爷爷菜园里的那只小竹篮

星期六的早上，太阳还没完全升起来，爷爷已经蹲在菜园边上。黄瓜藤上还挂着露水，他一片一片地掀开叶子看，看中了哪根黄瓜，就弯下腰再瞅一眼，嘴里念叨着：这根正好，这根正好。

他一只手托着藤，一只手掐住黄瓜的把儿，咔的一声拧下来，轻轻放进腰间的竹篮里，摆得整整齐齐，一层压一层。红透的西红柿另装一个布袋，爷爷说西红柿不能压，压坏了就不好吃了。

篮子渐渐满了。黄瓜垫底，西红柿在中间，最上面横着几根还带着泥的小葱。爷爷拍了拍篮沿，把篮子递给我：去，给隔壁李奶奶送去。替我问个好，跟她说黄瓜凉拌着吃，最爽口。

我抱着篮子走到三号楼门口，敲了三下门。李奶奶开门一看，眼睛笑成了月牙：又是你们家！回去告诉你爷爷，他种的菜是我们整幢楼最好的，我一个夏天都没买过菜。

她拿起一根黄瓜在手里来回摩挲，说晚上就拍一头蒜凉拌。说完转身进屋，再出来的时候，手里端着一碗绿豆汤，碗壁还是温的，汤里漂着几颗红枣。

拿回去给你爷爷，我熬的，给他解解暑。我一只手抱篮子，一只手端碗，一步一步往回走，生怕洒出一滴。篮子比来时轻多了，我的手却比来时沉。

爷爷接过碗，当场喝了一半，咂了一下嘴。他看看空篮子，又看看我，慢慢说：菜园子分一半出去，才是最高兴的。全留着，它就是一片菜；分出去，它就变成一幢楼的朋友。

下午我下楼扔垃圾，听见楼道里李奶奶正跟她的孙子说，三楼往下那个爷爷种的黄瓜，甜得很，比超市里的好吃多了。菜园门口那只竹篮空着，安安静静躺在太阳底下，看上去却是满的。

The Little Bamboo Basket of Grandpa

Saturday morning, the sun had barely risen when Grandpa was already crouching at the edge of the vegetable garden. Dew still hung on the cucumber vines. He lifted the leaves one by one to look, and when he found a cucumber he liked, he bent down for a second look, muttering: this one is just right, this one is just right.

He held the vine with one hand and pinched the stem of the cucumber with the other. With a snap it came off, and he laid it gently into the bamboo basket at his waist, arranging them neatly, layer upon layer. The fully ripe tomatoes went into a separate cloth bag, because Grandpa said tomatoes must not be squashed, or they would not taste good.

The basket filled up little by little. Cucumbers at the bottom, tomatoes in the middle, and on top lay several scallions still holding soil. Grandpa patted the rim of the basket and handed it to me: go, take them to Grandma Li next door. Give her my regards, and tell her cucumbers taste freshest tossed with garlic.

I carried the basket to the door of Building Three and knocked three times. When

Grandma Li opened the door and saw it, her eyes curved like crescents. Always your family! Tell your grandpa his vegetables are the best in our whole building. I have not bought a single vegetable all summer.

She picked up a cucumber and rubbed it in her hand, saying she would smash some garlic and dress it tonight. Then she went back inside, and when she came out again, she carried a bowl of mung bean soup, the sides of the bowl still warm, a few red dates floating on top.

Take this back to your grandpa. I made it to cool the summer heat. I held the basket with one hand and the bowl with the other, walking step by step, afraid to spill a single drop. The basket was far lighter than on the way here, yet my hand felt heavier.

Grandpa took the bowl and drank half of it on the spot, smacking his lips once. He looked at the empty basket, then at me, and said slowly: a vegetable garden is happiest when half of it is shared. Keep it all, and it is only a patch of vegetables. Share it, and it turns into a building full of friends.

That afternoon I went downstairs to throw out the trash and heard Grandma Li telling her grandson in the stairwell: the cucumbers grown by the grandpa below our floor taste wonderfully sweet. The bamboo basket at the garden gate sat empty in the sunlight, yet it looked full.