

The Cement Garden – Mother

Mother is “a **quiet** sort of person” but “furious” (19) because of the cement. She is “poor at arithmetic” (15).

Jack remembers a morning when he is eight and he is struck “by the obvious fact of [his mother’s] **independent existence**” (26).

Her illness

A year after Father’s death she starts suffering from **sleeplessness**. (22)

“Her sunken eyes were grey and watery.” (22)

“Each morning she painted on her lips a perfect bow in deepest red. But her eyes, set in dark skin wrinkled like a peach stone, were sunk so far into her skull she seemed to stare out from a deep well. She stroked the thick, dark curls at the back of her head. On some mornings I would find **a nest of her hair** floating in the toilet.” (25)

“Mother more and more frequently **went to bed in the early morning**.” (31)

“Sue had overheard her tell Julie that she was changing her doctor again.” (33)

“‘[The doctors] are all talking rubbish. [...] As long as I get my pills.’ [...] The prescription came at least in a heavy, brown bottle [...]” (34)

“I’m not ill, I’m just **very, very tired**.” (35)

“I can’t speak in the morning till I’ve had something to drink.” (36)

“[Her hand] was yellowish and scrawny, like a chicken’s foot.” (36)

“Mother was **not getting up**.” (36)

“‘She’s not feeling well,’ [...] ‘She’s got a headache.’ [...] Mother was **rarely out of bed now**. She became **bedridden** so gradually we hardly commented on it. Since my birthday, two weeks before, she had not been up at all.” (42)

“No doctors came to see Mother. ‘I’ve seen enough doctors and I’ve had enough tests to last me a lifetime.’” (42)

“Her hair was thinner and greyer, a few strands of it lay on the sheet.” (50)

“At last she said, ‘I might have to go away soon.’ [...] ‘To the hospital to give them a chance to get to the bottom of whatever it is I’ve got.’ [...] It might be quite a long time.” (50)

“Three days later she was **dead**.” (51)

Julie says: “‘She’s been dying for months.’” (52)