那个晒软路面的夏日午后

那年暑假的午后，整条巷子都被太阳晒得发白。蝉在槐树上一声接一声地叫，叫得人心里发慌。表哥把那辆蓝色自行车靠在院墙上，跟我说，今天必须学会。我围着车走了两圈，车座被晒得烫手，我摸了一下赶紧缩回来。表哥用车座后头那面试着扶我，让我先练蹬半圈。脚蹬子被晒得发烫，我穿着凉鞋，脚底板踩上去，热和疼一起从脚心窜上来。

真正上车是在午后两点多。巷子空着，只有我们的影子躺在地上。表哥在后面扶着后座，我蹬起来，车轮碾过晒软的路面，发出黏黏的声响。骑出十几米，前面有个下坡，我一慌，把车把往右死掰，车头没过来，整辆车斜着往路边的排水沟去。我跳了车，人是站住了，膝盖磕在马路牙子上，裤子磨破一个洞，皮翻开一小片，血珠立刻渗出来，混着灰。我扶着墙慢慢坐下，午后的太阳照在腿上，杀得生疼。

表哥蹲下来看我的膝盖，说今天到这儿吧，回去上药。我坐在墙根，看着那辆靠在墙边的蓝车。车把上还挂着我手心攥出来的汗印，车链子晒得发亮。我想起巷子里别的孩子都是这个夏天学会的，想起上周我还站在井台边看他们骑车过。我把裤子上的灰拍了，站起来，说，上车。表哥愣了一下，没劝，把车扶正。我跨上去，膝盖那块破皮扯着疼，我咬着牙把脚放上脚蹬子。

第二次上车之后，我不再盯着前轮，眼睛看向巷子尽头那棵槐树。车还是晃，晃到我愿意等它自己回来，不跟它抢。又摔了一次，摔在草地上，膝盖另一侧蹭红了，没破。太阳偏西的时候，我从巷子这头骑到了那头，全程没落脚。蝉还在叫，风从槐树那边过来，是热的，可我满身是汗地骑过去，觉得那风比什么都凉快。表哥站在巷子尽头，没鼓掌，只说，明天从井台骑到村口。我说好。

后来我明白，学会骑车那天最要紧的，不是骑通的那个来回，是膝盖流着血、我坐在墙根看着那辆蓝车、然后站起来说上车的那几秒。坚持不是喊出来的，是那一秒里，自己把车扶正的。

The Summer Afternoon That Softened the Road

On that afternoon in summer the whole lane lay bleached white under the sun. Cicadas cried one after another in the locust tree, restless and loud. My cousin leaned the blue bicycle against the courtyard wall and told me that today I had to learn it. I walked twice around the bike. The seat was too hot to touch, and I pulled my hand back at once. He held me up by the part behind the seat and had me practice half turns of the pedals. The pedals had been baking; I wore sandals, and the heat and the pain ran up from my soles together.

I truly got on after two in the afternoon. The lane was empty except for our shadows lying on the ground. My cousin held the rear seat while I pedaled, the wheel pressing sticky sounds out of the sun-softened road. Ten meters ahead the road sloped down. In a panic I wrenched the handlebars right, they did not come back, and the

whole bike slid toward the drain ditch. I jumped off. I stayed on my feet, but my knee struck the curb, my trousers tore a hole, a patch of skin opened, beads of blood came out at once mixed with dust. I sat down by the wall, and the afternoon sun on my leg stung badly.

My cousin crouched to look at my knee and said we would stop for today and go put medicine on it. I sat by the wall roots and looked at the blue bike leaning against the wall. My palm prints of sweat still hung on the handlebars, and the chain glittered in the sun. I remembered that the other children of the lane had all learned in this summer, and that last week I had still stood by the well platform watching them ride past. I patted the dust off my trousers, stood up, and said, put me on again. My cousin froze for a moment, did not argue, and righted the bike. I climbed on. The scraped skin of my knee pulled with pain, and I set my teeth and put my feet on the pedals.

The second time on the bike I stopped staring at the front wheel and looked toward the locust tree at the end of the lane. The bike still swayed, but I was willing to wait for it to come back by itself instead of fighting it. I fell once more, in the grass, rubbing the other side of my knee red without breaking it. When the sun leaned west, I rode from one end of the lane to the other without putting a foot down. The cicadas were still crying, and the wind came over from the locust tree, hot, yet riding through it sweat-soaked I felt it cooler than anything. My cousin stood at the end of the lane, did not clap, and only said that tomorrow I would ride from the well platform to the village gate. I said all right.

