奶奶坐着看

孙子学骑车那个周末，儿子儿媳都加班，带孩子的差事落在我头上。小区篮球场早上人少，我把那辆十二寸的小车推到场边，心想扶着跑就是，我身子骨还硬朗。

结果头十分钟我就坏了规矩。他歪一下我伸手，歪一下我伸手，车把上挂着我半条胳膊。孙子不耐烦，说奶奶你走开，我自己骑。我嘴上应着，脚还跟着走。他赌气一拧脚踏，前轮磕上路牙，连人带车翻出去，小胫骨刮出一道红印。

我扑过去要抱他，膝盖先自己软了一下，扶场边的铁网才站稳。孙子坐在地上，仰着脸看我，不哭，也不伸手。那一刻我忽然想起儿子小时候——他也是这样自己起来的，那时扶他的是他爸，不是我这个当妈的。我把手在围裙上擦了擦，退到场边的长凳坐下，说，好，奶奶坐着看。

坐在长凳上比跑着扶难十倍。他每晃一下，我的两只手就把布包带攥出褶子，人差点弹起来，又坐回去。场边打球的几个老头笑我，说老太太你比孩子还紧张。我说，是啊，我这是第二次学骑车，他学轮子，我学坐着。

到上午十点多，孙子已经能绕着篮球场骑一整圈。他骑过我跟前不喊停，风一样过去，再从另一头风一样回来。我坐在长凳上，影子替我跟着他跑。有一回他压到一颗小石子，晃了两晃，自己稳住了，没摔。我攥着布包带的手，就是在那一下松开的。

中午儿子回来接我们，看见孙子骑车进楼道，愣在原地。孙子说，我摔了一回，奶奶没扶。儿子看我，我有点心虚，说，摔那一下我差点扶，没扶成。儿子说，妈，你没扶，比扶了强。

晚上我翻来覆去想白天的事。带大过一茬孩子的人，本以为会带第二个，才知道隔了二十年，手比头先伸出去。老人疼孩子，疼就疼在忍不住，而孩子要长大的那一步，偏偏就踩在大人忍不忍得住上。

后来孙子生日，我送他一副护膝。卡片上我让他妈替我写了一行字：摔了自己起，奶奶坐着看。这行字也是写给我自己的。第二次学骑车我学得慢，但总算学会了。

Grandma Sits and Watches

The weekend my grandson learned to ride a bicycle, his parents were both working overtime, and the job of minding the child fell to me. The basketball court in our compound was quiet in the morning, and I pushed the twelve-inch little bike to the sideline, thinking I would simply hold on and run alongside, my body still sturdy enough.

In the first ten minutes I already broke my own rule. Every time the bike tilted I reached out, and half my arm hung on the handlebars. The grandson lost patience and said, Grandma, go away, I will ride by myself. I answered yes with my mouth while my feet kept walking. He twisted the pedals in a huff, the front wheel struck the curb, and he and the bike rolled over, leaving a red scrape on his little shin.

I rushed forward to pick him up, but my own knees went soft first, and I only steadied myself by holding the iron fence at the sideline. The grandson sat on the ground, face up, looking at me, not crying, not reaching out a hand. In that moment I suddenly remembered my son as a boy, how he too got up by himself, and the one who had held him then was his father, not me. I wiped my hands on my apron and retreated to sit on the bench at the sideline, saying, all right, Grandma will sit and watch.

Sitting on the bench was ten times harder than running and holding. Every time the bike wobbled, both my hands creased the strap of my cloth bag, and I nearly sprang up and sat back down. The old men playing at the sideline laughed at me, saying, old lady, you are more nervous than the child. I said, yes, this is my second time learning to ride a bicycle; he learns the wheels, I learn to sit.

Past ten in the morning the grandson could already ride a full lap around the basketball court. He passed me without calling stop, going by like the wind, and coming back like the wind from the other end. I sat on the bench, and my shadow ran along with him for me. Once he hit a small pebble, wobbled twice, and steadied himself without falling. The hand that had been gripping the bag strap loosened at exactly that moment.

At noon my son came back to fetch us and saw the grandson riding his bike into the stairway, frozen on the spot. The grandson said, I fell once, and Grandma did not hold me up. My son looked at me, and I felt a little guilty, saying, at that fall I almost reached out, and failed to. My son said, Mom, your not reaching out was better than reaching out.

That night I turned the day over and over in my mind. Someone who had raised one batch of children thought she could raise a second, and only then learned that after twenty years the hand shoots out before the head does. Old people love their grandchildren, and the love lies precisely in not being able to hold back, yet the very step on which a child grows up lands on whether the adult can hold back.

Later, on the birthday of the grandson, I gave him a pair of knee pads. On the card I had his mother write one line for me: when you fall, get up yourself, and Grandma will sit and watch. That line was written for myself too. My second time learning to ride a bicycle was slow, but I learned it after all.