

Confessions of a Shopaholic

REBECCA is a self-confessed shopaholic. She has agreed to meet her friend Jane in a café during her lunch hour. Jane is already at a table when she arrives.

REBECCA: Jane, I'm so sorry I'm late. They should list shopping under cardiovascular activity. My heart never beats as fast as it does when I see a 'reduced by 50 per cent' sign. *(Sitting down)* I count out the money in tens and twenties and wait, almost shivering as the shop assistant ducks behind the counter and produces the green box. She slides it into a thick glossy bag with dark green cord handles and hands it to me. I almost want to close my eyes, the feeling is so wonderful.

That moment. That instant when your fingers curl round the handles of a shiny, uncreased bag – and all the gorgeous new things inside it become yours. What's it like? It's like going hungry for days, then cramming your mouth full of warm buttered toast. It's like waking up and realising it's the weekend. Everything else is blocked out of your mind. It's pure, selfish pleasure. *(Turning to the waitress)* Oh, cappuccino please. *(To Jane)* Anyway, I walk slowly out of the shop, still in a haze of delight. I've got a Denny and George scarf. I've got a Denny and George scarf! I've got – then I heard him – "Rebecca." A man's voice interrupts my thoughts. I looked up and my stomach gave a lurch of horror. It was Luke Brandon. You know – Luke – the manager... Luke Brandon is standing on the street, right in front of me, and he's staring down at my carrier bag. I feel myself growing flustered. What's he doing here on the pavement anyway? Don't people like that have chauffeurs? Shouldn't he be whisking off to some vital reception or something?

"Did you get it all right?" he says, frowning slightly.

"What?"

"Your aunt's present."

"Oh yes," I say, and swallow. "Yes I... I got it."

"Is that it?" He gestures to the bag and I feel my cheeks flame red.

"Yes," I say eventually. "I thought a... a scarf would be nice."

"Very generous of you. Denny and George." He raises his eyebrows.
"Your aunt must be a stylish lady."

"She is," I say, and clear my throat. "She's terribly creative and original."

"I'm sure she is," said Luke, and pauses. "What's her name?"

Oh God. I should have run as soon as I saw him, while I had a chance. Now I'm paralysed. I can't think of a single female name.

"Erm... Ermintrude," I hear myself saying.

"Aunt Ermintrude," said Luke thoughtfully. "Well, give her my best wishes."

He nods at me, and walks off, and I stare after him, trying to work out if he guessed or not. You see Jane, after all – I had asked him to have extra time to buy a present for my aunt! (*The waitress brings the cappuccino*) Thank you! I was ready for this.

by Sophie Kinsella, adapted by LAMDA