银幕里的小猴子下工了

我是银幕里的小猴子。灯一灭，我就上班。我从银幕左边跳出来，翻一个跟头，再翻一个，跟头翻到第三排，惊起一片哎呀。哎呀也是我的工资，我收下了。

我的活儿是逗笑。我往泥坑里踩，噗嗤，泥巴溅到耳朵上。我装作没听见，其实我听见了，笑声轰的一下，像有人往我口袋里塞糖，塞得满满。

也有不好干的活儿。演到我想妈妈，我得忍住不笑。前排一个小弟弟冲我喊：别哭呀。我偏要哭，还得哭得轻，让那个吸鼻子的小姐姐觉得，哭没什么丢人。

放映的光穿过我，我浑身发亮，连尾巴尖都是亮的。那一刻我不只是猴子，我是一团会翻跟头的光，落在你们脸上，也落在我自己身上。放映机叔叔把镜头擦得亮亮的，光一稳，我就跳得更高。这份力气，我记在他账上。

灯一亮，我就下工。我拍拍屁股上的泥，朝前排挥手。别走呀，我还没演完呢。可你们穿外套、找水壶，呼啦啦涌出门。我站在银幕上，看你们的后脑勺，一个一个，消失在门口。

下工的时光很安静。银幕上只剩白，白得像冬天。我坐在银幕角上，等下一场。等爆米花味儿飘进来，等灯啪地灭掉，等一个小孩仰着脸说：妈，就是这只猴子！

人少的时候我也演。笑声薄薄的，像口袋底剩的几颗糖。糖少，也是糖。我还是翻跟头，还是踩泥坑。万一只有一个孩子在看呢，那这一个，看的就是我。

告诉你一个秘密。散场以后，我们银幕里的伙伴都出来透气。小船在银幕上轻轻摇，小鹿出来舔雪，我把笑声一颗一颗捡起来，收进口袋。一颗记给第三排的小弟弟，一颗记给吸鼻子的小姐姐。明天晚上，连本带利还给你们。

下一场开演，我要多翻三个跟头。对啦，故事还没有讲完。小猴子还没有找到妈妈，小船还没有绕过那座山。所以我盼着你再来，记得挑第三排的位子，我够得着。灯一灭，我就站在银幕上等你，举着两只手，冲你挥手。

The Little Monkey on the Screen Clocks Off

I am the little monkey on the screen. When the lamp goes out, I go to work. I jump from the left edge of the screen, turn one somersault, then another, and the somersault lands in the third row, waking up a field of gasps. The gasps are part of my salary, and I take them home. My job is to wake up laughter. I stomp into the mud puddle, splash, and mud flies onto my ears. I pretend not to hear, but I do hear it. The laughter arrives all at once, like someone stuffing candy into my pockets, until they are full. Some parts of the job are hard. When the story reaches the part where I miss my mother, I must hold back a smile. A little boy in the front row shouts at me: do not cry. I choose to cry, but softly, so that the big sister with the sniffles learns that crying is nothing to be ashamed of. The light of the projector passes

through me, and my whole body glows, even the tip of my tail. In that moment I am more than a monkey. I am a ball of light that knows how to tumble, falling on your faces and on my own. The uncle who runs the projector polishes the lens until the beam is steady, and then I can jump higher. I keep that favor on his account. When the house lamp comes on, my shift ends. I dust the mud off my bottom and wave to the front rows. Do not go, I have not finished. But you put on coats, find water bottles, and pour out through the door. I stand on the screen and watch the backs of your heads, one by one, vanish at the gate. The hours after work are quiet. The screen holds only white, white like winter. I sit in the corner of the screen and wait for the next show. Wait for the smell of popcorn, wait for the lamp to snap off, wait for a child to lift a face and say: Mom, it is this monkey! On thin days I still perform. When the laughter is as thin as the last candies at the bottom of a pocket, candy or few, it is still candy. I still tumble and still stomp. If only one child is watching, then that one child is watching me. Here is a secret. After the show, my friends on the screen come out for fresh air. The little boat rocks on the screen, the little deer comes out to lick the snow, and I pick up the laughter one by one and store it in my pocket. One for the little boy in the third row, one for the big sister with the sniffles. Tomorrow night I return them with interest. At the next show I will turn three extra somersaults. The story is not finished. The little monkey has not found his mother, and the little boat has not passed the mountain. So I hope you come back, and pick a seat in the third row, where I can reach you. When the lamp goes out, I will be standing on the screen, waiting for you, with both hands raised, waving.