

THE ILLUSIONIST ON THE SKYWALK

天橋上的魔術師圖像版

- * 2020 Japan International Manga Award (Silver)
- * 2020 Golden Comic Award
- * French, Japanese, and Korean rights have been sold for the original novel and a TV series is soon to be released.

Man Booker prize nominee Wu Ming-Yi's much-loved collection of nostalgic short stories, as a graphic novel. Let the artists whisk you back to Taipei of the 1980s, to the long-gone Chunghwa Market Bazaar and a world of magical memories.

In 1980s Taipei, the Chunghwa Market Bazaar was home to hardware stores, snack stalls, record shops, tailors, locksmiths and seal-carvers – if you needed it, you could find it here. Any resident of Taipei at the time will have precious memories of the eight buildings that formed the market. And linking those buildings, they will remember, was a skywalk. And perhaps one day, on the skywalk, they saw an illusionist.

The illusionist on the skywalk has many tricks. He can magic up a copy of a key, make the safety railing disappear, and have a papercut man stand up and dance. Children cluster round, trying to spot the trick to his tricks. Years later, those children are grown and the market is gone, and all that is left is stories steeped in magic: The elevator to the 99th floor that turns you invisible, the stone lion that walks into your dreams and joins you for a stroll, the drawing of a goldfish which comes to life and swims around its bowl (although if you look closely, you can see through it) and a curiously clever cat which keeps lonely old folk company.

Adapted from a collection of short stories by Taiwan's best-known writer, Wu Ming-Yi, this graphic novel has been created by two artists, each drawing four stories from the lives of those children who



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watched the illusionist on the skywalk. These are tales of adventure and setback, of love and death – of all that we must face as we grow up, told in a blend of nostalgia and magical realism. Let Wu Ming-Yi's words and the art of Sean Chuang and Ruan Guang-Ming carry you back to 1980s Taipei.

Comic by Ruan Guang-Min 阮光民

Ruan Guang-Min is a former advertising major and interior decorating major. After leaving the military he worked as an assistant to comic artist Lai Yu-Hsien. His first work to receive recognition was an adaptation of the TV show *Friends*, using the comic form to tell a moving story about a group of young people from the countryside struggling to make a living in Taipei. Conversely, his book *Dong Hua Chun Barbershop* and *The Corner Store* has been adapted into television series.

Comic by Sean Chuang 小莊

Sean Chuang is a director of commercial films. More than ten years ago, he published *A Filmmaker's Notes* in the form of a comic. The book, fresh in style, was well received. In 2009 he finished his second work, *The Window*, a full-colour comic that had been a decade in the making. Using a storyboard technique and a non-narrative pantomime approach, it received GIO's Graphic Novel Award. Sean Chuang continues to work both in film and to draw. In 2013 he finished his third graphic novel, *80s Diary in Taiwan*, which has been sold in French, German, and Italian.

Original Story by Wu Ming-Yi 吳明益

Wu Ming-Yi is a writer, artist, professor, and environmental activist. Widely considered the leading writer of his generation, he has won the *China Times* Open Book Award six times and his works have been translated into over ten languages. In 2018, his novel *The Stolen Bicycle* was longlisted for the Man Booker International Prize. He teaches literature at National Dong Hwa University. Wu's works have been translated into English, French, German, Turkish, Japanese, Korean, Czech, Hungarian, Italian, Swedish, Vietnamese, Thai, Polish, Ethiopian, Arabic, Ukrainian, and Indonesian.

