

05 RECOM MENDATIONS



Books

The Happiness Equation

The Crocodile Who Dies
in 100 Days

Film

Nomadland

Game

Final Fantasy XIV

Music

Traveling Light

Clouds

Recommended by

Anita XU, Rachel YAO, Elaine ZHANG, Fion YANG, Lexie XIN, Carol ZHONG

The Happiness Equation talks about the reasons for, and solutions to, psychological problems. Being positive every day is the foundation for protecting our hopes. One of the themes of this issue of Elsewhere is “new beginnings,” and this book instructs its readers on how to alleviate sorrow and have a new beginning.

I have applied some of its principles to me life. When I first found it, I was struggling with bipolar disorder and depression. This book taught me how to relieve my stress, the sense of constant pressure, and associated sadness. For example, taking a thirty-minute walk every week can help people escape from negative feelings. This method originally comes from a finding that the more physically active you are, the better emotional state you will enjoy. The guidance in this book come from scientific studies, so its solutions are authoritative and well-balanced.

I hope you can find a better balance in your happiness equation by reading this book.



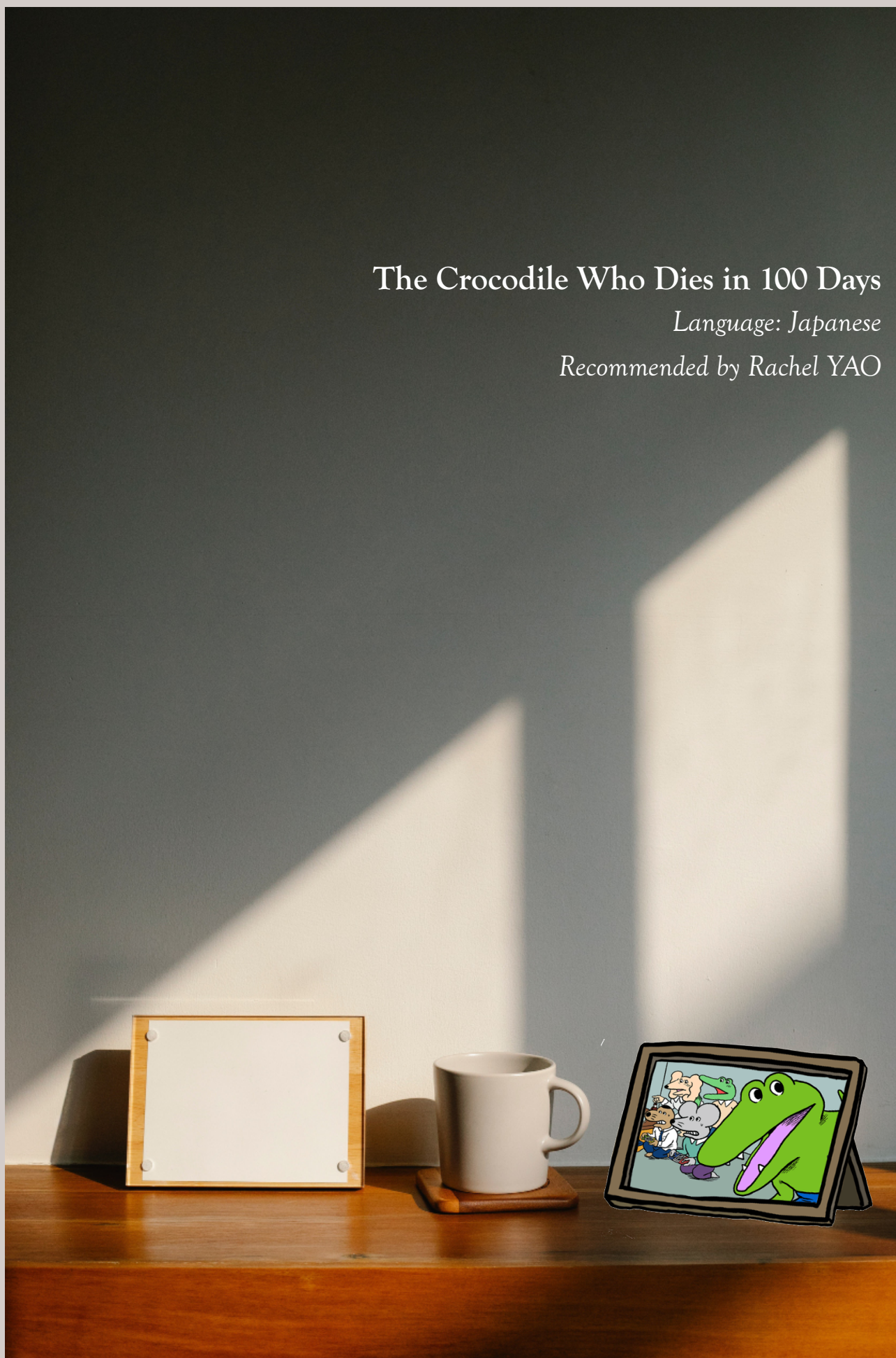


The Happiness Equation
Language: English
Recommended by Anita XU

The Crocodile Who Dies in 100 Days

Language: Japanese

Recommended by Rachel YAO



What will happen when these two strange elements collide? One element is a cold-blooded animal with a warm heart, and the other element is the imminent death of the reptilian protagonist, the crocodile himself. Those watching the crocodile know he is going to die, but the poor protagonist doesn't. *The Crocodile Who Dies in 100 Days* is a webcomic which presents us with just this scenario. Along the way it brings viewers lots of laughter and tears.

This four-panel webcomic first appeared on December 12, 2019. It records the daily life of our main character, a charmingly goofy crocodile who works in a café and acts like an ordinary person. Mr. Crocodile grins heartily upon seeing a new chapter of his favorite manga, flushes when seeing his crush Miss. Crocodile, who works together with him, or eats ramen happily with his best friend. Readers are always healed by these tiny but interesting moments that fill Crocodile's everyday life. However, when they look at the countdown, "X days before Crocodile dies" at the bottom of manga, the smiles fade.

