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金童玉女

Gold Boy, Emerald Girl

李翊雲

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溫情(頁3-30)

Kindness (pp. 3-30)

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序言

短篇小說《溫情》(Kindness)由美國華裔作者李翊雲所著，收錄於其短篇小說集《金童玉女》(Gold Boy, Emerald Girl)。《金童玉女》是李翊雲最近其之作，收入共八篇中篇及短篇小說，以孤獨、悲哀為題材，貫穿全書。

李翊雲1972年出生於北京，祖籍浙江，是個土生土長的中國人。1996年，她從北京大學生命科學學院畢業，並於同年赴美國愛荷華大學攻讀免疫學碩士課程。2000年獲得碩士學位後，她繼續進修，攻讀博士學位，但由於當時丈夫不在身邊，學業又繁重，她開始以寫作作為她的精神寄託，釋放壓力。這樣，就展開了她的創作之路。2002年，李翊雲果斷放棄只剩一年就到手的博士學位，進了著名的愛荷華作家工作坊，其後開始發表短篇小說作品。儘管她以前從來沒有寫作經驗，更是在二十多歲才開始用非母語的英文來寫作，她的文字功力卻絕對不容小覷。她第一次出版短篇小說集《千年敬祈》(A Thousand Years of Good Prayers)，便贏得數個獎項：美國筆會海明威獎、英國衛報新人獎，以及愛爾蘭的弗蘭克·奧康納國際短篇小說獎，當中與書名同名的短篇小說更被改編成電影；幾年後英國文學雜誌《格蘭塔》(Granta)雜誌更選其為美國最傑出二十一位三十五歲以下青年小說家，在歐美文學界可謂聲譽鵲起。被譽為「天才」的李翊雲作為作家的路似是一帆風順，但她在現實生活中卻經歷過無數崩潰，更曾兩度嘗試結束自己的生命。她的個人經歷，解釋了為什麼她大部份的作品都以孤獨、悲傷為題材。

縱使李翊雲自身經歷與她筆下的人物故事密不可分，她的作品常常以一個冷靜抽離的方式來呈現，沒有露骨字詞，卻盡顯悲傷。《溫情》記述故事主人翁四十一歲的單身女教師莫言的童年和少時經歷，由三條敘事線穿插而成：在北京的孩童時期、軍訓時期，以及講述她父母的回憶片段，而譯者選譯的篇章只是小說的一小部分，主要交代故事主人翁的出身背景，另外有頗長篇幅是記述她軍訓時在軍隊的所見所聞。小說盡顯作者陰暗、悲觀的一面，主人翁坎坷的出身、畸形

的家庭背景、孤立的人生，譯者閱讀此小說時，時而感共鳴，時而被那份過分的悲傷嚇到。雖然小說所講述的是莫言的人生，但也代表著無數人的人生，反映著七十年代末至九十年代的中國社會，誰都可能是莫言。作者的字裡行間流露著一股冷漠，但又暗藏對溫情和愛的渴求和吶喊。

李翊雲的年紀與小說中的莫言相近，又同樣在北京成長，仿佛作者自己就是角色的原型，用各個情節片段來訴說自身。作者在小說中用了頗大的篇幅來記述莫言軍訓時期在軍隊的經歷，當中的每一個細節都刻畫得栩栩如生，譯者閱讀時尤如親歷其境。1989年的六四事件後，國家教委規定北京大學和復旦大學的本科新生進行為期一年的軍訓，該規定於1993年才取消，計算回來，作者入讀北京大學時仍須參加一年的軍事訓練，小說中所寫的，都是她自己真實經歷過的歲月。除了在軍隊的經歷外，故事主人翁的童年時期在北京渡過，是在北京出生成長的作者最切身的生活經歷。可見雖然這是一本在美國出版的英文小說，但內容與作者的成長和文化背景息息相關，充斥著中國社會文化韻味。

《溫情》的故事背景設定由七十年代末橫跨至九十年代，發生在中國內地，對於生於九十年代末、在香港土生土長的譯者來說，年代和文化背景的差距為翻譯過程帶來不少困難和挑戰。在翻譯過程的初期，由於譯者對該時代及文化背景的不了解，出現了不少翻譯錯誤。開始讀小說的第一段，譯者就遇上難關。第一段，作者簡單記述了莫言大學時期的經歷，原本譯者將原文「In college, after a few failed attempts to convince me of the importance of being a community member, my adviser stopped acknowledging my presence,」中的「adviser」譯為「指導教授」，誤以為作者所指的「adviser」就是像我們在大學裡的學術顧問（academic advisor），但經導師提醒兩地的文化差異後，譯者再到網上查看，瀏覽一些內地網站和到國內年青人常用的討論區搜尋，發現原文所指的「adviser」是「輔導員」，工作範圍包括負責學生的思想政治教育、心理輔導等等，與香港由大學教授擔任的學術顧問大相逕庭。由於對句子前半部分的理解錯誤，再加上與

內地政治、教育文化的隔閡，以及原文的表達不盡清晰，譯者未能完全理解原文意思，將原文「being a community member」誤譯成「參加社團」。「Community」一字有團體、群體之意，字詞本身不帶有政治意味，但考慮到內地的政治文化背景，並結合上文下理，便能夠猜測到作者是指加入共產黨。

此外，另一個令我印象很深刻例子是「pounding on the face of her wristwatch with a long finger」，譯者在翻譯這句句子的時候疑惑過「a long finger」是指什麼「finger」，如果是那個人的手指的話，為何不是「her finger」呢？不是她的手指的話，又哪來的手指呢？譯者交初稿給導師看的時候，還是牽強地將句子翻譯成「用長長的手指敲打著手錶錶面」，後來幸得導師講述舊時的文化，才知道手錶的「long finger」是指最長的秒針，而當時七八十年代的手錶並不一定配有秒針，配有秒針的手錶並非常見，因此作者才會特別提及。小說帶有濃厚的年代感，具豐富的文化元素，譯者在準備翻譯，或進行翻譯時，應多看相關背景的資料或作品，可多詢問於該年代及文化環境生活成長的人的意見，才更能掌握原文所表達的意思，更加有效地將內容準確地轉換成另一種語言。

另一方面，作者自身以及故事的中國文化背景有時候減少了翻譯過程中的挑戰。有人稱作者李翊雲為「悖離母語的寫作者」。的確，李翊雲放棄用中文寫作，而是選擇用非母語的英文來寫作，但她自己也同意，沒有人能夠完全悖離自己的母語。我們的母語影響我們的思維，文字和語言自然就更不用說了。在李翊雲的文字中，仍然看得見漢語的影子，例如是「Do not think this is your home, she said, adding that I'd better prepare to shed a few layers of skin.」，當中的「shed a few layers of skin」本來在英語裡通常都只有其字面的意思，就是指皮膚脫了一層皮，但在中文，亦意指做一些辛苦的工作，因此此片語可以直譯處理。

小說內常用一些日常用語，因此譯者在翻譯本篇小說時，頗常用一些符合內地文化的俚語來表達。例如是「he had taken up with a younger woman」翻譯成「也有人說他和一個年輕女人好上了」。「好上了」是指倆人成了戀人、在一起了，

是內地的通俗語，較貼近日常生活，避免文字過於生硬，亦符合文化背景。此外，譯者在翻譯時亦選用四字詞，讓譯文更精簡通順，讀起來更朗朗上口。例如「oily and puffy as fresh fried dough」翻譯成「油光滿面，肥腫難分，像剛炸好的油餅」。譯者使用增譯法以及運用四字詞，將「oily」和「puffy」分別翻譯成「油光滿面」和「肥腫難分」，望將譯文寫的更形象化。

另外，有關文化背景的專有名詞，譯者在翻譯時亦有多加留意，將譯文文字和原文故事配合得更和諧。例如譯者將「work unit」直譯成「工作單位」。在粵語和香港文化裡，工作單位大多指工作的部門，但在內地，「工作單位」是一個專有名詞，可指整個機關，亦可指整個企業，可大可小。此外，「retired early from illness」在內地亦有相關的專有寫法「病退」，是內地的中文裡獨有的說法，廣東話裡則沒有對應的字眼。此外，廣東話和普通話的某些字詞概念相異，譯者在翻譯時亦根據故事文化背景處理，例如是廣東話和普通話中的「屋」、「房」的概念相反：在廣東話，「屋」較大「房」較小；在普通話裡，「屋」較小「房」較大。因此，譯者在翻譯本篇小說時，會根據內地的說法選字。

在翻譯初期，譯者因對小說背景的不熟悉，犯了不少翻譯錯誤，幸得導師仔細教導，循循善誘，譯者才能及時改正。在過去的一年，導師協助譯者進一步鞏固中文語言基礎，更毫不吝嗇的分享舊年代的事和翻譯心得，令過去一年的翻譯過程其樂無窮。

Kindness

I am a forty-one-year-old woman living by myself, in the same one-bedroom flat where I have always lived, in a derelict building on the outskirts of Beijing that is threatened to be demolished by government-backed real estate developers. Apart from a

trip to a cheap seaside resort, taken with my parents the summer I turned five, I have not traveled much; I spent a year in an army camp in central China, but other than that I have never lived away from home. In college, after a few failed attempts to convince me of the importance of being a community member, my adviser stopped acknowledging my presence, and the bed assigned to me was taken over by the other five girls and their trunks.

I have not married, and naturally have no children. I have few friends, though as I have never left the neighborhood, I have enough acquaintances, most of them a generation or two older. Being around them is comforting; never is there a day when I feel that I am alone in aging.

I teach mathematics in a third-tier middle school. I do not love my job or my students, but I have noticed that even the most meager attention I give to the students is returned by a few of them with respect and gratitude and sometimes inexplicable infatuation. I pity those children more than I appreciate them, as I can see where they are heading in their lives. It is a terrible thing, even for an indifferent person like me, to see the bleakness lurking in someone else's life.

I have no hobby that takes me outside my flat during my spare time. I do not own a television set, but I have a roomful of books at least half a century older than I am. I have never in my life hurt a soul, or, if I have done any harm unintentionally the pain I inflicted was the most trivial kind, forgotten the moment it was felt—if indeed it could be felt in any way. But that cannot be a happy life, or much of a life at all, you might

《溫情》

我今年四十一歲，女，獨居，這些年來一直住在這個一房單位。單位位於北京郊區一棟失修的舊樓，正面臨著被政府撐腰的地產商拆除的威脅。除了五歲那年暑假父母帶我去的那趟廉價海濱渡假之旅，和在華中地區參加過為期一年的軍訓外，我這生都沒怎麼旅遊過。大學時，我的輔導員不斷嘗試說服我加入黨的重要性，但都不成功，之後他就不理我了；在宿舍，床位被其他五個女孩子霸佔來放行李箱。

我未婚，自然也沒有小孩。我一直住在同一區，但沒什麼朋友。不過我熟人夠多了，他們大多老我一兩輩，與他們相處很舒服，讓我不會有獨自老去的感覺。

我在一所三流中學教數學。我從不愛這份工作，也不愛我的學生，但我發現，有時對學生微不足道的關心，會得到他們報以尊重、感激，甚至是莫名其妙的迷戀。比起欣賞，我更同情他們，因為我知道他們將要面對甚麼。看到他們暗淡的前途，即使是我這般冷漠的人也覺得可怕。

我沒什麼喜好，空暇時根本不用踏出公寓半步。公寓裏沒有電視機，但有放滿整個房間的老書，至少比我老五十年。我這生從沒有傷害過人，即使是無意造成的傷害，也必是微不足道的，如果感受到的話，在感受到的那一刻就被遺忘了，但那不是快樂的生活，甚至談不上是生活。對，那不算是活着。「你為什麼不快樂？」到現在，

只要我閉上眼睛，就會感受到魏中尉用手指托着我的下巴，

say. That may very well be true. “Why are you unhappy?” To this day, if I close my eyes

I can feel Lieutenant Wei’s finger under my chin, lifting my face to a spring night. “Tell me, how can we make you happy?”

