秃鹤得到的掌声

六一文艺会演快开场的时候，我的手心在出汗。我们班演课本剧，我演一个没有台词的士兵，站在最后一排。上台前，我想起上周读完的《草房子》，想起里面的秃鹤。

秃鹤是桑桑的同学，脑袋光得能照出光来。大家喊他秃鹤，他讨厌这个外号。他戴过帽子，又被逼着摘掉。广播操比赛上他故意出岔子，把全班级都拖了后腿，大家都生他的气。可到了学校文艺会演，他在大戏里演一个兵，那颗被嘲笑了很多年的光头，反倒成了台上最合适的东西。幕布落下来的时候，全场都在喊他的名字。

我对着镜子看自己：不就是一个没台词的兵吗，怕什么。秃鹤被嘲笑了那么多年，都敢在台上站得稳稳的，我只要站在最后一排，把枪举好就行。

那天我们的演出很成功。谢幕时，我听见台下有人喊我的名字，是我妈妈。回家的路上我又想起《草房子》。那本书里，没有哪个孩子身上不带着东西：桑桑脖子上长了怪疮，疼得直冒汗，爸爸骑着自行车带他到处看病，车轮一次次陷进芦苇荡的泥里；纸月那么安静，却要跟着外婆离开，桑桑站在河边，看载她的船越行越远。每个人都带着一点沉的东西，可他们照样把戏演下去，把日子过下去。

书里镇上的老医生用烧红的火针去烫桑桑的疮，桑桑咬着牙没哭，他爸爸把脸扭过去。我想，换成我，我敢不敢咬牙。秃鹤敢。他站在台上的样子，和桑桑挨火针的样子，是同一种敢。

明天是我六年级最后一个儿童节。我不想许什么大愿望。我就想演出那天，像秃鹤站在台上那样，站在最后一排，认认真真把那杆枪举起来，举到幕布落下来为止。

The Applause Bald Crane Received

Backstage before the Children's Day show, my palms were sweating. Our class was doing a play, and I played a soldier with no lines, standing in the last row. Before going on, I thought of Grass House, the book I had finished last week, and of Bald Crane.

Bald Crane was one of Sangsang's classmates, with a head so bald it seemed to shine. Everyone called him Bald Crane, and he hated the nickname. He once wore a cap, but was made to take it off. At the mass calisthenics contest he deliberately messed up and dragged the whole class down, and everyone was angry with him. But at the school arts show, he played a soldier in the big play, and that bald head everyone had teased for years turned out to be the most fitting thing on stage. When the curtain fell, the whole hall was shouting his name.

I looked at myself in the mirror: so I am just a soldier with no lines, what is there to fear? Bald Crane had been laughed at for years and still stood steady on the

stage. All I had to do was stand in the last row and hold my rifle up straight.

Our show went well that day. At the curtain call, someone downstairs shouted my name. It was my mother. On the way home I thought of Grass House again. In that book, no child walks without carrying something: a strange boil grew on Sangsang's neck, aching until he broke into sweat, and his father took him from clinic to clinic on a bicycle, the wheels sinking into the mud of the reed marshes again and again; quiet Zhiyue had to leave with her grandmother, and Sangsang stood by the river and watched the boat that carried her grow smaller. Everyone carries something heavy, yet they still act their parts and live their days.

In the book, the old doctor in town burned the boil with a red-hot needle. Sangsang clenched his teeth and did not cry, and his father turned his face away. I wondered: would I dare to clench my teeth? Bald Crane dared. The way he stood on stage and the way Sangsang took the hot needle were the same kind of daring.

Tomorrow is my last Children's Day in sixth grade. I do not want to wish for anything big. I only want that day on stage, to stand in the last row the way Bald Crane stood, and to hold that rifle up with all my heart.

