



# The Agnostic Detective

不可知論偵探

**Author:** Xerses **Illustrator:** Parrot **Publisher:** Apex Press

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248 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 2

**Award:** 2024 The 15th Golden Comic Awards, Comic of the year—*The Agnostic Detective Vol. 2*

**BFT2.0 Translator:** Mike Fu

Combining mystery, suspense, and folklore, *Agnostic Detective* follows Hai Lin-Tzu, a young Taiwanese Taoist priest with clairvoyant abilities. Acting as an unconventional “detective,” Hai Lin-Tzu solves conflicts, mysteries, and crimes tied to the paranormal.

When a dead body is found in a temple and a drowned corpse surfaces in a public park, rumors spread that water ghosts are seeking human sacrifices. With his ability to see beyond the mortal world, the young priest takes on the chilling case.

These stories explore urgent themes, including human relationships, adolescence, Taiwanese history, and the complex connection between Taiwan and its former colonial ruler, Japan. The series delves into spiritual exorcism and supernatural forces, combining thrilling suspense with cultural reflections.

*Agnostic Detective* is adapted from the short story “Coral Bones” in the Taiwanese bestseller *Chopsticks: Mysterious Tales*, which has been sold in many countries worldwide.



## Xerses

Xerses has worked in a variety of genres, including mystery, martial arts, and speculative fiction. Xerses debuted in 2013 with *Lotus of the Same Fate*, winning the Bronze Award at the Kadokawa Light Novel Awards, followed by recognition for the martial arts novel *Immortal Bird*. In 2015, Xerses' mystery novel *H.A.* was a finalist for the Shiomida Shosuke Mystery Novel Award, and in 2020, the epic novel *K.I.N.G.: Natural Disaster Response Center* was nominated for the Taipei International Book Exhibition Grand Prize. Recent works include the suspense series *Witch's Spearhead* and the collaborative ghost story novel *Chopsticks: Strange Tales of the Occult*, which sold rights in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. *The Agnostic Detective* has garnered over 100,000 views on the CCC online platform.



## Parrot

Parrot is a rising Taiwanese comic artist, recognized for her illustrations and cover art contributions to various novels, including *OPUS*. Her artistic style is known for its clean, delicate lines and a distinctive sense of tranquility. *The Agnostic Detective* marks her debut in commercial comics, where she not only illustrates but also meticulously crafts the script, refines the story, and breathes life into the characters.

# Solving the Mysteries of the Supernatural: the Legends Inspiring *Agnostic Detective*

by Ren Rong

Set in a supernatural mystery world, this story follows Hai Linzi, a Taoist priest, exorcist, and detective of the paranormal. To conceal a fish-shaped mark on his body, he always wears long sleeves and gloves, and he is followed by a strange malevolent spirit.

The title, *Agnostic Detective*, references his beliefs. Unlike atheism, which denies the existence of gods, to be an agnostic means to believe that the existence of deities cannot be definitively proven or disproven. Even if gods were to exist, they are ultimately unknowable. An unconventional Taoist, Han Linzi can see both the living and spirit worlds, yet he doesn't believe in the gods.

*An unconventional Taoist, Han Linzi is a detective tasked with solving paranormal mysteries. He can see both the living and spirit worlds, yet he doesn't believe in the gods.*

Parrot and Xerses draws inspiration from mysterious cases and legends spanning from the Japanese colonial period to modern times. The first case in the book, "The Self-Sacrificing Arhat", is

based on the ancient Taiwanese custom of human sacrifice during irrigation construction, where homeless individuals were selected as sacrificial offerings. In the summer of 2017, a series of

seven suicides and accidental drownings occurred at Dahu Park in Neihu, Taipei. The number of incidents far exceeded the annual average, reigniting discussions about the "live human sacrifice" legend tied to the Neihu Laogong Temple.

Dahu Park, formerly known as "Shisifen Bi," was an irrigation pond used for agriculture. At the southeast corner of the lake stand two small temples: Fuyou Temple and Laogong Temple. According to local elders, Laogong Temple, regarded as an "evil temple," enshrines the spirit of an old beggar who sacrificed himself for the irrigation system of Shisifen.

