奶奶家的玉米地

国庆放假，爸妈带我回乡下看奶奶。一进院，奶奶就拉着我的手说，明儿个早起，咱掰棒子去，你尝尝自己掰的棒子香不香。

第二天鸡刚叫第二遍，奶奶就把我喊起来了。她挎一个旧竹篮，拎一个小马扎，领我往村后的玉米地去。路两边全是玉米地，露水打湿了裤腿。奶奶走得不快，见人就打招呼，说这是俺孙子，从城里回来掰棒子的。说得满脸的光。

到了地里，奶奶把马扎往垄沟里一放，坐下，就开始掰。她的活儿安排得明白：她坐在地头掰，我提着小筐来回跑，把她掰下的棒子装进筐，装满了倒进地头的大筐里。她说她腰不行了，站不住，可是手没坏，一只手的劲儿还够咔吧那一声。

我头一回看见人坐着掰棒子。奶奶的手在秆子上摸一下，就知道棒子沉不沉。她说顶梢压弯的才是好棒子，粒儿能长到头；梢还翘着的，多半没长圆。她专挑压弯的掰，一根一根递给我，我接过来码进筐里。

有一根棒子长歪了，两头细中间粗，我觉得好玩，想拿走。奶奶一把抽回去，说歪的孬的不下筐，留着掰碎了喂鸡。她还把秆子上挂着的破苞叶撕干净，说装筐要装利索棒子，回头脱粒的时候不掺脏东西。

我在两行玉米地中间来回跑，筐从轻到重，又从重到轻。太阳出来以后，地里像扣了一口锅，闷得人出汗。奶奶的马扎边上堆了一小片棒子堆，金黄金黄的。我劝她回去，她不肯，说再装一筐，一筐就够吃半个月了。

到晌午，大筐装了四筐尖。奶奶从里头挑出两根最大的，塞进旧竹篮，说这两根不脱粒，给你同学捎去，让他们也尝尝。我说我同学又不在村里。奶奶说，城里的娃没掰过棒子，更没吃过自己掰的，带回去给他们看看，棒子是咋从秆子上下来的。

回去的路上，奶奶在前头拎竹篮，我在后头背大筐。筐带勒肩膀，勒得有点疼，可我背得稳稳的。村里人隔着地看见我们，问谁背的筐。奶奶说，俺孙子背的，一筐他一个人背的。她说这话的时候，头都不回，声音却大了一倍。

晚上奶奶煮了那两根大棒子，一根我吃了，一根我带着去车站。车开出去老远，我还回头看见她站在院门口，马扎放在脚边，脚边是满满四筐金黄的棒子。

Grandma Corn Field

Over the National Day holiday, my parents took me back to the village to see Grandma. The moment we entered the yard, she took my hand and said, tomorrow we get up early and go pick corn, and you will taste how sweet your own picked corn is.

Next morning, when the rooster crowed the second time, Grandma woke me. She carried an old bamboo basket in the crook of her arm, took a small folding stool, and led me to the corn field behind the village. Corn fields lined both sides of the

path, and the dew wet our trouser legs. She walked slowly, greeting everyone we met, saying this is my grandson, back from the city to pick corn. Her whole face glowed when she said it.

When we reached the field, she set the stool down between the rows, sat, and started picking. She had the work arranged plainly: she sits at the edge and picks, I run back and forth with a small basket, putting her picked ears into it and emptying it into the big basket at the field edge. She said her back is no good and she cannot stand long, but her hands are fine, one hand still has enough strength for that crisp snap.

It was my first time seeing someone pick corn sitting down. Grandma ran her hand along a stalk once and knew whether the ear was heavy. She said the ear that bends the top of the stalk is the good one, its kernels grow all the way to the tip; an ear whose tip still points up is mostly not filled out. She picked only the bending ones and passed them to me one by one, and I stacked them in the basket.

One ear grew crooked, thin at both ends and fat in the middle. I thought it funny and wanted to keep it. Grandma took it right out of my hand and said crooked or poor ears do not go into the basket, we save them to crumble for the chickens. She also tore off every scrap of torn husk hanging on the stalk, saying the basket should hold clean ears, so nothing dirty gets mixed in when the kernels are shelled later.

I ran back and forth between the rows, the basket going from light to heavy and heavy to light. After the sun came up, the field felt like a pot turned over on our heads, close and stifling. By Grandma stool a little pile of ears grew, golden yellow. I urged her to go home. She refused, saying one more basket, one basket is enough to eat for half a month.

By noon the big basket held four heaping loads. Grandma chose the two biggest ears and put them into the old bamboo basket, saying these two will not be shelled, take them to your classmates and let them taste too. I said my classmates are not in the village. She said city children have never picked corn, let alone eaten their own picked corn. Take it back and show them how an ear comes off a stalk.

On the way home, Grandma carried the bamboo basket in front and I carried the big basket on my back behind her. The straps cut into my shoulders a little, but I carried it steady. Villagers saw us from their fields and asked whose basket was being carried. Grandma said, my grandson is carrying it, a whole basket on his own. When she said this she did not even turn her head, yet her voice grew twice as loud.

That night Grandma boiled those two big ears. I ate one, and carried the other to the bus station. Long after the bus pulled away, I looked back and still saw her standing at the yard gate, the stool at her feet, and beside her feet four full

baskets of golden ears.