

Epilogue

1. Letter to dear Great Uncle William

“Dear Great Uncle William,
Under which sky are you traveling at this moment?
I would never have thought that being the head of the Ardlay family
required such a commitment.
I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for having visited
Pony’s Home. I know you are starting a new business project and that
this is, therefore, a particularly intense period for you.

And then...I still feel like I’m dreaming.
Prince on the Hill...
How could it be possible...?
He was Albert...
That means...Great Uncle William was Prince on the Hill!
Oh! I’m still quivering with surprise and emotion!
Immediately after your confession, George came to pick you up and
in the blink of an eye you vanished once again from Pony’s Hill.
Maybe that makes me feel all the more that this is a dream. My body
seems to be floating in the air. I have never forgotten Prince on the
Hill.

By no means will I be able to fall asleep tonight.
Candy”

2. Letter to Miss Candice White Ardlay (from William Albert Ardlay)

“Dear Miss Candice White Ardlay,
I have gratefully read your letter. It was highly regrettable for me as well that I had to leave immediately, even though I made such an important confession. Again, please accept my sincere apology, that my sudden confession surprised you.

Just joking, Candy! If I really write to you in this way, you will certainly pout with displeasure! So, can you write to me like your usual cheerful chattering?

It’s normal for you to be angry. In fact, I continued hiding from you my identity as Great Uncle and my real name: William A. Ardlay.

I don’t want to justify myself, but I want you to know that I also wondered if I was doing the right thing.

All I wanted was to just watch over you in secret. Instead, who would have imagined that you would take care of this ‘Albert’ to such an extent? (Like a cheap novel!)

For that reason, I bear without protesting the fact that you formally call me ‘Graaanduncle!’, or that sometimes you treat me as if I were an old man.

I knew I would surprise you again, but I had one last truth to confess to you. However, I wanted to find the right moment and, if possible, I wanted to tell you in the same season in which we met for the first time, on Pony’s Hill. That way, perhaps I might be able to return to my old self, the young boy back then.

Dear Candy, you realized that immediately. It was enough for me to see your face bathed in tears to know that everything became clear to you.

My intention was to stay with you to explain everything properly, but we were interrupted. George always gets in my way at the right moment. But I didn’t disappear; you even followed me all the way to the car to see me off, remember?

At this moment I must give priority to work, something I have never worried about until now. I would like to meet you right away, but for a while I’ll not be able to get away from my commitments.

Candy, I want your letter. And this time I want it to be in your typical style.

May you take good care of yourself. Please give my regards to Miss Pony, Sister Lane and the children.

William Albert Ardlay”

3. Letter to Prince on the Hill

“Dear Prince on the Hill,

Although I was asked to speak in my usual style, still I can't help feeling nervous about writing to Prince on the Hill! Come on, let's take a deep breath...

Prince on the Hill...

Thank you for answering me so quickly!

Sir William Albert Ardlay does nothing but surprise me!

To a frail person like me, ten hearts wouldn't be enough to bear all these revelations!

From now on I wonder if I shall call you 'Prince-Graaanduncle'. At least you'll have to bear that!

However, I must admit that the way in which you revealed the truth to me has been wonderful! We were on Pony's Hill, where I saw you for the first time. Just like then, there was a clear blue sky and I could smell the fragrance of the grass.

That day, ever since the moment Great Uncle appeared suddenly at Pony's Home, I had been feeling mysteriously uneasy. The teachers were in a panic and immediately offered to go and prepare tea and biscuits, but I was standing there paralyzed and stunned.

When Great Uncle entered Pony's Home, his expression seemed to me strangely different than usual...as if he were a boy...

Although occasionally I tease Great Uncle by treating him as if he were an old man, actually he seems much younger than his real age. Only, at that moment...to say that he looked younger isn't maybe the right expression...I can't explain myself very well...In any case, sensing that he looked different, for some reason my heart skipped a beat.

