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.