

*Toby King* is an orange cat—cynical, restless, and fiercely committed to freedom and equality. A singer with a cult following, he draws crowds with his street performances despite the country’s ban on public gatherings. Reminiscent of Nirvana’s Kurt Cobain, Toby is raw and disheveled, singing from the heart about the sorrows of ordinary people.

Toby works as an agent of T.T.L.P.—The Three Little Pigs—always staying one step ahead of the authorities. One day, he is tasked with solving the mystery of Duke Hare’s disappearance. The Duke, leader of the rabbit clan and member of one of the nation’s four founding families, has vanished without a trace, leaving behind a single clue: a bloodstained rabbit’s foot.

Teaming up with his buddy Dave, a pig and gifted inventor, Toby is pulled into a dangerous underworld of strange creatures and a vast conspiracy linking the government to powerful families. With novelist Wolf Hsu serving as script consultant, *Toby King* delivers a tightly paced narrative, an expansive world, and bold, high-impact action. Its dazzling pop aesthetic and incisive social satire define NANO HERO’s distinctive style.



## Author **NANO HERO**

NANO HERO, whose real name is Zhihao Huang, was born in 1983 in New Taipei City and now lives in Kaohsiung. At the age of 30, he left his career in the electronics industry to pursue his passion for drawing. His book *Toby King* was six years in the making. Currently, he runs an art store and studio at the Kaohsiung Pier-2 Art Center.



## Script Consultant **Wolf Hsu**

Wolf Hsu, a Taiwanese novelist and poet, studied biomedical engineering and now works in publishing. His representative work, *FIX*, was adapted into a television series in 2022. He works long hours, harbors many ambitions despite a thin wallet, and finds bookstores, record shops, and movie theaters intimidating. While he loves telling stories, he is not fond of introducing himself.

# Toby King

A Full English translation is available.

Toby King 托比王

**Author:** NANO HERO **Illustrator:** NANO HERO **Script Consultant:** Wolf Hsu

**Publisher:** Locus Publishing

**Date:** 12/2024 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

112 pages | 21 x 28.3 cm **Volume:** 1 (Three-book series, already published one)

**Awards:** 2025 The 16th Golden Comics Awards, Comic of the Year

**BFT2.0 Translator:** Michelle Kuo

# The Singular Pop Aesthetic of *Toby King*, a Taiwanese Original

by Heero Chiao

(originally published on [OKAPI.BOOKS.COM.TW](http://OKAPI.BOOKS.COM.TW))

At the end of 2024, a boundary-breaking work emerged: *Toby King*. Its creator, NANO HERO, did not come from a formal art background. After turning thirty, he left his job in the electronics industry to pursue drawing full-time. Rather than debuting through conventional comic competitions, he founded his own brand, “NANO HERO,” and began selling illustrated T-shirts. Although he initially had no plan to create comics, he spent six years gradually developing what would become the striking graphic novel *Toby King*. As he once explained, illustrations disappear once sold, but comics allow characters and worlds to endure.

All characters in *Toby King* are animals. The protagonist, Toby, is an

orange cat who opposes an authoritarian regime. As an agent of the privileged organization T.T.L.P. (The Three Little Pigs), he and his partner Dave are assigned to investigate the disappearance of Grand Duke Hare, leader of the rabbit clan—one of the nation’s four great families. Their mission soon spirals into encounters with bizarre creatures, violent conflicts between government and aristocratic families, and the gradual awakening of Toby’s unknown powers.

When evaluating a work, I tend to consider its broader historical and genre context. What sets *Toby King* apart is how it infuses contemporary pop aesthetics into the graphic novel form, resulting in a distinctly Taiwanese original that recalls George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. Like

Orwell’s fable—where pigs overthrow human masters only to become tyrants themselves—stories casting animals as protagonists often serve as incisive satires of humanity. *Toby King* follows this tradition. Toby is a cynical, world-weary antihero, while the power struggles among King Gill, the noble Houses, and The Three Little Pigs deliver pointed political and social critique.

