

我在纸上给油麻地的孩子排座次

11月8日 星期日 小雨。今天哪儿也没去，把《草房子》从头到尾读完了。晚饭后我拿出一张纸，把书里孩子的名字一个一个写下来，像给我们班排座位那样，在每个人后面写一行印象。

第一个名字是桑桑。我在他后面写：胆子最大，也最疼人。他敢穿着棉鞋蹚夏天的水，敢把父亲的奖杯当鸽子笼，也在纸月被人欺负时冲上去挨了打。他生病以后，我怕得整晚睡不踏实，他倒自己先稳住了，还安慰来看他的同学别哭。我在这个名字下面画了道横线——油麻地的孩子里，他是领头的。

第二个名字是陆鹤，就是秃鹤。我原本想写爱出风头，笔停了停，改成了：想被当成普通人。他戴帽子，是因为怕人看他的光头；他在汇演上亲手剃光头，是想让人看一眼真正的他，那一演，台下全站起来了。我们班的张一鸣也是这样，个子矮，非要在元旦晚会上报魔术，有人笑他，他报得更大声。我以前不懂他，现在我懂了。

第三个名字是细马。我写：话最少，肩膀最硬。他放羊，种山药，给瘫在床上的养母端水送饭，养父走后一个人把新房子盖起来，屋脊垒得比旧屋还高。他刚来油麻地时谁都不拿他当回事，最后油麻地最靠得住的偏偏是他。

写完这三个名字，我把我们班的名单也摸出来看了看。我们班四十七个人，没有洪水，没有饥荒，可每个人也都有自己的难处：有人家里父母常年吵架，有人转学来一直没交到朋友，有人像我一样，一考试就手心出汗。我以前只觉得他们怪，现在我知道，每个人心里都下着自己那场雨。

我把这张纸夹进书里，当书签。合上书我想：油麻地的孩子和我们的差别，不是苦不苦，是他们摔倒了就地爬起来，我们摔倒了先看看有没有人扶。这大概就是我该从这本书里带走的东西。明天，我想去跟张一鸣说一句：你那个魔术，其实挺有意思。

I Seated the Children of Youmadi on a Sheet of Paper

November 8, Sunday, light rain. Today I stayed home and read Grass House from beginning to end. After dinner I took out a sheet of paper and wrote down the names of the children in the book one by one, the way our teacher arranges the class roster, and behind each name I wrote one line of impression.

The first name was Sangsang. Behind it I wrote: the boldest, and the kindest. He dared to wade through summer water in cotton shoes, dared to turn his father's trophy cup into a dove cage, and rushed in to take a beating when Paper Moon was bullied. After he fell ill, I tossed awake all night with worry, yet he was the one who kept steady first, even comforting the classmates who came to visit him. I drew a line under this name. Among the children of Youmadi, he is the one who leads.

The second name was Lu He, the boy called Bald Crane. I first wanted to write show-off, then paused and changed it to: wants to be treated as an ordinary boy. He

wore the cap because he feared people staring at his bald head; he shaved it bright himself for the school play because he wanted people to see the real him, and that night the whole audience rose to their feet. Zhang Yiming in our class is like that too. Short in stature, he insisted on performing magic at the New Year party; some laughed, and he performed all the louder. I never understood him before. Now I do.

The third name was Xima. I wrote: fewest words, strongest shoulders. He herded sheep, planted yams, carried water and meals to his adoptive mother paralyzed in bed, and after his adoptive father was gone he built the new house alone, its ridge higher than the old one. When he first came to Youmadi nobody took him seriously; in the end he was the one Youmadi could lean on most.

After writing these three names, I took out our class roster and looked it over. Forty-seven students in our class. No flood, no famine, yet each one carries a private hardship: some have parents quarreling for years, some transferred in and still made no friends, some, like me, get sweaty palms at every exam. Before, I only thought they were strange. Now I know that inside everyone it is raining its own rain.

I slipped the sheet into the book as a bookmark. Closing the book I thought: the difference between the children of Youmadi and us is not whether life is hard. It is that when they fall they get up on the spot, and when we fall we first look around to see if anyone will help. That, I think, is what I should take away from this book. Tomorrow, I want to say to Zhang Yiming: that magic trick of yours is actually pretty interesting.