那双手，把这畦菜养大

爷爷的手，我闭着眼也能认出来。指节大，掌心横纹深，右手虎口有一块锄头磨出来的硬茧，冬天裂口，他就掰一截蜡烛头往裂口里抹。

清明前后移栽菜苗，那双手一早就忙起来。头天傍晚他给苗床浇透水，天不亮起苗，手指头捏着苗脖子往上一带，根上带着一撮土。他在一畦空地里用一根竹签戳坑，左手递苗，右手填土，指尖把土压实，动作快得我看不过来。栽完他直起腰，手背上沾满泥，指缝里全是黑的。畦里的菜苗一排排立着，叶子上挂着早上的露水，一颗一颗，被初升的太阳照得发亮。

有一年夏天连着下雨，那双手半夜就醒了。他披上雨衣往园子去，我也跟去。雨大，菜畦里汪着水，他蹲在畦边用铁锹在畦沟挖排水口，水打着旋往外走。他一趟一趟把泡着的青菜拔出来，拎到篱笆下暂放，手在雨里泡得发白。天亮雨停，那畦菜保住了大半，他坐在檐下，手心里全是泥嵌进裂口的痕。

入冬，菜畦歇了。他坐在灶边烤火，把那双手伸到火光里，裂口一道一道露出来。奶奶给他缠白布条。他把手翻过来又翻过去，说手闲着也裂，干活也裂，裂着裂着就开春了。我听着这话，心里动了一下。开春以后，那双手果然又下了地，翻土、点种、间苗，一畦青菜从土里一寸一寸长起来，叶子上夜夜挂着露水。

现在我在城里，早上赶着上学，偶尔在早餐摊看见一碟清炒青菜，绿得很齐整。我会想起那一畦菜，想起凌晨的露水，想起那双手。平凡的日子就是这样被养大的：没有人说爱这个字，可那双手把一畦青菜从苗养到叶，从春养到冬，也把一大家人的日子，稳稳地端上了桌。

Those Hands Raised This Ridge of Vegetables

I could recognize the hands of Grandpa with my eyes closed. Big knuckles, deep creases across the palms, a hard callus on the web of his right hand worn by the hoe, and in winter the cracks opened up, so he broke off a stub of candle and rubbed the wax into the splits.

Around the time of the spring term, those hands grew busy early transplanting seedlings. The evening before, he soaked the seedbed with water; before dawn he lifted the seedlings, his fingers closing around the neck of a plant and pulling it up with a tuft of soil on the roots. In an empty ridge he poked holes with a bamboo stick, his left hand offering the seedling, his right hand filling in soil, his fingertips pressing it firm, moving faster than my eyes could follow. When he finished he straightened up, his hand backs covered with mud, his finger seams black. The seedlings stood in neat rows in the ridge, morning dew hanging on their leaves, bead by bead, shining in the rising sun.

One summer the rain fell for days on end, and those hands woke in the middle of the night. He put on his raincoat and went to the garden, and I followed. The rain

was heavy, water pooled in the ridges, and he crouched at the edge to dig a drain in the furrow with a spade, the water swirling out. Trip after trip he pulled out the waterlogged cabbages and set them under the fence for a while, his hands whitened in the rain. By dawn the rain stopped, most of that ridge was saved, and he sat under the eaves, the palms marked where mud had pressed into the cracks.

When winter came the ridges rested. He sat by the stove warming himself, holding those hands into the firelight, the cracks showing line after line. Grandma wrapped them for him with strips of white cloth. He turned his hands over and over, saying they crack whether idle or working, and crack their way into spring. Those words moved something in me. After spring came, those hands indeed went back to the soil: turning earth, sowing seeds, thinning seedlings, and a ridge of green cabbage grew up inch by inch from the ground, dew hanging on its leaves every night.

Now I live in town, hurrying to school in the morning, and sometimes at a breakfast stall I see a dish of stir-fried green cabbage, its green very neat. I think of that ridge, of the pre-dawn dew, of those hands. Ordinary days are raised like this: no one says the word love, yet those hands carried a ridge of vegetables from seedling to leaf, from spring to winter, and steadied the days of a whole family onto the table.