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.

大手牵小手

老师布置了一项作业：和家长一起朗诵一首关于秋天的诗，要录视频交上去。

爸爸找遍了书房，没找到现成的诗。他挠挠头说：找不到，咱们就自己写一首，写完到田里去念，那里声音好。

第二天早上，爸爸带我到村东的田埂上。稻子收完了，稻茬一排一排，像刚理过发的头。田埂边上的野花开得正旺，紫的居多，风一过，齐齐点头。爸爸清了清嗓子，说他念问句，我念答句。

爸爸问：谁把田埂铺成了金色？

我答：是秋天，还有整整一季的太阳。

爸爸问：谁在埂边站成一排，点头不停？

我答：是野花，它们在给秋天数拍子。

爸爸问：那我呢，秋天给我留了什么？

我答：它留了一条窄窄的路，和你手心里那点热。

念到最后一句，我伸手去牵爸爸。他的手大，把我整个手包住。稻茬在晨光里亮了一下，像鼓掌。爸爸说：就这段，录。

视频只有一分半。回放的时候我发现个问题：念到野花那句，我笑场了，因为一只蚂蚱从紫花里蹦出来，正撞在爸爸裤腿上。爸爸也看见了，他说这段不重录，蚂蚱是咱们请来的观众。

交上去那天晚上，老师在班级群里回了一句：拍得真好，尤其是牵手那一下。爸爸把手机递给我看，他耳朵红了。我早就发现，爸爸写诗的时候比谁都认真，被夸的时候比谁都害羞。

第二天，同桌问我那首诗是不是网上抄的。我说不是，是我和我爸在田埂上一问一答编出来的。同桌说他也想去，放学就缠着他爸爸去。结果第二天全班有六个人带来了秋天的诗，有写玉米的，有写柿子树的，还有一首写收割机排队的。老师把六首诗都贴在教室后墙的展示栏里，标题写：我们班的秋天。

后来每个周末，爸爸都会带我去那条田埂走一圈，不录像，也不念诗，就是牵着手走。他说那条路是咱们家的诗，念一遍不够。

A Big Hand Holding a Small Hand

Our teacher assigned a task: recite a poem about autumn together with a parent, and record a video to hand in.

Dad searched the whole study and could not find a ready-made poem. He scratched his head and said: if we cannot find one, we write our own, then go to the fields to recite it. The acoustics there are good.

The next morning, Dad took me to the ridge east of the village. The rice had been harvested, and the stubble stood row after row, like heads freshly barbered. The wildflowers along the ridge were in full bloom, mostly purple, and when the wind passed they all nodded together. Dad cleared his throat and said he would read the questions and I would read the answers.

Dad asked: who spread the ridge out in gold?

I answered: autumn did, and a whole season of sun.

Dad asked: who stands in a row by the edge, nodding without end?

I answered: the wildflowers. They are counting the beats for autumn.

Dad asked: and what did autumn keep for me?

I answered: it kept a narrow road for you, and the little warmth in your palm.

At the last line, I reached out and took Dad by the hand. His hand was big and wrapped mine completely. The stubble gleamed once in the morning light, like applause. Dad said: this take, we record it.

The video was only a minute and a half long. When we played it back, I found a problem: at the line about the wildflowers I broke into laughter, because a grasshopper jumped out of the purple flowers and bumped right into Dad trouser leg. Dad saw it too. He said we would not reshoot, and the grasshopper was an audience we had invited.

The night we handed it in, the teacher replied in the class group: beautifully done, especially that moment of holding hands. Dad passed me the phone to look, and his ears turned red. I had noticed long ago that when Dad writes a poem he is more serious than anyone, and when he is praised he is more shy than anyone.

The next day my deskmate asked whether that poem was copied from the internet. I said no, that Dad and I made it up on the ridge, question and answer. He said he wanted to go too, and he pestered his father that very afternoon. In the end six kids in our class brought autumn poems the next day: one about corn, one about a persimmon tree, and one about harvesters waiting in a queue. The teacher posted all six poems on the display board at the back of the classroom, under the title: The Autumn of Our Class.

After that, every weekend Dad took me for a walk along that ridge, without recording and without reciting, just walking hand in hand. He said that path is the

poem of our family, and one reading is not enough.

