

# THE DRESSMAKERS DETECTIVE JOURNAL

## *THE MYSTERY OF THE POORLY PAINTED PORTRAIT*

Four distinguished ladies gathered in the sewing room of their hostess, Ada Bryce, as they were wont to do each Thursday morning. Here they laid out their various sewing projects, their bobbles and pins, their measuring tapes and scissors and set about their work, turning colorful fabrics into dresses or the occasional bonnet or shawl.

To any passerby who should happen to eavesdrop upon these four fine women, it would appear that they were simply engrossed in typical womanly idle chatter - discussing the latest gossip and fashions and exchanging advice and techniques on the domestic arts. However, although it is true that these ladies might be wont to discuss trivial matters such as dress patterns, they are most unique in that they also discuss patterns of a more serious nature (although this is a fact unknown to any but themselves!).

However, we shall touch upon this revelation in just a moment, for this account would be rather pointless if you, dear reader, were not formally introduced to the esteemed ladies in question. The first being the aforementioned Ada Bryce, and the unspoken leader of the group (or mother hen, as she might prefer to be called). She is a stern looking woman with impeccable posture and sharp wit. Her gray flecked hair is never out of place and is always pulled into a tight curl. It seems her piercing blue eyes miss nary a thing, oftentimes causing the other ladies to wince when she peers at them over her spectacles in an interrogative manner.

It is here in her sewing room in the lavish Bryce estate that the ladies gather for their weekly meeting and sewing circle. Ada's husband, a wealthy trader, spends many a night abroad. A staunch supporter of female rights, he entrusts the estate to his wife's care in his absence; this despite the mutterings of locals who feel it improper for a lady

to spend so much time alone, despite the knowledge that she is attended to by every manner of servant provided by the good Mr. Bryce to make her life comfortable. Ada would not have it any other way, for she secretly enjoys being the Mistress of the Bryce estate and believes she manages it better than even her own beloved husband.

To Ada's right sits the youngest member of the circle, Elizabeth Waite, or "Bessie" as she is often affectionately referred to by the others. A bubbly girl, newly married to a brooding young writer, she is quite a contrast to her spouse. Bright and cheerful by nature, she is quick to giggle and blink her long eyelashes in mock primness. The other women consider her a touch too trusting, but none can deny that her optimism can be quite uplifting and something sorely lacking in society in general.

The next lady in the circle is the ravishing Vivian Henley, a former model who now spends her days enjoying the inheritance of her dearly departed husband, Charles Henley, who died in a tragic accident many years ago. While it would not be proper for Vivian to take another husband, there is no shortage of suitors hoping to heal her downcast widowed heart. Even at thirty years, she is still quite an attractive woman, with flowing dark hair and skin like frosted snow. She is unanimously considered the most fashionable of all the ladies and often takes trips to Paris to fetch the latest styles for which she is the envy of every woman!

Last, but certainly not least we have Hettie Smith, a humble woman, and the wife of a baker. A round, kindhearted and quiet lady, she attended university for a teaching degree, only to realize she was too shy to manage a class! However, both her common sense and dressmaking skills are much valued by her companions. As a matter of fact, it is her superior powers of deduction that have earned her a spot in this special sewing circle.

YOU'VE MET THE LADIES OF THE  
DRESSMAKERS DETECTIVE JOURNAL.

NOW FIND OUT HOW THEY SOLVE A MYSTERY!

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The Dressmakers Detective Journal  
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