自行车冲进了菜地

暑假第一件大事，是学会骑自行车。那辆车是表哥的，链条哗啦哗啦响，座垫晒得烫屁股。表哥说他在后面扶着，让我只管蹬。我蹬了半条巷子，风从耳朵边过去，心里想的就是一个字：飞。

拐过碾坊，路宽了。我喊：表哥你觉没觉得我骑得稳！后面没人应。我回头一看，表哥站在十几步开外，两只手叉着腰，笑得直不起腰。他早就松手了。我一慌，车把立刻跟着慌，往左一歪，我往右一扭，车头反而笔直地朝着路边的菜地去了。那一片西红柿架长得正好，架子之间的缝，像一个专门等我的门。

车真的进门了。前轮压断一根竹竿，哗啦，整架西红柿朝两边弯腰。我捏死刹车，前轮在泥里犁出一条沟，车停住了，我的下巴磕在车把上，整个人挂在上面，像一件晾在衣架上的衣服。最要命的是我右手边，一颗熟透的西红柿在我掌心里破了，温热的汁从指缝里往外冒。我保持着挂着的姿势，一动不敢动。

表哥追进来，先不是扶我，是先笑，笑到一半踩倒一棵茄子，笑声戛然而止。我们俩把车抬出来，链条掉了，脚踏板歪了。西红柿地里一排脚印，竹竿断头朝天戳着。表哥说：完了，看地的是刘大爷。话音没落，地头就传来一声吆喝：哪个伢儿！我们一人抓起车，往回骑的骑、推的推，刘大爷追出半里地，鞋都跑掉一只，最后他自己也笑场了，叉着腰站在路中间喘。

回家我等着挨训。结果爸爸检查完我的下巴，只问了一句：会骑了没有。我说会了，就是不会拐弯。爸爸点点头：会骑就行，拐弯的事，菜地已经教会你了。那天晚饭，奶奶做了一盘西红柿炒蛋，是刘大爷送来的，说是压坏的不能放。我吃着自家孙子赔回来的西红柿，味道的确比平时甜。

车在院子里修了三天，表哥借了工具，把脚踏板掰直，链条重新挂上。车架上留下一道被竹竿刮出的白印，表哥说别漆了，留着。后来我骑车再没进过任何一片地，可每年夏天路过西红柿架，我都要慢下来看一眼。掌心好像又碰到那颗温热的、破开的西红柿，耳朵边又响起刘大爷那声吆喝，和半条巷子的风。

The Bicycle That Charged into the Vegetable Patch

The first big event of summer vacation was learning to ride a bicycle. The bike belonged to my cousin; its chain clattered, and the seat was hot enough to sting in the sun. My cousin said he would hold it from behind and I should just pedal. I pedaled half an alley, wind sliding past my ears, and the only word in my head was: fly.

After the turn by the mill, the road widened. I shouted: cousin, do you feel how steady I am! Nobody answered behind me. I looked back, and my cousin stood fifteen steps away, hands on his hips, laughing so hard he could not straighten up. He had let go long ago. I panicked, and the handlebars panicked with me, tipping left; I

twisted right, and the front wheel ended up pointing straight at the vegetable patch by the road. That row of tomato trellises stood at exactly the right height, and the gap between the frames looked like a door waiting just for me.

The bike really walked through the door. The front wheel snapped a bamboo pole, and with a crash the whole row of tomatoes bent to both sides. I squeezed the brake to death; the front wheel plowed a furrow in the mud and stopped. My chin knocked the handlebar, and I hung there on the bike like a shirt on a hanger. Worst of all, on my right hand a fully ripe tomato burst in my palm, warm juice oozing between my fingers. I stayed hanging there, not daring to move.

My cousin ran in, and instead of helping me he laughed first; halfway through the laugh he stepped on an eggplant plant, and the laugh stopped dead. We carried the bike out: chain off, pedal bent. The tomato patch held a row of footprints, broken bamboo tips poking at the sky. My cousin said: it is over, this is Old Man Lius patch. Before he finished, a shout came from the head of the field: which brat! We grabbed the bike and fled, one riding, one pushing. Old Man Liu chased half a mile, lost one shoe, and finally burst out laughing himself, standing in the middle of the road with hands on hips, out of breath.

At home I waited to be scolded. Dad examined my chin and asked only one question: can you ride now. I said yes, except I cannot turn. Dad nodded: riding is enough; turning, the vegetable patch already taught you. That evening, Grandma cooked a plate of scrambled eggs with tomatoes, sent over by Old Man Liu, saying the bruised ones would not keep. I ate the tomatoes my own family had paid back for, and they really did taste sweeter than usual.

The bike took three days to fix in our yard. My cousin borrowed tools, straightened the pedal, and rehung the chain. A white scratch from the bamboo pole stayed on the frame; my cousin said do not paint over it, keep it. After that I never rode into any patch again, but every summer when I pass a tomato trellis I slow down for a look. My palm seems to touch that warm, burst tomato again, and Old Man Lius shout comes back over my ear, with the wind of half an alley.