午后那场大雨是暑假递来的凉

暑假里的午后，天说变就变。刚才太阳还明晃晃地挂在天上，蝉还叫得起劲，西边的山头上却翻起一团乌云。乌云越滚越大，一层压着一层，把半边天都扣成了铁灰色。风紧起来，卷着地上的碎叶子和尘土，沿着巷子跑，院子里晾着的衣裳扑啦啦响，像有人躲在后面抖被子。

雨点先是一滴一滴落的，砸在院子的水泥地上，砸出铜钱大的深色圆印，印子转眼就干了。落着落着，雨点密起来，连成一片，哗的一声，天像破了个口子。雨帘子挂下来，把对面的房子、院墙外的树，全都浇成模糊的水彩画。

我忍不住冲进雨里。外婆在屋里喊，不喊由我。雨点打在胳膊上，有点疼，又痛快。我仰起脸接雨，雨水顺着头发流进脖子，凉得人直缩脖子。我张大嘴，接住几滴雨，雨是凉的，还有一点点甜，像天空发的不要钱的冰棍。

院子里的水洼越积越多，小的连成大的，大的又漫出去，找低的地方流。最大的那个水洼平得像一面镜子，把雨里的天空整个装了进去。雨点落进水洼，一个圆圈套着一个圆圈，水洼忙得不得了，还是把天装得完完整整。雨小些的时候，水洼里的云缝里透出一点亮，竟还藏着一小截彩虹。我蹲在水洼边上看，舍不得动，怕一脚把彩虹踩碎。

雨说停就停了。云开一条缝，太阳探出一角金光，把湿淋淋的世界照得发亮。蚯蚓爬到路面上，树叶亮得像上了漆，空气里全是泥土和青草的味道，深深吸一口，五脏六腑都洗了一遍。外婆端出绿豆汤，我坐在门槛上，一碗见底。抬头，西山上空又挂出一道彩虹，比水洼里那截长得多。

后来我想起许多个暑假的午后，最记得的还是这场大雨。它来得急，走得爽利，把暑气赶跑，把水洼和彩虹留下。原来暑假也会心疼人，那场午后大雨，就是它递来的一份凉。

That Afternoon Downpour Was Summer Handing Us Coolness

On summer afternoons the sky changes its mind at once. The sun had just been hanging bright in the sky and the cicadas were calling loudly, yet a black cloud rolled up over the hills to the west. The cloud grew bigger, layer pushing layer, and the half of the sky turned the gray of iron. The wind tightened, running along the lane with bits of leaves and dust, and the clothes hung out in the yard flapped as if someone behind them were shaking a quilt.

The raindrops fell one by one at first, striking the cement of the yard and leaving dark round marks the size of copper coins, which dried in a blink. As the drops thickened and joined into one sheet, the sky tore open with a roar. Curtains of rain hung down and washed the house opposite and the trees outside the wall into blurred watercolor paintings.

I could not help running out into the rain. Grandmother called from inside, then let me be. The drops stung a little on my arms, yet it felt glorious. I lifted my

face to catch the rain; it ran from my hair into my neck and made me shrink with cold. I opened my mouth wide and caught a few drops. The rain was cool, with a touch of sweetness, like popsicles the sky handed out for free.

The puddles in the yard grew and joined, the big ones spilling over toward the low ground. The largest puddle lay as flat as a mirror, holding the whole rainy sky inside it. Raindrops fell into it, ring after ring, and though the puddle was busy, it kept the sky whole and unbroken. When the rain softened, a little light showed through the clouds in the puddle, and there lay a short piece of rainbow. I squatted at the edge of the puddle and watched, unwilling to move, afraid that one step would trample the rainbow to pieces.

The rain stopped as suddenly as it came. The clouds opened a seam, the sun thrust out a corner of gold, and the soaking world shone. Earthworms crawled onto the path, the leaves glistened as if varnished, and the air was full of the smell of earth and grass; one deep breath washed everything inside me. Grandmother brought out mung bean soup, and I sat on the threshold and finished a bowl to the bottom. Looking up, a rainbow hung over the western hills, far longer than the piece in the puddle.

Later I recalled many summer afternoons, and what I remembered best was this downpour. It came fast and left cleanly, chasing off the heat and leaving puddles and a rainbow behind. Summer turns out to be tender toward people after all; that afternoon rain was a portion of coolness it handed us.