魔術師的天橋上

圖像版

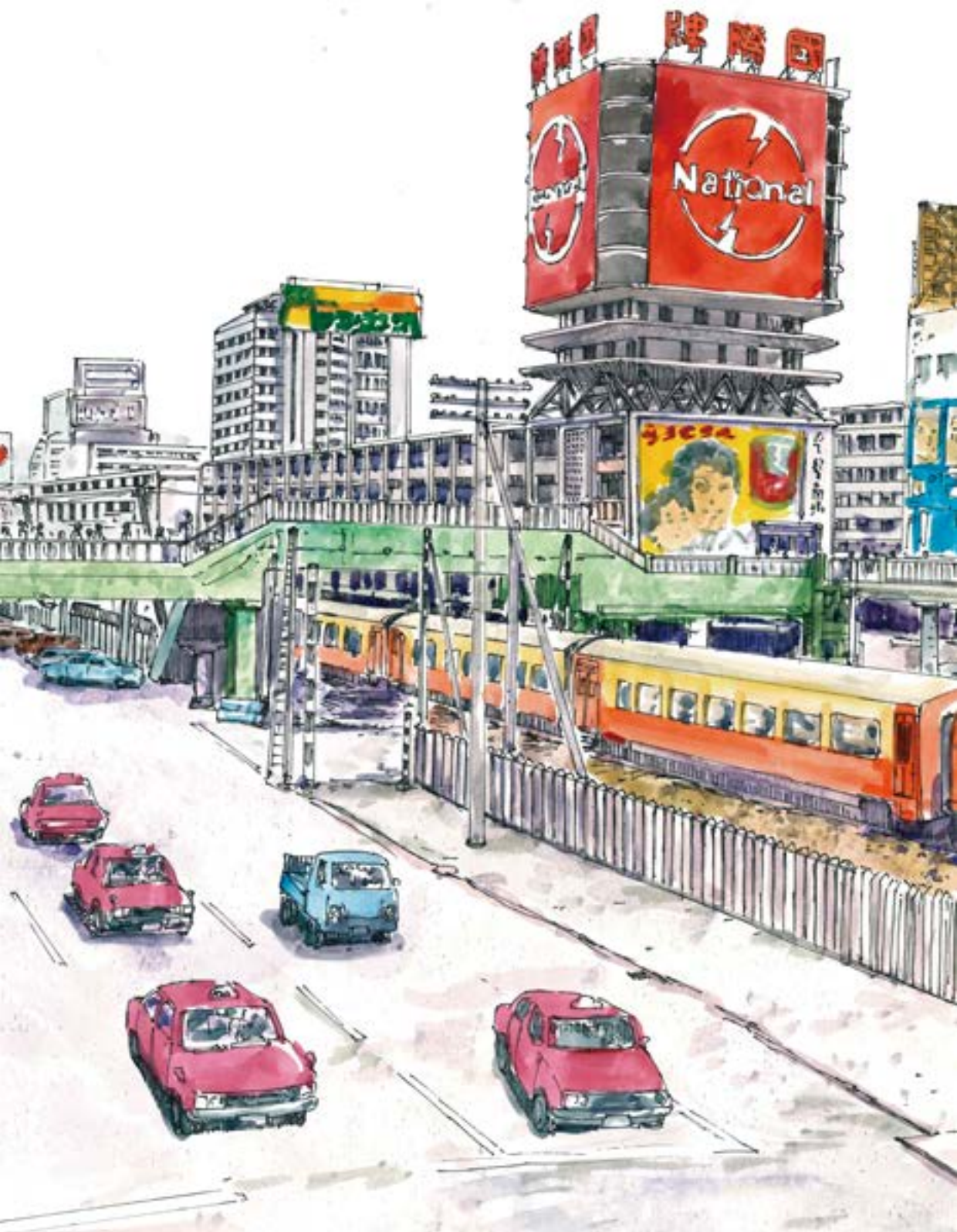
阮光民 卷 | 吳明益 原著



A graphic novel adaptation by Ruan Guang-Min of selected stories from
The Illusionist on the Skywalk and Other Stories
by Wu Ming-Yi.



















The Illusionist on the Skywalk

That which we see is not all that there is.

