一块西瓜，一阵笑

卖瓜的吆喝从巷子口飘来，

长长的，比冰棍还凉快，

我攥着硬币跑出去，

瓜堆成了小小的绿色的山。

爷爷蹲下来挑瓜，

敲一个，再敲一个，侧着耳朵听，

咚咚像敲鼓的才是熟的，

他挑了一个，抱回家。

奶奶下刀，咔嚓一声，

瓜没等切完就自己裂开，

红红的瓤，沙的，籽黑亮黑亮的，

满屋子都是甜甜的青气。

我们排排坐，一人抱一块，

谁也不说话，只有吃瓜的声音，

汁水顺着手腕流，滴到下巴上，

肚子吃得圆圆，像小绿瓜。

吐出的籽数一数，比一比，

我赢了，笑得最大声，

奶奶把最大的一块让给爷爷，

爷爷又偷偷塞回给我，我们都笑了。

下午游完泳回来，鼻子晒得通红，

冰箱里的冰西瓜救了场，

一口下去，凉从嘴巴一直走到肚子，

整个夏天变成红色的笑。

妈妈把瓜汁冻成小冰棍，

红红的冰棒棒藏在冰箱里，

外面舔一口，里面舔一口，

凉快在嘴巴里住了好久。

瓜皮也别扔，白白的瓤留一层，

奶奶拿刀切成小方块，

拌上糖和醋，脆脆的、酸酸的，

一盘凉拌瓜皮，又是一阵笑。

隔壁的小孩过来一起吃瓜，

一个瓜变成了四个盘子，

我们边吃边玩词语接龙，

笑声跳过墙头，跑到隔壁院子。

爸爸用瓜皮雕了只小螃蟹，

绿壳红嘴，摆在窗台上，

它不会动，也不会吃，

可我们看它一次，就笑一次。

夜里凉下来了，我们把瓜端到院子里，

一边吃一边数星星，

星星在瓜上掉了一粒，

我们叫它星星籽，抢着分。

爷爷说瓜秧春天才栽下，

浇了一个多月的水，才换来这一口甜，

所以我们吃瓜的时候要想着：

每一口红瓤里，都藏着一场春雨。

笑声是夏天最容易找到的东西，

它藏在瓜的咔嚓声里，藏在水花里，

藏在飞起来的瓜籽和树下的蒲扇里，

等我们一个一个把它捡起来。

如果有人问我暑假是什么味道，

我就举起西瓜片，大声回答：

是甜的，是凉的，是笑的，

咬一口，整个夏天都在嘴巴里。

A Slice of Melon, A Burst of Laughter

The watermelon seller's call came floating in from the entrance of the alley, long and drawn out and somehow cooler than an ice pop, and I ran outside with my coins already tight in my hand, because his pile of watermelons was stacked up into one little green hill.

Grandpa squatted down beside the melons to choose one carefully, and he knocked on one melon, then another, listening hard with his head tilted, and he said the one that sounds dong, dong, like a drum, is the ripe one, and he lifted a big one and hugged it all the way home.

Grandma set the knife down on the melon and it answered with a loud crack, splitting open all by itself before the knife had even finished cutting, and the sandy red flesh with its shining black seeds filled the whole house with a fresh sweet green smell.

We each hugged one big slice and sat in a row to eat, and nobody said a single word, there was only the sound of everybody eating melon, and the juice ran down our wrists and dripped onto our chins, and our bellies grew round like little green melons.

We counted and compared all the seeds we had spat out, and I won the seed-spitting contest and laughed the loudest of everyone, and Grandma handed the biggest slice to Grandpa, but Grandpa quietly gave it back to me, and we all laughed again.

In the afternoon, after we came back from swimming with sunburned noses, the ice-cold watermelon from the fridge came to the rescue, and one single bite made a cool feeling travel all the way from my mouth down to my belly, and the whole summer turned into one big red smile.

Mom froze some of the melon juice into little ice pops, red little ice sticks that we hid carefully in the freezer, and I licked them one lick outside and one lick inside, and the coolness stayed around my mouth for a very long, long time.

We did not throw the rinds away either, because we left a thin white layer on them, and Grandma cut them into little square pieces and mixed them with sugar and vinegar, crunchy and sour at the same time, and one plate of cold melon-rind salad

brought another round of laughter.

The little kid from next door came over to share the watermelon with us, and one watermelon suddenly became four big plates, and we ate melon and played word games together, and our laughter jumped over the wall and into the yard next door without any permission.

Dad carved a little crab out of a watermelon rind, with a green shell and a red mouth, and we set it on the windowsill to dry, and it could not move and it could not eat anything, but every single time we looked at it, we laughed all over again.

At night when the air finally cooled down, we carried the melon out into the courtyard, and we ate our slices while counting the stars one by one, and one star seemed to fall right onto the melon, so we named it a star seed and fought over who would get to eat it.

Grandpa said the melon vines were only planted in the spring, and he watered them for more than a whole month just to earn this one bite of sweetness, so every time we eat melon we should remember that inside every piece of red flesh there is a spring rain hiding quietly.

Laughter is the easiest thing to find in the summer, because it hides inside the crack of the melon and inside the splash of the pool, inside the seeds flying through the air and the old fan swaying under the tree, just waiting for us to pick it up one by one.

If anybody ever asks me what summer vacation tastes like, I lift my watermelon slice up high and answer out loud: it tastes sweet, it tastes cool, and it tastes exactly like laughter, one big bite and the whole summer is right there inside my mouth.