

[A first part of a three-part short story, first published in *Woman* magazine in early 1975. This was designed to fill in the gaps in the TV series between Season 4 (which dealt with *The Great War*) and the yet-to-be-screened Season 5 – Steve]

Exclusive to our readers! The Bellamy household's latest adventures you'll never see on television. What's going on Below stairs – and in the elegant morning-room upstairs at 165 Eaton Place?

What's happening to Rose and Hudson? Is Major James really inconsolable? How can Virginia live up to the first Lady Bellamy? Alfred Shaughnessy, script editor, keeps you up to date with the developments in this specially-written series of... Upstairs Downstairs.

Major, The Hon. James Bellamy M.C., paused for a moment as he dealt the cards; and listened to the sound of cheering from the direction of nearby Buckingham Palace.

For on this historic November evening in 1918, huge crowds had gathered there, waiting for the King and Queen to appear on the balcony.

"The whole world is cheering tonight," said James quietly, "Listen."

His father, Viscount Bellamy of Haversham, glanced warmly across the table to where his bride-to-be, the young war widow Virginia Hamilton, was picking up her cards ready to partner him in a game of three-handed bridge.

He did not answer James' comment. He knew what his son meant. Everyone was rejoicing but the Bellamys. And how could they, faced with that empty chair at the table?

"Hazel's place," thought James with a sharp pang of grief. For a moment his mind dwelt on the unfairness of it. He had come through four years of blood and violence while his wife, Hazel, far away from the shooting and apparently safe, had died.

He began to talk for the sake of it. "The trouble with this game is that you have to make all the decisions yourself."

It was the wrong thing to say. It brought their minds back to their loss. For a while they played without speaking, none of them caring much for the game.

The cheering and singing outside somehow emphasised the quiet mood inside the tall white house in Eaton Place, Belgravia.

Below stairs at Number 165, in the servants' hall, the three other occupants of the house sat by the fire, as quiet and thoughtful as those upstairs. The three older servants, Hudson the Scottish butler, Mrs. Bridges the elderly cook, and Rose the tall, pale headhousemaid, had chosen to stay in tonight and let the younger ones go out to join the surging crowds in Piccadilly Circus.

They'd seen them off earlier, Daisy the under housemaid, and Ruby the simple kitchen-maid, each on the arm of Edward, Daisy's husband, the footman turned soldier.

For Rose, agony in the midst of rejoicing

"Let's hope they don't get crushed to death," remarked Mrs. Bridges.

Hudson looked up from the pages of the *Daily Sketch*: "Who don't?" he asked.

"Edward and the girls."

"That's not very likely, Mrs. Bridges," murmured the literal-minded Hudson as his eyes turned back to the football results.

To a certain extent Mrs. Bridges' anxiety was justified. All along Piccadilly to the Circus the three young servants encountered scenes of unbelievable frenzy.

Near Hyde Park Corner, Georgina Worsley, Richard Bellamy's pretty ward, was stuck in a taxi trying to reach Grosvenor Street where an Armistice Night party was being held by a number of her friends.

She ground her nails into her palm in frustration at the delay. How maddening it was when she had such high hopes of this party. Martin Adams would be there. Of course, he was in love with another girl, and Georgina would never dream of interfering. But still...

In the servants' hall the clock ticked on in the gloom. Hudson put down his newspaper and checked the time with his watch. Mrs. Bridges' knitting needles clicked ceaselessly. As she reached the end of a row she glanced across towards the big table. Her eyes softened as she looked at Rose, sitting alone and apart, darning a stocking.

That stocking, thought Mrs. Bridges, should have been a sock, a thick male sock such as a man might give his wife to mend when he returned safely from the war. But Gregory had not returned, and Rose had only the faded photograph of a smiling young Australian sergeant, dressed in khaki, with the familiar broad-brimmed hat turned up at the side.

