抽屉里的谷粒

收谷那天傍晚，我蹲在谷堆边上，抓了一把谷子塞进口袋。现在它在我书桌抽屉里，一粒一粒的，壳上还有一道晒过的裂口。我常想，这把谷子是从哪片场子上来的。

那是十月初，外婆的谷子刚开镰就运上场。头一天我帮她摊谷。谷子从袋里倒出来，堆成小丘，木耙从顶上往四周推，推成一轮薄薄的圆，刚好盖住水泥地。外婆说摊得薄，日头才咬得动。我抢着推了几耙，推得坑坑洼洼，她跟在后头重新抹平，一句话没说。

隔天翻谷。耙子贴地走，整层翻身，翻过的地方颜色浅一道深一道。日头毒，场子上没有一棵树，外婆的布鞋在谷子上走出一串脚印，又很快被谷子填平。我给她送水，她只喝两口就给我。我站在边上不到十分钟，汗就把后背湿透了。她从天不亮就在场上。中午我给她送饭，她蹲在场边的矮凳上吃，眼睛不离谷子，扒得飞快，像赶农时的牛。一只麻雀落下来，她扔了半块馒头皮把它吓走，自己又笑：跟鸟抢饭吃。

再隔一天傍晚起风，收谷。拢成长条，装袋，我扶袋口，谷子哗地流进来，烫的。八袋，扎好口，一袋一袋立在场边，像一排站好的兵。外婆扫场，把糠扫成一堆，捧起来闻，说今年的谷香。

那天夜里我胳膊酸得抬不起来，梦里全是谷子。现在抽屉里这把谷子，就是收谷那晚我偷偷抓的。它晒透过，牙一咬嘎嘣脆，是太阳晒出来的脆。外婆说，人勤地不懒。我写作业写累了，拉开抽屉看一眼，就想起场子上那轮金色的圆，想起她从天不亮站到日落的身影，想起她摸我头时那只糙糙的、热的手。我把谷粒放回抽屉，接着写我的作业。

Grain Kernels in the Drawer

On the evening we gathered the grain, I squatted by the pile, grabbed a handful, and stuffed it into my pocket. It is in my desk drawer now, kernel by kernel, each husk marked with a crack made by the sun. I often wonder which yard this handful came from.

It was early October. The grain of Grandmother had barely been harvested when it went out to the yard. The first day I helped her spread it. Poured from the sacks, it rose in a small hill, and the wooden rake pushed it from the top outward into a wide thin circle, just covering the concrete. Spread thin, she said, so the sun can bite into it. I pushed a few rakes of my own and left the surface full of hollows. She followed behind smoothing it flat again, without a word.

The second day we turned the grain. The rake walked along the ground, rolling the whole layer over, leaving stripes of pale and dark. The sun was fierce, and there was not one tree in the yard. The cloth shoes of Grandmother left a trail of footprints across the grain, and the grain filled them in again almost at once. I brought her water; she took two sips and handed the cup to me. I stood at the edge for less than

ten minutes, and my back was soaked through with sweat. She had been out there since before dawn. At noon I brought her lunch. She squatted on the low stool at the edge of the yard and ate without taking her eyes off the grain, shoveling it in fast like an ox working against the season. A sparrow dropped down; she threw half a bun crust to scare it off, then laughed at herself: fighting birds for food.

On the third evening the wind rose, and we gathered the grain. It was raked into one long ridge, then bagged. I held the sack open while the grain poured in with a hot rushing sound. Eight sacks, mouths tied, standing one by one along the edge of the yard like soldiers at attention. Grandmother swept the yard and piled the chaff, lifted a handful to smell it, and said the grain this year is fragrant.

That night my arms ached too much to lift, and my dreams were full of grain. The handful in my drawer is the one I secretly took that evening. It was fully sun-dried: bite one and it cracks crisply. The land never cheats a hard worker, Grandmother says. When I grow tired of homework, I open the drawer and take one look, and I see that golden circle in the yard again, and her standing there from before dawn until sunset, and that rough warm hand ruffling my hair. I put the kernels back in the drawer and go on with my homework.