



# Tan-Tsiu-Niu

## 守娘上

**Author:** Nownow **Illustrator:** Nownow **Publisher:** Gaea Books

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188 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm

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**Rights sold:** Ukrainian, Arabic, Japanese, Thai

**Award:** 2020 The 11th Golden Comic Awards, Best New Talent

**BFT2.0 Translator:** Yichih Wu and Michelle Kuo

*"If I get married, will I end up like my sister-in-law, whose future depends entirely on whether she can bear children?"*

Chieh watches her sister-in-law take increasingly desperate measures to conceive, and she herself faces constant pressure from her neighbors to marry. How can she escape the weight of these suffocating traditions?

Salvation seems to arrive in the form of a mysterious, elegant woman and a powerful female ghost. Yet, Chieh is plagued by recurring nightmares and a series of eerie events—disappearances, abductions, and wrongful deaths. Will her journey lead to freedom through personal growth and transformation, or will she be confronted by a harsh and terrifying reality?

Blending folklore and ghostly elements, this story explores the coming of age of women in Taiwan under Qing rule. Comic artist Nownow is a rising star, and *Guardienne* offers a poignant depiction of their struggles and resilience.



## Nownow

Nownow graduated from the Department of Fine Arts at Taipei National University of the Arts, specializing in creating works with ancient costume themes. *Tan-Tsiu-Niu Vol. 1* won the Newcomer Award at the 11th Golden Comic Awards in 2020. *Tan-Tsiu-Niu Vol. 2* was a finalist for the Annual Comic Award at the 14th Golden Comic Awards in 2023. She has received grants from the Ministry of Culture's Cultural Content Fund and her work has appeared in Ukrainian, Arabic, Japanese, and Thai.

# The Legend of Taiwan's Strongest Woman Ghost: On the Struggles of Women under the Qing Dynasty

by Liu Chi-an (originally published in OpenBook)

Tainan, the oldest city in Taiwan, holds countless stories and legends. Among the most famous is the story of Chen Shou Niang, often called the legend of Taiwan's strongest woman ghost.

The story goes like this: Shou Niang, a widow, refused to remarry after her husband's death. Her mother-in-law and sister-in-law abused her, ultimately killing her. A corrupt magistrate tried to cover it up and the people, outraged, rioted. Shou Niang's spirit became restless and vengeful, so she wreaked havoc upon those involved. In response, the gods sought to subdue her spirit, but her powers were so strong that even a revered deity of Yonghua Temple was defeated. Ultimately, Guanyin, the goddess of mercy, intervened, negotiating peace.

Shou Niang agreed on two conditions: first, she would not be held accountable for the deaths she caused, and second, her spirit tablet would be placed at a shrine dedicated to chaste women. Then, Shou Niang found peace, restoring order to the city.

Shou Niang's spirit tablet can still be seen at the Temple of Chastity and Filial Piety within Tainan's Confucius Temple. Inscribed as "Spirit Tablet of the Chaste and Filial Widow Shou Niang, Wife of Lin Shou," it serves as a reminder of one of the most infamous cases in Qing Dynasty Taiwan.

The narrative does not retell Shou Niang's story, but instead follows Du Jie Niang, a young woman from a wealthy family in Qing Dynasty Tainan. Literate

and unbound by foot binding, Du Jie Niang enjoys freedoms unavailable to many women of her time. However, her sister-in-law, Yu Lan, who married into the family and bore a daughter, becomes obsessed with superstitious fertility rituals like "womb exchange" to bear a son. Seeing her sister-in-law's desperation, Jie Niang resolves to avoid such a fate and

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resist the pressures to marry.

In Qing Dynasty society, however, marriage was viewed as a woman's ultimate destiny, with parental approval being required for any match. As Jie Niang walks through the city, reflecting on her future, she comes across a female corpse by the river. A "shaman auntie" has been called to perform a ritual for the deceased. Hoping that the shaman could speak sense to her sister-in-law and save her from marriage, Jie Niang asks to become her apprentice, but the shaman

refuses.

