瓶子里的歌唱家

7月15日 星期六 晴

今天太阳大得把柏油路都晒软了，知了在树上叫得人心痒。奶奶从面筋袋上揪下一小团面筋，捏在竹竿头上，让我去树下试试。我举着竿子站在槐树底下仰头找，脖子仰得酸，找到了：一只大黑蝉，趴在最高的枝上，肚子一鼓一鼓。

我把竿子慢慢举上去，一点，一点。面筋碰到它尾巴的时候，它才发现不对，翅膀一展，已经晚了，粘在面筋上，六条腿乱蹬。我小心地把它捋下来，装进罐头瓶，拧了个透气的盖子。瓶子往桌上一放，我宣布：从今天起你就是我家的歌唱家。

白天它不叫。我以为它哑了，凑近瓶子看，它扒着瓶壁，腿一蹬一蹬。奶奶说，知了白天认生，夜里就好了。

夜里真的应验。我刚躺下，瓶子里就响起来，嗡——嗡——，一声比一声亮，隔着瓶子都像打雷。我枕头边摆着瓶子，听着自己的知了叫，翻个身都能笑出声。它叫到后半夜才停，停之前最后一声特别长，像唱累了叹口气。

第二天早上我去看它，笑不出来了。它两只前腿的钩钩磨秃了，瓶壁上蹭了几点褐色的印子，它扒着瓶壁，蹬腿的劲儿没昨天大了。我盯着它看了好久，想起它昨天在树上叫得多理直气壮，那棵树比我家屋顶还高，它的亲戚朋友都在上面。

我把瓶子端到槐树底下，拧开盖子，把瓶口对着树枝。它爬出来，爬到枝上，翅膀抖了两抖，没马上飞。我屏住气等它飞，它没飞，倒是叫了一声，就一声，然后才扑棱一下上了更高的枝。整棵树接着叫起来，像欢迎它回家。

晚上我在日记本上写：歌唱家回剧团去了。瓶子洗干净装绿豆。面筋还剩一小团，奶奶说留着明天再粘。我想了想，说明天我不粘了。奶奶问为什么，我说，它在瓶子里的那一夜，叫得没有它在树上的一半自在。

The Singer in the Bottle

July 15, Saturday, sunny.

The sun was so strong that the asphalt road turned soft, and the cicadas screamed in the trees until my heart itched. Grandma pinched a small ball of wheat gluten from its bag, fixed it on the tip of a bamboo pole, and told me to try under the tree. I stood under the locust tree holding the pole up, chin tilted, searching until my neck ached, and found one: a big black cicada lying on the highest branch, its belly pumping.

I raised the pole slowly, bit by bit. The cicada realized something was wrong

only when the gluten touched its tail; it spread its wings, but too late, stuck to the gluten, six legs kicking wildly. I carefully worked it off and put it into a glass jar with a breathable lid. I set the jar on the table and announced: from today you are our familys singer.

It did not sing during the day. I thought it had gone mute, and peered into the jar: it clung to the glass, kicking its legs. Grandma said cicadas are shy by day and fine at night.

She was right. The moment I lay down, the jar began to sound, buzz, buzz, each call brighter than the last, loud as thunder even through the glass. I kept the jar beside my pillow, listening to my own cicada sing, and laughed every time I turned over. It sang until past midnight; its last call was especially long, like a sigh after a tired song.

The next morning I went to look and stopped smiling. The hooks on its two front legs were worn blunt, and a few brown smears marked the glass; it clung to the wall and kicked with less strength than yesterday. I stared at it for a long time, remembering how boldly it had sung in the tree yesterday. That tree was taller than our roof, and all its relatives and friends were up there.

I carried the jar under the locust tree, unscrewed the lid, and pointed the mouth of the jar at a branch. It crawled out, climbed onto the branch, and shook its wings twice without flying right away. I held my breath waiting, and it did not fly at first; it sang one single note, then fluttered up to a higher branch. The whole tree burst into song again, like a welcome home.

At night I wrote in my diary: the singer has returned to its troupe. The jar is washed and holds green beans. A small ball of gluten is left, and grandma said we can catch more tomorrow. I thought a while and said I would not catch any more. Grandma asked why. I said: in the jar, its song was not half as free as its song in the tree.

