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Bruce Holland Rogers

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**Two Metamorphoses:
Rag Monster**
by Bruce Holland Rogers

Let's not bother with the details of how she started saving scraps of cloth. It might have been that she was poor and such scraps were the only thing at the orphanage that she could call her own. It might have been that she was wealthy and began saving scraps of cloth when, as a student at an elite private college, she had stained a favorite dress with Cabernet and had cut out squares of material before she threw the rest away. It doesn't matter exactly who she was or how she began.

What does matter is this: She loved quilts. She intended to make one.

She kept the fabric scraps in a closet. She added to the collection, scrounging and scrimping, perhaps, or perhaps buying whatever caught her eye.

She added more material. She considered how this color or pattern went with that one. She looked at finished quilts, perhaps in the homes of her friends or on the walls of museums. More and more of her thoughts were devoted to the quilts that she would make.

Always, just as she was about to start to pin one of her designs together, something came up. She had a romance, or a baby, or a divorce, or another baby, or a job, or a promotion, or a death in the family, or a drinking problem, or an auto accident, or a suicidal depression. Every time she was about to begin her first quilt, life intruded. Or if life didn't intrude, she would put her hand on the closet door and suddenly feel very tired, too tired to begin anything so involved as a quilt.

In the midst of this, she grew old. In the midst of growing

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old, she died.

On the day that she died, the closet door opened. The heap of fabric fell into the hallway. The front door opened. The scraps got outside.

How? They might have crept or oozed or shuffled. No one saw the pile move. No one ever sees it move. But it does move. It appears in one place and then in another.

One day, the mound of rags is on the sidewalk outside of the Greyhound station. A man who has just gotten off the bus sees the heap, considers, then goes back inside the station to buy a ticket for the next city north.

Later, a mother watching her baby play in the park thinks she sees something in the bushes. She gets a closer look. It's just a heap of dirty, tattered rags. Even so, she scoops her child up and hurries away.

In the desert, an artist paints a landscape that has the rag monster in it. The monster is dark, indistinct, and could almost be another boulder. But it isn't. The painting doesn't sell. Even after the artist paints over the pile of rags to place a boulder there—definitely a boulder—people look at the painting and can sense that somewhere in it, something is terribly wrong.