LOVE'S GREAT ADVENTURE

The exclusive magazine from Elizabeth Ellen Carter

FRANCE’S SECRET WAR
WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

HAVE YOURSELF A MEDIEVAL LITTLE CHRISTMAS

Laura Cappleman Exclusive!
“I survived two years in a harem.”

THE LADY’S MAID’S SECRET
EXCLUSIVE NEW SERIES FIRST INSTALMENT

WINNER WINNER
A SIGNED PRINT COPY OF CAPTIVE OF THE CORSAIRES

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Cover Photo: Oleg Gekman. Licensed by Ingram Images.
Welcome to the very first edition of Love’s Great Adventure! It’s funny how these ideas start. In October, I was in Brisbane for the Riveting Reads Australia book signing and saw many, many authors with wonderful and extravagant swag. It had me wondering how I could make myself stand out amongst the rows and rows of great authors, with wonderful books and promo material. A little voice said, ‘stick with what you know’ – and one thing I do know is publications!

My first job, straight out of high school, was as a cadet journalist for one of the biggest newspapers in Australia. I also met my husband there, so one day I might share our own romantic story.

This magazine is my way of saying thanks to you, my readers. And I know you all love to read, and it can be a little while between books, so I thought this might be the next best thing.

In each quarterly edition of Love’s Great Adventure, there will be exclusive content that you will see first. There will be interviews with characters, other great authors (both historical and contemporary romance), and an exclusive serialised story as well as competitions. I also invite you to share the link to the magazine to your friends who may be interested.

Most of all, I’d like to wish you a very merry, safe and blessed Christmas.

Elizabeth Ellen Carter
Villagrazia is one of those out of the way places, well off the popular tourist route, and yet close to Sicily’s capital, Palermo. It’s a farming community steeped in the time honoured traditions dictated by the rolling rhythm of the seasons. Access is by coach up the steep and winding roads on this six mile journey, and I take in the beautiful scenery, the deeply scored luscious green trees, the orchards of lemon, olive and almond, all set against a vivid blue sky.

It is a painter’s landscape, an artist’s view, and an artist is exactly who we are to meet here today.

She is Laura Nash, nee Cappleman, who caused a sensation at this year’s Royal Academy with her two remarkable Orientalist paintings simply called Yasmeen and Malik. A bidding war ensued for both works after the show and set a record high price for a debut artist.

The summer air is cooler up here in the mountains and the oppressive weight of heat from Palermo lifts like a cloud. Our carriage slows and I see the sign Arcadia, which tells me I’m in the right place. We round the corner through a grove of trees that bounds the estate and come across a picturesque scene – a rambling whitewashed villa sitting right in the middle of green lawn. It overlooks an equally bijou summer house and it is there where we meet the subject of today’s interview.

We’re greeted by Laura’s husband Elias Nash, a Scotsman who nonetheless speaks impeccable unaccented English. He’s tall and broad shouldered with a ready smile. He seems at ease amongst the rural folk and it’s clear to see he is devoted to his wife and their 18-month-old son Benjamin who shares his mother’s cornflower blue eyes.

Laura Cappleman, for that is how she signed her paintings, is a beautiful young woman. Her light brown hair is up in a topknot; her gown of springtime green is of the very latest style, trimmed with yellow and orange silk roses at the waist and hem.

She invites us to sit down while tea is served.

The view from her studio is magnificent. Arcadia sits on the edge of an escarpment that takes in a view down the ravine, down to the plains and, at the right time of day, as we are now, we see a glimmer of sunlight on the sea.

You were one of the leading debutants of 1814, much admired in London. What brought you to Sicily?

I have my cousin Sophia to thank. One of my suitors was not who he purported to be and, naturally, I was heartbroken to discover his duplicity. It was thought best that I accompany my cousin and a family friend, Professor Jonas Fenton, the famous archaeologist, on a visit to Sicily.

An aspect of your work that was highly praised by the Royal Academy judges was the attention to detail. The beautiful mosaics, the brass samovars and the richly coloured tapestries. You bring the harem to life so beautifully!

Harem life is not beautiful. It is hell.

I spent two years of my life there against my will and if there is to be any message to take from my work, it is that life and beauty can still flourish in the midst of hatred and evil.

