

BOOKS FROM TAIWAN
(CHILDREN'S BOOKS)



BOOKS FROM TAIWAN (CHILDREN'S BOOKS)

<http://booksfromtaiwan.tw/>

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Ministry of Culture, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

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Cover Illustration © by Lai Ma

Published originally under the title *Jerry Fu's Swimming Lesson* by Commonwealth Education, 2018

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Issue | Issue 10, Summer 2019

Publication Date | September 30, 2019

GPN | 2010302817

ISSN | 2410-0781

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MINISTRY OF CULTURE, REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN)

TRANSLATION GRANT PROGRAM

Books from Taiwan supports the translation of Taiwanese literature into foreign languages with the Translation Grant Program, administered by The Ministry of Culture of Taiwan. The grant is to encourage the publication of translations of Taiwan's literature, including fiction, non-fiction, picture books and comics, and help Taiwan's publishing industry to explore non-Chinese international markets.

- Applicant Eligibility: Foreign publishers (legal persons) legally registered in accordance with the laws and regulations of their respective countries.
- Conditions:
 1. Works translated shall be original, published works (for example, fiction, non-fiction, picture books, and comics but not anthologies) by Taiwanese writers (Republic of China nationals) in traditional Chinese characters.
 2. Priority is given to works to be translated and published for the first time in a non-Chinese language market.
 3. Applicants are not limited to submitting only one project for funding in each application year; however, the same applicant can only receive funding for up to three projects in any given round of applications.
 4. Projects receiving funding shall have already obtained authorization for translation, and be published within two years starting from the year after application year (published before the end of October).
- Funding Items and Amount
 1. Funds may cover licensing fees going to the rights holder of the original work, translation fees, and promotional fees (limited to an economy-class airline ticket for authors who are citizens of the Republic of China traveling abroad to attend promotional activities), and book production fees.
 2. The maximum funding available for any given project is NT\$ 600,000 (including income tax and remittance charges).
 3. Priority consideration will be given to those works that have not yet been published in a language other than Chinese, as well as winners of a Golden Tripod Award, Golden Comic Award, or Taiwan Literature Golden Award (list appended).
- Application Period: Twice every year. The MOC reserves the right to change the application periods, and will announce said changes separately.
- Announcement of successful applications: Winners will be announced within three months of the end of the application period.
- Application Method: Please visit the Ministry's "Books from Taiwan" (BFT) website (<http://booksfromtaiwan.tw/>), and use the online application system.

For full details of the Translation Grant Program, please visit

http://booksfromtaiwan.tw/grant_en.php

Or contact: books@moc.gov.tw

BOOKS FROM TAIWAN
(CHILDREN'S BOOKS)

What if only part of me grows?



What if I get too big?
That would be tricky!



WHAT'S IT LIKE GROWING UP? 長大是什麼樣子？



What happens when I grow up? Where does the old me go? Will I grow too big, too weird, too different? Every child's honest questions about maturation, explored in a panoply of beautiful, energetic illustration.

Hsiao Ti knows he's growing up, but he has no idea what will happen to him along the way. Will he get as big as Mom or Dad, as big as a tree, or even – oh, the horror – as big as their house?! He'll be able to reach things in high places, eat more tasty food, and go to faraway places all by himself. But will he still be him? Will he remember what life is like right now?

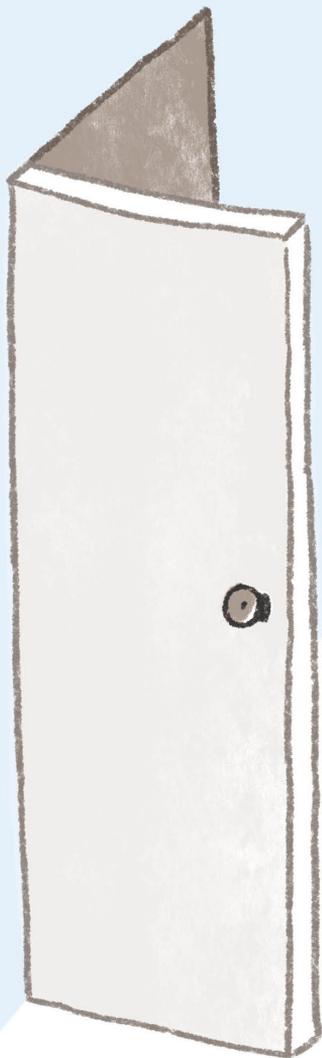
- Category: Picture Book
- Publisher: Light
- Date: 4/2018
- Rights contact: booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- Pages: 56
- Size: 21 x 25 cm
- Age: 3+
- Rights sold: Simplified Chinese (Chemical Industry), Korean (Crayon House)

Every child harbors all kinds of hopes, fears, and illusions about growing older. Wu Yi-Ting lets many of these bloom in illustrations that capture both the sincerity and the fantasy of a child's imaginations. Yes, her story affirms, growing old is a crazy process. Though it may change you somewhat, just face it bravely, and everything will be all right!



WU YI-TING 吳宜庭

Illustrator and author who loves the ocean, whales, and walking in the wilderness. 2013 winner of the Award for Excellence in the 9th Creative Design competition, as well as the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award.



What's it like growing up?
Do you just grow taller?





How tall will I grow?
Taller than Mama?
Taller than Baba?
Taller than the house plant?
Taller than a tree?



Hsiao Ti looks around...



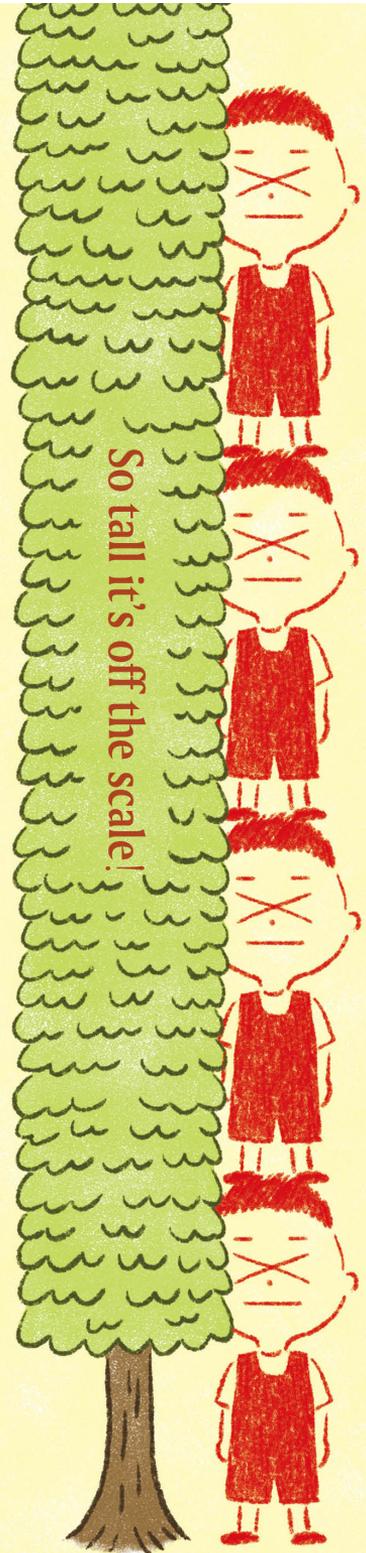
2.9 x Hsiao Ti



3.7 x Hsiao Ti



So tall it's off the scale!



When I grow up
Where will the little me go?





Will it still be inside me?

THE LITTLE SEED

小種子



- Category: Picture Book
- Publisher: Yes Creative
- Date: 6/2018
- Rights contact: booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- Pages: 40
- Size: 21 x 25 cm
- Age: 3+

As spring arrives and summer follows, the animals of the forest rush around in a flurry of activity, while flowers burst out of the ground and open up brilliant blooms. One tiny seed quietly sleeps in the mud, waiting for the perfect moment to awaken.

As spring arrives and the animals of the forest rush around in loud flurry of activity, one tiny seed lies asleep in the mud. Squirrels dig past him, a family of moles tunnel beneath him, and caterpillars mosey around him, yet no one even notices he's there. Summer comes, and flowers burst into bloom, yet still our little seed snoozes on. He's waiting for a day when he'll awake, itchy all over, and stretch his arms, and – oh, my! Look what's happened!

Soft-edged illustrations and a colorful yet sparing narrative depict nature as a world full of potential, a world always changing, in which every seed has its own right time to germinate. Every seed, burrowing mole, and crawling caterpillar live and grow together in a symphony of life.



Text by WU TSAI-YING 吳在嫻

Author Wu Tsai-ying holds a dual BA in English and Chinese from Fu Jen Catholic University and an MA in Communications Research from National Chung Cheng University. Her work has won the Huai En Literary Prize and been listed for the Hsin-Yi Children's Literature Award. A prolific author, she has steered the publication of many children's titles and published her own essays in several major newspapers and periodicals.



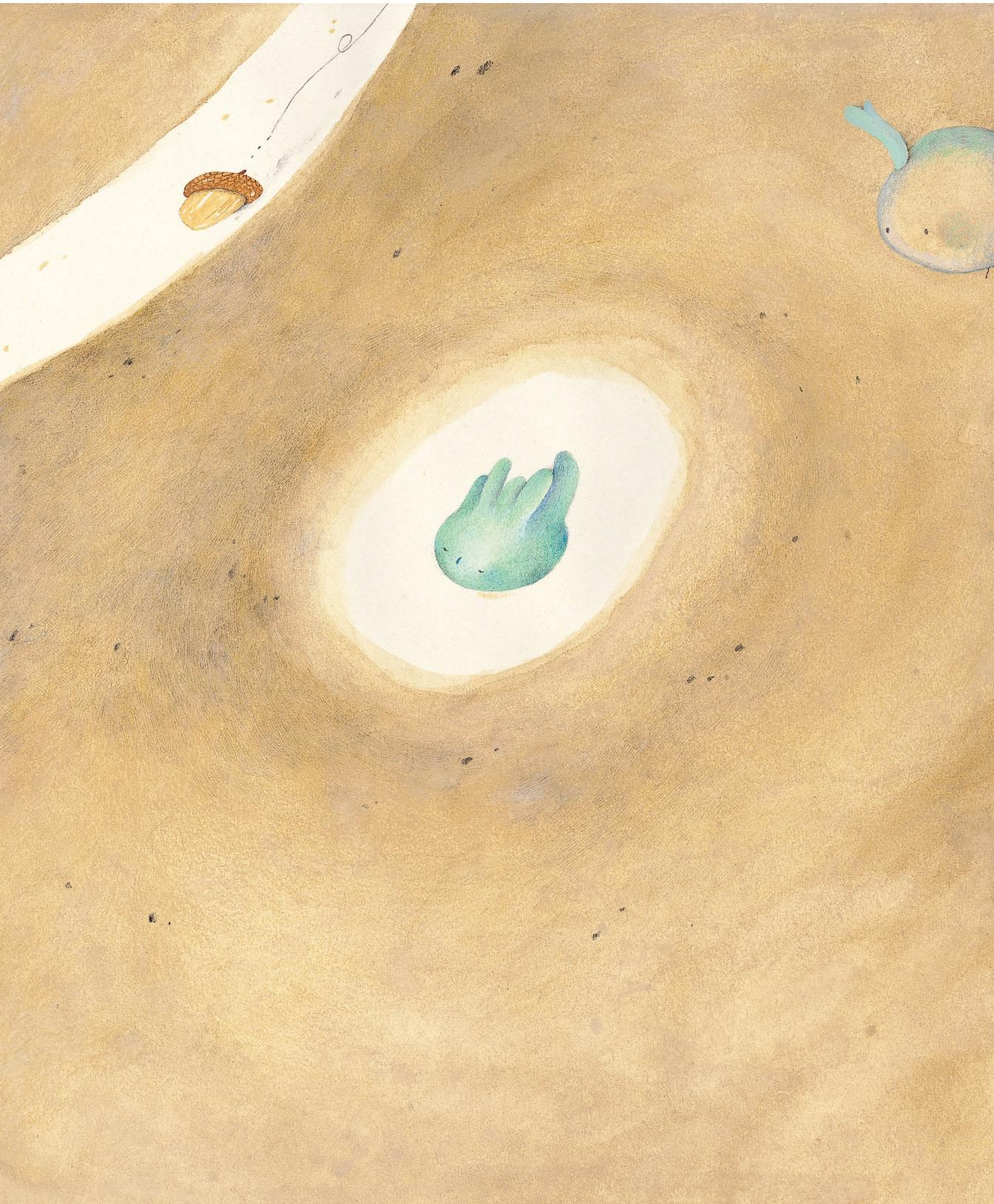
Illustrated by HSU TAI-YU 許臺育

Hermit and old soul, living in the suburbs of Taipei. She likes aimless walks, letting her imagination run wild, and finding joy in illustration.





