



THE MAN IN BLACK

Walking on the beach in Gulf Shores, caught up in the glory and beauty of the sunset, I was shell collecting, fragments of all colors and sizes.

A Johnny Cash-looking man, dressed in black, approached me and asked if I was finding anything beautiful. I showed him my plastic bags filled with exquisite fragments. His hands were filled with perfect shells, and he said, 'Take whatever you want. These are all gifts from God, meant to be given away.'

I looked into his deeply lined and smiling face as he held out his hands to me. I carefully selected a few precious treasures from the sea, and I thanked him and offered him my fragments. I walked the beach

at sunset every night, and I never saw him again. His one-time appearance was 'a gift from the sea.'

I continue to collect shells of all shapes, sizes, and colors, giving thanks to God for the perfect ones, the fragments, the old ones tossed and turned by the waves, and the miniscule ones, almost imperceptible to the human eye. And I will always remember the lone man on the beach, speaking the words of Jesus to me, 'They are all gifts from God, meant to be given away.'

May we all generously share the gifts God has given each of us, even with strangers we meet along the way.



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"God on the Gulf Coast" is a seven-day retreat guide from Sister Shirley Miller about finding God in unexpected places.