风筝、棉花糖和一个下午

六一点半刚过，闹钟还没响，女儿就爬上床扯我的耳朵：爸爸，你答应今天带我去公园的。我睁开眼，看见她的书包放在床头，昨天她亲手把风筝装进去，风筝的尾巴从拉链口露出一截。

到公园时，东门口的队伍已经排到人行道边上。她也不嫌等，踮着脚往大草坪那边望，像是怕风被别人抢走。进了园她就往前跑，抱着风筝，像抱着怕被人抢走的宝贝。我拎的水瓶和外套跟在后面，脚步慢慢追上她的脚步。

风筝头几回没飞起来。风一阵一阵的，风筝升到一半又栽下去。她抢着去抓线轴，手小，线勒得手指发红。我把风筝举高，喊一声跑，她跑出去几步一回头，风筝吃住了风，一下子蹿上去，她在原地喊起来，飞起来了，飞起来了。我站在原地两手空空，掌心倒有些发酸，举风筝举的。

风筝飞高了，线绷得嗡嗡响。她两只手攥着线轴，身子往后坐，像拽住一条要进港的船。路过的人停下来看，她更来劲，一会儿放线，一会儿收线。风软下来，风筝往下飘，她跑过去迎住，把风筝搂在怀里拍两下，说辛苦了辛苦了。我掏手机想拍张照，她头也不回，眼睛一直跟着风筝。

出园的路上有棉花糖摊。她站在摊前不动，我买了个最大的，粉色的糖丝比她的头还大。咬一口，满嘴黏糊糊的甜，她眯起眼睛嗯了一声。走了一半，棉花糖开始化，糖水顺着她的手指往下淌，她边走边舔手指，手背蹭得亮晶晶。我抽纸巾要给她擦，她把手一缩，说擦了就不得味了。

出公园时太阳已经偏西。她坐在园门口的观光车上，一手举着风筝，一手举着棉花糖棍，脸上花得很，糖渣沾在腮帮子上，粘着一缕头发。她抬头冲我笑，缺了颗门牙，眼睛眯成两条缝。那个笑亮得我移开眼，又忍不住看回来。

回家的路上她在车里睡着了。风筝压在她腿上，棉花糖棍还捏在手心，我轻轻给她抽出来。后视镜里她的脸，腮上还有糖的痕迹。我把车开得很慢，怕颠醒她。

A Kite, Cotton Candy, and an Afternoon

At half past five on the morning of Children's Day, before the alarm went off, my daughter had already climbed onto the bed and tugged my ear. Dad, you promised to take me to the park today. I opened my eyes and saw her school bag beside the bed. She had packed the kite into it herself the night before, and the tail of the kite stuck out of the zipper.

By the time we reached the park, the line at the east gate already stretched to the sidewalk. She did not mind waiting. She stood on tiptoe looking toward the big lawn, as if afraid someone would take the wind first. Once inside, she ran ahead, carrying the kite like a treasure someone might snatch. I followed with a water bottle and a jacket, and my steps gradually caught up with hers.

The first few tries at flying the kite failed. The wind was fitful, and the kite climbed halfway and fell back. She tried to grab the spool herself, but her hands

were too small and the line cut her fingers red. I held the kite high and shouted run. She ran a few steps, looked back, and the kite caught the wind and rose all at once. She shouted on the spot, it is flying, it is flying. I stood there with empty hands, my palms sore from holding the kite up too long.

When the kite was high, the string hummed tight. She held the spool with both hands, leaning back, like someone pulling a boat into harbor. Passersby stopped to watch, and she got more spirited, letting out line and reeling it back. When the wind softened and the kite drifted down, she ran to meet it, hugged it to her chest, and patted it, saying well done, well done. I took out my phone for a photo. She never looked at the camera. Her eyes stayed on the kite.

On the way out there was a cotton candy stall. She stopped in front of it, frozen, and I bought the biggest one. The pink cotton candy was larger than her head. One bite left her mouth full of sticky sweetness, and she closed her eyes and made an mm sound. Halfway along, the cotton candy began to melt, and sugar ran down her fingers. She licked her fingers as she walked, her knuckles shiny and sticky. I reached for a tissue, and she dodged my hand, saying it would not taste right if wiped off.

When we left the park, the sun had slanted west. She sat on the shuttle cart at the gate, the kite in one hand and the candy stick in the other, her face a mess, sugar crumbs on her cheek with a strand of hair stuck to it. She looked up and grinned at me, missing a front tooth, her eyes squeezed into two crescents. That smile was so bright I looked away and then looked back.

She fell asleep in the car on the way home. The kite lay crushed on her lap, and the candy stick was still in her hand, so I pried it out gently. The rearview mirror showed her face, the sugar still on her cheek. I drove very slowly, afraid even the bumps would wake her.