Legend has it that during the construction of the Shisifen canal, the embankments repeatedly collapsed, delaying the project. To resolve the issue, locals visited the beggar colony in Manka, where they found an old, frail beggar. They provided him with fine clothes and food, and a few days later, he was buried alive as a sacrificial offering. After his sacrifice, the water project was successfully completed.

Similar legends of human sacrifice exist at Amituo Pond in Zuoying District and Neiwei Pond in Gushan District, both in Kaohsiung. During the Qing Dynasty, ghostly disturbances plagued Amituo Pond even during the day. To resolve the issue, locals paid a beggar a hefty sum,

allowing him to indulge in all his desires for a time. When the period ended, the beggar was dressed as a deity—wearing straw sandals, golden armor, a dog's cauldron on his head, and holding peach and willow swords—and was buried alive by the pond. A stele inscribed with "Namo Amitabha" was erected to suppress the spirits. A similar tale exists at Neiwei Pond, though the stone steles in both places have since disappeared.

Hai Linzi can see both the living and the dead, but he cannot confirm the existence of heaven or hell. For him, the transcendent promises of many religions may be nothing more than illusions. Yet, despite everything, Hai Linzi seems to hold onto a glimmer of hope that "the answer has yet to be revealed."

*Ren Rong is part of the Creative Comic Collection.*

*This excerpt from the book's afterword has been condensed for this booklet.*



YES, YOU CAN HEAR THE SOUNDS OF CONSTRUCTION LATE AT NIGHT.

IT'S THE "GHOST TEMPLE"!

AH!

YOU MEAN THAT URBAN LEGEND ABOUT A RUN-DOWN TEMPLE NEAR LAKE YUSHUI?

YOU'RE JOKING, RIGHT?

WHY WOULD THERE BE CONSTRUCTION?



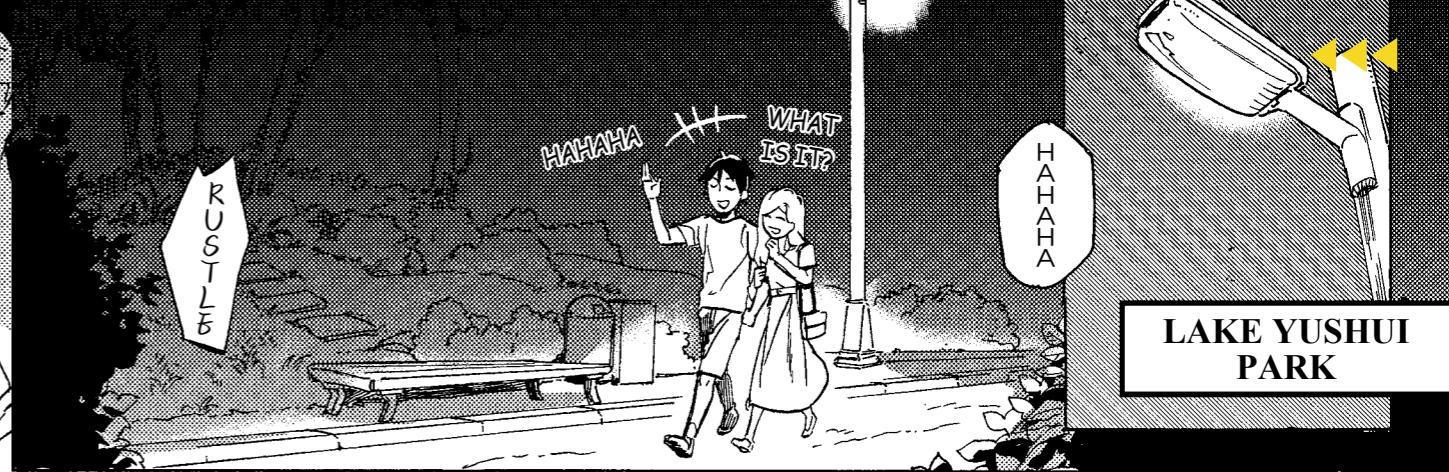
SUCH A SCAREDY-CAT!

