

# COMIC BOOKS

BOOKS FROM TAIWAN

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2026

THE SHIMMERING SUMMONER I WORK AT A SCAM COMPANY THUG BOOKSTORE THE ZUO FAMILY THE PUPPETEERS: THE UNDEAD HERO VS. THE MIST MAN YOUTH AT WAR THE NATURE CHEF THE UNDERDOGS LETTERS FROM THE BATTLEFIELD IS HE THE ONE? MONSTER SOCIETY SCARECROW THE GREAT MAGICAL INVESTIGATION UNIT GOOD MORNING, HOW ABOUT SOME POSITIVITY? DELINQUENT'S GUIDE TO THE SOUTH AIRPORT HOOD NUOZHA MANGALAND DRAWN TO LIFE: A REN ZHENG-HUA COLLECTION

# COMIC BOOKS

Comic BOOKS VII 2026

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PLAYING IN A DREAM THE DRIFTING CHRONICLES THE DEPTHS OF THE UNSEEN

**ABOUT THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE**

The Ministry of Culture of Taiwan (Republic of China) was established on May 20, 2012. As a member of the Executive Yuan, the Ministry oversees and cultivates Taiwan's soft power in the areas of arts and humanities, community development, crafts industry, cultural exchanges, international cultural participation, heritage, literature and publishing, living aesthetics, TV, cinema, and pop music. The logo of the Ministry is an indigo dyed morning glory. The indigenous flower symbolizes a trumpet heralding the coming of a new renaissance, in which cultural resources and aesthetics permeate all corners of the nation. The morning glory also represents the grassroots tenacity of Taiwan's diverse culture, a yearning for the positivity, simplicity, and warmth of earlier days, and a return to collective roots and values.

**ABOUT BOOKS FROM TAIWAN**

Books from Taiwan is an initiative funded by Ministry of Culture to introduce a select list of Taiwan publishing titles, ranging from fiction, non-fiction, children's books, and comic books, to foreign publishers and readers alike. We provide information about Taiwanese books and authors, as well as connect you to publishers from whom you can purchase translation rights. We also provide resources relating to the Grant for the Publication of Taiwanese Works in Translation.



# COMIC BOOKS

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FROM  
TAIWAN

2026



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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

# Between Realism and Fantasy: Reading the Many Faces of Taiwanese Comics

The Taiwanese comics featured in this issue demonstrate striking innovation in narrative technique and offer profound insights into culture. Beyond their command of visual storytelling and pacing, these works transform historical memory, folk belief, urban experience, and inner psychological exploration into compelling narratives. From the traumas of war and colonialism to contemporary issues such as fraud, cults, social services for the elderly, and loneliness; from local mythologies to sports to experimental works that move beyond visual and textual storytelling, this selection collectively sketches the multifaceted landscape of Taiwanese comics today.

Taiwan's history becomes the springboard for deeply imaginative works. In *The Drifting Chronicles*, the author makes a river the central protagonist, employing water as metaphor: as the

river flows downstream, historical time moves in reverse. A young boy, Roa, and his AI companion, Riv, travel along the Tamsui River, traversing the years from 1582 to 1983, revisiting wars and moments of urban transformation that unfolded along its banks. *The Puppeteers: The Undead Hero vs. The Mist Man* returns to a period when Taiwanese glove puppetry, a traditional Taiwanese folk art, was banned under the Japanese imperialization movement. The onstage conflict does more than recount legendary heroes—it stages tensions between master and apprentice, artistic lineages, and the values of a changing era.

Several works focus directly on war. *Youth at War* brings the battlefield into the schoolyard. Nekono, an idealistic teenager who hopes high school will mark the beginning of a literary life and new friendships, instead watches his

roommates and classmates conscripted into battle. Classrooms and bomb shelters begin to overlap, and the future of youth collapses amid explosions. *Letters from the Battlefield* unfolds through correspondence: Benny, a bullied elementary school student, and Corporal Thomas, stationed at the front, exchange letters that share their lives and their fears. Through mutual understanding, both find strength to break free from their circumstances. *The Nature Chef*, set on the coast of Hualien, Taiwan during World War II, portrays another history of survival. Panay, an Amis Indigenous girl working in the kitchen of a Japanese household, reinterprets Japanese home cooking using Taiwan's wild vegetables, fresh fish, and tribal techniques—turning food into emotional sustenance during times of scarcity and slowly building trust across ethnic and social boundaries.

Taiwanese creators also excel at bringing fear closer to everyday life. In *Is He The One?*, police officer Xie Zhi-Hao is plagued by recurring nightmares, only to awaken one day in another timeline where he unexpectedly saves his idol, Zero. As he protects Zero and investigates the recurring mist and dreams, he uncovers a mystery that binds them across time. *Monster Society* imagines a world where nearly everyone physically transforms into a monster, and yet society continues to function as usual. Commuting among creatures, Zhou Ting and Wang Ji search for beings who remain human in form,

repeatedly asking one another: is it the world that has become monstrous, or are they themselves the monsters?

*Scarecrow* heightens suspense and horror to an extreme. Yan-Yu enters Fenghe Village to search for her missing sister, only to find red coffins placed before every household—and scarecrows that move after nightfall. As prophecies of death and conspiracies surrounding secret rituals emerge, faith and fear intertwine into an inescapable web. In *The Depths of the Unseen*, Siao Chen, a college student studying Kunqu opera, is bound through a ghost marriage—a traditional practice in which a family marries a deceased person to another—to Pai Ch'ing, a three-hundred-year-old spirit. One is gentle and kind, the other arrogant and demanding, but slowly they forge a bond that spans life and death.

Though many works in this issue feature elements of magic and fantasy, their core themes explore personal choice, growth, and destiny. *The Great Magical Investigation Unit* follows Yadinis, a police officer navigating a city beset by missing children, mass protests, serial murders, and public panic after a deadly criminal escapes. Unlike her powerful colleagues, her own magic is dwindling, and she must rely instead on observation and reason. Gradually, she forges her own judgment and develops courage. *The Shimmering Summoner* weaves magic into an adventure narrative: Rubin, born into a powerful summoner lineage,

dreams of defeating the Magic Dragon—but keeps summoning things that should not exist. When he accidentally conjures a mysterious boy who claims to be a prince, Rubin is swept into a journey where the greatest challenge isn't battle, but learning that his flaws—and the things he lacks—are part of what make him strong. *Nuozha* is set against the backdrop of Taiwan's temple-based folk religion. A human protagonist is chosen by Nuozha—a prominent deity in Taoism, Buddhism, and Chinese and Taiwanese folk traditions—to serve as his representative among mortals, wielding divine power to vanquish demons and dispel evil. As the story unfolds, the mystery of why he was chosen gradually emerges, along with the subtle and intricate connections linking the characters.

*The Zuo Family*, a standalone prequel to a popular novel, portrays four brothers from a family of magicians. The eldest is exceptionally gifted and prepared to shoulder the family's future. Between the twins, one can teleport but uses it to escape responsibility; the other hears people's inner voices and is overwhelmed by emotion. The youngest possesses immense potential but lacks control over his powers. As the family's magical trial—a major rite of passage—approaches, they must confront a painful grief to truly become a family.

A set of books addresses modern anxieties and ethical gray zones,

depicting characters forced to make choices under institutional and social pressure. In *The Underdogs*, former basketball star Chou Ta-Hua is now mired in a sense of career failure and existential confusion. He's seemingly forgotten the passion he once had for his dreams. When he's invited to join a community 3-on-3 basketball tournament, he and his teammates—each worn down by reality—find their way back to rhythm, purpose, and the courage to believe in themselves again. *Good Morning, How About Some Positivity?* follows Da-Sing, a middle-aged man who has lost his job and joins what is arguably a cult. Its mentor Eric, a former high school classmate, promises salvation, but beneath his relentless positivity lies manipulation and malice. As Da-Sing uncovers this pyramid scheme, he reflects on family, faith, and the cycle of self-judgment.

In *Delinquent's Guide to the South Airport Hood*, punk teenager Yao-yu is sentenced to mandatory community service after committing a crime. He is assigned to deliver meals to elderly people living alone. At first, he treats the work as a burden and wants to finish it as quickly as possible. Over time, however, he discovers a gift for connecting with the elderly, accompanying them through loneliness and vulnerability—and, in the process, uncovering his own capacity to care for others. In *Thug Bookstore* Hung Ta-Hao is sent to a struggling bookstore

to collect debts, only to meet its honest, book-loving manager, Liu Ching-Wen. Instead of leaving, Ta-Hao stays to help revive the shop through sales and markets. Their unlikely friendship sparks new discoveries, as they search for ways to bring people back to bookstores and reflect on those in their lives who both encouraged and discouraged a love of reading. *I Work at a Scam Company* turns its gaze toward the fraud industry. An honest and good-hearted young man in need of work joins a scam operation. As he memorizes scripts intended to defraud others, he begins to reflect on the many forms of manipulation that are considered legal within our social and economic systems. Meanwhile, he finds unexpected friendship with his supervisor, herself a victim of exploitative employers. The two bond and plot one final con to take revenge.

Finally, experimental works expand the boundaries of sensory experience and reading itself. *Playing In A Dream* includes not only a comic but also a music cassette, inviting readers to listen. Born from the author's reflections during serious illness, the melodies drift through dreamlike sequences, allowing images to be "heard" and music to be "seen." *Drawn to Life*, a collected volume by an author renowned for a sharp, satirical voice and innovative storytelling, ranges from literary portrayals of interpersonal struggles in Chinese society to dark

humor and surreal fantasy. Each piece probes the shadows of human nature in a darkly amusing and inventive way. Finally, *MANGALAND*, created collaboratively by four comic artists, follows a girl on an Alice-in-Wonderland-like journey across worlds drawn by different creators. Each transition feels like stepping into another artist's mind, marked by shifts in visual style and narrative logic. The book offers not only a captivating story but also a creative relay between artists who, through this ambitious collaboration, seek to redefine what manga can be.

Taken together, these works—whether exploring history and war, supernatural mystery, magical trials, social realism, or experimental forms—converge on a shared question: how do we understand our place within our time and place? Taiwanese comics are not imitations of other nations or market trends. They are steadily evolving into a narrative form that carries local experience while remaining legible and resonant beyond Taiwan.

Sincerely,  
Books from Taiwan



# Playing In a Dream

A Full English translation is available.

夢遊

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

**Date:** 10/2024 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

88 + 12 insert pages | 13.1 x 18.7 cm **Volume:** 1

**Awards:** 2026 The 22nd Golden Butterfly Award, Silver Award

**BFT2.0 Translator:** Lya Shaffer

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

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

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



## Author **Sen**

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



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

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

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

by Li Hua

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



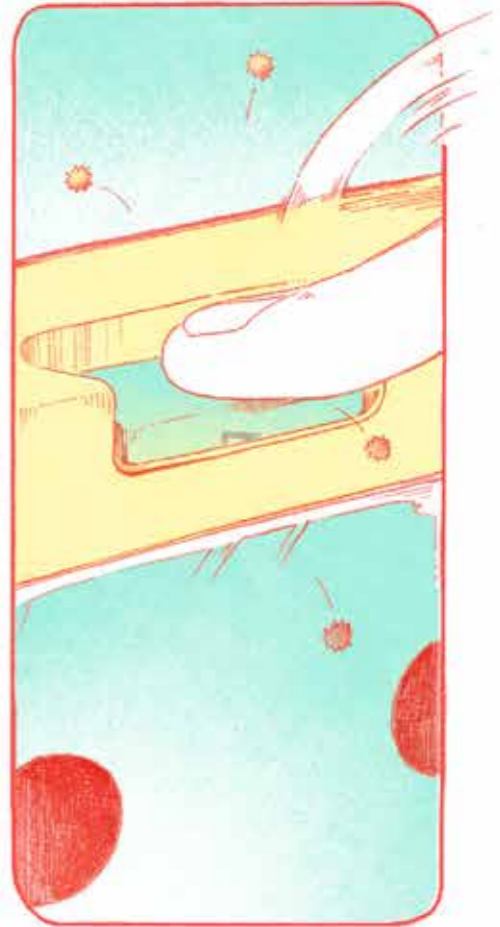
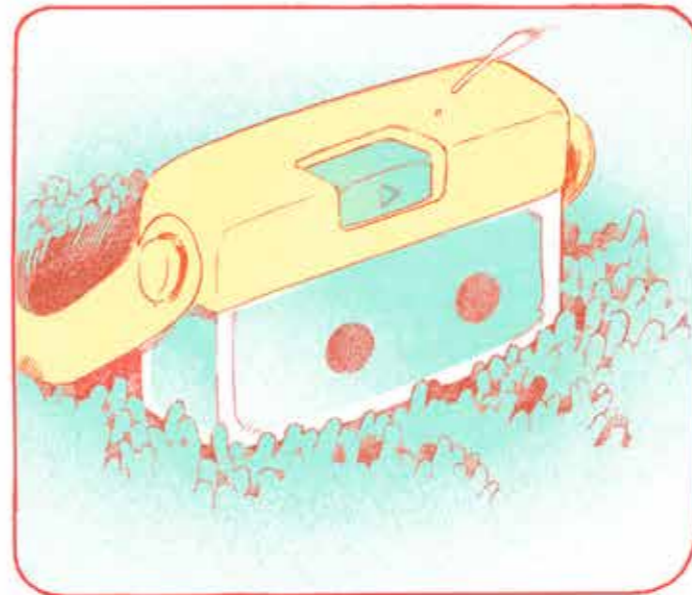
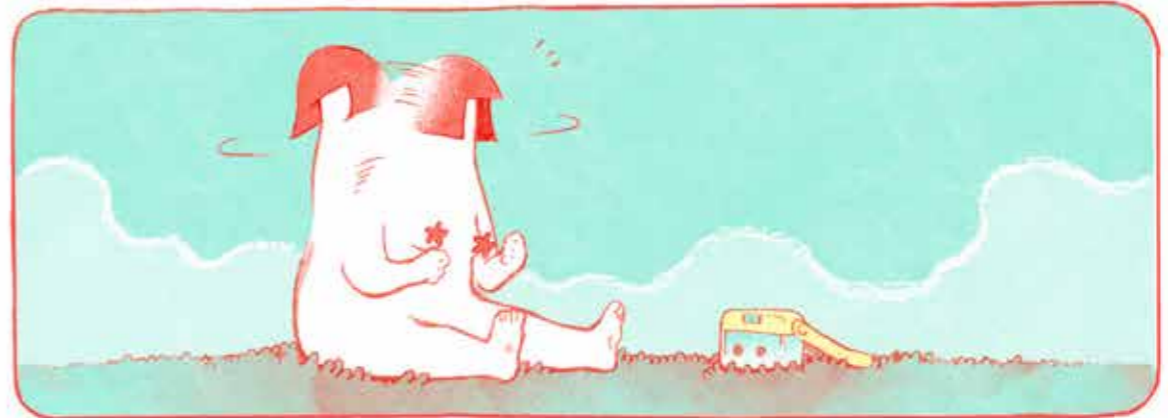
醒來時我就已經  
Upon waking, I find myself

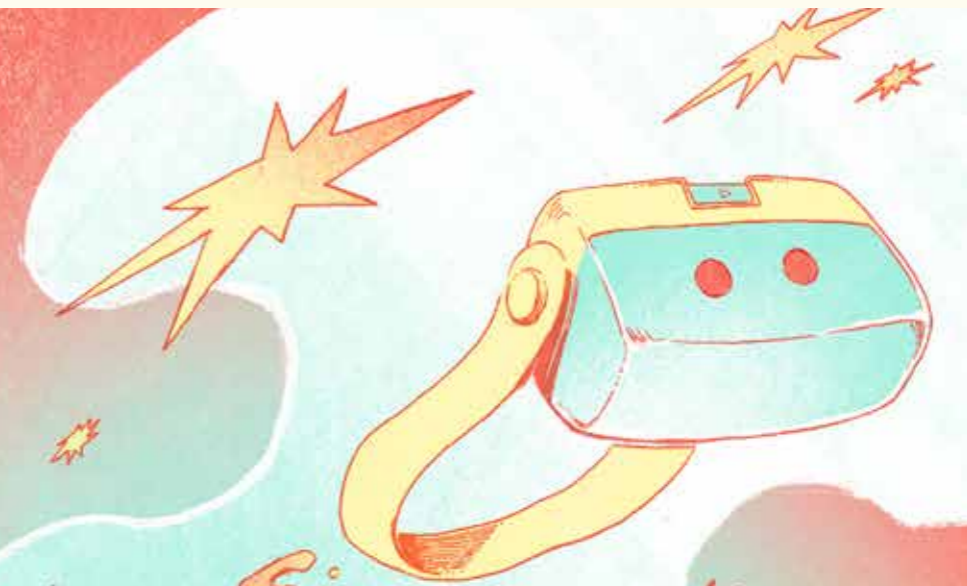
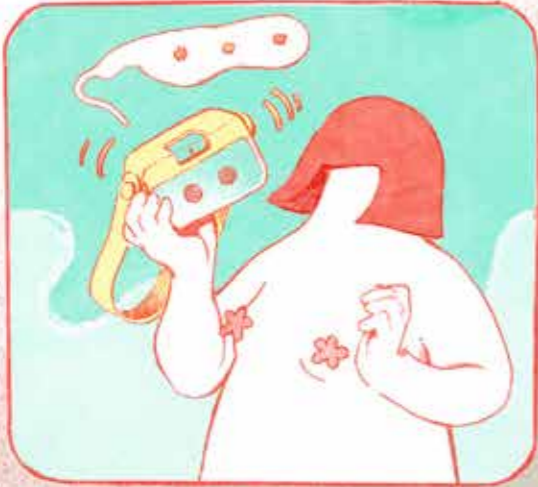
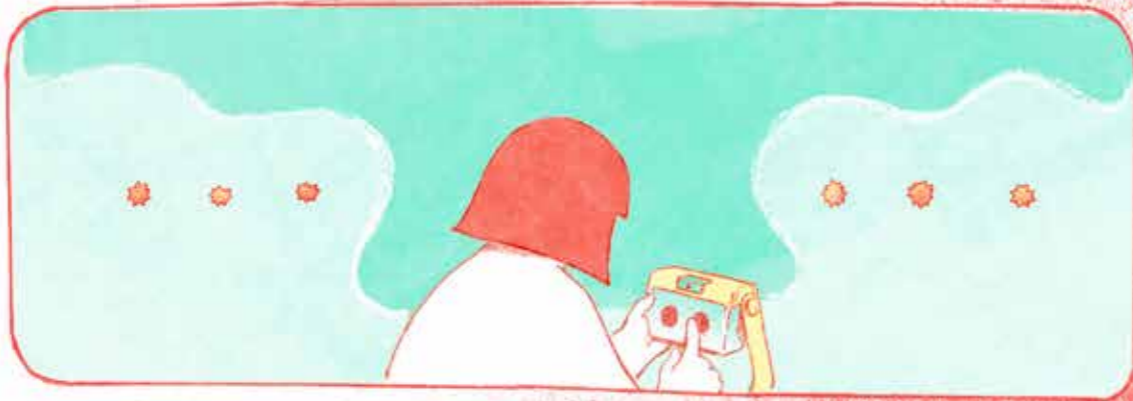
在這個未知的世界  
in this world I do not recognize...



不記得自己是誰，來自哪裡，身旁一個東西也沒...？

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







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

雖然還沒想起多少回憶，但我決定，

While I cannot retrieve my memories, I determine



帶上它繼續向前，尋找...

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



完整的聲音。  
the sound in its entirety.



# The Drifting Chronicles

A Full English translation is available.

案渡卷河

**Author:** Jian-Xin Zhou **Illustrator:** Jian-Xin Zhou **Publisher:** Slowork Publishing Ltd.

**Date:** 11/2024 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

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

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** David Knight

History and virtual space intertwine in this highly original work by a celebrated Taiwanese artist. Roa, an elementary school teacher, and Riv, an AI assistant whose appearance is constantly changing, travel along the Tamsui River from 1582 to 1983. What unfolds is a century-spanning journey through time.

Through ancient texts and archival materials, the pair reconstruct five significant historical events that took place along the riverbanks. Gradually, they discover that history does not merely record facts, but is a complex puzzle woven from contradictions, personal interpretations, and imagination. Using the river as weft and time as warp, the book invites readers to reconsider the nature of truth and history.

At the end of the story, readers learn that Roa is actually a teenager living in a future world who has chosen this virtual reality avatar to interact with them. This twist deepens the story's exploration of how we preserve knowledge—and how we learn—in an age increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence.



Author **Jian-Xin Zhou**

A picture book and comic creator, Jian-Xin Zhou has received the Hsin Yi Children's Literature Award for picture books, the Golden Comics Awards Best New Talent, and the Golden Tripod Award. His published works include the picture books *Puppy and I* and *Missing Cat Posters*, as well as the graphic novels *The Boy from Clearwater* and *The Drifting Chronicles*.

# What Do You See at the Threshold of the Virtual and the Real?

by Gou-fong Chi  
(originally published on OKAPI.BOOKS.COM.TW)

Creating a narrative where history and virtual space coexist, *The Drifting Chronicles* follows its protagonists on a journey spanning 400 years along the Tamsui River basin. Readers enter a single historical event through the perspective of the main character, Roa, only to find themselves shifting between different versions of “truth” constructed by diverse documents and social contexts. Meanwhile, the AI assistant Riv, seemingly omniscient, offers no definitive answers—only an expanding web of possibilities. Through these fractures in fact, the book reveals a central idea: whether in the realm of humanity or technology, critical thinking is what truly matters.

How can a compelling story connect a bridge, a river, and the world

at large? Jian-Xin Zhou chose the Kuan-tu Bridge as the conceptual foundation of this work. For him, the bridge carries personal history: his years of university study and teaching all unfolded along the Tamsui River basin, shaping both his source material and his emotional ties to the place. Through historical archives, Zhou explores what the bridge has witnessed across past and future. Before the bridge existed, how did people live here? Across different eras, what traces of interaction between humans and the environment were recorded?

In an age when AI can efficiently handle data collection, analysis, and visualization, how should creators respond? Zhou believes that AI does not replace creators. Rather, during the

conceptual process, AI becomes both a thinking counterpart and a creative partner. By exchanging keywords and prompts, Zhou explores the gap between human and machine interpretation, allowing those differences to spark new ideas.

Zhou even deliberately preserves traces of AI collaboration in the book. The waves on the cover, with their unnatural lines, are AI-Generated images. Although he could have redrawn them to appear softer and more refined, he chose to keep them as visible evidence of human–AI interaction. In doing so, Zhou physically enacts one of the book’s central questions: how should we, as contemporary individuals, learn and think alongside AI?

Across Zhou’s creative path—from picture books to graphic novels—his visual style remains fluid rather than fixed. For him, technique serves the story. Each narrative demands its own visual language, shaped by its unique historical and spatial context, making the establishment of a single personal style secondary. In *The Drifting Chronicles*, Zhou combines AI-assisted imagination with multiple artistic techniques to match the themes of the book’s five chapters. For example, Episode One, titled “1582, Tamsui Man,” depicts the first encounter between Westerners and the island of Taiwan. It is rendered in fine technical-pen lines that echo the Western silverpoint tradition.

Zhou recalls being asked by his editor to summarize the book in a single

sentence. After some reflection, he offered a question: What is real? This inquiry moves beyond distinguishing truth from falsehood, instead probing the nature of reality itself.

The coexistence of reality and fiction in this work unfolds on two levels. First, in content: the factual authority of archival records is paired with imaginative interpretations that fill historical gaps. Second, in method: human thinking and hand-drawn images are set alongside AI-Generated analysis and compositions. Fiction, in this sense, becomes a way of questioning—and testing—reality.

French historian Marc Bloch once wrote that causes in historical research cannot be assumed in advance but must be sought and investigated. *The Drifting Chronicles* powerfully echoes this idea, reminding us that written records are never entirely objective and that all history is, ultimately, contemporary history. Every act of interpretation reflects how we, in the present, imagine and reconstruct the past. To read history, then, is to create an organic connection between past and present.

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

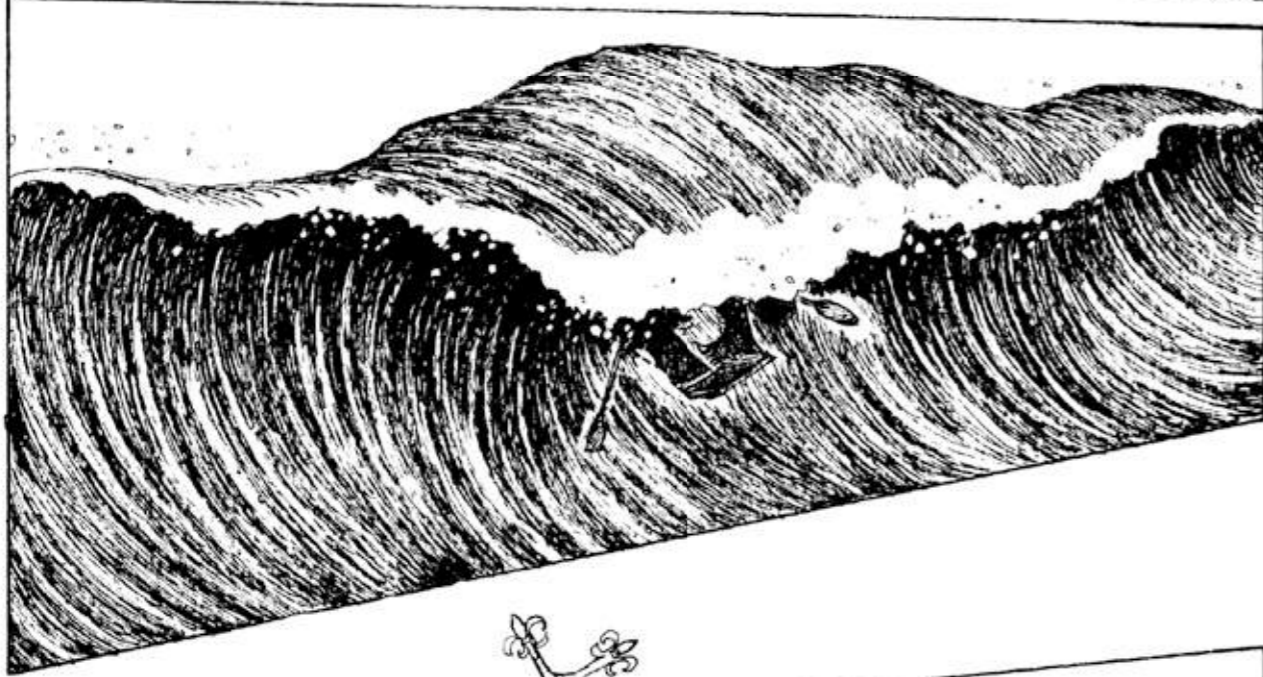
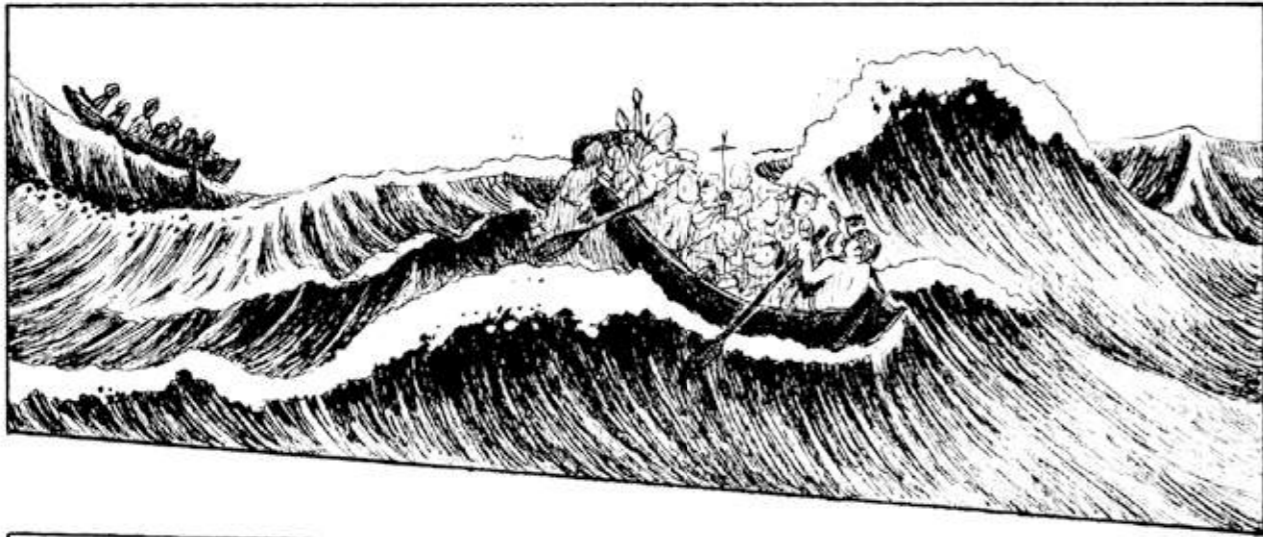
*Gou-fong Chi received a master’s degree in history from National Taiwan Normal University. Chi loves ice cream and believes that words have the power to move people’s will.*

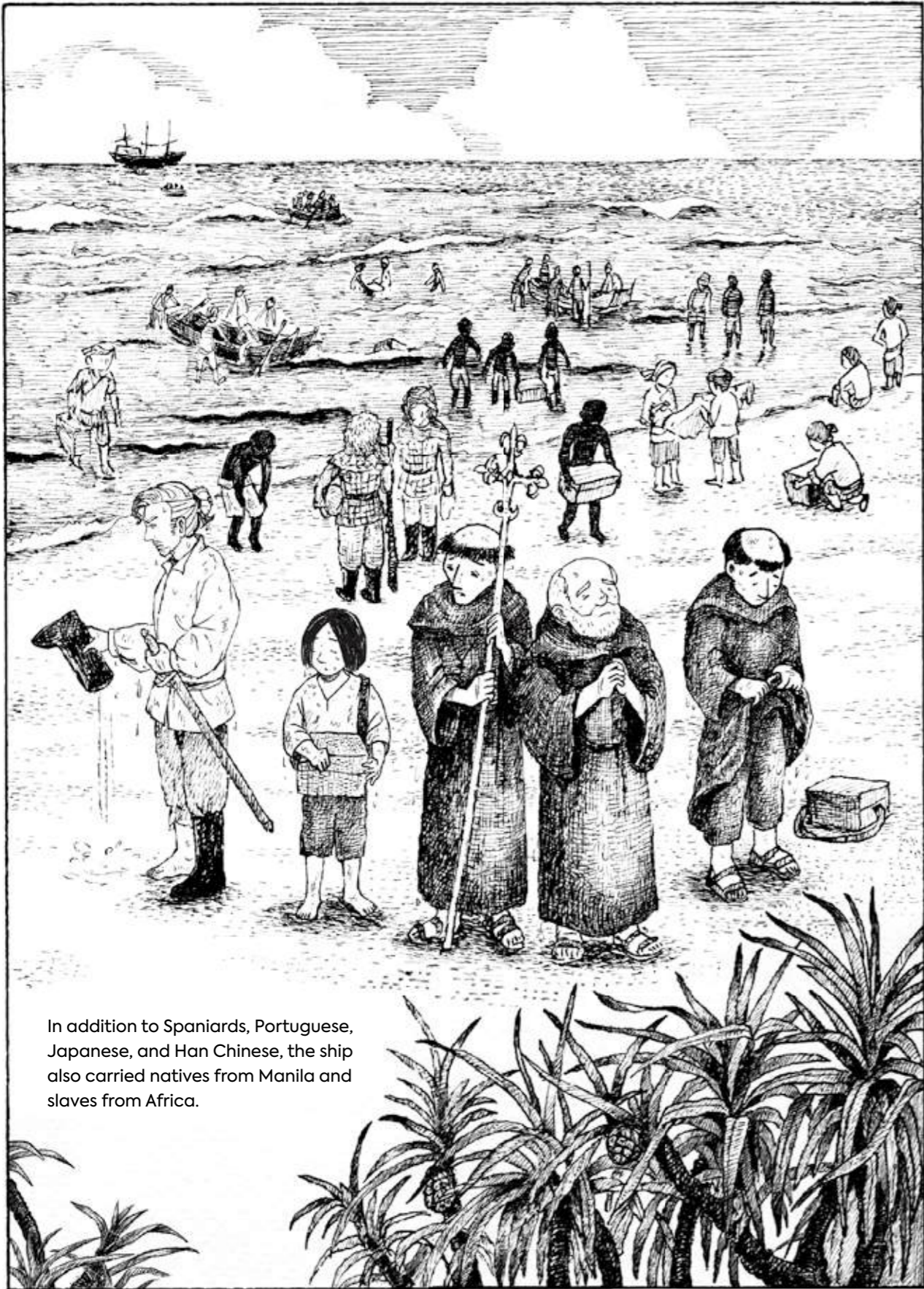
Episode One:  
1582, Tamsui Man

We drifted on the ocean waves  
for three or four days, until we struck  
the shallows off the untamed coast  
of Hermosa.

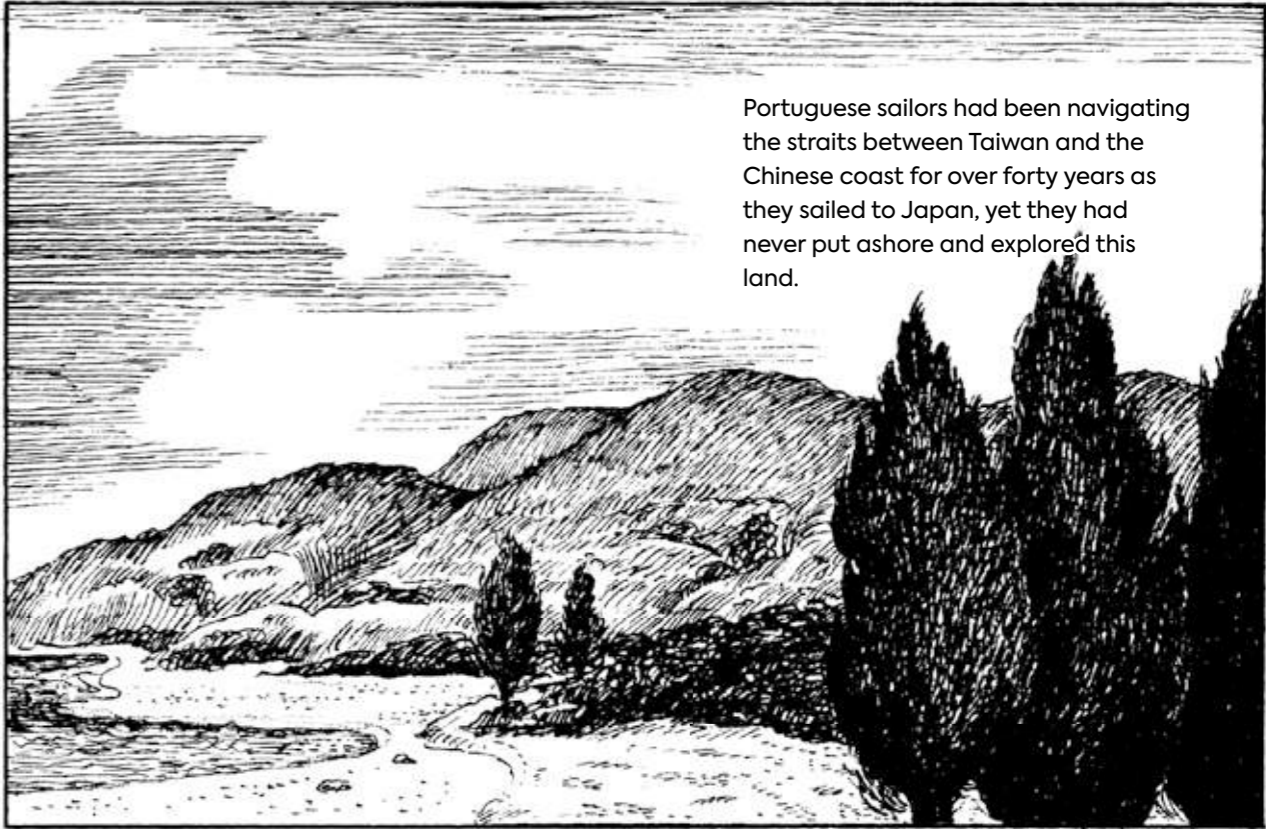
\* Spanish speakers in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries referred  
to Taiwan by the name "Hermosa" (beautiful).



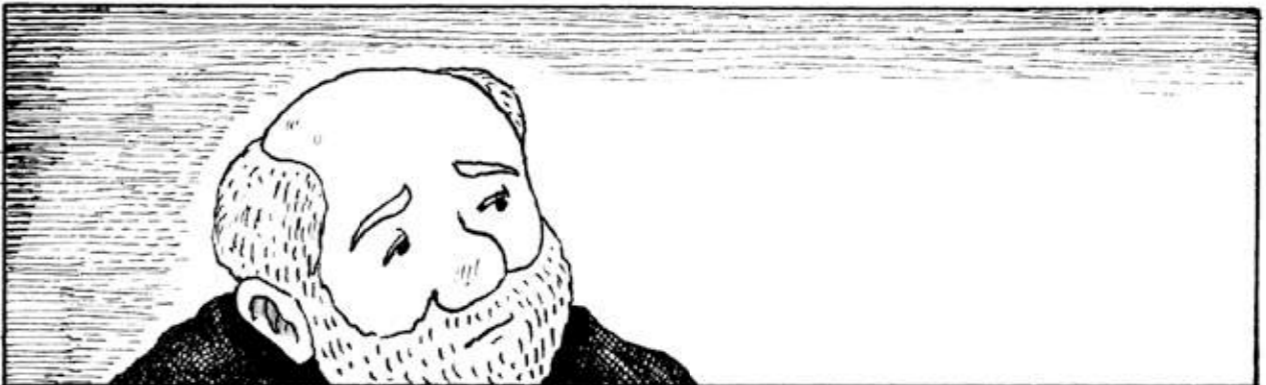
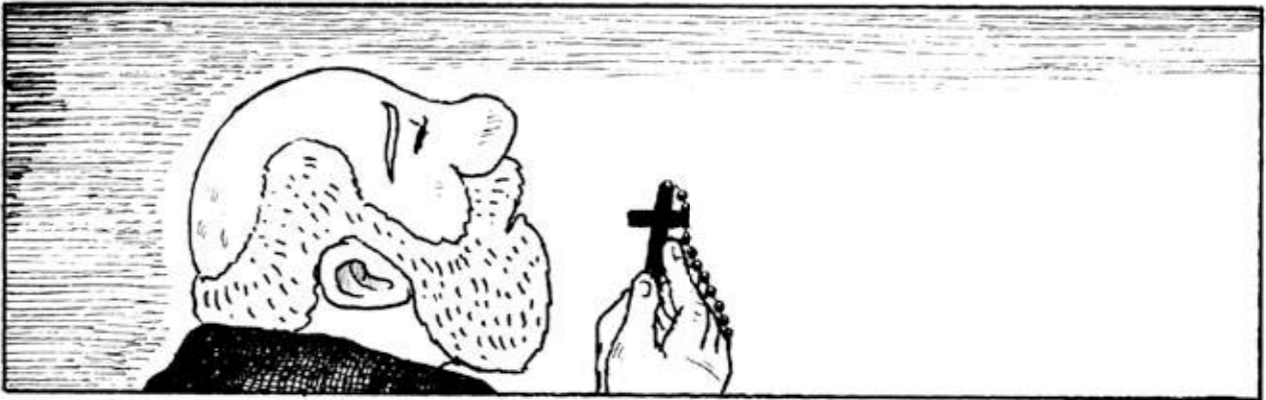




In addition to Spaniards, Portuguese, Japanese, and Han Chinese, the ship also carried natives from Manila and slaves from Africa.



Portuguese sailors had been navigating the straits between Taiwan and the Chinese coast for over forty years as they sailed to Japan, yet they had never put ashore and explored this land.





# The Depths of the Unseen

A Full English translation is available.

冥冥之衷

**Author:** RANDA **Illustrator:** RANDA **Publisher:** Creative Comic Collection webcomics

**Date:** 09/2024

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

**Volume:** 1 (ongoing webtoon)

**Rights sold:** French (digital)

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Eunice Shek

Siaochen's life takes a surreal turn when he accidentally becomes the groom to a ghost who died three hundred years ago. The Pai family, desperate to reverse its declining fortune, believes that marrying off their long-dead "daughter" will restore prosperity. But the plan is made even more absurd by a simple mistake: Pai Ch'ing was never a woman at all.

What follows is an absorbing and warm story about a marriage between two very different men. Siaochen is a kind-hearted college sophomore training to become a traditional opera performer. Pai Ch'ing, in contrast, is an aristocratic snob who must learn how to adapt to the modern world.

Hoping for a painless divorce, the two are forced into an unlikely partnership. They take on part-time work for the underworld, capturing wayward spirits and uncovering the deeply buried troubles of their clients. As they face case after case together, they gradually lower their guard, open their hearts, and find themselves drawn closer—forming a bond that neither of them saw coming.



**Author** **RANDA**

RANDA adapted the webtoon *The Secret of the Streamer* from a novel serialized on MOJOIN. She is the creator of the original series *The Depths of the Unseen*, currently serialized on Creative Comic Collection Chasing Comics.

# He Picked Up a Red Envelope and Married a Three-Hundred-Year-Old Soul: A BL Comic Centered on Companionship Across Centuries

by Wen-Chien Hsu

In traditional Chinese folk belief, women who die unmarried cannot enter the ancestral hall, where ancestral tablets are kept and the living come to pay their respects. These women are considered “masterless souls”—unable to rest in peace and potentially bringing misfortune to their birth families, or even haunting the living.

As a result, when an unmarried woman dies young, her relatives may arrange a “ghost marriage” to pair her with a partner. This gives her a “proper status” and is believed to help keep the family’s fortune steady. While such customs may have originated as a way to appease both the dead and the living, they also reveal the constraints placed on women’s fate, along with a deep-seated fear of death and disorder.

The manga *The Depths of the Unseen* emerges from precisely this

fraught cultural background. The story begins when the male protagonist, Siao Chen, inadvertently picks up a red envelope deliberately placed on the ground by the Pai family at his sister’s wedding. Through this mishap, he becomes entangled in a ghost marriage ceremony, bound as “husband and wife” to the other protagonist: Pai Ch’ing, who died three hundred years ago.

The Pai family has experienced a downturn in fortune and believes that arranging Pai Ch’ing’s marriage will reverse their decline. This has led them to this twisted scheme. The ghost marriage not only exposes the cruel nature of superstition but also highlights the cold logic of families. There is also an absurd twist: the Pai family descendants have misread Pai Ch’ing’s name. He is actually male, not female. In truth, the entire ritual is unnecessary. But only Siao Chen can see

the ghost, so only he realizes the mistake.

Siao Chen is a university student majoring in traditional opera performance. Cheerful and kind-hearted, he approaches opera with passion and respect. At first, Pai Ch’ing looks down on Siao Chen’s career choice. In his era, opera performers were poor and held low social status. But through their daily interactions, he gradually comes to respect Siao Chen.

