晃着晃着就稳了

周六一早，爸爸从杂物间推出那辆旧自行车，车梁上的漆掉了一片，露出底下的铁灰色。车座太高，我踮起脚，脚尖才够着地面。爸爸半蹲着，一只手扶住后座，说先绕院子转三圈。

头一圈，链条咔哒咔哒响，车头左右晃，像喝醉了酒。爸爸的手一直稳稳扶着，我听见他的呼吸就在背后，一下一下的。第二圈拐过墙角，车身忽然轻了，晃着晃着居然稳住了。我喊了一声，没人应。回头一看，爸爸站在院子当中，两只手插在兜里，离我足有十几步远。

我一慌，车头一歪，连人带车栽进墙根的枣树丛里。膝盖蹭破了皮，渗出一小片红。我坐在台阶上歇了十分钟，看着膝盖上的土印子，没哭。爸爸把车扶起来，车把上沾了几片枣树叶，他用袖子擦了擦，什么也没说，把车推回我跟前。

歇够了，我再上去。脚蹬转得很慢，链条一格一格地咬。爸爸这次没扶后座，只走在车旁边，手虚虚地悬着，不碰。走到第二个转弯，我的脚自己知道先往哪边探，车头过去，身子跟着过去，像身体里多长出一个会算数的东西。我盯着前方十米处的电线杆，不晃脑袋，也不回头看。一圈，两圈，三圈。风从耳朵边过去，链条的声音变得又轻又快。骑到巷子口，我捏了闸，车轮在地面上蹭出一声短响。整条巷子，我自己骑完了。巷子里晾着的被单被我带起的风吹得一鼓，又落下。

回家，妈妈看见我膝盖上的土，没问，转身进了厨房。晚上那碗面，上面卧着一个煎蛋。我头一回吃面吃到最后才舍得动那个蛋。妈妈看见我膝盖上的土印子，提了一句摔进枣树丛那一下。爸爸扒着面，只说了一句：那辆车在杂物间里睡了十年，今天总算又骑起来了。

Wobbling Into Balance

Early Saturday morning, Dad wheeled the old bicycle out of the storage room. A patch of paint had flaked off the frame, showing iron gray underneath. The seat was too high; on tiptoe my toes barely touched the ground. Dad half-squat, one hand on the rear seat, said we would start with three laps around the courtyard.

On the first lap the chain clattered, and the handlebars swayed left and right like a drunk man. Dad hand stayed steady behind me; I could hear his breathing right at my back, in and out. On the second lap, around the corner, the bike suddenly felt light, and the wobble settled into balance. I shouted, and nobody answered. I looked back. Dad stood in the middle of the yard, both hands in his pockets, more than ten paces away.

I panicked, the handlebars jerked, and I fell with the bike into the jujube bushes by the wall. My knee scraped open, a small patch of red welling up. I sat on the steps for ten minutes, looking at the dirt mark on my knee, and did not cry. Dad lifted the bike. A few jujube leaves stuck to the handlebars; he wiped them with his sleeve, said nothing, and pushed the bike back to me.

When I climbed back on, rested, the pedals turned slowly and the chain bit notch

by notch. This time Dad did not hold the seat; he walked beside the bike with his hand hovering, not touching. At the second turn my feet knew on their own which side to reach, the front wheel passing, my body following, as if something inside me had grown that could do arithmetic. I fixed my eyes on the utility pole ten meters ahead, kept my head still, and did not look back. One lap, two, three. Wind passed by my ears, and the chain turned soft and fast. At the mouth of the alley I squeezed the brakes, and the wheel made a short scrape on the ground. The whole alley, ridden by myself. The sheet hanging in the alley billowed in the wind I stirred up, then fell back.

At home, Mom saw the dirt on my knee, asked nothing, and went into the kitchen. That evening the bowl of noodles carried a fried egg on top. For the first time I saved the egg until the very last bite. Dad told him about my fall into the jujube bushes, and Dad only said: that bike had slept in the storage room for ten years, and today it finally rode again.