

## BENINBROOK HALL

By Lloyd Nelson

**M**ary Jenkinson has worked at the stately home Beninbrook Hall for the past 57 years. She started as an upstairs maid, but this changes on the morning Lord Beninbrook came - unusually - into the downstairs



dining hall.

"Damn it all, this weather is bad enough without having so many poor fires going throughout the place. I need," he says, "a volunteer to run these."

Mary is as bright as a button, puts up her hand. By this time the butler, the Major Domo, comes in the door. "A word, Sir," he says, "if the present system is not to your satisfaction I can make other recommendations." Mary, in the meantime interjects. "Pease Sir, I'd be pleased to do it." The Lord says "Done."

He turns to look at the butler. "Your recommendations lately Johnston," he says, "may well suit you, but they don't always suit me."

Spotting the farm manager, who has been here having a cuppa with the housekeeper "Now, Smith," the Lord says, "I want a sensible lad from the farm

cottage that is prepared to do this lass's bidding. Who have you got?"

"I'll send him here in the next half hour Milord." He says.

As soon as the Lord goes Johnston says "You'll report to me for the orders, of

fires with". Next she goes down to the huge pile of logs cut from windfalls or dead trees on the estate. Most of these usually get burnt in the autumn pile, which, after a bit of cajoling and a sound reminder that he was present when the Lord commissioned her to fix the fires, he agrees to have spare staff reduce the smaller limbs to fire grate size and to store them under cover.

Within a few days she has marked on her ad hoc note sheets the chimneys that have any tendencies to smoke. She is planning to give the sweep quite a hard time when he comes in early summer to do the annual sweep. Anyway, the fires start burning brightly and quickly at the start of each big house day. She uses applewood, elm and a bit of oak on the Lords fires.

To be continued .....

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**LifeTricks**

course."

Mary gives him a sunny smile. "I think not" she says, "The command just given me by the Lord is clearly an independent one."

She takes off her apron, picks up a handful of old dining room menus and pen and in no time is getting a list of fire priorities going. The part the Lord occupies or moves around of course is number 1 on the list. The staff places the lowest.

Taking the bit in her teeth she hunts for Mr. Smith and gets from him without difficulty a horse and spring cart and a man. She sends him off for a load of sawdust from the estate mill.

The next step in the coal cellar is to mix a half cask of this and paraffin, of which there is plenty on the estate. "Gawd", she thinks "at long last we have something decent to start the

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# Beninbrook Hall

Part Two By Lloyd Nelson

The applewood, elm and a bit of oak combine to give a cheery fire in the Lord's living space. This goes down well with Lord Beninbrook and he sends downstairs for Mary Jenkinson. He's as crabby as hell just at the moment. He took a fall from his big bunter going over a stone wall at the opening meet at Castle Howard, fractured a leg. It's not that bad a break, but it's left him housebound for the moment.

"Great job on the fires, Mary," he says, "now I want to apply your energy and imagination to a couple more areas. The single malt in my whisky decanter isn't up to snuff and my pipe tobacco tastes to me like horse manure."

"Perhaps it is" she brightly replies.

"Fix it, kid" he says.

"Sir," she says, "Mr. Johnson hasn't come to terms yet with me doing the fires. If I buy into whisky and baccy he'll have a very severe fit".

The lord has a belly laugh, "Perhaps" he says, "I'll start a rumour that I'm thinking of making you the Over Butler of the Hall".

"He might quit, Sir" she says.

"Never" says the lord. "Who the hell would ever take him on at his age?"

The lord sits at his beautiful Georgian desk, scribbles away.

"Here's a note of authority to my tobacconist and my liquor supplier. Here's a twenty pound note for the expenses. Train up to London tomorrow, see what you can do. No need to tell anyone, just do it".

"By the way" he says, "the last time I visited Kedleston, Lord Curzon's man served up the best pipe baccy I've smoked in years. His malt whisky, likewise, was quite memorable. Look it up".

