



Story



Ma Rufina's Secret...

"Salud y Alegría, Belleza Crean"

(Health and Happiness Create Beauty)

You could always tell when Ma Rufina was home because she had the radio on full blast. The rancheras, cumbias, and boleros serenaded the whole neighborhood through her turquoise screen door. Even in winter, Ma Rufina opened the door for a few minutes every afternoon, to air out the house.

Ma Rufina was a good neighbor. She was always there to lend a helping hand during good times and bad. If a baby was born, she would be the first one to come over to bring a little manzanilla tea, in case he had colic. If someone in the neighborhood passed away, she was always there to bring a pot of pozole or a stack of fresh tortillas.

When her husband, Juan, died, the neighbors worried about her because she was all alone. But after a few months she started going for her walks around the neighborhood, working in her garden, and being a good neighbor, just like before.

Lucinda was one of her friends and neighbors. She really admired Ma Rufina. Lucinda was 45 years old, divorced, and with 3 teenage children. She was always tired and run-down, but Ma Rufina always managed to cheer her up. Ma Rufina had been telling her to go to the doctor, but Lucinda never found the time.

One day, Lucinda finally decided to go to the doctor. She found out she had diabetes. Lucinda was very upset when she knocked on Ma Rufina's door. The music was so loud she had to bang on it for Ma Rufina to hear.

Ma Rufina's Secret, cont'd...

When Lucinda told her the bad news, Ma Rufina looked at Lucinda with her bright eyes and said, "Don't worry so much mi'ja. You'll be OK. I've had diabetes for 15 years!"

Lucinda was shocked and said, "I'm sorry, I didn't know you were sick."

Ma Rufina said, "I'm not sick, mi'ja. I have diabetes. I'm one of the lucky ones! I know how to take care of myself. I'll let you in on a secret: Salud y alegría, belleza crean."

Lucinda didn't understand Spanish too well and asked Ma Rufina to explain it to her. "It's simple, my dear: Health and happiness create beauty! People with diabetes can be healthy and happy. A happy person feels good about herself and in turn, takes good care of herself. It's like a circle."

Ma Rufina's attitude brought tears to Lucinda's eyes. All this time, Ma Rufina had diabetes and Lucinda didn't even know it. Ma Rufina was always helping others. She had a beautiful way of living and this helped her stay healthy and wise.

"It never fails," Lucinda said. "You always lift my spirits!" She gave Ma Rufina a big hug. As Lucinda walked down the street to her house she felt warm inside. It wasn't going to be easy to learn to take care of herself, but she knew that she had Ma Rufina's support. If Ma Rufina could be healthy and happy, she could, too!