The questions, put to me twenty-three years ago, have remained unanswerable, though it no longer matters, as, you see, Lieutenant Wei died three weeks ago, at

forty-six, mother of a teenage daughter, wife of a stationery merchant, veteran of Unit 20256, People's Liberation Army, from which she retired at forty-three, already afflicted with a malignant tumor. She was Major Wei in the funeral announcement. I do not know why the news of her death was mailed to me except perhaps that the funeral committee—it was from such a committee that the letter had come, befitting her status—thought I was one of her long-lost friends, my name scribbled in an old address book. I wonder if the announcement was sent to the other girls, though not many of them would still be at the same address. I remember the day Lieutenant Wei's wedding invitation arrived, in a distant past, and thinking then that it would be the last time I would hear from her.

I did not go to the funeral, as I had not gone to her wedding, both of which took place two hours by train from Beijing. It is a hassle to travel for a wedding, but more so for a funeral. One has to face strangers' tears and, worse, one has to repeat words of condolence to irrelevant people.

讓我抬起頭看著春夜。「告訴我，我們怎樣才能使你快樂？」

二十三年前的提問，一直沒有答案，不過一切都不重要了。魏中尉於三週前去世了，終年四十六歲。她是一個十幾歲女兒的母親，文具商人的妻子，中國人民解放軍20256部隊的退伍軍人。她四十三歲退役時，已開始受惡性腫瘤的折磨。在葬禮上，稱她為魏少校。我不知道治喪委員會的人為什麼會把她的訃告寄給我，大概是看到殘舊發黃的電話簿上潦草的地址，就以為我是她舊朋友吧。不知道其他女生有沒有收到訃告，不過她們應該大多都搬家了。記得多年前收到魏中尉寄來的喜帖時，還以為那是最後一次聽到她的消息了。

她的婚禮和葬禮我都沒有出席。這兩個地點都離北京兩個小時的火車車程，以婚禮來說太麻煩了，葬禮便更甚。要看着陌生人流淚，甚至不斷對着不相干的人重複慰問。

When I was five, a peddler came to our neighborhood one Sunday with a bamboo basket full of spring chicks. I was trailing behind my father for our weekly shopping of rationed food, and when the peddler put a chick in my palm, its small body soft and warm and shivering constantly, I cried before I could ask my father to buy it for me. We were not a rich family: my father worked as a janitor, and my mother, ill for as long as I could remember, did not work, and I learned early to count coins and small bills with my father before we set out to shop. It must have been a painful thing for those who knew our story to watch my father's distress, as two women offered to buy two chicks for me. My father, on the way home, warned me gently that the chicks were too young to last more than a day or two. I built a nest for the chicks out of a shoe box and ripped newspaper, and fed them water-softened millet grains and a day later, when they looked ill, aspirin dissolved in water. Two days later they died, the one I named Dot and marked with ink on his forehead the first to go, followed by Mushroom. I stole two eggs from the kitchen when my father went to help a neighbor fix a leaking sink—my mother was not often around in those days—and cracked them carefully and washed away the yolks and whites; but no matter how hard I tried I could not fit the chicks back into the shells, and I can see, to this day, the half shell on Dot's head, covering the ink spot like a funny little hat.

五歲那年的一個星期天，我跟在爸爸身後，購買每星期一次食物配給。一個小販背着竹籃到我家附近賣小雞，他把小雞放在我的掌心上。那嬌小柔軟的身體散發出一股暖意，不斷的顫抖着。還來不及開口要父親買下來，我就哭了。我們家不富裕，爸爸是個看門人，媽媽則自我懂事以來就久病不能工作，而我早早就跟著爸爸在外出買菜前一起數硬幣和小額鈔票。知道我們家境的人，看着爸爸因無法滿足孩子而內疚一定是太痛心了，所以有兩個阿姨主動買了兩隻小雞送給我。回家路上，爸爸婉轉地告誡我，小雞大多活不過兩天。我用鞋盒子和報紙為小雞做了一個巢，餵牠們吃用水泡過的小米，隔天，牠們看起來像是病了，我便把阿士匹靈溶在水裏給牠們喝。兩天後，牠們死了。先死的是額頭上有一點墨水記號的那隻，我叫牠做小黑點，之後蘑菇也跟着死了。一天，爸爸去幫鄰居修理漏水的水槽，媽媽又常不在家，我趁機偷偷溜進廚房偷了兩隻雞蛋，小心翼翼的剝開蛋殼，洗走蛋黃和蛋白，本想把小雞放回蛋殼裏，但怎麼也放不進去。至今回想起，小黑點頭上的半塊蛋殼，蓋着牠額頭上的那點墨迹，就像一頂滑稽的小帽。

I have learned, since then, that life is like that, each day ending up like a chick refusing to be returned to the eggshell.

I was eighteen when I entered the army. Lieutenant Wei was twenty-four, an age that I now consider young, though at the time she seemed much older, a lifetime away from me. The day I arrived at the camp, in a midsize city plagued by hepatitis and pickpockets, I came with a single half-filled suitcase. The army had sent an extensive list of supplies that would be issued to us: toothbrushes and towels and washbasins, mess kits, thermoses to be shared among a squad, uniforms for all seasons—we used to joke that, had the army known the sizes of our bras, they would have ordered them too, dyed the same green as our socks and underpants.

A few men and women in uniform loitered under a tree. I had taken a night train, making a point of leaving home and arriving at the camp at the earliest time allowed. My father had seen me off at the train station, shaking my hand solemnly through the open window when the train whistled its signal of departure; my mother had not come, citing illness, as I had known she would.

After I registered, a woman officer, about a head taller than I was, her hair cropped short, introduced herself as Lieutenant Wei, my platoon leader. She had on a straw-colored uniform shirt buttoned to the top, dark green woolen pants, and a crimson tie. I did not cringe under her severe stare; I had lived, until then, beneath the unrelenting eyes of my mother. Decent if not strikingly beautiful—sometimes during a meal she

從此，我明白了人生就是這樣，最後每天都像小雞般，不想再回到蛋殼裏。

軍訓那年，我十八歲。那時魏中尉二十四歲，對現在的我來說算是年輕，但當時的我就感覺她老了大輩子。去軍營的那天，我只帶了一個半滿的行李箱去軍營，所在地是個肝炎和扒手肆虐的中型城市。軍方的供給表，列明會發給我們牙刷、毛

巾、洗臉盆、餐具、全班共用的保溫瓶和四季的軍服。我們開玩笑說，如果軍方知道我們的胸圍尺寸，一定會一併訂購，並染成與襪子和內褲一樣的綠色。

幾個身穿軍服的男女在樹下徘徊。為了儘早到達軍營，我坐了夜班火車。爸爸去了火車站送車。火車準備離站，在鳴笛聲下，他從窗外嚴肅地跟我握手；媽媽則正如我所料，稱病沒有來。

登記過後，一位比我高一個頭，蓄齊耳短髮的女軍官走來自我介紹，說她是魏中尉——我的排長。她身穿黃綠色的軍服，鈕扣全扣起來，繫上緋紅色領呔，下身則穿着深綠色的羊毛褲。她冷冷的盯着我看，但我沒有害怕，這些年來我都在媽媽無情的眼光下活着。媽媽不時會在吃飯時對我評頭品足，她說我談不上美

would study my face and comment on it; in the evenings when my father was working the night shift, she would remark on my adequately developed curves. I had learned that if one remained unresponsive in those situations one could become transparent; when my mother's eyes peeled off my clothes piece by piece they would meet nothing underneath but air.

After I changed into my uniform, Lieutenant Wei ordered me to mop the barracks. Yes, I replied; yes Lieutenant, she corrected me. Yes, Lieutenant, I replied readily, and she looked at me for a long moment then turned around as if disgusted by my lack of defiance.

I was the first one of our platoon to have arrived, and I walked through the aisles between the bunk beds, studying the names taped to the metal frames. The company was housed in a three-story building, with each platoon occupying a long floor and

bunk beds lining both walls, separated into four squads by washstands and desks. I would be sharing a bunk bed with a girl named Nan: we each had a white sheet, underneath which was a thin straw mattress; a quilt and a blanket, both dark green, folded as though they were sharply cut tofu. There was no pillow, and soon we would all learn to wrap up our outside clothes—dresses and shirts that were forbidden in the barracks—into pillows at night. Next to my bed was a window opening to the courtyard, where trees whose names I had yet to learn stood in a straight line, their branches pointing upward in a uniform manner.

動人，但五官還算端正；爸爸上夜班的晚上，她會評論我已經發育完全的身體線條。我知道在這種情況下只要靜靜待着，就可以變得透明。當媽媽用雙眼一件一件的扯掉我的衣服時，她會發現內裏甚麼都沒有，只有空氣。

我換上軍服後，魏中尉命令我到營房拖地板。我回她「好」，她糾正我應說「是，中尉。」。我跟着她說：「是，中尉。」她瞪了我很久，然後轉過身，好像很討厭我的唯命是從。

我是我們排裡最早到的。我沿着雙層床之間的通道走，研究着貼在鐵床架上的名字。連隊住在一棟三層高的樓房裏，每個排住一層，雙層床靠着兩邊牆壁擺放，用盥洗盆和書桌將一個排分隔成四班。我和一個叫阿楠的女生睡同一張雙層床，我們每人都有一張薄薄的淺黃色床褥，上面蓋着白色床單，還有一張暗綠色的棉被和毯子，疊得像豆腐磚般方正齊整。沒有枕頭，我們很快就學會了將軍營內禁止穿的裙子、襯衫包起來當枕頭。我的床邊有一扇向着庭院的窗，院子裏長着我叫不出名字的樹，排成一條直線，枝杈整齊地向上指。

Lieutenant Wei came back later and ran a palm over the floor. Do not think this is your home, she said, adding that I'd better prepare to shed a few layers of skin.

When she ordered me to mop the floor again, I replied, "Yes, Lieutenant."

"Louder," she said. "I can't hear you."

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"I still can't hear you," she said.

"Yes, Lieutenant," I said.

"You don't have to yell in my face. A respectful and clear reply is all we need here."

"Yes, Lieutenant," I said. She stared at me for a long moment and then said that a soldier shed sweat and blood but never tears. I waited until she left before I dried my face with my sleeve. It was my father's handshake through the open window that I had cried for, I told myself, and swore that I would never again cry in the army.

2.

A dream has recurred over the past twenty years, in which I have to give up my present life and return to the army. Always Lieutenant Wei is in the dream. In the early years she would smile cruelly at me. Didn't I tell you that you would be back?

The question was put to me in various ways, but the coldness remained the same.