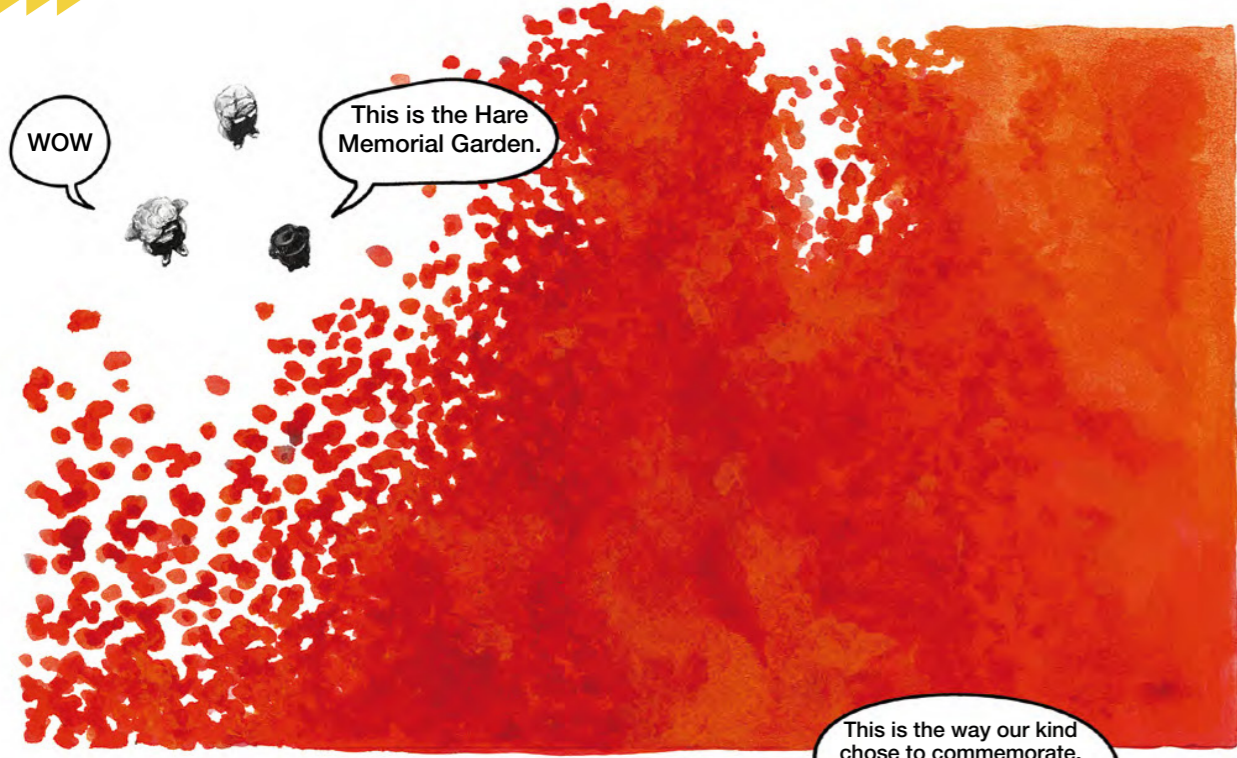
The most memorable part of the first volume is its ruthless portrayal of the rabbit clan’s House Hare. Hare Enterprise controls the nation’s economy, yet its wealth comes from selling cheap canned rabbit meat made from its own kind. News reports describe how the Hare Enterprise funds subsidies to incentivize reproduction. One family produces eighty offspring and trades them for eighty cans of meat. The Hare family claims it sacrificed an entire species to feed the nation, framing it as an act of honor, but the true victims are always the lower-class rabbits. Later, Madame Hare reveals a hidden truth to Toby that swiftly overturns the reader’s moral assumptions. This reversal embodies one of the work’s defining traits: characters initially cast as villains may be profoundly reshaped

through alternative perspectives.

