

Proud Flesh

Anita Tanner

Dad doctors Rudy's leg,
torn and jagged
just above the hoof
enmeshed in barbed wire.
I watch him smooth salve,
his fingers caressing
our horse's wound grown dark,
the flesh made stronger
by Father's benediction.
He teaches me about proud flesh,
how growth fills the hole
of every wound.

Over time
in Father's flesh
that abundance comes back
with the same passion—
the reddened mound
in the center of his chest
after the bolthole
when he fell from a runaway,
the scar tissue like a night crawler
encircling and stiffening
his forefinger that slipped
into a blade at the sawmill,
the traffic of time
making wounds, lines
to harrow his face
like a farm field.

Inside his casket
where his flesh lies
withered from his normal weight,
wounds echo in my head,
reverberate in my flesh,
all flesh being proud,
proud all the way
through the end.