爷爷扶过的车把

爷爷是在院子里看着孙女学骑车的。那辆粉色的小车是奶奶赶集时买回来的，车把上系着一根红绳。孙女站在车旁边，车座已经调到最低，脚尖才点着地。爷爷弯腰把红绳的结重新系紧，说，先推车，绕院子走两圈。孙女推着车走，第一圈还稳，第二圈车把一歪，前轮轧上砖缝，车往她身上压，她哇地叫了一声，扶住了墙。爷爷伸手要扶，孙女摆手，自己把车把正过来，接着推。爷爷的手停在半空，又收回去，在裤腿上蹭了一下。

第三圈孙女跨上车，爷爷在后面扶着后座。车轮慢慢转起来，爷爷弯着腰跟着，他的腰本来就不好，走几步就要直一下。孙女问，爷爷你扶稳了吗。爷爷说，扶着呢。其实他的两根手指只是虚搭在座垫边上。车晃起来，前轮往花坛那边去，爷爷喊，捏闸。孙女没捏，反而把脚往地上杵，人歪了，车压在她腿上。爷爷赶紧过去把车抬起来，孙女的眼泪在眼眶里转，就是不哭出来，说，再来。

歇晌的时候，孙女坐在台阶上啃黄瓜，小车立在院子当中，红绳在风里一动一动。爷爷蹲在车旁边，拿螺丝刀把后座的螺丝又拧了半圈，再把车座往下按了半分，试了试高度，用袖口把车把上的灰擦掉。孙女啃完黄瓜，拍拍手站起来，说再骑。爷爷直起腰，扶着后座又走了两圈，趁孙女骑直了，他悄悄松了手，站在原地。粉色的小车晃晃悠悠往前去，红绳在车把上飘。孙女骑到院门口，回头喊，爷爷你松手了。声音里没有怕，全是喜。爷爷背过身去假装看菜地，抬手在眼睛上抹了一下。院墙外有邻居经过，爷爷大声说，会骑了，明天就能自己上学了。

第二天清早，孙女自己骑车出了院门，红绳在车把上一颠一颠。爷爷站在门口看，直到那抹粉色拐过街角看不见了，才转身进院，把地上那辆小车压过的砖缝又踩了踩平。他不知道，孙女到了学校跟同学说，我会骑车了，是我爷爷教的。爷爷要是听见这句话，腰大概能直一整天。

The Handlebars Grandfather Held

Grandfather watched his granddaughter learn to ride in the courtyard. The little pink bike had been bought at the market by grandmother, with a red string tied to the handlebars. The seat was lowered to its last notch, and she could only touch the ground with her toes. Grandfather bent down to retie the knot of the red string and told her to push the bike around the courtyard twice first. The first round was steady. On the second round the handlebars tilted, the front wheel caught a gap between bricks, and the bike fell toward her. She cried out and grabbed the wall. Grandfather reached for it, but she waved him off, straightened the handlebars herself, and kept pushing. His hand stopped in the air, then withdrew and brushed against his trouser leg.

On the third round she climbed on and grandfather held the rear seat behind her. The wheel turned slowly and he followed, bent at the waist, which had never been good, straightening it every few steps. She asked whether he was holding firmly. He said he was, while in truth only two fingers rested lightly on the edge of the seat. The bike swayed toward the flower bed. He shouted, squeeze the brake. She did not.

She stabbed a foot at the ground, leaned, and the bike fell across her leg. Grandfather lifted it off her. Tears rolled in her eyes without falling, and she said, once more.

During the midday rest the granddaughter sat on the steps eating a cucumber, the little bike standing in the middle of the courtyard, its red string stirring in the wind. Grandfather crouched beside it, turned the rear seat screw another half turn with a screwdriver, pressed the seat down a little more, tested the height, and wiped the dust off the handlebars with his sleeve. When she finished the cucumber the girl clapped her hands clean and asked to ride again. Grandfather straightened up, held the rear seat for two more rounds, then let go quietly while she rode straight, and stood in place. The pink bike rolled forward unsteadily, the red string fluttering on the handlebars. At the courtyard gate she turned and called out that grandfather had let go, and there was no fear in her voice, only joy. Grandfather turned away toward the vegetable plot and wiped his eyes with the back of his hand. When a neighbor passed outside the wall he said, loudly, that she could ride now and would ride to school by herself tomorrow.

Early the next morning she rode out of the gate alone, the red string bouncing on the handlebars. Grandfather watched until the pink of it disappeared around the corner, then went back in and stamped the brick gap the little bike had crossed, pressing it level. He did not know that at school she told her classmates she could ride, and that grandfather had taught her. If he ever heard that sentence, his back would probably stay straight all day.