我把蚂蚁窝搬上了台阶

连下了两天雨，第三天早上终于停了。我下楼扔垃圾，走到单元门口那块洼地，忽然停住了。洼地中间积着一汪水，水面上漂着细小的土粒，还有一两只蚂蚁抱着一粒白色的卵，在水里打转。

我蹲下去看。洼地边上有一个蚂蚁洞，洞口塌了半边，水正往洞里灌。洞外的蚂蚁乱成一团，有的往高处爬，有的回头往洞里冲，又被水冲出来。我认得这块洼地，天晴时它们在这儿进进出出，排成一条黑线，我一直从旁边绕着走。

我跑回家，找来一个浅花盆、一把小铲，还有一截树枝。我在洼地边的高处选了新地方，那里的土是干的，晒得到太阳。我把花盆里的土倒掉，用小铲从旧洞口旁边铲起一小铲土，连土带蚂蚁一起放进花盆。铲的时候我屏住气，怕伤到它们。

第一铲下去，几只蚂蚁受惊四散，我停下来等它们回到铲子上，才把铲子抬起来，稳稳放到台阶上。第二铲、第三铲，我越铲越慢。卵是白色的，比米粒还小，有几只蚂蚁叼着卵不松口，我就把它们连土一起请进花盆。

花盆放上台阶最上面一格，那里水淹不到。我把树枝横在花盆和洼地之间，树枝一头搭着旧窝旁边，一头搭着花盆。蚂蚁爬上树枝，一只接一只，往花盆那边走。有的蚂蚁下到水里，把漂着的卵托起来，再爬上树枝。

妈妈在楼上喊我，问我蹲在楼下干什么。我说我在帮蚂蚁搬家。她下来看了一眼，没有说话，回屋给我拿了一条干毛巾，让我把手上的泥擦掉。

雨又下过一场，台阶上没积水。第三天傍晚，我蹲在花盆边看：新洞口排着一条细细的黑线，蚂蚁进进出出，有的顶着米粒，有的叼着白色的卵。我把小铲和树枝收好，花盆就留在台阶上，给它们当新家。

上楼的时候我回头看了一眼。洼地还积着水，可洼地边上一个蚂蚁也没有了。它们都搬到干的地方去了，住在我给它们找的那个花盆里。

I Moved the Ant Nest Up onto the Steps

It rained for two days straight. On the morning of the third day it finally stopped. I went downstairs to throw out the trash, and when I reached the low patch by the building entrance, I suddenly stopped. A pool of water had gathered in the middle of the low patch, with tiny soil particles floating on the surface, and one or two ants clinging to white eggs, spinning in the water.

I squatted down to look. By the edge of the low patch there was an ant hole. Half of the entrance had collapsed, and water was pouring in. The ants outside the hole swarmed in confusion: some climbed toward high ground, some rushed back toward the hole and were washed out again. I knew this low patch. On sunny days the ants came

and went here in a thin black line, and I had always walked around it.

I ran home and got a shallow flowerpot, a small trowel, and a stick. I chose a new spot on the higher ground by the low patch, where the soil was dry and the sun reached. I emptied the flowerpot, and with the trowel I scooped small portions of soil from beside the old hole, putting the soil and the ants together into the pot. While scooping, I held my breath, afraid of hurting them.

With the first scoop, several ants scattered in alarm. I stopped and waited for them to climb back onto the trowel before lifting it steadily onto the steps. Second scoop, third scoop, I went slower and slower. The eggs were white, smaller than grains of rice. A few ants held the eggs in their jaws and would not let go, so I invited them into the pot together with the soil.

I placed the flowerpot on the top step, where water could not reach. I laid the stick across between the pot and the low patch, one end near the old nest, the other end on the pot. The ants climbed onto the stick, one after another, heading toward the pot. Some ants went down into the water, lifted the floating eggs up, and then climbed onto the stick.

My mother called from upstairs, asking what I was squatting there for. I said I was helping the ants move. She came down, took one look, said nothing, went back inside, and brought me a dry towel to wipe the mud off my hands.

It rained once more, but no water collected on the steps. On the evening of the third day, I squatted by the flowerpot and looked: a thin black line lined up at the new hole, ants coming and going, some carrying grains of rice, some holding white eggs in their jaws. I put away the trowel and the stick, and left the flowerpot on the steps as their new home.

