外婆的竹耙

十月五日，星期六，外婆打电话让我去晒谷。我到的时候，她已经在场上了。谷子摊了一场，金黄金黄，边上薄中间厚。她递给我一把竹耙，耙齿磨得圆了。她说，今天你归我管，翻谷。

头一遍翻谷我翻不动。耙子推进谷子里，走两步就堆起来，谷子堆在耙前头，像推雪。外婆示范，手腕压着点，耙贴着地皮走，走到底把谷子往回一带，整层就翻了个面。我照她说的做，第二遍顺了，翻过去的那片颜色浅一点，底下潮的那面翻上来，颜色深一点。外婆用手背试了试我翻的，说行。

中午最晒。场子上没遮没拦，日头直直砸下来。外婆不歇，坐在场边的矮凳上看着场，谁家的鸡要过来，她吆一声。我给她送水，她喝了两口，又把杯子递给我：你也喝，日头底下不喝水要中暑。我灌了一大杯，站在谷子边上，汗顺着脖子往下流，才站一会儿就受不了，外婆从早上六点站到现在。场边的狗趴在墙根的影子里，舌头伸得老长，一动不动。外婆拿草帽扇了扇风，眼睛还盯着场上的谷子。

傍晚收谷。天阴了一角，外婆动作快起来，耙子拢、簸箕推、装袋、扎口，一套一套的。我扶袋口，她提袋抖两下，谷子落实了，再续一耙。装到第八袋，她说够了，剩下的明早接着晒。收完，场子扫得干干净净，扫出来的糠她捧起来闻了闻，说今年的谷香。我把耙子还给她，她摸了摸我的头，手心全是谷子的粗皮，糙糙的，热的。

回去的路上我两条腿打颤。晚上做梦，梦里全是谷子，抓一把，烫手。第二天我再去，她已经在翻谷了，看见我，笑：手痒了？我接过耙子。翻过去的那片，颜色浅一点。

The Bamboo Rake of Grandma

October 5th, Saturday. Grandmother phoned me to come help dry the grain. When I arrived she was already in the yard. The grain lay spread over the whole yard, gold from edge to edge, thin at the rim and thick in the middle. She handed me a bamboo rake whose teeth had been worn round. Today you work for me, she said. Your job is turning the grain.

The first pass, I could not manage it. Pushing the rake into the grain, I went two steps before it piled up in front of the rake like snow. Grandmother showed me: press the wrist down, keep the rake against the ground, walk to the end, then draw the grain back, and the whole layer rolls over. I did as she said. The second pass went smoothly. The turned side looked paler, and the damp underside that came up looked darker. She tested my work with the back of her hand and said: good.

Noon was the hottest hour. The yard had no shade at all, and the sun beat straight down. Grandmother did not rest. She sat on a low stool at the edge watching the yard, and shooed away any chicken that wandered near. I brought her water. She took two sips and passed the cup back: drink too. No water under this sun means

heatstroke. I drank a full cup. Standing at the edge of the grain, sweat ran down my neck. A few minutes was more than I could stand, and she had been out there since six in the morning. The dog at the edge of the yard lay in the shade of the wall with its tongue hanging out, not moving. Grandmother fanned herself with her straw hat while her eyes stayed on the grain.

In the evening we gathered the grain. One corner of the sky clouded over, and Grandmother moved faster: rake it into a ridge, push with the dustpan, fill, tie the mouth, one move after another. I held the sack open while she lifted and shook it twice to settle the grain, then added another rake full. At the eighth sack she said enough, the rest can dry tomorrow morning. When we finished, the yard was swept clean. She scooped up the swept chaff, smelled it, and said the grain this year is fragrant. I handed her back the rake, and she ruffled my hair. Her palm was rough with the coarse skin of grain, and warm.

On the way home my legs kept trembling. That night I dreamed of grain, and in the dream I grabbed a handful and it burned my hand. The next morning I went back, and she was already turning the grain. Seeing me, she laughed: itchy hands? I took the rake. The turned side looked paler.