

Gone to grace

by [Sydney Lea](#) in the [October 2, 2013](#) issue

Before Malcolm's funeral got started,  
I stood talking with John the blacksmith, who told me  
He'd been spending some pretty hard hours  
With a pair of two-year-old Friesian mares  
Who'd never had their feet trimmed.  
In a flash, I thought of a feral donkey  
In Ireland, back thirty years,

Poor animal, lowly mount of the Christ,  
Hobbling on hooves long as breadloaves.  
This had nothing whatever to do with Malcolm,  
But somehow it did, as it happened.  
Malcolm had once pronounced me as husband.  
A wonder. I'd gotten the girl,  
More than the clumsy hero can fathom

When it crops up in sappy movies.  
So Malcolm is part of a long, joyful marriage,  
And the family it made, including  
The children he baptized. One reading  
Came from a funny note  
He'd left for the pastor, which said in part:  
"Non-judgment day is coming,

Beware." I could virtually *feel* Malcolm's voice,  
Insisting as ever that God  
Was too big to conform to anyone's will.  
There was no one so evil or ill  
To have strayed beyond the Lord's grace, he claimed.  
He was frumpy and funny but mostly  
Just good. An accomplished athlete as well,

Improbably fierce on the courts,  
Although he loved his every opponent,  
He'd wanted his ashes interred  
In a tennis-ball can. It might seem absurd  
That I conjured horse or burro,  
But as we mourners chuckled and wept,  
I imagined I heard soft words,  
Malcolm's, and knew his hand would have stroked

Those neglected, suffering creatures.  
That funeral day, for all who were there,  
Was so painful I'd almost swear  
It hurt them to stand on God's green earth.  
For my part at least I wished  
I could somehow walk for a while on air.