

## Ms. Applegate, Claire

1.5

Foster Home: Kitchen

### “Like He’s . . . Broken or Something”

Claire returns home and delivers Ms. Applegate’s groceries to her in the kitchen. Ms. Applegate is busy cooking.

Claire

He seems really sad.

Ms. Applegate

Who’s that Claire?

Claire

The man with the red balloon.

Ms. Applegate

Who’s that?

Claire

I ran into him the other day when we were shopping. I almost knocked him over.

Ms. Applegate

Claire! What did I tell you about always running? Did you hurt the poor man?

Claire

No. But he sure scared *me*. Only for a moment though. He grabbed my arm and yelled at me. But . . . I don’t know. There was something about him—something about his eyes. They were sad, but . . . I don’t know . . . something else.

Yes, definitely sad. And now I think I know why.

Ms. Applegate

Why do you say that?

Claire

Well, because he’s always alone.

Ms. Applegate

Some people enjoy their solitude, Claire.

Claire

No, Ms. Applegate, no one should be *that* alone.

Ms. Applegate

I’m sure he has family or friends nearby.

**Claire**

I don't think so. Paris told me that he lives by himself, and I never see him with anyone. No one! And he's kinda grumpy.

**Ms. Applegate**

Grumpy?

**Claire**

Yeah. I think it's like a fence or something—with barbs—sort of keeps everybody out **(Gesturing)**. But it keeps him alone. And there's gotta be a reason.

I saw him at Miller's Market, and he didn't say anything to me.

**Ms. Applegate**

Well, you did almost run him over. I'm not sure I would be so cordial either.

**Claire**

But I was trying to apologize.

**Ms. Applegate**

What did you say?

**Claire**

I just asked him why every week he got a balloon and bread and grapes and roses?

**Ms. Applegate**

How do you know that?

**Claire**

Well . . . I've been sort of watching him.

**Ms. Applegate**

Claire! You can't just go around watching and following strangers around. You never know what you're . . .

**Claire**

But Ms. Applegate he's *always alone*. That makes me sad, and . . . I don't want to end up lonely like that.

**Ms. Applegate**

Claire . . . he's not your responsibility. **(Contemplating)** Everybody's lonely sometimes. But that doesn't mean you can fix it.

**Claire**

But . . . it's like he's . . . not important because he's got something wrong with him. Like he's lost or broken or something.

**Ms. Applegate is struck by Claire's comment, realizing that it reflects her feelings about herself.**

**Silent Pause.**

**Ms. Applegate**

Huh. Well . . . what do you suppose we can do for him?

**Claire ponders a moment.**

**Claire**

What about our “Share the Seasoning” dinner? You know, where you cook all those weird . . . yummy things, and we invite someone who might not have a lot for Christmas? Can I invite him?

**Ms. Applegate**

“Weird,” I thought you liked those . . . Never mind. That’s a great idea, Claire. He’ll be our guest of honor this year.

**Claire**

<sup>Exited</sup>I’ll take him an invitation. Oh, and may I take him some of your French cakes as a gift?

**Ms. Applegate**

Oh wonderful, wonderful idea. What’s his name?

**Claire sits up straight.**

**Claire**

Oh . . . uh . . . I don’t know. I never got that.

**Ms. Applegate**

Well that might be a good place to start, dear.

**Lights out.**

## **Ms. Applegate, Sylvia**

1.6  
Foster Home

### **Good News and Bad News**

**Claire, Bethany, and Ms. Applegate enter the room with a board game and begin setting it up. Adoption agent Sylvia Tilbert approaches and knocks on the door. Ms. Applegate answers it.**

**Ms. Applegate**

Hello, may I help you?

**Sylvia**

Ms. Applegate?

**Ms. Applegate**

Yes.

**Sylvia**

I'm Sylvia Tilbert from the Eastman Adoption Agency. I called you last week about Claire?

**Ms. Applegate**

Oh yes. Come in. Please come in.

**Sylvia**

Thank you.

**Ms. Applegate**

Make yourself comfortable. Would you like a spot of tea or coffee, or my world-famous hot chocolate? Well, it's not world-famous, but it is really good.

**Sylvia**

I would love some hot chocolate.

**Ms. Applegate**

Girls, take the game into the kitchen. I have a guest I'd like to speak with in quietness. Claire, you can take my place.

**Claire**

I don't like playing with Bethany. She cheats!

**Bethany**

Do not!

**Ms. Applegate**

Girls! Kitchen! Now!

**The girls exit while Ms. Applegate leads her to a table and pours two mugs of hot chocolate.**

**Ms. Applegate**

Well, are you the bearer of good news or bad news?

**Sylvia**

I have some good news for you and some, not so good news.

**Ms. Applegate**

Okay.

**Sylvia**

The good news is the couple I spoke of is ready to adopt Claire.

**Ms. Applegate**

Oh, that's wonderful. She will love to hear that.

**Sylvia**

Yes. I was hoping she would. However the bad news is that they want her in time for Christmas.

**Ms. Applegate**

What?! **(Pause)** You mean she won't get to spend her last Christmas with us?

**Sylvia**

No, I'm sorry.

**Ms. Applegate**

Couldn't they at least let us spend Christmas morning with her?

**Sylvia**

They have plans to move to another city, and this will be their last stop.

**Ms. Applegate**

Well, we'll just have to have a special Christmas for her a little early.

**Sylvia**

I am sorry.

**Ms. Applegate**

No, that's okay. Claire is finally getting an answer to prayer. That's what important here.

**Sylvia**

I have some paperwork for you to fill out.

**Ms. Applegate**

Yes, of course.

