

NUMBER 70, YOUR BADGE IS CROOKED

七十號，你的鳥歪了

Ho Kuan-yu turns down an elite police university to enroll at an ordinary academy for rank-and-file cops. As a result, he is singled out for harsh treatment. While Ho Kuan-yu's gentle spirit remains unbroken, and even wins him an unexpected friend, he is forced to navigate an internal power struggle that could have life-threatening consequences.

Aspiring police officer Ho Kuan-yu has gained admittance to two police academies: the elite Central Police University that trains police captains, and Taiwan Police College, a vocational school that produces rank-and-file cops. Against his parents' wishes, he enrolls in the latter, only to find that his decision makes him the target of abuse by Hsu Chan-hao, the upperclassman supervising his bootcamp-style freshman training. Despite the challenges, Ho Kuan-yu remains confident in his choice, knowing that the two schools will soon be combined into one academy as part of ongoing reforms to the police force.

Slowly, Ho Kuan-yu's honesty and kindness win over his tormentor, and the two forge an unexpectedly tender bond. At the same time, there is discontent brewing amongst teachers opposed to the integration of the police academies. These anti-reformists are plotting to harm students in order to strengthen their position in the struggle against the newly arrived reformist teachers. Once the safest place imaginable, the campus of the police college is now a veritable minefield.

In the tradition of *SOTUS*, Thailand's pre-eminent work of boy's love fiction, *Number 70, Your Badge Is Crooked* is a tender bromance set against a backdrop of serious social issues. The former addresses the pervasive hazing controversies that tarnished the public image of Thai universities, while the latter exposes a range of related issues



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bft.fiction.nonfiction@moc.gov.tw

within Taiwan's police force and training academies. The seriousness of these issues contrasts with author Yen Yu's endearing rendering of the protagonists' budding friendship. A former police officer and graduate of Taiwan Police College, Yen Yu's personal and professional experience lend credibility to his depictions of campus life, and the internal power struggles within the police force.

Yen Yu 顏瑜

A native of Changhua County, Yen Yu is a graduate of Taiwan Police College, a former police officer, and a member of the Crime Writers of Taiwan. Proficient at incorporating societal issues into his writing, his works span a range of genres, from crime, to romance, to sci-fi and fantasy, to comedy, though his police novels remain his most representative works. In 2022, he was awarded the Mirror Fiction Million Dollar Award, and a number of his works have already sold rights for television adaptations.

NUMBER 70, YOUR BADGE IS CROOKED

By Yen Yu

Translated by Eunice Shek

Prologue

It is said that boys will experience two stages of maturity in their lifetimes.

The first time is in kindergarten, when we learn that we are not the center of the world; every child is the treasure of their family, we are not special. The second time is during one's mandatory military service.

Upon entering the military, just like entering kindergarten, one is stripped of one's individuality. Like a girl who has worked hard to grow a beautiful head of long hair, but has her ponytail seized and her head forcibly shaved regardless of her wishes or agreement, serving in the military is like this.

"Diligence! Effort! Health! Vigor! Obedience! Discipline! Unity! Honor!"

Loud shouts resonated throughout the campus. A group of boys wearing tank tops ran out, mouths vigorously reciting these phrases in unison. They wound around a statue in front of the administration building, heading straight for the training grounds.

It was only six o'clock in the morning. Although it was July, the weather was slightly cool.

Ho Kuan-yu was among their ranks. Like everyone else, his head was shaved, and he was wearing a hat. Like everyone else, he expended all his energy to shout himself hoarse. He deeply feared being caught over a careless mistake and suffering a reprimand from his superiors.

But he wasn't serving in the military; he was at a police academy.

Chapter One

There are two police academies in Taiwan: one is Central Police University (CPU), the other is Taiwan Police College (TPC). The difference between the two is clear from the names alone. Ho Kuan-yu originally wanted to study at Central Police University, but due to an unexpected turn of events, he enrolled at Taiwan Police College instead.

TPC's full name is a bit of a mouthful: Taiwan Police College; one only needs to study for two years to become a police officer after graduation. However, compared to other schools, the College is more akin to a military base – there are definitely no university scenes of romance,

freedom, or overflowing youthfulness, which is why Ho Kuan-yu felt that he was completing mandatory national military service instead.

"Squad Five, fifth from the end, step out!" a voice roared angrily.

Ho Kuan-yu stood shoulder to shoulder with his classmates on the training grounds, already in formation, but he'd been caught spacing out – "Squad Five, fifth from the end" was him. He hastily hurried out from the ranks.

