妈妈的第一次

周六早上，妈妈站在小区门口看我学骑车。教练扶着后座，我绕着花坛一圈一圈地转。妈妈脸上没有紧张，倒有一种说不出的东西，像羡慕，又像遗憾。我停下来问她怎么了，她摇摇头，只说：你再骑一圈。

那天晚上，饭桌上妈妈忽然说她也要学骑车。爸爸筷子停在半空。妈妈这辈子没骑过车。外婆管得严，说女孩子家骑车不成体统，妈妈上学时连自行车都没摸过。爸爸回过神，第一句是：你都四十了。妈妈把碗一放：四十怎么了，四十就学不会了？

第二个周末，妈妈从楼下借来一辆旧自行车。她刚跨上去，车就歪，脚撑不住，一连三次坐不稳。楼下的人围过来看，妈妈脸涨得通红，让我去把那些人劝走。我说不劝，你越劝他们越看。妈妈咬咬牙，说看就看。

爸爸跟在后面扶车，嘴里念叨：看前头，别停，我在。这三句话我听着耳熟，跟教练对我喊的一字不差。妈妈扶着歪，歪着扶，车把扭来扭去，像一条不听话的蛇。练到两个小时，她忽然骑直了，从花坛这头骑到那头，又骑回来。风把她头发吹乱了，她也不管。

骑回原地，妈妈下了车，眼睛红了，就说了一句话：我会骑了，我终于是会骑了。爸爸假装去停车，半天没回来。邻居阿姨鼓掌，妈妈摆摆手，摆得特别慢，像要把这四十年的遗憾一下一下都摆手赶走。

现在妈妈每天骑车去菜市场，车筐里装着葱和鸡蛋，有时还有一把香菜。她不再提学车那天的事，但那辆旧车被她擦得锃亮，链条上油，车铃一按，一路都响。有回我放学，看见妈妈在前头骑车，背挺得笔直。我喊了一声妈，她回过头笑。她脸上的东西我长大了才懂，那是一个迟到了三十年的周末早上。

Mum's First Time on a Bicycle

On Saturday morning, Mum stood at the gate of our neighborhood watching me learn to ride. The coach held the rear rack while I circled the flower bed, lap after lap. There was no worry on her face; instead there was something I could not name, like envy, like regret. I stopped and asked what was wrong. She only shook her head and said: ride one more lap.

That evening at dinner, Mum suddenly announced that she would learn to ride too. The chopsticks of Dad froze in mid-air. Mum had never ridden a bicycle in her life. Grandma was strict and said a girl riding a bike was improper, so Mum had not even touched one at school. Dad came back to himself and said first: you are forty already. Mum put down her bowl: so what if I am forty, is one too old to learn?

The next weekend, Mum borrowed an old bicycle from downstairs. The moment she swung over it, the bike tilted, her feet could not hold, and she failed to sit steady three times running. People downstairs gathered to watch, and her face turned deep

red. She asked me to drive them away. I said no, the more you chase them, the more they watch. Mum set her teeth and said: let them watch.

Dad followed behind holding the bike, muttering: look ahead, do not stop, I am here. The three phrases sounded familiar, word for word the same as the coach shouted at me. Mum wobbled upright and upright wobbled, the handlebars twisting like a disobedient snake. After two hours she suddenly rode straight, from one side of the flower bed to the other and back. The wind messed her hair, and she did not care.

Riding back to the start, Mum got off with red eyes and said one sentence: I can ride, I can finally ride. Dad pretended to go park the bike and did not come back for a long while. The neighbor aunt clapped, and Mum waved her hand, very slowly, as if waving away forty years of regret one wave at a time.

Now Mum rides to the market every day, her basket full of scallions and eggs, sometimes a bunch of cilantro. She never mentions the day she learned again, but she keeps that old bike polished bright, its chain oiled, and once its bell is pressed it rings all the way. Once after school I saw her riding ahead, her back perfectly straight. I called out Mum, and she turned and smiled. Only when I grew up did I understand what was on her face: it was a Saturday morning thirty years late.