

Drawn to Life: A Ren Zheng-hua Collection

A Full English translation is available.

漫漫書人間：任正華漫畫集

Author: Ren Zheng-hua **Illustrator:** Ren Zheng-hua **Publisher:** Locus Publishing

Date: 09/2020

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388 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1

Awards: 2003 The 27th Golden Tripod Awards (Comics)

BFT 2.0 Translator: Michael Fahey

This collection showcases the significant, award-winning works of Ren Zheng-hua's late career. It includes the short-form anthology *Drawn to Life*, the longform *The Son*, and the rare doujinshi *Seven Sages of Doing Nothing*. The eight works vary widely in length and theme. Some are rooted in realism, exploring the cruelty of human nature in settings such as long-term hospital care, office gossip and bullying, and migrant caregivers in family households. Other works take a more literary approach, reflecting on love, marriage, and family in Mandarin-speaking societies. And last, some works employ dark humor to examine the past or indulge in surreal flights of fancy. *The Son* was also published in French as *Le Fils* by the acclaimed publisher Casterman.



Author **Ren Zheng-hua**

Ren Zheng-hua is one of Taiwan's leading comic artists. Born in Taipei in 1963, Ren began her comics career with the immensely popular *Sea of Devil*, serialized in *Sunday Comics* magazine, and later collected into a three-volume graphic novel. Incisively witty and tinged with dark humor, Ren masterfully weaves stories that span from the ancient to the modern, from the mythic and fantastic to everyday reality, often satirizing humanity's capacity for both good and evil. Ren is also the founder of publisher BoHai Culture Co, and comics magazine *Lotto*. In 2007, her work was published in French under the title *Le Fils*, making Ren the first Taiwanese comic book creator to be published by Casterman. In 2021, Ren received the Special Contribution Award at the 12th Golden Comic Awards.

On the Necessity of Ren Zheng-hua: A Creator of Unsparing Vision, Radical Originality, and Path-Breaking Force

by Wolf Hsu

During the formative years of Taiwan's professional comics industry, local creators faced a number of challenges. Readers were already accustomed to the highly developed Japanese manga market, while publishers and editors provided relatively little support for story development. At the same time, rigid production schedules and strict deadlines left creators little flexibility. Whether a comic could unfold seamlessly and reach a satisfying conclusion often depended as much on the creator's skill as a writer as on their stamina.

Even in her very first long-form work, Ren Zheng-hua showed a confident command of both theme and storytelling. Her approach to subject

matter distinguished her from other comic artists. Ren once remarked that she felt she needed to "tear everything down and start over." American comics—whose drawing techniques, visual presentation, and narrative methods differ radically from Japanese manga—proved to be a major stimulus for her. In her subsequent work *The Human Bun*, Ren began incorporating American stylistic elements into her linework and page composition.

Ren Zheng-hua's love for comics was transformed into a remarkable initiative. She produced independently published works with distinctive bindings, such as *The Seven Sages of Doing Nothing* and *Rose Comics*, and single-handedly ran the comics magazine *Lotto* for two years. Across these projects, Ren experimented

with a wide range of visual and narrative techniques. Even in works more readily categorized as "gag comics," such as the *Naughty Family* series, her engagement with these themes remains evident. The tone may be lighter and more satirical, but the core concerns never change.

Among the short and long works previously collected under the title *Drawn to Life* and now re-edited as *Drawn to Life: A Ren Zheng-hua Collection*, the story *No Means Yes* represents Ren's most direct engagement with misogyny as a central theme. Beginning with a murder case, the story exposes the bullying women face in misogynistic environments. From psychological pressures to workplace discrimination, from interpersonal relationships to gossip, Ren has honed in on misunderstandings perpetuated by the media, pressures exerted by family, and a broad range of experiences of women.

