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Hotblood

John S. Harris

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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

John S. Harris is a professor of English at Brigham Young University.