

The following is Part Two of **Stolen Honour**, a **Gazette** serial story, and was written by Stan Beeler. In Part One, Lord and Lady Bradley, art dealers, have discovered that the painting they have just sold to a certain Lord Cavendish has been stolen, Lady Bradley having notified the police of the theft before being informed by her husband that the art work is a forgery. Concerned about retrieving the painting before the authorities in order to protect their reputation, they receive a note from an unknown person.

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by Stan Beeler

Lord Bradley acknowledged Charles' statement with an absentminded wave of his hand, then took the preferred letter from the tray. He bent forward and picked up a finely tooled bronze letter opener and slit the envelope. As he read the enclosed note, Lord Bradley's expression changed from distraction to confusion. "Look at this my-dear," he said. "I can't make a bit of sense of it!"

Lady Bradley strode brusquely across the room and snatched the note from her husband's hand. "Really Henry," she said sharply, "I wish you would pay more attention to the matter at hand. This affair could have a terrible effect upon our social life. Remember how everyone cut poor Bertram when it was discovered that his daughter had run off with a garage mechanic." She glanced angrily down at the light blue notepaper in her hand, then gave a short gasp of amazement. "What can it mean," she muttered, then read aloud. "Quixote's father spent five years in Algiers, I hope that Bordella's son need not wait so long."

Lord Bradley replied, "Do you think that it could have some connection with the missing painting, my dear? After all, it was the Bordella that was stolen, was it not?"

"Yes", snapped his wife, "but what is this nonsense about Quixote's father?"

At that moment Charles re-entered the room and said, "Lord Cavendish is here sir, I believe that he has come to fetch a painting. Shall I bring him up?"

"Henry", shrieked Lady Bradley, "Now what shall we do?"

"Calm yourself my dear," her husband replied in a soothing tone of voice. "I believe I have the solution to our present difficulties. Charles, show the gentleman in please."

Charles left the room and returned shortly in the company of a tall, balding man. He was rather negligently dressed in a dark tweed jacket with a rumpled turtleneck sweater underneath. What remained of his hair was dark blond, straight, and had had only cursory attention from a comb. He had a narrow, high bridged nose and deepest, unremarkable blue eyes.

"Henry, old man," he said as he looked intently around the room, "how have you been? And my dear Lady Bradley, how absolutely wonderful to see you again."

Lord Bradley strode across the room to where the man stood near the door, and grasped his preferred right hand.

"Cavendish old man, I'm afraid that I've got some rather bad news for you. The Bordella, it's been stolen, beastly business you know. Of course we shall refund your cheque immediately." At that moment he stopped, released Lord Cavendish's hand, which he had been nervously shaking, and stepped back a pace.

"I know," Lord Cavendish muttered rather absently as he continued to inspect his surroundings. Then he seemed to draw himself together and said, "Henry, as you may remember, I have been working from time to time with the local constabulary. Ever since that nasty bit of business with the mechanic who was run down in his own garage. I was speaking with the chief inspector when Lady Bradley's call came through. He allowed me to take the case when he realized that I had a personal interest in it. I told him that I couldn't bear the thought of the Bordella slipping through my fingers at the last moment, so to speak."

Lady Bradley spoke up. "My dear Rutherford, I had no idea that you involved yourself in such common affairs. What would your dear Mama have thought of you galavanting around like a detective?"

"Quite right," added her husband. "Of course we appreciate your concern, old

man, but do you think it proper to involve yourself?"

"Yes, yes I do," replied Rutherford Cavendish while looking at the Bradleys inquisitively. "I don't believe that one should allow the criminal element to get the upper hand. Besides that, I find investigations of this sort intellectually rather stimulating. By the way, have you heard anything from the thief?"

Lord Bradley, looking rather surprised at this uncharacteristic outburst from the habitually cool Lord Cavendish, silently handed him the note.

Before Lord Cavendish had a chance to read the message on the light blue paper, Lady Bradley plaintively interjected:

"We can't make a bit of sense of it Rutherford. We don't even know that it concerns the missing painting."

Cavendish glanced down at the paper and read it aloud. "Quixote's father spent five years in Algiers, I hope that Bordella's son need not wait so long."

