试管里在冒气泡

我拿出一支试管，透明的，像一滴站起来的露水。我把它举起来对光，光在里面弯了个腰。倒进去半勺清清的白醋，再加一小勺白白的苏打，然后等，等，等。管底先是一阵小小的响，再是一阵更大的响，然后气泡，气泡，一串气泡，挤着，推着，往上跑，越跑越高，啪的一声破了，小声说了一句谁也听不见的话。我弯腰去听，气泡又在我指尖上破开，凉凉的，痒痒的。教室里的笑声也一起炸开了，飞出窗户，落在操场槐树的叶子上，槐树叶咯咯笑着，把一整个下午都笑醒了。

气泡啪地破开，像一扇小小的门开了。小门通向哪里？通向我满脑袋的问题。为什么白醋遇见苏打就会说话？为什么试管装着它们，却不批评它们？为什么气泡圆圆的身体没有腿，却跑得那么快？为什么气泡活不过一秒钟，却还是笑着的？气泡不回答，只是又破了一个，接着又破一个，像在对我摇头。老师也不回答，只是笑，眼睛笑得弯弯的，像两支透明的试管。教室里的笑声像气泡，破了一个，滚出十个，一路滚到下课铃响。

笑声飞出窗外，骑着一道光，滑下旗杆，落进花坛。蚂蚁抬起头问：你们笑什么？笑声说：试管里有气泡，气泡在说一个秘密。蚂蚁挤不进教室，就派一只小蚂蚁送来一封信，问下一次实验是什么时候。我举起洗干净的试管，轻轻说：明天，明天，气泡也会请你来看。风把笑声送回来，它还在教室里响着，响在晾干的试管口上，响在明天的白醋和苏打里，响在我们数到一半就忘掉的数数声里。

晚上我把试管的事讲给枕头听，讲着讲着，枕头上也冒出一串气泡。气泡钻进梦里，梦里全是啪的一声，小声的一句，咯咯的一阵。我在梦里笑出了声，把自己笑醒了。醒来我摸摸试管，试管凉凉的，安安静静，可我知道，明天一早，它又会装满新的气泡，新的问题，新的笑声。我把它举起来对光，光在里面弯了个腰，像在跟我约好：明天见，明天见。

Bubbles Are Rising in the Test Tube

I take out a test tube, transparent, like a drop of dew that has stood up. I hold it against the light, and the light bends its waist inside. I pour in half a spoon of clear white vinegar, add one small spoon of white baking soda, then wait, wait, wait. First a tiny rustle at the bottom of the tube, then a louder one, and then bubbles, bubbles, a string of bubbles, pushing and shoving, running upward, higher and higher, popping with a snap, whispering something nobody can hear. I bend down to listen, and another bubble bursts on my fingertip, cool and ticklish. The laughter in the classroom bursts open too, flies out of the window, and lands on the leaves of the locust tree on the playground. The leaves giggle and wake up the whole afternoon.

A bubble pops like a tiny door opening. Where does the little door lead? It leads to my head full of questions. Why do vinegar and baking soda start talking when they meet? Why does the test tube hold them without scolding them? Why do bubbles have

round bodies and no legs, yet run so fast? Why do bubbles live less than one second, yet still smile? The bubbles do not answer; they just pop again, one after another, as if shaking their heads at me. The teacher does not answer either; she only smiles, her eyes curved like two transparent test tubes. The laughter in the classroom is like bubbles: one pops, and ten roll out, rolling all the way to the ringing of the class bell.

The laughter flies out of the window, rides a beam of light, slides down the flagpole, and falls into the flower bed. An ant looks up and asks: what are you laughing at? The laughter answers: there are bubbles in the test tube, and the bubbles are telling a secret. The ants cannot squeeze into the classroom, so they send one little ant with a letter, asking when the next experiment will be. I lift the washed test tube and say softly: tomorrow, tomorrow, the bubbles will invite you to watch too. The wind carries the laughter back. It is still ringing in the classroom, ringing on the rim of the dried test tube, ringing in tomorrow's vinegar and baking soda, ringing in the counting we forget halfway through.

At night I tell my pillow about the test tube, and as I talk, another string of bubbles rises from the pillow. The bubbles crawl into my dream, and the dream is full of soft pops, tiny whispers, and fits of giggles. I laugh out loud in the dream and wake myself up. Awake, I touch the test tube: cool and quiet. But I know that tomorrow morning it will fill again with new bubbles, new questions, new laughter. I hold it up to the light, and the light bends its waist inside, as if making a promise with me: see you tomorrow, see you tomorrow.

