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.

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