

SON OF FORMOSA

來自清水的孩子

* 2021 Taipei Book Fair Award

The true story of Tsai Kun-lin, born in Qingshui, Taichung, in 1930, as he lives through Japanese rule and the arrival of the Kuomintang. Polite and a good student, Tsai found himself sentenced to ten years in jail for “membership of an illegal organization” after attending a high school book club. This graphic novel recounts his tenacity and determination.

The 1930s, Japanese-ruled Taiwan. A young boy, Tsai Kun-lin grows up, accompanied by picture books and folk tales. But the merciless flames of World War 2 soon arrive – protests, bombing and conscription will change his life forever.

After the war, the young booklover learns a new language and hopes to finally live a life of peace, never expecting his attendance at a high school book club will land him in jail. Transported to the penal colony for political prisoners on Green Island, he loses ten years of his youth to torture, terror, hard labor, and brainwashing.

This series of graphic novels draws on the actual events of Tsai’s life. At Taichung First Senior High School he was a trainee soldier and a good student; years later he was sentenced to ten years in prison for attending a high school book club. On release he worked in publishing and advertising, and founded *Prince*, a children’s magazine which kept Taiwan’s cartooning tradition alive during martial law. He raised funds to allow a rural little league team to compete in Taipei and, on retirement, became a human rights activist.

Tsai’s life is Taiwan’s recent history writ small. There is darkness, but always a light; hardship, but always the strength to endure. A simple yet graceful style faithfully recreates the historical scenes, with the accurate use of the Chinese, Taiwanese, and Japanese languages



Publisher: Slowork

Date: 5/2020 (Vol.1), 6/2020 (Vol. 2)

Rights contact:

booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com

Pages: 162 (Vol.1), 182 (Vol.2)

Volume: 2 (ongoing)

Rights sold: Japanese (Iwanami Shoten)

bringing those times to life. The warmth and vitality of the storytelling demonstrate that while we cannot control events, we can, as Tsai did, persevere through them.

Story by Yu Peiyun 游珮芸

A graduate of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at National Taiwan University, Yu Peiyun also holds a PhD from Ochanomizu University in Japan. She currently researches and teaches at the Graduate Institute of Children's Literature at National Taitung University. She is also involved in the curating, writing, translation and criticism of children's literature.

Comic by Zhou Jianxin 周見信

Zhou Jianxin has recently established himself as one of Taiwan's up-and-coming illustrators. His first illustrated title, *The Maroon Oriole*, won the 2014 Taiwan Golden Butterfly Award for Best Book Design and honorable mention from the International Design Awards. His collaborative works with Kuo Nai-wen have also been very well received: their title *Missing Cat Posters* also won Honorable Mention in the Hsin-Yi Children's Literature Award in 2012, and *Puppy and I* won first prize for an Illustrated Publication at the 2016 Hsin-Yi Children's Literature Award, a position that has remained empty for eight years. He is the featured artist of Taiwan Pavilion at the 2017 Guadalajara International Book Fair (FIL), for the launch of the Spanish edition of *Missing Cat Posters*.

