

When You Are Old

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars

Currach

By Doireann Ní Griofa

He knew.

Even as a boy in his father's currach,

He knew. He knew that the sea

would someday grasp him in her terrible teeth, destroy him,

drown him in her salted grief, her embrace wet and wide

as the slow dawn of death in the eye of a fish.

He knew. He knew it as he built the currach, as he

curved each slender rib of wood and covered it

in canvas as bleak and black as a mourning gown

pulled over slender shoulders. He knew

that someday it would buck like a colt

and hurl him into dark water. He knew.

Even as he married me, loved and laughed

and poured a baby into me, he knew.

He knew as he surged through sea-swell,

seeking to fill his nets with silver.

He knew, and still he refused to learn to swim,

for the struggle against his lot could only prolong his agonies.

He knew. He knew our lives together could never be long.

That by the time our child was born he would be long gone.

He knew. He knew. He knew.

When all this is over

By Siobhan Campbell

I plan to go north
by unapproved roads
where sniper signs rust on the trees.

I will cross the border
over and back
several times to see how it feels.

I will dance the pig's dyke
and taste mountain mayflower
on the breeze.

Near under-fished lakes
I will hear a blood-pause
in the reach of the night

when every word used for batter
and crisis will cruise with the ease
of what runs right through us,

when the shift and fill
of my own dear cells
is all they will tell as they breathe.

And out through the lanes,
I will lie in my form
in overgrown fields

not a chopper in sight.
And they say it is safe
and the weather agrees.

From: Cross-Talk (Bridgend: Seren Books)

Sisters

Anne Marie Ní Churreáin

Let it be said, I cut a nick in my own skin
and by a spit became blooded to them all;

Maeve swaddled in clean cloth like a gem
as her mother, aged sixteen, leaned against
the kitchen counter and watched me hold;

Breege and Marie found in a trailer
by the river speaking in a twisted song;

Emer who was always going home;

Niamh who I was wild for and who was wild
for me, but who held me under in the pool
until both of us were dragged out of the water
sobbing;

Dara who pulled her shirt up to reveal
a string of roses on her ribs. Here are the gifts
of my father she said;

Grace who could fix any error
with a piece of purple gum;

Sarah, pure as water — bold as fre.
I can still see her tear across the hill
on that guy's motorbike,
high-headed and ready for battle;

tailed women, denim-stealers, alley-girls
in White Musk with nine lives:
these were my sisters.
We argued over top bunks.
We bled on sheets.
We were four in a room the winter the house was falling down.
We wrote letters to the man on the radio.
We scanned the news for names of the dead.
We curled letters inside bottles and threw them out to sea.
We snapped wishbones, swore on graves, buried our treasure.
We swung the gold of our mothers over our palms
three times and asked the air:
will I be loved? Yes or No?
Yes or no?
Yes or no

He stood at the top of the stairs

Jane Clarke

from *When the Tree Falls* (Bloodaxe Books, 2019)

insisting he could go down himself
but, like a frightened bullock refusing
the crush, his body wouldn't move

from the spot where I used to sit
in the dark listening to rows in the kitchen
when my mother showed him the bill

from the shop. He stood at the top
of the stairs in a fever that came on him
as fast as nightfall in winter,

steep, narrow steps between him
and the ambulance ticking
outside the back door.

He stood there in checked pyjamas
and thick Wellington socks,
in the house where he was born

and had sworn he would never leave.
I held him from behind
my brother in front

coaxing with a tenderness
I'd never seen between them,
come on Dad, just one step, one step.

Feral

For T

By Anne Tannam

I remember reading a story once,
set in Victorian England,
about a gentleman whose young wife
—in an unexplained miracle
of the very worst kind—
gradually turns into a fox.

And here you are sitting in our kitchen
at a quarter to one in the morning,
dressed in someone else's coat,
smelling of neglect and nights
without the comfort of sleep.


Are you well?
Such a useless question
when thirst is slowly unravelling summer
from your skin,
your hair,
your eyes,
from the corners
of your mouth.

We offer you the couch
but you are racing across fields,
Winter's cold breath pounding in your ears.

MELANCHOLLY

By Jessica McKinney

Are we but drops of personality in a universe of emotion
All different ingredients
Of different origins
Different flavors
But all together make one unique recipe
One ingredient without the other and the dish is melancholy
The mixtures simmer together enforcing the outcome that's needed
Craved
Are we all but simple ingredients to our ancestor's dish
Combined in different forms
Adjusted to taste
Perfected
When will our taste be right
Generations of combining
Decades of tasting
Century's of improvement
When will we be safe for consumption
We lay the bricks to follow
We read our ancestors cook books
But what do we add
that ingredient to bring all these diverse emotions together

 [Lankum - The Young People \(Live at Other Voices\)](#)