

reached the toaster; and when Cherry vowed she would do something, she invariably did it.

Cherry was the youngest in a family of older brothers, four of them, who had teased her relentlessly since the day she was born, eleven years before. She referred to them as 'the four mistakes', for it was a family joke that each son had been an attempt to produce a daughter. To their huge delight Cherry reacted passionately to any slight or insult whether intended or not. Their particular targets were her size, which was diminutive compared with theirs, and her dark flashing eyes that could wither with one scornful look, her 'zapping' look, they called it. Although the teasing was interminable it was rarely hurtful, nor was it intended to be, for her brothers adored her; and she knew it.

Cherry was poring over her necklace, still in her dressing gown. Breakfast had just been cleared away and she was alone with her mother. She fingered the shells lightly, turning them gently until the entire necklace lay flat with the rounded pink of the shells all uppermost. Then she bent down and breathed on each of them in turn, polishing them carefully with a napkin.

'There's still the sea in them,' she said to no one in particular. 'You can still smell it, and I washed them and washed them, you know.'

'You've only got today, Cherry,' said her mother coming over to the table and putting an arm round her. 'Just today, that's all. We're off back home tomorrow morning first thing. Why don't you call it a day, dear? You've been at it every day – you *must* be tired of it by now. There's no need to go on, you know. We all think it's a fine necklace and quite long enough. It's long enough surely?'

Cherry shook her head slowly. 'No,' she said. 'Only that little bit left to do and then it'll be finished.'

'But they'll take hours to collect, dear,' her mother said weakly, recognising and at the same time respecting her daughter's persistence.

'Only a few hours,' said Cherry, bending over, her brows furrowing critically as she inspected a flaw in one of her shells, 'that's all it'll take. D'you know, there are five thousand, three hundred and twenty-five shells in my necklace already? I counted them, so I know.'

'Isn't that enough, Cherry?' her mother said desperately.

'No,' said Cherry. 'I said I'd reach the toaster, and I'm going to reach the toaster.'

Her mother turned away to continue the drying-up.

'Well, I can't spend all day on the beach today, Cherry,' she said. 'If you haven't finished by the time we come away, I'll have to leave you there. We've got

Highlight any clues about Cherry's character.

What do these clues tell us?

Use this evidence to complete the impressions and comparisons sheet.