

Original Poetry

Poems

Youth is a Flying Horse

youth is a flying horse
age slows to a walk on sand
now I notice sea shells

Change

My attic has changed.
For fifty years we stored our treasures there,
my mother's wedding dress
great-grandfather's solemn face in the ornate frame
love letters from high school days.

Change. My house is sold.
I return grandchildren's drawings.
My brother's wife cherishes letters from war-time years.
My daughter has my mother's dress.

The attic is bare,
but my heart is full
of what has been.

I Mourn the Things I Had to Leave Behind

I mourn the things I had to leave behind.
Who has the spool bed we bought for our first home?
the cedar chest my husband made?
I miss my friend, the birch tree in the garden,
the birds and squirrels,
the old car in the driveway.
I miss the cooking pots, the slotted spoon.

I can't be a young girl again,
a passionate wife,
a nursing mother falling into my baby's wide amazing eyes,

a mother of boisterous and busy teens.
I fill in the square that says 'widowed.'

I can be a grandmother,
rejoicing in children and a sister-friend.
When I accept a cane, a walker, orthopedic shoes,
a smaller space,
and learn to love this home;
when I hear the chatter at each meal
as strangers meet future friends;

When someone says
"I have enjoyed dinner with you,
I will see you again;"
when I see a sea of faces
and wonder who will be a friend;
when I feel a sense of family
and my space as home;
when I open my heart to this new life,
then—
Peace.

In My New Home

I want someone to know me.
Not this quiet woman
in the huge dining room,
hearing nothing, seeing shapes, not faces.

I want someone to know
how Hafiz lifts my spirit,
brings a friendly God closer,
how babies make my heart race,
how an earthquake-size gap
swallowed my husband and friends.

I want someone to know
my fear of future darkness
and my joy each morning.
Let me show you me.

Macular Degeneration

The darkness, the future darkness looms.
Self pity is a black cloud
releasing tears when I'm alone.
Milton's poem—a mouse running in my mind.

Helen Keller haunts me.
My sister-friend holds my hand.
God says "Fear not, I am with you."
Can I believe?

I can feel the dark, black bear following,
coming closer, waiting to pin me to the ground.
I pretend acceptance
while inside I'm screaming "I can't read."
I slump in despair.
The dark, black bear keeps coming, coming.
When June sunshine touches my cheek
will remembered sunshine warm me?

Bring Back the Pain

My dear one—
when you died the pain
was a jack-hammer destroying me.
In time it became a small hammer,
the size to hang a picture.
Pain and memories were the Cheshire Cat.

Stop fading.
I want to remember the sparkle in your eye,
your foot touching mine,
the feel of your back as I curl around it,
the autumn smell of your old tweed jacket.
If memories are fading blooms
I welcome pain to keep them fresh.
I smile and you are close again
my dear, dear one.

Dreaming

When I am dying
and the nights are long,
I'll spread my legs
and feel your loving body there.
I'll part my lips
and feel your mouth on mine.
I'll feel your fingers in my hair.
Memories will hold me fast,
and I'll let go
with peace at last.

NARRATIVE

Before becoming a poet, I took on many jobs, none of which defined me. I raised three children and took care of my mother and mother-in-law. I have been an artist, an early childhood educator and a realtor. At one time, I worked at an art school finding models for life-drawing classes.

Now, nearly 98 years of age, I have been living in a retirement facility for 2 years. One of my joys is receiving photographs of my first great-grandchild, named John, like his great-grandfather.

I came to expressing myself through poetry in my early 80s. I am still writing on my own and with a group of women 25–40 years my juniors. Recently I wrote a poem for the 70th reunion of our McMaster University class of '38 (there are still 30 of us, including my sister-friend Norma). An experience appears in a different light as I make it into a poem. When I am screaming inside at not hearing in the dining room or not being able to read, the creativity of writing a poem helps me to live gratefully.

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