

A very bad day looms in WE DID IT! Yet, in this story people and lives are changed by a toy. People everywhere love it and these students begin a campaign to change themselves community. You will love the positive example they show us.

We Did It!

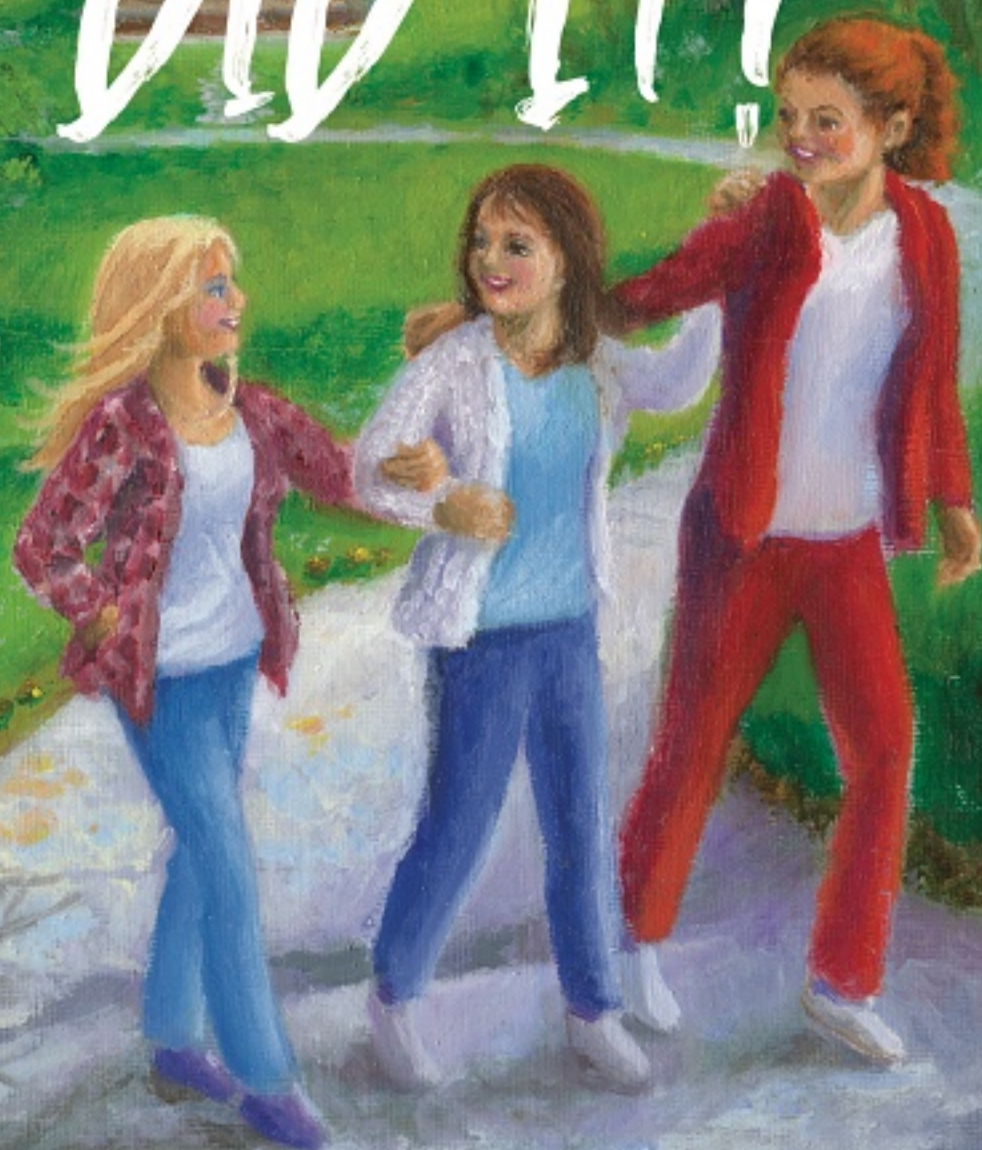
By Suzanne Pollock

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://booklocker.com/books/14150.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

WE DID IT!



SUZANNE POLLOCK

Copyright © 2025 Suzanne Pollock

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-959624-96-7

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia, U.S.A.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2025



Chapter 1

I stumbled out of bed feeling like I'd been run over by a train. As usual, I glanced out my bedroom window to check the weather but saw my dad slam dunking the basketball without pausing. He barely let the ball touch the ground before he slammed it over and over into the basket. He loved to play basketball, but this was not a pretty sight. He was mad and hurt and I knew exactly how he felt.

