

Lucky Penny

Editor's note: This short story by a Farmington High School 10th grader did not run in its entirety when it appeared as part of the Observer's Holidays feature Feb. 12. It appears here in its entirety.

By Amy Rickenback
special writer

The wooden hinges creaked as I slowly opened the door to enter my old bedroom. I automatically checked my hand out to the light switch, and the room immediately came to life.

My eyes flew from corner to corner, and I was a little surprised at what I saw. It isn't that the room looked any different to me. Frankly, it was quite the opposite. Everything, every little detail, was exactly as I remembered it to be. The sky-blue walls were still plastered to the ceiling with the movie star pictures that I had so patiently cut out of various magazines years ago. All of them were still stuck to the wall, except for the elegant pose of Jean Berlow, which had since fallen onto the blue, hand-stitched quilt made by my mother.

I slowly walked over to the bureau, which, by now, was covered by a thin blanket of dust. I reached out

for the knobs to pull open the top drawer but found that there was only one. "Of course," I thought. "How could I forget that I accidentally knocked one handle off when I was 6 years old? Mama nearly killed me for that one!"

I gazed at the memory of that day came back to me. I looked at the two neatly stacked piles of dresses. The frilly, but now fading, white laces reminded me that I had outgrown these garments years ago. On top of the bureau sat two framed pictures. The first one made my heart flutter as I read the message inscribed on the photograph of the debonair-looking gentleman — which read, "Best wishes to Katherine Love, Cary Grant."

I then gazed at the second photograph of a rather comical-looking boy that read "Katie, I'll love you forever, Jim," written boldly in the left hand corner. I smirked at the rather odd mistake that Jim, now my husband, wore in the picture, which had hardly suited his boyish face. Memories, both happy and sad, rushed back to me as I remembered the times that Jim and I had shared.

I THEN turned toward my dresser. Reaching it, I pulled out the little blue cushioned stool and gingerly sat down on it. My eyes wandered over the various articles that cluttered its oak surface — hair brush, ribbons, perfume and everything else imagi-

nable for a lively 16-year-old girl to own. I pushed back a lock of curly brown hair which had fallen in my face.

I then raised my green eyes and saw my reflection in the mirror. Many things had changed. I was no longer an innocent girl of 16. I was now a mature and married woman of 21. In fact, I could almost be thought of as a mother. I had so many concerns, fears and questions burning through my mind. I was so careless and wrong when I left home to get married.

My parents had pleaded with me not to leave, but I didn't listen. I left anyway. Now, five years have gone by. Father is dead, and I am going to have a baby. I need my mother now, of all times, but could she really ever accept me back and love me again? I knew that she could never forget the pain I caused her. If I were in her place, I would at least try and forgive my daughter, if not forget.

But I was not my mother. The Irish are very set in their ways. When I was little, Mama loved me dearly and gave me anything my heart desired. Then I grew up and left her. I had now returned, but both of us had changed greatly and she would no longer shower me with affection. I had emotionally wounded Mama and there was no easy cure for it.

I knew this by the cold reception she showed me when I arrived. I had to do something, but what? She probably wouldn't listen if I tried to talk to her, and what could I do to show

her that I really did care about her and her feelings?

MY HEAD was all mixed up and I didn't expect any wonderful brainstorm to come to me at 12:30 a.m. So I decided to get myself in bed and face my problem in the morning.

I awoke at 9:00 to the faint chiming of the grandfather clock. I opened the drapes to let in the sunshine and then rummaged through my suitcase to find my bathrobe. I then shuffled to the door to begin my venture downstairs.

I took a deep breath, pushed my hair back and descended down the stairs. I couldn't help peeking into the living room before going to face Mama in the kitchen. My eyes wanted to take in everything at once, but I was especially drawn to an old scratched-up pipe resting on the mantle of the fireplace. It was my father's pipe, the one he always smoked. I could smell the tobacco as I stood over it and a tear came to my eye.

"Katherine, is that you?" I jerked from my thoughts. I slowly replied, "Yes... yes Mama, it's me."

I then scurried off to the kitchen to face what I feared most — the hurt feelings that my mother held against me.

MAMA was already eating when I entered, and she told me to sit down. At my place, I found a plate heavily filled with bacon, eggs and hashbrowns. Normally, I would have gobbled down the whole meal. But now, I didn't have any appetite at all.

Mama noticed my apprehension and snapped, "Eat it, the baby needs the nourishment."

The baby! Doesn't she have any feelings for me? After all, I'm her baby!

"Oh Mama!" I sobbed. "You can't just look me out! I've been gone five years — five long years..."

"It's not my problem you took off and married that brute against your father's and my wishes. We pleaded with you to stay. You're the one who made the decision."

"Oh, please. I know I was wrong in leaving, but..."

"So, you admit to being wrong, do you? From the looks of you, I would say it's a little too late to just fix things up."



