

# Unsaddled

Contributed by Elizabeth J. Colen

Goodbye, Deborah had said after the third long goodbye. This fourth would stick, she thought. Fist in hand. He could not keep from leaving her. By leaving I do not mean leaving, I mean only that he saw other girls.

He had paused then and looked at her like horses do, that slightly sideways angle of the head, dark, open eyes blinking only when they have to, afraid they'll miss something or be sideswiped somehow if they don't stay trained on the object at hand.

In hand, a rock, the shards of glass surround. They would have had much, but they would never have had language between them. Star dark inside the living room, torn curtain (but that's how it's always been), the broken window. When she looked out the new round flaw in the living room's large pane, the wind whistling through and the cat whining from the floor, when she looked out she heard the stop and start static of retreat, felt the warmth of hidden anger, the grey orb of shadow creeping over trees. The beach wanted her so bad sand kicked in from the coast, roiling on the wave of wind through the maw. When I say sand, I mean every sense she'd ever had came back to her. His willing hands, his grand mouth, the way he spoke and said nothing at all, the moan, the deep-throated grunts, his bow legs. When I say sense I guess I mean the gritty way she loved him. His ass in profile, his round, hard ass then cradled in her hands.

Another stone sailed through, a descended angle. The cat scattered. The round shadow grew, the blowtorch static grew, her love, a bright balloon on the front lawn of everything she'd ever let go of. She let go of the gun in her hand, pulled the hair out of her mouth. His horse eyes. She would never forget how she put her fingers right through the black of his pupils, fingered the soft mass behind and found girl parts, arms and legs, ears, breasts, feet, belly, bottom, brunettes and blondes, and found his fingers on them. Worse, the open palms of his hands, his lifeline sliding over. His flesh was warm, skin thick, the jelly of his eyes came away in her hands. She wiped them on her jeans. Jelly eyes, horse eyes. Skin thick. A neigh. Cheap mane, a bad hair cut. A boy, a horse. Girl parts. A braided tail.

Deborah brushed the sand from her face, took a last look at the putrefying horse, and stepped into the hot-air balloon forever.