Slipping on my slippers I took two steps at a time downstairs and out the back door to reach him. When he glanced my way, he crumbled on the concrete sobbing and beating his fist repeatedly on the ground.

I grabbed him in a giant hug and together we sobbed and yelled, "Why Mary?" Several minutes passed until he looked at me with tears streaming down his face. I wiped them off with the sleeve of my pj's.

I had never seen dad cry, and the worst part was I did not know how to help him or myself either.

Yesterday Mom and I were waiting for my big sister Mary to call us about our 5 o'clock shopping date but when mom's cell rang, it was not Mary. Instead, our neighbor Julie yelling, "Come quick. There has been an accident."

The color left Mom's face as she grabbed my arm. Together we ran across our neighbor Julie's yard which was beside the exit ramp from the state highway near our house.

As we went around the corner of Julie's house, she was standing there blocking our way as she pointed at a car shoved across the intersection into a tree. I gasped as mother screamed, and I took off running to get my sister Mary out of the car.

Within a few feet a big arm reached out to stop me, quietly saying, "I am sorry. You can't go there." I screamed at the uniform, "It's my sister." He gently but firmly turned me away and guided me toward mother who had crumbled to the ground screaming, "Mary! Mary!"

I dropped down to hug her as the kind face of the police officer said quietly, "The young lady has passed. Is this your car?" Mother barely nodded as I jumped up in anger and shouted, "I have to see my sister Mary." I sprinted across the yard again, but this time Julie caught me pulling me to the ground.

She held my face in her hands and whispered over and over, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry Alice. Your sister Mary is dead."

At that second the world stopped.

I glanced at the car which was squished like a soda can. Another car was nearby but nobody was in it. Julie turned me back to face her but out of the corner of my eye I saw an officer talking with a man. I looked at Julie asking, "Did he kill my sister?" Julie nodded saying, "He has been drinking. He didn't stop."

I went back to mom as the kind officer approached us to ask, "Would you like this teddy bear? It was on the back seat." I grabbed it from him as Mom mumbled, "thanks." I looked at the dirty bear and realized it was the bear I had given her last Christmas. It wasn't pretty anymore, but the bright red bow tie was still on.

Mom and I hugged it as the air around us filled with sirens. One of the officers moved the gawking people away from the scene as they worked to pull the car apart. I have never heard squealing and scrunching metal before, but I'll never forget it. Mom and I walked a little closer as the ambulance moved in position to take my sister's body. The officer looked from us to her as they gently placed our Mary on the gurney and into the ambulance.

For another second, time stopped as complete silence filled the area as everyone paused. And to my surprise, that complete calm and peace flowed through me as mom gently patted my arm.

The sirens screamed, the cars sped up again and life was just like before. But my life as well as my parents would never be the same. I lost my only sister, and they lost their eldest, beautiful and smart daughter.

Mom and I staggered back home hoping dad would be there and sure enough he pulled into the driveway and jumped out to gather us in his arms as we all cried together.

Inside the house a gentle knock brought Julie with her arms outstretched, "The officer found these two boxes on the back seat." I read aloud the note on the top of each box, "Teddy Bears always listen." Mom and dad nodded in agreement as each grabbed a bear and cradled it to their chest. I nodded and whispered, "That's our Mary."

I turned to get them a glass of water and bumped into the basketball that Mary kept at the back door. I picked it up handing it to dad as he noted, "Only two bad things ever happened to our Mary: not making the varsity team last spring and today."

Mom replied, "But Mary loved playing basketball with you more than anything, so she wasn't too upset."

Then the phone rang and rang and rang the whole evening. Mom took the calls holding the teddy bear as dad stood at the back door greeting friends and neighbors who hugged him mumbling, "so sorry," as they handed dad food.

Some of my friends came with their parents and hugged me but did not know what to say. To help my parents I ran to get a pad of paper to start listing all the containers as mom mumbled, "lots of thank you notes to write."

I felt helpless but soon there was enough food for an army in our kitchen, so I tried to find a place in the frig and on the counter for everything.

My parents looked exhausted, so as it grew dark dad locked the back door and turned off the outdoor lights. Mom climbed the steps to her bedroom as if she was climbing a mountain while Dad just slumped into the recliner in his office. I hugged them then quickly went to find the teddy bears which they both cradled to their chest. As I left his office I heard Dad whisper, "Why Mary? What do we do now?"

Still feeling tons of anger, I ran up to my room, stumbled across the hallway to Mary's room. I could not go in, so I slammed the door shut and mumbled to myself, "She's not here anymore. What do I do with all those bears?" I slid down the wall waiting to cry like everyone else, but no tears came.

