



Playing In a Dream

A Full English translation is available.

夢遊

Author: Sen **Illustrator:** Sen **Musical Collaborator:** Kichor.ms (KiKi) **Publisher:** Sen (self-published)

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BFT2.0 Translator: Lya Shaffer

Playing In A Dream is a comic designed to be experienced with sound. Initiated by comics artist Sen, the project was created in collaboration with electronic musician Kichor.ms (KiKi) and singer Hsien Ching. A cassette tape is housed in a slot on the book's back cover.

The story unfolds like a dream, drifting between reality and imagination. Readers follow the protagonist through a series of strange and wondrous scenes. The interior pages feature a distinctive, vibrant fluorescent pink, combining dreamlike illustrations with handwritten marks and small attached diary pages. When played alongside the cassette, the music animates the visuals, creating a tactile, audible, and immersive reading experience.

Based on Sen's experience undergoing tumor surgery in 2022 and her reflections on confronting cancer, the work departs from conventional ways of representing sound in comics. Instead, it uses images and symbols to evoke what cannot be heard on the page. The accompanying cassette, inspired by childhood story tapes, transforms the book into an audio comic for adult readers.



Author **Sen**

Sen has a passion for illustration, design, and theater. Driven by a love of experimentation, Sen explores a variety of storytelling forms and styles, continually pushing the boundaries of comic creation. Her representative works include *No Criminal Facts*, *Playing in a Dream*, *Waking from a Dream*, and *Insomnia Diary*.



Musical Collaborator **Kichor.ms (KiKi)**

Raised in Hualien and currently based in Taipei, Kichor.ms (KiKi) is an electronic music producer. KiKi's work layers digital and analog sounds, seeking to use subtle, murmuring electronic textures that explore a state of mind reminiscent of childhood.

A Dreamlike Rondo: An Experiment Blending Sound and Visuals by a Theater-Trained Creator

by Li Hua

(originally published by the Preparatory Office of the National Taiwan Museum of Comics)

The bond between comics artist Sen—creator of *The Unseen Train* and *No Criminal Facts*—and music producer KiKi took root when they were classmates. Both graduated from the Department of Theatre Design at Taipei National University of the Arts.

With this book, Sen set out to portray the shifting inner landscapes within a person. “*Playing In a Dream* depicts the emotional states of someone going through a very difficult low point while trying to face reality,” Sen explains. “I wanted to tell this story in a fantastical way. I hoped the style and colors would feel soothing, while the fluorescent tones create a sense of detachment.”

During a curatorial invitation for a campus arts festival, KiKi and Sen came up with the idea of combining illustrations with a sound installation. “Children had

to create specific sounds at certain checkpoints for the story to continue,” Sen recalls. This installation later inspired her to turn *Playing In a Dream* into a “toy book,” a dream that she’d harbored for a long time. Meanwhile, the opportunity to collaborate with KiKi freed her to expand the possibilities for a toy book. “Because I work with KiKi, I wanted to create one with music,” Sen explains. “Originally, I imagined a book with buttons—press a button and music would play to match the illustrations. But the cost was simply too high, so we decided to use cassette tapes instead.”

When she was young, Sen owned a set of picture books, each accompanied by a cassette tape. Listening to story tapes before bed remains one of her most cherished childhood memories. “I wanted to recreate that feeling of reading picture

books while listening to cassette tapes,” she explains. The A/B sides of a cassette also felt especially meaningful. When one side ends, the tape is flipped and played in reverse, echoing the story’s mirror-like structure. At the midpoint, the protagonist returns to the beginning and continues along an opposite path. “The sound in this story needed to include human voices,” Sen adds.

Sen had long admired the quirky, playful voice of singer Hsien Ching and invited her to join the project. “At first, we planned to write a few songs for Hsien Ching to sing,” KiKi says. “But without interactive buttons in the book, we worried the connection between the music and the story might not be strong enough. After discussing it with her, we decided to have her narrate the story instead.” In the end, Hsien Ching did far more than narrate. She also sang the theme song, recorded the strange sounds made by the story’s tiny characters, and even contributed hidden sound effects. As KiKi puts it, she conveyed “the sound of sand dunes.”

Whenever Sen receives a new script, she develops a visual language that matches the tone of the story. “*The Unseen Train* and *No Criminal Facts* are darker and more suspenseful,” she observes, “so I collaged materials that felt appropriate for that atmosphere.” But *Playing In a Dream*, in contrast, became a playground for her more personal creative exploration. As she puts it, she sought to “forge symbols in the images that express

sound.” Whether it’s the rush of sliding down a playground slide or the crack of a music player shattering on impact, her work captures these experiences through sound. “Comics usually rely on onomatopoeia to represent sound,” Sen says, “but since we were making a cassette, I wanted to leave room for KiKi, the music producer, to interpret it.”