Mary's mother is a very fine seamstress and has taught Mary the basics. Thus, utilising her keen powers of observation and her innate care with money she is well able to turn herself out fashionably and smartly. She is also cute. The handle of her elegant umbrella is a turned down piece of stout oak. She always carries this with her, taking no chances when travelling. She gets off at Euston, finds a bank to break down into smaller change the lord's twenty pound note and gets herself around to Curzon Street first.

The footman who answers the imposing door looks her up and down cheekily, and no wonder. She's a fine looking girl with a fashionable hour-glass figure.

"I need to see the butler" she says.

"Won't I do?" asks the footman.

She shakes her broly at him.

"Begone and find him smartly" She says. The butler turns up.

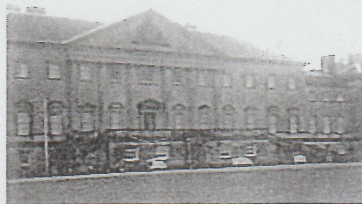
"My mission, sir," she says, "is one of enquiry for Lord Beninbrook. As you

would well know, Lord Curzon shoots at the Hall every August 12th. It's about pipe tobacco and malt whisky."

She is very persuasive and pert and the surprisingly young butler invites her in. Such is her style and diction (learned from her mother's close friend, who teaches elocution at St Andrew's University) he is unsure of whether she is upper class or servant class. It's not a bad effort on her part as most usually butlers have an unerring nose in placing people in their station in life. She grins at him.

"I'm only the fire lighter for the lord," she says, "but he's grumpy at the moment, huffy with the long serving butler, hence here I am at your doorstep on a secret service mission in effect."

"Jeez" says the butler, dropping his



sonorous tone. "I've heard about you. Old Johnson, the old curmudgeon, absolutely hates you."

"Ah" says Mary, "I don't take my orders from Johnson, the lord empowers me direct."

The butler chuckles.

"Come on" he says "a cup of tea, perhaps?"

"No" she says "a small malt whisky would be better."

The man goggles.

"It's like this" she says, "if I'm to organise better whisky for the lord it's best I taste what is normally served up in this well ordered household."

"You're a one" he says, "can I take you out on your day off?" She dimples.

"Would we get away with afternoon tea at the Ritz? I'll meet you outside at 3:00pm."

"Sharp" he says, "we can at least try our luck."

Mary moves on to the whisky and tobacco suppliers and meets him on the dot. They sweep into the Ritz. Sotto voce she says to the butler "Don't say a word, I'll do the talking."

Taking off the authoritative stance of Lady Marchmont, a regal visitor to the Hall, she accosts the waiter, points her broly at a decent table, she imperiously says to him "That will suit me, my colleague and I have some business to discuss and that table will give us a little privacy. The waiter says "but, but" and calls the very grand head waiter.

"What name, madam?" he asks.

"My man" she says, "if you have to ask that I doubt you are qualified for your job."

She puts her hand to the butler, stops him where he stands and gestures the head waiter over a few steps. In cut glass diction she talks in his ear in a furious whisper.

"That is the table I want and which I shall have" she says. "If you can't meet my requirements then I shall ring Lord Marchmont and he will tell you to seat me at it forthwith."

Marchmont is, of course, a director of The Ritz Company.

The head waiter buckles and escorts them to the table. After he has gone the butler says,

"What on earth did you say to that puffed up beggar?" Mary dimples.

"Nothing" she says, "I just asked him could he recommend the cucumber sandwiches today."

As they finish their afternoon tea the butler, who is very taken with Mary, says "Can we do this again next time you're in town?"

"I don't mind" says Mary, as she gathers up her things, "but best next time we go to a Lyons. I wouldn't chance getting away with this a second time. The wait staff here are not long term fools."

to be continued.....

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## PART THREE

Previous:

Mary Jenkinson, who looks after the many fires in the Hall, has been in London running errands for Lord Beninbrook.

It's been a successful day in London and the suppliers she has been sent to concur with what she has learned from Perkin at Curzons. She carries some well wrapped supplies back to the evening train to Yorkshire. Afternoon tea at the Ritz was fine too.

