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Wild Horses

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We're walking through dry dirt, smells
of sagebrush hard upon my
nostrils, caught up in the dust
swept up by the horse's
hooves in front of me. Creamy
brown in colour and texture,
his rump sways indecisively
from side to side. The warm
creature between my own legs
molds my spine into his
rhythm. The rhythm similar
to that of a small child sobbing
against a shoulder, a steady
shudder and shift against me,
jerking occasionally, catching a

hoof on a rock. It took awhile
to actually cry after they told me
about the accident. I was
only eight and had been colouring
splendidly whirling lines at
my safe and comfortable dining room
table, when my dad, framed in the doorway,
hung up the red phone in the kitchen
and told me Molly Roe was dead.

The beat of my heart, a slight pause
at my drawing, and my reply of a simple
nod, struggling through peanut butter
in my mind to recall a face, the girlfriend
who this was. Being pulled into my
mother's soft shoulder, oblivious to
the tears blurring the magenta, the periwinkle on
my paper, a cavern growing exponentially
within my chest, pushing my heart

into quick gallops, as quick as our
gallops had been that past Labor Day
weekend throughout the length of
her ranch-style house, flying through
halls as wild horses, racing out to cross
the creek complacently curting the
property lines; leaving in our dust other
guests, lengthy adult conversations,
and the many plastic horses in her
collection that worked fine only on days
less perfect than this. Her body silent
now in front of me, fingers meshed
into perfect prayer, worn string
friendship bracelets encircling one
wrist – minus the one I had been too
shy to give. How could she have been
so injured by that other car but still
look like this? The hand holding mine
pulls me away, my stomach ill after
swallowing so much of my own senseless
saliva and snot. “God must have needed
another angel”, an elderly woman soothes.
The dark green shirt of my father sticks to
my face, I want to be behind the drawn curtain
with the family members saying good-bye
drilling holes in my heart, draining my strength.

Rocking me, my dad holds me to his
warm body; his legs plod methodically
beneath me and the dry expanse of desert
lengthens in my sight, ripples of hot air,
my dry throat, tongue sticking to
the palate of my mouth thick and salty.