



Chairs and Steps

STORY BY LUCY ZHANG
ART BY BRENDA TRAN

Ok. We're going to build a world, a chairs and steps kind of world where everyone has somewhere to stay, somewhere to go. The first thing we're going to make is chairs, one of high-density foam covered by lime green pigmented fiberglass, held together by wood stringers and shaped without angles and all curves, a rail-less rocking chair for little kids drawn to bright colors and the hypnotic sway fading to a halt. These kids haven't yet found the way to the stairs. A continuation of skirting board lines traces their way from 2D to 3D, turning the corner into the void, expanding, curling, bifurcating from the wall in stair treads, lifting into the air as the veil of the balustrade now hangs like splayed threads around the corner, permitting entry to those who seek it. Some kids will wake up, leave their chairs and seek out the entrance. They will take their first steps upwards without shoes because this is a world without shoes. Their feet will blister after some time because we haven't figured out where these stairs will lead. Their plantar fascia will tear and stiffen, and maybe they're too young for calcium to build up, for foreign bone growth to latch onto their bodies before their baby teeth have fallen out. It will hurt; they will suffer.

We need to think about where the steps end. A place worthy of the climb, the bunions, the tendinitis, the growing awareness that their bodies only ever oppose gravity, the number of times they will want to turn around, except they've already made it so far, and what if the destination is just one flight of steps away? We can't think of anything right now, maybe because we're building this world based on what we already know. But for the sake of our chairs and steps world and the kids we'll plopp onto smooth, rounded lime green surfaces, we can try to think outside of the box. **Ok?**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lucy Zhang is a writer masquerading as a software engineer. She watches anime and sleeps in on weekends like a normal human being. Her work has appeared in *Atlas & Alice*, *Okay Donkey*, *Jellyfish Review*, *trampset*, *Barren Magazine*, and elsewhere.

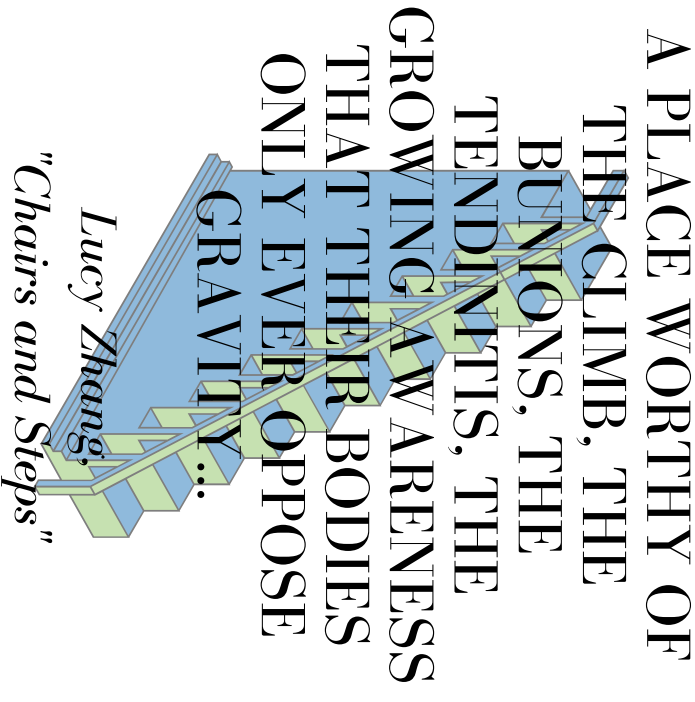
You can follow her on Twitter @Dango_Ramen, and her work can be found at kowaretasekai.wordpress.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Brenda Tran is a designer, illustrator, and writer based in Minneapolis, MN. Her work focuses on creative storytelling with an equity lens and community-based approach, with a particular interest in the intersections of migration, food, colonialism, and popular culture.

Outside of her day job as a graphic designer, she serves on the advisory board of ReleaseMN8, a Twin Cities-based organization fighting to end detention and deportation in SE Asian communities through civic engagement, legislative work, national coalition building, and providing direct support to impacted families.

You can find more of her work at brendattran.com.



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"Chairs and Steps"

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STORY BY LUCY ZHANG
ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRENDA TRAN

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by Lucy Zhang
Illustrations by Brenda Tran

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