

LONG NIGHT

長夜

The breakthrough title from Taiwan's bestselling YA romance author

Though Chen Yu's fiction is famous for its heart-wrenching plot twists, most of her novels eventually find their way to something resembling a happy ending. *Long Night*, however, is an abrupt departure from her previous oeuvre, in terms of both structure and content. The four sections of the novel are narrated from the distinct perspectives of four different characters – but what they all share is a poignant sense of melancholy.

Tai Yuan-Yen is a girl suffering deep trauma from a sexual assault in her past, her beauty and breezy demeanor belying the nightmares and depression that haunt her. Only one person can offer her solace: Wang Wei-Kai, the boy-next-door who dreams of becoming a tattoo artist. One day, he promises, he will ink a pair of wings on her back. But Yuan-Yen could never have imagined that a decision taken out of kindness would drive her and Wei-Kai apart, eliminating any possibility that they might some day find love together.

In her frustration, Yuan-Yen breaks off relations with Wei-Kai and allows Chou Hsin-Yu – a boy who has always carried a torch for her – into her life. But their relationship brings only disappointment, and ultimately causes such despair for Yuan-Yen that she ends up becoming a true angel, when she throws herself off a building. Her death is a terrible blow to both Wei-Kai and Hsin-Yu. Both go into isolation: Wei-Kai opens a tattoo parlor in Yuan-Yen's name but vows never to ink a pair of wings on anyone again, while Hsin-Yu drops out of university and goes into a slump – until the day a lovelorn girl shows up at his door...

In *Long Night*, Chen Yu depicts four tragic lives using language that is restrained yet emotive, her powers of characterisation enhanced by the novel's innovative structure.

Chen Yu 晨羽

Chen Yu was still in high school when she first started writing fiction online. The initial rejections she received from publishers only spurred her desire to create, and her writing career began in earnest after she won the Cross Straits Literary Competition for her novel *Deep Seas* in 2011. Since then she has been publishing two books a year, never flinching from serious topics such as domestic violence and campus bullying. She has been one of the top five bestselling Chinese-language authors on Books.com.tw for the last two years, and her fifteen novels to date have combined sales of around five hundred thousand copies.



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LONG NIGHT

By Chen Yu

Translated by Hallie Treadway

Chapter 1 - Hsu Yu-Wei

It was already the third day.

The day after she found out where that man lived, she had begun following him home, carefully trailing him from a distance – not too far, not too close.

The man had walked into an old residential building, shutting the iron door with a *clang*. She stood opposite the building, lifting her head to look at the windows of every floor. She couldn't help wondering – what might his home look like? At the same time, she found herself guessing which floor he had reached.

Just then, a motorcyclist carrying a short-haired girl drove up, and stopped at the door of the building.

The motorcyclist parked, opened the door with one push, and walked in with the girl.

She hesitated before walking up to the door and giving it a gentle nudge. Only when the door swung lightly open did she realize that the bolt was broken. Even if you closed the door, it would not lock.

She couldn't help smiling as a wave of excitement and pleasure rushed over her.

But she had not gone in. Instead, she quietly shut the door and left, head down.

She did follow the man inside, however, when she trailed him to this building the next day.

Since they were a short distance apart, the man never discovered that anyone had come with him into the building.

The man stopped at a door on the fifth floor, took out a key, and opened the door. She stood breathless on the fourth-floor stairs, staring at him through the gaps between the railings. Only after he had been inside for fifteen minutes did she tiptoe over to examine the door.

This building had six floors; he lived on the fifth.

The dark red iron outer door before her was rusting over, and the paint on the white inner door had begun to peel. It was nothing like what she had imagined; she'd thought the place he lived would look more dignified, more unique.

It was already 11:30 at night; she did not know if he would come out again.

But in any case, she now knew which floor he lived on, and could freely enter the building. She wouldn't need to stand outside shivering in the cold again. Thinking of this had given her a small sense of contentment.

The next day, she had not waited at his workplace; instead, calculating the time he got off work, she went to the building ahead of him to wait.

As soon as she heard the iron door closing on the first floor, she crept down the sixth-floor stairs to see if he had come home.

Today was her third day of waiting here.

