眼睛往前，别捏死闸

我们那条巷子，夏天是被蝉叫醒的，也是被蝉哄睡的。清晨一声，傍晚一片，夜里它们累了，就剩零星几嗓，像谁在很远的地方咳嗽。

蝉最凶的时候是学车那年八月。梧桐的叶子被晒得打了卷，蝉不管，趴在叶背上一个劲地叫，叫得空气都发颤。傍晚暑气一退，蝉声反而更密，密得像有人把整条巷子的声音都搅在了一起。

爸爸就是在那个声音里教我骑车的。他话少，扶车也只说几个字：眼睛往前。别捏死闸。身子别僵。蝉声太大，他喊这几个字都得费力气，所以我听得格外清楚，后来每个字都长在了身上。

头些天是他扶。后来他半扶半松。再后来，有一回我骑完一整条巷子回头，看见他站在井台边，背对着我，正弯腰系鞋带。他根本就没扶。

我冲回去喊他，他直起身，把背手在裤腿上蹭了蹭，说，我系我的鞋带，你骑你的车。说完他转身往家走，走在前面，背在路灯底下晃。那个背不算好看，工装空落落的，肩一边高一边低，是常年扛东西扛斜的。

我推着车跟在他后面。蝉在头顶一路陪着，从井台陪到院门口。他的影子在前头一长一短，我踩着他的影子走，踩了一路。

那天夜里我躺在凉席上，蝉还在叫。我翻来覆去地想他那个背影，想他什么时候松的手，想他系鞋带的手是不是在抖。想着想着就睡着了，梦里我又骑了一遍那条巷子，蝉声让开一条路，两头都是他。

后来我骑车去了镇上读中学，周末骑回来，巷子口的蝉一听见链条声就炸开，像列队迎接。爸爸不站在巷口了，他站在院门口，一听见动静就转身进灶房，端出饭来。他不说骑得好，只说今天回来得早。

再后来巷子装了路灯，梧桐砍了一半，蝉一年比一年少。爸爸老了，背真的驼了，弯腰系鞋带要扶住膝盖才能起来。我扶过他一次，他躲开，自己慢慢站直，说，这腰还不如自行车好使。

今年夏天回去，我在巷子里骑了一圈旧车。蝉从残存的梧桐上应了一声，只应了一声。骑到井台边我停下来，井填了，井台的石条还在，边上一道旧磕痕，是我那年摔上去的。

我在那道磕痕边上坐了一会儿。蝉声稀稀拉拉，风还是傍晚的风。我知道有些东西散了就是散了，可它们散在声音里——蝉一叫，那个扶着车的、背手蹭裤腿的、肩一边高一边低的背影，就又站在井台边上了。

Eyes Forward, Do Not Clamp the Brake

Our lane was woken by cicadas in summer and lulled to sleep by them too. One cry at dawn, a whole sheet at dusk, and at night when they tired, only a few scattered throats remained, like someone coughing far away.

The fiercest cicadas came the August I learned to ride. The plane tree leaves

curled in the heat, but the cicadas paid no mind; flat on the undersides of the leaves they screamed until the air itself trembled. When the heat retreated at dusk their song only thickened, so dense it seemed someone had stirred all the sounds of the lane into one pot.

It was inside that sound that my father taught me to ride. He was a man of few words, and holding the bicycle he said only a handful of them: eyes forward. Do not clamp the brake. Do not stiffen up. The cicadas were so loud that he had to force those words out, so I heard each one with special clarity, and later every one of them grew into my bones.

For the first days he held on. Then he half-held, half-let-go. Then one time I rode the whole length of the lane and turned around to see him standing by the well, his back to me, bending down to tie his shoelace. He had not been holding at all.

I pedaled back and called to him. He straightened up, wiped the backs of his hands on his trouser legs, and said, I was tying my shoe, you were riding your bicycle. Then he turned and walked home ahead of me, his back swinging under the streetlamp. That back was not a handsome sight — the work jacket hung loose on it, one shoulder higher than the other from years of carrying loads askew.

I walked behind him pushing the bicycle. The cicadas accompanied us overhead all the way from the well to the courtyard gate. His shadow stretched and shortened in front of me, and I stepped on it the whole way home.

That night I lay on the cool mat while the cicadas still sang. I turned the image of his receding back over and over in my mind — when exactly he had let go, whether the hands tying that shoelace had been shaking. Somewhere in the turning I fell asleep, and in the dream I rode that lane again, the cicada song parting to make a road, and at both ends of it stood my father.

Later I rode a bicycle to the town middle school, and on weekends I rode home. The cicadas at the lane mouth would erupt at the sound of my chain, like a formed guard of honor. My father no longer stood at the lane mouth; he stood at the courtyard gate, and at the first sound he would turn and go into the kitchen and bring out the meal. He never said I rode well. He only said you came home early today.

Later still, the lane got streetlamps, half the plane trees were cut down, and the cicadas thinned year by year. My father grew old, and his back truly hunched; to bend down and tie a shoelace he had to brace a hand on his knee to rise again. I tried to help him up once; he dodged my hand, straightened slowly by himself, and said this waist of mine works worse than a bicycle.

This summer when I went back, I rode the old bicycle one lap through the lane.

The cicadas on the surviving plane tree answered once — only once. I stopped at the well. The well had been filled in, but its stone curb remained, and along its edge was an old scrape mark, made the year I fell onto it.

I sat by that scrape for a while. The cicada song was sparse now, but the wind was still the evening wind. I know some things scatter and are gone for good, but they scatter into sound — the moment a cicada sings, the back that held the bicycle, that wiped itself on trouser legs, whose shoulders sat one high and one low, is standing by the well again.