Amy Rickenback
10th grader

"Oh no! I didn't mean I was wrong in marrying Jim! He's a wonderful husband, and he will be a great father to your grandchild. If you could only get to know him and stop blaming my actions on him! I had as much to do with it as he did — even more! Can't you try to see my side of this and forgive me? If not for me, then for your grandchild!"

I NOTICED a haze come across her eyes and a queer look come to her face, but in an instant, the old blue eyes and stern face reappeared. She then stood up and began clearing the table. She didn't look at me, nor did she speak to me. Nothing that she could have said or done could have possibly given me a colder or lonelier feeling. She acted as if I wasn't even there, and indeed, maybe she wished I wasn't.

As the visit progressed, so did the remoteness between my mother and I. She always seemed to have something to do or somewhere to go, and I saw less and less of her each day.

I took consolation in my old friends and acquaintances who greeted me with open arms. They were actually interested in me and cared about me! When people asked how Mama and I were getting along together, I was ashamed to say that we hardly spoke to each other. So I would casually lie, saying that "things are going fine."

However, things weren't going

fine. I admitted to myself on my way home one day. As I was slipping my hat to keep the sun out of my eyes, I noticed a penny on the ground. I picked it up and put it in my pocket, figuring that I would need all the luck I could get. I then resumed my thoughts as I continued on my way home.

THE WHITE gate clattered behind me as I started up our porch to the front door. I closed the door behind me and set my hat down on the table.

"Mama!" I called as I began pulling off my white gloves. "Mama! Where are you?"

I called as I went from room to room. I finally came upon her sitting on the floor of her bedroom. She had a box on her lap and various cards and objects were strewn about her. She held in her hand a big red Valentine's Day card that I had made for her many years ago. Mama sat there cradling the card in her hand and she was actually crying! She was crying over something I made. She was crying for me!

I quietly entered the room and sat down next to her. I was about to speak when she put her arms around me and hugged me as she never had before. No words passed between us for a few minutes, and we simply sat there — together.

"Katie, darling, I'm so sorry. I love you so much and I should never have been so mean to you. You are my daughter, my only child, and I should have tried to see your side, but I didn't, and I'm so sorry. Please try to forgive me, darling. As I sat here reading the poems and cards you made for me, I realized how important you are to me and how much I love and need you." Her voice trailed off and she began to weep once again. She cried tears of joy.

MAMA AND I were once again brought together. I really had been doubtful that it would ever happen, and I certainly didn't expect an old Valentine card to do the trick.

I laid my head on her shoulder, my curls once again falling on my tear-stained face. I didn't push them away this time.

My eyes twinkled as I remembered the penny in my pocket. Maybe it was a lucky penny after all. Maybe...

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Resident calls for a building moratorium

A Rolling Oaks resident urges a restriction on building permits in Farmington Hills until the city council and the school board can demonstrate their services won't be diminished by the influx of new residents.

"We need help. We're not getting it," said Stone Gate Court resident Diane Harnisch Monday night in addressing the city council.

Her remarks were prompted by Mayor Ben Marks' letter to the community in the City of Farmington Hills Annual Report for 1987.

Marks promoted a year of enhancement. He said the city "will continue to enhance the quality of life that we so enjoy by following the guidelines already in place."

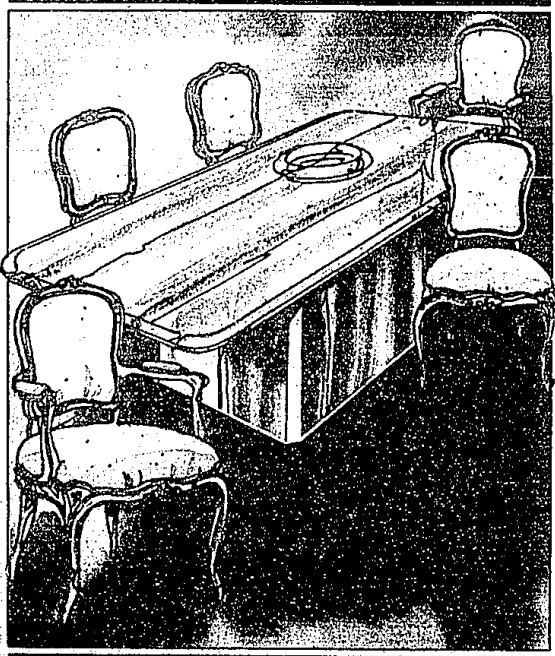
He then cited planned road and park improvements.

"These and other major projects to insure a sound basis for responsible growth within the city and continue in our effort to maintain a high level of services for the community."

Calling for a continuation of a "high level of services in our community," Harnisch said, "We have a drastic overcrowding problem in our schools — in all the schools here."

Harnisch sees the steady residential development "further overcrowding our schools without providing any answers in how to alleviate it."

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