# 10月26日 大黄的蹄印和我的鞋印

10月26日 星期日 晴

稻子收完半个月了，田空下来，只剩一茬一茬的稻桩。今天爷爷要犁地，说趁土还软，犁一遍，冻一冬，明年开春土就是酥的。我自告奋勇跟去，爷爷说，行，你今天负责牵牛。

大黄是家里那头水牛，角弯得像两个月牙。我把缰绳搭在肩上，在前头走，心想牵牛还不简单。结果我错了。大黄走它的，我在前头拽，缰绳绷得直直的，它看都不看我，蹄子踩在稻桩地里，噗嗤，噗嗤，比我还慢半拍。我回头求爷爷，爷爷也不帮，只说，别拽，跟着它走，它走过的地方比你直。

我没法子，只好掉转头，跟在牛屁股后面走。大黄倒不紧不慢，走几步还甩一下尾巴。我数它的蹄印，一个蹄印四个趾头，踩得又深又稳。走了一趟下来，我发现我的鞋印全落在它的蹄印缝里，像跟着它的脚印学写字。

爷爷在后头扶犁。犁是铁的，两个木把手，犁头插进土里，往前一推，土就哗地翻起来，卷成一卷，亮亮地躺在地面。爷爷的手在犁把上，眼睛不看犁，看前面的牛。他喊一声，驾，大黄就走；喊一声，转，到了地头，大黄绕着弯，犁头就把最后一拃土翻过来。

我看了半天手痒，求爷爷让我扶一回。爷爷把我拉到犁后头，手覆在我手上。我一扶才知道犁不是推着走的，是压着走的，土顶人，胳膊得一直使劲。半趟没扶完，我手心就热出了汗，胳膊酸得发抖。爷爷接过去，说，扶犁的劲在腰上不在胳膊上，你才十二，扶不动整趟，扶半趟就不少了。

下午我们歇了两回。我坐在田埂上，看翻过的地一大片一大片，黑褐色的土一卷挨一卷，掰开一卷，外头干，土心是湿的，有一股生土味，混着牛粪味和稻桩烂掉的味道。不难闻，那是地本身的味道。

收工回家，我鞋上糊了一层泥，大黄脖子上也蹭了泥。我在日记里数今天走的趟数，一共九趟。九趟里，大黄走前头六趟，我走前头三趟，三趟都是它拽着我。我在最后写：犁地最累的不是扶犁，是牵牛。可翻出来的土真好看，明年开春，我那些鞋印踩过的地方，会长出秧苗。

# October 26 The Hoofprints of Big Yellow and My Shoe Prints

October 26, Sunday, sunny

The rice was harvested half a month ago, and the field lies empty, only stubble row after row. Today Grandpa is plowing, saying while the soil is still soft, plow it once, let it freeze all winter, and next spring the soil will be crumbly. I volunteered to go along, and Grandpa said all right, today you are in charge of

leading the ox.

Big Yellow is the water buffalo at home, its horns curved like two crescent moons. I slung the rope over my shoulder and walked in front, thinking leading an ox could not be simpler. I was wrong. Big Yellow walks its own way. I pull ahead, the rope stretched straight, and it does not even look at me. Its hoofs step into the stubble field, squelch, squelch, half a beat slower than me. I turned back to beg Grandpa for help. He would not help, and only said, stop pulling, follow it, the line it walks is straighter than yours.

No choice, I turned around and walked behind the ox instead. Big Yellow strolls unhurriedly, flicking its tail every few steps. I counted its hoofprints. One print, four toes, pressed deep and steady. After one pass I noticed all my shoe prints landed in the gaps between its hoofprints, like a child tracing letters by following the strokes.

Grandpa held the plow behind. The plow is iron with two wooden handles. Its share bites into the soil, pushed forward, and the earth turns over with a rustle, rolling up in coils lying glossy on the surface. The hands of Grandpa rest on the handles, and his eyes are not on the plow but on the ox ahead. He shouts, giddy-up, and Big Yellow walks; he shouts, turn, and at the headland the ox rounds the curve while the share flips the last span of soil.

I watched long enough to itch, and begged to hold the plow once. Grandpa pulled me behind it and covered my hands with his. Only then did I learn a plow is not pushed along, it is pressed along. The soil shoves back at you, and your arms must strain the whole time. I did not finish half a pass before my palms sweated hot and my arms ached and shook. Grandpa took over and said, the strength for plowing lives in the waist, not the arms. You are only twelve. You cannot hold a full pass, but half a pass is already no small thing.

