字幕滚完，生活还在放映

我是一个人去看的那场电影。难得女儿去同学家过夜，我买了最近一场的票，坐进黑暗的影厅，像偷来的两个小时。散场灯亮的时候，我竟然有点不想站起来。银幕上那个母亲白天在餐馆洗碗，夜里在出租屋的灯下陪女儿读书，手指缝里还泡着白就趴在桌上算题。她有一场戏：女儿比赛拿了奖，她上台，手足无措，对着话筒说，我不懂你们这个，我就知道她晚上看书的时候我不能睡觉。灯一亮，这句话还悬在头顶，我坐在原位，手心出汗，因为我知道自己错过过多少个那样的晚上。

走出影院，晚高峰的人流把我裹进去。地铁站口人人低头看手机，我夹在中间回想那部电影。它没有大起大落，就是洗碗、赶路、陪读、交学费，一件一件，像把无数个人的日子摊开在银幕上放。我想起女儿小学那几年，我加夜班，她写完作业自己睡，我回来只看见桌上扣着的一碗面。有一回她留了张纸条：妈妈你回来不用叫我，我明天早读。那时我觉得这没什么，孩子就该自己懂事。电影里那位母亲让我坐立难安的，正是她从不缺席的那些夜晚——那些我缺席的。

换乘的时候我看见车厢玻璃上映着自己的脸，四十来岁，跟银幕上那位母亲差不多年纪。她演完就散了，我得接着演。我在手机上订了明晚的票，要和女儿一起看这部。她大概会说幼稚，我不在乎。

开门的时候女儿还没回来。我把桌子擦干净，把台灯摆正，烧了一壶水。今晚哪儿也不去，等她回来，问问她同学家玩得怎么样，听她讲完，不催她睡觉。电影散场了，可它把一部分留在了这间屋子里：那个在灯下陪着的人，现在换我坐好。字幕会滚完，生活还在放映，观众席上没有人替我们坐着，该陪的夜晚，一个都别省。

The Credits Roll, Life Keeps Screening

I went to that showing alone. Rarely, my daughter was staying over at a classmate's, so I bought a ticket for the nearest show and sank into the dark hall like someone who had stolen two hours. When the exit lights came on, I found I did not want to stand up. The mother on the screen washed dishes in a restaurant by day and kept her daughter company over books by night in a rented room, her finger creases still white from water as she bent over the problems. She had one scene: the daughter won a contest, and she went up on stage, at a loss, saying into the microphone, I do not understand your world; I only know that when she reads at night, I must not be asleep. When the lights rose, that sentence still hung overhead. I sat in my place, palms sweating, because I knew how many such evenings I had missed.

Leaving the cinema, the evening rush swallowed me. At the subway entrance everyone looked down at their phones, and I, caught among them, kept replaying the film. It had no great rises and falls - just dishes, rushing, keeping company over homework, paying tuition, one thing after another, like spreading countless people's days open on a screen. I thought of my daughter's early school years, when I worked night shifts. She finished homework and slept alone; coming home I saw only a bowl

upside down on the table. Once she left a note: Mom, no need to wake me when you're back, I have morning reading tomorrow. I thought nothing of it then - children should learn to be independent. What made me squirm in that film was precisely the evenings that mother never missed - the ones I missed.

During the transfer I saw my own face in the carriage glass, in my forties, about the age of that mother on screen. Her film was over; mine was still running. I booked two tickets on my phone for tomorrow night, to take my daughter to this one. She will probably call it childish. I do not mind.

When I opened the door, my daughter was not back yet. I wiped the table clean, straightened the desk lamp, boiled a kettle. Tonight I go nowhere. When she returns I will ask how the sleepover went, listen all the way through, and not rush her to bed. The film let out, but it left a part of itself in this room: the person keeping company under the lamp - now it is my turn to sit properly. The credits roll out; life keeps screening. No one sits in the audience in our place. The evenings meant for company, spare not one.