

那把小伞，斜了六年

三年级下过大雨。放学的时候，雨把操场浇成一面湖，我站在校门口，看别人的家长一把一把撑开大伞，黑伞花伞格子伞，一朵一朵开走。我没有伞，妈妈在上班，爸爸出差，我打算把书包顶在头上冲回家。

就在我系鞋带准备冲的时候，雨里跑来一个人。是妈妈。她跑得很急，伞在她手里被风吹得往后翻，她一只手攥着伞柄，一只手拎着我的雨鞋，鞋带在她手腕上甩来甩去。她到了跟前，喘得话都说不成句：等、等久了吧。

我看了一眼她手里的伞，心凉了半截。那伞小得可怜，伞面撑开也就够盖住一个人的头顶，还是那种旧式的布伞，边上一圈线脚都磨白了。我嘟囔了一句：这伞也太小了。妈妈没接话，把伞举过来，罩住我，说走吧走吧。

走到半路我就发现了不对。伞明明在我头顶上，妈妈的半边肩膀却是湿的。校服肩上一片深色，越洒越大。我把伞往她那边推，她又推回来：我衣服厚，不怕淋。雨点打在伞面上，噼噼啪啪，她空着的那只手帮我拎着书包，手指头都泡白了。

到家我才看清，她湿的不止肩膀。半边袖子、半个后背全是水，头发贴在额头上，鞋里能倒出水来。她倒完鞋里的水，先去拧我的裤脚，说：没湿就好，没湿就好。

那时候我嫌伞小，觉得妈妈来接我，还接得这么寒酸。这句话说出口已经六年了，我一直没跟任何人说过。

上个月收拾柜子，我从柜子顶上翻出那把旧布伞。撑开一看，我愣住了。伞面有一圈补丁，针脚细密的，是妈妈自己缝的；伞骨有一根用细铁丝缠过。原来这伞不是小，是旧，是坏了又修、修了又用。这六年，她每次接我，举的都是这把伞，伞每次都在我头顶上，她的肩膀每次都是湿的。

我把伞撑开放在腿上，坐在柜子前头，半天没动。伞罩在腿上，干的；我的眼睛却是湿的。

那天晚上妈妈回来，我看见她挂衣服，肩膀上还是那块老地方容易洒湿。我叫了她一声，她回头问怎么了。我说没什么，就是想说，以后下雨，我带伞，我去接你。

她愣了一下，笑了，笑完去厨房，锅铲的声音响了很久。

有些东西小时候看不见，嫌它小，嫌它旧。长大一点才发现，小的是伞，不小的是举伞的人。她把伞斜过来六年，一句都没说过。

That Little Umbrella, Tilted for Six Years

In third grade there was a great rain. At dismissal, the rain had flooded the playground into a lake. I stood at the school gate watching other people's parents open umbrella after umbrella, black ones, colorful ones, plaid ones, blooming one by one and carrying their children away. I had no umbrella. Mother was at work and

Father was on a business trip, so I planned to hold my schoolbag over my head and dash home.

Just as I tied my shoelaces to run, a person came running through the rain. It was Mother. She ran so fast that the wind flipped her umbrella backwards. She gripped the handle with one hand and carried my rain boots in the other, their laces swinging on her wrist. When she reached me, she was too out of breath to finish a sentence: Did you, did you wait long?

I glanced at the umbrella in her hand and my heart went cold. The umbrella was pitifully small, open no wider than one child's head, one of those old cloth umbrellas with its edge frayed white. I muttered: This umbrella is too small. Mother did not answer. She lifted it over me, covering my head, and said: Let's go, let's go.

Halfway home I noticed something wrong. The umbrella was clearly over my head, yet Mother's shoulder was wet on one side. A dark patch spread across her uniform shoulder, growing larger. I pushed the umbrella toward her; she pushed it back: My coat is thick, I don't mind the rain. Raindrops cracked on the umbrella, and her free hand carried my schoolbag for me, her fingers soaked white.

Only at home did I see clearly that it was not just her shoulder. Half her sleeve, half her back were covered with water, her hair clung to her forehead, and her shoes could pour out water. After emptying her shoes, she went first to wring my trouser cuffs, saying: Good that you stayed dry, good that you stayed dry.

Back then I resented the umbrella for being small, thought it shabby that Mother came for me like this. That muttered sentence has been out for six years now, and I have never told anyone.

Last month, cleaning the cupboard, I found the old cloth umbrella on top of it. I opened it and froze. The canopy wore a ring of patches, stitched with tiny dense stitches by Mother herself; one rib was bound with thin wire. So the umbrella was not small by nature, it was old, broken and mended and used again. For six years, every time she fetched me, she carried this umbrella; every time it hovered over my head, and every time her shoulder got wet.

I sat in front of the cupboard with the open umbrella across my lap, motionless for a long while. The umbrella kept my lap dry; my eyes were not dry at all.

That evening when Mother came home, I watched her hang her clothes, and the same old spot on her shoulder still darkened first. I called to her. She turned and asked what was wrong. I said nothing, only that I wanted to tell her: from now on, when it rains, I will bring the umbrella, and I will come fetch you.

She froze for a moment, then laughed, and after laughing went to the kitchen, where the spatula kept sounding for a long time.

When we are small we cannot see certain things; we think them too small, too shabby. Only growing a little taller do we find that the small thing was the umbrella, and the not-small thing was the one holding it. She tilted it toward me for six years and never said a word.