妈妈挑礼物的那些晚上

多年以后我才知道，那辆蓝色自行车，妈妈在车行挑了好几个晚上。这话是我听见她跟姨妈在阳台上说的，那天我刚把车胎打足气，正拿着扳手站在楼道里。

不过那是后来的事。六月一号那天清早，我只知道客厅门口立着一个大纸箱，系着红绸带。我围着箱子转了两圈，伸手想拆，又把手缩回来，跑去拉妈妈。妈妈被我拽到客厅，自己却靠着门框不动，说：你自己拆。

我蹲下来抠胶带，抠不开，就用牙咬。纸板盖子掀开，报纸一层一层扒拉开，先露出一个亮闪闪的车把手，再是车筐，再是整个车身。蓝色的，跟我水彩笔里那支天蓝一个颜色。我整个人从地上蹦起来，回头冲妈妈喊：是自行车！

妈妈靠在门框上笑，眼睛弯弯的，说喜欢吗。我扑过去抱了她一下，抱着她的胳膊晃了两圈，又跑回去摸车。车把上挂着一只小铃铛，我按了一下，叮铃，声音又脆又亮。

上午我们就下了楼。小区花园的空地上，妈妈扶着后座，我坐上车，脚刚够到脚踏板。我蹬了一圈，车身往左歪，我拿脚撑地，不敢再蹬了。妈妈在我后面说：眼睛看前面，妈妈扶着呢。

我一圈一圈蹬，车轮从歪歪扭扭慢慢转顺了。风从耳朵边上吹过去的时候，我听见妈妈在后面喘气——她一直跟着跑。骑到拐弯，我喊妈妈你还扶着吧，没人应。我回头，妈妈站在十几步开外，两只手举起来冲我竖大拇指。

我手一抖，车歪向花坛，脚落地撑住了。心口咚咚跳，我居然自己骑了那么远。我又骑出去，这一回稳稳的，铃铛一路响，麻雀扑棱棱飞。绕到妈妈跟前，我跳下车，一把抱住妈妈，脸埋在她的胳膊弯里，搂着不撒手。妈妈拍着我的背，一下一下。

阳台上，姨妈问妈妈：你那时候天天晚上去车行干什么？妈妈说：挑车呀，红的怕她嫌土，白的怕脏，比来比去，就她画里老用的那个蓝顺眼。姨妈笑我：你那时候还摔了一跤吧。妈妈说：膝盖破了，愣是没哭，回来抱着我说谢谢。

我站在楼道里，扳手还攥在手里。车胎气打足了，铃铛一按，还是那声叮铃。原来我过得最开心的那个儿童节，妈妈在纸箱到来之前，就已经陪着我了。

The Evenings Mom Spent Choosing the Gift

Years later I learned that Mom had spent several evenings choosing that blue bicycle at the bike shop. I heard it from her own mouth, talking to my aunt on the balcony, while I stood in the corridor holding a wrench, having just pumped up the tire.

But that was later. On the morning of June 1st, all I knew was a big cardboard box standing by the living room door, tied with a red ribbon. I circled it twice, reached out to open it, pulled my hand back, and ran to fetch Mom. I dragged her into the living room, but she leaned against the door frame and would not move, saying:

Open it yourself.

I squatted down and picked at the tape; when my fingers could not pry it loose, I bit it with my teeth. The cardboard lid came up, and I peeled the newspaper aside layer by layer. First a shiny handlebar appeared, then the basket, then the whole frame. Blue - the same blue as the sky-blue pen in my watercolor set. I sprang up from the floor and shouted back at Mom: A bicycle!

Mom leaned on the door frame and smiled, her eyes curving: Do you like it? I threw my arms around her for a second, shook her arm twice, then ran back to touch the bike. A little bell hung on the handlebar. I pressed it once - ding-ling, bright and clear.

Downstairs we went that morning. In the open space of the garden, Mom held the back seat while I sat on the bike, my feet barely reaching the pedals. I pedaled one round, the frame tilted left, and I stamped my foot down and dared not pedal again. Mom said behind me: Eyes on the road ahead. I am holding you.

I pedaled lap after lap, and the wheel went from crooked to smooth. When the wind brushed past my ears, I heard Mom panting behind me - she had been running the whole time. At the corner I shouted: Mom, you are still holding it, right? Nobody answered. I turned around, and she stood more than ten steps away, both hands raised, thumbs up at me.

My hands trembled, the bike leaned toward the flower bed, and my foot hit the ground. My chest was pounding. I had actually ridden that far alone. I rode out again, steady this time, the bell ringing all the way, sparrows fluttering up. When I reached Mom, I jumped off and hugged her hard, burying my face in the crook of her arm, holding on. Mom patted my back, one pat after another.

On the balcony, my aunt asked: What were you doing at the bike shop every evening back then? Mom said: Choosing a bike. Red, I feared she would find it tacky; white, too easily dirty. Comparing and comparing, the blue she always used in her drawings was the one that looked right. My aunt laughed: And you took a fall, did you not? Mom said: Scraped her knee, and she stubbornly did not cry. She came back and hugged me and said thank you.

I stood in the corridor, wrench still in my hand. The tire was firm, and one press of the bell still made that ding-ling. It turns out that on the happiest Children's Day I ever had, Mom had already been with me long before the box arrived.