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Pony Passage*

Mike Vanden Bosch

Bert set me bareback on a shetland pony
and galloped beside him, bareback.
He would not spoil pony or me,
three-year-old brother, bouncing
like a teddy bear on the trotting pony.

“Just hang on to his mane,” he puffed.
Good advice to one with legs two feet
too short to hug a pony’s side.
Neither pony nor I knew what saddles were;
Bert knew they were for sissies.

Hair exploding, we flew, terror and
pleasure blending as in an eaglet
pushed by his mother from her nest
on the cliff. I was spoiled, no more
content to ride, hair flat and parted,
a bald stick pony tame as a church pew.

*This poem appeared in the 1996 edition of
Lyrical Iowa under the title “Big Brother.”