

**COMIC
BOOKS**

**BOOKS
FROM
TAIWAN**

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Foreword

In Taiwan, comics hold a unique and vital place in our hearts. Our artists explore subversive topics, challenge traditional hierarchies, and envision new futures. They have a special ability to connect with people from all walks of life. Comics both reflect and propel the spirit of Taiwan, a country where people believe in democracy, practice freedom, and embrace an open society.

In recent years, Taiwanese comic creators have increasingly showcased diverse styles, gaining growing recognition on the international stage. In this year's latest booklet of recommended comic works, you'll find not only many pieces that have won prestigious international awards or secured multi-language rights sales, but also a wealth of creators with their own distinctive styles. Whether you're

just beginning to explore Asian comics or are already familiar with them, I hope this booklet provides you with valuable insights.

It's an honor to share these works with you. Surrounded on all sides by the sea, Taiwanese people have a deep desire to connect with the world. We're grateful that you are reading our books and joining us in this journey. We hope that the diverse styles and passions of these artists offer you a glimpse into the openness and expansiveness of life in Taiwan.



Rex How, Managing Director
Books from Taiwan

The World Lives in Comics, and Comics Live in the World

Every comic and graphic novel is a door to another world, inviting us to see our worlds from a new perspective. From horror tales to adaptations of classic literature, from tender romances to coming-of-age stories, this catalog offers a dazzling feast of stories.

Our catalog opens with *Rest in Pieces*, a series of horror stories exploring themes related to the environment, the body, and the mind. Its grotesque, inventive imagery has a singular power to stir primal dread. Also in the horror vein, *When You Don't Mind* adopts an eerie yet faintly comical style, telling stories of ghosts burdened by life's sorrows. These stories have a quiet power, often leaving readers in tears before they realize it.

With its distinctive artistic style, *The Night's Events* moves between realism and magic. Ghosts, humans, and deities become stand-ins for social groups and classes, replaying political struggles and resurfacing historical traumas. *Dark Days (Des Jours Sombres)* adopts a European-inspired realist style to lay bare the brutality of hegemonic rule and the struggles of the oppressed.

1947: The Man Returning from Afar revives the neglected Taiwanese figure

Tân Chhoàn-tê, portraying in vivid detail his lifelong struggles through Japanese colonial rule, World War II, and Kuomintang repression. In contrast, *Military Memoir of Class 1629: My Life as A Dog* takes a comedic approach, lampooning the absurdity and authoritarianism of Taiwan's military service culture—making readers laugh out loud while illuminating the experience of conscription.

Among literary adaptations, both by celebrated Taiwanese writers, *The Town with the Papaya Tree* depicts how an educated and idealistic young man is gradually crushed under the weight of colonialism, poverty, and traditional marriage customs. *Hunters: Daddy Cat and Lee Jiabao*, adapted from a collection of essays, offers a gorgeous, tender, and unromanticized portrayal of the subtle, complex bond between humans and cats.

For much of this catalog, adolescence—and the difficulty of growing into oneself—emerges as a central theme. In *Blossom*, a girl forced to look and act the part of “a proper girl” struggles with her gender identity and sexual orientation. *Left Hand* depicts the violence of high school bullying and one student's struggle to escape its lasting trauma.

Painful yet achingly realistic, *The Echo Before Dawn* follows the friendship of two teenagers brought together by their love of the same song. Their lives are irrevocably altered when they are drawn into a drug trafficking circle and one falls into addiction. In contrast, *Chio-Tian Young Beats* offers a more hopeful vision, where youths find redemption and renewal through steady mentorship and the joy of traditional arts and music.

Engaging and delightful, and infused with a lightly anthropological spirit, two books explore coming-of-age through the lens of cultural ritual. *Rites of Returning* follows a college student's return from Taipei to his childhood village, where temple festivals and traditional dances rekindle memories. Gradually, he rebuilds ties with his former best friend and estranged father. Meanwhile, *The Funeral Concerto* centers on a college dropout who begins working at a funeral home. There, she learns to perform Daoist and other folk rituals surrounding death. Through comforting the grieving and engaging with these diverse traditions, she discovers new meaning in the act of living.

In Taiwan, food and memory are inseparable. In the playful and exuberant *The Signature Dish*, a Taiwanese chef returns from a stint cooking in France. He turns to a local master to learn the art of traditional Taiwanese dishes. What follows is a journey of self-discovery and memory through food. *Tomoe's Memories of Koumeya*, on the other hand, follows a Japanese girl determined to prove to her grandma that she can help run the

family restaurant. She journeys through the landscapes and daily life of Taiwan under Japanese rule.

Comics don't just speak in images—they can also sing. *The Time Traveller from the Showa Era* imagines a singer from Japan's Showa period transported to the present. She reignites a present-day character's passion for music. *Demo* tells of a young man unwilling to give up his musical dream, battered by the mainstream industry. Yet he continues to resist, ultimately finding joy and meaning in music.

Finally, love—the element no comic list is ever without. *18x2: When Hearts First Stirred* is an anthology of short works by acclaimed artists, each exploring love from tantalizing and fresh angles. *Embers and Petals* takes a daring turn, weaving a queer romance between a vampire and a demon-hunter knight—defying not only social conventions but the very expectations of the genre itself.

What makes comics so special is their ability to distill life's many stages and circumstances into vivid, memorable images. Through stylistic and narrative choices, comics and other graphic forms reshape experience in ways that profoundly shape how we read, feel, and connect.

We thank you for taking an interest in Taiwanese books. We hope you'll love these books as much as we do.

Sincerely,
Books from Taiwan



When You Don't Mind

A Full English translation is available.

如果不在意的話

Author: Kurkurmanga (Ko Chun-Chieh) **Illustrator:** Kurkurmanga (Ko Chun-Chieh)

Publisher: Kurkurmanga/Ko Chun-Chieh (self-published)

Date: 04/2024

Rights contact: bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

216 pages | 14.5 x 19 cm

Volume: 1

BFT2.0 Translator: Brian Hioe

In this imaginative and empathetic book, Ah-Hsiu—a melancholy, disheveled man of mysterious origins—moves daily between the realms of the living and the dead. Each day, he drifts between the worlds of humans and ghosts, seeking to understand the story behind every soul he encounters.

Through a series of supernatural cases entrusted to him, Ah-Hsiu gradually begins to understand what it truly means to live—and what gives life its meaning. At its heart, this is less a tale of horror than of humanity. Ghosts and haunted encounters serve as vessels, guiding readers to confront loneliness, loss, and the possibility of healing.



Author **Kurkurmanga** (Ko Chun-Chieh)

Kurkurmanga (Ko Chun-Chieh) studied biotechnology before turning to business design. He now works as a freelance designer and part-time comic artist.

The Tenderness of Horror: Trauma and Listening in *When You Don't Mind*

by Wen-Chien Hsu

When You Don't Mind is not a work that can be neatly categorized as “horror.” It borrows the genre’s familiar surface—ghosts, empty mansions, an air of dread—but soon reveals something deeper. Here, horror works less as the destination than as a veil. Behind it lies the story’s true heart: a meditation on loneliness and the possibility of healing. Horror is not the point in itself, but a medium, a vessel that guides us toward confronting the unspoken shadows of human existence.

That crucial medium in the story is Ah-Hsiu, the protagonist. He is neither a typical “hero” nor a solemn exorcist. His melancholy and disheveled appearance mark him as a figure abandoned by society. Through coarse, densely drawn lines, the artist renders this estrangement

visible: Ah-Hsiu does not belong among people, but lingers at the margins of civilization. His condition brings him closer to the spectral “Other” than to the living, and it is precisely this displacement that enables him to resonate with souls no longer of this world.

Fascinatingly, Ah-Hsiu’s interactions with ghosts are never about banishment, but about companionship. He does not seek to drive them away; rather, he allows them to stay, even lending them his body so they might momentarily taste what it means to be alive again. Such a premise subverts the conventions of horror. Here, ghosts are not threats but echoes of regret, prompting us to ask: what constitutes the “unfinished”? Is it unfulfilled desires, unspoken loves and

hatreds, or voices that were never heard?

One of the book’s most poignant moments comes in the story of the grandmother who lingers outside an abandoned warehouse. Her refusal to leave is not driven by vengeance, but by loneliness and grievance caused by social structures. When she returns to the figure of her childhood self and relives a life constrained by class and gender, the narrative opens into a collective memory of repression. It is the shared experience of countless women—forced to measure their worth through the achievements of their children and families, their own voices stifled and disregarded. In this way, the ghosts of *When You Don't Mind* acquire a sociological depth: they are not merely restless spirits but embodiments of lives historically silenced and marginalized.

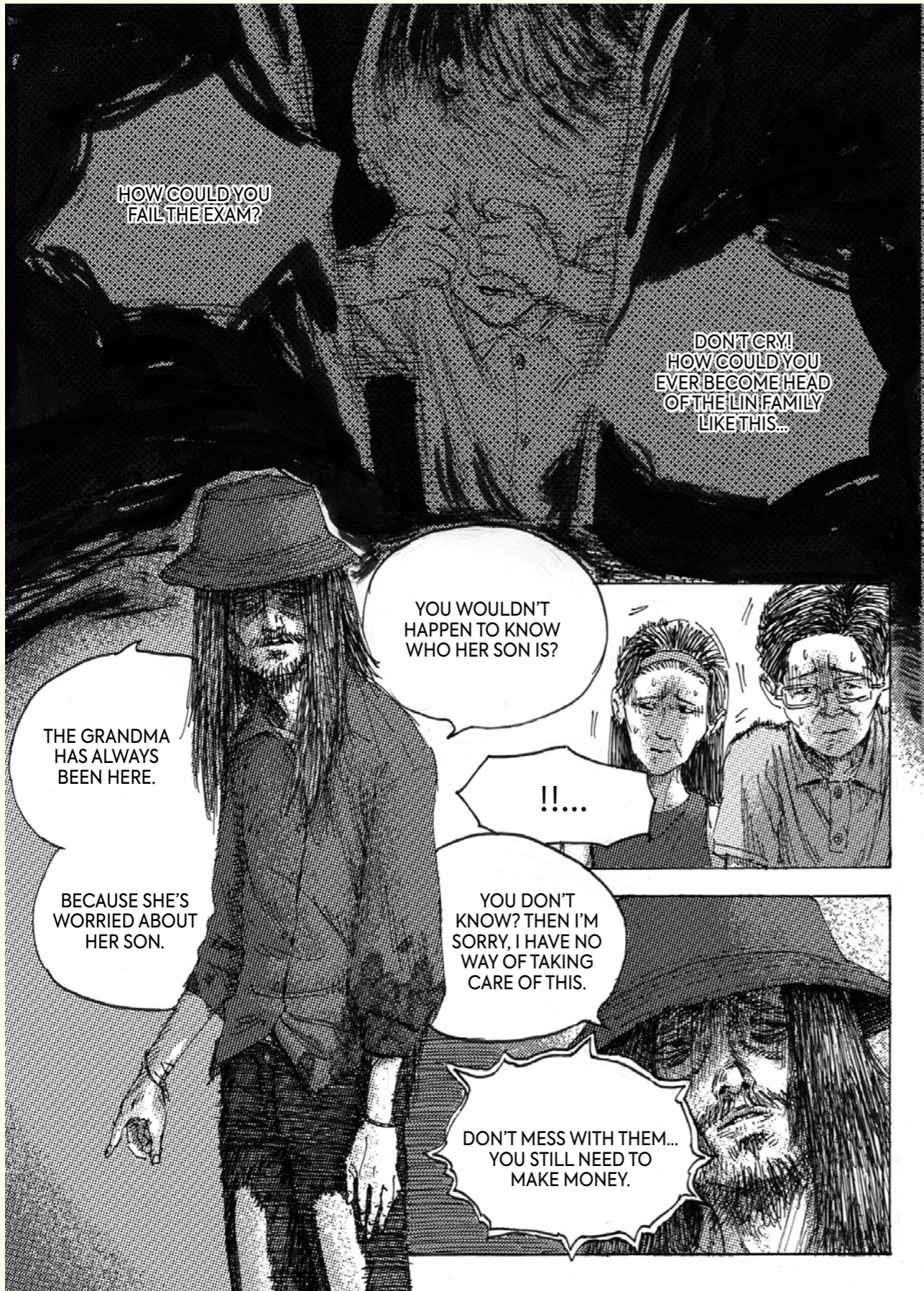
Seen in this light, *When You Don't Mind* is a profoundly modern work. It does not attempt to explain death through religion or esoteric ritual; instead, it adopts the language of psychological healing, transforming horror into a dialogue of souls. Ah-Hsiu’s exchanges with the spirits resemble sessions of therapy—through listening and presence, trauma is gradually rendered narratable. This approach redirects horror comics onto a new path: one where fear is no

longer the sole destination, but a vessel that carries human emotion and historical wounds.

Ah-Hsiu himself is deeply allegorical. Branded a “failure,” detached from his own body and life, he paradoxically becomes a source of support for others. His transparency, his indifference, is precisely his strength. In other words, Ah-Hsiu is both human and ghost. His brokenness and incompleteness make him the mirror through which the living and the dead reflect one another, symbolizing their shared fragility and yearning.

By the end of *When You Don't Mind*, the old maxim—“humans are more terrifying than ghosts”—rings hollow. For within these pages, ghosts are merely another form of the human, and humans merely another state of the ghost. Both are souls lingering in loneliness, searching for resonance amid silence. In this balance of horror and tenderness, the work transcends its genre.

Wen-Chien Hsu possesses a free-spirited soul. She has worked at LGBTQ+ organizations, the 113 Domestic Violence Hotline, and works as an editor of Books from Taiwan 2.0. She is dedicated to bringing Taiwanese comics and picture books to a global audience.



HOW COULD YOU FAIL THE EXAM?

DONT CRY!
HOW COULD YOU EVER BECOME HEAD OF THE LIN FAMILY LIKE THIS...

YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO KNOW WHO HER SON IS?

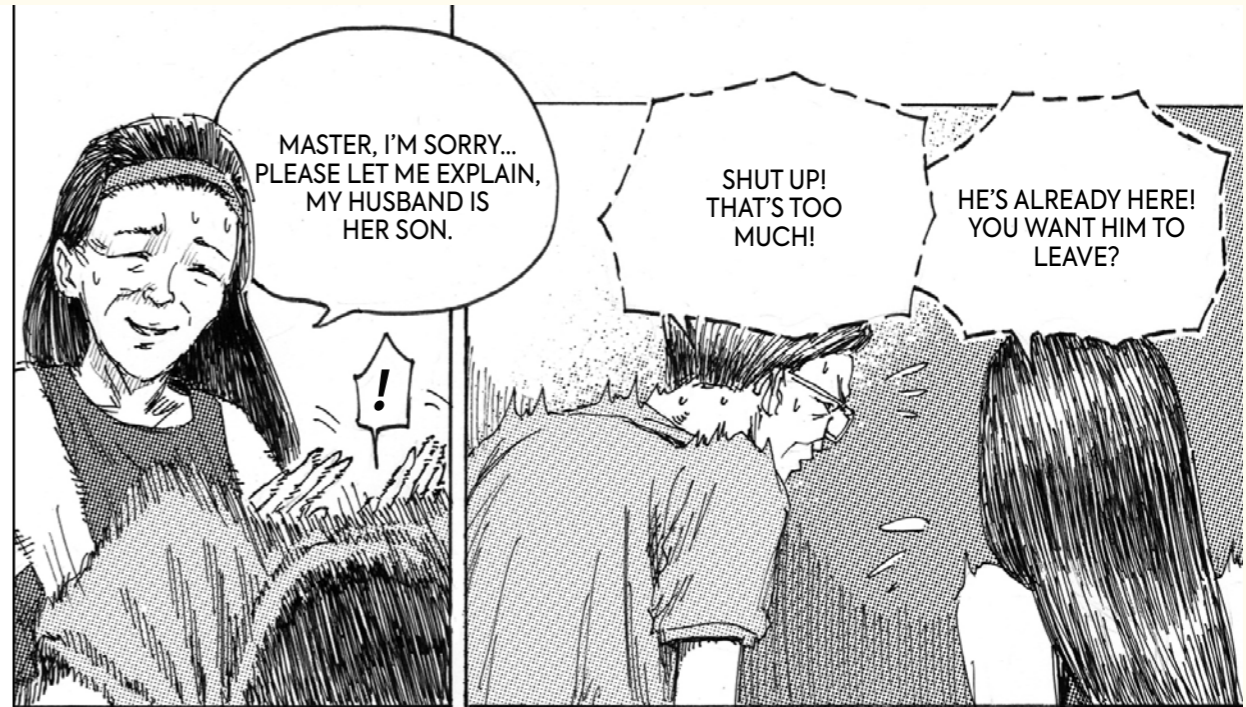
THE GRANDMA HAS ALWAYS BEEN HERE.

!!....

BECAUSE SHE'S WORRIED ABOUT HER SON.

YOU DONT KNOW? THEN I'M SORRY, I HAVE NO WAY OF TAKING CARE OF THIS.

DON'T MESS WITH THEM... YOU STILL NEED TO MAKE MONEY.



MASTER, I'M SORRY... PLEASE LET ME EXPLAIN, MY HUSBAND IS HER SON.

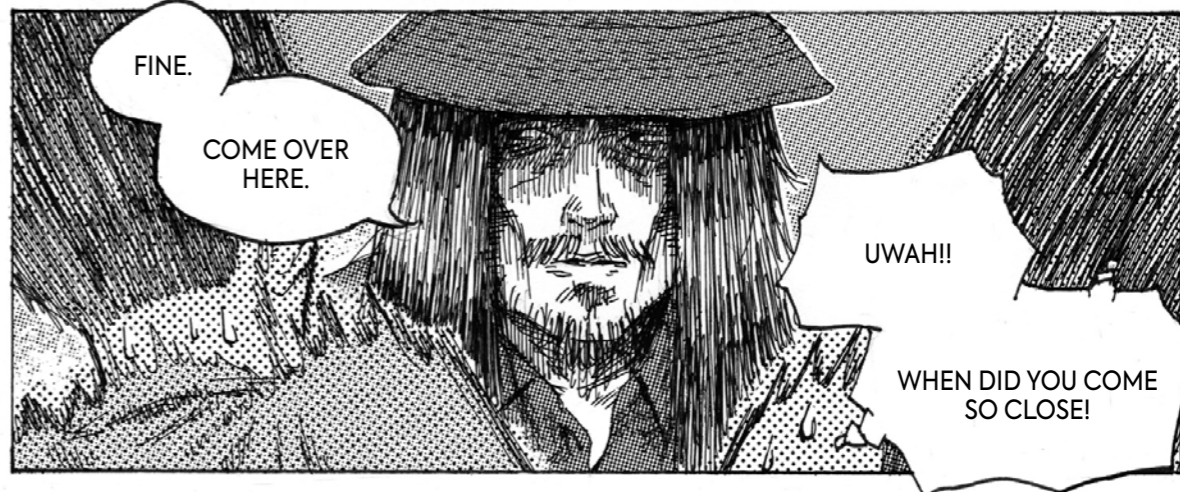
SHUT UP! THAT'S TOO MUCH!

HE'S ALREADY HERE! YOU WANT HIM TO LEAVE?



HOW COULD A SON BE SO USELESS...

...



FINE.

COME OVER HERE.

UWAH!!

WHEN DID YOU COME SO CLOSE!



KNOCK

KNOCK



HM?...

WHAT'S THE
MATTER, ARE YOU
AFRAID?



TCH!



WHY DID SHE STAY
TO SCARE US...



WE DIDN'T DO
ANYTHING...

IT WAS AN
ACCIDENT...
WHY BLAME US?



OOOOHHHH!



COME!

KNEEL BEFORE
YOUR MOTHER.

HUH?!!!



KNEEL!

COUGH! COUGH!

?

GRANDPA,
BE QUIET.





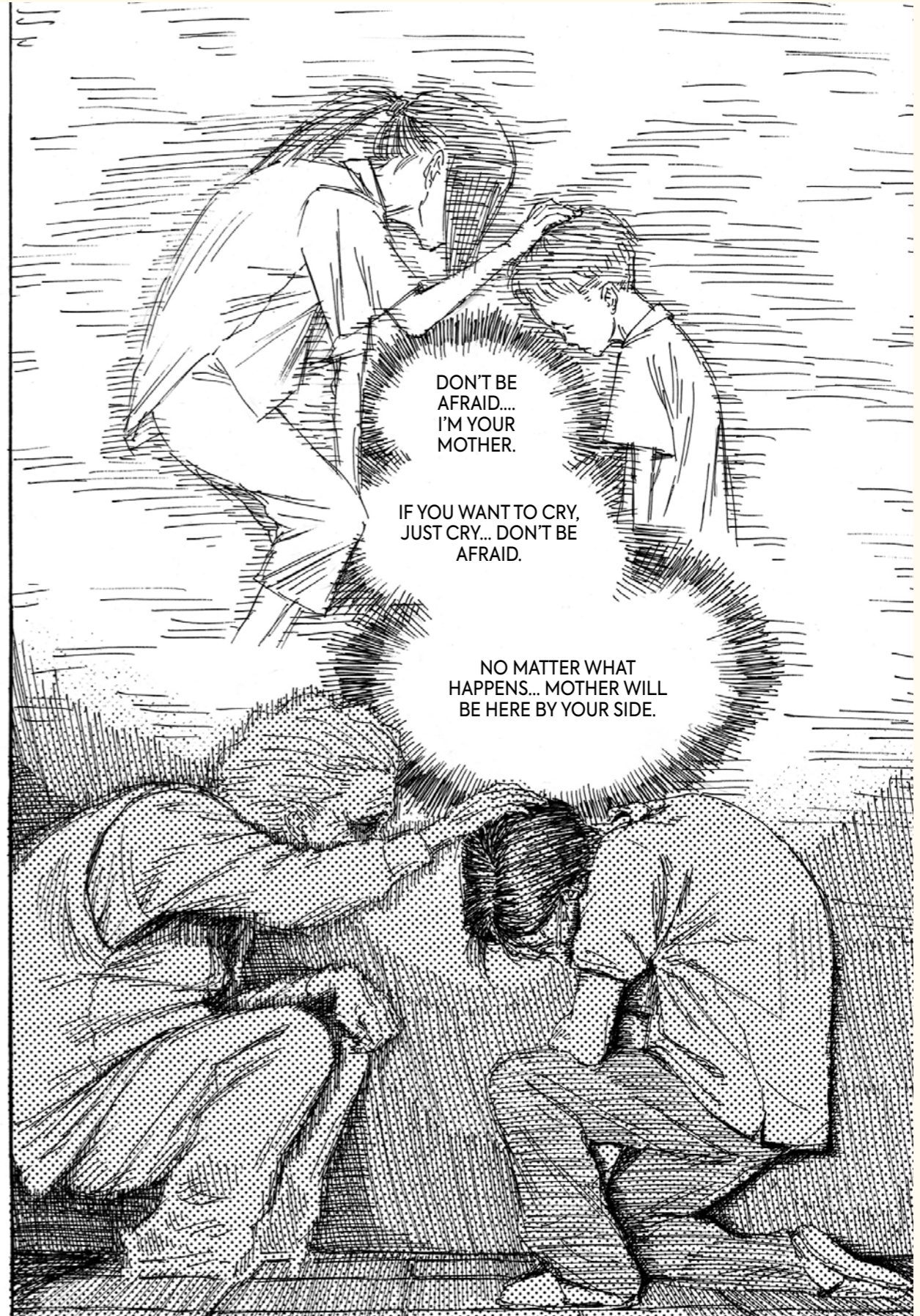
...



PLEASE GO!
DON'T DISTURB US...

I DIDN'T MEAN TO DO
IT ON PURPOSE!

WHO WOULD HAVE
THOUGHT YOU WOULD TRIP
AND DIE IN THAT ROOM?



DON'T BE
AFRAID...
I'M YOUR
MOTHER.

IF YOU WANT TO CRY,
JUST CRY... DON'T BE
AFRAID.

NO MATTER WHAT
HAPPENS... MOTHER WILL
BE HERE BY YOUR SIDE.



The Echo Before Dawn

A Full English translation is available.

黎明前的回聲

Author: Lang-Chi **Illustrator:** Lang-Chi **Publisher:** Fisfisa Media

Date: 09/2024

Rights contact: bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

184 pages | 15 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1

Award: 2025 The 16th Golden Comics Awards, GCA Grand Prize

Rights sold: German

BFT2.0 Translator: Michael Kearney

Two teenage boys from very different worlds are drawn together by their shared love of a single song. Their friendship quickly becomes inseparable as they weather the storms of adolescence. But when one leads the other into a drug-dealing gang, their lives spiral out of control.

This powerful comic confronts the urgent realities of drug use among today's youth, while searching for glimmers of compassion and hope. Created in collaboration with frontline experts in drug abuse prevention, psychology, and law, it brings both authenticity and urgency to the page. Acclaimed Golden Comic Award winner Lang-Chi showcases her masterful storytelling with taut pacing and illustrations alive with light, shadow, and emotion. The result is a work brimming with dramatic tension, capturing the lives of two friends.

The Echo Before Dawn invites readers to reflect on family, bullying, addiction, the effects of incarceration, and the endurance of friendship.



Author **Lang-Chi**

Lang-Chi is a comic writer and illustrator whose work explores the subtleties and ambiguities of everyday life. Through her art, she reinterprets familiar scenes and reveals the unexpected possibilities hidden within the ordinary. Her past works include *The Free China Junk*, for which she won the Golden Comic Award, and *Moonlight Calling*.

Can We Still Grow Up Well in an Age of Loneliness?

by Ting-Kang Liu

(originally published on OKAPI from Fisfisa Media)

The Echo Before Dawn (Fisfisa Media) explores the intertwined issues of drug abuse and bullying. This book is part of a series addressing issues faced by children and adolescents, combining field interviews with expert insights and presenting them in a graphic novel format.

At first glance, *The Echo Before Dawn* may appear to center on simplistic anti-drug themes. But through creator Lang-Chi's careful storytelling, the narrative expands into a deeper examination of addiction and its psychological roots. The story begins with two boys—Yi-chen, from an underprivileged family, and You-jie, a charismatic student who rescues Yi-chen from being bullied. You-jie introduces Yi-

chen to a hidden world, where middle schoolers work as “little bees”—drug mules and dealers in a local gang. These youths, victims of broken homes and school bullying, find a sense of belonging and status in the gang. The money helps relieve their family's financial burdens, and the gang becomes a refuge in contrast to the isolation they experience at school.

Yi-chen—whose own life lacks emotional and material support—becomes deeply entangled. What begins as a friendship becomes a dependency not just on drugs, but on the surrogate family the gang provides. Eventually, the two boys diverge: You-jie escapes the drug world, but Yi-chen spirals further into it.

While drug addiction is a familiar

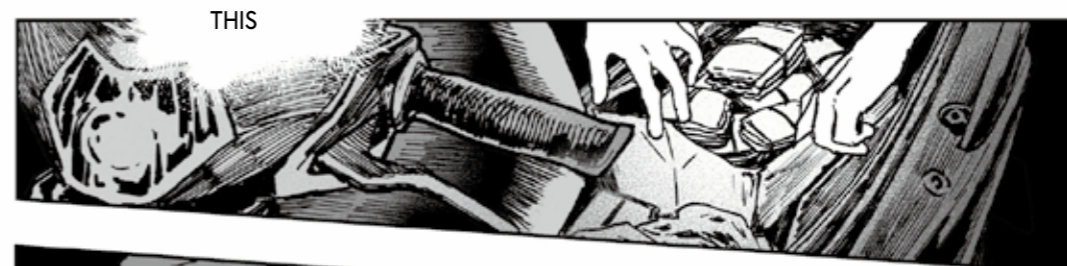
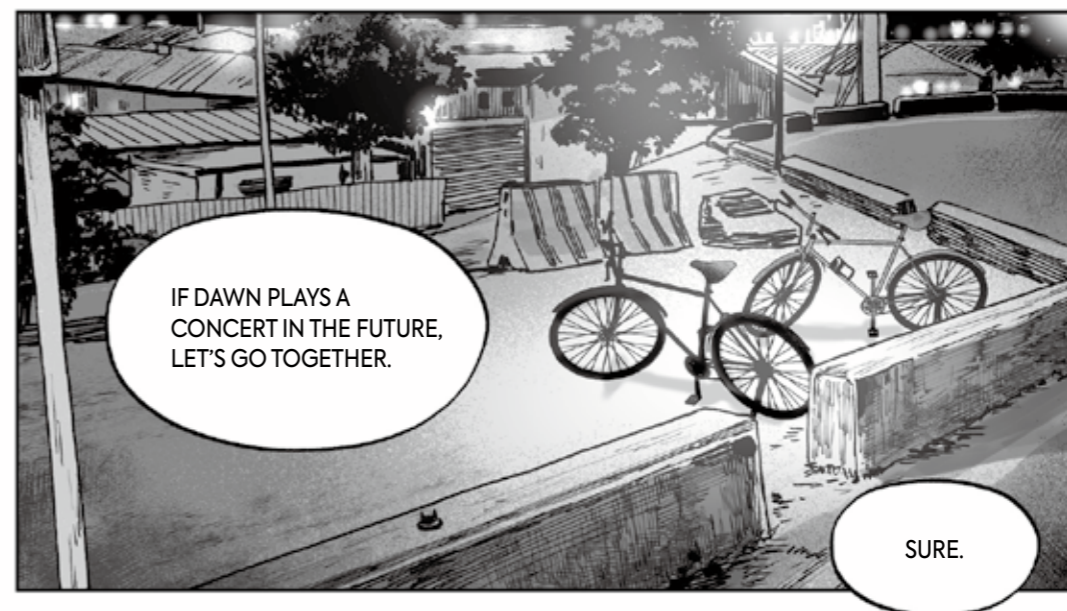
issue in Taiwan, this work goes beyond standard anti-drug narratives. It challenges the assumption that identity and selfhood are entirely autonomous. In modern individualistic societies, people are expected to manage all problems on their own, yet this expectation ignores the psychological void many face. Addiction, the story suggests, is often a coping mechanism—not only for physical dependence, but for emotional emptiness. What proves hardest to quit is not the drug itself, but the sense of meaning or connection it has come to replace. The real solution lies not only in detox, but in restoring a sense of being loved, valued, and supported.

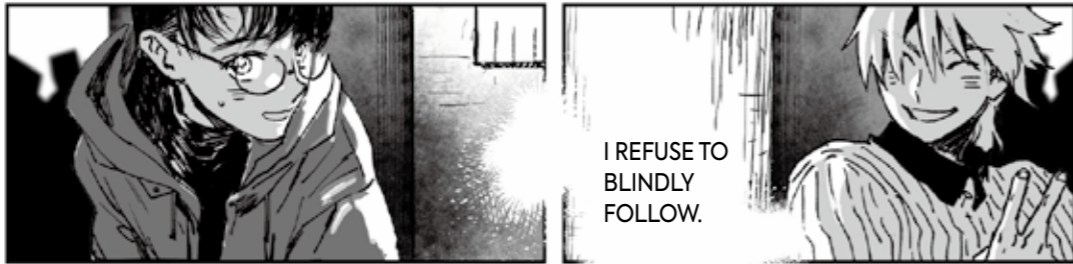
Though the story focuses on a case of drug addiction, it reflects a broader issue in contemporary society: addiction in many forms. Not all addictions are as visible or socially stigmatized as drugs or gambling. One of the most pervasive modern addictions is social media. Studies have shown how platforms foster anxiety while rewarding behavior through likes and shares, making users psychologically dependent. For those who grew up before digital media, these effects may be easier to resist. But today's youth—“digital natives”—are raised within these systems. Social media isn't just a tool they use; it's deeply embedded in their self-perception

and personality development.

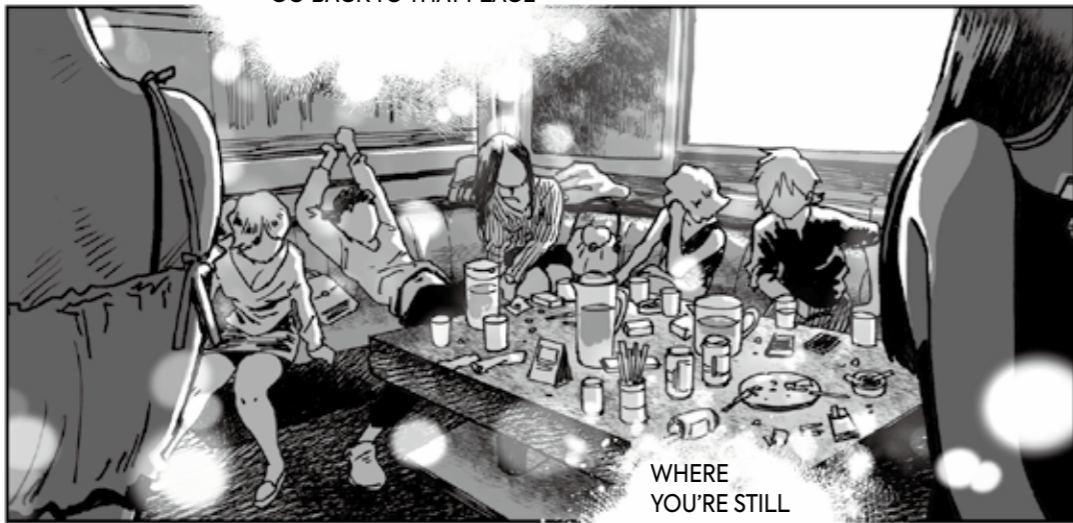
Addiction, then, is more widespread and insidious than we often realize. Social media addiction in teens may be even more damaging than physical dependencies, especially as it hinders autonomy. In an age of extreme individualism, where young people are left to navigate identity alone, the path to selfhood is fraught with confusion and isolation. While older generations had challenges in personality formation, today's youth face a far more complex, often darker reality. Constant visibility and validation-seeking leave little space for genuine self-awareness. Ironically, the true dangers they face may be subtler, more normalized—and even darker—than those shown in any comic.

Ting-Kang Liu is the Creative Director of Kiwi Creative and manager of the bookstore Kiwititsia. He holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from National Taiwan University and is an adjunct assistant professor in Taiwanese Literature at National Taiwan Normal University. His expertise includes cultural sociology, consumer society, Taiwanese culture, and cultural industries. He is currently involved in publishing Chinese and Taiwanese language textbooks for junior and senior high schools.





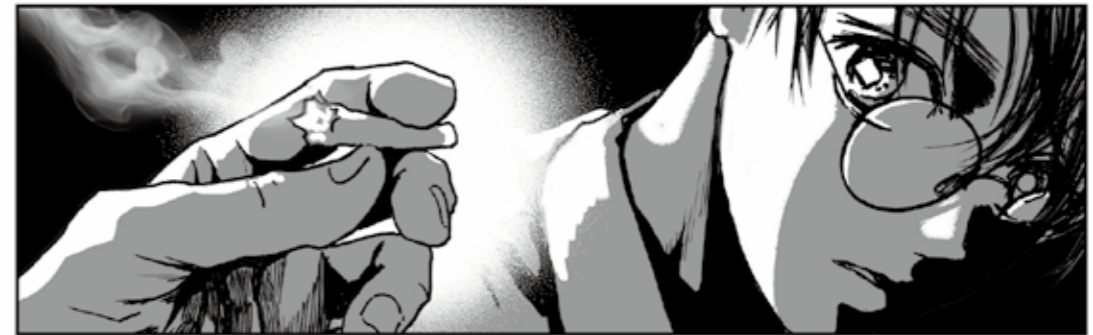
I WANT TO
GO BACK TO THAT PLACE

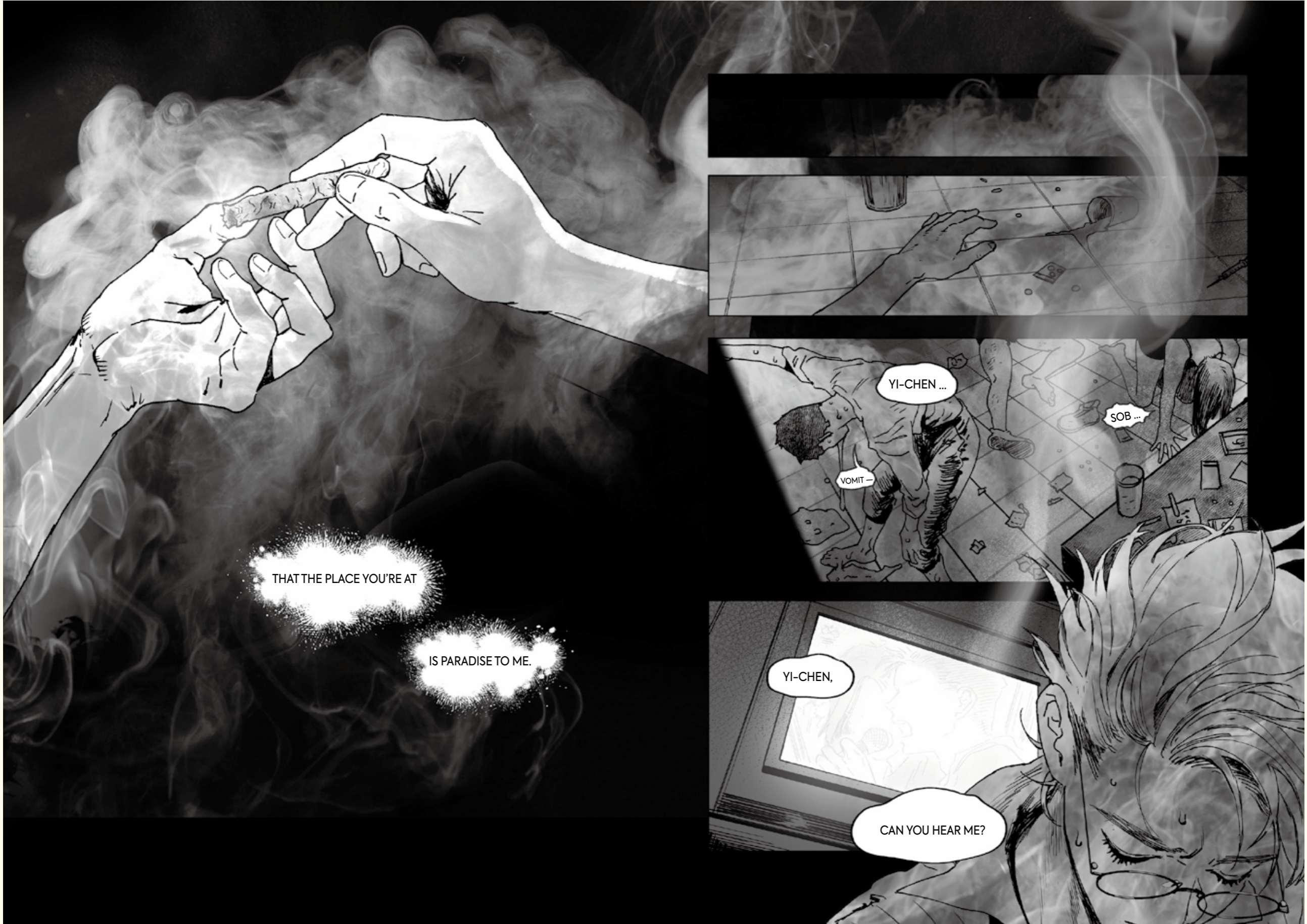


YOU GAVE ME WINGS TO FLY,



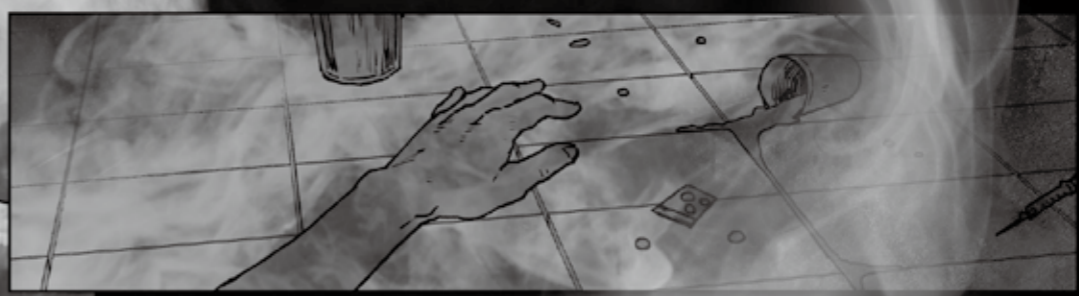
NOT REALIZING





THAT THE PLACE YOU'RE AT

IS PARADISE TO ME.





Rest in Pieces

A Full English translation is available.

器官拼圖

Author: Karmarket **Illustrator:** Karmarket **Publisher:** Balaena Islet Publishing

Date: 05/2024

Rights contact: bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

288 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm

Volume: 1

Award: 2025 The 16th Golden Comics Awards, Best New Talent

BFT2.0 Translator: Iris Lee

This collection of short stories by Karmarket masterfully builds a sense of creeping dread, where horror unfurls gradually. These poetic, darkly humorous stories end on an open note, leaving space for the reader's imagination to take hold.

In one story, a woman who sees ghosts encounters thousands of spirits in orbit—including her long-lost mother—just as an unknown entity begins to attack. In another, a man who lost his legs in a car accident feels them return in dreams, along with strange, unnamed limbs. A college freshman, in yet another tale, stumbles into a half-abandoned housing complex where shadows twist into a maze of illusions.

Elsewhere, in a drought-ravaged apocalypse strewn with the corpses of gods, a man and a peculiar child search desperately for hope. And in a future reshaped by cyborg technology, a bloody love triangle spirals into violence.

From spectral hauntings to futuristic nightmares, Karmarket delivers horror with depth, lyricism, and humanity.



Author **Karmarket**

Born in 1994, Karmarket graduated from Shih Chien University with a degree in Media Communication Design. He has worked as an assistant director on numerous music videos and commercials. Karmarket has also contributed to several Taiwanese feature films as a storyboard artist, director's assistant, post-production animator, and creator of social media promotional materials. Currently, he works as a freelance contractor and comic artist, with experience illustrating magazine covers, album art, and more.

As Powerful as a Meteor, As Delicate as Embroidery: Reading *Rest in Pieces*

by Tzu Ning Huang

From its very cover, *Rest in Pieces* boldly announces its unique aesthetic—both obscure and bold. A man's serene, closed-eyed face is surrounded by a burst of flowers, while the lower face depicts an eerie skeletal grin made of uneven teeth. Twisting branches represent organic tissue, giving the illusion that real muscle fibers are growing over bones.

This book is a collection of short stories, and if you've read Junji Ito, you might find yourself experiencing a similar sense of creeping dread. Every detail is magnified to a skin-prickling degree, with the horror gradually unfurling through the meticulous pen of the author, Karmarket. It's as if you can see the pores of fear itself. And yet, Karmarket's stories also carry a poetic flair—sometimes infused with dark humor, sometimes blending fantasy

with reality, and often leaving endings open, giving space for the reader's own imagination to bloom.

In "Ghosts From Outer Space," the protagonist is a woman who can see ghosts. In an attempt to escape this "curse," she becomes an astronaut, hoping that the void of space will offer some respite. But instead, she discovers that it, too, is filled with spirits—those of the countless dead. Among them, she encounters the soul of her long-deceased mother.

"Public Housing for Rent" draws from the author's personal experience in the film and TV industry. During a period of location scouting across Taiwan's aging public housing complexes, Karmarket became familiar with their unique atmosphere: high-density layouts,

clutter accumulated over decades, and the ghostly remnants of their long-term residents. The story vividly captures these spaces and the unseen lives that still linger in them.