Great Uncle refused the tea offered and told me seriously: 'Candy, let's go to Pony's Hill..' Upon receiving that invitation, I noticed a vague presentiment inside me, but I would never have imagined what would follow. Up on the hill, Great Uncle remained silent for a time, and then he turned around to face me as if he had made up his mind. 'Candy...don't you think the moment has come for you to return the badge to me?'

He said that with an embarrassed smile.

That moment, time turned back instantly.

I saw myself again, a little girl crying on the hill.

Prince on the Hill was there, before my eyes, and he was smiling at me.

Not being able to help it, I started crying and, between my tears, I immediately said: 'So...I am prettier when I smile?'

With moist eyes, you answered me: 'Now you're pretty even when you're crying, little girl.'

Your voice was a little broken. Yes, that was the voice of the Prince...It was undoubtedly his way of speaking! That voice which had always been by my side, and which I had always been hearing, but I had never realized anything...But finally I understood why it had always been able to soothe my heart. In the same way, I also understood the reason why Great Uncle had seemed different to me. The man who appeared suddenly at Pony's Home was not Great Uncle, but Prince on the Hill.

I couldn't stop crying, but this time those were tears of happiness.

Prince, you are terrible! At the House of Magnolia I showed you my precious badge many times, and even talked about you! If I remember correctly, someone called 'Albert' was there simply listening...I wonder if you had already recovered your memory back then. I have to take advantage of this opportunity to ask as many questions as I can!

Silently, you kept looking at me with tenderness until I stopped crying. The wind was blowing on the hill and it was nice to feel it on my wet cheeks.

I couldn't believe that, under that blue sky, Prince on the Hill was by my side...I was enthralled by such a vision. Then, from the foot of the hill, came the sound of George's horn, and it brought me back to reality. Oh!

I always dream of meeting you again so I can ask you so many things! I would like to know what you were doing there that day, why you disappeared suddenly...So then, why?

But I'll catch up next time we meet. Now I have so many things to look forward to!

To change the subject, soon it will be May and Pony's Hill will be full of flowers. So what day is approaching? Precisely: it's the birthday of a *certain person* (and I say it out loud)!

Well, dear Prince on the Hill, now I'll cast a spell on you!

Ala hela bla bla gela gola boone!

That day you must come to Pony's Hill to see a girl who is as pretty when she cries as she is when she smiles! And the gift you'll bring will be a holiday: you must spend a lot of time with her and talk to her about many things!

The magic will work...I hope so!

Candy"

4. Letter to little enchantress Candy (from Albert)

“Dear Candy,

You don't need to cast such a strange spell: I remember very well the birthday of a *certain person!* By the way, for some time I've been looking for a gift for you. I would like the product of my sweat and tears to be a gift that would leave you absolutely entranced!

Therefore, please forgive me if your magic doesn't have any effect. I myself, more than anyone, would really like to take a vacation, but George affirms with great severity that I have rested enough for the rest of my life. And he is right.

Don't look angry, Candy. Why don't you come back to Chicago? Annie would like to celebrate her birthday too and, if you came here, it would be easier for me to get a free moment.

When you overcome the disappointment and decide to accept my proposal, I'll immediately send a car to pick you up. Of course I would like everyone at Pony's Home to attend too.

Certainly a party organized in the orphanage would be more beautiful, but I think Chicago isn't so bad either. Your little ones could have an interesting educational trip, and I would also like to make sure that the teachers could have a little rest.

So, are you still displeased? However, when you receive my gift, I'm sure you'll show me a radiant smile!

Nevertheless, I think your magic has partly worked. Since I received your letter I do nothing but think about the past.

You asked me what I was doing that day on Pony's Hill, dressed in the traditional Scottish costume. You must know that back then...or rather, since I was even younger, I was strictly forbidden not only to go out freely, but also to appear in public.

