

a short story (11/17/07):

Delusional Complications

In memory of Feydor Dostoyevsky

I didn't notice him when I awakened. Not until I opened my eyes and peered through the fog outside. It was morning. Of course, I wasn't sure who he was, there in the furtive still world; certainly not Bob, but I sensed, uncomfortably, he was someone coming after me.

"Jackie, dinner is ready." That's my son down the hall.

"Are you awake, Mom?"

How could I not be awake? That other male form, like Irwin's, secreting itself into my room, demanding that all the back bills be paid.

Look, I'm no fool. I know that much. I've paid my dues and all my bills monthly for years. I've got the money, too. Or do you think that I'm crazy? Don't be silly. Who are you anyway to tell me how to live and such things; or that I should have to move. Just don't push your luck. I know how to deal with that. I've got friends. I'll cut you off if you don't behave.

I know this besides: It's my house, my money. I can handle my own affairs. I still drive the car. I'll write you out of my will.

"Jackie, Jackie," he's calling me again. His voice is getting nearer. Here he is now in the doorway.

"Were you sleeping, mom?"

"Yes, I just dozed off."

"Do you want dinner now?"

"Sure, I'm getting up right away....."

Slowly working her way out of bed, the near 90 year old woman, sturdy in body, erect though forshortened to 5 feet by age's dessication of life, squatly she sat. Then, bereft of mental clarity, she stood, slipped on her slippers and robe draped over her bedside chair, then sat back down on the bed. The edge of the bed gave a distant moan, little more than a creak. But the woman paid no attention. She was lost in her gaze appearing to focus out the window at some distance. Glancing at her eyes, you might not notice the unfocused mind, clouding as she tried to remember what in this world she was doing.

“Jackie, Jackie,” she called, a bit insistent, concerned. “Are you still here?”

“Sure mom,” he answered, perplexed, and again returned to the bedroom doorway.

She turned her head toward him. “What have you been doing? I took a nap.”

“Yes, I know,” he responded. I’ve been making dinner for us. Want to come along now.

“Sure,” she answered. “Dinner would be nice. You’re so good to fix it for me.”

With that the dutiful son took her arm and walked her out the door to the small dining room. There she sat down, of her own free will, and watched him bring food to the table. She watched but did not eat.