一粒玉米的旅行

我是一粒玉米，长在村东头那棵玉米秆的最顶上。秋天，一个小女孩把我掰下来，装进竹筐，运到了场院。半路上我蹦了出去，落在田埂边的草棵里。

我圆滚滚、金灿灿，在草里躺了三天。第一天，一只蚂蚱绕着我看了看，走了。第二天下了点雨，我喝得饱饱的。第三天早上，一个灰灰的小东西停在我面前，用鼻子闻我。

是小田鼠。她围着我转了两圈，爪子碰了碰我，然后一口咬住我的边，拖着我走。我贴着地皮骨碌碌地滚，草叶从我脸上扫过去，凉凉的。

她拖我上坡，坡上有块石头，我卡住了。她在我前面使劲，后腿蹬着土，身子一歪一歪。我在石头缝里挤得紧紧的，听见她的心跳，咚咚咚，比兔子还快。后来她把土挖松了，我哧溜一下滚过石头。

她的洞口在田埂底下，很小，我进不去。她把我举起来，从洞顶的一个小口塞下去。我黑咕隆咚地掉了一下，落在软软的干草上。

这是她的储藏洞。我抬头看，洞里已经住了不少伙伴：一排稻米站得笔直，几颗黄豆挤在角落，还有一小块南瓜，身上插着几粒瓜子。她把我按在墙顶上最中间的位置，拍了拍，像安顿一位远道来的客人。

洞里从此有了日子。小田鼠每天回来，身上带着外面的气味：露水的味，干草的味，有一回还带着一片红叶，插在洞壁上。她给我们讲外面的事：稻子收完了，拖拉机突突突地走了，孩子们放学踩着一地落叶。

我渐渐不想念那棵玉米秆了。洞外头风越刮越硬，洞里越来越暖。稻米们说，这就是被收进秋天的感觉。

下雪那天夜里，小田鼠啃着豆子，靠在我们旁边打盹。她的胡须一动一动。我贴在墙顶上，被她的体温烘着，金灿灿的，像一小块太阳。

我想，明年春天，如果她把我忘在洞角里，我就发芽给她看。不过现在，我先好好睡，把这一整个秋天存进身体里。

The Journey of One Corn Kernel

I am a corn kernel, and I grew at the very top of a corn stalk at the east end of the village. In autumn a little girl broke the cob off, put it in a bamboo basket, and carted it to the yard. On the way I bounced out and landed in the grass by the field ridge.

I was round and golden, and I lay in the grass for three days. On the first day a grasshopper circled me, looked me over, and left. On the second day it rained a little, and I drank my fill. On the morning of the third day, a small gray creature

stopped in front of me and sniffed.

It was a vole. She circled me twice, tapped me with a claw, then bit my edge and dragged me along. I rolled over the bare ground, and grass blades swept across my face, cool as water.

She pulled me up the slope, where a stone blocked the way, and I stuck. She heaved in front of me, hind legs kicking the soil, body rocking side to side. I was squeezed tight in the crack, and I could hear her heart going thump thump thump, faster than a rabbit would. Then she loosened the soil, and I slid over the stone with a whoosh.

Her burrow mouth was under the field ridge, too small for me. She lifted me up and pushed me down through a little opening in the roof of the burrow. I fell through the dark and landed on soft dry grass.

This was her storage burrow. I looked up. Many companions already lived there: a row of rice grains standing straight, a few soybeans huddled in the corner, and a piece of pumpkin with several melon seeds stuck in it. She pressed me into the middle of the top of the wall and patted me, like settling an honored guest who had traveled far.

From then on the burrow had its days. The little vole came home every day carrying the smells of outside: dew, dry grass, once a red leaf that she tucked into the wall. She told us news: the rice was all harvested, the tractor puttered away, the children came home from school crunching leaves.

Little by little I stopped missing my corn stalk. Outside the wind grew harder; inside it grew warmer. The rice grains said: this is what it feels like to be gathered into autumn.

On the night it snowed, the little vole nibbled beans, then dozed off beside us. Her whiskers twitched. I sat on top of the wall, warmed by her body heat, golden like a little piece of the sun.

I thought: if next spring she forgets me in a corner of the burrow, I will sprout to surprise her. But for now I will sleep well, and store this whole autumn inside me.

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