



Demo

A Full English translation is available.

無名歌

Author: ROCKAT **Illustrator:** ROCKAT **Publisher:** Gaea Books

Date: 01/2015 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

184 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1 (Two-book series.)

Awards: 2016 Japan International Manga Award Silver Award, 2015 Golden Comics Awards Best New Talent

Rights sold: Japanese

BFT2.0 Translator: Tony Hao

Tai-yang, once the vocalist of an indie band, has fallen so low that he now works as an escort for celebrity guests on variety shows—serving as the butt of jokes. One day, a clear, haunting voice drifting from a park near Yongkang Street awakens something long dormant, and his rock and roll dream feels suddenly both within reach and impossibly far away.

Set against a vivid portrait of Taipei, this comic book captures the rhythms of Taiwanese society in a particular moment and place. Through Tai-yang's winding journey, it explores how music, memory, and a restless city can shape—and upend—a life.



Author **ROCKAT**

Often jokingly referring to himself as a “not-so-free” manga artist, ROCKAT graduated from the National Taiwan University of Arts. In 2012, he illustrated the board game *The Wonderful Island*. His first standalone manga, *Demo*, was published at the end of 2014.

Demo: A Song Without a Name, A Dream Not Yet Let Go

by Wen-Chien Hsu

We often think that dreams end at a clear point in time—graduation, military service, or after being struck down by reality. But for *Demo*'s protagonist, Yu Yang, dreams refuse to fade. He lingers among their ruins, unable to move on. Once the lead singer of an indie rock band, he returns from his service to find the group disbanded, his bandmates having gone their separate ways. Only he remains, drifting like a drone with no signal, circling endlessly above the city.

He ends up at a small talent agency, working as a manager no one really trusts. He isn't even deemed worthy of helping others pursue their dreams. Then he meets Luna, a street performer who still believes in something—and recognizes him as the former frontman of a band she loved. Her admiration, passion, and belief in the music he thought the

world had long forgotten, rekindled a flicker of something within him. *Demo* doesn't offer a grand, dramatic turning point—but it gives us something more truthful: not hope, but defiance. Just enough to take one more step forward.

One of the most striking moments in the manga is a dream sequence. Yu Yang dreams he's a mouse running on a wheel to generate electricity for a power company. At first, he believes it's the happiest kind of life—stable, purposeful, unthinking. But when he finally can't run anymore, he starts to question what happiness really is, and whether he ever had a choice. The scene reads almost like a fable, one that hits painfully close for anyone who's ever numbed themselves to survive. When he wakes, he learns that a song he had written for a clownish celebrity has gone viral—an unexpected

vindication, as if fate was quietly acknowledging that even the smallest act of sincerity isn't wasted.

Demo doesn't dwell on the sweetness of success. Instead, it focuses on the void after failure—on that uncertain space where you are no longer who you were, but not yet someone new. How do you keep going when you don't know where you're headed?

In the afterword, ROCKAT shares how this story was born from his student days, when he first discovered Taiwan's indie music scene. As a longtime gig-goer, he witnessed firsthand how independent bands evolve over time—their styles, their live performances, their compromises. But it was those performances—sometimes explosive, sometimes gentle, sometimes absurd—that truly moved the artist. Because indie music isn't just about

sound. It's a way of living. Not a scramble to break into the mainstream, but a stubborn, sometimes quiet insistence on being heard from the margins.

I kept wondering why this manga is titled *Demo*. Perhaps it's because a demo, like a life not yet defined, is a song without a name. Until someone listens—really listens—it floats through the world untethered, with no case, no stage, no place to land. And yet still, it wants to be sung.

Wen-Chien Hsu possesses a free-spirited soul. She has worked at LGBTQ+ organizations, the 113 Domestic Violence Hotline, and currently works as an editor of Books from Taiwan 2.0. She is dedicated to bringing Taiwanese comics and picture books to a global audience.





