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桌上的水蜜桃泄了气似的变蔫了，散发着甜蜜的腐烂气息。一只蜘蛛爬过，远远绕开了。

在上海停留的一个月，槐住在星那里。“认识十年的闺蜜来了。”星几乎对身边的每个人都讲了一遍。

她们睡同一张床，半个月过去了，她们能说上话的次数越来越少。每天槐出门时星还没醒，槐睡着时星还没回家。

“我们其实也有交流，塑造空间是我们的交流方式。”槐心想着，起身开始清理桌子。明天桌上还会堆满别的垃圾，然后她会再做清理。“一个人堆放，另一个人丢弃，我们建立了空间守恒法则。”星一向靠外卖和快递度日，也没空打扫卫生，槐借住的第一天就看出来了。

“现在没什么事能难倒我。”槐记得星那天这样说。“我不是过去的我了。”她不聊附近能去哪里吃饭，散心，这些槐比较关心的事。她反复谈到钱，梦想，人脉，资源，这些槐一直没弄明白也不想明白的事。

槐感到愤怒，她一直在小心捍卫“过去”，尤其是她和星共同拥有的过去。可现在，似乎一切都在消逝，变得一点也不真实。她和星真的做了十年朋友吗？为什么星要这样对她说话？如果星不是过去的星了，那她这是住在谁的家？

在星的家里，“过去”这个词听起来更遥远了。所有的家具都是崭新发亮的，一切坏了、旧了的东西很快会被丢弃。窗外是陌生的，连只鸟也看不到，死板的天空是唯一的风景。星怎么会受得了住在这儿？

槐打量着她收拾过的房间。物品以她熟悉的顺序进行了整理，果篮里摆着她喜欢吃的橙子而不是水蜜桃，阳台上晾着她刚洗好的衣服，仿佛她才是这个地方的长期居住者。星竟然对这些变化没有表示异议，甚至说槐的到来让她觉得应该认真对待生活。这让槐更愤怒了，这样一来，她更没理由指责星对她的漠不关心了。星从来不问她每天在做什么，过得怎么样。

槐觉得她被她们过去建立的友谊困住了。如果她们不是之前就认识，她们现在可能根本毫无交集。

临走前的一个深夜，槐猛然惊醒了。黑暗中，星的手在槐身上游走，最后挂在了槐的腰上。“啊，抱抱我，抱抱。”星嘟囔着说。

槐屏住呼吸，假装自己已经死去。

The withering peaches on the table looked morose as they secreted a sweet decaying odor. A spider crawled past, keeping its distance.

During her month in Shanghai, Locust stayed at Star's. They slept in the same bed.

"My best friend of ten years is here!" Star shared with almost everyone around her.

Half a month passed by, and the opportunities to talk to one another were getting fewer and fewer. Every morning when Locust went out, Star hadn't yet woken up, and by the time Locust fell asleep at night, Star wasn't home. "but we are communicating with each other. We're connected by crafting out a shared space." So Locust thought to herself as she got up to clean the table.

Tomorrow there'll be more trash on the table again, and she'll clean it up again. From the first day Locust stayed here, she clocked Star's reliance on take-out and delivery parcels and how she had no time to clean up after herself. "One person piles up trash, and the other throws it away. See, we've established a standard principle for the conservation of living space."

"I'm not who I was. Nothing scares me anymore", Locust replayed these words of Star's in her mind. She no longer talked about where's good to eat or fun to relax — things Locust is interested in. Instead, she talked about money, dreams, business connections, resources — things Locust never understood nor wanted to.

Locust felt angry. She was always mindful of defending the "past," especially regarding Star and their shared past. However, now the authenticity of their entire relationship seemed to be fading away. Have she and Star really been friends for ten years? Why did Star speak to her like that? If this isn't the Star she knew, then whose house is she staying at?

In Star's house, the concept of "the past" feels even more distant. All the furniture is gleaming with an air of newness. Anything broken or old gets thrown out. The world outside her window is unfamiliar, with not even a single bird in sight. The only scenery is the unyielding sky. Just how can Star stand living here?

