傍晚的菜园，再看一眼

八月二十二日，星期五，晴。明天就要回城里上学，这条日记是我坐在菜园边写的，天正在暗下来。

刚才傍晚，爷爷领我在菜园里乘凉，这是整个夏天最舒服的时候。奶奶抱来井镇过的西瓜，切得大小不匀，籽喷在土里。爷爷说明年就在这儿种西瓜。园子里的虫一齐叫起来，风从玉米地那边吹过来，带着潮气。我靠在爷爷肩膀边上，他身上一股汗味混着菜叶味。

往前数，七月初刚到爷爷家的时候，我赖床，被爷爷拉起来浇园子。天还青着，水瓢泼在叶子上哗啦哗啦地响。黄瓜叶尖上挂着水珠，一颗接一颗往下掉。我打了一个哈欠，爷爷已经浇完半畦了。爷爷蹲在畦沟里薅草，把草根上的土抖净再扔进筐。我也蹲下去拔，一使劲拔出来一棵苗。爷爷没恼，把苗插回坑里，拢了拢土，说菜有菜的窝，草有草的窝，要学会认。后来我拔草都先看，手越来越快。歇晌的时候我躺在草棚里的凉席上，眼皮沉得抬不动，那一觉睡得比在家里香。

午后爷爷带我摘菜。我学会了看花摘黄瓜、掐蒂折豆角、用刀割苦瓜。有一回我碰见一条青虫趴在菜叶上啃，吓得跳开喊了一声。爷爷捏起青虫扔到远处，说种菜就要舍得跟虫打交道。那天回去，我把手掌摊开给奶奶看，指缝里全是泥，奶奶笑了，给我倒了一大杯凉白开。

今天下午，爷爷摘了满满一筐菜，豆角、黄瓜、茄子，还有一把用草绳捆好的香菜，让我带回城里。我知道筐不重，他还往里塞。明天的车清早发车，我想趁天没黑透，再到菜园边坐一会儿，把这些畦菜好好看一眼。这些菜爷爷天天浇，我也浇过。

One Last Look at the Garden at Dusk

August 22, Friday, clear skies. Tomorrow I am going back to town for school, and I am writing this diary sitting at the edge of the garden while the light fades.

Just now, at dusk, Grandpa took a cooling walk with me in the garden, the most peaceful hour of the whole summer. Grandma brought a watermelon chilled in the well, cut into uneven pieces, and the seeds spurted onto the soil. Grandpa said next year they would plant watermelons right here. The insects in the garden started chirping all at once, and the wind coming from the cornfield carried a damp smell. I leaned against the shoulder of Grandpa, and he smelled of sweat mixed with vegetable leaves.

Counting back to early July, when I first arrived at the home of Grandpa, I slept in and was pulled out to water the garden before dawn. The sky was still blue, and water from the ladle poured over the leaves with a rustling sound. Grandpa crouched in the furrow pulling weeds, shaking the soil off the roots before tossing them into the basket. I crouched down to pull too, and with one hard tug I pulled out a seedling. Grandpa did not get angry. He set the seedling back into the hole and firmed the soil around it, saying vegetables have their own nests and weeds have

theirs, and one must learn to tell them apart. After that I always looked first before pulling, and my hands grew faster and faster.

In the afternoons, Grandpa took me to pick vegetables. I learned to pick cucumbers by their flowers, to snap cowpeas by the stem, and to cut bitter melons with a knife. Once I found a green caterpillar munching on a cabbage leaf and jumped back with a shout. Grandpa picked up the caterpillar and threw it far away, saying that anyone who grows vegetables must be willing to deal with insects.

This afternoon, Grandpa filled a big basket: cowpeas, cucumbers, eggplants, and a bunch of cilantro tied with a straw rope, all for me to take back to town. I know the basket is not heavy, yet he kept pressing more into it. The bus leaves early tomorrow morning, and before dark I want to sit by the garden once more and look carefully at these ridges of vegetables. Grandpa waters them every day, and I have watered them too.