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**GOOD  
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GIRL**

**ALICE FEENEY**

MACMILLAN

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Acknowledgments

About the Author For daughters of mothers of daughters . . .

# The End



## *Mother's Day*

People say there's nothing like a mother's love. Take that away, you'll find there's nothing like a daughter's hate. I told myself things would be different when I became a mum. I was determined not to make the same mistakes as my mother, and I believed that my child would always be loved. That's what I promised my daughter the day she was born.

But I have. Made mistakes. Bad ones.

And I have broken my promise more than once.

I feel drunk from tiredness. My mind is a mess and my thoughts feel slow, jumbled, clouded by the fog of exhaustion. But she needs things and she needs me to get them for her. Doing, finding, being what she needs became my occupation the day she was born. A job I thought I wanted and now can't quit. Being a mother is a curious mix of love, hate, and guilt. I worry I am the only person who has ever felt this way, and despise myself for thinking unthinkable thoughts.

*I wish my daughter would disappear.*

I push the buggy along the high street, hoping to get inside the supermarket before the rain comes, when an elderly woman blocks my path.

"Isn't she adorable," she says, staring at the sleeping child before beaming back at me. I hesitate, searching my befuddled brain for the correct response. "Yes."

"How old?"

"Six months."

"She's  
beautiful."

*She's a nightmare.*

"Thank you," I say. I tell my face to smile but it doesn't listen.

*Please don't wake her.*

That is all I ever think. Because if someone or something wakes her she will start to cry again. And if she cries again, I will cry again. Or do something worse.

Inside the supermarket I hurry to get the things I need: baby formula, nappies, coffee. Then I see a familiar face—an old colleague—and for a moment I forget how tired I am all day, every day. I listen to the childless friend who has become a stranger talk about their life, which sounds significantly more interesting than mine. I live alone and I miss having conversations with adults. We chat for a while. I mostly listen, as I don't have much to say—every day is exactly the same as the day before for me now. And while I listen, I forget that I no longer have any dreams or ambitions or a life of my own. My daughter became my world, my purpose, my everything the day she was born.

*I sometimes wish she hadn't been.*

I know I must never share these thoughts or speak them out loud. Instead I pretend to be okay, pretend to be happy, pretend to know what I am doing. I'm good at pretending but it is exhausting. Like everything else in my life. Like her.

The conversation lasts less than three minutes.

My back is turned less than two.

One minute later my world ends.

The buggy is empty.

Time stops. The supermarket is suddenly silent, as though someone has turned down the volume. Muted a life that was always too loud. I never thought I would wish to hear her crying, long to see that tiny scrunched-up face, endlessly screaming and red with inexplicable rage. The only sound now is the thud of my heartbeat in my ears, and I feel wide-awake for the first time in days.

I stare at the empty stroller, wondering if I left the baby at home. I was so tired yesterday I put my phone in the fridge by accident. Maybe I forgot to put the baby in the buggy before I left the house today? But then I remember the elderly woman on the street, she saw the baby. The friend who is now a stranger saw the baby too. I saw the baby, five minutes ago. Maybe ten. When *did* I last see her? The panic rises and I spin around, looking up and down the supermarket aisle. She's gone. The baby is too young to crawl. She didn't climb out by herself.

*Someone has taken her.*

The words whisper themselves inside my head. I feel sick and I start to cry.

I look up and down the aisle again. The other shoppers are going about their business, behaving as though nothing has happened. It's been seconds since I

noticed she was gone but it feels like minutes. Am I dreaming? I've had this nightmare before. I sometimes wished she wasn't born but I didn't mean it. I never meant it. I love her more than I knew it was possible to love.

I'm shaking and I'm crying and my tears blur my vision.

*I wished my daughter would disappear and now someone has taken the baby.*

I whisper her name.

Then I scream it.

People stop and stare. I feel as though I can't breathe.

Life is suddenly loud again. I start to run, desperately looking for any sign of the child or the person who has taken her. I see a woman carrying a baby and I feel rage, then relief, then humiliation when I realize it isn't her. I apologize and keep running, keep searching, keep screaming her name even though she is too little to know how to answer. People are staring at me and I don't care. I have to find her, I need her, I love her. She is mine and I am hers. I would do anything for her. I will never think bad thoughts about her again.

But she is gone.

My chest hurts as though my heart is actually breaking.

And I am crying. And I am falling to the floor. And people are trying to help me.

