

## **My Two Families**

**By Rebecca Batin**

When my aunty Lisa died, everyone was shocked because it had been so sudden, she was 35 and full of life...that was how she died.

She was in Spain for a holiday with her partner James when it happened, they were going to go tramping in the mountains, sky dive from a plane and swim beside a giant waterfall in the middle of nowhere. But none of this happened because my uncle James woke up and Lisa wasn't there. He went back to sleep assuming she was just at the bathroom or something, but when he woke up half an hour later she still wasn't there so he went to the bathroom to find her.

She wasn't there.

He searched the rest of the room before calling the police. By 1:00 they had three search parties out, and by 1:30 they found a letter on the steps of the Hotel saying that a well-known criminal called Monty Thendcris had taken her hostage and would only give her back for \$40,000 James had no money and the dead line came quickly. He got back her bag and was told she was dead.

James wanted to move house, he couldn't bare to go back, and so mum and I offered to clear it out. Mum took care of Lisa's stuff and I headed to the spare room. It was packed with boxes of old photos and letters, I really liked looking at the photos but resisted reading the letters because they were private. I had almost finished looking through the boxes when I found a dark red book, it had faded gold righting spelling out the word memories it was bound shut by a gold band and bright lock.

I carefully took the book out, it was deffently old the faded cover proved that it was also locked, fastened shut by that bright lock that looked so out of place beside the old cover. I put the book down and searched around the bottom of the box for a key. There wasn't one. I put all the photos back then put the box on the sorted pile before racing down stairs book in hand,"mum" I called.

No reply.

"MUM" this time I shouted, still no answer.

I wasn't worried, mum sometimes walked down to the shops when she got overwhelmed by the fact that Lisa was gone. I thought for a moment then headed up to Lisa's room. I'd never been in there, the walls were pale pink as were the curtains and the drapes that hung around the bed the duvet was white and the bed and chest of draws were a deep brown wood. Draws were pulled out and clothing was piled up around the room. It was almost empty but luckily mum had left the jewerly boxes in a pile with the shoes.

I picked up the top box, it was yellow with a picture of a high heeled shoe on the front opened it up, there were three compartments filled with jewelry; rings bracelets and necklace's. I searched through them there was no key.

There were two more boxes neither of which contained the key. I was about to leave the room when something caught my eye, a minor imperfection in this perfect room, it was beside the bed and all it was, was a patch of wall painted a slightly different colour. I paused then walked over to it, from here you could see that the patch of wall which mum had moved when she dropped her ring down the back, she obviously hadn't noticed it then and it had been dark so we had gone straight home. It looked like someone had made a hole in the wall, then filled it in and painted over it.

For a moment I thought the key might be in it but I couldn't be bothered to look more closely I walked out of the room and down to the spare one all of the boxes were sorted and the room was almost clear I suddenly felt sad. I'd spent so much time in here in the past few weeks, I'd even slept in here once. I closed the door and walked down stairs to the kitchen. Mum wasn't back yet and it was starting to get dark. I started to think about the book, just then mum walked in.

"Hello, Gemma are you there?"

"Yep" I called back, "in the kitchen".

Mum came in carrying a few shopping bags.

"Sorry I didn't tell you I was going out, I was really hungry so I thought I would go down to the bakery and get some buns."

She paused for breath then continued

"But I met Stacy who was going to the super market, so I thought I would go to and cook a pizza or something. Then she asked if I wanted a coffee and I thought I'd better go."

Mum looked happier then I'd seen her in ages. I suppose mum hadn't seen any of her friends in ages and that'd probably been getting her down, I hadn't really noticed it till now. I had decided to tell mum about the book but she was so happy right now that I left it. That night we stayed at James house again. At about 9:00 I was walking slowly up stairs once again I was thinking about the book, and that's when I got it I had been so certain that the key had been in the house, but if Lisa hadn't wanted any one to see inside the book she would've kept the key on her at all times I would've so if she kept it on her she would've had it on her when she died.

All of her and James holiday stuff was at my house right now. I was so happy with my self and excited to i really wanted too see inside the book. I raced down stairs mum was reading on the sofa

"Mum" I said, "I really need to go home."

"Why" mum frowned "what for?"

I quickly started to go on about how I really missed my own bed and so on. "Please" I finished. "Ok" mum said reluctantly. Half an hour later we were home, I was so nervous that I went straight to bed, but I didn't sleep. At about 12:30 I heard dad come up and once id heard his bedroom door close I quickly crept down stairs. All Lisa's stuff was in

the spare room, I wasn't supposed to go near it during the day, but no one said anything about night.

No one was down stairs but the kitchen light was on and I waited five minutes before slowly ducking in to the spare room. I flicked on the switch, all of Lisa's stuff was lined up in piles around the room, on one of the piles was a green shoulder bag, grabbing the bag I pulled the contents out until at last I found a wallet. Apart from the usual credit cards there was a \$50 note, a small mirror and a thin silver chain with a greenstone locket on the end. I was about to open it when I heard footsteps on the stairs, stuffing the wallet back into the bag I turned off the light and crept back into the hall, Mum was in the kitchen with a glass of water. She didn't notice me so I crept up to my room. I studied the locket before opening the clasp. There was a small perfect golden key. I slowly fitted it into the lock and opened it for the first time.

