妈妈八岁那年也走丢过

我很少全家一起看电影。这次是儿子提议的，他攥着零花钱说，妈，我请你们仨。票是他买的，爆米花也是。散场灯亮，他把空桶递还给我，像交还一件干完的活。

片子里那只小鸭子，走丢了自己找路，非要看海。儿子说它傻。他爸抢着说想看海不算错，说完自己先愣了，摸后脑勺。我在旁边看着，心想这爷俩，一个嘴硬一个心软，活脱脱一个模子。

不知怎么，我开口讲了八岁那年的事。去车站接你姥姥，人没接到，自己先迷了路。两个钟头，我在站前广场转了一圈又一圈，害怕得腿肚子转筋，就是没哭，也没找大人。儿子瞪圆了眼：妈你怎么不哭啊。我说：哭有什么用，车来了抓不住后座，才真叫亏。

说这话时我自己都奇怪。这事我憋了三十年，连我丈夫都是头一回听。他半天没言语，走到路灯底下才说：那你当时饿不饿。我说不饿，就是渴。他说：下回咱也带小鸭子去看海，带上水壶。儿子大笑，说爸你俗。可我看见他笑完，悄悄往我们这边靠了靠。

坐过了一站，我们往回走。爷俩还在聊剧情，聊鸭子该不该留信儿，聊狗追它是不是饿了。我听着，忽然明白过来：这场电影散场以后，儿子聊他的道理，丈夫聊他的河滩，我聊我的车站。各自藏了几十年的童年，让一只小鸭子全放了出来。

进家门，儿子先跑去洗手，丈夫烧水，我把爆米花桶套好垃圾袋。丈夫递水给我时说了句：你八岁那回，真勇敢。我白他一眼：现在才知道。夜里躺下，儿子在隔壁床咕哝：妈，下回还坐过一站。我笑着应了。

原来一家人最远的距离，不是坐过了一站地，是各揣着各的童年，走了十几年都没聊到。散场不要紧，话长着呢。

The Year Mom Was Eight and Got Lost

It is rare for our whole family to see a film together. This time our son proposed it, holding out his pocket money: Mom, I am treating you three. He bought the tickets, and the popcorn too. When the lights came on he handed me the empty bucket, like returning a job well done.

That little duckling in the film got lost and found its own way, determined to see the sea. Our son called it stupid. His father jumped in saying wanting to see the sea is not a mistake, then froze at his own words and rubbed the back of his head. I watched from the side, thinking: these two, one with a hard mouth and one with a soft heart, cut from the very same mold.

Somehow I began telling the story of being eight. Going to the station to meet my mother, I missed her and lost my own way instead. Two hours I circled the plaza before the station, frightened until my legs turned to water, yet I did not cry and did not go to any adult. The eyes of my son went round: Mom, why did you not cry. I

said: what good is crying. If the bus came and you could not grab the back seat, that would be a real loss.

Even I found it strange as I said it. I had kept this thirty years, and even my husband was hearing it for the first time. He was silent a long while, and only under a streetlight asked: were you hungry then. I said not hungry, just thirsty. He said: next time we will take the little duckling to see the sea too, and bring a water bottle. Our son laughed and called him unromantic. But I saw him, after laughing, quietly edge closer to us.

We had ridden one stop too far and walked back. The two of them were still talking about the plot, whether the duckling should have left word, whether the dog chased it out of hunger. Listening, I suddenly understood: after this film ended, our son talked over his reasoning, his father talked over his riverbank, and I talked over my station. The childhoods each had hidden for decades, all let out by one little duckling.

Entering the house our son ran to wash his hands, my husband put on the kettle, and I fitted a bag into the popcorn bucket. Handing me water my husband said: that time when you were eight, you were truly brave. I gave him a look: you only found out now. At night in bed our son mumbled from the next room: Mom, next time let us ride one stop too far again. I laughed and said all right.

It turns out the farthest distance in a family is not one stop past your own. It is each carrying a childhood of their own, walking side by side for over ten years without ever talking of it. The show ending does not matter. The talk is long.