桑桑，我想跟你说说那根针

桑桑：我读完了你的故事，有些话想跟你说说，就说那根针吧。

你那碗药，我光读着都觉得苦。你仰起头一口吞下去，苦得脸都皱成一团，可你从来不把苦喊大。病最重的那些日子，你爸爸天天背你去医疗点；夜里你疼醒了，也不出声，怕吵醒妈妈，怕她听见了跟着掉眼泪。

我得跟你承认一件事：我怕针。上学期班里集体打流感疫苗，棉签刚碰到胳膊，我就叫出了声，全班都回头看我。我往队伍后面躲，越躲越靠后，连着两次都装肚子疼逃掉了。

我知道丢人，可我就是管不住自己。那天晚上我又翻到你那几章，看见你疼得弯下腰，还反过来安慰爸爸，冲他笑。我盯着那一页想：同样是疼，同样是针，你怎么能不喊，我却先丢了嗓子？

那天我决定学你一个办法。不是让自己不怕——怕还是怕的——而是不把苦喊大。针扎进来之前，先深吸一口气，然后数自己的呼吸，一下，两下，三下，身子不许动，也不许把眼睛闭得死死的。

我还给自己定了一条更小的规矩：药再苦，一口喝完，不许含在嘴里半天；扎针之前不许求人按住手。妈妈说你跟书里那个人较什么劲，我说我不跟他较劲，我就是想试试，他行得通的事，我行不行得通。

上个月回医院复查抽血，护士刚捏紧我的胳膊，我就开始数。数到第七下，针已经拔出来了，护士说你都没动。我攥着你的书，心里特别想告诉你：桑桑，我做到了，我一声都没吭。回家的路上我把这件事讲给我妈听，她半天没说话，后来伸手摸了摸我的头。

桑桑，你疼过，可你没让疼牵着走。你教会我的不是不害怕，而是害怕的时候照样把该做的事做完。谢谢你疼过。你的疼，到我这里，变成了一点点我的胆量。我们扯平了。

Sangsang, I Want to Talk to You About That Needle

Sangsang: I have finished your story, and there are things I want to say to you. Let me start with that needle.

Just reading about that bowl of medicine made my own mouth bitter. You tipped your head back and swallowed it in one go, your face scrunched up from the bitterness, but you never made the bitterness louder. In the worst days of your illness, your father carried you to the clinic on his back every day; at night you woke in pain without a sound, afraid to wake your mother, afraid she would hear and cry along with you.

I have to confess something to you: I am afraid of needles. Last term, when our class lined up for the flu shot, the moment the alcohol swab touched my arm I yelled, and the whole class turned to look. I ducked toward the back of the line, hiding

farther and farther back, and twice I pretended my stomach hurt just to escape.

I knew it was shameful, but I could not stop myself. That night I opened your chapters again and saw you bent double in pain, yet comforting your father instead, smiling at him. I stared at that page and thought: the same pain, the same needle — how could you stay silent while I lost my voice first?

That day I decided to borrow one of your tricks. Not to stop being afraid — I still am — but not to make the suffering bigger. Before the needle goes in, take a deep breath, then count your own breaths: one, two, three. Do not move, and do not squeeze your eyes shut either.

I set myself one smaller rule as well: no matter how bitter the medicine, finish it in one sip, never hold it in the mouth forever; and before an injection, never beg someone to hold my hand down. My mother said, why compete with a person in a book. I said I am not competing with him — I just want to try whether what worked for him can work for me too.

Last month, at the follow-up blood test, the moment the nurse tightened her hand on my arm, I started counting. By the seventh count the needle was already out, and the nurse said I had not moved at all. Clutching your book, I wanted to tell you right then: Sangsang, I did it — I did not make a single sound. On the way home I told my mother about it; she was quiet for a long while, then reached over and patted my head.

Sangsang, you knew pain, but you never let pain lead you around. What you taught me is not the absence of fear, but doing what must be done even while afraid. Thank you for having hurt. Your pain, by the time it reached me, had turned into a little bit of my courage. Now we are even.

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