计划墙

放假第一天，孩子把一张白纸贴到墙上，宣布要做暑假计划。我坐在旁边准备领导，先报了自己的主张：先把作业写完，再读两本书，抽空把钢琴练起来。孩子摆手，说这是他自己的计划，要他自己写。我到了嘴边的安排咽了回去，把笔递给他。

他趴在小桌上，写得比写作业还认真。计划里有看蚂蚁搬家，有抓蜥蜴，有踩水洼，还有一项是吃一整个西瓜。我忍住没纠正。在我眼里这些不算正事，可看蚂蚁在他看来是顶顶要紧的大事，既然做计划，就该把要紧的事放进去。

计划写好，他请我帮忙贴到墙上，又郑重其事地在纸角签了名，笔画歪歪扭扭，力气倒足，还要求我也签名作证。我签了，他检查一遍，确认我没有替他多写一笔。作业被挤在中间，前后都是玩。钢琴那一项排在末尾，他给它画了个哭脸，说练琴的事晚上再商量。他仰着头看了半天，满意了，说这个计划是他的。

计划贴上去的第二天，他就蹲在墙根看蚂蚁，一看一个钟头，回来告诉我蚁后比蚂蚁胖。作业十五分钟写完，比我守在旁边催着快得多。计划上原本没有踩水洼这一项遇雨生效，他自己补了一行，等下雨，踩水洼。有天午后落了雨，他穿着雨鞋就冲出去，我在窗后给他拍照留证。邻居撑伞路过，看他在雨里蹦，也仰头笑了一声。

那面墙上的计划纸，边角被他摸得起了毛。每天完成一项，他就用红笔划掉一项，划得用力，像把一件大事办妥了，划完还要把笔帽盖好、挂回笔筒，仪式一样不缺。我原本怕计划太松，荒一个暑假；结果他一天也没荒，荒的是我。我坐在旁边刷手机，看他看蚂蚁、踩水洼，笑得没心没肺，忽然意识到自己已经很多年没那样笑过。

陪孩子过暑假，我头一回明白，计划属于他，暑假才属于他。大人要做的不是替他安排，是把纸贴正，再退后一步，看他把日子过得有模有样。

The Plan Wall

On the first day of vacation my son taped a blank sheet to the wall and announced he was making a plan for summer. I sat beside him ready to lead, and stated my agenda first: finish the homework, read two books, and find time for the piano. He waved his hand and said this was his own plan and he would write it himself. I swallowed the arrangements that had reached my lips and handed him the pen.

He bent over his little desk, writing more earnestly than any homework. His plan listed watching ants move house, catching lizards, jumping in puddles, and one item about eating a whole watermelon. I held back from correcting him. In my eyes these were not serious business, but in his eyes watching ants was the most important matter of all, and a plan should hold the important things.

When the plan was written he asked my help to post it on the wall, then signed his name at the corner with great ceremony, the strokes crooked but the pressure full. He also asked me to sign as a witness; I signed, and he checked the line once to make sure I had not added a stroke for him. Homework was squeezed in the middle, with play on both sides. The piano item sat at the bottom, and he drew a crying face beside it, saying the matter of practice could be discussed at night. He tilted his head and studied it for a long while, satisfied, and said the plan belonged to him.

The day after the plan went up, he crouched by the wall watching ants for a full hour, then came back to report that the queen ant is fatter than the workers. His homework took fifteen minutes, far faster than when I stand over him urging him on. The plan had no clause about puddles, so he added a line himself: wait for rain, then jump in puddles. One afternoon the rain came, and he dashed out in his rain boots while I photographed him from the window, as evidence. The neighbor passed by under an umbrella, watched him jumping in the rain, and laughed out loud too.

The corners of the plan paper on that wall grew fuzzy from being touched. Each finished item he crossed out with a red pen, hard, as if closing a great affair; after crossing it out he capped the pen and hung it back on the holder, missing not one step of the ceremony. I had worried the plan was too loose and the summer would go to waste; in the end he wasted not one day, and the one wasting time was me. I sat beside him on my phone, watching him watch ants and jump puddles, laughing without a care, and it struck me that I had not laughed like that for years.

Spending summer with my son, I understood for the first time that the plan belongs to him, and only then does the vacation belong to him. What grown-ups must do is not arrange for the child, but keep the paper straight on the wall, step back, and watch the little one run the days in fine order.

