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## **The Old Woman who shut the door on death**

**by Sheena Blackhall**

Stanley Roberston when he was telling stories, one that he told to me was the old woman who shut the door on death. And because Stanley's people camped on Deeside, I assume it would be from the Deeside region so I think you'll enjoy this one. It's my favourite of Stanley's, so here we go.

There was a old critter who - she'd hae been about 80 odd - she didnae want to dee - aw she was terrified she wud dee. So she just announced to aabody in the village 'Dinna bother to come and see me. I wullnae be here much langer'. 'Oh' they said 'we'll miss you terribly'. 'Well' she said 'I'll be fine' she said 'I'm nae going to die. It's jist I willnae be opening the door because death will come in you see. But I'll be fine because I've got plenty meal and I've plenty water there's a wee spring just inside ma hoose'. So folk for a while wint up to see her at the heid of the hill but she never opened the door so, oh well, they gradually stoppit.

And it was a coorse winter, an awfae cauld winter and she was sittin there with a lovely fire roarin up the lum oh she was jist dandy. As the snaw was comin doon in big schmoodrichs, great muckle dads o snaw, it was that thick. And she was awa to shut the curtains and oh no, she lookit oot, here was this, a traiveller lassie comin up and she was barfoot and the old woman says 'Oh no, she'll be wantin something. Well she's nae gettin in'. Well the craiter would have been about 14, 15 and she had nothing on her feet and skin and bane and just in rags. And she thought 'She's nae gettin in'. So she shoved the curtains tae and she's back to the fire then she heard a chap on the windae and she shouted through the windae she says 'Awa you go. You're nae gettin in. I dinna open the door to naebody. Awa you go'. And the lassie says 'I dinna want anythin. I just want a heat'. 'No' she says 'away you go. I'm nae takin you in'. But she watched her going through the snow and she saw the puir lassie, no strength in her, jist lay doon in the snaw in a wee boorrochie and she could tell it wouldnae be lang ere she was deid, o the cald. Oh no, you see, whit could she dae? So she put her shawl roon about her shoulders and she opened the door a wee chinkie and she lookit oot and oh there was nae sign of nothing else gan aboot and lookit oot and oh no. So she creepit across as fast as she could the snaw and she trailed the lassie in and it took a whole winter to nurse that lassie better because she jist wasnae well, jist at death's door, a puir sowlie. And she was awful fond of her, she jist loved that lassie and in the spring she lookit oot the windae and oh the flooers were beautiful, she never seen flooers like them and the lassie had rosy

cheeks by now and she says 'Well, I must awa' she says 'I cannae just bide here any langer now that I'm fit and well' she says. 'Would you nae like jist to come oot and see the floers?'. 'Nae, nae. I'm nae seeing nae floers. You see if I open that door, death'll come in'. She says 'It's nae much of a life is it? Shut in, in this hoose. Never seein the floers and the floers look awfie bonnie'. The old woman thought 'Well I'll jist cam oot for a minutie. I'll jist tak your hand'. So she took the lassie's hand and they got to the floers and the floers were lovely and the lassie filled her lap wi floers and the old woman says 'I'm gan awa back now. I cannae bide oot lang because death will come in'. And the lassie says 'But do you nae recognise me?'. And the woman says 'No'. 'Oh' she says 'I'm death'. She says 'You were deid the time you opened the door to me' and she says 'This is the fields of paradise cos death sometimes comes as a friend. He's nae aye sometimes to be feart of'. 'Oh' says the old woman. And that was how she died.

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