At six in the morning, the training grounds were so cold that even cheerlessness was difficult to muster. A group of over two hundred boys stood in perfect formation, much like fish on a chopping block, nerves stretched taut, waiting to be gutted.

Before Ho Kuan-yu stood four grim and severe superiors. Although they were called "superiors", they were actually only one year ahead. Though they appeared no older than nineteen or twenty years old, their authoritative air didn't match their age.

"What were you thinking of, lost in thought like that?" the tallest among the four asked impatiently. He glanced at Ho Kuan-yu's student identification number. "Number Seventy, on the ground!"

"Yes, Squad Leader!" Ho Kuan-yu complied immediately, both hands braced against the ground as he assumed a push-up position.

"Two sets, begin!"

One set meant ten push-ups. The unfortunate Ho Kuan-yu immediately began his push-ups. Before this, he'd been feeling a little chilly, but quickly warmed up. His superior's attention quickly shifted to the others.

"The last three in Squad Four, step out!"

"The ones laughing in Squad Thirteen, step out!"

"Everyone in Squad Two, step out!"

Ho Kuan-yu wasn't the only one. Very quickly, the sounds of push-ups surrounded him; this was the scene of their morning exercise routine. As more units entered the training grounds, the noise increased – at least one hundred others were being punished at the same time.

"Everyone, halt!" At 6:10 a.m., a voice of even higher rank sounded from the front of the grounds.

The superiors immediately had their subordinates get up and quickly return to their ranks.

After the call to halt, the training grounds were densely packed with over three hundred TPC recruits, standing in absolute silence. Not a peep could be heard.

The national flag was raised, the national anthem sung, hats removed and donned again, all in perfect order. Although Ho Kuan-yu's back was soaked with sweat, he still drew out his voice, deeply afraid that if he sang too quietly, he would be reprimanded later.

Who would have thought that he, who had never gone to karaoke nor dared to sing out loud, would end up like this?

With his shaved head and deeply sun-browned skin, he sang off-key without any embarrassment. This transformation had occurred in just two weeks. A fortnight ago, he was still a carefree recent high school graduate; if his bangs were cut just a millimeter too short, he would

refuse to go out, preferring to order delivery than let the girl working at the neighboring convenience store see him. In his current plight, he no longer knew who he was.

This was the routine at the College, with its two-year curriculum, over seventy percent of which was comprised of military-style education and military-style management. Students were required to live at the school, comply with disciplinary measures, and live together as a group; they were assigned both dorms and cafeterias. Within the school, you were not allowed to walk around freely; even using the bathroom was regulated. If you broke a rule, even accidentally, woe betide you – the school had a wide range of methods to deal with infractions.

Why bother obeying the rules, you might ask.

It was very simple – if you wanted to be a police officer and receive your certification, you had to comply with school rules. If you couldn't take it, you could, of course, leave; no one was forcing you to stay, and anyway, there was a long waiting list of students hoping to enroll.

"After dismissal, each group will disperse and operate independently. Dismissed!" An officer broadcast orders from the command podium.

However, they were only dismissed from the flag raising ceremony. The real morning exercises were just beginning.

"Number Seventy, you haven't finished your sets, right?" A voice rang out, laden with bad intentions.

Ho Kuan-yu knew the person speaking to him was behind him to his right, but he didn't dare turn to look – at the college, even turning one's head without permission was violating regulations and could be punished.

"Squad Leader, sir, I have not finished!" he replied loudly, standing rigid and straight, eyes facing forward; he didn't dare to move even his pupils.

"Then why are you acting like you have free time? Number Seventy, step out!"

"Yes, Squad Leader!"

Standing before him was the superior from the group of four. With a height of 1.8 meters, he had eyes like obsidian pools, eyebrows like blades, sharp and well-defined nose and lips, and a bearing that was heroic yet menacing; proud and aloof, yet handsome and dashing; valiant yet elegant and unrestrained... Oh, yes, he was unbelievably cool; it was just a pity he also had a twisted personality.

"Get down!" He berated Ho Kuan-yu loudly.

"Yes, Squad Leader!"

Ho Kuan-yu obeyed his instructions, got into the push-up position, and, in front of everyone, began to exert all his strength to lower and raise his body.

This was a distinct difference in treatment. He was not the only one who hadn't completed his punishment, but he was the only one called out for it; it was very embarrassing. And the person targeting him was none other than his direct superior, his squad leader, Hsu Chan-hao.

