隔着课本，针还是动了

活动课刚开始，科学老师只在讲台上放了两样东西：一本厚课本，一块黑色条形磁铁。他说今天不讲课，让我们自己把回形针牵着走。我们组以为他在开玩笑。回形针躺在合上的课本封面正中央，磁铁在课本底下贴着桌面挪，回形针真的动了，压着纸面，一格一格跟着磁铁走，像有一只看不见的手在书底下牵着它。

小宇抢过去试第二遍。他把磁铁挪得太快，回形针跟不上，原地抖了一下就不动了。他放慢速度再试，回形针又稳稳地走起来。我们组围着那本课本，从这头走到那头，回形针在封面上画出一条歪歪扭扭的线。我忽然意识到一件事：课本一直压在上面，它没有让磁力停下来，可磁铁也没有碰到回形针。它们中间隔着三十页纸，照样互相找得到。

问题是从这里开始的。我猜磁铁能穿过所有东西。小宇不信，说他奶奶家冰箱上的磁铁隔着冰箱门都吸不住纸。我们决定一样一样试。第一样是硬纸板，回形针放上面，磁铁在下面走，回形针跟着，穿过去了。第二样是我的手掌。我把回形针放在掌心，磁铁贴着掌心底下移动，回形针在我手心里动，那种感觉非常怪，像有个东西在我的皮肤里面推我，可它明明在外面。第三样是小宇的铝尺。回形针搁在尺面上，磁铁在尺子底下贴着走，回形针纹丝不动。换塑料直尺，也不动。换课本，又动了。

我们把这个发现报给老师：纸能穿，手能穿，铝和塑料不能穿。老师没有直接说对错，只让我们再试一样东西——他把一块铁片放在磁铁和回形针中间。回形针不走了。老师把铁片拿开，回形针又跟着走。他说，磁力不是想穿谁就穿谁，它喜欢铁。铁片一挡，磁力就钻进铁片里出不来了，像水被一块海绵截住。纸、塑料、铝，磁力从它们中间穿过去，不理会它们；铁不一样，铁把磁力留下。

我后来一直记得手掌心里那一动。回形针在我皮肤里走动的时候，我盯着自己的手，第一次觉得看不见的东西也是真的。磁力没有颜色，没有声音，摸上去也摸不到，可它穿过我的手掌去够一枚回形针，而我的手掌拦不住它。那天放学我把条形磁铁和回形针装进书包。回家路上我在想，世界上大概有很多这样的东西，不发光，不出声，隔着东西也在起作用，只是大多数时候，没有一枚回形针替我们把它显出来。

The Needle Moved Through the Book

When the activity class began, our science teacher put only two things on the desk: a thick textbook and a black bar magnet. He said there would be no lecture today. We were to walk a paper clip on our own. Our group thought he was joking. The paper clip lay in the middle of the closed textbook's cover. The magnet slid along the desk beneath the book, and the clip really moved, pressing on the paper, step by step following the magnet, as if an invisible hand were leading it from under the book.

Xiao Yu grabbed it for a second try. He moved the magnet too fast, and the clip could not keep up. It shivered in place and stopped. He slowed down, and the clip

walked steadily again. Our group circled that textbook, walking the clip from one end of the cover to the other, leaving a crooked trail on the paper. It struck me then: the book had been on top the whole time, and it had not stopped the magnetism. The magnet never touched the clip either. Thirty pages lay between them, and they still found each other.

The question started there. I guessed the magnet could pass through everything. Xiao Yu disagreed, saying the magnet on his grandmother's refrigerator cannot hold paper through the door. We decided to test one thing at a time. First, a piece of stiff cardboard: clip on top, magnet below, and the clip followed. It passed. Second, my palm. I set the clip in my open hand and moved the magnet against the underside of my palm. The clip moved inside my hand. The feeling was strange, like something pushing me from within my own skin, though it was clearly outside. Third, Xiao Yu's aluminum ruler. The clip sat on the ruler, the magnet slid beneath it, and the clip did not move at all. We swapped in a plastic ruler. Nothing. Back to the textbook, and it moved again.

We reported our finding to the teacher: paper passes, hands pass, aluminum and plastic do not. He did not say right or wrong. He only asked us to test one more thing. He placed a piece of iron between the magnet and the clip. The clip stopped. He removed the iron, and the clip walked again. He said magnetism does not simply choose to pass through things. It loves iron. When an iron plate stands in the way, the magnetism sinks into the iron and cannot get out, like water caught by a sponge. Paper, plastic, aluminum: magnetism passes through them without noticing. Iron is different. Iron keeps it.

I have always remembered that movement in my palm. As the clip walked inside my skin, I stared at my hand and understood for the first time that invisible things are real too. Magnetism has no color, makes no sound, cannot be touched, yet it crossed my palm to reach a paper clip, and my palm could not stop it. After school that day I put the bar magnet and the clip in my schoolbag. On the way home I thought: there must be many things like that in the world. They give off no light, no sound, and they work through everything between them. It is just that most of the time, no paper clip is there to show them to us.