

CutBank

Volume 1
Issue 23 *CutBank* 23

Article 18

Fall 1984

Falling

Beatrix Gates

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Gates, Beatrix (1984) "Falling," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 23 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss23/18>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

Falling

I

The mare shies under me streaming
sideways my knees fold and unfold

like wings against the dark leather.
The curb and snaffle lace through

my fingers and my palms bristle
with her gray mane. I lean against

the center of gravity: her long dappled
shoulders whitewater over her bones.

A shot in the open field,
she rears up, eyes

white the hunter in her
washed away the quick blue

flashing of her metal shoes.
As I fall, I look through my hands, see

flags of light reins loose ribbons
and want to cover my face.

II

The mare returns to her stall, her
dappled coat dotted with indigo, the liniment
and salve for her wounds

that never heal the ropes that tie her
keep her steady on her feet out and
far away from the milky webbed walls.

She has splintered two stalls
kicking steady as a mule and here paws
the floor bald in a few hours, neatly

squaring all the hay behind her
outside the need for four walls
outside her high sensate head.

Her taste instead is for space and she chews
the wood to tufts around the latches'
glinty screwed-in stubs.

Let out, she runs
over fences, just mended, over ground, just dug
over her shadow rippling under her hooves.

III

I wake sitting up. Eyes
plunge the dark—the raw
current sprints my spine,
the unknown breaks in waves vertebrae.

I am afloat on my bed sheets peeled down
as she flies by the open window,
a trail of tiny bubbles
blurring the glass. She's out.

I run to meet her, a spastic swimmer
through the doors pawing at the openings.
The cold mud seeps back in the quick
impression of her hooves smoothed over.

I listen for the return of hoofbeats.
We stand off—a steady arm raised, points
and follows the mare as she looms
in and out of the trees.

We run to track her, not to catch her.
She will fall and we are running short of breath.
The frontyard mud sends her down
thrashing snake-like on the ground.

Talking low to the mare's deaf dread
we pull the knot tight.
She is listening to everything
outside this night the black holes

where her hooves have been. Her eyes
film the unseen—the drowned birds
of her life let themselves down,
slow weights that surface in her dapples,

the perfect stones with no edges.
Her nostrils deepen red—the thin coat of blood
bubbles with her breath. Our hands rise up to touch
the mare whose chest is not rising.

We fall away, fence the fear
from ourselves, stiffen with
the widening of our own sight—
no longer one, no longer two, no longer three.