It started with a small girl, dark blond hair and muddy brown eyes laughing as she squirted an older man with a hose. The next photo showed a girl about nine who looked solemnly at the camera. Beside her was a slightly older girl whose brown hair was in messy pigtails and tied with a blue ribbon. Both girls looked sad and a little lost. I guessed this was at my grandmother's funeral. The photographer had taken other photos of the funeral. All of them had the little blond girl in them.

The next photo showed years of birthdays, Christmases and children in school uniform. It showed a graduation where a tall girl with bronze skin and highlighted blond hair grinned out at the camera surrounded by friends looking happy. She was so different to the small sad looking girl in the first few photos that the only way you could tell she was the same person was by her brown eyes.

In the next few photos she was leaning back against a young man whose hand was draped around her shoulder. She looked comfortable but not happy, exactly. The man wore a scruffy coat and leather trousers that were too tight. They both looked tired and ill. The next few photos showed them in a rundown apartment, greasy café and in a park beside a large statue. All the photos were of the girl but they were somehow different from the first few.

A few photos later I realised what the difference was. The first photos had showed a young girl posing for a camera. Then she'd graduated and they showed the same girl tired but still happy but she showed no sense of making this moment one to remember. I couldn't say exactly but I thought this girl wasn't actually aware she was having her photo taken. The photos changed - they were spread out over several years. There was a wedding photo - the same tall man with brown hair beside a bright blond haired woman, a beach where two people relaxed on white sand and one of a young woman holding a newborn baby. They stopped and on the next page was a letter.

*Dear Lisa*

*I have spent my time following you and James around capturing  
Everything that matters in your life. I've followed you up mountains  
And to relaxing holiday destination you've not noticed me since*

*High school as I've changed, a lot, you have changed to and you have stayed with James even though my letter here calms that you didn't always want to be with James. I know you don't remember me but I'm Timothy Hendricks you once went out with me, and then you went on camp*

*And came back with James! I thought it was just a holiday romance you even married and had a child I have not seen you or her since then. Please remember me as a reminder of your past life i've inclosed The promise you made when you were 16.*

*Lots of love*

*Timothy*

*Ps I have another name it is MONTY THENDCRIS.*

I gasped Monty Thencries was a well-known criminal that took Lisa hostage and supposedly killed her! I turned the page there written in neat script was a short note:

*Tim,*

*I really don't want to go on this stupid camp. I'll really miss you and gemma, I really like the Name Gemma, if I ever have a kid I'll call it Gemma, even if it's a boy!! No I wont, sorry to be Sidetracking you again. Anyway I'm going on camp Tomorrow so I won't see you for three weeks.*

*Love Lisa xxx*

By the time id finished reading I knew one thing and suspected another. I knew that Lisa wasn't dead and I suspected I knew who child was. Even though it was 1:30 I raced in to James room, he was reading," Gem, what are you doing up?" I quickly told him about Lisa's and I can't believe she had a child." I finished in a whisper. James was silent while he looked through the book, then," go and get your antie "Gem."

"Who" I whispered.

"Mille."

That one word changed my life I raced in to my supposed parents room.

Twelve hours later we were on our way to Spain. I was really tired but my mind was buzzing. I was sitting beside James, mum and dad (Mille and Davis) were in the seat in front.

"Dad?" the word felt strange because it was so familiar. James looked at me sadly,

"Yes Gem?"

"Why didn't you not want me?"

"We did want you, its just we had no money, we were going to put you in care but mille loved you so much that we were allowed to give you to her and that way we could still see you. We were going to get five years worth of pay this august; we would have got you back then. OK."

"OK".

When we landed I was really tired, but still looking forward to seeing Spain. Two policemen who took us to the hotel where we were staying when we got there the adults left me alone in the room while they talked to the police met us at the airport. I just slept. When I woke up there were soft voices in the room, I opened my eyes there was Mille Davis James and... LISA, she was alive!!! "Mum?" I whispered "yes dear?" Mille answered. I felt really bad because I'd meant Lisa, then I realised that MILLY was my real mother.

Lisa had been found by the address that had been on the letter. She HAD been held captive by Timothy who was now in prison, so my life could now return to normal. Lisa and James are still going to move house, to a big one up on the hill, I'm going to live with them on weekends and Mille and Davis during the week, it's gonna be wired to start with. I still think Mum and Dad are Mille and Davis, even though they're not my biological parents. It's not like in book where you go and live with your real parents and forget about the ones who have looked after you all your life, we had to do all this paperwork and even then I was only allowed to spend up to four days with them to start with.

I chose to stay three nights and two full days. Last weekend we went out as a family, each person had to treat the other four to something of their own choice: Mum's treat had been the natural history museum, then we went out to a posh restaurant in Merrily for lunch, from Davis and James. Lisa's was the best of all; she took me to a beauty parlour where we met my best friend, Mollie.

We had manicures, our hair was styled and we had new clothes picked for us, then we were filmed doing the catwalk for a ceremony for teen clothes! I was asked to come back and do more modelling. Yay. My new life isn't going to be so bad I guess. I'm going to high school after the summer, two weeks, then back to nasty uniforms, boring subjects and late nights spent doing homework, at least Mollie will be going so that'll be cool, and I'll always have my family... sorry my TWO families.