

爷爷墙头的迎春花

外婆家的老院有一堵半人高的土墙，墙头长着迎春花。不是谁种的，听妈妈说，她小时候那花就有了，年年从墙头垂下来，像给土墙系了一条绿带子，冬天绿带子变成几根灰褐色的细枝条，硬硬地搭在墙头上。

爷爷的晚年是在这堵墙边过的。他腿脚不好，走不远，每天搬一只竹椅坐在墙根晒太阳，膝上盖一条旧毯子。他不说话的时候居多，就眯着眼看墙头。我看他看墙头，其实多半是看那几根细枝条，冬天里它们一动也不动，像晒在墙头上的干柴，谁都觉得它们死了。

可是每年雨水前后，那些细枝条会自己醒过来。先是枝条上鼓起一排排小疙瘩，然后一夜之间，小疙瘩裂开，钻出黄色小花。花不大，一朵只有黄豆那么大，可它们开得多，从墙这头排到墙那头，把土墙照得发亮。爷爷那天起得格外早，搬着椅子坐在花底下，仰着脸看，看得像个孩子。奶奶喊他吃饭，他不动，说再坐一会儿，花刚开，我陪陪它。

有一年春天，墙让雨水泡塌了一角。爷爷拄着锹去挖，把塌下来的土一点点清开。那截细枝条压在土块底下，压弯了，枝条的皮都裂了口。我们都说这截完了。爷爷不吭声，把土块搬开，找了根布条，把弯下去的枝条轻轻绑在墙头的木桩上。

第二年，那截裂了口的枝条照样开花。黄色小花从裂口上头一朵一朵冒出来，比别处开得还旺。爷爷照旧搬椅子坐在底下，那天他话多，跟我说：花跟人一样，骨头断了接上，照样过日子，还过得热气腾腾。

爷爷走后，奶奶接着坐在墙根。再后来土墙补了又补，迎春花还是年年从墙头垂下来。我每次回去，先去看那截绑过布条的枝条，布条早烂没了，枝条上却有一圈淡淡的印子，像结的疤。春天一到，疤上照样开满黄色小花，一朵挨一朵，开得理直气壮。

The Forsythia on Grandpa's Earthen Wall

The old courtyard at my grandmother's parents' home has an earthen wall half a person high, and forsythia grows along its top. Nobody planted it. Mother says it was there when she was a girl, hanging over the wall edge every year like a green sash tied around the wall; in winter the sash turns into a few gray-brown thin branches lying stiff along the wall top.

Grandpa spent his last years beside that wall. His legs were bad and he could not walk far, so every day he carried a bamboo chair out and sat in the sun at the wall's foot, an old blanket over his knees. He rarely spoke; he mostly sat half-asleep, looking at the top of the wall. When I watched him watching the wall, I was really looking at those thin branches, for in winter they never moved, like firewood drying on the wall, and everyone would have said they were dead.

Yet every year around the Rain Water season, those thin branches wake up by themselves. First little bumps swell along the branches in rows; then overnight the

bumps split, and out come small yellow flowers. Each blossom is no bigger than a soybean, but they come in crowds, lining up from one end of the wall to the other, making the dull earthen wall shine. That day Grandpa got up unusually early, carried his chair under the flowers, and sat looking up at them like a child. Grandma called him to eat; he would not move. Just a little longer, he said. The flowers have just opened; I will keep them company.

One spring, rain soaked through the wall and a corner of it collapsed. Grandpa hobbled over with a shovel and dug out the fallen earth, shovelful by shovelful. One section of thin branch had been pinned under the clods, bent double, its bark split open. We all said that piece was finished. Grandpa said nothing, lifted the clods away, found a strip of cloth, and gently tied the bent branch to a wooden stake on the wall top.

Next year, that split branch bloomed just the same. Little yellow flowers pushed out one by one above the split, more vigorously than anywhere else. Grandpa carried his chair under it as usual, and that day he talked more. Flowers are like people, he told me. Break a bone, set it, and life goes on as before, goes on warm and steaming.

After Grandpa passed away, Grandma took his place in the chair at the wall's foot. Later the earthen wall was patched again and again, and the forsythia still hangs over the wall edge every year. Every time I go back, the first thing I look for is that branch once tied with cloth. The cloth rotted away long ago, but the branch still carries a faint ring of a mark, like a scar. And when spring comes, that scar blooms full of little yellow flowers, one pressed against the next, blooming as if they had every right to.