两只蚂蚁碰了碰头，我想了很久

晚饭后我带狗下楼，它在水泥地缝边趴下不动，鼻子嗅个不停。我顺着它的鼻子看过去，是一个蚂蚁窝。洞口有一小圈松土，蚂蚁从里面排着出来，绕开狗的爪子。狗想伸爪子，我拽住了牵引绳，只好蹲下来替它看。蚂蚁窝边上的世界很小，可看进去就不太走得出来了。我看它们搬一粒米，八只蚂蚁围上去，没有一只指挥，可谁抬哪一头好像天生就知道。米走到洞口卡住了，外面的把米往里推，里面的蚂蚁退出来让路，让完再回去接着干别的。

真正让我蹲到天黑的，是两只蚂蚁碰触角。它们在米粒旁边碰上，触角搭在一起，一动不动，像两个头碰头说悄悄话的孩子。我盯着那两三秒，脑子里忽然冒出同桌。我和她已经三个星期不说话了，起因是借一块橡皮没还，谁也不肯先开口。我们每天坐在一张桌上，笔袋挨着笔袋，可中间像隔了一条水泥缝。蚂蚁碰一下触角，两秒钟，事情就传开了，该搬的搬，该让的让。我们要是也有触角，那三天的冷战大概当天就结束了。我又想到，人和人麻烦就麻烦在话多：一句话出口，能歪成三个意思，越解释越远。蚂蚁的两秒钟里没有解释。

狗在旁边打了个哈欠，催我回家。站起来的时候我发现牵引绳在手腕上绕了两圈。最后看了一眼那个洞口，一只蚂蚁正从里面出来，触角先探出来，像先派个信使。回家上楼，我在日记本上写：今天看了四十多分钟蚂蚁，主要看它们怎么说话。写完这句我停了一下，又加了一行：明天上学，跟同桌说一句话，不用触角的那种。我不知道这行字算不算想明白了，但它是我蹲在蚂蚁窝边四十分钟里，最实在的一个念头。上楼时狗回头看我，大概觉得我今天有点怪。

Two Ants Touched Heads, and I Thought for a Long Time

After dinner I took the dog downstairs. It lay down by a crack in the concrete and would not move, its nose sniffing nonstop. I followed its nose and found an ant nest. There was a small ring of loose soil at the opening, and ants filed out around the dog paw of the dog. The dog wanted to reach out with its paw, so I pulled the leash tight and had to squat down and watch for it. The world beside an ant nest is tiny, but once you look in, it is hard to look away. I watched them carry a grain of rice: eight ants gathered around it, none giving orders, yet each seemed to know by birth which end to lift. The rice got stuck at the opening. The ants outside pushed it in, the ants inside backed out to clear the way, then went back to their other jobs when the way was clear.

What kept me squatting until dark was two ants touching antennae. They met beside the rice grain, put their antennae together, and stayed perfectly still, like two children with heads together whispering. I stared at those two or three seconds, and my deskmate suddenly came to mind. She and I have not spoken for three weeks, over an eraser that was borrowed and never returned, and neither of us will speak first. Every day we sit at one desk, our pencil cases touching, yet between us there seems to be a concrete crack. Ants touch antennae for two seconds, and the news is passed, what needs carrying gets carried, what needs yielding gets yielded. If we had

antennae, our three-week cold war would probably have ended that same day. Then I thought: people are troublesome precisely because they talk too much. One sentence out of the mouth can twist into three meanings, and the more you explain, the farther apart you get. There is no explaining in those two seconds of ants.

The dog yawned beside me, urging me home. When I stood up I found the leash wound twice around my wrist. I took one last look at the opening: an ant was coming out, its antennae reaching out first, like a messenger sent ahead. Upstairs, I wrote in my diary: watched ants for over forty minutes today, mostly watching how they talk. After writing that line I paused and added another: tomorrow at school, say one sentence to my deskmate, the kind that does not need antennae. I do not know whether that line counts as figuring something out, but it was the most solid thought out of the forty minutes I squatted by that nest. Going up the stairs, the dog looked back at me, probably thinking I was a little strange today.