



I Gave My Baby Away

I gave my baby away at two months. She was born in Sheffield Hospital out of wedlock and she was tiny. Weighed next to nothing. Her father had gone long before, so I called her Margaret, after my mother, and anyway I liked the name. I wanted her to grow up and be someone good, marry a rich

husband and have healthy children. I wanted her to travel the world and see more than I had working as a housemaid, wiping noses and swatting flies.

Fly Margaret, fly from here and take on life. It's 1902, I told her, we just reached a new century and you're beginning it. How thrilling! When you're eighteen, Margaret, it'll be 1920 and who knows where you'll be. Maybe on a ship or riding a horse. Maybe those things won't exist any more.

I gave you up in a bundle, your pink face squashed and your eyes closed, a bonnet I had knitted covered your head, and you were wrapped in a shawl given to me by the hospital.

He gave me five pounds, Mr Bonner, put it in my hand and took you in his arms like he was carrying a sick animal, and told me I should be going. I walked out of the door into the fog of the gas lamps with my arms at my sides instead of around you. I didn't look back, but fixed my gaze straight on the moon and the man I told you lived in it.