

The 75-year-old Lady Reflects Upon Her Condition
By Judith Bruder

When I was in the hospital
(she said)
with this last illness ---
and I was delirious ---
(she said)
people were kind.
They were very kind.
You see those flowers?
Yellow flowers, over there?
My neighbor sent them; those are only part of what he sent,
(she said)
and there were many more,
so many flowers.
I would look at them,
amazed,
(she said)
Because ---
Because ---
Well, it seemed so strange to me,
lying there,
an unmade bed, my bedclothes stripped away,
no thoughts, comforts, hopes, pleasures,
friends, a world outside,
all gone.
Stripped away.
Unmade.
An unmade bed.
Not even God was there, unless ---
But oh, I knew it.
I knew it better than I ever had before in all my life,
that he was there,
present in his absence.
And I
(she said)
with my pneumonia, but not delirious,
I too was absent, lying there.
All those lovely flowers folks had sent to me
(she said, amazed and wondering)
and there wasn't any I there to receive them.

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