Scratch, scratch, scrabble, scrabble.







Rustle, Rustle...



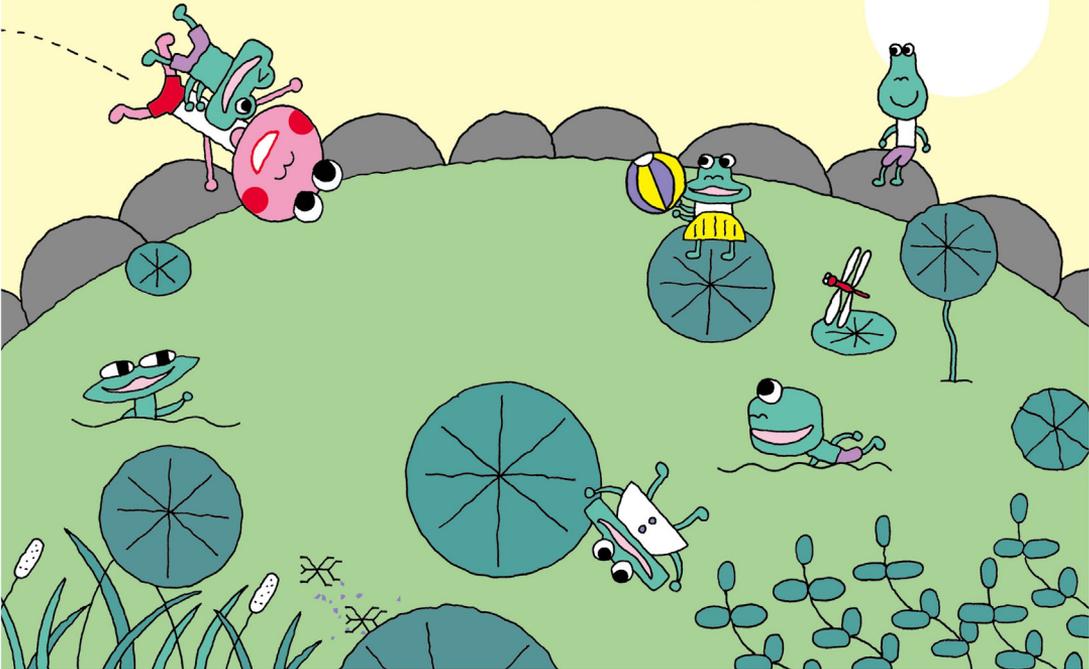
Bounce...

Bounce...



Bump... Bump...

River River Lake taught the other little frogs how to swim and leap.



River River Lake was very friendly and was always happy to help.



KUNG FU FROG, RIVER RIVER LAKE

青蛙大俠江河湖



* 2019 Golden Tripod Award Recommended Title

A pond of little green frogs has been invaded by a toad prince. The frogs plead with their high-jumping heroine, River River Lake, to save them. But the toad prince is so strong – how will she learn to overcome him?

- Category: Picture Book
- Publisher: Global Kids
- Date: 11/2018
- Rights contact:
booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- Pages: 36
- Size: 26.5 x 21.1cm
- Age: 3+
- Rights sold: Korean (Borim)

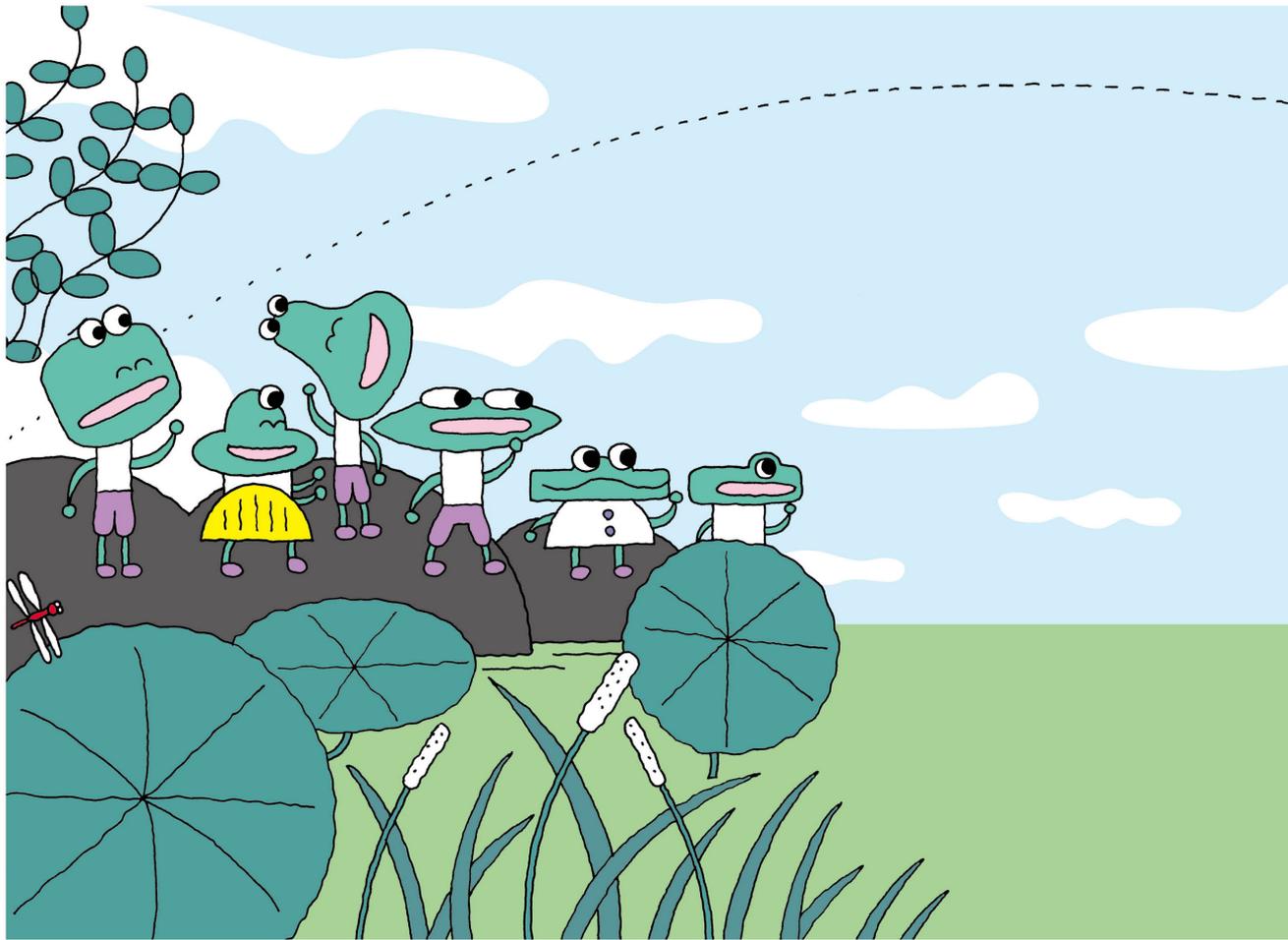
River River Lake is the champion of her pond. Her long legs let her jump higher than anyone else, and she's always the first to offer her fellow frogs help in solving any problem. Life is wonderful for her and her friends, until a toad prince from a faraway lake invades the pond and starts beating everybody up! What shall they do? The other frogs beg River River Lake to help, but what can she do against such a powerful bully? Her only option is to travel far and wide and learn enough kung fu to come back and beat him.

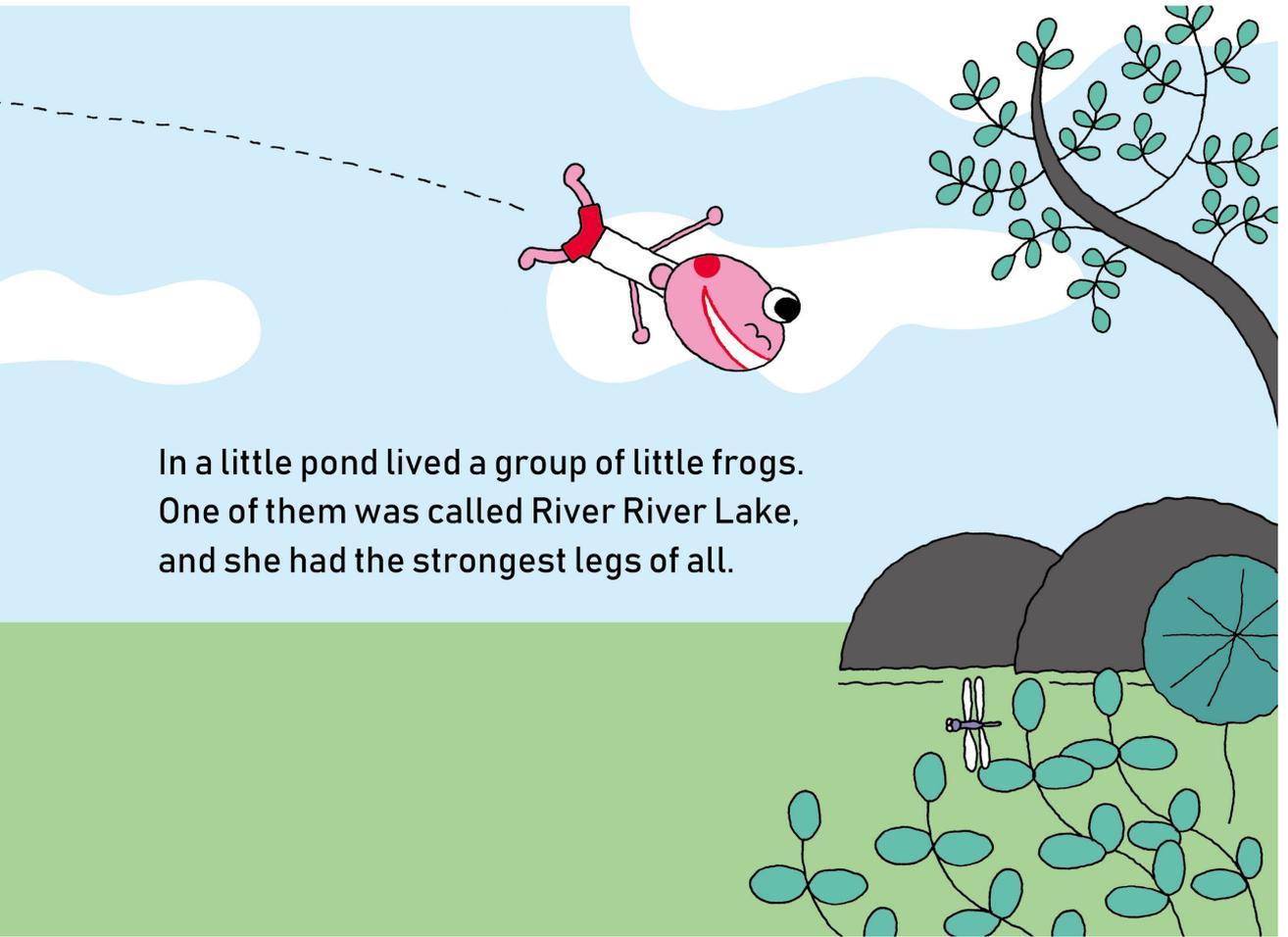
Liu Chen-Kuo gives free rein to his signature style of off-kilter illustration in this retelling of the David and Goliath story, in which persistence and the will to help others is all that's needed to overcome selfishness and violence. Brains and heart win over brawn once again, in the world of frogs as in the world of women and men.