I was up and down all night checking on mom and dad who tossed and turned. A couple times I found Dad walking around his office holding the bear, pausing to look at Mary's picture on his desk then slumping into the recliner again.

Upstairs I checked on Mom who had never moved from her fetal position. When her eyes were open, she stared at the wall, so I sat beside her stroking her hair. I grabbed her phone and found some of her favorite music. She smiled, closed her eyes, and stretched out as the music calmed her. But for me, right now the music did nothing for me.

I felt all wrong. Nothing was like it had been. No happy parents, no chatter about upcoming plans, no talk about what to wear, nothing was the same. Yesterday my life was fun and good. Now my life was empty.

The next morning my parents had to go to the funeral home and even though I had my driver's permit I just couldn't take them. To the rescue once again was our wonderful neighbor Julie to drive them. Mom looked awful walking as if in a dream. Dad was trying to be brave and helpful but when he walked as if he had lead in

his shoes. Yesterday, he bounced and jogged everywhere but today he was numb. I thanked Julie for driving them, and as I closed the door behind them, I turned around to an empty house.

I stared at the neat kitchen and spotted Mary's jacket on the back of her empty chair. I grabbed it and walked into the living room where there was a picture of the basketball team along with the second team which Mary was on. Then I remembered her excitement yesterday morning before she left to babysit when the coach had phoned her to say, "The team needs you to sit on the varsity bench at next Tuesday's game. If possible, we would like to see you in the game."

Mary jumped with excitement as mom, and I hugged her, as she phoned dad.

But, at this moment I wanted to throw that picture across the room and bust it into a million pieces. As I raised my arm to toss it, I knew that Mom and Dad would be mad so instead I shook it and laid back on the table. I was so mad, so very mad today. I hoped someday soon I would love looking at that photo of my sister.

I went to my room, but it was scary because our house was so quiet. I stumbled across the floor falling onto my bed. As I glanced out the window, slowly the numbness I'd been feeling dissolved, and every inch of my body was filled with anger. I stomped around the room, kicked a book slamming it into the wall and falling to the floor, picked up my pillow and beat it until I felt the tears coming. I cried and cried because I couldn't stop. I called to Mary over and over apologizing for the stupid things I had said to her, then I remembered the silly jokes she told and cried some more. I called out many times, "Please come back. I miss you." I have no idea where all the tears came from but finally, I was exhausted. I laid down hugging my pillow and slept about an hour.

I felt better so went downstairs to get a soda and while sipping it I heard a faint knock on the back door. I decided not to answer it but then I heard the familiar voice of Ginger whisper, "May I come in please?"

I looked and felt like a complete mess, but I wanted to see my friend. I opened the door and my friend and I stared at each other. I could

see Ginger was mad as she stomped inside, slammed the door, and grabbed me in a giant hug. Finally, she pulled away saying, "Coach already replaced Mary with Alma."

Wiping my eyes, "What? Why did he..." I could not finish. Ginger paced around the table saying, "I am so mad. Why couldn't he have waited until after the funeral?" And of course, that's how Mom and Dad found us as they returned from the funeral home. Mom looked like a ghost and went straight to the bedroom without saying anything to Ginger. Dad asked what was wrong and Ginger looked at me then mumbled, "The coach replaced Mary for the game."

Dad shook his head in disbelief, looked at her and then at me, threw his arms up in the air and walked away. Ginger and I sat at the table holding hands for awhile, then we both went to check on my parents. Ginger apologized to me for being so upset but said as she walked to the door to leave, "I am here for you Alice. I hardly know what to say or do but because I know you're hurt; I want to be a real friend to you. So, I'm gonna become your shadow for a few days."

I looked at her questioning, "A shadow... okay, I guess. As long as you are my friend, that's good." She grinned and waved. Ginger is my friend, and she will be help me through this.

As I turned around mom was cleaning out a kitchen drawer that was already neat. Out came all the silverware which she neatly rearranged and put them back in the drawer, then did it again. Dad went past me headed to shoot basketball.

I decided it was time for me to go to Mary's room.

When I cracked open the door, I was overwhelmed by the aroma of Mary's perfume. I picked up her shirt from the floor hugging it as I slowly looked around this side of her room. It felt like she was still here, and I liked that. I looked in her closet which was very neat and picked out a sweater of hers that I liked and decided to keep it to remind me of her. Then slowly I turned to the far side of the room where Mary had hung several shelves from ceiling to floor on the back wall. Teddy Bears of all colors, shapes, and sizes large to tiny were sitting on these shelves. I went to touch them as I heard Mary say, "I'm going to give every student a bear when I get to be a teacher."