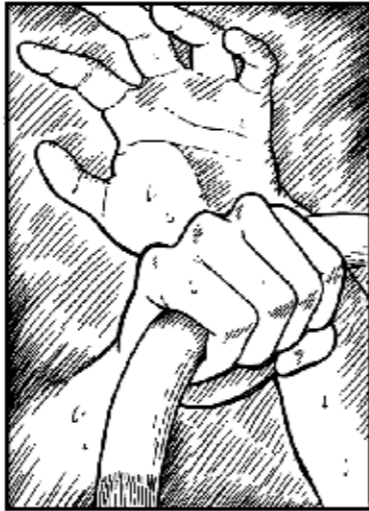
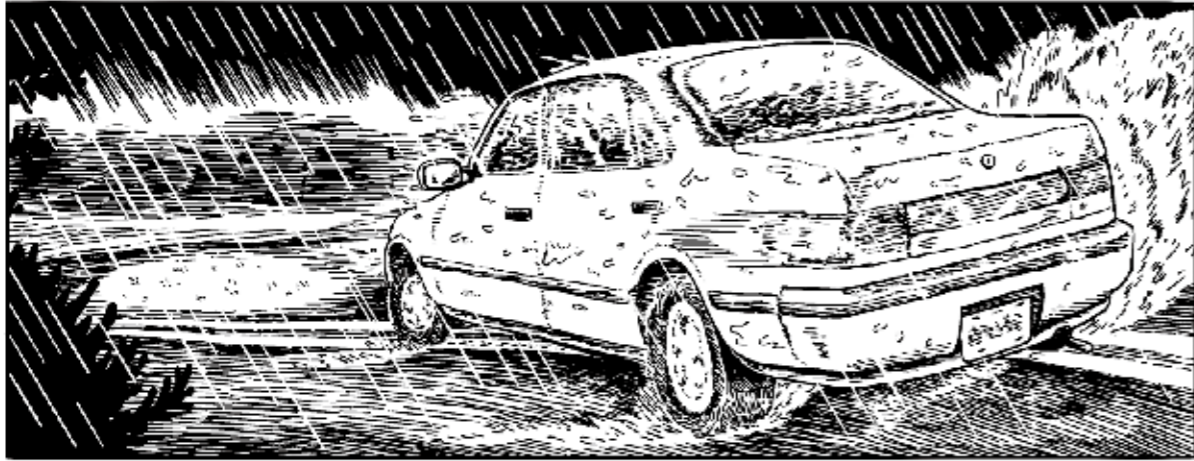
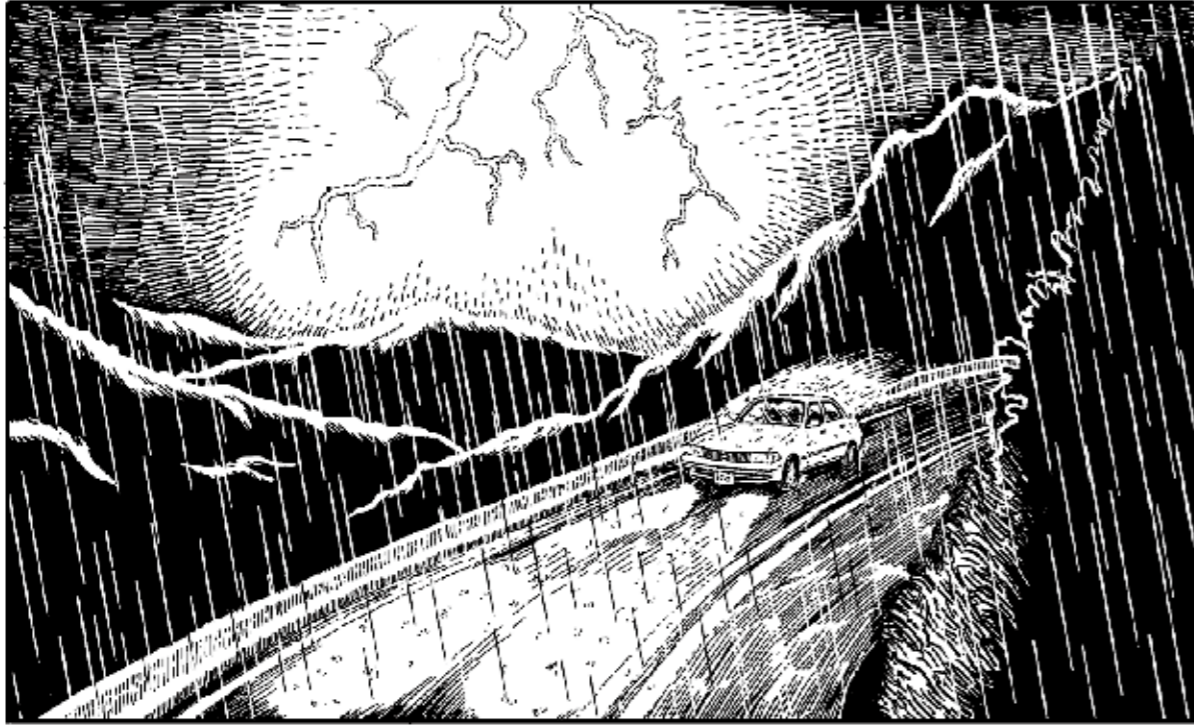
"Deep Dive" begins with a deep-sea researcher father receiving a drawing from his daughter, which becomes a sort of amulet that protects him. Through her innocent perspective, the daughter imagines what challenges her father might face underwater. Her childlike drawings create whimsical "deep-sea angels" that seem to dance through the abyss. The story shifts between hyperrealistic depictions of the ocean and the colorful simplicity of her doodles, making it feel as though her creativity truly protects him from the dangers below.

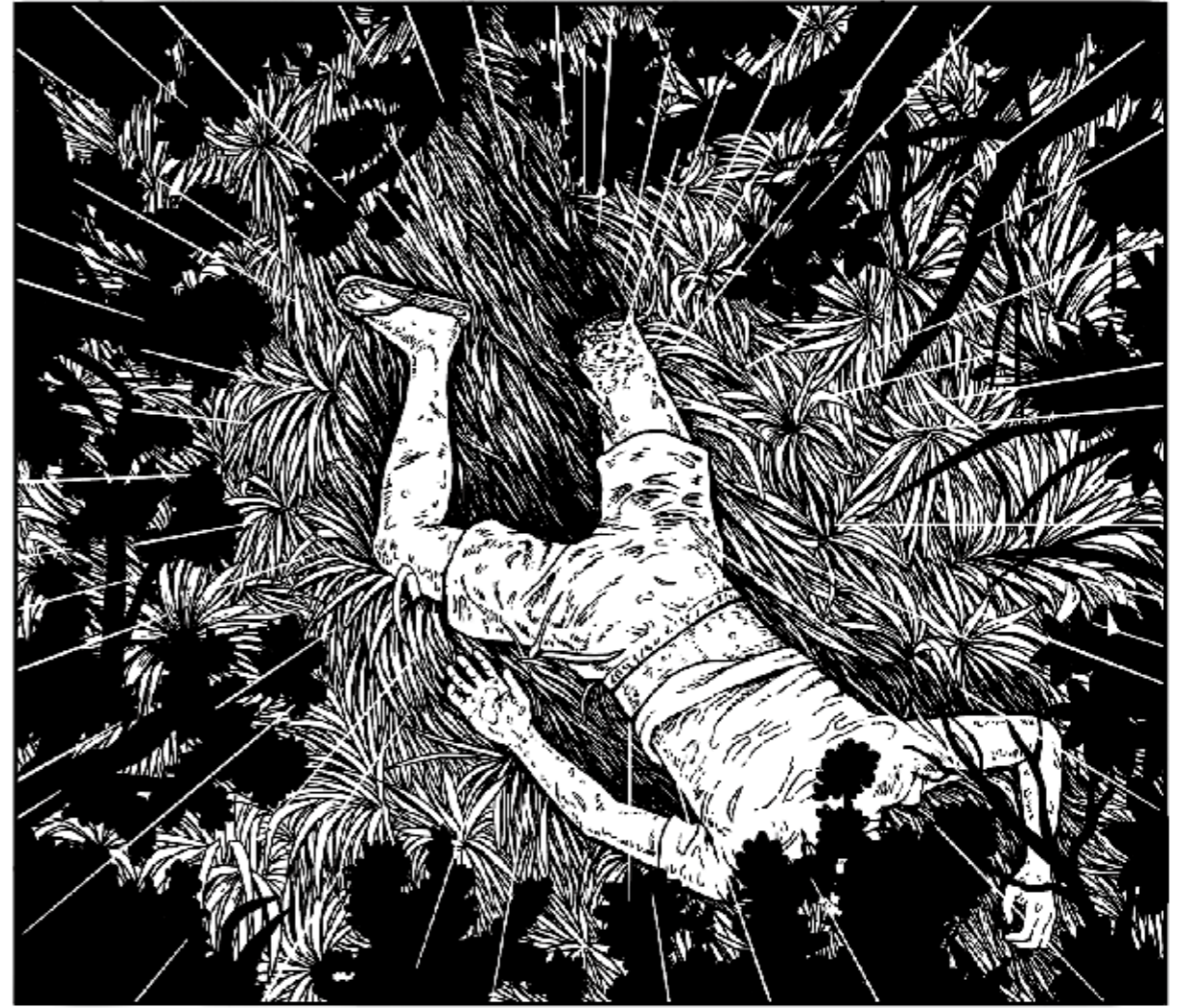
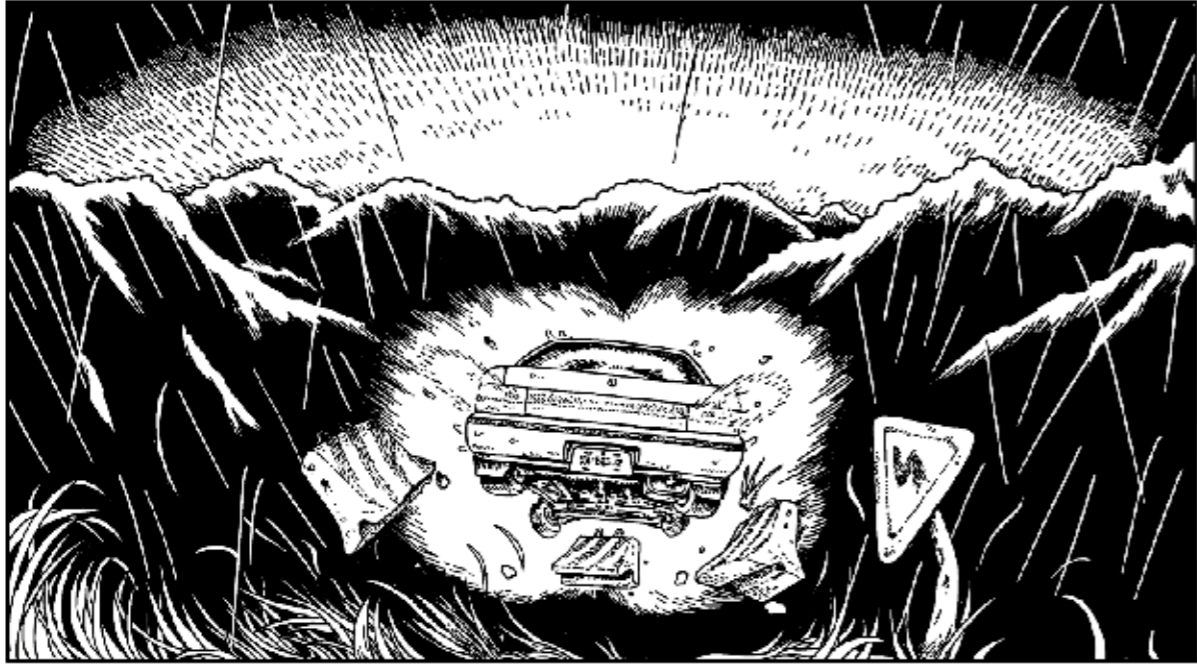
The title story, "Rest in Pieces," is brief and wordless, but its impact is like a blazing meteor streaking across the sky.

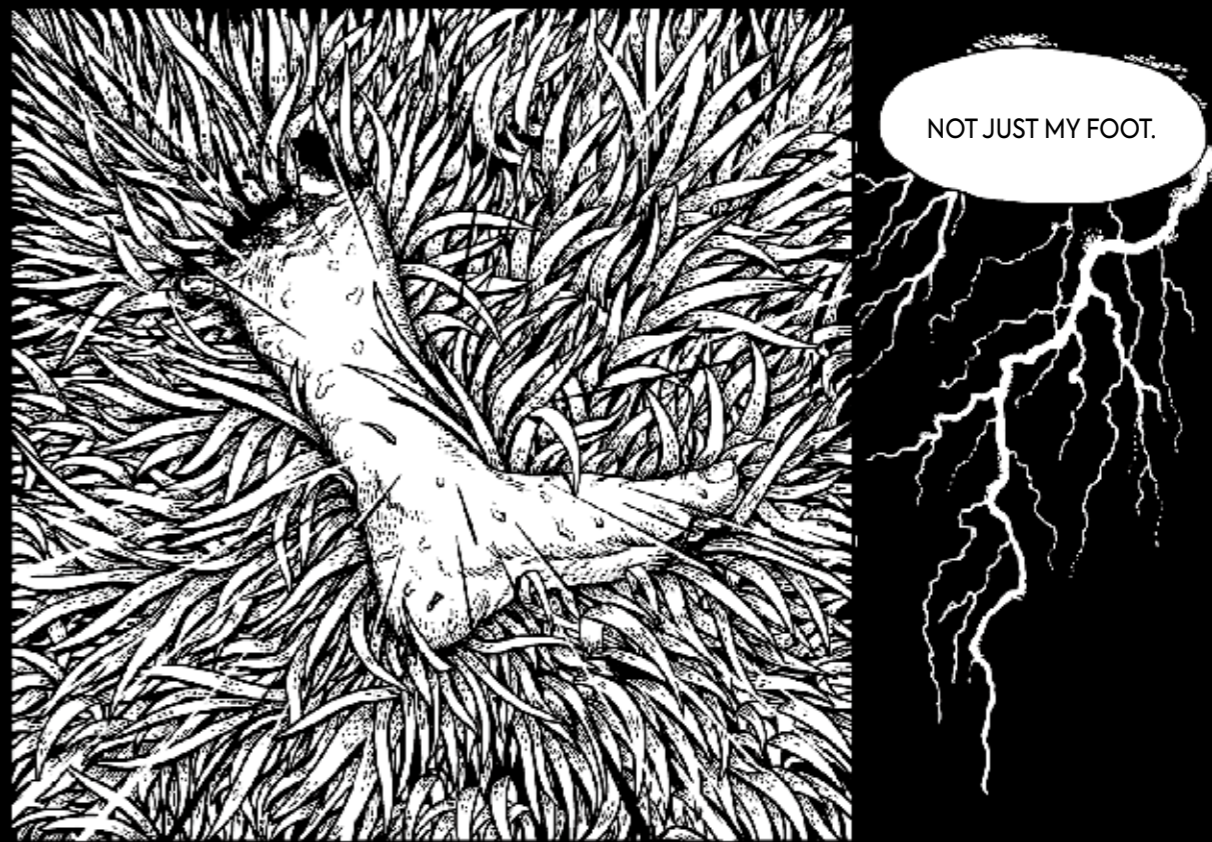
It fast-forwards through the birth and evolution of life—from primordial chaos to the emergence of consciousness—before ending on a quiet image: the author hunched over a desk, drawing. This moment subtly ties the cosmic back to the personal.

Reading *Rest in Pieces* is like running your hand over an intricately embroidered fabric. The visual detail in every panel withstands close inspection, while the stories unfold in unexpected and thought-provoking directions. It's a thoroughly enjoyable mental whirlwind—one that invites both awe and reflection.

Tzu Ning Huang is an editorial consultant at Books from Taiwan. She loves to listen and tell stories, enjoys conversations and encounters with others, and appreciates time alone. She also loves to use photography and writing to explore the world.









The Night's Events

A Full English translation is available.

夜的事變

Author: Fish Wang **Illustrator:** Fish Wang **Publisher:** Fish Wang (self-published)

Date: 04/2015 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

152 pages | 19 x 25.7 cm **Volume:** 1

Adaptation: Animation

BFT2.0 Translator: William Serrano

In this haunting graphic novel collection, memory, history, and everyday life take shape as eerie yet compelling tales. Multidisciplinary artist Fish Wang explores a breadth of themes, among them Taiwanese folk religion, the uneasy relationship between humans and gods, sharp critiques of the education system, historical trauma, and the psychological wounds we struggle to carry and heal.

Through a fluid and inventive style, Wang conjures figures that are at once playful, haunting, and unexpectedly sympathetic. His restrained, shadowed tones evoke a dreamlike world of uncertainty, punctuated by sudden bursts of color that suggest resilience and hope. The subtle layering of watercolor creates a meditative cadence, inviting the reader to linger. Atmospheric and resonant, *The Night's Events* merges the surreal with social critique, emerging as a striking and unforgettable work of imagination.



Author **Fish Wang**

Born in 1971 in Taipei, Taiwan, Fish Wang has worked in animation since 1987. A multidisciplinary artist, he also creates picture books, short stories, and three-dimensional sculptures. He has served as planner and editor for comic magazines *TAIWAN COMIX (TX)* and *Graphic Fiction (GF)*.

His comics include *Goldfish LOVE Dream Road*, *Jack & The Beanstalk*, *Secret Whisper*, *The Night's Events*, and *QQ-1*. His works of fiction include *Miss Elephant in the Movies*, while his illustrated books include *Scenery of the Dim Path*, *The Traveler Cat's Carry-on Luggage*, *Faint Signal from A*, and *The Clear Club*. His animation projects include *Orz Boyz* (animated segment), *Jack & The Beanstalk*, *Goldfish*, among others. His short film *Goldfish* won Best Animated Short at the 2019 Golden Horse Awards, while *Red Tail* earned the Crystal Award for VR at the 2023 Annecy International Animation Film Festival in France. His animated short *The Ghosts of the Dim Path* qualified for submission to the Academy Awards in the animated short category.

The Night's Events: Wandering Spirits and Memories That Haunt the Night

by Chi-Hsuan Wu

Night is a time when the world feels both silent and unbearably loud. It is a space where memories stir, histories return, and the borders between reality and fantasy grow thin. In the graphic novel collection *The Night's Events*, five short stories explore a wide range of themes—from Taiwanese folk religion and the fraught relationship between humans and gods, to incisive critiques of the education system, meditations on historical trauma, and the psychological wounds we struggle to carry and heal.

The characters in these stories—cute, bizarre, and sometimes unsettling—are brought vividly to life through the distinctive linework of Fish Wang. His expressive, freeform drawing style gives each figure a sense of movement and

emotional depth. The artwork's dark, muted palette enhances the eerie, dreamlike atmosphere, yet flickers of warm tones occasionally break through, offering glimmers of hope. The use of watercolor washes lends each panel a meditative quality, encouraging readers to linger and absorb the subtle shifts in mood and meaning. Together, these visual choices reinforce the magical realism that permeates the entire book.

In "The Ocean Gentlemen," the story is told from the perspective of anthropomorphized marine deities—ancient, otherworldly beings living in the sea, misunderstood as gods by the fishermen who depend on them. These "gentlemen" are not divine but exist within a bureaucratic hierarchy, bound by rules:

they provide blessings and protection only in exchange for human offerings. If their contractual obligations are unmet, they face punishment. Promotion within their world depends on seniority and reputation, such as being honored with a shrine built in their name. While the story playfully imagines this divine labor system, it also provokes a deeper question: is faith an act of connection, or is it simply an exchange? Are rituals genuine conversations with the unknown, or are they bargains struck in desperation?

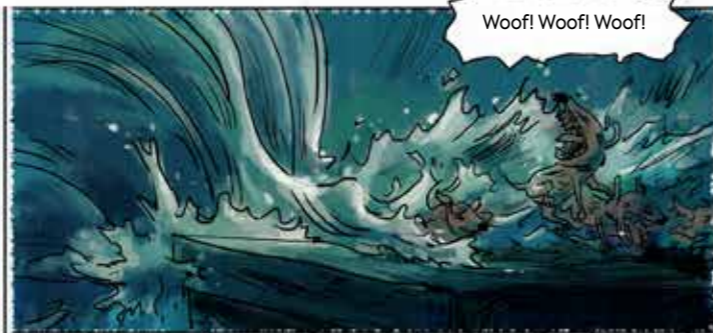
The title story follows two cartoonists who, in the quiet hours of the night, bring their politically sensitive manuscripts to a publishing editor, hoping for a chance at publication. Their work is rejected due to the risk it poses. The story, through cinematic framing and clever panel composition, shifts between wide shots and close-ups to create an atmosphere of surveillance and dread. The lines echo a haunting truth: "The doctor said some illnesses can't be cured in times like these—especially when the times themselves are diseased..." The book is a subtle reference to Taiwan's 228 Incident of 1947, when government forces violently suppressed civilian protests, leading to a massacre and decades of political repression. In such times, even the simple act of free expression could cost lives.

The tragedy is that these forward-

thinking voices, once punished for their dissent, are often vindicated only decades later—long after they are gone. In such a context, the act of remembering becomes a form of resistance. As stated in another story, "Red Tail": "You must reclaim your sorrow. Because even if you try to forget it, it won't forget you." Healing begins with naming, holding, and honoring these wounds. Only then can we move forward.

"For me, creating stories is a way of facing my own path of growth—to organize, give form, and release the things I've held on to," writes author Fish Wang. Through these stories, he opens a shared emotional space for readers. Whether you're a reader who shares in the island's collective memories or someone simply trying to survive the complexities of modern life, *The Night's Events* offers a place to hide, to feel, and to reflect. In looking back, we find the courage to move forward.

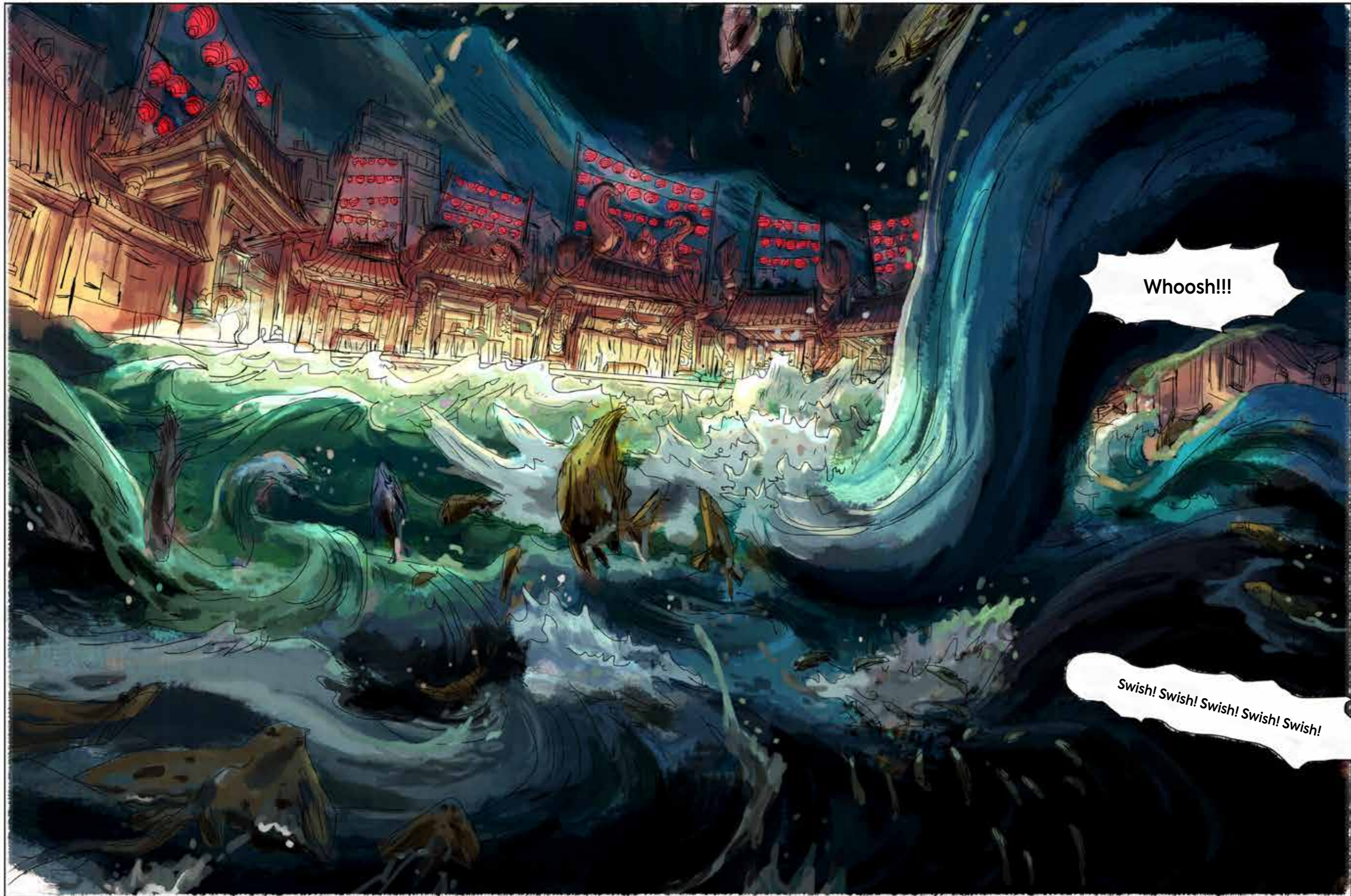
Chi-Hsuan Wu is from Taiwan, an island shaped by the meeting of the Kuroshio Current and the Tropic of Cancer. She grew up in a sugar-loving city, though paradoxically has little tolerance for sweets. A graduate of National Tsing Hua University, she has worked as an editor for online courses and audiobooks. Today, she continues to seek conversation with the world—through words, sounds, or whatever medium feels right.



The devotees seek shelter behind the temple pillars and under the offering tables...







Whoosh!!!

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!



Dark Days

A Full English translation is available.

日闇之時 DES JOURS SOMBRES

Scriptwriter: Frédéric Debomy **Comic Artist:** Yao-Ching Tseng **Publisher:** Gaea Books

Date: 06/2023 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

132 pages | 18 x 24 cm **Volume:** 1

BFT2.0 Translator: Evian Pan & Michelle Kuo

The story begins with a radio broadcast announcing that society has fallen into chaos: the military will seize control of the country, enforcing strict new regulations. In the streets, protesters march beneath banners demanding “University Autonomy” and “Soldiers Back to the Barracks.”

Dark Days unites Taiwanese comic artist Tseng Yao-Ching and French screenwriter Frédéric Debomy in three interwoven tales set in a fictional nation, each probing the fragile balance between totalitarianism and democracy.

Rich in symbolism, the play of day and night shapes both the cover and the interior artwork, creating a vivid, immersive atmosphere. The result is a graphic novel that blends poetic allegory with sharp political reflection—a thought-provoking work that resonates far beyond its pages.



Scriptwriter **Frédéric Debomy**

Born in 1975 near Paris, Frédéric Debomy is a writer and researcher focused on Myanmar and human rights. He led France Info Birmanie, curated films for the Paris International Human Rights Film Festival, and contributed to *Les Temps Modernes*. As a comics scriptwriter, he has collaborated with artists like José Muñoz and Hong Kong artist Lau Kwong Shing, with whom he published *Burma: The Final Gamble*.



Comic Artist **Yao-Ching Tseng**

Yao-Ching Tseng uses drawing and writing as mirrored extensions of his own body, valuing the physicality and spontaneity of the creative process. He explores diverse forms and movements to both depict himself and engage with the world around him. In his vision, the form of a work is not just a container for meaning, but meaning itself—an embodiment rather than a vessel.

Under the Shadow of an Eclipse: A Reflection on the Comic *Dark Days*

by Chia-Han Chu
(originally published on OKAPI)

Life may have once felt peaceful, but recent global unrest reminds us that we can't afford to be naïve. The dangers we face are not only external—they also come from within. Often, what pulls us into darkness isn't an outside enemy, but the collapse of our own values. When fear of the "other" takes hold, people are stripped of their humanity, compared to monsters, animals, or insects—making cruelty seem acceptable. Little by little, empathy disappears. And in the end, the very things we tried to protect can turn into a prison for everyone.

Dark Days sets its narrative in a distant, undefined past, yet its themes feel urgent and immediate. Through layers of surveillance—from government propaganda on TV to hushed

conversations in the street, down to the silence between individuals—the comic masterfully conveys the disoriented anxiety of living under white terror. The threat lies not in the extraordinary, but the everyday. Power hides in plain sight, omnipresent yet unreachable.

Scriptwriter Frédéric Debomy warns us not just about the horrors of totalitarianism, but about how easily it can grow from within a democratic system—fed by fear, apathy, and the surrender of critical thought. The story's claustrophobic setting heightens the tension, as we follow characters across various regimes: a rebellious young cartoonist, a cautious old man burdened by guilt, a silent woman prisoner. None can alter the course of events. Those who

resist quietly vanish.

This raises the core question: if all resistance is futile, how do we exercise conscience? In an inhumane society, how can one live with integrity?

Illustrator Yao-Cheng Tseng brings this tension to life with haunting visuals. His ambiguous faces, lost and indistinct, echo the despair found in works like Naoki Urasawa's *20th Century Boys*, yet go further—rendering characters almost ghostlike. His cinematic framing and unstable lines create a sense that people and objects might dissolve into the gray-blue gloom at any moment.

The original French title, *Des Jours Sombres*, emphasizes "sombre"—not full darkness, but a dimmed light. It's not that the light is gone, but that we're pushed into corners where it no longer reaches. Still, the longing for freedom and dignity persists, because somewhere, the light continues to exist.

As *Dark Days* reminds us,

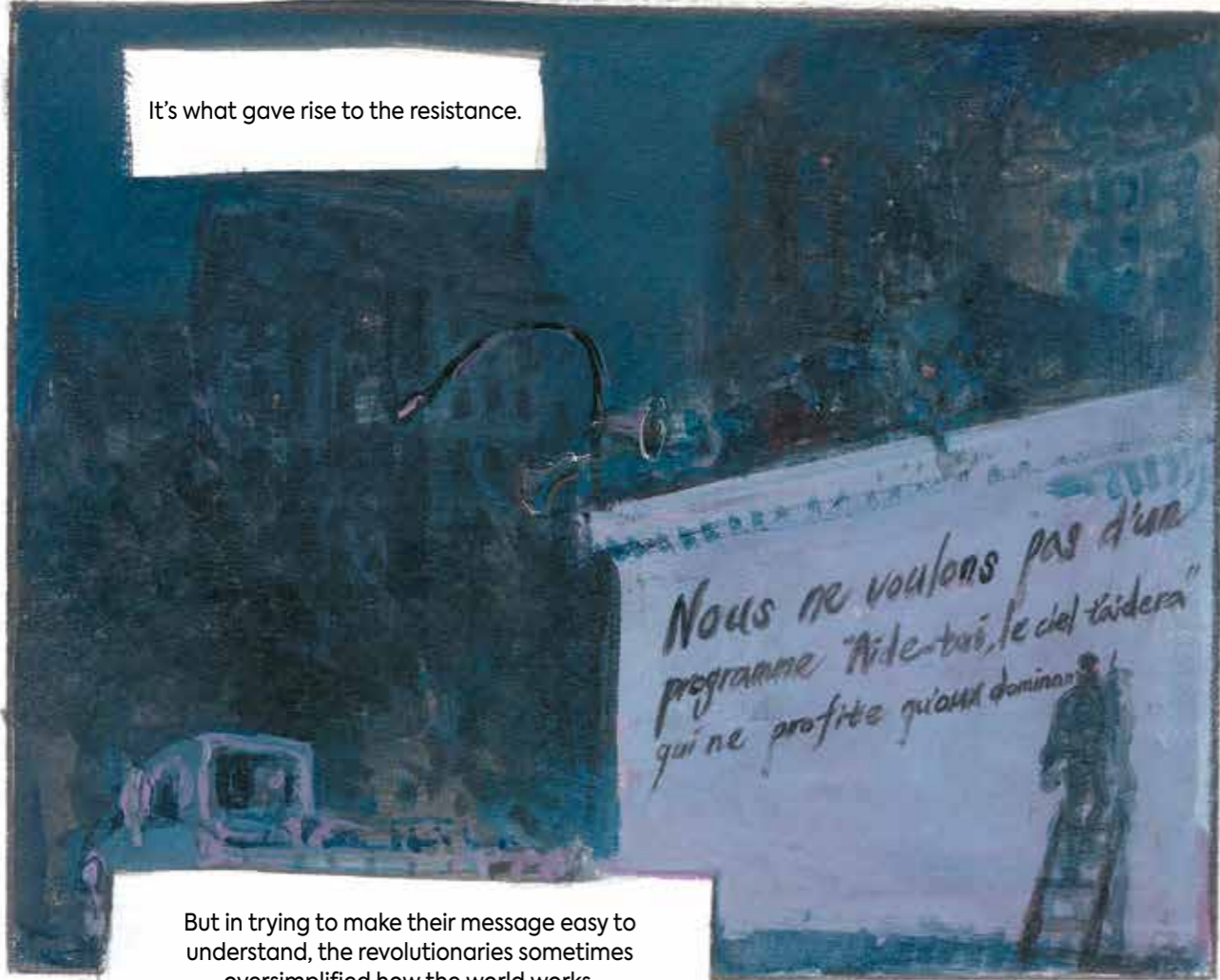
totalitarianism never arrives with fanfare; it seeps quietly into our lives. And its end isn't just the fall of a regime—it's when the shadows in our minds are finally cleared. As the book's final line suggests: only when those powers "can no longer do anything to us" can we truly step into the light.

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

*Chia-Han Chu studied in the doctoral program in sociology at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in France and now lectures at Taipei National University of the Arts. He writes both fiction and essays. His works include the novels *The Gift and The Inside of the Inside*, the philosophical reader *Reading Bataille at Night*, the essay collection *In the Best of Circumstances*, and the short story collection *The Drunken Boat*.*

* Spray-painted on the wall: We reject this policy "God helps those who help themselves." This only benefits the powerful.

It's what gave rise to the resistance.



But in trying to make their message easy to understand, the revolutionaries sometimes oversimplified how the world works.

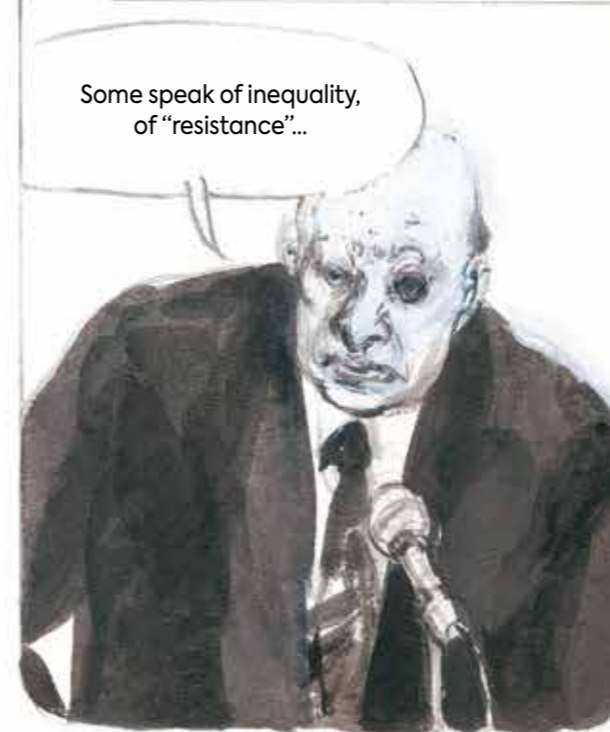


When politicians put the interests of the privileged above that of the public, they've failed their duty. We have to fight back for ourselves.

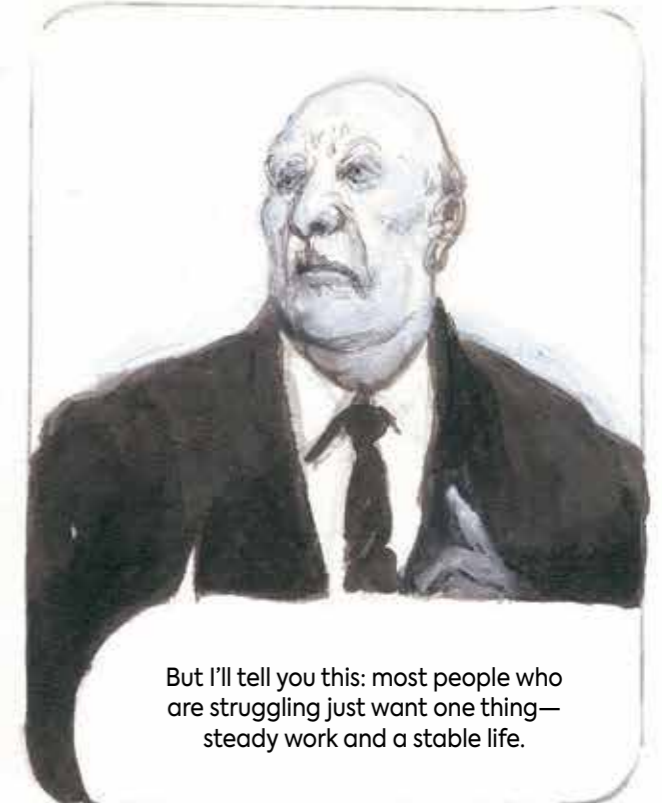


To achieve that, any means is justified.

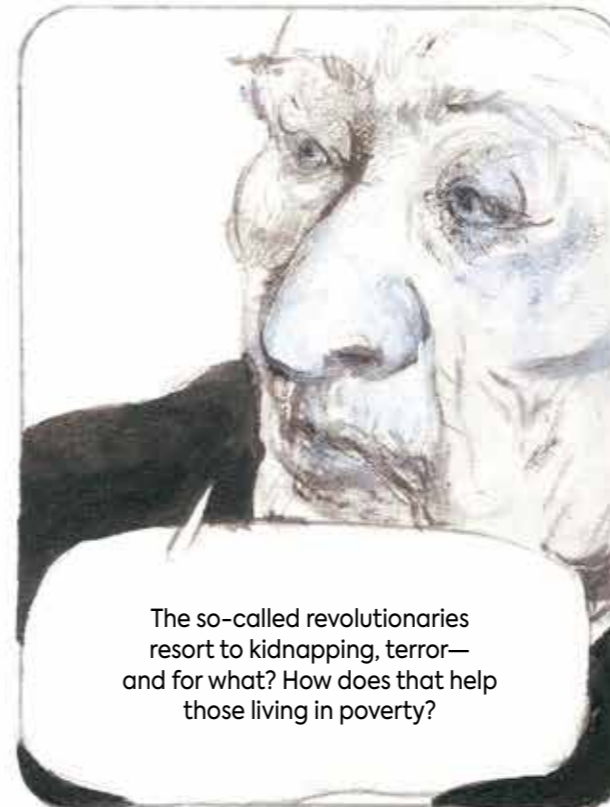
In doing so, they made the policies they opposed seem more persuasive.



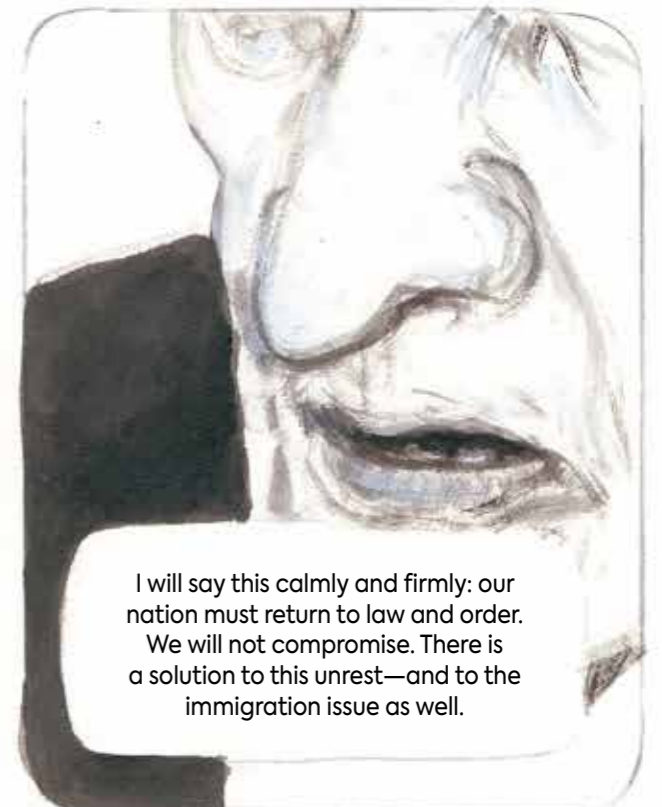
Some speak of inequality, of "resistance"...



But I'll tell you this: most people who are struggling just want one thing—steady work and a stable life.



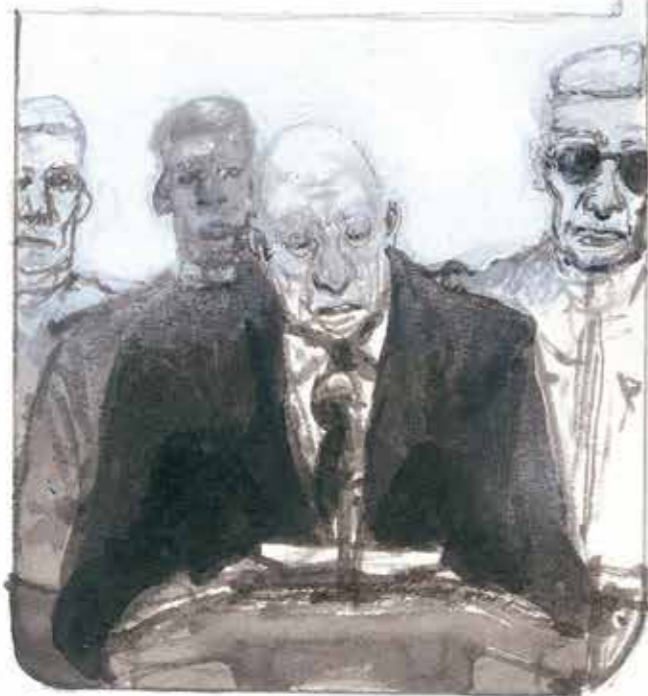
The so-called revolutionaries resort to kidnapping, terror—and for what? How does that help those living in poverty?



I will say this calmly and firmly: our nation must return to law and order. We will not compromise. There is a solution to this unrest—and to the immigration issue as well.



Just a few years ago, these same controversial policies—especially with manipulated public support—might have unleashed a political crisis.

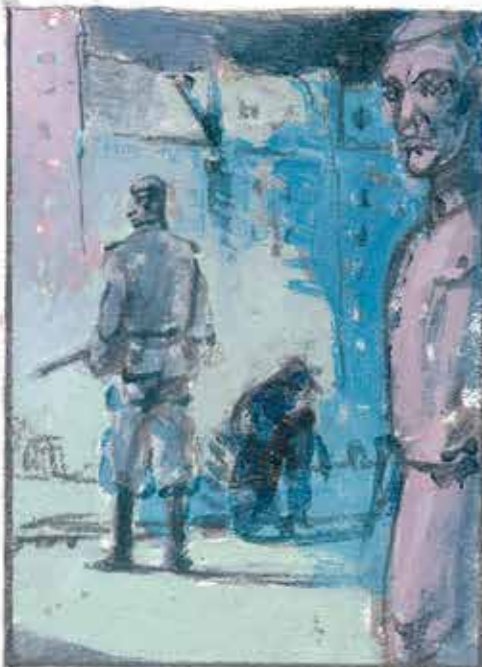


But now, things have unraveled.



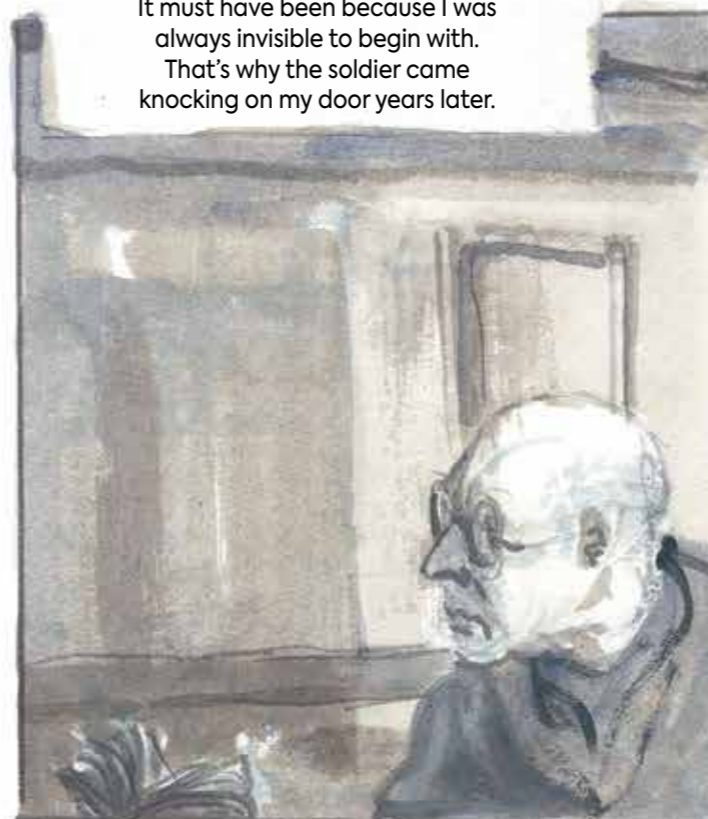
The government is incapable of resolving the chaos, and the military had to take control to restore order.

Fear has taken root in people's hearts.



And those who refused to be invisible began to disappear, one after another.

It must have been because I was always invisible to begin with. That's why the soldier came knocking on my door years later.



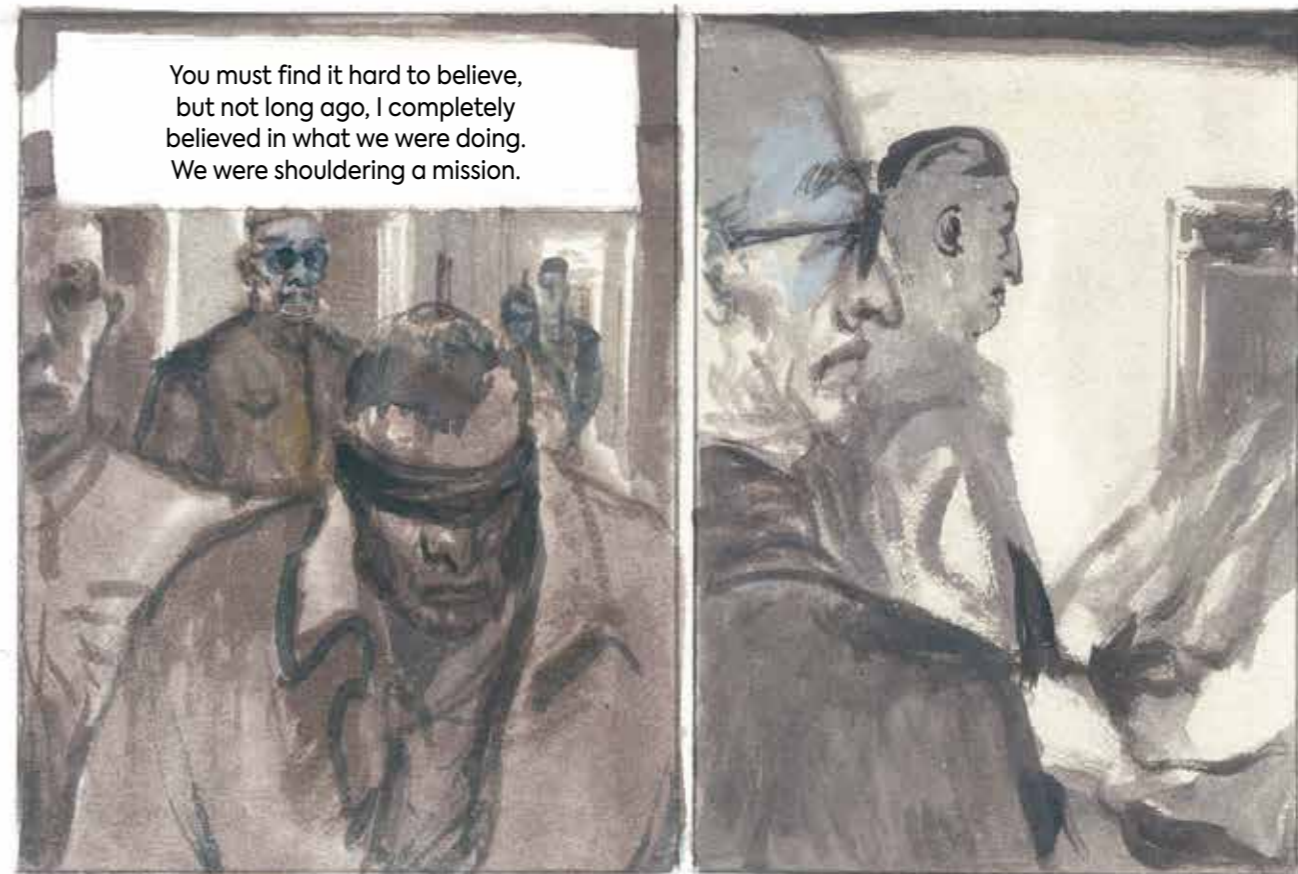


You don't know me. I'm not going to tell you my name. But you need to hear what I have to say.

