

## JUST AN OCEAN APART

*I declare that the story is my own work. It has not been copied or plagiarized from any other person or source.*

It all began in New York by night. Everything was abnormally calm. The high buildings were luminous in the sky. Some night places were still alight, closing. A little clock on the storefront was indicating the time. Six o'clock. A man was running away, shivering, on this winter morning. A car passed quickly, hiding the man who was turning at the street corner. The street became as silent as it was before.

"I'm so sorry", the breathless man apologized when he pushed the door, "I know that I'm late, I'll catch up after".

The man passed in a little room, under the post office symbol outside, filled with shelves and a few letters. A little desk was being installed in the middle of the area. Another man was present in the room, sorting letters.

"It won't be necessary", responded the second man.

A silence settled. The postman didn't understand.

"I mean, nowadays, nobody sends letters anymore. Everybody is connected to the internet and social media. We are useless now", explained the man, "I'm sorry but it won't be worth coming back".

The postman was distraught. It was true that, lately, few letters had been received. Very few actually.

"If letters are used again, will we be employed?"

"I suppose, yes", answered the man.

"So, in that case, please give me a month to try to fix the situation", implored the postman.

He didn't know how he would do it, but he really needed this job.

\* \*

*Monday, 4th of November of 2025*

*London*

*Dear Sir or Madam,*

*I am writing to you because someone gave me a strange piece of paper this morning just with your address without telling me anything. So, as I was very intrigued (and excited because it does not happen every day !), I decided to write you this letter to America in order to maybe have an answer.*

*I was so impolite, I didn't introduce myself ! My name is Liam Adams, I am sixteen years old and I live in Britain.*

*I hope you will be able to enlighten me on this situation.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Liam Adams*

**\* \* \***

“The Robert family has mail today !” thought the postman, intrigued, while quickly flying over the mailboxes on the large street. He knew the Roberts well because he was in the same high school as Carl Robert, many years ago. Even if they had followed different trajectories, they were still in contact. In fact, this one became a great and quite rich businessman, which made the postman somewhat jealous. However, that did not prevent him from spending a few Sundays in their good company.

Charlie Robert, the elder girl of the family, was coming from across the street, looking at her phone. She was very pretty, with her long blond strands that have fallen out forming a few curls, and her perfect makeup and outfit. The postman then left her the letter and went away for his tour.

**\* \* \***

*11/10/2025*

*New York*

*Hi Liam Adams,*

*Sorry but I don't know anyone in London who has my postal address. It must be an error.*

*Thx for writing,  
Charlie Robert*

*\* \* \**

A week later, the rain was falling hard all over the city. The postman, soaked despite his raincoat, found another letter directed towards Robert's family. Decidedly, those who did not often receive mail, received more and more lately ! Frozen, he put the letter in the mailbox and left to finish his tour as quickly as possible.

*\* \* \**

*Sunday, 17th of November of 2025  
London*

*Dear Mrs Robert,*

*Are you really sure that you don't know anyone here ? Because the man who gave me your address felt very sure of himself. He didn't say anything but gave me a knowing look... I'm pretty excited, for once something out of the ordinary happens to me !*

*Sincerely,  
Liam Adams*

*\* \* \**

*11/23/2025  
New York*

*Hi Liam,*

*Firstly, don't call me Mrs please ! I'm not 50 years old but I'm 16 like you !*

*Moreover, IMO, what you tell me seems quite strange, because, nowadays, who is writing letters ? I mean, this guy could have given you a phone number or an email address at least. BTW, I suggest that we continue to talk on social networks, it will be simpler and more practical.*

*Have a nice day,*

*Charlie*

*PS : Sorry for the abbreviations, it's just that I usually write like that.*

*\* \* \**

*Saturday, 30th of November of 2025*

*London*

*Hello Charlie,*

*You're right, nowadays, letters are less used. But I find it has a little "vintage side", so I will not be able to give you a very objective answer. Furthermore, my phone broke last month and I haven't been able to raise enough money to buy a new one yet. I'm not on social media because I don't really find it of interest. Otherwise, I have an email address, but it has been hacked and I don't know exactly how long it will take to restore it. Yes, I know, I'm really unlucky on this point.*

*Sincerely,*

*Liam*

*PS : I'm sorry but I don't know the meaning of the abbreviations, could you please clarify for me on this point ?*

\* \* \*

The next Sunday, the postman was invited to take part in the lunch in Robert's house. The cold temperatures avoided installing the barbecue like usual in summer, in the garden. The postman was explaining his cause to Carl Robert and his family. In fact, he was only disposing of some days until the end of his contract. Charlie put this phone off for once, and took part in the discussion. She explained that someone in Britain had found their postal address and wrote to her, what was seeming to her odd, because she didn't got used to send letters given the easily of practice of social media nowadays. His father seemed intrigued but didn't say anything.

\* \* \*

12/07/2025

*New York*

*Hi Liam,*

*How can you live without a phone ? I mean, now you can't communicate with your friends or anyone ! Do you have a computer ? Do you know that you can create a new email address easily ? And social media is not as terrible as what you think. In fact, it's very fun !*

*So, apparently you like the vintage aspect, it's funny because it's the opposite for me. I love fashion objects and clothes ! But you are right in the point that it seems interesting in any case.*

*Have a good day,*

*Charlie*

\* \* \*

12/08/2025

*New York*

*Hello Liam,*

*It's me again ! I am writing to you just because my father asked me yesterday who was the person who was writing to me, and many other questions. He looked very stressed, so I am intrigued because he is never like that. Wouldn't you know a certain Carl Robert by chance ? Because I think I remember that he told me that he had already been there many years ago, for his job... I asked him if he knew the reason for the fact that an unknown person gave to you our address, but he answered that it must be a coincidence. But I think it is still strange that it is my address written in this paper.*

*Well, please tell me what you think about that.*

*Goodbye,*

*Charlie*

*\* \* \**

Finally, the postman managed to negotiate another month before the end of his contract. He was still confused about the facility he had to convince his boss. Maybe he was as upset about the situation as the postman... In any case, he had one month left to prove himself.

