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Don't dis honesty

by Garf Collins

She'd tried her hand at most things but drew the line at honesty. So Cheryl wasn't amused at Mikey's idea she should go cleaning to help buy him drugs. She stroked her bruised face as she remembered his violent reaction.

"You're a useless coke head," she said and backed quickly away as he raised his hand, "but I've got an idea. We'll do the bag job."

The next day they visited the women's clothes department in the John Lewis store in London. Cheryl pretended to browse amongst the racks. When a rich-looking woman started showing her husband some trousers she had tried on, Cheryl moved into the changing rooms with a maternity dress. She grabbed the woman's handbag, rapidly replaced the rolled up scarf beneath her coat with it and left, handing back the dress to the assistant who smiled sympathetically at Cheryl's apparent condition.

Back at their flat they examined the trophy. Cash, credit cards, car keys and a few personal address cards. "You've scored big this time Cheryl." Mikey said in a rare moment of approval.

"But that's just the start. We can get a lot more than that," she replied, glad for once not to be the focus of his aggression.

The following day Cheryl rang the woman saying, "Mrs Humphries. It's Lizzie here. I am in the Customer Services Department at John Lewis.

A Hermes bag was found in the toilets which matches the description of yours. Unfortunately, the money and cards have gone but it's a valuable bag and it's here for you to collect."

They went to the address at Blackheath and waited until the woman left her house, walking towards the station. "Right Mikey, we'll put the stuff in her car and drive over to Ronny's. He'll know how to sell it on. We should make a few thou." They opened the front door, moved into the hall, stood still and listened. "It's OK. I'm sure there's nobody here. Let's get going."

As they carried their first stolen items through the hall, a side door opened and two police officers emerged. "Stop there. You are under arrest for burglary. You're not obliged to say anything but anything you say may be used in evidence in a court of law."

Mikey dropped the TV he had been staggering out with and grabbed his partner. "Cheryl you useless cow look what you've got me into. This was all your fucking idea." He would have savagely beaten her but was restrained by one of the policemen.

At the trial Mikey was sentenced to 18 months. Cheryl was given a suspended sentence. She had finally decided to give honesty a chance and had told her defending barrister frankly about Mikey's coercion and brutality. The judge had been sympathetic.

She now lives in a refuge for battered women and is honestly contemplating what she should do with the rest of her life.