But nobody can help me.

The child, my world, my everything has been taken.

*I wished my daughter would disappear and now the baby is gone.*

I already fear I will never see her again and it is all my fault.

Because I know who has  
stolen her. And I know why.



# Frankie



## *Another Mother's Day*

She was her mother's daughter. People often said that, and Frankie agrees as she stares at the framed photo of her little girl who has been gone too long. They share the same green eyes, same smile, same wild curly hair. She slips the silver frame into her bag and takes one last look around the prison library. Today is her final day as head librarian at HMP Crossroads, not that anyone else knows that. Yet.

Mother's Day has never been easy, and nothing Frankie does to distract herself from her grief works anymore. There is no greater pain than losing a child and it's hard to forget someone you so badly want to remember. Her daughter was a teenager when she disappeared, but that doesn't make it any easier than losing a younger child. And it doesn't help that she can't tell anyone what really happened, not that talking about it would bring her daughter back. Better to keep busy. Hard work has always been the best cure for heartbreak.

She switches off the outdated computer and picks up her mug. It was a gift a few years ago—handmade and hand-painted—with a wonky handle and Frankie's name on the front. Her *other* name. The one that is redundant now. Mum. It's the only mug she likes to drink from, at work and at home, so she takes it everywhere. She never leaves it *here*. Frankie doesn't like other people touching her special things. She walks the fourteen steps from her desk to the library door, then turns off the lights and stands in the darkness for a moment, no longer trusting herself or her senses. Her tired eyes sometimes see shapes inside shadows these days, things that her mind insists aren't really there. So she turns the lights back on, listens to the hum of silence, and waits for her breathing to slow down.

Frankie wasn't always afraid of the dark.

She turns the lights on and off three times, but everything is the same as before. The same as it always was. People spend too long adjusting to the light instead of the dark, it's why they are so unprepared when bad things happen to

them. Frankie counts down from ten before locking the library door for the last time. She has thirteen keys attached to the belt of her uniform to choose from, but can select the correct key for every lock without looking. The cut and shape and feel of the cool metal in her hands bring comfort. She likes to push individual keys into the tips of her fingers until they hurt and leave a mark. Feeling something—even pain—is better than feeling nothing at all.

There are twenty-two steps from the prison library to the stairs. She likes to count them. Silently, of course. Counting things has always helped Frankie to keep calm. She reaches another door, finds another key, then steps through into the stairwell before locking the previous door behind her.

There are forty steps down, then five to the outside door.

The big key this time.

Fifty-eight steps across the courtyard, sticking to the path, avoiding the grass.

The big key again.

Eighteen steps to reception. Twelve to her locker, where she retrieves her phone and sharp objects. It took Frankie a while to get used to being searched on her way into work, and having to leave her personal belongings behind each day. But she learned to adapt. She knows that doesn't make her special; the ability to cope with change is as essential as water or air. The same rules apply to all things and all people. Everything in life that is now normal was once unfamiliar.

She checks her phone but there are no new messages or missed calls. She sets an alarm to remind herself to set another alarm later. Frankie likes setting alarms on her phone for everything, it's the only time it makes a sound. There are thirty-two steps to the outside gate. She always walks more quickly for this part of the journey but does not know why. Fast, determined steps, as though she is trying to outpace herself. Or run away. She whispers the number of steps left like a numerical mantra. Or a prayer. *Thirty-two. Thirty-one. Thirty. Twenty-nine.*

It's as though all the numbers in her head need to find a way out of her. Buzzing like bees until they escape her lips and fly away.

*Nineteen. Eighteen. Seventeen. Sixteen.*

Frankie knows the guard at the final checkpoint well enough to say hello. He's asked her to go for a drink with him, twice. Frankie said no. She prefers to drink alone and *people* cannot be trusted. Not trusting people was her mother's

number one rule and it is one she inherited. Frankie doesn't know why men find her attractive, maybe it's her prison uniform. A uniform that is nothing more than a stereotype, a fantasy, a disguise. We all play daily dress-up games, choosing which character to be when selecting something from our wardrobe. Deciding who we want others to see us as, hiding behind our clothes. The world is full of people who are good at being bad, and people who are bad at being good. She has always thought of herself as a good bad girl. Someone who made the best of the bad life she was born into, and tried to do something good with it. But when Frankie looks in the mirror these days, all she sees is a plain-looking woman in her thirties. A woman with dark circles beneath her eyes and a mess of dark curls that have always refused to be tamed. A woman who resembles someone she used to know.