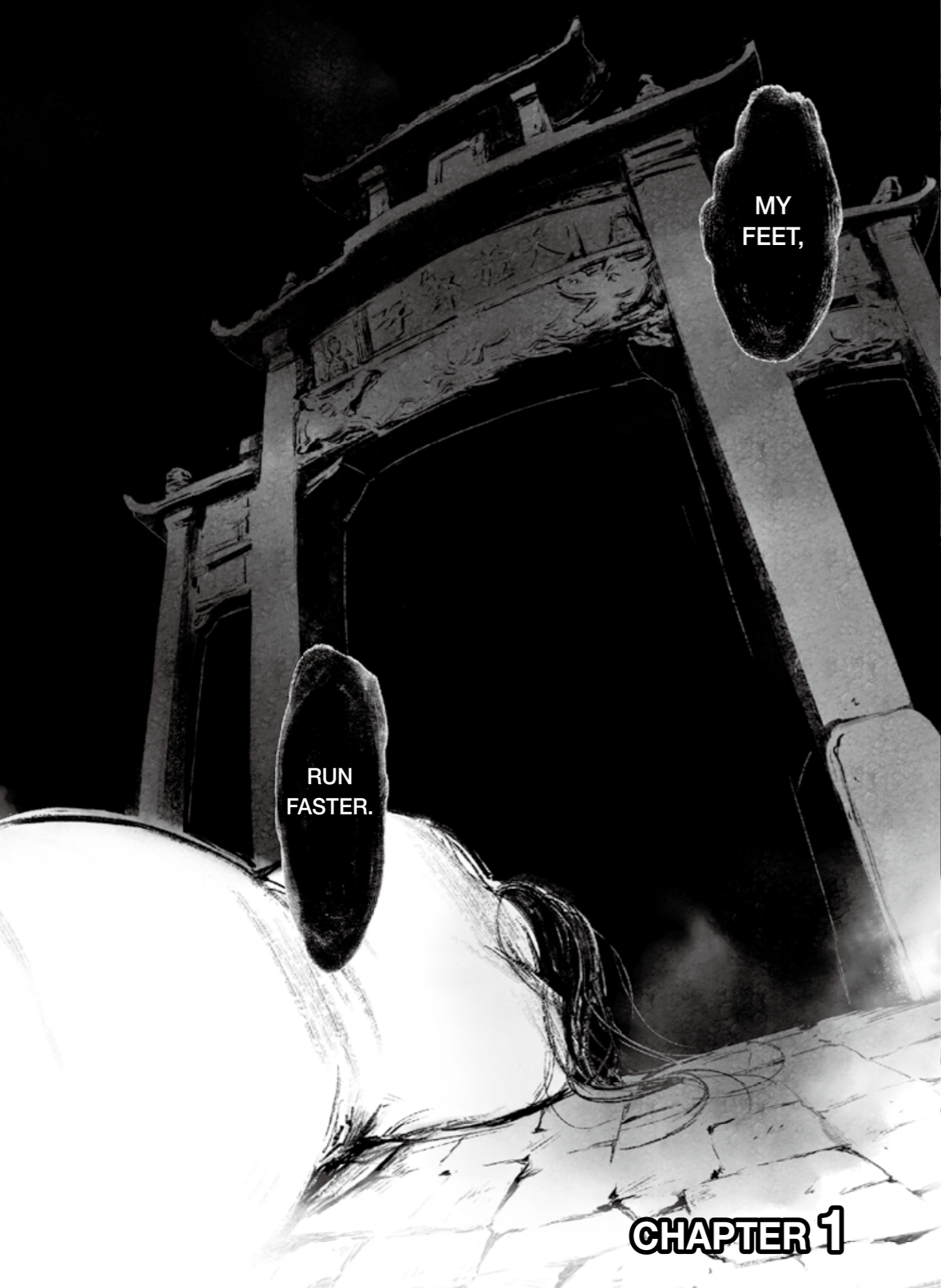
*Tan-Tsiu-Niu* stands out for its depiction of women's lives in Qing Dynasty Taiwan. The story portrays women from various social classes—wealthy elites like Du Jie Niang and Yu Lan, ordinary women like Xiu Niang and the shaman, and servants like Ah Lian, who was sold into servitude as a child. The comic captures

the diverse experiences of women through richly detailed illustrations, from the elite's ornate clothing to the hardships of lower-class life.

*Tan-Tsiu-Niu* offers a vivid glimpse into women's struggles, raising thought-provoking questions about fate. It shows how women were subject to societal and familial pressures, among

them the threat of female infanticide, the painful practice of foot binding, and the oppressive expectation to marry or remarry as widows. These themes are poignantly woven into the narrative, touching on issues of autonomy, fate, and the enduring legacies of women ghosts. Readers will surely be left eagerly anticipating the next volume.

