How Emily Mercer (96) grew young

She stood in her nightgown staring out at the night. The moon
dissolved like a sleeping pill on the tongue. The sky grew light.

She walked again in the garden. Dead blooms straightened their stems
and flowered. A broken web re-strung itself like a necklace

to hang at the throat of a tree. *This is all for me*, thought Emily.
She left her sticks at the gate and ran for Wish-you-well Bridge.

The river talked with its mouth full, gleaming with bright ideas.
Goodbye my dears ! cried Emily. In she dived, her skin smooth

as a pearl, her white hair turning to red as she swam. She forgot
her grandchildren's names, her children, the tall dark handsome man

with the ring. Emily Mercer was always a girl who could swim. *Hi diddle dee diddle dee.* Aeroplanes in the buttery air turned to balloons in the sky.

A poacher up to his tricks on the bank noticed her splashing away.
Afterwards, when they asked, *She was young*, was all he could say.

Carol Ann Duffy

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