

*Fading Roses*

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“I am a vibrant and active senior.” Obviously, the best kind of oldster, and of course, the kind who wants to live in the happy retirement community the actor is paid to advertise on TV. “See”, she seems to be saying, “you can still be young AND old! Isn’t that great?”

My daughter-in-law grew up in Manhattan, where the flowers live in flower shops. She called me up in alarm to tell me the scarlet roses they’d planted last summer, which had been blooming heartily in the little garden outside their Seattle townhouse, were dying. “Kayla,” I say, “Cut them down to the next leaf with five leaflets. They’ll be fine; you’ll probably get another set of blooms this summer. If not, they’ll be back next year, even better!” There are seasons to roses.

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Kayla knows as much about the seasons of life as I do, even though she's forty years my junior. She watched her own mother lose her ability to be "vibrant and active", as a Parkinson's-like disease sapped her strength. Humans, like Kayla's mom, like me, are mortal. The rebloom of roses is at least annual, but even rosebushes eventually become gnarled and old and die. Sure, the miracles of modern medicine sometimes surprise humans with a rebloom here and there. But I don't dread the image of myself, sitting in a rocker, watching fall turn to winter out the window. If we're lucky, we can fade gently, like the rose dropping our petals one by one.

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