

THE GIFT

I used to hate my birthday. It reminded me of how lonely and miserable I was, how I had no friends, no family, no one who cared about me. I had lost my parents in a bad motor accident when I was six, on the same day as my birthday. That's what my uncle told me, before he dropped me off at a rundown orphanage. He said he couldn't take care of me anymore, that I was a burden and a curse. I never saw him again.

I spent most of my days in the orphanage, where the only thing I looked forward to was reading books from the library. Books were my escape, my refuge, my friends. I loved to immerse myself in different worlds, different characters, different stories. I also loved to write my own stories, to express my thoughts and feelings, to create something out of nothing.

I had a special bond with Mr. Joshua, the librarian, who always greeted me with a smile and a kind word. He was the only adult who treated me with respect and compassion, who encouraged me to pursue my dreams of becoming a writer. He often gave me books as gifts, books that he thought I would enjoy or learn from. He was like a father to me, the only father I ever knew.

On my sixteenth birthday, I expected nothing. I woke up to the same cold and dreary room, the same bland and tasteless breakfast, the same harsh and cruel words from the matron. I dragged myself to school, where I endured the same bullying and teasing from my classmates, the same indifference and neglect from my teachers. I felt like a ghost, invisible and unwanted.

I decided to skip the last period and head to the library, where I hoped to find some solace and comfort. I walked in and saw Mr. Joshua sitting at his desk, sorting through some papers. He looked up and smiled when he saw me.

"Happy birthday, my dear!" he exclaimed, getting up and walking towards me. "I have something for you."

He handed me a wrapped package, about the size of a book. I felt a surge of emotion, a mix of gratitude and curiosity. I carefully unwrapped the package and gasped when I saw what it was.

It was a book, but not just any book. It was a book of my own stories, the ones I had written over the years and shared with Mr. Joshua. He had collected them, edited them, and published them into a book, with my name on the cover and a dedication inside.

"To my dear, the most talented and wonderful writer I know. You have a gift, and I hope you never stop sharing it with the world. Happy birthday, my dear. Love, Mr. Joshua."

I felt tears streaming down my face, tears of joy and disbelief. I looked at Mr. Joshua, who was smiling warmly at me. I hugged him and thanked him, over and over again. I couldn't believe that he had done this for me, that he had made my dream come true.

Mr. Joshua hugged me back and told me how proud he was of me, how much he loved me, how much he believed in me. He told me that I was not alone, that I had a family, that I had him. He told me that I was special, that I was beautiful, that I was worthy.

I felt a warmth in my heart, a warmth that I had never felt before. I felt a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose, a sense of hope. As at that time I didn't know, but now I know, what I felt was a supportive relationship, a supportive relationship that had changed my life.

I smiled and looked at the book in my hands, the book that was my gift, the gift that was my book. I felt a spark in my soul, a spark that was my passion, the passion that was my writing.

I knew that this was the best birthday ever, the best birthday of my life. And from then on, I looked forward to every birthday and always visited a library on my birthdays.