



The Free China Junk

A Full English translation is available.

湧與浪：自由中國號

Author: Lang-Chi **Script Collaborator:** Seal Hsieh **Publisher:** Gaea Books

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BFT2.0 Translator: Elizabeth Hsinyin Lee

Taiwan was under martial law in the 1950s, an era of strict surveillance and endless checkpoints. A single yacht race flyer from the United States sparks the dreams of six young men. Despite limited funding, accusations of espionage, an incoming typhoon, and political pressure from above, they hatch a daring plan: to sail an ancient wind-powered boat named Free China across the Pacific, from the rainy port of Keelung to the sunlit shores of San Francisco.

Over fifty years later, the descendants of the crew stand before the dilapidated remains of the once-majestic sailboat. Now, together with a team of Taiwanese experts, they embark on a new journey—a cross-national rescue mission and an immense restoration effort. And so, the frozen hands of time begin to move once again.



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 *Moonlight Calling*, *The Free China Junk*, *The Echo Before Dawn*, for which she won the Grand Prize at the 16th Golden Comic Award, and 2025 Japan International Manga Award The Special Encouragement Award.



Script Collaborator **Seal Hsieh**

Seal Hsieh is a scriptwriter for comic books. Seeking to bridge his romantic right brain and a thriller-loving left brain, Hsieh aims to blend love stories with suspenseful intrigue. Hsieh's works include *Seven Days to Live*, *BLOODY MAN*, and *Good Morning, How About Some Positivity?*

The *Free China* Journey: A Father's Courage and a Daughter's Legacy

by Dione Chen

Growing up, my father would sometimes tell my two younger brothers and me stories about how he came to America. We took these stories for granted. I wish we'd been better listeners. Unfortunately, it was not until after my father died that I truly came to appreciate the lessons of resilience, generosity, and friendship that were so central to the success of the *Free China* journey.

It's hard for me to imagine the circumstances that led my father to leave his home in Shanghai to start a new life—not once but twice. First, he became a refugee in Taiwan and second, as a young man, he felt he had no option but to risk everything aboard a Chinese junk boat. My father didn't know how to sail or swim. He didn't have a job waiting for him in America, or savings or a single friend or relative, but he said there was never any doubt that he would make the trip if he could. His example taught me that sometimes you have to take risks to get where you need to go, and that when you do, you'll have to trust in yourself and the goodwill of others. You will figure things out

along the way.

I found these lessons to hold true when I decided to save the *Free China* junk more than 50 years after its voyage across the Pacific.

Today, the humble *Free China* boat and its crew continue to remind me that everyone has a story worth saving. I am grateful to the many people in America and Taiwan who supported our efforts to save the junk, and who shared with me why and how the story of the *Free China* boat touched them. This story reminded them of their family heritage, the challenges of immigrant life, the richness of maritime history, and the values of friendship, grit, and resilience.

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

Dione Chen, the daughter of Chia Lin Chen, a crew member aboard the Free China junk, is also the real-life inspiration for Hsiao Ling, the protagonist in this book who actively works to save the junk in memory of her father.

The Only Surviving Chinese Sailing Vessel to Have Crossed the Pacific Ocean

by the editors of *Free China Junk*

Free China is the only surviving Chinese-style sailing vessel known to have crossed the Pacific Ocean. Built entirely of wood, it belongs to the traditional system of Chinese junk ship design. The story of this vessel and the six young men who sailed her begins with the 125th Transatlantic "King of Sweden Cup," an international yacht race jointly organized by the Royal Swedish Yacht Club and the New York Yacht Club. The race was scheduled to open on June 11, 1955, in Rhode Island, USA.

On April 4, 1955, the boat was given a grand ceremony and set sail from the Keelung Harbor. But the voyage did not go smoothly. Soon after departure, the ship encountered strong winds that snapped the antenna of the radio transmitter and damaged the main mast's pulley, forcing a return to Keelung for repairs.

After setting out again, the vessel ran into a typhoon and suffered severe damage. It was eventually spotted by the U.S. military and towed to Okinawa.

