

The Door

by Dan Hardesty

Jack sat slouched back in the same leather easy chair he'd been using since he'd retired seventeen years ago. He faced the window across from the bed but was oblivious of the darkening November sky with its promise of coming snow. He was sensing more than seeing an early spring afternoon in March with tiny leaves peeking from buds splitting open in the warming sunlight. Somewhere inside his nearly senseless body a restlessness was begging to join the birthing processes in his mind while blinding him to the reality of today.

He slowly rose from the old chair and, excitement keeping him from feeling any of the usual pains, walked to the closet to get a worn denim jacket then, slipping it on, made his way through the door to an empty hallway. The absence of any one in the hall didn't register as strange because he was reveling in the almost painless stroll through the lobby to the door that would let him join the natural world beyond.

The cold air that hit him as he pushed the door open and stepped outside failed to register as anything but the briskness of a March afternoon. Clouds bunched tighter together, blocking almost all light while the wind grew in intensity as a fine sleet began to drive downwards. Jack's mind was so full of spring his body couldn't feel stinging ice and increasing cold as his steps carried him towards the huge old oak tree he remembered in the park by City Hall.

His steps began to slow as the temperature nosedived and the sleet turned to snow, quickly piling up on the sidewalk. The cloud dropped to earth, enveloping him in fog which finally got through to his brain making him afraid as he realized nothing made sense. Nothing was familiar. He had no idea where he was. He couldn't remember where he had been. Why was he so wrinkled, so sore, so weak. Something inside his mind demanded that he continue on. A few people passed him but he was unaware of their presence. He stumbled on a curb once then caught a toe on a rock, sending him sprawling to the ground. He managed to stand but all the pains had returned along with nagging new ones. He stood, dazed, wondering why he was here? Where should he go? In the haze he saw a door. It looked like one of the old, heavy, oaken, church doors that appeared in books about medieval times. He tried and tried to open the door, finally collapsing.

People passing by stopped, called 911, and watched as the old man was rolled onto a stretcher. As the stretcher was about to pass into the ambulance the oaken door opened. Finally Jack was warm and secure in the arms of the beautiful spring his mind had sought.