"What are your long term plans?" Perkin the butler eagerly asks. Under it all he's not gentleman class, she thinks.

"Oh, just to keep the Hall fires burning." She says.

Just after dawn next morning she reclaims her bicycle from the railway station and cycles over to the hall to make sure her helper has got the fires busing brightly. She ramps up the Lords study fire with sweet smelling Applewood and a bit of left over elm, fills his decanter with the new whisky and puts a slipper of aromatic tobacco on the fireside table.

Later in the morning she's drinking tea in the servants hall when old Johnson the butler, wearing his full-on funeral face, comes in.

"The Lord has asked me to personally escort you to his study." They stop at the Lord's door, after Johnson has dusted imaginary dust from his coat lapels and shot his cuffs.

"Miss Mary, Milord" he says, and ushers her in. The Lord is sitting fireside smoking his big bowl briar pipe.

"Thanks, Johnson," he says, "that will be all."

When the door shuts he grins at Mary. This is Kedleston style baccy, Mary" he says, "where'd you find it?" She smiles a fetching smile, "Have you tried the Malt?"

"No," he says, "why don't you pour us one?"

She takes two glasses from the sideboard, pours a full shot into one and a tiny bit into hers. The Lord is bemused, as well as he might be, she thinks. It's most likely the first time in his life he is contemplating drinking with a servant of the Hall, or any servant, perhaps. She picks up her glass, sips.

"If I may my Lord," she says, "there is a tendency for modern day malt whiskies to become heavier, the extra caramel colouring in what is really a white liquid also has got darker. It takes from the finished product, which should only be a comfort to the drinker and an experience to the tastebuds. This malt is different and outstanding. It has a true peat taste and can only be described by those with a discerning palate as an experience without parallel. Bottoms up, sir," she says, taking off a cockney accent, she drains her glass.

The Lord chuckles. "Why should I spoil such an entrancing spiel?" He says, "by actually tasting what we have here?"

Actually what she has said is not original. It's what the obliging merchant told her in Bond Street. The Lord sits quizzically for a while.

"Bottoms up" he says. A look of pleased surprise comes over his face. "This," he says, "is an incredibly rare taste experience. Wherever did you get this very fine tippie?"

Mary says "I'm told that to arrive at a really good malt hinges on long experience and it was someone who shall be nameless gave me good road directions."

In actual fact this malt is distilled at Bothwell in Tasmania and the wine merchant says it will, in time, take top place with malt drinkers. But she also knows the Lord could never contemplate anything good of any nature coming out of the Colonies.

"Milord," she says, "I suggest you just enjoy and we can talk details later. Now," she says "I bought your supplies on the Hall account, but here is an account

of my travel expenses and the return of the unspent monies."

He scans the bill. "What?" he says, "no meals?"

She laughs a tinkly laugh, "No, sir. An obliging butler took me to afternoon tea at the Ritz."

The Lord chuckles. "best not to tell old Johnson."

## Fun Facts About June

June is the sixth month of the year in the Julian and Gregorian calendars and one of the four months with a length of 30 days.

June is the month with the longest daylight hours of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and the shortest daylight hours of the year in the Southern Hemisphere.

June in the Northern Hemisphere is the seasonal equivalent to December in the Southern Hemisphere and vice versa.

In the Northern hemisphere, the beginning of the meteorological summer is June 1st.

In the Southern hemisphere, the beginning of the meteorological winter is June 1st.

The month of June is probably named after Juno, the wife of Jupiter, and queen of the gods [Hera in Greek mythology].

It was held sacred to her, and was thought by the Romans to be the luckiest month for marriage, since Juno was the Goddess of Marriage.

Wherever the goddess went she was attended by her messenger Iris (the Rainbow), who journeyed so quickly through the air that she was seldom seen, but after she had passed there was often left in the sky the radiant trail of her highly-coloured robe.

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WHEN: 6 April and 14 May 2016.

