**Quarry**

Lorrie Ness

I was 12 years old the first time

a man squinted his eyes at me, rocked back on his heels.

He wore overalls and when he puckered his lips, his whistle

groped my whole body. He’d been hunting

with my uncle, who’d walked the distance to the shed

with two limp rabbits swinging at his side.

My uncle left him there in the gravel drive to unkennel the dogs.

Us kids were piling into a truck as he leered.

I froze, with one foot on the top of the tire,

my other leg straddling the side panel of the pickup’s bed.

Janie pulled me up and over the wheel well

before his reaching hand could pat my rear. He brought his palm down

on the truck’s red metal, gave it two good thumps instead —

but it was still my cheeks that burned.

*So yous all cousins huh? Betchu boys like the looks of this one huh?*

*Now I don’t wanna see no hanky panky.*

He wagged his finger at us.

None of us spoke. I huddled close to Janie, the only other girl.

It never occurred to me that some people would fool around

with family members. It never occurred to me

that I’d be mistaken for the type who would.

Janie and I sat shoulder to shoulder looking down,

our uncombed mops hanging in front of our eyes.

It’s not so much that our greasy hair had separated into clumps,

it’s that the dirty strands clung together, as if bonded by the oil.

My oldest cousin put the truck in gear,

drove us over the washboard ruts bisecting field after yellow field.

In the pickup bed, our bodies swayed side to side in unison.