*Liu Chi-an is a writer and student of history from Changhua.*



MY FEET,

RUN FASTER.

# CHAPTER 1

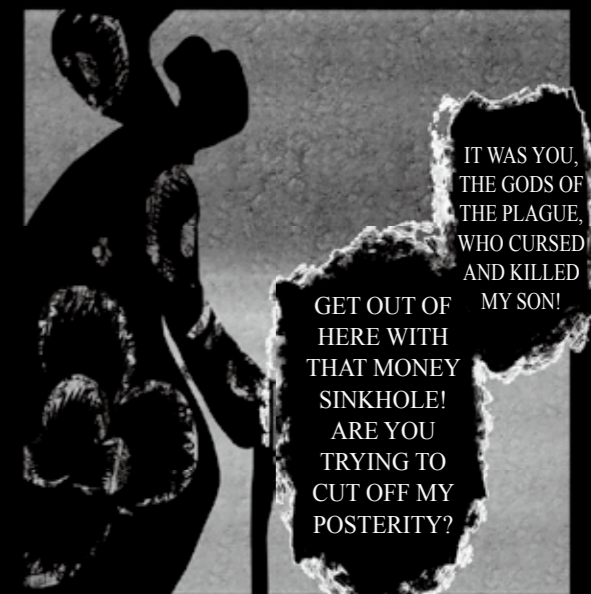


"BEAR A SON AND SECURE YOUR PLACE."



MOM, DON'T WORRY.

I'VE FOUND A GOOD WAY OUT FOR OUR SISTER-IN-LAW.

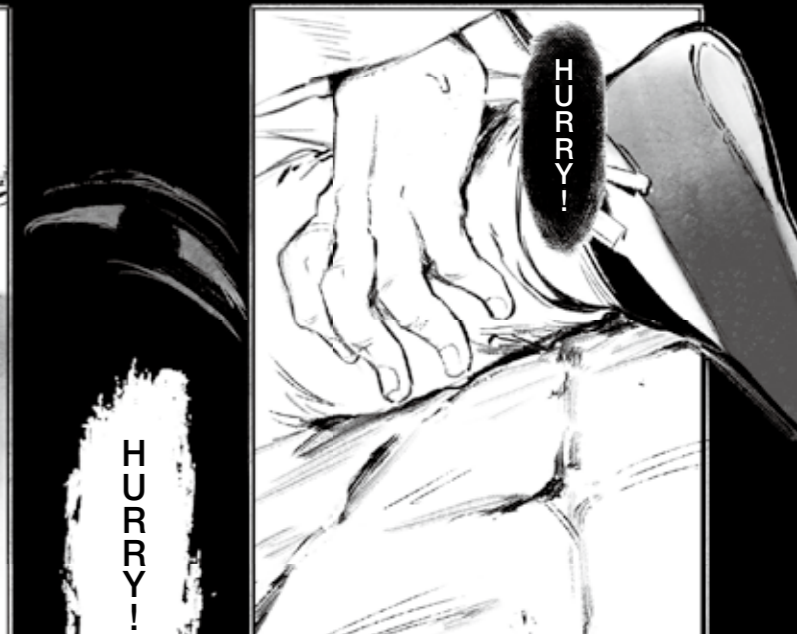


IT WAS YOU, THE GODS OF THE PLAGUE, WHO CURSED AND KILLED MY SON!

GET OUT OF HERE WITH THAT MONEY SINKHOLE! ARE YOU TRYING TO CUT OFF MY POSTERITY?



THOSE MONSTERS ARE COMING!



HURRY!

HURRY!



OF COURSE. TAKE CARE, MASTER.

WELL... SUCCESS DEPENDS ON THE PERSON, SO WE NEED TO KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON YOUR LADY.



JADE!

MAY I TAKE THIS OFF?

SIS,



OH, NOT THIS AGAIN.

IT'LL WORK OUT.

A BIG-FOOTED GIRL LIKE YOU.

WHAT IF YOU REALLY CAN'T GET MARRIED?



THE MASTER TOOK A LOT OF EFFORT TO DO THIS!

