



The Echo Before Dawn

A Full English translation is available.

黎明前的回聲

Author: Lang-Chi **Illustrator:** Lang-Chi **Publisher:** Fisfisa Media

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Award: 2025 The 16th Golden Comics Awards, GCA Grand Prize

Rights sold: German

BFT2.0 Translator: Michael Kearney

Two teenage boys from very different worlds are drawn together by their shared love of a single song. Their friendship quickly becomes inseparable as they weather the storms of adolescence. But when one leads the other into a drug-dealing gang, their lives spiral out of control.

This powerful comic confronts the urgent realities of drug use among today's youth, while searching for glimmers of compassion and hope. Created in collaboration with frontline experts in drug abuse prevention, psychology, and law, it brings both authenticity and urgency to the page. Acclaimed Golden Comic Award winner Lang-Chi showcases her masterful storytelling with taut pacing and illustrations alive with light, shadow, and emotion. The result is a work brimming with dramatic tension, capturing the lives of two friends.

The Echo Before Dawn invites readers to reflect on family, bullying, addiction, the effects of incarceration, and the endurance of friendship.



Author **Lang-Chi**

Lang-Chi is a comic writer and illustrator whose work explores the subtleties and ambiguities of everyday life. Through her art, she reinterprets familiar scenes and reveals the unexpected possibilities hidden within the ordinary. Her past works include *The Free China Junk*, for which she won the Golden Comic Award, and *Moonlight Calling*.

Can We Still Grow Up Well in an Age of Loneliness?

by Ting-Kang Liu

(originally published on OKAPI from Fisfisa Media)

The Echo Before Dawn (Fisfisa Media) explores the intertwined issues of drug abuse and bullying. This book is part of a series addressing issues faced by children and adolescents, combining field interviews with expert insights and presenting them in a graphic novel format.

At first glance, *The Echo Before Dawn* may appear to center on simplistic anti-drug themes. But through creator Lang-Chi's careful storytelling, the narrative expands into a deeper examination of addiction and its psychological roots. The story begins with two boys—Yi-chen, from an underprivileged family, and You-jie, a charismatic student who rescues Yi-chen from being bullied. You-jie introduces Yi-

chen to a hidden world, where middle schoolers work as “little bees”—drug mules and dealers in a local gang. These youths, victims of broken homes and school bullying, find a sense of belonging and status in the gang. The money helps relieve their family's financial burdens, and the gang becomes a refuge in contrast to the isolation they experience at school.

Yi-chen—whose own life lacks emotional and material support—becomes deeply entangled. What begins as a friendship becomes a dependency not just on drugs, but on the surrogate family the gang provides. Eventually, the two boys diverge: You-jie escapes the drug world, but Yi-chen spirals further into it.

