胡同里的水枪大战

蝉在槐树上叫得没完，下午两点，胡同里一个人影都没有。阿哲抱着一把比手臂还长的水枪拐进巷口，我和胖子正蹲在墙根弹玻璃球，头一抬，眼睛就直了。

水枪是阿哲他爸单位发的奖品，蓝黑色，枪身上印着一只卡通鸭子。阿哲把它往我们面前一举：打不打？我和胖子异口同声：打！可是两个人打不成仗，得凑够六个人。我们扯着嗓子挨家喊，最后喊出来六个：我们仨，对面是格子、丽丽和斌子。分组用猜拳，阿哲出剪刀，格子出石头，格子赢了当队长。他把手一挥，说我们守巷东，他们守巷西，谁被水滋透了就出局。

开战前的装水最麻烦。巷口的自来水龙头矮，我们蹲成一排，把水枪的储水仓按到出水口底下。水柱细细的一条，要接好几分钟。斌子急性子，接一半就拧上盖子，结果他的枪打三下就哑了。我的枪是老式抽拉式的，皮垫子松，得先把拉杆压到底再灌，水灌到一半从缝里冒泡，手背上凉丝丝的。

格子喊了一声开始，战斗就算打响了。斌子第一个冲出来，还没跑两步，躲在门墩后面的丽丽朝他胸口来了一枪，白T恤立刻洇出一大片深色。斌子不服，绕到电线杆后面反击，水柱歪歪斜斜，倒把出来收衣服的张奶奶浇了个正着，吓得他连连鞠躬，水枪都扔了。

胖子负责掩护我。他枪大，一次能滋两米远，就是装水慢。我们俩配合着往前压，我趁机绕到墙拐，朝格子后背补了两枪。格子回头追我，我钻进晒着的床单中间，水珠打在床单上，像下了一场小雨。我在床单里转圈，透过湿透的布看见格子站在原地找不到我，忍不住笑出了声，一笑就暴露了，隔着床单挨了一梭子。

打到第四轮，六个人全都湿透了。胖子的眼镜片上挂着水珠，他摘下来擦，擦完戴上，水又流下来，干脆不擦了。阿哲的鸭子水枪没水了，他举着空枪往桶里按，按半天进不了一点点水，我们全蹲在地上笑。

阿哲他爸下班回来，看见一巷子滴水的孩子，没批评，回家抱出一个冰镇西瓜，说谁先把水枪收好谁先吃。六把水枪哗啦一下全放进了塑料筐。我们坐在门槛上啃西瓜，衣服贴在背上，凉风一吹，浑身起小疙瘩。蝉还在叫，格子抹抹嘴说明天还打。我抱着我的抽拉枪点头，心想这个下午真长啊，长得够我记好多年。

The Water Fight in the Alley

The cicadas would not stop singing in the locust tree. At two in the afternoon, the alley was empty. A Zhe turned in at the mouth of the lane, carrying a water gun longer than his arm. Fatty and I were squatting by the wall playing marbles, and the moment we looked up, our eyes were fixed on it.

The gun was a prize from the workplace of the father of A Zhe, blue-black, with a cartoon duck printed on the body. A Zhe held it up in front of us: fight or not? Fatty and I answered at the same time: fight! But two people could not make a battle; we needed six. We went from door to door shouting, and six showed up: the three of us

against Gezi, Lili and Binzi. We split teams by rock-paper-scissors. A Zhe threw scissors and Gezi threw stone, so Gezi became captain. He waved his hand: we would hold the east end, they would hold the west end, and anyone soaked through was out.

Filling the guns was the hardest part before the fight. The tap at the mouth of the lane was low, and we squatted in a row, pressing the tanks of the guns under the spout. The water came in a thin line and took minutes. Binzi was impatient; he screwed the cap on when his gun was only half full, and his gun went silent after three shots. Mine was an old push-pull type with a loose rubber seal, so I had to push the rod all the way down first and then pour, and the water bubbled out of the seam halfway through, cool on the back of my hand.

When Gezi shouted start, the battle began. Binzi rushed out first, and before he had run two steps, Lili, hiding behind the door block, hit him in the chest, and a big dark patch spread across his white T-shirt. Binzi refused to accept it and circled behind the utility pole to shoot back, but his stream went crooked and soaked Grandma Zhang, who had come out to collect laundry. He bowed again and again and even dropped his gun.

Fatty covered me. His gun was big and could shoot two meters, but it filled slowly. We pushed forward together, and I slipped around the corner of the wall to fire two shots at the back of Gezi. He turned and chased me. I dived between the sheets hung out to dry. Water drops hit the sheets like a light rain. I spun around inside the sheet, and through the soaked cloth I saw Gezi standing there unable to find me, and I laughed out loud. The laugh gave me away, and I took a burst right through the sheet.

By the fourth round all six of us were soaked. Water beads hung on the lenses of Fatty. He took them off to wipe them, put them back, and the water ran down again, so he simply stopped wiping. The duck gun of A Zhe ran dry. He held the empty gun down into the bucket, and after a long press only a little water got in, and we all squatted on the ground laughing.

When the father of A Zhe came home from work and saw a lane full of dripping children, he did not scold anyone. He carried out a watermelon chilled on ice and said whoever put the gun away first would eat first. Six guns clattered into the plastic basket at once. We sat on the doorsteps eating watermelon, our clothes stuck to our backs, and the cool wind raised little bumps on our skin. The cicadas kept singing. Gezi wiped his mouth and said the fight would continue tomorrow. I hugged my push-pull gun and nodded, thinking what a long afternoon this was, long enough to remember for years.