芦苇荡里的自行车

《草房子》我读了两遍。第一遍喜欢秃鹤在台上演兵、全场喊他名字那段；第二遍放不下的是桑桑生病那段。

桑桑脖子上长了包，疼。镇上的医生摇头，爸爸就推起自行车，带他过芦苇荡去看另一个医生。芦苇荡的路窄，车轮陷进泥里，父子俩下来推，泥水溅了一裤腿。到了，医生用烧红的火针去烫那个包，桑桑咬着牙，一声没哭。他爸爸把脸扭到一边去。后来包慢慢消了，桑桑光着脚走在寺门口，说要去看 Bell 油，谁也不知道他是不是真的不怕疼。

书里还有一件事我总想起来：秃鹤在文艺会演里演兵。之前全校都嫌他，广播操比赛他故意捣乱，大家不跟他玩。可那场戏演完，人们只记得台上那个兵演得好。桑桑的病好了以后，也站在油麻地的小学门口，看纸月坐的船走远。纸月转学了，她走的那天，桑桑没有追，也没有喊，就站着。船变小，变成一个小黑点，他回去了。

这三个场景在我脑子里串成了一条路。秃鹤从被人笑，到被人喊名字；桑桑从怕疼，到挨火针不哭；纸月从一起上学，到船变成小黑点。他们谁也没有等谁来安排，都是自己把那一关走过去的。

今年儿童节，爸爸照例问我想要什么。玩具、球鞋、游戏机，往年的答案都在这几样里打转。今年我说：想跟你再去走一次芦苇荡。我家附近没有芦苇荡，只有江边那条长长的堤。去年我摔破过膝盖，是爸爸背我回去的，他的背没有书里桑桑爸爸的背那么宽，可也是一步也没有停。

儿童节一年一次，六年级的这一次过完，小学就完了。《草房子》里桑桑他们最后也各自散了。我想，散的时候能不能像纸月走那天一样安静，像桑桑挨火针一样不哭，像秃鹤站在台上一样，让人记得我演过的那个兵。

晚上我把书从书架上抽出来，又放回去，换了个位置，让它正面朝外。这样每天拿作业本的时候都能看见它。草房子会旧，会倒，书里那些孩子却不会。

The Bicycle in the Reed Marsh

I read Grass House twice. The first time I liked the part where Bald Crane played the soldier and the whole hall shouted his name. The second time I could not stop thinking about Sangsang's illness.

A lump grew on Sangsang's neck and hurt. The town doctor shook his head, so his father pushed a bicycle and took him through the reed marsh to see another doctor. The path in the marsh was narrow, the wheels sank into the mud, and the two of them got off and pushed, mudwater spattering their trouser legs. When they arrived, the doctor burned the lump with a red-hot needle. Sangsang clenched his teeth and did not make a sound. His father turned his face aside. Later the lump slowly went down, and Sangsang walked barefoot past the temple gate, saying he wanted to see the bell oil. Nobody knew whether he was truly not afraid of pain.

There is another part of the book I keep returning to: Bald Crane as the soldier in the arts show. Before that, the whole school disliked him. He had sabotaged the calisthenics contest on purpose, and nobody played with him. But after that play, people only remembered how well the soldier on stage acted. After Sangsang got well, he also stood at the gate of Youma Ground primary school and watched the boat carrying Zhiyue go away. Zhiyue transferred schools. On the day she left, Sangsang did not run after her and did not call out. He just stood there. The boat grew small, became a little black dot, and he went back.

These three scenes strung together in my mind into one road. Bald Crane went from being laughed at to being cheered by name; Sangsang went from fearing pain to taking the hot needle without crying; Zhiyue went from walking to school together to becoming a black dot on the water. None of them waited for someone to arrange things. Each walked through their own pass by themselves.

This Children's Day, my father asked me as usual what I wanted. Toys, sneakers, a game console, the answers in past years all circled among those. This year I said: I want to walk the reed marsh road with you once more. There is no reed marsh near my home, only the long embankment by the river. Last year I scraped my knee open, and my father carried me home on his back. His back is not as wide as Sangsang's father's

back in the book, but it never stopped for a single step either.

Children's Day comes once a year, and when this sixth-grade one is over, primary school is over. In Grass House, Sangsang and the others all parted ways in the end. I wonder whether, when we part, we can be as quiet as the day Zhiyue left, as unweeping as Sangsang under the hot needle, and as Bald Crane on stage, so that people remember the soldier I played.

