整理作业的最后一晚

暑假的最后一晚，我终于下定决心：把作业整理出来。这件事我已经拖了三天。每天早上我都跟自己说明天一定弄，每天晚上睡觉，桌上那堆东西还是原样。今晚不会再拖了，因为明天早上学校的大门就要重新打开。

我的桌子已经乱了两个多月。语文的暑假作业本压在数学卷子上，英语阅读书被塞在鼠标垫底下，生物观察日记的封面有一圈水渍，那是它在我的水杯旁边泡了一个夏天的证据。散页更多，七月的卷子混着八月的测验，还有几张写完就忘了的草稿。我把它们全部清下来，用抹布把桌面擦干净，开始一科一摞地码。然后对照老师发在班级群里的清单，一项一项打勾：作业本、卷子、阅读笔记、观察日记、读书报告。打完最后一个勾，我长长地出了一口气，像憋了两个月，终于可以呼出来。

整理的过程中我发现一件好笑的事：我七月写的字和八月写的字，完全是两个人。七月的卷子一笔一画，横平竖直，连批改出来的错号都补得整整齐齐；八月的卷子龙飞凤舞，字歪歪扭扭，一看就是赶出来的。我拿着两摞纸笑自己，又拿给爸爸看。他只看了一秒就说：你看，你的字把你这个暑假干了什么都记下来了。卷子上我的手写字，老老实实记录了整个暑假——前半段我还在认真做事，后半段我已经在想怎么开学前补完。

抽屉最底下，压在一沓旧卷子下面，我还找到了暑假日记。我坐在地板上从头翻。和爸爸去钓鱼，钓上来一只旧胶鞋，我们商量好谁也不告诉别人；学做西红柿炒鸡蛋，第一盘糊得烟雾报警器都唱了起来，第二盘我们谁也没提糊的事；骑自行车去县城，来回四十公里，回来两天坐不下凳子。我坐在地板上一个人笑，像个傻子。这些趣事像抽屉底下的鹅卵石，一颗一颗捡起来，还是温的。

作业码好以后，我开始准备开学。新书七月底就领回来了，我用牛皮纸一本一本包好书皮，在书脊上写好名字；新笔、尺子、三角板、一个新错题本装进书包；校服挂在门边的椅子上，免得早上起来是皱的。妈妈说不用急，开学要八点钟才到。可我想今晚就弄完。弄完心里踏实，像客人来之前把地扫干净了。

睡觉前，我站在门口又看了一眼干净的桌子。暑假像一间我住了两个月的房间，现在包好了，要退房了。我有点舍不得：懒觉还没睡够，剧还没追完，骑车还没骑够。可我也有一点兴奋，安安静静的兴奋。下学期上初三，所有人都说那一年不一样，我知道我不能像这两个月这样散着。人得知道什么时候玩，什么时候把东西收起来。现在，是把东西收起来的时候了。

The Last Night of Packing Up My Homework

On the last night of the summer vacation, I finally made up my mind: it was time to pack up my homework. I had been putting this off for three days. Every morning I told myself that tomorrow I would do it, and every night I went to bed with the pile on my desk still untouched. Tonight nobody was going to postpone it anymore, because

tomorrow morning the school gate would open again.

My desk had been a mess for two months. The Chinese holiday workbook lay on top of the math practice papers, the English reading book was squeezed under the mouse pad, and the biology observation journal had a round water stain on its cover because it had spent weeks next to my drinking cup. There were loose sheets everywhere, exam papers from July mixed with quiz papers from August, and a few pages I had written on and then completely forgotten about. I took everything off the desk, wiped the table clean with a cloth, and started making piles, one pile for each subject. Then I checked every item against the list our teacher had sent to the class group chat: workbook, practice papers, reading notes, observation journal, and a book report. When I ticked the last one, I let out a long breath, as if I had been holding it since July and could finally let it go.

While packing, I found something funny. My handwriting in July and my handwriting in August belonged to two different people. The July practice papers were written carefully, character by character, with straight lines, and even the corrections were drawn neatly in the margins. The August papers were scribbled, with characters leaning sideways and strokes flying off the lines, clearly written in a hurry the night before something else was due. I laughed at myself, then showed the two piles to Dad. He looked for only one second and said: see, your handwriting has recorded everything you did this summer. The handwriting on my papers had honestly kept a diary of the whole vacation. In the first half I was still doing things properly, and in the second half I was already thinking about how to catch up before school opened.

