

STOLEN HONOUR

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by Elissa Barnard

As Lord Bradley dozed in front of the fire trying to imagine how Lord Cavendish could read a blank sheet of paper, his imperial wife was standing guard at the ornately carved portals of the Bradley Bibliotheque. She had one hand firmly on the finely-tooled lace of her hip to appear authoritative and in control and the other delicately pressed to her forehead to appear quite undone by the dastardly theft.

"Charles, dear, oh my dearest darling . . . Well, yes, Charles do search the shelves under E. Leave no inch of the shelf uncovered and do be careful, sweetest. Myself, I will stand guard. Oh, I am quite unnerved by this ordeal. I could faint."

But there was no need to faint. The high drama of the situation reminded her of the Barbara Cartland novel lying on the floor beneath her ornately carved canopy bed and Lady Bradley cast herself as the novel's most glamorous, vulnerable yet strong, heroine.

Charles, flinching, gave her an indifferent peck on her heavily padded shoulder, and, still green about the eyes with the knowledge that the Francesca della Bordella was a forgery, walked with studied elegance into the dank library.

The grandfather clock in the downstairs hall ticked ominously loud, second upon second, minute upon minute, hour upon hour, louder even than Lord Bradley's snores. Upon remarking, "Rutherford is a strange character; how little one really knows of one's neighbours nowadays," he had fallen into a deep and dreamless sleep. Lady Bradley's back was getting sore and the stiff bone of her corset could no longer keep it from sagging. Charles had not muttered a syllable for two hours and when the telephone had jingled it had only been that nasty Jonathan evilly chortling, "A little birdie told me the Bradleys are not the presupposed beacons of our aristocratic community but purveyors of forgeries."

Tired of her pose, Lady Bradley decided, as capricious heroine, she must seek out her darling Charles. She straightened her back and wound her way through the circular, dust-covered stacks of her husband's childish library, calling softly, "Charles, Charles." Not a peep could be heard from her lower-class sweetheart. Mild, affectionate worry rose to panic as she walked dizzily round and round the stacks to the center of the library where the E's had been placed. Silently cursing Lord Bradley's eccentric great-grandfather for building a maze of a library starting with E, the first letter of his horrid name, Englebert,

she arrived slightly panting at the E's. Lady Bradley was not prepared for what encountered her myopic eyes. She stared at the shelves; they stared back at her, totally deprived of any books authored by E's. Lady Bradley screamed, sending echoes round and round the library shelves, bounding off *The Jungle Boy* and *The Wizard of Oz*, and this time, she did quite faint away, realizing just before she lost consciousness that she could never again adhere to Barbara Cartland's perception of reality. The maze of the Bradley Bibliotheque was quite deserted except for a blank sheet of paper resting at Lady Bradley's feet.

With the last crowing of the Bradley's token rooster, set in a minute barnyard to remind all they were pure, landowning aristocracy, Lord Bradley awoke with a start.

"I must have slept through tea time. Oh, dear," he mumbled wearily, tugging on the bell cord for Charles. But the figure that appeared was not the elegant butler's form of Charles. It was the swelling belly of the maid, Clarissa. "Clarissa, what is the meaning of this. Upon close inspection I find you are not Charles."

"Oh, sir, do not be mad with me, please, but Charles is nowhere to be found. He was last seen in the greenhouse pretending to water my ladyship's begonias but really poring over at least 50 dusty old books."

"Good God, Clarissa, nothing and no one are ever as they appear. I could quote Yeats' *The Second Coming* but it would be over your head."

"Do not take it so to heart, my lord, I hate to see you upset."

"I am not upset, only a trifle worried. We have been robbed, as I'm sure all you gossiping servants realize."

"Does that mean you cannot pay me my money?"

"Clarissa, kindly remember your place in this household and that an aristocrat never stops doling out money especially when he is bankrupt. I am not notoriously generous but, as a man of weakened principles, I will never stop supporting your child."

"Our child."

"Have you seen my wife, Clarissa? If not, you are dismissed."

"Lady Bradley has disappeared."

"Thank you."

With tears sparkling in her young blue eyes, Clarissa curtsied and left the room. Lord Bradley glowered over the punch bowl and hastily poured himself a scotch and soda. The day was taxing him badly. A forgery had been solen and his wife had run off with the butler, or so it appeared.

"I say, I say," he said, noticing for the first time a shadowy figure passing before the drawn curtains of the living room window. Before he could gallantly dash into the vestibule, Lord Cavendish entered at what Lord Bradley considered a badly timed moment, unequalled in history.

"Rutherford, I do wish you'd stop appearing like this. You are acting much more like the thief than a wholly inadequate, amateur detective."

"Lord Bradley, it is your painting, excuse me, my painting and your money which should concern you, not my appearance." He suppressed an irritated cough. "I have found no suspicious characters in the town library, in fact no one was there at all. Mondays the library is closed. We have reached in our investigation, I am afraid to say, the proverbial dead end."

"Not quite," exclaimed Lord Bradley triumphantly, brandishing his knowledge like a dull sword. "My wife and Charles have disappeared."

"What? Charles? Why that low bellied, measly, double-crossing scoundrel!"

"Lord Cavendish, remember your station if it means anything to you at all."

"Station be damned."

At which utterance Lord Bradley dropped open his mouth and was unable to mutter another sound. Lord Cavendish recovered his control although his eyes remained enlarged like a dragon's and his cheeks puffed red.

"Lord Bradley, a gross deceit has been practiced on me. In this case, I am afraid to say the butler did it. Where is Charles now?"

Lord Bradley could only point a lame finger in the direction of the Bradley Bibliotheque, at the center of which Lady Bradley was just regaining consciousness. Rutherford dashed up the stairs with a sense of alarm quite unappealing in one of his class.

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A PEEK AT THE PAST

by John Cairns

Most people have friends. All have enemies, and one of the worst is fire. No respecter of wealth or importance, or lack of the same, fire will attack anyone, including universities and their students.

This is something Halifax's Mount Saint Vincent University knows from experience. Thirty years ago the campus was demolished in flame. *The Dalhousie Gazette* of February 2, 1951, tells something of the event and of two of the refugees:

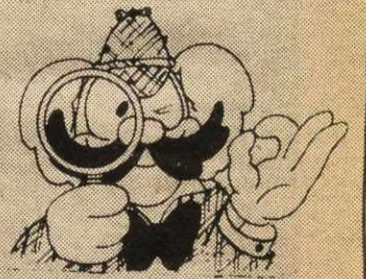
"Three girls from fire-raised Mt. St. Vincent were at Shirreff Hall for a short time on Wednesday. Ann Streeter from Rothsay, New Brunswick, and Mary Lou Oland and Jane Brennan, both from Saint John had lost everything they owned in the fire which completely destroyed the college.

According to the girls the fire started in the kitchen about midnight. After smouldering for some time, it spread at about 1:45, and everyone was awakened. There was no panic, and no one was injured, as within five minutes three hundred students and one hundred sisters escaped the

flames.

Although nobody was hurt, all possessions were destroyed, and everything belonging to the college was a total loss.

At the moment the girls are awaiting word from the Dean of the college. When asked what their plans for the future were, they said that they did not know whether they would be able to complete their college year. All the girls from the Academy were being sent home, they reported."



Mount Saint Vincent has since rebuilt while also growing and probably maturing. It would not fall victim so easily again, yet as always, the demon looms. The only effective weapon may be perseverance, and the Mount's experience testifies to the tenacity an institution can display.