As you already had the opportunity to know, I was just a child when I found myself taking over the role of the head of the Ardlay family. There are complex reasons that brought me to that situation: in fact, for the Ardlays, what counts most is the blood line. My father, William C. Ardlay, was an excellent businessman and had led the family since he was young. His sudden death caused a great instability and there was nobody but me, a child just eight years old at that time, who could succeed him. The role of the head of the family is transferred from William to William, in a line of direct descent. Great Aunt Elroy, my father's older sister, and the elders of the family thought carefully about what they would do, because there was another member of the Ardlay family who was interested in taking my place.

No, you don't need to know the details of those internal conflicts; now everything has been resolved for good.

Anyway, the elders decided to entrust the role of the head of the family to me and to take charge of everything since I was not old enough. Following a well-designed plan, they made sure that in the family and even in the business world the word was spread that Sir William A. Ardlay was an eccentric man, but extremely skilled at his work. Fortunately, the family was very large, and only very few people knew the truth. On the other hand, forced to listen to the same story, people ended up believing it. The results of that plan were really shocking. Over time the remembrance of me disappeared from the memory of my young relatives with whom I spent my childhood. I don't even know how things took place. I was a kind of marionette, and I was very lonely.

My only company was represented by discreet servitude and private teachers, carefully selected and specialized in subjects ranging from business administration to law. So I grew up surrounded by severe-looking adults. As long as I had my sister Rosemary by my side, I was able to bear everything calmly. She was the only one who could understand me, the only one who was worried about my situation and my stolen identity. Then, regrettably, she left me too.

Oh, Candy...In my mother's family there are many cases of women who died young. That happened to my mother too, who passed away immediately after giving birth to me. So my sister, much older than myself, was like a second mother to me.

That day...when I met you, a little girl crying, I had run away from home. Don't laugh: run away for a day is still run away!

I remember that in the second residence of the Ardlays, in Lakewood, there was a party and, as always, I had been forbidden to leave my room. On such occasions, George in general was careful to take me to some distant place, but that day he probably didn't have time.

Locked in my large room, I was immersed in studying. From outside I could hear the laughter of the other children of the family and the sound of the bagpipe. I was convinced I could play better than anyone, but the only people who listened to me were Aunt Elroy, who was able to praise me while maintaining at the same time a somber expression, and the expressionless George. I didn't even have friends my own age.

The more I listened to that music, the more unbearable the situation seemed to me and I put on the traditional Scottish costume. As a matter of fact, that was the usual costume for the young Ardlays on formal occasions.

In comparison to the parties celebrated in Chicago, I thought that few important members of the family attended and, dressed like that, certainly nobody would notice me.

But one of the elders discovered me immediately and Aunt Elroy scolded me severely saying that I had to understand my position. I felt a rage I had never felt before.

I knew I had to resist just a little more, since I would leave soon to attend a university in England, away from everyone. The idea of being able to free myself from that suffocating life comforted me, but it seemed that day would never come. After all, someone would soon follow me even to England to watch over me. I wondered how long they would continue to have me isolated in that way...

Who was I actually? I was seventeen years old, but I had no freedom at all. My name alone seemed to live its own life, while I carried on that abnormal existence.

I ran away from home. I was already good at driving, so I took a car. I knew I wouldn't go unnoticed, dressed like that, but I was feeling so oppressed that I didn't worry about anything else. I didn't even have any money with me.

It was the first time I felt so free.

'And so what? I am William Albert Ardlay! What do you want from me?'

Maybe I cried out those words while I was at the wheel. I was driving aimlessly.

I don't know why I stopped at some point and ascended that elevation. Maybe I did it because its height and dimensions reflected perfectly the image I had of a hill.

As I was lying on the grass, the sky seemed immense to me and it was as if I had been absorbed in that blue color. The beautiful white clouds were moving slowly, carried away by the wind. I envied their freedom.

While I was there absorbed, suddenly the clouds separated, taking different directions. Some joined other clouds, others disappeared in the air. That moment, Candy, I shuddered. Not even clouds were free: each one of them had to face its own destiny. Carried by the wind, even they were bound to move away and take unexpected paths. So why did they continue to travel so peacefully?