Although authorities in Taiwan hoped the ship would return to Keelung after repairs, the crew remained steadfast in their resolve. Undeterred by wind and rain, they pressed on and reached Yokohama on May 13, 1955, only to confirm that they had missed the international sailing race.

They departed once more on June 17. Along the way, a violent storm destroyed the mast, which the crew managed to repair in time. They then battled dense fog for several days and were even chased by a pod of whales. After an arduous, winding journey of about 114 days, *Free China* finally arrived in San Francisco at 4:00 p.m. on August 8.

With only six crew members and relying solely on sail power, the successful crossing of some 6,000 nautical miles of the Pacific stands as a rare and moving chapter in the history of Chinese seafaring.

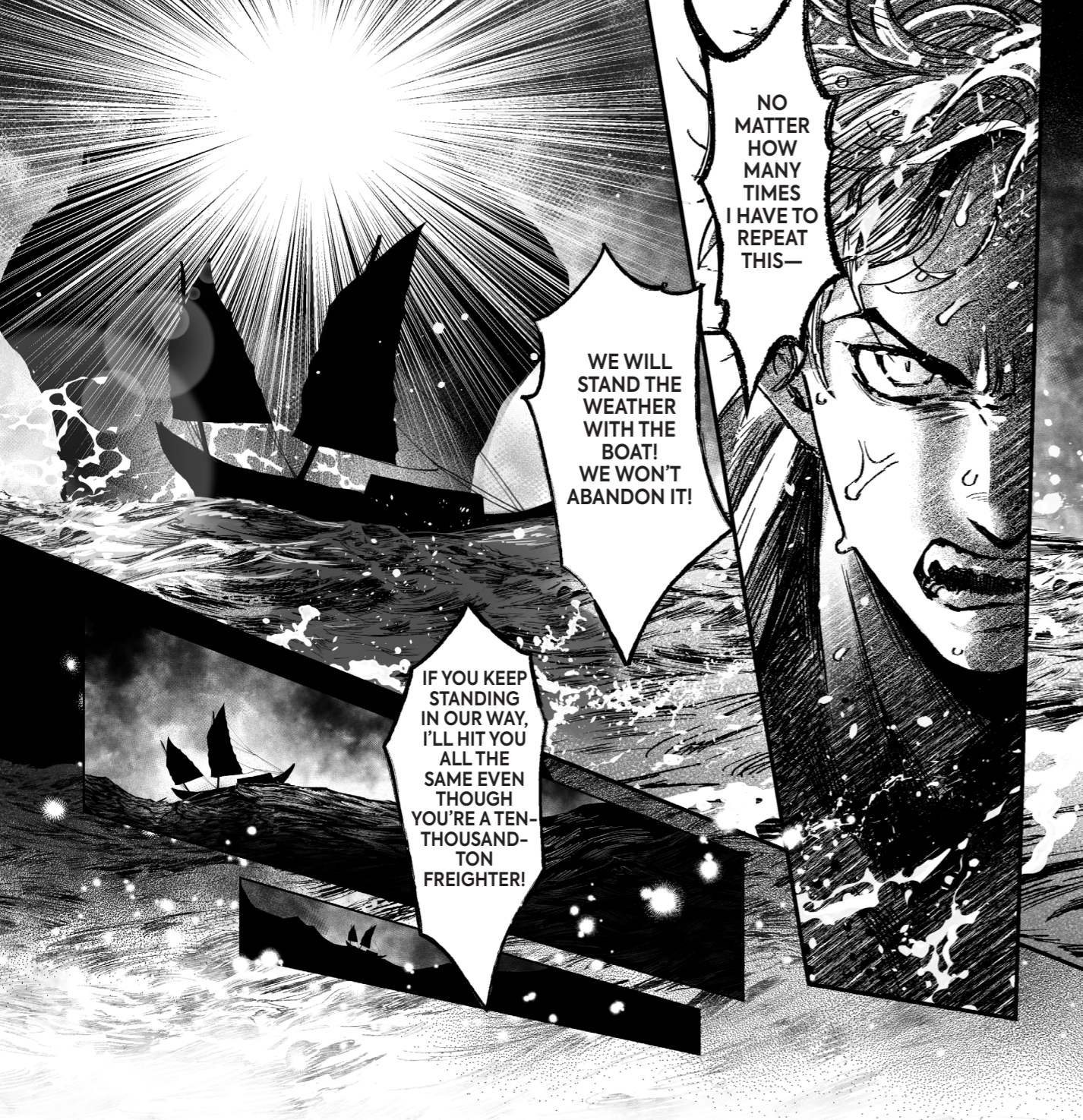
This essay originally appeared in the book's afterword.

