

掉漆的蓝文具盒

我的文具盒是四年级开学时买的，蓝色的铁盒子，盖子上印着一只白鲸。那时候它蓝得发亮，边角方方正正，我把它摆在笔袋最上层，舍不得用。

三年过去，它早就变了样。右边两个角掉漆掉得最厉害，蓝皮一块一块翘起来，露出底下银白色的铁皮。那是它从桌上摔下来过太多次。三年级下学期它第一次摔，我捡起来手心全是汗；到五年级，它摔下去我自己都不弯腰了，它自己熟悉怎么落地。掉漆的角摸起来糙糙的，可我手指头没事就爱去蹭那两块银白，像摸一个熟了的脸。

上个月收拾书桌，我把文具盒里的东西全倒出来，一张折成小方块的纸条从盒底的缝里滑出来。纸条都软了，边角起了毛，上面是李小冉的字：「我要走了，座位还给你留着，别忘了咱俩说好都考一中。」那是五年级上学期，她转学去外地的前一天塞进我文具盒的。我当时上课没敢看，下课看了三行，眼睛就热了。后来这张纸条一直在文具盒底躺着，我换了笔、换了课程表，没换过它。

纸条的事我没跟妈妈说。可是这周开学，妈妈领着我去了文具店，说要给我上六年级换个新文具盒。货架上一排一排，有带密码锁的，有能翻成笔筒的，蓝的绿的都有。我拿起一个灰色的，又放下；拿起一个带拉链的，摸了摸，还是放下。妈妈问我到底要哪个，我张了张嘴，说：「我那个还能用。」

妈妈不信，回家把旧文具盒拿到水池边，用湿巾擦了一遍。白鲸让擦得更清楚了，就是掉漆的两个角擦不掉，铁皮上还有细细的磕碰印。妈妈擦完递给我，说：「那就它再陪你一年。」

我把白鲸文具盒放进新书包的侧兜，纸条重新折好塞回盒底的缝里。它旧了，可它肚子里装着我三年的东西：摔过的地，写过的字，还有李小冉那句没回的话。换新文具盒的那天我到底没舍得，我想，等毕业那天，我再跟它一起回家。

The Blue Pencil Case with Chipped Paint

My pencil case was bought on the first day of fourth grade, a blue tin box with a white whale printed on the lid. Back then it was shining blue, its corners square and sharp. I set it on the top layer of my pencil pouch and hated to use it.

Three years later it had long changed. The two corners on the right had lost the most paint: chips of blue curled up one by one, exposing the silver-white tin underneath. That was from falling off the desk too many times. The first fall was in the second term of third grade; I picked it up with sweaty palms. By fifth grade, when it fell I did not even bend down – it knew by itself how to land. The chipped corners feel rough, yet my fingers love to rub those two silver patches when I have nothing to do, like touching a familiar face.

Last month while tidying my desk, I poured everything out of the case, and a small note folded into a square slid out from a crack at the bottom. The paper had gone soft, its edges fuzzy. In Li Xiaoran's handwriting it said: "I am leaving. I am still saving our seat for you. Do not forget we promised to both get into School Number One." That was the day before she moved to another city in the first term of fifth grade. I did not dare read it in class; after class I read three lines and my eyes stung. Ever since, the note lay at the bottom of the case. I changed pens and changed my timetable card, but never it.

I never told Mother about the note. But this week, on the first day of school, she took me to a stationery shop to get me a new case for sixth grade. Shelf after shelf: ones with combination locks, ones that fold into pen holders, blue ones, green ones. I picked up a gray one, put it back; picked up one with a zipper, felt it, and put it back too. Mother asked which one I wanted. I opened my mouth and said: "The one I have still works."

Mother did not believe me. At home she carried the old case to the sink and wiped it once with a wet cloth. The white whale came out clearer, only the two chipped corners could not be wiped away, and the tin still showed fine dents. Mother wiped it, handed it back, and said: "Then let it stay with you one more year."

