四个指头搭在坐垫上

儿子八岁那年秋天，学校通知要考骑车，不会骑的利用体育课补。我们家没有会骑车的男人——这话是我婆婆说的，她说的时候很平静，好像这是家里一件光荣的事。于是那个周末，陪儿子学车的事落到了我头上。

装备是提前一周备的。我在网上下单，把能搜到的护具都买了：头盔、护腕、护肘、护膝，还有一副露指手套。到货那天摆了一床，儿子试戴，从头到脚，自己管自己叫机器人。头盔我挑得最仔细，要正儿八经有认证标志的，尺码按量出来的头围买，两根手指塞不进带子才算合格。

学车在家旁边的公园，找了一段没人的缓坡。方法是我从卖车那儿听来的：不扶车把，不扶后座架，手伸到坐垫底下，四个指头虚搭着坐垫边，只帮他不倒，不替他骑。我照着做，手心全是汗，坐垫底下那块布被我攥出两个印子。

儿子头一回坐上去就下来了，说高。我把车座压到最低，他脚尖着地，才肯再上去。下坡那几米，他两只手把车把攥得死紧，胳膊绷得直直的，像举着什么了不得的东西。我说松一点，车把不是敌人。他松了一点，车就晃了一下，又赶紧攥紧。

鼓励的话我原本想不好。公园长椅上坐着个下棋的大爷，冲我们喊，数数！骑出去就数一二三！我试了，管用。儿子蹬出去，我跟着数，一、二、三，他听见数到三就笑，笑了身子就松，身子松了车就稳。后来我们的里程全用数数算：能数到十了，能数到二十了。

数到三十的那个傍晚，我发现我手里只剩一个坐垫的形状。他不知道我什么时候撒的手，在坡那头冲我喊，妈你看见了吗。我说看见了。其实我那时候正把脸别过去，假装看公园的湖。

摔过两回，都在平地上，护具全乎，膝盖一点事没有，就是手掌蹭红了一块。他自己爬起来，先看车，再看我，说，机器人装备好使。那床护具后来传给了表妹的儿子，头盔的旋钮都磨花了。

如今儿子十二岁，骑车比我骑得好，下坡不捏闸，靠身子压着走。他早不记得数数的事了。可我记得。我记得那个秋天我弯着腰，四个指头虚搭在坐垫边上，手心出汗，一、二、三，数得比下棋的大爷还认真。

当妈以后我才知道，陪孩子学一样东西，最难的不是方法，是忍住。忍住不扶死，忍住不喊小心，忍住在他晃的时候不伸手。公园那段缓坡不长，我在上头学会的东西，比儿子学会骑车还多。

Four Fingers Resting on the Seat

The autumn my son turned eight, the school announced a bicycle test; those who could not ride would make it up during PE class. There is no man in our family who can ride a bicycle — my mother-in-law said this, and she said it calmly, as if it were a proud fact about the household. So that weekend, the job of teaching our son fell to me.

The gear was ready a week ahead. I ordered online and bought every protector I

could find: helmet, wrist guards, elbow pads, knee pads, and fingerless gloves. When the parcels arrived they covered a whole bed. Our son tried them on head to toe and started calling himself a robot. I chose the helmet most carefully: a proper certification mark, the size matched to the head circumference we measured, and the strap passing only when two fingers could not slip underneath.

We learned in the park beside our home, on a quiet stretch of gentle slope. The method I picked up from the bicycle seller: do not hold the handlebar, do not hold the rear rack; put your hand under the seat, four fingers resting loosely on its edge, keeping him from falling but never riding for him. I did exactly that, my palm sweating, and I pressed two dents into the cloth under the seat.

The first time he got on, he got right off, saying it was too high. I pushed the seat to its lowest, his toes found the ground, and only then would he climb on again. Over those few meters downhill he gripped the handlebar so hard his arms stood straight out, as if lifting something enormous. I said: loosen up, the handlebar is not your enemy. He loosened a little, the bicycle wobbled once, and he clamped down again at once.

The encouraging words I had not worked out. An old man playing chess on the park bench shouted at us: count! Ride out and count one, two, three! I tried it, and it worked. He pedaled, and I counted: one, two, three. Hearing three, he laughed; laughing, his body loosened; loosened, the bicycle steadied. After that our distances were all counted in numbers: he could reach ten, then twenty.

On the evening we reached thirty, I found only the shape of a seat left in my hand. He never knew when my hand had left, and from the far end of the slope he shouted: Mom, did you see? I said: I saw. In fact I had just turned my face away, pretending to look at the park lake.

There were two falls, both on flat ground, fully protected, knees perfectly fine, only a palm scuffed red. He got up by himself, checked the bicycle first, then looked at me, and said: the robot equipment works. That bed of protectors later passed to the son of a cousin; the helmet dial is worn smooth.

Our son is twelve now and rides better than I do, going downhill without squeezing the brakes, leaning his body through it. He no longer remembers the counting. But I do. I remember that autumn I bent over with four fingers resting loosely on the edge of the seat, palm sweating, counting one, two, three, more earnestly than the chess-playing old man.

Only after becoming a mother did I learn that the hardest part of accompanying a child into a new skill is not the method but the holding back: holding back from gripping too hard, from shouting be careful, from shooting out a hand the moment he

wobbles. The park slope is not long, yet what I learned on it is more than what our son learned about riding.