

花讯员

教学楼前的贴梗海棠是三月十四日开的。那天我进教室，发现讲台上多了一张纸条：老师，海棠开了第一朵，我们班的观察角归我。字迹是小满的。小满是个平时连回答问题都要脸红半天的孩子，我没反对，在班上宣布：行，小满当花讯员，每天报一次花。

贴梗海棠开在老枝上，一朵一朵贴着枝干，红得实在。小满的报告一天比一天像样。头几天只是数字：今天三朵，明天七朵。后来添了细节：向阳那面开得快，背阴那面还睡着；有两只蜂，一早就来；花落了一地，花瓣边上卷起来了。他每天早读前把纸条压在讲台上，字越写越大，像怕谁看不见。

孩子们很快迷上了这件事。课间教学楼前总围着一圈人，男生们装得不在乎，只问小满：今天几朵了？小满答得神气。有孩子提议给海棠起名字，全班投票，选了个土得可爱的：铁杆红。那几天，铁杆红成了我们班暗号，谁上课走神，同桌就小声提醒：铁杆红今天八朵了，你听了没？

四月下旬花谢，小满的报告换成：花谢了，果子出来了，绿豆大。再后来是：果子有花生大了。他把每一张纸条都留着，攒了厚厚一沓，说毕业的时候送给大家看。

毕业前最后一周，孩子们在教学楼前拍毕业照，海棠树满树叶子，绿得发亮。拍完照，小满把那一沓纸条装订好的小册子放在讲台上，又在底下压了一张纸条，只有一行字：老师，花替我们开着，果子替我们长着，我们毕业了。我捏着那张纸条站在讲台上，底下乱哄哄的，孩子们抱着互相签名，没人知道我在看什么。

今年三月十四日，我提前到了教学楼前。第一朵花还没开，枝子上鼓着骨朵。我站在那儿等了一会儿，身后陆陆续续来了几个孩子，不知谁喊了一声：开了开了。其实没开，只是有一个骨朵裂了条细缝。可孩子们都笑了，挤着去看那条缝。我忽然想起小满，想起那沓纸条。花讯员这个差事，我原本只想让一个孩子看看花，没想到花把整个班都看了个遍，也把那个脸红的孩子，看得站到了讲台前。

The Flower Reporter

The flowering quince in front of the teaching building bloomed on March fourteenth. That day when I entered the classroom, I found a note on the podium: Teacher, the quince opened its first flower, and our class observation corner is mine now. The handwriting was Xiaoman's. Xiaoman is a child who normally blushes for half a day just answering a question. I did not object, and announced to the class: fine, Xiaoman is our flower reporter, one report a day.

Flowering quince blooms on old branches, each flower hugging the stem, a solid kind of red. Xiaoman's reports grew better day by day. The first few days were only numbers: three today, seven tomorrow. Then details appeared: the sunny side blooms faster, the shady side is still asleep; two bees came early in the morning; petals fell all over the ground, their edges curling. He pressed a note on the podium before

reading period every day, and his handwriting grew larger and larger, as if afraid someone would not see it.

The children were soon captivated. There was always a ring of people in front of the building at break; the boys pretended not to care and just asked Xiaoman: how many today? Xiaoman answered grandly. Someone proposed giving the quince a name, the class voted, and chose a homely, lovable one: Iron Stem Red. For those days, Iron Stem Red became our class code; when a child drifted off in class, the deskmate would whisper: Iron Stem Red has eight flowers today, did you hear?

In late April the flowers faded, and Xiaoman's reports changed to: flowers gone, fruits out, mung-bean sized. Later: the fruits are peanut-sized now. He kept every note, a thick stack, and said he would hand them out to everyone at graduation.

In the last week before graduation, the children took their class photo in front of the teaching building, the quince tree full of glossy green leaves. Afterward, Xiaoman placed on the podium a small booklet bound from that stack of notes, and under it one more note with a single line: Teacher, the flowers kept blooming for us, the fruits kept growing for us, and now we graduate. I stood at the podium holding that note; below, the children were in an uproar, hugging each other and signing shirts, and nobody knew what I was looking at.

This year on March fourteenth, I arrived at the front of the teaching building early. The first flower had not opened; the branches were swollen with buds. I waited a while, and children trickled in behind me. Someone shouted: it opened, it opened. It had not — only one bud had split a hairline crack. But everyone laughed and squeezed in to look at the crack. I suddenly thought of Xiaoman, and of that stack of notes. The job of flower reporter, I had only meant as a way for one child to look at flowers. I never expected the flowers would take a good look at the whole class instead — and would lift that blushing child, all the way to the front of the podium.