



## **AFTERNOON OFF! by S. Bee.**

[This text is read aloud at the beginning of this video:]  
Welcome to Stories for Lipreading. If you haven't used our website before, we suggest you look at our 'How to Use' page before you begin. We hope you enjoy this short story, which is called 'Afternoon Off!' by S. Bee.

### **Afternoon Off! by S. Bee.**

Mary turned on the hot tap and poured in the bubble bath. She'd decided to spend her precious afternoon off having a long, relaxing soak. Then she would start the brand new book she had bought as a Christmas present to herself.

Mary worked as an administrator for the local council, but a recent change in her rota meant she now had Wednesday afternoons off. Luxury!

Her phone rang.

She reached for it and turned off the tap. It was her sister, Joanne.

'Hi Mary. I knew you'd be at home. I remembered it was your afternoon off. Anyway, you'll never guess what I've just heard!' and Joanne immediately launched into full gossip mode before Mary could even say 'Hello'.

Forty-five minutes later, Mary finally bid Joanne goodbye.

Now to return to her bath... The doorbell rang. She ignored it. It rang again. Mary flung open the front door to see her widowed neighbour, Reg, standing there.

'I've been ringing your bell for ages. Where were you?'

'I was just about to have a bath,' she replied crossly.

'Would you do me a favour? I've a dentist's appointment, but I'm expecting a parcel. Could you keep an eye out for the courier and take in the parcel for me?' he asked.

'Er -' Mary thought longingly of her bath.

Thanks, Mary! Lucky it's your afternoon off.'

She nodded. 'That's right, it is, but -'

'Great. I'll be back as soon as I can. Cheerio!' And with that, Reg ambled off to the bus stop.

Mary spent the next hour stationed by the window. She couldn't even dip into her new book, in case she missed the courier's van.



Finally the courier arrived, rapidly followed by Reg. Mary went out and intercepted Reg before he reached his door.

'Thanks love,' he said, as he took the parcel. 'Why don't you come in for a cuppa? I've got some Christmas cake.'

'Well -,' she started.

'Ah, you can't trot out excuses today! I know it's your afternoon off.'

Put on the spot, Mary felt obliged to say 'Yes'.

'Smashing!' he beamed.

Over a cup of tea, Mary listened to Reg's in-depth tales of dental woe.

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Back at home, Mary knew her bath time was limited. Only half an hour left before Pete arrived home from work.

Best make the most of it, Mary thought. Then her mobile phone pinged with an incoming text. She sighed. Oh, now what was it?

It was a panicky plea from her colleague, Shirley.

Mary rang her straight away.

'Hi Mary, a reporter from the local newspaper is here asking about the Christmas lights switch-on. Can you come in and talk to him?'

'I could, but -'

'Brilliant! See you in twenty minutes.'

Mary took a deep breath. She'd had enough of people taking advantage.

'Tell him it's my afternoon off and I'll ring him tomorrow'.

'Oh, OK,' Shirley said, and rang off.

Glancing at the clock, Mary realised her 'me time' had run out.

Well, she thought, there is always next Wednesday... that's if there's no-one demanding her services as a listener, parcel-minder or advisor.

She heard Pete's key turn in the lock.

'Phew, I'm whacked,' he said. 'What's for tea?'

'I haven't planned the meal yet,' she replied.

'Too busy lazing in the bath, eh?' he winked.

Mary felt too tired to explain.

Later that evening, Mary finally opened her new book. Pete glanced over at the cover. 'What's that book?' he asked.

She smiled. 'It's called "Just Say 'No'"!'