那天，我起得比爷爷早

七月十四日，星期一，晴。这条日记是我坐在院里的葡萄架下写的，胳膊上的蚊子包还痒着。

今天我起得早。爷爷不到五点就出了门，我迷迷糊糊坐起来，院里没人，只有菜园方向传来水声。我趿上凉鞋跑过去，爷爷正握着水管的头，水甩出一道弧线，落在西红柿畦的叶子上，叶子在晨光里亮得发闪。他看见我，什么也没说，把水管递过来。我以为握水管是件轻松事，真握上了才知道水在管子里顶人，手腕抖个不停，水花溅了一裤腿。爷爷走过来托住管子中段，说握这里，它就不跟你较劲了。我们俩轮流，浇完三畦地，天才彻底亮透。泥土有一股凉丝丝的腥气，畦沟边上钻出来两条蚯蚓。

中午太热，爷爷不让我下地。下午四点多，日头软下来，他领我去摘菜。黄瓜躲在叶子底下，得掀开叶子才能看见。爷爷不掀叶子，他看地上的影子，说影子又圆又沉的地方，准挂着黄瓜。我伸手去够，黄瓜须上的刺毛扎了手。秋葵要用剪刀剪，硬掰会伤一整枝。盆很快就满了：三根黄瓜、一把秋葵、两个茄子、一小把香菜。爷爷端着盆，我提着水壶，走在水泥路上，影子被拉得很长。

傍晚最舒服。奶奶在院里铺开竹席，爷爷搬出一暖瓶茶水。天从橘红一点点变成青蓝，菜园里的虫叫一阵接一阵起来。爷爷指着天上说，晚霞这么红，明天准是个大热天。奶奶提起爷爷年轻时推着满满一车菜，走三十里去镇上卖。我靠在竹席边上想：暑假这些天，我天天睡到日上三竿，抱着手机不放，爷爷的背一年比一年弯，却还每天清晨浇三畦地。明天，我要起得比他更早。

That Day I Woke Up Before Grandpa

July 14, Monday, sunny. I am writing this diary under the grape trellis in the yard, and the mosquito bites on my arms still itch.

I woke up early today. Grandpa had slipped out before five. When I sat up, the yard was empty, and only the sound of water came from the direction of the vegetable garden. I pulled on my sandals and ran over. Grandpa was holding the end of the hose, and the water arced out onto the leaves of the tomato ridge, shining in the early light. He saw me, said nothing, and handed me the hose. I thought holding a hose would be easy, but the water pushed inside the pipe, my wrist shook, and drops splashed all over my pants. Grandpa came over and supported the middle of the pipe, saying, hold it here, and it will not fight with you. We took turns and finished watering three ridges. When we ended, the sky had just fully brightened. The soil gave off a cool, damp smell, and two earthworms had poked their heads out at the edge of the ditch.

At noon it was too hot, and Grandpa would not let me go to the field. After four in the afternoon, when the sun softened, he took me to pick vegetables. Cucumbers hid

under the leaves and had to be found by lifting them. Grandpa did not lift leaves; he looked at the shadows on the ground and said that where the shadow is round and heavy, a cucumber is hanging there. I reached for one, and the tiny spines on the tendril pricked my hand. Okra had to be cut with scissors; snapping it by hand hurts the whole branch. The basin filled quickly: three cucumbers, a handful of okra, two eggplants, a small bunch of cilantro. Grandpa carried the basin and I carried the watering can, and our shadows stretched long on the concrete road.

Evening was the best part. Grandma spread the bamboo mat in the yard, and Grandpa brought out a thermos of tea. The sky turned from orange to blue, and the insects in the garden started one after another. Grandpa pointed at the sky and said that when the evening glow is this red, tomorrow will surely be another hot day. Grandma recalled that when Grandpa was young, he pushed a cart piled full of vegetables thirty li to the town market. I leaned on the edge of the mat and thought: during these days of summer vacation, I had slept until noon and never let go of my phone, while the back of Grandpa grows rounder every year, yet he still waters three ridges every morning. Tomorrow, I will get up even earlier than him.