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# Beninbrook Hall

By Lloyd Nelson  
Part 4

Previous

Mary Jenkinson looks after all the hall fires. With winter over she is getting things ready for the next sharp Yorkshire winter and running errands for the quirky old Lord.

Nothing much out of the ordinary happens for a while. By August 1st Mary has had the hall chimneys and those in the stable block thoroughly swept and she has insisted that following this the sweep has to run loose straw filled sacks through to doubly ensure a really good clean. She knows this will help produce very good fires in the winter. Johnson, the crusty old Butler comes into the room she is inspecting. She has a mob cap on and is peering up the chimney using a black lantern and a hand mirror. He jerks his head in an upstairs motion.

"The lord wants you - again." He heads for the stairway. She laughs. "I'll spare you the trudge, sir," she says and lightly starts tripping up the stairs.

Lord Beninbrook is sipping a whisky. "I've found out where this comes from," he says. "If you had told me I would never have had the pleasure of quaffing it. Come," he says, "I'll pour you one, sits down."

This of course is patronage in a grand scale.

"The glorious 12th of august is approaching," he says, "but my leg is going slowly. I don't want to miss out on the grouse, but I don't want to look an invalid either. What do you suggest?"

"Easy, peasy, sir." she says. "There's a wooden platform on handles over at the granary. It's nicely high enough to sit on with unrestricted arm movement. We can easily get over to where you shoot and dig it in just a whisker."

"I haven't shot for a while" he says. "If you like sir," she says, "I've seen a wide choke shotgun in the gun room and we can get your loader to load up no. 9 shot more like say 10 shot."

"There's no ten shot." he says. "I know," she rejoins, "just let's not tell the others."

It's all settled and he has a good shoot. He doesn't waste time on the high flyers but does extra well on the low ones.

Next morning the lord sends for her. He automatically pours her a stiff shot of malt when she's comes in the door.

"Sit and sip." he says.

"Perhaps not, sir." she says. "If Lady Sybil catches me doing this it's me for gallows."

Beninbough laughs.

"Lady Sybil, as you well know, is only here when the all England show is on. She prefers her ancestral home in Gloucestershire. Now," he says "everything you suggested for the grouse shoot worked like a German band. I want to send a message to Johnson. Down half the malt and ill summon him."

Johnson turns up and nearly falls over to see Mary perched on a fiddle back chair sipping scotch.

In a mental flash Johnson thinks - this witch will be smoking the lord's panatelas when next I walk in.

The Lord says "by the end of august Mary will have everything ticket boo for our next winter. I expect you have plans on what you want to deploy her to once we reach that point."

"Indeed yes, your lordship, I have quite a few assignments in mind."

In a mental flash of her own Mary thinks - and these will be full on mucky jobs.

The lord says "in view of her success in the role I gave her, the very long hours she has of necessity put in, I plan to have her carry out general duties as assigned by me, mainly to capably handle any zig zag idea I might dream up. This she will continue to report to me and only I until

I tell you otherwise. Can I take it you fully understand my orders?"

Johnson looks as though he's taken a draught of vinegar followed by sucking a lemon.

"Yes, milord" he says. "Will that be all?" and leaves the room.

Mary drains her drink and stands up straight.

"What's your orders, milord?"

He surprises her. "I have Australian relatives, big in grazing, going to Italy towards the end of the summer and then visiting here. I want you to come up with a programme that will interest and entertain them here and perhaps you can organise and go along for a bit of a look around Ireland."

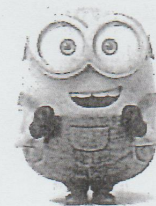
She tugs her forelock, "it will be a pleasure, sir." she brightly says.

What did the muffin say to the other muffins?

The other muffins say what?

Omg a talking Muffin!!

My boss told me to  
have a good day...



So I went home.

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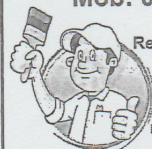
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# Beninbrook Hall

Part 5

By Lloyd Nelson

**M**ary Jenkinson runs all the fires at the Hall. It's now summer and the lord, incapacitated from a hunting fall has asked her to squire a party of Oz relies around Yorkshire and Ireland.

