我是影厅里的一束光影

我是放映机射出的一束光影。我穿过爆米花的气味，穿过前排少年的发梢，落在银幕上，铺开，变成一整个世界的地基。

我的工作是把故事举起来。举给第一排仰着的孩子，举给最后一排牵手的恋人，举给角落里独自来的老人。故事在我身上走，我驮着它，比驮一座山还小心——山不会哭，故事会。

我照见过很多事。照见那个少年偷偷抹眼泪，用手背，很快，像赶一只落在脸上的虫子。照见他把校服袖子拉下来，盖住手腕上那道旧伤。照见老人把最后一块手帕递给陌生的邻座，两个人都没说话。我没有声张。光影的规矩是：照见，但不说破。

他也照见过我。中场他抬头看我，光柱里灰尘在飞，像一场很小的雪。他忽然笑了，小声说：等我长大，我要去看你从哪儿来。我知道他的意思。他说的远方，是雪山，是海，是故事开头那片没名字的天。

我答应他。我来自很远的地方：来自摄影机睁开的眼睛，来自导演熬红的夜，来自一列绿皮火车真实碾过的铁轨。我把这些远方折叠起来，压进一格一格的胶片，等他长大，一格一格还给他。

散场的音乐响了。我收工，从银幕上退回来，缩回放映机的筒里。黑暗重新坐满影厅。可我知道我留下了一点东西：那个少年走出去的时候，眼睛里带着一小片亮，小得像火柴头，稳得像一颗星星。他母亲在门口喊他回家，他应了一声，脚步比进来时快。

明天晚上，灯一灭，我又上班。我会比今天更亮一点，因为那个少年说过要来。远方在胶片里等我，故事在银幕上等我，而他在门口的路灯下等我长大。我们三个，总会在下一场碰面。

I Am a Beam of Light and Shadow in the Hall

I am a beam of light and shadow shot out by the projector. I pass through the smell of popcorn, through the tips of the hair of a boy in the front row, and land on the screen, spreading out into the foundation of a whole world.

My work is to hold the story up. I hold it up for the child in the first row with a tilted face, for the lovers in the last row with joined hands, for the old man who came alone in the corner. The story walks across my back; I carry it more carefully than a mountain. A mountain will not cry; a story will.

I have witnessed many things. I saw the boy secretly wipe his tears with the back of his hand, quickly, like brushing off an insect that landed on his face. I saw him pull his sleeve down to cover the old scar on his wrist. I saw the old man pass his last clean handkerchief to a stranger in the next seat, and neither of them said a word. I said nothing. The rule of light and shadow is this: to witness, but never to say it aloud.

And he has witnessed me. At intermission he lifted his face to look at me; dust was flying inside my column of light, like a very small snowfall. He suddenly smiled and whispered: when I grow up, I will go and see where you come from. I understood him. The distance he meant is the snow mountain, the sea, the nameless sky at the beginning of the story.

I promised him. I come from far away: from the open eye of the camera, from the red-rimmed nights of the director, from the rails a green train really rolled over. I fold all these distances up, press them into frame after frame of film, and when he grows up I will return them to him, frame by frame.

The music of the ending plays. I finish work, retreat from the screen, and curl back into the barrel of the projector. Darkness sits full in the hall again. But I know I left something behind: when the boy walked out, he carried a small brightness in his eyes, small as the head of a match, steady as a star. His mother called him home from the entrance, he answered, and his steps were quicker than when he came in.

Tomorrow night, when the lamp goes out, I go to work again. I will shine a little brighter than today, because that boy said he would come. The distance waits for me inside the film, the story waits for me on the screen, and he waits for me to grow up under the street lamp at the door. The three of us will meet at the next show.