爷爷的竹篮子

七月的早晨，爷爷的菜园最好看。园子四周是竹篱笆，一根一根细竹竿插在土里，用麻绳绑在横杆上。篱笆上缠着牵牛花，早上开着紫花，到了中午就谢了。篱笆有个缺口，是爷爷留的门，也是递篮子的地方。

西红柿就种在篱笆边上。我蹲下来看，一个架子上挂着七八个果子，颜色都不一样。最小的那种是深绿的，摸上去硬硬的，还有一层细细的绒毛。大一点的是浅绿，绿里透着一点黄。最有趣的是半红的那种，一边红了，一边还青着，像谁拿刷子刷了一半。全红的最好看，皮亮亮的，太阳一照，像小灯笼。

爷爷站在篱笆外头，把竹篮子从缺口递进来。篮子不大，边上磨得发白，是爷爷用了几年的旧篮子。他说，挑红的摘，别硬拽，捏住果子往上一托，听见啪的一声就下来了。

我学着爷爷的样子摘。第一个我捏得太用力，捏出了一个坑。第二个我学乖了，托住果子往上一送，果柄啪地断了，果子稳稳落在手里，沉甸甸的，还带着太阳的温度。我一口气摘了六个，篮子里铺了满满一层。

摘到最后一个，我发现叶子底下还藏着一个全红的，藏得可深了，要不是拨开叶子，根本看不见。我把它摘下来，举给爷爷看。爷爷笑了，说菜园里的果子都老实，你认真找，它就让你找着。

中午奶奶用我摘的西红柿做了菜，还有一盘白糖拌西红柿，甜水都是红的。我吃撑了，坐在门槛上不想动。

我喜欢爷爷的菜园。喜欢竹篱笆上的紫花，喜欢半红半青的果子，喜欢爷爷从缺口递进来的旧竹篮子，喜欢啪的一声把果子摘下来的那个瞬间。明年七月，我还要去摘。

The Bamboo Basket of My Grandfather

In the mornings of July, the vegetable garden of my grandfather is the most beautiful place in the village. The garden is fenced with thin bamboo poles stuck into the ground and tied to cross bars with hemp string. Morning glories climb the fence, opening purple flowers at dawn and closing them by noon. There is a gap in the fence, left by my grandfather as a door, and it is also where he hands the basket through.

The tomatoes grow right along the fence. I crouch down to look. One stake holds seven or eight fruits, each a different color. The smallest are deep green, hard to the touch, covered with fine soft fuzz. The bigger ones are pale green with a hint of yellow inside. The most interesting are half red, one side red and one side still green, as if someone painted only half of them with a brush. The fully red ones are the best, with shiny skin, and in the sun they look like little lanterns.

My grandfather stands outside the fence and hands the bamboo basket in through the gap. The basket is small, its rim worn pale white, an old basket he has used for years. He says, pick the red ones, do not pull hard, hold the fruit and lift it upward, and when you hear a snap it comes off.

I pick the way he showed me. On the first one I squeeze too hard and leave a dent with my thumb. On the second I am wiser. I hold the fruit and push it up, and the stem snaps, and the fruit lands safely in my hand, heavy and warm from the sun. I pick six in a row, and the basket has a full layer lying in it.

At the last one, I find a fully red tomato hiding under a leaf, hidden so deep that nobody would see it without parting the leaves. I pick it and hold it up for my grandfather. He laughs and says the fruits in the garden are honest creatures; if you look for them in earnest, they let themselves be found.

At noon my grandmother cooks the tomatoes I picked, and there is also a plate of tomatoes with white sugar, and the sweet water turns red. I eat until I am too full to move, and sit on the doorstep.

I love the vegetable garden of my grandfather. I love the purple flowers on the bamboo fence, the fruits half red and half green, the old bamboo basket handed in through the gap, and the moment of a snap when a tomato comes off the plant. Next July, I am going to pick again.