

couch, the fan blowing through her summer nightgown. On the television, anchors are reporting how the coronavirus pandemic is ravaging the rest of the world. My grandmother doesn't wave hello; instead, she says in Mandarin, gesturing to a paper cup running with condensaton on the coffee table, "Your aunt bought 波霸奶茶 for you."

"You're here!" My eldest aunt exclaims as she comes out of the kitchen with steaming bowls of rice. "I've been waiting all day! You know, we only get this kind of feast when you come over!"

The long wooden table is set with beef noodle soup, stir-fried sweet potato leaves, and cold cut goose leg and intestines. My grandfather, his white combed hair wet from a shower, pulls out his chair. "來 Lai! *Doh jiah! Doh jiah!*" He says, "Your grandmother is afraid you will starve in the city because you don't speak Chinese, so we cooked everything!"

It is just the four of us tonight—the remnants of our long-ago emigration—gathered at one end of the table like a lonely, unbalanced seesaw in a deserted playground. Even as my aunt and grandfather speak in their brisk Taiwanese dialect, there is something silent behind their words, something—like ghostly laughter—missing in that deep, inky quiet of our mountain evening. My grandmother, sitting beside a cascade of empty chairs, pokes absent-mindedly at a pan-fried fish with her chopsticks, its marble eyes glistening with fat and wisdom. Now, in her nineties, she has begun to forget. She no longer cooks, and has passed her recipes onto her live-in helper from Semarang, Indonesia, who makes my grandmother's dishes with a kick of Javan spice.

I take a long drag on my 波霸奶茶: a stream of tapioca balls shoot into my mouth, the aromatic, earthy tea tug through the milk like dry sheet against my tongue. The ice has melted; the sugar level is not quite right. I am trying to find the language to tell my grandmother about my job at the red-bricked school down the roundabout from where she had once tended her farm, where as a child my father had stood outside the gate, peering in at the well-moneyed, uniformed children of Kuomintang elites. But I can't.