巷口那三级台阶

风灌进袖口的那个下午，我先记住的是声音：链条又轻又快，轮胎碾过碎土，沙沙的，像下小雨。

往回倒两个星期。爸爸蹲在院子里拆辅助轮，扳手卡住螺母，一下一下拧。我站在旁边看，辅助轮落在地上，轱辘还转了好几下。我忽然怕了，说装回去。爸爸说不装，拆了就回不去了。螺母放在窗台上，亮晶晶的，像两颗刚掉下来的牙。

头几天，车头怎么都不听话。往左躲一只鸡，车往右去；往右躲，车又往左去。爸爸扶着后座跟在我后面，影子在地上跟着车跑。他话少，一路上只说过三种话：眼睛看前头；脚别停；我在。摔过两回，第二回膝盖磕在道牙上，我坐在地上，看他走过来，把车扶起，推到我跟前，没伸手拉我。我自己站起来，也没哭。回家妈妈拿紫药水给我抹，抹完说，明天还去不去。我说去。

第五天开始，爸爸让我自己从院子骑到巷口，他在台阶上坐着看。我骑得歪歪扭扭，像一条喝醉的蛇，可一次也没摔。他在台阶上动了一下，像是想起身，又坐下了。我懂他那一下，比扶着还累。

第十天傍晚，我骑到巷口，又折回来。他还坐在院门口那三级台阶上，位置没挪过。我冲他喊，我会了。他站起来，拍了拍裤子上的土，说，知道。那天晚饭他多喝了一小杯酒，脸红，话倒更少了。

现在我能骑得很快，上坡站起来蹬，下坡捏半把闸，听风从耳朵边过去。同学约我去河堤，我去了，坡长，风大，车骑得飞快，我忽然想起那两个放在窗台上的螺母。每次经过巷口，我都朝院门口那三级台阶看一眼。他还坐在那儿，车筐里放着给我买的橘子。

The Three Steps at the Alley Mouth

That afternoon when the wind poured into my sleeves, the first thing I remember is sound: the chain light and fast, the tires grinding over loose dirt, a soft rustle like light rain.

Rewind two weeks. Dad crouched in the yard removing the training wheels, the wrench on the nut, turn by turn. I watched. The small wheels dropped to the ground, and one of them kept spinning. Fear hit me suddenly. I said, put them back. He said no. Once off, they do not go back on. The nuts sat on the windowsill, shiny, like two fallen teeth.

For the first days the handlebars would not obey. Swerve left around a hen and the bike went right; swerve right and it went left. Dad followed behind with a hand on the seat, his shadow running after the bike on the ground. He was a man of few words, and all he said along the way came in three kinds: eyes forward; keep pedaling; I am here. I fell twice. The second time my knee hit the curb. I sat there and watched him come over, lift the bike, push it to me, and offer no hand. I stood

up by myself, and did not cry. At home Mom dabbed purple medicine on the scrape and asked, will you go again tomorrow. I said yes.

From the fifth day he let me ride from the yard to the alley mouth alone while he sat on the steps watching. I rode crooked, like a drunk snake, but without falling. He shifted on the steps, as if about to rise, then sat back down. I understood that shift. It was more tiring than holding on.

On the tenth evening I rode to the mouth of the alley and turned back. He still sat on the three steps at the gate, in the same spot. I shouted, I can ride. He stood, dusted his trousers, and said, I know. At dinner that day he drank one extra small cup of wine, his face red, his words even fewer.

Now I can ride fast, standing on the pedals uphill, half-squeezing the brakes downhill, letting wind pass by my ears. Classmates asked me to the river embankment, and I went: long slope, big wind, the bike flying, and suddenly I thought of those two nuts on the windowsill. Every time I go through the alley mouth, I glance at those three steps. He is still sitting there, and the basket holds the tangerines he bought for me.