

*Shhh...*



Her-stories

Jiapei Yao



# Her-stories

by

Jiapei Yao

*Shhh...*

Women all over the world suffer from discrimination and oppression in various, but rather similar, forms. In the context of China, where this project is based, the top-down governmental measures as well as the deeply rooted Confucian ideology of looking at women's identity make these events of discrimination special in terms of how they are silenced by governmental forces such as censorship. To be more specific, in China, many events regarding women's rights (such as the “#MeToo” movement) and real-life discriminating incidents (such as rape) are taken down and deleted from social media according to the government's strict censorship. Simultaneously, culturally embedded Confucian ideology disciplines women to stay silent in face of suffering and stigmatizes the act of speaking up, while indulging toxic masculinity. I'm thus curious about how this particular system of culture and power, together with other existing institutional gender discrimination, works in silencing the suffering of women.

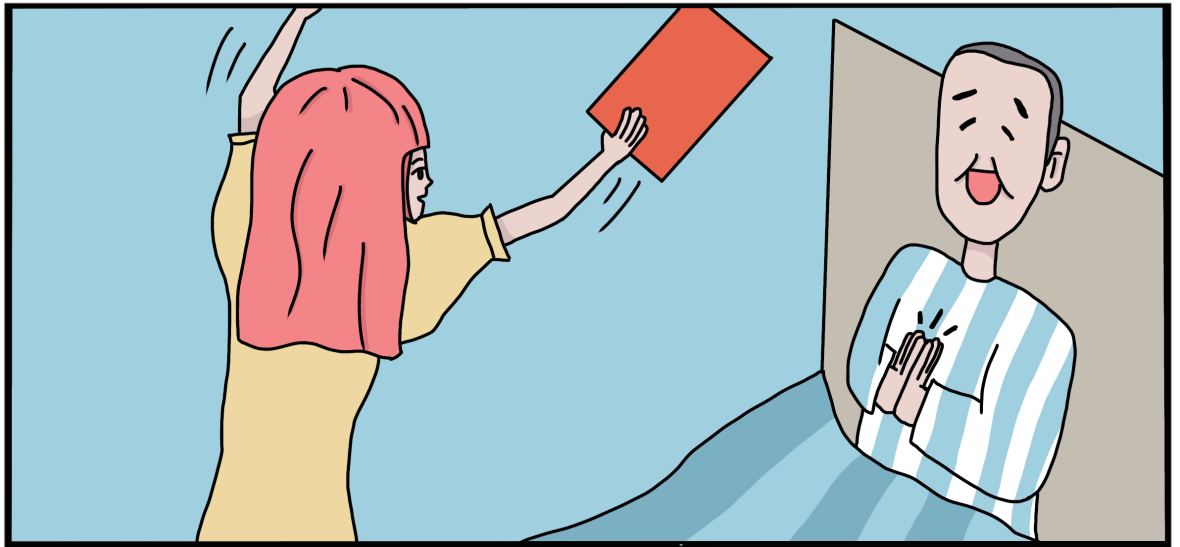
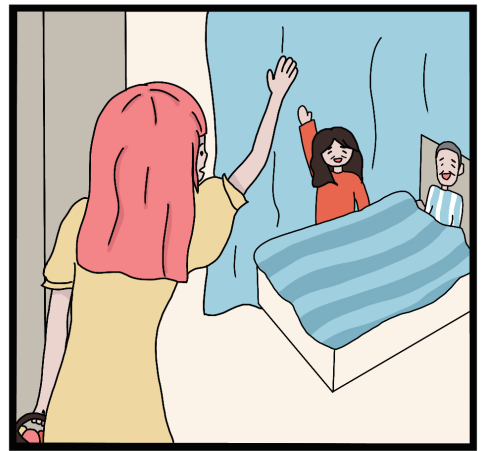
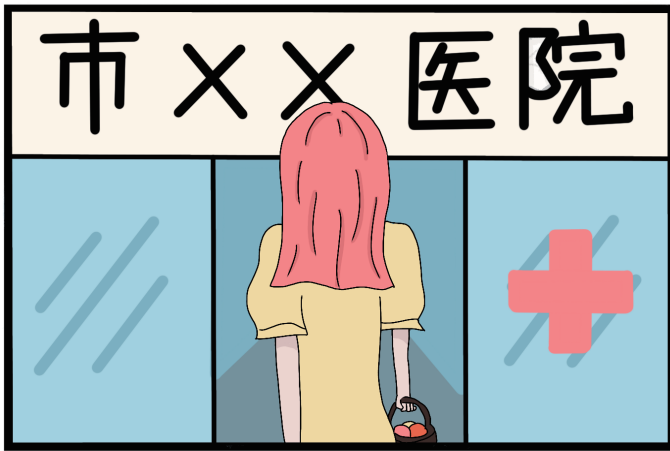
In recent years, more and more incidents of oppression against women are brought to the public's attention on social media. For example, an incident of violence against a woman happened in Tangshan in July 2022, in which a woman was violently beaten up by a man because she refused to respond to the man's flirting. Similar incidents range from cyberbullying to sexual harassment and violence, which often has led to serious mental health problems and even caused death. Frustratingly, many incidents have been censored rapidly despite many people's efforts of forwarding on social media to call out for assistance. The incidents that gain wide-spread public attention are met with cold treatment from authorities and then drown in the barrage of everyday digital information. As a woman and someone devoted to women's rights, I am compelled to say something to bring such a concerning phenomenon to people's attention.

