

Funeral Home

Across the street from the hospital,
so obvious and faux-respectable
we paddle right by it, like a frog
on a lily-pad, biding its time,
waiting for flies, for us, the funeral home--
that's right, just across from the hospital,
and the paramedics and the hardcore cases
dragging their drip-trolleys out
to sneak a sad, defiant puff.
Just going in for a spell, we thought,
a night or two to get our counts back up
before winter, and our energy,
but some of us, well, never step back
through those revolving doors again.
We end up down a different corridor
dealing with another order of business:
Imagine the owner going in to discuss
his start-up loan, the site picked,
glossy business plan in a binder,
the phrases he chose to pitch it
--steady earner, constant influx--
and the bank manager, nodding, nodding,
lunch coming up, some old friend
who's been sick, say, she stands up,
ignoring the fat package, all that work
this guy did, the surplus apostrophes buzzing
around his laborious words,
ushering him out, yes, already decided, yes,
with a hand that might be shooing a fly away.
Then months later, it's summer,
a cruel twist, sudden choices
to be made, and here she is, a new customer.

RICHARD SANGER