I can't bring myself to tell anyone else.



The rumors are true. I was sent on a special military mission, and our orders were to abduct, interrogate, and eliminate subversives. They told us that the fate of the nation lay in our hands.



You must find it hard to believe, but not long ago, I completely believed in what we were doing. We were shouldering a mission.



Until they brought in a girl.

She didn't look like a subversive at all.



Embers and Petals

A Full English translation is available.

灰燼花園

Author: Metalmouse **Illustrator:** Metalmouse **Publisher:** Gamanian group

Date: 12/2023 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

303 pages | webtoon **Volume:** 1 (15 episodes)

Embers and Petals follows Bertha, a human seeking to avenge her father's death at the hands of vampires. Assigned to guard Agnes, a vampire captive, Bertha grows conflicted as the two form an unexpected bond. Then Bertha discovers the truth: the "monsters" her people have been hunting are in fact mutated villagers, victims of human experiments. She recalls her childhood friendship with Agnes and learns her father died protecting her.

As they flee together, Bertha and Agnes confess their feelings, but Bertha is fatally wounded, sacrificing herself to save Agnes. Grieving yet inspired, Agnes chooses to live on. Centuries later, she runs a flower shop, honoring Bertha's dream of a world free from hate.

More than just striking artwork and compelling storytelling, *Embers and Petals* resists genre conventions. It challenges the eroticization of lesbian relationships in vampire fiction, instead grounding queer love in care, memory, and shared ideals.



Author **Metalmouse**

Metalmouse graduated from Taipei National University of the Arts in Taiwan. Her work focuses on portraying familial and romantic love among women, as well as stories about women's rights and the consciousness of independence. While she primarily creates themes focusing on girls' love, she also enjoys exploring other possibilities, including family and the search for belonging.

Subverting the Formula: A Lesbian Vampire Narrative in *Embers and Petals*

by Wen-Chien Hsu

The vampire tradition in literature traces back to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, where the vampire is depicted as a seductive, immortal figure. This portrayal gave rise to strong sexual metaphors in later works, with blood exchange symbolizing the transfer of bodily fluids during sex. As such, vampire stories often touched on sexual temptation, with blood-sucking used to veil desire. This framing helped creators bypass strict censorship, especially in conservative eras like the 1960s.

The trope of vampires fearing sunlight, however, comes not from the novel, but from the film *Nosferatu*, which also introduced associations with disease. Vampires were recast as metaphors for

contagions like plague or STDs, reflecting fears of immigrants or those with rare illnesses.

Within this tradition, the comic *Embers and Petals* is set in a fictional medieval world where the Church serves as antagonist. While secretly experimenting on the vampire Agnes to develop an elixir of immortality, the Church spreads fearmongering lies about witches and vampires preying on humans. They manipulate villagers' fears of outsiders—especially independent women—while their knights massacre “monsters” who are actually victims of the Church's own experiments.

This setup reflects a familiar genre formula, where institutional religion

is an oppressive force. However, the human Bertha resists this structure. As a child, she meets Agnes in the forest, and their relationship grows through quiet, everyday moments. This dynamic replaces the traditional eroticized blood exchange with emotional intimacy, challenging two tropes of the genre: that vampires seduce through sexuality, and that lesbian desire must be expressed through bodily fluid exchange.

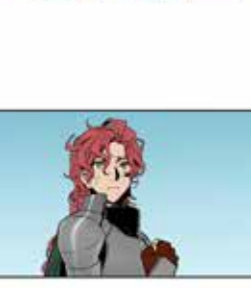
Though Bertha loses her memories and joins the Church under pressure, she is drawn back to Agnes. Upon their reunion, they share blood—not as a metaphor for sex, but as a symbol of trust, healing, and resistance to patriarchal control. As they escape together, sharing meals and dancing, their emotional bond deepens. Just before Bertha dies from poison, she recalls their past and seals their love with a kiss.

Though their love is cut short, Agnes chooses to live on. She builds a community around the place where they first met, where people of all kinds can coexist—

fulfilling the dream she once shared with Bertha.

Embers and Petals stands out not just for its artwork and storytelling, but for its quiet resistance to genre conventions. It challenges the eroticization of lesbian relationships in vampire fiction and instead roots queer love in care, memory, and shared ideals. This is precisely what many yuri readers seek: not fetishized portrayals, but emotionally authentic narratives. As such, this comic is not only beautiful and entertaining—it also carries cultural significance. Available online in both Chinese and English, it deserves broader recognition and future print publication.

Wen-Chien Hsu possesses a free-spirited soul. She has worked at LGBTQ+ organizations, the 113 Domestic Violence Hotline, and works as an editor of Books from Taiwan 2.0. She is dedicated to bringing Taiwanese comics and picture books to a global audience.







DELAH,

I'M LOOKING FOR THE COMMANDER. DO YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS?



THERE ARE MONSTERS EVERYWHERE, AND THE COMMANDER HAS ALSO GONE ON IN EXPECTATION.

TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON.



...THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE NORTHEASTERN WOODLAND VILLAGES IS CORRECT.

WE HAVE DISCOVERED GHOULS AND ELIMINATED THEM, AND ALSO RETRIEVED THE DOCUMENTS FROM THE SCENE.

THE REASON WHY THE GHOULS ATTACKED THE VILLAGE REMAINS TO BE CLARIFIED.



BEIDES, WE DISCOVERED THAT THE GHOULS HAD THE ABILITY TO USE WEAPONS, CAUSING INJURY TO ONE OF OUR TEAM MEMBERS.



ALTHOUGH HE IS CURRENTLY UNDER MEDICAL TREATMENT, HIS CONDITION IS STILL CRITICAL.



IT'S A PITY.

IT SEEMS WE DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THESE MONSTERS.



BERTHA, COME WITH ME. I'LL SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING WE CAN DO TO HELP YOUR TEAM MEMBER.

VAMPIRES ARE RARE, AND THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE'VE MANAGED TO CAPTURE ONE ALIVE.

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN ONE YET, RIGHT?



I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WANTED TO CAUGHT ONE.

WE COULD HAVE KILLED THIS MONSTER WITH A SINGLE STROKE.

VAMPIRES SHOW REMARKABLE RESILIENCE.

AND AGE MUCH MORE SLOWLY THAN HUMANS.

IF THE CAUSE BEHIND IT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD,

IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A DYING PERSON TO BE REVIVED.

THE COMMANDER INTENDS TO PRESENT THE WAY OF BACKTRAIL TO THE POPE IN THE CARNIVAL.

I NEED TO KNOW ALL THE SECRETS ABOUT THIS VAMPIRE. CAN YOU HELP ME?



YOU'RE GOING TO INVEST RESOURCES ON IT?!

THERE ARE MONSTERS EVERYWHERE. CURRENTLY, THE INVESTMENT PANEL DOESN'T HAVE THE RESOURCE TO WASTE ON A SINGLE MONSTER!

STOP WASTING OUR TIME JUST FOR SHOWING OFF!

CAPTAIN SCARLET,

THIS IS NOT A POLITICAL TUG-OF-WAR.

It's a time of war and chaos.



NOT ONLY MONSTERS, BUT PEOPLE WE ALSO KILLING EACH OTHER.

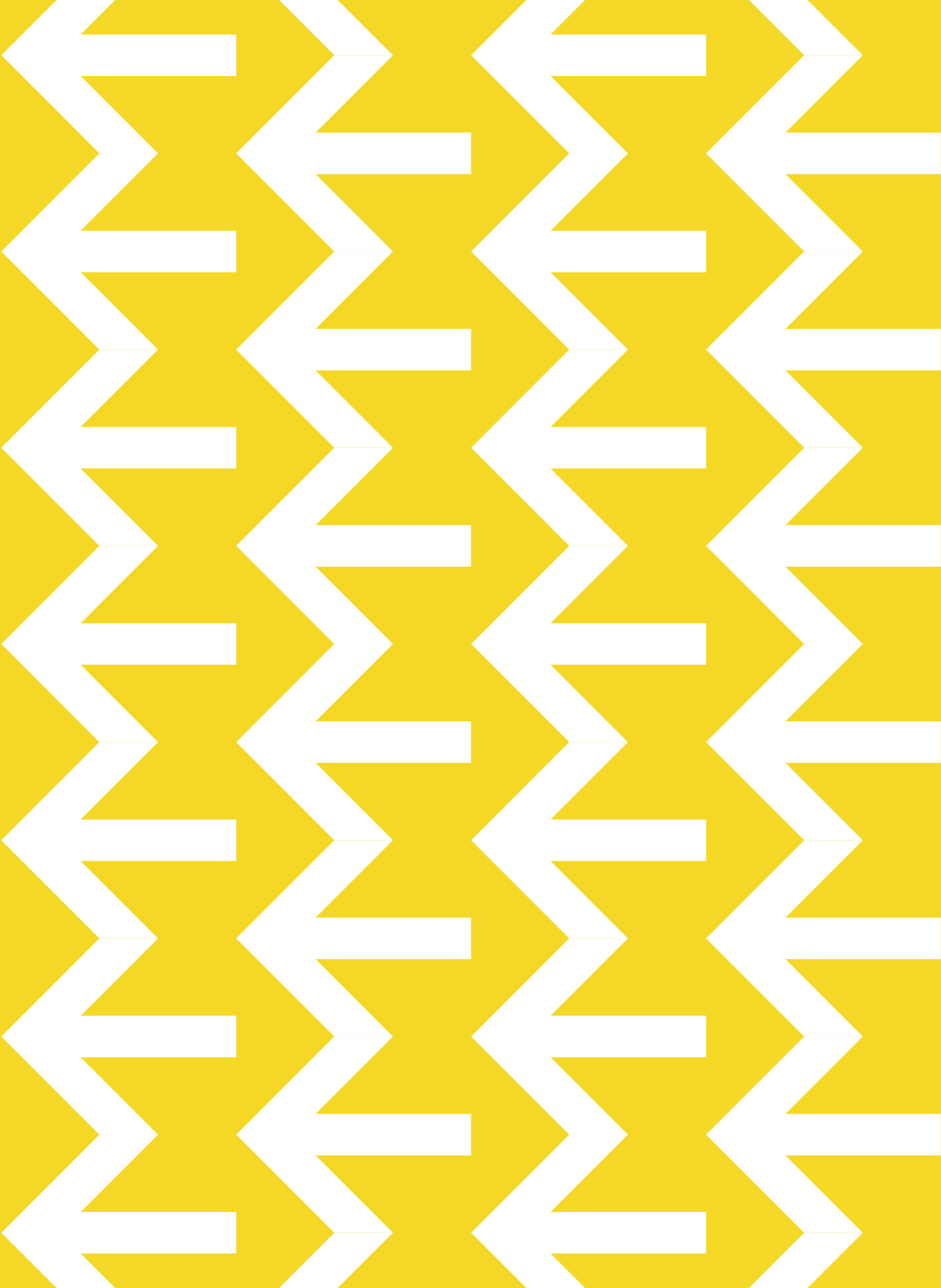
IF WE DISCOVER THE SECRET OF IMMORTALITY,

IMAGINE HOW MANY PEOPLE COULD BE GIVEN NEW LIFE!

THE CASE OF YOUR TEAM MEMBER IS JUST A TINY FRACTION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION.

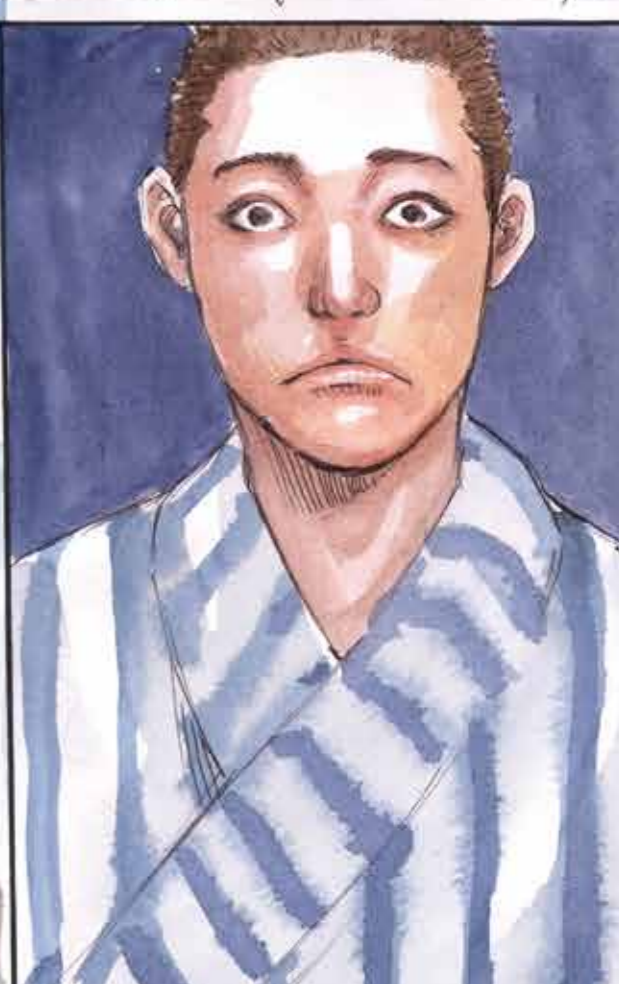
IF THE EXPERIMENT SUCCEEDS, THE SERIOUS INJURIES SUFFERED BY YOUR TEAMMATE

WOULDN'T BE A BIG DEAL.



**TO READ THE OTHER
ARTISTS' WORKS,
PLEASE GO TO PAGE 214
AND TURN PAGES
FROM RIGHT TO LEFT.**

(THIS IS HOW TAIWANESE COMICS ARE READ.)





If I can stand out as exceptional among my peers, the Japanese are sure to recognize my potential. Then, maybe...



Maybe, now that marriage between Islanders and the Japanese has been legalized, I might even catch a Japanese girl's eye.



I must continue working toward the goal I've set for myself!



Ba, get up! You can't sleep here...

As for my dream...

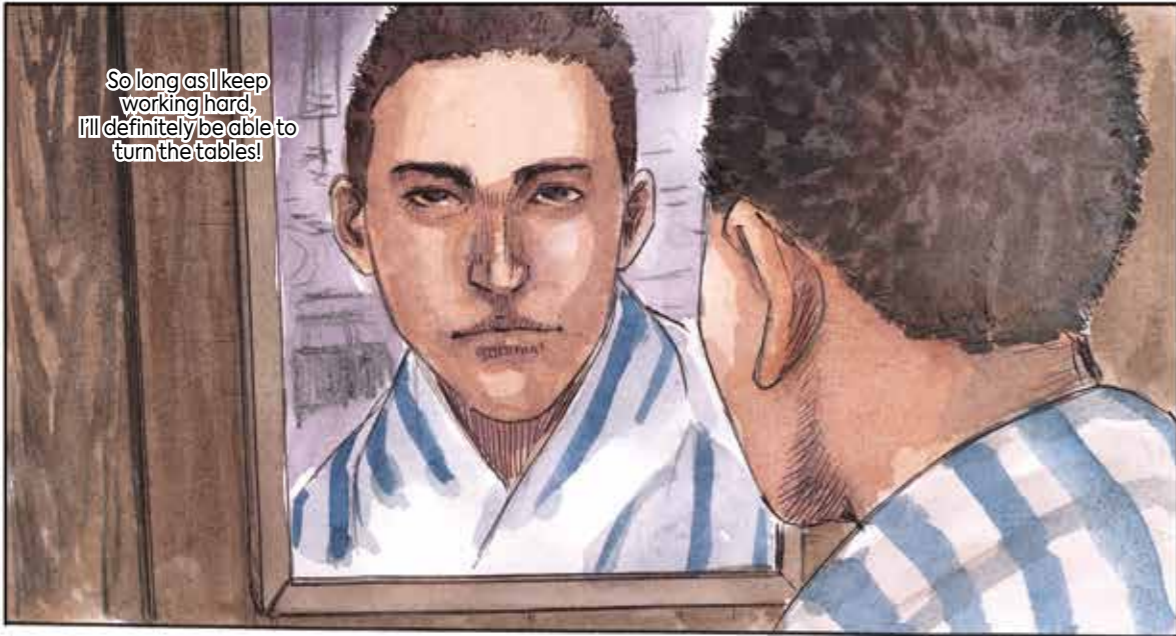


Definitely!



I can't let father and mother's nurturing and hopes go to waste.





At this rate, I can forget about realizing my dream—I might not even achieve my goals.



Such was my fate from the day I was born to a poor Islander family.



That said, many of the great men in the biographies I read also came from humble origins...



That's right...



Lifting the Curtain on a Literary Town of Papaya Trees: A Note from the Illustrator, Author, and Adaptor Ruan Guang-min

by Ruan Guang-Min

(originally published on Commonwealth Magazine from Acropolis Publishing)

What kind of writer was Long Ying-Zong? His prose was rich and vivid, like painting with words. Landscapes, expressions, clothing, buildings, even the play of light—he rendered them with intricate detail, as if his pen were dipped in paint. Native plants such as hibiscus, papaya trees, and banyans anchor his work in Taiwan’s seasons and climate, while even shifts in skin tone reflect the changing light and atmosphere.

Whether townsfolk, women, or intellectuals, Long’s characters are imbued with inner lives, each shaped by subtle

details that suggest their personalities. They feel real—like people you might know. And yet, behind all the beauty of his language, there’s always a subtle sadness, melancholy, and quiet lament over human weakness.

To adapt his work is to give up a part of my own soul and make space for him. During the creative process, I had to dialogue not only with the author but with the characters—interpreting their logic and emotional undercurrents. I believe characters, though created by writers, eventually develop their own thoughts,

responding to the story’s unfolding in their own way.

Long Ying-Zong, plagued by a stutter, physical frailty, and poverty from a young age, was a quiet observer. But in that silence, he became highly sensitive to others’ emotions, with a rich imagination that allowed him to craft vibrant literary worlds. Born during Japan’s colonial rule of Taiwan, he was well-educated but faced systemic discrimination. Despite his diligence, he was denied equal opportunities at work, and hindered in his personal and literary pursuits.

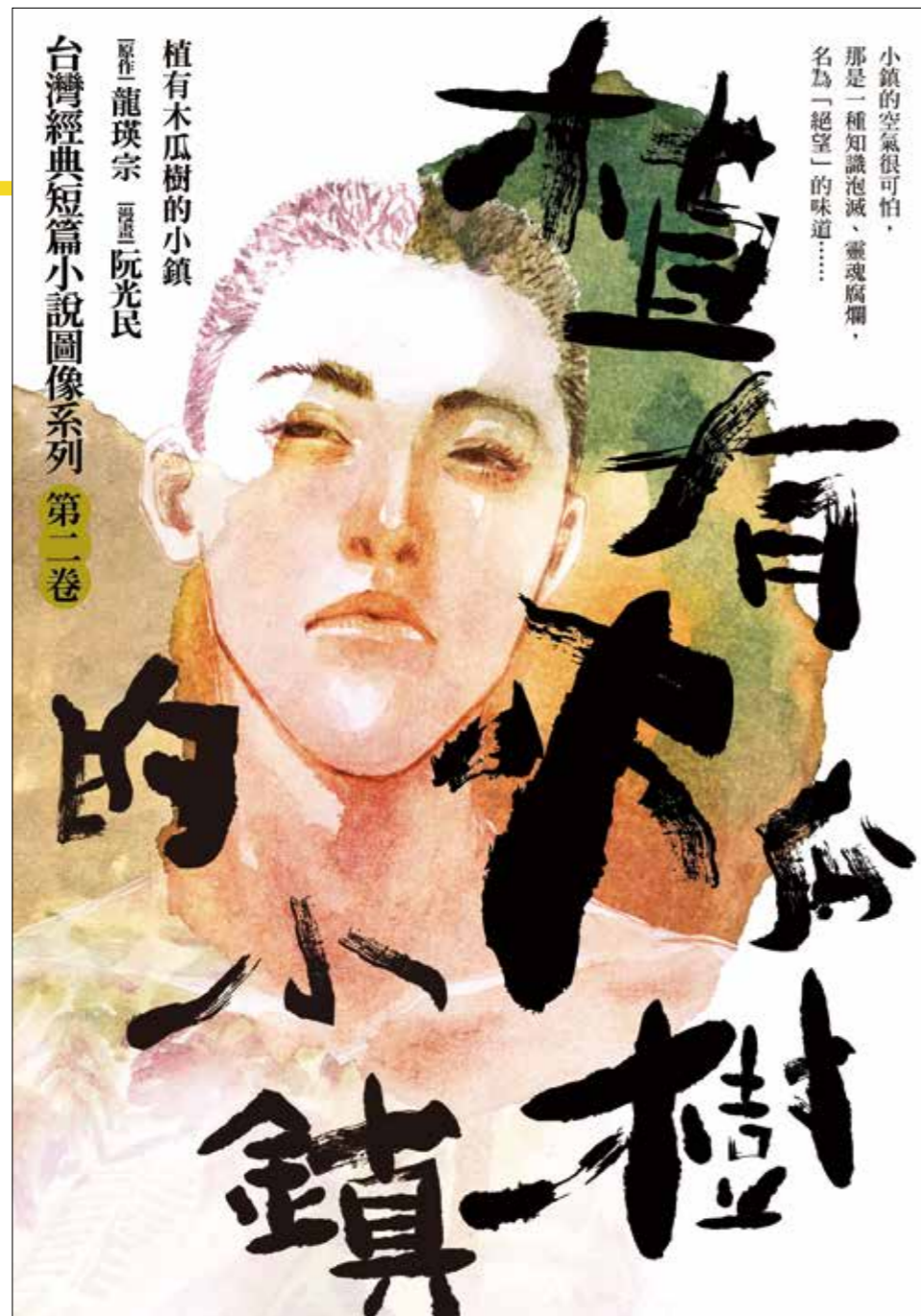
It’s common for writers to reflect on their own lives in their work. Long, once a poor student devoted to the arts, later became a bank clerk struggling to survive—much like Chen Yu-San, the protagonist of *The Town with the Papaya Tree*. Chen arrives in a small town full of ideals but slowly sees the harsh realities of society. Through this character, we witness the intellectual’s helplessness under colonialism and economic hardship—an

experience still painfully resonant today.

In adapting this work, I looked for themes that still speak to us. In *The Town with Papaya Tree*, the male characters are largely lost, passive, and disillusioned, while the women—though trapped in arranged marriages—burn like morning light through darkness. Long’s female characters offer redemption, not just romance. In this adaptation, I widened the emotional arc between Chen and Lin, allowing their mutual appreciation to unfold and grow into love.

Although Chen ultimately decays alongside the papaya tree. But like a modern Don Quixote, his sorrow and frustration has offered comfort to countless restless souls. I believe Long Ying-Zong used literature to pour his sorrow and frustration on the page—and in doing so, offered solace to countless restless, searching souls.

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



The Town with the Papaya Tree

A Full English translation is available.

植有木瓜樹的小鎮

Author: Ruan Guang-Min **Illustrator:** Ruan Guang-Min **Publisher:** Avanguard

Date: 06/2024 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

162 pages | 19 x 26 cm **Volume:** 1

Adaptation: Based on a novel

BFT2.0 Translator: Lin King

This beautifully illustrated graphic novel reimagines *The Town with the Papaya Tree* by Taiwanese author Long Ying Zong, written during the period of Japanese rule. The story follows Chen Yu-San, a young man full of ideals who arrives in a small town to work as a bank accounting assistant. Dreaming of success through study and hard work, he soon finds his ambitions crushed. The town slowly consumes his hopes, and despite relentless effort, he cannot escape the weight of colonial oppression and poverty. As the futility of his striving takes hold, his spirit unravels, leading him into despair and ruin.



Comic Artist Ruan Guang-Min

Acclaimed illustrator and author Ruan Guang-Min is known for his deep concern with the lives of ordinary people in Taiwan. Through his spare, unadorned drawings, he captures the values and outlook on life passed down from one generation to the next.

Ruan's works include *Dong Hua Chun Barbershop* and *Yong-Jiu Grocery Store*, both of which were adapted into television series; *Heaven Restaurant*, in three volumes; *King-tshat, Cop or Robber?*, in two volumes; and *Yong-Jiu Grocery Store*, in five volumes. He also turned the stage play *Human Conditions*, as well as the novel *The Illusionist on the Skywalk*, into graphic novels. Ruan has received numerous honors, including the 8th and 11th Golden Comic Awards and the Silver Prize at the 14th Japan International Manga Award.



I WANT IT!

OOH, THIS IS WHAT OUR TEACHER RECOMMENDED!

THERE'S ALSO ALMOND TOFU, LOTUS SEED SOUP...

TIRED OF SALTY FLAVORS?

THEN LET'S MAKE SOME FRIED PLANTAINS!

IT'S PRETTY EASY TO EAT ON THE GO IF YOU JUST WRAP IT IN PAPER.

THE CONSISTENCY OF THE BUNS GOES SO WELL WITH THE PORK!

AND YOU GET DONGPO PORK BUNS!

PUT PORK BELLY THAT'S STEWED FOR AN ENTIRE MORNING ON A STEAMED FLOUR BUN.

ADD PICKLED VEGETABLES AND PEANUT POWDER...

THE PORIA CAKE IS SO FRESH AND SWEET!

BROTHER RENSEI IS SO SKILLED IN THE KITCHEN.

OH?

DIDN'T EXPECT YOU ALL TO HAVE SUCH SOPHISTICATED PALATES.

EVERY-THING'S DELICIOUS.

DIP CRAB, WATER CHESTNUT, AND FLOUR IN EGG, FRY IT UP, THEN SERVE ON THE CRAB SHELL.

EIGHT TREASURES BAKED CRAB.

WOW, IT'S HOT RIGHT OUT OF THE OVEN.

YOU SHOULD CONSIDER YOURSELVES LUCKY. WE HAVE SO MANY INGREDIENTS TODAY.

TUBE RICE PUDDING!

MIX SOY SAUCE, SHIITAKE MUSHROOMS, AND MINCED MEAT WITH STICKY RICE. THEN PUT INTO A BAMBOO CYLINDER AND STEAM.

CRAB MEAT, TALK ABOUT FANCY!

YOU'RE VERY WELCOME!

THANK YOU BOTH SO MUCH.

RENHO, BROTHER RENSEI,

WE DEFINITELY WON'T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS WITH THE GARDEN PARTY NOW!

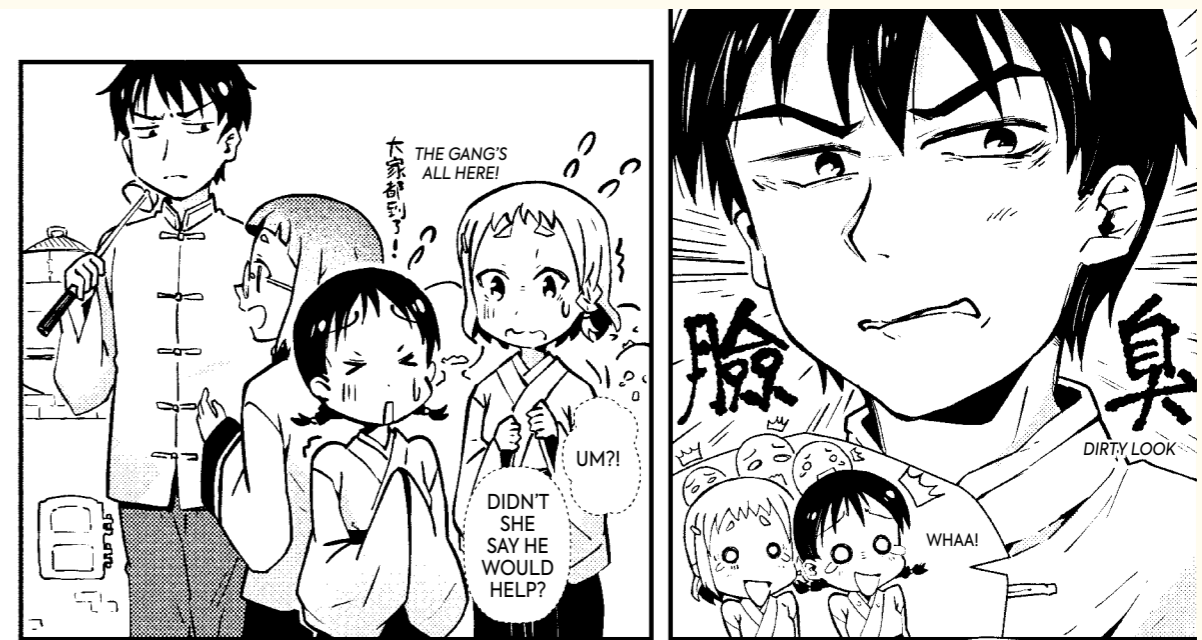
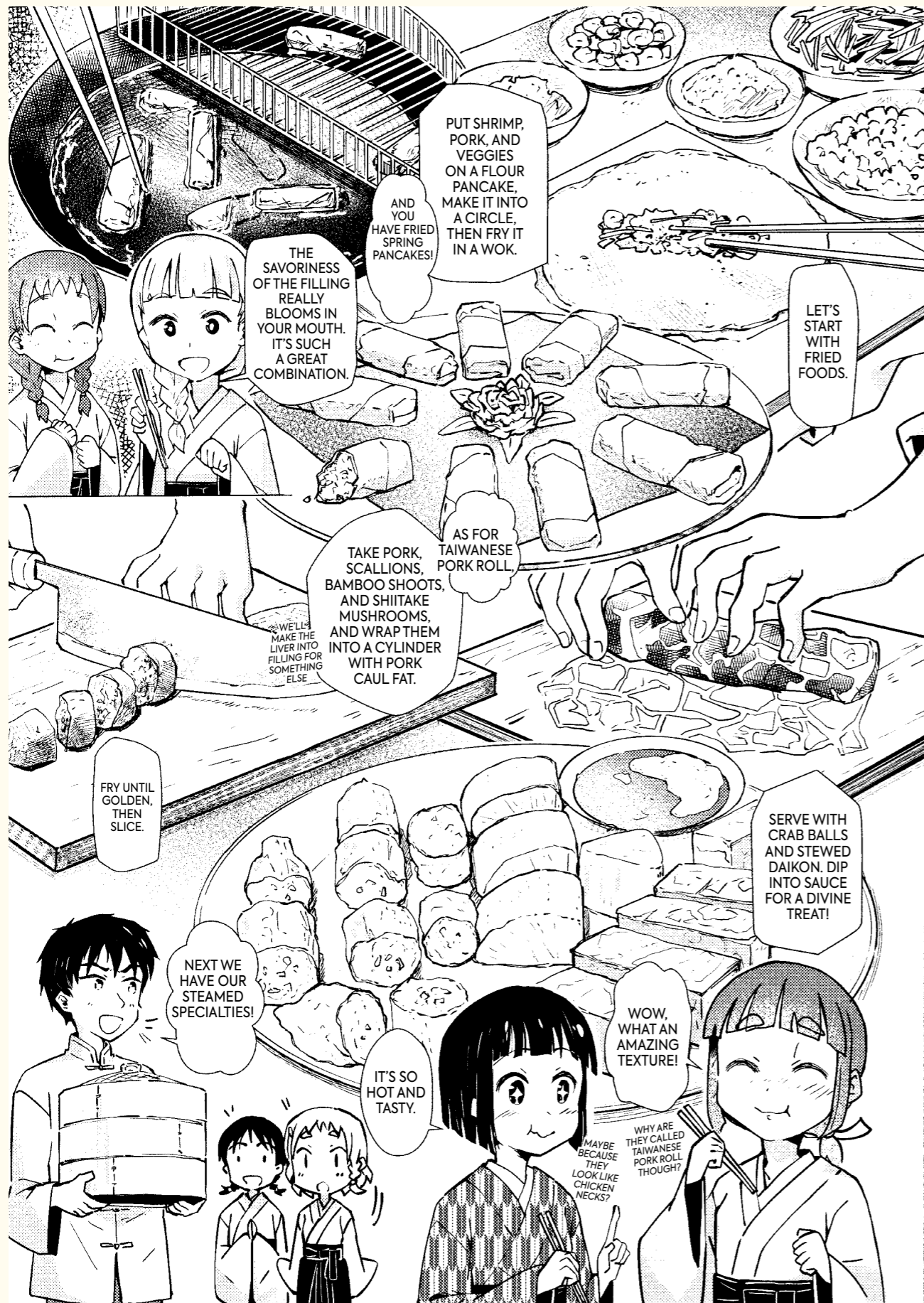
YEAH, TOTALLY!

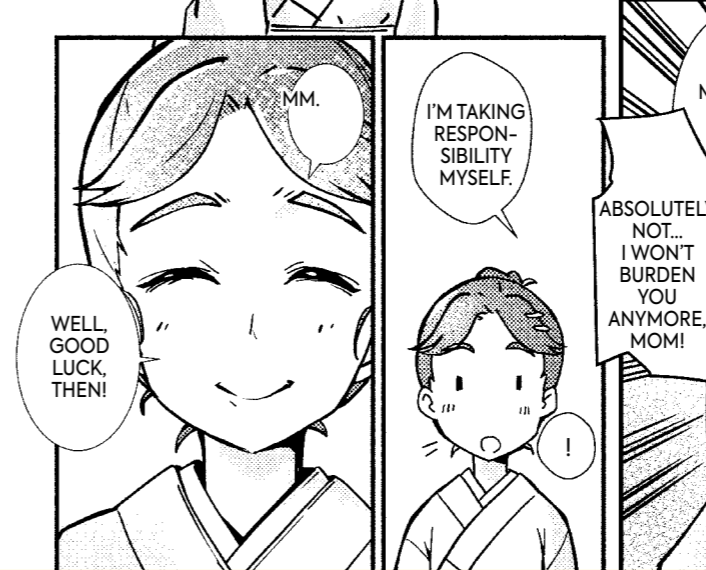
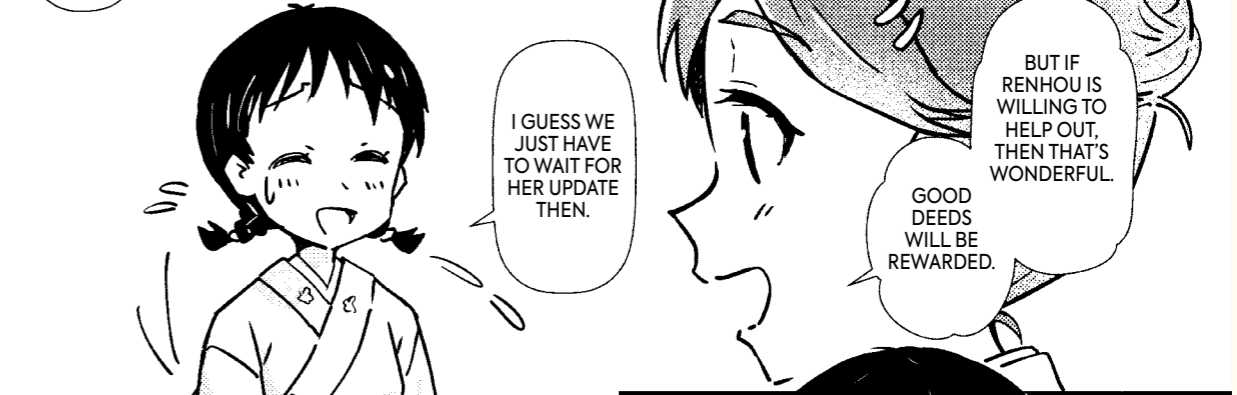
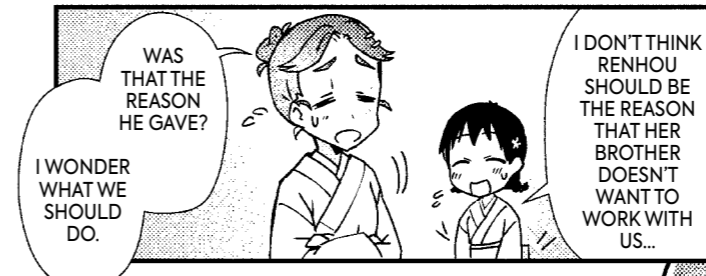
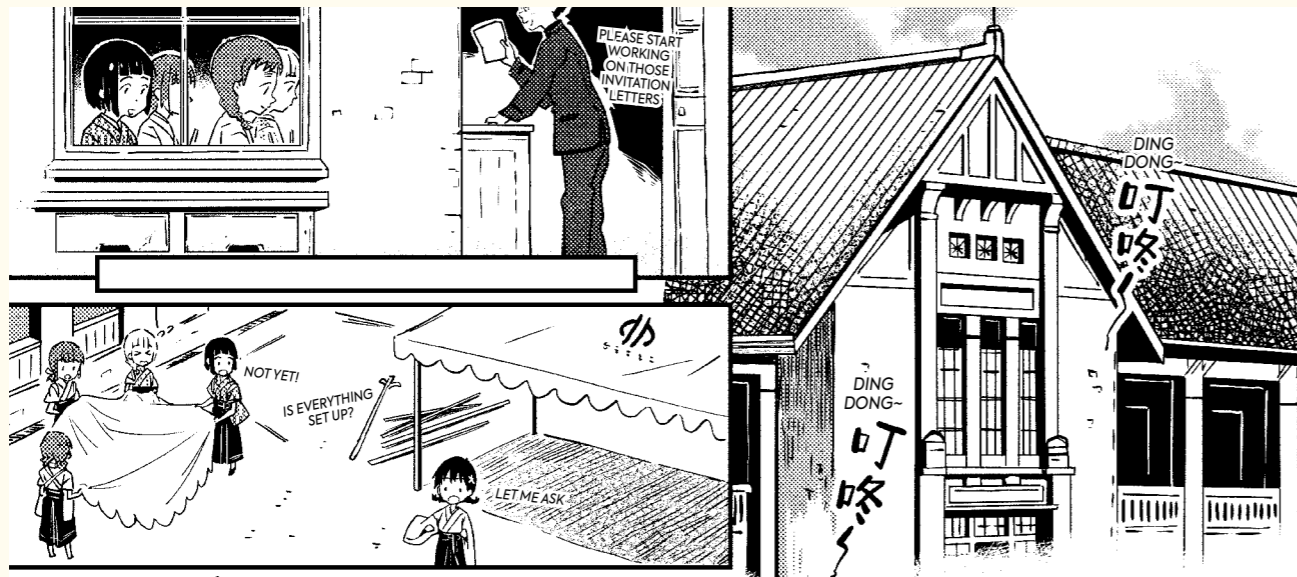
TAIWANESE CUISINE IS SO DIVERSE. YOU'VE OPENED MY EYES TO A WHOLE NEW WORLD!

IT'S SURPRISINGLY TASTY.

THE DAIKON CAKE IS SO SAVORY, TOO.

THE RUNBING SPRING ROLLS ARE ALSO GREAT.





After a Taste of Good Food? A Look at *Tomoe's Memories of Koumeiya*, Vol. 1

by A-P'ao Lin
(originally published on OpenBook)

The manga *Tomoe's Memories of Koumeiya* is set in Taipei during Japan's Taisho era. Its protagonist, Tomoe, is a second-year student at Taipei Second Girls' High School and heir to Koumeiya, a well-known ryotei (Japanese-style restaurant). Though her dream is to become a refined and capable *okami* (mistress of the house) like her mother, she's still often scolded by her strict grandmother as being "not up to standard."

Eager to prove herself, Tomoe volunteers to handle food vendor coordination for her school's upcoming garden party. Her initiative, however, meets fierce opposition from her grandmother, who fears the family restaurant is already overworked. Taking

on extra tasks, she warns, could even put their reputation at risk. With her mother's quiet encouragement, Tomoe chooses to press on in secret, enlisting the help of her uncle—behind her grandmother's back.

This setup cleverly creates dramatic tension: the disobedient act promises a clash of generations, but also reveals the older generation's efforts to train the next. As Tomoe and her uncle begin visiting restaurants across the city, readers are treated to a vivid tour of 1920s Taipei's culinary landscape—from Japanese sweets in Sakae District and black tea from Tsujiri, to Western cuisine at the elite Railway Hotel, and eventually, into the heart of Daitotei (present-day Dadaocheng), a vibrant Taiwanese district.

Tomoe's foray into Daitotei is not just narrative flair—it reflects historical reality. In 1922, the colonial government implemented a "Japanese-Taiwanese co-education" policy. The principal and teachers in the story hope the garden party can symbolically reflect this spirit, encouraging Tomoe to source food from local Taiwanese vendors and include native cuisine on the menu. This might be the most politically charged element of the otherwise romantic tale of girls, food, and youth during the Japanese occupation.

During the manga's serialization, readers debated whether the story overly romanticized Japanese rule. One character, Michiko, expresses fear and disdain toward Taiwanese food and avoids entering Daitotei, which understandably irked some Taiwanese readers. Still, given that the protagonist is Japanese, the manga offers an honest portrayal of the prejudices held by Japanese youth in colonial Taiwan—prejudices that gradually unravel through cultural encounters.

Guided by their Taiwanese classmate Renho, Tomoe and her group explore Daitotei's alleyways and temple markets. There, they sample *gua bao* (pork belly buns) and *aiyu jelly*, the latter even surprising Michiko with its sweet, refreshing taste. After helping Renho when she was bullied, Tomoe and her friends earn the trust of her brother Rensei, a chef at the "Drunken Fairy Restaurant," who

helps them prepare Taiwanese dishes like crab balls, pork rolls, spring rolls, and fried plantains for the event—all of which become crowd favorites.

Volume one of *Tomoe's Memories of Koumeiya* showcases detailed historical research, smooth storytelling, and beautifully framed panels. The wide array of Taiwanese and Japanese dishes—along with the appendix section "Koumeiya's Kitchen Time," which offers historical food facts—makes it a mouth-watering read, inspiring cravings for chicken rolls or a juicy *gua bao* at your local night market.

As the series progresses, will it explore the rigorous life of an *okami*, spotlight food craftsmanship, or explore family ties—and perhaps even Taiwan's complex colonial history? For now, we leave the questions open and continue watching, page by delicious page.

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

A-P'ao Lin (real name Chao-li Lin), holds a PhD in Taiwanese Literature from National Cheng Kung University, with a specialization in Taiwan-Hong Kong literary and cultural studies. He is now shifting his focus toward food culture research. His reviews and essays appear in *The News Lens*, *Youth Literary*, *Giloo*, *Initium Media*, *UNITAS*, and *INK Literary Monthly*.



Tomoe's Memories of Koumeya

A Full English translation is available.

友繪的小梅屋記事簿

Author: Shimizu **Illustrator:** Shimizu **Contributor:** Sanshokubou Haku **Publisher:** Gaea Books

Date: 02/2022 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

204 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1 (Three-book series.)

Awards: 2023 Japan International Manga Award Bronze Award

Rights sold: Japanese

BFT2.0 Translator: Mike Fu

Set in Taishō-era Taipei—a period of flourishing urban entertainment, vibrant social life, and a richly diverse food culture—this story follows Tomoe, a high school student and heir to a renowned traditional restaurant (ryōtei). Tasked with organizing the food for her school's upcoming festival, Tomoe is determined to prove herself to her grandmother, the restaurant's formidable first-generation proprietress.

Joined by friends and family, Tomoe embarks on a flavorful journey across Taipei. Together they visit celebrated chefs and eateries, confronting challenge after challenge to assemble a dazzling menu. The international flavors they gather become the highlight of the festival, delighting everyone in attendance.

Grounded in historical records and extensive research into 1920s culinary culture, this work vividly reconstructs the atmosphere of old Taipei—from vanished streetscapes to surviving architecture. It is a story that transports readers into a city alive with cultural exchange, where food becomes both memory and celebration.



Author **Shimizu**

Shimizu is a storyteller drawn to themes of youth and nostalgia. Inspired by both historical and contemporary cultures from around the world, Shimizu weaves these influences into creative narratives. Currently, Shimizu works at WeiComic Studio, a collaborative space where creators support and inspire one another.



