# 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.

# 水洼是阵雨留给孩子的

雨是午后三点落的，落在村后的土路上。土路平时一身白灰，谁走谁扬一身。这场雨把它浇得透湿，颜色深下去，软下去，还留下一串水洼，从村口一直摆到打谷场，像谁随手撒了一地小镜子。

雨一停，我就穿着凉鞋出了门。第一脚我踩得小心翼翼，踩在最小的那个水洼上。水花从鞋边升起，一圈涟漪推着圈往外跑。我抬起脚看，鞋印在水洼里清清楚楚，连鞋底的花纹都在。再踩一脚，水花更高，我笑出了声。

阿贵和小满从巷子那头跑来，三个人立刻开始比赛，看谁踩的水洼大。最大的水洼在打谷场边上，半间屋那么大，边上还立着一块牌子，是大人立来挡土的。我们绕着它转了一圈，谁也不敢先下脚。最后还是阿贵心一横冲了进去，水花溅起半人高，他的白短裤立刻甩满了泥点。他喊，快来，水到脚踝，凉得很。我们跟进去，一人占一角，把水洼踩得四面开花。

水洼里的世界也被我们搅翻了。刚才装在水洼里的云碎成一片一片，天上的蜻蜓点水的圈也被我们的水花盖住。小满忽然指着水洼尖叫，里面有一条小蝌蚪，不知从哪儿被雨带来的。我们围过去看，谁也不许再踩，绕着它换了个方向，又去踩别的水洼。

回家前，我们排成一排，从打谷场往村里走，专挑水洼踩，一路踩出一长串啪啪的响声。裤腿全湿了，鞋里咕叽咕叽响，没人管。路过晒场，几个大人笑我们，我们也笑，笑得更大声。

后来我离了村，在城里见过许多雨。有一天下公交，站台上有个小孩趁妈妈低头看手机，一脚踩进路边的水洼，水花溅起来，他笑得直躲。我站在雨棚下，脚忽然也痒。原来水洼一直留在原地，等一个想起它的人，把快乐重新踩出声音。

# The Puddles Are What the Shower Left for Children

The rain fell at three in the afternoon, onto the dirt road behind the village. The road wore a coat of white dust in ordinary times, and whoever walked it kicked up a cloud of it. This rain soaked it through; its color deepened, it softened, and it left a string of puddles stretching from the village entrance all the way to the threshing ground, like small mirrors someone had scattered on the way.

As soon as the rain stopped, I went out in my sandals. My first step was careful, landing on the smallest puddle. A splash rose along the shoe, and rings of ripples pushed outward. I lifted my foot to look: the footprint stood clear in the puddle, even the pattern of the sole. I stepped again, the splash jumped higher, and I laughed out loud.

A Gui and Xiao Man came running from the end of the lane, and the three of us at once began a contest over who could stomp the biggest puddle. The largest lay at the edge of the threshing ground, half the size of a room, with a board standing beside it that the grown-ups had set up to keep the dust down. We circled it once, none of us daring to step in first. In the end A Gui made up his mind and charged in; the spray rose half a person high, and his white shorts were instantly dotted with mud. He shouted, come on in, the water reaches the ankle, it is wonderfully cool. We followed and each took a corner, making the puddle bloom on all four sides.

The world inside the puddles got overturned by us too. The clouds that had been stored in the water broke into piece after piece, and the rings of the dragonflies skimming the surface were covered over by our splashes. Xiao Man suddenly pointed at a puddle and screamed: inside it was a tiny tadpole, carried there by the rain from somewhere unknown. We gathered around to look, nobody was allowed to step near it again, and we moved around it to another direction and went on to stomp other puddles.

Before going home we lined up and walked from the threshing ground into the village, stepping deliberately into every puddle, making a long string of slapping sounds all the way. Our trouser legs were soaked, our shoes squelched, and nobody cared. Passing the drying yard, a few grown-ups laughed at us, and we laughed too, louder.

Later I left the village and saw much rain in the city. One day as I got off the bus, a child on the stop, while his mother looked down at her phone, stomped one foot into a puddle by the road; the splash flew up and he laughed as he dodged. I stood under the rain shelter, and my feet suddenly itched too. It turns out the puddles have always stayed in place, waiting for someone who remembers them to stomp the joy back into sound.

