我在讲台上听他们吵秃鹤

读书会开始前，我在办公室把《草房子》翻到秃鹤那一章，折了个角。我原本准备了一段开场白，讲共情，讲尊重。上课铃响了，我走进教室，临时把开场白咽了回去，只在黑板上写下两个字：秃鹤。我想试试，这班十一岁的孩子，自己能把话说多远。

发言是从前排开始的。有个男孩学着秃鹤游行时抬头的样子，全班笑了，可他没有跟着笑，他坐下的时候自己先红了脸。有个女孩说，她读到秃鹤报名游行那段，哭了一下，因为她想起三年级转学来的一个同学，大家都学他结巴。我听见这句的时候，手里的笔停了一下。这句话不在我的备课本上。

争论是从后排一声咳嗽开始的。一个男孩说秃有什么好同情的，我们班还有光头呢。他说的就是后排的刚子。刚子没生气，倒是旁边的阿原站了起来，说同情也不是好东西，秃鹤要的不是同情。另一个男孩帮腔，说秃鹤捣乱就是活该被笑。阿原说，被笑的人还站着，你们知道那要多大的力气吗。教室里一下子炸开，两边各有一半人，声音压不住，有人拍桌子。我没有喊停。我靠在讲台边上听，听他们把书里的话和心里的话搅在一起，粉笔灰在光柱里转。

吵到最凶的时候，刚子自己开口了。他说，我没事，你们吵我的时候能不能小点声。全班静了。我抓住这几秒钟，说了三句话。我说，秃鹤捣乱，是想让人看他；秃鹤游行，是他自己看见了自己。你们今天能为书里一个光头吵架，说明你们把书读进心里了。我说，下次读书会，还由你们吵，我只负责记时。

散会后，阿原在走廊拦住我，问我秃鹤后来还笑不笑。我说书里没写，她自己想。她想了想说，她觉得他后来不笑了，因为他不需要别人笑了。我把这句记进了备课本的空白页，旁边标记是：十一岁，已读懂。

那晚我把办公室那段准备好的开场白撕了。共情两个字，不是我教给他们的，是那场吵架教给他们的。黑板上的秃鹤两个字我留了一晚上没擦，第二天早上发现被人添了一笔，秃字旁边画了个小小的、发光的脑袋。

Listening to Them Argue About Bald Crane from the Podium

Before the reading club began, I was in the office turning to the Bald Crane chapter of The Straw House, folding down a corner. I had prepared an opening speech about empathy and respect. When the bell rang, I walked into the classroom and, at the last moment, swallowed that speech. I only wrote two words on the blackboard: Bald Crane. I wanted to test how far this class of eleven-year-olds could carry the conversation on their own.

The sharing started from the front rows. One boy imitated the way Bald Crane held his head high during the parade. The whole class laughed, yet he did not laugh with them; he was blushing first as he sat down. A girl said she cried a little at the part where Bald Crane signed up for the parade, because it reminded her of a

classmate who transferred in during third grade, whom everyone mimicked for stammering. When I heard that, my pen stopped for a moment. That sentence was not in my lesson plan.

The argument began with a cough from the back row. A boy said there was nothing to feel sorry about being bald, and our class has a bald head too. He meant Xiao Gang in the back. Xiao Gang did not get angry; instead, A Yuan next to him stood up and said sympathy is not a good thing either, and Bald Crane does not want sympathy. Another boy chimed in, saying Bald Crane deserved the laughter for causing trouble. A Yuan shot back: do you know how much strength it takes to keep standing while people laugh at you? The classroom exploded, half the class on each side, voices out of control, someone slapping the desk. I did not call time. I leaned against the podium and listened, hearing them mix the words from the book with the words from their hearts, chalk dust turning in the shaft of light.

At the loudest moment, Xiao Gang spoke up himself. He said: I am fine, could you argue about me a little more quietly. The class went silent. I seized those few seconds and said three sentences. I said: Bald Crane causing trouble was him wanting people to see him; Bald Crane marching in the parade was him seeing himself. The fact that you can quarrel over a bald head in a novel today means you have read the book into your hearts. I said: at the next reading club, you keep quarreling, and I will only keep time.

After it ended, A Yuan stopped me in the corridor and asked whether Bald Crane still smiles later. I said the book does not write that; she should decide for herself. She thought for a while and said she believed he stopped smiling, because he no longer needed anyone else's smile. I wrote that sentence into the blank page of my lesson book, with a note beside it: age eleven, already understood.

That evening I tore up the opening speech I had prepared in the office. The word empathy was not taught to them by me; it was taught to them by that quarrel. I left the two words Bald Crane on the blackboard all night. The next morning I found someone had added a stroke beside them: a small, glowing head, drawn in chalk.