我在花坛边蹲了四十分钟

那个周六的下午，我在小区花坛边看见一条蚂蚁线。线的一头，一只蚂蚁停在一粒面包屑前面，绕着它转了两圈。我蹲下去看它，就再也没站起来。

开始的时候我根本坐不住。腿一会儿就麻了，妈妈在楼道口喊我回家吃饭，喊了两遍，我回了一句再等一会儿。其实那会儿我什么也没看见，就是不好意思走，觉得都蹲了这么久了。

那只蚂蚁用头顶面包屑，顶了一下，屑没动，又用肩膀撞，屑还是没动。它退回蚂蚁线里，碰了一个同伴的触角，两个一起往回走。我以为它放弃了，心里有点替它难过。

过了一会儿，线那头出来一串蚂蚁，七八只，排着队朝面包屑走。它们把屑围起来，前面两只拉，后面四只推，中间两只往上抬。面包屑动了一下，又停住，再动一下。我屏着气数它们的腿，数乱了，也不敢动。

线上传来了消息，一只大蚂蚁背着一条虫腿从洞里出来，和抬面包屑的队伍在路口错开。两边都停了停，让了让，谁也没有抢道。这个让路的过程没有谁喊，也没有谁指挥，它们碰一碰触角就办好了。我在旁边看得入了迷，连妈妈第三次喊吃饭都装作没听见。

路上有一条地砖缝。蚂蚁们抬着屑绕了个弯，多走了一截路。我看得着急，伸出手指想把缝抹平，指尖刚碰到线，蚂蚁全散了，面包屑孤零零躺在路中间。我后悔极了，把手缩回来，蹲回去等。

过了很久，触角一根一根重新碰起来，队伍又排好了，面包屑重新抬起来，绕开那条缝，一点一点挪进洞口的黑影子里。我抬头，天都快黑了，四十分钟就这么过去了。

我站起来的时候腿麻得走不动，一瘸一拐往家走，心里却特别满。我从前看书坐不住十分钟，做题也急，写两个字就想擦。那天我知道了，急的时候什么都看不见，蹲下来，静下来，蚂蚁就会把整个故事演给你看。

Forty Minutes by the Flowerbed

That Saturday afternoon, I saw a line of ants beside the flowerbed in our neighborhood. At one end of the line, one ant stopped in front of a crumb of bread and circled it twice. I squatted down to watch it, and I never stood up again until much later.

At first I could not sit still at all. My legs went numb quickly, and my mother called me twice from the stairway to come home for lunch. I answered that I needed a little more time. Really, I had seen nothing yet. I just felt too embarrassed to leave after squatting there so long.

The ant pushed the crumb with its head once, and it did not move. It bumped it

with its shoulder, and it still did not move. Then it went back into the line and touched the antennae of a companion, and the two of them walked back together. I thought it had given up, and my heart sank a little for it.

After a while, a string of ants came out from the other end, seven or eight of them, walking in a line toward the crumb. They surrounded it. Two pulled in front, four pushed behind, and two lifted from the middle. The crumb moved once, stopped, then moved again. I held my breath and counted their legs, lost count, and did not dare to move.

There was a crack between the paving stones on the road. The ants carried the crumb around it and walked a longer way. Impatient, I reached out my finger to smooth the crack flat. The moment my fingertip touched the line, all the ants scattered, and the crumb lay alone in the middle of the road. I regretted it at once, pulled my hand back, and squatted down to wait.

After a long time, the antennae found each other again one by one, the line formed again, and the crumb was lifted, carried around the crack, and moved bit by bit into the shadow of the hole. When I looked up, the sky was almost dark. Forty minutes had gone by.

When I stood up, my legs were too numb to walk properly, and I hobbled home with a full heart. Before that day, I could not sit still even ten minutes reading, and I rushed at my homework, wanting to erase every two characters I wrote. That day I learned that when you are in a hurry you see nothing, but if you squat down and grow quiet, the ants will act out the whole story for you.