At the bottom of the drawer, under a stack of old test papers, I also found my summer diary. I sat down on the floor and read it from the first page. The day I went fishing with Dad and we caught nothing but an old rubber boot, and we agreed never to tell anybody. The day I learned to cook tomato and egg stir-fry and burned the first plate so badly that the smoke alarm started singing, and we ate the second plate without mentioning it. The day I rode my bike all the way to the county town, forty kilometers there and back, and my legs hurt so much that I could not sit down properly for two days. I laughed by myself on the floor like a fool. These funny moments were like pebbles at the bottom of a drawer, and when I picked them up one by one, they were still warm.

After the homework was packed into the drawer, I started getting ready for the new term. The new textbooks had already been handed out at the end of July, so I wrapped the covers one by one with brown paper and wrote my name on the spine of each book. I put new pens, a ruler, a set of triangles, and a fresh mistake notebook into my schoolbag, and hung my school uniform on the chair by the door so that it would not be wrinkled in the morning. Mom said there was no hurry, that school did not start until eight o'clock. But I wanted to finish it tonight. Finishing it made me

feel calm, the way a clean floor makes you feel before guests arrive.

Before bed, I stood in the doorway and looked at the clean desk one more time. The summer vacation is like a room I have lived in for two months, and now the bag is packed and I am about to check out. I feel reluctant. I have not finished sleeping late, not finished the TV series, not finished riding my bike around town with nowhere to be. But I also feel a little excited, in a quiet way. Next term I am in the third year of middle school, the last year before the entrance exam, and everybody says it will be different. I know I cannot be as scattered as I was in these two months. A person has to know when to play and when to put things away. Right now, it is time to put things away.

暑假结束时,我站在孩子旁边

星期天的晚上，我往儿子房间走，准备催他赶紧把作业收收尾。去年这个时候，这是一年里最让我头疼的事：他坐在书桌里面，我坐在书桌外面，我催一次、两次、三次，到第三次我火气上来，到第四次他就哭了，作业还是空着，夜也白白过去，第二天晚上再从同一个地方开始。

可门一开，我愣在门口。他正在自己整理作业。一科一摞，码得整整齐齐，对照一张他自己抄的清单打勾，数学卷子还从1到14编了序号，说这样夹在文件袋里就不会乱。他抬头看见我站在门口，说：妈，我快弄完了，就剩英语阅读记录。我说哦，那你慢慢弄，就安静地站在他床边看。我忽然反应过来：他不需要我催了。这个变化是什么时候发生的？也许是七月里我决定不再陪坐、不再替他收拾桌子的时候，也许还要早。孩子是在大人不留神的时候长大的。

过了一会儿，他把我叫过去，非要看他的暑假日记。他念他学做饭那一页：第一盘鸡蛋粘在锅底，铲子铲不下来，爸爸拿勺子挖出来的，那天晚上我们吃了糊鸡蛋炒饭，谁也没说糊，笑了整整一个星期。我们俩站在房间里笑到肚子疼。我趁这个由头回顾了这个暑假，发现它跟往年的不一样：他开始跟我去菜市场，一路自己拎着最重的那袋；他自己拿螺丝刀把房门松了的合页拧紧了，门不坠了，他退后两步看了看，像个小工程师。这些事都不在作业清单上，没有老师会检查，可在我心里，它们比作业值钱。

准备开学，今年也是一起弄的。我们一起装书包，买笔、本子、新的文件袋，然后坐在餐桌旁谈初三的打算。过去都是我说得多，定计划、下命令；这一次他说得比我多。他说数学要单做一个错题本，因为他翻了上学期的卷子，发现自己错的来来回回就是那两类；他说每天晚饭前要去操场跑步，因为去年体测是他成绩单上唯一的难看数字。我大部分时间就在旁边说：行，行，好，好。当孩子开始自己定计划，家长最好的工作就是听着。

