

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



The Lady Grace Mysteries:
Betrayal

Grace Cavendish

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Table of Contents

Cover Page

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The Lady Grace Mysteries: Betrayal

Copyright Page

Dedication

The Fourth Day of May, in the Year of Our Lord 1569

The Fifth Day of May, in the Year of Our Lord 1569

The Sixth Day of May, in the Year of Our Lord 1569

The Seventh Day of May, in the Year of Our Lord 1569

The Tenth Day of May, in the Year of Our Lord 1569

The Eleventh Day of May, in the Year of Our Lord 1569

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THE LADY GRACE MYSTERIES



BETRAYAL



Grace Cavendish

Patricia Finney is writing as Grace Cavendish

RED FOX

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To the Real Jim Woolley -
he knows who he is

Most Privy and Secrete

Daybooke the Second of my
Lady Grace Cavendish,
at the Maids of Honour, their Chamber,
Palace of Placentia,
Greenwich

All Miscreants and Ill-thinkers,
Keep Out

The Fourth Day of May, in the Year of Our Lord 1569



Eventide

Now I am beginning my daybooke the second - the other is quite filled up. Today was very dull, sitting about winding wool for the Mistress of the Maids, Mrs Champernowne. At least there is something happening tomorrow - we accompany the Queen to the docks at Tilbury - very exciting! That is why I am scribbling away and getting ink on my smock, for I cannot sleep at all. Lady Sarah can't sleep either. She is writing a letter to her parents bemoaning how poorly she is clad and how all her raiment is utterly out of fashion.

At least the Queen sent me to walk the dogs this afternoon. She has often given me that task since my mother, the Queen's best friend, died a year ago - God rest her soul - leaving me in Her Majesty's care. I think she knows how much I enjoy playing with the dogs and spending time in the gardens, which I do - for that is where I find I am most reminded of my dear mother.

I changed into my horrible old hunting kirtle and then ran on tiptoes downstairs and along the painted passage to the door to the Privy Garden, where Mary Shelton was waiting with the dogs.

Now, I may like Mary Shelton better than I did - she has been very kind to me since my mother's passing. But I didn't want her getting nosy about what I do in the gardens - for I have a secret - so I invited her out with me. We raced up and down, with the dogs yapping away, and fairly soon she was red as an apple and puffing for breath.

'Oh Lord,' she said, 'I must go in and sit down.'

‘Are you sure?’ I asked, putting my hand on her arm. ‘We could kick the ball for them again—’

‘No, I need a rest,’ she insisted, fanning herself with her hand.

‘Well, I’ll run the dogs down to the Orchard,’ I told her. ‘I’ll see you later.’

Mary went inside mopping her face. I can be quite cunning when necessary – not for nothing has the Queen appointed me her own Lady Pursuivant (for the pursuit and apprehension of all miscreants who trouble the Queen’s peace at Court)!

I did run the dogs – throwing a stick for Henri, who is the chief of them despite being the smallest – and they all yelped madly. Then, when I was sure Mary couldn’t see me, I slipped through the little gate into the Herb Garden. We have just moved to the Palace of Placentia at Greenwich, which is one of the Queen’s most favourite residences. The palace gardens give right onto the river, and you can see the ducks and the swans and sometimes the pages and young henchmen fishing for salmon.

My friends Masou the tumbler and Ellie the laundrymaid have made a hidden place to sit inside the big yew hedge that surrounds the Herb Garden. And that’s where I found Masou, who was sitting looking worried, but there was no sign of Ellie at all.

‘She said she might be late,’ Masou explained. ‘The Deputy Laundress has her running about like a hunted rabbit.’

Mrs Twiste at the Whitehall laundry is a kind lady, but Mrs Fadget, her deputy at Greenwich, is a nasty hag who loves to order poor Ellie about when we are at Placentia.

I settled down and watched Masou, who was idly tossing red and green leather balls up and about his head. A bit of wood from the ground joined them, then a stone. I think it’s amazing what Masou can do – turning somersaults in midair, juggling and balancing. He’s getting very big-headed

because Mr Somers – who’s in charge of the tumblers – says he’s so good. So I don’t ever tell him, but I still like to watch.

We heard her cough first, then poor Ellie came dragging herself into the little hide and collapsed onto the ground next to me. She was coughing violently and her cheeks were flushed. I put my hand to her head as my mother used to do and it was all hot and dry.

‘Ellie, you have a fever,’ I said.

‘It’s just that cold I had last week gone to my neck,’ she replied. Her throat sounded as if she had been eating sandpaper. ‘And that Mrs Fadget’ – she turned her head and spat – ‘I hate her. She had me up till past midnight wringing out sheets, and then up again at dawn to grate the soap. Then I was putting shirts on the hedge and I missed dinner . . .’

I felt terrible. I usually bring Ellie something to eat and I’d forgotten. She saw me patting my pockets.

‘It’s all right,’ she said. ‘I ain’t hungry a bit.’

Masou and I looked at each other, feeling very worried now. Ellie! Not hungry? This was bad.

‘You should be in bed, Ellie!’ I told her. ‘You should be drinking horrible willow-bark tinctures and sniffing the smoke of henbane of Peru.’

Ellie laughed shortly. ‘Tell Mrs Fadget,’ she said. ‘What’s ’appening tomorrow? The Queen’s watermen were moaning down at the buttery about how early they’ve got to get up.’

‘The Queen’s going to Tilbury,’ I explained. ‘And we’re going with her to see the Royal Dockyards.’

‘Oh. And will you put it in your daybooke?’ Ellie asked curiously.

‘Of course,’ I replied.

‘Wish I could do that. Write, I mean,’ Ellie went on wistfully.

‘Well, you can read,’ I pointed out.

‘Only my name. But all the things I see – and the stories I hear in the laundry,’ she croaked. ‘I wish I could write them