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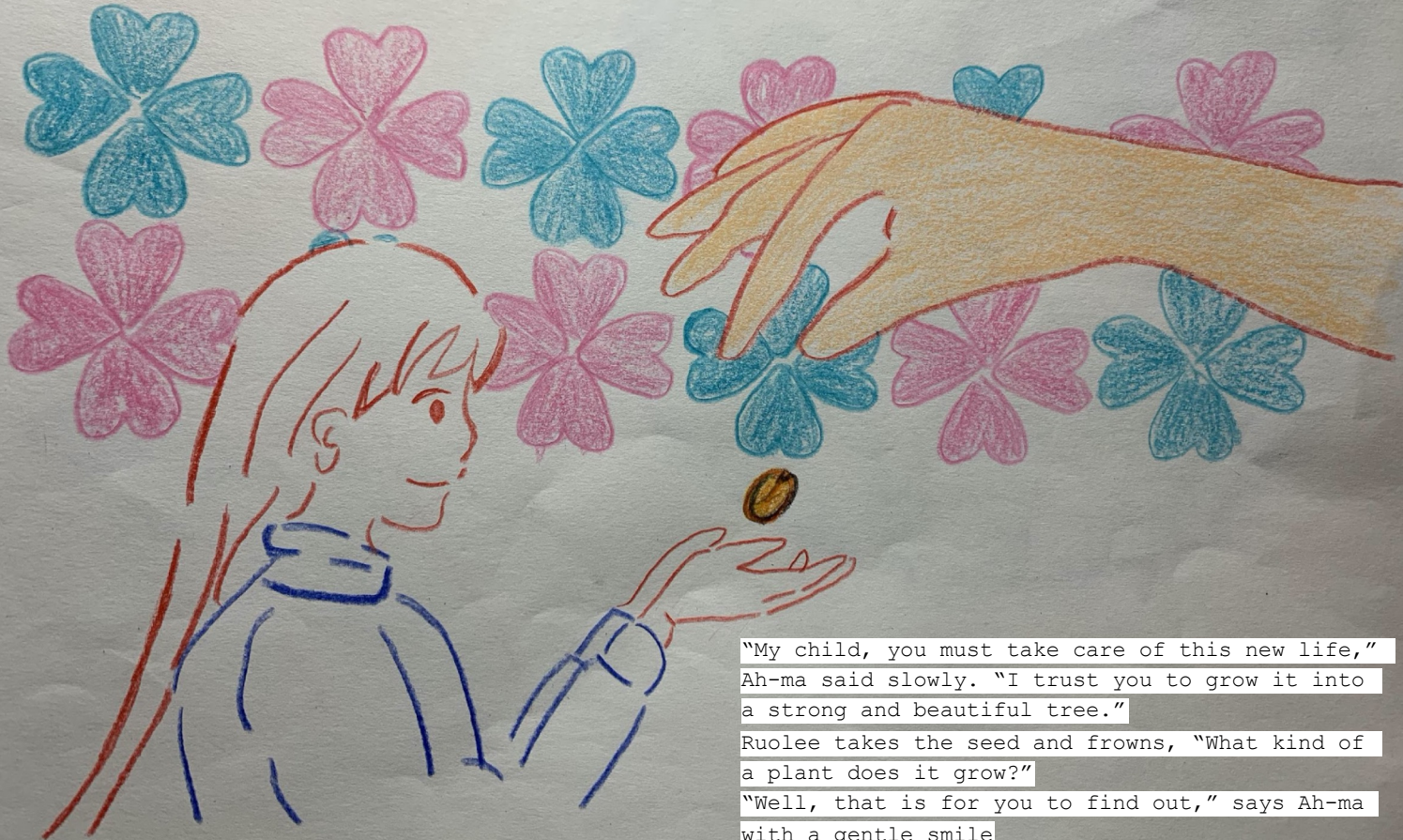
Final Project

UBC 2022-23 WT2

Maya Wu

(吳好蕎)

Ruolee is moving across the ocean to a place named Canada. On the last sunny day, her wise and old Ah-ma gave her an olive-shaped seed.



"My child, you must take care of this new life," Ah-ma said slowly. "I trust you to grow it into a strong and beautiful tree."

Ruolee takes the seed and frowns, "What kind of a plant does it grow?"