She sat eating steaming oden, her head lowered as she played with her phone. When she felt tired, she lifted her head to look around before standing to stretch.

Paint had fallen off in huge patches all over the white wall; cobwebs hung from several places on the ceiling. She couldn't help wondering despondently, what kind of person would live in such a dilapidated building? The building made you feel as if there were spirits constantly running all over it; it was ghastly.

A cold breeze blew in from an open window on the stairs, shattering her reverie. She shivered, one eye glancing over at the grey iron door next to her.

In the three days she had waited for the man downstairs to come home, she had never seen anyone go in or out of this door on the sixth floor.

She did not know whether the owner had gone far from home, or if there had never been anyone there to begin with. Either way, it was good that no-one was there; that way they would not discover her.

She yawned, and then kept playing on her phone. She frequently went on Facebook, and always stopped on one woman's page.

It had not been long when her eyes suddenly locked onto the phone: the woman had updated her status.

She was frozen by the photo that appeared before her:

The woman was holding a birthday cake covered with candles in both hands, and standing with a man.

The man was embracing her fondly around the shoulders, and kissing her cheek. The two were smiling, their expressions blissful.

Today I am very happy; thank you all for your good wishes. The best, best, best thing that happened to me this year was meeting my baby. Dear baby, thank you for giving me this surprise, you've moved me to tears... I hope that you'll be by my side every birthday from now on. I love you :) – feel loved.

With seconds of this status update, numerous comments appeared below.

"Happy birthday, and best wishes!"

"Soulmates!"

"So jealous, happy birthday!"

"Awesome!"

One line after another of replies and best wishes entered her vision, causing a flash of hate to leap from her heart and rush through her body. It was a long time before she could look away from the screen.

She sat still as if she were made of wood. Although the low temperature almost froze her fingers, she furiously typed out a comment with shaking hands: "Slut slut slut slut!"

She was struggling to breathe; she longed to rip that woman's evil smile to shreds, and let the whole world know how shameless she was!

But just as she was about to post the comment, her finger hovered in midair.

A thousand different emotions roiled in her chest, as if so many billowing waves had risen and rendered her incapable of finding peace.

Just then, the sound of footsteps came up from the first floor.

She collected and calmed herself, and then lowered her head to look downstairs.

The man who lived on the fifth floor was standing in front of the door, taking out his key.

From where she stood, she could look straight down on his black bandana, and could see the collar of his jacket covering half of a brown tattoo. Her face grew hot and her throat dry.

She nervously took a few deep breaths, stood up, and prepared to shout out his name.

But he disappeared inside and shut the door before she could produce a sound.

Realizing her courage had failed her, she couldn't help letting out a low, angry cry. She flung the empty oden cup against the wall, her eyes red with anger.

As the fourth day became the fifth day, she could only stare wide-eyed at the room where the man had gone. By the seventh day, she could stand it no longer, and gave herself an ultimatum:

Today, she had to call out to him. She wouldn't leave without telling him!

By midnight, the man had not yet come back.

Around one in the morning, her mind grew hazy; no matter how hard she rubbed her eyes, she could not drive off the desire to sleep. Hovering at the edge of consciousness, she leaned against the wall, closed her eyes, and drifted off to sleep.

"Miss, miss!"

A clear voice woke her up.

In her confusion, she saw a hazy figure in front of her.

She forced her eyes open, and saw a young man in a hoodie shaking her shoulder. She jumped, looked around, and realized she was still in that building.

She shouted threateningly at him: "And who are you? What are you doing here? What do you want?"

The man looked at her wordlessly, and pointed to the grey iron door behind her: "This is my house."

"Your house?" She was stunned. "Really?" she said, in a dubious tone. "But this is the seventh day I've been here, and I've never seen anyone go in or out, or heard any noise inside!"

When he heard this, the man raised his eyebrows a little, and his once-calm facial expression changed slightly.

"You've sat here for seven days?"

"Why yes!"

"Do you live in this building?"

"No!"

He fell silent again.

When she saw him pull out a phone from his pocket, she tried frantically to stop him: "Wait, you're not going to call the police are you? Come on, I'm not some suspicious character! I haven't done anything. I've just been sitting here. I really haven't done anything!"

