父亲的地，我的班

工作日我对着一班四十多个孩子，周末回乡下陪父亲侍弄菜园。那个周六早上，父亲派给我的头一件事，是把这半畦地翻了。他把锄头递给我，说：落深一点。

我握了三十年笔，握锄头是外行。头一锄落浅了，锄尖只划破地皮；第二锄我加了劲，土星子溅了一脸，袖口里都灌了土。父亲不教口诀，只在我前面翻了几步示范：举锄，落下，翻土，碎块，节奏不紧不慢。父亲七十多了，翻地不喊腰疼，我先疼了。我照着那个节奏来，到第十锄，才有点像样。

晌午前，半畦土翻松。父亲掏出一包萝卜种，用一根树枝划出浅沟，说籽沿沟撒，盖一层薄土，别埋深。我捏着细小的籽，怕撒密，手腕僵在半空。父亲说，急不得，籽有籽的时辰。

播完种，我们在菜园边的竹椅底下坐着歇，话就聊开了。竹椅是父亲坐旧了的，椅面塌下去一点，他坐惯那个位置，挪开半尺都要坐回来。他问班上怎么样，我说现在的孩子急，我也急，作业错一个字都要当天订正。父亲沉默一会儿，指着那条刚播过的沟说：你今天撒种，明天就盼它出土？土不答应。他不懂教育，他懂生长。

我愣在那里。我天天批改、追进度，像把苗拔起来助长。父亲侍弄他的菜，按土的速度等。翻地、播种、浇水、间苗，一样一样来，菜园从没教过他快。

那天下午我们给番茄搭架，他一边绑绳一边讲起我上班第一年，他挑了一筐西红柿送到学校门口，放下就走，怕耽误我上课。他的手握锄头稳，握绑绳也稳，指节粗得像树皮。

回去的路上，我总想起那条刚播过的沟。土底下，籽在安静攒劲。班上的孩子，我想我也可以像父亲那样，等一等。

My Father's Field, My Classroom

On weekdays I face a class of more than forty children; on weekends I go back to the village to help my father tend his garden. That Saturday morning, the first thing he assigned me was turning this half bed. He handed me the hoe and said: sink it deeper.

I have held a pen for thirty years; holding a hoe I am a beginner. My first stroke was too shallow, the tip only scratching the skin of the ground; on the second I put in force, and clods spattered my face. Father gives no slogans. He just tills a few paces ahead as a demonstration: raise, drop, turn, break, the rhythm neither tight nor loose. He is past seventy and never complains of a sore back; mine ached first. I followed his rhythm, and by the tenth stroke I looked almost presentable.

Before noon the half bed lay loose. Father took out a packet of radish seed and scratched a shallow furrow with a stick: sow along the furrow, cover with a thin layer, do not bury deep. I pinched the tiny seeds, afraid of sowing too thick, my

wrist frozen in the air. Father said, no rushing; the seeds have their own hour.

After sowing, we rested under the shade near the bamboo chair by the fence, and the talk opened up. He asked how the class was doing. I said the children nowadays are anxious, and so am I; a single wrong character in homework must be corrected the same day. Father was quiet for a moment, then pointed at the freshly sown furrow and said: you sow today and expect it above ground tomorrow? The soil does not agree. He does not understand education; he understands growing.

I sat there stunned. Every day I grade and chase progress, like pulling up seedlings to help them grow. Father tends his vegetables at the speed of soil: till, sow, water, thin, one thing after another. The garden never taught him to hurry.

That afternoon we staked the tomatoes. As he tied the twine he recalled the first year I taught: he carried a basket of tomatoes to the school gate, set it down, and left at once, afraid of interrupting my class. His grip on a hoe is steady, his grip on twine is steady, his knuckles rough as bark.

On the way home I kept thinking of that freshly sown furrow. Under the soil, the seeds are quietly gathering strength. For the children in my class, I think I too can wait, the way my father waits.

www.vv99.net