"Well, that is for you to find out," says Ah-ma with a gentle smile

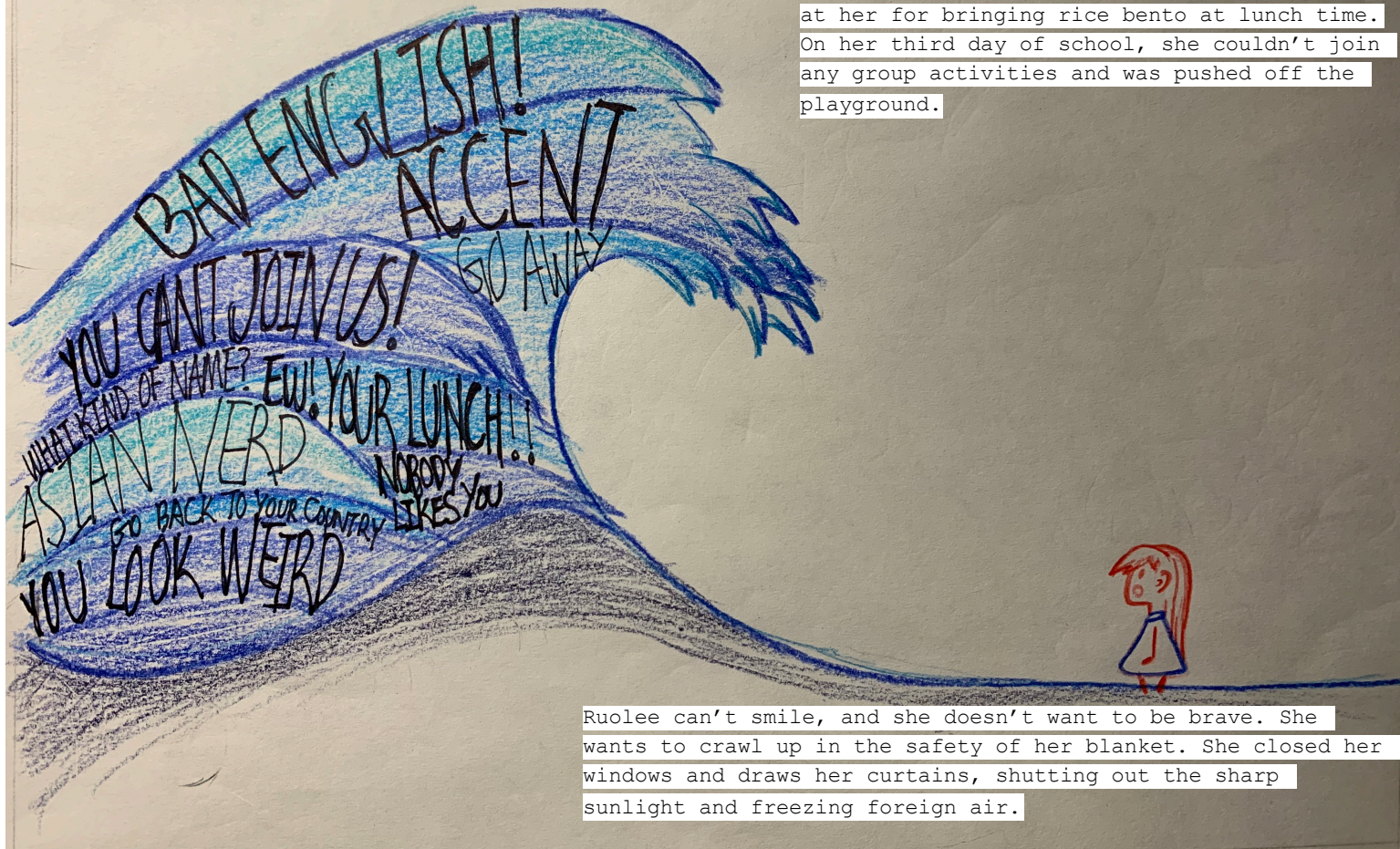
"Let's go! We will be late for the plane!" Dad and Mom shouts from outside the hospital room. Ruolee wants to cry. She doesn't understand why she needs to leave. "What if I never see you again?"



Ah-ma hold her hands: they feel like soft ivy vines, grounding her little heart in a warm and safe embrace. "You will make new friends, you will find new hobbies, and you will taste new foods!" Ah-ma tries to encourage her. "Chin up, smile, and be brave."

