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Gateway to University Honors

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This I Believe

*Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens, bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens, brown paper packages tied up with string: these are a few of my favorite things…*

I admit I have always had a soft spot for the smaller things in life. Whether it was the giant pile of leaves my parents raked up throughout the fall or the cup of homemade hot chocolate in front of a warm fire in the dead of winter, the simplest things have always held a bit of magic for me.

… *Girls in white dresses with blue satin sashes, snowflakes that stay on my nose and eyelashes, silver white winters that melt into spring: these are a few of my favorite things…*

To some, they might be irrelevant, just another event on an inconsequential day in a string of many more eventful days. But to me, they’re what make it so interesting. Life is full of surprises, both big and little. Sometimes they’re too big to handle all at once and yet we have to keep going.

… *When the dog bites and the bee stings and I’m feeling sad, I simply remember my favorite things and then I don’t feel so bad.*

The smallest things always seem to make a difference. I’ve noticed that the biggest one for me is the weather. It doesn’t matter how stressed out I am or tired or worried about something or other; if the sun’s shining, I’m already in a better mood. Conversely, if it’s raining and cold or just a generally ugly day, I’m not going to be as happy as you’d expect me to be on any given day. But in spite of the rain, I can always count on a warm cup of chai tea to make things better.

The small things are important to me, but they’re also important in making a difference in other people’s lives. It doesn’t always take much. You could bring your friend a cookie because you know they’re having a hard time with something, or leave them a note in their mailbox for them to find unexpectedly and brighten their day.

The other day I was walking around campus and I began to notice that people were leaving behind little surprises for us, the random strangers making up the University of Cincinnati community, to find. I saw funny post-it note designs composed on dorm room windows and Harry Potter references left in chalk on the sidewalk. It gave me the thought that maybe the key to brightening someone’s day isn’t a small act of kindness, but just being spontaneous and fun to break up the monotony of our daily routine. We all have classes, exams, and homework and it seems like too much of our time is spent working. Sometimes it’s just nice to see something completely out of the ordinary to shift our focus and distract us to give us a bit of comic relief.

I even started to notice that beyond brightening the lives of individuals, creating these sorts of surprises around our community lightens the entire mood and atmosphere of the area. Things just seem friendlier when you can laugh on your way to the library or smile coming back from class.

I suppose that after all of this, what I really believe in is that you really don’t have to go out of your way at all to cheer someone else up. You might even do it accidentally while creating something for yourself to enjoy. With all the stress that life can bring, it’s practically necessary.

*I simply remember my favorite things, and then I don’t feel so bad…*