**Say My Name**

Lorrie Ness

Before I could reach the cupboard without a stool,

but after I was big enough to pour the full jug by myself,

is when it slipped —

the plastic cup kids use so it doesn’t break

when dropped. Not every design meant to avoid disaster

plays the part. That day was the last time

dad spoke my name that year. It splattered

with the grape juice.

When he said I could earn my name back

only after the shag

no longer bore a purple stain,

he meant a kid is worthless until the bruises heal —

that the wounded are the ones who do the wounding.

After the crop tops and low-rise jeans

but before I learned to handle my bourbon

at parties, I heard the sound of others calling my name

as an unearned gift. Every boy who spoke it had come

to collect a debt.