田里的金珠子

十月六日 星期三 晴

今天一早，奶奶就喊我：“囡囡，带上小篮子，跟奶奶下田捡稻穗去！”我一骨碌从床上爬起来，把门后那只竹编的小篮子捞起来。篮子比我的脸大不了多少，提梁上还系着我去年缠的红布条，布条都洗得发白了，我还舍不得换。

田在村后头，走过一段露水还没干的小路就到了。稻子前几天刚割完，田里剩着一排排短短的稻茬，像给大地剃了个平头。地上散落着好多稻穗，是收割机漏下的，金黄金黄，一颗颗稻粒饱鼓鼓的。奶奶说它们叫“金珠子”，谁丢了都可惜。

我弯下腰去捡。稻穗躺在泥地上，有的还沾着湿泥，我捏住穗头往上一捞，抖两下，泥点子就飞出去了。起先我捡得飞快，看见就抓，抓了往篮子里一扔。奶奶笑我：“这样穗子会断，粒粒都要留。”她教我一只手拢着穗脖，另一只手轻轻捋，稻粒就不会撒在半路上。捡着捡着我也发现了窍门：朝着太阳那一面的穗子最亮，老远就能看见。

太阳升起来，田里暖洋洋的。我直起腰歇一口气，再弯下去。捡了十几趟，小篮子渐渐沉了，稻穗堆得冒出篮沿，像一座小小的金山。我的膝盖沾了泥，手心被稻壳磨得有点痒，可我心里美滋滋的，觉得自己捡了一篮子宝贝。田边还有几只蜻蜓停在稻茬上，我想去捉，又怕踩了掉在地上的稻穗，只好踮着脚绕过去。风一吹，干稻叶哗啦啦地响，像在替我数篮子里的稻穗。

回家路上，篮子换到我手里，我一路换着两只手拎，愣是没让奶奶碰一下。奶奶把稻穗摊在院子里晒，中午抓了一把给我看：“你看，一粒都没碎。”我把那把稻粒捧在手心，沉甸甸的，比任何玩具都好玩。奶奶摸摸我的头，说捡穗的娃娃最懂事。今天我是田里的小捡穗人，明天我还想来。

Golden Beads in the Field

October 6th, Wednesday, sunny. Grandma called me up early: bring the little basket and go pick the fallen rice ears with me. I jumped out of bed and grabbed the bamboo basket behind the door, its handle still tied with the red cloth strip I wrapped last year.

The field behind the village had just been harvested, short stubble in neat rows like a buzz cut, and golden rice ears lay scattered everywhere, the ones the machine missed. Grandma calls them golden beads, and it is a pity to waste them.

I bent down, pinched an ear, lifted it, shook off the mud, and dropped it in the basket. At first I picked fast and careless; Grandma taught me to hold the neck of the ear and stroke gently so no grain is lost on the way. Soon I found my own trick: the side of the ear facing the sun shines brightest and can be seen from far away.

The sun rose and the basket grew heavy, the ears piled above the rim like a little golden hill. My knees got muddy and my palms itched from the husks, but my heart felt full. Dragonflies rested on the stubble; I tiptoed around them so I would not step on any fallen ear. The wind made the dry leaves rustle, as if counting the ears in my basket.

On the way home I carried the basket myself, switching hands, refusing Grandma’s help. At noon she showed me a handful of the dried grains, not one broken. Today I was the little picker of the field, and I want to come back tomorrow.

我和小军比捡稻穗

十月七日 星期四 晴转多云

昨天我跟着奶奶捡了一篮稻穗，今天小军一早就来找我，脖子一梗：“我奶奶也下田捡了！咱俩比一场，看谁捡得多！”我回家拎上我的小篮子，他提着他家的小簸箕，两人一前一后往田里跑，一路上还在比谁跑得快。

田里的稻穗比昨天少了，昨天我们捡过一轮。小军眼尖，指着田角喊：“那边有！”我们猫下腰，沿着田埂一寸一寸地找。稻穗有的压在稻茬底下，有的半埋在泥里，得拨开稻茬才能看见。我弯下腰，捏住穗头轻轻一抽，穗子就到手了，再抖掉根上的泥，放进篮子里。

比赛开始了。小军捡得快，像装了小马达在田里窜来窜去。我不慌，专挑穗粒大的捡，一颗一颗捋干净再装篮。他回头笑我：“你这是捡金子呢？”我说：“奶奶教的，粒粒都要留。”他愣了愣，也学着慢慢捋起来。

捡到一半，小军的簸箕边挂住一根稻茬，他往前一栽，一屁股坐进稻茬地里，半天没爬起来。我跑过去拉他，他手里还攥着两穗稻子，咧嘴笑：“我这是给田磕了个头，田得多给我点稻穗。”我们坐在田埂上笑得肚子疼，笑完拍拍屁股接着捡。

捡到日头偏西，两个人的篮子都装了大半。小军的簸箕大，看着多；我的小篮子满得快，其实也不差。我们俩把篮子往田埂上一放，对着数了十穗，正好打平。小军不服气，非拉着我再各捡十穗，数得清清楚楚，还是打平，谁也说不清谁赢。

回家我问奶奶这算谁赢。奶奶把两篮稻穗倒在一起堆在院子里，说：“你看，全到一处了，谁赢？田里一颗金珠子都没少，就是你们都赢了。”奶奶还往我们每人兜里塞了一把炒米，奖励给两个捡金珠子的娃娃。我想了想，笑了。明天小军还来，我们比谁捋得干净。

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Picking Rice Ears with Xiaojun

October 7th, Thursday, sunny then cloudy. Yesterday I picked a basket of rice ears with Grandma; today Xiaojun came to me early, chin up, declaring his grandma was picking too, so let us have a contest of who picks more. I fetched my little basket, he brought his family's small winnowing tray, and we raced each other all the way to the field.

