那半块橡皮

学期末最后一天整理书包，文具盒倒过来抖，哗啦一声，掉出半块橡皮。它躺在地上，边角全磨圆了，中间还留着一道掰开的裂口。我捡起来，忽然想起它是怎么来到我这里的。

那是十一月的一个星期四，数学测验进行到一半，我写错了一个数，伸手去摸橡皮，摸了个空。文具盒里只有铅笔和尺子。我掀开书包，把里面的东西一样一样往外拿，试卷、水杯、跳绳，就是没有橡皮。我的脸开始发烫，卷子上的错号像一个小黑洞，越看越深。同桌小明看见了，没问为什么，从自己文具盒里拿出一块新橡皮。那块橡皮他刚用没几天，还带着文具店的香味。他两只手捏住，咔的一声掰成两半，把大的那半放在我卷子上，说：给你，剩下的我也够用了。我小声说谢谢，他摆摆手，眼睛还盯着自己的卷子。

再往前想，还能想到九月份刚开学换座位那天。老师按高矮排，小明坐我旁边。他个子不高，圆脸，鼻梁上有几粒雀斑，头发短短的，一根根竖着。他坐下第一件事，是用铅笔在两张课桌中间画了一条线，跟我说：过界要举手报告哦。说完自己先笑了。那条线后来早磨没了，我们谁也没报告过。

还有十月底那次值日。我们俩一组扫地，他扫得细，连桌腿底下都要扫出来。一团粘在地上的纸屑，扫帚推不动，他直接蹲下去，用指甲抠下来。垃圾袋口总散，他捏着袋口，我抬着袋底，两个人晃晃悠悠送到楼梯口的垃圾桶。回来的时候天快黑了，教室空空的，只有我们俩的影子被走廊的灯照在墙上。

我把那半块橡皮放回文具盒最里面。它不新了，也不值什么钱，可它是被掰开的，掰开它的那个人每天就坐在教室第三排我右手边的位子上。下学期换座位之前，我想跟他说一声：这条桌子中间的线，咱们别画了。

The Half Eraser

On the last day of the semester I was packing my schoolbag when I turned my pencil case upside down to shake it out. With a clatter, half an eraser fell onto the floor. It lay there, all its corners worn round, a crack still running through the middle where it had been broken. I picked it up, and suddenly I remembered how it had come into my possession.

It was a Thursday in November, halfway through a math test, when I wrote a number wrong and reached for my eraser, only to find nothing there. My pencil case held only pencils and a ruler. I opened my schoolbag and took things out one by one, test papers, water bottle, jump rope, but no eraser. My face began to burn. The wrong mark on my paper looked like a small black hole that grew deeper the more I stared at it. My deskmate Xiao Ming noticed. He did not ask why. He took a new eraser out of his own pencil case. He had used it for only a few days, and it still carried the smell of the stationery shop. He gripped it with both hands and snapped it in two, then placed the larger half on my paper and said, here, take this, the rest is enough for

me too. I whispered thank you. He waved his hand away, his eyes still on his own paper.

Thinking further back, I remember the day in September when we changed seats at the start of the new term. The teacher lined us up by height, and Xiao Ming ended up beside me. He is not tall, with a round face, a few freckles on the bridge of his nose, and short hair standing up strand by strand. The first thing he did after sitting down was draw a line down the middle of our two desks with a pencil and tell me, if anything crosses the line, you have to report it. Then he laughed at his own joke. That line wore away long ago, and neither of us ever reported anything.

And then there was the cleaning duty in late October. The two of us were a team sweeping the floor. He swept carefully, even under the desk legs. A clump of paper scraps stuck to the floor would not budge under the broom, so he crouched down and scraped it off with his fingernails. The trash bag kept opening, so he pinched the mouth of the bag while I lifted the bottom, and we swayed our way down to the bin by the stairs. On the way back it was almost dark. The classroom was empty except for our two shadows thrown on the wall by the hallway light.

I put the half eraser back at the very bottom of my pencil case. It is no longer new and is not worth much, but it was broken in two, and the one who broke it sits every day in the seat to my right, in the third row of the classroom. Before we change seats next term, I want to tell him: this line down the middle of the desk, let us not draw it anymore.