

Paris, Thoman

1.2
City Market

Claire, Meet Thoman: An Unexpected Spark

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Thoman Baker is not feeling joyous. In fact, he never feels joyous during the holidays. He hates the holidays and all the laughter and pleasantries they bring. He grumpily walks his weekly routine, as oblivious shoppers bump by him and cut him off. He dips into Miller's Market & Deli to avoid getting trampled by a group of ladies laughing loudly and not looking where they are going.

Thoman

Whoa! There should be a law, Paris, I tell ya. There should be a law against this frenzied consumption.

Paris

Well, sir, it is the holidays. I guess folks are a bit more excited than usual.

Thoman

You'd think this was gonna be the Christmas of all Christmases by the way they chase around here. It makes me crazy, I tell ya. Drives me up the wall.

Paris

And . . . how are things with you, Mr. Baker? **(Changing the tone)** Here are your things, sir.

Thoman

Thank you, Paris.

Thoman's weekly routine is to buy a single rose, a loaf of French bread, white grapes, and a bright red balloon. He builds a special doll in his workshop, and on Wednesday nights, he goes to the church and sits in the fourth pew on the left. It's the same thing he did the day before his wife died ten years ago.

Paris

What are you doing for the holidays, Thoman?

Thoman

I'm staying home like I do every year.

Paris

Maybe you outa consider at least getting out . . . and taking a carriage ride or something. You know, try some of this holiday cheer? Maybe it's not so bad. It might do you some good.

Thoman

(Thoman contemplates Paris's statement then thinks better.) You have a good day, Paris.
I'll see you next week.

Paris

The same to you, sir.

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Paris, Claire

1.4
Miller's Market

Breaking the Ice (or Mind Your Own Business)

Claire enters Miller's Market and looks for the old man. She goes and speaks to Paris the clerk.

Claire

Hi, Paris.

Paris

Hello, Claire. What can I do for you today?

Claire

Well, I do have some things that I need to get for Ms. Applegate. But . . . I . . . was hoping to bump into that man again.

Paris

(Puzzled) What man would that be?

Claire

Uh . . . the older gentleman than I ran into the other day? **(Paris gestures for more information.)**

You know. When I was running and I ran into him and his balloon flew away.

Paris

Ah, that man.

Claire

He usually gets French bread and grapes.

Paris

Yes, I know of whom you speak. But no. He's not been here today.

Claire

Oh. Okay, thank you.

Paris

Uh, did you need something?

Claire

Huh? Oh yeah. Uh . . . cloves, cinnamon, baking powder, and stinky cheese.

Paris

Coming right up **(chuckling)**.

. . . .

Paris begins bagging her groceries. The doorbell rings and in walks Thoman and immediately goes toward another part of the store. Claire looks at Paris and begins to fidget up and down but then tries to contain herself. She gestures and whispers loudly.

Claire
Whispering loudly>That's him.

Paris
Also whispering loudly>Well, go talk to him!

Claire
No, I can't.

Paris
Whispering>What? You came all the way here just to watch him buy groceries? He's right there. He doesn't bite.

Claire
Are you sure?

. . . .

Paris
To Clair>He doesn't talk much.

Claire
What's the matter with him?

Paris
He gets like this around the holidays.

Claire
Does he have any kids?

Paris
No, it's just him. He's pretty much all alone.

She smiles and gets her things.

Paris
Do you have any plans for the holidays?

Claire
Same thing I did last year. Nothing. It's just me, Bethany, and Ms. Applegate.

Paris
Well, that's something. I think we should have a holiday just for Ms. Applegate's cooking. She's the best.

Claire
Would you like to join us?

Paris
No. Wish I could, but I've got plans already. I do appreciate the invitation, though. I'll definitely come by on Christmas morning. Maybe you could give my place to someone else who needs the company . . . if you know what I mean.

Claire
Right. I'll see you later Paris.

Paris
Goodbye, Clare.

. . . .

Paris, Claire

2.8

Miller's Market

More than Magic

Claire enters Miller's Market, intense and determined. Dodging a few customers, she walks right up to Paris.

Claire

Why didn't you tell me?

Paris

Tell you what?

Claire

That you knew, Mr. Baker.

Paris

I don't know what you mean, Claire.

Claire

Okay then, what is this?

She puts the photo on the counter and taps her finger on it.

Paris

That's the Orphans Ball at St. Philips. Mrs. Baker used to organize those for the kids.

Then Claire moves her finger to another location on the picture.

Claire

I know. Ms. Applegate told me all about it! But my question is, who is that? **(Pause)** Isn't that you? The reindeer?

Paris looks at the photo a moment then sees that Claire is not going anywhere without an answer.

Paris

(Exasperated sigh) I used to work in Mr. Baker's toyshop.

Claire

What?! Okay, Paris, tell me why is he like this? And what happened to Mrs. Baker?

Paris

Shh. Come here.

Paris walks her to a quieter part of the market.

Mr. Baker loved his wife very much. He would make special dolls for her, bring her roses, and write her love letters. They would often go on walks in the middle of the day.

Claire

That's very romantic.

Paris

Well, Mrs. Baker was a beautiful woman. And she loved children. However, she couldn't have any of her own, which is partly why she spent so much time visiting the kids at the orphanage and in the hospital, and throwing big parties for them. Once, on a routine visit to the hospital, she caught the flu from one of the orphans . . . **(Pause)** and she died. She never came out of it. It was just one of those things.

