

Jump Rope: A Requiem

The girl who owned the rope
owned the power, queen of the block,

little mistress of the playground, hands
on hips, attitude so grown you'd think

she was someone's mama, not a pigtailed
girl hoarding lengths of twine in her

bedroom of marbles, jacks hitched
to red rubber balls. The girl who owned

the rope could order other girls
to turn on command—single turns

or double Dutch—arms cranking, faces
covered in shine, barrettes flying,

scabby knees giving way to muddy
sneakers. The girl who owned the rope

never let others borrow it, pouty mouth
twisted into *no, it's mine*, willing

to give it up only if some burly
older brother threatened to snatch it.

I wanted to be that girl, but never
was that girl—rope I found in the garage

not thick enough, heavy enough,
stiff enough for my committee

of sulky girls, my elite preening circle,
contingent of bubblegum and bruises.