Together, they face one obstacle after another. One major case involves an opera student whose soul has separated from his body. He is in a coma, having suffered a severe leg injury in a car accident that ended his stage career. Consumed by resentment and self-loathing, unable to accept that he may never perform again, his soul refuses to return. In the end, with Siao Chen and Pai Ch’ing’s persistence and support, he wakes up. He accepts that he may never return to the stage as an opera performer, but he can still stay connected to the art in other ways.

Through these incidents spanning the realms of yin and yang, Pai Ch’ing, dead for three hundred years, gradually learns how to be a person in modern society. He comes to understand technology, interpersonal relationships, and the flow of emotions; he also confronts his own history of being misunderstood, sacrificed, and forgotten.

On the surface, *The Depths of the Unseen* is a BL comic that uses ghost marriage as its catalyst. Yet emotionally, it leans closer to the spiritual

companionship and intimate resonance often found in yuri narratives. Rather than emphasizing physical attraction or romantic tension, the story centers on understanding, support, and mutual growth between two lonely souls. What emerges is a form of companionship that transcends gender, life and death, and even time itself.

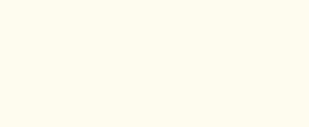
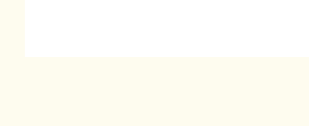
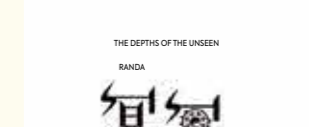
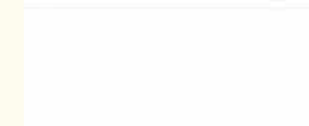
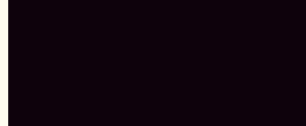
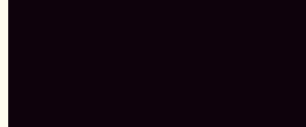
On a deeper level, the work uses cases involving both humans and ghosts to reflect universal vulnerabilities and obsessions. It explores the fear of losing one’s identity, the grief of dreams cut short, and the helplessness of never being able to return to one’s former self. Whether they are living people or souls lingering in this world, everyone must eventually confront their own limitations and questions of self-worth.

In a webtoon market dominated by action-packed battles and romances, *The Depths of the Unseen* centers on folk beliefs, opera culture, and existential dilemmas. It depicts the loneliness, loss, and growth shared by humans and ghosts alike. Emotionally and intellectually rich, this story stakes out a remarkable route in the webtoon world, paving a new path for genre comics.

*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.



Due to webtoon size limitations, we recommend scanning the QR code to read a sample on the Books from Taiwan website.



THE DEPTHS OF THE UNSEEN  
RANDA

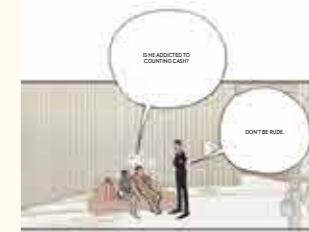
冥冥之靈  
RANDEA

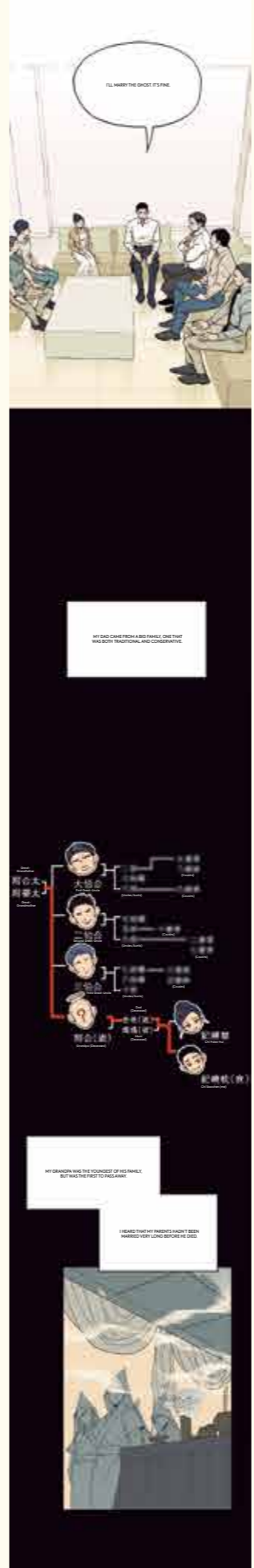
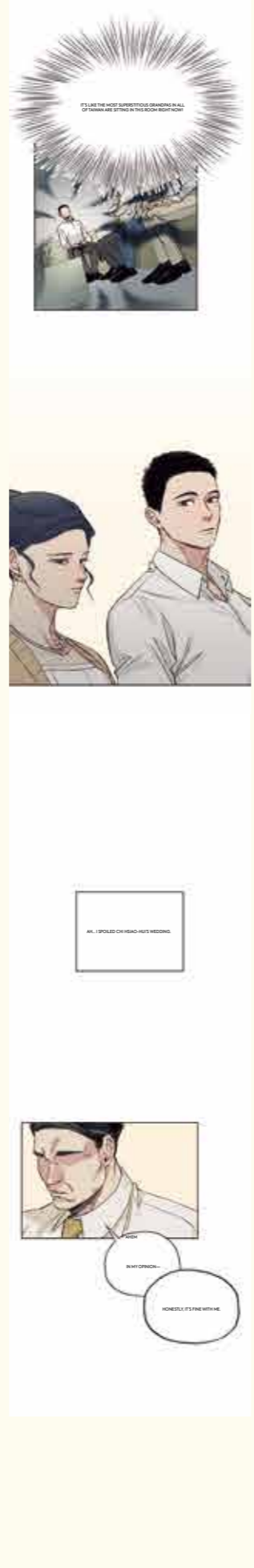


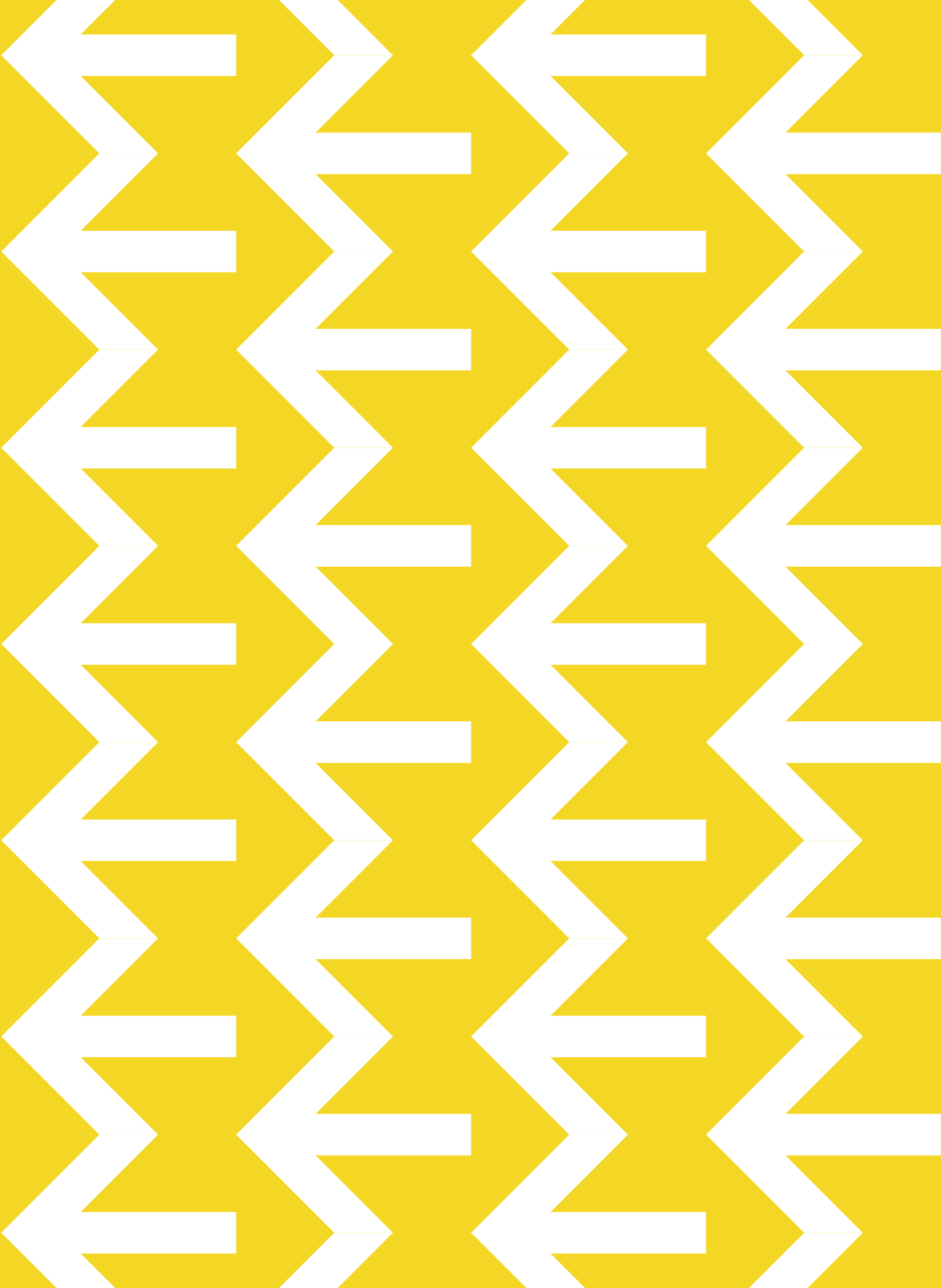
CRASH CRASH—



TODAY IS CHANG-HO'S (MY OLDER SISTER'S) WEDDING

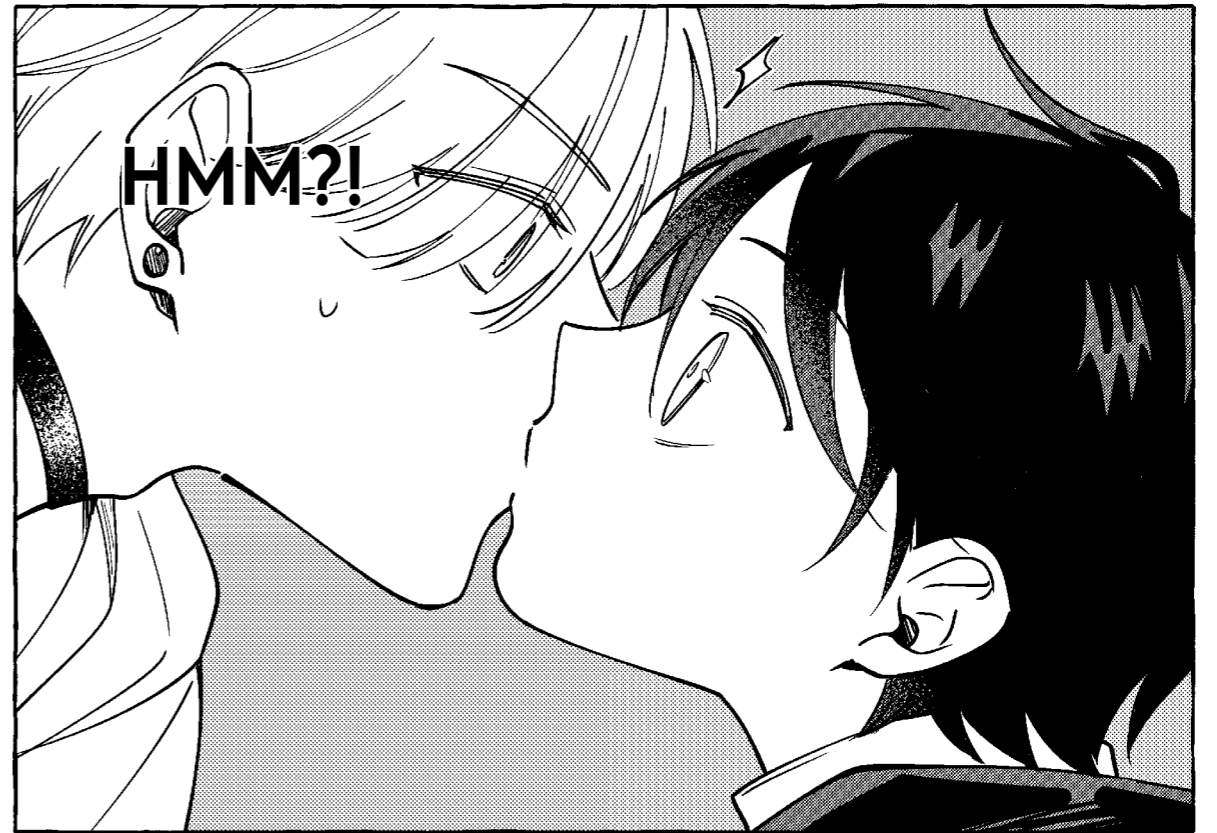
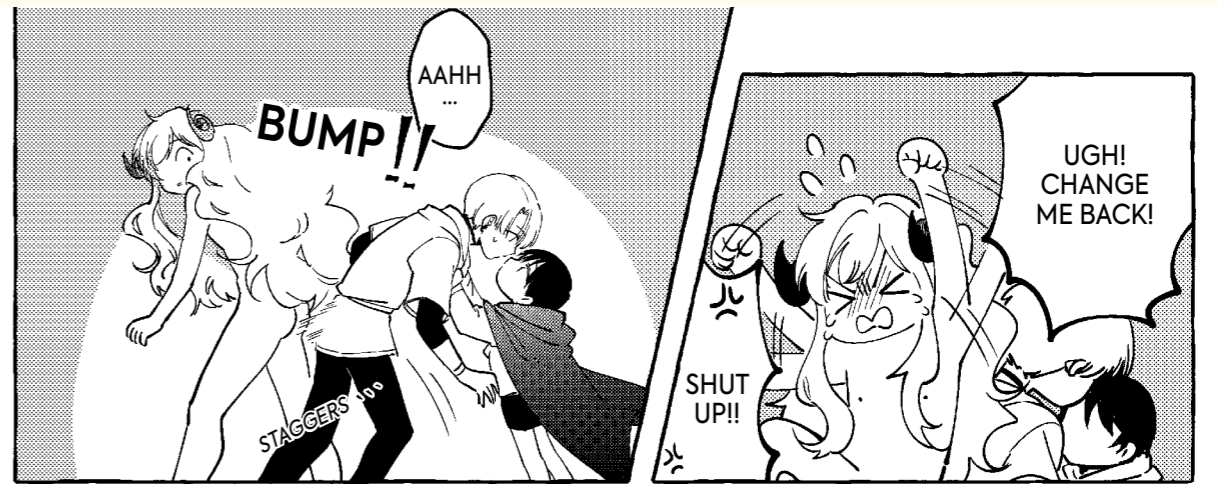






**TO READ THE OTHER  
ARTISTS' WORKS,  
PLEASE GO TO PAGE 224  
AND TURN PAGES  
FROM RIGHT TO LEFT.**

**(THIS IS HOW TAIWANESE COMICS ARE READ.)**





BUT PROMISE ME YOU'LL BE MY PRINCESS.

YOU CAST A SPELL ON ME. LET'S CALL IT EVEN, SHALL WE?

GRABS HIM

ROBIN, YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIFT THE SPELL FROM ME.

HUH?



COULD IT BE...

KYLE, WERE YOU A PRINCESS WITH BIG BOOBS AND FAIR SKIN?



...

WHAT KIND OF SPELL DID KYLE GO THROUGH?



I KNEW IT!! HE'S NOT A KID!!

TAKE A GUESS.



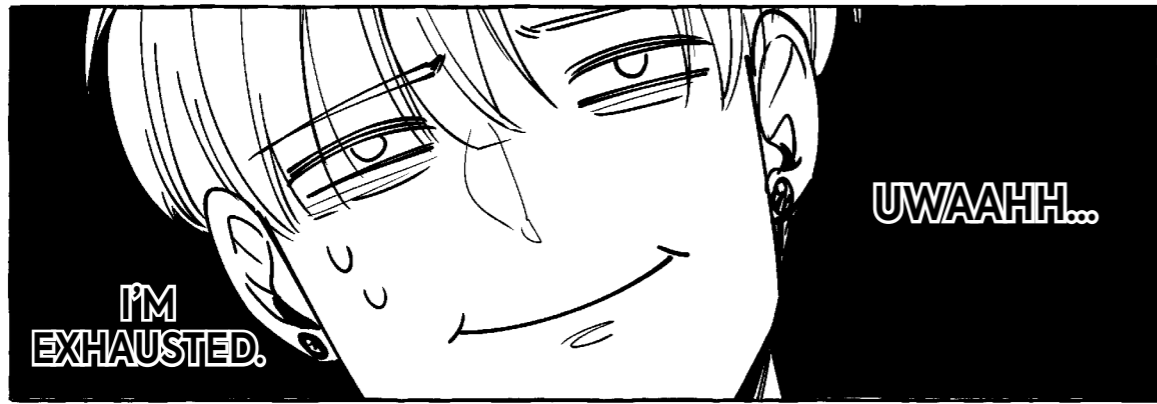
HAHA.

SO, YOU WANTED TO USE ME TO DEFEAT THE MONSTER DRAGON RIGHT FROM THE START, DIDN'T YOU?

I'M 19, TWO YEARS OLDER THAN YOU. I REALLY AM A PRINCE.

I CAN'T HIDE IT FOR LONG ANYWAY.

19 YEARS OLD



I'M EXHAUSTED.

UWAAHH...



TAKE THE CHANCE TO BECOME A FIGHTER THEN. YOU'RE BIG LIKE A BULL NOW.

IT'S MEANINGLESS NOW THAT I LOOK LIKE THIS.

SHUT UP! DO YOU KNOW HOW HARD I WORK TO LOOK ADORABLE LIKE I DID?

YOU'D BEEN STUDYING HOW TO SUPPRESS YOUR GROWTH. THIS IS HOW YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO LOOK.

YOU'RE A MAN. STOP CRYING!



DOES THE SPELL WORK DIFFERENTLY?

THE MONSTER DRAGON SHRANK, BUT BELL GOT BIGGER...

I HEARD ABOUT SPELLS THAT MAKE PEOPLE GO TO SLEEP FOREVER, OR TRANSFORM PEOPLE TO BEASTS...



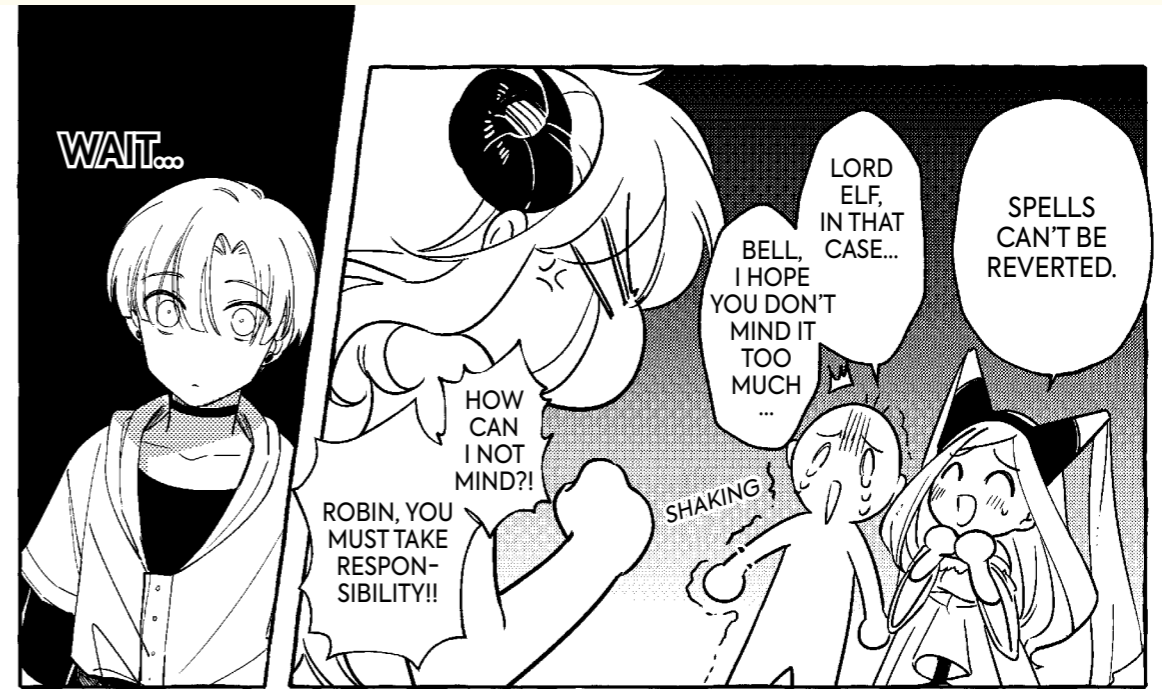
DON'T ADDRESS YOURSELF IN THIRD PERSON!

BELL IS NO BULL!

CAN I TOUCH YOUR MUSCLES?

NO, YOU CAN'T TOUCH BELL'S BODY!

AAH!



WAIT...

ROBIN, YOU MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY!!

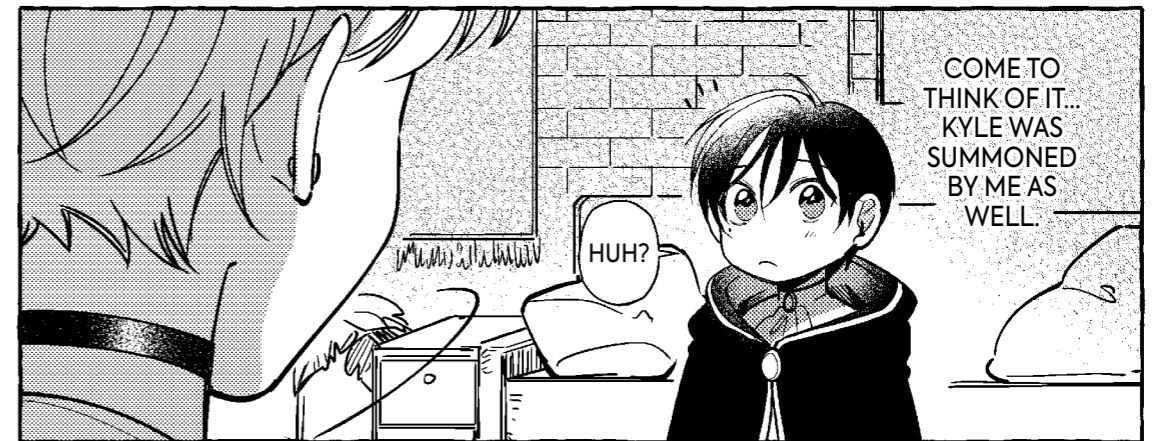
HOW CAN I NOT MIND?!

SHAKING

BELL, I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND IT TOO MUCH...

LORD ELF, IN THAT CASE...

SPELLS CAN'T BE REVERTED.



HUH?

COME TO THINK OF IT... KYLE WAS SUMMONED BY ME AS WELL.



KYLE MUST HAVE SUSTAINED A SIMILAR SPELL

I WAS THINKING ABOUT A PRINCESS WHEN I SUMMONED HIM, BUT I COULDN'T SATISFY THE SINGULARITY CRITERION. THEN, KYLE APPEARED.

# A BL Adventure of Finding Strength and Light Within

by Shiuian Chiang

Classic Japanese video game–style fantasy adventures often follow a hero traveling with party members from different backgrounds. Together, they set out to defeat monsters and search for treasure. *The Shimmering Summoner* is a boys' love (BL) adventure story built upon this familiar framework.

The protagonist, Robin, dreams of becoming a legendary hero, but in reality he is a very low-level Summoner. After running away from home, he lives with his friend Bell, an apothecary, and survives by helping Bell sell potions and hunt monsters. One day, determined to prove that he can earn bounties, Robin ventures beyond his level into a copper-level hunting ground. In the midst of battle, when he attempts to summon a weapon, he unexpectedly summons a child who claims to be a

prince. And so, their adventure begins.

As the story unfolds—featuring events such as slaying a dragon and rescuing kidnapped companions—the pasts and identities of the characters are gradually revealed. Robin, despite his seemingly low level of magic, turns out to be the son of an exceptionally powerful mage. Bell's cute and cheerful appearance hides painful experiences. The young prince, Kyle, also carries deep scars from his childhood and family. These personal histories give depth and dimension to characters who might otherwise seem formulaic, allowing readers to empathize.

Although Robin is a Summoner, he can never summon what he intends—a limitation that keeps him from growing. Midway through the story, however, the revelation of Prince Kyle's true identity

also brings Robin's own power to light. His summoning ability is bound to a "curse" that weakens whatever he calls forth. As a result, whether he summons Prince Kyle, the apothecary Bell, or even monsters, they all appear in diminished forms.

Through this clever setup, the author Gene playfully explores how the meanings of "strength" and "weakness" can be relative and fluid. From Robin's initial conviction that he is a "useless Summoner" to the shifting fortunes of those around him, the story delivers not only an exciting adventure but also a thoughtful layer of reflection. The "shimmering light" of the title symbolizes Robin's true power: an ability that awakens tenderness in the heart, offering warmth, comfort, and protection.

The romantic BL elements woven

into the adventure lend the story a gentle sweetness. Prince Kyle's age reversal, tied to his true identity, and the relationship between Bell and his beastman childhood friend are not central to the main plot, yet both are portrayed tenderly. Gene's delicate artistry and skillful character development render *The Shimmering Summoner* a captivating manga that will appeal to readers regardless of whether or not they are fans of BL.

*Shiuian Chiang was born and raised in Taipei, with time spent in Hsinchu, Tainan, and London. With a background in anthropology and art history, Shiuian has spent much of her time reading and writing descriptions of museum exhibitions and artifacts.*



# The Shimmering Summoner

A Full English translation is available.

## 微光的召喚師

**Author:** Gene **Illustrator:** Gene **Publisher:** Ever Glory Publishing

**Date:** 08/2020

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

144 pages | 12.7 x 18.2 cm **Volume:** 1 (Three-book series)

**Rights sold:** English (digital, non-exclusive), Japanese, German

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Iris Lee

Rubin comes from a powerful bloodline of people who use magic, but he can't seem to make magic work the way it should. He's a Summoner, yet he never summons what he actually wants. Instead, it's always the one thing he doesn't want that appears.

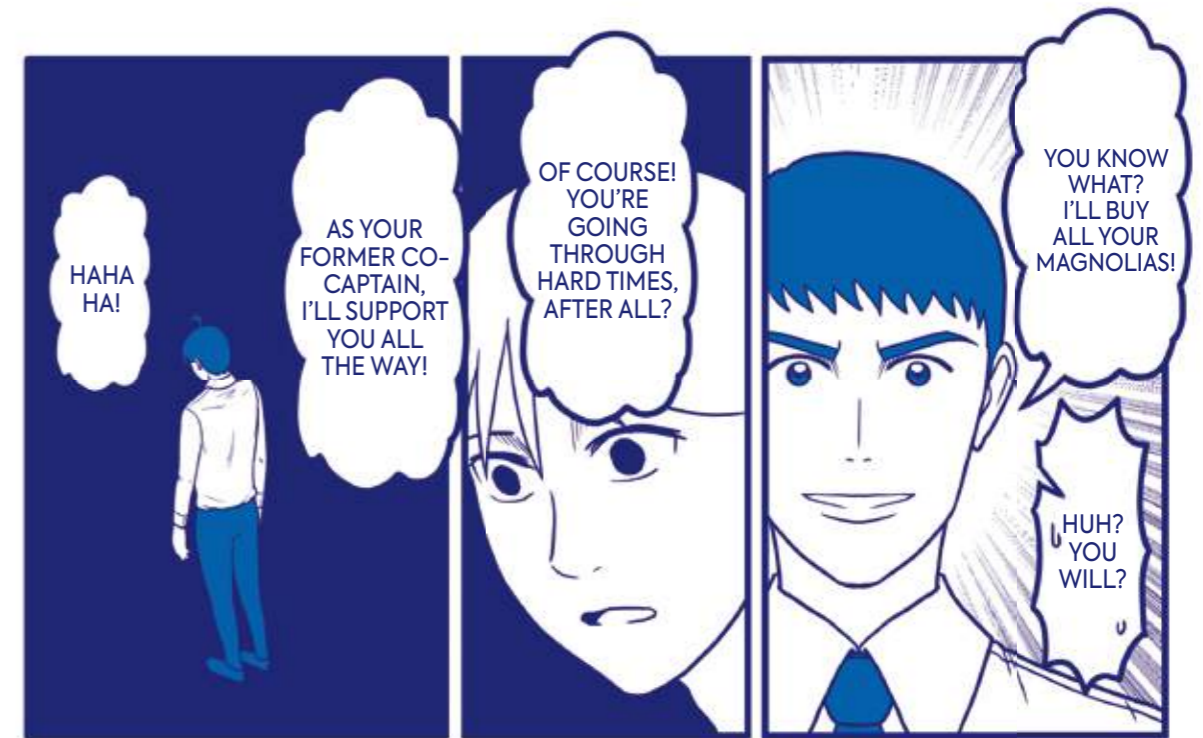
Rubin harbors an audacious dream: to defeat a dragon. One day, he inexplicably summons a mysterious child who claims to be a prince. Drawn in by the prince's words, Rubin and his companions set off on a perilous journey toward the dragon's castle. But what awaits them at the end of the road? And what hidden truth lies behind Rubin's strange, uncontrollable magic?

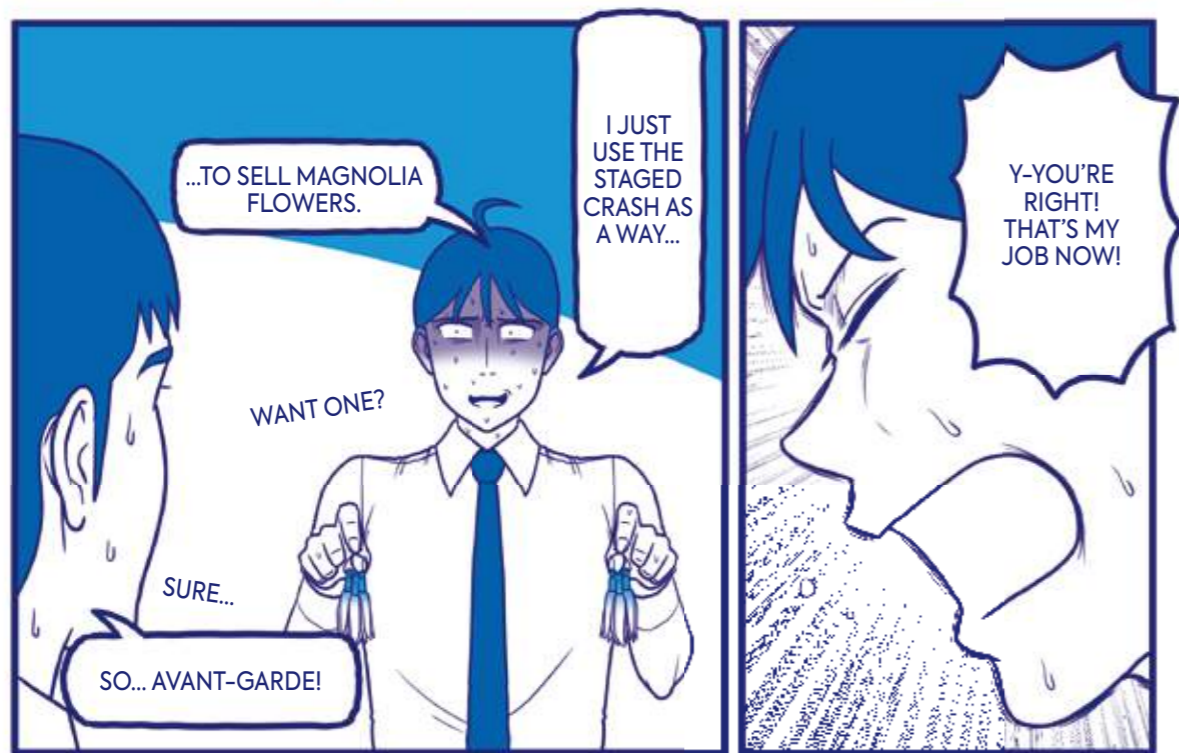
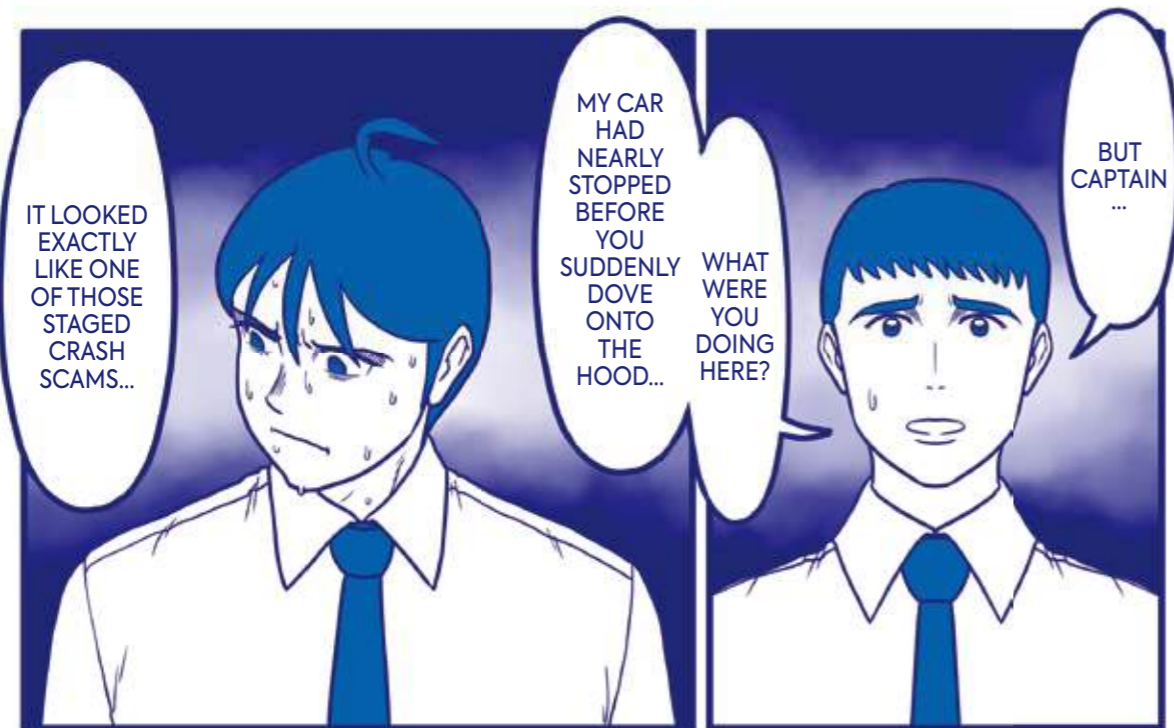


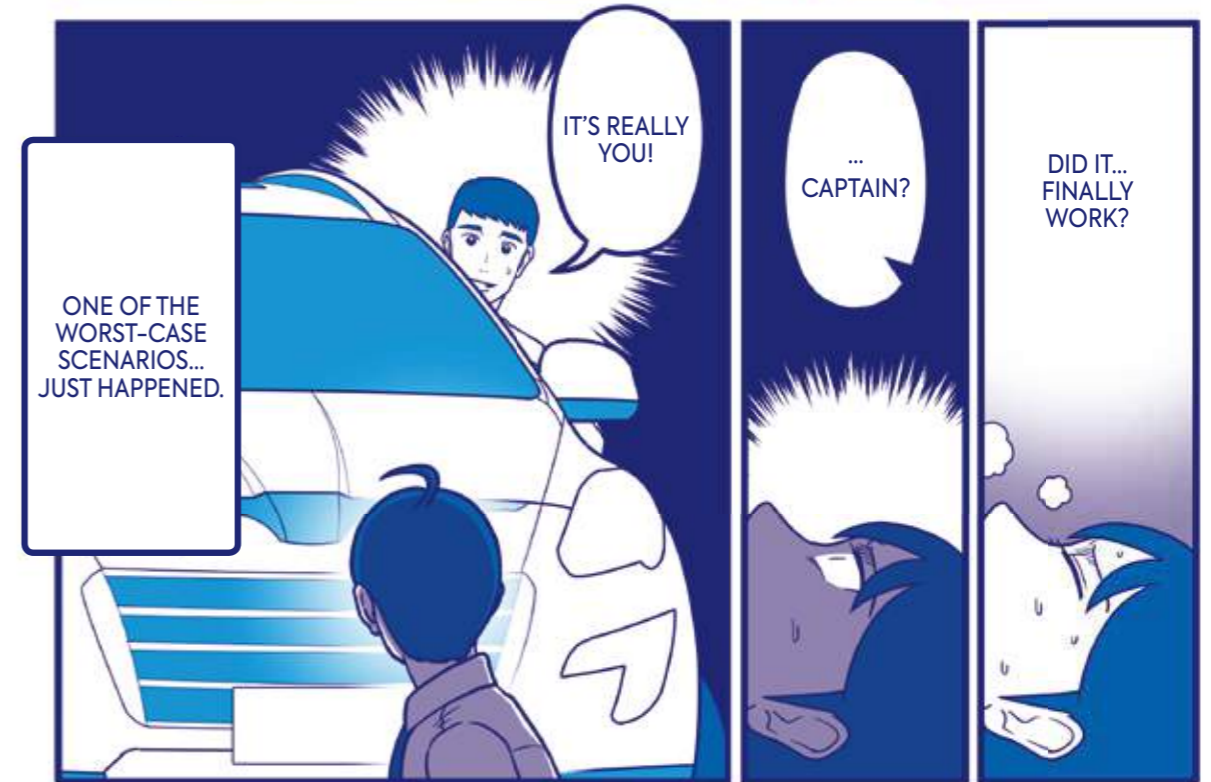
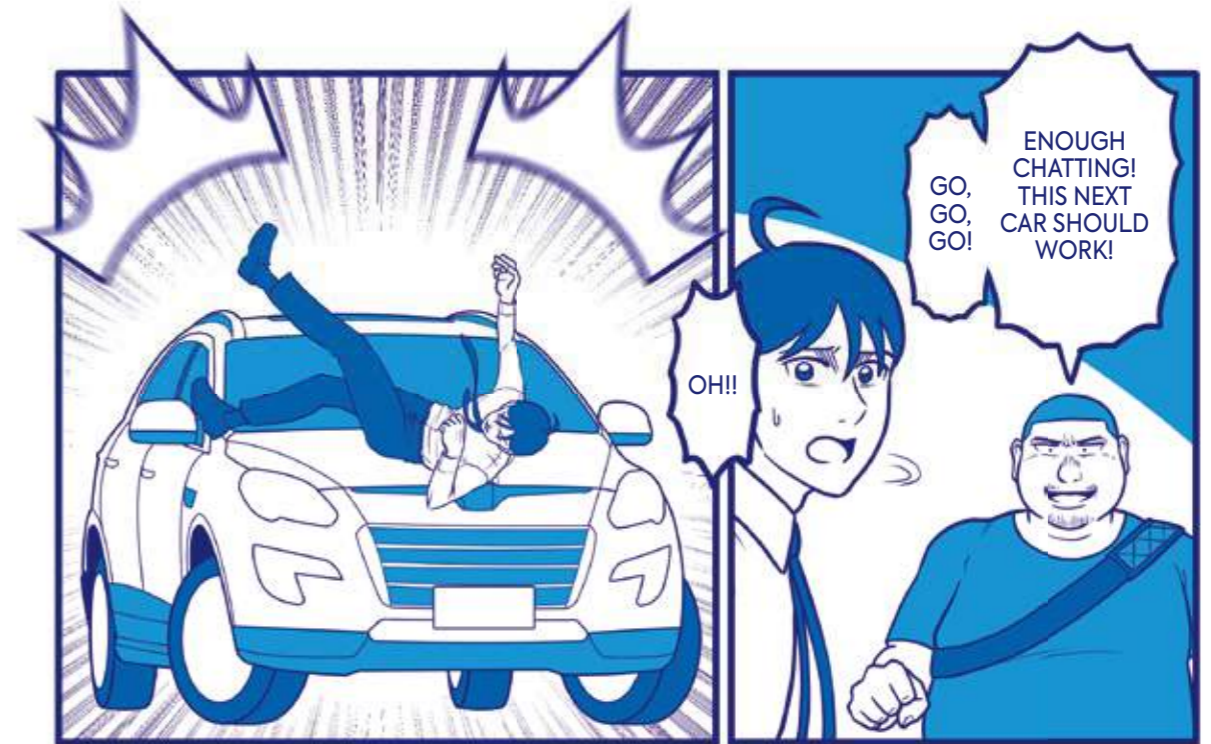
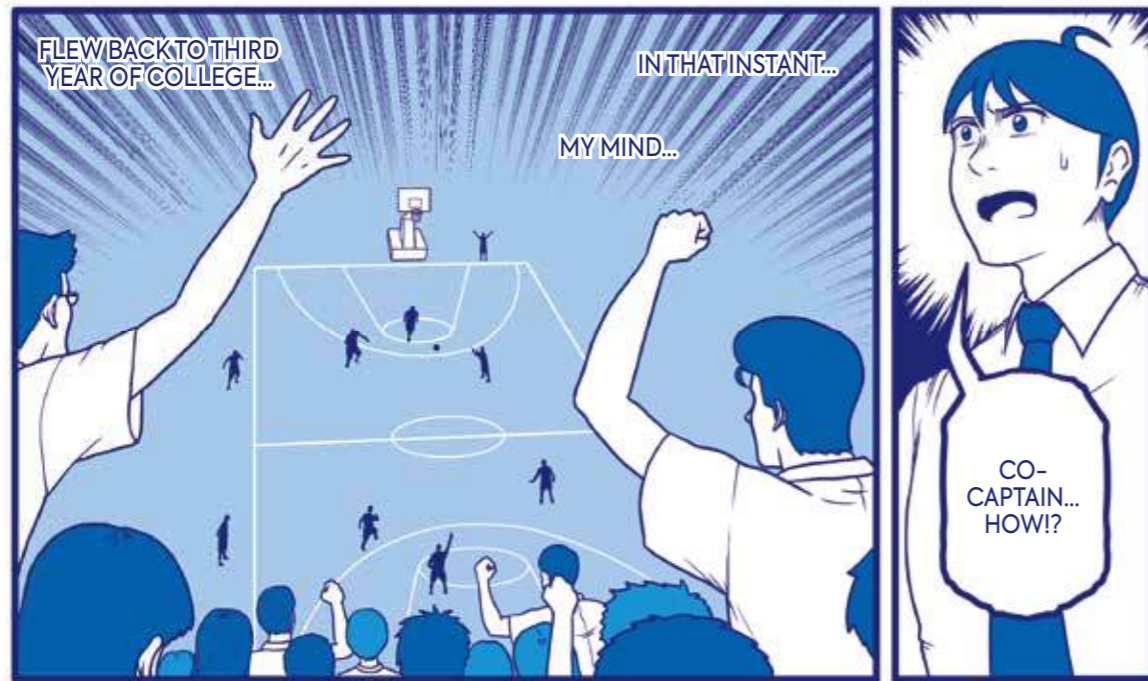
## Author Gene

Gene is a comic artist and illustrator from Tainan, Taiwan. She won the Grand Prize in the Manga Category at the 2020 Kyoto International Manga Awards for her comic *The Guardian of the Scarecrow*, and also received the Grand Prize in the Illustration Category the same year for her work "On the Way to the Festival," achieving a rare double win and earning wide recognition as well as international acclaim. Her published works include *The Wanted Magic Girl!*, *I Want to Be with You Even at the End of the World*, and *The Shimmering Summoner*, among others. Her work *The Wanted Magic Girl!* earned a nomination for Best New Talent at the 2019 Golden Comic Awards. That same year, she also served as the illustrator for IP character designs for the Patriotic Women's Association.

