



# How to Make Our World

A Full English translation is available.

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**Author:** Gene **Illustrator:** Gene **Publisher:** KADOKAWA TAIWAN CORPORATION

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**BFT2.0 Translator:** William Serrano

Tzu-Chien Wang and Shu-Fan Lu have relied on each other since childhood. One lives with an abusive father, the other grows up in poverty, and both learn to hide their pain behind silence.

Then one day, they notice Hsin-Tung Liu, a lonely classmate. Tzu-Chien steps in, and the three of them share a quiet celebration of her birthday—offering comfort none of them realized they needed. Yet hardship persists. Classmates collect money for Shu-Fan’s graduation trip without consulting him, leaving him feeling exposed and ashamed.

Soon after, Tzu-Chien’s father passes away. Hsin-Tung and Shu-Fan find him standing in the ocean, grief threatening to pull him under. He turns to Shu-Fan and asks, “Are you willing to die with me?” Shu-Fan agrees—but then gently asks if they could try living instead. Those words reach him. For these three teenagers, life has never been easy, yet by choosing one another, they begin to see that survival, healing, and the fragile hope of a future might truly be possible.



## Author Gene

Gene won first prize in the Comic Division of the 2020 Kyoto International Manga Awards for her work *The Scarecrow’s Guardian*, as well as first prize in the Illustration Division for “On the Festival Road” in the same year. She has also taught courses on comic creation and vertical webtoon production on the online learning platform Hahow. Her published works include *How to Make Our World*, *Together Till the End of the World*, and *Sweet Moon*.

# “It Hurts, But What If We Try Living?” A Story of Teenagers Overcoming Struggle

by Yu-Ting Tseng

(originally published on creative-comic.tw)

Teenagers' emotions tend to be subtle and elusive. For author Gene, *How to Make Our World* was the hardest story she has ever created. She had to understand the characters thoroughly so their contradictions would appear naturally.

The three protagonists of *How to Make Our World* are Tzu-Chien, cheerful and helpful; Shu-Fan, aloof and sharp; and Hsin-Tung, gentle and considerate. Beneath their outward appearances, each faces deep personal struggles. Tzu-Chien hides scars from domestic abuse inflicted by his father, yet he greets others with a bright, cheerful smile. Shu-Fan, sharp-tongued and withdrawn, is the only one who openly expresses emotion, crying when hurt, while also juggling part-time

work to survive. Hsin-Tung, desperate to fit in, becomes the target of silent exclusion. The story follows how the three gradually glimpse each other's wounds while navigating the challenges of an otherwise ordinary high school life.

Though Tzu-Chien is the main character, he represents the greatest contrast. Outwardly warm and helpful, he is the one who drags Shu-Fan along to celebrate Hsin-Tung's forgotten birthday. Yet at home, he suffers violence and emotional manipulation from his abusive father. “He thinks that by taking on the pain, he is helping his family,” Gene explained. “From my perspective, Tzu-Chien's eagerness to help others is a form of avoidance.”

Gene never intended this book to

feel bleak. Rather, she views it as a form of “life counseling.” The work poses a gentle yet persistent question to life itself. Gene isn't interested in showing how miserable someone can be; she aims to depict situations that readers will recognize from their own experiences. The focus lies in the delicate, everyday moments of confusion that ignite inner dialogue.

Meanwhile, Hsin-Tung experiences subtle but painful social exclusion. She suffers no physical harm, and to outsiders the situation may seem minor, yet the loneliness it brings is profound and difficult to express. Teenagers facing this kind of silent bullying often question themselves—are they overreacting, or is their pain insignificant compared to that of others?

Shu-Fan, on the other hand, wonders whether turning eighteen and entering legal adulthood truly means one has grown up. For Gene, maturity has no fixed definition: “There is no single moment you can point to and say, now you are grown. We don't really know what adulthood means, but we keep striving to

grow.”

