菜园四季帖

春天的菜畦是醒来的。冻土松了，爷爷蹲在畦边点种子，一粒，又一粒，像给土地数心跳。我帮他端盆，种子太小，我端得比考试还小心。风还凉，畦沟里的水却暖了，那是太阳落进去又化开的颜色。谁也不说话，土地的心跳就替我们说了。

夏天的菜畦是出汗的。草比苗疯，爷爷一上午薅的草堆成一座小山。他的汗水有三种样子：落在土里的，落在袖口的，落在脊梁上又滑进畦沟的。黄昏给菜园点名，丝瓜一个，南瓜一个，爷爷站在正中间，谁也不缺，谁也不敢迟到。

秋天的菜畦是弯腰的。南瓜卧在地上，肚脐贴着泥土，像一枚枚金色的句号。爷爷摘一个，掂一掂，搁进筐里，筐里的黄昏就沉了一分。他直起腰望天，云走得很慢，像替他一笔一笔数收成。我提着另一个空筐，故意走得很轻，怕惊动了那些熟透的日子。

冬天的菜畦是守夜的。霜把畦垄描成银线，虫声收走了，土在下面慢慢呼吸。爷爷傍晚还要绕一圈，影子落在休耕的畦上，像给菜园盖一层薄被。他说，地可以歇着，人不能歇，心里要常来。

汗水落在四季里，是有名目的。春天的汗叫盼头，夏天的汗叫本分，秋天的汗叫收成。爷爷一辈子只浇这三种水，菜园就还他一畦一畦的绿，一茬一茬的黄，和一个又一个不慌不忙的黄昏。

我在城里，水果摊前忽然闻到一根黄瓜的清香，愣了半天。那味道里有菜畦，有正午，有一滴汗替另一滴汗接着干活。摊主问我要不要，我买了一根，咬一口，竟是黄昏的味道。

路灯把我的影子铺在地上，一条一条，像畦垄。我忽然想，明年开春，我要回去，跟爷爷一起点种子。他数土地的心跳，我数我的。汗水认得路，黄昏也认得，它们会把我领回那六条畦中间，站成整齐的一行。

Notes of the Garden Through Four Seasons

The beds of spring are beds that wake up. The frozen soil loosens, and grandfather squats at the edge of the bed dropping seeds, one and one more, as if counting the heartbeat of the land. I help him hold the basin; the seeds are so small that I carry it more carefully than in an exam. The wind is still cold, yet the water in the furrows has turned warm, the color of the sun falling in and melting. No one speaks, and the heartbeat of the land speaks for us.

The beds of summer are beds that sweat. The weeds grow wilder than the seedlings, and the weeds he pulls in one morning pile into a little hill. His sweat has three looks: some falls into the soil, some on his sleeve, some on his back and then slides into the furrow. At dusk the garden takes roll call: one luffa, one pumpkin, grandfather standing right in the middle, none missing, none daring to be late.

The beds of autumn are beds that bend. Pumpkins lie on the ground, their navels

touching the earth, like golden full stops. He picks one, weighs it in his hand, sets it in the basket, and the dusk inside the basket grows heavier by a measure. He straightens and looks up; the clouds move very slowly, as if counting the harvest stroke by stroke for him. I carry the other empty basket and walk deliberately light, afraid of disturbing the fully ripe days.

The beds of winter are beds that keep the night. Frost traces the ridges into silver lines; the insect sounds are packed away, and the soil breathes slowly underneath. In the evening he still walks one round, and his shadow falls on the resting beds like a thin quilt laid over the garden. He says: the land may rest, but the person may not; the heart must visit often.

Sweat that falls through the four seasons has names. The sweat of spring is called hope, the sweat of summer is called duty, the sweat of autumn is called harvest. In all his life grandfather watered only these three kinds, and the garden pays him back with green bed by bed, yellow crop by crop, and dusk after unhurried dusk.

In the city, in front of a fruit stall I suddenly smell the clean scent of a cucumber, and stand stunned for a long while. In that taste there are vegetable beds, high noon, and one drop of sweat relieving another drop of sweat at work. The seller asks whether I want one; I buy one, take a bite, and it tastes of dusk.

The street lamp spreads my shadow on the ground, row after row, like the ridges of beds. It strikes me that next spring I will go back and sow seeds together with grandfather. He counts the heartbeat of the land, I count mine. Sweat knows the way, and dusk knows it too; they will lead me back between those six beds and stand me in a tidy row.