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Thunder Bay, ON

A Shovel Full of Kindness

-Prologue-

Sissy and I stood, staring back at the cleared driveway as the sun rose over the edge of the hill. The crisp wind licked at my bare neck. We began our speechless trek back to our house. It was a mile walk back from our neighbor's cottage. Three months ago Mr. Dressen broke his hip when he slipped and fell off a little hill around their cottage. Since then Sissy and I have been shovelling their driveway before dawn every third morning. As far as we know they have no idea who has been doing it but we were never the kind to look for recognition or thanks.

We dragged the shovels behind us as we walked, and like every morning I longed for the answer to my question, "How could I help?" Not in a little way like shovelling the Dessen's driveway, but in a way that would make a difference in the world. I lived in the middle of nowhere, with parents who would have nothing to do with the outside world, so I was stuck, not helping, not changing and not making the world better.



-Erin-

As sad as I was to see my father dead, I was happy to be able to make it to his funeral. I had been so close to my father when I was younger, but as I aged we grew apart. I moved away and hadn't seen him in years. I saved, and pooled every penny to my name but I was still two hundred dollars short. A month before my father's death, my normally stubborn, inconsiderate boss decided to loan me the rest of the money and give me a leave to spend the last few weeks of my father's life with him. That was the best gift that could be given to me.

-Drake-

I handed the money to Erin and a tear of joy fell from her face, I was glad to make somebody else happy. After all, I myself was recently overjoyed to see my little sister eating again. She had suffered from anorexia for the last two and a half years. As Amanda grasped my hand with her bony fingers, I could see the improvement. Her face was no longer sunken in, but rather was beginning to regain fullness. That sent bliss hurtling through me.

-Amanda-

I came home from Drake's house one humid summer day. I could hear children playing in the school yard behind me as I waited for the bus. A young girl sat on the bench next to me. I could only see her silhouette but she looked like my niece. Long flowing hair, head downcast as she played her hand-held computer game. After a few minutes she turned and talked to me about her family's issues and how they resolved them. She could see that I was suffering too and she told me that healthy is beautiful. She changed my life. Now I will live, live full and happy.

-Britney-

I knew she was going to kill herself if she deprived herself of food long enough. That happened to my best friend when we were only fourteen. I wanted to help the woman at the bus stop, so I did the best I could. I told her about my cousin who had brain cancer and none of us had the money for the treatment he needed. So my Dad started a fundraiser to help Nathan get what he deserved. I told her that once the treatments started and his health improved he looked so much better. I told her that Nathan couldn't fix his problem himself, but she could fix hers.

-Logan-

I started that fundraiser because I loved Nathan, but earlier that day I had stopped by a café and overheard a man talking to a pregnant waitress who presumably

he didn't know. I understood that the woman was due in a few weeks but she couldn't pay her hospital bill and was worried both for her life and the life of the baby. I left a few minutes after the man did and as I passed the table I saw a hundred and fifty dollars sitting in the tip box and thought, how could someone be so nice to a complete stranger. And if he could do that for someone he didn't know, the least I could do was help someone I did know.

-Justin-

I left the tip on the table for that unfortunate waitress and wished her the best with the child. I was feeling nice that day. I was on a road trip when my car broke down on a deserted road when an old man and lady drove past and stopped. They said we were out of cell phone range so they drove me into town, dropped me off at a café and bought me a coffee. They had to leave because the man had to get to his doctor's appointment. He was recovering from a broken hip and today was his last appointment. I was grateful for the help they offered and called a service station.

-Muriel-

When I was driving Albert into town for his doctor's appointment, I spotted a young man stranded on the side of the road. Normally, I would never stop to help a stranger. Albert and I were both feeling cheery that day as we had been every morning recently. Ever since Albert broke his hip, someone has been coming out and shoveling our driveway. It is always done before the break of day and we just can't seem to find out who it is.



-Epilogue-

"And I just can't figure out what I can do from all the way out here." I tell Sissy as we walk back up the winding driveway that leads to our house. The snow spills over the edges of my boots, freezing my feet. The wind is still howling around the trees, blowing them until they bend over.

"You know," Sissy's voice taking on that tone she uses when she wants to sound smart, which sounds a little funny when you add it to a high pitched seven year old girl's voice, "Mom told me that sometimes you do something that turns into something really big and you don't even realize it."

Her big green eyes peered up at me. "Oh please, like that would ever happen." I answered her as we opened the door to the house and a warm gush of air flew in our faces. "She's just trying to lead you on."