

Mrs. Polliver Loves to Shop

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Simon Brindle truly loved to ‘people watch.’ Actually, his favorite haunts were always busy with the hustle and bustle of people from all walks of life traveling to and fro – airports, train stations, shopping malls, and town squares. He would often log his ‘human nature’ observations in his journal, such as:

“The skinny fellow with bushy eyebrows and bruised elbows always arrives at the train depot around 8 am each morning. He appears to be in his late 40’s with a receding hairline and perennial coffee stains on his trousers. He always passes by with a pronounced limp. His supporting cane is quite travel-worn, with deep scratches and gravel pitting near the tip, perhaps suggesting a long-standing affliction of severe arthritis or possibly polio as a child.”

Simon was fond of watching strangers saying ‘farewell’ at the airport, bus, or train terminals. He had been known to shed a tear for people he didn’t even know. His make-believe stories about all of these strangers always involved lofty justifications for imminent departure, such as a spouse heading off to war or checking into a mental ward.

At the age of 52, Simon finally had mustered enough courage to nail up a detective shingle in front of his Brooklyn row house. He wasn’t overly concerned about how much detective business he would attract since he was already a successful realtor in the immediate area. Simon was confident in his powers of deductive reasoning, and he knew he would be a terrific modern-day Sherlock Holmes someday. Perhaps, he would even have Lucy Liu as his Dr. Watson just like the recent TV series!

Simon prided himself on staying in great shape. He was an avid mountain climber and weekend hiking enthusiast. He loved yoga in the park, and he just signed up for ballroom dancing classes at the YMCA. With hair that was more salt than pepper, one would think he would be worried that he had not yet found a perfect mate. He wanted a life partner, but he was picky – his parents' marriage ended badly.

A few weeks after the grand opening of his 'Clever Cleric Detective Agency', Simon opened his front door to a Ms. Inez Hendelva – his very first walk-in client. Simon seated the attractive Inez in his parlor while he prepared a plate of almond cookies.

"Inez, how may I help you?" Simon asked once he had returned from the kitchen. "It's my aunt, Joan Polliver, Detective Brindle," Inez responded while rolling up her pink-checkered blouse sleeves and pushing back her curly, auburn bangs. "I suspect she is shoplifting."

"What would make you think that?"

"Well, she has shoplifted some knick-knacks in the past, and she is always coming home from shopping with more purchases than I am sure she can afford." Inez described how her aunt went shopping almost every day and came home with numerous bags of merchandise in all shapes and sizes.

Simon took copious notes as Inez described a typical day's schedule for her aunt, which involved an early departure from the two women's apartment and the subsequent transfer to many different busses.

The subsequent day, Simon followed Joan Polliver as she transferred from bus-to-bus on her way to the mall outside the city and chatted with other travelers -- all of whom appeared to be regular bus companions and great chums of Joan.

Once inside the mall, Joan would quickly glide from store-to-store, checking out a sweater here and inspecting a purse there. She seemed to know everyone, and all of the store clerks clearly adored her. Simon couldn't help but notice the bulkiness of Joan's saggy overcoat, which appeared to be designed to obscure multiple shopping bags.

At the end of the week, Joan walked right up to Simon in the mall food court, which suggested to Simon that he really needed to better hone his skills of spying unobtrusively. "Hello, Mr. Brindle, I'm Joan Polliver, Inez' aunt. I'm certain that she's put you onto me. Would you care to join me for lunch today? I'll buy."

Simon and Joan sat at a secluded table in the mall's one and only sit-down restaurant, "The Sizzling Sombrero". Once they were seated and ordered drinks, Joan asked "Well, have you figured it all out yet?" Simon noticed that Joan was quite attractive and quite slender without the baggy overcoat. "Yes, I have. And, I must say that I'm quite impressed with your own detective skills."

She beamed a bright smile at Simon, "What gave me away?"

“Well, I had pretty much put two and two together when my suspicions were ultimately confirmed by Mr. Tipton in his chat with you at the Cheerful Candle Shoppe this morning.”

“And, I am certain that my loving, albeit overly protective, niece, put you up to this, correct?”

“She loves you very much. You are very lucky to have her as your niece.”

“I’ve been a store detective for five years now. I walk around in all of the stores, sniffing out shoplifters and catching them in the act. I’ve singlehandedly been responsible for the safe return of over \$400,000 in store merchandise.”

“Wow! That’s amazing!” Simon paused, “So, I take it that they also know you are pilfering from them as well? Mind if I take a look in the royal blue bag tucked into your pants on your right side?”

“No need. Guilty as charged. That is quite observant, Simon.” Joan grinned.

As Joan paid the waitress, Simon whispered, “I intend to marry your niece. Clean up your act for our sake, okay?” Joan never shoplifted again. Inez started dropping by to see Simon now and then. Simon invited her to go hiking with him on Saturdays.

When Inez moved in with Simon, they went to the dog pound together and picked out a little Schnoodle with a patch of white on his furry chest.

They named the six-month old puppy 'Bruiser' and walked him every day. Joan hosted the couple every week for Sunday dinner. Chicken and dumplings was Simon and Bruiser's favorite meal!

Kevin Buck is incarcerated in Idaho State Prison and will be up for parole in 18 months. He has written for novels in a series, "The Inspiring Adventures of Glo, Drag Queen Detective", while imprisoned for the past 18 months. He is currently seeking a publisher.