露水落在青菜叶上

天还没亮，爷爷已经站在菜畦边上了。我跟着他去，路上草鞋踩着的石板是湿的。

那一畦青菜刚起出来不久，叶片一层一层摊开，绿得发深。露水在叶子上聚成圆的一粒，滚到叶心又散开，叶尖承不住，掉下来，落进土里，几乎没有声音。整畦菜像刚洗过，又像是夜里自己醒过来喝过水。爷爷蹲下去，手指头从叶底插进去，把黄了的叶子掐下来扔进筐。他的手上事多，掐叶、捉虫、松土，一样一样来，不急。

我头一回那么近地看爷爷的手。手背上的筋鼓着，指节粗，虎口和指尖的裂口一道一道，有的塞着泥，有的贴着旧胶布。那双手掐起嫩叶来却轻，指甲盖从叶柄底下往上一挑，叶子就下来了，底下的芯一点没伤。他把手伸进畦沟里试土的干湿，手指头在土里捻了捻，说该浇水了。那双手捧起过秧苗、拔过草、攥过锄头柄，也在我小时候托过我的脸。

太阳上来，露水一点点收小，畦里的青菜轻轻晃。叶子尖上的水珠落下去以后，绿色反而更深了一层，像有人把颜色往叶子里又按了按。爷爷直起腰，把筐里的黄叶提到篱笆外沤肥。他弯着腰干活的时候不吭声，直起腰喘气的时候也不吭声，好像这一畦菜自己会说话，他听着就行。筐里的黄叶越堆越高，畦里的菜却越看越精神，叶子上还挂着没干完的露水。

我站在畦边，忽然心里很静。城里的事急，作业多，考试一场接一场，我总觉脚不沾地。可这一畦青菜不慌，露水夜夜来，爷爷天天来，叶子一天长一点。人最踏实的日子，原来就是弯下腰，把手放进土里，像爷爷那样，一天一天，把东西养大。

Dew Falls on the Green Cabbage Leaves

Before the sky brightened, Grandpa was already standing at the edge of the cabbage ridge. I followed him out, and the stone slabs under my straw sandals were wet.

The ridge of green cabbage had been planted not long ago, its leaves spread out layer by layer, a deep, fresh green. Dew gathered into round beads on the leaves, rolled to the center and spread out again, and when the leaf tips could not hold it, the drops fell into the soil almost without a sound. The whole ridge looked freshly washed, or as if it had woken during the night and drunk water. Grandpa squatted down, slid his fingers under the leaves, and pinched off the yellowed ones into the basket. His hands had a great deal of work to do: pinching leaves, catching insects, loosening soil, one thing after another, never hurried.

It was the first time I looked closely at the hands of Grandpa. The tendons on the backs of his hands stood out, the knuckles were thick, and the cracks across his finger tips and the web of his thumb ran line after line, some packed with soil, some covered with old bandage tape. Yet those hands were gentle with tender leaves: the nail slid under the leaf stem and lifted, and the leaf came away without hurting the

heart of the plant. He put his hand into the furrow to test the soil, rubbed a pinch of it between his fingers, and said it was time to water. Those hands had held seedlings, pulled weeds, gripped the handle of a hoe, and when I was small, they had also cupped my face.

When the sun rose, the dew shrank little by little, and the cabbages in the ridge swayed softly. Grandpa straightened up and carried the basket of yellow leaves outside the fence to rot down into fertilizer. He made no sound while bent over his work, and no sound while catching his breath upright, as if this ridge of vegetables could speak for itself and he only had to listen.

Standing at the edge of the ridge, I felt suddenly very calm. Life in the town rushes: homework piles up, exams come one after another, and my feet never seem to touch the ground. But this ridge of cabbage is not in a hurry. The dew comes every night, Grandpa comes every day, and the leaves grow a little each day. The steadiest life, I realized, is simply to bend down, put your hands into the soil, and like Grandpa, raise things one day at a time.