苦难留下的草房子

七年级的秋天，我打篮球摔断了左腿，在家休学一个月。拄着拐回到家那天，我从书架上抽出一本黄封面的书，曹文轩的《草房子》。六年级买的，一直没读完。那一个月，我一口气读完了。

书里的桑桑得了一场大病，脖子上长出一个恶疮。全镇的人替他找偏方，最后连艾灸的火针都扎了下去，疼得他叫出声，他还是为了父亲忍下来。读到他坐在城墙上看远处田野的那一段，我摸了摸自己腿上的石膏，想：他不知道自己能不能好，而我明知道会好，我有什么资格泄气。

杜小康原本是油麻地最富的男孩，他家的杂货铺一夜之间破产，他只好退学到校门口摆小摊。他没有躲，没有哭，站在小摊旁边腰杆挺得笔直。书里说，最能吃苦的人长大最快。我想起我的父亲。家里生意失败的那几年，他也没抱怨过，每天起早，从一个修理摊重新干起。

秃鹤因为一颗光头被人笑了好多年，他故意捣乱，只想让人注意到他。直到汇操演出，他扮演光头兵，跳得比谁都认真，全校忽然安静下来，给了他敬意。我五年级转过学，整整一年都是局外人。现在我明白了：孤独不是判决，是训练场。那一年我对着镜子一遍遍练说话，和秃鹤在院子里一遍遍练舞步，是一回事。

书里的三个人，一个生过大病，一个破过大产，一个背过一辈子的嘲笑。他们的成长都不是一天完成的，是在别人看不见的地方，一寸一寸长出来的。

拆石膏那天，我回到操场。秋天的太阳照在红色跑道上，我迈出的第一步还有点僵。我忽然想起《草房子》的结尾，桑桑病好之后，望着那一排在阳光下闪光的草房子。苦难不需要感谢，但走过苦难之后你成了什么样的人，你会记得。我心里那一排草房子，也在闪光。

The Thatched Houses That Suffering Left Behind

In the autumn of seventh grade, I broke my left leg playing basketball and stayed home from school for a month. The day I came back on crutches, I pulled a yellow-covered book from the shelf: Cao Wenxuan's The Straw House. I had bought it in sixth grade and never finished it. That month, I read it in one breath.

The boy Sangsang in the book fell gravely ill, with a terrible growth on his neck. The whole town searched for remedies, and in the end even the burning needle of moxibustion was pressed down on him; he cried out in pain, yet he endured it for his father. When I read the part where he sat on the city wall looking at the distant fields, I touched the cast on my own leg and thought: he did not know whether he would recover, while I knew I would get better. What right did I have to lose heart?

Du Xiaokang was once the richest boy in Oil Grain Village. His family shop went bankrupt overnight, and he had to leave school to keep a small stall at the school

gate. He did not hide, did not cry, and stood beside his stall with his back straight. The book says that the child who can bear hardship grows up the fastest. I thought of my father. In the years after our family business failed, he never complained either. He rose before dawn every day and started again from a small repair stand.

Touhe, the bald boy, was laughed at for years because of his shining head. He made trouble on purpose, wanting nothing more than to be noticed. Only at the gymnastics show, when he played the bald soldier and danced more seriously than anyone else, did the whole school suddenly fall silent and give him respect. I changed schools in fifth grade and spent a full year as an outsider. Now I understand: loneliness is not a verdict but a training ground. For that year I practiced speaking in front of the mirror again and again, just as Touhe practiced his dance steps in the yard.

Three children in the book: one survived a serious illness, one lost a fortune, one carried a lifetime of mockery. None of them grew up in a single day. Their growth came inch by inch in places no one else could see.

The day the cast came off, I went back to the playground. The autumn sun lay on the red rubber track, and my first step was still stiff. I suddenly thought of the ending of The Straw House: after his illness, Sangsang looked at the row of thatched houses shining in the sunlight. Suffering does not need to be thanked, but the person you become after walking through it, you will remember. That row of thatched houses inside my heart is shining too.

