女儿第一次看见稻浪

女儿十二岁那年，我带她回了一次故乡，赶在秋收的尾巴上。她生在城里，长在城里，见过稻田只在手机视频里。车进村的时候她正戴着耳机，是我拍她肩膀，让她看窗外，她才把一边耳机摘下来。

窗外是刚起浪的稻田。风从山口灌进来，稻子从田那头一层一层伏过去，黄浪滚到田埂边碎开，又弹回来。她愣了几秒，把另一边耳机也摘了，问这是真的还是屏幕。我说是真的。她摇下车窗，浪的声音涌进来，哗——停，哗——停，一阵一阵，像田在呼吸。她伸手到窗外去接落下来的谷穗，接住了一根，举着看，说比课本插图粗。

进村路上她还问了许多问题。田埂为什么是弯的，我说是水往低处走，田要存住水，埂就得顺着水势绕。她蹲在田缺口看水从竹筒里流进田，看水面上浮着细碎的稻壳，说原来米不是从超市长出来的。我一时语塞，竟不知道该怎么接，只说等会儿你自己去打谷场看。她点点头，把书包带子又紧了紧，像要去办一件正经事。

打谷场上我们碰见了我叔。他七十岁了，还在场上翻谷。女儿不怕脏，脱了鞋踩进晒着的谷子里，谷粒烫的，她咯吱咯吱踩着走，回头喊我。我叔教她推木耙，她推不动，半大个孩子跟一个耙子较劲，摔了个屁股蹲，坐在谷堆上笑。我叔也笑，抓了两把谷塞给她，让她带回去种。她当真了，一路护着那两把谷，怕撒了。

傍晚到家，炊烟在屋后烧起来。女儿站在院子里仰头看，说这烟跟火锅店的烟不一样。我说这是稻草和松枝，她凑近闻了闻，说香的。晚饭是新米焖的饭，她吃了两碗，说比学校食堂的甜。其实哪有那么大差别，我只是知道，有些味道要人亲自回到田边才尝得出来。

回城的高铁上她睡着了，手机里存了几十段稻浪的视频。我看着她，想起十二岁的自己蹲在打谷场草垛上的样子。两代人隔着四十年，在同一片浪里各站了一会儿。稻浪不记得这个，稻浪只管一年一年地起。

The First Time My Daughter Saw the Rice Waves

The year my daughter turned twelve, I took her back to my hometown, just at the tail end of the autumn harvest. She was born and raised in the city; she had only ever seen rice paddies in phone videos. When the bus entered the village she was wearing earphones, and I had to tap her shoulder and point out the window before she pulled one side off her ear.

Outside was a paddy where the waves had just begun. The wind poured in through the mountain gap, and the rice laid itself down layer by layer from the far end of the field; the yellow waves rolled to the field ridge, broke, and bounced back. She stared for a few seconds, then took off the other earphone and asked whether this was real or a screen. I said it was real. She rolled down the window, and the sound of the waves rushed in: hush, pause, hush, pause, wave after wave, like the field

breathing. She reached out the window to catch a falling rice ear, caught one, and held it up to look, saying it was thicker than the picture in her textbook.

On the way into the village she asked many questions. Why are the field ridges curved? I said water flows downhill, and the paddies must hold water, so the ridges have to wind along the path of the water. She crouched at the water inlet and watched the water flow from a bamboo pipe into the paddy, watched the fine rice husks floating on the surface, and said so the rice does not actually grow in the supermarket. I was struck speechless for a moment, not knowing how to answer, and only said she should see the threshing ground for herself soon. She nodded and tightened her backpack straps again, as if heading off to conduct some serious business.

On the threshing ground we ran into my uncle. He is seventy and still turning grain on the yard. My daughter was not afraid of dirt. She took off her shoes and stepped into the sun-hot grain, walking through it with a crunch, turning back to call me. My uncle taught her to push the wooden rake. She could not move it, a nearly-grown child wrestling with a rake, and she fell hard, then sat on the grain pile laughing. My uncle laughed too, and stuffed two handfuls of grain into her pockets to take home and plant. She took it seriously and guarded those two handfuls the whole way, afraid of spilling them.

By the time we got home at dusk, cooking smoke was rising behind the house. My daughter stood in the yard looking up, saying this smoke was different from the smoke at a hotpot restaurant. I said it was rice straw and pine branches. She leaned close and sniffed, then said it smelled good. Supper was rice cooked from the new harvest, and she ate two bowls, saying it was sweeter than the school cafeteria. In truth the difference cannot be that large. I only know that some flavors can be tasted only by standing at the edge of the field in person.

On the high-speed train back to the city she fell asleep, with dozens of videos of rice waves saved in her phone. I looked at her and remembered myself at twelve, crouching on the straw pile of that same threshing ground. Two generations, forty years apart, each stood for a while in the same waves. The rice waves do not remember this. The rice waves only keep rising, year after year.

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