Gene has been actively involved in doujin activities, and her work spans a wide range of styles. She enjoys weaving playful, humorous elements into her stories, often drawing laughter from otherwise serious situations.







# When Scamming Looks More Reasonable Than a “Real” Job: A Cutting Manga That Exposes Social Injustice

by Wen-Chien Hsu

It is hardly news that Taiwan is often labeled by its own media as the “Scam Kingdom.” Phones, text messages, social networks—everyone here has, in one way or another, brushed up against the shadow of a scam. Yet if we place the numbers in global perspective, Taiwan may be serious, but it is hardly the worst. In 2023, Taiwan’s financial fraud losses totaled about \$276 million (USD). Singapore’s figure in the same year reached \$820 million (USD), Sweden’s soared to \$2.75 billion (USD), and the United States topped the list at nearly \$16.6 billion (USD).

Still, in Taiwan, scams have become a shared national anxiety, with the media relentlessly repeating headlines that convey a sense of helplessness. Tung Lin

Hsieh’s comic *I Work at a Scam Company* was born out of this atmosphere. It is not just funny; it is a grotesque mirror that magnifies a reality we all recognize but rarely want to confront.

The protagonist is fresh out of college, saddled with family debt, and without any special skills. In the legitimate job market, he has no way forward. Ironically, when he stumbles into a scam syndicate, he immediately starts earning a salary higher than what most regular companies offer. Hsieh bluntly exposes this absurd reality: when society fails to provide decent working conditions, the scam company begins to look more like “real employment.” This is not a glorification of fraud, but rather a reminder that the

failure of the legitimate labor market allows illegal industries to thrive.

The comic is filled with scenes that poke directly at Taiwan’s social wounds. One unforgettable sequence involves the forced street-selling of “charity pens.” This is already a familiar con in Taiwan, but Hsieh makes it even more absurd: instead of successfully tricking anyone, the protagonist gets propositioned by an old man and nearly dragged into a sex transaction. The misunderstanding is hilarious on the surface, yet beneath it lies the bleak truth of Taiwan’s underclass survival—whether hawking, being duped, or trading sex, the same vulnerabilities and desperation are at play.

Another moment cuts even deeper. During a staged scheme involving a car accident, he unexpectedly bumps into an old classmate. He assumes the classmate is also struggling, only to learn the man has already launched his own business with \$160,000 (USD), an amount of cash that his father casually gifted him. Now he flaunts his “success” with ease. His encounter with his classmate is a gut punch that exposes the reality of class. No matter how hard they work, some people remain trapped by low wages and debt, while others, buoyed by family wealth, barely lift a finger yet still cross the finish line. Against this backdrop of such gaping inequality, any scam seems almost secondary.

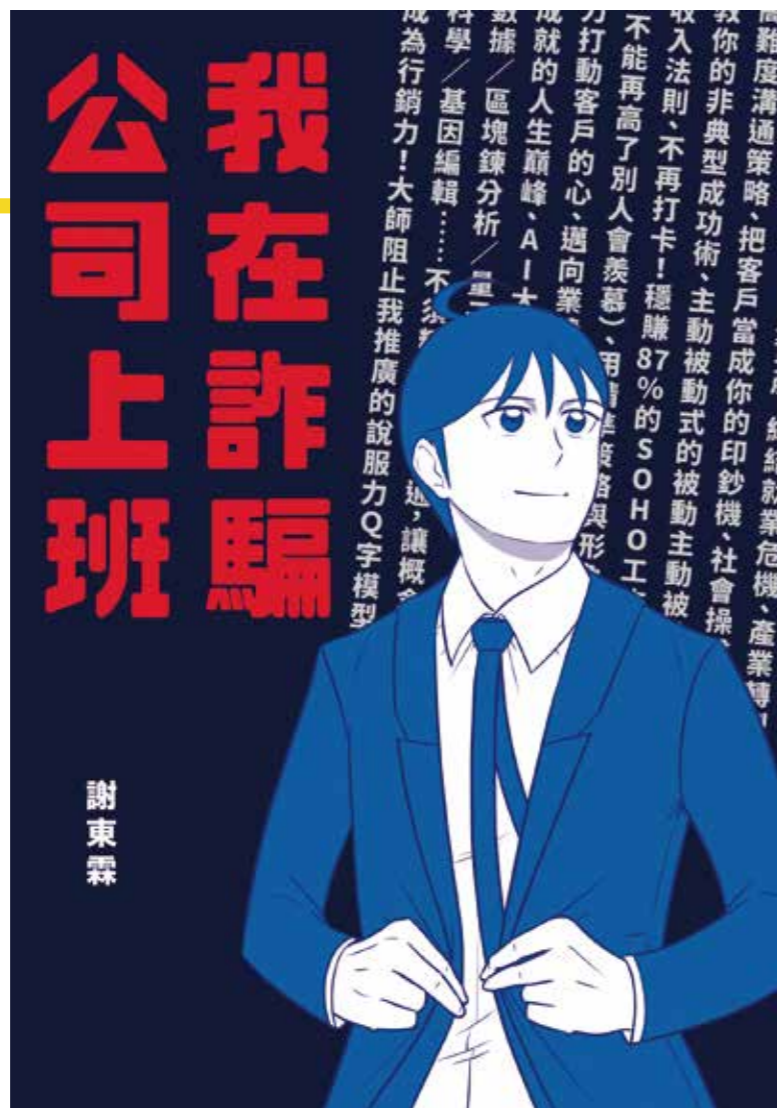
Hsieh’s cast of characters is equally allegorical. The boss specializes in “scamming the upper class,” hinting at the gray zones that slip through the cracks

of the system. Meanwhile, his supervisor manipulates people with her irresistible charm, pointing to a more universal human weakness. The protagonist’s own mother, who keeps falling for scams despite repeated losses, represents the blind trust in authority that still runs deep in Taiwanese society. Together, they form a tableau that feels extreme yet instantly recognizable.

By the end, it becomes clear that *I Work at a Scam Company* is not simply about how scams work, but why our world allows scams to flourish. Legitimate companies drain labor without offering fair pay; young people are forced to oscillate between poverty and gray zones; meanwhile, the privileged skip ahead on the ladder of success thanks to family background. Fraud, in this sense, is not merely crime—it is the reflection of social and class injustice.

What makes this comic so brilliant is that it makes us laugh even as it exposes the cracks in our society. The seemingly absurd scenes hint that a scam job can appear more rational than a legitimate one. What truly demands scrutiny is not the tricks of fraudsters, but the system in which we all live.

*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.*



# I Work at a Scam Company

A Full English translation is available.

我在詐騙公司上班

**Author:** Tung Lin Hsieh **Illustrator:** Tung Lin Hsieh **Publisher:** Mirror Fiction

**Date:** 11/2019

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

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

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Kevin Wang

A hapless young man at the end of his luck unexpectedly lands a job at a shady scam company staffed by two people: a gangster-like boss and a gorgeous supervisor. Gentle by nature and fond of animals, this essentially kind person nonetheless finds himself carrying out dubious assignments. From fundraising for fake charities to scripted phone scams, he struggles to reconcile his conscience with his work.

Meanwhile, the dynamic between the nameless protagonist and his supervisor starts to change. When he learns that she was once a victim of a notorious scam, he responds with empathy. She, in turn, can't help but notice his unexpectedly solid physique. As a subtle attraction emerges, the two begin plotting an ultimate con against her former boss—hoping it will allow her to reclaim her dignity.

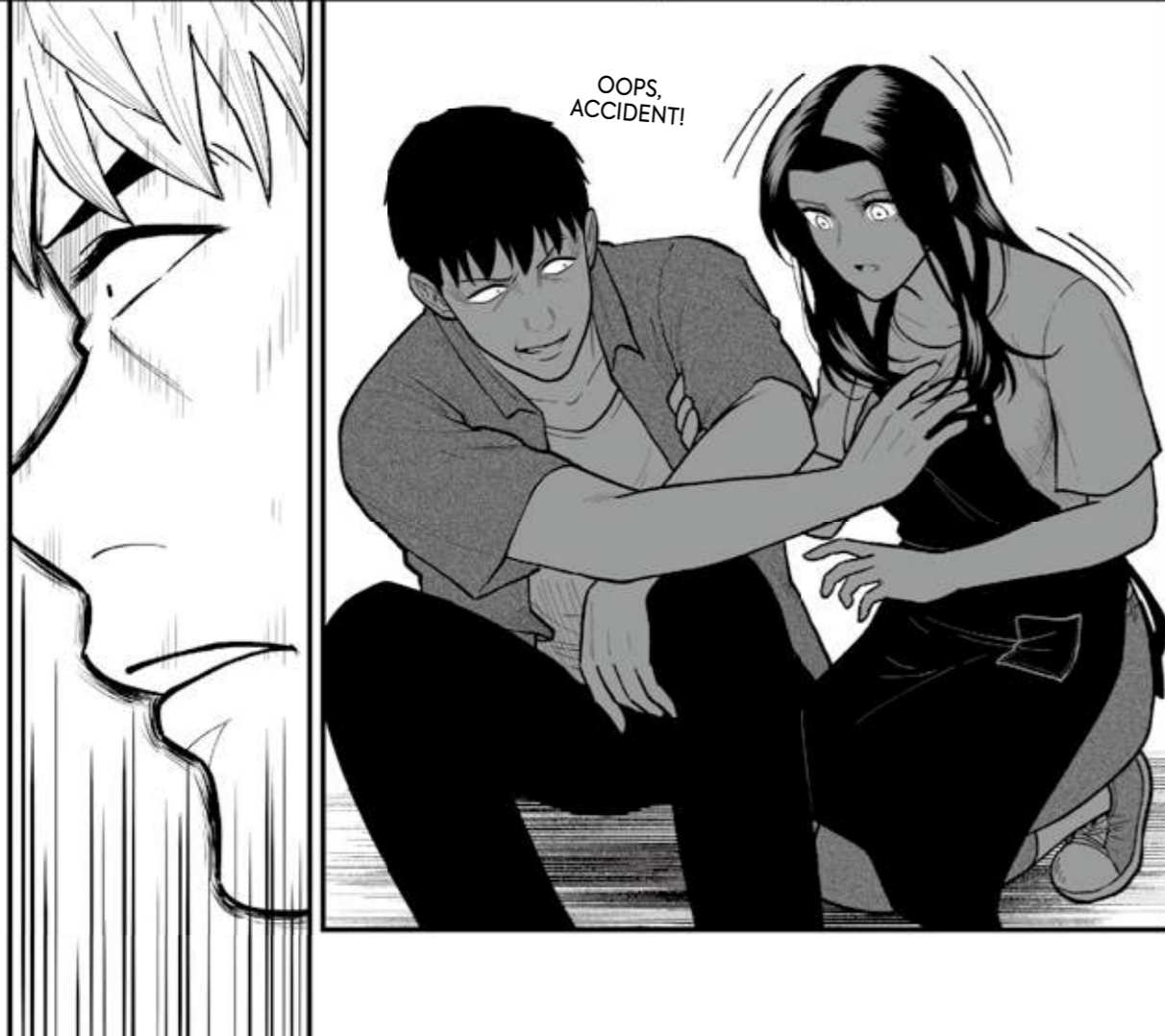
This humorous yet biting manga suggests that political and economic systems can create the conditions for scams to flourish. As the protagonist discovers, many so-called legitimate professions can be even more ruthless than an outright con.



Author **Tung Lin Hsieh**

Tung Lin Hsieh's works have frequently appeared on the Books.com.tw annual bestseller list and have been featured in the recommended selections for the Taiwan Pavilion at the Angoulême International Comics Festival. Formerly a novelist and advertising copywriter, Hsieh is now a full-time comic artist, known for notable works such as *The God's Convenience Store*, *Who's Afraid of Whom*, *Love Counseling for Assassins*, and *I Work at a Scam Company*. Additionally, he has been invited to teach scriptwriting at platforms such as LINE WEBTOON, Taiwan Comics Base, and Game Orange Comics Star. *The God's Convenience Store* has been licensed for adaptation into board games, video games, stage plays, and film and television. The series consists of two volumes, and overseas rights have been sold in Russian.







# Browsing a Bookstore with a Thug: The Surprise and Delight of Shared Meaning

by Li Hua

At heart, the Taiwanese manga creator Tung Lin Hsieh is deeply concerned with society and the fate of his country. Since the 2014 Sunflower Movement, where 500,000 people marched in the streets, he has committed himself to using a light, humorous style to translate serious issues—whether national affairs or everyday life—into comics. During that period, Hsieh came to recognize the communicative power of the medium, in which images and text work together to convey ideas. Comics, he believes, can be a powerful way to reach the hearts and minds of people.

Yet his love for books reaches even further back. “Bookstores and the publishing industry are basically my comfort zone,” Hsieh says. “I’ve always paid close attention to them.” He explains that books have long been his primary source of learning: whenever he wants to

read something, he buys it immediately, unable to wait.

In 2024, a decade after his debut, he released *Thug Bookstore*—a work that speaks for the world of books. Aware that a story centered around an independent bookstore may seem too niche, Hsieh injected the element of a “thug,” infusing the narrative with energy and entertainment. Thus, the handsome tough guy Hung Ta-Hao, who somehow keeps finding a reason to take off his shirt, steps into the indie bookstore run by the feisty, literary Liu Ching-Wen, quick to reprimand anyone who gets on her nerves.

Aiming to reach readers of all ages, Hsieh gave himself the challenge of conveying a thug’s aura without using a single swear word. Indeed, the most violent action in this book is a single punch. The story structure leans toward

the softer tones of Korean dramas and idol romances, while the details of running a bookstore emerged through Hsieh’s careful research. “At first I only wanted the bookstore to be a backdrop, but the more I investigated, the more stories I found there,” he says. He even built a 3D model of the fictional store to convey its vivid, living presence.

The incidents that unfold in the indie bookstore are colorful, striking, and memorable. Liu Ching-Wen runs the shop alone after its owner has fled, until Hung Ta-Hao, sent by a debt-collection company, suddenly appears. As sparks fly between them, the bookstore’s predicament comes into sharp focus—down to the realistic detail that selling black tea brings in more income than selling books.

“The decline of bookstores is a global issue,” Hsieh laments. “Maybe colleagues abroad will resonate with it too. I hope to contribute something in my own way.” He sees *Thug Bookstore* as a possible stepping stone toward his long-held wish of “bringing Taiwanese stories to the world.”

Hsieh is the kind of creator driven by an inborn obsession: he wants to create because he loves reading, and he reads even more because he wants to create, a cycle that continually pushes him forward. After completing military service, he worked as a copywriter in an advertising agency, which gave him a new perspective on language. “Advertising copy has to be

fast, direct, even unconventional. You can’t fall into other people’s logic. That’s why the language of film, comics, and online discussions is often a better source of inspiration.”

Even so, when it comes to the physical object of the book, Hsieh still believes in its power to circulate and connect, and he cherishes the tactile experience of holding one in his hands. For this reason, he feels a deep sense of regret when a work never makes it into print. He is pleased when some of his projects achieve commercial success, yet saddened when others fail to find their place. Ultimately, he hopes to reach a wide audience while quietly weaving his personal beliefs into his stories. This duality—both rational and deeply emotional—defines Tung Lin Hsieh.

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

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



# Thug Bookstore

A Full English translation is available.

流氓書店

**Author:** Tung Lin Hsieh **Illustrator:** Tung Lin Hsieh **Publisher:** Mirror Fiction

**Date:** 05/2024

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

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

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Adina Zemanek

Hung Ta-Hao comes to a struggling bookstore to collect a debt, only to find that the owner has already fled. The unsuspecting store manager, Liu Ching-Wen, can offer only meager sales figures and an honest admission: given the bookstore's dire situation, there is simply no way to repay the debt. For Ta-Hao, this assignment represents a rare chance to turn his life around. To complete his mission, he decides to help Ching-Wen sell off all the remaining stock within three months.

Reality, however, is harsh. With his background as a former thug, Ta-Hao quickly reads the bookstore's predicament in its sparse foot traffic and low checkout numbers, and begins to understand Ching-Wen's struggles. Coming from vastly different worlds, the two clash in values and perspectives. Yet together they devise a range of strategies to attract customers. Through this cooperation, they gradually come to know each other better—and mutual affection begins to blossom.

Yet the shadows of their pasts soon come knocking at the door...



Author **Tung Lin Hsieh**

Tung Lin Hsieh's works have frequently appeared on the Books.com.tw annual bestseller list and have been featured in the recommended selections for the Taiwan Pavilion at the Angoulême International Comics Festival. Formerly a novelist and advertising copywriter, Hsieh is now a full-time comic artist, known for notable works such as *The God's Convenience Store*, *Who's Afraid of Whom*, *Love Counseling for Assassins*, and *I Work at a Scam Company*. Additionally, he has been invited to teach scriptwriting at platforms such as LINE WEBTOON, Taiwan Comics Base, and Game Orange Comics Star. *The God's Convenience Store* has been licensed for adaptation into board games, video games, stage plays, and film and television. The series consists of two volumes, and overseas rights have been sold in Russian.





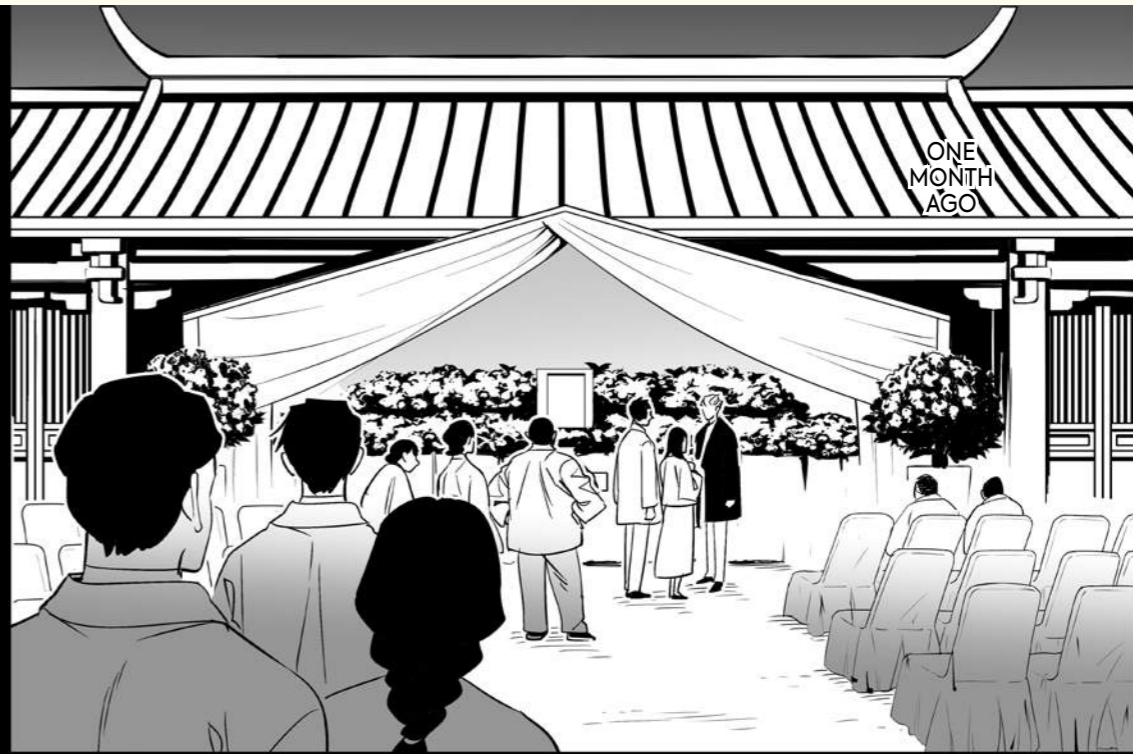


MAGICIANS BELIEVE THEIR MAGIC WAS BESTOWED BY THE GODS...

...BUT WITCHES' POWERS COME FROM DEALS WITH DEMONS.



...WE'D BE CELEBRATING THE WITCH'S DEATH.



ONE MONTH AGO



LET ME KNOW IF YOU NEED ANYTHING.



IF THE ZUO CLAN WASN'T SO POWERFUL...

IT'S TRULY ABSURD!

...I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY-MORE.



OUR DEEPEST CONDOLENCES.

STAY STRONG.



...WOULD DEFINITELY NOT BE CELEBRATED.

A UNION BETWEEN A MAGICIAN AND A WITCH...



# A Family Farewell in the Realm of Magic

by Wen-Chien Hsu

The four Zuo brothers are born into one of Taiwan's great magical families. Each is endowed with a unique power from birth. The eldest, Zuo Po, assumes a father's role within the household. No matter how severe his wounds, he can heal himself—an ability that mirrors the burden he has long borne and the quiet strength with which he protects his brothers. Meanwhile, the youngest, Zuo Chi, displays astonishing magical talent, but has not yet learned how to control the volatile power within him.

Finally, the middle children are twins, Zuo Chung and Zuo Shu. They could not be more different in temperament. The former is playful and optimistic, tending to avoid pressure and possessing the power of instantaneous movement: he can escape any situation in the blink of an eye. In contrast, the calm and perceptive Zuo

Shu can hear the thoughts of others. Yet because he cannot choose what he hears, he struggles with doubt about his ability and his own emotions.

As midterm exams and a family trial approach, Zuo Chi's longing for their deceased mother overwhelms him. His emotions spiral out of control, and his magic erupts, pulling his three older brothers into a magical realm shaped by his subconscious. In their search for their younger brother, the other siblings must overcome a series of obstacles. In so doing, they must also confront the grief their family has long tried to seal away; they'd collectively decided to cope with loss by forgetting her.

On the surface, this is a fantastical adventure through a world of magic. At its core, however, it is a poignant story of how a family grapples with the loss of

a loved one. Years earlier, Zuo Chi had attempted to resurrect his mother using forbidden magic, drawing the wrath of the entire clan. Wanting to protect him and the rest of the family, Zuo Po persuaded him to erase their mother from everyone's memory—effectively wiping away all traces of her existence from the world.

Their shared forgetting leaves them isolated from one another. But when Zuo Chi's yearning erupts once again into uncontrollable magic, the four brothers are compelled to recover the memories they had buried: the handmade certificates their mother crafted to encourage Zuo Chung when he faltered, and the gentle spells she used to soothe Zuo Shu in moments of sadness. These fragments become warm, tangible symbols within the magical realm, embodying the family's longing.

The loss of a loved one is among the deepest wounds a family can suffer, one that may never fully heal. Far more than a comic about magic, *The Zuo Family* is a love letter to family, to mourning, and to reconciliation. It reminds us that sorrows cannot be borne alone. Through the bonds of kinship, shared remembrance, and companionship, we may find the desire and strength to take a breath. In this world of Gene and YAGI, the four brothers not only grow stronger in their powers, but also learn to face loss and say farewell.

*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 Zuo Family (Prequel)

A Full English translation is available.

最後的魔術家族 (漫畫版)

**Author:** Gene **Illustrator:** YAGI **Publisher:** Mirror Fiction

**Date:** 01/2025

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

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

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Eunice Shek

Born into one of Taiwan's four great magic families, the Zuo brothers each possess extraordinary abilities. The eldest, a high school senior, has already earned a modest reputation as a magician and is preparing to shoulder the family's future. The twins could not be more different in temperament or power: one is carefree and uses his magic to escape any problem, while the other, gifted with the power to hear others' thoughts, is tormented by self-doubt. The youngest has yet to learn to control his temper, yet already displays astonishing magical potential.

As each brother faces his own challenge, how will they deal with the family's magical trials? Magic that brings joy to others but suffering to oneself—can such a gift truly be called a blessing?



## Author Gene

Gene is a comic artist and illustrator from Tainan, Taiwan. She won the Grand Prize in the Manga Category at the 2020 Kyoto International Manga Awards for her comic *The Guardian of the Scarecrow*, and also received the Grand Prize in the Illustration Category the same year for her work "On the Way to the Festival," achieving a rare double win and earning wide recognition as well as international acclaim. Her published works include *The Wanted Magic Girl!*, *I Want to Be with You Even at the End of the World*, and *The Shimmering Summoner*, among others. Her work *The Wanted Magic Girl!* earned a nomination for Best New Talent at the 2019 Golden Comic Awards. That same year, she also served as the illustrator for IP character designs for the Patriotic Women's Association.

Gene has been actively involved in doujin activities, and her work spans a wide range of styles. She enjoys weaving playful, humorous elements into her stories, often drawing laughter from otherwise serious situations.



## Illustrator YAGI

YAGI is a thoughtful person who seeks to draw beautiful comics that make the heart flutter.



BROTHER...

I WISH YOU  
COULD SEE  
THIS TOO...



THAT NIGHT, THE AUDIENCE  
WAS JAM-PACKED.

BUT THE PUPPETRY,  
THE RECITATION, THE  
ACCOMPANIMENT...

TRUE, MANY OF THEM  
WERE ATTRACTED BY  
THE STAGE EFFECTS.

UNTIL THE  
SPECTATORS BECAME  
ONE WITH THE STAGE.

THEY CAME TOGETHER  
ORGANICALLY.

WAVES AFTER WAVES  
ENGULFED THE PUBLIC...



SONGS  
ABOUND,  
OF YEARS I'VE  
LOST COUNT

MY HEART  
STAYS CALM  
THROUGH UPS  
AND DOWNS

IS THERE  
A FIRE?

...



ZEALOUS AS  
I AM, A ZEALOUS  
SWORD I WIELD

FAR AND  
WIDE I ROAM,  
PERFECTION  
MY IDEAL



WE'LL  
PERFORM  
A NEW PLAY:  
SET FIRE TO  
THE MIST!

LADIES AND  
GENTS!  
TONIGHT, WE  
BORROWED  
THE RONG-  
LE CREW'S  
STAGE!



HEY!  
DON'T GO  
AWAY!

WHAT?



OOOH!

A... REAL FIRE?!



# A Deeply Beloved Indigenous Folk Art: This Manga Traces Taiwanese Glove Puppetry Through Renewal and Transformation

by Kuo-feng Lai, Creative Comic Collection Editorial Department

Once immensely popular and deeply beloved by the public, Taiwanese glove puppetry stands as one of the most representative indigenous theatrical forms and folk arts. Its ceaseless spirit of innovation reflects the resilient vitality of grassroots culture. Today, it continues to thrive and evolve alongside the course of Taiwan's history.

Taiwanese glove puppetry originally comes from the coastal regions of Fujian and Guangdong in China. Puppeteers from the mainland crossed the treacherous "Black Ditch"—the historical name for the Taiwan Strait—carrying chests of puppets on their backs. They traveled from place to place performing. In their early days, the repertoire mainly consisted of single, narrative plays. While manipulating the puppets, the masters would recount stories of the past and present, accompanied

by the gentle and refined sounds of what is called Nanguan music. In the agrarian society of earlier times, when entertainment was scarce, temple festivals and thanksgiving rituals were major occasions for communal celebration, and glove puppetry was immensely popular.

Gradually, glove puppetry became localized. Performers adapted to local accents and speech patterns, incorporating poetry to make the spoken lines more rhythmic and memorable. They replaced Nanguan with Beiguan music, a brisk and rousing style popular in Taiwan, and greatly enhanced martial-arts choreography. The small puppets, controlled in the palm, could wield all manner of weapons, punch, kick, leap, and whirl, displaying dazzling combat sequences that left audiences in awe. These innovations were warmly received

and led Taiwanese glove puppetry onto its own distinctive developmental path. As the number of fans grew, the earlier format of isolated, single-episode plays was no longer sufficient. Audiences longed for continuous, climactic, and ever more exciting stories.

During the late Japanese colonial period under the Kominka (Japanization) movement, the Governor-General's Office banned Taiwanese theatrical performances, plunging glove puppetry into several years of silence. It was not until the late 1940s that authorities adopted a more lenient stance, establishing an Entertainment Committee to assess whether local drama could both serve policy goals and satisfy popular demand. Taiwanese member Huang De-shi argued that the glove-puppet repertoire, with its emphasis on loyalty, filial piety, integrity, and righteousness, was well suited for moral education in rural society. With carefully selected scripts, he maintained, it could meet official requirements. He invited famous puppeteers and troupes to help reform the art, introducing new performance techniques: accompaniment with Western instruments and Japanese records, puppet costumes combining Japanese and local styles, three-dimensional modular stage sets, and faster scene transitions. These changes brought fresh and unprecedented influences to the form of Taiwanese glove puppetry.

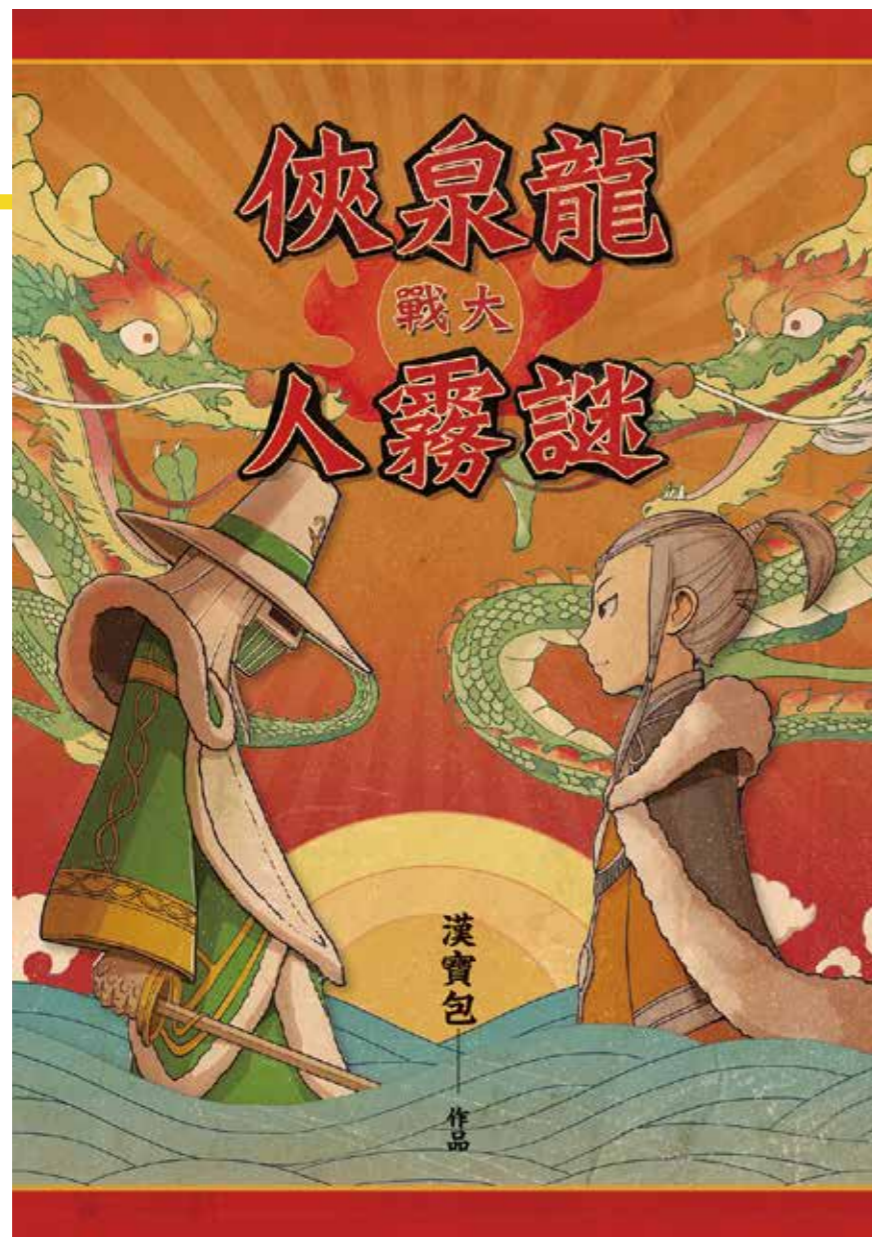
After the R.O.C government relocated to Taiwan and temporarily banned outdoor performances, glove puppetry moved into theaters, adopting new equipment and lighting effects—

multi-layered painted stages, colorful illumination, and both Eastern and Western music—to attract cinema audiences. Puppet sizes were enlarged once again. In 1953, Wu Tian-lai and the rising star Zhong Ren-bi of "New Prosperity Pavilion" launched The Great Hero Baicao Weng, a long-running sword-hero epic that played for years and thousands of performances. This formally marked the dazzling arrival of the "Golden Light Glove Puppetry" era, now a part of shared collective memory.

By then, both in form and in content, Taiwanese glove puppetry had diverged greatly from its origins. After the Golden Light era, successive generations continued to create new stages of expression: radio glove-puppet dramas that sparked boundless imagination through sound alone, television glove-puppet series that emptied the streets when broadcast, and the groundbreaking Pili puppetry that opened entirely new horizons.

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

*Since 2009, Kuo-feng Lai has served as the responsible editor for comic titles such as One Hundred Views of the Northern City, The Puppeteers: The Undead Hero vs. The Mist Man, Tales of the Orchid People, and A-Huo-Dan, Guardian of Hobe, and has also assisted with research and source-gathering for other projects. Since 2017, he has shared methods for collecting and organizing digital resources on historical topics through the Cultural Heritage Adaptation Workshop.*



# The Puppeteers: The Undead Hero vs. The Mist Man

A Full English translation is available.

龍泉俠大戰謎霧人

**Author:** Hambuck **Illustrator:** Hambuck **Publisher:** Gaea Books

**Date:** 07/2014

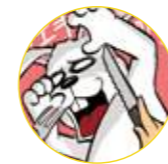
**Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

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

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Catherine Yu

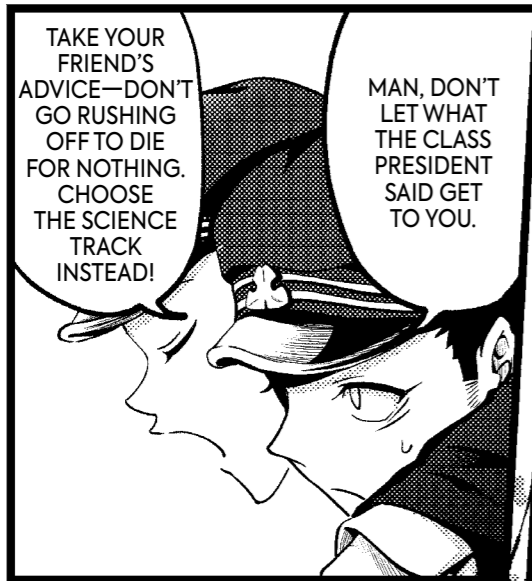
It was an era when plays existed only as outlines, their dialogue passed down orally. Competing troupes flourished, performing at temple festivals and ritual occasions as gongs and drums thundered through the air. From beloved adaptations of classical tales to thrilling new chivalric dramas, Master Jin Feng led the Jinfuxuan Troupe to introduce two iconic heroes: The Undead Hero and The Mist Man.

From Japanese rule to the Nationalist era, from classical-script theater to the dazzling Jinguang style, the turbulent currents of history shape the lives of puppeteers and the bonds between masters and disciples. As The Undead Hero confronts The Mist Man, the martial world unfolds onstage while the trials of human life play out offstage—together weaving a grand, legendary saga of Taiwan's glove-puppetry tradition. This book shows how puppeteers forged new paths to keep the tradition alive.



Author **Hambuck**

A native of Taipei, Hambuck was the resident artist for the Taiwan pavilion at the 2016 Angoulême International Comics Festival. Foreign language rights to his previous works have been sold in Japan, Thailand, France, and Russia.



TAKE YOUR FRIEND'S ADVICE—DON'T GO RUSHING OFF TO DIE FOR NOTHING. CHOOSE THE SCIENCE TRACK INSTEAD!

MAN, DON'T LET WHAT THE CLASS PRESIDENT SAID GET TO YOU.



THUD!



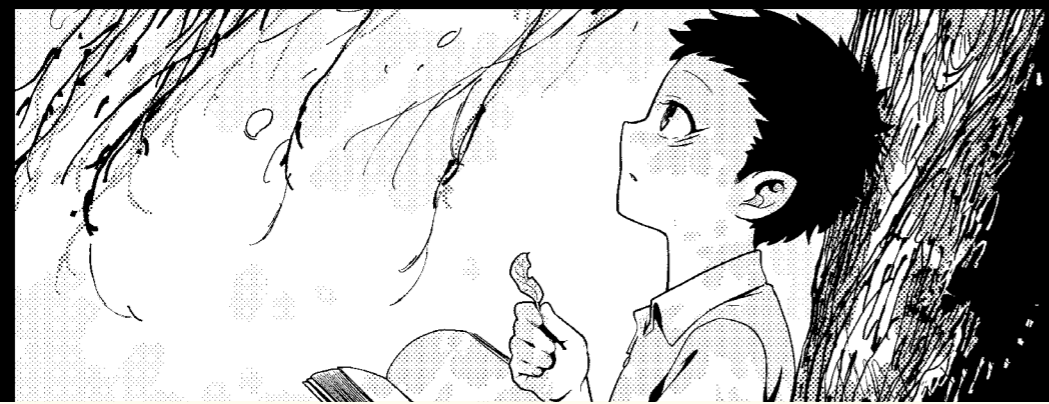
TORII WAS RIGHT. IF I CHOSE THE SCIENCE TRACK, I COULD POSTPONE GOING TO THE BATTLEFIELD...

BUT THAT KIND OF "UNPATRIOTIC" THINKING WASN'T TOLERATED IN TIMES LIKE THESE.

HONOR... OR LIFE?



WHY AM I HESITATING?

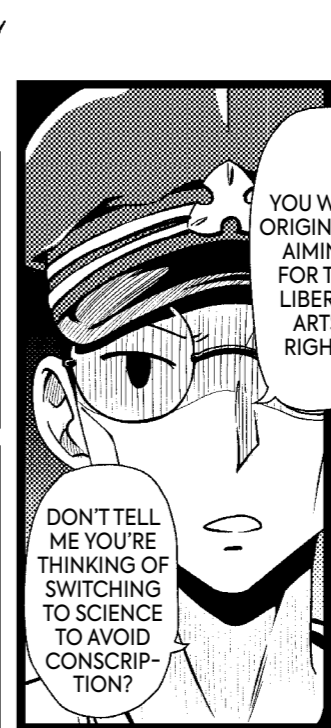


THE REVISION OF THE DRAFT SYSTEM IS EXACTLY WHAT WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR! WE SHOULD FOLLOW OUR FALLEN HEROES AND JOIN THIS HOLY WAR!

SUCH A COWARD. HOW COULD YOU FACE THE LOYAL SOULS WHO SACRIFICED THEMSELVES IN THE BATTLEFIELD?

Y-YES...

MAKE SURE TO HAND IN YOUR FORM BY THE END OF THE MONTH!



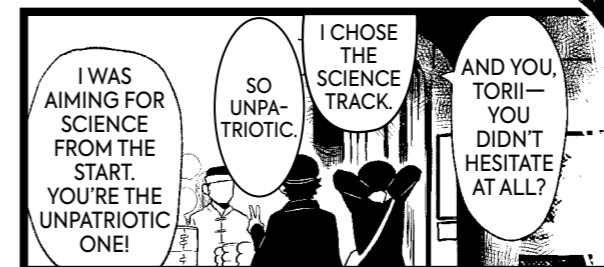
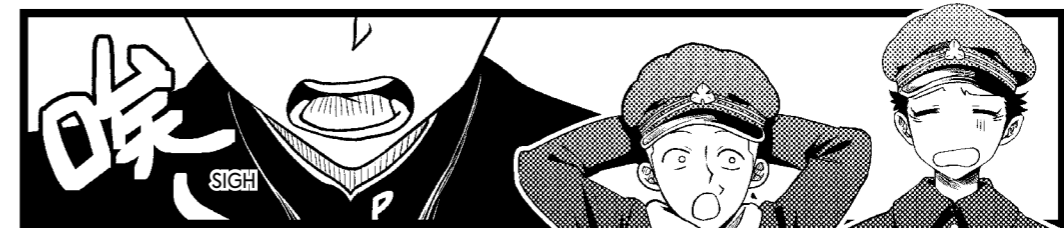
YOU WERE ORIGINALLY AIMING FOR THE LIBERAL ARTS, RIGHT?

DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE THINKING OF SWITCHING TO SCIENCE TO AVOID CONSCRIPTION?



C-CLASS PRESIDENT...? SORRY, JUST GIVE ME A LITTLE MORE TIME...

NEKO-NO...



I WAS AIMING FOR SCIENCE FROM THE START. YOU'RE THE UNPATRIOTIC ONE!

SO UNPATRIOTIC.

I CHOSE THE SCIENCE TRACK.

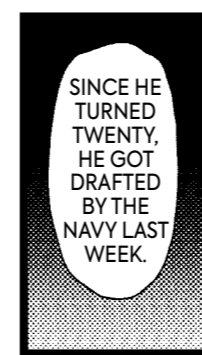
AND YOU, TORII— YOU DIDN'T HESITATE AT ALL?



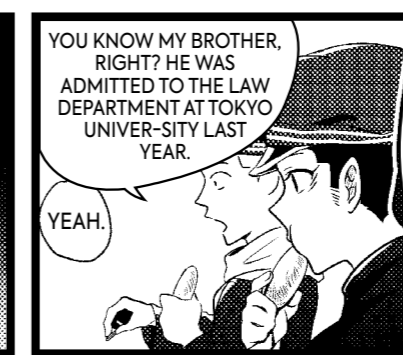
DUDE, THE CLASS PRESIDENT'S SO SCARY. I REALLY CAN'T STAND THOSE DIE-HARD PATRIOTS.

BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU? WHAT'S GOT YOU THINKING SO HARD ABOUT CHOOSING YOUR COURSE?

MIKAWA IS THE PRINCIPAL'S SON AND THE CLASS PRESIDENT. OF COURSE HE HAS A STRONG SENSE OF DUTY...



SINCE HE TURNED TWENTY, HE GOT DRAFTED BY THE NAVY LAST WEEK.



YOU KNOW MY BROTHER, RIGHT? HE WAS ADMITTED TO THE LAW DEPARTMENT AT TOKYO UNIVERSITY LAST YEAR.

