小菜园的晨歌

太阳翻过篱笆，开始挨个点名：叫豆角苗，叫黄瓜秧，叫叶子上还没睡醒的露珠。我提着小水壶跑进菜园，小菜园就热热闹闹地醒啦。

篱笆是竹子做的，一根拉着一根，手拉着手。它把快乐圈在里头，把麻雀的目光从缝里放进来。风一过，篱笆就哗啦啦地弹琴；下雨的时候，它站在菜园外头站岗，不让雨点欺负一棵菜苗。

菜苗是菜园里新来的同学。豆角苗举起两片叶子，像举着小手问好；白菜苗挤在一起，悄悄说昨晚做过的梦。它们一天比一天高，像在比赛，又像在等我给它们竖大拇指。我蹲下来给它们加油，它们就红着脸又蹿出一截。

水壶是我的喇叭。灌满水，举高高，水就哗啦啦地出来，像下雨，又像唱歌。菜苗伸长嘴巴接水珠，接一颗，笑一次。土地喝一口，颜色深一点，再告诉我：都长得好，都长得好。

黄瓜秧有一回爬上了篱笆半腰，麻雀落在上面开会，商量哪一朵瓜花开得最黄。我踮着脚尖去听，它们笑着飞散，把笑声撒了一地，全撒在菜苗的叶子上。

爷爷站在畦边笑，背着手，什么都不干。他不浇水，也不点种，就看着我浇水，笑得比秋天的收成还满。他说，菜园今天唱歌啦。我问，你怎么知道？他指指篱笆，指指菜苗，又指指空中亮晶晶的水珠。

我把耳朵贴近土地。真的呀，底下有声音：根在伸懒腰，芽在翻身，小虫子在赶路。小菜园每天都唱歌，把春天唱成夏天，把种子唱成菜，把我的童年，唱成绿油油的一大片。

太阳落山了，我把水壶放回老地方，篱笆在地上拖出长长的影子。我跟菜园挥挥手：明天早上，我还来早一点，听你唱歌。

Morning Song of the Little Garden

The sun climbs over the fence and begins to call names: call the bean seedlings, call the cucumber shoots, call the dewdrops still asleep on the leaves. I run into the garden carrying my little watering can, and the little garden wakes up with a clamor.

The fence is made of bamboo, one pole pulling another, hand in hand. It keeps the joy inside, and lets the eyes of sparrows in through the gaps. When wind passes, the fence plays its rustling lute; when rain comes, it stands outside on guard, letting no raindrop bully a single seedling.

The vegetable seedlings are the newest students of the garden. Bean seedlings raise two leaves like little hands in greeting; cabbage seedlings crowd together, whispering the dream they had last night. They grow taller day by day, as if racing, as if waiting for me to give them a thumbs-up. I squat down to cheer them on, and they blush and shoot up another inch.

The watering can is my trumpet. Fill it with water and lift it high, and the water comes out tinkling, like rain, like singing. The seedlings stretch their mouths to catch the drops, catch one, laugh once. The earth takes a drink and darkens a shade, then tells me: they are all growing well, all growing well.

Once a cucumber vine climbed halfway up the fence, and sparrows perched on it for a meeting, debating which melon blossom was the yellowest. I stood on tiptoe to listen, and they flew off laughing, scattering their laughter all over the leaves of the seedlings.

Grandpa stands at the edge of the plot smiling, hands behind his back, doing nothing. He neither waters nor sows; he only watches me water, and his smile is fuller than the harvest of autumn. He says, the garden sang today. I ask, how do you know? He points at the fence, at the seedlings, and at the glittering drops in the air.

I put my ear close to the soil. Truly, there are sounds below: roots stretching, buds turning over, a little insect hurrying along. The little vegetable garden sings every day, singing spring into summer, singing seeds into vegetables, singing my childhood into one big lush green field.

The sun goes down. I put the watering can back in its old place, and the fence drags long shadows on the ground. I wave to the garden: tomorrow morning, I will come a little earlier to hear you sing.

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