Contributor **Sanshokubou Haku**

Sanshokubou Haku is the leader of a small indie (dōjin) circle. He describes himself as an “editor” and has a deep love for both history and manga. Once, after buying a broken Plarail toy train to repurpose for a video, he accidentally repaired it—forcing him to hunt down another broken one instead.



LIFTS
衫.

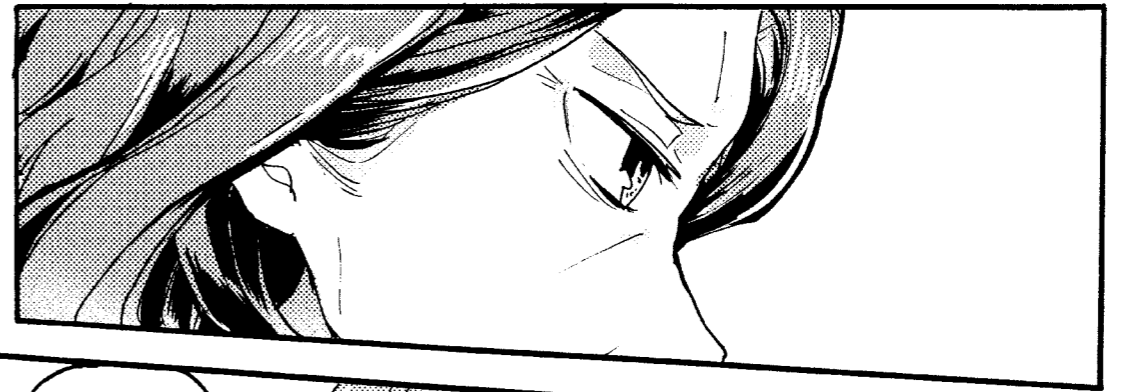
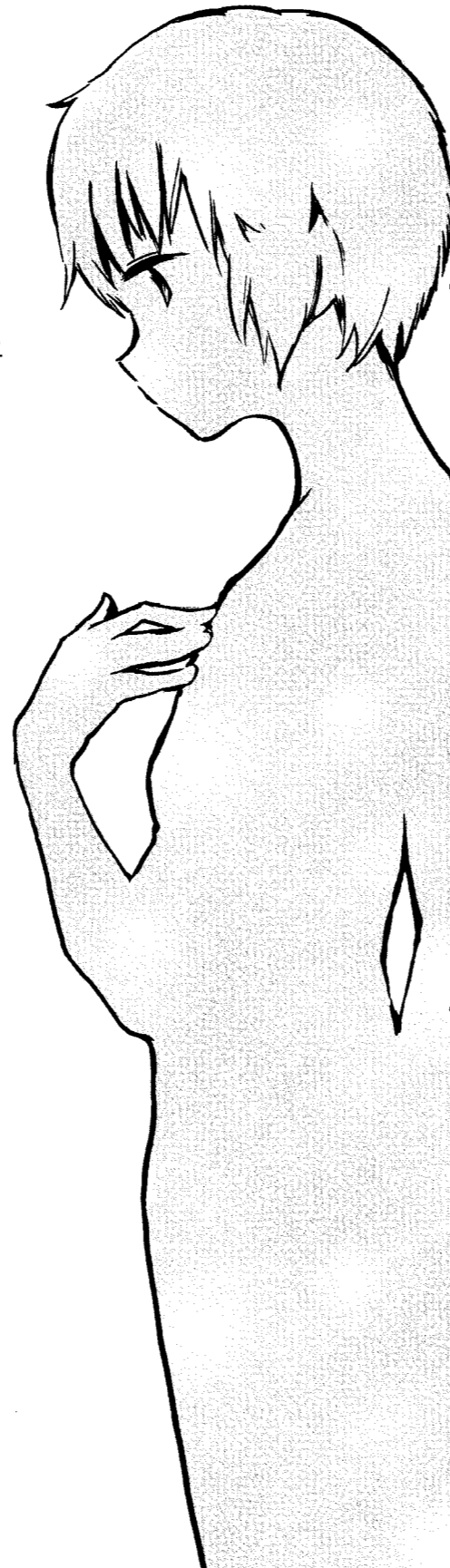
IF MY BODY IS
NOTHING BUT
A JOKE,

HOW CAN YOU
CONSIDER
ME LUCKY?



A-RU, DO YOU
THINK MY BODY
LOOKS FUNNY?

HUH?



BOYS ARE BOYS.

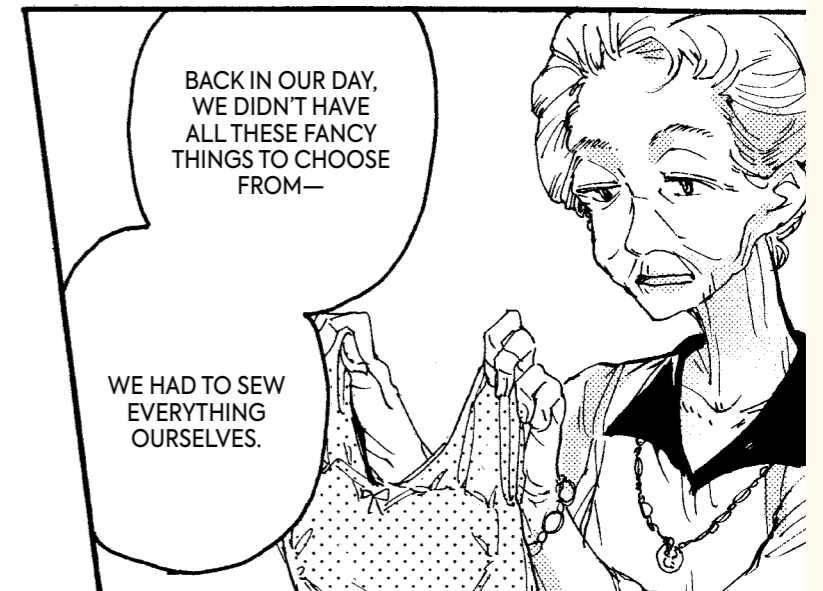
BUT IF A GIRL GOES
OUT WITHOUT
WEARING A BRA,
SHE'LL BE A JOKE!



BANG

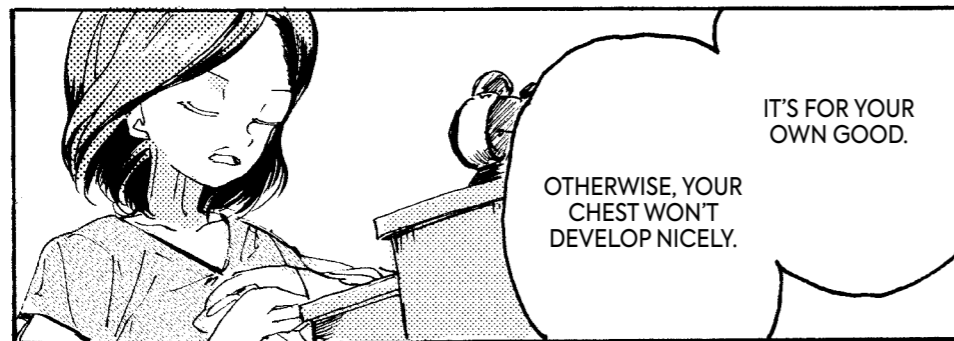


KIDS THESE
DAYS DON'T
EVEN REALIZE
HOW LUCKY
THEY ARE.



BACK IN OUR DAY,
WE DIDN'T HAVE
ALL THESE FANCY
THINGS TO CHOOSE
FROM—

WE HAD TO SEW
EVERYTHING
OURSELVES.

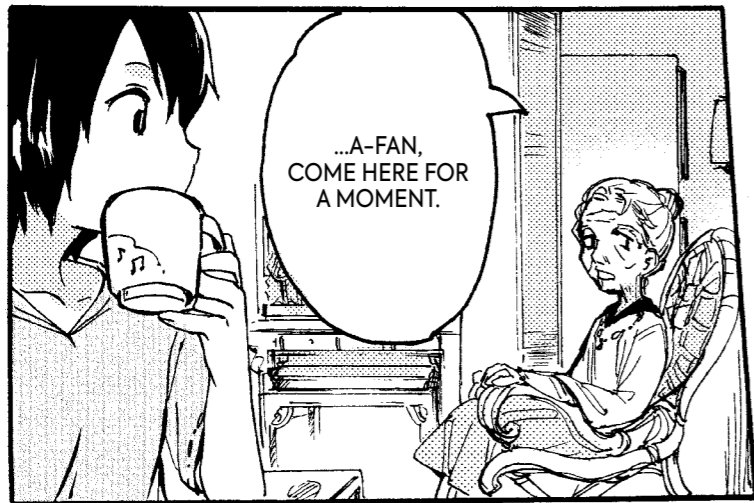


GRADUALLY, MY BODY FEELS LIKE IT NO LONGER BELONGS TO ME.

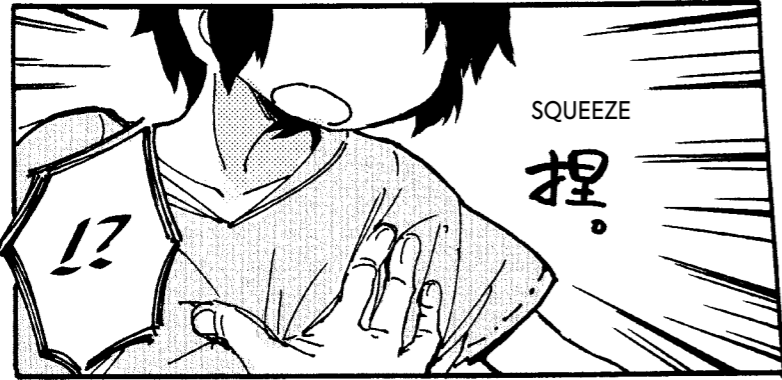


IT'S TERRIFYING.



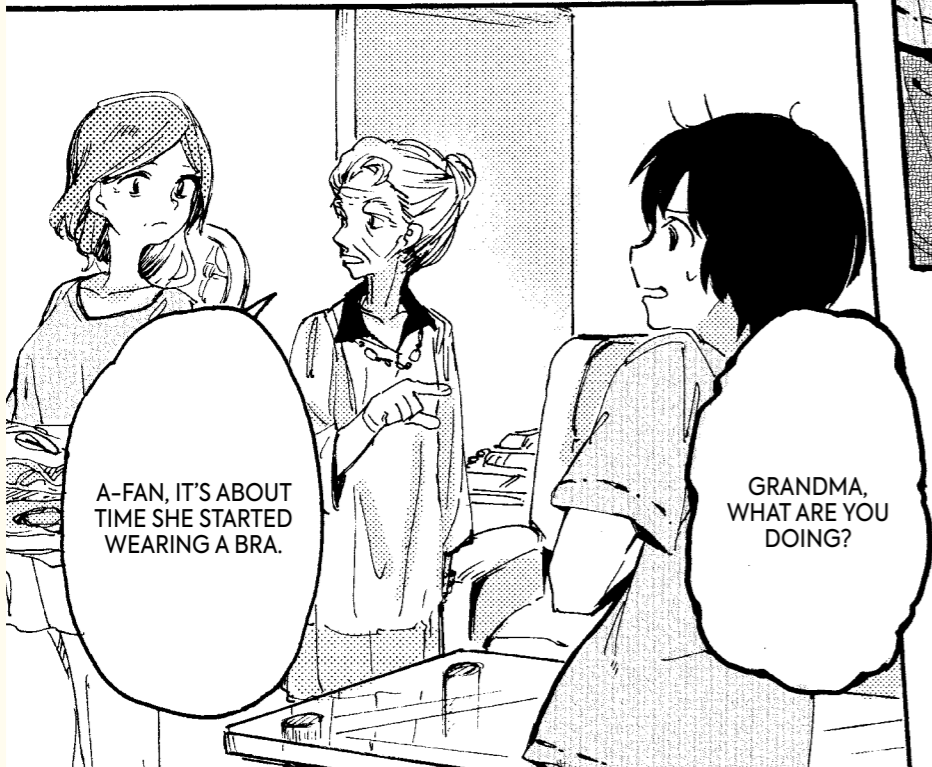


...A-FAN, COME HERE FOR A MOMENT.



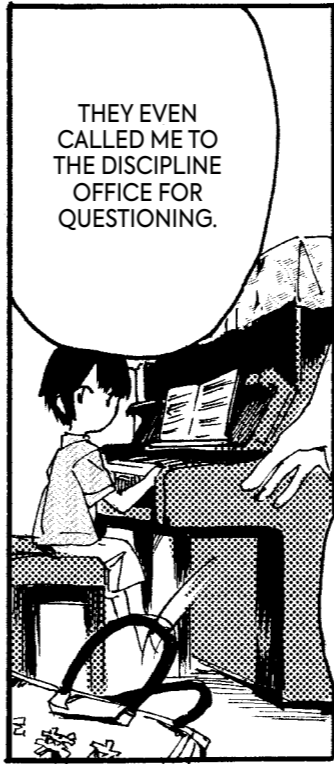
SQUEEZE
捏。

MAYBE THIS IS MY PUNISHMENT—

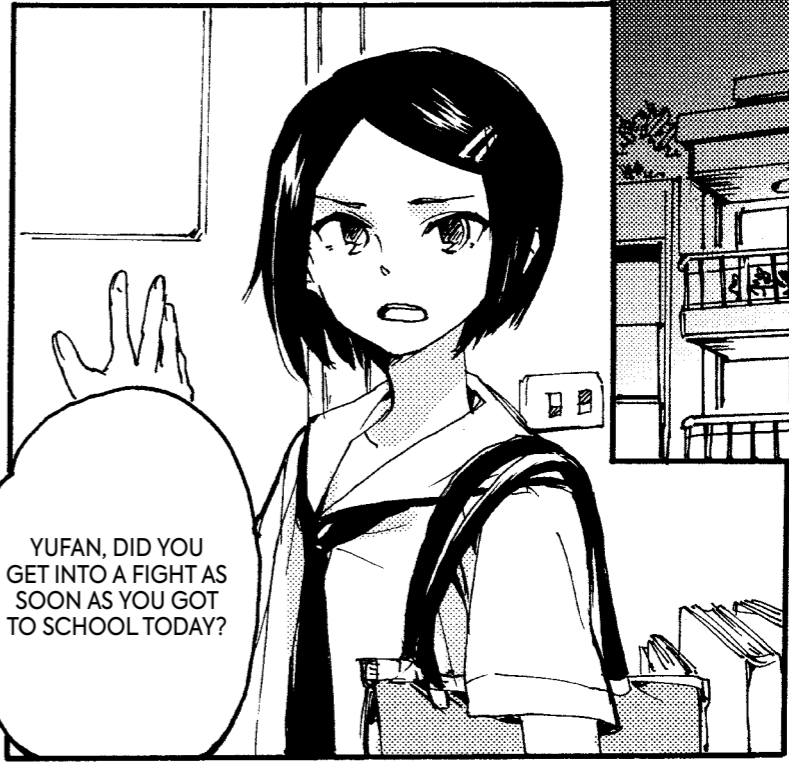


A-FAN, IT'S ABOUT TIME SHE STARTED WEARING A BRA.

GRANDMA, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?



THEY EVEN CALLED ME TO THE DISCIPLINE OFFICE FOR QUESTIONING.



YUFAN, DID YOU GET INTO A FIGHT AS SOON AS YOU GOT TO SCHOOL TODAY?

POKE POKE POKE POKE



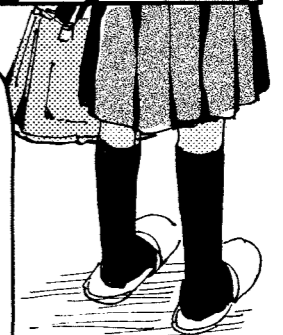
I REALLY DON'T WANT TO GET DRAGGED INTO IT EVERY TIME.

I DON'T CARE WHAT THE REASON IS. IF YOU'RE GOING TO CAUSE TROUBLE, AT LEAST WAIT UNTIL I GRADUATE.



IT'S REALLY EMBARRASSING.

MOM'S ALWAYS LOOKING AFTER YOU, AND YOU STILL ACT LIKE THIS...



Breaking Free from Gender Roles, A Taiwanese Coming-of-Age Story: A Review of the Comic *BLOSSOM*

by Mei-hsuan Liao
(originally published on OpenBook)

BLOSSOM, a manga by Taiwanese artist D.S., tells the coming-of-age story of Yufan, a queer teenager burdened by gender expectations. As a child, her non-conforming traits set her apart, and family pressure only deepened her confusion. In college, she discovers others like her—queer identities hidden in plain sight.

While LGBT narratives are no longer rare, *BLOSSOM* distinguishes itself by blending the story of an intersex protagonist with Taiwan's folk ritual, known as the "Flower of Transformation," rooted in the worship of Chen Jinggu, the Lady of the Water. Women seeking children pray at her temple and walk across the Hundred Flowers Bridge. Flower buds represent future children—white for boys, red for

girls. No flowers mean infertility, prompting a ritual to "plant" fertility. Pregnant women may also "swap" flowers to symbolically change a baby's gender—red for white if they wish for a boy.

The ritual's vibrant imagery comforts women hoping for children. Yet it also hints at sorrow. If a daughter is born after a flower swap, blame often falls on the mother. If a son is born, she may still feel guilt for giving up a daughter's soul. Beneath its beauty lies emotional weight.

The story begins with a mother's guilt. Though raised as a girl, Yufan preferred boyish clothes and resisted feminine stereotypes, drawing constant scolding. She later learns her parents had prayed for a boy, but she was born

intersex. Due to underdeveloped male genitals, they chose to raise her as a girl. Her mother, mocked by her in-laws, was determined to mold Yufan into the perfect daughter. Whenever Yufan's behavior strayed from this ideal, it reopened old wounds. Her mother responded with coldness, retreating into trimming plants—a symbolic escape.

Unlike other mothers who anxiously await the gender of their child, Yufan's mother faced dual disappointment: she didn't bear a boy, and her daughter didn't act like one. Elders' gossip pierced deeply. Unknowingly, she became an agent of patriarchy, forcing femininity onto Yufan's body.

It's unsettling how generations of women, once they become elders, enforce the very norms that once confined them. Men also face limits, but patriarchy often offers them escape—Yufan's father disappears into work, avoiding family conflict. Caught in this tension, Yufan feels like neither a red nor white flower—just a monster in between. She asks, "If I don't know where I belong, how can I know where to go for freedom?"

After leaving home for university, Yufan embraces newfound freedom and finds strength among other queer individuals—especially her cousin Ling, once the family's model young woman. In a surprise twist, Ling comes out as a lesbian to Yufan's mother and is unexpectedly accepted. This shift is partly due to her emotional appeal, but also because

the grandmother—long the enforcer of tradition—has passed away, easing the atmosphere.

Ling, known for her quiet devotion to temple gods, later celebrates her same-sex wedding at the temple gates after marriage equality is legalized. Watching Ling, rooted in tradition yet embracing queerness, and Yufan, strong in her own difference, their mother begins to soften. Like flowers of many colors, none are less beautiful in the eyes of one who loves them.

BLOSSOM gains resonance through its use of ritual, showing how tradition can both constrain and heal. Yufan's grandmother clung to authority; Ling found emotional connection. The mother, once rigid, begins to empathize with her child. Flowers once symbolized gender control; now they bloom as signs of reconciliation. Flowers grow in different soils, yet under the same sky—just like people, seeking space to breathe.

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

Mei-hsuan Liao, born in 1978 in Chiayi, Taiwan, double-majored in History and Foreign Languages at National Taiwan University. She enjoys damp weather, insomnia, and the color moss green. Her works include Dialogue des oreilles, published in France, and At Her Grandfather's Memorial Service.



BLOSSOM

A Full English translation is available.

百花百色

Author: D.S. **Illustrator:** D.S. **Publisher:** Gaea Books

Date: 01/2019 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

210 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1

Awards: 2020 Japan International Manga Award Bronze Award

Rights sold: French, Italian

BFT2.0 Translator: Michelle Kuo

Yufan has always been told to “act like a girl”: learn the piano, stay quiet and dignified, wear skirts, and never be noisy or rough. Pressured by her mother and grandmother, she hides her true self and conforms to the image they demand.

Her world shifts when she discovers she is intersex—and that her mother performed a Daoist ritual during pregnancy to ensure a boy. As puberty arrives, Yufan realizes her body is not developing like other girls’, deepening her confusion and isolation.

Published shortly before Taiwan legalized same-sex marriage, this award-winning graphic novel offers an intimate portrait of one young woman’s exploration of gender, identity, and belonging. It confronts the weight of family expectations, the grip of tradition and religion, and the pain of social scrutiny. Seeking refuge, Yufan feels lost—until her cousin invites her to join a queer rights protest and attend a same-sex wedding slowing, a door to acceptance and solidarity opens.



Author D.S.

D.S., a native of Keelung, loves the sea despite rarely venturing outdoors. An optimistic creator, she is dedicated to portraying the inner lives and emotions of young women and girls. She won the 2020 Japan International Manga Award Bronze Award.

... and track them to the place where they assembled for their full moon party.

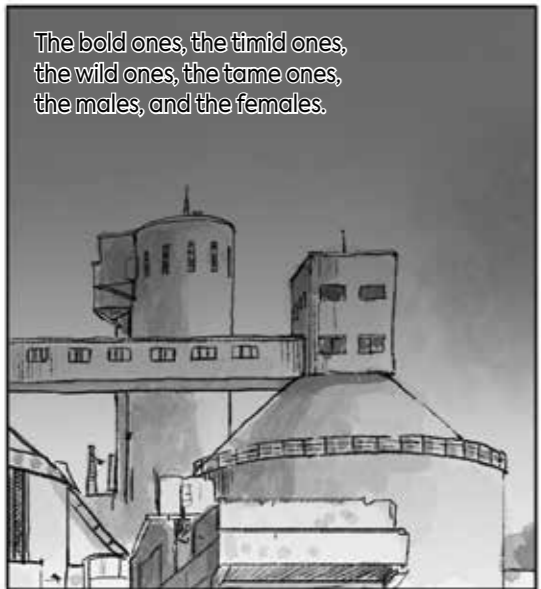




Every once in a while, there were nights when the cats would disappear like a gust of wind.



The hunters inside and the hunters outside.



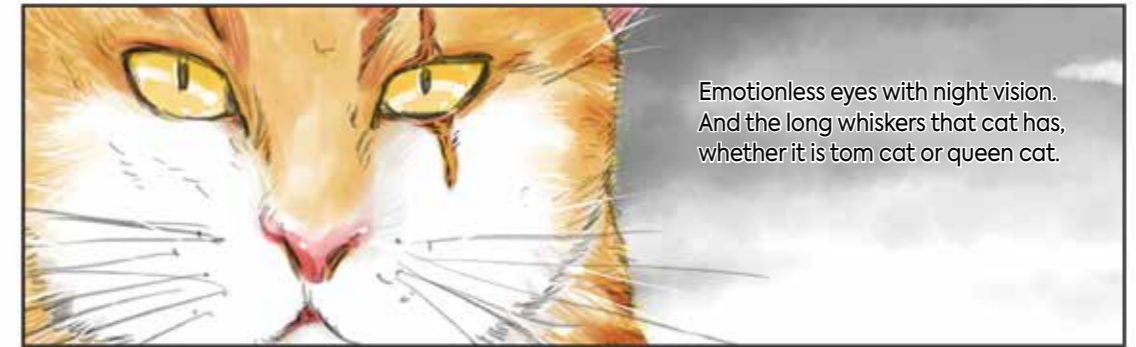
The bold ones, the timid ones, the wild ones, the tame ones, the males, and the females.



They were all gone.



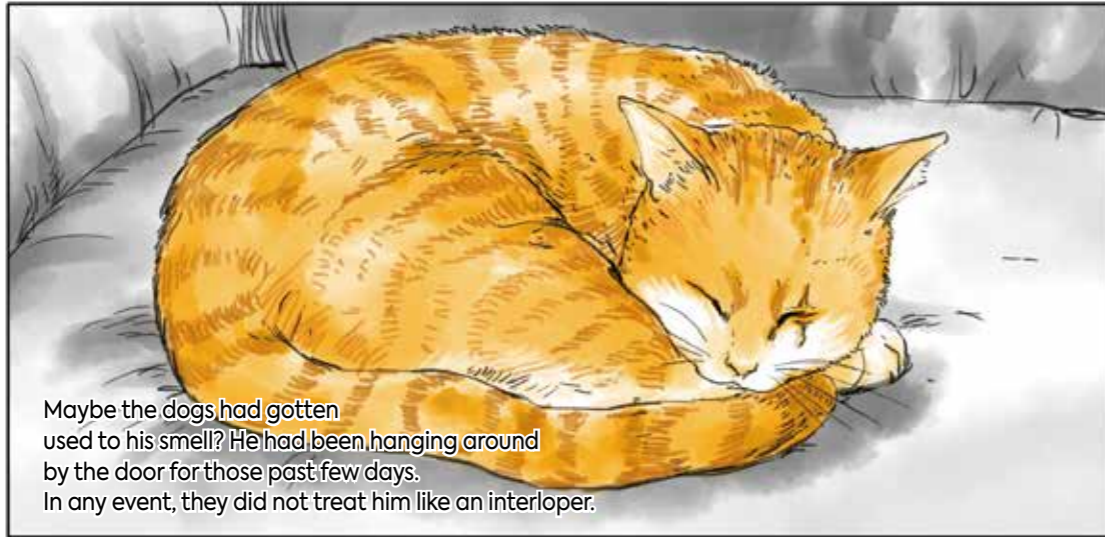
How I wished that I had silent shock-absorbing pads on the bottom of my feet. And a body as supple and sinuous as a flying squirrel.



Emotionless eyes with night vision. And the long whiskers that cat has, whether it is tom cat or queen cat.



If I did, I could follow them in real time ...



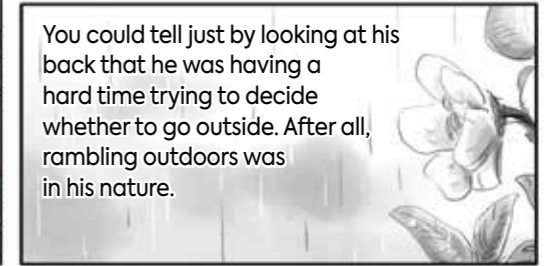
Maybe the dogs had gotten used to his smell? He had been hanging around by the door for those past few days. In any event, they did not treat him like an interloper.



He acted as if he had been living in the house for his whole life.



It rained constantly.



You could tell just by looking at his back that he was having a hard time trying to decide whether to go outside. After all, rambling outdoors was in his nature.



Scarry.

Why don't you just go, and come back soon?



Let's just wait for the rain to stop.



His expression said it all ...



Reunions and Farewells that Leap Off the Page: *Hunters*

by Tsung-Hui Huang
(originally published on OKAPI from Fisfisa Media)

This comic is an adaptation of the renowned Taiwanese writer Tien-Hsin Chu's essay collection *Hunters*. Centered on the observation of street cats, the work tells the stories of feline lives shared across homes, alleys, and city corners—interweaving the lives of humans and cats who inhabit the same urban spaces. Acclaimed comic artist Ruan Guang-Min once again crosses artistic boundaries to reinterpret Chu's work. Drawing from two particularly heartfelt essays, *Daddy Cat* and *Lee Jiabao*, Ruan captures the emotional and tender interactions between humans and cats. His use of warm, gentle hues breathes life into the cats, making them vivid presences in the reader's memory. In contrast, the grayscale backgrounds evoke the passage of time and subtly hint at the emotional coldness of urban life.

It has now been sixteen years since *Hunters* was first published. When I first read this book, I realized that behind

Tien-Hsin Chu's seemingly "provocative" declarations lay a deep and thoughtful intention. Though the book contains poignant moments of interaction between the writer and her feline companions, and offers lively portraits of cats' elegance and cleverness, *Hunters* was never meant to be a sentimental, "cat-speak" book that simply tugs at the heartstrings. It is not written for readers who merely want to celebrate the cuteness of cats. Instead, Chu attempts to show the harsh and often tragic reality of feline survival in a human-centered world—a reality so brutal that even those lucky enough to receive human protection may still meet unfortunate ends.

That is why the real aim of *Hunters* lies beyond the echo chamber of devoted cat lovers. Chu writes not just for those who already adore cats, but also—perhaps more importantly—for those who misunderstand or even dislike them. If these readers can be moved by the

honesty and compassion in her stories, perhaps they can begin to empathize with the stray cat population, and just maybe, their fate won't be quite so bleak.

In the comic's afterword, Ruan Guang-Min reflects, "If nature is the living room of all beings, then humans are merely its longest tenants. We have a responsibility to care for this living room and to show kindness to those lives that are only here for a short while." Yet, in recent years, I've noticed a troubling shift. As birthrates fall and more people lavish affection on their pets, there's a growing misconception that dogs and cats now enjoy "high status." Labels like "invasive species" are more frequently applied to stray animals, hardening public attitudes toward them. Some have even come to believe that strays simply don't belong in our shared living room, and no amount of emotional storytelling will sway them.

As the back cover of *Hunters* tells us, "This book is a prayer—a hope that we can all face both the beauty and the cruelty of this world." I've taken this to heart. To me, the "we" in that sentence refers to the "cat angels" in *Hunters*—those devoted souls who have chosen to protect street cats. In doing so, they witness immense beauty, but also confront unspeakable sorrow. Still, when one holds onto something deeply, it creates resonance. Tien-Hsin Chu's unwavering dedication over the years has become a source of strength for many like-minded individuals. The new comic adaptation of *Hunters* is itself a form of that strength—a gentle remedy for those

who continue down the difficult path of protecting stray cats.

In many ways, Ruan Guang-Min's adaptation offers the most immediate form of resonance. In his afterword, he recalls how *Hunters* stirred memories of his own fleeting encounters with stray animals, and he voices a heartfelt sympathy for the fate of street cats in an indifferent concrete jungle. His illustrations of "Daddy Cat" and "Lee Jiabao" vividly animate Chu's intent: Daddy Cat, with his radiant golden coat, radiates pride and charisma, while the tenderly rendered moments of separation from Lee Jiabao ache with quiet precision. Together, these depictions capture not only the essence of the cats but also the emotional weight and lingering regret carried by the writer herself.

The will, spirit, and affection of cats—so central to Chu's vision—find powerful new expression in Ruan's art. His comics not only echo her message but also expand it, allowing it to resonate with new generations of readers.

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

Tsung-Hui Huang is a professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at National Taiwan University. She often jokes that animal advocacy is her true vocation, with teaching as her side job. Her research focuses on psychoanalysis and animal studies.



Hunters: Daddy Cat and Lee Jiabao

A Full English translation is available.

獵人們：貓爸爸、李家寶

Original Author: Tien-Hsin Chu **Author:** Ruan Guang-Min **Publisher:** Fisfisa Media

Date: 09/2024 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

80 pages | 17 x 23 cm **Volume:** 1

Adaptation: Inspired by a collection of personal essays

BFT2.0 Translator: Michael Fahey

Adapted from Tien-Hsin Chu's essay collection *The Cats' Lives*, this work centers on tender observations of stray cats—wandering through shared spaces, weaving between house and street, inhabiting the overlooked corners of daily life.

Renowned comic artist Ruan Guang-Min brings these recollections into a new visual language, drawing on the essays “Cat Daddy” and “Lee Jiabao.” With warm, gentle hues, he captures the intimacy of human-cat bonds, while grey-toned backdrops evoke both memory and the quiet indifference of modern urban life. The result is a moving meditation on companionship, memory, and the fragile warmth found in ordinary encounters.



Author Ruan Guang-Min

Acclaimed illustrator and author Ruan Guang-Min is known for his deep concern with the lives of ordinary people in Taiwan. Through his spare, unadorned drawings, he captures the values and outlook on life passed down from one generation to the next.

Ruan's works include *Dong Hua Chun Barbershop* and *Yong-Jiu Grocery Store*, both of which were adapted into television series; *Heaven Restaurant*, in three volumes; *King-tshat, Cop or Robber?*, in two volumes; and *Yong-Jiu Grocery Store*, in five volumes. He also adapted the stage play *Human Conditions*, as well as the novel *The Illusionist on the Skywalk*, into graphic novels. Ruan has received numerous honors, including the 8th and 11th Golden Comic Awards and the Silver Prize at the 14th Japan International Manga Award.



Original Author Tien-Hsin Chu

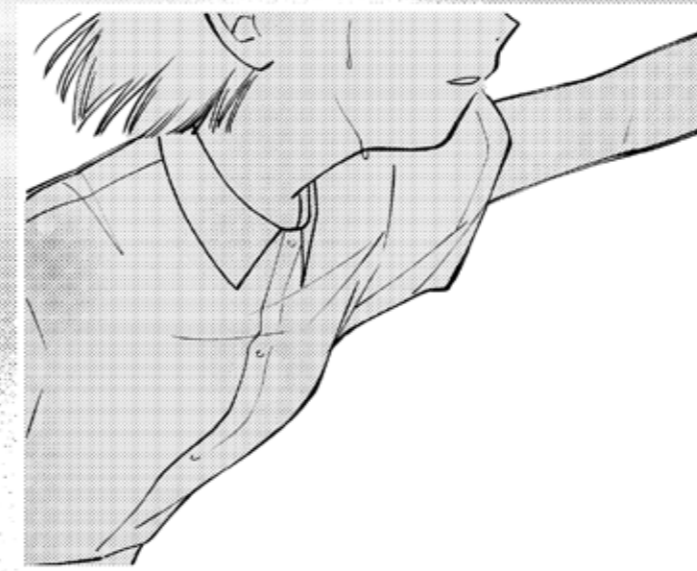
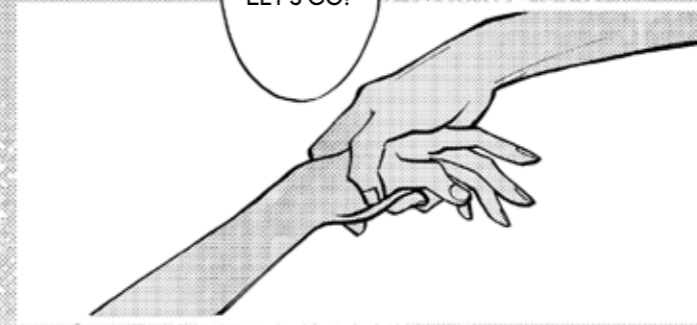
Born in 1958 in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Tien-Hsin Chu majored in history at National Taiwan University. The former editor of *The Threes Journal*, Chu is the recipient of numerous literary awards. Her works include *Days on the Ark*, *The Song of Tilling the Toil*, *Yesterday When I was Young*, *Imperfect*, *Changing of the Seasons*, *I Remember*, *In Remembrance of My Buddies from the Military Compound*, and *The Old Capital*.

I ACTUALLY
REALLY
WANT HIM
TO HOLD MY
HAND...

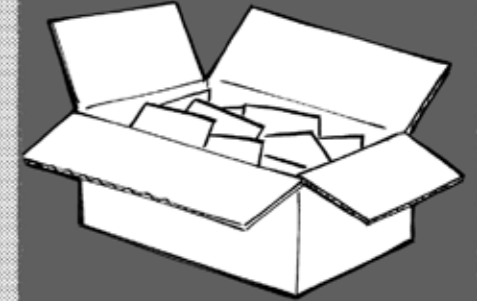
FOREVER AND EVER.

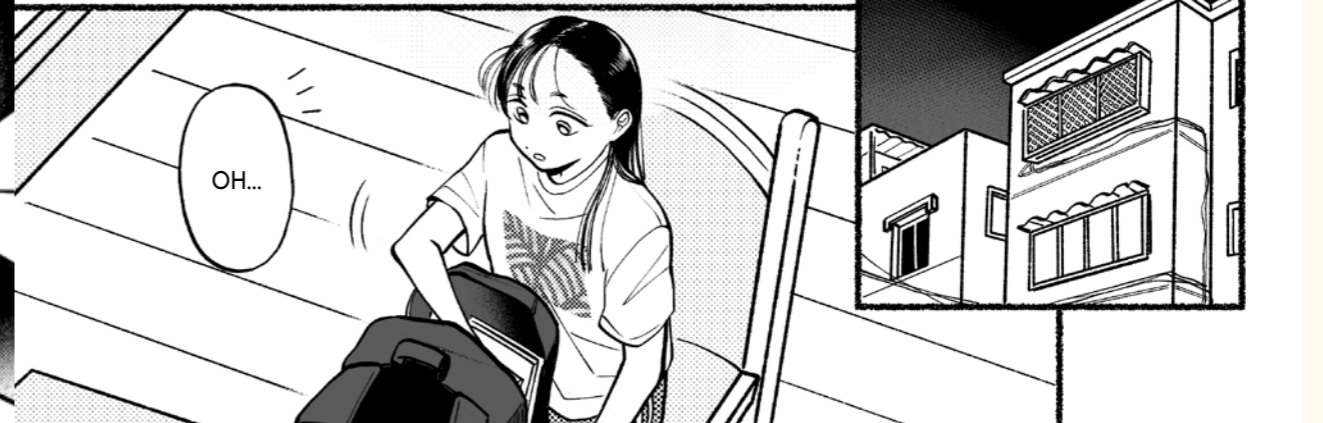
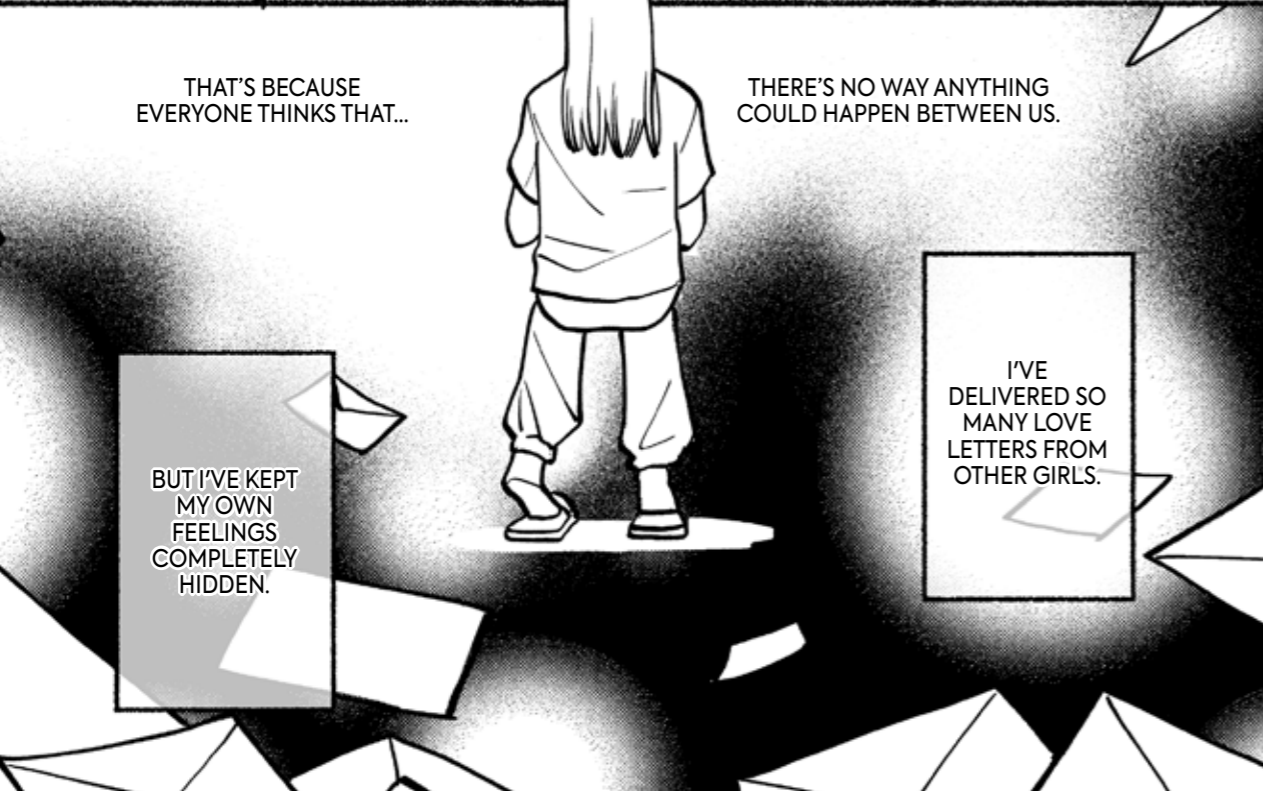
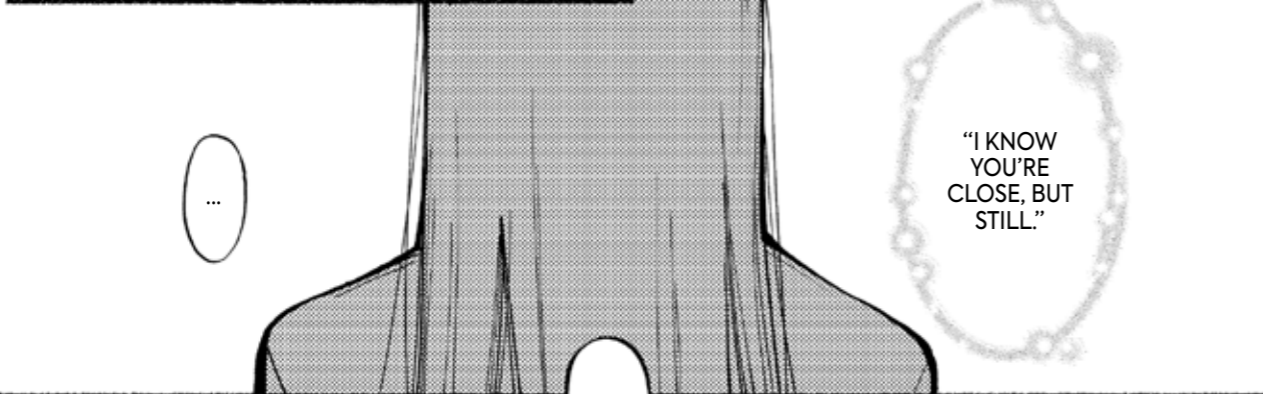


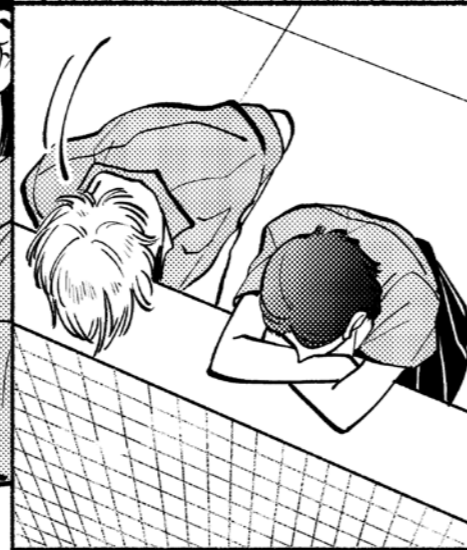
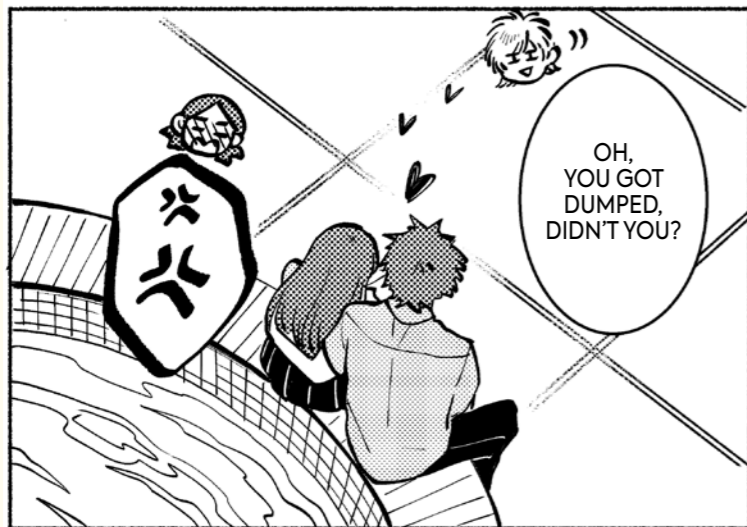
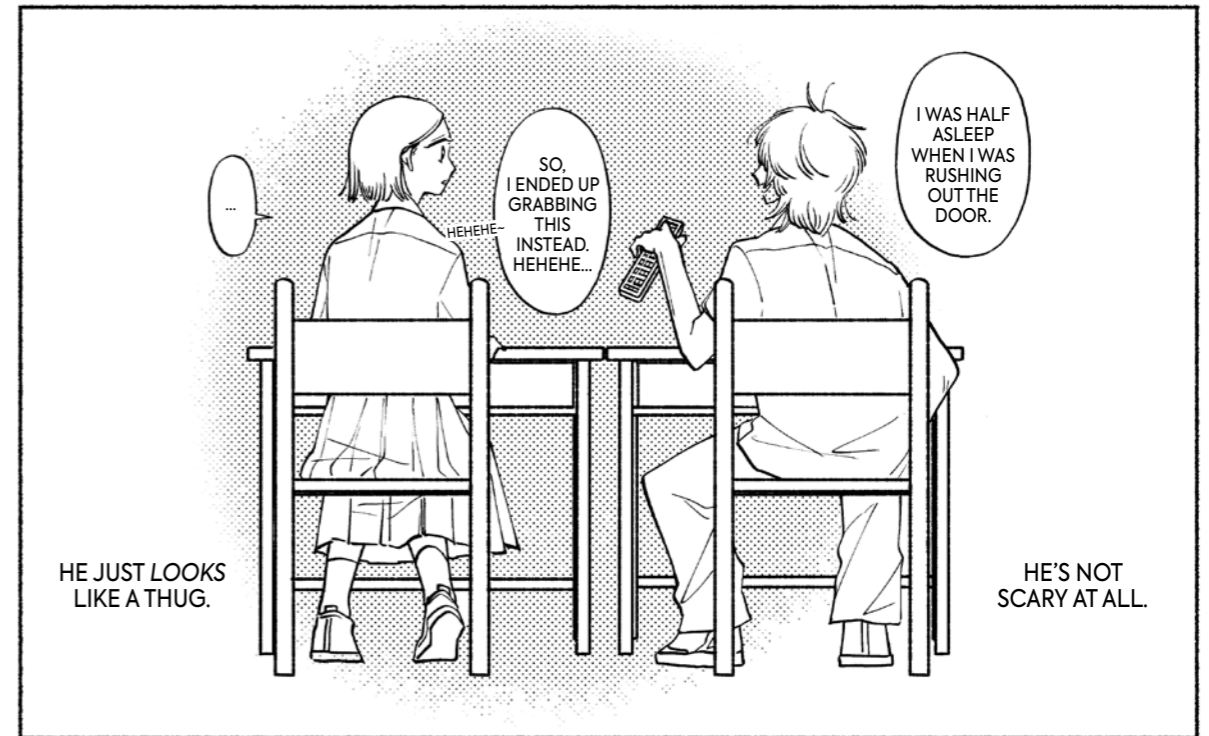
HE'S
COMING UP.
LET'S GO!