晚上躺在床上，我想了很久。对家长来说，暑假结束的时刻，就是看着孩子又长一截、而且不用人推的时刻。去年我还在替他管暑假，今年我站在旁边，看他管他自己。原来放手多一点，不是失控，是给孩子留出让你惊喜的地方。今年我要是多催那一次，就看不见他自己把一切收拾妥当了。这是这个暑假教给我的一课，它不在他收起来的任何一本作业里。

At the End of Summer, I Stood Beside My Child

Sunday night, I walked down the hall about to remind my son to hurry up and finish his summer homework. Last year at this time, this was the most headache-inducing thing of the whole year. He sat on the inside of his desk, I sat on the outside. I reminded him once, twice, three times. By the third reminder my temper was up, and by the fourth he was crying, and the homework was still empty, and the night was wasted, and the next night started all over again from exactly the same place.

But when I opened his door, I stopped in the doorway and stood there. He was packing up his homework by himself. He had made piles, one for each subject, and he was checking them against a list he had copied out by hand on a piece of scrap paper. He had even numbered his math practice papers from one to fourteen, so that they would stay in order inside his folder. He looked up, saw me standing there, and said: Mom, I am almost done, only the English reading log is left. I said: all right, take your time, and I stood quietly by his bed and watched him work. Then it hit me: he does not need me to remind him anymore. When did this change happen? Maybe in July, when I decided to stop sitting next to him and stopped cleaning up his desk after him. Maybe even earlier. Children grow while the grown-ups are not looking.

A little later, he called me over and made me read his summer diary. He read out loud the page about learning to cook: the first plate of eggs stuck to the bottom of the pan, he could not scrape them off with the spatula, so his father came over and dug them out with a spoon, and that night the whole family ate burnt-egg fried rice, and nobody mentioned that it was burnt, and we laughed about it for a full week. We stood there in his room laughing until our stomachs hurt. Then I looked back on this summer myself, and I found that it had been different from the summers before. He had started coming to the market with me and carrying the heaviest bag all the way home by himself. He had fixed the loose hinge of his own door with a screwdriver, and when the door stopped sagging, he stepped back and looked at it like a little engineer. None of these things are on any homework list, and no teacher will ever check them, but in my eyes they are worth more than homework.

Getting ready for the new term was a shared job this year, too. We packed his schoolbag together, bought pens, notebooks, and a new folder, and then we sat at the kitchen table and talked about his third year. In the past, I was the one who talked the most, making plans and giving orders. This time he talked more than I did. He said he wanted a separate mistake notebook for math, because he had looked through his papers from last term and found that he always made the same two kinds of mistakes. He said he wanted to run on the school playground every evening before dinner, because his sports test score last year was the only ugly number on his report card. I mostly just sat there and said: all right, all right, good, good. When

your child starts making his own plans, the best job left for a parent is to listen.

That night, lying in bed, I thought about it for a long time. For a parent, the end of the summer vacation is the moment of watching the child grow one more span without anybody pushing. Last year I was still managing his summer for him; this year I stood beside him and watched him manage it himself. It turns out that letting go a little more is not losing control. It is giving the child the room where he gets to surprise you. If I had reminded him one more time this year, I would have missed watching him put everything in order on his own. This is the lesson this summer vacation taught me, and it is not written in any of the homework he packed away.

暑假在收拾它自己

八月底的一个早上，我看着书桌，忽然感觉到：暑假在收拾它自己。它不出声告别，就是一天一天变小，小到某一天你抬起头，它已经快没了。

语文的暑假作业本写完了，数学卷子做完了，英语阅读书只剩最后三页，一晚上就能收尾。房间角落里的蚊香用完了，冰箱里也没有西瓜了，西瓜的季节跟着一起过去了。冷冻室里的冰棍化成了一整块冰。暑假不是大张旗鼓走的，它一直在悄悄地漏，现在快漏空了。

我决定把作业好好收拾一遍。翻着页码检查的时候，从两张纸中间掉出来一张纸条。是我七月写给同学的：周六上午，骑车下河，谁不来谁是狗。那是这个暑假最好笑也最好的一天。我们四个人推着自行车下河，骑了四十分钟，衣服半脱着就跳进水里，上了岸又比赛谁打的水漂飞得远。那天傍晚回家，我妈拎着一把扫帚在村口等我。可她看见我晒得漆黑的脸和湿淋淋的褂子，把扫帚举起来，看了我两秒，又放下了。现在，隔了几个月捏着这张小纸条，我想笑出声。

