儿子的鼻子贴在杯子上

吃过晚饭，儿子把我拉到饭桌边，宣布要做杯子吃水的实验。他摆出来的家当有：一根红蜡烛、一个盘子、一只喝茶的玻璃杯，还有一小碟兑了酱油的水。东西是他自己备的，连擦手的纸巾都铺好了，看来已经惦记了一整个下午。

他把打火机递给我，说：你点，剩下的我来。我懂他的意思，他怕火，可又不肯错过实验里的任何一步。我帮他把蜡烛粘在盘子中间，火苗立起来了。他先蹲下看了看蜡烛，然后端起杯子，对准火苗直直扣下，两只手扶着杯口，指头紧张得发白。

火苗在杯子里缩了缩，脖子一歪，灭了。酱油色的水顺着杯壁一点点往上爬。儿子的鼻子贴到了杯子上，呼出的气在玻璃上蒙出一小团雾，他赶紧用纸巾擦掉，再把脸凑得更近，好像怕错过水往上走的每一毫米。

水去哪儿了？它为什么要爬？是杯子喝的，还是火把它拽上去的？问题一个接一个，我几乎跟不上。我刚想把气压的道理讲给他听，又把话咽了回去，反问他：你觉得哪个杯子最能吸水？他跑去翻自己的水杯、牛奶杯，还有装饼干的大玻璃罐，在桌上一字排开。

那天晚上，蜡烛点了灭、灭了点，连着做了四回。牛奶杯不透明，他看不见水爬，皱起眉头把杯子举起来对着灯照；大罐子太高，水只挪了一点点。只有直筒玻璃杯里，水爬得最高。他用自己的办法记下结果：画了四个杯子，在爬得最高的那个上面画了一个小圆圈。

后来他睡着了，梦里嘟囔了一句：杯子里的空气吃饱了。我笑着替他关上门。饭桌上，盘子中间还留着一圈红色的蜡，像一枚刚刚颁发过的奖章，谁也没舍得擦。

My Son's Nose Pressed Against the Cup

After dinner, my son pulled me to the dining table and announced he would do the experiment of the cup drinking water. His equipment: a red candle, a plate, a glass tea cup, and a small dish of water darkened with soy sauce. He had prepared everything himself, even laying out paper towels for wiping hands. Clearly he had been thinking about it all afternoon.

He handed me the lighter and said: you light it, I will do the rest. I understood. He was afraid of fire, yet refused to miss a single step. I helped him stick the candle onto the plate, and the flame stood up. He squatted first to study the candle, then lifted the cup, lowered it straight over the flame, and held the rim with both hands, his fingers white with tension.

The flame shrank inside the cup, tilted its neck, and went out. The soy-colored water crawled up the glass wall bit by bit. My son's nose pressed right against the cup. His breath fogged a small patch on the glass; he wiped it quickly with a paper towel and moved his face even closer, as if afraid to miss a single millimeter of the rising water.

Where did the water go? Why did it climb? Did the cup drink it, or did the fire pull it up? The questions came one after another, and I could barely keep up. I was about to explain air pressure, then swallowed the words and asked instead: which cup do you think drinks the most water? He ran off to fetch his water cup, his milk cup, and the big glass jar from the cookie tin, and lined them up on the table.

That night the candle was lit and blown out, blown out and lit again, four rounds in a row. The milk cup was opaque, so he could not see the water climb, and he frowned and held the cup up to the lamp. The big jar was too tall, and the water barely moved. Only in the straight-sided glass cup did the water climb the highest. He recorded the results his own way: he drew four cups and put a small circle above the one where the water rose highest.

Later he fell asleep, and in his dream he mumbled: the air inside the cup is full. I smiled and closed his door for him. On the dining table, a ring of red wax still sat in the middle of the plate, like a medal just awarded. Nobody had the heart to wipe it away.