草房子在风里立起来的那天

《草房子》里我最忘不掉的一场，是那个暴风雨的晚上。大风把油麻地的草屋顶一片一片卷上天，孩子们追着屋顶跑，杜小康追得最凶。书里写，风过后，孩子们把屋顶重新压好，草房子又立起来了。我第一次读到这里就停住了：原来所谓成长，就是房子被掀掉之后，还有力气把它压回去。

油麻地里最先被掀掉屋顶的是秃鹤。他什么都没有做错，只因为一颗光头，笑声就跟了他六年。他试过反抗，把头发留长又剃光，故意在队列里出丑，换来的只是更多的笑。孤独这个东西，不砸出声，却天天往下压。可是汇操那天，他把自己那颗头跳成了全校最亮的一颗星，压住了所有笑声。他没有战胜谁，他只是没有让那颗头一直低着。

杜小康的屋顶是一夜之间没的。前一天他还是班里唯一穿皮裤的少爷，第二天他家船翻了，债主堵门，他连学都上不起。书里最狠的一笔是：他退学之后没有消失，而是每天蹲在校门口摆小摊，听里面上课。换一个人可能早就躲起来了。他把日子重新压回屋顶的形状，一根冰棍一分

钱地攒。

桑桑的屋顶是病。脖子上那肿块一天天大起来，母亲夜里哭，父亲背着他走遍全镇。火针扎下去的那一声，我在书页外都跟着发抖。可他最后自己从床上坐起来了。书里没写他怎么熬的，只写他好了。熬的过程藏在没有写出来的那些夜里。

去年冬天，我爷爷脑溢血住院，家里一下子安静得可怕。爸妈轮流守夜，我负责给奶奶送饭。有一晚我端着粥走过医院走廊，忽然想起蹲在校门口的杜小康。原来大人世界的破产和病人的床，跟书里写的是一回事。我没有哭，把粥热了第三遍端进去。奶奶喝完说，粥好。那一刻我觉得自己也把什么东西压回去了。

合上书我早就明白，油麻地的风不会只刮一次，我生活里的也不会。但草房子立起来的样子我记住了：不是没被掀过，是掀过之后，一根草一根草再压上去。

The Day the Thatched House Stood Up in the Wind

The scene from The Straw House I can never forget is the stormy night. The great wind rolled the thatched roofs of Oil Grain Village up into the sky piece by piece, and the children chased their roofs, with Du Xiaokang running hardest. After the storm, the book says, the children pressed the roofs back down, and the thatched houses stood up again. I stopped reading the first time I reached this line: so this is what growth means — after the roof is torn off, you still have the strength to press it back.

The first roof torn away in the village belonged to Touhe. He had done nothing wrong, yet laughter followed him for six years because of his bald head. He tried fighting back: growing his hair long and shaving it off again, acting out in the ranks on purpose, and earning only more laughter. Loneliness makes no crashing sound, yet it presses down every day. But on the day of the gymnastics show, he made his own head the brightest star in the whole school and silenced all the laughter. He defeated no one; he simply refused to keep that head lowered.

Du Xiaokang lost his roof overnight. The day before, he was the only young master in class wearing leather trousers; the next day his family boat sank, creditors blocked the door, and he could not even stay in school. The cruelest stroke in the book: after dropping out, he did not vanish. He squatted at the school gate every day keeping a small stall, listening to the lessons from inside. Another boy might have hidden long ago. He pressed his days back into the shape of a roof, saving coins one popsicle at a time.

Sangsang's roof was illness. The lump on his neck grew larger day by day; his mother cried at night, his father carried him on his back across the whole town. The

sound of the burning needle going in made me tremble outside the pages. Yet in the end he sat up from his bed by himself. The book never writes how he endured it; it only writes that he recovered. The endurance hides in the nights the book did not write.

Last winter, my grandfather was hospitalized with a brain hemorrhage, and our house fell terrifyingly quiet. My parents took turns keeping night vigil at the hospital while I delivered meals to my grandmother. One evening, carrying a bowl of porridge down the hospital corridor, I suddenly thought of Du Xiaokang squatting at the school gate. It turned out that bankruptcy in the adult world and a sickbed are the same thing as what the book describes. I did not cry. I reheated the porridge a third time and carried it in. When my grandmother finished it, she said: the porridge is good. In that moment I felt I had pressed something back into place too.

Long before closing the book I understood that the wind over Oil Grain Village will not blow only once, and neither will the wind in my own life. But I have memorized the way the thatched house stands up: not never having been torn open, but pressing grass back onto grass after it was torn.

