操场，和你走在我旁边

傍晚放学，夕阳把操场栏杆的影子拉得很长，你和我绕着跑道一圈一圈地走，谁也不说要去哪里。

我们的书包靠在看台边上，两个鼓鼓的轮廓，像两只蹲着的小兽，守着属于我们的这段时光。

你说这次月考退步了，声音压得很低，怕惊动场上那些疯跑的草。

我没有安慰你，只是把袖子往你那边靠了靠，让两块布料轻轻碰在一起。

沉默不是空，沉默是你把耳朵借给我，我把肩膀借给你。

风翻动你书包里的试卷，你走过去把它按回去，按到最深的一格。

我记得上学期我考砸的那次，你也是什么也没说，只是陪我在操场上跑了三圈。

那回跑道是湿的，你的鞋脏了，我的心却干净了。

现在轮到我陪你走，跑道是干的，你的脚步一圈一圈稳下来。

操场边的灯一盏一盏亮起来，把前面的路照成一条发光的河。

你忽然问我，远方是不是很远。我说，我们不是在走吗。

远方不是一个地点，远方是跑道尽头那盏灯，走近一步，它就亮一步。

我们背起书包，带子勒着肩膀，互相看了一眼，都苦笑了一下。

书包的重量是成长的重量，你背一半，我背一半。

回家的路上路灯排成一排，我们的影子互相踩着对方的鞋跟。

你背了半句课本里的诗，我没记住，只记住了里面的远方两个字。

我想说其实我也害怕，话到嘴边又咽回去，留给明天傍晚。

明天傍晚，操场还在，看台还在，你还在。

我们没有约定什么，约定太重了，书包已经够重。

我们只默认了一件事，晚自习后老地方见，不用等对方。

不用等对方，这六个字是我们之间最重的话。

很多年会过去，操场会重新翻修，书包会换过一批。

但我会记得这个傍晚，记得操场，记得你走在我旁边。

远方从此不再吓人，因为我的脚步旁边，始终有一个你的节奏。

夜风翻动旗杆上的旗，发出很轻的一声，像谁替我们回答。

我走着，前面的远方一寸一寸展开。

你走着，心里的疑问一圈一圈走完。

书包靠在肩上，操场铺在身后，远方悬在前面。

而你走在我旁边，就是今晚全部的诗。

The Playground, and You Walking Beside Me

That evening after school, the setting sun stretched the shadow of the playground railing long, you and I walked around the track lap after lap, neither of us saying where we were going.

Our schoolbags leaned against the stands, two bulging silhouettes, like two crouching little beasts, guarding this stretch of time that belonged only to us.

You said you had fallen behind in the monthly exam, your voice pressed very low, afraid of startling the grass where boys were running wildly.

I did not comfort you, I only leaned my sleeve a little closer to yours, letting two pieces of cloth touch gently.

Silence is not emptiness. Silence is you lending me your ear, and me lending you my shoulder.

The wind turned the test papers inside your schoolbag; you walked over and pressed them back, back into the deepest compartment.

I remember when I failed last term, you also said nothing, you only ran three laps around the playground with me.

That time the track was wet, your shoes got muddy, and my heart grew clean.

Now it is my turn to walk with you. The track is dry, and your footsteps steady themselves lap by lap.

The lamps beside the playground light up one by one, turning the road ahead into a glowing river.

You suddenly ask me whether the distance is far. I say, are we not walking.

The distance is not a place. The distance is that lamp at the end of the track; walk one step closer, and it brightens one step.

We pick up our schoolbags, straps digging into our shoulders, we glance at each

other and both smile a bitter smile.

The weight of a schoolbag is the weight of growing up; you carry half, I carry half.

On the way home the streetlights stand in a row, and our shadows step on the heels of each other.

You recited half a line from a textbook poem; I forgot the rest, I only remembered the word distance.

I wanted to say that actually I am afraid too, but the words went back down my throat, saved for tomorrow evening.

Tomorrow evening, the playground will still be there, the stands will still be there, you will still be there.

We promised nothing. Promises are too heavy, and the schoolbags are heavy enough.

We only agreed on one thing without saying it: meet at the usual place after evening study, no need to wait for each other.

No need to wait for each other, those six words are the heaviest words between us.

Many years will pass, the playground will be rebuilt, schoolbags will be replaced batch by batch.

But I will remember this evening, remember the playground, remember you walking beside me.

The distance stops being frightening, because beside my footsteps there is always a rhythm of yours.

The night wind turns the flag on the pole, it makes one very soft sound, like someone answering for us.

I walk, and the distance ahead unrolls inch by inch.

You walk, and the questions inside your heart are finished lap by lap.

The schoolbag rests on the shoulder, the playground spreads behind, the distance hangs ahead.

And you, walking beside me, are the whole poem of tonight.