一条河的距离

七月中，孩子点名要去那条有小鱼的小河。那条河是我小时候的河，离城九十多公里，导航要一个半小时。他爸发动车，说走就走。后座上装着小网兜、水枪和一条大毛巾，孩子把脸贴在车窗上，一路问到了没有。他爸说快了，他就掰手指算，算不清，改问还有几个红绿灯。

河比记忆里浅。孩子穿着凉鞋踩进去，第一脚就缩回来，喊凉。第二脚就不缩了，站在水里喊妈妈快下来。他爸下水比他早，蹲在水里装石头，被他识破，笑得直不起腰。我在岸上脱了鞋陪他走了几步，水到小腿，凉意顺着腿往上爬。他忽然弯腰去捧水，捧起一捧，指缝里漏光了，只剩一条手指长的小鱼在掌心扑腾。他蹲下去把鱼放回水里，放得比谁都轻。

我们在河边待了整整一个下午。河风一吹，湿衣服贴在他背上，他也不喊冷，只顾弯腰去摸

石头缝。他捉了放，放了捉，网兜挥得呼呼响，最后什么也没捉住，人倒湿透了。太阳落下去，他胳膊晒脱了一层皮，不喊疼，还笑。回家路上他在后座睡着了，睫毛上挂着河沙。保温壶里的水他一口没喝，反倒灌了半壶河水回去，说要带给我养在阳台的那条鱼住。

我坐在河边的石头上看他的时候，忽然发现他长高了。去年抱在怀里过门槛的孩子，如今自己蹚水，蹚得比我还稳。河还是那条河，水还是那个凉，我小时候泡过的河，如今泡着他。时间过去的方式，在这一刻看得见摸得着。

出发的早上，他爸只问了一句去哪儿，孩子答了那条河，于是我们真的去了。没有攻略，没有订房，一个背包一条毛巾。我从前觉得出游要郑重其事，如今觉得，孩子要的不是景点，是他说了有人当真。他记不住公里数，也记不住路，他记得的是那捧从指缝里漏掉的水，和那条被放生的小鱼。

晚上他泡在浴缸里还在笑，忽然说，明年暑假还去。我说好。就为这一句，那条河值得跑九十多公里。

The Distance of One River

In mid-July my son named the little river with the small fish as his wish. That river was the river of my own childhood, ninety kilometers out of the city, an hour and a half by navigation. His father started the engine and we simply went. The back seat held a small net, a water gun, and a big towel, and the boy pressed his face to the window asking all the way whether we had arrived. His father said soon, and he counted on his fingers, could not count it out, and switched to asking how many traffic lights were left.

The river was shallower than in memory. He stepped in wearing sandals and pulled the first foot right back, calling it cold. The second foot stayed, and he stood in the water calling me to come down. His father got in before me, crouched in the river pretending to be a stone, was seen through by the boy, and laughed until he could not straighten up. I took off my shoes on the bank and walked a few steps with him; the water reached my calves and the coolness climbed up my legs. Suddenly he bent to cup water, lifted a handful, and it leaked away through his fingers, leaving only a small fish as long as a finger flopping in his palm. He crouched and returned the fish to the water, gentler than anyone.

We stayed by the river the whole afternoon. A wind off the river pressed his wet clothes against his back; he did not complain of the cold, bent over, and felt along the cracks between stones. He caught and released, released and caught, swinging the net until it whistled, and in the end caught nothing but soaked himself through. When the sun went down he had peeled an armful of sunburned skin and did not complain of pain, only laughed. On the way home he fell asleep in the back seat with river sand

clinging to his eyelashes. He drank none of the water from the thermos; instead he poured in half a pot of river water, saying it was for the fish I keep on the balcony to live in.

As I sat on the stone by the river watching him, I suddenly noticed that he had grown tall. The child I had carried over the threshold last year now waded through water on his own, steadier than I was. The river was still that river, the water still that coolness; the river I had soaked in as a girl was soaking him now. The way time passes became visible and touchable in that moment.

On the morning we left, his father asked only one question, where to, and the boy answered, that river, so we really went. No guidebook, no hotel booking, one backpack and one towel. I used to think an outing must be solemn and well-prepared; now I think what the child wants is not a scenic spot but the feeling that when he speaks, someone takes him seriously. He will not remember the kilometers or the road; he will remember that handful of water leaking through his fingers and the little fish set free.

At night, soaking in the bathtub, he was still laughing when he suddenly said, let us go again next summer. I said yes. For that one sentence alone, the river is worth ninety kilometers.