Later I understood that what mattered most on the day I learned was not the round trip I finished, but those seconds when my knee was bleeding, I sat by the wall looking at the blue bike, then stood up and said, put me on again. Perseverance is not shouted. It is the second in which you right the bike yourself.

膝盖上的那道印

膝盖上那块痂是在初秋掉的，掉了以后留下一道浅色的印，走路弯腿的时候能感觉到它。每次摸到它，我就回到那个夏日午后。

那天午后热得没有风，操场边的单杠晒得没人敢碰，塑胶跑道软得像踩着一层橡皮糖。我借了同桌的自行车，推到操场边的树荫下练。车太高，我坐在后座上学蹬车，同桌扶着，我整个人歪在车后架上，像挂在车上的一个包袱。练到第三十次，同桌的手松了，我骑出去一段，心里一喜，车头就一飘，连人带车栽进跑道边的沙坑。膝盖先着的地，沙粒嵌进破开的皮里，一粒一粒地挑，同桌帮我挑了十几分钟，我疼得把树荫下的影子都攥皱了，却没吭声。

挑完沙粒，同桌说回去上药，明天再练。我把他的校服袖子卷起来擦了擦手上的血，推着车往校门口走，走了几步，停下来。校门口那排自行车一辆一辆被太阳晒着，车座反着光。我想起这个暑假要是就这么过去，开学后同桌骑车载我，我还得在后面追。我还想起我爸说过的一句话，他说人这辈子有几种难，第一种是当着人的面摔，第二种是摔了还肯再上。我把车从校门口推回树荫下，跨上去，对同桌说，再来。

重新上车的头两遍，膝盖上的纱布蹭着车座后架，每颠一下都疼。我把疼咽进去，眼睛钉在操场对面的旗杆上。第三遍过弯道，车身晃起来，我这次没跳车，两只手把车把压回去，脚在踏板上踩圆。骑到直道的时候，同桌在后面跑着喊，你没晃。那个夏日午后的太阳一直到六点半才软下去，我在操场上骑了四十多圈，膝盖上的纱布磨出了两个洞。

开学以后我天天骑车上学，同桌坐在后座背单词。谁也不知道我膝盖上那道印是怎么来的，我也不说。有些成长要留一个疤做记号，它替我记着那个午后：疼是真的，上车也是真的。

The Mark Left on My Knee

The scab on my knee fell off in early autumn, leaving a pale mark I can feel when I bend my leg to walk. Every time I touch it, I am back in that summer afternoon.

That afternoon was hot without a breath of wind. The horizontal bars beside the playground were too hot for anyone to touch, and the rubber track felt like stepping on a layer of soft candy. I borrowed the bicycle of my deskmate that year and pushed it to the shade of a tree by the playground to practice. The bike was too tall. I sat on the rear rack learning to pedal while he held it, my whole body leaning on the rear frame like a bundle hung on the bike. At the thirtieth try his hand let go, I rode out a stretch, my heart leapt with joy, the front wheel drifted, and I fell with the bike into the sand pit beside the track. My knee hit the ground first, sand grains set into the broken skin. My deskmate picked them out one by one for more than ten minutes while I crumpled the shadow under the tree with pain, yet made no sound.

When the last grain was out, he said we should go apply medicine and practice tomorrow. I rolled up his sleeve to wipe the blood off my hands, pushed the bike toward the school gate, walked a few steps, and stopped. The row of bicycles at the gate stood in the sun, their seats flashing. I thought: if this summer ends like this, when school starts my deskmate will ride with me on the rear rack and I will still have to run behind. I also remembered one sentence my father once said: in this life there are several kinds of hardship, and the first is falling in front of people, the second is still being willing to get back up after falling. I pushed the bike back from the gate to the shade, climbed on, and told him, once more.

For the first two rounds after getting back on, the gauze on my knee rubbed against the rear rack and every bump hurt. I swallowed the pain and nailed my eyes to

the flagpole across the playground. On the third round through the curve the bike swayed, and this time I did not jump off; I pressed the handlebars back with both hands and pushed the pedals in circles. On the straight my deskmate ran behind and shouted that I was steady. The sun of that summer afternoon did not soften until half past six. I rode more than forty rounds on the playground, and the gauze on my knee wore two holes in it.

After school started I rode to school with my deskmate on the rear rack reciting vocabulary. No one knows how the mark on my knee came about, and I do not tell. Some growth needs a scar as its marker, and mine keeps that afternoon for me: the pain was real, and so was getting back on.

