我渐渐看懂了秦大奶奶

读《草房子》前半部分的时候，我和书里的孩子们一样，讨厌秦大奶奶。

她住在油麻地校园角落的一间小破屋里，头发乱蓬蓬的，背驼得像一张弓。学校一有鸡鸭跑到草地上啄食，她就叉着腰冲出来，嘴里骂骂咧咧，挥着竹竿把鸡鸭撵得满天飞。孩子们靠近她的屋子，她会捡起土块吓唬人。桑桑他们觉得她不可理喻，给她起外号，绕着她的屋子走。我也觉得这是个脾气古怪、专跟人作对的老太太。

可是读着读着，我心里那点讨厌开始松动。乔乔掉进水里那天，谁都没反应过来，是秦大奶奶第一个扑通跳进河中。她水性并不好，在水里扑腾得厉害，却还是死死托住乔乔，把人推向了岸边。孩子们得救了，她自己呛了一肚子水，趴在岸上咳得直不起腰。那一刻她不再是那个凶巴巴的老太太，她只是一个拼了命救孩子的老人。

再后来，就是那个南瓜。学校地里的南瓜熟了一个，滚到了水边，秦大奶奶想去把它捞回来。她那么宝贝学校的庄稼——要知道，她从前可是最恨这块地的主人啊。她伸手去够南瓜，脚下一滑，落进了水里。这一次，她再也没有上来。一个南瓜，在别人眼里什么都不是，在她眼里却是学校的收成，是她守了一辈子的东西。

油麻地的人后来把她的坟迁到了校园边，桑桑他们每次路过都会放轻脚步。我合上书，脸上火辣辣的。我曾经那么轻易地讨厌她，只因为她凶、她怪、她不好看，却没人先去看看她骂声底下藏着什么。她把学校的鸡鸭当庄稼护，把别人的孩子当自家孩子救，把学校的南瓜当命根子守——她骂了一辈子，其实爱了一辈子。

秦大奶奶让我记住一件事：看人不能只看那张凶巴巴的脸。有些人把善良藏得很深，要等到水花溅起来的那一刻，你才看得见。以后再遇到不好相处的人，我不急着讨厌了，我想先等一等，看看水花溅起来的时候，他会做什么。

I Came to Understand Grandma Qin

During the first half of The Straw House, I disliked Grandma Qin just as much as the children in the book did.

She lived in a tiny shabby hut in a corner of the Youmadi schoolyard. Her hair was tangled, her back bent like a bow. Whenever chickens or ducks strayed onto the school grass, she would storm out with hands on her hips, cursing, waving a bamboo pole and sending the birds flapping in every direction. If children came near her hut, she would pick up clods of earth to scare them off. Sangsang and the others thought she was unreasonable; they gave her nicknames and detoured around her hut. I too thought she was a foul-tempered old woman who made enemies of everyone.

But as I kept reading, my dislike began to loosen. The day Qiaoqiao fell into the

water, nobody knew what to do, and Grandma Qin was the first to plunge into the river with a splash. She was not a strong swimmer; she thrashed badly in the water, yet she held Qiaoqiao firmly up and pushed the child toward the bank. The child was saved; she herself swallowed a bellyful of water and lay on the bank coughing, unable to straighten her back. In that moment she was no longer the fierce old woman. She was only an old person who risked her life to save a child.

Then came the pumpkin. One ripe pumpkin from the school field rolled to the water's edge, and Grandma Qin went to fish it back. She treasured the school's crops so much—remember, she had once hated the owners of this land more than anyone. She reached for the pumpkin, her foot slipped, and she fell into the water. This time, she never came back up. To others a pumpkin was nothing; to her it was the school's harvest, the thing she had guarded all her life.

Later the people of Youmadi moved her grave to the edge of the schoolyard, and Sangsang and the others slowed their footsteps whenever they passed it. I closed the book with my face burning. I had disliked her so easily, only because she was fierce, strange, and plain-looking, and nobody thought to look beneath her scolding for what it hid. She guarded the school's chickens and ducks as if they were crops, saved other people's children as if they were her own, and treasured the school's pumpkin as her dearest possession—she scolded her whole life, but in fact she loved her whole life.

Grandma Qin taught me one thing: you cannot judge a person by a fierce face alone. Some people hide their kindness very deep, and you only see it when the water splashes up. Next time I meet someone hard to get along with, I will not rush to dislike them. I will wait, and see what they do when the water splashes up.