LIU CHEN-KUO 劉鎮國 (湯姆牛)

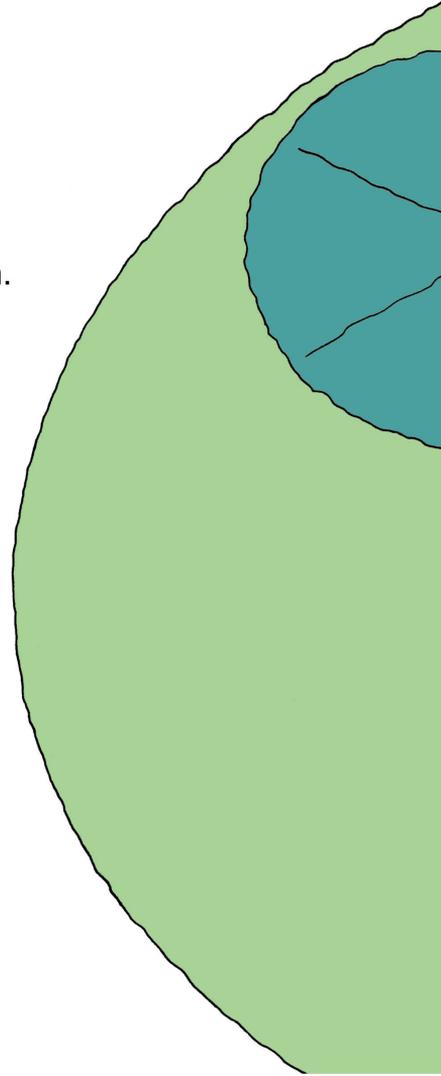
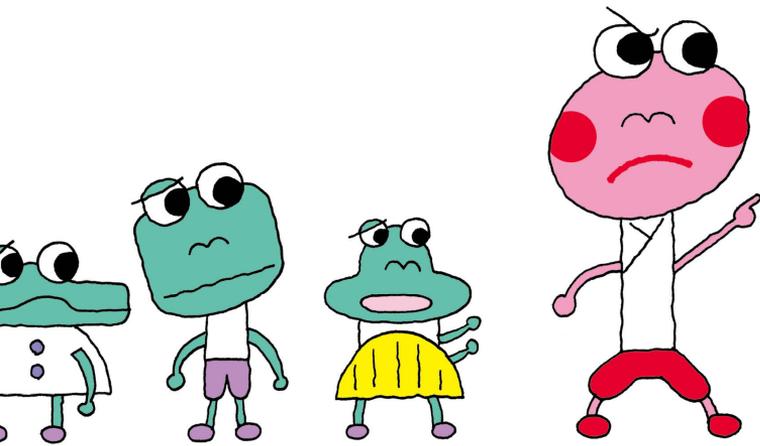
Originally trained as a sculptor, Liu Chen-Kuo has established himself as a household name in children's publishing over the last decade. His books have won several awards, including the White Ravens Award, the Golden Tripod Award for Best Illustration, and the Judge's Choice for the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award. Liu has also been a featured illustrator at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. Look for his other titles, like *Grandma Lin's Peach Tree*, and *Calder The Artist*.

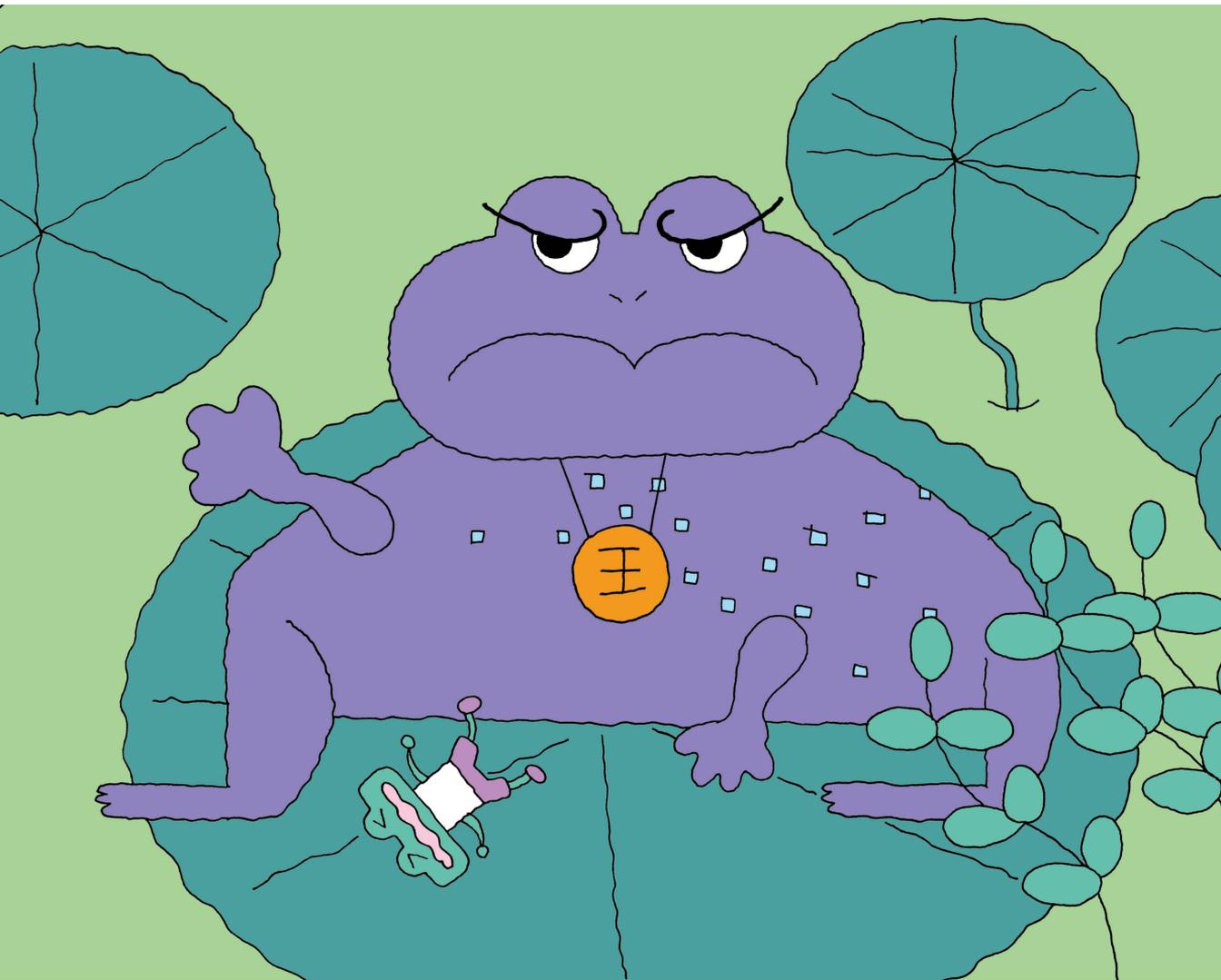


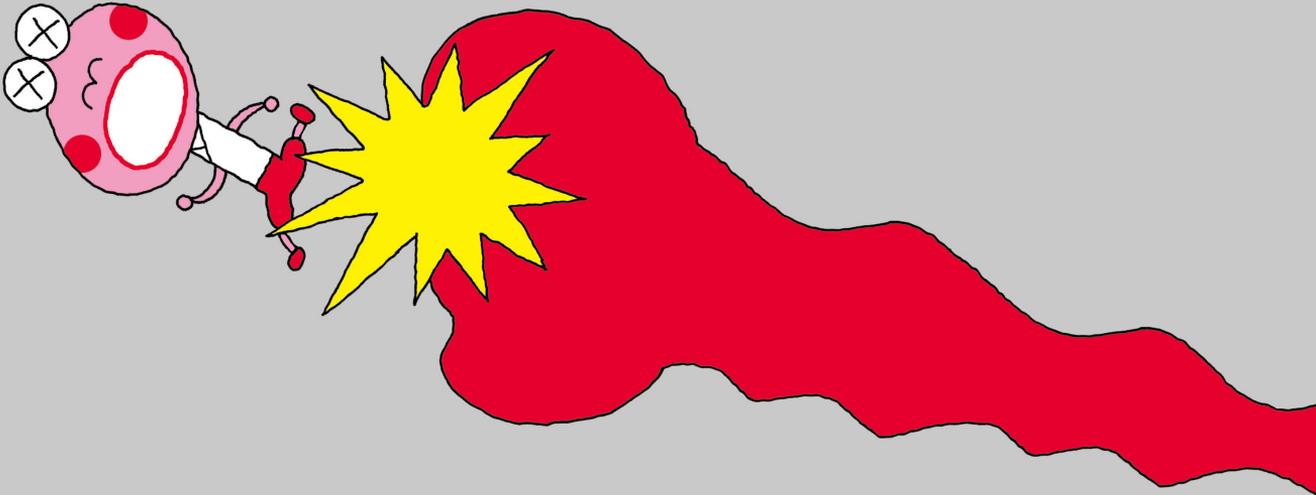


In a little pond lived a group of little frogs.
One of them was called River River Lake,
and she had the strongest legs of all.

One day,
a toad prince came from the big lake far, far away.
He was horrid to the little frogs.
They asked River River Lake to have a word with him.



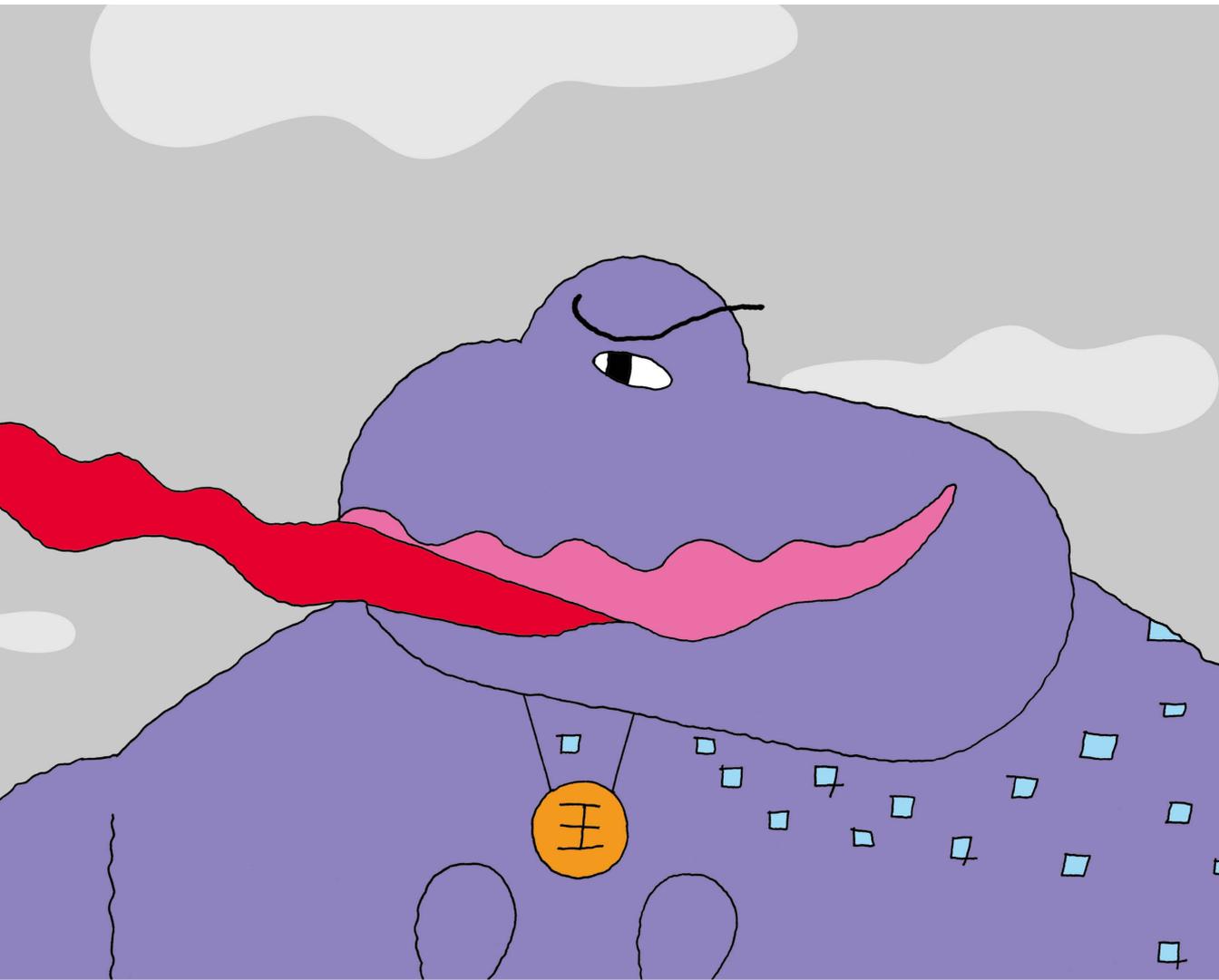




Wham!

The little frogs had never seen anything like it.







LET'S GO TO THE ZOO

一起去動物園



- Category: Picture Book
- Publisher: Yuan-Liou
- Date: 7/2018
- Rights contact:
booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- Pages: 32
- Size: 21 x 28.5 cm
- Age: 3+
- Rights sold: Simplified Chinese (Modern Press)

* 2019 Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award

A young girl's little brother has been in the hospital for several weeks. She misses him very much, and wants to take him to the zoo. Her love and attention help bring the zoo to him.

