

Afina Liang

Flower by the Creek

As winter secretly crept away, shedding the snowy coat, I anticipated a rain, heavy rain that would mark the beginning of spring. The next day, I smelt fresh earth with tiny sprouts barely reaching their heads and saw the world painted with gentle watercolor pigment. The meticulous use of vibrant green hues creates a relaxing, lively, and mysterious atmosphere after a whole night's pouring. And thus, the arrival also marked the beginning of my springtime habit—strolls in the forest.

Like how one has to eat, it had become a routine inextricable from the three months duration for years. The reason behind it? None. I often found myself drifting towards the impenetrable forest and viewed the walks as an escape from the dull life. Yesterday, when I put on my red sweater and wandered in the forest, perhaps out of boredom or curiosity, I explored deeper than usual and found myself at a newly formed creek. The water was ice-cold and crystal clear, and only algae decorated the bank with spring's touch of revival. Ordinary at first, but with careful examination, there was a delicate red tulip that bloomed earlier than most of its peers.

The tulip shined like a crimson ruby, reflecting sunlight from thin layers of frost. Excited and surprised, I decided to sit down and examine its fine silky texture, as well as the strong fleshy stem. It looked alive, it looked so bright in comparison to the colorless environment, and it was so brave to be the first to face that brutal coldness. As a pretense, the color and beauty almost deceived me to believe it is already mid-spring.

To accelerate the speed of spring, I ran fast back home and brought a shovel to scrape off the glacial frost. I expected more unbloomed buds under the wintry clothing but I did not expect seemingly myriad clusters of all kinds of flowers intertwined together, competing for sunshine.

They were no more than mere dots that did not fit in with the solid brown earth or the icy blue sky. At a closer look, there were also ants and other insects busy welcoming spring. They formed a new kingdom of life imbued with euphoria and new growth. Although the flowers each spring are different from last spring, their common intent to bloom is never changed. And through persevering defiantly against that forceful cold, they will face the sun once more.

Every year, the cycle continues. They live, they wither, and they would reemerge. Compared to the fragile plants, my life is much longer, but can humans ever bloom like flowers do? Given more time, I wish to grow past the bleak snow layer and feel the summery warmth too. I will not forget the magical encounter with the red flower by the creek.