

The Door-Bell

All was quiet and peaceful
in the cottage
and then
the doorbell sounded – boom!

In an instant, all hell
broke loose
as its deafening sound
echoed through every room

but even so, no one came.

It was one of those confounded
wireless electronic imitators;
not of a typical chime at all
but oddly of a wartime bomb –
an exploding shell.

He had it wired to remind him
of the trenches, the mud,
the blood, of them –
his best mates Frank and Jim
who it couldn't be at his door.

Everyone thought him crazy
to fix such a sounder on his wall.

He had ignored the installer
who tried for at least an hour
to talk him out
of that particular setting

but there was no getting
through, or past, his life-
long feeling of guilt –
his need to suffer
further – to atone
for being a lone survivor.

A week later
the Guards broke down
his front door to find him
lying on the floor, frozen;

his wrinkled left hand
on a tin-hatted head;
his right arm and eye missing;
the other closed; lips smiling.

John D. Kelly