

“How interesting,” Alice, a lecturer in French at Somerville College, Oxford, responded, her tone as polite as possible under the circumstances. She knew that the other women had been most concerned that Alice’s part of the plan, but they needn’t have worried—Alice already felt like she had plenty to pick a fight about at this meal.

When Alice had left Cambridge in 1936, almost twenty years earlier, she had no intention of ever going back. Cambridge had given her an education, for which she was grudgingly grateful, but she could never forgive the feeling that she wasn’t fully welcome, simply because she hadn’t been born a man. She didn’t understand how Jean, her best friend since their days at Girton, could bring herself to stay. But, as Alice herself well knew, Jean had always seen the best in places, and in people.

After almost twenty years of friendship, Alice was fairly sure she knew Jean better than anyone. But even she was shocked when Jean had told her about her idea over coffee on a rainy afternoon in Oxford. Alice knew Jean had raised money for New Hall before, ten years ago when she had published _____ and donated the proceeds to support the small new foundation for women’s education in Cambridge. But this new plan was bold, dangerous, and would raise much more money than the proceeds of _____ ever could. How could Alice say no?

As the waiters circled the table, collecting the plates, Alice felt Florence’s arm brush hers and a note fall into her lap. Glancing down and reading the hastily scrawled directions, Alice smiled and turned to the Fellow next to her, ready to do her part.

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Lillian was fully aware that her role at these meals was to be the entertainment, and she was happy to oblige.

Not that Alice hadn’t provided enough of a show already, storming gracefully out of the Hall after an increasingly loud and contentious argument with the Fellow seated next to her (about French etymology, Lillian thought, although she wasn’t sure on the details). It was a shame Alice had chosen the academic path—she would have thrived on the stage.

But it was Lillian’s job this evening to be the star. When Jean had come to her with her hairbrained scheme, she had agreed simply for the sake of recaptur90 g0 m>019A>TJ0008 0 595.32 01.92 re

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Jean watched as Lillian enchanted the table with tale after tale of her life on the stage, knowing that this evening was already in the process of becoming quite the tale of its own. Even if they didn't pull off the plan,