

# How Much Longer, and Why Are Gramma's Ankles So Dark?

Category: Watching the Clock

written by Julie A. Dickson | September 5, 2022

I am twelve, sitting with ankles crossed, hands in my lap. Sitting quietly as I have been taught. We are visiting my grandmother. I stare at the mantle clock, brain ticking off seconds, watching the slow-moving minute hand creep toward 12 noon.

*How much longer?* It's hard for me to sit this still. My hands clench and unclench. My foot threatens to bounce on her oriental rug. When the clock reaches noon, we will all go next door to Edelman's for lunch. Okay, I admit, Edelman's won't be much better. I will still have to be quiet; theirs is a conversation I am not invited to join. But, at least I can eat while they chat.

Why are Gramma's ankles so dark? I sneak a look, glancing at my father to make sure he's not paying attention to me. Her ankles are blue-black, reaching down into navy blue orthopedic shoes with side laces, strange enough on their own, but her ankles! I can only see a hint of lower knees and shins, which seem to be flesh-toned. Her ankles have the look of permanent bruises, and I don't understand what I've overheard my mother say about circulation. Finally, it's noon and we all stand and leave her apartment for lunch.

Now, I am fifteen and clock watching again, this time in Gramma's room at the Baptist Home. She sits in a recliner with feet elevated on a low stool, lap robe thrown over her ankles. I cannot see beneath. The mantle clock is on her bookshelf, just as it had been in her apartment. The familiar ticking enters my brain, but this time I am waiting for noon, when she will go to the dining room for her lunch, and we will leave.

It is almost noon, and the lap robe is suddenly removed to the arm of Gramma's chair. I stare in disbelief at her ankles, no longer dark. Before I can ask, my mother exclaims how wonderful Gramma is doing with her physical therapy, using the walker up and down hallways, walking to the dining room and the recreation area. I absorb this information without comment. I vow to never let my ankles get dark like hers were, just as the clock strikes noon.

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