# 我家门前也有一扇红门

我家门前也有一扇红门，漆了两遍，还是不够红。杜小康家的红门，才是真的红，油亮油亮，一推开，半个油麻地都看得见。那时候他穿皮夹克，课本都比我家的新。

可是有一天，红门旧了。他不上学了。我在窗后看见他跟着父亲摇船走远，船帮上跳着水花。我回家问我爹：杜小康家咋啦。我爹抽了口烟说：船沉了。我爹又说：别去笑话人家。

再见面，他在芦苇荡里。头发乱，裤腿全是泥，手里举着一只受惊的鸭子，像举着一面旗。他喊鸭子的声音都哑了。我忽然觉得，他比穿皮夹克的时候好看。

后来他在我们学校门口摆摊。几本书，几个纸盒，一根绳拉得直直的。我娘让我买作业本，我专找他买。他找钱，数得清清楚楚，说：两块五，一个不少。他说这话的时候腰是直的。

我蹲在摊边看他摆书。他把课本按大小排开，大的在下，小的在上，边角对齐，像给它们排队。有同学想逗他，故意问这问那，他不恼，一样一样答，答得慢，答得细。旁边大人小声说：你看人家娃。我听见了，心里不觉得他低，反倒觉得他高。一个人把穷日子过得这么齐整，齐整本身就是一口气。

我回家跟我爹说：杜小康摆摊了。我爹问：他丢人吗。我说：不丢。他对我可客气了，还多送我一根冰棍。我爹笑了，说：这就对了。穷不可怕，趴着才可怕。

现在我家门前的红门，我也天天漆。杜小康教会我一件事：门旧了不要紧，重新漆就是；人要是趴下了，漆啥都没用。他在校门口摆摊，我在教室里念书，我们都在往前走。

来，跟我念：红门红，鸭群白，杜小康，不趴下。小摊支在校门口，书本摆得方又正。我家红门我常漆，人穷志不短。油麻地的娃都记得：站起来的人，走到哪儿，哪儿就亮。

# There Is a Red Gate in Front of My House Too

There is a red gate in front of my house too. Painted twice, still not red enough. Du Xiaokang's red gate — that is truly red, glossy bright, and one push opens it so half of Youmadi can see. In those days he wore a leather jacket, and even his textbooks were newer than ours.

But one day the red gate grew old. He stopped going to school. From behind the window I watched him row away with his father, water dancing on the gunwale. I went home and asked my dad: what happened to Du Xiaokang's family. My dad drew on his pipe and said: the boat sank. Then he said: don't you dare laugh at them.

The next time I saw him, he was out in the reed marsh. Hair a mess, trouser legs caked with mud, holding up a frightened duck in his hand like holding up a flag. His voice calling the ducks had gone hoarse. Suddenly I thought he looked better than in his leather jacket.

Later he set a stall at our school gate. A few books, a few paper boxes, one rope pulled straight. My mother sent me to buy exercise books, and I made a point of buying from him. He gave the change, counted it clear and slow: two fifty, not one cent short. When he said it, his back was straight.

I crouched beside his stall watching him arrange the books. He spread the textbooks out by size, big ones below, small ones on top, corners aligned, as if lining them up in a queue. Some classmates tried to tease him, asking this and that on purpose. He did not get annoyed. He answered one by one, slowly, carefully. An adult nearby murmured: look at that boy. I heard it, and it did not feel like he had sunk low — it felt like he stood tall. When a person lives a poor life so neatly, the neatness itself is a kind of backbone.

At home I told my dad: Du Xiaokang has a stall now. My dad asked: is that shameful. I said: no. He was very polite to me, and even threw in an extra popsicle. My dad laughed and said: there you go. Poverty is not scary; lying down is.

Now I paint the red gate in front of our house every day too. Du Xiaokang taught me one thing: it is fine if the gate grows old — paint it again; but if a man lies down, no paint will help. He runs his stall at the school gate, I read my books in the classroom, and both of us are walking forward.

Come, say it with me: red gate red, ducks white, Du Xiaokang will not stay down. His stall stands at the school gate, his books set square and straight. I keep painting my red gate — poor in things, not in spirit. All the kids of Youmadi remember: a man who stands up lights up wherever he goes.