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。喷壶唰唰地响，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.