YEAH.

THE SEVEN-YEAR TAIHOKU HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM CONSISTED OF A FOUR-YEAR "ORDINARY DIVISION" AND A THREE-YEAR "HIGHER DIVISION." THE ORDINARY DIVISION WAS ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO SECONDARY SCHOOL.



!?

ALL THOSE NIGHTS BURNING THE MIDNIGHT OIL...

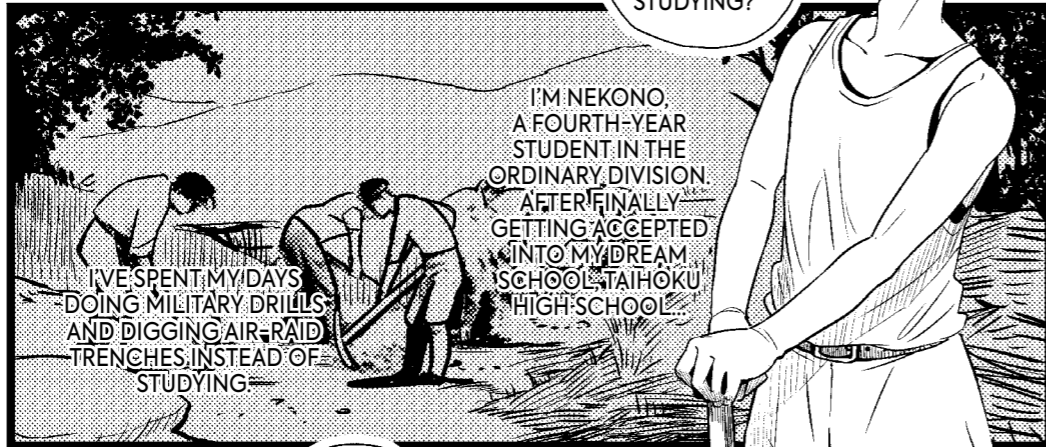
WAS IT JUST TO DIG OUR OWN GRAVES?



IDIOT! KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN, OR THE INSTRUCTOR WILL HEAR YOU!

HAH... WEREN'T WE SUPPOSED TO BE THE CHOSEN ELITE? THEN WHAT ARE WE DOING, DIGGING HOLES INSTEAD OF STUDYING?

HEY! STOP SLACKING OFF! THE INSTRUCTOR MIGHT CATCH YOU!



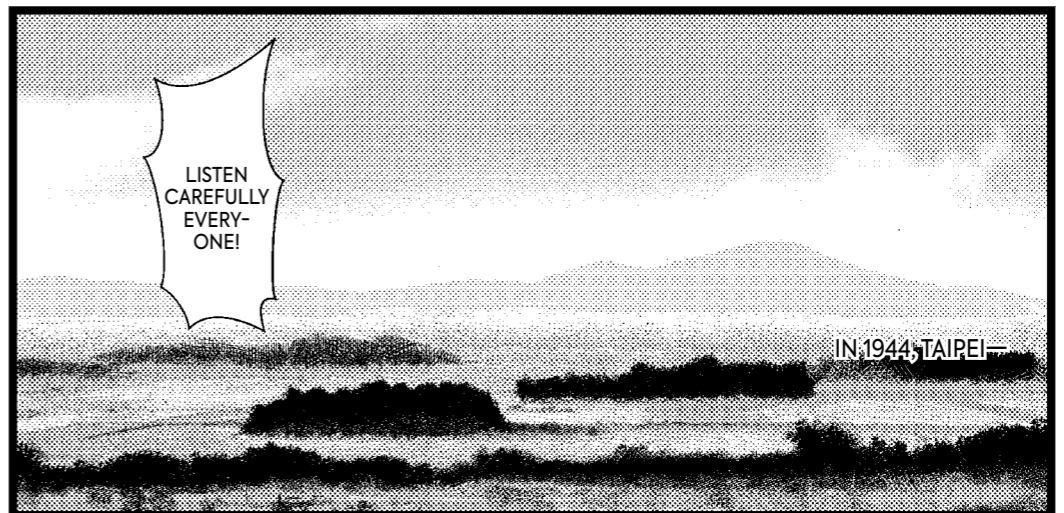
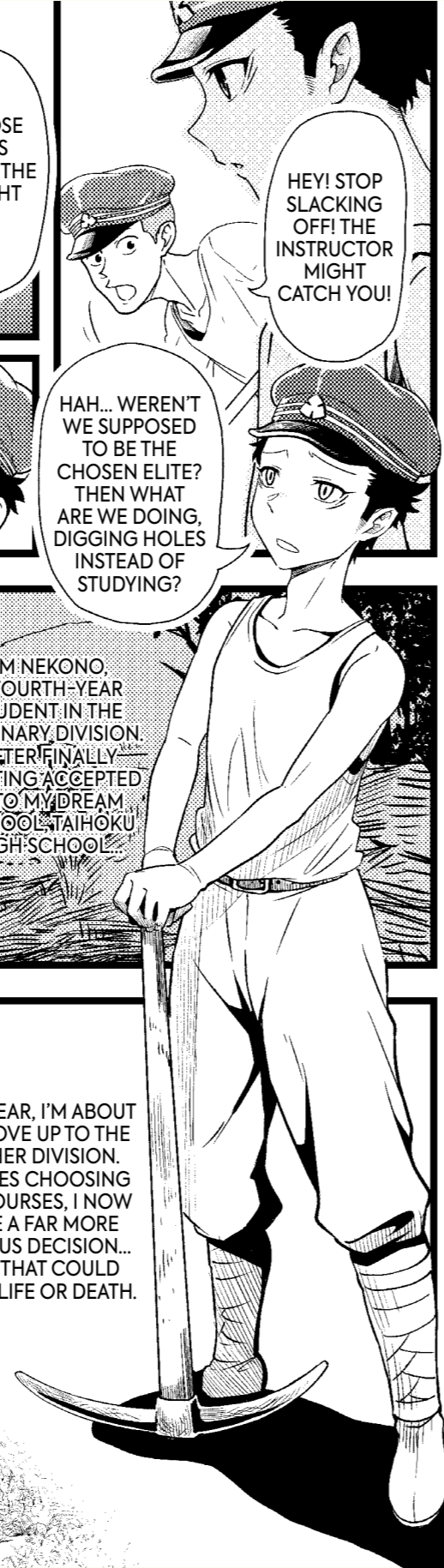
I'VE SPENT MY DAYS DOING MILITARY DRILLS AND DIGGING AIR-RAID TRENCHES INSTEAD OF STUDYING.

I'M NEKONO, A FOURTH-YEAR STUDENT IN THE ORDINARY DIVISION. AFTER FINALLY GETTING ACCEPTED INTO MY DREAM SCHOOL, TAIHOKU HIGH SCHOOL...



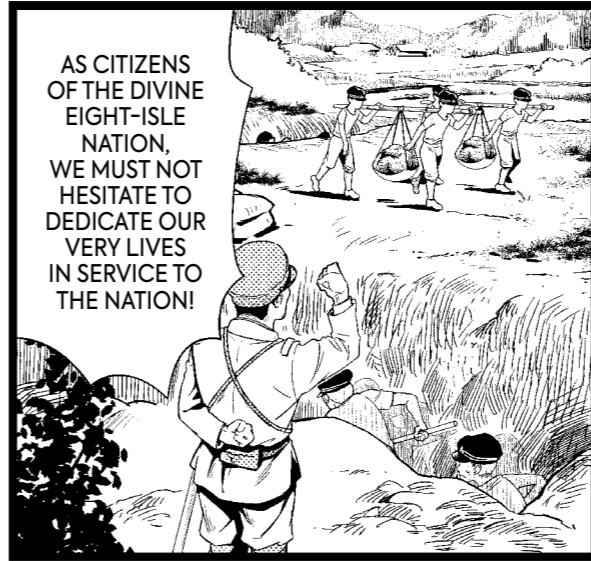
NEKONO, WHERE'S YOUR PREFERENCE FORM?

THIS YEAR, I'M ABOUT TO MOVE UP TO THE HIGHER DIVISION. BESIDES CHOOSING MY COURSES, I NOW FACE A FAR MORE SERIOUS DECISION... ONE THAT COULD MEAN LIFE OR DEATH.



LISTEN CAREFULLY EVERYONE!

IN 1944, TAIPEI

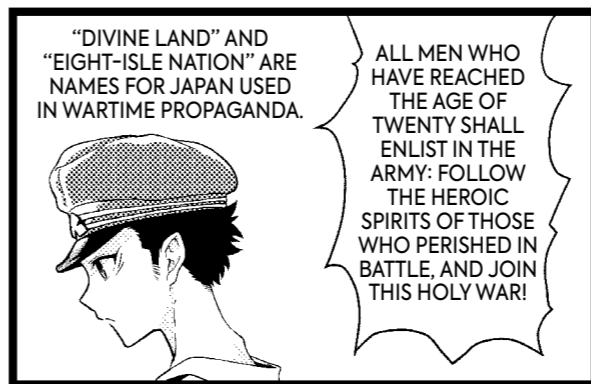


AS CITIZENS OF THE DIVINE EIGHT-ISLE NATION, WE MUST NOT HESITATE TO DEDICATE OUR VERY LIVES IN SERVICE TO THE NATION!



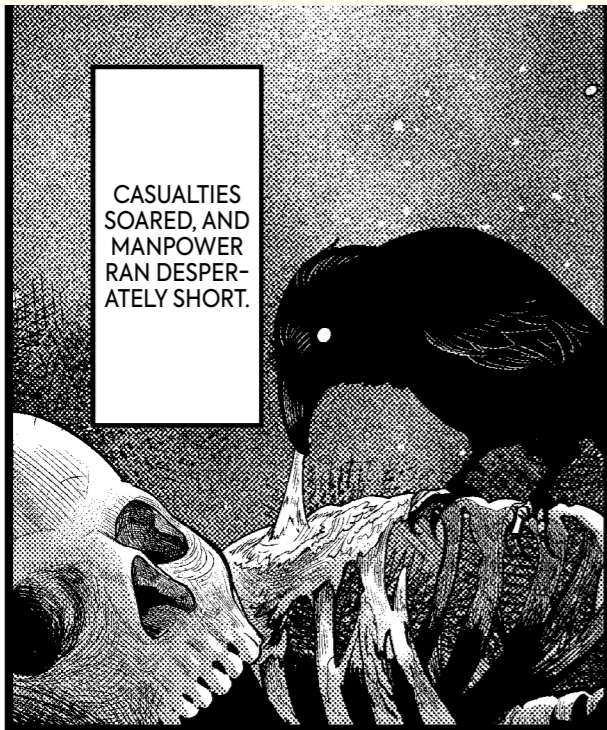
THESE THIEVES, HIDING BEHIND THE NAME OF CHRIST, SEEK TO ENSLAVE THE PEOPLES OF EAST ASIA!

THE BARBARIC AMERICANS AND BRITISH DEVILS HAVE ALREADY DRAWN NEAR TO OUR DIVINE LAND!

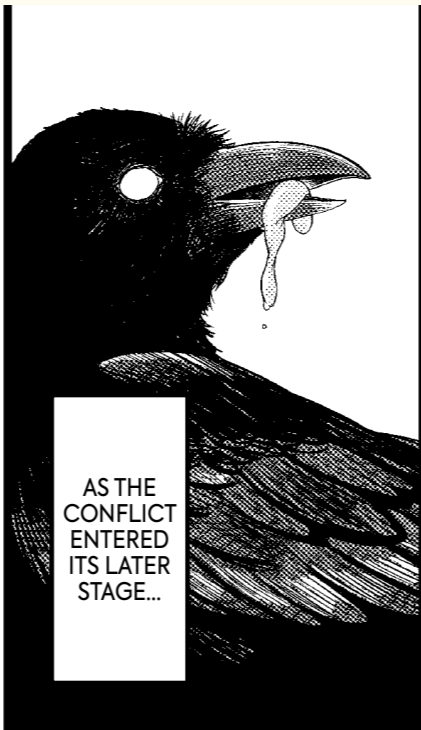


"DIVINE LAND" AND "EIGHT-ISLE NATION" ARE NAMES FOR JAPAN USED IN WARTIME PROPAGANDA.

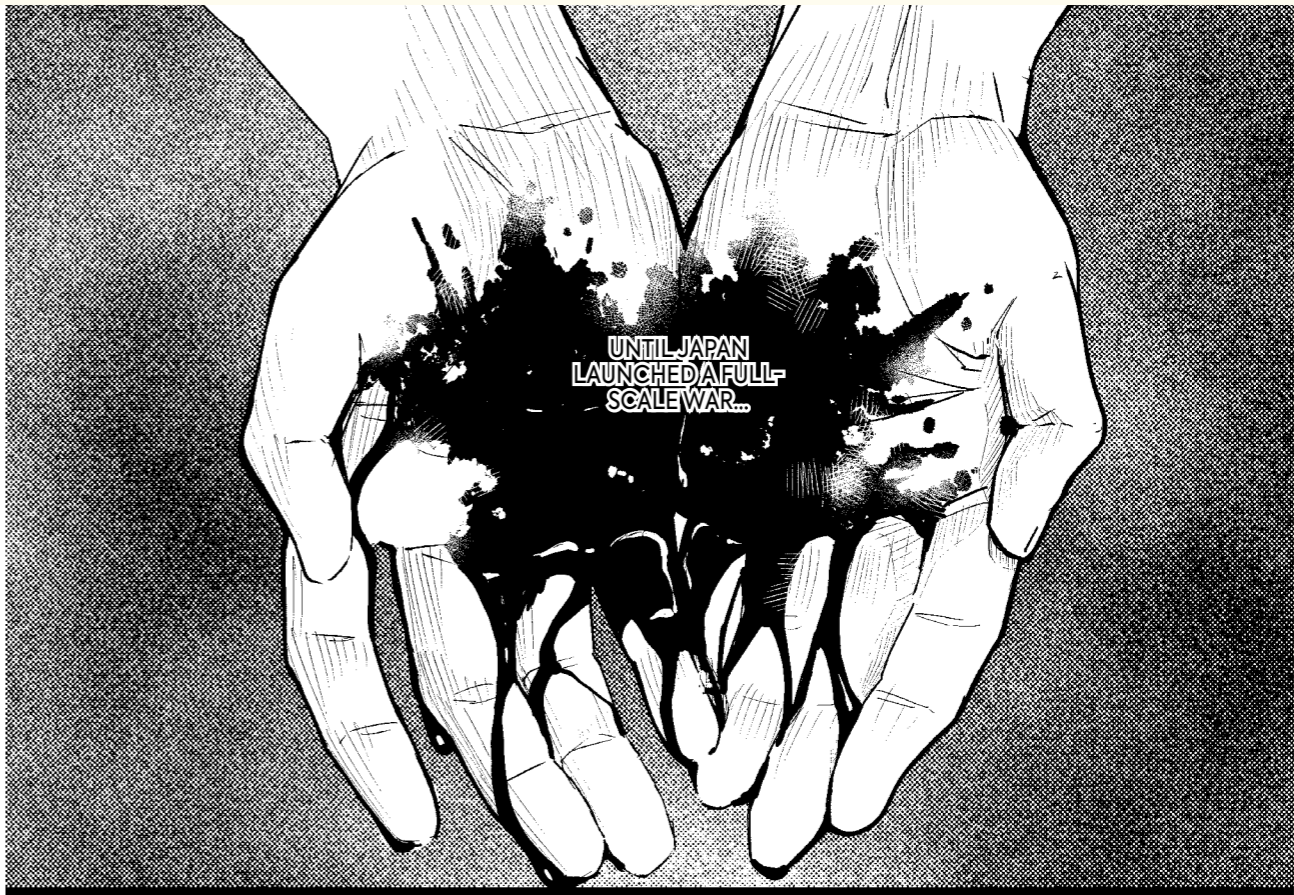
ALL MEN WHO HAVE REACHED THE AGE OF TWENTY SHALL ENLIST IN THE ARMY: FOLLOW THE HEROIC SPIRITS OF THOSE WHO PERISHED IN BATTLE, AND JOIN THIS HOLY WAR!



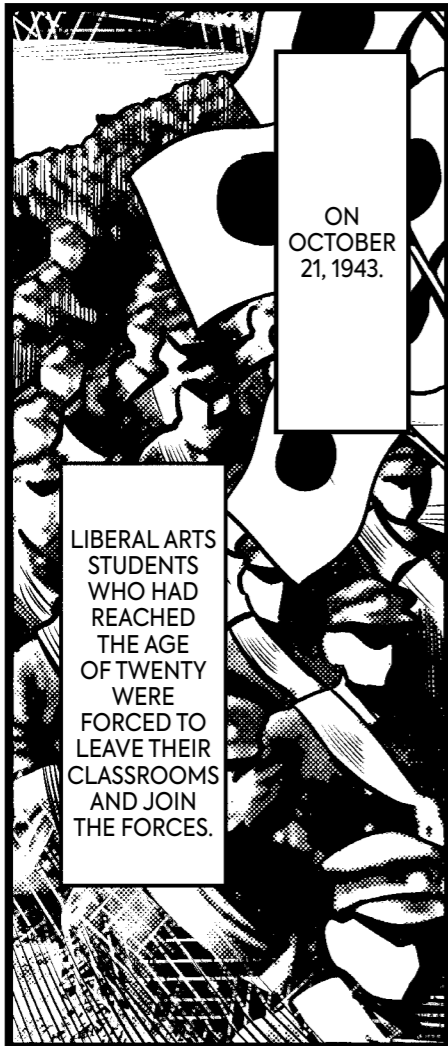
CASUALTIES SOARED, AND MANPOWER RAN DESPERATELY SHORT.



AS THE CONFLICT ENTERED ITS LATER STAGE...

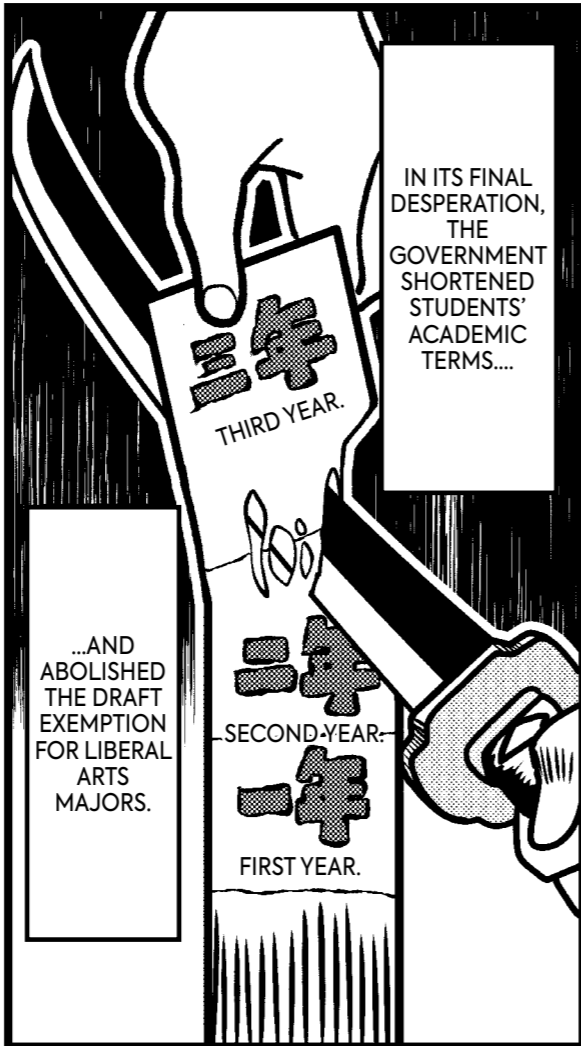


UNTIL JAPAN LAUNCHED A FULL-SCALE WAR...



ON OCTOBER 21, 1943.

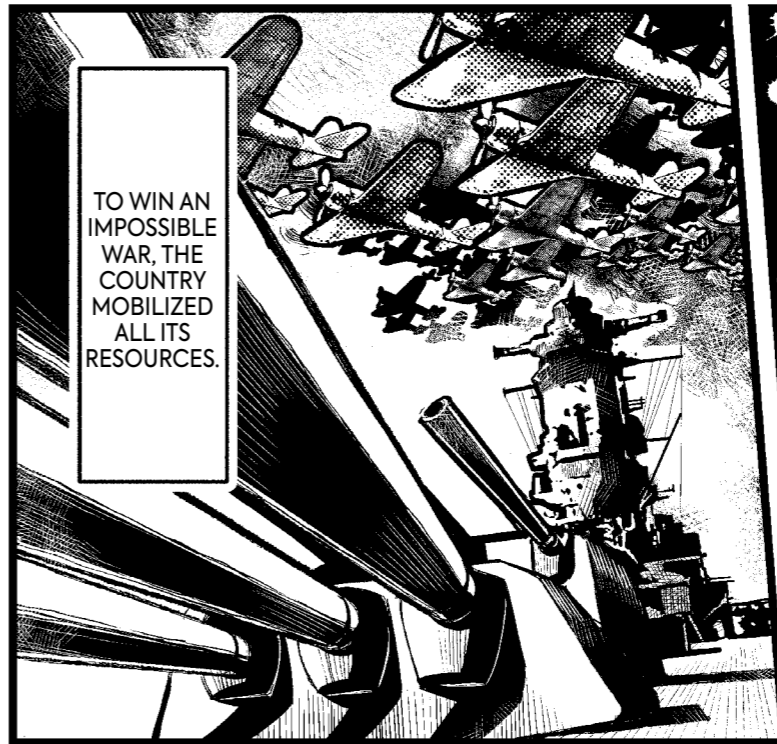
LIBERAL ARTS STUDENTS WHO HAD REACHED THE AGE OF TWENTY WERE FORCED TO LEAVE THEIR CLASSROOMS AND JOIN THE FORCES.



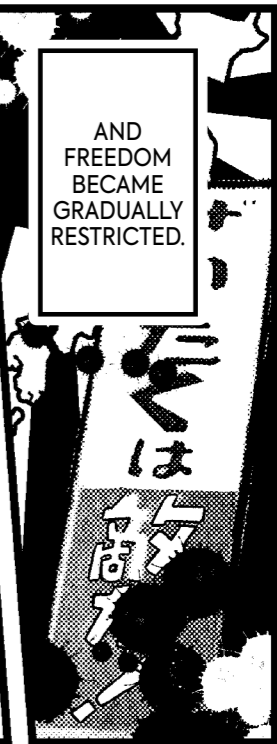
IN ITS FINAL DESPERATION, THE GOVERNMENT SHORTENED STUDENTS' ACADEMIC TERMS...

...AND ABOLISHED THE DRAFT EXEMPTION FOR LIBERAL ARTS MAJORS.

三年  
THIRD YEAR.  
二年  
SECOND-YEAR-  
一年  
FIRST YEAR.



TO WIN AN IMPOSSIBLE WAR, THE COUNTRY MOBILIZED ALL ITS RESOURCES.



AND FREEDOM BECAME GRADUALLY RESTRICTED.



# Amid the Roar of Bombing, Youth Seek Meaning and Hope

by Chin-Tang Tsai

In ANIN's earlier manga, *Taihoku High School: A Manga Story* (2013), the final scene shows the school principal telling students heading to the Xindian River to be careful just as the rumble of fighter planes looms over the campus.

That haunting foreshadowing of a war-torn world unfolds in ANIN's subsequent manga, *Youth at War* (2021). This book delicately portrays the final two years in which the war reached its most intense phase. High school students, once expected by the Japanese government to become the future elite leaders of the nation, are conscripted to serve overseas or assigned as trainee soldiers. They are sent to dig trenches and construct defensive positions in places such as Qixing Mountain, Datun Mountain, and Zhuzihu in Taipei and prepare for the coming battles.

The first chapter introduces two main characters, who are roommates:

Nekono and Inuyama. Nekono, a Taiwanese student who has adopted a Japanese surname, has enrolled in the Humanities Division of the Advanced Department at Taihoku Commercial High School. Meanwhile, because Inuyama has repeated entrance examinations and failed multiple years, he's already reached the age of conscription. Dispatched to fight in the Philippines, he gives up on his crush on a female classmate, as well as his passion for literature and writing.

*Youth at War* depicts the military training that begins on the Taihoku High School campus, revealing the horrors of war, the ugliness of unofficial sanctions within the military, and the desperation brought about by hunger. The work also portrays historical events, including the October 23, 1944 incident in which a Japanese civilian aircraft accidentally crashed into the Taiwan Shrine as it

was being relocated, resulting in severe damage. Another episode reveals the little-known story of students from the Girls' Higher School who were ordered to retrieve diamonds from inside the aircraft. The manga also depicts the devastating Raid on Taipei on May 31, 1945. Together, these episodes reflect ANIN's meticulous examination of historical sources prior to drawing, demonstrating that her work is not mere fiction but is grounded in careful historical research and verification.

Naturally, the manga also includes moments of creative storytelling and entertainment. When the female protagonist, Lin Hsiu-Ying, passes Nekono during a military march and remarks, "There is a soldier whose face... I cannot stop thinking about," readers may initially assume she has recognized him. The following panel, however, reveals Nekono's face swollen from punishment, creating a subtle comedic twist. In another episode, Private Second Class Li Musheng asks Nekono to descend the mountain to buy a laxative strong enough for cattle, hoping to

use it as payback against an overbearing corporal. Set against the chaos and anxiety of wartime, these flashes of humor offer readers brief moments of relief.

Beyond its historical significance and moments of humor, *Youth at War* also reveals the influence of ANIN's professional training at Japanese animation studios, particularly in its panel composition and visual storytelling. The eruption of the Raid on Taipei is depicted through a striking juxtaposition of terrifying explosions and scenes of ordinary daily life, creating a powerful and dramatic visual contrast.

*This preface has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.*

*Chin-Tang Tsai is an adjunct professor at the Graduate Institute of Taiwan History, National Taiwan Normal University. His research focuses on Taiwan under Japanese rule, modern Japanese history, and Japan-Taiwan relations, with particular interest in religion, education, and culture.*



# Youth at War

A Full English translation is available.

蕉兵戰時記

**Author:** ANIN **Illustrator:** ANIN **Publisher:** Gaea Books

**Date:** 03/2021

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

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

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Michelle Kuo

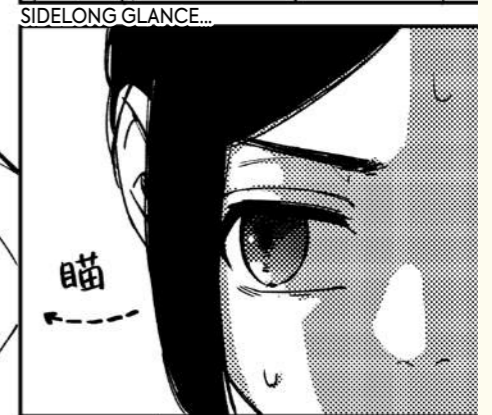
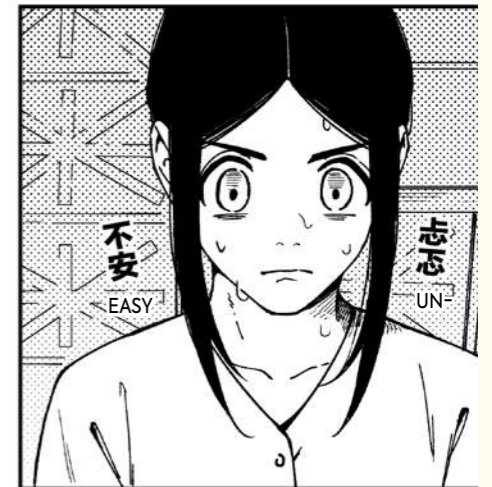
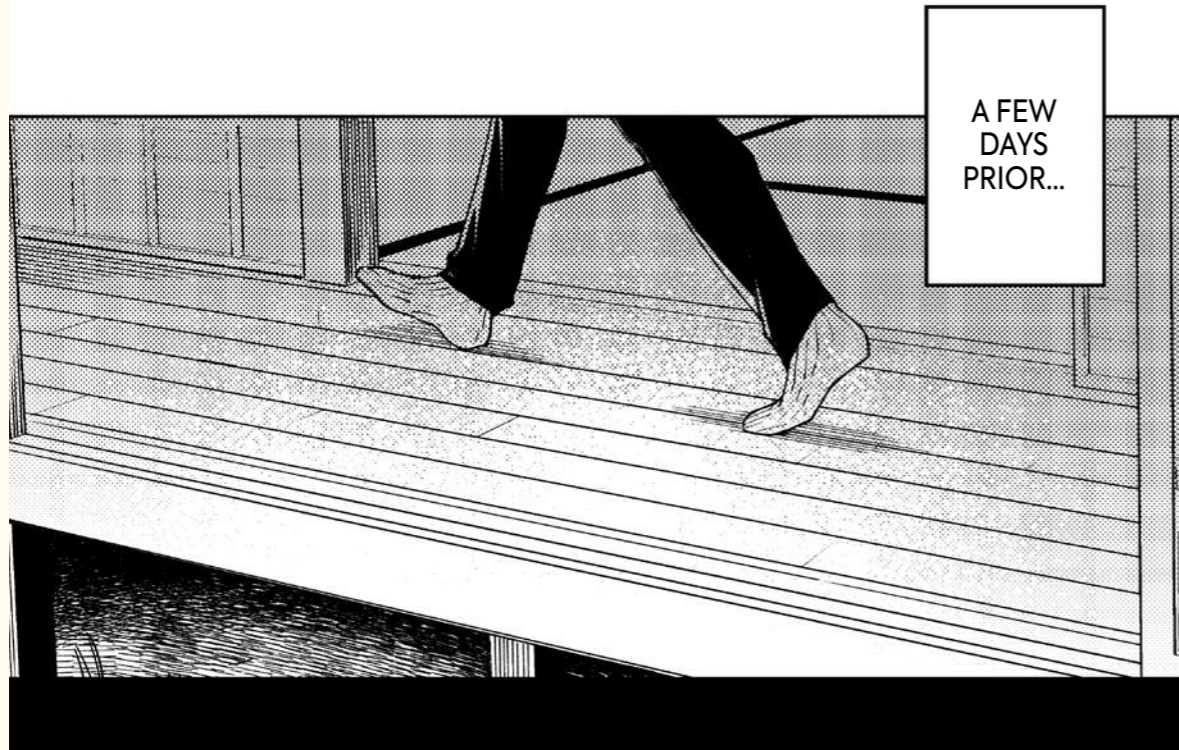
In the 1940s, the roar of fighter planes overhead signals the onset of war. As merciless flames of battle descend, what will become of the bewildered youths at Taihoku High School? Their school is renowned for its spirit of intellectual freedom, and they arrive dreaming of a luminous future. Yet once war begins, that freedom is stripped away, and one by one, students are conscripted and sent to the battlefield.

Nekono, a student who loves literature, arrives at Taihoku High School expecting to find joy and growth. But this hope is swiftly shattered when war breaks out. His roommate and friend, Inuyama, is sent to the front lines in the Philippines, while his classmate Mikawa narrowly escapes death during an air raid. Gradually, Nekono comes to understand the true terror of war.



**Author ANIN**

A former animator, ANIN currently works as an art designer at a game company. ANIN has worked as a key animator on television anime series including *Fate/Stay Night: Heaven's Feel II*, *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*, and *Attack on Titan*, and served as an animation supervisor for the Japanese anime series *RE-MAIN*. ANIN loves black tea.





...YES.



PANAY,  
DID YOU MAKE  
THIS ALL  
YOURSELF?

**IKEGAMI TADAO:**  
FATHER OF SHINSUKE,  
MASTER OF THE  
IKEGAMI HOUSEHOLD.



COME WITH ME.  
跟我来

OF COURSE!  
DIDN'T YOU  
JUST SET OUT  
A PORTION  
THAT CAN BE  
YOURS?

BUT... WASN'T  
THAT PORTION  
SET OUT FOR  
A GUEST?



REALLY??

WELL,  
THEN YOU  
MUST EAT  
SOME.

PLEASE COME  
SIT AND SHARE  
THE MEAL WITH US.

GRANDFATHER HAS  
ALREADY FINISHED AND SO  
IS UNLIKELY TO OBJECT.



WAAAAA....!



I HAVE TO SAY  
THAT THE LAST  
SOUP IS NOT  
EXACTLY RIGHT.

WELL, NO.

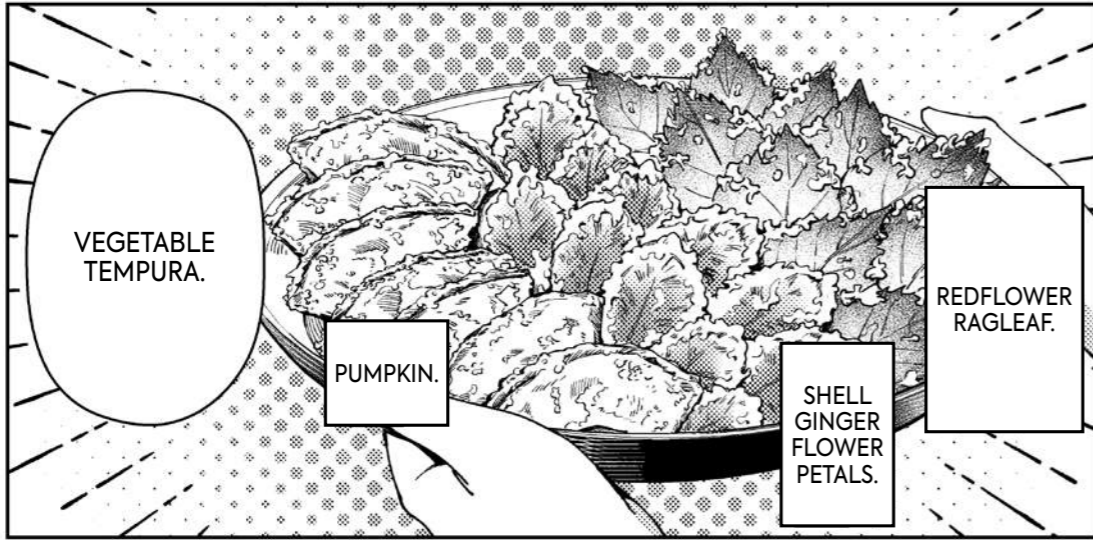
PANAY HAS  
REALLY  
STEAMED UP  
A STRANGE  
SOUP!

AND YOU  
EVEN  
HAVE THE  
HOMESTYLE  
FRIED WRAP,  
SANGAYAKI.

OH HOW I HAVE  
MISSED THAT!

WHAT  
A BOUNTIFUL  
TABLE!

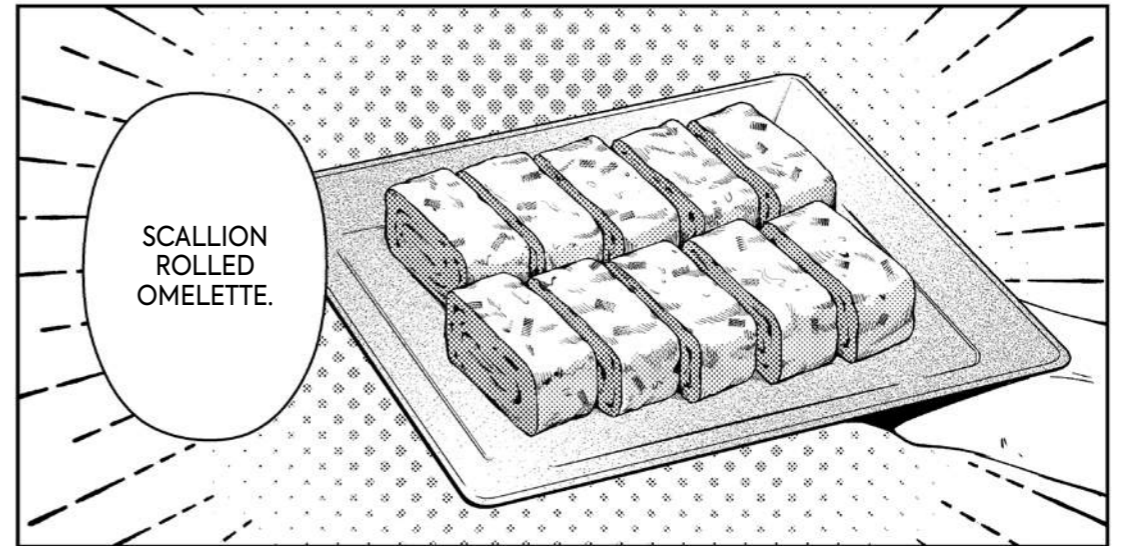
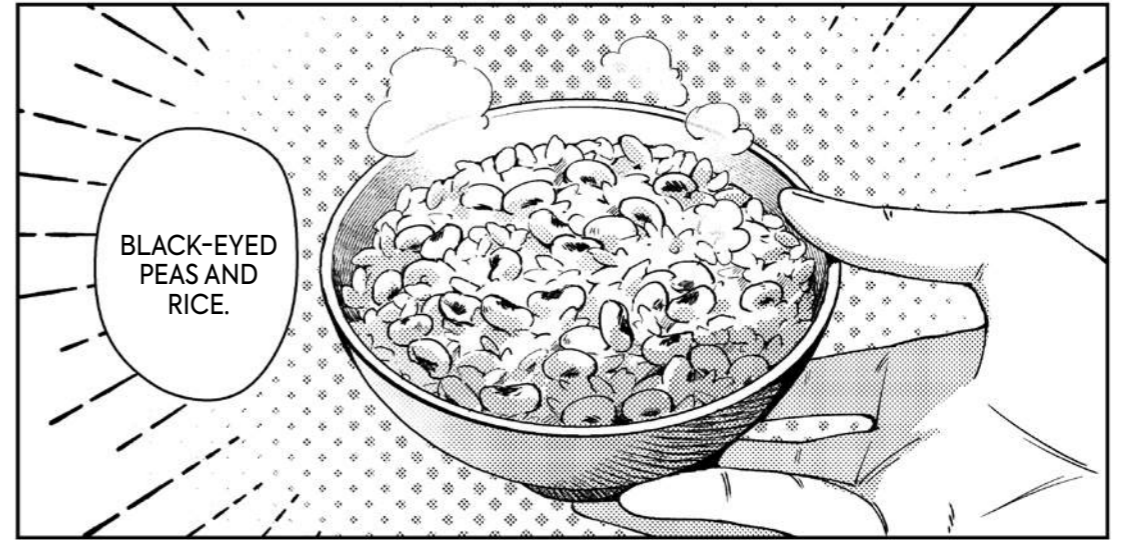
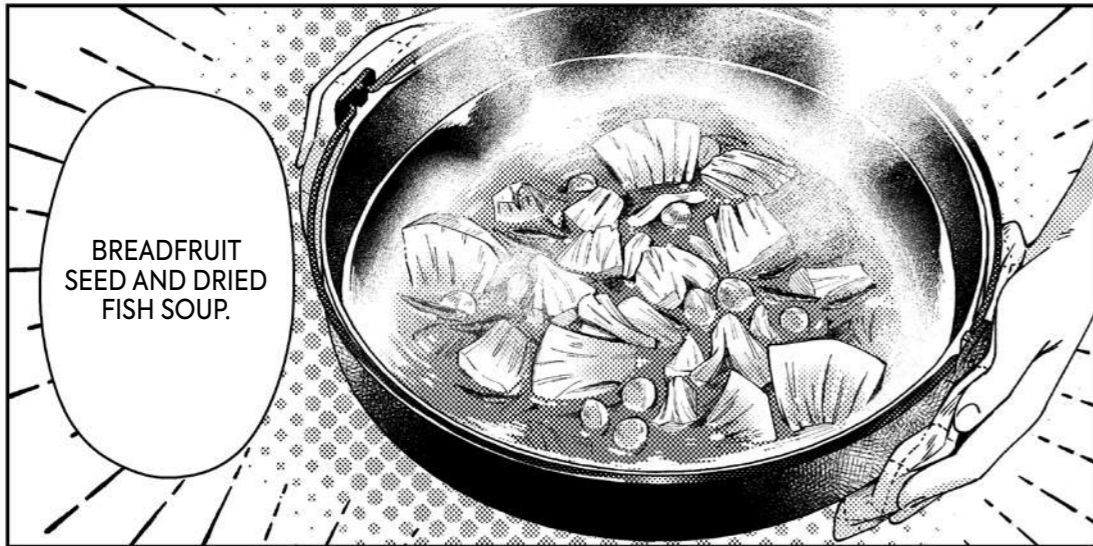
HEH.  
HEH.



※Redflower ragleaf is another name for the leaf of the *Gynura crepioides* plant, or "Okinawan spinach."



※A local Japanese dish from Chiba prefecture. It consists of mackerel, miso, ginger, and scallion wrapped in a shiso leaf.



# Cooking a Meal in the Cracks of Colonialism: Humble Meals that Reveal Place, Time, and the Longing of Ordinary Lives

by Wen-Chien Hsu

Taiwan has long existed at the crossroads of shifting empires. From Spanish and Dutch rule to the Qing administration and Japanese colonial government, and later the postwar regime, each transition left behind new languages, systems, and norms—while erasing fragments of what came before. As a result, Taiwan's cultural memory and sense of identity often resemble a map repeatedly taken apart and patched back together.

Against this complex historical backdrop, a comic that focuses on everyday life can reveal a more intimate truth. Instead of asking, "Who does Taiwan belong to?," it shows us how people of different identities once lived side by side—

meeting, clashing, relying on each other, and surviving together.

In the 1930s and 40s, under the shadow of war, Japanese and Taiwanese residents relocate to Hualien Port, on the eastern coast of Taiwan, to rebuild their lives. Panay, a girl from Taiwan's Amis Indigenous people, leaves her village to work as a maid in a Japanese household, hoping to earn money for the medical treatment of her sister, who is sick. Despite food shortages, Panay's careful and resourceful cooking brings warmth, nourishment, and comfort to the family she serves.

One day, Panay and her companions go to the coast to gather food, an Indigenous tradition prohibited

under colonial rule. Her friend is arrested, but Panay is unexpectedly spared by a Japanese police officer, Shinsuke Ikegami. Determined to save her friend, she visits the police station again and again. Moved by her persistence, Shinsuke eventually helps secure her friend's release.

What truly transforms their lives, however, is what follows. When Shinsuke finally returns to his family's home, having been away for some time due to his posting, he realizes that the maid cooking for his family is the very same girl he spared by the shore. Panay recognizes him too. In a time shaped by war and dislocation, two people whose paths were never meant to cross suddenly find their lives intertwined.

Artist Nananrih depicts this unlikely connection through the language of food. Indigenous ingredients blend with Japanese home-style dishes. These dishes form compelling instances of cultural exchange: tamagoyaki infused with indigenous herbs, wild vegetables wrapped in shell ginger petals and fried into tempura, and horse mackerel grilled with shiso. These hybrid dishes are more than recipes—they are evidence of

cultures meeting, adapting, and changing one another.

The true strength of this work lies not in historical explanation, but in offering a different way to interpret history. Rather than narrating events from the perspective of regimes or nations, it draws us close to the people who lived through them. Through steam rising from a kitchen and the mingled flavors of a shared meal, we see how individuals held on to one another in times of uncertainty, how understanding emerged from unfamiliarity, and how kindness could take root even within structures of power.

