

Four by *James Doyle*

The Herd Came Running

straight at me. “Stand
your ground,” he shouted.
“Stand your ground.”

Easy enough advice
for trees, for skies
bolted down to earth.

But a herd that blotted
the horizon? Even if
I clenched my eyes

shut, the pressure
of the herd’s great
shadow on my eyelids

would suffocate
anything I tried
to look at afterwards.

“Okay, run,”
he shouted. “Run
for your life.”

Poor dad, always too
little, too late, even
when he was alive.

The ground was shaking,
a horror movie where
all the dead were coming

through the cracks. Above
me, predator clouds
dropping of their own

weight from dark nests
in heaven. Okay, okay.
I held up my arm

to surrender. A needle
slid in, found the vein
very first try.