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poems
by
doctors

Time to Get Ready

Edward Picot

Take off that hair;
take off that self-assured air;
take out those teeth;
take that spring from your step and replace it
with a hesitant shuffle.
Take the fresh whites of your eyes
and smudge them yellow,
Take off that sexual appeal:
you won't be needing that any more.

The respect of others: your self-respect too:
they'll have to go.
Put on this extra weight,
these jowls, these liver-spots,
this tremor, these restless nights,
this peevish fretful manner,
this uncertainty, this fear,
this fear.

Come on.
You don't think you're ready yet,
but it's time. Your friends are all going.
You're more tired than you know.
And it's too late for another story.
You've been telling yourself a story all day,
acting it out too,
a big exciting fantasy, a real humdinger.
Now the story's over.
Come and lie down.

It's getting dark.

This poem is from *The Hippocrates Prize 2010: The Winning and Commended Poems*, published by The Edge Press. It won the 3rd prize. © Edward Picot, personal website <http://edwardpicot.com>

Chosen by Femi Oyeboode.

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