BOOKS FROM TAIWAN

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Minister | Yuan Li
Deputy Minister | Ching-Hwi Lee
Director | Ting-Chen Yang
Deputy Director | Yu-Ying Chu
Organizers | Wen-Ting Chen, Yu-Lin Chen, Shi-Ze Weng, Lun-Hui Lin
Address | 14 F., No. 439, Zhongping Road (South Building), Xinzhuang District, New Taipei City, Taiwan
Website | https://www.moc.gov.tw/en/
Telephone | +886-2-8512-6000
Email | bft.fiction.nonfiction@moc.gov.tw

Editorial Team of Books from Taiwan
Managing Director | Gray Tan, Jade Fu
Editor-in-Chief | Joshua Dyer
Editor | Jeff Miller
Production Manager | Shao-Chi Lin
Copyeditor | Agnes Hsiao, Angela Chang, Carol Huang, Chia-Hsun Lu, Eileen Lin, Ema Fu, Liwen Lin
Editorial Consultants | Ching-Yi Huang, Emily Ching-Chun Chuang, Jiun-Lung Huang, Shang-Yeh Lu, Ting-Chen Yang, Yu-Ying Chu, Zoe Wang
Cover Design | FLICCA Studio
Design and Layout | Wei-Jie Hong

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ABOUT MINISTRY OF CULTURE

The Ministry of Culture of Taiwan (Republic of China) was established on May 20, 2012.

As a member of the Executive Yuan, the Ministry oversees and cultivates Taiwan's soft power in the areas of arts and humanities, community development, crafts industry, cultural exchanges, international cultural participation, heritage, literature and publishing, living aesthetics, TV, cinema, and pop music.

The logo of the Ministry is an indigo-dyed morning glory. The indigenous flower symbolizes a trumpet heralding the coming of a new renaissance, in which cultural resources and aesthetics permeate all corners of the nation. The morning glory also represents the grassroots tenacity of Taiwan's diverse culture, a yearning for the positivity, simplicity, and warmth of earlier days, and a return to collective roots and values.

ABOUT BOOKS FROM TAIWAN

Books from Taiwan is an initiative funded by Ministry of Culture to introduce a select list of Taiwan publishing titles, ranging from fiction, non-fiction, children's books, and comic books, to foreign publishers and readers alike.

You can find information about authors and books, along with who to contact in order to license translation rights, and the related resources about the Grant for the Publication of Taiwanese Works in Translation (GPT), sponsored by the Ministry of Culture of Taiwan.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Books from Taiwan 2.0!

Under the auspices of Ministry of Culture's Taiwan Content Plan, Books from Taiwan has expanded dramatically, extending the depth of our catalog and the range of our publishing activities. To accommodate all the new titles, we will publish two expanded issues annually, each composed of two independent volumes, all in service of our mission to promote the best books from Taiwan to overseas publishers.

Taking the subject of expansion as our theme, I'd like to walk our readers through Issue 18 of Books from Taiwan, and point out broad wide range of genres our increased page count now allows. In the realm of fiction we have our bases covered, with fantasy, horror, crime, thriller, historical, literary, and women's fiction all represented. Our non-fiction offerings, if anything, are even more diverse, including everything from travel, memoir, food, and reportage, to science, politics, self-help, and design.

One highlight from our fiction catalog is *No. 1, Siwei Street*, the latest novel from Yang Shuang-Zi, whose *Taiwan Travelogue* was recently shortlisted for the 2024 National Book Award for Translated Literature. This heartwarming novel tracks the subtle give and take of friendships formed over shared meals in a historical boarding house for female graduate students (see vol. 1).

Another genre fiction highlight is *Sunset Over Dadaocheng*, a gritty crime thriller with an alternative history setting. Within the pages of Tommy Tan's novel, the historical Taipei neighborhood of Dadaocheng is recast as the epicenter of clashing political factions in an alternate Taiwan under communist rule. A down-on-his-luck detective must navigate this treacherous landscape of competing interests to crack a murder case, and save himself, and everything he holds dear (vol. 2).

Our fiction catalog also contains the recent reissue of *The Silent Thrush* by Chuang Shu-Chen. Originally released in 1990, this novel contains Taiwan's first

literary depiction of a lesbian relationship, helping pave the way for LGBTQ literature that followed in subsequent decades (vol. 2).

Moving on to the non-fiction side of the catalog, *Oo-Pèh-Tshiat: Taiwanese Pork Delicacy for the Common Folk*, by Ema Fu, offers an in-depth study of local food culture. This unique culinary guidebook is a fond tribute to a deceptively humble dish that can be found at markets and street stalls across Taiwan. Fu guides readers through all of the local variations of oo-pèh-tshiat and every aspect of its preparation in exquisite detail, with special praise reserved for the chefs who have kept this culinary tradition alive (vol. 1).

If your heart happens to be grumbling more than your stomach, have a look at *Fear of Intimacy: Why Is It So Difficult to Love and Be Loved*, by bestselling self-help author and counselor Chou Mu-Tzu (vol. 1).

For a non-fiction read that is sure to please everyone, look no further than *Searching for Animal Utopia*, because who doesn't love animals? Author and policy researcher Lung Yuan-Chih has traveled the world to observe conservancy in action, and interview the ecologists who dedicate their lives to protecting animal rights (vol. 2).

The diverse range of topics covered by our non-fiction books extends even further to include interviews with former sex workers in *Teahouse Ladies: Stories from Taipei's Red Light District* (vol. 1), a historical account of a South Seas botanical expedition in *Archived Shadows: Hosokawa Takahide's Seven Adventures in South Seas Mandate and the Story of Botanists in the age of Taihoku Imperial University* (vol. 2), and the memoir of a medical anthropologist and her mother who received simultaneous diagnoses of severe illnesses (see *Healing Redefined: An Anthropologist's Reflections on a Mother-Daughter Journey Through Illness*, vol. 1).

Now that we are working in the expanded format of Books from Taiwan 2.0, it is no longer an idle claim to say we "have something for everyone". So, without further ado, I invite you to slowly browse our book selections, and find that something which is just right for you and your readers.

Expansively yours,

Joshua Dyer

Editor-in-Chief
Books from Taiwan 2.0

GRANT FOR THE PUBLICATION OF TAIWANESE WORKS IN TRANSLATION (GPT)

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN)

GPT is set up by The Ministry of Culture to encourage the publication of Taiwanese works in translation overseas, to raise the international visibility of Taiwanese cultural content, and to help Taiwan's publishing industry expand into non-Chinese international markets.

- Applicant Eligibility: Foreign publishing house (legal entity) legally registered or incorporated in accordance with the laws and regulations of their respective countries.
- Conditions:
  1. The so-called Taiwanese works must meet the following requirements:
     A. Use traditional characters;
     B. Written by a natural person holding an R.O.C. identity card;
     C. Has been assigned an ISBN in Taiwan.
     i.e., the author is a native of Taiwan, and the first 6 digits of the book's ISBN are 978-957-XXX-XXX-X, 978-986-XXX-XXX-X, or 978-626-XXX-XXX-X.
  2. Applications must include documents certifying that the copyright holder of the Taiwanese works consents to its translation and foreign publication (no restriction on its format).
  3. A translation sample of the Taiwanese work is required (no restriction on its format and length).
  4. If applications use the fully translated English version of the book selected into "Books from Taiwan" to be published directly or translated into other languages, or uses its excerpt translated English version to translate the entire text into English or other languages for publication, please state it in applications, and apply for authorization from the Ministry of Culture. It is still necessary to provide documents certifying that the copyright holder of the Taiwanese work consents to its translation and foreign publication.

5. The translated work must be published within two years, after the first day of the relevant application period.

- Grant Items:
  1. The maximum grant available for each project is NT$600,000, which covers:
     A. Licensing fees (going to the copyright holder of the Taiwanese works);
     B. Translation fees;
     C. Marketing and promotion fees (applicants for this funding must propose a specific marketing promotion plan and complete the implementation before submitting the grant project results; those whose plans include talks or book launching events attended by authors in person will be given priority for grants);
     D. Book production-oriented fees;
     E. Tax (20% of the total award amount);
     F. Remittance-related handling fees.
  2. Priority consideration is given to books that have received the Golden Tripod Award, the Golden Comic Award, the Taiwan Literature Award, books on Taiwan's culture and history, or series of books.
  3. Grant recipients who use the fully or excerpt translated English version of the book selected into "Books from Taiwan" will be authorized to use it for free. For those who use the fully translated English version for publication, the grant does not cover translation fees; for those who use the excerpt translated English version, the translation fee is limited to the length of the book that has not yet been translated, and its grant amount will be adjusted based on the length of the entire text.
- Application Period: Twice every year, from April 1 to April 30, and from October 1 to October 31. 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 official website (https://grants.moc.gov.tw/Web_ENG/), and use the online application system.

For full details, please visit: https://grants.moc.gov.tw/Web_ENG/
Or contact: books@moc.gov.tw

BOOKS FROM TAIWAN

FICTION

四維街一號
NO. 1, SIWEI STREET

© Chen Pei-Yun

Yang Shuang-Zi
楊双子

- **Category:** Heartwarming, Commercial Fiction
- **Publisher:** SpringHill
- **Date:** 8/2023
- **Rights contact:** bft.fiction.nonfiction@moc.gov.tw
- **Pages:** 256
- **Length:** 81,000 characters (approx. 52,600 words in English)
- **Rights sold:** Japanese (Chuokoron-Shinsha), Korean (Marco Polo)

Born in Taichung in 1984, Yang Shuang-Zi is a novelist and researcher of genre fiction and youth subcultures. The pen name Shuang-Zi is taken from the Japanese kanji for "twins". Originally sharing this pen name with her twin sister, she has continued using it since her sister's passing in 2015. Her novels focus on female relationships and often incorporate elements of Taichung's history under Japanese colonial rule. Her best-known work, *Taiwan Travelogue: A Novel*, was published in English translation in 2024.

Sparks are sure to fly when four master's students with wildly divergent personalities begin living together in a Japanese colonial-era boarding house run by a mysterious landlady. Yet, perhaps this is just what is needed to shake up the lives of these young women, and point them each in a better direction.

Built during the pre-war era of Japanese rule, the house at No. 1, Siwei Street in Taichung has lived many lives before its current incarnation as a small boarding house for female graduate students from the local university. The residents include socially awkward first-year history student Nai-Yun, the optimistic but always broke Cha-Cha, the sensitive and aloof Feng, and puritanical star-student Chih-Yi, who is working on a novel even as she finishes her thesis. This uneasy mix of personalities is further complicated by the presence of their bizarre and inscrutable landlady, Hsiu-Yi.

After Nai-Yun discovers a century-old cookbook, she tries out a recipe and musters the courage to invite Cha-Cha to eat with her, but is met with rejection. Feng and Chih-Yi appear affectionate with one another at the dinner table, but seem determined to keep the exact nature of their relationship a secret. The truth is that each of these four young women have unspoken dilemmas weighing on them. Over the course of their days together, as they slowly delve into the secret history of the house they share, and enjoy daily meals of Taiwanese comfort food – medicinal chicken soup, eel with tamagoyaki, and sweet taro porridge – will the barriers between them gradually erode? How will their lives and relationships be changed by the days spent living at No. 1, Siwei Street?

Following on the success of *Taiwan Travelogue*, Yang Shuang-Zi returns with another novel based in meticulous historical research. With her characteristic warmth, she applies her refined prose to the subject of a historic building converted into a boarding house for female graduate students. The result is a moving narrative that blends architectural and culinary history into a tale of the evolving relationships between five women all at critical junctures in their lives.

NO. 1, SIWEI STREET

By Yang Shuang-Zi
Translated by Lin King

> Drawing from Taiwan's ethnic politics, history, and culinary culture, the story of *No. 1, Siwei Street* revolves around a historic boarding house for female graduate students. As the five residents cautiously draw closer to one another over their shared meals, the influence of the Japanese genre of *yuri* fiction (girl's love) also becomes apparent. By blending historical details concerning the boarding house, the author breathes new life into the structure, an actual historic building located in Taichung, Taiwan. Food lovers, *yuri* fiction fans, and readers of historical fiction will all find themselves easily drawn into the story.
>
> The convivial dining room scenes, with the young women of the boarding house gathered around the dinner table, are filled with exquisite images of food: desserts like taro porridge, castella (Japanese sponge cake), and lemon-shaped cakes (a specialty of Taichung); main dishes like wine-stewed chicken, old-style fried chicken, chicken soup with pickled vegetables; and snacks like *lumpia* and fried spring rolls. From shopping, to washing the vegetables, to preparation, everyone lends a hand, their nutritious and mouth-watering meals meeting the unfulfilled needs of body and soul, and their shared conversations promoting their deepening flow of their emotional connections.
>
> — ***Openbook*** **/ Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Act 1: Hsiao Nai-Yun

Nai-Yun had missed mango season.

The mango tree in the yard had been planted before the war – about eighty years ago, according to the Landlady. The reliable old tree flowered punctually after every New Year, then bore fruit after every Plum Rain season. *Pop pop pop*.

Why is "pop" the onomatopoeia for a mango tree? Nai-Yun wanted to ask, but ultimately refrained.

"That's so true! It really does go *pop pop pop*!" Cha-Cha of Room 201 chimed in.

At the opposite end of the dining table, Feng of Room 102 gave a "Mmm" of agreement. "Very true. *Pop pop pop*."

Cha-Cha jumped in again. "We were eating mangoes every single day in July – my nails were, like, permanently yellow! Aigh, if only mango season lasted longer."

What was the logic behind complaining about yellowed nails but still wishing the season were longer? Nai-Yun couldn't think of anything to say in reply. She had stuck her fork into a piece of red bean yokan jelly that she'd brought from Yuli Township, but couldn't find the right timing to put it in her mouth.

The square table was large enough to seat eight. The Landlady, who sat at the opposite corner to Nai-Yun, took a large bite of yokan and said, "It's so nice and sweet." Nai-Yun followed her lead and quickly ate a mouthful.

The jelly's fragrance spread pleasantly in her mouth. Nai-Yun pretended to be too busy chewing to take part in the conversation. Listening to Feng and Cha-Cha's chatter was like watching a game of table tennis – each ping was almost immediately followed by a pong.

"The mangoes were ripe as early as June, but Chih-Yi thought they were too messy to eat and couldn't be bothered, so I made two batches of mango jam. You know, the tree we have here is indigenous mango, which is a bit sour, but that actually makes it better suited to jam-making than Irwin or Chin-Hwang mangoes, which are a bit too sweet. Chih-Yi had yogurt with mango jam every night for *weeks*."

"Oh! You know the Dragon River Ice Shop in Zhonghua Road Night Market? I think they also put mango in the specialty jam they use on their toast."

"I don't know much about Dragon River's jam, but it's true that Chih-Yi and I also ate our mango jam with toast – for breakfast, you know."

"Ooh, that sounds so nice! Wait, but how come I didn't get to have any jam when I came in July?"

The Landlady almost spat out her yokan in laughter. "You ate so many of them, we couldn't rescue enough from you to make jam!"

Cha-Cha threw back her head and guffawed without showing any signs of embarrassment.

Nai-Yun was surprised to find Feng's eyes on her. "Nai-Yun didn't have a chance to try our mangoes."

"Oh… yeah, it's – what a shame," Nai-Yun stuttered, fumbling the ball of conversation that Feng had so kindly passed to her.

Feng smiled amiably and served her yet another ball. "That's alright, these trusty old trees always bear fruit every June. You might have missed it this year, but now you have something new to look forward to next year. Do you like indigenous mangoes?"

"Ah, uh, yes. I do."

A swing and a miss. The ball dropped limply to the floor with the end of her sentence.

The air stood still for a moment.

"Is that plate for Chih-Yi?" Cha-Cha asked, pinging another ball onto the table. "She probably doesn't have time to eat yokan with all the work she has. I can help her polish it off, you know!"

A pong from Feng. "No need to trouble yourself, miss."

"Why, it's no trouble at all—"

Cha-Cha's words were interrupted by the sound of feeble footsteps out in the corridor. It was the distinct tread of a petite person walking on wooden flooring.

Chih-Yi of Room 101 came into the dining room. She didn't meet Nai-Yun's eyes as she entered. More accurately, she didn't look anybody in the eye except Feng.

"I feel like my brain's burning to a crisp. I need something sweet."

"There's low-sugar yokan jelly, oolong tea flavor. Want some?"

"Yes."

"Nai-Yun brought it for us."

"Thank you."

Still without looking at any of the others, Chih-Yi picked up the plate of yokan and walked out, only to return after three steps.

"Thank you, Nai-Yun. Did I say thanks earlier?"

Feng chuckled. "Yeah, you did. You're working yourself too hard."

Chih-Yi massaged her temple. "Could you make me some coffee?"

"I'll bring it to your room later."

"Okay."

Again she left the dining room, and again the delicate footsteps halted.

"Feng, did I thank you earlier?"

"Nope."

"Oops – thank you."

Her unhurried steps trailed farther and farther away, back up the corridor. Feng seemed to be listening intently, and nobody at the table said a word. They heard the steps stop after turning a corner, followed by the creaking of old hinges – the wood-framed screen door to each of their bedrooms – and then the scraping of the shoji door sliding along its wooden tracks. Then the shoji door slid shut and the screen door swung back into place, clacking softly against the wooden frame.

Feng smiled, rose from her chair, circled around the table, put on wooden geta sandals, and stepped from the wooden-floored dining area down to the

kitchen's stepping stone.

Traditional Japanese houses were built mostly from wood, and only the "*doma*" – literally "earthen area" – didn't have wooden flooring. This was usually reserved for the kitchen, since using stoves on wooden floors could easily lead to house fires. However, the doma of No. 1, Siwei Street had been modified. The original kitchen had been elevated and made into part of the dining area, while the current doma, which had cement rather than earthen flooring, was a later addition. Because of this change, the current kitchen didn't have the side door that was typical of traditional Japanese residences.

"Does anybody else want coffee?"

Cha-Cha's hand shot up immediately. "Me me me! I want a hot latte. I'll help froth the milk."

"I'm on a coffee ban," the Landlady said. She put a little cup of rice wine to her lips and took half a sip.

Nai-Yun was half a beat slow, but managed to swish around the words "I'd like some, too" in her mouth. Nobody heard her.

From the kitchen, Feng asked, "What about you, Nai-Yun?"

This made Nai-Yun blush, suddenly self-conscious. She got to her feet. "That's alright, thank you. I – I'll head back to my room."

"Feng makes really delicious coffee!" Cha-Cha said. "You should try some next time."

"Offering other people's services," the Landlady said good-humoredly.

Cha-Cha grinned, her eyes still on Nai-Yun. "If you're done with your yokan, I'll gladly take them off your hands!"

Everyone had received four pieces, but Nai-Yun had only managed to eat one. She clumsily rushed to set the plate in front of Cha-Cha.

"Stop it, Cha-Cha," Feng said. "You're scaring her."

"No, I'm not!"

Nai-Yun forced her lips into a smile and made sure she showed it to both of them. She then escaped from the dining room to the corridor, her every step making the aged wooden passage squeak. She squeaked her way up the staircase to the second floor.

"Nai-Yun!" The Landlady's slightly raised voice easily penetrated the flooring. "There's a bit of a situation with the second-floor bathroom in your wing, so you'll have to come down to the first floor to use the bathroom. It's just for a few days!"

Flustered, Nai-Yun pressed herself against the low railing of the second-floor corridor and said, "Okay, got it."

"What did you say?"

"She said she's got it!" It was Chih-Yi's voice, coming from the room directly below Nai-Yun's.

This made Nai-Yun even more frazzled. She cried out a hasty "Thank you!" and half-ran, half-dived for her own room – Room 202.

The door was unlocked because there was no need to lock it. Once inside, Nai-Yun collapsed onto the tatami floor.

"I want coffee, too!" came Chih-Yi's ringing voice below. "Did I say that already?"

"Feng is boiling the water!" Cha-Cha's voice rang out brightly.

Aaaaaaaaaaah…!

Nai-Yun wailed from the bottom of her heart.

This was the onomatopoeic manifestation of her inner thoughts, which could also be articulated as: *Why on earth did I move into No. 1, Siwei Street?*

*

The word "Siwei" referred to the "four cardinal principles" of ancient Chinese philosophy: propriety, righteousness, integrity, and shame. The name of the street therefore had a very heavy Sun Yat-Sen, Republic of China, patriotic flavor, but the first building on said street was a Japanese house erected in 1938 that used to be an official guesthouse for Japan's Imperial Government-General of Taiwan. After the Second World War, the house somehow ended up as the Landlady's family's private property, and was now registered as a historic building by the Taichung City Government.

Nai-Yun looked up the city's Cultural Heritage Department website and found a page titled "Japanese

Guesthouse, Siwei Street, West District". On it was a short, disappointingly stoic description:

> T*his historic building is laid out in an upside-down U shape. On the first floor, there is an exterior "genkan" entryway, which opens into an open-air atrium surrounded by the building's left, central, and right wings. The layouts of these wings are symmetrical, with a single U-shaped passageway connecting all of the rooms. The original layout has been preserved, and the majority of materials and structural components are likewise originals from the Japanese colonial period. Further, the Guesthouse is one of very few remaining two-story wooden houses with "shitamiita" clapboard siding. It is notable in both its rarity and reuse potential.*

The "Year Completed" column said, "1938 (Showa 13 in the Japanese calendar)". When Nai-Yun had asked the Landlady about the year that No. 1 was built, the latter had cocked her head and said, "I asked my grandma that when I was little, and at the time she estimated that the house was about a century old." It seemed that oral history could be inexact.

What exactly did the webpage mean by "reuse potential"? No. 1, Siwei Street was a private property that the Landlady's family rented to female students at a nearby university. Was that not as "useful" and "potential-fulfilling" as signing a build-operate-transfer contract with some company that will turn it into an artsy café or an influencer hotspot?

At first, Nai-Yun had felt defensive of the building's current usage. But when later she realized that the old house could only accommodate six tenants maximum, and that at the time of her moving in there were only five inhabitants including the Landlady and herself, she felt less certain in her defense.

But to go back to the "real" beginning: Nai-Yun's story with No. 1 began in the spring of that year, when she'd gotten off the waitlist of the Master's program in History at the public university two kilometers away from the house.

On New Students Day, she'd spent the morning taking care of administrative paperwork and arranged a short history-nerd tour for herself in the afternoon. Sticking to distances that she could cover on a rental bicycle, she visited the former Taichung Prison complex, the Taiwan Prefecture Confucian Scholar Examination Hall, and Chang Hwa Bank Guesthouse, which were all near each other. Afterward, she planned to swing by the founding flagship location of Chun Shui Tang, the now-famous restaurant franchise. She thought about ordering a glass of pearl milk tea along with a plate of oolong-braised dried tofu.

It was on her way to Chun Shui Tang, struggling to navigate the lattice of one-way streets, that she came across it: a two-story Japanese house at the corner of Siwei Street, with an old mango tree that towered over the building and bloomed with little confetti-like flowers.

Love at first sight.

The old house immediately embedded itself into her heart. After graduating from college, Nai-Yun did a lot of research on rentals in Taichung City, but couldn't stop hemming and hawing despite visiting multiple studios and suites. Again and again, she cycled back to the old house.

No, 1 was surrounded by three streets: Shifu Road, Siwei Street, and Lane 3, Siwei Street. After illegally parking her bicycle on the sidewalk, Nai-Yun had walked along the property's periphery, examining the structure as closely as she had the other historical sites. She'd studied the cement outer wall, the black terracotta roof tiles, and the wooden clapboard whose darkened color almost blended into the black roof. The second story had three bay windows, on each of the wings of the U shape. The sunlight made the window glass shimmer.

災難預言事務所
THE DISASTER PROPHECY AGENCY

Lin Ting-Yi
林庭毅

- **Category:** Fantasy
- **Publisher:** Fantasy Foundation
- **Date:** 10/2023
- **Rights contact:** bft.fiction.nonfiction@moc.gov.tw
- **Pages:** 320
- **Length:** 111,607 characters (approx. 72,500 words in English)

Lin Ting-Yi was born in 1986 in Taichung City. A former hospital worker whose suspenseful and fantastical works of crime fiction first gained a following online, he is now a full-time writer and a member of the Crime Writers of Taiwan. His breakout novel, *Working for a Crime Group as a Scriptwriter*, has received numerous awards, and a film adaptation is currently in production.

As a series of natural disasters rocks Taiwan, a man with the ability to predict catastrophes uncovers a plot to intentionally sink the island nation beneath the sea.

What if one day we could predict natural disasters? Would humanity as a whole be better prepared to face what comes, or, might some people use this knowledge for personal gain?

After surviving a flood that killed three of his high school classmates, Lin Shao-Heng found he had gained the ability to see the future. Having always had a way with words, Lin Shao-Heng becomes a fortune teller, opening his own "prognostication agency". What no one realizes is that the spirits of his three dead friends have taken up residence in his office, using their powers to assist with his clients.

One day, a mysterious package containing a tablet computer arrives at the modest agency. After pressing the power button, Lin Shao-Heng discovers this is no ordinary tablet – it is a miraculous device that foretells natural disasters. After announcing his prediction of a volcanic eruption on the outskirts of Taipei, Lin Shao-Heng becomes the focus of media attention, which leads to him getting entangled in a secret plot to profit from future natural disasters. Where did the tablet come from, and why did it end up in Lin Shao-Heng's hands? And, what should Lin Shao-Heng do now that he foresees that Taiwan will be struck by a catastrophe of biblical proportions?

Freely mixing elements of the science-fiction and crime genres, *The Disaster Prophecy Agency* is a fast-paced thrill-ride with well-defined emotional ties between characters. Cleverly incorporating familiar disaster scenarios, the novel dares to envision the psychological state of humanity in the face of a starkly believable doomsday prophecy.

THE DISASTER PROPHECY AGENCY

By Lin Ting-Yi
Translated by Zhui Ning Chang

> "If Datun Mountain were to one day erupt, would the Taipei region have sufficient time to react? Against the backdrop this speculative scenario, *The Disaster Prophecy Agency* utilizes the motives of its various characters to probe the meaning of human life and activity. A distinctively Asian type, the humble and gentle protagonist has a gift for human observation, and understands well the art of prevarication. As high-technology and the natural world are pitted against each other, and the disaster unfolds in suspenseful detail, all concerned parties are given space to enter into the fray of public discourse. Building from the foundation of a plausible Taiwanese disaster, this novel can be read as either a retrospective of human folly, or an advance warning for times to come."
>
> — Karasumi (Author) / Translated by Joshua Dyer

Prologue: Memories

A natural disaster always sweeps through and is over before anyone realizes. Yet, the chaos left in its wake can last a long while.

At least, that was the case for the nursing home tucked in the corner of a valley in New Taipei City.

A fierce typhoon, fed by the warm waters of the Pacific and an incredible wind speed of 210 kilometers per hour, made landfall at Hualien and then invaded the rest of Taiwan.

At first, the nursing home's staff thought this was a regular summer typhoon. That it would be enough to do as they had done in previous years, reinforcing the large glass windows and piling sandbags where water might easily accumulate. Since the nursing home was in a mountainous area, they stored almost a week's worth of food and water, and had the workers check over the generator and the fuel. As long as no one went out in the lashing wind and rain, they should all survive the storm just fine.

In this instance, there were not many residents in the nursing home. When the police advised them to evacuate to the nearby community center in the town fifteen kilometers away, most of them voluntarily went to shelter there. A handful of intubated residents could not easily be moved, so a few necessary medical and emergency response personnel stayed behind. Everyone else was evacuated.

Following past experience, this was a reasonable decision to make.

Unfortunately, they had underestimated the power of nature. At first, the rainwater flowed from upstream in clear rivulets, but then soil and sand began to mix in with the water, forming thick, hard clumps of mud that continued down the mountain. Although the nursing home's concrete walls were 2.5 meters high and relatively sturdy, it could not hold the water back forever. Also, from the day the rain began to pour down, all external communications were cut off and no one at the nursing home had answered the phone. There was no way to know what was happening inside.

It was now early morning, but the sky was still covered in dark and stormy clouds, as if dawn had not broken. Taking advantage of a brief lull in the rain, someone dressed in a military-green poncho vaulted over the metal gates next to the nursing home guardhouse, which had cracked open due to the strong wind. This person had a slight, natural upturn at the corners of his mouth, and his tall, gangly figure did not impede his movements at all.

As he moved towards the nursing home, he seemed to be muttering incessantly. "If the rain keeps coming down, forget about climbing over the wall! I'd be able to break in by boat."