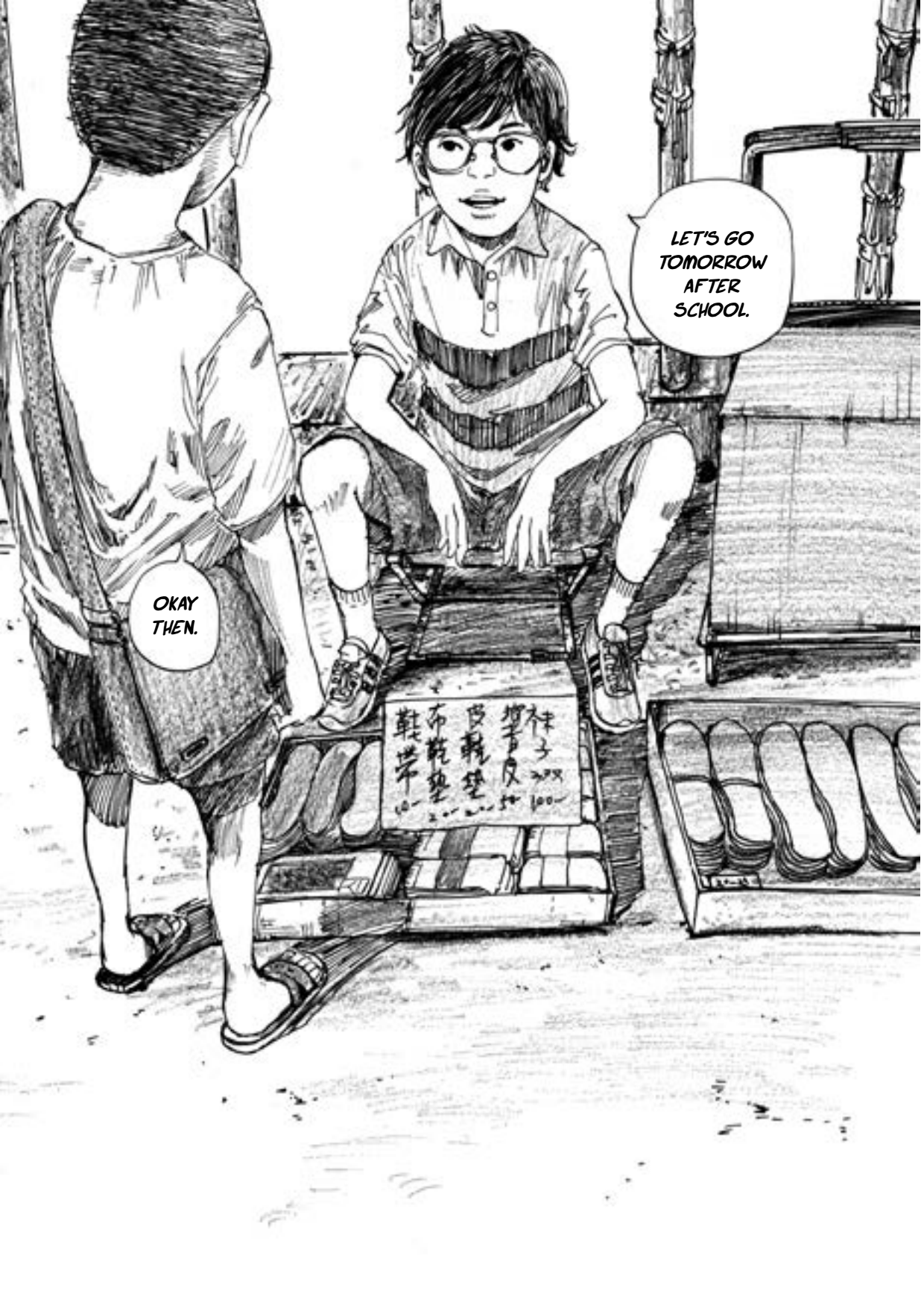


What I really wanted to be was a magician,
but doing tricks made me so nervous I took refuge
in the solitude of literature.

– Gabriel García Márquez





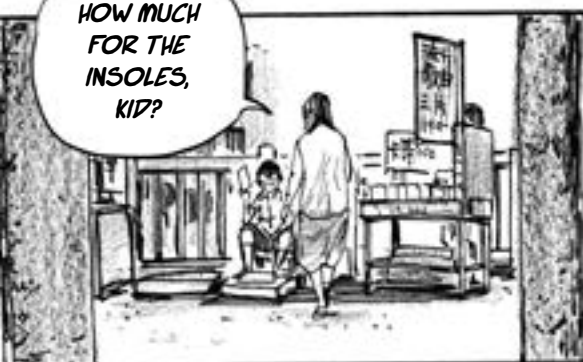


LET'S GO
TOMORROW
AFTER
SCHOOL.

