

A Boy's Bike

DIANE LOCKWARD

One morning a bike appears in our driveway,
at the end where we can't not notice it, where
someone who's not being careful will crush it.
A boy's bike, lying on its side like a wounded
animal, black, with green neon streamers
on the handlebars, a well-worn bike with rusty
chain, broken kickstand. It's not our bike, and
we don't want it. We phone the police to ask
if anyone's reported a missing bike. No one has,
and the cop doesn't care about the bike. Maybe
he has crimes to deal with. Things disappearing,
not bikes appearing. We can't throw it in the trash.
We know that somewhere a boy is missing
his bike. Maybe he'll search here and pedal away.
Problem solved. But days go by and no boy
shows up. We begin to worry about the missing
boy. And so it is that our worries double. And then
they triple for we are missing him, and we don't
even know him, but maybe we know a boy like him,
a boy who once lived here, a boy who once took
his sister's new Schwinn without permission, sped
down a hill, and fell, the pedal slashing the back
of his ankle, and he limped home, raised his foot,

and said, *Look, Mom!* a slice so clean no blood yet,
the bone inside white as cuttlefish, and later stitches
and pain. Lesson learned: If you take a bike without
permission, you get hurt. Somewhere a mother hurts;
she is missing her boy. Somewhere a boy hurtles
downhill, out of control, hands off the handles, brakes
failing, spokes of the wheels spinning like silver
plates, and he calls, *Look, Mom!* his face flashing by
so fast we can't see him, but we know this boy
is our boy, and we are there waiting for him to hit
the point of impact, longing for him to find his way
home, to come to us with his bloodless wounds.