A child's clutter awaits an adult's return

儿时百宝箱 老大归家梦

1 I watch her back her new truck out of the driveway. The vehicle is too large, too expensive. She'd refused to consider a practical car with good gas efficiency and easy to park. It's because of me, I think. She bought it to show me that she could.

我看着她在车道上倒着她的新卡车。车太大，而且太贵。她就是不愿意考虑买辆开起来省油、停起来省心的实用型汽车。我想，原因在我。她买这辆车就是为了让我看看她的能耐。

2 "I'm 18," she'd told me so often that my teeth ached. "I am an adult!"

“我18岁了，”她经常这样对我说，以至于听得我牙都疼了。“我是成年人了！”

3 I thought, is that true? Just yesterday you watched some cartoons. What changed between yesterday and today?

我心想,真的吗？昨天你还在看动画片呢。今天和昨天又能有多大的变化？

4 Today she's gone, off to be an adult far away from me. I'm glad she's gone. It means she made it, and that I'm finally free of 18 years of responsibilities. And yet I wonder if she could take good care of herself.

今天她走了，远离我去寻求成年人的独立。我很高兴她离开了。这意味着她成功了，而我也终于可以从18年的责任中脱身了。但是我还是担心她能不能照顾好自己。

5 She left a mess. Her bathroom is an embarrassment of damp towels, rusted shaving blades, hair in the sink, and nearly empty tubes of toothpaste. I bring a box of big black garbage bags upstairs. Eye shadow, face cream, nail polish — all go into the trash. I dump drawers, sweep shelves clear and clean the sink. When I am finished, it is as neat and impersonal as a hotel bathroom.

她留下的是一片狼藉。她的卫生间真是凌乱不堪，有没拧干的毛巾，有生锈的剃刀片，散落在面盆里的头发，还有几支快挤空了的牙膏。我拿了一盒大号的黑色垃圾袋上了楼。眼影、面霜、指甲油——这些统统扔进垃圾袋。我把抽屉清空，把架子打扫干净，还把面盆擦洗干净。我打扫完后，卫生间就像酒店里的那样井井有条，丝毫没有人情味儿。

6 In her bedroom I find mismatched socks under her bed and purple pants on the closet floor. Desk drawers are filled with school papers, field by year and subject. I catch myself reading through poems and essays, admiring high scores on tests and reading her name, printed or typed neatly in the upper right-hand corner of each paper. I pack the desk contents into a box. Six months, I think. I will give her six months to collect her belongings, and then I will throw them all away. That is fair. Grown-ups pay for storage.

在她的卧室里，我发现床下有不配对的袜子，壁橱底板上扔着紫色的裤子。书桌的抽屉里满是学校的卷子，按照年份和科目归了类。我发现自己竟然在翻看她的诗歌和作文，欣赏着考卷上的高分，端详着每张考卷右上角她用印刷体工工整整书写的或是打印的她的名字。我把书桌里的东西收拾到一个盒子里。六个月，我心想。如果过了六个月她还不来拿她的东西，我就会把它们一股脑儿全扔了。这算讲道理了吧。成年人存放东西是要付费的。

7 I have to pause at the books. Comic books, teen fiction, romantic novels, historical novels, and textbooks. A lifetime of reading; each book beloved. I want to be practical, to stuff them in paper sacks for the used bookstore. But I love books as much as she does, so I stack them onto a single bookshelf to deal with later.

轮到整理书的时候，我有些犹豫了。连环漫画册、青少年小说、言情小说、历史小说，还有课本。阅读是一辈子的事；每本书都是心爱之物。原本我想现实一点，把这些书塞进纸袋，然后送到旧书店。但是我跟女儿一样爱书如命，于是我把她的这些书归置到一个单独的书架上，等日后再作处理。

8 I go for her clothes. Dresses, sweaters, and shoes she hasn't worn since seventh grade are placed into garbage bags. I am a plague of locusts emptying the closet. Two piles grow to clumsy heights: one for charity, the other trash.

接下来，我着手整理她的衣服。那些她从七年级起就不再穿的裙子、毛衣和鞋子都被装进了垃圾袋。就像蝗虫洗劫一样，我清空了壁橱。理出高高的、乱蓬蓬的两大堆东西：一堆捐给慈善机构，另一堆扔掉。

9 There are more shoes, stuffed animals, large and small posters, hair bands, and pink hair curlers. The job grows larger the longer I am at it. How can one girl collect so much in only 18 years?

