# 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.

# 一只水壶的日记

我是一只铁皮水壶，住在爷爷菜园的门后。我的肚子是圆的，嘴巴是长的，头顶还有一提手，像长了一对耳朵，专门听菜园的动静。

每天清早，小女孩踮起脚把我从门后取下，晃一晃，听我肚子里的水响不响。响，她就笑了，提着我往菜畦走。她的步子快，我在半路上叮叮当当地唱歌，篱笆听见了，一根一根挺直腰，像列队欢迎我。

我的本领是下雨。小女孩把我举高高，我的长嘴巴就洒出一片雨。雨很小，很轻，一颗一颗，刚好够菜苗张开嘴接住。菜苗是菜园里最小的娃娃，它们不躲雨，反而仰着脸迎上来，谁接的水多，谁就红着脸先长高一截。

豆角苗最爱撒娇，叶子缠上我的影子，要我多留一会儿；黄瓜秧个子高，站在篱笆边，够不

着我的雨，我就挪过去，给它单独下一场。篱笆总在这时候哗啦啦地鼓掌，惊得麻雀扑棱棱飞起，又落回原处，假装什么都没发生。

爷爷有时也帮我。他把我提到井边，掀开我的盖子，看我还剩多少水。他添水的动作很轻，像怕呛着我。添满了，他把我递给小女孩，自己背着手站在畦那头，看我们俩给菜园下雨。

太阳爬到头顶的时候，我肚子里的水就见了底。小女孩把我放在畦边的石头上歇凉，我躺在那里，听见土地在慢慢咽水，听见菜苗在偷偷拔节。这是菜园最安静的时刻，也是我最骄傲的时刻。

到了秋天，我的肚子空的日子多了。可我不难过。我数过：番茄架上挂着一串红灯笼，篱笆边堆着小山一样的南瓜，小女孩抱着最大的一个，笑得露出缺了的门牙。我知道，那些全是我从前洒出去的雨，换了模样回来见我。

冬天，我回到门后，肚子里最后一滴水也干了。可我不着急。篱笆在门外守着，菜苗在地底下睡着，等下一场春雨。等雪一化，小女孩又会踮起脚把我取下，晃一晃，听我响。我最大的心愿，就是把自己肚子里的水，都变成黄瓜、番茄和豆角，再变成小女孩嘴角的笑。

# The Diary of a Watering Can

I am a tin watering can, living behind the door of grandfather of the garden. My belly is round, my mouth is long, and on my head there is a handle, like a pair of ears grown for listening to what happens in the garden.

Every morning the little girl tiptoes to take me down from behind the door, gives me a shake, and listens whether the water inside me sounds. If it sounds, she smiles and carries me toward the vegetable beds. Her steps are quick, and I jingle along the way like singing; the fence hears it, and straightens pole after pole, like lining up to welcome me.

My talent is making rain. The little girl lifts me high, and my long mouth sprinkles out a sheet of rain. The rain is small and soft, drop by drop, just enough for the seedlings to open their mouths and catch it. The seedlings are the smallest babies of the garden; they do not hide from rain but tilt their faces up to meet it, and whoever catches more blushes and grows tall first.

The bean seedlings love to act sweet, twining their leaves around my shadow and begging me to stay longer; the cucumber shoot stands tall by the fence, out of reach of my rain, so I move over and make it a private shower. The fence always applauds with a rustle at such moments, startling the sparrows into flight, and they settle back as if nothing had happened.

Sometimes grandfather helps me too. He carries me to the well and opens my lid to

see how much water I have left. He refills me gently, as if afraid of choking me. When I am full, he hands me to the little girl and stands with hands behind his back at the far end of the plot, watching the two of us rain on the garden.

When the sun climbs to the top of the sky, the water in my belly runs low. The little girl sets me on the stone by the plot to cool off, and lying there I hear the earth swallowing water slowly, hear the seedlings secretly jointing up. This is the quietest hour of the garden, and the proudest hour for me.

In autumn, days with an empty belly become more common. But I am not sad. I have counted: a string of red lanterns hangs on the tomato trellis, pumpkins pile like a little hill beside the fence, and the little girl hugs the biggest one, smiling with her missing front tooth. I know that all of them are the rains I once sprinkled, coming back to see me in a new shape.

In winter I return behind the door, and the last drop in my belly dries up. Yet I am not in a hurry. The fence keeps watch outside, the seedlings sleep under the ground, waiting for the next spring rain. When the snow melts, the little girl will tiptoe to take me down again, shake me, and listen for my sound. My greatest wish is to turn all the water in my belly into cucumbers, tomatoes and beans, and then into the smile on the mouth of the little girl.

