



# CAMILLA LONG

## THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

What is your favourite Christmas tradition? I like the one where a cheap celebrity opens a fake Lapland experience only to discover the elves have been caught a) smoking, and b) brawling, and that no one is duped by labradors posing as reindeer.

And so it came to pass that a "magnificent immersive theatrical version" of Santa's grotto, styled by prancing human lapel Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, is neither massive nor immersive nor even theatrical, but this year's Christmas catastrophe, shut down after just one day because the festive train collapsed and elves were "possibly" seen smoking in the staff rest area (claims that one elf wished guests a "shit Christmas" and Santa was "boozing, smoking and swearing" turned out not to be true).

Seriously, what did people expect? What else would the former star of Changing Rooms throw at customers except the bedraggled contents of a Homebase fire sale put together in under 60 minutes? The Magical Journey has now reopened between a thundering A-road and a golf course near Birmingham. I have come with my niece, 3, and her twin brother in order to meet "Fava Christmas", who, according to the website, has chillingly asked his close friend Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen to create a "North Pole outpost".

But the only thing Llewelyn-Bowen really seems to have created is a shopping mall, a row of festive booths selling festive marshmallows (yes) and festive americanos at unfestive prices and anything else parents think they might need in order to buy memories. Because the real thing on sale here is "memories", an entirely fabricated modern need fuelled by anxiety, guilt and smartphones. Parents splurge on "memories" with the urgency and keening competition of cash-rich, muffin-poor professional bolters who have rushed home from work, only to find they must now buy their children their actual childhood.

And so a vast and wanton supply of "memories" is offered at the Magical Journey, if by "memories" one means a mother anxiously filming her son from the moment he is removed from his car seat right through the car park and into the queue.

I have no idea what memories I should form in a fake Christmas wood, but the memories I have are these: being funnelled joylessly onto a "train" as part of a magical mission to find a baby reindeer. Being shown through a forest sprayed with pulverised bog

paper made to look like snow. Meeting an elf with a love bite and a magician with a vast cold sore. Watching an Augustus Gloop do a loser sign as he poses on a sleigh. Being led to a hut where Fava Christmas sits with a can of Febreze and a "photography elf".

According to reports, Fava has been given "additional training" following an incident where he "hadn't been briefed properly" on how to correctly administer presents from his sack. Today he rummages according to strict guidelines, producing two Frisbees that change colour in the heat — specifically the heat of my sister's thighs, for lolz, later in the car; so, well, that's a memory.

Another memory is the loss of £75 in return for my memories, which include the sight of what looks like a shelled-out B&Q, no face painting, no one making balloon animals or playing games, a shameless attempt on the part of the hotel to sell clothes and food. And even if you wanted the food, there is nowhere nice to sit and eat it, unless you like watching people looking at their phones. Happy Christmas!

Why on *earth* did no one tell me about the glittering butterfly that is David Cameron's fragrance ambassador? Roja (originally Roger) Dove is the house perfumier at Harrods. I meet him in the bar at the Connaught, just before he is officially anointed by Cameron at a dinner at Downing Street. Roja, "a lifelong socialist", is wearing purple velvet and several large jewels, including a large diamond necklace, which he bought with his inheritance when his mother died. His mother first "made me aware of glamour", he says, when she kissed him goodnight in a gold lamé dress smelling of "powder and flowers" as a child.

He is now aware of glamour 24/7 as Cameron's "voice of fragrance", creating scents for global trade fairs in order to invoke the "smell of Britain". Vomit and pigeon poo, I wonder? Britannia is, in fact, a mixture of "leather, wood, roasted chestnuts on Westminster Bridge and diesel", he says. People are always asking him to guess their scent, but he can't always tell because of the "sebum". Someone might say, "What does that smell of?" And he has to stop himself saying: "Well, oxidised sebum." But don't English people just smell bad, I say. "No comment," he titters. "But yes!" ♦



## GOING UP

♦ **MADISON STUBBINGTON**  
Brilliant name, brilliant red hair. Teen Aussie model set for huge things

♦ **EUCALYPTUS**  
The chicest seasonal foliage, plus smells amazing. Stuff branches everywhere

♦ **CHENILLE**  
Naff no more — the furry stuff is back. See Topshop's great pink jumper

♦ **COLBERT FACIAL DISCS**  
Little round exfoliating pads for your face. Use them all over your body like the Victoria's Secret girls



♦ **FROZEN FOR GROWN-UPS**  
Comme des Garçons meets Disney with this ace tee. No need to hide that Let It Go obsession any more

♦ **BLACK JEANS**  
All about white ones now. No, really. Serious East 17 Stay Another Day vibes

♦ **PARKA VISION**  
When your hood is so huge, it means you can't see a thing #urbanproblems

♦ **MARIAH PARIAS**  
Don't like All I Want for Christmas? Don't darken our doorstep, then

♦ **NEWSREADER BROW**  
The strangely smooth forehead seen on regional male news presenters everywhere. Suspicious

♦ **TINSEL TITS**  
Not festive, not cool. Do. Not. Try. This. At. Home



## GOING DOWN

