

Mom at 93:

Somehow, as mom turns ninety-three
and I slide towards seventy one,
it's time to write a poem
about what glorious fun
it is to simply sit and talk
while days dissolve and, in
memory, hold faces from the past
as clouds slide along the
last trace of light-lifting sky
where Cabot Tower spins a top;
a hub of empty spokes of "why?"

"Why" drifts away, as water goes past
every bend in life's rough steam,
dives over and past its falls,
over-flows the banks of youth,
takes us a-tumble into years of truth,
far past the shoals of "should"
and into still, deep pools of "could."

What I most love is the way that mom
always knew how to ask the necessary questions,
of... how I was, who I had become... and how,
for my Sister and for me, she could
(O, such a simple word) assist.

Instead of penny-pinching to the grave,
she, like Nan Gough, reached in
her apron pocket, and simply gave.

And so, for mother and for son
the sun rolls down the south-side hills,
spilling years before it, like a bolder
creating pebbles; spraying in the hop from
slope to slope, until the rock splashes down
into darkness of inevitable seas.

The Atlantic enfolds and holds us all
 in salty arms; the lives that light the
 spiralled sun, our eventual roll into
 a deep peace that only subterranean
 caves can give, the treasure chest of
 memory of each life lived.

'Tis Peace that gives us peace, no
 need to preach nor speculate on lives
 lived like ours, with odd barnacles
 of encrusted poverty rasping off
 the liberating luxury of all things
 & settle down to a precious few details;
 the chair rolled to a window, a simple touch,
 the shared hours that mean so much more
 than 'must' or 'can.'
 In short, we're already here, in St. John's
 (Ireland just across the watery street)
 ready to meet anything we may have to meet.

Sunset carries in its jaws
 the husk of years and decades too,
 when knowledge falls apart;
 this is not so much the story of a mother and her son
 but rather the simple feeling of each heart-beat,
 the nodding at the sky,
 the sounds of wheelchairs in the halls,
 the residue of lives as down they run
 and splash back to that Signal-Hill sky.

We're all related in this place;
 have left the land of "special,"
 of all the things we should have done,
 that history of the bored, where
 the ultimate shroud proves to be
 but a tut-tut-tuttering.

My family true, the frontliners, move

in shades of red & green & blue, and ask
of our mother, just what they may do to help.
I walk by her room, and hear, "Ruby! We love you!"

I see the bathroom ritual, where they wrestle
gravity and laugh with mom,
while, down the length of
Ruby Road, I hear without fail,
the whispering sounds made
by the skirt of Florence Nightingale.

Talk is always cheap they say, but not the
murmured question, the turning of a husk at night,
the pillow moved just so; the right feel of
the bedspread near a curling hand.

Past the shallow pomp of what we own,
far from the cruise ships of the almost-rich,
a necessary gathering takes place where
we are, all of us, meeting beside a well
that we've often dreamed to life.

Know that when we spin towards those
final waterfalls, the hidden pool, we'll vortex
until we bend our pretzeled selves
into a bobbing fetus again, for,
floating in our mother's womb,
there are no cars, no money-men nor awards;
instead, a plain hammered dipper
is dipping into the well
that we've all used in our dream.

Some day, I'll see mom walk towards the well,
and I'll see her mother, Nan,
reach towards her and extend a simple helping hand.

One day, I'll take my turn and stepping nearer
as does she, & walking towards the circle on the red,
while all humanity draws near,
we'll pull the forest
around us like a needed screen...

...a simple life in Delphic style
 where the great truth of life is revealed
 by the eager way my mother rolls along the hall
 or gains sweet enjoyment from the go-bus to the mall.

When all is said and done,
 my mother's truth is such a simple one,
 that we, all over the globe,
 are ready to hold
 each other's hand
 as we approach that final well.

A breathing-in, and last-breath-out, so easy
 to do, that we may now relax, smile, play the saw;
 eat a bit of cake, wonder if the snow may
 go tomorrow, have a dance or two, visit
 Tim's one more time.
 Relax, as what is the most clear note
 of the bell-like sound when dipper hits the well-wall,
 means that each second is eternal,
 and we are, in infinity,
 made mortal once again,
 are möbius-stripped to
 an infinite *now*.

Drink deep well water, brothers
 and sisters of the clay;
 and my cousins all,
 make no fuss, for we
 know, without doubt,
 there is no terrible journey ahead of us.

Know that the place we most want to be
 is
 here
 right
 now
 beside
 the well
 where
 we stand together

close and yet forever free
as time shakes the
world,
until, at last
we realize
that
our own true mother
is turning
ninety
three.
