我哥是个笨蛋

我哥是个笨蛋。这是我四年级整个暑假见人就说的话。原因很简单：他教我骑自行车，教出来的办法除了吼还是吼。

那辆车是爸爸给他买的，小轮，他上三年级时骑正好，如今腿长了，嫌挤，就传给我。第一天我上去，他在后头攥着后座，蹲下身子跟着跑，嘴里喊看前头。我一抬头，他又喊别低头。被他喊得晕头转向，一头栽进柴火垛。

我哥定了条规矩：摔了不许他扶，他自己数数。他喊一、二，数到三我要是自己爬不起来，他能笑我一整天。我在车底下挣了两下，数到二自己爬起来了，浑身是土。他别别扭扭说了句还行，那就是他的最高表扬。

第二周他偷偷松了手。我以为他还扶着，一路蹬到了巷子口，一回头，他双手插兜站在院门口。我一惊捏了死闸，连人带车拖出去半米。他跑过来，不帮我拍土，先说：你刚才自己骑了整整一条巷子。我缓过神，膝盖那一下好像也没那么疼了。

他还给我设了个考试：从家门口骑车到巷口小卖部，打一瓶酱油回来，做到了就算毕业。第一次我打回来了，瓶子半路颠得只剩半瓶。第二次我把围巾解下来裹住瓶子，原样打回来。他掏零花钱给我买了一根冰棍，说算毕业礼物，咬了一口又嫌甜。

五年级开学，他上初中，自行车又在院角闲下来。有一回我骑它上学，他背着书包在前头走路，听见车铃回头，就说了一个字：慢。我冲他按了一下铃，超过了他，风灌进袖子，凉丝丝的。

后来很多人问我谁教的骑车，我都说我哥是个笨蛋。人家问为什么，我说：因为他从来不肯扶我起来，可他又是第一个发现我会骑的人。这话我没当着他面说过。他要是听见了，肯定又吼我：看前头！

My Brother Is an Idiot

My brother is an idiot. That is what I told everyone the whole summer of fourth grade. The reason is simple: he taught me to ride a bicycle, and his only method was shouting.

The bike was one Dad had bought him, small-wheeled, a perfect fit in his third-grade year. Now his legs had grown and it felt cramped, so he handed it down to me. On the first day, as soon as I got on, he gripped the rear rack, crouched, and ran along, shouting look ahead. The moment I raised my head, he shouted do not look down. Shouted into a daze, I fell headfirst into the firewood pile.

He set a rule: when I fell, he would not help me up, and he would count. He called one, two; if by three I could not climb up myself, he would laugh at me all day. Under the bike I struggled twice, and by two I got up on my own, covered in

dust. He grudgingly said not bad, which was his highest praise.

In the second week he let go without telling me. Thinking he still held on, I pedaled all the way to the mouth of the lane. I turned my head, and he stood at the gate with both hands in his pockets. Startled, I clamped the brake shut, and bike and body dragged half a meter. He ran over, and instead of brushing off my dust he said first: you just rode a whole lane all by yourself. I came to my senses, and the knock on my knee somehow hurt less.

He also set me an exam: ride from our door to the little shop at the lane mouth and bring back a bottle of soy sauce; do it and I graduated. The first time I brought it back, but the road shook it down to half a bottle. The second time I unwound my scarf and wrapped the bottle, and brought it back whole. He spent his own pocket money on a popsicle for me, calling it the graduation gift, then took a bite and complained it was too sweet.

When fifth grade began and he entered middle school, the bicycle again sat idle in the corner of the yard. Once I rode it to school while he walked ahead with his schoolbag. Hearing the bell he turned and said one word: slowly. I rang once at him and passed him, the wind filling my sleeves, cool.

Later many people asked who taught me to ride, and I always said my brother is an idiot. Asked why, I say: because he never once helped me up, yet he was the first to notice that I could ride. I have never said this to his face. If he heard it, he would surely shout again: look ahead!