可是还有更多的鞋子、填充动物玩具、大大小小的招贴画、发箍和粉红色的卷发夹。我越理，要理的东西就越多。一个小姑娘怎么能在短短的18年里收集了这么多东西？

10 I stuff the garbage bags until the plastic strains. I haul them down the stairs, two bags at a time. Donations to charity go into the trunk of my car; trash goes to the curb. I'm earning myself sweat and sore shoulders.

我把东西往垃圾袋里塞，直到塑料袋快要被撑破了。我把垃圾袋拽下楼梯，一次拽两个。要捐给慈善机构的都放在我汽车的后备箱里；要扔掉的都放在路边。我弄得浑身是汗，肩膀酸痛。

11 She left the bedroom a ridiculous mess, the comforter on the floor, the sheets tossed aside. I strip off the comforter, blanket, sheets, and pillows. Once she starts feeding coins into laundry machines, she'll appreciate the years of clean clothes I've provided for free.

她把卧室弄得乱到匪夷所思的地步，盖被掉在地板上，床单掀到一边。我把床罩、毯子、床单和枕套都拆了下来。等到她开始投币洗衣的那一天，她就会感激我这些年来为她无偿提供的干净衣服了。

12 I will turn her room into a crafts room. Or create the fancy guest room I've always wanted.

我打算把她的房间改作手工室，或者改成一间我一直想要的漂亮客房。

13 I turn the bed over. A large brown envelope is marked "DO NOT THROW AWAY." I open it. More papers. I dump the contents onto the floor. There are old family photographs, letters, greeting cards, and love notes from us to her. There are comics clipped from newspapers and magazines. Every single item in this envelope has passed from our hands to hers. These are all things that we gave her. Suddenly, I feel very emotional.

我把床翻了个个儿，只见一个棕色的大信封，上面写着“不要扔掉”。我打开一看，又是纸。我把信封里的东西都倒在地板上。其中有家里的老照片、书信、贺卡、我们写给她的爱心留言，还有从报纸和杂志上剪下的漫画。信封中的每一样东西都是我们亲手给她的。我们以前给她的东西都在这里了。刹那间，我心潮起伏。

14 "DO NOT THROW AWAY".

“不要扔掉”。

15 My kid — my clutter bug — knows me too well. As I read through the cards and notes, I think maybe the truck wasn't such a bad idea, after all. Maybe it helps her to feel less small in a big world.

我的孩子——我那爱收集小玩意儿的收藏迷——对我太了解了。我一边翻看着卡片和留言，一边想：也许她买那辆卡车也不算什么太糟糕的主意。也许这能让置身于大千世界中的她不至于感到太渺小。

16 I reverse myself and bring back the garbage bags from the car and the curb. Clothes and shoes go back into the closet. I remake the bed and pile it with stuffed animals. My husband comes home and calls up the stairs.

我改变了主意，把垃圾袋从车里和路边又拿了回来。衣服和鞋子放回壁橱。重新铺好床，再堆上填充动物玩具。我丈夫回家了，对着楼上喊我。

17 "Just straightening up," I tell him. "Can you find some boxes for her stuff?"

“我把房间稍微整理一下，”我告诉他。“你能找些盒子来装她的东西吗？”

18 He brings up boxes from the basement.

他从地下室拿上来几个盒子。

19 "She left a mess," he says.

“她弄得真乱啊，”他说。

20"I don't mind," I reply. Silence.

“我不介意，”我回答。沉默。

21 Then he says softly, "She's not coming back." I feel my throat tighten at the sadness in his voice. I try hard to keep back my tears.

然后他轻轻地说道：“她不会回来了。”他伤感的语气让我喉头一紧。我努力克制，不让眼泪流下来。

22 My little baby, my dependent child, isn't coming back. But someday my daughter, the independent woman, will return home. Tokens of her childhood will await her. So will we, with open arms.

我的小宝贝儿，那个什么都让我操心的孩子，不再回来了。但是有一天，我的女儿，那位独立的女士，会回来的。家里有她童年的纪念品在等着她。我们也在等着她，张开双臂等她回来。

