

换掉旧盒子那天，我翻出一张三年前的纸条

新文具盒到货那天，妈妈把快递放在餐桌上，让我自己拆。我拆开一看，是个深蓝色的布面盒子，三层隔层，拉链亮闪闪的。说实话，我没什么惊喜，只是把旧盒子里的东西一样一样挪过去。挪到一半，我停了一下——我已经有过三个文具盒了，这是第四个。换盒子这件事，好像不知不觉就变成了一个记录我长大的刻度。

一年级时我用的是铁皮盒，双面开合，啪嗒一声特别响。那个盒子陪我到三年级下学期，卡扣坏了，按不紧，上课总在我胳膊底下慢慢张开。妈妈换了个塑料的，单层，轻。五年级上学期，那个塑料盒被我的椅子腿挤扁了，笔从缝里挤出来，滚了一地。班主任递给我一个透明的拉链盒，说将就用。这个透明盒陪了我两年多，笔槽磨得发白，盒盖上贴的小火箭贴纸翘起了边。我一直以为，下一个盒子该是它用旧了、坏了才换。这次才发现，它其实没坏，是我变了：小学一个盒子装十几样东西，彩笔、贴纸、备用橡皮，大半用不上；现在这个新盒子，我只放得下笔、几支常用的和错题标签。东西少了，我反而更顺手。

整理旧盒子时，一张对折的纸条从夹层里抖出来。我捡起来，是三年级的字，歪歪扭扭，上面写着：别丢三落四。那个落字不会写，还用了拼音。我盯着看了很久。三年级的我给自己提了个要求，纸条塞进盒子里，我就再没看过它。可是这两年，我好像慢慢做到了：放学前扫一遍桌面，周末把笔袋倒空清一遍。那个小孩塞进盒子的提醒，一直没离开，只是我过了两年才发现它还在。

我把纸条贴在新盒盖内侧。每天打开盒子都能看见那行歪字和那个拼音。旧盒子我没扔，放在书桌抽屉最里面。有时候拉开抽屉看见它，会想：盒子换了一茬又一茬，铁皮换成塑料，塑料换成透明拉链，再换成现在这个布面的。真正留下来的东西，从一只盒子挪进了另一只盒子。

新盒子用了一个星期，我已经能闭着眼摸到每样东西的位置。旧盒子安静地躺在抽屉里，它装过的那个丢三落四的小孩，好像也一起收进去了。成长大概就是这样：不是哪天突然变了，而是旧东西退场的时候，你才看清自己走了多远。

The Day I Retired My Old Pencil Case, I Found a Note from Three Years Ago

The day my new pencil case arrived, Mom set the parcel on the dining table and told me to open it myself. Inside was a dark blue cloth case with three compartments and a shiny zipper. To be honest, I felt no surprise. I just moved things over from the old case, one by one. Halfway through, I paused. This was my fourth pencil case. Changing cases had quietly become a ruler marking how much I had grown.

In first grade I used a tin case that snapped open on both sides, loud enough to turn heads in class. It stayed with me until the second term of third grade, when its clasp broke and it kept slowly opening under my arm during lessons. Mom replaced it with a light single-layer plastic one. In the first term of fifth grade, my chair leg

crushed that plastic case flat, and pens squeezed out of the crack and rolled all over the floor. Our homeroom teacher handed me a clear zippered case and said it would do. That clear case stayed with me for over two years. Its pen grooves wore white, and the little rocket sticker on the lid curled up at the corners. I had always assumed the next case would come only when this one wore out or broke. This time I realized it was not broken. I had changed. In elementary school one case held a dozen things, markers, stickers, spare erasers, most of them unused. Now the new case fits only pens, a few daily tools, and my mistake tags. With fewer things, I actually work faster.

While emptying the old case, a folded slip of paper fluttered out of the inner pocket. I picked it up. The handwriting was third grade, crooked and unsure: Do not keep losing things. The character for lose was not written correctly; I had used pinyin instead. I stared at it for a long time. The third-grade me had set a rule, tucked it into the case, and I never looked at it again. Yet over these two years I seem to have slowly lived up to it: a quick sweep of the desk before class ends, emptying the pouch on weekends. The reminder that kid tucked away never left. It just took me two years to notice it was still there.

I stuck the note inside the lid of the new case, where I can see those crooked characters and that pinyin every time I open it. I did not throw the old case away. It sits at the back of my desk drawer. Sometimes I catch sight of it and think: cases come and go, tin to plastic, plastic to clear zipper, now to cloth. The things that truly stay have been moved from one case into another.

After a week with the new case, I can find everything inside it with my eyes closed. The old case rests quietly in the drawer, and the careless little kid it once held seems to have been packed inside it too. Growing up is like that. Nothing changes on one sudden day. You only see how far you have walked when the old things take their bow.