篱笆换过很多次

爷爷菜园的篱笆换过很多次。小时候我以为篱笆一直就在那里，后来才知道，每隔几年，他就要去屋后砍一回竹子，把整排换掉。

旧篱笆是树枝和竹篾扎的，上面缠着几根枯了的藤蔓，每年春天又爬满牵牛花，开出淡紫的小花。篱笆的缺口刚好够一个孩子钻进去，我进进出出许多回，鞋常常忘在畦沟边，爷爷看见了，给拎回篱笆外摆好。菜畦就在篱笆里头，一畦挨一畦，菠菜一畦，白菜一畦，葱一畦，他按节气下种，畦里的菜像听了他的话，到点就发芽，到点就变绿。春天点蚕豆，秋天栽蒜苗，节气在他手里比日历还准。

爷爷总在畦里弯腰。薅草的时候弯着，浇水的时候弯着，给西红柿搭架的时候弯得更深。我人小，从篱笆缝里望进去，只看见他的背在叶子中间一伏一伏，像风里一张拉不满的弓。中午的风吹过去，他的褂子贴在背上，汗印深一块浅一块。后来我长高了，从篱笆上望进去能看见他的白头，才发现他的背一年比一年弯。

我上初中那年夏天，一场大雨压倒了半排篱笆。爷爷把篱笆重新扎起来，扎完了，手搭在篱笆头上，站在跟前看了很久。我过去帮他扶竹子，他说这排篱笆立了二十年，挡过鸡，挡过狗，挡过路过孩子贪嘴的手，就是没挡住时间。菜畦还在，一畦挨着一畦，他种的菜长起来，割了一茬，又长出一茬。

上周末回爷爷家，他正弯着腰在畦里间苗。篱笆的竹篾是新的，泛着浅黄，竹子的清气混着土腥气。我站在篱笆外看了一会儿，没有喊他。光阴就是这么过去的，从篱笆的缝里漏过去，落在爷爷的背上，也落进这一畦一畦的菜里。

The Fence Has Been Rebuilt Many Times

The fence around the garden of Grandpa has been rebuilt many times. As a child I believed the fence had always stood there, and only later did I learn that every few years he cut bamboo behind the house and replaced the whole row.

The old fence was tied together from branches and bamboo strips, with a few withered vines tangled on it, and every spring it was covered again with morning glories opening small pale purple flowers. The gap in the fence was exactly wide enough for a child to squeeze through. I went in and out many times, and Grandpa never scolded me, only saying, mind the seedlings. The vegetable ridges lay inside the fence, one beside another: one ridge of spinach, one of cabbage, one of green onions. He sowed by the solar terms, and the vegetables in the ridges seemed to obey him, sprouting when they should, turning green when they should.

Grandpa was always bent over in the ridges. He bent while pulling weeds, bent while watering, and bent even deeper while building supports for the tomato plants. I

was small, and looking through the gap in the fence, I could only see his back rising and falling among the leaves, like a bow never pulled full in the wind. At noon the wind blew across, his jacket clung to his back, and the sweat stains spread in dark and light patches. Later I grew tall enough to see his white hair over the fence, and only then did I notice that his back curved more each year.

The summer I entered middle school, a rainstorm pushed down half the fence. Grandpa tied the fence up again, and when he finished, he rested his hand on the top rail and stood looking at it for a long time. I went over to hold the bamboo for him. He said this fence had stood for twenty years, keeping out chickens, keeping out dogs, keeping out the greedy hands of passing children, but it had never kept out time. The ridges were still there, one beside another, and the vegetables he planted grew up, were cut for one harvest, and grew back for another.

Last weekend, back at the home of Grandpa, he was bent over in a ridge, thinning seedlings. The bamboo strips of the fence were new, glowing pale yellow, and the fresh smell of bamboo mixed with the smell of soil. I stood outside the fence and watched for a while without calling him. This is how the years pass: leaking through the gaps of the fence, landing on the back of Grandpa, and soaking into these rows of vegetables.

