



The Featherless Chicken

A Full English translation is available.

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BFT2.0 Translator: Michelle Kuo

In *The Featherless Chicken*, the titular hero is a chick born without feathers. Small, naked, and skinny, he dreams of rowing a boat alongside four elegant and fashionable chickens. But—as he finds out the hard way—they only befriend those who look like them.

Dejected, the featherless chick slumps away and accidentally slips into the mud. Soon, he finds himself decorated in colorful leaves and twigs. No longer featherless, he hatches a clever plan to join the group of four chickens.



Author **Chih-yuan Chen**

Chih-yuan Chen has won numerous prestigious children's book awards, including the Swedish Peter Pan Prize, Best Children's Book of the Year by the U.S. National Council of Teachers, the Bologna Ragazzi Award, the Golden Tripod Award for Book Illustration, and the Taiwan International Book Exhibition's Golden Butterfly Award Gold Prize. His works include *The Featherless Chicken*, *The Best Christmas Ever*, *The Snail That Counts Numbers*, *Whose Island Is This?* and *Everyone Pulling the Carrot*, among others.

The Featherless Chick: The Joy of Discovering What We Share in Common

by Shu Chiung Chang
(originally published on OPENBOOK.ORG.TW)

Chang: In *The Featherless Chicken*, the little chicken without feathers relies on outside objects to decorate itself, and other chickens with seemingly beautiful feathers won't play with him. It feels as though there's a deeper message behind your book. When you first created the story, what was the original idea?

Chen: I remember once seeing a report about a real featherless chicken. I found it astonishing. Nature truly is full of surprises, and things you'd never imagine can happen. Feathers help animals stay warm and waterproof, but their bright colors also attract mates. So, I wondered: what would happen if two featherless chickens met each other? The more I thought

about it, the more interesting it became.

I also recall an experience at a hot spring. Inside the steamy water, everyone removed their colorful clothes and soaked together. The steam made everything hazy, and people simply enjoyed the moment without caring who was beside them. Afterward, when we put our clothes back on and stepped out, I suddenly recognized one person from the pool—my teacher from childhood! I laughed at myself: how did I not notice earlier? Once dressed, you can immediately guess someone's job or age. Clothing becomes another kind of expression, another attitude we wear. I found that both funny and fascinating.

Chang: Indeed, external “costumes” can trigger all sorts of associations. For some readers, *The Featherless Chicken* might invite a more philosophical reading—that is, without the disguise of clothing, what is our truest form? But from a lighter perspective, especially for young readers, having no feathers simply means endless possibilities for creative play every day. Isn't that a delightful idea in itself?

The book's imagination of feathers is remarkable. Some feathers seem to come from the surrounding environment; some drift by on the wind and stick. And then there's that wonderfully absurd fork that the chicken picks up. The whole feather-collecting sequence is unforgettable.

In this story, characters end up falling into the water at the turning point. This is the finale, and it's as if the story is saying, “No matter how you dress yourself up, once you fall into the water, everything returns to its original form.” Was this ending intentional?

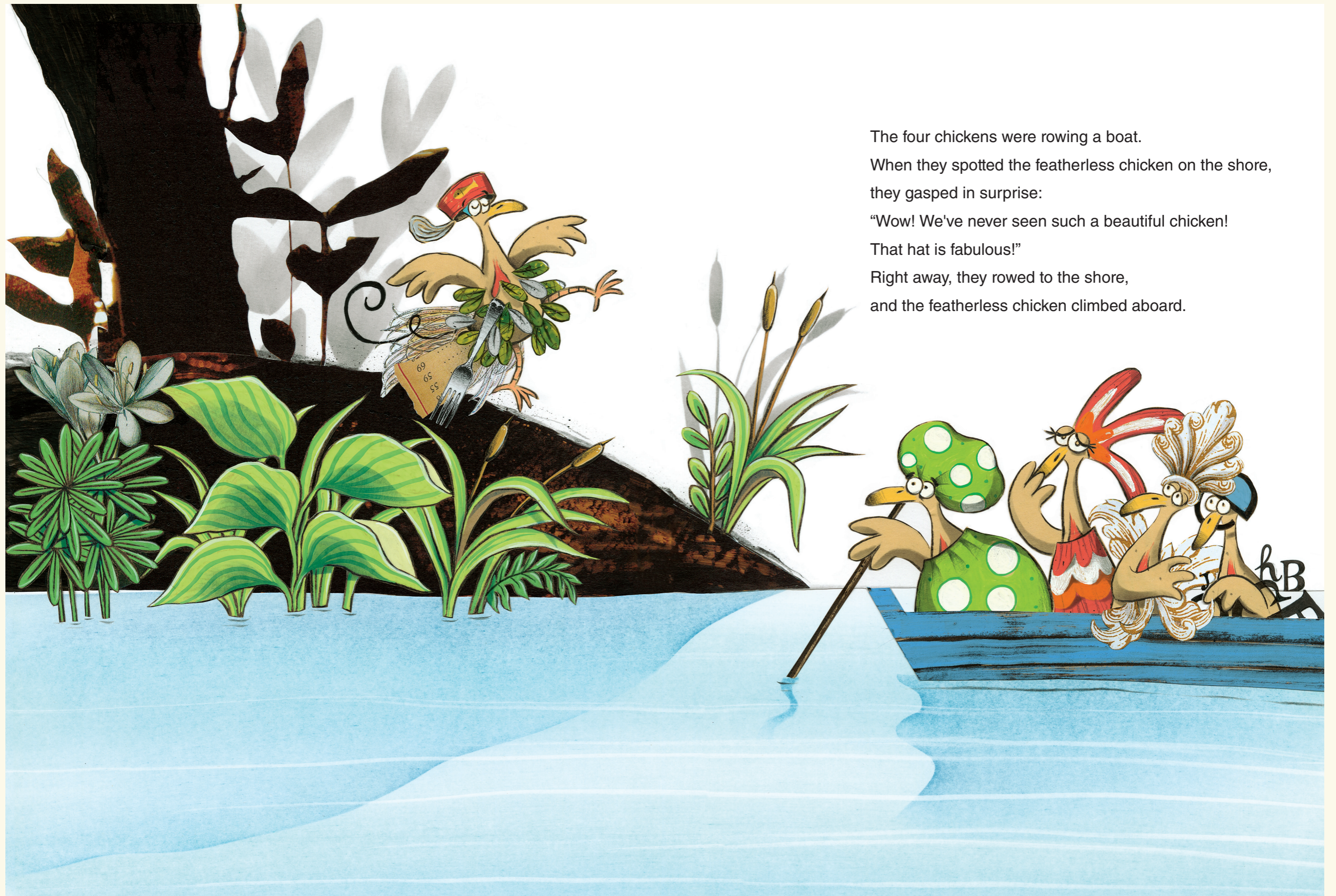
Chen: The ending is always the hardest part of making a story. But having the characters tumble into the water feels perfect for this series. It's playful and a little silly, a humorous release that washes

away the entire day's tension. After splashing around, the characters go home without worries—relaxed and refreshed.

