一只蚂蚁的旅程

周六下午，我蹲在小区门口的花坛边，看见一只单独行动的蚂蚁。

它从墙根的裂缝里出来，正穿过一片开阔的水泥地。地面太空旷，没有草茎也没有碎石可以依托，它显得很小，像谁不小心掉下的一粒黑点。它走得很快，触角不断在前面的地上点来点去，像在读一封只有它能看见的信。我跟着它的眼光走，生怕一阵风把它吹跑。

我不知道它要去哪里。它穿过长椅的影子，绕过一片枯叶，被一粒沙子挡了一下，停了停，绕了个弯继续走。这一路它没有犹豫过，也没有回头过。我忽然想，如果是我在一个完全陌生的地方迷路，一定比它慌张得多。

走了十来分钟，它迎面碰上一个同伴。两只蚂蚁停下来，互相用触角碰了碰对方，站得极稳，稳到我几乎能想象它们在交换几句简短的话。随后同伴改了方向在前面带路，它跟在后面。

再往前是草地的边缘，那里已经排成一条细细的队伍。有的抬着面包屑的碎块，有的空着手，路过彼此时会碰一下，却谁也不停。那只单独的蚂蚁汇进队伍，我一下子就找不到它了。它成了队伍里的一环，和所有蚂蚁一样。

我又蹲了一会儿，想起班级接力赛。跑自己那一棒的时候只紧张，可当接力棒递到我手里，我觉得自己握着的是所有人的希望。那只蚂蚁大概也是这样。单独走的时候它只是它自己，在找一个方向；汇进队伍以后，它的步子就和几十上百个同伴的步子连在了一起。

太阳偏西，队伍变成一条淡淡的黑线。我站起来，腿已经麻了。蚂蚁完成了它的旅程，我甚至记不清它的样子，可我心里踏实。一只蚂蚁不怕独自走路，因为它知道，前面总有同伴会和它碰一碰触角，总有一支队伍等着它汇进去。

The Journey of a Single Ant

On Saturday afternoon, I squatted beside the flower bed at the gate of our neighborhood and saw a single ant walking alone.

It had left the crack in the corner of the wall and was crossing the open cement ground. The ground was too bare, with no grass stem or pebble to lean on, and it looked tiny, like a black dot dropped by someone. It walked fast, its antennae tapping the ground in front of it again and again, as if reading a letter only it could see. I followed it with my eyes, afraid that a gust of wind would blow it away.

I did not know where it was going. It crossed the shadow of a bench, went around a dry leaf, bumped into a grain of sand, stopped for a few seconds, then turned and took another way. All the way it never hesitated, and it never turned back. I suddenly thought: if I were lost in a completely unfamiliar place, I would surely be far more flustered than it was.

After ten minutes or so, it met another ant coming from the opposite direction.

The two stopped and touched the other with their antennae, so still that I could almost hear them exchanging a few words. Then the other ant changed direction and led the way, and this one followed.

Ahead at the edge of the grass a thin line was already forming. Some carried crumbs of bread, some walked empty-handed, and they bumped into each other on the way yet never stopped. The single ant slipped into the line and I could no longer pick it out. It had become one link of the column, no different from all the others.

I squatted there a while longer and thought of the relay race in our class. When I ran my own leg, I only felt nervous; but when the baton was placed into my hand, I felt I was holding the hope of everyone. That ant must have felt something similar. Walking alone, it was only itself, looking for a direction; once in the line, its steps joined the steps of dozens of companions.

The sun moved west, and the line became a faint black thread. I stood up with numb legs. The ant had finished its journey, and I could not even remember its shape. Still, I felt at ease. A single ant is not afraid of walking alone, because it knows that somewhere ahead a companion will touch antennae with it, and a line is waiting for it.