梧桐叶响的时候

窗外的风一起来，梧桐叶哗地响成一片，像很多张纸同时被翻动。我停下笔，那声音一下子把我带回二十多年前的校园。

老校园里有几排梧桐，树干灰白，树皮一块一块剥落，露出底下浅绿的新皮。我们管剥下来的皮叫梧桐纸，卷成筒，比谁的筒长。夏天午后，阳光从叶缝里漏下来，在水泥地上碎成晃动的光斑，我们在那片光斑里跳皮筋、拍洋画、追影子。日头把影子拉得很长，梧桐的影子落在我们身上，一块一块地晃，谁也不躲。

那年我读四年级，六一儿童节的节目在梧桐树下排练。蝉在头顶叫，一声压着一声，白衬衫的后背全湿透了，贴在椅背上，起来的时候带起一小片凉。排练完不觉得累，都惦记着发糖果。节日那天每人一个纸袋，几颗水果糖、一块奶糖，还有一小包冲汽水的粉。我们蹲在水龙头底下，把汽水粉倒进玻璃瓶，咕嘟咕嘟冒泡，举着碰杯，故意碰得很响，洒了也不心疼。糖的甜味、汽水的辣味和梧桐叶的气味混在同一个夏天里，二十年没散。

再往后，是折纸飞机的季节。写废的作业本攒在桌肚里，放学路上折成飞机，从河堤上往树的方向扔。梧桐站在操场边上，像一排举着手的人。风大的日子，飞机能一直飞到树底下，我们追着跑，踩得落叶咔嚓响。有一架挂在了树杈上，我们围着树摇，摇不动，拿石子扔，也扔不下来。第二天它自己落下来了，落在教室窗台上，翅膀翘着，像专门飞回来找我们。

后来老校园拆了，听说那排梧桐没保住。我回去过一次，站在新铺的水泥地上找光斑的位置，什么也找不到，只在砖缝里捡到一小卷翘起的旧树皮，攥在手心里，扎得有点疼。

前几天路过一所小学门口，正赶放学，人流里一个男孩举着纸飞机跑过，机翼在风里抖。我站在原地看了一会儿，没有追上去。

风还在窗外响。我推开窗，让声音进来，坐下来继续写。写到一半抬头，那排梧桐正在风里弯腰，像很多年前我们排着队走过树荫的样子。

When the Plane Tree Leaves Rustle

When the wind rises outside the window, the plane tree leaves roar into one great rustle, like many pages turned at once. I set down my pen, and the sound carries me straight back to the campus of more than twenty years ago.

The old campus had several rows of plane trees, their trunks gray-white, bark peeling off in sheets to reveal pale green new skin underneath. We called the peeled bark plane-tree paper, rolled it into tubes, and competed over whose tube was longest. On summer afternoons, sunlight leaked through the gaps in the leaves and shattered into trembling patches of light on the concrete ground. We jumped rubber bands, slapped picture cards, and chased shadows inside those patches of light. The sun stretched our shadows long; the shadows of the plane trees fell across us, swaying patch by patch, and no one dodged.

That year I was in fourth grade, and our Children's Day program rehearsed under the plane trees. Cicadas screamed overhead, one cry pressing down on the next. The backs of our white shirts were soaked through, stuck to the chair backs, lifting a sliver of cool air when we stood up. We did not feel tired after rehearsal, because we were all thinking about the candy. On the holiday each child got a paper bag: a few fruit candies, a milk candy, and a small packet of soda powder. We crouched under the water tap, poured the powder into glass bottles, watched it bubble and gurgle, raised our bottles for a toast, clinking them loudly on purpose, not minding the spills. The sweetness of candy, the sting of soda, and the smell of plane tree leaves all mixed into the same summer, and twenty years have not scattered them.

Later still came the season of paper airplanes. We saved ruined exercise books in our desk cubbies, folded them into planes on the way home from school, and threw them from the river embankment toward the trees. The plane trees stood at the edge of the playground like a row of people with raised hands. On windy days the planes could sail all the way to the trunks, and we chased after them, crunching the fallen leaves. One plane snagged in a fork of branches. We shook the tree, could not shake it loose, threw pebbles, could not knock it down. The next day it fell by itself, landing on the classroom windowsill, wings cocked, as if it had flown back to find us.

The old campus was later demolished, and I heard that row of plane trees did not survive. I went back once, stood on the newly paved concrete trying to locate where the patches of light used to fall, and found nothing - only a small curled strip of old bark in a brick seam, which I clenched in my palm, pricking a little.

A few days ago I passed a primary school gate at dismissal time, and through the crowd a boy ran past holding up a paper airplane, its wings trembling in the wind. I stood there watching for a while, and did not run after him.

The wind is still rustling outside. I push the window open, let the sound in, sit down, and keep writing. Halfway through I look up: that row of plane trees is bending in the wind, just like us all those years ago, walking in line through the shade.

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