

‘Can I get you a cup of tea?’ Josie asked kindly, ushering her guest through to the kitchen.

‘How lovely, dear,’ said Patricia, offering Josie the sponge cake.

‘Thank you,’ said Josie as her neighbour sat warily at the kitchen table, wishing she could run an antibacterial wipe over the seat. Or that her cleaner could do it for her. ‘Would you like a cup of tea?’

‘Er . . . yes – thank you again,’ laughed Patricia.

‘Just as it comes. Milk in first, only three dunks of the bag, two-and-a-half sugars stirred anticlockwise and a small teaspoon. Silver if you have one, but I’m not fussy.’

‘Right,’ said Josie, looking confused as she put the kettle on. ‘Thank you for the cake, Elly will be so pleased.’

‘Isn’t he quite the . . . young man,’ said Patricia, through clenched jaws as she sprayed her palms with hand sanitizer under the table.

‘Oh, he’s wonderful,’ beamed Josie. ‘He takes such good care of me. He’s my gift.’

‘Let’s hope you kept the receipt,’ muttered Patricia as she looked out over the neglected fields. She could see it now. Rows upon rows of identical houses where these pointless acres now stood. ‘Dairy Mews’ – that’s what she’d call her development. The idiots who bought her soulless houses liked a bit of character. Patricia felt richer just looking out of the window.

‘Do you take sugar?’ asked Josie, assembling the tea on a tray.

‘Yes, please, two-and-a-half,’ said Patricia trying to keep the irritation from her voice. Not only was the woman poor and lazy, she was clearly stupid as well.

Josie set the tea tray down and Patricia took in the chipped and mismatched crockery.

‘I was so sorry about your father-in-law, poppet. He was such a . . . character,’ Patricia grimaced, knowing perfectly well that he’d invented the Horse’s-Bum nickname that followed her around the village like one of those frightful charity collectors.

‘Thank you,’ said Josie, quietly pouring the tea. ‘It’s been a difficult year.’

Patricia reluctantly accepted the stained cup, making a mental note of a wilting plant that would be grateful for the drink when Josie’s back was turned.

‘Shall we have some cake?’ she said breezily, steeling herself at the prospect of another piece of Hooper crockery.

Friday 5th March

Inference

When Patricia visits Josie at Home Farm, she is really kind and friendly! Maybe she is a nice person after all..... Prove whether you agree or not (using evidence from the text).
