

讲台上的那只文具盒

那只蓝色的文具盒，在讲台角上放了三天。

盒角磨得发白，盖子上印的小恐龙缺了半条尾巴，拉链头上系着一截蓝线打的结。我拿起来的时候，听见里面铅笔滚动的轻响——它很满，也很旧。

它是林小雨落下的。那个周五下午放学，教室里乱哄哄的，我回到讲台整理教案，才发现它安安静静地躺在墨水瓶旁边。我把它收进抽屉，想着孩子一会儿就会跑回来找。可是走廊空了，太阳落了，一直没有孩子来。

周一早上，我把它举起来，问全班这是谁的。教室里安静了一下，第三排有个女孩把手举到一半，又放了下去。我点了她的名字，她一小步一小步走到讲台前，低着头说：我以为丢了，不敢说。我当着她的面把文具盒打开，一样一样数：三支铅笔，一块橡皮，一把尺子，还有一张折成四折的小纸条，塞在最里侧的口袋里。她把盒子接过去，抱在怀里，耳根红了。

放学后，我给林小雨的妈妈发了消息，说小雨把文具盒落在了讲台上，三天不敢开口。没想到她妈妈很快回了一长段，说家里什么都替她收拾，书包、衣服、连水杯都是头天晚上装好的，孩子很少自己动手。她写：我没想到她丢了东西不敢说，我一直以为她只是马虎。

我回她：属于孩子的事，让她自己摸一摸、数一数。自己数过铅笔的孩子，才知道它落在哪里；自己数过的孩子，才知道少了东西要自己去找。

接下来的一周，我在班里做了一个小改变：凡是落在地上、讲台上的东西，都放到讲台角上，不替谁收，失主自己来描述、自己领回去。孩子们把这当成一个游戏，每天讲台角上都排着一小串儿人。有孩子领回一块橡皮，回去的路上顺手帮同桌捎走了帽子。

我不知道林小雨的妈妈后来有没有让她自己收拾书包。我只知道，月底的时候，小雨来找我认领过一只同学的文具盒，她描述得清清楚楚：盖上的恐龙缺半条尾巴，拉链上系着蓝线结。

我把盒子递给她，心里想：讲台上落下一只文具盒，是小事。可小事上长出来的东西，并不小。

The Pencil Case on the Teacher's Desk

The blue pencil case sat on the corner of my desk for three days.

Its corners were worn white, the little dinosaur printed on the lid was missing half its tail, and a knot of blue thread was tied to the zipper pull. When I picked it up, I heard pencils rolling inside — it was full, and well used.

It belonged to Lin Xiaoyu. That Friday after school the classroom was in an uproar, and when I returned to organize my lesson plans, I found it lying quietly beside the ink bottle. I put it in the drawer, sure the child would come running back

for it. But the hallway emptied, the sun went down, and no child came.

On Monday morning I held it up and asked the class whose it was. There was a moment of silence, then a girl in the third row raised her hand halfway and let it fall again. I called her name. She came to the front in tiny steps and said, head down: I thought it was lost, and I was afraid to say so. I opened the case in front of her and counted, one by one: three pencils, one eraser, a ruler, and a small note folded into quarters, tucked in the innermost pocket. She took the case, held it to her chest, and the roots of her ears turned red.

After school I messaged her mother, telling her that Xiaoyu had left the pencil case on my desk and had been too afraid to speak up for three days. Her mother replied at once with a long message: at home everything was always tidied for the child — backpack, clothes, even the water bottle packed the night before — the child hardly ever did anything herself. She wrote: I never imagined she would be afraid to speak about losing something. I always thought she was just careless.

I wrote back: let the child touch and count the things that belong to her. A child who has counted her own pencils knows where they were left; a child who has counted knows that a lost thing must be gone after by herself.

The following week I made a small change in class: anything left on the floor or on the desk goes to the corner of my desk, and I do not keep it for anyone — the owner must come describe it and take it back herself. The children treated it as a game, and every day a little line formed at the corner of my desk. One child collected an eraser and, on the way back, carried off her deskmate's hat as well.

I don't know whether Lin Xiaoyu's mother ever let her pack her own backpack. I only know that at the end of the month, Xiaoyu came to claim a classmate's pencil case, and described it perfectly: the dinosaur on the lid is missing half its tail, and there is a blue thread knot on the zipper.

I handed her the case and thought: a pencil case left behind on the teacher's desk is a small thing. But what grows out of small things is not small.

