

The Rusty Mailbox

by Nancy Carter



The year is 1946. I had moved to the city to help with the war effort but I'm not a city girl. The war changed my life and now that it's over, I pray for God to help me find a quiet place in the country again...

When I came upon the place at the end of the road I started to back out of the long dirt lane. But something drew me to it. I parked my car and stepped out into deep weeds. The road was overgrown and went no farther, but the packed hard ground left a distinguishable mark that indicated it had once been well traveled.

Just beyond my car was a large rambling rose, growing wildly to its own choosing. It was not red, nor pink, somewhere in between. Peeking from the center of the rose bush was a hint of life that used to be—a mailbox, now rusty with a door barely holding on by one hinge. The rose may have protected it from weathering but the mailbox was in bad shape. How odd, I thought, one of God's beautiful delicate creations protecting metal.

In each direction from the mailbox were remains of a fence. I found a stepping stone covered with moss and dirt and thought, probably placed beneath the mailbox for footing when retrieving the mail. A closer look revealed beautiful native stones that beckoned to come and explore.

Following the stones I came upon what was once a grand house, now falling to gravity and decay. It was partially hidden by trees and overgrown shrubbery trying to devour it, working to return it to the land.

I wondered...would someone want to sell this place...would I want to buy it? With a lot of love and God's help, it could be grand again. I could give it new life.

On the south side of the house the sun dappled through the overgrowth revealing, under the brush next to a stone chimney, beautiful blooming Easter lilies in their yellow pinking-shear shaped garments. They're properly known as daffodils, but I'm country and proper isn't so important unless it's our manners.

It's as if this place continues to live, I thought...the roses and the Easter lilies blooming, a testimony to all those who have called this home.

I walked back to the rambling rose and the rusty mailbox. I am drawn to take a closer look. I lift the branches back being careful not to get caught by the thorns. Deep inside the box I see a yellowed envelope covered with rusty particles.

Gently I lift it out of the box shaking off the rust. I study it over, I open it. I am prying into someone's life. It feels like I'm doing something wrong.

Dear Aunt Rachel,

I will arrive within the month. Please prepare my room, as I will be staying for a spell. Mother is well so I am not needed here. I am searching for a place where my sorrow will turn to joy. I feel so cordial coming to you because you are the only one who understands how my heart aches for another. Biblically because of his Christian obligation he can never abandon the woman he was forced to marry and she will never set him free. So that is how it will be until death will part them.

I shall cook my new recipes from France for you and Uncle Will. I shall not be a burden to you but instead a companion so that we may do our hand sewing while we converse in the sun room and take in the fresh air.

With great expectations and love, Your niece, Katherine

I gasped. My name is Katherine. I too am searching for my place because my circumstances have not allowed the love of my life to be my companion. He went to war and never returned.

At the bottom of the mailbox post my eye caught a stone gothic cross. I pulled back the weeds to reveal the inscription: John15:16 "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." I stared at it almost fearful as if God was standing beside me.

The letter was dated 1918. What a mystery. Why would the letter still be here? Is it possible that it could have waited for me to find it? Yes, it is. God answered my prayer. I didn't find this place, this place found me.