The Oz visitors come and go and it's a roaring success. One of the highlights is the conducted tour Mary takes them to Riveleux Abbey on a delightful sunny afternoon.

After they go things run along quietly at the Hall. The morning comes when she is again to take a dram with the lord. It's late November and a heavy fog hangs over the plains of York.

"Mary," he says, "I can't contemplate riding to hounds just yet, but I've an invite to the opening meet at the Gascoignes. I'd love to go."

"Surely easy enough, Milord" she says. "Just lean on a shooting stick and partake of the stirrup cup."

"Ears, ears," he says, "I'll do that, but I want to see the blood and thunder of the actual chase. Any ideas?"

"Again, easy peasy, milord," she says, "I go along to local meets with Larry Flint who drives the jaunting cart and Arthur Hill, alias Top Rail, the hunt correspondent for the Yorkshire Mail. I help him gather up details of whose riding and Larry is a sure hand on where the hunt will run and hops out to help the fallen and gather names. We can easily fit you in the cart."

"Mary, bring a long silver flask filled with the hall brandy and a parcel of pasties."

They have a lovely and amusing day and Mary runs off a sketch of the Laird following proceedings sitting in the jaunting cart at a high spot. Top Rail includes this in his story and the paper, not being stupid, puts it on the front page of the social notes.

But this is the upside. The downside is the lord catches a chill in the sharp conditions and this worsens into pneumonia. Johnson has some very

harsh words to say to Mary about all this, but he pulls through, and when he's finally up and about, which takes until March, he says to Mary "Just one more winter in Yorkshire could finish me."

"Well, sir," she says, "you have your place in Venice."

"Bah," he says, "That interesting, damp city sits in fog for much of the Northern winter." "Barbados?" she asks.

"Full of blasted English," he says, "boring as hell."

"Singapore?" she asks, and strikes a chord.

"Tell me about it" he says, "the tropics, where there is a bit of life and colour may be worth a thought."

Mary grins, pulls her forelock.

"It will be a pleasure, sir" she says.

"Tell me," he says, "you could buy and sell most of the people I meet. How come you're not married?"

She chuckles, "Milord, I could be a clergyman's wife if I wanted."

"You didn't want?" he asks.

"Ah, sir, marriage and mothering children is a vocation that has little appeal to me. When handling babies one has to remember that the peanut butter covering your fingers is not something you should suck off."

He laughs. "And the clergyman?"

"Well, sir, I told him that in Yorkshire – if he wanted to progress in his profession he has to marry a County girl and preferably one with real money. But also hung him out an alternative. The Church of England in Singapore were advertising for a curate with choir experience. All of which fitted my suitor like a glove. I saw the spot advertised in your Times and thought of him immediately."

"So?" the lord asks.

"He went, has done well, has married the only daughter of a Singaporean millionaire and they have a child on the way."

"Umn" the lord says, "is the church in Yorkshire ready for one of their sons with a different cultured wife?"

"Probably not" she says, "but why would he come home to work when he can well afford now to pay a state visit back?"

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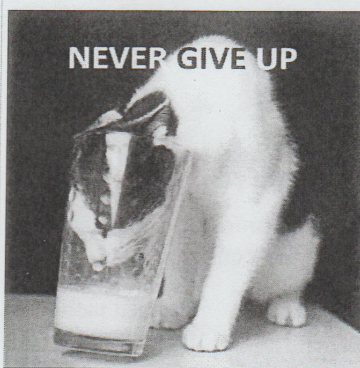
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# Beninbrook Hall by Lloyd Nelson

Part 6

Previous

Lord Beninbrook is recovering from a bout of pneumonia, fears another Yorkshire winter may be the end of him. Mary Jenkinson, who keeps the Hall fires burning and runs errands for the lord has suggested he spell in the Tropics, Singapore in particular.