孩子

游珮芸 X 周見信

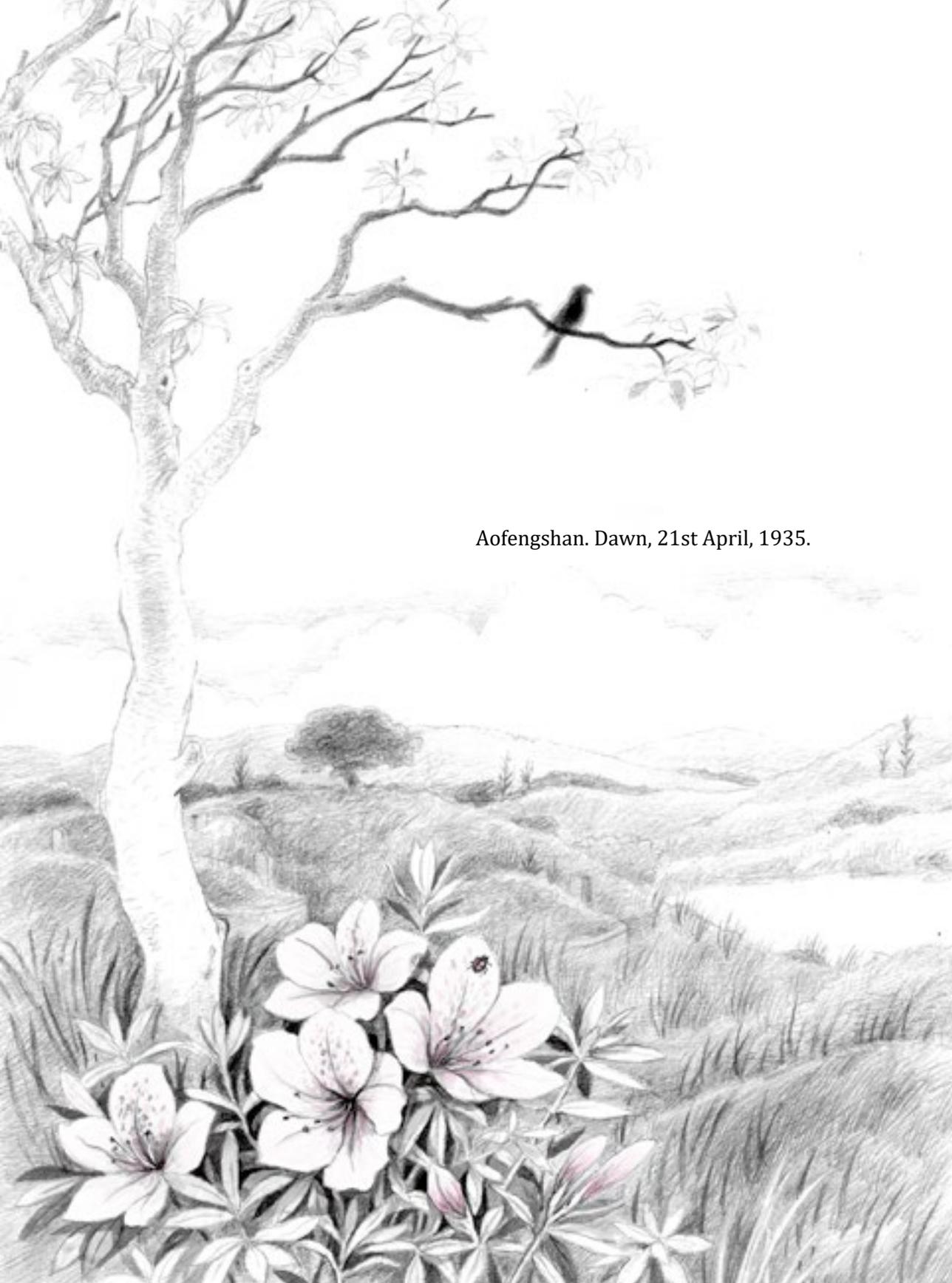
來自清



SON
OF
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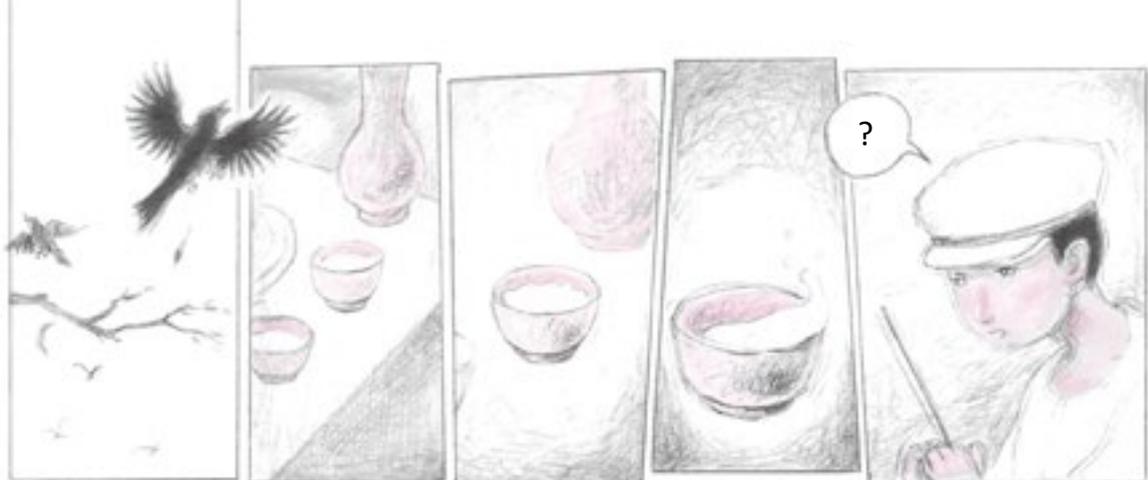
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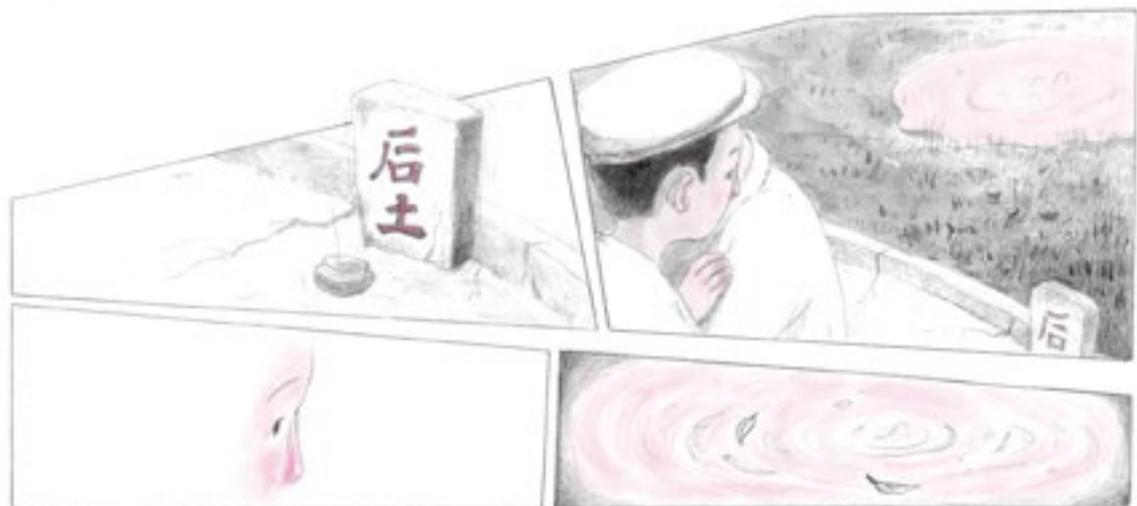


Aofengshan. Dawn, 21st April, 1935.









Kun-ping, you come down with me.





Kun-hsiu, you look after your brothers.

I will!



Do you think everything will be okay at home?



Let's pack up and get down as soon as we can.



Okay.

Here, take this.



I want to help too.



You take the tortoise cake.



Kun-tsan, you
help Kun-lin.



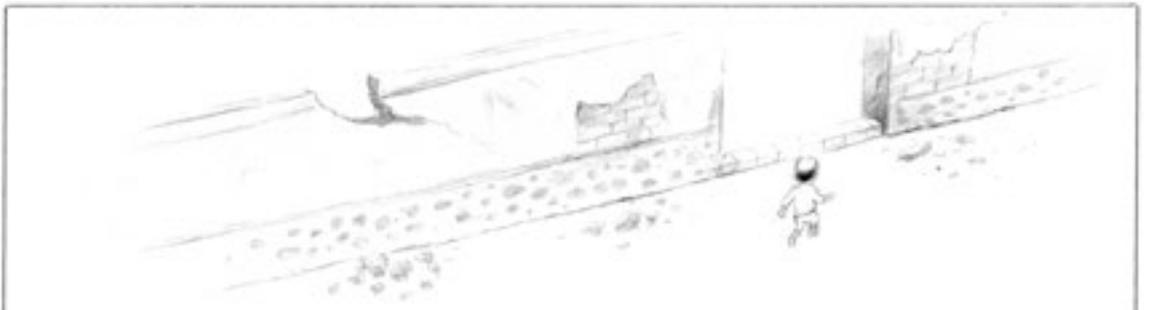
Mind your
step.







