

Speak our minds

Cheryl stood behind the bric a brac stall desperately trying to avoid the sympathetic glances from the group of mums gathered around a large craft table.

It was one thing to be guilted into volunteering at the Christmas fair, but another to be the object of pity. Her daughter Daisy studiously rearranging a family of ceramic ducks, caught her eye and raised an eyebrow quizzically.

“I’m fine Daise, honestly”, Cheryl smiled “Why don’t you get us a hot chocolate”? She added as one of the mums made a beeline for them.

“It’s so lovely that you and Simon are doing Christmas together for your girls”. Madeleine whispered theatrically as soon Daisy was out of earshot. “It must be so hard for them, this first year”. Cheryl nodded noncommittally.

“Here you go mum”. Daisy said returning with two steaming cups. “Hello, Mrs Johnson” she said to Madeleine before holding up a cracked hand mirror from the stall.

“Oooh mum, can I have this? It looks like an antique!”

“It looks plastic to me and there is no point buying stuff from our own stall, is there?”, Cheryl replied kindly.

“Ok”, Daisy shrugged, “I’m going to see if there is anything here for Dad’s or Jodie’s Christmas presents – see you in a bit”.

Madeleine clucked sympathetically and then turned to pick up the mirror. “It’s filthy” she exclaimed “God, there’s some tat here, but I suppose it’s for a good cause...”

“Dreadful woman”, Cheryl thought as Madeleine stalked off, “she’s clearly eager to update the other mums”.

She felt wretched knowing her family was the subject of class gossip. She sighed, looked at the discarded mirror and impulsively threw £5 into the cash tin and pocketed it.

++++

Two weeks later Cheryl sat on the sofa sipping a glass of wine. She looked at Daisy, who was slumped against her older sister Jodie, both scrolling on their phones in front of the TV.

“Look, why don’t you open your stockings now as it’s Christmas Eve? She suggested “We’re at Nanna’s all day tomorrow, so we’ll do a proper Christmas on Boxing Day.”

“I don’t know why we’re pretending, Jodie pouted “I am sure Nanna knows Dad doesn’t live here anymore,”

Daisy shot up and tore into her stocking “Oh Mum! You got it!” She held the mirror up triumphantly.

“Look – the handle’s inscribed”, she continued, *“Whoever owns this mirror and listens carefully will receive the true gift of insight.”*

“What do you think it means?” She asked Jodie who was now pursing her lips at her phone.

“I think it means you got a dud, and I got the TikTok lip-gloss! Candice is going to be so jell!”

“Well, I think its lovely” Daisy smiled at her reflection. She turned it over to the magnified side and gasped in shock as instead of her own larger reflection, she was stunned to see Jodie’s face in the mirror. **“This lip gloss is amazing, Jodie’s image smiled, “Connor’s def’ going to notice me now, I am so much prettier than Candice”.**

“Did you hear that?!” Daisy squealed; her eyes wide as she looked up at her sister.

“What?” Jodie asked through glossed lips.

Daisy looked back into the mirror, but this time saw only her reflection. “Oh – it’s gone...”

“You’re going loopy.” Jodie smirked.

“Be nice Jodie”, Cheryl warned. “It’s Christmas; talking of which, have you both packed for tomorrow? I want you ready for when Dad comes.”

Daisy’s eyes were drawn to the mirror again but this time it reflected her mother’s face, and she was struck by how tired and drawn she looked.

“Let me get through tomorrow for the girls’ sake” Cheryl’s reflection said, **“and maybe Simon and I will remember that we once loved each other so much”.**

“Oh mum” – Daisy sighed.

“What, love?”

“Nothing.”

Jodie rolled her eyes but said nothing.

+++++

“Girls, Dad’s here! Cheryl shouted from the foot of the stairs the following morning.

“Daddy!” Daisy yelled taking the stairs two at a time.

“Happy Christmas Pumpkin – now, have you been naughty or nice?” Simon grinned catching her in a hug.

“Nice of course!” Daisy replied, “Just look what I got in my stocking!”

“Oh that’s, lovely Daise,” he said, pulling a face in the mirror to make her laugh.

“I’ve missed so much, Daddy,” Daisy whispered, clinging fiercely to him.

“I missed you too, Pumpkin”.

Daisy turned the mirror to the magnifying side and this time was unsurprised to see her father's handsome face reflected.

"It's so good to be back with my girls", the reflection said to Daisy ***"and if it's only for today I'll make the most of it."***

+++++

In the car, Cheryl tuned the radio to Classic FM and as the sound of Christmas Carols filled the car, she sighed deeply, and Daisy instinctively looked at her mirror.

"Why can't it always be like this?" her mother's reflection asked.

Cheryl sighed again.

"What is it?" Simon asked her.

"Nothing, I was just remembering that Christmas morning when we drove all over town to get eggs for your mum's Famous Eggnog" Cheryl replied smiling slightly at the memory.

"Oh yes, the great Christmas Day Egg Hunt of 2019, I remember it well". Simon smiled too, briefly taking his eyes from the road to look at her. "We got there in the end though, didn't we, love?"

His reflection in Daisy's mirror spoke again: ***"I'm so sorry I hurt you and the girls. Please just give me a chance to make things right."***

In back seat, Jodie leaned over to give her sister a hug, "Sorry I was rude about your mirror," she whispered, "It's lovely and really unusual."

"Yes, it is" Daisy agreed, "It's okay - I'm just glad we're all together for Christmas, aren't you?"

"Yeah, I am" Jodie smiled.

Daisy looked into her mirror again and this time her own face was framed. ***It's all going to be fine; I promise"***, her reflection said.

995 words.