EVERY ONE OF THOSE
LOVE LETTERS FELT
LIKE A HUGE WEIGHT
ON MY CHEST.







Young Love: Five Acclaimed Manga Artists Reimagine a Classic Theme

by Chen Yu

Stories that explore youth have always captivated me. I see those early years as life's most luminous chapter—simple, potent, and overflowing with possibility. What makes this period so unforgettable is its irreplaceability. Beauty and regrets can never be relived. That's why I find myself endlessly drawn to revisiting and describing those moments.

My own teenage years were nothing like the rosy, glittering depictions I admired in fiction. In reality, they were fairly ordinary—frankly, even dull. That's part of what drew me to manga, where characters lived out the dreams and emotions my own life seemed to lack. And that's why I started writing stories about young people. My hope is that my narratives can captivate readers, offering them a temporary respite from their everyday anxieties and troubles.

Manga brightened my otherwise uneventful and solitary youth, setting me

on the long path of artistic creation. Even now, well past my teenage years, I still cherish the excitement and emotion these stories evoke. I've continued to follow incredible Taiwanese and international artists—many of whom are featured in this collection, and whose work I've admired for years. For an aspiring manga artist like myself, collaborating with admired creators in this collection and writing about their stories is an honor.

This manga collection, brought to life by five amazingly talented Taiwanese artists, is an extended adaptation of the movie *18×2 Beyond Youthful Days*. Built around the themes of “youth, love, 18 and 36 years old,” it features five youth manga, each with a completely unique style. From the sweetness of mutual affection to the pangs of unrequited love and the sorrow of farewells, these emotionally rich stories captivated me. I return to them time and again, and their re-readability is one of

the most wonderful things about this collection.

Yu-Shi Wu's *Boxed Feelings* pulled me right back to my teenage years, to a time when schoolboy crushes filled my thoughts. The story's vibrant charm brought a knowing smile to my face. I longed to leap into that world—racing across campus, reliving youthful joys and sorrows, and finding the courage to be brave for the one I love.

Rimui's *A Spring Unseen* delves into a forbidden love story with an 18-year age gap, instantly taking me back to my school days and a male teacher I once admired. Seeing the main female character confront that unrequited love nearly two decades later brought an unexpected sense of relief to my own regrets. Rimui's masterful art, with its beautiful figures and tender interplay of light and shadow, creates scenes as striking as film stills. Through her work, distant memories feel real once more.

Yao-Ching Tseng's *Breakwater* stands out as the collection's sole youth story told from a male perspective, and it was also my very first encounter with his work. The meticulous portrayal of a teenage boy's inner world, coupled with thrilling visuals, left a powerful, lingering impression long after I finished the story. In the entire collection, this story resonated most deeply with me.

Chi-Cheng Yang's *Unauthorized Chronicles of Your Youth* masterfully intertwines sweet memories with unforgettable regrets. An adolescence

abruptly cut short and a love destined to remain unspoken creates wounds that never heal. Some people, some moments, are forever confined to memory. Yang Chi-Cheng's characteristic delicate brushwork and rich visual storytelling.

Monday Recover's *School Uniforms and Parasols* transcends age and identity, offering a love story that feels both pure and subtly forbidden, infused with a dreamlike quality. (No spoilers here!) It's utterly captivating—you'll wish for a sequel. I've admired Monday Recover's fresh artistic style since *Sea You There and Us*, and this new work highlights her signature rhythm and emotional depth.

As you experience these five beautiful short stories of youth, you might just find yourself, like me, recalling someone from your own past. Whether you're currently 18 or looking back at that age from 36, I believe this collection will strike a chord within your heart.

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

Chen Yu is a Taiwanese web novelist. She began writing in high school and has since published numerous young adult romance novels, including Deep Sea, Blue Sky and Safe and Sound. Her stories often bring readers to tears while leaving a lasting warmth. She lives in Nangan, Matsu, and is passionate about black tea, the color blue, music, films, and storytelling. Her greatest wish is to tell a story that stays in someone's heart for a very long time.



Comic Artist **Yu-Shi Wu**

Yu-Shi Wu enjoys drawing girls and telling warm, emotionally rich stories through watercolor and hand-drawn techniques. She is active in commercial comics, illustration commissions, and dōjin works. Her notable titles include *Fall in Love with Spring* and *The Time Traveller from Showa Era*.



Comic Artist **Rimui**

Rimui, of Atayal and Hakka heritage, is a graduate of National Taiwan University of Science and Technology. Her notable works include *Where Are You Going?* and *The Funeral Concerto*.



Comic Artist **Yao-Ching Tseng**

Yao-Ching Tseng uses drawing and writing as mirrors of the self, emphasizing physical sensation and spontaneity in the creative process. His work explores the body and the world through varied postures and movements, striving to make form not just a vessel for content, but content itself.



Comic Artist **Chi-Cheng Yang**

Chi-Cheng Yang is a Taiwanese comic artist who debuted in 2016 with *Don't Call Me Magical Girl, I'm OXXX*. His second series *Just Hear Me Out!!* is currently serialized on the Tong Li Comics e-book platform.



Comic Artist **Monday Recover**

Monday Recover, a full-time comic and illustrator, is a Tainan native who starts every day with a black coffee. Her notable works include *Have I Found You?* and *Sea You There and Us*.



Original Concept **Jumpboys Films Co., Ltd.**

Jumpboys Films, founded by Huang Chiang-Feng and Lin Yu-Hsien, specializes in script development, production, and documentaries. Known for unique, emotional storytelling rooted in Taiwanese culture, Jumpboys Films champions artistic integrity and social impact. The company collaborates with emerging directors and global partners to promote Taiwanese cinema and talent worldwide.



18×2 When Hearts First Stirred

A Full English translation is available.

青春 18X2 重返最初的悸動

Comic Artist: Yu-Shi Wu, Monday Recover, Rimui, Yao-Ching Tseng, Chi-Cheng Yang

Original Concept: Jumpboys Films Co., Ltd. **Publisher:** Dyna Books

Date: 06/2024 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

178 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1

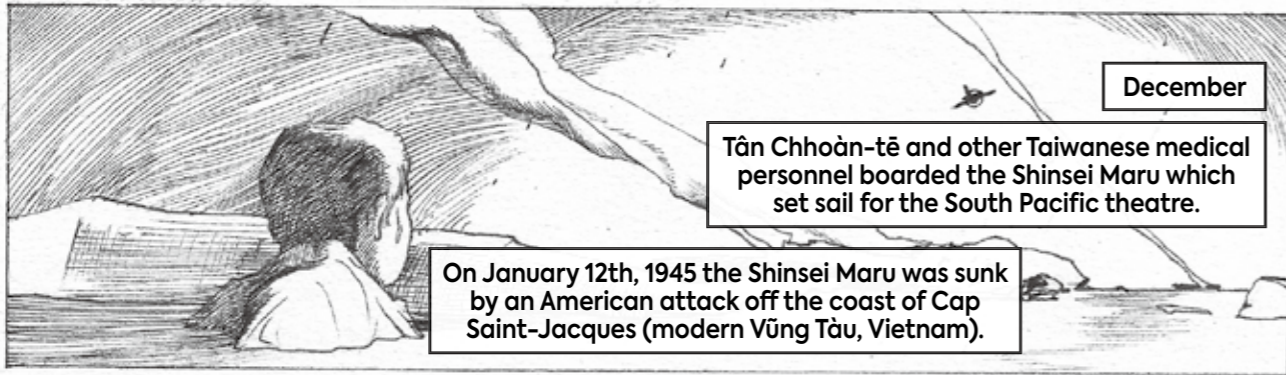
Adaptation: A spin-off project from a TV drama *18×2 Beyond Youthful Days*

BFT2.0 Translator: Lorena Rivas Kuang

Five acclaimed manga artists team up in a unique film-and-manga crossover project to explore the many faces of young love. Each story offers a different perspective on romance and coming of age—capturing both the unforgettable beauty of youth and its lingering regrets.

Yu-Shi Wu’s “Boxed Feelings” portrays a secret crush on a best friend, hidden beneath layers of friendship and playful teasing. Rimui’s “A Spring Unseen” reflects on love at first sight, a confession left unspoken, and a secret that becomes a lifelong weight.

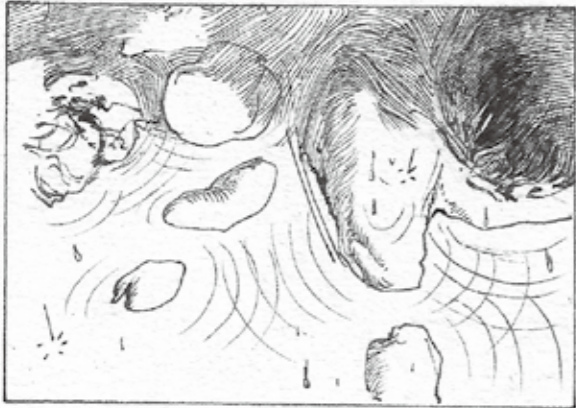
Yao-Ching Tseng’s “Breakwater” tells of yearning for a twin sister’s boyfriend, and the restless search for answers to adolescence’s mysteries. Chi-Cheng Yang’s “Unauthorized Chronicles of Your Youth” follows a relationship left undefined, where the words “I like you” were never heard, and regret never fades. Finally, Monday Recover’s “School Uniforms and Parasols” brings together two solitary lives, their paths crossing in an unexpected bond. From first loves to shy glances, unspoken feelings to the courage of confession, these stories capture the thrill, hope, and heartbreak of youth.



December

Tân Chhoàn-tê and other Taiwanese medical personnel boarded the Shinsei Maru which set sail for the South Pacific theatre.

On January 12th, 1945 the Shinsei Maru was sunk by an American attack off the coast of Cap Saint-Jacques (modern Vũng Tàu, Vietnam).



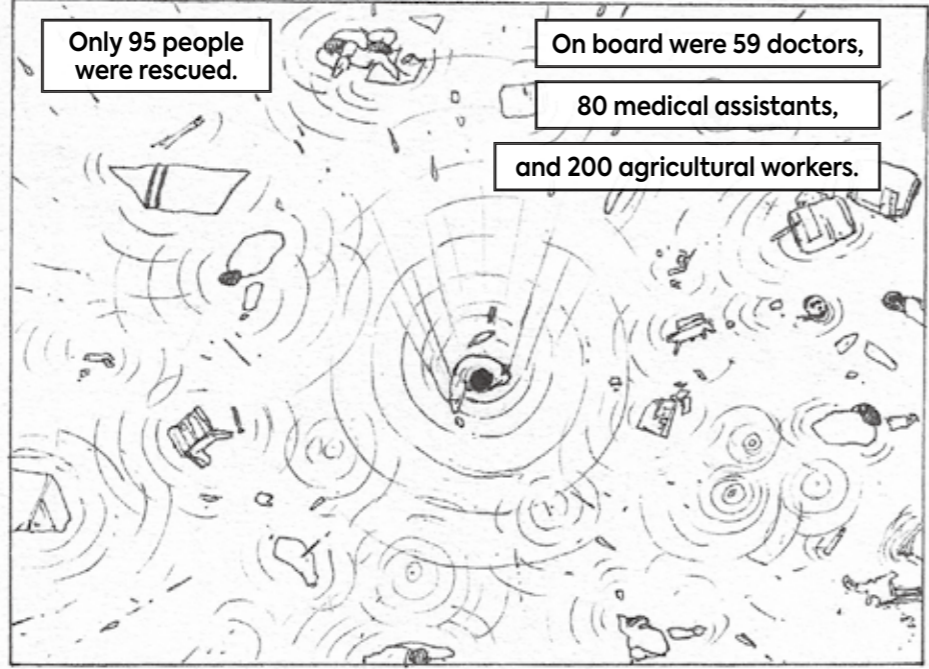
When life and death come down to a sea of fire or a hail of bullets...

Only 95 people were rescued.

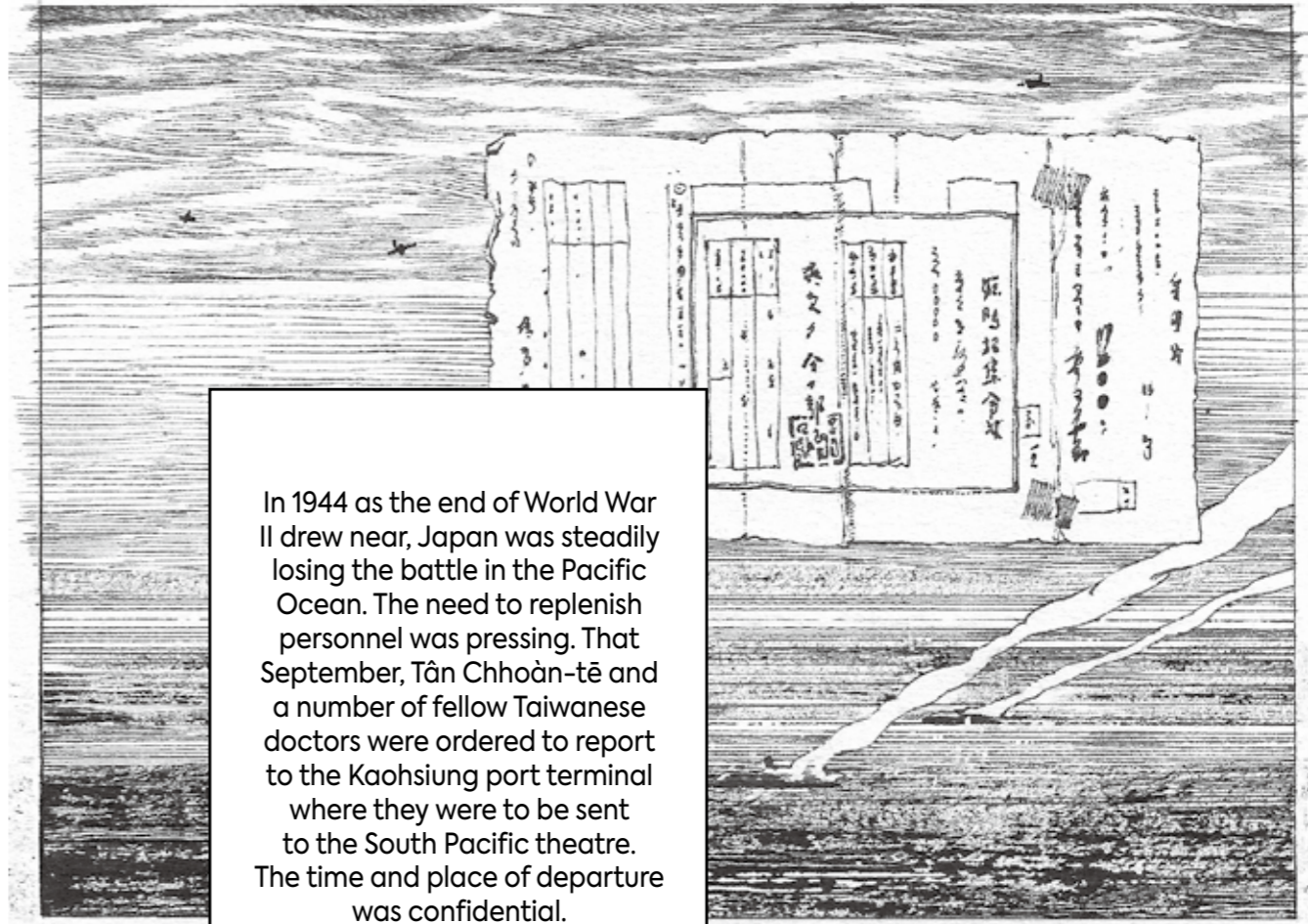
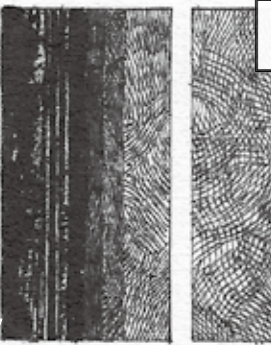
On board were 59 doctors,
80 medical assistants,
and 200 agricultural workers.



No book you have read...

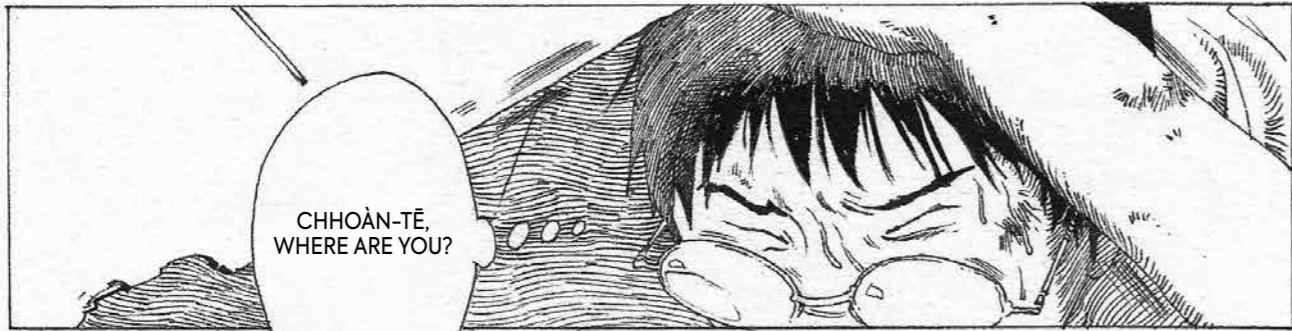


...Can prepare you for the choice.

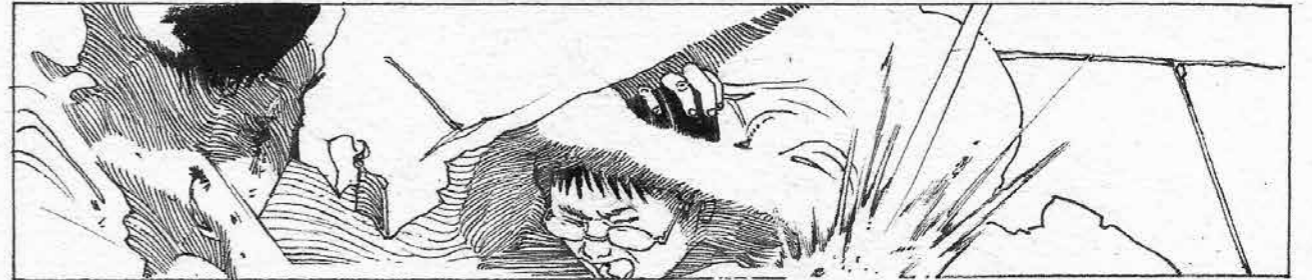
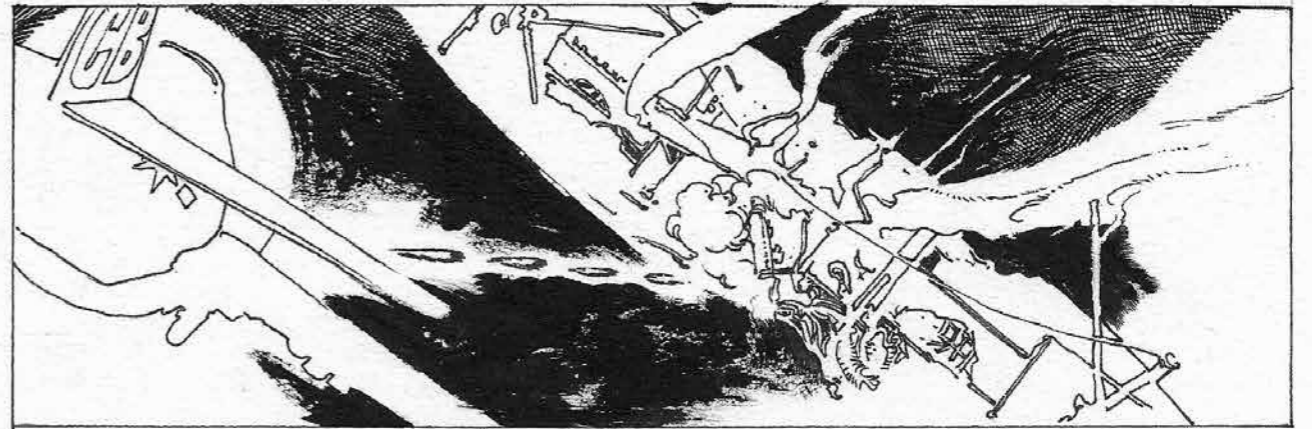
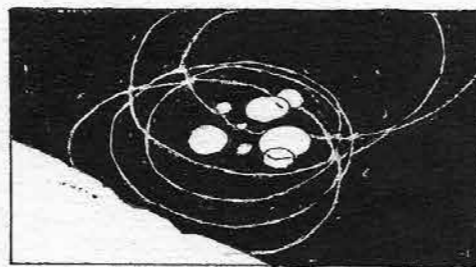


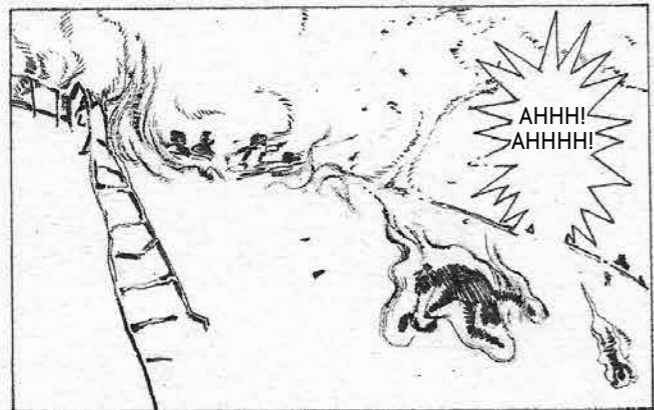
In 1944 as the end of World War II drew near, Japan was steadily losing the battle in the Pacific Ocean. The need to replenish personnel was pressing. That September, Tân Chhoàn-tê and a number of fellow Taiwanese doctors were ordered to report to the Kaohsiung port terminal where they were to be sent to the South Pacific theatre. The time and place of departure was confidential.





Tân Choàn-tê during World War II





South China Sea off the coast of Japanese-occupied French colonial Cochinchina (modern Vietnam), 1945



underground political group, he found himself in prison. When the Kuomintang came from China to Taiwan, Dr. Tân could not accept the military brutality that came with it and rose up in armed resistance. He ultimately lost to superior firepower and found himself imprisoned on his own. But here too, his plight was hardly solitary; the rest of his family and friends were implicated as well.

Anyone living can imagine and empathize with such a situation. If you or I lived during that time period, would we not believe that the world should be better? What actions would we take? What ideological tools would be at our disposal, and what could we do to effect their use? Better, with our hindsight and omniscience gazing backwards, are there smarter decisions that we could have made?

This story effectively grabs the

reader's curiosity about living through such complicated times. After taking up arms against Chiang's regime, Tân Chhoàn-tê was spared from execution and allowed to practice medicine until the natural end of his life. Given that five of his family members were arrested and executed, this different outcome is a point worth considering.

The authors chose not to explicitly discuss it, and some of the reason for that may lie in the wish that readers explore it on their own. Some scholars speculate that Hsieh Tung-min (1908–2001), a native of Erh-shui as well as classmate of Tân's at Taichung First Senior High School, and later Vice President of the Republic of China (1978–84), played a role in Tân Chhoàn-tê's release. It is important to note however, that Tân Chhoàn-tê's surviving family members do not believe this to be the case.

Finally, the form of the manga itself echoes its topic. As the sections change, so too does the rhythm and manner of the illustrations. The chapters spare in dialogue are rich in visual self-explanation. These include some of the most moving and visceral scenes, such as the death of Ah-ch'eng, and Tân's reunion with Hsieh Yü-lu.

This type of interspersed style switching may, at first glance, cause the reading experience to appear fragmented. But if one thinks about Tân Chhoàn-tê's life, can it not be said, in a manner of speaking, to be fragmented? As for all of us, constant change pervaded his story, whether it was living under an authoritarian regime, being caught up in the war, grappling with political ideology, determining one's own identity, or even just trying to be alive.

In some ways, this story is precisely

a microcosm of the Taiwanese experience for the past century. We are in the front row of a changing international situation, and there is no single fixed point of stability. The best we can do is hold goodness in our hearts, continue to adapt, continue to learn, and continue to progress.

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

I-Chen Tsai, a medical doctor from Taiwan, founder of InnovaRad and Accompany You to Watch International News, and convener of the Asian Cardiac Imaging Guidelines. He is widely known for his insightful takes on global news, expertise in medical science, and unique educational perspectives.



Scriptwriter **Chen-Yu Chang**

Chen-Yu Chang is the director of World Softest Production, creating works that highlight Taiwanese culture and humanistic values. His projects span film, comics, board games, and social design, all aimed at bringing history to life. Chang's projects include *Talking Taiwan Through Comics* and the satirical series *Social Matters*.



Scriptwriter **Che-Yu Kuo**

Che-Yu Kuo is a filmmaker and film enthusiast who creates documentaries and writes screenplays. Through his work, he is dedicated to telling Taiwan's stories from a local perspective.



Scriptwriter **Yueh-Shen Chuang**

A native of Taitung, Yueh-Shen Chuang graduated from the Department of History at National Taiwan University. He believes that stories are metaphors for life and aspires to use his creative work to help the public discover new and varied dimensions of society.



Illustrator **A-Hsiang**

A-Hsiang graduated from the Department of Fine Arts at National Taiwan University of Arts. Currently an illustrator for Taiwan's United Daily News, A-Hsiang has also held solo exhibitions in Taiwan.

Making the Story of the Taiwanese People Powerfully Accessible

by I-Chen Tsai
translated by David Knight

In today's world, younger generations can feel ambivalent toward politics, often disinterested in didactic presentations of a painful past.

That is what makes this project so important: comics and graphic novels, as a visual art form, present history in a way that is easier to absorb than traditional textbooks. Through this accessible and visually compelling medium, comic creators reach young readers with stories rooted in real historical events. With their lively rhythm, these stories move swiftly toward key facts while vividly portraying the figures and circumstances of a momentous era. This medium opens new pathways for a generation to understand Taiwan's history.

The presentation of Dr. Tân Chhoàn-tê's story is especially gripping. Grounded in historical fact, it is clear and empathetic, while rich in details that invite deeper reflection. The World Softest Production Film Company and Vanguard Publishing House have teamed up to produce this fascinating series of graphic novels about Taiwan's history. Like the previous books in this series, it is grounded in historical fact, easy to read, and deeply relatable. The story also brings out many thought-provoking details.

The story illuminates the tension between thought and action faced by intelligent, determined individuals of that era. Dr. Tân was troubled by the militaristic escalation in Japan, and upon joining an



1947: The Man Returning from Afar

A Full English translation is available.

尋找陳篡地：1947 遠方歸來的人

Scriptwriters: Chen-Yu Chang, Che-Yu Kuo, Yueh-Shen Chuang **Illustrator:** A-Hsiang

Publisher: Avanguard

Date: 03/2024 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

130 pages | 17 x 23 cm **Volume:** 1

BFT2.0 Translator: David Knight

1947: The Man Returning from Afar is the fourth volume in the *Talking Taiwan Through Comics* series. It tells the story of Tân Chhoàn-tê from Ershui, Changhua—a doctor, community leader, and witness to one of Taiwan’s most turbulent eras. The narrative follows Dr. Tân through moments of conviction, resistance, and sacrifice.

Disturbed by Japan’s growing militarism, Dr. Tân joined an underground political group and was imprisoned for two years. He then survived the sinking of the *Shinsei Maru* during World War II and returned to Taiwan. With the arrival of the Kuomintang from China, Dr. Tân refused to submit to repression. He chose to resist, but the uprising was crushed, and he was once again imprisoned—this time with the weight of punishment falling not only on him, but also on his family and close companions.

After a number of years, he surrendered and negotiated terms of peace. He was monitored by intelligence agencies for the rest of his life.

The story illuminates the tension between thought and action faced by intelligent, determined individuals of that era. His story mirrors the struggles of countless Taiwanese who faced impossible dilemmas under shifting regimes—standing against oppression yet carrying the burden of family and community. More than the biography of one man, this volume reflects Taiwan’s larger story: a century marked by war, colonialism, authoritarian rule, and resilience. It is a powerful reminder that, amid uncertainty, humanity endures—adapting, resisting, and moving forward.





HUFF!
HUFF!

AND THEIR HARD
WORK RESULTS IN
PERFORMANCES
THAT CAN CHANGE
OLD SOCIAL
PREJUDICES!!

BOOM!!



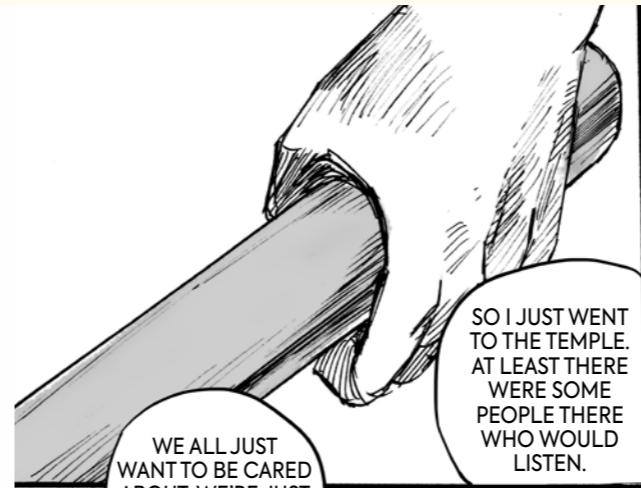
AT OUR TEMPLE,
THEY HAVE
PLENTY OF TIME
TO EXPLORE.



TIME TO BE WITH
A GROUP OF PEOPLE
WHO ENCOURAGE
ONE ANOTHER.



TIME TO TAKE
A GOOD LONG LOOK
AT THEMSELVES.



WE ALL JUST WANT TO BE CARED ABOUT. WE'RE JUST LOOKING FOR SELF-RESPECT AND RECOGNITION.

SO I JUST WENT TO THE TEMPLE. AT LEAST THERE WERE SOME PEOPLE THERE WHO WOULD LISTEN.



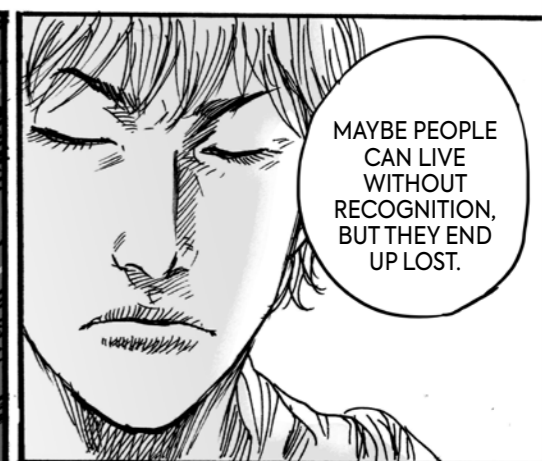
TAKE ME AS AN EXAMPLE.

I WAS A TERRIBLE STUDENT. I WAS ALWAYS SINGLED OUT AT SCHOOL. I NEVER GOT ANY PRAISE.

IT WAS ALWAYS THE SAME. NO ONE EVER HELPED ME WORK OUT THE PROBLEMS I HAD AT HOME OR INSIDE ME. IT WAS AS IF KIDS WHO WEREN'T GOOD AT SCHOOL COULDN'T GET HURT.



THE REASON MY TEMPLE TROUPE EXISTS IS TO GIVE LOST PEOPLE A PLACE WHERE THEY WILL BE ACCEPTED.



MAYBE PEOPLE CAN LIVE WITHOUT RECOGNITION, BUT THEY END UP LOST.



BE THAT AS IT MAY, LOST PEOPLE SHOULD NOT BE LABELED 'BAD'.



Life's Turning Point in the Beat of Drums: Reading Ruan Guang-Min's *Chio-Tian Young Beats*

by Wen-Chien Hsu

In Taiwan, the word *zhentou* (temple parade troupes) often brings to mind either the spectacle of temple festivals or news of gang violence. This binary view links “zhentou” with “school dropouts,” as if joining a troupe means deviating from the “right path.” But the truth is more complex. While some troupes intersect with gangs, they also offer what families, schools, and society often fail to provide. For some youths, *zhentou* is a last refuge.

Rooted in Taiwanese folk religion, temples are the heart of spiritual and communal life. Temple festivals are major events, and *zhentou* functions as both ritual and grassroots street performance.

Like a localized version of Brazil's Carnival, *zhentou* celebrates the divine with thunderous drums, vibrant costumes, and traditional artistry. It unites communities and passes on culture.

Ruan Guang-Min's *Chio-Tian Young Beats* draws from the real Chio-Tian Folk Drums & Arts Troupe, known for taking in youths rejected by school or society. Through strict training, members learn drumming, dance, and ritual performance. In the comic, drumming takes center stage—it becomes life's heartbeat, a way for marginalized youth to say: “I am still here.”

To show the diverse paths leading to *zhentou*, Ruan creates two characters:

Hao-Nan, who leaves school to support his grandmother, and Thit-Hiong, who turns to violence after family breakdown. Their stories reflect why many join troupes—economic hardship, social alienation, or having nowhere else to go.

At first, both boys are guarded and distant. But through shared rhythm and routine, they slowly rebuild trust. They learn to keep time—not just musically, but with others—and begin to heal. Their transformation is gradual, reminding us that change doesn't need miracles, just a place to breathe.

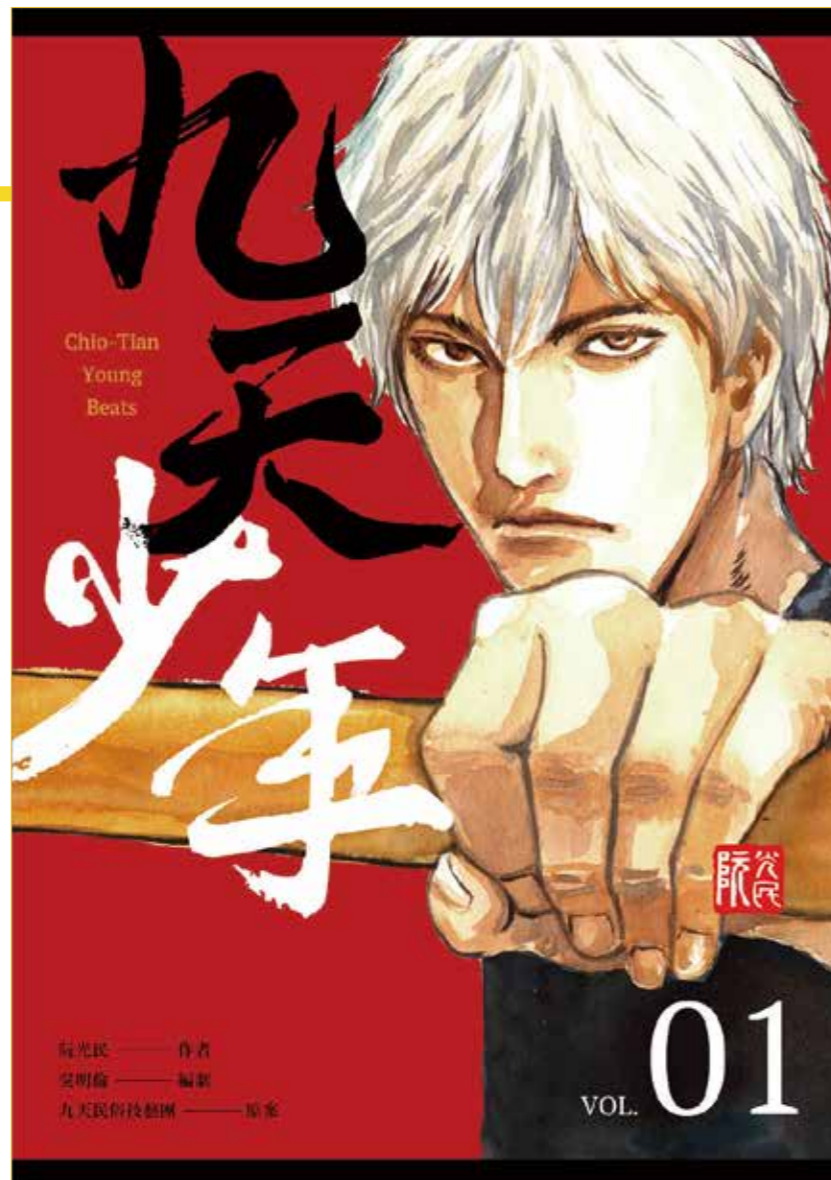
Later, Ruan introduces the Troupe Leader, a tough but caring figure. Aware of society's continued prejudice and limited resources, he encourages members to return to school. It's a bittersweet choice—some must leave the troupe—but it opens the door to new possibilities. The kids are no longer just “zhentou troublemakers”; they're

individuals capable of change.

Chio-Tian Young Beats is not a dramatic underdog tale, but a nuanced, grounded story. It doesn't romanticize hardship, but honors resilience. Its power lies in its familiarity: a neighborhood boy, a classmate who disappeared. Through the steady pulse of drums, Ruan brings such forgotten lives back into view.

In the end, the comic reminds us: even in isolation, connection is possible—through drums, dance, or simple empathy. The next step doesn't have to be a fall. It can be a beginning.

Wen-Chien Hsu possesses a free-spirited soul. She has worked at LGBTQ+ organizations, the 113 Domestic Violence Hotline, and works as an editor of *Books from Taiwan 2.0*. She is dedicated to bringing Taiwanese comics and picture books to a global audience.



Chio-Tian Young Beats

A Full English translation is available.

九天少年

Comic Artist: Ruan Guang-Min **Scriptwriter:** Ming-Lun Wu

Original Concept: Chio-Tian Folk Drums & Art Troupe **Publisher:** Dyna Books

Date: 07/2022 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

188 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 2 (End)

BFT2.0 Translator: Michael Fahey

Award-winning Ruan Guang-Min's *Chio-Tian Young Beats* draws on the real Chio-Tian Folk Drums & Arts Troupe, known for taking in youths rejected by school or society. Through strict training in drumming, dance, and ritual performance, members find discipline, belonging, and purpose.

Hao-Nan, a rebellious teen, moves into the troupe's dormitory when his beloved grandmother is hospitalized. Thit-Hiong, meanwhile, turns to violence. Like many who join, both boys carry the weight of hardship and alienation. At first guarded and distant, these two teenagers slowly build trust through rhythm, routine, and shared struggle.

Set against the sweat and thunder of practice on Dadu Mountain in Taichung, their gradual transformation shows that healing doesn't require miracles—just a place to belong. With sincerity and nuance, acclaimed comic artist Ruan Guang-Min delivers a deeply Taiwanese coming-of-age story, pulsing with grit, emotion, and hope.



Comic Artist Ruan Guang-Min

Acclaimed illustrator and author Ruan Guang-Min is known for his deep concern with the lives of ordinary people in Taiwan. Through his spare, unadorned drawings, he captures the values and outlook on life passed down from one generation to the next.

Ruan's works include *Dong Hua Chun Barbershop* and *Yong-Jiu Grocery Store*, both of which were adapted into television series; *Heaven Restaurant*, in three volumes; *King-tshat, Cop or Robber?*, in two volumes; and *Yong-Jiu Grocery Store*, in five volumes. He also adapted the stage play *Human Conditions*, as well as the novel *The Illusionist on the Skywalk*, into graphic novels. Ruan has received numerous honors, including the 8th and 11th Golden Comic Awards and the Silver Prize at the 14th Japan International Manga Award.



IF I AM WITH
THIS GROUP
OF PEOPLE..

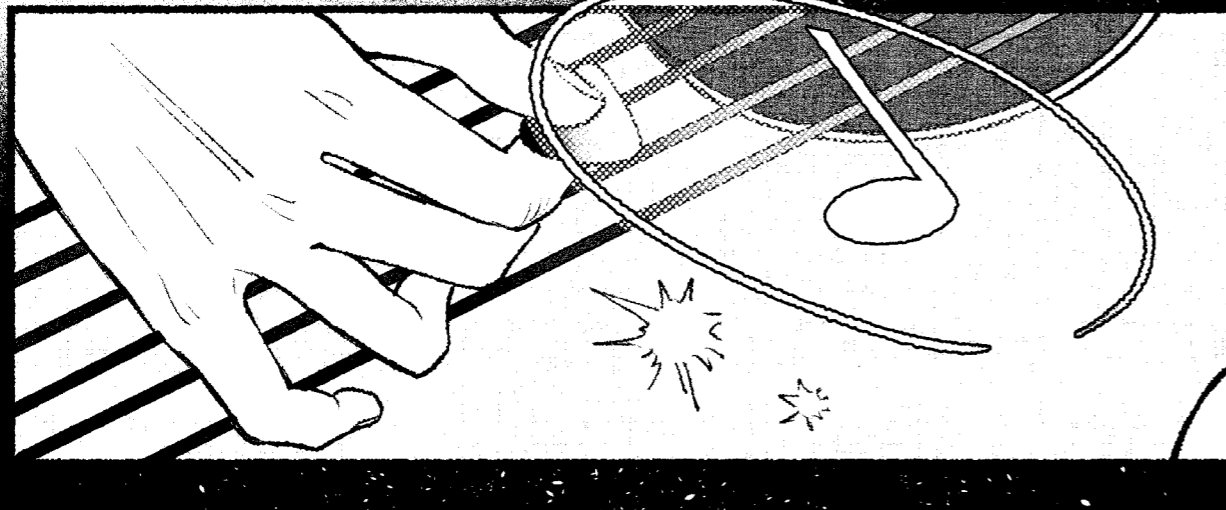
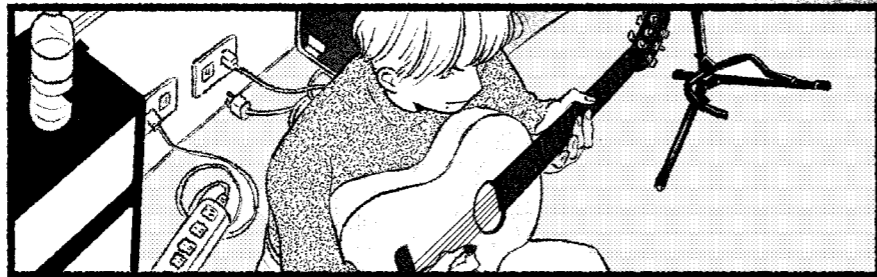
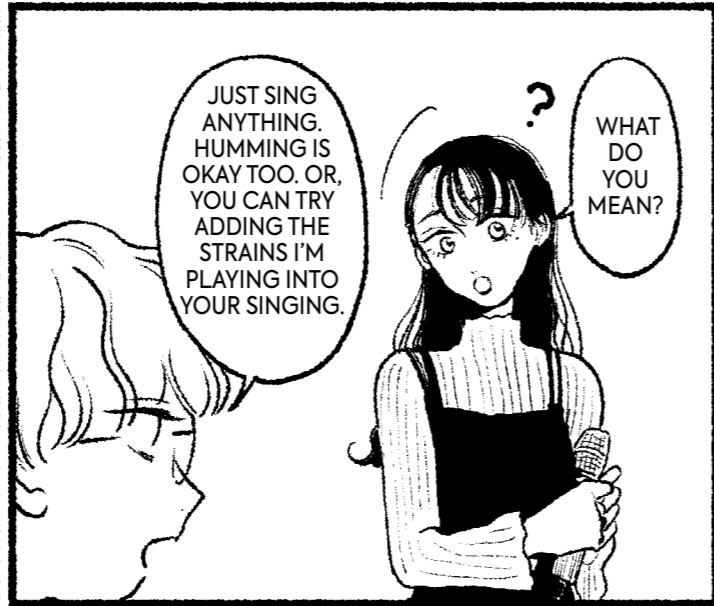
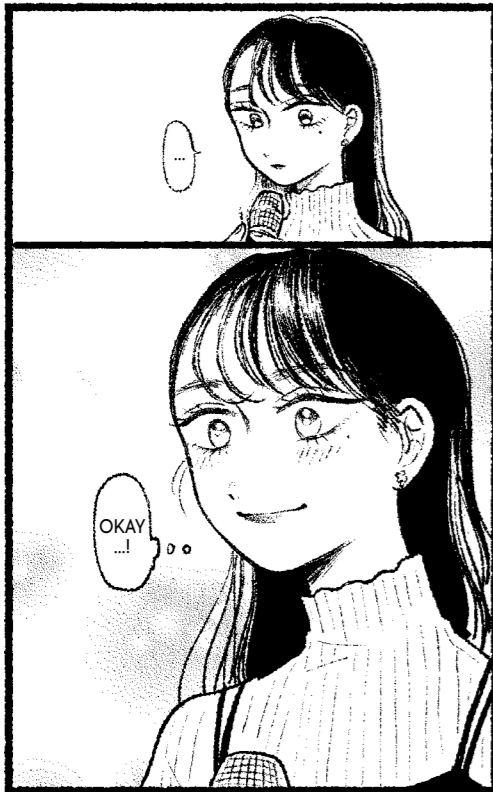
PERHAPS.

