散场时那盏突然亮起的灯

灯是在片尾字幕走完的那一刻亮起来的。毫无预备，唰一下，整个影厅亮得像教室的日光灯。我眯起眼，看见周围的人都还坐在原位，脸上挂着没来得及收的表情，被这灯光照得无所遁形。前排的男生用手背快速抹了一下眼睛，旁边女生假装找包，把纸巾捏成一团。大家都一样，刚从同一个故事里被拽出来，还没站稳。

我坐在那里没动，脑子里全是那个送信的少年。电影里他十六岁，替受伤的老交通员送一封要命的信，翻过两座雪山，雪埋到膝盖。最后一场戏，他把信送到，回头想找那个一路上给他烤红薯的同伴，同伴已经留在了第二座山上。少年站在山口，风把他的衣角吹得直抖，他没有哭出声，只是把那个没吃完的半块红薯从怀里掏出来，捧着，像捧着一样很重的东西。灯一亮，那半块红薯从我脑子里退走了，可它压过的地方还沉。

走出影院，商场里人声轰一下涌过来，音乐轻快得刺耳。我顺着扶梯往下走，忽然想起阿远。上学期他转学去外地，走的前一天我们在球场边坐了一下午，谁都没说舍不得，放学他还把水壶留给了我，说借你用。我连一句再见都没好好说。电影里那个少年至少还能捧着半块红薯站在山口，我连一个站着的地方都没有。

到家我摊开信纸。写给阿远的，写那个水壶还在我的书架上，写我们坐过的那条球场边长凳今年刷了新漆，写我看了一部电影，里面有个少年没能跟同伴好好告别，我不想学他。写了三页，不打算写得多好，只把该说的说出来。

有些电影散场了，人却走不出来，因为银幕上的故事替你说破了自己那件没说出口的事。灯光亮起的那一刻不是结束，它把影院里的事押到你回家的路上，逼你接着往下演。我封好信，明天去寄。散场之后，我自己的那一幕，才刚开始。

The Light That Flipped On at the End

The lights flipped on the moment the end credits finished. No warning - whoosh - the whole hall bright as the fluorescent tubes in a classroom. I squinted and saw everyone still in their seats, faces wearing expressions they had not had time to fold away, exposed under the light. A boy in the front row wiped his eyes quickly with the back of his hand; the girl beside him pretended to search her bag, crumpling a tissue. We were all the same: just dragged out of the same story, not yet steady on our feet.

I sat without moving, my head full of the boy who carried the letter. In the film he was sixteen, carrying a life-or-death message for the wounded old courier, over two snow mountains, snow up to his knees. In the last scene he delivered the letter, turned to find the companion who had roasted sweet potatoes for him along the way, and learned that companion was already buried on the second mountain. The boy stood

at the pass, wind whipping his coat hem. He did not cry out loud; he only took the half-eaten roasted sweet potato from his bosom and held it with both hands, as if holding something very heavy. When the lights came on, that half potato retreated from my mind, but the place it had pressed on was still heavy.

Walking out of the cinema, the roar of the shopping mall surged in, the piped music unbearably cheerful. I rode the escalator down and suddenly thought of Ayuan. Last term he transferred to a city far away. The day before he left, we sat by the court all afternoon, neither saying we would miss each other; at dismissal he left me his water bottle, saying, borrow it to you. I never even said goodbye properly. The boy in the film could at least stand at the mountain pass holding half a sweet potato; I did not even have a place to stand.

Home, I spread out letter paper. A letter to Ayuan: the bottle is still on my shelf; the bench by the court where we sat got a coat of new paint this year; I saw a film where a boy failed to say a proper goodbye to his companion, and I do not want to imitate him. Three pages long, not written well, only saying what needed saying.

Some films end yet you cannot leave them, because the story on the screen says aloud the thing you never said. The instant the lights rise is not the end; it escorts what happened in the hall onto your way home and makes you keep acting. I sealed the letter; tomorrow I mail it. After the show let out, my own scene has only just begun.

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.

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.