开大车的姥爷

我学骑车是跟姥爷学的。姥爷开了三十年大货车，跑长途，退休那年回家，手里忽然空了，没方向盘可摸了。我六岁生日，他不知从哪推回来一辆小车，车把上系了根红布条。

姥爷教我，满嘴是开大车的词。他管车把叫方向盘，管脚蹬叫油门，管捏闸叫带闸。他说你甭管它晃，大车上了高速也晃，手要松，眼睛放远，看远处，别盯脚底下轮子。我那时小，听不懂高速是什么，只记住了眼睛放远。

摔是在坡底下摔的。小区后头有个缓坡，姥爷不让上坡，说下坡才练人。我下坡带闸，车一抖，我慌了，闸捏死，人从车把上翻出去，下巴磕在马路牙子上，破了皮，血渗出来。我坐在地上等着扶，姥爷不扶，蹲在旁边说：大车翻了司机也不能哭，先检查人，再检查车。我抹了把脸，自己起来，把车扶正，检查了一遍，车把歪了一点点。

姥爷从兜里掏出扳手，把车把拧正，拧完拍拍我的手：记着，摔了不可怕，摔了不知道为啥摔才可怕。你为啥摔，闸捏太死。下次带一点，松一点。我下次真带一点了，车抖但不翻，像骑在一匹闹脾气的小马上。

第七天傍晚，我从坡顶一路滑到坡底，脚没沾地。姥爷在坡底背着手站着，夕阳照着他。他说了句：行了，出徒了。然后从兜里摸出一把水果糖给我，那糖他兜里揣了好几天，糖纸都焐得发软。

姥爷走的那年我上初中。整理他遗物，在他抽屉里发现一个笔记本，前头记的是油钱、过路费，最后一页画着一辆自行车，歪歪扭扭，旁边写着一行字：小车比大车难，娃摔了没哭，好娃。我把那个本子留下了。

如今我开车很多年，上高速真不晃，眼睛放远成了习惯。每次从后视镜里看见后座打盹的孩子，我就想起坡底那个背着手的人。姥爷，你画的那辆小车，我后来骑了很多年，一次也没再翻过。

Grandpa Who Drove Big Trucks

I learned to ride from my grandpa. He drove heavy trucks for thirty years on long routes. The year he retired he came home with empty hands, no steering wheel left to hold. On my sixth birthday he wheeled a small bike in from somewhere, a red cloth strip tied to its handlebars.

He taught me using the language of a truck driver. He called the handlebars the steering wheel, the pedals the throttle, and braking easing onto the brake. He said do not mind the wobble; even a big truck wobbles on the expressway. Keep your hands loose and your eyes far ahead, look far, never stare at the wheel under your feet. I was small then and did not know what an expressway was, but I kept one line: eyes far

ahead.

The fall happened at the bottom of a slope. Behind our compound lay a gentle hill. Grandpa forbade riding uphill; only downhill trains a person. Going down I eased the brake, the bike shuddered, I panicked and clamped it shut, and flipped over the handlebars, my chin hitting the curb, skin broken, blood seeping. I sat waiting to be lifted. He did not lift me. He squatted beside me and said: when a truck overturns the driver cannot cry either; check the person first, then the vehicle. I wiped my face, got up myself, righted the bike, and checked it over. The handlebars had bent a hair.

He took a wrench from his pocket and twisted the bars straight, then patted my hand: remember, falling is not frightening; falling without knowing why is frightening. Why did you fall? You clamped the brake shut. Next time ease it, just a little. Next time I did ease it, and the bike shook but did not flip, like riding a sulking little horse.

On the seventh evening I slid from the top of the slope to the bottom without touching my feet down. Grandpa stood at the bottom with his hands behind his back, the setting sun on him. He said one line: all right, you have graduated. Then he fished out a handful of fruit candies from his pocket; they had been in there for days, the wrappers gone soft from his body heat.

The year grandpa died I was in middle school. Sorting his belongings I found a notebook in his drawer. Its early pages recorded fuel money and tolls; the last page held a drawing of a bicycle, crooked and clumsy, with one line beside it: the small bike is harder than the big truck, and the boy fell without crying, good boy. I kept that notebook.