这是我上初中以后的第一个暑假，比小学六年加起来都热闹。下午下河游泳；晚上打手电筒去捉蝉，蝉叫得太响，我手里的光柱都跟着抖；下雨的夜里，爸爸带我去桥上看涨水，河水的声音像一辆卡车在桥底下开了一整夜。这些事我都写进了日记。现在翻着日记往回看，像看一部已经看过的电影，还想再看一遍。

准备开学是正经事，因为初二要添一门新课：物理。班主任说，物理是初二最容易入门、也最容易掉队的科目。我给自己定了计划：每天早起二十分钟，早饭前把英语读出声；物理课本在老师讲到之前，自己先看完前三章。我用牛皮纸把新书一本一本包好书皮，削好五支铅笔放进铅笔盒，校服头天晚上就挂出来。我妈笑我小题大做。我不在乎。把这些小事做得像模像样，我才觉得自己真的要上初二了。

暑假和学期像一条河的两岸，明天我就要过桥回去。可过桥不等于把暑假丢了。暑假教了我玩：教会我骑四十公里的车，教会我打水漂，教会我记日记。学期教我学。这两样都是人这辈子要好好学的功课。我最后看了一眼干净的书桌，关了灯，跟暑假说了晚安。

The Summer Vacation Is Packing Itself Up

One morning near the end of August, I looked at my desk and suddenly felt it: the summer vacation is packing itself up. It does not say goodbye out loud. It just gets smaller and smaller, day by day, until one morning you look up and almost all of it is already gone.

The Chinese holiday workbook was finished. The math practice papers were finished. The English reading book had only three pages left, and I could finish them in one evening if I wanted to. In the corner of my room, the mosquito coil had burned out. There was no more watermelon in the fridge, and the watermelon season had gone with it. The popsicles in the freezer had melted into one solid block of ice. The summer did not leave with any big ceremony. It has been leaking away little by little, and now it is almost empty.

I decided to pack up my homework properly. While I was turning the pages and checking them, a folded note fell out from between two sheets. It was a note I had written to a classmate back in July: Saturday morning, bring your bike to the river, and whoever does not come is a dog. That was the funniest and best day of this whole summer. The four of us pushed our bikes down to the river, rode forty minutes to get there, jumped into the water with our shirts only half off, and then stood on the bank competing to see who could skip a flat stone the farthest. When I got home that evening, my mother was waiting at the entrance of the village with a broom in her hand. But when she saw my sunburned black face and my dripping wet shirt, she raised the broom, looked at me for two seconds, and then put the broom back down. Now, months later, holding this little note in my fingers, I want to laugh out loud.

This was my first summer vacation in middle school, and it was more lively than all six years of elementary school put together. We swam in the river in the afternoons. At night I went out with a flashlight to catch cicadas, and the cicadas sang so loudly that the beam of my flashlight shook in my hand. On a rainy night, my father took me to the bridge to watch the flood water rise, and the river sounded like a truck driving under the bridge all night long. I wrote every one of these things into my diary. Now, flipping through the diary to look back at them feels like watching a movie I have already seen, and I still want to watch it one more time.

Getting ready for the new term is serious business, because second year brings a new subject: physics. Our homeroom teacher says that physics is the easiest subject to pick up in second year and also the easiest one to fall behind in. So I made a plan for myself. I will get up twenty minutes earlier every day and read English out loud before breakfast. I will read the first three chapters of the physics textbook before the teacher reaches them in class. I wrapped the covers of the new textbooks with brown paper, sharpened five pencils and put them in the pencil case, and hung my

uniform out the night before. My mother laughed at me for making such a big deal out of it. I did not mind. Doing these small things properly is what makes me feel that I am really about to become a second-year student.

The summer vacation and the school term are like the two banks of a river, and tomorrow I have to cross the bridge back. But crossing the bridge does not mean losing the summer. The summer taught me how to play: it taught me to ride a bike forty kilometers, to skip stones, to keep a diary. The school term teaches me how to learn. Both of them are lessons a person has to study hard at in this life. I looked at my clean desk one last time, turned off the light, and said good night to the summer vacation.