

SEMI-PRIVATE

If you're dressed in white and being importuned
by sick people, you *might* be a nurse
or other health care professional. If you feel
you've been pierced with harpoons and are lying on a beach
listening to the sand but not hearing the ocean
you *could* be mistaken. But if, in the middle of the forest
you come upon your arch-foe finishing a sandwich
and drinking from your skull, you will know with certainty:
you have taken a wrong turn in life.
Coming home from school that day
you should have gone *left* at the dry goods store,
followed Elm Street to the edge of town
and *then* set off on the dash through the proliferations of the moment
to the interim haven of the future. This must have been the work
of the sorceress in red, whose existence may have come to fruition
that very morning—you overheard whispers in the garden, there,
just outside your window, while enchanted flies buzzed in the heat.

Tony Towle