



The Girl Called the Lake Goddess

This book does not have a full translation.

那個叫湖神的女孩

Author: ManChiu Lin **Illustrator:** Hsiao-Han Lin **Publisher:** Global Kids

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One summer, a girl who calls herself the Lake Goddess appears at thirteen-year-old Chiya's family guesthouse, dragging a suitcase filled with muddy, moss-covered coins. She warns that the waters of Lake Seryue have been polluted, forcing her to escape onto land—but no one believes her.

Lake Seryue is famous for its stunning scenery—and its miraculously effective “wish stones.” Visitors come from far and wide to toss stones into the lake. But where do all these stones come from? Why is a strange layer of fine silt settling at the lake's bottom? And whose skeleton lies hidden in an underwater tunnel?

One mystery after another disturbs the quiet lakeside village. When the rainy season fails to arrive, the lake dries up, revealing cracked earth and countless wish stones once buried beneath the water—and exposing the villagers' long-held secrets. Can the Lake Goddess, Chiya, and the children of the lake district uncover the truth and protect their beloved home?



Author **ManChiu Lin**

A prominent novelist for young readers, ManChiu Lin currently resides in London. She is a four-time winner of the Golden Tripod Award. Her works span a wide range of genres, among them essays, young adult and children's fiction, picture books, and cross-genre writing. Deeply engaged with social issues in Taiwan and around the world, she has published numerous titles, including *Two Miraculous Journeys Under the Stars: the Lizard Girl & the Alpaca Boy*, *Substitute*, *Chasers of Light*, *Daughter of the Ventriloquist*.



Illustrator **Hsiao-Han Lin**

Hsiao-Han Lin enjoys experimenting with various illustration styles. Her works have appeared in newspapers, books, and magazines. Her published titles include the *YES! I Guess I'm a Little Superhero* series, *Fairy Tales of Good Character 3: The Shadow-Stealing Elf*, *Meeting Poetry Through Imagination*, and *Substitute*.

A Trial of Self-Assertion and Self-Righteousness

by Jung-Chun Ko Roslyn

With a single deft stroke, Golden Tripod Award-winning author ManChiu Lin introduces the titular “Lake Goddess”: a frail girl who arrives at the family-run guesthouse with a suitcase in tow. Her arrival feels both natural and mysterious, as she repeatedly begs to stay. Lin not only paints this character vividly but uses her appearance to stir the calm surface of Lake Seryue, testing the trust, conscience, loyalty, and convictions of those who live nearby. In so doing, she allows the unusual to rise within the ordinary.

The novel showcases Lin’s practiced approach to magical realism. There exists no separate fantasy realm, and Lake Seryue grounds the story in reality. Meanwhile, the Lake Goddess embodies the genre’s essential element—the inexplicable entering daily life. As J. R. R. Tolkien noted, experiencing the fantastical within the everyday requires belief. Yet should the villagers believe this girl’s warning that something is wrong

with the lake water?

Through the Lake Goddess, Lin reminds readers that what the eyes see may not be true. Her words blur the line between reality and fabrication. Many things we take for granted may not reveal the whole truth; the ordinary can hide the strange or extraordinary. When people cling to habit and rigid assumptions, how can they see deeper? Magical realism thus becomes a test of belief for both characters and readers. Those focused solely on the girl’s authenticity overlook the work’s broader depth.

The story draws inspiration from Sun Moon Lake’s historic drought crisis in Taiwan. Through the Lake Goddess, the author introduces ecological concerns while also questioning the long-held practice of throwing “wish stones” into the water. The plot further intertwines an unsolved crime—yes, a body appears—pressing characters and readers into a moral conflict: Should one protect

commercial interests and maintain superficial harmony, or expose the truth behind the wish stones and restore conscience?

In educational contexts, teachers may invite students to debate these dilemmas through role-play. For instance, if you were the village chief, how would you respond to discovering that sacred wish stones had been turned into fraudulent stones? If exposed, the scandal could harm the village’s livelihood. Or, from the perspective of the youth living around Lake Seryue: Would you leave the matter to adults? As young citizens, would you relinquish your right to speak? More importantly, do you believe you possess the power to act?

These questions underscore the deeper value of the novel. It is impressive to see the author thread elements of the “inexplicable within real life” into a short work that resonates so closely with issues we face in our daily world.

What I admire most is Lin’s refusal to villainize adults. Instead, she presents a balanced, realistic spectrum of both youth and adults. Some kind, some flawed; some capable of bias, mischief, or small cruelties; and, likewise, some adults who mix virtue and weakness. Such even-handed portrayal reflects the true complexity of human nature.

