我给蚂蚁画了一张地图

10月15日　星期四　晴

今天早晨上学以前，我故意把一小块饼干放在花坛边的地砖上，跟妈妈说：我今天要弄清蚂蚁的家在哪儿，你别催我。

我在旁边蹲着等。太阳晒得脖子热，我没动。过了好一会儿，那只我认识的个头最大的蚂蚁来了，还是先绕着饼干转两圈，这回它不推了，转身就走。我悄悄跟在它后面，一边走一边把兜里的面包屑一小撮一小撮放在地上，当路标，这样回来就不会迷路。

它走的路特别直，拐过一个墙角，穿过一片晒着的被子底下，最后钻到院墙根下一个小小的洞口。洞口边上堆着一圈细土，像小山。我趴下去看，洞里黑黑的，有蚂蚁进进出出。有一只出来时嘴里叼着一个白白的、米粒大的东西，走得比谁都快，我猜那是它们的孩子。

我跑回家拿粉笔，在院墙根的地砖上画了一张地图：从花坛画一条线到墙角，再画到院墙的小洞，线上画了小叉叉，代表我放的面包屑。画完我得意极了，喊妈妈出来看。妈妈蹲在地图前看了一遍，摸摸我的头说，这就是探险家画的地图呀，还知道留路标。

我问妈妈，蚂蚁是不是也有一张地图在脑子里。妈妈说不知道，不过蚂蚁认路靠鼻子，地上有它们自己留下的味道，别的蚂蚁闻着味道就能走。我觉得它们比地图还厉害，地图不会自己画自己。

吃晚饭我又去看我的地图，看着看着我发现不对——我放在地上的面包屑路标，一小撮一小撮全都不见了，连粉笔线边上那撮最大的也没了。蚂蚁把它们也搬走了，连我留的记号都不放过。我蹲在粉笔线旁边数了数，一共放了八撮路标，一撮都没剩，地上只剩粉笔画的线，白白的，弯弯曲曲，像我真的给它们画了一条路。

我在日记里写：今天我给蚂蚁画了地图，蚂蚁收走了我的路标。明天我在洞口再放一小块饼干，看看它们晚上是不是也出来搬。妈妈说晚上别蹲外头，那就在日记里先记下来，明天白天补看。

I Drew a Map for the Ants

October 15, Thursday, sunny.

This morning before school I placed a small piece of cookie on the floor tile by the flower bed on purpose, and told my mother: today I am going to find out where the ants live, so do not hurry me.

I squatted nearby and waited. The sun made my neck hot, but I did not move. After a long while, the big ant I know came along. It still circled the cookie twice first, but this time it did not push — it turned and left. I followed it quietly, dropping pinch after pinch of bread crumbs from my pocket onto the ground as trail marks, so I would not get lost on the way back.

Its road was very straight. It turned around a wall corner, passed under a quilt drying in the sun, and finally disappeared into a tiny hole at the foot of the courtyard wall. Around the mouth of the hole was a little ring of fine soil, like a tiny mountain. I lay down and peered in: the hole was dark, and ants went in and out. One came out carrying something white and the size of a rice grain in its jaws, walking faster than anyone — I guessed it was one of their children.

I ran home for chalk and drew a map on the tiles by the wall: a line from the flower bed to the wall corner, then to the little hole, with small crosses on the line for my bread crumbs. When I finished I was so proud. I called my mother out to see. She squatted before the map, looked it over, and patted my head: this is a map an explorer would draw — and you even left trail marks.

I asked Mom whether the ants also carry a map in their heads. She said she did not know, but ants find their way with their noses: there is a smell they themselves leave on the ground, and other ants follow it. I think that is even better than a map, because a map cannot draw itself.

After dinner I went to look at my map again, and while looking I noticed something wrong — every pinch of bread crumb I had left as a trail mark was gone, even the biggest pinch by the chalk line. The ants carried those away too. They would not spare even my marks. I squatted beside the chalk line and counted: I had left eight pinches of trail marks, and not one was left. All that remained on the ground was the chalk line, white and winding, as if I really had drawn them a road.

In my diary I wrote: today I drew a map for the ants, and the ants collected my trail marks. Tomorrow I will place another small piece of cookie by the hole and see whether they come out for it at night too. Mom said do not squat outside at night — so I write it in the diary first, and I will check by daylight tomorrow.