

COVID^{IN THE} HOUSE OF OLD



I greet Edna in her room.

A few family photos decorate the walls. Everything, from the bedspread to her comfy, cotton clothes, is pink. Large jars of honey, molasses and protein powder cover her bedside table. She keeps sheep's yogurt in a small fridge and dark chocolate locked in a drawer.

"I'm a vegetarian," she informs me. Unlike most residents, she is lithe and sparkles with curiosity. The poem becomes a springboard to talk of her life. She pulls an acrylic crystal attached to a string out of her pocket and tells me she's a dowser. She once lived in the Arizona desert with a younger man who became her husband. Words and numbers fascinate her. She demands to know my full name, birthdate and astrological sign.

I'm learning that everyone here had a life with many chapters before moving into long-term care. Each resident's story is like an unfinished manuscript waiting for a conclusion. How will the pandemic change their outcomes?

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STORIES FROM A NATIONAL HUMANITARIAN CRISIS