沉进水里的那只南瓜

《草房子》里有一只南瓜，它没有名字，却让我记了很久。就是这只南瓜，把秦大奶奶永远带走了。

要懂这只南瓜，得先懂秦大奶奶这个人。在油麻地小学的孩子眼里，她是个讨人嫌的老太婆：住在校园角落的破屋里，成天跟学校作对。鸡鸭进了草地，她挥着竹竿满院子撵，骂声能传出二里地；孩子从她屋前抄近道，她会扬手吓唬。谁见了她都绕着走，背地里叫她怪老太婆。说实话，我读到这里也讨厌她，心想世界上怎么有这样不讲理的老人。

可后来发生的事，一拳一拳打在我心上。乔乔失足落水，岸上的大人孩子都慌了神，是秦大奶奶第一个跳进河里。她不会水，喝了一肚子浑水，硬是把乔乔顶出了水面。还有一次，学校地里的瓜果蔬了，她半夜起来一根根扶正，像护自家的娃。我越读越奇怪：这个嘴上恨学校恨了一

辈子的老太太，怎么手脚比谁都护着学校？

直到那只南瓜滚到水边。一个熟透的南瓜，从篱笆边滚到河边，眼看要漂走。秦大奶奶去捞它，脚下一滑，掉进了水里。人们捞上来南瓜，却没有捞回她。我读到这里停了很久：她这一辈子，跟学校抢了一辈子地，到头来却为学校的收成丢了命。她抢地，是因为那是她男人用命换来的；她护瓜，是因为她终于把这块地当成了自己的家。她不是不讲理，她只是把理都藏在粗话底下，不会好好说出来。

油麻地的人终于懂了。他们把秦大奶奶葬在校园边上，让她天天听着孩子们的读书声。从前绕着她屋子走的孩子，如今路过她的坟，都会安安静静地把脚步放轻。

那只南瓜后来被人捧回了厨房。你看，它照见了秦大奶奶的心：凶了一辈子的人，心是软的；骂得最响的人，爱得最深。我也想起小区里那个总瞪孩子的门卫爷爷，后来才知道他每天最早到岗，雨天背低年级的孩子过马路。从秦大奶奶起，我不再用一张脸去断定一颗心。要懂一个人，得等他跳进河里的那一刻。

The Pumpkin That Sank Into the Water

There is a pumpkin in The Straw House. It has no name, yet I have remembered it for a long time. It was this pumpkin that took Grandma Qin away forever.

To understand the pumpkin, you must first understand Grandma Qin. In the eyes of the children of Youmadi Primary School, she was a disliked old woman: living in a shabby hut in the corner of the schoolyard, opposing the school day after day. When chickens and ducks strayed onto the grass, she chased them across the yard with a bamboo pole, her scolding carrying two li through the air; if children cut across in front of her hut, she raised her hand to frighten them. Everyone gave her a wide berth and called her the strange old woman behind her back. To be honest, I disliked her too as I read this, wondering how the world could hold such an irrational old person.

But what happened afterward punched me in the heart, blow after blow. When Qiaoqiao fell into the water, the grown-ups and children on the bank panicked, and Grandma Qin was the first to jump into the river. She could not swim; she swallowed bellyfuls of muddy water, yet she pushed Qiaoqiao up above the surface. Another time, the vegetables in the school field wilted, and she got up at midnight to straighten them one by one, guarding them like her own babies. The more I read, the more puzzled I became: this old woman who claimed to hate the school her whole life—why were her hands and feet guarding the school more than anyone's?

Then the pumpkin rolled to the water's edge. A fully ripe pumpkin rolled from beside the fence to the riverbank, about to float away. Grandma Qin went to fish it

out, her foot slipped, and she fell into the water. People fished up the pumpkin, but they did not fish her back up. I paused for a long time there: she had fought the school over that land her whole life, and in the end she gave her life for the school's harvest. She fought for the land because her husband had traded his life for it; she guarded its crops because at last she had come to treat this land as her home. She was not irrational—she only hid all her reason beneath rough words, unable to say it gently.

The people of Youmadi understood at last. They buried Grandma Qin at the edge of the schoolyard, so she could listen to the children reading aloud every day. The children who once detoured around her hut now pass her grave in silence, softening their footsteps.

The pumpkin was later carried back to the kitchen. You see, it reflected Grandma Qin's heart: the person who was fierce all her life had a soft heart; the person who scolded the loudest loved the deepest. I thought of the gatekeeper grandpa in our neighborhood who always glared at children; only later did I learn he arrived at work earliest every day and carried younger children across the street on rainy days. Ever since Grandma Qin, I no longer use a face to judge a heart. To understand a person, you must wait for the moment they jump into the river.