Lin Shao-heng was a student in his second year of senior high in a neighboring mountain town. The day before, he had gone with his classmates to seek shelter at the community center. But that night, as he was about to lie down and rest, Lin Shao-heng had overheard a group of workers from the nursing home talking, anxious that they had not been able to reach the staff who had remained behind. Only then had he realized that this typhoon was unlike all the rest. It was uncommon for communications to break down in a storm, and to make matters worse, as of their last known correspondence, the situation at the nursing home had seemed bleak.

The wind had been slicing through the air outside and the rain was gradually growing heavier. Lin Shao-heng had looked towards a corner of the community center, where Lan stood listening to the nursing home workers' conversation. After, she turned to stare out the window at the storm. Although she did not say a word, her helplessness and despair were reflected clearly on the rain-spattered window panes.

Lan had always lived in Taipei City, but this year she had come up the mountain to stay with her grandfather for the summer holidays. She was quite shy and did not talk much, but her face dimpled when she smiled. Lin Shao-heng had passed by her grandfather's old courtyard home several times, and always glanced about for Lan, but never had a chance to talk to her. Who would have thought they would meet here, in the community center, while taking shelter from a typhoon?

As an aside, "Lan" was not her given name. She always had a blue hair tie like a garden cosmos holding her ponytail together; if it was not in her hair then it was on her slender wrist, as though it were a part of her. Lin Shao-heng privately called her "little blue", and thought she might not mind it even if she found out.

All the children on the mountain called Lan's grandfather Grandpa Shih. No one was sure what his real name was, but he was always seen carving lovely and lifelike little animal statues, which he then placed on the wall of his courtyard home. Arrayed one after another, they were all quite cute.

People said that Grandpa Shih had gone to live in the nursing home, but he was nowhere to be seen in the community center. Surely, he had not stayed behind?

Deep in the night, Lin Shao-heng kept thinking about this and could not sleep. He tossed and turned on his sleeping bag, and bumped into his best friend, Zhang Cheng, the chubby young man sleeping next to him. Zhang Cheng shifted and accidentally pressed Shao-heng's ribs, which he had injured a few months ago while fighting his archenemy in school. Still tender and aching, Lin Shao-heng could not help crying out.

"Ow, that hurts! Zhang Cheng, you have so much room, why do you have to squeeze over here with me?"

"Huh? Oh, you haven't slept yet. Is the typhoon gone? Can we go home?"

Zhang Cheng turned around and almost squashed him, but Lin Shao-heng hurriedly dodged and glared at him.

If not for the fact that Zhang Cheng was his classmate and best friend, Lin Shao-heng would have picked a fight with him long ago due to his unruly behavior. Just like he fought with his enemy three months ago – Hsu Chih-i, a boy from the next class with the moniker Mad Dog. At that time, Hsu Chih-i had received a hard knock on the head and Lin Shao-heng had broken a rib; the fight was so bloody and intense that the entire school had known about it.

Still, he had no choice but to throw himself into that fight. That thug Hsu Chih-i somehow heard that a female classmate, Wu Wen-hsin, had a secret crush on Lin Shao-heng. He had colluded with gangsters from outside the school to set a trap, planning to kidnap

Wu Wen-hsin. Luckily, he was caught in the act by Lin Shao-heng, and the two had beaten each other bloody. As his crime had been more severe, Hsu Chih-i was sentenced to three months in a juvenile detention center. Word was that he still had to check in regularly for correctional counselling after his recent release. As for Lin Shao-heng, he had received a reprimand from the court and was ordered to undergo guidance and counselling sessions during the holidays.

The teachers at school were of the opinion that Lin Shao-heng was a problem student with a spotty record and a habit of lying, and sooner or later would also end up in a juvenile detention center. Some teachers even said that he should have been sent to the center alongside Hsu Chih-i, that if they beat each other to death at least someone else would deal with the bodies. If filthy, nasty thoughts could get one jailed, these high and mighty adults with their disgusting outlook should have been locked up instead, every last one of them. At least, that was what Lin Shao-heng always thought.

"Zhang Cheng, I'm thinking to go take a look around the nursing home." Lin Shao-heng said.

"Eh, Heng, all the rainwater must have drowned your brain. There's a goddamn typhoon out there!"

Zhang Cheng turned on his side and stared at Lin Shao-heng with wide eyes. They had both grown up in the mountains and were highly aware of the force of rain during a typhoon. They knew nature could be merciless.

"Look, Grandpa Shih is not here. He must have stayed behind in the nursing home." Lin Shao-heng briefly described how he had eavesdropped on the nursing home workers and learned they had lost communications with the place. "I'm familiar with the area, I should go and see if there's anything that can be done."

"You sure? This isn't the usual heavy rain. Remember that typhoon when we were in primary school? That road splintered into three sections, and parts of it completely disappeared. If something like that happens again, what's the point of you being there?"

"I don't know, but I just can't stand that look in her eyes." Lin Shao-heng looked again towards Lan, who was still in the corner. "Besides, Grandpa Shih is so kind to everyone, I should do *something*."

"You're not allowed to go." A girl's voice suddenly came from above their heads.

Both boys startled. They looked up from where they lay at the same time.

Wu Wen-hsin stood over them. She was like a cat getting ready to throw a fit, her thin eyebrows furrowed and her arms crossed.

Lin Shao-heng raised his head. "You're so annoying! Why don't you go to sleep, instead of eavesdropping on our conversation?"

"Either way, you're still not allowed to go. It's raining heavily outside, and the nursing home is so remote. Who will save you if something happens!"

"Don't you worry, I can take care of myself. It won't be first time I've been outside during a typhoon, right, Zhang Cheng?"

"Um, you're right, but this time the rain seems to be more…"

Lin Shao-heng rolled his eyes, and Zhang Cheng stuttered to a stop.

"If you dare step out of the community center, I will tell the police at the door! Also, when you skipped counselling last time, I was the one who helped you hide. You don't want this to be discovered by the teacher, right?" Wu Wen-hsin's tone became firmer. This was completely different from her usual good-girl image; this time, she was dead set on stopping Lin Shao-heng from venturing into danger.

"Fine, whatever. If you don't want me to go then I won't go."

"Really? You're not lying again?" She raised an eyebrow, deeply familiar with Lin Shao-heng's ways.

"No way! I'll swear it, okay?"

"Even if you swear, I still feel that…"

"Just hurry up and go to bed. It's some rubbish hour." Lin Shao-heng shrugged, knowing it was impossible to convince Wu Wen-hsin, and then buried himself in the sleeping bag.

Outside, the rain was being blown sideways by the

powerful wind. Raindrops thudded harshly on the iron roof, loud enough that Lin Shao-heng lay awake the whole night.

In the early morning, Lin Shao-heng braved the rain, crossed the mud-covered parking lot, and finally stepped into the nursing home. He had no idea where the original front door was. There were sharp edges all about the metal hinges, so maybe the door had been ripped off by the ruthless wind. This was one of the best nursing homes in the area, and once achieved excellent reviews. But in the spacious foyer, the white floor tiles were covered in wet mud almost five centimeters high, and the distinctive tang of disinfectant that used to permeate the place was gone, leaving only the smell of damp soil.

Then, a sharp, chemical smell floated down from the end of a nearby corridor.

Lin Shao-heng gripped his backpack tightly. It was filled with drinking water, biscuits, batteries, and basic bandaging supplies pilfered from the community center, and he had even stolen a walkie-talkie from one of the local officials. He originally thought these supplies might help, but as he walked down the waterlogged corridor, his blood ran cold.

Next to the weakly flickering emergency lights, slumped in a wheelchair and bundled in a wool blanket, was the corpse of an old man.

As I guessed, something did happen. Lin Shao-heng moved closer, cautious.

He found that the old man's mouth and nose were both filled with mud and water. It appeared that he could not walk very well and had fallen down, then drowned in the muddy water. Lin Shao-heng had never seen such a tragic death before. Yet, someone seemed to have helped the old man into the wheelchair, and even carefully covered the body with a blanket. Maybe it was the staff's doing, but where were they?

"Is anyone here?" Lin Shao-heng shouted.

No response. Only the sound of running water and the wind, blowing his call into the distance.

Lin Shao-heng continued on, checking each of the wards. He could not tell if the ward doors were had been blown open by the wind or forced open by fleeing people. All signs indicated that, not too long ago, the situation had been so dire everyone was forced to evacuate. Although Lin Shao-heng managed to enter the nursing home in a brief interval as the storm subsided, the weather in the mountains was changing every other minute, and he was not certain that he could safely leave.

And he had not found Grandpa Shih yet. Perhaps the staff had taken him off the premises?

As he deliberated, someone rushed out from a door. Despite the mud covering them from head to toe, Lin Shao-heng could make out that they were wearing the white uniform of the nursing home. But their behavior was quite strange: they kept turning back to look behind them before leaving.

"Hey! Wait a minute!"

Before he finished speaking, the person had already vanished in the opposite direction towards the front door.

"Dammit! Gotta ask where everyone else has gone." Lin Shao-heng tried to chase after the mysterious person, but found that the water was starting to rise again, and was already reaching his calves. It was quite difficult to wade forwards, and he knew he wouldn't be able to catch up. The storm was fluctuating wildly, one moment a heavy downpour, the next moment a drizzle.

Suddenly, from near the foyer, there came the sound of a familiar voice shouting.

"Heng! Where are you?"

"Hey, Lin Shao-heng! I told you not to come, but you did it anyway. You're always lying!"

Although the voices came from far away, he recognized them quickly. Zhang Cheng and Wu Wen-hsin.

"How come you're both here?" Lin Shao-heng leaned out of the long corridor and shouted back across the distance.

鬼樂透
GHOST LOTTO

A master of horror whose work dominates discussions in online forums, Cloud Lon frequently incorporates elements of Eastern and Western history, religion, and mysticism in his novels.

Cloud Lon
龍雲

- **Category:** Horror
- **Publisher:** Fantasy Foundation
- **Date:** 7/2023
- **Rights contact:** bft.fiction.nonfiction@moc.gov.tw
- **Pages:** 312
- **Length:** 98,195 characters (approx. 63,800 words in English)
- **Rights sold:** Film (Machi Xcelsior Studios)

A man purchases a lottery ticket as the jackpot approaches 960 million Taiwan dollars, setting off a deadly chain of events involving his wife, two robbers, and the proprietor of the lottery ticket shop. As the suspense builds, and each character's ulterior motives are revealed, will anyone escape this curse unleashed by human greed?

Most holidays will see large numbers of Taiwanese head to the local lottery ticket shop to try their luck, an act so commonplace it is seen as a form of entertainment. Many shops place a small statue of the God of Fortune on the counter to bring customers a bit of luck. But what happens when the God of Fortune doesn't have the best intentions? And what kind of misfortune would such a god visit upon customers whose greed knows no bounds?

Although he had sworn to his wife that he would quit gambling, Chen En-Tien can't resist purchasing another lottery ticket. When his wife hears about it, she loses control and kills her backsliding husband. From there, the unlucky lottery ticket sets off a chain of suspicious deaths. One of the victims is a gangster who had tried to convince Chen En-Tien to join a smuggling operation. Another is the owner of the lottery ticket shop, who had broken a contract in a bid to monopolize the lottery ticket trade. In fact, everyone associated with the shop seems in danger of losing their lives in some ill-fated manner. Only gradually are the deaths linked to the God of Fortune statue that stands watch in the shop, with its unusual black coloration and uncharacteristic bucked teeth. Investigations carried out by Ho Chang-Yuan, a man who specializes in the disposal of religious idols, indicate that the statue was made by the sculptor Liao Tian-Shou. Could Liao be the key to solving the riddle behind the string of deaths? But, when Liao himself turns up dead, what hope is left for ending this legacy of misfortune?

Juggling concepts from Taiwanese religion, local superstition, and the universal theme of greed, *Ghost Lotto* cuts a bizarre and twisting path into the dark recesses of human nature.

GHOST LOTTO

By Cloud Lon
Translated by Kevin Wang

> Starting from the everyday phenomenon of Taiwan's national lottery, *Ghost Lotto* hones in on the various forms of the human desire to strike it rich, and the local superstitions and religious beliefs concerning wealth and good fortune. Beneath the everyman dream of overnight wealth lies a range of forces that distort and defile human nature: misfortune, delusion, vanity, jealousy, and desire.
>
> Greed is never far from these, but what is their true source? Beginning in simple actions motivated by greed, *Ghost Lotto* builds a tightly coupled story that expands à la the butterfly effect, to incorporate numerous other facets of human nature. An impulse moves one character to action, only to produce a tragedy in the life of another, and the ultimate truth isn't revealed until the very end, leaving readers to wonder: what is more horrifying, the ghosts and demons of superstitious belief, or the evil that lurks in our own nature?
>
> — **Ling Jing (Author) / Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Prologue: A Lottery Ticket

What's the luckiest thing that could ever happen to you?

There are many answers to this question, depending on who you talk to, but ask around in Taiwan, and most people would probably say the same thing: winning the lottery.

Any ordinary citizen, with no skill or effort – just luck – could become an overnight billionaire. For this reason, from the moment the government introduced the Public Welfare Lottery, the dream of many Taiwanese people has been to win the jackpot.

The jackpot grows whenever there are consecutive drawings without a big winner, causing long, winding lines to form in front of lottery shops. Friends and coworkers never miss the chance to chat about how much to bet and which numbers they think are lucky. This drama has been repeating endlessly in the years since the launch of the lottery.

Driven by this craze, lottery shops have sprung up in avenues and alleyways like bamboo shoots after spring rain.

Our story begins in one of these shops.

At the entrance, numerous scaled-up photocopies of winning lottery tickets were on display. While none of them were for the jackpot or even second prize, plenty of other winning tickets were plastered across the wall, a few worth close to a hundred thousand.

The shop was located on a main road with plenty of cars and foot traffic, but with all the competing shops nearby, it was always so empty that cobwebs wouldn't be out of place over the entrance. Despite its prime location, the shop lacked the reputation boost that comes with selling a big winner, making business here much worse than a rival shop in a nearby alley

that had sold jackpot tickets twice.

The shop had several tables inside, with LCD screens on the wall continuously showing results from the last drawing and the predicted winning numbers for the next. Although the space was clean, the contrast between the single customer standing by the counter and the bustle of pedestrians outside made it feel rather dreary.

Behind the counter, the shop owner, who walked only with difficulty, was skillfully operating a computer. He recognized the lone customer, a man named Chen En-Tien who lived nearby. The owner realized it had been quite some time since he'd last seen En-Tien, though he used to be a regular. He recalled how, last year, En-Tien would come in to buy a few tickets at nearly every draw. When the prize amount went up, he would even pool some money with others to place small bets. But starting about half a year ago, En-Tien's visits had become far less frequent.

In the past, En-Tien would come in, find a seat at a table, and carefully study the lottery numbers. But the En-Tien of today seemed hesitant, as if it were his first time buying a ticket. After walking into the shop, he had stared at the LCD screens on the wall for a while before finally going to the counter and telling the owner he wanted to buy a computer-generated number for the Power Lottery.

The winner would be announced that very night, and the prize had ballooned to over 900 million. Sales hadn't been as good as the owner had hoped, but he wasn't worried. After all, people were just getting off work. He trusted that sales would heat up in the final stretch before the drawing.

En-Tien waited by the counter for the owner to print out his lottery ticket. A gold ingot and the statue of a deity were arranged on the counter by the computer, likely to bring good luck to customers and help them make the right choice.

En-Tien hadn't seen these objects before. He had a general idea of why the owner had placed them there, but still…

He tilted his head as he looked at the black statue of the deity. At first, he thought it might be the Tibetan Black God of Wealth, but from every angle, it seemed off. The fangs protruding from its mouth were particularly unusual.

"You can give it a touch," the owner laughed. "I heard this one works like a charm."

These words waved away the doubts that had been lingering in En-Tien's mind. It was a Black God of Wealth after all. En-Tien nodded, reached out, and stroked the idol for good luck.

Superstition was an essential part of most gamblers' lives. Otherwise, the popular practice of asking supernatural beings for winning numbers wouldn't have continued to this day.

The owner slipped the printed lottery ticket into a red envelope and handed it to En-Tien.

"I hope it's a winner. Please visit again soon!" As he spoke, he wondered why En-Tien hadn't come by in so long.

En-Tien took the envelope from the owner's hands and walked straight out. Of course, he knew that the owner recognized him. In the past, whenever the jackpot swelled, he would join the lottery craze like everyone else. He had only stayed away for so long due to the protests of his wife, Liu Hung-Chuan.

Today was different though: the lottery ticket in his hand might very well change his life. At least, this was the premonition En-Tien had as he left the shop. He turned around to look at the wall full of past wins, hopeful that the ticket in his breast pocket would soon be up there, too.

While En-Tien was looking at the winning tickets, a man across the street eyed his back. A smile rose from the corner of the man's mouth as he shook his head.

En-Tien was so immersed in his beautiful fantasy that he didn't notice the man gazing at him at all, much less so the wide-eyed woman approaching him from behind.

"Don't tell me you just went in there to buy a lottery ticket."

En-Tien instantly recognized the voice. He whipped his head around to see his wife Chuan standing behind him, arms crossed, looking ready to unleash a torrent of accusations.

En-Tien looked a bit embarrassed. He hesitated for a moment before nodding. "Yeah, I bought one."

Chuan's expression darkened instantly. "So," she said sharply, "You don't give a shit about what I said?"

"It can't be that serious." En-Tien furrowed his brows. "Just playing with a hundred *kuai*."

Already unhappy, Chuan's anger surged at his attempted nonchalance. Just days ago, after learning their landlord would raise the rent next month, they had discussed saving for a down payment on a house. En-Tien had agreed to cut down on unnecessary expenses. She never imagined he'd waste money on a lottery ticket so soon after their talk.

"You'd rather throw your money away?" Irritation was written all over her face. "Did you forget what you promised? You call buying a lottery ticket 'cutting down on unnecessary expenses?'"

Chuan's anger flared as she berated En-Tien in the middle of the sidewalk without a care about the sidelong glances of passersby.

Of course, Chuan's words also reached the ears of the lottery shop owner, who had been puzzled about why this regular customer hadn't shown up in so long. Now, he finally had the answer.

"It's just a hundred. Don't be like this," En-Tien, a bit embarrassed, tried to calm her.

Who would have thought that these words would only make Chuan more upset? She nearly roared: "What do you mean, 'just a hundred'? A hundred today, a hundred tomorrow – who knows how many hundreds you'll waste before you give up? Don't forget, you promised to stop gambling!"

En-Tien had no defense against her accusations. He could only lower his head and submit to her scolding.

"You're always chasing these pipe dreams instead of keeping your feet on the ground. That's why you're a complete failure. You can't even hold your head up as a man." Chuan pointed at him, heedless of the growing tide of commuters around them. "I've given up on expecting you to accomplish anything. Now, even your promises to me are worthless. Don't you think you've gone too far?"

Rome didn't fall in a day. This was true for both Chuan and En-Tien in how they viewed one another.

There was truly nothing remarkable about En-Tien. He was neither more afflicted nor more blessed than the next person. His office work was dull beyond mention. If you took every milestone that En-Tien's peers had passed and averaged out their outcomes, En-Tien's life would perfectly match this average. He could not be more unexceptional. In a video game, En-Tien would be the faceless character in the background with zero personality. His story would not fill a single page.

At least, not so far.

En-Tien had experienced plenty of fleeting passions, but reality always brought him back to one truth: recognize your mediocrity. He did not see mediocrity as a choice; it was his fate. He lived by the motto, "Getting by is good enough." He would never descend into a drunken stupor, but without any opposition, he would have been content to live his undistinguished life until the very end.

It was this very personality trait that allowed him to simply turn a deaf ear to Chuan when she gave one of these jarring lectures, as he was doing now, with his head down. But for Chuan, who has experienced a different dynamic in every relationship, becoming the dominant partner wasn't what she had intended. It was rather a result of their differing personalities. Someone had to hold the reins in the relationship, and because En-Tien was so meek, Chuan naturally became the forceful one.

Whenever a problem arose, En-Tien would just bury his head in the sand, causing Chuan's disappointment and anger to build without her even realizing it. She wanted to provoke her indifferent husband into action with tough talk, but it never worked. Her admonishments ended up sounding more like bullying insults than anything else.

Of course, this wasn't uncommon. Couples like this can be found all over the world. Chuan and En-Tien were not the first, and they certainly wouldn't be the last.

In the past, whenever Chuan made him lose face or nagged him in front of strangers, En-Tien would not show any opinion or emotion. But today, the gazes of passersby felt like scorching rays, burning through the self-esteem that he had kept numb for so long.

En-Tien turned his downcast face slightly toward

the lottery shop. He noticed the owner looking right at him. When their eyes met, the owner tactfully turned away.

It wasn't just the owner; strangers on the street were also watching. Although they weren't turning their heads to stare directly, their eyes kept glancing over. Some people walking in groups were laughing and whispering as though he were a joke.

En-Tien could feel his rage growing. Chuan's every word was stirring up an indescribable resentment.

Oblivious to this change in En-Tien, Chuan continued to berate him, relentless as usual.

"If you really had the kind of luck to win the lottery, then you wouldn't be such a deadbeat," said Chuan with hands on her hips.

Hearing this, En-Tien couldn't help but think: "This woman is jinxing me before the draw has even started." He clenched his hands into fists, but Chuan showed no signs of letting up.

Our emotions rise and fall just like the tides, but in this marriage, En-Tien had never expressed his emotions, always submitting meekly to whatever came his way. He had just managed to muster a bit of hope that this lottery ticket might change his life, but within a few short minutes, Chuan's nagging had completely extinguished that spark.

In the past, En-Tien could always find a way to ignore Chuan's tirades. After all, he hadn't been an underachiever for just a day or two. If her words had the power to transform him, his life would have changed course a long time ago.

But today, he couldn't take it anymore. It wasn't just because of the way she was turning over every stone from their past, but also how she kept repeating that his lottery ticket was a waste of money, that there was no way he could win.

So, En-Tien did something that he had wanted to do for years, but had never dared.

"Have you said enough?" he suddenly looked up.

"Huh?" Having been interrupted, Chuan's face was a mixture of displeasure and disbelief.

"Are you done or not?" En-Tien suddenly roared. "Fuck!"

This one utterance held years of En-Tien's suppressed emotions, especially the last word, which was shouted loudly enough for the whole street to hear. It not only startled Chuan, but also all the people and shopkeepers around them. Time seemed to freeze. Everyone's movements halted.

But in reality, it was only for a split second. At the very next moment, everyone immediately acted as if nothing had happened and resumed what they were doing: walking, chatting, pretending to tidy up the counter. Nevertheless, a trace of the moment lingered on each person's face. As he continued wiping the counter, the lottery shop owner kept his lips tightly pursed, but the hint of a smile was showing.

Chuan felt utterly humiliated. With her strong personality, she, of course, began arguing back. In the past, En-Tien might have given in to her every time, but today, he wasn't backing down. He snapped back, matching her jab for jab. They bickered all the way home.

"You might be a degenerate, but don't drag me down with you!" Chuan yelled. "Why don't we just get a divorce!"

After dropping this line, Chuan stormed into the bathroom, bringing a temporary silence to the quarrel. Tears of grievance fell as soon as she was alone. She didn't want En-Tien to see her weak side. After crying for a while on the toilet, she decided to take a shower and wait until her eyes were not so red and swollen before coming out.

Outside the bathroom, En-Tien sat on the edge of the bed. He knew very well that his outburst today had not been without cause. As he re-examined his life, he was baffled by why this woman always insisted on causing such a scene.

Tonight, he felt his heart wither as he thought about his marriage.

When he finally looked up, the clock on the wall reminded him that it was time for the lottery draw.

Soon, he would know whether the lottery ticket in his breast pocket was a piece of trash, or a ticket to an extraordinary life.

魚眼
FISH EYE

© Luke Huang

Xerses
薛西斯

- **Category:** Crime
- **Publisher:** Links
- **Date:** 12/2023
- **Rights contact:** bft.fiction.nonfiction@moc.gov.tw
- **Pages:** 592
- **Length:** 304,523 characters (approx. 198,000 words in English)

Xerses is one of the most exciting young novelists on Taiwan's science fiction/mystery scene. Deeply inspired by Soji Shimada's *The Tokyo Zodiac Murders*, Xerses is dedicated to incorporating intrigue and exacting deduction into her stories. Her novel *Lotus Reborn* won a Bronze Medal in the 2013 Kadokawa Fiction Awards, and *Avalon's Quest* was shortlisted for the 2015 Kavalan Soji Shimada Mystery Award. Her previous collaboration with Mitsuda Shinzo, JeTauZi, Xiao Xiang Shen, and Chan Ho-Kei – *Chopsticks* – has sold rights in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, and Russia.

Following clues found in a letter, a struggling writer begins investigating a case that has gone cold for thirty years: a murder involving a missing human cornea and a poisoning incident at a high school. Soon, however, he becomes entangled in the convoluted relationships and dark secrets of a wealthy family, and at the heart of it all – a murderous tendency that is passed from one generation to the next.

Yeh Sheng-Chiu, a struggling writer suffering from an eye condition, accepts a new commission from a book editor. Following the leads in a mysterious letter, Yeh begins to investigate a murder case that's been cold for thirty years, hoping to write a true crime story that will revive his ailing career.

The letter tells the horrific tale of a blind and infertile woman, raised in darkness, who, after receiving an organ transplant from an executed prisoner, not only regains her sight, but also her womb. Moreover, the woman begins receiving portents of death in the form of a static-like haze that clouds her vision.

Though the letter reads like fiction, certain details are connected to a child-killer case from thirty years past – personal details that would not have been unavailable to the general public. Why would anyone take such pains to hide these facts within a fictional tale?

The trail of clues leads Yeh Sheng-Chiu to an elite high school in Taitung, where, three years earlier, a poisoning incident had occurred. The circumstances surrounding the incident, as well as the complex family relations of a mysterious cross-dressing student named Hua Pai-Yueh, all echo elements of the brutal murder case. Complicating matters are a pair of twins as different as night and day, a mistress hoping to gain a fortune after bearing a child, a student who poisons a friend for no apparent reason, and a barren mother who becomes a copy-cat killer, each carrying secrets they are reluctant to reveal. Before long, what started as a fact-finding trip lands Yeh Sheng-Chiu in a morass of unsolved mysteries.

Fish Eye, the latest novel from best-selling author Xerxes, draws source material from one of Taiwan's most shocking death-penalty cases: the Chen-Kao Lien-Yeh murders, carried out with poisoned candy. Blending reality and fiction, Xerxes imaginatively enters the mind of the notorious female killer, challenging our conceptions of motherhood with a disturbing question: "Is it true that every mother must love her child? Or, might she choose not to love this living thing that tortured her for nine months before being painfully expelled from her body?"

FISH EYE

By Xerses
Translated by Roddy Flagg

> Piecing together a couple of different crimes, including the infamous Chen-Kao Lien-Yeh child poisonings, *Fish Eye* subtly crafts a seamless whole from what, at first glance, are disparate criminal cases. As multiple threads of investigation trace their way deeper and deeper into the past, everything is revealed to radiate from a single point.
>
> That single point, which the author has been driving at all along, is to interrogate our images of motherhood, and she won't accept any naïve answers sourced from simplistic interpretations of feminist theory. Rather, the author constructs a fascinating puzzle of meticulously arranged clues that guide us to question the power structures that underpin our concept of motherhood, leaving readers with unsettling questions that will linger long after the case is cracked and the book is closed.
>
> — **Cyu Chen (Researcher of popular literature) / Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Chapter 2

Yeh Sheng-chiu neatly folded the pages along the original creases and returned them to the envelope. Kan couldn't wait: "What do you think?"

"About what? Do you want him to write for Century Literature?"

"No, I don't mean if you think it's good or not. I'm interested in your overall impression of the piece. I mean, what was the first thing it made you think. Was there anything you noticed?"

Seeing Yeh still confused, Kan explained: "There is something in particular I have in mind, of course. But I want to hear what you think. You're a writer, you'll have a different point of view."

Yeh had no option but to remove the pages from the envelope again. He skimmed through them a few times more.

But extra readings wouldn't change anything. It was always the same – his first impression would be his last. It was like writing a Chinese character: there was an order to the strokes, a structure. A structure he could see at a glance.

"Okay. The first thing I really noticed was..."

He took the two pages and placed them on the table, each as far from the other as possible. "I think the protagonist changes between these two pages."

"How do you mean?"

The question was a little pointed and Yeh could tell he wasn't giving the answers the other man hoped for. But Kan had retrieved the two pages and was reading them himself, comparing them, as if checking a lottery win.

