

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.