爸爸的手掌有老茧

车是三年级那个周六从杂物间推出来的，链条锈得发红。邻居家的孩子都会骑了，放学一大群一大群地骑过去，我总找借口绕开那条路。

爸爸蹲下调整车座，我看见他掌心的裂口。他是修车的，机油渗进皮肤的纹路里，怎么洗也洗不干净。

他说扶着后座，让我只管蹬。头一回，车把像活蛇一样左右乱拧，我赶紧跳了下来。

爸爸说眼睛看前面，别看轮子。我骑出十米，又骑出十五米，车慢慢不晃了。我得意起来，扭头看他——后座后面空空的。他早就松了手，站在巷口的垃圾桶旁边，拿抹布擦手。

我一慌，车往右一歪，压在小腿上。脚踏板在小腿上磕出一道印子，辣辣地疼。我坐在地上说再也不骑了，不学了。

爸爸没骂我。他把车提起来，看了看我的腿，说歇一会儿，再上去。

我抹了把脸，其实没哭，就是脸上又是土又是汗。爸爸拿湿毛巾给我擦了腿，又把脚踏板上的土拍掉。

再上去那回，他扶着车座在旁边跑。他宽大的手掌搭在车座边上，老茧蹭着我的手腕，粗粗的，很稳。

那天下午练了一遍又一遍。他松一次手，又松两次，每回松手都在后面喊，没扶，声音越跑越快。妈妈在楼上喊吃饭，我们谁也没应。

有一回我又歪了，脚刚着地，他在后面说，别停，接着蹬。我咬着牙接着蹬，车居然又直了。

等我不用人扶也能骑完一整条巷子的时候，风灌进袖口，袖子鼓得像气球。我使劲蹬，想告诉爸爸，扭头看见他站在巷口，手撑在膝盖上喘气，衬衫湿透了。

他一直在后面跟着跑。后来他说，每回松手，他的心跳得比我还快。

现在骑车路过巷口那个垃圾桶，我总会慢下来。车不是我一个人学会的，一直往前走的，也不止我一个人。

The Calluses on the Hands of My Father

The bicycle was wheeled out of the storage room on a Saturday morning in my third year of primary school, its chain rusted red. All the neighborhood children could ride by then; after school they streamed past in groups, and I kept finding excuses to avoid that street.

My father crouched to adjust the seat, and I saw the cracks in his palms. He repairs machines for a living, and machine oil has worked into the lines of his skin and never washes off completely.

He said he would hold the back of the seat and I only needed to pedal. The first time, the handlebar twisted left and right like a live snake, and I jumped off just in time.

He told me to keep my eyes forward and not look at the wheels. I rode ten meters, then fifteen, and the bicycle slowly stopped wobbling. I got cocky and turned to look at him — behind the seat there was nobody. He had let go long ago and stood by the trash can at the mouth of the lane, wiping his hands with a rag.

I lost my nerve, the bicycle tipped to the right, and it fell across my shin. The pedal had cut a mark into my leg, stinging more than bleeding. I sat on the ground and said I would never ride again, that I quit.

My father did not scold me. He lifted the bicycle, looked at my leg, and said we would rest a while and then get back on.

I wiped my face. I was not really crying; my face was just covered with dust and sweat. My father wiped my leg with a wet towel and patted the dirt off the pedal.

When I got back on, he held the seat and ran alongside. His broad palm rested on the edge of the seat, its calluses brushing my wrist, rough but steady.

That afternoon we practiced again and again. He let go once, then twice more, and every time he released he shouted from behind that he was not holding on, his footsteps growing faster and faster. My mother called us for dinner from upstairs, and neither of us answered.

Once I wobbled again, and my foot had barely touched the ground when he called out from behind: do not stop, keep pedaling. I gritted my teeth and kept pedaling, and the bicycle straightened on its own.

When I could finally ride the whole length of the lane with no one holding, the wind blew into my sleeves and made them swell like balloons. I pedaled hard, wanting to tell my father, but when I turned I saw him standing at the mouth of the lane, hands on his knees, breathing hard, his shirt soaked through.

He had been running behind me the whole time. He said later that every time he let go, his heart beat faster than mine.

Now whenever I pass that trash can at the mouth of the lane, I always slow down. I did not learn to ride all by myself, and the one who kept going forward was not only me.

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