

Poetry

Kevin Clark

Kevin Clark's poetry has appeared in numerous journals, including *The Black Warrior Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Denver Quarterly*, *College English*, and others. He recently won *The Literary Review's* Angoff Award. He has also published three chapbooks, including his most recent, *One of Us* (Mille Grazie Press). Clark teaches English at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo.



Platter

So many deaths and conjoinings, so many
 cocktail parties on the slate patio,
 but they never dig it out. It's the design:
 heavy, clumsy at the grip, in the center
 an odd, clumped relief
 of flowers—vines
 grown out of an underworld, a tangled

migraine. My widowed mother leans cat-still
 against the door frame, peering
 autistically into the kitchen—
 but the secret eludes her.
 She hasn't told us of her headaches.
 Animals roam the frontal lobes.

I saw a movie with the venus fly trap
 as the guiding symbol. So thickly rooted.
 Giant knobs in the dirt. Portentous.
 The platter is like that, heaped
 like a king's last meal—only
 he can't accept the pronouncement
 floating from the physician's mouth,
 he's called for the jugglers.

When my mother
 shudders from her vision
 and reaches into the cabinet for tea,

the vines begin to grow, shift, stretch
like tentacles in the bad dusk.

A friend tells me an apostrophe
has appeared in the only word of his mantra.
I'm forty-seven, my mother at seventy
can't figure out where it went.
Not the time. The peace.

The platter rocks as if to call
from the cupboard. I see now
as always it's begun.
But we want to refuse the feast.
Its silence. Its elaboration.