

Roses

by Philip F. Clark

I arrived just as they
were making your bed; I thought,
“They’ve moved him,” but no,
you were dead. Someone else
was coming in. Your sisters had left.

As the attendant finished cleaning up
and I was about to turn away,
I noticed on the table, a Red Rose teabag—
and I smiled. Your friend Jim would
always send you a box of them,
and on each tag, like an advent calendar
he’d pasted small pictures of porn under each rose.

Your laugh used to startle the nurses.
I was going to stay in the room, ask
questions but I just left, without a “Why?”

I went home and made my bed. But I lay
there thinking of you, of having just missed you,
of the few minutes of breath I might have saved
had I rushed, or taken the train instead.
And try as I might I could not cry.

Instead I began to laugh, hearing in my head
your words: “Oh lord, darling, look at these!”
And then, your command “Make me some tea!”
Thinking of you, funny ghost, I rose from my bed.
I looked at my life. I took my meds.
“Dear boy, I will,” I said.

