

Conspiracy Of Kindness

Here's one underground movement you'll want to join:

A woman in a red car pulls up at a tollbooth at California's San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. *"I'm paying for myself and the six cars behind me,"* she says with a smile. One after another, the next six drivers arrive at the booth, money in hand. *"Some lady up ahead has already paid your fare,"* says the collector. *"Have a nice day."*

The woman, it turned out, had read a note stuck on a friend's refrigerator: ***'Practise random kindness and senseless acts of beauty.'*** The words leaped out at her, and she wrote them down.

Judy Foreman spotted the same phrase on a warehouse wall 75 miles from her home in San Francisco. When she couldn't get it out of her mind, she finally drove all the way back to copy it exactly. *"I thought it was incredibly beautiful,"* she said, explaining why she writes it at the bottom of all her letters. *"It's like a message from above."*

Her husband, Frank, a teacher, enjoyed the saying so much he posted it on the wall for his class. *"A local columnist, I put it in the paper, admitting I liked it but didn't know its source or real meaning. If you think there should be more of something, do it – randomly. **Kindness can build on itself as much as violence can.**"*

Now the message is spreading, on car stickers, walls and business cards. And as it spreads, so does a vision of guerrilla goodness.

A passer-by may slip a coin into a stranger's parking meter just in time. A group of people with buckets and mops may descend on a run-down house and clean it from top to bottom while the elderly owners look on, amazed. A teenager sweeping the drive may be hit by the impulse to sweep the neighbour's drive too.

Senseless acts of beauty spread. A man plants daffodils along the roadside. A concerned citizen roams the streets collecting litter. A student scrubs graffiti from a park bench. It's a positive anarchy, a gentle disorder, a sweet disturbance.

They say you can't smile without cheering yourself up. Likewise, you can't commit a random act of kindness or beauty without feeling as if your own troubles have been lightened – because the world *has* become a slightly better place.

And you can't be a recipient without feeling a pleasant jolt. If you were one of those commuters whose toll was paid, who knows what you might have been inspired to do for someone else. Like all revolutions, guerrilla goodness begins slowly, with a single act. Let it be yours.