蹲下来，看见另一个世界

那天我被工作搅得心烦，接女儿放学回家，她在楼下忽然蹲住不动。我以为鞋带开了，低头一看，她盯着墙根，说：爸爸，你看，它们在排队。我本来只想应付三秒钟，可既然蹲下来了，就看得久了一点。就那一点，把我从工作里捞了出来。墙根的缝里住着一窝蚂蚁，一条细线从缝里出来，绕过石子，爬上台阶。女儿屏着呼吸，我屏着呼吸，我们两个人为一条蚂蚁线让了路，站在两边等它们过完。

它们搬运的样子让我这个大人惭愧。一粒比它们大得多的瓜子壳，七八只蚂蚁围成一圈，有的推，有的叼，走三步退一步，绕开一块碎砖。没有一只偷懒，也没有一只抱怨走错了路——它们大概根本不知道什么叫抱怨。我想起自己这星期为一份改了四遍的方案赌气，说这活没法干了。可墙根这七八只蚂蚁，搬的就是它们没法换的东西，一步一步，绕也要绕过去。女儿数着：一、二、三……数到七只的时候，瓜子壳翻上了台阶，她小声欢呼，像它们赢了比赛。我也笑了，心里那块堵着的东西松了。

傍晚天阴，风里有土腥味。蚂蚁线忽然慌了起来，从一条线散成一片，往墙根上方一条更高的缝里涌，叼着白卵的跑在最前。女儿拉住我的衣角，说它们要搬家了，要下雨了。话音没落，雨点就砸下来。我们跑上楼，隔着窗户看，墙根积了水，那条高缝的口上却有一只蚂蚁在来回走动，像新家的守门人。雨停的时候，女儿说：它们比咱们还早知道要下雨。我嗯了一声，心里想的是另一件事：我蹲下来不过二十分钟，蚂蚁给我上了一课——扛住眼前搬不动的东西，把路让给该让的人，在雨来之前先把家挪到高处。这三件事，我三十几岁才从一窝蚂蚁身上看懂。

Squat Down and See Another World

That day I was tangled up with work, and I picked my daughter up from school. Downstairs she suddenly squatted and would not move. I thought her shoelace had come undone, but looking down I saw her staring at the wall corner, saying: Dad, look, they are standing in line. I had meant to give it three seconds, but since I had squatted, I looked a little longer. That little bit fished me out of my work. A nest of ants lived in the crack at the wall base, a thin line coming out of it, skirting a pebble, climbing the steps. My daughter held her breath, I held mine, and the two of us gave way to an ant line, standing on either side until it had passed.

The way they carried things shamed me, a grown man. A sunflower seed shell far bigger than them: seven or eight ants ringed it, some pushing, some gripping, three steps forward one step back, going around a broken brick. None slacked off, none complained about the wrong road. They probably do not know what complaining is. I thought of my own sulking this week over a proposal rewritten four times, saying this job could not go on. But these seven or eight ants at the wall carry exactly what they cannot swap out, one step at a time, detouring if detour they must. My daughter counted: one, two, three. When she reached seven, the seed shell crested the step, and she cheered in a whisper, as if they had won a race. I laughed too, and the knot

in my chest loosened.

In the evening the sky clouded over, and the wind smelled of earth. The ant line suddenly grew frantic, scattering from one line into a sheet, surging into a higher crack above the wall base, those carrying white eggs at the front. My daughter tugged my sleeve and said they are moving house, it will rain. Before the words finished, the drops came down. We ran upstairs and watched through the window. Water pooled at the wall base, yet at the mouth of the high crack one ant paced back and forth, like the gatekeeper of a new home. When the rain stopped, my daughter said: they knew about the rain sooner than we did. I grunted yes, while thinking of something else: I had squatted down for only twenty minutes, and the ants gave me a lesson. Shoulder what you cannot move today, yield the road to those who should have it, and before the rain comes, move your home to higher ground. I am past thirty before I understood these three things from a nest of ants.