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## The Grey Family

My father, Richard Grey, was a vicar in the north of England, who was respected by everybody who knew him. He lived quite well on a small salary and had a pleasant<sup>12</sup> little house of his own. My mother was the daughter of a rich landowner<sup>13</sup> and she married my father against the wishes of her friends and family. If she became the poor vicar's wife, they told her, she would have to give up her carriage, her lady's maid<sup>14</sup> and the chance to live in a large, beautiful house. A carriage and a maid were certainly nice things to have; but luckily my mother had feet to carry her and hands to dress herself. And a large, beautiful house would be pleasant, but she would rather live in a cottage with Richard Grey than in a palace with any other man in the world.

Her father told her that she could marry the vicar if she wanted to, but that if she did, she would lose her fortune<sup>15</sup>. However, my mother was a strong woman who knew what she wanted. So the couple got married and my mother's fortune was given to her sister. Despite these difficulties and their simple life, I believe that you could search the whole of England and not find a couple who were happier than they were.

My mother gave birth to six children, but my sister Mary and I were the only two that survived<sup>16</sup> the dangers of early childhood. I was six years younger than Mary, so I was always a little spoilt because I was the 'baby' of the family. We lived a very protected life and my sister and I did not go to school. Instead, our mother, who was hardworking and very well educated, taught us at home. Sometimes we went to a tea party at a nearby house or visited our father's parents and other elderly family members. Mostly, however, we heard about the world through the stories our mother told us about her younger days and of carriages, parties

and big elegant<sup>17</sup> houses. While these stories entertained us, they often made me secretly wish that I could see more of the world.

My mother seemed very happy and told her husband that she had everything that she needed in life. However, my father worried that his wife had given up too much in order to<sup>18</sup> marry him. As a result he was always thinking about how he could make more money.

One day, a kind friend suggested<sup>19</sup> to him a way of making a lot of money within just a few weeks. This friend was a merchant, a man who made money by buying and selling goods. If my father lent him some money, he said, he would make them both rich. My father took the chance and gave the man all the money he had. The friendly merchant used the money to buy goods and then arranged for them to be sent abroad on ships to be sold.

My father was excited and so were we all. We were going to be rich! We spent happy hours by the fire talking about what we would do, where we would travel and what we would buy with the money that would surely soon arrive.

The weeks passed but then the terrible news came. The ship, which contained the goods and therefore our fortune, had been caught in a terrible storm. It had sunk to the bottom of the sea along with the goods it carried and the unlucky merchant himself.

I was young and did not understand how serious this loss<sup>20</sup> was, but I could see how it had upset<sup>21</sup> my parents and this worried me. My mother concentrated on taking care of what little money we still had, and on cheering up my father<sup>21</sup>. He, on the other hand, lost all hope and became desperate<sup>22</sup>. He believed that this recent poor decision had made his wife's life even worse. Over time he became ill with the worry of it all and none of us could give him any hope.

We had a pony – a little horse – but we had to sell it. We stopped buying new clothes and we used everything we had as carefully as we possibly could. My father dismissed one of our two servants<sup>23</sup> and my mother and sister began to help with the