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.