

"PLEASE GOD LET HER LISTEN"

ERMA HAD A HARD WEEK, AND UP UNTIL THE TIME SHE WAS TO GO TO THE AIRPORT THE DAY HAD BEEN ONE IN WHICH SHE HAD BEEN BESIEGED BY WHAT SHE CALLED ASSAULTS ON HER EARS. SHE WAS READY TO BE ALONE, TO RELAX AND READ, WHILE SHE WAITED TO BOARD THE PLANE.

AS SHE SETTLED INTO HER BOOK, SHE HEARD A VOICE NEXT TO HER, BELONGING TO AN ELDERLY WOMAN, SAYING "I'LL BET IT'S COLD IN CHICAGO." WITHOUT SMILING, ERMA RETURNED FLAT, CLIPPED RESPONSES TO WHAT THE WOMAN SAID. NEVERTHELESS, THE WOMAN CONTINUED TALKING, SOON UNFOLDING THAT SHE WAS TAKING HER HUSBAND'S BODY TO CHICAGO TO BE BURIED. AFTER 53 YEARS OF MARRIAGE, HE DIED SUDDENLY DIED.

WITH A START, ERMA'S HEART WOKE UP. SHE REALIZED ANOTHER HUMAN BEING WAS SCREAMING TO BE HEARD AND IN DESPERATION HAD TURNED TO ANY STRANGER. THIS WOMAN WASN'T ASKING FOR ADVICE, INFORMATION OR EVEN CONSOLATION, SHE WANTED A LIVING PERSON JUST TO BE WILLING TO BE "PRESENT" WHILE SHE TALKED. THE WOMAN TALKED NUMBLY AND STEADILY UNTIL IT WAS TIME TO BOARD THE PLANE. THEN SHE MOVED ON TO FIND HER SEAT IN ANOTHER SECTION. AS ERMA HUNG HER COAT, SHE HEARD THE WOMAN'S PLAINTIVE VOICE SAY TO HER NEW SEAT COMPANION. "I'LL BET IT'S COLD IN CHICAGO." ERMA PRAYED, "PLEASE LET HER LISTEN."