The dreams have become less wicked as the years have gone by. I'm back, I tell

Lieutenant Wei; I always knew you would come back, she replies. We are older,

魏中尉隨後回來，用手在地上摸了摸。她叫我不要把這裡當自己家，還說我最好準備好要脫幾層皮。她命令我把地再拖一遍，我回她說：「是，中尉。」

「大聲點，我聽不見。」她說。 6

「是，中尉。」

「還是聽不到。」她說。

「是，中尉！」我說。

「不要對我大吼，你只須禮貌和清晰地回答。」

「是，中尉。」我說。

她瞪了我很久。她說，軍人流血流汗不流淚。我等她走了才用袖子把臉擦乾。我告訴自己，我是想起了從窗外和我握手的爸爸才哭的。我發誓，以後絕對不在軍隊裏哭了。

二.

這二十年來，我反覆發同一個夢。夢中，我放棄現在的生活，回到軍隊。魏中尉總是出現在這個夢裏，頭幾年，她會對着我冷笑。我不是說過你會回來嗎？她用不同方式問我這條問題，但每次都同樣冷淡。過了這麼多年，如今夢境已不再那麼恐怖。我告訴中尉，我回來了；她回答，我一直都知道你會回來的。夢中

having aged in my dreams as we have in real life, the only remnants of a previous life among a group of chirrupy teenage girls.

These dreams upset me. Lieutenant Wei's marriage, two years after I had left the army, and her transfer to another city, which would know her only as a married woman and later a mother, and then would see her die, must have wiped her history clean so she could start collecting new memories not about young, miserable girls in the camp but about happy people who deserved to be remembered. I never showed up in her dreams, I am certain, as people we keep in our memories rarely have a place for us in theirs. You may say that we too evict people from our hearts while we continue living in theirs, and that may very well be true for some people, but I wonder if I am an anomaly in that respect. I have never forgotten a person who has come into my life, and perhaps it is for that reason I cannot have much of a life myself. The people I carry with me have lived out not only their own rations but mine too, though they are innocent usurpers of my life, and I have only myself to blame.

For instance, there is Professor Shan. She was in her early sixties when I met her—but this may be the wrong way to put it, as she had lived in the neighborhood for as long as my father had. She must have watched my generation grow up, and studied every one of us before singling me out—I like to imagine it that way; you

的我們與現實中的我們一樣，都老了，在一群吵鬧的少女身上，只會看見過去生活的殘影。

這些夢使我難過。我離開軍隊，她也被調派到其他城市，兩年後，她結婚了。以後大家就只會視她為已婚婦女，之後就是母親，然後看着她離世。這一切把她一生以來的經歷抹得一乾二淨，去儲存新的回憶，不再是軍營裡的可憐女生，而是值得記住的幸福的人。我肯定她的夢不會有我，因為通常我們留在記憶裡的人，他們的記憶裡卻沒有我們的位置。你可能會說，我們也會把心裡給我們留位置的人從心裡驅逐出去，同時卻繼續存在於他們心裡。對一些人來說的確如此，但我大概是個例外吧。我不會忘記在我生命中出現過的任何一個人，也許是因為這樣，我沒有屬於自己的生活。我心裡記掛著的那些人，把我的那一份也活了。他們無意中侵佔了我的生活，但我只能怪自己。

像是單教授，我第一次見她的時候她已六十出頭了——這樣說不對，她跟爸爸在這區住了一樣久。她看著我們一代長大，一定是研究過每個人，才挑了我。

see, for a lonely woman, it is hard not to make up some scenario that allows her to believe herself special in a minor way.

Professor Shan was in her early sixties and I was twelve when she approached me one September evening. I was on my way to the milk station. “Do you have a minute?” she asked.

I looked down at the two empty bottles, snuggled in the little carrier my father had woven for me. He had painted the dried reed different colors, and the basket had an intricate pattern, though by then the colors had all faded. My father had a pair of hands that were good at making things. The wooden pegs he put on the foyer wall for my school satchel and coat had red beaks and black eyes; the cardboard wardrobe had two windows that you could push open from the inside, a perfect place for me to hide. He had built my bed too, a small wooden one, painted orange, just big enough to fit in the foyer alongside the wardrobe. We lived in a small one-room unit, the room itself serving as my parents’ bedroom, the foyer my bedroom; there was a small cube of kitchen and a smaller cube of bathroom next to the foyer. Later it occurred to me that we could not afford much furniture, but when I was young I thought it was a hobby of my father’s to make things with his own hands. Once upon a time he must have made things for my mother too, but from the time my memory begins their bedroom had two single beds, my father’s bare and neatly made and my mother’s piled with old novels, perilously high.

你看，我這個孤獨女子，硬是要編織一些故事，說服自己在微不足道的事情上是特別的。

九月的一個傍晚，六十出頭的單教授找上十二歲的我，當時我正在去牛奶站的路
上，她問我：「你有空嗎？」

我低頭看著在爸爸給我編織的籃子裏互相依偎的兩個空瓶。他在蘆葦上塗上不同顏色，還有複雜的圖案，不過那時都已經褪色了。爸爸有一雙巧手，他在門廊的牆上釘上有紅嘴黑眼的木鉤給我掛書包和外套，還用紙板做了個有兩扇窗的櫃子給我，是我最佳的藏身處。我的床也是他親手造的，是張小木床，髹成了橘黃色，剛好能放在前廳的櫃子旁。我們住在小單間裏裡，屋子本身就是爸媽的睡房，而門廊就是我的房間；門廊旁就是小廚房，和更小的洗手間。小時候我以為爸爸自己動手做家具是他的興趣，後來才知道是因為買不起。以前他肯定給媽媽做過東西，但從我有記憶以來，他們的睡房就已有兩張單人床，爸爸的床空蕩整潔，媽媽的床則是堆滿了舊小說，高得搖搖欲墜。

“Do you have a minute? I am asking you,” the old woman said again. I had developed a look of distractedness by then, and she was not the most patient woman.

I was on the way to the milk station, I stammered. “I’ll wait for you here,” she said, pounding on the face of her wristwatch with a long finger.

When I was out of her sight I took my time examining the trees by the roadside, and the last blossoming wildflowers. The line at the station was long, and that was what I told her when I reported back to her late. I addressed her as Teacher Shan, and she corrected me, telling me to call her Professor Shan. She led me up flights of stairs to her flat on the fifth floor. It did not occur to me that there was anything odd about this. The only thing my mother had warned me about, when I had had my first period a month earlier, was not to spend time alone with a man.

Professor Shan’s place, a one-room unit also, seemed more crowded than ours even though she lived there by herself. Apart from a table, a chair, and a single bed, the room was filled with trunks: dark leather ones with intricate patterns on the tops and sides, wooden ones with rusty metal clips, and two matching trunks—once bleached but by then more yellow than white—made of bamboo or perhaps straw, I couldn’t tell which. On each trunk there were books. She moved a pile of books to make a spot for me to sit on her single bed, and then took a seat in the only chair in the room. Up to that point I had not studied her, but I realized now that she was a beautiful woman, even at her age. Her hair, grayish white, was combed into a tight

「你有空嗎？我在問你呢。」那老婆婆再問一遍。那時我已常一副心不在焉的樣子，而她也不太有耐性。

我結結巴巴地說我正在去牛奶站。「我在這裡等你。」她邊說邊用手指敲打著手錶錶面，有秒針的那一種手錶。

離開她的視線後，我細心地觀賞路邊的樹、開最後一輪的野花。我跟她解釋，因為牛奶站的隊很長，所以晚了回來。我叫她單老師，她糾正我，要我叫她單教授。她帶我上了她在五樓的單元，當時我不覺得有什麼不妥，一個月前我第一次來月經，那時候媽媽只警告我不要再和男人單獨在一起。

單教授的家也是個小單間，她一個人住，但屋子看起來比我們家還要擁擠。除了一張桌子、一把椅子和一張單人床，房間還放滿了行李箱——深色皮箱，底部和側面有精細的花紋；金屬夾子生鏽的木箱；還有兩個同款的行李箱，漂白過一遍，但那時已是黃多於白，分不清是用竹還是稻草做的。每個行李箱上都放著書。她在她的單人床搬開一堆書，空出一個位置給我坐，然後自己坐了屋子裡唯一一把椅子上。在那之前，我從沒細看過她，但我現在發現，即儘管她年紀大了，她還是個美人。她灰白的頭髮梳成一個緊緊的髮髻，連一根髮絲也沒有鬆

bun, not a single strand running loose. Her face—the high cheekbones, the very prominent forehead, and the deep-set⁹ eyes—reminded me of a photograph of a female Soviet pilot in my textbook. I wondered if Professor Shan had some mixed blood. It was a secret joy of mine to study people's faces. I must take after my mother, who, apart from studying my face at a meal—the table placed between the two beds in my parents' bedroom—rarely took a bite. Sometimes, waiting for us to finish eating, she would comment on the people passing by outside our window: oily and puffy as fresh fried dough she described a woman living a floor above us; the man next door had a long and bitter-looking face, like a cucumber.

My mother was the prettiest woman I had known until then, with almond-shaped eyes in a small, heart-shaped face, a straight and delicate nose, and, as I later learned from her collection of romantic novels from the early 1900s, a cherry-petal mouth.

When she grew tired of watching the world, she would study her own face in an oval mirror that she kept close to her all day long. “A princess trapped in the fate of a handmaiden,” she would say to no one in particular. My father, eating silently, would look up at her with an apologetic smile, as if he were a parent responsible for his child’s deformed body.

出來。高高的顴骨，突出的額頭，還有深陷的眼睛，讓我想起課本上的蘇聯女飛行員。我想過，單教授會不會是混血兒。¹⁰我有個秘密的喜好，就是研究人的臉。我一定是學了媽媽：吃飯時，餐桌就放在爸媽睡房的兩張床中間，她看著我，卻不吃飯。有時候，她在等我們吃完的時候，就會評論在窗外經過的人，她說我們樓上的女人油光滿面，肥腫難分，像剛炸好的油餅；隔壁的男人有張長長的臉，一副苦相，就像根黃瓜。

我媽媽一直都是我見過最漂亮的女人，細小的瓜子臉上有雙杏眼，精緻高挺的鼻子，還有櫻桃小嘴。（我從她所收藏的二十世紀的初浪漫小說中學會的字眼）。她看膩了別人，就會用她整天放在身旁的那塊橢圓形鏡子來研究自己的臉。「公主身傭人命……」媽媽自言自語。正在默默吃飯的爸爸抬起頭，露出抱歉的微笑，就像個生了怪胎而心感內疚的父親。

My father had married late in his life, my mother early, he at fifty and she at twenty. Two years later they had me, their only child. When I was in elementary school, other children often mistook him for my grandfather, but perhaps that was because he had to be a parent to my mother, too. Together my mother and I made my father grow old fast. You could see that in his stooped back and sad smile.

“Do you always let your mind wander in front of your teachers?” Professor Shan asked, though I could see the question was more an amusement than a criticism. In her youth, she must have been more beautiful than my mother. I wondered what my mother would think if she knew my opinion. One thing I was certain of was that my mother would not get along well with Professor Shan, eccentricity being both women’s prized possession.

