如果我是纸月的同桌

读《草房子》的时候，我做过一个梦：梦里我坐在油麻地小学的教室里，旁边坐着纸月。

梦里的清晨是从桥开始的。纸月每天天不亮就出门，过石桥，穿芦苇荡，鞋尖踩湿了露水也不停脚。而我只要晚出门五分钟，就要一路小跑。要是我真是她的同桌，我大概会不好意思再赖床——身边天天坐着一个走那么远路都不迟到的人，自己脸上一阵阵热。

梦里的冬天在庙会上。我跟着纸月去卖鸡蛋：外婆的扁担压得吱呀响，纸月蹲在筐边，手指冻得通红，小声招呼过路人。有人嫌贵，她不恼；没人买，她也不喊累。我在旁边看着，忽然很羞愧。我买文具的时候只挑贵的，从没想过一枚鸡蛋从鸡窝到筐里要走多少步，更没想过有人会在寒风里守着一整筐的指望。

梦的最后是那块橡皮。上课的时候，我的橡皮掉到课桌底下，滚出去老远。我正要弯腰去够，纸月已经把它捡了起来。她鼓起腮帮吹掉上面的铅笔屑，又用袖口把橡皮边上的黑印蹭了蹭，然后趁老师转身板书，把它轻轻放回我的桌角。整个过程她没有说一句话，也没有抬头看我。我愣了好一会儿，连谢谢都忘了说。

醒来以后我一直在想那块橡皮。纸月帮我，不是为了听一句谢谢，她只是觉得东西掉了就该捡起来，弄脏了就该擦干净。她帮人帮得那样自然，像呼吸一样。反观我自己：帮同学传个作业本，都要顺口说一句我帮你了啊；扫了一次地，恨不得全班都知道。

书里纸月后来跟着舅舅离开了油麻地。听说她走的那天还是安安静静，没有大哭大闹。我在想，如果我是她的同桌，我大概会在她的桌肚里塞一块新橡皮，什么也不写。她走在露水未干的路上时摸到它，就会知道：有人记得她弯腰捡橡皮的样子。

现在我也学着这样做事：捡起掉在地上的文具悄悄放回去，摆好歪掉的椅子就走。善良这件事，纸月没教过我口诀，她只是让我看见——不出声的，才最响。

If I Were Zhiyue's Deskmate

While reading The Straw House, I had a dream: in the dream I sat in the classroom of Youmadi Primary School, with Zhiyue beside me.

The morning in the dream began at the bridge. Zhiyue left home before dawn, crossed the stone bridge, walked through the reed marsh, and never paused even when the dew soaked her shoe tips. Me? If I left home five minutes late I would have to run the whole way. If I really were her deskmate, I probably could not bear to linger in bed anymore—sitting day after day beside someone who walks that far and is never late would set my face burning.

The winter in the dream was at the temple fair. I followed Zhiyue to sell eggs: her grandmother's carrying pole creaking under the weight, Zhiyue squatting by the baskets, her fingers red from the cold, calling softly to passers-by. When someone

grumbled the price was high, she did not sulk; when nobody bought, she did not complain of tiredness. I watched from the side and suddenly felt ashamed. When I buy stationery I pick only the expensive ones, and I never thought about how many steps an egg travels from the henhouse to the basket, let alone that someone might guard a whole basket of hope in the cold wind.

The dream ended with that eraser. During class my eraser fell under the desk and rolled far away. Just as I bent to reach for it, Zhiyue had already picked it up. She puffed her cheeks to blow off the pencil shavings, rubbed the black smudge on its edge with her cuff, then, while the teacher turned to write on the board, gently placed it back on the corner of my desk. Through the whole process she said nothing and did not even look up at me. I sat stunned for a while, forgetting even to say thank you.

After I woke up, I kept thinking about that eraser. Zhiyue helped me not to hear a thank you; she simply believed that what falls should be picked up and what is dirty should be wiped clean. She helped people so naturally, like breathing. Look at me instead: when I pass an exercise book for a classmate I can't help adding I did you a favor; sweep the floor once and I want the whole class to know.

In the book Zhiyue later left Youmadi with her uncle. I heard she was still quiet on the day she left, without loud crying or fuss. I thought: if I were her deskmate, I would slip a new eraser into her desk cubby and write nothing on it. When she felt it while walking on the dewy road, she would know that someone remembered the way she bent down to pick up an eraser.

Now I am learning to act the same way: pick up a classmate's stationery that fell and put it back quietly, straighten a crooked chair and walk away. Kindness—Zhiyue never taught me a slogan for it. She only let me see this: what is done without a sound rings the loudest.