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.