While drug addiction is a familiar

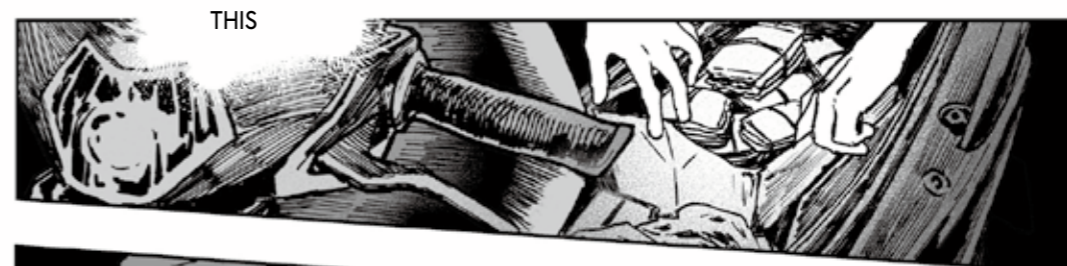
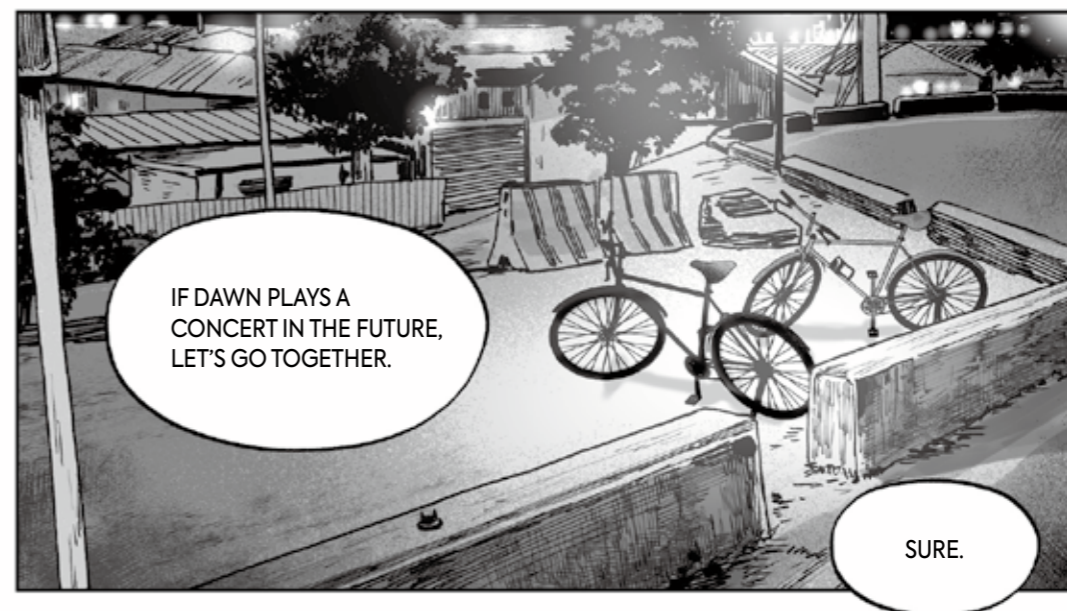
issue in Taiwan, this work goes beyond standard anti-drug narratives. It challenges the assumption that identity and selfhood are entirely autonomous. In modern individualistic societies, people are expected to manage all problems on their own, yet this expectation ignores the psychological void many face. Addiction, the story suggests, is often a coping mechanism—not only for physical dependence, but for emotional emptiness. What proves hardest to quit is not the drug itself, but the sense of meaning or connection it has come to replace. The real solution lies not only in detox, but in restoring a sense of being loved, valued, and supported.

Though the story focuses on a case of drug addiction, it reflects a broader issue in contemporary society: addiction in many forms. Not all addictions are as visible or socially stigmatized as drugs or gambling. One of the most pervasive modern addictions is social media. Studies have shown how platforms foster anxiety while rewarding behavior through likes and shares, making users psychologically dependent. For those who grew up before digital media, these effects may be easier to resist. But today's youth—“digital natives”—are raised within these systems. Social media isn't just a tool they use; it's deeply embedded in their self-perception

and personality development.

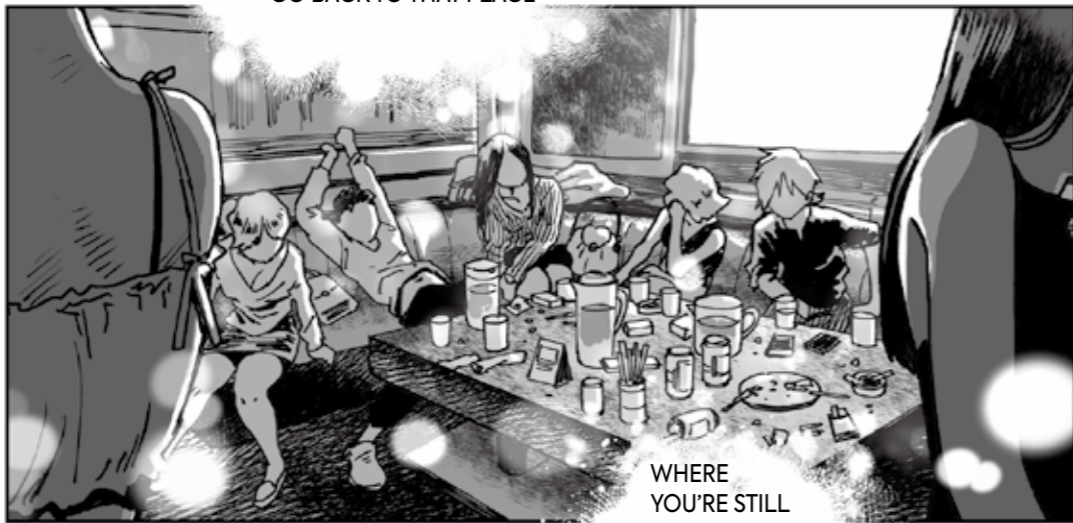
Addiction, then, is more widespread and insidious than we often realize. Social media addiction in teens may be even more damaging than physical dependencies, especially as it hinders autonomy. In an age of extreme individualism, where young people are left to navigate identity alone, the path to selfhood is fraught with confusion and isolation. While older generations had challenges in personality formation, today's youth face a far more complex, often darker reality. Constant visibility and validation-seeking leave little space for genuine self-awareness. Ironically, the true dangers they face may be subtler, more normalized—and even darker—than those shown in any comic.