In the final chapter, Tzu-Chien finally confesses the words he has swallowed for so long: “Are you willing to die with me?” For a teenager overwhelmed by an unfixable inner rupture, death may feel like the quickest escape. But Gene also seeds the story with another question: “What if we try living instead?”

Gene hopes readers who share the characters' emotional struggles will find comfort and know they are not alone. Her characters face hardship, but they endure. “The future might be good. Or better. We don't know. But maybe it will be.”

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

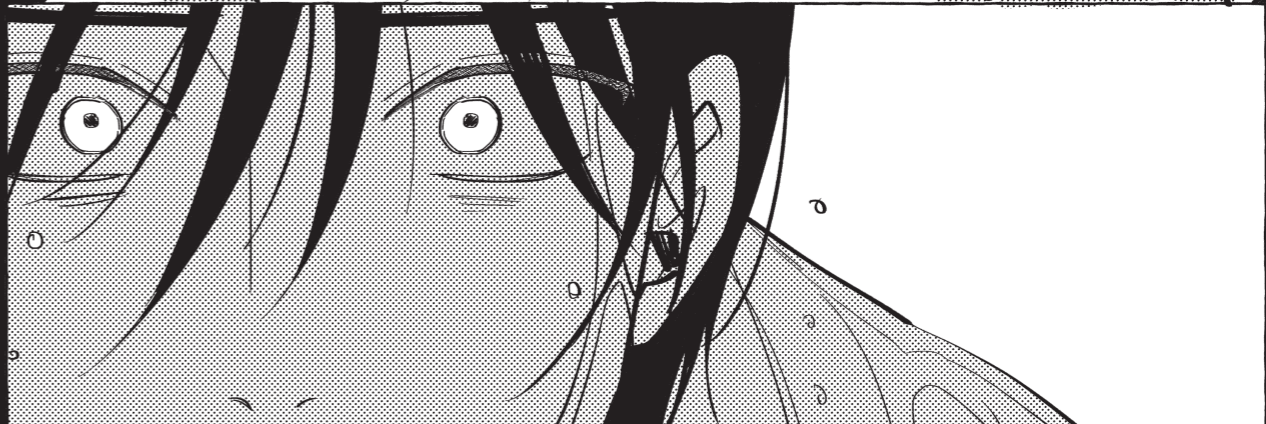
*Yu-Ting Tseng is a writer committed to observing and portraying the subtle details of everyday life with sincerity. A longtime comics reader, she came to deeply appreciate the unique charm of Taiwanese comics later in her journey.*



I'M  
SORRY...

ARE YOU  
WILLING TO  
DIE WITH  
ME?

I'VE WANTED  
TO ASK YOU  
MANY TIMES...





DON'T BE AFRAID, I'LL BE WITH YOU.

...SHU!

HUH?

NO.. NO..