The technique of the countdown was the most wonderful part of this manga, which firmly grasped the hearts of readers. With the passage of time, tension increases, so that readers will not give up until they see the end of Mr. Crocodile. Most readers are more likely to wait for a miracle to happen on the one-hundredth day.

In Eastern tradition, death is regarded as taboo. Most people are afraid to talk about or face death directly. Yuuki Kikuchi, the creator of this manga, believed that death does not exist as the opposite of life, but as an extension of life. His thoughts are similar to Heidegger's viewpoint of being-toward-death. As long as people are alive, they are always running toward the destination of their lives, which is death.

As readers, we all know when the stop button of Mr. Crocodile's life is going to be pressed. But thinking out of this manga, we are all Mr. Crocodile, and none of us can anticipate when we will reach our destination. Is it tomorrow, or the unexpected events? The simplest but greatest meaning of our lives is to live with all our might and cherish every moment, just as what Mr. Crocodile did in his last 100 days.



Having garnered six Oscar nomination, *Nomadland* initially appears to be a documentary.

Though it lacks conventional plot development, it includes flowing images, a monologue, and background piano music, which, altogether, all complement each other. The thing it received the most praise for is the way it reflects reality and delivers hope. The story takes place in a town called “Empire” in Nevada. During the financial crisis in the 21st century, the town’s key industry, a gypsum mine, is forced to close. Fern, the protagonist, loses everything in the recession: her job, her house, and her direction. She starts to live in her RV as a modern nomad, setting off on a road trip to search for her future.



By exchanging stories with other nomads, Fern begins an interchange with her old self. It could be the extensive sunset that heals her. It could be her friends' words that give her hope, telling her "we will always meet again down the road." It could be all the happiness and difficulties she encounters that help her redefine home, hope, and life. However, it is only when she escapes the fetters of her past that she embrace a new beginning.

As a film directed by a Chinese director, *Nomadland* combines features of implicit eastern culture and the explicit western one. Sometimes the internal feelings of characters are not shown by facial expression, but through long, steady shots of the environment, such as waves crashing on a reef. Whenever this kind of image is presented, the audience feels the integration of humans with their natural environment, which is another ancient Chinese concept.

