

墙那边的牵牛花

四月天暖起来的那个周末，我在院子篱笆根下种了四粒牵牛花种子。隔壁的王奶奶也在墙根种了一排，还提前搭好了一个竹花架。她递给我一粒她的老种子：这种蓝的皮厚，出芽慢，别心急。我把她的种子和我的种在一起，浇了水，心里盘算着夏天爬满篱笆的样子。

五月，墙那边先有了动静。王奶奶的竹架下钻出几片心形的叶子，顺着竹竿往上绕。到六月，她的花架已经爬满了，每天早上开一架子蓝花，花瓣上还托着露水。整条巷子的孩子都去看。我放学也去看，看完回来自家篱笆根前站一会儿。土还是土，连根须的影子都没有。王奶奶隔墙喊我：孩子，别光看花，牵牛花先扎根，后爬架。根没扎稳，爬上去也会栽下来。

我半信半疑，接着浇水。每天放学先去墙那边看一圈她的花，再回来蹲在自家篱笆根前看一圈土。妈妈笑我：你这是去看别人的花，回来审自己的土。我说：老师说了，看别人是为了学，审自己是为了不灰心。七月里下了场大雨，雨停了我去看篱笆，愣在原地：篱笆根下钻出四条粗藤，比王奶奶的粗一圈，已经绕着竹篱爬了半人高，藤头卷着，正往上够。我跑去敲她家的门，拉她过来看。她眯着眼打量了半天，说：好家伙，你这藤比我的还壮。第二天清早，第一条藤上开了两朵蓝花，比墙那边的还大。

王奶奶过来看，说：你那四粒种子埋得深，根在底下扎了一个多月，扎得比我的深，所以你的藤粗，花也大。她顿了顿又说：地底下的事，眼睛看不见，不等于没有发生。

那个夏天，我家篱笆上的蓝花从七月一直开到九月。我坐在花下写作业，笔停了就抬头看一会儿。我记住了王奶奶那句话。后来有同学笑我某件事做得慢，我也不恼。我知道有的东西慢，是因为它在看不见的地方扎根。墙那边的花先开，是它的时辰；我这边的花后开，也是它的时辰。

The Morning Glories on the Other Side of the Wall

On the weekend when April turned warm, I sowed four morning glory seeds at the foot of our yard fence. Grandma Wang next door sowed a row along her side of the wall and had even set up a bamboo trellis in advance. She handed me one of her old seeds: this blue kind has a thick shell and sprouts slowly, so do not be impatient. I planted her seed together with mine, watered them, and pictured the fence covered in vines by summer.

In May, the other side of the wall stirred first. Heart-shaped leaves pushed out beneath the bamboo trellis of Grandma Wang, winding upward along the poles. By June her trellis was fully covered, and every morning it held a shelf of blue flowers with dew resting on the petals. Children from the whole alley came to look. I went after school too, and after looking I stood a while at the foot of my own fence. The soil was still only soil, with no shadow of a tendril. Grandma Wang called to me over the wall: child, do not only watch the flowers. Morning glories root first, then climb. If the roots are not steady, a vine that climbs will also fall.

I half believed her and kept watering. Every day after school I first walked over to her side of the wall to look at her flowers, then came back to crouch at the foot of my own fence and look at the soil. Mother laughed: so you go to admire the flowers of other people and come home to interrogate your own dirt. I said: our teacher said we look at others to learn, and examine ourselves so as not to lose heart. In July came a heavy rain. When it stopped I went to the fence and froze on the spot: four thick vines had pushed out at the foot of the fence, a ring thicker than those of Grandma Wang, already winding half my height up the bamboo, their tips curled and reaching upward. I ran to knock on her door and pulled her over to see. She squinted at them for a long while and said: well I never, your vines are sturdier than mine. Early the next morning, the first vine held two blue flowers, larger than the ones over the wall.

Grandma Wang came over to look and said: your four seeds went in deep, and their roots spent over a month driving down below, deeper than mine, so your vines are thick and your flowers large. She paused and added: what happens underground is invisible to the eyes, but invisible does not mean it is not happening.

That summer, the blue flowers on our fence bloomed from July to September. I sat under them doing homework, and whenever my pen stopped I looked up for a while. I kept those words of Grandma Wang. Later, when classmates teased me for being slow at something, I did not get angry. I know that some things are slow because they are putting down roots where no one can see. The flowers over the wall opened first, in their hour; the flowers on my side opened later, also in their hour.