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.

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.

转学第一周，我陪一只蚂蚁走路

转学到新学校的第一周，我不认识几个人。课间别人三五成群，我总一个人到操场角落，蹲下来看地上。

那里墙根有个蚂蚁洞。第三天下午，我看见一只单独出来的蚂蚁，就盯着它。它从洞口出来，穿过水泥地，触角一直在点地。它走得急，却没有走错的样子。我蹲着陪它走，心里想，它也是一个人在赶路。

第五天，我又去找它。这次它走到一半，迎面碰到另一只蚂蚁，两只停下来碰了碰触角，很快又各自走开。就这么一碰，我看了好几遍才确认发生过。可我看见它之后脚步好像松了一点，走路的节奏都匀了。我想，它大概知道刚才那是自己人。

第六天放学，队伍排到操场边。我看见那条线：几十只蚂蚁排成一列，从墙根一直通到花坛，中间一只接一只，路过时互相碰一下。前几天那只独行的蚂蚁也在里面，混在队伍中，再也分不出。它找到了组织，组织也接住了它。

第七天中午，同桌忽然转过头，问我数学作业最后一题怎么解。我愣了两秒才反应过来他在跟我说话。讲完题他说了句谢谢，下午又把他的小零食分给我一半。我忽然想起那只蚂蚁——原来人和人之间，也就是碰一碰触角的事。

第二周，我跟着同桌他们一起去打乒乓球，四个人凑不满一局就轮流发球，笑得比谁都响。我不再在课间蹲到操场角落了，但路过墙根，我还会看一眼那条线。

现在回想那一周，那只蚂蚁替我把道理走了一遍：单独出发不丢人，那是每个个体都要走的一段；遇到同伴碰一碰，孤单就少一半；汇入队伍以后，你的路就成了大家的路。转学像被放到棋盘外，可只要往前走，总会碰到那两只触角，总会有一条线，等着把你接进去。

In My First Week at the New School, I Walked With an Ant

In my first week at the new school I knew almost nobody. During breaks others gathered in little groups, while I always squatted alone at the corner of the playground, looking at the ground.

There was an ant hole at the corner of the wall. On the afternoon of the third

day I saw a single ant coming out, and I watched it. It left the hole and crossed the cement ground, its antennae tapping all the way. It hurried, yet it never seemed to take a wrong turn. I squatted there keeping it company, thinking: it is hurrying alone too.

On the fifth day I went to find it again. Halfway along, it met another ant coming the other way. The two stopped, touched the other with their antennae, then went their separate ways. I had to watch it several times before I was sure it had happened. But after that touch its steps seemed looser, its rhythm even. It must have known, I thought, that the one it met was its own kind.

On the sixth day at the end of school, a line had formed by the playground. I saw it: dozens of ants in a single file, running from the wall corner all the way to the flower bed, one after another, each touching the next as they passed. The ant that had walked alone these past days was in it, mixed in, impossible to pick out. It had found its group, and the group had taken it in.

At noon on the seventh day, my deskmate suddenly turned around and asked me how to solve the last problem in the math homework. I froze for two seconds before realizing he was talking to me. After I explained it he said thanks, and in the afternoon he shared half of his snacks with me. I suddenly thought of that ant — so between people, it is only a matter of touching antennae.

In the second week I went to play table tennis with my deskmate and the others. Four people could not make a full game, so we took turns serving, laughing louder than anyone. I no longer squatted at the corner during breaks, but passing the wall I still glance at that line.

Thinking back on that week, the ant had walked the lesson through for me: setting out alone is nothing to be ashamed of, every individual must walk that stretch; when you meet a companion and touch antennae, half the loneliness is gone; once you join the line, your road becomes the road of all. Changing schools felt like being placed outside the board, but keep walking, and sooner or later you will meet those two antennae, and there will be a line waiting to take you in.