

拉链终于坏掉的那一天

十月十八日 星期六 阴。

昨晚写作业的时候，旧文具盒的拉链终于彻底坏了。拉锁的金属齿这两年断断续续掉了好几颗，最后只剩末尾一颗还咬着。我把文具全倒在桌上，试着修了一会儿，放弃了。盒面的蓝色图案早磨成了灰白色，两个角起了边，以前贴的一张篮球运动员贴纸撕掉了，在盖上留下一块浅色的方块。内侧的凹槽里嵌着铅笔灰和橡皮屑，怎么擦都还剩一点淡淡的黑印。

这个文具盒是我上初中第一天买的，跟了我三年。它从课桌上摔下来过十几次，有一次在走廊被人踩过，提手是妈妈用针线重新缝上去的。初一到初二的每一次期末考、每一次周考，它装的笔和涂卡铅笔被拿出来用掉再放回去，它一天都没缺过勤。

周六上午，妈妈带我去文具店挑新的。货架上的文具盒多得让人眼花。塑料的硬邦邦，可是掉在地上会哐当一声，全班都会回头看；自动的有按钮有暗格，我怕上课忍不住摆弄，分了心。我拿起一个深蓝色帆布的：软，落地没声音，两层，一层放笔，一层放尺子和圆规。妈妈说它太素了，我摇头，坚持要它。用的人是我，我最清楚自己要什么。

回到家，妈妈拿起旧文具盒就要扔进垃圾桶。我拦住了她。我用湿巾把旧文具盒擦了一遍，把凹槽里的黑印尽量擦掉，把它装进一个干净的布袋，放进书桌第二个抽屉，紧挨着那摞旧试卷。妈妈笑我：不扔还擦这么干净干什么。我答不上来，只说，它像个退役的兵，不能脏着送走。

今晚打开新文具盒，帆布有一点新东西的气味。笔在里面站得整整齐齐，盖合得很顺。我想，旧文具盒替我保管了三年的文具，往后这件事归新的了。旧的在抽屉里安顿，我升入初三。抽屉像一间休息室，而我还得往前走。

The Day the Zipper Finally Gave Up

October 18, Saturday, cloudy.

Last night while I was doing homework, the zipper of my old pencil case finally gave out. The metal teeth of the slider had been snapping off one by one for the past two years, and in the end only the last tooth was holding on. I poured all the stationery onto the desk, tried to fix it for a while, then gave up. The blue pattern on its surface had long been rubbed to a whitish gray, both corners were frayed, and the basketball-player sticker I used to paste on had peeled off, leaving a pale rectangle on the lid. The grooves inside were packed with pencil lead marks and eraser shavings, and no matter how hard I wiped, faint black marks remained.

This pencil case has been with me since my first day of junior high, three years now. It was knocked off the desk more than ten times; once it was stepped on in the corridor, and its strap was sewn back by my mother with needle and thread. During every final exam in Grade 7 and Grade 8 and every weekly quiz, the pens and 2B pencils it carried were taken out, used, and put back; it never missed a single day.

On Saturday morning my mother took me to the stationery store to pick a new one. There were so many pencil cases on the shelves that my eyes went dizzy. The plastic ones were hard, but when they fell they went clang and drew the eyes of the whole class; the automatic ones had buttons and hidden compartments, and I was afraid I would play with them in class. I picked up a dark blue canvas one: soft, quiet when it falls, with two layers, one for pens and one for rulers and compasses. My mother said it was too plain, but I insisted. I would be the one using it, and I knew best what I needed.

When we got home, my mother picked up the old pencil case to throw it into the trash can. I stopped her. I wiped the old one clean with a wet wipe, cleaned the black marks in the grooves as much as I could, put it into a clean cloth bag, and placed it in the second drawer of my desk, right beside the pile of old exam papers. My mother laughed and asked why I washed it so clean if I was not throwing it away. I could not answer well, so I just said: it is like a retired soldier; you cannot send him off dirty.

Tonight when I opened the new pencil case, the canvas smelled faintly new. The pens stood straight inside, and the lid closed smoothly. I thought: the old one held my stationery for three years, and from now on this job belongs to the new one. The old one rests in the drawer, and I am moving up to Grade 9. The drawer is like a retirement room, and I am still on the road.