表哥的螃蟹课

表弟来乡下过暑假，天天缠着我带他出去玩。我带他去河边捉螃蟹，他头一回下河堤，在堤上抢先跑了几步，喊着他要先找到螃蟹，一路蹦，把凉鞋都跑掉了一只，嘴里问个不停，螃蟹咬人吗，螃蟹有多大，我敢捉吗。我说，螃蟹夹人，但不咬，敢不敢自己到了再说。

河边的石头底下螃蟹多。我翻开一块，他凑过来看，一只螃蟹横着跑，他喊，它跑歪的。我说螃蟹都横着跑。他说它怎么不直着跑。我说不知道。他说为什么。我说不知道，你长大自己查。他说那我长大查好了再告诉你。我说好，这个话我记住了。

石缝里卡着一只螃蟹，指头那么大。我说你来捉。他卷袖子，先拿小石子捅螃蟹，捅得螃蟹举钳子，他再伸手捏，捏的不是背，是钳子根，螃蟹一夹，夹住了。他愣了一秒才叫，哇地一声，眼泪在眼眶里转，可手没松。螃蟹吊在他手上晃，他另一只手乱挥，喊表哥表哥。

我把螃蟹从他手上取下来，他甩着手哭，哭着哭着忽然笑场了，说他刚才捏的是螃蟹的钳子，螃蟹不夹他夹谁。他自己笑自己，笑得蹲下去。我把那只螃蟹拎起来给他看，螃蟹的背在哪里，钳子根在哪里，还让他摸了摸蟹背。我说我再教你一遍，按住背，别碰钳子。他点头，手还疼着，又去捉第二只，这回按对了，举着螃蟹跑，喊我来看，喊得比谁都响。

走的时候桶里五只螃蟹。表弟忽然说不想带走了。我说为什么。他说，螃蟹也有家，它家里说不定也有小螃蟹。我想了想，把桶里的螃蟹一只一只倒回石缝边。他蹲着跟螃蟹说话，说回家吧，明年我再来看你。

回去的路上他举着被夹过的手指，逢人就说他被螃蟹夹了，讲一遍笑一遍，路过小卖部连看店的阿姨也讲了，阿姨笑着给了他一颗糖。奶奶心疼，他反过来安慰奶奶，说螃蟹就夹了他一下，他按了螃蟹两下，算他赢。我走在后头笑，这个暑假，他大概会把螃蟹讲一整个学期。

The Crab Lesson of My Cousin

My cousin came to the village for summer vacation and pestered me every day to take him out. I took him to the river to catch crabs. It was his first time on the river bank, and he ran a few steps ahead of me, shouting that he would find the crab first, bouncing along, even losing one sandal on the way, asking question after question: do crabs bite, how big are crabs, am I brave enough to catch one. I said crabs pinch but do not bite, and whether you are brave we will see when we get there.

Under the stones by the river there were many crabs. I turned one over and he came close to look. A crab ran sideways and he shouted, it runs crooked. I said all crabs run sideways. He asked why they do not run straight. I said I do not know. He asked why. I said I do not know, look it up yourself when you grow up. He said then when I grow up I will look it up and tell you. I said good, I will remember those words.

A crab was wedged in a crack of rock, as big as a finger. I said, you catch it.

He rolled up his sleeves, first poking the crab with a small pebble until the crab raised its pincers, then reaching out to pinch — not the back but the base of the pincers — and the crab clamped on. He froze for one second before crying out, a loud wah, tears rolling in his eyes, yet his hand did not let go. The crab dangled from his hand and swung, and his other hand waved wildly, shouting, cousin, cousin.

I took the crab off his hand. He shook his hand and cried, and crying, he suddenly burst into laughter himself, saying he had pinched the pincers of the crab, so of course the crab pinched him. He laughed at himself until he squatted down. I lifted that crab and showed him where the back of the crab is and where the base of the pincers is, and I even let him stroke the back of the crab once. Then I said, let me teach you once more: press the back, do not touch the pincers. He nodded, his hand still aching, and went to catch a second crab. This time he pressed right, and ran holding the crab up, shouting for me to come and see, louder than anyone.

When we left there were five crabs in the bucket. My cousin suddenly said he did not want to take them home. I asked why. He said crabs have homes too, and maybe there are baby crabs at home. I thought a moment and poured the crabs back one by one beside the cracks. He squatted and talked to the crabs, saying go home, I will come see you next year.

On the way back he held up the pinched finger and told everyone he met that a crab had pinched him, laughing each time he told it. Passing the little shop, he told the shopkeeper auntie as well, and she laughed and gave him a sweet. Grandma felt sorry for him, and he comforted her in return, saying the crab only pinched him once and he had pressed the crab twice, so he had won. I walked behind laughing. This summer, he will probably talk about crabs the whole term.