一支试管，一屋子的笑

试管站在架子上，一排透明的疑问。有的装蓝色的水，有的装黄色的水，有的装着一声不吭的空气。我们围在实验桌前，屏住呼吸，怕惊跑管子里的秘密。老师捏着小勺，手腕轻轻一斜，白色粉末滑下去，安静得像一场雪。等，等，等。气泡，气泡，一串气泡，从管底挤出来，圆的，亮的，顶着一小片太阳。它们碰在一起，会轻轻让路；它们排着队，会绕开试管壁。教室里的笑声啪地也炸开了，脆脆的，圆圆的，滚到后排那个不爱说话的男孩桌上，他也笑了，笑得肩膀一抖一抖。

气泡长高了，高过试管口，翻了一个跟头，坐在桌上一动不动，开始互相说悄悄话。一个说：我是白醋生的。一个说：我是苏打生的。一个说：我是它们拥抱时呼出的那口气。我们围着听，头凑在一起，围成一个大大的气泡。老师举起手机，咔嚓一声，把气泡拍进照片，也把三十几个笑脸一起拍了进去。照片里的我们睁大眼睛，嘴巴张成小小的圆，像一串不会破的气泡。后来每次翻开这张照片，里面的气泡都会再破一次，我们的笑声也会跟着再破一次。

实验结束了，试管洗干净，倒扣在窗台上，滴着水，一滴，两滴，像在重放刚才的气泡。桌面擦干净了，可还有一小点笑声粘在桌角，指尖一碰，它就咯咯地笑。白醋和苏打被装回盒子，盒子也笑了，盖子轻轻抖了一下。窗台上的试管空着，却好像还装着一串没说完的问题。下一次实验是什么？气泡的故事还没讲完，笑声还没响完，试管已经站回架子上，排好队，等着我们问出下一个问题。

放学路上，我把试管的事讲给书包听，书包拉链一抖，像也在笑。路过花坛，我蹲下来告诉蚂蚁：下一次实验，白醋换成柠檬汁，气泡会更爱跳舞。蚂蚁没有回答，可它搬来一粒米，放在我手心，算是它的回信。我把那粒米收进铅笔盒，和照片放在一起。照片里的气泡不会破，铅笔盒里的米不会发芽，它们一起替我保管着那个下午，保管着一屋子的笑。

One Test Tube, a Whole Room of Laughter

The test tubes stand in the rack, a row of transparent questions. Some hold blue water, some hold yellow water, and one holds air that refuses to say a word. We gather around the lab table, holding our breath, afraid to scare away the secrets inside the tubes. The teacher pinches a small spoon, tilts her wrist gently, and the white powder slides down, quiet as a fall of snow. Wait, wait, wait. Bubbles, bubbles, a string of bubbles squeeze out from the bottom, round and bright, each carrying a tiny piece of sun. When they bump into one another, they politely make way; when they line up, they steer around the glass wall. The laughter in the classroom pops open too, crisp and round, rolling onto the desk of the quiet boy in the back row. He laughs as well, his shoulders shaking.

The bubbles grow tall, taller than the mouth of the tube, do a somersault, sit still on the table, and start whispering to each other. One says: vinegar gave birth to me. One says: baking soda gave birth to me. One says: I am the breath they sighed when they hugged. We lean in to listen, heads pressed together, forming one big

bubble. The teacher lifts her phone, and with a click she photographs the bubbles, along with more than thirty smiling faces. In the photo our eyes are wide and our mouths form small circles, like a string of bubbles that never pop. Ever since, every time we open this photo, the bubbles inside pop once more, and our laughter pops along with them.

The experiment is over. The test tubes are washed and stand upside down on the windowsill, dripping, one drop, two drops, as if replaying the bubbles from before. The tabletop is wiped clean, yet a little laughter still clings to the corner of the desk; touch it with a fingertip and it giggles. The vinegar and baking soda are put back into the box, and the box laughs too, its lid trembling slightly. The test tubes on the windowsill are empty, yet seem to still hold a string of unfinished questions. What will the next experiment be? The bubbles have not finished their story, the laughter has not finished ringing, and the test tubes are already back in the rack, lined up, waiting for us to ask the next question.

On the way home from school, I tell my schoolbag about the test tube, and its zipper gives a little shake, as if it is laughing too. Passing the flower bed, I squat down and tell the ants: at the next experiment we will swap vinegar for lemon juice, and the bubbles will love dancing even more. The ant does not answer, but it carries a grain of rice and places it in my palm as its reply. I keep that grain of rice in my pencil case, together with the photo. The bubbles in the photo will never pop, and the rice in the pencil case will never sprout, and together they keep that afternoon for me, keeping a whole room of laughter.