"But why?" Kan asked, louder now: "At the end the woman says she's got someone else's eyes and womb! It's matches up with earlier... Sorry, I don't get it. You think there's a mystery in here to solve?"

"I'm not saying there's a clue in there or anything," sighed Yeh. "In terms of the narrative, it's obviously the same character. But I think the author had different

people – or whatever – in mind when writing the two sections. For me, the protagonist in the first half doesn't feel like a real person."

Kan waited, wide-eyed, for Yeh's further explanation. And so, Yeh had to go on: "It's a ghost story, yes. But the first half of it doesn't feel real. And when I say that, I'm not saying the ability to predict death is unrealistic. I mean how it's written, the vocabulary. In the second half you've got a farmhouse, neighbors, trucks, the police, all that. It gives you a sense that the woman is living in the real world. Some village in the south, probably, somewhere like that."

"But that's missing from the first half. It could be anywhere. Could be set in the mountains in 16th century Japan, you wouldn't know. You only get modern terms as the twist in the plot approaches. The organ transplants, all that. That's something else I noticed, actually. Look, at the start it makes you want to ask 'Where are her eyes?' and 'Why are her eyes missing?' It made me think of some monstrous thing with its eyes removed, just two black holes where they should be."

Kan nodded fast and hard, clearly in full agreement.

"But then the writing shifts and it becomes more realistic. Now it's just a 'cornea transplant'. That does away with the eyeless monster; our protagonist turns out to have undergone eye surgery. And it's even clearer in the second half. Take out the supernatural powers and you've lost any sense of the weird."

"I think in the second half the author is thinking of a real person, he's got a model in mind. And because it's a real person, the monstrous aspect gets dropped. Of course, I've no way of knowing if he's started basing it on a real person or he's come up with a more plausible invention. The first half is different, though. I don't really know what he's trying to say. It might even be an analogy for something? But the story's got several different things going on, all mixed up."

Yeh's expounding of his views had left him thirsty. He finished his coffee, now cold and bitter, in a single gulp.

Kan's face, screwed up in concentration as he listened, finally relaxed and he took a deep breath, as if he had been the one doing the talking. And then, he laughed and clapped. "I knew it! I knew an author would look at it differently. I'd never thought of looking at it that way. Sheng-chiu, that was fascinating!"

"So, what do you think?" Yeh asked. "Will you share your considered view as an experienced professional journalist?"

"Naturally. A fair trade is only fair." Kan leaned across the table, as if about to impart some secret, and whispered: "My first impression of the letter was completely different. A million miles from yours! What I was interested in was the executed criminal they took the organs from. It says they took a womb. That means it was a woman, right?"

Yeh didn't see the point: "So?"

Kan laughed. "My friend, do you know how many women have been executed in Taiwan since the civil war?"

It wasn't a question Yeh had given much thought and Kan did not wait for an answer: "Ignoring political cases, five. There have been almost five hundred executions in those seventy years. But only five of them were women."

It was a lot less than Yeh had expected. Not that he was an advocate for gender equality in the matter, but the imbalance was a bit of a shock. For a moment, he even felt a little guilty. *Are we men born law-breakers?*

But that only lasted a moment. *I haven't killed anyone*, he thought. *I'm not even an arsonist.* The guilt faded as fast as it had come.

Kan continued: "And if there are only five of them, I thought, maybe one of them was the basis for the woman in the story. And if so, which one?" With so few candidates, he was saying, it wouldn't be hard to check. "And I happen to know a thing or two about murderesses."

"Oh yes. I've heard you're a big fan."

"I prefer to say I have an interest in their cases, thank you," Kan corrected, a little annoyed: "The first big case I covered, back in 95, was Pan Shu-ming. Does the name ring any bells?"

It did, but Yeh couldn't recall any details. Kan

sighed. "You won't have, I know. How old would you have been? Ten, if that? The papers called her the Black Widow. She was a clever one. She could manipulate men into situations where she could kill them, as easy as that. She'd find a new man and kill off the old one."

"So is she the woman in the story?"

"No, she wasn't sentenced to death. Actually, now I think about it, she might be out by now." Kan paused a moment, then went on: "I'll always remember something she said when she was arrested. She said: 'I wasn't scared to see the police at my door. I was happy.'"

"I guess once you're arrested, it's over. You don't have to spend your life in fear."

"For some, yes. But not for her. The last man she'd killed was this big strong type. Former special forces. She'd killed him and dumped the body in a mountain gorge. But then she'd got worried: what if she hadn't really killed him? She used to have nightmares about him knocking on the door. So, when the police turned up, she could be one hundred percent sure he was dead. And that was the best possible news she could have got."

It was a tragic sort of happiness. She was more scared of a man than the risk of the death penalty. A man like that perhaps deserved to die, Yeh Sheng-chiu thought to himself. But he couldn't say that, so instead he said: "It's a kind of positive thinking, I suppose."

"Positive thinking?" Kan chuckled: "So was your idea. Anyway, ever since covering the Pan Shu-ming case I've had a particular interest in cases involving female murderers. I can't quite explain why. They just work differently to the men. Sometimes I even find myself understanding them."

"How so?"

"I don't mean I agree with murder. But some cases make me think that in the same situation, I might do the same thing. That even if you gave them another chance to live their lives, they'd commit the same crimes, because to do so is in their own best interests. Women always know what's in their best interests, I feel. And if they kill, it's because it's in their interests to do so. I don't mean that it'll make them rich or anything. Just that they don't believe there are any other options."

"You sound as if you think men just go about killing at random." Yeh laughed a little: "Are you sure you're not being a chauvinist? If I was going to kill anyone, it would mean it was in my own interest too."

Kan took this as a cue to bring Yeh up to speed on his findings. After the Pan Shu-ming case, Kan had covered a number of other female murderers. None of them fit, though, as none had been sentenced to death: Taiwan stopped executing women sometime prior to the 1990s. At that point, Kan was only a rookie reporter on the local news beat. He had some vague memories of the older cases, but had had to refer back to the archives.

There weren't many cases that fit the bill, and he'd soon found one which matched the details in the story.

Kuo Lien-tzu. Executed 1989.

In the autumn of 1986, the Pingtung township of Fangliao was rocked by a series of child murders. Kuo Lien-tzu, a woman in her thirties, was found to have laced candies with potassium cyanate purchased from a pharmacy and lured seven children into consuming the poison. The motive: years of distress and resentment at being unable to have children after suffering uterine fibroids. The sight and sound of her neighbor's happy children playing in the street filled her with jealousy and rage until, eventually, she was driven to murder.

Kan immediately knew he could be on the right trail: Just like Kuo, the ghost in the story was unable to have children. But what really got the hairs on the back of his neck going was something that happened after the execution.

Kuo's mother, Kuo Chin-kuei, had complained her daughter's corneas had been stolen.

There was only one short report on the matter, with no indication of what happened next. But if there was a model for the executed criminal in the story, there was no doubt: it had to be Kuo Lien-tzu.

"So?" Yeh was confused as to exactly what Kan was driving at with the extended explanation: "That would mean the author referred to Kuo's case, sure. But is there anything else special about the case?"

"I simply had to know if Kuo's corneas really were taken or not. I made a few phone calls to consult with some retired colleagues, to see if any of them had covered the story."

The glint in Kan's eyes made it clear he had hit paydirt and Yeh had to admit he was getting interested himself. Noticing Kan's mug was empty, he waved at a server for a refill.

"I found a few who remembered covering the story, but none of them could recall anything about stolen corneas. I mean, it wouldn't have been a big thing. But one of them suggested I call the Tainan morgue and ask who would have been working back then. Any executions would end up being sent there, maybe someone would remember something.

"So, I gave them a call. I figured I might as well try my luck. And guess what? I spoke to the director and he knew exactly what I was talking about! He was working there, back in the 80s. He was in his early thirties at the time, a junior functionary. He said Kuo Lien-tzu's mother raised merry hell over it. She kept demanding the prosecutors exhume the body to check and the municipal government had to get involved. He said it was still the most farcical case he'd ever seen, even thirty years later."

"And? Were her corneas missing?"

"Who knows! They exhumed the body, sure enough. But it had been buried for over a month, in August. When they dug it up anything that was going to rot already had!"

What would it feel like? To have my eyes rot? Yeh instinctively reached out to press at the edges of his eyes. Still there, still firm. *Things can rot from the inside out though, can't they? Maybe there's something in there already soft and stinking.*

Kan, unaware of Yeh's concerns, gave an "and there's more" smile. "But I did hear one interesting thing."

"What?"

"I told the guy at the morgue a little about what's in the story and he got a proper fright. It turns out he'd seen Kuo's body. And, he said, there was a birthmark on the left side of her belly, just like the woman in the story. In the shape of a lotus, next to a big long scar. Put the birthmark and the scar together and you could say it looked like a flower. But it was more like a scorpion, he said, all legs and tail and terrifying. So he remembered it very well."

The image had Yeh shifting uncomfortably in his seat.

"So who wrote the story, then? A relative of Kuo Lien-tzu?"

The corneas being stolen was one thing, but the birthmark another entirely. That wasn't something you could find in a newspaper archive. It had to be someone who had tracked down the medical records or prison records. Or, someone who knew Kuo personally.

"I don't know. All I do know is that this isn't some random made-up story. At the very least the author has to be someone who knew Kuo Lien-tsu personally. But that means there's something else I can't make sense of."

"Which is?"

"Remember I said she couldn't have kids, because she'd had uterine fibroids. That was why she poisoned the neighbor's kids. The big scar on her belly mentioned in the story was from the operation to remove the tumor."

Yeh Sheng-chiu could barely handle a laser drilling tiny holes in his corneas. He couldn't imagine having his stomach sliced open. Who could let that be done to themselves? He kept on imagining Japanese samurai committing seppuku by disemboweling themselves.

He had to ask: "Is that the only way to treat uterine fibroids? An operation?"

It sounded like he was asking Kan to answer from personal experience. As if Kan had once had a tumor growing on his uterus. Kan shook his head, the bug-in-the-mouth look of disgust on his face mirroring Yeh's. "I don't know. But when they operated on Kuo they removed the entire womb."

"Huh? The whole thing? Wait, you mean..."


BOOKS FROM TAIWAN

NON-FICTION

台灣豬，黑白切——日以繼夜的庶

OO-PÈH-TSHIAT: TAIWANESE PORK

Ema Fu
傅士玲

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A graduate of University of Wisconsin and George Mason University, Ema Fu has over thirty years of experience in media and publishing. Her writing has appeared in *Business Weekly*, among other publications, and she has authored a previous food book on Taiwan's "lion's head" meatballs. Her publications also include numerous Chinese translations of English language books, including *The Book Thieves* and *Paper: Paging through History*.

民美食

DELICACY FOR THE COMMON FOLK

*** 2023 Openbook Award**

A thorough analysis of a thoroughly Taiwanese street food made from nearly every cut of pork imaginable, this is the ultimate foodie guidebook: an exquisitely detailed map of a distinctive culinary culture.

Oo-pèh-tshiat is a dish found throughout Taiwan, beloved of the masses. Though this plate of assorted cuts of pork might at first appear a crude and slapdash affair, its humble appearance belies the expertise required in its preparation. It is a culinary delight enjoyed at all times of day, and which always bears the unique touch of the chef who prepares it. Beginning with the pigs, the animals that supply the basic elements of oo-pèh-tshiat, this book expands into a foodie guidebook and cultural history of a nation's signature dish.

Organized into three parts, the book begins with the outer meats of the pig, detailing preparation methods for everything from head meat to tail tip, complete with a tantalizing list of recommended food stalls from across Taiwan. Even more mouth-watering are the descriptions of the resulting dishes, including "pork snowflake", a preparation of the meat of the gums that will have readers longing for a nibble of its delightfully chewy texture. The second part focuses on oo-pèh-tshiat cuts prepared from internal organs, whose poetic names will have curious readers guessing at exactly what part of the pig has been employed in its creation. Emphasizing freshness and simple cooking that accents the natural flavor and appearance of the basic ingredients, oo-pèh-tshiat prepared from organ meats are a direct representation of the chef's dedication and skill. The final section turns to the men and women whose knowledge is essential to the creation of oo-pèh-tshiat. From the person who selects the pigs for slaughter, to the street-stall chef who cooks the meats, an entire food culture is revealed through unacknowledged but loyal inheritors of this culinary tradition.

Author Ema Fu, a media and publishing professional with decades of experience, gathered stories from numerous interviews to assemble this behind-the-scenes look at the complexities that go into the making of a humble dish. Spiced with personal anecdotes and a pinch of homesickness, Fu has created a foodie guidebook that doubles as a moving cultural documentary, using oo-pèh-tshiat as a window on the honest, hard-working people of Taiwan. Food lovers and the culturally curious alike will find plenty to tempt their reading tastes in this unique book on one of Taiwan's most ubiquitous culinary delights.

OO-PÈH-TSHIAT: TAIWANESE PORK DELICACY FOR THE COMMON FOLK

By Ema Fu
Translated by Marianne Yeh

> "The charm of this book lies in the author's keen sense of narrative, and eye for telling detail. From the technical skills of the chefs to the selection of raw ingredients, the preparation methods of *oo-pèh-tshiat* in all its variety are described in exhaustive detail. Even rarities such as stuffed pork lung receive a nod. The scope of the discussion extends to the history of local culinary cultures from across Taiwan, paying special attention to the life stories of the bearers of this culinary tradition, which, compiled together, form a heck of a mouth-watering read. As readers savor these literary delights, they will have opportunity to observe the associated social and cultural backdrop, in which food culture is seen to connect to everything from social structure, to economics, to the manifestation of local culture.
>
> While dining on this feast of a book, readers will discover links between the individual, the food they consume, and lived aspects of contemporary society. It is a rewarding read that will awaken readers to the importance of preserving and passing on their local food culture."
>
> — **Chao Tian-Yi (Professor of Foreign Languages, National Taiwan University) / Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Prologue: Oo-pèh-tshiat Forever – The Common Folk's Favorite, with Good Reason

In the life story of every Taiwanese, there is a page filled with memories of oo-pèh-tshiat.

Those few eateries we've eaten at since childhood are the most unforgettable. Each bite fills the heart with nostalgia.

These humble establishments, with their aging workers and timeworn recipes, struggle to find successors.

With each passing year, the beloved flavors teeter on the brink of extinction.

Oo-pèh-tshiat isn't your ordinary street food. The exotic-sounding name doesn't make it easy for people to fully grasp the uniqueness of this culinary wonder. For Taiwanese, when they go to a night market stall or a street-side eatery and order an oo-pèh-tshiat, they give their complete trust in the server to create a one-of-a-kind assortment platter consisting of the very best the establishment has to offer.

Don't think of oo-pèh-tshiat as a side dish, because nothing about it is – or can be – made casually. Each slice carries the weight of countless workers' dedication. From the production farm to the cooktop, they toil day and night, going to bed late, waking up early, and pouring themselves physically into every

step, never once slowing.

The rise of oo-pèh-tshiat mirrors Taiwan's economic development. In the early 1960s, it was a rare find. Today, it graces every corner and alley. The workers in these old eateries can be considered part of Taiwan's intangible cultural heritage. They may not be professional chefs but are the unsung guardians of Taiwanese culinary tradition. The pork dishes they craft daily might appear simple and unassuming, but their taste tells a different story. Whether you're wealthy or a regular Joe, all get to enjoy this delicacy equally. It's a favorite for all.

The first time I tried oo-pèh-tshiat was back in fourth grade, in a small alley off Linsen North Road near Zhongshan North Road. This whole area was full of single-story Japanese-style houses then, each boasting expansive front and back yards about thirty-five hundred square feet in size. Two of my classmates lived next door to each other there. Their yards were thick with trees and plants, and huge banyan trees spread their leafy, shady branches over the surrounding walls. Against one wall stood a hand-pushed mobile food cart selling rice vermicelli soup, fried tofu puffs, and pork large intestines – just these three items, and nothing else. The stall opened when schools let out in the afternoon, and the rice vermicelli and other ingredients were always fresh and flavorful. No need for dipping sauce; just drop the intestines straight into the rice vermicelli soup and slurp it all down in one go. The taste of oo-pèh-tshiat was more refined than any other street food around.

This was a time when oo-pèh-tshiat hadn't yet taken over Taiwanese street cuisine. Around our school and the nearby Chingguang Market, you'd often find fish ball soup, deep-fried sticky rice cake, thickened meat soup, pork blood soup, and large intestine vermicelli. Yet there was only one stall selling oo-pèh-tshiat rice vermicelli soup. In this neighborhood, street food was meant to be a snack, not a full meal. Each stall specialized in just one item, focusing on quality over quantity. It wasn't about stuffing yourself but instead enjoying small portions of expertly prepared food.

At that time, oo-pèh-tshiat only came with rice vermicelli soup. Other braised dishes were paired with cehhka-a noodles or braised pork on rice. Each stall stuck to just a few set items on its menu.

Several years later, our family relocated to Tomoncho. It was there, at the entrance of Yongkang Park, that we rediscovered the familiar sight of oo-pèh-tshiat rice vermicelli soup. The vendor's cart boasted a dizzying array of dishes, a testament to Taiwan's burgeoning economic prosperity. The geography, socioeconomic, and cultural characteristics of Taipei City were mirrored in the welcoming diversity of Yongkang Street. Here, you could find rice vermicelli soup, thickened squid soup, danzai noodles, Vietnamese pho, beef noodle soup, plain noodles, Fuzhou noodles, hot pot udon, xiaolongbao (steamed soup dumplings), crab shell pastry, three-treasure rice, and Cantonese congee… All the flavors gathered together like a vibrant world snack expo opening for business every single day.

Back then, oo-pèh-tshiat wasn't a household name yet, but the presentation of braised pork parts had already carved out its unique niche in Taiwan's culinary scene. Everyone knew the dish of assorted pork meats and intestines, prepared simply without elaborate cooking or seasoning. Despite its simplicity, it was culinary art in its purest form. From raising pigs to transforming them into a delectable dish, its natural, exquisite taste was the result of years of dedicated effort by countless professionals.

Consider the tireless labor of pig farmers. In the 1960s, almost every rural household raised pigs. As a child, I spent my winter and summer breaks visiting my grandfather in Taibao, Chiayi County. His home typically had two or three pigs, farming cattle for plowing fields, a whole henhouse of chickens, ducks, geese, and an array of free-roaming cats, dogs, and squirrels. The cow was considered part of the family, while the chickens, ducks, and geese laid eggs and were used for sacrificial offerings during religious worship. Pigs and humans jointly managed the delicate balance at both the top and bottom of the local food chain. When we ate oranges, the adults would lead me to the pigsty, handing me the fruit while feeding the peels to the pigs. These pigs were raised for a long time and never intended for our consumption. A compost pit collected kitchen scraps, and leftover food

was given to the pigs. Typically, the pigs were only sold when they were nearing the end of their lives.

Some families expanded pig farming into a side business. As a side venture, there was no need to fret over the intricacies of feed management. However, transforming it into a full-fledged family enterprise would be a different story. Table scraps alone wouldn't be enough to raise healthy pigs, so efforts would be made in the fields to grow crops like sweet potatoes, corn, and soybeans for their feed. If the scale expanded further, budgeting for purchasing feed would become necessary.

In rural life, survival depended on the whims of the weather, but that doesn't mean farmers and ranchers didn't need good math skills. My grandfather used to say that with each harvest, you had to calculate how much grain to store based on the household's headcount, and how much vegetable seed to collect in advance for the next season. Only the surplus was sold. The household wasn't just comprised of people – every pig, cow, chicken, duck, goose, cat, and dog had to be accounted for.

Once piglets are born, they are raised until weaning and then separated from their mothers, never to see them again in their lifetime. Piglets go through a critical growth phase before reaching puberty, so their nutritional needs are different from those of mature pigs. Professional farms, aiming to raise top-quality pigs, meticulously monitor pig weights and scrutinize the feed and timing. Pigs are intelligent animals capable of recognizing people and voices, much like household pets, though they are extremely timid and easily startled. They are highly sensitive to their environment, including noise, temperature, humidity, ventilation, and crowded conditions. Despite this, they are gentle and omnivorous, which is advantageous for humans who rely on them for meat. With clean and nutritious feed and a good environment, pigs grow and fatten up quickly.

On average, piglets are ready to leave the farm after about one hundred and eighty days. However, some piglets grow faster, while others eat a lot but don't gain as much weight. At that point, it's up to the farm to decide which pigs stay and which ones go. Before leaving the farm, to prevent the pigs from getting carsick and vomiting, they're not given food or water. This fasting period can last anywhere from twelve to twenty-four hours. Pigs recognize who feeds them and who transports them. When they see the feeder, they happily trot over. But when they see the transporter, everyone instantly goes on high alert, huddling together in the farthest corner and staying completely still, trying to hide their healthy bodies to avoid being caught.

Pigs aren't just intelligent; they also display social and even political behaviors. Some take on leadership roles, while others stir up trouble like rioters. Some enjoy playful antics, while some are prone to fights and confrontations. The animal kingdom shows remarkable similarities to human society. Visitors to animal farms witness naive, chubby piglets alongside fully-grown pigs asserting dominance or squabbling. Temperaments vary widely, from mild-mannered to cantankerous, providing plenty of entertainment. From the moment we're born, what creature, regardless of species, isn't destined to evolve from innocence to cunning, and then march towards decay and mortality? The only difference lies in the timeline.

When the time comes, the selected pigs are rounded up and loaded onto freight trailers. These trailers are large iron cages; some are simply fenced, while others have sunshades, but most are basic affairs. Luxury is scarce because, after each unloading, they must be thoroughly cleaned inside and out to get rid of any trace of odor. As the freight trailers rush to the auction yard, the pigs already know their fate is sealed. They remain silent, resigned to their destiny. In the dawn hours, only the merest whiff of their individuality drifts in the air over the island's network of roads.

Most people are familiar with these trucks loaded with pigs. Even if you've never seen pigs walking around, you've probably caught a glimpse of a pig truck speeding by at some point in your life. The distinctive smell it leaves behind is quite memorable.

When they arrive at the auction, the pigs are

usually so weak from hunger that the handlers have to use sticks to guide them along. Some pigs can't handle the stress of traveling on an empty stomach and the intense atmosphere of the auction, and collapse or even die as soon as they enter. To prevent financial loss for the farm, the auctioneers must immediately bleed and process the pigs on the spot. They can't wait until the pigs are completely dead, or they will be forcibly removed for disposal.

Each farm has its own code and number for identification, and so does every pig. The people who act as distributors between the meat sellers and pig farmers are known as pig catchers. They can instantly gauge the quality of a pig walking down the runway, so to speak. Regardless of the pig's size, weight, color, or breed, there will always be buyers with their own reasons for bidding on them. It's often said that there's no pig that can't be sold, and also no price that can't sell. Everyone wants a good pig. A good one has firm muscles and a stable belly when it walks. Weight is also a key indicator. A fully grown pig with the right weight has thick fat, which makes its lean meat and organs tender and flavorful.

The process of transporting and auctioning live pigs is difficult to manage perfectly and often criticized for various shortcomings that are difficult to overcome. And debates will continue to rage over whether fresh pork or frozen pork tastes better. However, when it comes to traditional dishes like oo-pèh-tshiat, the debate is settled. There is indeed a difference between fresh pork and frozen pork.

When the auction ends, the handlers once again load the pigs onto trucks and head to the designated slaughterhouse. Once there, a relentless race to deliver fresh meat begins. Typically, the auction finishes by midday, and by the time the pigs are transported to the slaughterhouse and then to the wholesaler for butchering, it's already midnight. The wholesalers must wield their cleavers non-stop and start delivering the meat to downstream buyers by one or two in the morning.

These downstream buyers include market meat vendors and breakfast vendors specializing in oo-pèh-tshiat. In fact, those preparing for the afternoon or late-night shifts also need to have their meat and offal ready by noon. While regular office workers are enjoying their deep sleep, a large army of workers is sweating it out, preparing food under the cover of night.

Oo-pèh-tshiat might seem like it's just boiled meat, but there is actually a lot of skill involved in its preparation. Should the various cuts be cooked separately or together in one big pot? How long should they be boiled? Until fully cooked, half-cooked, or about seventy to eighty percent done? Each vendor has their own unique method. Customers vote with their feet, and the best oo-pèh-tshiat is usually sold out by noon, especially the most sought-after parts like head meat, cheek meat, kidneys, and pork heart.

The name "oo-pèh-tshiat" is only used north of the Muddy River. In southern Taiwan, similar dishes are called "*lóo-sìt-bah*" or "*hiang-tshiâng-sìt-bah*". Although the basic forms are similar, the latter two involve more complex preparation processes and are more akin to refined appetizers.

If you want to know the quality of Taiwanese pork, just give oo-pèh-tshiat a try. You'll wonder how the various cuts of meat and organs can offer such a wonderfully complex array of flavors despite coming from the same pot. The simplest cooking method, with the most meticulous attention to detail, yields the richest flavor – that comforting and satisfying taste you keep returning to even after trying every elaborate dish out there.

Good food often isn't about what you add, but what you don't. The minimalist aesthetic of oo-pèh-tshiat reflects the straightforward, amiable, and honest nature of the Taiwanese people.

Such a popular delight, so irresistibly enchanting. Its appeal may seem somewhat lowbrow, but it deservingly wins hearts and minds. Long live oo-pèh-tshiat – may it endure for generations to come.

在自己的城市旅行

BECOMING A TRAVELLER IN YOUR

Peter Lee
李清志

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- **Rights contact:** bft.fiction.nonfiction@moc.gov.tw
- **Pages:** 320
- **Length:** 44,341 characters (approx. 28,800 words in English)

Scholar, professor, columnist, and radio show host Peter Lee is dedicated to educating and elevating public awareness about architecture and metropolitan culture. He holds a master's degree from University of Michigan, and serves as an associate professor of architecture at Shih Chien University. He has been awarded two Golden Bell broadcasting awards, one for Best Cultural Radio Show, and one for Best Host of a Cultural Radio Show.

OWN CITY

Renowned Taiwanese architect Peter Lee explores forty of Taiwan's noteworthy buildings via his favorite approach to travel: straying from the path. Visiting each of Taiwan's major cities, Lee guides readers to a deeper appreciation of the local culture and architectural landscape.

During the pandemic, the international tourist industry ground to a halt and remaining inside one's borders became the norm. Fortunately, sensible health policies helped Taiwan to largely avoid lockdowns, and residents continued to enjoy freedom of movement within their own cities. It was under these conditions that *Becoming a Traveller in Your Own City* was born. In distinction to other travel writers, city sleuth Peter Lee focuses on Taiwan's architectural edifices, and employs a Japanese approach to travel known as *meisō*, which translates as "straying from the path".

The book arranges its sights into seven thematic chapters: "Setting Out", "Forgotten", "Healing", "Oddities", "Pilgrimage", "Rebirth", and "Utopia". In "Setting Out" the author lays out his motivations for writing the book. Next, he explores "Forgotten" buildings, such as an unusual avant-garde Catholic church in Tainan. In the following chapters, he undertakes a "Healing" journey, which includes a train ride on the seaside Fangliao-Taitung line, and introduces readers to some local "Oddities", such as a curated tour of some of Taiwan's most bewildering statuary, representing everything from monsters, to dinosaurs, to Daoist gods, Buddhas, and even giant insects. Next up, he visits "Pilgrimage" sites, including a church used as a set in a popular music video, and sites undergoing "Rebirth", such as the colorfully refurbished waterfront of Keelung harbor. Finally, the author seeks refuge in the "Utopia" of buildings and architectural designs far removed from the rush and clamor of daily life.

Packed with observations that draw on the author's wide-ranging knowledge of film, architecture, and cultural peculiarities, *Becoming a Traveller in Your Own City* takes readers on a tour of buildings and sites that inspire the imagination, or grant a fresh perspective, encouraging readers to explore their familiar environments with new eyes.

BECOMING A TRAVELLER IN YOUR OWN CITY

By Peter Lee
Translated by Chris Findler

> "With lucid prose and images, "city sleuth" Peter Lee conveys his experiences in the field, guiding readers on a meandering journey into the depths of the everyday, and revealing some of the most unique architecture, public art, and public transportation infrastructure of Taiwan.
>
> Lee is never short of favorite sights to share, nor of personal interpretations of their significance. Take, for example, the Jingliao Holy Cross Church near Tainan, which took its inspiration from the temporary thatched huts erected by local farmers, or the old wooden houses in Chiayi that are being repurposed for new uses. Another example: the alternative utopia built by photographer Chen Min-Chia deep in the mountains of the northern coast, a simple cabin he calls "a working man's place of repose". Lee's case studies blend the aesthetic observations of an architect with the atmosphere evoked by the site, demonstrating that architecture is a response to society, and revealing the intimate relationship between cities and the periods through which they evolve."
>
> — **Huang Tzu-Ting (Assistant professor of Chinese language, National Sun Yat-Sen University) / Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Chapter 1: Setting Out

1 Traveling Domestically

COVID-19 hit the pause button on globalization. Riding the wave of globalism, it spread around the planet faster than any other epidemic in history, only, ironically, to bring globalization to a complete standstill.

