

Is everything all right?

Scene: A crowded tea shop. A waitress busies herself at tables. Several tables of shoppers having afternoon tea and chatting. In the background a stereo plays "Well I wish it could be Christmas, Every Day" by Wizzard. When the action starts this is turned down. Later in the action the stereo plays the Christmas carol "Hark the Herald" Two customers Emma and Carol enter.

Emma: (Slumps heavily into chair at tea shop table, putting several bags full of shopping down) I'm absolutely exhausted. Totally done in.

Carol : Me too. Talk about shop till you drop. I couldn't walk another step. (Sits)

Emma: Thank goodness for tea -shops. Will you listen to that. (*points to speaker on the wall*)

Carol: What?

Emma: That song. I wish it could be Christmas every day. They have got to be kidding!

Carol: You can say that again. Once a year is more than enough.

Emma: Yes, especially considering it's been going on for a good few months already. Do you know I actually saw a Christmas advert on the box at the beginning of

October.

Carol: No.

Emma: Yes –it was for a break in Disneyland over Christmas. Honest. I wish I'd gone.

Carol: What and miss all the fun?

Emma: Fun ? Fun? Well if you mean the kind of fun slogging round the shops getting jumpers for kids who won't even have the courtesy to pretend they like them, toys for others which you know will be lucky to remain intact till Boxing Day and spending hours thinking of something for a dad who has no hobbies, no interests and no vices. That is not what I call fun exactly. I'd rather have colonic irrigation.

Carol: Really?

Emma: Well maybe not. But you know what I mean.

Waitress: Is everything all right? Can I help you?

Carol: Well apart from changing the record for some other sentiments we'd like something to drink.

Waitress: We've got tea, coffee, cola, juice and our Christmas specials.

Emma: Oh they sound fun. What are they?

Waitress: Fanta with Santa, a Lolly with Holly and ...

Carol: Sherry with a berry? No, I think we'll stick to a pot of tea and scones, please.

Waitress: So that's two teas and two scones.

Emma: Thank you. (*The song continues in the background*).

Carol: (*sighs*)

You know I remember when that first came out, I think.

Emma: What? Oh the song. Yes, the kids were always singing it. They were great Christmases. (*Pause reflecting on past Christmases, continues to muse throughout Carol's next speech*)

(*Distractedly*)What have you bought then?

Carol: You know, I've found it so hard this year. Especially for those people I always get something different for. Like Ray and Sally-they're just so different. The trouble is I used up my more creative ideas in past years. I got them those spaghetti servers last year, and the year before that the long Norwegian matches for the barbecue shaped like little fir trees upside down and now I'm all out of creative thought.

Emma: Teacloths!

Carol: Em, I hardly think in dare try that with the Jenkins'. They think I'd really gone too far this time.

Emma: No...teacloths. That's what Christmas with the kids when they were young reminds me of. Teacloths.

Carol: Oh you mean all the mealtime washing up. I find it hard to believe your kids helped you. Mine didn't. I find it hard to believe any kids would when there's an mega automatic atomic ray and stun gun to play with.

Emma: No-surely you remember all the Nativity plays at school. There was always a run on tea cloths for shepherds' head-dresses. And Joseph's.

Carol: Oh yes. There was a Joseph one year with "A Gift from Ibiza" written on his head, I seem to recall.

Emma: And then there was the annual search for blue material for Mary.

Carol: Do you remember when young Sally Archer had to drop the baby Jesus and run to the loo?

Emma: Oh yes. What a laugh. Now that was a *real Christmas*.

Waitress: Is everything all right with your scones?

Carol: Yes, thank you. Could we have a pot of hot water?

Waitress: Of course.

(The tape/CD has gone on to “Hark the Herald”)

Emma: Mmm. Now that’s more like it. Hark the whatsit angels.

Carol: Herald

Emma: Harold. No you’ve got that wrong. He doesn’t he come into the Christmas story. It’s Jesus and Bethlehem, not the Battle of Hastings

Carol: I know. It’s *Herald. Hark the Herald* angels.

Emma: Oh right. Mind you for all kids know about it today it might as well be Harold and Hastings. I expect the nativity plays these days have the wise men turn up in a space shuttle to present the baby Jesus with an X Box.

Carol: *(laughs)*

Emma: It was also so much simpler then, wasn’t it?

Carol; What 2000 years ago?

Emma: I was thinking about 20 years ago, actually. When the kids did the nativity play. You know “Lo! Unto you has been born” and all that.

Carol: The world’s moved on Em. You have to recognise it. Kids need more sophisticated stories.

Emma: Stories?

Carol: Yes, that's all it is. I mean a virgin giving birth...to the Son of God...shepherds, kings –all that stuff. We're all a bit too sophisticated for that, aren't we.

Emma: Y e s... I suppose so...

Waitress: Is everything all right?

Carol: Yes, fine thank you.

Emma: Do you think it's all just a story then, Carol.

Carol: Of course, a very nice comforting story ... for the kids.

Emma: Not all that comforting, when you think about it.

Carol: How do you mean?

Emma: The baby died.

Carol: No he didn't . I know Harold was after him...

Emma: Herod

Carol: Right, Herod. But he escapes.

Emma: Yes that time, I know. But he did grow up to be crucified.

Carol: Oh...right...I'd forgotten that bit. . *(Pause..(both*

look thoughtful)

Emma: And what's that like for a mother? Think of that?

Carol: When you think of it like that, it's not quite such a cosy story?

Pause

Emma: No. Not exactly snowy white snow and jingle bells

Pause

Both deep in thought

Waitress: Is everything all right? *Freeze*

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