

文具店里的留堂生

下班路过街角文具店，我看见我的学生陈一诺一个人站在货架前。书包还背着，人站在中层货架跟前，手里捧着个灰白条纹的布文具盒，拉开，合上，再拉开。这种时候当老师的都懂：不该上前打招呼，我退到旁边的本子架后面，假装挑备课本。

她挑得很慢。货架上层是带灯带密码锁的新款，她一眼没看——不是不敢看，我看得分明，她的目光扫过去，停都没停。中层三个候选她全拿了下来，并排放在隔板上，先掂重量，再听拉链，最后把三个盒盖都按了一遍。她捏起灰白条纹那个的拉链头看了看，金属的，又去看另外两个的，塑料的。她把塑料那两个放回去，动作没有犹豫。

我在本子架后面看着，忽然有点不认得她。教室里她是中等偏后的那种孩子，不举手，不惹事，作业工整但错误不少。此刻她站在货架前，像另一个人在替她办事：清楚自己要什么，不被上层的灯光晃一下。我教她两年，第一次知道她挑东西有这套章法。

她付了钱，十九块，跟售货员说了谢谢，声音不大。我比她早出门，站在店外的梧桐影里等她出来。她出门时怀里抱着盒子，走路的步子比平时稳。我没叫住她。第二天收作业，她的本子依旧工整，错的地方依旧多。我们谁都没提文具店。

过了些天，家访路过她家楼下，听见她在跟奶奶说话，讲新文具盒拉链是金属的、旧的别扔还能装纽扣。我站在楼下听了几秒就走。当老师总想一眼看穿学生，其实孩子离开教室以后，在货架前、在公交上、在自家书桌边，会长出教室里的灯照不到的那一面。那天在文具店，我没挑备课本，我挑到了一件更要紧的东西：重新认识一个我原以为自己很熟的孩子。

The Student I Found Detained in a Stationery Shop

Walking home from work past the stationery shop on the corner, I saw my student Chen Yinuo standing alone in front of the shelf. Schoolbag still on her back, she stood before the middle tier holding a grey-and-white striped cloth pencil case, opening it, closing it, opening it again. Any teacher knows this moment: you do not walk up and greet. I stepped behind the notebook rack beside her and pretended to browse lesson-plan pads.

She chose slowly. The top shelf held new models with lights and combination locks; she gave them not one glance. Not out of timidity, I saw clearly, her eyes swept past without stopping. She took all three candidates from the middle shelf, lined them on the divider, weighed them first, listened to the zippers, then pressed each lid. She pinched the zipper pull of the striped one and studied it, metal, then checked the pulls of the other two, plastic. She put the plastic ones back without hesitation.

Behind the notebook rack I watched, and suddenly half did not recognize her. In the classroom she is the middling kind of child: no raised hands, no trouble, neat

homework full of small errors. At that moment, standing before the shelf, she was like someone else running errands for her: clear about what she wanted, unblinded by the lights upstairs. I had taught her two years and learned for the first time that she has this method for choosing things.

She paid, nineteen yuan, and thanked the shop assistant, her voice not loud. I left before her and waited in the shadow of the plane tree outside. When she came out she carried the case in her arms, walking steadier than usual. I did not call after her. The next day collecting homework, her notebook was neat as always, wrong as always. Neither of us mentioned the shop.

Some days later, on the way to a home visit, I heard her talking to her grandmother downstairs about her new case: the zipper is metal, do not throw out the old one, it can still hold buttons. I stood under the building a few seconds and left. Teachers always want to see through a student at a glance. In truth, once children leave the classroom, at shelves and on buses and beside their own desks, they grow a side the classroom lamp never reaches. That day in the shop, I was not browsing lesson-plan pads. I came away with something more important: meeting again a child I had thought I knew well.