

多年以后，盒子里还亮着一盏灯

搬家那天，我在纸箱最底下，摸到一只旧文具盒。

铁皮上的蓝，褪成了一种说不上来的颜色。

咔哒。拉链锈了，还是开了。

一支笔尖钝了的钢笔先滚出来，像一位退休的老船员。

我拧开笔帽，它干涸多年，却还记得握它的角度。

我把它按在废纸上，划了一下。

不出水。可我的手记得，那年冬天它如何在灯下替我赶路。

盒盖内侧，便签的胶已经失效，纸片却一片没掉。

褪色的字迹里，那四个字还在：想去远方。

旁边的小字也还在：此处风浪大，备好橡皮，备好心情。

我忽然想得起那个夜晚：台灯把光扣在桌上，笔尖在压轴题前打滑，又立住。

想得起灯光照着的范围有多大——一掌，刚好够放下一整个初三。

想得起橡皮屑堆在笔尖旁边，像一场下在桌面上下不完的小雪。

那些夜里写过的字，我以为早忘了。

它们却在我后来的每一次签字、每一次写下自己名字的时候，悄悄到场。

我去了远方，比那张便签写的更远。

我解过的题没有一张留到今天，解题的那股劲却留了下来。

原来文具盒装过的，从来不是笔和纸。

它装的是一段被灯光照亮的坚持，和一支替我走路的笔尖。

还有那个趴在灯圈里、以为全世界都睡了的小孩。

他不知道自己能走多远，只知道明天的课还要听，明天的题还要算。

他就是一天一天地走，把灯走成了自己的一部分。

我把旧笔、旧便签放回盒里，没有扔。

新居的台灯拧开，光扣在桌上，和那年一模一样大。

我坐下来，像回到一张没收拾完的课桌。

盒子放在灯圈边上，安安静静，咔哒上锁。

多年以后我才懂：那盏灯没有熄，它只是搬进了我身体里。

往后每一个需要赶路的夜晚，它都自己亮起来。

Years Later, a Lamp Still Glows in the Case

On moving day, at the bottom of a cardboard box, my hand found an old pencil case.

The blue on its tin had faded into a color I cannot name.

Click. The zipper had rusted, but it opened all the same.

A fountain pen with a dulled tip rolled out first, like a retired old sailor.

I unscrewed its cap; dry for years, it still remembered the angle of my grip.

I pressed it to scrap paper and drew one stroke.

No ink came. But my hand remembered how, on winter nights, it had traveled for me under the lamp.

Inside the lid, the glue on the sticky notes had long failed, yet not one square had fallen.

In the faded handwriting, those four words were still there: I want faraway places.

The small line beside it survived too: heavy swells here, bring spare erasers, bring a steady heart.

Suddenly I could see that night again: the lamp turning its light over the desk, the pen tip slipping before the hardest problem, then planting firm.

I remembered how wide the pool of lamplight was — one hand's-breadth, just enough to hold an entire ninth grade.

I remembered eraser crumbs piled beside the pen tip, like a light snow over the desk that never stopped falling.

The characters written on those nights, I thought I had long forgotten.

Yet at every signature since, every time I write my own name, they quietly show up.

I reached faraway places, farther than that note ever wrote.

Not one problem I solved survives to today, but the stubbornness of solving it does.

So the pencil case never really held pens and paper.

It held a stretch of persistence lit by a lamp, and a pen tip that walked the road for me.

And it held the child hunched inside that ring of light, sure the whole world was asleep.

He had no idea how far he could go; he only knew tomorrow's lessons still had to be heard, tomorrow's problems still had to be solved.

He simply walked day after day, until the lamp became part of himself.

I put the old pen and the old notes back inside. I did not throw them away.

In the new apartment I twist on the desk lamp, and its light falls over the desk, exactly as wide as that year.

I sit down, as if returning to a school desk not yet tidied.

The case rests at the edge of the circle of light, quiet, locked with a click.

Only years later did I understand: that lamp never went out. It simply moved inside me.

Every night from now on that calls for travel, it lights itself.