Going upstairs, I looked back once. The low patch still held water, but there was not a single ant left at its edge. They had all moved to the dry place, into the flowerpot I had found for them.

水进洞那天，一个孩子帮了我们

我是洞里的搬运工。那两天雨没有停过，水从洞口那道裂缝渗进来，越渗越大。洞里存粮的洞室先湿了，接着是放卵的地方。姐姐们把卵一粒一粒叼起来，往高处送。我背着一粒卵往上爬，回头看见水已经漫到洞口下面。

我们从洞里出来，洼地里全是水。洞口塌了半边，剩下的出口也被水堵了一半。我们挤在高处，触角碰来碰去，谁也说不出办法。卵放在一片湿叶子上，几只姐姐围着，不让我们踩到。

一个小孩蹲在洼地边上，看了我们很久。他跑开了，回来的时候拿着一个浅花盆、一把小铲，还有一截树枝。他在高处挖开干土，把花盆放在那里。然后他的小铲插进我们旧洞旁边的土里，铲起一小块，连我几个兄弟一起，稳稳放到台阶上的花盆里。

我一开始吓得触角都竖起来了。可那个小孩屏着气，铲子放得很轻，没有伤到谁。他铲了一铲又一铲，越铲越慢。叼着卵的姐姐不松口，他就把卵连土一起请走。水里的卵漂着，他伸手够不着，就把树枝伸进水里，等姐姐把卵放上去，再轻轻抬起来。

他把树枝架在洼地和花盆之间。我们的探路蚁先爬上去，碰了碰，是干的，能走。于是我们排成一串，顺着树枝往花盆走。走到花盆边，新土软软的，洞口是他刚挖开的，不大不小，正好是我们进出的宽。

搬完那天，雨又下了一场，台阶上没有积水，洼地里的水却更深了。我们在新洞里把卵一粒一粒码好，存粮也一粒一粒归位。我爬到花盆沿上，看见那个小孩坐在楼门口的台阶上，正看着我们这边。

后来每天出洞，我都从花盆沿上绕一圈。那个小孩经过时脚步很轻，从不碰我们的花盆。我不知道他叫什么名字。我们的触角碰不到他，可洞里存粮最干净的一粒，我一直记着，是留给他的。

The Day Water Flooded Our Hole, a Child Helped Us

I am a porter in the nest. The rain did not stop for two days. Water seeped in through the crack by the hole, more and more. The chamber where we stored food got wet first, then the place where the eggs were kept. The elder sisters picked up the eggs one by one and carried them upward. I climbed with an egg on my back and looked back to see the water already rising at the mouth of the hole.

We came out into the low patch, which was full of water. Half of the entrance had collapsed, and the remaining exit was half blocked by water. We crowded onto high ground, our antennae touching one another, and none of us could think of a way. The eggs were placed on a wet leaf, and several elder sisters stood around them so we would not step on them.

A child squatted at the edge of the low patch and watched us for a long time. He ran off and came back with a shallow flowerpot, a small trowel, and a stick. He dug open the dry soil on the high ground and set the pot there. Then his trowel went into the soil beside our old hole, lifting a small piece, carrying several of my brothers along, and set it steadily into the pot on the steps.

At first I was so frightened that my antennae stood straight up. But the child held his breath and set the trowel down gently, hurting no one. He scooped again and again, slower each time. The elder sister holding an egg would not open her jaws, so

he took the egg away together with the soil. When eggs floated in the water out of his reach, he stretched the stick into the water, waited for a sister to place the egg on it, and lifted it up carefully.

He set the stick between the low patch and the pot. Our scout ants climbed on first, tapped it, and found it dry and walkable. So we lined up and walked along the stick toward the pot. At the edge of the pot the new soil was soft. The entrance was one he had just dug, neither too big nor too small, exactly the width we needed to pass.

That day after the move, it rained once more. No water collected on the steps, while the water in the low patch grew deeper. In the new nest we stacked the eggs one by one and put the stored grain back in place. I climbed onto the rim of the pot and saw the child sitting on the step by the building entrance, looking toward us.

After that, every day when I left the nest, I made a round on the rim of the pot. When the child passed by, his footsteps were light, and he never touched our pot. I do not know his name. Our antennae cannot touch him, but the cleanest grain in our store, I have always remembered, is kept for him.