MAYBE WE'LL RUN INTO THE PEOPLE WHO ARE BUILDING THE TEMPLE AND CRACK THIS MYSTERY!

DIDN'T YOU HEAR THAT SEVERAL PEOPLE HAVE DROWNED IN LAKE YUSHUI THIS YEAR?

SUPPOSEDLY THIS TEMPLE IS BEING BUILT BECAUSE SOMEONE WANTS TO WORSHIP THE "DEARLY DEPARTED" IN THE WATER!

THAT'S TERRIFYING. LET'S GO HOME...



RUSTLES

HAHAHA WHAT IS IT?

HAHAHA

LAKE YUSHUI PARK

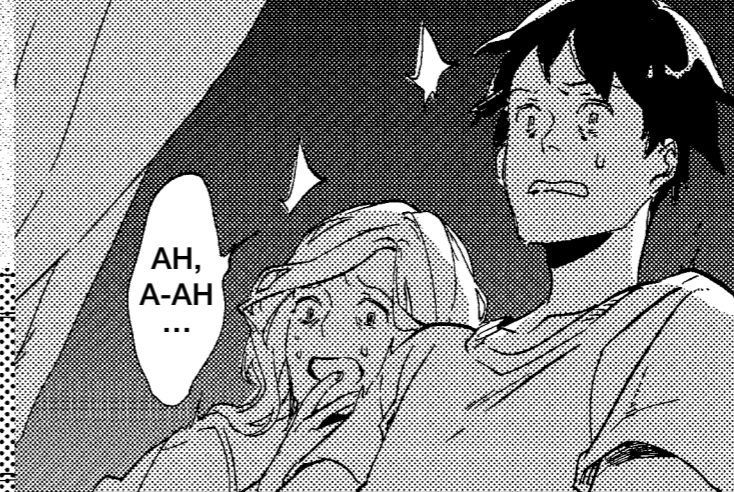


EH?

DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING MAKE A NOISE?



IT SOUNDED LIKE IT CAME FROM OVER THERE.

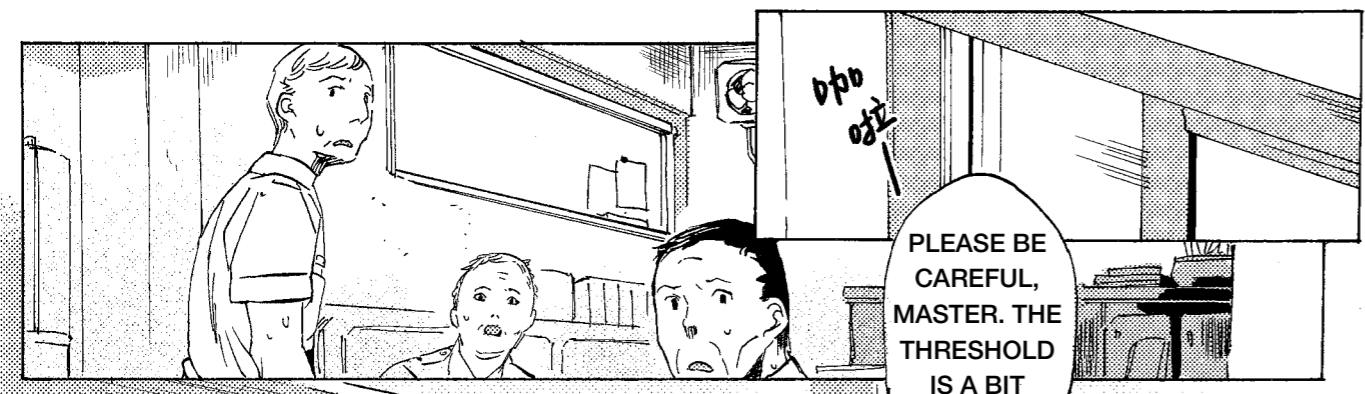


AH,  
A-AH  
...



