

THE DUCHESS'S LETTER

The Duke of Windsor sits uneasy in his chair. His study overlooks the Bois de Boulogne's leafy Parisian suburbia. There's a chill this November morning and unusually the Duke has woken early. His mind is troubled. The Duke has not been well this past year and the discovery of a copy of a letter written by his Duchess to her former husband, Ernest Simpson, has added to the stress being caused by his long illness. The Duke's secretary, John Utter, enters.

'Good morning, your royal highness.'

'Good morning John. Thank you for coming so early. I have not slept. It's important we deal with this matter of the Duchess's letter. Now, could it be true? Could it be genuine?'

'Well Sir, the letter is dated 1937. It appears to be in the Duchess's handwriting.'

'Right. I am dying so who would send me such a thing, why now?'

'The unknown sender thought you ought to know, Sir.'

The Duke stood up. His hands shaking, he passed the letter to Utter and instructed him to file away.

'I had my suspicions back in '36 just ahead of the abdication, but I didn't believe she was unhappy with the prospect of our marrying. But now this. Could there be other letters?'

'Sir, I received a phone call yesterday evening from a journalist in London who says she has discovered a cache of letters written by the Duchess, with one significant letter dated November 1936 stating to her former husband that she wished to flee the country forever and would have to lie to you in order to achieve her goal.'

'Guy Trundle, Von Ribbentrop and his bloody carnations, Herman Rogers, and then Jimmy Donahue; and now, I find out that she was writing to her former husband during the crisis. She thinks I don't know about all the others. No. No, this will not do at all. The Duchess is to know nothing of this. I have not long to live. What we have, needs to remain intact; at least in the eyes of the world. Our story was called the love story of the century. A sort of Snow White. Can you imagine how my family would react if they knew all this?'

‘How would you like me to deal with the journalist?’

‘Tell the journalist to consider the potential impact on the monarchy and how explosive the whole thing could be we contested this in court. Ask for the journalist to exercise leniency. Also, explain that I am a sick man and any stress could hasten my death. Publish the letters after my and the Duchess’s death, but not before.’

‘Sir.’

The Duke sat back in his chair. A tear careered down his wrinkled old face.

‘I gave everything up for that woman!’ said the Duke loud enough for Utter to hear as he left the room.

Utter closed the Duke’s office door firmly behind him. Grinning, he said to himself, ‘You gave everything up for yourself.’