



Roddy Phillips

Raking through recycling bins?
It might be fascinating but it
won't make you any richer

I've often fantasised about finding a massive stash of cash and then battling courageously with the moral dilemma of whether to hand it in to the police or keep it and go slowly crazy worrying about the money's nasty owner tracking us down.

I think it probably depends on the amount of cash. If it was millions and we kept it my wife and I would have to go into luxuriously appointed hiding, change our identities, undergo plastic surgery, obviously an improvement for me, then we'd have a strange but exciting, tension filled new life until one hot night in the Caribbean a menacing shadow would slip silently into our fabulous beach house.

"Probably just give it to charity," I said out loud, surprising myself as much as my wife.

She was squinting at me from the other side of our recycling bin.

"Keep it down Sundance," she whispered, "I said I've found some money."

"I know," I replied, "I was already fantasising about being murdered in my sleep by its owner, in the Caribbean."

"The Carribbean sounds nice," said my wife, "what happens to me?"

"I don't know, it was too scary so I gave the money away to the PDSA. How much have you found?" I asked, "if its millions we're in big trouble."

"I'm not sure," she replied glancing nervously up and down the garden while holding the bin firmly shut.

A neighbour passed with her dog and we both smiled and managed to look very suspicious loitering around our own bins.

“Everything OK?” she asked, her dog barking in chorus.

“Yes fine thanks,” I shouted, “just checking up on our bins.”

This wasn't too far from the truth. A few months ago our recycling bin was stolen in broad daylight, stuffed to the brim with recyclable stuff. Now some cash had appeared in the new bin. I could already see some kind of pattern forming.

The neighbour was still staring at us. “You can come and check mine if you like,” she said knowingly, “its full of fascinating rubbish.”

We laughed nervously and waved her off.

“She meant her bins right?” I asked.

“Never mind that, let's see how much we've won,” said my wife slowly lifting the bin lid, her eyes widening. I could barely handle the suspense and to be honest I was slightly relieved when my wife produced a single ten-pound note.

“Thank goodness for that!” I said.

My wife was baffled. Apparently when she first spotted the tenner it looked like it was sitting on a big pile of tenners. Undeterred she scrambled down into the mini-mountain of soggy cardboard, smelly cans and plastic containers, but all she could produce was a pile of receipts and old money-off vouchers that were just pretending to be tenners.

“Actually I think its mine,” I said, “I must have thrown it out with those receipts when I cleaned out the car yesterday.”

“Please don't tell me you're going to start recycling money, I don't think that you're that daft yet,” said my wife, looking through the receipts, “anyway there's a receipt here from Domino's pizza that's not yours either.”

“No, probably not,” I lied.

Obviously my wife had forgotten about the substantial cheque I flushed down the toilet just a few days earlier. I’d only had it for thirty seconds, that must be a record. I’d folded it and put it in the top pocket of my shirt before going to the loo. Just before I hit the flush I dropped my phone, but I managed to catch it before it fell into the bowl. That’s when the cheque must have slipped out from my pocket.

I hunted for hours for that cheque until I was back in the toilet where the flushing scenario occurred to me. I re-enacted the whole thing with a folded piece of paper and bingo! down it went.

I was going to remind my wife about the vanishing cheque but for some reason she had decided the tenner belonged to our neighbour Grant.

“I wouldn’t want to spend it accidentally,” she said as she climbed the stairs to Grant’s flat.

Unfortunately Grant was in. At first I think he was quite pleased to see my wife.

“Hi Grant, sorry to bother you,” began my wife, “I just wondered if you might have accidentally thrown something into the recycling bin?”

Grant considered this for a moment and then asked my wife to repeat the question, which she did word for word.

“Is that a trick question?” asked Grant.

“No,” laughed my wife, “I found some money in the recycling bin and I wondered if it was yours, Roddy says its his, but I don’t think he’s stupid enough to throw money away, not that I’m suggesting you are either of course by any means, but anyway have you lost some money?”

“I don’t think so,” said Grant, “how much is it?” he added hedging his bets.

My wife held up the tenner for inspection.

Grant stroked his beard, “to be honest its hard to say, they all look the same

to me. Tell you what, lets split it.”

“That’s very generous of you,” replied my wife smiling broadly, “why don’t I buy something nice for you worth five pounds.”

“Perfect!” said Grant.

I think they actually shook on it. Which is just the kind of thing that puts you off recycling.

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900 words