

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.