

THE GOOD SIDE OF A MAN

They had been married for sixty-four years. She had watched him become what he was;-- a helpless, twisted old man, *And* he despised her for seeing it. He had never intended this, this binding unity, sharing a single room in a nursing home, never a day away from each other. Where once this oneness may have been his longing, it was now his torment.

She was his view. She teetered about the room in a space between his bed and hers, just for the sake of movement, her thin legs knotty and wobbly, her spine curved into an arch, and her breasts sagging from her chest like gray wattles on the underside of a *Rooster's or turkey's* chicken's neck. *ooh, how terrible...*

A framed testimony on the wall portrayed her once stark beauty. He had taken her hand in marriage, delicate hands passed over from a doting father to be cherished and pampered. For all he was worth, he had loved this woman who was his wife...*and then wonderful*

He had built his home, his whole world, around her. He had

worked them wealthy, until his back was tired and his hands were raw, and she had said, "Enough." She forced him to face himself, a blessed, but aloof and rigid man.

In a changing world ~~when~~ when their children were adolescent, she had packed her bags and left him. Eight months without her, and he had thought he would go insane. *How he loved her.*

He chuckled at the memory of her return to meet accusing eyes without a flinch, and part sweet curled lips to say, "I have found that life is hard without you. I have roamed, Danny. Been with another. Do you think you can forgive me?" *show her strength*

Forgiveness had been hers for the asking. *so much love.*

His children, whom he loved more than life, but not nearly as much as he loved her, were not so eager to forgive. "Look what you have done to daddy," they accused, in voices and mannerisms.

"No," he had assured them, "your mother has made me a contented man."

It was the work, the worry, and the loneliness that had nearly done him in. So many years ago, so much happiness in between, and now this.

She could tell of intricate details from patterns forty years ago, but could not tell the day of the week in present time. A stroke had left him hemiplegic, stuck with a worthless left half of a body, and also aphasic, to speak words that were garbled and maimed, that only she could understand. She translated, made his needs known, and he despised her for it. *(for being a witness to his weakness. Since to cry.)*

Each day she pushed his wheel chair down the corridor to the

^{sp} dinning room, and he needed to believe that the chair served as her crutch rather than to move him alone. She was eighty-three, and her hands had not been groomed for labor.

On bad days, when the frustration was more than he could bear, he used his good arm to throw peas from his tray across the table into her face. Primly, she would take her napkin and wipe the peas away, then say to him, "Be a good boy, Danny."

*Excellent, heartrend-
Boreal.*

The nursing staff would rush to her defense, separate the two, speak to him as though he were a child, and accuse him of being an abusive mate.

Never! He had used his hands to build a castle, to erect for her a throne. Sometimes he even asked himself what else had he done with his life, except fail to make her happy. It pained him, the things he could no longer do. He had loved and raised three children who had loved him in return, and they had done all they could before placing him in this home. They still came weekly to visit. In a sense, he guessed he was a blessed man.

Hands handled him daily. They dried him, bathed him, got him up each morning, and put him to bed each night. Hands handled him daily, but he hungered to be touched. In eighty-five years, he had never once asked for comfort, but his mind screamed for it now.

He lay on the bed where hands had placed him, and closed his eyes to block a flow of tears. He remembered her the way she ^{sp} used to be, filling his life with joy, and his mind called out her name. Irene, dear sweet Irene.

His body stiffened as a hand touched his shoulder and a tear-

drop wet his face. He opened his eyes to see her standing there, then felt angry that she could come and look down on him like this. In a garbled voice, harsh and resentful, he yelled at her, "Get away! Why do you trouble me, woman?"

She stood her ground on the good side of her man. "I thought I heard you call my name, and so I came," she said. "I promised you, Danny, that I would never leave you again, and I never will. I love you." *Damn, shivery & goosebumps. Great!!!*

He raised his useful arm with the intent_{on} of striking or shoving her away. The arm had only the strength to touch the curvature of her spine and pull her gently down onto the single bed. There he held her. There they cried together, and it felt so good.

*As you doubtless already know, this is
a powerful treatise to love, forgiveness, longevity,
and an innate goodness in flawed humane.
AKH*