Little Tales from Beatrice's Writing Desk

The Postbox Sneezed



Told by Miss Beatrice Pennyfeather

A story by Effie Moss

My dear reader,

I had every intention of beginning Monday in a sensible fashion.

A little breakfast. A tidy desk. Absolutely no distractions.

Then the postbox sneezed.

Only once. A very small, rather polite sneeze.

I looked up from the envelopes in my satchel. A butterfly continued about its business. Somewhere in the hedge, a robin stopped singing.

“Bless you,” I said, because good manners cost nothing. Even when one is addressing a postbox.

The postbox said nothing.

I waited. A corner of an envelope appeared in the slot.

“Ah,” I said. “Something for me?”

I gave it a gentle tug.

It wouldn’t budge.



“Not yet, then?” I asked.

I have tended unusual correspondence for long enough to know that pulling harder is rarely the answer. Great-Grandmother Pennyfeather once spent an entire afternoon arguing with a letter that refused to be folded. Neither of them enjoyed it.

So I sat on the little stone beside the postbox and waited.

The robin began singing again. The butterfly returned. A breeze carried the smell of somebody’s toast down the lane, which I considered rather inconsiderate.

I was wondering whether I had time to go home for a second breakfast when the envelope gave the smallest shiver.

Then came another sneeze.

This one sent a puff of dust through the slot and deposited the envelope neatly in my lap.

It was addressed, in purple ink, to:

“The person who remembered to say bless you.”

Well. That appeared to be me.

Inside was a small piece of paper.

“Thank you for waiting.”

Beneath it, in considerably smaller handwriting, someone had added:

“And for not pulling too hard.”

I read it twice. Then I looked through the slot.

“You’re very welcome,” I said.

From somewhere inside came a soft rustle. It might have been paper settling. It might have been somebody trying not to laugh.

I decided not to enquire. We are all entitled to a few things we keep to ourselves.

Before I left, I brushed the dust from the little ledge beneath the slot. Then I went home for a handkerchief.

I have left it beside the postbox, folded into four. Just in case.

My desk is still untidy, and breakfast was rather late. But I think Monday began quite well after all.

Yours,

Miss Beatrice Pennyfeather

P.S. The handkerchief had disappeared by teatime. I shall take that as a good sign.