

Hotblood

What a horse Medio could have been—
Sixteen hands, eleven fifty
And grandson of Man-o-War
On his father's side
Red sorrel with two white feet
And a star,
A coat as fine as mouse fur
That rippled over thoroughbred lean.

Foaled in Montana as a remount,
Rough broke at three
Then turned out to grass
When the cavalry quit buying.

He was five when he came to me—
Gaunt from the railroad car
And hotblood wild—more untameable
Than any desert-caught mustang.

I was sixteen
And thought I knew my horses
From a Welsh pony
And a Morgan-Hambletonian cross.
I knew about gentling them down
With grain and curry comb,
And snubbing to a tame horse
And riding on plowed ground
And holding their heads up
So they couldn't buck.

But it wasn't enough.

I lost count of the times
He pulled his head loose
And threw me off.

And he ran away with me—
Two miles on a paved road,
Running like the leader in a race—
Paying no attention
To my seesawing the reins—
Until he was stopped by a brick wall.

Once we put him in a chute
To check his feet
And he kicked at one of us
And ripped his velvet hide
On a projecting nail,
And then frantic, he kicked again
And again and again—
Until the leg was ruined
And he had to be destroyed.

I've known men like that.

—John S. Harris