

同桌的花开了，我的还没有

三月第一周，班主任抱进教室三十个小花盆，说每人种一盆万寿菊，从播种到开花，看谁的花开得最好。教室里一下子炸开了。我领了盆，抓了土，把三粒种子按进土里，还在盆壁上贴了名字：五号，林小满。

头一个星期，同桌陈冬的花盆先冒了芽，两片嫩叶像举着的手。第二星期，他的芽长成了巴掌高的苗，叶子挤挤挨挨。我的五号盆还是光光的土面。有同学路过瞟一眼：林小满，你种的是石头吧？全班笑。我把五号盆往窗台里侧挪了挪，没吭声。

四月，陈冬的苗顶上鼓出一个个绿苞，圆头圆脑。又过了几天，开了第一朵，橘红色，像一小团火。全班围着看。我站在自己那盆光土前面，耳朵发烫，放学时赌气地对它说：不浇了，爱开不开。扭头就走。

第二天早读前，班主任在窗台边蹲着，正好被我撞见。她指着五号盆说：过来，摸一下土。我摸，底下是湿的。她说：底下湿，说明它在土里憋着劲呢。你才等了四十天，陈冬的种子比你早下地两个星期。花不赛跑，各有各的时辰。再等等。

我重新浇起来。五月十日，早读铃刚响，后排忽然有人大喊：五号发芽了！我跑过去，土面裂开一道小缝，一个红褐色的小芽顶了出来，比陈冬的芽小一半，可它结结实实地立在那里。六月，它开花，颜色比陈冬的还深，像烧透的炭。

班会课上，班主任让开花的同学讲经验。我讲了一句：我的种子下得晚，芽出得晚，可它没有偷懒，它在土底下一直没停。教室安静了一会儿，然后鼓掌。那天我在日记里写：别人开花的时候，不用慌。我学会了等，也学会了在等的时候，照样浇水。

The Flower of My Deskmate Bloomed and Mine Had Not

In the first week of March, our homeroom teacher carried in thirty small flower pots and announced that each student would grow one marigold, from sowing to bloom, and we would see whose flower opened best. The classroom erupted. I took a pot, grabbed some soil, pressed three seeds into it, and stuck my name on the pot wall: Number Five, Lin Xiaoman.

In the first week, the pot of my deskmate Chen Dong sprouted first, two tender leaves raised like little hands. In the second week, his sprout had grown into a palm-high seedling with crowded leaves. My Number Five pot still showed a bare soil surface. A classmate strolled past and glanced over: Lin Xiaoman, did you plant stones in there? The whole class laughed. I moved Number Five a little inward on the windowsill and said nothing.

In April, round green buds swelled on top of the seedling of Chen Dong. A few days later the first flower opened, orange-red like a small ball of fire. The class gathered around it. I stood before my own bare pot with burning ears, and at

dismissal I said to it in a huff: no more watering, bloom or do not bloom. Then I turned and left.

The next morning before reading class, the homeroom teacher was crouching by the windowsill, right where I ran into her. She pointed at Number Five: come here, touch the soil. I touched it; the bottom was damp. She said: damp below means it is straining away inside. You have waited only forty days; the seeds of Chen Dong went into the soil two weeks earlier than yours. Flowers do not race; each has its own hour. Wait a little longer.

I started watering again. On May 10, just as the morning reading bell rang, someone in the back row shouted: Number Five sprouted! I ran over. The soil surface had cracked open, and a reddish-brown shoot pushed out, half the size of the sprout of Chen Dong, but standing there solidly. In June it bloomed, its color deeper than that of Chen Dong, like fully burned charcoal.

At the class meeting, the teacher asked those whose flowers had bloomed to share experience. I said one thing: my seeds went in late and sprouted late, but they never slacked off; they kept working under the soil. The room went quiet for a moment, then applauded. That day I wrote in my diary: when others bloom, do not panic. I learned to wait, and I learned to keep watering while waiting.