

Della

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“Well, Mr. Daggert, Della is underperforming, but I believe there is something special about her. She is quiet and sensitive, has a desire to learn it seems. Yet, she is so shy, distant and doesn’t mix with the other children or participate in class activities. I would like to have one of our psychologists assess Della. Perhaps they can help her come out of her shell.”

Funny, I really liked Mrs. Tompkins. She was the best teacher I ever had. You could really think she actually cared. I wish I would have talked to her more. She cared.

Dad pulled me out of Montgomery Middle School after that meeting, like he’d done at Markham Elementary and Standish Academy. Dad said he’d found a better job across state. Mom said nothing. She hardly ever said anything.

We moved a lot. It was hard to make friends. When I was four, my dad let me keep a mutt that came by. I loved Mitzy. Dad figured she had beagle blood in her. The only real friend I ever had. I could talk to her. She listened.

I spent most of my time alone with Mitzy. I felt safe with her. No one seemed to care. I think my mother didn’t want to be bothered and dad always told me he was too tired from his work on the farms. When they did have something to say it was usually mean talk, sometimes with the back of a hand. So, I stayed to myself with Mitzy.

Since it was late in the school year, dad said there’s no sense in putting me into a new school. So, I was playing with Mitzy in the front yard of our new place. She saw a cat and chased it into the road, got hit by a car. We buried her in the back yard.

I cried alone in my room for three days.

Now, Mitzy and I look down upon my mother and father standing by the little stone with my name on it. Dad is crying, holding his hat to his chest. Mom is staring off into the sky. I scratch Mitzy’s head and tell her, “Let’s go home, girl.”

