



HAVE YOU CHECKED YOUR HANDBAG LATELY?

Goldie Grossbaum

I'M AT A RED LIGHT, looking for my lipstick. I know this light will last for over a minute, and that's more than enough time to feel for my lipstick and quickly put it on, a time-saving trick when free minutes are few and far apart.

I start digging through my handbag and feel a round small container...what is that?! It's definitely not my lipstick and not my wallet either...I pull it out and give it a quick glance.

Nutmeg.

McCormick nutmeg, to be exact.

Oh, right, nutmeg.

And I even remember how it got there.

I had dashed into Walmart to buy a few things, and having finally reached the stage of having a child old enough to stay in the van with my baby (with the windows slightly open on a nice brisk day!) I had the luxury to park and run into the store, alone, skipping the many minutes it takes to disconnect the car seat, lug it over to a cart, hoist it safely and securely into the cart, discover after a few feet of pushing that it is the squeakiest and ricketiest cart in the store and therefore go back and switch it, once again hauling the backbreaking car seat out and in, and then finally make my way with my oversized vehicle through the aisles.

This time, I just hopped out of the car, ran into the store, grabbed a cart and zipped through the store in no time. Boy, did I earn this!

I needed diapers in size 4,5 and 6. I stacked the cart with the three jumbo boxes and passed the fall baking display, and that was when I saw the nutmeg. And I remembered that I was out of it. I added it to my cart, did the self-checkout (which for sure saved me at least 40 seconds) and decided not to splurge on the 10-cent shopping bag just for my little nutmeg. So I dumped it into my handbag, and wheeled the cartful of diapers to the van. And that was the last I had thought about the nutmeg, until that moment at the red light.

And the truth is, there's a lot of other miscellaneous and equally misplaced items in my handbag.

Reading too many articles about anything can do that to you.

Two Lego guys, one Lego head and a tiny workerman's hat. Three Sharpie markers, weapons of mass destruction, that I had had to quickly confiscate and therefore dumped into the closest and safest out-of-reach spot—my handbag.

A tube of glitter—*why haven't I destroyed it already??*— was hastily added there when I needed to get it out of sight immediately.

Two light-up menorah necklaces. The type that has those little button batteries that I've read way too many terrifying articles about, so when I see any toy with those batteries out in the open, I get rid of the item, regardless of how well sealed the battery compartment is. Reading too many articles about anything can do that to you. And I guess when I had spotted them, my handbag was the closest and safest spot.

A sheet of four stickers from Trader Joe's.

Receipts. For food and diapers. Food we ate. Diapers we used. Items we can't return. Receipts I do not need.

Sticky...argh, a lollipop stick. I don't even eat lollipops.

One laffy taffy. Hard as a rock. I haven't eaten a laffy taffy in about 10 years. I must've found it somewhere and wanted to make it disappear real quick so I dumped it in my bag.

A ziploc bag with 12 foreign coins. I don't collect coins. My nine-year-old does. And I guess he also knows where to store valuables so that they stay safe.

Three grey baby socks. There's nothing particularly symbolic about having three of them together. I assume that's just the amount of stray socks I've found in the car over the last week.

Two glow sticks. The glow part is gone, but the stick still remains, a memory of a Chanukah menorah lighting, and I vaguely remember one of my kids stuffing it into my bag so he shouldn't lose it at the event.

The untrained eye might mistake my bag for one big clutter mess.

Truthfully, sometimes I do, too.

And I decide that that's it, I'm getting a smaller handbag so that it simply can't hold that much.

And then I get a smaller one and after not having enough space, I decide

I really need a bigger one.

And then after having a bigger one for a while, I decide I must get a smaller one.

You get the idea.

But here's the truth—if there's anything that shows what life as a mom is, it's my handbag. There's love and tears and trust and secrecy and safety all held together with sticky wrappers and tissues. My wallet, my license, my identity all safely zipped in, surrounded by so much trust and love and spice ... like nutmeg.

Every handbag has a story.

Next time you have that extra minute at a red light, check out what goodies you have in yours. 🍪



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