I hope when people look at my paintings they see beyond the external trappings. Yes, it is a gilded cage, but unmistakably still a cage.

She was two years a captive. Now...
I regret to say that my youthful naivety and exuberance led me to trust someone I should not have trusted—even against the warnings of my cousin and her husband. The harem exists for one thing only and that is for the exclusive gratification of one man. Women are sexually used against their will. Their lives are a prison; the only time they see the sky above is when they are surrounded by armed guards.

If you take a look at my work, you will see little direct light on the subjects and a lot of shadows. That is an accurate depiction of what it is like.

Can you tell us more about how you felt being in such a place?

There is a weight that settles on your shoulders that rests there when you wake up and stays there all day... your stomach is constantly on the edge of rebellion and there is the moment of sickening dread when he calls for you.

you are helpless but to let him do what he wants. you are compelled by threats and violence to do what he wants.

[Editor's Note: Laura does not speak the man's name, but sources close say he was Emir Selim Omar, cousin to the Ottoman Emperor who was an emissary to Sicily before the end of the war with Napoleon.] She continues:

The routine is the same, day after day after day, until your mind is numb. Then your soul dies little by little each day until you become little more than an automaton.

The diaphanous costumes we were made to wear were a parody of clothing. It was so we would always be exposed and always be available for his use. Or that of his guests.

Tell me about Yasmeen and Malik, the subject of the two acclaimed paintings.

Yasmeen was a real woman, a concubine, as I was. There is a hierarchy in a harem. The youngest and least experienced girls—aged thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, are known as odalisques. The more experienced and talented women are concubines and they are to teach things that please the master—grooming and skills such as music and dance... and sometimes painting... The head concubine is responsible for looking after all the girls and to enforce discipline. She is answerable to the Hutan, the Lady, the wife of the Sheik.

That was the role of Yasmeen. She was beautiful and brave.

Partly because of her actions, I am free, and so too is my cousin Sophia.

And what about Malik, is it true he was a eunuch?

Yes, that is true, although I don't know of his fate since leaving the harem. I'm ashamed to say I was afraid of him. He was a large man, the biggest man I've ever seen. He always wore a scimitar but he didn't need it. Malik could crush you to death with his bare hands. He was terrifying. But after a few months, I started to realise he meant none of us any harm. He was as much a slave as we were.

When did you realise there was a tendre between Malik and Yasmeen.

To stop myself from falling in the worst kind of despair—and to preserve my own life, I watched everyone and everything—there are cliques and friendships to navigate and a misstep or an unwitting offence to the wrong girl will make a hellish experience even worse.

So I watched Malik, and the way he was kind to Yasmeen. This was not the typical dealings between guard and concubine. After a while of watching them, I saw there was something more than just collegial regard.

They were so careful not to let their feelings show, but it was there nonetheless.

Are you painting now? What is next for you?

I am preparing a series of paintings for an exhibition in Sicily sponsored by the Florio family with whom I have become well acquainted over the past year.
ALL OVER THE WORLD
In the northern hemisphere it is winter, in the southern hemisphere it is summer. Despite the disparate seasons, we come together at this time of year to celebrate.

The days of Advent led to the arrival of Christmas and, following a tradition established by Sebastian from his first year as Baron of Tyrswick, the household of the Keep walked or rode down into the village to attend the first of its three masses to mark the holy day.

The Angel's Mass was held at midnight on Christ's Mass Eve. The small stained glass window of the church spilled light and colour from the hundreds of candles lit inside. Rosemary has connections to the Virgin Mary who is symbolised by her blue cloak because of its blue flowers. This fragrant herb is also associated with love. Misteltoe is said to increase life and fertility, its blue flowers. This fragrant herb is also associated with love. Misteltoe is said to increase life and fertility. People in medieval times loved symbolism and each of the items used in a Kissing Bough had meaning:

- Holly: a symbol of eternal life.
- Ivy: is said to represent dependence, endurance, faithfulness.
- Rosemary has connections to the Virgin Mary who is symbolised by her blue cloak because of its blue flowers. This fragrant herb is also associated with love.

