我的读书笔记里住着十几个人

读《草房子》之前，我的读书方式是翻页：读完就合上，问我都记得谁，一个名字也说不出。语文老师听说我在读这本书，说别白读，给每个人物做一页笔记，写他做过什么矛盾的事。我当时觉得麻烦，第二天还是买了个新本子。

第一页给了桑乔，就是桑桑的爸爸、油麻地的校长。我写：他开会时板着脸，把全校老师的出勤表贴墙上；儿子闯祸，他当众把儿子按在凳子上打；儿子生病，他背着一家一家医院跑，夜里蹲在门口不出声。写完我在页边写了一句：严厉和心疼可以同时装在一个人身上。这一句我想了三个晚上，因为我不确定桑乔打儿子的时候，是生气多还是害怕多。

第二页给了秦大奶奶。我写她跟学校争了一辈子地，骂孩子，被全村人当怪人；写她两次下水，第一次捞孩子，第二次为一只南瓜，第二次没上来。我在页边写：全村人最后都来送她，可她在的时候没人领她的情。写这句的时候我心里发堵，想起我们楼下那个总被背后议论的修车师傅，他修车不收小孩钱，也没人记得。

第三页给了杜小康，我写白手套，写他把碗摆整齐，写他在芦苇荡里追鸭子追到哭。页边写：穷不是最难的，最难的是穷了还要把自己当个人。

这个本子后来用到了别的课上。历史课讲人物，我照这个格式给李鸿章立了一页，写他签条约又办学校；物理课讲科学家，我给法拉第立了一页，写他当学徒时抄书。老师在我的历史笔记上批：会想问题。其实这个本事是《草房子》给的——它让我知道，一本书里的人值得停下来想，想透一个人，比翻过十本书有用。

现在那个本子写满了大半，扉页上我写了一行字：读书不停下来，就等于没读。新来的同学问我这写的什么，我把本子递给他，他翻到秦大奶奶那页，看了很久，没说话。

A Dozen People Live in My Reading Notebook

Before Grass House, my way of reading was turning pages: close the book when done, and if anyone asked who I remembered, I could not name a single character. Our Chinese teacher heard I was reading it and said do not read it for nothing — make one page of notes per character, writing the contradictory things they did. I thought it was a hassle, but the next day I still bought a new notebook.

The first page went to Sang Qiao, Sang Sang's father and the school principal. I wrote: he keeps a straight face at meetings and posts the teachers' attendance sheet on the wall; when his son misbehaves, he pins the boy over a bench and beats him in front of everyone; when his son falls ill, he carries him from hospital to hospital and squats by the door at night without a sound. In the margin I wrote: strictness and tenderness can live in one person at the same time. That line took me three evenings, because I could not decide whether, when Sang Qiao hit his son, anger or fear was bigger.

The second page went to Grandma Qin. I wrote that she fought the school over her land her whole life, scolded the children, and was treated as a oddity by the village; that she went into the water twice — the first time to save a child, the second time for a pumpkin, and the second time she did not come back. In the margin I wrote: in the end the whole village came to see her off, but while she was alive no one ever thanked her. Writing that line my chest tightened, and I thought of the bike repairman downstairs whom people gossip about behind his back — he never charges kids, and no one remembers it either.

The third page went to Du Xiaokang: the white gloves, the bowls lined up straight, chasing ducks in the reed marsh until he cried. In the margin I wrote: being poor is not the hardest part; the hardest part is still treating yourself as a person when you are poor.

The notebook later spread into other classes. In history, I made a page for Li Hongzhang in the same format — he signed treaties and founded schools. In physics, I made a page for Faraday, copying out books as an apprentice. My history teacher wrote on the page: you know how to think about questions. That skill actually came from Grass House — it taught me that the people in a book are worth stopping for, and thinking one person through beats skimming ten books.

The notebook is more than half full now. On the first page I wrote one line: reading without stopping is the same as not reading. A new classmate asked what was in it. I handed it over. He turned to Grandma Qin's page, looked for a long time, and said nothing.

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