

## The Golden Ticket

by Gill Kane

He was always lucky my brother Jim. Lucky in love, lucky with money. Just lucky. Lucky Jim. He weaved his way through life, charming and delighting, picking all the plump fruits that life could offer.

We both loved sport and I was good and fast with a keen eye for a ball but Jim was brilliant. A star at any sport. Our front room looked like the medal room at Man United. He was clever too when he bothered, and he bothered when it mattered. Enough to get to grammar school and a place at uni. I went to the local tech and got a trade. Make good money as well, I do. But Jim, he's in the city, big in the finance world.

I was 14 when I made my first foray into the world of the opposite sex. Edna Douglas of the spiky dark hair, acne and thick ankles. Not that I cared. Love truly is blind and cupid had done a right job on me. I adored her. We walked to school together, held hands at break, sneaking quick kisses and in the evenings she came round to watch telly. When I say watch telly, I watched her, and she - well she watched Jim. Her eyes followed his every move. Jim was oblivious of course. He was going out with the only girl in town that every boy fancied, Susanna McIntyre. Got together when they were 13, married at 23 and still crazy in love. Lucky Jim. Turned out Edna only went out with me because I was Jim Baxter's brother.

And that you see was the crux of it for me. You might think I'd resent Jim but no, my position, my place in life was as Jim Baxter's brother. You have no idea how many doors that opened. Everybody wanted to know me because I was Jim Baxter's brother. So we were Ok, Jim and me. Brothers and best friends. And that's why I'm a bit ashamed of what I did last week.

You see when our local pub announced they were having a raffle for an all expenses paid trip to the world cup, we all joked that there was no point in entering. "Just give it to Jim" we said. "He's going to win it anyway". And when Jim picked his ticket out the hat, he kissed it, held it aloft and shouted "This is the golden ticket". And I believed him. So much so that when he went up to the bar to get a round in, I stared at his ticket lying on the table and almost without thinking swapped it for mine. Immediately I regretted it. But before I'd had a chance to swap it back Jim was plonking 2 pints on the table before me.

The draw took place with great ceremony, music, drum rolls, much joking and joshing but finally we got down to the serious business and the numbers were read out. I clutched the gold ticket. One...yes! Eight...yes! Five...no? Seven...no? Four...no? I stared in disbelief whilst beside me my brother Jim erupted in an explosion of joy. Holding his ticket aloft he punched the air. "Yes! Yes! Yes!" He cried. He'd won! With MY ticket. But as the crowd erupted around him, he handed it to me. "It's for you," he said. "I'm already going. A client's taking me." He threw his arm round my shoulder. "You didn't think I'd go without my little brother." And that's when I realized there was no golden ticket. Just a golden brother. Lucky Jim. Lucky me.