两个书包

操场角落靠着两个书包，一个蓝色，一个灰色，肩带缠在一起，像两只握手的小动物。

蓝色的属于林小雨，灰色的属于陈望，全班都知道，她们是好朋友。

体育课解散以后，两个书包独自留在白杨树下，看满操场的人跑来跑去。

蓝色的书包被汗浸湿了一块，灰色的那只被风推得晃一下，像是递过去一张纸巾。

书包当然不会做事，做事的是林小雨和陈望。

那次期中考试，林小雨数学考砸了，一个人坐在看台最高的一格。

陈望没有过去讲道理，只是把自己的灰书包提过去，放在她旁边。

两个书包靠在一起，两个人隔着一臂的距离，谁也不说话。

后来林小雨说，那天她没有哭，因为灰色的书包在那里。

陈望的妈妈发现，陈望开始帮人拿书包，一只装自己的课本，一只装别人的信任。

书包一天天重起来，里面塞满试卷、错题本、字典和一沓一沓的明天。

她们一天天高起来，校服裤脚一寸一寸往上收。

千米测试那天，陈望在最后一圈崴了脚，林小雨从前面折回去，扶住她的胳膊。

计分的裁判说，那两个女生是最后冲线的，却是笑得最亮的。

晚自习结束，她们背着两个书包走出教室，带子在夜里吱呀吱呀地响。

她们谈起远方，说要去一座很远的城市，远到能看见真正的海。

书包听不见远方这个词，书包里却夹着写给远方的志愿表。

毕业的日子越来越近，白杨叶子一层一层地落。

林小雨在灰书包上贴了一张纸条，写着，去远方记得回头。

陈望在蓝书包上贴了一张纸条，写着，走慢一点，等我。

两个书包最后一次靠在白杨树下，影子叠在一起，分不出哪块是哪块。

操场记得两对脚印，一对轻，一对重，步子始终互相等。

很多年以后人会散开，操场不会忘。

远方还是远，但她们不再怕。

因为她们都见过一种陪伴的样子，像白杨树的影子，落在书包上，一声不响。

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而成长，就是背着越来越重的书包，在操场上再走一圈，身边那个人还在。

Two Schoolbags

In the corner of the playground lean two schoolbags, one blue and one gray, their straps tangled together like two little animals shaking hands.

The blue one belongs to Lin Xiaoyu, the gray one to Chen Wang, and the whole class knows they are best friends.

After PE class dismisses, the two schoolbags stay alone under the white poplar tree, watching the whole playground run back and forth.

A patch of the blue bag is soaked with sweat; the gray one is nudged by the wind to sway once, as if handing over a tissue.

Of course schoolbags cannot do anything. The ones who do things are Lin Xiaoyu and Chen Wang.

The day of the midterm exam, Lin Xiaoyu failed math and sat alone on the highest step of the stands.

Chen Wang did not go over to lecture her. She only carried her own gray schoolbag over and placed it beside her.

The two schoolbags leaned together; the two girls sat the length of one arm apart, and neither spoke.

Later Lin Xiaoyu said she did not cry that day, because the gray schoolbag was there.

The mother of Chen Wang noticed that Chen Wang had begun carrying bags for others too, one holding her own textbooks, one holding the trust of others.

The schoolbags grew heavier day by day, stuffed with test papers, mistake notebooks, dictionaries, and stack after stack of tomorrows.

The two girls grew taller day by day, the hems of their uniforms gathering inch by inch.

On the day of the thousand-meter test, Chen Wang twisted her ankle on the last lap, and Lin Xiaoyu ran back from ahead and held her arm.

The teacher keeping time said those two girls crossed the line last, but they were the brightest smiling of all.

When evening study ended, they walked out of the classroom with two schoolbags on their backs, the straps creaking softly in the night.

They talked about the distance, saying they wanted to go to a very far city, far enough to see a real sea.

Schoolbags cannot hear the word distance, yet inside them are tucked the application forms written for the distance.

Graduation drew closer, and the poplar leaves fell layer after layer.

Lin Xiaoyu stuck a note on the gray bag: when you go to the distance, remember to look back.

Chen Wang stuck a note on the blue bag: walk slowly, wait for me.

For the last time the two schoolbags leaned together under the poplar, their shadows folded into one, impossible to tell apart.

The playground remembers two pairs of footprints, one light, one heavy, their steps always waiting for each other.

Many years later people will scatter, but the playground will not forget.

The distance is still far, but they are no longer afraid.

Because they have both seen what companionship looks like: like the shadow of the poplar tree, falling on a schoolbag without a sound.

And growing up is carrying a heavier and heavier schoolbag, walking one more lap around the playground, with that person still beside you.

