**Cherry Harvest**

Lorrie Ness

No one speaks.

We stand by the picnic table

with a hose threading through our feet.

Us cousins empty our pails into a pile,

use our hands to corral the berries before they roll off the edge.

Grandma tells us girls

that cherries with holes are not worth keeping,

and the rest need to be rinsed clean.

She points the nozzle at each of us in turn,

then fills a metal pail with water.

*There won’t be many that float,*

*but a few will always rise up against a wash.*

*Those should be cast aside too.*

Grandma clamps a cast iron cherry pitter to the table.

She scoops the firmest, most unblemished fruit

into the hopper.

I crank the handle that turns the blades.

Pits slide down one chute. Split flesh streams down another,

splatters into a bowl.