# 树荫下的午后

树下，正午放慢了脚步。 阳光从叶缝里漏下来，碎成一地铜钱，没有人去捡。 树荫是一座凉快的岛，跟着太阳慢慢挪动。 我坐在岛的中央，书摊在膝上， 有一页，留给风去读。

蝉鸣像雨，不大，却把整个下午淋透。 它从头顶来，从荫的最浓处来， 把头顶的光影缝成一块粗布，旧而柔软。 我不赶它。 村里只剩这一种声音， 好像全世界都在解释同一个词。

墙边的旧自行车靠着打盹， 车筐里躺着两只西瓜，和去年的夏天。 狗在树荫最凉的地方睡熟了， 耳朵偶尔一动，像在梦里打拍子。 它尾巴一扫， 把一地碎光，扫到了院子另一头。

井里的西瓜沉在桶底，被凉水抱着。 祖母坐在门槛上剥绿豆， 剥着剥着，自己先睡着了，一碗豆子扣在膝头，像一场小小的绿雪。 蝉鸣替她守着这个下午， 守得那么稳，连时间都绕着这棵树走。

书只翻过去几页。 字在纸上浮浮沉沉，我读到行末， 就悄悄溜走，去看田那边的云。 云很白，天很高， 路从田头出发，一直伸向远方， 拐一个弯，消失在光里。 我知道远方那边有镇子，镇子那边，有我还没见过的海。

蝉鸣不停，像用嗓子量着下午的长短。 荫挪一寸，书挪一寸，我也挪一寸， 跟着影子散步。 光变成金色的时候， 母亲在门口喊我的名字， 我合上书，用手指夹住这一页， 把下午做了记号。

后来很多个下午，我都想起那片树荫。 蝉鸣没有停过，远方还在路的那头。 那年读的书，我早忘了名字， 只记得凉意落在肩上—— 整个夏天按着我的肩膀，轻轻的， 像怕我发觉，它正在过去。

# Afternoon in the Tree Shade

Under the tree, noon has slowed its footsteps. Sunlight sifts through the gaps in the leaves, breaking into coins of light scattered on the ground that no one gathers. The tree shade is a cool island, drifting slowly with the sun. I sit at the center of the island, a book open on my knees, and one page left for the wind to read.

The cicada song is like rain, not heavy, yet it soaks the whole afternoon through. It comes from above my head, from the thickest part of the shade, stitching the light and shadow overhead into a piece of coarse cloth, old and soft. I do not drive it away. The village keeps only this one sound, as if the whole world were explaining one and the same word.

The old bicycle by the wall leans there asleep, its basket holding two watermelons and a summer from last year. The dog sleeps soundly in the coolest corner of the shade, its ears twitching now and then, as if beating time inside a dream. One sweep of its tail sends the scattered light rolling to the other end of the yard.

The watermelon in the well sits at the bottom of a bucket, held by the cold

water. Grandmother sits on the doorstep shelling green beans, and halfway through she falls asleep first, a bowl of beans tipped over on her knees like a small green snowfall. The cicada song keeps watch over her afternoon, keeping watch so steadily that even time takes a detour around this tree.

The book has turned only a few pages. The words float on the paper, and when I reach the end of a line I slip away quietly to watch the clouds beyond the field. The clouds are white, the sky is high, and the road sets out from the edge of the field, stretching toward the distance, turning once, then vanishing into the light. I know there is a town beyond the distance, and beyond the town, a sea I have not yet seen.

The cicada song does not stop; it seems to measure the length of the afternoon with its voice. The shade moves an inch, the book moves an inch, and I move an inch too, taking a walk along with the shadow. When the light turns golden, mother calls my name from the doorway, and I close the book, holding the page with one finger, marking this afternoon.

In many afternoons since, I have remembered that patch of tree shade. The cicada song has never stopped, and the distance is still at the far end of the road. I have long forgotten the name of the book I was reading that year; I only remember the coolness settling on my shoulders, the whole summer resting its hand on my shoulder, gently, as if afraid I would notice it passing.