

What Won't Happen in 2037

You like me, and I like you, and at times
when we use the word “love” it does not feel false
but we are not married

and when I'm 88—if I get to be 88—
I don't expect you to be with me

when my grisket is grizzly and my gorns are swollen
and I need help getting up from the couch
and my knee trembles and my yellow teeth crumble
and my toenails are dragonistic and my rudder is limbo-squiffed
and my progg is scraffily and my garboard strake leaks
and then each expedition to the bathroom is a Beckettian folly
and each tilt toward the toilet portends Armageddon—

you will not be there to help me, gently or practically,
to guide my elbow, to stroke my white hair lightly
or even press your lips together in a representation of sympathetic encouragement.

I don't expect you to be there, then, in 2037,
and I don't at all ask you to feel that you should intend to be there,
and I don't especially feel moved to promise that I will “be there for you”
day after day in the twenty-thirties
if you become very weak before I become very weak.

It's true I have a son and a daughter
but I don't want them washing my skillet or my spatula
or wiping my cledger or sponging flenk from my jowls
when I am 88 with the skillet and spatula and cledger and flenky jowls
of an 88-year-old man.
I want them instead to be vital and thriving and phoning me once a week;
or twice.

But my wife—her assignment is to stay healthy
and be buoyantly strong and cheerful for me
when my progg and strake, rudder and spritz, throp and scutcheon
begin to fail and further fail.
Marriage hasn't *always* seemed like a great idea
but it will then.

Meanwhile you, my friend, will be elsewhere, naturally so,
alive I hope and sending me an occasional message,
electric, jarringly funny and sadly true in 2037.