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.

我们是大地上的一条队列

我们是大地上的一条队列。大地不知道我们走过它多少次，我们只知道太阳升起就出发，太阳落下，就把最后一片光搬回洞里。

触角是我们的话。两根触角碰一碰，前面的路就传了过来，连一滴雨的消息也一起传了过来。我们不喊，大地那么大，喊没有用。我们把身体贴紧大地，大地替我们驮着所有的消息。

打头的那只从不回头。它信任身后的同伴，像信任自己的六条腿。走在后面的也不问要去哪

里，碰一碰前面那只的身体就够了。队列是我们共用的一副身体，从洞口一直拉到草地的尽头。

我们抬起一粒米，对我们来说它是一块黄色的巨石。一片虫翅落下来，对我们是一张帆。大地把这些东西摆在我们的路上，像在试探我们的肩膀还硬不硬，步子还齐不齐。

太阳升到头顶的时候，路面发烫，大地把热都收在自己身上，只留一点影子给路边的草。我们贴着影子走，影子挪一寸，我们跟一寸。走累了也不停，把步子放小一点，队列就短不了。谁摔倒了，后面的绕开他，把他驮的东西分着背走，没有一个东西掉在路中间。

有时一只巨脚落下来，大地晃了一下。队列散了，像一句被风吹散的话。可是很快，触角一根一根重新找到触角，那句话又被拼了回来，比原来更直。

下雨的时候，大地变软，我们往高处爬，带着卵，带着谷粒，带着整个冬天的记忆。雨点砸在我们的背上，我们把背互相抵住。队列没有断，队列把自己搭成了一座桥。

我们中有一些再也回不来。一只麻雀带走了一只，一滴蜜留住了一只。队列不停下来哀悼，我们把它驮的东西接过来，把它没走完的路走完。大地记得每一个倒在路上的小小的身体。

夜深了，最后一只进了洞。大地安静下来，可它知道，明天天亮我们还会列队。它一直在等我们，像母亲等孩子回家那样，轻轻地等。

We Are a Column Marching on the Earth

We are a column marching on the earth. The earth does not know how many times we have crossed it. We only know that we set out when the sun rises, and we carry the last piece of light back into our home when it sets.

Our antennae are our words. When two antennae touch, the road ahead is passed along, along with the news of a falling raindrop. We do not shout. The earth is so wide that shouting is useless. We press our bodies close to the ground, and the earth carries every message for us.

The one at the front never looks back. It trusts the one behind as much as it trusts its own six legs. The one behind asks no questions. A touch on the body in front is enough. The column is one shared body of ours, stretching from the mouth of the nest to the far end of the grass.

We lift a grain of rice, and to us it is a yellow boulder. A wing falls down, and to us it is a sail. The earth places these things in our path, as if testing whether our shoulders are still hard and our steps still even.

When the sun climbs overhead, the ground grows hot, and the earth keeps the heat inside itself, leaving only a little shade for the grass at the roadside. We walk along the shade, and when it moves an inch, we move an inch. When we are tired we do

not stop; we only shorten our steps, and the column never grows shorter. If one of us falls, the ones behind step around and share the load on his back, so that nothing is ever left lying in the middle of the road.

Sometimes a giant foot comes down and the earth shakes. The column scatters like a sentence blown apart by the wind. Before long, the antennae find each other again, one by one, and the sentence is put back together, straighter than before.

When rain falls, the earth turns soft. We climb to higher ground, carrying our eggs, the grain, and the memory of a whole winter. The rain beats on our backs, and we press our backs against each other. The column does not break. The column builds itself into a bridge.

Some of us will not come back. A sparrow took one away, and a drop of honey held one fast. The column does not stop to mourn. We take over what it carried and finish the road it left half done. The earth remembers every small body that fell along the way.

When night is deep, the last of us enters the nest. The earth grows quiet, but it knows we will line up again at dawn. It has always been waiting for us, gently, the way a mother waits for her children to come home.

考试那天，一条队列从他眼前走过

考试那天的最后一声铃响过，所有人都往教室外冲。他走得很慢，手里捏着一张不想看的答卷，在墙根停住了。那里有一条队列，从墙缝一直排到树的脚下。

他蹲下来。队列很窄，比试卷上的横线还窄，却比横线整齐。蚂蚁一个跟着一个，触角碰着触角，传着大地教给它们的语言。大地平平地躺在它们身下，托着这支小小的队伍，像托住一座山那样稳。

一只蚂蚁在半个瓜子壳旁边停下，绕了两圈，回头用触角碰了碰后面的那只。两只一起往前推，瓜子壳挪动了一点。他屏住呼吸，怕自己的出气惊动了它们的计划。

队列走过一片阳光。光落在它们背上，整条队列像一行会发光的字，被一笔一画抄在大地的皮肤上。他忽然觉得眼睛有点热。他从来不知道，这样小的东西可以这样认真。

有同学在远处喊他的名字。他没有应。他想看到最后。队列绕过一颗石子，跨过一条裂缝，钻进草里不见了。大地重新安静下来，像什么都没有发生过。风把草吹直，阳光挪了半尺，墙根底下空空的，只有他自己蹲过的两个印子。

他站起来，又看了一眼手里的答卷。红笔的钩还在，可是没有那么大。一条蚂蚁的队列可以

走那么远，走得那么稳。他把纸折好，放进书包，往家走，脚步比刚才轻。

从那以后，每次经过墙根，他都要停一停，看一眼。队列有时在，有时不在。可大地一直在，托着它们所有的来路和归路，也托着一个初中生刚刚懂事的秘密。

许多年以后，他也许会忘记那场考试，忘记分数，忘记红笔的钩。可他会记得墙根，记得碰在一起的触角，记得大地托起一条小小的队列，记得那个蹲下来就明白了什么的下午。

On Exam Day, a Column Passed Before His Eyes

The last bell of the exam day rang, and everyone rushed out of the classroom. He walked out slowly, holding an answer sheet he did not want to look at, and stopped at the corner of the wall. A column was lined up there, reaching from a crack in the wall to the foot of a tree.

He squatted down. The column was narrow, narrower than the lines on his exam paper, yet neater than any line. The ants walked one after another, their antennae touching, passing along a language the earth had taught them. The earth lay flat beneath them, holding up this tiny procession as steadily as it would hold up a mountain.

One ant stopped beside the shell of a sunflower seed, circled it twice, then touched the one behind with its antennae. Together the two of them pushed, and the shell moved a little. He held his breath, afraid that his own breathing would disturb their plan.

The column passed through a patch of sunlight. The light fell on their backs, and the whole column looked like a line of glowing characters being copied stroke by stroke onto the skin of the earth. He felt his eyes sting. He had never known that something so small could be so serious.

A classmate called his name from far away. He did not answer. He wanted to watch it to the end. The column went around a pebble, crossed a crack, and disappeared into the grass. The earth became quiet again, as if nothing had happened. The wind straightened the grass, the sunlight shifted half a foot, and the corner of the wall was empty, with nothing left but the two prints where he had squatted.

He stood up and looked at the answer sheet once more. The red marks were still there, but they no longer seemed so large. A line of ants could walk so far and so steadily. He folded the paper, put it in his bag, and walked home with lighter steps than before.

After that, every time he passed the corner of the wall, he would stop and look.

The column was there on some days and gone on others. But the earth was always there, holding all their comings and goings, holding a secret a middle school student had only just begun to understand.

Years later he may forget that exam, forget the score and the red marks. But he will remember the corner of the wall, the touching antennae, the earth lifting a tiny column, and the afternoon when he squatted down and understood something no one had to teach him.