

## THE NEIGHBOR

My uncle is not yet  
dead and the last red  
bloom of summer has spread  
to take the sun  
when a neighbor clips it  
and places the stem  
in the water of her own  
crystal vase and offers  
the beautiful gift  
at the door. She is welcomed  
and led up the stairs  
to the room where he is  
propped on the bed  
watching baseball on tv,  
and he smiles  
and wisecracks the old line  
about doors left open.  
She laughs and hands  
him the flower.  
He reaches to take it,  
to place on top  
of the oxygen machine

and that night at dinner  
she is staring at a cut  
violet in her centerpiece  
when she remembers how  
she held the vase a moment  
too long, how he almost  
had to pull it from her hand,  
so surprised was she  
at his forearm,  
the vessels bulging  
blue, and awful the way  
the whole thing pulsed

*Kevin Clark*

like a lung, and she thought  
the word 'nitroglycerin'.  
The violet is growing darker,  
the sound of cars  
arriving in the street,  
when she looks up,  
surprised now  
at the remarkable steadiness  
of his hand, his kind eyes,  
and finally she lets go her grip.