I do not know how or why but at that moment I knew I would help make Mary's dream come true somehow, someday. Feeling calmer than I had for the last couple of days, I sat on the floor looking at these wonderful, sweet bears and I began to talk to them. And I do not know how, but those silly bears hanging on the wall listening to my troubles made me feel alive again.

It was like Mary said, "Teddy Bears just listen. Complain, shout, sing, talk no matter how and what you say to teddy bears. They just listen. They do not argue, there is no shouting, no singing, no talking back to you. They just listen Alice."

I laughed aloud as I told all those 75 bears in my sweet sister Alice's room, "Okay. I'll do it. You must help me; you bears must help me find and share bears with everyone. I teased them, "You cannot talk back. Mary told me you just listen."

I closed the door to Mary's room, went to mine and before I crawled in bed I whispered, "Thanks Mary. Somehow, I am going to make your wish come true."

At the last minute, I picked up the dirty little bear the officer gave me, brushed the dirt off, fluffed up its fur, set him on top of my dresser and then tied the bright red ribbon around its neck



where it belonged. I know this cannot happen but as I crawled under the bedsheets in the blink of my eye, I'm sure that Teddy Bear smiled at me.

The next day at the funeral was extremely hard as my mind found memory after memory of fun times with Mary. Ginger and Janie stayed at my side as I stood with mom and dad to greet lots of students, teachers and everyone who loved Mary. At the end of the ceremony they even walked with me to the casket to put a new teddy bear in with her. I am not sure I could have made it through this without them. They didn't say much. They were just there.

I told them later about my favorite memory: Christmas when we both got a white unicorn to ride. Mary was 6 and I had just turned five and she said, "We're going on the best trip of our life. Get on Alice. Make sure you blow a kiss to dad," she laughed, as off we galloped. He called to us, "Where are my girls off too?"

Mary called, "You will see when we get back. Tell mom to get a fancy dinner ready. Bye."

I laughed and whispered, "Where are we going?" She motioned for me to follow her down the hallway saying, "We're going to find me a

prince to marry." I almost laughed aloud at the funeral.

But that trip with Mary was very special. We galloped around the living room where we stopped to look at the sparkling Christmas tree. Mary declared, "We're almost at the castle where I'm told all the handsome men live." I followed Mary as she got off the unicorn, fluffed up her hair like a movie star, smoothed the wrinkles from her fancy dress as she said to me, "Okay Alice, you pick out five good looking men for me to marry and I'll also choose five."

I shouted, "But I do not even like boys. Yuck!" Mary shook her finger at me, "You like Dad, don't you?" I nodded. "Choose me five dads," she ordered.

Mary turned to climb the steps and stopped as she pretended to see something. She turned saying, "Yuck. This guy is green." She told me he drew a sword and as she ran to my side he shouted, "Halt! You two cannot stay here. Leave at once."

That made Mary mad, so she ran past him up the stairs to the pretend castle, in her bedroom. She turned around with a huge smile on her face and a sweep of her arm, "Alice, look at all these

men. Choose me a handsome one please.” Mary paraded around the bedroom like a princess, while I growled and gave all those men a definite thumbs down, except a reflection I saw in the window of our dad and gave him a thumbs up.

He jumped back so I couldn’t see him again, but I heard him laughing all the way down the stairs at our silly pretend play. I turned to Mary saying, “They all have freckles.”

Mary swooned and clapped and immediately chose the man of her dreams. But he shook his head no. She got on her knees pleading but he said, “No. No and NO. I don’t want to marry you or anyone.” Mary began to cry and begged again but I grabbed her arm and pulled her toward her unicorn, “Let’s go home now.”

She climbed on her unicorn ever so slowly, looked at her Prince Charming, straightened her back like a queen and waved goodbye. We galloped through the hallway and as we passed the room where Dad was sitting, she shouted to him, “Can you believe it? My prince does not want to marry me.”

I saw Dad trying to not to laugh as he calmly said, “I am sorry Mary. That young prince doesn’t know what he is missing.”

Dad winked at me and suggested, "I think your mother has an elegant dinner ready."

Mother stepped out of the kitchen to say, "That young man must be blind. My daughters are too beautiful to turn down. I'm sorry girls, but I would like you to join our fancy dinner of pizza, Princess Mary and Princess Alice, and tell us all about him."

The royal pizza made by our favorite chef was really good even though Mary's story was extremely sad.

After the funeral we went to the cemetery which was a noticeably quiet place that we knew Mary would like. We thanked all the people who came to help us to say goodbye to Mary.