HEH HEH!  
CAUGHT  
YOU!

SOMETHING SMELLS



PLEASE BE  
CAREFUL,  
MASTER. THE  
THRESHOLD  
IS A BIT  
HIGH.

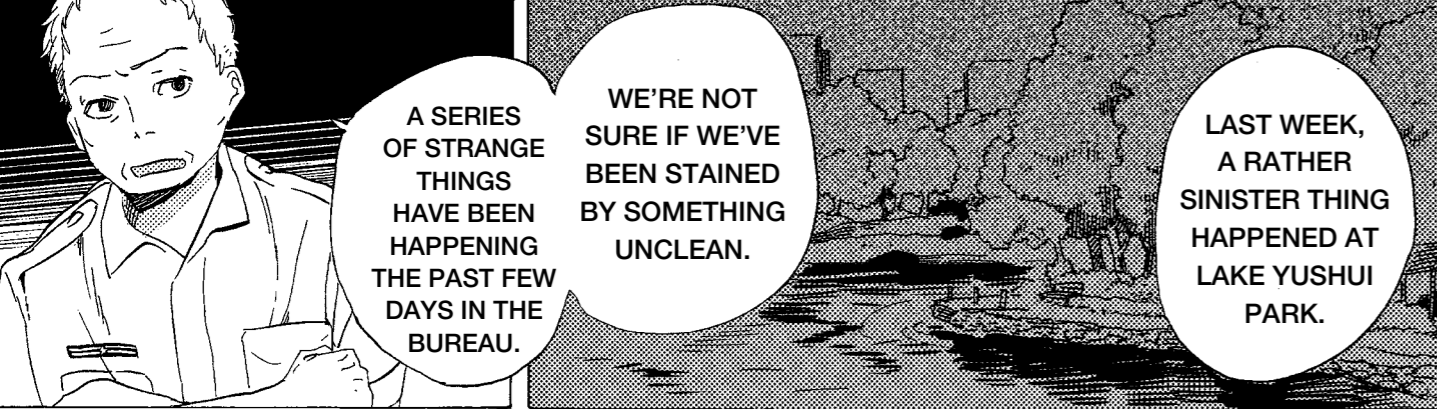


ATTENTION,  
EVERYONE!  
THIS IS MASTER  
HAI LIN TZU,  
THE TAOIST  
PRIEST WHO  
IS REPLACING  
MASTER HSIAO  
GUANG.

HE'S HSIAO GUANG'S  
MASTER-UNCLE.



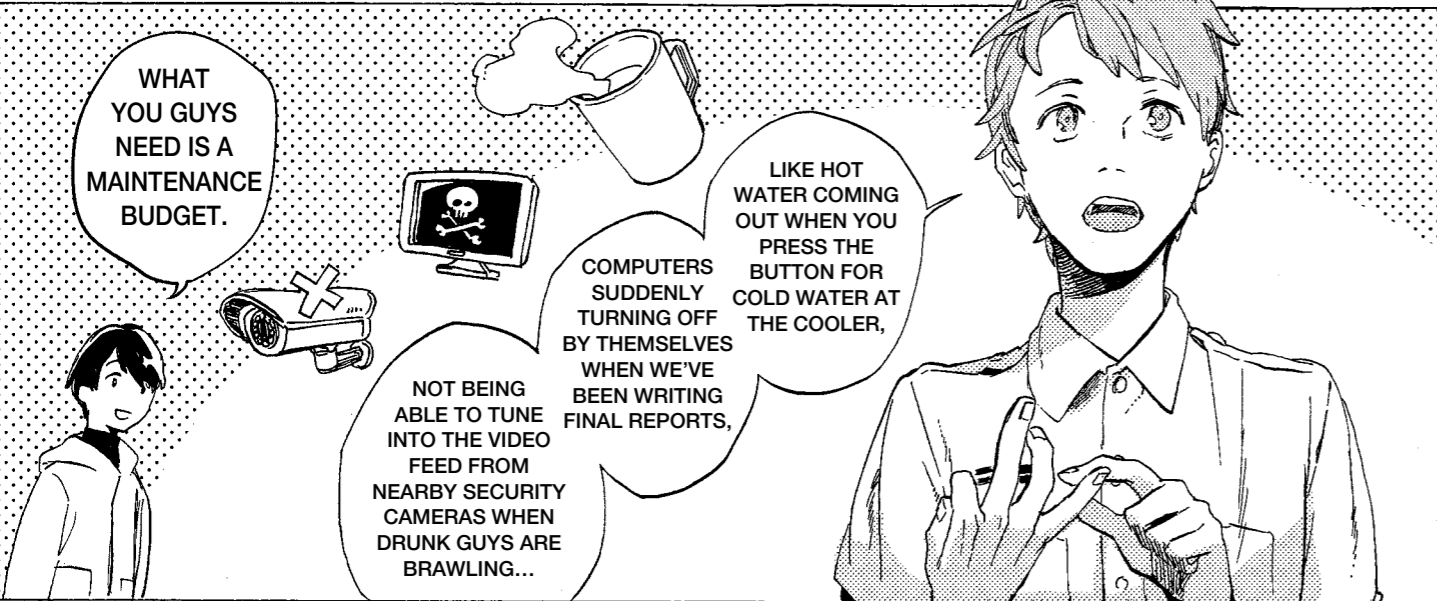
AAAAHHH!



