

文具盒里传了一周的橡皮

那块4B橡皮是班级里最软的一块，先是在周明的文具盒里，那是他姐用剩的，边角已经圆了。星期一数学小测，周明前一晚把橡皮落在作业本上，卷子写错了一大片，他手伸到桌缝又缩回来。同桌赵一苇没等他开口，从自己盒里摸出橡皮递过去。周明用完还回去，赵一苇摆手，说下回你忘带东西，你也别张嘴，旁边的人先递。这是橡皮的第一条规矩。

星期二，橡皮到了前桌陈朵的盒里。陈朵的橡皮昨天借给走廊对面班同学，没还回来，她正对着英语卷子上的错词发愁。周明把那块圆角橡皮放到她桌上，放完就跑，像传递暗号。陈朵擦完错词，把橡皮放进自己文具盒最上层，说行，规矩我接着。这是第二条：递东西不许让人当面道谢，谢的人替全班擦一次黑板。

星期三轮到值日生马跃。他擦黑板时发现粉笔槽里卡着一截写反的粉笔，改不了，回座位就翻盒找橡皮。陈朵把橡皮从桌缝推过去，推得有点用力，橡皮滚到马跃笔袋底下。马跃捡起来，在橡皮侧面用铅笔刻了个小箭头，箭头指着陈朵的方向，说橡皮认路，谁递的就朝谁躺着。星期四，橡皮又滚回周明桌上，箭头朝外，谁也没说过谢谢，箭头替他们说了。

星期五班会，班主任发现讲台上多了一张纸条，是马跃写的：我们班这周借出去过一块橡皮、两把尺子、三支笔，没人说谢谢，也没人吵架。橡皮星期一在周明盒里，星期五在陈朵盒里，中间路过四个文具盒，每一站都添了一条规矩，规矩加起来就一句话：缺东西别慌，总有人先递。班会下课，那块橡皮躺在陈朵文具盒最上层，侧面的小箭头磨得快看不见了，可它指的方向，我们这一排每个人都认得。

The Eraser That Traveled for a Week

The 4B eraser was the softest in the class, and it started the week in Zhou Ming's pencil case, a leftover from his older sister, its corners already round. During Monday's math quiz, Zhou Ming had left the eraser on his homework notebook the night before, and a whole stretch of his paper went wrong. His hand reached toward the desk crack and shrank back. His deskmate Zhao Yiwei waited for no request; he fished an eraser out of his own case and passed it over. When Zhou Ming tried to return it, Zhao waved him off and said, next time you forget something, don't open your mouth either, the person beside you passes it first. That was the eraser's first rule.

On Tuesday the eraser reached the case of Chen Duo, the girl at the desk in front. Hers had been lent to a class across the hall yesterday and never came back, and she was staring at the wrong words on her English paper in despair. Zhou Ming set the round-cornered eraser on her desk and ran off, like passing along a secret code. After erasing, Chen Duo put the eraser on the top layer of her own case and said, fine, I'll carry the rule on. That was the second rule: whoever passes something over must not be thanked to their face, and whoever says thank you wipes the blackboard for the whole class once.

Wednesday it was the duty student Ma Yue's turn. While wiping the board he found a piece of chalk stuck in the tray writing backwards, unfixable, so he got back to his seat and rummaged for an eraser. Chen Duo pushed it through the desk crack, a little too hard, and it rolled under Ma Yue's pencil case. He picked it up and scratched a small arrow on its side with a pencil, pointing toward Chen Duo, saying the eraser knows the road and lies facing whoever passed it last. On Thursday the eraser rolled back to Zhou Ming's desk, arrow pointing out. Nobody had said thank you, and the arrow said it for them.

At Friday's class meeting, the teacher found a note on the podium, written by Ma Yue: this week our class lent out one eraser, two rulers, and three pens; nobody said thank you, and nobody quarreled. The eraser was in Zhou Ming's case on Monday and in Chen Duo's case on Friday, having passed through four pencil cases on the way, and each stop added one rule, which together came to a single sentence: when you are missing something, don't panic, someone will always pass it first. When the meeting ended, the eraser lay on the top layer of Chen Duo's case, the little arrow on its side worn nearly invisible, but everyone in our row still recognized the direction it pointed.