On her first day of school, Ruolee stumbles to introduce herself because she didn't know the right words in English.

On her second day of school, classmates laugh at her for bringing rice bento at lunch time. On her third day of school, she couldn't join any group activities and was pushed off the playground.



Ruolee can't smile, and she doesn't want to be brave. She wants to crawl up in the safety of her blanket. She closed her windows and draws her curtains, shutting out the sharp sunlight and freezing foreign air.

At her house, she tries to plant the seed. Nothing happens.

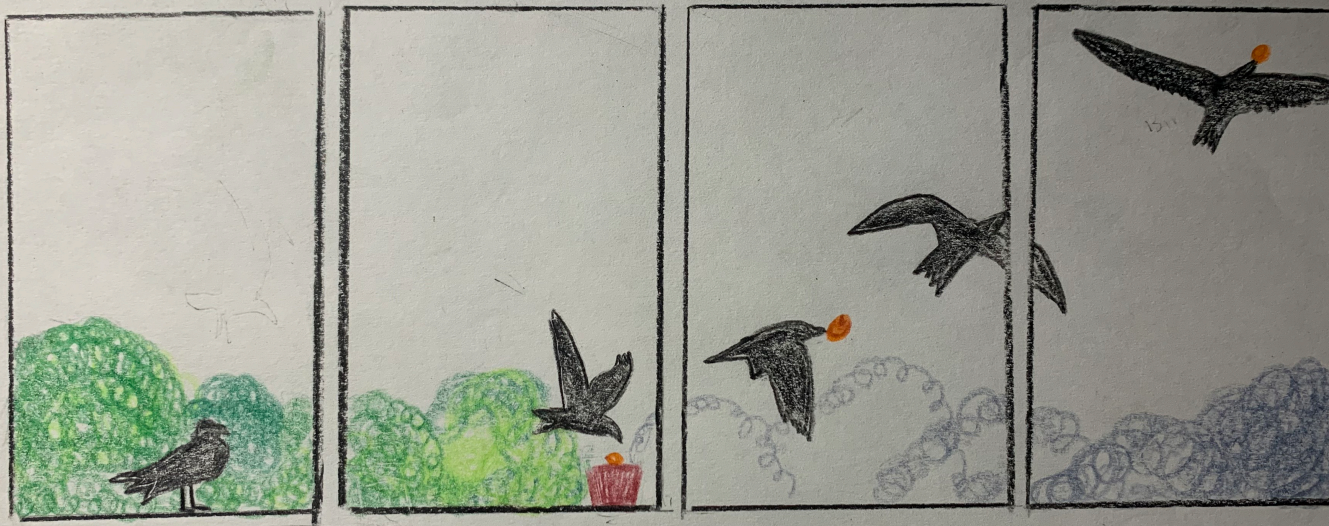
"Maybe there is something wrong with the soil," Mom said.

"Maybe there is something wrong with the water," Dad said.

Ruolee tried everything.

"Maybe the seed just doesn't want to grow in Canada," she whispers.

"Maybe it misses home."