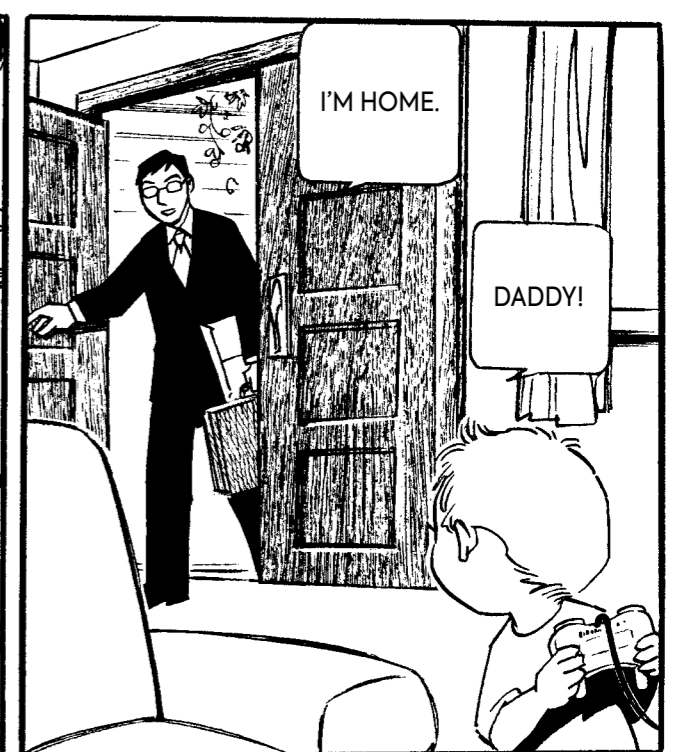
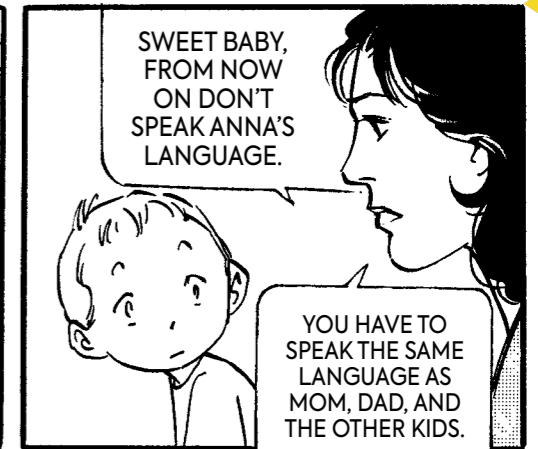
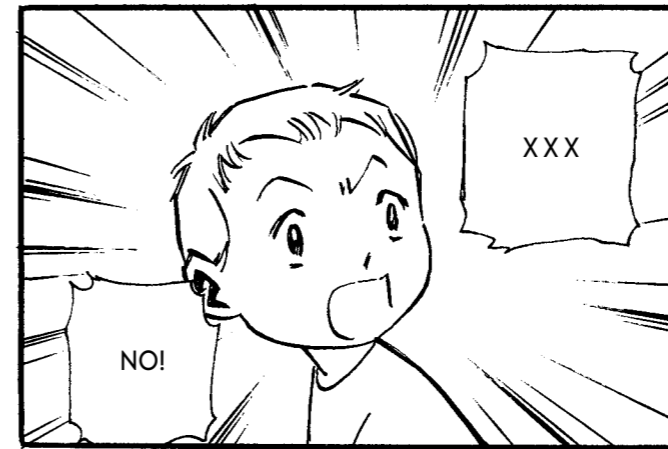
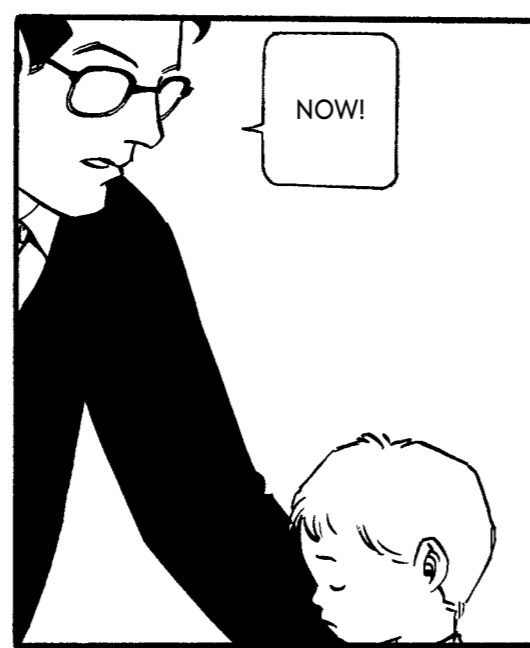
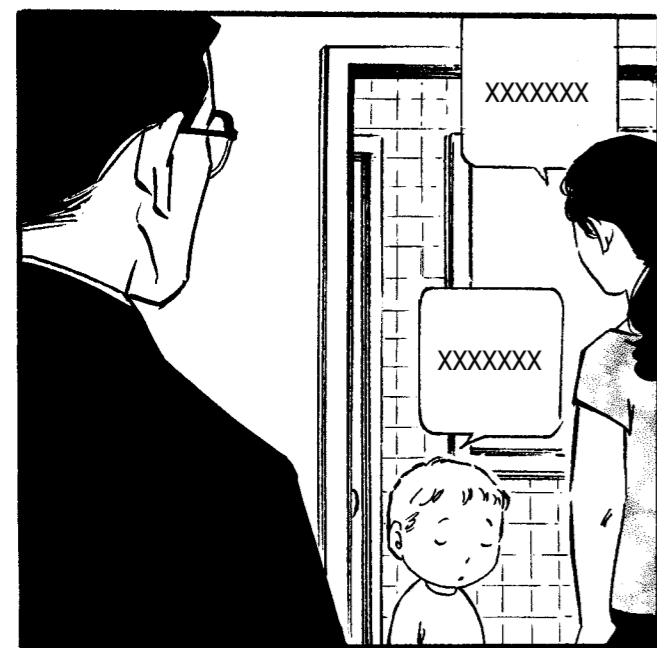
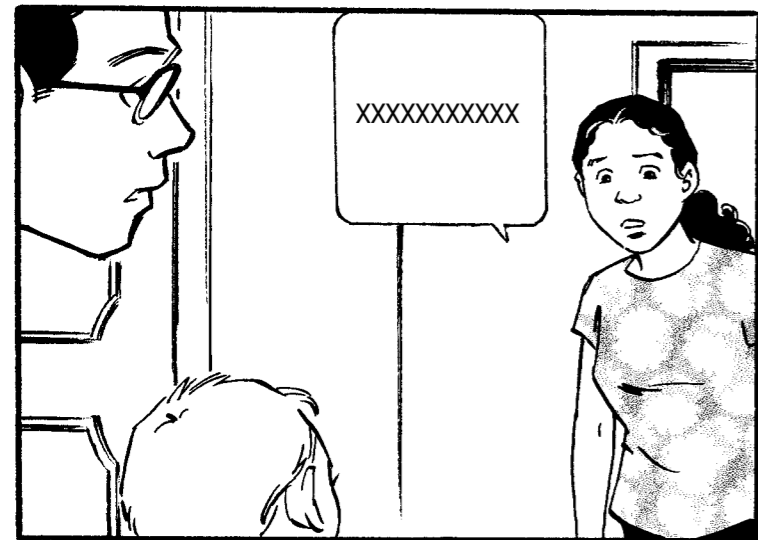
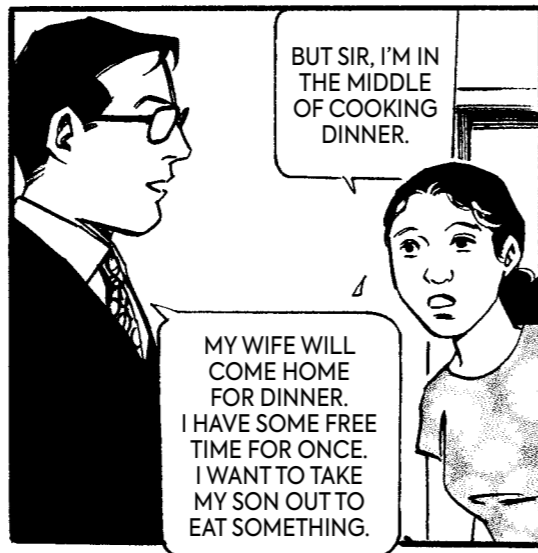
