苹果树等得人心里甜

《苹果树上的外婆》我是一口气读完的，晚上九点上床，十一点半开小夜灯把最后几章看完。合上书，眼前留下的不是海盗船，也不是牛仔竞技场，是那棵苹果树。安迪的外婆去世以后，有一天，外婆竟然出现在他家苹果树上，从树枝中间往下跳，裙角挂在叶子上，一落地就拉着安迪去做那些外婆们从来不让大人同意的事。我读到这里忍不住笑，笑完又有点想哭，因为安迪等这棵树，等了好多年。

书里写那棵树的时候总是很安静。风吹叶子，苹果掉下来，安迪坐在树杈上想心事。外婆在树上出现，是在安迪最孤单的时候——他没有外婆，同桌有，邻居有，别人都有。我忽然想起我们小区门口也有一棵老苹果树，春天开一树白花，秋天结的果子又小又硬，没人摘。小时候在外婆家，每到傍晚，外婆就站在院子那棵树下喊我乳名，喊两声，我应了，她就转身进屋端饭。后来外婆不在了，那棵树我也好多年没见过。

安迪后来在邻居家认识了真的老外婆，帮她做事，陪她的孙子玩，慢慢明白外婆不只在想象里，也在伸手就能够着的地方。书里分苹果那段我记得清楚：安迪把最大的苹果留给别人，自己拿小的，手伸出去的时候有点舍不得，伸出去以后反而松快。我读到这儿想起去年秋天，妈妈买了两斤苹果放果盘，我挑了一个最大的，咬了一口很甜，忽然想到要是外婆在，我一定把这个递过去。苹果当时就吃不下了，甜也变成了别的味道。

现在路过小区那棵苹果树，我会放慢脚步。树不认识我，可它站在那儿，像替我记着喊我回家的那个声音。安迪有他的苹果树，我也有。书里说，想念一个人的时候，那个人会在你心里长成一棵树。我信。秋天它结果，小小的，硬硬的，摘一个擦擦咬一口，心里就甜一下。外婆的苹果，原来一直留着等我。

The Apple Tree Waits, and the Heart Grows Sweet

I finished Grandma on the Apple Tree in one sitting: into bed at nine, nightlight on, last chapters done by half past eleven. When I closed the book, what stayed before my eyes was not the pirate ship or the cowboy ring but the apple tree. After Andy's grandma died, one day she appeared, of all places, in his apple tree, jumping down through the branches, her skirt hem catching on the leaves, landing and pulling Andy off to do all the things grown-ups never let grandmothers do. I laughed reading it, and the laugh turned into something close to tears, because Andy had waited for that tree for years.

The book always writes the tree quietly. Wind in the leaves, apples falling, Andy sitting in the fork of a branch thinking his thoughts. The grandma appears in the tree at Andy's loneliest hour: he has no grandma, the boy at the next desk does, the neighbors do, everyone else does. I suddenly remembered the old apple tree at the gate of our compound, white flowers all over it in spring, small hard fruit in autumn

that nobody picked. When I was little at my grandmother's house, every evening she stood under the tree in the yard and called my pet name; if I answered to the second call, she turned and went in to bring out dinner. Then she was gone, and I have not seen that tree for years.

Later Andy meets a real old grandmother next door, helps her with her chores, plays with her grandsons, and slowly understands that a grandmother lives not only in imagination but within reach of a hand. I remember clearly the part where they divide apples: Andy leaves the biggest one for someone else and takes a small one himself; his hand hesitates going out, and after it goes out he feels light. There I recalled last autumn: Mom bought two jin of apples and set them in the bowl; I picked the biggest, bit into it, it was sweet, and out of nowhere I thought, if Grandma were here I would hand this one to her. The apple could not be eaten after that; the sweetness had turned into another taste.

Now when I pass the apple tree at our gate I slow my steps. The tree does not know me, yet it stands there keeping the voice that called me home. Andy has his apple tree; I have mine. The book says that when you miss someone, that person grows into a tree inside you. I believe it. In autumn it fruits, small and hard; pick one, wipe it, take a bite, and the heart goes sweet for a moment. Grandma's apples, it turns out, were kept all along, waiting for me.

