

午睡时的三种声音

中午我趴在桌上午睡，迷迷糊糊听见有人喊开会。睁眼一看，文具盒盖大开，里面的文具围成一圈，铅笔站在最中间，像举着手发言一样。

今天居然是尺子先开的口。他平着嗓子说：「开会就说正事。这个家里只有我能画直线，线段、垂线、长方形，哪样离得开我？弯弯曲曲的活儿我不干，直的活儿谁也干不过我。所以最有用的是我。」

铅笔一听就不乐意了，蹦到作业本上，哗啦一页一页翻给大家看：「这一整本，从生字到算术，全是我写的。作文本上的方格，是我一个字一个字填满的。你尺子写过一个字吗？一个也没有。」

橡皮没有跳，也没有喊。她慢慢挪到灯光底下，把自己亮出来。原来她原先是个方方的白胖子，现在只剩下薄薄的一片，四个角全磨圆了，脸也灰扑扑的。她小声说：「我不争。我就是想说，铅笔写错的那些字，每一个都是我用身子换掉的。我短了这么多，没人看见过。」

文具盒一直坐在最底下当主席，这时拍了拍盒盖：「都别争嘴上的胜负。咱们各干一件事，干完再说。铅笔写一行字，尺子画一个长方形，橡皮把写错的地方擦干净。少一样，这个活儿就完不成。」

铅笔写了一行字，有两个错了；尺子接过笔靠着他画，长方形四个角方方正正；橡皮凑上去，把错字擦得干干净净，连铅笔灰都拢成一条小堆，我一吹就吹掉了。三样东西干完，谁也没提谁最有用。

会议开到这儿就散了。文具一个一个跳回盒里，尺子躺在最底下，铅笔挨着他，橡皮缩在角落。文具盒盖轻轻合上，像打了个哈欠。

我醒了，嘴角还挂着口水印，作业本摊在面前，那行字整整齐齐。我揉了揉眼睛，把文具盒摆正。梦里的事我记着：一个本子上的干净整齐，是三种声音合起来才有的。

Three Voices During the Nap

At noon I put my head down on the desk and dozed off. Through the fog of sleep I heard someone call a meeting. I opened my eyes to find the pencil case wide open, its contents standing in a circle, with the pencil in the middle as if his hand were raised.

Surprisingly it was the ruler who spoke first. In his flat, level voice he said: "Let us get to business. I am the only one in this house who can draw a straight line. Segments, perpendiculars, rectangles - none can do without me. Crooked work is not my job, and at straight work nobody beats me. So the most useful one is me."

The pencil was not pleased at that. He leapt onto the homework notebook and flipped page after page for everyone to see: "This whole book, from new characters to

arithmetic, is written by me. Every square in the composition book is filled one character at a time by me. Have you, ruler, ever written a single character? Not one."

The eraser did not jump and did not shout. She slowly moved into the light and showed herself. Once she had been a square, plump, white fellow; now only a thin slice was left, all four corners worn round, her face gray with dust. She said quietly: "I am not fighting for the title. I only want to say that every wrong character the pencil wrote, I traded my own body to remove. I have grown this much shorter, and nobody ever noticed."

The pencil case had been sitting at the bottom acting as chairman. Now he tapped the lid: "No more arguing with words. Each of us will do one thing, and then we talk. Pencil, write a line of characters. Ruler, draw a rectangle. Eraser, clean up the mistakes. Leave out any one of us, and the job cannot be finished."

The pencil wrote a line, and two characters were wrong. The ruler took the pen leaning against him and drew a rectangle with four square corners. The eraser hurried over and wiped the mistakes spotless, gathering even the pencil dust into a little ridge that I could blow away with one breath. When the three finished, nobody mentioned who was the most useful.

The meeting broke up right there. One by one the stationery jumped back into the case: the ruler lay at the bottom, the pencil next to him, the eraser tucked in the corner. The lid closed gently, like a yawn.

I woke up with a drool mark at the corner of my mouth, the homework notebook open in front of me, that line of characters neat and tidy. I rubbed my eyes and straightened the pencil case. I remember what happened in the dream: the cleanliness and order on one notebook came from three voices joined together.