WE'LL NEVER
ABANDON
THE BOAT!

NO WAY!

WE'RE NOT
LEAVING
WITHOUT
THE BOAT
ALL!



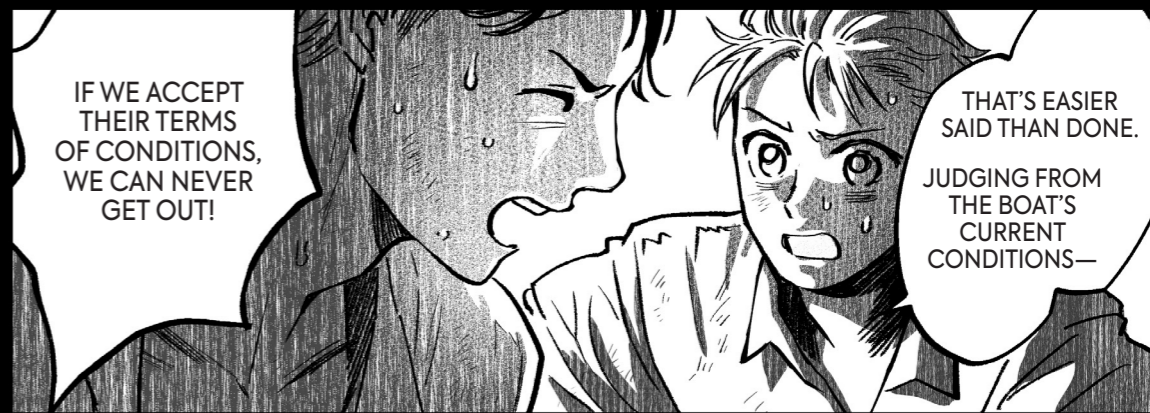
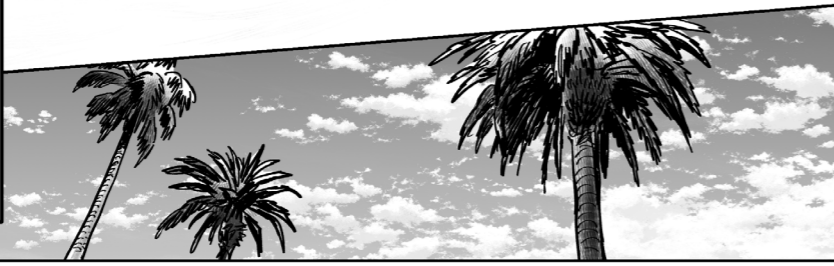


NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I HAVE TO REPEAT THIS—

WE WILL STAND THE WEATHER WITH THE BOAT! WE WON'T ABANDON IT!

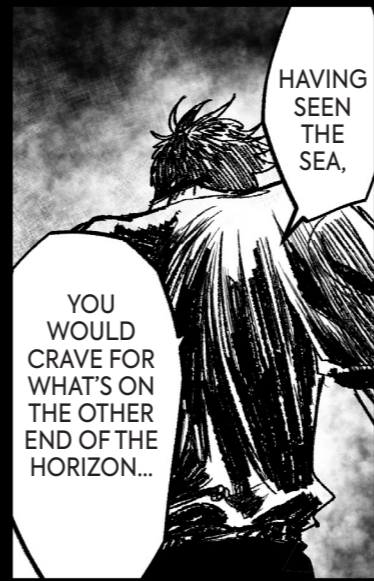
IF YOU KEEP STANDING IN OUR WAY, I'LL HIT YOU ALL THE SAME EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A TEN-THOUSAND-TON FREIGHTER!