Locust examined the room she had just tidied up. Objects arranged orderly in sequences familiar to her. Instead of peaches, the fruit basket held her preferred oranges. Her freshly washed clothes hung out to dry on the balcony as if she were the one living there.

Star put up no challenge to these new changes.

“真羡慕你住在这儿啊。”夏吐出一口烟，缓缓说道。接着，她把烟蒂在雪递过来的咖啡手冲壶里摁灭了。不止一次，夏说雪灭烟的方法是“智慧的体现”。

夏总是在出乎意料的时候造访，每次敲门声响起时，

She even went as far as to say Locust's arrival inspired her to take life more seriously. Instinctively, hearing this infuriated Locust. Yet, she felt she had no reason to criticize Star for her indifference. After all, not once had Star asked her what she spent her days doing or how she was doing.

Locust felt chained to the friendship they'd built in the past. If they weren't already friends, they probably wouldn't have any chance to confront each other.

The night before she left, Locust awoke suddenly. In the darkness, Star's hand migrated up Locust's leg, finally coming to a halt on her waist. "Oh, hug me, hug me," murmured Star.

Locust held her breath and pretended she was dead.





雪都没做好准备。有时她从床上一跃而起，胡乱抓起衣服穿上，有时她正在洗澡，湿着头发便来开门。夏进门后会在餐桌边的椅子上气喘吁吁地坐下，然后说她只是路过，顺便来看一看。“胡同里可以随便串门。”雪有点后悔她对夏这样说过。

夏在读博士，要读四年，她想一心留在校园里搞学术，但“对外面充满好奇，也想知道别人过着怎样的生活”。她会先讲一讲学校里复杂的人际关系，然后赞美一番胡同的人情味，最后以福柯、以赛亚·伯林、后现代主义这些话题结束拜访。雪会在夏谈论的间隙梳理工作安排，浇浇花，在窗边踱着步再抽一根烟，甚至做一顿午饭。她不能让自己显得无事可做，不然她就不得不弄清楚夏提到的那些哲学术语到底是什么意思，以免说错了话。

“好了，我该走了。”每次夏一吐为快后便匆匆推门离开。

雪觉得夏来得太频繁了，但她开不了口提这件事。她是夏唯一一个校园外的朋友。“如果不是你，我都不知道出了学校能去哪儿。”夏曾经这样说。

可夏除了向雪倾诉自己的近况，也不曾邀请她一起去做点什么，哪怕是到不远处的咖啡馆坐一坐。这让雪一度困惑不已，她能算夏的朋友吗？还是一个研究对象？一种人生的参照系？

她想，可能夏不过是看上了她住的地方。
于是，雪在要离开北京的时候提出把房子转租给夏。夏想了一天便决定好了。“确实，我深入生活的时候到了，”夏把抽了一口的烟扔进新买的熄烟盒里，顿了顿说，

2

“I envy that you get to live here,” Summer leisurely said while exhaling a puff of smoke. She extinguished the cigarette butt in the coffee pot that Snow had just handed her. More than once, Summer has claimed Snow’s technique for putting out cigarettes to be “the embodiment of wisdom.”

Summer always visits at unexpected times. Every time she knocks on the door, Snow’s caught off guard. The knock often comes when Snow’s not ready to get up, forcing her to jump out of bed and haphazardly put on clothes. Other times she’s showering and still has wet hair when Summer walks in the door. Summer comes in breathing heavily, saying she’s just passing by to check-in, then pulls up a chair and sits at the dinner table.

“Here in the Hutongs, you can drop by any time.” Snow now regretted declaring this to Summer.

Although Summer, a doctoral student in her second year, chose to stay on campus to live the life of an academic, she remains “curious about the outside world and how other people live their lives.” Her conversations usually start with talking about the complex interpersonal relationships on campus, and then she’ll move on to extolling the humanity that thrives in the hutongs. Finally, she’ll end her visit with discussions on Foucault, Isaiah Berlin, and Postmodernism.

