

Broken Memories

What do you see, nurse, what do you see?
Are you thinking when you look at me -
A crabbed old woman, not very wise
Uncertain of habit with far away eyes,
Who dribbles her food and makes no reply
When you say in a loud voice - "I do wish you'd try."
Who seems not to notice the things that you do
And forever is losing a stocking or shoe,
Who resisting or not, lets you do as you will
With bathing and feeding, the long day to fill.
Is that what you're thinking, is that what you see?
Then open your eyes, nurse. You're not looking at me.

I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still.
As I move at your bidding, eat at your will,
I'm a small child of ten, with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters who love one another;
A young girl of sixteen with wings on her feet,
Dreaming that soon a love she'll meet;
A bride of twenty, my heart gives a leap,
Remembering the vows I promised to keep;
At twenty-five now I have young of my own.
Who need me to build a secure, happy home.

A woman of thirty, my young now grow fast,
Bound together with ties that should last.
At forty, my young sons have grown up and gone,
But my man's beside me to see I don't mourn,
At fifty once more babies play round my knee -
Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead.
I look at the future, I shudder with dread.
For my young are all rearing young of their own,
I think of the years and the love that I've known.

I'm an old woman now and nature is cruel
Tis her jest to make old age look like a fool.
The Body it crumbles, grace and vigor depart.
There is a stone where I once had a heart.
But inside this old carcass a young girl still dwells,
And now again my bittered heart swells.
I remember the joys, I remember the pain
And I'm loving and living life over again.

I think of the years, all too few, gone too fast,
And accept the stark fact that nothing can last.
So open your eyes, nurse, open and see.
Not a crabbed old woman,
Look closer – see me!

**Narrated by Mona Frame:
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