



Mr. Wang on the Street

街上的汪先生

Author: Jun-Peng Chen **Illustrator:** Jun-Peng Chen **Publisher:** SiLoo Story

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BFT2.0 Translator: Michelle Kuo

This picture book is rare in its exploration of homelessness. With gentle subtlety, it tells the story of Mr. Wang, a man living on the street, and a little boy who reaches out to connect with him.

This book tells the story of a child who encounters Mr. Wang, a man living on the street who works in the park. Mr. Wang waters the plants, tends to kumquat trees, and pushes a cart that holds all his belongings. Every night, he searches for a safe place to sleep, knowing that once he closes his eyes, he can't protect himself. Author and illustrator Jun-Peng Chen approaches this difficult and urgent subject with a subtle, imaginative touch.



Jun-Peng Chen

Jun-Peng Chen is an illustrator fond of humor and horror stories. A dog lover, she has a Maltese and is inspired by the happiness offered by her pet. Chen's works often feature dogs and other animals. Her other published works include *Crossing the Road*, which won the Green Picture Book. *Mr. Wang on the Street* received and the 2022 Kaohsiung Library "KPL Picture Books Sprouting Awards" Award. Chen donated the royalties from the first print of *Mr. Wang on the Street* to the Taiwan Homeless Association.

“Does Everybody Have a Home?”: This Children’s Book Is For People Without Homes

by Wenjun Wu
translated by Michelle Kuo
(originally published at Okapi)

Creating a picture book that explores the theme of homelessness is no easy task. “This story has been in my heart for seven years,” says author and illustrator Jun-Peng Chen. “I told myself to keep writing, even if I didn’t have ideas,” she said. “I ended up writing many versions, each different, and finally arrived at the version that became the book.”

Her inspiration for this story began during her daily walks with her dog, when she noticed a man frequently loitering around the community park. One day she saw him watering the flowers beside an overpass. “He actually shares the same interest as my mother,” Chen thought. This curiosity led her to want to understand his life on the streets better. She began to immerse herself in research and reached

out to the Taiwan Homeless Association to learn more about the stories of the homeless.

Her delicate observations of life, accumulated over many years, give *Mr. Wang on the Street* a layered quality. The text and illustrations repeatedly explore the concept of home. From the starling’s nest to the turtle’s log, everyone’s home looks different. Yet the inner longing for stability remains universal. “For Mr. Wang, all of his possessions are on a little cart,” she writes. “Wherever he goes, that’s his home, but it’s also not his home.”

Bei Lynn, a children’s book illustrator and artist, founded the independent publisher SiLoo Story. She edited *Mr. Wang on the Street*, praising it. “The staff at the Taiwan Homeless Association read

Mr. Wang on the Street and said that every sentence hits the heart. I think this book can explain a complex situation with just one sentence.”

At the beginning of the story, a boy walking his dog quietly sees Mr. Wang from a distance, feeling curious about the stranger. When Mr. Wang bathes at the sink outside the public restroom, Chen illustrates the boy noticing through a mirror. Gradually, the boy approaches him. Later, they chat together on a bench in the street.

Even though the topic is heavy, Chen manages to bring an imaginative and hopeful perspective to readers. The

*Does everybody have a home?
A place where if your stomach hurts,
you can rush to the toilet immediately,
A place where if you’re sleepy, you can
fall asleep without thinking.
Does everybody have a home like this?
Mr. Wang doesn’t.*

story’s text ends with the start of a new, sunny day. But the illustrations continue beyond the text, showing a windy and rainy night,

with Mr. Wang sleeping alone under a bridge—still a homeless person living in the cold. Repeated readings of this book can change a reader’s perception of the challenges facing those who live on the street.

Wenju Wu is a writer, contributor to Reading on a Swing, picture book translator, and editor.

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



"So, I need to get going! Otherwise I won't get a good spot to sleep."

As Mr. Wang rises to leave, the owner of the juice shop runs out and hands him a cup of the summer special juice, saying, "Good night! Be careful on your way."





Mr. Wang gulps down the cold juice, which feels warm in his stomach.
As he walks, Mr. Wang guesses what kind of fruit is in the juice.
"Kiwi fruit, pineapple, apple, and...kumquat!" Mr. Wang laughs out loud.