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

Jung-Chun Ko Roslyn is an associate professor at the Graduate Institute of Children’s Literature at National Taitung University. She primarily teaches courses on the history of Western children’s literature, literary theory, critical analysis of children’s literature, Western youth fiction, and fantasy literature.



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The Girl Who Checked In with a Suitcase of Coins

It was the last summer break before I started junior high, and I'd planned to spend it giving a proper goodbye to my childhood. But in June, Grandpa had a stroke. Dad renovated our old house in town so we could take care of him. Because he had to go there often throughout the summer, I ended up staying behind and helped out at the guesthouse we rent out.

Ding-dong!

The bell above the front door gave a crisp chime as the door swung open.

In my warmest tone, I said, "Welcome."

A girl stepped inside, carrying a leather suitcase.

"I'd like a room," she said. Her voice was clear and pleasant, sounding like that of a child.

"Did you make a reservation?" I asked.

"No," she said, casually taking off the straw hat on her head, revealing a deeply tanned face. "I have a lot of money—enough to stay for four months. If

that's not enough, three months is fine too."

"I'm sorry," I replied, trying my best to sound polite. "Our guesthouse is fully booked until the end of September."

The girl looked to be about my age. Tall and slender, she had waist-length hair tied in loops, strands tangled with roots and bits of grass, as if it hadn't been washed in a long time. She wore a pale blue dress, loosely cut and plain in design, tied at the waist simply with a green straw rope. On her feet were sandals woven from palm leaves. She looked quite wretched. Yet with every movement, there was an unmistakable air of elegance.

"It doesn't matter if there's no room—as long as there's a bathtub I can soak in, that'll do. I'll still pay."

The girl immediately opened her suitcase, which was filled with copper coins. Dark and tarnished, some even sprouted green moss. My mother, who had just finished tidying up a room, was coming downstairs with an armful of sheets. The girl caught her attention.

"You dug out all the money from your piggy bank?" I asked in surprise.

"What's a piggy bank?" The girl frowned, then suddenly looked as if she'd figured it out. "Oh—

you're asking where this money came from, aren't you?"

I nodded.

"These coins were all tossed into Lake Seryue when people made wishes," she said. "They're not going to dive back in for them, so I just took them."

"People make wishes at Lake Seryue with spirit stones, not coins," I said, shooting her a sideways glance. What a lie—she didn't even bother to make it convincing.

"Before spirit stones were made public, people used copper coins to make wishes," the girl said. She watered her lips as if she were a little thirsty. "I know I shouldn't use someone's money without permission, but I really had no choice."

"You've got water plants stuck to you—don't tell me you just came out of the lake after collecting coins?"

"I came ashore before dawn," the girl said.

"What about your parents?" Mom couldn't help asking.

"I don't have any," she said.

"What about other relatives?" Mom tried again.

The girl shook her head. Then replied with a question of her own: "Is having no relatives a reason I





can't stay here?"

"It's not that," Mom said with a smile. "It's just that we don't have any rooms available. I'm sorry."

"October is the rainy season. It rains every day, and it's damp and cold. Why would you want to stay that long?" I asked.

"Because I have nowhere else to go!" Tears now shimmered in her eyes. "Please let me stay! I promise I won't cause you any trouble."

"I'm truly sorry," Mom repeated. "But we really don't have any vacancies," Mom said again, turning her down.

I knew that even if we did have space, Mom wouldn't just take in a homeless girl so easily.

"I see..." The girl lowered her head, looking utterly dejected.

"Head to the right of our guesthouse—there are three or four others down that way. You can try there," Mom said.

"I already asked—they're all booked, too." Now she crouched down to fasten her suitcase shut. She picked it up and walked toward the door, but just as she was about to push it open, she suddenly collapsed.

"Are you alright?"

We hurried over to check on the girl, who looked terribly pale. Mom and I gently helped her onto the sofa.

"If you don't mind, you can stay in our attic for the night," Mom said, moved in spite of herself.

The attic was where we stored all kinds of odds and ends. My mom was planning to renovate it during the rainy season so that we could have two more rooms to use next year.

"I'll go upstairs to get it ready," Mom said, climbing the stairs. "Chiya, see to her check-in."

I gave the girl the registration form and said, "Could you fill this out, please?"

But she didn't even glance at it. Instead, she said, "I'm not feeling well. Fill it out for me."

I had no choice but to go through the form line by line, asking her each question in turn.

"Name?"

"Lake Goddess," she said weakly.

"You mean...your surname is 'Lake' and your given name is 'Goddess'? I glanced at her, thinking to myself, *Who names their child that?*

"I'm *the* Lake Goddess," she repeated, her voice a little stronger this time.