蜡烛灭掉的那一秒，水爬了上来

晚上写作业的时候，我忽然想起一个疑问：蜡烛点着以后，要是被杯子扣住，火会去哪儿？我听哥哥说过有个会吸水的杯子，杯子又没长嘴，怎么会吸水呢？我不信，可是又想知道，就去厨房找东西：一根生日蜡烛、一只旧盘子、一个直筒玻璃杯，还有一小碗水。

火柴我不敢划，请妈妈帮我点了蜡烛。我把蜡油滴几滴在盘子中间，趁热把蜡烛粘上去，它歪歪地站着，没倒。盘子里倒了一点水，刚刚盖住盘底，我又滴了一滴红墨水，想让水看得清楚些。水静静的，火苗也静静的，我的心比它们还要静。

我拿起玻璃杯，对准蜡烛直直地扣下去，杯口压在盘子上。火苗被关在杯子里，还在烧，可是已经矮了一截。我蹲下来，脸贴着杯壁看。它晃了两下，像喘了口气，脖子越伸越长，然后灭了。

就在灭的那一秒，盘子里的红水像被一只看不见的手推着，一点一点往杯子里爬，顺着杯壁往上爬，爬到蜡烛底下往上一指高的地方停住了。我在心里数：一指，两指。水真的爬上来了！杯子什么都没吸，水自己上去了。

我喊得太大声，全家都跑来了。爸爸让我再做一次，我故意换了个高杯子。蜡烛灭得一样快，水却只爬到更低的位置。我拿出小本子记了两行：大杯子，水爬得低；小杯子，水爬得高。为什么我还说不上来，可我把问题写在了旁边：杯子里的空气去哪儿了？它是不是被火用完了？

睡觉前，那个问题在我脑子里滚来滚去。我决定明天去科学办公室问问李老师，空气是不是也会累。床头柜上，蜡烛早就凉透了，凝成一座红色的小山，我觉得它替我保管着一个秘密，等着我明天去取答案。

The Moment the Candle Went Out, the Water Climbed Up

One evening while doing homework, a question popped into my head: where does the flame go if a lit candle is covered by a cup? My brother had once mentioned a cup that drinks up water. A cup has no mouth, so how could it suck anything? I did not believe it, but I wanted to find out. I went to the kitchen and hunted for things: a birthday candle, an old plate, a straight-sided glass cup, and a small bowl of water.

I was afraid to strike a match, so Mom lit the candle for me. I dripped hot wax in the middle of the plate and stuck the candle onto it. It stood crooked but did not fall. I poured water onto the plate, just enough to cover the bottom, and added a drop of red ink so the water would be easy to see. The water was still, the flame was still, and my heart was even stiller than both of them.

I picked up the glass cup, lowered it straight over the candle, and pressed its rim onto the plate. The flame was shut inside the cup, still burning, but already a little shorter. I squatted down and watched it with my cheek against the glass. It flickered twice, as if taking a breath, stretched its neck longer and longer, and

then went out.

At the very second it went out, the red water on the plate seemed pushed by an invisible hand. It climbed into the cup bit by bit, crawling up the glass wall, and stopped at a height about two fingers above the base of the candle. I counted in my head: one finger, two fingers. The water really had climbed! The cup sucked nothing, yet the water rose by itself.

I shouted too loudly, and the whole family came running. Dad asked me to try again, and this time I deliberately used a taller cup. The candle went out just as fast, but the water rose even lower. I took out my little notebook and wrote two lines: big cup, water rises low; small cup, water rises high. I could not explain why yet, but I wrote the question beside it: where did the air inside the cup go? Was it used up by the fire?

Before bed, that question kept rolling around in my head. I decided to ask Teacher Li at the science office tomorrow whether air gets tired too. On the nightstand, the candle had cooled into a small red hill. I felt it was keeping a secret for me, waiting for me to fetch the answer tomorrow.