田埂上的秋天

星期六的傍晚，妈妈抖开围巾说：走，散步去，去田埂。

老田埂窄窄的，刚好两只脚宽，两边都是收过的稻田，稻茬整整齐齐地立着，在夕阳底下泛着暗光。妈妈走在外侧，我走在内侧，路一窄，她就回过头来牵住我的手。她的手心是暖的，指头有一点点粗糙。

田埂边上开着野花，白的、紫的。妈妈把白的叫满天星，说她小时候摘一大把，插在饭碗里摆在家里的柜子上。我们真的在路边找到一个旧饭碗，里面插着两枝野花，我们俩都笑了。

妈妈说：咱们编一首诗吧，一人一句，就编田埂上的秋天。我先起头。

田埂窄窄，像一行字，/ 托着两片金色的地。

妈妈接：妈妈在前，我在后，/ 这一行是田里最软的一笔。

我接：野花在字缝里探出头，/ 请我们停下来歇一歇。

妈妈接：我牵着你的手，你牵着野花，/ 秋天把我们俩牵在怀里。

念到这里，太阳已经落到田头的树后面去了，半个脸红彤彤的。我们的影子被夕阳拉得很长，横躺在整条田埂上，手牵着手，跟诗里写的一模一样。

往回走的路上，妈妈把诗从头念了一遍，我马上纠正她：上一句是歇一歇，不是等一等。妈妈说都对，野花不会生气。

路过自家田的时候，妈妈停下来看了一会儿。稻子已经割完，稻茬齐齐整整，中间踩出的一行小路通向田头。妈妈说那是爷爷当年挑稻捆踩出来的，二十年了，还在。她牵着我走到那行脚印上，让我照着脚印一步一步走。脚印不大也不深，我一步正好卡进去一个，走起来摇摇晃晃。妈妈说：记住这条脚印，咱们家的秋天是从这里走过来的。

晚上睡觉前，妈妈把这首诗存进手机备忘录，标题写《田埂上的秋天》。她说留着，等明年秋天再去田埂，接着往下编。我说好，心里已经偷偷写好了下一句：田埂短短，秋天长长，/ 牵着手的路，走也走不完。

Autumn on the Ridge

On Saturday evening, Mom shook out her scarf and said: come on, let us take a walk, to the ridge.

The old ridge was narrow, just two feet wide, with harvested rice fields on both sides. The stubble stood in neat rows, shining with a dim glow under the setting sun. Mom walked on the outer side and I walked on the inner side. When the path narrowed, she turned back and took my hand. Her palm was warm, and her fingers were a little rough.

Wildflowers grew along the edge of the ridge, white ones and purple ones. Mom called the white ones baby breath. She said that when she was a girl she picked big armfuls and stood them in a rice bowl on the cupboard at home. We really did find an old rice bowl by the road, with two wild stems standing in it, and we both laughed.

Mom said: let us make a poem, one line each, about the autumn on the ridge. I will start.

The ridge is narrow, like one line of writing, / holding up two pieces of golden land.

Mom caught: Mom in front, I behind, / this line is the softest stroke in the whole field.

I caught: wildflowers poke their heads out between the words, / asking us to stop and rest a while.

Mom caught: I hold your hand, you hold the wildflowers, / and autumn holds the two of us in its arms.

By the time we recited this far, the sun had dropped behind the trees at the end of the field, half its face glowing red. Our shadows were stretched long by the evening light, lying across the whole ridge, hand in hand, exactly as the poem said.

On the way home, Mom recited the poem from the beginning, and I corrected her right away: the earlier line says rest a while, not wait a while. Mom said both are right, and the wildflowers will not be angry.

Passing our own field, Mom stopped and looked for a while. The rice had been cut, the stubble neat and even, and a footpath trodden through the middle ran to the end of the field. Mom said Grandfather had made that path carrying bundles of rice on his shoulder pole, twenty years ago, and it was still there. She led me onto the line of footprints and told me to step into them one by one. The prints were neither big nor deep, and one of my feet fit exactly into each, so I walked along swaying. Mom said: remember these footprints. The autumn of our family walked in from here.

Before bed that night, Mom saved the poem in the notes on her phone, with the title Autumn on the Ridge. She said she would keep it, and next autumn we would go back to the ridge and go on writing. I said yes, and in my heart I had already secretly written the next line: the ridge is short, autumn is long, / and the road we walk hand in hand never ends.