针还是那根针，我变了

说真的，读《草房子》之前，我以为勇敢就是敢跟别人打架，敢走夜路。我从来没觉得自己跟勇敢沾过边，因为我怕打针，怕得惊天动地。上次抽血，护士刚把酒精棉球擦在我胳膊上，我就开始哭，哭到一半针还没扎呢。全班排着队等我，我觉得全班的眼睛都在我后脑勺上。

书里的桑桑得了怪病，脖子上的肿块疼起来，他整个人弯成一只小虾。他每天喝药，那药苦得连大人都皱眉，他端起来，一口一口往下咽，咽完了咂咂嘴，还说苦什么，甜得很。有一回疼得满地打滚，他爸爸要背他去看病，他怕父亲累，自己扶着墙走。我读到这里，把书合上了，因为脸上有点热。

我想起我妈每周带我去做理疗，扎那种很细的针。我每次都要我妈按住我的手，针一进去我就扭，护士说别动别动，我越喊针越疼。本来十分钟能做完的事，每次都折腾半个钟头。疼是真的疼，可我喊得越凶，好像就越疼，好像我把疼喊大了十倍。

桑桑教会我的不是不怕。他疼，他也怕，书里写他夜里也偷偷想过自己会不会死掉。他怕，可是他把药喝下去，把日子过下去。我想，勇敢不是不疼，是疼着还不动，还认。

这个月复查，又要抽血。轮到我的时候，我把《草房子》攥在手里，眼睛看着窗外那棵树，胳膊伸出去，一动不动。酒精棉球擦上来，凉的；针扎进来，我吸了一口气，没喊。拔针了，护士说，这孩子真稳。我走出门，我妈在门口等，我举起胳膊给她看：没哭。我妈愣了两秒，笑了。

针还是那根针，一点没变，疼还是那点疼。变的是我。一本书里有个孩子疼给我看，我才知道，原来我可以这样。这就是读书对我的用处：它不能替我疼，但它把怎么疼着站起来，演给我看了一遍。

The Needle Is Still the Needle, but I Changed

Honestly, before reading The Straw House, I thought brave meant daring to fight other kids, daring to walk on a dark road. I never thought I had anything to do with bravery, because I am afraid of injections — afraid in a way that shakes the whole room. At the last blood test, the nurse had only wiped the alcohol swab on my arm and I started crying, crying so hard halfway through that the needle had not even gone in. The whole class stood in line waiting for me, and I felt every pair of eyes on the back of my head.

Sangsang in the book falls ill with a strange disease. The lump on his neck hurts so badly he bends into a little shrimp. Every day he drinks his medicine, bitter enough to make adults frown, and he lifts the cup and swallows it mouthful by mouthful, then smacks his lips and says what's bitter about it, it's quite sweet. Once the pain made him roll on the ground, and when his father wanted to carry him to the doctor, he was afraid his father would be exhausted, so he held the wall and walked himself. I read to this point and closed the book, because my face felt a

little hot.

I remembered my mother taking me for physiotherapy every week, those very thin needles. Every time I made my mother hold my hand down, and the moment the needle entered I twisted. The nurse said don't move, don't move, and the more I screamed the more it hurt. What should have taken ten minutes always dragged on for half an hour. The pain was real pain, but the louder I screamed, the more it seemed to hurt, as if I shouted the pain ten times bigger.

What Sangsang taught me is not being unafraid. He hurts, he is afraid too — the book writes that at night he secretly wondered whether he would die. He is afraid, yet he drinks the medicine down and carries on with his days. I think bravery is not the absence of pain; it is hurting and still not moving, still accepting.

This month at the follow-up visit, another blood test. When my turn came, I gripped The Straw House in my hand, looked out the window at a tree, held my arm out, and did not move. The alcohol swab came on, cold; the needle went in, I took a breath, and did not cry out. The needle came out, and the nurse said, what a steady child. Walking out, my mother waited at the door. I held my arm up to show her: no tears. She froze for two seconds, then laughed.

The needle is still that needle, not changed at all; the pain is still that pain. What changed is me. Somewhere in a book a child showed me his pain, and only then did I learn that I could be like this. This is what reading does for me: it cannot hurt for me, but it acted out, once for me to see, how to hurt and still stand up.

www.vv99.net