# 稻草人的守望

稻田中央立着一个稻草人。竹竿做的身子，旧草帽扣在头上，袖子里塞满了稻草，手里还攥着一个红布袋。农民把它立起来的那天，稻子刚刚插稳，整个夏天它都在看云，看稻叶一寸一寸长高，听青蛙在夜里唱歌。

秋天一到，稻穗低下了头，田野变得金灿灿的。稻草人知道，它最要紧的日子来了。真正的对手不是风，也不是雨，是麻雀。

麻雀们成群结队地来，落在田边的篱笆上，叽叽喳喳地开会。它们派一只小灰雀出来探路。小灰雀贴着稻穗飞，一会儿落在稻草人的帽子上，一会儿停在它的袖子上，歪着脑袋打量它。稻草人一动不动。小灰雀啄了啄它的袖子，是稻草的味道，没有危险，就放心地叫起来：伙伴们，快来呀，这个看田的不会动！

麻雀们呼啦啦落进稻田，啄稻穗吃得开心。稻草人心里着急，可它不能喊，也不能挥手。它想起农民插它进土里时说：好好看着田。它就继续挺直身子，把影子拉得长长的，盖在稻田上。

小灰雀渐渐不怕它了，天天落在它的袖子上，跟它讲田野里的新鲜事：村口的小河干了，谁家的南瓜熟了，风把蒲公英吹上了屋顶。稻草人不能回答，可它听得津津有味，风一吹，它的袖子轻轻晃一下，算是回答。

一天中午，一只灰黑色的大鸟忽然从天上冲下来，直扑稻田。小灰雀吓得飞起来，落在稻草人耳边急促地叫：大鸟来了，大鸟来了！稻草人心里一紧。它动不了，只能把自己站得更直，旧帽子被风掀得啪啪响，手里的红布袋呼啦啦地翻。大鸟愣了一下，调头飞走了。那是一只苍鹰。

小灰雀落在帽檐上，冲着天空叫了三声，又转头对稻草人叫了三声。稻草人不知道麻雀的话，但它听懂了那三声里的高兴。

秋天快结束的时候，农民来收稻子，一镰刀一镰刀，稻穗堆成了小山。麻雀们也跟着忙碌，捡落在田里的谷粒。稻草人看着空荡荡的田野，有点想念那些热闹的日子。小灰雀飞来，站在篱笆上叫了几声才走。稻草人想，明年稻穗黄的时候，它还会来的。

# The Scarecrow Keeps Watch

In the middle of a rice field stood a scarecrow. Its body was a bamboo pole, an old straw hat sat on its head, its sleeves were stuffed with rice straw, and it held a red cloth bag. The farmer set it up the day the rice seedlings were planted. All summer it watched the clouds, watched the rice leaves grow taller inch by inch, and listened to frogs singing at night.

When autumn came, the rice ears bowed their heads, and the field turned golden. The scarecrow knew its most important days had begun. Its real rivals were not the wind or the rain but the sparrows.

The sparrows came in flocks and perched on the fence at the edge of the field, chirping as if holding a meeting. They sent out a little gray sparrow to scout. The little one flew low over the rice ears, landed on the hat of the scarecrow, then sat on its sleeve, tilting its head to study it. The scarecrow did not move. The little sparrow pecked the sleeve. It smelled of straw, no danger, so it called out cheerfully: Come quick, friends, this field guard cannot move!

The sparrows swept down into the field and ate the rice grains happily. The scarecrow felt worried, but it could not shout and could not wave. It remembered what the farmer said when pushing it into the soil: watch the field well. So it kept its body straight and let its long shadow lie over the rice.

Little by little the little gray sparrow lost all fear. It came every day, sat on the sleeve, and told the scarecrow the news of the fields: the village river had run dry, some pumpkins had ripened, the wind blew dandelions onto the rooftops. The scarecrow could not answer, but it listened with joy, and when the wind blew, its sleeve swayed gently, which counted as an answer.

One noon, a big gray-black bird suddenly dived from the sky straight at the field. The little sparrow flew up in alarm and chirped by the ear of the scarecrow: A big bird is coming, a big bird is coming! The scarecrow felt a jolt. It could not move, so it stood even straighter. The old hat flapped loudly in the wind, and the red cloth bag in its hand rustled and snapped. The big bird hesitated, then turned and flew away. It was a goshawk.

The little sparrow sat on the brim of the hat, called three times toward the sky, then turned and called three times to the scarecrow. The scarecrow did not know sparrow words, but it understood the joy in those three calls.