I started thinking about my family, my father, my mother, my sister and George, always ready to follow me like a shadow. Then I thought about Aunt Elroy, a severe woman who, however, was trying to protect me in any way.

I realized that, wherever I went, I would always be an Ardlay. I wanted to be free, but I couldn't renounce my family. However, I no

longer intended to let anyone direct my life. I wanted to make my own decisions and choices according to my own mind.

At that thought, I felt suddenly lighter.

It was then that a little girl ran up the hill, as fast as a bullet, and with a grimace on her face. Yes, Candy: it was you.

I remember well your struggle not to cry. I understood that you were waiting to be alone on the hill to be able to do that. Your image struck me to the heart.

You know, Candy, that was the first time I saw and heard someone cry so freely and sincerely. And it was also the first time that I could admire such a wonderful smile. I couldn't help speaking to you.

If I suddenly disappeared that day it was because of George. I saw him climbing the hill and escaped on the other side downhill, quick as the wind. You were trying to point out to me something at the foot of the hill and you were talking loudly by yourself. Probably you hadn't realized that I was already gone.

However, George is much quicker and caught me immediately. I was surprised to see his face full of tears. It's difficult to look into the eyes of someone who cries without even saying a word to you. The only other occasion on which I had seen him crying like that was when my sister died.

On that hill I discovered the way I had to live. And I never forgot that little girl, that's why I recognized you immediately when I saved you after you fell from the top of the waterfall. Around your neck you were wearing a cross and my badge. On the other hand, you hadn't changed much since our first meeting (don't be angry).

When you told me about yourself, I felt the desire to make you happy. I wanted the girl in front of my eyes to find her happiness; and I was sure I could help her.

My letter has already become too long. Would this be also the work of your magic?

I'm waiting for you in Chicago.

Albert

P.S.

Candy, I can bear anything, but could you stop with that 'Prince on the Hill'? It gives me the shivers..."

5. Letter to Albert

“Thank you, Albert.

I couldn't help getting wet with tears the letter you sent me.

From now on I'll never call you 'Graaanduncle' again. I'll never let you bear anything!

Now I feel even closer to you.

Of course everybody at Pony's Home, including me, is happy to accept your invitation!

I can't wait to see you again in Chicago!

Candy the crybaby”

6. Letter 2 to Albert

“Albert! Albert! Albert!

What did you say? That you can hear very well so I don't have to shout like that? The fact is I'm so happy that I can't help crying out your name again and again...Thank you, Albert!

It seems to me that I alone have received all the birthday presents reserved for the girls all over the world!

I can't stop thinking about that enormous room that you completely renovated in mint green especially for me! Those handmade wooden furniture, so beautiful to touch...their scent! And to think that I would have been happy to stay, as always, at the guest room. Now I will want to return often to the Chicago mansion.

When I saw all those gifts on the table, I simply didn't know which one to open first. But it was not over! I was convinced that the product of your sweat and tears was precisely that refurbished bedroom! On the contrary, the gift which appeared before my eyes took my breath away literally! Thank you, Albert!

I could never have imagined that you had recovered Cleopatra and Caesar! When they entered the garden, I couldn't really believe my eyes. Those were the horses I had taken charge of at the Leagan house, the animals with which I slept and woke up in the morning. Even after I had been adopted, I used to go secretly to the stable of the Leagans and, when I learned that they had been sold separately, I felt very depressed. Caesar and Cleopatra were very attached and I could perceive how much they took care of each other. How could they separate them in that way? I couldn't forgive the Leagans nor the behavior of Neal and Eliza: those two are interested in something just for a while and then, when they get tired, they completely forget about it. But undoubtedly, even Neal's whim wanting to be engaged to me must have been something similar! What happened was so unpleasant!

Actually the two horses have grown old, but they haven't lost the elegance that agrees with their pure blood. What touched me the most is the fact that they had remembered me. They competed in wiping away the tears that were flowing down my face. Later we started the preparations for bringing them to Pony's Home...Oh, Albert, you simply want to make me cry again and again, don't you?

