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Surprise from an Eccentric



As You Were Saying...

WHEN AN eccentric old man moved into our neighborhood, we gave him little attention. He lived alone, puttered constantly in his yard, and seemed especially fussy over his roses.

One day three little neighborhood girls, while playing on his lawn, smashed one of his rose-bushes. Although frightened, they rang his doorbell and stammered out their confession.

Then this "eccentric" gentleman reached into his pocket, slowly peeled off three crisp dollar bills, handed one to each girl and, in a kindly tone, said, "What happened was an accident, but instead of running away you did the right thing. I hope this little reward will remind you always to do what's right. As for me, I can always get another rosebush."—*Marjorie Custer, San Diego, Calif.*

The Perfect Gift. Some friends of ours with limited finances have a novel way with gifts. We've received Christmas greetings with an offer of 12 hours of baby sitting. My husband was sent a "get well" card with three mowings of our huge lawn thrown in. Our little three-year-old girl was surprised on her birthday with an all-day trip to the zoo. These, I believe, are perfect examples of Emerson's theory, "The only gift is a portion of thyself."—*Mrs. P.E.T., Fayetteville, N.C.*

Double Trouble. Being a twin has given me many amusing experiences. One occurred when my sister and I were eight. We were visiting a neighbor's house and I stopped to admire a doll case in the hall. I turned to my sister and said, "Aren't they beautiful?" No answer. In front of me was a full-length mirror. I was talking to my own reflection.—*Miss Ruth Begent, Utica, N. Y.*



I Was Just Thinking...

"...FOLKS sure thought they was mismated when they was married," he said. "A big fellow like Bert. He must of weighed 350 pounds then and he was a horse trader. Traveled some with the circus animals, too.

"And that little bitty woman. Over a foot shorter'n him she was and never weighed enough to whip a cat. She'd been teachin' school for who knows how long.

"Old maid schoolteacher and big Bert. Who'd ever think—both of 'em set in their ways—that it'd ever last?"

Nobody believed it would. Bert wore a big diamond on his massive hand. He liked people about him and hunting dogs and fine horses. And Maude wore neat spinster dresses and counted the pennies and waggled a sharp finger under his nose.

But she worshipped him and wound him around the same finger. And in later years when diabetes came and his foot was amputated and the money with it, Maude

tended him as though he were a child and found the strength in her birdlike body to lift and turn him on the old davenport.

He had destroyed forever the precision of her parlor and left the mark of his personality on her heart.

He died last Fall, but the frail little woman who lived and breathed in his hulking shadow lives on.

And now Maude might have been a spinster all those years, so much has she returned to the life she knew before him. The parlor is immaculate. The house is scented with the faded aura of garden roses and Maude pours tea from a dainty cup.

But she sits on a davenport sagging from remembered weight and tolerates at her side a stray hound. She says it came one day and she couldn't turn it away.

Any woman who has known and lost a great love will understand. Maude's marriage has outlived Bert.

Patty Johnson

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