We rested twice in the afternoon. I sat on the field ridge looking at the plowed ground, dark brown soil coil against coil over wide patches. Break one coil open, the outside is dry and the heart of the soil is wet, with a raw earth smell mixed with ox dung and rotting stubble. It is not unpleasant. That is the smell of the ground itself.

At the end of work we went home. My shoes were caked with mud, and the neck of Big Yellow was smudged too. In my diary I counted the passes of today, nine in all. In those nine, Big Yellow led six and I led three, and in all three it was dragging me. I wrote at the bottom: the most tiring part of plowing is not holding the plow, it is leading the ox. But the turned soil is truly beautiful. Next spring, rice seedlings will grow right where my shoe prints stepped.

# 10月27日 我把一犁扶歪了

10月27日 阴。今天起得比鸡还早。

昨天我牵了一下午大黄，手心到今天还酸。可是跟爷爷出门的时候，我挺着胸说：爷爷，今天我要扶犁。爷爷看了我一眼，没说好，也没说不好，只说：你先扶两趟。

爷爷先牵牛走了一趟给我看。他两只手扶着犁把，身子微微弯着，犁铧吃进土里不深不浅。大黄低着头走，它身后那道沟直得像谁用尺子弹出来的。走回来，爷爷把犁把交给我。犁把是木头包的，磨得油光发亮，摸上去是温的。

头几步我走得挺好。犁铧往前拱，翻起来的土在两边打卷，露出湿的、深褐色的土块，沟里还爬出来两条蚯蚓。我心里有点得意：这有什么难的。

可是犁渐渐不听话了。我的右手一使劲往下压，犁头就往右拐，我扶的那道沟开始弯弯扭扭，像一条躺在地里的蛇。我想把它掰回来，越掰越歪，到后来那道沟歪歪地靠着前一道，眼看就要倒过去。

爷爷站在田边看，没骂我。他只说：先回来，让大黄歇口气。接着他说：歪犁比直犁费牛，你知道不？犁一走歪，牛就得替你较劲，一趟的活儿变成两趟。你省的是自己，糟蹋的是牛的力气。

我脸有点热，说：爷爷，我牵牛走一趟直的，再回来扶犁。爷爷站到犁那边去，我接过缰绳。大黄的缰绳是麻绳拧的，粗，硌手心。我在前头走，总想回头看沟，每回我一回头，缰绳就轻轻一紧——大黄慢下来了，它在等我。我喊一声走，它又迈开步子。这一趟我把眼睛钉在前头，脚不乱，再回头看，沟是直的。

然后再扶犁，扶了半趟。这一回我记着爷爷的话：两手匀着劲，眼睛看前头的沟，别看自己的脚。犁铧还是晃了几晃，可我扶的这半趟，比早上那一整趟直多了。

中午站在田边看我们翻完的地，翻起的土一道压着一道，太阳照着，有的地方已经晒得发白，有的地方还湿得发黑。歪的直的，全摊在地上，谁都看得见。

晚上我在日记里写：地不会骂人，可犁会把你干的活儿全留在地上，骗不了人。

# October 27 I Plowed One Furrow Crooked

October 27, cloudy. Today I got up earlier than the rooster.

Yesterday I led Da Huang the whole afternoon, and my palms were still sore. But when I set out with Grandpa, I said: Grandpa, today I want to hold the plow. Grandpa only said: try two rounds first.

Grandpa led the ox first and showed me one round. He held the plow handles, bent

over a little, and the plowshare bit into the soil just enough. Da Huang walked with its head down, and the furrow behind was like a line drawn with a ruler. Then he handed me the handles, worn glossy and warm.

The first steps went well. The turned soil rolled over on both sides, showing damp dark clods, and two earthworms came out in the furrow. I thought: this is not hard at all.

But the plow began to slip. My right hand pressed down too much, and the furrow started to curve, like a snake lying in the field. The more I tried to fix it, the worse it became.

Grandpa did not scold me. He said: a crooked plow tires out the ox more than a straight one. When the plow goes crooked, the ox must fight your strength, and one round becomes two rounds of work. You save yourself, but you waste the strength of the ox.

My face got hot, and I asked to lead the ox for one straight round before holding the plow again. The reins of Da Huang were thick hemp rope, rough against the palm. Every time I looked back, the reins tightened a little — Da Huang was slowing down, waiting for me. I called out, and it walked again. This round I kept my eyes fixed ahead, and the furrow came out straight.