油麻地少了一种声音

读完《草房子》，油麻地的画面我都还记得，但最先回到我耳朵里的，是声音。

头一种是秦大奶奶的骂声。天不亮，她的屋子前就传来鸡鸭扑翅膀的声音，接着是她的竹竿抽在篱笆上的脆响，再然后就是她中气十足的骂。她骂偷食的鸡鸭，骂抄近道的孩子，骂油麻地小学占了她的地。那声音又粗又硬，像一块老树皮擦过瓦片。书里的孩子烦她，我也烦：怎么会有这样一个整天吵闹的老太太？我甚至想起我们楼道里挨家拍门催物业费的邻居阿姨，我也嫌她嗓门大。

第二种声音，是河里的扑腾声。乔乔落水那天，岸上的惊叫乱成一片，紧接着扑通一声，有人跳了下去——是秦大奶奶。她在浑水里扑腾，喉咙里咕噜咕噜灌着水，手却高高把乔乔往水面托。那声音一点也不好听，呛、急、吓人，可我读得鼻子发酸：原来那副骂人的嗓子底下，藏着这样一个不肯见死不救的心。

第三种声音，是南瓜事件之后的安静。秦大奶奶为捞学校那只滚到水边的南瓜，滑进了河里，再没上来。油麻地忽然没了她的骂声。竹竿不抽了，鸡鸭没人撵了，校园角落那间破屋的门开着，里面静得让人心慌。人们这才发现：原来那些年被她骂声罩着的日子，早就习惯了，也早就被护着了一直不知道。桑桑他们把她的坟迁到校园边，从此她的坟头天天有读书声陪着。我读到这里，忽然替从前的油麻地害臊：她吵的时候没人领她的情，她安静了，所有人开始对她好。

书里的孩子们终于不再以貌取人，可他们明白得太晚了。我合上书想：我能不能早一点明白？楼道里那位嗓门大的阿姨，每天挨家拍门，是怕谁家忘锁门招贼；她催物业费，是怕楼道的灯坏了没人出钱修。她跟秦大奶奶一样，把守护做成了吵闹的样子，只等一个南瓜、一次落水，才让人看见她的心。

油麻地后来再没有那种骂声。我耳朵里却一直留着它。它提醒我：下次再被谁的声音吵到，先别捂耳朵。吵闹底下，可能正有人在替你看着鸡鸭、护着庄稼。

Youmadi Lost One Kind of Sound

After finishing The Straw House, I still remember the scenes of Youmadi, but the first things that return to my ears are its sounds.

The first is Grandma Qin's scolding. Before dawn, the sound of chickens and ducks flapping their wings comes from in front of her hut, then the crisp crack of her bamboo pole on the fence, and then her full-throated scolding. She scolds the chickens and ducks that steal food, the children who cut across her path, and the Youmadi Primary School that took her land. Her voice is coarse and hard, like old tree bark scraped across roof tiles. The children in the book are annoyed by her, and so am I: how can there be an old woman who quarrels all day long? I even thought of the neighbor auntie in our stairwell who knocks on every door to press people for the property fee—I, too, found her voice too loud.

The second sound is the thrashing in the river. The day Qiaoqiao fell in, the screams on the bank melted into chaos, and then came a splash—someone jumped in. It was Grandma Qin. She thrashed in the muddy water, her throat gulping it down, yet her hands pushed Qiaoqiao high toward the surface. That sound was far from pleasant: choking, urgent, frightening. But I read it with a stinging nose: beneath that scolding voice hid a heart that refused to watch a child die.

The third sound is the silence after the pumpkin. Grandma Qin slipped into the river while trying to rescue the school's pumpkin that had rolled to the water's edge, and never came back. Suddenly Youmadi had no scolding left. The bamboo pole stopped cracking, nobody chased the chickens and ducks anymore, and the door of the shabby hut in the schoolyard corner stood open, silent enough to make people uneasy. Only then did people realize: those years covered by her scolding had long been part of their lives, and they had long been guarded without knowing it. Sangsang and the others moved her grave to the edge of the schoolyard, and from then on the sound of children reading aloud kept her company every day. Reading this, I suddenly felt ashamed for the old Youmadi: while she was noisy, nobody appreciated her; once she fell silent, everyone began treating her kindly.

The children in the book finally stopped judging people by appearances, but they understood too late. I closed the book and asked myself: can I understand sooner? The loud auntie in our stairwell knocks on every door because she worries some family forgot to lock up; she presses for the property fee because she fears the stairwell light will burn out with nobody to pay for repairs. Like Grandma Qin, she shaped her guardianship into noise, waiting for a pumpkin, a fall into water, before letting people see her heart.

Youmadi never heard that scolding again. But it stays in my ears. It reminds me: next time someone's voice annoys me, do not cover my ears first. Beneath the noise, someone may be watching over your chickens and ducks, guarding your crops.