

*Marjorie Saiser*

## In the Dream the Horse

In the dream the horse  
crashes through the wall,  
crashes through the china cabinet  
into my grandmother's kitchen.  
Crashing but without splinters,  
landing stiff-legged on the  
linoleum of her kitchen  
beside the china cabinet where  
she keeps the strange sugar  
spoon that I like to eat  
with. The strange bowl  
of the spoon, scalloped  
like a sea shell, strange edges  
to my mouth. I would see the  
spoon in the drawer of the  
china cabinet and ask her if

I could eat with it and she  
would laugh and say yes.  
Now I want to say to  
her though she is  
dead for years: You did  
not protect me. You  
did not protect me from

his mean fingers, onions on his  
breath. I think of the  
carcass of a goat I saw  
in the back of his old-  
fashioned black car, the  
meat and fat and bones of  
the little goat wrapped

in a sheet in the back,  
the car bouncing across the  
shortgrass prairie, my

grandfather driving  
across the pasture to his  
windmill to look over his  
cattle, or my grandfather  
lying on the davenport in  
the front room, his feet  
in his work shoes propped  
on the wooden arm of the  
davenport. His arms crossed  
over his big belly overalls,  
listening to the voice in the  
radio describe a prize fight  
or give the market report.  
Sometimes my grandmother  
in the kitchen frying  
pancakes big as a plate.  
The smell of bacon grease  
and the crisp edge around  
the pancake, my grandfather  
and me at the round table,  
my grandmother bringing  
a hot pancake on a spatula to  
him at the table and I knew  
she did not love him because  
I heard her talking low to  
herself, whenever he was  
out of the house, talking  
about him, about his  
shoes and his coal and his sheep.  
The horse comes down stiff-legged  
on the other side of the wall,  
between the china cabinet  
and the round oil-cloth  
table. On the other side of

the wall is my grandparents'  
 bedroom, the bed filling the  
 room, my grandfather's heavy

body sagging the plain no-grace  
 bed. Smell of clothes and house  
 dust. I tell her as she sits  
 behind the Warm Morning coal  
 stove, I tell her fingers tapping  
 on her knees, her old dark  
 dress, big bones of her feet  
 rounding out the black  
 leather of her shoes,  
 her stockings thick and not  
 beautiful, You did not  
 protect me. Tapping her  
 fingers and cursing him but  
 not by name, repeating things  
 he said and recounting things he  
 did and did not do. The big horse,

heavy legs, landing stiff-legged.  
 The head, the neck, the bridle,  
 my feet in the stirrups, leaping  
 over the china cabinet,  
 the sugar spoon in it, landing  
 in the kitchen, the windows on the  
 north, the round table, the poor  
 white plates, the forks scraping  
 against them. The round-faced  
 Irish English man, mean short round  
 fingers. Dark curving line of  
 the china cabinet, curved glass  
 not to be replaced if broken,  
 doilies, velvet lining the drawer,  
 forks stacked together,  
 thin shell-shaped spoon,  
 green tea in the poor  
 white cups. The old woman  
 who gave to her canary slices of

apple and to her granddaughter  
 slices of homemade bread,  
 good white bread  
 cut on the wooden board and  
 the loaf put back in the drawer in tea  
 towels. The slice spread with  
 chokecherry jelly. Getting up  
 heavily from behind the  
 stove or out of the rocker  
 when her granddaughter asked  
 for another slice. The child in a

darkened bedroom with the measles,  
 the shade pulled over the  
 open window in the hot room, the  
 shade moving, slapping the sill.  
 The grandmother sponging  
 the girl's face with a  
 wet cloth, but then also,  
 at some other time,  
 leaving the child

unprotected with him,  
 the grandmother, easy as putting a slice  
 of apple into the canary's cage,  
 pressing the soft white apple  
 to stay against one of the wires  
 of the cage, taking her flashlight  
 and walking downtown on Wednesday night,

the child, four years old,  
 under the library table in the  
 front room, crouching  
 in her underwear  
 among the stacks  
 of old farm magazines.