A ghost.

The guard steps out of the little security hut that borders the *inside* and *outside*. He smiles and she feels herself shrink. His name badge says Tom but he looks like a Tim.

*Thirteen steps. Or was that twelve?*

Everyone calls it a hut, but it's made of thick reinforced concrete walls, with barbed wire on the roof, and it is staffed with armed guards 24–7. Tom is a little older than Frankie. He's tall, but his broad shoulders are always a little hunched, as though he is embarrassed by his own height.

*Ten steps. Nine.*

Frankie stares down at her feet to avoid his gaze—she does not like people looking at her—and notices that her shoelace has come untied. It can wait; there is no time to stop.

*Five steps. Four.*

Tom looks down at her, but only because he is six feet tall and she is five foot nothing.

*Three.*

She is close enough now to smell the tea on his breath.

*Two.*

Frankie pushes one of her keys into her fingertip until it hurts.

*One.*

She reminds herself to breathe as the guard starts to unlock the outer gate. It is camouflaged by the inescapable, tall, thick concrete ring fence that surrounds

the prison. Frankie tries not to stare at the bloody white feathers that decorate the barbed wire on top. Tom smiles again and she tries to smile back, but her face won't let her. She is relieved that he doesn't try to start a conversation. Frankie can't remember how to have them, and she needs to carry on counting the seventy-three steps from the gate to her van.

Life has taught her that other people should be kept at a distance. *People* can't be trusted. People can't be counted on, so she counts other things instead. Counting things that are real makes the walls of her world feel more solid. And Frankie likes walls, even the ones that surround the prison. She builds imaginary ones just like them around herself all the time, to keep *people* out.

Frankie locks the doors as soon as she is in her ancient blue and white Volkswagen camper van. She puts her special mug on the passenger seat and wishes the person who made it was still here. Losing her daughter is the worst thing that has ever happened to Frankie. Worse than all the other worst things that happened before it.

Frankie whispers the words that sometimes make her feel better:

*You're okay. You're okay. You're okay.*

We live in a world where it is too easy to lie.

She checks her Mickey Mouse watch—the same watch she had as a child—and sees that she needs to hurry or she'll be late. It's hard to drive away from the prison for the last time. Her job is the only thing that has kept Frankie sane recently, but she's about to lose that too. They'll never let her return to the library at HMP Crossroads when they find out what she's capable of: the terrible things she has done, and the horrible thing she is about to do. The future can seem too uncertain when your past catches up with your present.

Frankie needs something to calm her down. Turning on the radio seems like a good idea, but the voices coming out of it are all talking about Mother's Day, so she switches it off. She searches inside her handbag and finds a packet of Rolos. There are ten chocolates in total, which is good because ten is a good number. It is the Pythagorean symbol of perfection; humans have ten fingers and ten toes, there were Ten Commandments and the number ten symbolizes the completion of a cycle. It must be a sign because Frankie has come full circle. She counts each Rolo as she eats them but saves the last one for her daughter, carefully wrapping it in the gold foil, never quite willing to give up all hope. One is a lonely number. The Pythagoreans did not consider it to be a number at all,

because number means plurality and one is singular. The number one reminds Frankie of how alone she is in the world.

She can feel herself starting to spiral to the darker corners of her mind, so she takes a can of Mr. Sheen from the glove compartment, squirts some of the polish onto the steering wheel, and massages it into the leather with a cloth. Frankie breathes deeply; she finds the smell of cleaning products calming. She is afraid of dirt almost as much as she fears the dark, but with good reason. When life throws enough dirt at you some always sticks. She puts the polish back and checks the other three things inside the glove compartment:

An old ten-pound note from 1999.

A newspaper clipping.

A silver ladybug ring.

She slips the ring onto her finger and notices that her mind is finally quiet and calm. She has stopped counting. Frankie knows what she needs to do and no longer cares about the consequences. The only good thing about losing everything is the freedom that comes with having nothing left to lose.

## Patience



My Sunday morning shift begins with the elevator doors closing and trapping me inside. The whole thing shudders before grumbling to life, and the Victorian contraption reluctantly carries me to the top floor, groaning all the way. I stare at my reflection in the tarnished mirror and an eighteen-year-old girl glares back. Sometimes I don't know who I am anymore. I know my name, it's written on my badge: Patience. I know where I live: London. I know where I work: here, sadly. I know what I like to eat, to drink, to read . . . but I don't know *me*. I can't remember who the real me is.