"How did you get in?" His tone had grown cold.

"The lock on the first floor's broken, so I..."

His gaze was sharp: "What did you plan to do?"

She grabbed the hem of her dress with both hands, bit her lower lip, and said nothing.

Suddenly she was dazzled. She squinted until her eyes grew accustomed to the light and she could slowly widen them.

The man had turned on the stairwell lights, which illuminated his face. She was a little surprised to discover that he had a pair of beautiful eyes – the pupils were a little lighter than most peoples', and clear and bright as water. His lips were thin, his nose straight, and he looked like he might be biracial.

She would guess he was about her age. He was about a head taller than she was, though for a man that wasn't particularly tall.

She didn't know if it was because the light was so strong, but his face seemed very pale; there was no color in his cheeks. He wore a dark green hoodie, and the shoulders and hood were wet, like he had just come out of a rainstorm.

"If you don't tell me, I'm calling the police." His voice was low and threatening.

"Aww, don't be so mean." She wrung her hands quickly and sputtered: "I...I can't say!"

He narrowed his eyes: "Why?"

"I, I'll only tell you if you promise not to report me to the police!" She lifted her chin with a stubborn look.

The man chuckled: "Miss, do you not understand this situation? You've pushed your way into this building and are sitting at midnight in front of my house. Who do you think you are giving conditions? If you won't explain, I'm not interested in finding out; but if you don't leave, I will call the police immediately."

"Alright, alright. I understand. I've just been sitting by your door. I haven't done anything bad or strange." She grumbled. Picking up her bag, she was about to leave when she stopped, turned back, and asked: "So will you go to the landlord tomorrow?"

He frowned, looking at her without understanding.

"Could you please *not* tell the landlord about the lock on the front door?"

"Why?"

"Because if the landlord changes the lock, I can't come in!"

Seeing that the woman in front of him was convinced she had the right to barge into the building, he didn't know whether to be angry or to laugh.

He replied coldly: "Thank you for reminding me. Apart from letting the landlord know about the locks, I will also tell him that suspicious people have been here late at night and ask him to tell everyone to be careful." He took out his key, opened the door, and shut it without speaking another word.

For a moment she was unable to react. Then, after standing there for a while, she walked down to the fifth floor. She stood in front of the tattooed man's door for a while before walking sadly down to the main door.

It was almost three o'clock in the morning.

It was raining outside. Watching the rain, she thought of the man in the damp hoodie.

Could it be that he always came home this late? No wonder she hadn't seen him all week. She couldn't help feeling agitated at the thought that she would no longer be able to freely enter the building.

The next day, she had come near the building as usual. Just as she was wracking her brains about how to get in, she saw the man on the fifth floor push open the door and go right in.

She waited for a while to go up to the door. When she discovered that the lock had not been fixed, she darted happily in.

At 11:20 that night, the iron door of the house on the sixth floor opened.

The man walked out of his house. When he caught a glimpse of a figure sitting in the shadows, he almost jumped. His face assumed a serious expression.

“Hi.” She lifted her head, and gently waved at the man with the beautiful eyes. “I’m sorry...I’m back.”

The man sighed, and stared wordlessly at this perpetual prowler.

“I thought you had already talked to the landlord about fixing the lock.” She smiled awkwardly. Her gaze roamed over his white hoodie, then flickered over to his room: “Have you been inside all day?”

He stared at her icily.

“Are you going out? It’s really late you know, and, it’s raining; remember to bring an umbrella.”

“...”

“I’m called Hsu Yu-Wei.”

“I don’t want to know your name.” The man’s voice seemed powerless.

“Aw, don’t be like that. I’m truly only resting here. I don’t want to do anything bad.” She took a bag of snacks out from her purse and handed it to him: “Do you want some dried squid?”

He ignored her. “How long have you been here?”

“Almost an hour.”

“Is snacking here a hobby of yours?”

“Of course not – who would sit here with no reason when the weather’s so cold? When you’re waiting for someone, of course you’re going to snack and play on your phone, otherwise it would be boring!”

When the man heard this, his brows twitched: “Who are you waiting for?”

Hsu Yu-Wei opened her mouth but did not reply, interrupted by the sound of high heels from the floor below.