Chebeague Island is home to one of Maine’s liveliest poetry communities. In today’s poem Sheila Jordan, a member of that community, explores the familiar yet strange event of elderly women wandering outside in nightgowns.

**In Nightgowns**

*by Sheila Jordan*

Nothing insists they get dressed.
Midmorning, like toddlers,
late parading in their pajamas,
they walk out of the house
in nightgowns.

What do they care who sees them
without a robe, appearing
in the first layer over
the Emperor’s new clothes,
these elderly women

sweeping the steps, accommodating
an arthritic cocker spaniel,
dead-heading the lilies.
Or they proceed like butterflies,
pastel-bright, to flutter

from this to that, breezy —
not explaining —
in and out of sun and shade,
air reaching up under
a skirt.

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