这条埂我走了三十年

女儿三岁生日过后没几天，她爸把她架在肩上，去看田。

那条田埂他走了三十年。小时候他爹赶集回来，他就骑在脖子上，田埂窄，他爹一只手扶腿，一只手掐着腰，走得稳稳当当。埂两边的野花开得没心没肺，他伸手去够，够不着，急得直蹬腿。他爹就说：急什么，花又跑不了，明年还开。

如今轮到他牵着女儿走。埂还是那条埂，窄得只容两个人前后走。女儿不肯骑了，非要自己走，走三步蹲一次，蹲下就揪野花。他由着她，蹲下来陪她看，紫色的，五个瓣，她说像小星星掉在草里。

走到埂中间，太阳照得人后背发暖。女儿忽然仰起脸问：这条路上，你走过吗？他愣了一下，说走过，你爷爷牵着我走的，也是这个季节，也是这些花。

他把小时候他爹说过的那几句念给她听，他也不知道那是不是诗，反正他爹当年是哼出来的：

埂窄窄，田宽宽，/ 花不开在路边，开在脚边。

大手牵小手，小手拽花辫，/ 走一步，秋天长一寸。

女儿听一遍就跟着念，念得字都含混，把秋天念成秋迁。他也不纠正，由着她念。风从田那头过来，稻茬沙沙地响，埂边的野花齐齐弯腰，像给这一老一小让路。

回去的路上，女儿走累了，又爬上他脖子。他一手扶腿一手掐腰，跟三十年前他爹一模一样。走到村口他抬头，他爹正站在门口等，手里拎着一只饭碗，碗里插着两枝野花。

女儿从他脖子上下来，跑过去接饭碗，非要自己端。碗比她的两只手还大，她走得晃晃悠悠，谁也不敢扶。野花在她手里一点一点往前挪，走到门槛，她稳稳把碗放在桌上，抬头问他爹：太爷爷，花明年还开吗？老人弯腰把孙女抱起来，说：开，明年还开，还开在你脚边。

晚上他媳妇翻手机，发现他站在田埂上念诗那一段被录下来了，画质晃得厉害。他存好，文件名写：田埂上的秋天，三代人。他想，等女儿再大一点，教她自己写下一句。

Thirty Years on This Ridge

A few days after his daughter turned three, her father lifted her onto his shoulders and went to see the fields.

He had walked that ridge for thirty years. When he was small, his father came

back from the market with him riding on his neck. The ridge was narrow, so one hand of his father held his own leg while the other gripped the child at the waist, and he walked steady as a rock. The wildflowers on both sides bloomed without a care in the world. Little him reached and reached and could not touch one, and kicked his legs in frustration. His father would say: what is the rush. The flowers cannot run away. They will bloom again next year.

Now it was his turn to lead his daughter along it. The ridge was still the same ridge, narrow enough for only two people walking single file. The girl refused to be carried and insisted on walking herself. She squatted down every three steps, and every time she squatted she picked a wildflower. He let her, squatted with her to look: purple, five petals. She said they looked like little stars fallen into the grass.

Halfway along the ridge, the sun warmed their backs. The girl suddenly lifted her face and asked: Daddy, have you walked this road before? He froze for a second, then said: yes. Your grandpa led me along it by the hand, in this same season, with these same flowers.

He recited to her the few lines his father had said when he was small. He did not know whether they were a poem. His father had hummed them out, anyway:

The ridge is narrow, the fields are wide, / flowers do not bloom at the road side, they bloom at your feet.

A big hand holds a small hand, the small hand pulls a braid of flowers, / one more step, and autumn grows one inch longer.

The girl repeated after him on the first hearing, chewing the words, saying autumn as if it were a made-up word. He did not correct her and let her say it her way. The wind came over from the far side of the field, the stubble whispered, and the wildflowers along the ridge all bent down together, as if making way for the old and the young.

On the way back the girl got tired and climbed onto his neck again. One hand on his own leg, one hand around the child at the waist, exactly as his father had done thirty years ago. At the village entrance he looked up, and his father was standing at the gate waiting, holding a rice bowl in his hand, with two wild stems standing in it.

The girl climbed down from his neck and ran to take the bowl, insisting on carrying it herself. The bowl was bigger than her two hands together, and she walked along wobbling, and nobody dared to help. The wildflowers moved forward inch by inch in her grip. At the doorstep she set the bowl steady on the table, looked up at the old man and asked: great-grandpa, will the flowers bloom again next year? The old man

bent down and lifted his great-granddaughter, and said: yes, they will bloom again next year, right at your feet.

That evening his wife went through the phone and found the clip of him reciting on the ridge, the picture shaking badly. He kept it, and named the file: Autumn on the Ridge, Three Generations. He thought: when the girl is a little older, he will teach her to write the next line herself.