Fifty-Two Years Later
San Francisco, United States 2007



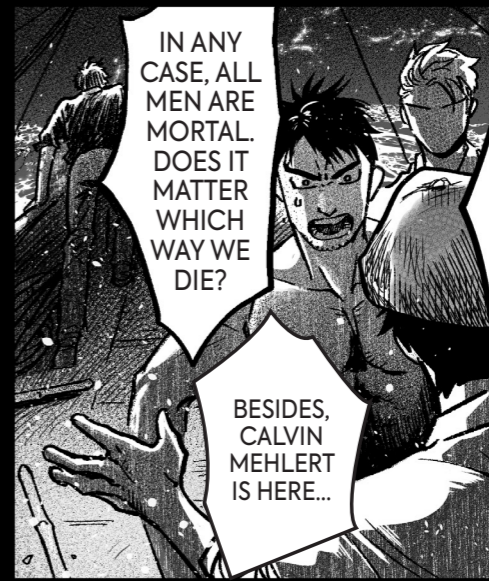
IF WE ACCEPT THEIR TERMS OF CONDITIONS, WE CAN NEVER GET OUT!

THAT'S EASIER SAID THAN DONE. JUDGING FROM THE BOAT'S CURRENT CONDITIONS—



HAVING SEEN THE SEA,

YOU WOULD CRAVE FOR WHAT'S ON THE OTHER END OF THE HORIZON...



IN ANY CASE, ALL MEN ARE MORTAL. DOES IT MATTER WHICH WAY WE DIE?

BESIDES, CALVIN MEHLERT IS HERE...

BUT IF WE DON'T ACCEPT THIS ONE LAST CHANCE— NEVER MIND GOING TO AMERICA— WE MIGHT ALL DIE AT SEA!