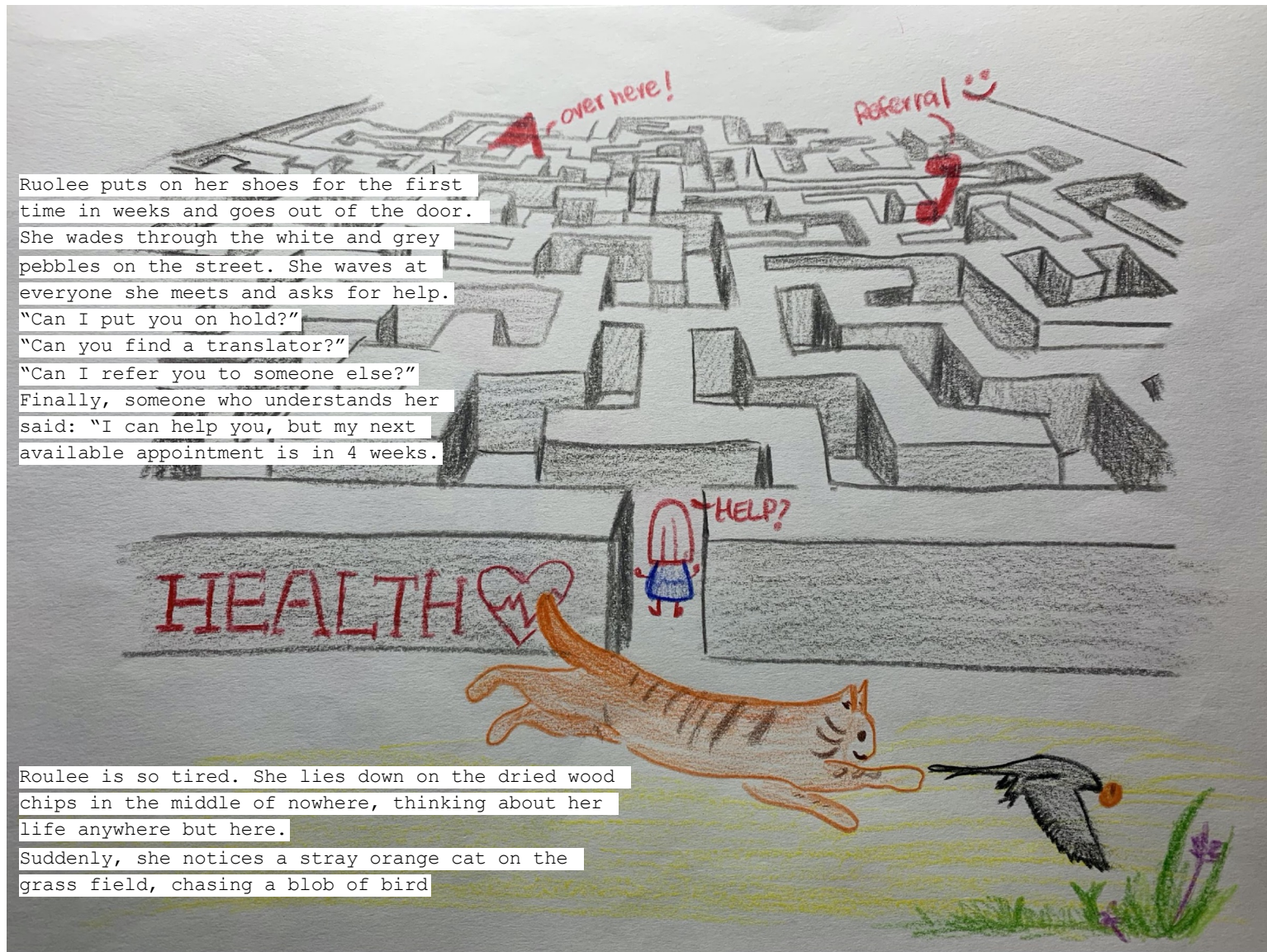
One day, the seed goes missing from the window sill. Ruolee looks
around in a panic.

"Oh that? I saw a bird took it," Dad said as he flipped his
newspaper, sipping tea.

"Stop being so sentimental and go to school."

Ruolee puts on her shoes for the first time in weeks and goes out of the door. She wades through the white and grey pebbles on the street. She waves at everyone she meets and asks for help. "Can I put you on hold?" "Can you find a translator?" "Can I refer you to someone else?" Finally, someone who understands her said: "I can help you, but my next available appointment is in 4 weeks.

Roulee is so tired. She lies down on the dried wood chips in the middle of nowhere, thinking about her life anywhere but here. Suddenly, she notices a stray orange cat on the grass field, chasing a blob of bird



Ruolee follows the dash of ginger, running along a trail of flowers. She stumbles into a big glass house, surrounded by curly vines and twisty branches. She almost falls into a pond in the middle, covered by round lily pads.

