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Secrets

by Miriam Silver

“You’re a liar!” my brother yelled.

“Baby, baby baby!” I responded in my typical superior big brother manner putting my hands over my ears while strolling away, happy to leave him crying, adding for good measure,

“And there’s no such thing as Santa Claus!”

He was six when I told him this, making my Mum furious with me, giving me a “telling off” as she called it, warning me,

“One day you’ll be struck by lightning, ‘cos that’s what happens to little boys who make up stories.”

True, I was a day dreamer, I created and lived in a fictional world long before I could write, spending my spare time reading anything and everything, suffering hunger pangs with David Copperfield, and always escaping with Superman when I, Richard Smith, badly injured, beat the enemy off single-handed.

Living in this world enabled me to ignore a brother and parents who thought David was the answer to England’s football. He never forgave me for jeering at him, and had his own back by being our Mum and Dad’s favourite, eventually going to university on a sports scholarship.

I became ever more reclusive living in my world of fiction, almost antisocial, leaving school after A levels to work at the Garden Centre. I got the use of a 'liveable' flat on the estate in return for nightwatch, which gave me the quiet I needed for my writing.

Meanwhile favourite son left university and went travelling, never communicating with his ageing parents, leaving me responsible, only coming home for Christmas.

By the time Mum died I was a published author, albeit of one children's book.

"Won't make your fortune doing that rubbish," was all they could say.

I feel like an intruder here today although I have been in and out of this house frequently, looking after Dad during his last illness. The funeral is over, a simple affair, and here I am left with the 'clearing out' prior to selling.

David did not come to the funeral, just sent a brief note telling me to 'get on with it, having bit of financial trouble, could use my share', giving only a P.O. Box for the answer.

Pouring myself a big glass of the red I'd bought, parents were t-t, I ploughed through bills, receipts, and all the stuff without which life cannot be lived. Perhaps this is what makes 'Everlasting Life'?

And there it was, amongst dusty birth and marriage certificates, David's adoption certificate all pristine in its own envelope. Why had they kept it a secret? Neither of us ever knew, no one had ever mentioned it or even hinted at it.

My quandary was now, should I send this, find him, meet him, tell him. Unanswerable, especially as I had no real forwarding address or phone number.

I felt too weary to make a decision. I only know my next book will be about a boy who deflects the lightning that threatened to strike him.