

文具盒里的星期五

我是一个铁皮文具盒，住在五年级男生李小满的书包侧袋里。每个星期一早上，小满的妈妈往我肚子里装东西：三支铅笔、一块橡皮、一把塑料尺、一支红笔。到星期五，我肚子里的东西就会变成另一副样子，我来数给你们听：三支铅笔变成两支半，第三支被咬秃了；橡皮被圆规扎了七个洞；尺子断了一根，是我肚子里那根被同桌坐断的；红笔不见了，笔帽倒是多出来两个，不知道是谁的；此外还有弹珠两颗、纸折的飞镖一枚、不知道哪来的半块橡皮、以及饼干渣若干。我的夹层被飞镖顶得鼓起来，盖子要按两下才能扣上。

这个星期的星期三，出过一件事。数学老师让全班画角，小满伸手进来找量角器。他不知道量角器在我肚子里，他也不知道我的肚子里有什么。他的手在我这里翻，把铅笔拨到尺子上，把尺子压到红笔上，飞镖划了他的手指。他翻了四十秒，最后问前排借。前排的量角器借给他了，可是那节课他一直在道歉，先借尺子，再借笔，老师看他一眼，他的头就低下去。

星期五放学，小满的妈妈把我拿到厨房的桌上，说，每周五咱们清一次。她把我和我肚子里的东西全倒在桌布上。弹珠、飞镖、饼干渣、七个洞的橡皮、咬秃的铅笔，一样一样被拿走。妈妈给小满一个旧铁罐，说用不上的放这儿。然后她把我肚子里的夹层擦干净，把东西放回来，放的方式变了：靠盖子的地方放铅笔和橡皮，一伸手就是；尺子和量角器贴着里面的边立着；红笔单独躺在夹层里。妈妈管这个叫常用的放外面，不常用的住里面。

从那以后每个星期五都倒一次桌布。第一周倒出来三样没用的，第二周一样，第三周桌布上干干净净，小满的妈妈把桌布收了回去。小满自己发明了一个检查动作，睡前把眼睛闭上，把手伸进来摸一遍，摸到量角器就睡觉。第一周他摸不到量角器，因为量角器躺错了地方，第二天他自己给它挪了边。后来他闭着眼三秒钟就能摸到尺子，比睁着眼还快。

到了期中考试那个星期，我的肚子里只有六样东西：两支铅笔、一块橡皮、一把尺子、一个量角器、一支红笔。英语听力那天，小满掀开我的盖子，把铅笔放在桌角，盖子合上的声音很轻。他后来跟妈妈说，那天他一次都没有低头看我。我在侧袋里听见这句话，铁皮盒子不会骄傲，但我那天扣得特别严。

现在我的肚子里还是六样东西，每周五晚上过一遍桌布。铅笔们住在靠门的位置，它们不用被翻出来找，只用被伸手拿到。这就是一个文具盒的一星期，从兵荒马乱到安安稳稳。小满管这个叫收纳，我管这个叫回家。

Friday Inside the Pencil Case

I am a tin pencil case, living in the side pocket of Li Xiaoman's schoolbag, a fifth-grade boy. Every Monday morning, his mother loads my belly: three pencils, an eraser, a plastic ruler, a red pen. By Friday my belly holds a different inventory, let me count it out: the three pencils become two and a half, the third chewed blunt; the eraser wears seven holes punched by a compass; one ruler is broken, the one his deskmate sat on; the red pen is gone, though two extra caps have appeared from nowhere; plus two marbles, a paper dart, half an eraser of unknown origin, and a

scatter of cookie crumbs. The dart pokes my divider into a bulge, and my lid needs two presses to snap shut.

Something happened on Wednesday of one such week. The math teacher asked the class to draw angles, and Xiaoman reached in for his protractor. He did not know the protractor was inside me. He did not know what was inside me at all. His hand raked through my belly, pushing pencils onto the ruler, pressing the ruler onto the red pen, and the dart scratched his finger. He searched for forty seconds and finally borrowed one from the row in front. The protractor came, but he spent the lesson apologizing, first for the ruler, then for the pen, and every time the teacher glanced his way his head dropped.

That Friday after school, his mother carried me onto the kitchen table and said, we clean once every Friday. She dumped me and everything inside onto a cloth. Marbles, dart, crumbs, the seven-holed eraser, the chewed pencils, each one carried away. She gave Xiaoman an old tin can for the unusable ones. Then she wiped my divider clean and put things back, but differently: pencils and eraser near the lid, instantly reachable; ruler and protractor standing along the inner edge; the red pen lying alone in the divider. Mother calls this daily tools outside, occasional tools inside.

Ever since, the cloth comes out every Friday. Week one produced three useless items, week two one, week three the cloth came back empty and Mother folded it away. Xiaoman invented his own check: before bed he closes his eyes and reaches into me once, and if he finds the protractor he sleeps. In week one he could not find it, because it lay in the wrong place, and the next morning he moved it to the edge himself. Later he found the ruler blindfolded in three seconds, faster than with his eyes open.

By the week of midterms, my belly held only six things: two pencils, an eraser, a ruler, a protractor, a red pen. On English listening day, Xiaoman opened my lid, set the pencil at the corner of his desk, and closed me with a soft click. He later told his mother he never once looked down at me that day. I heard it from the side pocket. A tin case cannot feel pride, but I snapped shut extra tight that day.

My belly still holds six things, reviewed on the cloth every Friday night. The pencils live by the door, never needing to be hunted for, only reached for. That is one week in the life of a pencil case, from chaos to calm. Xiaoman calls it tidying. I call it coming home.