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.