



Eyes that see the good in things

ALLISON LINDGREN

Second Chance.

What do you think of when you hear those words? I bet you don't think of the same thing I do.

I think of a secondhand store in Fargo my sister managed where I spent a lot of time as a college freshman. It was a store run like many other thrift stores now, items are donated and the proceeds help fund a philanthropic organization. I went frequently to see what new things had come in.

Mostly though, I went there to spend time with my sister. Being the wise business person that she was, she put me to work. We spent hours talking as we stood in the back room, sorting, folding, ironing, hanging and pricing clothing. Sometimes there were volunteers there, sometime I was the only unwitting volunteer working that day.

I'd gotten engaged that year and would be moving back home at the end of the quarter. I was excited to be starting this new chapter of my life. Underneath though, was a sense of failure at not finishing college.

Like many brides though, I totally immersed myself in wedding plans. Although the term "Bridezilla" hadn't been coined yet, I know there's more than once that she would have called me that! I spent hours poring through *Bride* magazine and dog-eared the pages of the dresses that I liked. I found a picture of the one I wanted but I could never find the dress. My sister listened and finally handed me a pencil and a piece of paper. I'm not an artist but my pencil sketch was enough to give her an idea.

One day, she called and told me to come down there. That's all. No explanation. The first thing I saw as I walked through the door was my dress! My sister and a volunteer had dressed the mannequin, pulled the train around to the front and placed silk flowers all

around the edge of the train.

It was exactly what I wanted and it had just been brought in. I walked out of the store that day, having purchased my dream dress for \$35. I actually haven't told that story much but since it's been over 30 years, I think I can come clean.

I eventually got a second chance to finish my degree but a recent story about a high school senior who didn't have enough credits to graduate with his class brought it to mind again. He was embarrassed and more than a little angry with himself. A sense of failure led to some self-deprecating comments at first but after getting his coursework set up, he buckled down and finished in a little over a month. He could have just given up and decided he'd continue working at his job at the automotive store but he didn't. He persevered and made use of his second chance. He received a scholarship and is registered to start college in the fall.

Second chance. A Google search told me that my little store is no longer in business but many other organizations have also chosen that name. Many organizations who work to find homes for pets are called Second Chance.

There is a non-profit organization that provides people, materials and the environment with a second chance. They deconstruct buildings and homes, salvage usable materials and make those available to the public through a huge retail space. With the revenue, they provide job training and workforce development for those with employment obstacles in the Baltimore area.

There's a Second Chance organization in San Diego whose motto is "Disrupting the cycles of incarceration and poverty by helping people find their way to self-sufficiency." They provide employment services, job

training, temporary housing and clothing to recently released prisoners.

Another helps abused women with professional clothing for interviews, employment services and job training so they can enter the workforce and provide for their families. Another organization helps the homeless get jobs and get back to work. Still another gives people with addiction problems a second chance and a grace-based organization provides help to people with mental illnesses.

A small craft beer company chose the name Second Chance because it represented a life change for them and they included these words on their website, "Second Chance is our ultimate expression of opportunity—we may not all get one, but if you do, seize it!"

The point is that we probably all have been granted second chances and we've all probably given them. If we're honest, we've all failed at one time or another. Sometimes, though, that failure is an opportunity in disguise because it leads to success in another area, another field or just another place. Some of the world's most famous "failures" include names we all know.

Names like Michael Jordan, who was devastated when he was cut from his high school varsity basketball team in his sophomore year but was inspired by it to work even harder. This is what he said about failure, "I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Names like Walt Disney, who no one wanted to hire as an artist. They told him he didn't have creative vision. When he couldn't get hired anywhere else, his brother got him a temporary

job. Disney's first animation studio went bankrupt but he went on to co-found The Walt Disney Company, which now makes over \$40 billion a year.

Names like Charles Schulz, whose drawings were rejected by his high school yearbook but he went on to create *Peanuts* (featuring Snoopy and Charlie Brown), a product generating over a billion dollars a year in revenue. There's now a statue of Snoopy standing in that high school.

Names like Oprah Winfrey, who was fired from her job co-anchoring the news in Baltimore. She wasn't the "right fit" there. Oprah said that she was also once told by a news director that she couldn't get involved with other people's stories. However, Oprah's success came as a direct result of getting involved in other people's stories.

Names like J.K. Rowling who, when she wrote her first *Harry Potter* book, was divorced, bankrupt and on welfare. More than a dozen publishers rejected her manuscript before one finally agreed to publish her book. It was that publisher that told her she should get a job because there was no money to be made in children's books. That's probably true in most cases, but it wasn't for her. She's now a billionaire. When she spoke at Harvard's graduation, she spoke about failure, "You might never fail on the scale I did," Rowling told the new graduates. "But it is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all—in which case, you fail by default."

These stories encourage us to remember that failure is a part of life. We all fail at times. Second chances help us to know that failures don't kill us; it's the second chances that give us the courage to continue. And that's what counts.