As we turned to go the limousine, members of the basketball team were standing in a line and each of them was holding a teddy bear. Coach looked at his team with pride and said, "These bears are from our team to add to making Mary's team come true." Mom and dad were so excited they could barely thank each girl, but they made sure they did.

Standing in the back were my two besties, Ginger and Janie who announced, "We've decided to accept donations at the next two

ballgames to buy more bears to make Mary's dream come true." I couldn't help jumping up and down in that quiet cemetery saying, "Yeah for Mary," and the team cheered with me. Mom and Dad were smiling from ear to ear.

After all the people left, we were exhausted and feeling very lonely. It seemed everyone had a story about how Mary had given a teddy bear to grandparents as well as kids both sick and homeless. We shook our heads in disbelief to learn how many bears she had scattered all over the community.

Back at home I ran up the steps and announced to the wall of bears, "You fifty-two bears on the wall, you did it." Did the bears reply?

Of course, not but I continued as I heard Mom and Dad tiptoe in behind me. "Mary loved every one of you bears. We love you too and we are gonna make Mary's dream come true."

Mom and Dad grabbed me in a hug saying, "Let's do this."

The next two days were filled with quietness but slowly our house began to come alive again. Our little family minus one continued to hug, I drank lots of hot chocolate toasting Mary while

mom and dad raised their cups of coffee in the air saying, "We love you, Mary."

Monday morning my parents were off from work dreading the return to listen to people stammer and stutter not knowing what or how to say they were sorry about Mary's death. Mom said many times to me, "Alice, it's okay to say something to someone grieving. But as we all have learned -there are no right words."

When I got home from school that afternoon, I heard a familiar sound that made me know 100 percent that life was returning. Dad picked up the basketball outside, rolled it around in the palms of hands and finally took a shot. It sailed right through the net as he shouted, "That's for you, Mary!" Mom saw it too and we laughed which made the day better.

That evening I saw Mom roll out on the kitchen table a large roll of red material and she began cutting it into all sizes of hearts. I did not ask, I just watch her meticulously cut each heart perfect without a pattern. By the time she finished she had filled a small box of hearts. What were her plans for them? She didn't share but I'm sure she will.

For me returning to school made me nervous but guess who was waiting for me at my locker: G and J which are my new nicknames for Ginger and Janie. I smiled and handed them each a red heart that mom had cut along with mom's message, "To my two new daughters."

They were surprised but loved it and of course Ginger jumped right there in the hallway to pretend a slam dunk. Then the two locked arms with me as we headed to class as Janie commented, "Watch out world. Mary's wish team is on the way to her dream come true." The kids we passed in the hallway either gave us a thumbs up sign or shook their heads knowing we were crazy for sure. Either way for me it was all good.

Most of the school day went well except for making up the homework for the last week that I had to do. But it shocked me how many small flashback moments I had. I could not shake them off. They flooded my body. At the end of the day, I decided to clean out her locker which made me cry, shake, and feel nauseous. I wanted to throw it all in the trash and to get away. Instead, I knew mom and dad would love the silly pictures of teddy bears she had plastered all over her locker, so I stuffed them in my book bag to take home.



The teachers were all kind and most of them told me special things about having Mary in class. I thanked them and told them I would tell these things to mom and dad. At dinner they grinned saying over and over, "That's our Mary."

After going through this ordeal, I've learned a thing or two: most of all I hope someday people will have special memories of me. And even though my days aren't the same and they never will be without Mary, I know in the next few months I have two dreams to fulfill: Mary's and my own.

Daily for many years I have seen dad pull in the driveway after work shooting 10-12 baskets before coming inside, so I was happy to see after that first week of back to work he began taking a couple of shots which he missed. It shocked him as he stared at the basketball for several minutes. Dad does not miss. Puzzled, he came inside and gave me a big hug and asked, "Where's your mom?"

I shrugged so we went looking and a few steps later I heard a sniffle. We looked at each other as we heard, "I can't do this anymore."

I motioned to him and there she sat at the piano but every time she raised her hands to the

keyboard to play, she stopped in midair. Dad and I went to stand by her, and as she tried again dad reached to the lowest note on the keyboard and played it.

In the next second her fingers were above the keys bent to protect them from him. I giggled as she frowned at him as he played the note again. Her shoulders began to shake, and tears started to flow, then she began to laugh uncontrollably. Dad was not finished bugging her yet saying, "Honey. The keys don't play by themselves. They need you, not me."

She paused laughing long enough to say, "Yes dear. They need me tickling the ivories, not you." She began to play slowly. Mom has played piano since she was four years old, played through high school and majored in piano in college. She has performed many times with area orchestras. This was part of my mom, so she had to play the piano again.