The girl in the mirror is wearing thick-rimmed nonprescription glasses. She doesn't need them, but she thinks they make her look less pretty. According to others, her green eyes are her best feature. That's why she tries to hide them. She wishes it were easier to disguise her worst feature: the distinctive freckles on her nose. Her long, wild, curly hair has been tamed into a plait, which rests on one shoulder of her black-and-white uniform like an unloved pet. A uniform that still looks too big for her, even though it was the smallest size they had.

The girl I used to be is gone.

The girl in the mirror is all that is left of me.

It isn't because I wanted to fit in, I just didn't want to stand out.

The old elevator chimes to signal my arrival on the top floor. I adjust my star-covered backpack—it's heavy but I daren't put it down—and heave the metal gate to one side before pushing the cleaning trolley out into the dimly lit corridor. I push some of the elevator buttons with the door held open—which is normally all it takes for it to stop working—buying myself a little time. The floorboards creak and the trolley wheels squeak as though conspiring to give me away, but there is nobody up here to see me. Everyone else is busy elsewhere, distracted. I still check twice in both directions before letting myself into room thirteen. Doing something wrong is sometimes the right thing to do. Everyone knows that, even if they pretend not to.

The bedroom is dark, but I know my way around. Room thirteen is a large double room with an en suite bathroom. Recently redecorated, because they

had to do something to hide what the last occupant left on the walls. The first thing I do—once I've locked the door behind me and parked the trolley—is unfasten the shuttered doors on the far side of the room. I fling them open, letting in the light the space has been starved of and revealing a small balcony. The white curtains billow out like ghosts and the sounds of the city let themselves inside before the air gets a chance. A chaotic symphony of traffic and life rises up to greet me in a glorious crescendo, drowning out all the unpleasant thoughts inside my head.

I step out onto the tiny tiled balcony and peer down at the busy London street below. People rush by in both directions, talking on their phones or staring at their screens, hurrying past each other. They behave as though they are important people going to important places to talk about important things. But from up here they all look so small. So insignificant. If someone were to fall, or jump, or be pushed over this balcony, I'm almost certain they would die. I wonder if other people think about death as often as I do. It's an occupational hazard for me.

I close my eyes, just for a moment, enjoying the warmth of the sun on my face. With my eyes closed, I can pretend to be anywhere. And I do, pretend. There is no better place to hide than inside your own dreams. For a few seconds, the city seems strangely still and quiet, as though waiting for what is about to happen. The perfect moment of solitude lasts less than a minute, and it is the closest I'll get to a break during my twelve-hour shift.

I step back inside the bedroom, catch an unwelcome glimpse of myself in the mirror above the dressing table, and see that girl again. The one masquerading as me.

I look like a maid but that is not what I am.

The building looks like a hotel but that is not what it is.

This is where people come to die.

It still surprises me that people pay good money to stay in bad places like this.

I have been working at the Windsor Care Home in London for almost a year. Its name makes the place sound royal, but it isn't fit for a queen. It's barely fit for purpose. There aren't enough staff, and the care home manager is a monster disguised as a well-dressed, fiftysomething woman. Her name is Joy. Which is ironic really, because I have never met anyone more miserable.

The fees for the elderly residents who live in this beautifully restored Victorian building are astronomical, but I get paid significantly less than the minimum wage to work here. Which I do twelve hours a day, six days a week, in exchange for cash. The former “palace,” as it is described in the brochure, is a four-story town house with eighteen rooms. Residents—or their relatives—need to be well-off to get a room here. But the money can’t mask the stench of loneliness, death, and despair. God’s waiting room might look luxurious but it feels like a prison with wallpaper and patterned carpets. I freeze when I spot the shape of someone hiding beneath the bedsheets in room thirteen.

“It’s *me*,” I say, carefully lowering my heavy backpack to the floor.

An elderly woman sits up in the bed. She is wearing pajamas covered in pink flamingos. “Why didn’t you say so?” she says, clapping her hands together. “Oh, Ladybug, I am so happy to see you!”

Her hair is a mess of white curls with a few purple heated rollers left in, and her heavily lined face is a picture of glee. Her Scottish accent always makes me smile, and her words trip over themselves in their hurry to leave her mouth, the way people speak when they don’t often have someone to talk to.