To this end she rounds up Justin Jones, the travel writer for the Yorkshire Mail. He has just put out an in-depth article on Singapore. She picks his fertile brain.

"Fill me in," she says, "there'll be a story in it and perhaps an invite back to Singapore if it all works out."

She explains her interest. Jones says the go-to man is Sammy Oh.

"He will find what you want for not silly cost. I'll cable him today and we can see what he digs up."

Nearly three weeks later Mary is spreading out colour photos and details on the lord's desk.

Days later the lord says "I've spoken to young Piper at the lawyers in York, near Petergate. They are attending to letters of authority etc., and your passport. I'd like you to take the flying boat down to Singapore and set me up with something decent, starting December the 1st."

"What actually do you want, sir?"

He laughs and pours her and himself a

dram.

"You know our lifestyle, so you'll know what I want when you see it."

Not all that much later, after a wonderful trip out, staying every night in top class hotels she is looking through a marvellous furnished house in Emerald Hill in Singapore. She takes it for a year with an option to renew or to buy freehold. She arranges staffing with Sammy Oh and decides against a motor vehicle. It's a tricky place to drive around and Sammy says that the local Rolls Royce hire firm gives immediate service to the right people. And at quite a moderate cost. Next stop is Government House. The ADC to the Governor gives her an audience.

"It's like this," she says, "Lord Beninbrook will be here with a full establishment from early December and I am keen to trade off a monthly cheque to the Governor's wife's pet charity in exchange for inclusion on the Governor's A list."

"I'm sure," the man says. "what you propose can be easily and satisfactorily arranged."

"What about High Tea at the Raffles," he says, "today?"

"Surely," Mary says.

Over this famous tea and cakes affair he asks,

"what do you do for the lordship? You seem to have full powers to arrange his

life for him."

"Oh", she says, "I light and keep his lordships house fires."

He scoffs at this. Little does he know. Mary makes very sound arrangements and after the laird comes out on a P&O Liner she spends a month settling him in. Sammy Oh has provided two big Chinese butlers, Ying and Yan. They work twelve hour shifts and no-one comes into the villa, either via the back or front door without Ying or Yan letting them do so. The house staff are Singaporean and to have some acceptable company for the lord Mary, taking advice from the Governors ADC recruits a retired army major to come in every morning for a couple of snifters with the laird, to see he gets his older Times of London and more currently the Times of India and the main English language local paper. He goes with the lord to church at St Andrews Cathedral and Mary's rector friend from Yorkshire makes sure the laird is welcomed and well recognised at the Cathedral Church of Singapore. It's a great time to live in Singapore. It's a bustling Colonial hub and the lord has entrée to Government House garden parties, croquet matches, cricket at the Singapore Cricket Club and so on. The ex-pat major is persona grata at all of these places and an excellent choice for the job.

## Historical Flashbacks !!!

The Krupp board room 1933

"Well, shall we support this Hitler chap or send a hit man around?"

"Nah, leave him be, he's harmless."

xxxxxx

Admiral Hood to Admiral Collingwood

"No, I just can't see wooden ships being replaced by these steam kettle things."

xxxxxx

Custer aide to General Custer

"Shouldn't we wait on the rest of the cavalry coming up?"

"Nah, why share the glory?"

xxxxxx

Winston Churchill after Chamberlains visit to Germany

"We have sustained a defeat without fighting a war."

"Salisbury - "Rubbish, Winston, you're talking through your hat."

xxxxxx

Stanley Baldwin to Cabinet

"Let the romance run on. The King will never marry this American divorcee."

xxxxxx

The Olympic Games coach to Eddie the Eagle

"Do you really want to do this?"

"Yep - I know I won't win, but it's worth a try."

xxxxxx

The batting partner with Geoffrey Boycott at a Trent Bridge match.

"Geoffrey, I can tell when Lillee's going to bowl a bouncer."

Boycott to the battling partner "Yep, so can I, but let's not tell the others."

