鸡蛋浮起来之前，我先学会了看

科学老师布置盐水浮鸡蛋实验的时候，我心里想，这有什么难的，鸡蛋、盐、水，谁不会看。我做实验一向快，材料摆上桌，水倒进杯，鸡蛋放进去，鸡蛋坐在水底，我拿起笔准备写实验完成。老师说过要记录，我翻开本子，笔尖落在纸上，卡住了。我写什么？我只知道鸡蛋沉在下面，可它是怎么沉的，躺着的还是立着的，杯底有没有没化开的盐，我一概说不上来。我这才发现，我从前所谓看，只是扫一眼。

我把杯子端起来凑近看。鸡蛋横躺在杯底，身上有一层特别小的泡，小得像撒了把碎芝麻。我从来不知道鸡蛋身上会冒泡。我把这一条记下来：鸡蛋沉底，横躺，蛋皮上有小泡。写完这一行，我忽然觉得这个本子有用，它逼我把眼睛停在杯子上，不许我扫一眼就走。

加盐以后我学乖了，每加一勺就停一下，等一等。第一勺下去，盐粒沉在杯底像一层白沙，我用筷子搅，搅到水发浑，盐不见了，鸡蛋一动不动。我把时间也记进去：四点零五分，一勺，无变化。第二勺，还是无变化。写到无变化三个字的时候我心里有点烦，可是转念一想，没变化也是变化的一种，本子上的空格也是证据。

变化出现在第四勺和第五勺之间。第四勺化开以后，鸡蛋的一端慢慢抬起来，像睡着的人翻了个身。我屏住气盯着它，它立起来了，可还站在杯底没走。我在本子上一行一行记：蛋立起，离底一点，又离底多一点。第五勺下去，它真的往上走了，走得很慢，慢得像怕人看见。它停在杯子中间，我数了三下，它又往上，顶上探出水面，鼓出一个小小的黄帽子。

我盯着那顶黄帽子看了很久，忽然明白这个实验真正给我的东西不是鸡蛋浮起来这五个字。鸡蛋浮起来谁都知道，可鸡蛋翻身的那半厘米，蛋皮上那层芝麻泡，第四勺和第五勺之间的那一下，如果我不记，它们就白白过去了，我这一辈子都不会知道鸡蛋还会翻身。观察记录不是给老师交差，是我给自己留证据，证明我真的看见过。

现在我看东西的习惯变了。以前看一眼就算看过，现在我会多停十秒，找找有没有第二样东西。看云我会看它挪没挪，看绿豆发芽我会量它高了几毫米。我妈说我最近话里全是数字，可我觉得，能说出数字才算真的看见。一次实验，一个本子，一层芝麻一样的小泡，把我这双只会扫一眼的眼睛教变了。这就是我做这个实验最大的心得。

Before the Egg Floated, I Learned to Look

When our science teacher assigned the floating-egg-in-salt-water experiment, I thought, how hard can it be: egg, salt, water — everybody knows how to look. I am always fast at experiments. Materials on the table, water in the cup, egg dropped in, egg sitting at the bottom. I picked up my pen ready to write experiment complete. But the teacher had said keep a record, and when I opened my notebook, my pen tip froze on the page. What would I write? All I knew was that the egg sank. How did it sink — lying flat or standing up? Was there undissolved salt on the bottom? I could not answer any of it. That was when I realized that what I called looking had only ever been one quick glance.

I lifted the cup and brought my face close. The egg lay on its side at the bottom, covered with a layer of tiny bubbles, tiny as scattered sesame seeds. I had never known an egg could bubble. I wrote it down: egg at bottom, lying flat, small bubbles on the shell. After that one line, I suddenly felt this notebook was useful. It forced my eyes to stay on the cup and would not let me glance and leave.

After that I learned my lesson. One spoonful of salt, then stop and wait. The first spoonful sank to the bottom like white sand. I stirred until the water went cloudy and the salt vanished — the egg did not move. I started recording the time too: 4:05, one spoonful, no change. Second spoonful, still no change. Writing the words no change made me a little impatient. But then I thought: no change is also a kind of change, and an empty line in the notebook is still evidence.

The change came between the fourth spoonful and the fifth. After the fourth dissolved, one end of the egg slowly lifted, like a sleeping person turning over. I held my breath and watched. It stood up, still on the bottom, not moving yet. Line by line I recorded: egg upright, off the bottom a little, now a little more. With the fifth spoonful it truly rose, moving so slowly it seemed afraid to be seen. It paused in the middle of the cup. I counted to three, and it climbed again, its top breaking the surface with a little yellow cap.

I stared at that yellow cap for a long time, and it hit me that what this experiment really gave me was not the five words the egg floats. Everybody knows an egg can float. But the half centimeter when it turned over, the sesame-seed bubbles on its shell, that moment between the fourth and fifth spoonfuls — if I had not written them down, they would have passed for nothing, and I would never in my life have known an egg can turn over. A record is not homework for the teacher. It is evidence I keep for myself that I truly saw.

My habit of looking has changed now. A glance used to count as seeing; now I stay ten seconds longer and hunt for the second thing. When I watch clouds I check whether they moved; when I watch a mung bean sprout I measure how many millimeters it grew. My mom says everything I say lately is numbers. But I think if you can say the number, only then have you really seen. One experiment, one notebook, a layer of sesame-seed bubbles: this experiment took my glance-only eyes and taught them something new. That is my biggest lesson from it.