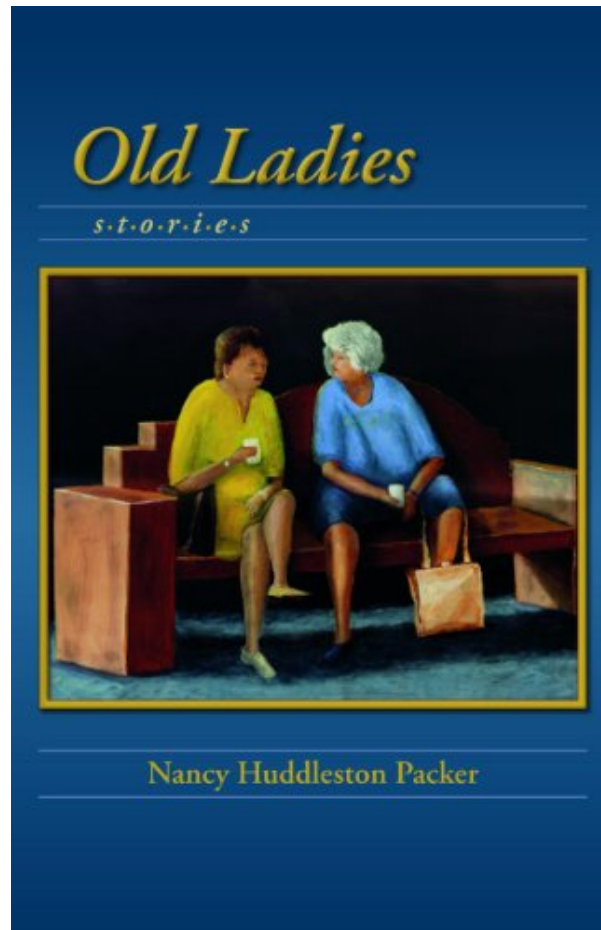


# OLD LADIES: STORIES BY NANCY HUDDLESTON PACKER



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# *Old Ladies*

*s.t.o.r.i.e.s*



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## About the Author

Nancy Huddleston Packer is Professor Emeritus of English and former Director of the Creative Writing Program at Stanford University. Her stories have been published in many literary magazines, and she is the author of four earlier collections of stories: *Small Moments* (1976), *In My Father's House* (1988), *The Women Who Walk* (1989), and *Jealous-Hearted Me* (1997)

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# OLD LADIES: STORIES BY NANCY HUDDLESTON PACKER PDF

The stories in this collection center on women of a certain age. They are widows, divorcees, the happily married, an artist, a cleaning woman, a professor, the leisurely rich, and the working poor. Whatever their life condition, all the protagonists are decidedly individual. Some are feisty, some shy, some gentle, some ornery, some who know exactly who they are, and some who are seeking to find out. And almost all discover something a little unsettling that changes their sense of themselves, for better or worse. As the characters are different, so are the stories. No two have the same subject, theme, or situation. In "Two's Company," two women in entirely different social worlds struggle for supremacy. In "Regulars," a recent widow finds solace in a shocking way. The protagonist in "The Pioneer Women" at last comes to acknowledge and accept her younger self. The collection expresses a mix of humor and sadness. Some of the stories are funny. In "Bridge," the male protagonist, the only one in the collection, is a widower who throws himself on the mercy of three hotshot women bridge players. In "Night Noises," a woman finds she has a real knack for inventing a "romantic" life for herself. At the other end of the spectrum, "Dust Catchers" is the story of an alcoholic at the mercy of an elder abuser. Although several stories take place on the East Coast, most are set in Northern California and several at a retirement community. Nancy Packer's writing is strong, concrete, and entertaining. Her stories hit the ground running, develop in a chain of consequences, and move quickly to their satisfying end. Many of these stories have appeared in literary journals including *Sewanee Review* and *North American Review*.

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A Strong dose of Truth-telling Takes the Shine off the Golden Years

By AYJ

About ten years ago I sent Nancy Packer a letter thanking her for "Jealous-Hearted Me," which had touched me deeply as it mirrored my own relationship with my mother, who at the time was a lively 85-year-old.

Last week I was at the library and from their mini-kiosk featuring short story collections I picked up "Old Ladies." It touched a number of nerves. My formerly feisty mother has become faint-voiced and frail, unable to walk unassisted the distance between her house and mine just next door. She spent a week in hospital and five weeks in rehab after breaking her hip, so I recognized both the sad inhabitants of the hospital waiting room in "Regulars" and the denizens of the Triple-R retirement home which with its established routines and cliques appears in several stories.

This was a painful book. Packer draws a detailed portrait of the end of life, when health and certainty and romance and friends are all turning to ghosts. These are cautionary tales, but we must all go into the forest sooner or later, though we know there are monsters.

7 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

eleven fascinating short stories

By A Customer

"Night Noises." Widow Louise begins renting out a room to men (Edward and then Leo) and finally a woman (Ingrid) as a means of companionship, but none match Ross.

"Her Men." Her grandson Jackie hits on Katherine to fund his latest "Big Chance". She has doubts as she lives off her money, but reflects back years ago to her twentyish son Jay and his then teenage girlfriend pregnant Gail before deciding whether to be the Iron Duchess or the doting grandma.

"Charade." Planning to sell the house with its bitter reminders of what was, Helen hires Eddie to fix it up while she reflects back to when she and Lamar were together before he left her. However, her flirting has both men upset.

"Two's Company." Rosa the short muscular immigrant cleaning lady and her employer Virginia the six foot slim with roots going back to colonial times decide to fire one another though each needs the other.

"A Woman and His Dog." Before going to the hospital where he died, Martin asked Lydia to take care of Ozzie. As they walk each day in different directions, Ozzie introduces Lydia to the neighbors.

"Bridge." At Ridgeside Retirement Residence, Norman the widower replaces the recently deceased Angela as the fourth at bridge with Millie, Jean and Charlotte though they ridicule him for stinking at the game.

These well-written eleven stories showcase the diversity of Old Ladies as each protagonist differs from one another as do their circumstances. Each of the stars learns you can teach an old dog new tricks when they discover something new about themselves.

Harriet Klausner

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Old Ladies in a new world?

By Lydia

I expected to identify with these old ladies--to be entertained and supported, but I was disappointed. Only one of the stories came close. At 74 I'm somewhere between practicing for old-ladyhood and being slammed into it. Maybe I should just shut up, and roll gracefully with whatever I'm dealt. I can borrow from their

attitudes, if not their behaviors.

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