Kun-lin, be careful!



The earthquake hit Tun-á-kha (now Houli District) and Qingshui Street (now Qingshui District) hard, but was felt across Taiwan. Over 15,000 people were killed and more than 60,000 houses damaged.

A-niâ!



I'm fine.



Thankfully.

The little one and I only just got out.



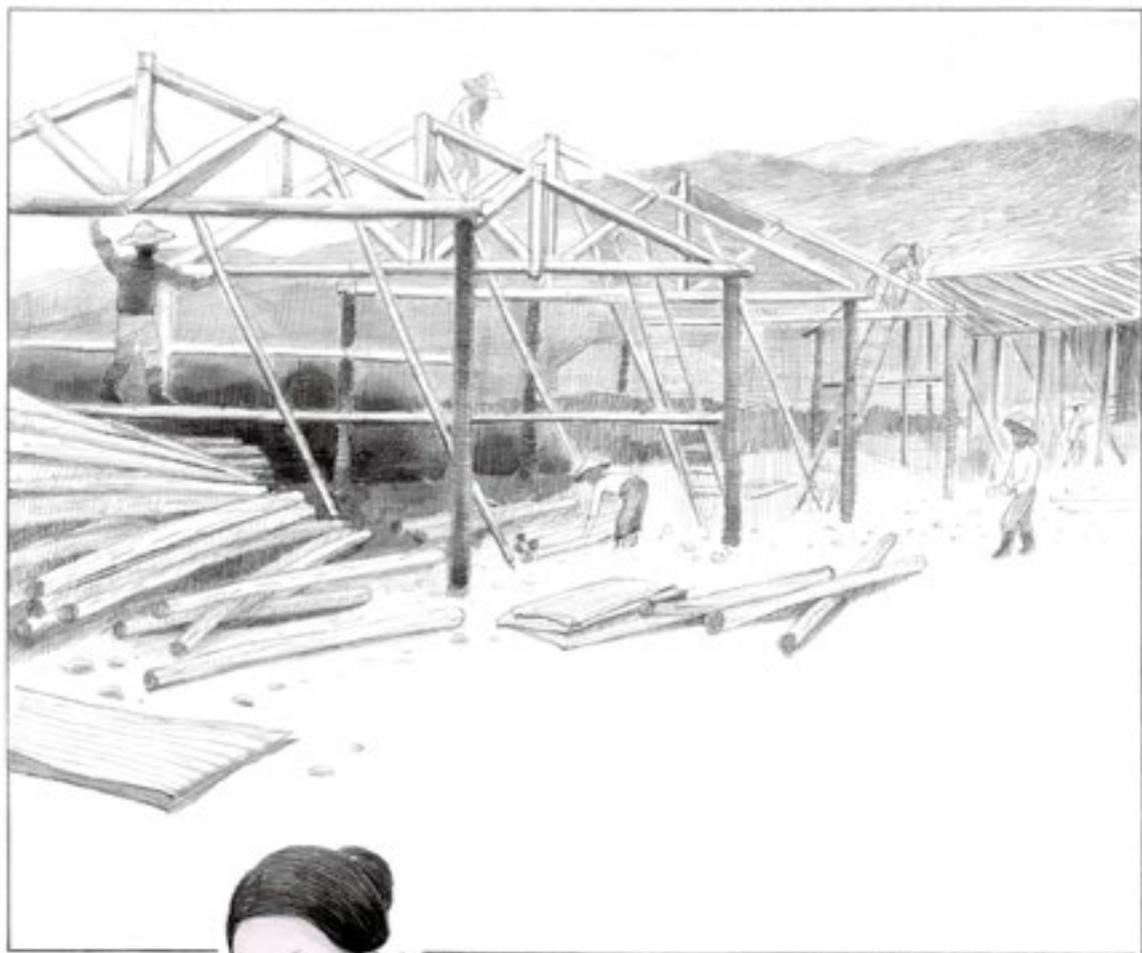
Kun-lin, are you hurt?

No.



Tsai Kun-lin was born in December 1930, and was almost four and a half at the time of the earthquake. His family's home was badly damaged.





Kun-lin...

Yes?

Would you go and buy me some betelnut?

Yes.

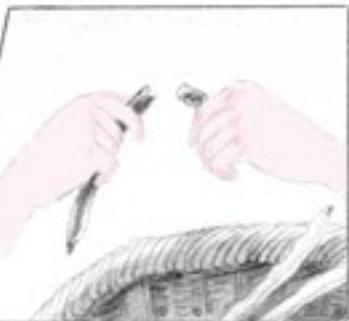


This was the first time that young Kun-lin, not yet five years old, had been outside alone at night.



By the end of 1935, the Tsai family
had rebuilt their home.

