散场后那条走了很久的路

散场的灯光亮起来时，母亲还在擦眼镜。她看不清银幕的时候就开始擦，其实擦不擦都一样。我没有催她。影厅里的人陆续站起来，椅子一排排响起来，像退潮。母亲把眼镜戴回去，说，那个修鞋的老头，跟你爷爷一个脾气。

电影里那个老修鞋匠，住在要拆迁的老街上，所有人都搬走了，他不搬。每天把摊子支在槐树下，给剩下的几个老街坊补鞋、钉后跟，收的钱有时是一兜鸡蛋。儿子在城里买了新房，第三次回来劝他，他把锥子放下，说，这条街上还有人的鞋等着我修。最后一场，推土机停在街口，他没去拦，只是收摊，把工具一样一样擦干净摆进木箱，然后坐在槐树下，坐到天黑。灯亮的那一瞬间，我看见母亲的眼睛红着，她想起的是父亲那间谁也不许动的工具房。

我们没有坐车，沿着江边走。夜里的江面把对岸的灯揉成一条条晃动的金线。母亲走得慢，忽然说，你爷爷走之前那年，还在给人修鞋，人家过意不去要给钱，他说街坊邻居修双鞋还要钱。她说这些的时候语气很平，像在说电影。可我知道她不是在说电影。她是在说，有些人一辈子就守着一件事、一条街、几个人，守到我们长大以后觉得傻，等我们自己活了些年头，才咂出那里面有多难。

路过一个夜市摊，母亲买了两个烤红薯。我们一人一个，边走边掰。烫手的时候我想起银幕上槐树下的天黑，母亲想起的大概是另一幅画面，我们都没说。有些回想不需要说出来，两个人并排走着，各自心里放着同一个去世的人，脚步就是一样的速度。

到家楼下，母亲说明天把储物间收拾一下，你爷爷的工具箱别扔。我说好。上楼的时候我在楼梯拐角站了一会儿。电影散场已经两个小时了，可那个坐在槐树下的老头还在我心里没走。他坐在那里，替所有守着旧东西不放的人坐着。我们往前走，他们坐在散场后的记忆里，是我们回头时一定能看见的人。

The Long Walk Home After the Credits

When the exit lights came on, my mother was still wiping her glasses. She started wiping when she could no longer see the screen clearly, though wiping changed nothing. I did not hurry her. People in the hall rose one by one, seats clattering row after row, like a tide going out. My mother put her glasses back on and said, that old cobbler in the film, same stubborn temper as your grandfather.

The cobbler in the movie lived on an old street slated for demolition. Everyone had moved away; he would not. Every day he set his stall under the locust tree, mending shoes and hammering new heels for the few neighbors left, sometimes paid with a basket of eggs. His son, who had bought a new apartment in the city, came back a third time to persuade him. He set down his awl and said, there are still people on this street whose shoes are waiting for me. In the last scene, the bulldozer parked at the street mouth; he did not go block it. He only packed up, wiping each tool clean and laying it into the wooden box, then sat under the locust tree until dark.

The instant the lights rose, I saw my mother's eyes red. What she was thinking of was father's tool room that no one was allowed to touch.

We did not take a cab; we walked along the river. At night the river surface kneaded the lights of the far bank into shimmering gold threads. My mother walked slowly and said, the year before your grandfather died, he was still mending shoes for people; they felt bad insisting on paying, and he said, neighbors, charge you for mending a pair of shoes. Her tone was level, as if talking about the film. But I knew she was not talking about the film. She was saying that some people guard one thing, one street, a handful of people their whole lives - foolish to us while we are young, until we have lived a few years ourselves and taste how hard that guarding is.

Passing a night market stall, my mother bought two baked sweet potatoes. One each, breaking them as we walked. When it burned my hands I thought of the dark under the locust tree on the screen; my mother was probably thinking of another picture. Neither of us said it. Some remembrance does not need speaking. Two people walking side by side, each carrying the same departed person in the heart, their steps fall at one speed.

At the foot of our building, my mother said we would tidy the storage room tomorrow, and not to throw away your grandfather's toolbox. I said all right. On the stairs I paused a moment at the landing. The film had ended two hours ago, yet the old man sitting under the locust tree had not left my heart. He sits there, sitting for everyone who keeps watch over old things and refuses to let go. We walk forward; they sit in the memory after the credits, and they are the people we are sure to see whenever we look back.