I was 18, about to start college and broke. To make some money, I *plodded* down a quiet street of older homes, selling books door-to-door. As I approached one gate, a tall, woman in her 80s came to the gate in her bathrobe. "There you are darling! I've been waiting for you! God told me you'd be coming today." Mrs. Link needed help around her yard and house, and, apparently, I was the one for the job. Who was I to argue with God?

The next day I worked for six hours, harder than I had ever worked before. Mrs. Link showed me how to plant bulbs, what flowers and weeds to pull up, and where to haul the *wilted* plants. I finished off the day by mowing the lawn with a mower that looked like an *antique*. When I had finished, Mrs. Link *complimented* me on my work and looked under the mower at the blade. "Looks like you hit a stone. I'll get the file." I soon learned why everything Mrs. Link owned looked like an antique, but worked like brand-new. For six hours of work she gave me a check for three dollars. It was 1978. God's funny sometimes, isn't he?

The next week I cleaned Mrs. Link's house. She showed me exactly how to vacuum her antique *Persian* rug with her antique-looking vacuum. As I dusted her beautiful treasures, she told me where she had *acquired* them while she traveled the world. For lunch she sautéed fresh vegetables from her garden. We shared a delicious meal and a lovely day.

Some weeks I got to be a *chauffeur*. The last gift to Mrs. Link from Mr. Link was a glorious new car. By the time I met Mrs. Link, the car was 30 years old, but still glorious. Mrs. Link was never able to have children, but her sister, nieces and nephews lived nearby. Her neighbors also were fond of her, and she was active in civic affairs.

A year and a half passed since I met Mrs. Link. School, work and church were taking up more of my time, and I saw Mrs. Link less and less. I found another girl to help her around the house.

Valentine's Day was coming, and being very very broke, I was compiling a very short list of my valentines. Mom glanced at my list and said, "You need to get Mrs. Link a valentine." "Why?” I asked, Mrs. Link has a lot of family, friends and neighbors. She's active in the community. I don't even spend a lot of time with her anymore. Why would Mrs. Link want a valentine from me?"

Mom was unimpressed. "Get Mrs. Link a valentine," she insisted. On Valentine's Day, I presented Mrs. Link a small *bouquet*, which she *graciously* accepted. A couple of month later, I visited Mrs. Link again. Centered on her *mantle*, in her living room full of beautiful things, stood my wilted and faded Valentine's Day bouquet -- the only valentine Mrs. Link received that year.