"Fascinating," he mused, and sank, uninvited, into one of the heavily padded armchairs in the corner of the room.

Lord Bradley interrupted his thoughts. "I say Cavendish, do you think it could have something to do with the French possessions in Africa. Perhaps they've carried my Bordella off to Algiers. There's not much chance of getting it back from there, is there? I shouldn't think the French authorities would be very co-operative."

After a moment Lord Cavendish spoke decisively. "No," he said, as he stood up abruptly. "I don't believe that it concerns Algiers at all. The key is Quixote's father, that must refer to Cervantes, you know the Spaniard who wrote **Don Quixote**. You see, if Bordella's son refers to your painting, rather I should say my painting, as I couldn't possibly consider the return of my forty thousand pounds, gentleman's agreement you know, then Quixote's son must logically refer to the creator of the character. Now from my studies of literature in Christ's College I remember that Cervantes spent five years in the hands of the Moors, or was it Turks, held for ransom."

Lady Bradley interjected, "Then you believe that the Bordella is being held for ransom."

"Exactly," said Lord Cavendish as he moved across the room and reached for the heavy velvet covered rope that rang a bell in the servants' quarters. "If I might," he said, glancing over his shoulder, then pulling twice sharply without waiting for the Bradleys to reply.

A moment later Charles entered the room. "You rang, sir?" He looked directly at Lord Cavendish, for after twenty years of faithful service he was easily able to recognize his Master and Mistress' familiar tug on the bell rope.

"Yes Charles," said Cavendish in a tone of command. He was obviously at ease in his role of investigator. "Can you describe to me the person who delivered this note?" Charles threw an inquiring look at Lord Bradley, and then replied as he received an assenting nod from his Master. "Yes sir, certainly. It was a small boy sir, obviously a street urchin. I did not allow him to come in sir."

Lady Bradley spoke approvingly. "Of course not, Charles, one never knows what sort of infections such persons are carrying."

"Well," said Lord Cavendish, "I suppose that it would be impossible to trace him now. I should imagine that he was merely acting as a messenger for the thief anyway."

Lord Bradley nodded at Charles, "very good, you may go now Charles."

As he left the room Lord Cavendish turned to his hosts and said, "I must go now. I should imagine that you will receive another note soon; please inform me when it arrives. You have my number Henry." He inclined his head slightly in the direction of the lady of the house, "Lady Bradley, don't bother to summon Charles, I shall let myself out."

As he left the room Lord Bradley turned to his wife. "What do you make of that business? I can't imagine Cavendish behaving in such a manner."

His wife replied, "It is very curious Henry. I had no idea that he involved himself in this sort of thing." She looked to her husband with a curious expression and said, "Henry, how do you suppose that he knew that it was the Bordella that had been stolen? I didn't tell the officer on the telephone, and yet he knew before he arrived."

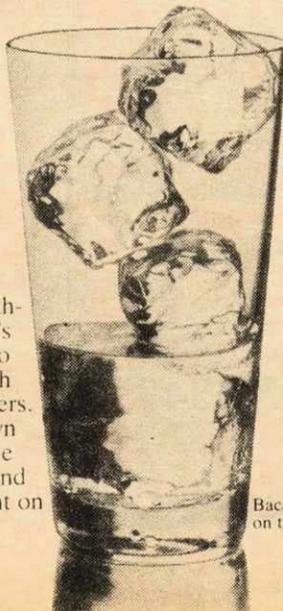
Lord and Lady Bradley stared at one another silently.



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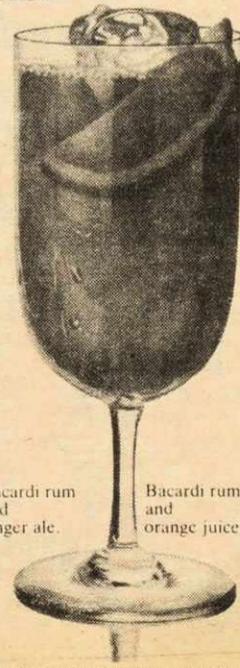
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