我在讲台上等了三天

我在讲台的角落里，等了三天。

我是一只蓝色文具盒，盖子上印着恐龙，尾巴缺了半条——那是小主人三岁时用圆珠笔画掉色的。我的拉链头上系着一截蓝线结，是她奶奶打的，说这样好拉。

星期五放学，教室里像一锅烧开的水。小主人把我放在讲台上，去帮同学捡书包，然后人群就涌出了门。我躺在墨水瓶旁边，听着脚步声越来越远。我想喊她，可是文具盒不会喊。天黑下来的时候，一只大手把我拿起来，放进了讲台抽屉。抽屉里有粉笔灰的味道，我等了整整一个周末。

周一早晨，抽屉开了。老师把我举到半空，问全班：这是谁的？我看见小主人坐在第三排，手抬到一半，又缩回去。她以为我丢了，不敢说。老师点了她的名字。她走上讲台的时候，我在老师手里轻轻晃了一下——其实我想说，我一直在这儿，哪儿也没去。

老师当着她的面打开我，一样一样数：三支铅笔，一块橡皮，一把尺子，还有她塞在我最里侧口袋里的那张折成四折的小纸条，上面写着半首没编完的歌。小主人接过我的时候抱得很紧。后来我趴在她书包侧袋里，听见她小声跟我说：以后我每天晚上都数一遍你。

那天傍晚，我从书包侧袋的开口缝里，听见小主人的妈妈在打电话。老师说，孩子把我落在讲台上，三天不敢开口。电话那头安静了一会儿，那位妈妈说，家里什么都替她收拾，书包是晚上装好的，铅笔是削好的，连第二天穿什么都摆在床头。她的声音低下去：我没想到她丢了东西不敢说。老师在那头说，属于她自己的东西，让她自己清点吧。数过铅笔的孩子，才知道铅笔落在哪里。

那天晚上，小主人真的把我摊在书桌上，一支一支数。她把我放在门口的小凳上，说这样明天不会忘。她的妈妈站在房门口看了一会儿，没有伸手。

我在小凳上睡得很踏实。后来我还丢过一把尺子、一块橡皮，都是她自己找回来的。她找东西的时候翻书包的样子，笨手笨脚的，可是我觉得，那才是她自己的手。

讲台上落下的东西，会等人来领。可是有些东西，比如自己动手的习惯，得孩子自己长出来。我在她书包侧袋里，替她数着日子。

I Waited on the Teacher's Desk for Three Days

I waited in the corner of the teacher's desk for three days.

I am a blue pencil case with a dinosaur on the lid, missing half its tail — that faded when my little owner scratched it with a ballpoint pen at age three. A knot of blue thread is tied to my zipper pull; her grandmother tied it, so it would be easier to pull.

On Friday after school, the classroom was like a pot of boiling water. My little owner set me on the desk to help a classmate pick up a backpack, and then the crowd poured out the door. I lay beside the ink bottle, listening to the footsteps fade. I wanted to call her, but pencil cases cannot call. When it grew dark, a big hand lifted me into the desk drawer. The drawer smelled of chalk dust, and I waited there the whole weekend.

On Monday morning the drawer opened. The teacher held me up in the air and asked the class: whose is this? I saw my little owner in the third row, raising her hand halfway and pulling it back. She thought I was lost and was afraid to speak. The teacher called her name. As she walked up to the desk, I wobbled gently in the teacher's hand — I wanted to say: I was here the whole time, I never went anywhere.

The teacher opened me in front of her and counted, one by one: three pencils, one eraser, a ruler, and the note folded into quarters that she had tucked in my innermost pocket, with half an unfinished song written on it. My little owner hugged me tightly when she took me back. Later, lying in the side pocket of her backpack, I heard her whisper to me: from now on I will count you every night.

That evening, through the opening of the side pocket, I heard her mother on the phone. The teacher said the child had left me on the desk and had been too afraid to speak up for three days. There was a pause on the line, then the mother said that at home everything was done for the child — the backpack packed at night, the pencils already sharpened, even tomorrow's clothes laid out by the bed. Her voice dropped: I never imagined she would be afraid to speak about losing something. The teacher said: let her count her own things herself. A child who has counted her pencils knows where they were left.

That night, my little owner really spread me out on the desk and counted me pencil by pencil. She set me on the little stool by the door, so I would not be forgotten tomorrow. Her mother stood in the doorway for a while, and did not reach out her hand.

I slept soundly on that stool. Later she lost a ruler and an eraser, and found both of them herself. The way she rummages through her backpack is clumsy, but that, I think, is what her own hands are for.

Things left behind on the teacher's desk wait to be claimed. But some things, like the habit of doing things yourself, have to grow in a child on their own. I sit in her side pocket, counting the days for her.

失物招领处的老规矩

我教了三十年书，退休返聘那年，搭班的是个毕业才三年的年轻班主任，姓程。

小程有个怪规矩：凡是班里捡到的东西，一律放到讲台角上，谁丢的谁自己来领，领的时候要说出东西的模样。第一周我就看不惯。一只文具盒在讲台上摆来摆去，我替他收过两回，他都笑眯眯地取回去，放回那个角上。我说，你这是何苦，顺手给孩子送过去，多大点事。他不接话，

只说，周老师，您再看两天。

第三天早读前，他举起一只蓝色文具盒问全班是谁的。第三排一个女孩手举到一半又放下，他点了名，让女孩上来，当着全班把盒里的东西一样一样数出来。女孩走下讲台的时候，把盒子抱在怀里。我坐在后排听课，忽然想起一件事。

