我的画架倒在了稻田边

星期五第二节课，美术课。上课铃一响，李老师没拿课本，拎着一摞画板出来了，说，今天不上课，去村口稻田边写生。我们全班欢呼，抬画架的抬画架，拎颜料桶的拎颜料桶，浩浩荡荡出了校门。

稻田就在公路边上。十月的稻子黄透了，穗子压弯了腰，风从田那头滚过来，整片田就朝一个方向低头，一层推一层，像有人从田底下往前推浪。李老师喊，看好了，这就叫稻浪，今天全班都画它。

我抢了个好位置，田埂边上，把画架支开，三条腿踩实，夹上画纸。我打算画得跟真的一模一样：稻穗一根一根数着画。刚画了十几根，风来了。不是普通的风，是裹着稻浪一起来的大风。整片田哗啦一响，我的画架跟着晃，我伸手去按，画架咔哒一声折了，连人带架坐在了地上。

更惨的是画纸。风把纸从我手里抽走，打着旋儿往田里飞。我扑过去，在田埂那头把它捞回来，纸角沾了泥，我画的那十几根稻穗变成了一道泥印子。旁边同学笑得直不起腰，说你的画会飞。

我重新夹了张纸，把画架腿往土里踩得更深。这回我不数着画了。我盯着稻浪看，看它从田那头起来，滚到跟前，低头，又起来。我发现稻浪不是每一根稻子的事，是一整片的事。我就先画一条一条的弧线，黄的、深的黄、带点绿的黄，一条压一条，稻穗用笔尖点上去，点得乱乱的，反而像。

下课前，李老师收画。她把我们的画靠在画架上，一张一张看。看到我的，她停住了，问，你第一张画的什么？我说一根一根数的，画架倒了，画也毁了。她把两张并排举起来，先举那张糊了的，再举这张乱的，问大家哪张有风。大家喊，后面这张。李老师说，对喽，第一张画的是稻子，这一张画的是稻浪。会动的画，才是好画。

全班给我鼓掌。我耳朵热热的，手上一管颜料都没洗，先跑去把画举起来又看了一遍。那些乱糟糟的笔触点，风一吹，好像真的在动。

回家我把画贴在卧室墙上。我妈问哪来的风，我说画里自带。晚上睡觉前我又看它一眼，稻浪还在那儿滚，从田那头，一直滚到我床边。

My Easel Fell Down by the Rice Field

Friday second period, art class. When the bell rang, Mr Li came out carrying a stack of drawing boards instead of the textbook, and said, no class today, we are going to the rice field by the village gate to sketch from life. The whole class cheered. Some carried easels, some carried paint buckets, and we marched out of the school gate in a long line.

The rice field lay right beside the road. The October rice had ripened fully

golden, the panicles bowing their heads. The wind rolled in from the far side of the field, and the whole field bowed one way, layer pushing layer, as if someone under the field were pushing waves forward. Mr Li shouted, look well, this is called a wave of rice, and today everyone paints it.

I grabbed a good spot on the field ridge, spread my easel, planted its three legs firm, and clipped on the paper. I planned to paint it exactly like the real thing: counting the rice panicles one by one. I had drawn barely a dozen when the wind came. Not an ordinary wind, but a big wind riding the rice waves. The whole field roared, my easel shook with it, I reached out to press it down, and the easel snapped and folded, and I sat down on the ground with it.

Worse was the paper. The wind snatched it from my hand and spun away toward the field. I dived after it and fished it back at the far end of the ridge. The corner of the paper had mud on it, and my dozen rice panicles had become one muddy smear. The classmate next to me laughed so hard he could not stand up, saying your drawing can fly.

I clipped on a fresh sheet and stamped the easel legs deeper into the soil. This time I stopped counting. I watched the rice waves rise at the far end of the field, roll toward me, bow, and rise again. I realized a rice wave is not about every single plant, it is about the whole field at once. So I first painted arc after arc, yellow, deep yellow, yellow touched with green, one pressing on another, and dotted the panicles on with the tip of the brush, dotted them wildly, which somehow looked right.

Before the bell, Mr Li collected the drawings. She leaned them against the easels and looked at them one by one. At mine she stopped and asked, what was your first drawing? I said, counting panicles one by one, then the easel fell and the drawing was ruined. She held the two side by side, first the smeared one, then the wild one, and asked the class which one has wind in it. Everyone shouted, the second one. Mr Li said, exactly. The first one painted rice plants. This one painted rice waves. A drawing that moves is a good drawing.

The whole class clapped for me. My ears went hot, and with paint still on my hands I ran to hold my drawing up and look once more. Those wild little dots of brush, with the wind blowing, really seemed to move.

At home I pasted the drawing on my bedroom wall. My mom asked where the wind came from. I said it comes with the painting. Before bed I took one more look. The rice waves were still rolling there, from the far end of the field, all the way to my bed.

