

When You Are Old

by William Butler Yeats

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

DRA Comment: Many believe Yeats to have been the greatest poet of the 20th century. And this simple verse just about says it all, doesn't it? Every person wonders about this, but only Yeats could express it so beautifully. It is a love poem for life's final stages.