Dad left the room to get a cup of coffee, then we sat on the sofa and listened as she played and sang several old favorite songs. After a short pause I heard the first notes of the "Minuet in G" which she often used to warmup.

Dad and I did a silent cheer in the air as Mom was on her way back. Everyday Dad got better at slam dunking and Mom easily played the masters, Mozart, Beethoven and even some jazz tunes she'd been playing with a new little band.

I leaned over and asked Dad, "Would it be okay if I invite Coach S. and Ginger to a little meeting here on Saturday? I have something special I would like to talk to all of you about." Dad studied my face for more info and said slowly, "Sure. I guess that will be good. Can you tell me more?"

Dad, "I have a plan I'd like to present to help the team, so I would like to show and tell you all at the same time. Please."

He nodded slowly so I went to phone Ginger and Coach S. who both said they'd come over right after lunch.

I was so excited but nervous as I went upstairs to study my notes then sat down to put my little plan on the computer so they could see it too. Leaning back on the chair, I took a deep breath and said, "Ok Alice. Let's make this happen."

The next afternoon Ginger and Coach S. joined dad and I around the table. After greetings

were exchanged, they looked at me as Dad said, "Are we in trouble, Alice?"

I laughed with them and said, "I hope you like my idea. On your phones I've sent you a plan that I'd like to implement at the school, and I need your help. Would you look at it now?"

In the next few minutes of quiet I got really nervous wondering what in the world I thought I was doing – these people do not need me. Then I saw nodding heads and smiles, so I began, "You all know I am not and do not want to be a basketball player, but I do enjoy the game. We have a very small school and I'm proud when we win so many games especially when I look at the super nice gyms we play in and their huge fan crowds. One night I sat behind a guy from the other team, and he was filling out a paper. He never spoke he simply concentrated on the game and how each player was doing."

Father spoke up, "All teams keep stats on their players, and it looks to me like you have something in mind for our school."

"Please explain, Alice," said Coach S. as Ginger gave me a thumbs up. "Even though our school is small, and everyone is a volunteer, I think that we have some talented players, so they

need this program. It will make them eligible for scholarships and honors and more. I know it will be a challenge to keep going but, in the crowd, I know there are math geeks like me that will love to do this. We need to keep statistics for every player. Accurate stats are a must. I nominate my dad to help you get this started, Coach S. And I will help train a couple students in the next two weeks and then I will bow out. What do you think of this idea?"

Ginger was grinning from ear to ear and spoke, "I am all for this plan, Alice. I know I can't take stats and play ball, but I agree that we need the plan, and we need to train the volunteers. Thanks. The team will thank you; I am sure. And just to let you know, I know you are a math geek, but I like you anyway."

We all laughed as Coach S. spoke up, "I'm in 100 percent agreement that we need this plan. I have asked the school board to employ an assistant coach to do two things: schedule games and keep stats. You're reading my mind, and this plan looks great. And..." He looked at Dad and continued, "And your dad will be welcome and excellent at this. If I know him his head is already figuring out where the students both

boys and girls can earn honors and scholarships. And I'm also looking for a coach for the boy's team. I'd like to stay with the girls but teaching full time and coaching two teams is exhausting. I make a motion to adopt this plan Alice has presented."

Instantly everyone shouted, "I'm in. Yes, let's do it." I looked at Dad and he looked ten years younger as the stress of the past few weeks became something positive in his life again.

There were a few questions and Coach mentioned several students who might be interested in joining this team as he said, "You know, Alice, you've made me official now."

I looked at him puzzled, "I mean because we are a small team the other competitors don't give our players too much attention. Now that we will have stats on each player our team will become official. The students deserve it."

So, we agreed to start at next Tuesday's game to make sure we had the spreadsheet easy and efficient enough for someone to be accurate. As they stood and everyone hugged me, Dad said loud and clear, "This is my math geek at work. I love this plan, Alice, and I love you. From now on every slam dunk I make outside is

for Mary and You. Thanks.” He teared up as he hugged me.

As they left, I felt like a different person so said to myself, “Good work, math geek. Make sure this works for Mary and then let’s move on.” I literally patted myself on the back as I headed outside to watch Dad do 10 perfect slam dunks. I was so proud of him.

** **

After the talk with Dad and the coach, Monday morning at school the atmosphere seemed alive as everyone nodded, smiled, and gave me the thumbs up. But one of the girls in my first class said something that puzzled me, “I hear you told your dad and the coach how to do things.”

Looking at her puzzled I said, “Wait. What did you say? I did not tell my dad or the coach anything.”

She laughed saying, “That’s not what I heard.”