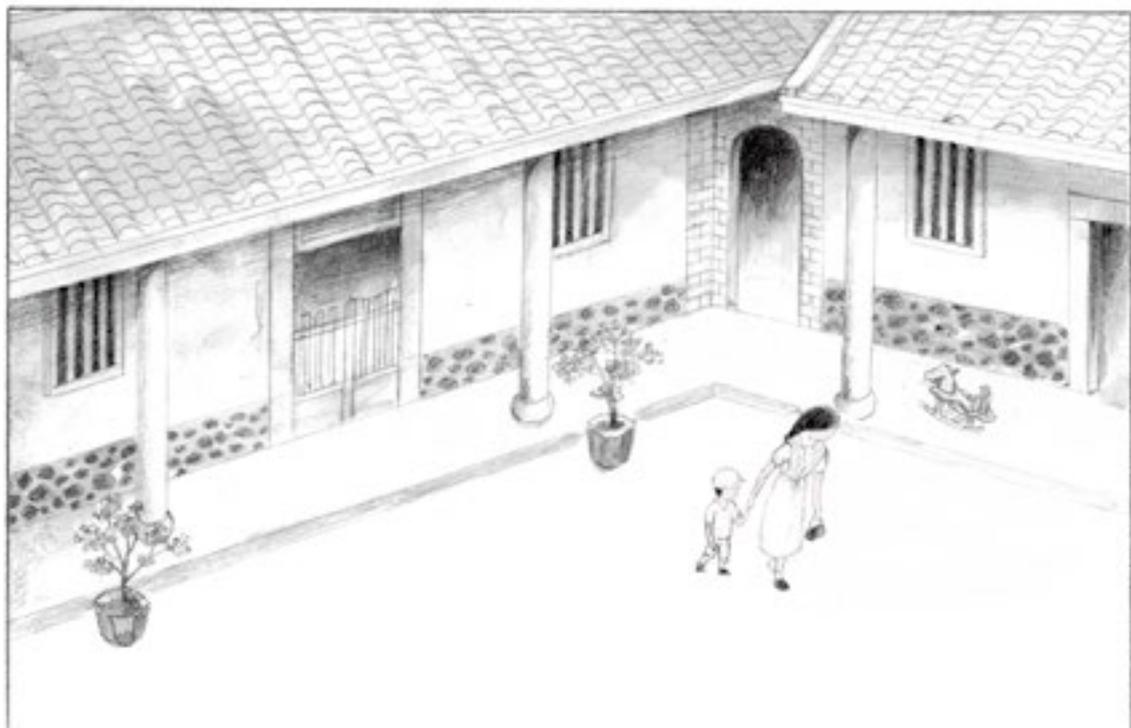




Let's go and see A-sià.

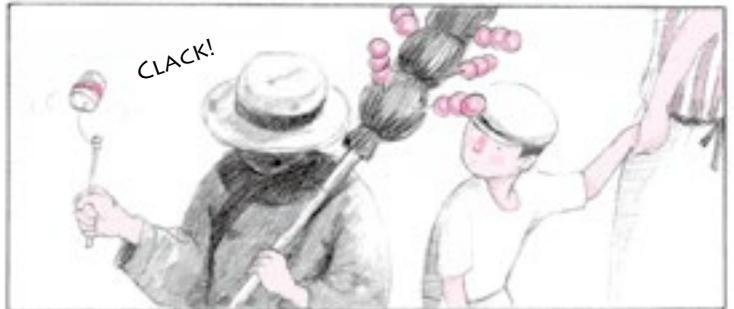


Okay!





Qingshui Street, 18th Steps





A-chiung, congratulations on your engagement!

Thank you. You and A-hsiu and Mei-chin have to come.

Of course, we'll be there.

Oh, and Kun-lin's here!

Auntie Feng!

Where are you off to?

mmm mmm mmmm

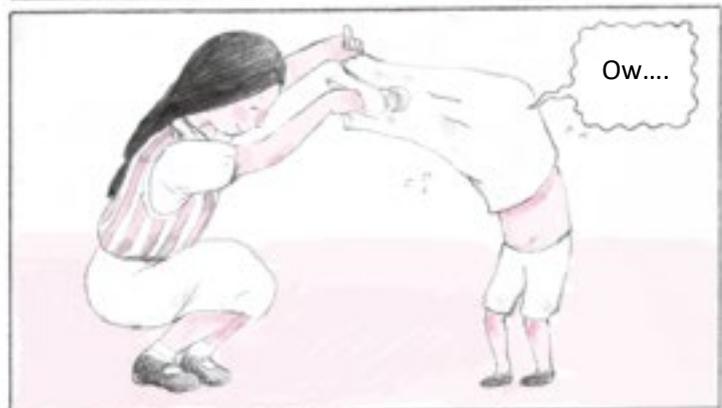


Tsai Mei-feng's neighbors called him A-sià, and the Tsai family, including his son Kun-lin, adopted this nickname.





Try this on.



How handsome!



BANG BANG







A-niâ...



A-niâ...

A-niâ...



Your sister and brother-in-law are coming back today, so be good.



I will.



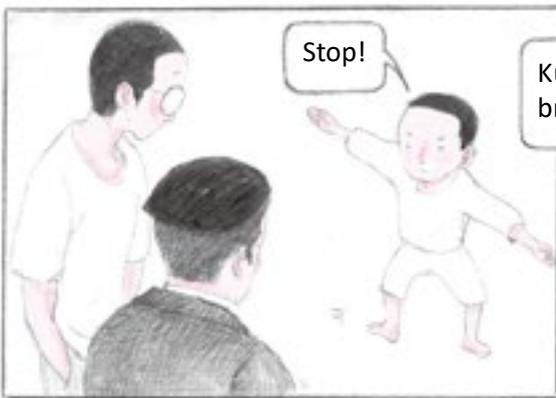


They're back!



Sister!





Tsai Kun-lin, now five, was not happy the sister who loved him and looked after him had married. For the first time, he felt the pain of separation.

來自清

游珮芸 X 周見信

的孩子



SON
OF
FORMOSA

2

水



10 September, 1950

"Kun-lin's been taken away!" Working late at the town hall, Kun-lin was detained by plain-clothes military policemen. His colleague and elementary school friends Chang Sheng-po saw what happened and rushed to tell his family.

Kun-hsiu, second eldest of the brothers, hurried to the police station, but despite repeated enquiries he learned nothing.



A-sià, A-niâ! I asked and asked, but they won't let him out...

Ai-ya! How could this happen? Policeman Lin knows him!



I asked the military police why they took him, but they wouldn't say.

He's an honest boy, what do they think they're doing, arresting him at work?



Do you know where they've taken him?

No, but they're going to the bus station. I'm going to follow them and see.





Kun-lin...



A-sià, A-niâ, you should stay here. I'll follow on and see where they are sending him.



Be careful,
Kun-tsan.

