

讲台上的那束光：清晨教室里的三十年

清晨六点四十，教室还没有人。第一束光从东边的窗斜进来，擦过最后一排课桌的边，落在讲台上，正好罩住那半块黑板。光是有形状的，长方形的，边缘让窗棂切得整整齐齐。讲台是光的台座。

光里浮着粉笔灰。头天晚上值日生没擦净的灰，让这一束光全照了出来，一粒一粒，悬着，慢慢地转。人看不见粉笔灰，除非有光；粉笔灰也等光，等了一夜，天亮才起身。它们从老师的指缝里出发，本来是要落在作业本上的，半路被穿堂风截住，就留在光里，成了光的一部分。

老师是在七点零二分走进这束光的。她站在光里写字，背对着门，粉笔点着黑板，笃、笃、笃，声音很轻，像有人在很远的地方敲门。光从她肩上过，把她的影子拉长，投在讲台前的水磨石地上。影子比她先到，每天都是。

粉笔灰落在她的袖口上，一层，白的。她拂了一下，拂不净。袖口上的白和黑板上的白是同一种白，一个是写的，一个是落的。写了三十年，袖口就一直是这个颜色。粉笔灰也落在她的发间，远看像落了霜，近了才知道不是。霜会化，这些不落下来，也不化，就在头发里住着。

三十年，清晨的光还是六点四十进窗，还是那个长方形，还是罩住那半块黑板。光不认识人，它只认位置。可站在光里的人换着老。第一年她走进光里，鬓角是黑的，光打上去，黑发吃光，光就暗了一度。如今她走进同一束光，鬓角有几根白的，白头发吃不住光，光就从那里滑出来，亮亮的，像讲台边沿漏出来的一线。

她还在写字。笃、笃、笃。粉笔灰在光里升，升，升到窗棂切出的那道边上，就下不去了，在光里慢慢变淡，淡到看不见，就算落定了。每一天，每一课，三十年的粉笔灰都走过同一条路线：从她的指缝，到光里，到看不见。这条路线没有人看见过第二次，除了清晨六点四十的教室，和教室里那束从不迟到光。

快七点半了，走廊有了脚步声。光挪了一寸，往讲台里侧让了让，把位置腾给进来的人。教室亮起来，人也亮起来。那束光还罩着那半块黑板，罩着刚写上去的字，字白，光也白，一时分不清哪个是粉笔写的，哪个是光写的。

The Light on the Podium: Thirty Years in a Morning Classroom

Six forty in the morning. The classroom holds no one yet. The first beam of light slants in through the east window, grazes the edge of the last row of desks, falls on the podium, and covers exactly that half of the blackboard. Light has a shape: a rectangle, its edges cut clean by the window mullions. The podium is the light's pedestal.

Chalk dust floats in the beam. The dust the duty students missed last night is

all lit up now, grain by grain, suspended, turning slowly. People cannot see chalk dust unless there is light; chalk dust waits for light too, waiting all night, rising only at daybreak. It sets out from the teacher's finger gaps, meant to land on exercise books, but the crosswind intercepts it halfway, and it stays in the beam and becomes part of the light.

The teacher walks into this beam at seven oh two. She stands in the light writing, her back to the door, chalk tapping the board — tap, tap, tap — soft, like someone knocking on a door far away. The light passes over her shoulder and stretches her shadow long across the terrazzo floor before the podium. The shadow arrives first, every day.

Chalk dust settles on her cuff, a white film. She brushes once; it does not come clean. The white on the cuff and the white on the blackboard are the same white — one is written, one falls. After thirty years of writing, the cuff never changes color. Chalk dust settles in her hair too, like frost from a distance, and only up close you know it is not. Frost melts. This dust neither falls nor melts; it lives in her hair.

Thirty years, and the morning light still enters at six forty, still the same rectangle, still covering that half of the blackboard. Light knows no people; it knows only positions. But the person standing in it ages. In her first year, she walked into the light with black temples; black hair drinks light, and the beam dimmed a degree. Now she walks into the same beam with a few white hairs at the temples; white hair cannot hold the light, and the light slips out there, bright, like a thread escaping along the edge of the podium.

She is still writing. Tap, tap, tap. Chalk dust rises in the beam, rises, reaches the edge cut by the window mullion, cannot fall past it, fades slowly inside the light until it vanishes — and that counts as landing. Every day, every lesson, thirty years of chalk dust travel the same route: from her finger gaps, into the light, into the unseen. No one has seen this route twice — except the classroom at six forty in the morning, and the beam in it that is never late.

