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.