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.