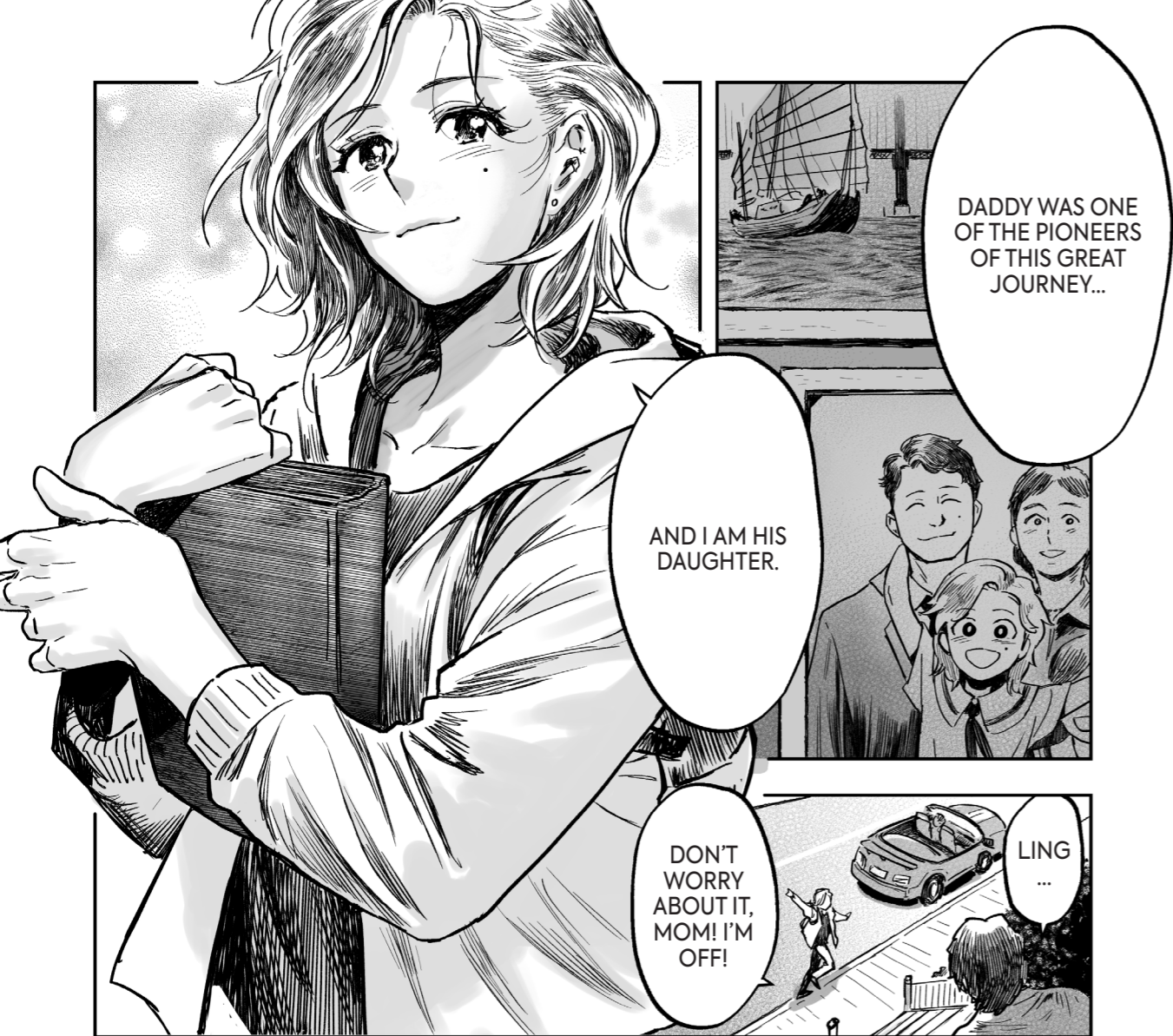


HSIAO CHOW!



DO YOU HAVE A DEATH WISH?

THIS IS THE LAST WARNING!

