畦边的清晨

那个周末我起得早，雾还没散，爷爷已经提着水桶往园子去了。我跟在后头，裤脚很快被路边的草打湿。

菜畦在雾里显出轮廓，一畦一畦，边上的篱笆滴着水。走近了，青菜叶子上一层露水，密得没有空隙。雾里有土腥气，也有菜叶清苦的味道，吸一口，凉到胸口。我伸手碰了一下，一整夜的凉意顺着指尖上来。爷爷说露水是夜里下的，不吵人，菜喝得饱。他把手探进畦沟的土里，停了一会儿，抽出来看看手指，说今早不用浇，土还潮。我原以为他起这么早是要浇水，他倒背着手绕畦走了一圈，把倒了的苗扶正，把一片黄叶掐了。

那双手在雾里看得更清楚。指头粗，指甲缝里洗不净的土色，手背上被叶子划过的红痕一道压一道。他捏住菜心的外叶，轻轻一掰就下来了；他抓一把土，攥紧又松开，土散成团，他点点头。这双手跟土打了四十年交道，土说什么，它听得懂。

太阳把雾烧开以后，畦里的露水开始发亮，青菜绿得干净。爷爷蹲在畦头拔草，影子斜斜地铺在畦上。我蹲在他旁边学着拔，拔出来的根上带着一小截湿土。他看了一眼，没说好，也没说不好，只把手里那棵草的根在畦沿上磕净。后来我拔的几棵，根上都带着差不多的湿土，他嘴角动了一下，像是满意了。

回城的车上我睡着了，醒来时窗外是楼。那几天功课压得人闷，晚自习回来只想发呆。可我一闭眼，就是那畦青菜，叶子上挂着露水，爷爷的手插进土里。奇怪的是，心就定了。一畦菜一夜长一点，急没有用；手放进土里，事就有头。这个清晨我没跟爷爷说什么话，他把一畦挂着露水的青菜留给了我，我一直带着。

Morning at the Edge of the Ridge

That weekend I got up early. The fog had not lifted, and Grandpa had already carried the bucket toward the garden. I followed behind, and my trouser cuffs were soon wet from the grass along the path.

The ridges took shape in the fog, one after another, the fence at their edges dripping. Up close, the cabbage leaves wore a layer of dew so thick there was no space between the drops. I touched one, and the cold of the whole night came up through my fingertip. Grandpa said the dew falls during the night without making a fuss, and the vegetables drink their fill. He put his hand into the soil of the furrow, held it there a moment, pulled it out and looked at his fingers, saying there was no need to water this morning, the soil was still damp. I had thought he rose this early to water; instead he walked around the ridge with his hands behind his back, straightened the fallen seedlings, and pinched off one yellow leaf.

In the fog his hands looked even clearer. Thick fingers, soil color under the nails that washing never removes, red scratches across the backs of his hands laid

one over another. He gripped an outer leaf of a cabbage heart and broke it off with the slightest twist; he took a handful of soil, squeezed it and let go, and when it fell apart in clumps he nodded. Those hands had dealt with soil for forty years, and whatever the soil said, they understood.

After the sun burned the fog open, the dew in the ridges began to shine, and the cabbages looked cleanly green. Grandpa crouched at the head of the ridge pulling weeds, his shadow stretched slantwise across the plants. I crouched beside him and learned to pull, the roots coming up with a little plug of wet soil. He glanced at it, said neither good nor bad, and only knocked the root of the weed in his hand clean against the edge of the ridge.

On the bus back to town I fell asleep and woke to buildings outside the window. Those days homework weighed people down, and after evening study I only wanted to sit blankly. But the moment I closed my eyes there was that ridge of cabbage, dew hanging on the leaves, the hand of Grandpa sunk into the soil. Strangely, my heart settled. A ridge of vegetables grows a little each night; hurry is no use; put your hands in the soil and things find their beginning. That morning Grandpa and I exchanged hardly any words, yet he left me a ridge of cabbage wearing its dew, and I have carried it with me ever since.