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Dearest Sister

by Chris Robinson

Dearest Sister,

It has been so long since we have had contact but recent developments make it necessary for me to break my silence. I am unwell and my doctor has recommended I put my affairs in order therefore I write to inform you of my wishes for Elizabeth. I am sure this letter is not unexpected. It is time to tell the truth and having ignored all my previous attempts to contact you I have passed the matter to my solicitor and you shall hear from him in due course. He has clear instructions on how to progress when my time comes. Don't write. Don't come. I don't need it. It's not why I've written.

I often wonder if you ever think of me sister? Do you ever wonder what became of me? Well allow me to enlighten you. When I confided in you all those years ago that I was with child you told me you would make things right. I believed you so I followed your instructions exactly and went to the address you gave me in the North of England. I stayed, as promised, for my whole confinement. I waited patiently for the visits you said you would make but you never came. I was alone and frightened but still I trusted you.

Eventually I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl in a cold damp room, all alone other than an elderly woman from the village telling me to be quiet and not fuss so.

The baby, or Elizabeth, as you call her, was delivered safely and then wrenched from me and left alone to cry in another room along the corridor. She cried for hours and the noise of her wailing increased until it reached a crescendo of screaming. I begged the elderly lady to take me to her but she refused. I begged her to contact you and tell you to come but she refused. I begged and I cried and I screamed until my sounds and those of my daughter merged as one and then there was silence.

It took me some days before I accepted the baby was gone and some months before it became apparent that you were not coming for me like you said you would. Instead I received a solicitor's letter informing me that my baby was to be brought up by you and Edmund and that a substantial sum of money had been placed in a trust for me which I could access once I was 25 yrs old on the condition that I told no one what had happened. I was just 19 at the time, alone and having to seek employment in a strange town. I wrote to you but my letters were returned unopened. I even travelled to London to beg you to let me come home or at least let me see my little girl but was informed you had gone away for the summer months.

I found work as a scullery maid and eventually married Albert. I never once touched your trust fund. My husband and I booked a passage to America and he made his fortune as a tailor to the rich gentlemen of Boston. We were happy but were unable to have children of our own. He passed ten years ago leaving me once again alone but this time with wealth. I have considerable assets and would like to leave everything to my daughter Elizabeth. My daughter, not yours but in order for her to inherit I must make some demands of my own.

I insist she be told the truth. I want you to tell her about me and everything I went through on my own. I am sure you believe that you made the right decision but I don't agree. What you did to me and Elizabeth was cruel, selfish and unforgivable. My solicitor has been instructed not to release any assets until he has proof from Elizabeth herself that this request has been carried out.

If you decide not to tell her about me or inform her of her inheritance then I must warn you of the consequences. I shall repay your cruelty to me by publicly exposing you and Edmund. My very good friend Sir Henry Radcliffe, the owner of The Daily Post, has instructions to print my story, in full, 21 days after my death if he has not heard from Elizabeth personally requesting him not to do so. Over the years I have seen that you and Edmund are regulars in the society columns of his paper but I feel sure this is one story you would not want published. Once again I leave the decision in your hands dear sister. All that remains for me to say is goodbye and good luck.

Ursula

