

## Something to Hang Around For

*By Marilyn Reeves*

"Dagnab it, Hank! You got me again. I sure didn't see that knight hovering over there. Think maybe I'm getting' too old to play chess. How 'bout a game of checkers instead?"

"Naw. I'm thinking of going out to sit on the porch for a spell so I can light up my pipe. Would you mind doing the honors?"

"Sure, Hank. You should get one of them electrical wheelchairs, then somebody wouldn't have to push you all the time."

"Well, they don't. I can wheel it myself, thank you very much. It just kinda tires out my arms a bit. Don't have the muscles like I used to, back when I was seventy."

"I know what you mean, Hank. I used to stack them bales of hay like they was just piles of cotton fluff. Heck, I was darn-near muscle bound. The ladies used to come up and ask me if they could cop a feel of my biceps."

"Sure they did, Bud. You probably had to fight 'em off."

"You got that right."

"How did the wife feel about that?"

"Mary Ann? Oh, heck, she didn't mind. Made her feel right proud."

"Okay, here we go, Hank. Just a little bump. Now where do you want to sit? Over in the shade here?"

"Yeah, that's good. Thanks, Bud." Hank struck a match with his thumbnail and drew deeply on his pipe, its fragrance spirited away by the evening breeze.

"How old you getting to be now, Hank?"

"Well, I'm ninety-eight. Don't you remember, they baked a cake for me just last week?"

"Oh, yeah. I remember. Except I think it was maybe a couple of months ago."

"Whatever. Hey, look over there. Ain't that a pretty sunset? Look at that! Them clouds are all different colors. Pink, and red, and purple, and gold! Don't see one like that very often. Wish I had a camera."

"Nowadays the kids take pictures with their phones, can you believe it? Heck, I can remember when a phone was something mounted on the wall and you had to ask the operator to hook you up with whoever it was you wanted to talk to. Then the entire neighborhood would listen in. Remember that?"

"Yeah, I surely do. Times sure have changed. I can't keep up any more. But you, you're still a young 'un. How old are you now, Bud?"

“Well, I’m ninety-six. Comin’ up right behind you there, Hank. Don’t suppose I’ll be seeing too many more sunsets like this one here, either. Would you look at that! Looks like a big purple dragon with piles of pink cotton sitting on his back.”

“Looks more like a lion to me. Kinda like that sphinx over there in Egypt.”

“Whatever. Funny how you can make out a whole bunch of faces and things when you look at the clouds. Just gotta use a little imagination.”

“Well, it looks like the color’s starting to fade. Getting on time for supper. Wonder what they’re going to feed us this evening. Probably some more of them mushy mashed potatoes. No gravy. And liver and onions. Never did care much for liver.”

“Me neither. But we don’t get much of a say on anything anymore, do we, Hank? Guess we should be happy that we’re still here. I wouldn’t mind sticking around for a few more sunsets like that one.”

“Yep. Something to hang around for, that’s for sure.”