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.

气泡出来看我们

试管养出一串气泡，不是叶子，不是花，是圆圆的、亮亮的问题。我用手指轻轻敲管壁，气泡跳得更高，一直跳到试管口，探出头来看我们。我对气泡小声说话，气泡就破了，变成一缕笑，藏进我的耳朵里。试管是一间小小的房间，气泡是不请自来的客人。客人带来什么故事？故事都在气泡里：一支粉笔，一小勺白色粉末，一双瞪得大大的眼睛，还有一屋子屏住的呼吸。舞台上的灯光照过来，我手里的试管亮了一下，像把那天下午的光又借回来一次。

气泡出来看我们，站在试管口，被光照得发亮。后排的男孩伸手去接，手慢了，气泡在他指尖上破开，他先笑了，笑得半条胳膊都在抖。前排的女孩伸手去记，铅笔慢了，气泡已经把秘密讲给了空气，她一边笑一边把铅笔转了个圈。老师说：别急，气泡还会再来。气泡果然又来了，一串接一串，笑声也跟着一波接一波，把礼堂的屋顶洗得亮亮的，把我们的影子洗得高高的。连台下打瞌睡的评委，都睁开眼，跟着我们眨了一下。

我们把这次实验朗诵出来，试管立在台上，气泡立在心上。我们念气泡，三十几个声音合成一个大气泡，慢慢滚到礼堂屋顶，又轻轻落回每个人的头顶。我们念笑声，笑声就散开，落在肩膀上，暖暖的，像一小片晒过太阳的羽毛。朗诵结束，我们鞠躬，退场。口袋里好像还藏着一个没破的气泡，它不着急，它等自己长大，等把那天试管里的秘密，轻轻地，说给全世界听。

散场的时候，礼堂的灯一盏一盏亮起来。我们把试管放回讲台，把白醋和苏打放回盒子，把笑声分一半给门口扫地的爷爷。爷爷扫着扫着，扫帚底下也冒出一串小小的笑，像气泡排着队跟他回家。我把手插进口袋，摸到那个没破的气泡，它温温的，跳得轻轻的，像一颗小小的心脏，替那天下午继续活着，替我们所有人，继续好奇。

The Bubbles Come Out to Look at Us

The test tube raises a string of bubbles, not leaves, not flowers, but round and shining questions. I tap the glass wall lightly with my finger, and the bubbles jump higher, all the way to the mouth of the tube, where they poke their heads out to look at us. I whisper to a bubble, and it pops, turning into a wisp of laughter that hides inside my ear. A test tube is a tiny room, and bubbles are guests who arrive uninvited. What stories do the guests bring? The stories are all inside the bubbles: a piece of chalk, a small spoon of white powder, a pair of wide-open eyes, and a whole room of held breath. The stage lights shine over us, and the test tube in my hand glows for a moment, as if borrowing back the light of that afternoon.

The bubbles come out to look at us, standing on the rim of the tube, gleaming in the light. The boy in the back row reaches out to catch one, but his hand is too slow; the bubble pops on his fingertip, and he laughs first, laughing until half his arm trembles. The girl in the front row reaches out to write one down, but her pencil is too slow; the bubble has already told its secret to the air, and she giggles while spinning her pencil in a circle. The teacher says: do not worry, the bubbles will come again. And they do come again, string after string, and the laughter follows, wave after wave, washing the roof of the hall bright and stretching our shadows tall. Even the sleepy judge in the audience opens her eyes and blinks along with us.

We recite this experiment aloud. The test tube stands on the stage, and the bubbles stand in our hearts. When we say the word bubbles, more than thirty voices merge into one big bubble that rolls slowly to the roof of the hall and gently settles back on each of our heads. When we say the word laughter, the laughter scatters, landing on our shoulders, warm as a small feather sunned in daylight. The recitation ends; we bow and leave the stage. In my pocket there seems to be a bubble that has not popped. It is not in a hurry. It is waiting to grow up, waiting to tell the secret from that test tube softly, to the whole world.

As the audience leaves, the lights of the hall come on one by one. We put the test tube back on the podium, put the vinegar and baking soda back in the box, and give half of our laughter to the grandpa sweeping at the door. As he sweeps, a small string of laughter rises from under his broom, like bubbles queuing to walk home with him. I slide my hands into my pockets and touch that un-popped bubble. It is warm and pulses gently, like a tiny heart, living on for that afternoon, and staying curious for all of us.