

Jess's Story

In a small town in the country, there lived a boy named David. He was sixteen, so he was more a man than a boy in his own mind, but no one knew what David thought because he didn't talk to anyone. Not because he couldn't, but because he was very shy.

When David was little, he learned from his mother, who was a florist, that flowers have secret meanings. So instead of talking, David gave people flowers, hoping they would understand what he was trying to say.



He gave clematis and Good King Henry to his grandmother and to his teacher, because they mean wisdom and goodness. He put coltsfoot in the court house and in the police station to tell everyone *justice will be done* here. He brought rosemary to the retirement home so that the elderly would know they were not forgotten.

And he gave his mother a rose everyday, because he loved her.

Only his mother knew what he was trying to say – everyone else just thought he was being nice and never stopped to think why he had chosen to give them those flowers. David was sad that no one understood him, even if they did think he was a nice boy. He would have preferred them to think he was a nice young man, anyway.

Then one summer, a new family moved to town. They had a daughter named Mary who was pretty in an ordinary sort of way, but David thought she was the most beautiful person he had ever seen. When he gave her calla lilies to tell her so, she gasped, looked up at him, and said, "Do you really think I'm beautiful?"

David leapt with joy – Mary understood him! She knew the secret meanings of flowers, too!

Mary and David became best friends that summer – they understood each other in a way no one else could.

When school started that year, Mary and David sat next to each other in every class. They passed notes and whispered secrets only they could understand. Then Mary suggested that they make more friends – David was worried, but he trusted Mary, so he agreed to try.

Mary was right – it was fun to have lots of friends! Because Mary was with him, David forgot to be shy and started talking to his new friends. In fact, he talked so much, he forgot to listen to the secret messages Mary sent him. He didn't notice Mary looking sad and tired. He ignored the clover, the fragile pleas to think of her, she tucked into his locker and school books. He stopped listening to the meanings of flowers.

Until one day, Mary didn't come to school.

David worried about Mary all day – he remembered the clover and other signs that something might be wrong and wondered why he hadn't noticed before. As soon as school ended, he went over to Mary's house, stopping at his mom's shop on the way to tell her where he'd be and to pick up a bouquet of bluebells and Star of Bethlehem, because he knew he was wrong and needed forgiving.

Mary's mother opened the door, but didn't invite David in. She told David that Mary was very sick and wasn't going to be allowed to have guests for a while. David asked if Mary would be ok and her mother replied, "I don't know." Now David was scared. He asked Mary's mother to give her the flowers – that it was very important she get them – and then he went home.

Every day, David went to Mary's house after school and brought her a get well bouquet of peony, zinnia, and yarrow, always with a few sprigs of clover and star of Bethlehem tucked in. Every day he asked if Mary was feeling any better. And every day, Mary's mother had the same answer, "No, she's not any better, and I don't know when she will be."

Then one day, Mary's mother said something different. "Mary said to give you this message – Queen of the Meadows and striped carnations. She said you would understand." David certainly did understand – it meant *I'm not worth your attention – it's misplaced*. He thought for a moment and said, "Will you tell her I said alstoremeria?" *No matter what, I will always be there for you*. Mary's mother was slightly puzzled by the exchange, but said she'd deliver the message. David went home feeling a little better – after weeks of silence, Mary was finally talking to him again.

David added a new flower to his bouquet the next day – red camellia to tell Mary she was worthwhile, and that she was wonderful. He sensed that telling her this would help her get well more than just telling her to feel better would. And he was right – the next message Mary had her mother give David was "bittersweet" – *do you mean that?* David smiled and promptly replied "sweet alyssum" – *you are more than beautiful*. He left smiling, knowing now that everything would be ok.

All through the winter, David would bring Mary flowers – his bouquets proclaiming how much he cared for Mary, how much he wanted her to get better, and how much he needed her forgiveness. He realized she had taken away his loneliness – he could never hope to repay her for that, but he hoped he could comfort her now.

Then, one day in early spring, Mary answered the door herself. She didn't say a word – she simply smiled and handed David two flowers – a scilla and a tulip – *I forgive you and I love you*. David whooped for joy and scooped Mary into a gentle hug, aware of how thin and frail her illness had made her. Then, he pulled a small pressed ambrosia from his pocket and presented it to her – *I love you, too*. He had wanted to tell her before, but he was afraid to as long as she hadn't forgiven him. So he had pressed the most perfect ambrosia he could find and started carrying it with him, waiting for the day she would.

Time passed as it always does. Mary and David have been married for several years now, and have small children of their own. Every spring and all summer long, you can smell their house from a block away – the neighbors enjoy the

scent of orange-blossoms and clover, and the beautiful green of the holly. What none of them know is that these flowers speak of happiness, family, and a hope that your loved ones will think of you that day.

alstoremeria
sweet alyssum
Ambrosia
bittersweet
blue bell
calla lily
red camellia
striped carnation
Clematis
brilliance”
White Clover
Good King Henry
holly
peony
queen of the meadow
rosemary
remembrance
scilla
star of Bethlehem
red tulip
yarrow
zinnia

devotion
excellence beyond beauty
love returned
truth
constancy, sorrowful regret
magnificent beauty
unpretending excellence, innate warmth
rejection – no, I’m sorry
Intellectuality “I pay tribute to your

Think of Me
Goodness “You are good to me”
domestic happiness
healing
uselessness
never will your memory fade,

forgive and forget
atonement
declaration of love
good health
thoughts of friendship