Mothers, daughters, wives

The first time it was fathers, the last time it was sons, and in between your husbands marched away with drums and guns, But you never thought to question, you just went on with your lives, ‘cause all they taught you who to be was mothers, daughters, wives.

You can only just remember the tears your mother shed as she sat and read the papers through the lists and lists of dead, and the gold frame held the photograph your mother kissed each night, and the door frame held the shocked and silent stranger from the fight. And the first time it was fathers....

It was twenty-one years later with children of your own, the trumpets sounded once again, the soldier boys were gone, so you made their guns and drove their trucks and tended to their wounds, and at night you kissed their photograph and prayed for safe returns.

And after it was over, you had to learn again to be just wives and mothers though you’d done the work of men, so you worked to help the needy and you never trod on toes, and the photos on the piano struck a happy family pose. ‘Cause the first time it was fathers....

Then your daughters grew to women and your little boys to men, and you prayed that you were dreaming when the call up came up again, but you bravely smiled and held your tears as you proudly waved goodbye, though the photos on the mantelpiece they always made you cry.

And now you’re growing older and in time the photos fade, and in widowhood you sit back and reflect on the parade of the passing of your memories - how your daughter change their lives, seeing more to their existence than just mothers, daughters, wives.

‘Cause the first time it was fathers, the last time it was sons, and in between your husbands marched away with drums and guns, and you never thought to question, you just went on with your lives, ‘cause all they taught you who to be was mothers, daughters, wives.

But we are learning.

Judy Small
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