Over the past century, advancements in aviation made moving between countries extremely common and easy and the rise of budget airlines made jetsetters out of young people of modest means. If you opened a flight tracker app on your cellphone, you would discover that skies the world over were almost always packed with planes. Enjoying *xiaolongbao* in Taipei one day and sipping *café* in Paris the next became a way of life for many. This all came to a surprising, sudden halt by a tiny, invisible virus. The previously unimaginable began to occur. Travel by plane and cruise ship became things to be dreaded. Established travel agencies unexpectedly found themselves faced with insolvency. International travel became unthinkable, something to fear. We used to jaunt about the globe, but now we had to cool our heels for a spell, because to slow down the virus, we had to slow ourselves down first. Taiwan was lucky. Due to the hard work of healthcare workers and the general public's willingness to cooperate with them, ours became the only "untouched land" in a world racked by the disease. We were able to avoid local outbreaks and community-acquired infections for a long time, so we could travel freely domestically. We were the envy of the world. Many people in Taiwan like to travel to

and are well-acquainted with metropolises like Tokyo, London, and New York, but are relatively unfamiliar with and indifferent to cities in Taiwan. When you can no longer travel abroad, why not seize opportunity to travel domestically?

As a "city detective", I spend a great deal of time going around and checking out my own town trying to find new and interesting places and things. I have a few tips for those who would also like to explore their own towns:

First, view your city through the eyes of a tourist.
Be sure to explore the backstreets and alleys on foot.
Strive to be perceptive, sensing the joys and hardships of local residents.
The pandemic put the brakes on the world.
Our complicated, busy lives have gradually slowed down, becoming simpler.
Now is the time to cherish warmth, kindness, and the little joys of life!

2 Stepping Out of *Tianlongguo*

Unable to travel abroad during the pandemic, people set their sights on local trips, many becoming aware of beautiful places that they had previously overlooked.

The epidemic was so severe that the world was almost entirely engulfed in chaos and danger, but life in Taiwan, the only exception, continued as normal. We could not go abroad, but we could travel freely domestically, making us the envy of people around the world.

I actually went "abroad" many times during this period of time. By "abroad", I do not mean out of Taiwan; rather, I mean I left "Tianlongguo". Literally "Celestial Dragon Kingdom", Tianlongguo is a term of derision used locally to poke fun at those who live in Taipei. Borrowed from the Japanese manga *One Piece*, it indicates a privileged class of self-absorbed individuals who feel it is beneath their dignity to live like or even breathe the same air as the common people.

I do not think the descriptor Tianlongguo really applies to me. That said, I have lived in Taipei for quite a while, so I have to admit that some of the attitude has rubbed off on me without me even realizing it.

So what makes somebody a citizen of Tianlongguo? Based on my humble observations and analysis, the people of Tianlongguo do not leave the "Kingdom of Taipei" unless it is to make a beeline to the Taoyuan Airport to catch a flight to Tokyo, Paris, or New York to vacation and shop. To them, everywhere else in Taiwan is tedious, uninteresting, and not worth wasting precious vacation time to see. A Tianlongguo citizen, therefore, might have visited Tokyo and Kyoto countless times, but never have set foot in Taitung. They may have scoured the backstreets of Paris, but have no idea what Tainan's Old Capital has to offer.

The same was true of me. Almost all of my vacation time was spent abroad; very little of it was spent roaming about Taiwan. It wasn't until I was no longer able to travel internationally that I finally opted to step out of the Kingdom. I fooled myself, saying that I was "traveling abroad", but I was actually only leaving the Kingdom. I took this time, to visit places I had never seen before, including Yilan, Hualien, and Chishang as well as Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Taichung, Puli, Jiji, and Tainan.

The first thing I noticed is that the air outside of the Kingdom is different.

The Kingdom is so stifling that everybody has to duck into air conditioned buildings and cars. They have no idea what a natural breeze feels like. I discovered that when you leave the Kingdom and head for the south, which is known for its heat, you can actually feel cool breezes under the trees. You don't even need air conditioning. The open-air cafés and shaved ice shops are nice and comfortable despite the fact that they don't use AC.

Later, I discovered the laidback way of life and simplicity of Provence in Chishang. In the Hsinchu Train Station, I experienced the golden proportions of classical architecture from the Italian Renaissance. I found the elegance and antiquity of Kyoto in the Asuka Antique Store tucked away in an old building in Tainan. Early in the morning at the Lalu, a hotel on the shore of Sun Moon Lake, I enjoyed the tranquility and seclusion of an alpine lake in Europe. I felt déjà vu as I gazed at the raw concrete of Taichung's Zero

Space so reminiscent of Ando Tadao. Riding the Jiji spur line reminded me of traveling in the mountains on the Kyoto Eizan Electric Railway. Getting lost in the back alleys of Tainan brought to mind the time I got disoriented in the maze-like streets of Venice.

The day I was sitting on a terrace at the Lalu Hotel trying to decide if the tranquil waters of Sun Moon Lake were covered with a rising mist or low clouds, I found myself transported back to the banks of the Switzerland's Lake Lucerne. The last time I came to Sun Moon Lake, I was in elementary school. I came with my parents and we stayed in the Teachers' Hostel. The waters of Sun Moon Lake are still unruffled, but my parents are no longer here to enjoy them. I had long forgotten about Sun Moon Lake's beauty and tranquility, but the pandemic brought me out of Tianlongguo, allowing me to rediscover the lake's wonder and helping me re-experience the feelings I shared with my family when last we were there.

I learned that when you step outside of Tianlongguo, you can discover wonders and pleasures similar to those found when traveling internationally. As the COVID epidemic continues to rage around us, I'm going to continue leaving Tianlongguo and discover more of Taiwan.

3 Travel Inspired by Old Photos

Due to COVID, I have been visiting local travel destinations and have realized that Taiwan is a wonderful place in the process. The epidemic has actually given us the opportunity to reacquaint ourselves with our own land. It's like somebody who spends their life exploring outer space, but when they return to Earth, they realize that they don't even know their own planet.

I was once racking my brains trying to plan a unique travel itinerary for the New Year's holiday for my family. As I was tidying up my study, I came across a black-and-white photo of my family on a trip to Yehliu when I was in elementary school. In the photo, we were all standing next to the renowned Queen's Head rock formation. My impish little brother braced one hand against her neck as he pretended that he was about to scale up the side of her head.

A yearning stirred within me. I wanted to go back to Yehliu, back to Queen's Head, back to where the photo was taken to revisit the place that my family had been.

Beyond reasons of nostalgia, I wanted to assess for myself just how much scenic spots in Taiwan had changed over the years.

The photo must have been almost 50 years old. I couldn't believe that I hadn't been back there in half a century. But there were reasons. For one thing, everybody knows and has been to places like Yehliu, Sun Moon Lake, and Alishan. They're old hat. They lacked draw. For another, after Taiwan opened up to mainland Chinese tour groups, these passé tourist sites were once again packed with visitors. This time, however, due to the sheer number of sightseers, many of them lacking manners, the scenic spots were now characterized by thronging crowds and bedlam, discouraging locals from going.

In recent years, however, with the decline in mainland Chinese tourists, tranquility has returned to Yehliu. Authorities have also made vast improvements to the area. Street vendors have been relocated to shopping streets and amenities, like restrooms, parking areas, and even signage, are now first-rate. Most importantly, the Geopark has been restored to its original beauty and visitors can once again come appreciate its natural landscape.

In the past, visitors went primarily to hyped up attractions at Yehliu, like the Queen's Head and the Fairy Shoe. The remainder of their time was spent eating and drinking at the seafood restaurants. You might think that that's a sad excuse for a travel excursion, but my memories of my family's outing at Yehliu are just like that. I can only recall the Queen's Head, the bronze statue of Lin Tien-chen, and the seafood joints. Part of the reason I wanted to go back was to fill in the blanks of my memory and discover the real Yehliu.

When I returned to Yehliu almost 50 years later, I found myself amazed as I stood in the Geopark

gawking at the bizarre rock formations fashioned by wind and sea. It turns out that there is so much more to see than the Queen's Head; all of the geological formations are incredible. I walked among the giant mushroom rocks and gaped at the otherworldly formations that were all around: honeycomb rocks, earth rock, tofu rocks, marine pot holes, and candle rocks. Fossil creatures could be found everywhere in the ground beneath my feet. I felt like I was exploring an alien planet. Yehliu is one of the world's most beautiful places anywhere and should be on everybody's bucket list.

The natural beauty of Yehliu was first captured by photographer Huang Tse-Hsiu, who slipped into the park before it was opened to the public. In 1962, he held an exhibition titled *The Forgotten Paradise – Yehliu*, allowing the public to behold the beauty of the bizarre rock formations on the Yehliu coast from his black-and-white photographs. I took a photo of the Queen's Head during my latest excursion to Yehliu and compared it to the black-and-white one taken by my family when I was a child and noted that part of the queen's neck was much thinner. I'm afraid that within the next few years, she might "lose her head". To protect Queen's Head, visitors are no longer permitted to touch it.

My trip taught me the true meaning of the Chinese phrase "uncanny masterpiece of the gods" (鬼斧神工) and revealed to me the area's spectacular beauty. I realized I was wrong about Yehliu and left there with wonderful memories.

Chapter 2: Forgotten

4 Forgotten Masterpiece in the Countryside

If you travel in the countryside outside Tainan, you'll see an impressive pyramid on the horizon towering over the nearby fields like some monument. This structure, it turns out, is the main steeple, cross and all, of Jingliao Holy Cross Church.

60 years ago, German architect Gottfried Böhm was asked to design a Catholic church in rural Taiwan. Due to its remote location, it didn't attract much attention, not even from local architects. After he was awarded the Pritzker Prize in 1986, however, Böhm began to be noticed and people suddenly remembered that he had designed a place of worship in Taiwan.

Most of Böhm's architectural works are located in Germany. Jingliao Holy Cross Church was his first outside of Germany and is the first structure in Taiwan to have as its designer a Pritzker Prize recipient. You could say that Böhm has architecture in his blood. His father and grandfather were architects. He followed in their footsteps and his son followed in his. While his father designed traditional Catholic churches, Gottfried took a modernist approach. Heavily influenced by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, Böhm's architectural style leans toward the Bauhaus School, but his designs are simple, geometrical, and imbued with a certain classical monumentality.

Jingliao Holy Cross Church is composed of geometric blocks, including a pyramid-shaped church and structures capped with conical spires. The aluminum sheeting that covers all of the structures glistens in the sunlight. The spires are topped with symbols. The cross on the main building represents salvation through Christ, the rooster weathervane perched on the entrance clock tower signifies vigilance, the dove above the baptistery symbolizes the Holy Spirit, and the crown atop the tabernacle denotes the sovereignty of Christ.

在田中央：宜蘭的青春・建築的場所・

FIELDOFFICE: A PLACE FOR YOUTHFUL THAT SHAPE AN ISLAND

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- **Length:** 138,705 characters (approx. 90,100 words in English)

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Fieldoffice Architects
田中央工作群

In the twenty-something years since the founding of Fieldoffice Architects, the young people who have arrived to work on the firm's projects constitute a confederacy of common ideals. Their work has won numerous awards, and earned them invitations to countless international exhibitions in Europe and the United States. A number of them have gone on to become influential architects in their own right.

© Fieldoffice Architects

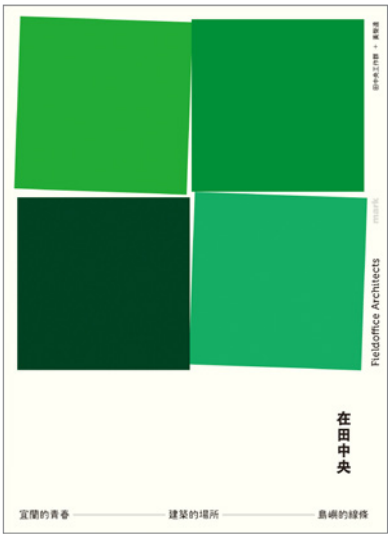
Huang Sheng-Yuan
黃聲遠

Born in Taipei in 1963, Huang Sheng-Yuan, the founder of Fieldoffice Architects, holds a masters degree in architecture from Yale University. He believes that the design of a work of architecture continues to evolve after the building is put into use, and this is the concept that inspires all of the work of Fieldoffice.

島嶼的線條

MINDS, ARCHITECTURE, AND THE LINES

Fieldoffice Architects, led by the internationally renowned architect Huang Sheng-Yuan, is recognized within the Taiwan architectural community for their award-winning public buildings and uniquely free work culture. In this book, Fieldoffice employees recall the process, ideas, and inspiration behind some of their best-known works.



Led by renowned architect Huang Sheng-Yuan, Fieldoffice Architects are an outlier in Taiwan's architectural landscape. Their offices are not housed in a metropolitan office tower, but in the open fields of Yilan County. Their work is celebrated around the world, but they do not accept high-paying commercial projects, instead spending most of their energy on public buildings with limited budgets and strict requirements. This book, their first collaboration with the publishing industry, consists of in-depth interviews that reveal the firm's working philosophy and creative process.

In casual conversation with three Fieldoffice architects, the first chapter lays out the characteristics of the firm's unique organizational culture: principal architect Huang Sheng-Yuan's ability to draw out the hidden talents of others, an egalitarian organizational structure without a defined hierarchy or roles, which allows even interns to freely suggest creative solutions to problems, and Huang's tendency to act less like a boss, and more like a mentor, or a friend, to his employees. The interviewees are candid about the challenges and joys of working in this unorthodox manner, while also unveiling the details of how cases are handled within the office.

The chapters that follow provide in-depth introductions to eighteen of Fieldoffice's architectural works – including Cloud Gate Theater (seven years in the making), Shih-fang Yang Memorial Garden (six years), Kamikaze Aircraft Shelter as War Museum (eleven years), and Cherry Orchard Cemetery Service Center (nine years) – followed by interviews with more than twenty Fieldoffice employees who give first-person accounts of the moving stories and unexpected twists that occurred behind the scenes.

Each project represents Fieldoffice's aspiration to propose an alternate vision of society within the medium of space, and the intention to provide end-users a venue for open-ended thought and reflection. In a society that values efficiency, Fieldoffice's blatant disregard for timelines may strike some as foolish, but if critics were to enter one these buildings, they might find themselves unwittingly engaging in a dialogue with design. This is why Fieldoffice has managed to patiently carry on for so many years with such dedication to their principles – and if this book facilitates an authentic encounter between Fieldoffice and like-minded readers, the seven years spent on its production, like the long years spent on so many of their works, will not have been in vain.

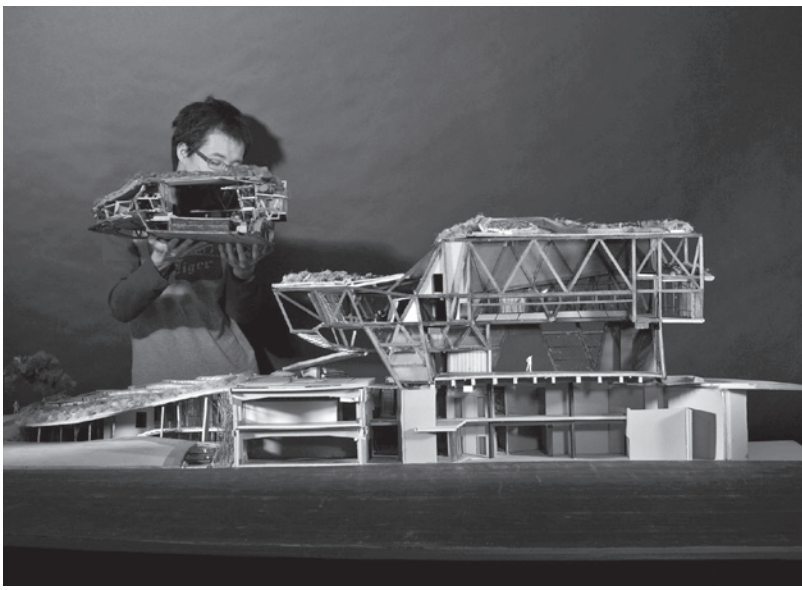
FIELDOFFICE: A PLACE FOR YOUTHFUL MINDS, ARCHITECTURE, AND THE LINES THAT SHAPE AN ISLAND

By Fieldoffice Architects, Huang Sheng-Yuan
Translated by Elliott Cheung

> *Fieldoffice* is the life story of an architectural firm committed to the continuous exploration of the needs of people, and the relationship between people and the environment. Through their works, they have successfully realized the ideals of blending architecture with the environment, and of creating a symbiosis between buildings and people. Based in Yilan, Taiwan, Fieldoffice Architects holds a special place in the history of Taiwan architecture. Through a range of personal perspectives, this book records the life and work philosophy of this unique firm.
>
> The presence of Yilan's ocean, rivers, natural scenery, and the local populace is constantly felt as various Fieldoffice employees walk readers through their architectural process. One might even say this is a book that uses the medium of architecture to spark a revolution. Most of the ideas presented within these pages are clearly revolutionary in nature. The communal living spaces, unique lifestyles, and the vision behind each work of architecture are each intended to bring about radical forms of behavioral and conceptual change.
>
> — **Lily Huang (Travel writer) / Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Chapter 1: Freedom

1 FIELDOFFICE | A Story of Some Silly Folks – Can We Do It Like in Yilan?



n July 9, 2015, TOTO Gallery Ma, the leading Japanese architectural design museum, held an opening for the "Fieldoffice Architects – LIVING IN PLACE" special exhibition. Luminaries in the architectural field as well as well-known celebrities were present, among them Naito Hiroshi, Kojima Kazuhiro, and Fujimoto Sou, as well as Nanjo Fumio, the curator of the Mori Art Museum. All

of them were listening closely to the guided tour provided by the chief architect of Taiwan's Fieldoffice Architects[01], Huang Sheng-yuan. The exhibition was supported behind the scenes by the museum's "Project Management Committee", with Ando Tadao serving as special advisor. The committee members responsible for evaluation were designer Hara Kenya and architects Naito Hiroshi, Kishi Waro and Erwin Viray.

Endo Nobuyuki, the head of Gallery Ma, remarked that three years ago, he had presented a picture snapped on his phone camera to this very jury to convey the unique flair he had seen in Fieldoffice's work in Taiwan. Rooted in Yilan for over twenty years, they had largely kept to designing public infrastructure works, from the smallest pedestrian walkway to larger structures. At the close of the presentation, the jury found themselves unanimous: "Yes, let's put this exhibition on as soon as possible!"

Prior to Fieldoffice, other architects had been invited to exhibit at the gallery, including Alejandro Aravena, recipient of the 2016 Pritzker Architecture Prize, akin to the Oscars of architecture; Renzo Piano, architect for the Pompidou Arts Centre; Jean Nouvel, who designed the Arab World Institute in Paris – countless names one would see in textbooks, as well as Sejima Kazuyo, Kuma Kengo, Ito Toyo, and other widely acclaimed masters of architecture in Japan.

It could be said that Endo's curatorial team understood two truths at first glance: one, Fieldoffice were not content to set down concepts and actions for a single building, and two, their strength was cultivated through "making friends with time".[02]

The news that Fieldoffice had an exhibition in Japan was only reported by two domestic newspapers (one a local edition), and one magazine. Fieldoffice and Huang Sheng-yuan have never been granted the moniker "Glory of Taiwan". After all, public buildings and small-scale infrastructure are built over many years, and are not exactly a hot topic. After returning from Gallery Ma and two special lectures at Waseda University, Huang and his colleagues felt like nothing had happened at all, with Huang saying, "this is in the past now." This differed little from his attitude before the exhibition, when he once said, "Let's get to work, because nothing will change." After returning home, he and his "associates"[03] once again took up their "backpacker's hostel" lifestyle in Yilan.

In any case, something's been happening in Yilan for the past two or three decades and has even begun to germinate further afield. Now, more than a few heads at the county and township levels might say to their contractors, "Can we do it like Yilan?"[04]

A group of Yilaners, and a succession of rooted, loyal die-hards at "Silly Folks Architects", finally succeeded in coining the term "Lanyang Architecture".[05]

This is the story of those silly folks at Fieldoffice.

2 ARCHITECT | Young People Should Shoulder Great Responsibilities – A Discussion/Tell-All With 3 Fieldofficers

Chou Ming-yen – Member of Fieldoffice from 2005-2011, hereafter "Black".
Chang Wen-jui – Member of Fieldoffice from 2007 to present, hereafter "Wen-jui".
Huang Chieh-erh– Member of Fieldoffice from 2001-2009, hereafter "Egg".
Black: Huang Sheng-yuan was part of the committee

01 The predecessor of Fieldoffice was Huang Sheng-yuan Architects, established by Huang in Yuanshan Township, Yilan County in 1994. At the time, the law required an architects' office to be opened under one's own name. Fieldoffice Design Inc. was subsequently established in 2005. The name, chosen by company accountant Tu Shu-chuan, had first belonged to the office baseball team. In 2008, the concept for Fieldoffice Workgroup took shape. In 2012, the cluster within the workgroup changed its name to Fieldoffice Architects, with Huang as partner and chief architect. The other partners included Tu Teh-yu and Chen Ja-sheng. This book will refer to this workgroup as "Fieldoffice".

02 Reference: "The Anthropologists of Architecture" special issue, *Business Weekly*, August 24-30, 2015.

03 Huang has stated that he never uses the word "employee" to describe a colleague at Fieldoffice.

04 Excerpted from a speech given at the Symposium on the Modern Regionality of Taiwanese Architecture, November 2013. Relevant records and arguments will be collected in a volume co-edited by Wang Chun-hsiung, Wang Wei-jen, and Lin Sheng-fung, forthcoming from Spatial Mother Tongue Arts and Culture Foundation.

05 Regarding the uniqueness of Yilan architecture, see "The Realities of Romance – An Exhibition of Postwar Architecture in Yilan", ed. Wang Chun-hsiung, Lanyang Museum, 2011.

for my graduation blueprint at Tamkang University's Department of Architecture. After my evaluation, he came to ask me whether I'd be interested to work at Fieldoffice. At the moment, I thought, "Am I that exceptional, that he saw something in me?" Because I was quite laid-back at school.

Wen-jui: What's remarkable about Black is that no matter how rushed the design, he will punch out at midnight and return at 6 in the morning to work. Everybody else would work through the night.

Egg: He's absolutely the type your parents would frown upon.

Black: When Huang came to me, I thought, "I'm taking it so easy here, if you want me, does that mean I'm some kind of genius?" But I didn't decide on the spot, I told him I'd consider it. If you didn't know Huang, you would think his architecture was all about modelling. All of his works were narratively very strong. But that's not what our academic education demands.

Because many of my classmates were preparing to go abroad, I went to Xingtian Temple and asked for a divination. It said, it will be very good for you to go to Fieldoffice. But I forgot to ask whether I should go abroad. Afterward, I told Huang that I had decided to take him up on his offer, "because I got a divination at Xingtian Temple." His expression was like, "why did you decide based on the divination results and not me?"[06]

Later on, we heard Dr. Wang[07] had asked Huang, "Are you sure you want Chou Ming-yen? That's not the best idea!" True, I wanted to leave after some three or four years in Yilan. Later, I ran into Dr. Wang, and he told me, "Looks like you've cleaned up your act enough to go abroad."

Egg: We suspected that Dr. Wang would send students with potential, but rough around the edges, to Huang. I remember when Black was at Tamkang, six experienced architects from Fieldoffice were invited to lead an assignment for them in the format of a hackathon. They chose a worksite at the St. Camillus Center for Intellectual Disability in Sanxing, Yilan. That was one of the design projects I participated in while at Fieldoffice, but Black was completely nonchalant about it. I was leading six or seven students, but Black just kept pacing back and forth, his expression saying "let's knock off class already". My first impression of him was tanned, lanky, and a little full of himself.

Wen-jui: And Black was still willing to come to Yilan?

Black: I initially came to Fieldoffice for a change of scenery, to pad my resume a little. I don't think I wanted to learn anything in particular.

Recently, something struck me. I have an underclassman who was the spitting image of me in my first days at Fieldoffice. He hated communal living. I once thought there was an invisible hierarchy at Fieldoffice, but now because of generational differences, that's been done away with.[08] I'm quite rebellious to be honest; when Huang initially asked me to go swimming, I said I didn't want to, and he stopped inviting me after that. This underclassman's situation was very similar to mine upon first arriving in Yilan, dissatisfied and nonchalant about everything, but now he's ended up staying five or six years!

I think there are some things with Fieldoffice that need to be slowly discovered and experienced. At least in Yilan I learned to appreciate what Huang can bring out of people. I've become more willing to listen, to understand what others are thinking. But I'm still critical.

Wen-jui: I think you're more accepting of "diversity" as a concept.

Black: I think I wanted to maintain a distance from Huang. I came to Yilan not to ride the coattails of a "master", but to maintain my own autonomy; I'm not going to wear sandals just because he wears sandals. However, we worked exceptionally closely in work matters. Since we spent so much time together, it felt like we maintained a family-like relationship, like how

06 Huang later explained that he was glad "the heavens" gave him this friend.

07 Referring to Associate Professor Wang Chun-hsiung of the Department of Architectural Design, Shih Chien University. At that time he was associate professor at Tamkang University's Department of Architecture.

08 Huang Sheng-yuan commented that the "communal" way that Fieldofficers support each other is demonstrated by the fact that they can each do their own thing while functioning within a larger group. Fieldofficers have never taken a liking to uniform "collectivity".

you'll tell your own father off sometimes, and it's ok.

Egg: Black's personality is such that the more Huang wanted to talk to him about something, the more he would avoid it.

Black: Back then, Huang really loved doing home visits. When he came to my place, I told my grandfather, this is my boss. Huang said I was the first one to tell their family he was their boss and not their teacher. I thought I would 'fulfill' his visions out of his being my superior, to help fulfill his impulses in some way. He was 'part teacher, part boss' to me, so I couldn't speak that freely with him.

In some cases, he worked at too fast a pace; he would jump from thought to thought, always the type of person who'd help you map out your life plan. Because of this, I felt it was best to keep my distance from him. "You stay out of my business, and I'll get the job done for you." Back then Huang would call me in the middle of the night sometimes,[09] and I'd think, "I wouldn't even pick up for my dad at this hour." I thought then that I was still young; did I really want to take the path he was leading me down? Or was that what he wanted?

This kind of relationship with Huang is hard to conceptualize in the context of other architects' offices. I once wondered what I would write to him in the event of his death, but I still don't have an answer.

Wen-jui: That means he still holds an important place in your heart.

Black: I left Fieldoffice after five and a half years, the reason being lack of human resources support. Now the structure of the office is changing, because in the past there was no (departmental) "head" to take care of these things.[10] Take, for example, the design for the Cherry Orchard Cemetery. I thought it was a case nobody wanted to take part in, so I had to ask people to help out. At that time Huang wasn't doing any division of labor. You had to have good relationships with your colleagues, so you could ask them to help draft and do models.

Wen-jui: Now Tu (Tu Teh-yu, Executive Director) handles all that.

Egg: You won't find any trace of management or money in Huang's brain.

Black: Looking back on it, perhaps this kind of training was useful. I had to understand how much progress we'd made, find resources, find people to help fulfill the targets. Though I was dissatisfied in the moment, and even now thinking back on it I feel dissatisfied, but this really can change your life for the better. In the Cherry Orchard Cemetery case there were some loose ends with some of the government ministries that required patience to resolve. Aside from making decisions about the design and on-site, things like whether the blueprints were clear enough, the pressure of resolving issues on-site, how to befriend the contractors, and the alterations that Huang would make to the design from time to time… all of it had to be taken care of simultaneously.

Thinking back on it, it was a positive experience where I grew a lot. Maybe at other firms, or working on other design cases, I wouldn't have had this holistic experience. One reason for this is Huang gives us a great deal of freedom and trust, as well as tolerance. There are ups and downs, for sure.