According to custom, the mistletoe must not touch the ground between cutting and removal as the last of Christmas greens at Candlemas.

To keep thyself warm, during the coldest and shortest time of the year, find thee a large log, sufficient to last thee over the Twelve Days of Christmas — being December 25 to January 5 — that day being the eve to the Feast of Epiphany.

Be thou surest to save some of last year’s Yule log for the lighting of this year’s log for good luck.

If you don’t have a fire place, then this simple recipe will have you feeling festive in no time!

Chocolate Christmas Yule Log

- 1 cup thickened cream
- 400g dark cooking chocolate, chopped
- 500g double chocolate sponge roll
- icing sugar

1. Place cream and chocolate into a small saucepan and stir over low heat for about 5 minutes, until chocolate has melted and mixture is smooth.
2. Transfer to a bowl and refrigerate for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the chocolate mixture has thickened to a spreadable consistency.
3. Cut one end of the sponge roll at an angle and reserve.
4. Place the smaller piece of sponge roll at the side of the log to represent a cut branch. Cover with remaining chocolate mixture. Dust with icing sugar.

The Kissing Bough

In the depths of winter, greenery, especially pungent pine and rosemary was just the thing to add colour and pleasant aroma when everyone was stuck indoors. Wreaths of holly and ivy also enlivened the room.

An authentic 15th century gingerbread recipe. If you’d like to know the modern translation of this recipe, head on over to Medieval Cookery [http://medievalcookery.com/greneboke/recipes/gyngerbrede.html]

Gyngerbrede. Take a quart of hony, & sethe it, & skeme it clene; take Safroun, pouder Pepir, & þrow þer-on; take gratyd...
AN EXCERPT FROM THE NIGHT OF THE FEAST
Jacqueline shifted to the side, out of immediate reach of Decoux—out of the fire if not exactly out of the pan.

And yet, she could not resist one more dig. “You hear what I said? There will be six of us, and I expect the kitchen fire good and hot when we get there.”

“No. You came alone.”

“No? Do you wish me to cook or not?” She folded her arms. “I cannot prepare all these dishes alone unless you want your lamb served at midnight.”

“Can set that damn fire yourself. “ The captain turned on his heel, colliding with Michel’s shoulder as he barged past.

“You’re shaking.”

She nodded, not trusting her voice for the moment and letting it burn away the lump in her throat. “He also says what I said? There will be six of us, and I expect the captain to ride to her rescue. She knew it. She accepted it.

She offered him a wan smile but ignored the glass. “You need your lamb served at midnight. ”

“Please, I had wandered!”

Jacqueline noted the edge to Michel’s voice, but she kept her focus on the amber liquid in front of her. “Don’t you see? We cannot spare five men from their training with you and Celeste tomorrow. By making demands of Decoux, you refused out of spite, as I expected him to.”

She swallowed and reconsidered the glass of brandy, letting it burn away the lump in her throat. “He also forgets about Suzette.”

“Suzette.”

“Michel’s expression changed. ‘So, you’d endanger yourself instead.’

Jacqueline turned and met his soft blue eyes. ‘It is no different than what you do.’

‘It is different,’ he said.

Jacqueline shook her head. ‘If she were a man, they would not be having this conversation. He would slap her on the back and congratulate her for her ruse. The centre of an aspiring counter-revolution was in the Vendée, a regional area in the west of France.

Popular history teaches that the counter-revolution was fostered by aristocrats and the Catholic church, determined to hang on to their power base against the popular uprising of the newly empowered and emboldened working class.

That would only be part of the truth.

In many areas, aristocrats were remote city dwellers, spending most of the time away from their ancestral lands, while the clergy were disengaged and dissolute. But the département of Vendée was quite different.

Vendean peasants had relatively good relations with their local noblemen who, unlike other ‘aristocrats, stayed on their estates. The people were also devout and dependent on their local clergy.

And, by far, most Vendean were quite successful peasant farmers with living conditions better than those in northern France, and not as troubled by 1788–89’s harvest failures and harsh winter.