The narrative also repeatedly references the Big Bad Wolf Tragedy, a devastating era caused by a monstrous dictator. Although National Day celebrates liberation from that past, the current regime under King Gill continues to label dissenters as remnants of the Big Bad Wolf. In so doing, the regime manufactures a false peace. While the story does not explicitly use Taiwanese cultural symbols, Taiwanese readers will undoubtedly sense its resonance. Perhaps the shared thread running through today’s diverse Taiwanese comics lies here: creators strive to balance compelling storytelling and entertainment while remaining attentive to our land’s past, present, and future—charting a path uniquely their own amid the dominance of Japanese and Korean styles.

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

*Heero Chiao is a member of the association Crime Writers of Taiwan, a columnist on Japanese and Korean dramas, films, and football, and an editor specializing in Taiwanese fiction.*



WOW

This is the Hare Memorial Garden.

This is the way our kind chose to commemorate. Every glass flower represents a rabbit that gave their life.

It also honors the sacrifices of the Big Bad Wolf Tragedy.

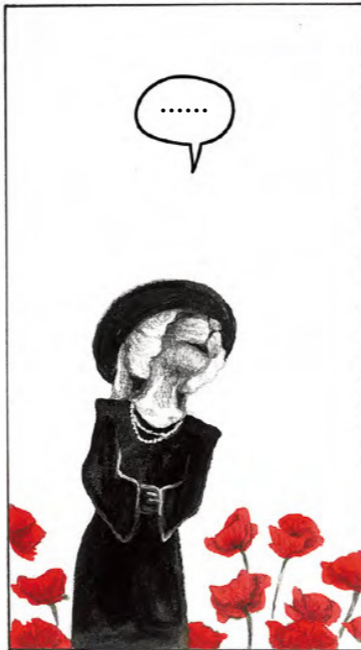
Let me take a closer look.



I remember... after the Big Bad Wolf Tragedy, planting or owning these flowers became illegal...



There are names on them...



.....



I've noticed that you don't seem to fully agree with the ways of the Hare family.



So, let's talk, young Toby.



What does ...



...the Big Bad Wolf Tragedy mean to you?

And what about the Seven Little Lambs, King Gill, and the Four Great Families?



The reporter pointed this out, and the rabbit father chuckled and said, "Yes, our future depends on these kids."

A bizarre scene followed: the rabbit parents were smiling for the camera, while in the background,



Last year... there was a piece of news.

Eighty children... for that ordinary family in the footage, it was clearly a heavy burden.

