

The city can be an unfriendly place at the best of times. At my favorite make-up counter, where the assistant usually laughs and jokes with me, she looked as if she couldn't wait to get rid of me. Later, in a music store, my request for some CDs was met with laughter from sales assistants who couldn't believe an 80-year-old was interested in the latest chart hits!...an elderly lady by Tracy Bond Turning 25-year-old me into an 80-year-old was no easy task; with the help of a make-up artist, I had to be covered with layers of prosthetic make-up....a homeless man by Sam Browne Carrying a sleeping bag and wearing scruffy clothes, I headed for the spacious store doorways where the homeless spend their nights. After putting on a shabby coat and holding tightly onto a walking stick, my transformation was complete and very convincing! As I finally took my make-up off, I couldn't help wondering how I would have treated 80-year-old me. Over the next 50 years, the number of elderly people in society will triple. I got into my sleeping bag in the large, well-lit doorway of a boutique, but I couldn't sleep. It wasn't just the biting cold, but I was constantly aware of people walking close to my head and the hard stone floor dug into my shoulder and hip. I finally dozed off, only to be woken up at about 5 a.m. by the cleaners who arrived to wash the steps. At the public toilets I couldn't believe the reflection I saw in the mirror. My eyes were red and puffy, my skin pale and my hair was frizzy. As I walked, people avoided looking at me and crossed the road.