我读三遍，每次怕的人不一样

《草房子》这本书，我读过三遍。五年级一遍，六年级一遍，七年级一遍。奇怪的是，每一遍我记住的人都不一样。后来我想明白了：不是书变了，是我在变。

五年级那一遍，我整天活在秃鹤里。那学期我刚从乡下转来，普通话里带着调子，一开口后排就笑。我学着把话吞回去，课间也装作不听见别人聊天。书里秃鹤留过长发又剃成光头，站在操场上让所有人看，我当时不懂他为什么自讨苦吃。现在懂了：他是不肯让自己一辈子躲着那颗头。而我那一年，确实在躲着自己的口音。

六年级那一遍，满书都是杜小康。就在那年夏天，我最好的朋友阿远家做买卖赔光了，他半夜转学走了，走前把心爱的集邮册塞给我，说帮我保管。第二天他的座位空着，我盯着那道空看了整整一周。书里杜小康蹲在校门口摆摊，听见上课铃不能进教室。我在学校门口见过阿远，他穿着旧外套帮家里卸货，看见我，笑了一下，喊了我名字。那一下比任何哭都重。我第一次知道，失去可以不打招呼，接住它的人得自己站稳。

七年级这一遍，我读到了桑桑。上学期我做了个小手术，住院五天，夜里疼得睡不着，母亲趴在床边睡，手还攥着我的手腕。书里桑桑的父亲背着他在镇上找医生，一夜白头发。我从前觉得大人不会老，那一夜我看见我父亲在走廊里来回走，背也有点弯。病这个东西，把一家人的胆子都照出来了，也把爱照出来了。

三遍读完，我在扉页写下一句话：苦难没有相同的形状，它落到秃鹤头上是嘲笑，落到杜小

康家是空货架，落到桑桑脖子上是一个肿块。但它每次都不是白落的。秃鹤赢得了安静，杜小康把摊子撑成了脊梁，桑桑从病床上自己坐起来。

我合上书想，我这一代人也会有自己的肿块、自己的空货架、自己的嘲笑，早晚的事。只希望到时候，我能想起油麻地这三个人的背影，然后像他们一样，不躲，不跪，不装没事。

I Read It Three Times, and Each Time I Feared a Different Boy

I have read The Straw House three times: once in fifth grade, once in sixth, once in seventh. Strangely, the person I remember differs each time. Later I figured out why: the book did not change. I did.

During my fifth-grade reading, I lived inside Touhe's skin all day. That term I had just transferred in from the countryside, my Mandarin carrying the accent of the fields, and the back rows laughed whenever I opened my mouth. I learned to swallow my words and pretended not to hear the chatter at break. In the book, Touhe grows his hair long and then shaves it bald, standing on the playground for everyone to see. Back then I could not understand why he courted such pain. Now I do: he refused to spend his life hiding his own head. And in that year, I truly was hiding my own accent.

During the sixth-grade reading, the whole book was Du Xiaokang. That very summer, my best friend Ayuan's family lost everything in their trade, and he transferred schools in the middle of the night. Before leaving he pressed his beloved stamp album into my hands and asked me to keep it safe for him. The next day his seat stood empty, and I stared at that emptiness for a full week. In the book, Du Xiaokang squats at the school gate with his stall and hears the class bell he can no longer enter. I once saw Ayuan at the school gate, wearing an old coat, helping his family unload goods. He saw me, smiled, and called my name. That smile weighed more than any crying. For the first time I understood that loss need not knock first, and the one who catches it must stand steady alone.

During this seventh-grade reading, I reached Sangsang. Last term I had a small surgery and stayed in the hospital five nights, unable to sleep from pain, my mother asleep face-down at the bedside with her hand still gripping my wrist. In the book, Sangsang's father carries him through the town hunting for a doctor, his hair turning white in a single night. I used to think adults never grow old. That night I watched my father pacing up and down the corridor, his back slightly bent too. Illness exposes a family's courage, and it exposes their love.

After three readings I wrote one line on the title page: suffering never takes the same shape. It lands on Touhe's head as mockery, on Du Xiaokang's home as empty shelves, on Sangsang's neck as a lump. But it never lands for nothing. Touhe won the silence, Du Xiaokang propped his stall into a backbone, and Sangsang sat up from his sickbed by himself.

I closed the book and thought: our generation will have its own lumps, its own empty shelves, its own mockery, sooner or later. I only hope that when the time comes, I can recall the backs of these three boys from Oil Grain Village and, like them, not hide, not kneel, not pretend nothing happened.

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