A SERIES OF STRANGE THINGS HAVE BEEN HAPPENING THE PAST FEW DAYS IN THE BUREAU.

WE'RE NOT SURE IF WE'VE BEEN STAINED BY SOMETHING UNCLEAN.

LAST WEEK, A RATHER SINISTER THING HAPPENED AT LAKE YUSHUI PARK.



WHAT YOU GUYS NEED IS A MAINTENANCE BUDGET.

NOT BEING ABLE TO TUNE INTO THE VIDEO FEED FROM NEARBY SECURITY CAMERAS WHEN DRUNK GUYS ARE BRAWLING...

COMPUTERS SUDDENLY TURNING OFF BY THEMSELVES WHEN WE'VE BEEN WRITING FINAL REPORTS,

LIKE HOT WATER COMING OUT WHEN YOU PRESS THE BUTTON FOR COLD WATER AT THE COOLER,



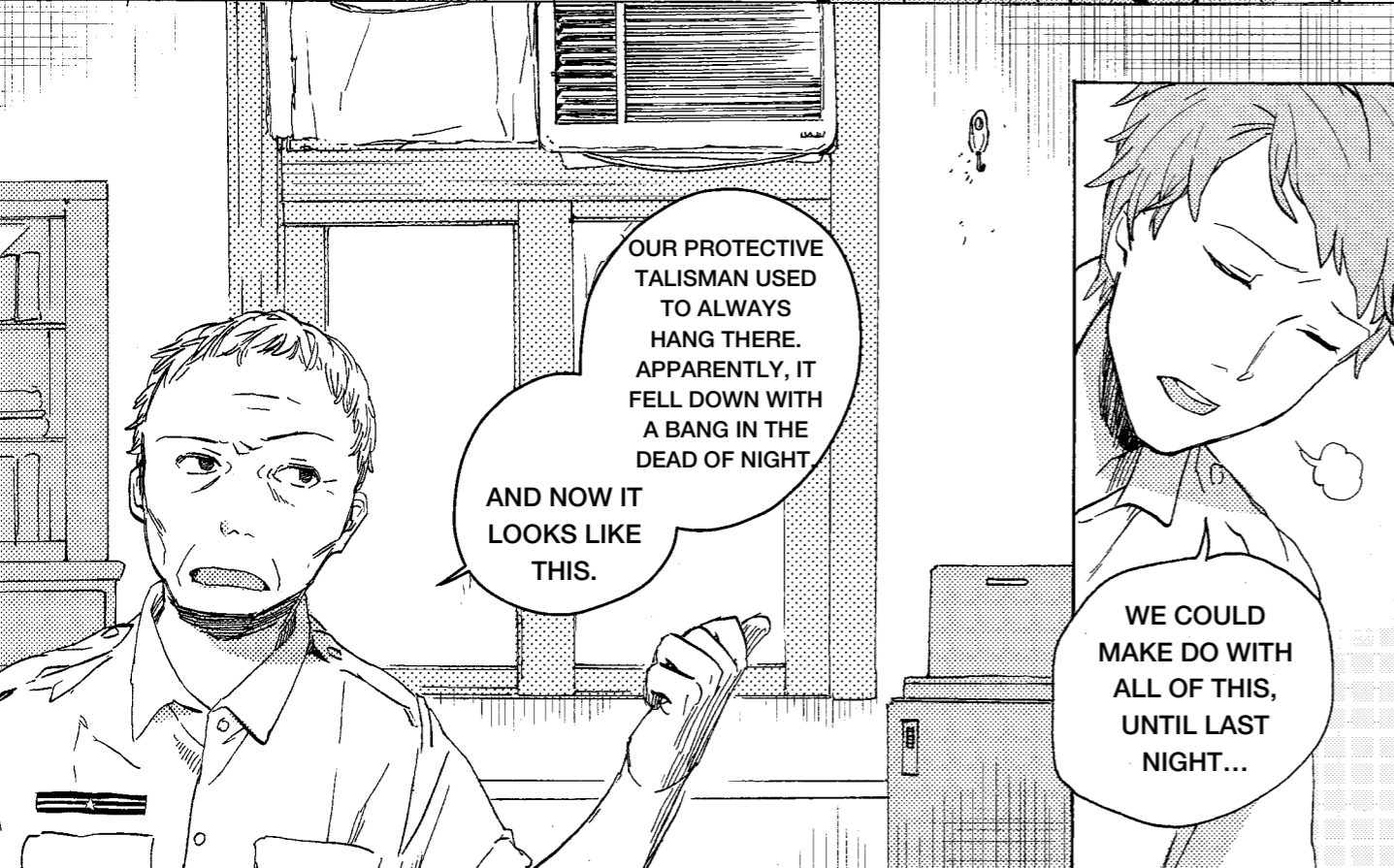
WE'LL SEE WHETHER I'M UP TO SNUFF OR NOT, BUT SINCE I'M GETTING PAID BY THE HOUR,