The children are enthusiastic about the idea of taking care of them. In the vicinity there is also the Cartwright farm, and certainly Caesar and Cleopatra can spend their old age quietly on Pony's Hill.

Miss Pony and Sister Lane are happy for having spent a wonderful holiday. They say they don't know how to repay you, and I bet you'll

soon receive a long letter of gratitude from them! It seems that Miss Pony hasn't been in a big city for more than twenty years! Also Sister Lane confessed to me ecstatic that she revives the Ardlay mansion in her dreams. She's still wondering if all this had been real.

The same thing happened to the children. They do nothing but talk about Chicago and I always tell them that, if they want to go back there one day, they must behave well. Whenever I solemnly admonish them in that way, they quickly pay attention.

On that occasion I could also see Archie, Annie and Patty again after a long time. But maybe my magic was fading. In fact I had very little time to talk with you.

Albert, it seems to me you're very busy...I'm afraid for your health. Even Dr. Martin told you not to get overtired, didn't he? I wonder if amnesia is a recurring illness...I never want to live certain moments again!

I remember those days of both uncertainty and tranquility that we lived at the House of Magnolia. We didn't have any money, but we had such good times...I'll never forget when you asked me to share everything with you, good things and bad. I wanted you to recover soon, but on the other hand our living together as brother and sister didn't seem so bad to me...Well, now I'm your adopted daughter! Maybe I should start calling you...*father?*

By the way, when did you recover your memory? Next time I would also like you to tell me about your life in Africa...

I wonder when I'll see you again...

Your beautiful adopted daughter"

7. A quick greeting to Candy (from Albert)

“Dear Candy,

I’m writing a small complaint to you. You had promised me that you wouldn’t let me bear anything, hadn’t you? So what does that ‘father’ mean now? And then what do you mean by ‘beautiful adopted daughter’?

Yes, it’s true, you are beautiful...maybe (have I made you angry?), and certainly it can’t be denied that you are my adopted daughter. In fact I had forgotten about it. I’m still young and unmarried, and yet I have a daughter...it’s something that surprises even me.

Even the term ‘adopted daughter’ sounds unbearable to me. I don’t look like it, but I’m a sensitive man (don’t laugh!).

Changing the subject, I’m on my way to São Paulo. I’ll write to you again as soon as I get there. I would like you to tell Miss Pony and Sister Lane that I only did what a good adoptive father is expected to do. *Adoptive father?* Oh, no! I have said it myself...

Please, try to look after yourself and say hello for me to the children!

Albert”

8. Letter to *maybe* beautiful Candy (from Bert)

“Dear Candy,

I am in a hotel of São Paulo and it's two in the morning. Finally I am alone.

I feel very well, so don't worry. During this time I really enjoy taking over my work. Not for nothing; the blood of my father William runs in my veins.

I'm happy you have had a wonderful birthday, and it seems to me the party has been a success! I really apologize for leaving so early.

I suppose Caesar and Cleopatra are resting at Pony's Home at this moment. They're really a beautiful pair, and it's great to see how close they are to each other. I would have liked you so much to see their joy when they met again. There's no difference between animals and humans. On the contrary, perhaps animals are much more unadulterated creatures; they never betray you.

I had to leave Poupe in Africa, and it was a decision that cost me a lot. At the last veterinary clinic where I worked she was very much loved, that's why I thought that maybe it was the right choice. Later, they informed me that she died of old age. Candy, pray too that she may rest in peace. When I recovered my memory, I was glad I had saved Poupe from being involved in the accident that happened in Italy. However, when I saw Caesar and Cleopatra, my heart contracted: even at the risk of dying in that railway disaster, maybe she would have preferred to leave with me.

I hate to say that, but it was not me who found your beloved horses... It was all thanks to George. I really admire his capacity. I begin to understand why you call him your White Knight. Nevertheless, even he had difficulty in finding me, when nobody knew what had happened to me.