# 菜园的一天

天还没全亮，第一声鸟叫落在篱笆上，小菜园的一天就开始啦。篱笆先醒，它一夜没睡，正数着星星退场。露水在菜苗叶子上排好队，等着太阳给它们发亮晶晶的勋章。

爷爷提着水壶走来，草帽挂在篱笆最高的那根竹子上，像升起了第二轮太阳。水壶倾斜，水珠排着队跳下去，一颗给豆角，一颗给白菜，一颗给刚出土、还戴着帽子没睡醒的小菜苗。菜苗喝一口，伸一次懒腰，叶子就张开一寸。

早操时间到了。风一吹，满园的菜苗一起做操：举左手，举右手，弯腰，再挺直。篱笆在旁边喊拍子，哗啦，哗啦。只有老南瓜不做操，它赖在藤上打呼噜，梦见自己又圆了一圈。

太阳升高，菜园安静下来。蝴蝶来巡视，落在黄瓜花上闻一闻，满意地点点头飞走。蚂蚁排成长队，从篱笆缝里进来参观，它们约定谁也不许摘花，谁也不许踩苗。菜苗们站得笔直，像等着老师表扬的好学生。

午后来了一场急雨。篱笆把背挺直，替矮处的菜苗挡一挡；水壶站在门边看戏，有点失落，因为今天的雨轮不到它下。雨停了，菜苗个个洗了澡，绿得发亮，连泥巴都冒出了好闻的气味。

傍晚，爷爷来收水壶，顺便给菜园点名。他念一个名字，一棵菜晃一下叶子，算是答到。念

到篱笆时，风替篱笆哗啦响了一声，爷爷也笑了，笑声挂在草帽沿上，晃了一路。

天黑了，菜园点起自己的灯：萤火虫提着小灯笼查夜，看看豆角爬了几寸，看看菜苗有没有做梦。篱笆依旧站着，影子和黑夜连成一片。星星探下头来看，问菜园睡了吗。菜园说，快了，等我先把今天的快乐都记下来。

它记的是：水壶唱过一次歌，菜苗做过一次操，篱笆站了一整天的岗，爷爷笑过三回，麻雀偷喝过一次雨水又被赶跑。小菜园的一天，就是这么过的，普普通通，快快乐乐，像一首念不完的小诗，明天太阳一出来，又从头念起。

# One Day in the Garden

Before the sky is fully bright, the first bird call lands on the fence, and the day of the little garden begins. The fence wakes first; it did not sleep all night, counting the stars as they left the stage. Dewdrops line up on the leaves of the seedlings, waiting for the sun to pin on them shiny medals.

Grandfather walks over carrying the watering can, his straw hat hung on the tallest bamboo of the fence, like a second sun rising. The can tilts, and water drops jump down in line: one for the beans, one for the cabbages, one for the tiny seedling just out of the soil, still wearing its cap, not yet awake. The seedling takes a drink, stretches once, and its leaf opens an inch wider.

It is morning exercise time. When wind blows, seedlings all over the garden exercise together: raise the left hand, raise the right hand, bend over, stand straight again. The fence beats the time beside them, rustle, rustle. Only the old pumpkin skips exercise, snoring on its vine, dreaming that it has grown another round fatter.

The sun climbs and the garden grows quiet. A butterfly comes on patrol, lands on a cucumber blossom, takes a sniff, nods with satisfaction and flies off. Ants march in a long line through a gap of the fence to visit, agreeing that no one may pick a flower and no one may step on a seedling. The seedlings stand bolt upright, like good students waiting to be praised.

In the afternoon comes a sudden rain. The fence straightens its back to shelter the shorter seedlings; the watering can stands by the door watching the show, a little disappointed, for today the rain is not its turn to make. When the rain stops, every seedling has taken a bath, green and shining, and even the mud gives off a good smell.

At dusk grandfather comes to collect the can and takes the garden roll call along the way. He reads a name, and a vegetable shakes its leaves in answer. When he comes

to the fence, the wind rustles for it, and grandfather laughs too, his laughter hanging on the rim of the straw hat, swinging all the way home.

Night falls, and the garden lights its own lamps: fireflies patrol with little lanterns, checking how many inches the beans have climbed and whether the seedlings are dreaming. The fence still stands, its shadow merged with the dark. A star leans down to look and asks whether the garden is asleep. The garden says, almost, let me first write down all the joy of today.

What it writes down is this: the watering can sang once, the seedlings exercised once, the fence stood guard the whole day, grandfather laughed three times, and a sparrow stole a drink of rainwater and was chased away. This is how a day of the little garden passes, plain and happy, like a short poem that cannot be finished; tomorrow when the sun comes out, we start reading it again from the beginning.