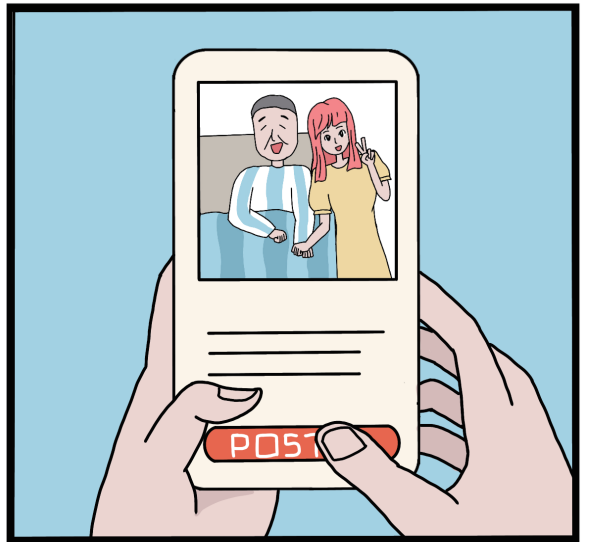
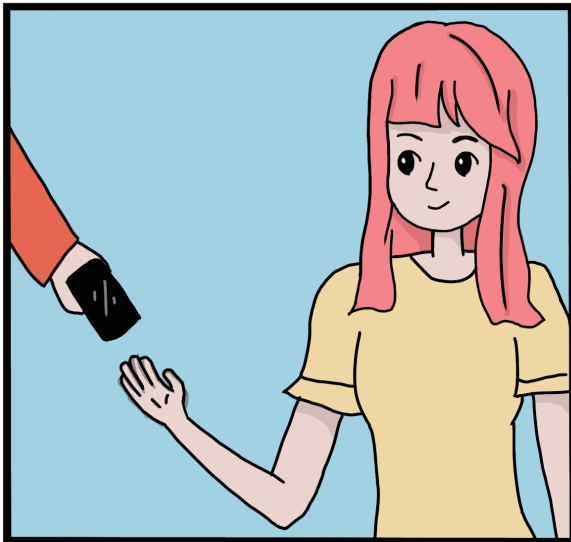
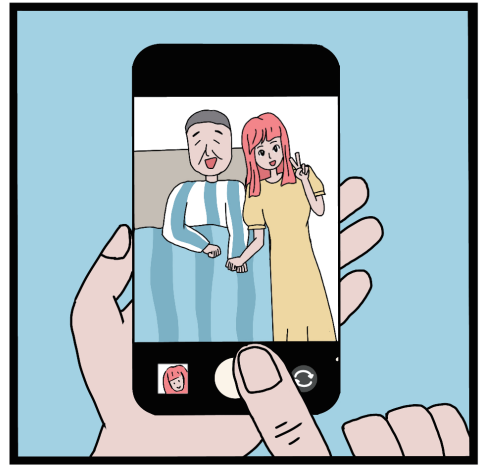
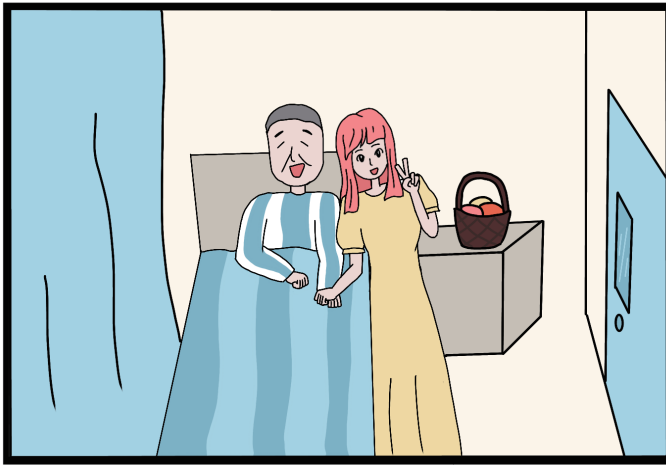
This project is inspired by “The System” by Peter Kuper, which is a wordless comic that tackles society's systems of power and corruption in New York City by recreating an intriguing story with real-life incidents from the news. Kuper tells a complicated series of stories simultaneously and logically by incorporating parts of the image or signs from the last frame to the next so that the stories can seamlessly transform from one to another. The use of wordlessness is thus made powerful because all the events that he focuses on are happening secretly and not within the scope of what is commonly shown to the public.

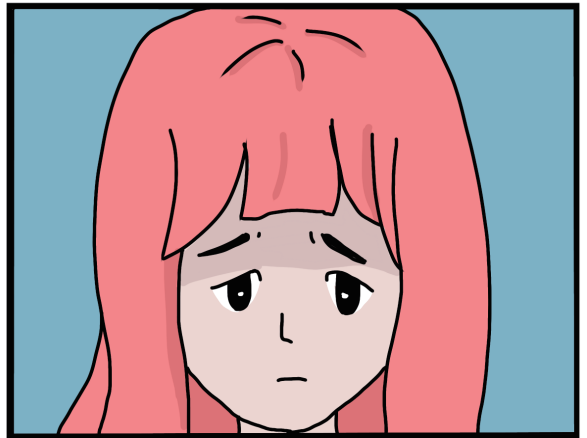
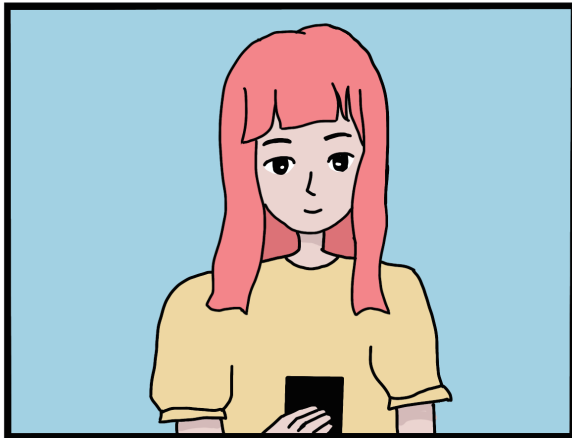
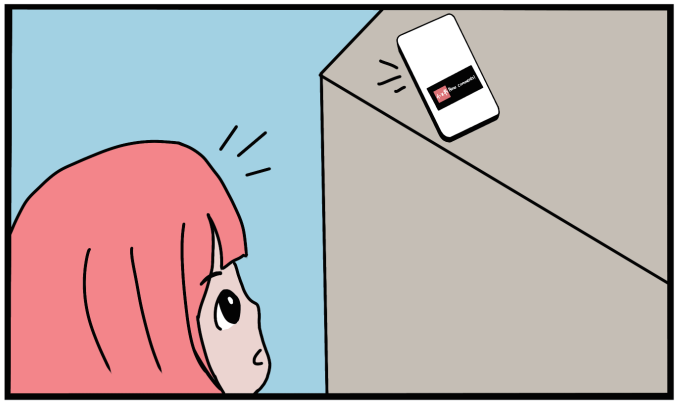
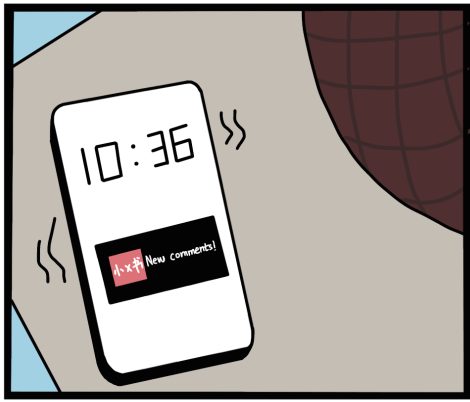


