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The Girl Who Made It Right

Mrs. M.A.L. Lane

It was the day before Christmas, in the city of Boston. Snow was falling and falling. Mothers hurried by with tired children, and everyone, even in the cold and the slush, was in a kind and cheerful mood.



On a streetcar, a group of young people were laughing and talking so much that they rode right past their stop.

"I said Music Hall!" snapped Frank. He spoke crossly to the conductor, a tired man named Jim. Jim pressed his lips together and said nothing. He just gave Frank his change.

Frank looked at the coins in his hand. "He gave me too much! Fifty cents too much!"

"Oh, then we must give it back!" cried his cousin Maidie.

"Maidie, you worry too much," laughed Frank. "He won't miss it. Here, you take it." And he put the coins in her hand.

Maidie felt a little sting from his words. But she felt something else, too: it wasn't right to keep what wasn't theirs.

At the big doors of Music Hall, everything looked so warm and bright. It would be so easy to just walk in and forget. Maidie stood still. Then she said, very softly, "I must go back." Her voice shook a little. "Please tell them I'll come as soon as I can."

And she ran back out into the snow.



On the streetcar, Jim was counting his coins. Then he stopped. His hand began to shake.

I gave him fifty cents too much!

He thought of his little room at home, up the stairs, with only a very small fire in the stove. His wife, Mary, was tired and pale. His baby boy was pale too, and coughed and coughed.

"Poor little kid," Jim whispered. "Isn't papa coming soon?" he could almost hear the baby ask. And Jim had wanted so much to bring him a toy, and to bring Mary her violets. The first time he ever gave Mary violets was the night she said she would marry him. Now he would come home with empty hands.

A sneaky thought crept in. *I could keep a few fares. Nobody would know.*



But Jim shook his head. "Mary would know," he said. "She'd never want the violets if I got them that way." His eyes were blurry. He was so tired, and he was trying so hard not to cry.

So he rang up every fare, one by one. The bell rang out loud and clear, almost as if it were cheering him on.

Then the streetcar stopped, and there on the step, with snow in her hair, stood a girl with kind, steady eyes. It was Maidie!

"You gave us too much change," she said, in a shy little voice. "Here it is."

Jim took it like someone in a dream. "Thank you, miss," he stammered. "I thought it was gone... and there's the baby... and it's Christmas Eve... and my wife is sick... you can't understand..."

"But I do," said Maidie gently. "I thought there might be a baby. So I brought my Christmas present for him." And she pressed two more shining coins into his cold hand.



"Wait!" called the driver. "Are we going?" When Jim looked up again, the girl had vanished into the snow.

That night, the little room smelled of violets. The baby slept with a toy horse tucked under his chin. Jim sat in a tiny rocking chair, much too small for him, and told Mary all about it.

"She had tears in her eyes, I think," he said. "But I was so near to crying myself, I couldn't be sure."

"Bless her heart," said Mary softly.

Back at Music Hall, Maidie's friends were waiting. She had missed the first song. But she was glowing.

"I don't mind if they scold me," she whispered. "I would have lost so much more if I had stayed."

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