**Tire Swing**

Lorrie Ness

The balloon, now withered on its string,

is still tied around a vase. Petals have unhinged

and come to rest as a mosaic on the table —

one more thing I’ll be guilty of

wiping away.

In our house, amends are no more than a burden.

Dad hangs his apology over a limb,

gives me an eyelet I’m expected to thread —

a tire swing is his answer

to shattered dishes, a wife who is mistaken

for her flesh and a daughter who is only a fraction

of them both.

The porch step is saddle backed

where I sit at sunset, wrapped in the silence I find

outside. I harden myself in the cool air and wait for the voices

to stop, for the screen door to slap. For my father

to walk out, motion me to follow,

then give the tire a nudge.

He needs me to ride it out. On this land

where I learn to shoulder his act of contrition,

forgiveness is a theft. Years of rain have ripened the rope.

I kick off with one leg, listening for it to snap.

The bough only groans, dips like the porch stoop

that expects my weight.