

爷爷的刨花卷

开学前一周，妈妈要带我去商店买文具盒。爷爷摆摆手说，别买，我给你做一个。我不太相信。商店里的文具盒会发光，还会自动弹开，爷爷做的木头盒子能比得上吗？

第二天一早，爷爷从柴房搬出一块存了多年的柏木板，放在院子里的长凳上。他先蹲下来看木纹，像看一张地图。接着他拉起墨斗，线绳一弹，木板上多了一条笔直的黑线。锯子咔咔响过，木板分成四块。爷爷拿起刨子，身子微微前倾，一推一拉，木屑打着卷儿飞出来，落在他的裤脚上，也落了一地。那些刨花薄薄的、亮亮的，卷起来像一圈圈糖纸。我蹲在旁边看入了迷，一连看了一个下午。

爷爷做盒子做了三次。第一块板刨到一半，他说纹理不对，拆了。第二块板拼到一半，他说接缝太宽，又拆了。第三次，他整整干了一个傍晚，才把四块板拼成一个方方的盒子，安上两只小小的铜合页。盒盖上还刻了一朵云，云的尾巴卷卷的，像他年轻时画过的样子。

最让我难忘的是刻名字那天。爷爷戴上老花镜，用一把小刻刀在盒子正面刻我的名字。他一笔一划刻得很慢，刻完还往刻痕里蘸了一点清漆，名字立刻发亮了。爷爷把盒子举起来，用拇指把四个角又摸了一遍，确认没有毛刺，才放进我的新书包。

第二天到学校，我把木头文具盒摆在桌角。同桌先看见，接着前后桌都围了过来。有人问，这盒子哪里买的？我说，我爷爷做的。有人摸了摸盒盖上的云，说比商店里的还神气。我打开盒子拿铅笔，发现里面多了一块崭新的橡皮，是爷爷悄悄放进去的。

放学回家，我把盒子放在桌上，给爷爷看。爷爷笑了，脸上的皱纹一条条挤在一起。他说，木头盒子用久了颜色会变深，越用越好看。现在我每天用它。盒子的边角真的越来越圆，木头的颜色越来越深，刻上去的名字在灯光下发亮。每次打开盒子，我好像又看见院子里那些打着卷儿的刨花，看见爷爷弯着腰，一推，一拉。

Grandpa's Wood Shavings

A week before school started, Mom wanted to take me to the store for a pencil case. Grandpa waved his hand and said, do not buy one, I will make it for you. I was not sure. Pencil cases in the store glowed and popped open by themselves. How could a wooden box compare with them?

Early the next morning, Grandpa carried out a cypress board he had kept for years and laid it on the long bench in the yard. He squatted down to study the grain, the way one studies a map. Then he stretched the ink line, snapped it, and a straight black line appeared on the board. The saw sang its quick song, and the board became four pieces. Grandpa took the hand plane, leaned slightly forward, and pushed and pulled. Wood shavings curled out, landing on his trousers and covering the ground. They were thin and shiny, curled up like rings of candy wrappers. I squatted beside

him, fascinated, and watched the whole afternoon.

Grandpa made the box three times. The first board was half planed when he said the grain was wrong, and he took it apart. The second board was half assembled when he said the joints were too wide, and he took it apart again. The third time, he worked the whole evening before the four boards became a square box with two small brass hinges. On the lid he carved a cloud, its tail curling like the clouds he used to draw when he was young.

What I remember most is the day he carved my name. Grandpa put on his reading glasses and used a small carving knife to cut my name on the front of the box. Stroke by stroke he worked slowly, then brushed clear lacquer into the grooves, and the name began to shine. He lifted the box, ran his thumb over the four corners to make sure there were no splinters, and only then put it into my new schoolbag.

At school the next day, I set the wooden pencil case on the corner of my desk. My deskmate spotted it first, then the rows around us gathered round. Someone asked where I bought it. I said my grandpa made it. Someone else touched the cloud on the lid and said it was grander than any store box. When I opened it to take out my pencils, I found a brand new eraser inside. Grandpa had slipped it in quietly.

After school I placed the box on the table for Grandpa to see. He laughed, and the lines on his face crowded together. He said a wooden box grows darker with use, and the more you use it, the better it looks. I use it every day now. The corners really have grown rounder, the wood has grown deeper in color, and my carved name shines under the lamp. Every time I open the box, I seem to see those curling shavings in the yard again, and Grandpa bent over his work, pushing, pulling.