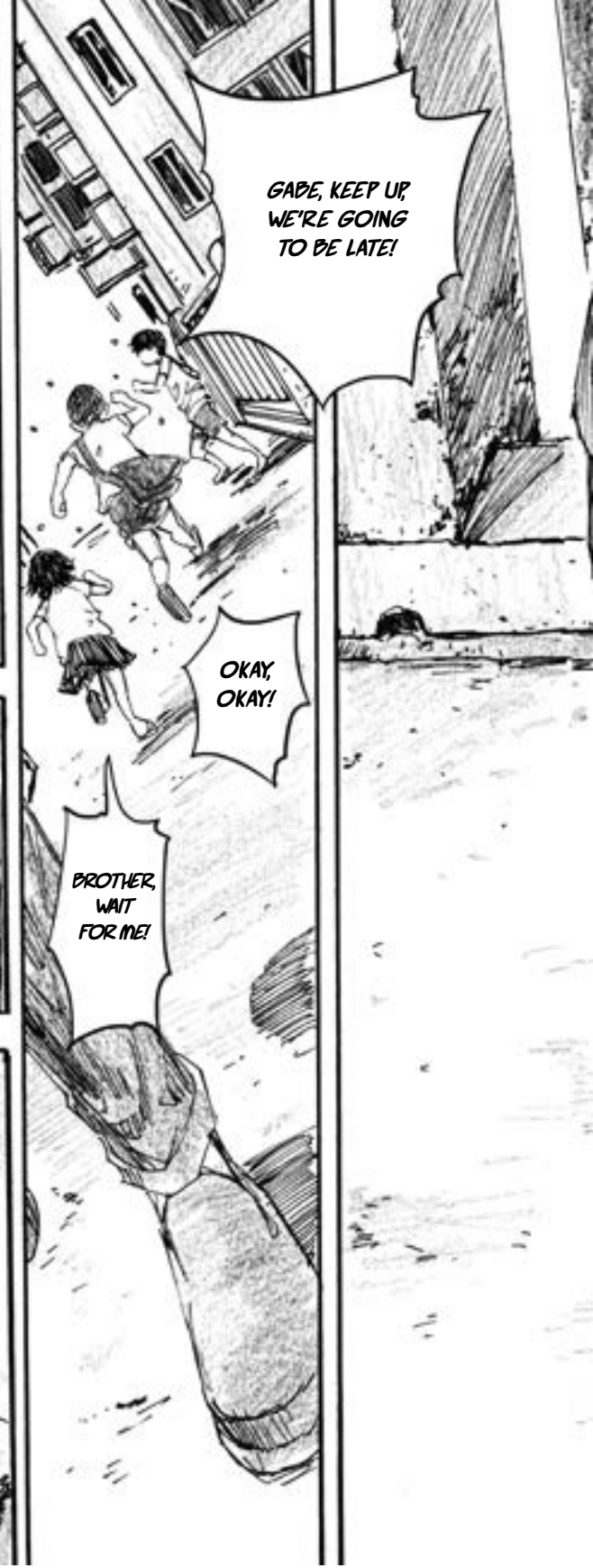
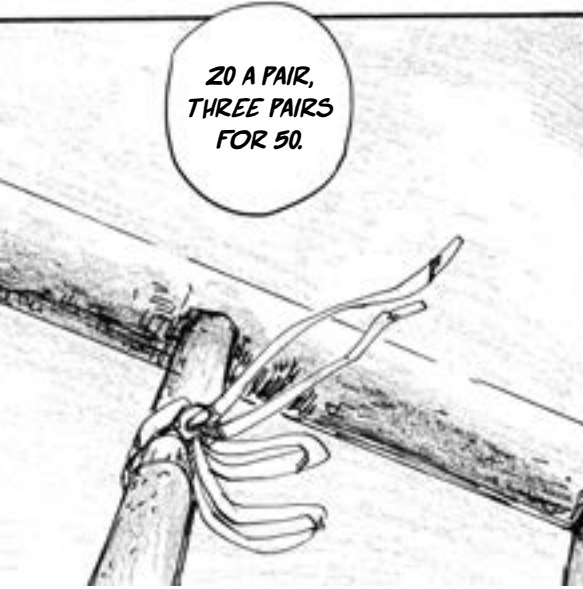
OKAY
THEN.



HOW MUCH
FOR THE
INSOLES,
KID?



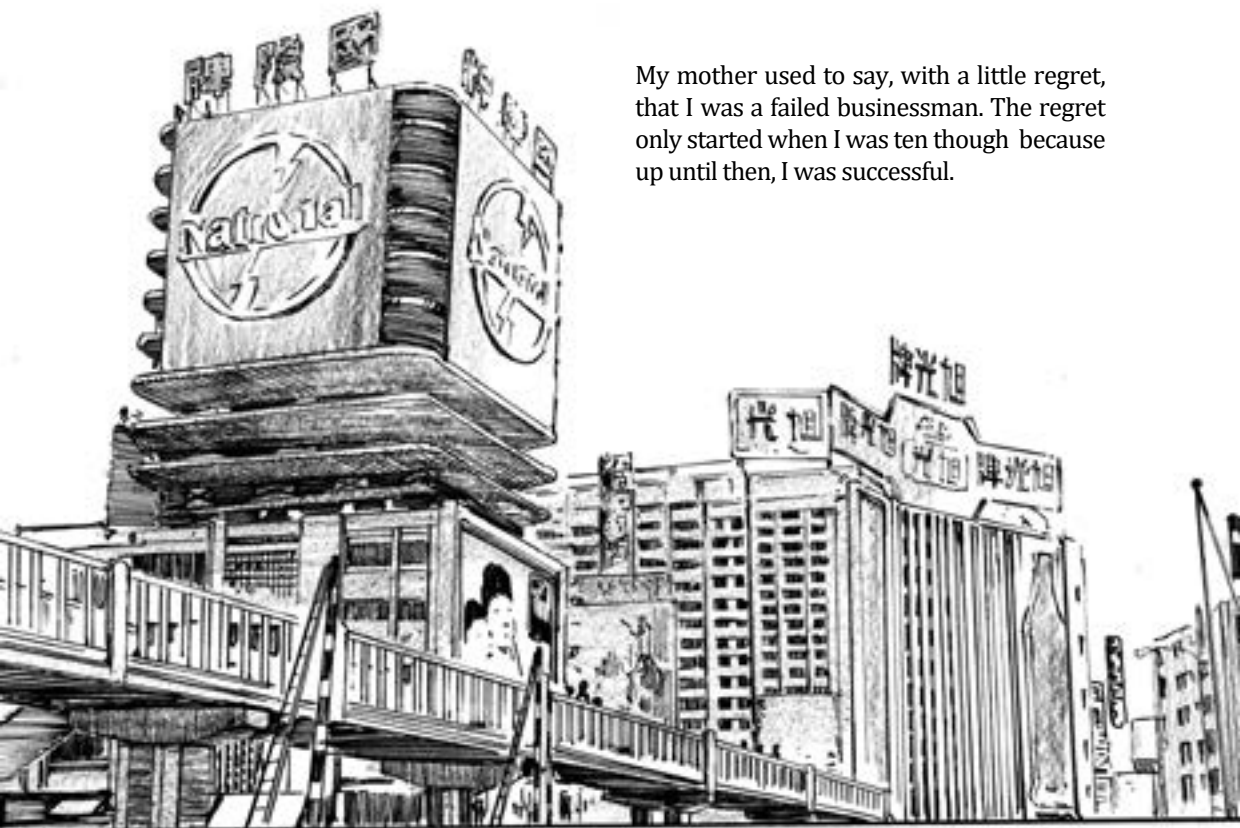
20 A PAIR,
THREE PAIRS
FOR 50.