一九九几年那会儿，我也当班主任，教室后墙有个失物招领箱，牙膏皮做的，里头常年躺着半截铅笔、断了的尺子、没人要的橡皮。那时候东西丢了就是丢了，第二天自己翻书包，翻不着，挨一顿说，第二天自己再买。不是我们当老师的狠心，是家里兄弟姐妹多，谁也不替谁收拾。丢东西的孩子，第二天准记得自己昨天把东西搁哪儿了。

放学时小程给女孩家里发消息，说孩子东西落在讲台上，三天不敢开口。他跟我念家长回复：家里什么都替孩子收拾，书包晚上装好，铅笔削好摆着。小程在办公室跟那位妈妈通了电话，我在旁边听见他说，让孩子自己清点自己的东西，数过铅笔的孩子才知道铅笔落在哪儿。电话那头静了一会儿，那位妈妈说，我没想到她丢了东西不敢说。

这句话我记了很多年。我带的那一届，丢东西不敢说的孩子不多——不是他们胆子大，是丢了就得自己想办法，哭也没用。现在的孩子什么都齐备，反倒丢不起一样东西，一丢就慌，一慌就不敢出声。东西是家长收拾的，慌是孩子自己扛的。

后来那个讲台角越来越热闹，每天早读前排一小串人，你描述你的橡皮，他认领他的帽子。有回一个男孩领回外套，顺手把同桌忘在椅背上的水杯也捎走了。小程在讲台上看着，冲我抬了抬下巴，那神情，像我们当年收了兵一样。

学期末家长会上，小程请那位女孩的妈妈发言。她说她现在只替女儿收拾一样东西——把门口的凳子腾出来，女儿自己把书包和文具盒摆在上头。她说这叫「留一个位置」。我在台下鼓掌，心想，失物招领这个行当，两代人做了三十年，做的原来是同一件事：把属于孩子的事，交还给孩子。

那只蓝色文具盒后来再没落过讲台。它每天跟着女孩走到门口的小凳上，晚上数一遍，早上再数一遍。我退休那天，小程送我到楼梯口，说周老师，您替我收过两回文具盒，我一直记着。我说，我记着的是你那个讲台角。

The Old Rules of the Lost and Found

I taught for thirty years. The year I came out of retirement to be rehired, my partner was a young homeroom teacher named Cheng, barely three years out of college.

Young Cheng had a strange rule: anything found in the classroom went to the corner of the teacher's desk, and whoever lost it came to claim it personally, describing what it looked like. I disapproved from the first week. A pencil case kept sitting on that desk, and twice I put it away for him; both times he smiled and took it back to that corner. I said, why make it so hard — just walk it over to the

child, it's such a small thing. He didn't argue, only said: Teacher Zhou, watch for two more days.

On the third day, before morning reading, he held up a blue pencil case and asked the class whose it was. A girl in the third row raised her hand halfway and dropped it; he called her name and had her come up while he counted the contents out loud in front of everyone. She walked off the platform hugging the case. I was sitting at the back observing the lesson, and something suddenly came back to me.

Back in the mid-nineties, when I was a homeroom teacher, our classroom had a lost-and-found box on the back wall, made from a toothpaste tube, with half a pencil, a broken ruler, and unwanted erasers lying in it year-round. Back then, a lost thing was simply lost. The next day you rummaged through your own bag, and if you couldn't find it, you got scolded and bought a replacement yourself. It wasn't that we teachers were harsh — there were many siblings in every family, and nobody tidied up for anyone else. A child who lost something remembered, by the next day exactly, where they had put it.

After school Cheng messaged the girl's family, saying she had left her things on the desk and had been too afraid to speak up for three days. He read me the parent's reply: at home everything was done for the child — backpack packed at night, pencils sharpened and set out. Cheng phoned the mother from the office, and I overheard him say: let her count her own things herself; a child who has counted her pencils knows where they were left. There was a silence on the line, then the mother said: I never imagined she would be afraid to speak about losing something.

I held onto that sentence for years. In the classes I taught, there weren't many children too afraid to speak about losing things — not because they were brave, but because once you lost something you had to figure it out yourself; crying was useless. Today's children have everything complete, yet they can't afford to lose a single thing — lose one and they panic, panic and they stay silent. The things were tidied by the parents; the panic was carried by the children alone.

Later that corner of the desk grew busier. Every morning before reading a little line formed: one child described an eraser, another claimed a hat. Once a boy collected his jacket and, on the way back, carried off the water bottle his deskmate had left on a chair back. Cheng watched from the desk and jerked his chin at me, looking like we used to look after drilling troops.

At the end-of-term parents' meeting, Cheng invited the girl's mother to speak. She said she now tidied exactly one thing for her daughter — clearing the stool by the door, where the girl placed her own backpack and pencil case. She called it "leaving a place." I applauded from my seat, thinking: the lost-and-found trade, practiced by two generations over thirty years, was always the same work — handing

the things that belong to children back to the children.

The blue pencil case never stayed on the desk again. Each day it followed the girl to the little stool by the door, counted once at night, once again in the morning. On my last day, Cheng walked me to the stairwell and said: Teacher Zhou, you put away pencil cases for me twice, and I never forgot. I said: what I remember is your corner of the desk.