

Care For An Apple?

By Joanne Sher

I never should have gotten out of bed this morning.

As soon as my eyelids opened at 6 a.m. I should have reached behind my head for the medicine bottle, grabbed a few sleeping pills, swigged them down with the warm can of Dr. Pepper that had been sitting on the headboard for days, and closed my eyes again. The minute my droopy eyes registered the presence of a three-foot tall woman with a long flowery dress, a pink floppy hat, and an orange cauldron, I should have rolled over and just gone back to sleep.

Unfortunately, I didn't. Instead, I asked her what she was doing in my bedroom.

"Looking for you." Her voice reminded me of door hinges that needed oiling, or an old rocking chair. "Got a message for ya."

Well, that got me curious. I sat up on the side of the bed.

"What kind of message?"

"I dunno," she squeaked. "I think the kind that tells you something."

This was when I should have lifted her by her pudgy little arms and drop-kicked her out the bedroom window. But, being the model citizen I am, I simply rephrased the question.

"Who is the message from?"

The woman put down her cauldron and sat on it. It appeared to be somewhat bigger than she had thought, for her rear sank a good six inches into it. She almost looked like a turtle that had gotten stuck upside down. Oddly enough, she didn't look the least bit uncomfortable.

"It's from your horse."

I pondered this for a moment. Only a moment, I tell you, because I was already getting a headache. "My horse has a message for me?"

My visitor nodded. "Wanna hear it?"

I nodded. I figured if my horse (who was in a stable a good hour away, by the way) took the trouble to get a "little person" to come to my house at 6:00 on a Saturday morning to tell me something, I might as well hear what it was.

"Well, let's go see him. And bring some apples along." She stood up awkwardly, pried the cauldron off her bottom with a *pop*, and handed the pot to me.

This lady seemed to be in a hurry, so I put the cauldron down on my bed, dressed quickly, and ran a brush through my hair. I headed for the kitchen, where I rinsed out the cauldron (I knew ONE place where it had been) and put half a dozen apples in it.

When I returned to the bedroom, the woman was gone. I looked all over the bedroom, the kitchen, the bathroom - every room in the house, and she was nowhere to be found. I even looked under the bed, and in the refrigerator. This strange woman seemed to have disappeared as mysteriously as she had arrived.

I began wondering if this whole thing had actually been real. Maybe I was losing my mind, or I had too much takeout Chinese last night and was having one of those dreams. Yet, I still had this orange cauldron in my hand. I pinched myself, but I didn't wake up.

I figured maybe I should head out to the stable. No matter what was going on, it certainly couldn't hurt to check on the horse, right? So, I grabbed my purse and keys (and the cauldron of apples, of course) and headed for the car.

As I sat and tried to put my purse and apples on the passenger seat, I solved the mystery.

"Took you long enough." There she sat, seat belt already buckled, tapping her fingers on the dash - which she could barely reach because of her short stature. "Let's get going."

We drove in silence, my eyes on the road. I don't think I even looked in her direction but once or twice, until about halfway there when I heard what sounded like several things dropping. Glancing her way, I saw a pile of apples on the seat. The woman, along with her cauldron, was gone.

So you see, officer, that's why I ran the red light and crashed into your cruiser. Wouldn't you have been distracted too? I'm really sorry, sir. It's just been one of those bad days. And now a ticket too, right? I really should have stayed in bed this morning.

Care for an apple, sir?

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