Perhaps these small, ordinary moments come closer to the truth of memory than any grand historical narrative ever could.

*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 Nature Chef

A Full English translation is available.

Mararum : 山間料理人

**Author:** Nananrih **Illustrator:** Nananrih **Original Concept:** GoodTrip Creative

**Publisher:** Gaea Books

**Date:** 12/2024

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

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

**Awards:** 2025 Japan International Manga Award Silver Award

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** David Knight

Wild vegetable tempura made with shell ginger petals and native grasses. Bamboo mackerel wrapped in shiso leaves and grilled in the mountain style. A tamago-rolled omelet seasoned with prickly ash.

During World War II, a brilliant young girl named Panay, gifted in cooking, works as a housemaid for the Ikegami family. Panay is Amis, one of Taiwan's Indigenous peoples, while the Ikegamis are Japanese and have relocated to Hualien Harbor. In an age of scarcity, Panay blends local ingredients with tribal culinary traditions, creating distinctive Japanese-style dishes. Her food awakens the palate and comforts the homesick hearts of the Ikegami family. Meanwhile, her friendship with Shinsuke, a Japanese policeman and the family's eldest son, slowly blossoms.

Rising comics artist Nananrih portrays the everyday food culture of the wartime period and, through these humble meals, evokes the longing and nostalgia of ordinary lives.



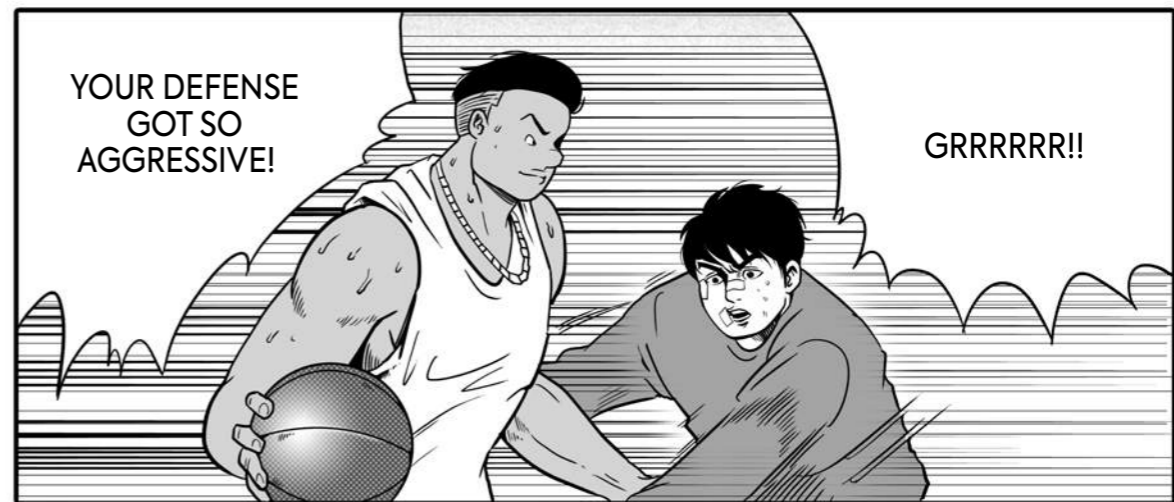
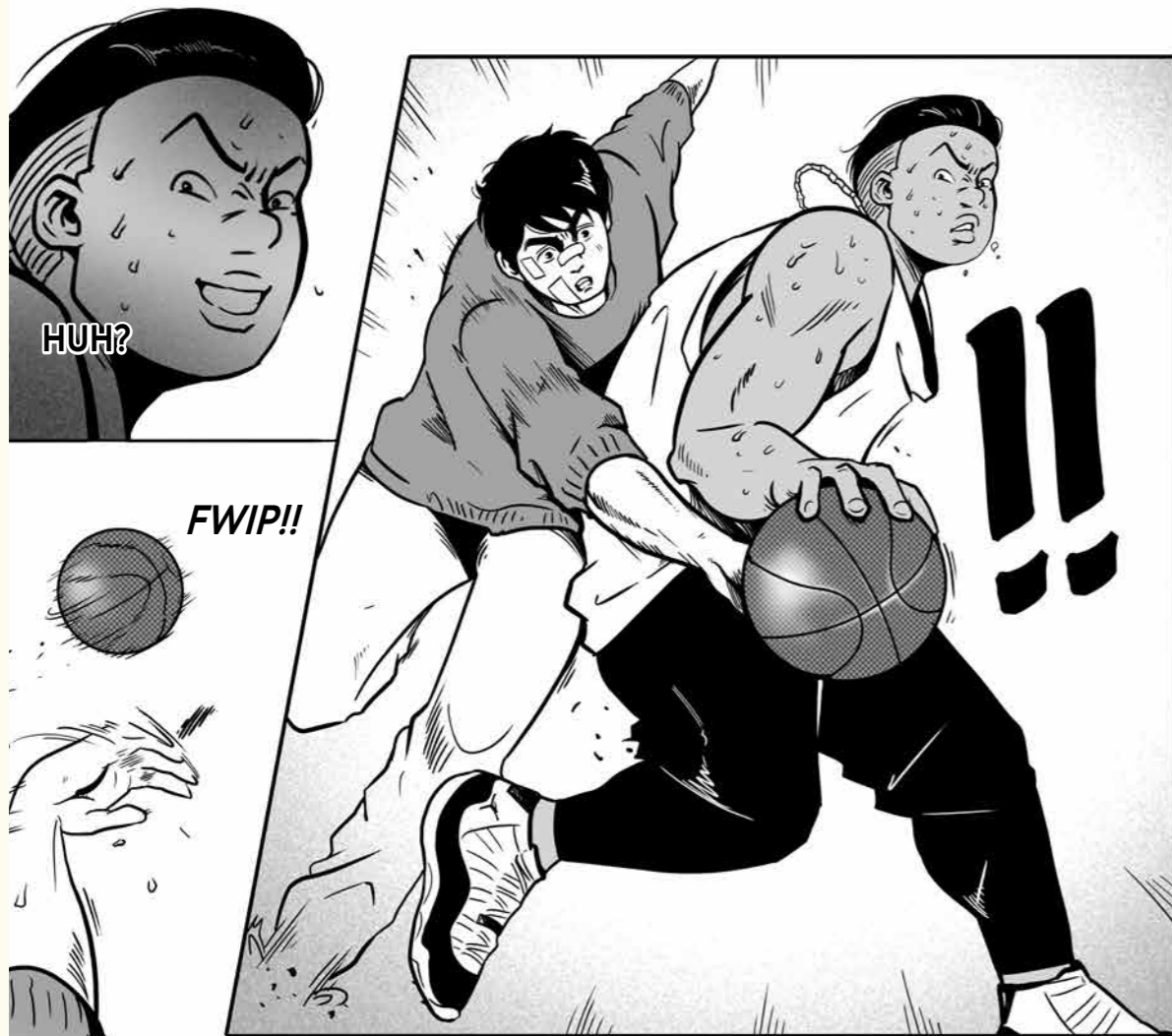
Author **Nananrih**

Nananrih is a comics creator who delights in observing and portraying people, reading the pulse of the times through the crowd, exploring the world from diverse perspectives, and seeking to resonate with readers through their works.



Original Concept **GoodTrip Creative**

Founded in 2016 by Golden Bell Award-winning producer Hsin Tsui-Yun, GoodTrip Creative Co., Ltd. focuses on developing original stories and expanding them across film, television, print, comics, and theater. Its works have received wide recognition from major domestic and international awards, including the Golden Bell Awards, Golden Comic Awards, Asian TV Awards, and Asia Academy Creative Awards. Representative projects include *Listen to the Voice of Taiwan*, *Travel Running Cheering Squad*, *The Nature Chef*, *VR101*, and the cross-media comic *Island Rhapsody: Listen to the Voice of Taiwan*.



I CAN'T STAND THIS!  
EVEN IF WE LOSE, I'M NOT GONNA  
MAKE THIS EASY FOR YOU!

PULL!

BACK THEN,  
I USED TO WIPE  
THE FLOOR  
WITH THEM  
FOR FUN...  
THESE GUYS...



PFF!

!!

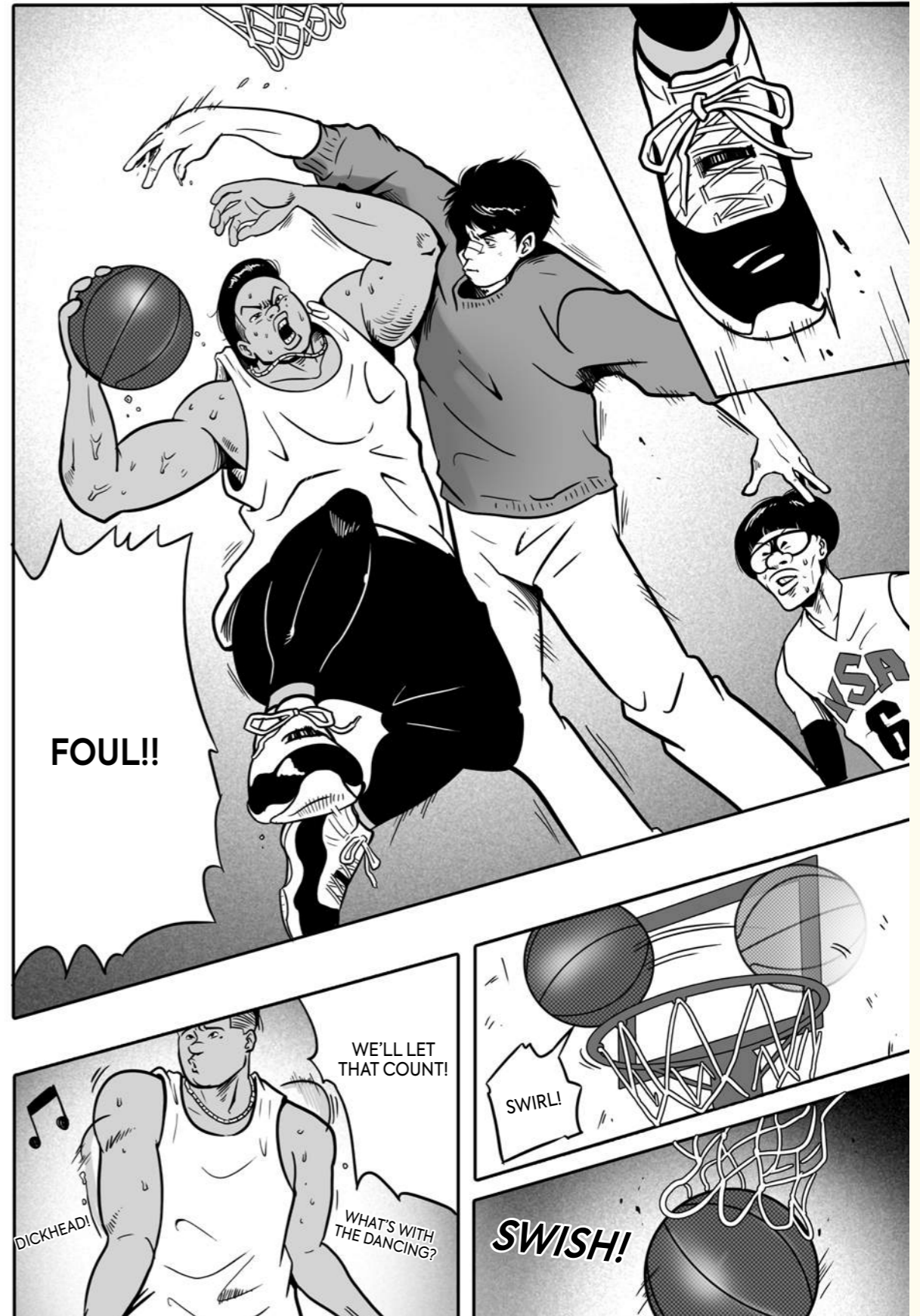
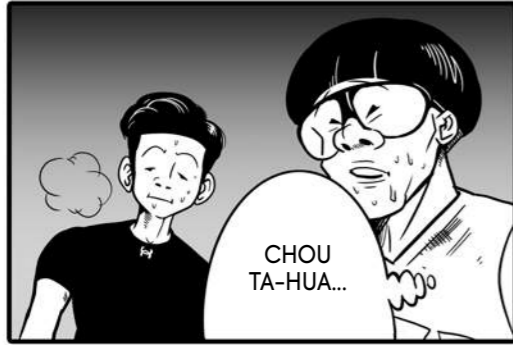
TELLING ME  
I DON'T  
KNOW HOW  
TO PLAY...  
AND HIS  
MOVEMENTS ARE  
DRIPPING WITH  
CONTEMPT.



THAT LOOK  
IN HIS  
EYES...  
DAMN IT...

I'VE GOTTA TAKE  
THIS CRAP FROM  
THEM!

BUT EVEN ON  
THE COURT...  
WHAT AM  
I DOING?  
I LOST OUT  
THERE IN THE  
WORLD.



# When Underdogs Dare to Dream: An Interview with the Author

by the editors of Dyna Books  
(originally published on [OKAPI.BOOKS.COM.TW](http://OKAPI.BOOKS.COM.TW))

*The Underdogs* has been serialized for over a decade, with its 30th collected volume already published, making it one of Taiwan's longest-running sports manga series today. What makes this manga "cool" is not glamorous characters or exaggerated heroism, but the sheer ordinariness of its protagonists. Most have already entered the workforce, holding jobs that bear little—if any—connection to their youthful dreams, and in many cases are worlds apart from them.

Two key themes crystallize in this series: underdogs and dreams. The idea of rediscovering one's dreams only after reaching adulthood is profoundly moving. When underdogs meet dreams, the result is a story that is unexpectedly, deeply cool.

**Q: What made you start drawing this manga in the first place? Was it because you really love basketball?**

My relationship with basketball

probably began around fourth or fifth grade in elementary school. Back then, everyone was talking about Michael Jordan, and later I started following the Chicago Bulls. That was when I truly fell in love with basketball and began playing by myself. The friends I became closest to in junior high school—friends who are still with me today—are all people I met through basketball.

After entering the workforce, I continued playing, though less and less because of how busy work became. Even so, I've always followed basketball in one way or another. From the moment I first got into the sport, I knew very clearly that none of us would ever become professional basketball players. Even so, we kept practicing and trying to get better—just so that in the next game, we could finally pull off the moves we'd been imagining in our heads.

I kept thinking about how people who would never make a living from

basketball could still love this sport so deeply. That's why I wanted to draw a story about basketball accompanying ordinary people throughout their lives.

**Q: Why did you name the team "MEIYODA"?**

The name "MEIYODA" comes from the breakfast shop run by the protagonist's father, which is also the sponsor of the team—so the team ended up taking the shop's name.

In Taiwan, there are many chain restaurants. When a shop eventually breaks away from a franchise and continues operating independently, it often changes its name to something similar to the original. "MEIYODA" is a play on "MEI & MEI," a well-known traditional Taiwanese breakfast chain. In Taiwan, when people participate in informal competitions, team names are often chosen quite casually. Professional teams will think carefully to come up with something that sounds impressive, but in amateur games, people tend to let their imaginations run wild.

Personally, I have an aversion to overly conventional ideas of "cool." Since this manga leans toward realism, I don't think reality is actually that cool

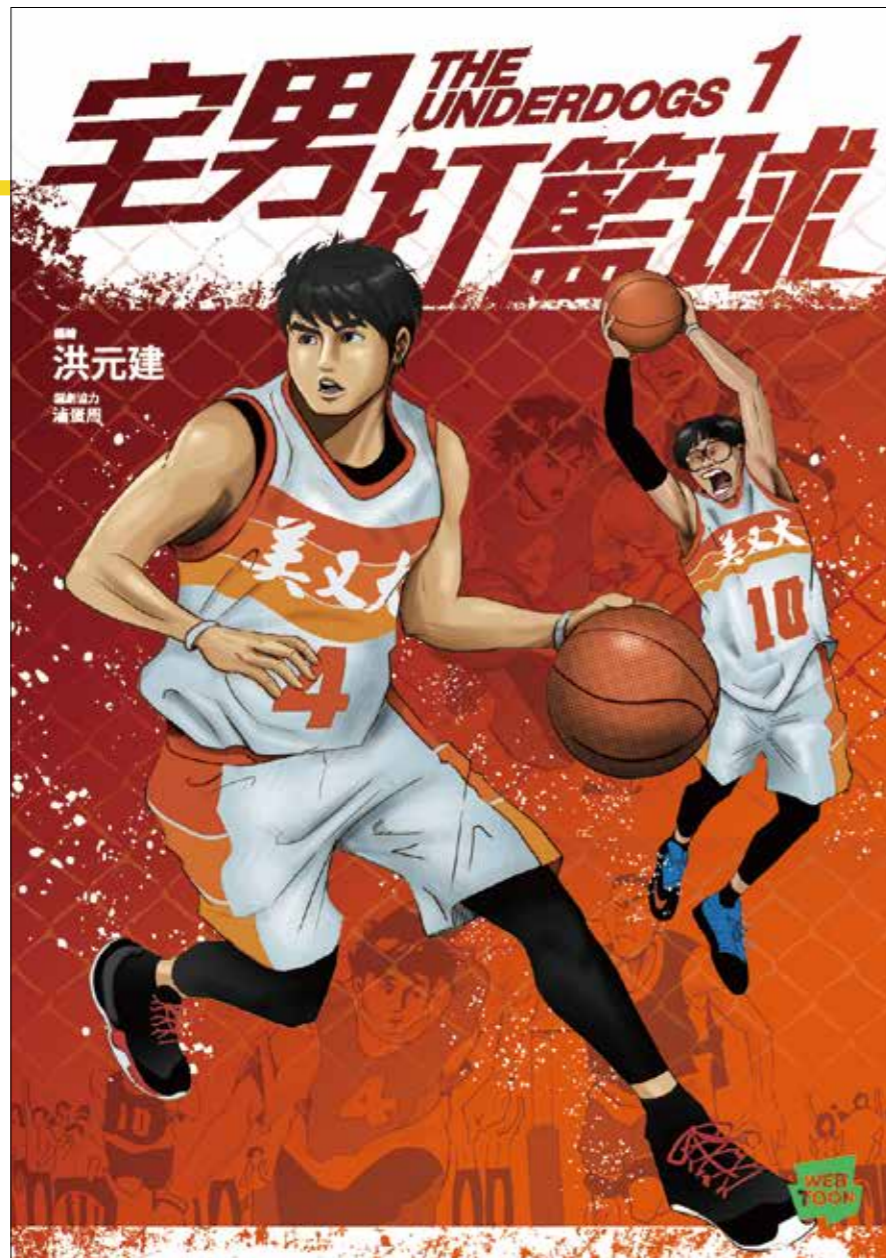
in the typical sense. Taiwanese readers don't particularly care whether a work is domestic or foreign—if you're dealing with the same subject matter, comparisons are inevitable. If I had tried to portray a standard kind of coolness, I was worried readers might find it off-putting. That's why I decided to make more localized choices.

At the time, the template I had in mind was closer to *Shaolin Soccer*. In that film, only the main character is conventionally cool, while everyone else is doing ridiculous things. Yet in the end, those ridiculous moments are what move people to tears. What I wanted to depict were people who aren't cool doing something truly cool.

**Q: How would you define the spirit of this work? Where do you hope to take your readers?**

I think that pursuing basketball—or anything you truly love—may not be able to change the environment or the system. But it can change you.

*This interview has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.*



# The Underdogs

A Full English translation is available.

宅男打籃球

**Author:** Yuan-Jian Hong **Illustrator:** Yuan-Jian Hong **Publisher:** Dyna Books

**Date:** 10/2024

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

188 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1 (ongoing, already published 30 volumes)

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Kevin Wang

During his school days, Chou Ta-Hua was a campus star—talented, handsome, and seemingly destined for greatness. But after graduation, the spotlight fades. Now nearly thirty, he's become an underdog adrift, with no clear goals and no future in sight.

At the lowest point of his despair, a loyal fan from his school days reappears, inviting him to join the Formosa Cup: Community 3v3 Tournament. And so, he joins a ragtag team of misfits and officially enters the competition.

Awkward spin moves, sloppy passes, and defenses that can't keep up with the pace—frustration surges through him, and bitter thoughts creep in. Nonetheless, he loves the feel of the basketball in his hands. The dream, the passion, the excitement—it all comes roaring back.



Author **Yuan-Jian Hong**

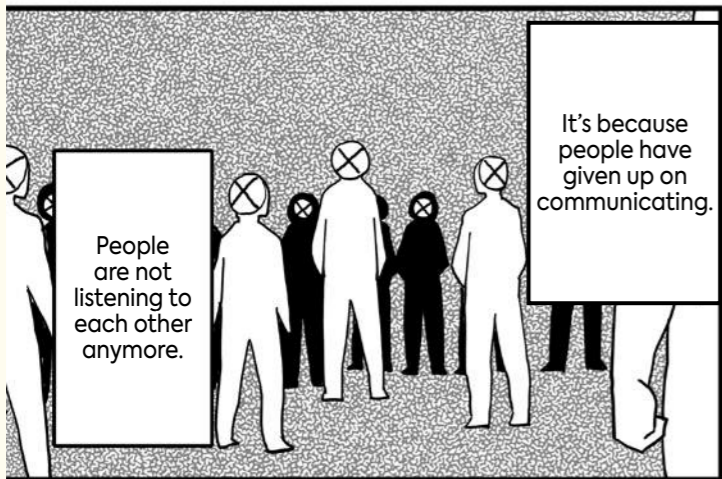
Yuan-Jian Hong is a veteran designer and a newcomer to comics. He has run a design studio for over a decade, with work spanning web and graphic design, animated music videos, and numerous corporate mascot projects. He has also created designer toys and published independent comics. Now, after a long detour—and only after settling down and starting a family—he has finally begun pursuing the comic-making dream he once longed for but didn't dare to chase. He turns his lifelong love of basketball into comics—building characters, shaping worlds, and telling the stories that matter most to him.



This is what so-called "communication" means.



"Telling the other person" is just as important as "listening to the other person."

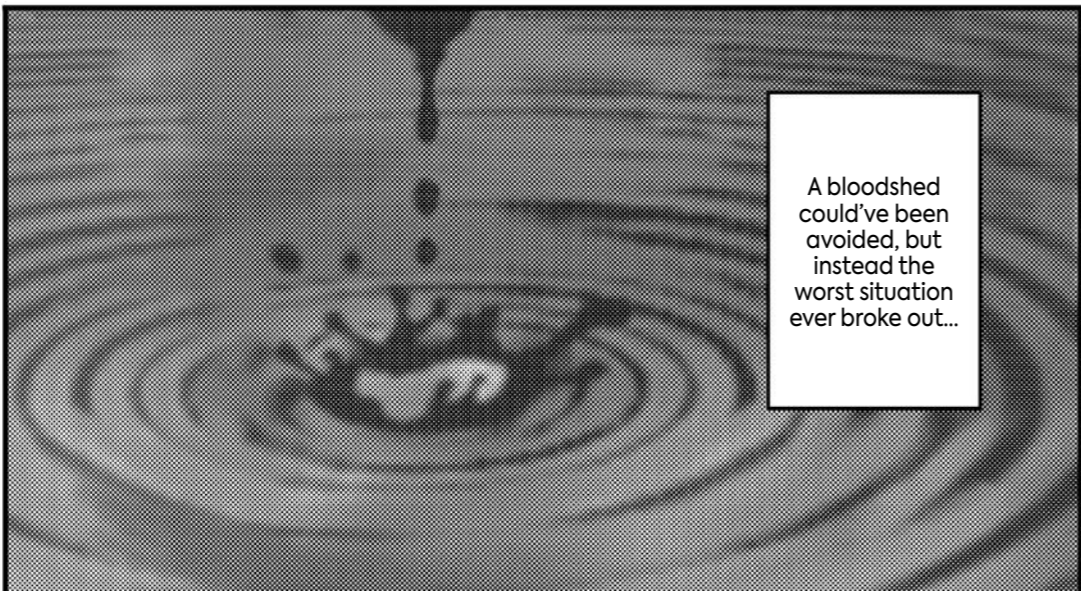


People are not listening to each other anymore.

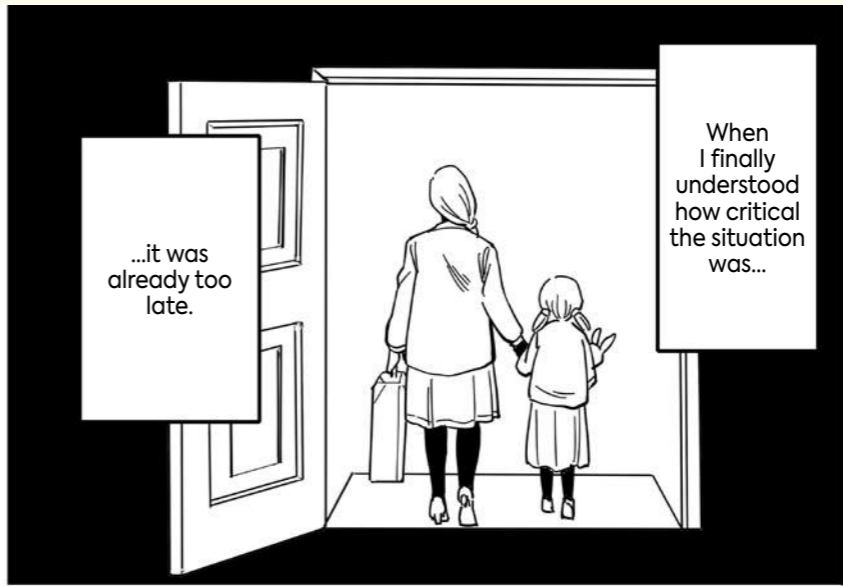
It's because people have given up on communicating.



Why is this war silly?



A bloodshed could've been avoided, but instead the worst situation ever broke out...



...it was already too late.

When I finally understood how critical the situation was...



I realized later that my wife had been repressing her emotions.



Would things turn out differently?

If she'd expressed her discontent...

If I had known her feelings earlier...

I kept asking myself after that...



If we hadn't been corresponding so frequently, we wouldn't be able to understand each other so well.

...just like us.

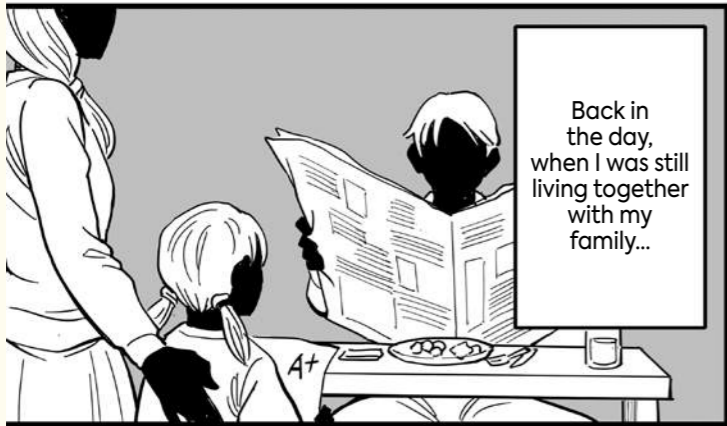


It's not easy to understand why the other person does the things they do...



I've encountered a similar situation before.

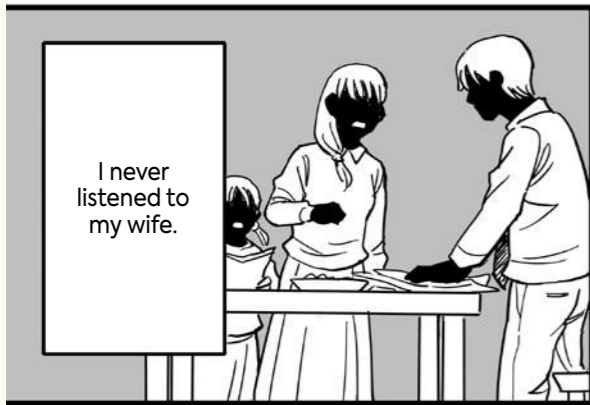
I can understand your pain.



Back in the day, when I was still living together with my family...



But I was the "perpetrator" then.



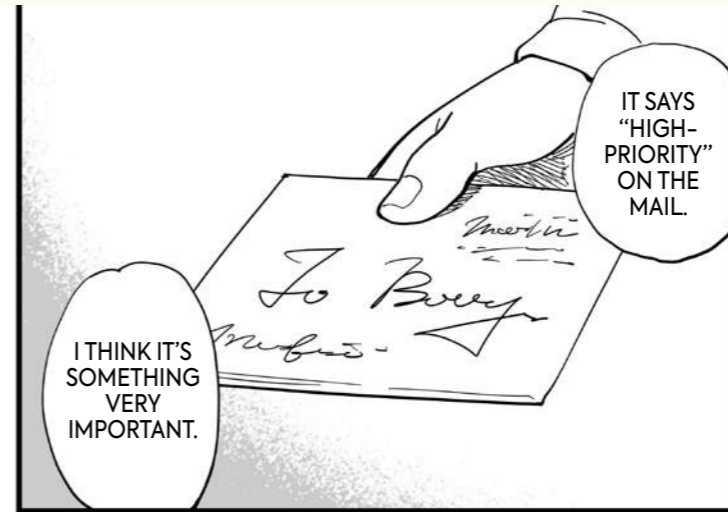
I never listened to my wife.



My wife had never lost her temper with me.



I only cared about my own life.



I THINK IT'S SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT.

IT SAYS "HIGH-PRIORITY" ON THE MAIL.



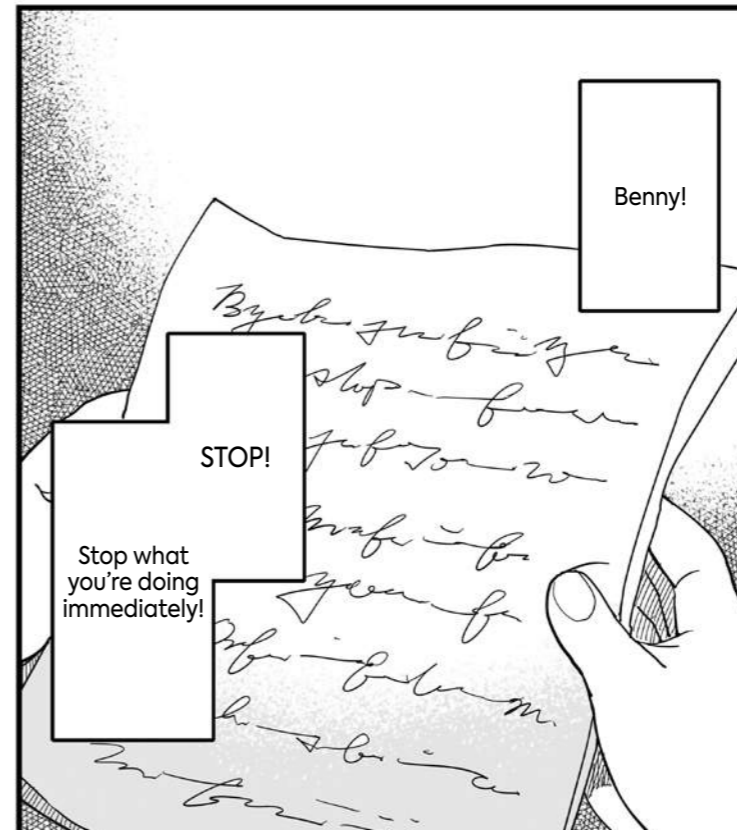
TAKE THIS.

IN ANY CASE, IT'S GOOD THAT I FOUND YOU.



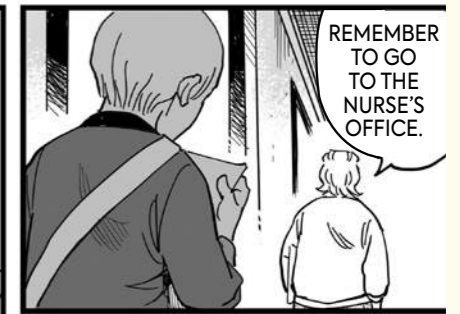
THE TWO OF YOU ARE STILL WRITING TO EACH OTHER.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, MANY STUDENTS STOPPED AFTER ONE OR TWO LETTERS.



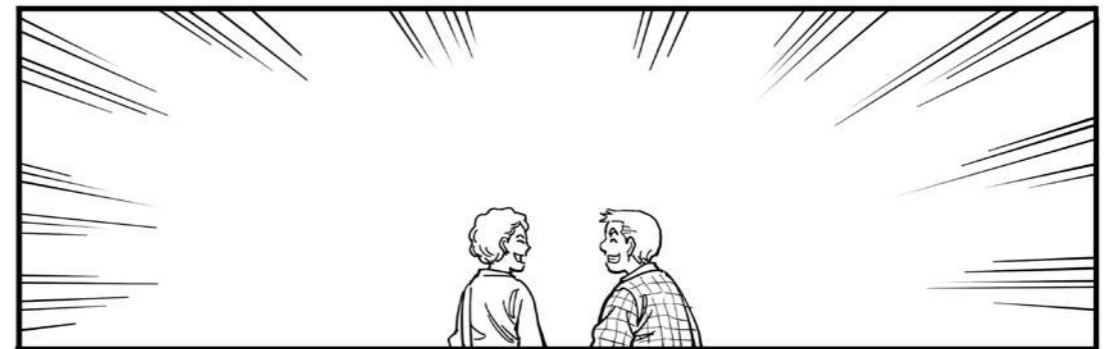
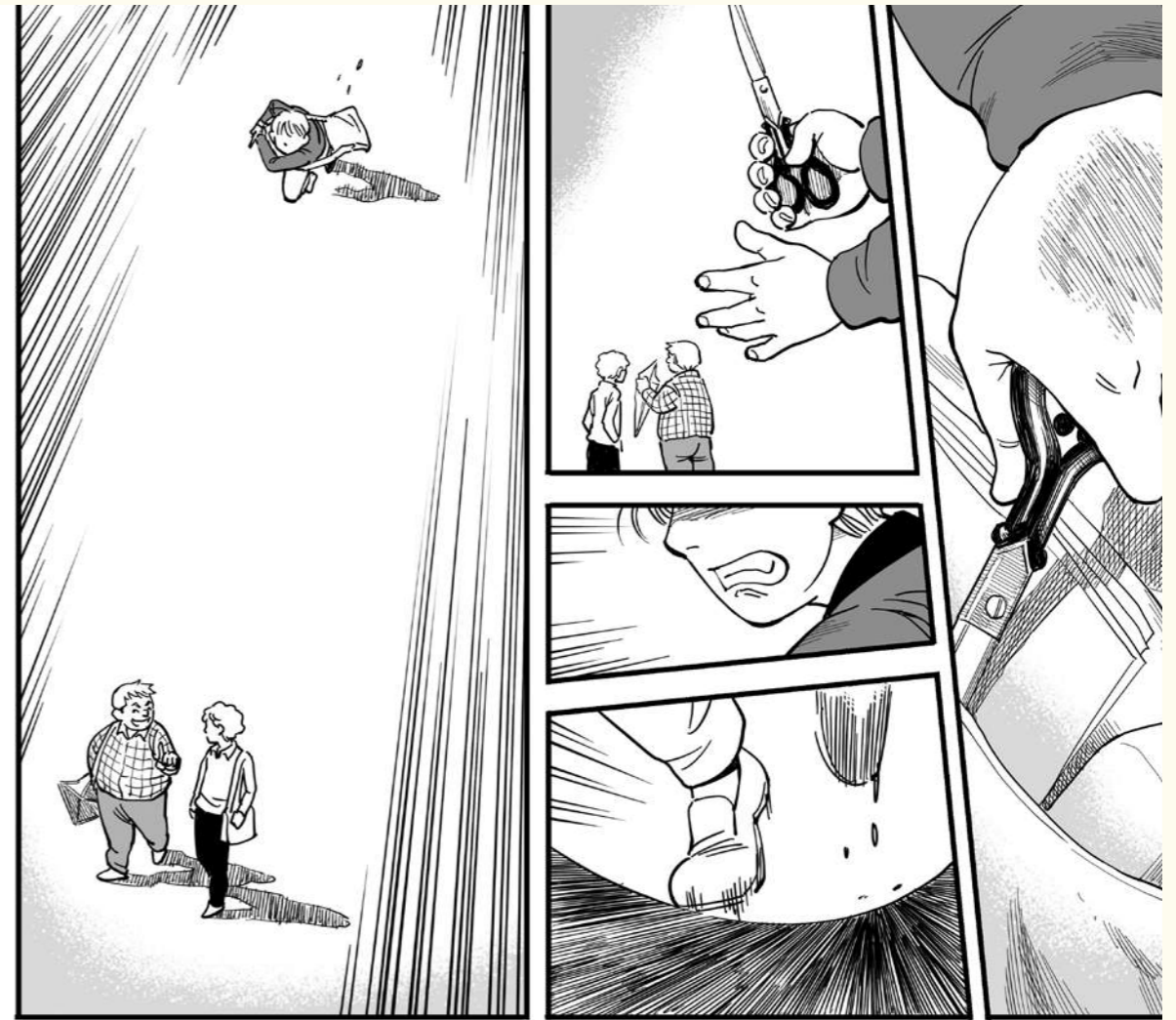
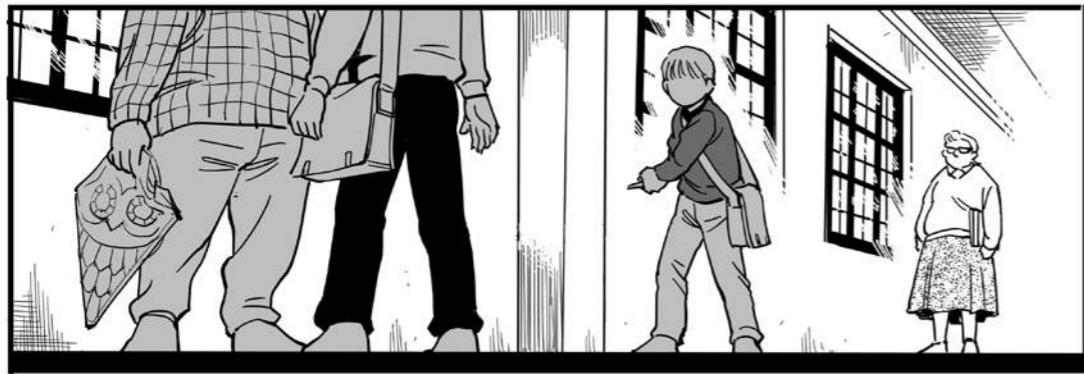
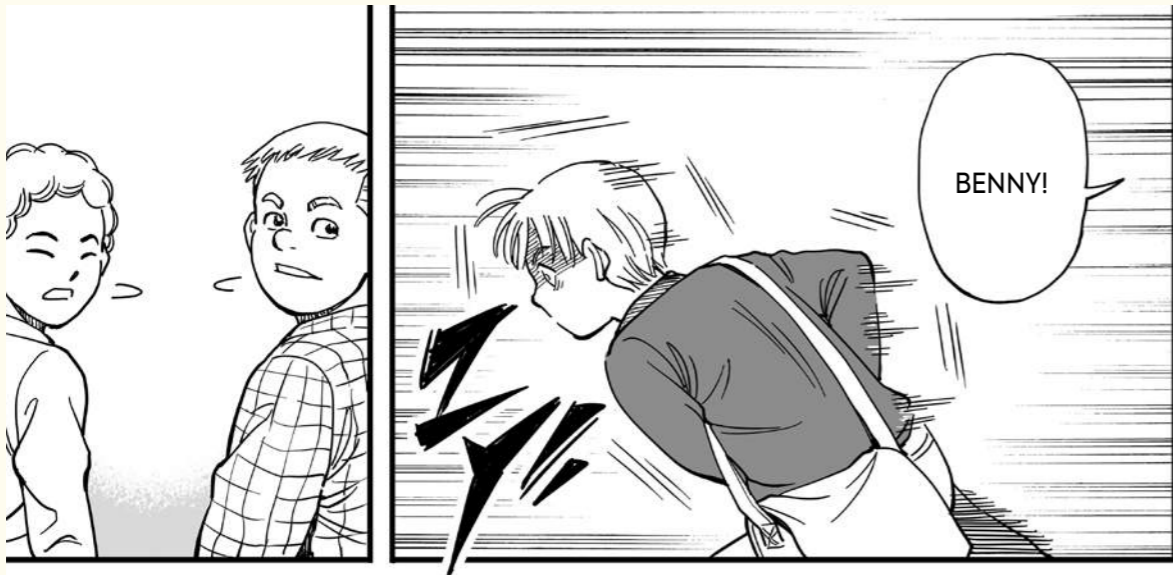
Benny!

STOP!  
Stop what you're doing immediately!



REMEMBER TO GO TO THE NURSE'S OFFICE.





# Letters Between a Child and a Soldier: Nourishing One Another Across Distance

by Shan-Chung Yang

Pain is everywhere. It saturates the battlefield, where soldiers face violence and death, and it lingers in school corridors, where children endure bullying in silence. Though these two spaces may seem worlds apart, both can become arenas of suffering, fear, and isolation for those caught within them.

Benny's class initiates a letter-writing program with soldiers stationed on the front lines, a project intended to foster empathy and understanding. In contrast to the battlefield, a school campus is commonly imagined as a place of safety, order, and joy. Yet for Benny, whose daily life is consumed by relentless bullying, school is anything but peaceful. Signing his letters as "A Suffering Me," he expresses an unsettling longing for the battlefield—a place he believes may offer clarity,

meaning, or even escape from his own pain.

On the receiving end is Thomas, a soldier who has experienced life and death firsthand. Having learned that emotional attachment can deepen loss, Thomas has developed a habit of concealing both his name and his feelings. On a battlefield where comrades may fall without warning, forming close bonds often means inviting unbearable grief. In this way, both protagonists are wounded—one physically, the other psychologically—and both struggle against the gradual erosion of their inner lives.

The interweaving of life and death forms the central axis of this graphic novel. Though Benny and Thomas inhabit entirely different worlds, they are confined within parallel "battlefields" from which

neither can easily escape. As letters are exchanged, Thomas—surrounded by gunfire and explosions—begins to grasp that what Benny describes as a "game" is, in truth, a euphemism for cruel and sustained bullying. Through this realization, Thomas paradoxically reconnects with a world beyond violence, rediscovering a sense of vitality and human warmth even in a landscape defined by death. At the same time, Benny, overwhelmed by the suffocating dynamics of school relationships, gradually becomes aware of a world far larger than his immediate suffering. This expanding perspective allows him to momentarily step outside his pain and, eventually, to summon the courage to resist.

Through the exchange between a veteran and a child—figures often assumed to embody "experience" and "innocence," yet whose realities evade such simple labels—the two characters come to nourish and sustain one another. Their correspondence becomes a fragile yet vital space where empathy takes root, allowing both to cultivate the strength to face the present and to continue living. As one letter puts it, "No one can easily understand another person. If we had not continued writing to each other, we would never have truly come to understand one another." It continues: "This is why war is so foolish—because people give

up communication. They stop listening to one another. What could have avoided bloodshed instead leads to the worst possible outcome."