西瓜、萤火虫和晚睡

孩子的暑假快乐，安排得都很小。冰镇西瓜，院里的萤火虫，破例晚睡。一样一样，都不花钱，一样一样，都让他高兴得打滚。

西瓜是傍晚镇上的。整个按进水盆，搁在穿堂的过风处，等它凉透。他写作业写一半就跑来看一眼，问好了没有。盆里的西瓜纹丝不动，他急，拿勺子敲盆沿，被我说住。吃的时候他挑中间那一口，红得最透，籽还最少。一牙西瓜咬出月牙形的缺口，汁水顺着手肘往下流，他也不擦，仰头哈哈笑，说西瓜汁腌胳膊了。我们家的西瓜账，一个暑假记得比谁都清：第几天吃的，谁切的，最中间那一口归谁。

萤火虫是院角来的。第一只亮起来的时候，他屏住气，招呼我们全家排队看，谁也不许出声。光在草叶上一闪一闪，绿得干净。他问萤火虫的光能不能装进瓶子，我说能，但会把它闷坏。他想了想，说那还是让它亮在草里吧。那一晚他睡前最后一句话是，萤火虫晚安。第二天他又惦记了一整天，傍晚跑去院角看，没看见也不失望，说萤火虫今晚放假。

晚睡是破例的。八月底前的几个晚上，我们允许他过九点。全家搬了竹椅到院里，看星星，认北斗，找牛郎织女星。他仰着头，脖子酸了换一只脚撑地，讲学校的事，讲得眉飞色舞。他妈认星座认错了，被他纠正，他还得意地踮了踮脚。九点半他打了个哈欠，自己说，星星还没数完，

人先数困了。

我原本以为陪暑假要带他去远的地方、贵的地方。后来发现他的快乐全在小的地方：西瓜中间那一口，草叶上的一只萤火虫，晚睡多出来的半个钟头。他像一面小镜子，照出我早就丢掉的本事——原来高兴可以这么便宜，这么容易。

开学前夜，他自己收拾书包，忽然说这个暑假高兴。我问高兴到什么程度，他想了想，说，比收到玩具还高兴。我在旁边记账一样记下这句。是这个孩子，教我把夏天重新过了一遍。

Watermelon, Fireflies, and Staying Up Late

The summer joys of my son are all arranged in small sizes: watermelon chilled in water, fireflies in the yard, permission to stay up late. None of them costs money, and each one makes him roll with delight.

The watermelon came from town in the evening. We pressed the whole melon into a basin of water in the draft where the wind passes through the hall, waiting for it to chill through. Halfway through homework he would run to look and ask whether it was ready. The melon sat still in the basin; he grew impatient and tapped the rim of the basin with a spoon, and I told him to stop. When we ate it he chose the bite from the center, the reddest part with the fewest seeds. He bit a crescent gap into a slice, juice running down to his elbow, and he would not wipe it, only threw his head back and laughed, saying the melon juice was pickling his arm. Our household watermelon ledger, kept through one summer, is clearer than anyone could keep it: which day we ate, who cut it, and who got the very center bite.

The fireflies came to the corner of the yard. When the first one lit up, he held his breath and made the whole family line up to watch, nobody allowed to speak. The light flickered on the grass leaves, green and clean. He asked whether the light of a firefly could be bottled. I said it could, but the bottle would smother it. He thought a moment and said, then let it stay lit in the grass. His last words before sleep that night were, good night, fireflies. The next day he thought about it all day long, ran to the corner of the yard at dusk to look, saw none, was not disappointed, and said the fireflies were on holiday that evening.

Staying up late was the exception we granted. For several nights before the end of August we allowed him past nine. The whole family carried bamboo chairs into the yard to watch the stars, learn the Big Dipper, and hunt for the Herd Boy and the Weaver Girl. He held his face up; when his neck ached he switched to the other foot for support, and told stories from school, glowing as he told them. His mother named a constellation wrongly, he corrected her, and stood up on his toes in triumph. At half past nine he yawned and said by himself, the stars are not finished counting but

the person fell asleep first.

I had thought spending summer with him meant taking him to far places and expensive places. In the end I found his joy lives entirely in small places: the center bite of the watermelon, one firefly on a grass leaf, the extra half hour of staying up. He is like a small mirror showing me a skill I had long lost, the knowledge that delight can be this cheap and this easy.

On the eve of school opening he packed his schoolbag by himself and suddenly said this summer was happy. I asked how happy, and he thought a moment and said, happier than receiving a toy. I wrote that sentence down in my mind like an entry in a ledger. It is this child who taught me to live through summer all over again.