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## The Woman at Pine Haven

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Judith Boogaart    *The Woman at Pine Haven*

She sits mummified  
hands embalmed  
on lap-robed knees  
staring out at life beyond  
the window as I approach.  
Her stretched pink scalp shines  
through hair like dandelion fluff  
and her cheeks droop  
like sagging stage makeup.

I wrap her up and up  
in my thoughts. . . .  
She is old, old, her spirit  
buried under fourscore years  
of hard or easy life.  
For her, as for many in this place  
which smells of age and incontinence,  
hope has fled; she backs  
crab-wise away from life  
into her shell. . . .

Thus my thoughts wrap her up  
into a tight cocoon,  
a smooth lump of nothing  
perched on a green vinyl chair  
while wordless groans  
and whines of discontent  
float around our heads.

I make a move to leave,  
but her faded, slightly curious  
eyes have discovered me,  
and I cannot escape.  
Shall I leave her  
bound? or with infinite patience  
unwrap layer from layer,  
unwinding long strings of stories  
back to their beginnings?  
Only the faint spark  
in her eyes seems alive,  
daring me to break my stone  
cold silence, to risk  
discovering an old friend.