First Day with Prancing Dan

James A. Emanuel
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1  We called him Prancing Dan,  
    my brother Raymond and me;  
    beautiful this restless horse  
    (his bright-copper sidestepping—  
    ballet-like, prairie style),  
    teenager like us, as horses go,  
    Nebraska–born too,  
    bred on whirlwind-dust and knobby hail,  
    harnessed too young, like us  
    (men by necessity).

2  Now teamed with a veteran mare,  
    bit in his teeth as pride commanded,  
    he gritted his way through morning,  
    the long blade of his mowing-machine  
    laying cut-down stems of wheat like carpet,  
    re-coloring the yellowing field  
    till noon.

3  At the water-tank  
    Dan’s nose plunged first and deeper,  
    the mare’s downreined by harness laws,  
    both circling blowbubbles,  
    his upsnorted  
    as if to shake out ditties  
    from his leathered chains.

4  The afternoon, all his,  
    surrendered with elegance:  
    an orange-and-purple butterfly,  
    settling on his perky mane,  
    rode plume with him home.
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