GABE, KEEP UP,
WE'RE GOING
TO BE LATE!

OKAY,
OKAY!

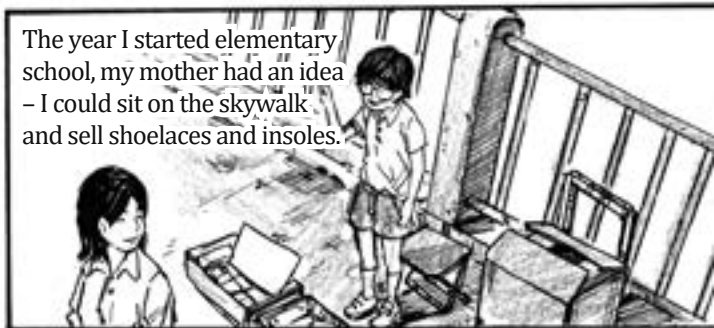
BROTHER,
WAIT
FOR ME!



My mother used to say, with a little regret, that I was a failed businessman. The regret only started when I was ten though because up until then, I was successful.



I only understood what she meant much later.



The year I started elementary school, my mother had an idea – I could sit on the skywalk and sell shoelaces and insoles.



After all, those innocent little faces are designed to trick us into looking after you, no matter how hard life gets.

People are bound to buy from a kid.



CLACK



SWISH



ROLL UP,
COME
AND SEE!

THE
MAGIC WILL
SOON
BEGIN!

DON'T
MISS THIS
FANTASTIC
FREE
PERFORMANCE!



天橋上的 的 魔術師

圖像版

小莊卷
——
吳明益 原著

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When Tom got the Facebook message, he'd meant to reply and make some excuse...

Lane 242

That's odd.

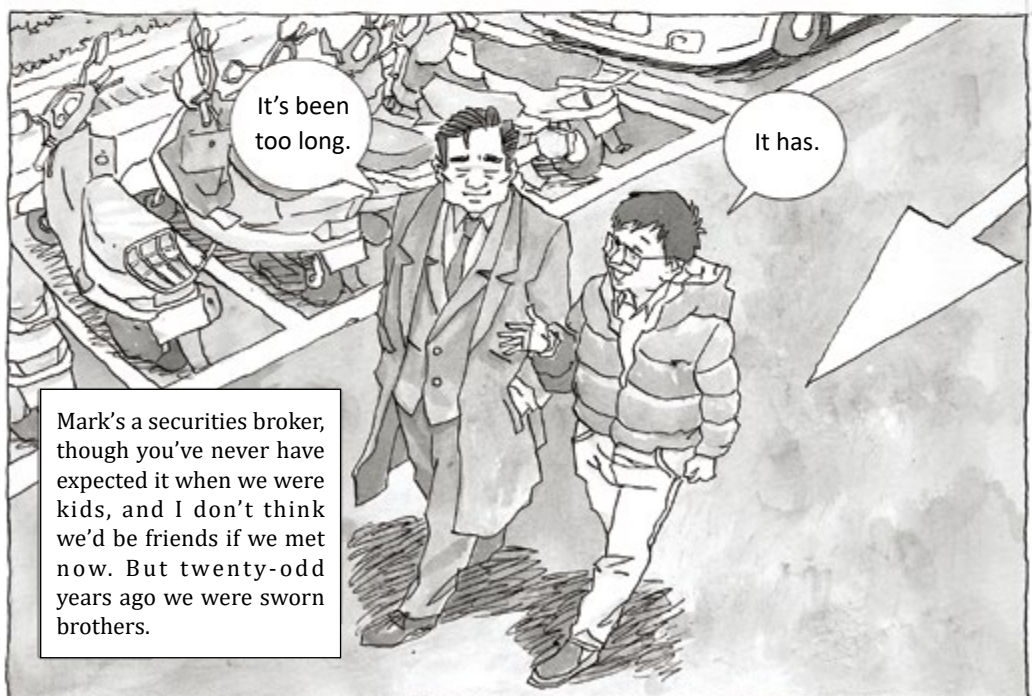
It should be here?