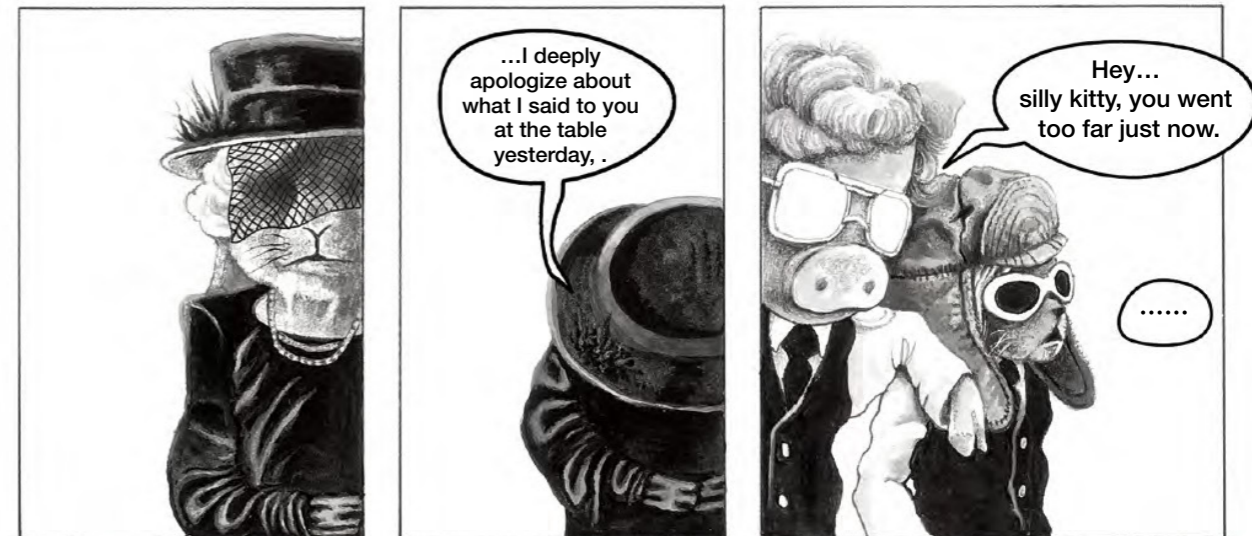
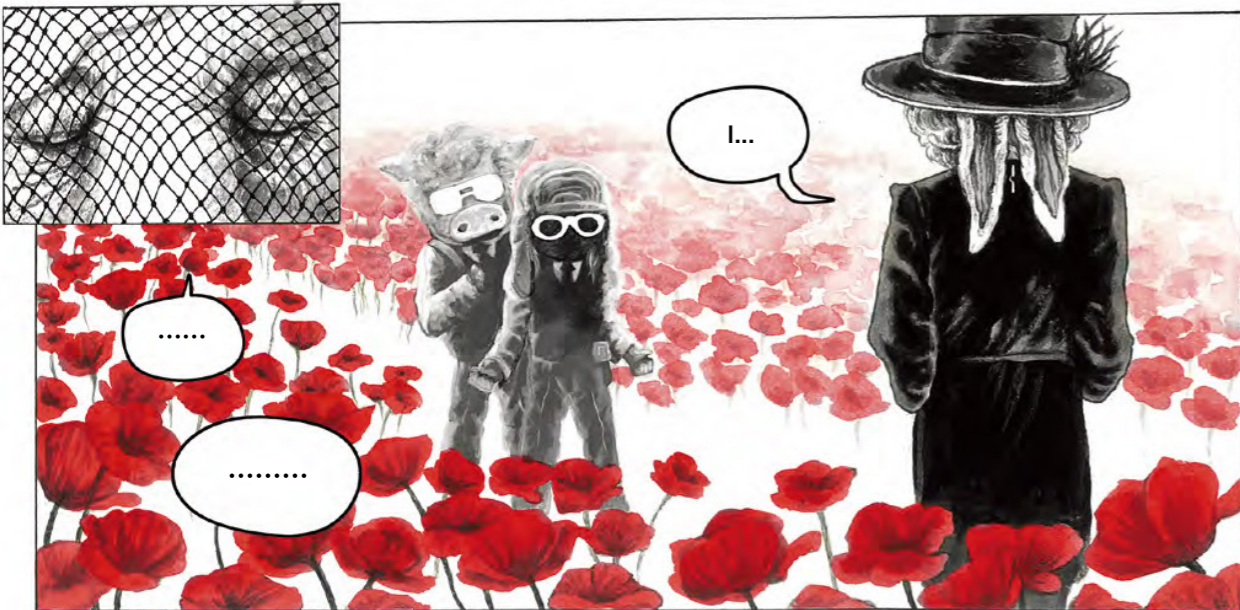
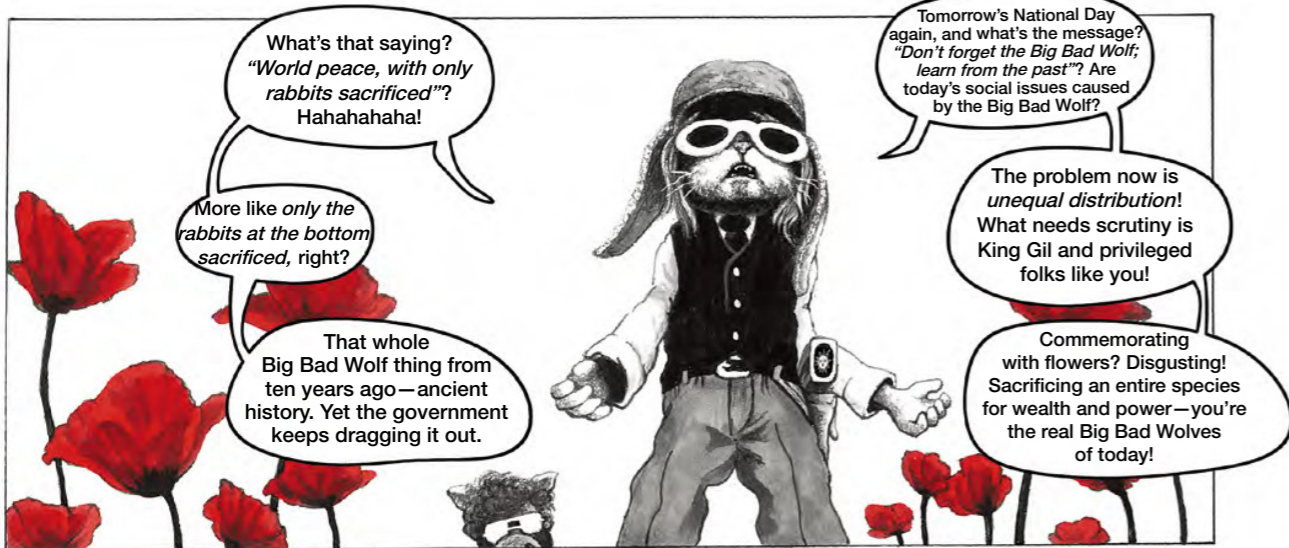
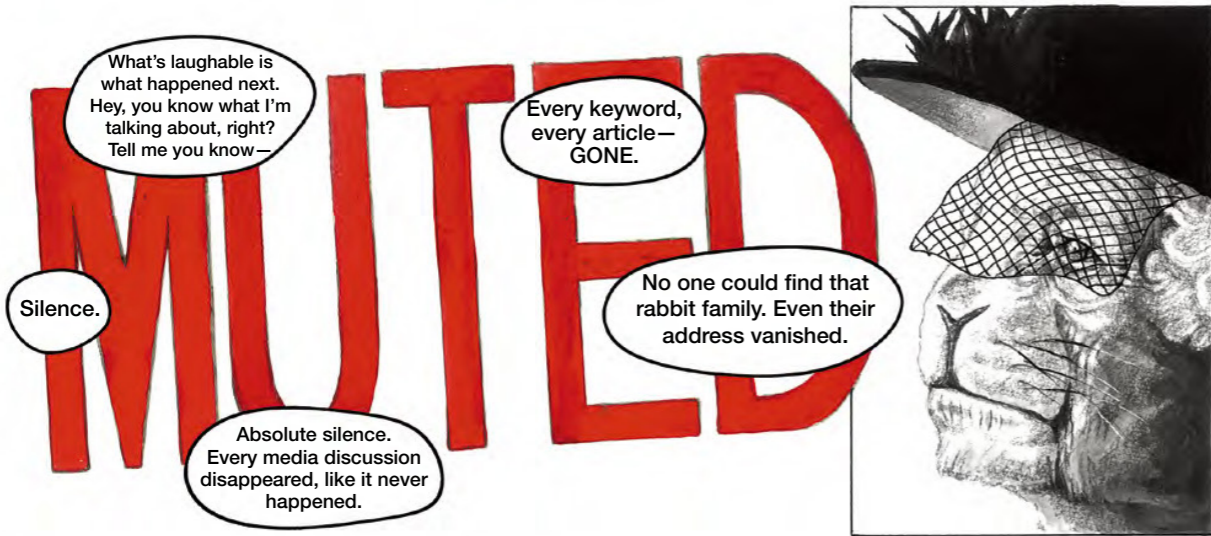
eighty little rabbits of all sizes crowded together. They were obedient, some cleaning, some waiting in line for the bathroom. No complaints, no expressions of displeasure.

