礼物发完以后

傍晚我回教室取教案，讲台上落着一只气球，黄色的，不知道哪个孩子临走摘下来忘带的。我把它系在讲台角上，坐在我的位子上没走。

下午发礼物的场面还在眼前。学校发的是字典，一人一本，我念名字，孩子上来，我递过去，孩子说谢谢。四十多本，念了一个多钟头。轮到阿哲，他上来不接字典，先给我敬了个不太标准的队礼，全班鼓掌，我抬手回了一下，手有点抖。最后剩一本，是给请假在家的小宇的，我打算明天送过去。

中午那顿饭，我坐在教室后头。六一加菜，每个孩子多一个鸡腿。平时打饭最磨蹭的几个，那天自己把饭吃得干干净净。有个孩子举着骨头问我，老师，鸡小时候是不是也过儿童节。我顺着他说，过，鸡的节比你们多一天。他认真想了想，说那鸡比你幸福，你一年才过一次。后头的老师听见，笑出了声。

再往前，是早上。我六点半到教室，跟体育老师一起布置。他爬高挂彩带，我在底下扶椅子，他的鞋带开了，我喊他，他低头看我，椅子晃了一下，两个人都笑。教室后面的黑板报是昨晚出的，板报上画着气球和鼓，我画鼓画得歪，第二天没人提，孩子们只说好看。

七点多，教室空着，气球在讲台角上一鼓一鼓。我坐着想起一件事。三十年前我上小学，六一发礼物，发到手的是个塑料文具盒，我们班主任把自己那份让给一个没带文具盒的同学。我那时候不懂，只觉得那个老师真好看。现在我站在讲台上发字典，忽然就懂了，好看不是长相，是他肯把自己的那份让出去。

我把小宇那本字典放进包里，明天给他，扉页上写什么，我想了一路。写学习进步太官腔，写天天开心又太轻。最后写的是：这本字典陪你，就像今天陪你过的这个节。写完觉得还是别扭，又划掉重写，重写了两遍才满意。

锁教室门的时候，那只黄气球在风里碰着讲台角，发出很轻的声响。我把它取下来带走了，第二天挂在教室后面的黑板边上，底下贴了张小纸条，写着谁的气球。一个星期都没人来认领。后来它就一直挂在那儿，毕业那年，有个学生来摘走了，也没说是他的。

After the Gifts Were Handed Out

In the evening I went back to the classroom for my lesson plans, and a yellow balloon sat on the podium, left behind by some child who picked it off the wall and forgot to carry it out. I tied it to the corner of the podium and sat down at my desk without leaving.

The afternoon gift scene was still before my eyes. The school gave dictionaries, one each. I read names, children came up, I handed them over, children said thank you. Forty-some books took over an hour. When it was A Zhe's turn, he came up and did not take the dictionary first. He gave me a not-quite-standard salute, the class applauded, and I raised my hand in return, my hand shaking a little. One dictionary

remained at the end, for Xiao Yu, who was home sick. I meant to deliver it tomorrow.

At noon I sat at the back of the classroom during lunch. The holiday added a dish, an extra drumstick for every child. The few who are always dawdling over their trays finished everything that day. One child held up his bone and asked, teacher, do chickens have Children's Day when they are little. I played along: they do, chickens get one more day than you. He thought it over seriously and said then chickens are happier than you, you only get one a year. The teacher behind me heard that and laughed out loud.

Further back still was the morning. I arrived at six thirty and decorated with the PE teacher. He climbed high to hang streamers while I held his chair. His shoelace came undone, he looked down at me, the chair wobbled, and we both laughed. The back blackboard had been finished the night before, balloons and a drum drawn on it. My drum came out crooked. Nobody mentioned it the next day; the children only said it looked good.

After seven, the classroom empty, the balloon puffing gently at the corner of the podium, I remembered something. Thirty years ago, in elementary school, Children's Day gifts were plastic pencil boxes, and our homeroom teacher gave her own to a classmate who had none. I did not understand then. I only thought that teacher looked truly fine. Now I stand at the podium handing out dictionaries, and I understand at last. Looking fine is about the face; it is about being willing to give your share away.

I put Xiao Yu's dictionary into my bag. Tomorrow I will hand it over, and all the way home I thought about what to write on the flyleaf. Study harder sounds like an official notice; be happy every day is too light. What I finally wrote was: this dictionary will stay with you, the way today's holiday stayed with you. Then it still felt awkward, so I crossed it out and rewrote, twice, before I was satisfied.

When I locked the classroom, the yellow balloon tapped the corner of the podium in the draft, very softly. I took it home, and the next day I hung it by the back blackboard with a note under it: whose balloon is this. Nobody claimed it for a week. It stayed hanging there after that, and in graduation year a student came and took it down, without saying it was his.