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.