弯成问号的背

《爷爷的菜园》里有一个画面，合上书我还看得见。书里的爷爷蹲在豆垄里锄草，从早蹲到晚，起来的时候扶着锄头柄，背弯得像一个大问号。孙子劝他歇，他摇摇头，说草不等人，豆也不等人。他把锄掉的草拢成一堆，说是沤了肥下一畦还能用。连一把草，他都不肯浪费。

去年暑假，我帮爷爷锄过一上午豆地的草。日头刚上来还好，到了晌午，汗顺着下巴滴进土里，腰直起来又落下去，像有一根线拽着。中午坐在树荫里吃饭，我捏自己的后腰，捏出了眼泪。爷爷看见了，没说话，把他那半瓶水递给我。他上午锄的那几垄，比我的多一倍。他手上的茧磨着锄头柄，一下一下，稳得很。我那时才明白书里那个问号是怎么来的。那不是累出来的形状，是年月压出来的。他给这个家弯了几十年，从田里弯到灶台，从我的幼儿园门口弯到我小学教室的后门。

书里的孙子后来在城里想起那片菜园，想起的全是爷爷的背影。我不用以后才想起，我天天都见得到。放学路过菜地，爷爷在里头，我在外头，他直起腰冲我摆手，让我回家吃饭。那个腰直起来的样子很慢，像一页被水压湿的书，要晾一晾才能翻过去。我站在篱笆外头看了好久，直到他进屋关门。

合上书我给自己定了两件事，都不大。第一，从下个星期起，傍晚浇菜的事归我，爷爷坐在畦边石头上看着就行，他看着的时候最高兴。第二，把书里那个孙子换成我：他进城才懂的事，我现在就懂，所以我要把书读好，让爷爷锄草的时候心里不惦记我。书里说，一畦菜，一份情。我想让这份情轮到我这一头。爷爷弯下去的，我替他直起来。

The Back Bent Like a Question Mark

There is a scene in the book The Garden of Grandpa that I still see after closing the cover. The grandfather in the book squats in the bean furrows weeding, from dawn till dusk, and when he rises he leans on the hoe handle, his back bent like a big question mark. His grandson urges him to rest, and he shakes his head, saying the weeds will not wait, and neither will the beans. He gathers the pulled weeds into a pile, saying they will rot into fertilizer for the next bed. Even a handful of grass, he refuses to waste.

Last summer vacation I helped Grandpa weed the bean field for one morning. The sun was gentle at first, but by noon sweat dropped from my chin into the soil, and my back rose and fell as if a string were pulling it down. At noon, eating in the shade, I pinched the small of my own back and pinched out tears. Grandpa saw it and said nothing; he handed me the half bottle of water that was his. The furrows he had weeded that morning were twice as many as mine. The calluses on his hands rubbed against the hoe handle, stroke after stroke, steady as stone. Only then did I understand how that question mark in the book was made. It is not a shape born of

tiredness; it is pressed out by years. He has bent for this family for decades, bending from the field to the kitchen, from the gate of my kindergarten to the back door of my primary school classroom.

The grandson in the book remembers the garden only later, in the city, and what he remembers is all the back of Grandpa. I do not have to wait until later; I see it every day. Passing the vegetable plot after school, Grandpa inside, I outside, he straightens up and waves me home for dinner. That straightening is slow, like a page wet through by water, needing a while in the air before it can turn.

When I closed the book I set myself two tasks, both small. First, starting next week the evening watering belongs to me; Grandpa only needs to sit on the stone by the bed and watch, and watching makes him happiest. Second, to swap the grandson in the book for myself: what he understood only after leaving for the city, I understand now, so I will study well and let Grandpa weed without worry in his heart. The book says: one bed of vegetables, one share of love. I want this share to reach my side of the family. What Grandpa bent down, I will straighten up for him.

卖菜的钱带着手心温度

《爷爷的菜园》里最让我心里一动的，不是菜，是钱。书里的爷爷凌晨三点起来摘菜，把带露水的黄瓜一根根码进筐，赶早集去卖。卖完，他把钱在柜台上摊开，一枚一枚数，数完用手掌压平，塞进贴身的兜。作者写，那个兜的布都磨得发亮。爷爷回家路上不买烟，集上最便宜的烟他也不买，他说菜钱是有数的，孩子的学费是有数的。

去年秋天我帮爷爷背过菜去集上。竹筐压到肩上，走二十分钟土路，我换了三次肩，爷爷一路只换了一次。到了集上他蹲在墙根，面前铺一块塑料布，黄瓜、辣椒、两把小葱分堆摆好。有人还价，他不恼，抹零头。卖完他给我买了一个烧饼，自己喝白开水，烧饼是热的，他递给我的时候吹了吹，怕烫着我。回家路上他从兜里掏出几张皱巴巴的纸币，一张一张抚平，说给我攒着，以后上初中要用。我捏着那几张钱，纸是软的，还带着他手心的热。那一刻我在集上的墙根底下站了很久，人来人往，只有我和爷爷那一小块塑料布是安静的。书里数硬币的爷爷，和我爷爷，是同一个动作。他们数钱的样子不是小气，是把每一张都认成了给孩子的日子。

书里的孙子长大后每次给爷爷钱，爷爷都推回去。我想到这儿，把书合上了。我不要等到长大。从今往后我做两件事：周末早起跟爷爷背菜，我的肩膀矮，先背半筐，练着来；我的零花钱攒在饼干铁盒里，过年给爷爷换一副新手套。他那副手套的指头都磨白了，还舍不得换，冬天在手炉子上烤一烤，第二天接着戴。卖菜的钱不多，可每一张都带着爷爷手心的温度。这本书把这笔账算给我看了：他给我攒了这么多年，我也该给他攒一次。

The Money from Vegetables Still Carries the Warmth of His Palm

What moves me most in the book The Garden of Grandpa is not the vegetables but the money. The grandfather in the book gets up at three in the morning to pick vegetables, packs the dew-wet cucumbers one by one into baskets, and hurries to the early market to sell them. When he finishes, he spreads the money on the counter, counts coin by coin, presses it flat with his palm, and puts it into the pocket against his skin. The author writes that the cloth of that pocket is polished shiny. On the way home the grandfather buys no tobacco; even the cheapest tobacco at the market he does not buy, saying the money from vegetables is counted out, and the school fees of the child are counted out.

