蹲下来那十分钟，我把速度还给了蚂蚁

月考最后一科交卷铃响的时候，我脑子里全是排名。走出教学楼，我走得飞快，书包带子勒得肩膀疼，脑子里过着一道道没把握的选择题。路过小区花坛，我本来不会停的，是鞋带松了，才蹲下去。鞋带系好，我抬头，正好看见一只蚂蚁在我鞋尖前面转圈。

它转了三圈，像是找不到方向。我本来可以抬脚走掉，可那天我不赶了，排名的事再急也急不出结果，我就把手撑在膝盖上，接着看。它终于认准了一条缝，钻进去了。过了不到一分钟，它带出来三只蚂蚁，排成一列，往同一个方向走。我跟过去，蹲到花坛边上，脸凑得很近，近到能看清它们腿上的小钩子。

那条路并不顺。一粒米饭挡在中间，领头的蚂蚁爬上去又滑下来，绕了半圈，从侧面顶。后面两只接力，一只推一只抬，米饭挪了一寸。它们也歇，停下来不动，触角晃几下，再继续。我蹲在那里，数它们歇了几次，数到第四次的时候，我发现自己已经十分钟没动过了，脖子酸，腿麻，可脑子从来没这么静过。那些选择题一道都想不起来了。

天擦黑，蚂蚁把米饭推进了洞。我站起来，腿麻得踉跄了一下。奇怪的是我心里不慌了。排名还在那儿，没变好也没变坏，可我好像不那么怕它了。蚂蚁搬一粒米都要歇四次，我一次考砸，凭什么不许自己歇一歇。

后来我常去那个花坛蹲一会儿，有时五分钟，有时一刻钟。写作业写烦了也去，不看书，不看手机，就看它们走路、绕路、碰触角。我妈说我最近走路都慢了，我说慢点好，我看见的东西多了。花坛边那十分钟里，我不排名，不赶时间，蚂蚁也不嫌我碍事。是我蹲下来观察蚂蚁，可教我慢下来的，是蚂蚁。

Ten Minutes Squatting, Giving Speed Back to the Ants

When the bell rang at the end of the last exam of the month, my head was full of rankings. I walked out of the teaching building at a fast pace, my bag strap digging into my shoulder, going over one uncertain multiple-choice question after another in my head. Passing the flower bed in our residential compound I would not have stopped, but my shoelace came loose and I squatted to tie it. When I looked up, an ant was circling right in front of my shoe.

It circled three times, as if it had lost its way. I could have walked off, but that day I was no longer in a hurry. No amount of hurry would change the ranking, so I rested my hands on my knees and kept watching. It finally found a crack and disappeared into it. Less than a minute later it brought out three ants, walking in a line in the same direction. I followed and squatted at the edge of the flower bed, my face close enough to see the tiny hooks on their legs.

The road was not smooth. A grain of rice blocked the way. The leading ant climbed on and slid off, went around halfway, and pushed from the side. The two behind took

over, one pushing one lifting, and the rice moved an inch. They also rested, stopping still, waving their antennae a few times, then continuing. I squatted there counting how many times they rested. By the fourth time I realized I had not moved for ten minutes. My neck ached and my legs went numb, yet my mind had never been so still. I could not remember a single exam question.

As dusk fell, the ants pushed the rice into their nest. I stood up and nearly stumbled on my numb legs. Strangely, my heart was calm. The ranking was still there, neither better nor worse, but I was no longer so afraid of it. The ants rested four times to carry one grain of rice. I had failed one test. Why should I not be allowed to rest for a while.

After that I often squatted by that flower bed for a while, sometimes five minutes, sometimes a quarter of an hour. I went whenever homework wearied me, no books, no phone, just watching them walk, detour, and touch antennae. My mother said I had been walking slower lately. I said slower is good, I see more things now. In those ten minutes by the flower bed I was not a ranking, not in a hurry, and the ants did not mind me in the way. I was the one squatting down to observe the ants, but it was the ants who taught me to slow down.