I was aware of Professor Shan’s existence as much as I was aware of the other people in the neighborhood: If you live in one place long enough, you do not need to seek out gossip and rumors; stories, all sorts of tales, will come to find you. Even for a family like ours, with a mother who rarely talked to people, and a father who was, in my mother’s words, quiet as a dead log, stories would come in eavesdropped form while I waited in lines—and it seems that I spent my childhood perpetually in lines, waiting for eggs, cooking oil, meat, soap, milk, and other rationed goods, waiting to pay the rent and utilities, waiting to get my mother’s prescription filled at the pharmacy. That was where I had first heard bits and pieces of Professor Shan’s story, 爸爸晚婚，媽媽則早婚，一個五十歲，一個二十。兩年後就有了我，他們的獨生女。我上小學的時候，同學常常以為他是我爺爺，但大概是因為他連媽媽的爸爸那一份也當了。我，再加上母親，讓爸爸老的很快，看他佝僂的背影和悲傷的笑容就知道了。

「你在老師跟前總是這麼心不在焉的嗎？」單教授問，但這是玩笑多於批評。她年

輕時一定比我媽還美。如果媽媽知道我這樣想，不知道她會覺得怎樣。我唯一肯定的是媽媽和單教授不會處得來，畢竟怪癖她們倆都為自己的怪癖感到自豪。

單教授的存在對我來說，就與其他鄰居一樣。如果在同一個地方住得久，你就不用特地去打聽，所有八卦故事都會自動找上門來。就連我們家，孩子媽不怎麼跟人說話，孩子爸又如媽媽所說的靜得像根木頭，我排隊時總會偷聽到不少故事。我的童年似乎就是在排隊中度過的——排隊買雞蛋、食油、豬肉、肥皂、牛奶，還有其他配給；排隊交房租、水電費；在藥店排隊拿媽媽的處方藥。單教授

even before I met her: She had taught high school English in another district before her retirement. She had a son and a daughter, who, after graduating from college, had both vanished, reappearing every once in a while as visitors from America. People could not agree on how they had managed to leave the country, though the most reasonable explanation was that Professor Shan had relatives on her mother's side who had fled to the States. Once upon a time there had been a husband, a much friendlier person than Professor Shan, but he had disappeared, too, and it was said that he had been sent to the American relatives just as their children had been; it was also said that he had taken up with a younger woman and started a Chinese restaurant with her in New York City, which might be true, as he was never seen in the neighborhood again.

In any case, sitting in Professor Shan's room on that first day, I could not imagine that the place had once been occupied by a family. There were no framed photographs or letters bearing foreign addresses, and the room, packed with trunks, seemed too small even for Professor Shan by herself. She studied me while I looked around the room, then picked up an old book and turned to a random page. "Read the line to me," she said. The book was the first one in a series called Essential English, which Professor Shan had used to learn English fifty years ago. The page had a small cartoon of a child on a seat, the kind one would find in a luxury theater.

的零星故事起初就是這樣聽回來的，那時我還沒見過她：聽說她退休前在另一區的高中教英語；她有一子一女，大學畢業後就不見了，每隔一段時間再以美國遊客的身份出現。對於他們是怎樣出國的，人們有不同的說法，但最合理的解釋是單教授娘家有親戚逃到了美國。她曾經有丈夫，人比她友善得多，但他也不見了。有人說他和孩子一塊兒被送到美國的親戚那裡去了；也有人說他和一個年輕女人好上了，在紐約一起開了家中餐館，這說不定是真，因為再沒有人人在附近見過他。

不管怎樣，第一次坐在單教授的房間裡，我無法想像這裡曾經住過一家人。房間裡沒有用相框鑲起來的照片，也沒有寫上外國地址的信；房間堆滿了行李箱，哪怕是單教授一個人住也太擠了。在我環顧房間的時候，她端詳著我，然後抽出一本老書，隨意翻開一頁。「讀這句給我聽。」她說。那是《基礎英語》系列中的第一本，單教授五十年前就是用它來學英語的。那頁有一幅小插畫，一個在座位上，豪華影院裡的那種座位，那個孩子因為太輕，不能把座椅壓下來，坐

In the cartoon, the child, who was not heavy enough to keep the seat from folding back, smiled uncertainly on his high perch, and I felt the same. I had entered middle school earlier that month, and had barely learned my alphabet.

When I could not read the caption, Professor Shan put the book back with the other volumes, their spines different colors that were equally faded. “You do know that you are not your parents’ birth daughter, don’t you?” She turned and faced me. “And you do know that no matter how nicely they treat you, they can’t do much for your education, don’t you?”

I had not doubted my blood until then—I knew that my parents were different from most parents, but I had thought that it was their age difference, and my mother’s illness. Moyan: my mother sometimes said my name in a soft voice when my father was not around, and I would know that she had some secrets to tell me. A man can have children until he is seventy, she would say; a woman’s youth ends the moment she marries. Moyan, do not let a man touch you, especially here and here, she would say, gesturing vaguely toward her own body. Moyan, your father would get you a stepmother the moment I died, she would say, narrowing her eyes in an amused way; do you know I cannot die now because I don’t want you to live under a stepmother? In one of these revelatory moments she could have said, Moyan, you were not born to us; we only picked you up from a garbage dump—but no, my mother had never, even in her most uncharitable moment, said that to me, and in fact she kept the secret until her death, and 在座位上，豪華影院裡的那種座位，那個孩子因為太輕，不能把座椅壓下來，坐在高高的椅子邊緣上不安的微笑著，我就和他一樣。那個月初，我進了初中，剛剛學過字母表。

我讀不出來，單教授就把書放回¹³原處。每本書的書脊顏色不同，但同樣褪色。「你知道你不是你父母親生的吧？」她轉過來看著我。「不管他們對你好，也不能給你

好的教育，你是知道吧？」

我以前從沒懷疑過自己的身世，我知道自己的父母和一般的父母不同，但我以為是因為他們的年齡差距，還有媽媽的病。「莫言——」有時候趁爸爸不在家，媽媽就輕聲叫我的名字，我就知道她有秘密要跟我說。她說，男人七十歲之前都能生小孩，而女人的青春在結婚的那一刻就完了。莫言，不要讓男人碰你，尤其是這裡，還有這裡——她會邊說邊模糊地指劃著自己的身體。莫言，我一死你爸就會給你找來個後媽——她會邊說邊眯著眼睛，像是覺得很有趣。我現在還不能死，因為我不想你跟著後媽生活，你知道嗎？來到這種真情剖白的時刻她大可跟我說，莫言，你不是我們生的；你是從垃圾堆裡撿來的——但她沒有，哪怕是在她最尖酸刻薄的時候，她都沒有這樣說過。事實上，她一直牢牢的守著這個秘

for that alone I loved her, and love her still.

13

“If your parents haven’t told you this, someone else must,” Professor Shan said when I did not reply. “One needs to know where she came from, do you understand?”

In my confusion I nodded. I am fortunate to be slow in responding to news—I have avoided much drama in my life, as the impact, if there is any, comes much later, in solitary meditation.

“I was an orphan myself,” Slowly, over the next three years, Professor Shan’s story would come in full. Her mother, a woman who had stayed unmarried to take care of her own aging parents, had inherited their small china shop when they died; by then she was too old to get married. She went to a Shanghai orphanage in the deadly winter of 1928 and adopted the only girl who was not suffering pneumonia. She named the young girl Shan Shan; she had no family name, as there was not one she could claim. McTayeier

School for Girls, the best school in Shanghai, was where Professor Shan had been educated, the school's name spelled out for me to remember, "The McTayeierians," the song she and her classmates had sung at school gatherings, sung to me. In her early twenties, Professor Shan had been hired by a teachers college but was fired when her dubious history was discovered. People who think they know their own stories do not appreciate other people's mysteries, Professor Shan explained; that is why people like you and me will always find each other. Those words, first said to me in the early days of my visits, are what made me go back to her every day at five o'clock.

密，直到她去世。單憑這一點，我愛她，到現在還愛。

「如果你父母沒跟你說，總得有人跟你說。」單教授看我沒有答話，便說道。「我們都該知道自己的出身，你明白嗎？」

我糊糊塗塗地點了點頭。幸好我對新消息的反應很慢，人生中少了很多戲劇性，因為就算對我有什麼影響，來的也要晚多，會在獨個兒沈思時找上門來。

14

「我自己也是孤兒。」單教授的故事在接下來的三年時間裡拼湊出來。她的媽媽為了照顧年邁的父母，一直沒有結婚，父母過世後她就繼承了他們的小瓷器店，那時候她已經過了適婚年齡。1928年的冬天，她從上海的孤兒院領養了唯一一個沒有染上肺炎的女孩。她給那個小女孩取名為姍姍，沒有姓氏，沒有人可讓她隨他姓。她上全上海最好的學校——McTayeier School for Girls（中西女中），她特意拼出來好讓我記住。《中西女孩》是她和同學在學校聚會時唱的歌，她唱給我聽。單教授二十來歲時在一所師範學院教過書，但後來因為有人發現她的出身背景有問題，就被解僱了。單教授解釋，那些自以為了解自己的故事的人，不懂得欣賞別人的秘密，所以像你跟我一般的人，總會找到彼此。在我開初去她家的時候，我第一次聽到了這番話，是我每天五點鐘都回去找她的原因。

She read to me. She scoffed at my English textbook, and told me to start on the first volume of Essential English. She never checked my progress, and after a while I realized it did not make any difference to her that I only looked at the illustrations. Instead she read her collection of novels to me. We began with David Copperfield, she sitting in the only chair in the room, I on the bed. Intimidation kept me focused at first, as sometimes she would look up sharply in mid-sentence to see if my eyes were wandering to the trunks, or the trees outside. I worried that she would find me a fraud and dismiss me. I did not like her or dislike her yet, but I was in shock, unable to process the fact that I was not related by blood to my parents, and Professor Shan's reading voice, with a melody that was not present when we talked, was soothing in a way that my mother's voice never was. Professor Shan would read long passages, stopping only when she seemed pleased, and then translate for me. Her translation seemed shorter than the original English, but even those brief Chinese words gave me a joy that I did not get elsewhere—she used phrases that belonged to a different era, a language more for the ancients than the living, and before long I began to mimic her. I had never been a talkative person, but now I had even fewer words, for the ancients had the most efficient ways of saying things. My schoolmates found it laughable but I persisted, ignoring teenage slang for a mixture of language used in ancient poetry and eighteenth-century romance novels. My father, who was not an educated person, did not seem to find it odd, perhaps having

她讀書給我聽。她對我的英語課本嗤之以鼻，叫我從《英語基礎》的第一冊開始讀。她從不檢查我的進度，之後我發現，我只看插圖她也無所謂。她反而會讀她收藏的小說給我聽。第一本是大衛·科波菲爾。她坐在屋裡的唯一一把椅子上，我坐在床上。她不時會在句子中間突然抬頭看我有沒有魂不守舍，顧著看行李箱，或者是外面的樹，起初我有些害怕，不敢不專心。我怕她會發現我偷懶，然後就不理我了。那時候我還說不上喜歡還是討厭她，但我很驚愕，接受不了我和爸媽並沒有血緣關

係，而單教授朗讀的聲音中，有一種在我們交談中從來沒有過的旋律安撫著我，連媽媽的聲音裡也沒有這種效果。單教授會讀長長的段落，讀到叫她滿意才會停來，然後翻譯給我聽。她的翻譯好像比英文原文短，但就連簡練的中文字句，就足以帶給我前所未有的一種喜悅。她會用一些另一個年代的說法，像是說給古人聽的，而不是現在的人。我不久就開始模仿她。我從來不是個愛說話的人，但現在話就更少了，古人說話就是精簡。我的同學覺得很可笑，但我堅持，不說青少年間的俚語，把古詩詞和十八世紀的愛情小說的語言混著用。爸爸沒怎麼讀過書，他似乎不覺得奇怪，也許他對於教育如何影響一個人說話沒什麼概念；但媽媽卻不只一次在聽過我和爸爸說話之後打量起我來。我知道

little idea how education could change one's speech, but my mother, more than once, studied me after my father and I exchanged some words. I knew I had invaded her territory—after all, she was the one who read ancient poetry and centuries-old novels to pass the time. She could not make up her mind about how to accept my change, I could see, just as I could not make up my mind about the news of her not being my birth mother.

