河坝上的勇敢章

暑假里，小明跟着爸爸回乡下。村口的河坝又宽又平，是学骑车最好的地方。小明盯着村里孩子骑过的旧车，眼睛亮得像两盏小灯。爸爸拍拍车座说，想学？今天就开始。

河坝上风大。小明骑上去，车把被风一吹，往河那边一歪。他慌了，捏死后闸，后轮在石板上跳了两跳，哐当，小明从车边上翻出去，手掌按在一块粗石板上，蹭破了一大片，火辣辣的。

小明看着手掌上的血印子，嘴一瘪，眼泪掉下来。他坐在河坝上说不学了，车欺负人。爸爸没急着拉他，让他哭了一会儿，才指着河说，你看这条河，它小时候也撞石头，撞了一千年，才把河床撞得这么平。男孩子摔一跤，跟它比，小得多。

爸爸又从口袋里掏出一张贴纸，是小明最喜欢的红星贴纸，贴在他没破的那只手掌上，说，这是勇敢章，摔了没跑的人才有。小明吸吸鼻子，问，那我算不算没跑。爸爸说，你坐在这儿生气，生气完了还愿意上车，这比不摔还了不起。

小明把破手掌吹了吹，扶起车。爸爸教他一个新口诀：眼看远处，手轻轻，脚画圆。眼看远处，就不怕河了；手轻轻，车把就听话；脚画圆，轮子就不断。

小明照着念，一遍，两遍，三遍。车居然直了，风再吹，也只是把衣角掀起来。他骑过河坝最宽的那一段，水在右手边亮晃晃地陪着他跑。

骑到坝头，小明跳下车，冲坝下的爸爸喊，爸爸！我会了！我会了！声音把坝上歇凉的鸭子都惊得扑棱棱飞。爸爸仰着脸笑，说，明天让你骑车给奶奶送信，敢不敢？小明把红星手掌举起来，说，敢！

第二天，小明真的骑着车，驮着一封信，叮铃铃地骑过河坝，骑到奶奶门口。奶奶拆开信，他坐在门槛上，给奶奶看手掌上的勇敢章。他说，摔跤不可怕，可怕的是坐在地上不起来。

The Badge of Courage on the River Dam

During the summer vacation, Xiao Ming went back to the countryside with Papa. The river dam at the village entrance was wide and flat, the best place in the world to learn riding. Xiao Ming stared at the old bicycle the village children had ridden, his eyes bright like two little lamps. Papa patted the seat and said, want to learn? We start today.

The wind on the dam was strong. As soon as Xiao Ming got on, a gust pushed the handlebars toward the river. He panicked and squeezed the rear brake shut. The rear wheel hopped twice on the stone slab, there was a clang, and Xiao Ming rolled off the side of the bike, his palm slapping onto a rough slab, scraped over a wide patch, burning hot.

Xiao Ming stared at the blood marks on his palm, his mouth turned down, and the tears fell. He sat on the dam and said he would not learn anymore, that the bike

bullied people. Papa did not hurry to pull him up. He let him cry for a while, then pointed at the river and said, look at this river. When it was little, it also crashed into stones, and it crashed for a thousand years before it made its riverbed this flat. One fall for a boy is much, much smaller than that.

Then Papa took a sticker out of his pocket, the red-star sticker Xiao Ming liked best, and stuck it on the palm that was not scraped, saying, this is the badge of courage, only for those who fall and do not run. Xiao Ming sniffled and asked whether that counted as not running. Papa said, you are sitting here angry, and when you finish being angry you are still willing to get back on the bike. That is more impressive than never falling.

Xiao Ming blew on his scraped palm and lifted the bike up. Papa taught him a new rhyme: eyes on the distance, hands light, feet drawing circles. If your eyes are on the distance, you are not afraid of the river; if your hands are light, the handlebars obey; if your feet draw circles, the wheels never stop.

Xiao Ming repeated it as he rode, once, twice, three times. The bike actually went straight, and when the wind blew again it only lifted the hem of his shirt. He rode across the widest part of the dam, the water shining on his right hand side, running along with him.

Riding to the end of the dam, Xiao Ming jumped off and shouted down to Papa, Papa, I can do it, I can do it. The shout startled the ducks resting on the dam into fluttering flight. Papa looked up with a face full of smile and said, tomorrow I will let you ride across to bring a letter to Grandma, dare you? Xiao Ming raised his red-star palm and said, dare.

The next day, Xiao Ming really rode across the dam with a letter on the bike, ding-a-ling all the way to the door of Grandma. Grandma opened the letter, and he sat on the threshold showing her the badge of courage on his palm. He said that falling is not terrible; what is terrible is sitting on the ground and not getting up.