

Poem: "Be a lady"

Image: Ophelia, John Everett Millais

"Be a lady"

Men say,

Pick flowers and cook

Be fit, but not more than us

Vibrant flowers rest in my hand

The wreath floating on the pristine water

"Be a girl"

Cry about insignificant things

Be intelligent but not a know-it-all

The stream carries me away

Past grassy fields where was once my home

Flow'rs of autumn and spring come together

But we can't.

"Be a woman"

You can dance and sing, but the men will always be the star

Be independent, but don't work

Work is for men

Rely on them

Care for them

Respect them

Like how they respect us?

Like how they dictate what we can and can't do

Like how they tell us how to live our lives

Like how they always have something to say about every little thing we do

Like how they judge us and act like our superiors?

Yes.

Because that's what they want

That's the world we live in

Cook, clean, but never work

Dictated by men

Made to aid men

This is the world we live in

Or rather you live in.

Not me

Not anymore

My body rests down within the river

Reeds along the bank wave their final goodbyes
Lush green leaves promise me their coverage, as they hide me.
By the greenery that flourishes and thrives,
Down underneath I decay and die.

We must be pretty, right? We must,
“Be a lady.”

The poem above (“Be a lady”) is an ekphrastic poem, inspired by the painting *Ophelia*, by John Everett Millais.