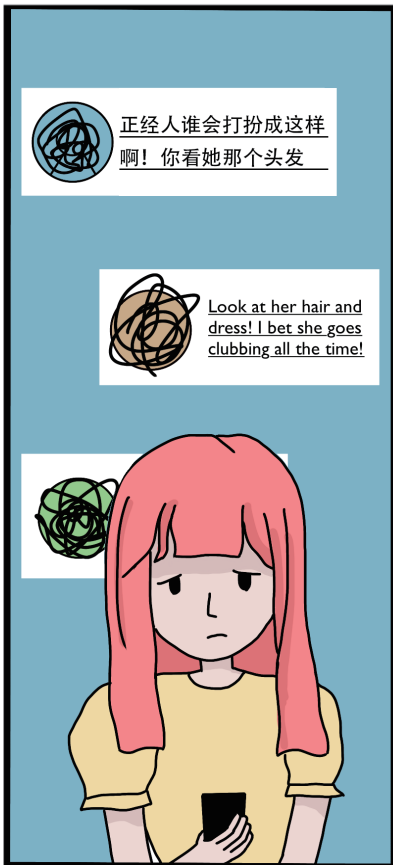
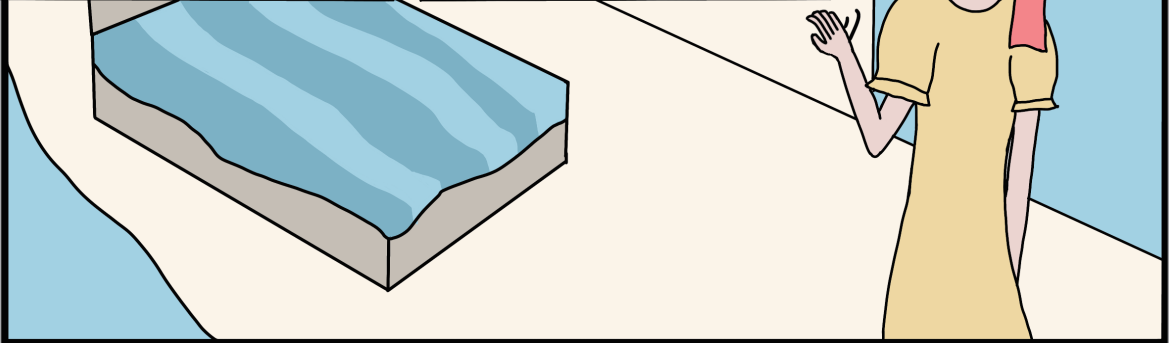
By adopting a similar approach, this project also takes existing real-life incidents regarding women's suffering from social media and retells these incidents in dialogue with each other through a wordless graphic novel. The wordlessness of the project invites viewers to focus on what's happening in unspoken ways and arouse people's attention to the underlying system in our culture and society that pampers and amplifies discrimination against women.

*To all the women who suffer and  
whose voice got silenced...*









正经人谁会打扮成这样  
啊！你看她那个头发



Look at her hair and  
dress! I bet she goes  
clubbing all the time!



怕不是个站街女吧...



正经人谁会打扮成这样  
啊！你看她那个头发



How does she even dare  
to come to the hospital  
like that!



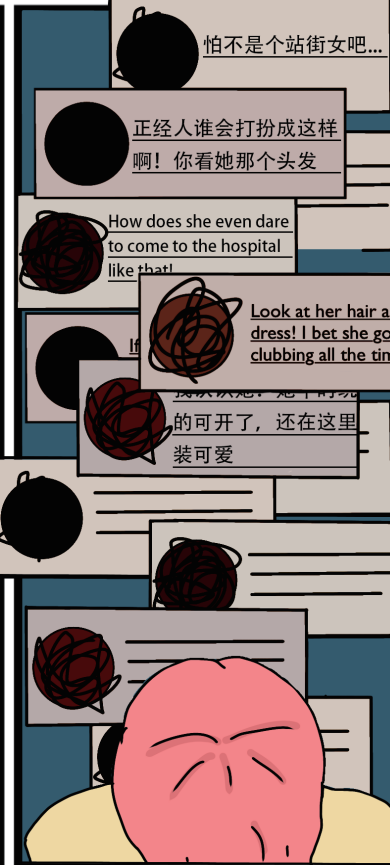
Look at her hair and  
dress! I bet she goes  
clubbing all the time!



我认识她！她平时玩  
的可开了，还在这里  
装可爱



How could she get  
into graduation school  
like that!



怕不是个站街女吧...



正经人谁会打扮成这样  
啊！你看她那个头发



How does she even dare  
to come to the hospital  
like that!



Look at her hair and  
dress! I bet she goes  
clubbing all the time!

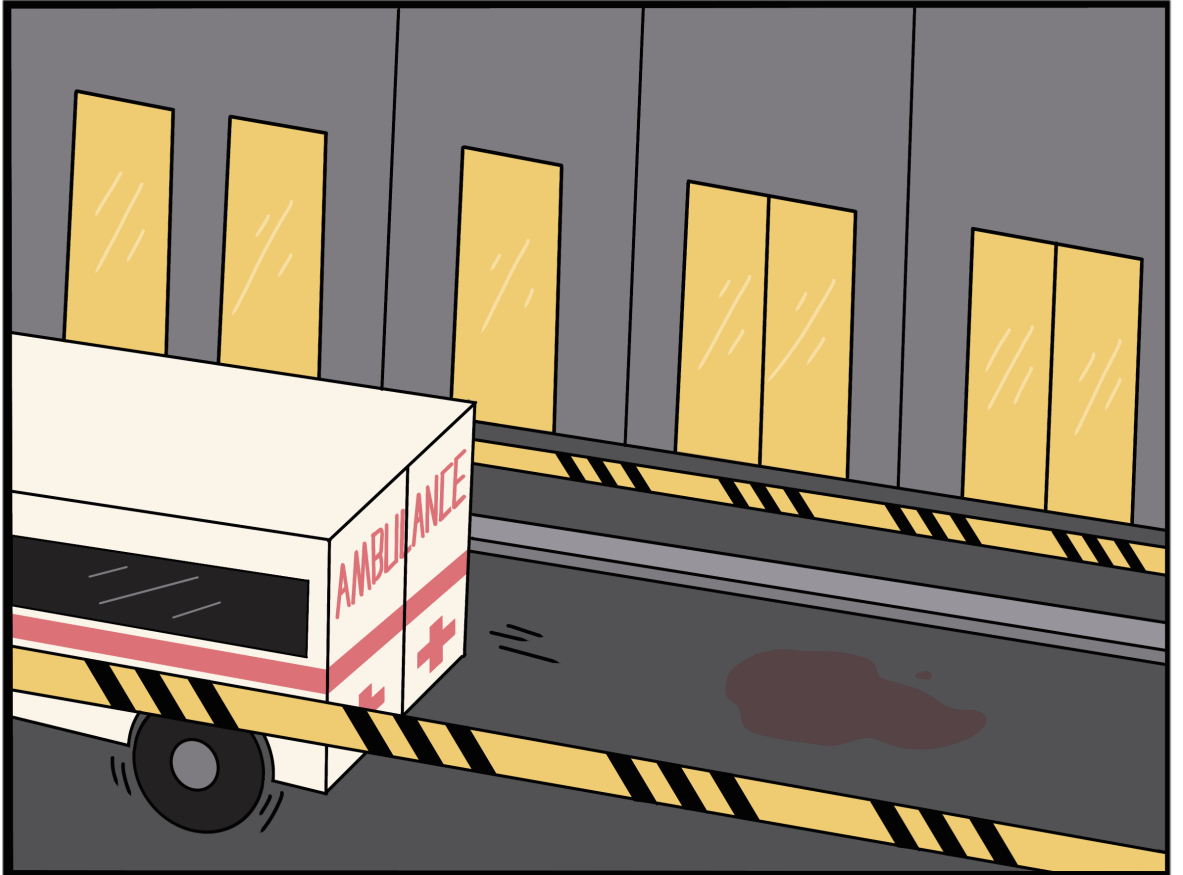
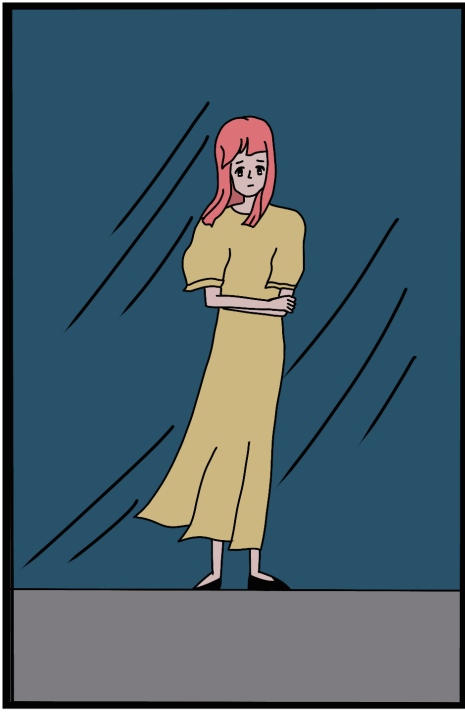