I sure was baffled by her comments and as I went to my next classes I heard more comments such as, “Way to go Alice. I wish I could have heard you tell the coach how to do things.”

I was getting upset and after one girl said, "Hey Alice. Don't pick on your dad too much. He's a nice guy." I ran down the corridor toward the gym hoping to find out what was going on.

I interrupted the coach's class as he swirled around saying, "Well hello Alice. Can I help you?" And as fast as I could talk with all the kids staring at me, I told him the comments I'd heard about he and dad.

He motioned for the students to take five and said, "Those comments are absolutely not true, and you know it. Someone has gotten it mixed up. You had some fantastic ideas for the stats, and I've told everyone how talented and smart you are. Don't worry. And your dad is a great guy, and I'd guess he would not let you boss him around. We will see you in a couple of nights to get this started. Okay?"

I shook my head and walked away really baffled. The bell rang as I left the gym headed for math class when I heard someone yell, "Watch out guys. There's the boss lady – I mean bossy girl." I walked on but scowled at that strange boy. Just then Ginger ran up beside me. "I heard that. What's he talking about?"

I stopped and whirled around to face her knowing she was the one responsible for all these false statements.

I blurted that out as she backed up shouting, "Absolutely not true. Why would you think that? I was sitting beside you and your dad and the coach around the table and heard everyone word of your plan. We are so excited. I told the team, and they were really happy. You know keeping these stats could help put our team in contention for scholarships and special honors. We wouldn't do anything to mess that up, Alice. I'm sorry you'd think I had hurt you. I thought we were best friends."

She turned to walk away as I called to her, "Stop. I didn't mean you did it, but someone told the story that I'm controlling my dad and the coach. And you know that is impossible and not correct."

Ginger stood there with an expression of wonder on her face and then we heard Janie call out, "Hey, you two. I bet I know who you're looking for."

"What? Have you been listening?"

"Yes, it was impossible not to hear since you were yelling at Ginger."

I felt furious but also felt like a fool.

Mumbling I said to them both, "I am so sorry. Someone started an untrue story about ..."

"You." Janie finished, "and I just told that young lady she needs to apologize because the story was totally wrong. I don't think she'll apologize but I don't think she will mention your name in a bad way again. She'll deal with me if she does."

As I looked from Janie to Ginger, I felt so bad but then at once I felt like the luckiest girl in the school. I had two real friends. I hugged them both and apologized to Ginger again, as I heard my teacher say, "Coming to class today Alice or are you going to stand out here and solve the world's problems?"

I laughed saying, "Coming, sir." Ginger and Janie walked away laughing too.

In math class the interesting day continued. Math is my favorite class, but what made me mad is that now I occasionally get a wrong answer. That morning my teacher handed me

a test paper with a B grade on it. I was shocked as he leaned down to say, "On this test you forgot a step to the right answer." I looked up thinking, *He's crazy. I know what I am doing.* However, as I looked over the paper, I saw he was correct: five problems missed; I omitted a step in each.

How is this possible, I asked myself? I know how to solve these problems, and I confirmed to myself, *Alice, math is your thing. You'll be fine.*

After school, I immediately took out my math paper and reworked them and found the step I had omitted. Then, I remembered in class that Mary memories came to me while I took that test. Every day I have those moments but as I chuckled, I declared, "From now on Mary, you will not visit me in math class."

Sure enough, the next day I had no special moments in math with Mary and my grades rebounded to A's.

On game day the coach wanted to see me. This was the big night when we three statisticians began our work. Dad and I were both excited to see if the spreadsheets I created made the job easy and exact. Between classes I stopped by to

talk to him and he looked very businesslike, so I wondered if he had changed his mind about the statistics things.

He quickly blurted out, "Alice, the team needs you to help. Why did you and your dad back out on this? We are so disappointed."

Shocked, I raised my hand to stop him, "Sir. We aren't backing out. Where did you get that idea? In fact, Dad and I are excited to see if the spreadsheet works and makes it easier. We'll be here."

It was fun to watch this man stand up to his 6 ft. 3 inches height, square his shoulders and jump in the air. "Yes. Yes. I didn't think you would back out."

He rubbed his chin and slowly he said, "I know who started this rumor. I'll see you and your dad tonight at 6. Excuse me but I need to get this situation stopped right now."

Coach patted me on the head and as he turned the corner, I saw him talking to a former competitor of Mary's. "Ah," I whispered to myself. "Still trying to get back at my sister. That's pretty low, I'd say."

Dad was really excited about the game, so as he played ball at home, I counted 25 perfect slam dunks. He jabbered all the way to the game asking me over and over if I had plenty of copies of the spreadsheets.

