

POSSESSIONS

He wants to see the bike start moving, without his son. He wants to see the blue one-speed come alive; kickstand rise from the ground, the bike find its balance, the wheels begin to turn, pedals pumping harder with each rotation. He imagines the bike performing his son's daily good-bye ritual for the last time: circling the house on a worn path, close to the green board fence, gaining top speed and shooting out onto the sidewalk. He wills the bike toward a new destination, a different house. Someone else's boy.

He feels the key turn in his hand, hears the small click when he moves room to room, locking the front and back doors after his son comes home from school. He can hear the soft clang of metal when he drops the key down a cold air vent. His son will leave his books on the table, eat a quick sandwich, and head for the front door. He can picture his boy finding the door locked, trying the other, then pressing against the living room window, face flushed, watching his bike circle madly without him. An escape made under the escape artist's nose.

He knows his son won't understand at first; will grind questions and curses in his mouth, spitting out the questions, mumbling the curses. Not waiting for answers, thinking of a way to get free. His son will understand later he shouldn't stray so far. He didn't realize when he bought him the bike how often he'd be gone. His son biked with his friends to the creek outside of town. Met the new neighbors before they turned in their driveway.

He hears the kickstand go down, the front door slam. His son is home from school. Touching the metal key in his pocket, he walks toward the living room.