

A New light

By Paul Lister

Candice had better things to do with her Saturdays than help her mother with the shop. And anyway, it wasn't her fault that Dad had left.

"And what exactly is this torch thing?" Candice asked.

"A flash," said her mother, Polly.

"But it's huge! Who would bother with it?"

Her Mother swallowed hard. She looked like she was going to cry again but managed to choke it down. Candice just packed quietly. Whatever she tried to say next was going to be wrong. You got used to that when you were thirteen.

She pulled out her phone and when mother wasn't looking, took a pouty photo and snapchatted it with the text, 'Stuck in Mum Jail. Help!!!!'. When she turned back Polly was looking at her.

"I wish you wouldn't Candy, we'll never get this done."

"God it's bad enough that I have to help at all, why can't Dad do it? It's his shop."

"It's my shop now. All the cameras are his. I want them out."

"I like, can't see the point, no one ever bought any anyway. Everyone has one on their phone now. Literally everyone."

Candice didn't want to say something stupid again, but she knew she was right. No one wanted old stuff when they could have something new.

The shop had only stayed open due to the odd collector or camera buff coming in. Dad was still making money from his photography business, so Mum ran the shop in the day time. Until she found out what he was doing in the day time.

Or rather who.

They had packed up most of the shop proper and were going through the stockroom. Candice opened an ancient cardboard box which sprayed dust up into the air. She sneezed and then on reflex pulled out her phone and held it up in front of her face.

"Candy, its only a few more hours, please."

"I'm not on media mum, I'm just checking my hair. Oh."

"What's the matter?"

"Battery's at three percent. Have you got a charger?"

"I've got the one for this?"

Polly pulled out a device and Candice didn't realise it was a mobile until her Mum flipped it open. She'd never seen a phone like it.

"It, like, definitely wont fit. I'll have to turn it off."

As Candice turned the phone off, Polly fished through her handbag and passed her an ornate mirror.

"Here, it doesn't run out of batteries."

Candice took it and tried to look at her reflection but every time she brought it close to her eyes they went out of focus. The resolution didn't change on real mirrors, you just saw what was there.

"You look fine," Polly said, smiling but a little sad. She was looking at the back of the mirror.

Candice turned it over. It had a heart design and an inscription. It read 'Every time you look in this mirror you get more beautiful, at least to me'.

She did what she could to get the dust from her hair and then handed the mirror back.

"Keep it," Polly said.

"I don't need it, you really need to get another phone. This thing doesn't do anything else."

"No, no I guess it doesn't," Polly said but never turned around. Candice shrugged, put it on the shelf and went back to her box.

It was full of old photos. Big glossy prints. Her Dad's photography business had made a lot of money from pictures of girls. Not high fashion but not glamour modelling either. That was how he had met his new girlfriend. There was one shot of a striking looking girl cuddling up to him. An antique selfie. Candice was about to throw it away before her mother saw it. But then she realised who the girl in the picture was.

It was Polly. She looked so young, so happy, looking up at Candice's dad and smiling. And in her hand was the mirror, as she showed it to the camera. Dad must have given it to her.

Candice watched her mum then. She couldn't imagine being so calm in the same circumstances. Not destroying the things of the person who betrayed you. But just removing them from your life.

"Why don't you go Candy, I know this is a chore for you and we're nearly done."

Candice looked at the mirror and then walked over to her mother and gave her a cuddle.

Polly was a little taken aback and then hugged her back.

"What's that for?" she asked.

"For being my Mum," Candice said. Then she reached out and took the mirror from the shelf, to remind her that sometimes there was more to something than just what it was.

End