手磨红的那天，我懂了珍惜

暑假第一周，妈妈把我送到乡下爷爷家，说让我体验体验劳动。我嘴上答应，心里想，劳动有什么难的，不就是种种菜嘛。没想到第一个上午，劳动就给我上了一课。

那天早上六点多，爷爷就喊我起来浇菜。他递给我一只绿色的小水壶，让我去井边打水。我提着空壶跑去，觉得轻飘飘的，还顺路踢了一颗小石子。等灌满水再提起来，壶身子直往下坠，像壶里装了一整条小河。我两只手攥紧提手，走几步就得换一次手，水洒出来一半，浇在畦外的土路上。

爷爷没笑话我，只是把壶接过去，又递给我一把小锄头，让我帮着松土。我学着他的样子，锄头举起来，落下去。第一下用力太猛，锄头啃进土里，震得我虎口发麻。第二下我学乖了，可锄头把在我手心里磨来磨去。到第九下第十下，我低头一看，两只手的虎口和掌心都磨得通红，红得像抹了胭脂，碰一下菜叶子都钻心地疼。

我坐在田埂上不想干了。爷爷也不催，他蹲在畦边，一锄一锄，慢得很稳。他的手掌我见过，全是硬茧，冬天还会裂口子。他种了一辈子菜，手才磨成那样。我忽然有点不好意思，站起来拍拍土，接着干。手疼，我就换手，一上午把六条畦都浇完了。

晚上吃饭，奶奶炒了一盘青菜，就是上午我浇过水的那一畦。我夹了一筷子，忽然觉得格外甜，格外香。以前在城里，青菜我总不爱吃，挑两筷子就推开。那天我却把一盘吃得差不多干净。奶奶笑我胃口好，我心里清楚，不是胃口变了，是这盘菜里有我的一上午，有我磨红的双手，有我洒了又浇的那半壶水。

睡觉前，我把手伸到台灯底下看，红印子还没消，掌心有点肿。我盯着看了很久，忽然想起老师教过的那句诗，谁知盘中餐，粒粒皆辛苦。以前背它是为了交作业，那天晚上，它是真的背进心里去了。原来我们每天吃的每一粒米、每一棵菜，背后都是一双磨红的手，都是弯下去又直起来的腰。

后来在爷爷家的日子，我每天早上都去浇菜。手上的红印子消了又起，起了又消，最后变成薄薄的一层茧。我不再觉得那是疼，我觉得那是菜园发给我的奖章。从那以后，碗里的饭我再也没剩过，掉在桌上的米粒，我也会捡起来吃掉。因为我知道，珍惜这两个字不是喊出来的，是手磨红之后，自己懂了的。

The Day My Hands Were Rubbed Red, I Learned to Cherish

In the first week of summer vacation, mother sent me to grandfather of the village, saying let me experience labor. I agreed with my mouth, thinking in my heart, how hard can labor be, it is just growing vegetables. I did not expect that on the very first morning, labor would give me a lesson.

It was past six when grandfather called me up to water the vegetables. He handed me a little green watering can and told me to fetch water at the well. I ran off with the empty can, light as a feather, even kicking a pebble on the way. When I lifted it

filled with water, the body of the can pulled straight down, as if a whole small river had been poured into it. I gripped the handle with both hands, changed hands every few steps, and half the water spilled out, watering the path outside the beds instead.

Grandfather did not laugh at me. He only took the can back and handed me a small hoe to loosen the soil. I copied him: raise the hoe, let it fall. The first stroke was too violent; the hoe bit into the soil and numbed the gap of my thumb. On the second stroke I tried to be clever, but the handle rubbed back and forth in my palm. By the ninth and tenth strokes, I looked down and saw the webbed parts and palms of both hands rubbed bright red, red as if painted with rouge, and even touching a vegetable leaf stung.

I sat on the ridge and did not want to work anymore. Grandfather did not urge me; he squatted by the bed, one stroke after another, slow and steady. I had seen his palms, all hard callus, cracking in winter. He had grown vegetables a whole lifetime to get hands like that. I suddenly felt ashamed, stood up, dusted off my pants, and went on. When one hand hurt, I switched to the other, and finished watering all six beds before noon.

At supper grandmother stir-fried a plate of greens from the very bed I had watered that morning. I took one chopstick and suddenly found it unusually sweet and fragrant. In the city I never liked greens; I would pick at two bites and push the plate away. That day I cleaned the whole plate almost by myself. Grandmother laughed at my appetite, but I knew clearly it was not the appetite that changed: that plate held my whole morning, my rubbed-red hands, and the half can of water I spilled and then poured.

Before bed I put my hands under the lamp. The red marks had not faded, and my palms were a little swollen. I stared at them for a long time and suddenly remembered the line our teacher taught: every grain in the bowl comes from hard toil. Before, I recited it to finish homework; that night it was truly recited into my heart. Every grain of rice and every vegetable we eat stands before a pair of red-rubbed hands, before a back that bends down and straightens up again.

In the days that followed at grandfather of home, I went to water the vegetables every morning. The red marks on my hands faded and rose again, and at last became a thin layer of callus. I no longer felt them as pain; I felt them as medals the garden awarded me. Since then I have never left rice in my bowl, and if a grain falls on the table I pick it up and eat it. Because I know now that the word cherish is not shouted; it is understood by oneself after the hands are rubbed red.