

The Envelope

Characters: Gladys and Mabel.

Scene;

Cluttered sitting room in the family home. Mabel & Gladys in their early 80s. Gladys sits in an armchair reading the paper.

Mabel enters carrying a tray of tea and biscuits. Placing the tray on the table she spills some tea.

Gladys: (crossly) Why do you always do this? Look you've spilt the tea. For goodness sake be more careful.

Mabel: I'm sorry dear, I know I'm a bit clumsy but look I've bought your favourite biscuits.

Gladys: They're not my favourites. I like Bourbons. Really, can't you remember anything? We have lived together all our lives. We are sisters after all, or so we thought!

Mabel (shaking her head) I'm sorry dear, I thought it was custard creams. I'll get Bourbons tomorrow.

Gladys: You haven't been the same since you found that letter in the old biscuit tin.

Mabel: Well, it is a worry. I keep wondering what it all means? I do hope that Aunt Gertie can shed some light on it. After all, she's the only one left now that would remember when we were born.

Gladys: Let me read the letter again,

Gladys picks up a letter from an old tin on the table, adjusting her glasses

'My Darling Violet,

I'm so glad that you have decided to keep the baby. Let me know if you need anything? I will try and help. As you know, due to our situations, I cannot be a true father to the child, but I will do what I can.

I will treasure so many happy memories of our time together.

Always yours,

Charles'

Mabel shakes her head and wipes away a tear.

Gladys : (disapprovingly) Who would have thought that Mother would have behaved like that?

Mabel : Let's try not to judge dear, I was born during the war, all sorts of things happened then.

Gladys : Well I think I just heard the postman deliver the post.

Mable exits, returns holding a handwritten envelope. Her hand is shaking. She sits in the armchair.

Gladys: Well come on, is it from Aunt Gertie? There's no mistaking her handwriting, even though she's well into her nineties.

Mabel: (*still shaking, looks worried*) I'm afraid to learn what she might have to say. It's not a very nice thing to find out about your sister or indeed, our mother.

Mabel turns the letter over in her hand

Mabel: I was always so fond of Daddy. As far as I am concerned he will always be my father.

Gladys: Oh just open Aunt Gertie's letter for goodness sake. Let's hope it clears this up once and for all.

Mabel opens the letter and slowly reads it out

Dear Gladys and Mabel

I hope that you are both keeping well? Considering my age, my memory is not as good as it was, but I remember all of this so very clearly.

I was, as you know, several years younger than your mother, I was a young teenager when Violet met and married Bill. I enjoyed being a bridesmaid.

Gladys casts her eyes to the ceiling. Mabel smiles and nods.

Your mother seemed to be able to talk to me and confided in me that that she'd had a romance with an older married man. She was already pregnant when she married Bill. I don't know if he ever found out, because Violet said, I was the only other person that knew, beside the father of course. The child she was expecting was (pause) Gladys.

Gladys : Oh no, not me!

Mabel: Hold on dear, there's more, or would you like me to stop?

Gladys nods to continue.

Mabel : Your true father went away for a time to help out in a home for returning wounded soldiers. When he came back to resume his previous job, he and your mother rekindled their affair. Made easier by the fact that Bill had just gone back to his RAF posting. Not long after that Mabel was born.

You share the same father, a Dr. Charles Anderson, who was very well thought of locally at the time and his wife was a pillar of the community.

So there it is. I hope that you are able to accept this news, which I have never breathed a word of to anyone until now.

With love to you both

Aunt Gertie

The sisters sit silently for a moment. Gladys looks very shocked, her mouth opening and closing.

Mabel: Well at least we know the truth now.

Gladys: My father was a doctor, I always knew I came from better than this!

Gladys sweeps her hand around the room.

Mabel: (with strength) STOP IT. There you go again!

You just can't resist one upmanship can you?

Why do you **always** do this?

BLACKOUT