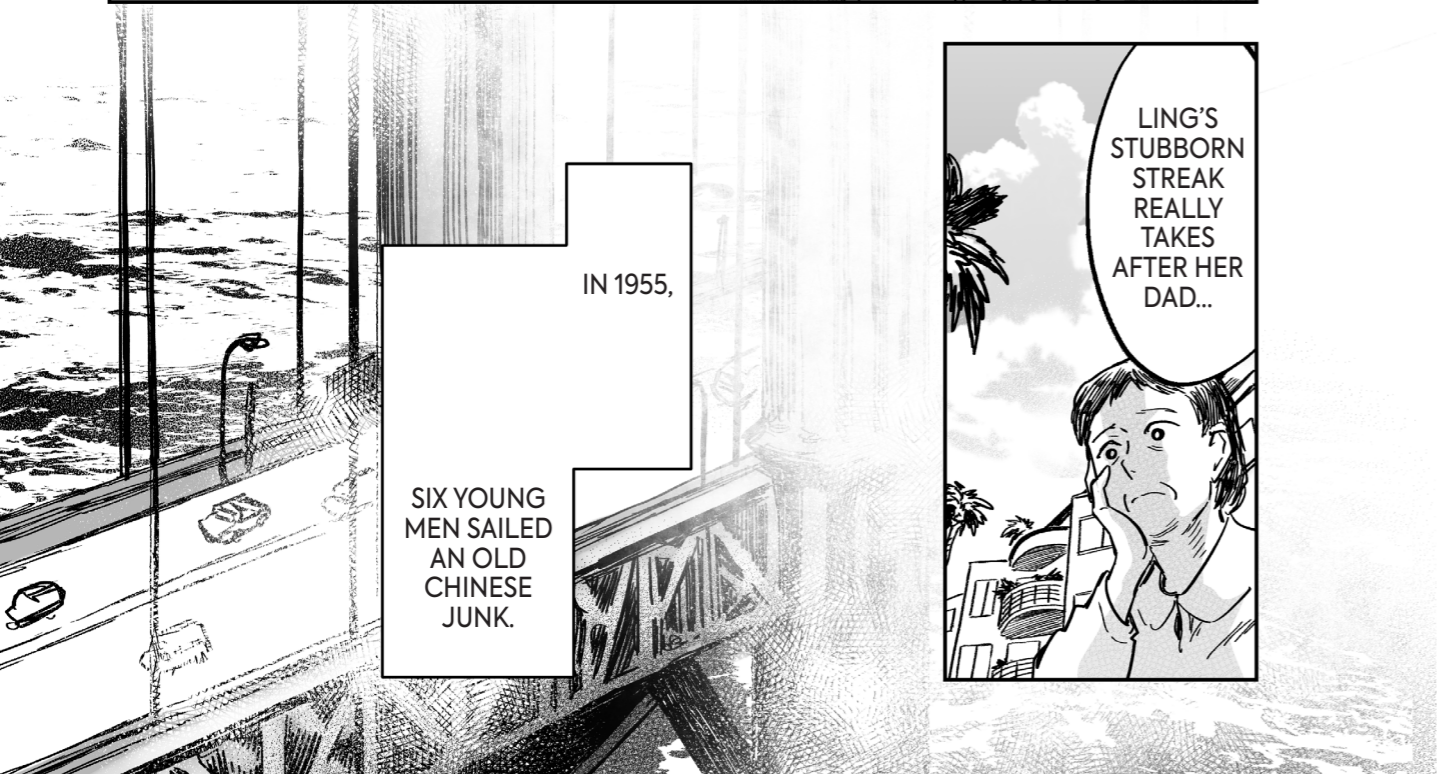


AND I AM HIS DAUGHTER.

DADDY WAS ONE OF THE PIONEERS OF THIS GREAT JOURNEY...

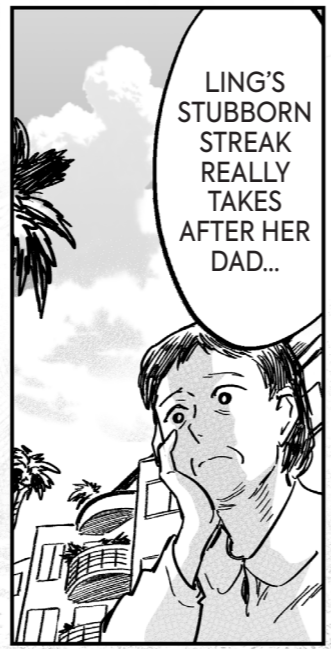
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, MOM! I'M OFF!

LING ...

