

Catharine Lucas

OPEN HEART SURGERY

An unknown clover blooms, small hearts in
the wild grass, dark-red as ripe strawberries.

Stopping on the path, I sense a softening overhead
and am suddenly less sure of death.

I understand what heaven there is, is made on earth
and held, inside the skull;

it dies when we die. I scoff at those who imagine
spirits abroad in the atmosphere—

There is nothing beyond this earth, I say, save planets
and suns and other small mischiefs
in the void.

But this morning, standing among small hearts
that are nearly buried in tall grass, I see my father
walking, hands in pockets,
his golfer's amble a little halting.

There was no limp when he visited last summer;
Would this be the leg, then, that yielded a stretch
of artery, stripped out to make the necessary repair?
Just yesterday, Mama called to say he'd come through fine.

I move as if to join him, but he winks at me and gives
a jaunty little whistle before
dissolving

I swear it

into the welcoming sky.