

Grandma Does

'Let the baby cry,' they tell me. 'The book says it won't hurt her. She will get her bottle at four o'clock.'

That wee love hasn't read the book and neither have I, and we both get hungry long before four. I have a cup of tea and she nestles in my arm and has her bottle now. I have extra milk on hand in case she asks for more. No child is hungry in my home; and as she smiles and gurgles for me, we both know what grandmas are for.

I am doing my thing.

'You shouldn't watch those late night movies,' they protest. 'It's hard on your eyes, and you need your rest.'

They forget that naps can be taken in the afternoon and any other time I choose. Those old movies take me back to my past. Some of them I've seen before, and not alone. I draw the heavy drapes and turn out the lights so that no one can see I'm up so late

--and do my thing.

'Make the children eat their vegetables,' they say. 'No dessert unless they do.'

By coincidence I serve only their favorite vegetables when my grandchildren visit me. I take no chances that they might miss the fudge cake I've baked especially for them. As they grow tall, I grow old; and in my years of being a grandma,

I want to do my thing.

'All those plants in the windows are bad for you,' they scold each winter.

I pretend not to hear, and my friends the plants remain with me as they have been for many years. Some were gifts from persons now long dead. I water my plants, pluck off the faded blooms and the dead leaves, and give slips from them to friends. I make the rounds of my plants each morning.

I am doing my thing.

'Don't rock the baby to sleep,' they say. 'He doesn't get rocked at home. Just put him in his bed, turn out the lights, and shut the door.'

I won't disappoint my old rocker now that it is shabby and its cushion is worn thin. That rocker and I rocked my children; now we will rock the grandchildren when we are alone. As a cure after a fall or a quarrel or for a sleepy head, there is nothing better than a rock in that old rocker. Sitting in it, I can see our reflection in the mirror above the fireplace and see how old and small I look, and how the baby's smooth, white skin contrasts with my wrinkles. That old-fashioned rocking chair and I,

we do our thing.

'You shouldn't be outside in all that sun,' they admonish. 'And all that stooping, too.'

I pick wild strawberries out back in the field as I have done each spring. I can't bear to see them go to waste. And where can you buy those ruby gems in Mason jars which make such special Christmas gifts for friends? After the picking, my knees are stiff but I rub them well with hot oil.

I did my thing.

'Don't let the youngsters eat between meals,' they warn me.

I used to make fat date cookies by the dozens when my children were young. Sometimes I baked them late at night to keep the jar full and ready for the morning. But one or two won't hurt. Anyway, the grandchildren know where I store the ones I make for them. I am not permitted sweets myself; but I don't mind doing without, as I watch the small teeth sink into those lush, sweet dates.

I am doing my thing.

'Those clothes aren't worth mending,' they explain. 'They've just about outgrown them, anyway.'

Many modern mothers don't have time to patch, but it troubles me to see torn clothing and buttons missing from the things children wear. So I smuggle the worn clothes home and sew them when I'm alone. It's nice to have my mending basket by my chair again and

doing my thing.

'That old tree shades your room,' they said when I was ill. 'Let us cut it down and your room will be much brighter.'

That old tree is older than I, and I respect its age. It was here when we bought this house. I know it is misshapen and no longer full of leaves, but we have seen a lot together and I won't part with it. That old tree and I still have our roles to play in the final act, and

we do our thing.

Her Thing

IRENE CRAIG NEIL

'Don't climb the stairs,' they caution.
'Let the cleaning woman go upstairs for you.'

I don't go often—just once in a while. And I climb real slowly, resting on the way up; and there's a good strong rail to hang onto coming down. But there are treasures up there—keepsakes no one else would want—and I know that when I'm gone they'll throw them all away. There isn't space for them downstairs where they fixed a room and bath for me after my attack. I dream a little in each room, and when I dust the old pictures still up on the walls,

I'm doing my thing.

'Wouldn't you like a younger bird? they ask. 'We'll buy you one that can sing.'

On the days when the room is filled with early morning sun, Dickie can still reach his swing and chirp a little. He calls me and we often chat about our aches and pains—things we have in common. A young bird wouldn't understand such things. On days when Dickie's feeling low, I put a drop of brandy in his drinking cup to perk him up. He needs me and I need him.

We do our thing.

'Be sure the kids are in bed by eight,' they say.

Well, those children cannot tell the time—and without looking real close, neither can I. I keep a box of jigsaw puzzles for rainy days. Now we lay one out on the kitchen table, and the wee ones try to fit the pieces together with my help. It may be late, after cocoa, when I tuck them in; but I have given them a memory,

I have done my thing.



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