As she darned, Rose kept stealing a glance at the picture which lay on the table beside her, and wondering what might have been if her Gregory had not sustained a bullet through his heart at Festubert, two years earlier. Why, she would be

one of the cheering crowd now, her face covered with tears of joy instead of these...

"Come over by the fire, Rose," said Mrs. Bridges gently. "You'll strain your eyes over there."

"I'm all right, Mrs. Bridges," said Rose in a soft voice.

Death comes – but not to the soldier

Shortly after eleven Lord Bellamy rang for Hudson to telephone for a taxi. It was time for Virginia to get back to the Hyde Park Hotel, where she and her two children Alice and William, were staying during their visit to London.

"They're bound to be awake, with all the noise in the streets," she said fondly as she rose.

She said goodbye to her future stepson with a specially warm and fond embrace, while Richard, who was to accompany her back to the hotel, was helped by Hudson into his heavy black overcoat.

"I hope you'll sleep well tonight, James," she said softly, her heart aching for the young man.

"Don't wait up for me, old boy," his father added. "You go to bed."

"Yes, I think I will, father."

It has been a day of particular emotional stress for those living under the roof of Major Bellamy's house. That morning, at exactly seven o'clock, Richard, Virginia and Georgina had attended the funeral of James' young wife.

Hazel Bellamy had been tragically carried off at the early age of 32 by the cruel epidemic of Spanish Influenza which was sweeping across Europe in the closing months of the war, killing almost as many as the battles in Flanders.

Dressed in black, they had stood on that damp foggy morning along one side of the deep, cold grave as James, wearing the uniform of the Life Guards, a black crêpe band round his arm and the ribbon of the Military Cross on his tunic, had scattered earth on to the coffin.

With the family had stood Mr. and Mrs. Forrest, Hazel's elderly parents, pale and dignified. On the other side of the grave Hudson, Mrs. Bridges, Rose and Ruby had kept their respectful distances from the family whose grief they shared.

At tea-time that day, Georgina had been invited by telephone to an armistice party that same evening. She had refused, out of respect for Hazel, but James insisted that she went.

"You've earned yourself a few hours' happiness," he said in a bleak voice. "Go out and dance and drink champagne and celebrate the end of the war. Hazel..." He stopped, then forced himself to go on, "Hazel would hate you not to."

So Georgina had kissed him affectionately and gone up quietly to her room to sort out something to wear.

For most of the families in Great Britain joy had also been tinged with grief. So many had suffered bitter loss in a far-away country. Hundreds of thousands of young men had perished in the great struggle for liberty.

As he walked slowly up the stairs through the silent house to his room, James almost hated himself for coming through it when so many of his friends, brother officers, chaps he'd grown up with, been at school with, were lying in their crude graves in France.

"It's for men to die in war, not women," he thought to himself. And he remembered how passionately Hazel had hated war and all it stood for; it was senseless carnage, and now she herself...

James reached the door of his room and went in, switching on the light. He sank onto his lonely bed and buried his face in his hands.

Daisy reveals plans for a new life

Georgina was much too sleepy to notice Daisy's rather surly expression the next morning. Vaguely she saw that the little under-house-maid had brought up her breakfast tray, and pulled back the curtains to reveal a sunny, frosty morning.

"Eight o'clock, Miss Georgina."

Daisy's normally cheerful voice was flat and toneless as she put down the tray on the bed.

"Did you have a pleasant evening?" Georgina asked, trying to break the surly silence. "Hudson said you and Edward were going out to see the sights along Piccadilly. And Ruby."

"That's right, miss. We did." Georgina waited hopefully for the cheerful stream of gossip that would have been Daisy's normal reaction. Instead there came only faint sounds as the housemaid laid out Georgina's clothes. Georgina tried again.

"I didn't get home from my party until two in the morning and there were still thousands of people in the streets."

"Oh yes, miss."

Georgina knew genuine indifference when she heard it. Daisy's attention was wrapped in whatever she had on her mind. Georgina was instantly sympathetic.

