



To Paradise

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getting confused, I fell back to sleep. I woke to her mild call. My sister was sitting by my head. She got up quickly when I opened my eyes. She was wearing a pitch black gown that came down to her knees. I looked at her face – only to find a mask. With one black-clad hand, she picked up her suitcase, the other she held out to me and spoke for the first time, "Let's go." I was about to ask where when she lifted her black hand to her masked lips and motioned for me to be quiet. We left the door wide open and stepped out. How strange! We didn't need to climb down any stairs from the fifth-and-a-half floor. How was this possible? It had to be a dream. Just as such a mild suspicion began to grow, it occurred to me that whether this was a dream or not, the truth was that my sister was leaving. I shouldn't waste time thinking of such nonsense at a time like this. I didn't even have time to think about whether we took the lift down or not – we were in a great hurry.

We walked side by side in the soft light of the dawn – she seemed to be my little two or three-year-old frock-clad sister who had cried and made our parents agree to

allow her to go with me. The only difference now was that she no longer held my hand. I couldn't even touch her – she was like my shadow, a dark and silent statue. She was neither one step ahead nor one step behind – she walked in sync. Why was she wearing this disguise? Why the mask? Couldn't she walk outside without them? As these thoughts crossed my mind, we came to the tunnel where the road was being dug up. Ahead lay the indescribable open mouth of the cave. A thin light emanated from the lightbulb hanging from the bamboo pole next to it. She jumped into the cave-womb first. I followed immediately. It was a bottomless pit and I felt as though I was flying in the depths. I was so scared that I couldn't help but ask, "Where are we going?" Just then I heard, not in the voice of my sister, but as though from my own throat, a voice tearing through, echoing off the walls and inside the mosquito net, one word – to Paradise.

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