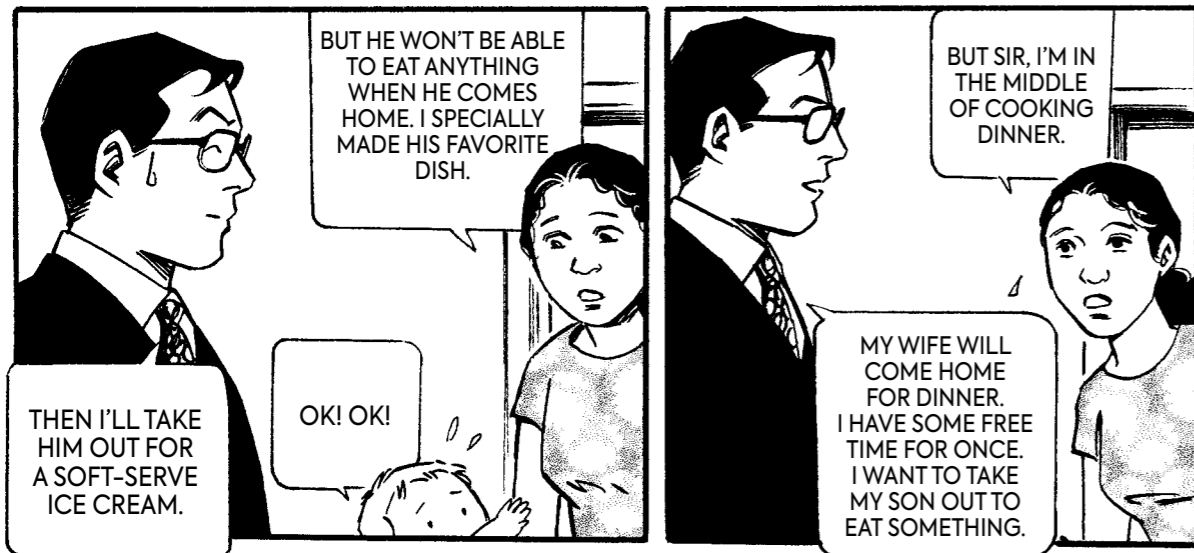
Neither *The Human Bun* nor *Drawn to Life: A Ren Zheng-hua Collection* consists of epic long-form narratives or serialized sagas. Precisely because of this, they achieve a sharper focus and a more distilled articulation of these themes. The shadow of domestic violence in *A Family's Happiness*, the realities of migrant labor and child-rearing in *Anna's Child*, and, like *No Means Yes*, the ruthless exposure of social hypocrisy all lay bare what is unbearable or helpless beneath the surface. *Seduction* carries satire steeped

