

The Last Leaf

Sue and Johnsy were two young artists who lived together in New York City. They worked hard and dreamed of becoming successful painters.

One autumn, a dangerous illness called pneumonia spread through the city. Many people became sick, and Johnsy was one of them. As Johnsy lay in bed, she became weaker every day.

Outside her window stood an old ivy vine growing on a brick wall. The cold wind blew, and the leaves began to fall. Johnsy started counting them.

“When the last leaf falls,” she said quietly, “I will die too.”

Sue was shocked. She tried to encourage her friend.

“You must not think that way,” she said. “You will get better soon.”

But Johnsy had lost hope. Each day, she watched the vine. The number of leaves grew smaller and smaller.

In the same building lived Behrman, an old artist. He had dreamed for many years of painting a masterpiece, but he had never created one. When Sue told him about Johnsy’s strange belief, he became worried.

That night, a terrible storm arrived. Rain fell heavily, and strong winds shook the buildings. Everyone expected the last leaf to disappear.

The next morning, Johnsy looked out the window.
“There is still one leaf,” she whispered.

The leaf remained on the wall through the storm. It stayed there all day and all night. Seeing the leaf survive gave Johnsy new hope.

“If that leaf can stay alive,” she thought, “perhaps I can too.”

Day by day, her health improved. Soon, she was able to sit up and smile again.

Then Sue told her the truth. Behrman had gone outside during the storm and painted a perfect leaf on the wall. He wanted Johnsy to believe that the leaf was still there. After working in the cold rain, he became sick and died.

Johnsy realized that Behrman’s final painting was his masterpiece. Through his kindness and sacrifice, he saved her life and taught her the power of hope.