

15.

Voices of Elderly Women

Let today's poem be about aging, If you are young, speak of the aging of someone close to you, say a mother or grandmother.

How to Be Old

It is easy to be young. (Everybody is,
at first.) It is not easy
to be old. It takes time.
Youth is given; age is achieved.
One must work a magic to mix with time
in order to become old.

Youth is given. One must put it away
like a doll in a closet,
take it out and play with it only
on holidays. One must have many dresses
and dress the doll impeccably
(but not to show the doll, to keep it hidden).

It is necessary to adore the doll,
to remember it in the dark on the ordinary
days, and every day congratulate
one's aging face in the mirror.

In time one will be very old.
In time, one's life will be accomplished.
And in time, in time, the doll—
like new, though ancient— will be found.

May Swenson
Anthologized in *Waltzing on Water*
edited by Norma Fox Mazer
and Marjorie Lewis

How Would You Like To Age?

I want to age like sea glass.
Smoothed by tides
but not broken.
I want my hard edges to soften.

I want to ride the waves
and go with the flow.
I want to catch a wave
and let it carry me
to where I belong.
I want to be picked up
and held gently by
those who delight in my
well earned patina and
appreciate the changes I went
through to achieve that beauty.
I want to enjoy the journey
and always remember that if
you give the ocean something
breakable it will turn it into
something beautiful.
I want to age like sea glass.
By Bernadette Noll
where from?

Thoughts for My 96th Birthday

What if my hands have a tremor?
What if I sit where I'm set?
What if I wet my underwear?
There's life in the old girl yet!

Don't pity me or worry
at the words that I forget
or my going on and on and on and on with a story.
There's life in the old girl yet!

You may shuffle the cards and roll the dice,
you may hedge or not hedge your bet.
I'll say it once and I'll say it twice:
There's life in the old girl yet!

SLF

Gold Star Girl

My job is to live. Like Isaac
named for laughter.
Not Job's job, up to his ears
in death. Tragedy

my mother knew when she lost
her first child; then I knew
she would die if I did—
so I didn't. My job is to live.

This year I'm seventy-five. Good job,
Mama'd say if she were here.
I hear it anyway. And soon
I will have to let her down.

Well, I must face it. Without
the comedy of an afterlife
there's only dying. How do I
find the mettle to give myself

to the violation? Run wild? Bear left?
You see what I'm up against.

Myra Shapiro

from: *12 Floors Above the Earth*

Theory of Aging

As the number of the year gets bigger
the year itself grows smaller
but heavier. It acquires gravity.
It will finally get so heavy
that it cannot continue as it is
but implodes to a black hole
into which sink all the years
becoming numberless
and utterly weightless.

Ursula Le Guin

in: *So Far So Good: final poems: 2014-2018*