台阶上的浅花盆

雨停的早上，周小满下楼买酱油，走到单元门口，忽然蹲下来不动了。酱油瓶搁在脚边，他盯着门口那块洼地看。洼地积了一汪水，水里有蚂蚁抱着白色的卵打转，一个塌了半边的洞口正往里灌水。

他端着酱油瓶跑回家，跟奶奶说，蚂蚁窝淹了。奶奶说，蚂蚁自己会想办法。周小满说，它们抱着卵呢。他放下瓶子，翻出一个浅花盆、一把小铲，又捡了一截树枝，往楼下跑。

奶奶跟出来，站在台阶上看他。周小满在洼地边的高处选地方，那里的土干，晒得到太阳。他把花盆倒空，用小铲从旧洞旁边铲起一小铲土，连土带蚂蚁放进花盆，屏着气，放得很轻。

第一铲下去，蚂蚁四散，他停住，等它们爬回铲子上才抬起来。奶奶在台阶上说，别把台阶弄太脏。周小满说，我垫着报纸。奶奶下去看了一眼水里的卵，回来时手里多了一张旧报纸，铺在台阶上，让他把花盆稳稳放上去。

他把树枝架在洼地和花盆之间，一头搭旧窝旁边，一头搭花盆。蚂蚁爬上树枝，一只接一只往花盆走。有几只蚂蚁下到水里托着卵，周小满就把树枝伸过去，等它们把卵放上去，再轻轻抬。

酱油还没买。奶奶自己去买了，回来把瓶子放在台阶上，没催他。周小满铲到第九铲，手上有泥，膝盖上也蹭了泥。奶奶伸手替他拍了拍，没有说台阶的事。

傍晚，周小满下楼看，新洞口排着一条细细的黑线，蚂蚁进进出出，有的顶米粒，有的叼白卵。他蹲在花盆边看了很久，数到三十几只就乱了，干脆不数了。

后来那个浅花盆一直留在台阶上。奶奶擦台阶时会把花盆端起来，擦完再放回去，放的位置和原来一样。周小满放学回来，先到台阶上看一眼，看见蚂蚁进进出出，才上楼写作业。

The Shallow Flowerpot on the Steps

On the morning after the rain stopped, Zhou Xiaoman went downstairs to buy soy sauce. Reaching the building entrance, he suddenly squatted down and stopped moving. The soy sauce bottle stood by his feet while he stared at the low patch by the door. A pool of water had gathered there, with ants in it clinging to white eggs and spinning, and a half-collapsed hole letting water pour in.

He ran home with the bottle and told his grandmother: the ant nest is flooding. His grandmother said ants will find a way themselves. Zhou Xiaoman said they are holding their eggs. He put down the bottle, found a shallow flowerpot, a small trowel, and a stick, and ran back downstairs.

His grandmother followed and stood on the steps watching him. Zhou Xiaoman chose a spot on the high ground by the low patch, where the soil was dry and the sun reached. He emptied the pot and scooped small portions of soil from beside the old hole, putting soil and ants into the pot, holding his breath, setting it down gently.

With the first scoop the ants scattered. He stopped and waited until they climbed back onto the trowel before lifting it. His grandmother said from the steps: do not make the steps too dirty. Zhou Xiaoman said: I will lay down newspaper. His grandmother went down, looked at the eggs in the water, and came back with an old sheet of newspaper, spreading it on the steps so he could set the pot firmly on it.

He set the stick between the low patch and the pot, one end by the old nest, the other on the pot. The ants climbed onto the stick, one after another, heading for the pot. Several ants went into the water holding eggs, and Zhou Xiaoman stretched the stick over, waited for them to place the eggs on it, then lifted it carefully.

The soy sauce was still not bought. His grandmother went and bought it herself, set the bottle on the steps, and did not hurry him. By the ninth scoop, Zhou Xiaoman had mud on his hands and on his knees. His grandmother reached over and patted it off, saying nothing about the steps.

That evening, Zhou Xiaoman went downstairs to look. A thin black line lined up at the new hole, ants coming and going, some carrying grains of rice, some holding white eggs. He squatted by the pot and watched for a long time, lost count past thirty, and

simply stopped counting.

The shallow flowerpot stayed on the steps after that. When his grandmother cleaned the steps, she lifted the pot, wiped, and put it back in exactly the same place. When Zhou Xiaoman came home from school, he first checked the steps, and only after seeing the ants coming and going did he go upstairs to do his homework.