Roanoke Valley

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HEARTBEAT

My father’s eyes fix again on nothing.
My mother cries, and holds his mad wrists against her forehead for the seventh day.
Heartbeat: 212.

In the riverbed, a nervous, bloodhaired roan sniffs the darkness curled at the wind’s edge.
And runs; and can’t stop.

Nostrils blaring.
Mad hooves clattering on the shale.

David St. John

ROANOKE VALLEY

I have never seen such stuck-up mountains: their valleys look like they belong always to someone else. Here accent is taken up with fine horses; it braids their tails, expecting Saturday and all other hurdles to go right.

If I were staying, I would talk up what goes into dogfood, sell the foxes into fur.

I am used to mountains taken up with snow, to valleys that belong to anyone who wants them; it is the women who go about in braids there, and naked when fine occasions come up.

Mark McCloskey