



Lynne
Reid Banks

"The best novel of the year."
—*The New York Times*

THE
INDIAN
IN THE
CUPBOARD

Illustrated by Brock Cole

Birthday Presents



IT WAS NOT THAT OMRI didn't appreciate Patrick's birthday present to him. Far from it. He was really very grateful—sort of. It was, without a doubt, very kind of Patrick to give Omri anything at all, let alone a secondhand plastic Indian that he himself had finished with.

The trouble was, though, that Omri was getting a little fed up with small plastic figures, of which he had loads. Biscuit tinsful, probably three or four if they were all put away at the same time, which they never were because most of the time they were scattered about in the bathroom, the loft, the kitchen, the breakfast room, not to mention Omri's bedroom and the garden. The compost heap was full of soldiers which, over several autumns, had been

raked up with the leaves by Omri's mother, who was rather careless about such things.

Omri and Patrick had spent many hours together playing with their joint collections of plastic toys. But now they'd had about enough of them, at least for the moment, and that was why, when Patrick brought his present to school on Omri's birthday, Omri was disappointed. He tried not to show it, but he was.

"Do you really like him?" asked Patrick as Omri stood silently with the Indian in his hand.

"Yes, he's fantastic," said Omri in only a slightly flattish voice. "I haven't got an Indian."

"I know."

"I haven't got any cowboys either."

"Nor have I. That's why I couldn't play anything with him."

Omri opened his mouth to say, "I won't be able to either," but, thinking that might hurt Patrick's feelings, he said nothing, put the Indian in his pocket, and forgot about it.

After school there was a family tea, and all the excitement of his presents from his parents and his two older brothers. He got his dearest wish—a skateboard complete with kickboard and kryptonite wheels from his mum and dad, and from his eldest brother, Adiel, a helmet. Gillon, his other brother, hadn't bought him anything because he

had no money (his pocket money had been stopped some time ago in connection with a very unfortunate accident involving their father's bicycle). So when Gillon's turn came to give Omri a present, Omri was very surprised when a large parcel was put before him, untidily wrapped in brown paper and string.

"What is it?"

"Have a look. I found it in the alley."

The alley was a narrow passage that ran along the bottom of the garden where the dustbins stood. The three boys used to play there sometimes, and occasionally found treasures that other—perhaps richer—neighbors had thrown away. So Omri was quite excited as he tore off the paper.

Inside was a small white metal cupboard with a mirror in the door, the kind you see over the basin in old-fashioned bathrooms.

You might suppose Omri would get another disappointment about this because the cupboard was fairly plain and, except for a shelf, completely empty, but oddly enough he was very pleased with it. He loved cupboards of any sort because of the fun of keeping things in them. He was not a very tidy boy in general, but he did like arranging things in cupboards and drawers and then opening them later and finding them just as he'd left them.

"I do wish it locked," he said.

It all starts with a birthday present Omri doesn't even want—a small plastic Indian of no use to him at all. But when an old wooden cupboard and a special key bring the unusual toy to life, Omri's Indian becomes his most important secret: precious, dangerous, wonderful, and above all, magical.



“Deserves a place of honor beside Mary Norton’s *THE BORROWERS* and E. B. White’s *STUART LITTLE*. Lynne Reid Banks possesses that rare ability to blend the drama and humor of everyday life with utterly believable fantasy.” —*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

“Lynne Reid Banks touches a nerve in young people—adults, too—and touches it with wit, excitement, and poignancy.” —Lloyd Alexander

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