# 收工

最后一捆稻草码上垛顶，码草的老人直起腰，拍了拍手上的草屑。这一天，田里的活儿就算收完了。

收割机开走以后，田野一下子空了，也一下子静了。先前还有机器的轰隆声、人喊话的声音、稻子倒下的声音，现在只剩下风。稻茬地铺到天边，一茬一茬，茬口都朝着一个方向倒，那是机器走过的方向。

收工的人三三两两往村里走。有人骑摩托，车斗里横着镰刀和绳子；有人挑着空担子，扁担两头晃；有两个人并排走，商量着明天谁帮谁。他们的影子在前面的田上拖着，被晚霞拉得老长。

晚霞这时候正红。红得不均匀，西边最深处发紫，往上退成橘红，再退成淡金。云一层压一层，像码草垛那样码在天边。田里的颜色跟着天走，稻茬地一会儿红，一会儿金，一会儿又灰下去。

鸟成群回来，落在田边的电线上，一根线落一排，像五线谱上落了音符。它们叫了一阵，声音在空田上传得很远。叫完了，又一批鸟低低掠过田面，落进远处的林子。

田埂上有孩子跑过去，手里举着一截稻穗，是白天拾下的。有个女人蹲在沟边洗一把铁锹，水声哗哗，洗完了在田埂上墩两下，扛上肩。狗跟着人跑，跑进草垛的影子里。

码草的老人最后一个走。他绕着草垛走了一圈，踢了踢垛脚，把一把散草重新按在垛顶，压上两块旧砖。然后他背上空叉，慢慢往村里走。

天暗下来。晚霞从边上开始退，退得很快，像有人从天边把一块红布慢慢抽走。第一盏灯在村里亮起来，接着第二盏、第三盏。

空下来的田野在暮色里歇着。白天的活儿都落在地上：垛是码好的，田是拾净的，沟是通开的。人回了家，灶上的烟升起来。田野歇下来的样子，跟人收工坐在门槛上的样子，是一样的。

# Knocking Off

When the last bundle of straw was stacked on top, the old man who piled the straw straightened his back and brushed the chaff from his hands. That day, the work in the field was done.

After the harvester drove away, the field was empty all at once, and quiet all at once. Before, there had been the rumble of the machine, people shouting, and the sound of rice falling; now only the wind was left. The stubble field spread to the horizon, stubble by stubble, all leaning the same way, the way the machine had gone.

People knocking off walked home in twos and threes. Some rode motorcycles, with sickles and rope lying in the sidecar; some carried empty shoulder poles, the two ends swinging; two walked side by side, arranging who would help whom tomorrow. Their

shadows trailed across the field ahead, stretched long by the evening glow.

At this hour the glow was at its reddest. It was not an even red: the deepest part in the west was purple, fading upward into orange, then into pale gold. Cloud lay on cloud, stacked against the horizon the way straw is stacked. The color of the field followed the sky: the stubble ground turned red, then gold, then gray.

Birds came back in flocks and landed on the wires along the field, a row on each wire, like notes fallen onto a staff. They called for a while, their voices carrying far over the empty field. When they finished, another batch of birds skimmed low across the field and dropped into the woods in the distance.

A child ran along the ridge holding a head of rice picked up during the day. A woman crouched by the ditch washing a spade; the water splashed, and when she finished she knocked it twice on the ridge, shouldered it, and went. A dog ran after its person and ran into the shadow of the straw stack.

The old man who piled the straw left last. He walked once around the stack, kicked at its foot, pressed a handful of loose straw back on top, and weighted it with two old bricks. Then he took up his empty pitchfork and walked slowly toward the village.

The sky darkened. The glow began to retreat from its edges, quickly, as if someone were slowly pulling a red cloth away from the horizon. The first light came on in the village, then the second, then the third.

The emptied field rested in the dusk. The work of the day lay settled on the ground: the stacks were piled, the field was gleaned clean, the ditches were opened. People were home, and smoke rose from the stoves. The way the field rested was the same as the way a person rested, sitting on the threshold after knocking off.