

The life of things.

He would have known I was thinking of him
As I packed a bag for the hospital visit
Eventually, they had said,
then soon, then very soon.
People hustling for final visits,
grave faces, mute in the face of dying

I choose a bag, big and quilted, to silence
Small bottles; Dry ginger for dry mouth,
His not mine. I imagine he drinks,
leans back on a pillow
Sighs, with temporary relief,
a brief sensory pleasure

Into the bag, warm water, cloth washer for hands,
Benediction, Ritual of cleansing of dust,
mothers love, benediction, removal of sin.
Also in the bag, a fondly remembered poem,
a shared love of words
Remembering, visioning another world, past,

He left this world as I left my house
Gone, removed from pain with will
Using the energy of my thoughts
To carry him away from us
Leaving us behind
His hands, unwashed, folded in rest

Tricia McCann

Wisdom: *The Life of Things* by Tricia McCann

Age on the Page – Poetry Challenge 2021

All poems were judged anonymously, and poet Anne M Carson awarded poems which combined literary merit with how well the poem addressed any of the 5 categories identified in the competition:

- *What It Means to be an Elder*
- *Independence*
- *Stereotypes*
- *Identity*
- *Wisdom*

Judge's comments:

This poignant, powerful poem apprehends many subtle aspects of wisdom. It is a narrative of a mother's farewell of a beloved son. In simple, effective language, the poem describes the narrator's preparation for the final visit, starting with her confidence that her son would have known she was thinking of him. This confidence in their bond carries the poem, leading to her acceptance that though she didn't actually have that final visit, her preparations provided caring energy which mattered, contributing to his passing. This is a poem of finely calibrated emotion and wise clear seeing.