

校园后墙的那排花期

学校后墙外是一条旧马路，路边种着一排花树，没人打理，年年自己开。我骑车上学从那里过，第一年只记得好看，第二年才开始数它们。

最先的是玉兰。三月初，别的树还黑着，那几棵玉兰已经举了一树白花，大得像停着一群白鸟。可它开得急，一场倒春寒就打掉大半，剩下的撑不到两个星期，地上全是摔烂的花瓣。我在树下捡过一朵完整的，握在手里，花茎断口是绿的。

玉兰落尽的时候，桃花才上色。粉的一排，从墙根开到电线杆底下，开得慢条斯理，从花苞到全开拖了将近一个月。海棠挨着桃花，红的花苞开成粉白的花，风一吹掉进墙根的草里，也不心疼。最晚的是墙根的蔷薇，五月上旬才开，一墙一墙地爬，开得不管不顾，香气浓得骑车经过都得屏一下气。

第二年春天，我在后墙外停过一次车。那天放学早，我坐在路边的石墩上看那排花。玉兰只剩叶子，绿得发亮；桃花谢了大半，枝头有了小青果；海棠正开着；蔷薇打着密密麻麻的骨朵。同一排树，同一天，各有各的阶段，谁也没抄谁的答案。

我忽然想起自己。初一那年我急着参加物理竞赛班，跟不上，一个学期下来笔记抄了半本，题还是不会，后来退回普通班，反而把力学学扎实了。当时我觉得那半年是浪费，是落后。那天坐在石墩上，我看着那排各开各的花，忽然觉得那半年像玉兰的倒春寒——打掉的花不是白开，它把根往土里又按深了一截。

花期这东西，细想很讲规矩。早开的不一定先谢，晚开的未必不如人。玉兰抢了春天最前面的半个月，代价是挨一场寒流；蔷薇压轴，把整个五月都占了。没有哪棵树能全年都开，也没有哪棵树因为开得晚就少结果。

毕业前的那个五月，蔷薇开得最盛。我推着自行车从墙根走过去，花瓣落在书包上，落在车筐里。我摘了一朵压在字典里，没跟任何人说。

后来很多年，我大概还会路过各种各样的春天。有的春天轮到我开花，有的春天我只配长叶子。我都记得后墙那排花：花开不语，自有时节。轮到谁，谁就开；没轮到，就扎根。

The Row of Blooms Behind the School Wall

Behind the school's back wall ran an old road, and along it stood a row of flowering trees, untended, blooming on their own every year. I biked to school past them. The first year I only remembered that they were pretty. The second year I started keeping count.

The magnolias went first. In early March, when every other tree was still black and bare, those magnolias held up whole trees of white flowers, big as a flock of white birds at rest. But they bloomed in a rush. One late cold snap knocked down most of them, and the rest lasted less than two weeks, the ground under them littered with

bruised petals. I once picked up a whole one under the tree and held it in my hand, its broken stem green at the cut.

Just as the magnolias finished, the peach blossoms took on color. A row of pink, running from the wall root all the way to the telephone pole, opening at a slow, unhurried pace, taking nearly a month from bud to full bloom. The crabapples stood next to the peaches, their red buds opening into pink-white flowers, dropping into the grass by the wall when the wind came, without any regret about it. The last were the roses climbing the wall, blooming only in early May, spreading row after row, reckless, their scent so thick that passing on a bike you had to hold your breath for a moment.

In the second spring, I stopped my bike once outside the back wall. School let out early that day, and I sat on a stone block watching the row. The magnolias had only leaves left, glossy green; the peach blossoms were mostly gone, tiny green fruits on the twigs; the crabapples were in full bloom; the roses wore dense buds all along the wall. The same row of trees, the same day, each in its own stage, none copying another's answers.

I thought of myself suddenly. In seventh grade I had rushed into the physics competition class, could not keep up, filled half a notebook with copied notes yet still could not solve the problems, and was eventually moved back to the regular class, where my mechanics quietly turned solid. Back then I counted that half year as wasted, as falling behind. Sitting on that stone block, watching the row of trees each in its own bloom, I suddenly felt that half year had been the magnolia's late cold snap. The knocked-down blossoms had not opened in vain. They had pressed the roots one notch deeper into the soil.

Flowering seasons, thought through carefully, keep strict order. The early bloomer is not always the first to fade; the late one is not necessarily the loser. The magnolia grabbed the first half month of spring and paid for it with a cold wave; the roses took the finale and owned all of May. No tree blooms all year, and no tree bears less fruit for blooming late.

In that May before graduation, the roses were at their peak. I walked my bike along the wall, petals landing on my backpack, landing in the basket. I picked one and pressed it inside my dictionary, and told no one.

For many years to come, I will probably pass through all kinds of springs. Some springs it will be my turn to bloom; some springs I will only be fit to grow leaves. I will remember that row behind the back wall: flowers bloom without speaking, each keeping its own season. When it is someone's turn, they bloom. When it is not, they put down roots.