



SEASON OF GOODWILL 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 Christmas story, which is called 'Season of Goodwill' by S. Bee.

Season of Goodwill by S. Bee.

When I read my Secret Santa name, my heart sank. Muriel was my battle-axe line manager. Well, a tub of chocolates would have to do!

I couldn't get into the Christmas spirit because, this time last year, I had my boyfriend, Liam.

Then he'd ditched me.

So I focused on my tasks at the call centre, especially since Muriel had her beady eye on me.

Arriving home from work, I encountered my neighbour Mr Kershaw.

"Rex has run off," he told me tearfully. Rex was his beloved whippet.

"I've cut down on his walks because of my arthritis. I opened the door before I could get his lead on, and -"

"I'll have a look around," I said.

"That's good of you, Jess. Here's his lead."

I spotted Rex near the park. He recognised me, so I was able to return him home.

Mr Kershaw was overjoyed. "You've found him! Thank you!"

Suddenly, I had an idea.

"I work part-time. Why don't I take Rex out for you three times a week?"

"Would you?" He looked relieved.

On Monday at work, there was a crisis.

"Help!" Clare, a new recruit, wailed.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"I've used the wrong password. I'm locked out of the system," she explained.

I thought quickly.

"There's a spare computer in the corner. Let's try that."

It worked.



“If Muriel asks you why you've changed over, I'll explain,” I said. Unlike others, I wasn't intimidated by her stern manner.

“Thanks, Jess,” Clare said.

Luckily, Muriel was in meetings that afternoon, so I placed my wrapped chocolates on her desk and slunk away.

“Do you like singing, Jess?” Mr Kershaw asked me one day, when I returned with Rex. “My group is singing in the shopping mall this Saturday to raise funds for the hospice,” he explained. “We're a carol singer short - someone's dropped out due to illness.”

I pulled a face. “I'm no Susan Boyle, Mr Kershaw.”

“No one expects you to sing solo. You don't need to rehearse, either. I have all the song sheets.”

He handed me a stack of paper.

To my surprise, I really enjoyed it. There was an upbeat, feel-good vibe amongst the group and, for the first time, I felt Christmassy.

Back at work on Monday, Muriel appeared. “My office, please, Jess.”

“I've heard how you helped Clare,” Muriel began. “Don't worry. I'm not going to tick you off. Look, a mentor position has been created to help new recruits. We need someone encouraging and supportive. Would you be interested in applying for the post?”

I smiled. “I'd love it!”

And battle-axe Muriel actually beamed at me.

That evening, Mr Kershaw said the singing group wanted me to join them permanently.

Preparing for my new job, walking Rex and spending time with the singing group meant I didn't have a moment to brood about Liam.

I smiled.

Christmas? Bring it on!