"What's the matter, Daisy?" she asked hesitantly.

At once Daisy turned away. She looked out of the window, nervously clutching a pair of Georgina's evening shoes.

"It's me and Edward, miss," she said over her shoulder.

“What about you and Edward?” Surely, she thought, they couldn’t be quarrelling already, after only two years.

“He wants us to better ourselves, miss. Give in our notice and look for a good job.”

For a moment Georgina was almost relieved. Then it hit her.

“You mean – you and Edward are going to leave us?” she gasped.

“He wants us to leave domestic service altogether, miss.”

Daisy turned to face Georgina, now, her eyes a trifle moist.

“He wants us to earn more, you see, so that we can save up for a nice house and have a baby.”

Georgina wondered how badly paid they’d both been at Eaton Place. It was something she’d never concerned herself with before.

“Does Hudson know about this?” she asked.

“No, miss,” said Daisy tearfully. “Nor Rose nor any of them. How can I tell them? I know what they’ll all say.”

“But you have every right to give notice if that’s what you want,” said Georgina indignantly. “Surely you can tell Rose. She’s wise and kind.”

Daisy nodded, but still seemed anxious about something.

“I’ve got to give the Major notice all by myself, you see, ‘cos Edward’s still a soldier and not really on the staff no more.”

“Don’t worry about that, Daisy. I shall miss you terribly of course, but you’re married now and you must go where your husband goes.”

“Yes, miss.” Daisy still sounded worried.

Georgina had only eaten one small slice of toast. She pushed her breakfast tray down the bed.

“You can take the tray, Daisy. I can’t manage any more. Too much champagne last night I’m afraid,” Georgina smiled and yawned.

“The Major won’t kill you for leaving us, Daisy,” she said. “After all, things are going to change, now the war’s over.”

“I expect so, miss,” said Daisy doubtfully as she steered the tray through the doorway.

An invitation to dinner – alone

Georgina sank back into the warm sheets, tired but happy, to think about Martin Adams and how sweet and attentive he had been to her at the party last night. And to look forward to seeing him again this evening, for he had asked her to go with him to the theatre and to supper afterwards – not in their usual party of four, with her best friend Angela Barclay,

and his brother officer in the Grenadier Guards, Harry Gurney, but alone.

On her way downstairs Daisy found Rose busy at the linen cupboard on the landing. Impulsively she decided to take Georgina’s advice and confide her secret to Rose. But Rose was far from sympathetic.

“Once you give notice there’s no turning back,” she said quite sharply. “You’ll be out on the street and nobody won’t do nothing for you but yourself. Have you thought of that?”

“Eddie’ll see we’re all right,” Daisy said with precious little conviction. “After all, he’s a corporal in the army.”

“As if that’s going to help,” said Rose.

“What am I to do?” Daisy muttered nervously.

“You’d best get it over with, Daisy. See the Major this evening.”

“Yes, all right,” said Daisy. If she’d been facing the Last Judgment she couldn’t have sounded more worried.

One or two spectators in the Gallery of the House of Lords that afternoon wondered who she might be, the attractive petite young woman, smartly dressed with a hat and veil, who leaned eagerly forward to listen. Lord Bellamy had just risen to speak in the debate on the peace terms with Germany.

Virginia Hamilton had better reasons than most to detest war, for she had lost her husband Lieut. Commander Hamilton, when his ship *Monmouth* was sunk in 1914 off Coronel. And her eldest boy Michael, promoted rapidly from Midshipman to Acting Sub-Lieutenant, had lost his young life at Zeebrugge.

Richard senses a battle ahead

Richard spoke well, and Virginia felt a proud urge to call out to all her fellow spectators in the Gallery: “That’s Lord Bellamy and I’m going to marry him.”

But she restrained herself and conveyed her sense of pride to Richard personally as they walked afterwards to the Ritz for tea.

“You were so good, darling, and so clear. I could hear every word,” she told him, and Richard, well pleased, squeezed her arm.

