

书里夹着一朵干花

搬家整理书架的时候，一本旧字典从顶上滑下来，啪地摔开。书页里掉出一样东西，轻得落地几乎没有声音。是一朵干花，黄色的，压得扁扁的，颜色褪成了浅米色，花形还完整。花瓣底下压着一张小纸条，纸都黄透了，上面两行铅笔字：送给妈妈。放学路上，我看见它们开了。

我把纸条捏在手里，一下子回到了很多年前的那个周六。那天钢琴课放学，路边石缝里有一丛小黄花。我蹲下去，把它们一朵一朵采下来摆在手心里比。花瓣小的不要，低头的不要，叶子有洞的也不要。蹲到腿都麻了，才挑出最高的一朵，茎直直的，花朝着太阳。

我又配了两朵小白花，用扎头发的橡皮筋捆起来，插在饭桌的空玻璃杯里，写了那张纸条。晚上妈妈下班回来，在饭桌前站了很久，然后笑了，眼睛弯成两道月牙。她问我怎么知道她喜欢花，我说我不知道，我就是想你看会笑。

那天夜里她拿来字典，把花夹进去，上面又盖了张纸，动作轻得像盖被子。我在旁边看着，问为什么要压起来。妈妈说：花会谢，压起来就能一直留着。我当时似懂非懂，只觉得大人真奇怪，一朵蔫掉的花也要留。

现在我懂了。花瓣褪了色，纸条黄了边，可那个周六还在：路牙子边上的小黄花，手心里比来比去的十分钟，橡皮筋上洗发水的味道，妈妈眼角一起亮起来的细纹。全都被这朵干花收着，一收就是这么多年。

我把干花放回字典，合上，塞进新家的书架，放在最顺手的那一层。妈妈从客厅探头问：捡到什么宝贝了？我说：一朵花，你儿子挑了好久的那朵。妈妈走过来看了一眼，没说话，眼睛又弯成了两道月牙，和那个周六一模一样。

窗外正好是春天，楼下的花坛里开着一丛小黄花。我和妈妈都看见了，谁也没有去采。有些花采一朵就够了，剩下的，让它们开着更好看。

A Dried Flower Pressed in a Book

While sorting the bookshelves during our move, an old dictionary slid down from the top shelf and snapped open on the floor. Something fell out of the pages, so light it made almost no sound when it landed. It was a dried flower, yellow, pressed perfectly flat, its color faded to pale beige, its shape still whole. Under the petals was a small note, the paper yellowed through, with two lines of pencil writing: For my mother. I saw them blooming on my way home from school.

I held the note and was thrown straight back to that Saturday years ago. Piano practice had ended, and by the road there was a patch of small yellow flowers in the stone cracks. I squatted down and picked them one by one, laying them on my palm to compare. Not the ones with small petals, not the ones hanging their heads, not the ones with holes in their leaves. My legs went numb from squatting before I finally chose the tallest one, its stem straight, its face toward the sun.

I added two small white flowers, tied them with a hair elastic, stood them in an empty glass jar on the dining table, and wrote that note. In the evening my mother came home from work, stood by the table for a long time, then laughed, her eyes curving like two crescents. She asked how I knew she liked flowers. I said I did not know; I just thought she would smile if she saw them.

That night she fetched the dictionary, pressed the flower inside, covered it with another sheet of paper, her hands as gentle as when pulling up a blanket. I watched and asked why she had to press it. She said flowers fade, but pressed they can be kept forever. I only half understood then, thinking grown-ups were strange to keep even a wilted flower.

Now I understand. The petals faded, the note yellowed at the edges, but that Saturday is still there: the small yellow flowers along the curb, the ten minutes of comparing them on my palm, the smell of shampoo on the hair elastic, the fine lines at the corners of her eyes lighting up together. This dried flower has kept all of it, kept it all these years.

I put the flower back in the dictionary, closed it, and set it on the most reachable shelf in our new home. My mother peeked in from the living room and asked what treasure I had found. I said: a flower, the one your son spent a long time choosing. She came over, took one look, said nothing, and her eyes curved into two crescents again, exactly like that Saturday.

Outside the window it was spring, and a patch of small yellow flowers was blooming in the flowerbed downstairs. We both saw them, and neither of us went to pick any. Some flowers only need to be picked once. The rest look better left where they are.