

Fur Coat and No Knickers

Drawing breath between tales of dead
 little brothers and elderly neighbours
moved away, my mother looks inside
 a lifetime that's 92 and counting,
claims no-one's visited for months,
 thinks I'm her cousin Betty
with designs on her fur coat and hopes
 of borrowing a fiver.

I try not to mind the care home smell
 and wonder what else to talk about when
the devil himself taps my shoulder
 suggests I unburden, reveal secrets
never before shared, so I offer a revelation:
 I lost my virginity four times
before I was married. She's never yet listened to me
 so its no surprise she doesn't hear,
continues with a rattle about imagined walks
 in the park yesterday, shopping
trips she'll make next week.

 A carer comes to tuck her in,
brings weak tea and egg sandwiches,
 asks if I'd like some,
is relieved when I decline.

 I get up to leave and the frail old cripple
who used to be my mother
 says quietly: 'I always knew
what a little whore you were,'
 before she spills her tea and demands
to know when cousin Betty intends returning
 the fur coat.