To bring Sen’s dreamlike visuals to life, KiKi approached the cassette’s sound design as a world where every noise could become a character. “We anthropomorphized all the sounds,” KiKi says. “I wanted to blur the boundaries between sound effects, human voices, and melody. For example, you can use musical scales to mimic the feeling of a caterpillar walking. I hoped there wouldn’t be clear divisions between sounds.” As a result, explosions and vibrations appear on the page.

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

Li Hua holds a B.A. in Industrial Design from Shih Chien University and an M.A. in Visual Design from Scuola Politecnica di Design (SPD Milano). Long active as a chief editor in publishing, with a focus on art, design, picture books, and comics, Li has edited more than one hundred titles. With extensive experience in graphic and web design, illustration, and independent video production, Li works currently as a freelance editor and reporter.



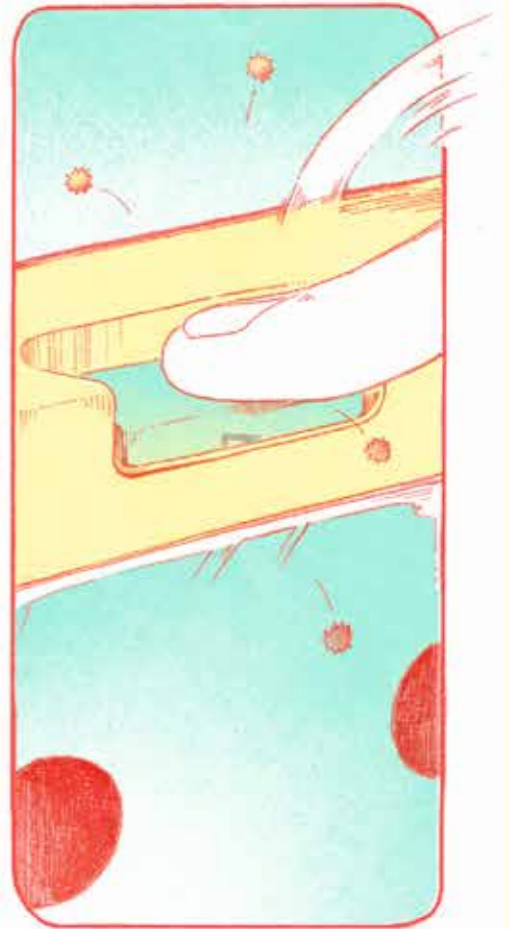
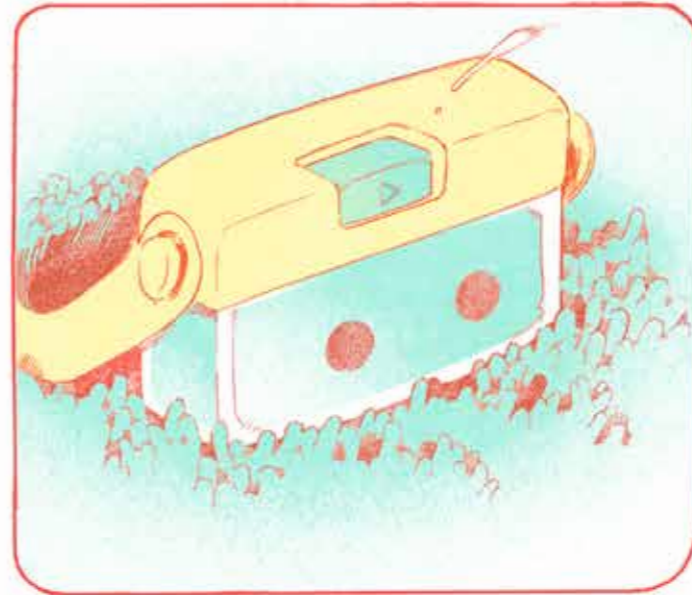
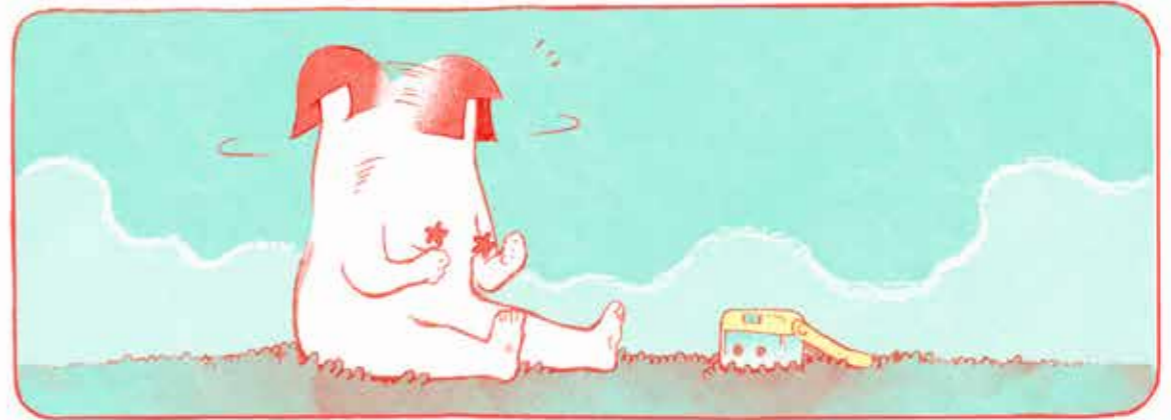
醒來時我就已經
Upon waking, I find myself

