

放学路边的那束花

周六中午，我从钢琴课回来，路过路边的时候，看见石缝里长着一丛小花。黄的，只有手指那么高，挤挤挨挨地排在路牙子边上，像谁撒了一把小灯。

我蹲下来。第一个念头就是送给妈妈。妈妈周六要上班，早上出门的时候眼睛还肿着，她从来不说累，只是她的包到了晚上好像总是更沉。

我想采，可是不知道采哪一朵。它们看起来都差不多。我就一朵一朵采下来，摆在手心里比。这一朵花瓣太小，那一朵低着头，像刚被谁批评过，这一朵颜色最亮，可叶子上有个洞。我在路边蹲了快十分钟，腿都麻了。

最后我挑了最高的那朵。它长在草边的最外头，茎是直的，花朝着太阳，中间有一点亮亮的金。我捏住茎一掐，啪的一声，脆得我愣了一下。

可是一朵好像有点少。我又采了两朵小白花配在旁边，用文具盒里的橡皮筋把它们捆在一起，成了一小束。橡皮筋是我扎头发用的，上面还有一点洗发水的味道。

回到家，妈妈还没回来。我把花插在饭桌上那个空玻璃杯里，看了一会儿，又撕了张纸条写：送给妈妈。不知道再写什么，想了半天，加了一句：放学路上，我看见它们开了。

晚上门锁一响，妈妈进来，放下包，在饭桌前停住了。她看那杯花看了很久，没有说话，然后她笑了，眼睛弯起来，眼角那些细细的纹路好像一起亮了一下。

她说：你怎么知道妈妈喜欢花？我说：我不知道，我就是想，你看见会笑。妈妈蹲下来抱住我，她的衣角扫过我的脸，凉凉的。

那天夜里，妈妈把那朵花夹进了一本书里，说要压起来收着。我站在旁边看她拿纸把花盖住，她做得很轻，像在给谁盖被子。

后来很多个周六，我从钢琴课回来都会看一眼路边那丛花。它们开了又谢，谢了又开。我再也没有采过。那朵就够了，妈妈已经把它收在书里了。

Wild Flowers by the Road on My Way Home

One Saturday at noon, on my way home from piano practice, I found a patch of tiny flowers growing in the cracks beside the road. They were yellow, no taller than a finger, crowded together along the curb like a handful of little lights someone had dropped.

I squatted down. My first thought was to give them to my mother. She works on Saturdays, and when she leaves home in the morning her eyes are still puffy with sleep. She never says she is tired, but her bag always looks heavier in the evening.

I wanted to pick one, but I did not know which one. They all looked the same to me. So I picked them one by one and laid them on my palm to compare. This one had

petals that were too small. That one hung its head down, as if it had just been scolded. This one had the brightest color, but one leaf had a hole in it. I squatted by the road for almost ten minutes, and my knees went numb.

In the end I chose the tallest one. It stood at the very edge of the grass, its stem straight, its face turned toward the sun, with a dot of bright gold in the center. I pinched the stem and snapped it off. The sound was clean and made me start a little.

But one flower did not feel like enough. I picked two small white ones to go with it, tied them with a hair elastic from my pencil case, and made a tiny bouquet. The elastic was the one I used to tie my hair, and it still smelled faintly of shampoo.

When I got home, my mother had not come back yet. I stood the flowers in an empty glass jar on the dining table, watched them for a while, then wrote a note on a piece of paper: For my mother. I did not know what else to write. I thought for a long time and added one more line: I saw them blooming on my way home from school.

In the evening the door lock turned. My mother came in, put down her bag, and stopped in front of the dining table. She looked at the jar of flowers for a long time without speaking. Then she laughed, and the corners of her eyes crinkled up, as if all the small lines there lit up at once.

She asked how I knew she liked flowers. I said I did not know; I just thought she would smile if she saw them. She squatted down and held me, and the hem of her sleeve brushed my cheek, cool.

That night my mother put the flower into a book and said she would press it and keep it. I watched her lay a piece of paper over it. She did it so carefully, as if she were pulling a blanket up over someone.

Later, on many Saturdays on my way back from piano practice, I looked at that patch of flowers by the road. They bloomed and fell, fell and bloomed. I never picked them again. One flower was enough. My mother had already kept it safe inside a book.