

**To Some Women I Have Known, by Re'Lynn Hansen, copyright 2015,  
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**The Ghost Horse**

We were going to get a horse. The horse would give us meaning.  
Or a feeling we didn't have sitting in lecture halls during the day or waiting on tables at night.

We would ride the horse from Illinois to Colorado and meet people along the way who would also give us meaning.

Before we went to see the horse, my friend June bought a pair of English riding boots in butter yellow. She found them at the local Goodwill. Four dollars.

The horse handler had a Guns N' Roses t-shirt and slapped at the horse's chest. The horse went crazy. He pawed the ground and the steam from his nostrils hung in the darkened stables.

As soon as June mounted, her boots slid from the stirrups. The horse was gone like a ghost train, all light and muscle flying past.

And June was a horizontal dash on top of it—frightening and comical—the stirrups bounced and flew beneath her, useless apparatus to hook on the rider.

There was a sift of snow on the stubbled wheat outside the corral, and I thought this had some meaning.

I felt the moment pressing upon me, perhaps knew how I would remember it: whitened girls on a whitened landscape with Ghost Horse.

*Freakin' sideshow hell horse*, the horse handler shouted. The horse breached the corral, jumped a low gate. The horse-hand ran and tried to stop him. *Whoa! Whoa!* Several times the horse handler had to ditch.

June hung on. The horse slowed itself.

Then for a moment she looked like god on a horse, straight in the saddle. It was as we had imagined ourselves—we who did not believe in god, but horses.

The horse handler grasped the reins. June dismounted, and we walked away. There was a bus stop at the cul-de-sac, before the fields and stables. Turning back I saw the horse handler standing there with the reins of the colossal horse, a dejected giant, a Trojan horse, the Appaloosa, a clown of a horse,  
that meant everything was huge and luminous and dying.

## There's a Shoe on Your Plate

I shouldn't mention again that my grandmother was known as the best ballroom dancer, if only by her circle of elder friends—and a grower of roses, though she planted only the hot colors, the candy oranges.

Nor should I mention the nursing home and sitting with her on her bed that day with the book of roses I had brought and stopping to look out the wired window at the autumn trees.

Nor should I recall following the shape of her hands as she moved them to mimic the trees outside. Her arms tilted like branches.

Nor remember the words she said—*Look, the trees are dancing.*

Nor should I recall that I looked at the trees beyond the wired window, beyond the curb of the parking lot and noticed, sure enough, one could say they were dancing. Sometimes the branches swayed in pairs. Sometimes they dipped and caught each other. For this she hugged herself.

She is passed now and these moments should dissipate and not be frozen.

I should not note that out in the hall across from us, a man in a wheelchair had a tray of lunch in front of him and was putting a shoe on his plate, and another man in a wheelchair across from him was yelling, *Don't put your shoe on that plate! Don't put your shoe on that plate!*

Nor should I further note that the first man continued to arrange his shoe on his dinner plate. Taking a comb from his pocket, he combed the laces carefully down each leathered side of the shoe and pressed the tips of the laces into some lettuce, mayo, and tomato. The man, who had been yelling, now laughed and said, *There's a shoe on your plate!*

And how ridiculous it would be to note this momentary sadness, because no one there that day was sad. Certainly not the man arranging his shoe on the plate, nor the grandmother staring out the wired window. And yet, there we were pinned—this grandmother swaying, this granddaughter watching this choreographer with a shoe, while the other shouted, *There's a shoe on your plate.*

And before the whole thing breaks apart, there must be something more to say.

