



## A Sign of the Times

by Victoria Watson

Dear Mary

I will have left by the time you read this but I felt it was for the best. I have been drafted to XXXXXXXXXXXXX and will have to wait for orders after that. I do not know how long I will be away; soldier life is always unpredictable but I hope you will forgive me enough to write. I think of you often and how pretty you looked that last day at Hollywell in your red dress and sad eyes.

Yours with affection,

Tom

Dear Mrs Lacey

I trust this finds you well and you have received my eldest daughter, Mary. She is a good hard-working girl, and although she may be quiet at first, she learns fast and I hope will prove a useful apprentice. She can be prey to day dreaming but a close eye will steer her to be a most valuable companion. Please pass on our best wishes to Mr Lacey and we thank you both for your great kindness in these difficult times.

Kind regards

Mrs Hetty Davies

P.s I trust the pickled damsons and ginger cake arrived unscathed.

Dear Tom

It was wonderful but devastating to read your letter, I have been quite inconsolable these last few days with no word from you. Mother was harsh at first, but once realised the depths of my upset showed some kindness and released me from my chores to take the twins for a swim. The weather has been warm of late and it was lovely to retrace our evening strolls towards the bandstand. The twins have teased me over my "sweetheart" but Father threatens them with the belt if they go on so, which they do regularly. I am leaving soon; Mother and Father have arranged for me to take up lodgings and work for a Mrs Lacey, a milliner in Padstow. I am sure she will be most unimpressed with my needlework but I will try to make myself useful somehow and help the family in however I can.

Do come home soon Tom. Words cannot convey just how much I miss you, each and every day.

Lovingly yours

Mary

Dear Mrs Davies

I am sorry to be the bearer of distressing news but unfortunately the appointment of your daughter has had to be immediately terminated. Mr Lacey and myself have to protect our professional reputation in society and therefore cannot afford to be associated with any unpleasantness. We are uncertain as to whether you are in full knowledge regarding your daughter's current condition, yet she implores you are very much ignorant of this fact. We feel in these particular circumstances it would only be appropriate for her to return to the sanctity of her family where provisions can be made for her, and her future. She will be departing on the first train in the morning. My deepest concern is that no word of this should reach the ears of any of our most important clientele, hence the impediment of her return post-haste.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Catherine Lacey

Dear Mrs Lacey

I write with tears in my eyes in response to your recent letter. I am horrified by its content and wish to assure you that we had no knowledge of Mary's indecency and wish to only pass on our most sincere apologies for any disgrace she has caused. Mary has brought shame on her family and we deeply regret any consequence to you. We would like to thank you for acting so discretely over this matter and trust that no further mention should be made, either in Padstow or Hollywell. I also must tell you

that Mary was not on the train, or any others after that, and we have received no word from her. She is of course in our prayers, as our you and kind Mr Lacey.

Respectfully yours

Hetty Davies

Dear Mary

Wonderful news! I have leave and should arrive by Thursday. Please meet me at Paddington Station, in our usual café at 7 o'clock. I long for a bath and a pint but more than anything dearest, I am desperate to see you once again.

Yours with love

Tom

To: Jenny Davies

Subject: Hi!!!

Hi Mum

Its me! Arrived yesterday, and guess what: it was raining! It was just how I remembered all our Lake District camping holidays; wet, windy and cold. I don't think I had remembered though just how beautiful it is. Yesterday we went on the Ullswater Steamer with Granny and she loved it. She is so cool for her age; she was drinking tequila slammers with Matt last night!

It's good to catch up with her, she was telling me all about the war last night, she brought out all these letters from years ago. I never knew what she went through; it seems so awful to be shunned by her own family just for being pregnant.

Will text you when we get home as want to come over and see you, Matt and I have some exciting news!

Love Tilly x