I have driven for many years now, and on the expressway it truly does not wobble; eyes far ahead has become a habit. Every time I see a child dozing on the back seat through the rear mirror, I think of the man standing at the foot of the slope with hands behind his back. Grandpa, that little bike you drew, I have ridden it for many years since, and never once flipped again.

从山里转来的同学

五年级下学期，班里转来一个山里来的同学，叫石头。石头个子高，力气大，单杠一口气拉八个，可开学第二周我们就知道他的短处：他不会骑车。全班都会，就他不会。有人笑他，他红着脸不说话。

放学我跟他顺路，他走路，我骑车。有一回他忽然说：你教我骑车吧，我拿我教你翻跟头换。我说行。第二天他真在操场垫子上给我翻了两个标准的侧手翻，我摔得屁股疼，他稳稳落地。公平交易，我认。

教石头比教别人难，不是他笨，是他太稳。山里走惯了山路，他上身纹丝不动，车反而站不住。我喊歪了就扭回来，他扭得慢半拍，人车一起躺倒。他摔了十几次，一次没吭声，拍拍土上来接着练。我倒是先急了，他反过来安慰我：没事，我们山里人摔习惯了。

转折在一个周六。我让他别看车，看前头二十米，把山路上的步子挪到蹬腿上。他忽然就直了，从操场这头骑到那头，越骑越快，风把他校服吹得鼓起来。他在操场边上刹住，回头看我，脸上还是没什么表情，可眼睛亮得吓人。他说了句：原来骑车就是走路，就是换了一条腿走路。

后来石头学会了带人，学会撒把，学会下坡不捏死闸。暑假他回山里，开学回来给我带了一兜野核桃。他跟我说，山里现在也修了水泥路，他堂弟们都会骑车了，就他爸还不会，回去他教他爸。他说这话的时候特别认真，像在给一个任务立项。

毕业那年我们不同校，渐渐少了联系。前年我在城里地铁站口看见他，他骑着共享单车来接人，动作利索。他认出我，按了一声铃，说了句当年那句话：骑车就是走路，换一条腿走路。我站在原地笑了。石头，你后来肯定也教会了你爸，山里人学什么都快，因为不怕摔。

The Classmate Who Came from the Mountains

In the spring term of fifth grade a transfer student from the mountains joined our class. We called him Stone. He was tall and strong, eight pull-ups on the bar in one breath, yet by the second week everyone knew his weakness: he could not ride a bicycle. The whole class could, only he could not. Some laughed, and he turned red and said nothing.

After school our ways overlapped; he walked and I rode. Once he suddenly said: teach me to ride, and I will teach you somersaults in exchange. I agreed. The next day he really did two proper cartwheels for me on the playground mat; my backside hurt from my own clumsy try while he landed steady. A fair trade, I admitted.

Teaching Stone was harder than teaching others. Not because he was slow, but because he was too steady. Used to mountain paths, his upper body would not sway at all, and the bike could not stand. I shouted to twist back when it leaned, but he twisted half a beat late, and man and bike toppled together. He fell more than ten times without a sound, dusted himself off, and got back on. I was the one who got flustered first, and he ended up comforting me: it is fine, we mountain people are used to falling.

The turn came on a Saturday. I told him not to watch the bike but twenty meters ahead, and to move his mountain steps into his pedaling legs. Suddenly he went

straight, riding from one end of the playground to the other, faster and faster, the wind ballooning his uniform. He braked at the edge, turned to look at me, his face still showing little, but his eyes shining fiercely. He said one sentence: so riding is just walking, only walking on one leg switched.

Later Stone learned to carry a passenger, to ride no hands, and to ease rather than clamp on downhill. That summer he returned to the mountains and brought me a bag of wild walnuts when school reopened. He told me cement roads had reached the village, his cousins all rode now, only his father still could not, and he would teach him when he went back. He said it with great seriousness, like signing up for a mission.

We went to different schools after graduation and lost touch. The year before last I saw him at a subway entrance in the city, picking someone up on a shared bike, moving deftly. He recognized me, rang once, and repeated the line from those days: riding is just walking, walking on one leg switched. I stood there smiling. Stone, you surely taught your father too. Mountain people learn anything fast, because they are not afraid to fall.

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.