

My dearest Susanna,

I've decided to write this letter because I want you to know how much I understand your loneliness and **1)** ..... at the recent rumours you've heard about your father. I don't want you my darling to have any further illusions about him and I think that at the age of 18 you're strong enough to stand the whole truth about William and his foul play.

Your father and I met in the spring 1582 and a few months later I discovered that I was pregnant with you. William was devastated by this news. Being only 18, eight years younger than me, he wasn't really ready for marriage and family. As Joan, his younger sister, told me later on he even wanted to **2)** ..... my trust and leave Stratford secretly, hoping to escape his paternal duties in this way. It was only because of his father John, a highly respected citizen in our town, that William proposed to me and we got married in November 1582. Sadly but true, he was never a dedicated husband or father and even the birth of your siblings, Judith and our poor Hamnet, didn't change his feelings. We were struggling to make ends meet but he didn't even bother about doing any work. For him this was just much ado about nothing. In fact William was a constant dreamer interested only in writing poetry and acting.

It was not surprising then that when a travelling group of players visited Stratford your father saw this as a golden opportunity to **3)** ..... us and under the pretext of earning money for our family he went with them to London. As far as I know, your father is a very successful and well-known **4)** ..... in London and I've even heard recently that he has started building an imposing theatre there. I think it's called the Globe. But what does all this mean to us? As you know my darling, he has mostly been an **5)** ..... father to you, hardly interested in our life and very rarely visiting us since then. He did regularly send us some money but in his letters he never really asked about our life in Stratford. Even the tragic death of our beloved Hamnet didn't bring him back to us. And my dear Susana, I'm afraid it's also absolutely true that your father does have a **6)** ..... there. He fell head over heels in love with a mysterious dark lady who has become the inspiration of his sonnets and who has stolen your father's heart, the heart that should belong to us, to our family.

My dearest Susanna, I tried really hard to be both a mother and father to you and your siblings, but only now I can see how hard it is for a mother to play both these roles. Is there anything I can do that can soothe your pain? Please remember that your mother loves you forever and a day and she will be over the moon to have you back at home!

Yours lovingly  
Mother  
Anne Hathaway

My beloved Susanna,

My heart broke on receiving your letter. There is so much pain and sorrow flowing through your words, so bitterly accusing me of causing all the misfortunes in your life. I think it was really foul play of your mother to tell you all these lies about me, your father. I want to write you the truth about my life and I really hope this will shed a ray of light on your feelings about me.

I was born to the well-known Shakespeare family in Stratford. My parents sent me to King Edward's VI's Grammar School, and also taught me the virtues of honesty and loyalty. When I met your mother, Anne Hathaway, I fell head over heels in love with her. I didn't even mind the age gap between us and it never occurred to me to **1)** ..... her. I was over the moon about becoming a father and I just couldn't wait to marry Anne. After our wedding in November 1582 we moved to our house in Henley Street, Stratford. At that time I worked hard for a living at my father's craftsman's shop where I was making leather gloves for aristocratic ladies in our county. Although my father, John, was highly-respected and there was always a lot of work in his shop, I didn't earn much. When you, Susanna, were only two years old, to my great joy, your sister Judith and our poor Hamnet were born. However, difficult times soon came upon our family and we started struggling to make ends meet. Thus, when I met a travelling group of actors performing in Stratford, I thought it was a golden opportunity for me to earn more money for our family. I knew I had had a natural gift for acting and writing and I was right. My move to London became a great success. I quickly found a job at the King's Men, one of the best known theatres in London, where I've been working since then as an actor and their main **2)** ..... . I've written many plays and poems, and I really hope, my dearest Susanna, that you'll read them one day.

Despite this success, you can't imagine how much I've been missing you over these long years away from home. I hated being an **3)** ..... father to my children! I always tried to come to visit you in Stratford whenever I could, but I must admit I didn't really have much time free from work. I kept sending your mother all these letters with some coins in them but she never replied to any of my questions about your life. And then the news of the death of our beloved Hamnet completely devastated me. It was so devastating that I just couldn't visit Stratford any more. I completely threw myself into work only to escape from my **4)** ..... at his loss.

And my sweetie, in all these years, I haven't even thought to **5)** ..... your mother with another woman, and there hasn't been a single **6)** ..... in my life here. In fact I'm deeply disappointed that your mother hasn't recognized herself in the mysterious dark lady of my sonnets! She's always been the only inspiration for my writing!

As you can see, my darling, this is much ado about nothing and there is no use shedding tears any more. I can't wait to meet my little girl again and tell her how much I love her!

Yours for ever and a day,

Father  
William Shakespeare