远方是我们走出来的地方

你坐在靠窗的座位，从初一第一天起就坐在那里。

窗外正对操场，你上课偷偷望外面，我扔过去一个纸团，问你到底在看什么。

你说在看跑道，想知道一圈到底有多远。我说一圈四百米，中午带你量一遍。

那个中午我们真的量了一遍，你的新鞋踩在塑胶颗粒上，咯吱咯吱地响。

你说原来远方也是这样，一格一格量出来的。

初二那年你的成绩往上走，我的往下掉，我们仍然在放学后的操场碰头。

你从书包里掏出错题本，我从书包里掏出笔，一道题拆成两种解法，摊在膝盖上。

你讲到第三遍还不通，我们就坐在跑道边，从黄昏讲到天黑。

你说别怕，远方还在那里，它不会跑。

我说我怕的是走到远方那天，你不在。

你没接话，捡起场边一颗石子扔出去，扔得很远，然后说，追上去就是了。

初三的晚自习结束得越来越迟，操场边的灯替我们留着最后一圈。

我们的书包越来越胖，话越来越少，一个眼神就够，一个点头就够。

模拟考的排名贴在墙上，你踮脚指我的名字，我伸手指你的名字。

谁也没说话，我们又绕着操场走了一圈，影子在灯下叠成同一个形状。

你开始讲那座很远的城市，讲海边那所大学的梧桐道。

我开始在课桌角写下那个很远的日期，像写下一个不许反悔的约定。

我们的书包交换过无数次东西，半块橡皮，一颗糖，一整晚的勇气。

那节收尾的体育课，我们跑得很慢，像在陪三年本身跑完最后一程。

操场还是四百米，我们走得特别特别慢，慢到把每一圈都记住。

你在看台台阶上坐下，说，远方其实不是地点，是我们一起走出来的路。

我想反驳，想了想这三年的脚印，把到嘴边的话点了点头咽下去。

是啊，远方是我们走出来的地方，你的四百米加我的四百米，就是它。

毕业以后，书包会收进柜子，操场会留给下一届。

可我朝远方走的时候，脚步里永远带着你的节奏。

窗边的座位还会靠窗，操场还会正对窗，远方还会悬在操场尽头。

而你，从初一那个中午起，就一直走在我旁边。

我不问远方有多远，我只问，谁和我一起走。

这个问题，你用三年替我回答完了。

The Distance Is a Place We Walked Out

You sit by the window, and you have sat there since the very first day of seventh

grade.

Outside your window lies the playground, and in class you kept sneaking glances out there, until I threw a paper ball over and asked what on earth you were watching.

You said you were watching the track, wondering how far one lap really is. I said one lap is four hundred meters, I will measure it with you at noon.

That noon we really measured it, your new shoes crunching on the rubber granules, squeak by squeak.

You said, so the distance is like this too, measured out step by step.

In eighth grade your grades climbed and mine slid down, yet we still met on the playground after school.

You took the mistake notebook out of your schoolbag, I took a pen out of mine, and we spread one problem on our knees, split into two ways of solving it.

When the third explanation still would not get through, we sat down by the track and talked from dusk until dark.

You said, do not be afraid, the distance is still there, it will not run away.

I said what frightens me is that on the day I reach the distance, you will not be there.

You did not answer. You picked up a pebble from the edge of the field and threw it far away, then said, just run after it.

In ninth grade evening study ended later and later, and the lamps by the playground kept the last lap lit for us.

Our schoolbags grew fatter and fatter, our words fewer and fewer; one glance was enough, one nod was enough.

The mock exam ranking was posted on the wall; you stood on tiptoe to point at my name, I reached up to point at yours.

Neither of us spoke. We walked one more lap around the playground, our shadows folding into one shape under the lamp.

You began to talk about that faraway city, about the plane-tree avenue of the university by the sea.

I began to write that faraway date on the corner of my desk, like writing a promise that cannot be taken back.

Our schoolbags exchanged things countless times, half an eraser, one candy, a

whole night of courage.

In the last PE class we ran very slowly, as if running the final stretch together with the three years themselves.

The playground was still four hundred meters, and we walked it so very slowly, slowly enough to remember every lap.

You sat down on the steps of the stands and said, the distance is not really a place, it is the road we walked out together.

I wanted to argue, then thought it over against three years of footprints, and swallowed the words with a nod.

Yes, the distance is a place we walked out; your four hundred meters plus my four hundred meters make it.

After graduation, schoolbags will be stored in cupboards, and the playground will be left to the next class.

But when I walk toward the distance, my footsteps will always carry your rhythm.

The seat by the window will still face the window, the playground will still face the window, and the distance will still hang at the end of the playground.

And you, ever since that noon in seventh grade, have been walking beside me.

I no longer ask how far the distance is. I only ask, who walks with me.

That question, you answered for me across three years.