

by Alan Christensen

Lady Bradley was just regaining consciousness when Rutherford entered the library. His noisy entrance startled her into full alertness. "Rutherford! What is going on here!"

Cavendish barely heard her as he stormed past the now puzzled Lady Bradley who was striving to rebuild her shattered composure. All of Rutherford's gentlemanly instincts disappeared as he ignored Lady Bradley and rushed headlong toward the shelf which normally contained the books written by authors whose names began with the letter E. His face twisted in rage as he discovered that all such books were gone from the shelf which had held them.

"Damn that double crossing bastard!" he shouted in a rather loud voice.

Rutherford turned around and ran back toward the parlor muttering under his breath. He hardly noticed the extremely flustered Lady Bradley who picked up her skirts and followed him.

When she reached the parlor Rutherford was on the phone telling the police about the events of the day and ordering them to apprehend Charles. As he finished his conversation and hung up the phone, he turned around to face the startled Lord and Lady Bradley.

"I guess I should explain my somewhat unorthodox behavior."

He paused for a moment to collect his thoughts.

"Well, to begin my story, I should explain that I am what you might call a spy. That is, I work for His Majesty's Intelligence Service. It seems that your faithful butler has actually been a spy in the service of the Kaiser. Since he started in your service in 1893 Charles, or perhaps I should use his real name Karl, has been informing the Germans of all your activities as a member of the Cabinet and as an admiral in the navy."

"You mean that all those secret documents that I brought home to study were..."

"... were meticulously copied by our dear Charles and were then transmitted to agents in the German Embassy in London. We became wise to this devious plot about a month ago and found out that the latest batch of copied documents were to be smuggled out via one of the paintings that were to go on sale here. The agent was to arrive here as a potential buyer and Charles was then to signal the agent and tell him which painting to buy. After the agent had purchased the painting, he was simply to return with the painting and the documents to London where the German Embassy was to receive them."

"Well why didn't you simply arrest the bounder when you uncovered his activities?" interjected Lord Bradley.

"We had hoped to apprehend both Charles and the other agent so we waited for the transfer to be made at the auction, but unfortunately someone tipped off the other agent and he never showed up for the sale. Therefore I felt compelled to purchase the painting. Charles wasn't about to let the painting get out of his grasp so he stole it that night and hid it in the stable. The first note was written by him as a diversion in order to make you think that the painting had been stolen for ransom."

"What about the second note?" demanded Lord Bradley in a suspicious tone. "I saw it before you dropped it into the fire and it was just a blank piece of paper!"

"How observant of you my Lord! You are quite right. It was a blank paper which I had Charles bring in. You see I confronted him after the theft of the painting and promised clemency for him in return for his co-operation. I had him replace the real documents for faked ones which I then supplied. This misinforming of the Germans I assumed would be very beneficial to us. The real copies were then hidden in the library in one of the books on the E shelf, which I must admit was bad judgement on my part. They should have been destroyed right away. In any case, the message which I then recited was actually a signal to Charles that the agent would arrive tonight. I then went into the city to, how shall I say, prepare a welcome for our guest. This then, is when our friend Charles pulled his double cross."

The phone rang and Lord Bradley picked it up.

"It's the police, they've arrested Charles and another man. And they recovered the painting."

