家里的小摊

晚饭后共读《草房子》，读到杜小康把课本和瓶瓶罐罐摆上校门口的架子。读完那一章，女儿把沙发垫子搬到客厅中间，又抱来她的文具盒和几本旧故事书，摆成一排，宣布她的小摊也开张了。

她坐在垫子上招呼我：客人，买橡皮吗，五毛。我掏兜找硬币，她说不收真钱，收问题。她的第一个问题就是：爸爸，杜小康为什么不难过？他家都没了，他摆摊还笑。

我坐在小凳上想了想说，他可能不是不难过，是难过归难过，日子归日子。她摇头，说不对，杜小康摆摊的时候是真的在忙，忙的时候难过进不来。我说你怎么知道他在忙。她说，我摆着小摊就不想别的事了呀。她招呼完我，又招呼墙上的钟，说钟先生也来买一个书签，钟没答话，她就自己替钟挑了一个，插到日历边上。

那一晚她的摊子做了很多生意。她卖橡皮，卖用故事换的书签，还卖了一次讲笑话，客人是我，我笑得很大声。收摊的时候她把东西一样一样装回文具盒，装得很慢很整齐，像书里杜小康数毛票那样。

装完她忽然说，爸爸，我知道杜小康为什么不难过了。我问为什么。她说，忙着忙着，难过就下班了。她说完自己去洗漱，踩着小凳子刷牙，镜子里的她一脸认真。

我站在客厅收拾沙发垫子，半天没动。我给孩子讲过那么多道理，不如她摆一晚小摊自己撞见的那一句。难过就下班了——这话书里没写，是女儿从杜小康的摊子上，自己走过来捡到的。

后来我们家的小摊隔三差五开张，客人轮流是我跟孩子妈妈。每次收摊，女儿都把东西码整齐。她说这是杜小康的规矩。我想，共读一本书能留下这样的规矩，比留下多少好词好句都值。

The Little Stall at Home

After dinner we read Grass House together and came to the part where Du Xiaokang sets his textbooks and jars on the shelf by the school gate. The moment the chapter ended, my daughter carried sofa cushions to the middle of the living room, brought over her pencil case and a few old storybooks, lined them up, and announced that her little stall was open for business too.

Sitting on the cushion, she greeted me: Customer, want an eraser? Fifty cents. I patted my pockets for coins; she said no real money, questions only. Her first question was: Dad, why isn't Du Xiaokang sad? His family lost everything, yet he smiles at his stall.

I sat on a little stool and thought. Maybe it's not that he isn't sad, I said - sadness is one thing, the days are another. She shook her head. No, she said, when Du Xiaokang runs his stall he is truly busy, and when someone is busy sadness can't get in. How do you know he's busy, I asked. She said, because when I keep my stall I

don't think about other things. After serving me she served the wall clock too, asking Mr. Clock to buy a bookmark; when the clock did not answer, she picked one for him herself and tucked it beside the calendar.

Her stall did a lot of business that evening. She sold erasers, bookmarks paid for with stories, and once she sold a joke - the customer was me, and I laughed loudly. When closing up, she packed everything back into her pencil case one by one, slowly and neatly, the way Du Xiaokang counts small bills in the book.

When she finished packing she suddenly said, Dad, I know why Du Xiaokang isn't sad. I asked why. She said, busy and busy, and sadness clocks off work. Then she went to wash up, brushing her teeth on her little step-stool, her face serious in the mirror.

I stood in the living room gathering the cushions and did not move for a long while. I have explained so many principles to my child; none of them beat the one line she found herself after one evening at a pretend stall. Sadness clocks off work - the book never wrote that. My daughter walked over to it herself, from Du Xiaokang's stall.

Since then our little stall opens now and again, with my wife and me taking turns as customers. Every time she closes up, my daughter stacks everything neatly. She says it is Du Xiaokang's rule. If reading a book together leaves behind a rule like that, I think it is worth more than any number of pretty phrases.