畦与畦之间，爷爷站了四十年

奶奶的柜子里有一张老照片，边角磨白了。照片上是一片菜园，篱笆矮矮的，一个年轻人站在畦头，直着腰，手里拎着一把刚拔的萝卜，冲镜头笑。奶奶说，那是爷爷嫁过来第二年拍的。

我拿着照片走到园子边，跟眼前的对了一遍。篱笆换成了高的，畦也多了几畦，可最东边那畦的位置没变，畦沟还是那条畦沟。照片里的爷爷腰板笔直，像一棵刚栽下的小树。眼前这个爷爷正蹲在畦里点种，膝盖压着土，背弓起来，头低到几乎碰到叶子。他点完一粒，用脚把土掩上，再往前挪半步。这个动作，他做了四十年。

畦与畦之间有一条窄窄的走道，被爷爷的脚踩得发亮。他薅草的时候在走道这头，直起身已经在另一头。他给豆角扶蔓，把蔓一圈一圈绕上竹竿，手指头被藤勒出白印。他摘西红柿，挑熟透的，连蒂拧下来放进围裙兜，兜鼓起来，他在畦中间直起腰喘气，用袖子擦脸。篱笆外的槐树落了又开，开了一回又一回，他的背就在这些畦中间，一年低一点。

傍晚我陪他在园子边站着。他说起照片上那年的事，那年奶奶刚过门，他种的萝卜水灵，拿到集上人家都问在哪儿买的。他说这些的时候手还搭在篱笆上，眼睛顺着畦沟望到最远处。我忽然明白，畦与畦之间那条发亮的走道，是四十年一步一步踩出来的。光阴从畦沟里流过去，没有声音，只把爷爷的背一点一点压弯，把日子一页一页种成了菜。

回城之前，我把那张老照片跟爷爷在畦里的背影合拍了一张。照片里，篱笆还是那道篱笆，畦还是那些畦，只是站在畦头的人，把腰弯给了土地，把笑留给了镜头。

Between the Ridges, Grandpa Has Stood for Forty Years

In the cabinet of Grandma there is an old photograph, its corners worn white. The photo shows a vegetable garden with a low fence, and a young man standing at the head of a ridge, back straight, holding a bunch of freshly pulled radishes, smiling at the camera. Grandma says it was taken the second year after she married into the family.

I carried the photo to the edge of the garden and matched it against what stands there now. The fence has been replaced with a taller one, and there are more ridges, but the position of the easternmost ridge has not changed, and the furrow is still the same furrow. The Grandpa in the photo stood as straight as a newly planted sapling. The Grandpa before me is squatting in a ridge, sowing seeds, his knees pressed into the soil, his back arched, his head lowered almost to the leaves. He drops one seed, covers it with a sweep of his foot, and moves half a step forward. He has done this motion for forty years.

Between the ridges runs a narrow walkway, polished bright by the feet of Grandpa. He starts weeding at one end of the path, and when he straightens up he is already at the other. He trains the bean vines, winding them around the bamboo poles loop by loop, the vines leaving white marks on his fingers. He picks tomatoes, choosing the fully ripe ones, twisting them off with the stem into the pocket of his apron. When the pocket bulges, he straightens up in the middle of the ridge to catch his breath and wipes his face with his sleeve. The locust tree outside the fence drops its leaves and blooms again, once and again, and the back of Grandpa, among these ridges, grows a little lower each year.

At dusk I stood with him at the edge of the garden. He told the story behind the photo: that year Grandma had just married in, and the radishes he grew were so juicy that people at the market asked where he bought them. He said this with his hand still resting on the fence, his eyes following the furrow to the far end. It struck me then that the shining path between the ridges was pressed out step by step over forty years. Time flows through the furrows without a sound, pressing the back of Grandpa lower bit by bit, and planting the days, page by page, into vegetables.

Before going back to town, I took one photo combining the old picture with the back of Grandpa in the ridge. In it, the fence is still that fence, the ridges are still those ridges, only the man standing at the head of the ridge has given his bending back to the soil and kept the smile for the camera.