存了三十年的柏木板

那块柏木板在我家柴房顶上躺了三十年。是我爹留下的。当年他给我打书桌，多开了一张板，说留着，以后总有用处。我留着，一留就是三十年。板子不响，也不坏，木纹里的油气一年比一年足。孙子开学前闹着要买会弹开的铁皮文具盒，我夜里翻来覆去，想起那块板。第二天一早，我把它请了下来。

擦净板子，我先蹲着看木纹。做木器的人都知道，木头是有脾气的，顺着它的性子来，它才服帖。墨斗线弹下去，锯口咬住黑线，咔咔地走。刨子是我结婚那年我爹置的，铁刨刃磨薄了一层又一层，推起来却比新的还听话。刨花一卷一卷飞出来，落在脚边。我在院子里刨木头，孙子蹲在旁边数刨花，数到六十七就不数了，改帮我把刨花拢成一堆。他说爷爷你刨得慢。慢有慢的道理。快刀劈不开木头的筋骨，慢刨子才能把日子推平。

盒子拼了三次才成。头一次接缝宽，第二次纹理别不过劲，第三次我干到天黑才收工。铜合页是镇上五金店配的，小小两片，拧上以后盒盖开合不严不松，正好。刻名字那天我戴了老花镜。刻刀走笔画，一笔都不能抖。名字刻深了费木，刻浅了藏不住漆。刻完，我用棉签蘸清漆，一点一点填进笔画缝里，名字立时亮了，像贴在盒子上的一小片灯。

孙子背着书包出门，走到院门口又回头，把文具盒从书包侧兜里掏出来举了举，像是在说，爷爷，我带着它。我点头，让他走。那一整天我在院子里坐着，总觉得木头盒子在孩子书包里一磕一碰地响。

傍晚孙子回来，一进门就把盒子掏出来，说全班都看了，同桌摸那朵刻的云，说比商店里的神气。他说完跑去洗手吃饭。我把盒子拿过来，对着光看那四个角。角上有一道新磕的小印子，不碍事，木头以后会把它包起来。我爹当年说，木头东西是活的，人用它，它也用人的一生慢慢回礼。如今这盒子替我陪着孙子念书，一天一天，颜色会越用越深。柴房顶上还剩下半块板，我想好了，等小孙女开学，再做一只。

The Cypress Board Kept for Thirty Years

That cypress board had rested on top of the woodshed in our yard for thirty years. My father left it behind. When he built my desk long ago, he cut one board extra and said, keep it, it will find its use someday. I kept it, and thirty years passed. The board never warped and never cracked; the oil in its grain grew richer year by year. The night before my grandson started school, he kept asking for a tin pencil case that springs open. I tossed in bed and thought of that board. Early next morning I brought it down.

I wiped the board clean and squatted to read its grain. Everyone who works with wood knows that timber has a temper; follow its nature and it will follow yours. I snapped the ink line, let the saw bite the black line, and cut. The hand plane was one my father gave me the year I married; its iron blade had been ground thinner year after year, yet it pushed more smoothly than a new one ever could. Shavings curled out in rolls at my feet. My grandson squatted beside me counting them, stopped at sixty-seven, and started gathering them into a pile instead. He said, Grandpa, you plane slowly. Slow has its reasons. A fast blade cannot part the sinew of wood; only a slow plane can smooth a life flat.

The box took three tries. The first joints were too wide; the second grain would not cooperate; the third time I worked until dark. The brass hinges came from the hardware shop in town, two small pieces, and once screwed on, the lid opened and closed neither too tight nor too loose. The day I carved the name, I wore my reading glasses. The knife traced each stroke, and not one stroke could tremble. Carve too deep and you waste the wood; too shallow and the lacquer will not hold. When I

finished, I filled the grooves with clear lacquer on a cotton swab, bit by bit, and the name lit up at once, like a small lamp set into the box.

My grandson left with his schoolbag, walked to the gate, turned back, and lifted the pencil case out of the side pocket as if to say, Grandpa, I am bringing it. I nodded and let him go. All day I sat in the yard, half hearing the wooden box knocking softly inside his bag.

He came back at dusk, pulled the box out at the door, and said the whole class had seen it, that his deskmate touched the carved cloud and called it grander than any shop box. Then he ran off to wash his hands for supper. I took the box and studied its four corners against the light. One corner had a fresh little dent. It did not matter; the wood would grow around it in time. My father used to say that wooden things are alive: people use them, and they repay a whole lifetime slowly. Now this box keeps my grandson company at his studies, day by day, its color deepening with use. Half of the board is still up on the woodshed. I have decided: when my little granddaughter starts school, I will make her one too.

