读书会上的那句话

周五下午，黑板上写着班级读书会五个字，粉笔灰还在空气里飘。老师没有讲话，只写下三个字：秃鹤。教室里嗡了一声，又静下来。小海第一个举手站起来，说他最记得游行那段，秃鹤把头抬得高高的，好像头上顶着什么宝贝。小海学着那个样子，挺胸，下巴扬起，后排几个同学笑出了声，小海没有坐下去，等老师点头才坐。

我分享的是广播操比赛那一段。我说，秃鹤故意做错动作的时候，我很生气，恨不得钻进书里冲他喊；可他举手报名参加游行那天，我突然明白了。我跟大家说，他不是想逗笑别人，他是想让别人闭嘴。说完这句，我同桌的桌子安静了一会儿，我听见她把这句话轻轻抄进了本子。

小杨是真的脱口而出：秃有什么好夸的，我表哥也秃，天天戴帽子上学。好几个人同时回头。阿原没有举手，直接站了起来：秃鹤不是帽子，他是长大的人。小杨说他名字也好笑。阿原说他叫陆鹤，名字里的鹤就是勇敢的意思。两个人你一句我一句，有人帮小杨，说秃鹤在广播操里捣乱那段确实讨厌；有人说他只是想让人看见他。教室乱成一锅粥，讲台上的粉笔被忘了，粉笔头都磨干了。

老师等大家说完，只讲了三句话。她说，秃鹤捣乱那天，他在求大家看他；他走游行那天，他在看他自己。今天我们肯吵架，是因为我们开始替别人想事情了。老师停了一下，又补了一句：这就是读书读出来的。

散会的时候，我走出教学楼，看见小杨在操场拐角堵住小刚。我们班的刚子也是光头，以前大家都叫他灯泡。我没有听清小杨说了什么，只看见刚子挠了挠头，笑了，两个人一起往小卖部方向跑去。

第二天，黑板上秃鹤两个字被人擦了，下面多了一行很小的粉笔字：油麻地的孩子都在长大。不知道是谁写的。我把这行字抄进《草房子》最后一页的空白处，抄完又把游行那一页重新读了一遍。

That Sentence at the Reading Club

On Friday afternoon, five characters were written on the blackboard: Class Reading Club. Chalk dust still floated in the air. The teacher said nothing and simply wrote three words: Bald Crane. The classroom buzzed for a moment, then fell quiet. Xiao Hai raised his hand first and stood up. He said the parade scene impressed him most, when Bald Crane held his head high, as if he were carrying something precious on top of it. Xiao Hai copied that posture, chest out, chin up. A few kids in the back row laughed out loud, but he stayed standing until the teacher nodded him back to his seat.

My turn was the radio calisthenics competition. I said that when Bald Crane deliberately messed up the movements, I was so angry I wished I could climb into the

book and shout at him. But the day he raised his hand to join the parade, I suddenly understood. I told the class: he was not trying to make people laugh; he was trying to make people stop. After I said that, my deskmate's desk stayed silent for a while, and I heard her quietly copying the sentence into her notebook.

Xiao Yang really did blurt it out: What is great about being bald? My cousin is bald too, and he wears a hat to school every day. Several heads turned at once. A Yuan stood up without even raising her hand: Bald Crane is not a hat. He is a person growing up. Xiao Yang said his name sounded funny too. A Yuan said his real name is Lu He, and the He in it means crane, the brave bird. The two went back and forth. Some sided with Xiao Yang, saying the part where Bald Crane sabotaged the calisthenics really was annoying. Others said he just wanted people to see him. The classroom boiled over, and the chalk on the podium was forgotten, its tip worn dry.

The teacher waited until everyone finished, then said only three sentences. She said: the day Bald Crane caused trouble, he was begging everyone to look at him; the day he marched in the parade, he was looking at himself. The fact that we are willing to argue today means we have started thinking for other people. She paused, then added one more line: that is what reading a book gives you.

When the club broke up, I walked out of the teaching building and saw Xiao Yang cornering Xiao Gang at the bend of the playground. Our classmate Xiao Gang is bald too, and people used to call him Lightbulb. I could not hear what Xiao Yang said. I only saw Xiao Gang scratch his head, laugh, and then the two of them ran off together toward the little shop.

The next day, someone erased the two words Bald Crane from the blackboard, and under them appeared a line of tiny chalk writing: Every child in Youmadi is growing up. I never found out who wrote it. I copied that line into the blank space on the last page of my copy of The Straw House, and after copying it, I read the parade chapter once more.

