

My Hero

By Bella Hall

Heroes: strong, brave, bright fancy costumes. You may have heard the saying, "Not all heroes have capes," which is very true, sometimes they come in blue jeans and a hoodie, sweatpants, a uniform, or even a hospital gown.

When I moved to a different state my new neighbor, Mr. Johnson came to greet us right away. He was tall and slim with a goofy smile, he was wearing a light blue collared shirt with straight jeans and big brown shoes. His voice was sweet but manly and, what I noticed, he was alone. When his bony cold hand reached down to shake my hand, he asked me my name, I said "Bella." Unlike other old adults, he heard me so clearly that when he repeated my name he didn't mistake it for Isabella. When he said Bella, his eyes got soft and he smiled like he knew something I didn't. He kind of looked sad about my name. The next day when I was unpacking, he came and brought cookies. When I answered the door his face lit up like he was excited to see me, then my brothers came to surround me for the sweet treats he referred to them as, "Bella's brothers," as if he already forgot who they were. The cookies were chewy and had chocolate chips, they tasted homemade which made me wonder who made them since it was just Mr. Johnson in the blue house next door.

Then the next day, when my brothers and I were playing outside, he invited us to run in his sprinkler, and we did. It was a beautiful summer day and the cold water refreshed me. Even Mr. Johnson ran through it. Week after week he would bring things, or just say hi, he was like a grandpa to me. I was obviously a favorite of his, but I just assumed because I was an only girl surrounded by boys and some people felt bad for me. But it was different for Mr. Johnson, he truly liked me above my brothers. We would have parties for holidays and even birthday parties, and he would be there with presents or treats, like a true family member. After a year, he has

become my best friend and when I would go to school, sometimes I would see him on his daily walk.

Then the worst day of my life happened, all because of me. On spring break, I was practicing my volleyball skills in the front yard, and Mr. Johnson was outside watching me. One of my bumps went out into the road and when I went to retrieve it, I didn't look both ways, and a car was coming in FAST. When it was about 20 yards away Mr. Johnson leaped out of his chair and raced out to the road. When I was just standing there looking at the car coming closer and closer like an idiot, Mr. Johnson pushed me out of the way to the other side and then the car hit him. I didn't know if he was going to make it, I screamed, "HELP!!!!" on the top of my lungs. Many people came out of their houses and crowded the scene and they called an ambulance. My Mom rushed out and tried pulling me away but I kept kicking and screaming, I didn't want to leave him. An ambulance came and took poor Mr. Johnson away. I was watching everything happen from my bedroom window and in my mind the same thoughts kept repeating, "It's your fault," "You deserve to be in his place," "It's all on you if he dies." I couldn't bear it. I refused to eat and I locked myself in my room.

The next day we were invited to see him, he was alive! When we got there I stopped myself from racing to his room, but when I was in there by myself with him I ran to his side hugging him crying, "I'm so sorry, it's all my fault!" he replied, "It's not your fault, it's okay," I observed all the tubes and wiring and machines and kept myself from bawling my eyes out, not that I already was, I felt so sorry that this had to happen to him. I noticed a picture of a girl on the wall, but she looked familiar, like the picture in the hall of Mr. Johnson's house. She looked 7 with a missing tooth, pjs, and shoulder length hair, "Who is that?" I asked, wiping my tears. He looked at her and sighed, then he told me a story about a little girl. She was an only child and loved cookies, and when her parents split up and her mom moved to India, her dad had to become very skilled at making cookies.

She was so cheerful and funny. Her dad believed that she deserved everything. Then one day she got sick and didn't get better. By the time she turned 8 her hair was gone and she spent most of her days in the hospital. She still pushed through and tried to be happy around her father. He tried so hard to help her, and he was so grateful he got those last few months with her and stayed right by her side until God called his child to come home. When she was gone he didn't know what to do with himself, he thought it was all his fault that he didn't protect her enough. Then Mr. Johnson said in a soft voice, "And that man was me," I gasped, and that little girl was the girl with a missing tooth, pjs, and shoulder length hair, his daughter. "What was her name?" I question, "Bella," he smiled then closed his eyes and the heart rate machine beeped in a straight line. As I come out of the room my mom throws her arms around me, but my tears are happy tears knowing he's with his Bella. He is my hero.