Egg: At Fieldoffice, you have to take on significant responsibility as a young person. Sometimes that's hard to wrap your head around because our life experiences are given by our parents. We're always training within a safe environment. While I was still at the firm, I would often hear people say, I didn't take this case, the firm did, so why do I have to ask my colleagues to help? There was no guarantee that anyone would help, and Huang wouldn't step in to handle it. That's when you realize that to get something done, you need more than professional ability. The key lies in how you go about looking for resources and resolving problems your own way.

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09 With regards to the late-night calls, Huang commented he would only do this with certain colleagues, expressing the closeness of their relationship.

10 Huang said, many people are unsure what he's thinking. In fact, he treats everyone differently, and hopes that everyone is forced to think about life in someone else's shoes, encouraging one another and oneself, and searching for the road not taken. However, he's not sure if this is the right approach…

夢中通訊
DREAM DIALOGUES

Ci Yun
崎雲

- **Category:** Memoir
- **Publisher:** Aquarius
- **Date:** 12/2023
- **Rights contact:** bft.fiction.nonfiction@moc.gov.tw
- **Pages:** 240
- **Length:** 71,800 characters (approx. 46,700 words in English)

Ci Yun is the pen name of Tainan native and National Chengchi University PhD student Wu Chun-Lin. His essays and poems have been awarded numerous local literary awards, and been collected under the titles *The Tears of All Heavens, Animitta, Return, Lies About Time*, and *Dream Dialogues*.

Poet and essayist Ci Yun records his reflections on family catastrophes and illness, questioning the meaning and purpose of life. Through a series of self-revelatory essays, he engages in inner dialogues on the historical process of becoming his present self.

Marked by literary diction and reflections steeped in Buddhist thought, *Dream Dialogues* transcends the bounds of the typical family memoir. The author, Ci Yun, skillfully employs poetic language and imagery to trace the evolution of his relationship with his parents, and their responses to the tragedy of debilitating illness. Through the clarifying lens of time, Ci Yun reconciles himself to the past, granting readers an elevated perspective of measured detachment from the inevitable upheavals and challenges of life.

The book revolves around three core axes: self, mother, and father. Beginning from the self, Ci Yun explores his expectations of societal acknowledgement as a means to reveal his understanding of his own character. Next, he records his mother's descent into schizophrenia, and the evolution of their relationship over the course of more than a decade of illness, using his mother's inability to distinguish reality from delusion as the basis for a philosophical inquiry into the nature of truth. Finally, he turns his attention to the process of becoming an organ donor to save his father from liver cancer.

Dreaming is a significant theme throughout the book, taking on various meanings as it links each of the axes. Ci Yun learns to accept his mother's schizophrenia as a disease which impairs the ability to distinguish dreams from reality. In another episode, while lying in the intensive care unit following the donation of part of his liver, the author enters a series of nested dreams, like Russian dolls. There, free from the constraints of time and physical existence, he engages in a dialogue with his dream-reality.

Dreams take on a new level of meaning in a discussion of *Dream Travels*, a text by Hanshan Deqing, the Ming dynasty Buddhist master. Therein, life itself is ephemeral – another dreamscape. The dichotomies of fortune and misfortune, honor and shame, and happiness and sadness are viewed as lessons in a long course of study. We need not wrestle with faith, nor struggle against suffering. We need only engage in a dialogue with time, allowing each moment to speak, whether it brings pleasure or pain – for all experiences, good and bad, provide the essential nutrients that will allow us to grow, and continue our life's journey.

Collecting multiple award-winning essays by author and poet Ci Yun, *Dream Dialogues* is both a record of suffering, and an expression of the joy of creation. It is a book that gracefully confronts the realities of lost companionship and our basic aloneness. Yet, beneath the still surface of its detached prose, there is a vibrant, pulsing love of life, family, and the world we inhabit.

DREAM DIALOGUES

By Ci Yun
Translated by Shanna Tan

> "The author's perceptiveness is like a thin blade, cutting its sustained and silent course through questions of life and death, suffering and decline, before slowly being ground down to a soft gleam by Buddhist wisdom and philosophy. Like a stone polished smooth in the river's current, macrocosm and microcosm unfold side by side, the grand scale of universal time flowing through a blade of grass touched by morning dew.
>
> When addressing what is abnormal in his mother's condition, the author writes with such depth and precision that he transcends any conventional standard of human behavior, leaving us with no objects on which to depend, no words sufficient to further decode what has already been put down. Yes, the human bodies in this text carry disease and madness, but they also seem to have left behind any association with the entanglements of speech in this mundane world.
>
> I wonder how many Buddhist Sutras the author has perhaps recited, or copied out, gentle and fragile as poetry? And, what might be his purpose in writing such a book? Asking questions within questions, seeking the suffering within suffering, he draws himself closer to his own inner truth, even if only to catch a glimpse of the painful answers that lie hidden there."
>
> — **Tsui Shun-Hua (Author) / Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Mama Lotus

Whenever she had nothing better to do, Mama Lotus would ride her scooter back to her hometown to pick fruits and vegetables from the fields. Her memory seemed to reside in the past, but in fact, the old house she'd grown up in, where dreams, folk taboos, and village myths were once tended to, had been torn down years ago. On a small plot of the land, Fifth Uncle continued to grow easy crops like sweet potatoes, peanuts, luffa, leaving the rest to go to waste. Ever since Mama Lotus fell sick thirty years ago, her capacity to remember everyday things progressively worsened, and in recent years, even her sense of direction was failing. But because she refused to carry a phone outside, we had no way of knowing where she'd gone until she finally returned home late in the evening. To keep tabs on her whereabouts, I fell into the habit of asking her where she was heading whenever I saw her heading out, and gradually pieced together a map of her go-to places – Fanziliao in Jiali District, Fifth Uncle's house at Haidian Road, Anping Old Street, Fucheng Secondhand Bookshop, the library and Dawan Street Market.

On several occasions, Mama Lotus got ready to head out at the crack of dawn only to find her scooter missing. The first few times, we made a report and when the police came to check the security cameras, they found the scooter parked neatly outside the supermarket round the corner on the main street. After

a few false alarms, whenever Mama Lotus complained that her scooter had gone missing again, I'd lead her to the supermarket and the neighboring drugstore barely a hundred meters away from our house. "Urgh, someone stole a ride on it again," she'd say in Hokkien, her brows deeply furrowed despite finding the scooter safely parked in front of the shops each time. "Why always me," she'd grumble as she lifted the seat storage and put on her helmet. Her brows remained knitted as she started the engine. "Only know how to steal mine." Her voice agitated, darkened by the helplessness and despair.

Get on, Mama Lotus said. I shook my head, saying that I'd grab a cup of coffee at the convenience store and walk back on my own.

There were times, like this, when Mama Lotus would happily invite me to join her, whether it was shopping at the small craft shops on Anping Street, admiring the flowers at the weekend farmer's market next to the Tainan Motor Vehicles Office, taking an evening stroll at Dadong Night Market or visiting Sister Pan – *Pan Jie* – at Fucheng Secondhand Bookshop in the basement. On the way, Mother would murmur into my ear, "Go slowly, you're going too fast, I'm scared." She enjoyed giving me a running commentary on changes in the street, like the old temple or a new shop, or sometimes she'd point out a place where an acquaintance used to stay, or tell me about a delicious snack she'd discovered on her previous visit, or the shop she'd bought her new dress from. In such moments, Mama Lotus seemed to remember more than she'd forgotten, her nostalgia tinged with awe at the changes, as if the sights and the streets were the neurons in her brain, the muscles in her heart, the threads of her memory, and where her mind resided.

To Mama Lotus, everything about day-to-day life was in fragments, like slices of cake or loose tetris-like dream sequences. After repeated bumps and scrapes, the weathered pieces would crumble like loose soil falling through the cracks of time. Whenever she lost yet another piece of memory, she pushed the blame onto others and acted as if there was a gang of thieves out to get her. Mama Lotus had anemia, and whenever she stood up quickly, dizziness would hit her like a flash of blinding light and she thought the thieves would dart out in that moment to steal things that were seemingly not of value but always what she most needed in that moment – her scooter, reading glasses, an old photo, heels, health insurance card. She found the thieving creatures absolutely annoying, like sprites that pranked humans, or karmic creditors dancing in the shadows.

The world was out to spite her, and only after it succeeded would the forces of time and space crack a Cheshire cat grin and spit out the items they'd swallowed. Mama Lotus, whose memories were being devoured, would sometimes invite me to join her outings, but whenever I asked her to go somewhere, the answer would almost always be a *no*.

After multiple false alarms about the thefts, the police phoned us and gently suggested that besides her schizophrenia, we might want to keep an eye out on whether she might be displaying symptoms of dementia. I told them I understood, but Mama Lotus was adamantly against visiting the hospital "for no good reason". Only when she herself felt, through bodily pains or otherwise, "a reason" for doing so would she oblige and be willing to listen to the doctor. If not, she'd insist that everyone was lying to her or worse, threatening her. Her scheduled appointments always involved herculean efforts to stage a whole scripted show. First was to book the appointment online, next was to work with the employees from the Health Bureau and the doctors and nurses from Jianan Psychiatric Center to assure her that it was just a routine check-up. To coax her into it, we'd tell her that her doctor had been asking how she'd been.

That said, if Mama Lotus refused to go to an appointment that'd already been fixed, she'd pretend to forget. And if we dared to chide her, God forbid, her expression would harden immediately. "I'm not sick, why for see the doctor!" She'd snap as she put on her earphones to shut out everyone and everything else. When that happened, all we could do was to give her space.

For decades, that was how stubborn she could be. She knew that we'd never abandon her, and I knew that she was truly aggrieved. To people outside the family, they only saw her friendliness and her eagerness for knowledge, taking this side of her as her personality.

Like the bookshop owner who'd known her for years, who often said, "Your mom is just more sensitive." Perhaps that was because her episodes came and went. One moment, everything was as usual, but the next instant, it was as if the whole world had turned against her and what everyone else knew to be untrue was real to her. The sudden, explosive wave of anger and despair, the extreme interpretations of our actions, the voices and images – a mix of memories and hallucinations – in her head, the coagulation of time and space, the conversations with beings visible only to her…to Mama Lotus, everything was real.

And for us – her family – who could only watch from the side, things were real too. The bitterness, the helplessness, the heartaches – everything was real. A few months before her passing, Mama Lotus started spending more time watching clips on her phone and talking to the air. One of my younger sisters asked her who she was talking to, and she replied, "My dead classmate. They came in from the balcony and are asking me how I've been." To her, death and life didn't seem too different. Or rather, living felt like death, and it was just a matter of a difference in "state". In the end, whether something was real or fake wasn't important, and whether the person she'd been talking to was alive or dead didn't matter much either.

Sometimes Mama Lotus seemed to be in between worlds. As we became more steeped in her world, slowly, we were learning, in some sense, to understand and to accept what was normal or otherwise for her. As if trying to understand a brand-new world from a child's perspective, to figure out the roles that others played in her world, the reasons for her sudden waves of hate, sadness and suffering, and climbing the ladder into the cracks of her memories and seek out those lost, but important life experiences. And other times, it felt like meeting a shaman in seclusion who was using Mother as a mouthpiece, learning to understand the workings of another dimension, the complexity of the secular world, of destiny and fate in past lives, the afterlife. And out of the blue, she'd say something sagely, and even if that wasn't her intention, it wiped away our worries at one go.

Like the time I was working on my master's thesis and didn't return home for nearly a year. After the final oral defense of my dissertation, I took a four-hour intercity bus back home, just in time for Mother's Day. I opened the front door, bouquet of flowers in hand, only to be greeted by a frown. Mama Lotus was sitting in the living room, and she nodded at me, her tone polite yet distant. "Who are you? Why do you have our house keys?"

"It's me, your son!" I exclaimed.

"My son is studying in Hsinchu! You look nothing like him."

Hearing that, Father turned his head towards Mama Lotus. "You don't even recognize your own son?"

Mama Lotus cocked her head, only to look quizzically at me in silence. It took a couple of days of living under the same roof for my face to slowly overlap with the one in her memories. "Remember me now?" I asked. She smiled. "How can I not know my own son?"

But to her, nothing was impossible to forget. And when she'd forgotten, what replaced me was either the baby-who-gave-her-too-much-grief-during-labor, the "always tardy" and "weak, sickly" child, or the son who "only returns home to Tainan when he's free", the one "studying and working in Hsinchu". Yet, somehow, she'd never forgotten the way back to her ancestral home.

I was impressed at how, despite her failing memory, she could set off from Houjia, cruise down the roads on her scooter at a leisurely speed to her hometown more than twenty kilometers away, back to the abandoned land where the now-demolished ancestral house used to stand. Only much later did I learn that the first time she went there alone without telling any of us, she'd trailed behind a Shing Nan city bus, following it through all its stops, as if they were the signposts for her to return to the hometown in her memories.

When she got lost, she'd ask a passer-by for directions. But in the countryside, sometimes she'd have to keep riding straight before meeting anyone and that was how, after repeated practice, she gradually familiarized herself with her own unique route to Fanziliao. Once, I asked her why a Shing Nan bus, and she replied that in her younger days, she'd worked at a

factory and always took a Shing Nan bus home.

I marveled at her reckless bravery, but as her children, we were often worried. Worried that she'd never find her way back home. Grandpa used to drive Shing Nan buses in his younger days, and for a while, I'd wondered if it was his soul who came back to guide Mother into a limbo of travelling back and forth to her childhood home, as if tracing the path of a klein bottle. The straight country road, the archway of the temple, all the lost items piled up in the abandoned field behind. In the field, a hole, narrow but deep, hiding a piece of the universe behind the broken tiles and bricks.

Crickets and grasshoppers chirped loudly, the mirror-like hole reflecting a different world within. On the other side was the undisturbed village of the past, the traditional houses with low ceilings nestled amongst the fertile land, the dirt road that was occasionally caked with mud, the smell from the pigsty and chicken coops attacking our nostrils, wild dogs chasing one another, frogs camouflaged in the embankments. And on this end was the present, a quiet village town with fewer open fields, now taken over by villas, farms, and manors that stretched along the lengthening asphalt road. The new houses emanated a different mood – in front was the parking space, to the side was a garden where a dog barked loudly whenever a car zoomed past.

It was now a stretch of wasteland, mostly, but the place used to be home to a mud brick house where Mama Lotus was born and raised. In her life, she had two names, both written with a flower character. Lotuses in *Hsiu Lien* and orchids in *Kuei Lan*. Mama was Hsiu Lien was she was living in Fanziliao; Kuei Lan when she moved to Tainan City. As for me, I barely had any memories of Mother's ancestral home. The only things I remembered were the stretch of sugarcane fields filled with snails, frogs and grasshoppers. When I was in elementary school, I used to play amongst the sugarcane and corn crops with my older cousins. At that time, the world seemed infinite, and the mud beneath our feet soft. We spent our time catching earthworms, luring the mole crickets out by flooding their holes with water. Life was carefree; we had nothing to worry about. But not Mama Lotus. I remembered her telling me how she'd hated people calling her Kuei Lan.

After my grandparents passed away, Fifth Uncle took over managing the land. On a small plot, he grew an assortment of crops – brinjal, sugar cane, peanuts, bananas – whatever seeds he had on hand. Mama Lotus frequently rode all the way there to "help" Fifth Uncle gather the crops. Sometimes, she'd even bring back some soil in plastic bags. As for the crops she'd taken, she'd share some with Second Uncle and her friends. Only after that would she do her own gardening on our balcony. Because of that, Fifth Uncle would often complain about Mama Lotus, saying that when she went to "inspect" the land, even the unripe fruits and vegetables weren't safe from her hands.

Every time he discovered bald patches amongst the crops, Fifth Uncle would call to ask if Mama Lotus had gone to the fields again. He sounded more resigned than upset, as if he'd given up trying to dissuade her and was more worried that Mama Lotus hadn't known that some of the crops were sprayed with pesticide. It was true that she had her fair share of mishaps at the fields. Once, fire ants swarmed out from nowhere to bite her until her hands and legs were red and swollen with pus. She suffered a terrible itch, and we spent a hefty sum getting medicine that wasn't covered by insurance and it took several trips to the dermatologist before she recovered. Once, perhaps sick of all the nagging, after she picked all the crops, Mama Lotus planted an assortment of flowers in the soil – orchids, lotuses, flanked with stalks of red berries, creating a vibrant and prosperous sight. A few days later, Fifth Uncle, who usually had a soft spot for Mother, called to yell at her. Not because of the vegetables and fruits she'd taken, but because the flowers she'd planted were the fake flowers used as festival decorations.

受苦的倒影：一個苦難工作者的田野

REFLECTION(S) OF/ON SUFFERING: FIELD

Wei Ming-I
魏明毅

- **Category:** Social Science
- **Publisher:** SpringHill
- **Date:** 3/2023
- **Rights contact:** bft.fiction.nonfiction@moc.gov.tw
- **Pages:** 312
- **Length:** 83,000 characters (approx. 54,000 words in English)

Wei Ming-I has worked for over twenty years in counseling psychology and social work, and holds a master's degree in anthropology from National Tsing Hua University. Her writing has earned her a Golden Tripod Award and a Taipei International Book Exhibition Award for non-fiction.

備忘錄

NOTES OF A SUFFERING SPECIALIST

*** 2023 Openbook Award**

Author, counseling psychologist, and social worker Wei Ming-I has decades of experience walking side-by-side with her clients through the fires of intense suffering. This collection of entries from her case notebooks records the observations and reflections of a front-line "suffering specialist" in interaction with those in need.

The little girl displaying her self-inflicted wounds in a bid to win the sympathy of her social worker; the perpetrator of domestic violence who threatens suicide; the juvenile delinquent; the civil servant who has become numbed by the system.... each of these people suffer silently in the margins, yet the myriad tendrils of their pain touch every corner of society. And there are certain people, the "suffering specialists" – the social workers, the counselors, the police detectives, and so on – who extend a hand to pull others out of their suffering, and require special skills and training so that they themselves are not sucked into misery's black hole in the process. Written by a counseling psychologist and social welfare supervisor, *Reflection(s) of/on Suffering* records decades of observations and reflections from the front lines of this struggle to assist those in need.

The book is composed of forty entries from the author's case notebooks, providing detailed snapshots of episodes from her working life. Organized into three "sites", the book gradually draws readers deeper into the issues confronted by suffering specialists in their work. First, the author uses real case studies to illustrate the darkness and tragedy that exist in society. Next, she broaches the unavoidable dilemma faced by suffering specialists working within a capitalist system: is it possible to retain their ideals, or are they doomed to be assimilated into a system which drives individuals to compete for recognition, position, and power? Finally, the author borrows the concept of open-ended games to encourage suffering specialists to think outside of conventional frameworks when confronted with the challenges of their profession.

Suffering specialists are critical links in the chain of social welfare services. Here, their daily encounters are vividly recounted by a counselor and social worker whose background in anthropology contributes to her objective assessment of human affairs. With her lyrical prose and strong philosophical tendencies, she guides readers through the contradictions and blind spots of the social welfare system, granting a taste of the uncertainty and confusion faced by suffering specialists, and reminding readers of the importance of preserving their optimism and ideals in the face of life's challenges.

REFLECTION(S) OF/ON SUFFERING: FIELD NOTES OF A SUFFERING SPECIALIST

By Wei Ming-I
Translated by Emily Lu

> Author Wei Ming-I is a counseling psychologist and social work supervisor with decades of experience serving on the front lines of mental health and shuttling between various decision-making bodies in the public sector. This has granted her in-depth knowledge of both the on-the-ground realities of psychological suffering, and the institutional processes used to combat it. The stories she tells in this book are mostly vignettes composed of brief snapshots, free of melodrama and heart-wrenching displays of tears and anguish. Instead, the emotional climaxes occupy but a moment, leaving readers space to contemplate their meaning. The author's flowing prose is a display of technical prowess, approaching the emotional depths of its subject with steady-handed discretion. Readers will have the sense of treading a well-graveled road, assessing the terrain with every step, ruminating on every word.
>
> "How can it be like this? What should we do?" From start to finish, these questions will continually circle in the sensitive reader's mind, and the author is reluctant to provide easy answers. Suffering is not resolved via dichotomies; there is no black and white here. Even less distinct are the bounds of the authority to intervene in the lives of others. What is given to readers is a larger space for contemplation. They are brought closer to the heart of the problem, without issuing any judgement, and the pleasure of reading this book is the appreciation of the freedom that this provides.
>
> — **Liu Kuan-Yin (Brand Director, Huashan 1914 Creative Park) / Translated by Joshua Dyer**

April 20th, 2020, noon
Location: Chain Restaurant
Event: Lunch
Re: Those Who Labor in the Margins

Today's worksite was two hundred kilometers out. Not wanting to be late, I took a much earlier train. Punctuality was one of the few habits I was willing to carry forward from my practice. It framed each of my interactions at work, as well as my personal life, constituting a clear and well-established daily rhythm, and bringing efficiency to my routine. Perhaps to the detriment of myself.

There were still two hours before work. I walked into a fusion chain restaurant opposite the station and next to the department store. In addition to my meal, I ordered a ginger soda to stay.

The restaurant offered Chinese and Western dishes, and the dining area was bright and spacious, with the tables arranged in a way that I wouldn't accidently catch the eye of my neighbor. However, if I was attentive, I could hear adjacent conversations. The restaurant was not busy just before noon. A mother and daughter sat down at the table to my right shortly after I placed my

order.

The mother asked: "What would you like? Sundae or fruit juice? How about the sundae?" I didn't hear the daughter's reply. She might've nodded.

The mother continued: "Anything else? Why don't we get the fruit juice, too. What about to eat? Spaghetti?" The sound of the mother's voice was fluid and well-polished, every phrase falling from her lips neatly.

After their server left, the mother continued: "Mommy's really busy today. Let's eat quickly, ok?" I heard the daughter mumble a reply, but it was too quiet to make out.

Customer satisfaction was this restaurant's priority, and the service was speedy. After a few moments, their set meal arrived with its side soup and sundae. "Hang on, mommy's going to take a photo."

Their conversation continued quietly through their meal, between a mother and daughter that clearly spent a lot of their time together. The child was a cherished one. A lucky one.

The mother twirled the spaghetti into her mouth while paying the bill. Then asked for the latte to be packed up. Then ordered another croissant. "For you to bring along in case you get hungry later." She said to her daughter: "But you have to eat quickly now, or we'll be late. Are you finished?"

In less than thirty minutes, the mother and daughter ate and left. I couldn't help but glance up as they walked by. The little girl could have been in grade one, holding a paper take-out bag and following quickly behind her stiletto-heeled mother, who held her hand.

Not too long after, I also started packing up my notes, and drained the last of the tea from my cup. I prepared to set out to my worksite for the afternoon. There were twenty or so girls placed there for a myriad of reasons unnamed. The parents who ushered them into this life had not paused to hold their hands. Luck, it would seem, did not distribute evenly.

Delving into the backgrounds of these placement kids I found bright lights of cityscapes and the transient adults drifting through them. In 2011, I was travelling in the world of Keelung dockworkers. I examined the local culture of gâu, a working class male obsession with displaying capability and grit, and how through national policy and global supply chains alike it perpetuated the collective suffering of the dock men. Was something similar happening in the world outside the docks? More than a decade later, was it also a way of explaining my work ethos across the island's districts and every scene of suffering?

June 30th, 2021, morning
Location: Placement Agency Meeting Room
Event: A One-on-one Meeting
Re: The Eternal Question

Because my previous meeting ran late by five minutes, Hsin was already waiting for me by the door. At the time, Level 3 COVID restrictions were in effect. We were both wearing masks. Hsin was no stranger to me; I'd done group supervision for many years at the placement agency where he worked. The brisk pace of those previous group supervisions broke the ice of this first one-on-one meeting; we quickly delved into the heart of Hsin's issue. Or, perhaps the lack of cautious probing on Hsin's part was due to what he later told me: that he was someone who trusted easily. We didn't yet know what role that trust would play in his life, and in the lives of others.

Hsin's suffering arose from his confusion over the myriad relationships of his teenage years. Alongside the changes in his body and appearance brought on by adolescence, his relationship to others and the world became increasingly complex, impacting his sense of self. Over time, relationships with family, friends, and even the physical space of his life became uncertain, unfamiliar. He longed to know how to definitively orient himself along these relational axes, yet with this longing came an ever-shifting emotional landscape that had to be negotiated. Hsin, like most youth his age, was embarking on a road of many questions and uncertainties.

The questions were like waves on the sea, waning and waxing, harboring contradiction, culminating in the ultimate question: what to live for? Over the past few centuries, this eternal question has become unavoidable within highly developed societies. Yet in our modern imagination, the question has been repackaged strategically into one of futility: "What is the

use in living?" We began to doubt our own productive value. Across most homes, campuses, workplaces, and every level of social relationship, this systemic deflection took place.

Eternal questions are not going to dissipate from our aversion. Rivers stagnate into cesspools. Time ferments life into an asphyxiating stench, repulsive to all, unsightly to all. No one enters and no one leaves. Under this massive inscrutable cloud, the slightest breeze is enough to knock us over in an instant. And yet, modern society, enraptured by capital and productivity, poses no reply. It cannot reply due to its role in the reproduction of collective scarcity and suffering. Rather it kicks us while we are down, proclaiming that individual weakness and disorder are the root of all suffering.

From the student counselor's office to the psychiatric hospital, Hsin was diagnosed with severe depression. He went from consultation to hospitalization, from a regional hospital to an outpatient clinic, from eight pills per day to twelve (which he continued to take though they didn't seem to help much), to another suicide attempt, to readmission, to another discharge… At that time, Hsin was a postsecondary student, and he had been assigned the role of patient – of being deficient – for his attempts at answering the eternal questions. Was his tortuous trajectory the direct result of illness? Or, were there other possibilities, something crucial we might have collectively overlooked?

Hsin's trust didn't stop with me. He also trusted the medical and pharmaceutical fields. He was a reliable patient and had strong insight into his illness. Hsin attributed the side effects of the medication, including memory issues and involuntary movements, to the progression of his illness. Even his doctors had scribbled relapse under the diagnostic classification heading of his medical chart. All of his life's griefs, new and old, were viewed through the lens of symptomology and chronic illness.

The field of psychiatry relies heavily on assessing the patient's insight into their illness. However, determining diagnosis and insight is like strengthening a safety mat to stop people from falling. If we stretch a safety net under the heavens and obscure the eternal questions, we only manage to reduce the question to one of disease and symptomology. Thus, a person becomes a social and political patient, a sufferer.

Depression isn't an immaculate conception. Suffering and illness leave a trail. However, an individual's alienation from relational life prematurely buries that trail. Terminal lifesaving measures in the name of rescue only propel that suffering into illness, in a vicious cycle. What circumstances had this young person met with before he encountered me? Did his predicament arise from a convergence of mistakes, or by chance? And did institutional safety nets play a role?

Metaphor is both the process and result of naming. Metaphor utilizes certain values and meanings to pin down life. From what viewpoint was "the safety net" used as a metaphor to distinguish the sufferers from the non-sufferers? What were the limitations of that viewpoint for professionals and the public?

As someone who worked within that safety net, how could I respond adequately to Hsin's trust? Moreover, how could I address the factors outside of his control: his reoccurring suicidal ideation, the day-night reversal caused by his work schedule, his fitful sleep, the high-dose medications and their associated cognitive blunting, among numerous other uncertainties? They had stampeded over each other in such a knotted configuration as to be impossible to unravel. Could I accompany his suffering with mere patience and kind words? If yes, was that based in my expertise on the dynamics of human behavior in various settings? Or was I just regurgitating western theories without the blood and arteries of context?

Or, could it be that my offer of compassion and support only stems from my own helplessness? Was the supportive role of a therapist who has fragmentary knowledge of Humanistic Therapy and psychodynamic psychotherapy merely a sham, a cover up for a lack of expertise and skill? Compassion and support have little relevance to modern structures of collective suffering, offering only a defensive kind of equanimity. Perhaps it is nothing more than professional arrogance and mediocrity dressed up in the guise of beautiful rhetoric.

We have taken the most basic psychotherapeutic

stance – empathetic support combined with probing of the patient's developmental history – not only as a starting point; through wishful thinking, we've also made it the destination, and even the ceiling. What theoretical issues does this impose for those legally accredited to practice in mental health, and for those being practiced on? With support as its capstone, our field of specialization has adopted a non-confrontational stance that bypasses theoretical responsibility and reflective self-criticism. Our mediocrity has festered into real consequences for many.

Support and listening are necessary, but they should not be reduced to a presumption or a microwave dinner gimmick. The mental health worker should think: is a supportive stance crucial to this situation, or is it simply a deflection of responsibility? Is it the professional face we turn towards suffering, or a copout we don't want to admit to?

