别在围裙上的锅铲

我们楼下的空地上，那阵子天天有个男孩在学车。车是绿色的，比他半个人还高，他爸爸把车座降到最低，他的脚还是只能踮着地。

我放学常绕到空地上玩，其实主要是看他们。男孩骑得凶，车头一会儿蹭着路牙，一会儿又甩向花坛，他爸爸跟在后面跑，公文包都没来得及放下。有一回他骑快了，前轮压上一片碎砖，车往右一歪，他往左跳，两头都没救成，人和车一起摔在空地的边沿上。那一声摔得又响又实。男孩坐在地上，先是看看自己的手，再看看围过来的人，然后嘴一瘪，哭出了声，哭得整片空地都听得见。

他妈妈是从楼道里出来的，围裙都没解，手里还拿着锅铲。她走过来，蹲在男孩跟前，没先看车，先看他的膝盖。裤腿磨破了，她拿围裙角去擦，擦不动，就回家端了半盆温水下来，蹲在那儿给他擦腿。擦完她把锅铲别在围裙带上，扶起那辆绿车，说，车立起来了，你也起来。男孩抽噎着不起来，她也不催，就蹲在旁边等。过了能有半分钟，男孩自己抓着车把站起来了。

再骑的时候他妈妈站在空地当中，两只手插在围裙兜里。男孩绕着圈骑，骑得歪，但一圈比一圈少歪。他爸爸蹲在路边系鞋带，系了半天没系完。天擦黑的时候男孩骑得已经像模像样，绕着空地一圈接一圈，车链子在暮色里咔哒咔哒地响，他妈妈端着空盆站在单元门口，看一辆车绕一块空地。

后来那片空地铺了沥青，再没见过绿车。听说男孩上初中了，骑得比谁都快。可我记得他坐在地上哭的那一场，也记得他妈妈蹲在泥边擦腿的样子，和那把别在围裙带上的锅铲。

The Spatula Tucked in the Apron

On the open lot below our building, for a stretch of days there was always a boy learning to ride. His bike was green and taller than half of him. His father dropped the seat to its lowest, and the feet of the boy could still only touch the ground on their toes.

After school I often detoured through the lot to play, though mostly I went to watch them. The boy rode wildly. The front wheel grazed the curb one moment and swung toward the flower bed the next, while his father jogged behind, briefcase still in hand, never setting it down. Once he rode too fast, the front wheel ran over a shard of brick, the bike tipped right, he jumped left, saved neither, and man and bike crashed together on the rim of the lot. That fall landed loud and solid. The boy sat on the ground, looked at his own hands first, then at the people gathering, then his mouth crumpled and he cried out, cried loud enough for the whole lot to hear.

His mother came out of the stairwell with her apron still on, a spatula in her hand. She walked over and squatted in front of him. She looked at his knee before she looked at the bike. The trouser leg was scraped through. She tried to wipe it with

the corner of her apron, could not, went home, and came back with a half-basin of warm water, squatting there to wash his leg. When she finished she tucked the spatula into her apron strap, lifted the green bike upright, and said: the bike is standing up, so you stand up too. The boy sobbed and stayed down. She did not hurry him; she just squatted beside him and waited. After perhaps half a minute, he grabbed the handlebar and got up by himself.

When he rode again, his mother stood in the middle of the lot with both hands in her apron pockets. The boy rode in crooked circles, but each circle a little straighter than the last. His father crouched by the curb tying his shoes and never finished tying them. By dusk the boy was riding like someone who knew how, lap after lap around the lot, the chain clicking through the gathering dark, while his mother stood at the building entrance holding the empty basin, watching one bicycle circle one open space.

Later the lot was paved with asphalt, and the green bike was never seen there again. People say the boy is in middle school now and rides faster than anyone. But I remember the fit of crying he had sitting on the ground, and his mother squatting at the edge of the dirt washing his leg, and that spatula tucked into her apron strap.