

LING YU 零雨

And Then, and Then—

The dark staircase. How I loved
The darkness there. The stairs. To a bustling mansion
In Dadaocheng¹

Banquet tables filled the hall downstairs. On the second floor
We ran around the columns and pointed at this or that
Guest down below. With their happy faces and classy manners

Servants scurried about carrying steaming dishes, dumplings, desserts
And delicacies rarely served on ordinary days—
It was not even a wedding. Such was the leisurely air
In peacetime after the war. Or
A holiday then could be an excuse, fraternities
Taking turns playing host. Children paid no heed to all that.

We didn't understand war (what is it?). Social gatherings (what are they?).
Holidays and festivals (what are they?). We were just happy. Happy to see
so many people
Putting on performances like at a theatre. All dressed up. Proper
Manners. Wine poured non-stop. Food from the kitchen flowing endlessly.

Upstairs we enjoyed ourselves, free from the loud grown-ups on the first
floor.

We ran to the second floor, watching the clamouring below, ran around
the balcony

And then up to the third floor. There we stopped.

We saw that dark staircase.

So dark it seemed to conceal even greater commotion.

¹ Editor's Note: Dadaocheng in the western part of Taipei was the centre of wholesale and retail shops selling food staples, medicinal herbs, and textiles from the mid-nineteenth century through the Japanese Occupation. It was the most prosperous area in old Taipei.

然後，然後——

黑暗的樓梯。我好喜歡
那個黑暗。樓梯。通往大稻埕
繁華的宅邸

樓下擺滿宴席。我們在二樓
圓形廊柱間奔跑，一同指指點點
下面的客人，帶來歡樂、富貴氣象

僕役穿梭著，端出熱菜、湯圓、甜品
以及一些平時難得一見的精緻食物——
不是婚禮。該是因為戰後承平歲月
多出來的一份閒情。例如
一些節慶的藉口，或者輪流作東的
兄弟會。孩子們完全不理會這些。

不明白戰爭（是什麼）。酬酢（是什麼）
節慶（是什麼）。只是高興。高興這麼多人
像為一齣大戲而演出。盛妝打扮。合宜的
禮貌。酒不停供應。食物從廚房無止盡出現

我們喜歡。從一樓掙脫大人的叫喊，跑上二樓
俯瞰樓下的熱鬧，然後繞著內室的露臺，再跑上
三樓。在那裡我們停下來。
我們看到那個黑暗的樓梯。
暗得好像藏了更多的熱鬧——

Mother and Great Auntie and Silly Auntie were sitting on
The dark stairs. Whispering.
Then Great Auntie wept, while Silly Auntie giggled vacantly. Then
We quickly fell silent. Sat there stealthily. Without letting Mother see us
Then we sneaked away, down the stairs. One of us burst out laughing
Then we started running, chasing around the banquet tables. Soon we
forgot all about the dark staircase

Before long, Great Auntie and Mother came down.
They had touched up their make-up, each wore a red flower in her hair
and a pearl necklace
Smiling brightly. Everyone at the banquet smiled brightly.

And then, and then, who would stay on the dark staircase?

Translated by Michelle Yeh and Frank Stewart

母親和姑婆，還有癡傻姑，她們在黑暗階梯上
坐著。說著小聲小聲的話
然後姑婆會流下眼淚，癡傻姑則愣愣笑著。然後
我們會迅速變安靜。偷偷坐一會兒。沒讓母親發現
然後我們假意躡手躡腳，又跳回樓下，不知誰帶頭爆笑開來
然後又在宴席中跑著追著。快速忘掉那個黑暗的樓梯

不久，姑婆和母親會出現
她們重新補妝，頭上插著紅花，再配上珍珠項鍊
笑容燦爛。滿座的人都笑容燦爛

然後，然後，誰還會留在那個黑暗的樓梯