THE SYLVANS
幸福森林

When a cuddly AI toy marketed to children begins exhibiting violent behavior, the engineer who designed it has no choice but to travel to England and retrieve it for study. Upon arrival he finds himself confronted by a string of unthinkable events.

The animals of Happy Forest live in a proserous town filled with a variety of animal residents. Vera the rabbit lives in a warm and comfortable house with her mother and father. On weekdays she goes to school, and on weekends she looks forward to visits from the Gods. One day the Gods bring Vera a little brother, but her new sibling turns out to be nothing but trouble. Not long afterward, a series of mysterious crimes shatter the peace and order of Happy Forest.

Elsewhere, Liu, an engineer who designed the cuddly AI toys called Sylvans, is told about a video making the rounds on the internet of two of Sylvans beating each other up. In theory, this kind of violent behavior should be impossible, as it violates the AI's most basic-level settings. To mitigate the fallout, Liu heads to the UK to retrieve the Sylvans and bring them back for study. Little does he know that the malfunctioning AIs are only the tip of the iceburg, and he will soon be entangled in a series of events so sinister they might be beyond the imagining of the human mind.

Weaving connections between real-world crimes and a virtual utopia, *The Sylvans* probes the speculative limits of AI. Are AI entities ultimately limited by their programming, or can they grow beyond it? Can they engage in the deepest levels of human thought? Can they develop a moral, or immoral, nature? The latest offering from Wei Tzu-Chien, one of Taiwan's hottest young mystery writers, *The Sylvans* reads like *Fantastic Mr. Fox* run through the blender with a sophisticated AI thriller.

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BOOKS FROM TAIWAN

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Wei Tzu-Chien (also known as Hassengo) is a Taiwanese mystery writer, a graduate in forensic science, and recipient of the Ministry of Culture Young Creatives grant. His novel *Testimony* received special recognition at the third annual Sharp Point Media awards. His other works include *My Sister is a Teenage Bone Collector* series.