弯腰的人，不说话

爷爷的四季，是在菜园里过的，一格一格，像挂历撕下来的一页一页。

春天，篱笆根下的冰碴刚化，他就蹲在那儿点豆子。他把豆粒一颗一颗按进土里，间距用手量，谁也不许碰他的畦。苗出来以后，他弯腰间苗，捏住弱的一棵，手腕一抖带出根，强的那棵原地不动。我蹲在旁边看，他始终不说话。我替他拔了几棵草，他扫了一眼，把垄沟里我踩出的脚印用脚后跟一一抹平。

夏天，菜畦热闹起来。他给西红柿插竹竿，把倒伏的秧苗扶起来绑住，动作轻得像在给谁掖被角。傍晚摘菜是他一天里话最多的时候，他把黄瓜在围裙上擦擦递给我，说先吃，路上再拿。篱笆上的牵牛花也是夏天开的，他从不在早上摘，说早上开得好，要让人看见。

秋天起萝卜。他提萝卜的样子很讲究，攥着叶子根部，一拧一带，完整的萝卜就躺在掌心里。他把最大最正的几根留下埋进土坑，说那是留种的。霜降以后菜畦空下来，他给畦盖上一层草，像给地盖被子。空畦安静，他也安静，坐在畦头抽一袋烟，烟味散在冷掉的土气里。

冬天菜园歇了，他也不闲着。他坐在篱笆边修那把用了多年的锄头，磨镰刀，把松了的篱笆桩一根根砸紧。北风把篱笆吹得吱呀响，他坐在檐下的小凳上，眯着眼看那片空畦。有一回我问他，明年还种吗。他说，种。就一个字，像回答了几十年。

我在城里上学，一年回两回，春天一回，冬天一回。每次回来，菜畦里的菜换了一茬，篱笆又矮了几寸，弯腰的那个人背又低了一点。他从来不跟我说想念，也不问我成绩。他弯腰干活，把要说的话都种进畦里，长成了我每次离家时后备箱里那一兜一兜的菜。

The Man Who Bends Over Says Nothing

The four seasons of Grandpa pass inside the vegetable garden, one after another, like pages torn from a wall calendar.

In spring, the moment the ice by the foot of the fence melts, he squats there to plant beans. He presses each bean into the soil one by one, measuring the spacing with his hand, and lets no one touch his ridges. When the seedlings come up, he bends over to thin them, pinching the weaker one and flicking it out by the root while the stronger one stays in place. I crouch beside him and watch, and he never says a word. When I pull a few weeds for him, he glances over and smooths out, one by one with his heel, the footprints I left in the furrow.

In summer the ridges grow busy. He drives bamboo poles for the tomatoes, lifts the fallen seedlings and ties them up, his hands as gentle as when tucking in the corner of a quilt. In the evening, picking vegetables is the chattiest part of his day. He rubs a cucumber on his apron, hands it to me, and says eat it now, carry the

rest on the road. The morning glories on the fence also bloom in summer, and he never picks them in the morning, saying they bloom best then and people should be allowed to see them.

In autumn he lifts radishes. His technique is careful: he grips just above the leaves, gives a twist and a pull, and a whole radish lies in his palm. He keeps the largest and straightest few and buries them in a pit, saying those are for seed. After the first frost of late autumn the ridges empty, and he covers them with a layer of straw, like putting a blanket on the ground.

In winter the garden rests, but he does not. He sits by the fence mending the hoe he has used for years, sharpening the sickle, driving the loose fence stakes back down one by one. The north wind makes the fence creak, and he sits on a small stool under the eaves, eyes narrowed, looking at the empty ridges. Once I asked him whether he would still plant next year. He said, plant. One word, as if he had been answering for decades.

I study in town and come back twice a year, once in spring and once in winter. Each time I return, the vegetables in the ridges have changed for a new season, the fence has sunk a few inches, and the man who bends over has curved a little lower. He never tells me he missed me, and never asks about my grades. He bends over his work and plants everything he wants to say into the ridges, and it grows into the bags of vegetables that fill the trunk of the car every time I leave home.