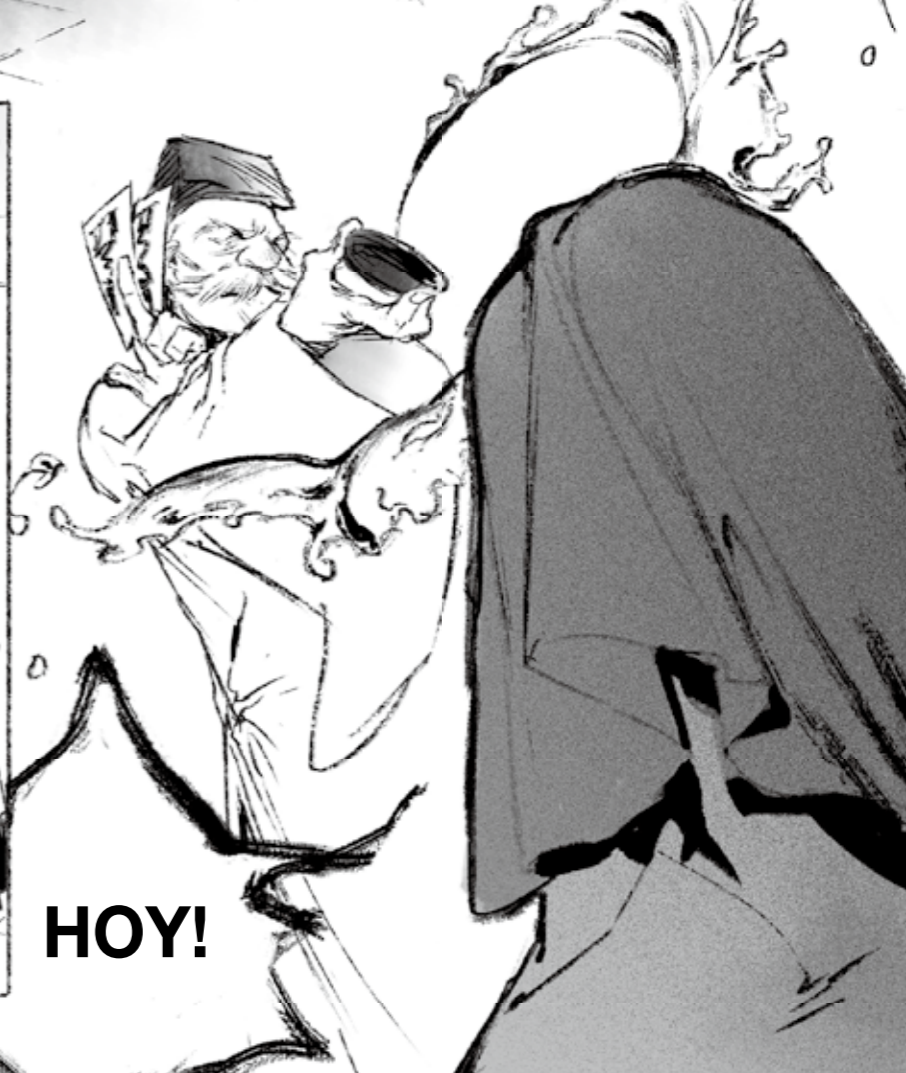
SILLY GIRL!

BUT IT'S WET AND DISGUSTING!



THANK YOU, MASTER!

IT SHOULD BE FINE.



HOY!

AND YOU, YU-LAN,  
IF YOU CAN'T  
MANAGE THE  
SERVANTS,  
HOW CAN YOU  
MANAGE A  
HOUSEHOLD?

I'M  
SORRY  
...



YOU'RE  
USELESS!

YOU CAN'T  
EVEN LOOK  
AFTER A  
BABY!

SHE JUST  
STARTED  
CRYING...

WHAT WILL  
YOU DO IF  
YOU RUIN  
THE RITUAL?

IT'S  
ALL MY  
FAULT...

IT'S FOR  
YOUR OWN  
GOOD.

YOU SHOULD  
BE WORRIED  
ABOUT THE  
CHILD, NOT  
ABOUT  
ATTRACTING  
MEN.

WHY ARE  
YOU  
WEARING  
THOSE  
CLOTHES?



AUNT!  
AUNT,  
PLEASE  
WAIT A  
SECOND.

OH,  
THIS  
ISN'T  
GOOD.

SIS?!



WHAT  
ARE  
YOU  
DOING?

AUNT...

POMEGRANA-  
NATE

BE  
GOOD.

GOOD GIRL,  
DON'T CRY.