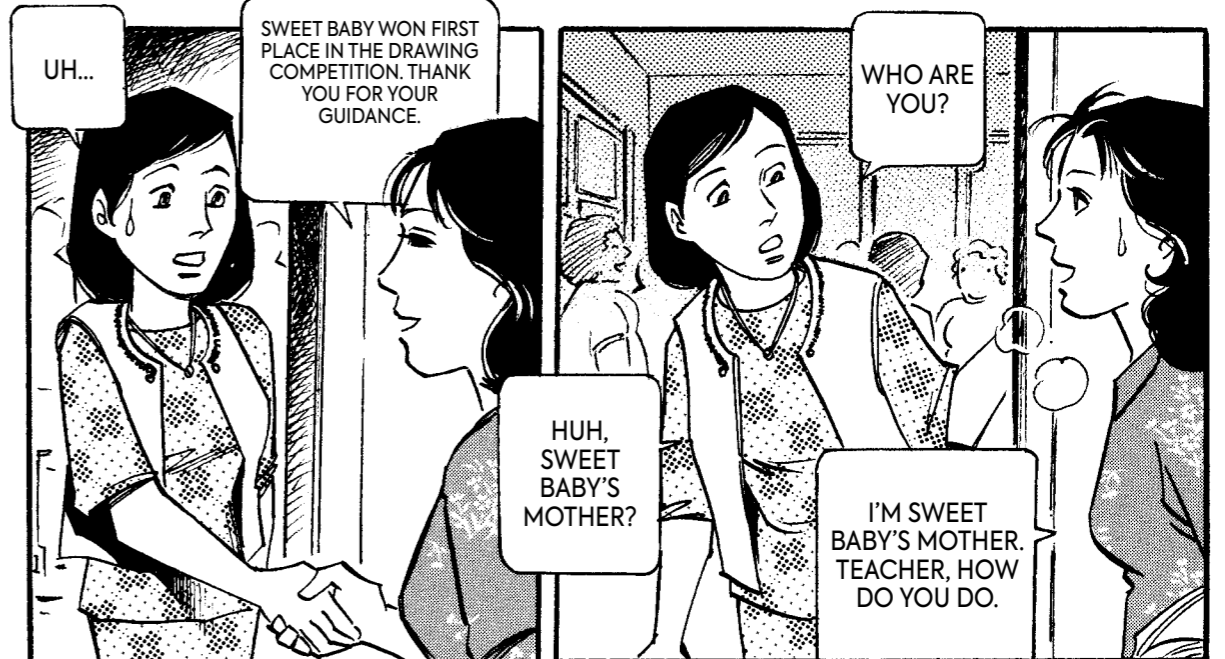
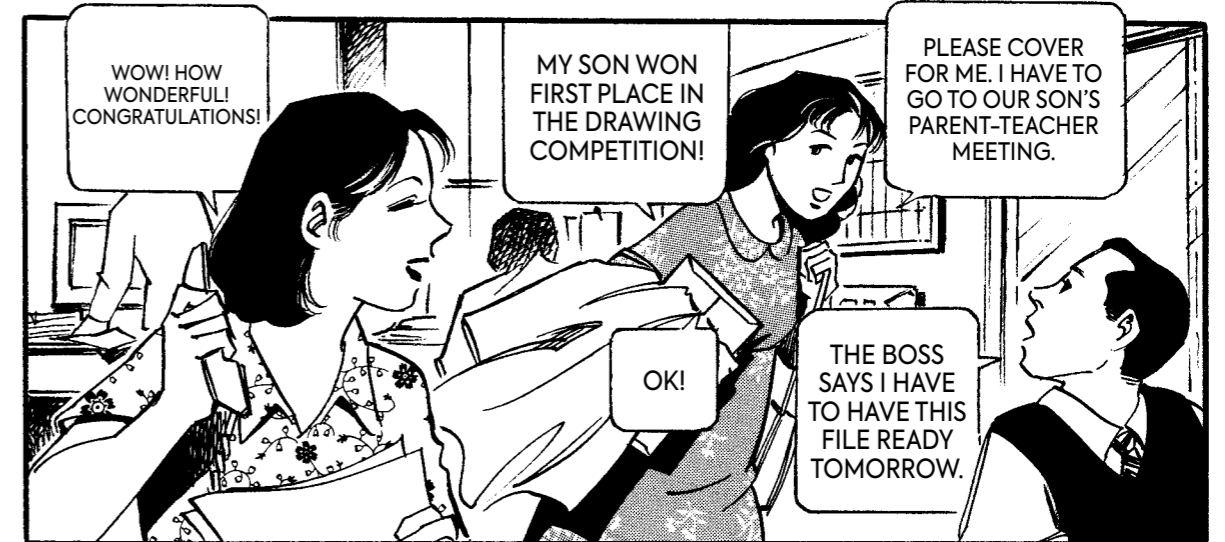
in misogyny; *The Visitors* and *The Siamese Fighting Fish* pose questions about self-discovery and faith in life; and *The Son*, previously published as a standalone volume, clearly points out that men who grow up in misogynistic environments are also constrained by distorted values. From certain perspectives, they may appear to be beneficiaries of such systems; from others, they are unwilling, melancholic victims of oppression themselves. Such skewed frameworks, taken for granted, continue to be passed down from Generation to Generation.

