灯下，我把草房子读给孩子听

晚饭后，女儿抱着《草房子》钻进被窝，非要我读。她翻到油麻地那一页，指着插图上的草顶房子问：这房子会漏雨吗。我说会。她又问：那为什么还叫它家。我没答上来，只好低头往下读。书里的草房子确实漏雨，雨点落在麻纸糊的墙上，鼓起一个个小包，孩子们仰头看，谁也不恼。教室漏雨，先生就领他们大声读书，说读书声能把雨声压下去。女儿听到这里把被子往上拉了拉，像怕雨淋着书里的人。

读到桑桑举着竹竿满村跑，女儿忽然攥紧了被角。她紧张的样子像在看一场要输的比赛。后来桑桑生病跑不动了，她小声问：他还能跑吗。我说你往下听。病好了，桑桑重新跑起来，风又掀起他的衣角，女儿在被窝里轻轻跳了一下，像那一跑是跑给她看的。孩子的眼睛是一架最老实的秤，书里那点好，她全接得住。读到这一句我自己倒先停了，低头把那一行又看一遍，嗓子有点紧。

最难讲的是杜小康。他家的红门板被债主卸走那晚，女儿把书扣在胸口，半天不翻开。缓过来以后她问：他后来吃什么。我接着往下念：他在小学门口摆了个摊，卖铅笔和糖果，腰板直直的。女儿想了很久，问：他能赚很多钱吗。我说不知道，可他没伸手要过谁的。女儿点点头，第二天一早，把她攒的硬币数出一半放进存钱罐，说这是给杜小康进货的。我知道她不是给书里的人，她是把这份体面收进了自己心里。

我原以为是我在给孩子读书，读着读着才明白，是孩子替我把书里的光一处一处指出来。草房子漏雨，她说那是房子在喝水；桑桑跑，她攥拳；杜小康摆摊，她存硬币。大人读书看命运，孩子读书看人心，而人心那一层，本来就该先讲给她听。

灯熄了，她的呼吸慢慢匀了。书摊在枕边，草房子在灯影里立着。我替她掖好被角，心里想：这一夜读进去的东西，够我们俩受用很久。

Under the Lamp, I Read the Grass House to My Child

After dinner my daughter crawled into bed hugging Grass House and insisted that I read to her. She turned to the page about Youmadi, pointed at the thatched house in the picture and asked: does this house leak when it rains. I said yes. She asked again: then why is it still called home. I had no answer, so I bent my head and kept reading. The grass houses in the book do leak. Raindrops beat on the hemp-paper walls, swelling little bubbles, and the children look up at them, nobody angry. When the classroom leaks, the teacher leads them to read aloud, saying the sound of reading can press the sound of rain down. Hearing this, my daughter pulled the quilt up a little, as if afraid the rain would soak the people inside the book.

When I read the part where Sangsang runs across the village holding a bamboo pole, my daughter suddenly gripped the corner of the quilt. Her tension looked like watching a game about to be lost. Later Sangsang fell ill and could not run, and she whispered: can he still run. I said, listen on. After he recovered, Sangsang ran

again, the wind flipping his hem once more, and my daughter gave a little jump under the quilt, as if that run were performed for her alone. A child's eyes are the most honest of scales; every bit of goodness in a book, she can hold.

The hardest part to read was Du Xiaokang. On the night the creditor carried off his family's red door panels, my daughter pressed the book shut against her chest and would not open it for a long while. When she calmed down she asked: what did he eat afterward. I read on: he set up a stall at the school gate, selling pencils and candies, his back straight. She thought for a long time, then asked: can he earn much money. I said I did not know, but he never once reached out his hand to anyone. She nodded, and early the next morning she counted out half of her saved coins into the piggy bank, saying this is capital for Du Xiaokang's goods. I knew she was not giving to a person in a book; she was folding that dignity into her own heart.

I thought I was reading the book to my child. Reading on, I understood: it was she pointing out to me, one by one, the lights inside the book. The grass house leaks, and she says the house is drinking water; Sangsang runs, and she clenches her fists; Du Xiaokang sets up his stall, and she saves coins. Grown-ups read for fate, children read for the human heart, and the layer of the human heart was always the one to tell her first.

The lamp went out; her breathing evened out slowly. The book lay open at her pillow, the grass houses standing in the afterglow. I tucked the quilt around her and thought: what we read into ourselves tonight will serve us both for a long time.