

ADAM JAHIEL

*Remuda #1, YP Ranch Stateline Camp,
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Photographic print, 30 x 30 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

DION O'REILLY

The Mare in the Road

Midnight, the blacktop in front of me
familiar in the headlights and coastal fog.
Suddenly, horses with sweaty coats
careen across my path,
racketing like an avalanche,
twenty or so, in an instant
before they gallop down a ravine.

Gone, except one, still standing
on three good legs.
Struck by a car speeding around the bend
or kicked in the bucking frenzy,
stranded now, immobile.
I pull over, walk to the chestnut mare,
her head down, ears quivering and veined
like sable leaves, her smell strong
like sap from an old tree.

She looks at me, her eyes a full
glazed brown with no white,
then moves her head violently,
like nodding *Yes*.

No halter, so I pull at the forelock,
click softly, nudging her away
from the danger. It's so hard
with her cannon bone,
the long one below the knee, bent
like a broken branch,
but she blows out her wet nostrils
and limps off the bloody road
to the shoulder where we wait.

When the vet arrives, finally,
I stand, one hand on the blaze
crowning her forehead, the other squeezing
the muscled crest of her neck,
and her life—

the onion smell of meadows, the small
warm herds, the shimmering leaves
in the wind above the trails—
all of it canters in the darkness.

Dion O'Reilly has spent much of her life on a farm in the Santa Cruz Mountains in California. Her poetry appears or is forthcoming in *Sugar House Review*, *Rattle*, *the Sun*, *Canary*, *Spillway*, *Bellingham Review*, *Atlanta Review*, and a variety of other literary journals and anthologies, including the Lambda Literary's anthology *Emerge*. Her work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and the Intro Journals Project, and was sent to the judges for the Folio Poetry Contest.