**Its final dedication reads: to those who had to depart.
"See you down the road."**

Recommended by Elaine ZHANG

Final Fantasy XIV

Recommended by Fion YANG

Describing stories of people fighting for their hopes and overcoming all difficulties, Final Fantasy XIV produced by SQUARE ENIX has recently been celebrated with the MMORPG Award for most popular game.

A Realm Reborn is one part allowing players to feel the theme of hope most clearly. Eorzea has just suffered from the catastrophe caused by Bahamut while enemies from Garlemald are waiting to invade and rule Eorzea.

Then you, the player, enter this disaster-stricken land and start your adventure. Many ordinary people struggle to make a living, but they never give up. To help people rebuild their homeland and protect it from Garlemald, you will complete different tasks given by NPCs.

Besides the moving storyline of Final Fantasy XIV, the process of developing this game is also legendary. In 2010, the complex operating systems, too meticulous modeling, and the tedious tasks made this newly-released game “A world not worth exploring” commented by IGN.

Facing this problem, Mr. Yoshida, who was in charge of this program, overthrew all the work in 1.0 and secretly designed the 2.0. His bold attempt gave the entire game a brand-new beginning.



“

Down by the riverside,
I laid my burdens down,
Now I am traveling light.

My spirit lifted high,
I found my freedom now.
And I am traveling light.

”

<Traveling Light>

Song Recommended by Lexie XIN

Artist: Joel Hanson/ Sara Groves

Country: The United States

Joel Hanson and Sara Groves song “Traveling Light” invites listeners to cut off, to let go, and to move on. Weary travelers who carry jam-packed suitcases, stagger through the train station and hotels on their aching legs. They have put everything they own into the luggage. Some of them are necessities, such as a pair of comfortable shoes, a new planner, and a camera. While some items are burdens that they never intended to carry—loads on their shoulders, the heavy chains of doubt and fear, and the souvenirs of misery. For those travelers who are bearing the unforeseen heaviness, struggling with every step, exerting a huge amount of energy on the road, their destination seems unreachable.

You may have seen them, or you were one of them. But “Traveling Light” offers another option. Instead of being exhausted by all the luggage, make an inventory of your trunk. Stop considering the possible disappointment or the potential failure you may come across in your journey. The moment you pick up your suitcase, it already represents a new beginning.

Follow the lively and light-hearted tune, lift your spirit, get yourself prepared, and find joy in simplicity.



"Time tried to stop one,
Cold cold night in June,
Somehow I knew you,
Kept on dancing through,
And you jumped on a flight in the,
Darkest of blues, took a trip to paradise,
Through the stars and back over the moon.
Are you way up in the sky?
Laughing, smiling, looking down,
Saying "one day we'll meet in the clouds."

<Clouds>

Song Recommended by Carol ZHONG

Artist: Before You Exist

Country: The United States



Clouds is a song dedicated to a deceased friend who passed away from the car accident. It combines the past and the sadness, but also the present and the truthfully blessing from beloved friends, which is the meaning of new beginning and hope. Actually, somehow we cannot escape the bad luck that befalls us, we seem to have no control over our destiny, and the most persuasive example is the life of the people during the COVID-19. But what we can control is ourselves. By knowing and talking to ourselves, we can know what we really are. We won't feel lonely when we are alone. We own thoughts, we can make decisions, and we hold hopes. We are even given the chance to love and be loved even when we are in adversity.

This song metaphors hopes and new beginning. When we look up to the sky, we might find different types of clouds every day. Every piece of cloud is unique in shapes, colors, and sizes. So it is impossible to find two pieces of same clouds. So the same as human emotions, we own our feelings. It is good to feel delighted when we achieve our goals that seem hard to reach; it is also fine to feel sad when we lost our beloved ones. What we need to do is to accept our emotions and move forward, instead of blaming ourselves or being too complacent about the results. To learn from the clouds, we get to know ourselves. We would become gentle to humans, letting nature take its course. As human emotion is the most wonderful artistic conception, we need to be true to ourselves no matter what.