Then I held the plow for another half round, remembering the words of Grandpa: keep even strength in both hands, look at the furrow ahead, not at your feet. The plowshare still wobbled, but this half round was much straighter than the whole round of the morning.

At noon I looked at the field we finished. The turned soil lay ridge after ridge, some parts already white in the sun, some parts still dark and damp. Crooked or straight, all of it lay open on the ground for anyone to see.

That night I wrote in my diary: the field does not scold people, but the plow leaves all your work on the ground, and you cannot fool it.

## 10月28日 爷爷拍拍老犁

10月28日 晴。今天爷爷不让我下地，说我手心磨出了水泡，让我歇着。上午我提着饭桶走到田边去。

站在田埂上，我头一回从外头看犁地这件事，不是从犁把后头，是从田埂上。

爷爷牵牛下地。他不像我那样把缰绳攥得死紧，缰绳松松地搭在他手里，垂成一个圈。大黄自己认路，走到地头，不用爷爷开口，爷爷只把缰绳换到另一边，喉咙里轻轻一声，大黄那么大的身子就慢慢原地转过来，后腿一步一步踩进刚才的沟里，一点不乱。

爷爷扶犁。他扶犁的样子跟我不一样：他不攥，两只手搭在犁把上，像在听什么。地硬的地方，他的手往下按一点；地软的地方，又往上抬一点。犁铧在土里时深时浅，翻出来的沟却一直是直的。

翻起的土在太阳底下堆成一道道浪。有几只乌鸦落到新土边上啄蚯蚓，大黄的尾巴一甩，它们就飞起来，绕一圈又落下。

我把饭提到田边。爷爷在沟里洗了手，坐到田埂上。他伸手拍了拍犁铧，说：这犁在咱家二十多年了，你爸当年就是扶着这犁学会扶犁的，也是你这个年纪。接着他又拍了拍大黄的脖子：这个九岁了，它犁过的这块地，比我还多。

我问：爷爷，大黄怎么不听我的？爷爷说：它听你的。昨天你牵它，老回头看沟，它怕你摔跟头，才走那么慢。它不是不听话，是照顾你。

我没说话。风从翻过的地里刮过来，土腥味浓得可以靠上去。

吃完饭回家，我在日记里写：我以为扶犁是靠自己使劲，今天才明白，扶犁是两只手在听——听地的软硬，听牛的步子。爷爷和大黄不用说话，那才是扶犁的样子。我手心的水泡，明天大概就不疼了。

## October 28 Grandpa Patted the Old Plow

October 28, clear. Grandpa did not let me go to the field today, because my palm had a blister. In the morning I carried the lunch pail to the edge of the field.

Standing on the ridge, I saw the work of plowing from the outside for the first time, not from behind the plow handles but from the ridge.

Grandpa led the ox down. He did not grip the reins tight the way I do; the reins lay loose in his hand in a hanging loop. Da Huang knew the road by itself. At the end of the field, without one word, Grandpa only moved the reins to the other side and made a soft sound in his throat, and the big body of Da Huang turned slowly on the spot, its hind legs stepping into the last furrow one by one, without a single wrong step.

Grandpa held the plow differently from me. He did not grip it; his two hands rested on the handles, as if listening. Where the ground was hard, his hands pressed down a little; where it was soft, they rose a little. The plowshare went deep and shallow in the soil, yet the furrow it opened was always straight.

The turned soil lay ridge after ridge in the sun, like waves. A few crows landed at the edge of the new soil to peck at earthworms, and when the tail of Da Huang swished once, they flew up, circled, and landed again.

I carried the meal to the field. Grandpa washed his hands in the ditch water and sat down on the ridge. He patted the plowshare and said: this plow has been in our family for over twenty years. Your father learned to hold the plow behind this very plow, at the age of you. Then he patted the neck of Da Huang: this one is nine years old, and it has plowed more of this field than I have.

I asked: Grandpa, why does Da Huang not listen to me? He said: it does listen. Yesterday when you led it, you kept looking back at the furrow, and it was afraid you would fall, so it walked slowly. It was not disobeying you; it was taking care of you.

I said nothing. The wind came across the turned field, and the smell of earth was thick enough to lean against.

After the meal I went home and wrote in my diary: I used to think holding the plow was pushing with my own strength. Today I understand that holding the plow is listening with both hands — the hardness and softness of the ground, the steps of the ox. Grandpa and Da Huang need no words, and that is what holding the plow truly looks like. The blister on my palm will probably stop hurting tomorrow.

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