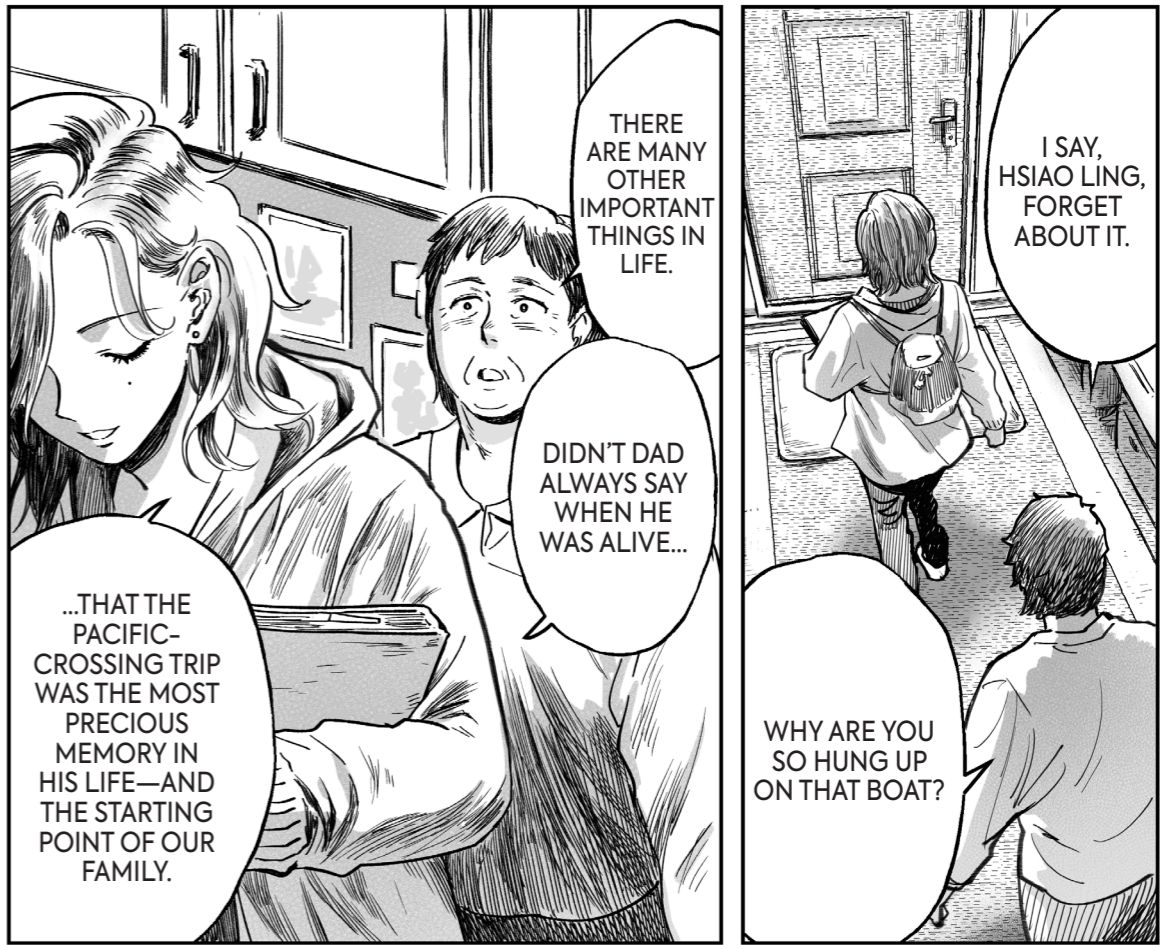


IN 1955,

SIX YOUNG MEN SAILED AN OLD CHINESE JUNK.



LING'S STUBBORN STREAK REALLY TAKES AFTER HER DAD...



THERE ARE MANY OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE.

DIDN'T DAD ALWAYS SAY WHEN HE WAS ALIVE...

...THAT THE PACIFIC-CROSSING TRIP WAS THE MOST PRECIOUS MEMORY IN HIS LIFE—AND THE STARTING POINT OF OUR FAMILY.

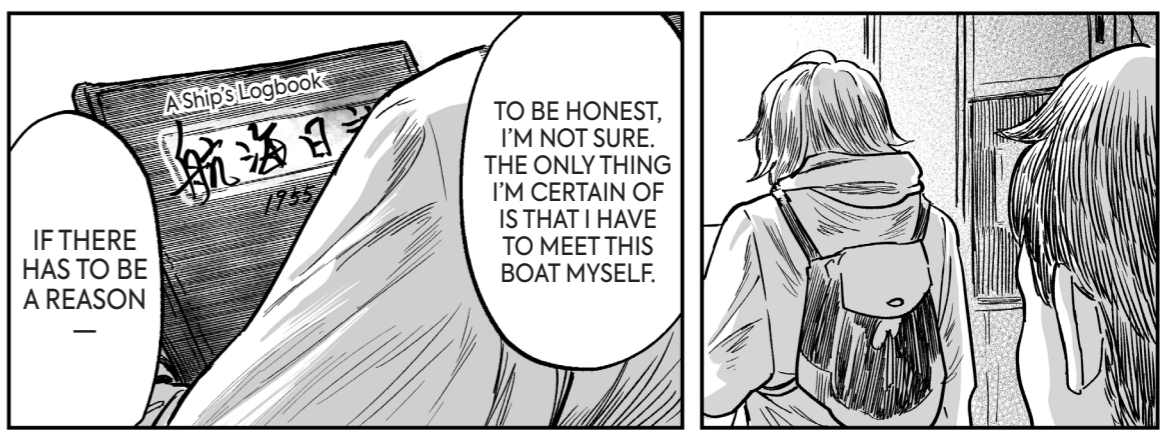
I SAY, HSIAO LING, FORGET ABOUT IT.

WHY ARE YOU SO HUNG UP ON THAT BOAT?



BUT THAT BOAT IS NOTHING BUT AN OLD RELIC FROM THE LAST CENTURY. WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH IT EVEN WHEN YOU FIND IT?

I KNOW YOU MISS DAD A GREAT DEAL.



IF THERE HAS TO BE A REASON —

TO BE HONEST, I'M NOT SURE. THE ONLY THING I'M CERTAIN OF IS THAT I HAVE TO MEET THIS BOAT MYSELF.