I put the whale case into the side pocket of my new schoolbag and folded the note back into the crack at the bottom. It is old, but inside it carries three years of my life: the floors it fell on, the characters it wrote, and the words of Li Xiaoran I never answered. On the day of a new case I could not bear to switch. I think on graduation day, it and I will go home together.

一个旧文具盒的自述

我是一个铁文具盒，蓝色，盖子上印着白鲸。我在这个小主人的书包里住了三年。现在我的右边两个角掉了漆，露出银白的铁皮，像磕掉的两颗门牙。她不嫌弃我，她的手指天天来摸那两块铁皮。

我身上的漆不是一天掉光的。第一次摔是在三年级下学期的数学课上，她从桌边捞我没捞住，我侧着身子砸在地上，右边第一个角就是这么磕的。后来我熟了一套本事：从桌角滑下去要侧着落，别肚皮朝下，肚皮朝下白鲸会磕出坑。她后来也熟了，看我摔下去，只抬一下眼皮。

我肚子里的事，比她笔袋里任何一支笔知道得都多。我装过她写坏折成团的纸，装过半块断掉的橡皮，还装过一张纸条。那张纸条是五年级上学期一个晚上塞进来的，那天她回家哭过一场，哭的是好朋友转学走了。第二天有个女孩在她文具盒里塞了张折成小方块的纸条，她上课不敢看，下课看了三行，又把它按回我盒底的缝里。这一按，就是两年多。纸条的字我看不清，可我替她

保管得严严实实，连铅笔灰都没让它进缝里。

这个星期，她妈妈带她去了文具店。回来那天，桌上多了一个灰色的新盒子，带拉链，能翻成笔筒，皮面亮得能照出人影。新盒子躺在我旁边，小声问我：「你身上怎么这么多坑？」我没答话。它没摔过，没装过纸条，没听过半夜的哭声，它当然亮。

换不换，其实她说了算。那天晚上她把新盒子打开，又合上，打开，又合上。然后她把我盒底的缝抠开，把纸条抽出来看了看，又放回去。她把我擦了一遍，把我放进新书包的侧兜，新盒子留在了书桌上。

现在我还在她侧兜里，每天跟着她走两站路。我的角还是掉漆的角，我的白鲸让擦得发白。她上六年级了，明年就要毕业。她跟她妈妈说过，毕业那天带我一起回家。我肚子里那张纸条还没旧，我也还不能旧。

Confessions of an Old Pencil Case

I am a tin pencil case, blue, with a white whale on my lid. I have lived in this girl's schoolbag for three years. Now the two corners on my right have lost their paint, showing silver tin underneath, like two front teeth chipped off. She does not mind. Her fingers come to rub those two bare patches every day.

My paint did not chip off in one day. The first fall happened in a math class in the second term of third grade. She tried to catch me as I slid off the desk edge and missed. I hit the floor on my side, and that is how the first right corner got dented. Later I learned a craft of my own: when sliding off a desk corner, land on the side, never belly-down - belly-down puts a dent in the whale. She learned too. When I fall now, she only lifts her eyelids.

What I hold inside, I know better than any pen in her pouch. I have kept crumpled paper she wrote badly, half a snapped eraser, and a note. The note was stuffed in one evening in the first term of fifth grade. That day she came home crying, over a best friend moving away. The next day another girl slipped a small folded square of paper into my case. She dared not read it in class, read three lines after class, and pressed it back into the crack at my bottom. That press has held for over two years. I cannot make out the writing clearly, but I have guarded it for her tightly, keeping even the pencil dust out of the crack.

This week her mother took her to a stationery shop. When they came back, a new gray box with a zipper sat on the desk, one that folds into a pen holder, its surface bright enough to show a reflection. The new box lay beside me and whispered: "How did you get so many dents?" I did not answer. It has never fallen, never held a note, never heard crying in the middle of the night. Of course it shines.

Whether to switch is really her call. That evening she opened the new box and closed it, opened and closed it again. Then she picked open the crack at my bottom, drew out the note, looked at it, and put it back. She wiped me clean, put me in the side pocket of her new schoolbag, and left the new box on the desk.

