

Excerpt from the Sutherland Series -- Jill C. Baker

Tory Roof Page 60

Sarah had just hung the kettle on a hook over the hearth when there was a knock at the door. She hurried to open it, wiping her hands on an apron which somehow adorned her. She looked down and noticed her skirt was long, her shoes stocky, her blouse buttoned at her throat. It was as if she were wearing someone else's wardrobe.

"Lord Bennington," she heard herself say. "Do come in. May I take your wrap?" Her words sounded other-worldly.

Removing his hat, he entered, nodding good-day. "And where is that man of yours?" he bellowed, displaying his own prominence.

"He's tending to the back fence. We had a rail come down and one of the lambs got out this morning. Took us two hours to find her," Sarah said, making conversation. "Terrence will be right back; he knows you're coming. Would you care for some tea while you wait?"

She was sure to flash a winning smile, though for the life of her, she had no idea where the explanation originated. Did they have lambs? She wasn't even sure they had a fence.

"Don't mind if I do, good lady," he answered, authoritatively sitting in the largest chair. Like Terrence, he was as real as could be, with a white powdered wig, ruddy complexion, portly posture that challenged his waistcoat.

"And Lady Bennington... is she well?" Sarah heard herself ask as she poured the tea.

"Quite fine, quite fine, thank you. You should join her sometime after church. She and the ladies are quilting a coverlet for our daughter's dowry."

"That would be lovely," Sarah replied, assured she would somehow be gifted with the fine stitching skills that endowed the women of the day.

Just then Terrence entered, wind-blown and covered with slivers of straw. He quickly strode over to shake his visitor's hand. "Lord Bennington, it's wonderful to see you. Please pardon my tardiness, but Sarah must have told you we had a lamb escape."

“She most certainly did, and delightfully, too. You’ve got quite a fine woman here, young lad!” Lord Bennington beamed, slapping Terrence on the shoulder.

“Yes, I do,” said Terrence. “I am truly blessed.” He glanced at Sarah in a way that went through her like a warm flood.

“Please excuse me, gentlemen. I’ve got bread baking,” Sarah said, fluffing a pillow as she left the room. Through the doorway, they could see her maneuvering a long bread peel into the opening of the large beehive oven. Terrence threw another log on the fire as Lord Bennington lit his pipe. Sarah could hardly believe what she was watching.

Pulling the steaming loaves from the hot chamber, without a clue how they got there, she set them on a rack to cool. She could overhear the men talking. Lord Bennington was loud and pompous as he spoke of “those pesky Colonists... all full of themselves... probably couldn’t scare a crow out of a corn field.” Terrence responded in kind, laughing appropriately, and offering equally derogatory remarks.

Both men paused to thank Sarah as she poured tea and served the warm bread with summer jam. Then they resumed their boisterous talk, amending their tea with brandy and their conversation with bravado.