"Squad leader" wasn't a terribly extraordinary position. Hsu Chan-hao was merely a grade above them, only a year older. He had simply entered the school one year before them, but, according to a codified tradition of hierarchy and obedience, he could not be defied.

Police colleges and military academies both followed a system of dividing the student body between upper- and lowerclassmen. This system was neither good nor bad; the point was to learn obedience. When Ho Kuan-yu had first arrived, he was suspicious of this approach; but after his two-week-long rude awakening, he was already numb to it. Those that couldn't adapt to it had all dropped out.

"Number Seventy, fall in!" Hsu Chan-hao said.

"Yes, Squad Leader!"

Their unit began their morning exercises, running on the early morning training grounds. Every so often, they would encounter another unit and briefly run alongside them before splitting off again. After several encounters, their unit leader got tired of this, so he directed them to the mountain behind the school and ordered them to run up the sloping mountain path.

Running on the rising and falling mountain path was the worst. TPC's campus was not flat; there were mountains and hills, as well as simulated shopping malls and traffic intersections, interspersed with barracks and other facilities. Those students who were a bit heavier, or at least not fit, quickly ran out of steam and fell behind the group one by one, only to be rounded up by the squad leaders, who commanded them to do push-ups, giving their legs a rest even as they engaged in a more unbearable exercise.

The unit leader began singing, "*The light of the police is brilliant and glorious!* One! Two! One! Two! Ready, sing!"

Damn it, this isn't over yet? Now, we have to sing as we run.

"*The light of the police... is brilliant and glorious...*" The recruit next to Ho Kuan-yu tried to sing but was out of breath; he was nearly done for.

He slept beneath Ho Kuan-yu on the lower bunk. His name was Chou Wei-hao. He wore glasses that lent him a well-educated and well-bred appearance, and was a little plump. He'd just barely passed TPC's physical selection threshold; if he'd been a little heavier, he likely would have been rejected.

When Ho Kuan-yu first saw him, he guessed Chou Wei-hao wouldn't last three days. He didn't expect that that it would be their neighbors, Numbers Seventy-Two and Seventy-Three, who both dropped out, and that Number Seventy-One – Chou Wei-hao – would still be there, sleeping under him on the lower bunk.

If you want to become a police officer, it turns out willpower is the most decisive factor.

"*We must carry forward the glorious history of the police force!*" Ho Kuan-yu sang loudly to replace Chou Wei-hao, hoping to conceal Chou Wei-hao's faltering voice.

Hsu Chan-hao was running right beside them, glaring at them menacingly.

Each squad consisted of fifteen people. Hsu Chan-hao was their squad leader, responsible for Numbers Sixty-One through Seventy-Five. His top priority – every squad leader's top priority – was to push these fifteen people to their utmost. On behalf of the school and the national selection policies, he was to separate the wheat from the chaff and select the best TPC recruits from his squad.

This was why their training was so strict. When he first arrived, Ho Kuan-yu didn't yet understand why the school wanted to abuse people like this. Only later did he understand that the military and the police both had the same mission: if obedience was a matter of free will, soldiers would never enter the battlefield.

Ho Kuan-yu understood this, so he was still here; those who didn't understand had already run off. The current Seventy-Two and Seventy-Three were already much better than the ones who had dropped out, at least in terms of physical stamina.

"Number Seventy, what's distracting you?" Hsu Chan-hao's impatient voice rang out again. He was like a tick, stuck to Ho Kuan-yu, as if he wouldn't be satisfied until he'd eliminated him.

"Nothing, Squad Leader!" Ho Kuan-yu panted in response.

"Number Seventy, step out! Get down!"

Ho Kuan-yu was forced to separate from the group and submit to Hsu Chan-hao on the mountainside.

The Vampire, they called him. Hsu Chan-hao looked the part with his pale face, spiteful nose, and ruddy lips, it seemed as if he would only give up after sucking them dry.

Ho Kuan-yu might be under the jurisdiction of Squad Five, and entirely under Hsu Chan-hao's thumb, but it wouldn't have mattered which squad he was in. No one likes their squad leader.

"I heard you tested into CPU. You think you're all that?" Hsu Chan-hao said suddenly, close to Ho Kuan-yu's ear. Ho Kuan-yu could almost feel the puff of air as he spoke.

Ho Kuan-yu was dumbfounded. Forgetting the rules for an instant, he lifted his head without permission.

