

Dementia

by Michael Tusa

It's a crime.

They should have shot me when I turned 80, a bullet right between my sunken eyes.

I don't know much, but I know what I am.

They tell me I'm not fit to live alone, so they put me here, a criminal, in a criminal's home. My windows barred, my room dimly lit. A man in white watches me and spits, "Don't you move them sweet ole bones, you're old Mrs. Mary, very old."

I wasn't stupid. I knew what old age was, I knew how I got here. I knew who the real criminal was. They think I don't know what that pill does. They think I don't know what it means to open my lips, to swallow their pill, they say "Don't throw a fit. Its medicine, you'll feel better in a little bit."

Oh I've, swallowed before, the chills that fill my aching bones. I would never wish death upon a soul. But here, you wish to be still, you wish to stay cold. Every night I fantasize of a coma. Every night I hope to dance with death. I wish every waking moment, after every swallow of the pill, I'd take my last dying breath.

But they want me in pain. They love to watch me writhe at night. Frozen in gray time, a wasp dying on a dusty windowsill, able to see the air outside, but never breathe it.

I must have committed some crime. To be here locked up like this. I've begun to plot, I've got it all mapped out in my head, but every day after I swallow the pill, after I go to bed, I forget It all, I wake up dead.

Like an "Etch a Sketch" shaken over night,
I have to start
again.

