

MY DEAR 親愛的

* Longlisted, 2010 Golden Tripod Award

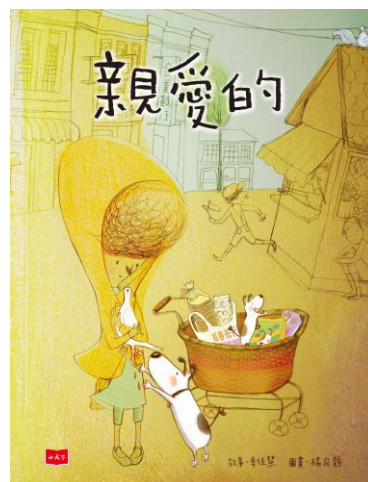
After the death of her mother, a young girl takes up the maintenance of her household and does her best to help “the person upstairs”, her grieving father, break free of the chains of bereavement. A story of persistence, optimism, and loving memory told through diary entries, letters, and notes.

After the death of her mother, a young girl takes up the maintenance of her household, making meals, cleaning the house, and weeding the garden, her two dogs and two chickens by her side. Mom explicitly told her she would have to take care of “the one upstairs” for a while: a man with wild hair and beard who stares all day at an empty canvas and barely speaks or eats. Though lonely, sad, and tired, the girl rolls up her sleeves and gets to work. Life goes on with the help of her puppies and her neighbors, and one day, “the one upstairs” – her grieving father – comes downstairs for dinner with a shaven face and clean clothes on.

Arlene Hsing’s story replicates memory through fragments: the little girl records every day in her diary and leaves herself notes about work, life, and her lost mother, and those notes come together to form the story. This is a tale of persistence, optimism, and love, which is brought to life through endearing illustrations that appear to rise from a common yellow legal pad.

Text by Arlene Hsing 幸佳慧

Arlene Hsing is an all-around star of children’s literature: She translates, critiques, writes, and researches it. Holder of a PhD in Children’s Literature from Newcastle University, she combines research into its cultural, linguistic, and gender aspects with staunch advocacy. Her own body of written work ranges from essays and reader’s notes for adults to a variety of titles for children. Her published titles have been longlisted several times for the Golden Tripod Award.



Category: Picture Book

Publisher: Global Kids

Date: 12/2018 (first published in 2009)

Rights contact:

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Size: 21.5 x 28.1 cm

Age: 4+

Rights sold: Simplified Chinese (Qingdao)

She has received Golden Tripod Special Contribution Award in 2019 for her lifetime achievement.

Illustrated by Yang Wan-Jing 楊宛靜

An artist of broad natural and literary interests, Yang Wan-Jing loves drawing animal and natural subjects in particular. Several of her illustrated titles have been longlisted for the Golden Tripod Award, *China Times* Open Book Award, and others.



2 April

Mama said, I must look after him

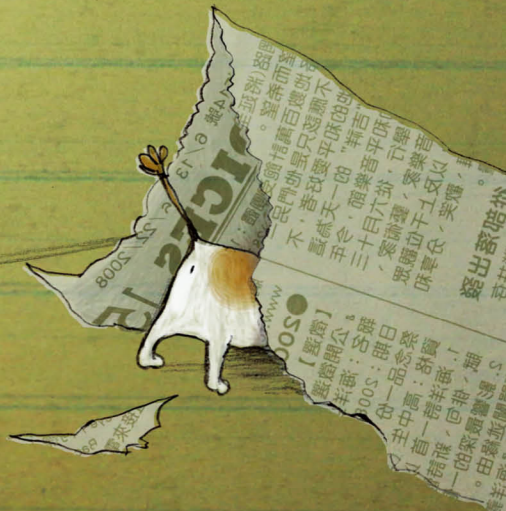
I have to, there's no other way.