外婆家的河堤

四年级的暑假，我在乡下外婆家过。乡下村子全是土路，家家孩子都有自行车，就我站在边上看。外婆把表哥那辆旧车往我手里一推：学，在姥姥家还能学不会骑车。

练车的地点是外婆定的，村外的河堤。堤路平，两边是草和杨树。外婆搬个小板凳坐在堤口看我，日头大，她提着水壶，我每骑过去一趟，她就喊一声喝口水。我不想喝，她也喊，我只好停下灌一大口。

表哥是教练，他的招数只有一样：扶着后座跑。跑了半天他蹲到杨树荫里不肯动，说他累了。我只能自己练，车扭得像喝醉了。摔了我也不哭，外婆在，我不能哭。

第三天外婆做了件让我难为情的事。她回家抱出一床旧棉被，叠成三层，捆在车后座上，绳子勒得紧紧的。她说往后仰摔就不疼。我红着脸不肯骑，外婆拍了拍那床被子：骑。我上去一试，座子一下高出一截，软软的，像坐在一个刚出锅的大馒头上面。

第五天，我从河堤一路骑回村口，外婆竟在村口等我，也不知道她怎么得到的信儿。她拉着我的手看手心，看了两遍，说：行，去，给你姥爷看看。姥爷在屋里刨木头做小板凳，头都没抬，只说骑一圈场院。我绕着场院骑了一圈，姥爷这才抬起头，说了两个字：不错。姥爷一年到头夸不了三回人。

临走前一天，我骑车到外婆家接她。她送我到门口，往车筐里塞了一布袋绿豆糕，压了又压。回去的路上车一颠，我怕把糕颠碎，腰绷得直直的，那段路我骑得比什么时候都稳。

前年河堤铺了水泥，外婆的老屋也拆了。我回去在堤上站了一会儿，杨树还在，风一吹叶子哗啦响，像有人坐在堤口的小板凳上，冲我喊：喝口水。

The River Embankment at My Grandmothers Home

In the summer vacation of fourth grade, I stayed at my grandmothers place in the countryside. The village roads were all dirt, and every child in every family had a bicycle except me, standing aside to watch. Grandma pushed the old bike of my cousin into my hands: learn, at your grandmothers house you cannot fail to learn riding.

Grandma chose the practice place: the river embankment outside the village. The road on the dike was flat, grass and poplars on both sides. She carried a small stool and sat at the dike mouth watching me. The sun was strong, she carried a water kettle, and every time I rode past she shouted: have a drink of water. I did not want to, but she kept shouting, so I stopped and gulped a big mouthful.

My cousin was the coach, and he had only one trick: running while holding the rear rack. After half a day he squatted in the poplar shade and refused to move, saying he was tired. I had to practice alone, the bike twisting like a drunk. When I fell I did not cry; Grandma was there, and I could not cry.

On the third day Grandma did something embarrassing. She went home and carried out an old cotton quilt, folded it three layers deep, and tied it tight with rope over the rear seat. She said falling backward would not hurt now. I blushed and refused to ride. Grandma patted the quilt: ride. I got on and tried; the seat stood a whole notch higher, soft, like sitting on a huge steamed bun just out of the pot.

On the fifth day I rode from the dike all the way back to the village entrance, and Grandma was waiting there; I never learned how she heard. She took my hand and studied my palm twice, then said: good, go, show your grandpa. Grandpa was indoors planing wood for a stool and did not even lift his head, only said: ride one lap around the threshing yard. I circled the yard once, and only then did he raise his head and say two words: not bad. Grandpa manages fewer than three praises a year.

The day before I left, I rode to the house of Grandma to fetch her. She saw me

off at the gate and stuffed a cloth bag of mung bean cakes into the bike basket, pressing it down again and again. On the way home the bike jolted; afraid of crushing the cakes, I held my back perfectly straight, and on that stretch I rode steadier than ever.