It is nearly seven thirty; footsteps come down the corridor. The light shifts an inch, yielding toward the inner side of the podium, clearing its place for whoever enters. The classroom brightens, and the people brighten with it. The beam still covers that half of the blackboard, still covers the words just written — the words white, the light white, and for a moment you cannot tell which were written by chalk and which by light.

粉笔灰落下来的声音：写给用粉笔的人

没有人听过粉笔灰落下来的声音。它不响。但用粉笔的人知道它响过——不是落的声音，是磨的声音。一支粉笔在黑板上走过，留下一道白，同时往空气里留下一层细雾。写一个字，就是把自己用掉一点。粉笔的寿命是十一厘米。会用的老师，一支粉笔写满一黑板字，最后剩一小截，指头捏不住了，就丢进粉笔盒。粉笔盒里攒着笔头。笔头是粉笔的遗骨。

粉笔灰落下来像雪。不是窗外那种雪，窗外的雪冷，落在手心里就化。粉笔灰是暖的，它从老师的指缝里出来，从写字的摩擦里出来，带着一点体温。冬天教室关窗，粉笔灰不动，慢慢地落，一层一层，落在粉笔槽里、桌沿上、搁在桌上的手背上。前排的学生看得见它落：老师深色衣服上，白点一粒一粒地出来，像雪落在山坡上。

用粉笔的人，手会变。指纹的沟里填满白，洗多少遍都洗不净。冬天手指裂口，裂口的缝里嵌着白，不是粉笔沾上去的，是粉笔长进皮里的。跟人握手，人家看你手干，问你做什么的。你说，写字的。人家看看你的指尖，不用再问。

粉笔盒会换。木头的用旧了，棱角让无数只手摸圆了。新盒放在粉笔槽原来的位置，装着同样的白棍子。旧盒让哪个老师带回家去，不知最后盛了什么。可盒里的粉笔总在用掉，总在续上。一支磨短了，下一支被拿起来。拿粉笔的那只手是同一只手，三十年同一只手，指纹里还是白，裂口里还是嵌着白。

后来有了白板笔，有了马克笔，有了屏幕。粉笔灰少了，终于没有了。有人说粉笔灰脏，呛人，早该淘汰。这话不错。可用了半辈子粉笔的人，偶尔会想它：想笃、笃、笃的声音，想清晨那束光把灰照出来的样子，想自己手指裂口里嵌着的那点白。想的不是灰，是一个人安安静静把自己磨成白、留在黑板上的那种方式。

粉笔灰落下来的声音，只有用粉笔的人听得见。那是把一个人的年月，一粒一粒磨细了，码成黑板上一座白字的山的动静。

The Sound Chalk Dust Makes as It Falls: To Those Who Use Chalk

No one has ever heard chalk dust fall. It makes no sound. But those who use chalk know it has been sounding — not the sound of falling, but the sound of wearing away. A piece of chalk travels across the board, leaves a line of white behind, and leaves a fine mist in the air. Writing one character is spending a little of itself. The life of a piece of chalk is eleven centimeters. A teacher who uses chalk well writes a whole board with one stick; at the end only a stub remains, too small for the fingers to hold, and it is dropped into the chalk box. The box fills with stubs. The stubs are the bones of chalk that finished its work.

Chalk dust falls like snow. Not the snow outside the window — that snow is cold and melts in the palm. Chalk dust is warm. It comes from the teacher's finger gaps, from the friction of writing, carrying a little body heat. In winter, with the window shut, chalk dust drifts down slowly, layer on layer, onto the chalk trough, the edge of the desk, the back of a hand resting on the desk. Students in the front row can see it falling: on the teacher's dark clothes, white specks appear one after another, like snow falling on a mountainside.

The hands of those who use chalk change. The whorls of the fingerprints fill with white, and no matter how often you wash, they never come clean. In winter the fingers crack, and in the cracks white is lodged — not chalk stuck on, but chalk grown into the skin. When you shake hands, the other person notices your hands are dry and asks what you do. You say: I write characters. They look at your fingertips and need ask nothing further.

The chalk box gets replaced. Wooden boxes wear out, their corners rounded by countless hands passing over them. A new box sits in the same place in the chalk trough, holding the same white sticks. The old box is taken home by some teacher, and who knows what it ends up holding. But the chalk in the box is always being used up and always being refilled. One stick wears down; the next is picked up. The hand picking it up is the same hand, thirty years the same hand, the fingerprints still white, the cracks still holding white.

Later came the whiteboard pen, the marker, the screen. Chalk dust thinned, and at last disappeared. Some say chalk dust is dirty, bad for the lungs, good to be rid of. That is true. But those who used chalk half a lifetime sometimes miss it: the tap, tap, tap; the way morning light revealed the dust in a beam; the white lodged in the cracks of their own fingers. What they miss is not the dust, but the way a person quietly wore themselves into white and left it on the board.