Now I am still in her side pocket, walking two bus stops with her every day. My corners are still the chipped ones, my whale rubbed pale from wiping. She is in sixth grade now, graduating next year. She told her mother that on graduation day she will take me home. The note inside me is not old yet, and so I cannot be old yet either.

毕业前最后一次收拾

期末考完那天，老师说书桌要清空，六年级的孩子下学期就不回这栋楼了。我趴在桌上收拾，把三年的东西分成两堆：带走的，和扔的。

文具盒是最后倒空的。我把里面的笔一支支插进笔袋，倒过来抖，铅笔头、橡皮屑、一截断了的圆珠笔芯哗啦啦落了一桌。抖到第三下，一张折成小方块的纸条从盒底的缝里滑出来，飘在铅笔屑中间。

我捡起来，纸条软得起了毛边。是五年级那会儿，好朋友转学前一天塞给我的，上面写着座位还给我留着、别忘了都考一中的话。两年多了，它一直藏在我那个蓝文具盒的盒底缝里，藏得比谁都深。我用拇指把纸条重新折好，放进书包最里面的拉链兜。

文具盒本身没法塞进兜里。它右角掉漆掉出两块银白，白鲸图案磨得只剩个轮廓。我把它举到窗户边看了看，阳光照在磕碰的坑上，那些坑一个一个亮起来。三年里它从桌上摔下来过多少回，我数不清，它身上每一块掉漆都对应着一回。

回家路上妈妈看我抱着旧文具盒，说：毕业的人了，明天带你去换个新的，带密码锁那种。我嗯了一声，没抬头。

第二天她真领我去了文具店。新盒子一排一排挂着，我站在货架前，手伸出去又收回来。回家我把旧文具盒摆在书桌抽屉最上层，想了想，又拿出来，放回笔袋。纸条的事我还是没说。有些东西换了新盒子就找不回来了，比如盒底那道缝，比如缝里两年多的铅笔灰。

晚上我把笔袋拉上拉链前，最后摸了一遍那两个掉漆的银角，糙糙的。我对它说，下学期初中用的新书包在门后挂着，你照样进侧兜。它没吭声，铁皮盒子当然不会吭声。可是它在我手心里沉了一下，像应了一声。

The Last Tidying Before Graduation

The day the final exams ended, our teacher said the desks must be cleared, because the sixth graders would not come back to this building next term. I bent over my desk and sorted three years of things into two piles: what to take, and what to throw away.

The pencil case was emptied last. I put its pens one by one into the pouch, then turned it upside down and shook. Pencil stubs, eraser crumbs, a broken ballpoint refill clattered across the desk. On the third shake, a small note folded into a square slid out of the crack at the bottom and fluttered down among the pencil shavings.

I picked it up. The paper had gone soft, its edges fuzzy. It was from fifth grade, stuffed to me the day before my best friend transferred away, saying our seat was still saved for me and not to forget we both promised for School Number One. For over two years it had hidden in the crack at the bottom of my blue case, deeper hidden than anything else. I folded it back up with my thumb and put it in the innermost zip pocket of my bag.

The case itself would not fit in a pocket. Its right corners had lost paint down to two patches of silver tin, and the whale on the lid was worn to a mere outline. I held it up by the window. Sunlight fell on the dents, and they lit up one by one. In three years it fell off the desk more times than I could count; every chipped patch matched one fall.

On the way home, Mother saw me hugging the old case and said: you are a graduate now, tomorrow I will get you a new one, the kind with a combination lock. I grunted and did not look up.

She really took me to the shop the next day. New cases hung row after row. I stood before the shelf, reached out my hand, and pulled it back. At home I set the old case on the top shelf of the desk drawer, thought a moment, took it out again, and put it back into the pouch. I still did not mention the note. Some things cannot be found again once you switch to a new case – like the crack at the bottom, like over two years of pencil dust inside that crack.

That night, before zipping the pouch shut, I rubbed the two chipped silver corners one last time, rough under my fingers. I told it: next term the new middle-school schoolbag hangs behind the door, and you go in the side pocket as usual. It did not answer – a tin box of course cannot answer. But it grew heavier in my palm for a moment, like a yes.

