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The Tired Honeysuckle

Mary Graham Bonner

"I'm very tired," the Honeysuckle said, "and I'd really rather not come up this spring."

"But you always come up," said the Hyacinth. "Your roots are strong — you don't need to be replanted every year, like the annuals."

"That's all perfectly true," said the Honeysuckle. "But I am old. Terribly old."

"How old?" the Hyacinth whispered.

"I've lost count. This garden has been kept just like this for over a hundred years, and the house nearby is older still. I've been here for a very large part of that time."

The Hyacinth was quiet a moment. "Then I don't blame you. I think you've earned a rest. Let someone plant a new honeysuckle."

"Ah," said the Honeysuckle. "That's just what you don't understand. I am tired. But I have to blossom."

"Why?"

"Because of the people. I grow just outside a window, you see, and my fragrance can drift indoors. I give honey to the bumblebees and nectar to the hummingbirds — the dear little creatures, I love them — but that's not the real reason I come up each year. Let me tell you.

"A long time ago, a little girl planted me. Her name was Mary Alice, and she could make anything grow. Of all her flowers, she loved her red honeysuckle best. She watered me. She dug around my roots. She made me comfortable. On special occasions she'd cut a spray of my red blossoms and wear them.

"Mary Alice grew up — though she was never very big; she was always dainty and small. Her eyes stayed blue her whole life. But each spring I noticed a little more silver in her golden hair, and then one spring it was quite white.

"She watched over children all those years — other little faces, generation after generation — and every one of them smiled at her. I don't think anyone could have scowled at Mary Alice. Even when her hair was white, her forehead had no wrinkles.



"Every spring she would come to her window. 'There comes my honeysuckle,' she'd say. The last few years it was hard to come up — my roots had weakened. But I came, because I thought of her.

"Last year she sat at her window and looked out at me. 'That honeysuckle is as old as I am,' she said.

"Not long after that, I no longer saw her at the window.

"But one day the rest of the family came to look at me. The children too. 'The honeysuckle she loved,' they said. 'Oh, we do hope it keeps coming up — it reminds us so of her.'

"So you see, little Hyacinth, I must come up. Even now. Even tired."

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