The sound chalk dust makes as it falls is heard only by those who use chalk. It is the sound of a person's years being ground fine, grain by grain, and piled into a mountain of white characters on the blackboard.

她鬓角的那几根白：讲台、光与时间的散文

我坐在第一排，正对着讲台。看老师，先看她的鬓角。这不是故意，第一排的角度就这样：她转身写字，脸侧过来，鬓角离我最近，比黑板上的字还近。

一年级那年，她鬓角只有一根白的。一根。我盯着看了半节课，同桌问我看什么，我说她头上有根白发。同桌说，就一根，有什么好看。后来我常想，同桌说得对，就一根；可也正因为

就一根，才看得清——白头发少的时候，每一根都有自己的位置。

粉笔灰落在她肩头，她拂掉。落在袖口，她拂掉。落在鬓角，她不拂——拂不掉，也分不清哪粒是灰、哪根是发。灰和白发挨在一起，灰比白发细，白发比灰长；风一吹，灰走了，白发不走。于是那几根白就一年一年地留了下来。

二年级是两根。三年级是一小片，藏在黑发里，光一照才显出来。她站在讲台上，清晨的光从窗口进来，落在她身上，黑发吃光，白发亮。坐在第一排的人看老师，其实看的是光在她头上的分配：哪一部分黑把光吞了，哪一部分白把光吐出来。

黑板上的白是新的，每天都是新的，擦了写，写了擦。她鬓角的白是旧的，一年比一年旧，拂不掉，也擦不掉。黑板的白是粉笔磨出来的，她鬓角的白是什么磨出来的，没有人问过。粉笔磨短了会换一支，没有人换她的黑发。

到高年级，那几根白已经不算什么了。全班都习惯了：讲台、黑板、粉笔、她、鬓角那几根白，像教室的固定陈设。有一回我走神，看那几根白出神，她忽然转过头来，我慌得低头。其实她不知道我看什么。她知道的只是粉笔又短了一截，明天该换一支新的。

毕业多年，同学聚会，有人说起老师还在教。有人问，她头发白了多少。大家想不起来。只有一起坐过第一排的人答得出：不是一下子白的，是一根一根白的；不是头发白的，是时间从讲台上走过去，每一步留下一个白脚印。

The White Hairs at Her Temples: A Prose of Podium, Light, and Time

I sat in the front row, facing the podium squarely. To look at the teacher, you saw her temples first. Not on purpose — the angle from the front row is simply this: when she turns to write on the board, her face turns sideways, and her temples are closer to me than the characters on the blackboard.

In first grade, she had exactly one white hair at the temple. One. I stared at it through half a class. My deskmate asked what I was looking at. I said she had a white hair. My deskmate said: just one, what is there to see. I often think back on that. My deskmate was right, just one; but precisely because it was only one, you could see it clearly — when white hairs are few, each one has its own place.

Chalk dust lands on her shoulder and she brushes it off. It lands on her cuff and she brushes it off. It lands at her temples and she does not — you cannot brush it away, and you cannot tell which grain is dust and which strand is hair. Dust and white hair lie side by side: dust is finer than hair, hair is longer than dust; a breath of wind takes the dust away, but the white hair stays. So those few white strands stayed, year after year.

In second grade there were two. In third grade a small patch, hidden in the black hair, visible only when light struck it. She stood at the podium, morning light came in through the window and fell on her: black hair swallows light, white hair gives it back. People in the front row watching the teacher are really watching how the light is distributed across her head — which part of black drinks the light in, which part of white spits it back out.

The white on the blackboard is new, new every day: erased and rewritten, rewritten and erased. The white at her temples is old, older each year, impossible to brush off or erase. The board's white is ground out of chalk; what grinds out the white at her temples, no one asked. When chalk wears short, it is replaced with a new stick. No one replaces her black hair.

By the upper grades, those few white strands were nothing special. The whole class had grown used to them: the podium, the blackboard, the chalk, her, the few white hairs at her temples — fixed furnishings of the classroom. Once I drifted off and stared at those white strands, and she suddenly turned her head; I panicked and dropped my eyes. She did not know what I had been looking at. All she knew was that the chalk had gone another notch shorter, and tomorrow a new stick was due.

Years after graduation, at a class reunion, someone said the teacher was still teaching. Someone asked how white her hair had gone. No one could remember. Only those who had sat together in the front row could answer: it did not go white all at once, it went white strand by strand; it was not the hair turning white — it was time walking across the podium, leaving one white footprint with every step.