知了壳里的空房子

7月28日 星期五 阵雨转晴

傍晚那阵雨来得急去得快，雨一停我就跑下楼。空气里有土腥味，树叶亮得反光。就在我家那棵梧桐树离地一尺高的地方，我看见一个奇迹：一只知了正从它的壳里往外拱。

它的背先裂开一条缝，一个嫩绿的脑袋顶出来，然后是胸，然后是两条前腿，扒着旧壳，像扒着船舷。旧壳是褐色的，两只前爪还保持着抓树皮的姿势。我看呆了，蹲在树下不敢动，连呼吸都放轻了，怕把它吹跑。

最难的是后腿。它整个身子倒挂着往下坠，两条后腿在旧壳里够来够去，够一次，滑一下，我看得手心出汗，恨不得伸手帮它。它自己够到了，腿一蹬，整个身子翻出来，落在旧壳顶上。这时候它还皱皱的，绿得像一片刚发的芽，翅膀是软的，缩成一团。

我就蹲在树下看它晾翅膀。翅膀一点一点展开，像有人往里吹气，纹路清清楚楚，透明的，路灯亮起来的时候，翅膀上落了一小片灯光。前后整整半个钟头，它从一只皱巴巴的绿虫子变成了一只会飞的知了。

它试了两下才飞起来，先撞到树叶，再落到更高的枝上，然后开始叫。第一声还有点哑，第二声就亮了。我抬头找它，它藏在叶子里，叫得整棵树都在响。树下那个旧壳还保持着抓树的姿势，空空的，像一个退掉的房子。

我把那个壳请回家，放在窗台上，底下垫了张白纸。吃晚饭的时候我妈问我笑什么，我说我捡了一间空房子。我妈顺着我的手指看过去，哦了一声，说蜕的壳还能入药呢。我立刻紧张，问会不会有人来收。我妈大笑，说不收不收，归你了。

睡前我又去看它。壳在台灯底下投出一小片影子，前爪的姿势跟它在树上时一模一样。我在日记里写：今天我在树下看了半个钟头的搬家。新房子是翅膀，旧房子还留在树上。它半夜要是回头看一眼，应该能看见我窗台上那盏灯。

The Empty House in the Cicada Shell

July 28, Friday, shower then clear.

The evening shower came fast and left fast. The moment it stopped I ran downstairs. The air smelled of wet earth, and the leaves shone with reflected light. On our plane tree, about a foot off the ground, I saw a miracle: a cicada was pushing its way out of its own shell.

First a crack opened on its back, a tender green head pushed out, then the chest, then two front legs gripping the old shell like the rail of a boat. The old shell was brown, its two front claws still holding the posture of gripping bark. I squatted under the tree, too amazed to move, breathing softly, afraid to blow it away.

The hardest part was the hind legs. Its whole body hung downward, the two hind legs groping inside the old shell, reaching once, slipping once, and my palms sweated just watching; I almost reached out to help. It reached on its own, kicked its legs free, and flipped its whole body out onto the top of the old shell. At that moment it was still wrinkled, green as a fresh sprout, its wings soft and bunched up.

I squatted there watching it dry its wings. They spread out little by little, as if someone were blowing air into them, the veins clear and transparent; when the street lamp came on, a small patch of its light landed on the wing. Half an hour from

start to finish, and a crumpled green creature became a cicada that could fly.

It tried twice before it flew, first bumping into leaves, then landing on a higher branch, and then it began to sing. The first note was still hoarse; the second one rang out. I looked up for it, hidden among the leaves, singing until the whole tree sounded. Down below, the old shell still held its tree-gripping pose, empty, like a vacated house.

I brought the shell home and set it on the windowsill over a sheet of white paper. At dinner my mother asked what I was grinning at. I said I had picked up an empty house. She followed my finger, said oh, and added that shed cicada shells can be used as medicine. I got nervous at once and asked whether anyone would come to collect it. My mother laughed and said no, it is yours.

Before bed I checked it again. Under the desk lamp the shell cast a small shadow, its front claws in exactly the pose they held on the tree. I wrote in my diary: today under the tree I watched a moving-out ceremony for half an hour. The new house is its wings; the old house stays on the tree. If it looks back at midnight, it should see the lamp on my windowsill.

