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Riding to Devil's Kitchen

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Abstract

I ride Moose today,

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Riding to Devil's Kitchen

by Donna L. Emerson

I ride Moose today,
a deep chestnut gelding.
Sixteen hands, strong, steady gait and slow.
His soft nose likes my hand;
his darker mane lifts as I riffle it.

His eyes hold me still.
Deeper than dark pools, the shape of wide almonds.
What is it about a horse's eyes that makes me feel seen,
known, when they look at me? I'm lost in them.

Familiar, the press of stirrups.
Their certainty.

Alan, gone now eight years,
showed me how to ride easy in the saddle,
loving the sound of horse hooves on a path, their echo,
the sound of leather pressing leather
as our bodies moved up and down
with the horse's gait.

Astride this horse, wider than I remember horses,
my haunches stretch, widen.
The warm feel of his body comforts me.
Leather reins in my hand natural for going this way and that.
The distance to the ground just right
for viewing wetlands and woods.

We amble to Devil's Kitchen, near Lassen.
My hands can't help stroking his long neck,
even though I have to pull him back from eating leaves.

Moose's muzzle nuzzles me when I remove the bridle.
I hold an apple in my open palm.
He gobbles it up, careful not to bite fingers,
slobbering up my arms.

Alan joked when we were teens
that girls like to ride horses
because they feel stimulated by the ride.
I told him that was not true.

Girls love horses because a horse's eyes draw us in.
We can't see the bottom. Only know we want to go there…