

Mary's Heart

Mary was a quiet soul, who rarely ventured out of her small house on the corner. She didn't have children; no husband, no family came calling. And only once or twice in the ten years that I lived across the street did I even see Mary as a visitor.

Many of the neighborhood kids joked that Mary, with her large brown eyes, and short kinky hair, her grand round figure and her short stature, was a troll.. Many of the grown folk neighbors gossiped about her saying that she was "all there" or was "touched."

Mary knew that she was talked about and acted like it never bothered her. She's been a "big girl" all her life. And she knew that people poked fun. So she cried her tears alone, and didn't let anyone know that it broke her heart.

Season's came and went. In our town, and in our neighborhood houses were warmed and cooled as winter left and summer came. With every season, Mary would decorate her yard or hang a wreath on her door.

During Valentines and Easter, and even at the Fourth of July, Mary would steal away out of her home, before any of her neighbors rose and leave a card in the mailboxes of all her neighbors, or a gift of candy or small toys for the kids, for every holiday.

Sometimes, you could see her peering out the window, watching as the kids opened their packages of candies or their mother stood by her mailbox reading a card. And she waved back, once or twice, when someone acknowledged her from inside her sheltered world. But no one ever approached her.

I'm ashamed to say, not even me to tell her, "Thank you," or invite her over for coffee or tea. And no one ever brought a gift to her.

Many said that Mary had lived in that house on that block, for all her life. It had been her childhood home. She was never married. She was just a part of the community.

But one Christmas, Mary did not put a wreath on her door. And on Christmas Day, there were no goodies waiting for the kids on their porches and no cards in the mailbox.

Most of the neighborhood supposed that Mary had finally gotten tired of giving, and just decided to quit. No one noticed anything else about her...until.. One day, they noticed a man putting a For Sale sign up in front of Mary's house.

A small crowd converged across the street and watched as one by one, boxes were carried from Mary's home and placed in a large moving van.

Finally, one of the neighbors spoke up and said: "Excuse me sir, but.. Where is Mary going?"

"I'm sorry ma'am." He replied. "I don't know, I just have orders to move all of this stuff out."

"But you don't know where to?" The neighbor asked.

"No ma'am. But you can ask the guy that hired us," he said, looking towards the street. "Here he comes now" and he pointed to a big black limousine that parked on the curb.

From the car stepped a lovely woman, dressed in a nice coat, and hat and carrying a small purse. Beside her stood a man in a business suit.

"Excuse me" The neighbor walked up, and said, "But, can you tell us where Mary is going?" "Going?" The man

"Yes, I see the van moving her things out. Where is she going?" The neighbor asked.

The man and woman looked at each other, then the woman bowed her head, and the man said, "I'm sorry, Mary is moving away. You see she died on Christmas Eve. She'd been in the hospital for a few days before, but her heart wasn't well."

"OH." The neighbor said, startled. "I didn't know." Then he paused, then said.. "NO one did really. I mean it was quiet but we didn't know."

"Yes, I understand." The man said.

"So you're going to rent the house to someone else then?" The neighbor asked, contemplating what a new family neighborhood would be like. "I mean, aren't you, weren't you Mary's Landlord?"

The man smiled a small smile, the kind that says "I'm only tolerating you." Then answered. "No, I'm Mary's brother. This was her house. She owned it since our parents passed away almost 40 years ago."

The neighbor stood looking at the man, shocked to find that Mary had a brother. Even more shocked to find that her brother was obviously of means and never helped her or came to visit. As he thought of Mary's gifts, and cards, and her kindness towards the community, his heart began to feel guilty. He SHOULD have told her thank you, should have taken the time to get to know her, should have.. but.. Why didn't her brother ever come to visit?

Just as he was about to ask Mary's brother about his nonexistent visits, one of the moving men approached with a box.

"What do ya want me to do with this, sir?" He asked.

Her brother looked at the man. "Put it on the van with the rest of her junk." The brother said.

"But it says on top of it that it belongs to you." The moving man replied.

"Oh?" The brother said, looking puzzled. He took the box from the man's hands, and placed it on the trunk of the van. He tore the tape from the top of the box, and peered inside. The neighbor, from his distance, could see the man's shoulders shaking, and went to his side, to comfort him.

"Sir," He said. "I'm terribly sorry for your loss." He said.

The brother looked at him, a tear on his cheek. "For OUR loss, you mean."

The neighbor looked at him, and was confused. "Well, yes.. I suppose, but she was YOUR sister.. and I.."

