

The House of Warm Wishes



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At the edge of a village, where the road turns to meadow, stood a little cottage. Its windows were always bright, and its door was always open. Everyone called it the House of Warm Wishes. Elder Mira, the caretaker, greeted each visitor with a smile. She had a silver bun and round glasses on a cord. 'Come in, come in,' she would say, 'and write a wish.'



Inside the cottage, hundreds of colorful papers hung from the ceiling. Each one held a kind wish written by a visitor. 'May you find joy,' said one. 'Keep going,' said another. The papers swayed gently in the breeze. Pip, the orange tabby cat, napped among them. His red ribbon collar jingled softly. The cottage felt like a hug.



Tomas visited almost every day. He was nine years old, with messy brown hair and a mustard-yellow sweater. His satchel was full of colored paper, ready for new wishes. 'Elder Mira,' he asked, 'what should I write today?' She smiled, and her hazel eyes twinkled. 'Write something you would want to hear on a gray day.' Tomas wrote: 'You are braver than you know.'



One morning, Tomas found the cottage door closed. He knocked softly, and the door opened a crack. Elder Mira stood there, wrapped in her dusty-rose cardigan. Her cheeks were pale, and she coughed. 'I'm afraid I'm not well today, dear,' she said. 'The cottage must rest.' Pip rubbed against her ankles and meowed. Tomas felt a knot in his tummy. The cottage had never been closed before.



Tomas ran to find Grandma Rosa. She was in her garden, carrying a woven basket. Her lavender shawl fluttered in the breeze. 'Grandma Rosa!' he called. 'Elder Mira is sick, and the cottage is closed!' Grandma Rosa set down her basket. Her dark eyes grew serious. 'Then we must help,' she said. 'The cottage is too important to stay closed.' She took Tomas's hand, and they hurried to the village square.



Grandma Rosa rang the village bell. Ding-dong! Ding-dong! People came from every house. There was the baker, still dusted with flour. The schoolteacher with her arms full of books. The carpenter with his hammer. 'Elder Mira is ill,' Grandma Rosa announced. 'We must keep the House of Warm Wishes open. Who will help?' Every hand went up. Tomas smiled so wide his gap tooth showed.



The villagers made a plan. Grandma Rosa wrote chores on a list. 'Baker, you bring bread for visitors,' she said. 'Carpenter, fix the squeaky door. Schoolteacher, read stories aloud. Tomas, you know the cottage best. You will greet visitors and help them write wishes.' Tomas nodded. His heart beat fast, but he felt proud. Pip wound around his legs as if to say, 'I'll help too.'



The next morning, Tomas opened the cottage door. The rooms felt quiet without Elder Mira's humming. But he lit the lamps and fluffed the cushions. Pip jumped onto a table and rang his bell. 'Welcome!' Tomas called to the first visitor, a woman with a tired face. 'Would you like to write a wish?' She wrote: 'I wish for a good night's sleep.' Tomas hung it from the ceiling.



All day, visitors came. The baker's fresh bread smelled warm and sweet. The schoolteacher read a story about a brave mouse. The carpenter fixed the squeaky door so it sang instead of squeaked. Tomas helped everyone write wishes. Some wishes were funny, like 'I wish my socks matched.' Some were hopeful, like 'I wish for a friend.' The cottage filled with laughter and kindness.



Pip stayed close to Elder Mira, curled on her blanket. The old woman smiled and said, 'I can hear the cottage humming. It sounds happy.' The villagers brought her soup and flowers. Tomas visited every evening and told her about the day. 'A little girl wrote a wish for her grandma,' he said. Elder Mira's hazel eyes sparkled. 'The wishes are growing,' she whispered.



After a week, Grandma Rosa called another meeting. 'Elder Mira is getting stronger,' she said. 'But the cottage needs more than repairs. It needs a plan for the future.' The villagers talked and shared ideas. 'Let's take turns being caretaker,' said the baker. 'Let's teach the children to write wishes,' said the schoolteacher. Tomas raised his hand. 'Let's make sure no one feels alone,' he said.



The villagers nodded. They wrote their own wishes on bright paper and hung them from the ceiling. 'Wishing you health, Elder Mira,' one said. 'Wishing for many more years of warm wishes,' said another. The cottage glowed with color. Pip rang his bell, as if to say, 'This is the best wish of all.' Grandma Rosa smiled and said, 'One warm heart started this. Now we all share it.'



On a sunny morning, Elder Mira returned. She walked slowly, holding Tomas's arm. She wore her dusty-rose cardigan, and her silver bun gleamed. When she saw the cottage, tears filled her eyes. 'You kept it open,' she said. 'All of you.' The villagers cheered. Pip jumped into her arms and purred loudly. Elder Mira laughed. 'I see new wishes everywhere. And new helpers too.'



Elder Mira sat in her favorite chair. Tomas sat beside her. 'I have a wish,' she said, 'to thank every one of you.' So the village threw a party. There was bread and jam, and lemonade. Everyone wrote a wish for the cottage. 'May it always be a place of hope,' wrote Grandma Rosa. Tomas wrote: 'May we always help each other.' The cottage hummed with happiness.



From that day on, the House of Warm Wishes belonged to everyone. Tomas became an official wish-greeter, with a satchel of colored paper always at his side. Grandma Rosa organized helpers every week. Elder Mira rested more and smiled often. Pip napped among the wishes, his bell jingling softly. Visitors came from near and far, and the cottage never closed its door.



And if you ever pass the little cottage at the edge of the village, you will see bright papers fluttering from the ceiling. You will hear laughter and kind words. You might even see Tomas writing a wish, or Elder Mira waving from her chair. The house is full of hope, because one person's warm heart inspired a whole community. And that is the warmest wish of all.