老周头最后一次走过那条田埂

儿子把车停在村口，是来接老周头进城过冬的。老周头答应得很爽快，只提了一个要求：先让他去村后走一圈，走那条老田埂。儿子说那田都收完了，有什么好看的。老周头不辩解，回屋换了那双解放鞋，就出门了。儿子拗不过，跟在后头。

田埂上的野菊花正开得满埂都是。老周头走得慢，走几步停一停。他不摘花，只低头看，看完了接着走。有一段埂塌了半边，野菊花从塌口垂下来，开成了一个小瀑布。他用鞋底蹭了蹭埂边的土，说这条埂是他当年一担一担土垫起来的，稻子收完那阵，他挑了整整一个秋天的夜土。儿子第一次知道这件事，没接话，掏出手机想拍，老周头说拍它做什么，明年它还开。

埂左边是稻茬田，茬子立得齐整。老周头下了田，儿子怕他摔，伸手要扶，被他挡开。他在田里走了半圈，弯腰拔起一棵稻茬，根上还带着干泥，他用手把泥抠掉，凑近闻了闻，又闻了闻手里的土，说这田今年墒情好，明年开春不用多上肥。他把稻茬放回茬坑里，插回去，像给它重新站好。

埂尽头有块青石，是给歇脚的人留的。石头让几代人的裤子磨出了浅浅的弧，弧上落着野菊花的花瓣。

夕阳这时候压到山头上了。整片稻茬田烧成红金色，野菊花在埂上亮成一条花边。老周头从田里上来，在埂尽头那块青石上坐下，面朝西。他不说话，儿子也不说话。炊烟从村里升起来，一缕一缕，跟夕阳搅在一起。坐了很久，老周头站起来，拍了拍裤子上的土，说走吧。走了几步他又回头看了一眼，那一眼很长，长得把整片田都收进去了。

车开出村口，儿子从后视镜里看，那条田埂上的野菊花在夕阳里亮成一线金。老周头在副驾上靠着椅背闭了眼。他不知道城里的阳台能不能种活野菊花，他只知道明天就要走，而今天，田埂走完了，稻茬看过了，夕阳也看过了，他可以走了。

The Last Time Old Zhou Walked That Field Ridge

His son parked the car at the village entrance, come to take Old Zhou to the city for the winter. Old Zhou agreed readily, with only one request: let him first walk a loop behind the village, along that old field ridge. His son said the fields were already harvested, what was there to see. Old Zhou did not argue. He went inside, changed into his cloth shoes, and walked out. His son could not persuade him otherwise and followed behind.

The wild chrysanthemums on the ridge were in full bloom along its whole length. Old Zhou walked slowly, stopping every few steps. He did not pick the flowers; he only lowered his head to look, then walked on. A section of the ridge had collapsed on one side, and the chrysanthemums hung down from the broken edge, blooming into a small waterfall. He scuffed the soil at the foot of the ridge with his sole and said he had built this ridge himself, basket of soil after basket of soil; in the season

after the rice harvest, he had carried night soil for an entire autumn. It was the first time his son heard this. He said nothing, took out his phone to photograph it, and Old Zhou said, what for, it will bloom again next year.

To the left of the ridge lay the stubble field, its stubble standing in tidy rows. Old Zhou stepped down into the field. His son, afraid he would fall, reached out a hand, and Old Zhou waved it off. He walked half a circuit through the field, pulled up one stubble, its roots still holding dried mud, picked the mud off with his fingers, sniffed it, then sniffed the soil in his hand, and said this field had good moisture this year and would not need much fertilizer in the spring. He put the stubble back into its hole and pressed it in, as if standing it upright again.

At the end of the ridge sits a flat blue stone, left there for people to rest on. Generations of trousers have worn a shallow arc into it, and petals of wild chrysanthemum lie in the arc.

By then the setting sun was pressing down on the hilltops. The whole stubble field burned red-gold, and the chrysanthemums on the ridge glowed like a floral trim. Old Zhou climbed back onto the ridge and sat down on the flat stone at its end, facing west. He did not speak, and neither did his son. Cooking smoke rose from the village, wisp after wisp, mingling with the setting sun. After a long while Old Zhou stood, brushed the dust from his trousers, and said, let us go. A few steps later he turned to look back once more, and that glance was long, long enough to take the whole field into it.

As the car left the village entrance, his son watched in the rearview mirror: the wild chrysanthemums on that field ridge shone in the setting sun as a single line of gold. Old Zhou leaned back in the passenger seat and closed his eyes. He did not know whether a city balcony could keep wild chrysanthemums alive. He only knew he would leave tomorrow, and that today he had finished walking the ridge, finished seeing the stubble, finished seeing the setting sun, and now he could go.

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