

December 13<sup>th</sup> 2017

It was 2 days, 7 hours and 43 minutes since I had been told.

44 minutes.

I had also been told that I was currently going through the necessary process of shock, denial, but that there was more to come. I needed time. Time to understand. Time away from the scene. As if I haven't spent enough time away from her in her life already.

I hate this ugly feeling. So bitter. The toxic scent of tears coating my tongue. But I have acknowledged it. Anticipated its arrival. For years really.

Guilt.

I know what I have done. They say she lost the will to live. Had nothing to live for. It took them a while to find out I existed. To contact me. But I was still the last person in her call log. Only person.

I sit outside the steps of my childhood home, two things clutched in my hands, miniature lifeboats failing to keep me afloat. A tissue, and an old, worn-out, tearstained paperback copy of *Secret Daughter*. She wrote her entries at the back.

December 13<sup>th</sup> 2007

*She came home from school crying today, asking about her father. Demanding why he wasn't here, if he was ever here, why no one loved her, and if he had both his eyes.*

*He did. And that made her cry harder. She asked me why she couldn't live with him, why he couldn't be the one taking her to school, meeting her friends, instead of her one-eyed freak of a mother.*

*She was being mild today.*

August 30<sup>th</sup> 2005

*I had to sell it. Every time I see it in the pawnbrokers I remember how happy she was when I put it in.*

*She hasn't talked to me in a week.*

June 28<sup>th</sup> 2005

*Today was a good day. It was incredible. I showed her the gift. And for a first time in a long time, she smiled and let me take her outside. We went to the park, a completely normal mother and her completely normal daughter, and had fun. It was beautiful. Complete with the brand new glass eye.*

*It was my saviour.*

December 13<sup>th</sup> 2017

I remember that day. I remember it more than any other day in the makeshift diary. An olive branch, an exposed nerve of hope, and a desire for normality that would now never be fulfilled. I feel a ball of petulance tighten around my gut. All I wanted was a normal family. A mother with two eyes. Someone who wouldn't embarrass me or horrify my friends. Was that too much to ask? But as quickly as the feeling comes, it goes. And I'm overwhelmed by what I did. It was all because of me.

My legs start moving, taking me of their own accord away from the memories, and I let them.

August 8<sup>th</sup> 1996

*Through so much pain, and so much suffering came to me the best thing in my life. She is exactly 6 pounds and 8 ounces. I feel a love I have never felt in my life before, with anyone. I know that this is it. What I have been waiting my whole life for. I was meant to be a mother.*

*There is only one slight glitch with the day. She was born with one dud eye. I mean, it's no problem; everyone is imperfect. But it's okay. I've decided I'm going to give her one of mine. My baby has her whole life to live, and she is my life. She is my everything. She deserves the world and I will do my best to give it to her.*

December 13<sup>th</sup> 2017

I haven't heard her voice for years, but I can suddenly hear it, whispering these words into my hair, a smile on her face, right after she has gone through the hell of giving birth. One by one they send nuggets of overwhelming guilt shooting into my heart. It was my fault. She gave me her blessings, and I tortured her for it. Granted is too pathetic a word for how I've taken her. My fault, my fault, my fault.

I lay at mound where I've stopped, the remains of her pitiful life marked by bare earth and a stone, and let the tears fall again. And I cry all the feelings I know she would've given the other eye to hear. But she is gone, my mother, surrounded by the loneliness I have dragged her into.

I curl up into a ball, and recite the words over and over again. My fault. All my fault.

I'm sorry.