

Love On The RTD

by Kay Mauser

They were adult children who rode to work every day at Goodwill Industries.

Alice would board the bus with her scowl on her face, pay her fare and seat herself on the right front side facing the aisle.

One time when the bus was noisier than usual, she stood in the center and shouted "Be quiet You sound like magpies." Alice seemed to be always cross but harmless.

John would board the bus quietly, say "Good Morning" to the bus driver and sit on the left front aisle seat facing Alice. After settling himself he would take out his earphones; put them on and sit back, listen and smile all the way to town.

One morning when Alice got on she sat quietly. Then I noticed her shoulders were shaking and every once in awhile she'd heave a deep sigh. She was crying,

John boarded at the next stop, sat in his usual seat, and then glanced across the aisle at Alice. Seeing the tears running down her cheek, he got up crossed to the other side and sat next to her. He silently offered her his handkerchief.

She grabbed it from his hand whipped her eyes and blew her nose loudly with the cloth. She then made a ball of it and jammed it into HER coat pocket.

John whispered something to her and took his earphones and placed them on her head.

I waited sure she would reject them.

After a few moments she seemed to relax. Was that a smile appearing on her face? Impossible.

When she got off she handed John his earphones. It looked as though no thanks was offered him. Oh well that was Alice.

Next morning Alice seemed more nervous than usual, I kept expecting her to shout orders at us but when John boarded the bus he sat next to her. She opened her purse took out a neatly washed and ironed handkerchief and handed it to him.

He smiled and offered her one of his earphones, and they rode quietly to town each holding an earphone to their ears.

A scenario developed. Alice would be restless until John arrived. John would share the earphones and they would both smile happily all the way to town.

The other passengers fell back to their reading, talking, knitting etc. Peace had been restored to the RTD bus ride.

And then one day Alice was excited. She stood up and shouted "Sing! Sing! Happy Birthday!" Was the command

The startled passengers stared-at her. I looked at the women next to me she "shrugged" her shoulders. Then a timid voice began in the back of the bus began "Happy Birthday to you." Gradually the others joined in but "Happy Birthday to whom?"

And then John got on and we all sang "Happy Birthday dear John, Happy Birthday to you."

"Delighted" he smiled at Alice and took her hand and they sat. The earphones were forgotten that day.

Latter I found out that this was her way of thanking him, for you see the day she had been crying had been her Birthday; and no one had remembered it.