

The Magic Bag

By Sasha Gabriel

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So odd. Now where did I put it? Only three small words on paper. Chuckling softly, he patted the pockets of his Prada suit only feeling spare bills and change.

Today was the day. He knew it. He felt it. Just like before, it woke him out of a deep, dreamless sleep. He patted his stomach to quiet its swooping sensation, as though he were in an express elevator that had forgotten to invite his stomach along for the ride.

Picking up his \$800 Raffaello briefcase downstairs, he heard his name.

“Sally... how are you this beautiful morning?” his \$6,000 perfect white teeth smiled at her.

“Oh, sir, don’t you look smart! Going to work on a Saturday? You don’t never rest, do you?”

“You didn’t think I’d forget... did you, Sally?”

“Well, sir, with everything you do... for everyone... I wasn’t expecting you’d remember. But,” looking at him adoringly, “you did!”

He handed her something. “Sally, go and buy something for yourself. And take the whole weekend off! For a couple days we’ll be fine...” then, leaning into her so she smelled his Ralph Lauren cologne, he kissed her lightly on the cheek.

“Oh, sir! \$100! I swear, you spoil me something fierce!”

“22 years ago today, I hired you – best decision I ever made!” He pretended to look at his Chanel H1693J12 watch, a steal at only \$30,000. “I have to go, Sally... I’ll be late... and I never want to be late for my Saturday patients!”

He got into his silver Aston Martin Super Sport car, waving to Sally who was waving back.

His stomach swooped again and he stopped suddenly. He opened the glove box but it was not there.

Chuckling, he realized it must be on his desk. Only three small words but they were important.

He unlocked the burl wood door to his office. He looked everywhere but it was gone. Odd.

She knocked on the door and timidly walked in. He welcomed her warmly. Lovingly.

“I have a surprise for you, Claire.”

She looked into his Adonis-like features and blushed. He liked that.

“Today, we’re going to a special place where, I promise, you’ll be happy and never scared again!”

“Not here?” she said looking around.

“No. Not today.” He drove through the countryside and parked near a picture-postcard lake surrounded by large pines.

She looked at him with gratitude and he smiled at her, nodding his understanding. There was not much beauty in Claire’s life. But, he was going to change that. He loved her.

He showed her his favorite bench and bid her sit. She always obeyed. He went back to the car, opened the trunk and removed his bag.

“What’s that?” Claire’s voice barely a whisper.

“It’s my magic bag, Claire, so you’ll not be sad again.” His eyes gentle and caring. “Close your eyes and tell me about the most wonderful thing in your life,” already knowing the answer.

“You,” she said simply. He smiled, nodding.

Standing behind her, he opened the bag and smiled broadly. There, on top, was the paper. Chuckling at his silliness, he picked it up and put it into his pocket.

He looked at the 21 names pinned carefully to the velvet lining of the lid. And now, Claire would be 22.

He picked up the needle and the small bottle of *Clostridium botulinum*. Just the tiniest amount will do.

“I love you, Claire.”

“I love you, too.”

Driving home, he looked at the paper and smiled at the three small words he wrote with such care: TIME TO KILL.

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