Not all Frenchmen were onboard with the overthrow of the old order. The new regime also brought in now familiar revolutionary policies: a stream of arbitrary laws on nationalisation, wage and price-fixing, arbitrary powers to municipal councils, taxes, levies and ultimately requisition and expropriation. The Catholic clergy challenged the injustices, so the regime replaced them with priests who had taken the civil oath of loyalty to the revolution.

This was rejected in the Vendée and elsewhere. Churches served by the ‘intruder priests’—curé truttons—were deserted, and the people went to hear Mass in the woods with their old pastors who had refused the oath and gone into hiding to avoid arrest. The revolutionary government next tried to force the people to hear the Mass of the ‘truttons,’ but the people refused.

In one report, a labourer, armed only with a fork, resisted the gendarmes of the new National Guard. ‘Yield,’ demanded the officer. ‘First yield or force the people to hear the Mass of the “truttons”,’ he was my God,” was the labourer’s reply. He was overpowered and bayonetted 22 times by the gendarmes.

Thus, the aristocrats, the clergy and the common folk of the Vendée got on well together and resisted the imposition from a remote, hostile and brutal Parisian government.

Continued on next page.
**WAR IN THE VENDÉE**

(continued from page 11)

The War of Vendée is hardly known in France. It was total war. Of a population of 800,000, it is estimated that up to 500,000 people were killed. The skirmishes which afflicted the region turned into a full scale war in 1793 following a forced conscription of 300,000 Vendean men — they took up arms all right, but they did it for “Dieu et la Roi”, for God and King. The Parisian authorities exercised hitherto unknown brutality of a type only hinted at during the capital’s own Reign of Terror. Not only were the capital’s own Reign of Terror. Not only were Louis the XVI and Marie Antoinette were executed. Therefore it wasn’t surprising that Vendée should be the locus for other Frenchmen who wanted to throw off the brutal new order once the Vendée. A memorial to this astonishing part of French Revolutionary history was only erected in 1993 – on the 200th anniversary. The keynote address was given by acclaimed Russian author, philosopher and anti-Communist freedom fighter Alexander Solzhenitsyn:

And so, in dedicating this memorial to your heroic Vendée, I see double in my mind’s eye– for I can also visualize the memorials which will one day rise in Russia, monuments to our Russian resistance against the onslaught of Communism and its atrocities. We have all lived through the twentieth century, a century of terror, the chilling culmination of that Progress about which so many dreamed in the eighteenth century. And now, I think, more and more citizens of France, with increasing understanding and pride, will remember and value the resistance and the sacrifice of the Vendée. A memorial to this astonishing part of French Revolutionary history was only erected in 1993 – on the 200th anniversary. The keynote address was given by acclaimed Russian author, philosopher and anti-Communist freedom fighter Alexander Solzhenitsyn:

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**Out Now from The Bluestocking Belles**

Eight authors and eight different takes on four dramatic elements selected by our readers— an older heroine, a wise man, a Bible, and a compromising situation that isn’t.

Set in a variety of locations around the world over eight centuries, welcome to the romance of the Bluestocking Belles’ 2017 Holiday Anthology. It’s Never Too Late to find love.

Click here: https://goo.gl/mcAUC2

**The Lady’s Maid’s Secret**

This is the first episode in a serialised story, exclusive to Love’s Great Adventure: Be sure to check back each quarter for the next instalment.

Dear Reader,

I HAVE always considered myself of honest character and it is not just conceit that says so. I come to Lady Pendrick’s with impeccable credentials from my previous employer, Lady Lesaint, whom it must be said was very understanding of my desire to further my career — after I arranged to furnish proof of her husband’s infidelity (not to mention his on-going harassment of the chambermaids). I suppose I should introduce myself properly. My name is Rose Reed. I am an orphan of meagre fortune but an abundance of ambition. I know in my heart of hearts I am destined for more than a life in service, although, for now, any movement up the ladder is a step in the right direction. My new post, I was assured, would suit me well, a lady’s maid to Lady Pendrick, a mature widow with no amorous husband. On my arrival, I was surprised to find this renowned dame was suffering in genteel poverty with but four other servants in addition to myself to attend to her. There is Beatrice, the housekeeper and cook, her husband Arthur who is both butler and gardener, and then there is Evan, the rather handsome footman who has also taken on the duty of groomsman and driver. Evan has an equally pleasant sister, Felicity, who is maid-of-all-work. We staff and mistresses ramble about the large townhouse, making do with two-and-a-half floors while the remaining one and a half are filled with furniture and ornaments which her ladyship has decided she will not miss, and which can be discreetly sold as needed without any affront to appearances and reputation.