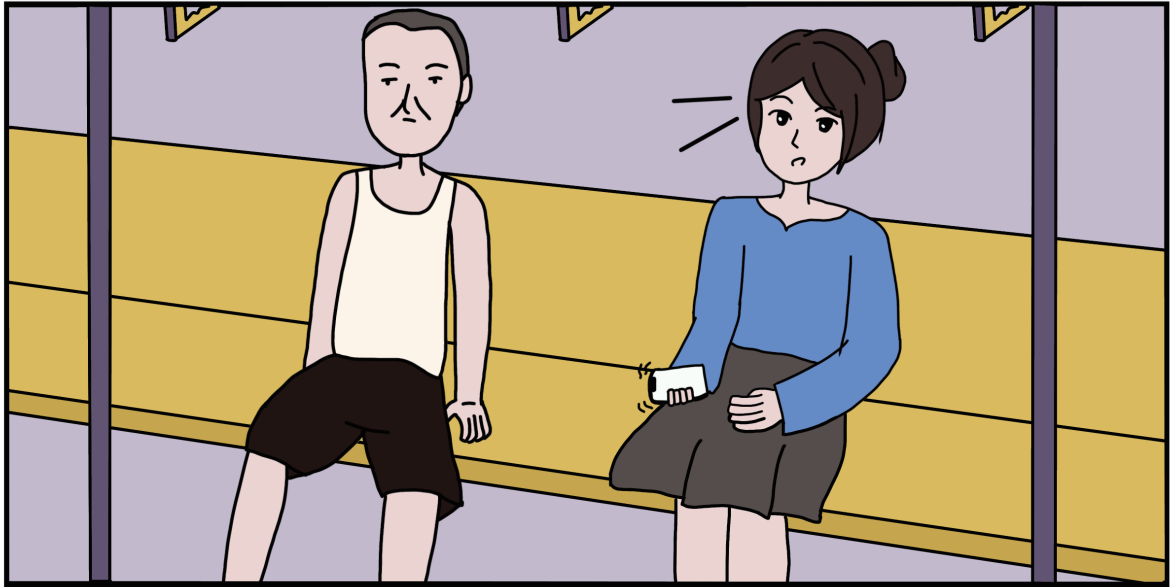
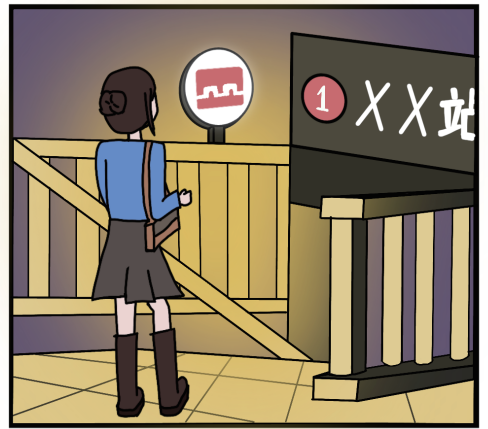
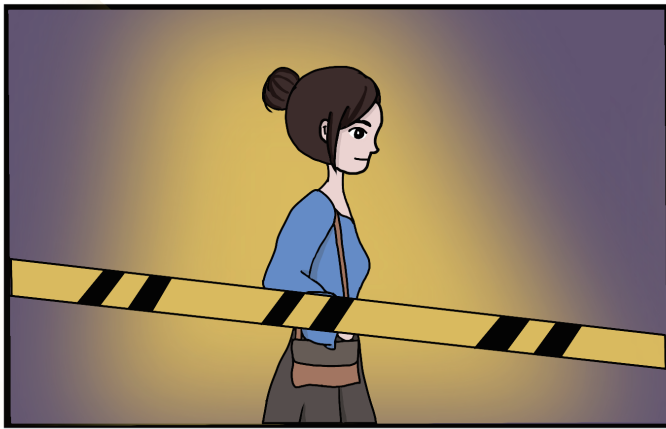
我认识她！她平时玩  
的可开了，还在这里  
装可爱