Ting-Kang Liu is the Creative Director of Kiwi Creative and manager of the bookstore Kiwititsia. He holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from National Taiwan University and is an adjunct assistant professor in Taiwanese Literature at National Taiwan Normal University. His expertise includes cultural sociology, consumer society, Taiwanese culture, and cultural industries. He is currently involved in publishing Chinese and Taiwanese language textbooks for junior and senior high schools.





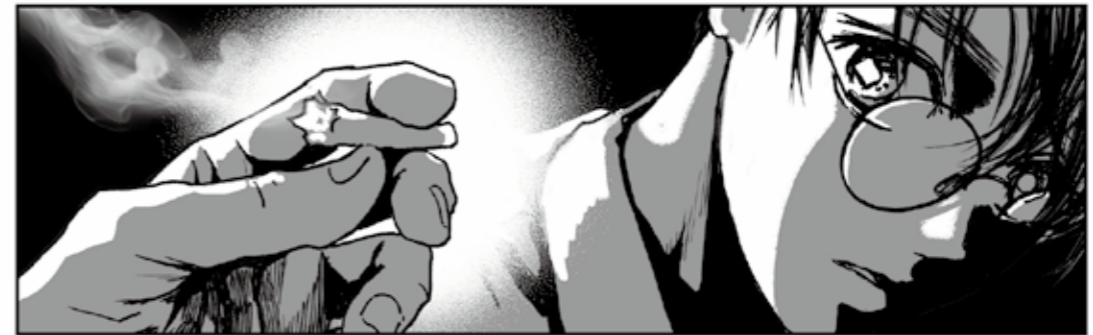
I WANT TO
GO BACK TO THAT PLACE

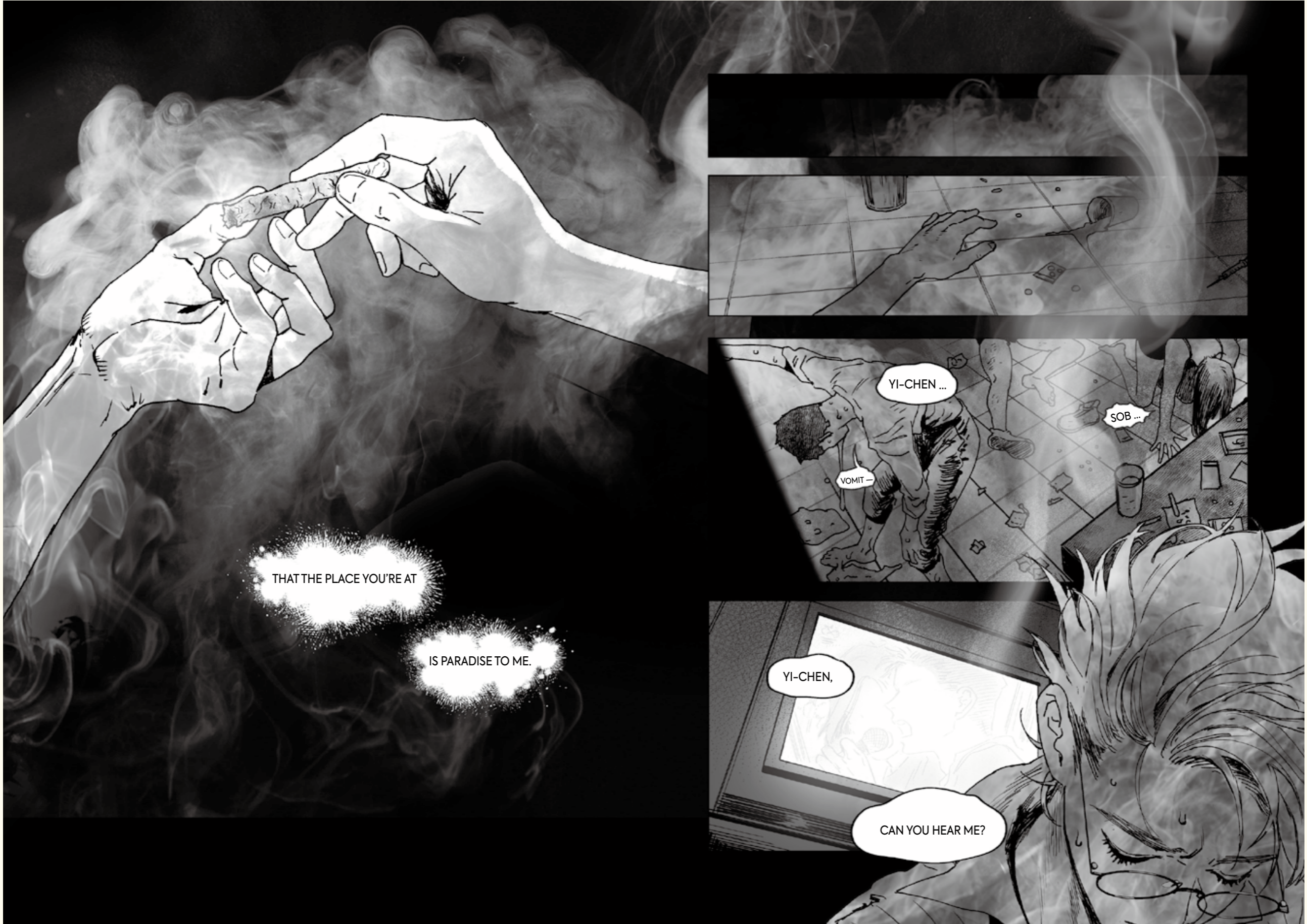


YOU GAVE ME WINGS TO FLY,



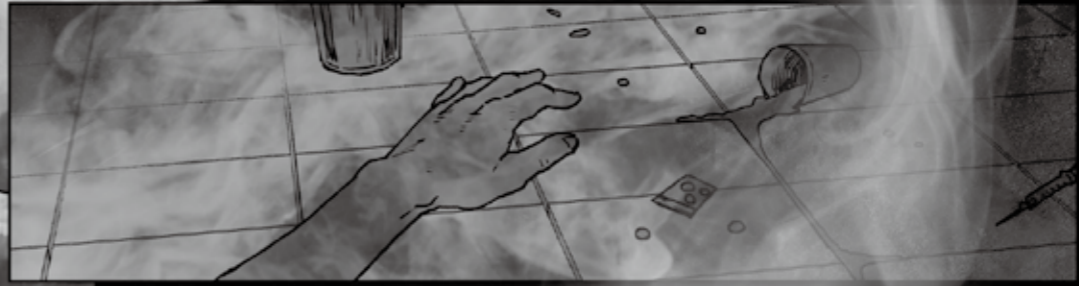
NOT REALIZING





THAT THE PLACE YOU'RE AT

IS PARADISE TO ME.



YI-CHEN ...

SOB ...

VOMIT -



YI-CHEN,

CAN YOU HEAR ME?