包了三十亩田的第一年

四十岁那年我从城里回来，包了村里三十亩田，头一年就赶上秋收。父亲站在田头看我，那眼神像在看一个外行。我没说话，把镰刀磨了，把麻袋备了，把晒谷场的位子提前跟村组说好了。

晒谷场还是那个晒谷场，水泥地上刷着各家的记号。我的谷摊开以后，白天请人看，夜里自己守。守场那几夜我睡在场边的棚子里，头一晚翻来覆去，第二晚听着谷粒在风里沙沙响，居然睡得很沉。那种踏实，在城里的楼房里没有过。天亮时露水打在谷上，我起来推一遍，谷香混着土腥气，直冲鼻子。

拖拉机也还是拖拉机，只是排队了。全村十几家的谷都指着老鲁叔一台车，晒谷场上贴了张排期表，我的排在第三天下午。拖拉机进场的时候，我跟着卸，谷从车斗里哗下来，热气扑面。老鲁叔叼着烟说，急不得，机器就一台，地都赶在这几天。

农忙最紧的那天，我从早上五点干到夜里十一点才回家。骑电动车进村，路上一个人没有，车灯照着两边的稻田茬子。进门，妻子把饭在锅里温了四遍，菜是剩的，饭是新焖的。她说，地里的活，误不得。

收完那天，父亲到场上来抓了一把我的干谷，看了看成色，没夸，只说了句，明年接着包。就这一句，我在场边站了半天。三十亩田，一年下来挣的钱不如城里一个月，可父亲那句话，比城里任何一次涨薪都重。妻子在场边听见了，什么都没说，回家路上把电动车骑得飞快，像是替我高兴。

夜里十一点回家这条路，我后来年年走。蛙声稀了，路灯亮了，可那种累到骨头里、心里却满的感觉没变。农忙变了模样，晒谷场还在，拖拉机还在排队，晚归的人还是我。

The First Year of Leasing Thirty Mu of Fields

The year I turned forty I came back from the city and leased thirty mu of the village fields, and the first year I hit the autumn harvest at once. Father stood at the edge of the field watching me, his eyes looking at an outsider. I said nothing. I sharpened the sickle, prepared the sacks, and arranged my spot on the threshing ground with the village group ahead of time.

The threshing ground was still the same ground, its concrete marked with the signs of each family. After my grain was spread, I paid someone to mind it by day and minded it myself at night. Those nights I slept in the shed at the edge of the ground. The first night I tossed and turned; the second night, listening to the grains rustling in the wind, I slept deeply. That kind of settled feeling never came in a city apartment. At daybreak the dew fell on the grain; I got up and pushed it over once, the smell of grain mixed with the raw scent of earth, straight into the nose.

The tractor was still a tractor, only now there was a queue. A dozen families in

the village all depended on one machine of Old Lu, and a schedule sheet was posted on the threshing ground; my turn fell on the afternoon of the third day. When the tractor came in, I followed to unload, the grain pouring down from the bed with heat on my face. Old Lu, cigarette in mouth, said there was no rushing: one machine, and the fields of everyone fell on these same few days.

On the busiest day of the harvest I worked from five in the morning until eleven at night before going home. Riding the electric bike into the village, no one on the road, my headlamp lighting the rice stubble on both sides. When I came in, my wife had reheated the meal four times in the pot; the dishes were leftovers, the rice freshly steamed. She said, work in the fields cannot wait.

The day the harvest ended, Father came to the ground and grabbed a handful of my dry grain, looked at its quality, praised nothing, and only said, keep leasing next year. That one sentence. I stood at the edge of the ground for a long while. Thirty mu of fields earn less in a year than one month in the city, but that sentence of Father weighed more than any raise I ever got there. My wife heard it at the edge of the ground and said nothing; on the way home she rode the electric bike very fast, as if glad for me.

The road home at eleven at night, I have walked it every year since. The frogs are fewer, the street lamps are on, but that feeling — tired to the bone yet full inside — has not changed. The harvest busy season has changed its shape. The threshing ground is still here, the tractor still has a queue, and the one coming home late is still me.

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