

BLOODLINE

The storm blew up in the family following the discovery of my mother's diary soon after she had departed this world. Hidden away in a locked draw for decades, you could be forgiven for suggesting even the spiders and dust mites had left home!

'You're not even blood related to us Jim, so how is it that you can decide on who has what from the house?' said my annoyed brother Paul.

A Christian man all his life, St Paul as I preferred to call him had suddenly grown dark as though his stall set up in the local church had been turned over by Christ himself.

'St Paul, you are a good man. Whilst I understand you're upset, I can assure you that we are related as brothers. Brothers!'

'But Mother reveals all here. First day of January, 1950. You are not her son. Our wicked father chose to bring you into the family house rather than see you sent out into the wilderness. You are our father's bastard but that is all. Perhaps you are not the bastard of our father? Perhaps you are the discarded offspring of a maid and groom?'

'Daisy, you awfully quiet. Cat got your tongue?'

'Paul you are being monstrous. Jim has done nothing wrong,' said Sarah who was sat in the corner listening.

'Dear sister, Jim is telling us what we can and cannot do with our mother's things and he has no right.'

'But Paul, since when have you the right to dictate?' replied Sarah forcefully. 'Well?'

Paul remained standing; fists clinched behind his back. Flames roared from the Adams fireplace and the heat circulated to offset the cold dampness creeping into the room. He looked sternly back at Jim.

'I need you to decide your path, Jim. The evidence is here, in black and white, in mother's own hand.'

'St Paul, I am prepared to stand aside to allow you to remove some of mother's contents; but I shall not stand-by and watch you destroy our family. Whether I am blood or not, have I ever been unkind at anytime to you, Daisy, Sarah, mother and father?'

Paul looked at his watch. 'I'm late for a meeting with the Parson. We shall continue this upon my return. In the meantime, consider your position here at Holmefield.'

'I will do no such thing,' answered Jim. 'Father placed me in charge of the estate and the estate continues to thrive. My wife and I have placed our whole life on hold to rescue this estate from certain ruin and I will not let our efforts be cast aside by, by a Judas!'

'Jim!' shouted Sarah. 'Apologise to Paul. That was uncalled for.'

'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone,' replied Jim pointing at Paul. 'Only yesterday we were enjoying an ale and you were thanking me for taking charge of the estate.'

'Well, Jim, it appears you come from sin. I shall be contacting the lawyers to sort this unholy mess.'