Fewer ears remained since we had already picked a round the day before. Xiaojun spotted some at the corner of the field, and we crouched and searched inch by inch along the ridge. Some ears lay pressed under the stubble, some half buried in mud; you had to part the stubble to see them. I bent down, pinched an ear, pulled it free, shook off the mud, and placed it in my basket.

The contest began. Xiaojun picked like a little motor zooming up and down the field. I took my time, choosing only the biggest ears and cleaning each grain before putting it in. He laughed at me: picking gold, are you? I said Grandma taught me that every grain must be kept. He paused, then slowed down to stroke his ears clean too.

Halfway through, the rim of his tray caught a stubble and he plopped down into the field, sitting there a good while. I ran to pull him up; he was still clutching two ears and grinned that he had kowtowed to the field, so the field owed him more ears. We sat on the ridge laughing until our bellies hurt, then dusted off and kept picking.

By late afternoon both baskets were most of the way full. His tray was bigger and looked like more; my little basket filled fast and was not behind either. We set the baskets on the ridge and counted ten ears each, a perfect tie. Xiaojun refused to accept it, so we picked and counted another ten, still a tie, and nobody could say who won.

At home I asked Grandma who won. She poured both baskets into one pile in the yard: look, it all comes to one place, so who won? Not a single golden bead was lost in the field, which means you both won. She pressed a handful of popped rice into each of our pockets, a prize for the two golden-bead pickers. I thought about it and smiled. Xiaojun is coming again tomorrow, and this time we will contest who cleans the grains better.

小篮子放在床头

十月九日 星期六 晴

我的小篮子现在放在我床头，洗得干干净净，篮底还粘着两三粒稻壳，我舍不得抠掉。妈妈问我为什么把个空篮子摆在这儿，我说这不是空篮子，这是装过一篮子“金珠子”的篮子。妈妈笑我，我也笑。

那是十月六日的事，离今天才三天，我却觉得像上个星期，因为那天我捡得太认真了。那天稻子刚割完，田里到处是散落的稻穗，金黄金黄地躺在稻茬中间。奶奶提篮子下田去捡，我也跟着去了，路上还采了一朵野菊花别在篮沿上。我学着奶奶的样子弯下腰，手一伸，一捞，一抖，稻穗就进了篮子。捡了十几次，篮子从轻飘飘变得沉甸甸，我拎都拎不稳，走两步就得换只手。

那天太阳照在田里，稻粒亮得晃眼。我蹲下去捡一穗，站起来再找下一穗，腰弯了又直，直了又弯。奶奶在前头捡，我在后头捡，我捡的穗子老是从篮沿上滚出来，我就回去捡滚出来的。奶奶回头看见了，不笑话我，教我把手拢成碗状往篮子里放。我照着做，稻穗果然再也不滚了，我得意得尾巴都要翘起来。风一吹，稻茬上的干叶子哗啦啦响，像田在跟我们说话。

田里安静，只有我们两个人的脚步声，远处有人在捆稻个子，拖拉机突突突地响。我捡到一穗特别大的，穗脖比我的手指还粗，举起来给奶奶看。奶奶说这是稻穗王，放进篮子最上头，压住别的稻穗就不散了。

中午回家，奶奶把稻穗倒进竹匾里晒。我蹲在旁边数了一遍，三十七穗，我把这个数字记在日记本上，怕过几天忘了。

现在篮子空了，稻穗早就晒干交给了奶奶的米缸。可我一看见小篮子，就想起田里那些金珠子，想起我弯着腰、满手泥、心里美滋滋的样子。奶奶说等明年割稻子还带我去捡。我把小篮子摆得更正了一点，又在篮底放了一粒最大的稻粒，那是我的稻穗王。晚上我梦见田里满地都是金珠子，我捡也捡不完。

My Little Basket by the Bed

October 9th, Saturday, sunny. My little basket now sits by my bed, washed clean, two or three rice husks still stuck to its bottom that I refuse to pick off. Mom asked why I display an empty basket there. I said it is not empty; it is the basket that once held a full load of golden beads. Mom laughed, and I laughed too.

That happened on October 6th, only three days ago, yet it feels like last week, because I picked so carefully that day. Right after the harvest, golden ears lay scattered among the stubble all over the field. I followed Grandma in, picking a wild chrysanthemum on the way and tucking it into the rim of the basket. I copied her: bend down, reach, lift, shake, and the ear was in. After a dozen trips the basket

went from light to heavy, and I had to switch hands every few steps.

The sun made the grains shine so bright they dazzled. I crouched for one ear, stood for the next, my back bending and straightening. My ears kept rolling out of the basket, so I kept going back for the rolled-out ones. Grandma saw and, instead of teasing me, taught me to cup my hands like a bowl when placing them in. It worked, and I swelled with pride. The wind set the dry leaves rustling, as if the field were talking to us.

The field was quiet but for our footsteps; far off someone was binding sheaves and a tractor puttered. I found one enormous ear with a neck thicker than my finger and held it up for Grandma. She called it the king of ears and set it on top of the basket to hold the rest down.

At noon Grandma poured the ears into a bamboo tray to dry. I squatted beside her and counted them once: thirty-seven ears. I wrote the number in my diary in case I forgot it in a few days.

Now the basket is empty and the ears long since dried and given to Grandma's rice jar. But every time I see the basket I remember the golden beads in the field, and myself bent over, hands muddy, heart glowing. Grandma promised to take me again next harvest. I straightened the basket a little more and placed the biggest grain of all at its bottom, my own king of ears. That night I dreamed the field was covered with golden beads, and I could not finish picking them all.