蚜虫来了，瓢虫来帮

清晨我端水舀给甘蓝浇水，看见叶子背面聚着一群小绿虫，密密麻麻，几乎不动，像叶背上长了一层绿霉。我喊：爷爷，你快来，甘蓝上长虫了！

爷爷扛着锄头过来，捏下一片叶，凑近看。他说：这叫蚜虫，专吸叶子的汁，聚得多了，叶子卷边发黄，甘蓝就长不动了。我说：那快打药呀！爷爷摇头：药一喷，蚜虫死了，吃蚜虫的瓢虫也死；药落在菜上，回头咱们吃进嘴里。咱们用土办法。

爷爷把一小块肥皂化进水里，搅到发白，又掐几个辣椒捣碎泡进去，搁了半日。他把喷壶递给我：专喷叶子背面，蚜虫都藏在那儿，喷到才管用。我一片一片掀着叶子喷，喷完一畦，胳膊发酸，手背上溅满肥皂水。喷壶咝咝地响，我越喷越起劲。爷爷在畦那头看着，提醒我：别踩畦面，脚走沟，喷完这片再挪一步。

第二天一早我去看：蚜虫掉了不少，剩下的挤在叶角上，缩着不动。爷爷说：再等几天，瓢虫自己会来。园子里一有蚜虫，瓢虫在后坡闻着味就来了。我问：它们怎么知道？爷爷说：虫的鼻子比人灵。

第四天，甘蓝叶上真落了一只七星瓢虫，背上一个一个小白点，比绿豆还小。它沿着叶背爬，一路吃。我蹲在旁边看它吃，看了很久，连隔壁小伙伴来喊我玩，我都摆手不让他过来，怕他惊走它。

奶奶在院里搭话：那肥皂辣椒水没白沤。爷爷说：虫吃菜，菜也养虫，园子里的账，人不能一个人算完。园子不光属于咱们，虫也住在这儿，想不伤益虫的办法，就是疼园子。

那年秋天，我们的甘蓝长得好，一片卷边的叶子都没有。每次吃甘蓝，我都想起那只七星瓢虫，想起它趴在我喷过肥皂水的叶子背面，一路吃蚜虫的样子。

Aphids Came, Ladybugs Came to Help

Early morning I carried the ladle to water the cabbages, and saw on the back of a leaf a crowd of tiny green insects, thick and still, like a layer of green mold grown on the leaf. I shouted: Grandpa, come quick, the cabbages have bugs!

Grandpa came over with the hoe on his shoulder, pinched off one leaf, and looked close. He said: these are aphids; they suck the juice of leaves. When too many gather, the leaf curls and yellows, and the cabbage stops growing. I said: then spray medicine! Grandpa shook his head: one spray kills the aphids, and kills the ladybugs that eat aphids too; the medicine lands on the vegetables, and we eat it later. We will use a country way.

Grandpa melted a small piece of soap in water, stirred it white, then crushed a few chili peppers into it and let it stand half a day. He handed me the sprayer:

spray the backs of the leaves only; aphids all hide there, and the spray works only if it reaches them. I lifted leaf after leaf and sprayed. When one bed was done, my arms ached and the backs of my hands were spattered with soapy water. The sprayer hissed, and I sprayed with more heart. Grandpa watched from the other end of the bed and reminded me: do not step on the bed itself, keep your feet in the furrow, and move one step only after this patch is done.

Early next morning I went to look: many aphids had fallen, and the rest huddled at the corners of leaves, shrunk and still. Grandpa said: wait a few more days, and ladybugs will come by themselves. Once a garden has aphids, ladybugs smell it from the hillside and come to feed. I asked: how do they know? Grandpa said: an insect nose is keener than a human one.

On the fourth day a seven-star ladybug really landed on a cabbage leaf, white dots one by one on its back, smaller than a mung bean. It crawled along the back of the leaf, eating as it went. I squatted beside it and watched it feed for a long time; when my playmate next door came to call me, I waved him away, afraid he would startle it.

Grandma called from the yard: the soap and chili water was not soaked for nothing. Grandpa said: bugs eat the vegetables, and the vegetables also feed the bugs; the accounts of a garden cannot be kept by people alone. The garden does not belong to us only; insects live here too. To think of a way that spares the good insects is to be kind to the garden.