九十九樓



NINETY-NINTH FLOOR

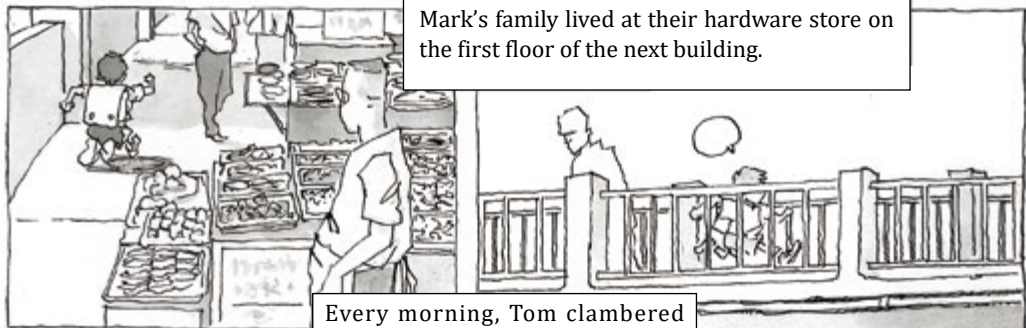




Back then, Tom lived on the third floor of the Chungwa Market Bazaar.



His dad was from Shandong, but had fled the mainland and opened a shop on the second floor, selling fried dumplings, steamed buns, and millet porridge.




Mark's family lived at their hardware store on the first floor of the next building.

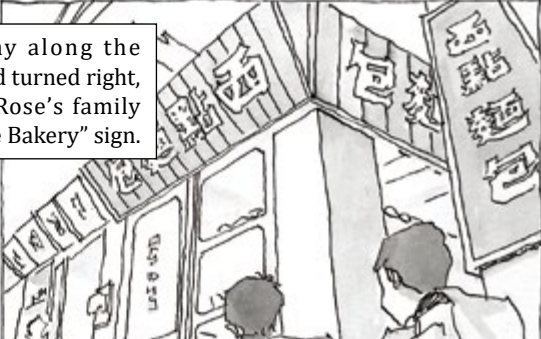


Every morning, Tom clambered up to the window out the raised platform Mark slept on and knocked on the glass to wake him up.


Mark!



If you went all the way along the skywalk, then came off and turned right, you'd pass the door of Rose's family bakery, with its "Patisserie Bakery" sign.



That was the only sign and we didn't know what "Patisserie" was, so we thought it must be Rose's surname.



And more than twenty years later, there was Rose, sitting at the back of a vegetarian restaurant.

Long time no see, Tom.

Tom, Mark, and Rose were the English names our music teacher gave us – she said they were easier to remember.



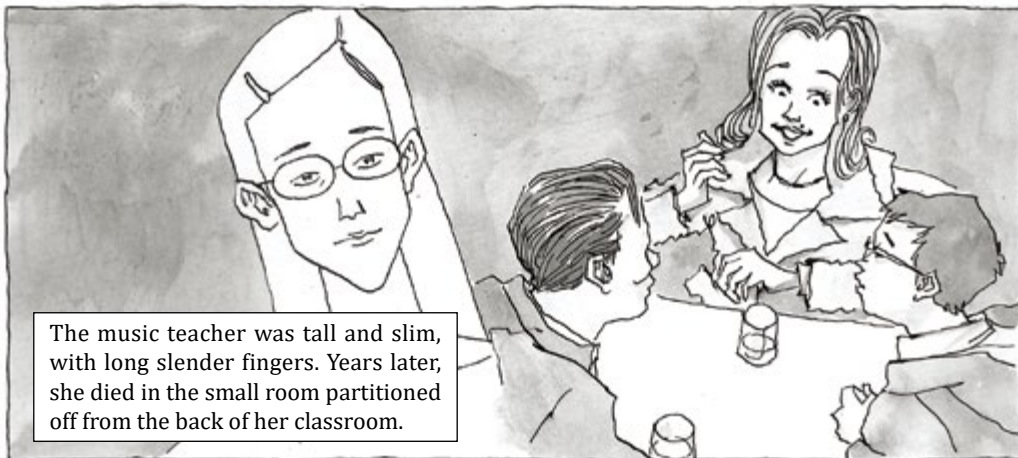
She gave every new class the same forty names.

So every 3rd grade, 4th grade, and 5th grade each had one Tom, one Mark and one Rose.



