

# 三十年的那树梨花

教学楼前的梨树今年五十三岁，比我的年纪还大。我调到这所学校的头一年，它就已经是现在这个个头了，春天一开，满树白，白得教学楼的水磨石地面都反光。三十年了，我在它底下送走了二十六届毕业生。

梨树开花有个脾气：不声不响。头天放学还是满树骨朵，第二天早读，靠窗的孩子忽然叫起来，整班人脑袋齐刷刷扭向窗外。早读声停了半分钟，我没喊安静，因为他们都在屏着气看，那样子像迎接一个了不起的人物。下课铃一响，教学楼前就站满了人，高年级的挤不进去，就站在台阶上远远地看。有个学生伸手接住一瓣落花，夹进了语文书里，我看见了，没管。

梨花落的时候更好看。风一过，花瓣一片一片往下旋，落在孩子们的头发上、肩膀上，落在花坛沿上。那几天校园里没人追跑，都走得很慢，好像怕踩坏了地上的白。有年春天正赶上市里检查卫生，花瓣扫不完，我拦住了扫地的校工：让他开完，让他落完，地晚一天扫不要紧。

毕业季的时候，梨树早绿透了。可总有孩子到树下站着不走。有一届一个男生，毕业那天在树下站了很久，后来给我写信说：老师，我那天是想跟树告个别，我在这儿六年，它看着我从一年级到六年级，它是我待得最久的同学。我把这封信在班会上念了，念完没人说话，窗外正好有风。

前年春天，两个毕业多年的学生回母校，专门去梨树下照相。他们如今比我高了，站在树下找当年的位置，比划了半天。临走其中一人摸着树干说：树没变。我听见了，心里动了一下。树当然没变，变的是树下的人，和树下站着的那个我——一年比一年矮下去，一年比一年更会看花。

今年梨花又开了，课间照旧站满了人。我站在走廊上看，忽然不想催他们回教室了。让他们看吧。他们将来会记得很多事，也许不记得我讲过的每一篇课文，但会记得某个春天的早晨，全班一起扭过头去看窗外，记得花瓣落在课本上的那半天课。这就够了。树替学校记着年头，我替孩子们记着他们。

## The Pear Tree of Thirty Years

The pear tree in front of the teaching building is fifty-three this year, older than I am. The first year I was assigned to this school, it already stood at its present height; when it blooms in spring, the whole tree is white, so white that the terrazzo floor of the building reflects it. In thirty years, I have seen twenty-six graduating classes off beneath it.

The pear tree has a temperament about blooming: it does it quietly. One day after school the branches are full of buds; the next morning during reading period, a child by the window suddenly cries out, and every head in the class turns toward the window in one motion. The reading stopped for half a minute. I did not call for silence, because they were all holding their breath, the way one greets a truly important person. When the bell rang, the front of the building filled with people; the older

students who could not push in stood on the steps and watched from afar. One student caught a falling petal in his hand and pressed it into his Chinese textbook. I saw it and let it go.

The falling of the petals is even more beautiful. When the wind passes, petals spiral down one by one, landing on children's hair, on their shoulders, on the edge of the flower bed. For those days nobody ran in the schoolyard; everyone walked slowly, as if afraid to step on the white on the ground. One spring a city inspection happened to fall then, and the petals could not be swept up in time. I stopped the caretaker with his broom: let it finish blooming, let it finish falling. Sweeping a day late is no matter.

By graduation season the pear tree is deep green. Yet children always linger under it. One year a boy stood under the tree for a long time on graduation day, and later wrote me: Teacher, that day I wanted to say goodbye to the tree. I spent six years here; it watched me from first grade to sixth grade; it is the classmate I have known longest. I read that letter at a class meeting. When I finished, nobody spoke, and there happened to be wind outside the window.

The spring before last, two former students long graduated came back to the school and went straight to the pear tree for photos. They are taller than I am now; they hunted for their old positions under the branches and gestured for a long while. As they left, one of them touched the trunk and said: the tree hasn't changed. I heard it, and something stirred in me. Of course the tree hasn't changed. What changes are the people under it, and the me standing under it — sinking a little year by year, and getting better at watching flowers year by year.

The pear blossoms came again this March, and the front of the building filled with people at break as always. I stood in the corridor watching, and suddenly did not want to hurry them back to class. Let them look. In years to come they will remember many things; perhaps not every text I taught, but they will remember a spring morning when the whole class turned to the window together, and the half lesson when petals fell onto their textbooks. That is enough. The tree keeps the school's years; I keep the children for them.