第一次独自坐班车去爷爷家

出发那天早上，妈妈往我书包侧袋里塞了一张折好的纸条，说真出事了就打开看。我嘴上嫌她啰嗦，心里其实怦怦跳。我要一个人坐两小时班车，去乡下爷爷家过半个月。这是我头一回没有大人陪着走这么远。

上车比我想的乱。售票员阿姨催着报站点，我攥着车票，手心全是汗。中途有个大叔问我是不是一个人，我点头，他往旁边挪了挪，让我坐靠窗的位置。车过一条河的时候，我忽然想起纸条，掏出来打开，上面只有一行字：到了就打电话，没到也打电话。我看了两遍，把纸条按回侧袋，忽然就不慌了。

车到镇上，爷爷没来。我背着包站在站牌底下，看着人来人往，腿有点软。我记起妈妈说过，找不到人就回站牌等。我等了二十分钟，爷爷骑着三轮车来了，一见面就说记错日子，晚了一天。我上了车，坐在货斗里看两边的玉米地往后退，觉得自己刚才等那二十分钟的样子，也挺像个大人。

在爷爷家的半个月，我包了灶台下的火和一天的三顿饭。头一天生火，烟熏得我眼泪直流，爷爷在门外笑。半个月里我学会了看火苗添柴，学会了把剩饭炒得不糊。有天晚上停电，我一个人点着蜡烛把碗洗了，洗完才发现自己哼着歌。

回家前夜，爷爷送我到村口，说了一句：你这次自己来了，以后就能自己去了。我坐在班车窗边想这句话。长大好像不是哪一天忽然发生的，是上车时攥紧车票、等站牌时没哭、停电时把碗洗完，一件一件攒出来的。那张纸条我夹进了日记本，它上面没有道理，只有一行让我心安的话。

到爷爷家那天傍晚，我借村口小卖部的电话给妈妈打回去，报一句平安。电话两块钱一次，我捡最便宜的那种打，说完就挂。后来半个月里我每周打一次，从两块钱的打到五块钱的，话也多了，会讲今天炒了什么菜。妈妈在电话那头笑，说这钱花得值。

The First Long-Distance Bus Alone

On the morning of the departure, my mother tucked a folded note into the side pocket of my schoolbag, saying to open it if anything really went wrong. I complained she was fussy, but my heart was pounding. I was going alone on a two-hour bus to the countryside to spend half a month at the home of my grandpa. It was the first time I traveled that far without an adult.

Boarding was messier than I expected. The conductor hurried everyone to state their stops, and I gripped my ticket with sweaty palms. A man midway asked if I was alone; I nodded, and he shifted aside to let me take the window seat. When the bus crossed a river, I suddenly remembered the note. I pulled it out: one line only, saying call when you arrive, and call if you do not. I read it twice, tucked it back, and my nervousness went away.

At the town stop, grandpa was not there. I stood under the sign with my bag, watching people pass, my legs a little weak. I remembered my mother saying: if you cannot find anyone, go back to the sign and wait. After twenty minutes grandpa came on his tricycle, saying he had mixed up the date by one day. I climbed in and sat in the cargo bed watching the cornfields slide backward, thinking that the way I had just waited there looked rather like a grown-up.

During those half a months I took charge of the fire under the stove and three meals a day. On the first day the smoke made me cry, and grandpa laughed outside the door. In fifteen days I learned to feed the flame with firewood and to fry leftover rice without burning it. One night the power went out, and I washed all the bowls by candlelight, only noticing afterward that I had been humming.

The night before I left, grandpa walked me to the village entrance and said: you came by yourself this time, so from now on you can go by yourself. On the bus I sat by the window turning that sentence over. Growing up does not seem to happen on one sudden day. It is saved up piece by piece: gripping the ticket when boarding, not crying while waiting at the sign, finishing the dishes in the dark. I slipped that note into my diary. It holds no lesson, only one line that set my heart at ease.

That evening at the home of my grandpa, I phoned my mother from the payphone at the village shop to say I had arrived safe. The cheapest calls cost two yuan each, and I hung up as soon as I was done. For the rest of those fifteen days I called once a week, upgrading from the two-yuan calls to the five-yuan ones, and I talked more, telling what I had cooked that day. My mother laughed through the receiver and said the money was well spent.