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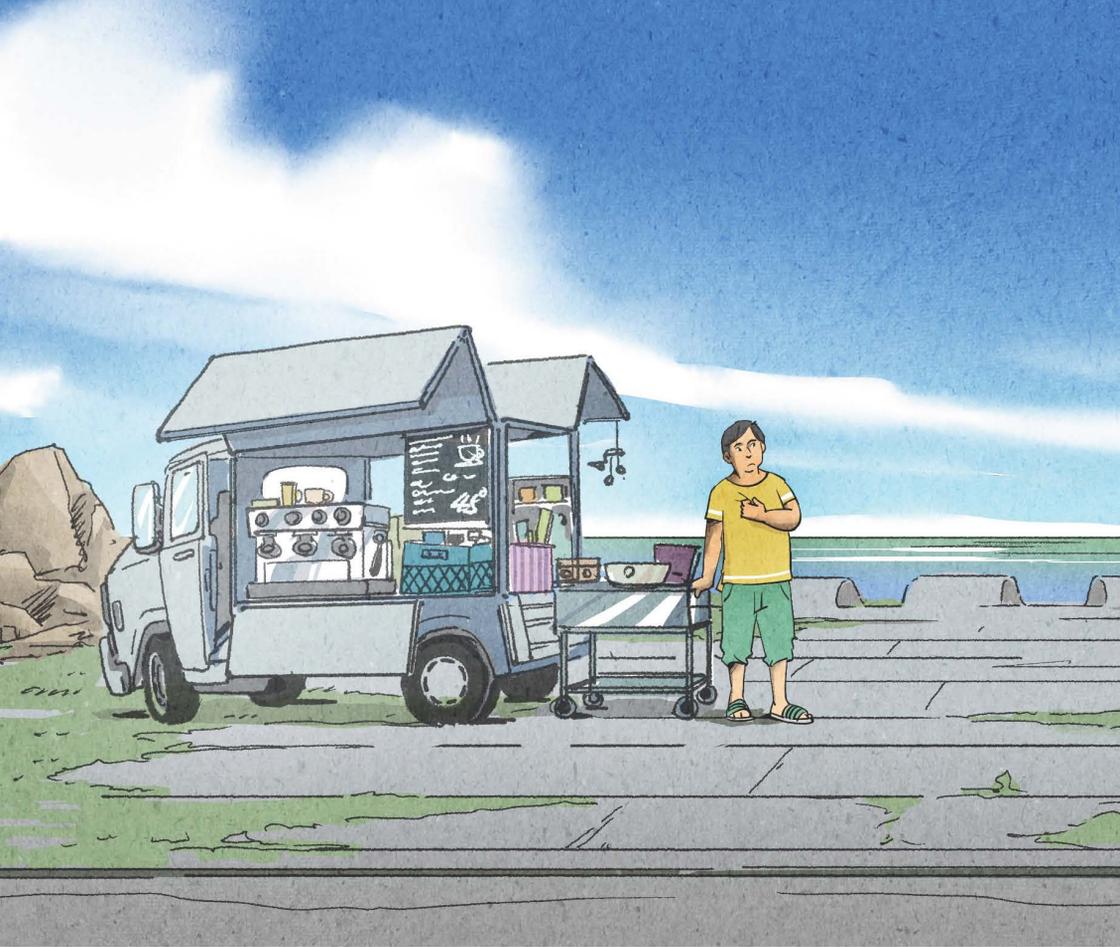


