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The Horse We Lie down In

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The Horse We Lie Down In ·
Frannie Lindsay

For Helen

We are burning the horse down
building a bonfire
of hocks and jaws
and the big soft bellows
that carry their quiet
tons of air like a dose
of black.

We have coated the shoes
with brass
to walk with the flames
up to the eyes at the top,
the brown stars;
the moon in the heart
like a face of the human hoof
at the molten gut's gate.

The horse is a grave
too hot to lie down in.
The bit melts and drips free
and the stirrups hang
like remnant rungs
from a fast ladder of kicks.
The saddle breaks
and curling leather
chunks down.
The mane's a bristled aura now,
and the wind quits
at the flank.
No tail. Only a line of
ashes, ashes:
the horse falls in
and we wait

till the night's a cave
we're painted on,
and the skull stares in like a witness.