讲台上的空椅子

六一那节班会课，我做了一个从教十一年没做过的决定：不进讲台。上课铃响之前，我把讲台边那把椅子搬到教室最后一排，坐下，对孩子们说，今天这节课归你们，主题是我的节日我做主，我只提三个要求——要谢谢一个帮过你的人，要讲一件让你笑过的事，要自己定一条安全约定。说完我就坐下，把课本合上，像坐在家长会最后一排的家长那样。

主持人是个扎羊角辫的女生，手里捏着彩色笔写的卡片。她报的第一个名字让我心里咯噔一下：林小满。这个孩子一学期主动发言不超过三次，声音小得像怕吵到谁。她真的走上去了，站在马蹄形桌子中间，讲食堂的张阿姨追到楼梯口，把没吃完的馒头掰开说还热着。她讲得快，像怕自己反悔。我坐在最后一排，把这一句记在备课本的空白处。当老师这些年，我习惯了替孩子把话说完整，今天才发现，他们自己的话本来就完整。

好笑的事那个环节，教室的屋顶像要被笑声顶开。种豆烂成泥的、风筝缠上电线杆的、粽子煮成粥的，一个接一个。我环顾教室，三十九个孩子，有二十几个在笑的时候看向同桌或好朋友，笑是要分给具体的人的。我数了数举手的人，十九个。有个我一直担心插不进去的男孩也举了手，讲他爷爷钓鱼钓上来一只靴子，讲完自己先笑弯了腰。他在座位上讲完就坐下了，没上台，主持人也允许了——规则是他们自己的，规则也是活的。

安全约定环节，班长领读。不在马路上追跑，没有大人不去水边，放学结伴出校门，这三条是我教他们喊了两年的口号，今天从他们嘴里领出来，调子都不一样了。第四条我愣住了，是班长自己加的：谁心情不好，我们陪他走一圈操场。这一条全班安安静静跟完。我在备课本上写下这一条的时候，笔停了一下。我教了他们两年安全，他们今天教了我一样我没教过的东西。

下课铃响，主持人跑到最后一排问我：老师，今天算不算开完了。我说算，而且是开得最好的一次。她把主持人卡举起来给我看背面的正字，十九笔。放学时林小满在楼梯口喊张阿姨给她蒸了甜馒头，声音大得整层楼都听见。我站在原地，把备课本上那几行字又看了一遍。空了一节课的讲台，原来不是空，是让。

The Empty Chair at the Podium

During the class meeting on Children's Day, I made a decision I hadn't made in eleven years of teaching: I would not go near the podium. Before the bell, I carried the chair from beside the podium to the very back row, sat down, and told the children: this period belongs to you. The theme is my holiday, run by me. I have only three requirements — thank one person who helped you, tell one thing that made you laugh, and set one safety promise yourselves. Then I sat, closed my textbook, and became something like a parent sitting at the back of a parents' meeting.

The host was a girl with two pigtails, clutching a card written in colored markers. The first name she called made my heart skip: Lin Xiaoman. This child volunteered fewer than three times all term, her voice small as if afraid of disturbing someone. She actually walked up, stood in the middle of the horseshoe of

desks, and told how Auntie Zhang from the canteen chased her to the stairwell, broke open her unfinished bun, and said it's still warm. She spoke fast, as if afraid she'd back out. In the back row I wrote that sentence in the margin of my lesson book. All these years as a teacher I had gotten used to finishing children's sentences for them. Today I discovered their own words were already whole.

During the funny-things segment, the ceiling looked ready to lift off under the laughter. Beans rotted to mud in a cup, a kite tangled on a utility pole, zongzi boiled into porridge — one after another. I looked around the room: thirty-nine children, and more than twenty of them laughed while looking at their deskmate or best friend. Laughter, it turns out, is meant to be shared with specific people. I counted the raised hands: nineteen. A boy I had worried would never fit in also raised his hand and told how his grandfather once fished up a boot, then doubled over laughing at his own story. He told it from his seat without coming up, and the host allowed it — the rules were theirs, and their rules were alive.

For the safety promises, the class monitor led the reciting. No chasing on the road; no water edges without grown-ups; leave the school gate in pairs — three slogans I had drilled for two years, and today led out of their own mouths, they sounded different in tune. The fourth line stopped me cold: it was the monitor's own addition — if someone feels low, we walk one lap of the playground with them. The class echoed that one quietly to the end. When I wrote it into my lesson book, my pen paused. I had taught them safety for two years; today they taught me something I had never taught.

When the bell rang, the host ran to the back row and asked: teacher, did we finish today? I said yes — and it was the best class meeting we ever held. She held up her host card to show the tally marks on the back: nineteen strokes. After school, Lin Xiaoman shouted from the stairwell that Auntie Zhang had steamed her a sweet bun, loud enough for the whole floor to hear. I stood there and read those few lines in my lesson book again. The podium, empty for a whole period, was not empty. It was yielded.