



# I have Allotted them their Tasks

I have allotted them their tasks, the maids.  
While I sit waiting here, they busy themselves.  
One, maddened by the smell of beeswax,  
circles the living-room with a yellow duster.  
Another steps into the garden to pick herbs,  
holding leaves of rosemary to her nose,  
pressing marjoram between her fingers.  
She pauses on her way back to the house  
to talk to another who's pegging out the sheets,  
hoisting them into the wind with the laundry prop.  
Can you hear them laughing? Yet another -  
have you noticed how like you they are :  
hair, nose, mouth, the way they walk,  
anyone would think that you were sisters -  
climbs the hill behind the house, kicks up  
leaves, and stoops to fill her apron with chestnuts.  
The last - she's the wild one - is missing.  
"A doctor's appointment," she said ; but there she is,  
running across the sand, shedding her dress  
and knickers - the hussy - and wading into the sea.

*Eleanor Cooke*

*This poem was commissioned by the poet David Hart on behalf of the Arts Council. It is part of a collection of fifty poems by different UK poets - each on the subject of waiting. The poems are for display in waiting rooms.*

Poems for...waiting

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