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# Beninbrook Hall

By Lloyd Nelson

Final

## Previous

Mary Jenkinson through her personality and intelligence has risen from looking after the hall fires to looking after the estate of lord and lady Beninbrook and also the ladies estate in Gloucestershire.

## Now

After a conference in Singapore with the Beninbrooks, Mary actions the programme put forward by her to consolidate estate matters.

She has copy painters in to do very good copies of the hall pictures then puts the originals in secure storage, knocks down a big brick barn on the home farm to obtain enough matching bricks to build an extension addition to the Dower house to house copies. This ensures the safety of the very good stuff from art thieves, ever present and active in Britain. She moves the old hangers on (rellies and such like) from the hall to now surplus cottages on the estate and subsidises the local meals on wheels to ensure they are visited and provided with a decent mid-day meal. They grizzle like blazes of course now that they have been divorced from the free grog supply.

Major work now starts to remove the timber floors in the main house and other features which, despite depression times, sell to the national trust and American buyers not effected by the times.

A deal of work is done on binding the outer house walls strongly together with long iron rods. This done the between walls space is filled gradually with dry fill from the estate collieries.

Before real work starts Mary finds time to present her letter of authority to the recalcitrant hall head Butler old Johnston to pick up her great green toned music room painting. He fobs Mary off a few times but eventually buckles and they agree to meet to finish the deal.

They meet in the denuded hall entry and to Mary's astonishment he hands her a packing envelope. She opens this and finds the painting folded in half and looking as though it has been cut out of its magnificent gilded frame with a butcher's knife. Mary is a lady but she expostulates.

"Where is the frame?"

Johnston waves the letter of authority.

"This contains," he says, "no mention of the frame."

With blood in her blue eyes she rasps, absolute steel in her glance she fires back.

"Produce the frame at once. Quibble with me at your peril."



Johnston says "officially you're still only the fire lighter and tender. The frame has been chopped up and put in the kindling bin."

She steps up closer "prove it to me" she says.

He walks her down to kindling cellar. This clearly in this off fire season has long splinters of gilded wood evident.



Johnston sneers again, "while you are here badgering me, the head butler, its time you revealed to me where abouts in the estate infrastructure is the life tenancy quarters I will perform move to."

Mary's eyes are flashing dangerously but she bites her lip and clutching the big envelope she

leaves the hall.

Mary has the say so from the lord to allocate who gets placed where on the Estate.

Thus she does up the Garden Gate House, a delightful and airy Georgian beauty for herself. It's also very well furnished with good quality left-overs from the big house. She allocates the old gamekeepers cottage, half a mile below the hall in a damp and moss filled dell to

Johnston although she hasn't told him yet.

When he hears he rounds on her, snarling.

"You can't do this; the lord won't let you."

Mary smiles sweetly at the old irate curmudgeon.

"Oh," she says, "I'm willing to compromise."

"What can I have in lieu?" he growls.

She springs a wide grin.

"Ah, the stable boy loft on top of the coach house. That is, if you are equal to climbing the three flights of rat trap stairs to get up and down."

He turns on his heel, soundly defeated.

"There is no furniture in the old cottage and the roof leaks."

"Enjoy," Mary says to his departing back.

But old Johnston never gets to lodge a complaint about his abode to the Beninbrooks.

They stay too long at Emerald Hill. With the Japanese army heading down through Malaya they finally get away from the coming storm at the death knock on the Empress of Canada. But a smart Betty Bomber pilot spots them two days out of Singapore, overflies the old passenger ship and turns back at low level to drop a biggish bomb down the main funnel. There are no survivors from this dramatic event.

The ripples from this impact Mary's life. The young heirs to Beninbrook Hall cut back on Mary's managerial wages and offer the hall to the army for the duration. The requisition people lob along, but back off when they realise the house is now a monolith, not a liveable big house. With the war and recruitment demands and cut in management funds Mary is just able to maintain a skeleton staff, a very aged one at that. But she has a heart and every week sees that eggs, butter and cheese are placed on the rough bench outside Johnston's abode. Also now and then a fresh rabbit, an occasional pheasant and once in a while a whole salmon. Does the old curmudgeon appreciate this? No way. He often throws a stone on her pan tile roof on his way home from the village pub.

