A Worn Path By Eudora Welty Essay, Research Paper

?A Worn Path? by Eudora Welty, is the tale of the unstoppable love and care of a grandmother for her grandchild. It tells a story of sheer determination as Phoenix Jackson makes a long journey into town to get medicine for her chronically ill grandson. She strives forward despite frequent obstacles in her way that include her own failing health and the grandchild’s slim chance of survival. Phoenix Jackson is ?an old Negro woman? who continues forward over barriers that would not even be considered a hindrance for the young. This is a journey, which she has taken before, and now “the time come around? she must travel it again. She begins her journey to town on ?a bright frozen day in the early morning? in December. Phoenix Jackson is ?very old and small ?, and walks like the ?pendulum in a grandfather clock? ever so carefully with her ?thin, small cane made from an umbrella.?

The description of Phoenix Jackson at the beginning of this story gives the reader a glimpse of how difficult this trip is going to be for an elderly woman such as her. The description ?Her eyes were blue with age. Her skin has a pattern all its own of numberless branching wrinkles? are indications of Phoenix Jackson?s old age. She supports herself with a cane, striving not to fall with every step she takes. She wears a ?dress reaching down to her shoe tops? along with ?an equally long apron of bleached sugar sacks, with a full pocket.? This just adds to her difficulties.

As she begins her journey, she talks to herself and warns “Out of my way, all you foxes, owls, beetles, jack rabbits, coons and wild animals!?Keep out from under these feet, little bob-whites?, because as she says, “I got a long way.? She is determined to go down that path despite anything that might come between her and getting the medicine for her grandson. This shows that her body may be worn out, but the attitude that she takes and desire that she has in order to get the medicine for her grandson are not. In addition, her shoelaces ?which dragged from her unlaced shoes? adds to the chance of her falling on the path.

First, she has to face an uphill climb. Then, she goes downhill but soon finds herself tangled with a bush, and she does not want to rip her dress. She talks to the bush stating “Thorns, you doing your appointed work. Never want to let folks pass, no sir. Old eyes thought you was a pretty little green bush” However, she manages to free herself from the thorn bush. In addition, she faces a barbed-wire fence, which is not easy for anyone, but she gets through, again telling herself that ?she could not pay for having her arm or her leg sawed off.? At one point, she is startled by a stray dog and falls into a ditch.

Eventually, a hunter and his dog happen upon her and pull her out of the ditch. He also tries to prevent her from finishing her journey. He tells her that she is too old, and even tries to scare her with his gun. At that point the man says, “you must be a hundred years old, and scared of nothing…you take my advice and stay home, and nothing will happen to you.? Not even these words from the hunter could make Phoenix give up, always getting herself out of a predicament, and having her grandson as a reason to keep going.

Walking across a log with her eyes closed is another daring thing she attempts. After safely crossing she says “I wasn’t as old as I thought.? She sits down to rest ?when a little boy brought her a plate with a slice of marble-cake on it.? When old Phoenix reaches ?to take it there was just her own hand in the air,? and nothing else around. Throughout the story, she exhibits signs of senility and delusions including her meeting of a scarecrow which she initially thinks is a man.

When Phoenix reaches her destination, the reason for her mission is given. When she enters “the big building”, evidently a medical facility, she doesn?t speak and appears disoriented. A nurse recognizes her and inquires about her grandson who swallowed lye two to three years ago. She asks ?He isn?t dead, is he?? Phoenix responds with, “No missy, he not dead, he just the same.? She tells the nurse ?he not able to swallow. He not get his breath. So the time come around, and I go on another trip for the soothing medicine.?

Phoenix Jackson encounters many adversities along her journey, but somehow manages to get through them. Her perseverance in the face of tremendous obstacles is admirable considering her age and declining health. This story reminds the reader over and over that she truly loves her grandson, and that she is determined to overcome any obstacle to achieve her goal. The only thing that keeps her from giving up is the love she has for him and the fact that all they have in this world is each other.