamboo basket,
pulling out sheet after
sheet of "雨."

He's overcome with memories.



Little Monk wrote this sheet of "雨"
late at night, after overhearing that
he had been brought as an orphan,
with no mother and no father.



As for this "雨,"
Littlest Monk wrote it when he turned five.
It is the only word Little Monk could teach.



He wrote this "雨" when
Old Monk left this world.
Tears were streaming down
his face, smudging the ink.



He wrote this "雨"
after some nearby children
threw rocks at him,
writing slowly,
stroke by stroke,