A young girl hasn't seen her brother in ages. He's been in the hospital for weeks, unable to come. Does he miss her? she wonders. He gets so many shots and has to sleep by himself at night; he really is a brave boy. So much has happened to her over the past few weeks – she's learning to swim and to read, and their class went to the zoo for a field trip. She really wants to take her brother to the zoo with her.

We hear the sister's hopes, expectations, and confused anxieties mount as her excited stories and questions for her brother pile up. The animals of the zoo accompany her hopes and fears all the way to her brother's bedside, to care for and protect him until that decisive moment his sister so little understands. Together they bring him home, in whichever sense of the term you choose.

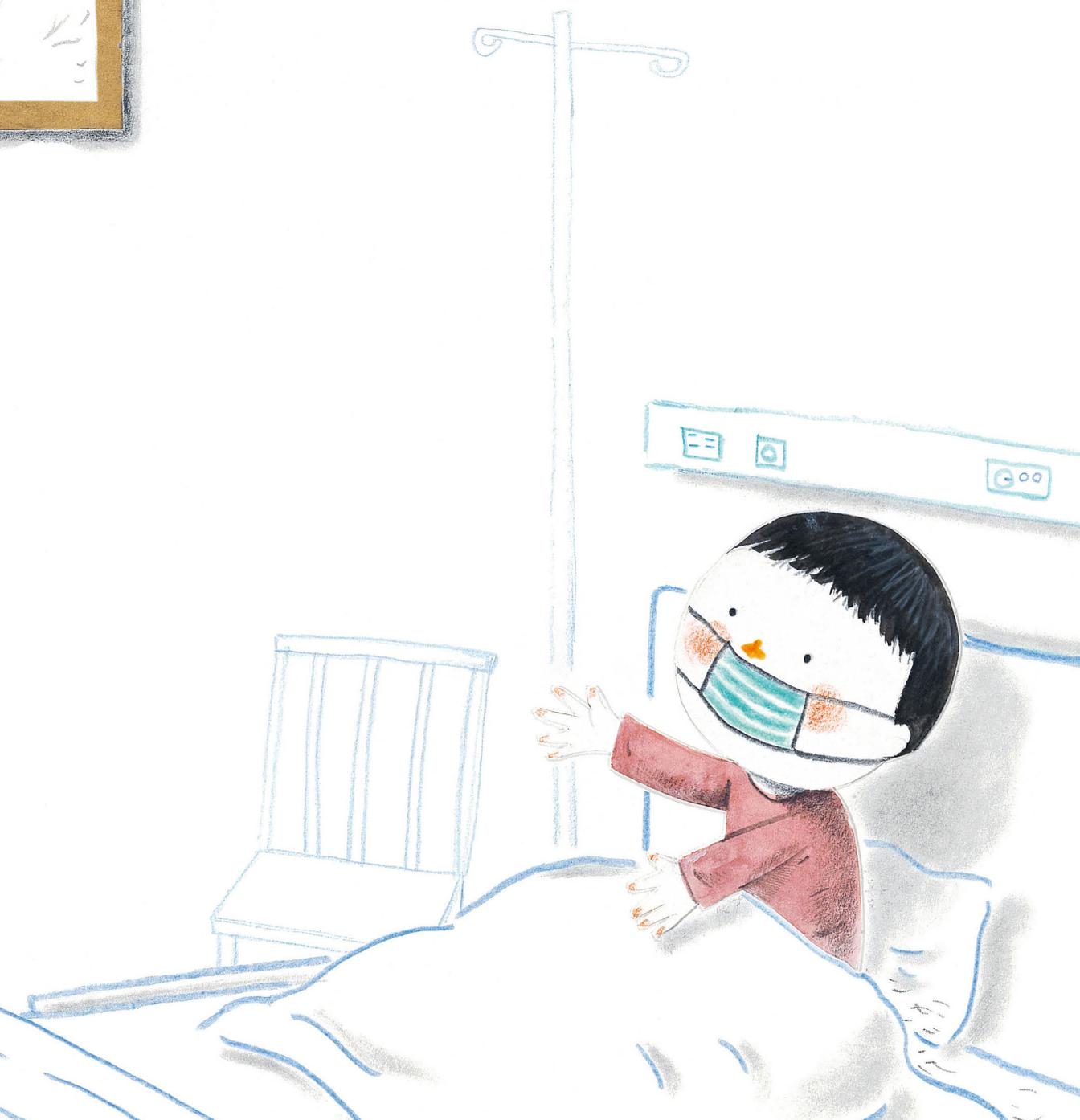


BERNIE LIN 林柏廷

Bernie Lin is an accomplished illustrator, a coffee addict and a lover of children. An accomplished artist in traditional media, he produces work through digital illustration. His children's titles have won the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award and the Hsin-Yi Children's Literature Award.



Hey, little brother,
I haven't seen you for ages!
Are you feeling better?
Do you miss me? I've so much to tell you!



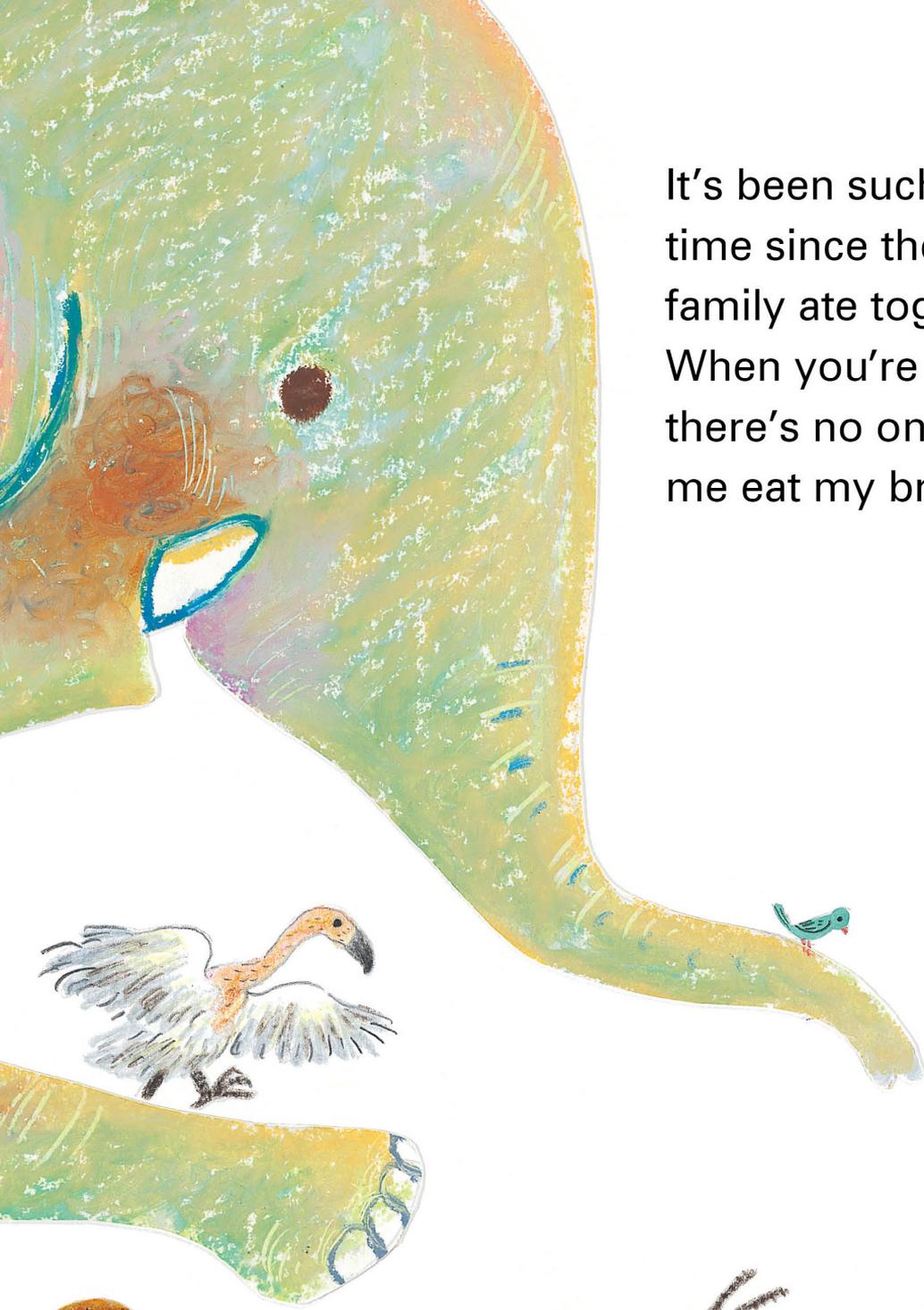


Last Wednesday there was a school trip to the zoo!
The zoo's enormous. There are so many animals.
I hope you'll be better soon.
Then the whole family can go to the zoo.





It's been such a long time since the whole family ate together. When you're not there, there's no one to help me eat my broccoli.





Everyone is swimming.

Swimming has become very popular in his town.

JERRY FU'S SWIMMING LESSON

朱瑞福的游泳課



- Category: Picture Book
- Publisher: Commonwealth Education
- Date: 7/2018
- Rights contact: booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- Pages: 44
- Size: 26 x 25 cm
- Age: 4+
- Rights sold: Simplified Chinese (CheerFly)

Everybody in town is learning to swim, and young Jerry Fu the giraffe wants to learn too. But swimming is so scary, and he keeps failing. Why is it so hard for him? One tiny detail amid Lai Ma's rich visual world catches Jerry Fu's eye and shows him the thing he's missing.

Swimming has become a really popular activity in town these days – all the animals are doing it, and young Jerry Fu the giraffe wants to learn. His mother signs him up for a beginner class led by amazing instructors, and he's really excited. But every step of the way, from the warm-up to being in the water, is really hard for Jerry Fu. After all the other animals have learned the basic strokes, he's exhausted and struggling. Only when everyone else has left, and he's sitting alone by the pool, he notices a single leaf floating effortlessly on the water...and an idea pops into his head!

Celebrated children's author Lai Ma imbues this educational story about growing, learning, and overcoming difficulty with energy, hope, and a whirlwind of detail. The book's stunning complexity and smooth coherence make it a rewarding read and an easy favorite.



LAI MA 賴馬

Lai Ma published his first book, *I've Turned into a Dragon!* at the age of twenty-seven to critical acclaim. He has devoted himself to his writing and illustrations. He has won almost every major prize for children's literature in Taiwan, and has had three books take the top spot on the Eslite yearly bestseller list for picture books.



LAI HSIAO-YEN 賴曉妍

The Lai family matriarch, and the crucial motivator of Lai Ma's children's literature project. This book is adapted from a bedtime story she crafted for their three children.

The streams and rivers, ponds and lakes are full of animals swimming.





Swimming is cool!
It's good for your health.



His name is Jerry Fu.

OK, how tall is he?

Jerry Fu can't swim.



Mama takes him to sign up for Children's Swimming Lessons.

There are five coaches:

Mr Monkey



Miss Panda



Miss Raccoon



Mr Frog



Mr Wild-boar



Mr Wild-boar wasn't at all wild or boring. He made everyone laugh!





Hah Hah Hah!

Hah Hah!

Hah Hah!

Hello everyone!
I'm Mr Wild-boar.
Let's be cool in the pool!



RIPE RED FRUIT

果子紅了



- Category: Picture Book
- Publisher: Pace
- Date: 12/2018
- Rights contact: booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- Pages: 48
- Size: 28 x 21 cm
- Age: 3+
- Rights sold: Simplified Chinese

A fruit fly spies a bright red pomegranate dangling from a branch. What a delicious meal! He thinks. But is someone watching him? Cookie Lin and Liao Chien-Hung depict an entire food chain through a series of shocking surprises.

A wandering fly lays his big eyes on a bright red pomegranate dangling from a branch. He buzzes over, hoping for a delicious meal. But wait! His senses are tingling. Is somebody watching him? Somebody is, in fact – a spider eyes him greedily. But wait! The spider suddenly panics. Is somebody watching *him*? There’s always somebody watching, and even the hunter with his rifle gets a sudden shock from the lonely pomegranate.

Cookie Lin adapts an ancient Chinese fable about pursuing short-term benefit without thinking of risk into a series of illustrated encounters, each imbued with the animal’s simple inner monologue. The illustrations glow with collaged color, their style somewhat reminiscent of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. The author blends her exposition of the concept of the food chain with novelistic excitement, as the “apex predator” is suddenly foiled by a falling piece of fruit.



