

教学楼前的梅花开过三次了

教学楼前的那棵梅树，是建校那年栽的。学校比我大，梅树比我的教龄大得多。我来这所学校教书的秋天，它刚结过果；今年春天，是我陪它开的第三次花。

三月初的一个课间，班长跑进办公室喊：开了开了，就开了一朵。几十个孩子呼啦一下涌到教学楼前，把梅树围了个里三层外三层，谁也不敢伸手，都踮着脚往里看。那朵花真的只有一朵，在最高的枝子上，粉白的，小得很，风一吹抖两下。孩子们看它的样子，像看一个刚睡醒的同学，屏着气，生怕吵着它。

接下来的两个星期，梅树成了全校的闹钟。今天谁先看见开了五朵，明天谁发现树下落了一层花瓣，都要报告。有孩子拿手机拍，被没收了两部；有孩子在树下背书，说沾沾花香背得快；花坛边的台阶不知什么时候被擦得干干净净，成了固定的看花位。我不止一次把他们从树下赶回教室，转过身，自己又忍不住多看两眼。

花最盛的时候是三月下旬，正好赶上毕业班的百日誓师。年级组同意孩子们到梅树下来合影。六月的风已经热了，梅树满树是叶子，花一朵也没有。孩子们不在乎，照样在树下站成几排，喊完口号，有个平时最调皮的男生忽然说：老师，明年这个时候，我们就看不上了。全年级安静了一瞬，然后快门声响成一片。

那天晚上我批改日记，一个女孩写：梅树开花的时候我们还在读一年级，现在我要毕业了，花还是那样开。它不记得我们，可我记得它。我把这句话读了三遍。

今年三月，花开得比去年早。课间孩子们照旧涌过去，照旧一层一层围着，照旧为谁先看见第一朵争得脸红。我站在办公室窗前看他们，忽然明白这棵树真正开的是什麼。它每年开一次花，提醒我一次：讲台下面这批孩子也会像花一样，开过，谢过，然后长成满树的叶子，散到很远的地方去。我要做的，就是在他们还在树下的日子里，陪他们把每一朵花开的时候都看清楚。

The Plum Tree in Front of the Teaching Building Has Bloomed Three Times

The plum tree in front of the teaching building was planted the year the school was founded. The school is older than I am, and the plum tree is far older than my years of teaching. The autumn I came to this school, it had just fruited; this spring is the third time I see it bloom.

One break in early March, the class monitor ran into the office shouting: it opened, it opened, just one flower. Dozens of children surged out to the front of the teaching building and surrounded the plum tree in layer after layer, nobody daring to reach out, all on tiptoe peering in. That single flower really was single, high on the topmost branch, pink-white, very small, trembling twice in the wind. The way the children looked at it was like looking at a classmate who had just woken up, holding their breath, afraid to disturb it.

For the next two weeks the plum tree became the alarm clock of the whole school. Who first saw five flowers today, who found a layer of petals under the tree tomorrow, everyone reported it. Some children took out phones to photograph it and had two confiscated; some recited textbooks under the tree, claiming the scent made them memorize faster; the steps by the flower bed were cleaned spotless at some point and became the fixed flower-watching spot. More than once I shooed them back to class from under the tree, then turned around and stole another look myself.

The flowers were at their peak in late March, just in time for the graduating class's hundred-day pledge ceremony. The grade office agreed to let the children take group photos under the plum tree. The June wind was already hot; the tree was full of leaves and had not a single flower left. The children did not care. They still lined up in rows under the tree, and after shouting the slogans, the most mischievous boy in the grade suddenly said: Teacher, this time next year, we will not be here to see it. The whole grade went quiet for a moment, and then shutters clicked in a wave.

That night while correcting diaries, I read one girl write: when the plum tree bloomed we were still in first grade, now I am about to graduate, and the flowers still bloom the same way. It does not remember us, but I remember it. I read that sentence three times.

This March the flowers came earlier than last year. At break the children still surged over, still surrounded it layer by layer, still argued red-faced over who saw the first blossom. Standing at the office window watching them, I suddenly understood what this tree truly blooms. It flowers once a year and reminds me once: the children below my podium will also bloom like flowers, fade, then grow into a tree full of leaves and scatter to faraway places. What I can do is, while they are still under the tree, accompany them so they see every blossom clearly.