To attribute the origins of conflict solely to mutual misunderstanding may be an oversimplification. Yet for those who have never dared to speak, and who have long been trapped within pain, listening and dialogue can still offer a thread of hope. They provide a means of connection, and perhaps a path toward escape from seemingly inescapable circumstances.

And yet, communication does not guarantee resolution or redemption. Benny's act of resistance provokes harsher bullying, and Thomas, upon returning to civilian life, faces profound and unresolved challenges. Still, within this fictional narrative of *Letters from the Battlefield*, a quiet yet persistent light remains visible—a reminder that even amid suffering, the act of reaching out can sustain the will to live.

*Shan-Chung Yang graduated from the Department of History at National Taiwan University and has worked as a teacher and a literary event programmer. Born in the subtropical winter of a humid island, she loves the trees and climate of the temperate zone. She is a devoted bear enthusiast, and her life idol is the Adélie penguin.*



# Letters from the Battlefield

A Full English translation is available.

戰場通信

**Author:** Chien Chia-Cheng **Illustrator:** Chien Chia-Cheng **Publisher:** Dyna Books

**Date:** 02/2021

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

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

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Christina Ng

A tender exchange of letters unfolds between an elementary school child and an officer on the battlefield. One handwritten letter after another gives each of them the courage to keep moving forward.

Benny Bronte is a quiet, slender boy who is often the target of pranks and bullying at school. On the front lines is Corporal Thomas, a calm and composed officer, leads his soldiers with stoic resolve. Benny is withdrawn and unhappy; Corporal Thomas, meanwhile, bears a weathered appearance and a gentle heart.

When Benny's class is selected to join a Letters of Care correspondence program, he begins writing to the battlefield and is paired with Thomas. Through their exchange of letters, the two—separated by age, experience, and distance—become sources of strength and support for one another. But as the war grows ever more brutal, how will this unseen friendship between two people who have never met, yet rely so deeply on each other, begin to change?



Author **Chien Chia-Cheng**

Chien Chia-Cheng is an independent comic artist and visual storyteller renowned for blending meticulous historical research with cinematic visuals. His body of work explores a diverse range of themes, spanning from railway and film history to the complexities of war and collective social memory. His books include *Wind Chaser Under the Blue Sky*, *Memories of an Actress*, *The Movie Painter*, and *Beyond the Reach of Light*. He is a multiple Golden Comic Awards winner, with works recognized by Taiwan's Ministry of Culture. His *Wind Chaser Under the Blue Sky* won the Grand Prize at the 17th Japan International Manga Award in 2023.







WHY THE HELL MUST I SEE THIS...

HERE IT COMES AGAIN...

I SIT IN A CINEMA, FORCED TO WATCH THIS TRAGEDY UNFOLD.

I DON'T HAVE THIS KIND OF HOBBY.

NO...

DON'T...

MY BODY—

I CAN'T MOVE.

WHY IS NO ONE TRYING TO SAVE HIM?

DODGE IT... HURRY!

DODGE! HURRY AND DODGE!

DAMN IT! DAMN IT!

MOVE—!!

MOVE, DAMN IT!

SHATTER



...EVEN THOUGH HE CLEARLY BROKE THE LAW. DAMN...

BOOMFFF

I'M EXHAUSTED... AND I REALLY DID HAVE TO GO AND APOLOGIZE...

PLEASE, NO MORE NIGHTMARES...

I HOPE I CAN SLEEP SOUNDLY TODAY.



OF COURSE, MY FERVENT WISH WASN'T GRANTED. AS ALWAYS, THE SAME SCENE REPLAYED UNCEASINGLY.

LIKE A MOVIE BEING SHOWN ON REPEAT—



# Thrilling and Suspenseful, with a Touch of Romance: A New Style of Taiwanese BL Comics Emerges

by Tzu Ning Huang

The author Duo63 has long enjoyed a strong reputation in Taiwan's vibrant doujin community, known for its self-published and fan-created works. A highly active female creator, Duo63 recently published a number of works in the commercial sphere. *Is He The One?* marks a clear departure from her earlier portrayals: alongside the emotional characterizations she is known for, the work introduces a pronounced element of mystery and horror, signaling a new stage in her storytelling ambitions.

The protagonist, Xie Zhi-Hao, is a police officer worn down by bureaucratic systems and the constant demands of the public. He is also deeply troubled by his

younger sister's sudden devotion to a so-called "Madame," into whose belief system she has poured a large sum of money. To make matters worse, Zhi-Hao begins to suffer from recurring nightmares—vast expanses of black fog, film-like flashes of scenes, and an overwhelming sense of oppression that leaves him mentally and physically exhausted.

Then, without warning, he wakes up in an unfamiliar place and unexpectedly finds himself serving as the bodyguard to a super idol named Zero. From clues in his surroundings—his phone, the news—he gradually realizes that he has landed in a different era altogether. How are these events connected to his

nightmares? Meanwhile, the talismans his sister obtained from the "Madame" seem mysteriously linked to everything that has unfolded.

The author's narrative skill shines in her depiction of Zhi-Hao's encounter with Zero, which feels almost fated, even as hidden dangers are gradually woven into the unfolding plot. This approach echoes the subtitle *Is He The One?*—is this person truly the right one? What the story ultimately seeks to unravel is not only the dangers that surface along the way, but also the enigmatic nature of the relationship between its protagonists.

The Chinese title refers to "righteous bonds" and "karmic bonds." The former is "good," while the latter implies an ill-fated relationship. In traditional Taiwanese beliefs, people often pray for a "good" bond and a positive destiny. Naturally, everyone wishes for a good bond—but how do we determine what kind of bond a relationship truly is? And might the existence of an ill-fated bond not also serve as the catalyst for the emergence of the next important connection? As the book suggests, human relationships are

intricately intertwined, influencing one another in unceasing and immeasurable ways.

In the early development of BL comics in Taiwan, creators largely focused on depicting emotional relationships between two men. In recent years, however, the creative inspiration of artists and the increasing openness of the market have allowed works to flourish in diverse directions. From the reading experience of *Is He The One?*, we can observe how such a shift has enriched and broadened the narrative possibilities. Rather than simply telling a love story about two men, this book tells a compelling story that happens to feature a couple made up of two men. This transformation reflects changing social attitudes and underscores the positive, mutually reinforcing relationship between readers and creators.

*Tzu Ning Huang is an editor 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.*



# Is He The One?

A Full English translation is available.

正孽緣

**Author:** Duo63 **Illustrator:** Duo63 **Publisher:** Dyna Books

**Date:** 08/2022

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

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

**Rights sold:** German

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Eunice Shek

Police officer Xie Zhi-Hao lives an ordinary, repetitive life. Exhausted by his days on duty, he is relentlessly haunted by recurring nightmares each night. One morning, he wakes to find himself in a remote rural area. By chance, he saves a popular idol from a near-fatal accident.

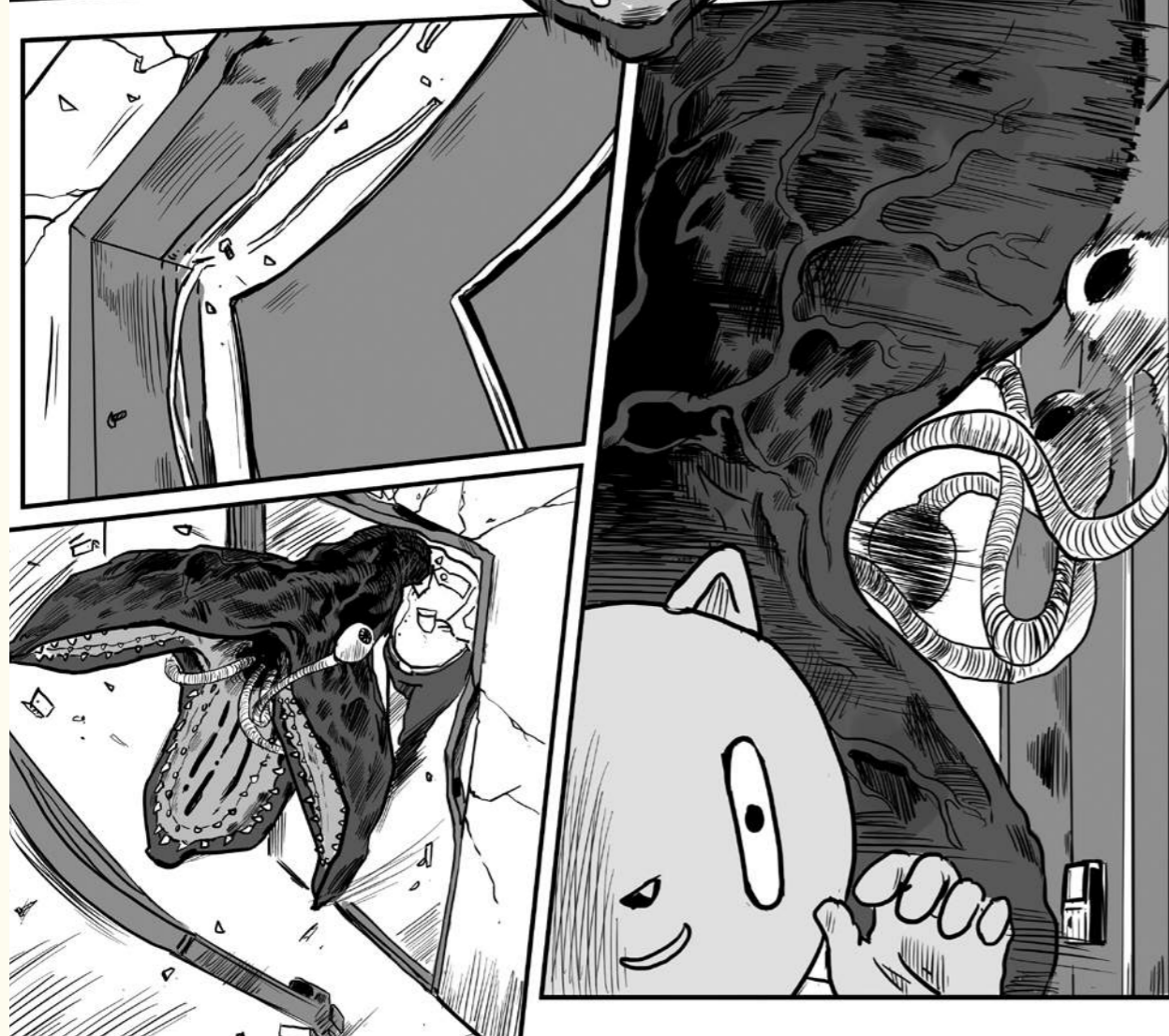
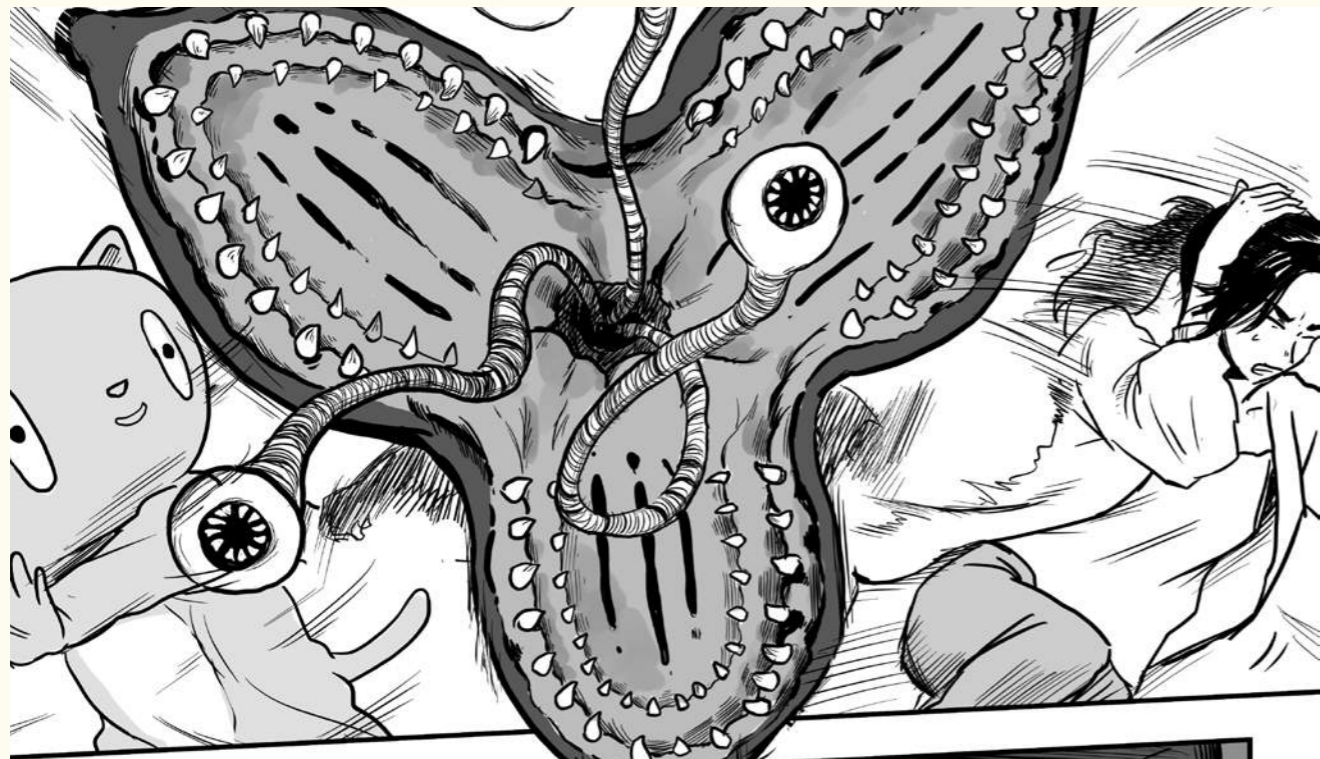
Zhi-Hao soon becomes the idol's bodyguard, only to be swept into a series of unsettling events: black fog that seems to swallow the world, ghostly figures trailing in his wake, and scenes charged with eerie nostalgia. Something about this place feels profoundly wrong... Could he have crossed into an entirely different time and space?

In her first foray into the BL genre, manga artist Duo63 pairs delicately rendered characters with an atmosphere of horror and suspense, unveiling the protagonists' fated bond in a breathtaking story.



Author **Duo63**

Duo63 is a Taiwanese artist based in New Taipei City. She draws whatever captures her interest, but most of all she loves drawing cute boys. Her work primarily focuses on female-oriented yaoi. Her commercially published titles include *My Marriage Contract with the Devil*, *My Lifelong Contract with the Devil*, *This Is What Happened When I Guarded a Stump Waiting for Rabbits*, *Is He The One?* and *Desire Before The Blade*.





THIS IS EXACTLY THE SAME AS WHAT HAPPENED THAT TIME!



OUCH!



JUST AS I'VE EXPECTED, NO ONE CAN BE TRUSTED. NOT EVEN A TEACHER...



AHHHHHHH!



039  
039  
039



YOU WERE THE ONE WHO CAME LOOKING FOR ME?

ARE YOU KIDDING ME?



IS THAT A GIRL SCREAMING?



ISN'T IT YOUR... GULP GULP... OWN... DOING...



EH? WHAT PLACE IS THIS?



DON'T WORRY. JUST TAKE SOME TIME OFF TOMORROW.



SORRY TO WAKE YOU UP. DID YOU SLEEP WELL?



STAY A BIT LONGER! SINCE WE'RE ALREADY HERE...

!... I WANT TO GO!



IT WAS POURING THAT DAY.



MY TROUBLES WERE MUFFLED BY THE SOUND OF THE RAIN.



I FELL ASLEEP IN MY TEACHER'S CAR.



# Who Is the Real Monster? A Darkly Funny Debut Comic That Portrays Loneliness, Exclusion, and the Search for Belonging

by Wen-Chien Hsu

If one day you woke up to find that everyone around you had turned into monsters, while only you and a handful of others remained human, who would truly be the monster—them, or you? In *Monster Society*, creator Xuan Lee uses absurdity laced with dark humor to portray those who are lonely, socially excluded, and uncertain of where they belong. The story's protagonist has no name. He survives on odd jobs and is bullied even by others in the same working class.

One day, he is unexpectedly assigned to wear a mascot costume. For the first time, he experiences what it feels like to be loved and appreciated. That fleeting warmth becomes irresistible. He vows never to return to his former life and escapes while still wearing the costume.

The heroine, Zhou Ting, seems like an ordinary office worker, but she carries a heavy secret. While attempting to reclaim company property, she chases after the runaway mascot. During their struggle, both fall into the water—and when they climb ashore, the world has changed. Everyone has turned into grotesque, hideous monsters.

Thus begins the story of *Monster Society*. Together, they search for the reason behind humanity's transformation. They soon discover that, despite their bizarre appearances and inability to communicate, the monsters still maintain the basic order of human society: they pay for goods when shopping, and trespassers are still chased away by security guards. Within this strange new order, the two

continue their daily lives while seeking the truth behind the transformation.

On their journey, they meet others who have also retained human form. One is a young girl who was once abducted and assaulted; another is a boy who could never outrun his peers. Both carry resentment and pain toward the world, yet in the company of the protagonists, they begin to feel understood and safe. Before long, however, they too turn into monsters.

Gradually, the protagonists realize that people have not actually become monsters. Rather, everyone harbors hidden wounds and untold stories that cause them to perceive others as monstrous—and to be seen the same way in return. The “monsters” in this story are not aliens from a sci-fi movie, but metaphors for society's outsiders and the wounded. Only by confronting inner trauma and loosening the knots in one's heart can one truly “return to human form”—or, more precisely, reconnect with society and learn to see others as human again.

In the end, the protagonist—still

wearing his mascot costume—helps Zhou Ting face the secret that has haunted her for years. She finally releases her guilt over believing she had killed her abusive father. While she regains her freedom, the protagonist chooses to remain in the costume, running through a world full of monsters.

Every person carries their own shame, guilt, fear, and pain. These emotions quietly isolate us, eroding our ability to communicate or empathize. Such a life is like living in a society of monsters—everyone may appear human, yet remain alien to one another. *Monster Society* suggests that, in the prospect of spending our lives lonely, we open our hearts, acknowledge our imperfections, and face what lies within. In doing so we begin to reconnect with the world.

*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.*



# Monster Society

A Full English translation is available.

怪物社會

**Author:** Xuan Lee **Illustrator:** Xuan Lee **Publisher:** Dyna Books

**Date:** 06/2022

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

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

**Rights sold:** French

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Christina Ng

In this debut surreal mystery comic by Xuan Lee, Zhou Ting, a beautiful young woman, and Wang Ji, who is perpetually dressed in a mascot costume, are caught in an unexpected accident.

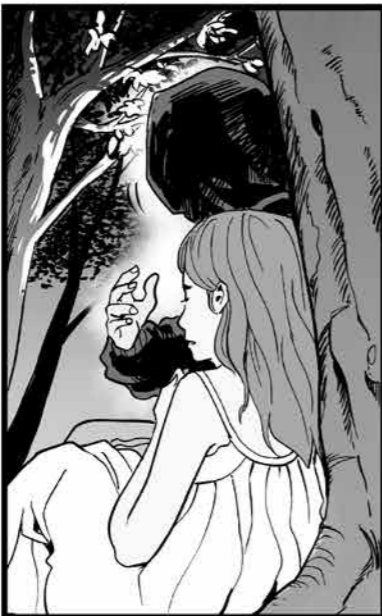
When they open their eyes, they discover that the world has transformed—everyone has become a monster. Bird-men do calisthenics in the park, man-eating plants stand guard outside office buildings, and hybrid creatures roam the streets, all while society continues to function as if nothing were amiss.

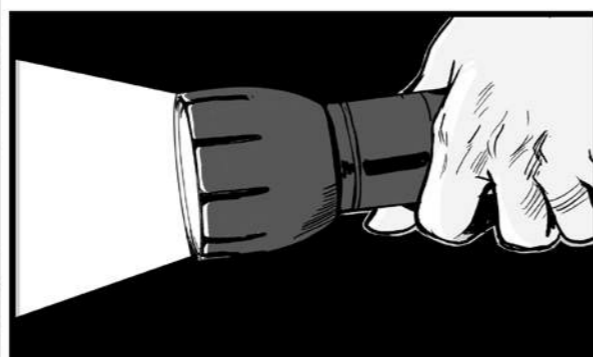
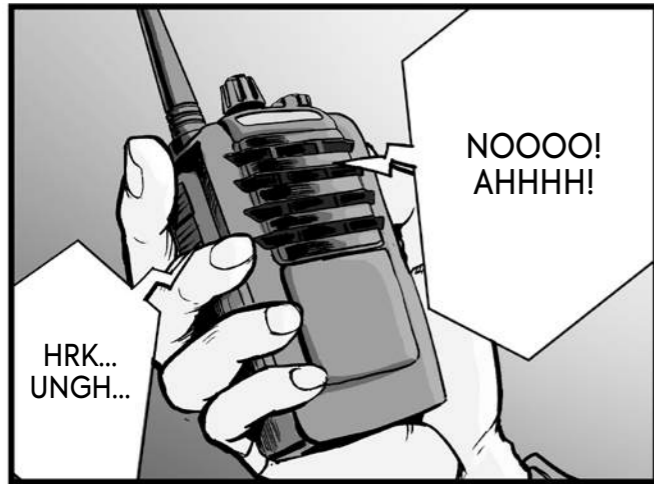
Rendered in a finely observed, realistic style that only heightens its sense of absurdity, this is a world where monsters have become the norm. Only by finding the remaining humans can the clues behind this social mutation be pieced together. Zhou Ting and Wang Ji set out on a journey in search of answers, confronting a fundamental question along the way: in this transformed reality, are you a monster—or are you still human?

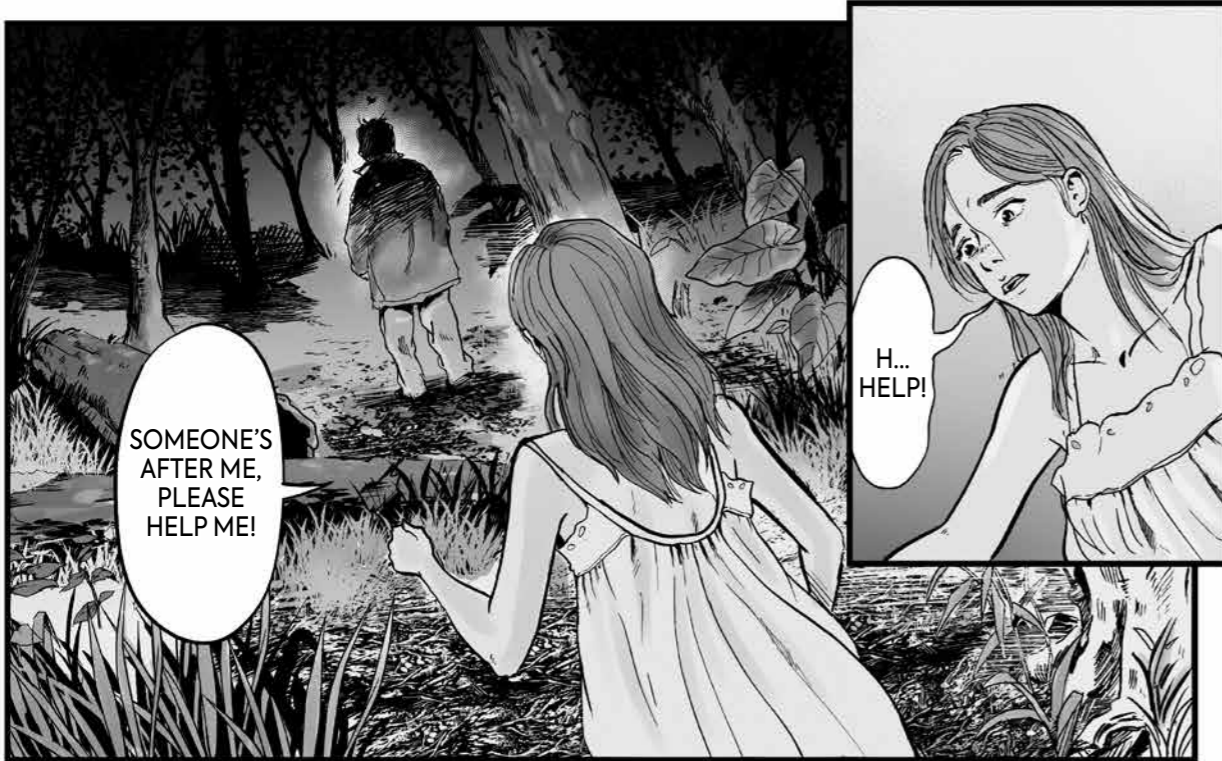
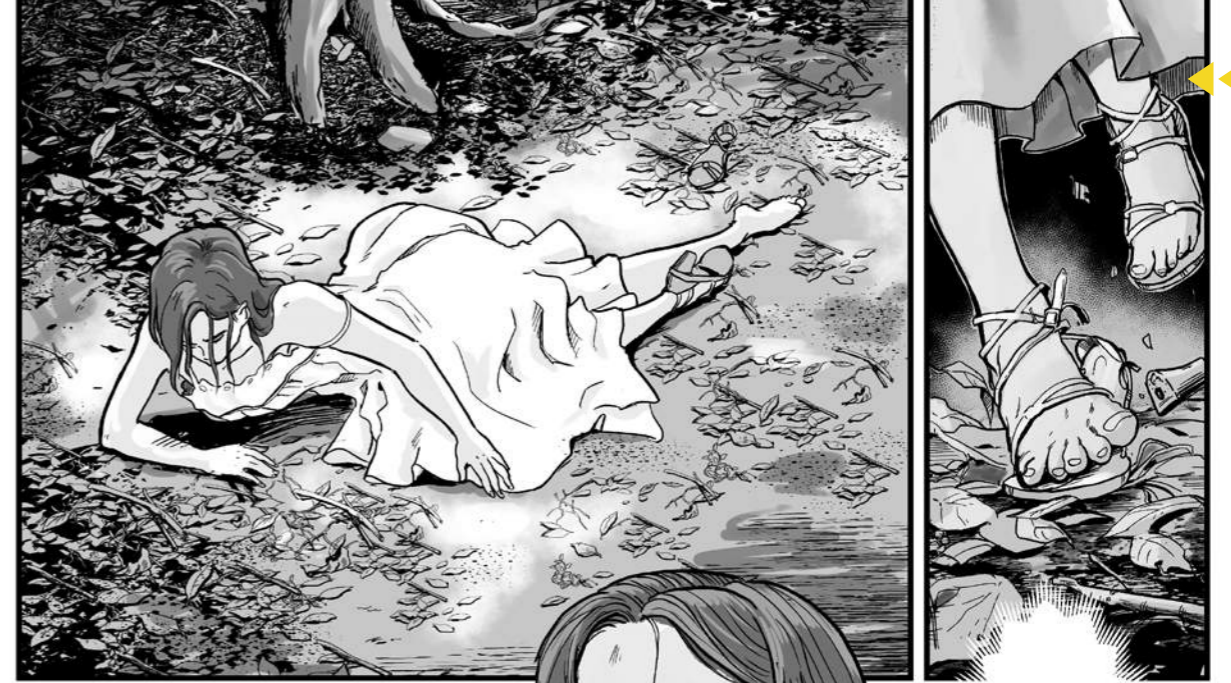


Author **Xuan Lee**

An animation and comics creator primarily active online, Xuan Lee believes in the existence of mysterious phenomena and enjoys imagining strange, unconventional stories.







SOMEONE'S AFTER ME, PLEASE HELP ME!

H... HELP!

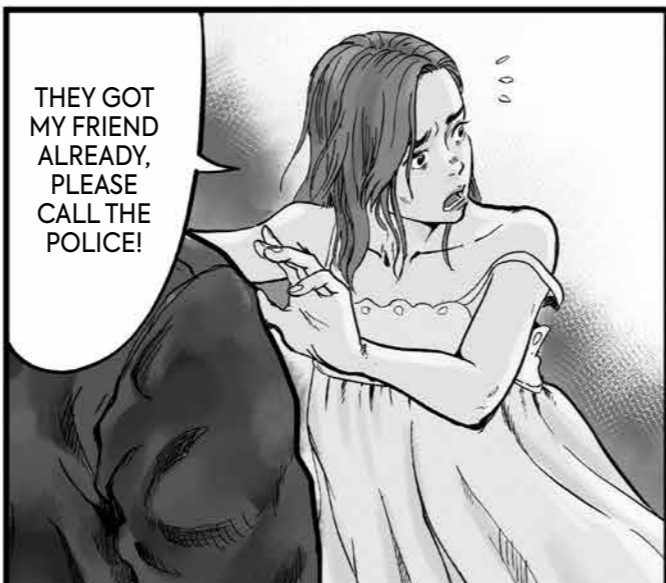


N-NO!

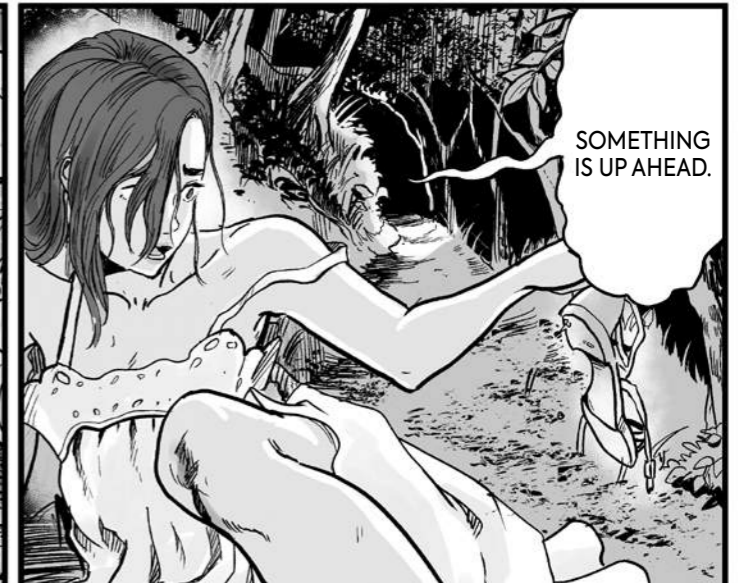
I DON'T WANT TO DIE HERE!



?



THEY GOT MY FRIEND ALREADY, PLEASE CALL THE POLICE!



SOMETHING IS UP AHEAD.

# Cult Rituals, Occult Motifs, and Human Sacrifice: A Chilling Horror Comic That Asks What Makes Us Human

by **HORRORLOFT**

(originally published on [OKAPI.BOOKS.COM.TW](http://OKAPI.BOOKS.COM.TW))

The story opens with the assault and throat-slashing of a young girl—a declaration that this work will use bloody, brutal imagery to expose the cruelty and darkness of reality. As a Taiwanese comic, *Scarecrow* draws on the folk ritual of “Straw Man Substitution”—a practice meant to ward off misfortune—to explore death, while also taking inspiration from Japan’s famous “Scarecrow Village” in Tokushima.

Thus, Fenghe Village is set as the stage for “the hunt”: a place where living humans and inanimate straw figures coexist, and where faith in the scarecrow’s power to avert disaster sustains a twisted belief system. Despair (the throat-slashing murder) and hope (the villagers’ devotion to the scarecrow) form a stark visual and

thematic contrast, immediately enticing readers to peer into the village’s hidden ugliness.

The intertwined stories of three women reveal the secrets of this haunting village. Yan-Yu searches for her missing sister. Ching-Ching Liu embodies both good and evil. And last, Xiu-Lin Yan’s fate hovers between life and death.

Yan-Yu, the protagonist, reflects the archetypal “final girl”—the lone female survivor of 1970s–80s slasher films—sharply contrasted with the other female tourists and victims who come only to sightsee. Driven by her determination to find her sister, she symbolizes courage, resilience, and independence, and becomes the emotional core of the story.

Ching-Ching Liu, who works in the

funeral trade, carries a dual burden: on one hand, the guilt of murdering innocent travelers to secure immortality for her loved ones; on the other, the remnants of conscience that ultimately drive her to betray the village and help Yan-Yu.

Xiu-Lin Yan, whose life and death are uncertain, represents what Steven Arthur Pinker calls “instrumental violence”—a victim killed as a means to an end, sacrificed so that the villagers may attain eternal life. She is both the human offering in this exchange of lives and the catalyst that propels Yan-Yu into the role of the Final Girl. Yet in the end, Xiu-Lin herself takes revenge, killing her murderer and transforming from a passive victim of instrumental violence into an agent of retributive violence. She embodies a form of ancient morality that holds blood must be repaid with blood.

As a work steeped in cult imagery and occult motifs, *Scarecrow* inevitably centers on sacrifice. Fenghe Village’s practices evolve over time. At first, villagers use straw figures to ward off misfortune. They perform the “Straw Man Ritual,” placing a scarecrow made of thirty-six stalks of rice in a red coffin and burying it with the dead to prevent consecutive deaths. Eventually, straw is no longer enough. The village replaces the effigies with living humans. What begins as symbolic substitution becomes a literal exchange of life for life.

The turning point lies in the appearance of the White Immortal Maiden, who transforms the traditional,

one-way offering of sacrifice to the gods into a transactional system. By trading lives, villagers receive tangible “returns” in the form of immortality. The villagers abandon their original faith in Master Hu and the straw men, turning instead to the White Immortal Maiden and the doctrine of human sacrifice. In doing so, they become a community that collectively commits crime.

In the final act, however, Master Hu’s compassion for all beings erupts. Unable to bear the sight of villagers murdering others, he exhausts his divine power to resurrect the victims buried in red coffins throughout Fenghe Village.

From the author’s perspective, *Scarecrow* places humanity at the center, with divinity as a supporting force. Its central question—when are humans no longer human?—carries multiple layers of meaning, Generating still more questions. For the villagers, who have lost their moral compass and turned to slaughter, can they still be considered human? For those who gain immortality through the White Immortal Maiden’s ritual, what remains of their humanity when only the body endures and the soul is gone?

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

*Dedicated to horror comics, HORRORLOFT explores non-mainstream dark and grotesque artistic creations while researching the global development and textual lineage of horror comics.*



# Scarecrow

A Full English translation is available.

孤村草人

**Original Author:** Zuiliuli **Comic Artist:** Xuan Lee **Publisher:** Dyna Books

**Date:** 11/2022

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

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

**Adaptation:** Original novel

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Alan Chiu

A legend haunts Fenghe Village: whenever two deaths occur, a third will follow. To break this fatal cycle, the villagers perform an ancient rite known as the Straw Man Ritual. When Yan-Yu arrives in search of her missing sister, what she finds unsettles her—red coffins displayed outside every home, straw figures mysteriously shifting positions, and a strict curfew that forbids anyone from going out after 10 p.m.

As her investigation deepens, the village's unspeakable secrets begin to surface. From the moment one sets foot in Fenghe Village, escape is no longer possible. With suspicious villagers and knife-wielding scarecrows, what was once a sightseeing spot becomes a chilling hunting ground.

Rendered in a dark, richly detailed realist style, artist Xuan Lee adapts *Scarecrow* from Zuiliuli's horror series *Whispers in the Night*. Drawing on traditional Chinese customs and beliefs, the story leads readers into a world of cult ritual, occult practices, and human sacrifice—a place where the boundary between the living and the dead grows terrifyingly thin.



## Comic Artist **Xuan Lee**

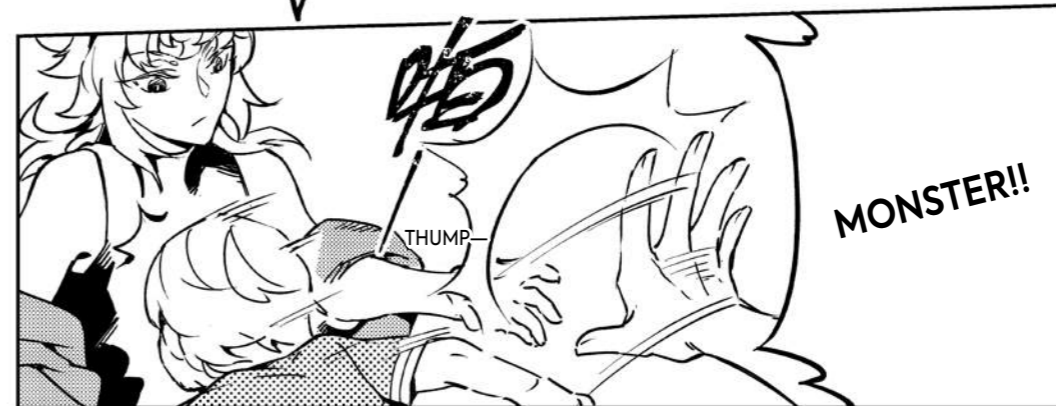
An animation and comics creator primarily active online, Xuan Lee believes in mysterious phenomena and delights in imagining strange, unconventional stories.



## Original Author **Zuiliuli**

Zuiliuli is a best-selling author of light novels that often incorporate elements of Eastern myths and legends. A gifted writer of supernatural thrillers, she writes in a broad range of styles, including lighthearted, humorous fantasy-adventure stories set on school campuses. Her representative works include the popular series *Agents to the Gods*, *Night Whispers*, and *I, the Elf King, Need Cash!*

Zuiliuli is also a Virgo. When work gets overwhelming, she copes by cleaning her room to escape reality. She loves watching horror movies, yet always covers her eyes with her fingers. Her greatest wish each day is to sleep until she wakes up naturally.





DRAIN YOUR LIFE SLOWLY WITH DARK MAGIC.

OR FREEZE YOU WITH ICE?

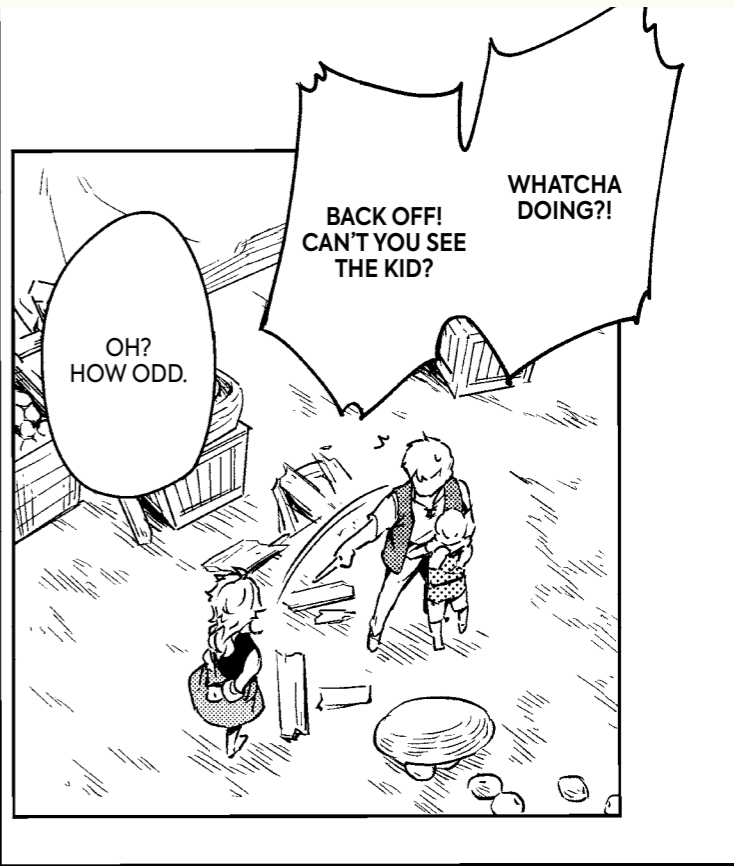
SHOULD I TOAST YOU WITH FIRE?

OR MY FAVORITE...

AND TURN YOU INTO MY OWN STONE STATUE.



WHAT DO I CARE ABOUT A HUMAN KID?



OH? HOW ODD.

BACK OFF! CAN'T YOU SEE THE KID?

WHATCHA DOING?!



SINCE YOU SEEM EAGER TO FEED MY ART, I SHALL OBLIGE.

I AM GORGON, THE WITCH OF THE STONE.  
IT IS MY HOBBY TO TURN CONCEITED MEN INTO STATUES.



# Deduction in a Magical World: A Riveting Manga Blending Fantasy and Justice

by Xiao Xiang Shen  
(originally published on OKAPI.BOOKS.COM.TW)

When a series of murders unfolds, a police organization whose members wield magic is tasked with investigating a mysterious supernatural aura. This immediately raises a thought-provoking question: is deduction even possible in a magical world?

Magic creates the illusion of infinite possibility. Yet once magic is revealed to have limits—or is transformed into a system of rules that deduction can reference—the detective can no longer evade responsibility. This is the true core of special-setting mysteries: settings are rules, and rules presuppose and guarantee fairness. It is a precious, almost divine form of judgment, for the real world is far crueler, revealing neither its rules nor

promising any measure of fairness.

No matter how realistic a mystery novel may seem, it is always guided by a logic of fairness; in this sense, it is a limited version of the real world, which offers no such guarantee. By contrast, even a world of magic becomes something we can reason through, as long as it follows clear and consistent rules. From this perspective, the key to building deduction in a magical setting is to present those rules in a way that feels fair. This is exactly where *The Great Magical Investigation Unit* shines, introducing its magical logic smoothly and naturally, without slipping into heavy exposition.

The author accomplishes this by introducing a “non-typical protagonist.”

This does not mean the character type itself is rare, but rather that the protagonist is fundamentally out of place in this world—a genuine exception. As a mage, she deviates sharply from common expectations: although capable of using more magical attributes than ordinary mages, she cannot truly master any of them, leaving her overall skill far below that of her peers. This abnormality forces the protagonist to explain herself repeatedly to colleagues at work. Through this “exception,” the norms of the magical world are gradually revealed.

Criminal investigation is, of course, a central attraction, but the author does not overlook the police’s more fundamental duties. When protests erupt, the police maintain order; when the governor’s cat goes missing, they help search. When a child fails to return home, they head into the mountains. The organization suffers from insufficient funding, understaffing, and a lack of respect, leaving the protagonist exhausted and overwhelmed. Yet helping ordinary people in need is also part of what the police are meant to do—they do not exist solely to chase murder cases.

That said, as agents authorized to enact violence on behalf of the state, the police do not represent only justice and light. The story also depicts officers who manipulate influence behind the scenes, casting darker shadows over

already horrifying events. Although the narrative centers on serial murder, its political portrayals are equally chilling. The scheming figures who smear protesters for their own ends demonstrate just how despicable such manipulation can be. While the depiction is not excessively graphic, the fact that these tactics are all too familiar in real life makes them genuinely unsettling.

*The Great Magical Investigation Unit* is, on the surface, a light, accessible, and enjoyable read that asks little of its audience beyond immersion. Yet whether addressing the meaning of the police, the dangers of power, or the debate over capital punishment, these fleeting but incisive reflections are woven effortlessly into the narrative. Deep and sustained contemplation occurs beneath the surface.