# 屋檐下的听众

外婆说过，夏天的雨是客人，说来就来，不摆架子。那个午后我在屋檐下乘凉，亲眼见这位客人进村。先是村东头的狗叫了两声，不叫了。抬头，一片乌云顺着天顶过来，像有人拿大笔把天空往回涂。接着风进了村，枣树的叶子翻出背面，满树银绿。外婆不慌不忙，从檐下起身去收晾绳上的衣裳，动作和平时收衣裳没有两样，好像雨是约好的。

雨点先落在瓦上，嗒、嗒，像谁在房顶数数。数到一半，雨点齐了，整片瓦响成一片，声音却不难听，密密的，像织布机开动了。檐口垂下一排水线。院里的木盆没扣过来，正好接住一捧雨，盆里的雨声和瓦上的不一样，咚咚的，闷一些，像另一间屋子在敲鼓。我伸出手指去接檐口的水线，雨点砸在指肚上，一颗一颗，有分量。

我蹲在屋檐下看雨。村路成了浅河，雨点在上面扎满小针脚。邻居家的鸡躲进柴垛底下，探一只眼。对门的小卖部檐下站满了人，谁也不说话，一起看雨。没有人带伞，大家都不急，反正雨总会让路。

雨真的让路了。云往东走，光从云缝里斜下来，把湿了的村子照成亮的。院里的水洼各占一角，最大的那个在石榴树下，把屋檐、晾绳、还有站在檐下的外婆，全都装在里面。水洼里的外婆安安静静，比檐下的外婆年轻。我舍不得走，绕着水洼看，直到太阳把她的倒影照得晃眼。

外婆进灶房，端出一盆放凉的酸梅汤。我们坐在檐下喝，檐上还挂着雨，一滴一滴落进水洼，把石榴树下的倒影又敲散一次。那味道我记了很多年，酸里带甜，甜里带着那场雨的凉。

后来我在城里躲过许多雨，写字楼的檐下、公交站的棚下，雨打在玻璃顶和柏油路上，声音都对，就是少点什么。少的是瓦上的嗒嗒、盆里的咚咚，和那个把倒影养在水洼里的午后。城里的雨是路过，外婆家的雨是进门坐下了，一坐就是许多年，还在我心里落着。

# The Listener Under the Eaves

Grandmother used to say that summer rain is a guest: it comes the moment it thinks of coming, without ceremony. That afternoon I was cooling off under the eaves when I watched this guest enter the village. First the dog at the east end barked twice, then stopped. I looked up: a black cloud was crossing overhead, as if someone were painting the sky back with a huge brush. Then the wind came into the village; the leaves of the jujube tree turned up their undersides, and the whole tree showed silver-green. Grandmother rose unhurriedly from under the eaves to take in the clothes on the line, her movements no different from any ordinary day, as if the rain had been appointed.

The raindrops landed on the tiles first, tap, tap, like someone counting on the roof. Halfway through the counting, the drops fell all together, the whole roof rang into one sound, pleasant somehow, dense as a loom at work. A row of water threads hung from the eaves. The wooden basin in the yard had been left upside up and caught a handful of rain; the sound in the basin differed from the sound on the tiles, a duller drum-drum, like another room beating its drum. I reached out a finger under the eaves and the drops struck the pad of my finger, one by one, each with weight.

I squatted under the eaves and watched the rain. The village road became a shallow river, its surface stitched all over with the stitches of drops. The chickens next door hid under the woodpile, one eye peering out. The front of the little shop across the way filled with standing people, none speaking, all watching the rain together. Nobody carried an umbrella; nobody was in a hurry, since the rain would always give way.

The rain really did give way. The clouds moved east, light slanted down through the seams, and the wet village turned bright. The puddles in the yard each held a corner; the largest one under the pomegranate tree took in the eaves, the clothesline, and Grandmother standing under the eaves, all of it. The grandmother inside the puddle was quiet and younger than the one under the eaves. I could not bear to leave, and circled the puddle watching, until the sun made her reflection dazzle.

Grandmother went into the kitchen and brought out a basin of sour plum drink that had cooled. We sat under the eaves and drank, while rain still hung on the eaves above, dripping into the puddles and scattering the reflection under the pomegranate tree once more. I have remembered that taste for years: sour with sweetness, and the sweetness carrying the coolness of that rain.

Later I sheltered from much rain in the city, under the eaves of office towers and the roofs of bus stops. The rain struck glass tops and asphalt, and the sounds

were all correct, yet something was missing. What was missing was the tap on the tiles, the drum-drum in the basin, and that afternoon that kept a reflection resting in a puddle. Rain in the city only passes by; rain at the house of my grandmother came in and sat down, and it has been sitting there for years, still falling inside me.