I MIGHT FLY
FREELY IN
THE MUSICAL
NOTES.

THIS IS THE
FIRST TIME
THAT I HAVE
THIS KIND OF
FEELING...

THAT I TRUST
UNCONDITIONALLY,
WITHOUT THE
FRAME OF RIGHT
OR WRONG—

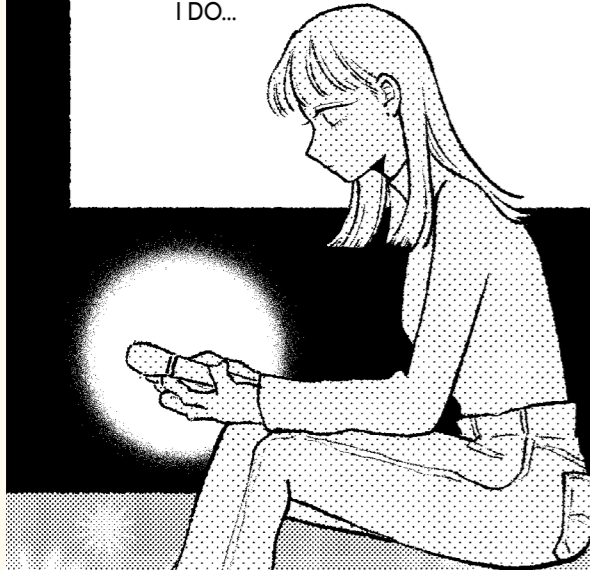
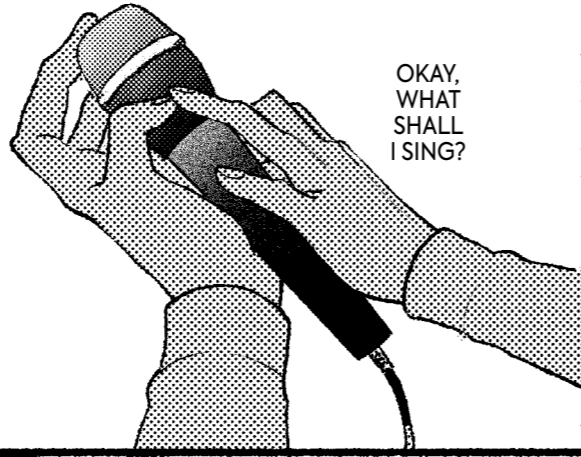
AS THOUGH
WE ARE
CREATING
A WORLD
TOGETHER.



WHAT SHALL I DO...

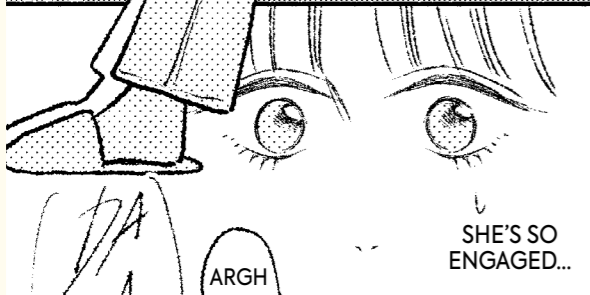
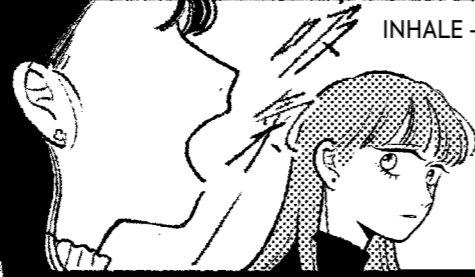
CAN THE PERSON I AM NOW BEING ABLE TO JOIN IN?

OKAY, WHAT SHALL I SING?



INHALE -

IN ORDER TO MATCH PERFECTLY...



SHE'S SO ENGAGED...

ARGH...

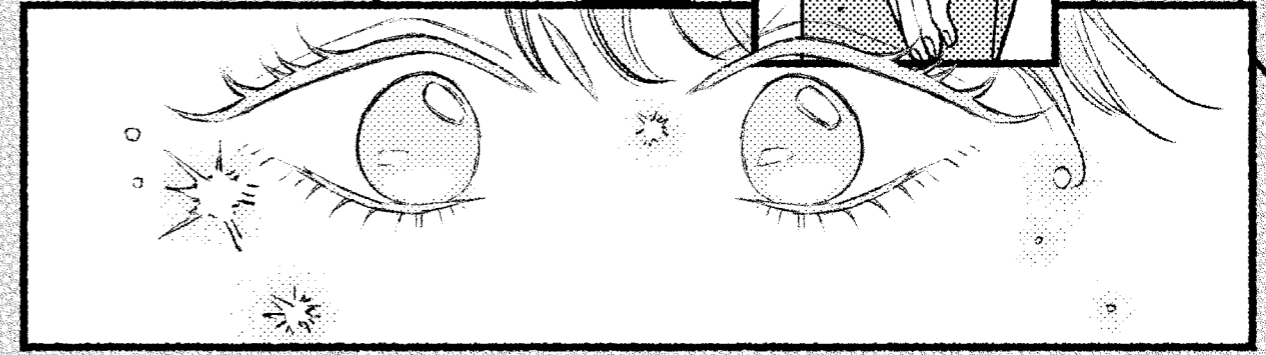
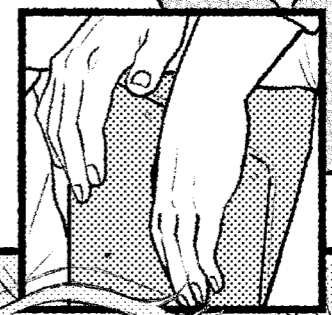
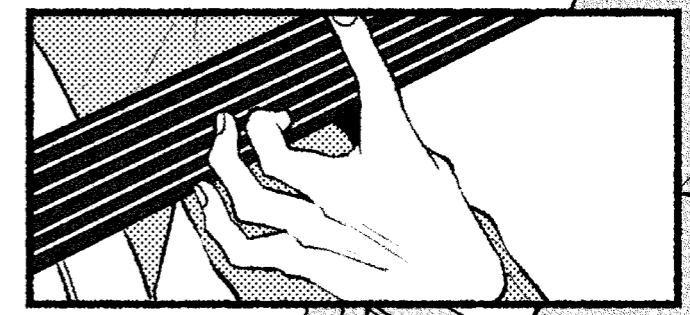
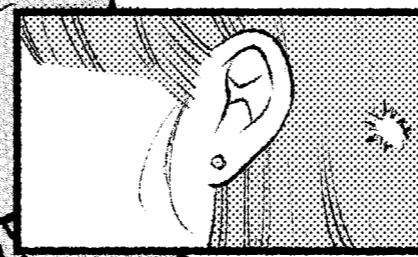
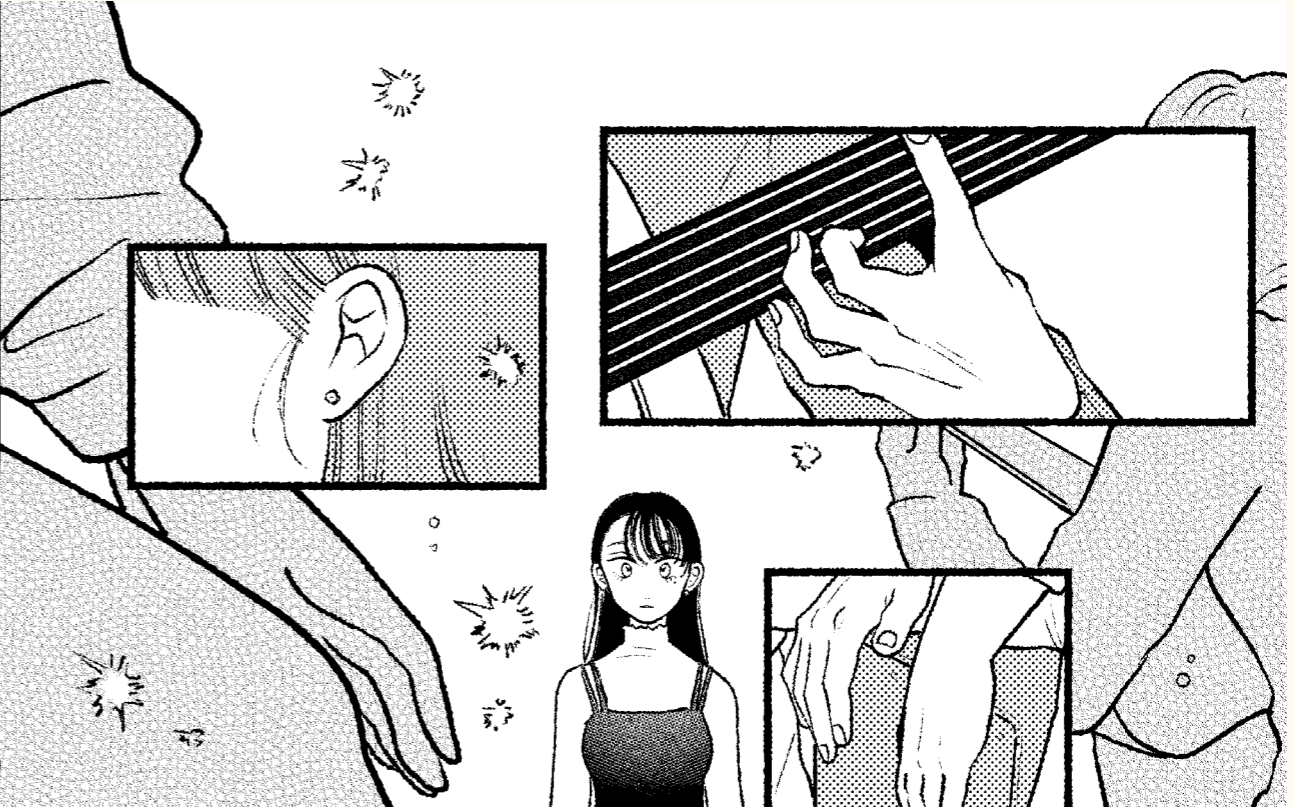
THAT'S RIGHT.

THE POINT OF IMPROVISATION IS NOT ABOUT "BEING PERFECT."

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN SINGING SONGS WRITTEN BY OTHERS—



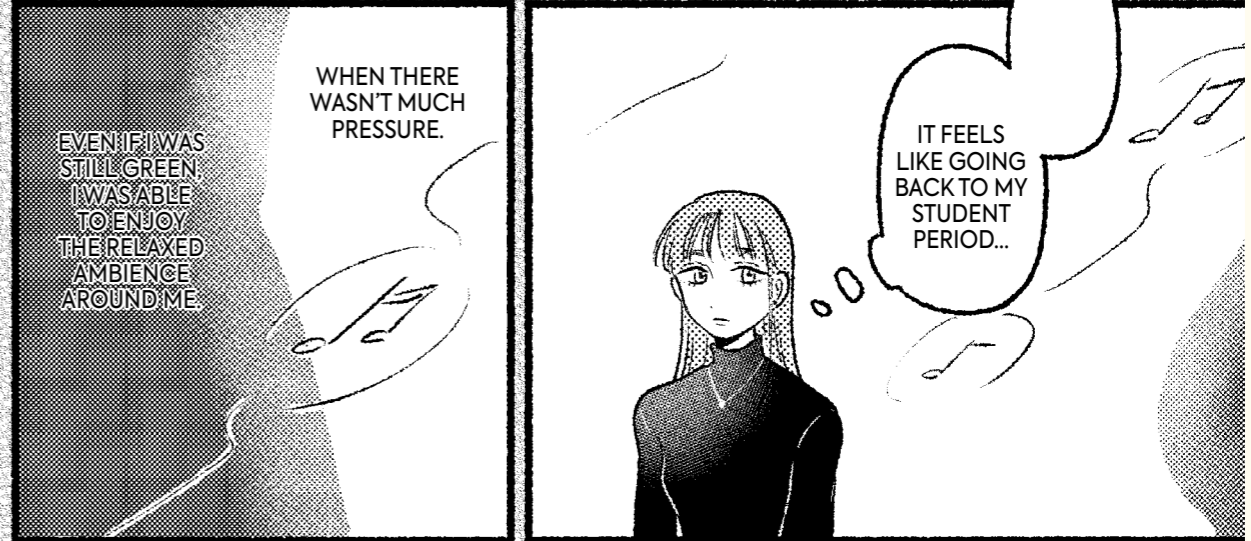
THE PERSON I LOVE MOST -



WHEN THERE WASN'T MUCH PRESSURE.

EVEN IF I WAS STILL GREEN, I WAS ABLE TO ENJOY THE RELAXED AMBIENCE AROUND ME.

IT FEELS LIKE GOING BACK TO MY STUDENT PERIOD...



The Time Traveller from the Showa Era—A Journey Through Time to Mend Regrets and Rediscover Oneself

by Wen-Chien Hsu

This is a story of two heroines—one from the present, the other from Taiwan’s Showa era under Japanese rule. Both are singers, brought together by a twist of time travel. The protagonist from the present, Li I-hsing, is a timid and insecure vocalist with no albums or original works to her name. She performs at weddings and events, taking whatever gigs come her way. In contrast, Peng Hsuan-mei, a singer from the past, is on the verge of stardom but entangled in an affair, ignoring the person who has always quietly loved her.

When they first meet, Hsuan-mei introduces herself by saying, “I was born in the sixth year of the Taishō era,

nineteen by East Asian count, seventeen by Western reckoning.” At first, I-hsing doesn’t believe her. But as small clues surface, the truth unfolds: Hsuan-mei was once her grandfather’s lover. She had been recording a song composed by I-hsing’s great-grandfather when she was mysteriously transported to the present day. Together, they embark on a journey—not only to return Hsuan-mei to her time, but also to help I-hsing rediscover her love for music and reclaim her confidence.

Along the way, with help from a few friends who come to understand the truth, they grow closer—singing karaoke, visiting night markets, performing onstage, and even entering a singing

contest. Yet the story doesn’t end with Hsuan-mei simply returning to the past or I-hsing winning the prize. Instead, it centers on transformation: how Hsuan-mei learns she had been too self-focused to see the love beside her, and how I-hsing gradually regains her faith in her voice and her sense of self.

One of the most poignant moments comes after Hsuan-mei returns to her own time. As promised, she hides a recording of her singing—pressed onto vinyl—in a secret compartment within the family’s ancestral home. I-hsing remembers the promise and finds the record. In that moment, she understands: the deepest connections she has with others are forged through music. No matter how often the world tries to dismiss her, she can never truly walk away from it—

not because music is just a dream, but because it is the thread that ties her to her late father, to her ancestors, and to the very core of who she is.

This work is a tender, heartfelt story framed by a time-travel narrative. At its core, it is not about fame or success in the music industry, but about the enduring love for music—how it draws people together across time and helps them rediscover the meaning of self.

Wen-Chien Hsu possesses a free-spirited soul. She has worked at LGBTQ+ organizations, the 113 Domestic Violence Hotline, and works as an editor of Books from Taiwan 2.0. She is dedicated to bringing Taiwanese comics and picture books to a global audience.



The Time Traveller from Showa Era

A Full English translation is available.

1934 穿越的星與夢

Author: Hua Ling **Comic Artist:** Yu-Shi Wu **Publisher:** Dyna Books

Date: 12/2022 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

226 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1

Adaptation: A spin-off project from the TV drama

Rights sold: French

BFT2.0 Translator: Elizabeth Hsinyi Lee

Peng Hsuan-Mei, a rising star of Taiwan's Shōwa period (1926–1945), draws a fortune slip at the City God Temple—and is suddenly transported to modern-day Taiwan. Desperate to return to her own time and record the single destined to make her famous, she crosses paths with I-Hsing, a socially withdrawn wedding singer. Together, they form a band and set their sights on the Ying Hsi Music Festival.

Two young women from different eras, bound by the same fortune slip, find connection through music. In the glow of song and performance, friendship, dreams, and love take center stage. To sing the songs they love, to become the people they long to be—each becomes the guiding star in the other's life.

Inventive, heartwarming, and full of charm, this comic brings a Shōwa-era songstress and a modern-day dreamer together across time, forever changing both their worlds.



Author **Hua Ling**

Hua Ling describes herself as having a teenage heart. She may look cold, but she is full of passion inside. Known for her habit of adjusting her glasses, she sees writing as a daily step toward the light. She hopes to keep sharing stories that come from the heart.



Comic Artist **Yu-Shi Wu**

Yu-Shi Wu enjoys drawing girls, using watercolor and hand-drawn techniques, and telling warm, emotionally rich stories. Wu is currently active in commercial comics, illustration commissions, and doujin works. Her notable works include *Fall in Love with Spring* and *The Time Traveller from Showa Era*.



IT DOESN'T TASTE RIGHT!

NO GOOD!

NO GOOD, NO GOOD

NO GOOD

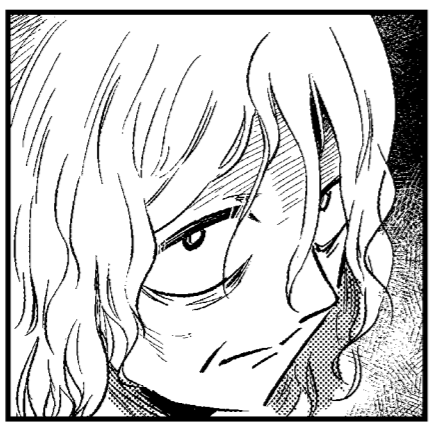
啪!

SMACK!

啪!

SMACK!

SWIPE



WE CAN'T GIVE THIS TO CHING-HSIUNG!

THROW IT AWAY!

DID YOU HEAR ME? THROW IT AWAY!



WHO ARE YOU?



EMPTY!

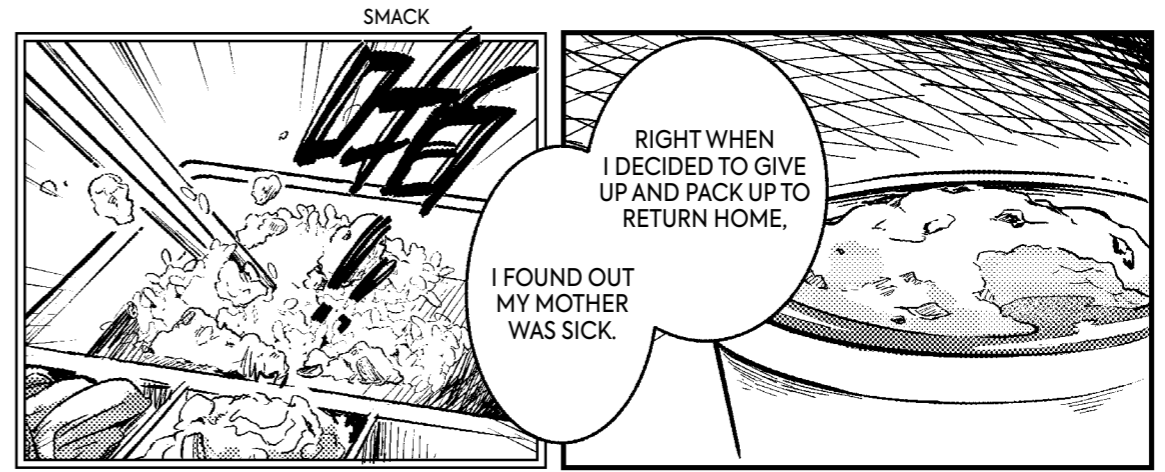
FLAMBOYANT AND BORING!

SCRIPTED!

IT WASN'T UNTIL I WENT ABROAD THAT I REALIZED I WASN'T SPECIAL.

WHAT WAS MY ACTUAL CUISINE?

THE MORE I TRIED TO RUN AWAY FROM THOSE PICKLED VEGETABLES, THE MORE LOST I BECAME.



SMACK

I FOUND OUT MY MOTHER WAS SICK.

RIGHT WHEN I DECIDED TO GIVE UP AND PACK UP TO RETURN HOME,

DRIP DRIP...

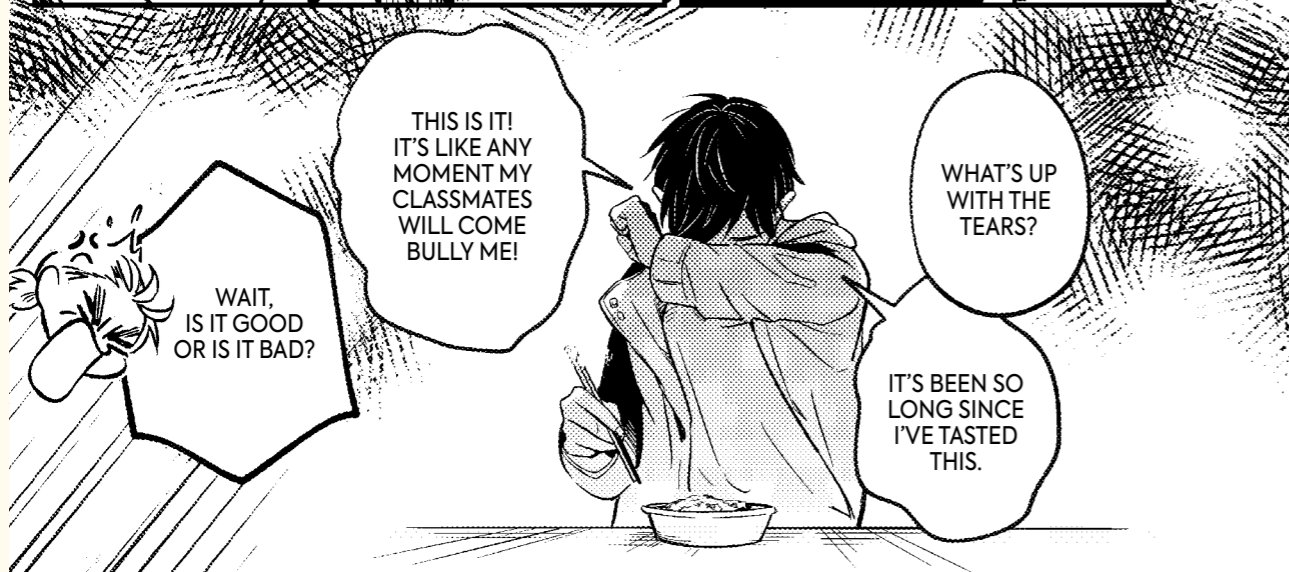
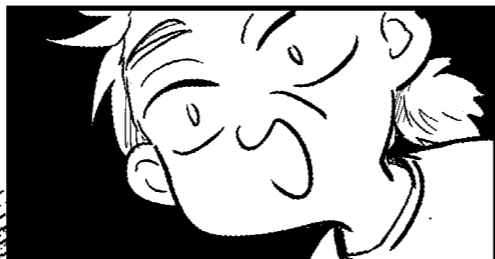


撲簌
撲簌...



HOW ABOUT OUR BET?

HOW IS IT?



WAIT, IS IT GOOD OR IS IT BAD?

THIS IS IT! IT'S LIKE ANY MOMENT MY CLASSMATES WILL COME BULLY ME!

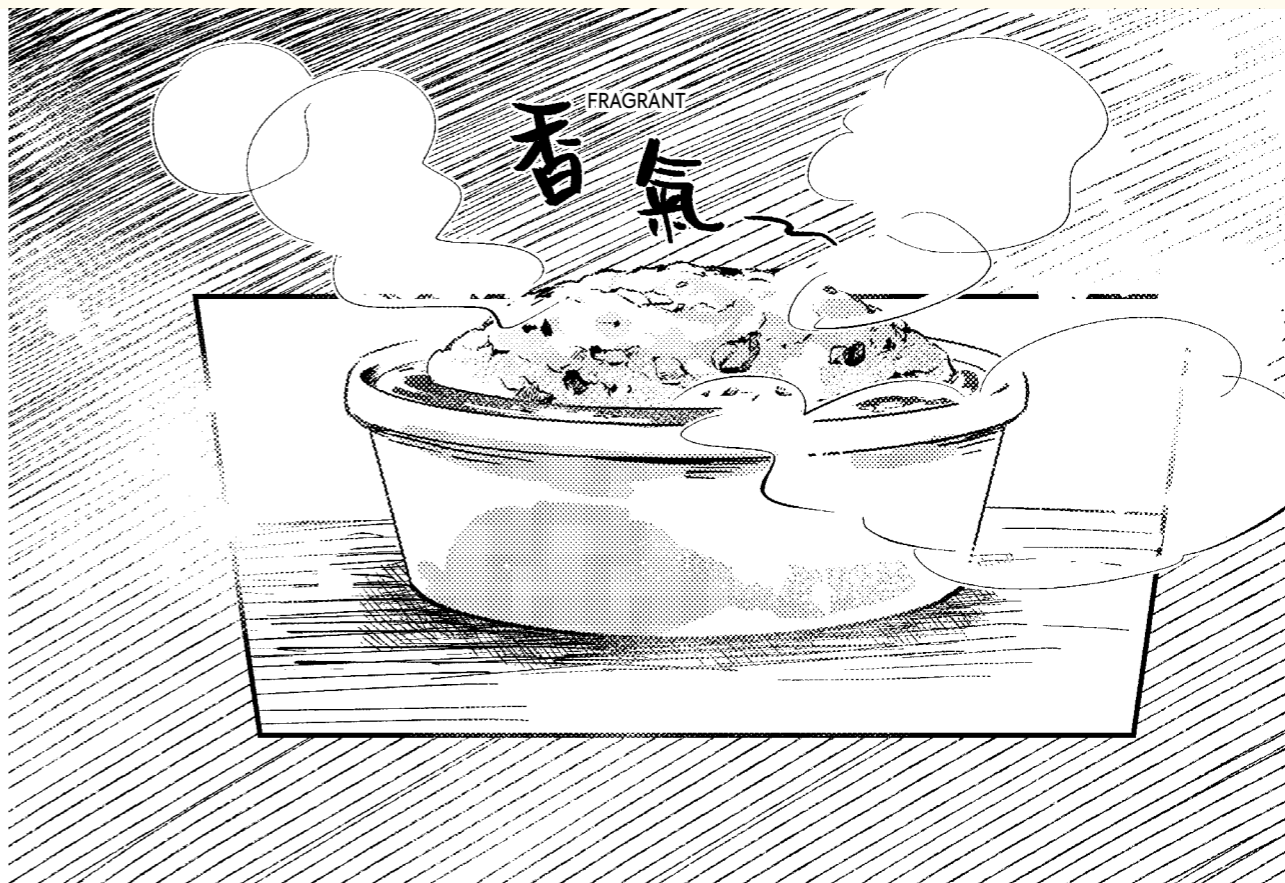
WHAT'S UP WITH THE TEARS?

IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE TASTED THIS.



TO SHOW MY MOM THAT I WAS GOOD AT SOMETHING.

I JUST WANTED TO PROVE MYSELF—



FRAGRANT

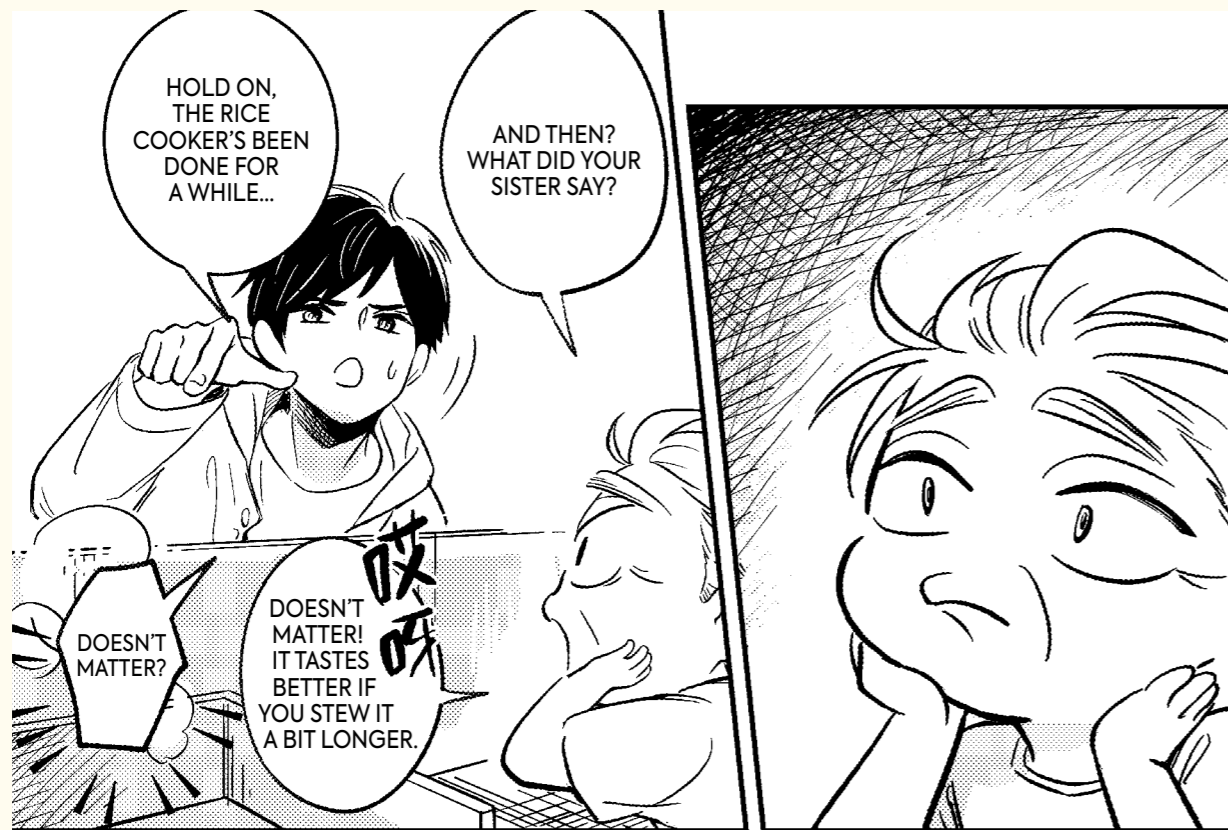
香氣



DOESN'T IT SMELL GOOD? I DON'T MESS AROUND.
IF YOU NEED MORE RICE, LET ME KNOW!

HERE— THE MINCED MEAT WITH PICKLED CUCUMBER YOU ORDERED!

DOESN'T LOOK ANY DIFFERENT THAN WHAT I'VE MADE.



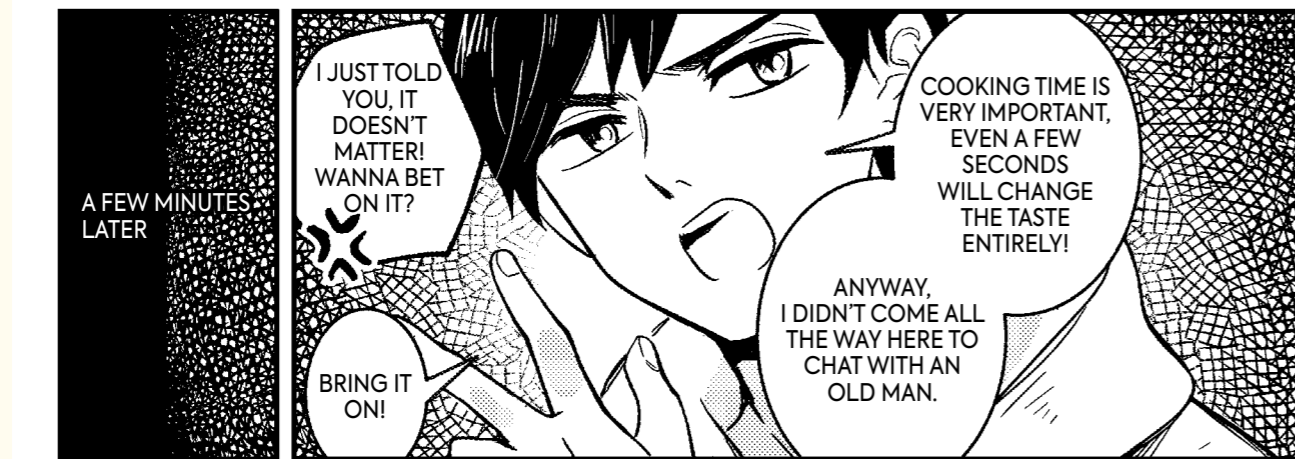
HOLD ON, THE RICE COOKER'S BEEN DONE FOR A WHILE...

AND THEN? WHAT DID YOUR SISTER SAY?

DOESN'T MATTER?

DOESN'T MATTER! IT TASTES BETTER IF YOU STEW IT A BIT LONGER.

AH



A FEW MINUTES LATER

I JUST TOLD YOU, IT DOESN'T MATTER! WANNA BET ON IT?

COOKING TIME IS VERY IMPORTANT, EVEN A FEW SECONDS WILL CHANGE THE TASTE ENTIRELY!

ANYWAY, I DIDN'T COME ALL THE WAY HERE TO CHAT WITH AN OLD MAN.

BRING IT ON!



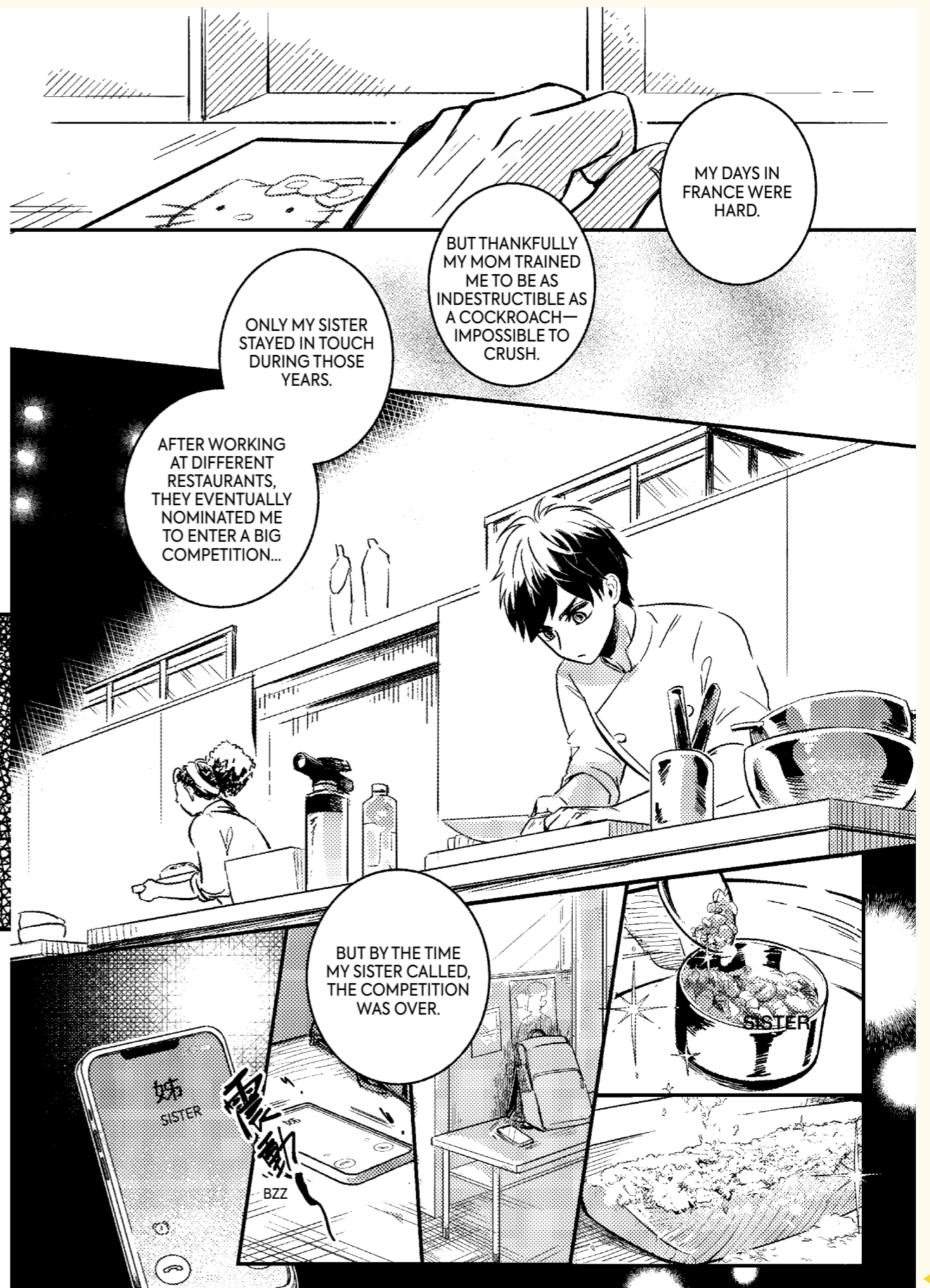
IS THAT SO?

LIFTS LID

I BET YOU'RE NOT POPULAR WITH THE GIRLS, HUH...

I'M VERY POPULAR, AND MY ROOM IS VERY CLEAN!

THIS TYPE OF PERSONALITY...



MY DAYS IN FRANCE WERE HARD.

BUT THANKFULLY MY MOM TRAINED ME TO BE AS INDESTRUCTIBLE AS A COCKROACH—IMPOSSIBLE TO CRUSH.

ONLY MY SISTER STAYED IN TOUCH DURING THOSE YEARS.

AFTER WORKING AT DIFFERENT RESTAURANTS, THEY EVENTUALLY NOMINATED ME TO ENTER A BIG COMPETITION...

BUT BY THE TIME MY SISTER CALLED, THE COMPETITION WAS OVER.

姊 SISTER

BZZ



The Signature Dish—The Untold Stories Behind Home-Cooked Meals

by Wen-Chien Hsu

In Taiwan, culture, memory, and food are deeply intertwined. Locals eagerly recommend dishes to international visitors, and food is a constant topic of conversation. Food here is more than nourishment—it is a symbol of identity, a way of understanding relationships with family and loved ones, and a vessel for memory. In many ways, every home-cooked meal carries an untold life story.

The Signature Dish is not a cookbook that teaches you how to cook. It's a comic about food and memory, flavor and emotion. It explores how the dishes that raised us quietly preserve pieces of the past, staying with us long after the moment has passed.

The protagonist, Chiang Ching-hsiung, was once teased by classmates

because his mother sold pickled vegetables. Embarrassed, he grew up dreaming of mastering the refined world of French cuisine. After years of hard work and studying abroad, he returns to Taiwan in defeat after losing at an international culinary competition, only to discover that his mother has developed Alzheimer's disease. Determined to recreate her signature dish—minced meat with pickled cucumber—he finds himself unable to recover its familiar taste. It isn't until he meets Master Awang, a street chef for hire, and tastes his cooking that he realizes what's missing is not a recipe, but the love his mother once poured into every dish. When he finds his mother's diary, he realizes that the meal his mother longed for most wasn't her own creation, but the

very first “failed” dish he had made for her as a child.

From there, Ching-hsiung becomes Master Awang's apprentice, traveling across Taiwan and taking on cooking requests for people yearning to relive a particular taste from their past. In the process, he encounters a series of deeply personal stories embedded in flavor. Lung, who spent his childhood on the road with an opera troupe, misses the backstage fried rice noodles that had long gone cold. An unnamed elderly man, once imprisoned for political activism, remembers little from those years except for his wife's pork rolls. Master A-Yung still recalls the salt baked chicken his father had once made just for him—a taste that brings him to tears. And Master Awang himself continues to cook pork trotter rice, clinging to the memory of a daughter who left home long ago.

Through Ching-hsiung's journey, the comic weaves together stories rooted in the soil and soul of Taiwan. In these pages, food is not a show or an ornament—it is the emotional anchor of memory. One especially endearing character is Li-

Mei, a sharp-tongued but warm-hearted ingredient supplier. Though demanding and blunt, she genuinely cares for others. Her interactions with Ching-hsiung bring sparks and tenderness to the story, adding a layer of warmth to their shared path.

Overall, *The Signature Dish* is a touching, warm-hearted comic—like a familiar meal that always brings you home. It may remind you of something your family once made—a bowl of soup after school, or the braised pork rice always served at New Year. These flavors not only nourish the body—they connect us to our past, to the people we've loved, and to all the unspoken words between us.

It's a story for anyone who misses home, and for those still searching for where they belong.

Wen-Chien Hsu possesses a free-spirited soul. She has worked at LGBTQ+ organizations, the 113 Domestic Violence Hotline, and works as an editor of Books from Taiwan 2.0. She is dedicated to bringing Taiwanese comics and picture books to a global audience.



The Signature Dish

A Full English translation is available.

手路菜

Scriptwriter: Hsin-Mei Cheng **Comic Artist:** ANIYONG **Publisher:** Dyna Books

Date: 02/2023 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

226 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1

Adaptation: TV film

BFT2.0 Translator: Cindy Ko

After a disappointing loss in a French culinary competition, young chef Ching-Hsiung returns to Taiwan in search of the true essence of cooking. Determined to recreate his mother's signature dish—minced meat with pickled cucumber—he struggles to capture its familiar taste. Then he meets Master Awang, a legendary chef who roams the island in a food truck, serving dishes tailored to each customer. From him, Ching-Hsiung learns that what's missing is not a recipe, but the love and care his mother once poured into every meal.

In this warm and hopeful story, a disheartened young chef and a master of roadside banquets journey together across Taiwan, uncovering the human stories behind every recipe. This book celebrates the power of food to nourish not only the body, but also the heart. Minced pork with pickles, fried rice noodles, crispy spring rolls, braised pork knuckles over rice—each handcrafted dish carries not only flavor, but the weight of memory and emotion.



