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.