塌了三次的帐篷

车停在湖边的草地上，后备箱打开，里面滚出一个鼓鼓的绿色袋子。爸爸说：就它了，搭起来。我和他把袋子倒在草地上，两根杆子、一块顶布、一捆地钉，摊了一地。说明书在袋子最底下，被压得起了皱，图上画得清清楚楚，可手里的杆子怎么也对不上那个图。

头一次，我们把杆子穿进了顶布外侧的环里，帐篷立起来一半，像个驼背的人。第二次，杆子穿对了，顶布却是反的，拉链朝了天。第三次刚拉好最后一根，一阵风从湖面过来，整个帐篷朝我这边扣下来，我钻出来，头发全乱了。隔壁营地的大叔掀开帘子看了一会儿，终于走过来，蹲下，把两根杆子的顺序换了个位置：先长后短，交叉点压住。帐篷第四次立起来，端端正正，像换了个帐篷。

大叔摆摆手走了。我妈把防潮垫铺进帐篷，笑我们爷俩：说明书上画的就是先长后短。爸爸钻进帐篷试了试高度，在里面直起腰，说：比家里客厅矮一点，但是赢在有湖。

夜里睡不着，我掀开帘子，外面比家里黑一百倍。星星不是几颗，是一片，密得让人不敢多看，看久了眼睛会酸。爸爸仰面躺在防潮垫上，手机屏幕还亮着，他关掉屏幕说：别看手机了，看那边，七颗连成勺子的。我眯着眼找，先找到三颗排成一线的，顺着往下，勺子慢慢显出来。我喊：找到了！声音在夜里传得很远，湖对岸有人也应了一声。

风把草吹得沙沙响。一颗星从树梢上面滑过去，很快，我以为是眼睛花了。爸爸说那是流星，许愿来不及，就当它是个记号。我们谁也没许愿，就躺着，数到后来都数不清了，我先睡着了，醒来时爸爸的鼾声很轻，帐篷外天已经有点发灰。

隔天一早收营，帐篷湿的，露水把顶布浸得发沉。按大叔教的反着来：拔地钉、抽杆子、抖掉里面的草屑。卷的时候我跪在布上从一头往前推，空气推不出去，鼓起一个大包，我妈从另一头配合我，两个人把帐篷卷成一条绿色的长条，塞回袋子里，袋子口却怎么也收不拢，最后用背包带捆住。

上车前我回头看了一眼草地，帐篷的位置留下一块压平的印子，草还立不起来。爸爸说明年再来。我抱着装帐篷的袋子，袋子比来的时候鼓，里面多了一夜的星星。我想，下次搭帐篷，我先穿长杆。

The Tent That Collapsed Three Times

The car stopped on the grass by the lake. The trunk opened and out rolled a fat green bag. Dad said: this is it, set it up. He and I emptied the bag onto the grass: two poles, one rain fly, a bundle of stakes, spread all over the ground. The instruction sheet was at the very bottom of the bag, wrinkled from being pressed. The pictures on it looked perfectly clear, but the pole in my hand refused to match anything in the drawing.

The first time, we threaded the poles through the loops on the outside of the fly. The tent rose halfway and looked like a hunched man. The second time, the poles

went in right, but the fly was inside out, its zipper facing the sky. The third time, just as we fastened the last pole, a wind came off the lake and the whole tent buckled down toward me. I crawled out with my hair a mess. The man at the next campsite lifted his flap, watched for a while, and finally walked over, squatted down, and swapped the order of the two poles: long one first, short one second, press down the crossing point. The tent stood up on the fourth try, straight and square, as if it were a different tent.

The man waved and left. My mother spread the moisture pads inside the tent, laughing at the two of us: the instruction sheet said long first, short second. Dad crawled in to test the height, stood up inside, and said: a little lower than our living room, but this one wins for having a lake.

At night I could not sleep and lifted the flap. Outside was a hundred times darker than at home. The stars were not a few but a whole sheet, so thick it made the eyes ache to look too long. Dad lay on his back on the pad, his phone screen still glowing. He switched it off and said: stop looking at the phone, look over there, seven stars joined into a ladle. I squinted and searched, first finding three in a straight line, then following down, and the ladle slowly appeared. I shouted: found it! My voice carried far in the night, and someone on the far shore of the lake answered back.

The wind rasped through the grass. A star slid past above the treetops, very fast; I thought my eyes were playing tricks. Dad said that was a meteor, too late to make a wish, so just treat it as a mark. Neither of us wished. We just lay there counting until counting failed, and I fell asleep first. When I woke, Dads snoring was soft, and the sky outside the tent had begun to gray.

Taking camp the next morning, the tent was wet, dew soaking the fly heavy. We did the mans lesson in reverse: pull the stakes, slide out the poles, shake the grass bits out of the inside. To roll it, I knelt on the fabric and pushed from one end forward, but the air would not come out and swelled into a big balloon, so my mother worked with me from the other end. The two of us rolled the tent into a long green loaf and shoved it back into the bag, but the mouth would not close, and in the end we tied it shut with a strap from my backpack.

Before getting in the car I looked back at the grass. The spot where the tent stood left a flattened mark, the grass still pressed down. Dad said we would come back next year. I hugged the tent bag. It was fatter than when we came, holding a whole night of stars inside. Next time, I thought, I will thread the long pole first.