That autumn our cabbages grew well, without one curled leaf. Every time I ate cabbage, I thought of that ladybug, lying on the back of a leaf I had sprayed, eating aphids all the way along.

罐子里的毛毛虫

清晨我在园子里拔草，见甘蓝叶上趴着一条绿毛毛虫，正啃叶子，啃出一个圆洞。我捡起小树枝想把它弹走，爷爷喊：别动，让我看看。

爷爷蹲下，端详了一会儿，说：这是菜粉蝶的娃，长大是蝴蝶，白的，就在园子上空飞。我说：可它啃咱们的甘蓝！爷爷说：它饿了要吃，咱们的菜也想留，那就想一个两全的办法。

爷爷找出一个玻璃罐，把毛毛虫请进罐里，又把它趴着的那棵甘蓝苗带土挪进旧花盆，转到后坡拔了几片野芥菜叶放进去。他说：它的饭换成野芥菜，跟甘蓝是一家，它认得，也爱吃。园子保住了，它也不挨饿。

打那以后我每天给它添野芥菜叶。它吃得慢，叶子上的洞一天比一天小。它的粪是绿的小颗

粒，落在罐底，像撒了一把碎茶。它越长越粗，背上的毛看着也软了。我给它起了个名，叫小绿，跟爷爷汇报它每天吃了几个洞。爷爷说：它吃饱了会自己找地方变蛹，你不用替它操心。

一周后它不吃不动，爬到罐口边上，身子缩成一个小疙瘩。我慌了，跑去喊爷爷。爷爷看了一眼，说：它吐丝把自己箍住了，这叫蛹。别碰它，等。

又过了十来天，疙瘩裂开一道缝，湿漉漉的蝴蝶爬出来，翅膀皱皱的，挂在罐口晾。晾干了，翅膀一张一合，从窗口飞出去，在院里绕了一圈，往后坡去了。我追到门口看，它落在一片野芥菜上。

爷爷说：园子里的虫，能想活路的就不白杀。你喂了它半个月，它把命还成一只蝴蝶，还给你在坡上散籽，往后坡上的菜粉蝶更多。这是劳动里的账，人算得公道，虫也记得。

那年园里甘蓝的洞不多。再看见白蝴蝶飞进园子，我就想：它说不定在咱家罐子里住过。

The Caterpillar in the Jar

Early morning I was pulling grass in the garden when I saw a green caterpillar on a cabbage leaf, gnawing a round hole in it. I picked up a small twig to flick it away, and Grandpa called: do not move, let me look.

Grandpa squatted, studied it a while, and said: this is the young of the cabbage white butterfly; when it grows it becomes a butterfly, a white one, flying over this very garden. I said: but it is gnawing our cabbages! Grandpa said: it is hungry and must eat, and we want our vegetables kept; then let us think of a way that saves both.

Grandpa found a glass jar and asked the caterpillar into it, then moved the seedling it had been sitting on, with its soil, into an old flowerpot, and went to the hillside to pull a few wild mustard leaves for it. He said: its food becomes wild mustard, which is of the same family as cabbage; it knows the taste and likes it. The garden is saved, and the insect goes hungry nowhere.

From then on I added wild mustard leaves every day. It ate slowly, and the holes in the leaves grew smaller day by day. Its droppings were small green grains on the bottom of the jar, like a handful of broken tea scattered there. It grew thicker, and the hairs on its back looked softer. I gave it a name, Little Green, and reported to Grandpa each day how many holes it had eaten. Grandpa said: when it is full it will find a place to turn into a pupa by itself; there is no need to worry for it.

After a week it stopped eating and moving, climbed to the rim of the jar, and shrank its body into a small lump. I panicked and ran for Grandpa. He glanced and said: it has spun thread around itself; this is called a pupa. Do not touch it. Wait.

Some ten days later the lump split a seam, and a wet butterfly crawled out, its wings wrinkled, hanging on the rim to dry. When dry, the wings opened and closed, and it flew out of the window, circled once in the yard, and went toward the hillside. I chased to the gate and saw it land on a wild mustard plant.

Grandpa said: of the insects in a garden, if a way to let them live can be thought of, we do not kill for nothing. You fed it half a month; it pays its life back as a butterfly, and scatters its young on the hill for you, so more cabbage whites will live on the slope. This is the accounting of labor: if people keep it fair, insects remember too.

