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.