Hsu Chan-hao was squatting before him. He narrowed his eyes, sizing him up. "So? You think your grades are hot shit?"

Central Police University and Taiwan Police College were two different schools. CPU required four years of study; after graduation, one directly became a commissioned officer, so enrollment required very good grades. On the other hand, TPC graduates could only become ordinary police officers.

Ho Kuan-yu was accepted into TPC, but had also been simultaneously accepted into CPU. He unexpectedly gave up his chance at CPU and chose TPC instead. Ho Kuan-yu thought this was a secret – he'd only told his neighbor, Chou Wei-hao. He realized now that Chou Wei-hao and his big mouth had blabbed, bragging until even the squad leader found out.

No wonder that ever since the first week, Hsu Chan-hao had fixated on Ho Kuan-yu; there had been a reason all along.

"Answer me – you look down on us, don't you?" Hsu Chan-hao asked him.

Ho Kuan-yu immediately dropped his head, breaking into a cold sweat. This was the first time he'd seen his superior so closely. "No, Squad Leader!"

"Get ready for push-ups. I'll call the count: one for down, two for up!"

This type of "he calls the count" push-ups were the scariest. It was endless; you had no idea how many you would have to do. The day before, a fool in Squad Twelve was caught secretly

using his cell phone; at midday, he was dragged to the plaza, surrounded by seven squad leaders, and, in fits and starts, was forced to complete over a hundred push-ups.

“One! Two! One! Two! One! Two!” Hsu Chan-hao called, neither fast nor slow; the tempo indicated that Ho Kuan-yu was in for a lot of push-ups.

When calling the count for push-ups, if the call was fast, you could never keep up; if the call was slow, you were being tormented; if the call was neither fast nor slow, you were expected to take it seriously and work hard.

Ho Kuan-yu followed the count, but his arms quickly began to tremble. After all, he’d just done another set of thirty; in total, he’d now surpassed a hundred.

Soon, Ho Kuan-yu surrendered. He sprawled on the ground, panting, with no energy to even prop himself up. This was nothing willpower could solve – if his arms had no more strength, they simply had no more strength.

However, the counting calls hadn’t stopped. They continued, same as before. Dazed, Ho Kuan-yu waited to be reproached; he had no idea why Hsu Chan-hao kept counting – he’d already admitted defeat, shouldn’t Hsu Chan-hao be rebuking him? Why was he still calling the count?

Ho Kuan-yu lifted his head, wiped away buckets of sweat, and unexpectedly realized that Hsu Chan-hao was also doing push-ups. He followed his own calls of “One, two, one, two” without stopping, even now.

“One! Two! One! Two!” Hsu Chan-hao called, glaring at Ho Kuan-yu balefully, even though he, too, was drenched in sweat. “Hmph, that’s all you can do before giving up? What a limp noodle. Why not go study at CPU? Their physical training is easier than ours.”

TPC graduates could only become regular police officers. Therefore, despite the similarity in their training, when students from the two schools met face to face, things could get a bit messy.

TPC students saw CPU students, as their future superiors; it didn’t matter which CPU student, any one of them might go on to be your commander – they would always outrank you. When CPU students ran into TPC recruits, they also felt a bit awkward: although both groups were obviously similar ages, and were all recent high school graduates who could laugh and hang out when they occasionally met, their career prospects were already separated by an enormous chasm.

“One! Two! One! Two!”

“One! Two! One! Two! One! Two!”

The barriers between Taiwan Police College and Central Police University were enormous. Hsu Chan-hao had done who knows how many push-ups, but persistently kept his gaze fixed on Ho Kuan-yu. Ho Kuan-yu was stunned – he didn’t know what his squad leader was trying to prove, that TPC recruits were better?

So strange!

Finally, Hsu Chan-hao got to his feet, swaying, and used his last bit of haughty dignity to face Ho Kuan-yu and command, “Number Seventy, fall in!”

“Yes, Squad Leader!”

Ho Kuan-yu ran toward the distant ranks. Most had already crested the hill and were turning back to return to the training grounds. Ho Kuan-yu's arms were very sore, but his mind was clear, thanks to the cold morning air and the intense push-ups.

His squad leader had fixated on him. Ho Kuan-yu had to fix this crisis ASAP.

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"Chou Wei-hao, who said you could tell everyone I tested into CPU?"

During the post-breakfast washing-up period, Ho Kuan-yu found Chou Wei-hao and rebuked him vehemently.