As he spoke, the man pulled from the box, a small musical carousel. It was brightly colored, with lights around the top of the base of the big wheel. The chimes in the box played a happy tune when the brother turned the key. Taped to the side of the carousel, was a note.

"Do you know what this is?" The man asked the neighbor.

"No sir, I'm afraid not." The neighbor replied.

"This is the very first toy that Mary ever owned. You see, Mary was a large and unseemly person. Her appearance was an embarrassment to her for most of her life, I suppose. She tried for many years to change, and was so unhappy that then, she just decided to accept herself, as she was. Then, about thirty years ago, she started producing these small hand made toys. She said she loved them because they reminded her of happy times as a child. Times when, even though she had few friends, she still had family that loved her, and me to play with. She sent the toys to my children."

few years later, she and I talked, and I patented the toys for her, we opened a company and began to manufacture. Mary visited her corporation only four times, and all four occasions were very brief. Time and time again, I would tell her to move in with us, or to get a bigger house. Maybe even go for some of those new surgeries to help her weight and facial deformities, but she wouldn't. She said she loved her neighborhood here. Loved to hear the kids playing and the families living happy lives. Every year she would have our factories send her a few big boxes of toys and cards. I don't know what she ever did with them, but each year, like clockwork, she would order. Mary could have lived anywhere in the world. Our business, her business is very successful. But she chose to remain here, as God made her. She was happy."

The neighbor stood, shocked. He had never known, had no idea. His mind was trying to take in all this information. Her brother, took the envelope that was taped to the side of the carousel, and opened it.

"Here." He said, as he took the piece of paper and handed it to the neighbor.

"What's this?" The neighbor asked.

"Just a note." The man said.

The neighbor took the note, and placed it in his pocket. "Thank you." He said, "I'll be going back to the rest of the neighbors now." They were very curious to know what was going on. He said, "Please accept my sympathies."

"Certainly." The brother said.. "We'll meet again."

The neighbor turned and walked back across the street, where his fellows stood waiting. Once there, he quickly relayed all that had happened.

"Where's this note?" His wife asked.

He pulled the note from his pocket and read it, and as he read, his heart was filled with sadness and joy, all at once. And his eyes began to fill with tears.

"Dear Friends,

For many years, I have lived here, in this small house on the corner of our delightful street. I have watched from my window as fathers have gone off to work in the mornings, and mothers hurried their children off to school. I've celebrated each birthday, each new arrival, each wedding, and each loss.

Thank you, for letting me be a small part of your lives. Watching you all, has given me back the family I lost. Even my brother, won't come to see me often, as he is such a busy man. But being here, where I can watch and listen to the sadness, the pain and the laughter of your lives, has made my life so full.

Because you all have given so much to me, I want to give something back to you. When you get this letter, please take it to Allen Hamersmyer, Attorney at Law. I have instructed him as to what to do for you. You are to receive the deed to my house, and all the land on the opposite side of the corner, where the field now stands. But I have two conditions in order for you to have this.

1. My house must never be sold, or rented for income. It is to stay open as a place for children to come after school when no one is home and to be used as a community house, for meetings, and such and a place to welcome NEW NEIGHBORS to the block.

2. The land on the other side of the street is to be turned into a park. There should be swings and slides, and a swimming pool. Lots of things for little kids, and a walking track for the "older kids." I've told my brother that every year, each family with children here, should be allowed to go to one of our stores, and purchase toys for their families.

with an 80% discount. If any of you should ever find yourself in need of a job, please call on my brother, whose I have included here. You won't ever want for anything.

Thank you, for making my life so joyful.

Love Mary

After he read the note, the neighbor passed the paper to all of his friends, and each one read. They all cried. For all of them, had known about the lady in the house across the street, but none of them knew Mary, or the kindness that she had in Mary's heart.

Now, in that small house.. there is an office for welcoming new neighbors to the neighborhood. And the families on that block take turns making sure that all of their neighbors have what they need. If someone gets sick, another neighbor goes to help them out. If someone dies, all of the neighborhood gets involved, and helps out the family in mourning.

The kids come there every day during the week, between the end of school and when their parents get home, so that they are not alone. They read, play games, and talk. Getting to know each other.

And the park has swings, and a swimming pool, and a slide, and in the middle of the park, stands a tall Carousel, and the people of the neighborhood have dedicated to fun and friendship. And they have named it...Mary's Heart.

Take care and God Bless, Friends Forever, LOL *Lots of Love*,

Are there any Mary's in your neighborhood?!?!?! Jesus help us to be more sensitive to those around us... ~~~(o:~