调色盘上调不出那种黄

美术课搬到田野里上，是我们班这个学期最威风的一节课。老师姓陈，女的，扎一条黄围巾，拎着一只铁皮调色盘走在最前头，说今天只教一件事，颜色是从天上和田里借来的，不是从颜料管里挤出来的。

我们分成几个小组，散在田埂上。我们组四个人，围着一副共用画架，画架是折叠的，支起来咯吱响。画题是稻浪加天空。我抢着负责调颜色，谁让我妈说我在家把颜料盒玩了三整年。

结果第一关我就栽了。稻田那种黄，我调不出来。挤柠檬黄，太亮，像新塑料；加土黄，又太暗，像旧牛皮纸。我站在田埂上对着田比来比去，画纸上的黄跟田里的黄打架，怎么看怎么别扭。我挤掉半管颜料，盘子里糊成一团脏色。

同桌林小满蹲下来，把我的画纸转过去对着田，说你别看盘子，看田。她说你盯着田里最亮的那块和最暗的那块，眼睛来回看三遍，手自己就知道加什么。我将信将疑，眼睛在田上来回走，田里的黄在风里一层亮一层暗，确实跟任何一管颜料都不一样。我往脏色里点了一点白，又点了一点点绿，再一笔抹在纸上，跟田一比，对上了。我高兴得差点把盘子举起来。

调完黄的调蓝。天空的蓝更好玩，头顶是深的，往田那头越远越浅，浅到快白了。我们把画架转了个方向，让天空和稻田同时进画面。风一阵一阵来，稻浪就从画面右下角往左上角滚，我们跟着喊口令，起浪喽，我们四个的笔就一起往下扫。

画到一半，云来了。一大片云从田那头压过来，田里的黄跟着暗了一瞬，云一走又亮回来。林小满说快画云，我们抬头看云怎么走，笔跟着走。我调出一种灰不灰白不白的颜色，一笔一笔把云拖过去。

收课时陈老师绕着画架看。她在我们这副前站得最久，先看我那片云，问，你是不是盯着云走了很久？我说是，云从这头走到田那头，我数着它走了多久。她点头，说云会走的人，笔上就有风。又看我的黄，说这个黄是从田里借的，借得地道。我们组四个人挤在一起看自己的画，谁也不嫌谁挤。

回学校的路上，黄围巾陈老师走在最前头，还是那句话，颜色是借来的。我把这句话记在心里。下回谁问我稻田的黄怎么调，我就让他先去田埂上，眼睛来回看三遍。

The Palette Cannot Mix That Yellow

Having art class out in the fields was the proudest lesson of our class this term. Our teacher is a woman named Ms Chen, wearing a yellow scarf, carrying a tin palette at the head of the line, and she said today she would teach only one thing: colors are borrowed from the sky and the field, not squeezed out of paint tubes.

We split into small groups and scattered along the field ridges. Our group had four people around one shared easel, a folding one that creaked when we set it up.

The subject was rice waves plus sky. I fought to be in charge of mixing colors, since my mom says I played with the paint box three whole years at home.

And I failed at the very first step. I could not mix the yellow of the rice field. Lemon yellow is too bright, like new plastic; add yellow ochre and it turns too dark, like old kraft paper. I stood on the ridge comparing my paper with the field again and again, and the yellow on paper fought with the yellow in the field, wrong no matter how I tilted it. I used up half a tube of paint, and the palette became one smear of muddy color.

My deskmate Lin Xiaoman squatted down and turned my paper to face the field. She said, stop looking at the palette, look at the field. She said, stare at the brightest patch of the field and the darkest patch, let your eyes travel back and forth three times, and your hand will know what to add. Half doubting, I let my eyes walk across the field. The yellow in the field grew bright in one layer and dark in the next with the wind, truly unlike any tube of paint. I touched a little white into the mud, then a little green, swept one stroke onto the paper, compared it with the field, and it matched. I nearly lifted the palette in the air.

After the yellow came the blue. The blue of the sky was even more fun, deep overhead, paler the farther toward the field, pale almost to white. We turned the easel so the sky and the rice field entered the picture together. The wind came in gusts, and the rice waves rolled from the lower right corner of our picture to the upper left, so we shouted commands like, here comes the wave, and all four of our brushes swept down at once.

Halfway through, the clouds came. A big cloud pressed in from the far side of the field, the yellow of the field dimmed for a moment, and brightened back when the cloud moved on. Lin Xiaoman shouted to paint the clouds. We looked up to watch how the cloud traveled, and our brushes traveled with it. I mixed a color that was neither gray nor white, and dragged the cloud across the paper stroke by stroke.

At cleanup, Ms Chen walked around the easels. She stood longest in front of ours. First she looked at my cloud and asked, did you watch that cloud travel for a long time? I said yes, it traveled from here to the far end of the field, and I counted how long it took. She nodded and said, a person whose clouds walk has wind in the brush. Then she looked at my yellow and said this yellow was borrowed from the field, and borrowed honestly. Our four group members squeezed together to look at our painting, nobody minding the crowding.

On the walk back to school, Ms Chen with her yellow scarf still led the line, still on that one theme: colors are borrowed. I kept the sentence in my heart. Next time anyone asks me how to mix the yellow of a rice field, I will tell them to stand on the ridge first and let their eyes travel back and forth three times.

