

session, she quit teaching reading, writing, and speaking. Instead, she began to teach children, and Jean Thompson paid particular attention to one named "Teddy."

#### **HE SEEMED TO COME ALIVE**

As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded and, on days that there would be an important test, Mrs. Thompson would remember that cologne. By the end of the year he had become one of the smartest children in the class and... well, he had also become the "pet" of the teacher, who had once vowed to love all of the children exactly the same.

A year later she found a note under her door from Teddy, telling her that of all the teachers whom he'd had in elementary school, she was his favorite.

Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy, and then he wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still his favorite teacher of all time.

Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, that he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would graduate from college with the highest of honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson she was still his favorite teacher.

Then four years passed and yet another letter came. This time, he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still his favorite teacher but that now his name was a little longer, and the letter was signed, "Theodore F. Stoddard, M.D."

#### **THE LOVE CONTINUES**

The story doesn't end there. There was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said that... well, the he'd met a special girl and was to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering...well, if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit in the pew usually reserved for the mother of the groom.

You'll have to decide yourself whether or not she wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. But on that special day, Jean Thompson smelled just like...well, just like she smelled many years before on the last day of school before the Christmas holidays began.

~ ~ ~

## *Love Everyone*



At the end of the day,  
as the other children  
joyously raced from the room,  
Teddy stayed behind just long enough to say...

## **Love Everyone**

by Mr. Brian V. Kinney

There was a woman named Jean Thompson, and when she stood in front of her fifth-grade class on the very first day of school in the fall, she told the children a lie.

Like most teachers, she looked at her pupils and said that she loved them all the same; that she would treat them all alike. And that was impossible because there in front of her, slumped in his seat on the third row, was a boy named Teddy Stoddard

### **THE UNHAPPY CHILD**

Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before, and noticed he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were unkempt, and that he constantly needed a bath. Added to it was the fact that Teddy was unpleasant.

It got to the point during the first few months that she would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold 'X's and then marking the 'F' at the top of the paper biggest of all.

Because Teddy was a sullen boy, nobody else seemed to enjoy him, either. Now, at the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's records and because of other things, put Teddy's off until the last... but when she opened his file, she was in for a surprise.

### **"HE IS A JOY TO BE AROUND"**

His first-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright, inquisitive child with a ready laugh. He does work neatly and has good manners ... he is a joy to be around."

His second-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student and is well liked by his classmates—but he is troubled because his

mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle."

His third-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy continues to work hard but his mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best, but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him, if some steps aren't taken."

Teddy's fourth-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and sometimes sleeps in class. He is tardy and could become a problem."

### **CLUMSILY WRAPPED**

By now Mrs. Thompson realized the problem, but Christmas was coming fast. It was all she could do, with the school play and all, until the day before the holidays began, when she was suddenly forced to focus on Teddy Stoddard on the last day before the vacation would begin. The children brought her presents all in gay ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy's, which was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper of a scissored grocery bag.

Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents, and some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet, with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one-quarter full of cologne. She stifled the laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and then she dabbed some of the perfume behind the other wrist.

At the end of the day, as the other children joyously raced from the room, Teddy Stoddard stayed behind just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my mom used to." As soon as Teddy left, Mrs. Thompson knelt at her desk and there, on the last day of school before the Christmas holiday, she cried for at least an hour.

On the first day after the holiday, when school was in