We were sitting on the floor playing Hungry Hippos, which, if you’ve ever played it, you’ll know to be quite a raucous board game. Amy was sitting cross-legged with all the supple flexibility of a seven-year-old, whereas I was sprawled uncomfortably with all the restless arthritic flexibility of a sixtyfive-year-old. Clearly this gave her an enormous advantage, as I was losing two games to nil (best of five) – which I believe is not an uncommon scorecard when grandfathers play board games with their granddaughters. There was time for one more game before dinner (I was confident she would win it easily) when suddenly her eyes lit up as if she had remembered something important. She swivelled around and started rummaging through her toy box, eventually turning back to me, a small object in her hand.

‘This is for you Grandpa – it’s something special’ she told me solemnly as she handed over the result of her search. I graciously accepted what looked to be a small plastic male figurine – possibly from a farmyard play set.

‘That’s very sweet of you darling but if he’s so special to you, don’t you want to keep him?’

‘Oh no Grandpa, he’s special because I have to give him *away* to someone special. Grandma said so.’ She replied quite emphatically.

‘Grandma?’ I questioned.

‘Not *your* Grandma – my *other* Grandma. She gave it to me and told that when someone is really, really kind to me, I should give them this so that when someone is kind to them, they can give it to the person that was kind to *them*.’

‘Ah, now I see. So, every time someone is kind to someone else, he gets passed along.’

I was worried that I was being ‘rewarded’ for letting her win the games, even though she was a much better player than me. Honestly.

My anxiety subsided when she explained that she gave me the toy because I had been kind to her by taking the time and trouble to visit and play games with her. I was suitably touched.

She was setting the board up for game three and I was examining my gift when curiosity got the better of me.

‘Does he have a name? Farmer Brown perhaps?’ I asked as casually as possible.

‘No – his name’s *Mr Blowthrough’* she replied, equally casually, not looking up from the task at hand.

‘*Mr Blowthrough*? How on earth did he get to be named *Mr Blowthrough*?’ I asked.

Amy looked up at me and shrugged then continued setting up the game.

It could only mean one of three things. Either she hadn’t a clue herself, or it was blindingly obvious why he would be called *Mr Blowthrough* and I was just being a silly (or just plain thick) Grandpa, or it was too difficult to explain. I’ll admit that it’s been a long time since I’ve had the thought processes of a seven-year-old, so I pocketed *Mr Blowthrough* and thought nothing more of it.

Until about three weeks later.

I was at the supermarket check-out and passed my one item, a carton of milk, across for scanning and reached into my pocket for the loose change I thought was there -and came out with just *Mr Blowthrough* (he must have been hanging on for dear life in my pocket whilst these trousers were hanging upside down in my wardrobe for three weeks – unlike the loose change?). Oops! I patted every other pocket on the off chance I had a hidden note or coins but nope, nothing…nada…zilch. I started mumbling excuses, trying to put on a brave face to cover my embarrassment, but the check-out boy stared back at me expressionless, hand outstretched for payment, obviously thinking *Here we go again, another wally spinning a hard-luck story.*

Salvation came as the woman behind me (a complete stranger), handed over the required coinage on my behalf.

‘Here, allow me’ she said.

‘Honestly, I can’t let you do that – it’s only a carton of milk’ I pleaded.

‘No, that’s ok, it’s nothing – just a few spare coins, and one day you might do the same for someone else.’

‘That’s very generous of you but…’

‘Think nothing of it’ she said with a smile.

It was then that I looked at *Mr Blowthrough* in my hand and synapses started connecting. I waited until she had paid for her basketful and approached her, thanking her profusely.

‘Please, take this as a gift’ I said proffering *Mr Blowthrough*.

She looked at me quizzically and, to be honest, I’ll swear she took a defensive step backwards, but I explained the concept of *Mr Blowthrough* as Amy had explained it to me.

‘How sweet’ she said, taking *Mr Blowthrough* and examining him. ‘You must be very proud of Amy. Does he have a name?’

I must have looked quite sheepish when I replied ‘*Mr Blowthrough*’.

‘*Mr Blowthrough*? How on earth…’’

I shrugged. Maybe I really did have the thought processes of a seven-year-old after all.