Last autumn I carried vegetables with Grandpa to the market. The bamboo basket pressed on my shoulder; over twenty minutes of dirt road I switched shoulders three times, and Grandpa switched only once the whole way. At the market he squatted by the wall, a plastic sheet spread before him, cucumbers, peppers, and two bundles of scallions arranged in piles. When buyers haggled he did not mind; he rounded the change down. After selling he bought me a baked cake and drank plain water himself. On the way home he took several crumpled paper notes from his pocket, smoothed them one by one, and said he was saving them for me, for middle school later. I held those notes; the paper was soft and still warm from his palm. The grandfather counting coins in the book and my grandfather make the same gesture. Counting money like that is not stinginess; it is recognizing each note as a day of life saved for the child.

In the book, when the grown-up grandson tries to give money back, the grandfather pushes it away. Thinking of this, I closed the cover. I will not wait until I grow up. From now on I will do two things: get up early on weekends to carry vegetables with Grandpa; my shoulders are low, so I start with half a basket and train. And I will save my pocket money in a biscuit tin, and at New Year buy Grandpa a new pair of gloves. The fingers of his old gloves are worn white, and he still cannot bear to replace them. The money from vegetables is small, yet every note carries the warmth of Grandpa palm. This book showed me the ledger: he has saved for me for so many years; it is my turn to save once for him.

篱笆上的小洞

《爷爷的菜园》里，爷爷围着菜园扎了一圈篱笆，挡鸡，也挡鹅。可篱笆上留着一个洞，不

大，只够一个小孙子侧身钻进去。书里爷爷说，大洞防鸡，小洞留人。孙子钻进去帮他看水、递绳子，出来时衣角挂一根草。作者写，那个洞爷爷隔几天就用指甲抠一抠，怕草把洞堵小了。我读到这里笑了，笑完心里发酸。书里还写，鸡从篱笆外头探脑袋，爷爷不骂，只把竹竿往篱笆上一横，说这是菜，不是你们的饭。

我四年级帮爷爷赶过偷吃豌豆的母鸡。爷爷拿着长竿跟在后头，却不打，只把鸡往河滩那边引，说鸡下蛋给咱们家，吃几颗豌豆不算偷。去年冬天篱笆倒了一段，风大，爷爷蹲在风里把铁丝一段段掰直，重新绑上木桩，手指冻得通红，一下一下，还是稳。我在旁边递钳子，手冻得握不住，爷爷把我的手捂在他手心里焐了一下，又接着绑。风把塑料布吹得哗啦响，爷爷的白头发让风吹得乱，他顾不上理。看他绑完，蹲在那儿看那个小洞看了半天。我长个儿了，四年级那年洞不够钻，爷爷把洞改高了一拳，改完还拿砂纸把洞边的毛刺磨了，磨完用手背扫一遍，再让我钻一次试试。书里那个隔几天抠一抠洞的爷爷，我天天见得到。

篱笆挡得住鸡，挡不住爷爷留给我的那条路。合上书我想好了：开春爷爷换篱笆铁丝，锈了的归我递新的，毛刺归我用砂纸磨光，那个小洞不堵，留着，等我长高了它跟着长。我还想把书里那个孙子换成我现在的样子：把书读好，让爷爷在菜园里直起腰的时候，心里踏实。一畦菜，一份情。爷爷把情扎在篱笆上，留了一个洞给我；我把情读进书里，攒起来，将来给他撑住整个家。

The Little Hole in the Fence

In the book The Garden of Grandpa, the grandfather builds a fence all around the vegetable plot, to keep out chickens and geese. But the fence has one hole, not big, just enough for a small grandson to turn sideways and slip through. Grandpa in the book says: a big hole fails to stop chickens, a small hole keeps the person. The grandson crawls in to help watch the water and pass rope, and comes out with a blade of grass caught on his coat. The author writes that every few days Grandpa picks at the hole with his fingernail, afraid the grass will close it up. I laughed reading this, and after laughing my heart turned sour.

In fourth grade I helped Grandpa chase a hen that stole peas from the garden. He followed with a long pole but did not strike, only led the hen toward the riverbank, saying the hen lays eggs for our family and eating a few peas is not stealing. Last winter a section of our fence fell in the wind. Grandpa squatted in the gale, straightening pieces of wire one by one and tying them back to the stakes, his fingers red with cold, stroke after stroke, still steady. I passed him the pliers and watched him finish, then squat there looking at the little hole for a long time. I have grown; in fourth grade the hole was no longer enough, so Grandpa raised it by a fist, then sanded the burrs at its edges so my clothes would not snag. The grandfather in the book who picks at his hole every few days, I see him every day.

The fence can stop chickens; it cannot stop the road Grandpa left for me. When I closed the book I had decided: in spring when Grandpa replaces the fence wire, the rusty pieces go to me and the new ones pass from my hands, the burrs are mine to sand smooth, and the little hole stays open, growing as I grow. I also want to swap the grandson in the book for myself as I am now: study well, so that when Grandpa straightens his back in the garden, his heart is at rest. One bed of vegetables, one share of love. Grandpa tied his love into the fence and left a hole for me; I will read my love into my books and save it, to hold up the whole family for him one day.