During the intervals of Summer’s ramblings, Snow would do some planning for her day job, water the plants, stroll by the window smoking cigarettes,

“你想留下的东西都留下，这里还是你在北京的家。”

雪尽量让屋子保持原样，只带走了私人物品。厨房里挂着刷洗干净的锅，储物柜里有各类干货、调料和面条。书架上剩了一排旅游杂志。门口散落着给野猫的猫粮。

之后，夏有很久没跟雪联系，直到夏说她要回学校住了。

“为什么？”雪大吃一惊。

“该体验的都体验过了，而且住学校更方便。”夏解释说。

夏还补充道，清洁整个屋子是个大工程，尤其是把厨房里“杂七杂八”的东西都扔掉、卖杂志以及打扫门前的卫生，这让她感到是在浪费时间。“有个家太难了，现代生活太难了。”她说。

这至少证明我们活在后现代的世界。雪这样想着，原谅了夏。

3

“都是兄弟，怎么能分得这么清呢？”力想不通。

他走进林搬走的房间。一片狼藉，林就像连夜逃荒般消失了。

事情的起因是他没有“边界感”和“分寸感”，这两种他第一次开始仔细琢磨的定义。昨天一帮兄弟来吃饭，

or even cook lunch. Snow didn’t want to appear as though she had nothing to do, or she would have to grapple with the meanings of the myriad philosophical terms Summer referenced. This way, she didn’t have to worry about saying something wrong

“Well, I’d better go.” Each time Summer had no sooner gotten everything off her chest than she hurriedly pushed out the door and left.

Snow felt that Summer came round too often but could never bring herself to mention it. After all, she was Summer’s only friend outside of the university. “If it wasn’t for you, I don’t know where I’d go,” Summer once shared.

Other than telling Snow about her recent news, Summer never invited her to do anything else. Not even to go to a nearby café. This confused Snow. Is she really a friend of Summer’s? Or just a research subject? Or even just a life-style reference?

Perhaps, Snow thought, Summer had taken a fancy to her home. So when Snow was about to leave Beijing, she asked Summer to sublet her house. Summer thought about it for a day before deciding. “Truly, it’s time for me to go deeper into life.” Then, taking one puff of her cigarette before tossing it in the newly purchased ashtray, Summer paused for a moment and said, “you can leave whatever you don’t take. This house is still your home in Beijing.”

Snow took only her personal belongings in an attempt to leave the house as it was. Clean pans cupboards full of dry goods, spices, and noodles were still in the kitchen. A row of travel magazines left on the bookshelf, and piled at the front door was dried food for the street cats.

Snow didn’t hear from Summer for a long time. And then, one day, she reached out to say she was going back to live on campus.

“Why?” Snow asked, surprised.

“I’ve experienced everything I needed to. Anyway, living on campus is more convenient.”, explained Summer. She added that cleaning the whole house was too big a workload, especially throwing out all the kitchen “clutter,” selling the magazines, and cleaning around the front door. It all seemed like a waste of time to her. “Keeping a home is hard. Modern life is hard.”

“At the very least, this proves that we live in a post-modern world.” So Snow thought as she forgave Summer.

坐不下了，只好全部挤进林那里。林的房间要比客厅大一些，这是他当时心里唯一的想法。他确实做错了，没想过要事先和林打一声招呼，可林也不至于走得那么绝情。

朋友之间还计较这些？力盯着角落里那个林用来酿酒的大玻璃瓶，太重了，林显然只能把它丢下。他想把它一脚踹碎，但却始终无法向前迈出一步。

力退回自己的房间，缩在床上，他感到喘不过气来，感到自己被虚的东西压制住了。他想到过去和林打地铺的日子，想到他们那时只用得起借来的被子和碗筷，那时他们应该要比现在走得更近。

