

FAITH

By Athena Kontjonis

She looked like someone's Grandma. Silver- grey short cut, curly hair, a gentle smile that would make one believe she had not a care in the world. Faith had dementia.

“Just one more”, she said out loud to no one in particular. Terry the gardener heard her as he walked past her in the corridor to get the key to the shed. “One more what Faith?”, he asked. “I’ll get just one more “ she repeated in a cheery alto sing song voice. “Ok”, he responds, “Sounds like a plan”. He'd heard it all before. Faith had been in Parklands Aged Care Facility for 3 years now. She didn't have many cohesive things to say anymore but this seemed to be a favorite phrase of hers.

Faith was one of the few residents who could still walk unaided. Making her way to the dining room for lunch and remarking on the lovely old watercolour painting on the wall as she passed it,

“Is this one new? I haven't seen that one before.” “No Faith, its been there for a while now, pretty isn't it?” Sally had worked in the kitchen for 2 years now. She had a soft spot for Faith and every day when Faith asked about the painting that had been on the wall for as long as Sally had worked here, Sally simply responded as if it was the first time Faith had asked the question. Sally's mother had had dementia. The cruel disease had insidiously stolen her mother's very soul and replaced it with a cardboard copy of the one that once lived there. A taunting reminder of the loved one you could no longer reach.

Faith struggled to her feet and slowly walked towards the blue TV room, her favorite one. Passing the linen trolley on her way someone called out to her. “How are you Faith?”, one of the nursing staff called out from a residents room. “I haven't got to your room yet but I'm on my way.”

“ I'm fine sweety”. Just going to watch some telly.”

Making her way slowly down the passage Faith heard someone in distress. She turned into the room, it was Jean's room. Poor Jean lay there on her back and repeating in a frail, soft voice, “Help me. Please won't you help me?”

Faith looked lovingly down upon this poor soul. Faith had no idea that she had been good friends with Jean. This miserable soul needed help, that was clear.

And Faith would do just that. She picked up the large soft pillow from the chair beside this distressed woman's bed and placed it over her face. There was little resistance at first but then the all too familiar struggle began. It always amazed Faith that these frail people could put up such a show of strength at the end.

It took all her strength to hold the pillow firmly in place. “There now darling girl, isn't that so much better. You're free now. Free to be in peace.”

“How I love doing God's work”, Faith mumbled softly to herself as she wandered out of the room and down the long passage to her favorite TV room and sat down in one of the big comfy chairs.

Sally, the kitchen hand, appeared. “Hello there, my dear Faith. Are you ready for a cuppa? What have you been up to this morning, hey?”

“Just one more dear girl. Just one more.” Faith replied.

“Just another cup of tea then?” Sally asked.

“ No problem at all. I'm onto it.”

Bio

Athena Kontjonis began her career in nursing in 1974. She became a RN (Registered Nurse) and Midwife. Later she became a business woman and along with her husband they created a children's and Educational bookshop in Lismore, NSW, Australia.

She can be contacted at athena@ozemail.com.au

EPISSTEME