“Where have you been?” she asks. “When you didn’t come yesterday, I was worried you might have quit! *Joy* came to see me instead. She said I’d have to eat in the dining room with *the others* because of staff shortages. The woman is an ignoramus and only fluent in bunkum. She tried to starve me out of my room but I survived on custard creams and Werther’s Originals. I thought it might be *her* again, so I was pretending to be dead. Did you think I was?”

“No and sorry, I had a day off yesterday. Has nobody been in to check on you today?”

She shakes her head and I shake my own as though headshaking is contagious. Sadly it doesn’t surprise me that none of my colleagues have come to check on someone who would have probably just told them to go away.

“You might have to start going downstairs again sometimes,” I say. “You used to at least have your meals down there, even if you refused to eat with the others.”

“Would you want to eat in a dining room with the walking dead? It’s like feeding time at the zoo. Besides, I had *May* for company back then so it wasn’t all bad.”



May was Edith's neighbor in room twelve. They ate their meals together and played Cluedo in the conservatory, away from *the others*. They were like two peas in a pod and could often be found giggling like schoolgirls. But then—quite out of the blue—I came to work one day and May's room was empty. The bed had been stripped, her things were gone, and so was she. "I know how sad you still are about May dying—"

"That's a bucket full of hooey. I'm angry, not sad. May didn't die, she was murdered. She knew something was rotten about this place, so they got rid of her."

"We've talked about this before—"

"That's all anyone wants to do these days: talk. Nobody remembers how to listen."

"I hear you, promise. It was lovely that you found a friend here and that you two had so much in common." May and Edith were both former detectives and would spend hours in each other's rooms watching old episodes of *Murder, She Wrote*. "And it's very sad that May is gone," I say.

"Was murdered," Edith mumbles, but I choose to ignore her.

"You could try getting to know some of the other residents? Make some new friends?"

"What for? I have you."

"I can't be here every day, and you can't survive on whatever food is hidden beneath your bed. I think leaving your room once in a while would be good for you, and *the others* aren't all bad."

"*The others* are all old, or ill, or incontinent, or insane. I am none of those things and I do not belong in this place. I haven't met a single person here who is still fully hinged, including the staff—no offense. Besides, I found ways to amuse myself while you were gone. How does my hair look?" she asks.

I smile. "Great, but I think you're supposed to take all of the rollers out."

"Why? They make me look *interesting* and at least ten years younger."

"All I know is that's what other people do."

"You should never worry about what other people do or don't do. I never have."

Edith Elliot is eighty years old. She has an almost full set of marbles but one year ago, without her knowledge or consent, her daughter moved her into the Windsor Care Home. Edith was tricked into signing some paperwork which

resulted in her losing her home and independence. Her daughter then left Edith here one day without even saying goodbye. Joy—the world’s most miserable manager—gave Edith the tour and explained that this was now her home. Edith hasn’t left the building since and now refuses to leave her room. “How was your day off?” she asks. “Did you do anything nice?” “No,” I reply, trying to make the bed with Edith still in it.

“Did you make any new papercuts?” she asks, turning to look at a small framed piece of art on the wall. It was a Christmas present from me. I have been cutting paper since I was a child, but these days I do it with a knife. A very sharp one. I cut and I slash and I slice until I have made something out of nothing. I make paper people, animals, birds, trees, the sky, the sea, entire towns made from my imagination, and it makes me feel less lonely. The red-and-black papercut on the wall is of ladybugs. Edith has insisted on calling me Ladybug since the first time we met—she seems to think it is my name—and I have given up correcting her.

“I didn’t have time to make any new papercuts yesterday,” I say.

“You must *make* time for the things you love most. You’d be a dunderhead not to; you’re a talented artist.”

She doesn’t understand how tired I am after working here. Sometimes I don’t have anything left in me for anything else. “I’ll try.”

“Do or do not. There is no try,” says Edith. “Do you know who said that?” “Shakespeare?” I guess, plumping up her pillows.

“Yoda,” Edith replies with a grin. I didn’t have her pegged as a *Star Wars* fan. The woman is full of surprises.

“Here, I want you to have this.” She reaches over to the bedside table and picks up a little wooden box I don’t remember seeing there before. She opens it, revealing a silver ring shaped like a ladybug.

“Thank you, but I can’t—” I start to say.