而且，我们不是说好要一起建立这个空间吗？我们甚至说过要成立一个来者不拒的出租房流浪者之家。力很憋屈。

“我们没什么可说的，和你说话就是一种消耗。”林在走之前这样对他说。

力第二天醒来时看到家门外多了一个真皮破沙发。他认识这个沙发，被丢弃在公园里有好一阵了，林说可以捡回来。

建一个流浪者之家，收留无处可去的年轻人。这是林和力一直以来的共同构想，哪怕几年未见，他们也都惦记着这件事。他们租房时还一致认为，要用旧物和废品弄一个破破烂烂但令人放松的客厅，打破人和人之间的隔阂和距离。

之后的每天早上，都会有新的东西出现在门口。一个坏了条腿的木茶几，一把吱呀作响的摇椅，几个有缺口的玻璃杯。力把它们拿进客厅，擦洗一番，摆在合适的位置。他没有问林这些是不是他送来的，林也没有说，虽然他们曾经在街上碰到一次，可那一次也只是互相点了点头。这是他们达成的默契。

流浪者之家在两个月后正式成立。这个日子是力决定的，这一天，他发现门外是空的。他没有邀请任何人来庆祝，事实上，他甚至没告诉任何人这里有这样一个空间。还有，他不想在林不知清的情况下让任何人进屋。

力环顾客厅，所有的摆设都缺了点什么。他走到林搬走后的房间，敲了敲门，欲言又止。

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“We’re best friends. So what’s the point of putting up restrictions like this?” A bewildered Iron thought to himself.

He walked into the room that Wood had just moved out of. It was a mess. With the urgency of someone fleeing, Wood just up and left as though he had disappeared into the night. The situation arose because of Li’s lack of “boundaries and restraint.” For the first time in his life, Iron began to mull over the meanings of these two concepts.

The previous day, a group of Li’s good friends came over for dinner. With no room to fit everyone, they all crowded into Lin’s room. His room was simply more spacious than the living room – this was all that went through Li’s head. He knew he screwed up. It just didn’t cross his mind to ask Wood beforehand. Still, it doesn’t justify Wood’s acrimonious departure.

Do friends argue about things like this? So Iron thought as he stared at the big glass bottle in the corner that Wood used to brew beer. It was so heavy that Wood had to leave it behind. Iron thought about kicking it to pieces but physically couldn’t bring himself to take a step forward.

Retreating to his room, Iron shrunk into his bed. He felt breathless, like an empty void was smothering his entire being. He thought back to the old days when he and Wood got by with only borrowed quilts and tableware. They used to improvise a makeshift bed on the floor.

Back then, they were much closer. “Anyway, didn’t we agree we’d build this space together? We even said that we wanted to establish an inclusive open-house homeless shelter.” Iron recalled as he felt a wave of melancholy. “We have nothing more to say. Talking to you is a drain.” Wood told Iron before leaving.

The next day, Iron woke to find a leather sofa lying outside the door of the house. He recognized it. The couch had been lying abandoned in the park for a while. Wood had said he’d take it home someday.

To build a home for the homeless and take in the youth who have nowhere else to go – was both Wood and Iron’s long-time shared vision. Even if they hadn’t seen each other for several years, they still cared about this joint goal. Back when they first rented their house, they agreed to use old and discarded objects to create a grungy yet relaxing living room. They felt this atmosphere would help reduce the distance and break down barriers

between people. Every morning after the sofa’s mysterious arrival, something new would appear at the door. A small tea table with a broken leg, a creaky rocking chair, chipped drinking glasses. Iron took them all into the living room, scrubbed them clean, and found suitable places for them. He never asked if Wood was the one delivering these items. Wood also said nothing about it. They had met once on the street but only gave a reciprocal head nod. It was a show of their tacit understanding. Two months later, Iron decided to officially open the homeless shelter. On that same day, he found there was nothing new outside of the door. He didn’t invite anyone to celebrate the opening. Nor did he tell anyone about the existence of their space. He didn’t want anyone in the house without Wood knowing about it first. As he gazed around the living room, he felt something was missing. He walked over to the room Wood had moved out of, knocked on the door, made it as if to speak, but no words came out.

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Translated by Gavin Marcus