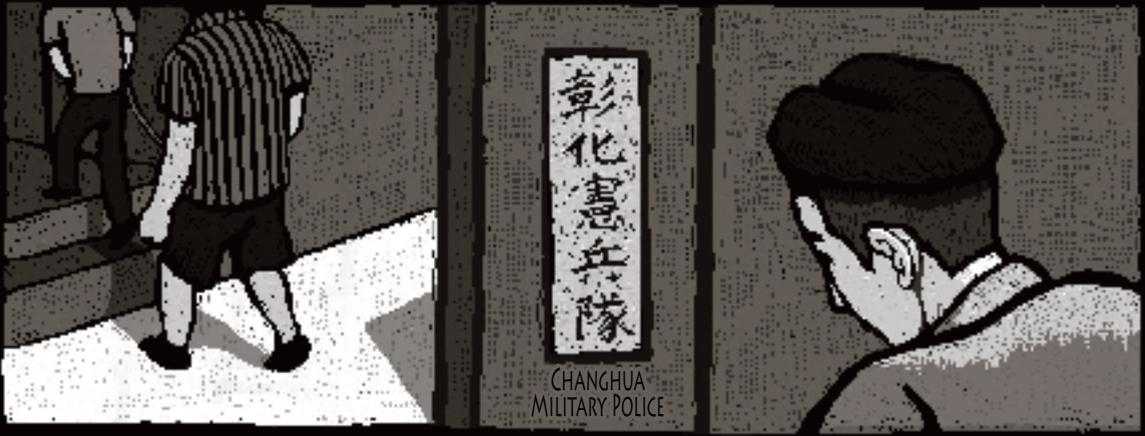


What could such a good boy have done to deserve being dragged about like a dog...

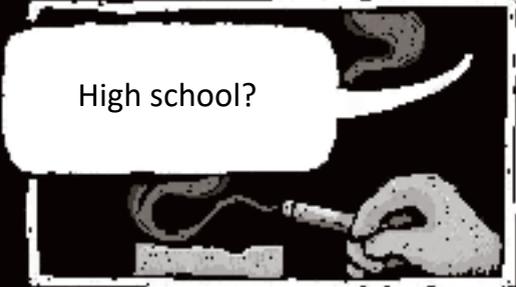


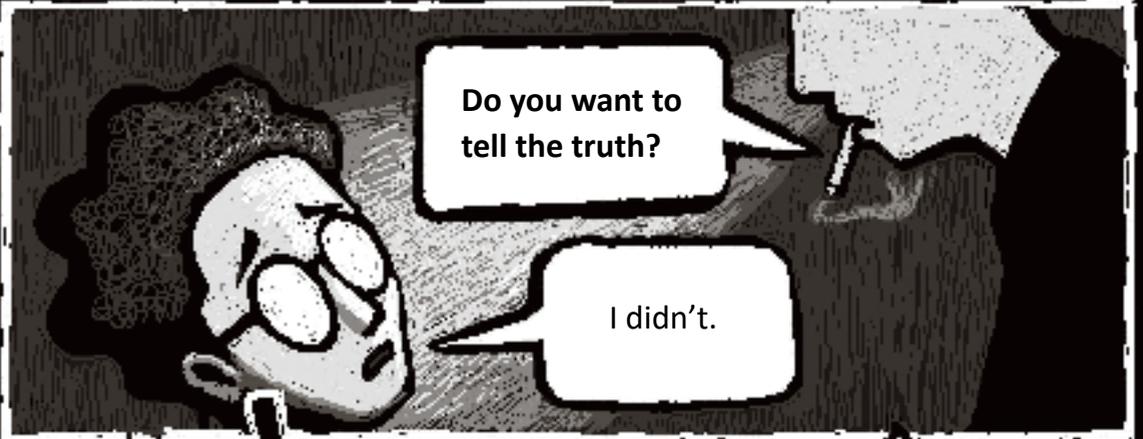


Kun-lin had no idea what awaited him once he boarded the bus. He did not know if he would see his family again, or Yang Pi-ju, the girl he had yet to confess his love to.



偵訊室
INTERROGATION ROOM







碰!
CRACK!



I don't know anything;
how can I tell you?

Are you going
to tell us?

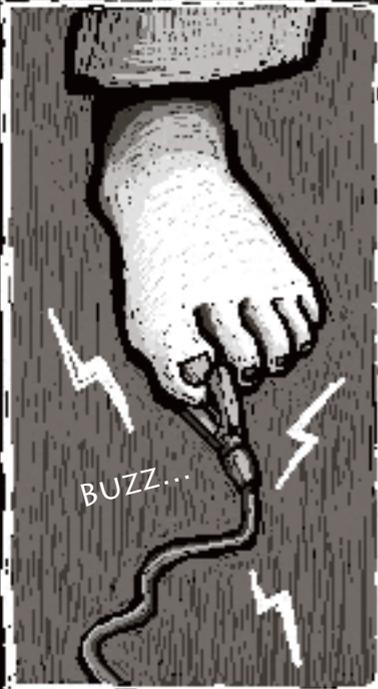
Ow!



Hurry you, don't make it harder...

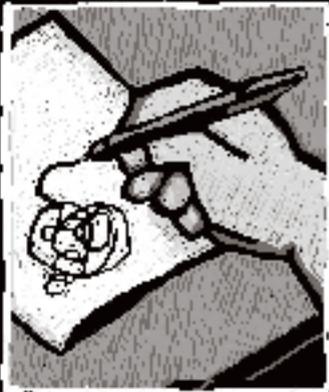


I really don't know!



BUZZ...





What about your second year of senior high,

what did you join then?



Second year?



You mean the book club?



We just chose books to read and talked about what we thought of them...



%*\$*!



That was an illegal organization plotting a revolt!



Tell us who else
was involved.

I didn't know them...



Don't try and
hold out,

admit it!

And you handed
out leaflets for the
Communist bandits,
didn't you?

