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.