Claire

Oh, no. That's terrible.

Paris

Yes. And she died on Christmas morning.

Claire

That's horrible.

Paris

Yes. But I'm not done. By some miracle, she had finally gotten pregnant with their first child. (They were so excited.) But the complications from the flu were too much for her body to handle. The doctors couldn't save either one of them.

Silence.

Claire becomes a statue and then is overwhelmed by this news. She then begins to cry/weep. Paris attempts to console her.

Then with sobbing, Claire exclaims . . .

Claire

Oh, no . . . Mr. Baker...I broke them.

Claire continues to grieve.

Paris

What?

Claire

In his shop, I saw a picture of his wife, and there were two dolls next to it: a woman and a baby. The woman looked just like the picture. And I broke them. I dropped them, and they broke. **(Claire is taken back to her empathetic sadness.)**

Paris

Claire, he really thinks highly of you.

Claire

Then why does he keep running away?

Claire zones out as she thinks about Thoman.

Paris

How about some hot cocoa?

Claire nods.

Claire

I went to his shop and the most amazing thing happened.

Paris

They all work, didn't they?

Claire

Subdued but Excited>Yes. How did you know?

Paris gestures for Claire to wait as she rings up a customer.

Paris

That will be six, twenty-five please. Thank you. **(Paris manipulates the cash register.)** Here's your change, and have a Merry Christmas.

Customer

Thank you, Paris. You have a Merry Christmas, too.

The hanging doorbell clangs as the customers leave the store. Claire says nothing but hangs her head toward the floor. Paris locks the front door and turns the "Open" over to "Closed," as Claire wanders around lost in her thoughts. Paris goes to the coffee station and pours hot water into two cups, stirs them, then gives one to Claire. She then continues her explanation.

Paris

Ella could make them talk, too. There was a special connection between Mr. Baker and his wife that made the toys respond to her like that. He loved her so much. That's what scares him about you. That's probably why he keeps running.

Claire

Buy why are they all locked away like that?

Paris

Claire, Mr. Baker's toys were known all over the world. He was known as "the wizard" of toymakers. All the other toymakers were jealous. Their toys had cranks and winds sticking out of their dolls; Mr. Baker's dolls had no mechanical parts. His toys were, well . . . they were magical—like you saw. And . . . yet, there was a big controversy because not all kids saw the magic.

Claire

What do you mean?

Paris

The Baker's Toyshop—I have never had as much fun working than my time at the toyshop. Dancing dolls, flying planes, bicycles that taught you how to ride them, balls that bounced and bounced—the place was wonderful. And every toy that left the toyshop had the Baker's magic touch on it.

Claire

Then why would some toys work and others not?

Paris

You know, Claire, some children want toys because they just want more things. It is something shiny and new, or something they do not have, or a new and improved version comes out and they want to be the first person to have it. Some don't take care of their toys. They play with

them for a while and if the toy doesn't do what they want it to do, they get rid of it. They don't explore or develop their imagination. And some children are downright mean—breaking, burning, and tearing their toys apart.

Paris thinks a moment.

If parents would pay a little more attention to what they buy their children . . . and why . . . Toys are meant to stimulate creativity and imagination—not to take the place of people and good things. But they can bring comfort and joy. When you see a child playing with a toy—they're in a completely different world—you can see that child's heart. It's a beautiful and magical thing.

Paris realizes she's on a "soap box."

I'm sorry. I just really love toys. Can you tell?

Not everybody sees it, but we could not blame that on our customers. People wanted Baker's toys because they were different—special.

But it's really more than that, Claire. There was something given to Mr. Baker—to Thoman—to share with the world, I think. And it was brought out by his wife, Ella—because she loved him and children so much. Something magical happened when Mr. Baker's toys came into the hands of a child with an open or a broken heart. The gift . . . touches the need . . . and voila—^{whispery} things come alive. That's more than toys . . . and more than magic. You see?

Claire shrugs like she's not sure if she gets it.

Claire

So when Mrs. Baker died, they all stopped working?

Paris

Pretty much. Mr. Baker had to refund their money. He lost a lot that year. He was devastated.

Claire

There's got to be something we can do with them. It just doesn't make sense for them to just sit there. They are beautiful toys even if they don't talk.

Paris

What do you have in mind?

Claire

I don't know. **(Pause)** I don't know if I can do *anything now*. I'm moving away on Christmas day.

Paris

You're being adopted? That's wonderful. Congratulations! He'll be very sad to hear that. He will surely miss you.

Claire

Thanks. I'm excited to be getting a family. Although, I was kind of hoping that . . . uh . . . never mind. It doesn't matter now.

Paris

Yeah . . . it would have been nice to work at the shop again. **(Changing the subject)** Are they nice folks?

Claire

Huh? Oh. Ms. Applegate says they are really excited about getting me.

Paris

Must be nice.

Claire

Yeah.

Claire stares off at the front door, thinking about what she said to Thoman.

Paris

I imagine you've got some packing to do.

Claire

What? Yes. I better get home. **(She heads for the door.)**

Thanks for everything Paris. And, please don't tell him. I want to tell him myself.

Paris

Okay, I understand.

Claire

Goodbye, Paris. And . . . Merry Christmas.

Paris

Merry Christmas, Claire.

Claire exits the market.

Lights out.