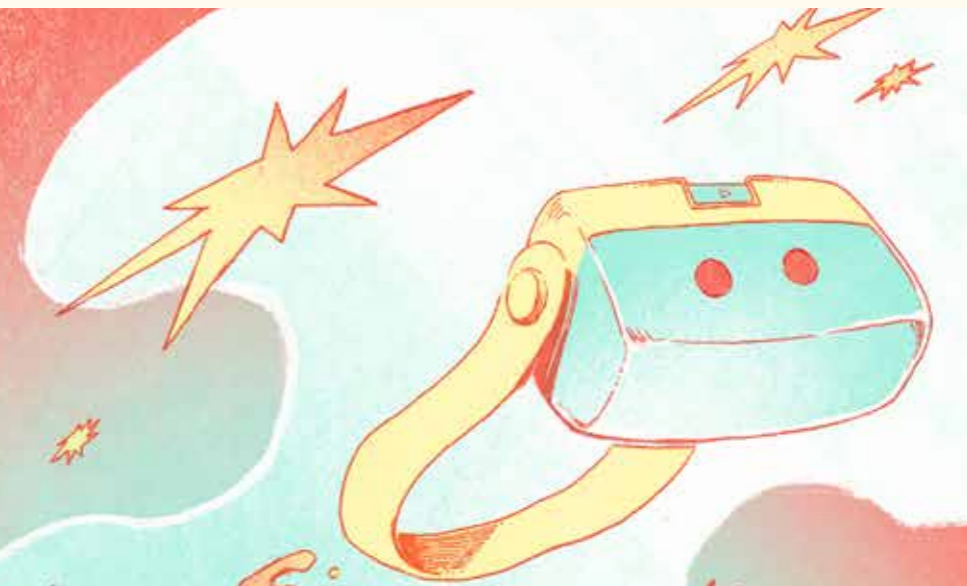
在這個未知的世界
in this world I do not recognize...



不記得自己是誰，來自哪裡，身旁一個東西也沒...？

I remember nothing about who I am, nor where I'm from, and I have nothing with me— ?!

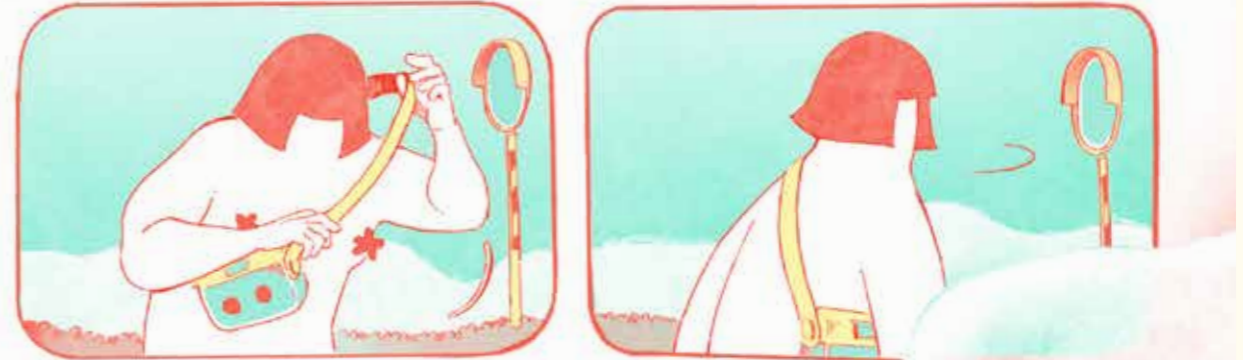






才會播放出連貫又破碎的聲響...
begins to emit fragments of sound.

雖然還沒想起多少回憶，但我決定，
While I cannot retrieve my memories, I determine



帶上它繼續向前，尋找...

to continue forward with it,
in search of...



完整的聲音。
the sound in its entirety.