

PATRICIA SIERRA

Room 226

Keys on her belt; a blood stain on her collar;
crepe soles that suck at the gray linoleum;
I hear the rub of nylon on nylon when she walks;
slick-slick, slick-slick, slick-slick.

Jello cubes and tea arrive, harmless,
in paper cups with plastic spoons.

The old lady beside me falls asleep on her bed pan;
someone slick-slick, slick-slicks into the room
and removes the pan.
Later, I hear the old lady pee.
When they asked her, she denied it and cried.

They won't let me shave my legs;
an aid sits by the open shower as I wash.

It's a difficult night: I remember why I am here.

The elevator arrives empty—opens and closes its door,
lighting my room like a slow motion flash bulb.

There's a hair in my soap dish. A fly lands on my cheek.

The old lady mumbles to an invisible dog.

And I hear the nurse bringing me 10 cc's of sleep:
slick-slick, slick-slick, slick-slick.