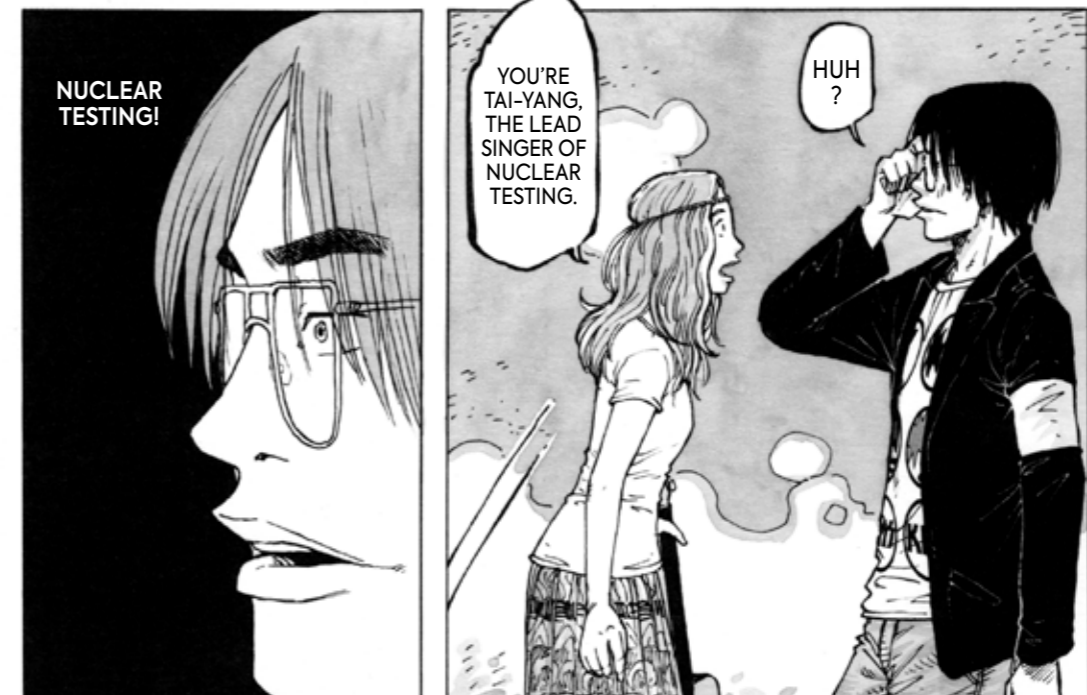
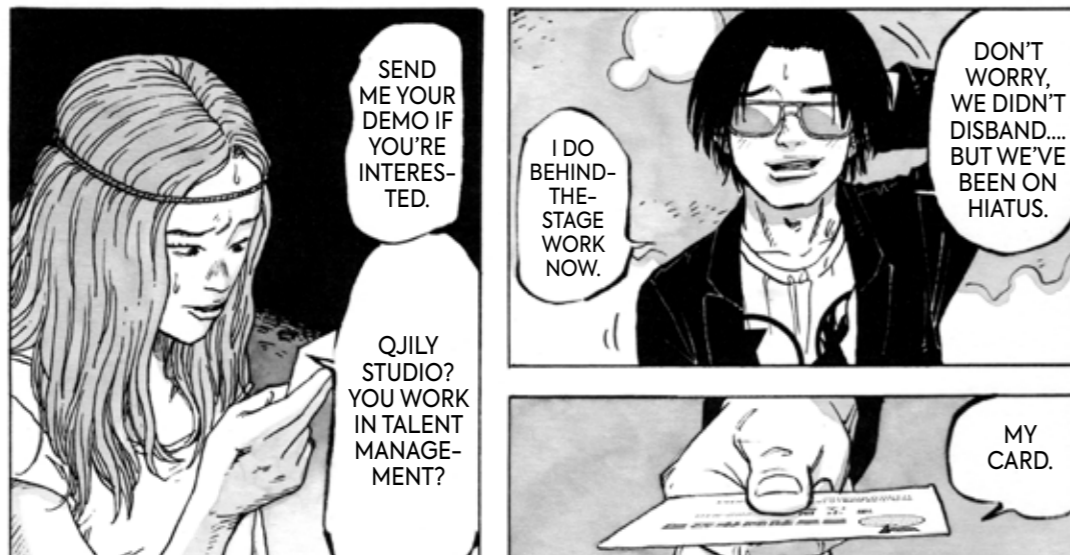
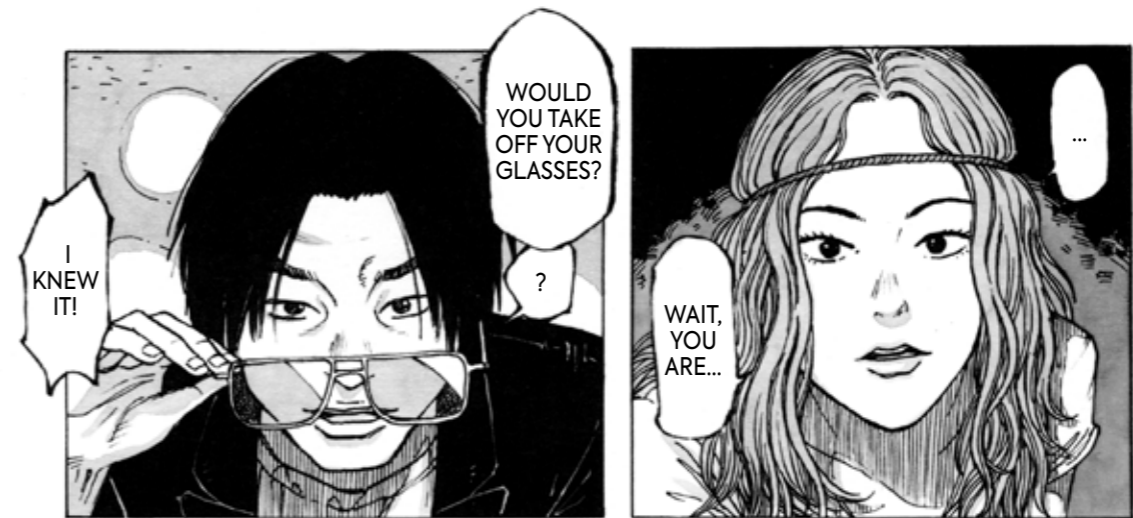
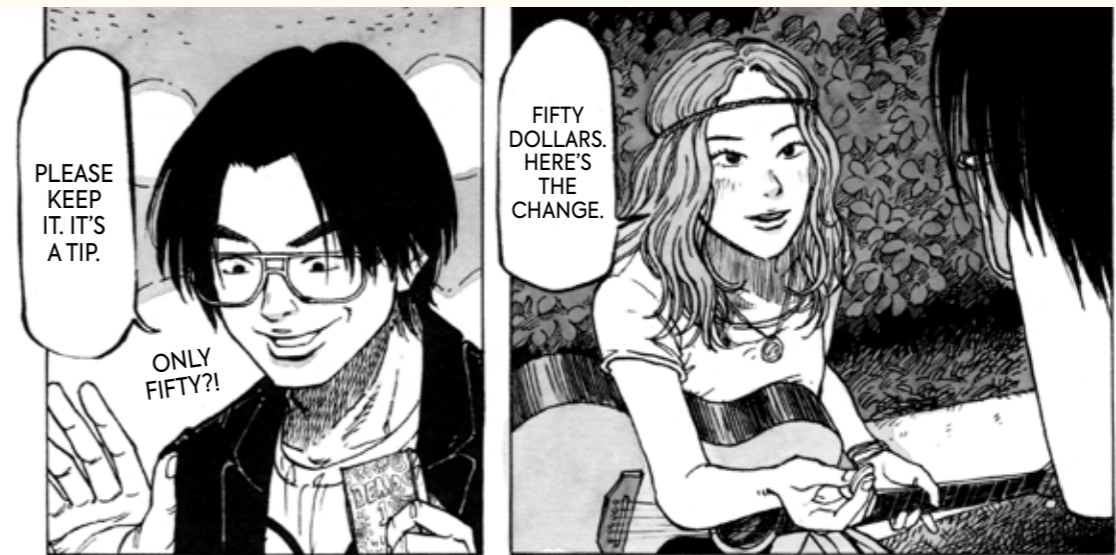
Scriptwriter Hsin-Mei Cheng

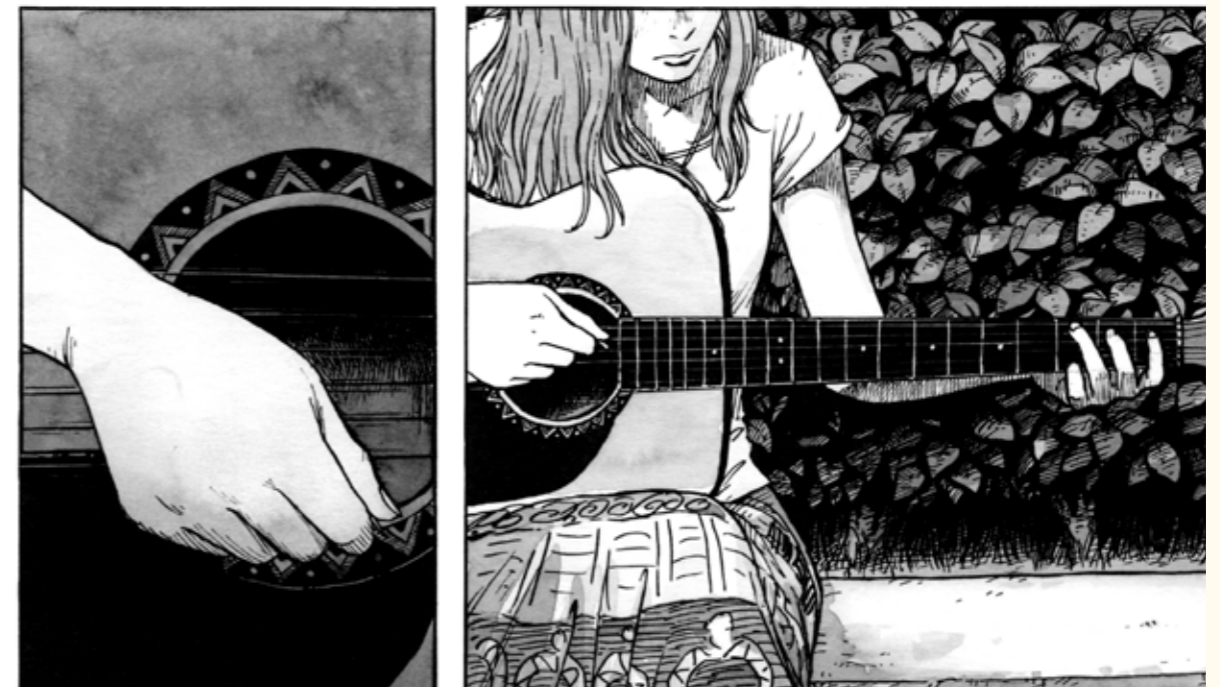
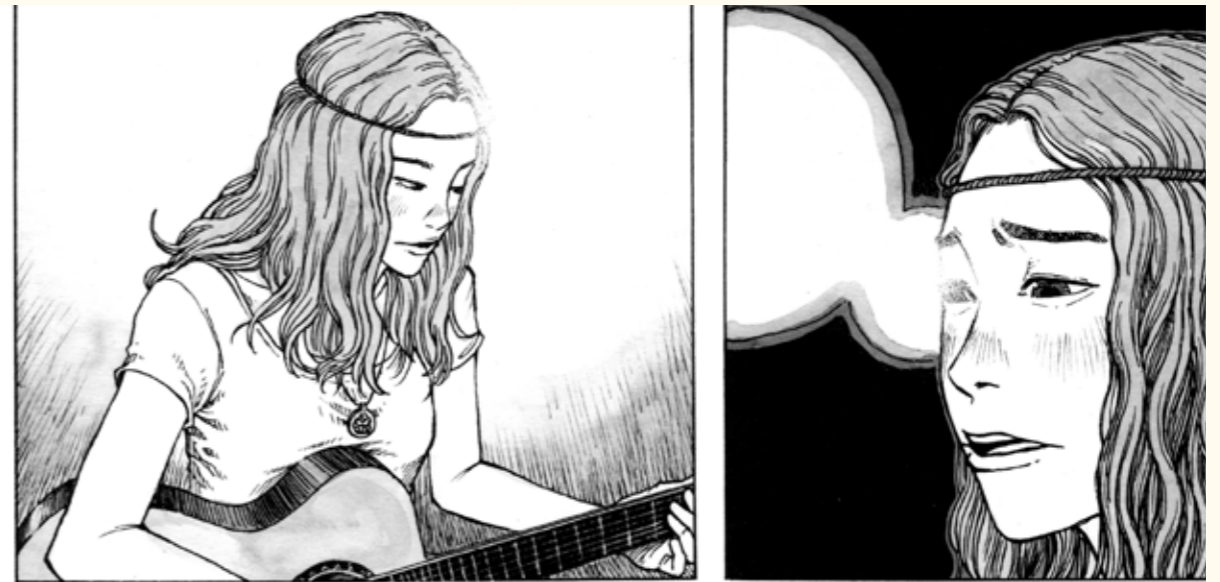
Born in 1976, Hsin-Mei Cheng began her career as a journalist before transitioning to full-time scriptwriting. Known for her keen social insight, she is dedicated to uncovering stories rooted in Taiwan and crafting emotionally powerful narratives that resonate with its people.

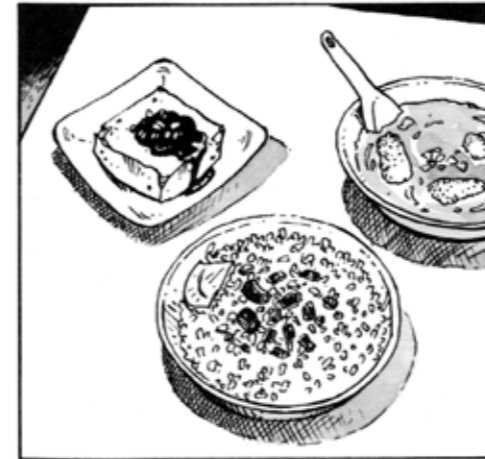
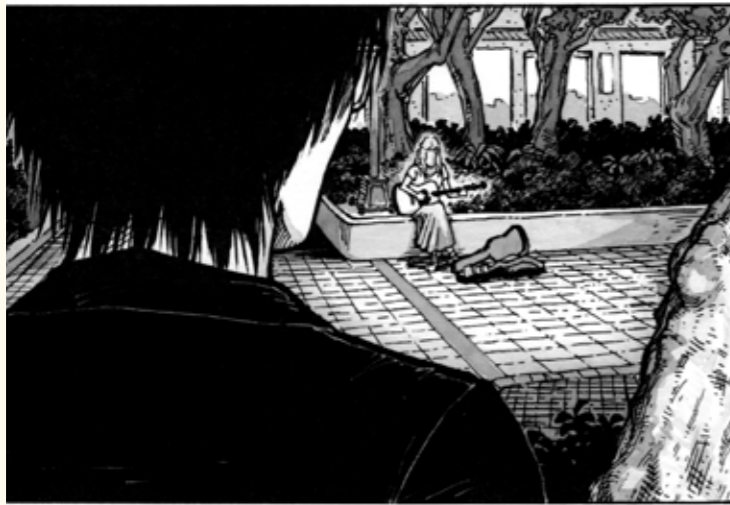


Comic Artist ANIYONG

ANIYONG is known for her compelling storytelling, vivid characters, and engagement with social issues, offering readers both emotional resonance and deeper layers of interpretation.







Demo: A Song Without a Name, A Dream Not Yet Let Go

by Wen-Chien Hsu

We often think that dreams end at a clear point in time—graduation, military service, or after being struck down by reality. But for *Demo*'s protagonist, Yu Yang, dreams refuse to fade. He lingers among their ruins, unable to move on. Once the lead singer of an indie rock band, he returns from his service to find the group disbanded, his bandmates having gone their separate ways. Only he remains, drifting like a drone with no signal, circling endlessly above the city.

He ends up at a small talent agency, working as a manager no one really trusts. He isn't even deemed worthy of helping others pursue their dreams. Then he meets Luna, a street performer who still believes in something—and recognizes him as the former frontman of a band she loved. Her admiration, passion, and belief in the music he thought the

world had long forgotten, rekindled a flicker of something within him. *Demo* doesn't offer a grand, dramatic turning point—but it gives us something more truthful: not hope, but defiance. Just enough to take one more step forward.

One of the most striking moments in the manga is a dream sequence. Yu Yang dreams he's a mouse running on a wheel to generate electricity for a power company. At first, he believes it's the happiest kind of life—stable, purposeful, unthinking. But when he finally can't run anymore, he starts to question what happiness really is, and whether he ever had a choice. The scene reads almost like a fable, one that hits painfully close for anyone who's ever numbed themselves to survive. When he wakes, he learns that a song he had written for a clownish celebrity has gone viral—an unexpected

vindication, as if fate was quietly acknowledging that even the smallest act of sincerity isn't wasted.

Demo doesn't dwell on the sweetness of success. Instead, it focuses on the void after failure—on that uncertain space where you are no longer who you were, but not yet someone new. How do you keep going when you don't know where you're headed?

In the afterword, ROCKAT shares how this story was born from his student days, when he first discovered Taiwan's indie music scene. As a longtime gig-goer, he witnessed firsthand how independent bands evolve over time—their styles, their live performances, their compromises. But it was those performances—sometimes explosive, sometimes gentle, sometimes absurd—that truly moved the artist. Because indie music isn't just about

sound. It's a way of living. Not a scramble to break into the mainstream, but a stubborn, sometimes quiet insistence on being heard from the margins.

I kept wondering why this manga is titled *Demo*. Perhaps it's because a demo, like a life not yet defined, is a song without a name. Until someone listens—really listens—it floats through the world untethered, with no case, no stage, no place to land. And yet still, it wants to be sung.

Wen-Chien Hsu possesses a free-spirited soul. She has worked at LGBTQ+ organizations, the 113 Domestic Violence Hotline, and currently works as an editor of Books from Taiwan 2.0. She is dedicated to bringing Taiwanese comics and picture books to a global audience.



Demo

A Full English translation is available.

無名歌

Author: ROCKAT **Illustrator:** ROCKAT **Publisher:** Gaea Books

Date: 01/2015 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

184 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1 (Two-book series.)

Awards: 2016 Japan International Manga Award Silver Award, 2015 Golden Comics Awards Best New Talent

Rights sold: Japanese

BFT2.0 Translator: Tony Hao

Tai-yang, once the vocalist of an indie band, has fallen so low that he now works as an escort for celebrity guests on variety shows—serving as the butt of jokes. One day, a clear, haunting voice drifting from a park near Yongkang Street awakens something long dormant, and his rock and roll dream feels suddenly both within reach and impossibly far away.

Set against a vivid portrait of Taipei, this comic book captures the rhythms of Taiwanese society in a particular moment and place. Through Tai-yang's winding journey, it explores how music, memory, and a restless city can shape—and upend—a life.



Author **ROCKAT**

Often jokingly referring to himself as a “not-so-free” manga artist, ROCKAT graduated from the National Taiwan University of Arts. In 2012, he illustrated the board game *The Wonderful Island*. His first standalone manga, *Demo*, was published at the end of 2014.



YOU'LL BE ACTING AS THE GOD.

ONCE YOU PUT THE TÔNG-Á ON, YOU'RE NO LONGER ACTING AS YOURSELF.



A FEW HOURS LATER



YOU'LL ALSO HAVE TO WALK LIKE ONE!



MAYBE TRYING WITH THE TÔNG-Á ON WOULD HELP?



AH-HSÜN.

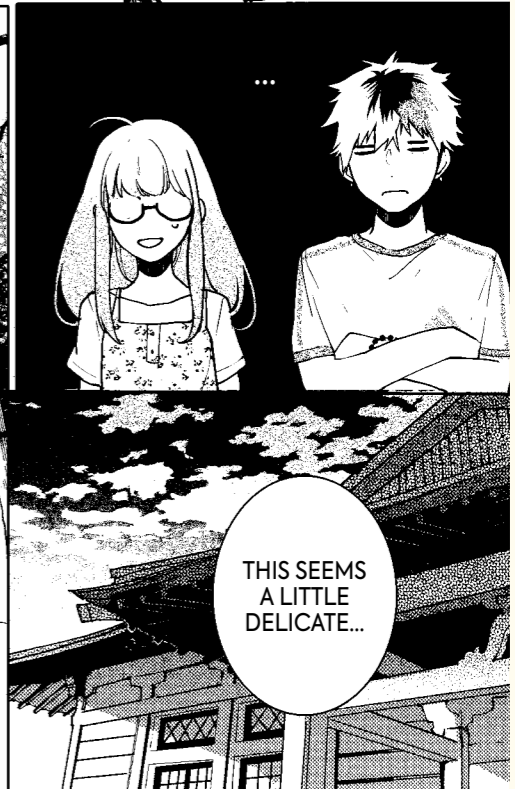


YI-HSÜN SEEMS EXTRA STRICT TODAY...

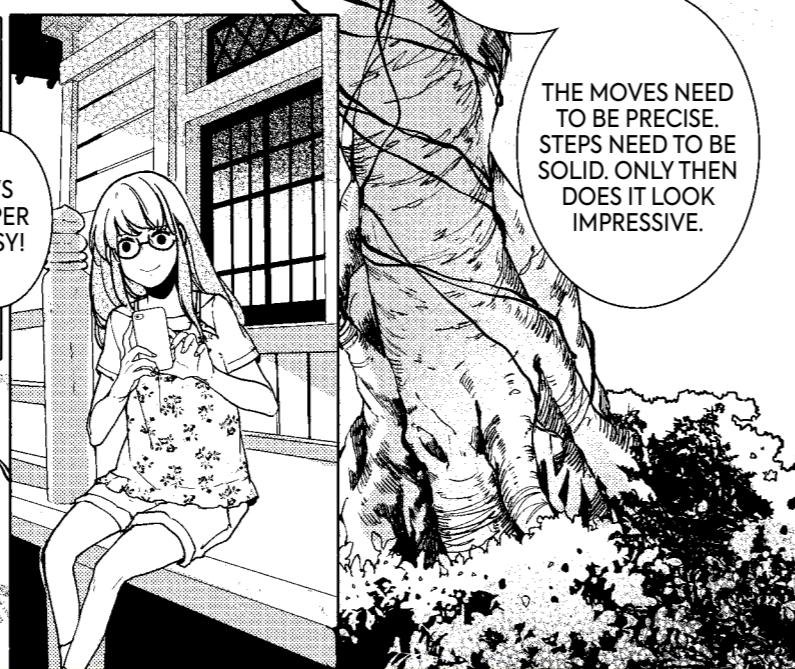
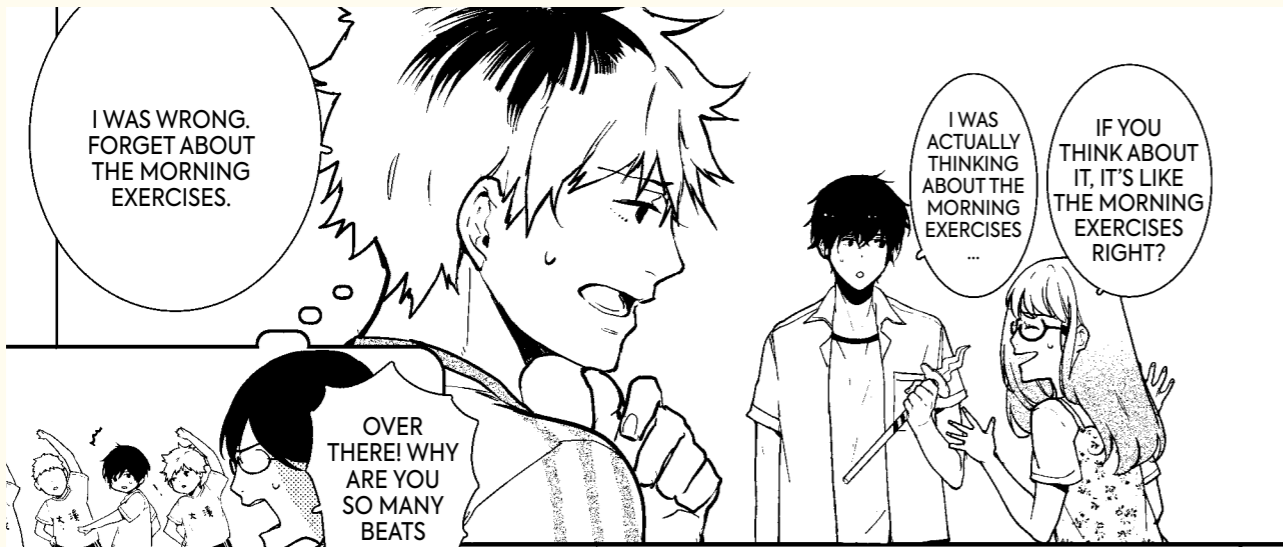
MAKE SURE THE INSTRUMENTS DON'T FALL WHEN YOU TURN.

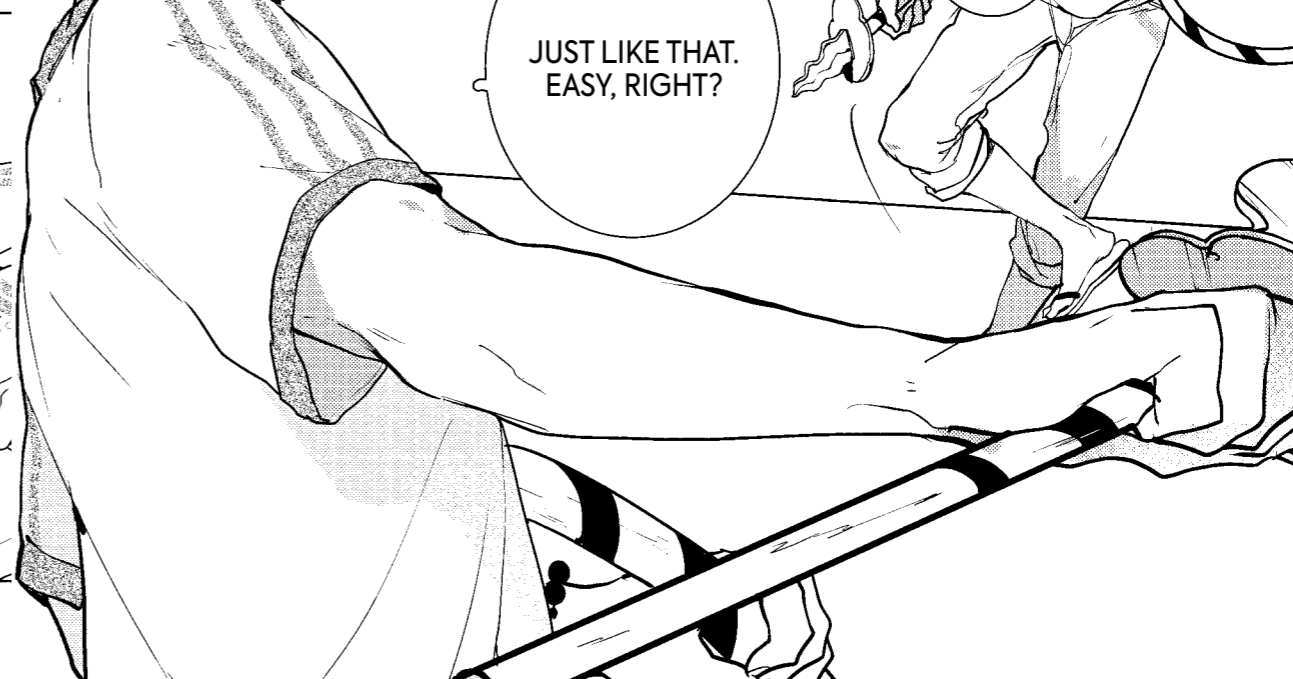
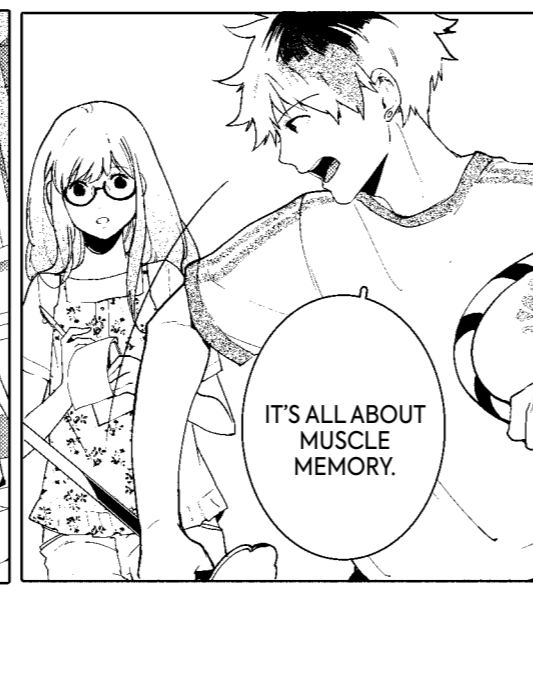
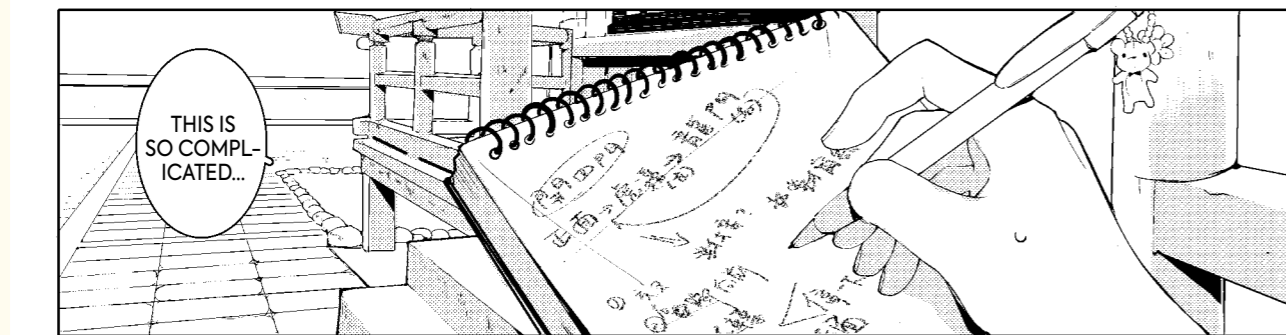
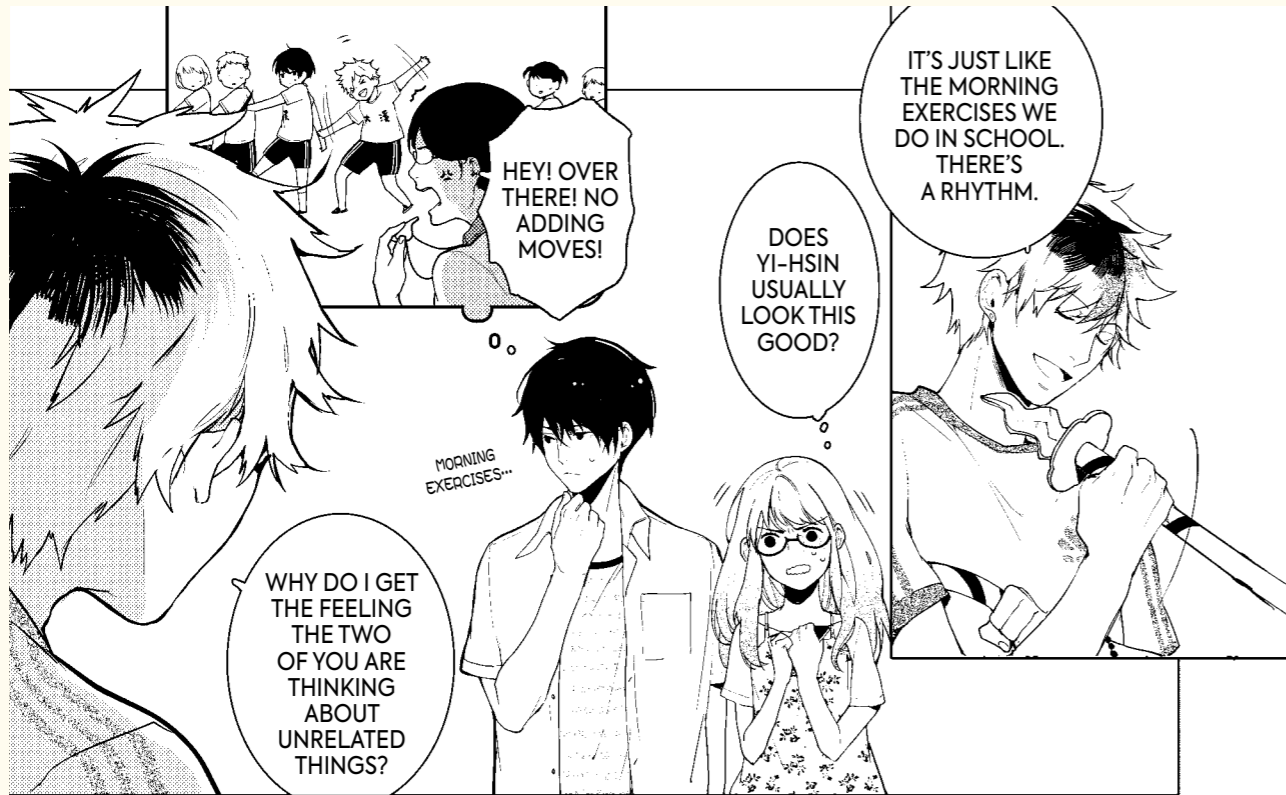


NO.



THIS SEEMS A LITTLE DELICATE...





Turning Around Is the Hardest Part: Revisiting Home in *Rites of Returning*

by Wen-Chien Hsu

Although the story begins from the perspective of Nuan-nuan Chen and her quiet crush on the male protagonist Chih-hsün Hsia, the heart of the narrative lies in Chih-hsün's inability to let go of a past he cannot fully understand. Raised in the small northern Taiwanese town of Daxi, Chih-hsün grew up spinning tops, watching temple processions, and never once imagining a life beyond it. But after his parents' divorce forced him to leave, he found himself on a long, winding path home—one that would take years to undergo.

What makes *Rites of Returning* such a rich and distinctive comic is how it embeds this journey of reconciliation—between son and father, self and origin—

within Taiwan's folk religious culture. Through traditional games, temple festivals, and the rituals of hometown life, the story layers personal memory over collective heritage. Like Chih-hsün himself, who uses a school project as an excuse to return to Daxi, the comic gently explores the longing to return through indirection and ritual.

The story cleverly sets its emotional turning point during one of Daxi's most important annual events: the birthday celebration of Holy Emperor Guan, held on the 24th day of the sixth lunar month. This becomes Chih-hsün's gateway to reentering his hometown—not just to attend the festival, but to fulfill a childhood promise by joining the local

parade group performing the Prince Nezha dance. It's also where he begins to reconnect with his estranged father—most powerfully through a shared moment during a traditional top-spinning performance at the Puji temple fair.

In a climactic moment, Chih-hsün's father—a master of the spinning top—says: “When I used to spin tops, I always told myself never to look back. Charging ahead was the easiest thing... But later I realized, turning around—that's the hardest part.” This line doesn't just encapsulate the comic's theme—it gently invites the reader, too, to look back. It speaks to anyone who has ever fled their past, avoided reconciliation, or missed a chance to heal. It reminds us that to turn around is painful, yes—but necessary, if we are to live without regret.

Author Zuo Hsuan renders the rhythms and textures of Daxi with quiet elegance. Unlike many comics about Taiwan that focus on cuisine or grand historical narratives, Zuo Hsuan avoids clichés and complex entry points. Instead, she centers everyday human interactions—between families, between memories and rituals—and in doing so, reveals a deep emotional resonance

grounded in place. The comic's charm lies not in exoticism, but in the quiet, universal truths tucked into the details: the weight of memory, the awkwardness of reunion, the sweetness of Moonlight cakes shared at dusk.

This is a comic that makes Taiwanese readers smile in recognition—and non-Taiwanese readers weep with understanding. It offers something rare: a vision of Taiwan that transcends politics and cuisine, reaching instead for something more intimate—belonging, reconciliation, and the roots of identity.

For foreign publishers seeking emotionally resonant, culturally grounded stories, *Rites of Returning* is a luminous example of how local specificity can unlock universal emotion. It is not simply about going home—it is about discovering what it truly means to return.

Wen-Chien Hsu possesses a free-spirited soul. She has worked at LGBTQ+ organizations, the 113 Domestic Violence Hotline, and works as an editor of Books from Taiwan 2.0. She is dedicated to bringing Taiwanese comics and picture books to a global audience.



Rites of Returning

A Full English translation is available.

神之鄉

Author: Zuo Hsuan **Illustrator:** Zuo Hsuan **Publisher:** Gaea Books

Date: 10/2015

Rights contact: bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

212 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1 (Two-books series)

Adaptation: TV Drama

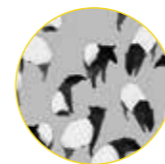
Award: 2017 Japan International Manga Award Bronze Award (Volume 1), 2025 Japan International Manga Award Silver Award (Volume 2)

Rights sold: French, Italian, Japanese, Vietnam, German

BFT2.0 Translator: Kevin Wang & Michelle Kuo

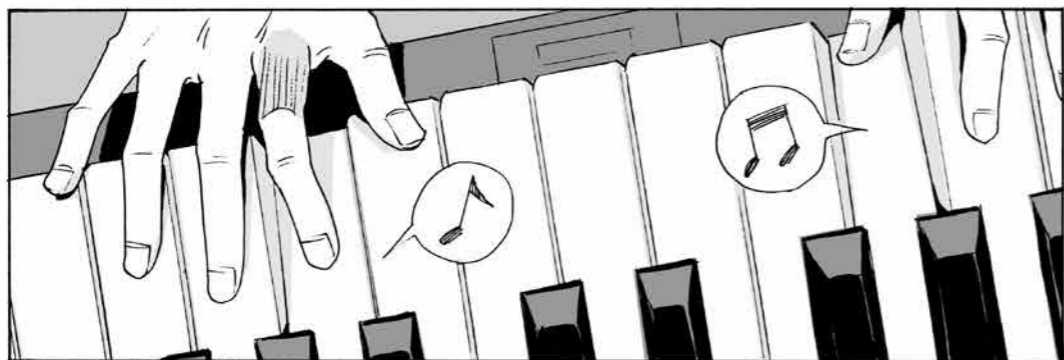
College student Nuan-Nuan Chen is thrilled when she's paired with her crush, the aloof Chih-Hsun Hsia, on a summer field project. Their assignment—to study religious practices in the Taiwanese town of Daxi—turns out to be more than research: for Chih-Hsun, it's a return to the hometown he left behind seven years ago.

As the community prepares for its grand temple fair, Chih-Hsun slowly reconnects with childhood memories, old friends, and his estranged father. Handmade moonlight cakes, spinning top contests, and urban legends all infuse this vibrant story by one of Taiwan's leading comic artists. Through festivals, rituals, and traditional games, *Rites of Returning* weaves a moving tale of reconciliation—between past and present, self and family, memory and home.



Author **Zuo Hsuan**

An award-winning comics artist and illustrator, Zuo Hsuan graduated from National Taiwan Normal University's Department of Fine Arts in Design. Her work *Rites of Returning* (2015) won the Japan International Manga Award Bronze Prize and was adapted into a 2021 TV drama. She also illustrated *What She Put On the Table* (2017) and published *The Banana Sprout* (2022). Her works have been published internationally, and she has represented Taiwan at various international book fairs.



MIRACULOUSLY,
TODAY MY
LEFT HAND
FOLLOWED
ALONG
WITHOUT
TROUBLE.



WHAT IS IT?
KEEP GOING.

RIGHT.



SMOOTHER
THAN IT HAD
EVER BEEN!



IF YOU AREN'T
PLAYING
BETTER—

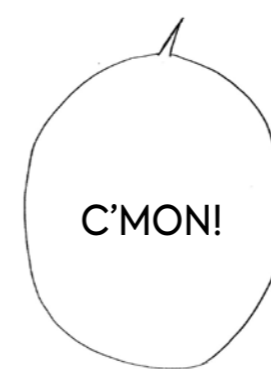
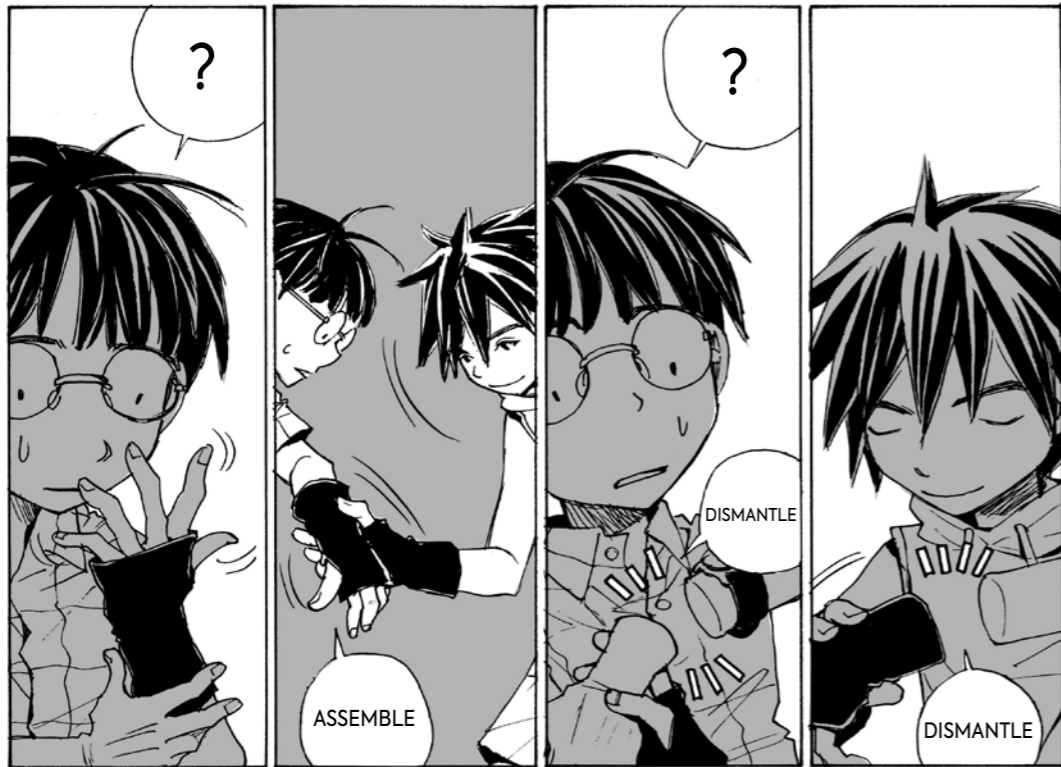
I'LL LISTEN
FROM OUTSIDE.

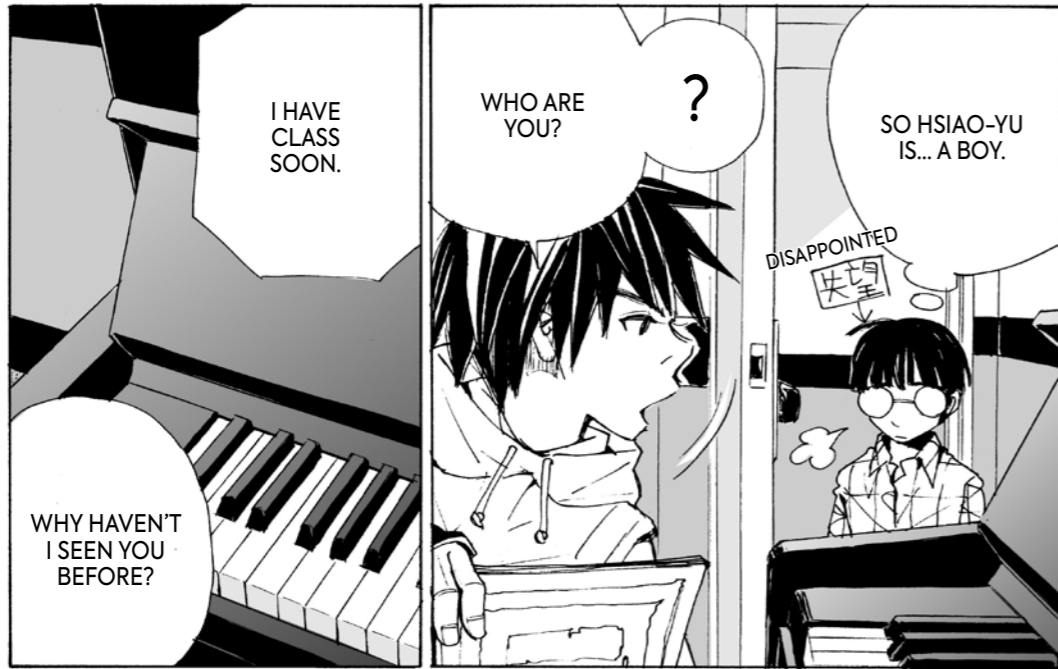
YOU CAN COME
OUT AND YELL
AT ME.

WHAT PIECE
ARE YOU ON?
PLAY IT FOR ME.



OK.





I HAVE CLASS SOON.

WHO ARE YOU?

SO HSIAO-YU IS... A BOY.

DISAPPOINTED
失望

WHY HAVEN'T I SEEN YOU BEFORE?



NOT REALLY. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S AMAZING.

ARE YOU REALLY GOOD OR SOMETHING?

I WASN'T TAKING LESSONS FROM MR. HO BEFORE.

YOU PLAYED SO FAST. AND WE'RE THE SAME AGE.

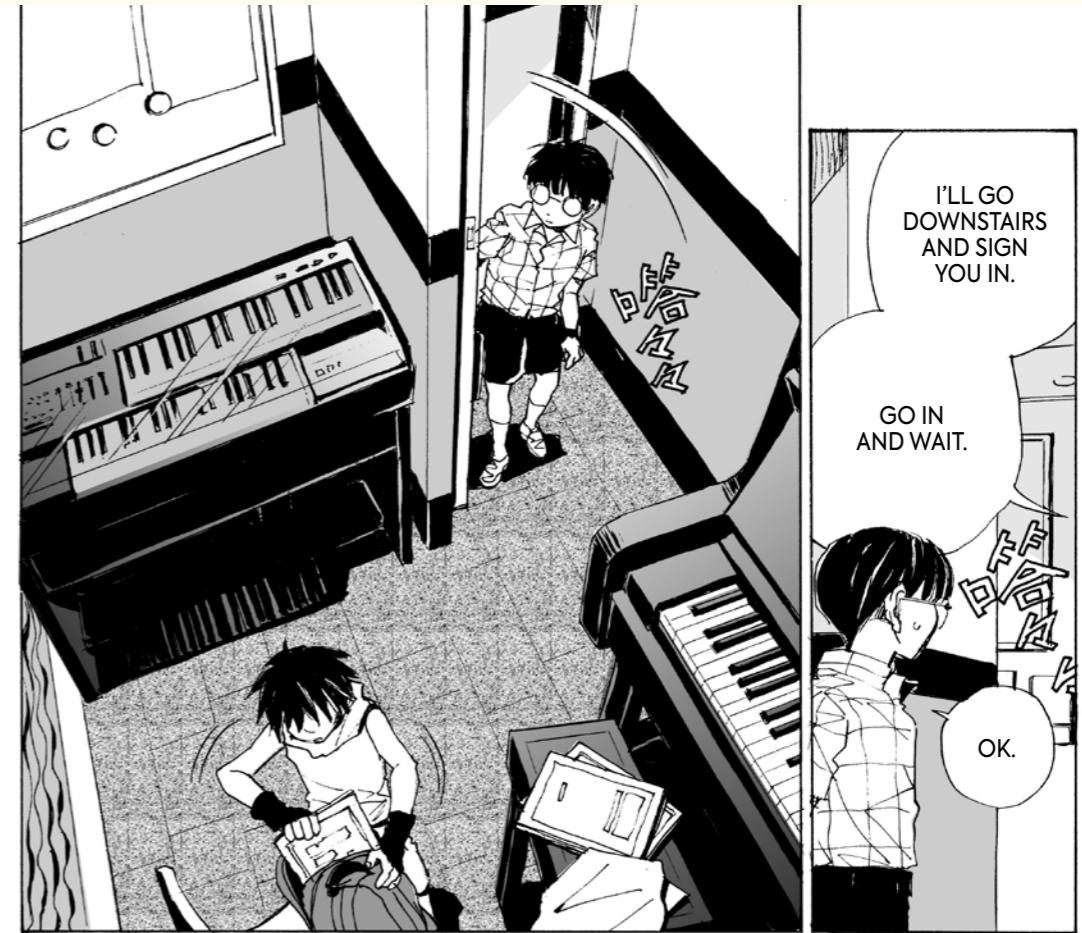
OH?

JUST THESE FEW.

YOU'RE IN FIRST GRADE TOO, HUH.

