Casserole Brigade

Joy’s fridge was overflowing with casseroles stacked five deep as if she’d raided the grocery store for noodles and sauce. She didn’t have to open them to know they contained the likes of lasagna or macaroni and cheese. Bagged green salads, dressings, and a few loaves of garlic bread filled the crisper drawers. A barrage of guests arrived every afternoon, carrying food and insisting she put it away. She’d dutifully obeyed their commands while silently rolling her eyes. The longer she took with the foil-covered meal she’d never eat, the more she avoided chatting with them.

She had no desire to be social, to talk and laugh as if her life were normal. After all, it was a long-standing tradition to bring dinner to the sick, new mothers, or the bereaved, and somehow Joy had ticked all three boxes in the same week. It was the sole reason unwelcome company sat on her sofa trying to look the right amount of sad and happy as they searched for the apology they believed she wanted to hear. In truth, she was so tired of people telling her they were sorry.

Lottie was different though, walking straight into the kitchen and shoving her 9×13 Pyrex pan into the fridge herself before handing Joy a fresh box of tissues and wrapping her in a comforting hug. She didn’t waste time with a meaningless apology either.

“I’ve come home empty-handed, too,” she said. “I promise life gets better, but you’ll never stop missing her.”