菜园里第一根黄瓜

暑假下到乡下，爷爷指着菜园尽头的一架黄瓜说：这根归你，你看着它长。

黄瓜才小指头大。每天早起，我第一件事就是跑到架下。第一天它长了一截，第二天它弯了一点，第三天它身上的小刺扎了手。我蹲在架下数，问爷爷：什么时候能摘？爷爷说：等它头上的花干了、掉了，等它身子从浅绿转成深绿，就熟了。我又问：那要几天？爷爷说：说不准，天热就快，天凉就慢，黄瓜自己知道时候，你替它着急没用。

打那以后我天天看花。花是黄的，干的时候先卷边。第五天花干了一半，第六天只剩一小撮。我急了，问爷爷：现在能摘吗？爷爷笑：摘早了没开花，嘴里发苦，这一根就白等了。

第七天早上，花掉了，黄瓜深绿，身上蒙一层白霜。我伸手摸了摸，硬实了，跟前几天软塌塌的手感不一样。我喊爷爷过来，爷爷说：你来摘。我伸手拧，拧不动，爷爷过来托着我的手，一起咔的一声，拧下了第一根黄瓜。

我举着黄瓜往屋里跑，一路喊：奶奶，黄瓜熟啦！奶奶接过去掂了掂，说这根长得真好，刺还扎手呢，新鲜。我说：不行，这根是第一根，要分着吃。于是奶奶切成片，我端着盘子挨个送：先送爷爷，再送奶奶，再送爸爸妈妈，最后送隔壁王奶奶，因为爷爷平日总给王奶奶送黄瓜。王奶奶咬一口，说这丫头有心，黄瓜也甜。

爷爷咬一口，问我：苦不苦？我摇头，说甜。其实我不知道是真甜，还是等了七天才觉得甜。盘子里的黄瓜片很快就没了。奶奶说：明天再去看第二根。

晚上躺在凉席上，我听见院子里爷爷跟奶奶说话，说这丫头头一回这么勤快，天天早起。我闭着眼笑，心里已经在盘算明早几点去架下等着。

The First Cucumber in the Garden

The summer I went down to the countryside, Grandpa pointed to a cucumber frame at the end of the garden and said: this one is yours, watch it grow.

The cucumber was as small as a finger then. Every morning after getting up, the first thing I did was run to the frame. On the first day it grew a little; on the second day it bent; on the third day the fuzz on its body pricked my hand. I squatted under the frame, counted, and asked Grandpa: when can I pick it? Grandpa said: wait until the flower on its head dries and falls, wait until its body turns from pale green to deep green, then it is ripe. I asked again: how many days? Grandpa said: hard to say; hot weather makes it fast, cool weather slow. The cucumber knows its own time; worrying for it will not help.

From then on I watched the flower every day. The flower was yellow, and when it dried, the edges curled first. On the fifth day half of it was dry; on the sixth day

only a small bunch was left. I could not wait and asked: can I pick it now? Grandpa laughed: pick it early and the bloom has not settled, it will taste bitter, and this one will be wasted.

On the morning of the seventh day the flower fell off. The cucumber was deep green, with a coat of white frost on its body. I called Grandpa over, and Grandpa said: you pick it. I reached out and twisted, but could not get it off; Grandpa came over, held my hand, and together we twisted with a snap, and the first cucumber came off.

I held the cucumber and ran into the house, shouting all the way: Grandma, the cucumber is ripe! Grandma took it and said: this one grew well, the fuzz still pricks the hand, quite fresh. I said: no, this is the first one, we must share it. So Grandma cut it into slices, and I carried the plate around: first to Grandpa, then to Grandma, then to Mom and Dad, and last to Grandma Wang next door, because Grandpa often gave her cucumbers. Grandma Wang took a bite and said: this girl has a good heart, and the cucumber is sweet too.

Grandpa took a bite and asked me: is it bitter? I shook my head and said: sweet. I do not know if it was truly sweet, or sweet because I had waited seven days. The slices on the plate disappeared fast. Grandma said: tomorrow go and look at the second one.