豆角又长了一截

七月二十一日，星期一，晴转多云。醒来的时候，爷爷已经挑着两只桶在井台边等我了。

井水凉。爷爷把桶放下去，提上来的时候桶口冒白气。他把两桶水灌满，扁担往肩上一搁，我扶着桶帮走在旁边，水晃出来，湿了鞋。有只蜻蜓停在桶沿上，爷爷说别赶它，它专吃蚊子。菜园离井台有半里路，爷爷走得稳，我走得提心吊胆。爷爷说井水凉，要在畦沟里搁一会儿才能进地，不然苗要惊。他拎着水瓢顺着根脚浇，水直往土里钻。我学着浇，水头溅到叶子上，爷爷用瓢把儿轻轻敲我的手背：浇根，别浇叶，叶子湿一天要生病。浇完，我手心让瓢把儿硌出红印，畦里的土颜色深了一整片。换手提瓢的时候，红印发着烫，心里却比起床那会儿轻快。

晌午日头毒，我们躲进菜园边的草棚。爷爷递给我一顶草帽，我歪歪地扣在头上。四点钟以后去摘豆角。豆角一嘟噜一嘟噜挂在架底下，要掀开藤才看得见，有的长得跟手一样长，掐断时嘎嘣响；有的老了，一掰带出筋。爷爷教我从靠蒂的地方掐，细的留着再长两天。苦瓜扎手，我把手套翻过来戴着去掰。筐装满，我背着走，带子勒肩膀，脚步倒轻快。半路上我回头看了一眼，藤架在日头底下整整齐齐地立着。

傍晚，奶奶在树下铺了席，三个人坐着剥豆角，掐豆角的脆响响了一院子，奶奶把碗举到灯下，挑出漏下的老筋。萤火虫在菜园那边一闪一闪。爷爷说这个豆角品种是早年从镇上集上背回来的，年年留种，就是不锈。我盯着面前剥好的一碗豆角想：家里的饭菜从前看着平常，在菜园里干了一个夏天才明白，每一棵都被人浇过水、除过草、看过虫。

The Cowpeas Grew Another Segment

July 21, Monday, sunny then cloudy. When I woke up, Grandpa was already waiting for me at the well with two buckets on the carrying pole.

The well water is cold. Grandpa lowered the bucket and pulled it up, and white mist rose from the mouth of the bucket. He filled two buckets, put the shoulder pole on his shoulder, and I walked beside him holding the rope of the bucket to steady it. Water sloshed out and soaked my shoes. The garden is half a li from the well. Grandpa walked steadily, and I followed with my heart in my mouth. Grandpa said well water is cold, so it must sit in the ditch for a while before it enters the ridges, or the seedlings will be shocked. He held the water ladle and watered along the base of the stems, and the water sank straight into the soil. I imitated him, and the water jet splashed onto the leaves. Grandpa gently tapped the back of my hand with the handle of the ladle: water the roots, not the leaves, because leaves wet all day bring sickness. When we finished, my palms had red marks from the handle, and the soil of the ridges had darkened by a whole shade.

At noon the sun was fierce, and we hid in the thatched hut at the edge of the garden. Grandpa handed me a hat woven of straw, and I wore it crooked on my head. After four in the afternoon, we picked cowpeas. They hung in clusters under the trellis and had to be found by lifting the vines; some grew as long as a hand and snapped with a crisp sound, while some were too old and let out fibers when broken. Grandpa taught me to pinch near the stem and to leave the thin ones for two more days. The bitter melons were prickly, so I turned my glove inside out to hold them. When the basket was full, I carried it on my back. The straps dug into my shoulders, but my steps felt light.

At dusk, Grandma spread the mat under the tree, and the three of us sat shelling cowpeas. The snapping sound filled the yard, and fireflies blinked on the far side of the garden. Grandpa said this variety of cowpea was brought back from the town market years ago, and seeds have been saved and replanted every year, so it never turns rusty. I looked at the bowl of shelled cowpeas piled in front of me and thought: the dishes at home once looked ordinary, but only after working in the garden for a summer did I understand that every single plant had been watered, weeded, and watched over.

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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.