

Nancy Underwood

MITCH LESCARBEAU

Or it may have been Susan.
Second grade; 1958—
Russians, Chinese, what were they?

Outside the classroom windows,
the ache of spring.

What did we know of hearts
like black canvas, that skeletons
could ride a horse to lather?

She was the first girl I wanted to touch.
What did I know? Where?

She breathed in
our classroom smell of pencil shavings
and floor wax.

And then she didn't.

Miss Maynard never said a word.

It was another time.

Next morning the little desks

re-shuffled in the night

to hide her absence,

which we carried in us.