操场角落，我们看蚂蚁拆一只蜻蜓

体育课解散以后，刘小满在操场角落喊了一声，我们全跑过去了。那里躺着一只死去的蜻蜓，翅膀摊在地上，一群蚂蚁已经把它围住了。

我们蹲成一圈，谁也不说话。先是几只蚂蚁在蜻蜓的腰上咬，咬下一小块，叼着往回走。接着更多的蚂蚁来了，排成两条线，一条通向花坛，一条从花坛回来，像两条细细的黑辫子。

有人伸手想去帮忙，被刘小满一把拉住。他说，别碰，咱们就看着。后来我们给自己定了三条规矩：不出声，不碰它们，不挡在它们的路中间。我们就那么蹲着，看蚂蚁把蜻蜓一块一块拆下来，翅膀、身子、尾巴，分成一小片一小片搬走。

一片翅膀太重，六只蚂蚁围上去，有的拽前边，有的拖后边，翅膀在地上划出一道弧线。它们绕开了一个鞋印，鞋印里积着昨夜的雨水。我盯着那道弧线看了很久，它绕得那么自然，像早就商量好的。

下课铃响了，我们没人走。体育老师走过来问看什么，我们齐声说看蚂蚁拆蜻蜓。老师也蹲下来看了一会儿，说别打扰它们。于是全班一半人都蹲在那个角落，安安静静的，连平时最爱喊的张大力都没出声。

蜻蜓最后只剩下一点点，蚂蚁也散了。我们站起来，腿都麻了，互相搀着往教室走。那一节课间，我们谁也没玩，可谁都没觉得浪费。

我从前做观察日记，写三行就烦了，觉得蚂蚁有什么可看的。那天我明白了，看得久才看得见。蹲下去不出声的那二十分钟，蚂蚁把一整个世界的规矩演给我们看了：怎么分工，怎么绕路，怎么把大的东西变成小的搬回家。

后来我写观察日记，不再写三行就合上本子。我学会了对着一只小虫子蹲够二十分钟，学会把手放在膝盖上不动，学会在腿麻的时候先咬咬牙再站起来。那只蜻蜓早就没有了，可那两条黑辫子一样的蚂蚁线，我一直记着。原来耐心不是坐着等，是蹲在那里，眼睛一直亮着。

At the Corner of the Playground, We Watched the Ants Take Apart a Dragonfly

After PE class was dismissed, Liu Xiaoman shouted from the corner of the playground, and we all ran over. A dead dragonfly lay there with its wings spread on the ground, and a group of ants had already surrounded it.

We squatted in a circle, nobody speaking. First a few ants bit at the waist of the dragonfly, tore off a small piece, and carried it back. Then more ants came and formed two lines, one going to the flowerbed and one coming back, like two thin black braids.

Someone reached out to help, and Liu Xiaoman grabbed his hand. He said, do not touch, just watch. Then we made three rules for ourselves: no noise, no touching, no standing in their road. We squatted there and watched the ants take the dragonfly apart piece by piece, wings, body, tail, each small part carried away.

One wing was too heavy. Six ants gathered around it, some pulling the front, some dragging the back, and the wing drew an arc on the ground. They went around a shoe print filled with the rain from the night before. I stared at that arc for a long time. It turned so naturally, as if they had agreed on it long ago.

The bell rang for the end of the break, and nobody left. Our PE teacher came over and asked what we were watching, and we answered together that we were watching ants take apart a dragonfly. The teacher squatted down and watched for a while, then said, do not disturb them. So half the class squatted in that corner, perfectly quiet, even Zhang Dali who always shouted the loudest made no sound.

In the end only a speck of the dragonfly was left, and the ants scattered too. We stood up with numb legs and held each other on the way back to the classroom. We had not played during that whole break, yet not one of us felt it was wasted.

I used to write my observation diary for three lines and then close the book, thinking there was nothing to see in ants. That day I understood that only those who watch long enough really see. In those twenty silent squatting minutes, the ants acted out the rules of a whole world for us: how to divide work, how to go around, how to turn a big thing into small pieces and carry it home.

Later, when I wrote my observation diary, I no longer closed the book after three lines. I learned to squat in front of a tiny insect for a full twenty minutes, to keep my hands still on my knees, and to grit my teeth before standing up when my legs went numb. The dragonfly was gone long ago, but I still remember those two ant lines like black braids. Patience, it turns out, is not sitting and waiting; it is squatting there with your eyes bright the whole time.

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.