

美术课在玉兰树下上的

美术课在玉兰树下上，是三月的事。我们教学楼后面有一棵老玉兰，听说建校时就有了。美术老师带我们围着它画，第一节课画的是花苞。那时树上还没有开，枝子光光的，每个枝头一支毛笔头，灰绿色，毛茸茸。老师说别嫌它难看，让它进画。我画了很久那些苞，画它们怎么在光枝上立着，风摇枝子，苞一动不动。有个同学问，光画苞有什么意思。老师说，等一个星期再来。

一个星期以后再去，满树全白了。画纸当场换掉。那天的课没人说话，只有铅笔在纸上走。玉兰的白不好画，白里有一层一层的影子，花瓣厚，边上有光。我画了一朵半开的，像一支朝天的笔。抬头看整棵树，几百朵一起开着，没有叶子，枝枝都是花，天是灰蓝的，花白得往上浮。老师走过来看我画，说别涂背景，留白，它自己会站住。我照做了，那张画后来贴在教室后墙，贴了一学期。

花落是四月中旬，前后不到二十天。玉兰谢得整齐，整朵整朵落，落在草地上，落在跑道上。体育课自由活动，我们几个去捡落花，一朵一朵都完整，花瓣外面白，背面有一条淡紫的印。我把一朵夹进字典，留到今天。落花那几天树下反而最静，花开时人围着看，花落时没人扫，也没人踩，都绕着走。

后来我常想，那堂课其实教了我们三样东西，都是那棵树教的。含苞的时候画它，学会了等。满树开的时候画它，学会了看。花落满地的时候捡它，学会了送。它开得不吵，落得不惨，从苞到落，前后一个多月，每一天都是那天的样子，不装，不拖。我现在写作业写到心烦，会想起美术课上那些光枝上的苞，风摇枝子，苞一动不动。它让我知道，安静不是没有事发生，是事情正在里头长。

The Art Class Held Under the Yulania

The art class was held under the yulania tree, back in March. Behind our teaching building stands an old yulania, said to have been there since the school was built. Our art teacher took us around it to draw. The first lesson we drew the buds. Nothing had opened yet. The branches were bare, each tip carrying one brush-nib bud, gray-green and fuzzy. The teacher said do not find them ugly, let them into the picture. I drew those buds for a long time, drawing how they stood on the bare branches, how the wind shook the branches but the buds did not move. A classmate asked what the point was of drawing only buds. The teacher said, come back in a week.

A week later, the whole tree was white. We replaced our drawing paper on the spot. Nobody talked that day, only pencils moving on paper. Yulania white is hard to draw. Inside the white there are layers of shadow, the petals thick, light running along their edges. I drew one half-open bloom, like a brush pointing at the sky. Looking up at the whole tree, hundreds of flowers open together, no leaves, every branch all flower, the sky gray-blue, the whiteness floating upward. The teacher walked by, looked at my drawing, and said leave the background blank, the tree will hold itself up. I did, and that drawing hung on the back wall of our classroom for a

whole term.

The flowers fell in mid-April, less than twenty days after opening. Yulania falls neatly, whole flowers at a time, onto the grass, onto the running track. During free time in P.E. class, a few of us picked up the fallen blooms. Every one was complete, white outside, with a faint purple mark on the back of the petals. I pressed one into my dictionary and still keep it. Those days of falling were the quietest under the tree. When the flowers were open, people gathered to look. When they fell, no one swept them, no one stepped on them, everyone walked around.

I often think that class actually taught us three things, all taught by the tree. Drawing it in bud taught me to wait. Drawing it in full bloom taught me to see. Picking up the fallen flowers taught me to let go. It opened without noise and fell without tragedy. From bud to fall, a little over a month, and each day was truly itself, no pretense, no stalling. Now when I get frustrated with homework, I remember those buds on bare branches in art class, the wind shaking the branches, the buds not moving. They taught me that stillness is not nothing happening. It is something growing inside.