我和小军比赛掰玉米

星期六上午，邻居小军隔着墙头喊我，说两家的大人都在地里，咱俩比一场掰玉米，一人一行，从地界那儿往两头掰，谁先装满三筐谁赢。我一口就答应了。

我们两家的玉米地挨着，中间踩出来一条窄窄的地界。到了玉米地里，小军他爸用脚在地界上划了一道印子，说就从这儿起。我分到的那一行棒子又大又密，我心里得意，觉得赢定了。

开头我掰得飞快。咔吧一声接一声，棒子顺着胳膊滑下去，夹不住我就往筐里扔，扔得哐当响。掰到一半，我回头一看，小军那一行才掰了没多远，我早就超过他一大截了。我更是放开手脚，连拧都懒得拧到位，胡噜一下拽下来就算。

结果问题出在装筐上。我的筐看着满，其实棒子横七竖八，有的还架在筐沿上。我往地头倒的时候，一路跑一路掉，棒子骨碌碌滚进秆子丛里，我还得回去找。有一根滚到别人家的行里，还是小军他爸帮我捡回来的。

小军那边安安静静的。他掰一根，在筐里码一根，棒子头朝一个方向，码得服服帖帖。他往地头倒的时候，两只手端着筐，走得慢，可一个都没掉。等我装到第二筐半，他三筐已经满了，整整齐齐摞在地头的袋子边上。

我输了，坐在秆子堆上生闷气。小军他爸过来说，小子，你手不慢，掰得比他还快，就是装筐的时候毛躁。干活跟掰玉米一个理，咔吧那一下痛快，码整齐才是收成。

小军把赢来的三筐棒子倒进我们两家的公共袋里，说他答应过的，比完一起给两家装。我脸一下热了，赶紧也抱起筐来装。这回我学乖了，一根一根码，码满一筐再走，走到地头一个没掉。

中午两家大人坐在田埂上喝水，数一共装了十一筐。小军他爸说，这十一筐里，有俩小子的六筐。我听了比赢了还高兴。

回去的路上，小军跟我说，下回比装筐不比掰，我肯定还输。我说去你的，下回我肯定赢你。嘴上这么说，我心里其实服气，掰棒子要听咔吧那一声，装筐要码得整整齐齐，这两样我都得再练。

Xiao Jun and I Have a Corn Picking Contest

Saturday morning, my neighbor Xiao Jun shouted at me over the wall. The grown-ups are all in the fields, he said, let us have a corn picking contest, one row each, from the boundary line toward both ends, whoever fills three baskets first wins. I said yes without thinking.

Our two family fields touch each other, with a narrow boundary path trodden between them. When we got into the corn, Xiao Jun dad scored a line on the boundary with his foot and said, start here. The row I got had big dense ears, and I felt smug, sure the win was mine.

At the start I picked blazing fast. Snap after snap, the ears slid down under my

arm, and when I could not hold more I hurled them into the basket with a clang. Halfway through, I looked back and the row of Xiao Jun had barely moved, while I was far ahead. So I let loose completely, not even twisting properly, just yanking an ear off and calling it done.

The trouble came at the basket filling. My basket looked full, but the ears lay in every direction, some balanced on the rim. When I carried one to the edge of the field, I dropped ears all along the way, rolling into the stalks, and I had to go back and hunt for them. One rolled into another family row, and Xiao Jun dad picked it up for me.

On Xiao Jun side everything was quiet. He picked one ear and placed one in the basket, all heads pointing the same way, stacked neat as can be. When he carried his to the field edge, he held the basket with both hands and walked slowly, and not a single ear fell. By the time I had filled two and a half baskets, his three were done, stacked tidy by the sacks at the edge of the field.

I lost, and sat on a pile of stalks sulking. Xiao Jun dad came over and said, kid, your hands are not slow, you pick faster than him, but you are careless when filling the basket. Work is like picking corn, the snap feels great, but stacking it neat is the harvest.

Xiao Jun poured his winning three baskets into the shared sack of our two families, saying he had promised, after the contest we load them together for both families. My face went hot all at once, and I hurried to grab a basket too. This time I learned my lesson, placing one ear at a time, and when a basket was packed I carried it out, and not one ear dropped.

At noon the grown-ups of both families sat on the field ridge drinking water, and counted eleven baskets in all. Xiao Jun dad said, six of these eleven baskets belong to the two boys. That made me happier than winning.

On the way home, Xiao Jun told me, next time we contest on basket filling and not picking, and you will still lose. I said get lost, next time I will definitely beat you. Talking tough aside, I was truly convinced. To pick an ear you listen for the snap, to fill a basket you stack it neat, and I still need practice in both.