I think I began to recover from amnesia when I was taken to Dr. Martin's clinic, after the car accident. Until that time, several images had been appearing to me as if they were fleeting glimpses, but following that incident I happened to feel a severe headache and I fainted. I was at work, where I had been allowed to have a dishwashing job. When I came to I was myself again, Albert...or rather, William Albert Ardlay.

I should have told you immediately, but I couldn't. I still think today that I was wrong, but I didn't want to leave the warmth of our life together. I knew well that, once I returned to the Ardlay house, I would have to take up my role as head of the family and I would no

longer be able to escape responsibility. Even that desire of mine was merely selfish.

My reckless behavior caused great concern to many people, but if I have been able to lead the life I wanted, it was always thanks to the Ardlays and to the devotion George has shown to me.

Dear Candy, I want you to know that I didn't limit myself to having fun traveling around the world. If I was in England, it was also to follow up on the preparations for a new business project. However, the fact that we met by chance makes me think of that mysterious thread that unites us and which you always talk about.

When I finished my assignment and I was reassured to see you serene again in London, I decided to leave the Blue River Zoo to get to my beloved Africa.

Wherever I went, I never had to worry about finding a work or about how I was going to live. That, too, I owe to my belonging to the Ardlay family. I had always doubted if I was able to do anything by myself, but my trip to Africa allowed me to face that fear. I chose to leave cutting contact even with George, simply because I wanted to prove myself.

The alarming premonition of war was hovering over Africa too, and maybe it was precisely that atmosphere that stimulated me. The Ardlay business was stable and I thought that, even if I left for quite a while, there would be no problem. How could I have been so selfish? I knew well, from the beginning, that many people would be distressed about me, and now I'm really ashamed for my superficiality.

Being involved in that railway accident in Italy was maybe a fair justice. A spy was traveling in those wagons, and it was no wonder that a fellow like me, with no identity and with a miserable appearance, had been a suspect.

Chicago. The name of that city, the only word that remained in my memories, was able to save me and bring me back to you. I think I became much more religious than I ever was. At the refugee camp where I was, if there had not been a kind person willing to help me to return to America...and if I hadn't run into you...

You know, Candy, at that time I was no more than a suspicious man, with no memories and without his own identity, but you didn't abandon me. Even when you were discharged from the hospital you remained by my side and comforted me, saying that some day I would certainly recover.

You did all this for a man who had helped you only once in his life. Words can never express my gratitude to you. But in the future I want to make sure that you can find happiness.

When I return to Chicago, I promise I'll take a holiday and come to visit you.

Bert”

9. Letter 3 to dear Albert

“Dear Albert,

When will you return from São Paulo and come to visit me at Pony’s Home? If you are so grateful to me, I really hope you’ll meet me soon.

But, did they actually call you ‘Bert’? What a nice nickname!

Well, my letter ends here today. I want to talk to you about everything when we meet in person.

Yours, briefly (maybe)

Candy”

10. Letter to William Albert Ardlay, aka Little Bert

“I wonder if Little Bert is still working at this moment...As always, I have just come back from Dr. Martin’s Happy Clinic and I have just put the children to bed.

*Little Bert...*I’m really very happy you confided to me this nickname! That is how your sister Rosemary, Anthony’s mother, called you. She was the only one who used that expression, but now I have the honor myself to be able to call you that way!

I’m writing today because I would like to talk to you in a renewed spirit. In these few hours we spent in Lakewood, it is as if a part of me had been revived.

Your sudden visits don’t do much good to my heart, but the fact that I’m getting used to them means also that I’m getting stronger, doesn’t it? That applies to the teachers too.

The drive to Lakewood has been wonderful!

The *lupines*, or rather the bluebonnets, the black-eyed-susans, the lace flowers and the wild chervil...The road was flanked by a lot of flowers and you were so astonished while I was murmuring the name of each one of them. Thank you for admiring me so much!

The wind that was coming through the open window was so pleasant and while you were driving, you were singing that popular Scottish song, and I was completely ecstatic listening to it.

