小麻雀奶奶的守田课

小麻雀跟着队伍飞到稻田上空时，吓得躲到了柳树后面。田中央立着一个高高的东西，戴着破帽子，张着两只胳膊，一动不动地盯着它们。

奶奶落在它身边：别怕，那是稻草人。它是一根竹竿、一件旧衣裳，专门替农民守田的。它不会抓你，也不会赶你，它只会站着。

小麻雀探出半个脑袋。稻草人确实站着，一动不动，连眼皮都没有。稻穗在风里点头，金黄金黄的，香气飘过来，小麻雀的肚子咕咕叫了。

奶奶说：想吃到稻穗，得先看懂它。你看，它的胳膊是稻草塞的，风一吹就软；它的脚是一根竹竿，插在土里，比你还笨。它守的是白天黑夜，守的是那些想伤害你们的大家伙。咱们大大方方去啄，从它背后绕过去，啄一粒，飞开，再回来。

小麻雀绕了几圈，心还在怦怦跳。它学着奶奶的样子，落在离稻草人最远的稻穗上，啄了一粒谷子，立刻飞开，再落回来。成功了。它又啄了一粒。它发现稻草人的影子长长的，躺在影子里晒太阳，还挺暖和。

后来小麻雀胆子越来越大，敢停在稻草人的袖子上，敢站在它的帽顶上往下看整片田。它给稻草人起了个名字，叫高个子爷爷。每天来稻田，它都要先落在高个子爷爷头上叫两声，算是打招呼。

有一天夜里刮大风，第二天清早，小麻雀发现高个子爷爷歪了，帽子不知被风卷到哪里去了，一只袖子也耷拉下来。它急得在田上空转圈，叫醒了整支队伍。奶奶围着稻草人飞了一圈，忽然落在它肩头，轻轻叫了一声：别急，你看。

耷拉下来的那只袖子，正好罩住田边一个麻雀窝。风把窝边的稻秆吹得东倒西歪，可窝里的几只雏鸟一根毛都没淋湿。原来歪倒的稻草人也在守田，换个姿势也在守。

收稻子那天，农民把稻草人扶正，重新扣上一顶新草帽。小麻雀落在帽顶上，啄了啄新帽子，又飞起来，绕着整片稻田飞了一圈，稻穗在它身边沙沙地响，像整片田在说话。

Grandma Sparrow and the Field Guard

When Little Gray flew with the flock over the rice field, it hid behind a willow tree in fear. In the middle of the field stood a tall figure in a torn hat, arms stretched out, staring at them without moving.

Grandma Sparrow landed beside it. Do not be afraid, she said. That is a scarecrow. It is one bamboo pole and one old coat. It stands guard for the farmer. It will not catch you and will not chase you. It only stands.

Little Gray poked out half its head. The scarecrow really just stood there, not moving, not even blinking. The rice ears nodded in the wind, golden and bright, and

their fragrance drifted over. The tummy of the little one rumbled.

Grandma said: if you want the rice grains, first understand the guard. Look, its arms are stuffed with straw and go soft in the wind; its foot is a bamboo pole stuck in the soil, sillier than you. It guards day and night, guarding against the big creatures that would harm you. Walk up boldly, circle behind it, peck one grain, fly aside, then come back.

Little Gray circled a few times, heart still pounding. It copied Grandma, landed on a rice ear farthest from the scarecrow, pecked one grain, flew aside at once, then came back. It worked. It pecked another. It noticed the long shadow of the scarecrow and found lying in that shadow warm and pleasant.

Day by day Little Gray grew bolder. It dared to sit on the sleeve, dared to stand on the top of the hat and look over the whole field. It gave the scarecrow a name: Grandpa Tall. Every day at the field it first landed on his head and called twice, as a greeting.

One night a strong wind blew. Early next morning Little Gray found Grandpa Tall leaning sideways. His hat had been blown away somewhere, and one sleeve hung down. It circled over the field in a panic and woke up the whole flock. Grandma flew around the scarecrow once, then landed softly on his shoulder and called gently: look, look.

The hanging sleeve covered a sparrow nest at the edge of the field. The wind tossed the rice stalks around the nest this way and that, yet the baby birds inside stayed perfectly dry. A fallen scarecrow was still guarding the field, guarding in a new posture.

On harvest day the farmer straightened the scarecrow and put a new straw hat on it. Little Gray landed on the hat, pecked it twice, then flew up and circled the whole field. The rice ears rustled beside it, as if the entire field were talking.