

<sup>4</sup>It is important to note that up until the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Federation executive was, for the most part, composed of single (and not married) women.

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## PHERYNE WILLIAMS THATCHER

### Irene, Good Night

By late afternoon, she has played  
one hundred and twenty-four games.

She loses more than she wins,  
she cheats more than not.

On occasion, she gets confused,  
puts kings where aces belong.

The cards are incredibly worn:  
stained, sticking together,  
bent with dirty torn edges.  
Hard to separate, when tips are rounded  
and nails bitten down past the quick.

They are familiar, comfortable  
like dear old friends.  
Thrity seven new decks sit in a cupboard,  
like nineteen hundred and twenty four strangers  
Gifts from relatives (and other jokers)  
who didn't know what to get.

When Irene plays solitaire,  
she forgets lunch, the cancer,  
her dead husbands, washing  
her body, and the laundry.

She is eighty four, entitled to forget;  
she is alone, entitled to play  
two hundred and forty games a day.  
Eyes laughing, she crackles,  
"it passes the time."  
And she deals herself another hand.

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