收营那天，我先想起星星

收营那天早上，我右手虎口被地钉磨出一块方方的红印。下山的时候握着水瓶，那里一阵一阵地疼。我边走边想，疼得好，这是这趟露营留在我身上的记号，别的都会忘，这个忘不了。其实最先想起来不是搭帐篷的狼狈，是后半夜那片星星。

那晚十一点多，我被帐篷外一种低沉的呼呼声弄醒，一声一顿，像有人在很远的地方拉风箱。我屏住呼吸听，爸爸在睡袋里翻了个身，含含糊糊说：猫头鹰，叫它的，睡你的。我掀开帘子一角，月亮偏西，湖面上铺着一层薄薄的白，星星落在水里，被波纹揉成一条条银线。头顶的星星和水里的星星连成一片，我分不清哪边是天。那一刻我忽然觉得自己很小，但不是害怕的那种小，是轻的那种小，像一片叶子落在很大很大的水面上。

白天的事想起来就滑稽了。下午三点到的营地，太阳把草地晒得发白。爸爸把帐篷袋甩在肩上，说搭帐篷是他的强项。结果两根主杆在他手里拧成了麻花，插不进底座；妈妈按说明书念，念到地钉与地面成六十度，我们仨蹲在那儿比划角度，谁也说不出六十度在哪儿。最后是旁边遛狗的老太太看不下去，让孙子过来帮忙，一个初中生模样的哥哥，三分钟把帐篷按立起来，拍拍手上的土走了。我爸爸站在自家立起来的帐篷前，表情复杂，说：回家我练。

帐篷立起来以后，事情顺了。我们支折叠桌，烧水，泡了三桶方便面，就着火腿肠，吃得比家里任何一顿都香。妈妈拍照，镜头里有帐篷、湖、我们三个满头汗的脸。她说明天发朋友圈，配文都想好了：第一次，及格。

清晨五点半，鸟叫先把妈妈吵醒，她拉开帘子，尖叫一声，把我和爸爸都惊坐起来。湖上浮着齐腰高的白雾，远处的山只剩一个尖，像水墨画没干。我们仨谁也没说话，怕说话把雾吹散。后来还是爸爸先动，烧水，煮挂面，锅里的热气跟湖上的白雾接在一起，分不出哪股是家里的，哪股是野外的。

所以现在，红印还在虎口上，帐篷在后备箱里滚着，沾了一夜露水的袋子还没晾干。妈妈问下次还去吗。我说去。我想的不是方便面和滑稽的爸爸，是那片分不清上下天的星星，是齐腰的白雾。有些东西没试过就永远只是课本上的名词，试过一次，它们就长进你身上，往后抬头低头，都带着那晚的湖光。

Breaking Camp, I Thought of the Stars First

On the morning we broke camp, the web of my right hand showed a square red scrape from the tent stakes. Walking down the mountain with a water bottle, it throbbed in waves. I thought: good, let it hurt. This is the mark this trip left on me; everything else may fade, but this will not. What came back to me first was not the clumsy tent pitching but the stars after midnight.

A little past eleven that night, I woke to a low hooting outside the tent, one note, a pause, another, like someone far away working a bellows. I held my breath and listened. Dad turned over in his sleeping bag and mumbled: an owl, let it call, you

sleep. I lifted a corner of the flap. The moon had leaned west, a thin white film lay over the lake, and stars had fallen into the water, rubbed by the ripples into long silver threads. The stars overhead and the stars in the lake joined into one field, and I could not tell which side was sky. In that moment I suddenly felt very small, but not the frightened kind of small, the light kind, like a leaf resting on a very, very wide sheet of water.

The daytime parts were funny to remember. We reached the camp at three in the afternoon, the sun bleaching the grass pale. Dad slung the tent bag over his shoulder and announced that pitching tents was his strong point. In the end he twisted the two main poles into a knot in his hands, unable to seat them in the base; Mother read from the manual, reaching the line about stakes at sixty degrees to the ground, and the three of us crouched there gesturing at angles, none of us able to say where sixty degrees was. Finally an old woman walking her dog next door took pity and sent her grandson over, a boy who looked like a high schooler, who had the tent standing in three minutes, dusted off his hands, and left. My father stood before our own upright tent with a complicated face and said: I will practice at home.

Once the tent stood, everything went smoothly. We set up the folding table, boiled water, made three tubs of instant noodles, ate them with sausages, and it tasted better than any meal at home. Mother took photos: the tent, the lake, our three sweat-soaked faces in the frame. She said she would post them tomorrow, caption already chosen: first attempt, passing grade.

At five thirty in the morning, birds woke Mother first. She opened the flap and screamed, startling Dad and me upright. Waist-high white fog floated on the lake, and the far mountain kept only its peak, like ink wash not yet dry. None of us spoke, afraid words would blow the fog away. In the end Dad moved first, boiled water, cooked thin noodles, and the steam from the pot joined the white fog on the lake until you could not tell which breath was from home and which was from the wild.

So now the red mark is still on my hand, the tent tumbles around in the trunk, and the dew-soaked bag has not dried. Mother asked if we would go again. I said yes. What I am thinking of is not the instant noodles or my ridiculous father, but that field of stars with no top or bottom, and the waist-high white fog. Things you never try remain nouns in a textbook forever; try them once and they grow into you, and afterward, looking up or down, you carry that nights lake-light with you.

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