把最大的那瓣递给谁

《苹果树上的外婆》里，安迪先有一个想象中的外婆，会钻苹果树、会带他上天入地；后来他又有一个真的邻居外婆，库丝克老外婆，耳朵有点背，围裙上有面粉，烤的饼有时糊边。两个外婆，安迪都爱。但最打动我的不是想象中的外婆，是邻居这一段：安迪一开始嫌库丝克家烦，后来替她拎菜篮，听她讲孙子，陪她那两个爱抢东西的孙子玩，慢慢地，他家苹果树上的苹果，成了他送给库丝克老外婆的第一样东西。

书里分苹果的地方我读了三遍。安迪把苹果递给老外婆，自己留一个小的，他心里有过一秒钟的不情愿，脸上没露出来。老外婆把苹果掰成两瓣，最大的那瓣推回给他。那一瓣苹果在桌上放着，谁也没急着吃。我读到这里把书扣在腿上，因为我想起了我们同桌。上学期我忘带水果，她把她那个苹果在课桌底下掰成两半，大的那半推过来，嘴上说的是我不爱吃苹果。她明明爱吃，每天书包侧兜都插一个。当时我只说了声谢谢，现在想起来，那瓣苹果跟书里那瓣一模一样，推过来的时候谁都没客气，也没人觉得自己了不起。

安迪还教库丝克老外婆的孙子们玩苹果树下的游戏，一人一个苹果，咬之前要转三圈。书里写他们玩得满头汗，苹果最后没吃完，互相交换着咬。我合上书想，分享原来不是老师讲的那种大道理，是转三圈、是换一口咬、是把大的那瓣推回去。这些动作小得看不见，可它们让安迪从

没有外婆变成有两个外婆。

隔天我在水果袋里放了两个苹果。课间我把大的那个递给同桌，她愣了一下。我说我今天的苹果不爱吃。她笑了，接过去在课桌底下掰成两半，还是把大的那半推给我。我们俩谁也没说谢谢。书里说得对，分享这件事，说破就没意思了，苹果树不谢风，风也不谢苹果树。

Who Gets the Biggest Slice

In Grandma on the Apple Tree, Andy first has an imaginary grandma who can dive into an apple tree and take him anywhere under the sky; then he gets a real neighbor grandmother, old Mrs. Kusk, a little deaf, flour on her apron, her baked cakes sometimes burnt at the edge. Andy loves both grandmothers. But what moved me most was not the imagined one; it was the neighbor chapters. At first Andy finds the Kusk household a nuisance. Then he carries their grocery basket, listens to her talk about her grandchildren, plays with her two grabby grandsons, and little by little the apples on his family's tree become the first thing he gives to old Mrs. Kusk.

I read the apple-sharing scene three times. Andy hands an apple to the old woman and keeps a small one for himself; for one second he is unwilling inside, and it never shows on his face. She breaks her apple into two halves and pushes the bigger half back to him. That half sits on the table, and neither of them hurries to eat it. I closed the book over my lap there, because I thought of my deskmate. Last term I forgot my fruit, and under the desk she broke her apple in two and slid the bigger half over, saying out loud that she does not like apples. She does like them; every day one sticks out of her bag's side pocket. All I said then was thanks. Now I see that half was exactly like the half in the book: pushed over without ceremony, and nobody thought they had done anything great.

Andy also teaches the old woman's grandsons a game under the apple tree: one apple each, and you must spin around three times before the first bite. They play until their heads steam, the apples never get finished, and they trade bites of each other's fruit. Closing the book I thought: sharing is not the big lesson teachers talk about. It is the three spins, the swapped bite, the bigger half pushed back. These gestures are too small to see, yet they turn Andy from a boy with no grandmother into a boy with two.

The next day I put two apples in my fruit bag. At break I handed the bigger one to my deskmate, and she froze for a second. I said I do not like today's apples. She laughed, took it, broke it in two under the desk, and pushed the bigger half back to me. Neither of us said thanks. The book is right: say sharing out loud and it loses its meaning. The apple tree does not thank the wind, and the wind does not thank the

apple tree.

