每天二十个单词的对赌

放寒假前，我和好友方小舟定了一个「单词对赌」：每天互相考二十个英语单词，错三个以上的人，第二天请对方喝豆浆。这个心得就写这个对赌，以及它教给我的事。

先说辅导。方小舟英语好，我英语是瘸腿。以前我背单词是死记，s后面跟什么全靠蒙。她看不下去，教了我拆词：apple拆成ap加ple，她说记单词像拆积木，先认零件再拼整体。她还给我划了「三遍法」：早上读三遍，中午默一遍，睡前再默一遍。我照做了一个月，月考英语从六十八到了八十一。

再说互相监督。对赌最狠的地方不是罚豆浆，是每天雷打不动。有一回我赖皮，说今天太累不考了。她掏出小本子说：「那记上，欠一次，加罚两杯。」我瞪她，她瞪我，谁也不让谁。第二天我老老实实考了，二十个词只错一个——前一天赖账的羞愧比豆浆管用。

她也欠过。腊月里她家办事，连着三天没考成，回来补考那天错了七个，二话不说拎来三杯豆浆。我喝了两杯，剩一杯给她，说补上就行，她说不行，规矩是规矩。那天我明白了：互相监督监督的不是对方，是自己。你赖一次，对方就有权记你一次；对方被记了不恼，因为规矩对谁都一样。

三遍法听着笨，可它把我从蒙题的坑里拉了出来。以前完形填空我全凭感觉，现在读到生词会先想她教的零件。有一回考到transport，我当场拆出port这个词根，想起她说过port是「搬」，搬运的搬，答案一下就定了。那天下课她听说我拆了词，两个眼睛笑得弯弯的，说：这就是我的积木。

共同进步是后知后觉的。开学老师念进步名单，念到我和她，全班鼓掌。我这才发现：她数学也进步了，因为我给她讲了两学期方程。我们俩谁也没单独补过课，就是一人教一科，教着教着，两科都上去了。

这个心得最后写我的反思：我以前以为进步靠拼命，现在知道进步靠规矩加陪伴。一个人背单词会偷懒，两个人对赌就不敢；一个人讲题讲一半就烦，两个人轮流讲就讲得下去。下学期我们把对赌升级成全科，豆浆照罚，谁也不怕。

The Daily Bet on Twenty Words

Before the winter vacation, my good friend Fang Xiaozhou and I made a "word bet": every day we quiz each other on twenty English words, and whoever misses more than three buys the other soy milk the next day. This reflection is about that bet and what it taught me.

First, the tutoring. Fang Xiaozhou is strong in English; English is my lame leg. I used to memorize words by brute force, guessing what follows the letter s. She could not stand watching, and taught me to take words apart: apple splits into ap plus ple. She said memorizing words is like taking building blocks apart—learn the pieces first, then assemble the whole. She also gave me her "three-pass method": read

three times in the morning, write once from memory at noon, write once more before bed. I followed it for a month, and my monthly test English went from sixty-eight to eighty-one.

Second, the mutual supervision. The fiercest part of the bet is not the soy milk penalty but the daily routine that never breaks. Once I tried to weasel out, saying I was too tired to quiz that day. She took out a small notebook and said: "Then it is recorded—one debt, plus two extra cups." I glared at her, she glared at me, neither gave in. The next day I took the quiz honestly and missed only one of twenty words—the shame of the excuse of the previous day worked better than soy milk.

She also fell behind. In the twelfth lunar month her family had affairs to handle, and three days of quizzes were missed. On the day she made them up she missed seven words, and without a word she brought over three cups of soy milk. I drank two and left one for her, saying making it up is enough. She said no—the rules are the rules. That day I understood: mutual supervision supervises not the other person but yourself. If you slack once, the other has the right to record you; and when the other is recorded, there is no hard feeling, because the rule is the same for everyone.

The three-pass method sounds clumsy, but it pulled me out of the pit of guessing. Before, I did cloze passages entirely by feel; now when I meet a new word I first think of the pieces she taught. Once the test had the word transport, and on the spot I took out the root port, remembering she had said port means to carry—carrying things—and the answer settled at once. After class that day, when she heard I had taken the word apart, her eyes curved into crescents and she said: that is my building blocks.

The shared progress came home to me later. When the teacher read the list of improved students at the start of term and reached our two names, the whole class applauded. Only then did I notice that her math had improved too, because I had explained equations to her for two terms. Neither of us ever took extra classes. One taught one subject, the other taught another, and teaching went on until both subjects rose.

My final reflection: I used to think progress came from working desperately. Now I know it comes from rules plus company. Alone, memorizing words invites laziness; with a bet between two people, nobody dares. Alone, explaining problems gets tiresome halfway; taking turns, two people keep explaining. Next term we upgrade the bet to all subjects. The soy milk penalty stays, and neither of us is afraid.