When I was thirteen years old I passed that same road, full of disappointment at not becoming a true adopted daughter. While I was approaching the Leagan residence, however, my heart was overflowing with hope at the prospect of a new life.

Little Bert, you can’t imagine my excitement at being again with Prince on the Hill (this is the last time I’m saying it, I promise!) and with Great Uncle William (this is also for the last time)!

There was nobody at the Leagan house. After having left the car in the Ardlay residence, we walked along the path that led to the three gates.

I had already been several times in Lakewood, but it was the first time that I had been there with you and, during our walk, I was overwhelmed by so many mixed feelings that I couldn’t even speak. I felt that the same thing happened to you too.

Stear and Anthony...In my heart emerged the thought of the people I can never see again. I suppose that this place means a lot to you, since it’s connected to your father, to your mother whom you only know through her portraits, and to your sister Rosemary Brown.

It was me who wanted to go to the forest. That same forest where Anthony died falling off the horse.

The meadow, surrounded by multiflora roses, was full of bluebells and the bright and twinkling afternoon light seemed almost to draw a border between this life and eternity. Everything was so beautiful that I started crying.

In fact I remembered that fox hunting. If only it hadn't been carried out, organized for my official presentation as an adopted daughter, Anthony wouldn't have left us so prematurely.

'It was my fault...it is my fault that Anthony...'

When I started crying, you immediately took me in your arms with tenderness.

'It was me who decided to adopt you...And it was me who organized the fox hunting.'

Your voice, full of pain, penetrated my heart, making me understand that you also, during all this time, have been living sharing the same grief with me.

Forgive me for crying like that on your chest. I'm afraid I ruined your fine shirt.

Actually it's true that none of us can know what awaits us around the corner.

It was nobody's fault: since I have been conscious of that, I feel like I was reborn.

Thank you, Albert!

And later we went to that room...the same room where I realized who you really were. On the writing desk was my diary. You...you wanted to return it to me...

'Because this...is something valuable to you.'

You murmured those words looking out of the window. Your voice was so quiet...

My diary speaks almost entirely about Terry, and I have even often meditated on what I would have done with it.

That diary is here at this moment, close to me, but I have never opened it again and I intend to give it back to you, just as you gave me back the badge which I once returned to you.

The passing of time is cruel but also wonderful at the same time.

I don't know what destiny awaits our world, but I'm convinced that the beautiful memories live in our hearts, and it's these memories that give us the courage to face adversity.

I'm really grateful to my parents for abandoning me at Pony's Home. Thanks to them I could meet you! It is me who can never thank you enough.

Yes, Albert: this is my happiness, now.

Oh...I don't think I'll be able to sleep tonight again, but I hope Little Bert can have a splendid dream!

With love and gratitude,
Candy”

11. Letter to Anthony Brown

“Dear Anthony,

I think of you very often, but I could never write to you until now. I can write that first letter to you only from my heart...It’s something very sad.

I’m sure you have already found Stear and your mother too.

You know, Anthony, I have been to Lakewood. Can you guess with whom? Oh...While I was asking you this question, I realized that you have never met Albert. On the other hand, Stear and Archie only knew him in London.

If you had known him, maybe you would have seen Rosemary, your mother, in his face. In fact, Albert is none other than Great Uncle William, and at the same time he is your mother’s younger brother. You have remained speechless, haven’t you?

Do you remember when I talked to you about Prince on the Hill, and I told you how much you looked like him? Imagine my astonishment when I discovered that he, too, is actually the same Albert.

That boy you barely remembered was your uncle. It’s not so strange that you resembled him so much. Do you understand now why I was confused for a moment, when we met at the Gate of the Roses?

The first time I saw you both you had sandy blond hair. If Albert had preserved that hair color, maybe I would have sensed something, but when I met him years later he had brown hair. Not to mention that he had a beard and he was wearing a pair of haunting sunglasses.

He seemed to me so different from you...However, now I realize that the color of the eyes of both of you is the same: clear blue, like the morning sky.

