

## 厨房里的灯，亮到凌晨一点

有些夜晚是用来后悔的。初二下学期的那个雨夜，就是这样一个夜晚。直到现在，每逢下雨，我总会想起厨房那盏亮到凌晨一点的灯，和母亲蹲在地上的背影。

那天晚上九点多，我上完晚自习回家，雨大得像瓢泼。校门口母亲举着伞等我，我一路抱怨着往家走：鞋湿了，袜子湿了，书包侧袋的卷子也湿了。她的伞一直往我这边斜，自己的半边肩膀却是深的颜色。可那时的我看不见这些，只看得见自己狼狈的样子。

进门换鞋，我发现那双新球鞋彻底泡透了。那是上个月刚买的，白色，我宝贝了一个月。我的眼泪一下子冲上来，话也跟着冲出来。我冲母亲喊，都怪你，来这么晚，我的鞋全毁了。母亲愣了一下，说雨太大，她在路口等红灯多耽误了几分钟。我正在气头上，说出了那句我后来后悔了很久的话：你总是这样，做什么都不行。

说完那句话，厨房安静了两秒。母亲没有骂我，也没有讲道理，只是把毛巾递给我，说，先去洗个热水澡，别着凉。就这两句。她的语气平静得让我心里一凉，可我硬着头皮进了浴室，还故意把水声开得很大。

十一点半，我躺在床上翻来覆去睡不着。那句话像根刺，卡在喉咙里。我起来去客厅倒水，路过厨房，发现灯还亮着。门虚掩着，我从门缝里看见母亲蹲在地上，面前摆着我的那双球鞋，她手里拿着吹风机，一档一档地吹，时不时用手摸一下鞋面，试温度。鞋垫抽出来放在旁边，报纸揉成团塞进鞋膛。她的头发没有扎，垂下来，随着低头的动作晃。

吹风机声音很轻，怕吵到我。她就这样蹲着，吹一会儿，停一会儿，用手背贴一贴鞋里，再吹。地上铺着旧毛巾，接从鞋底滴下来的水。

我站在门缝外面，没有进去，也没有出声。我想起我那句做什么都不行。她做什么都不行吗？她每天六点二十起床煮粥，骑车送我，在厂里上八小时的班，晚上还要检查我的作业。她只是不会在吵架的时候反驳，只会在我睡着以后，蹲在厨房的地上，用吹风机修我的一天。

凌晨一点，厨房的灯熄了。我闭上眼睛，眼泪从眼角跑到枕头里。我在心里把那句话收回了一万遍，可是第二天早上，我到底也没有说出口。我们像往常一样吃早饭，她眼睛下面有淡淡的青，若无其事地给我夹菜。我低着头喝粥，把对不起三个字在嘴里嚼了一早上，咽了下去。

如今我上初三，回想那次争执，我想明白了一个道理：语言是有重量的。我随手扔出去的一句话，砸中的是最不会躲的人。大人也会受伤，母亲也会，只是她们受伤以后不哭，去干活。把愤怒说出口只需要三秒，蹲在地上用吹风机烘干一双鞋，需要两个小时。

回忆让我学会珍惜。珍惜不是等失去了再愧疚，而是在话说出口之前停半秒。现在我要是再想发火，就会先看看母亲的手，那双手冬天会裂口子，涂最便宜的护手霜。我开始学着把话反过来说：鞋湿了没关系，人没淋病就好。第一次说这句话的时候，她抬头看了我一眼，笑了。

又下雨了。我书包侧袋里常年放着一包纸巾，专门用来擦湿的鞋。这不是什么大事。我只是不想再让那盏灯，为我亮到凌晨一点。

# The Kitchen Light That Stayed On Until One in the Morning

Some nights exist to be regretted. That rainy night in the second half of eighth grade was exactly such a night. Even now, whenever it rains, I think of that kitchen light burning until one in the morning, and my mother crouching on the floor.

It was past nine that evening when evening study ended and I came home through rain that fell as if the sky were tipped over. My mother waited at the school gate holding an umbrella, and I walked home complaining the whole way: shoes soaked, socks soaked, the papers in my side pocket stained with water. Her umbrella leaned steadily toward my side, while her own shoulder on the other side was dark with rain. But the me of that time could not see any of that. I could only see my own misery.

Changing shoes at the door, I found that my new sneakers were completely soaked through. They were white, bought only the month before, and I had treasured them for a month. The tears came up all at once, and the words came up with them. I shouted at my mother that it was all her fault, that she came so late and ruined my shoes. She froze for a second and said the rain was heavy and the red light at the crossing had held her up a few minutes. I was in the middle of a tantrum and said the sentence I have regretted ever since: you are always like this, you can never do anything right.

After that sentence, the kitchen was quiet for two seconds. My mother did not scold me and did not lecture me. She only handed me a towel and said, go take a hot shower first, do not catch a cold. Just those words. Her voice was so calm it made my chest go cold, yet I kept my chin up, went into the bathroom, and deliberately turned the water on loud.

At half past eleven I lay in bed, tossing and turning. That sentence was a fishbone stuck in my throat. I got up to pour a glass of water, passed the kitchen, and found the light still on. The door was a crack open, and through it I saw my mother crouching on the floor with my sneakers in front of her. She held a hair dryer, blowing on the low setting, every so often touching the surface of the shoe with her hand to test the temperature. The insoles lay taken out beside her, and crumpled balls of newspaper were stuffed into the shoes. Her hair was unbound, hanging down, swaying as she bent her head.

The hair dryer hummed softly, afraid of waking me. She crouched there, blowing a while, resting a while, pressing the back of her hand inside the shoe, then blowing again. An old towel lay on the floor, catching the water dripping from the soles.

I stood outside the half-open door, not going in, making no sound. I thought of my sentence, you can never do anything right. Could she do nothing right? She got up

at six twenty every morning to cook porridge, biked me to school, worked eight hours at the factory, and checked my homework in the evening. She simply did not know how to talk back during a fight. She could only wait until I fell asleep, then crouch on the kitchen floor and repair my day with a hair dryer.

At one in the morning, the kitchen light went out. I closed my eyes, and tears ran from the corners into the pillow. I took that sentence back ten thousand times in my heart, yet the next morning I still did not say it out loud. We ate breakfast as usual. There were faint shadows under her eyes, and she served food onto my bowl as if nothing had happened. I kept my head down over my porridge, chewed the words I am sorry around in my mouth all morning, and swallowed them.

Now in ninth grade, looking back at that argument, I have understood one thing: words have weight. The sentence I threw without thinking hit the person least likely to dodge. Grown-ups get hurt too. Mothers do. They just do not cry after being hurt. They go and work. Throwing anger out takes three seconds. Crouching on the floor and drying a pair of shoes with a hair dryer takes two hours.

Memory has taught me to cherish. Cherishing is not waiting to feel guilty after the loss; it is pausing half a second before the words leave the mouth. Now, when I feel anger rising, I first look at my mother's hands, which crack in winter and are rubbed with the cheapest hand cream. I am learning to say the opposite thing instead: the shoes got wet, that is fine, as long as you did not catch a cold. The first time I said it, she looked up at me and smiled.

It is raining again. A pack of tissues lives in the side pocket of my schoolbag now, kept just for wiping wet shoes. It is not a big thing. I simply do not want that light to stay on for me until one in the morning ever again.