“I ought to be competent by now, he laughed, “after making speeches in the House of Commons for 18 years.”

Richard felt happier than he had for several years.

The loss of his wife, Marjorie, in the *Titanic* disaster, the tensions of the war and years of political strife had weighed heavily on him.

Now, the future seemed brighter. He was to marry a charming young woman who had known grief as

he had. She had two young children of her own, who would keep him young in heart.

They sipped their tea and made plans for Christmas. They were to travel up to Scotland with the children, and the Nanny to spend Christmas with Virginia's devoted father-in-law, old Admiral Hamilton, at Aberdarrie Lodge, his house outside Inverness.

Aberdarrie had been Virginia's home throughout the war; as an orphan she had no home of her own when she married Charles, so it was natural to live with Charles' old father, and thus keep the children away from the threat of air raids.

"I'm looking forward to meeting the Admiral," Richard said.

"Let's hope you hit it off with him," Virginia smiled.

"Why shouldn't I?"

"He dislikes politicians, especially Ministers of the Admiralty."

Richard swallowed some tea and put down his cup sharply. "Really?"

Virginia patted his hand teasingly. "With your charm you'll have him eating out of your hand in no time," she laughed.

But Richard sensed another battle ahead. He was about to marry Virginia and take her and her children away from a fond and possessive father-in-law who was used to getting his own way. But he said nothing to Virginia. Just smiled and offered her another *éclair*.

Richard returned to the Lords that evening after dropping Virginia back at her hotel. So James was alone in the morning room at Eaton Place, when Georgina came in, dressed for the theatre.

"Look at you, all got up," he remarked, glancing up from his book. "Where are you off to?"

"Martin Adams is taking me to see a play called *The Eyes of Youth* at the St. James' Theatre, and to supper at the Savoy afterwards."

"Oh is he?" Was there a faint note of jealousy in James' voice? Georgina had long since got over the schoolgirl crush she'd once had on her tall, handsome step-cousin by marriage.

It had begun the summer before the war – when Hazel was ill and James had taken Georgina as his partner to her first really grown-up party, a dance given by the officers of the Life Guard at Ranelagh Gardens. On that occasion he had kissed her dangerously on the lips and started her pulse racing. When, a few weeks later the war broke out and James was sent off to France with his regiment, Georgina had cried herself to sleep and over the next year or two she had written regularly to him at the front.

A rival enters James' life

As the war progressed Georgina had gone out dining and dancing with many young officers on leave from the trenches, and had become more than just fond of some of them. But it was James to whom Georgina gave her love and for him that she felt her deepest fear.

After he was wounded she had cared for him in the base hospital in France, where she was nursing. But, curiously, once he was safe, her feelings for him had begun to change.

On leave in Paris she and Angela Barclay, who was nursing with her at Etaples, met up with their two young friends, Harry Gurney and Martin Adams, both on leave before the battle of the Somme. The four of them had enjoyed a happy reunion and when Georgina bumped into Martin a few months later on board the leave boat for Folkestone, she was shattered to find that his right arm had been amputated, the result of a shell burst in the front line.

From that moment on Georgina spent her leaves visiting Martin in hospital and soon her feelings for James became once again those of a younger sister for an older brother.

"Is he fetching you?" James asked.

"Yes. Any moment now."

"Well, make sure he behaves himself in the taxi. I've heard he's a bit of a taxi tiger."

Was this really the dashing hero she had once idolised? He sounded, she thought crossly, like an elderly uncle.

"What do you mean by that?" she demanded.

"I thought you always told me that he was in love with your friend, Angela Barclay. If so, what's he doing taking you to the theatre alone, unless it's to add you to his list of conquests?"

The logic of James' argument only served to make her angrier.

"How *dare* you say that?" she lashed at him.

"I dare say it," James replied coolly, never taking his eyes off her face, "because I know what these young Grenadier subalterns are like and..."

