

On the Floor

Category: Accidents

written by Julie A. Dickson | August 8, 2022

Aunt Jenny is in her chair knitting when she asks me to make her some tea. "Nice and hot," she says in her whispery voice. "Warm the cup with boiling water and pour it out." She's forgotten that she tells me this every time I make her a cup of tea. I sigh and head to the kitchen, fill the tea kettle, and am taking the fragile porcelain cup from an upper cabinet when I hear her fall.

Racing back to the living room, I call, "Aunt Jenny, what are you doing?" She is on the floor (again), doesn't seem hurt this time, and is struggling to get up. "Lie still, please," I plead—to no avail, as she crawls to her chair and starts to pull herself up.

I am one of several relatives taking turns monitoring Jenny's daily routine—helping her get out of bed and change her clothes, standing by while she's on her shower chair, fetching her lunch, and just keeping her company. We watch the birds and squirrels make short order of her many feeders outside and talk about her trip 20 years ago to Ireland and, always, about knitting. I often crochet while she knits, to keep my own hands busy during the many hours I am with her.

She is standing now and sits back in her chair, exhausted. Aunt Jenny has dementia and various physical ailments, including episodes of low blood pressure and residual pain from a mostly-healed broken hip. Her right side is weak from a stroke she suffered six years ago, and her foot is turned in—this most likely being the cause of her falls. "Why didn't you wait for me to help you up?" I ask her helplessly, realizing that I can no longer turn my back on her at all.

She answers dreamily, gazing toward the window. "I just pictured myself getting up, walking to the window to scare away the squirrels from the bird feeders," she says. Her rheumy eyes seem to go unfocused for a moment. "Suddenly, I was on the floor."

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