

雨声在旧窗上坐下来

雨又落下来了。我放下笔，听。雨声在旧窗上坐下来。

那扇窗还在老屋里，木框旧成灰色，玻璃上有一道裂纹，像一芽没长开的叶子。

小时候我以为旧窗是耳朵，整天贴着巷子，听。

落雨的时候它听得最认真。雨点敲玻璃，嗒，嗒嗒，像有人在窗外翻一封信，翻得很慢。

奶奶坐在窗边纳鞋底，雨声是她的节拍器，一针，又一针。

那时我不懂，只当雨是水，窗是玻璃，日子是过不完的。

后来我离开巷子那天，雨大得像要把巷子装满。我朝旧窗哈了口气，玻璃雾了半边。

奶奶用袖口擦，擦了又擦，没擦干净。她擦的不是雾。

火车往南，我把雨声带在身上。南方的城，雨落在骑楼的雨棚上，落在工地的铁皮上，声音都不是那个声音。

可夜里闭上眼，雨声还在敲同一扇窗。嗒，嗒嗒，像有人在窗外翻信。

我也写信。写了寄出去，又写了不寄的，攒在抽屉里，像檐沟里攒着的雨。

奶奶识字不多。她请人念，念完只让人回一行：我吃饭很好。

旧窗一年比一年旧。框边的腻子剥落，雨渗进来，她用旧衬衫的一角堵上。

前年听说老屋要拆。我赶在一个雨天回去。

墙上有个白圈，圈里一个拆字，被雨浇得发白。

旧窗还挂在原处，玻璃碎了一角，木框朽了半边，像一只听够了的耳朵。

雨声照旧来，照旧在窗框上坐下来，嗒，嗒嗒，和从前一模一样。

我站在小时候坐过的位置，忽然听懂了旧窗这些年一直在听什么。

它听的是雨落回原处，等的是有人在雨里走回来。

奶奶已经不在。她去了一个很远的地方，比所有南方都远。

拆字后来没有落成。旧窗修好了，换了新玻璃，留了旧木框，继续含着一口雨声。

我回到城里，雨没有停。我推开房间窗，雨声跳进来，坐下来，不走。

现在我懂了：雨声是信，旧窗是信箱，远方是贴在日子上的邮票。

每一滴雨都是一个字，落啊落，一封信总也写不完。

我重新拿起笔，给那个最远的地方写。这一回，不放进抽屉。

我念给雨声听，雨声念给旧窗听，旧窗替我念给她听。

窗外是雨，窗内是我，中间隔着旧窗，旧窗那边是远方。

雨声在旧窗上坐下来。这一回，它没有走。

The Rain Sound Sits Down at the Old Window

The rain falls again. I set down my pen and listen. The rain sound sits down at the old window.

That window is still in the old house, its wooden frame aged to gray, a crack in the glass like a leaf-bud that never opened.

As a child I thought the old window was an ear, pressed all day against the pane, listening.

In rain it listened hardest. Raindrops tapped the glass, ta, ta-ta, like someone outside turning a letter, very slowly.

Grandma sat by the window stitching shoe soles; the rain sound was her metronome, one stitch, then another.

I did not understand then. Rain was water, a window was glass, and days were endless.

The day I left the lane, the rain was big enough to fill it. I breathed on the old window, and half the glass fogged.

Grandma wiped it with her sleeve, wiped and wiped, and could not wipe it clean. She was not wiping fog.

The train went south, and I carried the rain sound with me. In the southern city, rain fell on arcade awnings, on tin roofs of construction sites; none of it sounded like that sound.

But at night, eyes closed, the rain sound still tapped the same window. Ta, ta-ta, like someone outside turning a letter.

I wrote letters too. Some I posted, some I did not; they gathered in the drawer like rain gathered in the gutter.

Grandma knew few characters. She asked someone to read to her, then asked them to write back one line only: I eat well.

The old window grew older each year. The putty at the frame flaked, rain seeped

in, and she plugged it with a corner of an old shirt.

The year before last I heard the old house was to be demolished. I rushed back on a rainy day.

On the wall was a white circle, and inside it the character for demolish, washed pale by rain.

The old window still hung in place, one corner of glass broken, half the frame rotted, like an ear that had heard enough.

The rain sound came as always, sat down on the frame as always. Ta, ta-ta, exactly as before.

Standing where I used to sit as a child, I suddenly understood what the old window had been listening for all these years.

It listened for rain falling back into place; it waited for someone walking home through the rain.

Grandma is gone. She went to a far place, farther than every south.

The demolition character was never carried out. The old window was repaired, given new glass and kept its old frame, still holding a mouthful of rain sound.

I returned to the city; the rain did not stop. I pushed open my room's window, and the rain sound jumped in, sat down, and would not leave.

Now I understand: rain sound is the letter, the old window is the mailbox, and faraway places is the stamp pasted onto the days.

Every raindrop is a character, falling and falling, and the letter is never finished.

I take up my pen again and write to that farthest place. This time, not into the drawer.

I read it to the rain sound; the rain sound reads it to the old window; the old window reads it to her for me.

Outside the window is rain, inside is I, between us the old window, and beyond the old window, the faraway.

The rain sound sits down at the old window. This time, it does not leave.