That year the cabbages had few holes. And whenever a white butterfly flew into the garden, I thought: perhaps it once lived in our jar.

一只七星瓢虫的自述

我是一只七星瓢虫，住后坡。一天清早，我闻见一股蚜虫味，从山脚菜园方向飘上来，甘蓝叶背上的蚜虫，怕是有好几千只。我叫上同伴，顺着篱笆往山下走。

到了园子，叶背上的蚜虫果然挤成一团。我们开工。一边吃，我一边留意那个背喷壶的小女孩。头一天她往叶背上喷过肥皂辣椒水，那水不好闻，可它不伤我们虫，喷过的叶子照旧能落脚。有个同伴落在她手背上，她抬手看了看，轻轻吹到叶子上，没捏。

后来我才知道，是她的爷爷教的：肥皂化水，泡上碎辣椒，专喷叶背。有人劝他打药，他摆手说，药一喷，蚜虫死了，我们瓢虫也死，菜上落的药，回头人自己吃。他们不用药，把叶背留给我们吃饭。

我们干了好几天，蚜虫一天比一天少。小女孩蹲在叶子旁边看我吃，脸凑得很近，呼吸吹得叶子轻轻晃。她一动不动，小声说：别怕，继续吃。我听不懂人的话，可我知道她没有赶我。她奶奶在院里喊她吃饭，她应一声，人不动，只把草帽扣在旁边的畦沟上，像是给我们留了个阴凉。

蚜虫快吃完那天，她爷爷在园里说：园子不光属于人，虫也住在这儿；想不伤益虫的办法，益虫就会自己来帮忙。我在叶子上听着，觉得这话对虫也说得上。

蚜虫吃完，我们回后坡过冬前又下了一趟山，把卵产在篱笆边的野芥菜上，不占他们的菜地。第二年园里刚长出几片新叶，我又闻见蚜虫味，照旧叫上同伴下山。小女孩认得我，喊：爷爷你看，瓢虫又来了！她爷爷抬头看了一圈，笑了，没说话。

我是一只小瓢虫，不会浇水，不会拔草，只会吃蚜虫。园子里的人给我们留了一顿饭，我们用吃虫还他们。这笔账，两边都公道。

Confessions of a Seven-Star Ladybug

I am a seven-star ladybug, and I live on the hillside. One early morning I caught the smell of aphids drifting up from the garden at the foot of the slope, on the backs of cabbage leaves; there must have been several thousand. I called my companions, and we went down along the hedge.

At the garden the aphids on the leaf backs were indeed packed in crowds. We went to work. As we fed, I kept an eye on the small girl with the sprayer on her back. The day before she had sprayed soapy chili water on the leaf backs; the water smelled bad, yet it did not harm us insects, and a sprayed leaf was still a place to land. One companion landed on the back of her hand; she raised her hand, looked at it, and blew it gently onto a leaf instead of crushing it.

Later I learned that her grandpa had taught her: melt soap in water, soak crushed chili in it, and spray the backs of leaves only. Someone urged him to use medicine; he waved it off, saying one spray kills the aphids and kills us ladybugs too, and the medicine that settles on the vegetables is eaten by people themselves. They used no medicine and left the leaf backs to us for a meal.

We worked for several days, and the aphids grew fewer day by day. The girl squatted beside a leaf and watched me feed, her face quite close, her breath making the leaf sway lightly. She sat still and whispered: do not be afraid, keep eating. I cannot understand human words, yet I knew she was not driving me away. Her grandmother called her from the yard for a meal; she answered, but the person did not move, only set her straw hat down over the furrow beside us, as if leaving us a patch of shade.

The day the aphids were nearly gone, her grandpa said in the garden: the garden does not belong to people only; insects live here too; think of a way that spares the good insects, and the good insects will come to help by themselves. I heard it on my leaf, and the words seemed true for insects as well.

When the aphids were finished, we went back to the hillside, and before winter we came down the slope once more to lay our eggs on the wild mustard by the hedge, not taking their vegetable beds. The next year, when the garden had just put out a few new leaves, I again caught the smell of aphids, and called my companions down as before. The girl knew me and shouted: Grandpa look, the ladybugs are back! Her grandpa looked up around the garden, smiled, and said nothing.

I am only a small ladybug. I cannot water and cannot pull grass; I can only eat aphids. The people of the garden left us a meal, and we pay them back by eating the pests. This account is fair on both sides.