女儿学车的这个春天

女儿八岁那年春天，我把她的辅助轮拆了。拆的时候她问我：拆了我就学会了吗。我说没有，拆了只是开始摔。她抱着车把不撒手：那先别拆。我说好，下礼拜再拆。车在阳台立了一个礼拜，她每天看一眼。

第二个周六拆的。楼下小广场，我扶着后座。她上车第一句话：爸，你抓紧。我说不行，一会儿我就松了。她说那不行。我说我松手之前会告诉你，这是规矩。她想了想，同意了。

我喊了三回我要松手了，三回她都让我别松。第四回我趁她骑直了悄悄松，她骑出去五六米才发现，一回头，车一歪，她坐在了地上。没哭，坐在地上第一句话是：你骗人，你说会告诉我的。我过去扶，她推开我的手，自己站起来，说：再来，这次你松之前一定说。

练到中午，她能在广场上绕半圈了。她发现了窍门，说车慢的时候容易倒，快一点反而稳。我说对，这叫不倒翁原理，骑快了车自己会找平衡。她不服：什么原理，这叫我自己试出来的。行，她自己试出来的。

真正学会是第五个周六。她从广场这头骑到那头，绕了完整的一圈，回来停在我跟前，额头全是汗，喘着气说：爸，我自己骑了一圈。我说嗯。她不满意我的平淡，补了句：一圈！一点没扶！我这才把她举起来转了两圈，广场上的人都看我们。

后来她骑车上学，骑得比我好，下坡不慌，拐弯利索。有一回我骑我自己年轻时那辆旧车，车把太宽，拐得笨，她在前头回头喊：爸，你慢点，别摔了。我听见这句话，愣在车上一秒，笑了。

教她学车的那个春天，我也学会了一件事：松手要提前说，孩子要的是实话，不是保护。这句话我用了很多年，后来她上初中、住校，每次送她到校门口，我都只说一句：爸不进去，你自己进去。她回头看我一眼，点头，进门。我们父女俩，从一辆拆了辅助轮的自行车起，就懂了这个规矩。

This Spring My Daughter Learned to Ride

The spring my daughter turned eight, I removed the training wheels from her bicycle. While I removed them she asked: will I have learned once they are off. I said no; taking them off only marks the beginning of falling. She hugged the handlebars and would not let go: then do not take them off yet. I said all right, next week. The bike stood on the balcony for a week, and she glanced at it every day.

We removed them the second Saturday, at the little plaza downstairs. I held the rear seat. Her first words on the bike were: Dad, hold on tight. I said no; in a while I will let go. She said that would not do. I said I will tell you before I let go; that is the rule. She thought it over and agreed.

Three times I announced I was about to let go, and three times she made me keep

holding. The fourth time I let go quietly while she rode straight, and she made five or six meters before noticing; she turned her head, the bike tilted, and she sat down on the ground. No tears. Her first words sitting there were: you lied, you said you would tell me. I came to lift her; she pushed my hand away, stood up herself, and said: again, and this time you must say it before letting go.

By noon she could loop half the plaza. She found the trick herself: at low speed the bike tips easily, and a little faster is steadier. I said right, that is the roly-poly principle; ride fast and the bike finds its own balance. She was not convinced: what principle, this one I tested out myself. Fine, she tested it out herself.

She truly learned on the fifth Saturday. She rode from one side of the plaza to the other and completed a full lap, stopping in front of me sweat-soaked on her forehead, breathing hard: Dad, I rode a whole lap by myself. I said uh-huh. Unhappy with my flatness, she added: a whole lap, without one touch of holding! Only then did I lift her up and spin twice, and everyone in the plaza watched us.

Later she biked to school and rode better than me, unhurried downhill, deft in corners. Once I rode my own old bike from younger days, its bars too wide, turning clumsily, and she called back from ahead: Dad, slow down, do not fall. Hearing that sentence I froze on the bike for one second, then laughed.

In that spring of teaching her, I also learned one thing: say it before letting go, for a child wants honesty, not protection. I have used this line for years. When she entered middle school and boarded, every time I dropped her at the school gate I said only: Dad will not come in, walk in yourself. She looked back, nodded, and went in. Father and daughter have understood this rule ever since a bicycle with its training wheels removed.