**Soap**

by Gayelene Carbis

She doesn’t know what she really wants for Christmas, or any other time really (including what to do with her life in general) yet she’s disappointed when she ends up with a bar of soap for her latest job’s Kris Kringle after she went to so much trouble and spent more (as usual) than the requisite ten dollars. She says to me, ‘You can’t get anything of any worth under that, but that’s it, it’s the last time I’m going to bother when the last thing I wanted was what I got! The funny thing is, I half-expected it. It had crossed my mind. I thought - *not another soap-bar let it not be a bar of soap.’*

She adds, ‘I’ve already got bars of soap piled high in a cupboard. They’re inaccessible and an inconvenience.’

I say, ‘You sound pretty pissed off at the kind of people who buy bars of soap …’

‘Well, I don’t mind the fruity ones from the Body Shop. Good soap. Not rubbish. Like those gift-set boxes you get on special at the Chemist. They just add to all the rubbish you’ve accumulated,’ she says.

I ask her, ‘What’s wrong with a bar of soap?’

‘I’ve got too many already.’

‘But how would people at work know what you like and what you don’t??’

‘It takes two seconds to buy a bar of soap,’ she says. ‘There’s no time or thought put into it. It doesn’t cost anything.’

‘Why don’t you give those gift-sets as presents to people who’d appreciate them?’

‘That’s cheating. And it’s cheap,’ she says.

‘Isn’t that better than not using them?’

‘No,’ she says. ‘That’s not really giving someone something.’

‘But what about,’ I say, ‘the Spirit of Christmas, the thought that counts …’

 ‘Look I do appreciate what people give me, it’s just that they never give me what I really need,’ she says.

She’s spent so many years searching for the perfect present for everyone else –

 her parents, her siblings, her friends; actresses she admires. And then there’s all the jewellery she buys for herself.. In her favourite colour, aquamarine blue. Someone once said they match her eyes and ever since …

  We sit in silence then she says, ‘No one ever really gives me exactly what I want.’

  ‘But … ,’ I say, ‘what do you really want anyway?’

And she just looks at me.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |