



# Mother Tree

A Full English translation is available.

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**Author:** Li-Ying Chen **Illustrator:** Heidi Huang **Publisher:** Hsin Yi Publications

**Date:** 05/2025

**Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

96 pages | 15 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1

**BFT2.0 Translator:** Rachel Wang Yung-Hsin

Little Kuai has no mother, and he longs for one. Owl tells him that if he picks a fruit from the Mother Tree, it will turn into a mother. Greedy and excited, Little Kuai picks ten... and they turn into ten mothers. At first, Little Kuai is thrilled and dazzled but soon, he begins to regret his decision. When they begin to chastise him, he makes a mistake, and the Mothers all disappear.

This fantastical fairy tale brims with imagination, exploring the longing for maternal love. This award-winning book captures the genuine emotions of a child-like creature, moving between embarrassment, longing, pride, and the desire for awakening. Told in clear, lively language, the story resonates with both parents and children alike.



Author **Li-Ying Chen**

Li-Ying Chen grew up in Penghu and graduated from the Department of Applied Foreign Languages at National Taiwan University of Science and Technology. Chen enjoys daydreaming, discovering stories, and telling them. Chen's book *Mother Tree* won First Prize in the Children's Literature category of the Hsin Yi Children's Literature Award.



Illustrator **Heidi Huang**

Born in 1982 in Taipei, Heidi Huang is a freelance creator. She loves nature, animals, making things by hand, and living a free-spirited life. Above all, she loves to draw. Now living in the mountains of Changbin, Taitung, she has illustrated and published picture books, among them *The Vanished Star*, *Wobbly Rabbit*, *The Woodpecker Girl*, *The Cat Hotel*, *Child*, and *Meow Meow*.

# The Longing for Maternal Love

by Shu-Fen Wang

A truly outstanding story offers not only the pleasure of reading, but also lingering emotional resonance and ripples of reflection afterward. *Mother Tree* is just such a fairy tale—rich, layered, and beautifully complete.

Little Kuai longs to have a mother like the other children. In one wishful moment, he gains ten mothers, transformed from the ten fruits on the Mother Tree. At first, he revels in the abundant and devoted care they shower upon him. However, because of his past misbehavior, ten mothers scold him together. In a fit of resentment, he breaks the rules, and the mothers turn into tiny saplings. The remorse he feels after losing his mothers ultimately leads him to gain one mother once again.

From a literary perspective, choosing a “tree” as the image of a mother is highly effective. A tree provides shade and nourishment, making it a powerful and fitting symbol. Its familiarity and many benefits render the metaphor easy to understand and readily accepted. The presence of ten mothers further suggests that mothers everywhere take on multiple roles and responsibilities, subtly pointing out how they are often stretched thin. The colorful imagery and tightly woven narrative invite the reader’s identification. The greedy act of picking all the fruit—leading to an accidental tumble—also functions as a clever piece of foreshadowing.