教室里那只木头文具盒

三年级下学期，我们班转来一个男孩。他坐在我斜后方，开学第一天就把文具盒摆在桌角。那不是铁皮盒子，也不是塑料盒子，是一只木头做的文具盒，颜色是浅浅的黄，四只角磨得圆圆的，盒盖上刻着一朵云，云的尾巴卷卷的，云旁边刻着男孩的名字。名字的字缝里填着清漆，在窗边的光里发亮。

我们的教室里，文具盒是有声音的。铁皮盒子啪地弹开，塑料盒子咔哒咔哒，一节课总有响声此起彼伏。可那只木头盒子几乎不出声。它合上的时候很轻，像轻轻合上一本书。有一次它掉在地上，全班都回头，它只闷闷地响了一下，比谁的落地声都老实。

课间，几个同学围过去看。胆大的伸手摸了摸盒盖上的云，说这云刻得真神气。有人问，哪里买的？男孩想了想说，我爷爷做的。大家都不说话了。有人说起自己家谁谁会做木工，说了半句又停住。那节课间，我们好几个人的眼睛都留在那只盒子上，连平时最爱按铁皮盒子开关的同学，也没去按自己的盒子。

班主任巡课的时候也停在他桌边，低头看了看那只盒子，问他，爷爷做的？男孩点头，说爷爷刨了一下午木头，刨花卷了一地，又拿刻刀一笔一笔刻上他的名字。老师直起身，看了看我们全班，没说什么大道理，只说了一句，好好用，别磕着。男孩把盒子往桌角里挪了挪。

后来那只盒子在我们班待了一整个学期。木头的颜色一天比一天深，刻的名字还是亮的。学期末班里办小小展览，展桌上摆着手工作品，男孩把文具盒也摆了上去，旁边立了张小纸条，是他自己写的：我爷爷做的，他今年七十六岁。来看展览的家长站了一圈。我听见有个阿姨说，这

手艺再传下去就好了。男孩站在展桌旁边，腰挺得直直的。

放假那天，男孩把文具盒收进书包最里层。他背起书包走出教室，走到门口又回头看了一眼我们的教室。那只盒子在他书包里，安安静静的，像一小块从院子里带来的木头日子。

The Wooden Pencil Case in Our Classroom

In the second term of Grade Three, a boy transferred into our class. He sat diagonally behind me, and on the first day he set his pencil case on the corner of his desk. It was not tin and not plastic. It was a wooden pencil case, pale yellow, its four corners worn round. On the lid was carved a cloud with a curling tail, and beside the cloud, the boy's name. The grooves of the letters were filled with clear lacquer, and they shone in the light from the window.

Our classroom has its own sounds, made of pencil cases. Tin cases snap open, plastic cases rattle clickety-clack, and all through a lesson the noises rise and fall. But the wooden case was almost silent. When it closed, it closed softly, like a book being shut with care. Once it fell to the floor and the whole class turned around. It gave only one dull knock, the most well-behaved landing sound of them all.

At break, several of us gathered around it. The boldest reached out and touched the cloud on the lid, and said the cloud was carved magnificently. Someone asked where he got it. The boy thought a moment and said, my grandpa made it. Nobody spoke for a while. One child started to say that someone in his family once did carpentry, and stopped halfway. For that whole break, many of our eyes stayed on the box, and even the classmate who loved clicking his tin case open and shut did not touch his own.

Our homeroom teacher paused at his desk during a walkabout, looked down at the box, and asked, your grandpa made it? The boy nodded and said his grandpa planed wood a whole afternoon, shavings curling all over the ground, then carved his name stroke by stroke with a small knife. The teacher straightened up, looked over our whole class, said no grand lesson, only one line: take good care of it, do not dent it. The boy moved the box a little deeper onto his desk.

The wooden case stayed with our class the whole term. Its color deepened day by day, and the carved name stayed bright. At the end of term we held a small class exhibition, and the boy placed the pencil case on the display table with a little card he wrote himself: made by my grandpa, he is seventy-six this year. Parents stood around the table in a circle. I heard a mother say, what a pity if this craft does not pass on. The boy stood beside the table with his back very straight.

On the last day, the boy tucked the pencil case into the innermost pocket of his bag. He swung the bag up and walked out of the classroom, then turned at the door to look back at our room. The box rode inside his bag, quiet as a small piece of yard-and-wood days carried along.