我是一只出来找路的蚂蚁

我是一只蚂蚁。今天早上，我从墙根的洞里出来，一个人走。

洞里总是挤的。姐妹们挨着卵，挨着食物，挨着彼此的身体睡觉。可出来找路不一样，找路的蚂蚁只有一个，洞把最轻最敏捷的我推了出去，像把一枚棋子放到棋盘外。我沿着墙走，墙是凉的，我的六条腿轮流落地，没有一条是闲着的。

独行有一段很长的路。要穿过一片对我而言像森林的狗尾草，要绕过一块晒得发烫的石头。石头挡住的路，我从左边试了一次，不对，退回来，再从右边试。没有人告诉我往哪边走，气味是我自己一路留下的，回头时它就是我的地图。走独路的时候我害怕吗？蚂蚁不说害怕，我只知道触角不能停，腿不能停。

在草叶的阴影里，我遇到一个同伴。也是出来找路的。我们停下来，用触角碰了碰对方。那一碰很短，却比在洞里挤着睡一整夜都让我安心。原来外面不只有我一个。它往东，我往南，分开的时候我们谁也没有回头，但我知道从今天起，我的气味路上有它的脚印了。

下午，我找到了一小块饼干屑，比我自己大得多。我搬不动它，就沿着来路回去报信。走到半路，我遇上了队伍——几十上百个姐妹排成一条线，顺着我的气味往前去。我汇进去，跟在队伍侧面，和大家朝同一个方向走。线里的每一步都踩得很实，我不用再想往哪走，线本身就是方向。

回头想想，我这一天走了三段路。一个人走的时候，我在找路；碰见同伴的时候，我知道了外面有伙伴；汇入队伍的时候，我找到的路变成了所有蚂蚁的路。

天黑前，饼干屑进了洞。洞里还是挤的，我挨着姐妹们睡下。明天也许又轮到别的蚂蚁出去，独自穿过那片草。它不会孤单。我们每一只单独出发的蚂蚁，最后都会变成队伍里的一步。

I Am an Ant Out Looking for a Road

I am an ant. This morning I left the hole at the corner of the wall and walked out alone.

The hole is always crowded. My sisters sleep pressed against the eggs, against the food, against each other. But going out to look for a road is different: only one ant goes, and the hole pushed out me, the lightest and quickest, like a chess piece placed outside the board. I walked along the wall. The wall was cool, and my six legs landed one after another, none of them idle.

Walking alone has a long stretch. I had to cross a patch of bristle grass that felt like a forest to me, and go around a stone baked hot by the sun. Where the stone blocked the way, I tried the left once, found it wrong, came back, and tried the right. Nobody told me which way to go. The scent I left behind was mine all the way; when I look back, it becomes my map. Is an ant afraid when it walks alone? Ants do

not speak of fear. I only know the antennae cannot stop, and the legs cannot stop.

In the shadow of a grass leaf I met a companion, also out looking for a road. We stopped and touched the other with our antennae. The touch was short, yet it steadied me more than a whole night of crowded sleep in the hole. So I was not the only one outside. It went east, I went south. When we parted neither turned back, but I knew that from today its footprints were on my road of scent.

In the afternoon I found a crumb of biscuit, much bigger than myself. I could not lift it, so I went back along my road to tell the news. Halfway home I met the column — dozens upon hundreds of sisters in a thin line, following my scent forward. I slipped in and walked at the side of the line, all of us in one direction. Every step in the line landed firmly. I no longer had to think about where to go; the line itself was the direction.

Thinking it over, my day had three stretches of road. Walking alone, I was looking for a road. Meeting a companion, I learned there were partners outside. Joining the column, the road I had found became the road of all the ants.

Before dark the biscuit crumb was carried into the hole. The hole is still crowded; I sleep pressed against my sisters. Tomorrow maybe another ant will go out and cross that grass alone. It will not be lonely. Every one of us who sets out alone will end up as one step inside the line.