The two of them were at the cafeteria counter, washing their dishes. They spoke in low voices; the sound of scrubbing echoed around them. This was the only time they could converse in secret and elude the eyes and ears of their superiors.

"Ahahaha, I only told a few people." Chou Wei-hao laughed awkwardly. Compared to two weeks ago, his cheeks were slimmer, and his bowl no longer held leftovers; it was licked completely clean.

"It's not something you can tell just anyone." Ho Kuan-yu leaned close to Chou Wei-hao's ear and warned, "You'll cause serious problems for me. The squad leader already knows about it."

"Huh?" Chou Wei-hao looked very surprised. "Why would it cause problems for you? Isn't having good grades a good thing? With your brains, even if you don't go to CPU now, you can apply again in the future, right?"

"It's not that simple. Spreading it around will have negative consequences." Ho Kuan-yu's face was bitter. He felt wronged. "No wonder the squad leader has it in for me. He definitely hates me."

"Pfft, why would he hate you? Maybe he's just jealous." Chou Wei-hao pondered this and became increasingly pleased with himself. "Hmph, what squad leader? In the future he'll be a regular cop, just like me. But you'll be able to get payback for us! Once everyone knows you could be a commissioned officer, no one will dare bully us!"

Ho Kuan-yu had no reply. From this, he could tell what Chou Wei-hao's mentality was like. But Chou Wei-hao was wrong. They still had two years before graduation and weren't police officers yet. As for their superiors, who would tolerate a puffed up brat swaggering around all day, bragging that he'd tested into Central Police University?

Chou Wei-hao was really too naive. Speaking of commanding officers, apart from the squad leaders, the lieutenants, captains, commanders, the Commander in Chief, and even the college president – they were all commanding officers. Taiwan Police College was chock full of highly ranked police officers, none of whom would give a damn about rookies like them.

"Stop wantonly spreading rumors. I never tested into CPU, got it?" Ho Kuan-yu looked seriously at Chou Wei-hao and warned, "If you keep spreading this around, I'll ghost you!"

Chou Wei-hao was so shocked, he dropped his dish soap. "Why? Don't you know how many people wish they could get into CPU?"

Of course Ho Kuan-yu knew, he had been one of them. After being accepted, he had attended interviews for both Central Police University and Taiwan Police College. Thinking back to those times, he realized it truly was a case of experience being the best teacher.

"I don't care what other people think. Right now, I'm enrolled at TPC, so I want to concentrate on my studies here! I'm proud to attend TPC!" Ho Kuan-yu spoke loudly, intentionally drawing attention from two students nearby, who turned to eye him up and down.

Since his classmates loved to gossip so much, let them gossip about this instead. Ideally, it would reach his squad leader's ears and quell the flames of his fury.

Ho Kuan-yu attended interviews at both schools. Central Police University held onto a faint air of academia. He'd made a dignified entrance and the interviewer treated him courteously, asking him questions about his life goals and such. The students around him all had a scholarly air. But the Taiwan Police College interview, if it could be called that, was completely different: as soon as he entered, he was ordered to take off his shirt and pants, then tossed into the assembly hall to take a urine test and do calisthenics. Together with several hundred others, wearing only his underwear, he had lining up to be examined by his superiors as if he were goods in a store. In no way could it be considered dignified.

Taiwan Police College had no sit-down interview. If you could endure the training, you stayed; if you couldn't, you withdrew. Many noticed early-on that something was off, and ran away even before their names were called. Taiwan Police College and Central Police University were very different schools. Based on his experiences in the interviews, Ho Kuan-yu knew there was no way they were the same.

"We just have to endure this week and then we'll be fine. I heard this military training won't continue forever. Once classes start in September, our classes will follow the Ministry of Education's regulations. The squad leaders will also have classes, so we'll be free!" Chou Wei-hao's eyes brightened as he spoke.

It was still the last third of August. From a university perspective, classes hadn't started yet. But TPC and CPU recruits had to enter school early to train and drill with their units. This was called "Preparatory Education"; this was mandatory – one could only enter the school by completing the preparatory education.

Ho Kuan-yu of course knew that the drills wouldn't last forever. They were university students after all, so they would have to take classes. It was just that he really couldn't imagine what classes would be like – would there be a squad leader standing over him, supervising his Chinese classes, English classes, and so on?

"Even once classes start, I bet we'll still have to live on campus in the barracks. And we'll still have to do roll call every morning and evening. At this rate, we'll never live like real university students." Ho Kuan-yu was a bit discouraged, and felt that his days would never become brighter.