我们家的西瓜大王

要问我爱吃什么水果，我第一个喊出来的是西瓜。它又大又圆，穿着绿条纹衣裳，往桌上一放，像来了个胖大王。

昨天傍晚，爸爸从菜场抱回一个真正的西瓜大王。它有十几斤重，爸爸两只手抱着，肚子都挡没了。我绕着它转了一圈，看它的样子：瓜皮是深绿和浅绿相间的条纹，一条一条，像西瓜自己画的斑马线。瓜顶上有一截干枯的瓜藤，卷卷的，像猪尾巴。爸爸把瓜放到我面前，说：来，先考考你，挑瓜要听声音。我学着爸爸的样子，用手掌拍瓜。砰砰砰，声音又闷又实。爸爸说，不对，这种是生瓜。我又拍，这回找到一边，拍出来嘭嘭嘭，声音又脆又空，像敲一面小鼓。爸爸点头：就它了，熟得刚刚好。

妈妈把西瓜大王请上餐桌，按住它，爸爸握紧菜刀。我紧张得大气不敢出。刀尖刚扎进去一点点，就听啪的一声轻响，西瓜自己裂开了一条缝，好像早就等着这一刀。爸爸顺着缝往下切，咔的一声，瓜分成两半。哇，红瓤黑籽，红得像傍晚的天边，黑籽一颗一颗嵌在里面，像谁撒了一把小瓜子。汁水顺着刀口流出来，滴在案板上，空气里一下子全是甜甜的味道。

妈妈把两半瓜切成月牙，一人一盘。我端起盘子先闻，一股清甜直往鼻子里钻，忍不住舔了一口，沙沙的，甜到舌根。我咬下一大口，红瓤在嘴里化成水，籽也顾不上吐，咕咚咽下去好几颗。妈妈说吞了籽肚子里会长西瓜，我吓得住嘴不动，过了一会儿摸摸肚子，什么也没长，全家都笑我。

吃到一半，我们开始比赛吐籽。爸爸一用力，籽飞出老远，钉在窗帘上。我也不服输，瞄准垃圾桶，噗噗噗连吐三发，中了两个。妈妈笑得最响，她的籽最短，全落在自己盘子里。

一盘瓜见了底，我的肚子圆滚滚，像自己也变成了小西瓜。冰箱里还剩最后一块，妈妈说明天中午吃。我抱着肚子躺下，闭眼全是那个红瓤黑籽的西瓜大王。夏天最好的东西，我看就是它了。

The Watermelon King of Our Family

If you ask what fruit I love best, the first word out of my mouth is watermelon. It is big and round, wearing a striped green coat. Set it on the table and it looks like a fat king has arrived.

Yesterday evening, Father carried home a real watermelon king from the market. It weighed over six kilos, and his two arms could barely hold it, hidden behind its belly. I walked around it and studied its look: the rind has stripes of dark green and light green, one after another, like zebra lines the watermelon painted on itself. On top sits a piece of dried vine, curled like a pig tail. Father set the melon in front of me and said: let me test you first. To pick a melon, you listen to its sound. I copied him and knocked the melon with my palm. Thud thud thud, a dull, heavy sound. Father said wrong, that kind is unripe. I knocked again, and on one side

I found a spot that went boom boom boom, crisp and hollow, like tapping a small drum. Father nodded: this one, ripe just right.

Mother invited the watermelon king onto the dining table and held it steady while Father gripped the knife. I did not dare breathe. The knife tip had barely entered when, with a soft pop, the melon split a crack by itself, as if it had been waiting for this cut. Father cut down along the crack, and with one crunch the melon fell into two halves. Wow: red flesh, black seeds. The red glowed like the evening sky, and the black seeds sat embedded one by one, like someone had scattered a handful of tiny melon seeds. Juice ran out along the cut and dripped on the board, and the whole air turned sweet.

Mother cut the halves into crescents, one plate each. I lifted my plate and smelled first, a fresh sweetness diving into my nose, and I could not help licking one bite. It was grainy and soft, sweet down to the roots of my tongue. I bit off a big mouthful, the red flesh melting into water in my mouth, and I swallowed several seeds without noticing. Mother said a watermelon would grow in my belly if I swallowed seeds. I clamped my mouth shut in fear, then patted my belly a while later. Nothing had grown, and the whole family laughed at me.

Halfway through, we started a seed-spitting contest. Father flexed once and a seed flew far, sticking in the curtain. I refused to lose. I aimed at the trash bin and spat three in a row, hitting two. Mother laughed loudest. Her seeds flew the shortest, all landing in her own plate.

When the plate ran empty, my belly was round and full, as if I had become a small watermelon myself. One last piece waited in the fridge for tomorrow noon, Mother said. I lay down with my belly hugged by my arms, eyes closed, full of that red-fleshed, black-seeded watermelon king. The best thing about summer, I decide, is this.

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