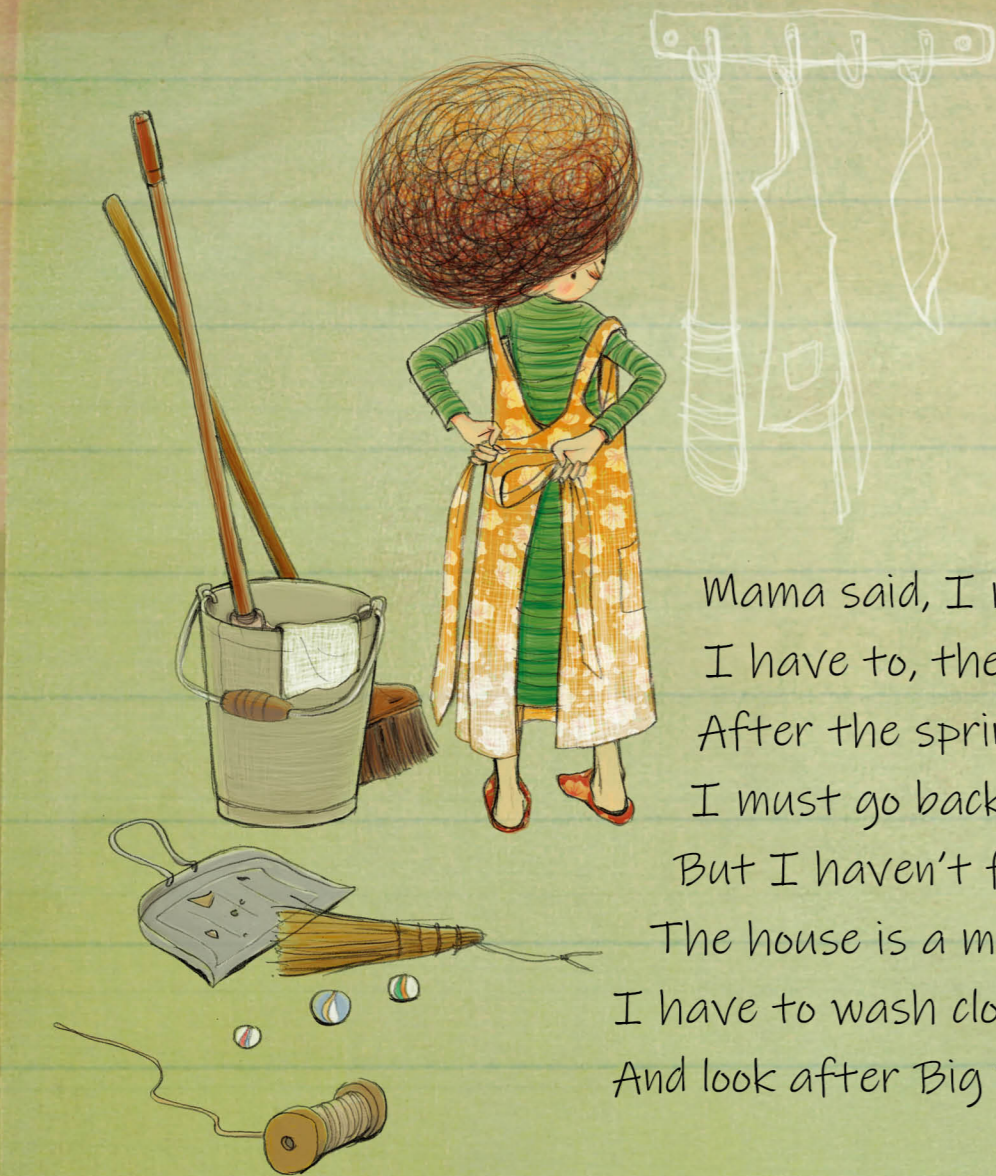
He doesn't come down, he doesn't speak.

I take food up to him, which he sometimes eats,

But he has so much beard and hair

That it's hard for him to eat.





Mama said, I must grow up fast,
I have to, there's no other way.
After the spring break,
I must go back to school
But I haven't finished my homework,
The house is a mess,
I have to wash clothes and cook,
And look after Big Bao.

It was annoying
That today Big Bao brought back a Little Bao,
I looked them both in the eye
I knew what they were going to say.
I found the little bowl we used before,
it was perfect for Little Bao.





Today, someone brought us a pigeon,
I put the pigeon and our dinner by the
attic door. I knocked, then went downstairs,
I counted the 35 stairs down, but didn't hear anyone
open the door.



Shopping list:
Dog food, noodles,
bread, eggs, ham,
toilet paper...



3 April

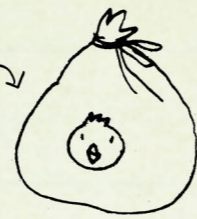
Today, while I was tidying the bookshelf,
A photo fell out of Mama's gardening book,
A photo of us both in the garden.
And I realized that since Mama fell ill,
The grass has grown almost as tall as me.



In the morning, our pigeon friend brought another pigeon.
I took the pigeon and lunch up to the attic.
I put them by the door, and knocked,
I counted the 35 stairs down, but didn't hear anyone
open the door.

4 April

Today, our pigeon friend brought a little basket,
Inside were two little chicks and a bag of feed
He said they were a gift for me.
And I could look after them in the garden.



I gave the little chicks names.
One was called Peanut. The other, Groundnut.
Groundnut had a ring on his leg.
For the sake of the chicks, I tidied the garden.
Mama always used to say,
"Treat minor ailments while you still can."
Now I understood,
"Cut the grass while you still can."



Peanut



Groundnut





5 April

Today, on the way back from the store,
A pigeon was limping on the ground.
I picked it up. Its leg was broken, and bleeding.
There was a piece of paper wrapped around its leg.
I took the pigeon home, and removed the paper.

My dear,
I have been painting all day. No, not all day,
Because I can't concentrate, because I miss you.
I know you are there, that you haven't left me.
But I can't feel you, and that makes me sad.
Where are you?

We called the injured pigeon Dove.