缠在车把上的胶布条

爸爸把自行车推出来之前，先用旧内胎剪成的布条把车把缠了两圈。女儿问为什么，他说铁车把凉，手攥久了打滑。女儿扶着车把，他在后头扶着后座，两个人从巷子这头往那头走。

车头歪，他就把后座扶正；身子往后仰，他就喊一声坐稳。女儿脚短，腿够不着地，每次停车都得他抢一步扶住。巷子中段有个小坡，是前几年修下水道留下的土坎。他先让女儿推着车走上去两趟，空手走一趟，说先看坡有多陡，再上车就不慌。女儿推着车上坡，车蹬子磕到她的腿肚，她龇了一下牙，没吭声。

练到太阳偏西，女儿忽然说，你松手试试。爸爸没应声，手悄悄离开了后座。车往前走了五六米，开始晃。女儿喊爸爸，喊了两声，回头看见他还站在原地，一只手举在半空，没敢真放下。车把一歪，车停在土堆边上，人跳了下来，没摔。

当天收车，女儿坐在门槛上揉胳膊，说再来一次。第二回松手，车晃得轻了些，晃到一半自己稳住了。爸爸在后头长出了一口气，那口气出得太响，女儿听见了，回头瞪他，他装作咳嗽。

第二天傍晚，他们不用扶了。女儿骑到巷口，又骑回来，裙角扫过墙根的狗尾巴草。爸爸靠在门框上看，手里端着的茶凉了也没喝。邻居问，你家丫头会骑了？他应一声，嘴角压不住，进屋又给他续了一杯热的。

收车的时候，女儿拿抹布把车座擦了一遍，又把链子上的土抹掉。爸爸蹲在旁边看着，看她把车推进门，车把上缠的胶布条在灯下发亮。他说，明天把辅助轮拆了，这车本来就是给学会的人骑的。女儿把车靠墙放好，车铃铛碰在墙上，叮的一声，很轻。

Tape Strips on the Handlebars

Before wheeling the bike out, Dad wrapped the handlebars twice with strips cut from an old inner tube. His daughter asked why. He said the bare metal runs cold, and a cold grip slips. She held the handlebars; he held the rear seat behind her, and the two of them walked from one end of the alley to the other.

When the front wheel wandered, he straightened the seat; when she leaned back, he called out, sit steady. Her legs were short and could not reach the ground, so every stop needed him to step in and catch the bike. Midway through the alley stood a small mound left by sewer work years ago. He first made her push the bike up it twice, then walk up empty-handed once, saying: see how steep the slope is first, and the fear on the saddle will be smaller. She pushed the bike up, and a pedal caught her calf; she gritted her teeth and said nothing.

By late afternoon she suddenly said, let go and see. Dad made no sound, and his hand quietly left the seat. The bike ran five or six meters, then began to sway. She called Dad, twice, then turned to see him still standing where he was, one hand raised in midair, not daring to set it down fully. The handlebars tilted, the bike

stopped by a mound of dirt, and she hopped off without falling.

That evening as they parked the bike, the girl sat on the doorstep rubbing her arms and said, once more. The second time he let go, the sway was lighter, and halfway it steadied by itself. Behind her Dad let out a long breath, too loud, and she heard it and glared; he pretended to cough.

The next evening nobody needed to hold it. She rode to the mouth of the alley and back, the hem of her skirt brushing the foxtail grass along the wall. Dad leaned on the doorframe watching, the tea in his hand gone cold untouched. A neighbor asked: your girl can ride now? He answered yes, the corner of his mouth refusing to stay down, went inside, and poured himself a fresh hot cup.

When they put the bike away, the girl wiped the seat with a cloth and dusted off the chain. Dad crouched beside her, watching her push it through the door, the tape strips on the handlebars shining under the lamp. He said: tomorrow we remove the training wheels. This bike was always meant for someone who has learned. The girl leaned the bike against the wall, and the bell tapped the brick with a soft ding.

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