

Warm Enough To Sit In The Shade
by Stephen Mark Golden

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Doc Jenkins was an unusual sort, always concerned about others' welfare. Not at all common these days. He had devoted his life to doing good deeds for those less fortunate than himself. And it was important to him to maintain a good rapport with the people in the community. Yes, Doc Jenkins was well respected by everyone around. "Honest, trustworthy, and kind, that Doc Jenkins!" the neighbors would say. "He'll be your friend even when no one else will! Not a biased or prejudiced bone in his body!"

And who could be less fortunate in his immediate surroundings than elderly Mrs. Samuelson. You might say Doc Jenkins had taken on Mrs. Samuelson as a special project. Nearly every day he would stop by, share a treat and good company. On pleasant days, they would take walks to the park, or down to the foot bridge. On cold days, they would sit by her cozy fireplace and he would listen to her tell stories of her past. Doc always found them quite entertaining, and oftentimes amusing.

He would still spend time with other folk in the neighborhood whenever he made the rounds. He was always on the watch for everyone. Ready to come to the aid of anyone in need. Always on the lookout for trouble or distress. Why, once Doc had noticed a strange man breaking into Miss Warner's house, and before anyone could wink, he had both summoned the police, and caught the burglar.

Oh, and there was the time when he jumped into the Mackintaw river a couple of springs ago and saved that little boy, Jimmy Pense, from drowning. That got him the community medal of honor! And you know, Doc was so modest, he gave that medal to little Jimmy. Quite a hero, that Doc Jenkins!

Mostly, Doc Jenkins liked the quiet life best. Staying out of the limelight. Not one to brag you know, and he never had too much to say, he always greeted

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you with that genuine smile that let you know he really cared. He enjoyed just sitting in the park with the sun shining down.

But as I said earlier, Mrs. Samuelson was his project of caring, ever since she took to using a walker — just last year, as I recall. I guess she became unable to get around as well as she used to. Sometimes Doc would bring his assistant, Marybeth Niles, to help with opening doors and gates and such while he helped Mrs. Samuelson. Navigating with that walker was not quite as easy as just going for a simple walk, so Marybeth was of great assistance. Doc appreciated that.

Yes sir! Doc always looked forward to the change of seasons, but he liked springtime best of all. You'd see him in the park as soon as it got warm enough to sit in the sun. You could even tell just how warm it was outside by what you would see Doc Jenkins doing on any given day. Whether it was a brisk walk, a leisure stroll, or sitting on a park bench in the sun, or in the grass, he enjoyed the out of doors. He had such a pleasant disposition on life.

Well, just yesterday, I heard that Mrs. Samuelson passed away. They said she passed on with a smile on her face. Peacefully. Doc Jenkins was right by her side. I hear it really affected him though.

I saw Doc in the park today. Get a kick out of watchin' him. He was back to his normal contented self. I guess he wouldn't want to let his mourning get in the way of another's happiness. It's middle of May. And you know, the warmth of the sun can't even come close to matching the warmth that Ol' Doc gives you. Usually this time of year it may be pleasant enough to sit in the sun, but it's a little too cool to sit under a tree. But today, sittin' with Doc just seemed to make my own life so full of happiness. He made me laugh a bit — the way he kept jumping up to lick my face.

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Oh, didn't I tell ya? I thought you knew! Doc Jenkins is a Spaniel —
Springer Spaniel, I think.

Yeah, sittin' with Doc, thinkin' about life Today, it was warm enough
to sit in the shade.