3.

By our third week in the army everyone in my squad had received a letter from home; a few had received additional letters from their friends. Without fail all of them cried when they read them. Ping, the youngest among us, fifteen and a half, doubtless a genius to have graduated high school so young, read aloud her father's letter between sobs: "After you registered and went into the barracks, Baba cried on the way to the train station. The night train from Wuhan to Beijing was fully packed, and Baba stood for eighteen hours, but that, compared to Baba's little darling's suffering in the army, was nothing. I have the calendar on my wall, and every morning I mark a day off, knowing it is one day closer to our reunion."

我侵入了她的領域，畢竟她才讀古詩詞和幾百年前的舊小說來打發時間的人。我看得出來她不知道該怎樣接受我的改變，就像我不知道該怎麼接受她不是我親媽的事實一樣。

三.

軍訓的第三個禮拜，班裡全部人都收到了家信，有些人更收到朋友的信。讀信的時候人人都哭了，無一例外。阿萍是我們中最年輕的，十五歲半，這麼早就高中畢業了，一定是個天才。她邊啜泣邊大聲朗讀她爸寫給她的信：「你登記完，進了軍營後，在去火車站的路上，爸爸哭個不停。武漢去北京的夜車客滿，爸爸站了十八個小時，但比起爸爸的心肝寶貝在軍隊裡受的苦，就算不上什麼了。我每天早上都會在牆上的月曆做個記號，告訴自己距離和女兒團聚的日子又近了一天。」

I was the only one, by the fourth week, not to have received a letter. “Are you sure you don’t want to write to your parents again?” asked Nan, who stood next to me in line for the formation drill and slept in the bunk bed above me. “Your last letter might have got lost, and they might not have the address to write to you.”

I shook my head. I had sent a postcard to my parents the first week, saying nothing but that I had arrived safely. My father was not the type to write a letter, and secretly I was relieved that my father was not like Ping’s, who would continue sending letters filled with unabashed words of love, which Ping never hesitated to share. My mother might write me, on a whim, a letter filled with quotations from ancient poems, but then again, she might have decided to cut me out of all communications.

At the end of the week I was summoned to Lieutenant Wei’s room. It was a Sunday, and we had the morning off from drills. She motioned for me to take the only chair, and I moved it away from her before sitting down in the middle of the room. There was a single bed on my left, with an army-issue quilt, blanket, and sheet. There was no pillow on her bed, and I wondered if she wrapped up some old clothes as we did at night, or if she had a pillow hiding in her closet. On the wall next to the bed were a few framed photographs. A black-and-white one stood out. A young girl, thirteen or fourteen, looked away with a smile, as if she had been teasing the photographer. “That was taken the summer before I enlisted,” Lieutenant Wei said as she studied me. “Have you been out to town yet?”

我是唯一一個到了第四個星期還沒有收到信的。「你真的不要再寫信給你爸媽嗎？」阿楠問我。步操時她站我旁邊，又睡我的下鋪。「你上次寫的信可能給寄丟了，也許他們沒有你的地址。」

我搖了搖頭。第一個星期我就給他們寄明信片了，只是告訴他們我安全到達了。

我爸不是會寫信的人，而我也暗暗鬆了一口氣，幸好他不像阿萍爸爸那樣，不斷地寄那些寫滿情話的信來——就是阿萍愛跟我們分享的那一種。我媽可能會一時興起的寫信給我，寫滿古詩名句，但又可能跟爸爸一樣跟我斷絕聯繫。

那個週末我被叫到魏中尉的房間去。那天是星期天，我們早上操練完就放假。她示意讓我坐在房間裡的唯一一把椅子上，我把椅子從她身邊挪開，坐在房間的中央。我左邊有一張單人床，上面有軍隊發的棉被、毯子和床單，沒有枕頭，不知道她是跟我們一樣，晚上才把舊衣服包起來當枕頭，還是藏在衣櫃裡了。床邊的牆上有幾張用相框鑲起來的照片，有一張黑白的格外顯眼。一個十三四歲的小女孩笑著別過臉去，像是在逗拍照的人。「這是我在入伍前的夏天拍的。」魏中尉邊打量我邊說：「你進過城嗎？」

“No, Lieutenant,” I said. She only had to check her chart to know that I had never requested one of the two-hour permits¹⁷ to visit town on Sundays.

“Why? The town is too small for someone from Beijing to visit?”

I thought about the question, which, like all questions put to us by an officer, could have many traps. There was no particular reason, I said. I could have said that I wanted to give the opportunity to the other girls, who were more eager to have the two hours of freedom, but that would have led to more questioning. I had learned, in the past few weeks, that an officer’s friendliness was not to be trusted. Lan, a girl whose hometown was in the same province as Lieutenant Wei’s hometown, once had an amicable chat with Lieutenant Wei at a drill break, but five minutes later, when Lan made the mistake of turning right when the rest of us turned left, Lieutenant Wei ordered her to leave the formation and do a hundred turn-lefts. Even

worse, Lan was to give herself the drill command, and by the time she reached thirty, her voice was choked by her tears. Lieutenant Wei, while the rest of us watched with anxiety, told Lan that if she did not make the command clear and loud to all who were witnessing her punishment, it would not count. Similar incidents had happened to others: a girl was ordered to stand in the middle of the mess hall during a meal after she had laughed at a joke told quietly to her by a squad mate; another girl was asked to read a self-criticism in front of the company because she had claimed the food from the mess hall was better suited for feeding pigs than human beings. These punishments were

「沒有，中尉。」我說。她只要查一下記錄就會知道，我沒有申請過星期天進城參觀兩小時的許可。

「為什麼？這個城對北京人來說太小了嗎？」

我想了想這條問題，跟軍官問的其他問題一樣，可能滿佈陷阱。我說沒什麼特別的理由。我可以說我想把機會留給其他人，她們更渴望這兩個小時的自由——但這樣說就會有更多問題問我。過去的幾個禮拜，我看出長官的友善並不可信。阿蘭和魏中尉是同鄉，來自同一個省，有一次步操，休息時她們有說有笑地聊了幾句，但五分鐘後，阿蘭犯了錯，在大家都左轉時她卻右轉了，魏中尉就要她離隊，做左轉一百次。更要命的是，阿蘭要給自己叫步操口令，叫到第三十遍時，她都被眼淚噙到了。我們都不忍心看下去，魏中尉跟阿蘭說，如果她口令叫得不夠清楚大聲，看她受罰的人聽不到的話，就不算數。其他人也有過同類的遭遇：有一個女生在班裡其他人悄悄地給她講了個笑話後，笑了出來，就被罰在吃飯時間站在食堂中央；另一個女生說食堂的飯菜是豬食，不該給人吃，被罰在整

measured out not only by Lieutenant Wei and the other junior officers, but also by Major Tang, the commander of our company, who, as the only male officer, liked to storm through the barracks for unannounced inspections.

When I did not reply, Lieutenant changed the topic and said that she had heard that I hadn't yet received a letter from home. I wondered who had reported this to her, but perhaps this was how the army worked, details about our lives recorded by informants among us. My parents are not the type to write letters, I said.

"Is that a problem for you?"

"A problem, Lieutenant?"

"Would you like to phone them?" Lieutenant Wei said. "I could arrange for you to make a phone call to your parents if you wish."

My parents did not own a telephone. The nearest public telephone was a few blocks from our building, guarded by a brusque middle-aged woman. A message would be taken but would not be delivered until the end of the day; she was a government worker, her salary at a set level, so she rarely inconvenienced herself to deliver even the most urgent messages. Once in a while when the residents filed complaints, she would for a week or two put the callers on hold and send her teenage son around the neighborhood. "A phone call for number 205," he would call out in front of a building, his voice no longer a child's but not yet a grown man's. He was said to be slow, so no school would admit him, and he spent his days, if not as a 個連面前自我批評。不止魏中尉和其他下級軍官會這樣罰我們，我們連隊的指揮官唐少校也會。他是唯一一個男軍官，喜歡衝進營房突擊檢查。

我沒有答話，中尉就換個話題，說她聽說我還沒收到家裡的信。不知道是誰跟她報告的，可能軍隊就是這樣的吧，我們的生活點滴全都有線人記下來。我告訴她我父母是不愛寫信的那種人。

「這對你來說成問題嗎？」

「什麼問題呀？中尉。」

「你要不要打電話給他們？」魏中尉說。「你的話我可以安排一下，讓你打電話給你父母。」

我家裡沒有電話，最近的公用電話離我們家幾條街，由一個粗魯的阿嬤看守。她會記下口信，但等到下班才會把口信送出去。她是政府工作人員，有固定的工資，所以即使是緊急的口信，她也很少會特意走一趟。偶爾有居民投訴，那一兩個禮拜她就會攔起電話，派她十多歲的兒子去送口信。「205號！電話！」他會在樓前大喊。他的聲音已經不像小孩子，但也還不是大男人的聲音。聽說他人

companion to his mother, then running around the neighborhood and intimidating
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young children with incoherent ghost stories. My mother would never respond to such a boy calling our flat number in that manner, nor would she be willing to make a trip to the phone booth to call me back.

I told Lieutenant Wei that there was no need to make a call, as my parents did not have a telephone at their place.

“And a neighbor? A friend living nearby?” Lieutenant Wei said. “Anyone who could receive a phone call on their behalf so they know you are well?”

The only telephone number I knew—though I had never used it—was Professor Shan’s. It was written on a slip of paper, in her neat handwriting, and taped on the red telephone next to her single bed. I had studied the number many times while she was reading a long passage, and after a while I could not get it out of my mind.

There is no one I could call, I said when Lieutenant Wei pressed me again. She studied my face as if trying to decide if I was lying out of defiance. She retrieved a file folder from a drawer, and pages rustled under her impatient fingers. I looked out the window at the evergreen trees, wishing to be one of them. I loved trees more than I loved people; I still do. Few creatures are crueller than human beings, Professor Shan had said once; we had been standing side by side next to her fifth-floor window, looking down at people busy with their late-afternoon lives. I can guarantee you, Professor Shan said, pointing to the weeping willows by the roadside, 很遲鈍，所以沒有學校錄取他。他每一天不是陪他媽媽，就是在小區裡跑來跑去，說些顛三倒四的鬼故事來唬嚇小孩子。我媽一定不會理會一個用這樣的態度喊我們家房號的男孩，也不願意跑一趟電話亭回電給我。

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我告訴魏中尉我不需要打電話，因為家裡沒有電話。

「鄰居呢？住附近的朋友呢？」魏中尉問。「有沒有誰可以代他們接個電話，報個平安呢？」

我只知道單教授的電話號碼，可我沒有打過。她把號碼工整地寫了在一張紙條上，貼在單人床邊的紅色電話上面。在她讀著一段又一段的時候，我看了那個號碼很多遍，之後就忘不掉了。

魏中尉再追問，我就跟她說我沒有可以打電話的人。她打量著我的臉，像是在想我是不是為了反抗她而撒謊。她從抽屜裡找出一個文件夾，紙張在她不耐煩的手指下沙沙作響。我看著窗外的常青樹，希望成為其中一棵。那時候，比起人，我更愛樹，直到現在依然如此。單教授曾經說過，沒什麼生物比人類還要殘忍。我們並肩站在五樓的窗口前，望著街上人們繁忙的午後生活。單教

every one of those trees is more worthwhile than the people you'll get to know in life; isn't it a good thing that once you are bored by people you still have trees to watch?