The year before last the dike was paved with cement, and the old house of Grandma was torn down. When I went back I stood on the dike for a while. The poplars were still there, and when the wind blew the leaves rustled, as if someone sat on the little stool at the dike mouth, calling to me: have a drink of water.

三十岁学骑车

我爸学骑自行车的时候，三十岁。这件事我妈笑了二十年，我爸从来不恼。

那年我爸的厂子搬到河对岸，上下班走一个小时。厂里和别的厂合并，分下来一批旧自行车，我爸领了一辆。他把车推回家，我妈问：你会骑吗。我爸没吭声，晚上就把车推到了巷子外头。

我妈领着我站在窗口看。我爸上车用的是老式骑法，腿从横梁底下穿过去。他贴着墙根蹬，车靠着墙，人靠着车，蹬出去半条街才摔。摔了他赶紧用手撑起来，先四下看一圈，见没人，才松了口气。我妈把我拉回屋，说：你爸跟做贼似的。

我爸练了整整一个星期，每天傍晚去。第七天，他从巷口一路骑到了河边的桥上。骑回来时衬衫全湿透了，脸上憋着一股笑，憋不住，嘴角翘起来又压下去。我妈端出面条说吃面，他吃了整整两碗，晚上蹲在院里给车链条上油，上了半宿。

从那以后我爸骑车过河上班。每天早上出门，他在我窗下按一声车铃，那一声就是我们家的闹钟。下雨天他披雨衣蹬车，路上的泥水溅一裤腿，他也不管，进了厂门再擦。

有一回我坐他后座，他去河对岸的集市买鱼。他的背又宽又稳，蹬车一点不晃。我问他：爸，你学骑车的时候摔过吗。他想了想说：摔过。我问摔了几回，他说记不清了，可疼还记得。我那时小，听不懂这句话。

我爸走了五年了。那辆旧车早当废铁卖了，只剩车铃留在我手里。我把铃收在抽屉里，平时不碰。上回收拾东西不小心按响了一下，声音有点哑，不算脆。我在书桌前坐了很久。那一声铃声，是我们家的闹钟，每天早上按一次，按了十几年。

Learning to Ride at Thirty

When my father learned to ride a bicycle, he was thirty. My mother laughed about it for twenty years, and he never minded.

That year the factory moved to the far side of the river, an hour on foot each way. It merged with another factory and a batch of old bicycles came down to share; my father took one. He pushed it home, and my mother asked: can you ride. He said nothing, and that evening wheeled it out beyond the lane.

Mother and I watched from the window. He mounted the old way, swinging his leg under the crossbar. He pedaled along the wall, the bike leaning on the wall, he leaning on the bike, and fell only after half a street. Up he sprang, first scanning around, and seeing nobody, let out a breath. Mother pulled me back inside and said: your father behaves like a thief.

He practiced for a full week, every evening. On the seventh day he rode from the lane mouth all the way to the bridge over the river. Riding back, his shirt soaked through, a smile fighting its way onto his face, pressed down and rising again. Mother brought out noodles and told him to eat; he ate two bowls, then squatted in the yard oiling the chain half the night.

From then on he rode across the river to work. Every morning as he left, he pressed the bell once under my window; that single ring was our household alarm clock. On rainy days he pedaled in a rain cape, mud water spattering his trouser legs, and he did not care, wiping it off only after passing the factory gate.

Once I sat on the rear rack while he bought fish at the market across the river. His back was broad and steady, the pedaling never rocking. I asked: Dad, did you fall when you were learning. He thought a moment and said: I fell. I asked how many times, and he said he could not count them, but he still remembered the pain. I was small then; I did not understand that sentence.

My father has been gone five years. The old bike was sold for scrap long ago; only its bell remains in my hands. I keep it in a drawer and seldom touch it. Last time, tidying up, I pressed it by accident, and the sound came out a little hoarse, not bright. I sat at my desk for a long while. That single ring was our household alarm clock, pressed once every morning, for more than ten years.

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