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Youth

The time between loving the world and mourning it
was very slim – barely wider than the space between your fingers.

At my uncle's farm, my cousin and I made him angry
by throwing hay from the window of his barn.
What did we know of life, of profit or of agriculture?

In the fields nearby we found a white horse, loose,
wearing a saddle but no reins.
We took turns to ride her, though we did not know how,
and the sun clattered in the sky above us, a brace of dropped pans.

When I was on her, she started to gallop, and I fell,
foot caught in the stirrup, dragged through the stony dust.
Death flashed like a mouth of bright teeth, but I did not see it.
I wriggled out, and we stood laughing at my filthy look—
body red and brown like an ant, face bruised and gravelled.

We had not begun to mourn then,
and even our own suffering was distant, joyously repressed,
waiting for some future self who might pick it up,
dig their nails in, pay attention.

We were still short, low down, close to the earth.
Summer smelt like our own sweat,
floral body spray and hot pink jelly shoes,
and always outside in the dirt, or on the road,
something was happening.