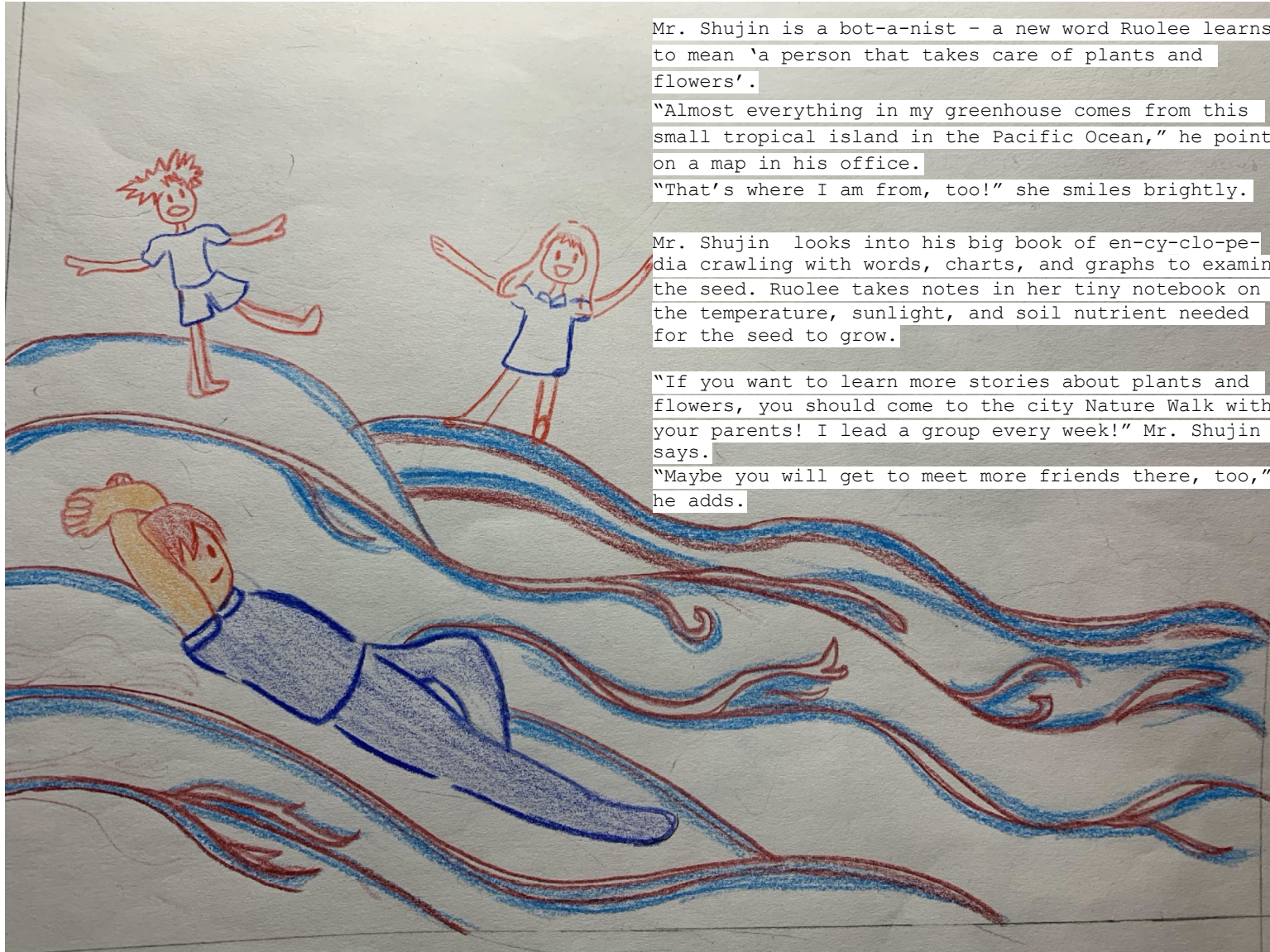
Clear water ripples as frogs trot along the edge. Purple flowers glitter underneath the dappled sunlight overhead.

"Do you need help?" a man's voice interrupts her thoughts.

"Yes! Please help me catch the bird and take the seed from it!" Ruolee answers without hesitation.

"Weird request. But okay."





Mr. Shujin is a bot-a-nist - a new word Ruolee learns to mean 'a person that takes care of plants and flowers'.

"Almost everything in my greenhouse comes from this small tropical island in the Pacific Ocean," he points on a map in his office.

"That's where I am from, too!" she smiles brightly.

Mr. Shujin looks into his big book of en-cy-clo-pe-dia crawling with words, charts, and graphs to examine the seed. Ruolee takes notes in her tiny notebook on the temperature, sunlight, and soil nutrient needed for the seed to grow.

"If you want to learn more stories about plants and flowers, you should come to the city Nature Walk with your parents! I lead a group every week!" Mr. Shujin says.

