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The Old Woman

Katie Blackwelder

Your life goes on even if you're not aware of it. When you become too weak and frail, it seems to pass you by like dust in the wind. Every day is a struggle to stay in constant motion, to catch up with everyone so you are not left behind. Life doesn't seem to care if your body is worn, if everyone else is gone, or if your days are empty with death. The fear of being an outsider is the greatest human obstacle, and to overcome it is to be free.

I've been living in a nursing home for about four and a half years. My days begin when I look out the window of my room, and generally they end that way, too. I watch the newspaper man come sometimes, or the garbage collector. Occasionally I feed the birds some crumbs from my meals.

I don't mind this life too much because even when I was a young girl I liked to sit at the window and watch people outside. But lately something has been bothering me when I look out at the world. I want to live again with the busy people and the birds.

When I was sixteen, I started work as a nurse during the war. I helped hundreds of people, soldiers and civilians alike. I even gathered a group of about a hundred small children from a school into a bomb shelter, and when the bomb hit that school nobody died because I got them out. I met my husband in the war, too. He was a handsome Navy man with dark brown eyes and shiny

black hair, who came to the hospital where I was working to visit a friend. We married after the war and had two children. My husband died three years ago, and my children are both grown up with families of their own.

Sometimes when I wake up in the morning, I forget that I'm not young anymore. I hop out of bed ready for the new exciting day, and I suddenly remember there isn't one. Then I somberly walk to the window and take my usual lonely place as an observer. Sometimes I cry, and other times I just stare blankly. Nobody cares what I do anymore anyway. That's the usual routine, but tomorrow will be different. Tomorrow I'm going out.

I woke up this morning and I thought I heard someone calling my name, but of course, nobody was. Someone was calling for the other Laura, the nurse who takes care of the angry people. Suddenly, I remembered that I was going somewhere special, and I jumped out of bed like an eager child on Christmas morning. I hurried to get dressed and then planned the adventure in my head. I wanted to go to the park, the one I used to go to with my husband. So when breakfast came, I saved some bread for the birds and ate the rest. I thought of the best route to take. Then I opened the window and started my journey.