From what he has told me, as a little boy he had also blond hair, but it became darker over the years. During his travels in the desert, the tone was even more accentuated, but after the accident and the various vicissitudes he had to face, his hair returned to its original color.

In Lakewood, I entered for the first time the memorial hall of the Ardlays and there I could admire the many portraits of the family ancestors. The painting that portrays Rosemary is the most beautiful I have ever seen. You were still a baby and your mother was smiling happily, holding you in her arms. I couldn’t hold back my tears. Your picture as a baby was really sweet.

I remember you once told me about her and confided to me her words: ‘Flowers die and are born again even more beautiful. People die and are born again even more wonderful in the hearts of those who stay behind.’

When I quoted that phrase to Albert, he remained listening to me without saying a word. Later, after a long silence, he told me the details about the wedding of his sister Rosemary and your father, Mr. Vincent Brown.

He confided to me how your mother didn't give in to the Ardlays' opinion, which was completely against that union due to the difference of class between the families. Rosemary told them that happiness doesn't depend on money or social prestige but on the possibility of living with the person you love. If they were determined to prevent that, she was ready to renounce at any moment the Ardlay surname.

Rosemary was gentle, but she was strong too. You were also like that, Anthony: gentle and strong at the same time. If you were still alive, I wonder what kind of man you would have become.

Your last smile is still living in my heart. When you were gone so suddenly, I was overwhelmed with pain and the mere fact that I could go on breathing seemed an injustice to me. It was unbearable to think that, even though you were no longer there, the sun went on rising and setting. I hated the fact that I felt hungry and thirsty.

I was convinced that I would never fall in love with anyone as I was with you, but then...You already know what happened to me, don't you? In London I felt a deep affection for someone who looked like you. Actually, you both seemed similar to me only for a moment, and maybe you are two completely different persons.

Anyway, thanks to that boy I discovered that love has several forms and that there are things which, once lost, we can't find anymore. We can no longer find those who have left this world... And this is such an obvious reality, but I couldn't accept it. On the contrary, now...I also know that, even though they are alive, there are circumstances in which destiny doesn't allow two people to be together.

After all, to live means to accumulate these experiences little by little. However, if we are still alive, there is always hope.

Your last smile gives me strength, and I also know that you have forgiven me for everything.

Thank you, Anthony... The fact that I have known you gave me great happiness.

You, Stear and all the people I have met, the sad and the beautiful things...Nurturing in my memories, I will go on with my life being always myself.

Who knows what the dawn will bring, wrapped in its white light? I don't know why, but I'm anxious to face anything fate has in store for me.

I know we can never meet again in this world, but when we are together some day, I want to be a person of whom I can be proud.

That's why I will strive to follow my way and, as I have promised you,
I'll do it with a smile!

Anthony...keep watching over me.

This is the season when the Sweet Candy roses are blooming.

Candy”

Conclusion

The sun has already disappeared.

The room is suffused by the light blue color of the twilight, and my fingers seem white in the semidarkness. Slowly, I put my numerous memories back into the encrusted jewelry box. The time passed, all that I have lost, all that I have achieved...

I have learned to live together with my destiny, with its light and shadows. Destiny isn't always dark; sometimes it is able to emit a resplendent light.

Just as Miss Pony says, you never know what awaits you around the corner. Even if you have to endure a pain so great that it tears your heart, if you face it without fear, certainly at the next corner you'll find something wonderful and fascinating. I'm convinced of that.

Sitting in the chair, I wait for my memories inside the jewelry box to calm down, letting them go in a serene breath. In the twilight, I also let out a little sigh.

That moment, suddenly, the light turns on in the room.

"Candy, what are you doing here in the darkness?"

I hear that gentle voice, which is always capable of making my heart beating hard. *He* is here, at the door, looking at me with that smile I love so much. I can't believe I didn't hear the sound of the car that brought him back home.

"Welcome back!" I exclaim in a faltering voice.

I get up savoring the joy of being able to pronounce those words, and I throw myself into his open arms.