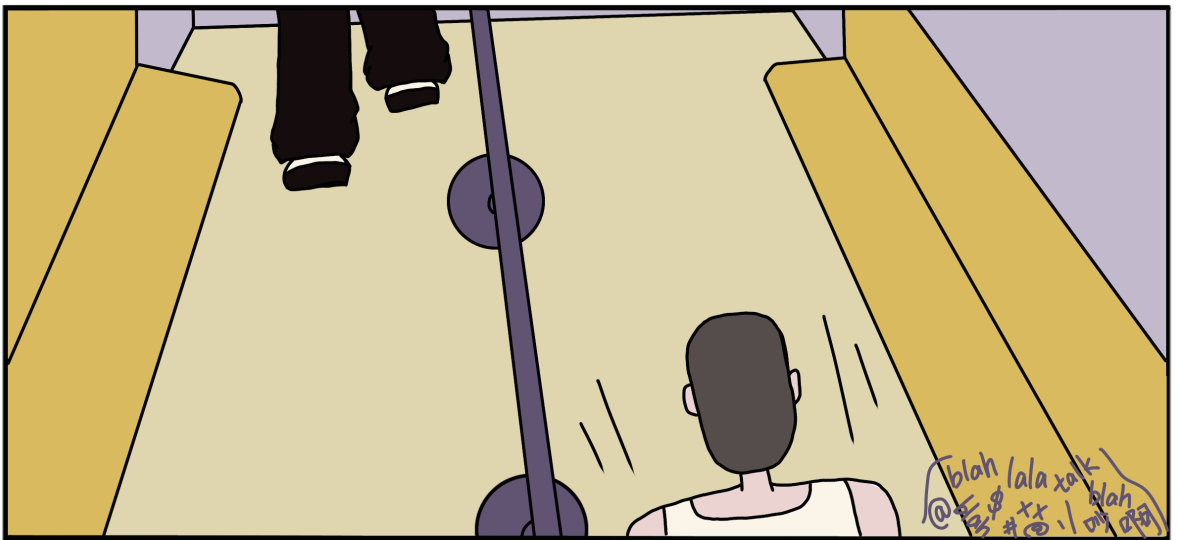
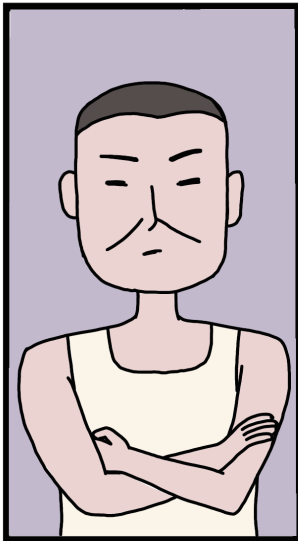
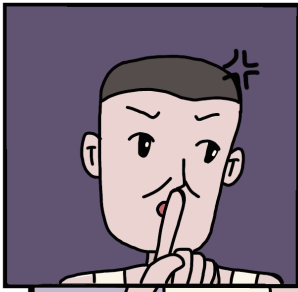


How could she get  
into graduation school  
like that!

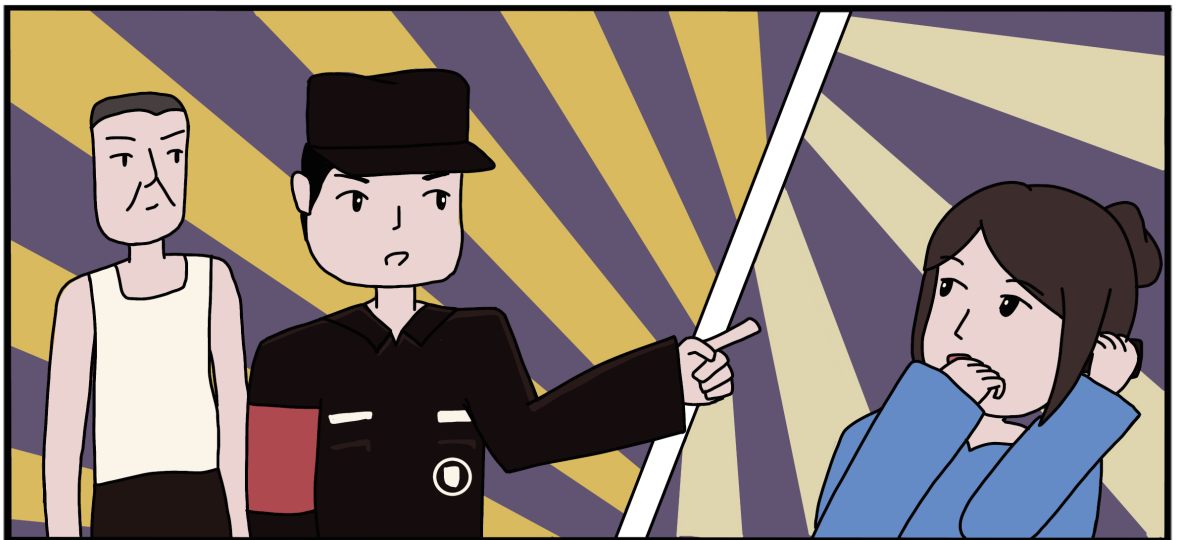
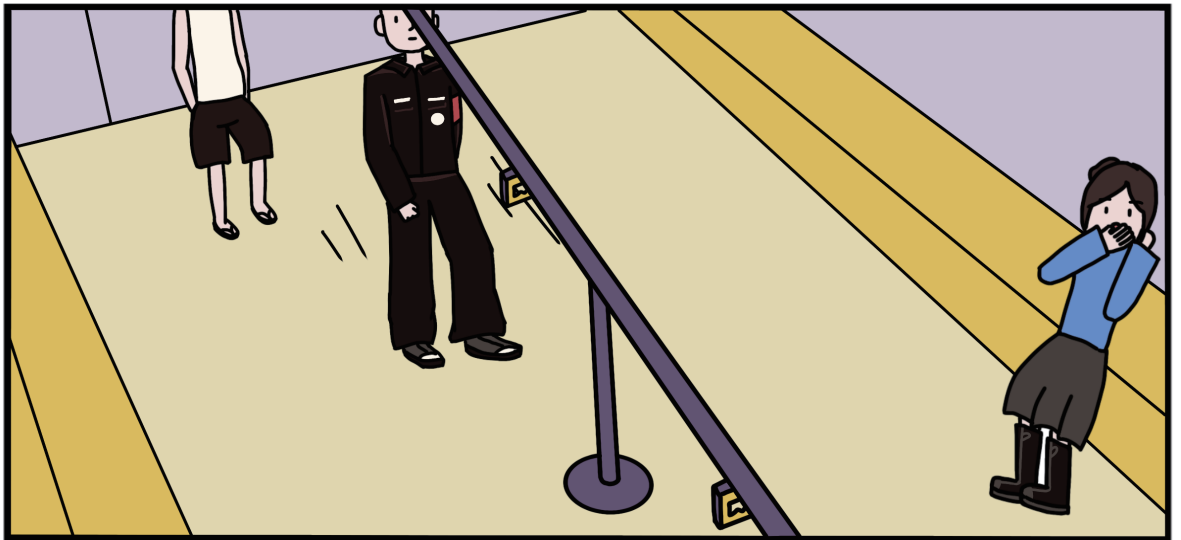
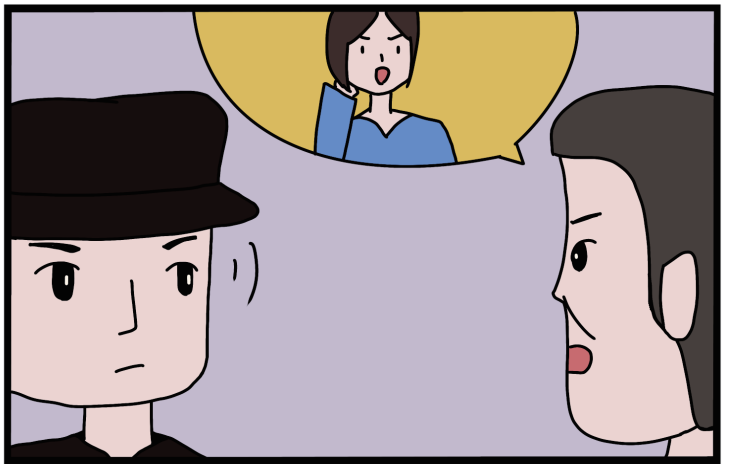