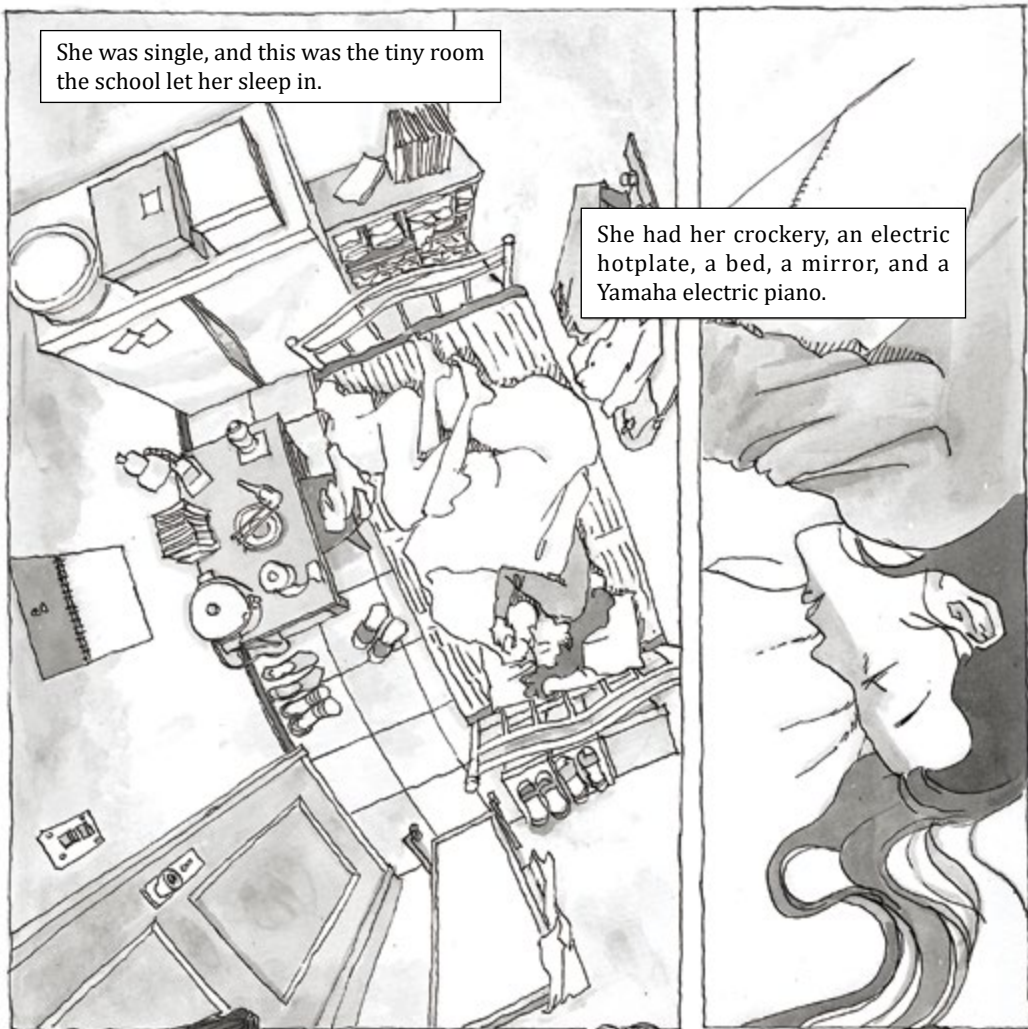
That year, we were the Tom, Mark and Rose in 3rd grade.


The music teacher was tall and slim, with long slender fingers. Years later, she died in the small room partitioned off from the back of her classroom.




She was single, and this was the tiny room the school let her sleep in.

She had her crockery, an electric hotplate, a bed, a mirror, and a Yamaha electric piano.






Nobody calls me Rose anymore, I'm Paula now.




And still gorgeous!




Yes, your skin looks great.




Ha ha, really?



I'm a beautician, so I have to take care of myself.



But you can't help getting old. Doesn't matter what I do, I'll never look like that again.



Hey, do you remember Fa? My car broke down a while ago and I took it to the garage – he was working there.



He's a mechanic?



I think so. His namecard said technician.



Remember how we used to bully him?



Yeah, everyone did.



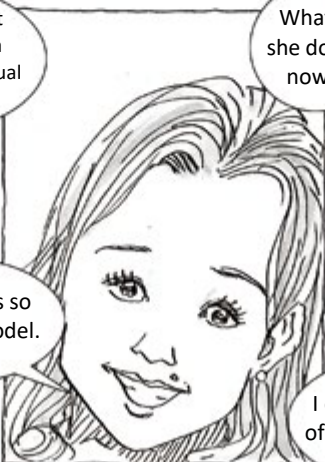
Remember Chen Wei-ning?



The one who got dressed up like a princess every casual Wednesday?



Yes, she was so tall, like a model.



What's she doing now?



I don't know. So many of us have disappeared.



He said that it'd taken him
over a decade to realize it, but
he actually likes men.



.....



It's so good to catch
up. Let's take a photo.



