那篇参赛作文，我写的是菜园

去年学校办征文比赛，题目是《我的家》。班主任说，一等奖可以代表学校参加区里的比赛。全班都憋着劲，我也报了名，可坐在桌前想了一个晚上，越想越虚。

我先试着编。编一个深夜妈妈背我去医院的故事太老套，编一个爷爷给我织毛衣又没依据——我爷爷从不织毛衣。写了几行自己看，干巴巴的，像塑料花，颜色挺鲜，就是没有味儿。那晚我把纸揉了，趴在桌上生闷气：我家普普通通，农村的房子，种地的爷爷，哪有那么多感人故事。

第二天放假回乡下，早上起得早，雾还没散，我跟着爷爷去菜园。老井台上结着薄冰，爷爷打水，木桶磕在井沿上咚的一声，雾里格外响。他给青菜浇水，水瓢一歪，水线在雾里散成一层细雾，落下去时菜叶轻轻晃。爷爷的草帽搁在井台上，帽檐滴着水。他蹲着拔草，后背的旧棉袄上沾着草屑，一声不吭。我站在雾里看着，忽然想：我的家不就是这个菜园吗？感人故事不用编，它每天早上都在菜园里发生，只是我从来没把它当回事。

回家我铺开稿纸，从头写这个早晨：老井、木桶、井台上的薄冰、雾里的水线、草帽上的水珠、爷爷后背的草屑。写到爷爷直起腰冲我喊，让我帮忙抬水，我抬着晃，他笑我肩膀太薄。写完了我数了数，两页多，一处编的地方都没有。

作文交上去，过了一个多星期才出结果。我拿了二等奖，没进区赛，站在公示栏前有点失落，又有点不服气。语文老师把我叫去，说评委的意见她转达：这篇不取巧，细节是真的，读的人能走进那个雾天。老师说，二等奖不是终点，是你终于知道该往哪里看了。

奖状我贴在了书桌前。每次看到它，我想起的不是领奖那一刻，而是雾里的菜园和那声井沿上的响。以前我以为好作文靠想象编出惊天动地的事，现在我知道，写真的东西最有力。爷爷的菜园不会讲故事，它只是把老井、晨雾、草帽和一双沾泥的手摆在我面前，剩下的，是我自己去看、去记、去写。

For the Contest Essay I Wrote About the Garden

Last year our school held an essay contest, with the title my home. The homeroom teacher said the first prize would go on to represent the school in the district round. The whole class geared up, and I signed up too, but I sat at my desk thinking all evening and felt emptier and emptier.

I tried inventing first. A story of my mother carrying me to the hospital at midnight was too worn out; writing about my grandpa knitting me a sweater had no basis, since my grandpa never knits. A few lines in, I read it myself: dry as dust, like a plastic flower, bright in color but with no scent. That night I crumpled the paper and sulked face-down on the desk. My family is ordinary, a farmhouse, a grandpa who farms, nothing moving enough to write.

The next day was a holiday, and back in the countryside I woke early before the

fog lifted, and followed grandpa to the garden. The old well rim wore a thin sheet of ice. He drew water, and the wooden bucket knocked against the well edge with a boom that rang extra loud through the fog. He watered the greens; the dipper tilted, and the stream of water broke into a fine mist in the fog before settling, making the leaves sway gently. His straw hat rested on the well rim, its brim dripping. He crouched pulling weeds, bits of grass stuck to the old padded jacket on his back, saying nothing. I stood in the fog watching, and it struck me: is not this garden my home? Moving stories need no invention. They happen in the garden every morning; I had simply never treated them as anything.

Back home I spread out manuscript paper and wrote that morning from the beginning: the old well, the wooden bucket, the thin ice on the rim, the water line in the fog, the beads on the straw hat, the grass bits on grandpa back. I wrote how he straightened up and shouted for me to help carry water, how I walked unsteadily with the bucket, and how he laughed that my shoulders were too thin. When I finished I counted: over two pages, and not one invented spot in them.

The essay went in, and the results came more than a week later. I won second prize and did not advance to the district round. Standing before the notice board I felt a little down and a little unconvinced. The language teacher called me aside and passed on the judges note: this piece takes no shortcuts; the details are real, and the reader can walk into that foggy morning. She said second prize is not the end but proof that you finally know where to look.

I pasted the certificate above my desk. Every time I see it, what comes back is not the moment of receiving it but the garden in the fog and that single boom against the well rim. I used to think a good essay meant inventing earth-shaking events out of imagination. Now I know that writing what is real carries the most force. Grandpa garden never tells a story; it simply lays the old well, the morning fog, the straw hat, and a pair of muddy hands in front of me. The rest is mine to see, to record, and to write.