画得最丑的那张画

我画画不行，这是全班公认的事。美术课上别人画花像花，我画花像一团毛线。时间久了我也习惯了，美术课就低头玩铅笔刀，一节课混过去。

那节田野写生课，我本来打算照旧混。老师把队伍带到村南的稻田边，让每人领一块画板、一副小画架。那画架是木头折叠的，我支了三回才支起来，腿还一长一短，垫了块土坷垃才不晃。别人都面朝大田找位置，我专挑田角上人少的地方，心想离老师远一点，混得踏实。

画题是稻浪。我朝田里看了两眼就低下头，笔在纸上划。我不会画浪，就把稻子画成一根一根直挺挺的竖线，绿绳子似的，排得整整齐齐，穗子用黄点点上去，点得跟排队做操一样。画到一半，风来了，我抬头，整片田哗地朝一个方向弯腰，我手里那排绿绳子却站得笔直。我愣了一下，又低头接着画我的直稻子。我想，反正我也不会画弯的。

收画的时候我把画往后压，想混在中间。老师偏偏一张一张看。她看到我的，抽出来，我脸一下就烧了，等着那句大家都说过的话，画得不太像啊。结果老师把那张画举起来，问，你们看出来这张的稻子有什么不一样吗？大家七嘴八舌，有的说太直了，有的说像栅栏。老师说，直有什么不好？你们看这一排排稻子，根根立着，像不像站岗的兵？再看他的天，天上一朵云都没有，安安静静的，配得上这一田站岗的稻子。画得直，是他看见的稻子；画得弯，是你们看见的稻子。眼睛不一样，画就不一样。

教室里安静了一下。我耳朵嗡嗡的，头一回有人把我的丑画当回事讲。老师把那张画钉在教室后墙正中间，说这张挂中间，让大家都看看另一种眼睛。

回教室的路上我走在最后，心里乱乱的。路过稻田我又看了一眼，稻子其实不是全直的，靠田边的让风吹歪了，地当中间的还立着。原来我画的是地当中间的稻子，我坐的那个田角，正好看得见它们。

第二天放学，我回家翻出颜料盒，在旧作业本背面画了一张稻子，还是直的，这回穗子点得大小不一样。我妈路过看了一眼，说这张有精神。我把它夹进课本里。我想等下回田野写生，我还画直的稻子，不过要让其中几根，稍微弯那么一点点。

The Ugliest Painting of the Day

I am bad at drawing, and the whole class agrees on it. In art class other kids draw flowers that look like flowers, and my flowers look like a ball of yarn. After a while I got used to it too. In art class I would play with the pencil sharpener with my head down, and get through the period.

For that sketching lesson in the fields, I planned to coast as usual. The teacher led the class to the rice fields at the south edge of the village, and everyone took a drawing board and a small easel. The easel was wooden and folding. I set it up

three times before it stood, its legs one long and one short, propped with a lump of dirt to stop the wobble. While everyone faced the big field to find a spot, I picked the quiet corner of the field, thinking the farther from the teacher, the more peacefully I could coast.

The subject was rice waves. I glanced at the field twice and lowered my head to the paper. I cannot paint waves, so I drew the rice as straight stiff vertical lines, like green ropes, lined up neat, with the panicles dotted on in yellow, dotted like a class doing morning exercises in formation. Halfway through, the wind came. I looked up and the whole field bowed one way with a roar, while my row of green ropes stood ramrod straight on my paper. I froze for a second, then bent my head again to my straight rice. Anyway, I thought, I cannot draw them bent.

At collection time I pushed my drawing to the back, hoping to hide in the middle. The teacher looked at them one by one anyway. When she reached mine and pulled it out, my face burned, waiting for the line everyone always says, this does not look quite like it. Instead the teacher held my drawing up and asked, can you see what is different about the rice in this one? Everyone chimed in. Some said too straight, some said like a fence. The teacher said, what is wrong with straight? Look at this row after row of rice, every stalk standing, like soldiers on guard? And look at his sky, not one cloud in it, quiet, matching a whole field of rice on duty. Straight is the rice he saw; bent is the rice you saw. Different eyes, different drawings.

The room went quiet for a moment. My ears buzzed. It was the first time anyone took my ugly drawing seriously enough to talk about it. The teacher pinned that drawing in the very middle of the back wall, saying this one hangs in the center, so everyone can see another pair of eyes.

On the way back to the classroom I walked at the rear of the line, my heart in a turmoil. Passing the rice field I looked again. The rice was not all straight after all. The plants by the field edge were bent by the wind, while those in the middle of the plot still stood. So I had drawn the rice in the middle of the field. The corner where I sat happened to look right at them.

After school the next day I dug out my paint box and drew rice on the back of an old exercise book. Still straight, but this time the panicle dots were different sizes. My mom passed by, took one look, and said this one has spirit. I tucked it into my textbook. I am thinking, next time we sketch in the fields, I will still draw straight rice, only let a few of them bend just a tiny bit.