

The door opened and Gerald stepped into the hallway. He looked pale and drawn. He faced the four pairs of eyes staring at him from the kitchen and stood still, returning their stares, his eyes full of uncertainty. Time seemed to stop still for everyone until a small squeal left Florrie's mouth as she jumped up from the kitchen table and ran down the hall into Gerald's waiting arms. The children watched as the two adults embraced, kissed and cried all at the same time. Daisy was next to leave the table and run down the hall to her daddy and mummy, who lifted her up into their arms to join in the embrace. Georgie was frozen to her seat. A cold numbness spread through her as she watched the scene unfold. She felt nothing. John stayed where he was with a look of mild surprise and confusion on his sullen face. The scene inside the front door seemed to go on for ever. Eventually, Florrie and Gerald put Daisy down and turned towards the kitchen.

"John, are you going to come and say hello to your daddy?" asked Florrie gently.

"No."

Gerald touched Florrie on the shoulder.

"Give him space, Darling. I'm a stranger as far as he's concerned. He'll come around in his own time."

But Daisy was ahead of Gerald. She walked into the kitchen straight up to her brother.

"John. Don't be so rude. Your daddy said hello to you. You say hello to him right now."

John shook his head. Daisy grabbed his hand and pulled him off the chair before dragging him along the hall and standing him in front of the ginger haired man.

"Now, say hello to your daddy politely," bossed Daisy.

John burst into tears, prompting Daisy to pull him into her.

"Don't cry," said the tender-hearted little girl. "There's nothing to be worried about. This is your daddy who loves you. I know you don't remember him, but you'll soon get to know him and love him like Daisy does."

Florrie turned to look into Gerald's eyes and smiled, which made Georgie, who was still sitting at the kitchen table, feel nauseated. Florrie's eyes then moved to her eldest daughter.

"Say hello to your daddy, Baby," ordered Florrie.

As Gerald's eyes met Georgie's, she felt a bolt of electricity. She was scared that if she tried to speak, she would vomit. Gerald saved her from that as he was first to speak up.

“Georgie let’s put the past behind us. I hold no grudges against you. You are a child, and you did what you had to do. It wasn’t you that put me in prison. It was Pattie and Robert. They are entirely to blame for witnessing against me in court.”