

# Medicine Man

*by Philip F. Clark*

The scalpel is  
prescient --  
it knows  
blood before  
it cuts.  
Every surgeon  
is a seer.

We start here,  
just below the neck.  
The slide of its  
sharpened silver  
touches softly,  
enters the skin  
with care; half

the cut is question,  
and half an answer.  
This is nothing that has died.  
A long, thin sluice of red  
between the breast.

The knife, a planchette,  
moves from nipple to  
stomach, to rib. What word  
will come, and of what disease?  
Metal listens well.

And who was this? Some Jim  
or Anne; we cannot tell. Heart,  
spleen, bladder, ovary or scrotum?  
The body's secret unguents

are perfume beneath the knife.

Skin reveals its secrets:  
alcohol, nicotine, an adipose  
on the lung; hard tissue,  
multiplying cells. A scent  
of something slowly  
seeping -- what, at last,  
is breath?

