接女儿放学的路上，我们蹲了二十分钟

那天下午四点半，我照例去接女儿。出校门没走两百米，她忽然停下，往花坛边的路沿上一蹲，喊我：爸爸你快来看，蚂蚁在搬家！

换成平时上班的日子，我大概会说快走快走，回家写作业。可那天我正好请了假，心里不赶时间，就也蹲下去，蹲在她旁边。路沿的缝里果然排着一条线，蚂蚁一只接一只，有的背着白色的卵，有的抬着什么东西，匆匆地往高处去。

女儿的问题跟着就来了，一个接一个，根本不给我喘气的空。她们为什么要搬家？是不是要下雨了？背白白的是不是它们的宝宝？最高的那只为什么老回头？我一个个答。有的我知道，比如要下雨，蚂蚁觉得洞里要进水就往上搬；有的我也不知道，比如那只为什么老回头，我只能说，我猜它是在等落后的同伴，回家咱们查一查。她听了不失望，反而点点头，说那咱们得记住回去查。

我们蹲了二十分钟。旁边有人匆匆走过，有个爷爷笑我们父女俩看蚂蚁看得出神。女儿一点不害羞，还跟那爷爷介绍：快要下雨了，蚂蚁在往高处搬。爷爷说，哦，那我也得看看。那二十分钟里，她眼睛一直亮着，比考了一百分的时候亮得持久。

回家以后，她没有先喊饿。她从抽屉里翻出一个画画的本子，说要记下来。我帮她写，她口述：十月三十一日下午，校门花坛，蚂蚁搬家，背白色的卵，有一只老回头的，我们猜它在等同伴。画的部分她自己画，一条黑线从花坛爬到长椅，黑线上点了一排小点，小点上画了小包袱。本子最后一页她还写了个问号：蚂蚁怎么知道要下雨？说明天放学还要去看。

晚上我看天气预报，第二天真有雨。我在她床边说了，她迷迷糊糊嗯了一声，翻个身又睡了，嘴角还翘着。

我常想，孩子的提问就像那些蚂蚁背上的卵，小小的，看着不起眼，其实里面都是还没出来的小生命。大人随口一句快走快走，就等于一脚踩下去。我不是懂很多知识的爸爸，那天也有答不上的问题，可我蹲下来了，我记下来了，这就够了。陪她蹲在路边的二十分钟，比我给她讲过的任何道理都管用——因为她信了：这个世界值得蹲下来看，而她问的问题，值得被记在本子上。

On the Way to Pick Up My Daughter, We Squatted for Twenty Minutes

At half past four that afternoon, I went to pick up my daughter as usual. Only two hundred meters from the school gate, she suddenly stopped, squatted down on the curb beside the flower bed, and called me: Dad, come quick, the ants are moving house!

On a normal working day I would probably have said: hurry up, go home and do your homework. But that day I happened to be on leave, and I was not chasing time, so I squatted down too, beside her. In the crack of the curb there really was a line, ant

after ant, some carrying white eggs on their backs, some lifting something, all hurrying toward higher ground.

Her questions came right after, one after another, giving me no room to breathe. Why are they moving house? Is it going to rain? Are the white things they carry their babies? Why does the tallest one keep looking back? I answered one by one. Some I knew — for instance, about the rain: when ants feel water will get into the hole, they move upward. Some I did not know, like why that one kept looking back. I could only say: I guess it is waiting for the companions left behind; let us look it up when we get home. She was not disappointed. She nodded and said: then we must remember to check.

We squatted there for twenty minutes. People hurried past; an old grandpa laughed at us, father and daughter, absorbed in watching ants. She was not shy at all. She even introduced it to the grandpa: it is going to rain soon, the ants are moving to higher ground. The grandpa said: oh, then I should have a look too. For those twenty minutes her eyes stayed bright — brighter, and for longer, than when she scored a hundred on a test.

After we got home she did not complain of hunger first. She dug a drawing notebook out of the drawer and said she wanted to write it down. I wrote while she dictated: October thirty-first, afternoon, flower bed at the school gate, ants moving house, carrying white eggs, one kept looking back, we guess it is waiting for a companion. The drawing was hers: a black line climbing from the flower bed to a bench, a row of small dots on the line, and on the dots she drew little bundles. On the last page she also wrote a question mark: how do ants know it will rain? And she wrote that she would go back after school tomorrow to look again.

That evening I checked the forecast: rain was indeed coming the next day. I told her by her bed. She murmured an absent yes, turned over, and fell back asleep, the corners of her mouth still turned up.

I often think: the questions of a child are like those eggs on the backs of the ants — small, easy to overlook, yet each holds a life not yet hatched. A careless hurry up from an adult is a foot stepping down. I am not a father who knows much; that day I had questions I could not answer either. But I squatted down, and I wrote it down, and that is enough. Those twenty minutes squatting with her by the road work better than any lesson I have ever explained to her — because she came to believe: this world is worth squatting down to look at, and the questions she asks are worth writing into a notebook.

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