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.