

I'm Still Here

By Marilyn Reeves

Nowadays, younger people often make me feel like I'm invisible.

I go for days on end when I see no one. Only the clerk at the store, or perhaps the lady who cuts my hair. Mostly, we just chat about the weather. At least they treat me like I'm still a person and not just some obstacle standing in their way.

I tell the boy behind the counter at Burger King, "The ladies' room is out of paper towels." He looks at me uncomprehending, as if I'm a mere figment of his imagination. But finally he responds with the only words he knows. He says to the figment: "For here or to go?"

I walk along the path to the Center. I pass a young man and say, "Good morning!" He doesn't look up. He's too busy texting. It makes me feel as if I don't matter. I'm just a wraith, a breath of air – nothing to disturb his concentration.

My daughter-in-law drives me to the eye doctor's. To pass the time I say, "I think electronics are starting to rule our lives." She gives me a withering look, and then, as if to spite me, she listens to her electronic device. I could have given her directions, but she'd rather hear Alexa's tinny voice. So much for trying to make conversation.

My sister and I communicate via e-mail to share what little news we have. This morning they shut off the water in my building. Her son took her out to go shopping. Maybe one of these days we'll get together, when we're both not so busy doing nothing.

It's a Holiday and the family comes over. So nice to see the twins again. Often I go for months without seeing them. The girls are twenty-one now – my, how time has flown! I ask them to tell me what's happening in their lives, but they're too busy texting to respond.

They were only six years old when I first moved in here. They used to love to play in my shower. They would laugh and squeal when they squirted each other with water, using the hose extension I have in there. When they were nine, ten, eleven, they used to sit at the table and paint pictures with my acrylics. Both of them were good artists, but they don't care to do that any more. It seems like only yesterday, but it was actually more than ten years ago.

As I walk along the path to the Center, I pass by one of the gardeners. He looks up and tells me, "Good morning!" He sees me. I'm not invisible. It makes my day!

Sometimes I run into a neighbor. We just laugh and talk about the weather. But at least they're not texting. They see me. They make me feel like I'm still here.