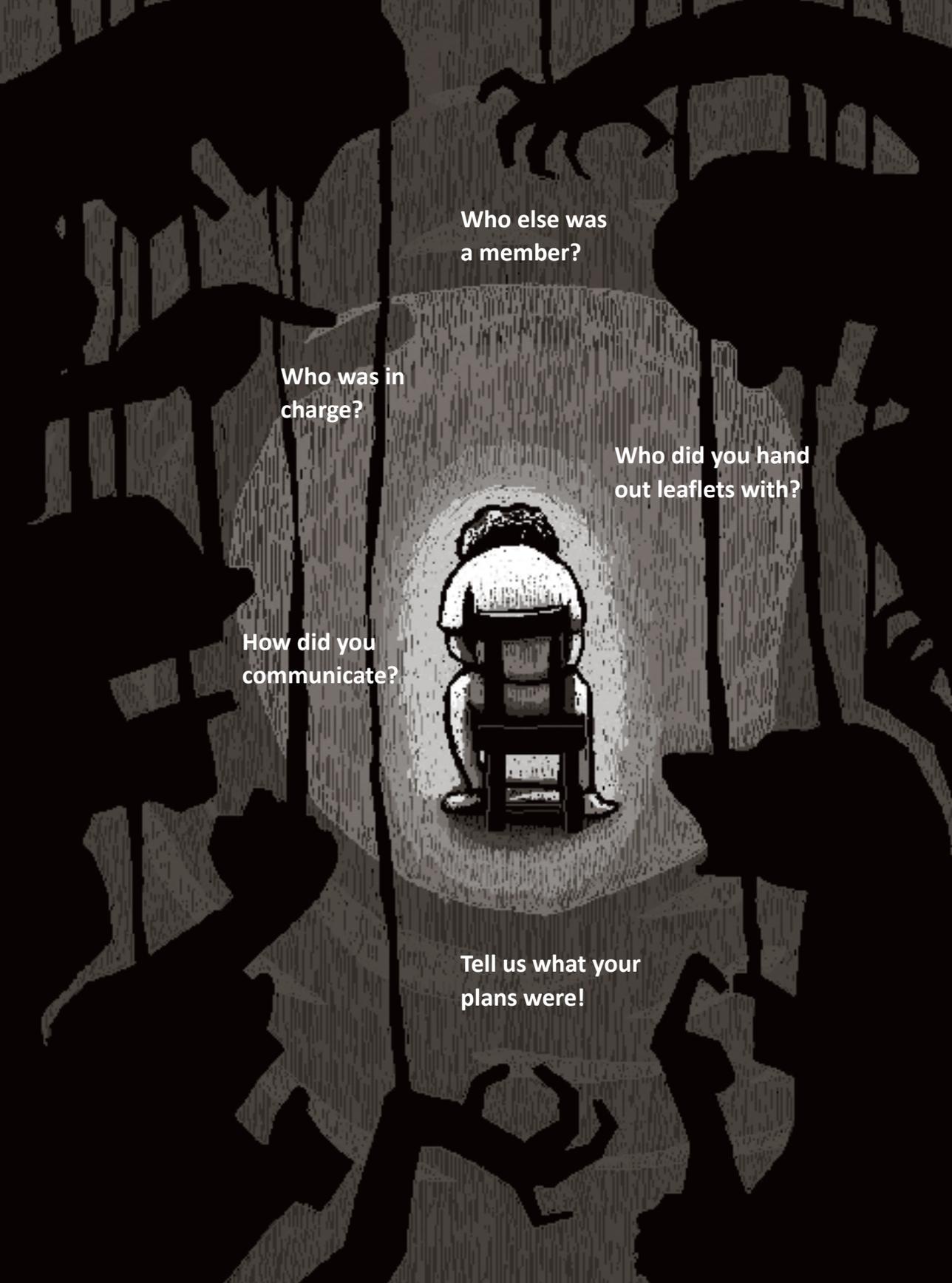


What leaflets?
No!



I never...

Whack!

A central figure of a person with their back to the camera, sitting on a wooden chair. They are surrounded by a circular arrangement of dark silhouettes representing the heads and hands of other people. Five white text prompts are scattered around the central figure, each pointing towards them. The background is a dark, textured grey.

**Who else was
a member?**

**Who was in
charge?**

**Who did you hand
out leaflets with?**

**How did you
communicate?**

**Tell us what your
plans were!**



You were just kids,
someone else put
you up to it.

Your friends have
all confessed, why
hold out?

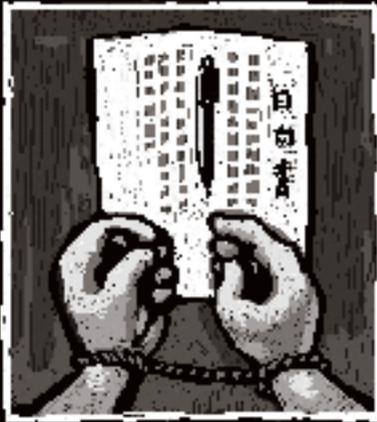
then sign the
confession.

Just give us a
thumbprint,



You'll be out in
two days.





After days of torture and interrogation, Kun-lin was at the point of collapse. On a confession already completed for him, he signed his name and inked a thumbprint.

Charged with spying for the Communists, he was transferred from the Changhua military police to Tainan. In late September, 1950, he was transferred to the security office at Taiwan Garrison Command in Taipei.

The security office was in the Azuma Honganji, a Japanese-style Buddhist temple. Prisoners were often secretly executed here, and it was referred to as "Demon's Purgatory."





Kun-lin was placed alone in a long, narrow, coffin-like cell. It was approaching mid-autumn, a cold and damp season in Taipei, and he shivered uncontrollably.





Tsai Kun-lin, time for questioning.



Membership of an illegal organization, distributing Communist leaflets. You admit this?

I really didn't...

Damnit! Isn't this your thumbprint?



