**BSH 7**

**WHEN WE WERE YOUNG**

It stood there between us on my kitchen table, a part of our past. When we were young, my brother Jack and I, it had been symbol of home, a provider of comfort, the constant in all our lives. The big yellow teapot. Amazingly it had no damage after sixty odd years of use. Not a chip or crack spoilt the brown and green vine leaves decorating it. It had been my mother’s treasured possession.

It was one of my mother’s first jobs, after lighting the coal fire, to spoon tea into the pot and top it with boiling water, having warmed it first, of course! When Jack and I got up and shivered our way to the steamy kitchen, at the start of a school day, we would sit with a cup of tea and a bowl of porridge, warming our fingers on the hot cups. At the weekend the teapot was hardly ever empty as friends and family popped in for a ‘cuppa’ and a gossip. As we grew older, we made the tea ourselves, sometimes with teabags, but the teapot was always there, I think the kitchen table changed several times, but the teapot, never did.

When we left home my parents still sat at the kitchen table and drank their tea. The house was centrally heated by then, but no teabags in mugs for them, the teapot was still there in the centre of the table. My father died and mother struggled on in the family home alone, keeping it as neat and comfy as she always had. The teapot, however, ceased to be used. It was too big and heavy for her as she grew frail. It still had pride of place though, on show on the kitchen windowsill. When mum died it got shoved into a box with other china, to be sorted at a later date. Well that day had arrived.

My brother stared at the table, we had emptied all boxes. Divided things we wanted between us and the rest were given to a charity shop. All that was left was the teapot, which I wanted to keep.

“I don’t understand” he mumbled “what happened to dad’s wedding ring? Mum used to sleep with it under her pillow when he first died, she can’t have lost it.”

I was as baffled as he was.” I don’t know, I’ve no idea” I replied, but I cleared everything in the room.”

He looked at me accusingly. “When we were young” he hissed, “You were obviously her favourite, everything had to revolve around you. You got to choose where we went, what we did. When you got married, they paid out a fortune, nothing was too good for their precious little girl. Are you sure that she never gave it to you?”

I was shocked, I couldn’t believe what he was saying. Mum’s death had hit him hard, it had been sudden and he had just returned to the area after a long time away. We didn’t talk about the reason he came back, but we all knew. He had got himself into debt and couldn’t cope, he nearly had a breakdown. Mum had said she would help and that he could move back home, but he chose to move in with an old friend instead and now, somehow, seemed to have paid off most of the money he owed. I had hoped that he was now coping better, but this hostility…

“Why are you being like this?” the tears had started to trickle down my cheeks, “When we were young we were treated equally, they didn’t have favourites, I don’t remember things being like that. I know you’re upset” I sobbed “but I haven’t got the ring, I haven’t seen it for ages, I don’t know what happened to it.”

He stood up, angry now and banged on the table. “Of course you don’t remember, you were the youngest and spoilt rotten. They gave you everything they had there is nothing left that is worth a second glance, nothing to remember them by.”

“Only this teapot” I whispered “remember when we were young, mum used to…”

“When we were young? When we were young?” he shouted “why do you only remember the stupid little things?”

He raised his arm and swiped the teapot off the table and it smashed into pieces on my kitchen floor. I jumped up and stood there stunned. There sticking out of the broken spout was a piece of rolled up paper. I rubbed the tears from my eyes, bent down and picked it up. I opened it up and read it over and over. I couldn’t take it in at first and then the light dawned. With a shaking hand I held it out to my brother. He took it from me, quiet now, and read it.

“Look at the date” I said.

He shook his head, “So that’s how she did it, I didn’t know, honestly, I didn’t.

I’m sorry.”

The piece of paper was pawn ticked for dad’s ring, dated the day my brother returned. She had given him the money to help to get him out of debt.

It was his turn to cry now. He slumped back into the chair sobbing, “I miss them so much”

I hugged him and sat there for a while, then made a cup of tea, just like mum did when we were young.