

# MAIVE

Maybe it was because she'd feared death for so long it made life that much easier?

"Now that doesn't make any sense" Maive said out-loud to herself in the mirror as she examined the fine scar lines running along each one of her ribs on both sides. She'd done that not so many years ago. In the depths of her illness she'd cut herself just enough to see the blood run. It was to remind her that she was still alive. It was her way of getting through things and the illness was so much worse than a few cuts.

Maive opened her shirt to see the larger and less exquisite scar running down the middle of her chest from the heart transplant. It had taken thirty years for her heart to finally fail. Thirty years of working with the flawed organ she was born with. Thirty years of being held back because of one health obstacle or another. How do you live when every moment of your life you could die? How do you set goals? Have aspirations? Sure it's all cute and inspirational in one of those bullshit books written by other "survivors". Ever notice how they don't write those books until after they know they will live? Maive buttoned her shirt up and smiled to herself. 'Maybe now she'd even write one'. It was the perfect time, plus, she had to figure out what the hell to do with her life from now on. She had to make money. People had taken care of her for the past three decades, now she had to take care of herself.

Maive pushed her fingernail into her arm just below the elbow. Hard enough to make a small, crescent moon of blood. She immediately felt a strange comfort. Her blood was red and there to spill which meant she was alive. Maive looked around the apartment and took inventory of her items. She'd had the place for a year but it was nearly empty. Things were still in boxes, walls were bare. Old habits die hard. Before the surgery, there hadn't been much point to spending precious energy decorating when you could just die. But now, now she was living a whole new life and would have to start acting like a normal human being. Maive knew that was impossible. She was affected for life and that was OK. The hard part was figuring out who she was exactly. She looked down at a cardboard box, reached in and pulled out a sparkling crystal frog. It wasn't a particularly pretty thing. In fact, it was kind of weird but it did cast nice spikes of green around the room when the sun shone through it. Maive placed it on the windowsill. There.

Her mother's friend, Judy, had given it to her when she visited Maive in the hospital. People give you things when your sick. All kinds of things that often don't make any sense. Maive thought they did at first. Maybe that frog meant something to Judy and that's why she was passing it on? But Maive had been sick long enough to discover that this wasn't the case. People are just grasping. They give you things because they don't know what else to do. Your illness reminds them of their own mortality and it makes them sad. So they give you things to try to feel better. Maive always took the gifts gratefully. It didn't matter, she had been in her struggle for so long she'd given up being angry or offended years ago.

What next?

Maive walked over to her bed and made it. She ran her hands over the fresh clean sheets and smoothed out the down comforter. This was one area she was an expert on. Good sheets and covers were essential to someone who spent thirty years of their life in and out of beds. She'd even got a small plant for the bedside table and noticed it was getting ready to bloom. Huh. This was nice. A flood of good feelings ran through her as she walked over to the window and opened it. A Boston spring rushed in. The air was cold and clear carrying the scent of tiny green buds and crocuses. She stuck her head out and took a long deep breath. A big breath was something she couldn't do all of her life but now...no problem. She felt her head clear and her thoughts start to sort themselves out.

'What did she know in order to start a life?' She thought. 'Medicine? No. The last thing she wanted was to spend any more time with the medical profession. Book? She had read so many books. But did she want to write them?' Maive pondered on this. 'No' was the answer. But she did like reading them and being around them.

"It's a start" she said out-loud, pulling her head in and closing the window.

Maive readied herself for a walk. Again, a new concept for her. Being able to grab her things, go down a flight of stairs and walk down the street. Just like that.

"People don't know how lucky they are" she said.

Maive grabbed her purse and jacket. She'd get the paper and a coffee and look for a job at a bookstore. She wasn't sure who'd hire her with no job experience but she wasn't against using her story to get a leg up. She had no quandaries about that, plus, it always worked. People can't take stories about struggles with death. The "gift giving feelings" start rumbling around in them and they can't help it. It's like your a soldier or firefighter and they want to show their appreciation that you survived. Maybe this time the gift will be her first job.

Maive locked the apartment door and headed down the stairs. She took the stairs two by two, feeling like a superhero or a woman with a brand new heart beating in her chest.