Text by COOKIE LIN 林秀穗

Cookie Lin has been a dreamer and a writer since her childhood. Her children's titles have won several prizes, including two First Prizes from the Hsin-Yi Children's Literature Awards, the Judge's Choice for the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award, and the seventh Chen Kuo-Cheng Children's Literature Award. She has also been longlisted for a Golden Tripod Award.

Illustrated by LIAO CHIEN-HUNG 廖健宏

Liao Chien-Hung is a prizewinning illustrator of multiple children's titles. His work has garnered him a Judge's Choice Award for the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award, a Hsin-Yi Children's Literature Award and Illustrated Book Award, the Chen Kuo-Cheng Children's Literature Award, and *Mandarin Daily News* Children's Literature Award.

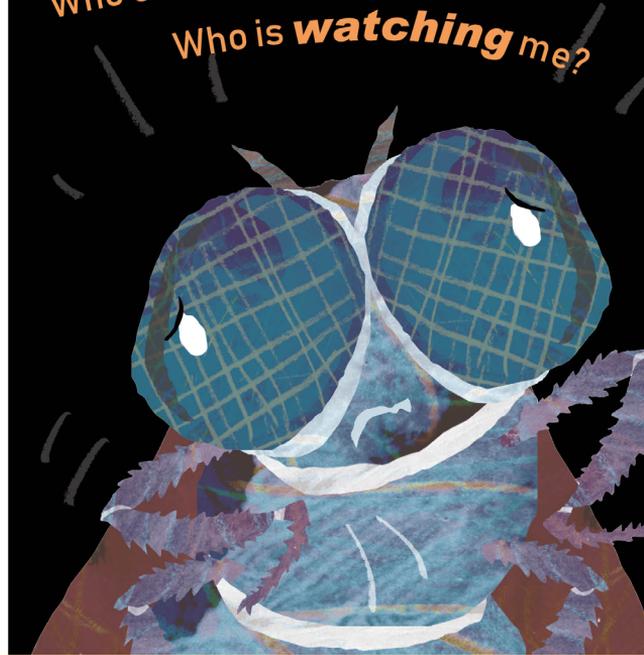


Along came a fruit fly,
his tummy rumbling.
"I'm hungry. This ripe red fruit
looks delicious!"



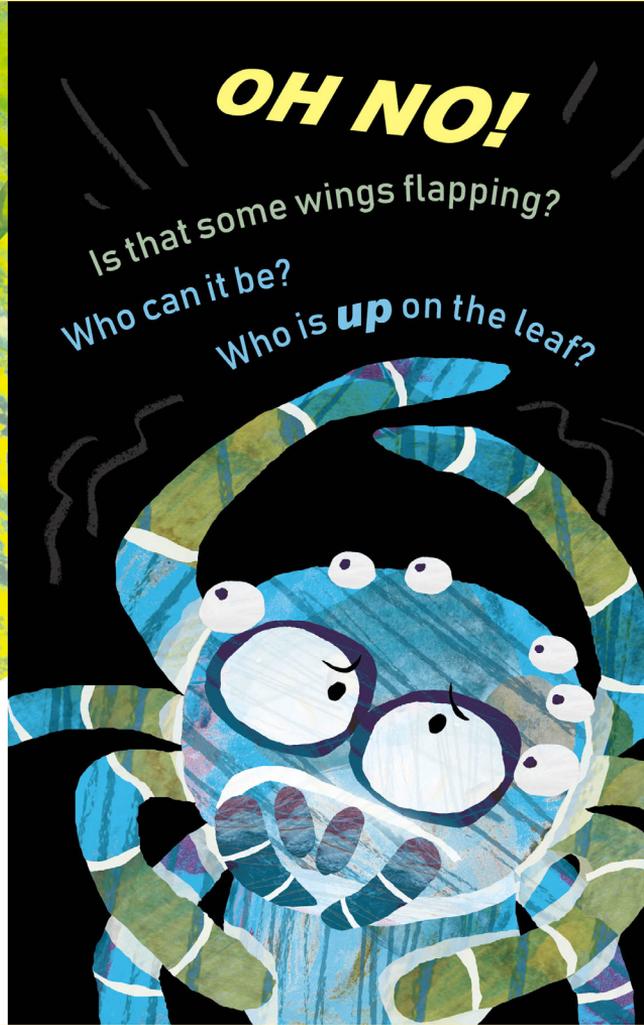
OH NO!

I can feel eight eyes behind me?
Who can it be?
Who is **watching** me?



A spider appeared behind the fly.
"Mmm, a tasty fruit fly!"





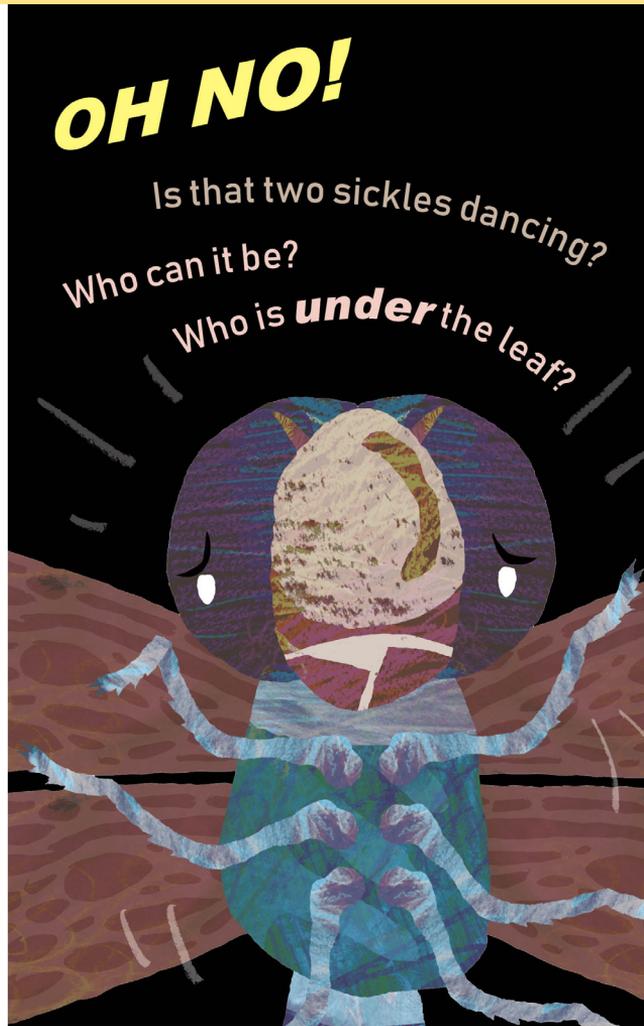
OH NO!

Is that some wings flapping?
Who can it be?

Who is **up** on the leaf?

A dragonfly landed on a leaf.
“Mmm, a scrumptious spider!”







MY DEAR

親愛的



- Category: Picture Book
- Publisher: Global Kids
- Date: 12/2018 (first published in 2009)
- Rights contact: booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- Pages: 48
- Size: 21.5 x 28.1 cm
- Age: 4+
- Rights sold: Simplified Chinese (Qingdao)

* Longlisted, 2010 Golden Tripod Award

After the death of her mother, a young girl takes up the maintenance of her household and does her best to help “the person upstairs”, her grieving father, break free of the chains of bereavement. A story of persistence, optimism, and loving memory told through diary entries, letters, and notes.

After the death of her mother, a young girl takes up the maintenance of her household, making meals, cleaning the house, and weeding the garden, her two dogs and two chickens by her side. Mom explicitly told her she would have to take care of “the one upstairs” for a while: a man with wild hair and beard who stares all day at an empty canvas and barely speaks or eats. Though lonely, sad, and tired, the girl rolls up her sleeves and gets to work. Life goes on with the help of her puppies and her neighbors, and one day, “the one upstairs” – her grieving father – comes downstairs for dinner with a shaven face and clean clothes on.

Arlene Hsing’s story replicates memory through fragments: the little girl records every day in her diary and leaves herself notes about work, life, and her lost mother, and those notes come together to form the story. This is a tale of persistence, optimism, and love, which is brought to life through endearing illustrations that appear to rise from a common yellow legal pad.



Text by ARLENE HSING 幸佳慧

Arlene Hsing is an all-around star of children’s literature: She translates, critiques, writes, and researches it. Holder of a PhD in Children’s Literature from Newcastle University, she combines research into its cultural, linguistic, and gender aspects with staunch advocacy. Her own body of written work ranges from essays and reader’s notes for adults to a variety of titles for children. Her published titles have been longlisted several times for the Golden Tripod Award. She has received Golden Tripod Special Contribution Award in 2019 for her lifetime achievement.



Illustrated by YANG WAN-JING 楊宛靜

An artist of broad natural and literary interests, Yang Wan-Jing loves drawing animal and natural subjects in particular. Several of her illustrated titles have been longlisted for the Golden Tripod Award, *China Times* Open Book Award, and others.





2 April

Mama said, I must look after him
I have to, there's no other way.
He doesn't come down, he doesn't speak.
I take food up to him, which he sometimes eats,
But he has so much beard and hair
That it's hard for him to eat.





Mama said, I must grow up fast,
I have to, there's no other way.
After the spring break,
I must go back to school
But I haven't finished my homework,
The house is a mess,
I have to wash clothes and cook,
And look after Big Bao.

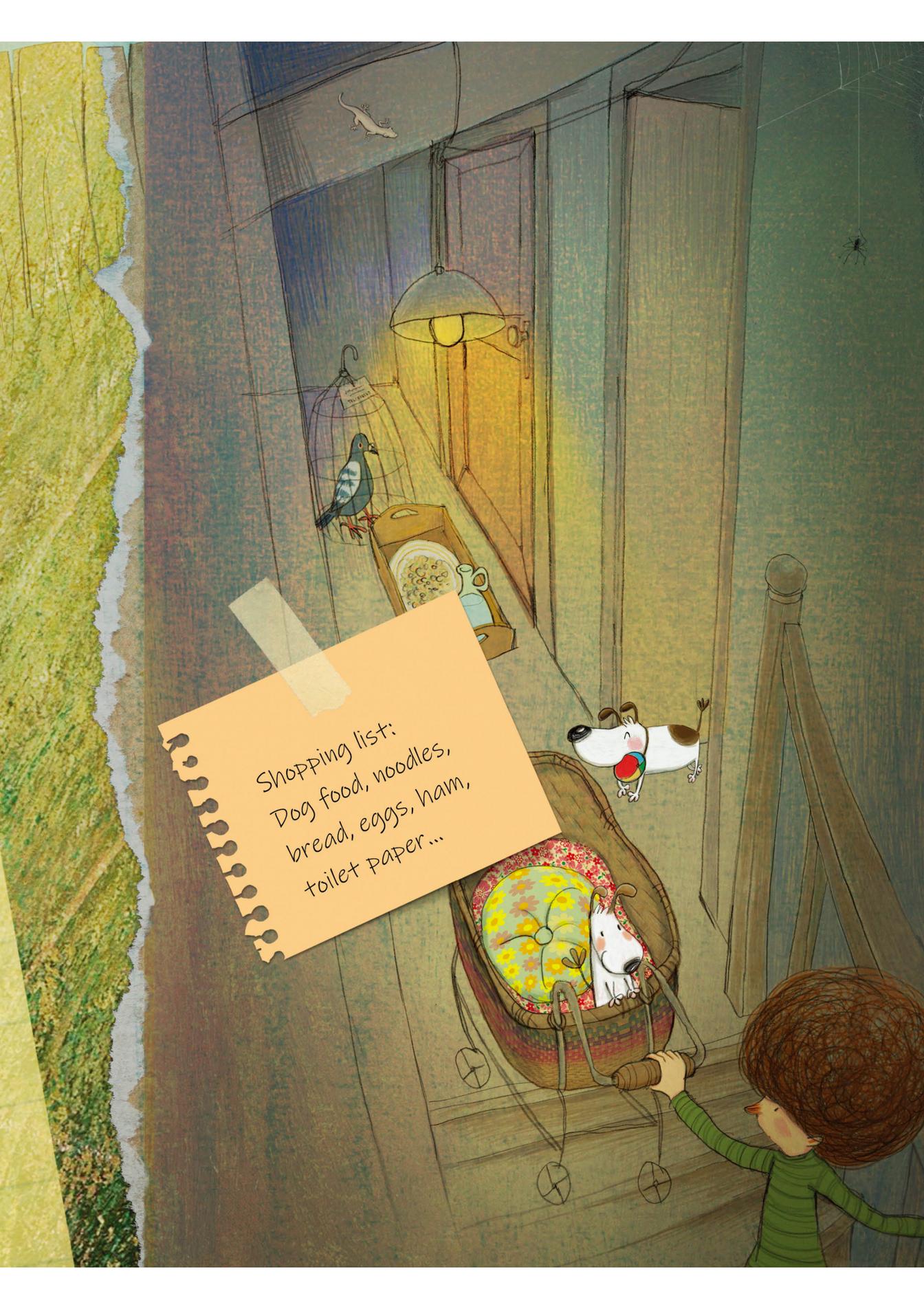


It was annoying
That today Big Bao brought back a Little Bao,
I looked them both in the eye
I knew what they were going to say.
I found the little bowl we used before,
it was perfect for Little Bao.





