

Poetry Series

**Patricia Ryan**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**  
2016

**Publisher:**  
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

## Patricia Ryan()

Patricia Ryan is a published and produced poet, playwright, and author. Her poetry has been published in several poetry magazines and she is the author of four poetry chapbooks. Her poetry has been set to music and performed by theater and opera companies. Her poetry is also included in the Poets House Collection, one of the most comprehensive poetry libraries in the United States. Her plays have been frequently performed in New York City.

# Cancelled Stamps

## CANCELLED STAMPS

Francesco collected stamps.  
The day after the letter came that he was dead  
I went to tear some strange ones off for him.

For me he had been dead before, when they pulled away from me.  
Or should I say when I left him, looking at the floor  
And asking for dungarees from Naples.

How I loved them both.  
The father more because the son confirmed  
Things the man himself had learned to hide.

We used to sit in a green Roman light  
And I'd pretend the stamps were beautiful  
And be surprised they were.

I gave him American ones  
And we would talk about it, but no,  
He didn't want to come.

I often thought, 'I can't explain them to anyone;  
No one would believe  
How beautiful they are.'

Step in, one, two  
Up the street.  
They both walked like boys.

I knew so little about  
These things,  
Fathers, sons, and death.

I've learned that stamps are kept;  
It's love and death once done  
That cannot be saved.



# Today You Know It's Too Long Without Them

TODAY YOU KNOW IT'S TOO LONG WITHOUT THEM

You've waited before.  
Held your breath.  
For Christmas.  
For summer.  
Til the car pulled up.  
It was reasonable.  
You knew how.  
It always came true  
sooner or later.  
But today  
you know something  
is wrong, the wait is  
too long today  
it hits you like  
the puzzled child  
who has to give  
up, stop sitting  
on the curb looking  
down the street, who gets  
called in for dinner because  
now it's too late.  
Today you get the full  
impact: the dead  
don't show up no  
matter how many  
years you think are  
too many no matter  
they are absent  
beyond patience  
they are not coming.  
Today you know the car  
will never pull up to  
the curb  
Christmas will  
always arrive  
empty  
and summer will

forever be  
cold.

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-Patricia Ryan 12/2/13

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