

BECAUSE...

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After nine years of marriage, Mary knew that the holidays were not a good time to ask her husband for a favor. Money to buy a gift was the only favor she wanted.

Holidays always seemed to make Ezra angry. It didn't matter if it was Christmas, Easter, or anything else; he always seemed to think the act of spending money to celebrate that holiday was a total inconvenience along with a huge waste of money.

She had thought his actions might have changed during those nine years but she discovered she was so very wrong.

“What’s wrong with celebrating Mother’s Day or Father’s Day?” Mary demanded.

Ezra’s snarky answer was, “You’re not my mother and I’m not your father.”

Mary walked away without a remark. What was the use?

Easter was out of the question but the subject of spending money on candy for trick or treaters was the next hurdle to cross.

Unfortunately, every time Mary went to the grocery store; Ezra was with her. That wasn't always a good thing. As a matter of fact, it was never a good thing. He controlled every food choice she made. If he didn't think she should buy the item, he placed it back on the shelf. That happened quite often. If she had managed to have hidden something in the cart until check out, he would make an embarrassing scene about not wanting the item. Those were the moments that Mary wanted to crawl under the checkout counter.

She knew she couldn't buy the candy when Ezra was with her but shopping without Ezra was impossible.

She only had a couple more days to figure out how to get the candy. She didn't work and she didn't drive so she had more obstacles than most of the wives in the little town where they lived.

Ezra never allowed her to have any friends because he preferred to be a recluse, a private person, without any interference from outsiders. Even though she had been a friendly, outgoing person when she met Ezra and married him, that attitude changed with the 'I do's.'

Ezra did not allow Mary to work. His mother never worked outside of the house, so he expected Mary to do the same,

Without Ezra knowing it, she and her neighbor, Ruth, had become friends by talking to each other over the back yard fence when Ezra was at work.

Mary had no money other than the found change she collected in a jar hidden behind the cleaning items in the laundry area. She knew Ezra would never look for anything in there.

She snatched up the jar when she saw Ruth in the back yard and handed it to her.

"Would you pick me up some candy for the trick or treaters?" asked Mary.

"Keep your change, Mary. I'll buy you a couple of bags of candy."

"No, no, please, take the change. If Ezra found out you gave me the candy, he would consider it charity, and I would have to give it back. If you take the change, I can tell him I bought it. He will get mad but I won't have to give it back."

"Why do you put up with that kind of treatment?" asked Ruth.

“Because...”

Ruth took the change and said she would get some kind of candy for her as she walked away from the fence.

Mary couldn't answer the question about putting up with Ezra without wanting to ask Ruth why she put up with her husband. He was a wife beater and Mary had seen the bruises on Ruth many times.

Trick or Treat Day arrived and Mary had a bowl of candy to hand out to the kids. Ezra didn't like it, but he let her do it. When the last piece of candy was gone, after the front door was closed and locked, he started his diatribe about charity. He always felt that Halloween was charity and he didn't like it one little bit.

“I bought the candy, Ezra, and I can give it to whomever I want,” she said timidly. She wasn't sure what type of punishment this little bit of rebellion would get her.

He stormed off announcing that he was going to bed.

Mary sighed with relief.

Thanksgiving was coming but that wouldn't be a problem. He always allowed her to buy a little extra so he could eat what he wanted. Turkey, mashed potatoes, and stuffing were always on the menu.

Christmas, on the other hand, was hard to handle. Ezra wanted no gift giving. Ezra wanted no special meal. Ezra wanted no church activities. It was always Ezra, Ezra, Ezra.

Mary had very little money saved up after giving what she had to Ruth to buy candy at Halloween. It wasn't that she wanted money to buy Ezra a Christmas present, but she would like

to have had enough money to buy Ruth a gift. Ruth had always been so kind to Mary when no one else was. Of course, no one knew Mary and she didn't know them. It wasn't allowed.

Christmas came and went. Mary received no gift nor did she give one. She continued to live her solitary existence with Ezra until he died. When his passing came about she shed a few obligatory tears; but, truthfully, she was relieved.

She learned to take a bus to do her grocery shopping and to open her front door wide for visitors.

Mary had finally begun to live.