The Viewing

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Tara Neely

His face is yellow, cold, and dead –
So unlike what he had been.
He didn’t look good, or even at peace;
He was just there to be seen.

The granddaughters giggle in a corner
To the irritation of the grieving daughter.
The family came in from the city,
But they can’t stand the sight of each other.

Murmurs and tears from the guests
Who scratch their names into the visitor’s book,
And of course they come with condolences,
Though they mostly just came to look.

Being dead must be easy, there’s nothing to do –
From man to formaldehyde bag.
The living must dig out your six-foot hole,
And the others just have jet lag.

People are tactless and silly and loud,
So I just stand still while they awkwardly stare.
As I’ve said, it’s all just a chance to come look –
Not many of them actually care.

It’s hard to watch his widow cry,
And see the milling people overdoing
Their emotions, like hyper zombies.
All part of what’s expected at the viewing.

The groups disperse, at very long last,
What a torturous time it has been.
We’re all dead in some way, our faces are cold,
And we’re only there to be seen.