

Jean Wong

Attendance

in first grade
my teacher wrote

My Name

on the blackboard because
I was arranging my crayons
and hadn't heard her say:

Put your hands in your lap and look at me

the name sprawled like white
 ghost lines was
 left to

screech

all morning

the next day more shame
was smeared

I see Joan is paying attention today

Could I have stood, told her and

myself

before splayed on the board

I was there

my crayon colors

blinking like flower stalks

afterwards

Second-Place Winner
2021 Redwood Writers Fall Poetry Contest

I disappeared
into a thick choke
of chalk

it took years to re-surface

wary cautious

attentive