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The Little Old Man on the Corner

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The Little Old Man on the Corner

The bus roared into the neighborhood, and Ricardo raised his head. With his hands on the arms of the rocking chair, he pushed himself into a standing position, his knees creaking as he rose. A smile underlined his mustache. He wrapped the maroon sweater tightly around his shrunken chest, pressed his favorite cap onto thinning gray hair, and made his way down the stairs.

Heels clicked against the pavement as the crowds burst through the bus doors and past Ricardo. Some smiled at the little old man and said hello; others didn't notice him at all. He was a short man, whose slightly arched back only made him shorter. Ricardo paused for a second to watch the faces that were becoming more and more familiar every day then shuffled on in slow steady steps.

At the corner pharmacy, Ricardo stopped to catch his breath. It was at this very spot fifty years ago that he had met Mary, his wife. She'd gone away somewhere. Ricardo couldn't remember where, but he knew she was going to come home. He knew this was where she'd meet him again.

With his hand behind his back, Ricardo stood outside the store, keeping vigil. Thoughts of Mary warmed him, and he smiled. His dark brown eyes crinkled with joy.

Several buses went by, and soon darkness came. Ricardo blew into his cold, dry hands, then rubbed them together. He tapped his toes inside his shoes. When Mary still hadn't shown up, Ricardo stopped smiling, wrapped his wrinkled hands around his arms and headed back home.

Maybe Mary had missed the bus again.

Winnie Yu