棉花糖化在手指上

棉花糖在化。粉色的糖丝塌在女儿的手指上，黏的，她把手举起来舔，舌头绕着圈。我蹲下来拿湿巾给她擦，她把手藏到背后，别擦，擦了就不得甜了。

半个钟头前，她站在棉花糖摊前，看糖在转动的杆上变成丝。她不出声，整个身子往前探，鼻尖几乎贴上玻璃。摊主把棉花糖递给她，她两只手捧着转过来，一路朝我走一路笑，棉花糖蹭在腮上，蹭出一道粉印子。

放风筝的差事归她爸。爷俩在大草坪上占了块地方，爸爸举着风筝，女儿攥着线轴。跑，爸爸喊一声，女儿冲出去，辫子在背后颠。风筝晃了两下，起来了。女儿回头，跟她爸的眼神撞在一处，两个人同时笑，像藏了一百年的秘密终于说出口。

我坐在长椅上看他们，膝盖上放着喝了一半的水瓶。草坪上全是跑动的孩子，大人散在外围，姿势都差不多，身子微微前倾，随时准备冲过去。隔两条椅子有位妈妈也在看自家孩子放风筝，我们的目光碰了一下，都笑了笑。谁也没说话，谁都明白。

风筝越飞越高，线绷直了。女儿撂下线轴，去追草地上风筝的影子，跳起来想抓住它。当然抓不住，影子从她脚底下溜走。她连跳了几下，一屁股摔坐在草地上。她没哭，坐在原地咯咯地笑，笑得眼睛闭紧，整个人缩成一团。我用手机拍照，拍下来的画面里，那点笑声一分都没装进去。

回家的路上她在推车里睡着了，一只手还半握着，像攥着棉花糖的形状。糖棍掉在车板上，风筝叠起来垫在她屁股底下。我把毯子给她拉到下巴，推着车沿人行道慢慢走。路灯一盏一盏亮起来，树影从她脸上扫过去。

到家她爸把她抱上楼。我去洗湿巾，发现桌上放棉花糖的地方留下一圈粉色的印子。我用手指抹了一下，还是甜的。

Cotton Candy Melting on Her Fingers

The cotton candy was melting. Pink sugar threads collapsed onto my daughter's fingers, sticky, and she raised her hand to lick them, her tongue going round and round. I crouched down to wipe her hand with a wet wipe, and she hid it behind her back. Do not wipe, she said, if you wipe it stops tasting sweet.

Half an hour earlier she had stood in front of the cotton candy stall, watching the sugar spin into threads on the turning rod. She made no sound, her whole body leaning in, the tip of her nose almost touching the glass. When the vendor handed her the candy, she held it with both hands, turned around, and walked toward me grinning, and the cotton candy pressed against her cheek, leaving a pink mark.

Flying the kite was her father's job. The two of them claimed a spot on the big lawn, he holding up the kite, she holding the spool. Run, he shouted, and she took

off, her braids bouncing behind her. The kite wobbled twice and climbed. She looked back, her eyes met her father's, and the two of them laughed at the same time, like a secret kept for a hundred years and finally told.

I sat on a bench watching them, a half-finished water bottle on my lap. The lawn was full of running children, and the adults scattered around them all held the same posture, leaning slightly forward, ready to rush over at any moment. A mother two benches away was also watching her child fly a kite, and our eyes met for a second, and we smiled at each other. Nobody spoke, and everybody understood.

The kite climbed higher, the string pulled taut. My daughter let go of the spool and chased the shadow of the kite across the grass, jumping up to catch it. Of course she could not. The shadow slid under her feet. She jumped several times and fell down onto the grass. She did not cry. She sat there and laughed out loud, laughing with her eyes shut tight and her whole body curled up. I took a photo with my phone, and the picture held not one part of that laugh.

On the way home she slept in the stroller, one hand still half closed, as if it remembered the shape of the cotton candy. The candy stick had fallen to the floor of the cart, and the kite was folded under her bottom. I pulled the blanket up to her chin and pushed her slowly along the sidewalk. The street lamps came on one after another, and tree shadows crossed her face.

When we got home, her father carried her upstairs. I went to wash the wet wipes and found a pink ring on the table where the cotton candy had been set down. I wiped it with my finger, and it was still sweet.

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