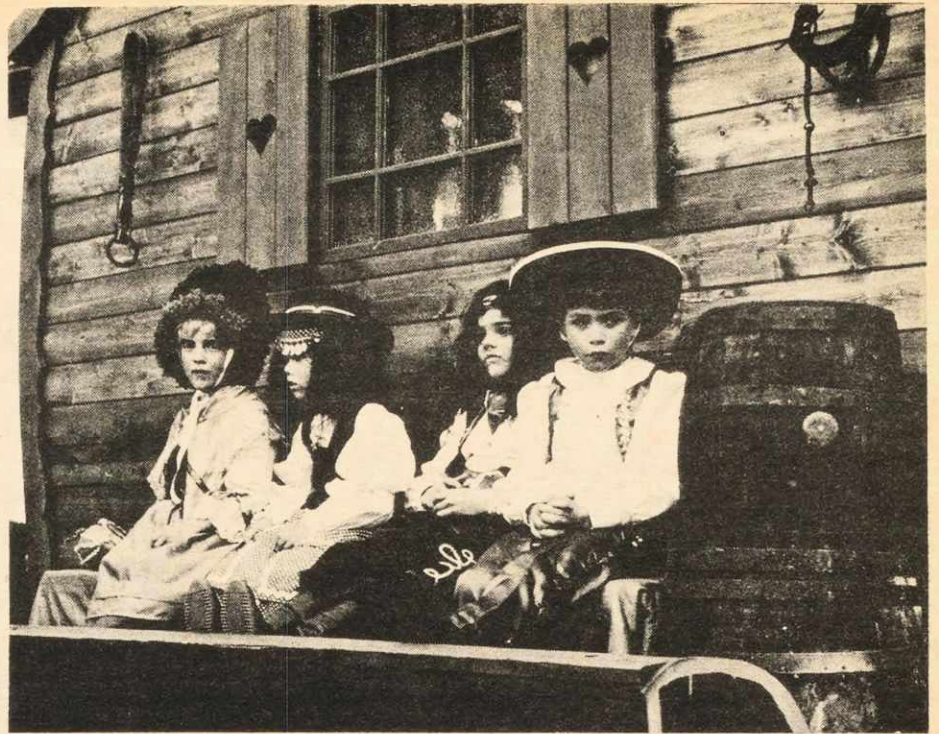
"Well," continued Rutherford, "that certainly is a relief. In any case, to continue the explanation, I should say that our friend Charles decided to take the true documents and meet his contact and he probably would have left the country with those documents. Does that upset you Lady Bradley?" he said, directing his stare at the unnerved Lady.

"Wh-what do you mean by that?"

"What I mean is that I know all about your illicit affair with our friend, Charles."

"I say, what is the meaning of this dastardly accusation that you are making against my wife!" screamed Lord Bradley as he rose from his chair.

"Oh sit down you old fool!" retorted Rutherford, pushing Lord Bradley back into his chair.



This photograph by Roland Haebler won the first prize for Black and White Photography in the Dal Arts Society Contest.

"It was your own incompetence and stupidity which created this whole situation in the first place. If you hadn't have left all those top secret materials out in the open where Charles would find them, this might not have happened."

"Yes, do sit down. I wish to hear what Rutherford has to say," said Lady Bradley, regaining her composure and then turning toward Rutherford Cavendish. "Now please do continue, but I am afraid I am rather puzzled by your reference to Charles and myself. One of my class would not think of having an affair with a—a servant."

"Don't play games with me Lady Bradley. I was standing outside the window when you were alone with Charles." Lady Bradley's hands began to tremble.

"You see I had been very puzzled as to just who had warned the German agent about our trap at the auction. I knew that you were the only one who knew my true occupation, but of course I had no evidence to connect you with Charles. When I saw you two together, it all came to me and I knew that you, Lady Bradley, were the hidden third agent who warned the German agent about the trap."

"Well I suppose there is no alternative but to confess," said Lady Bradley in a shaky voice. "But I couldn't stand spending another day with him!"

She pointed her finger at Lord Bradley. "He is such a colossal bore that I knew that if I spent another day with him I should surely become insane. Charles and I were planning to run off together..."

"Don't be silly!" retorted Rutherford. "Charles didn't care for you. He just used you to carry out his espionage. Now let us go."

Rutherford escorted the tearful Lady Bradley from the house and drove her into the city. Lord Bradley remained in his chair for several minutes after Rutherford and his wife left. Then the old grandfather clock which had belonged to his family for almost one hundred years chimed its hourly tune.

"It is time," muttered Lord Bradley to himself. He raised himself from his chair and walked into his bedroom. He opened the drawer in his night table and withdrew a small revolver which he had always kept there. Calmly he placed one bullet in the chamber and pointed it at his temple. Then he pulled the trigger.

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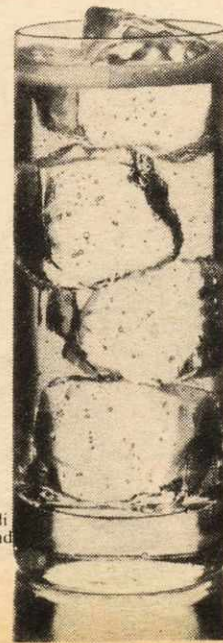
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