

Old age has crept up on me, although by many standards I am not old. I am older than I once was, but generations ahead of me chuckle at the idea that I am old. Yet, the spring in my once lively step is gone. I am well acquainted with the banter as I ascend or descend stairs, and plan my outings around the weather, some of which makes my joints ache. I rise and fall with the sun, and dread the idea of leaving home after dark.

When I first stand, my body is stiff and complains at the sudden yanking from its cozy stupor. It begs, just for a moment, for me to move slowly and threatens to lock up completely if I don't heed the warning. I fear falling, not so much for the absurdity of how I may look, but the fear of breaking something that will take too long to mend.

These are the things I think about when I am alone. My grip on the railing, my inability to read small print, the ever-growing number of pills I'm expected to take. I sit with them, and wonder how old age crept on me. It did not happen suddenly, for I'm sure I would have noticed. No, it was stealthy in its advancement. One day I'm taking the stairs two at a time, and the next I'm holding the railing lest I fall. Lest a knee give out on me, or my once sure foot slips.

My brain, so full of information, it discards it in random places. Thoughts, once certain, now become a jumble of memories mixed with stories from my past, and I have to concentrate on them with all that I have to be sure they are real and not just a dream I created or book I read. To know they are my story and really happened. Somewhere, mixed in with all the memories, are facts I'm supposed to pull up at the ready: a phone number, address, birthdate, and more. Once so quick to rattle them off, I have to pause now to be sure I have the numbers in the correct order.

I look in the mirror and smile. Although many seek serum to reduce their wrinkles and push back age, I am not amongst them. Perhaps it is because I am older and wish to conserve whatever funds I have left, or maybe it's because I made peace long ago with the person in the mirror smiling back at me.

The eyes that showed me the wonders of the world, and many of its tiny secrets. Legs that carried me from country to country and state to state. A nose that can identify its favorite

smell, and everything in between. Ears that know the sweet sound of childish laughter, and the deep anguish of soul when our dearest love has left us behind. Hair, once long and vibrant, is a muted shade of gray cut at a length that's not so hard to manage even when my arms ache.

These are the things I think about when I am alone. I wonder how old I will be, or if I will be at all, when this young one in front of me has found their path in life. Their driving desire to reach their place in this world. Will they wander far from the path only to discover they spent countless years wandering without need? Or will they stay the course, determined as they are, to reach the end and rise to their calling?

The thoughts are swirling again as I stare out the window and wonder what the weather holds in store for us today. I've been up for hours, waiting for the others to stir while the house creaked and groaned and we sympathized with each other. These are the things I think about when I am alone, the things I don't speak about.



Author's Note:

This piece was inspired by a [writing prompt](#) titled: *These were the things she thought about when she was alone*. Sometimes the pieces come together quickly, and other times they take a while to make themselves known. Below are two other attempts I made at writing this piece.

*These were the things she thought about when she was alone. The things she didn't tell anyone else. How could she? They were hard enough for her to swallow and believe they'd really happened. It was unlikely anyone else would believe her, too.*

*Attempt #1*

The one above was short, but I stalled on wondering what it was the character knew and didn't want to share. It could have been anything from a slight mistake to life altering news. While my brain considered all the different things it could have been, I opted to try a different tactic.

*Meghan collapsed in the decrepit gray armchair and sighed. It had been a long full of answering the same questions repeatedly, giving false assurances to calm the addled mind, and a desperate bid to keep her own sanity. She was too tired to pull herself upstairs for sleep and, instead, curled up under a quilt that was previously discarded over the back of her chair.*

*What she needed was sleep, but here, in the quietness of her own home, her thoughts took flight. Where would she be when she was eighty? Would she have a helping hand to guide her? How would her mind cope? These were the things she thought about when she was alone. Each one filling her with a sense of unease without reason. Worry, better saved for another day, clung to the air around and suffocated commonsense. She shook her head to throw the thoughts off while she grappled for sleep.*

*Attempt #2*

Meghan popped into my mind and I started writing her thoughts down, but she dropped to sleep and left me with nothing else to write. No amount of poking at her seemed to wake her up and get her thoughts flowing again. Thus I tried another attempt, which is the one you read in the main post.

I read a book, and which one it was escapes me, recently about a person who said old age crept up on them. Do you ever read something and just one line or phrase sticks with you? That phrase stuck with me. A couple of weeks ago, after doing some exercises to help

strengthen my weak knees, a muscle tightened up in my right knee and refused to release. While it was painful, I found it more annoying than anything else. It gave me a new perspective for people older than myself who can't move as quickly anymore.

I started toying with the phrase, "old age crept on me." That week I was clinging to the banister when I was going up or down. At one point I laughed because in that moment I felt old age had truly crept up on me and there I was, using the banister for support instead of wondering if I could slide down it. If you're wondering, Dear Reader, you cannot slide down the banister in our home. It's one of those very thin ones attached to a wall.

While [reading a book this month](#), the author was describing the oldest female character in his story. I'm not quoting directly, so forgive me if you know the book and line by heart. It went something like this, "My mother was not that old, but old enough to be acquainted with the banister."

I'm one of those people who has a top favorite line in almost every book I read, one that sticks with me long after the book is finished. The single line that comes to mind as soon as the book is mentioned, and it makes me smile. The line above about the banister is one such line.

Before anyone asks, I want to clarify that this piece is not written about me. As I was looking for a fitting image for the post, I couldn't even remember if I'd used any pronouns to make the person male or female. I don't know who the person is, or their exact age, but I know that when they are alone with their thoughts, they think about old age.

The Reluctant Author

