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.