

On

The chair, there's a woman in her dressing gown, wiping her hands with a crumpled tissue. The table, there's a mug lying on its side. The floor, there's a coffee-coloured puddle. On the chair, on the table, on the floor. On her own. Daisy takes a few moments to add it all up but when she does, she knows for certain she has a problem on her hands.

A sharp voice sneaks into the room. "What was that noise?"

"Nothing." Daisy wavers a faint defence, as she scrunches the tissue into her pocket and edges her trembling fingers towards the mug.

Taking her deepest breath, she stiffens her hands against the shaking, scoops the mug towards her and hooks a finger through the handle. Jiggling it this way and that, she wobbles it upright and celebrates with a sigh of relief. She could be wrong, but she thinks it might have been a while since she managed anything this tricky.

The chair, there's a woman shuffling one foot beside the other, levering with her elbows, trying to persuade her disobedient knees to stand. The bench, there's a clear spot to put the mug. The sink, there's a dishcloth to wipe up the mess. On the chair, on the bench, on the sink. Such a long way to travel and Daisy simply can't muster the strength. As she sinks back down, her finger slips from the mug, the mug slips from the table.

A shatter of china rings around the room. Daisy flinches and draws her trembling hands over her face. The problem has grown and she can't think how to fix it.

While she's hiding in her hands, the voice creeps up behind her and mutters,

"Oh Mum . . ."

There's a moment's worrying silence before Daisy hears a breath of frustration, then footsteps back and forth. The sweep of a brush, the chink of china, the slurp of a dishcloth, the gush of water in the sink, the click of a kettle being switched on.

The chair, there's a woman in her dressing gown squeezing tears from her eyes with her fists. Her shoulder, there's a hand. Her cheek, there's a kiss. On the chair, on her shoulder, on her cheek. Daisy risks a peek through her fingers and a familiar face peers back at her. No name comes to mind but the sympathetic smile seems friendly enough.

The chair, there's a woman in a dressing gown cradling a mug of coffee in her hands. The other chair, there's a younger woman, cradling her hands around Daisy's. The mug, two sets of hands. On the chair, on the other chair, on the mug.

Daisy sips her coffee. There was a problem and she can't quite think how it was solved. She was on her own, that had something to do with it. She smiles at the woman helping her lift the mug to her lips. Perhaps she's the reason things are back on track.