

# Are you due a family fortune?

Someone with good news and a fat cheque could be looking for you

**W**hen a stranger knocks on your door and tells you they may have a large

sum of money waiting for you, you're likely to send them packing. But if the stranger's a pretty, quietly spoken blonde called Sasha Buchler, you might want to hear her out, because Sasha's offers are legitimate – and if you're the stranger she's looking for, you may end up with a genuine windfall.

Sasha Buchler is a detective, but not the sort who hunts criminals or uncovers illicit affairs. She's a genealogical

sleuth whose talent is finding people who have inherited money from relatives they may not realise have died – and occasionally never even knew existed!

The estates Sasha deals in can be valued at as little as £50 or as much as £1 million. Her files contain stories of long-buried family secrets, feuds and fallings-out and much, much more.

**'One man had a secret wife and children'**

Sasha, 31, founded her firm KIN (as in family), three years ago and has become an expert at tracing beneficiaries

before the legacies fall into the hands of the Treasury. It's a competitive business, and Sasha has to move quickly if she's going to earn her commission.

Her firm doesn't do the work out of the kindness of their hearts. A



**Winner**

US rock star Isaac Slade is set to inherit \$15 million from a distant relative



**Loser**

Paris Hilton's drink/drive conviction saw her cut out of her grandad's will

great deal of time and expense has gone into finding you, so you'll be asked to pay a finder's fee, but only if they help you inherit.

'When I call at someone's house

and explain why I'm there, people normally think I'm part of a scam,' says Sasha, from north London. 'I can understand it. I'm a total stranger, telling them they might be due some money. But what the person doesn't know is that I'll have worked desperately hard to get to that doorstep. I'll have gone through piles of birth, marriage and death certificates, not to mention censuses, electoral registers and other documents, so it's only fair I earn a commission on what the inheritor gets.'

A visit from an 'heir hunter' like Sasha can be much more than a financial transaction – it often stirs up all kinds of emotions. It can spark feelings of bitterness, open

**I opened the door to £20,000!**

**J**acqueline Seddon and her sister Gloria ran away from home when they were young and hadn't seen their father for nearly 40 years. He was a violent man who later killed their mother and was jailed for manslaughter. 'As you can imagine, I was a bit taken aback when I had a letter earlier this year inquiring if I was his daughter,' recalls Jacqueline, now 47. 'I didn't even know he'd died. Then someone from KIN visited and explained they'd traced me and my sister and that we were the beneficiaries of his estate. My first thought was that it was the only decent thing he'd done for us – it may sound heartless, but he'd been so cruel. I was eight when we ran away, my sister was six. We went into a children's home and were fostered. We had a difficult life. We'll share about £20,000, and we're going to give our children – I've got four – a better start to life than we had.'

**'It was the only decent thing Dad had done,' says Jacqueline**



It's Sasha's job to find long-lost beneficiaries

## How it all works

● Each year in the UK, 545,000 people die and more than half don't leave a will. That's called 'dying intestate,' which means their financial affairs are then handled by HM Treasury.

● If there are no obvious beneficiaries, the Treasury posts details on its website. If there is no response, they then advertise the deceased person's details in national and local newspapers.

● Sasha and her competitors research the new postings, hoping to be the first to contact any surviving relatives.

● Beneficiaries have 12 years to come forward before the money goes into the Treasury coffers. Between £10 and £20 million goes unclaimed every year.

**'I earn a commission on what the inheritor gets'**

old wounds and uncover deeply buried personal or family secrets.

'I once traced a salesman who'd inherited some money, but by the time I'd tracked him down he'd died. I set about finding his heirs, and found he'd had children by two different women, who he was seeing at the same time. And he'd given each set of children the same names, in case he forgot which of his families he was visiting! Entitlement goes down

the bloodlines, so all his children from both relationships had a share of his estate.'

Inheriting money from a sister isn't unusual – but if it's from a sister you never knew you had, it can be a shattering discovery, Sasha explains. 'There were six brothers and sisters, and then I found a seventh. She'd been born out of wedlock and put in a home – such births were often regarded as shameful. When this sister

died, I traced her brothers and sisters. They each got a small amount of money, but more than that, they all wished they'd known their sister when she was alive.

'Most people accept the cash regardless of what they thought of the deceased. People don't usually confess their true emotions to me, but there was the woman who took a fair-sized cheque from me and then said, 'Thank goodness she's dead!'