Herd

I felt hands cup my eyes, lower the lids, and hold them until they stopped shuddering, like in the story, when the girl covers a horse’s eyes to calm it, release it from standing watch.

You and I stood next to each other in a business meeting, yes, at work, shoulder to shoulder our invisible shadows smoldering.

Then I lay down on my side, stretched out my four legs, a horse able to sleep, safe with its herd watching.

In my body I felt the warmth of the ground connect with the hot of the sun, a current carried the feel of your starched shirt and the grit of dirt against my cheek.

Your name drifted away into pallid clouds, mine started to follow, and a tongue new to me in reach reached to lick them back.

Or maybe it was you who lay down like a horse giving itself to dreams.

Your muscles twitched. Heat rose off your body like remorse exploring the air for mercy.

All this I knew, being your herd, and sharing your restlessness for tall grass, wind playing over a prairie that hides bird skull, a brass brooch, teeth.

Could our colleagues smell the horses, the horse heat, the horse breath?
I heard “oysters,” whispered in my ear as if I had asked your favorite food.

No, I’d asked how many carrots a horse eats in a day.

We didn’t speak of what we didn’t know
how to hold in our hands.

As always the day fell.
The night caught it as always.