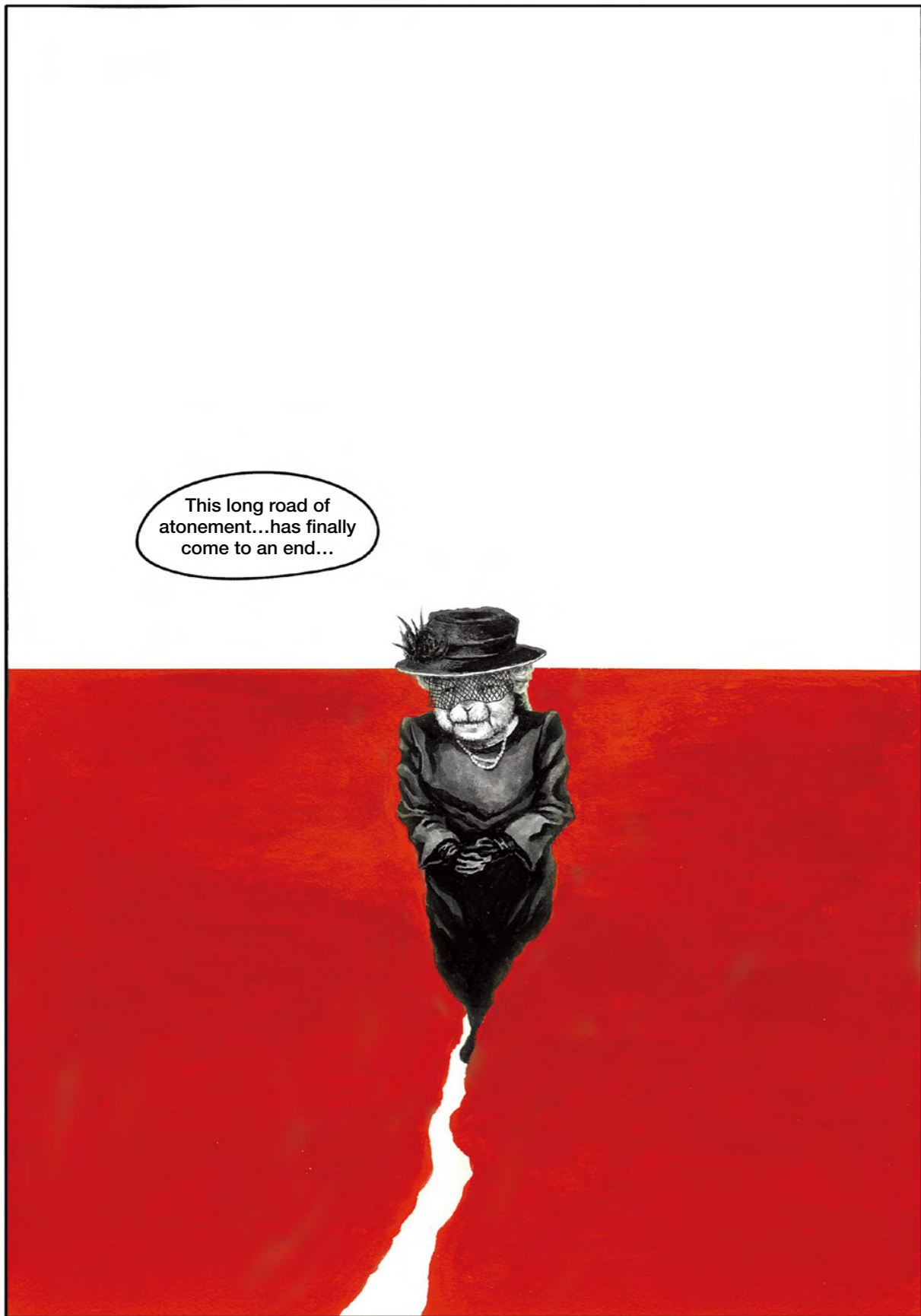


The reporter titled the news segment: "Population Growth for National Prosperity."

Later, someone discovered that rabbits could apply for subsidies simply by having children—subsidies funded by the Hare Enterprises.

Public opinion exploded. "So they had eighty kids just for the money?" "Those aren't eighty children; they're eighty cans!" "Hell is empty, and the devils are walking among us!"





This long road of atonement...has finally come to an end...



I hope T.T.L.P. can witness the Hare family's final chapter. I'm sorry for all the trouble I've caused...

I'm sorry.

So sorry...

The conversation ended with Lady Hare repeatedly apologizing, but I felt her apologies weren't directed at us...