At night on the cool mat, I heard Grandpa and Grandma talking in the yard, saying this girl had never been so diligent, getting up early every day. I smiled with my eyes closed, already planning what time to wait under the frame tomorrow morning.

等花干了再摘

爷爷在菜园里种黄瓜，我负责浇水。头一根黄瓜六月初开的花，头上顶着一朵黄的，身子又细又短。

我想摘。手刚伸出去，爷爷按住我：花还没干，再等几天。我问：为什么？爷爷说：摘早了的黄瓜没开花，嘴里发苦；再长几天，肉才脆，才回甜。我问：几天？爷爷说：看花。花干了、掉了，就差不多了。

打那以后我天天去看。花从边上开始干，卷成一小团，颜色转褐。第三天花还没掉，我着急，问爷爷：它是不是不掉了？爷爷说：它在等时候，就像你放学等下课铃，到点它就响。我蹲在架下想，下课铃还有十分钟，我这朵花还有几天，比等下课难熬多了。那天中午我连饭都少吃一碗，惦记着它。

第五天早上，花掉了。黄瓜深绿，身上蒙一层白霜。爷爷把剪子递给我：你来，剪断柄，留

卷须，藤上还接着结。我咔的一声剪下来，断口嫩得出水。爷爷接过去看了看断口，点头说：剪得对，没伤着藤。

我举着黄瓜问爷爷：先给谁？爷爷说：你定。我想了一会儿，说：先给李爷爷吧，他上礼拜帮咱挑过水。奶奶拌了一碗凉菜，我端着送到隔壁。李爷爷咬一口，说这黄瓜甜。我说：我等了五天呢。李爷爷放下筷子，认真地跟我说：等过的东西，吃着才知道等是什么滋味。我不太懂这句话，但把它记住了。

回来爷爷也给我们切了一碗。我咬一大口，确实是脆的，咽下去一会儿，嘴里泛上一点甜。原来等待是有味道的。

爷爷坐在竹椅上，看着那架黄瓜，慢悠悠说：园子里长的东西，跟嘴里的东西一样，等一等，都好吃。我把这句话记在心里，第二天一早，又跑去数第二根黄瓜头上的花了。

Wait Until the Flower Dries

Grandpa planted cucumbers in the garden, and I was in charge of watering. The first cucumber flowered in early June, a yellow flower on its head, its body thin and short.

I wanted to pick it. My hand was barely out when Grandpa held it back: the flower has not dried, wait a few more days. I asked: why? Grandpa said: a cucumber picked early has no bloom settled in it, it tastes bitter; let it grow a few more days and the flesh turns crisp, and sweet after that. I asked: how many days? Grandpa said: watch the flower. When it dries and falls off, it is about time.

From then on I went to look every day. The flower dried from the edges, curled into a small ball, its color turning brown. On the third day it had not fallen, and I worried and asked Grandpa: will it not fall? Grandpa said: it is waiting for its time, just like you wait for the bell at the end of school; when the time comes, it rings. I squatted under the frame and thought: the school bell has ten minutes to go, but my flower has how many days left; this is harder to wait out than a school day. That noon I ate a bowl less of rice, my mind back on the flower.

On the morning of the fifth day the flower fell off. The cucumber was deep green, with a coat of white frost on its body. Grandpa handed me the scissors: you do it. Cut the stem, leave the tendril, and the vine keeps bearing. I snipped once, and the cut was so tender it gave out water. Grandpa looked at the cut and nodded: cut right, the vine is unhurt.

Holding the cucumber I asked Grandpa: who first? Grandpa said: you decide. I thought a while and said: let us give it to Grandpa Li first, he helped us carry water last week. Grandma made a bowl of cold salad, and I carried it next door.

Grandpa Li took a bite and said: this cucumber is sweet. I said: I waited five days for it. Grandpa Li put down his chopsticks and said to me seriously: a thing you have waited for tells you, in the eating, what waiting tastes like. I did not quite understand the line, but I kept it.

Back home Grandpa had cut a bowl for us too. I took a big bite; crisp indeed, and a while after swallowing, a little sweetness rose in the mouth. So waiting has a taste of its own.

