

**The Final Letter**  
**By Katherine S.**

As Alice celebrated her eighty-first birthday, a letter arrived bearing a handwriting she hadn't seen in more than sixty years. The envelope was aged and yellow, its edges fragile like brittle leaves. Her hands shook as she glanced at the return address—General John Whithlock, 1944, Normandy.

Her heart fluttered.

She settled into the floral armchair that had been her faithful companion through numerous birthdays, funerals and serene evenings. Gently, she slipped a silver letter opener beneath the seal. Inside lay a single sheet, meticulously folded.

*July 8, 1944*

*My beloved Alice,*

*If you receive this, it means I didn't make it home.*

*But I beg of you, don't let that bring you sadness. In these final moments, I am not afraid because I carry you with me, in every breath and in every step.*

*Promise me, Alice, that you will live. That you'll laugh, love and dance in the kitchen. I'll be there, in all of it.*

*Forever yours,*

*John*

The letter had been lost in a mailbag and was finally delivered after all these years.

Alice's tears blurred the ink, but the words had already burned into her heart.

She had been married, had children and grandchildren. She moved on, but some memories refused to fade. John had been her first love. Her only real love.

The next morning, Alice rose earlier than usual, and put on her bright maroon skirt, the one she wore when John kissed her goodbye at the train station. She walked to the forest near her home, the wind soft and pine scented.

There, she sat on a bench facing a meadow. She pulled out a small notebook from her purse and wrote:

*Dear John,*

*I kept my promise. I lived a good life. I danced in the kitchen, sang with my children and watched the stars.*

*Now, I think it's time I come find you. Wait for me, love. I won't be long.*

*Always yours,*

*Alice*

A neighbour found her later that day, her head gently tilted to the side, a smile on her wrinkled lips, letter resting in her lap and fluttering in the breeze.