山不响，路会回答

那是一部登山纪录片，拍一支学生登山队冲一座六千米的山。他们在山脊下被大雪挡住了三次。第一次，风雪太大，营地帐篷被掀掉两顶，全队撤回谷底；第二次，爬到五千米，氧气瓶出了故障，又撤；第三次，离顶峰只剩四百米，雾墙压下来，能见度不到五米，领队看了看高度表，下令下撤。镜头里没有哭天抢地，只有队员把背包往肩上又提了提，一步一步往下走。下山路上，一个队员对着镜头说了一句话：山不会响，但你走过的路会回答你。

第二次下撤以后，他们没有散伙。全队回到谷底，把故障的氧气阀拆开研究，修好，重新检查每一只冰爪，然后第三次上山。纪录片没有给他们一个登顶的大团圆——第三次冲顶时天气再次变脸，队伍在四千米处停下，收队回家。片尾字幕写：该队次年春季再次尝试，登顶成功。没有欢呼的镜头，只有一行字。可就是这一行字，让我在座位上坐得笔直。

因为我想起校运会一千五百米的那一次。

初二秋天，我报名一千五百米，想证明自己能行。发令枪响后第一圈我还跟得上，第二圈踩到别人的鞋钉，整个人摔在跑道上，膝盖蹭破一大片，手掌也磨出了血。我爬起来，一瘸一拐走完最后三百米，全班在终点线那里安静地看着我。那之后整整一个月，我躲着体育课，跑步就找肚子疼的借口。我觉得摔那一跤就是结局，像一场电影放完了，字幕是我输了。

纪录片里那支队伍让我重新看了自己的那场比赛。他们三次被大雪挡回来，没有一次算输，因为每一次下撤都在回答：帐篷怎么固定，阀门哪里故障，雾里怎么结组。他们把失败拆成了可以修的东西。而我呢，我把摔倒当成一个评语，贴在身上整整一个月，从来没有拆开看过：我到底是起跑太急，还是摆臂乱了，还是摔过之后不敢抬腿。

想通以后我做了几件小得可笑的事：体育课的慢跑我不再请假，第一圈只跑七成力；体育老师教的三步一呼两步一吸，我在小区楼下数着练了两个星期；上个月班级测试，我重新跑了一千五百米，没进前三，但比上次快了十四秒。十四秒不多，可它是我摔出去的那一个月里，路给我的回答。

山不响，路会回答。雪不会给登山队打分，跑道也不会给摔倒的人打分，它们只记录你后来有没有继续走。我的打算是把这句话带进初三：模拟考砸了，就像一次下撤，把卷子拆开，找那个故障的阀门，修好，再上一次山。山一直在那里，不响，也不走，它等的就是愿意再来的人。

The Mountain Is Silent, but the Road Answers

It was a mountaineering documentary about a student team attacking a six-thousand-meter peak. Three times the snow wall stopped them below the ridge. The first time, the wind tore down two tents and the whole team retreated to the valley. The second time, at five thousand meters, an oxygen bottle failed, and they turned back again. The third time, four hundred meters from the summit, a wall of fog came down with visibility under five meters; the leader checked the altimeter and gave the order to descend. There was no wailing in the frame, only team members hoisting their

packs higher on their shoulders and stepping down one by one. On the way down, one of them said to the camera: the mountain is silent, but the road you have walked will answer you.

After the second retreat they did not break up. The team returned to the valley, took the faulty oxygen valve apart and studied it, repaired it, re-checked every crampon point by point, and went up for the third time. The documentary did not give them a summit happy ending: on the third push the weather turned again, and the team stopped at four thousand meters and came home. The closing caption read: the team tried again the following spring and reached the top. No cheering shot, just one line of text. That single line sat me straight in my seat.

Because it took me back to the fifteen hundred meters at our school sports meet.

In the autumn of eighth grade I signed up for the 1500 meters to prove I could do it. I kept pace through the first lap; on the second my foot caught another runner's spikes and I went down on the track, my knee scraped wide open, my palm raw. I got up and limped through the last three hundred meters while the whole class watched in silence at the finish line. For a full month afterward I dodged P.E. class and found stomach-ache excuses whenever running came up. I had treated that fall as the ending, like a film over, with the caption reading: I lost.

The team in the documentary made me rewatch my own race. Snow turned them back three times, and none of it counted as losing, because every descent had answered something: how to anchor a tent, where the valve failed, how to rope together inside fog. They took failure apart into things that could be repaired. I, instead, wore my fall as a grade stuck to my body for a month, and never once opened it to look: was I starting too fast, was my arm swing in disorder, or was I simply afraid to lift my legs after falling.

Once I saw that, I did a few laughably small things. I stopped skipping the slow run in P.E., and ran the first lap at seventy percent effort; I practiced the breathing rhythm my teacher taught, three steps inhaling and two exhaling, counting laps below my building for two weeks; at last month's class time trial I ran the 1500 meters again, made no podium, but finished fourteen seconds faster. Fourteen seconds is not much, yet it was the road's answer to the month I had thrown away on the ground.

The mountain is silent, but the road answers. Snow gives no score to the climbers, the track gives no score to the fallen; they only record whether you kept walking. My plan for ninth grade is to carry this sentence with me: a failed mock exam is one retreat, so take the paper apart, find the faulty valve, repair it, and climb again. The mountain stays where it is, silent, unwilling to leave, waiting for the ones willing to come back.