

How the World Walked In

By Katherine De Vries

It was a cold, wintry day. A type of day that made one feel extra lonely. Arthur McGregor stared blankly at his heavy, oak door, open and wavering in the wind. He kept a close and unblinking gaze as snowflakes flew into his warm, red house, slowly covering the floor mat that lay by the entrance. As people walked past, they would hold their eyes in a fixed position at the crazy old man, never understanding why his door was always open, letting the whole world peer into his life. Arthur would eventually turn his head to the other side of the house, wrestling with the memories and the guilt of it all. His wife, Dorothy, passed away a month ago. Arthur blamed himself for the lost minutes. The night of her passing, he had just bought a new bolt for the front door, due to break-ins around their neighbourhood. All he wanted was for Dorothy to feel safe in her own home. Later, she had contracted a sudden illness that caused her to stop breathing. Arthur called the ambulance, staying with his wife instead of meeting them at the door. When the ambulance arrived quickly, they couldn't break the bolt, costing crucial seconds to his wife's survival. The firemen had to be called to break open the door, but they weren't fast enough. Dorothy had fought suffocation for three minutes, with Arthur by her side. When the ambulance and firefighters took her body away, Arthur couldn't help but blame his uselessness. If he had used his brain instead of his heart, his wife could still be alive. He thought about the need for the bolt and decided it wasn't really necessary.

He blamed himself. He killed Dorothy. The days after his wife's death were gloomy and sad. Arthur had taken the broken bolt off the door, and couldn't bring himself to close it ever again. He didn't care about safety. He didn't care about being cold, or wasting money on heating or air conditioning. All he wanted was to save Dorothy. Arthur knew she wasn't ever coming back, but there was hope for a miracle inside him, and he wanted her to be fast. He held steadfast to the glimmer on the horizon that brought her grace.

One snowy January day, Arthur sat on his lounge chair, watching the open door, hoping for a miracle. As he looked away, he noticed a spot of golden yellow in the corner of his eye. When he looked back at the door, it was gone. He almost jumped at the sight of a stray golden retriever sitting near the leg of the chair. He shooed the dog away, but it lay at his feet, wagging its tail and smiling with its tongue drooping out of its mouth. Arthur looked outside at the -20-degree weather, and back at the dog, snowflakes balancing on its fur. Arthur decided he would keep it. After all, the house was lonely and quiet, so he could use some company. Arthur had thought that maybe the dog would leave after he had fed it some leftover food, but no, the dog was now Arthur's.

As winter turned to spring, he had given the dog a name: Doe, to remind himself of Dorothy. Arthur didn't worry about Doe leaving him, for they were now companions. His front door still stayed open, for the sounds of spring filled the emptiness he once felt. Day after day, Arthur began to smile. It was the first time he had smiled since Dorothy's passing, but he saw his wife in spring. In birds, he heard her voice; in flowers, he saw her beauty; and in Doe, he saw her companionship and compassion. Birds and bunnies

often flew or hopped into the house, and the once dead-silent home started bursting with energy.

As summer arrived, Doe longed to be outside more often, and Arthur decided to as well. When Arthur left his home to buy groceries, he would crack the door wide open, just in case. This time was no different. As Arthur and Doe returned from the park, they found a little boy sitting inside their house. The boy looked at them in shock, as if he didn't realize that the house was a home. Arthur chuckled at the boy's explanation of how he needed to cool down and thought it was open to anyone. Arthur told the boy he could come and cool down anytime he needed to. Soon, summer turned to fall, and the memories of Dorothy came back in more signs. Arthur saw her in the colourful leaves, the sound of crickets, and the sweet smell of maple syrup. Once again, his house was full of colour and sound, and yes, some animals!

When December approached, the month of Dorothy's death, Arthur was full of sorrow and remorse, but Doe was beside him all through it. He decided to think of the good that his guilt had brought him. The open door led to sounds in his quiet, dead-silent home, it led to companionship in his lonely days, filling the silence with life, and it led to the understanding of what had happened, and it had caused a miracle.

The miracle Arthur was waiting for wasn't Dorothy coming back to life, but finding life again through his grief, in the living things that walked through the door he refused to close. The open door had led Dorothy back to Arthur. Dorothy's spirit and grace was in Arthur's daily life because he saw different parts of Dorothy in the seasons and in his home. So now, leaving the door open wasn't because of his guilt and regret, but

because of his continuous and steadfast love. In the end, the open door not only helped Arthur, but helped others too. It helped those looking for help, and those looking for a home. His open door became a sanctuary where love lived and never left.

The end.

Declaration: I used AI to perform a grammar check and I then applied some of the suggestions to my work. I also used AI to help me brainstorm titles before settling on my final choice.