老井台边的蚂蚁线

周志远是在村口老井台边蹲了半个钟头的。他本来在等公交车，一条蚂蚁线从井台的石头缝里出来，背着一只死蟑螂，往坡上的玉米地去。他就跟了过去。

蟑螂比蚂蚁大得多，二十几只围着它，前头拉，后头推，两边扶。走到一个三岔口，队伍停住了。左边的路被一块枯叶盖着，右边的路是上坡，中间的路横着一条砖缝。蚂蚁们没有开会，也没有谁发号施令，队伍自己分成三股，各试各的路。

试枯叶的那股把叶子抬开一角，从底下钻过去。试上坡的那股把蟑螂翻了个身，头朝坡顶重新排好。试砖缝的那股绕了过去，多走了半尺。最后走通的是上坡那一股。周志远后来跟全班讲这段的时候说，它们不是只认一条路，是三条路一起试，哪条通了就走哪条。

我也蹲下去看过一次那条线。蟑螂的须还在动，蚂蚁绕着它转。周志远把我拉起来，说别挡着它们的路。我们退到井台后面，从那儿看它们把蟑螂往坡上抬。坡很陡，扶边的蚂蚁滑下去两只，立刻有别的补上。

那阵子班里排课本剧，周志远演一个只有两句台词的角色，一直不高兴，觉得自己没用。看完那条蚂蚁线，他把两句台词背得比主角还熟，因为道具组缺人，他又去管了道具。他说，蚂蚁搬蟑螂，拉头的和扶边的力气不一样，可缺了谁，蟑螂都过不去那个坡。

公交车来了三趟他都没上。回家他跟他妈说，他在井台边看了电视剧那么久，看的是蚂蚁。他妈说他魔怔了，他笑了笑，没有辩解。

期末班会，班主任让每人说一句这个学期懂得的道理。周志远站起来说，小生命里没有主角，只有位置。全班安静了两秒，然后鼓起掌来。那条蚂蚁线早就不在了，可他把从它身上看见的东西，用到了自己身上。

The Ant Line by the Old Well

Zhou Zhiyuan once squatted by the old well at the village entrance for half an hour. He had been waiting for the bus when a line of ants came out of a stone crack in the well platform, carrying a dead cockroach toward the cornfield up the slope. He followed them.

The cockroach was far bigger than any ant. More than twenty of them surrounded it, pulling in front, pushing behind, and supporting it on both sides. At a three-way fork the line stopped. The left road was covered by a fallen leaf, the right road went uphill, and a brick crack lay across the middle one. The ants held no meeting, and nobody gave orders. The line divided itself into three groups, each trying its own road.

The group on the left lifted one corner of the leaf and crawled underneath. The group on the right turned the cockroach over and re-formed with its head toward the

top of the slope. The group in the middle went around the crack and walked half a meter extra. The uphill group was the one that made it. When Zhou Zhiyuan told this to our whole class later, he said the ants did not believe in only one road. They tried three roads at once, and took whichever one opened.

I squatted down to watch that line once too. The whiskers of the cockroach were still moving, and the ants circled around it. Zhou Zhiyuan pulled me up and said, do not block their road. We stepped back behind the well platform, and from there we watched them carry the cockroach up the slope. The slope was steep. Two ants on the supporting side slid down, and others took their places at once.

Around that time our class was staging a textbook play, and Zhou Zhiyuan had a role with only two lines. He was unhappy about it for a long time, feeling he was useless. After watching the ant line, he memorized his two lines better than the lead actor memorized his. When the props group ran short of hands, he went to manage the props as well. He said that pulling at the front and supporting at the side take different strength, but without either one, the cockroach would never pass that slope.

Three buses came and he did not board any of them. At home he told his mother that he had watched a show as long as a TV drama, and the show was ants. His mother said he had gone strange. He only smiled and did not argue back.

At the final class meeting, our teacher asked everyone to say one lesson learned that term. Zhou Zhiyuan stood up and said that in small lives there are no leading roles, only positions. The class was quiet for two seconds, then burst into applause. The ant line was long gone, but he had taken what he saw in it and applied it to himself.