

the HARLEQUIN

Cindy Hunter Morgan

Knotweed

This morning the horses were cross
when I showed up to feed them.
They blocked the ladder to the hay mow,
would not meet my gaze.
You old stick in the mud, I said,
just like my grandfather, but they did not budge.
Still, I got their hay and fluffed the flakes
like Easter basket grass.
The horses bowed their heads, licking
their grain bins and flicking their tails.
I patted their rumps and left.

In the hospital, I saw my grandfather's legs
for the first time: purple veins hardened
like the stems of Japanese knotweed, knees
swollen like nodes on the stem.
He told me of hallucinations, how
in the fog of delirium the geometry
of this world kept bleeding angles
when he tried to define the slope of the barn.
He asked about the horses, but only said
the names of the dead ones.

Now in the amber afternoon,
they stretch their heads over the rail
and nicker. I slip under the fence
beside their skinny legs, ropy
as blue beech. I could be among trees.
How mutable, the stuff of this world.
I feed them apples, one each,
and brush them until they shine,
their lost hair blowing away,
then settling like tufts of wintered grass.

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