"Your father's work unit? Can you call him there?" Lieutenant Wei said. "But of course we'll have to arrange for you to call during the weekdays to catch him at work."

I had put down "service" for my father's occupation on my registration form, along with the name of the department store where he worked night shifts. I wondered if she was calculating my parents' ages, as the registration form asked for their birth information, too.

There was no need to call him, I replied. My parents were not the type who would begrudge the army for not giving them sufficient information about my well-being.

Lieutenant Wei seemed not to notice the hostility of my words. "Your mother—what kind of illness does she have?"

When I had entered elementary school I had been instructed by my father to put down "retired early from illness" for my mother's occupation. What kind of illness, the teachers would ask. What did she do before she became ill? At first I did not know how to answer, but by middle school I became an expert in dealing with people's curiosity—she was a bookkeeper, I would say, the most tedious and lonely

授指著路邊的垂柳，說她保證這裡的每一棵樹，都比我往後的生命中要遇見的人更有價值。當你對人厭倦了，還有樹可看，不是很好嗎？

「你父親的工作單位呢？你可以打電話到那裡找他嗎？」魏中尉說。「那樣我們就要安排你在平日他上班的日子打給他了。」

登記表格裡父親的職業那一欄，我填了「服務業」，還有他上夜班的那家百貨公司

的名字。表格裡也有問父母的出生資料，不知道她是不是在計算他們的年紀。

我說不需要打給他，我爸媽不會因為軍隊沒有通知他們我過得怎麼樣而抱怨。

魏中尉好像沒察覺到我話中帶刺。「你母親患的是什麼病呢？」

我上小學的時候，爸爸就教我在母親的職業那一欄填「病退」。老師會問是什麼病，她生病之前是做什麼的？開頭我不知道怎麼回答，但到了初中，我就成了對付好奇心的專家。我會說她以前是記帳的，這是我能想得到的最無趣、最寂

job I could come up with for her; lupus was what had been troubling her, I would explain, the name of the disease learned in fifth grade when a classmate's mother had died from it. I thought about what kind of tale would stop Lieutenant Wei from pursuing the topic. In the end I said that I did not know what had caused her disability.

The earliest I could remember people commenting on her illness was when I was four. I was standing in a long line waiting for our monthly egg ration when my father crossed the street to buy rice. What kind of parents would leave a child that small to hold a place in line, asked someone who must have been new to the neighborhood, and a woman, not far behind me, replied that my mother was a mental case.

Nymphomania was the word Professor Shan had used, and it was from her that I had learned the story of my parents' marriage: at nineteen, my mother had fallen in love with a married man who had recently moved into the neighborhood, and when the man claimed he had nothing to do with her fantasy, she ran into the street calling his name and telling people she had aborted three babies for him. They would have locked her up permanently had it not been for my father's marriage proposal. My father, whom people had thought would remain a bachelor for life, went to my mother's parents and asked to take the burden off their hands. Which would you have chosen for your daughter had you been a mother, Professor Shan asked me—an asylum or an old man? She'd told me the story not long after I had

寞的工作了。我會說她患狼瘡，五年級的時候有一個同學的媽媽因為這個病而去世了，我就學會了這個病名。我在想要說什麼樣的故事，魏中尉才不會追問下去。最後，我說我不知道她是什麼病。

條長長的隊，買每月一次的雞蛋配給，而爸爸就到過街買米去了。有個人說，哪有父母會留下這麼小的孩子來排隊呢，這人應該是新搬來的，然後站我後面不遠的女人回他，說我媽媽有精神病。單教授用了慕男狂這個字眼來形容，爸媽的婚姻故事也是從她那裡聽來的：媽媽在十九歲那年愛上了一個新搬到附近的已婚男人，那男人說那只是她的幻想，和自己沒有任何關係，媽媽就跑到街上大喊他的名字，跟人說為他打掉了三個孩子。要不是我爸向她父母提親，她應該會被關一輩子。大家都以為爸爸會當一輩子光棍，他卻跑去找媽媽的父母，說要接過他們的擔子。單教授問我，如果我是個媽媽，會為女兒怎樣選擇呢？精神病院？還是老男人？在我常去她家不久後，她就說了這個故事給我聽。我支支吾

become a regular visitor to her flat. I had stammered, not knowing how to pass the test. Professor Shan said that it was my mother's good fortune that her parents had given her up to a man who loved her rather than to an asylum; love makes a man blind, she added, and I wondered if my father's misfortune was transparent to the world.

Later I would realize that my family—my father's reticence, my mother's craziness, and my existence as part of their pretense to be a normal married couple—must have been gossip for the neighborhood, and their story, sooner or later, would have reached me, but when I left Professor Shan's flat that day, I resented her heartlessness. We were only fifty pages into David Copperfield, and I could have easily found an excuse not to go to her flat again, but what good would it have done me? I was no longer my parents' birth child, and their marriage, if it could be called a marriage, was no doubt a pitiful one.

Lieutenant Wei closed the file folder. She seemed, all of a sudden, to have lost interest in my case. She looked at her wristwatch and said that since there was still an hour until the end of the day, meaning eleven o'clock, when drills started, I might as well use the time wisely and go water and weed our platoon's vegetable garden.

吾，不知道怎樣回答。單教授說我媽媽很幸運，她的父母把她交給了一個愛她的男人，而不是精神病院。她又說，愛情使人盲目。爸爸不走運的命，不知道是不是全世界都看得見了。

之後我發現我們家的事一直都是鄰里之間的八卦——沈默寡言的爸爸、瘋瘋癲癲的媽媽，還有用來裝作他們的婚姻生活很正常的我。其實他們的事早晚會傳到我耳

朵裡，但那天離開單教授家的時候，我還是很恨她那麼殘酷無情。大衛·科波菲爾只讀了五十頁，我很容易就能找到藉口不再去她家，但那對我又有什麼好處呢？我不是爸媽的親生孩子，而他們的「婚姻」，如果可以稱之為婚姻的話，無疑是很糟糕的那一種。

魏中尉合上文件夾。她好像突然對我的事失去了興趣。她看了看手錶，說既然今天還剩一個小時，（還有一個小時才到十一點，開始步操的時間），那不如好好利用時間，去排裡的菜園澆水、除雜草。

Unsupervised Part (未經指導部分)

I declare that I have done the following part entirely on my own, without any help from my supervisor or any other person.

本人謹此聲明,本人獨力完成以下部分, 未得導師或其他人協助。

Date 日期: 3/5/2021

Today I would give anything for a garden, but the only space I can claim now is my flat. It's on the north side of the building, so the only sunshine I get is slanted light for an hour in the evening. My father used to keep pots of plants on the windowsill, but they have long since withered and found their way to the trashcans. Today I would give anything for a garden—perhaps not as big as the one we used to have in the army, as it would be pure greed to ask for that, but a small patch of earth. At eighteen, though, I did not have the urge to nurture anything. “The garden was weeded and watered yesterday, Lieutenant,” I said.

“Are you telling me that I have given you a worthless order? How about the pigs? If you think the vegetables grow without your contribution, maybe you could put some efforts into cleaning the pigsties.”

The pigs, not yet fully grown, were kept at the far end of the camp. There were five pigs for each company, and the conscripts in the cooking squad had told us that they were to be butchered at the end of our year for the farewell banquet. Other than the five pigs, we saw little meat. Once in a while Ping would devise an extensive plan to sneak a pig out of the camp, find a willing butcher to kill it, and another willing soul to cook it; the scheme grew more detailed and vivid, but it was only talk, for the sake of passing time.

今天的我會為園圃付出一切，但我擁有的，只有這公寓。我住在這棟樓的北邊，所以晚上一個小時的西斜，就是唯一入屋的日光。爸爸以前有在窗台種過幾盆植物，不過早就枯萎了，丟進了垃圾箱。今天的我會為園圃付出一切，不用像軍隊裡的菜園那麼大，那樣太貪心，一塊小小的地就夠了。十八歲的時候，我還沒有想種植的衝動。我說：「昨天已經澆過水、除過雜草了，中尉。」

「你意思是我叫你做沒用的事情嗎？那些豬呢？要是你覺得你只管待著，菜也會自己生長的話，那你花點力氣把豬圈打掃乾淨吧。」

豬還沒有成年，養在軍營的最末端。每個連隊有五頭豬，炊事班的士兵告訴我們，年末就會宰這些豬來擺告別宴。除了這五頭豬，我們幾乎沒機會看到肉。每過一陣子，阿萍就精心策劃大計，計劃偷運一頭豬出營地，找個屠夫來把牠殺了，再找人來煮。計劃愈來愈詳盡，繪聲繪影的，但不過是為了打發時間才說說而已。

I said it was not our squad's turn to take care of the pigs. Most shared duties—grounds-keeping around the barracks, gardening, helping the cooking squad prepare meals for the company, feeding the pigs and cleaning the pigsties, cleaning the toilet stalls and the washing room—were rotated among the four squads in the platoon, and apart from the kitchen duties, during which we could sneak extra food to our table, they were dreaded and carried out with aversion.

“I see that you haven't learned the most basic rule about the army,” Lieutenant Wei said. “This is not the civilian world, where one can bargain.”

4.

The civilian world slowly crept in on us, in the form of letters from old school friends and packages of chocolates from parents, memories of childhood holidays and teenage expeditions, and, in my case, Professor Shan's voice, reading D. H. Lawrence, her tone unhurried. Well, Mabel, and what are you going to do with yourself: when I closed my eyes at the shooting range I could hear her voice, and the question, posed from one character to another, now seemed to request an answer from me. Or else: To her father, she was The Princess. To her Boston aunts and uncles she was just “Dollie Urquhart, poor little thing.”

我說還輪不到我們班照料這些豬。大部分一起分擔的職務都是由四個班輪流負責的，包括修剪營房周圍的草坪、做園藝、幫炊事班的忙做飯給整個連隊、餵豬和清理豬圈、洗廁所，還有打掃洗衣房。除了廚房的工作——唯一一個可以偷偷多拿食物的機會外，其他工作全部都很可怕、很令人厭惡。

「看來你還沒有學會軍隊裡最基本的規則。」魏中尉說。「這裡是軍隊，不是外面，

別想討價還價。」

四.

外面的世界不知不覺地慢慢影響著我們，舊同學寫信來，父母寄巧克力來，滿載童年的假日回憶和青年時期的探險回憶，而我腦海中，是單教授的聲音，不著不急的讀著D·H·勞倫斯。好吧，梅布爾，你打算怎樣？我在射擊場內閉上眼睛，可以聽見她的聲音，聽見這條問題，一個角色向另一個角色提問，現在似乎換我回答；要不然就是：對她父親來說，她是公主，而對她波士頓的舅舅舅媽來說，她不過是『可憐的小東西多利·厄克特』罷了。

The point of a boot kicked my leg, and I opened my eyes. I was not in Professor Shan's flat, released momentarily from responsibility by her voice, but facedown, my elbows on sandbags, my right cheek resting on the wooden stock of a semiautomatic rifle. The late October sunshine was warm on my back, and two hundred yards away the green targets, in the shape of a man's upper body, stood in a long line. Two magpies chattered in a nearby tree, and the last locusts of the season, brown with greenish patterns, sprang past the sandbags and disappeared into the yellowing grass. I shifted my weight and aligned my right eye with the front and rear sights. The training officer did not move, his shadow cast on the sandbags in front of me. I waited, and when the shadow did not leave to check on the next girl, I pulled the trigger. Apart from a crack, nothing happened—it would be another two weeks before we would be given live ammunition.