按着暗红布说再来的人

我这一辈子忘不了阿凯重新上车的那个夏日午后。先说清楚，车不是我的，摔的也不是我，可学会骑车的是我们两个。

那年七月，镇上放了假，阿凯从他舅舅家推回来一辆旧车，黑漆掉了大半，后座锈了两个洞。我们把它推到河堤下的空地上。午后三点，河面反着白光，晒得人睁不开眼，堤上的狗尾巴草垂着头。阿凯个子小，坐在车座上只能够到一半脚蹬子，他站起来蹬，整个人往左歪，我扶着后座跟着跑，跑两步就得扶一把。练了一个钟头，他一次都没骑直过，车把被他拧得像麻花。

出事是在下坡。阿凯想从堤坡上溜一段，没捏住闸，车把一抖，他从车座上滑下去，膝盖正撞在坡边的碎石上，小半条裤子都是血和土。我吓傻了，跑过去要扶他去卫生所。他坐在坡边，把裤腿掀起来看，血珠一颗一颗往外渗，他拿河水浸了块布按在膝盖上，按得那块布变成暗红色。我以为他要放弃，他自己先说了，再来一遍。我说不行，他说不捏闸，慢慢蹬。

重新上车以后他骑得极慢，慢得像上学路上老奶奶的车，眼睛死死盯着前方五米。骑到平地上，他的背慢慢直起来，扶后座的我不知不觉松了手，他骑出去七八米，发现没人扶，也不慌，捏闸，下车，回头冲我笑，露出缺了一颗的门牙。那天收车的时候，他把裤腿卷起来给我看，膝盖上的布已经粘在伤口边上，揭开来疼得他倒吸气，他还是咧着嘴。我们在水边把那块布洗干净晾在车把上，它一路飘着，像一面小小的旗。那个午后我们练到天边发红，他从只能蹬半圈，到能骑完河堤下那二百米。回家路上他推着车，一瘸一拐，车铃铛一路叮当。

后来阿凯骑车比我骑得好，能撒把，能翘前轮。可我知道，他真正学会的不是这些，是膝盖流着血按着布、还说再来一遍的那一下。我到现在遇到难处想撂挑子，眼前就浮出那个夏日午后，河堤、碎石、暗红的布，和他重新踩上脚蹬子的背影。那我就把想放下的东西，再扶起来一次。

The Boy Who Said Once More with a Dark Red Cloth on His Knee

I will never in my life forget that summer afternoon when A-Kai got back on the bike. To be clear, the bike was not mine and the fall was not mine, yet the two who learned to ride were both of us.

In July of that year the town went on holiday, and A-Kai pushed an old bike back from his uncle house, most of its black paint flaked off, two holes rusted through the rear rack. We pushed it to the open ground below the river dike. At three in the afternoon the river flashed white, too bright to keep the eyes open, and the dogtail grass on the dike hung its head. A-Kai was small; seated on the bike he could reach only half the pedals. He stood to pedal, leaning left as a whole, and I held the rear seat and ran along, steadying him every two steps. For one hour he never rode straight once, and he twisted the handlebars like a braided rope.

The accident came on the slope. He wanted to coast down the dike slope, did not hold the brake, the handlebars jerked, and he slid off the seat, his knee striking the broken stones at the edge of the slope, the lower half of his trousers all blood and dirt. I froze and ran to take him to the clinic. He sat by the slope, lifted his trouser leg to look, beads of blood seeping out one by one, and pressed a cloth soaked in river water on his knee until the cloth turned dark red. I thought he would give up. He spoke first: once more. I said no. He said no brakes, pedal slowly.

After getting back on he rode extremely slowly, slow as an old grandmother on the way to school, eyes nailed to the five meters ahead. On flat ground his back straightened little by little, and I, holding the rear seat, let go without noticing. He rode seven or eight meters, found no one was holding, did not panic, braked, got off, and turned to grin at me, showing the missing front tooth. When we put the bike away that day, he rolled up his trouser leg and showed me that the cloth had stuck to the edge of the wound; peeling it off made him suck in air through his teeth, yet he kept grinning. We rinsed the cloth in the river and hung it on the handlebars to dry, and it fluttered all the way home like a small flag. That afternoon we practiced until the edge of the sky turned red. He went from half turns of the pedals to finishing the two hundred meters below the dike. On the way home he pushed the bike, limping, its bell jingling the whole way.

Later A-Kai rode better than I did, could let go of the handlebars, could lift the front wheel. But I know what he truly learned was not any of that. It was the moment his knee was bleeding, the cloth pressed dark red on it, and he still said, once more. To this day, when I face a difficulty and want to drop things, that summer afternoon rises before me: the dike, the broken stones, the dark red cloth, and the

back of him putting his feet back on the pedals. Then I lift back up whatever I wanted to let go of, one more time.