

书架最里面的铁皮盒

年末大扫除，我从书架最里面摸出一个冰凉的物件。是铁皮文具盒，磁吸的搭扣，盒身印着一列绿皮火车。它在我书架最高层待了多少年，我算不清，只记得它比我的许多课本都活得久。

盒盖右下角贴着一张贴画，是那种九十年代小卖部里五分钱一张的塑料贴画，一只白兔子坐在蘑菇下面。颜色褪得差不多了，兔子只剩轮廓，蘑菇红成一块淡淡的斑。我记得贴上它的那个下午，也记得它翘起一角后，我用透明胶带仔细压住的样子。胶带黄了，贴画倒还平整，像被谁小心按住了时间。

打开盒子，凹槽里还有浅浅的铅笔灰，一块用剩的橡皮硬得像小石子。搭扣一合，啪的一声，和三十年前一模一样。就是这一声响，把我拽回那条上学路。

那时的路是土路，两边是麦子。春天麦子青，夏天麦子黄，我背着书包走在田埂边，铁皮盒在书包里咣当咣当响，像给自己伴奏。冬天路冻得硬邦邦，走到学校手是红的，到了教室第一件事是把文具盒从书包里掏出来，摆在桌角，好像摆上它，人才算坐稳。路上有座石板小桥，下雨天桥面滑，我奶奶不放心，跟了一段又一段，后来她眼睛不好了，我只能自己走，走到桥头总要回头看一眼，村子在雾里慢慢变小。

如今土路成了水泥路，小桥翻新了栏杆，麦子地只剩一小块。我在城里有了书桌、台灯和一整柜的文具，可那个铁皮盒始终没扔。它旧，旧得理直气壮：盒角磕掉漆的地方，是摔过；火车图案磨白的地方，是摸过。

我把铁皮盒放回书架第二层，不再是最里面。兔子贴画朝外。有些东西不需要用，摆在那里，就是一条回家的路。

The Tin Case at the Back of the Bookshelf

During the year-end cleaning, I felt my way to a cold object at the back of the bookshelf. It was a tin pencil case with a magnetic clasp, its body printed with a green train. I cannot count how many years it has sat on the top shelf; I only know it has outlived many of my old textbooks.

On the lower right corner of the lid clung a sticker, the kind of plastic picture that cost five cents in the little shops of the 1990s: a white rabbit sitting under a mushroom. Its colors had faded almost away; the rabbit was only an outline, the mushroom a pale red blot. I remembered the afternoon I pasted it on, and how, after its corner curled up, I pressed it down carefully with clear tape. The tape has yellowed, but the sticker lies flat, as if someone had gently held time in place.

Opening the case, I found faint pencil lead in the grooves and a leftover piece of eraser hard as a small stone. When the clasp snapped shut, it made the same pop as thirty years ago. That single sound pulled me back to the road to school.

The road then was dirt, with wheat on both sides. In spring the wheat was green; in summer it turned gold. I walked along the ridge of the field with my schoolbag on my back, the tin case clanking inside it, keeping time for me like an accompaniment. In winter the road froze hard, my hands were red when I reached school, and the first thing in the classroom was to take the pencil case out and set it on the corner of the desk, as if only then was I properly seated. On the way there was a small stone-slab bridge, slippery on rainy days. My grandmother worried and walked part of the way with me again and again. Later her eyes grew weak, and I had to go alone; at the bridge I always looked back once, watching the village shrink slowly into the mist.

Now the dirt road is concrete, the little bridge has new railings, and only a patch of wheat field remains. In the city I have a desk, a lamp, and a whole cabinet of stationery, yet I never threw the tin case away. It is old with good reason: the chipped paint on its corners came from falls, and the worn-white part of the train came from my hands.

I put the tin case back on the second shelf, no longer at the very back, with the rabbit sticker facing out. Some things do not need to be used. Placed where they are, they are a road home.