

## An Old Lady's Poem

What do you see, nurses, what do you see?  
What are you thinking when you're looking at me?  
A crabby old woman, not very wise,  
Uncertain of habit with faraway 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 do at your bidding, as I 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 now a lover she'll meet.  
A bride soon at twenty -- my heart gives a leap,  
Remembering the vows that I promised to keep.

At twenty-five now, I have young of my own,  
Who need me to guide and a secure happy home.  
A woman of thirty, my young now grown fast,  
Bound to each other with ties that should last.

At forty, my young sons have grown and are gone,  
But my man's beside me to see I don't mourn.  
At fifty once more, babies play round my knee,  
Again we know children, my loved one and me.

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,  
And I think of the years and the love that I've known.

I'm now an old woman ...and nature is cruel;  
'Tis jest to make old age look like a fool.  
The body, it crumbles, grace and vigour depart,  
There is now a stone where I once had a heart.

But inside this old carcass a young girl still dwells,  
And now and again my battered 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, people, open and see,  
Not a crabby old woman; look closer....see ME!!



*The story behind the poem.....*

*When an old lady died in the geriatric ward of a small hospital near Dundee, Scotland, it was felt that she had nothing left of any value. Later, when the nurses were going through her meager possessions, they found this poem. Its quality and content so impressed the staff that copies were made and distributed to every nurse in the hospital. One nurse took her copy to Ireland. The old lady's sole bequest to posterity has since appeared in the Christmas edition of the News Magazine of the North Ireland Association for Mental Health. A slide presentation has also been made based on her simple, but eloquent, poem. And this little old Scottish lady, with nothing left to give to the world, is now the author of this "anonymous" poem.*

*Remember this poem the next time you encounter an elder. Before you brush by, take a moment to look at the soul within... We will one day be there, too!*

Courtesy of



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