

那朵迟开的向日葵

清明前三天，爸爸给了我一小包向日葵种子，和一个底部戳了洞的铁皮罐。我们装满土，用筷子戳了三个浅浅的洞，一粒一粒放进去，再轻轻盖上土。爸爸说：放阳台，每天浇水，一个星期就能发芽。我点头，从那天起，我成了一个有任务的人。

七天过去，土面平平的，像没人睡过的床。十四天过去，还是什么都没有。小区门口看门的爷爷在墙根种了一排向日葵，五月初就高过了我的头顶，顶上顶着圆圆的绿花苞。我放学总要停下来看一会儿。爷爷笑：你那盆在睡觉。我说：怕是种子坏了。爷爷说：种子不会一直睡，它在底下攒力气呢。

我将信将疑，继续浇水。妈妈说：拔了重种吧。我拿着筷子在盆边犹豫了很久，终究没挖。那天晚上，我在纸条上写：向日葵正在攒力气，把纸条贴在盆沿上。从那以后我每天早晚各浇一次水，浇完就蹲在旁边看一会儿。看的时候什么也看不见，可蹲着蹲着，心里那点急就淡了。我还给它写观察日记，连着记了三十多天，每一天都写同一句：土面无动静。写完也不撕，一页一页攒着。

五月十九日早上，我端水出去，忽然一屁股坐在阳台地上。罐子正中间拱起一个小小的绿芽，两片叶子上还顶着一粒土。我扯着嗓子喊：发芽了！发芽了！妈妈手也没擦干就跑过来，爸爸居然还拍了照。我蹲在罐子边数：一个、两个，第三个洞边上也拱起了一个小包。那天上学我跟同桌说了三遍，同桌说：你都说了三遍了。我说：再说三遍也行。从那以后它长得飞快，一天蹿一节，八月里在阳台上开出一只手掌大的花，早上朝着太阳。

楼下爷爷的向日葵谢了，头低垂下来，我的才刚开。我问爷爷：为什么我的开得这么晚？爷爷说：你的种子比我晚埋进土一个月，它在土里多攒了一个月的力气呀。我想了很久。那朵迟开的向日葵让我明白：每个人都有自己的时间，还没开花的，不是被忘掉了，只是在攒力气。

The Sunflower That Bloomed Late

Three days before the Qingming holiday, my father handed me a packet of sunflower seeds and a tin can with holes punched in its bottom. We filled it with soil, poked three shallow holes with a chopstick, dropped the seeds in one by one, and covered them lightly. Father said: put it on the balcony, water it daily, and it will sprout within a week. I nodded, and from that day on I was a person with a duty.

Seven days passed, and the soil surface lay flat as an unoccupied bed. Fourteen days passed, still nothing. Downstairs, the gatekeeper grandpa had planted a row of sunflowers along the wall, and by early May they stood taller than my head, round green buds on their tips. I always stopped to stare on my way home from school. Grandpa laughed: yours must be asleep. I said: maybe the seeds are dead. Grandpa said: seeds do not sleep forever; they are gathering strength underground.

I half believed it and kept watering. Mother said: pull it out and sow again. I held a chopstick over the pot and hesitated a long while, and in the end did not dig. That night I wrote on a slip of paper: the sunflower is gathering strength, and stuck it on the rim of the pot. From then on I watered it morning and evening, and after each watering I crouched beside it for a while. Watching, I could see nothing, yet crouching there the impatience in my heart grew thin. I also kept an observation diary for it, writing the same line for over thirty days in a row: no movement on the soil surface. I never tore the pages out; I saved them one by one.

On the morning of May 19, I carried water out and suddenly sat down on the balcony floor. A small green shoot had pushed up in the middle of the can, its two leaves still carrying a grain of soil. I shouted: it sprouted, it sprouted! Mother ran over with wet hands, and father actually took a photograph. I crouched beside the can and counted: one, two, and a third bump was pushing up by the third hole. At school that day I told my deskmate three times, and he said: you have said it three times already. I said: I could say it three more times. After that it grew fast, a notch taller each day, and in August it opened a palm-sized flower on the balcony, facing the morning sun.

Downstairs the sunflowers of the gatekeeper grandpa had finished blooming and hung their heads, while mine had only just opened. I asked grandpa: why did mine bloom so late? He said: your seeds went into the soil a month later than mine, and they spent an extra month gathering strength. I thought about that for a long time. That late-blooming sunflower taught me: everyone has a time of their own, and one who has not bloomed is not forgotten, only still gathering strength.

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.

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.