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

*Xiao Xiang Shen is a Taiwanese writer and live-action game designer, and a member of the Taipei Local Lore Studio. He has long focused on folklore and monster culture in his creative work. In 2012, *The Great Taipei Illustrated Scroll*, inspired by graffiti culture, won the Bronze Prize in the Short Story Category of the Kadokawa Light Novel Award, and in 2014 he received the King Car Fantasy Fiction Award.*



# The Great Magical Investigation Unit

A Full English translation is available.

大魔法搜查線 RESET

**Author:** Chan Ho Kei **Illustrator:** Linjay **Publisher:** APEX PRESS

**Date:** 01/2025

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

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

**Adaptation:** Novel

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Catherine Yu

Born into nobility, Yadinis expects a quiet life when she's assigned to a small town as a police officer. Instead, she is swept up in a whirlwind of duties. From guarding a pop idol to searching for missing children, from managing protests to apprehending criminals at concerts, she's overwhelmed.

When a serial killer responsible for 28 deaths escapes from prison, the town plunges into crisis. Yadinis lacks combat skills or magical powers; her true power lies in keen deduction. Beneath Yadinis's composed exterior, she struggles with insecurity and mistrust. But she must press forward, relying on her companions to navigate the challenges ahead.

Adapted from Chan Ho Kei's novel *The Great Magical Investigation Unit*, this manga is fully reimagined by Linjay. Recasting the original male protagonist as a female lead, the story becomes a fantastical mystery exploring a woman detective's growth and self-discovery.



Author **Chan Ho Kei**

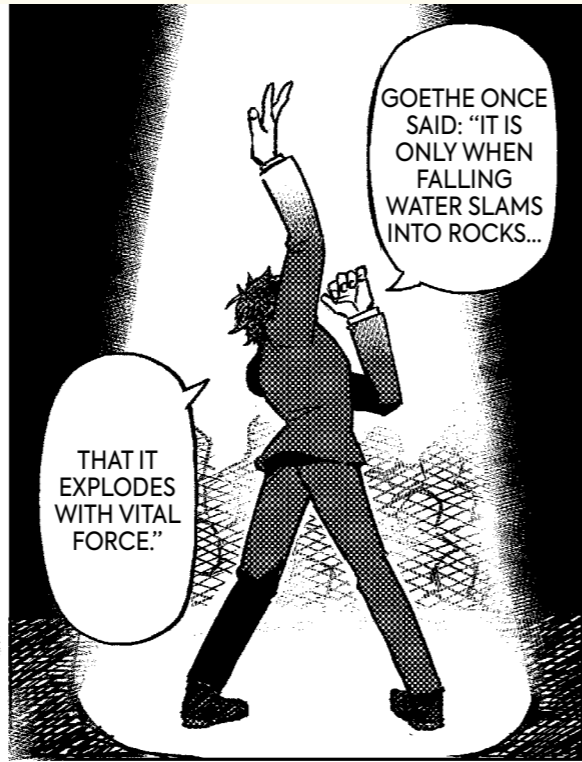
A graduate of the Department of Computer Science at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Chan Ho Kei is an overseas member of the Taiwan Mystery Writers Association and a recipient of multiple literary honors, including the Taiwan Mystery Writers Association Award, the Shimamoto Shōji Mystery Novel Award, the Taipei International Book Exhibition Award, and the Hong Kong Literature Season Recommendation Award. His novel *13.67* topped both the Weekly Bunshun Mystery Best 10 and the Honkaku Mystery Best 10 in 2017, becoming the first Asian work to achieve this distinction.

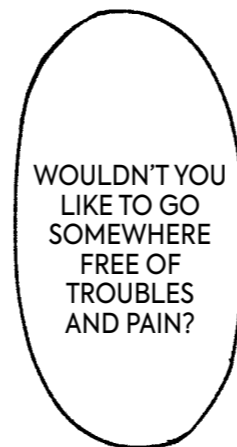
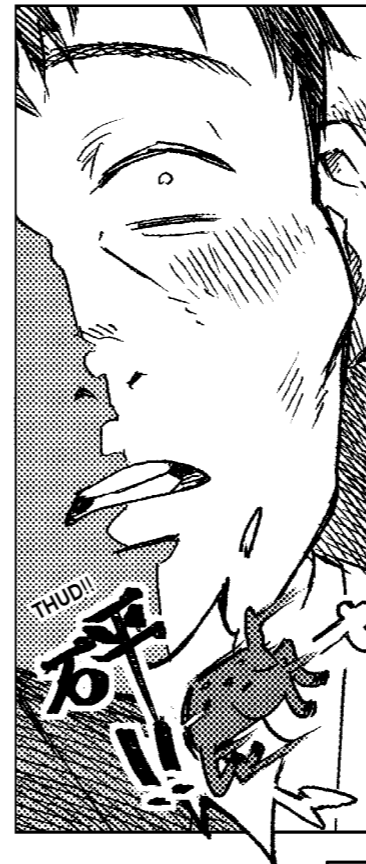
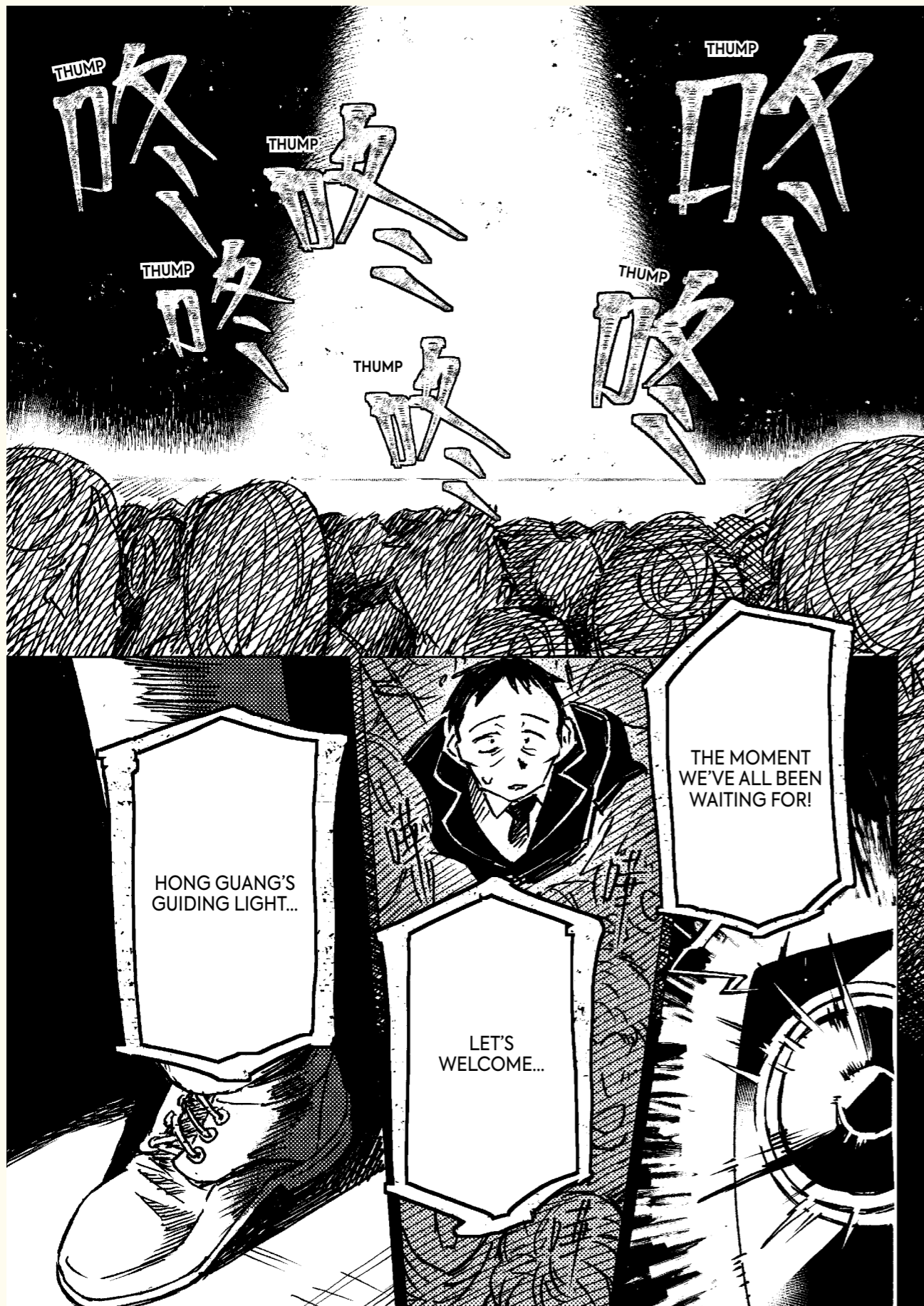


Illustrator **Linjay**

Linjay is a Taiwanese comic artist who won the 16th Tong Li Short Comic Award in 2009 and the Gold Prize in the Comics Category at the Bahamut ACG Creative Awards in 2012. The artist made her commercial debut with *The Retired Heroes* and, in 2022, adapted Chen Hao-Chi's novel *The Great Magical Investigation Unit* into a comic series. She is currently serializing the original adult BL manga *The Most Vile Contract* on [tw.myrenta.com](http://tw.myrenta.com)







# When Self-Help Becomes a Cage: A Poignant, Illuminating Manga That Reflects the World We Live In

by Wen-Chien Hsu

Have you ever heard of so-called self-help or personal growth courses? They often advertise themselves with slogans like “free trial” or “change your life”—phrases that seem harmless yet can slowly consume an entire existence. Someone close to me once joined such a program. He had endured years of emotional repression; he was also gay and unable to come out to his family. Initially, he felt understood by the group, as though someone was finally listening to him. But soon he was subjected to the instructor’s manipulation and humiliation. In the end, he became completely estranged from his family, his life reduced to obeying the instructor’s commands. This person’s experience haunted me as I read this work.

In this story, Da-sing Wang, a middle-aged man, hits rock bottom

after being laid off. A chance encounter leads him to an old elementary school classmate, now reinvented as a glamorous self-help guru with a devoted following and a thriving business. Fueled by envy and hope, Da-sing joins the program and even convinces his wife and children to join as well.

At first, it feels like a new beginning: marital rifts seem to heal, his children find an outlet for their problems, and he himself finds a job within the organization. Da-sing now works promoting courses in a role reminiscent of multi-level marketing. Yet beneath the lively and celebratory atmosphere runs a disturbing undercurrent. Upon completing one course, a client must undergo a succeeding level: beginner, intermediate, then advanced. Moreover, the program extends to teenagers and

even children. Each step upward demands more money and deeper attachment. Beyond the courses are endless products and fee-based activities, ostensibly to help participants “grow,” but in reality stripping away their time and energy, isolating them in a closed echo chamber.

This isn’t fiction—it’s the classic playbook of LGAT, or Large-Group Awareness Training. These programs often tout slogans like “unlock your potential,” but they rely on carefully engineered psychological tactics. They force people to expose their deepest wounds in public, breaking them down in tears under group pressure, and then create the illusion of “rebirth.” Those who cannot continue paying are shamed as failures. Participants are pressured to recruit friends and family, or risk being branded as “selfish.” Such courses preach that anything is possible, while ignoring individual limits and refusing to acknowledge or even name social and economic realities. Psychologists have long criticized LGAT programs, warning that they can cause illness, acute psychosis, and in some cases, suicide. These are not exaggerated urban legends, but documented outcomes of research.

The true power of this manga lies in how it avoids sensational depictions of cult horror and instead unfolds like a frog slowly being boiled alive. The improvements at the beginning are genuine—or at least they appear so—and that’s the most heartbreaking part. In real life, when someone enters such

a program, those around them often think, “At least they’ve found a way out,” without realizing that way out leads only to deeper darkness. Readers watch helplessly as Da-sing loses himself step by step. The more entangled he becomes, the more powerless he feels.

With a vivid style and precise storytelling, creator Nigou immerses readers in a world that is both familiar and terrifying—one that feels less like fiction than a mirror held up to reality. This manga lays bare the entire structure of such groups: they prey on people at their most vulnerable, strip away freedom of choice, and turn “growth” into something to be consumed and paid for. In believing they are pursuing freedom, people instead find themselves bound by even tighter chains.

I wholeheartedly recommend *Good Morning, How About Some Positivity?* In today’s world, as the old anchors of family and religion loosen, we all long for belonging and support. But true support cannot mean surrendering our choices to an instructor or an organization. We must stay alert, look after one another, and never let “personal growth” become a trap that devours who we are.

*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.*



# Good Morning, How About Some Positivity?

A Full English translation is available.

早安您好，來點正能量嗎？

**Author:** Nigou **Illustrator:** Nigou **Original Concept:** Seal Hsieh **Publisher:** Ever Glory Publishing

**Date:** 07/2023

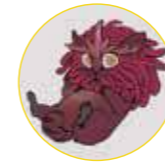
**Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

224 pages | 12.7 x 18.2 cm **Volume:** 1 (Three-book series)

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Chris MacDonald

In his forties and deep in a full-blown midlife crisis, Da-Sing finds himself unemployed, at odds with his parents, and drifting further apart from his spouse. Paralyzed by indecision and worn down by repeated job rejections, he stumbles into the Hong Guang Association, a self-styled “positive energy” group that appears to offer answers to life’s hardest questions. To his surprise, its spiritual mentor turns out to be Yu-Bin Wei, his long-lost high school classmate. And as if that weren’t unsettling enough, Da-Sing soon realizes his wife is an eager believer too.

This absorbing and freshly poignant manga follows a person who discovers a seemingly perfect group during a moment of immense vulnerability. It asks, in an increasingly lonely and challenging world, how we find belonging and meaning without being seduced by false promises of transformation.



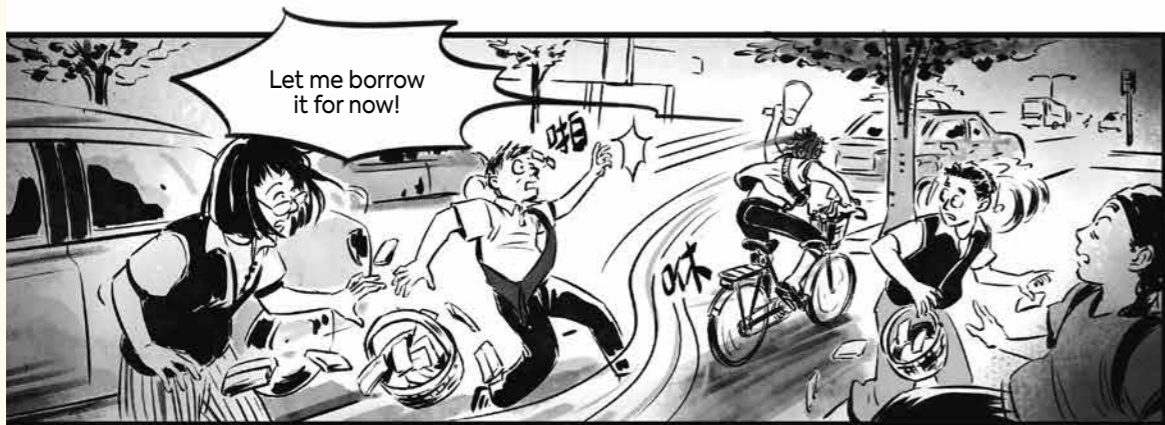
## Author **Nigou**

Nigou won the Excellence Award at the 2021 Kyoto International Manga Anime Awards. After a considerable period working in the gaming industry, Nigou has built a solid foundation in illustration, excelling in both story construction and narrative composition, and has crafted captivating stories. Through comics, Nigou seeks to convey the richness of interior life.



## Original Concept **Seal Hsieh**

A full-time scriptwriter of comics, Seal Hsieh loves suspenseful thrillers and romcoms. Hsieh’s representative works include *Seven Days to Live*, the series *BLOODY MAN*, and *Good Morning, How About Some Positivity?*





That's her!  
Uncle A-Chong's  
eldest daughter...



She's broken her  
word! Didn't she  
promise to stay until  
the surgery is over?!



Don't leave!!!



Green light!

Green light  
again!



Someone stops  
that damn car!



Please vote for  
candidate number 3, your  
next door big brother



Yeah, we're here anyway. At least we should visit Pop.

Don't worry. I have confirmed with the doctor that ligament surgery is not a major operation.

There's nothing for us to do here now. We should get back to our life and take care of our business.



Have you considered Mom's feelings?

Sis...



I know you were too young to remember many things.

But it's all thanks to Mom that we get to where we are today...



...After Mom died.

Definitely not the person who drank all day and only asked after school and grades...



Damn, it's so far. Didn't she say she'd stay "nearby" South Airport?



signing documents, hoping to bring his service to an end. Yet through repeated encounters, he gradually finds himself growing emotionally attached.

One of the elderly residents, widowed at a young age, turns to alcohol and eventually becomes estranged from his family. When he is rushed to the emergency room in critical condition, his children agree to sign consent forms but refuse to come see him. At first, Yao-yu looks down on the old man, believing his fate to be self-inflicted. This reaction, however, only deepens the distrust of the other seniors—because everyone who has ended up in South Airport has been shaped by failures and losses of their own.

Everything changes when Yao-yu

accidentally recovers a missing videotape belonging to the old man. Filled with recordings of his children's childhood, it reveals a life shaped by regret and longing—a man who has waited for forgiveness and dreamed of reuniting with his family. Defying court regulations and risking a return to prison, Yao-yu insists on delivering the tape himself. In that moment, he is no longer merely a delinquent fulfilling an obligation, but someone who chooses kindness of his own will. This decision not only earns him the elders' genuine trust, but also quietly opens Hsin-ping's heart.

*Delinquent's Guide to the South Airport Hood* is a poignant story. Readers may come away with renewed trust in

humanity, reminded that it is still worthy of hope. In this story, people on the margins learn to care for one another and, through mutual support, become each other's "chosen family." It suggests that what truly drains the will to live is the loss of human connection, the absence of love and care. And yet solidarity carries its own quiet power. Even when trust is scarce and a sense of belonging is missing at first, people can—just as they do in South Airport—slowly find their way back to one another through the rhythms of shared daily life.

I believe it is with this faith that the creators brought this moving work into being.

*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.*



## Scriptwriter **Seal Hsieh**

A full-time scriptwriter of comics, Seal Hsieh loves suspenseful thrillers and romcoms. Hsieh's representative works include *Seven Days to Live*, the comic series *BLOODY MAN*, and *Good Morning, How About Some Positivity?*



## Interviewing Scriptwriter **Ars**

Ars is a filmmaker and television professional specializing in humanities-focused documentaries. She received the 6th Purple Ribbon Award for documentary filmmaking. She also served as producer, director, and writer for the TaiwanPlus program *Welcome to Taiwan*, and is the interviewing scriptwriter and editor of the book series *South Airport Coffee Fragrance*.



## Comic Artist **H. Chia**

H. Chia is a sequential artist specializing in comics, illustration, 2D hand-drawn animation, and storyboarding. Blending European, Japanese, and American influences, her distinctive style brings warmth and vitality to everyday stories. She is the creator of *Bygone* and *South Airport Coffee Fragrance*.

Her work has been featured at the Angoulême International Comics Festival (France), BDFIL (Switzerland), the International Animated Film Festival ANIMATOR (Poland), and the Spark Animation Festival (Canada). She currently lives in Bern, Switzerland, where she swims in the river in summer, crunches through snow in winter, and posts short comics on Facebook and Instagram every week.

# Second Chances in South Airport: The Everyday Rhythms of Care at the Margins

by Wen-Chien Hsu

When was is the lowest point in your life? For some, it is the loss of a loved one; for others, financial hardship; for still others, the loneliness of having no one by their side.

In the South Airport area of Wanhua, Taipei, lively night markets coexist with illegal red-light districts, parks filled with unhoused residents, and impoverished elderly people living alone. It is within this landscape that the manga unfolds. Guo Yao-yu, a teenager repeatedly in and out of court, is ordered by a judge to perform community service under the supervision of the local neighborhood chief.

At first, Hsin-ping, the young social worker, has little faith in Yao-yu. With his

flippant attitude and careless manner, he seems like a sapling that has yet to take root—and one whom nobody expects to ever blossom. Yet drawing on what he calls his “prison connections” and his streetwise ability to read people, he quickly wins over the elderly with smooth talk and well-timed sympathy. Ironically, this leaves Hsin-ping, who has long devoted herself to the community, feeling both frustrated and unsettled.

As the story progresses, both Hsin-ping and the seniors begin to glimpse the diligence beneath the delinquent's rough exterior. Still, he is far from purely kind. Eager to complete his mandatory service hours as quickly as possible, he even deceives elders with dementia into



# Delinquent's Guide to the South Airport Hood

A Full English translation is available.

## 南機場生存指南

**Scriptwriter:** Seal Hsieh **Interviewing Scriptwriter:** Ars **Comic Artist:** H. Chia

**Publisher:** Fisfisa Media

**Date:** 01/2024

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

216 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1 (Two-book series; each book is interlinked but can also stand alone.)

**Rights sold:** Russian

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Elizabeth Hsinyin Lee

A delinquent young man named Yao-yu is sent to the South Airport neighborhood to perform community service. There, he encounters Borough Chief Fang, who runs a daily meal delivery program for elderly residents living alone. Eager to finish his service as quickly as possible, Yao-yu strikes a deal: if he can satisfy the neighborhood's elders with his work, he will be allowed to complete his service early.

But the task proves far more complicated than he expects. The elders' requests are varied, demanding, and deeply personal. To succeed, Yao-yu must do more than complete each job correctly—he must learn to listen, observe, and respond with care.

As Yao-yu takes on one challenge after another, he begins to confront not only the elders' needs, but also his own assumptions and attitudes. To his surprise—and that of those around him—he discovers a gift for this work and a capacity he never knew he had.



CAN YOU SEE THE STRIPPERS?

HEAR MY PRAYER!  
MAY I ENJOY  
FOOD, CLOTHES,  
AND PLEASURE  
WITHOUT  
SPENDING  
A PENNY!



THE SPIRITS ARE  
DESCENDING!

WHOOSH!

LOOK OVER  
THERE!

WOW!



THWACK!

SMACK!



WHY IS HE  
STANDING AT THE  
FRONT WITHOUT  
MOVING?

EXCUSE ME,  
COMING  
THROUGH.

THE ONE WITH  
FIVE RODS  
ON HIS BACK,  
ISN'T THAT THE  
CROWN PRINCE?



DONG!

DONG!



THUMP!

MAY I INTEREST  
YOU IN A  
FORTUNE  
BANNER,  
MISS?

WHACK!

LOOK BEHIND  
THE PALANQUIN!  
THE ORACLES  
ARE HERE!

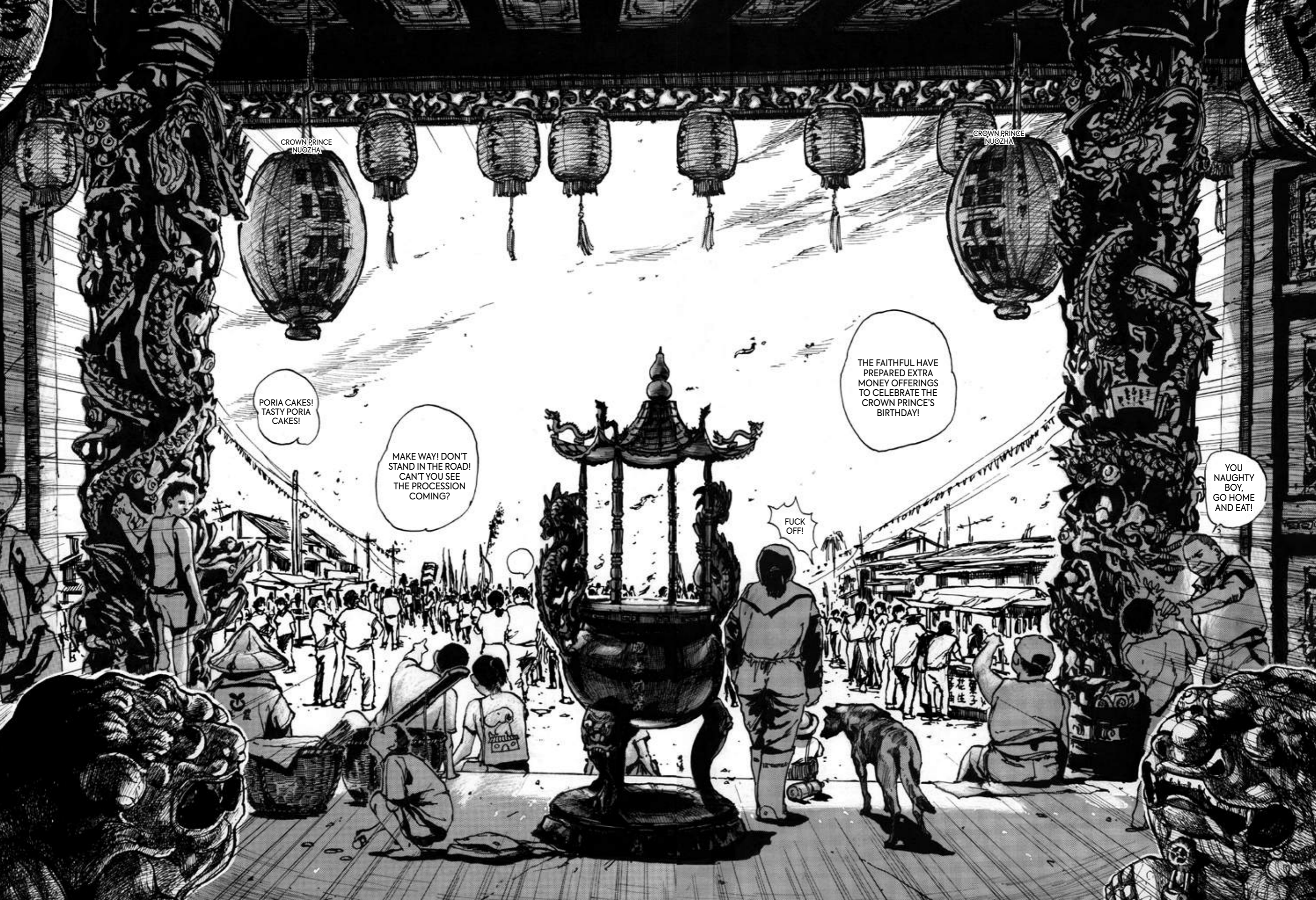
WHACK!



SWISH!

WHOOSH!

WHACK!



CROWN PRINCE  
NUOZHA

CROWN PRINCE  
NUOZHA

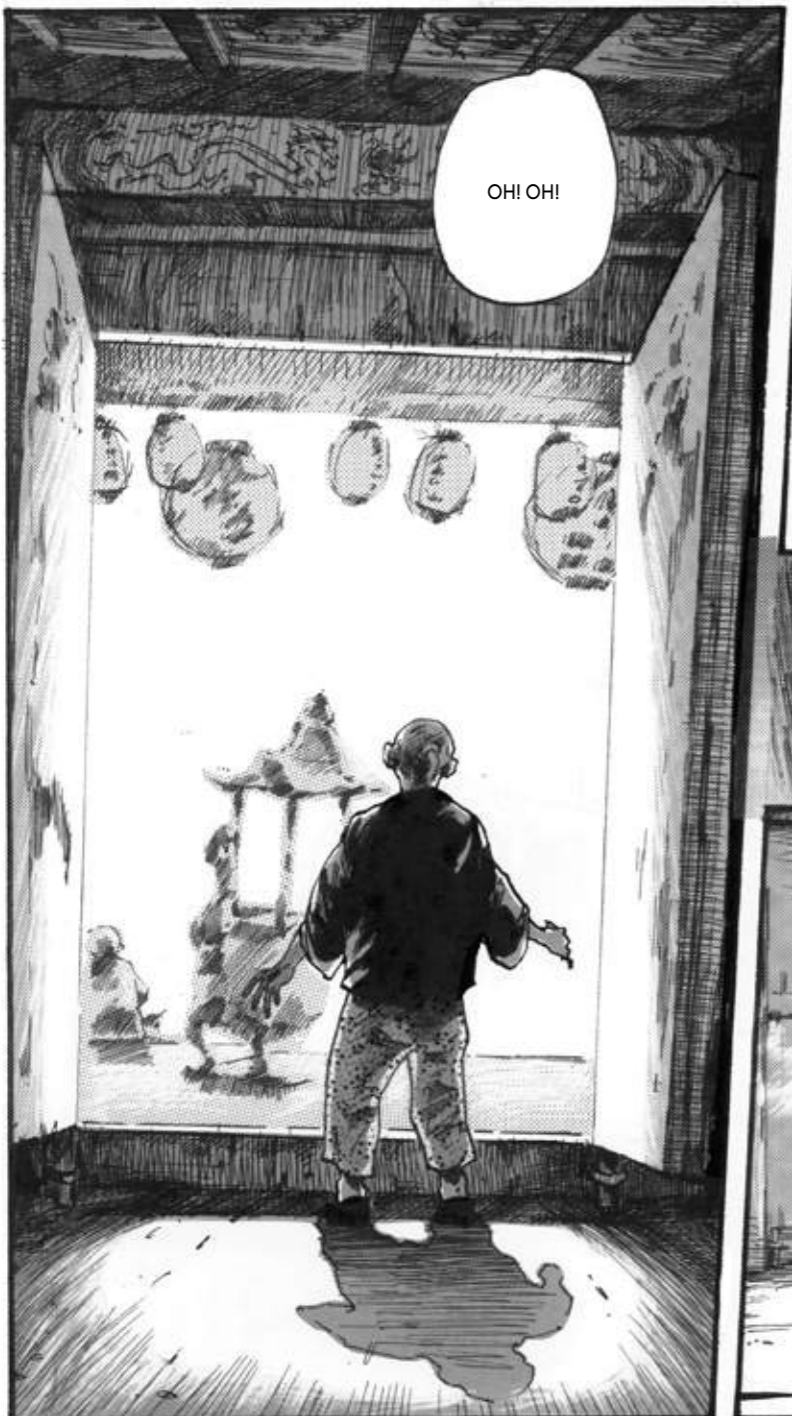
PORIA CAKES!  
TASTY PORIA  
CAKES!

MAKE WAY! DON'T  
STAND IN THE ROAD!  
CAN'T YOU SEE  
THE PROCESSION  
COMING?

THE FAITHFUL HAVE  
PREPARED EXTRA  
MONEY OFFERINGS  
TO CELEBRATE THE  
CROWN PRINCE'S  
BIRTHDAY!

FUCK  
OFF!

YOU  
NAUGHTY  
BOY,  
GO HOME  
AND EAT!



OH! OH!



ARE YOU HAPPY, CROWN PRINCE? IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY TODAY!



I WONDER HOW IT'S GOING IN THE TEMPLE PLAZA.



\*Translator note: Nuozha is commonly referred to as the "Crown Prince." In the way that a king might be referred to as King Charles, the full title Nuozha might read "Crown Prince Nuozha."

# On Depicting Mystical Power: Expanding the World of Taiwanese Comics Through Faith, Belief, and Everyday Life

by Tzu Ning Huang

The first edition of the serial comic *Nuozha* was released in 1998, at the turn of the millennium—a period when original Taiwanese comics in Taiwan were just beginning to emerge and search for their own direction. Its arrival brought a surge of rawness and wild energy to the market. Its characters come from complex, gritty backgrounds shaped by late-twentieth-century Taiwan—electronic flower trucks and strip shows, the spread of illegal drugs and outbreaks of violence sparked by land development disputes. None of these developments is pretty or heartwarming; instead, it is charged with the ferocity and vitality of Taiwanese society at the time. The story does not shy away from violence, sex, or taboo subjects, as these elements are drawn from realities that

truly existed.

*Nuozha* is one of the most active and widely worshipped deities in Taiwanese folk belief. Youthful, valiant, and possessed of formidable martial prowess, he offers rich narrative potential—qualities that find ample room to unfold within the story. Meanwhile, traditional Taiwanese temple faith is among the cultural sources most deeply embedded in everyday life on the island. Its influence permeates history, food culture, and local daily practices. Oracle culture can be understood as the belief that a deity temporarily enters a human body in order to communicate with people. For devotees, this embodied form of mediation is one of the most direct ways faith becomes tangible in everyday

life.

At first glance, the narrative framework appears relatively simple: the male protagonist is chosen by a deity and becomes an oracle, serving as *Nuozha*'s human representative in the mortal world and wielding divine power to subdue demons and vanquish evil. As the serialization progresses, however, the story gradually reveals why the protagonist was favored by the gods, while hinting that each character carries unspoken histories and hidden motives. The worldbuilding continues to expand, extending the stage of the story into the underworld and introducing an ever-growing cast of characters. These developments enrich both the narrative and its thematic layers, allowing the plot to evolve from simplicity into complexity and drawing readers deeper into its world.

The scenes of demon subjugation are particularly striking. With bold, unrestrained linework, the artist renders combat sequences with visceral energy and momentum. At the same time, his

depictions of static settings—such as temples or the underworld—are rich in detail, shaped by the needs of the narrative and capable of evoking both grandeur and a sense of awe.

From its choice of subject matter to the structure of its storytelling, *Nuozha* demonstrates how cultural “closeness”—to the land, to belief, and to everyday life—can become both a source of creative inspiration and a point of pride. There is a saying in Taiwan: “The more local it is, the more international it becomes.” Through this comic, readers around the world are invited, step by step, to encounter Taiwan's traditions and to discover their depth, mystery, and enduring appeal.

*Tzu Ning Huang is an editor 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.*



# Nuozha

A Full English translation is available.

太子爺

**Author:** Yi-Pin Zhuo **Illustrator:** Yi-Pin Zhuo **Publisher:** Initial Publish (SMALL SMALL IDEA CO., LTD.)

**Date:** 07/1998

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

784 pages | 21 x 29.7 cm (tentative)

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** William Serrano

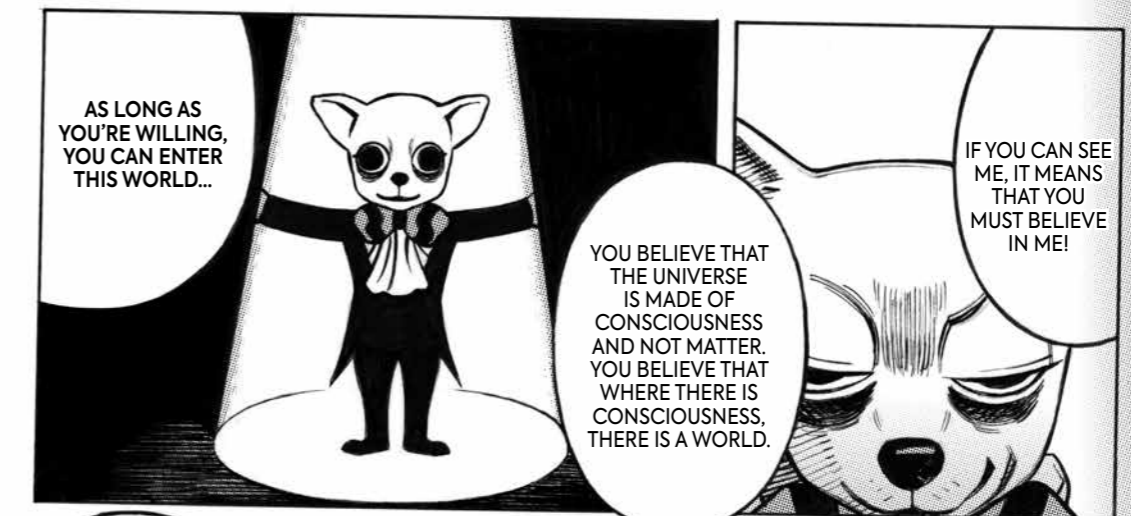
*Nuozha* is widely regarded as one of the defining works of the golden age of Taiwanese comics. Distinguished by its dark visual style and fantasy-driven narrative, the story follows Thih-Hui Li, a youth who bears the gilded body of Nuozha, a deity in Taiwanese folk belief. After accidentally awakening the spiritual power, Thih-Hui becomes entangled in bonds with past lives that stretch across the courts of the underworld.

One of renowned artist Yi-Pin Zhuo's representative works, *Nuozha* began serialization in 1998 in *Dragon Boy*, published by Tong Li Publishing, and was later released in collected volumes. The series later gained renewed attention through a digital release on the Creative Comic Collection platform. This revised edition has since been licensed for republication by Initial Publish. The narrative continually expands its setting, moving into the underworld and introducing a steadily enlarging cast that enriches its mythology.



Author **Yi-Pin Zhuo**

Yi-Pin Zhuo is known for a highly versatile body of work and a sustained creative presence in the comics field. His practice spans genres from magical realism and shōnen science fiction to adult comics and sports manga. A frequent participant in international comics festivals, Yi-Pin Zhuo has continually expanded and refined his visual language through experimentation and innovation, establishing himself as one of the most significant creators in contemporary Taiwanese comics.





...IS THE WORLD INSIDE A MANGAKA'S MIND.

MANGALAND ...



FUCK!



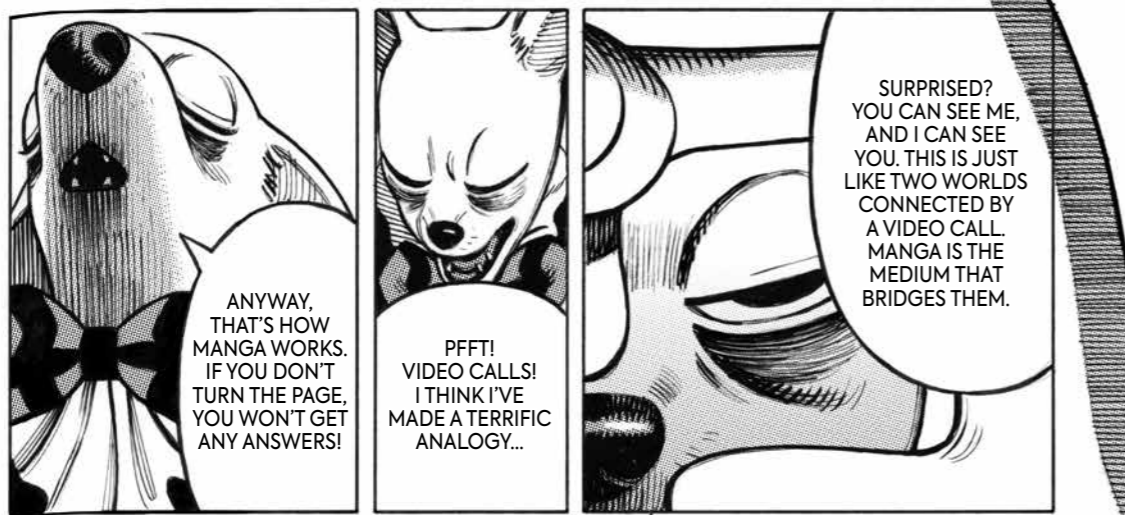
CORRECT. THE CLOCK ON YOUR WALL SAYS IT IS 9.03 AM.

IT LOOKS LIKE... YOU'RE READING THIS MANGA IN YOUR ROOM?

ARE YOU FINALLY GOING TO TURN THE PAGE?



FUCK.



ANYWAY, THAT'S HOW MANGA WORKS. IF YOU DON'T TURN THE PAGE, YOU WON'T GET ANY ANSWERS!

PFFT! VIDEO CALLS! I THINK I'VE MADE A TERRIFIC ANALOGY...

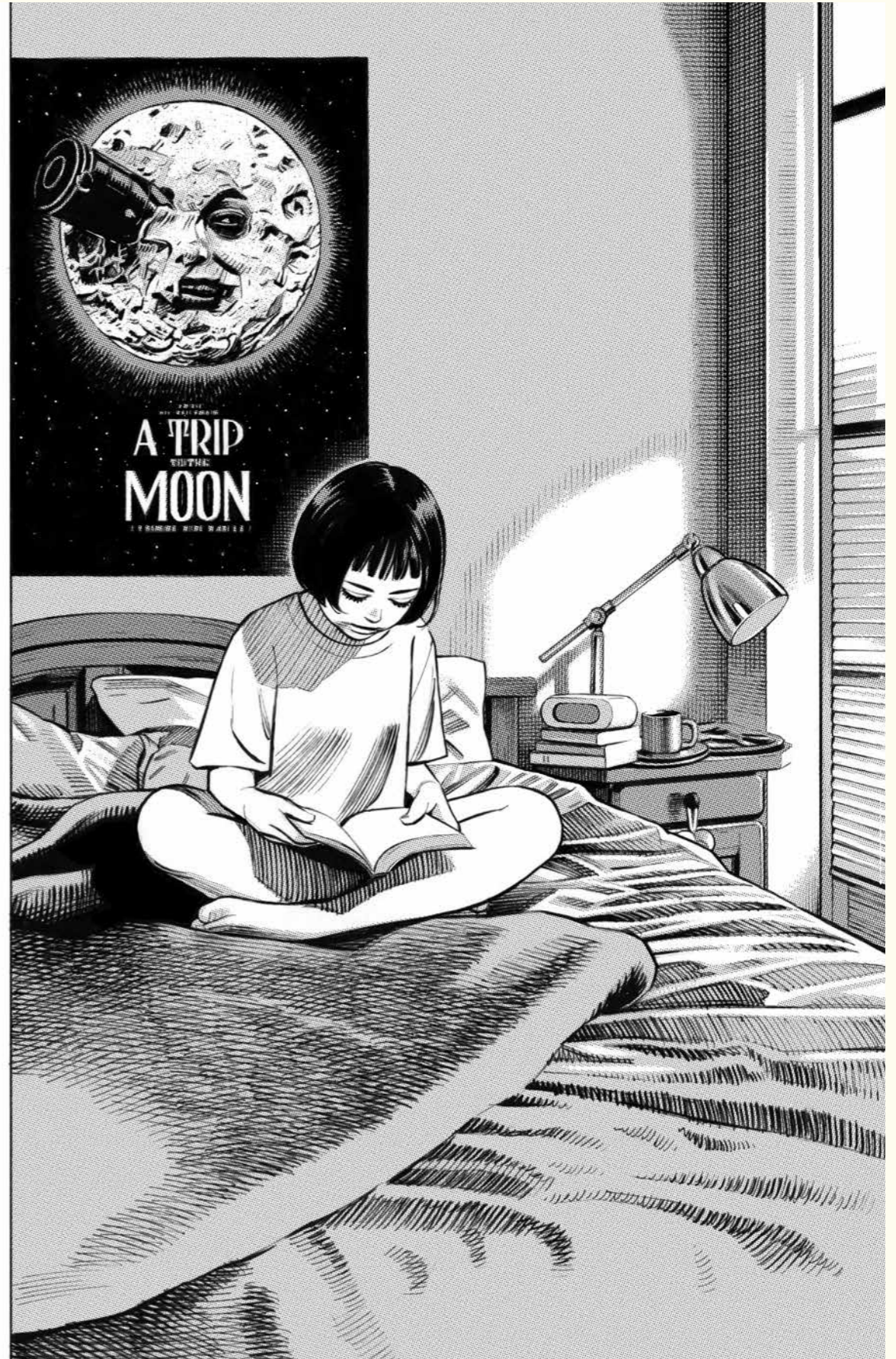
SURPRISED? YOU CAN SEE ME, AND I CAN SEE YOU. THIS IS JUST LIKE TWO WORLDS CONNECTED BY A VIDEO CALL. MANGA IS THE MEDIUM THAT BRIDGES THEM.



