读书角里那页卷边的故事

教室后面有个读书角，铁皮箱里放着旧杂志。翻旧杂志的时候，我翻到一页卷了边的故事，讲一个孩子学骑自行车。那个孩子最怕车把。他说车把像有自己的主意，往左躲人，往右躲狗，他越攥它越晃。就是这一句，让我把那一页读了三遍。

因为我的同桌也说过一模一样的话。上个星期同桌跟我说，他放学看见同学骑车，心里痒，可他不敢，车把在他手里不听话，他爸扶着他都摔过。他说完还学了一下摔的样子，两只手往前一伸，人往旁边一歪。我看着他，想起我自己学车头几天，也是这样，车把一歪我就整个人跟着倒，像车驮着一个不倒翁。

故事里后来发生了什么，我记得很清楚。孩子的爷爷教他，别跟车把较劲，手放松，眼睛找远处一样东西盯着。孩子盯住了三十步外的一棵柳树。他晃晃悠悠骑过去，绕柳树回来，居然没倒。爷爷在门口抽烟，烟都忘了吸。故事结尾，孩子能骑去镇上买酱油了，瓶子上拴在车后座，一路叮当响。

我把这一页讲给同桌听，讲到爷爷忘了吸那口烟，同桌笑得趴在桌上。笑完他说，那周末咱俩也去练？我说去。我想起自己学会骑车那天，也是先盯住了远处一样东西，我们楼下的绿色邮筒。我一路晃着骑到邮筒跟前，手心里全是汗，可我没倒。那一刻我忽然不怕了。原来害怕这个东西，盯着远处就不见了。

这周我们班的读书分享，我讲了这页卷边的故事。讲完老师说，好，就讲你怕什么、后来怎么过去的。我说我怕车把，后来我盯住了一个邮筒。教室里笑了一片，同桌笑最大声。下课后他在我胳膊上写了一个日期，是周末练车的日子，字写得歪歪扭扭，像车把画的。

那页故事我还留着，夹在语文书里。它卷了边，可它让我明白：害怕车把的不止我一个，同桌不是胆小，我也不是。我们只是还没盯住那个邮筒。

The Dog-Eared Page in the Reading Corner

There is a reading corner at the back of our classroom, an old tin box full of used magazines. While leafing through them, I found a dog-eared page with a story about a child learning to ride a bicycle. That child feared the handlebars most of all. He said the handlebars seemed to have minds of their own, dodging people to the left, dogs to the right, and the harder he gripped, the more they shook. Just that line made me read the page three times.

Because my deskmate once said almost the same thing. Last week he told me he watches classmates bike home after school and itches to try, but he does not dare. The handlebars refuse to obey him, and even with his dad holding on he has fallen. He even mimed the fall, both arms shooting forward, body tipping sideways. I looked at him and thought of my own first days of learning, when every wobble of the handlebars took me down with it, the bike carrying a tumbling tumbler doll.

I remember exactly what happens later in the story. The child's grandfather tells him not to wrestle with the handlebars: loosen the hands, find something far away, and stare it down. The child fixes his eyes on a willow tree thirty steps off. He wobbles toward it, circles it, comes back, and does not fall. The grandfather stands in the doorway with his cigarette, forgetting to smoke. At the end of the story the child rides to town to buy soy sauce, the bottle tied to the back rack, clinking the whole way home.

I told this page to my deskmate. When I reached the part about the grandfather forgetting his cigarette, he collapsed on the desk laughing. When he finished laughing he said, so this weekend, we practice? I said, deal. I remembered my own day of learning, when I too had fixed on something far away, the green mailbox downstairs by our building. I wobbled all the way to that mailbox, palms soaked, but I did not fall. In that moment the fear simply left. It turns out fear disappears once you stare at something far off.

This week our class has a reading share, and I am presenting this dog-eared story. The teacher said, good, tell us what you feared and how you got through it. I will say I feared the handlebars, and then I fixed on a mailbox. The classroom will laugh, and my deskmate will laugh loudest. After class he will write a date on my arm, the day we practice, the numbers crooked as if drawn by a handlebar.

I still keep that page, tucked in my Chinese textbook. Its corner is bent, but it taught me this: I am not the only one who feared the handlebars. My deskmate is not a coward, and neither am I. We just had not found our mailbox yet.