Today, someone brought us a pigeon,
I put the pigeon and our dinner by the
attic door. I knocked, then went downstairs,
I counted the 35 stairs down, but didn't hear anyone
open the door.



Shopping list:
Dog food, noodles,
bread, eggs, ham,
toilet paper...



TO READ OR NOT TO READ, THAT IS MY QUESTION

不愛讀書不是你的錯



- Category: Picture Book
- Publisher: Locus
- Date: 4/2018
- Rights contact:
booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- Pages: 128
- Size: 15 x 20 cm
- Age: 8+
- Rights sold: Italian (Abele Onlu), Thai (a book), Spanish (Barbara Fiore), Simplified Chinese (Tianjin Huawen Tianxia)



©Wang Chih Yuan

- * 2019 Golden Tripod Award
- * 2019 Taipei Book Fair Award
- * 2019 Eslite Bookseller Award Author of the Year
- * 2018 Taipei Public Library Pick

“It’s not your fault if you don’t like to read!” Children’s book star Jimmy Liao transforms a collection of famous quotes about books, bookstores, and reading into a story full of both inspiration and sharp, witty criticism.

When a local bookstore faces bankruptcy, the saddened owner asks his son to bring around all his friends who used to hang out there so he can ask why no one buys books anymore. The owner collects dozens of famous quotes about books and reading to remind the children why books are so important, but the children’s responses are much more realistic and less predictable than he expected.

Jimmy Liao’s latest work is “color commentary” in the literal sense; every famous quote from Kafka, Borges, Woody Allen, and others is accompanied by a brilliant full-page illustration and met with snarky but accurate criticism from the mouths of children. It’s a work of tough love for books and bookstores, offered by a devotee of reading; it’s also a celebration of the role books can play in our life.

JIMMY LIAO 幾米

Jimmy Liao (1958) is an illustrator and picture book writer. After graduating in art from Taiwan’s Chinese Culture University, he worked in an advertising company for twelve years, until a battle with leukemia inspired him to start a career as an illustrator. He published work with various newspapers and magazines before producing his first picture books, *Secrets in the Forest* and *A Fish that Smiled at Me*, in 1998. He went on to achieve fame throughout the Chinese-speaking world, with films, television adaptations, and merchandise. He has won numerous influential awards and has been published in several languages, including a series of collaborations with English-speaking writers, including Amazon Best Book of the Year for Kids winner, *The Champion of Staying Awake* with Sean Taylor. Bold colors and child narrators are signature characteristics of his work, which often hints at a world sometimes sinister, sometimes lonely, but always filled with the deepest of emotions.

Dear classmates, because fewer and fewer people are buying books, our family bookshop may have to close.

In fact, I'm happy that I won't have to move books and help in the shop in the holidays. But my father's upset, he frowns all day, he's not ready to give it up.

He misses everyone, and often asks me:

"How's so-and-so, he hasn't been for ages."

"How's so-and-so, the one who used to squat in the corner and read?"

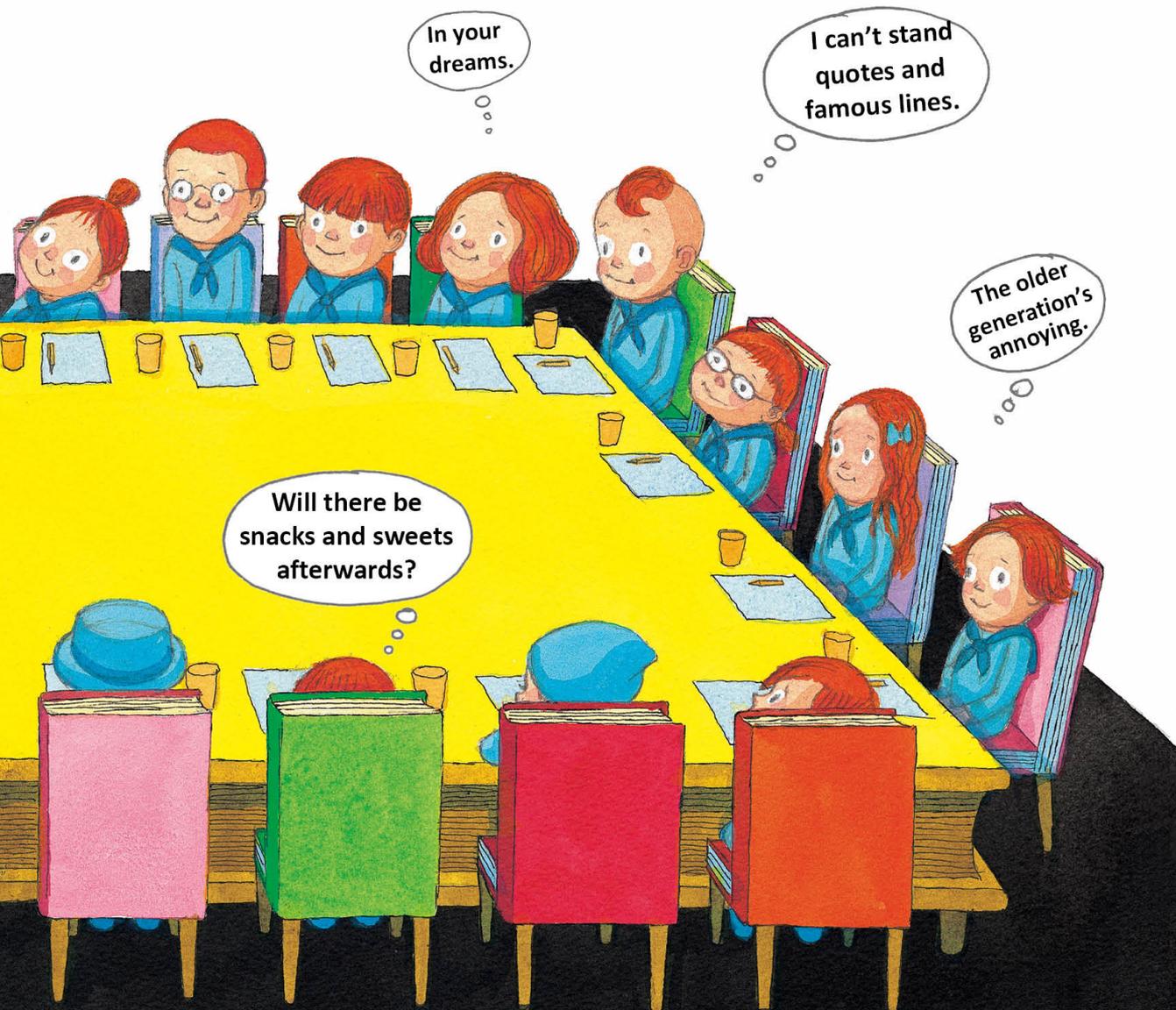
"How's so-and-so, has his mother banned him for buying more books?"



I say. "How should I know!"

So he asked me to come and ask you all, if you still like going to bookshops to browse and buy books?

You all know my father's mad about books, obsessed with quotes. He reads for the quotes and loves nothing better than to share them with you.



**I don't believe in the magic in my books,
but I believe that when you read a truly
good book, something magical happen.**

– J. K. Rowling

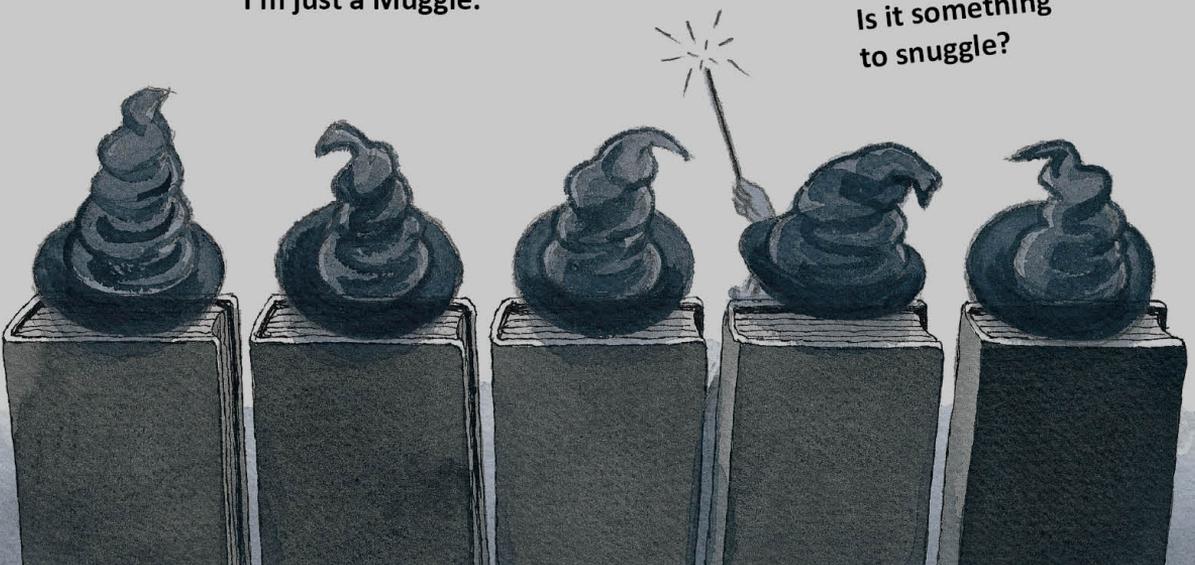
J.K. Rowling (1965-)

Joanne Rowling, pen-names J.K. Rowling and Robert Galbraith, British novel writer, scriptwriter, and film producer. Known for the Harry Potter series. One of the bestselling authors in history; the movie adaptations are also among the highest earning in history!

*Last time Auntie asked me
What's a Muggle?*

I'm just a Muggle.

*Is it something
to snuggle?*





Rubbish books become good books!

Expelliarmus!

“What does an editor do?”

“An editor helps an author bring out a book.”

“You mean, like the gynaecologist?
He helps bring out lots of babies,
But none of them are his.”

“But if there was ever a problem
Then people would blame him.”



YOUNG KITCHEN WARRIORS

少年廚俠 1：兩王的心結



- Category: Middle-Grade Fiction
- Publisher: CommonWealth Education
- Date: 3/2018
- Rights contact: booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- Pages: 216
- Age: 10+
- Length: 60,000 characters (approx. 40,000 words in English)
- Volume: 5 (ongoing)

The Stove Guild rules both the culinary industry and the kung fu underworld. Young Lin Chih-Ta dreams of rising to the top of both disciplines. But when his mother, the Guild's new leader, is poisoned, Lin must travel through time in search of a cure.

Lin Chih-Ta is the talented, ambitious son of the up-and-coming leader of the Stove Guild, a secret society that rules both the culinary industry and the kung fu underworld. His dream is to rise to the top of both disciplines and become a peerless kung fu chef. Yet on the day his mother is inaugurated leader of the Guild, someone slips a deadly poison into her food that paralyzes her completely.

Desperate to save his mother, Lin Chih-Ta learns that the only possible cure is a mystical practice called Full Channel kung fu, now more legend than fact. He must employ the magic of the Guild's most precious artifact to travel through time in search of a teacher, yet that is no easy solution. The artifact brings him back half a millennium to the time of the dying Southern Ming dynasty; the two kings whose help he needs are more concerned with undermining each other than reclaiming their country. To make things worse, the black-clad assassin who poisoned Lin Chih-Ta's mother has followed him through time, intent on taking Lin Chih-Ta's life.

Kevin Cheng's work of historical fantasy energizes elements of Chinese imperial history with its unique focus on food. Young readers can immerse themselves in the historical background of Chinese culinary tradition while still enjoying a riveting story.



Text by KEVIN CHENG 鄭宗弦

Author Kevin Cheng has been writing stories for young readers for over two decades. His literary projects, which find inspiration in Taiwanese history and local ecology, have won him over ten different prizes for his children's titles, including the Chiu Ko Children's Literature Award and the Chen Kuo-Cheng Children's Literature Award.



