守摊那一天

方小禾被选成游园会的志愿者，负责看套圈摊。消息是上周五放学的路上知道的，班主任拍了拍她的肩膀，说信任她。她当时愣在原地，书包带子攥出了褶子，回家一路都在练习怎么递圈：双手捧着，递出去，说请拿好。为了对得起这份信任，六一前一天放学她留到最后，帮教室里挂彩带、挪桌椅，把黑板上那行欢庆六一的粉笔字描了一遍又一遍，描到笔画又黑又亮才满意。彩带是她扶着梯子让男生挂的，最高的那串气球挂得有点歪，她仰着脖子看了半天，记在心里。

六一当天九点，她站到走廊的桌子后面，十几个灌了彩色水的瓶子在地上摆成三排，太阳照过来，红一块蓝一块，亮得晃眼。她的工作是发圈、收圈、给套中的同学发奖券。排队的同学比她高半头，她得踮着一点脚递圈。有人一圈就中，她喊一声好，声音比谁都大；有人三个圈全扔飞了，蹲在地上不肯起来，她跑过去把圈捡回来，说再来一次，我帮你数着。一个一年级的小娃娃够不着投掷线，她搬来一个小凳子让他站上去，小娃娃的圈歪歪斜斜落在蓝瓶子头上，全场欢呼，小娃娃蹦得比她高，她自己也跟着蹦，两个人撞了一下膝盖都不觉得疼。只有那个瓶子她一直没好意思动：它摆得有点歪，她趁没人注意把它往正了推了推，又心虚地回头看了一圈。

一上午她递出去一百多个圈，嗓子喊哑了，水都没顾上喝一口，自己一次都没玩。夹弹珠的摊在隔壁教室飘出彩纸的味道，拍皮球的哨子一声一声，她都听见了，脚也痒过，可桌子后面离不开人。中午散场，奖品桌收摊前，她帮桌后的同学盖章盖到手酸，同桌用胳膊肘捅捅她：你也去挑一样。她捏着中午补发给她的两张奖券，在铅笔盒和书签之间选了书签，书签是树叶形的，压着一小枝真正的桂花。

回家路上，她把书签别在书包带上，风一吹，书签轻轻点头。走廊上那串歪气球后来被风吹得更歪了，可方小禾觉得那是全校最顺眼的一串。她跟书签说，明年她还守摊，不过要提前给自己留两个圈。

The Day I Ran the Game Stand

Fang Xiaohe was picked as a volunteer for the garden games, in charge of the ring toss stand. She learned it on the way home from school last Friday, when her homeroom teacher patted her shoulder and said she was trusted. She froze on the spot, her backpack strap wrinkled in her grip, and the whole walk home she practiced how to hand out the ring: hold it with both hands, offer it, say here you are. To live up to that trust, she stayed late after school the day before, helping hang streamers and move desks in the classroom, tracing the chalk line Happy June First on the blackboard again and again until the strokes were black and bright enough to satisfy her. She held the ladder while a boy hung the streamers, and the highest string of balloons went up a little crooked; she craned her neck looking at it for a long time and filed it away in her heart.

At nine on Children's Day morning she took her place behind the table in the corridor. More than a dozen bottles filled with colored water stood on the ground in three rows, and when the sun came over, red here and blue there, they glittered so

bright it hurt the eyes. Her job was handing out rings, collecting them, and giving tickets to anyone who scored. The kids in line were half a head taller than her, so she had to rise on her toes to pass the ring. When someone scored on the first throw, she shouted yes, louder than anyone; when someone flung all three rings away and squatted on the ground refusing to get up, she ran over, picked the rings up, and said try again, I'll count for you. A first grader could not reach the throwing line, so she carried over a little stool for him to stand on. His ring landed crooked but true on the head of the blue bottle, the whole corridor cheered, and the little boy jumped higher than she did. She jumped too, and their knees knocked without either feeling the pain. Only that bottle she kept meaning to fix: it stood a little crooked, and when nobody was looking she nudged it straight, then guiltily glanced around.

All morning she handed out more than a hundred rings, her voice went hoarse from shouting, she never got a drink of water, and she never played a single round herself. The marble-picking stand next door drifted over the smell of colored paper, and the whistle at the ball-bouncing station went tweet tweet, and she heard it all, and her feet itched too, but the table could not be left. At noon the games ended, and before the prize table packed up she helped the kids behind it stamp cards until her wrist ached. Her deskmate nudged her with an elbow: go pick something for yourself too. Holding the two tickets handed to her at midday as her due, she chose a bookmark between a pencil case and a bookmark - a leaf-shaped one with a real sprig of osmanthus pressed inside.

On the way home she pinned the bookmark to her backpack strap, and in the wind it nodded gently. That crooked string of balloons in the corridor had blown even crookeder by then, but Fang Xiaohe thought it was the nicest-looking string in the whole school. She told the bookmark that next year she would run the stand again - only this time she would save two rings for herself in advance.