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.