Grandpa sat on the bamboo chair, looking at the cucumber frame, and said slowly: what grows in a garden, like what goes into a mouth, always tastes better after waiting. I kept that line in my heart, and early the next morning I ran again to count the flower on the second cucumber.

我是一根被等待的黄瓜

我是菜园里的第一根黄瓜。五月初，爷爷把我栽进畦里，绑上架竿，跟奶奶说：这根留着，给暑假来的孙子。

六月，孙子真来了。他每天早起蹲到架下看我，我能觉出他的眼睛，从我头顶看到尾巴。他问爷爷：什么时候能摘我？爷爷说：等我头上的花干了、掉了。他点点头，伸出手指比了比我的长短，跟爷爷汇报：今天又长了一指。爷爷说：你天天量它，它天天长给你看。

我头上的花一天比一天干，我自己也急，想快点熟。孙子来得一天比一天早。有一天下雨，他也来了，穿着雨靴站在畦沟边看我，叶子上的水滴到他鼻尖，他不擦。他嘴里念叨着：快干吧，快干吧。我听了想笑，我头上的花，哪能被他念叨干。

花掉的那天早上，他喊：爷爷，花掉了！爷爷过来，说：摘。他伸手拧我，拧不动，爷爷托住他的手，一起咔的一声，我离了藤，断口嫩得出水。

他举着我往院里跑，一路喊：奶奶，黄瓜熟啦！奶奶接过去说拌凉菜。他说：不行，要先分。他把我切成片，端着盘子挨个送：先送爷爷，再送奶奶，再送爸爸妈妈，最后送隔壁王奶奶。

我被人挨个传着，一口一口吃完了。我听见孙子说：我看了它七天呢。爷爷说：园子里长的东西，跟嘴里的东西一样，等一等，都好吃。王奶奶说：这黄瓜脆，明年我还来摘。他们说话的时候，太阳已经照到架竿上，我的藤在地上投下一小片影子。

我是一根黄瓜，可我觉得自己比多数黄瓜活得值：有人天天看我，有人等了我七天，有人把我第一片放到爷爷碗里。架竿上还缠着我的藤，藤上正结第二根。它还不知道，会有个小男孩，明早又来蹲着看它。

I Am a Cucumber That Was Waited For

I am the first cucumber in the garden. In early May Grandpa planted me in the bed and tied me to the frame, saying to Grandma: keep this one for the grandchild who is coming for summer vacation.

In June the grandchild came. Every morning he squatted under the frame to look at me; I could feel his eyes, from my head down to my tail. He asked Grandpa: when can he pick me? Grandpa said: wait until the flower on my head dries and falls. He nodded, held up his fingers against my length, and reported to Grandpa: one finger longer today. Grandpa said: you measure me every day, and I grow for you to see every day.

The flower on my head dried day by day, and I was in a hurry too, wanting to ripen fast. The grandchild came earlier and earlier each day. One rainy day he came as well, in rain boots, standing at the edge of the furrow to look at me; water dripped from a leaf onto his nose, and he did not wipe it. He muttered: dry soon, dry soon. I wanted to laugh at that: a flower on my head cannot be dried by muttering.

On the morning the flower fell, he shouted: Grandpa, the flower fell! Grandpa came over and said: pick it. He reached out and could not twist me off; Grandpa held his hand, and together we twisted with a snap, and I left the vine, my cut so tender it gave out water.

He held me up and ran into the yard, shouting: Grandma, the cucumber is ripe! Grandma took me and said she would make a cold salad. He said: no, we must share first. He cut me into slices and carried the plate around: first to Grandpa, then to Grandma, then to Mom and Dad, and last to Grandma Wang next door.

I was passed from hand to hand and eaten bite by bite. I heard the grandchild say: I watched it for seven days. Grandpa said: what grows in a garden, like what goes into a mouth, always tastes better after waiting.

I am only a cucumber, yet I think I lived worthier than most: someone looked at me every day, someone waited for me seven days, someone put my first slice into Grandpa bowl. My vine still clings to the frame, and it is bearing a second one. That one does not know yet that a small boy will squat under it again tomorrow morning.