Mary, for her part, is appreciative he only aims at the roof as replacement glass for windows is very hard to come by in war time.

The changes she has made to the estate now start to pay dividends. The new road in now attracts post war offers

of joint ventures to build a business park. The colliery is still bringing in good money to an energy short country and post war crowds, starved of entertainment make use of the Dower house displays and the very beautiful landscaped grounds of the estate.

The young heir's spokesman now rolls along to negotiate with Mary to do a buy back of her lifetime tenancy. This is uphill going for them as Mary wrote the lawyers brief protecting the life tenancies years back and it's all very water tight, as is old Johnston's right to the gamekeepers cottage, which he has worked hard at tidying nicely and developing a great cottage veggie garden.

The heirs want to dislodge Mary to put one of their dropkick progeny in her job as manager. Mary knows this is a sure recipe for disaster and hangs tough on the negotiation, but finally accedes to a very big offer.

Mary takes her fine music room painting to Christies. It's an Arthur Faith-Smith effort, much in demand from collectors. It realises after commission and valuation fees out at £84,000 (Eighty-four thousand pounds). She buys with this a very handsome annuity and with some of the gate house money buys back her mother's old cottage across the village green from the pub.

She reflects on her rather interesting life, a life of quite considerable achievement,

seeing that she started as an under maid at the hall and finished up managing the estate. But as she also reflects she has mellowed too with time and personal prosperity. On twilight evenings in the summer she knows to the minute when old Johnston will arrive at the Bull and Bush. She goes down ten minutes later, buys at the bar a couple of pints of bitter and a platter of pork pies and chips and joins the old chap at his pub table.

Johnston too, as unlikely as it seems, has mellowed finally.

"You're a natural smart arse, Jenkinson," he say "and for my part it has taken me a long time to realise that deep down you have a soft heart."

Mary has been watching Downton Abbey. She raises her pint.

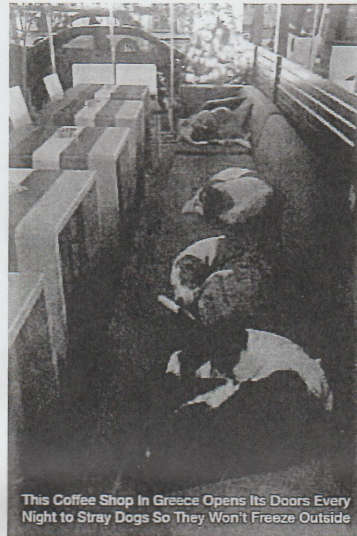
"Cheers Mr. Carlson" She says.

"Indeed, Lady Mary" He rejoins - and wonder of wonders, smiles at her, a very first.

## Mind Hack



If you close your eyes and act like you're shaking salt in your mouth, you will actually taste salt.



This Coffee Shop In Greece Opens Its Doors Every Night to Stray Dogs So They Won't Freeze Outside

Most people don't realize this, but you can go to the gym without telling Facebook about it.



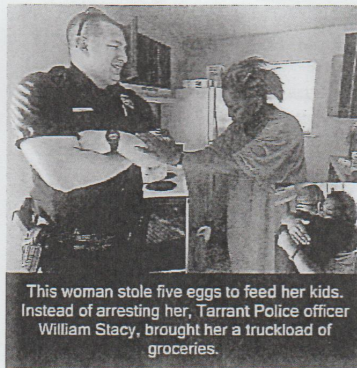
your cards

## Faith in Humanity



This Turkish Couple Spent Their Wedding Day Feeding 4,000 Syrian Refugees

A group of women in Kampala, Uganda (who earn about \$1.20 per day breaking rocks into gravel) sent \$900 of their wages to help Hurricane Katrina victims in 2005.



This woman stole five eggs to feed her kids. Instead of arresting her, Tarrant Police officer William Stacy, brought her a truckload of groceries.

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