

## 倒出来的半年

物理卷子发下来，我趴在桌上看那个分数，五十三。放学铃响完，物理老师把我叫到办公室，说不是要批评我，就想看看我平时的笔记。我翻开书包，把文具盒拿出来放到她桌上，打开。她看了三秒钟，没看我的笔记，先看了我的文具盒。

她说，倒出来吧。我把文具盒翻过来，哗啦一声，办公桌上摊了一片：五支笔，两支写不出字；橡皮断成两半；一把学生尺断了角；圆规只剩一条腿；七张纸条，其中四张是上课传话传了一半停下的；两张不及格的卷子折成小方块塞在盒底；还有一支笔帽咬得全是牙印的笔。物理老师拿笔把这些东西一样一样拨开，像拨开一段时间。

她指着那四张传了一半的纸条问，什么时候的事。我说是上学期十一月开始的。她指着盒底两张折起来的卷子问，为什么折起来。我说，不想看见。她指着那条断腿的圆规问，怎么断的。我想了半天，想起来了：上学期几何单元测验，我画不出辅助线，把圆规掰了。她一样一样问完，说，你自己说说，这半年你的学习是什么样。我说不出来。她说，不用说了，都在这儿摊着呢。

那天晚上我在办公室把东西重新装好。物理老师给我一个她抽屉里的旧盒子，铁皮的，分两层。她说不用买新的，先把东西分对地方：能写字的放上层，断的坏的扔了，纸条和卷子不许进盒子，卷子进文件夹。我照做了。装到最后，文具盒里只剩四样能用的东西，盒子合上，声音很脆。

真正的变化是物理老师提的一个要求：每周把她课上没听懂题写在小本上，周五放她办公桌上，她周五中午给我讲，一次不超过三道。第一个周五我写了三道，全是上学期几何的欠账。讲到第二道的时候我才明白，我听不懂八年级的内容，根子在上学期没懂的辅助线。那个学期我上课听不懂就传纸条，纸条传了一半又停下，因为连传纸条的劲都用不上了。我的成绩不是从这个学期下滑的，是上学期就开始往下走，文具盒替我藏了半年。

一月期末，物理七十六。不算好看，但是我把那张卷子放进了文件夹，没有折成方块。文具盒还是那只铁皮盒，两层，上层四支笔一块橡皮一把尺一个圆规，下层备用。它干净得让我有点不好意思，好像它知道我欠的账正在一笔一笔还。

后来我常想起办公室那一声哗啦。半年乱掉的东西，倒在桌上就看得见；学习乱掉的东西，平时藏在分数底下，只有倒出来才看得见。我现在的办法是每周五晚上把文具盒倒在书桌上清一遍，顺手把这一周没弄懂的题抄进小本。盒子倒干净只要五分钟，可是它逼我每周直面一次自己的乱。乱不可怕，看不见才可怕。

## Half a Year Poured Out on the Desk

When the physics test came back, I lay on the desk staring at the number: fifty-three. After the final bell, my physics teacher called me to the office, saying she was not going to scold me, she just wanted to see my usual notes. I opened my bag, took out my pencil case, and set it open on her desk. She looked for three seconds, and looked at the case before she looked at the notes.

She said, pour it out. I turned the case upside down, and with a clatter my desk became a scatter: five pens, two of them dead; an eraser broken in half; a school ruler with a chipped corner; a compass with one leg left; seven notes, four of them half-finished messages passed in class; two failing test papers folded into squares stuffed at the bottom; and a pen cap chewed full of tooth marks. She moved each item aside with her pen, as if parting a stretch of time.

She pointed at the four unfinished notes and asked when. I said it started in November of last term. She pointed at the folded papers at the bottom and asked why they were folded. I said, I did not want to see them. She pointed at the broken compass and asked how it broke. I thought for a long time, then remembered: during last term's geometry quiz, unable to draw the auxiliary line, I had snapped the compass. Having asked through everything, she said, tell me yourself, what has your studying been like this half year. I could not. She said, no need, it is all spread out right here.

That evening I repacked my things in the office. She gave me an old tin box from her drawer, two layers. She said do not buy a new one, first put things in the right places: working pens in the upper layer, broken ones in the trash, notes and test papers never in the case, papers in a folder. I did exactly that. In the end only four usable things went in, and the lid closed with a clean click.

The real change came from one requirement she set: every week I write down the problems I did not understand in her class in a small notebook, leave it on her desk on Friday, and she explains them to me at noon, no more than three at a time. The first Friday I wrote three, all debts from last term's geometry. Halfway through the second one I understood: the reason I could not follow eighth-grade content was the auxiliary lines I never grasped last term. Last term, when I got lost in class I passed notes, and even those notes stopped halfway, because I could not muster the energy for note-passing either. My grades did not slide this term; they had been falling since last term, and my pencil case had hidden it for half a year.

At the January final I got seventy-six in physics. Not pretty, but I put that paper into my folder instead of folding it into a square. The case is still that tin box, two layers: upper layer four pens, one eraser, one ruler, one compass; lower layer spares. It is so clean it makes me a little embarrassed, as if it knows the debts I owe are being repaid one by one.

I often think of that clatter in the office. Things messy for half a year become visible once poured onto a table; a messy study life hides under the scores until you pour it out. My method now: every Friday night dump the case onto the desk and clean it, and while at it copy that week's unresolved problems into the small notebook. Dumping the case clean takes five minutes, but it forces me to face my own mess once

a week. Mess is not frightening. Not seeing it is.