

错过花开的那三天

三月里我感冒了，喉咙疼，请了三天假。在家的那三天，我一边吃药一边惦记学校的事，惦记数学作业，还惦记一件事：花坛那棵桃树的花苞。放假前一天我刚看见它裂了缝，按同桌电话里的说法，再过两三天它就要开了。我偏偏在这两三天里回不了学校。

病假最后一天，我退烧了。妈妈问我要不要再歇一天，我说不用。其实我早上醒来第一个念头就是那朵花——它会不会在我睡着的时候开？开的时候只有它自己知道，那多可惜。

回到学校，我把书包放进座位，第一件事是跑到走廊上往花坛看。桃树上有一朵花开过了，花瓣已经全张开，颜色有点发白，边上有一片卷了起来。它不是刚开的。我站在走廊上，心里空了一下。我错过了它张开的那一下。

同桌看我站着不动，过来说，你走以后第二天它就开了，是我们班先看见的，后来同学们围过来，半个班的人都蹲在花坛边上。她说他们数过，那朵花有五个花瓣，还说要摘，被劳动委员拦住了。她一边说一边比划，说它开的时候太阳刚好照到那根枝。我听着，又可惜又羡慕。那一下我没看见，就永远没看见了。

不过她说完，指着旁边一根枝：还有一个包，给你留着。我跑下去蹲在花坛边看，那个花苞比前几天那个小一点，紫红色，壳边上有一圈毛，顶上还没裂缝。它在枝头晃，我蹲着看它，心里慢慢好受了一点。它还没开，我这次不走了。

从那天起我每天课间都来看它。第一天没变化，第二天缝裂开一条线，第三天花瓣露出一一点粉，卷着。我数得很仔细，因为我不想再错过。第四天中午，风比较大，花瓣张开了一半。放学前的最后一节课间，同学们又围过来，这次我站在最前面。太阳下去一点，光照在花坛的水泥边上。就在那群人中间，那个花苞的缝越裂越大，花瓣一层一层往外翻，最后整朵立起来了。有人喊开了开了，声音不大，但是全班都听见了。

这朵花开的时候，我眼睛一直睁着。我这才明白，花不等人，可是花也不只开一次。第一朵我错过了，第二朵我等到了。以后花坛里的花一朵一朵开，我打算一朵也不错过。

The Three Days I Missed the Bloom

In March I caught a cold, my throat hurt badly, and I asked for three days off. At home, between doses of medicine, I worried about school: about the math homework, and about one more thing, the flower bud on the peach tree by the flower bed. The day before I left, I had just seen a crack open on it, and according to my deskmate on the phone, it would bloom in two or three days. Of all times, I could not go to school in exactly those two or three days.

On the last day of my sick leave, my fever broke. My mother asked if I wanted to rest one more day. I said no. Actually, my first thought when I woke up was that flower. What if it opened while I was asleep? It would open with nobody seeing, and that would be such a pity.

When I got back to school, I dropped my bag at my seat and ran straight to the corridor to look at the flower bed. On the peach tree one flower had already bloomed: its petals were fully spread, the color fading to pale, one edge curling up. It was not freshly opened. I stood in the corridor and felt a hollow in my chest. I had missed the moment it opened.

My deskmate saw me standing there and came over. She said the flower opened on the second day after I left, and our class saw it first; then classmates gathered around, and half the class squatted by the flower bed. She said they counted five petals, and someone tried to pick it but the labor committee member stopped them. She gestured as she talked, saying that when it opened, the sunlight fell right on that branch. I listened, feeling sorry and jealous at the same time. That moment I did not see, I would never see.

Then she pointed to a branch nearby: there is still one bud, saved for you. I ran downstairs and squatted by the flower bed. This bud was a little smaller than the one from before, purple-red, with a ring of fuzz on the husk, its top not yet cracked. It swayed on the branch while I squatted and watched it, and I felt a little better. It had not opened, and this time I would not leave.

From that day on I came to look at it during every break. Nothing changed on the first day; on the second a thin line split open; on the third the petals showed a bit of pink, still curled. I counted carefully, because I did not want to miss it again. At noon on the fourth day the wind was strong and the petals had opened halfway. During the last break before school ended, classmates gathered around again, and this time I stood in front. The sun had sunk a little, and the light fell on the cement edge of the flower bed. Right there among the crowd, the crack in the bud widened, the petals turned outward layer by layer, and at last the whole flower stood up. Someone whispered, it is opening, not loudly, but the whole class heard.

This flower opened with my eyes wide open. I finally understood: flowers do not wait for people, but flowers do not bloom only once. I missed the first one; I caught the second one. From now on, as the flowers in the bed open one by one, I plan not to miss a single one.