

墙角的金瀑布

我们小区后门出去，有一段老墙。墙是青砖砌的，不知道站了多少年，砖缝里长着瓦松和枯黄的狗尾草。墙根堆着碎砖头，谁也不往那儿看一眼。只有我奶奶每次路过都要说一句：这墙，怕是撑不过今年了。

去年冬天，我在墙根看见几根细枝条。说是枝条，其实更像铁丝，灰扑扑的，硬邦邦地从砖缝里探出来，顺着墙往下垂，垂到半路又翘起来，像谁随手画了几道没画完的弧线。那时候树上没有叶子，地上也没有草，那几根枝条就孤零零地挂在冷风里，我猜它们跟墙一样，都撑不了多久。

今年三月初，我放学回家，还没走到墙角，先看见一片黄。起初我以为是谁把黄绸子丢在了那儿，走近了才看清楚，是花。满枝条的花。一根根细枝条上挤满了黄色小花，六瓣的，小指甲那么大，从墙头一直开到墙根，风一过，整面墙的黄都晃起来，真像一道细细的金瀑布。我站在那儿看了很久，书包带子滑到胳膊上都没发觉。

我凑近看那堵墙。花就是从砖缝里长出来的，那缝窄得插不进一根手指，没有土，更没有谁浇过水。墙皮剥落的地方露出里面的碎砖，它就在那碎砖中间扎根，把根往缝的深处钻。它不挑地方，也不等人安排，墙给它一条缝，它就还墙一树春天。

奶奶再来，也站住了。她盯着那墙黄看了半天，说：这墙啊，比我想的争气。我说不是墙争气，是花争气。奶奶笑，说都一样，挨着这么硬的地方，还能开出这么软的花，就是争气。

后来每次路过，我都要绕到那面墙跟前看一眼。花谢了以后，细枝条长出了小叶子，绿得发亮，还是从那条砖缝里出来，还是往风里垂着。我忽然明白，坚韧不是喊出来的口号，它就是那条砖缝里的根，没人看见，也照样往深处钻；它就是那些黄色小花，没人浇水，也照样开满一面墙。

The Golden Waterfall at the Wall Corner

Out the back gate of our neighborhood runs a stretch of old wall. It is built of gray brick, standing there for who knows how many years, its cracks sprouting liveforever and dried-out foxtail grass. Broken bricks are piled at its foot, and nobody ever glances that way. Only my grandmother says the same thing every time we pass: this wall probably won't last another year.

Last winter I noticed a few thin branches at the wall's foot. Branches is generous, for they looked more like wire, dull gray and stiff, poking out of a brick crack, hanging down along the wall, then springing back up halfway, like a few unfinished arcs someone had sketched in the air. No leaves on the trees, no grass on the ground; those bare twigs hung alone in the cold wind, and I figured they were as finished as the wall.

Then one day in early March I came home from school, and before I even reached

the corner I saw a sheet of yellow. At first I thought someone had dropped a piece of yellow silk there. Walking closer, I saw it was flowers, flowers on every branch. Crowded along each thin branch were little yellow blossoms, six petals each, no bigger than a fingernail, running from the top of the wall all the way down to its foot. When the wind passed, the whole wall of yellow shimmered, a slender golden waterfall. I stood there so long that my schoolbag strap slid down to my elbow without my noticing.

I went close and studied the wall. The flowers grew straight out of a brick crack too narrow to fit a finger, with no soil in it and certainly no one to water them. Where the wall's plaster had flaked off, broken brick showed underneath, and that is where the plant drove its roots, pushing them deep into the gap. It does not choose its place and does not wait for anyone to arrange one. If the wall gives it a crack, it gives the wall a whole tree of spring.

When grandmother came by again, she stopped too. She stared at the yellow wall for a long while and said: this wall tries harder than I thought. I said it is not the wall, it is the flower. Grandma laughed and said it is the same thing, to bloom so soft a bloom in so hard a place is trying hard indeed.

After that, every time I passed I made a point of walking over to that wall. After the flowers faded, the thin branches put out small glossy green leaves, still coming from the same brick crack, still hanging down into the wind. I understood then that toughness is never a shouted slogan. It is the root in the brick crack, pushing deeper with nobody watching; it is those little yellow flowers, blooming across an entire wall with nobody to water them.