

The Gifts He Brings

‘Who was that at the door, babe?’ Marcus asks when I re-enter the kitchen.

‘Oh, just Sammy from next door.’

Marcus looks up from his morning paper and smiles. ‘What did he bring you this time?’

I reach into my apron pocket and take out the folded pink-and-white striped paper bag.

‘What is that? A Pick-n-Mix bag?’

‘I think so.’

‘That’ll come in handy, should you need a sick bag today,’ Marcus chuckles.

‘You tease me, but I bet I’ll find a use for this bag sometime today. Just you wait.’

‘Still convinced that Sammy’s clairvoyant, are you?’

I pull out a stool from beneath the counter and sit across from my cynic of a husband. ‘Well, how else would you explain why every time he brings me a gift, I find a use for it that very same day? Like the time he brought me a plaster and I ended up with a nasty paper-cut. And do you remember when he gave me that safety pin? Thank goodness I had it with me when I popped a button on my blouse. My bra would’ve been on show for everyone at Tesco if it wasn’t for that pin.’

‘Has it never occurred to you that those could be coincidences? I mean, don’t you usually carry around plasters with you anyway? If he hadn’t given you one, surely you would’ve used one of your own?’

‘Well, yes. I guess. But that’s not the point. I’m telling you, Marcus, I know the boy doesn’t speak, but there’s something extraordinary about him. There’s wisdom in his eyes. Like he’s an old soul or something.’

Marcus gulps down the remainder of his tea and sets down his mug. ‘I’ll tell you what, Claire. When that child prodigy brings you the winning lottery numbers so I can take an early retirement, I’ll believe he’s a psychic.’

He stands up and kisses me on the cheek. ‘That’s me. See you tonight. Love you.’

‘Love you, too,’ I say, and see him out the front door.

Sorry to say, I didn’t stumble on a need for Sammy’s gift all day. By the time Marcus returned from work, I had to admit to myself that he’d been right all along about the whole coincidence thing. Perhaps I’d been reading too much into it. Looking for a little magic, I suppose.

‘Turn on BBC One, will you?’ Marcus asks as we settle down in front of the telly for the evening. ‘It’s time for the lottery draw.’

He takes a ticket out of his wallet and focuses his eyes on the screen. As each number is drawn, Marcus’s breathing grows more and more rapid.

‘Babe ... Claire ...,’ he says between gasps of air. ‘We’ve won. We’ve won the jackpot, babe!’
And that’s when he starts hyperventilating, as if he’s sprinted a marathon.

I calmly retrieve the paper bag out of my apron pocket and hand it to my husband. ‘Here. Breathe into this. Take long, deep breaths.’