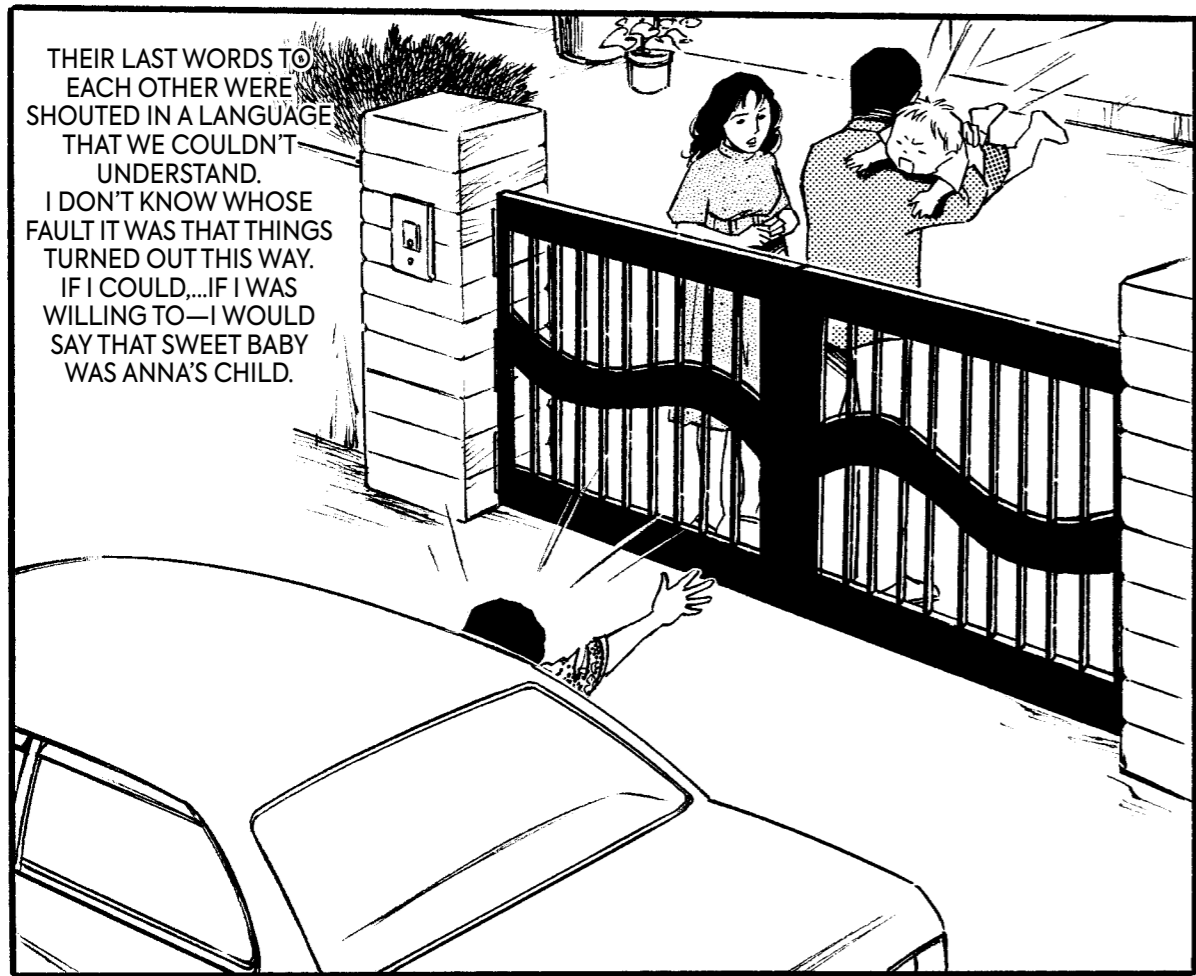
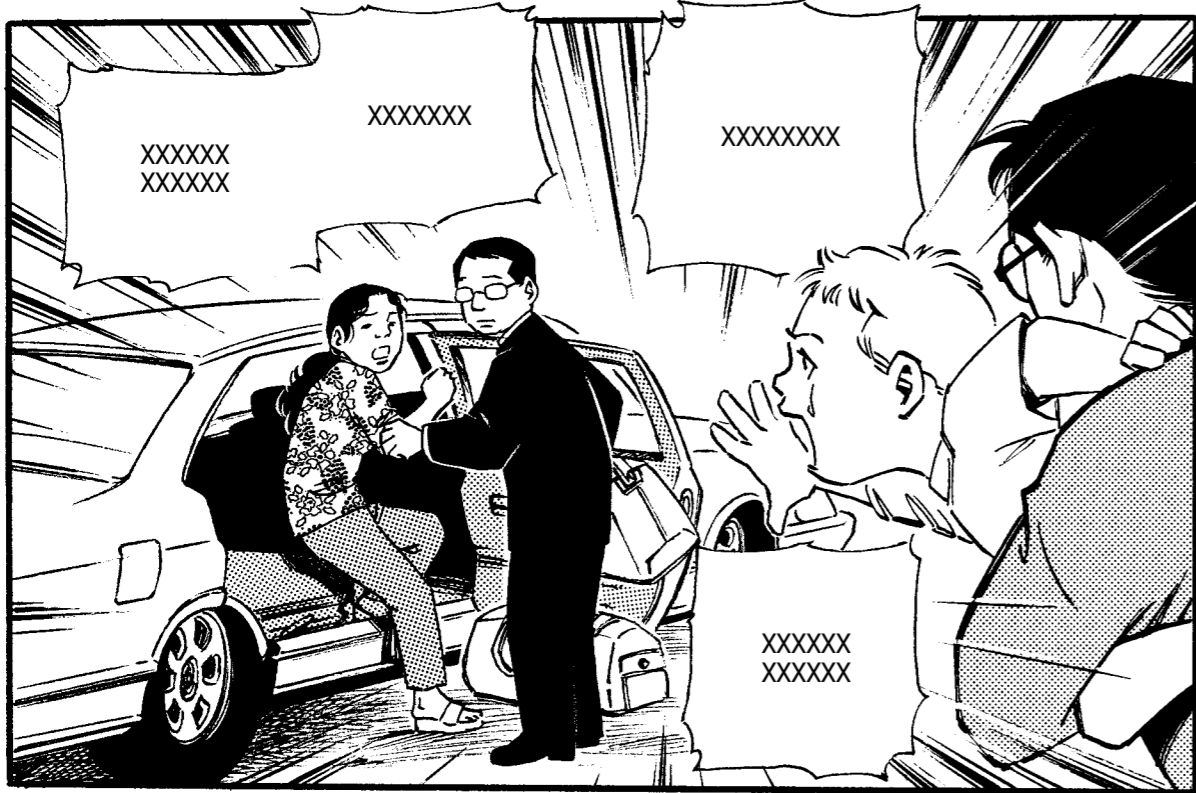
We need creators like Ren Zheng-hua—artists whose observation of humanity is nearly cold, and whose depiction is almost cruel.

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

Wolf Hsu, trained in medical engineering, works in publishing. He sleeps very little, works long hours, carries a thin wallet, and wants to do many things. His published works include Rain Dog Space, Warm Beer and Cold Women, The Circus Leaves Town, The Tongue-Walking Family, No One Knows I've Left, Broken Dream Boulevard, Even Tough Guys Can Be Soft Sometimes, Let Me Know When You Reach Dreamland, FIX, Ants Climbing a Tree, and Low-Cost Dreams.







THE END—ANNA'S CHILD