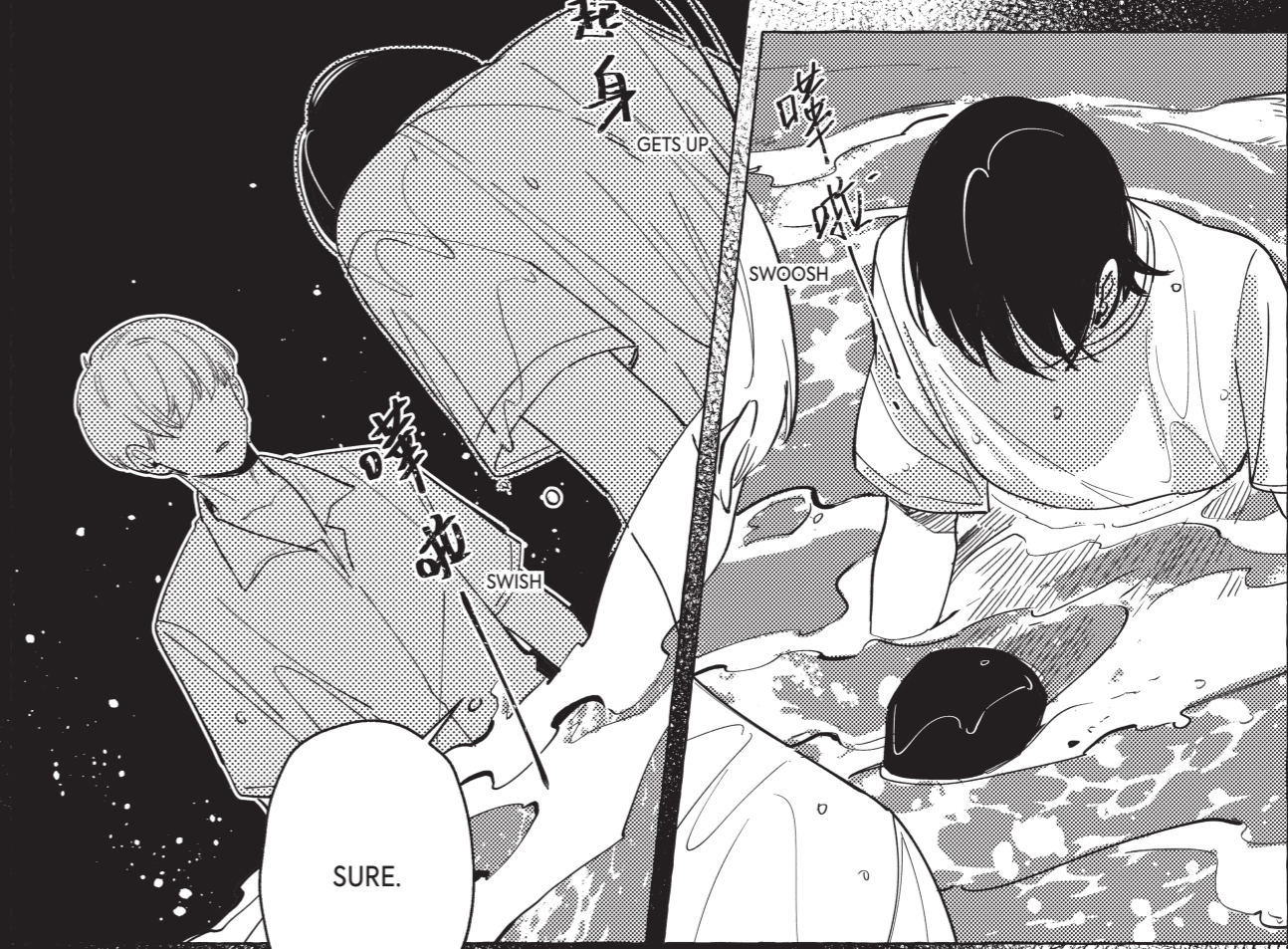
SHU'S BEEN TRYING SO HARD TO SURVIVE...

WHAT THE HECK DID I JUST SAY?



AREN'T YOU AFRAID?

