

Dear Uncle

by

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INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

HUGH lies awake in in his bed.

He is past seventy and the years have not treated him well. If there were two words to describe him, shaggy and dirty would suit well.

His bed is a couple of well-used sheets upon a worn living-room couch placed in the kitchen.

Hugh gets out of bed, fully dressed in clothes that have not been off his body for a long time.

He makes himself some coffee by the stove in a kitchen that is indescribably neglected and soiled. A mouse scarpers away behind some dirty plates.

A quick KNOCK on the door and SAMUEL enters with a grocery bag.

SAMUEL

Morning.

Hugh gives him a nod.

Samuel is about fifty, clean, trimmed and smiling; Everything that Hugh is not.

Samuel opens the fridge and cleans out some old groceries before he puts the new ones from his bag in.

HUGH

What's that for?

Hugh points at a bag of cinnamon rolls in Samuel's bag.

SAMUEL

The scrap booking ladies sent them,
as a thank you. Don't you want
them?

Hugh shrugs. Samuel puts the cinnamon rolls on the table and picks up a few envelopes from his pocket, already neatly opened.

SAMUEL

Got your pension check here.

Samuel holds out a pen and Hugh signs the check.

Then Samuel shows him a letter from one of the other envelopes.

SAMUEL
And our local baseball team asks
for a donation to rebuild their
dressing rooms.

HUGH
Kids?

SAMUEL
Yes.

HUGH
Give them what you seem fair. And a
little extra.

SAMUEL
Sure. I had to go now. I'll come by
tomorrow and get that wood chopped
up for you.

Samuel leaves.

Hugh pulls on a pair of boots and walks out too.

EXT. YARD - DAY

The farm is in a deplorable condition. The barn is leaning
over, its roof sagging. The main building could hardly be
called a house for much longer.

Hugh feeds a few hens walking loose on the yard when FAITH
arrives in her car. She parks on the driveway and exits.

She is no more than twenty-five and six months or so
pregnant.

Hugh sees her as she lingers by the driveway.

FAITH
Excuse me, sir, are you Hugh
Appleby?

HUGH
No thanks. I'm not interested.

FAITH
Are you Hugh Appleby, sir?

HUGH
I'm not buying anything.

FAITH
I'm Faith Appleby, sir. Your niece.

HUGH
Niece?

FAITH
I'm Kevin's daughter.

HUGH
I don't want anything to do with
him! Shoo!

FAITH
He is dead.

HUGH
Dead?

FAITH
Yes. I'm sorry.

HUGH
But I'm the oldest. I'm supposed to
die first.

FAITH
Dad and my fiancé were killed in a
car crash a week ago.

HUGH
I was supposed to die first.

Hugh seems confused and deeply bothered. He throws some more
corn to the hens.

HUGH
Now I know. You can leave.

But Faith remains.

Hugh does not manage to ignore her.

HUGH
I suppose I can offer you some
coffee.

FAITH
A cup of coffee would be nice,
thank you.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Chocked, Faith looks around the kitchen. She YELPS as a mouse runs across the floor.

HUGH

I can't get myself a cat. It would eat my hens.

FAITH

Most people manage without.

Hugh searches for an extra cup among the dirty dishes.

FAITH

On second thought, a glass of water will be fine.

HUGH

I wasn't expecting company.

FAITH

I'm sorry. I just wanted to see you. We never met. And dad spoke so much about you and this place. I thought that maybe this was a nice place to raise a child. It's almost like your grandchild now, when dad's gone.

HUGH

You've must have gotten a lot of things on the wrong foot, miss. This house has never been a nice place for a child. Never. Now get out of here.

Faith cries.

FAITH

I came here in good faith to tell you that your brother is dead.

HUGH

He's been dead for me for forty years. So are you. Leave!

EXT. BY THE ROAD - MORNING

Faith sleeps in her car when Samuel KNOCKS on the window.

Faith looks up, red-eyed from crying.

SAMUEL

Are you alright, miss?

She opens the car door and steps out.

SAMUEL

Good gracious, girl, what makes you
sleep in your car in your
condition?

Faith bursts out crying again. Samuel puts a comforting arm
around her shoulder.

SAMUEL

Dear girl, what's the matter?

EXT. YARD - DAY

Hugh exits the house to the sound of CHOPPING. Samuel swings
the axe and shreds the wood into firewood.

Samuel gives Hugh a look and continues without a word.

HUGH

If you have something to say, say
it.

SAMUEL

I met a sad girl this morning. She
claimed she was your niece; and
that you threw her out.

HUGH

That's my business.

SAMUEL

She's expecting a baby and you
forced her to sleep in her car.
That's not the generous man I know.

HUGH

I don't give to be popular. I just
don't want there to be anything
left for him, that's all.

SAMUEL
You did a lot of good things with
your money, though.

HUGH
So what? Good riddance.

Faith walks into the yard, Samuel smiles and waves for her
to come closer.

SAMUEL
You're about to get a grandchild.

HUGH
I'm not.

SAMUEL
Sort of. The child will look upon
you as a granddad. If you give it a
chance.

Hugh leaves, walking to the back of the house.

EXT. BEHIND HOUSE - DAY

Faith finds Hugh watching an old, rusty car almost covered
in weeds and brushwood. It has not moved out of the spot
many, many years.

FAITH
Dad spoke so fondly about you. I
wonder why.

HUGH
So he married a nice girl, did he?
Got a couple of kids?

FAITH
Three. I'm youngest. How about you?

HUGH
I had a pretty girl once.

Emotions flush over Hugh's face.

HUGH
God, how she laughed at me.

FAITH
Your girlfriend?

HUGH

My mother. When I had bought this
and told her I was going to get a
driver's license.

He points at the car, a broken dream, once red.

HUGH

Just as she laughed at Caroline,
right in her face, when she said
she loved me. Drove her off.

FAITH

Why didn't you leave?

HUGH

Someone had to stay and take care
of mother. Since Kevin left I had
no one but her. Bitch as she was,
but I could not just leave her to
her fate.

FAITH

You left me to my fate.

HUGH

I guess I'm sorry for that.

FAITH

You guess?

HUGH

I'm used to be on my own.

FAITH

Dear Uncle, you seem to have spent
most of your life hating a man who
never hated you. Isn't it about
time you find something to love
instead? Find a little room in your
heart for your brother's grand
child?

Tears well from Hugh's stone face eyes.

HUGH

Why care? My life's been a waste.

Faith hugs him.

FAITH

Because you're still alive. Because
I'm alive. And because my child is
alive.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Hugh and Faith enter the house where a lot of activity is going on.

People, from older kids to adults, have their hands full cleaning the home.

HUGH
What's this?

SAMUEL
No matter reason, you've supported every local activity in the area with generous contributions. Now, you're the one in need for help. I just sent the call in your name.

Hugh watches the sheets in his bed being ripped out and the worn sofa carried out through the door.

HUGH
This is my home. Get out of here!
All of you!

All work stops and everybody stares at Hugh.

Faith gently puts her hand on his arm.

Hugh glances at the people around him.

HUGH
Sorry about that. Thank you. Very much. There are some cinnamon rolls here somewhere. Help yourself.

THE END