

DEAR TIFFY,

'TIS CHRISTMAS EVE EVE EVE. ONLY SINCE MEETING YOU WOULD I HAVE CALLED DECEMBER 22<sup>NO</sup> BY THIS NAME. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?

LAST NIGHT YOU SAID I MUST BE GRATEFUL TO BE GOING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS GETTING SOME PEACE AND QUIET. WISH I'D THOUGHT OF THE RIGHT THING TO SAY THEN, BUT, AS IS MY WONT, HAVE ONLY JUST THOUGHT OF IT NOW. TRUTH IS: YES, FAIRY LIGHTS ALL OVER FLAT ARE STRESSFUL (NO ONE LIKES THE FLASHING SETTINGS) YES, TINSEL AROUND SHOWER IS ANNOYING (DOES BATHROOM NEED TO BE FESTIVE?) YES, DRAGGING AN ENORMOUS CHRISTMAS TREE FROM BROCKWELL PARK WAS A VEXING WAY TO SPEND A SATURDAY OFF (STILL MAINTAIN WE SHOULD HAVE CALLED RICHIE. LIFTING HEAVY THINGS IS HIS HOBBY.)

BUT IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE GOING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR. FEELS LIKE LEAVING A VERY IMPORTANT BIT OF CHRISTMAS BEHIND.

WITH RICHIE IN PRISON, LAST CHRISTMAS WAS AWFUL. THIS TIME OF YEAR ALL ANYONE TALKS ABOUT IS FAMILY COMING TOGETHER. GLANCE AT THE TELLY ON THE WARD AND SUDDENLY YOU'RE CRYING AT A JOHN LEWIS ADVERT; LOOK FOR A NEW RECIPE FOR DINNER AND FIND COOKING FOR ONE HAS BEEN OUTLAWED IN FAVOUR OF ENORMOUS TURKEY-BASED BANQUETS FOR YOUR LOVED ONES. ALL VERY WELL IF YOUR LOVED ONES ARE THERE; NOT SO GOOD IF THEY CAN'T BE.



I DECLARED MYSELF NOT THE CHRISTMAS TYPE. ONE OF THOSE GROUCHY, GRINCHY PEOPLE WHO COMPLAINS ABOUT COMMERCIALISM AND INSISTS THEIR HEAD IS TOO BIG TO WEAR THEIR CHRISTMAS CRACKER PARTY HAT.

THEN YOU CAME ALONG.

YOU WERE MADE FOR CHRISTMAS TIME. BAUBLES, PAPER CHAINS, MULLED WINE, POP SONGS WITH TOO MANY JINGLING BELLS. TINSEL AND MINCE PIES AND GOODWILL TO ALL. EVERYTHING ABOUT THIS TIME OF YEAR MAKES YOU HAPPY AND SO, IT SEEMS, THIS TIME OF YEAR MAKES ME HAPPY TOO

THANK YOU, TIFFY. YOU'VE MADE CHRISTMAS BRIGHT AGAIN

LEON x

PS HOPE YOU LIKE THE PRESENT. SORRY IT'S LOPSIDED. KATHERINE HELPED A BIT BUT I DID ALL THE CROCHETING MYSELF. IT'S MEANT TO BE FLISS FOX, HENCE ONE WHITE PAW AND MISCHIEVOUS 'I WILL STEAL THE MINCE PIES YOU LEFT OUTSIDE FLAT 1' LOOK IN EYES.





Dear Leon,

If you are reading this letter that means it's CHRISTMAS DAY! I hope you're sitting up in bed in your super-cute festive pyjamas (you better be wearing them) and reading this with a large cup of tea in your homemade Christmas mug. Or maybe not, because pottery is hard and I'm not 100% sure it's watertight. But I hope you like it, and your other gifts, too! Sorry if I went overboard with the pom poms on the Santa socks.

I hate that we're spending these days apart, but I love knowing that you and your mum and Richie are together at Christmas time. You guys deserve the most wonderful family Christmas. I bet it's snowing and everything. I know it's not forecast to, but it would just be so perfect if it did, and the universe owes you a bit of perfection.

I don't know if you'll have noticed yet, but I smuggled a little extra gift into your suitcase when you were packing. Check the inside pocket. Me and Bobby from Flat 5 have been working on festive banana 'cider', and this is a bottle of our finest brew! It's more a liqueur than a cider, really - I'm still working on convincing Bobby that you can't make cider with bananas. I am almost certain





it won't give you a stomach upset this time as Bobby says he's worked out what was causing that and fixed it, but if you're nervous, give it to Richie. If it does make him ill that will be fair punishment for sleeping with you-know-who when I SPECIFICALLY told him not to!



Anyway! It's Christmas and I've just wasted half a sheet of my reindeer paper rambling on about cider — this is not the time to discuss Richie's indiscretions. I should be spending this whole letter telling you how incredibly adorable it is that you have embraced my festive decorations, my festive baking, my festive playlists and my festive wardrobe. I know you don't really like Christmas, and I get it: once you've had a bad one, it's hard to bounce back, and last year's December was definitely the crappiest on record for the Twomeys. But that's why we had to go all-out this year. Go hard or go home, as Rachel says (though usually in a slightly different context). You and Richie needed a complete reset for the festive season, and the aggressive use of fairy-lights was a crucial part of that.



In all seriousness, though, I do want to tell you how much I love you for letting me drag you to see all of the shiniest, kitchiest, Christmas-iest things







that London has to offer. You're always so open to adventure. I feel like that's something people don't get about you when they first meet you. Yeah, you need a little persuading sometimes, and plenty of quiet time in between Christmassy outings (lesson learned)... but you're never, ever closed-minded. And now, because of that, we have so many amazing memories. Ice skating with Mo and Gerty, the world's least coordinated skaters. Taking your mum to Winter Wonderland, then immediately bailing on Winter Wonderland because you declared it "the actual stuff of nightmares" and played one of your rare putting-my-foot-down cards. (You were right, Home Alone 2 with takeaway at your mum's new flat was way more fun anyway.)

And then my favourite memory of all. Going with Richie to visit his friends at HMP Wandsworth last week, and getting the whole prison visiting hall singing Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree. That was a moment I will never forget.

Thank you for getting in the spirit of Christmas and making this time so special for me. I love you so much I won't even care if your homemade present is as rubbish as you keep telling me it is. Though I have a feeling I'm going to love it.

Yours with festive love,

Tiffy xxx 