MANGALAND.

YOU'RE NOT ALICE, AND I AM NOT SOME RABBIT IN A WHITE WAISTCOAT. THIS IS...

COUGH... MIND YOUR MANNERS, MISS.



# Created as A Love Letter to Manga Fans: Four Singular Artists Join Forces to Expand the Genre's Possibilities

by Gahra Hippie  
(originally published on [OKAPI.BOOKS.COM.TW](http://OKAPI.BOOKS.COM.TW))

If you were to randomly ask passersby what “comics” mean to them, you would likely receive hundreds, if not thousands, of different answers.

Veteran comic artist Chang Sheng, with decades of creative experience, teams up with ZEI, Peter Mann, and Path to create an extraordinary, single-story adventure that departs from the everyday.

Upon opening the deep blue cover, we meet a chihuahua that speaks human language. Talking animals are nothing new—but this chihuahua is different. He breaks the fourth wall, addressing the reader directly. As we turn the next page, we realize that while speaking

to the reader, he is simultaneously communicating with the female protagonist.

The heroine of *MANGALAND* is a bob-haired schoolgirl. While reading comics at home, she suddenly realizes that the characters are speaking to her. She hurriedly tells her father, a comic artist, about this strange occurrence. Then, on her way out to summer sessions, she encounters even more events reminiscent of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

In the first chapter, Chang Sheng passes the baton to ZEI. The first time I saw the girl drawn by ZEI, her large, lively eyes and delicate style immediately drew me in. A lover of Lolita fashion, ZEI crafts

the first world with striking vibrancy and beauty. The heroine truly becomes Alice in Wonderland, stepping into a picture-book realm where speech bubbles are tangible objects, almost within reach.

In the second chapter, the heroine enters a world crafted by Peter Mann. Characters descend layer by layer into the dreamscape of the human mind. Fragmented, bizarre, and uncanny events feel perfectly natural within the logic of dreams, revealing the intricate complexity of the subconscious. The experience is like stepping directly into the artist's mind, with the heroine acting as a playful mouthpiece to gently mock the comic's creator. Traditionally, the comic artist occupies a godlike position—omniscient and omnipotent within the story—but here, that hierarchy is inverted, allowing the created being to critique the creator.

The third chapter, drawn by comic artist Path, is rendered entirely in pencil. While pencils are typically reserved for sketches or drafts, Path employs a distinctive visual style and a simple, warm narrative to create his own vision of the “land of comics.” In this chapter, there are no inked lines, no screentones, and not even conventional panel layouts. The black frames are removed, yet the language of comics persists, returning to the essentials of dialogue, character tension, and narrative segmentation. The story shifts back to the heroine's everyday life, where the interpersonal

challenges she faces mirror the obstacles we encounter in our own daily lives. The comic's “hint-giving characters” may well represent the mentors or benefactors we meet in real life.

After three dazzling adventures, the heroine meets a boy traveling with a suitcase. Chang Sheng returns for the final chapter, where everyone carries a locked suitcase in their heart, safeguarding precious and beautiful memories. What, then, lies inside the boy's suitcase?

With a compelling sense of symmetry, *MANGALAND* seamlessly unites its opening and ending. Its conclusion is exhilarating. Marked by a highly distinctive narrative approach and brimming with the passion of its creators, this comic delights and surprises from the very first page. Viewed from different angles, it reveals new sensations with every reading. Above all, it is a love letter to everyone who cherishes comics.

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

*Gahra Hippie is a veteran otaku who grew up immersed in the arts from elementary school onward, and deeply believes that otaku culture and literary sensibilities can coexist. She hosts the podcast *Otaku Literati Salon*, and her writing has appeared on *Vocus*, *Creative Comic Collection*, *Womany*, *AgentMovie*, and *Reading Island*.*




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Author **Chang Sheng**

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Born in Taipei, Taiwan in 1968, Chang Sheng graduated from the Western Painting Department of Fuxing Commercial High School. After 15 years in advertising, he transitioned to comic creation in 2002. Notable works include *Dream Hotel*, *Baby*, *OLDMAN*, *The Hidden Level*, *Nine Lives Man: Time's Wheel*, and *Yan*. Chang Sheng was part of the Louvre Comics Project and contributed to "Seven Dreams of the Louvre: Fantastic Journey of Taiwanese Comic Artists." His works have been licensed in Japanese, French, Korean, English, Italian, Turkish, and other languages.




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Author **ZEI**

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ZEI is a Taiwanese manga artist known for emotional fantasy. ZEI created *Witch in Practice: Pico Pico* (6 volumes) and won 2015 the 6th Best Comic for Teenage Girls and 2016 the 7th Character Design at the Golden Comic Awards.




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Author **Peter Mann**

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Born in 1995 in Germany, Peter Mann is 100% Taiwanese. She previously worked in animation and video production but has now started creating comics. Her illustration work often relates to music, including visuals for music festivals and album cover designs. Peter's comic creations are difficult to categorize, but she enjoys exploring dark humor in daily life and developing unexpected twists within seemingly logical narratives. In 2023, her work *Bla Bla Song* won the Best New Talent Award and the Best Cross-Media Application Award at the 14th Golden Comic Awards.




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Author **Path**

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Path is a horror manga artist and cat lover. Known for *The Children's Mass Suicide*, *End of Days*, and *Story of Neil Poe*, Path weaves social critique through eerie, unsettling storytelling.



Mangaland



# MANGALAND

A Full English translation is available.

## 漫畫之國

**Author:** Chang Sheng, ZEI, Peter Mann, Path **Illustrator:** Chang Sheng, ZEI, Peter Mann, Path

**Publisher:** Dala Publishing

**Date:** 02/2024

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

320 pages | 16.5 x 23 cm **Volume:** 1

**Adaptation:** Figurine

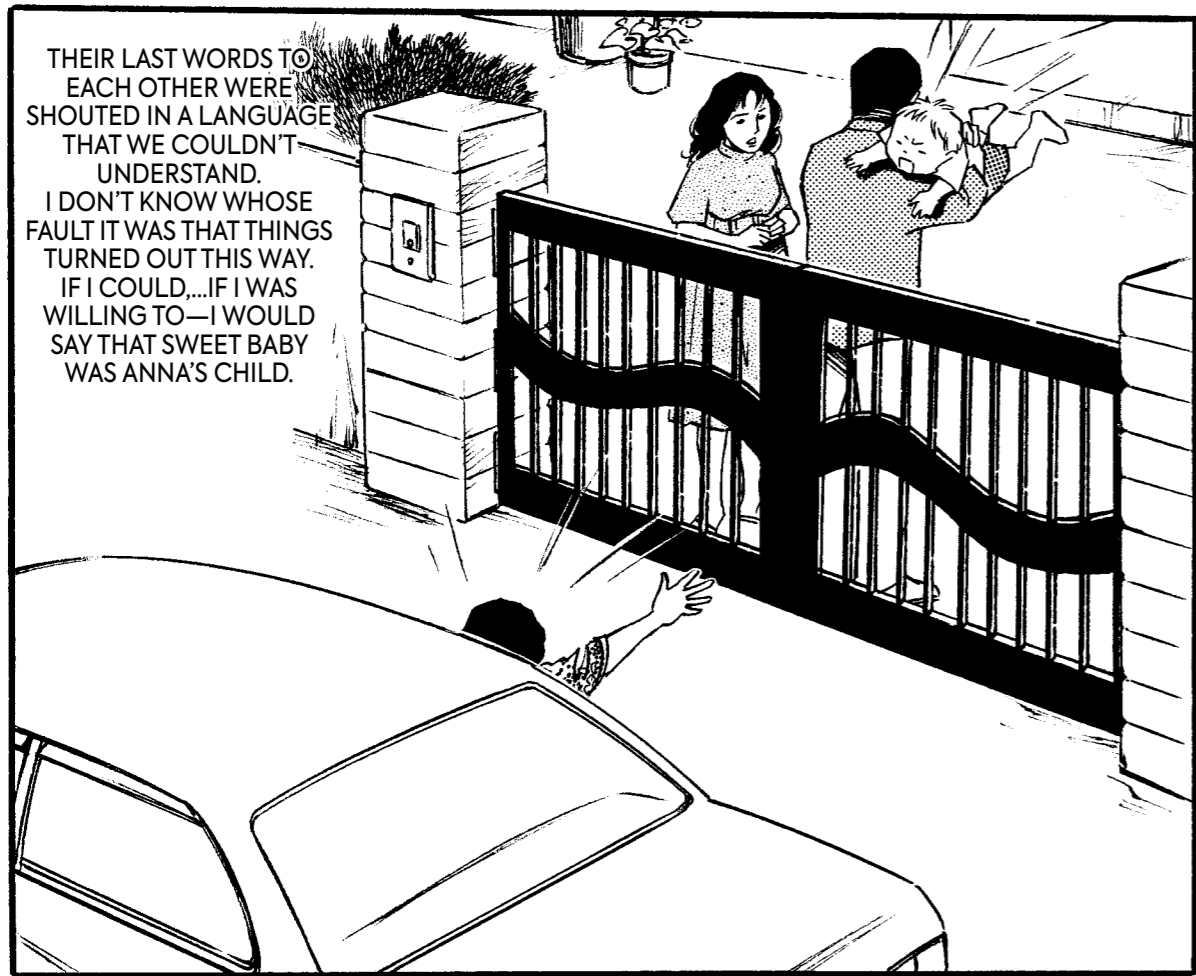
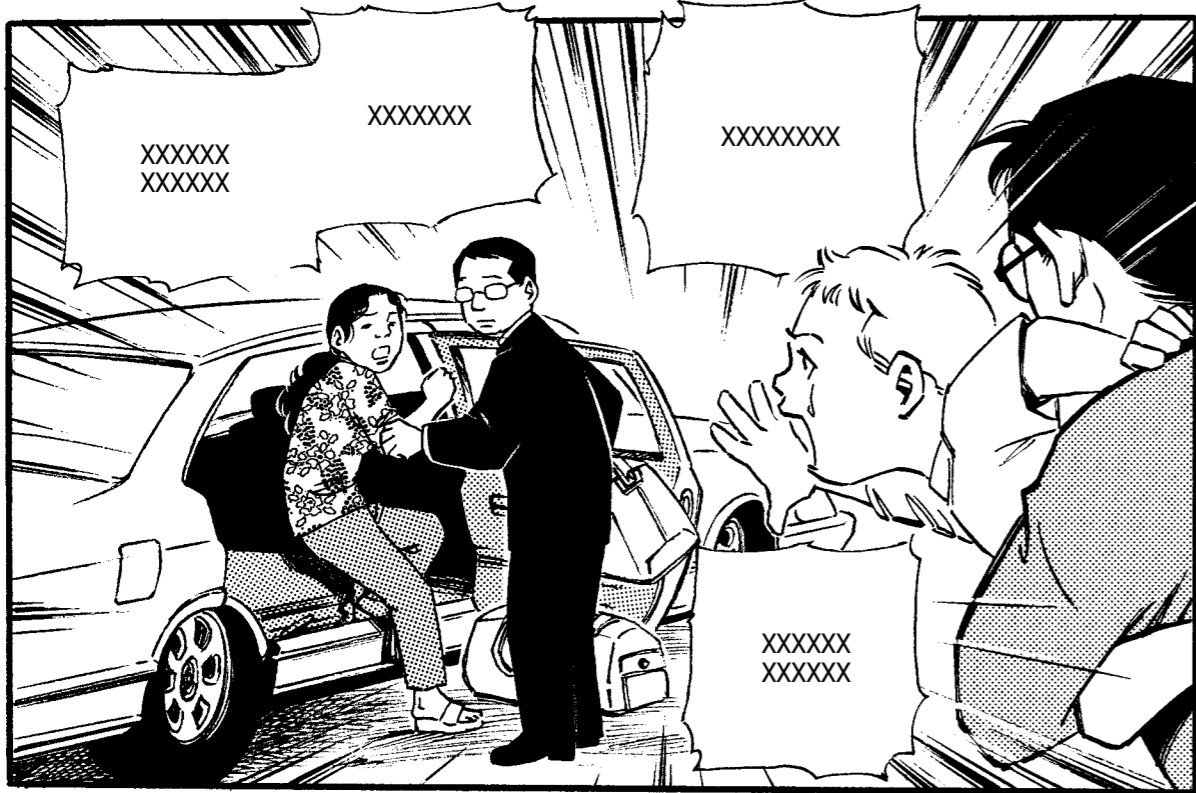
**Rights sold:** Russian

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Elizabeth Hsinyin Lee

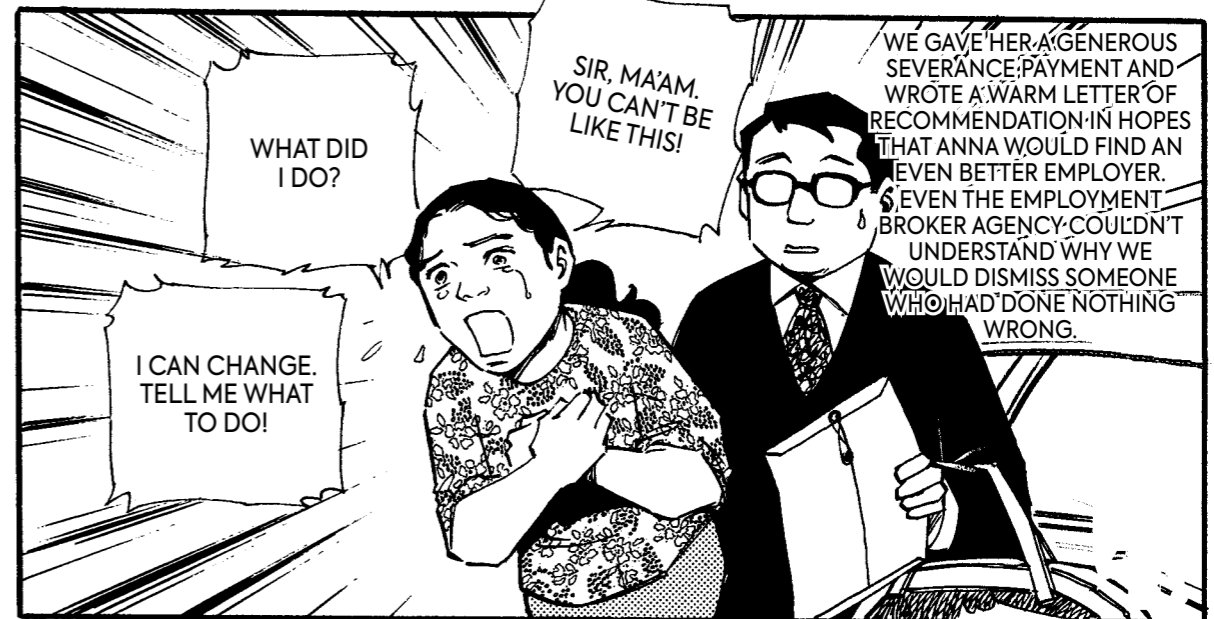
As a young girl slips from one manga world into the next, readers are pulled deeper into a surreal journey. Echoing Alice's passage through the looking glass, *MANGALAND* invites them into a playful realm of imagination.

*MANGALAND* is a collaborative manga by four singular artists—Chang Sheng, ZEI, Peter Mann, and Path. Each chapter is drawn by a single artist, while the transition pages, co-created by the artists, blend styles to reflect the passage between worlds. These distinct chapters are anchored by a single protagonist, forming one immersive storyline. Introspective and whimsical, this book is not a manga anthology at all. Rather, it is a mosaic—an experiment in narrative that celebrates artistic diversity while boldly reimagining what manga can be.

“Ah, I remember now—I’ve always loved manga.”



THEIR LAST WORDS TO EACH OTHER WERE SHOUTED IN A LANGUAGE THAT WE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND. I DON'T KNOW WHOSE FAULT IT WAS THAT THINGS TURNED OUT THIS WAY. IF I COULD...IF I WAS WILLING TO—I WOULD SAY THAT SWEET BABY WAS ANNA'S CHILD.



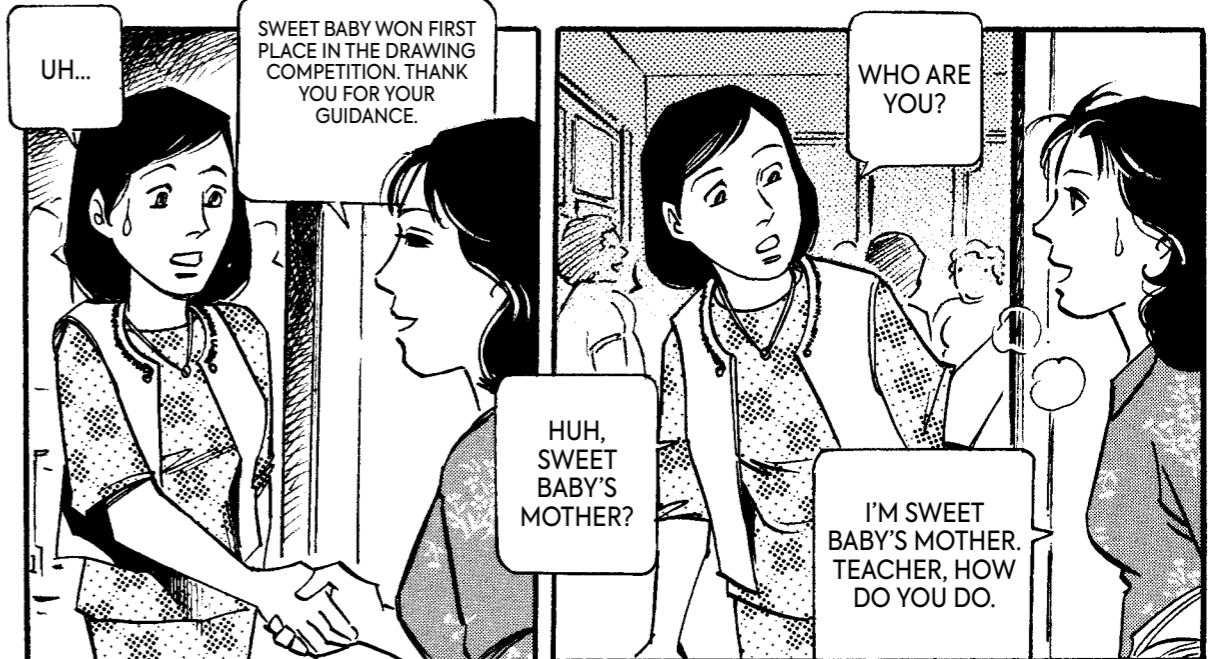
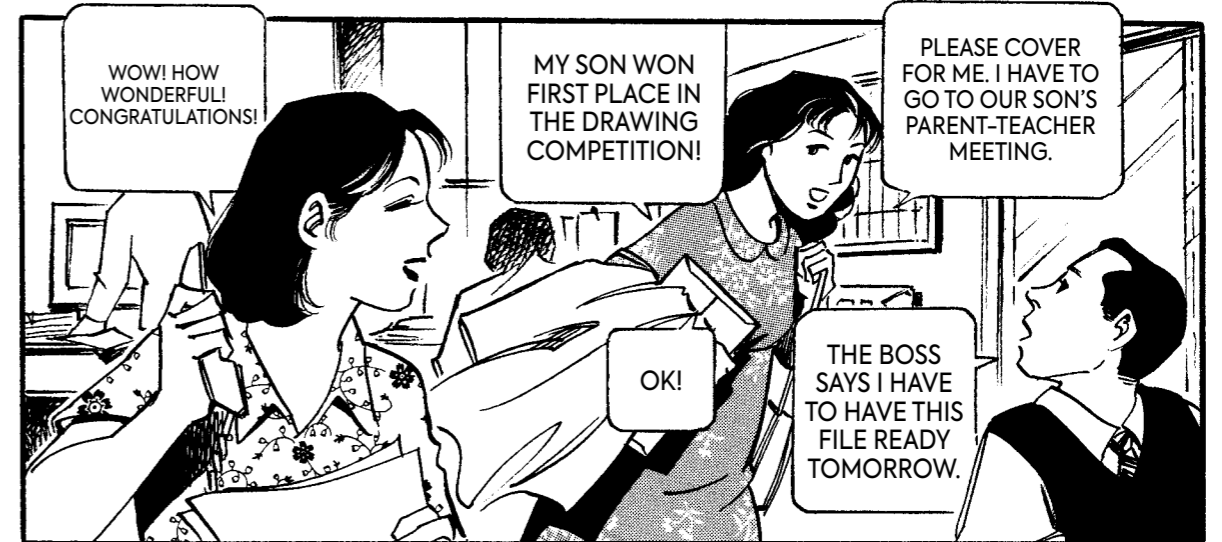
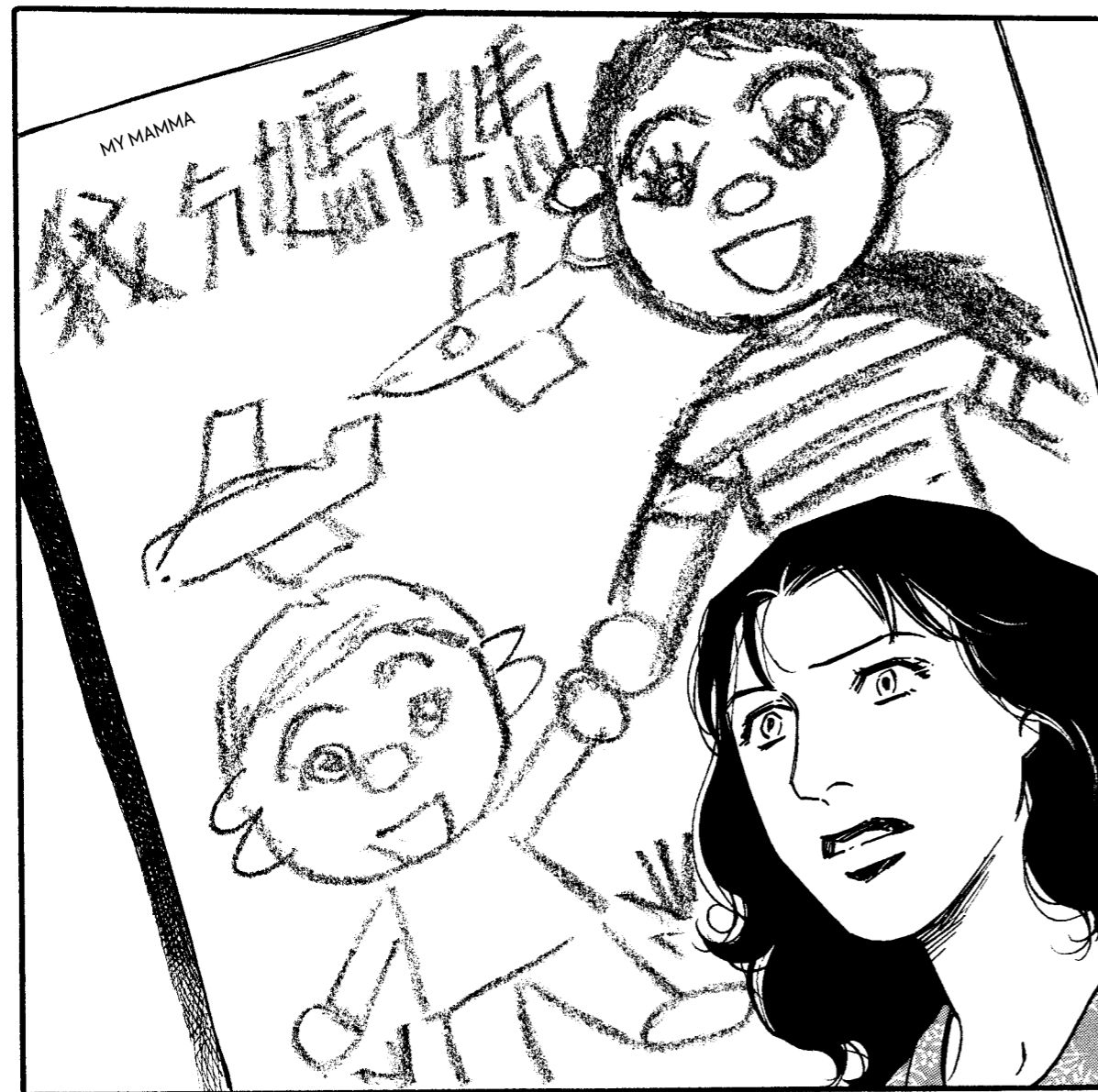
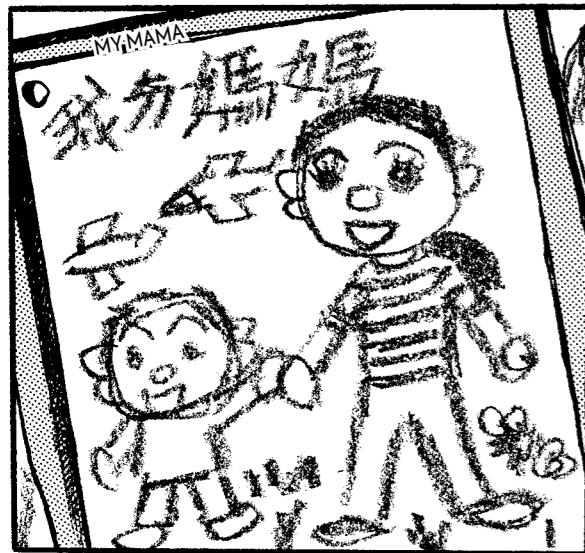
WHAT DID I DO?

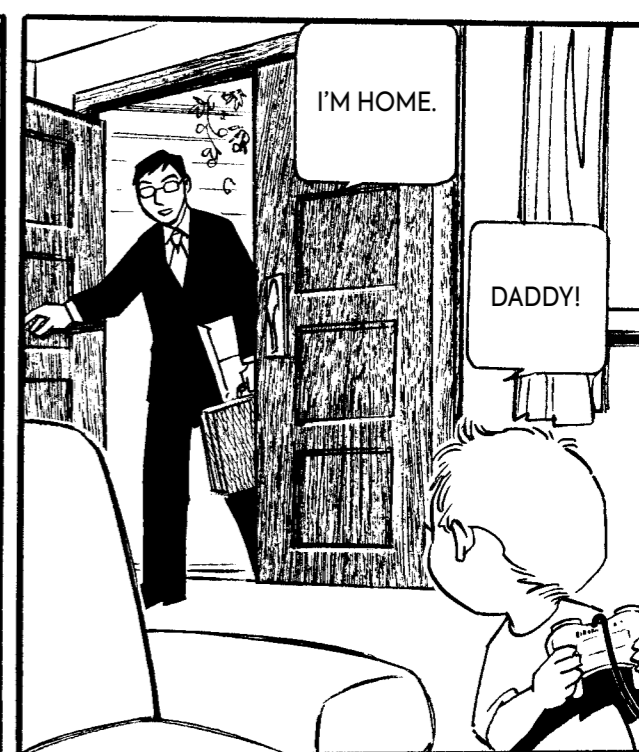
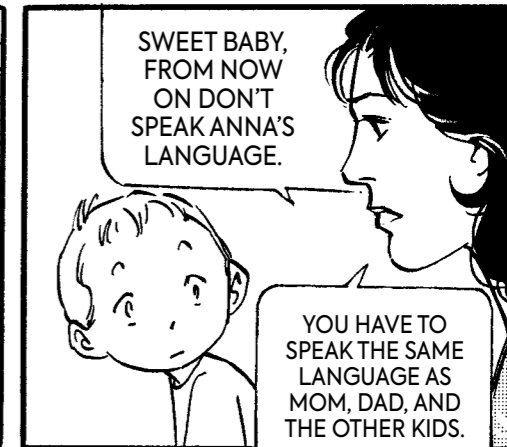
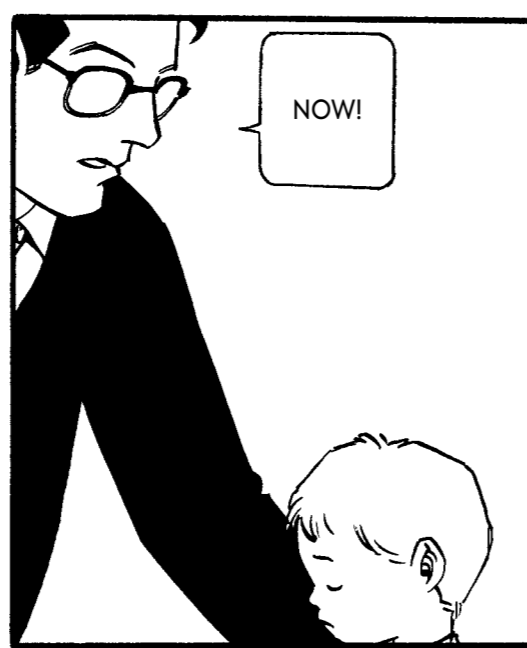
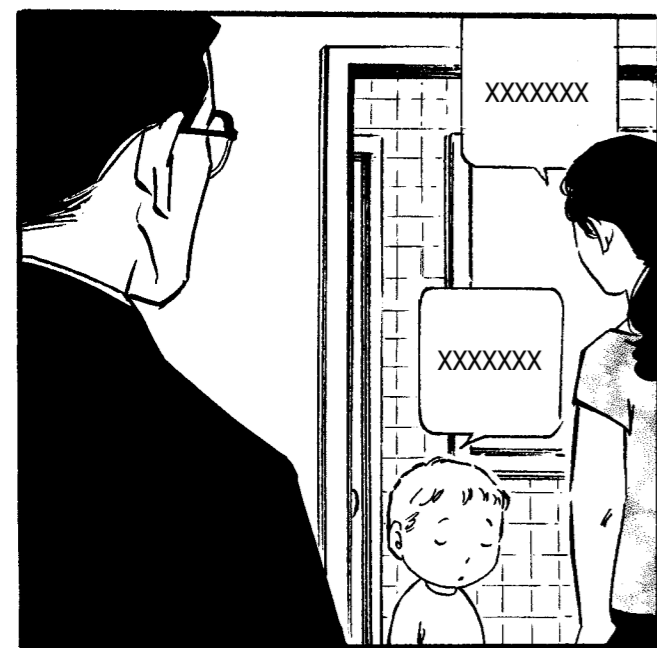
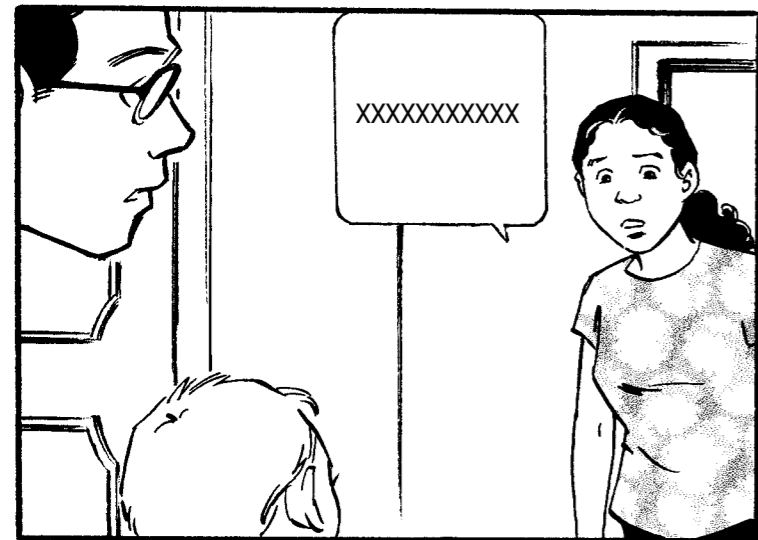
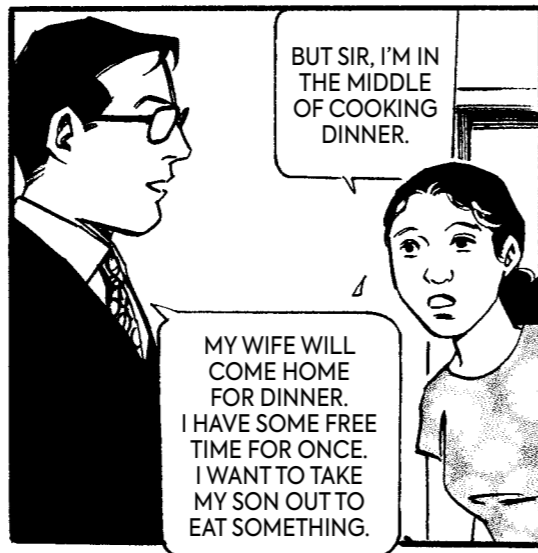
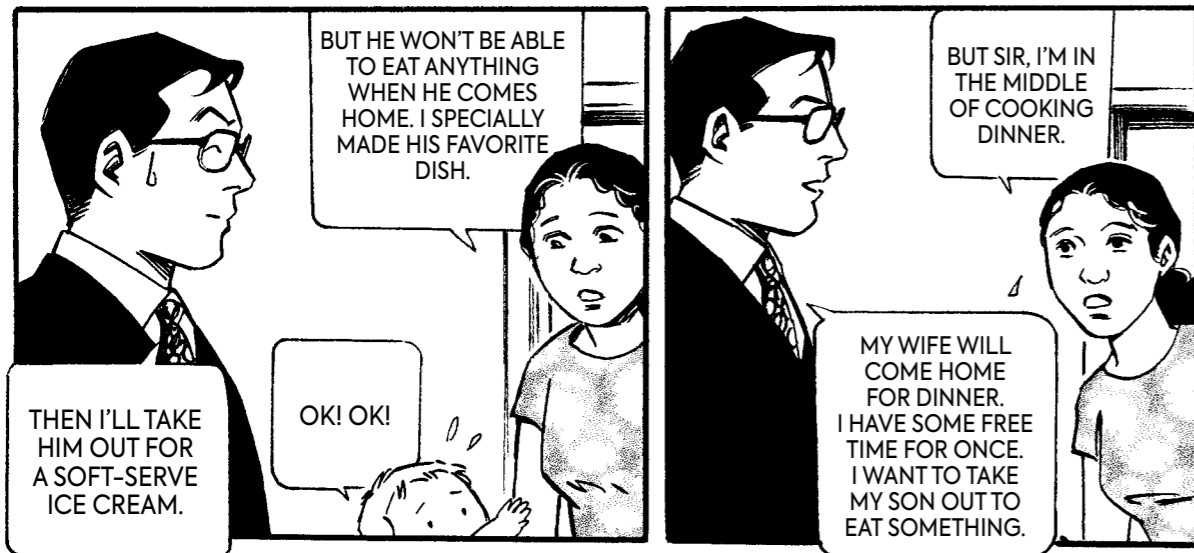
SIR, MA'AM. YOU CAN'T BE LIKE THIS!

WE GAVE HER A GENEROUS SEVERANCE PAYMENT AND WROTE A WARM LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION IN HOPES THAT ANNA WOULD FIND AN EVEN BETTER EMPLOYER. EVEN THE EMPLOYMENT BROKER AGENCY COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE WOULD DISMISS SOMEONE WHO HAD DONE NOTHING WRONG.

I CAN CHANGE. TELL ME WHAT TO DO!







# On the Necessity of Ren Zheng-hua: A Creator of Unsparing Vision, Radical Originality, and Path-Breaking Force

by Wolf Hsu

During the formative years of Taiwan's professional comics industry, local creators faced a number of challenges. Readers were already accustomed to the highly developed Japanese manga market, while publishers and editors provided relatively little support for story development. At the same time, rigid production schedules and strict deadlines left creators little flexibility. Whether a comic could unfold seamlessly and reach a satisfying conclusion often depended as much on the creator's skill as a writer as on their stamina.

Even in her very first long-form work, Ren Zheng-hua showed a confident command of both theme and storytelling. Her approach to subject

matter distinguished her from other comic artists. Ren once remarked that she felt she needed to "tear everything down and start over." American comics—whose drawing techniques, visual presentation, and narrative methods differ radically from Japanese manga—proved to be a major stimulus for her. In her subsequent work *The Human Bun*, Ren began incorporating American stylistic elements into her linework and page composition.

Ren Zheng-hua's love for comics was transformed into a remarkable initiative. She produced independently published works with distinctive bindings, such as *The Seven Sages of Doing Nothing* and *Rose Comics*, and single-handedly ran the comics magazine *Lotto* for two years. Across these projects, Ren experimented

with a wide range of visual and narrative techniques. Even in works more readily categorized as "gag comics," such as the *Naughty Family* series, her engagement with these themes remains evident. The tone may be lighter and more satirical, but the core concerns never change.

Among the short and long works previously collected under the title *Drawn to Life* and now re-edited as *Drawn to Life: A Ren Zheng-hua Collection*, the story *No Means Yes* represents Ren's most direct engagement with misogyny as a central theme. Beginning with a murder case, the story exposes the bullying women face in misogynistic environments. From psychological pressures to workplace discrimination, from interpersonal relationships to gossip, Ren has honed in on misunderstandings perpetuated by the media, pressures exerted by family, and a broad range of experiences of women.

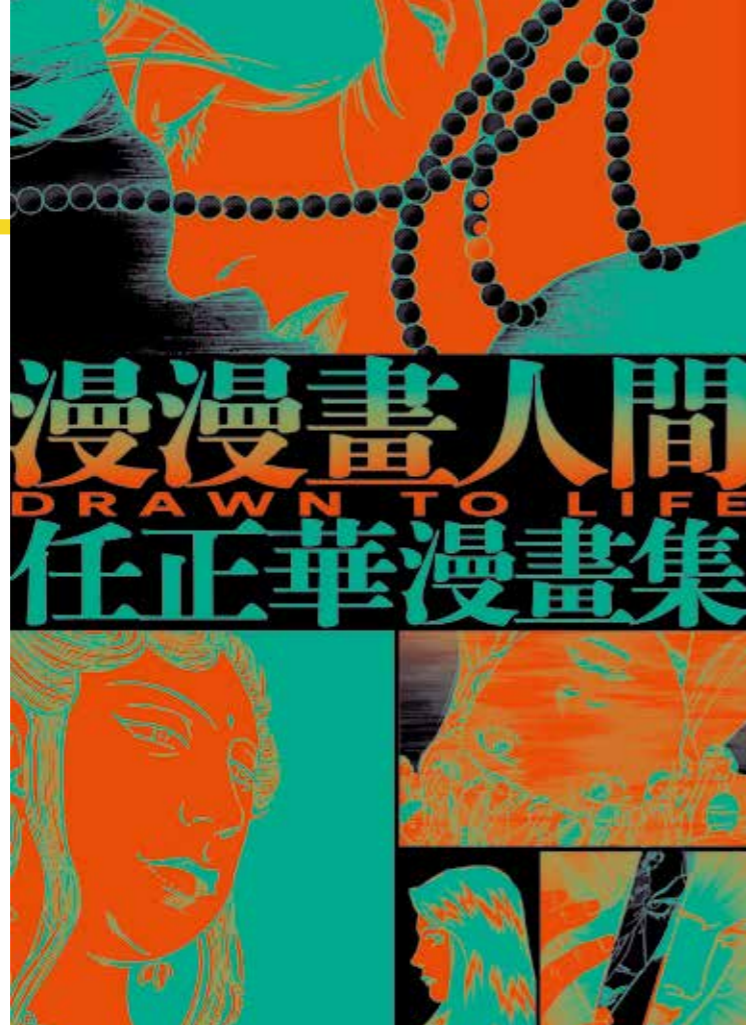
Neither *The Human Bun* nor *Drawn to Life: A Ren Zheng-hua Collection* consists of epic long-form narratives or serialized sagas. Precisely because of this, they achieve a sharper focus and a more distilled articulation of these themes. The shadow of domestic violence in *A Family's Happiness*, the realities of migrant labor and child-rearing in *Anna's Child*, and, like *No Means Yes*, the ruthless exposure of social hypocrisy all lay bare what is unbearable or helpless beneath the surface. *Seduction* carries satire steeped

in misogyny; *The Visitors* and *The Siamese Fighting Fish* pose questions about self-discovery and faith in life; and *The Son*, previously published as a standalone volume, clearly points out that men who grow up in misogynistic environments are also constrained by distorted values. From certain perspectives, they may appear to be beneficiaries of such systems; from others, they are unwilling, melancholic victims of oppression themselves. Such skewed frameworks, taken for granted, continue to be passed down from Generation to Generation.

We need creators like Ren Zheng-hua—artists whose observation of humanity is nearly cold, and whose depiction is almost cruel.

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

*Wolf Hsu, trained in medical engineering, works in publishing. He sleeps very little, works long hours, carries a thin wallet, and wants to do many things. His published works include Rain Dog Space, Warm Beer and Cold Women, The Circus Leaves Town, The Tongue-Walking Family, No One Knows I've Left, Broken Dream Boulevard, Even Tough Guys Can Be Soft Sometimes, Let Me Know When You Reach Dreamland, FIX, Ants Climbing a Tree, and Low-Cost Dreams.*



# Drawn to Life: A Ren Zheng-hua Collection

A Full English translation is available.

漫漫書人間：任正華漫畫集

**Author:** Ren Zheng-hua **Illustrator:** Ren Zheng-hua **Publisher:** Locus Publishing

**Date:** 09/2020

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

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

**Awards:** 2003 The 27th Golden Tripod Awards (Comics)

**BFT 2.0 Translator:** Michael Fahey

This collection showcases the significant, award-winning works of Ren Zheng-hua's late career. It includes the short-form anthology *Drawn to Life*, the longform *The Son*, and the rare doujinshi *Seven Sages of Doing Nothing*. The eight works vary widely in length and theme. Some are rooted in realism, exploring the cruelty of human nature in settings such as long-term hospital care, office gossip and bullying, and migrant caregivers in family households. Other works take a more literary approach, reflecting on love, marriage, and family in Mandarin-speaking societies. And last, some works employ dark humor to examine the past or indulge in surreal flights of fancy. *The Son* was also published in French as *Le Fils* by the acclaimed publisher Casterman.



Author **Ren Zheng-hua**

Ren Zheng-hua is one of Taiwan's leading comic artists. Born in Taipei in 1963, Ren began her comics career with the immensely popular *Sea of Devil*, serialized in *Sunday Comics* magazine, and later collected into a three-volume graphic novel. Incisively witty and tinged with dark humor, Ren masterfully weaves stories that span from the ancient to the modern, from the mythic and fantastic to everyday reality, often satirizing humanity's capacity for both good and evil. Ren is also the founder of publisher BoHai Culture Co, and comics magazine *Lotto*. In 2007, her work was published in French under the title *Le Fils*, making Ren the first Taiwanese comic book creator to be published by Casterman. In 2021, Ren received the Special Contribution Award at the 12th Golden Comic Awards.

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# COMIC BOOKS

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