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Valiant

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The Valiant

Mike Vanden Bosch

“ . . . The valiant never taste of death but once.”
Julius Caesar, II, ii, 32

Donis, the colt, was blessed with limber legs;
Donna, her mother, had legs like cedar posts.

Donis's hooves cut a sharp circle in the dust;
Donna's curled up in front like an old shoe.

Donis's body throbbed with the yearning of youth;
Donna's throbbed with the creaking aches of age.

When they raced, all bets were on darling Donis,
his odds written well on his rippling thighs.

No one bet on dauntless Donna, the old mare, bony
spine a bare ridge, shanks shriveled to sticks.

From the start, manes and tails whipped the wind,
but Donis rollicked along while Donna rocketed.

Donis was dreaming of grazing in green pastures;
Donna, of finishing fast and fierce in every race.

Donis's nostrils sniffed mown alfalfa perfume;
Donna's flared nostrils fought for an inch of fame.

We think of Donis's graceful loping often; we
write songs of Donna's galloping on gray guts.