

My Plastic Childhood Christmas Knight 3
by Jerry Prager

Dust webs between his elbows and the haunch of his horse,
both rider and charger holding up well: the white stallion,
still legless and tail-less, proudly pretending
the page I moved them onto is a snow field
and that his legs are buried, its neck still defiantly aimed
where it was always fixed, but I've turned the knight's head
in its socket to face what the horse has been facing for years,
for decades, veering right since inception,
the knight usually gazing off to his left, or behind him,
until now, but the rooms and the views have changed
however many forgotten times since Christmas 1964,
the year my mother and father, sister and brother
came to my sickbed side, the year the knight and his horse
were given to cheer me.

My brother died two months ago
from self-inflicted liver failure; nine years before that,
my father died of self-inflicted lung disease,
my sister has been a common-law widow since June, my mother
is as defiant as the horse, and her legs only marginally better;
the knight, like me, is still cavalier in the saddle,
his gauntlet remains over his heart to hold his long-lost lance,
a hole for a hand that gapes like a chest wound.