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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## The Night Before Thanksgiving

In a small gray house nestled under tall, whispering elm trees lived an old woman named Mrs. Robb. The house was cozy but felt empty since she lived there all alone. She spent most of her time in the warm kitchen and her tiny bedroom, while the other rooms stayed cold and quiet.

As autumn turned to winter, Mrs. Robb grew worried. She didn't have much food or firewood left, and some neighbors whispered that she should go to the town's poorhouse—a place for people who had nowhere else to go. The thought made her heart heavy because she loved her little house and the memories it held.

On the day before Thanksgiving, the sky was gray, and the chilly wind rattled the bare branches of the elm trees. Mrs. Robb sat by her window, gazing out at the empty fields covered in frost. She hugged her shawl tightly around her shoulders.

"Thanksgiving won't be very thankful this year," she sighed. "I wish I wasn't so alone."

She remembered the happy times when her house was filled with friends, laughter, and the delicious smell of cooking. She especially thought about a boy named Johnny Harris. Years ago, Johnny was an orphan who had nowhere to go. Mrs. Robb took him in when he injured his leg, and they became like family.

"I wonder where Johnny is now," she whispered, a tear rolling down her cheek. "He always promised he'd come back."

As the sun began to set, a single ray of golden light broke through the clouds and shone on a distant hill. It made the frosty world sparkle just for a moment. Mrs. Robb felt a tiny flicker of hope light up in her heart.

"Maybe something good will happen," she thought. But then she shook her head. "Oh, who am I kidding? It's just an old woman's wish."

The daylight faded, and snowflakes began to dance outside the window. They tapped softly against the glass, whispering secrets of winter. Mrs. Robb shivered. "I'd better make a fire," she decided. She gathered the last pieces of firewood she had—a few small logs—and lit them in the stove. The flames crackled and cast a warm glow around the room.

Sitting in her rocking chair by the fire, Mrs. Robb felt a little better. The warmth made her eyelids heavy, and soon she drifted off to sleep.

A loud knock at the door startled her awake. She gasped and clutched her shawl. Who could be visiting on such a snowy night?

"Maybe it's someone coming to take me to the poorhouse," she thought fearfully. Her hands trembled as she slowly stood up.

The knock came again, louder this time.

"Who... who is it?" she called out, her voice quivering.

"Hello? Is anyone home?" a cheerful voice replied from the other side of the door.

Mrs. Robb hesitated, then took a deep breath. She hobbled to the door and opened it just a crack. A tall man stood there, bundled up against the cold, snowflakes sparkling in his hair. His eyes were bright, and he had a friendly smile.

"Good evening, Mother Robb!" he said warmly.

Mrs. Robb peered at him closely. Her eyes widened in surprise.

"Johnny? Is that really you?" she whispered.

"It's me!" he laughed. "I told you I'd come back!"

"Johnny Harris!" she exclaimed, flinging the door open wide. "Oh, my dear boy, I thought I'd never see you again!"

Johnny stepped inside, and they embraced tightly. Mrs. Robb's eyes filled with tears—this time of joy.

"I can't believe you're here," she said, her voice choked with emotion. "You remembered your promise."

"Of course I did," Johnny replied. "I could never forget you."

He looked around the small house and noticed how empty it was.

"Mother Robb, have you been taking care of yourself?" he asked gently.

She shook her head slowly. "Times have been hard, Johnny. But now that you're here, everything feels better."

Johnny smiled. "Well then, it's time to make this the best Thanksgiving ever!"

He hurried back outside and returned with armfuls of bags and boxes.

"What's all this?" Mrs. Robb asked, her eyes wide with wonder.

"Surprises!" Johnny grinned. "I brought a turkey, potatoes, cranberries, and even a pumpkin pie! We're going to have a feast."

Mrs. Robb laughed—a sound she hadn't made in a long time. "Oh, Johnny, you shouldn't have!"

"Nonsense! You took care of me when I had nowhere else to go," he said, his eyes shining. "Now it's my turn to take care of you."

They set to work in the kitchen, peeling potatoes, mixing ingredients, and telling stories. The little house filled with the mouthwatering aroma of roasting turkey and baking pie. Outside, the snow continued to fall, blanketing the world in white, but inside, it was warm and bright.

As they sat down at the table, the candles flickered softly, casting a golden glow.

"Happy Thanksgiving, Mother Robb," Johnny said, raising his glass of apple cider.

"Happy Thanksgiving, Johnny," she replied, her heart overflowing with gratitude.

They enjoyed their meal, savoring every bite. Mrs. Robb couldn't remember the last time she felt so happy.



After dinner, they sat by the fire. Johnny shared stories of his adventures out West—how he had worked hard, faced challenges, and finally found success.

"I always thought about you," he said. "Your kindness kept me going, even when things were tough."

Mrs. Robb smiled. "I'm so proud of you, Johnny."

He took her hand gently. "I have a surprise for you," he said. "I bought a little house in town, not far from here. I'd like you to come live with me. You won't ever have to worry again."

Tears welled up in Mrs. Robb's eyes. "Oh, Johnny, that's more than I could ever ask for."

"You deserve it," he said firmly. "We can take care of each other."

She nodded, her heart filled with joy. "Thank you, my dear boy."

That night, as Mrs. Robb tucked herself into bed, she looked out the window at the sparkling snow.

"Maybe wishes do come true," she whispered. "This has turned into the most wonderful Thanksgiving."

She closed her eyes, knowing that she was no longer alone and that her future was bright.