一句走在大地上的话

放学路上，我在墙根看见它们列队走过。没有谁画过线，它们却走得比操场上任何一条队伍都直。一个接一个，嘴里都衔着一小片光，像衔着一个词，往句子的末尾走去。

没有人喊口令。触角碰一下，前面的慢下来；再碰一下，后面的绕了个弯。它们的话很少，少到大地听这场对话听了一亿年，从不厌烦。

我蹲下来，让影子落在队列旁边。大地很近，近得能听见草根在暗处挪动，近得能看见一粒沙子在夕阳里站成一座小小的碑。它们穿过我的影子，像穿过一片短暂的凉，没有停。

有一只停下来，回头用触角碰了碰后面的那只，两只换了位置。我不知道它们托付了什么。也许是前面的路太挤，也许是它们中有一只，想让另一只走到前面，先看一眼落日。

队列越过一条裂缝，翻过一根踩断的枯枝，绕过一个小水洼。大地把障碍一个一个摆给它们，它们把通路一条一条还给大地。没有人宣布开始，也没有人宣布结束，整个大地却像在替它们让路。

风来了，草俯下身。队列跟着俯身，又直起来。我想起自己在操场上排过的许多次队，总在交头接耳，总在动来动去。它们安静得像一句决定不跟任何人辩解的话。

一只蚂蚁离了队，在一块饼干屑前转了两圈，用触角把它整个量了一遍，然后转身归队，把消息递给后面。队列分出一小截，像一句话里长出的一个从句，把那块饼干屑围住，抬起，带走。它回到原来的位置，步子不快也不慢，好像刚才什么也没有发生。

我想一直蹲在那里，看它们把白天的光斑一片一片搬回家。风从墙根过去，大地平平地躺着，托着一条队列，也托着一个刚刚懂得步子踏实的人不必出声的少年。

光线暗下去，我看不见队列的头，也看不见尾。我只知道它们还在走，沿着大地的皮肤，把白天最后一片光搬进洞里。我站起来，拍了拍裤子上的土，带着一句说不出的话回家。

A Sentence Walking on the Earth

After the last bell, I saw them lined up at the corner of the wall. No line was drawn, yet they walked straighter than any column on the school playground. One after another, each carrying a small piece of light in its mouth, like a word walking toward the end of a sentence.

No one called the order. An antenna touched, and the front slowed down. Another touch, and the one behind turned aside. Their words are few, so few that the earth has listened to this conversation for a hundred million years without ever growing impatient.

I squatted down and let my shadow fall beside the column. The earth was close, close enough to hear the grass roots shifting in the dark, close enough to see a grain of sand standing like a small monument in the setting sun. They crossed my

shadow as if crossing a brief coolness, without stopping.

One of them paused and touched the one behind with its antennae, and the two changed places. I do not know what they entrusted to each other. Maybe the road ahead was crowded; maybe one of them simply wanted the other to walk in front and see the sunset first.

The column crossed a crack, climbed over a broken twig, and went around a puddle. The earth placed one obstacle after another in their way, and they answered with one passage after another. No one fired a starting gun, no one called the end, yet the whole earth seemed to be making room for them.

The wind blew and the grass bent. The column bent with it and then stood up again. I thought of all the times I stood in line on the playground, whispering and shifting. They were quiet like a sentence that has decided not to argue with anyone.

One ant left the line, circled a crumb of biscuit twice, measured it all over with its antennae, then returned to the column and passed the news to the one behind. A short branch of the column grew out like a clause inside a sentence, surrounded the crumb, lifted it, and carried it away. The ant returned to its place at the same unhurried pace, as if nothing had happened.

I wanted to stay there forever and watch them carry the bright spots of daylight home one by one. The wind swept across the corner of the wall. The earth lay flat, holding a column, and holding a boy who had just begun to understand that steady steps make no sound.

When the light grew dim, I could no longer see the head or the end of the column. I only knew they were still walking, along the skin of the earth, carrying the last piece of daylight into their home. I stood up, brushed the dust from my pants, and went home carrying a sentence I could not say.