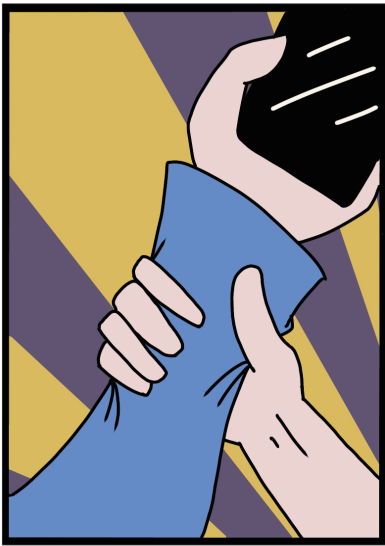
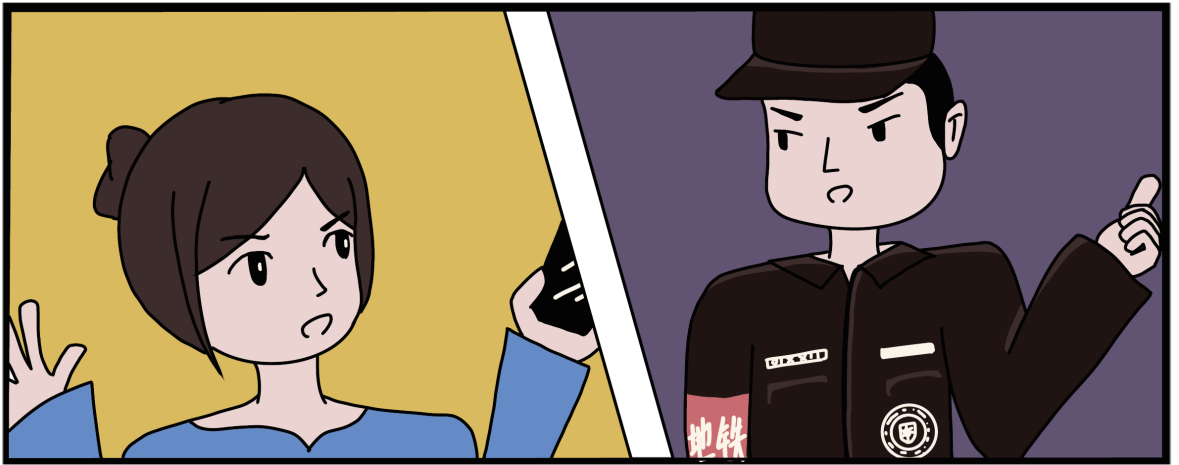