飞进屋的不速之客

8月3日 星期一 晴，闷热

今晚热得邪乎，风扇转出来的都是热风。我妈把窗户全打开，说透透气吧。就为这句透气，我们家来了一位不速之客。

九点半我正在跟一道数学题较劲，台灯底下忽然嗡的一声，越来越响，像一架小飞机找不着跑道。接着啪的一下，一只大知了撞在台灯罩上，掉在我的作业本上。它六脚朝天，翅膀嗡嗡地扇，把自己扇得原地转圈。我吓得从凳子上弹起来，喊妈，有知了撞我作业本上了！

全家开灯捉知了。它翻过身，扑棱一下飞起来，先上了窗帘，又上了吊灯，在吊灯上倒挂着叫，叫得理直气壮，好像它才是这屋的主人。我爸举着抄网（就是夏天捞蚊子那个），我妈打手电，我负责指挥。我喊左边，我爸往左边够，它往右边飞。指挥错了三回，我爸说你别喊了，越喊越乱。

最后是瓶子立了功。我妈拿来罐头瓶，把瓶口凑到吊灯底下，知了往下爬了两步，一头拱进瓶里。我妈手疾眼快拧上盖子。知了在瓶里叫，嗡——，声音撞在玻璃上又弹回来。我爸抹着汗说，捉个知了比捉鱼还累。

我把瓶子放在书桌上当夜灯用，它叫一阵停一阵，像给我陪读。说来也怪，有它陪着，那道数学题倒是不烦了。我把它叫作陪读先生。

第二天一早，我端着瓶子下楼，走到小区那排树下，拧开盖子。它爬出来，爬到树枝上，半天没动。我等了一会儿，它叫了一声，就一声，然后飞进树冠里不见了。整棵树上的知了呼啦一下全叫起来，吵得像在开会。

晚上我在日记里写：陪读先生回家开会去了。我妈路过瞄了一眼我的日记，说写得像那么回事。我把罐头瓶放回柜子，瓶壁上还留着一圈知了爬过的印子。下回它要再来，我不捉了，给它留着窗口的位子。

The Uninvited Guest That Flew In

August 3, Monday, sunny, muggy.

Tonight the heat was outrageous; the fan blew nothing but hot air. My mother opened every window and said let some air through. For that one sentence about fresh air, our family gained an uninvited guest.

At half past nine I was wrestling with a math problem when a buzz suddenly rose under the desk lamp, louder and louder, like a small plane that cannot find its runway. Then came a smack: a big cicada hit the lamp shade and fell onto my homework book. It lay on its back, six legs in the air, buzzing its wings and spinning itself in circles. I sprang off my stool and shouted: mother, a cicada crashed into my homework!

The whole family turned on the lights to catch the cicada. It flipped over, fluttered up, first onto the curtain, then onto the hanging lamp, where it hung upside down and sang boldly, as if it were the master of the house. My father held up the small net (the one for scooping mosquitoes in summer), my mother carried the flashlight, and I was in charge of directing. I shouted left, my father reached left, and it flew right. After three wrong calls, my father said: stop shouting, your directions only make it worse.

In the end the jar won the day. My mother brought a glass jar, held its mouth under the hanging lamp, and the cicada crawled down two steps and butted straight into the jar. Her hand flashed and the lid was on. The cicada sang inside, buzz, its sound hitting the glass and bouncing back. My father wiped his sweat and said catching a cicada is more tiring than catching fish.

I kept the jar on my desk as a night lamp. It sang in bursts, then rested, like a study companion. Strangely, with it keeping me company, that math problem stopped being annoying. I named it Mr. Study Companion.

Early the next morning I carried the jar downstairs, walked to the row of trees in our neighborhood, and unscrewed the lid. It crawled out, climbed a branch, and

stayed still for a while. I waited, and it sang one single note, then flew into the treetop and vanished. Every cicada in the tree burst out at once, noisy as a meeting.

At night I wrote in my diary: Mr. Study Companion has gone home to his meeting. My mother glanced at the page as she passed and said it reads like a real essay. I put the jar back in the cupboard; a ring of crawl marks from the cicada was still on the glass. If it ever visits again, I will not catch it — I will leave its seat by the window open.