树荫下的一个下午

考完最后一门的那个下午，我没有直接回家。太阳还白晃晃地挂在天上，我拐进小区后面的小园子，在老槐树下坐下来。

树荫是圆的，像谁在地上铺了一块凉席。我往树荫中间一躺，草的凉气从背下面慢慢渗上来。头顶的叶子一层压一层，风从最上面过，只漏下一点点声音，沙沙的，像很远的地方有人在翻书。光从叶缝里掉下来，落在地上变成碎金子，碎金子一动不动，说明风停了。

就在这时候，我看见了那支蚂蚁队伍。

它从我脚边过，一条细黑的线，从树根一直拉到远处的墙根。有的蚂蚁抬着青色的虫子腿，有的顶着白米，空手的走在旁边，像给抬东西的让路。它们过得很慢，可是没有一只停下来歇。我看它们搬一粒米，看一只大蚂蚁绕开一根草茎，看队伍中间有个小缺口，马上又被后面的补上。

我看着看着，脑子里那些没考好的题、没说完的话，全都沉下去了。世界缩小到脚边那一寸地方，只剩下线在动。我听见自己的呼吸慢下来，和蚂蚁的步子差不多匀。

等我发觉的时候，那块圆树荫已经挪了位置，我的胳膊上有一道浅浅的印子，是刚才枕着的一根草。太阳矮下去了，园子里有了别人回家的脚步声。一个下午就这么过去了，我什么也没做，可心里比任何时候都满。

回家路上我在想，平时时间总是被作业和考试切成一块一块，赶着走。只有那个下午，时间是完整的，它跟着蚂蚁的步子走，跟着树荫的移动走。蚂蚁不数自己走了多远，树荫不算自己挪了多少，它们只是走，只是挪。原来宁静不是没有声音，是你终于肯把心放到一件小事上，让时间从你身上慢慢地、完整地流过去。

An Afternoon in the Tree Shade

On the afternoon after the last exam, I did not go straight home. The sun still hung white and blazing in the sky, and I turned into the small garden behind our neighborhood and sat down under an old scholar tree.

The patch of tree shade was round, like a cool mat someone had spread on the ground. I lay down in the middle of it, and the coolness of the grass seeped up slowly from under my back. Layer upon layer of leaves covered my head; the wind passed over the very top and leaked down only a little sound, a rustle, as if someone far away were turning the pages of a book. Light fell through the gaps between the leaves and became broken gold on the ground. The broken gold did not move, which meant the wind had stopped.

Just then I saw the column of ants.

It passed by my foot, a thin black line running from the tree root all the way to the corner of a distant wall. Some ants carried the green legs of a caterpillar, some

balanced grains of white rice, and those walking empty-handed stayed at the side, as if making way for the ones carrying loads. They moved slowly, yet not one stopped to rest. I watched them carry a grain of rice, watched a big ant go around a grass stem, watched a small gap open in the middle of the line and immediately be filled by those behind.

As I watched, the questions I had failed, the words I had not finished saying, all sank down. The world shrank to the inch of ground beside my foot, and only the line was moving. I heard my own breathing slow down until it matched the pace of the ants.

By the time I noticed, the round patch of shade had moved, and there was a faint mark on my arm from the blade of grass I had been resting on. The sun had sunk lower, and the garden filled with the footsteps of people going home. A whole afternoon had passed. I had done nothing, yet my heart was fuller than ever.

On the way home I thought: usually time is cut into pieces by homework and exams, and we rush through it. Only that afternoon, time was whole. It walked with the steps of the ants, it moved with the shifting shade. The ants do not count how far they have gone; the shade does not measure how much it has moved. They simply go, simply shift. So stillness is not the absence of sound. It is finally willing to rest your heart on one small thing, and letting time flow through you slowly, and wholly.