值日那天，我在操场边看了很久蚂蚁

轮到我值日那天，我主动揽了扫操场这活，因为操场边上有一个蚂蚁窝，我早就想细看一次。别的同学扫教室，我拿着扫帚慢慢往墙根挪，扫两下停一下。那个窝的洞口在跑道边的排水沟盖上，洞口的土堆被风削掉了一角，蚂蚁在缺口处来回补土。我蹲下去看，发现它们补土很有章法：谁叼来一粒，就放在缺口最薄的那一段，放完就走，不回头检查。我盯着那个缺口看了十几分钟，它一点点被补圆了。

看得最入迷的还是触角相碰。排水沟盖上蚂蚁多，碰面的机会也多。两只迎面碰上，触角搭一下，分开；再走两步，又一只碰上，触角搭得久一点，大概四五秒。我试着数，十分钟里碰了三十多次。我猜短碰的是让路，长碰的是报信。它们把消息一路碰过去，就像往一条绳子上打结，结打到洞口，整个窝都知道了。我想到我们班大扫除那次：班主任只说了一句把教室弄干净，剩下的没人安排，擦黑板的自己去，摆桌椅的自己去，谁看见地上有纸就捡了。当时我们没碰触角，可那天的配合跟蚂蚁那天差不多。

扫帚靠在我肩上，我坐到天快黑才回教室锁门。路上我一直在想一个问题：蚂蚁的窝没有班长，可它们不乱；我们班没有谁下命令，大扫除也没乱。这是巧合吗？也许秩序不一定需要一个头，可能每个人把自己看见的那一点补上，秩序就自己长出来了。这个念头让我有点兴奋，又有点不确定，因为考试里问谁组织大扫除，标准答案肯定写班主任。我在日记末尾写：秩序也许是从底下长出来的，不是从上面压下来的。写完我把这句话圈了起来，打算哪天生物课讲到社会行为，拿这句话去问老师。

On Duty Day, I Watched Ants by the Playground for a Long Time

On the day it was my turn for classroom duty, I volunteered to sweep the playground, because there is an ant nest at its edge and I had long wanted a close look. While others swept the classrooms, I took my broom and moved slowly toward the wall, two sweeps then a pause. The nest opening sat on a drain cover beside the track. The soil mound at the mouth had been shaved off at one corner by the wind, and ants were shuttling back and forth repairing the gap. I squatted down and found their repair work quite methodical: whoever brought a grain placed it on the thinnest stretch of the gap, then left without looking back to check. I watched that gap for over ten minutes, and it rounded itself out bit by bit.

What fascinated me most was still the touching of antennae. The drain cover had many ants, so meetings were frequent. Two would meet head-on, touch antennae briefly, part; two steps later another pair met, touching a little longer, four or five seconds. I tried counting: over thirty meetings in ten minutes. I guess a short touch means make way, a long one means pass the news. They tap the message along the line knot by knot, and when the knot reaches the hole, the whole nest knows. It reminded me of our big classroom cleaning: our homeroom teacher said only one sentence, get

the classroom clean, and afterward nobody assigned tasks. Whoever wipes the blackboard went on their own, whoever arranges desks went on their own, and anyone who saw paper on the floor picked it up. We had no antennae that day, yet our teamwork was much like that of the ants.

With the broom resting on my shoulder, I sat there until near dark before going back to lock the classroom. On the way I kept turning one question over: an ant nest has no class monitor, yet it does not fall into chaos; our class had no one giving orders, yet the cleaning did not fall into chaos either. Is that a coincidence? Maybe order does not need a head. Maybe order grows on its own once everyone fills in the little they can see. The thought excited me a little, and left me a little unsure, because if an exam asks who organized the cleaning, the standard answer surely says the homeroom teacher. At the end of my diary I wrote: order perhaps grows from below rather than being pressed down from above. After writing it I circled the sentence, planning to take it to my biology teacher on the day we study social behavior.