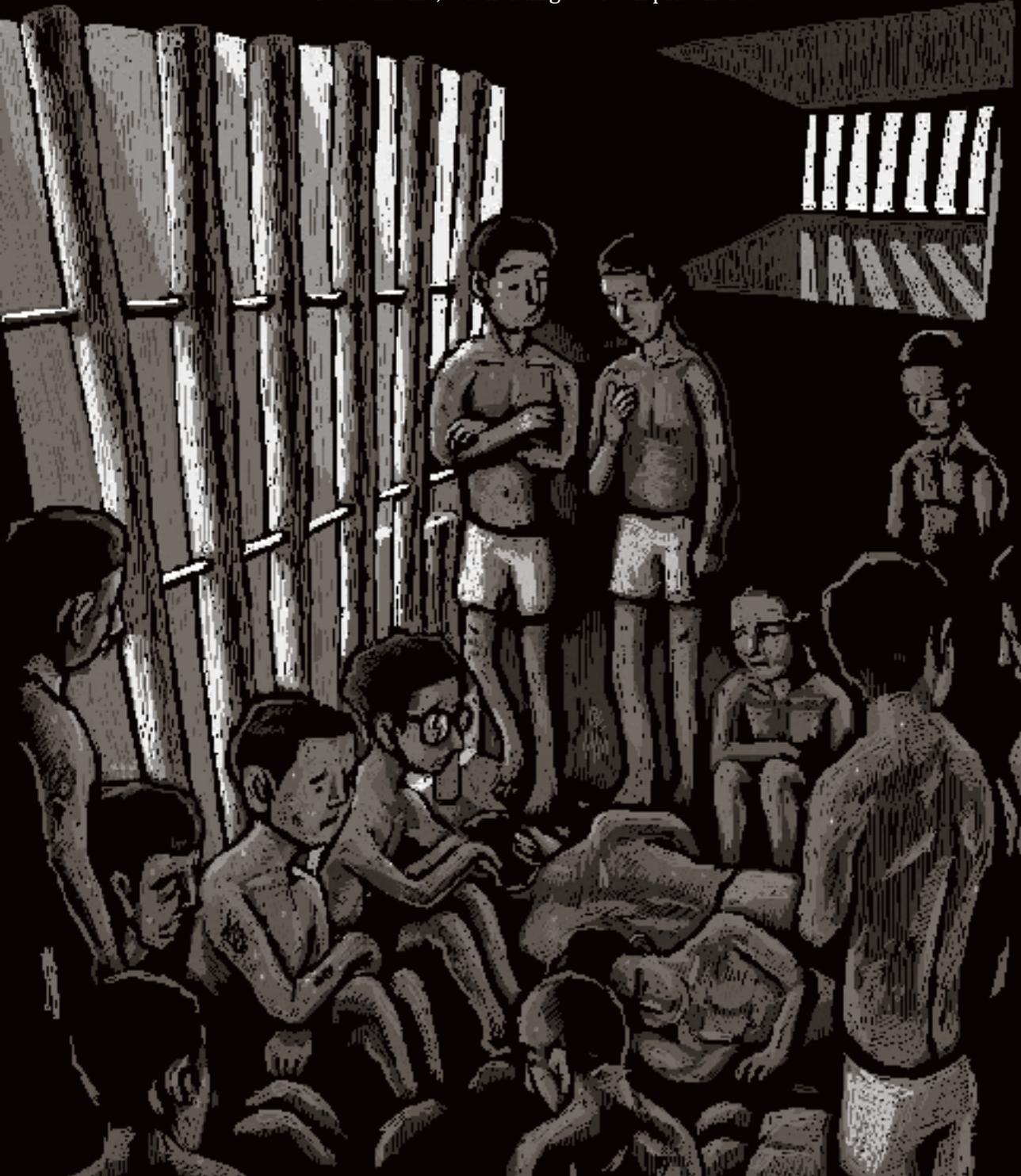
They said I couldn't go home unless...

Less of your talk!

Sign that!

Soon, Kun-lin was transferred to the Military Intelligence Bureau's building on Yanping South Road.

The cells here were cramped and hot: only a square meter or two in size, but holding over ten prisoners.





The Military Intelligence Bureau was known for its use of torture and Kun-lin listened, disturbed, to the cries of prisoners coming from the interrogation rooms.



Quite the coincidence, I'm from Tai-chung too. My name's Liu Wen. I used to teach in Lishan.

I'm Cheng Hai-shu.

Who's the photo of?

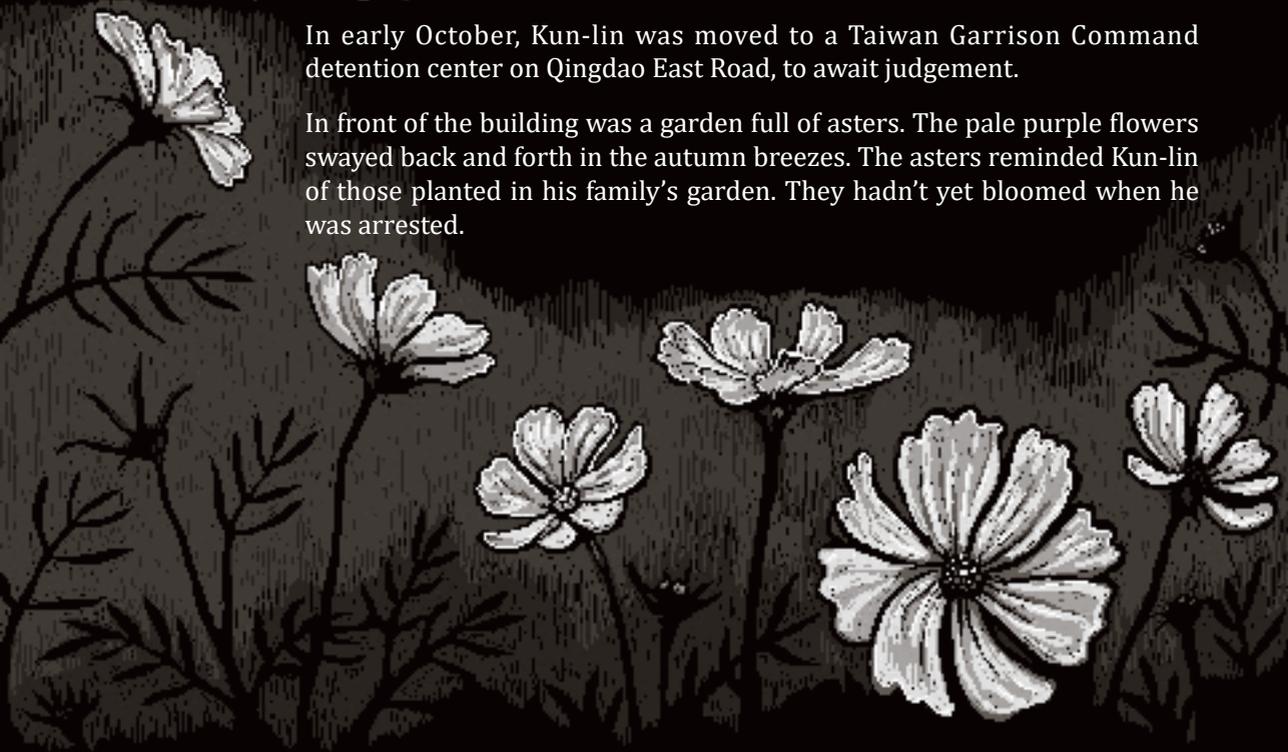
My wife.

