

# THREE GIFTS OF KINDNESS

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One act of kindness occurred on a train. It was a cold winter day in Philadelphia. Larry, who was retired, was taking the train to New York City to attend a new exhibit at one of the big museums. He boarded the train, bought a cup of coffee, and sat down to read a newspaper. At the Trenton station, Pete had his cup of coffee and his brief case in hand and climbed aboard to find a seat. He too was going to NYC, where he worked as an accountant at a well-known accounting firm. There were not many seats left. Just as Pete was ready to sit down, the train lurched forward. Pete lost his balance and spilled some of his coffee on Larry who was sitting next to him. Pete almost landed in Larry's lap. Pete profusely apologized, and Larry helped Pete get settled next to him.

Larry put down his paper and they started chatting. Larry had been a businessman, and he and Pete found “common ground” and mutual interests. Pete could have retired a year ago, but he enjoyed working with his colleagues five days a week. Pete knew he needed to retire because his health was not so good. About a week ago, Pete went to his heart doctor who expressed concerns about his heart and wanted to run some tests. Pete had not told his wife about the doctor's visit or his increasing health concerns. He loved his wife, Mia, but knew she would be worried. Mia wanted Pete to retire, and she had plans for activities they could do together. Pete was in conflict. He wanted to be with her but also enjoyed his work and his fellow professionals. He had not told anyone about his dilemma, and now, he was having trouble sleeping.

Pete and Larry chatted about current events as they drank their coffee. They were enjoying each other's company when suddenly the train stopped. The conductor announced there would be a delay. The two men continued talking and the conversation became more personal. Pete learned that Larry was retired and that his wife had died five years ago. Larry missed her greatly. Larry had good friends who helped him in various ways, and he had adjusted to his life circumstances. Pete was listening and Larry noticed Pete had tears in his eyes. Larry became quiet and listened to Pete who wanted to keep working but it was getting harder for him.

There were long hours traveling on the trains and sometimes he worked long hours. He was often tired by the end of the week.

Pete told Larry about how he had not told his wife about his health, and that he felt badly withholding information from her. They had always been honest and open with each other. Larry thoughtfully listened. He let Pete talk. He didn't criticize or tell Pete what he should do. The train started moving once again. As the train pulled into New York City, Pete turned to Larry and said, “Thank you for listening. I actually feel much better and I know what I have to do. When I go home tonight, I will tell my wife what has been going on for me. I love my wife and want to be with her.” Larry smiled at Pete and nodded. The two men shook hands before they got off the train and went their separate ways.



A second act of kindness was performed by my friend, Lisa. She lives in a condo, and from her living room window, she can see almost everyone else's driveway in her small complex. Lisa has lived there for many years and knows most of the other residents. One of Lisa's neighbors is a retired couple, Carla and Todd. They have been married for years and their adult children live in other states. Carla and Todd are enjoying their senior years with other friends in the local area. Todd was in the military for ten years, and he sustained several injuries during that time. Now that he is seventy-five, he needs a metal walker to get around. Todd is a very proud man. Years ago, he used to cut their grass, rake the leaves in the fall, and shovel snow in the winter. The only thing he can do now is get their mail from the mailbox every day. The mailbox is about fifty feet from their driveway and across the street. Carla knows how important it is for Todd to be able to do this one task. It gives him a sense of dignity and value.

However, in the winter there can be a lot of snow that needs to be shoveled and plowed, which is now done by a contractor for all the residents. Sometimes, there is still ice and snow around that makes it hard for Todd to safely get to the

mailbox. He cannot afford to fall, since it would be hard for him to get up and he could injure himself. Recently there was a big snow storm in the neighborhood. Lisa could see from her window that Todd was struggling to get his mail.

Lisa is about 50 years old and physically fit. She hikes and skis and loves the outdoors. One evening when there was still some daylight, she walked over to Carla and Todd's condo and saw them inside watching the news on TV. Lisa quietly shoveled some of the snow and ice from the garage door along the driveway and worked her way over to the mailbox. It took her about an hour to break up some of the ice and shovel the snow. She made sure the open space was wide enough for Todd's walker.

The next day, when Todd went outside to get his mail, he stopped and was surprised that someone had shoveled a path for him. He looked around in all directions. He walked out to the end of his driveway and looked again but saw no one. He raised his arms to the sky and seemed very thankful. He had no trouble getting to his mailbox the rest of the week. Lisa shared that she was very happy to see Todd's response to having a clear path to the mail box. As she finished her story, she smiled and said there was no need to tell Todd who had done the work.

The third act of kindness came from an electrician. Don had his own business as a licensed electrician. He was experienced and had a good reputation in the community. He charged his customers for his travel to and from their residence. He charged a second fee for an hour's worth of work when he arrived. He also charged for any electrical parts he purchased for the repairs. Don would clearly explain these charges so the client knew what the cost would be.

One day, Don got a call from a resident in town. Mary was retired and she was a bird lover. All winter, she put out seed daily for the birds, and she had a deicer in her bird bath so the birds would have fresh

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water. However, one day a large chunk of snow about three feet high by two feet fell from her roof onto the bird bath. Mary had trouble getting the deicer to work and she thought the problem was with the outside outlet near the bird bath. She called Don and he explained his fees. The fees would be high for Mary, given her limited savings, but she wanted the birds to have water, so she agreed to the estimated charges. Don drove to her home the next day. He checked the outlet and reset it; checked the deicer and it was working. In barely five minutes he had helped Mary. As they were talking, Mary learned that Don was an avid bird watcher and they chatted about their love of wild birds.

pay Don and asked how much she owed him. Don took a deep breath and said he was not going to charge her anything. Mary was very grateful for Don's generosity and thanked him.

We never know when an opportunity for an act of kindness will come our way. We never know how we might be able to help. Sometimes it can be as a good listener, sometimes it can be calling 911 to save a life. What we do know is that these unexpected moments will come along for each of us at times. What matters is our willingness to be of service when needed. Every act of kindness will help us feel our own goodness! ■

They walked back to Don's car, and he shared how grateful he was to be alive, since he had a sudden heart attack two months ago. He said he would have died if a stranger who found him lying on the street had not called the Rescue Squad. They were nearby, got him to the hospital, and he had surgery, which saved his life. Don said he was grateful for every day of his life. Mary pulled out her money from her wallet to

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