我家阳台那盆苹果苗

读完《苹果树上的外婆》，我在学校周记本上写读后感，写了三行就卡住了。安迪的外婆在苹果树上出现，带他去坐旋转木马、去开汽车、去当牛仔，全是大人不许小孩干的事。我抄了一句书里的话：外婆从树上跳下来，裙子上挂着叶子。抄完不知道下面接什么。晚上吃饭我跟妈妈说，要是我家有苹果树就好了。妈妈说阳台那盆苹果苗是你爸种的，种了两年，一片叶子都没多。

隔天我跑去阳台看那盆苗。它种在一个旧陶盆里，枝子细得像筷子，顶上几片叶子，确实不像能结果的样子。可我把书里安迪的样子想起来——安迪对着苹果树说话，把心事说给树听。我也开始对着这盆苗说话。上学前往盆里看一眼，说今天数学测验；放学回来说食堂的苹果是面的，不好吃，书里的苹果看着就甜。说的时候我有点不好意思，声音压得很低，像怕邻居听见。可是说完心里顺当，跟安迪在树杈上坐了一下午那种顺当一样。

书里安迪把苹果分给邻居外婆，我学着做了件小事：把阳台上熟过头的一个苹果洗了，给楼下看车的爷爷送去。爷爷掰了一半还我，说甜的。我举着那半苹果上楼，忽然想，安迪要是有一盆这么小的苗，他也会跟它说话吧。树不等大小，等你把它当回事。我想象有一天这盆苗长高，枝叶中间探出一个系围裙的影子，那是我想像里的外婆，她不说话，就冲我笑。

后来那篇读后感我重写了一遍，不再抄书里的句子，写的是这盆苗：它不会从树上跳下一个外婆，可它让我敢把想念说出口。妈妈说我写得不像三年级的，像五年级的。我把阳台那盆苗挪到光照最足的位置，浇了水。书里说想念会长成一棵树，我家这盆还小，那就先当一盆草养着，根在土里，一天比一天稳。等它结果那年，我把第一颗留给楼下的爷爷。

The Apple Sapling on Our Balcony

After finishing Grandma on the Apple Tree, I sat down to write my reading response in the school journal and got stuck after three lines. Andy's grandma appears in the apple tree and takes him on the carousel, behind the wheel, out to be a cowboy - all the things grown-ups forbid. I copied one sentence from the book: the grandma jumped down from the tree with leaves caught in her skirt. Then I did not know what came next. At dinner I told Mom it would be something if our family had an apple tree. Mom said the apple sapling on the balcony was planted by Dad, two years ago, and it has not added a single leaf.

The next day I went to the balcony to look at it. It sat in an old clay pot, its stem thin as a chopstick, a few leaves at the top, plainly not the sort of plant that

bears fruit. But I remembered what Andy does - he talks to his apple tree and tells it what is on his mind. I started talking to this sapling. Before school I glanced into the pot and told it there was a math quiz today; after school I told it the apples in the canteen were mealy and bad, while the apples in the book look sweet just to look at. I felt embarrassed saying it, keeping my voice low as if the neighbors might hear. But afterward my chest felt clear, the same clearness Andy must feel sitting in a tree fork all afternoon.

In the book Andy shares apples with the neighbor grandmother, so I tried one small thing of my own: I washed an overripe apple from the balcony and carried it down to the old man who minds the bikes downstairs. He broke off half and handed it back, saying it was sweet. I climbed the stairs holding that half apple and suddenly thought: if Andy had a pot this small, he would talk to it too. A tree does not wait for you to be big; it waits for you to take it seriously. I imagine the sapling growing tall one day, and out of its leaves leaning a figure in an apron - the grandmother of my imagining. She says nothing; she just smiles at me.

In the end I rewrote the reading response. Instead of copying sentences from the book, I wrote about this pot: no grandmother will jump down from it, but it gave me the courage to say my missing out loud. Mom said it did not read like third grade, it read like fifth. I moved the pot to the brightest spot on the balcony and watered it. The book says missing someone grows into a tree. Ours is still small, so for now I will keep it like a pot of grass, roots in the soil, steadier day by day. The year it fruits, the first one goes to the old man downstairs.