“Do you think you got a ten there?” asked the training officer.

“Yes, sir,” I said, still squinting at the target.

He did not think so. Try again, he said. I held the rifle closer so that the butt was steadied by my right shoulder. I had noticed that people, once in the army, become two different species of animals—those who were eager to please, like the most loyal, best trained dogs, and those who, like me, acted like the most stubborn donkeys and need a prod for every move. I looked through the sights and pulled the trigger.

靴子的鞋尖踢到了我的腿，我睜開眼睛，我不是在單教授家，不是在她的聲音下短暫地脫離一切責任，而是臉朝下，手肘放在沙袋上，右頰貼靠著一把半自動步槍的木托。十月底的陽光照在我的背上，暖暖的。二百碼外的綠色標靶是人上半身的形狀，站成長長一排。附近的樹上有兩隻喜鵲在嘰嘰喳喳地叫，這季最後一批褐色、帶綠色花紋的蝗蟲，在沙袋間跳竄，消失在枯黃的草叢中。我轉移重心，把右眼、準星和後瞄准器連成一直線。訓練官沒有動，他的影子投在我前面的沙袋上。

我等待著。那個影子沒有離開去看下一個女生，我便扣動了扳機。啪的一聲，就此而已，沒有發生任何事。還要過兩個禮拜，才會派實彈給我們。

「你覺得你射中靶心了嗎？」訓練官問。

「是的，長官。」我說，眼睛仍然眯著，盯著標靶看。

他不是這樣想，叫我再試一遍。我把步槍拿得更近，用右肩把槍托穩住。我發現，大家一進軍隊，就只有可能變成兩種動物：一種是最忠誠、最訓練有素的狗，急於取悅別人；或者是另外一種，就像我，最倔強的驢子，一舉一動都需要有人督促。我從瞄准器中看過去，扣動了扳機。

“Much better,” the training officer said. “Now remember, the shooting range is not a place to nap.”

26

Shooting practice was one of the few things I enjoyed in the army. Major Tang showed up occasionally to inspect us, but since aiming was one thing we had to practice on our own, he had little patience for staying at the shooting range for hours. The three platoon leaders, including Lieutenant Wei, sat in the shade of the ash trees and chatted while two of the shooting officers for the company, who liked to sit with them, told jokes. Our officer, older and more reticent, sat a few steps away and listened with an indulgent smile. The two girls on my right talked in whispers, and now and then I caught a sentence; they were discussing boys, analyses and guesses that I did not bother to follow. On my left, Nan hummed a tune under her breath while maintaining a perfect shooting position. I was amazed at how soldierly

she could act, her posture perfect in formation drills, her impeccable bed-making winning her titles in the internal-affairs contest. Anyone could see her mind was elsewhere, but the military life seemed to provide endless amusements for her; she never misbehaved, and she was among the few who hadn't received any public humiliation. I turned my head slightly, still resting my right cheek on the stock but looking at Nan rather than the target. Her uniform cap was low on her eyebrows, and in the shadow of the cap she squinted in a smile, singing in a very low voice.

「好多了。」訓練官說。「記住，射擊場不是給你們來打盹的。」

27

射擊訓練是我在軍隊中為數不多的樂趣之一。唐少校偶爾來查看我們，但因為瞄準是要我們自己練習的，他沒什麼耐性留在射擊場幾個小時。三個排長，包括魏中尉，坐在柊樹蔭下聊天，有兩個負責教射擊的訓練官也和他們坐在一塊兒，跟他們說笑話。我們的訓練官年紀比較大，人也比較安靜，他坐在幾步以外聽著，面露寬容的微笑。我右邊的兩個女生竊竊私語，我偶爾聽到一兩句，他們在討論男生，分析這樣猜測那樣的，聽下去也無謂。我左邊是阿楠，她維持著一個完美的射擊姿勢輕聲哼歌。我很詫異，她多像個真正的軍人。她步操的姿勢無可挑剔，更憑無懈可擊的鋪床技巧贏了內務比賽。任何人都能看出她志不在此，但軍隊生活似乎給她無盡的快樂。她從來沒有行為不端，是少數沒有被當眾羞辱過的人之一。我輕輕轉過頭，右頰依然貼靠著槍托，但沒有看著標靶，而是看著阿楠。她把軍帽壓得低低的，蓋住眼眉。在帽子的暗影下，她眯起眼睛，微笑著，低聲哼起歌來。

“The Last Rose of Summer,” she told me when I asked her about the song during the break. Nan was a small girl and looked no more than thirteen years old. She had joined a famous children’s choir when she was six, and when the other children her age had entered middle school and left the choir, she had remained because she liked to sing, and she could still pass for a young child. When she reached sixteen, the choir changed its name from “children’s choir” to “children and young women’s choir.” She’d laughed when she told us about it. Would she go back to the choir, one of the girls had asked her, and she’d thought for a moment and said that perhaps after the army she would have to find some other hobbies. One could not possibly remain in a children’s choir all her life, she’d said, though she seemed to me the kind of person who could get away with anything she set her heart on. I could imagine her still singing at twenty or thirty among a group of children, looking as young and innocent as them—though this I did not tell Nan. We were friendly toward each other, but we were not friends, perhaps the only two in our platoon who hadn’t claimed a close friend eight weeks into the military life. I did not see the need to have someone next to me when I took a walk around the drill grounds after dinner for the fifteen minutes of free time; nor did I need to share my night-watch duty with a special friend, so I was often paired with leftover girls from the other platoons—girls like me who had no one to cling to—and it suited me to spend half a night with

「〈夏日的最後玫瑰〉。」我在休息時間問起她那首歌，她就告訴我。阿楠是個小女孩，看起來不過十三歲。她六歲時加入了一個有名的合唱團，之後其他和她同歲的孩子都進了初中，離開了合唱團，她還留在團裡，因為她喜歡唱歌，還有，她看起來還像個小孩子。她十六歲，合唱團把他們的團名由「兒童合唱團」，改成「兒童及青年女子合唱團」。她跟我們說的時候大笑了起來。有一個女生問她會不會再回合唱

團，她說軍訓過後可能要找其他興趣。她說人總不可能一輩子都呆在兒童合唱團，不過在我看來，她是一旦下定決心就一定能辦到的人。我能想像她到了二三十歲，還在一群孩子中唱歌，看起來就跟大家一樣幼嫩，一樣天真，但我沒有這樣跟阿楠說。我們對彼此都很友好，但稱不上是朋友。排裡大概就只有我們兩個，在軍隊生活了八個禮拜都沒有很熟的朋友。我不需要有人在飯後的十五分鐘自由時間陪我到操場散步，也不需要一個特別的朋友跟我一起守夜，所以我通常都跟其他排剩下來的女生一組，她們都跟我一樣沒有形影不離的熟人。和跟我一樣安靜的人在營房前廳待上半個晚上，在相隔要多遠

someone as quiet as I was in the front room of the barracks, dozing off in two chairs set as far apart as possible.

Nan was a different case. She was friendly with everyone, including the officers and the conscripts in the cooking squad, and was courted by quite a few girls hoping to become her best friend. You could see that she was used to such attention, amused even, but she would not grant anyone that privilege. Even our squad leader, who had become a favorite of the officers with her increasingly militant treatment of us, was unwilling to assign the most dreadful duties—cleaning the toilets, or the pigsties—to Nan. A less gracious person than Nan would have been the target of envy, yet she seemed untouched by any malignancy.

One girl, overhearing our conversation, asked Nan to sing “The Last Rose of Summer.” Nan stood up from where we were sitting in a circle and flicked dried grass and leaves from her uniform. Her voice seemed to make breathing hard for those around her; her face, no longer appearing amused, had an ancient, ageless look. I wondered what kind of person Nan was to be able to sing like that—she seemed too aloof to be touched by life, but how could she sing so hauntingly if she had not felt the pain described in those songs?

The shooting range was quiet when Nan finished singing. A bumblebee buzzed and was shooed away, and in the distance, perhaps over the hills where a civilian world could not be seen, a loudspeaker was broadcasting the midday news, but we 有多遠的兩把椅子上打盹，這正好適合我。

29

阿楠不一樣，她對所有人都很友善，包括軍官和炊事班的士兵。有幾個女生天天跟著她屁股走，想要當她的好閨密。看得出來她很習慣這種關心，甚至覺得很有趣，但她不會給任何人特別待遇。班長對我們的態度愈來愈強硬，成了一眾長官的寵兒，但就連她都不願把廁所、清理豬圈這些最可怕的工作分配給她。如果是個不如

阿楠那麼親切的人，應該會招人嫉妒，然而，似乎沒有人對她有惡意。

一個女生聽到我們的對話，便叫阿楠唱〈夏日的最後玫瑰〉來聽聽。我們圍坐成一圈，阿楠站起來，輕輕彈掉軍服上的乾草和葉子。她的聲音使人屏息，她的臉，不再喜逐顏開，看起來既莊嚴成熟，又嬌柔稚嫩。究竟阿楠是個什麼樣的人，才能唱出這樣的感情，她看似是個冷漠的人，不被生命觸動，但如果她感受不到曲中所描繪的傷痛，她的歌聲又怎會這樣縈繞在我心頭呢？

阿楠唱完後，射擊場一片安靜。趕走一隻嗡嗡叫的大黃蜂，應該是山後遠處不會有外面的人的地方，那裡的廣播喇叭在播午間新聞，但我們一個字都聽不

could not hear a word. After a while, a girl from another platoon who had sneaked away from her squad to join our circle begged Nan to tell us something about her trips abroad. Apart from Nan, none of us had traveled abroad—none of us had ever had a legal reason to apply for a passport.

I could not decide if Nan was annoyed or pleased by such requests, but she never failed to tell some tales: singing in front of a Vienna palace, learning tap dancing from an American teenager on a cruise ship, taking a long train ride across Siberia in February on her way back to China from a European tour, the whole time stuck in a carriage with girls eight or nine years younger. She had learned chess from the choir director on that train ride, she said, while the children sang and clamored, and a doll-like girl, not yet seven, had played violin for hours like an oblivious angel.

“How old is your choir director?” the girl from the other platoon asked.

