**“Reckless words pierce like sword thrusts,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”
Proverbs 12:18 -- A Proverbial Story
By Ted Hildebrandt**

At Ridgeview High School, reckless words and cruel comments moved fast — faster than text messages, faster than rumors carried on whispers between lockers. And no one knew that better than Mia Carter.

Mia was invisible most days, content to sketch in her notebook, which she hung on her locker door while the world around her churned in tides of popularity and drama. But everything shifted when a cruel meme about her spread like wildfire.

Karen, the popular, loud, queen bee wannabe, had a sharp tongue that she used like a sword, especially on those who didn’t fit her liking or bow to her whims. Karen had taken a candid photo of Mia asleep in the library, plastered it online, and captioned it: *“Too weird to have a life.”*

By lunchtime, snickers followed Mia down every hallway. She could feel herself shrinking, one silent step at a time. The mocking laughter that followed was like being stabbed in the gut.

Mia didn’t cry, but kept a fake smile on her face as her insides felt like they were cut apart.

Jordan wasn’t the most handsome or the most popular, but he had a quiet kind of weight about him — the guy who people listened to, because he always seemed to say the right thing. when it mattered.

He watched Mia drop her tray and hurry out of the cafeteria with her head down and eyes avoiding every onlooker. She found a darkened, solitary place and collapsed and wept quietly by herself.

On Ridgeview’s crowded electric message board, Jordan wrote:
*"Mia sees the world in a way most people miss. Don’t let them steal that from you, Mia!”* No hashtags. No photos. Just plain old wise words.

The next morning, everything changed. When Mia stepped into homeroom, her stomach twisted, expecting another avalanche of disapproving looks and cruel gossip. Instead, a girl she barely knew from science class leaned over and whispered, “Hey, sorry for all the verbal abuse, your art is amazing. I’d love to see more sometime.” The snide remarks faded, as apologies, compliments, and even invitations trickled in. Mia glanced across the room, unsure, but Jordan met her eyes from the other side with a small, supportive nod.

In the days that followed, people didn’t just stop mocking Mia — they sought her out. Not everyone, but enough. She started to fill in the empty spaces again, smile by smile.

Later, when Mia found Jordan sitting under the oak tree behind the gym, she asked him, “Why’d you do it?”

Jordan just shrugged, “Because words can hurt. But they can also heal. My grandma often reminded me of the old proverb: ‘Reckless words pierce like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.’ I just thought we could use a little healing around here.”

Mia nodded and gave an approving smile. “Thanks, I really needed that.”