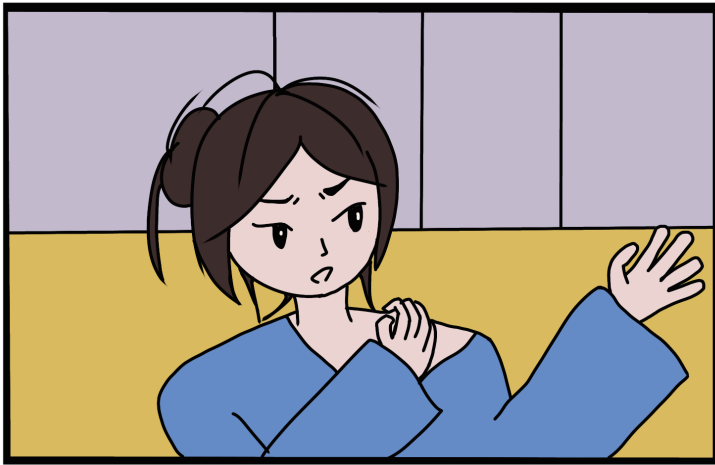


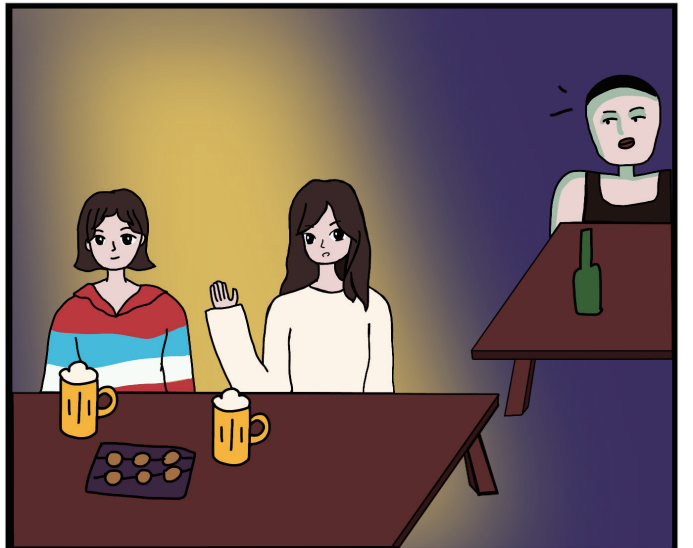
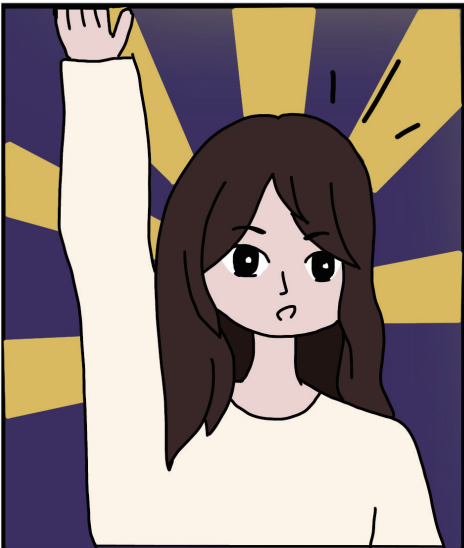
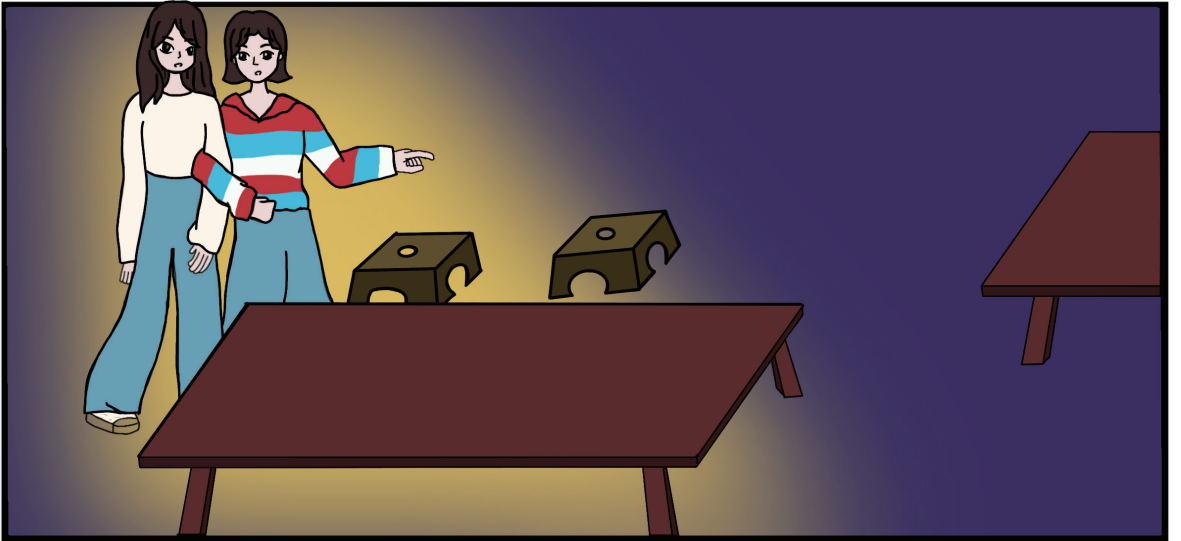
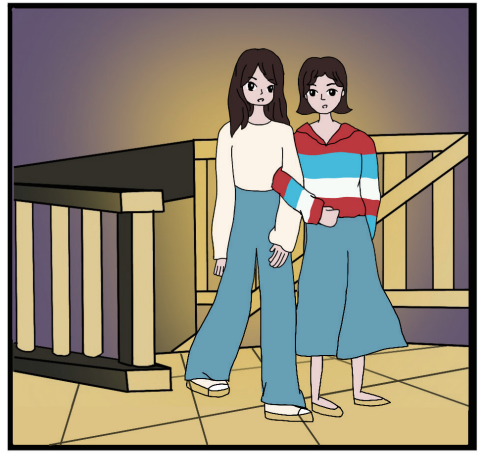
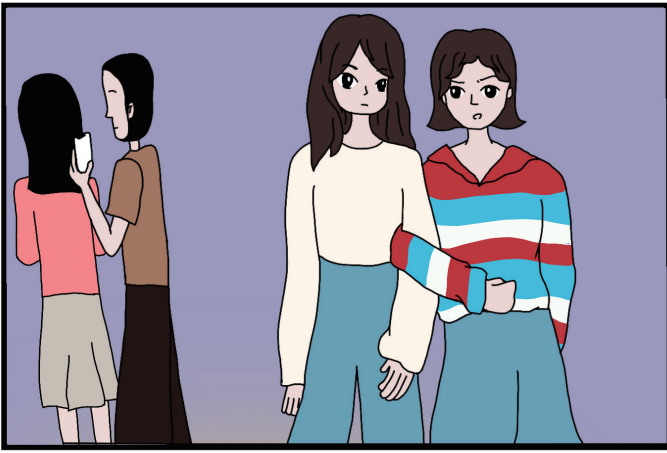


