雪天把一本书读完

雪是上午十点开始下的。我站在窗前看了一会儿，给学校发了条消息，下午的课跟同事换了。然后我拉上书桌旁那把椅子，坐下，从书架上抽出一本买了两年没读完的书。

那本书是本旧小说，书页有点黄，前面三分之一是去年在地铁上读的，读得断断续续，人物关系记不牢。那天下午不一样。窗外飘雪，雪花大到能看清形状，一片一片斜着落，落在对面楼的空调外机上，落在小区路上，落下去就没有声音。雪把整个世界调成了静音，只剩下书页翻动的声音。

我泡了一杯茉莉花茶，没用什么讲究的茶叶，就是家里最普通的那罐。第一泡酽，我喝得急，烫了一下舌头。后来茶渐渐淡下去，我也不去续，就着淡茶往下读。读到一半起身续水，回来发现窗台上落了一层白，薄薄一片，像谁撒的糖霜。我没擦，就让它在那儿。

那个下午我读完了剩下的三分之二。有些句子平时是读不进去的，比如一个人站在火车站看雪的那一段，我平时读到这种地方会跳过去，嫌慢。那天我一个字一个字读完了，读完还坐了一会儿，想象那个站台上的冷。奇怪的是，我人坐在暖气房里，脚边是暖的，心里却跟着那个站台凉了一下，又回到茶上暖回来。

傍晚雪停了，我合上书，茶已经凉透，杯底一层深色的茶叶沫。我去厨房热茶，顺手也热了一杯给下班回来的妻子。她问我一下午干了什么，我说读了本书。她说雪天读书，你也会享受啊。我没接话。我不是会享受，我是忽然明白了：不是书难读，是平日太吵。地铁吵，手机吵，连心里都吵。雪替我把这些吵的东西按住了一个下午。

后来那本书我借给了同事。她问我好看吗，我说好看，但你得挑个下雪天读。她笑我迷信。我不辩解。有些书确实要配天气，就像有些茶要配冷天。那天下午的雪早化了，那杯茉莉花茶我也记不清味道，可翻书的声音我一直记得，一下午，很轻，很稳。

Finishing a Book on a Snowy Day

The snow began at ten in the morning. I stood at the window watching for a while, then sent a message to school swapping my afternoon classes with a colleague. After that I pulled the chair up to the desk, sat down, and took from the shelf a book I had bought two years ago and never finished.

It was an old novel, the pages slightly yellow. The first third I had read on the subway last year, in fragments, never holding the characters firmly in mind. That afternoon was different. Snow drifted outside the window, flakes large enough to see their shapes, falling slantwise one by one onto the air-conditioning units of the building across, onto the paths in our compound, soundless once they landed. The snow turned the whole world to mute, leaving only the sound of pages turning.

I brewed a cup of jasmine tea, no fancy leaves, just the most ordinary tin in the house. The first steep was strong, and I drank too fast and scalded my tongue. Later the tea grew pale and I did not refill it, reading on through the weak tea. Halfway through I got up for hot water, and coming back found a thin layer of white on the windowsill, like sugar powder someone had scattered. I did not wipe it off. I let it stay.

That afternoon I finished the remaining two thirds. There are sentences you normally cannot get into. For instance, the passage where a man stands at a station watching snow - normally I skip such parts, finding them slow. That day I read it word by word, and sat a while after finishing, imagining the cold on that platform. Strangely, though I sat in a heated room with warm feet, my heart went cold with that platform for a moment, then warmed back at the tea.

By evening the snow stopped. I closed the book; the tea had gone completely cold, a dark bed of leaves at the bottom of the cup. I went to the kitchen to reheat it and made a cup for my wife when she came home from work. She asked what I had done all afternoon. I said I read a book. She said, reading on a snowy day, so you know how to enjoy life. I did not take that up. It was not enjoyment. I had suddenly understood: it is not that books are hard to read, it is that ordinary days are too loud. The subway is loud, the phone is loud, even the mind is loud. The snow pressed all that noise down for one afternoon.

Later I lent the book to the colleague who covered my classes. She asked if it was good. I said yes, but you must pick a snowy day to read it. She laughed at my superstition. I did not argue. Some books really do need the right weather, just as some teas need cold days. That afternoon's snow melted long ago, and I can no longer recall the taste of that jasmine tea, but I still remember the sound of the pages turning - all afternoon, light and steady.

