



1870 February

Dear Mother,

I know you watch over us from heaven. I draw strength and comfort believing you can protect us from any further harm or abandonment. We are well provided for and growing up fast. Even without Father, our lives are better than most. Sarah and I speak of you often and send our enduring love to you when we search the night sky for your bright sparkling star.

I am thrilled to be learning so much at the Carr's tailor shop; learning to keep the puckers from seams, hiding stray threads inside those seams, but mostly finishing the stitch work on the vest's buttonholes. There is high demand from any well-dressed business man to have several versions in his wardrobe. Mrs. Carr greets and takes the orders from customers and arranges for pickup and payment. Mr. Carr and I work shoulder to shoulder to assure the flow of fabrics moves to keep up with demand. We have an easy relationship. If ever I am frustrated with my slow progress he doles out kind encouragements, remarking that my speed will increase over time, the more vests I 'practice' on. I happily thread his needles for him when the day grows long and his older eyes tire. He treats me like an adult and never talks down to me. He wants me to succeed to help his business grow and prosper. Seeing my work being worn by a customer, helps to bolster my confidence.

Sometimes he grumbles about Mrs. Carr spending all their profits on home enhancements. She is house proud and likes to shop for furniture and new rugs. My room may be modest, but it is clean and bright... and mine. Her name is also Anne, like yours. We are not as close as you and I once were, so long ago. I suppose most married couples have their disagreements, maybe that comes with age and familiarity, or unforgivable habits. She does take to drink from time to time, which changes her demeanor from kind and loving to her husband, Mr. Carr... to cross and quarrelsome. It is best to stay out of her way when these month-long binges occur. Mr. Carr will take her on, but I step lightly to avoid her unpredictable rage. Though not perfect, I have no real complaints with my present circumstances.

Your good girl, Francis Elisabeth



1870 September

Dear Mother,

Less than a year after my own indenture, there is good news from Sarah. She is to be placed with a family about to have their first newborn. Being the baby of our family, it all seems too soon for a 13 year-old to be taking on those responsibilities... but I am happy for her. She will rise to the occasion and help the expectant mother however she is able.

We both miss you, F. Elisabeth



1871 September

Dear Mother

Apparently I'm was not too far off the mark, Sarah had been handed off to another farm couple in Centerville. The mother-to-be is too overwhelmed and fearful Sarah was indeed too young and as inexperienced as she is confronted with new motherhood. So, less than two months later she has found herself in another unfamiliar home on a family farm, with two small children and a baby. It is unclear if she is serving as their young nanny or helping with the farm chores... maybe both.

Here's the wrinkle, Mrs. Swain somehow gets wind of this undocumented exchange after 10 months and demands Sarah be returned to the POA. Not sure if Sarah finally initiated this with the truth or the family got found out in the lack of paperwork. Sarah may have been too afraid to speak up and deny herself a chance to prove her worth. Her unofficial placement and distance from 'home base' might have complicated her surrender to tough it out. I hope it was all a misunderstanding and there was no incident or shameful circumstance with the second couple. Nonetheless, being passed around has to strike a traumatizing chord with her memories of our first night being deposited at the POA.

Sarah sends her love, as do I, Eliza



1872 May

Dearest Mother,

You will be relieved to know, Sarah's situation has settled down after almost a year's passing. She is stronger now after spending time at the Orphan Asylum being nurtured by those fine women that brought us up. She is presently living in Oakland, properly and officially indentured to a Dr. Charles Kittridge DDS and his wife. She has just turned 15 and is growing into a fine young woman that would make you proud. I know I am and now, rest easy, knowing her fancy new situation is everything she deserves. This is likely her forever home, at least for the next 4 years.

Love and peace of mind to you wherever you are, Lizzie



July 2, 1872

Mama,

The Carrs are fighting and she has no kind words for me. I do so wish you were still with us and here to wrap me in your arms.

Yours, Francis Elisabeth

