妹妹学着桑桑的样子

《草房子》在我们家，最先读完的其实不是我，是上二年级的妹妹。她们老师布置了这本书，她三天就啃完了，晚上抱着书爬上我的床，说要读给我听。读到火针那一章，她停下来问，姐姐，火针是什么呀。我说，是一根烧热的针。她的脸一下子皱起来，又接着往下读。

妹妹有哮喘，每年犯得重的时候都要打针。去年冬天她犯病，才四岁，护士拿着针过来，她哭着往被子底下钻，是我妈连人带被子把她抱住，才打完那一针。她哭到打嗝，我妈的眼圈也红了。

今年夏天妹妹又犯病了，她已经上二年级。去卫生所的路上她一直很安静，安静得我心里发紧。护士取出针，妹妹自己把手臂伸过去，说，可以打了。护士夸她勇敢。我看见了，她的嘴唇其实在抖。

晚上我问她，今天怎么不怕了。她说，因为桑桑没有哭呀。桑桑那么怕，都没有哭。我都上二年级了，也可以坐稳的。她说桑桑的时候，语气就像说一个转学来的同学。

我没接话，想起的是书结尾那一幕：桑桑的病好了，爸爸背着他去看病回来，桑桑的头发重新长了出来，黑黑的，有点支棱。妹妹读到那一页跟我说过，她又想笑又想哭。我说我懂，我也想这样。

我妈买菜回来，听说这事，说她小时候打针才是哭得最凶的那个，现在带妹妹打针，她自己倒不敢闭眼。妹妹爬上凳子宣布，她也要教妈妈学桑桑。我们笑成一团，笑完我妈的眼角有点湿。

那天夜里，我从书架上又取下《草房子》，书角已经被妹妹翻得卷了边。草房子的顶就是普通的茅草，可住在里面的孩子一个个都长大了。桑桑教会了妹妹，妹妹教会了妈妈。我学到的那条是：家里有人害怕的时候，抱住她，别让她往被子底下钻。

My Little Sister Learned From Sangsang

In our family, the first one to finish Grass House was actually not me but my little sister, who is in Grade Two. Her teacher assigned the book, and she chewed through it in three days. At night she climbed onto my bed hugging the book and said she would read it to me. When she reached the chapter of the fire needle, she stopped and asked, big sister, what is a fire needle. I said it is a red-hot needle. Her face scrunched up at once, and then she kept reading.

My sister has asthma, and in the bad years she needs injections. Last winter when it flared up, she was only four. When the nurse came with the needle, she cried and tried to burrow under the quilt, and our mother had to hug her together with the quilt to get the shot done. She cried until she hiccupped, and the eyes of our mother went red too.

This summer it flared up again, and my sister is already in Grade Two. On the way

to the clinic she was quiet all the way, so quiet my heart tightened. When the nurse took out the needle, my sister held out her arm herself and said, you may give it now. The nurse called her brave. I could see that her lips were trembling.

At night I asked her why she was not afraid today. She said, because Sangsang did not cry. Sangsang was so scared and still did not cry. I am in Grade Two now, so I can sit steady too. When she said the name Sangsang, she said it the way one talks about a classmate who just transferred in.

I did not answer right away. What came back to me was the closing scene: Sangsang gets well, and his father carries him on his back home from the doctor, and the hair of Sangsang has grown back black and standing up a little. My sister once told me that on that page she wanted to laugh and cry at the same time. I said I understood. I would want that too.

Our mother came back from the market and, hearing this, said she had been the loudest crier at injections when she was little, and now she cannot even close her eyes when my sister gets her shot. My sister climbed onto a stool and announced that she would teach our mother to be like Sangsang. We all laughed in a heap, and afterward the corners of the eyes of our mother looked a little wet.

That night I took Grass House off the shelf again. Its corners were already curled from the reading of my sister. The roof of the grass house is ordinary thatch, yet one by one the children who live inside it grow up. Sangsang taught my sister, and my sister taught our mother. The lesson I took away is this: when someone at home is afraid, hold her, and do not let her burrow under the quilt.