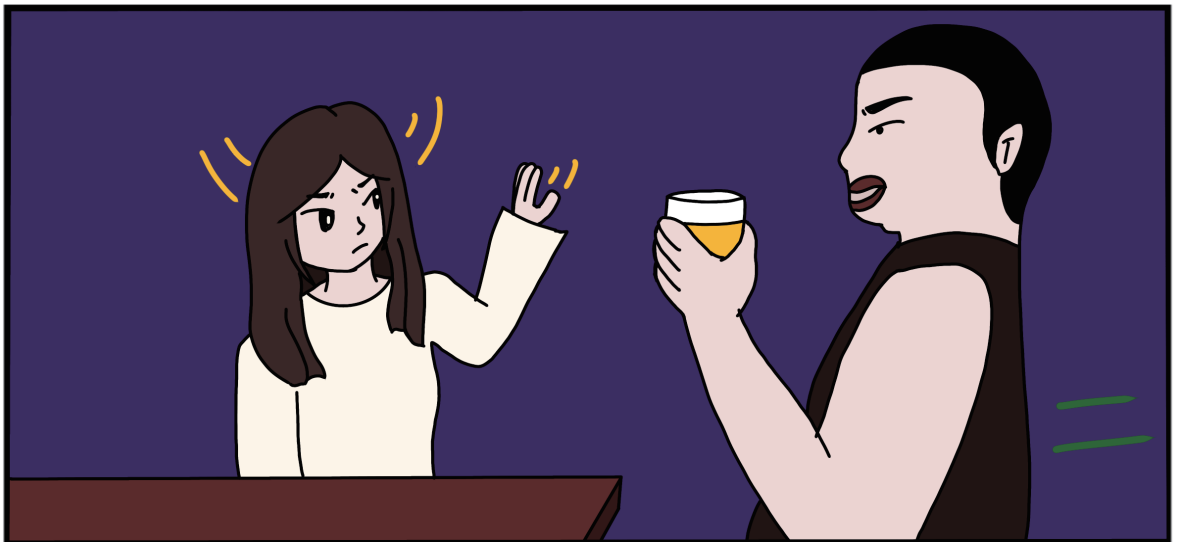
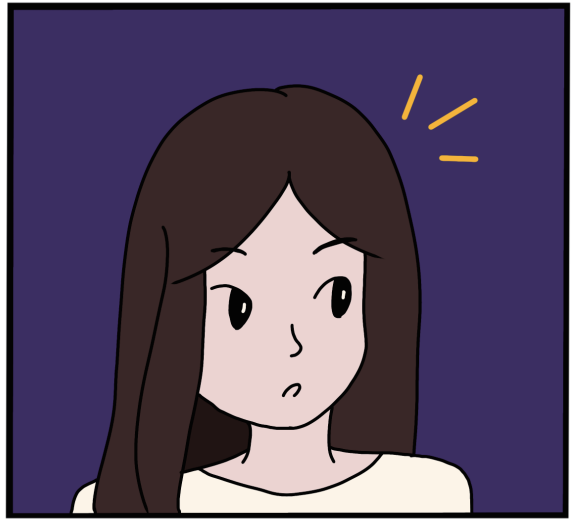
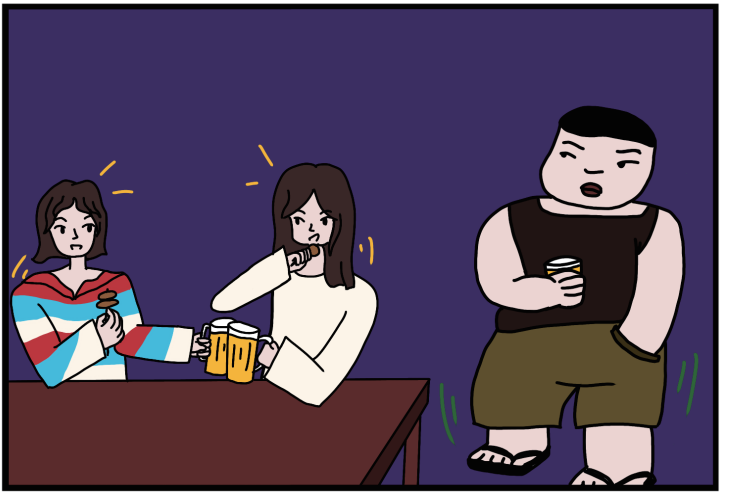
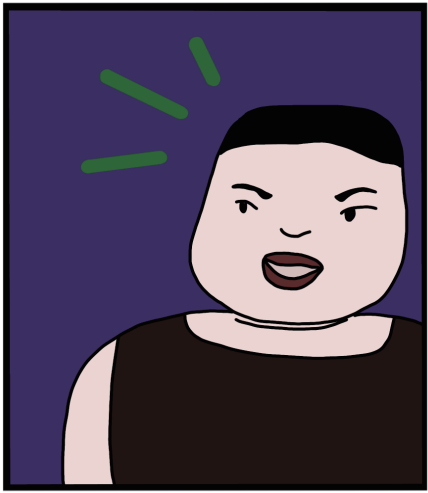


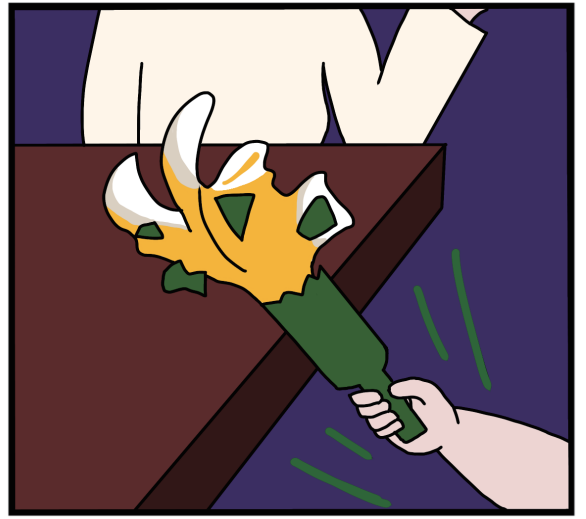


















**All stories told in this visual story book adopts real life incidents happend in China in the past two years.**

**Feburary, 2023**

# 那个染粉色头发被网暴的女生走了 #

#The girl who dyed her hair pink passed away because of cyberbully#



A girl posted a photo with her grandfather in the hospital, holding an admission letter into a graduate school. The post soon went viral on social media, with many people criticizing her light pink hair and making pornographic rumors about her. In the end, she couldn't take the pressure and committed suicide.

**September, 2021**

# 西安地铁保安拖拽女子 #

#Xi'an Subway Security Guard Drags Woman#



A security guard rudely drags a woman out of the subway compartment because of a noise concern brought up by another passenger. The woman's clothes were torn off by the security guard in public without any disguise. Later, the official of Xi'an Subway didn't response to the problem respectfully and with any compensation for the victim.

**June, 2022**

# 唐山烧烤店多名男子围殴女子 #

#Several men in a barbeque shop in Tangshan beat up women#



Several men in Tangshan violently beat up some women because one of the women didn't response to their flirting. Neither the barbeque shop owner nor customers stood up to mediate the conflict. The victims were later beaten to severe injuries and taken to the hospital. The police official didn't give the result that the public is satisfied with by simply saying "the police will look further into this".

**July, 2023**

# 人大毕业生泄漏全校个人信息 #

#RUC Graduate Leak Personal Information of the Whole School#



A graduate of the Remin University of China (RUC) created a website for users to view and rate the appearance of female students from RUC while displaying their personal information including name, place of birth, etc. He's then accused by the police for violating others personal information and was arrested.

**August, 2021**

# 阿里巴巴女员工被侵害 #

#Alibaba Female Employee was Raped#



A female Alibaba employee alleged sexual harassment by her supervisor after a coerced drinking session with a merchant on social media, after failing to get attention from the Human Resource department and other relevant departments in the company. Under public pressure, Alibaba suspended the supervisor and initiated an internal inquiry, while police investigated. The supervisor was ultimately sentenced to 1.5 years of prison.

**June, 2023**

#BBC 卧底记者扒出经营偷拍视频团伙 #

#BBC Undercover Reporter Reveals Gang Operating Creepshots#



A BBC documentary revealed gang operating creepshots\* and one of the main interviewees was Chinese. This person makes money out of selling creepshots of Chinese women and even trained people to take creepshots in public places in China. Though the news has gain great attention on Chinese social media, it was heavily censored after a short time. The only public authorities' response until now (September, 2023) was that the police has visited and investigated the residence and hasn't return to China yet.

\*Creepshots: a sexually suggestive photograph taken of a woman in public without her knowledge (Oxford Languages).

Jiapei Yao is a student from New York University Shanghai. She was born and raised in China. Throughout her life, she has had a growing observation of how women are mistreated by cultural norms, people of authorities, and even countless details in life. Her work mainly focus on social inequality in different areas, ranging from women's rights, digital media, urban-rural differences, environmental protection, etc. Through works in different media, she hopes to bring people's attention to often ignored social issues in life and inspire people to take action.

