

My Neighbourhood

Once upon a time, in a small, quiet neighbourhood called Maryview, eleven-year-old Oliver felt trapped. Oliver moved to Maryview with his mother and grandma, but he didn't enjoy the neighbourhood one bit. The streets were too narrow, the houses too strange, and the kids in the area were different from his old friends. Oliver missed the vibrant energy of his old home, the bustling parks, and the laughter that filled the air.

Days turned to weeks, and Oliver had still found no joy. He stayed in his weird room, staring out the window at the world he didn't want to be a part of. Oliver watched as some kids played basketball on a cracked court, the noises they made irritated him deeply. He'd often scowl at them, but at least they didn't feel alone in a place they thought was dreary. However, things can change.

On a rainy afternoon, Oliver came home from his dull school to find his mother sitting on the couch. The doctors had given them news that would change their lives forever. The sadness that engulfed their home felt suffocating, but Oliver wouldn't be prepared for what came next.

Weeks passed, and all Oliver could do was watch the only person who brought joy to his life, grow weaker. His mother was the one who brought colour to Oliver's world. Now all he could do was stand by her side as she took her last breaths. On her final days, she often spoke to Oliver about love and community, urging Oliver to look beyond the uninteresting life within the neighbourhood he'd seen since he moved.

“Oliver,” she whispered one sorrowful evening “There’s beauty here if you let yourself see it. This place may not feel like home but it can be. All you have to do is open your heart.”

After she passed, the grief felt like a heavy blanket smothering him. He spent long days wandering around the neighbourhood, feeling lonely and broken. All remaining colours faded. One day, as Oliver walked past the basketball court, he noticed a group of kids laughing and playing. They looked so blissful. For the first time, Oliver could feel something stirring up inside of him. Something he hadn’t felt in forever.

On a whim, Oliver picked up a basketball he had forgotten in his garage and approached the court. The kids paused, eyeing him curiously. After a moment of hesitation, he joined in. At first, he was awkward, missing shots and fumbling passes, but they welcomed him in, encouraging him with laughter instead of ridicule. Slowly, Oliver started to feel a sense of belonging.

What once felt like slow days became faster. As Oliver kept returning to the court he noticed a change in the neighbourhood. He observed wildflowers growing in the cracks of the pavement, the way the sun set behind the trees, and heard the comforting sound of laughter as it filled the air. He started talking to kids, learning their names, sharing stories, and even making friends.

One sunny afternoon, after leaving the court, Oliver spotted a familiar face. It was Mrs. Collins, who lived a few houses down from him. Mrs. Collins had brought cookies when he first moved. As Oliver waved to her, she waved for him to come over. They ate delicious pastries while Mrs. Collins talked about the stories behind Maryview. Turns out, it got its name due to the beautiful marigolds that grew

around the park. Oliver thought of his mother who loved the colour orange. Mrs. Collins also mentioned how the citizens of the neighbourhood looked out for each other. At that moment, Oliver felt a strange sense of security.

The more Oliver immersed himself in the community, the more he realized how much his mother had been right. The neighbourhood was not a backdrop in his life; but a living, breathing entity filled with friendship, stories, and warmth.

During his grief, Oliver found healing. He began to embrace the memories of his mother, carrying her lessons with him as he played with his friends. His old home was only a chapter of his life, he still had a whole story to complete.

As the seasons changed so did Oliver. Instead of scowling at the kids, he was now one of them. The neighbourhood became a place woven with love, comfort, and memories that honored his mother.

Oliver laughed and played with his newfound friends, then paused to gaze at the pink sky.

“Thank you,” he whispered “For revealing that the neighbourhood I once felt trapped in could become a place I truly belong. This is my home.”

He rejoined the game; his spirit soaring as the sun dipped behind the trees casting long shadows that danced around him. A perfect backdrop for his newly discovered joy.

By Sonia Chaudhari