秋风送信

秋风是在一个夜里出发的，背着一包金色的信。它是田野的邮递员，已经送了几千年信，一天也没请过假。

它飞过小河，芦苇白了头。它飞过果园，苹果红了脸。到了田野，它开始一封一封地送信。第一封送给稻穗。稻穗从春天就等这封信，拆开一看，从头到脚都黄了，高兴得弯下了腰。

秋风蹲下来听。稻穗在给土地回信，声音又轻又密。它们说：谢谢春天的雨，谢谢夏天的太阳，谢谢这封金色的信。话都说得很重，越说头越低。

信送完了，秋风打了个长长的口哨，把收割机叫来。收割机是秋风的老朋友，每年信一送完，它就轰隆隆地赶过来。它开到田中间，把稻穗写的信一捆一捆收起来，装上卡车，送到村里、粮仓里、饭桌上。

我站在田边看收割机干活。它像一头贪吃的大兽，整片整片地吞稻子，谷子从它肚子里流出来，像一条金色的瀑布。开车的叔叔摇下车窗擦汗，说这机器一天要吃三十亩田。田里的稻茬在太阳底下亮闪闪的，像全都在笑。

秋风不光给稻子送信。它还把信送给了棉花，棉桃咧开嘴，露出白肚皮；送给了柿子，柿子挂起一盏盏小灯笼。可信最多的还是稻田。稻穗们挤在一起，肩挨着肩，信一到，整片田哗啦啦地响，像在一起读信。

天黑下来，秋风掏出小本本核对。每一封信都签收了，一封不落。它躺在田埂上歇口气。稻茬整整齐齐地立着，像拆空的信封，等下一场雪来写新的信。

我在田边捡起一根稻穗，心想：这就是田野写给我们的信吧，上面的字，叫作丰收。我把稻穗夹进语文书里，当成本子收到的第一封金色的信。

夜里我梦见秋风。它把背包往肩上一甩，又往南边去了。南边还有棉花田、还有玉米地、还有等着收信的山坡。它一夜也没停，像它几千年来做的那样。

The Letters of the Autumn Wind

The autumn wind set out one night, carrying a pack of golden letters. It is the postman of the fields. It has been delivering letters for thousands of years and has never taken a single day off.

It flew over the river, and the reeds turned their heads white. It flew over the orchard, and the apples turned their cheeks red. When it reached the fields, it began delivering one letter after another. The first letter went to the rice ears. The rice ears had been waiting for this letter since spring. The moment they opened it, they turned golden from head to foot, and bowed with joy.

The autumn wind squatted down to listen. The rice ears were writing letters back

to the soil, their voices light and thick. They said: thank you for the rain of spring, thank you for the sun of summer, thank you for this golden letter. Every word was heavy, and the more they spoke, the lower they bowed.

When the letters were done, the autumn wind gave a long whistle and called the harvester. The harvester is an old friend of the autumn wind. Every year, as soon as the letters are delivered, it comes rolling over. It drives into the middle of the field, gathers the letters of the rice ears bundle by bundle, loads them onto the truck, and sends them to the village, to the granary, to the dinner table.

I stood by the field and watched the harvester work. It was like a big greedy animal, swallowing the rice swath by swath, and the grain poured out of its belly like a golden waterfall. The driver rolled down his window and wiped his sweat. He said the machine eats thirty mu of field in a day. The stubble glittered in the sun, as if the whole field were laughing.

The autumn wind does not deliver only to the rice. It also carried letters to the cotton, and the cotton bolls opened their mouths and showed their white bellies. It carried letters to the persimmons, and the persimmons hung up lantern after lantern. Still, the fields with the most letters are the rice fields. The rice ears stand shoulder to shoulder, and when the letters arrive, the whole field rustles, as if it were reading them together.

When dark fell, the autumn wind took out its little book and checked. Every letter had been signed for, not one missing. It lay down on the ridge to rest. The stubble stood in neat rows, like emptied envelopes, waiting for the next snow to write new letters.

I picked up a rice ear by the field and thought: this must be the letter the fields wrote to us. The word written on it is harvest. I pressed the rice ear into my Chinese textbook, as the first golden letter my notebook ever received.

At night I dreamed of the autumn wind. It slung its pack over one shoulder and headed south again. To the south there are still cotton fields, still cornfields, still hillsides waiting for their letters. It did not stop all night, just as it has done for thousands of years.

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