“Please,” Edith insists. She holds the ring out in front of me, her hands bent out of shape like gnarled twisted twigs. “I can’t wear rings anymore—my fingers are too thin, anything I try to wear falls off—but this ring used to mean a lot to me, and I want you to have it.”

“Accepting gifts from residents is against the rules—”

“Poppycock and fiddlesticks to *the rules*. Would you really deny an old woman her dying wish?” “You’re not dying.”

“We’re all dying from the day we are born, it is only a matter of time. Ladybugs are a symbol of new beginnings, love, and luck. I hope this little ladybug might bring you all three.”

Luck has never liked me but I take the ring and slip it onto my finger. It fits perfectly. “Thank you. I’ll give it back when you’re feeling better,” I say. The ring looks old and I wonder how Edith came to own it, and why she is so obsessed with ladybugs. She recites the same nursery rhyme whenever I leave her room:

*Ladybug, Ladybug, fly away home.*

*Your house is on fire and your children are gone.*

*All except one, and her name is Anne.*

*And she hid under the—*

A sound in the corner of the room interrupts my memories. My mind is always too full of unfinished thoughts.

We both turn to stare at the star-covered backpack on the floor. It is moving, all by itself.

“Did you bring him today?” Edith whispers.

I nod. I did something bad, but it was a good thing to do. Good and bad aren’t as different as some people seem to think. Mother’s Day is as difficult for Edith as it is for me—I doubt she’ll get any visitors—and I wanted to cheer her up.

Edith’s first day as a resident at the Windsor Care Home was also my first day here as an employee. It could have been a coincidence, if coincidences were real, which they are not. We met in this room a year ago, where I found her sobbing in an armchair. There are endless rules and regulations at the Windsor Care Home. One of them is no pets. Not content with tricking Edith into coming here, her daughter took Edith’s beloved dog and dumped him at an animal rescue center. So I found him, spent all of my savings, and adopted the dog. I secretly bring him to see Edith whenever I can, then take him home with me again at the end of my shift. Nobody else knows that I do this. I’d lose my job if anyone found out, but seeing them reunited makes the risk worthwhile.

Dickens is an eight-year-old border terrier and my only other friend. I love him almost as much as I have grown to love his owner. I unzip my backpack and he runs out, leaps onto the bed, and licks Edith’s face, wagging his little tail so fast his whole body wiggles with it. Dickens has got very good at being still and silent when he’s in the backpack—he spends most of his time sleeping these days—

which makes smuggling him in that much easier. He's also a little bit deaf—though I sometimes wonder if it is a case of selective hearing—but the rest of him is in full working order. There is something quite magical about the bond between a dog and their human. Seeing the two of them together makes me so happy.

“Look, I've got a new toy for you,” Edith says to Dickens, throwing a black-and-white cuddly bear for him to fetch. “It was a gift sent in the post from my daughter, for Mother's Day. What am I going to do with a teddy bear at my age?” Dickens fetches and returns the bear. “But at least you can get some enjoyment out of it,” she says, throwing the toy for him to fetch again, which he does, gripping it in his teeth and giving it a shake for good measure.

I take the toy from Dickens. “Why don't we put this away for now? We don't want anyone downstairs to hear him running about.” I place the teddy bear on the dressing table. “And before I forget, I managed to get everything you wanted.”

Once a week, Edith gives me her bank card to buy her a *Radio Times* magazine, a book, a packet of custard creams, a large bar of Dairy Milk, three cans of ready-mixed Pimm's and lemonade, and two lottery scratch cards. We always scratch one card each, but the most we've ever won was a pound. I take all the items from my bag and put them on the bed.

“You should hide this somewhere safe,” I say, trying to give the bank card back. “Valuable things have a habit of going missing around here.” Residents are not allowed to leave the care home alone, it's against the rules, but Edith does still have some money tucked away that her family didn't manage to get their hands on, and I don't mind getting her things she wants from the outside world.

“Keep the card for now, there are a few more items I need you to get for me. I've made a list,” she says, ripping a page from her favorite notebook. She keeps it by her bed at all times and calls it her “List of Regrets and Good Ideas.” She writes her regrets at the front and her good ideas at the back. The only spare pages are toward the end.

“It looks like a lovely day out there. I wish I could take Dickens for a walk instead of being locked away in here,” she says.

“You're not locked away. You could at least leave your room. This isn't a prison.”

“Isn't it?” she asks. “Prisons come in all shapes and sizes, and sometimes we build our own without realizing.”