



# L-O-V-E

## Farmgirl



In one of those meant-to-be connections, Mimi dropped into my life via a Christmas card sent to me by my daughter and her co-workers, The Magenta & Co. real-estate team. Inside, it said:

"It's those nights when the sky is black and the snowflakes fall in its silence, glimmering when they drift into the glow of the streetlight. It's those nights that remind us to breathe amidst life's restlessness. We wish you a wonderful holiday season that's merry and bright, interrupted by those still moments that help you enjoy it that much more."

The front of the card had a watercolor painting of our town square, known as Friendship Square. The painting made my heart skip a beat. Friendship Square has a special place in my heart. It's where I sat for hours watching my daughter, Meg, swing, whirl, and twirl on the playground equipment. Or on a hot day, wade in the town water fountain.

Rather than spend the money I'd saved working for the Forest Service renting a proper house while I looked for land to buy, I'd rented a small two-room flat on the third floor of the Hotel Moscow, which meant Meg's backyard was concrete and asphalt, except for the playground area in Friendship Square.

For several months, at the base of my computer screen, right in front of me, I kept the card's painting on display, wondering who had created it, wondering how an artist knows to depict inviting windows, buildings that wobble but stand tall, a child, a woman, and a dog in perfect stride. All I knew was that one of Meg's co-workers had

commissioned the painting by sending a woman artist "across the globe" a summer photo of Friendship Square.

Then Russia invaded Ukraine. Meg told me the artist of my painting had contacted them to say she needed as much work as possible, immediately, because she and her 13-year-old son had fled Ukraine in the night for a three-day journey to safety, first by a neighbor's car, then a Red Cross bus, and then the cars of German volunteers, eventually finding asylum in a neighboring country, leaving their husband/father behind, losing everything but each other, and even that up in the air every day, every minute.

Suddenly, the peace of the painting I'd learn to breathe by had been violated. I asked more questions. I found out the artist had illustrated a children's book about a farmgirl named Bellamy, and that she was a dancer. Could our connection be more meant-to-be? The author of the book who'd commissioned her work also wanted to help. My daughter wanted to help.

As is often the case, war is full of impossibilities. We filed paperwork to bring Mimi and her son to the farm (that hit roadblocks); we commissioned more artwork. In the end, we realized that sending Mimi routine money for food and shelter helps her the most.

To shorten a long story, I work with someone who helps us send her money every month, a complicated and frustrating process at best.

Because I've learned the power of farmgirls in unison and their need to rally, here's how you can also help and I can stay legal, never an easy task.

Put a love mark (♥) on your calendar, December 8, Thursday, when 20 percent of proceeds from sales in our online store (in addition to our food, books, and other items, be sure to check out MaryJane's Curations under the heading Farmhouse Style) will be sent to Mimi, who is still living abroad with her son, her husband still in Ukraine. The photos he sends to Mimi are haunting, her losses unbelievable to me. I constantly think, "What if I were in her situation?" "What if no one came to help?"

