

*A rose will bloom, it then will fade;  
So does a youth, so does a maid.*

A Rose Will Bloom  
by  
Brian T. Maurer

A friend from the southwest writes: "My little 2-year-old daughter is such a delight. Last night I took her out in a little red wagon I salvaged some years ago. I used to sort through junk that people discarded. Six years ago I picked up a little red wagon. I couldn't believe someone had put it out in the trash. All the little parts were there. I reassembled the thing and fixed it up.

"Last night I strung some Christmas lights on the wagon and put a little flashing light on the back. I loaded it up with blankets and tucked my little daughter in; and we walked through the neighborhood for over an hour, enjoying the Christmas lights. There was one beautiful manger scene where we stopped for a long time; my little daughter really seemed to enjoy that.

"Lately, I have become more aware of how short life is, how fragile, and how precious."

At the insistence of her mother, I recently saw a 21-year-old woman for a physical exam. I've taken care of her since she was an infant. When she was a preschooler she had surgery for a brain tumor. Later the astrocytoma recurred, and she had another round of surgery. Now she's been tumor-free for the past decade, studying to become a medical therapist at one of the local colleges.

Since I last saw her eighteen months ago she dropped her weight from 128 to 93 pounds—a net loss of 35 pounds. Imagine a skeleton with breasts and wasted buttocks—that's how she looks now. She still has a stunningly beautiful face with a ready smile and pleasant disposition. I spent quite a bit of time talking with her. In the end I sent her for lab work with a plan to increase her caloric intake through small frequent feedings. She agreed to come back to see me in a week.

My friend's words reverberate inside my head: life is fragile; life is precious.

How fragile, how precious these short lives of ours are.