

# *Mary*

If I were to say her name, most of you would recognize the famous surname—but she was not the famous one. Still, she had experienced her own measure of fame and success, and because of that fame she had come to value her privacy and seclusion. She was older now, and the seclusion had turned to isolation. She had no friends left. The young couple who lived down the street sometimes spoke to her, but lately she not been out of her home. Her isolation had turned to depression.

At the time, I was fortunate to be working for Geriatric Network, as a mobile crisis worker for older adults in Sacramento County. The hospital called Adult Protective Services, and the APS worker in turn called me to visit this lonely lady and assess her potential suicidal ideation.

Her only child, a son, lived in another state. Her one contact with a human voice was on Saturday evenings when he would call. Of course she always told him that she was fine—she wanted to spare him the need to fly to California. Her son was experiencing his own measure of success in the same field as she--and above all she wanted him to have his success. I doubt that he ever knew how ill she was or how isolated and depressed she had become.

I had only known her for two weeks when she was found dead in her home. The APS worker had once again gone to check on her—when she did not answer he called the police, who forced their way into her home and discovered her body. Her training in dramatic art had served her well, as she had staged her death to look like an accident—indeed, it was never proven any different. In the end, she protected her son by shielding him from the terrible isolation and depression which had driven her to take her own life.