

Mark Irwin

Rider

As I carried my mother from the hospital bed
across the room toward the chair by the window,
she played with my gold watch as if it were a toy,
flipping the strap up and down, then singing *Giddyup*,
Giddyup, but as I looked at her she did not smile
so I nodded my head, snorted, then put a pencil
in my mouth, as bit, and cantered about the room
till I was out of breath, puffing, and she patted me, saying,
Good boy, Good boy, so I pawed the carpet, slobbering a little
like her, as she waved and I nodded my mane
until this was how we said goodbye one spring
while the sun shrank to a white-hot BB among a thousand
others receding in the jeweled, black sky as the rivers
galloped away with her breath through the dark green land.