SENSE OF COMPETITIVE UP

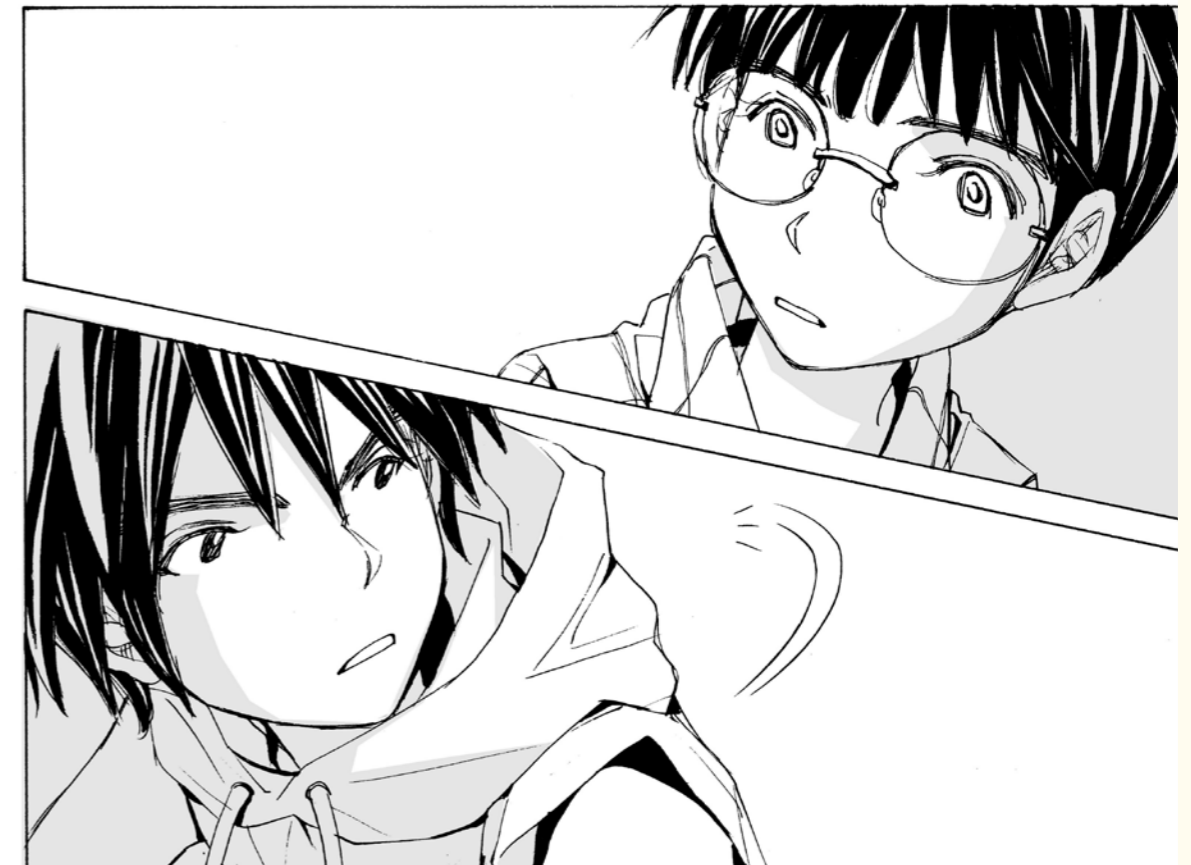
STARE



I'LL GO DOWNSTAIRS AND SIGN YOU IN.

GO IN AND WAIT.

OK.



Left Hand: When We Can't Explain Ourselves, the Body Speaks in Our Place

by Wen-Chien Hsu

Do you remember what you were like as a teenager? Did you ever act out in ways you couldn't explain—even to yourself? Sudden anger, inexplicable withdrawal, overwhelming impulses, and long silences? And when someone asked, “Why did you do that?”—maybe all you could say was, “I don't know.”

For Yueh-lin Kuo, his left hand never listened to him. That was his childhood struggle while learning the piano—and also the beginning of a strange, lonely journey. The story opens with what seems like a childish, whimsical exchange: a boy named Chun-yu Lin, a gifted pianist, offers to “lend” him his left hand. In that moment, it was as if a secret pact had been sealed. From then on, Yueh-lin's playing improves dramatically—but so begins a silent entanglement neither of

them fully understands.

The “borrowed left hand” begins to develop a will of its own. It acts without Yueh-lin's permission, doing things he dares not do, refuses to do—yet perhaps secretly wants to.

He once said: “*My left hand never listens. It always does what I don't want it to do... but sometimes, it does what I want to do but don't have the courage for.*”

It is not merely a hand—it's the embodiment of his subconscious: the emotions he suppresses, the longing he can't express, and the thread that still ties him to the boy who once lent him a hand.

But he never gave the hand back. That summer, Chun-yu left the country without warning, without even a goodbye. Yueh-lin had no way to return what he had borrowed, and so the hand stayed

with him as he grew. Years later, in high school, when the two meet again, Yueh-lin believes this is his chance—to finally return the hand, and maybe fix what's been broken inside him. But Chun-yu doesn't remember any of it.

This time, Chun-yu is the one being bullied. Yueh-lin freezes, unsure of what to do—until the left hand acts on its own, lashing out in protection. The blow drives away the aggressors, but also isolates both of them further. This isn't a heroic victory. It's one of those messy, painful, and ambiguous moments that come with growing up—a moment of defense that brings no resolution.

What makes *Left Hand* so moving isn't its fantastical premise, but the way it delicately portrays what it feels like to be misunderstood. How does a child cope with changes even they cannot control? When only one person remembers a past, does the memory still hold value? And when the body carries memory, desire, and love—are we still whole without understanding it?

The “left hand” in this novel may

be magical, but it powerfully symbolizes something deeply real: the unruly emotions and nameless desires that swell inside adolescents. Yueh-lin's left hand doesn't just belong to him—it lives in every bullied child, every bully, every silent witness who acts out in ways even they can't explain. Adults ask, “Why did you do that?”—but rarely pause to ask, “What happened to you?”

Left Hand isn't a guide on how to stop bullying, nor a mystery to be solved. It reads more like a letter to teenagers—especially those who have no words yet, who speak through their bodies, their outbursts, and their silence. It tells them: When you don't know how to say it, maybe it's simply because you haven't yet met someone willing to listen.

Wen-Chien Hsu possesses a free-spirited soul. She has worked at LGBTQ+ organizations, the 113 Domestic Violence Hotline, and works as an editor of Books from Taiwan 2.0. She is dedicated to bringing Taiwanese comics and picture books to a global audience.



Left Hand

A Full English translation is available.

左手

Author: SALLY **Illustrator:** SALLY **Publisher:** Gaea Books

Date: 07/2015

Rights contact: bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

180 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1 (Three-books series)

Awards: 2018 Japan International Manga Award Silver Award

BFT2.0 Translator: Lya Shaffer

Kuo Yueh-Lin, a quiet high school sophomore, gains entrance to a top public school to meet his parents' expectations. All he wants is to stay under the radar and make it through unnoticed. But ever since he swapped his left hand with a childhood classmate at piano school, life has been anything but ordinary—the hand seems to have a will of its own, pulling him into trouble both good and bad.

When a new transfer student arrives and quickly becomes the target of vicious bullying, Kuo is stunned to discover that the student is none other than the original owner of his left hand.

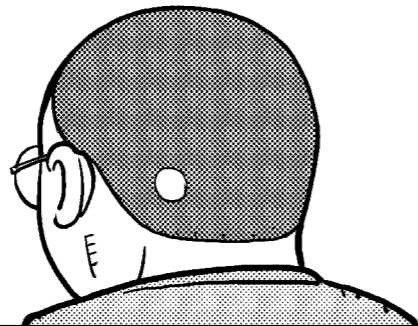
This coming-of-age graphic novel captures the struggles of Taiwanese youth—caught between academic pressure, the search for friendship, and the awakening of love.



Author **SALLY**

Based in Taipei, Sally is a graduate of the Department of Architecture and a member of CLUB ZIP. Sally works on both original doujin (self-published) projects and commercial manga. Published works include: *Left Hand*, *Going My Way?*, *Colorful Dreams*, *Butler's Groove*, and *The Matchmaker Agency*.

■ HOW OUR LIVES CHANGED IN THE ARMY.



WHATEVER TIME WE GOT, WE USED THEM TO WRITE LETTERS.

OI, IT'S TOO BRIGHT!

WE WROTE THEM DURING THE DAY AND NIGHT.



WE STARTED WRITING MORE LETTERS.



IT'S KIND OF STRANGE THAT MANY OF OUR HABITS CHANGED AFTER WE SHAVED OUR HEADS AND ENTERED THE MILITARY SITES. THE FIRST CHANGE WAS ABOUT LETTERS.

TAKING NOTES.

WHAT A QUOTE!

IT'S BETTER TO BE SHAMELESS THAN TO BE FORGOTTEN.

ACTUALLY BEFORE I ENLISTED, I WAS TOO LAZY TO EVEN SEND OUT CHRISTMAS CARDS.

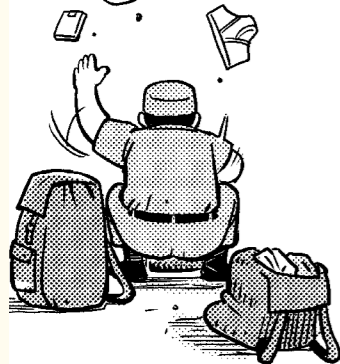
MY FRIEND DA-YU WAS RIGHT.

EVEN AFTER SO MANY YEARS, I STILL REMEMBER YOUR SMILE.

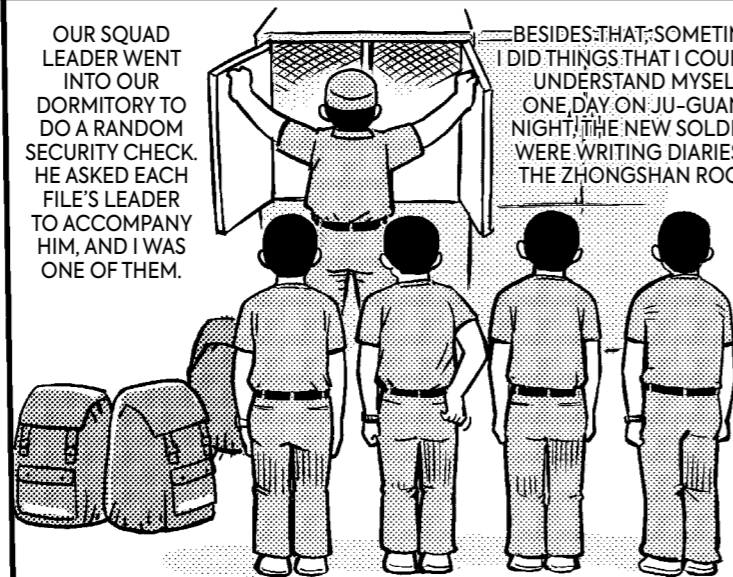
IT DIDN'T MATTER HOW MUCH WE KNEW SOMEONE. WE EVEN WROTE TO THIS RANDOM GIRL SITTING NEXT TO US IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.



AT THE TIME, THE STANDARD OF SECURITY CHECK FROM THE TRAINING CENTER WAS STRICTER; WHATEVER WASN'T ALLOWED AT THE MOMENT WAS CONFISCATED RIGHT AWAY.



OUR SQUAD LEADER WENT INTO OUR DORMITORY TO DO A RANDOM SECURITY CHECK. HE ASKED EACH FILE'S LEADER TO ACCOMPANY HIM, AND I WAS ONE OF THEM.



BESIDES THAT, SOMETIMES I DID THINGS THAT I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND MYSELF. ONE DAY ON JU-GUANG NIGHT, THE NEW SOLDIERS WERE WRITING DIARIES IN THE ZHONGSHAN ROOM.

SO YOU CAN'T FALL ASLEEP?

YOU GOT NOTHING TO DO.

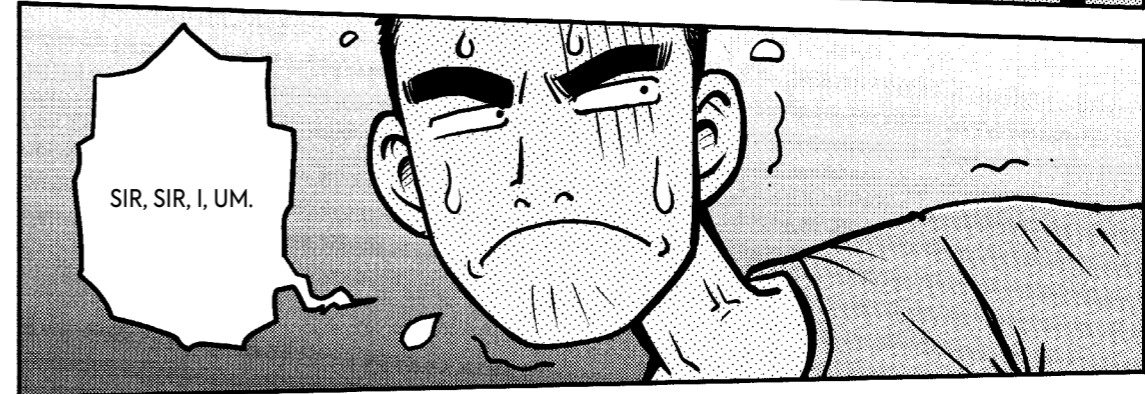


WHOA!

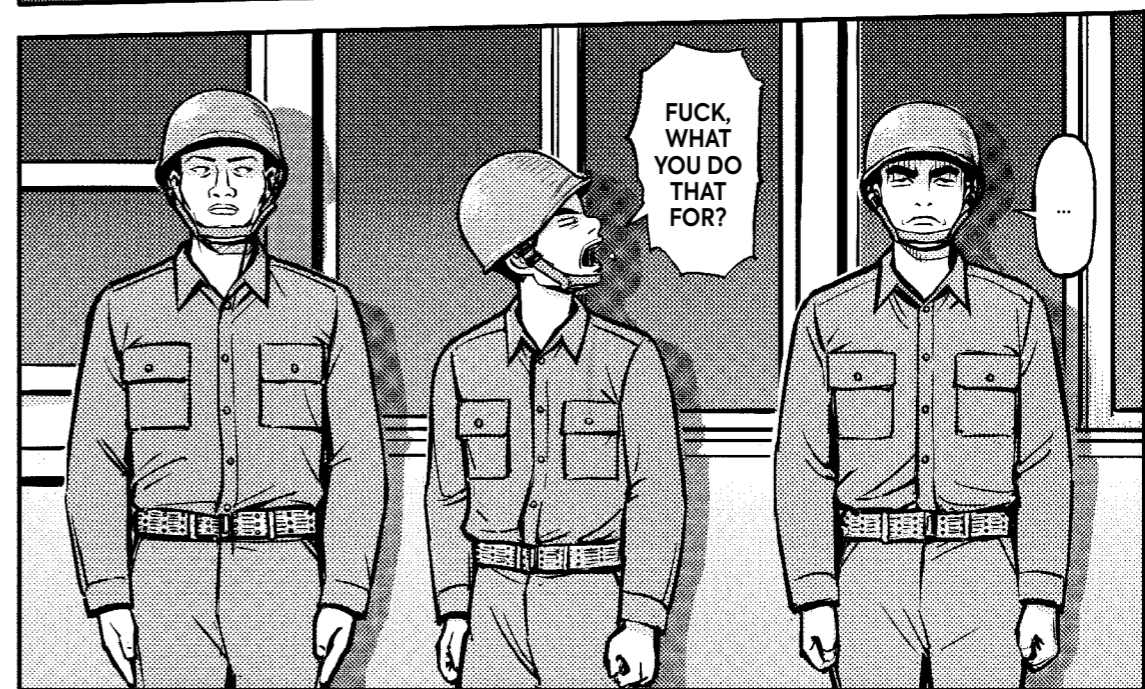
SECURITY SOLDIER

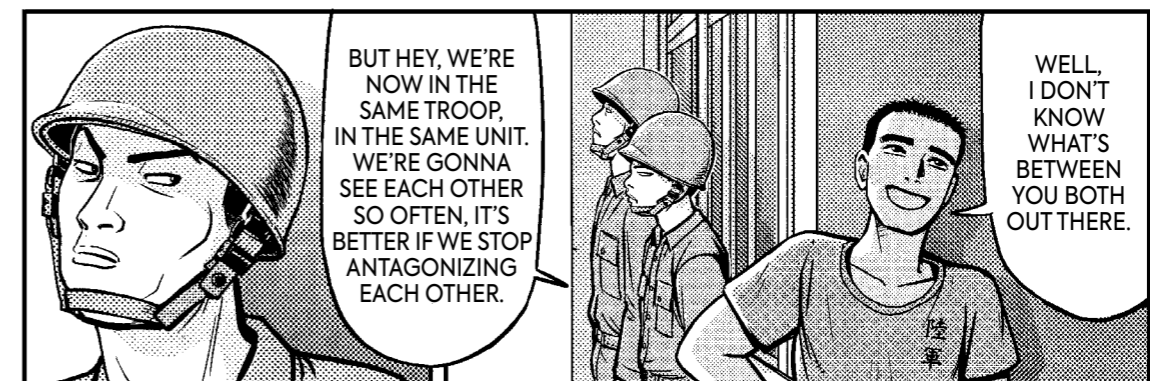
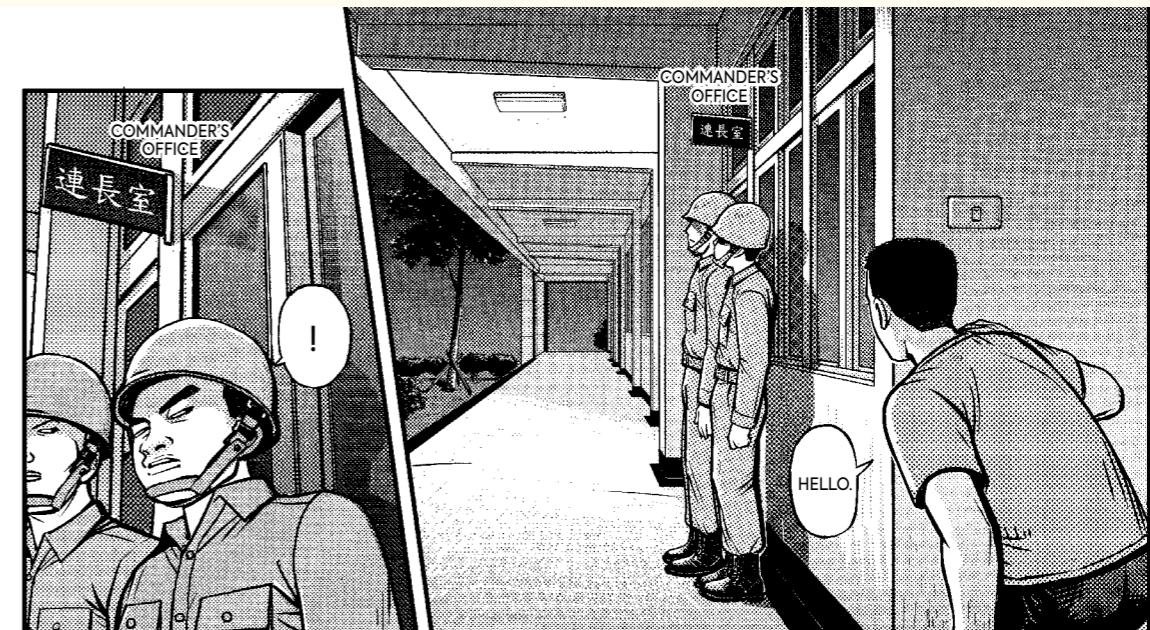
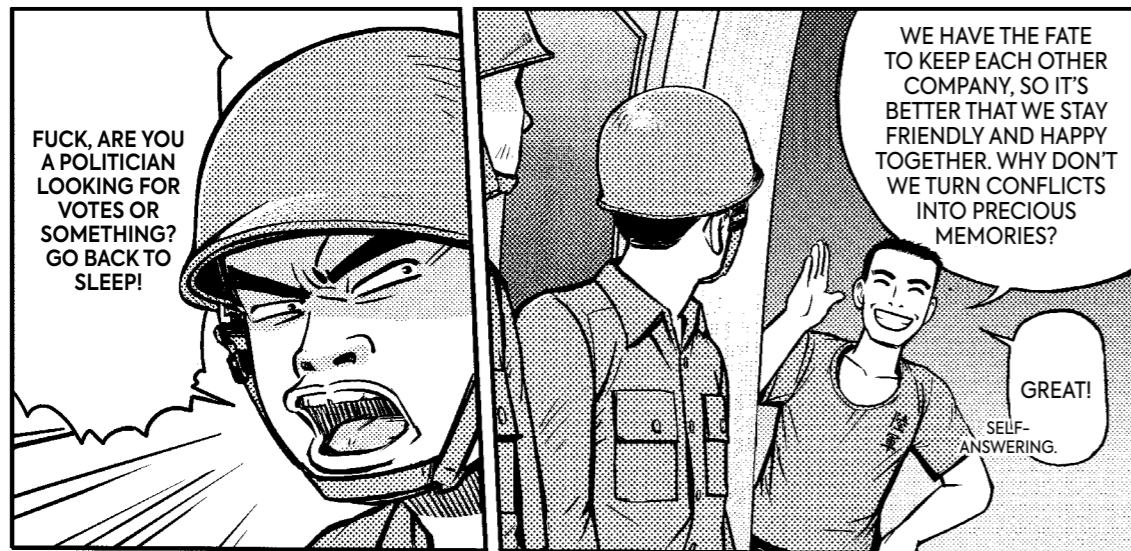
YOUR FRIENDSHIP IS SO TOUCHING.

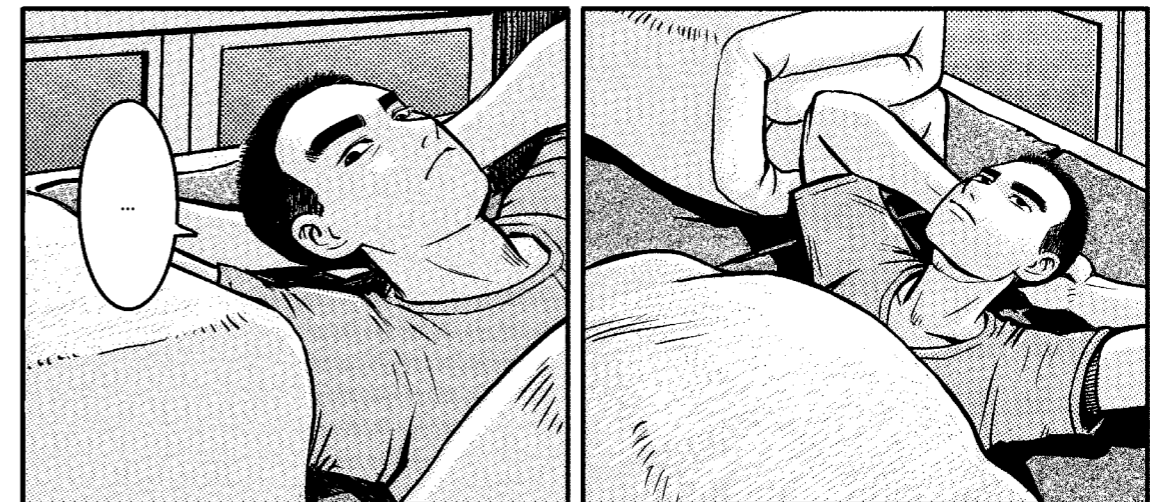
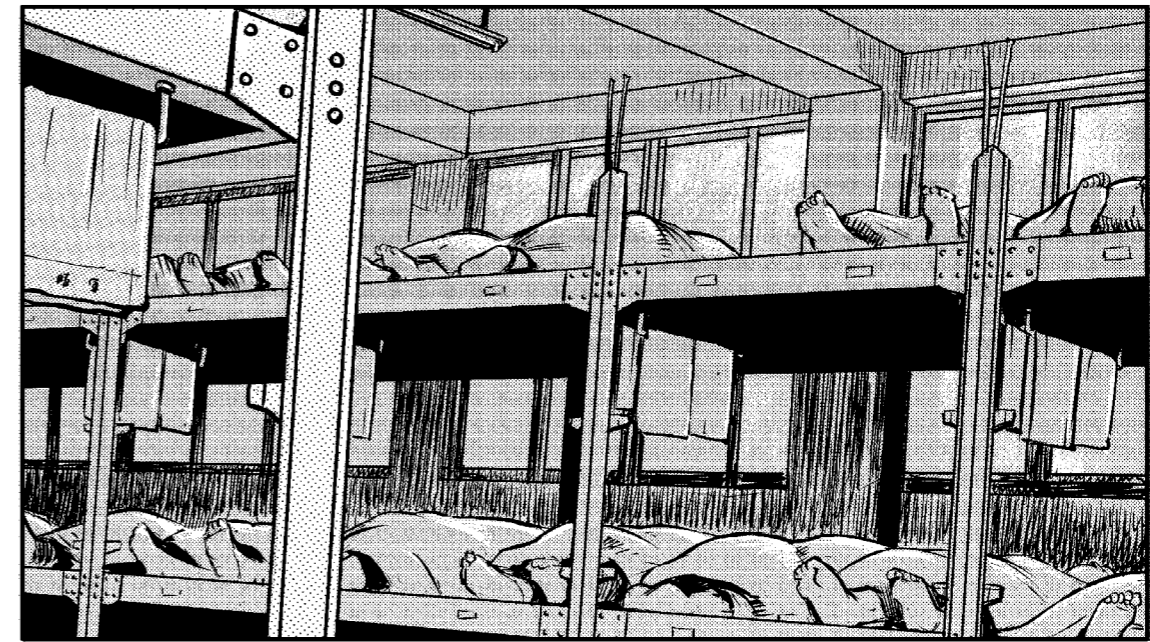
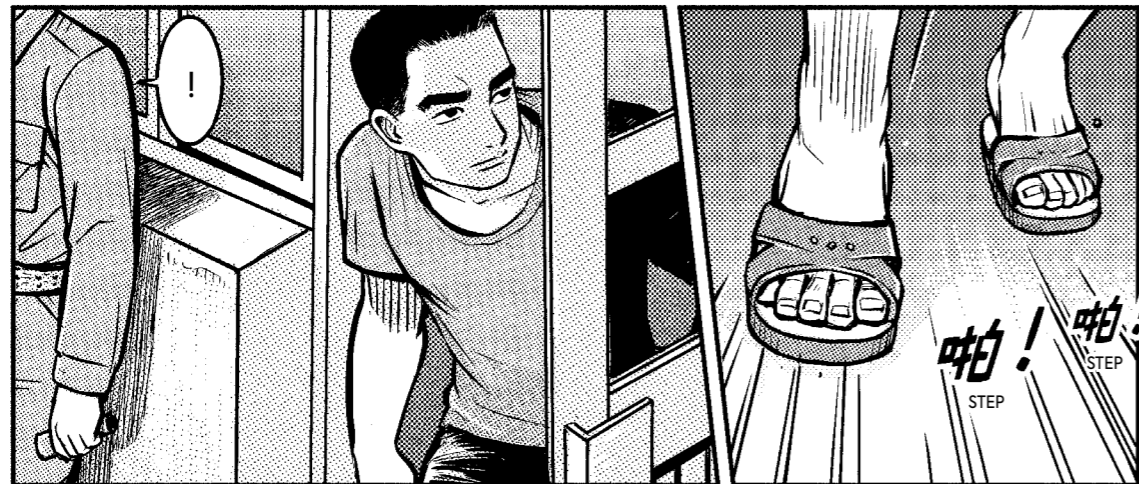
SIR, SIR, I, UM.



FUCK, WHAT YOU DO THAT FOR?







A Cross-Generational Collective Memory Review of *Military Memoir of Class 1629: My Life as A Dog*

by Chih-Liang Wu
(originally published on Creative Comic Collection)

For many, military service is among life's hardest and most uncomfortable experiences. Yet in Taiwan, comics on this theme are almost always comedic.

Unlike works such as France's *La Guerre D'Alan*, which delve into the realities of war, Taiwan's military comics are shaped by the conscription system. These stories typically focus on conscripts adjusting to military life, with clear beginnings and ends. Since martial law was lifted, such comics have continually appeared—from Joe Tseng's *Comics Army* (1990), to *Rookie Recruit* (1999), *Mom, I Want to Be a Slack Soldier* (2012), and more.

These works turn stifling memories into humor. In recent years, the genre

has evolved. Tsung-cheng Wei's *Taiwan National Army Act Corporation* (2013) pushed boundaries with outrageous jokes, even depicting a bored soldier pleasuring a dog. Tung Lin Hsieh and MixFlavor's *Attention! Magical Girls* (2019) cleverly flipped gender norms by replacing male soldiers with magical girls, offering a fresh take that resonated with female readers.

A classic in this genre is Hung-Ching Lee's *Military Memoir of Class 1629: My Life as A Dog* (1996), which chronicles protagonist A-Feng's army life. Re-released in 2019 by Dyna Books, its realism stands apart from newer, more entertaining titles, preserving the atmosphere of Taiwan's 1990s military.

Though the story is set decades

ago, many details remain relatable across generations. Whether it's wasting time at arcades (now internet cafes), riding trains or scooters, or chatting about military life during leave, these are timeless experiences. Weapons may evolve from T57 rifles to T91s, but the feel of carrying them doesn't change. I recall a fellow soldier asked his platoon sergeant if he really had to sprint with so much gear. The reply: "Hundreds of thousands have done it before you." Indeed, these shared experiences span generations of Taiwanese men.

The comic also illustrates class and regional diversity. In one scene, soldiers from all walks of life—tattooed or shy, speaking Mandarin or Taiwanese—bathe together. Yet once their heads are shaved, backgrounds fade under the uniform. Wealth, education, or past mistakes are all leveled in the barracks.

Military comics reveal Taiwan's grassroots identity. Their appeal lies in shared memory, making them inherently local. From soldiers joking, scavenging missing gear, or even burying stolen Hummers during inspections, the absurdity is distinctively Taiwanese. *My Life as a Dog* also highlights local figures—aggressive market vendors, street thugs—vividly portraying society in all its texture.

Even after 20 years, its raw depiction of bullying remains rare in comics. Such stories were mostly hidden until 23-year-old Hung Chung-chiu in 2013, who died three days from completing his military service. His death sparked a mass movement. I served at the same base in Yangmei; during the incident, I was in Pingtung for joint drills. That summer, a nearby officer deserted, and my platoon leader broke down under pressure, often hiding in the woods.

Ultimately, the realism of *My Life as A Dog* captures a deeply complex, bittersweet chapter of Taiwanese male experience. Its reissue is not just nostalgic—it remains a powerful and authentic testimony.

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

Chih-Liang Wu holds an MA in Chinese Literature from National Chi Nan University and is co-author of The Rural Armed Youth and His Friends. He previously worked as a contributing editor at China Times Publishing and Red Table Cultural Studio. He is now editor-in-chief of Openbook, where he oversees the comics section and the Reading on the Go podcast.



Military Memoir of Class 1629: My Life as A Dog

A Full English translation is available.

狗臉的歲月記 1629 梯

Author: Hung-Ching Lee **Illustrator:** Hung-Ching Lee **Publisher:** Dyna Books

Date: 12/2019

Rights contact: bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

200 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1 (Four-books series.)

BFT2.0 Translator: Jenna Tang & Michelle Kuo

A-Feng is 20 years old when his draft notice arrives. *Welcome to Guantian Military Base in Tainan—Class 1629.*

Push-ups, squat jumps, frogman drills, paratrooper training—military service in Taiwan is both a rite of passage and a wellspring of shared memory. From barracks banter to the small absurdities of daily drills, these experiences have long fueled the island's beloved military comics.

Comic book creator Hung-Ching Lee captures this world with humor and grit. A-Feng, together with A-Pao—the mischievous troublemaker from Nanmen Market—and A-Wei, the quiet bookworm, stumbles through the sweat, tears, and unexpected laughter of rookie life. Along the way, Lee interweaves lively depictions of everyday figures—street vendors, neighborhood toughs—creating a portrait of Taiwanese society in all its richness.

First published in 1996 and reissued in 2019, *Military Memoir of Class 1629: My Life as a Dog* stands apart from lighter takes on army life, preserving the raw atmosphere of the 1990s with authenticity, camaraderie, and heart.




Author **Hung-Ching Lee**


Hung-Ching Lee, a comic artist from Chiayi, Taiwan, is known for his detailed, realistic drawing style infused with raw local energy. His cinematic paneling emphasizes camera movement, while his works often highlight delicate human emotions set against meticulously crafted backgrounds.



A PROFESSIONAL
MOURNER
PLAYING
THE FILIAL
DAUGHTER
BAIQIN.



SUCH
A MOURNFUL
CRY! IT'S
GIVING ME
GOOSEBUMPS!




THE FILIAL
DAUGHTER
BAIQIN?

WHO IS
SHE...?



DADDY!

I'VE CRIED SINCE THE MOMENT YOU DIED.



... OR
SOMETIMES
THEY WERE TOO
OVERWHELMED
TO EXPRESS
THEIR GRIEF.

IN THE PAST WHEN
TRANSPORTATION
WAS POOR,
CHILDREN OFTEN
COULDN'T TRAVEL
FAR FOR A PARENT'S
FUNERAL...

THEY'D HIRE
PROFESSIONAL
FEMALE
MOURNERS
TO HELP.

目屎流甲溼過衫

自從你死哭到擔



MY TEARS FLOWED, SOAKING THROUGH MY CLOTHES.

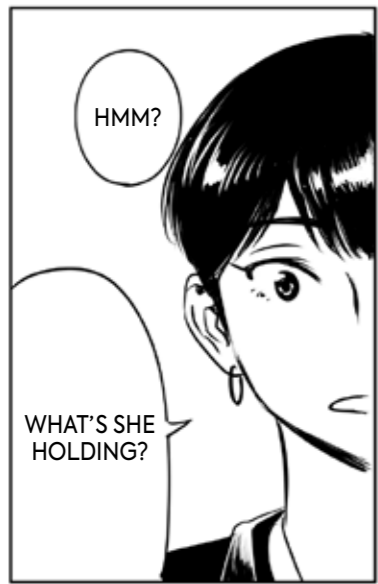


YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THIS SINCE JOINING THE COMPANY, HAVE YOU?

SEEN WHAT?

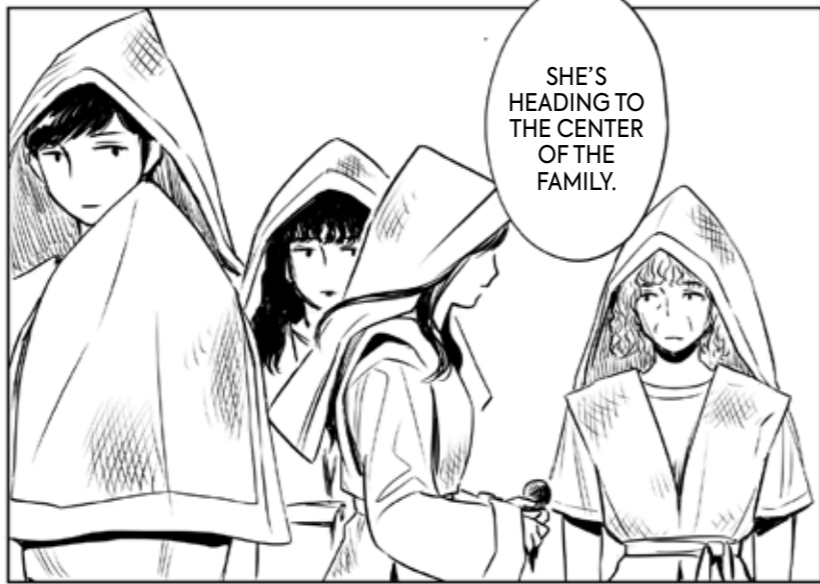


SHE'S BEAUTIFUL. IS SHE PART OF THE FAMILY?

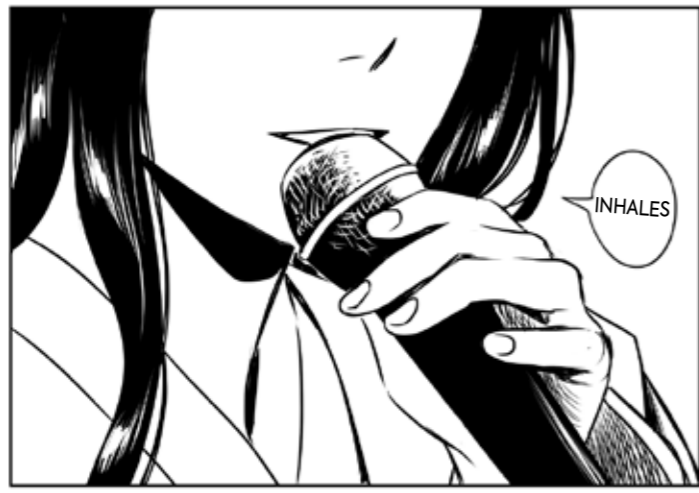


HMM?

WHAT'S SHE HOLDING?



SHE'S HEADING TO THE CENTER OF THE FAMILY.



INHALES



A MICROPHONE !?



SORRY I'M LATE.



THERE'S NO SENSE OF SORROW— SOMETHING DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT.



MAYBE SHE GOT STUCK IN TRAFFIC. SHE WILL ARRIVE SOON.

I HAD A PLAN READY FROM THE MOMENT I MET THE FAMILY.

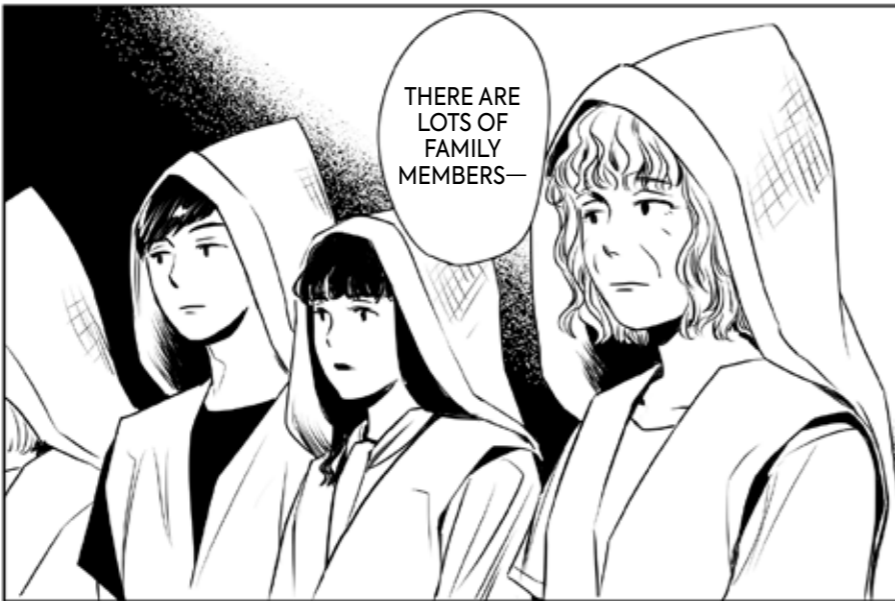
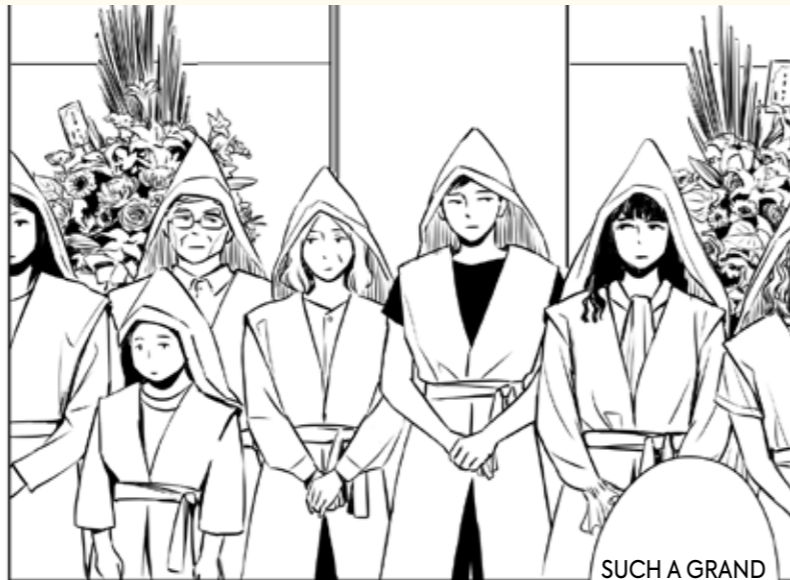


I'LL LEAVE THIS TO YOU THEN.



NODS





Chasing Dreams is a Privilege of the Living: Creator Rimui Reflects on Her Award-Winning *The Funeral Concerto*

by Tomo Tzeng
(originally published on Creative Comic Collection)

As Rimui reached a certain stage in life, witnessing the loss of family members and pets led her to seriously reflect on mortality. Wanting to challenge herself with a manga about Taiwanese professionals, she began creating *The Funeral Concerto*.

Through the eyes of rookie mortician Lin Chu-sheng, the story delicately portrays Taiwan's comprehensive funeral industry and Han Chinese mourning customs. But for Rimui, what truly moved her wasn't the rituals—it was the ordinary yet profound moments of parting between the living and the

dead.

To capture this world, she immersed herself in research, even visiting a small funeral home and interviewing a newcomer in the field. One story shocked her: on their first day, the rookie had to handle a suicide case. Rimui had assumed there would be a gradual learning curve, but the reality was much harsher. "The more I researched, the more I realized funerals are really for the living," she said. Her parents, devoted to traditional practices like burning spirit money and chanting scriptures, prompted her to reflect on their deeper meaning. "Maybe

it's more about comforting the people left behind." A character in the manga voices the same thought: "It doesn't matter if the soul exists. A funeral is for the living to remember and say goodbye."

Though her work explores death, Rimui admits she fears it deeply. While reading real-life accounts during her research, she often cried and at times felt overwhelmed by solitude: "I'd lie awake at night wondering if I might just suddenly die."

Her earlier works, *Where Are You Going?* and *The Funeral Concerto*, both confront themes she struggles with—ghosts, death, and sorrow. Yet through the act of creating, she gradually calmed those fears, as if entering into dialogue with her own emotions.

One story arc, featuring Kuang, a child undergoing chemotherapy, was inspired by a news report about a young patient with a rare disease. Rimui was struck by how children can grasp the reality of death without succumbing to despair: "They can still find joy and live in the moment. That really changed how I see things."

While developing the story, her own grandmother was diagnosed with cancer and passed away before the manga was completed. A funeral scene

in the work was drawn directly from her grandmother's memorial. Though painful, the process helped her grow: "It made me start living each day more consciously."

At its core, *The Funeral Concerto* is about human connection—especially the bonds of family. Rimui delves into their complexities: "You don't always get closure. But as we grow up, we understand our parents better, and sometimes even help them with their own struggles." The manga's closing message, voiced by the character Yang-Ching, is resolute: never give up. "Pursuing dreams is a privilege of the living," Rimui affirms. For her, hardships are real but should never become excuses. "If you truly want something, you'll find a way."

By facing death through her art, Rimui discovered both peace and personal growth. And while *The Funeral Concerto* is complete for now, she hopes to return to its world someday—letting its music continue to play, for both the living and the dead.

Tomo Tzeng is a journalist and writer dedicated to treating every detail of life with sincerity. A longtime manga enthusiast, she only came to truly appreciate the beauty and uniqueness of Taiwanese comics as she grew older.



The Funeral Concerto

A Full English translation is available.

送葬協奏曲

Author: Rimui **Illustrator:** Rimui **Publisher:** Gaea Books

Date: 02/2020

Rights contact: bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

234 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm

Volume: 1

Awards: 2020 Japan International Manga Award Golden Award

Rights sold: Japanese, French, Ukrainian, Czech, Russian, Italian, Thai, German

BFT2.0 Translator: Michael Kearney

Through the eyes of a rookie funeral home worker, this award-winning manga offers a moving portrait of Taiwan's funeral industry and Han Chinese mourning traditions.

Lin Chu-sheng abandons a prestigious academic future and runs away from home to follow her own path—only to find unexpected guidance among the dead. Entering the funeral profession, she quickly learns that death rarely comes with warning. Even after passing, tangled webs of family ties and personal conflicts remain unresolved, lingering at the edge of every ceremony.

From symbolic burials to soul-calling banners meant to summon the departed, the rituals depicted are at once deeply cultural and profoundly human. They not only honor the dead but sometimes bring the living closer together. At each funeral, the entirety of human experience plays out—grief, love, regret, reconciliation. As the dragon horn sounds and the funeral dance begins, unspoken words and hidden emotions rise to the surface.

In that moment, Chu-sheng comes to a simple, powerful realization: to cherish the rights we have, and the lives we lead, while we are still here.



Author **Rimui**

Rimui, a member of the Atayal indigenous peoples from Taoyuan, graduated from National Taiwan University of Science and Technology. Her notable works include *Where Are You Going?*, *Harmony in the Family*, *The Funeral Concerto*, and *CATzzz*. She was awarded the Golden Prize at the Japan International Manga Awards and was featured as a selected manga artist at the 2023 Angoulême International Comics Festival Taiwan Pavilion. Rimui Yumin also participated in the 2023 Taiwan-Thai Manga Exchange and the 2023 Lucca Comics & Games Festival in Italy.

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by Fish Wang • translated by William Serrano • published by Fish Wang
- 028 **Rest in Pieces**
by Karmarket • translated by Iris Lee • published by Balaena Islet Publishing
- 018 **The Echo Before Dawn**
by Lang-Chi • translated by Michael Kearney • published by Fisfisa Media
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