

书桌抽屉里的旧文具盒

周末收拾女儿的书桌，拉开最上面那个抽屉，一个蓝色文具盒躺在最底下，盒盖一掀，东西哗啦全散出来：笔帽咬变形的圆珠笔、剪掉一半的指甲刀、七八张贴纸、一张对折过多次的课程表，还有一截不知道从哪支笔上掉下来的弹簧。抽屉里更乱，试卷和零食袋压在一起。

女儿站在旁边不好意思，说她每天早上出门前都要翻十分钟，经常找不到红领巾，也找不到英语书。我说咱们不搞大扫除，就管这一个文具盒。她把东西全倒在桌上，一样一样过：能用的留下，不能用的扔掉，贴纸挪到书桌上的铁盒里。课程表她展开压平，贴在了抽屉内壁上。铁盒里的贴纸她挑了两张最旧的贴在笔袋背面，说这两张贴了三年，跟着她从小学贴到初中，扔不得。剩下的贴纸按大小码在铁盒里，码贴纸的时间比码文具还长，她在旁边码，我在旁边看着，谁也没催谁。

分类之后，笔袋里只剩九样东西。我们定了个一周的约定：她睡前把文具盒里的东西归位，我睡前把厨房台面收干净，互相不提醒，一周后看谁断了。头两天她做得很认真，笔一根根插进笔槽。第三天她回来得晚，随手一塞就睡了，第二天早上找红笔找了半分钟。第四天起不用我留意，她自己会在睡前拉开拉链摆一摆。第七天早上，她把文具盒递给我看，笔、尺子、橡皮各在各自的位置，说这规矩小，两分钟就弄完，断不了。

现在那个蓝色文具盒还在抽屉最上层，抽屉里试卷归试卷，零食袋早没了。女儿偶尔还是乱塞，但睡前会归位。我想起自己小时候的文具盒，也是这么乱，那时候没人跟我约定一周，也没人告诉我规矩可以定得这么小。原来大人小孩都一样，守不住大事，就先守住两分钟。

The Old Pencil Case in the Desk Drawer

Over the weekend I was tidying my daughter's desk. Pulling open the top drawer, I found a blue pencil case at the very bottom. The moment I flipped the lid, everything spilled out: a ballpoint pen with a chewed cap, a nail clipper with half of it cut away, seven or eight stickers, a class schedule folded so many times the creases went soft, and a small spring from some pen nobody could name. The drawer itself was worse, with test papers pressed together with snack bags.

My daughter stood there embarrassed. She said she spent ten minutes rummaging every morning before school, often unable to find her red scarf or her English book. I told her we would not do a big cleanup, just deal with this one pencil case. She emptied everything onto the desk and went through it item by item: keep what works, throw out what does not, move the stickers into the tin box on the desk. She unfolded the schedule, pressed it flat, and stuck it to the inside wall of the drawer. From the stickers she picked the two oldest and put them on the back of the case, saying those two had been stuck on for three years, following her from elementary school all the way to middle school, and could not be thrown away. She arranged the rest in the tin box by size, and sorting the stickers took longer than sorting the stationery. She lined them up while I watched, and neither of us rushed the other.

After sorting, only nine things were left in the case. We made a one-week deal: she would put her pencil case back in order before bed, I would clear the kitchen counter before bed, no reminding each other, and at the end of the week we would see whose streak broke. The first two days she was serious, slotting each pen into place. On the third day she came home late and tossed everything in, then spent half a minute hunting for her red pen the next morning. From the fourth day on, without my watching, she unzipped the case and straightened things before bed. On the seventh morning she handed me the case to look at: pens, ruler, and eraser each in their own place. She said the rule was small, two minutes and done, so it would not break.

The blue case still sits in the top drawer now, test papers in their own pile, the snack bags long gone. She still tosses things in carelessly sometimes, but she straightens them before bed. I thought of my own pencil case as a child, just as messy. Back then nobody made a one-week deal with me, and nobody told me a rule could be that small. It turns out grown-ups and kids are the same: if you cannot keep the big things, start by keeping two minutes.