蝉鸣里的一天

叫醒我的是蝉。清早五点多，窗纸刚透出一线白，院子里的蝉就一声接一声地试嗓子，像赶集前清点人数。我翻了个身，竹席上还剩一点夜的凉。

祖父已经在菜地里了。他蹲在黄瓜架下绑蔓，草帽压在膝盖上。我跟去帮忙提水，木桶晃出来的水花打湿鞋面。日头还没站起来，蝉叫得松散，一声是一声，听得清它们各自站在哪棵树上。

日头立起来以后，蝉就合成了同一片声音。祖父把活儿收进墙根的桑树荫里，修剪子、搓草绳。荫地不大，刚好站下两个人。桑树叶子厚，蝉就在头顶，叫声贴着耳朵滚，人站在荫里，像躲在一口倒扣的钟下面。祖父手上搓着绳，偶尔抬头看蝉叫的方向，说叫得这样响，说明天还是晴。

晌午，祖母从镇上带回一根冰棍，红心的，攥在手里直冒白汽。我含着它躲进屋后的树荫。冰棍化得比吃得快，糖水顺着手腕往下爬。蝉声在正午稠得化不开，我靠着树干眯起眼，凉从脚底往上走，甜在舌头上化，那根冰棍吃到最后舍不得咬，只用舌头一点点舔，连木签都舔得干干净净。

午睡起来，蝉声矮了半截，日头从正南滑向西边。祖父从井里吊起镇了一下午的西瓜，刀一碰，瓜自己裂开，凉气混着蝉声一起涌进院子。我们坐在树荫底下吃瓜，汁水顺着手肘滴。蝉声这时候变得柔软，一阵长一阵短，像唱累了。祖父把瓜籽吐进墙根，说明天再镇一个。

天黑透之前，最后几只蝉叫了几声就停了。我帮着收桌子，心里有点空，又有点满。空的是蝉不叫了，满的是这一天从早到晚，蝉一直在，荫一直在，甜的东西也来过。暑假还长，我知道明天清早，蝉还会把我叫醒。

One Day Inside the Cicada Song

What woke me was the cicadas. A little past five in the morning, the window paper had just turned pale at the edge, and the cicadas in the courtyard were testing their voices one after another, like vendors counting heads before the market. I turned over; the bamboo mat still held a little of the coolness of the night.

Grandfather was already in the vegetable garden, squatting under the cucumber trellis tying down the vines, his straw hat resting on his knee. I went along to help carry water, and the splashes from the wooden bucket wet my shoes. The sun had not yet risen, and the cicadas sang loosely, note by separate note, and you could hear which tree each one stood on.

Once the sun stood up, the cicadas merged into a single wall of sound. Grandfather moved the work into the shade of the mulberry tree by the wall, trimming branches and twisting straw rope. The patch of shade was small, just enough for two people. The mulberry leaves were thick, the cicadas right overhead, their song rolling against the ears; standing in the shade felt like hiding under an upside-down

bell. Grandfather twisted rope as he worked, occasionally looking up toward where the cicadas sang, saying that such a loud chorus meant tomorrow would stay clear.

At noon, grandmother brought back a popsicle from town, red at the heart, giving off white vapor in my hand. I held it in my mouth and hid in the shade behind the house. It melted faster than I could eat it, and sweet water crawled down my wrist. The cicada song at high noon was too thick to stir; I leaned against the tree trunk and dozed off, coolness rising from my feet, sweetness melting on my tongue. At the end I could not bear to bite the stick, so I licked it little by little, until even the wooden stick was clean.

When I woke from the nap, the cicada song had dropped half its volume, and the sun had slid from due south toward the west. Grandfather hoisted the watermelon he had cooled in the well all afternoon; the knife barely touched it and the melon split open by itself, cold air surging into the courtyard together with the cicada song. We sat under the tree shade eating melon, juice dripping down our elbows. The cicadas had turned soft by then, one phrase long, one short, as if tired of singing. Grandfather spat the seeds toward the base of the wall and said he would cool another one tomorrow.

Before the dark settled completely, the last few cicadas called a couple of times and stopped. I helped clear the table, feeling a little empty and a little full. Empty because the cicadas had stopped; full because from morning to night the cicadas had been there, the shade had been there, and something sweet had come through. The summer vacation was still long, and I knew that tomorrow at dawn the cicadas would wake me again.