

Classic Poetry Series

Ellen Bryant Voigt

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Lesson

Whenever my mother, who taught
small children forty years,
asked a question, she
already knew the answer.
"Would you like to" meant
you would. "Shall we" was
another, and "Don't you think."
As in "Don't you think
it's time you cut your hair."

So when, in the bare room,
in the strict bed, she said,
"You want to see?" her hands
were busy at her neckline,
untying the robe, not looking
down at it, stitches
bristling where the breast
had been, but straight at me.

I did what I always did:
not weep --she never wept--
and made my face a kindly
whitewashed wall, so she
could write, again, whatever
she wanted there.

Anonymous submission.

Ellen Bryant Voigt