

Rest in peace, Patricia Routledge

In memory of her, I encourage everyone to read these words of hers from February last year. Whether young or old, you're bound to get something out of it.

"I'll be turning 95 this coming Monday. In my younger years, I was often filled with worry — worry that I wasn't quite good enough, that no one would cast me again, that I wouldn't live up to my mother's hopes. But these days begin in peace, and end in gratitude.

My life didn't quite take shape until my forties. I had worked steadily — on provincial stages, in radio plays, in West End productions — but I often felt adrift, as though I was searching for a home within myself that I hadn't quite found.

At 50, I accepted a television role that many would later associate me with — Hyacinth Bucket, of Keeping Up Appearances. I thought it would be a small part in a little series. I never imagined that it would take me into people's living rooms and hearts around the world. And truthfully, that role taught me to accept my own quirks. It healed something in me.

At 60, I began learning Italian — not for work, but so I could sing opera in its native language. I also learned how to live alone without feeling lonely. I read poetry aloud each evening, not to perfect my diction, but to quiet my soul.

At 70, I returned to the Shakespearean stage — something I once believed I had aged out of. But this time, I had nothing to prove. I stood on those boards with stillness, and audiences felt that. I was no longer performing. I was simply being.

At 80, I took up watercolour painting. I painted flowers from my garden, old hats from my youth, and faces I remembered from the London Underground. Each painting was a quiet memory made visible.

Now, at 95, I write letters by hand. I'm learning to bake rye bread. I still breathe deeply every morning. I still adore laughter — though I no longer try to make anyone laugh. I love the quiet more than ever.

I'm writing this to tell you something simple: Growing older is not the closing act. It can be the most exquisite chapter — if you let yourself bloom again. Let these years ahead be your TREASURE YEARS. You don't need to be famous. You don't need to be flawless. You only need to show up — fully — for the life that is still yours.

With love and gentleness,

Patricia Routledge