Illustrated by LEO TANG 唐唐

As a lover of anything creative, Leo Tang practices illustration as a way to return to the happiness of childhood. His illustrated titles have been licensed in Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Russia, and China. He has won several prizes, and his work has been included in the Catalonia Illustrator's Fair and bought by private collectors.

YOUNG KITCHEN WARRIORS

By Kevin Cheng

Translated by Helen Wang

1. The Mysterious Initiation Ceremony

“Yay, here at last!” The instant the car stopped, Lin Chih-Ta opened the door and looked for their hotel. He couldn’t wait.

He had lain awake all night waiting for this day to come. Too excited to sleep, he rose before dawn to practice his kung fu moves as many times as he could, then chivvied everyone into the car. Fired with curiosity, he’d been asking questions and looking out of the window the whole journey, so restless and excited you’d think he’d drunk some kind of stimulant.

His mother Chen Shu-Mei got out of the car and caught hold of him. “Hey! Don’t run off, wait for everyone else!”

“Ow!” Chih-Ta scrutinized his mother. “Are you nervous, Mama?” he asked thoughtfully.

Before his mother could reply, a stern-faced Auntie replied: “Of course not! Don’t you go making a tense atmosphere on purpose.”

“I wasn’t,” said Chih-Ta, pressing his hand on his beating chest, “but I’m nervous.”

Grandpa parked the car, and straightened his clothes as he stepped out. “Calm down, calm down,” he chuckled.

Mama looked at everyone, then took a deep breath and stood up straight: “Let’s go!”

It was the 24th day of the twelfth month of the lunar calendar, the day when people give the Kitchen God a good send-off so that he will report well on them to the heavenly court. It was also the day the mysterious “Stove Guild” held their annual meeting.

Every year on this day, thirteen-year-old boys and girls must honor their founding father

and go through the guild’s initiation ceremony. This year merited special attention, because it was also the occasion of the Martial Arts Meeting, which took place only once every twenty years, and they would be selecting a new Head of the Guild, who would be responsible for distributing power in the global food and beverage industry.

The initiation ceremony was to begin at ten-thirty, but by ten the car park was already full, as guild members from all over the world filed into the grand hotel and checked in at the registration desk.

As soon as he was inside the hotel, Chih-Ta made straight for the floor-to-ceiling windows. “Wow!” he shouted, excitedly, “Come and look at this, there’s the famous infinity pool!”

Mama gave him one of her looks, and said quietly, “You’re in middle school now. You need to behave more maturely.”

But Chih-Ta couldn’t contain his excitement. He continued to jump about and cry out with delight. Mama and Auntie began mingling with other guests. Grandpa was in his element, greeting people left and right.

This year, twenty-five boys and girls were to join the Guild, and the initiation ceremony required that they perform the Guild’s kung fu moves before the Kitchen God. Chih-Ta was one of the youngsters taking part, and his mother Chen Shu-Mei was one of the two most popular candidates for Head of the Guild.

To prepare for the big day, Chih-Ta got up early every morning to chop firewood and boil salt water on the range so that his mother could do her *qigong* in the salty air, while he worked on his lower-belly deep breathing, stood in horse

stance, and repeatedly practiced the Gentleman's Fist and the Fruit Fist.

Mother and son were equally focused, each on their own goal.

Chen Shu-Mei was the daughter of the owner of a 100-year old restaurant in Tainan. Her father, Chen Chin-Tu, was born into a family known for its culinary skills passed down from the Ming dynasty, and had made sure to pass those skills on to his daughter. Chih-Ta's father, Lin Yao-Hsiung, had been the head of catering services in the Qingshui district of Taichung, and had learned his trade from the "The Catering Services Nest" in the Neimen district of Kaohsiung.

Chih-Ta's parents were well-matched and at the tops of their professions, in both the culinary and martial arts. They married and opened a restaurant in Taichung, and three years later Chih-Ta was born. They shared eight very happy years together.

Tragically, Lin Yao-Hsiung died in a car accident when Chih-Ta was five. Chen Shu-Mei had returned to her family in Tainan with the little boy and taken over her father's "Fucheng Catering Services Group". She ran it well, building a reputation for herself and earning acclaim throughout southern Taiwan.

Chen Shu-Mei always told her son, "Your father was a phenomenal kitchen warrior. He used his martial arts to help the weak and support the poor. He did a lot to relieve hardship. When you grow up you must follow in your father's footsteps." Chih-Ta had idolized his father since childhood and waited eagerly for the day when he could join the Guild and become a kitchen warrior like his father.

Action-loving Chih-Ta enjoyed kung fu and had a keen interest in the culinary practices that inspired it. He had already learned how to make many dishes. As he practiced his kung fu at the hotel, his nose caught a smell so delicious he couldn't help following it to its source.

He rushed from the big window to the kitchen to see what rare delicacies were cooking inside, but a man in his sixties in a snow-white

apron stopped him at the door. The old man's face was pink and shiny, and his eyes stern but not angry. Extending his right arm, he brusquely informed Chih-Ta, "The kitchen is a sacred place. You have to be invited."

Chih-Ta stole a look inside the kitchen, and saw many chefs packed together, some chopping vegetables, some deep-frying, some stir-frying, some setting out plates, each of them skilled in his work, and not an inch of space unused.

The old man seemed to be idling, yet there were plenty of people wanting to come and talk to him, and two men, suited up, kept turning them away. When they spotted that Chih-Ta had slipped through the net, they quickly moved him on.

Chih-Ta wandered around the famous high-class hotel. He'd thought it would be magnificent, full of delightful surprises, and it was. At ten o'clock, a man announced in the registration area: "Would all the participants in the initiation ceremony please gather in the Great Hall."

Chih-Ta hurried off to the Great Hall, where he joined the other boys and girls his own age. They followed the man to the auditorium on the twelfth floor to learn their positions and rehearse.

The auditorium was like a theater, with twenty stepped rows rising from a stage. A portrait of the Kitchen God twice the height of a person hung in the middle of the stage behind an altar table, which held a celadon crackle-glaze incense burner. In front of the altar table stood a high-backed armchair made of rosewood and landscape-patterned marble.

Guild members started to take their seats, and the auditorium filled with noise. At half past ten, the master of ceremonies made an announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen, the 2,162nd meeting of the global Stove Guild is now open." The lights dimmed, a spotlight rose on the boys and girls in the middle of the stage, and the auditorium went quiet.

Bang bang! Bang bang! The brisk rhythm of martial art music rang out. The boys and girls

sank into horse stance, focused their breathing, and moved through the forms.

The master of ceremonies, a celebrity host of a TV cooking show, took the microphone: "Watch our initiates demonstrate the Guild's basic kung fu forms – Plum, Orchid, Bamboo and Chrysanthemum make the Gentleman's Style. First is 'Plum Breaks the Ice'. The five fingers uncurl like the five petals of the plum blossom, channeling inner strength to the fingertips, scratching, scraping, twisting, turning, and winding. The fingers are like the gnarled winter plum breaking through ice and snow; the ancients say, 'the sword sharper after the whetstone, the plum blossom sweeter after a bitter winter.' This move comes from mixing the filling for ingot-shaped dumplings...."

"Ahhh...."

As the master of ceremonies said, this was a basic move, one that every child in every family would know. No one unable to do this move would dare go on stage, else they should lose face for their whole family. Keen to put on a good show, Chih-Ta gritted his teeth and raised his eyebrows as he performed the move. The other children performed confidently too, bending their arms like bows, moving their hands with purpose.

"And now, Orchid Spins the Cloud, a rapid movement of the wrists to channel inner strength to the palms, turning them quickly and loosely so that the enemy sees only a blur. This move comes from stripping bamboo shoots at high speed. Then, Bamboo Leaves in the Wind, derived from wrapping sticky rice dumplings, followed by Chrysanthemum Becomes the Moon, which comes from rolling lion-head meatballs in one's hands. Those who are skilled in the Stove Guild's moves and seventh *dan* will have these subtle smells in their nostrils by now...."

The audience was full of experts in channeling inner strength. They murmured appreciatively, "So fragrant...! The lone orchid in the empty valley...so fresh and new, so tall and elegant...."

"When gas stoves became popular in the 70s, members of the Stove Guild no longer had to chop firewood every day for their breathing practice, and they gradually abandoned kung fu. Now only a handful of people continue the practice. They are the young people here today. Everyone, please give them a round of applause." The master of ceremonies spoke solemnly and from the heart.

The audience clapped vigorously.

"We move on now to the Fruit Style." The master of ceremonies explained in detail, "first, we have the Majestic Pineapple, a tricky move in which the force of both fists smacks the enemy's face, a fight-for-your-life move; Thunderbolt Sugar Apple, a killing blow in which the middle finger is bent, and the knuckle is aimed at the blood vessels in the neck; then, the Hailstorm Pumpkin...as before, for seventh dans, it will be like entering a room filled with fruit and fragrance...."

Many in the audience lifted their noses and breathed deeply, as though slipping into a drunken stupor.

When the performance was over, the audience gave a hearty round of applause.

"Now, I'll invite Fan Wei-Hsiang, the current Head of the Guild, to lead us in honoring our founding father, the Kitchen God."

The Head of the Guild went on to the stage, clasped his hands before him, and bowed to the audience. Chih-Ta froze; it was none other than the old chef he had seen by the kitchen door, and the two kitchen guards were his protectors.

The boys and girls on the stage turned around to face their founding father. The Head of the Guild pulled a stone the size of a hen's egg from inside his jacket and placed it carefully in the middle of the altar table. Then he turned to receive an incense stick with a curl of white smoke rising from it.

Chih-Ta was mesmerized. Could this man be the top chef that Grandpa had talked about, the one people called the "Stove Medium"? Could he be the Head Chef of all the grand hotels, responsible for checking the dishes made

by the kitchen chefs? The Head Chef who could tell at a glance, without tasting, whether the color, aroma, and taste were right?

“Let us bow three times to the Kitchen God,” said the master of ceremony. The audience stood and bowed with the Head of the Guild.

It was time for the children’s initiation ceremony.

The Head of the Guild sat in the high-backed chair facing the audience, as the master of ceremonies commanded the twenty-five children to kneel three times and kowtow nine times to the Kitchen God and the Head of the Guild.

“The ceremony is now complete...” said the master of ceremonies.

Parents in the audience wiped tears from their eyes. This ritual was not only a coming-of-age ceremony for their children, from now on they would follow in their forefathers’ footsteps, and their parents would also be their masters, responsible for passing on the glorious culinary and martial arts to their children.

Chen Shu-Mei heard the words *ceremony* and *complete* and smiled with relief.

On stage, the children were still kneeling before the altar, waiting for instructions.

The Head of the Guild took the microphone, and said sincerely, “Congratulations, everyone, on becoming the new disciples of the Stove Guild.”

“Congratulations!” shouted the crowd amid another round of hearty applause.

LETTERS FROM PRISON

來自監獄的信



- Category: Middle-Grade Fiction
- Publisher: Global Kids
- Date: 3/2018
- Rights contact: booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- Pages: 288
- Age: 10+
- Length: 79,000 characters (approx. 50,000 words in English)

Two good friends happen upon a love letter written from prison. Curiosity and compassion inspire them to write back. Little do they know that the correspondence that follows will bring their own desires and pain to the surface.

Classmates Li Chia-Mei and Chang Kai-Hsin are very different people. Chia-Mei is an excellent athlete and a bit of a tomboy; she says what she means, and would rather be playing sports with the boys than do anything else. Kai-Hsin is an intelligent and gentle soul from a wealthy family who has won the admiration of everyone in her class. Yet despite their differences, these two have always been friends.

One day, the girls discover a lost letter originally sent from prison. It turns out to be a love letter, its pages full of hope and heartbreak, that concludes with a pained inquiry as to why the recipient hasn't written back. The girls, deeply moved, decide to answer the letter, and a correspondence begins. Yet as their epistolary relationship grows, other bonds begin to fall apart. Kai-Hsin's first date with a male classmate causes a nervous outbreak that makes her emotionally withdrawn; Chia-Mei's parents divorce, and she is forced to move to her aunt's house, away from her father and brother, and help her aunt run a food stall at the night market all summer. As the two young women invest very different conceptions of love into their anonymous letters, conflicts arise that threaten to blow the friendship apart.

In *Letters from Prison*, Lin Man-Chiu brings us a tale of growth, fragmentation, and the difficulty of hope. Through vivid detail and careful plot construction, Lin imbues her characters with a psychological depth that makes their pain accessible to readers who have never shared it, and offers comfort to those who have.