**Lights out.**

## Ms. Applegate, Claire

2.2  
Foster Home

### “Dolls Don’t Talk” 2

Claire returns inside still puzzled about Thoman. Without speaking, she walks by Ms. Applegate who is working on a photo album on the couch.

Ms. Applegate

How did it go?

Claire doesn’t respond.

Ms. Applegate

That good, huh?

Claire

I don’t know. I think I did something wrong because he ran off again. But the most amazing thing happened. At least I think it happened. **(Pause)** I’m sure it happened.

Ms. Applegate

<sup>Exasperated</sup>>What happened?

Claire

The doll talked. **(Ms. Applegate looks puzzled.)** He brought a doll. She was very pretty, and . . . well . . . she talked to me.

Ms. Applegate

She talked to you? What do you mean, she talked to you?

Claire

I mean she said, “I love you.”

Ms. Applegate

Oh, that’s so sweet.

Claire

No, I don’t think you understand. The doll actually said, “I love you.”

Ms. Applegate

Sweetheart, I think what you heard was that amazing imagination of yours. Toys don’t talk.

Claire

No, no, Ms. Applegate, I know I . . .

Ms. Applegate

And, I think . . . I think **(Pause)** you really like Mr. Baker, and you want to help him.

Claire

<sup>Uncertain</sup>>But . . . I’m sure I heard it.

**Ms. Applegate**

I know, sweetie. Just give it some time. Our emotions can sometimes get the best of us, especially around this time of year. Mr. Baker seems to be a nice man, but you can't save everybody in one day.

**Claire**

I guess so. But I could have sworn that I . . .

**Ms. Applegate**

Look on the bright side: you'll be with your new family on Christmas.

**Claire gives a look of defeat.**

Honey, did you hear me? New family? Christmas? What a present that will be!

**Still no response. Ms. Applegate shakes her out of her stupor.**

Claire! Okay, let's get dressed. We're going caroling. We're gonna get our minds on "the reason for the season." Bethany! Let's go!

**Bethany enters and Ms. Applegate shoves the girls along. They grab their coats and head out the front door.**

**Lights out.**

## Ms. Applegate, Claire

2.5  
Foster Home

### Reminiscing

Claire flops herself down on the sofa.

Ms. Applegate

Well, Claire?

Claire

**(Zoning out, thinking about her visit to Thoman.)**

I'm sorry, Ms. Applegate.

Ms. Applegate

You did a dangerous thing!

Claire

I'm sorry. **(She starts to cry.)**

Ms. Applegate

C'mon dear, Mr. Baker will be fine. **(Pause)** I want to show you something.

**Ms. Applegate reaches down into the chest and pulls out a photo album and begins flipping through pages.**

Ms. Applegate

For many years, Saint Phillips Community Church put on a Christmas benefit for the orphans. They actually had an ol' fashioned ball (like in Cinderella). You know what that is? **[Claire: "Of course."]** The "Orphans Benefit Ball": They would invite several of the orphanages and foster homes to participate. It was a lovely time, with beautiful music played by a live orchestra, elegant food, great entertainers, and wonderful, wonderful dancing. Can you believe they did all that for the orphans?

Claire

That's amazing. Who are these kids?

Ms. Applegate

They are some of the kids I've fostered in the past.

Claire

Wow. Look at all those pretty dresses. Is that you?

Ms. Applegate

Yes. Yes it is.

Claire

You look beautiful. What was the ball like?

Ms. Applegate

Oh, it was a night like you never could imagine . . .

**As Ms. Applegate begins her description of the night, the scene changes into the actual ballroom, and we go into the ballroom sequence.**

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## Ms. Applegate, Claire

2.10  
Foster Home

### Claire's Prayers

Claire has just put on her pajamas and is sitting on her bed. Ms. Applegate is in the other room, talking on the phone.

#### Ms. Applegate

Okay. **(Brief Pause)** Thank you. **(Brief Pause)** Yes, I understand. **(Brief Pause)** Goodbye.

#### Claire

Hi God. It's me, Claire. Can I talk to you for a minute? I really need your help. You see, Mr. Baker, my friend is very sad, and I don't like seeing him that way. Uh, I know I asked you for stuff this Christmas, but Mr. Baker needs it more than me. So could I trade my stuff for something for him? Would you give him a family, even if it's not me? **(Pause)** Thank you. Amen.

**Mrs. Applegate comes into Claire's bedroom and sits down next to her.**

#### Ms. Applegate

Claire, I'm sorry, but I have some disappointing news. That was Mrs. Tilbert. **(Pause)** The couple that was going to adopt you . . .? Well, they just found out that they are pregnant. They're not going to adopt you. I'm so sorry, honey.

**Brief pause. Claire stands up and cocks her head as if unfazed by the news. In her best British accent exclaims:**

British accent>Not bloody surprising. Those Americans are a rather fickle lot, aren't they? Losing accent>But they seem to agree on one thing: No accent and crying>They don't want me.

**Claire drops her head and begins to cry. Ms. Applegate pulls her back down onto the bed, wraps her arms around her, and rocks her. Tears roll from Claire's eyes, as she closes them and is quickly asleep. An emotional Ms. Applegate sheds her own tears as she prays an emotional prayer.**

#### Ms. Applegate

Poor child.

Lord, I know you love Claire. But she needs to feel that from you even more right now. She is such a blessing. She has such a big heart—too big sometimes. But she's been alone for a long time, and she feels like nobody wants her. She could really use a special touch from you this Christmas. Is it too late for a Christmas miracle, something that would bring her some sense of joy and peace? Please.

**Lights out.**