

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.