

WANG-WANG, THE ELEPHANT

大象忘忘

Deep in the savanna roams an elephant called Wang-Wang. He's a newcomer who's haunted by the shadows of his past, but with the help and comradery of his friends, he manages to heal the trauma from his previous life.

All the elephants who roam the savanna have incredible memories. The only exception is Wang-Wang, an elephant from a faraway place who is extremely good at forgetting which earns him the name "Forgetful". After spending a few days with him, the other elephants begin to realize that Wang-Wang is acting a bit strange and he speaks in a way that they don't understand. He doesn't even seem to remember how to do simple things like walking, foraging, and playing, plus he has trouble sleeping because he often has nightmares. What happened in Wang-Wang's past? And what can his friends do to help?

Author Wang Yu-Ching was inspired to create this book after reading about the abuse of circus animals, and uses warm, humorous words alongside Nan Jun's delicate illustration style to present the characters' inner worlds. By discussing post-traumatic stress disorder and trauma recovery, the book teaches children to accept and tolerate differences, as well as encouraging them to contemplate the relationship between humans and animals. This heartwarming, love-filled picture book is not only dedicated to the animals that have been subjected to pain at the hands of humans, but also to any child who has been forced to experience suffering while growing up.

Text by Wang Yu-Ching 王宇清

Wang Yu-Ching has a PhD in children's literature and writes guides, blurbs, and reviews of children's books. He has won numerous awards including the Chiu Ko Young Adult Literature Award. He is



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best known for *The Daemon Times* series (Korean rights sold), and his other works have appeared in children's newspapers and magazines.

Illustrated by Nan Jun 南君

Born in Pingtung, Nan Jun was inspired to pursue an illustration career all the way back in primary school after reading page after page of beautifully illustrated picture books. He continues to work by hand because he wants to have only one "draft". His work is retro in style and exquisitely executed. His picture books include *Wishing at 18 Degrees Below Zero*, *The Girl from the Tower*, and *Fox Hatches an Egg*.

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Translated by Helen Wang

p.6-7

A new elephant appeared on the plain.

“Excuse me, I can’t remember anything, please could you help me?”

he asked a group of four elephants.

They were very surprised because elephants have always had excellent memories.

p.8-9

“It looks like there’s something wrong with your memory, my friend,” said Grey.

“Better to say that your forgetfulness is excellent!” said Sweet Fruit.

“Can we give you a nickname? How about Wang-Wang?” Baldy welcomed him to the group.

“But...” their new friend hesitated.

“Don’t worry! Come and join us, Wang-Wang!” said Tusks.

p.10-11

It was early morning.

The four elephants took Wang-Wang for a walk.

Elephants love going for walks.

They walked and walked...

But where was Wang-Wang?

Had he fallen behind?

p.12-13

They looked back and gasped.

Wang-Wang was trying to stand on two legs on a round stone.

He was struggling to keep his balance.

Was that really more fun than walking?

p.14-15

Wang-Wang wobbled and fell over.

“Sorry, that wasn’t very good!” Wang-Wang apologized quickly.

Grey tried to copy him, but he fell off too.

“Ouch, my bottom!” cried Grey.

Tusks tried to comfort Wang-Wang: “Elephants don’t need to do that!”

“Really?” asked Wang-Wang. He couldn’t quite believe it.

p.16-17

They walked and walked. Everyone was hungry.
Elephants love to eat grass, leaves, and fruit.
The four elephants picked bananas from the trees by the road.
They were preparing a feast...
But where was Wang-Wang? They glanced back and saw...

p.18-19

Oh my goodness! Wang-Wang was standing on his head.
After all that walking, wasn't he hungry?
They were just thinking how strange it was, when they heard
Wang-Wang say quietly: "Excuse me, please could you give me something to eat?"

p.20-21

Sweet Fruit asked Wang-Wang to sit comfortably, then said:
"When elephants are hungry, they just pick fruit from the trees!"
"Really?" asked Wang-Wang. "I'm sorry, I've forgotten how to pick fruit."
He was very embarrassed.
"I'll show you!" said Sweet Fruit, wrapping her trunk around a banana.

p.22-23

That night, Baldy woke up.
He saw Wang-Wang standing up straight, not daring to move.
"Wang-Wang, why don't you go to sleep?" Baldy asked.
"I'm sorry, no one said I could go to sleep," said Wang-Wang.
He was so tired that his voice was trembling.

p.24-25

Baldy stretched out his legs, then said:
"Do you know that elephants can sleep whenever they like?"
"Really?" asked Wang-Wang. He lay down tentatively.
But even in his dreams, Wang-Wang couldn't relax.
He kept groaning and sighing.
The other elephants tried to comfort him, but nothing worked.

p.26-27

The other elephants were upset and thought hard.
If only they knew what he was dreaming about, they might be able to help.
But Wang-Wang could never remember his dreams.
Tusks reassured everyone:

“Fortunately, Wang-Wang is excellent at forgetting,
because when he has a bad dream, he just forgets it!”

p.28-29

Although Wang-Wang spent every day with a relaxed and
contented group of elephants that ate when they liked,
and slept when they like.

He still felt low.

p.30-31

Wang-Wang never smiled.
But Tusks, Sweet Fruit, Baldy, and Grey tried
to cheer him up every single day...

p.32-33

Until one night, Wang-Wang seemed to be having a terrible dream.
His whole body was shaking, he was in a cold sweat.
He kept crying out loud: “I’m sorry! I’m sorry!”
Wang-Wang seemed to be trapped in a nightmare.
No matter how often they called his name,
he couldn’t wake up.

p.34-35

“Poor Wang-Wang,
what horrible things are you dreaming about?”
“Don’t be afraid, Wang-Wang, we’re here by your side!”
They looked after Wang-Wang, and kept encouraging him.

p.36-37

(wordless)

p.38-39

“Wang-Wang! You’re here with us!”
“It’s time for us elephants to play in the mud.
It’s my turn now!”

The four elephants sat around Wang-Wang.
And started squirting mud...

p.40-41

Wang-Wang suddenly woke up. He was very excited.

“I dreamt I was playing with you in the mud, and we had so much fun!”

“How wonderful! Wang-Wang remembers his dream, and we were in it!”

Tusks, Sweet Fruit, Baldy, and Grey were surprised and touched.

p.42-43

That evening, all the elephants slept soundly and sweetly, including Wang-Wang.

p.44-45

These days, Wang-Wang still does strange things sometimes, and he often forgets. But he remembers very clearly that he is an elephant, a happy and contented elephant that eats when it likes, and sleeps when it likes.

He loves being an elephant.