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.