那部片子，我在考场上又看了一遍

先说结果：那篇作文我写了两页半，收卷铃响时刚好写完最后一句。但如果倒回考场前十分钟，我坐在座位上，手心全是汗。题目是《路》。一个字，我盯着它，脑子里先响起的是平时背的名言，条条都对，条条都不像我要写的。

慌到第七分钟，我闭上眼，做了件大胆的事：把去年看过的那部老片子在脑子里从头放。片子讲一个修鞋匠，守着一个巷口的摊子，摊子上一只收音机坏了三十年，他也没修收音机，只修鞋。片子里有人劝他搬去临街铺面，他摇头。有一场戏，一个姑娘来粘断了的鞋带，粘完在摊子前站了一会儿，说，师傅，你这条摊子支在这儿，我们这巷子的人出门都得先跟你点个头。

放到这一句，我脑子里咔哒响了一声。我想起了我们巷口。修自行车的刘叔，摊子支了十几年，车链子断了喊一声他就递工具，不收钱。上学放学，巷子窄，骑车的人见了他都按铃，两声短铃，像打招呼。我以前从没觉得这算什么，电影里那句点头的台词一照，巷子里这些两声短铃全亮了起来。

我从刘叔写起。写他补胎时把内胎在水里挤出一串泡，写他给放学的孩子打气从不收钱，写巷子拆了一半那年，他的摊子还在剩下半截墙根底下，铃声响过，他就抬头看一眼。写到最后我接了电影里那句：这条摊子支在这儿，巷子的人出门都得先点个头。我把点头换成了短铃。收卷铃响，我写完最后一句：路不一定通向远方，有的路是有人守在原地，让别人的路好走一点。

发卷子那天，老师在讲评里念了我的作文，说这篇的路不是马路，是人。我没说是电影给的。不是不敢说，是知道不全是。电影给的是那一句台词，巷子是刘叔十几年自己在那儿。电影像一把钥匙，捅开了我自己存着的那扇门，门里的东西一直在我眼前，只是我以前没低头看。

成绩的事，我放在最后说。那学期期末我的语文进了班里前列，作文单项分是我上初中以来最高的一次。我妈高兴，问我是不是偷偷补课了。我说没有，我只是在考场上，把一部老电影又看了一遍。她以为我开玩笑。我没解释。有些路要自己走一遍才懂，比如从银幕到巷口那一段，两千里远，也就一步。

I Watched That Film Again in the Exam Room

Let me start with the result: that composition ran two and a half pages, and the last sentence landed exactly as the collecting bell rang. But rewind ten minutes, and there I sat sweating through my palms. The topic was one character: Road. I stared at it while famous quotations rang in my head, every one correct, every one unlike what I wanted to write.

At the seventh minute of panic I closed my eyes and did something bold: I replayed from the beginning, in my head, that old film I watched last year. It is about a cobbler keeping a stall at an alley mouth, with a radio broken for thirty years on the stall, which he never fixes, because he only mends shoes. Someone in the film urges him to move to a storefront on the main street, and he shakes his head. In

one scene a girl comes to glue a broken shoe strap, then stands a moment by the stall and says: master, with your stall set here, everyone in this alley has to nod to you before going out.

On that line something clicked in my skull. I thought of our alley. Uncle Liu, the bicycle repairman, kept his stall for over a decade; when a chain snapped, one shout and he passed over his tools, taking no money. The alley is narrow, and cyclists on their way to and from school ring twice when they see him, two short rings, like a greeting. I had never thought that counted as anything. The line about nodding in the film lit up every pair of short rings in that alley.

I started from Uncle Liu. I wrote how he squeezed a string of bubbles from the inner tube in water when patching flats, how he never charged schoolchildren for pumping, how the year half the alley was demolished his stall still stood under the remaining half of wall, and when a ring sounded he looked up for a glance. At the end I took that line from the film: with your stall set here, everyone in the alley nods before going out. I changed the nod to short rings. As the bell rang I finished my last sentence: a road does not have to lead far away; sometimes a road is a person standing still so that the roads of others go easier.

On the day papers came back, the teacher read my composition in the review class and said: the road in this piece is not a street, it is a person. I did not say a film gave it to me. Not out of shyness, but because I know it was not all the film. The film gave one line; the alley was Uncle Liu, standing there for over ten years on his own. A film is like a key that pries open the door you have been keeping yourself. Everything behind that door had been under my eyes all along; I had simply never looked down.

I save the grade for last. That term my Chinese ranked near the top of the class, and my composition sub-score was the highest since I started junior high. My mother, delighted, asked whether I had been secretly taking tutoring classes. I said no, I just watched an old film once more, inside the exam room. She thought I was joking. I did not explain. Some roads must be walked once to be understood, like the stretch from the screen to the alley mouth: two thousand li away, and only one step.

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