

Horsepower

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Inside you are horses dashing mad
against the racetrack and horses
yoked to the plow before sunrise,

and someone is always trying to steal
the quiet from your body.

As you drive to work each morning,
past that meadow where the horses live
behind the fences that separate them

from the road, you point them out
to your son. Horses, you say to be sure
he sees them wandering out in the snow.

That's how it is with the quiet
that was once yours, the horses grazing
where no one has ever prayed

and if this were a poem about the soul,
it would be a poem full of angels
eating the bleeding sky and salvation

is absent save for the stillness of a horse
near the highway with a blanket on its back.

You could say a quick prayer, sing it loud
with the radio, if you believed that noise
could somehow calm the horses inside you,

horses harnessed to heavy carts jangling
with each lash of the whip, horses
galloping hard, wide-eyed, frantic
with each gash of the spur.

You could say the horses' names
but your son wouldn't hear you break
the quiet—he isn't with you on the drive

to work this morning. He is at school
where you left him to play with other kids
who can't see the horses shiver.