“Yes, Dad. I have plenty. As a matter of fact, I have enough copies for the rest of the season. Remember we can add or subtract anything from the sheets so pay attention.”

We three did an excellent job getting the stats for each player on the floor. At moments when the score was tight, making sure each player’s shots and actions was really important. We did it. At half time we took a break and then back at it. The last minute of the game was tied, so we really had to concentrate to make sure our team’s every move was accounted for. Dad and I were both happy to see that everyone on the floor was recorded in the following moves: field goals, rebounds, free throws, assists, blocks, steals, 3-point percentage, turnovers, points per player, minutes played by each member of team, and how many games they started.

On the way home Dad talked about the successful evening and as we pulled in the drive, he shut off the engine and said, "You are awfully quiet. What's wrong?"

I sat for a spell trying to figure what was wrong with this successful evening. Finally, I said, "Dad, I love math and am very good at it, but I have other plans I want to do." I was scared to go on but finally I stammered, "I need to remind you that I am not Mary. I only want to be a fan of basketball, not a player like you and Mary."

The quiet in the car was deafening and made me nervous. I did not want to hurt Dad, but I had to make sure he saw me.

"Yes." he whispered. As he opened the car door, he looked me in the eye saying, "I do know you are Alice."

The next day at school Ginger had seen the new sheets and commented, "I like them. It was great to see how much each player did to help win that game. I saw several things I need to work on. Thanks."

Janie approached saying, "Congratulations, new stat lady."

I shook my head, "Nope. Not me. I'm just helping for two more games. I'm a fan but this is not my new life."

Ginger and Janie stopped walking and turned to me. "Really?" commented Ginger. "What's up your sleeve, friend? I cannot wait to hear what you have in mind." The girls grinned at me as I mumbled "You'll see, and I hope you help me." With Ginger on one side and Janie on the other, they linked arms with me as Janie belted out, "Here come the three musketeers!" We laughed as everyone heading into the lunchroom looked at us like we were crazy.

That night I talked to my dad as I sat on the back porch steps, and he bounced the ball as I began, "Dad, I am so glad to help the basketball team and am happy that it's going to work. Since you love basketball so much, I hope you will continue to help them, but without me. I hope you will use the statistics to guide both boys and girls' teams and find them new opportunities." He stopped bouncing the ball and looked at me, nodding his head.

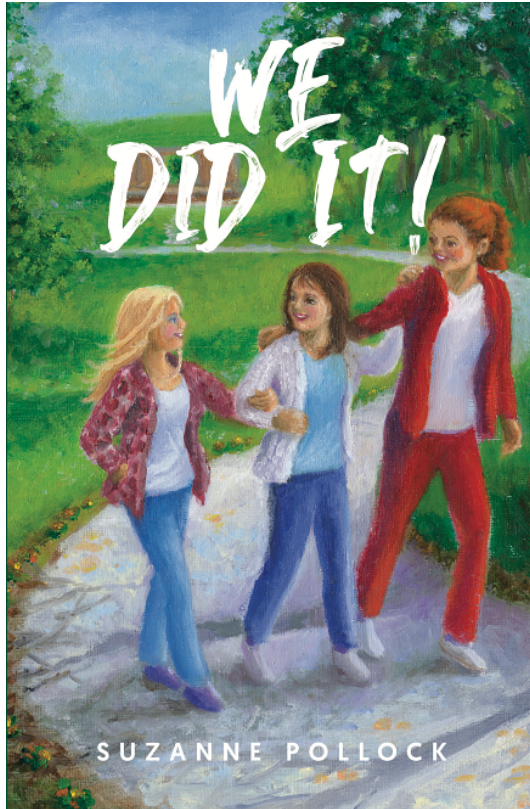
"But..." I continued, "I am working on something else that will honor Mary." I did not know mom was behind us listening until she interjected, "That sounds like our great daughter Alice. Can I join you?"

She sat down as I continued, "This project will take your help. I don't have every part of the plan worked out, but as soon as possible I want to put Mary's dream in action along with my dream. Please don't be mad about the basketball stuff Dad."

Mother asked quietly, "Does this dream include singing with me again?" I nodded and she and Dad hugged me big time as I said, "This dream is for Mary."

For me, this day was a major step forward into a good future. I got up and as I ran up the stairs to my bedroom, I felt like me again and ready to make my wish come true.

** **



A very bad day looms in WE DID IT! Yet, in this story people and lives are changed by a toy. People everywhere love it and these students begin a campaign to change themselves community. You will love the positive example they show us.

We Did It!

By Suzanne Pollock

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://booklocker.com/books/14150.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**