ONE LOOK AT THIS YOUNG DUDE AND YOU CAN TELL HE'S NOT UP TO SNUFF!

LOTS OF DISCUSSION

WE HAD BETTER CUT TO THE CHASE.

HSIAO GUANG'S MASTER-UNCLE? HE LOOKS EVEN LAMER THAN YOU, HSIAO WU.



AND NOW IT LOOKS LIKE THIS.

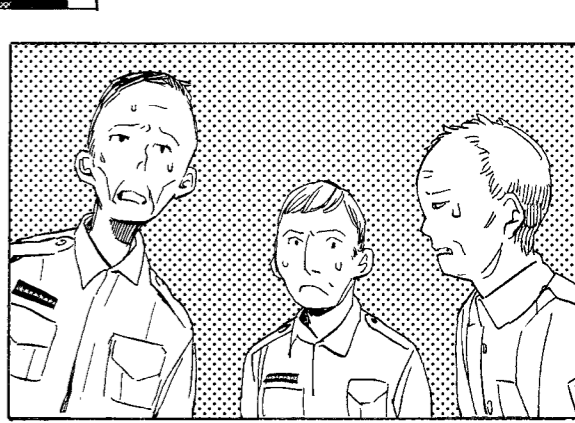
OUR PROTECTIVE TALISMAN USED TO ALWAYS HANG THERE. APPARENTLY, IT FELL DOWN WITH A BANG IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.



WE COULD MAKE DO WITH ALL OF THIS, UNTIL LAST NIGHT...



WHAT HAPPENED HERE?



THIS IS A PROTECTIVE TALISMAN THAT THE GRANDMASTER OF GUANGMING TEMPLE WROTE HIMSELF.