那天我没备课，读了一本闲书

那场雪把学校封了半天。学生放假回去，宿舍楼里就剩我们几个没走的老师。我本来计划好了：下午备两节课，把古诗那单元的课件做完。计划列得很细，几点到几点讲什么，写在纸上。

雪从午后开始飘，越下越密。我坐在桌前做课件，做到第一首诗的注释就卡住了——不是注释难，是我心里浮。窗外雪片大，一片压一片地斜着落，落在操场旗杆上，落在跑道上，把平时吵惯了的操场盖得安安静静的。我看了很久的雪，久到自己都察觉不出来。

后来我做了一件很多年没做过的事。我从行李箱底层抽出那本带过来一直没拆封的书，一个作家写自己故乡冬天的散文集，撕了塑封，坐在窗边的椅子上读。纸书，不是手机。第一页就写

雪，写他小时候屋檐下的冰溜子。我给自己泡了杯茶，大红袍，办公室顺来的，泡得很浓，第一杯烫，第二杯苦，第三杯刚好，喝到后来没味了我也没换。

那个下午我没有打开课件。书里写一个人雪天关在屋里翻旧书，翻着翻着睡着了，醒来茶凉透了。我读到这句的时候笑了一下，因为我的茶也凉了一半。我把凉茶一口喝完，凉的也不难喝，就是涩。窗外的雪把天色往下压，四点就像六点，我开了台灯继续翻，纸页在台灯下白得发亮。

合上书的时候，我忽然想起自己念师范的年代，冬天宿舍没暖气，我们裹着棉被轮流朗读，读的是书，哈的是白气。我从什么时候起只读教参和考纲的？教了十几年书，教学生读书，自己倒把读书这件事弄丢了。雪还在下，我坐在原地想这件事，想了很久，没有答案，也没有要紧，想过了就算数。

第二天雪停了，我照常上课，课件还是没做完，我凭老底子讲的，讲得一般。但课上讲到一个雪的句子，我合上书本，跟学生说我昨天读到一个更好的句子，就背给他们听了。背完教室里静了一会儿。那几十秒的安静，比任何一次课堂纪律都好。我没提我读了闲书，也没布置他们去读。有些东西不用说，雪落在纸上，他们看得见。

That Day I Did Not Prepare Lessons - I Read a Book for Pleasure

That snow closed the school for half a day. The students went home for the break, and only a few teachers remained in the dormitory building. I had planned it all out: prepare two lessons in the afternoon, finish the slides for the classical poetry unit. The plan was written on paper, down to what to teach at which hour.

The snow began drifting after noon, thicker and thicker. I sat at my desk making slides and got stuck at the notes for the first poem - not because the notes were hard, but because my mind was restless. Outside the window the flakes were large, falling slantwise layer upon layer, onto the flagpole in the playground, onto the running track, covering the noisy playground in silence. I watched the snow a long time, so long I did not notice myself doing it.

Then I did something I had not done in years. From the bottom of my suitcase I took out the book I had brought and never unwrapped - a collection of essays in which a writer writes about the winter of his hometown. I tore off the plastic and sat down by the window with it. A paper book, not a phone. The very first page was about snow, about the icicles under his childhood eaves. I brewed myself tea, da hong pao, borrowed from the office, brewed strong: the first cup scalding, the second bitter, the third just right, and when the fourth had no taste left I did not change it.

That afternoon I never opened the slides. In the book a man shuts himself in on a snowy day leafing through old books, and drifts off as he reads, and wakes to find

his tea stone cold. I laughed when I reached that line, because my tea had gone half cold too. I drained it in one go. Cold tea is not undrinkable, just astringent. Outside, the snow pressed the daylight down; four o'clock looked like six. I turned on the desk lamp and kept reading, the pages shining white under the light.

When I closed the book, I suddenly remembered my years at teachers' college, winters with no heating in the dorm, us wrapped in quilts taking turns reading aloud - reading books, breathing white vapor. Since when had I read only teaching manuals and exam outlines? I had taught for over a decade, teaching students to read, while losing reading itself. The snow kept falling. I sat there thinking about it a long time, with no answer, and it did not matter; having thought it counted.

Next day the snow stopped. I taught as usual, slides still unfinished, getting by on experience, and doing it middling. But when we reached a line about snow, I closed the textbook and told the class I had read a better line the day before, and recited it to them. Afterward the room was quiet for a moment. Those tens of seconds of silence were better than any class discipline I had ever kept. I did not mention the book of essays, and I assigned them nothing to read. Some things do not need saying. Snow falls on the page, and they can see it.