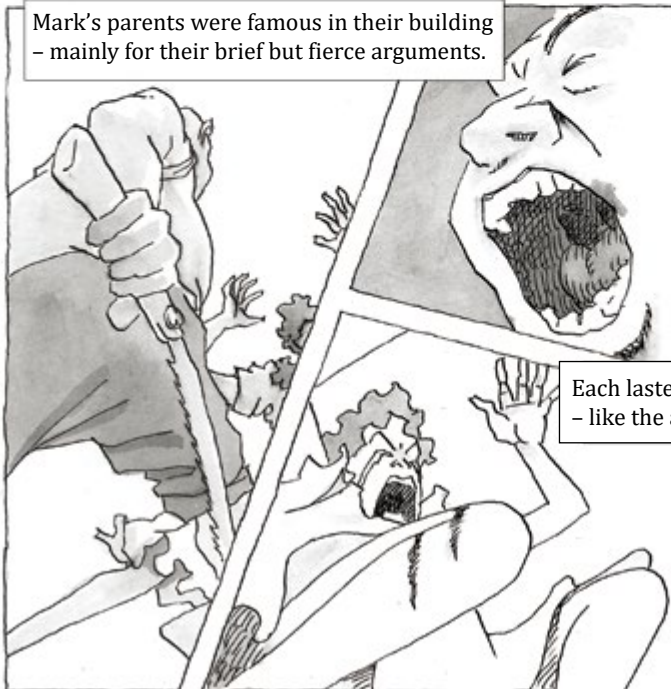
Ha, okay.





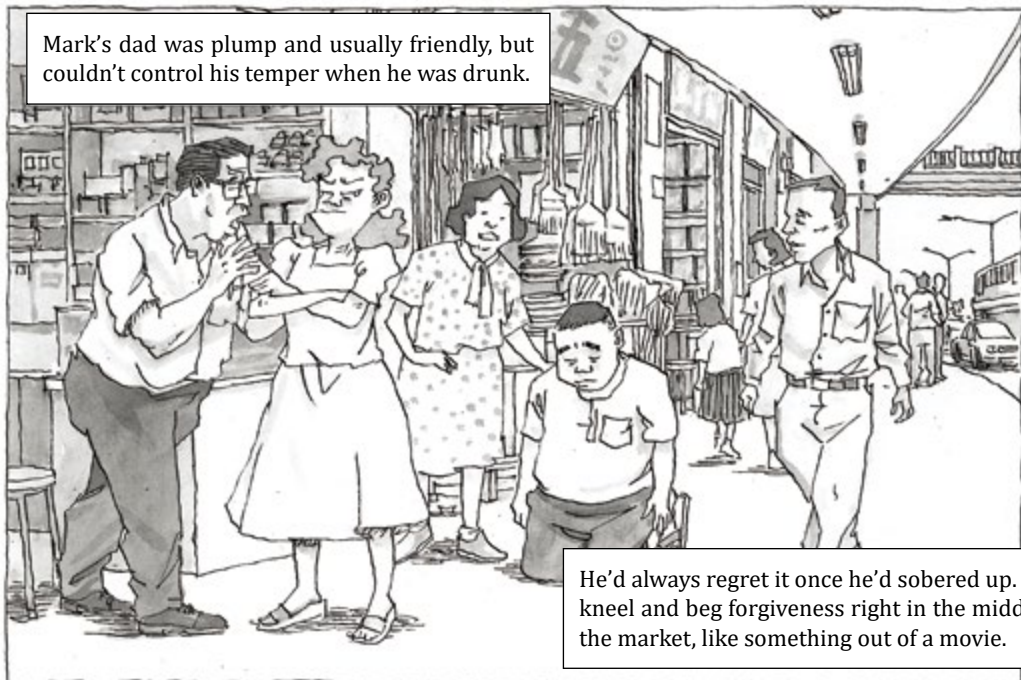
Watching Mark through the viewfinder, and knowing that Mark was looking back at him, Tom couldn't help but think about what had happened when they were ten.

Mark's parents were famous in their building – mainly for their brief but fierce arguments.



Each lasted about half an hour – like the afternoon rains.

Mark's dad was plump and usually friendly, but couldn't control his temper when he was drunk.



He'd always regret it once he'd sobered up. He'd kneel and beg forgiveness right in the middle of the market, like something out of a movie.

Tom used to visit their shop to buy things: sometimes nails, sometimes screws, sometimes a screwdriver.



But Mi was their best customer for nails – his family had a shoe shop and needed lead nails for fixing shoes.



Lead nails.

Why do you use lead nails, and not iron ones?



Idiot. Lead nails are soft, so they bend in the sole and don't fall out.

It turned out there were lots of kinds of nails,
each for a different type of material.



Mark and Tom used to sneak up to the roof of the
building. There was nobody there, just television
aerials, electricity cables, and that illusionist who
sold props on the skywalk.

