

# The Clock is Ticking

## *A Villanelle*

by [Cristina Nehring](#) (May 2025)



Mother And Child 2 (Mary Cassatt, 1910)

My fearless child, go play in the bright  
Corners of our wintering town.  
Before we breathe twice it shall be night

The lives of your breed are rarely long  
And your mother's time will never exceed  
Your own. My fearless child go play in the bright

Let us fete every ray of sun that we catch  
Let us stay in that circle of light  
Before we breathe twice it shall be night.

When the time comes, we'll go into the shadows  
Together: We're an indivisible pair at the end as at advent.  
My fearless child go play in the bright.

We hold dearest what we have a short while  
A trial or triumph; it's hard to distinguish  
But before we breathe twice it shall be night.

We will trade time for beauty  
In each chapter of our lives.  
My fearless child go play in the bright.  
Before we breathe twice it shall be night.

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**Cristina Nehring's** most recent book is *The Child Who Never Spoke: 23 1/2 Lessons in Fragility*. She is also the author of *A Vindication of Love* which made the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* as well as two books in French. She writes for *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. She lives in Paris with her daughter. See

more at [www.cristinanehring.net](http://www.cristinanehring.net).

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