Nan shrugged and began another tale about the Macedonian folksongs they’d had to learn because of a detour. I noticed that this was her way of not answering questions she found unpleasantly nosy or uninteresting. Even though Nan kept smiling, you could see the girl who had asked the question was ashamed of her blunder. In fact, there was so much pain and yearning in the girl’s face that I turned to look at the officers under the ash trees, Lieutenant Wei massaging the nape of

見。過了一會兒，另一個排的一個女生從班裡偷偷溜出來，和我們一塊兒坐，她求阿楠跟我們說一些她出國的時候的事。除了阿楠，我們都沒有出過國，沒有合法的理由去申請護照。

我判斷不了阿楠對這種要求是感到煩厭還是高興，但她總能說出故事來：在維也納的宮殿前唱歌、在

遊輪上跟一個十多歲的美國男孩學踢踏舞、二月份歐遊過後坐長途火車經西伯利亞返回中國，全程和一個比她小八九歲女孩困在一卡車廂裡。她說，那一趟火車，她從合唱團總監那裡學國際象棋，而孩子就唱歌吵鬧；一個長得像洋娃娃一樣女孩，還不到七歲，像個忘我的天使一樣拉了好幾個小時的小提琴。

「你們合唱團總監幾歲呀？」另一個排的那個女生問。

阿楠聳了聳肩，然後開始講另一個他們因為繞了道，而不得不學馬其頓民謠的故事。我注意到她是想要避開一些使人不快的八卦無聊問題。儘管阿楠一直都面帶笑容，但也看得到問那條問題的女生為自己的過錯而覺得丟臉。女孩的臉上，有很多苦痛，很多盼望。我轉過頭看柁樹下的軍官，魏中尉在幫洪中尉按脖

of Lieutenant Hong's neck, and the two young shooting officers competing with exaggerated gestures to talk to another platoon leader. From where we sat, twenty meters away, they looked young and ordinary, their laughter distant but their happiness tangible. After a moment the older shooting officer looked at his

wristwatch and, almost apologetically, blew the whistle to signal the end of the break.

At night, when I could not sleep, I thought about other people and their pain. I wondered, for instance, what kind of pain could be found in Nan's heart that gave such unbearable sadness to her songs, but she was the most imperturbable person I had met, and if she could be connected to any pain, it would be what she inflicted on others, perhaps against her will. I thought about the girls who vied for her attention, often with open animosity toward each other; they had become transparent in their longing, but I did not know what more they could ask from Nan. She shared her songs and her stories; she treated everyone kindly. Would they be lying in their beds, wondering if Nan had ever known pain? But why would one want to access another person's pain, when there is enough in one's own life? In the barracks there was much love in the air—boys left behind in the civilian world were missed and written long letters; boys met in the camp were discussed, sometimes with giggles, sometimes less gleefully; more subdued was the longing between the girls that manifested itself as a competition to become best friends. People don't know what 子, 兩個年輕的射擊訓練官做出誇張的動作, 爭著跟另一個排長說話。距離我們二十米遠, 他們看起來年輕而平凡。他們的笑聲很遙遠, 但他們的快樂, 是實實在在的。過了一會兒, 年紀較大的射擊訓練官看了看手錶, 幾乎是帶抱歉地吹響了哨子, 示意休息結束。

晚上睡不著的時候, 我就會想起其他人, 還有他們的苦痛。我會想阿楠是心裡藏著什麼樣的傷痛, 才能唱出這種悲哀, 可她是我見過最沉著的人了, 要是說她跟苦痛有什麼關係, 那會是她非本意地給別人帶來的苦痛。我在想, 那些爭著要博得她的注意的女孩子, 她們擺明了對彼此懷有敵意。她們的渴望變得顯而易見, 但我不

知她們還能在阿楠那裡要些什麼。她分享她的歌聲，分享她的故事，善待每一個人。她們躺在床上時，會想起阿楠，好奇她有沒有受過什麼苦痛嗎？可是，當一個人的生活已經夠苦了，為什麼還要去知道別人的苦痛呢？軍營裡充斥了愛——思念外面的男孩子，寫下長長的信；討論在軍營裡遇到的男生，有時會傻笑，有時則不太高興；比較低調的是女生之間的渴望，明擺著要爭著做某人

they are doing and saying. They chatter-chatter, and they hurt one another, and they hurt themselves very often, till they cry. At night I tried to remember Professor Shan's voice when she read her favorite story to me, and when I was not sure if I remembered the exact words, I turned on my flashlight and reread the story under the quilt. But don't take any notice, my little Princess.

We had spent ten months with David Copperfield, slowly at first, two or three pages a day, and later five or six pages. I don't remember at what point I had begun to understand what was read to me, in bits and pieces of course; it must be similar to the moment a child first understands the world in words, when what is spoken to her has not yet taken on a definite meaning, but she becomes more confident each day that there is message behind those jumbled sounds. I told my parents that I had been visiting Professor Shan, as she had agreed to tutor me with my schoolwork, a lie that my father had not questioned and my mother had not bothered to listen to. I did not tell Professor Shan that I had begun to understand her, but surely she saw the change: perhaps my eyes wandered less often to the tress outside the window, or perhaps my face betrayed an eagerness where before was only ignorance. In any case, two-thirds into the novel she stopped translating for me. Neither of us talked about this change of routine. I was quiet, still intimidated by her, though I had begun to look forward to the hour spent in her flat. She had not begun to tell me her stories—that would come later. I had not begun to share her attachment to books—

最好的朋友。大家都不知道自己在做什麼，說什麼。他們喋喋不休，互相傷害，又常常傷害自己，直到哭出來才罷休。晚上，我試著回憶單教授給我讀她最愛的故事的聲音，當我不確定是不是那個字，我就打開手電筒，在被子裡再讀這個故事一遍。可你不要在意，我的小公主。

我們讀了十個月大衛·科波菲爾，開頭讀得很慢，每天兩三頁，後來五六頁。我不記得我在什麼時候開始聽得懂，當然，只是零零碎碎的。這一定是像一個孩子，第一次理解這個世界的語言的那一刻，她不知道確實的意思，但她一天比一天自信，知道這些雜亂無章的聲音背後，是有信息的。我告訴爸媽我一直有去找單教授，因為她答應幫我補習功課。這個謊話，爸爸沒有懷疑，媽媽也懶得聽。我沒有告訴單教授我開始聽明白了，但她肯定看出了不同：可能我沒那麼常分心，顧著看窗外的樹了；或者我的臉流露出一種熱切的渴望，而不再只是愚昧。無論如何，讀到小說的三分之二，她就不再幫我翻譯了。我們都沒有談起這個改變。我很安靜，依然怕她，但我已經開始期待去她家了。她還沒開始跟我說她自己的故事——那是之後的事了。我還沒開始跟著她迷上看書——那是之後的事了，更久之後，可能是我不再去找她之後的事了。儘管如

that too would come later, much later, perhaps only after I stopped visiting her. Still, her fifth-floor flat, where life did not seem to be lived out in the measuring of rice and flour or the counting of paper bills and coins, at least during the time I was there, became a place that no other place could be: strangers, closer to my heart than my neighbors and acquaintances, loved tragic and strange loves and died tragic and strange deaths, and Professor Shan's unperturbed voice, made it all seem natural. Looking back, I wonder if it was because of my limited understanding of the language that all tragedies became acceptable to me. Perhaps all that time I was imagining a different story than the one read to me.

After David Copperfield, we read Great Expectations. Then The Return of the Native and, later, Tess of the d'Urbervilles. It was during Jude the Obscure that she began to tell me her story, in fragments I would piece together later. Sometimes the story came at the beginning of the afternoon, sometimes when she took a break from reading the novel to me. She never talked long about herself, and afterward we did not discuss it. I had become less nervous around her; still, I did not talk much about my life at school or at home—intuitively I knew she had little interest in the life I lived outside the hour in her flat. Only once did I ask her advice, about where to go for high school. I was not an excellent student, though decent enough to do well in entrance exams. She asked me my choices of schools, and when I listed them for her, she answered that they were all good schools, and it rather did not matter, in her

此，她在五樓的單位，那裡的生活，似乎不只是量米量面粉、數鈔票數硬幣，至少我在那裡的時候，其他任何地方都無可比擬：陌生人，比起我的鄰居，比起我認識的人，離我心更近。他們的愛情，悲慘又怪異；他們的死亡，悲慘又怪異，但單教授平靜沉著，令這一切都顯得自然。現在回想起來，不知道是不是因為我的

理解有限，所有的悲劇我都能接受。也許一直以來，我都在想像著一個截然不同的故事。

讀過大衛·科波菲爾後，我們讀了《遠大前程》，接著是《還鄉記》，然後就是《德伯家的苔絲》。我們讀《無名的裘德》的時候，她開始講她自己的故事，後來我才把零碎片段拼湊起來。她有時候在下午不久時講，有時候在讀小說給我聽時的途，停下來休息的時候講。她講自己的事從來不長篇大論，我們之後也沒有討論。我在她身邊的時候，沒有那麼緊張了，但我依然不怎麼說起學校或者家裡的事，我的直覺告訴我，她對我在她家以外發生的事情不怎麼感興趣。我只問過她一次意見，問她應該去哪裡上高中。我說不上是個很優秀的學生，但也不算不錯，能在面試中好好表現。她問我有哪些心儀的學校，我就列出來給她聽。她回答說，全部都不錯。她覺得，我去哪裡都無所謂。最後我選

opinion, where I went. In the end, I chose the school farthest from our
neighborhood, a decision that later proved convenient when I had to come up with
an excuse to stop visiting Professor Shan.

5.

I turned out to be excellent at shooting. I was one of the few who scored all tens in our first live-ammunition practice, and when we marched back from the shooting range, I was displayed in front of the company along with three other girls, with a red ribbon pinned to my chest. Major Tang called the four of us budding sharpshooters and gave a speech that ended with the slogan, “My gun follows my orders, and I follow the Communist Party’s orders.”

“That slogan,” said Jie, one of the other sharpshooters. “Don’t you think it sounded so... off-color?”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“You’re too innocent for this discussion,” Jie laughed, but a few days later she sought me out. “Do you read English?”

Apart from the officers and the conscripts in the cooking squad, all of us were able to read some English, since we had studied it in high school, and I said that to Jie. “I know that, of course,” she said. “I’m asking you if you could read an English novel for me.”

了離我們區最遠的一所。後來要想藉口不再去找單教授，我就發現這個決定很便利。

五.

我射擊的表現很出色，是少數能在第一次實彈射擊訓練中得滿分的人之一。從射擊場行軍回來，我和三個女生胸前別著紅絲帶，站在整個連面前。唐少校叫我們四個做新晉神槍手。他演說了一番，以口號作結尾：「我的槍服從我的命令，我服從共產黨的命令。」

「那口號……」另外一個神槍手阿潔說。「你不覺得聽起來很……下流嗎？」

「什麼意思？」我問。

「你太單純了，不適合說這個話題。」阿潔笑了出來，但幾天後她來找我。「你會英語嗎？」

除了軍官和炊事班的士兵外，我們全部都懂一點英語，因為我們高中時學過。我這樣跟阿潔說。「我當然知道。」她說。「我是問你可不可以讀英文小說給我聽。」

I had never talked to anyone about Professor Shan, and I did not memorize English vocabulary during the free time, as some of the other girls, who had their hearts set on going to America after college, did. I replied vaguely that I could try, and after dinner the next day approached me with a copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. "It was once a banned book," she told me with hushed excitement, and asked me to promise not to let the secret out to anyone. "My boyfriend sent it to me. Don't lose it. He went to great trouble to find a copy."

我沒有跟任何人提起過單教授，也沒有像那些一心要在大學畢業後去美國的女生一樣，在自由時間背英語單詞。我含糊其辭，說可以試試看。隔天晚飯後，她拿著《查泰萊夫人的情人》來找我。「這本書以前可是禁書！」她竊喜不已，要我答應幫她保守秘密。「我男朋友寄給我的，他費了很大的勁兒才找到，可別弄丟了。」