"Maybe you will get to meet more friends there, too," he adds.



On her class's Show-and-Tell day, Ruolee returns to school without fear. She talks about all the vibrant flowers and unique bio-di-ver-si-ty in her homeland. Her classmates listen in awe. They came up to her with excited wide eyes and curious faces, eagerly asking questions.

"Ruolee, can you tell me more about this flower?"

"Rolli, why can't I find this in the park nearby?"

"Ruolee, where can I see one?"

She smiles, and she takes out her olive-shaped seed.

"I have a special plant right here! We can plant this as a class, together!"

CLASS PLANT 😊

The class worked together to decorate the flowerpot.

"We need a goose, for protection.

"We need some hearts, to show our love."

"We need a maple leaf," Ruolee says finally, "because it is her new home."

Everyone agrees. And everyone draws a small piece.

Ruolee holds the seed, like how Ah-ma held her hands.

"I know it will grow now. It certainly will."



The end

Writer's note:

- A. Ah-ma (阿嬤) is a common way of calling “grandma” in Taiwan
- B. The Chinese characters for the name “Ruo-lee” is 若離
Significance: meaning “If I leave” and in some contexts of this story “If I never left”
- A. Page 2: The small “stickers” of Canadian symbols symbolizes a process of self-labeling and attempts at identifying with the new mainstream culture
- B. Page 3: Words in the tidal wave are common insults that immigrant children experience from school bullies
- C. Page 4: the trees fades from left to right, from brightly coloured green to grey, along with the bird incident. The discoloration symbolizes a loss of hope and joy in life. .
- D. Page 5: maze represents the healthcare system, and how it is often inaccessible to immigrants due to language barrier, slow respond speed and also the lack of culturally-sensitive care.
- E. Page 6: depict multiple species of plants and flowers well-known in the Taiwanese ecosystem:
 - a. *Senecio tarokoensis* 太魯閣千里光 (the yellow tall flower)
 - b. *Aster takasagomontanus* 雪山馬蘭 (the white tall flower with yellow center)
 - c. *Viola nagasawae* 紫花堇菜
 - d. *Viola grypoceras* 台北堇菜
 - e. *Spiranthes sinensis*, also known as the Chinese spiranthes 綬草 (the tall thin plant with pink flowers)
 - f. *Nymphaea nouchali*, also known as the blue water lilies 睡蓮
- F. Page 7: very abstract way of depicting - with Mr. Shujin’s guidance and sharing of botany knowledge, Ruolee and a friend she met on the Nature Walk slowly learns to confidently socialize in their new environment. Instead of Page 3’s tidal wave swallowing them with fear, they learn to navigate with positivity.

- I. The Chinese characters for the name “Shu-jin” is 書景, there is no added significance in this story’s context
- J. Page 8: depict multiple species well-known in the Taiwanese ecosystem:
- a. *Urocissa caerulea*, also known as Taiwanese blue magpie (national bird) 台灣藍雀
 - b. *Nelumbo nucifera*, also known as sacred lotus 蓮花
 - c. *Hypochaeris radicata*, also known as catsear 貓兒菊
 - d. *Melia azedarach* 楝
 - e. *Bolbitis appendiculata*, a type of fern 刺蕨
- K. Page 9: the pink and blue heart echoes the first page, symbolizing Ruolee’s cultural roots. The stickers echoes the second page, symbolizing the integration of second cultural environment. The two presented together on the same container with a new sprout symbolizes the beginning of a successful acculturation process.
- L. Due to my limited drawing abilities, the age of characters shown in the illustration can look ambiguous. In my original conceptualization, Ruolee is 12 years old and Ah-ma is 88 years old.
- M. Throughout the pages, you might notice that the adults are filled with colour while the children are not - this is an intentional artistic choice to symbolize adults achieving their identity while children are still in the stage of exploration with unlimited potential.
- N. I don’t actually know what the seed is or what kind of plant it grows. If I am asked to specify it for the audiences, I want it to be an avocado because I came up with Ruolee’s name when I was washing an avocado (酪梨) for lunch.

Line art exemplar of all plants and flowers are sourced from Taiwan’s national academy [Academia Sinica (中央研究院)], Photo Digiarch (數位典藏資源網) at <https://digiarch.sinica.edu.tw/>