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.

为秃鹤拍桌子的人是我

那天我拍了一次桌子。拍完我才反应过来，全班在看我。其实我本来没打算说话，是听到小杨那句秃有什么好同情的，血一下子冲上头顶。我站起来的时候凳子往后滑出去半尺，吱的一声，全班都听见了。

我为什么反应那么大，会前我自己也没想明白。我们读《草房子》，读到秃鹤被起外号，读到他在广播操里故意乱动，我本来只觉得好笑。会前我甚至准备了一个笑话，想在会上讲秃鹤戴帽子那段。可是小海发言的时候说，秃鹤抬头走路那天，他头上顶着的是自尊。我坐在那儿，手心出汗。我想起隔壁班有个男生，因为耳朵大，被叫了一学期招风耳，后来他再也不举手了。

所以我站起来替秃鹤说话。小杨说他捣乱活该被笑，我说他捣乱之前，先被笑了三年。小杨说他报名游行也是出风头，我说出风头的人心里最疼，你不懂。这句话说出口我就后悔了，太冲。可话收不回来，两个人隔着两排课桌吵，我声音越来越大，手在桌子上一拍。就是那一声，全班静了半秒，又炸开。粉笔灰从讲台边飘过来，落在我的袖口上，我那时候根本没工夫拍掉。

真正让我哑口无言的是刚子开口。他说我没事，你们吵我的时候能不能小点声。我这才知道，全班都听见了，包括那个光头本人。我转过身看他，他冲我摆摆手，那个手势我这辈子忘不了，不是原谅，是大人对小孩的那种摆法。我的脸烫得厉害，坐下去，再没发言。

老师后来的三句话，我记在书的第一页。散会后我在走廊问她，秃鹤后来还笑不笑。她说让我自己想。我想了一路。放学我绕到小杨那儿，跟他说对不起，不是为吵架，是为那句你不懂。小杨挠挠头，说明天他去跟刚子说，他表哥戴帽子的事，他也去说。

读书会散了两个星期，那天的争论还没散。它散在我翻开《草房子》的每一次里，散在我路过隔壁班、再也没跟着笑招风耳的那些下午里。

I Was the One Who Slapped the Table for Bald Crane

That day I slapped a table. Only after the slap did I realize the whole class was looking at me. I had not planned to speak at all. It was Xiao Yang's line about there being nothing to sympathize about being bald that sent the blood straight to my head. When I stood up, my stool slid back half a foot with a squeak the entire class heard.

Why I reacted so strongly, I had not figured out even myself before the meeting. Reading The Straw House, at the parts where Bald Crane gets nicknames and where he deliberately messes up during calisthenics, I had honestly just found it funny. Before the meeting I even had a joke ready about the chapter where Bald Crane wears a hat. But when Xiao Hai shared, he said that on the day Bald Crane walked with his head up, what he carried on top of it was self-respect. I sat there with sweaty palms. I remembered a boy in the next class whose ears were big; they called him Weather-Vane Ear for a whole semester, and afterward he never raised his hand again.

So I stood up to speak for Bald Crane. Xiao Yang said he deserved the laughter for causing trouble. I said he had already been laughed at for three years before he ever caused trouble. Xiao Yang said signing up for the parade was just showing off. I said people who show off hurt the most inside, and you do not understand. The moment it left my mouth I regretted it. Too sharp. But words cannot be taken back. We argued across two rows of desks, my voice getting louder and louder, until my hand slapped the table. That single sound froze the class for half a second, then it exploded again. Chalk dust drifted over from the podium and landed on my cuff; I had no presence of mind to brush it off.

What truly left me speechless was Xiao Gang speaking up. He said: I am fine, could you argue about me a little more quietly. Only then did I learn that the whole class had heard, including the bald boy himself. I turned to look at him. He waved his hand at me, a gesture I will never forget. It was not forgiveness; it was the way an adult waves off a child. My face burned badly. I sat down and did not speak again.

The teacher's three closing sentences I copied onto the first page of my book. After the meeting I asked her in the corridor whether Bald Crane still smiles later. She told me to think for myself. I thought the whole way home. At the gate I detoured to Xiao Yang and apologized, not for the argument but for the line you do not understand. Xiao Yang scratched his head and said tomorrow he would go talk to Xiao Gang, and that he would also bring up his cousin who wears a hat.

The reading club ended two weeks ago, but that day's argument has not ended. It lives on in every time I open The Straw House, and in the afternoons when I pass the next class and no longer laugh along at Weather-Vane Ear.