Near the end of autumn, the farmer came to harvest, sickle after sickle, and the rice ears piled into little hills. The sparrows kept busy too, picking up the grains that fell. The scarecrow looked at the empty field and missed the busy days a little. The little sparrow came and stood on the fence, calling a few times before leaving. The scarecrow thought: when the rice ears turn golden next year, it will come again.

# 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.

# 稻草人与野猫

稻草人的活儿是看稻穗。麻雀来偷吃，它拦不住，但它天天站着，提醒麻雀们别忘了它。麻雀们嘴上叫它木头大叔，心里其实服气：这片田里，就它从不离开岗位。

猫不一样。猫不怕它，敢从它脚边大摇大摆走过去，跳上田埂舔爪子。稻草人盼着风，风一来，它的袖子呼地掀起来，猫就吓一跳，溜了。这是稻草人唯一的招数。

有一天傍晚，一只黄猫蹲在田边，盯住了一只落在稻穗上的小麻雀。小麻雀只顾啄谷子，一点没察觉。猫一步一步往前挪，爪子陷进土里，一点声音都没有。

稻草人着急。它动不了，喊不出，只能拼命盼风。风偏偏不来。它把身子绷得笔直，攥紧红布袋，心里一遍一遍地说：来风呀，来风呀。

风真的来了，从田那头跑过来，整片稻子哗地弯腰。稻草人的袖子呼地张开，胳膊上的竹竿

咯吱作响，红布袋啪啪地响，像有人拍巴掌。黄猫以为田里有人，掉头就跑。

小麻雀扑棱棱飞到稻草人肩后躲着，心跳得咚咚响。稻草人那一刻觉得自己是个真正的卫士。它守住了，不只是稻穗，还有一个活生生的朋友。

打那以后，小麻雀天天来，停在稻草人肩后梳理羽毛，像躲在朋友身后。它还给稻草人衔来一根漂亮的野鸡毛，插在草帽的边上。稻草人戴着这根羽毛，在田野里站到了深秋。

收稻子那天，农民发现稻草人肩后落着几根灰色的羽毛，顺着羽毛看到田边有猫踩出的脚印，又看看草帽边上插着的野鸡毛，明白了什么，笑着给稻草人的袖子上系了一条红布。

风一吹，红布飘起来，麻雀从远处飞来，落在红布旁边。整片稻田都在替稻草人守着秋天。

# The Scarecrow and the Stray Cat

The job of the scarecrow is to watch the rice ears. It cannot stop the sparrows from stealing a meal, but it stands there every day, reminding them it has not been forgotten. The sparrows call it Uncle Wood to its face, yet deep down they respect it: in this whole field, it is the only one never leaving its post.

Cats are different. A cat is not afraid of it, strolls past its feet with great dignity, jumps onto the ridge and licks its paws. The scarecrow waits for wind. When wind comes, its sleeves flap up suddenly, the cat jumps and slips away. That is the only trick the scarecrow has.

One evening, a yellow cat crouched at the edge of the field, eyes fixed on a little sparrow perched on a rice ear. The sparrow was busy pecking grain and noticed nothing. The cat crept forward step by step, its paws sinking into the soil without a sound.

The scarecrow was anxious. It could not move, could not shout, could only wish hard for wind. The wind refused to come. It stiffened its body, gripped the red cloth bag, and repeated in its heart: come wind, come wind.

The wind really came, running in from the far side of the field, and the whole rice crop bent over with a rush. The sleeves of the scarecrow spread open, the bamboo arms creaked, the red cloth bag snapped and cracked like clapping hands. The yellow cat thought there was a person in the field and ran off.

The little sparrow fluttered behind the shoulder of the scarecrow and hid, heart drumming. In that moment the scarecrow felt like a true guardian. It had protected not only rice ears but a living friend.

After that the little sparrow came every day, perched behind the shoulder and

preened its feathers, as if sheltering behind a friend. It even carried a beautiful pheasant feather and stuck it on the rim of the straw hat. Wearing that feather, the scarecrow stood in the field deep into late autumn.

On harvest day the farmer found a few gray feathers behind the shoulder of the scarecrow, followed them to cat footprints by the field, then saw the pheasant feather on the hat rim, understood something, and smiled, tying a strip of red cloth onto the sleeve.

When the wind blew, the red cloth floated up, and sparrows flew in from far away to land beside it. The whole rice field was keeping autumn for the scarecrow.