稻桩田里的回忆

十月末，稻子收完了，我踩进田里。脚底下扎扎的，田里只剩下齐膝的稻桩，黄白的，一排排立着。远处拖拉机在犁田，翻出来的土是湿的，颜色比表面的土深。我蹲下来看稻桩，每个桩口都是斜的，像被谁一刀削过。我在稻桩里找到一粒掉下的谷子，壳上的芒还翘着，剥开，里面的米是饱满的，我把它装进口袋。

两个月前，这里还是另一副样子。八月底我来看过一回，稻子刚要黄，穗头先弯下来，颜色从青里透出一点浅黄，像旧衬衫洗多了透出来的白。奶奶说，再等一个月。那时我站在田边，觉得一个月好长。

九月中我再来，整片田黄透了。风一来，黄从田那头卷过来，先到脚边，又退回去。爷爷站在田埂上捏开稻穗数粒，说这一穗八十多粒，是个好年成。我还记得那股味道，凑近了闻，甜甜的青草味，混着一点土腥。

十月初开镰。爷爷头天晚上磨镰刀，磨石的声音在院子里响了一晚上。早上天麻麻亮他就下田了。我睡醒跑到田边，田里已经割开了一条路，爷爷弯着腰从这头走到那头，镰刀唰唰地响，稻子一排排朝同一个方向倒下去。奶奶和叔叔把稻子摔在拌桶上，谷粒噼里啪啦溅进桶里。我扶桶，谷粒打在胳膊上，痒。田埂上放着一排装好的谷袋，鼓鼓的，袋口扎得紧紧的，像一队站好了的队伍。

那天傍晚，最后一袋谷子过了秤，爷爷直起腰，回头看了一眼田，什么也没说。现在那片田犁过了，土翻过来，稻桩埋了进去。我有点想它。才两个月，它已经变成另一副样子了。等明年五月，这里插上新秧，青苗站成一排，它又会变回来的。

Memories in the Stubble Field

Late in October, the harvest was over, and I stepped into the field. The ground pricked through my shoes. Only knee-high stubble was left, pale yellow, standing row after row. In the distance a tractor was plowing, and the turned-up soil was wet and darker than the surface. I squatted down to look at the stubble. Every cut was slanted, as if someone had sliced it with one clean stroke. Among the stubble I found one fallen grain, its awns still sticking up. I shelled it open: the rice inside was plump. I put it in my pocket.

Two months earlier this place had looked completely different. I had come once in late August. The rice was about to turn. The heads bent down first, and a pale yellow showed through the green, like the white of a shirt washed too many times. Grandma said: wait one more month. Standing at the edge of the field then, I thought a month was very long.

I came back in mid-September. The whole field had ripened to gold. When the wind came, the yellow rolled in from the far end, reached my feet, then pulled back.

Grandpa stood on the ridge, cracked open a head and counted the grains: more than eighty on this one. It is a good year, he said. I still remember the smell. Lean close and it is a sweet grassy scent, mixed with a little of the earth.

The harvest began in early October. The night before, Grandpa sharpened his sickle, and the sound of the whetstone went on all night in the yard. At the first light of dawn he was down in the field. When I woke and ran over, a path had already been cut through the rice. He bent low, walking from this end to that, the sickle swishing, and the rice fell row after row in the same direction. Grandma and my uncle beat the bundles against the threshing tub, and the grains crackled into it. I held the tub steady while kernels struck my arms and itched. Along the ridge stood a row of filled grain sacks, plump and tightly tied at the mouth, like a line of soldiers standing at attention.

That evening, after the last sack was weighed, Grandpa straightened his back and looked back at the field without saying anything. Now the field has been plowed. The soil is turned over, and the stubble is buried. I miss it a little. Only two months, and it has already become something else. Next May, when new seedlings are planted here and the green shoots stand up in rows, it will change back again.