In certain moments, people need much more than attentive listening. And in those moments, are we, as professionals, using our boundless reserves of attentive listening to bury our ignorance?

The deep questions masked by Hsin's "symptoms" required attentive examination and honest self-reflection. Given his efforts at work, his capacity for understanding, and his keen observations during our discussions, I couldn't squarely attribute his mental state and suicidal ideation to a diagnosis of depression. That did not appear to be the origin of his problems, nor the one path towards their resolution. The institutional response to depression might have in fact propagated a new problem cluster.

At this point, any discussion of safety interventions was too caught up in the practitioner's ego. I needed to catch up to Hsin's primary question: what do we live for? At the same time, I needed to be wary of the glut of medications landing daily in Hsin's hands, and the biological side-effects that ripped across his day-to-day life.

Hsin's complex case required attentive examination and response. Given his efforts at work, and his capacity for understanding and keen observation during our discussions, I couldn't squarely attribute his mental state and suicidal ideation to a diagnosis of depression. That did not appear to be the origin of his problems, nor the one path towards their resolution. The institutional response to depression might have in fact propagated a new problem cluster.

Insight cannot be the sole aim in treating mental illness. Shifting the focus from individual to collective care in a time of suffering and hardship could be a critical departure from how we think about mental illness. In particular, we should not naively assume that mental health systems, including medications and their recommended dosages, are a science completely divorced from big pharmaceutical interests. The crucial question then becomes: how do we live? What form does our life take, situated in what kind of life-world?

Before our session ended, I asked Hsin one last question: was he willing to consult another psychiatrist that I knew and trusted, to take a look at his medication dosages? I hoped there was still a chance to slow down these medical interventions, and allow the complexity of his essential life dilemma to resurface.

November 22nd, 2020, morning
Location: At The Door
Event: Meeting
Re: Where Life Happens

After leaving a consultation room and driving over one hundred kilometers, I arrived in the district where Hsin-hsiung lived. It was our third meeting. I had arrived an hour ahead of our appointment to learn more about how the lone survivor of a countryside parricide case was getting on in his old neighborhood.

The start and end of suffering is inextricably linked to the spaces where life is lived. Modes of living, familial relationships, the social status of relatives, local demographics, levels of education, the landscape of local politics and industries, and the land where they are situated – these are some of the threads that are woven to form the various pockets of ordinary life. They shape how residents view themselves and each other, as well as how they view the events of everyday life.

病非如此：一位人類學家的母女共病

HEALING, REDEFINED: AN ANTHRO ON A MOTHER-DAUGHTER JOURNEY

Liu Shao-Hua
劉紹華

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Anthropologist Liu Shao-Hua earned her PhD at Columbia University, and currently works at the Academia Sinica Institute of Ethnology. Her research focuses on the interactions of society and global health issues from the perspective of infectious disease. *Passage to Manhood: Youth Migration, Heroin, and AIDS in Southwest China* (Stanford University, 2010) is one of her many research publications which have earned awards and recognition in Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, and other international academic societies.

絮語

POLOGIST'S REFLECTIONS THROUGH ILLNESS

Just as her mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, the author, a professional anthropologist, received a positive cancer diagnosis. She applied her anthropologist's eye to their experiences, and the result is a touching and unsparing diary of daily life impacted by serious illness.

When two life-shattering illnesses, cancer and Alzheimer's, strike the same family, what kind of upheaval will follow? Anthropologist and author Liu Shao-Hua had long been a researcher of the vicissitudes of human lives in interaction with their environment and circumstances. When she and her mother received simultaneous diagnoses, she began recording their experiences with an anthropological eye for detail, creating an intimate and objective record of a family coming to terms with grave illness.

As a cancer patient, she states that "to undergo treatment for cancer is to embrace the courage to survive". Her detailed portrait of the psychology of illness will help readers understand why facile encouragement can make those suffering from serious illness feel more isolated, or even abandoned. She also emphasizes the importance of vulnerability. Entrusting oneself to the care of others and engaging the support of family and friends can help provide what the afflicted need most: a sense of connection.

At the same time, her experience of cancer enhances her ability to empathize with her mother's condition. Even has her mother's memory declines, and her daily activities are curtailed, the author takes care to trace the course of her mother's thoughts, inferring her needs, and taking pleasure in her mother's quick retorts and easy smile. Even as losses are incurred, and the shroud of disease draws close around the family, many of the most cherished and truly important elements of life remain.

This unsentimental chronicle depicts every aspect of living with a grave illness, down to the burdens and worries borne by loved ones. At the same time, the course of these two diseases has the effect of deepening family ties, and enhancing the appreciation of life's precious moments. Healing, Redefined reminds readers that we start life dependent on our caretakers, and our life's journey is not complete until we return the favor. Aging, disease, and death are the darkness that marks the road of life, but with companionship and understanding, the journey will see many bright days as well.

HEALING, REDEFINED: AN ANTHROPOLOGIST'S REFLECTIONS ON A MOTHER-DAUGHTER JOURNEY THROUGH ILLNESS

By Liu Shao-Hua
Translated by Marianne Yeh

> "This diary of a medical anthropologist and her mother's simultaneous illnesses is far more than a daily record of suffering; it is a demonstration of the way disease can become the central axis of life, determining the rhythm and texture of the passing days. Interweaving rational analysis and shifting currents of emotion, the book forms a powerfully persuasive whole. Much of the credit for this goes to author Liu Shao-Hua's dual status as both a scholar and sufferer of illness.
>
> As the manifestations and negative impacts of disease pour in with the regularity of a news broadcast, the author repeatedly affirms the importance of love and companionship during this time of hardship. In addition to the preparations for treatment, the mental process of coming to grips with serious illness, and intimate portraits of family life, the book also gives a sincere account of the author's life philosophy on cohabiting with disease. Far more than a reconciliation with the past, this wisdom points us to new ways of dealing with present and future struggles of life."
>
> — ***Openbook*** **/ Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Chapter 1: Crossing Boundaries

"Come on, follow my lead! One, two, three, four... Remember to breathe! Shouting it out helps you remember to breathe!" The energetic instructor led the group in aerobics, a class Mei enjoyed.

Mei was a veteran of this class at the fitness center, the longest-attending and oldest participant. She moved with agility and energy, keeping pace with the fast-changing rhythms. The instructor often praised her in front of everyone and sometimes recorded her on Mei's phone to share with her children and grandchildren, who would cheer her on.

But today, something was off. Midway through a Pony Jump right after the twist steps, Mei suddenly felt a bit dizzy. She tried again, but the unsteadiness persisted. Deciding it was best to play it safe, she switched to marching in place. As the instructor and classmates continued bouncing around her with enthusiasm, Mei felt out of sync, awkward, defeated, and threatened. The normally exhilarating movement of arms around her seemed disorienting, and the

music she loved turned into an irritating noise. She quietly slipped away from the group, missing the instructor's wave. Lost in thoughts, she muttered, "I can't finish today's class," as she headed towards the shower room, troubled by this unexpected turn.

A few days later, COVID cases were on the rise, and the fitness center was locked down again. Bored and restless from being home alone, Mei often forgot about the lockdown. She would head to the fitness center, only to be disappointed by the locked doors. Her family hired long-term care home service workers, but Mei continued venturing out. When the fitness center finally re-opened two months later, Mei felt her stamina had waned and struggled to keep up with the routines she once breezed through. Despite this, she faithfully went to the fitness center every morning, only staying home when her children were home on the weekends.

Father's Day in 2020 fell on a Saturday, coinciding with the distribution of "stimulus vouchers" aimed at boosting the economy. Mei happily went shopping with her family at Decathlon. Outings with her children and grandchildren were her favorite, as they always managed to make her smile.

The store was packed with people. While her grandchildren searched for sports gear, her daughter, Hua, helped her pick out some sportswear. When Mei saw the long line outside the fitting room, she grew impatient and told Hua that she didn't want to try on the clothes anymore. Hua then picked out a few pairs of socks that didn't need to be tried on. Unfortunately, the checkout line was even longer, adding to Mei's irritation.

The chaos and noise made the spacious store feel claustrophobic. Mei, visibly flustered, wore her discomfort on her face. Sensing her unease, the family decided to leave the store as quickly as possible.

Mei's son went to get the car while Hua held her mother's hand, waiting.

Suddenly, Mei frowned, on the verge of tears. She turned to Hua and said, "I really hate myself right now!"

Making a pounding gesture on her head, she continued, "My brain feels like it's blocked by something; everything is so fuzzy." Her voice was tearful. "I feel dizzy even when I walk. I'm afraid of falling."

Hua asked, "If you feel dizzy, can you still exercise at the fitness center?"

Mei replied with a hint of resignation, "I don't dare do anything too intense right now. I'm sticking to yoga – the slow kind."

Seeing Mei's worry and sadness, Hua was at a loss for words. She hugged her mother's slender shoulders and thought, "It must be terrifying to realize your brain isn't working right, and you have no idea how it happened, or what comes next."

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The changes hadn't come on like a thunderstorm but instead crept up on us like the moisture of a drawn-out rainy season, slowly seeping in and permeating through an old house. Though the discomfort had been brewing for a while, it wasn't until the paint began peeling off the walls that the symptoms became tangible and alarming.

In April 2017, after returning from a neighborhood-organized tour to Wu-ling Farm, Mother began experiencing excessive sleepiness. She slept from morning to night, skipping even her favorite eight o'clock soap opera. The sudden change raised alarms within our family. Three days later, my typically upright and healthy mother got up from bed but struggled to stand steadily, and her steps noticeably tilted to one side. Concerned, we rushed her to the emergency room, where doctors diagnosed her with delirium.

Delirium is an acute brain syndrome characterized by symptoms such as memory impairment, disorientation, incoherent speech, agitation, temporal and spatial disorientation, and visual or auditory hallucinations. In popular culture, it is often misunderstood as being "possessed" or mistaken for a mental illness outbreak, which can cause fear among others. These symptoms can resolve within hours to days with proper treatment. Delirium can be triggered by various factors such as advanced age, illness, infections, medication interactions, and electrolyte imbalances. Dementia patients are a high-risk group for this condition.

The afternoon following her delirium episode,

Mom awoke groggily, her eyes unfocused as she murmured, "Red threads. Three-quarters of an hour." She extended her left hand, thumb touching the middle and little fingers. Thinking she was dreaming, I comforted her, and she drifted back to sleep. Minutes later, she woke up again, repeating the same words and gesture. This time, she asked, "Where are the red threads? Only half an hour is left now." It no longer sounded like dream talk; the specific time reference made me take it seriously.

Mother spoke to me weakly but clearly, saying that Guanyin Bodhisattva had instructed her to wrap red silk threads around the middle and little fingers of her left hand within three-quarters of an hour to pass a test, or else she wouldn't make it.

Upon hearing this, I didn't care if it was true or whether I believed it; I immediately called my family. With no red silk threads at home, we split up to search for them, racing to deliver them to the hospital before Mother's deadline.

Mother kept straining to keep her eyes open, anxiously pressing us for the thread. Her distress unsettled me. I hurried to the nursing station and requested red rubber bands, emphasizing, "They must be red." The nurse found two for me without a word, leaving me to wonder, "Are they so used to all sorts of unusual requests here?"

I wrapped the rubber bands around Mother's fingers, reassuring her that these were temporary until the red silk threads arrived soon. She nodded weakly and closed her eyes once more.

Time ticked away mercilessly. The half-hour window Mother mentioned was almost up when suddenly, her oldest grandson burst into the room, breathless. "Grandma, the red threads are here!" The athletic high schooler had sprinted to the hospital at champion speed, deciding the bus would be too slow.

Finally, the red silk threads were in place. Mother struggled to sit up, clasped her hands in prayer, murmured words of gratitude, and bowed repeatedly toward the foot of the bed, thanking the white-robed Guanyin she saw standing there. Finally content, she laid back down and drifted off to sleep.

The day Mother was hospitalized happened to be my elder brother's birthday. Even though it was close to midnight, he insisted that he must blow out his candles and make a wish in Mom's hospital room, hoping for her recovery. Mother was sleeping peacefully, clutching the red silk threads in her hands, so the family instead moved to the adjoining lounge to light the candles and cut the cake. My brother took a slice to place by Mother's bedside but suddenly rushed out of the room, urgently whispering to us, "Quick, come see Mom!" We abandoned the cake and hurried into Mother's room. Everybody was stunned to see her practicing yoga on the bed, stretching into splits. She greeted us with her usual laughter and jokes, seemingly unaware of why she was in the hospital in the first place.

Just like that, Mother dramatically recovered.

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After Mother's delirium episode, our family recognized that she was declining and anticipated more challenges ahead. Yet, when faced with each instance of something amiss, distinguishing between normal aging and signs of dementia wasn't always clear. Amidst our hectic lives, we struggled to grasp Mother's new reality but had yet to fully calibrate how we perceived and treated her. Life was already stressful, and although Mother was deeply affected by the internal storm of change, it wasn't always apparent from her outward appearance. She, too, strove to uphold her familiar lifestyle and appearance. We all yearned for life to remain unchanged.

The reality, however, was that life was constantly evolving, and our daily routines would soon reflect this reality.

Over the next year or so, as Mother faced increasing difficulties, our family finally confronted the possibility that she might have dementia and took her to see a neurologist. Thankfully, Mother also sensed something was wrong and didn't resist seeking medical help. It was a relief, considering how many elderly individuals often refuse hospital visits when ill.

Mom's cooperation likely stemmed from her familiarity with frequent specialist visits with us; she may not have realized which department she was visiting this time.

In July 2018, after extensive testing, Mom received a diagnosis: the early stages of Alzheimer's Disease. Finally, our family had a medical explanation for her myriad challenges. It turned out that her puzzling behaviors were all manifestations of dementia: her cooking became excessively salty from repeated additions of salt; she would start looking for rice just after she had placed freshly washed rice in the pot; she frequently stocked the fridge to bursting, leading to spoiled food; when fetching water for her medication, she would forget her task upon reaching the dispenser; she would take a double dose of medication upon seeing yesterday's forgotten pills in the pillbox; afraid of being nagged about forgetting to take her medicine, she would hide the pills in plastic bags inside her closet; she often complained about friends or relatives saying upsetting things, becoming easily angered; she accused people of stealing from her room, constantly searching for misplaced items; to prevent further "thefts," she would hide items meticulously, only for us to later find food, cash, scissors, jewelry, cups, bowls, and even piles of tissues in various boxes, cabinets, drawers, walls, bathrooms, and kitchen corners. The house was a labyrinth of forgotten items hidden by Mom, their types and locations often baffling.

Yet, Mother's hiding spots were always within what she considered her personal domain: her bedroom suite and the kitchen. This revealed that despite her cognitive decline and confusion, there was still a certain logic to her actions. It gave our family a starting point as we tried to decipher the reasons behind each behavior and the subjective reality of time and space she experienced at the moment.

Despite being diagnosed with a disease, Mother remained physically robust. She continued her daily trips to the fitness center, bought groceries, and cooked for the family. It was as if she refused to acknowledge her illness, instead insisting on living her life as usual. Despite her mental decline, her physical strength and mobility remained strong. We couldn't control her; we could only support her independence.

Ultimately, life had to continue. For an elder who had accumulated a lifetime of nuanced relationships and worldly wisdom, it was paramount to maintain dignity, freedom, and her role in caring for the family.

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Mother was aware of her mental decline but still tried to live independently. Worried about the challenges of my upcoming chemotherapy, she even offered to move in with me so she could take care of me.

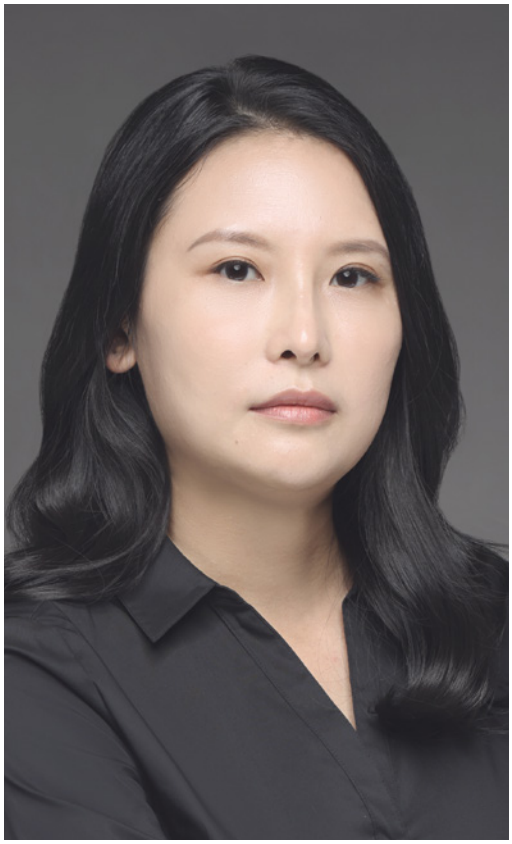
After my surgery, Mother went out of her way to buy a chicken to make me nourishing chicken soup. She loved visiting various markets to find the best ingredients. Whether it was the fruit and vegetable market in Taipei, the traditional market in Yung-ho, or the evening market near our house, she always had her preferred vendors and unique quirks. Watching her return with bags full of meat and vegetables in the sweltering summer heat, then bustling around the kitchen, I quietly muttered an apology: "Mom, I'm so sorry to still make you worry at my age."

Mother didn't look at me as she continued preparing the vegetables. After a long silence, she spoke with her head bowed, her voice trembling as if she was trying to control her emotions: "I'm so happy to have you as my daughter. You've always been caring and helpful, even when you were little. You've always been a good student and never gave me any trouble." After a brief pause, she added, "And you know how to make money, too."

I never expected my already ailing mother to share such heartfelt words with me. Her words brought me comfort and even a sense of joy. It turns out that "being able to make money" was something she saw as one of my strengths. I had never thought of it that way before. As I sipped her chicken soup, I felt both physically and emotionally healed.

春日的偶遇：白色恐怖、我的阿公黃

A CHANCE MEETING IN SPRING: MY TANGLED THREAD OF OUR FAMILY



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- **Length:** 86,000 characters (approx. 55,900 words in English)

Chang Yi-Lung 張旖容

A third-generation victim of political violence, Chang Yi-Lung holds a PhD in biology. Having grown up in a family that never discussed politics, it was only by accident that she discovered the cruel reason behind her family's reticence, thereby initiating a process of unearthing her family's political past that spanned over a decade.

Lin Chuan-Kai 林傳凱

An assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at National Sun Yat-sen University, Lin Chuan-Kai specializes in the post-war political history of Taiwan.

溫恭與家族記憶追尋

GRANDFATHER'S EXECUTION AND THE HISTORY DURING THE WHITE TERROR

Purely by accident, a researcher uncovers the will left by her grandfather before he was executed as a communist traitor in 1953, thereby initiating a quest to understand the multi-generational trauma borne by her family under the shadow of the White Terror, and the influence it exerted over her fraught relationship with her mother.

The relocation of the government of the Republic of China to Taiwan in 1949 was followed by a series of campaigns to root out communist traitors among the island's populace. Initiating the period known as the White Terror, which cast a shadow over Taiwan for four decades, these campaigns were marked by unlawful surveillance, detainments, trials, and executions, inflicting incalculable trauma on the victims and their families. Swept up in these campaigns, the grandfather of co-author Chang Yi-Lung was sentenced to death in 1953 for the crime of subverting the government. The execution of Huang Wen-Kung was more than the taking of a life, it marked an entire family as "enemies of the nation". Until the lifting of martial law decades later, they faced countless difficulties, among them the loss of the opportunity to study abroad for Chang Yi-Lung's mother.

In truth, the trauma of political violence doesn't end with the first or second generation; it becomes a genetic inheritance that can be passed further. The first half of the book narrates Huang Wen-Kung's involvement in underground communist organizations and his eventual arrest. Along the way, Chang Yi-Lung explores the political persecution experienced by her mother and her entire family. Using the analytical skills she developed as a biology researcher, she pieces together how this intergenerational trauma gave birth to her mother's strict style of parenting, leading to an eventual breakdown in their relationship.

In the second half of the book, sociologist and co-author Lin Chuan-Kai adopts a scholarly perspective to fill in the picture concerning the operation of resistance networks under the White Terror, and the methods of surveillance and extra-judicial punishment employed by the autocratic government of the ROC. Simultaneously, Lin Chuan-Kai interrogates his own role as both an observer and facilitator in Chang Yi-Lung's quest to uncover her family's past through interviews and archival research.

Beginning as the story of a political criminal whose life was sacrificed on the altar of an era, *A Chance Meeting in Spring* transforms into the difficult quest of a third-generation inheritor of trauma to confront and heal her family's wounds. Transcending the bounds of family history and archival research, the book is a deep meditation on the legacy of political violence and its profound impact on a mother-daughter relationship.

A CHANCE MEETING IN SPRING: MY GRANDFATHER'S EXECUTION AND THE TANGLED THREAD OF OUR FAMILY HISTORY DURING THE WHITE TERROR

By Chang Yi-Lung, Lin Chuan-Kai
Translated by Christina Ng

"In this book, a third-generation victim of the White Terror traces her family history back through this traumatic period. In 2008, the author stumbled across a reference to her grandfather's final letter in the national archives, sparking an inquiry into her family's collective memory, and a quest to have the letter finally returned to her family.

Starting from her personal experiences growing up, she begins to uncover the shadows cast over her family by her maternal grandfather, who was disappeared during the White Terror. Through this challenging process, the author helps to restore this period of cruel devaluation of human life to the historical record, while also easing the longstanding tensions between herself and her mother, and addressing the profound subject of intergenerational trauma. Challenging routine accounts of the White Terror, the book vividly expands our understanding of history by introducing new possibilities for collective healing."

— ***Openbook*** **/ Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Chapter 1: A Chance Meeting in Spring

In early 2010, I received an admission letter from the British doctoral program I applied for, meaning I would have to leave Taiwan in a few months. When I heard that Lynn, my good friend, was planning to go on a road trip around the island and visit friends along the way, I was overcome with the desire to also see more of Taiwan, since I would soon be leaving its shores. Therefore, I joined him midway on his round-the-island trip. He set out from Taipei, and drove down the western half of the island all the way to Kenting. I left from Kaohsiung and went to meet him in Kenting, so as to travel with him for the return trip north via the eastern route.

As we drove past Fangliao Township, I saw the sign for Chunri Township and suggested that we go there for a look-see. The last job that my maternal grandfather, or *A-Kong*, held was the chief physician at the Health Center of Chunri Township. I wanted to know something about the place where he spent the last few years of his life. In September of 1952, A-Kong was arrested in Chunri Township, and after he was sent to the security headquarters in Taipei, he never returned again.

Chunri Township is located in the southern part of Taiwan's Central Mountain Range. Ninety-five percent of the land is mountainous. The township's administrative center is located in Chunri Village

on Chunri Road, where Chunri Elementary School and the Chunri Public Health Center are also found. Following the road into the mountains, and taking notes of landmarks along the way, we arrived at our destination without difficulty. The turnoff to Chunri Village, a settlement of the Paiwan people, is adorned with large Paiwan sculptures, and a carved wooden map indicating major roads and landmarks. There were traditional slate houses everywhere, their windows and door plates engraved with traditional wooden carvings. I stopped in front of the Health Center and took a few pictures. The Chunri Elementary School compound was very new. It had a library akin to a greenhouse, and its walls were adorned with murals and carvings of the Paiwan people.

Just as I was wondering how to begin my search, my companion Lynn, who was always ready to make new friends, suggested going to the local church. We asked some people chatting outside the church if any of them was familiar with the situation at the Health Center during A-Kong's time. One person suggested that we talk to Madam Kao Hsing-kuei, the mother of the village leader, as she was the chief nursing officer at the Health Center back then.

We followed the directions given to us by the helpful people at the church and found our way to the village leader's residence. There was a horizontal inscribed board above the door, as well as a pavilion outside furnished with tables and chairs for people to enjoy the shade. We knocked on the door and, luckily for us, Madam Kao was at home. She came out and sat with us at the table in front of the house for a chat. Madam Kao had jet black hair, looking like she was perhaps fifty or sixty years old, younger than she actually was.

In the beginning, she was rather confused about who we were. I explained that my A-Kong was Huang Wen-kung. He used to be a physician at the Health Center in Chunri, and I asked if she might know him. She said that she did, and that he was very stern as the Health Center's chief physician. She was not very coherent in Mandarin, which made me wonder if it was because she seldom spoke Mandarin, or if she could not quite recall what it was like back in those days.

All of a sudden, without any warning at all, she turned her head and spoke to my friend Lynn in Japanese. Coincidentally, Lynn had lived in Osaka for many of the twenty five years he was on the political blacklist in Taiwan, resulting in him being highly fluent in Japanese. They then started to talk in Japanese, a language that I had absolutely no knowledge of. I did not know how Madam Kao came to the conclusion that this American who came knocking on her door actually spoke Japanese, as she did not ask Lynn if he did, but simply went ahead and spoke to him in Japanese.

They would talk for a bit, pausing now and then during the conversation so Lynn could translate for me. In the midst of their halting conversation, Madam Kao mentioned that A-Kong once had a chicken coop.

"Physician Huang was very fierce back in the day. Nobody was allowed to enter his chicken coop except him. Not even his wife could set foot in it. She would be scolded if she even went near it! Physician Huang would spend his nights there sometimes. He was sleeping in the chicken coop the day he disappeared. His wife only realized that something had happened when she woke up the next day and couldn't find him anywhere", she said.

Following that, Physician Huang never returned and his wife left with their kids. She was not sure what happened after that.

Before we left Lynn could not help but ask Madam Kao how she figured out that he spoke Japanese.

"Do I look Japanese?"

"Yes, you do", Madam Kao replied with conviction. I had so many questions in my head, but Lynn simply tittered. I was sure that he looked more like Santa Claus – a big white American with a head of white hair and a bushy white beard. In what way does he look Japanese? I mentioned this incident to my friends after that and they suspected that Madam Kao was not really talking to me or Lynn at that time, but our questions had brought her back to the past, a time when speaking in Japanese was second nature to her. Since Japanese had once been her dominant language, she used it to speak about times bygone. Luckily Lynn, who spoke Japanese, was able to respond to her in kind and became the bearer of her memories, allowing her to continue on with her recollections.

Lynn's mother tongue is English, whereas Mandarin

Chinese and Japanese are languages that he learned as an adult. He says that a Japanese person would recognize that he was not a native speaker in a phone conversation. He fared better in Mandarin. When he spoke Mandarin on the phone he would sometimes be mistaken for a Taiwanese. Since Madam Kao saw him as Japanese right away, that would also indicate that his Japanese was not bad at all!

According to what Madam Gao had implied, a person could sleep (or hide) in a chicken coop, but there was no evidence to prove whom A-Kong might have hidden in there. Perhaps, only A-Kong knew the answer. In his written records, at least, A-Kong had never mentioned anything that was related to the chicken coop.

At that time, I had already received from the Taiwan National Archives a photocopy of the last letter my grandfather wrote before his execution, the court verdict, his personal written records, and his confession. I had been fighting with the authorities to have the original copy of his letter returned to us. I wanted to know all about A-Kong, but there were so few available clues. When I saw any inkling of a lead, I had to seize it. I heard that the former Health Center has now become the township's recycling center. After the trip, I shared the pictures of the recycling center with my uncle, as he was the only person in the family who might still remember the old Health Center. Uncle said that the center looked completely different, and did not match his memory of it at all.

After Lynn and I came down the mountain, we had the lingering feeling that we had just gone on a mystical journey. From how we spontaneously decided to go up the mountains, to how we found a person who still remembered A-Kong, and how that person suddenly switched to speaking Japanese with us, it was all very surreal. Fortuitously, the friend I brought with me was able to respond fluently. Everything was unplanned, and yet it all unfolded so naturally. Through all of my years inquiring about A-Kong, those were some of the most beguiling moments that I still very much cherish to this day. They showed that as long as you put your heart into something, Heaven will lend a hand, just as it happened on that trip. What we did not know at that time was that Lynn would be diagnosed with terminal cancer a few years later. It was a journey never to be repeated.

Lynn Miles (1943 to 2015), American. His Chinese name was Mei Hsin-yi. He came to Taiwan to study Chinese in the beginning of 1962. I was not born yet when he was actively involved in rescuing overseas political prisoners in the 1970s. I got to know him in 2009 through a human rights campaign on Green Island. He was living in Longtan District, Taoyuan, then. He had friends all over Taiwan, which was why he undertook that round-the-island road trip to visit them.