老头儿的雪天

老周退休第七年，雪天还是老作息。六点醒，不急着起，先躺着听外头。没声音，他就知道下雪了。城里下雪是不响的，但他听得出来——那种静本身就是一种响。

起来烧水，抓一把茶叶捂在缸子里，抱进书房。书房朝北，窗大。他坐下，从桌上那摞书里抽出一本，是他翻过不知多少遍的《水浒传》，书脊都软了，夹着几张药盒剪的书签。窗外雪正飘，一片一片，斜着往窗玻璃上贴，贴上来又滑下去。他看几页，抬头看一会儿雪，再低头看几页。这个读法四十年了，在厂里值夜班也是这个读法，那时候手边是一缸子高末，现在是龙井，他其实喝不出多少分别。

雪越下越大。他起身把窗开了条缝，说下雪天屋里闷，得见见外头。冷风进来，茶凉得快，他也不介意，凉了就再倒热的。书里打到景阳冈，武松那一段他熟得能背，可雪天读就是不一样，读到店家说三碗不过冈，他停了停，想起自己年轻时在厂门口的小馆子，也是这样的冷天，也是三碗酒——他喝的是白酒，喝完去上夜班，风一吹全醒了。他笑了一下，给自己又倒了半缸子茶。

一上午就这么过去，书读了四十来页，雪把外头全白了。老伴在客厅喊他吃晌午饭，他应了，没动，说再读两页。这两页读到晌午一点才放下。他吃饭的时候还在想武松过冈那段，跟老伴说，下雪天就该读这个。老伴说下雪天你读了一辈子了。他说对，读了一辈子，没读够。

下午他本来要午睡，没睡，接着读。读到林教头风雪山神庙，外头的雪恰好也下到了最密的

时候，草料场那一段，他读得特别慢，一个字一个字，好像怕读快了雪就停了。读完这段他坐到窗边看真雪，看了怕有半个钟头。茶缸子里的水续了三回，最后一缸已经没什么色了。

傍晚雪停，老周合上书，书里那片雪和窗外那片雪一起白着。他说明天还下，明天接着读。老伴问读哪回。他说林冲的下一回。他说这话的时候像个等着明天上课的学生。书房灯亮起来，窗台上积的白还没扫，一小片，端端正正，像谁给这个雪天盖的章。

The Old Man's Snowy Day

In his seventh year of retirement, Old Zhou still kept the old hours on snowy days. Awake at six, he did not hurry up. He lay listening first. If there was no sound outside, he knew it was snowing. Snow in the city makes no noise, but he could tell - the silence itself was a kind of sound.

He got up, boiled water, grabbed a handful of tea leaves, smothered them in his thermos mug, and carried it into the study. The study faced north and had a large window. He sat down and drew one book from the stack on his desk - a Water Margin he had leafed through who knows how many times, its spine gone soft, bookmarks cut from medicine boxes tucked between its pages. Outside, snow was drifting, flake by flake slanting onto the window glass, sliding back down. He read a few pages, raised his head to watch the snow a while, then bent back to the pages. This was his way of reading for forty years. On night shifts at the factory he read the same way; then his mug held the lowest grade of tea dust, now it held longjing, though truthfully he could not taste much difference.

The snow grew heavier. He got up and cracked the window open a sliver, saying a room on a snowy day gets stuffy and must breathe the outside. Cold air came in and the tea cooled faster; he did not mind - when it cooled he poured more hot. In the book the fight on Jingyang Ridge had begun, a passage he knew by heart, yet reading it on a snowy day was different. When the tavern keeper said three bowls do not cross the ridge, Zhou paused and remembered the little eatery by his factory gate in his young days - such a cold day then too, and three bowls of wine - he drank the white liquor, then walked out into his night shift, and the wind sobered him completely. He smiled, and poured himself another half mug of tea.

The whole morning passed this way: some forty pages read, and the outside world gone wholly white. His wife called from the living room for lunch. He answered but did not move, saying two more pages. Those two pages lasted until one in the afternoon before he put the book down. Over lunch he was still on the passage of Wu Song crossing the ridge, and told his wife that snowy days are for reading this. She said you have read this on snowy days your whole life. He said true, a whole life,

and never enough.

He meant to take his afternoon nap and did not; he went on reading. He reached the chapter where Lin the instructor shelters from the snow at the mountain shrine, and outside the snow happened to be falling at its densest then. At the fodder depot passage he read very slowly, one character after another, as if afraid that reading fast would stop the snow. When he finished that chapter he sat by the window watching the real snow, perhaps for half an hour. His mug was refilled three times; the last round had almost no color left.

By evening the snow stopped. Old Zhou closed the book, its snow and the snow outside white together. He said it would snow again tomorrow, and he would go on reading tomorrow. His wife asked which chapter next. He said the one after Lin Chong's. Saying it, he sounded like a schoolboy waiting for tomorrow's class. The study light came on. The thin white gathered on the windowsill had not been swept - a small neat patch, like a stamp pressed onto the snowy day.