那架丝瓜教会我别跟难题绕路

初三开学前那个暑假，爷爷的丝瓜架出了个难题，也解开了我心里另一个难题。

那阵子我在补物理，电学和力学搅在一起，越学越烦。一遇到难题我就绕：看两分钟没头绪，就翻答案，看不懂就跳过，反正作业对付完了。我妈说我这是假用功，我顶嘴说我学了，其实心里清楚，我专挑自己会做的题做，难的绕着走。

菜园里那排丝瓜，爷爷插的竹架一人多高。有一根藤不知怎么搞的，爬到半架就往下垂，眼看要在地上趴着长。我心疼它，找了根布条想把藤拉直绑上架，爷爷一把按住我的手：别绑，它自己会找。我不服气：它往下垂，再不帮就废了。爷爷蹲下来指着藤尖给我看：你看它的卷须，往哪边探。我凑近看，那些细卷须真的在空中一圈一圈地探，碰到竹竿就缠上去，缠得紧紧的。垂下来的那段藤，第二天早上竟然自己拐了个弯，卷须够到了一根横竿，整根藤又抬起了头。

爷爷说：你替它爬，它自己的卷须就废了，风一吹全塌。它自己一圈一圈探出来的架，八级风也吹不落。我站在架下看了半天，脸上有点烧。我学物理，就是在替丝瓜爬架：答案一翻，难题就绕过去了，我的脑子没有探过，没有缠上过。题目做没做对像藤直不直，可卷须废没废，只有风来了才知道——考试就是那场风。

开学后我改了办法。物理难题先给自己一刻钟，像卷须一样一圈一圈探：画受力图、列已知条件、翻回课本找对应的公式，探到缠上为止。头一个星期慢得吓人，一道题耗半小时，可缠上之后那种踏实，跟抄答案完全两回事。第一次月考物理四十七分，第二次五十六，中考我物理考了全班第五。

毕业前的周末我回乡下，丝瓜架上挂着七八根老丝瓜，爷爷留作种子，藤还缠在架上，一圈一圈的卷须把竹竿箍得死死的。爷爷摘了一根给我妈煮汤。我坐在架下，看那些卷须，忽然明白：学习没有绕路的藤，每一道难题都是我的竹竿，我的脑子得自己一圈一圈缠上去。这是菜园教我的，比任何补习班都管用。

That Loofah Trellis Taught Me Not to Dodge Hard Problems

That summer before ninth grade started, grandpa loofah trellis posed a problem in the garden, and it untangled another problem inside my heart.

Around that time I was catching up on physics, electricity and mechanics tangled together, and the more I studied the more frustrated I got. Whenever a hard problem appeared I dodged it: two minutes without a clue, I flipped to the answer; if I could not follow it, I skipped it, and the homework got finished one way or another. My mother said I was studying in appearance only. I talked back that I did study, while inside I knew the truth: I picked only problems I could do and walked around the hard ones.

In the garden stood a row of loofah trellises of bamboo, taller than a person. One vine, for some reason, drooped downward halfway up the frame, about to sprawl and

grow along the ground. Feeling sorry for it, I found a cloth strip to pull the vine straight and tie it to the frame. Grandpa caught my hand: do not tie it; it will find its own way. I objected: it is drooping; without help it is ruined. Grandpa crouched and pointed at the vine tip: look at its tendrils, which way they reach. I leaned in. The fine tendrils really were feeling around in the air, circling, and wherever they touched a bamboo pole they coiled on tight. The drooping section, by the next morning, had bent a corner on its own; a tendril had reached a crossbar, and the whole vine lifted its head again.

Grandpa said: if you climb for it, its own tendrils go useless, and one wind brings it all down. A frame the vine found itself, circling and circling, no gale can shake it off. I stood under the trellis a long while, my face burning. My physics study was exactly someone climbing the trellis for the vine: flip the answer and the hard problem was bypassed; my brain had never felt around, never coiled onto anything. Whether the problem looked done was like whether the vine looked straight, but whether the tendrils went useless only the wind can tell, and an exam is that wind.

After school started I changed my method. For a hard physics problem I gave myself fifteen minutes to feel around like a tendril: draw the force diagram, list the knowns, go back to the textbook for the matching formula, keep circling until it coils on. The first week was frighteningly slow, half an hour on one problem, but the solidity after it coiled on was a different thing from copying answers altogether. The first monthly test in physics I got forty-seven; the second, fifty-six; on the entrance exam my physics ranked fifth in the class.

The weekend before graduation I went back to the countryside. Seven or eight old loofahs hung on the trellis, kept by grandpa for seed, the vine still coiled around the frame, its rings of tendrils gripping the bamboo tight. Grandpa picked one for my mother to make soup. Sitting under the trellis watching those tendrils, it came to me: in study there is no vine that takes a detour; every hard problem is my bamboo pole, and my brain must coil onto it ring by ring itself. The garden taught me this, and it works better than any cram school.