Huang Wen-kung (1920 to 1953). Head of Chunri Township Health Center from March 1950 to September 1952. After he was arrested on September 23, 1952, he was sent to the security headquarters in Taipei. The following year, Chiang Kai-shek personally intervened to alter his sentence, and was executed by firing squad on May 20, 1953. When he was arrested, his eldest son was three years and nine months old, and his eldest daughter one year and six months. His second daughter, who is my mother, was not born yet. At the end of 2008, when I applied to see the records at the National Archives, I discovered the letter that A-Kong wrote the night before he was executed. No one in the family knew of this letter. It was after that that I started my long journey of investigating A-Kong's life.

Many times, I felt like I was piecing together a jigsaw puzzle that had a hole in the middle. The pieces that I managed to gather formed mirror images, or reflections, around the hole. No matter how hard I tried, the missing pieces in the middle could never be recovered. Even so, I still decided to embark on this journey. I did not know what I would find or encounter along the way. I would just have to go on the journey and find out. If one path led to nowhere, I would switch to another path. I often stumbled around in the dark. The more I discovered, the more questions popped up. Perhaps, no one would be able to provide answers to my questions anymore.

Chapter 2: Childhood Years and the Farewell Letter

Remembering My Childhood

I was born during the martial law era. I came from a family that never talked about politics. They only asked about my grades, and never anything else. Not long after I was born, my mother entrusted me to the care of my paternal grandparents and eldest aunt, as she was leaving to pursue her lifelong dream of doing her graduate studies in the United States. After I matured and started to have a better sense of the world, I became close to my eldest aunt. Whenever I was sad or troubled, she was the first person that I would go to. I would always feel much better after talking to her.

When my mother graduated from university in 1975, she had applied for a full scholarship to go to the United States to pursue her graduate studies. However, the ROC government would not allow her to leave the country. No reason was given; they simply refused to grant her a passport, destroying any opportunities she might have had. After seven years, she married and gave birth to me. At that point, she applied once more, and was finally successful in getting a full scholarship to pursue her studies in the States. However, she never forgot how she had been denied the chance to leave the country in 1975. That deep regret still affected her tremendously.

The year after Mother left Taiwan, my father, who originally wanted to do a Ph.D. overseas, changed his mind about leaving, and stayed in Taiwan to do his post-baccalaureate program for medical school. One year and ten months later, my Mother received her master's degree and returned to Taiwan. Following that, she gave birth to my younger brother and later went to do her Ph.D. at the National Taiwan University. My father was studying at National Cheng Kung University in Tainan at the time, so they had to live separately for several years until Father finished his doctorate and went up north to do his residency.

Many years later, I myself also obtained a doctorate and gave birth to a child. Looking back, I can finally see the unbelievable difficulties they faced in their lives. How did Mother manage seeing her husband only on weekends? Her working week was akin to going to war – she was a warrior fighting off two young opponents, since it could not have been easy taking care of two kids on top of managing her doctoral studies. Somehow, she managed to graduate according to plan in just four years.

When I was in third grade, my whole family moved out of Grandpa and Grandma's home in Shuanglian to a rental near National Taiwan University. I had to switch schools, and I did not take it well. I would cry on the sofa after coming home from school every day, insisting on going back to Grandpa and Grandma's to look for my eldest aunt. My parents did not know what to do with me, and tried to move me to the small elementary school at the foot of Chanchu Shan (Toad Mountain). I was much happier in that school and stayed there till I graduated.

Every class in that elementary school had its own vegetable garden, a stream and a small pond. There were all sorts of creatures living there: frogs, toads, dragonflies, damselflies, tadpoles, minnows, etc. There was a tiny, natural ecosystem right on the school campus. We watched the frogs mate, and we learned how to distinguish the resting dragonflies from the damselflies: the dragonflies would lay their wings flat when they were resting whereas the damselflies would hold their wings erect. We found the egg cases (or ootheca) of praying mantises wedged in the school's wooden toys and games, which the translucent baby mantises would emerge from one by one. Then there were the tiny tadpoles with their comma-like bodies. We would compare tadpoles at various stages of transforming into frogs: those that had only hind legs, those that had tiny forelegs, those that had both forelegs and hind legs but also had a tail, and those that had already transformed into a full-grown frog. I only came to know after many years, when I was watching the news one day, that the spring on the campus was actually the result of a happy accident: a water tap had been leaking water all year round.

先陪伴，再教養——讀懂孩子不愛念書、期父母的27則心法

LISTEN BEFORE YOU LECTURE: 27 TROUBLED ADOLESCENTS FROM A

Tsai Yi-Fang
蔡宜芳

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Author Tsai Yi-Fang holds a master's degree in Educational Psychology and Counseling from Taiwan Normal University. She has worked in a variety of settings including hospitals and community and campus mental health clinics. Currently, she serves as a middle school guidance counselor while also writing a column and giving lectures on parenting. Her previous works include *Catch a Falling Youth: My Work with Wounded Children and Their Troubled Families.*

手機滑不停背後的困境，校園心理師給青春

LESSONS FOR PARENTS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

Packed with theory, exercises, real-world examples, and workable strategies, this invaluable parenting reference teaches parents to identify and respond to the psychological needs of their adolescent children. Starting from a foundation of self-awareness, parents can learn to re-open the channels of communication with their teenage children, and discover the optimal solutions for their families.

Falling grades, internet addiction, telling lies, a stand-offish attitude… the list of adolescent affronts to parents' sensibilities goes on and on. But how often do we pause to wonder whether these problematic behaviors of adolescence might actually be important survival strategies? Are teenagers really that hard to talk to, or do parents simply not understand how to communicate with them?

As a professional counselling psychologist and mother, author Tsai Yi-Fang understands the difficult problems that concern parents. With this book, she discusses a variety of situations and issues, and supplies practical exercises (such as listing the phrases they most often repeat to their children, then rewriting them as "I" statements) to help them strengthen their rapport with their children.

The first part of the book is dedicated to commonly encountered academic issues. The second part teaches parents how to listen to the language of their children. In the third part, the author addresses problem behaviors like rule-breaking and lying, explaining the thinking that motivates these behaviors. The fourth part advises parents on how to weather their children's outbursts and other emotional issues, including depression. The fifth part explores attachment theory, reflecting on the significance of the parent-child relationship, and the lifelong impact it has on the child's later relationships. The sixth part brings the discussion back to the parents themselves, focusing on the necessity for self-care and grounding as part of the journey of mutual growth they share with their child.

More than just a guidebook to parenting adolescents, *Listen Before You Lecture* is a lifeline for parents in difficult seas. From a foundation of extensive professional and personal experience, the author advocates a deeper understanding of adolescence, helping confused and disappointed parents find the healing, affirmation, and renewed energy and direction they need for raising their children.

LISTEN BEFORE YOU LECTURE: 27 LESSONS FOR PARENTS OF TROUBLED ADOLESCENTS FROM A MIDDLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

By Tsai Yi-Fang
Translated by Petula Parris

> "With her professional training and experience, the author is able to mix parenting theory with hand-picked examples to help parents penetrate the confusion around adolescent speech and behavior, pinpoint the underlying emotional issues behind problem behaviors, and better empathize with the needs and circumstances of their children.
>
> The book is packed with clear, practical advice. When confronted with falling grades (a common concern of Asian parents), the author advises first understanding the child's internal motivations, and then helping them identify small steps that can be taken to improve. When dealing with direct challenges from children, the author recommends first looking at the origin of the behavior, and the influence of their environment. How can stressed and busy parents learn to better empathize with their adolescent children? Don't immediately contradict your child's opinions, nor act as if ideal behavior should be taken for granted. Even these small steps can begin to have a positive impact on the relationship.
>
> More than just an instruction manual for parenting adolescent children, this is a personal growth book that encourages parents to develop their own self-awareness. Parents must engage in sincere self-reflection before they can effectively deal with the rebellion, anxiety, and emotions coming out of their adolescent children. Only then can they properly support and love their children through this stormy transition into the independence of adulthood.
>
> — **Liu Chia-Chi (Bookshop foreign language book buyer) / Translated by Joshua Dyer**

When Your Teen Is a Passive Learner: Map Out Achievable Small Steps

During my talks, one of the most common questions I encounter from parents is: "My child doesn't enjoy studying! They have such a negative attitude toward learning and need constant reminders to do their homework. What can I do?"

I believe that that very few children have this problem when they first enter elementary school. As such, we should ask: What causes this kind of behavior to develop?

When Chiu was in third grade, his parents divorced. Chiu's father and grandmother were adamant they would continue to look after Chiu, the only grandson, while Chiu's mother moved out with his little sister. Paranoid that Chiu's mother might try to abscond with Chiu, his father would often shun her visits. For a good while, Chiu's mother was only able to see Chiu briefly at his school or afterschool day-care center.

Each day after elementary school, Chiu would first go to the afterschool center to complete his homework. When Chiu returned home later in the day, his father and grandmother left him largely unsupervised, allowing him to stay up playing video games until late at night.

When Chiu started junior high, his dad once again enrolled him in an afterschool program, this time at a cram school. However, it wasn't long before Chiu started to skip cram school classes, sneaking off to play with friends, or simply returning straight home to play video games. As no one was keeping checks on him at home, and because he had also dropped off the cram school's radar, Chiu become increasingly addicted to gaming and often left his homework untouched.

As Chiu's overdue homework piled up, his homeroom teacher finally called Chiu's father – only to learn that Chiu's father had been living with a new girlfriend since Chiu was in fifth grade and therefore hadn't been looking after Chiu at all. After speaking to the homeroom teacher, Chiu's father was irate. He turned up at the family home to reprimand Chiu but, as with scoldings from Chiu's aunties and cousins, this had little effect on Chiu's behavior. As a last resort, Chiu's grandmother sent Chiu back to live with his mother.

Initially, Chiu's mother was overjoyed to have her son back. But it wasn't long before their relationship began to sour. The more Chiu's mother badgered Chiu to do his homework, the less he cooperated, leading to constant arguments. Chiu's big sister would also get involved, berating Chiu for his "bad attitude" toward their mother.

As Chiu's end-of-term exams approached, his mother attempted to help Chiu review each of his exam topics. The harder she tried, the less Chiu engaged. When it came to his actual exams, Chiu made zero effort whatsoever, simply ticking "A" for each question. As a result, Chiu failed all his end-of-term exams, leaving his poor mother distraught.

When I asked Chiu what had happened, he told me he wanted to prove he was dumb. He hoped everyone would then give up on him, leaving him to concentrate on his gaming.

Through his elementary school years, Chiu's grades had always been average in his class. It was only in junior high that his grades started to decline. He told me that, during the first year of junior high, he had tried hard to revise for one set of exams, thinking he had a chance of doing well. For some reason, his grades on that occasion dropped even further – so much so that he was ridiculed by his classmates.

Chiu explained: "When you don't review, it's normal to get low grades. But when you revise hard and still do badly… that's just embarrassing. It hurt my self-esteem and basically proves I'm stupid. I figured the best approach is to not bother revising and just guess the answers." This perspective sheds light onto why Chiu was so reluctant to accept his mother's help before his exams.

Chiu even told me he'd prefer to go back to living with his grandma, where he could be left to play his video games in peace.

When I relayed this to his mother, she was overcome with emotion, bursting into tears in front of me.

No Child Starts Out Unwilling to Learn

By the time they enter junior high school, it is not unusual for some children to have pretty much given up on learning. Knowing they tried hard in elementary school, yet still got low grades, these children tell themselves: "I'm just not cut out for studying. What's the point in trying?"

I believe that every child has tried hard at some point. But for some children, their grades never seem to improve no matter how much effort they put in, resulting in endless frustration. Faced with growing academic pressure in junior and senior high school, these children no longer find any joy in learning and are, therefore, left with only exam scores and rankings. Even if they have tried (and certainly if they haven't!), once these children

are met with disappointment or reproach from their parents, they become more critical of themselves.

In 1967, psychologist Martin Seligman discovered the now popular theory of "learned helplessness." Seligman was conducting conditioning experiments on dogs, during which he subjected the dogs to electric shocks that they could not control. At first, the dogs would bark loudly and try to escape the shocks. When they eventually learned they could not, they stopped struggling, lay down, and silently endured the pain, their cries turning from loud barks to low whimpers.

After this, the dogs were placed in a box with a partition they could easily jump over to avoid the shocks. This time, when the dogs received electric shocks, they did not even attempt to jump over the partition; they simply lay down again while the shocks continued.

But what happened with dogs from the control group? When this group of dogs were put into the box (without having experienced the initial electric shock treatment), they quickly jumped over the partition to avoid being shocked.

This discrepancy in behavior occurred due to "learned helplessness," which describes a psychological state of helplessness resulting from a prolonged period of setbacks. Consequently, when a child experiences feelings of self-defeat, they come to believe they cannot succeed however hard they try, and eventually give up on learning.

When children are in elementary school, their schoolwork is relatively easy, meaning that exerting effort generally translates into success. However, once they enter junior high, their assignments become more challenging. While a child might still be "trying," consistently low grades will eventually lead them to believe they are "not good at studying" or "dumb," thus causing them to give up on learning. Once a child has adopted this mindset, they may start to misbehave or act out in other ways. Much like Chiu in the previous section, they often give up trying altogether.

In reality, our reason for "trying" is rooted in a belief that our efforts will lead us to achieve. However, a child that experiences "learned helplessness" already feels a loss of control over their lives. They feel that no matter how much effort they put in, success is out of reach, and their efforts are unlikely to affect any outcomes. As such, learned helplessness often leads to depression and a complete loss of hope for the future.

What If My Child Is Already Showing Signs of "Learned Helplessness"?

I personally find the Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) approach useful, as it moves the focus away from "problems" toward "finding solutions". A simple motto used with this approach is "Goals, exceptions, small steps", which we will explore below:

1. Transform negative behavior into concrete, positive goals

Example 1: Criticizing your teen for "always losing their temper" does not help them understand what they need to work on. Instead, set a concrete, positive goal, such as: "I want you to be able to express what makes you angry" or "Please find some ways to calm yourself down when you are upset."

Example 2: Instead of simply complaining that your teen "never does their homework", "doesn't pay attention in class", or "isn't interested in learning", you could set clear, positive goals, such as: "I would like you to complete your homework independently" or "I would like you to listen more carefully in class."

Note: Avoid setting goals that may seem too ambitious. For example, suppose your teen's exam grades are currently ranked twentieth in their class. Setting a goal for them to move into the top ten might seem too challenging for them, potentially leading them to give up, rather than try harder.

2. Identify "exceptional events":

"Exceptional events" refer to situations where a problem *could* have occurred but didn't. For example, some children may exhibit behavior that is consistently problematic, but is still *less problematic at times*. Parents can start to observe when their child's problem behavior is less frequent, less severe, or perhaps stops altogether; or when the problem gets resolved–even

if only for a brief period. Viewing our teen's behavior in this way *helps us to learn to focus on the "positives" rather than the "negatives".*

Some parents complain about their teens being "negative about everything", "glued to their phone all day", or having a tendency to "lose control of their emotions". However, in his book *Positive Focus*, Taiwanese psychologist Chen Chih-heng describes how every person's behavior "fluctuates." Someone who normally has a good appetite will have days when they don't feel hungry; a teenager seemingly addicted to their smartphone will still sometimes put it down; and even a child who "hates reading" might flip through a book every now and again. Indeed, it is because people's behavior tends to fluctuate that setbacks are inevitable. Where there is room for progress, there is also the possibility for setbacks.

Therefore, even when a child's problematic behavior is pretty much constant, there will be times when it is less frequent or severe, and it is these moments that parents must remember to watch out for.

For example, a student who "always talks back to their teacher" may have a day where they leave the teacher alone. Another student who never does their homework" may, on occasion, decide to write part of it. A student who "talks non-stop through class" may one day find themselves paying attention to a lesson.

3. Find small steps your teen can take:

Whenever an "exceptional event" occurs, parents can ask: "How did you manage that?" or "How can you make that happen again?" Changes do not need to be monumental; on the contrary, one small change after another can lead to significant improvements.

Try discussing with your teen small steps they can take to reach their goal. For instance, if your teen wants to complete their homework independently, small steps could include "putting their phone away or setting it to 'Do not disturb'", or "checking their textbook and asking their parents for help with tricky questions".

4. Strengthen your relationship with your teen:

Whenever I see a child do something well, I always ask them how they achieved it. Teenagers often respond with "I don't know." In such a scenario, try telling your teen: "It means a lot to see you making changes." *Allow the parent-child relationship to become a source of motivation for your teen to make improvements*. For example, you could tell your teen: "The teacher told me he's so pleased to see you making changes" or "I'm so touched you did that!" or "Your classmates were praising your volleyball skills. I'm really proud of you."

We should learn to appreciate small improvements our children make and the positive actions they take, rather than taking these for granted. As well, change doesn't happen overnight. Your teen will not miraculously transform into the ideal image you have in your mind – such as instantly becoming an avid reader, or their grades suddenly jumping from 60% to 80%.

But what if your son's grades improved from 60% to 65%? Would you view that as progress? If your daughter struggles to sit at her desk for ten minutes a day, but one day spends twenty minutes studying, is that progress?

To me, this is all progress!

More often than not, we fail to notice small improvements such as these, because they are not obvious, causing us to overlook our child's accomplishments. However, in reality, *everyone desires their achievements to be seen*. Just as when you prepare a delicious meal – surely you hope to see your family enjoying it?

When you fail to notice your teen's small wins yet continually point out their weaknesses, do not be surprised if, over time, they become less motivated or simply give up altogether.

Strive to be your teen's cheerleader, helping magnify even the smallest improvements they make. In this way, you will gradually be able to overcome your teen's "learned helplessness" and help them rediscover their self-confidence.

終究一個人，何不先學快樂的獨老

IT'S DOWN TO YOU: LIVING WELL

Liu Hsiu-Chih
劉秀枝

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Section Chief of the Department of Neurology at Taipei Veterans General Hospital, Liu Hsiu-Chih remains a part-time physician there, while also serving as an adjunct professor of neurology and clinical preceptor at National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University. A recognized authority on aging and dementia, Dr. Liu enthusiastically shares her knowledge with the general public through magazine columns and a podcast.

AS A SINGLE SENIOR

A happy, single, semi-retired physician synthesizes a lifetime of medical knowledge and real-life wisdom in this guidebook to maintaining mental and physical well-being and independence in one's golden years.

The seventy-five year-old author of *It's Down to You* is an authority on dementia who enjoys the life of a single senior who is still busy making plans for her future. She's well-versed in the use of the internet and mobile payments, enjoys travel with friends, and understands how to love herself. Most importantly, she faces the unavoidable fact of aging with a healthy attitude, leveraging her professional knowledge to guard against disease and tackle the problems of aging head on.

Divided into five chapters, the book immediately lays out eight key principles of aging in the first chapter: "Financial Independence", "Exercise When You're Well", "See the Doctor When You're Sick", "The Importance of Friends", "Enjoy Your Own Company", "Maintain Interest in Your Old Hobbies and Discover New Ones", "Steer Clear of Mishaps", and "The Right Attitude". The entire second chapter is dedicated to the prevention and diagnosis of dementia, summarizing the author's many decades of professional experience while targeting the needs and concerns of those in the process of aging.

Maintaining physical fitness is, of course, very important to the elderly. In addition to encouraging regular exercise, the third chapter reminds readers to gauge their strength and ability so as to avoid exercise-related injuries. From maintaining the physical body, the fourth chapter turns to the equally, if not more, important topic of adjusting one's attitude in the later stages of life. Therein, the author provides valuable advice on maintaining a sense of accomplishment and a positive sense of self, dealing with pain and disease, and the benefits of positive thinking for both the body and the mind. The final chapter addresses stroke, anemia, insomnia, and other common conditions experienced by the elderly, using case studies to illustrate which symptoms must be paid attention to, and when to seek the advice of a doctor.

Inclusive of body, mind, and lifestyle, and packed with easily understood examples, *It's Down to You* is a comprehensive instruction manual for the later stages of life, from an author who perfectly embodies her message: that life is to be lived fully no matter what your age.

IT'S DOWN TO YOU: LIVING WELL AS A SINGLE SENIOR

By Liu Hsiu-Chih
Translated by Eunice Shek

"This 75-year-old author is a specialist in neurology, a breast cancer survivor, has undergone surgeries for cataracts, a bulging disc, and a dislocated vertebra, and has consciously chosen to never marry. In this personable and approachable book, this unique woman helps dispel readers' fears, teaching them the principles of happiness for the final stage of life's journey, even when the road ahead is rough going.

Eschewing technical jargon and confusing explanations, the book is an easy read, even for seniors who might already be wondering if they are slowing down mentally. The author approaches things in a step-by-step fashion. Her suggestions are intended to have low barrier-to-entry, and don't require any financial resources to follow. In fact, most of her advice revolves around principles for healthy living that we can follow at any age. If you're caring for an aging parent, consider reading this book together, and encouraging each other to put these principles into practice.

As the author suggests, being too hard on ourselves won't accomplish anything. Just as we all must one day face death, so must we all face aging. And even if the process cannot always be graceful, if we can live happily with aging, we will have done enough."

— **Lin Ying (Translator) / Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Eight Tips for Happy, Single Aging

My good friend's husband has severe dementia, occasionally exhibiting violent behaviors, delusions, and so on. She and a live-in nursemaid had cared for him as best they could, but were exhausted. All they could do was send him to a long-term care facility, but she temporarily retained the nursemaid.

When asked why she retained this expense, she said that on one hand, she expected that after her husband's outbursts stopped they could continue to care for him at home. On the other hand, she is seventy-two years old, and had been married to him for forty-four years and never separated. She has no experience living alone and her children live overseas. She is currently very anxious and fears living alone; she needs someone to accompany her and slowly help her through her psychological adjustment.

This explains why, when I once joined an overseas tour group, a friend (and hotel roommate) suddenly canceled at the last minute, leaving me alone. The group leader was worried, not because of the extra lodging costs I would have to pay, but because of the concern, "Are you okay with staying by yourself?" Apparently there are many people who would not be okay with this.

Regardless of choice or circumstances, everyone will probably live alone at some point, especially if a spouse

passes away or children are far away. Plenty of people experience this. The Ministry of the Interior announced that the average life expectancy in Taiwan in 2022 was 76.63 years for men and 83.28 years for women. *This means that if a husband and wife are the same age, the wife will likely survive her husband by almost seven years, so she should mentally prepare herself for this.*

The Ministry of the Interior's "Real Estate Information Platform" issued residence statistics in the second quarter of 2022. There were 680,000 seniors-only (those aged sixty-five and up) residences; of those, about 517,900 of those residences housed seniors living alone. When the media reported on this topic, they called these places "Homes for Lonely Elders".

However, age doesn't necessarily mean solitude, and living alone doesn't necessarily mean being lonely and desolate. Seniors living alone can also have full and carefree lives.

The Sunset Glow of a Single Person is Also Very Beautiful

When I was around six years old, my maternal grandmother, who had doted on us, passed away. In the large hall of the family home, my grandmother's body lay on a raised wooden door. She looked at peace, with incense lit beside her. Together with my mother, I quietly circled my grandmother. This is my first impression of a dead person: quiet, peaceful, natural. Also, she was old – everyone will be like this one day.

Watching my mother's silhouette walking in front of me, I realized that one day, she, too, would be like my grandmother and leave me. I couldn't rely on my parents forever!

My very capable mother prepared three meals every day and helped my father run his rice shop. She bustled about her tasks all day long. I decided not to be like her, but to become a skilled professional and support myself. It was just as well that I liked studying and didn't fear exams; as I hoped, I got into medical school and became a doctor without a hitch.

Because I knew there was no way I could juggle a career and a family, and that my independent personality loved freedom and hated shackles, I chose to remain single; when I finished eating, so did my household of one. Also, choosing what to eat, what to buy, where to live, what to study, even how messy my room is…none of this involved seeking a partner's permission, considering school districts for children, or potential conflicts with a mother-in-law.

After enjoying my single, leisurely, and carefree life, I have now become a senior citizen. Since I never raised children, I cannot hope for someone to care for me, so *I must adjust my mindset. In addition, I must carefully plan the rest of my happy life so that my passing can be natural and unburdened.*

(1) Don't Ask for Charity

"There is no need to ask for charity" is the foundational principle of a happy and independent single life. Therefore, while you're young, you need to work hard and save money. As you age, choose low-risk investments, and safeguard your money from fraud to avoid losing it.

After retiring, although your income will decrease, so will your social engagements. You won't need to obsess over brand name clothes and accessories; instead, learn to match your outfits from before to your current leisure activities and make your own style. In addition, you will eat less, so your food expenses will also decrease.

However, medical costs – especially costs for care – will increase. Listen to your elders when they joke, "The most reliable child is the golden child (money)"; they have a point.

(2) Don't Get Sick; Exercise!

As one's age increases, one's organs will inevitably slowly begin to deteriorate; therefore, it is important to maintain healthy living habits. Some people like to go to the gym to take classes: stretching, rehabilitation, yoga, weight training, swimming, etc., but actually, just walking every day is effective too. If it is only a short distance, and I can walk, I won't take public transportation. Every day as I go out for a bite, go to the market for fruit, visit the bank to do business, or walk to the metro stop, bus stop, and so on, these

trips imperceptibly add up to a significant amount of walking.

Toward evening, if the step counter on my wrist hasn't reached eight thousand steps, I will go to a nearby park for a walk and often exceed ten thousand steps.

(3) If You Are Sick, See a Doctor

Every age group suffers from a different illness. When chatting with other friends in their seventies, almost half the time is spent talking about our ailments and experiences at the clinic, as well as recommending medical professionals.

Elders are most worried about cancer and dementia, especially degenerative conditions like Alzheimer's disease. Although it's impossible to avoid them completely, "healthy living habits" remain the best preventative measure. Of these, using your brain more, exercising more, staying active, interpersonal interactions, adequate sleep, avoiding air pollution, and treating the three "hypers" (hypertension (high blood pressure), hyperglycemia (high blood sugar), and hyperlipidemia (high cholesterol)), etc. are all good ways to prevent Alzheimer's.

In this advanced age, many cancers can be managed, even cured, so *if symptoms appear, don't self-diagnose; instead, seek medical help to catch the disease early and treat it*.

As you grow old, going to the hospital is normal, just like going to the supermarket when you were younger. Thankfully, seeing the doctor is very convenient in Taiwan, so you can easily think, "I'm lucky that I only have to go to the hospital regularly when I'm old" and not grumble, "I'm so old, I'm always sick."

(4) Friends Are Very Important

As one ages, one's parents will pass away and one's siblings, too, will grow old. At this time, "friends" become very important. When needed, they can accompany you to the hospital to see the doctor, and after a surgery, they can help change your bandages and such.

Hold onto friends you are compatible with and don't let them go. However, don't clutch them too tightly either; give each other some space. Of course, you must also remember to repay them in good time.

Don't leave groups you've joined in the past. This also applies to things like book clubs, karaoke classes, golf teams, etc. These are all good, stable activities and provide a sense of belonging.

When you're busy working, you might neglect your old friends, and former classmates come and go. After retiring, keep in regular contact with them; going out to eat, chatting, or traveling with close friends your age can be very relaxing.

However, as you age, you can't avoid situations like "It's not a class reunion, it's a classmate's funeral," so it's also a good idea to make new friends – *preferably friends that are younger than you, who bring new ideas and new perspectives*.

Where do you find new friends? They could be friends of friends, or you could meet them through an activity or class. Also, when a new friend invites you out to eat or to play, don't refuse unless you really have a conflict; otherwise, they may stop inviting you.

(5) One Can Enjoy Company, but Also Appreciate Solitude

Before New Year's, I was very focused on meeting my deadlines for two columns I was writing; afterward, I banged out a PowerPoint for an upcoming speech. Finally, I was able to take a breather and free up a day for fun. I saw that many groups had been following the reddening bald cypress trees, so I tossed some invitations into a couple of LINE group chats hoping for company, but in the end everyone was busy. Although I was a bit disappointed, this wasn't unusual and didn't dampen my enthusiasm. So I took the subway alone to Taipei Dahu Park, and, in the slanting wind and damp drizzle, admired the glowing scarlet bald cypress trees, took in the atmosphere, and felt very satisfied.

On Lunar New Year's Eve, I didn't want to bother my friends, so like every other night, I ordered takeout from a restaurant: shrimp fried rice, steamed dumplings, and vegetables; and added slices of tasty beef that a friend had stewed and some dried tofu.

After dinner, I had a cup of filter coffee with fruit, dessert, and snacks; it was very satisfying. At the same time, I enjoyed watching television and catching up on TV dramas.