At night I pulled the book off the shelf and put it back in a different spot, cover facing out, so I can see it every time I take out my homework books. Grass houses grow old and fall down, but the children inside the book do not.

船变小成一个黑点之后

《草房子》里我最怕的一段，是纸月走。纸月每天走很远的路来上学，后来她跟着外婆走了，桑桑站在河边，看那条船越走越远，最后变成一个小黑点。书里没有写桑桑说了什么，他什么也没说。

我读这段的时候是五月，离我们的最后一个六一没几天。我们班已经有两个人转走了，一个去了外地，一个换了学区。走的那天在教室，书包拉链一拉，人就跟着家长出去了，连一句完整的话都没来得及说。我想，桑桑当时大概也是这样的：不是不想说，是话到嘴边，船已经开了。

书里另外两个场景，我读的时候总跟这段放在一起想。秃鹤在文艺会演里演兵，幕布落下，全场第一次齐声喊他的名字；桑桑挨火针，疼得攥紧拳头，他爸爸把脸扭过去。这三个场景合在一起，像油麻地小学给每个孩子发的三样东西：一样疼，一样掌声，一样没说出口的再见。

儿童节那天，我们排毕业节目。老师让我们每人说一句给同学的话。轮到我，我站起来，看着对面坐了六年的座位，说出来的却是：谢谢你借我的那块橡皮，我一直没还。全班笑了，我也笑，笑完心里有点酸。原来告别的话可以这么小，小得像一块橡皮。

散会以后我一个人绕着操场走了一圈。六年级了，再过两个月，我们也会像纸月一样，各坐各的船走掉。我不知道以后还会不会记得秃鹤那样的同学：班里也有一个总被起外号的男生，我以前跟着笑过，现在想起来脸有点热。《草房子》让我想起他。我想在毕业前跟他说一句，以前那样喊你，不对。

书里桑桑最后光着脚站在寺门口，像把什么疼的事都放下了。我想，我们这一批人走的时候，也带上这三样东西吧：挨过的疼，给过别人的掌声，还有那些趁船还没开就说出口的再见。

After the Boat Became a Black Dot

The part of Grass House I dread most is Zhiyue's leaving. Zhiyue walked a long way to school every day, and later she left with her grandmother. Sangsang stood by the river and watched the boat go farther and farther until it became a little black dot. The book does not say what Sangsang said. He said nothing.

I read this part in May, a few days before our last Children's Day. Two kids in our class have already transferred away, one to another city, one to another school district. On the day they left, it happened in the classroom: a backpack zipper pulled shut, and the person followed a parent out, without even time for one whole sentence. I think Sangsang must have been like that: not that he did not want to speak, but that the words reached his lips and the boat had already cast off.

I always think of the other two scenes in the book together with this one. Bald Crane played the soldier in the arts show, and when the curtain fell, the whole hall shouted his name in unison for the first time; Sangsang took the hot needle, so painful his fists clenched, and his father turned his face away. Put together, these three scenes are like three things Youma Ground school handed to every child: one pain, one applause, one goodbye never spoken.

On Children's Day we rehearsed a graduation program. Our teacher asked each of us to say one sentence to a classmate. When it was my turn, I stood up, looked at the seat across from me that I had shared for six years, and what came out was: thank you for that eraser you lent me, I never gave it back. The whole class laughed, and I laughed too, and after laughing my heart stung a little. So a farewell can be this small, as small as an eraser.

After the rehearsal I walked one lap around the playground alone. We are in sixth grade; in two months we will leave like Zhiyue, each on our own boat. I do not know if I will still remember classmates like Bald Crane. There is a boy in our class who always gets nicknames, and I used to laugh along. Now my face warms when I think of it. Grass House made me remember him. Before graduation, I want to tell him: the way we called you that was wrong.

At the end of the book, Sangsang stands barefoot at the temple gate, as if he has set down something that used to hurt. When we leave, let us carry those three things too: the pain we took, the applause we gave others, and the goodbyes said before the boat casts off.