

Widow

After the funeral
we pile into the little cottage,
brothers, sisters, in-laws, children,
full of post funereal bounce,
keeping up appearances, the wrong sort.
A dozen hale and hearty bodies standing
or sitting awkwardly in a space only
big enough for two shrunken ones.
She in her usual corner seat, clings
to what dignity she can muster.
There is talk of mending broken chairs,
searching for lost certificates,
all too much too soon. And you sit
casually in His chair, assuming it were vacant.
In your careless way, an arm collides with
his tray full of things, which, unused
to such vigour, collapses noisily onto the
wooden floor, causing great hilarity.

Magnifying glass, screw driver, scissors,
lighter fluid, rubber bands, pipes, pouches,
torch, and those multi-functional gadgets,
bought by children for parents whose functions
have slowly withered and disappeared.
A life of small things, now displayed
embarrassingly, where his feet used to tremble.
A brother makes a show of tidying up the mess.
She entreats him not to, but he insists.
She says "No," panic and anger in her voice.
She will have plenty of time to do that.
She will have time.
She will have things.
She will have to do.
But not now, not yet.
He still remains in the corner.
His remains. His stillness.
scattered under his chair.
Let him lie there.
A bit longer.

John King