

杜小康的故事让我睡不着

10月20日 星期二 晴

今天晚上，我睡不着。我一闭上眼睛，就看见杜小康站在芦苇荡里，身后是一群鸭子。

晚饭后我把《草房子》里杜小康破产那一章读完了。杜小康曾经是油麻地最神气的孩子：他家有堆到房顶货物的杂货铺，他有全村唯一一辆红自行车。可是一夜之间全完了——铺子抵了债，他爸爸病倒了，连铺子那两扇红漆门板都抵给了债主。杜小康只好失学，跟着父亲去很远很远的芦苇荡放鸭。书里写他回来的时候，脸晒得黧黑，嗓子变得沙哑，再也不是从前那个杜小康了。我读到这儿坐直了，半天没能往下读。

我睡不着，是因为我想起自己。这星期我扔了半个肉包，只因为嫌馅儿不对口味；我用了几页的本子，因为封面不好看就塞进抽屉最里面，缠着妈妈换新笔袋；我的橡皮咬得满是牙印，用两天就换新的。杜小康在芦苇荡里守着一群鸭子，盼着能再上一天学；我坐在亮堂堂的教室里，把半个肉包说扔就扔。被窝里的脸烫得很，我把踢开的被子又拉上来蒙住头。

后来听见客厅里妈妈叠衣服的声音，我爬起来光脚走过去，坐在她旁边，把杜小康的事从头讲给她听：红门板、病倒的爸爸、芦苇荡里的鸭群。妈妈听完没有马上说话，过了一会儿才讲：姥爷小时候上学，铅笔短得捏不住了，套在竹管里接着写，一支笔写到拿不住才肯换。妈妈说：东西不怕少，怕的是不知道惜。

我们俩聊到很晚，聊到姥爷的竹管铅笔，聊到我家抽屉里那些用了几页就嫌旧的本子。妈妈把那个丑封面本子找出来，用牛皮纸包了个新皮，我在皮上写了三个字：请用完。

睡前我把今天写进日记：杜小康的故事让我睡不着。睡不着不是坏事，睡不着，说明我开始懂了。明天早上，我要把买来的肉包一口不剩地吃完。

Du Xiaokang's Story Keeps Me Awake

October 20, Tuesday, Sunny

Tonight I cannot sleep. The moment I close my eyes, I see Du Xiaokang standing in the reed marsh, a flock of ducks behind him.

After dinner I finished the chapter of The Straw House in which Du Xiaokang's family goes bankrupt. Du Xiaokang was once the proudest boy in Youmadi: his family's grocery shop had goods stacked to the ceiling, and he owned the village's only red bicycle. But in a single night it all ended—the shop went to the creditors, his father fell ill, and even the two red-lacquered door panels of the shop were pawned for the debt. Du Xiaokang had to drop out of school and follow his father to a reed marsh far, far away to herd ducks. The book says that when he came back, his face was tanned dark and his voice had turned hoarse; he was no longer the old Du Xiaokang. I sat up straight reading this and could not go on for a long time.

I cannot sleep because I thought of myself. This week I threw away half a meat bun just because I disliked the filling; I stuffed a notebook with only a few pages used into the back of the drawer because its cover was ugly, and nagged my mother for a new pencil case; my erasers, bitten full of tooth marks, get replaced after two days. Du Xiaokang guards a flock of ducks in the reed marsh, longing for one more day at school; I sit in a bright classroom and toss away half a bun without a second thought. My face burns under the quilt, and I pull the kicked-off quilt back over my head.

Later I heard my mother folding clothes in the living room. I got up, walked over barefoot, sat beside her, and told her Du Xiaokang's story from the beginning: the red door panels, the father struck down by illness, the flock of ducks in the reed marsh. Mother was quiet for a moment after listening, then spoke. She said that when grandpa was a schoolboy, his pencil grew too short to hold, so he slipped it into a bamboo tube and kept writing; he would not replace a pencil until it could no longer be held. Mother said: it is not scarcity of things that matters, but not knowing how to treasure them.

We talked late, about grandpa's bamboo-tube pencil, about the notebooks in our own drawer used a few pages then shelved as old. Mother found the ugly-covered notebook, wrapped it in a kraft-paper sleeve, and I wrote three characters on the sleeve: please use me up.

Before bed I wrote today in my diary: Du Xiaokang's story keeps me awake. Being awake is not a bad thing. Being awake means I am beginning to understand. Tomorrow morning I will eat the whole bun I buy, not leaving a single bite.