The plum work in the rainy season

梅の実の熟す季節、近所の小さな梅林で収穫を手伝った。

The neighborhood’s small plum grove was helped to be harvested in the ripe season.

ついこのあいだ花をめでたばかりなのに、時のめぐりは早い。

Even though the flowers were cared for just recently, time flies fast.

いつしかどれも丸々とそだち、 青菜に隠れて細かい雨にぬれている

Hiding inside their green shells and hydrated by the small raindrops, before anyone noticed they had grown plump.

落ちているのをまず拾い、枝の実は手でもいだ。

The fruits were collected by hand, first from the branches that had fallen.

すぐにバケツはいっぱいになる。

The bucket was immediately filled to the brim.

分け前をもらって帰り、ざるに盛ると台所は甘酸っぱい。

After returning with their share and pouring it into a basket, the kitchen is filled with sweetness and bitterness.

毎年ながらこの香り、雨の季節によく似合う

Every year, this aroma is well suited for the rainy season.

梅干しを漬けたり、梅酒を作ったりすることを「梅仕事」と呼ぶ。

It’s called “plum work”, such as pickling with vinegar, or distilling with liquor.

手元の辞書にはないが味のある言葉だ。

It’s a word you wouldn’t be able to find in your on-hand dictionary, but one filled with a certain flavor.

煮梅やジュースなど、野菜な手作りを楽しむ人が、この時期少なくない

Now there’s quite a lot of people who enjoy handmade dishes using vegetables, like boiled plums or juice.

当方も、傷の入った実はジャムにして、傷なしを梅干しに漬けた。

We also used the fruits with cuts to make jam while we pickled the untouched ones.

瓶の中で、塩をふった梅から梅酢が上がるのを眺めれば、ご先祖様の知恵に頭が下がる。

When you see the vinegar rising from the salted plums inside the bottle, you will be blessed with the wisdom of your ancestors

質素きわまる日の丸ながら、作ればなかなか奥は深い。

Although it looks like a simple ball like the sun, when using in preparation, it’s pretty thick on the inside.

「うめぼしの歌」というのがあるそうだ。

There’s something called “The Pickled Plum Song”.

端折って紹介すると、「二月三月花盛り」に始まって「五月六月実がなれば枝から振るい落とされて何升何合量り売り塩に漬かってからくなりシソに染まって赤くなり…」

In a condensed version, it begins with “In February and March, the flowers bloom” and continues with “In May and June, when the fruits are ripe, they are shaken off the branches, sold by volume, pickled in salt, and stained with the red of perilla….”

そうやって「生涯」をうたっていく

They continue singing that through the life of the plum.

梅雨が明ければ三日三晩の土用干しが待つ。

Once the rainy season ends, they look forward to 3 days and 3 nights of “the soil drying”, “airing clothes in the summer”

一人前の梅干しになるまでに結構な手間とひまがかかる。

For one serving of pickled plum to be made, a great deal of time and effort has been used.

そうして一粒一粒が、食欲の刺激し、食あたりを防ぐといった効用を宿すのである。

And so, each drop helps the appetite to stimulate and to prevent food poisoning.

「手塩に掛ける」という忘れがちな言葉を、年に一度の梅仕事に思い出す。

In this annual plum work, I remember a phrase often forgotten, “Raise your salt by hand” meaning to bring one up under someone’s care.

日本の雨期の、しみじみ嬉しい生り物である。

For the rainy season in Japan, this is the harvest filled with the most sincerity and joy.