Time slows down  
那一刻，时光驻足  
1 "Daddy, let's take a walk."  
“爸爸，我们去散散步吧。”  
2 It's an April day in Virginia. He nods, puts his hands on the arms of his wheelchair, whispers something that makes little sense. I try to help him up, but he is too heavy and limp.   
这是弗吉尼亚四月的一天。他点点头，把手放到轮椅的扶手上，嘟哝着谁也听不懂的话。我试着扶他起来，但是他太重了，而且也太虚弱了。  
3 "Come for a walk, and then — I've brought you a surprise."  
“去散散步，然后呢——我给你带来了一个惊喜。”  
4 The white curtains surge in the breeze.   
微风吹过，白色的窗帘飘了起来。  
5 Shivering, he complains it's chilly. "It's cold, I'm tired. Can't we go home now?"  
他哆嗦着，抱怨天太冷。“冷，我累了。我们现在回家不行吗？”  
6 Suddenly we're far away in a time long past in part of a harbor I've never seen before. December, Chicago, I'm five, and cold. One glove is lost. My feet are tired. His legs are longer; he strides quickly through melting snow, toward buildings like airplane sheds with immense doors.   
突然间，我们仿佛回到了很久很久以前，我们来到一个我从来没见过的港口。那时是十二月份，在芝加哥，我五岁，我很冷。一只手套丢了。我也走不动了。他的腿长多了，大步流星地走过正在融化的雪地，走向一群装着大门的像是飞机机库一样的建筑。  
7 This is the most exciting place I have ever been. Suddenly my fatigue is gone. I could walk along here forever, at least until I find out how to get aboard one of the boats.  
这是我到过的最令人兴奋的地方。忽然之间，我的疲惫消失得无影无踪。我可以一直在这里走下去，起码可以一直走到我设法登上其中的一条船为止。  
8 We slow down our pace. Smaller sheds now. A green diner. Smells of fish and smoke. We enter a little hut. Barrels of salty water, string bags of shellfish, bundles of fish laid out on ice.  
我们放慢了脚步。现在我们看到的是一些小一点的货棚，还有一间绿色的小餐馆。四周弥漫着鱼和烟的味道。我们走进一个小棚里。里面是一桶桶的海水，一网兜一网兜的贝类海鲜，还有一捆捆放在冰块上的鱼。  
9 "Daddy, look at that snake!"  
“爸爸，快看那条蛇！”  
10 "No, that's an eel," says Daddy. "Smoked. We'll take a portion home for supper."  
“不，那是鳗鱼，” 爸爸说。“烟熏的。我们买一段回家当晚饭吃。”  
11 "I certainly won't eat that!"  
“我才不吃那个东西呢！”  
12 "All right," he says, and carries the smelly package. As we walk back, he tells me about migrations of eels to the Sargasso Sea: how eels come down Dalmatian rivers and swim across the Mediterranean and then the whole Atlantic, until they reach the warm Sargasso Sea. Here they lay their eggs, and then the baby eels swim back to the native rivers of their parents.  
“好吧，”他说道，然后拿起那包腥味很重的鱼。我们往回走的时候，他给我讲鳗鱼向马尾藻海洄游的故事：鳗鱼怎样从达尔玛提亚地区的河流游过地中海，再游过整个大西洋，直到抵达温暖的马尾藻海。它们在那里产卵，然后幼鱼再游回到它们的父母原先待过的河流。  
13 Back at last in the apartment, he unwraps the eel, opens his pocket knife and slices carefully.  
我们终于回到了公寓。他拆开鳗鱼包，打开折叠小刀，小心地切片。  
14 "I won't eat it," I say suspiciously.  
“我不吃，”我狐疑地说道。  
15 "Try one bite, just for me."  
“尝一口，就算为了我。”  
16 "I won't like it."  
“我不会喜欢它的。”  
17 While he hangs up our coats, I test one pinch. Smelly, smoky, and salty.  
当他在挂我们的外套时，我尝了一丁点儿。很腥，带着烟熏味，还咸咸的。  
18 He goes into the kitchen to heat milk for me and tea for himself. I test another pinch. Then another. He returns with the steaming cups.  
他去厨房帮我热牛奶，并给他自己热茶。我又尝了一丁点儿。然后，又尝了一点儿。他从厨房回来，端着热气腾腾的杯子。  
19 The eel has vanished.  
鳗鱼已经消失得无影无踪了。  
20 Because it is Sunday and I am five, he forgives me. Time slows down and the love flows in — father to daughter and back again.  
因为是星期天，我又只有五岁，他原谅了我。时光在此刻驻足，爱意在此刻流淌——从父亲流向女儿，又从女儿流向父亲。  