Actually, the best part about solitude is being able to focus on reading and writing. I read a lot of books, internet posts, treatises from online medical periodicals, or material from online classes. Therefore, my laptop and my smartphone are two very useful tools, allowing me to be like "the scholar who knows the affairs of the world without going outside". Simply put, as long as we can use them nimbly, *learning new software and techniques as needed, these technologies help us to age well by facilitating human interaction and connecting us to the world.*

(6) Keep Old Hobbies, but Cultivate New Interests

When I first retired, apart from continuing to read and write (ex. special columns, Facebook fan posts), I also joined Chinese, Taiwanese, and English karaoke groups, and registered for many classes at the community college; I tried everything. Currently, my favorite classes include "Walking in Forested Mountains" and "Going on Excursions in Your Golden Years". A young teacher leads twenty, mostly older, students in exploring nearby mountains of northern Taiwan, such as Junjianyan, Caoling Old Trail, and Syakaro Historic Trail, among others.

(7) Take Good Care of Yourself to Prevent Accidents

You are living alone after all, so for the most part, you must take care of yourself and be careful to avoid accidents; therefore, move slowly and don't rush. For example, when the metro warning bell sounds, it is a reminder that "older folks should stop walking," not to rush to board the train car, in order to avoid falling.

Also, "focus on doing one thing at a time." Otherwise, you might make many unnecessary mistakes and thus conclude that you might have dementia.

As for the phone numbers of important friends and family, don't just enter them into your phone; carry them on your person, so you can contact them if you lose your phone or forget to bring it with you. Also remember to leave a house key with a friend, just in case you ever need it.

I've dubbed one of my single, senior friends "The One Who Always Plans Ahead". Apart from installing comprehensive safety measures, their application for a long-term care unit has already been assessed, and *they have placed an "emergency notification machine" by their bedside table with a button they keep on their person*. In case of emergency, they can press the button, and a twenty-four-hour service center will notify an emergency contact or an ambulance to hurry and assist.

Another senior friend in her eighties doesn't live with her son. Instead, the son installed an image surveillance system in her home and gave her an Apple Watch *that will send out detection notices* if she falls. So thoughtful!

(8) Attitude Determines Everything

Marriage comes with sweetness, duty, and shared responsibilities; being single comes with loneliness, freedom, and responsibility for yourself. Regardless of the gains and losses, this is the choice you make for yourself.

But no matter how you do it, use the resources you have, make your best plans, and enjoy the present situation. No matter if you appreciate it alone or with a family, the rosy clouds filling the sky around the setting sun are just as beautiful.

親密恐懼——為什麼我們無法好好愛

FEAR OF INTIMACY: WHY IS IT SO

Chou Mu-Tzu
周慕姿

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Chou Mu-Tzu holds a master's degree in psychology and counseling from National Taipei University of Education. She has worked as a psychologist and school counselor, and is a frequent guest on TV shows where she discusses issues of mental health. She currently runs the Sincere Counseling Center, and is the lead vocalist of the folk-gothic metal band Crescent Lament. Her first book *Emotional Blackmail* sold over seventy-thousand copies in its first six months of release. The book sparked a discussion in the media about the concept of emotional blackmail, and has been translated into Korean, Thai, Vietnamese, and Indonesian.

人，好好被愛？

DIFFICULT TO LOVE AND BE LOVED?

When we feel frustrated in our intimate relationships, when we feel we are not good enough, or unworthy of love, what is actually needed is that we learn to love ourselves. Psychological counselor Chou Mu-Tzu gently guides readers through the root causes of our fear of intimacy, and teaches practical strategies to overcome it.

We all want to be loved, and to establish a stronger connection to our intimate partners, but we often find that the closer we get, the more we fear being hurt. Chou Mu-Tzu, author of Taiwan's top inspiration/self-help title *Emotional Blackmail*, returns to address our fear of intimacy by exploring the nature of love, and the influence of our family of origin and childhood environment on the way we interact with our intimate partners.

The first half of the book explains what the fear of intimacy is, how our childhood experiences shape the way we establish relationships later in life, and the ways in which the fear of intimacy manifests. Drawing examples from the Japanese film *Memories of Matsuko*, the book demonstrates the connection between childhood wounding and the patterns that repeatedly play out in the love lives of the film's characters. Cases studies in the latter half of the book will help readers identify their individual fear-type in intimate relationships: the fear of abandonment, the fear of not being good enough, the fear of the loss of self, and so on. Balancing theory and practice, the author analyzes the root causes of each fear-type, and suggests practical exercises for dealing with them. Through deepening self-awareness, readers are guided to reflect on how their relationships are impacted by the fear of intimacy, and initiate a profound process of self-healing.

More than a book about love, *Fear of Intimacy* is a master class on loving others, and accepting that we are worthy of being loved. This work of healing presents its knowledge in a clear, well-structured, and practical manner, helping readers to face themselves and overcome the deepest obstacles in their intimate relationships.

FEAR OF INTIMACY: WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO LOVE AND BE LOVED?

By Chou Mu-Tzu
Translated by Christina Ng

> "Being able to love is an ability. But no one ever tells using that allowing ourselves to be loved is also an ability. Love is not a given. It can be lost. It can be forgotten. But, if we're lucky, we might, in some magical moment, recover love.
>
> Author Chou Mu-Tzu describes many life paths in this book. Some twist and turn. Some are so faint they can scarcely be seen. Some unfold in ways that defy logic. But, just as all rivers return to the sea, all of these paths can be traced back to our need for intimacy, and our willingness to assume the burdens of intimacy.
>
> Whether we speak of intimacy or love, both imply a kind of fatalism. Both have their source in our family of origin. With a kind of genetic logic, we replicate this inheritance, shaping it to the words that are fashionable at the time. Perhaps we call it an avoidant attachment style. Perhaps we use one of the countless phrases coined by gurus and spiritual teachers, calling it "the power of attraction," or "the cosmic ordering service", packaging it with a confectionary sweetness. In the end, however, it all comes back to the same thing: you weren't loved well in childhood, and, as a result, you don't know what real intimacy is.
>
> Because this pierces the core of the inner emptiness and deficiency we hold so close, we struggle even more to draw close to one another, to depend on each other, hoping to receive a tiny piece of the life's warmth."
>
> — **Tsui Shun-Hua (Author) / Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Chapter 1: What We Do Not Know About the Fear of Intimacy

She looks at him lounging on the sofa, and anger rises from within.

"Why don't you take me out? Or try to chat with me?"

He stays silent, as he doesn't know what to say. He feels like whatever he does, it won't make her happy.

"You simply don't care about me. Work and other people are more important to you, aren't they?" she says with a sob.

He still doesn't say a word.

She sits in the room doing her own thing.

He is outside the room, desperately knocking on the door. "Is there anything wrong? Can you please not ignore me? Please, tell me what I can do."

She doesn't say a single word in the room. She is fed up with everything, and wants to find a place where she can catch her breath.

"It's time to put an end to this," she thinks aloud.

Perhaps We All Have a Fear of Intimacy

When we broach the topic of the fear of intimacy, many people might think of an elusive person who keeps others at arm's length; a seemingly talented and charming person who is simultaneously volatile or hard to get close to; a person who can't stay in a relationship for long and can't build long-term relationships.

Maybe you've met someone like this in your life before. Or, maybe, you yourself are such a person.

We might think that a person like this isn't adept at building close relationships. Not only that, anybody who is in a relationship with such a person must be excellent at building close relationships, since they must be the one putting all of the effort to keep the relationship going. Otherwise, how would they manage to stay in such a relationship?

However, would you believe me if I told you that the two people involved in such a scenario might actually both have a fear of intimacy?

I started with two classic scenarios (the genders can be swapped) which are very common: One person wants to be close and to be loved, whereas the other person is distant and needs space. These two classic characters might both be knee-deep in a fear of intimacy, but both are unaware of it.

Having read up to this point, your curiosity might have been slowly piqued:

"I can understand that a person who is distant and needs space might have difficulties with intimacy, but why would the other person, who wants to be close and to be loved, also have difficulties with intimacy?"

What Causes a Fear of Intimacy?

Intimacy is a feeling we have when we connect with people that are important to us. This feeling – which we continue to seek in our relationships – brings us a sense of security and happiness.

A person first experiences closeness with their parents or main guardian, thereby forming their very first intimate relationship. *If we feel that person responding with love, care, protection, and understanding as we explore and reveal ourselves in the relationship, then we develop certainty: "you will be there when I need you. You will love and protect me without judgment or criticism."* When we look at this from an attachment theory viewpoint, there is a higher possibility of these children having a more secure attachment style, where they are willing to reveal and express themselves in relationships, as well as enjoy intimacy more freely.

However, when a parent or main guardian holds themselves back in expressing their needs, avoids dealing with their emotions, and curbing themselves from understanding them, then the intimacy that we feel in relationships will be affected.

For example, if the parents:

- find it hard to accept others' feelings, and express their own feelings
- have volatile emotions and lack clarity about their own emotions. They often show their emotions through rage, and even dump these emotions on their children.
- are long term absentees in their children's lives…

These sorts of emotional neglect – not understanding your own emotions or those of others – and low frustration tolerance will create a sense of insecurity and danger in children when they are growing up. Therefore, the child will start to find ways to protect their inner self. They will respond to the unsafe environment by not showing their real emotions, or they will center on other people's wishes rather than their own in order to prevent themselves from getting hurt, or to get themselves out of danger.

However, this method of self-protection will cause us to be more and more out of touch with our real emotions and our real selves. When we deal with our possibly "menacing" parents, we will respond in self-protective ways which, in turn, make it even harder for us to build close and intimate relationships with them.

Why Is It Hard to Feel Intimacy?

I once witnessed this situation:

A five-year-old kid was crying over his broken toy, to which his mother responded vehemently, "What's there to cry about! If you don't stop crying, I'm never going to buy you toys again!"

It is possible that this mother never really wanted to be angry with her child in the first place. However, when she saw her child crying, she immediately felt frustrated. Anger was her way of quelling this frustration. On top of that, she wanted to use rage and punishment (I'm never going to buy you toys again) to stop her kid – the source of her frustration – from expressing their emotions.

Of course, as a bystander, it's easier for me to think of five hundred better ways to respond: hug the child, stay by the child's side to comfort him, understand why the child is behaving like this….

However, the key point is not only "why can't this mother respond to her child's emotions adequately?" but also "why does the mother have such a vehement reaction to her child's negative emotions?"

Why was the mother so quickly affected by, and frustrated with, the child's negative emotions, and why did she respond just as hastily with anger and the desire to punish her child?

This might be related to how other people responded to this mother's emotions when she was young.

Do You Think That Negative Emotions Are Bad?

If this mother grew up in a family that deems negative emotions as bad, then her parents would always be angry with her and punish her when she showed negative emotions. If that was so, she would never have had the opportunity to gain an understanding of her own emotions, nor would she have experienced acceptance and forgiveness when she suffered a meltdown.

To her, "negative emotions are bad", and this belief stays with her.

When her parents got angry with her and punished her for her negative emotions, they were also dumping their frustrations on her. When parents do not understand their own emotions and find it hard to accept their children's emotions, it also means that the parents themselves are strangers to the needs and emotions of their real selves. They are helpless when it comes to dealing with them. Therefore, when their child encounters similar situations, exhibiting their real feelings and needs, they also find difficulty accepting and understanding those. This results in an emotional distance between the parents and the child.

When we cannot show the parts of ourselves that are real and vulnerable, then *we cannot really understand each other and feel closeness towards each other either.*

In the case of this mother who got angry when her child exhibited negative emotions, her anger is not only a tool to manage her child's negative emotions, but also to protect herself – to *protect her own vulnerability and helplessness by using anger to deal with her child.*

As a child, if we never had a guide who showed us how to understand our emotions, we would develop all kinds of survival strategies to cope with the situations that render us helpless and vulnerable. We are not able to understand what we really feel about things, and we have no ability to understand the real feelings of others. This then results in difficulties feeling intimacy with others.

Our Neglected Real Selves Are the Cause for a Lack of Closeness

Many times, parents not only fail to listen and pay attention to their children's feelings and needs, they also suppress their children's needs. They feel inadequate at managing emotions. In order to have a sense of security and control in the family, they intentionally or unintentionally send a message that

"this family can only function if it follows my rules; no one can bend the rules." *In this kind of environment, out of a need to survive, children will forgo their wish of wanting to be close and understood*. Instead, they will try their best to invent a survival strategy that allows them to live under these rules. The strategy helps them to follow these rules. In exchange, they receive attention and care, and, eventually, a sense of security that helps them to survive.

Simply put, this means:

We learn how to use our own survival strategy to get limited love, care, and attention in the families we grow up in. But we do not get a feeling of closeness when interacting with other family members, nor do we feel our real selves will be seen and accepted with empathy and respect.

We also lose the opportunity to get to know our parents' real selves. What our parents truly feel is elusive to us. We don't get to know our real selves either, because what our parents reflected back to us as children were the people our parents wanted us to be and not our real selves.

In the end, the survival strategy that we invented makes us believe that this is the only way to get even a tiny fraction of what we want in the relationship, and eventually have some sense of security.

Now let's go back to the examples in the beginning of the chapter:

"Why won't you take me on a trip?" This question reeks of anger within, pointing fingers at the other party so as to get attention or an apology. Needs are met in the end – this is a survival strategy.

However, what this girl really wanted to say might be:

"We haven't spent a lot of time together recently. I really want more time with you, because you are very important to me."

This is *what the girl really feels and needs*.

The irony is, *the kind of partner that this girl seeks out will most likely be a partner who lets her use this survival strategy*. That is to say, the partners she seeks out are likely to be the kind of people who give her plenty of reasons to point fingers, or complain about not spending enough time with her.

Is It Dangerous to Show Your Vulnerability?

It is not easy to understand and express your real needs, especially if you've never had the space to really get to know yourself. When you do not have any experience expressing your real self, or being accepted for who you are, showing your vulnerability is the most dangerous thing imaginable, even if having more intimacy in your relationship is right there at the top of your to-do list.

"What if I am not understood, or even rejected and mocked? What would I do?"

"What if the other person doesn't respond to me? *What then?*"

The feelings that arise would be intolerable. *The hurt and indifference that you experienced from your parents will come surging forth like torrential waters. This is what we call "emotional replay"*. We find ourselves drowning in an emotional tsunami, desperate for some piece of driftwood to cling to.

茶室女人心：萬華紅燈區的故事

TEAHOUSE LADIES: STORIES FROM

Lee Win-Shine
李玟萱

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Born in Kaohsiung in 1977, Lee Win-Shine holds a master's degree in continuing education from National Chi Nan University, and is a recipient of the Taipei International Book Exhibition prize for non-fiction. Her writing spans essays, interviews, song lyrics, and film reviews.

TAIPEI'S RED LIGHT DISTRICT

During an era of rising economic fortunes and seeming prosperity, women from Taiwan's lower classes were often sacrificed at the altar of progress. In order to survive, many had no choice but to seek work in the sex-industry. Long viewed as disgraced women, now, it is finally time to hear their stories.

During the post-war baby boom, many Taiwanese households lacked the economic means to give all of their children a proper upbringing. In a society that valued boys over girls, daughters were often forced to leave school and join the workforce so that economic resources could be focused on educating sons. Struggling to survive alone in the city, and lacking in education, these young women were at high risk of slipping into an endless cycle of poverty and abuse. In moving and readable prose, *Teahouse Ladies* tells the life stories of the women who were sacrificed at the twin altars of patriarchy and progress.

To gather these stories, writer Lee Win-Shine interviewed twelve long-term residents of Taipei's Wanhua District. Most were not born locally. Rather, in an era that gave them few choices, they found their way to Wanhua, a place synonymous with Taipei's lower classes, and a notorious red-light district due to the "teahouses" hidden away in its alleys. More than just venues for enjoying tea, alcohol, and conversation, the Wanhua teahouses provided pretty girls who were paid to drink with the clientele, *nakasi* bands led by sultry songstresses, and prostitution.

Chapter by chapter, these teahouse girls relate their stories. Some were sold into prostitution to pay family debts. Some had stable lives that were destroyed by a partner's gambling addiction. Some were forced by their own families into marriages with abusive husbands, and, from there, they slipped ever deeper into the abyss of domestic violence. Yet, with assistance from a variety of non-profit organizations, including the sponsors of this book project, these women were eventually able to rebuild their trust in others, and regain their sense of personal value.

Author Lee Win-Shine is a recipient of the Taipei International Book Exhibition non-fiction prize. With assistance from the Pearl Family Garden Women's Center, she was able to conduct in-person interviews with these former teahouse ladies, finally giving a voice to the women who survived the poverty of Wanhua, the disdain of society, and even the prejudice of close family and friends.

TEAHOUSE LADIES: STORIES FROM TAIPEI'S RED LIGHT DISTRICT

By Lee Win-Shine
Translated by Laura Buice

> "Taipei's Wanhua District is a place of prosperity and ruin, home to vagrants and streetwalkers. But, even more, it is a treasure trove of stories. One woman from Singapore spent fourteen years working in and out of the teahouses of Wanhua. The stories she witnessed in that time reflect not only the lives of people living at the fringe of society, they reflect the core experiences of an entire generation of women. They had dreams of being pop stars, they worked as bus stewardesses and manual laborers, and they sacrificed their youth and their futures for the sake of their families. These women bear the history of the workers that society chose to forget. Like opening a drawer in your grandmother's dresser, you have no idea what secrets you might uncover between these pages."
>
> — ***Openbook* / Translated by Joshua Dyer**

Part 1: Where There's a Will, There's a Way

Bus Stewardess

Born in 1956, Tsai-Ni worked as a bus stewardess in the era before buses used automatic doors. Back then, when she was not using her skillful hands to tailor clothes, she dressed in the white shirt and blue pencil skirt to sell bus tickets. A full ticket cost two and a half *kuai*, a student ticket was discounted at five *mao*, and a senior discount was one and a half kuai. In a time when few Taiwanese people could afford to travel internationally and the words "flight attendant" were unfamiliar to most, the bus stewardess' stylish uniform was a favorite for girls playing dress up.

Underground Rules of Wan Hua District Tea Houses

As a child, Tsai-Ni loved watching Jimmy Wang and Cheng Pei-Pei's martial arts movies. She also loved Ni Kuang's sci-fi novels. However, she wasn't interested in the romance novels that most girls projected their desires onto: "When I read books, I didn't like Chiung Yao. And I didn't watch the movies of those double Chin, double Lin acting types- Brigitte Lin, Joan Lin, Charlie Chin, or Chin Han."

She went on a date with a man her friend had introduced her to, and felt like they had nothing to talk about. After a second date, she refused to meet with him again. But suddenly one day, he brought a matchmaker with him and proposed. Tsai-Ni wanted to decline, but her father believed that "being bad with words is a form of sincerity; unless you only want smooth talkers, that kind of man?" Even today, Tsai-Ni

still remembers the inexplicable feeling that welled up inside her the first time he put the ring on her finger.

After the wedding, the man she called "The Slob" brought his brother and nephews to live with them. Tsai-Ni had not yet given birth, and now she had to help raise three children. Afterwards, when she was pregnant and had a big belly, the whole house waited for her to get off work at eight p.m. or later and cook dinner. She finally got a divorce after their second child started elementary school. The children lived with their father while Tsai-Ni worked in a Wan Hua district tea house as a janitor. Her plan was to deliver lunch to her kids every day, since she did not start work until two in the afternoon.

When the author interviewed other women from the tea houses, they would often keep their heads down, eyes glued to the tabletop, or they would only respond to the caseworker from Pearl Family Garden Women's Center. Only Tsai-Ni, a janitor, made direct eye contact without any evasion. It was as if she was still a bus stewardess pointing out the window at passing tea houses, allowing us to observe the varied scenes of life within.

Tsai-Ni said the first tea houses in Wan Hua district started in a small alley in the vicinity of Yen Chai Hospital on Guang Zhou Road. You could sit in the main hall and pay five kuai for a 17 oz. cup of tea. The tea houses later grew to include separate private rooms. This gradually developed into Wan Hua District's specialty industry.

Tsai-Ni mentioned the earliest tea house sex workers had permits, though on the government application they listed their profession as "waitress". Whenever there was a surprise inspection, they would leap up, wipe everything down, and quickly pour tea. After the police left, they would sit back down with their patrons, and resume serving alcohol.

Back then, the owner of the tea house had to be quite skilled. Beyond managing money, he had to maintain good relationships with the police and even local gangs. According to custom, "contributions" were made to the local gang bosses and the police chief during each of the three major holidays: Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Spring Festival.

Tea house owners had a tacit agreement: if a waitress quit, she could not go work for another tea house in Wan Hua. "You had to leave for six months before you could come back and work again."

For five to ten thousand Taiwan Dollars every month, a man would sit at the mouth of the alley and keep watch for nearby tea houses. He was responsible for reporting when the police came to the area. "They just reached the entrance to the alley; the whole street needs to take precautions!" Ordinary patrons did not need to run; they could sit and wait as the police inspected everyone's papers. But any wanted criminals, or anyone who had left home without their papers, or girls who had been reported missing from work, would have to escape quickly out the back.

Sometimes the warning came too late. The employee at the front desk would have to press an emergency button connected to the private rooms. A red light would flash, and anyone who needed to run knew they would have to figure out their own means of escape.

Tsai-Ni revealed that every tea house had a back door to escape through. "When it was time for an inspection, you could run to a room without any guests, turn the lights off, and hide under the table where the gas stove (for cooking hot pot) was kept."

Whenever there were issues, or the police were impossible to avoid, the scout would assume responsibility. The police knew he was just a scapegoat, but they would turn a blind eye to the real culprits, and lock up the scout for a day or two.

Tsai-Ni's features took on a smug and self-deprecating look as she described the survival games she played for a time in Wan Hua district. "Ah, I guess I've got a lot of inside knowledge."

A Woman Can Be a Host Too

From 2000 to 2010, Tsai-Ni worked as a janitor in four tea houses. Business was good. In an effort to reduce their taxes, the tea houses would register as "restaurants" or "snack bars".

Some of the tea houses genuinely had a specialized kitchen. Tsai-Ni worked for one with a head chef. If the patrons at other tea houses wanted food that paired well with alcohol, they would order from

the head chef: deep-fried cloves, deep-fried burdock, hot pot… Although Tsai-Ni worked as a janitor, if the kitchen was short-staffed, she would help deliver food. She could deliver to fifteen tea houses in one day.

Tsai-Ni did not want to get too deeply involved in this industry. Otherwise, when a local gang boss or local government official visited, she could have filled the position of a "host", despite it typically being a man's role. A host escorted guests to the private rooms, delivered fruit, served dishes, or handed out hot towels for patrons to wipe their hands and faces on when they were drinking.

On the books, tea houses employed two hosts in every private room and each one was paid two hundred Taiwan Dollars. Tips were the real income for the hosts. Every time a host opened the door to provide a service, the patron would tip based on their mood or how good they wanted to look in front of the waitress. Tips ranged anywhere from one to five hundred Taiwan Dollars.

In a two-story tea house with twenty-five private rooms, Tsai-Ni noticed that a host's tips could total more than ten thousand Taiwan Dollars a day. If business was slow, it might be only two thousand. Every month they averaged one hundred and fifty thousand Taiwan Dollars, or more.

Hosting was not dangerous; however, if patrons got upset with a waitress, it was the host's job to pacify them. For safety purposes, the doors to the private rooms did not lock from the inside. If a waitress was only drinking with a patron – no physical contact – the door could be cracked open.

What if a guest got drunk and caused a scene? "You found a gangster, of course. You didn't call the police."

In order to keep peace both outside and in, Wan Hua district tea houses gave the gang boss a cut. On the occasions where they had trouble, they placed a phone call and someone would immediately show up. "There were sub-sections; for example, one from Guang Zhou Street to San Shui Street and one at Hsi Yuan Road."

Did they fight over the best territory? Tsai-Ni thinks we have watched too many movies. "The leader of the gang was the 'head' of whatever district he lived in, if he went anywhere, it was probably the wealthiest side of his district."

Some of the tea houses did not hire janitors. The host was responsible for cleaning melon rinds off the floor and greasy dishes from the table after clients left. Occasionally, the client and waitress would rinse off with tea after a one-on-one sexual service, soaking the whole room. The host's swearing could be heard by people walking on the street outside when this happened.

The tea houses where Tsai-Ni worked were sizeable. Direct sexual service in a private room was not common. It was more common for patrons to fondle the tea house women, a service commonly known as "Sexy Tea". If they just wanted a woman's company for a few hours, older men might only spend three hundred Taiwan Dollars for a waitress, plus another two hundred for a pot of tea with tea leaves that could be re-brewed. But for this flat-rate price you could only enjoy the company of Taiwanese waitresses. "If you wanted a foreign waitress, you wouldn't leave until you were stripped clean (of your money). They would eat you alive."

Foreign Waitresses Changed the Environment of the Tea House

The Chinese and Southeast Asian waitresses started to overtake the Taiwanese ones after Tsai-Ni stopped working at the tea house. She secretly counted the names in the sign-in book; visits from foreign patrons numbered almost two and a half times those of local clients.

In the past, the front desk served patrons without preference. They assisted in selecting a waitress and escorted patrons to their private rooms. If the patrons were happy, they would stay. If they were unhappy, they would swap waitresses until they were satisfied. Whether a patron selected one-on-one or multiple waitresses in the room, someone always stayed to pour alcohol, regardless of how frequently a waitress swapped rooms.

After waitresses from China and Southeast Asia

entered the houses, they created a "benefit-exchange" model. Popular waitresses would incessantly promote a close "sister" to the guests. Afterward, the front desk would roll call the promoted sisters and the polite ones would say hello to everyone in the room, even those who were not visible. By saying hello to everyone, it was possible to get an additional three hundred Taiwan Dollars in tips. On subsequent days, when a different waitress was favored, she recommended someone else and everyone took turns making money.

Waitresses frowned at patrons who were uncooperative with their bill or indifferent in choosing their waitress. They would swap to another private room and would not come back until the guest paid in full.

If you paid your bill but did not want anyone to serve you alcohol? Tsai-Ni laughed, "They would sit there like idiots!" She once saw several men sit in a private room without a waitress; they poured alcohol for each other.

What discouraged clients from selecting a Taiwanese waitress? Chinese waitresses took initiative and stood at the mouth of the alley. Avoiding them was a challenge; people called them the "solicitor corps". Southeast Asian waitresses were incredibly shameless with clients. They got to work as soon as the music began playing. Some were in charge of closing the door, some took off their clothes and danced on the tabletop, and others would sit beside clients and start groping them.

Foreign waitresses were willing to sleep with a client for free as long as the client was a regular who was guaranteed to return. Taiwanese clients were often comparatively guileless; if they slept with one waitress, they would not sit in a private room with another, despite the lack of a written agreement. This averted internal conflict between the waitresses. Consequently, business for local waitresses was relatively bleak.

Those Repugnant but Pitiful Men

The tea house owners made money from the food and alcohol served in the rooms. They did not interfere with or charge the waitresses. After Chinese waitresses started working in the tea houses, they negotiated with the owners to be allowed twenty percent of room revenue, sometimes as much as thirty or forty percent, after the costs were deducted.

The most popular waitresses were allowed to buy stock in the tea house as an incentive to stay. If they choose to go to another tea house, the waitresses could only take seventy percent of their shares back. Recently, foreign waitresses have been taking over tea houses by buying enough stock.

Because of the yellowed walls and the lingering odors of cigarette smoke, the private rooms were renovated every few years. The owners in Wan Hua usually withheld a portion of the contractor's wages for the tea house renovations. To offset the loss, they asked the contractors in charge of the renovations to come inside and drink. In the end, one contractor was, without a doubt, in over his head and ensnared by the women's warmth and charms. Every time the waitress sitting with him left the private room, her folded stack of thousand-dollar bills was a little thicker. She laughed and told the accountant at the desk to list the names of twenty-five women and so he could settle their tabs.

In Tsai-Ni's position as a janitor, she also had to assist the waitresses with alterations and perform other odd jobs. Tea house waitresses made a generous income. Did she ever want to join them in earning that kind of money? "But I had seen all of those awful men, so why would I?"

She once saw a client "adopt" a waitress. For weeks, he supported her and her twenty "sisters". While he was very generous with the waitresses, he was heartless and stingy towards his struggling wife. Later, this client committed suicide because of a large gambling debt he owed to a loan shark.

Did the waitresses disgust Tsai-Ni? "It was their job; I don't blame them… I blame the men. If not for them, those women from other countries wouldn't be able to come here and make that kind of money, would they?"

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