

春天是从墙角开始的

我们学校的春天，是从花坛来的吗？不是。花坛里的花要到四月才肯露面，三月里它们只是一圈秃土，围着冬青，冻得硬邦邦。真正的春天来得比这早，它在教学楼后墙那个墙角上，先亮了起来。

那个墙角没人注意。墙是水泥刷的白，墙角堆着扫帚、簸箕和几块旧瓷砖。可就在扫帚后头，墙根和地面的接缝里，钻出一丛迎春花。没人栽过它，校工老周说，是鸟叼来的种子。它的枝条细得很，一根一根往下垂，垂到地上又往上翘，乱蓬蓬的，像一把倒过来放的金丝扫帚。

三月初的一个早晨，我抱作业本去办公室，路过墙角，眼角忽然被什么亮了一下。我停下脚步，开花了。昨天还是光枝条，今天一夜之间缀满了黄色小花，一朵一朵，小得像谁拿黄漆在枝条上点了一排点子。我蹲下来看，花上有露水，亮晶晶的；墙根的缝里还留着上一层霜。一边是霜，一边是花，就在同一个墙角里，谁也不让谁，谁也没输。

我开始留意那个墙角，一留意就停不下来了。我发现花不是同时开的：向阳那面的枝条先开，背阴那面晚三天；靠根的矮枝开得密，墙头的高枝开得稀。我发现蜜蜂来得比我们还早，早上七点，花上已经有蜂了。我还发现，扫帚天天在花的旁边挪动，没有一个人知道墙角开过花，全校只有那丛花知道春天来过。

四月，花坛终于热闹起来，同学们围着花坛拍照。没人往后墙走。我不难过，反倒有点得意，好像那个墙角是我一个人的秘密。我绕过去看它，花已经开到最盛，细枝条被花压得弯下去，快扫到地面，黄色小花从墙根一路开到墙头，把半面白墙都映黄了。

后来我常想，春天原来不排队，不从花坛、从公园、从谁安排好的地方开始。它从墙角开始，从砖缝、从没人扫的角落、从一把扫帚背后开始。谁也不请它，它自己来；没有土，它就自己带一点土来。那丛迎春花年年都懂这个道理，所以年年都是它，替我们学校把春天第一个打开。

Spring Begins at the Wall Corner

Does spring at our school come from the flower beds? No. The flowers in the beds will not show their faces until April; in March they are only a ring of bare frozen soil around the privet, hard as stone. The real spring arrives earlier than that. It lights up first at the wall corner behind the teaching building.

Nobody notices that corner. The wall is whitewashed cement, and the corner holds brooms, dustpans, and a few old tiles. But right behind the brooms, out of the seam where the wall foot meets the ground, pushes up a clump of forsythia. Nobody planted it. Old Zhou the caretaker says a bird carried the seed. Its branches are very thin, each one hanging down, touching the ground and then curving back up, tangled like a golden broom set upside down.

One morning in early March, I was carrying exercise books to the office and passed the corner when something flashed at the edge of my eye. I stopped. It had

bloomed. Yesterday bare branches, today every branch studded overnight with little yellow flowers, each one small as a dot of yellow paint dabbed onto the twig. I squatted down. There were dewdrops on the petals, glittering; in the crack at the wall's foot lay the last of the frost. Frost on one side, flowers on the other, in the very same corner, neither giving way, neither losing.

Once I started watching that corner, I could not stop. I found the flowers do not open all at once: the branches on the sunny side bloom first, the shady side three days later; the low branches near the root bloom thick, the high branches at the wall top bloom sparse. I found the bees arrive earlier than we do, for at seven in the morning there are already bees on the flowers. I also found that the brooms move beside those flowers every day, and not one person in the school knows a corner has been blooming; of the whole school, only that clump of flowers knows spring came.

In April the flower beds finally got lively, and classmates gathered around them for photos. Nobody walked to the back wall. I was not sad; I was secretly a little pleased, as if that corner were my private secret. I detoured to see it: the flowers were at their peak, the thin branches bowed almost to the ground under the weight, little yellow flowers running from the wall's foot all the way to its top, tinting half the white wall gold.

I often think about it now: spring does not stand in line after all. It does not begin at the flower beds, or the parks, or wherever someone has arranged for it to begin. It begins at wall corners, in brick cracks, in un-swept corners, behind a broom. Nobody invites it, so it comes on its own; where there is no soil, it brings a little soil with it. That clump of forsythia understands this every year, which is why every year it is the flowers that open spring first on behalf of our school.