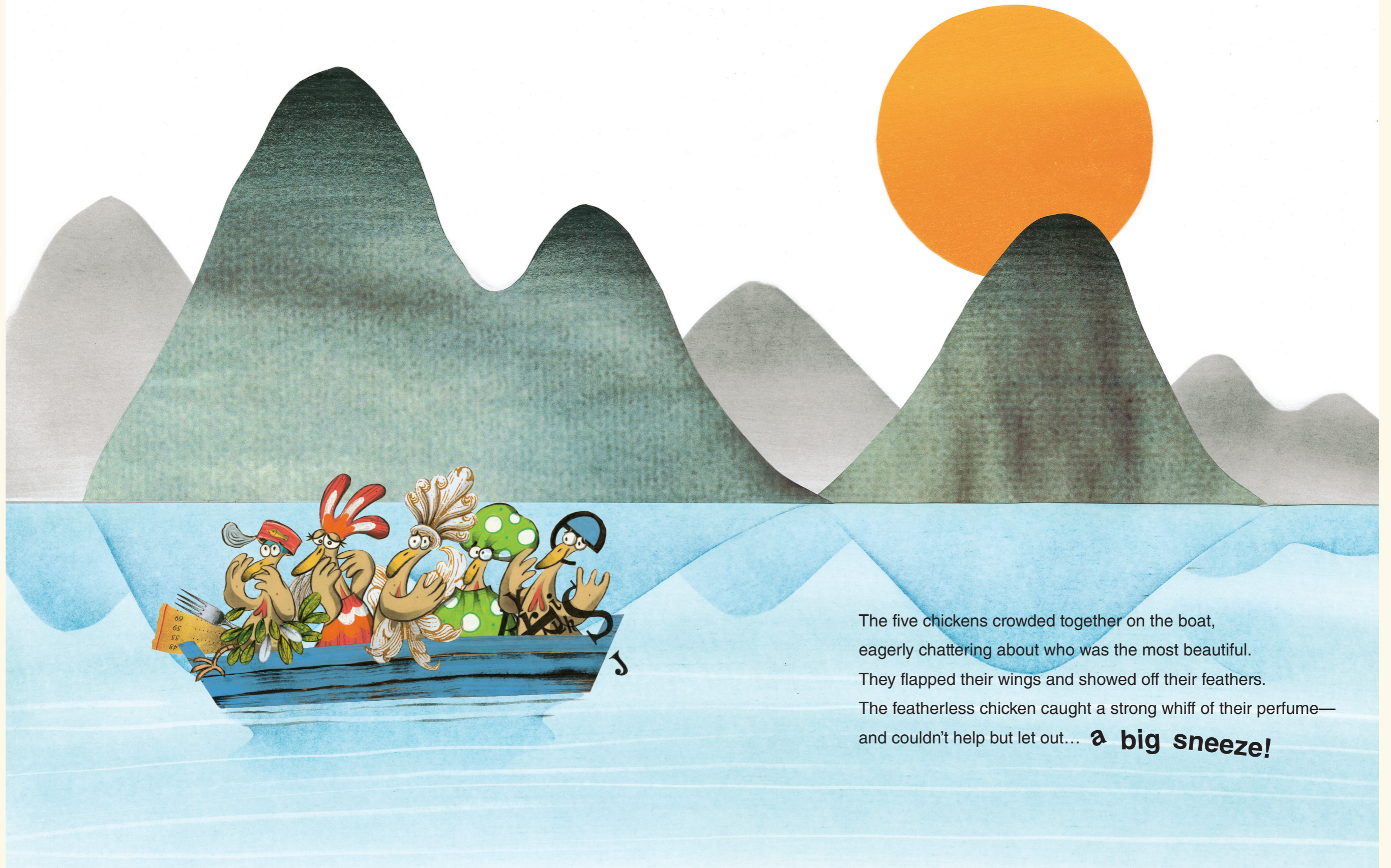
Chang: I want to stand up and applaud after hearing that! Endings and turning points are indeed one of the greatest challenges in storytelling. These two stories use the same device—falling into the water—yet each does it with its own kind of charm. It's brilliant. Knowing that the splash symbolizes “washing away the day's troubles” transforms what was merely funny into something unexpectedly tender and deeply comforting.

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

Shu Chiung Chang studied communications in college and later completed graduate work in children's literature and education. She has promoted children's reading and worked as a book planner, buyer, and chief editor, as well as director of the Reading Channel at Commonwealth Education. She also curated the Taiwan Pavilion at the Bologna Children's Book Fair and has served as a judge for various children's literature awards and notable book selections.



The four chickens were rowing a boat.
When they spotted the featherless chicken on the shore,
they gasped in surprise:
“Wow! We’ve never seen such a beautiful chicken!
That hat is fabulous!”
Right away, they rowed to the shore,
and the featherless chicken climbed aboard.



The five chickens crowded together on the boat, eagerly chattering about who was the most beautiful. They flapped their wings and showed off their feathers. The featherless chicken caught a strong whiff of their perfume—and couldn't help but let out... **a big sneeze!**

Suddenly, the little boat rocked wildly.
The five chickens were frightened,
hopping around in a panic.
The boat rocked harder and harder...

