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Man of the Field

Abstract

The man got kicked in the head by a mare
ripped inside birthing her foal. He staggered,
tried in his stupor to make the mother

Keywords

animals, farm, woman



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Man of the Field

Gary Dop

The man got kicked in the head by a mare
ripped inside birthing her foal. He staggered,
tried in his stupor to make the mother

feed. His head dripped a bright red,
and her insides bled into the browns
of the damp dirt and hay. Beside the unlicked colt,

the man's hands twitched as he passed out,
and the little horse stood over the mess
having nursed the last of his mother.

The man woke after a three-week coma,
grunted at his wife, *Don't touch me*, swore
for the first time in 22 years, shoved

his teenage daughter when she raised
her voice, and put his fist through
the drywall while listening to the morning

news. Long ago when alone in the barn
as a foal first stood, its legs arguing

toward a stiff compromise, he'd wipe tears

with his dirty sleeve and whisper prayers
for the beasts of the field. Yesterday,
the man filled a Winchester shell with a heavy load,

and in the pasture, he found the foal
and brought the barrel to its brow. He couldn't
tug the trigger till he turned the gun around.

The man's body sprawled both sides
of the thin buzz of electric fence. Beside a patch
of purple weeds and dry manure, the foal,

determined and lean, was the first to consider
the body and walk away.

Gary Dop—poet, scriptwriter, essayist, and actor—lives with his wife and three daughters in Minneapolis, where he teaches creative writing at North Central University. He received a Special Mention in the *2011 Pushcart Prize Anthology*, his essays have aired on public radio's *All Things Considered*, and his poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Agni*, *New Letters*, *Rattle*, and *North American Review*, among others.

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