*\* \* \**

*Monday, 16th of December of 2025*

*London*

*Good morning Charlie,*

*You know what ? The guy who gave me the paper appeared again two days ago. I was strolling peacefully in the street, and I saw him at a corner. I know that I couldn't see his face last time, but I am almost certain that it was him. He was wearing a large black coat with a hood (well, it's right that it was raining that day but anyways, it seemed strange). Do you think that there could be some connection*

*between the fact that your father knew just for some days and that I told you ? Don't take this the wrong way in any case, it's just a thought.*

*I don't know if I'm becoming paranoid, but I feel more and more like I'm being watched in front of my house, because I often see the same people in front when I go out, even though I know these thoughts don't make sense.*

*I agree that writing by letters is a very slow medium, I will try to fix the problem with my mail address.*

*By the way, Merry Christmas in advance !*

*Sincerely,*

*Liam*

*\* \* \**

*Sunday, 29th of December of 2025*

*London*

*Hello Charlie,*

*I hope you had a good holiday.*

*I received an anonymous letter one week ago, which asked me to stop writing at this address and not ask questions. Further, as you didn't answer my previous letter, I just wanted to make sure you got it.*

*See you soon in writing,*

*Liam*

*\* \* \**

That morning, the postman passed in front of the Roberts house, without mail to distribute this time again. He stopped anyway when he saw Carl's daughter, Charlie, crying on the edge of the little wall of the garden. When he asked her what was wrong, she confided that she was quite peined, because a certain British with whom she corresponded hadn't replied to her for almost a month. She even sent another letter last two weeks, without response either. However, she was sure that it was left, because her father had confirmed to her that he had deposited it in a mailbox. In fact, with the cold outside, she hadn't had the

courage to go out by herself to drop off the letter as usual. In addition, there were fewer and fewer mailboxes this way. The postman tried to comfort her and left again for his morning's tour.

\* \* \*

*Friday, 4th of January of 2026 !*

*London*

*Happy New year Charlie !*

*I would have liked to have a happy speech, but it will not be the case.*

*Please, tell me what is happening ? Why don't you answer me ? I am very anxious about that...*

*I received another two anonymous letters, asking the same thing as before. I don't understand anything.*

*Moreover, the people who I believe are watching me are often around my house when I leave. I don't know what happened.*

*Please, write me,*

*Liam*

\* \* \*

The postman entered the little office, like every morning, before beginning his tour. "Happy New Year !" he launched. "I'm sorry, but I can't keep you any longer, we are too short of money," explained his boss. Even if the postman expected that, it does not prevent him from being somewhat disappointed. He had done everything to try to revive epistolary correspondence, like sticking up posters or even encouraging young people, like Charlie Robert, to write. But with the arrival of social media, he knew very well that it was a waste of time. So, he ends up going home, having nothing else to do.

\* \* \*

**Liam Adams**

I finally found your Instagram account !  
I hope it's the right one... Apparently, you  
have many admirers, or followers as you  
say. As you can see, I finally decided to try  
social media, above all in order to under-  
stand why you don't answer my letters.

01/08/2026 11:46

**Charlie Robert**

Oh my god, I am very relieved that  
you write to me ! But I don't understand,  
because I didn't receive anything. And in  
addition I sent another letter two or three  
weeks ago. Did you not receive it ?

01/08/2026 11:47

**Liam Adams**

No, I didn't. Just three anonymous letters  
which ordered me to forget this address...

01/08/2026 11:49

**Charlie Robert**

It looks very strange...

01/08/2026 11:50

**Charlie Robert**

You know what ? My father was arrested  
this morning. The policemen came home.  
Seemingly, it's due to illegal money traffic.  
I don't understand... It's not great fun  
at home in any case right now.

01/09/2026 9:50

\* \* \*

The postman came to Robert's home this morning to keep the two young brothers of Charlie Robert, because, apparently, there was a bit of a stir here. He had learned this very morning that his friend was involved in some money trouble. One of his employees would have discovered the case and denounced him.

\* \* \*

Six months have passed. There was a Sunday in July, and the ex-postman, who had also been hired on the redaction for a small newspaper, allowing him to keep his passion for epistolary and writing, was invited to Robert's house.

Carl Robert “only” had to pay a heavy fine, but he stopped his illegal financial activity and apologized to Liam for the harm he had caused him, including watching him to make sure he wouldn't compromise his address.

It was a sunny day, and this time, the barbecue was out. A boy was also present. If the ex-postman had understood correctly, it was the correspondent of the Robert girl's letters, who had come from England. All the Robert children were present, running in the grass. Charlie seemed more relaxed than before. She hadn't even touched her phone all day, which seemed like a feat to her. Even if she could now text her friend, they kept sending each other letters, for fun, and to the delight of the ex-postman.

“In fact, it was thanks to my father and the error of his messenger that we met”, said Charlie in a conversational tone.

“Yes”, confirmed Liam, “it's a very unlikely encounter- nice all in all, but unlikely.”