



Mummy Feels ...

By Katy Darby

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Darling Simon,

So lovely to get your last letter, although Mummy couldn't *quite* make out the part about what happened in Biology because there was a rather nasty stain on the paper: probably just a bit of dissected worm.

Mummy remembers her Biology classes *very* well. She used to have a super time cutting up rats and testing blood-types and things. Mummy once made a pig's eye squirt *vitreous humour* all over Jenny Matravers's cardigan. (That's Mrs. Pertwee, but she was called Matravers then). Perhaps Mummy should have been a doctor? Too late now, I suppose. I don't expect they let you do blood testing in class any more, do they, because of diseases and things, which is nonsense of course, but there you go.

I hope you're doing well on the Second Eleven and that you're not *too* disappointed about Chartwell losing against Winchester at footer. It's rotten, naturally, but from what Mummy saw at the match it wasn't your fault *at all*. That silly centre-forward shouldn't have passed the ball when any fool could see that you were pulling up your sock. You mustn't let being dropped from the team bother you. In Mummy's opinion cricket is a much nicer game and the Captain (Northam Major is it?) looks *very* dashing in his whites. He must be six foot already, and such lovely blond hair and green eyes. And think of the teas! Yum!

Mummy's sent you a fruit cake for the next game. Do make sure Northam Major gets a piece, and tell him it's from me. And don't eat it all yourself like the last one, darling (oh yes, your housemaster told me all about *that* little incident, *and* the horrible mess you made on his Turkish rug) because let's face it, you don't need the calories!

I'm sorry to hear that the fourth-formers were beastly to you over your little

accident in the night. It's perfectly natural, even at your age, darling, and I expect a lot of them do it themselves, only they probably get up earlier, so they've time to change the sheets before breakfast and nobody's any the wiser. However, Mummy does *not* feel that staying awake all night is the answer, because the last thing you need is to be tired in lessons. Goodness knows your reports are hardly exemplary as they are! "Could do better", darling, so *do* try, won't you? For Mummy?

It's funny, isn't it, darling, how Daddy is so clever, even if it's in a rather showy, boring way, and Mummy is so pretty (though she shouldn't say so herself!) and yet you don't seem to take after either of us! The glasses don't help, of course (and that *is* your father's fault: he admitted his great-uncle went blind when we were having that grown-up discussion you unfortunately overheard last half-term hols). Naturally you can never join the RAF now, but Mummy promises not to be too heartbroken. Perhaps you can be in the Navy instead! You always were good at swimming. Or floating, anyway.

With regard to your spots, Mummy will tell you one thing: do *not* pick at them. You were a terror for it when you had the chickenpox, and you've still got that ugly scar on your nose, so darling, I beg you, leave well alone. I've sent you some skin-cream: it's Estee Lauder and frightfully expensive, so use it sparingly and let's hope it doesn't leak over the cake. And *don't* let the fourth-formers see it: heaven *only* knows what they'd call you! "Pimple Simon" and "Bedwetter Fetter" will be nothing to the nicknames they'd come up with then! Although that is rather witty, for fourteen-year-olds. Mr. Bertram must be teaching them *something* in English classes.

So, be Mummy's brave little soldier. Most boys grow out of acne by seventeen or eighteen so it'll be five years at most: and anyway, it's not as if there are any girls to impress at Chartwell! Although I suppose there is the summer dance with St. Winifred's to think about, but that's ages away, and you'll probably have grown into your dinner-suit by then.

Mummy remembers her last school dance as if it were only yesterday! Oh, she was the belle of the ball that night! She could have had any boy she wanted: Roger Garwood (he's a cabinet minister now) Peter de Beauvoir, who made that enormous fortune in rubber ... even the Hon. Johnny Smythe-Black, who ended up marrying that *dreadful* slut Anthea Holland who took him for half of Wiltshire in the divorce.

But no: your father swept me off my feet, with a combination of his roguish (if superficial) charm and the Remy Martin I hadn't realised he'd slipped into my punch. He always had a taste for pretty girls and hard liquor, even at the age of seventeen. If anything it's only got worse, as I expect you noticed at Christmas. Let's put it this way: it wasn't Father Christmas who drank all the brandy so that there was none left to light the pudding. Neither was it Rudolph who surprised Nanny Alice in the stables, so that she had a complete nervous collapse and had to be sent to that rather expensive clinic.

But enough of silly boring things about home! Tell me about History: is Mr. Anstruther still giving you good marks? He was awfully nice when I met him at your last parents' evening: such a shame that Daddy couldn't make it, although I still have no idea *how* Mr. A can have thought I was a widow. Just a simple misunderstanding, though in confidence, Simon, your father was *extremely* unreasonable about it. If little mistakes like that occur in future, darling, it's probably best to keep 'mum': at least until you've spoken to Mum!

Such a shame that Mr. Anstruther's engagement to the French mistress (Mademoiselle Fournier, was it?) had to be broken off after they found those photographs of her in that old *Paris-Match*. Now *there's* something you might have spoken up about a little sooner, as it was obviously in the public interest that her so-called "modelling" career came to light. Although it's rather a pity that the magazine in question belonged to your father.

Goodness! Time is ticking on, darling, and I shall have to run to catch the last post. I know you must be *terribly* excited about seeing Mummy and Daddy tomorrow for the first day of the summer hols: I expect you're all packed, and Mummy is too! So, what I meant to say, what I almost forgot to say, in fact, is that Daddy will be picking you up from school tomorrow instead of Mummy. I know, it's a surprise, isn't it?! When was the last time he pulled his considerable weight in the parenting department, you must be thinking! Trust me, it wasn't easy to persuade him, but Mummy reminded him about her bad back, the one Daddy gets so resentful and suspicious about (you'll find out why when you're older) and he *finally* agreed to collect you himself. I expect he'll let you sit in the front on the way home, if you're good.

Speaking of which, Mummy has some good news and some bad news. Bad news first, I think!

Now this is important, darling; I need you to tell Daddy something for me, though ideally not when he's driving along the A40 at ninety miles an hour as per usual. I need you to gently break it to him that Mummy shan't be at home when you get back; or ever again, I should think. I'm sorry if this comes as a shock to you, or Daddy, but Mummy feels it's best this way.

And I can tell you what else Mummy feels: Mummy feels like a teenager again, as though the youth you and your father stole from her has come rushing back in a tidal wave of passion. Mummy feels free, and alive, and like the most beautiful, seductive, exotic, sensual woman in the world, and Mummy wouldn't swap this feeling for anything: not for you, I'm afraid, Simon darling, and *certainly* not for your father.

So be an angel and tell Daddy however you think it's best, perhaps when you stop for lunch on the way? Mummy would do it herself, but she simply can't face the inevitable tedious arguments and sobbing and begging and so on: it would be like Nanny Alice all over again. Sorry to make you the bearer of ill-tidings, darling, but I'm sure he'll take it much better coming from you.

Oh, I nearly forgot the good news! The good news is that you won't need to bother doing your History prep tonight, because Mr. Anstruther shan't be in the lesson tomorrow, or ever again, I should think.

There! Isn't that lucky? Every cloud has a silver lining, hasn't it? Just think of the look on the other boys' faces!

With lots of hugs and kisses and a little sorry-face,

Your loving

Mummy