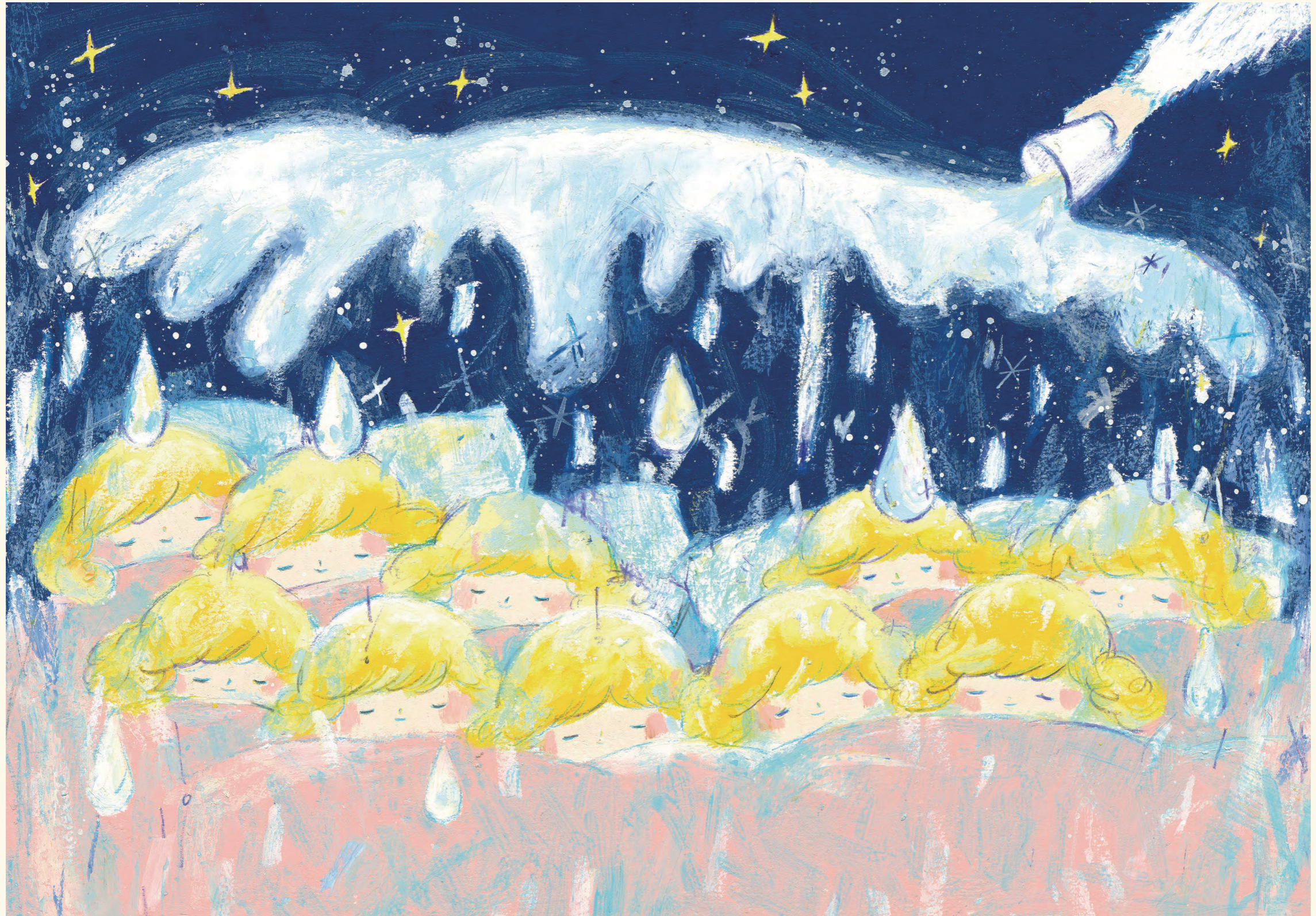
The words and actions of the ten mothers—whether doing housework,

offering comfort, listening, or even scolding—are vividly portrayed. Scenes of parent–child interaction permeate every detail of the storyline, creating a clear and focused overall atmosphere. As the plot unfolds, readers feel as though they are stepping into a series of small family dramas, deeply familiar and powerfully resonant. Yet because the story is told through the genuine emotions of a child, it never feels trite. From eager showboating to embarrassed outbursts, from putting on a brave face after losing her to his stunned disbelief at regaining a mother—Little Kuai’s emotional swings are captured in concise, nimble language that resonates with both parents and children.

Although the story carries an

educational theme about correcting behavior, it does so through the lovable image of a child who could be found in any household. With smooth, flowing narration, the lesson is conveyed gently—like a light boat gliding across the water to reach the shore of persuasion. The story is easy to read and rewarding to revisit.

*Shu-Fen Wang, an award-winning and bestselling children’s author, has also served as a primary school director, art teacher, and consultant and host for literary programs on Public Television and Global Destiny Cable.*



no delectable aroma of breakfast. The cave carries only the damp smell of morning dew and mountain mist. Surrounded by silence, Little Kuai slowly rises from bed and finds many new saplings in the cave.

As he passes through the areas where the mothers often spend their time, he realizes all ten of them are gone. Scattered

in their places are ten saplings—some by the dining table, some in front of the sewing machine.

“Hmph, they don’t like me anyhow, who needs mothers!”

Remembering what happened in the village yesterday, Little Kuai is still seething. Yet he also feels an unsettling



emptiness in his chest that is hard to describe.

Before he can figure out what that sensation is, his stomach starts to gurgle. He is hungry.

Little Kuai remembers how the mothers would prepare breakfast, copying what they did. But he really doesn't know how.

He resorts to his old ways, going out in search of tree roots and trying to find food...And yet, he's grown tired of eating those things long ago.

"Ah, I can just go pick more fruits from the Mother Tree," he says to himself.

"The new mothers will not scold me." With a flash of inspiration, Little Kuai sprints towards the Mother Tree outside the cave.

On the Mother Tree, tender leaves flutter and sway with the wind. But there is not a single fruit, as Little Kuai picked them all.

Little Kuai lowers his head and considers returning to the village to snatch food from the children. After all, it is because of their snitching that he doesn't have any mothers now.

"But I promised the mothers that I would not be bad anymore..."

Little Kuai feels full of remorse. He