外婆家，我看蚂蚁搬房子

在乡下外婆家的那个下午，天又闷又低，我在石阶边看见一条好长好长的蚂蚁线。它们全都背着东西：有的背一粒白米，有的背一个黄黄的小卵，有的背上驮着一只死去的小虫。线从院墙根的缝里出来，一直往石阶上面的缝里去。

我回屋喊外婆，外婆出来看了一眼说，明天要下雨，它们是把娃娃搬到高处去。我从来不知道蚂蚁还会搬房子，就蹲在石阶边看开了。

队伍走得很慢。背米粒的蚂蚁走几步，放下歇一会儿，再背起来走几步。我看得着急，想伸手替它们背一段，被外婆拉住了。外婆说，你一碰，它们就不认得路了。我只好把手按在膝盖上，接着看。

线中间有一摊水。背卵的蚂蚁绕着水走，空着身的蚂蚁直接从水里蹚过去。有一只落进水里，挣了好一会儿才爬上来，抖抖身子，重新背起那颗卵往前走。我屏着气看它，心跟着它提起来又放下。

石阶上面的新洞口前，有一只大蚂蚁守着，像看门的。每只蚂蚁进洞前都要跟它碰一下触角，碰完才进去。我数了很久，也数不清到底进去多少只，只看见线一直不断，白米、虫腿、黄黄的卵，一样一样消失在缝里。天擦黑了，最后几只蚂蚁跑得比先前快，像是知道雨快要来了。

我蹲到腿都麻了，外婆喊我进屋吃饭。我回头看了一眼，线还在走，好像比刚才更长了。当天夜里真的下起雨来，第二天一早就没停。石阶上面那道缝好好的，院墙根那道缝里积满了水。

回城以后，我在日记里写这次蚂蚁搬家。我写外婆没有讲什么大道理，只说看得久才看得见。我从前以为耐心就是坐得住，那天才明白，耐心是蹲下来，让蚂蚁在你眼前把路走完，不中途走开。

At Grandma's House, I Watched the Ants Move Their Home

That afternoon at the house of my grandma in the countryside, the sky was stuffy and low. Beside the stone steps I saw a very long line of ants. Every one of them carried something: some carried a grain of white rice, some carried a small yellow egg, and one had a dead little bug on its back. The line came out of a crack at the foot of the yard wall and went all the way up to a crack in the stone steps.

I went back inside to call my grandma. She came out, took one look, and said it would rain tomorrow, so the ants were moving their babies to higher ground. I had never known ants could move their house, so I squatted by the steps and watched.

The line moved very slowly. An ant carrying a rice grain walked a few steps, put it down to rest, then lifted it and walked a few more. I got so impatient that I wanted to carry part of it for them, but my grandma held me back. She said if I touched them, they would not know their own road. So I pressed my hands on my knees and kept watching.

There was a patch of water in the middle of the line. The ants carrying eggs walked around it, while the empty-handed ones waded straight through. One ant fell into the water, struggled for a while, then crawled out, shook itself, lifted the egg again, and walked on. I held my breath the whole time, and my heart rose and fell with it.

I squatted until my legs went numb, and my grandma called me in to eat. I looked back once: the line was still moving, and it seemed longer than before. That night it really began to rain, and the rain did not stop until the next morning. The crack up in the stone steps stayed safe, while the crack at the foot of the wall filled with water.

After I went back to the city, I wrote this ant moving day in my diary. I wrote that my grandma taught me no big lesson; she only said that only those who watch long enough really see. I used to think patience meant sitting still. That day I understood: patience is squatting down and letting the ants finish their whole road in front of your eyes, without walking away halfway.