菜畦、汗水与黄昏的距离

菜畦是一行一行的。一行丝瓜，一行毛豆，一行我说不清名字的青菜。它们站得整齐，像爷爷半辈子排好的日子。

我站在这一头，爷爷站在那一头。中间隔着六条畦，隔着整个暑假，隔着我没说出口的那些话。城里的一年太长，长到我忘了怎么开口喊他。

七月的太阳不跟人商量。它把爷爷的影子踩在脚底下，踩得很扁。爷爷弯着腰，脊背拱起，像一截老桥。汗从他的帽檐出发，走很远的路，落到土里，土的颜色就深了一点点。

我数过。他直一次腰，用袖子擦一次脸，再弯下去。一个中午，他直了十一次腰。那十一滴汗，没有一滴落在抱怨上，全部落在菜根旁边。菜不会说谢谢，菜只是长。爷爷给丝瓜搭架，一根竹竿一根竹竿地绑，绳结全是同一个方向，像汗排着队往前走，从不插队。

丝瓜知道夏天有多长。它一天开几朵黄花，一天长一寸，把黄昏一天一天往后顶。毛豆知道夏天有多重。它的叶子在午后垂下来，又在傍晚抬起来，像一个人咬紧了牙。

黄昏是从菜园外边进来的。先是光变软，照在畦沟里，像水。然后是影子变长，爷爷的影子从脚边一直铺到我脚边，我才知道，原来他离我并不远，是我自己站得太靠边。

我拎起桶。水很沉，我走得歪歪斜斜，六条畦走了很久。爷爷没说话，只是把腰直了直，让开半步。水浇下去，土吸一口，又吸一口，像替我们俩，把没说出口的话都喝掉了。

那天晚上我写在日记里的只有一句：菜畦六条，我走了一遍，就懂了爷爷走过的几千遍。汗水不响，黄昏不说，它们只是把一个人，一寸一寸，放到另一个人的影子里。

The Distance Between the Bed, the Sweat and the Dusk

The vegetable beds stand row by row. One row of luffa, one row of green soybeans, one row of greens whose name I cannot say. They stand in good order, like the days my grandfather has arranged for half a lifetime.

I stand at this end, grandfather stands at that. Between us lie six beds, the whole of summer vacation, and the words I could not bring myself to say. A year in the city is so long that I forgot how to call out to him.

The July sun consults no one. It stamps his shadow flat under its foot. He bends at the waist, his back arched like an old bridge. Sweat sets out from the brim of his hat, travels a long way, and falls into the soil, and the soil there darkens just a little.

I counted. He straightens once, wipes his face with his sleeve once, bends again. In one noon he straightened eleven times. Not one of those eleven drops of sweat fell on complaint; every one fell beside the roots. The vegetables do not say thank you.

The vegetables only grow. He builds a trellis for the luffa, tying pole after pole, every knot facing the same direction, like sweat marching in line, never cutting ahead.

The luffa knows how long summer is. It opens a few yellow flowers a day, grows an inch a day, and pushes the dusk one day further back each day. The soybeans know how heavy summer is. Their leaves droop in the afternoon and lift again toward evening, like a person clenching the teeth.

Dusk enters from outside the garden. First the light turns soft in the furrows, like water. Then the shadows lengthen, and his shadow spreads from his feet all the way to mine. Only then I know he was never far from me; it was I who kept standing too far aside.

I lift the bucket. The water is heavy, I walk crooked and unsteady, and the six beds take a long time. He says nothing, only straightens his back and yields half a step. The water goes down, the soil takes one drink, then another, as if for the two of us it drank up everything we left unsaid.

That night my diary holds only one line: six beds, I walked them once, and I understood the thousand times he has walked them. Sweat makes no sound, dusk says nothing. They only place one person, inch by inch, into the shadow of another.