A Day at Work

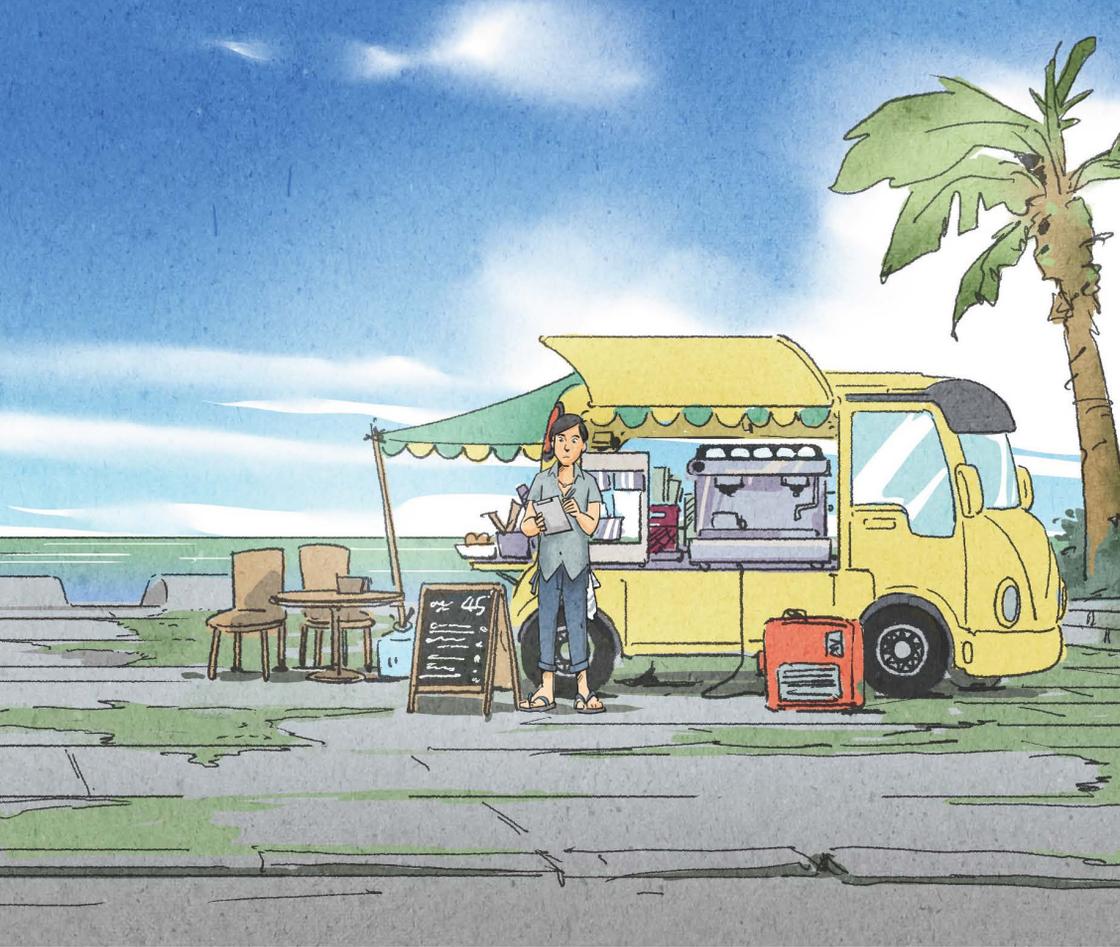
It was 10:30 in the morning, and Henry Chuang had a problem. He was running out of coffee beans. He hadn't expected Thursday to be like this, but since 9:00 a.m. business had been very good. People on their way to the beach, families in cars stopping to take a rest, even a group of university students on motorcycles . . . a lot of people had come to The Coffee Truck to get a cup of coffee before heading into Kenting to have fun. The weather had been good so far with no sign of rain, and this had been his first chance to rest. Looking out to sea, he could see the sun on the waves. He smiled. He was having a good day.

Henry looked around his truck. Two full bags of coffee beans left. He planned to stay open until five and then head back into Pingtung to eat with his family. Perhaps closing early would be a better idea.

He could see Ah Bin watching him from further down the road. They both **operated** coffee trucks on the roadside, just before traffic turned into the Kenting beach area. Henry had been running his stand for six months. Ah Bin had been running his for two years. When Henry had first decided to rent a space near Kenting, he hadn't really thought about not being welcome. But Ah Bin hadn't liked him from the beginning. Henry had tried to be friendly but had given up after a short time. Ah Bin didn't like him and saw him as **competition**.



While he waited for more people to come, Henry sat and thought. So far, returning to Pingtung and selling coffee had worked out well. He didn't make as much money as he had done in his old job, but he didn't care too much. He had spent the last 15 years living and working in Taipei. He had been working for a company that made computers, and when people had asked him what it was he did there, he would say, "I solve problems." He hadn't hated his old job, but he had felt that he had been missing out on something.



Luckily, his wife had been **supportive** and suggested he find a new career. When he had asked her if the family could move back to his boyhood home of Pingtung, she had taken a little time to think about it but had said yes. His wife was a doctor and had easily found a job in Pingtung. His two children had agreed to moving to Pingtung, too. He thought it may have been because they didn't have to go to cram school anymore. So, here he was in Kenting running a coffee truck.

A Different Type of Customer

Someone said hello, and Henry looked up. It was Jessica, who ran a coffee truck further down the road. She usually had better business than Henry or Ah Bin, mostly because she sold cake from her truck, too.

"I've been working hard since 9:00 a.m.," she said. "How about you?"

"Me too," Henry replied. He held up a bag of coffee. "You never know. I might get to sell a few more cups."

Jessica laughed. "In this weather, you'll only sell iced coffee. Wait and see."