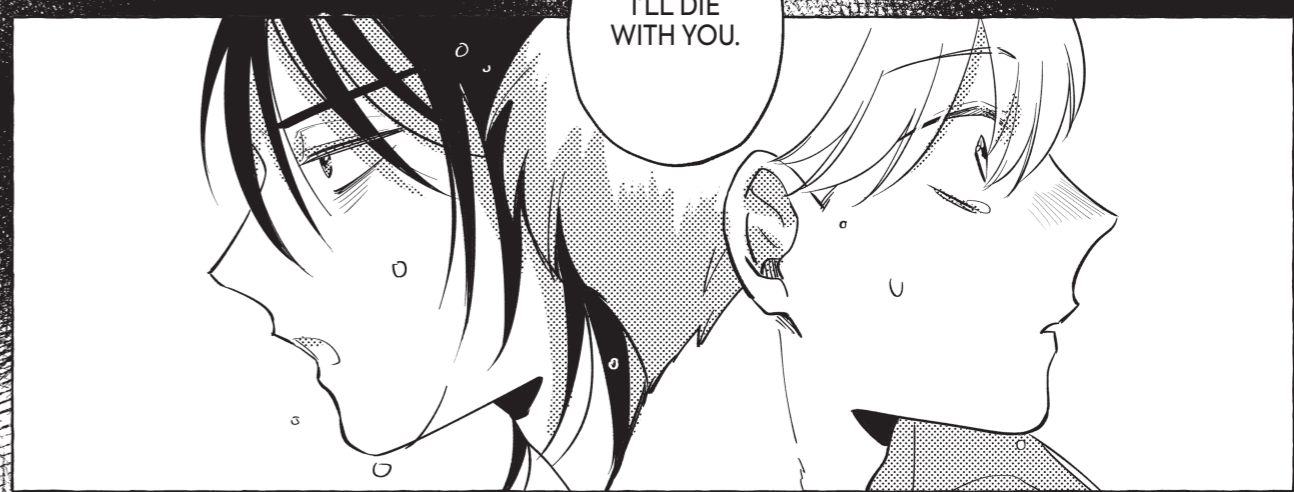
... WHY?



SURE.



I'LL DIE WITH YOU.

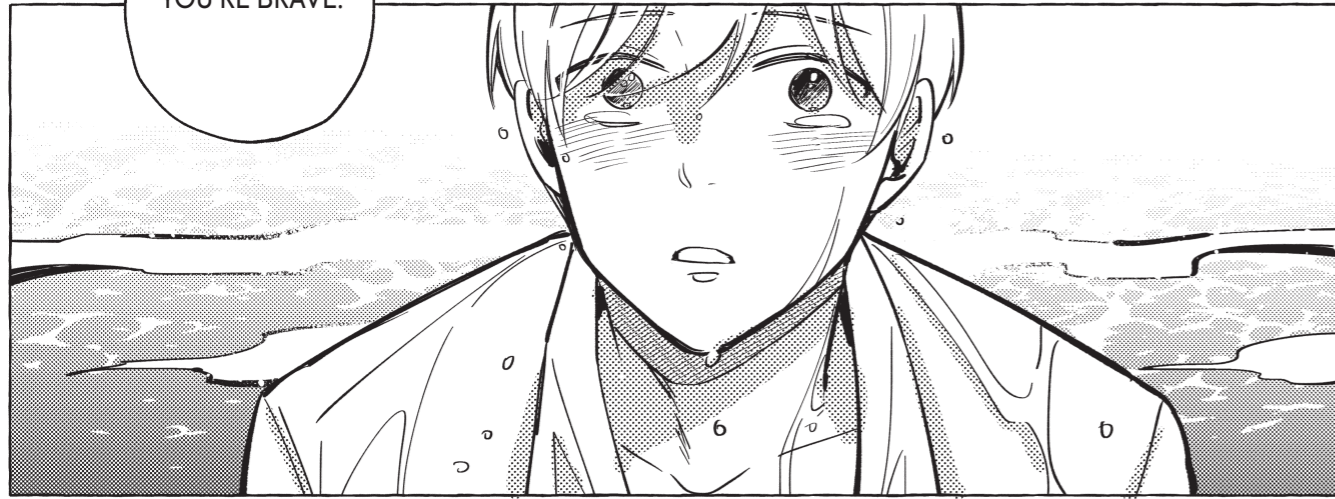




WHATEVER YOU CHOOSE—

BOTH LIVING AND DYING TAKE COURAGE.

YOU'RE BRAVE.



IT'S NOT EASY...

BUT YOU'RE WITH ME.

IS IT THAT EASY TO DIE?

FIRST OF ALL,

YOU'RE NOT SELFISH IN THE LEAST, CHIEN.



THEN.. ARE YOU WILLING TO GO ON LIVING WITH ME?



KINDER THAN ANYONE.

YOU NEVER ASKED ME BECAUSE YOU'RE TOO KIND,

SO, PLEASE DON'T APOLOGIZE.