Did I mention, Dear Reader, that I have [found myself in a situation where penury is the true mistress]? I would have left at the soonest opportunity had I not been quick to ken how much the rest of the servants loved their mistress, and to appreciate their kindness towards myself. While I was [familiarising myself with the house and helping Beatrice and Arthur to itemise items for sale, I happened to find myself in an upper floor maid’s room, which had fallen to disuse. A trunk stood against one wall. I was told by Felicity it had belonged to Lady Pendrick’s previous lady’s maid who had passed away at a venerable old age just the summer gone. For want of anything better to do (Lady Pendrick sleeps extensively in the afternoon), and with a curiosity I have been warned is my biggest failing, I examined the trunk thoroughly.
A Lady’s Maid is in a unique position within a household. She is to be organised and clever. She should be a confidence we might keep between ourselves, Dear Reader.

One usually demurs from reading another’s diary, but I am not such a one – although that should be a confidence we might keep between ourselves, Dear Reader.

Inside was a maid’s uniform and beneath it several thin volumes. A quick leaf through told me they were diaries dating back decades. I opened up the first to hand, which looked newer than the rest so was perhaps the most recent. In a neat cursive hand, the inside front cover was inscribed:

The diary of Mary Kirkpatrick, lady’s maid to Margaret, Lady Pendrick.

One usually demurs from reading another’s diary, but I am not such a one – although that should be a confidence we might keep between ourselves, Dear Reader.

It hardly seems right, “ said she, “that such a woman profit from our employer’s trusting nature. ”

Mary, the maid, was most scathing in her private thoughts of a certain ambitious widow who claimed a friendship with Lady Pendrick. This woman, Mrs. Eliza Badgely, it seemed was a notorious cheat at cards. The diarist outlined a party one evening when the lady brazenly defrauded her hostess of one hundred guineas!

What was I to make of this, Dear Reader, now this Madam Badgely is become a Barness, having inveigled herself into such an advantageous match while my mistress is destitute?

I made my feelings on the subject known when I joined the servants downstairs for supper. Beatrice, who is very protective of my lady, was rightly aghast at this adventuress.

“I have given it some thought, ” I replied, and yes, I did not mind, the contents were illuminating enough.

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“It hardly seems right, ” said she, “that such a woman profit from our employer’s trusting nature. ”

Everyone at the table agreed.

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The topic may have come to an end at that very moment, had I not taken inspiration from Mary Fitzpatrick’s diaries. For the more I had read that afternoon, the more I knew about the inner machinations of the circle of acquaintances which had left my new mistress destitute.

“Perhaps there is something we can do, ” I ventured. “What if our mistress could win back the amount with interest?”

Everyone at the servant’s table fell silent. They all stared at me – Evan with his devilishly handsome face regarded me carefully, pretty Felicity, her brown eyes wide, looked to her brother for guidance; Beatrice’s kindly face was furrowed, but it was her husband Arthur who broke the silence.

“I have given it some thought, ” I replied, and yes, there may have been a flirtatious smile on my lips, which was returned.

But no, there will be time for romance later on. For now I needed the involvement of all my fellow servants for my plan to be successful.

“I believe turnabout is fair play, ” I said. “this Barness can afford to be taken down a peg or two, and pay for her past misdeeds, but for this enterprise to be a success, we need to know everything there is to know about the former Eliza Badgely.

“You’re suggesting blackmail, ” stated Evan, plainly. He did not look at all displeased by the idea.

Just a little persuasion to see justice done, ” said I. “And, according to the diaries, there are more who deserve reminding how much they owe Lady Pendrick.

In the first instance, we need to arrange a dinner party for eight.

“Do you think Lady Pendrick would be agreeable to hosting a small soiree with some of her oldest and dearest friends?”

End of part one.

Next edition: A dinner party has a surprise entertainment on offer. And a certain Barness is fleeced.

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