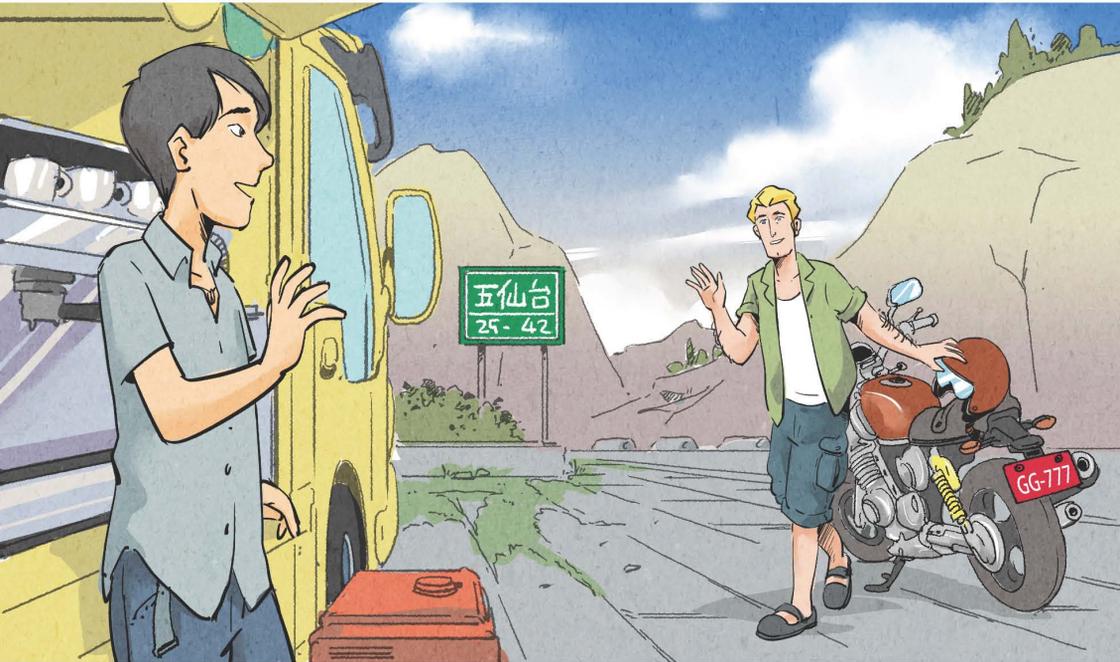
Henry knew she was right. Pingtung was a hot place, and when he had started selling coffee, he had thought he would sell hot and cold drinks. Maybe it was being by the beach, but he sold more iced than hot coffees. Jessica said her goodbyes and went back to her truck.

For the next hour, business was a little quiet. He sold a few more cups, mostly to young people on motorcycles heading into Kenting to surf. At about 11:30 a.m., a motor scooter pulled over to the side of the road, and the rider got off. A helmet was pulled off, and Henry saw a young man with blonde hair. *Probably an English teacher on holiday*, Henry thought. Henry smiled. He wondered which coffee truck the rider would choose. If he chose Ah Bin's truck, Henry wanted a better view. Ah Bin couldn't speak English and did not like dealing with foreign customers. Ah Bin knew Henry could speak English, and he had brought foreign

customers over to Henry's truck twice to find out what kind of coffee they wanted. The young man walked over to Henry's truck.

"How can I help you?" Henry asked.

The young man looked surprised. "You speak English," he said.



"Just a little," Henry replied. The young man's name was Justin, and he and Henry started talking while his drink was being made. As Henry had thought, Justin was an English teacher, working at a cram school in Pingtung City. He wasn't going to the beach, which Henry had thought he would be doing. He was going to the National Marine **Aquarium** and Aquatic Center in Hengchun.

"So you like sea animals?" Henry asked.

"I'm not sure," Justin replied. "Everyone says it's a great place to go, and I've lived in Pingtung for over a year and never been. Today's the day I decided to go. I called in sick at work and jumped on my bike."

Henry looked at Justin's motorcycle. It had a red license plate, meaning Justin could ride it on the expressway. It looked powerful and fast. Justin drank his coffee at the table Henry had next to his truck and said goodbye. After he rode off, Henry noticed he had left behind his wallet. He found Justin's name card inside, and it had his cellphone number on it. Before Henry could call, more customers arrived. By noon, he was down to one bag of coffee beans. If he wasn't careful, he would be going home by 2:00 p.m.

The sun was high in the sky, and he was very hot. If there was one thing he missed about his old office job, it was the air conditioning. He had reached for his phone to call Justin to tell him he had left his wallet behind when a car pulled in. This time it was a married couple needing coffee. Henry served them and looked at his coffee bean supply. A few more customers and he could really think about closing early.

After that, business had quieted down, and it was 4:30 before Henry had another customer. He realized he had forgotten to call Justin. He looked at his watch. It was 5:15. Where had the day gone? He would call Justin about his wallet and then close up. Just then his phone rang. It was Tina, his wife.

"Have you left yet?" she asked.

"No. I was just about to. I should be home in about 30 minutes if the traffic isn't busy."

"There's no rush. I can get some food on the way home."

"Sounds good," Henry said. "See you soon. I might take a walk along the beach first."

He ended the call, closed up his truck and walked down to the beach.

Sometimes Henry liked to end his working day by walking along the shore, sometimes even taking his shoes off and feeling the sand and sea between his toes.

He walked on the sand, looking at the sea. The **tide** was coming in, and as he walked where the sand met the sea, he felt his legs getting wet. He decided to walk a little further before he turned back. Ahead of him, he saw a large shape lying on the sand. Running, he went over to see what it was.