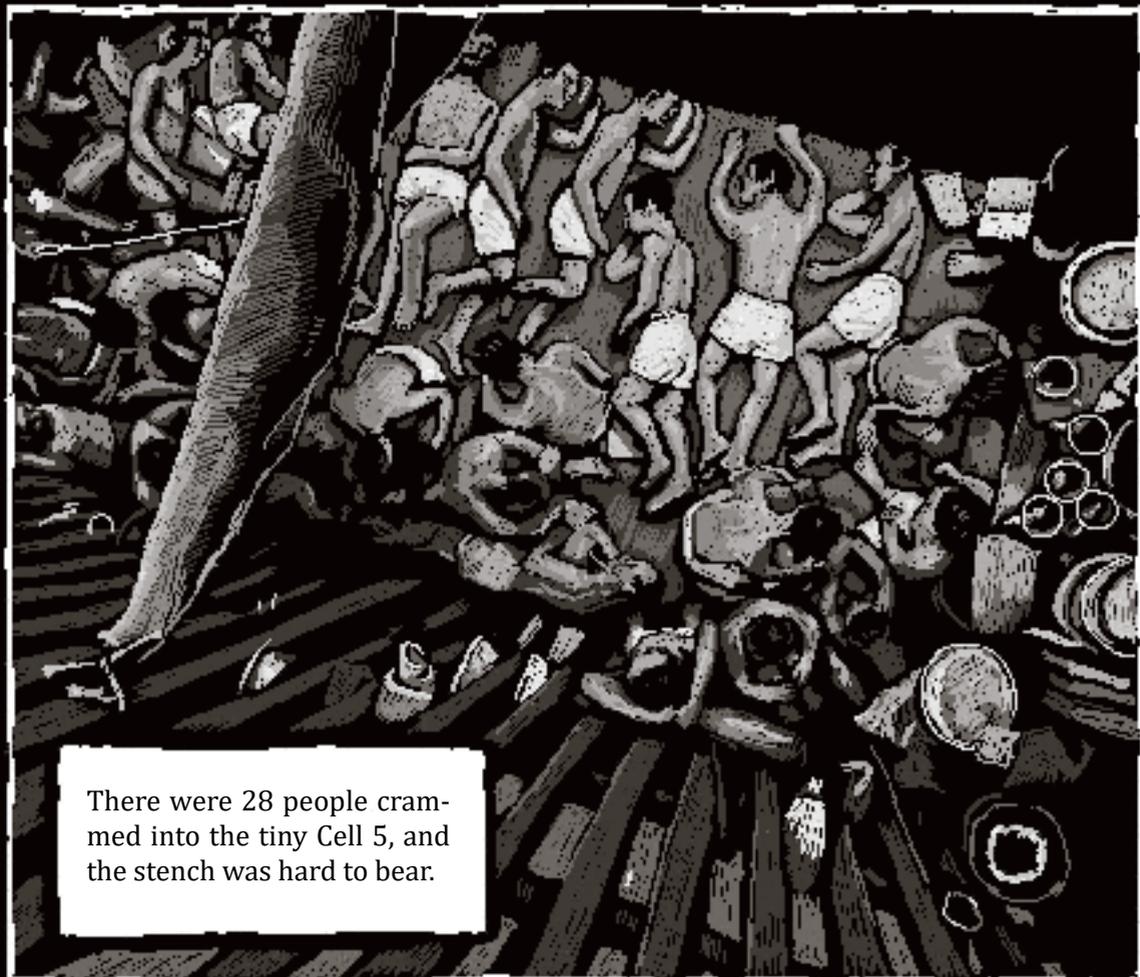
We only just got married.



In early October, Kun-lin was moved to a Taiwan Garrison Command detention center on Qingdao East Road, to await judgement.

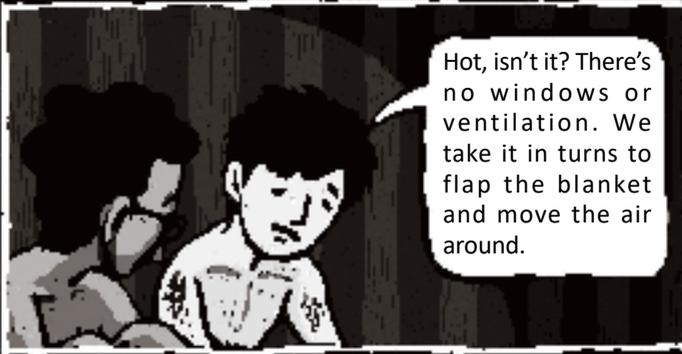
In front of the building was a garden full of asters. The pale purple flowers swayed back and forth in the autumn breezes. The asters reminded Kun-lin of those planted in his family's garden. They hadn't yet bloomed when he was arrested.





There were 28 people crammed into the tiny Cell 5, and the stench was hard to bear.





Hot, isn't it? There's no windows or ventilation. We take it in turns to flap the blanket and move the air around.



I'm Wu Jui-lu, you?



Tsai Kun-lin.



You're very young.

Three years younger than me.

Almost twenty.



Everyone up, exercise time!

?



It's too small in here, so all we can do is walk in circles and sing.



Up you get, time for a walk.

Oh, Danny boy,
The pipes, the pipes are calling
From glen to glen, and down the
mountain side.

Note: Danny Boy records a father's feelings as he sees his son go off to war. It was written by songwriter Frederic Weatherly and set to a traditional Irish melody, Londonderry Air. It has become famous around the world.

The summer's gone, and all the roses falling,
'T's you, it's you must go
And I must bide.