21 At 19, I fly out to Japan. My father and I climb Mount Fuji. High above the Pacific, and hours up the slope, we picnic on dried eel, seaweed crackers, and cold rice wrapped in the eel skin. He reaches the peak first.   
十九岁的时候，我飞去日本。父亲和我一起登富士山。我们爬了几小时后，在俯瞰太平洋的山坡上野餐，吃着鳗鱼干、海苔饼干和鳗鱼皮包的冷饭团。他第一个登上山顶。  
22 As the years stretch, we walk along waterways all over the world. With his long stride, he often overtakes me. I've never known anyone with such energy.   
随着岁月的流逝，我们游遍了世界各地的江川湖海。他步子大，所以经常走得比我快。我不知道除了他，还有谁能有如此旺盛的精力。  
23 Some days, time flies with joy all around. Other days, time rots like old fish.   
有些日子，时间在快乐中飞逝，也有些日子会像不新鲜的鱼一样，令人难受。  
24 Today in the nursing home in Virginia, anticipating his reluctance, I beg boldly and encourage him, "Please, Daddy, just a little walk. You are supposed to exercise."  
今天，在弗吉尼亚的养老院里，虽然明知他不太愿意，我还是大胆地请求他、鼓励他：“来吧，爸爸，就走一小会儿。你应该锻炼锻炼。”  
25 He can't get out of his chair. Not that he often gets up on his own, but once in a while he'll suddenly have a surge of strength. I stoop to lift his feet from the foot restraints, fold back the metal pieces which often scrape his delicate, paper-thin skin. "Come, now you can stand."  
他无法从轮椅上站起来。不是说他能常常靠自己站起身来，但是偶尔，他会突然来那么一股子劲儿。我弯下身，把他的脚从脚蹬里拿出来，收起经常把他脆弱的、薄纸般的皮肤擦伤的金属脚踏。“来，你现在可以站起来了。”  
26 He grips the walker and struggles forward. Gradually I lift and pull him to his feet. Standing unsteadily, he sways and then gains his balance.   
他抓住助步车，努力往前起身。慢慢地，我连拖带拽地帮他站了起来。他站在那儿，有点儿不稳，摇摇晃晃，然后才站稳了。  
27 "See, you made it! That's wonderful! All right, I'll be right behind you, my hand in the small of your back. Now — forward, march!"  
“看，你做到了！太好了！好吧，我就跟在你后面，我会用手扶着你的腰。好，往前，往前走！”  
28 He is impatient with the walker as I accompany him to the dining room. I help him to his chair, and hand him a spoon. It slips from his fingers. Pureed tuna is heaped on a plastic plate. I encourage him, sing him old songs, tell stories, but he won't eat. When I lift a spoonful of gray fishy stuff to his mouth, he says politely, "I don't care for any."  
我陪着他往餐厅走，一路上他对助步车很不耐烦。我扶他在椅子上坐下，递给他一把勺子。勺子从他的指间滑落。塑料餐盘上是一堆金枪鱼肉糜。我鼓励他吃，唱老歌给他听，给他讲故事，但是他不肯吃。当我举起一勺灰灰的鱼肉糜送到他嘴边时，他客气地说：“我一点儿也不想吃。”  
29 Nor would I.   
换了我，我也不想吃。  
30 Then I take the small smelly package covered in white wrapping paper from a plastic bag. He loves presents, and he reaches forward with awkward fingers to try to open it. The smell fills the room.  
于是，我从一个塑料袋里取出一小包用白纸包着的带着腥味的东西。他喜欢礼物。他伸手用不怎么灵活手指试着打开纸包。房间里满是鱼腥味。  
31 "Look, Daddy, they've been out of it for months, but at last this morning at the fish seller near the Potomac, I found some smoked eel."  
“看，爸爸，他们已经断货好几个月了。今天早上，我终于在波托马克河附近的鱼贩子那里找到了一些熏鳗鱼。”  
32 We unwrap it, and then I take out the Swiss Army Knife my beloved aunt gave me "for safekeeping", and slice the silvery flesh.   
我们把纸包打开，然后我拿出我亲爱的姨妈送给我的那把“防身用”的瑞士军刀，切开银色的鱼肉。  
33 "What a beautiful picnic," my father beams.  
“多么美妙的野餐啊，”父亲笑容满面地说。  
34 He takes a sip of his champagne, and then with steady fingers picks up a slice of eel and downs it easily. Then another, and another, until he eats the whole piece. And again, time slows down and the love flows in — daughter to father and back again.  
他呷了一口香槟，然后用一点儿也不哆嗦的手指捏起一片鳗鱼肉，轻松地咽了下去。接着，他吃了一片又一片，直到把整块鱼吃完。再一次，时光在此刻驻足，爱意在此刻流淌——从女儿流向父亲，又从父亲流向女儿。