Text by LIN MAN-CHIU 林滿秋

Lin Man-Chiu is a four-time winner of the Golden Tripod Award, and undoubtedly one of Taiwan's best-known young adult fiction authors. Her body of work is varied and constantly adapting, and includes personal essays, novels, and illustrated titles. Her magical realist novel *The Ventriloquist's Daughter* has already been licensed in English and Simplified Chinese. She lives in London.



Illustrated by JADE HUANG 黃雅玲

Jade Huang is an up-and-coming illustrator who works in watercolor, pastel, and digital media. A graduate of the Cambridge School of Art with an MA in Children's Book Illustration, she was a featured illustrator at the 2016 Bologna Children's Book Fair.

LETTERS FROM PRISON

By Lin Man-Chiu

Translated by Helen Wang

1. Tagiole

As soon as Li Chia-Mei caught the ball, she turned and drove to the hoop, keen to ride the momentum and score twice in a row. But Lin Hao-Sheng had his eyes on her. He spread his arms like a steel wall in front of her.

She had just transferred to this school, and though she still couldn't remember all her classmates' names, she had already clicked with the basketball team. She was good at sports – basketball and swimming in particular – and had signed up with the basketball club on her first day. The next day, she'd played a game with a few boys in the club, which both demonstrated her skill and gave her the chance to make a few friends.

Now, with Lin Hao-Sheng's eyes fixed on her, there was no way she could drive to the basket. She was just about to pass the ball when a lane opened before her. She stepped into it and sank another beautiful layup. Her heart exulted, but she was also confused; why had her opponent suddenly relaxed his defense? Looking back at the other players, she found her answer.

Chang Kai-Hsin was walking past the basketball court. Turning her gaze to the court, she flashed a smile as dazzling as spring flowers, while her waist-length hair swayed like an alluring black wave as she moved.

Chang Kai-Hsin was very attractive – Li Chia-Mei had known this before she arrived at the school, but the fawning treatment she received surprised her. Scanning the boys around her, Chia-Mei found every pair of eyes trained on Chang Kai-Hsin, the basketball match

apparently clean forgotten.

"What are you looking at?" Li Chia-Mei felt they were spoiling the atmosphere.

"You're new here, so you probably don't know, huh? She's our goddess. Whenever she appears, we can't help but stare," said Chao Hsun-Ching.

"She just smiled at me!" Li Tien-Kang's face filled with joy.

"Don't flatter yourself! She was looking at me," said Wang Cheng-Hao.

Li Chia-Mei looked at Lin Hao-Shen, whose gaze was still on the spot where Kai-Hsin had just been.

"You fancy her too?" Li Chia-Mei nudged his hand with her elbow.

Lin Hao-Sheng smiled shyly, then deliberately changed the subject. "Aren't you two in the same class?"

Chia-Mei nodded.

"Chia-Mei and Kai-Hsin in the same class? I didn't know that! That's awesome. Chia-Mei, you'll have to help us!" said Wang Cheng-Hao.

"You mean, help you go after Kai-Hsin? No thank you." Chia-Mei immediately put a stop to that idea.

"The thing is, we can only see Chang Kai-Hsin from a distance, we can't get any closer. There's no chance – we'd need more than divine intervention!" laughed Li Tien-Kang.

Chia-Mei was surprised. "How do you know if you haven't tried?"

"I declared my love for her in sixth grade," said Li Tien-Kang.

Wang Cheng-Hao and Kao Yu-Pi both whooped spontaneously.

"You were rejected too?" asked Chia-Mei.
"Not just us. Everyone's been rejected," said Kao Yu-Pi.

Chia-Mei's gaze drifted to Chao Hsun-Ching.
"Me too," he nodded.

"And you?" Chia-Mei looked at Lin Hao-Sheng.

He shook his head, but adoration was written all over his face.

"I can't believe she struts like that!" said Chia-Mei, keeping her admiration to herself.

"She doesn't strut at all. Kai-Hsin's very sincere, and very clever," said Lin Hao-Sheng. "She knows we all fancy her, and that if she says yes to one, everyone else will be hurt. Actually, her rejecting us is good for everyone."

"Really?" Chia-Mei was doubtful.

"Really." Kao Yu-Pi picked up the conversation, "Kai-Hsin is like Chrysanthemum, young and tender, soft and beautiful, and she has a kind heart. She hides her true feelings to avoid hurting anyone."

"You didn't know that she likes Tagiole?" Chia-Mei was surprised.

"That little schemer? That can't be right!" Chao looked stunned.

"I'm not surprised you were all rejected," said Chia-Mei, realizing the situation.

"I wouldn't believe that Kai-Hsin likes Tagiole even with a gun to my head," said Li Tien-Kang, "Tagiole is frigid and arrogant, she never even looks at guys, and she's so negative. She's not like Kai-Hsin at all. Kai-Hsin's lovely, she can't possibly like her."

"You can say that again! Sniper likes her so much, and she pays him no attention until another girl starts chasing him, and she blocks the way. That kind of wanting to love, but not daring to is so hypocritical. How can Kai-Hsin possibly like her?" said Wang Cheng-Hao.

"Well, Kai-Hsin said that Tagiole knows the difference between good and bad and doesn't pretend. The reason she can't say yes to Sniper is because she's been hurt in the past, and the hurt is still with her. She likes Sniper, and she only pretends to be cold to cover her inner pain. Kai-Hsin believes her feelings are too complex,

and that she's not like Chrysanthemum, who's basically love-struck, and can't do anything but smile like an idiot." Chia-Mei repeated what Kai-Hsin had said a few days before.

"What exactly happened to Tagiole? I have no idea. Which volume is it in?" asked Lin Hao-Sheng.

"Kai-Hsin seems to see Tagiole differently to us? Have we been looking at different editions of that manga?" asked Kao Yu-Pi.

"That's why I say you don't understand Kai-Hsin at all!" said Chia-Mei.

"So how come you understand her then?" asked Chao Hsun-Ching. "You only just arrived."

"Kai-Hsin's father and my father are friends, I've known her since we were little. We were in the same class in first and second grade. Then my father's job took us to Taipei, but our families stayed close. Before my grandmother passed away, we would come back every winter and summer vacation, and Kai-Hsin would invite me to stay with her for a few days. And she used to stay with us whenever she went to Taipei. You know the movie '*Girls*' – we were just like that!" Seeing the stunned look on the boys' faces made Chia-Mei feel good.

"You were *Girls*? That takes some believing!" There was disdain written all over Wang Cheng-Hao's face.

"From your looks and personalities, it's hard to imagine you two being friends! You're having us on," said Li Tien-Kang.

"Yeah, Chia-Mei. Stop bigging yourself up!" Chao Hsun-Ching teased.

Then Chia-Mei whipped out a small knife and thrust it toward them. Chao Hsun-Ching played along, grabbing the knife and wailing, "We plead for mercy, Warrior Lady!"

"Great knife work," Li Tien-Kang chuckled appreciatively.

Chia-Mei stared at Chao Hsun-Ching, "Don't you dare hurt me again!"

Lin Hao-Sheng toyed with the knife. "It's very well made. Did you make it yourself?"

"Kai-Hsin gave it to me," Chia-Mei grinned. "You probably didn't know that she's an expert

at card sculpture. She made a whole series of the weapons that Tagiole uses. If you go after her, watch out – she might kill you.”

A few of the boys looked at her in shock and disbelief. Chia-Mei grinned, sank a jump shot and walked off court.

At the end of the day, Kai-Hsin and Chia-Mei left school together.

“Who were you smiling at when you passed the basketball court?” Chia-Mei asked.

“You, of course!” beamed Kai-Hsin.

“I don’t believe you. You fancy someone. Who is it?”

“You’re always asking me that, don’t you get bored?” A flash of joy in Kai-Hsin’s expression, then she turned serious.

“I’m just concerned that you’re relying on your looks, that you’re living in the clouds! If you don’t take boys seriously now, there’ll be no one to bury you when you get old.”

“You make it sound like I’m in my seventies.” Kai-Hsin rolled her eyes at Chia-Mei, “I’m thirteen, not thirty. What’s the hurry? And when I’ve a girlfriend as close as you, why would I want a boyfriend!” Kai-Hsin put on her trademark smile and took Chia-Mei’s hand, “Come on, I’ll take you for a drink.”

Chia-Mei turned her head and called out playfully, “Lin Hao-Sheng, Kai-Hsin wants to take you for a drink.”

Kai-Hsin tensed, tugged on Chia-Mei’s sleeve and whispered: “What are you doing?”

“You’re blushing!”

“You’re so annoying!” Kai-Hsin glared at Chia-Mei.

“So I’m annoying, so what?” Chia-Mei pulled a face and started to run.

Kai-Hsin ran after her.

Chia-Mei ran as fast as she could. She didn’t notice the girl walking towards her with her head bowed. The two ran straight into each other.

Chia-Mei immediately apologized, but caught her breath when she saw the expression on the other girl’s face.

She had never seen such an expression of

hurt before. It was the kind of piercing despair from which you can find no way out.

The girl hurried away without saying a word.

“She’s crying,” Kai-Hsin observed.

“I wonder why?”

“Perhaps she split up with her boyfriend?”

“I don’t think that’s it.” Chia-Mei looked troubled, apparently touched by the girl’s tragedy. She frowned. “It’s something more tragic than a break-up.”

“Perhaps a death in the family?”

“Who knows.”

Kai-Hsin and Chia-Mei talked as they headed to a supermarket.

The supermarket, located on the ground floor of a twelve-story building, was owned by Kai-Hsin’s father. It was spacious, clean, and bright, and featured a large seating area with floor-to-ceiling windows in the drinks section that was very popular with customers.

As soon as Kai-Hsin stepped into the store, she heard her brother’s voice: “Help yourself to a drink. Take whatever you like.”

Kai-Hsin’s expression stiffened and she muttered: “Kai-Teng’s paying for everyone again.”

Chia-Mei felt a bit awkward. “But don’t you pay for me all the time?”

“I only do it for you. See how many people he’s paying for? One of these days, he’ll bankrupt us.”

Chia-Mei quickly scanned the group – eight people, including Kai-Teng. Some had drinks, some had snacks, and others had instant noodles. The table was piled high with food and drink. One boy went to fetch another Coke, and called out, “Anyone else want one?” Three put their hands up, as if they were in their own home.

“Don’t your parents mind?” asked Chia-Mei.

“You know how my mother spoils him. My father’s too busy opening another store to pay attention!”

“Didn’t he open a new store last year? Your father’s better at business than he was at being a cop.”

“That’s what he says too – that if he hadn’t been shot, he would never have known he had a gift for business.”

The drinks section was full and the noise was deafening. Kai-Hsin picked up two bottles and said, “Let’s go to my place.”

Kai-Hsin’s home was on the eighth floor. Chia-Mei hadn’t been for a long time.

“Ma, you need to talk to him, he’s always got a crowd with him in the store, eating and drinking for free. It’s not right.” Kai-Hsin complained to her mother as soon as she was through the door.

“They’re all friends, don’t be so mean.” said her mother, who was concentrating on the computer screen.

“They’re taking advantage of him. None of them are real friends.”

“If your brother were more like you, with good grades and good friends, he wouldn’t be doing this, would he?”

“You’ve spoiled him.”

“Don’t I spoil you too? Or does mail-ordering Japanese outfits for you not count?” It was only when Kai-Hsin’s mother looked up from the computer screen that she saw Chia-Mei.

“Hello, Auntie.”

“Ah, Chia-Mei,” Kai-Hsin’s mother greeted her with a warm smile. “It’s wonderful that you’ve moved back. You don’t know how happy Kai-Hsin is!”

“I don’t need you to say whether I’m happy or not!” Kai-Hsin glared at her mother.

“OK, OK. The Japanese dress and boots came, they’re in your bedroom.” Kai-Hsin’s mother shook her head, though her smile persisted.

“It’s crazy buying things without trying them on first, they might look awful. You must be loaded to spend so much money!”

“You’re my only daughter, what’s wrong with spending some money on you? I just want you to look beautiful, my little princess.”

“Stop calling me ‘little princess’. It makes me feel sick.” Kai-Hsin sneered, rolling her eyes

at Chia-Mei.

“Let’s go to my room.”

“Chia-Mei,” Kai-Hsin’s mother called out, “Can you help me with Kai-Hsin? If she keeps throwing temper tantrums, she’ll end up all on her own.”

“I don’t care.” Kai-Hsin snapped before going into her room.

“She’s getting more and more rebellious,” Kai-Hsin’s mother sighed, “I don’t know what to do with her.” Then, taking Chia-Mei’s hand and pulling her to the sofa, she asked, “Is your mother all right?”

Chia-Mei nodded. But her mother was nowhere near all right.