"Martin happens to be a Captain, James, and if he heard you talking like that to me he'd hit you in the face –" she took a deep breath and played her best card triumphantly, "– *if* he had a right arm."

Falling in love again – with Martin!

She saw, with satisfaction, that he was as stunned as she had meant him to be. He hadn't heard about Martin's arm.

"Oh my God, I'm sorry. I didn't know, I..."

She turned away, fiercely glad at his discomfiture. Before James could finish his sentence. Hudson came quietly in.

“Captain Adams is here, Miss,” he announced.

Georgina went hurriedly from the room without another word and James heard the front door slam and a taxi drive away. He wanted to bite his tongue off. Instead, he lit a cigar and poured himself a stiff whisky and soda.

At the St. James’ Theatre that night, as the lights went down and the curtain rose on the play, Georgina squeezed Martin’s left hand and gazed at his dark, handsome face. Martin gazed back at her, smiled and detached his left hand from hers to pick up his programme with it from his knee. Georgina pretended not to have noticed the slightly clumsy movement.

At supper afterwards he talked and laughed and made jokes for a while before they danced to the Savoy band. Georgina rested her left arm lightly on his right shoulder. It was awkward but they managed. No expressions of love or passion came from Martin. Nevertheless he was kind and sweet and Georgina felt a strange new tenderness in her feelings towards him, a feeling of security in his presence.

When Martin dropped her home at Eaton Place in the small hours, Georgina allowed him to kiss her softly on the cheek, then she kissed him full on the lips and whispered to him: “Good night darling, and thank you for a lovely evening.”

Martin looked just a little surprised. but managed to murmur: “Not at all,” and returned to his waiting taxi.

Georgina fell into her bed, certain she was falling in love and very, very happy.

She met James only briefly in the dining room the next morning at breakfast time. She was in her nurses’ uniform. Her leave period was over and the Red Cross had posted her to the big military hospital in Stamford Street near Waterloo Station, where men wounded in the closing stages of the fighting in France were still in the care of the endlessly patient nursing staff.

James came in as she was leaving. He told her briefly that Daisy and Edward had given in their notice, and she breathed a small sigh of relief for Daisy who’d found her courage again. Nothing was said about Martin Adams and she left James helping himself to breakfast from the sideboard.

All day long Georgina flitted about the hospital ward with a heart as light as air. She loved her work among wounded soldiers and she was in love with a wounded soldier. Life was good.

Later that night she returned home off duty to have a bath and change out of her uniform. The house, she noticed, was very quiet.

The shadow on the frosted window

James was out at his club, Richard was at the opera with Virginia, and Hudson had the evening off. Mrs. Bridges was up in her room, Ruby had gone to bed. So Rose sat alone in the servants’ hall, as she did most evenings, darning and sewing quietly at the table.

Georgina, lying in her bath upstairs knew nothing of the strange event that took place below stairs. She did not even hear Rose cry out.

It was about 9.30 p.m. when the back door bell rang. Rose put down her work and went through to see who might be ringing at such a late hour. Perhaps Mr. Hudson had forgotten his key. It was a foggy night, quite thick, and as she approached the back door, Rose could see the vague outline of a figure through the frosted glass panel.

It was a tall, erect figure, but through the glass it was impossible for her to make out whether it was a man or a woman.

As she undid the bolt and unlocked the door Rose could see the outline of a broad-brimmed hat and wondered if it might be Mrs. Bridges’ friend from Lupus Street, who sometimes called on her of an evening.

She pulled open the back door, and what she saw made her let out a cry, clutching at the wall to steady herself. The blood rushed from her face and she swayed as if about to lose consciousness. Facing her in the gloom was a fairhaired young man in the uniform of the Australian forces, the hat turned up at the side. Her mind raced, disbelief crowding with sudden glorious certainty.

“Gregory?” she said. Then, in a burst of joy, “GREGORY!”

NEXT WEEK: Rose finds new romance and Richard faces his fiancée’s family.