



BARBARA
TAYLOR
BRADFORD

Dangerous
to Know

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FIRST EDITION

Designed by Nina Gaskin

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Bradford, Barbara Taylor, 1933–
Dangerous to Know / by Barbara Taylor Bradford.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-06-017722-5

I. Title.

PS3552.R147D36 1995

813'.54—dc20

95-18481

95 96 97 98 99 ❖/RRD 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Dangerous
to Know

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Mad, bad, and dangerous to know.

—Lady Caroline Lamb, writing of her lover,
the poet Lord Byron

THE NARRATORS

- Part 1:* **Vivienne: LOYALTY**
- Part 2:* **Jack: DUTY**
- Part 3:* **Luciana: PRIDE**
- Part 4:* **Zoë: TRUTH**
- Part 5:* **Vivienne: HONOR**

PART 1



VIVIENNE

LOYALTY

1

The first time I met Sebastian Locke I fell in love with him. He was thirty-two years old. I was twelve. I had no idea at the time that he was my mother's lover. Nor did I know then that ten years later I would marry him.

Now he was dead.

He had died in somewhat mysterious, even suspicious, circumstances. It was not yet known whether he had died of natural causes, committed suicide, or been murdered.

We were divorced. I had not seen him for almost a year, until last Monday, when we had lunched together at his request. Obviously the police hoped I might be able to throw some light on the matter of his death, but I could not. I was as perplexed as everyone else. However, they had just arrived to see me. I was appalled. That Sebastian was dead was only just registering with me. I glanced around my library. The familiar room looked exactly the same as it always had. The two walls of books were balanced by an eclectic mixture of antiques, my grandmother's horse paintings, and her Victorian lamps. But somehow it was out of kilter. So was I. Pulling myself together, I buzzed the intercom and told my secretary Belinda she could show them into the library.

A split second later I was shaking hands with Detectives Joe Kennelly and Aaron Miles from the Major Crime Division of the Connecticut State Police.

“We’re baffled, Mrs. Trent,” Detective Kennelly said as we all sat down. “Until we get the autopsy report we’re working in the dark. As you already know, the circumstances are suspicious, so we can’t rule out foul play. But who would want to kill Sebastian Locke? Surely such a good man didn’t have enemies, did he?”

They both focused their eyes on me, and intently so.

Silently I stared back at them. I did not say a word. I could think of several enemies, and any one of them might easily have murdered him. However, I was not about to mention this to the police. That was a family matter, and, oddly enough, even though we had been divorced for eight years, I still thought of myself as being a member of the Locke clan, and was treated as such by the family—what was left of it.

Clearing my throat, I said finally, “Naturally, a man like Sebastian met a lot of people on his travels around the world, and from all walks of life. I suppose he *might* have made an enemy or two, unintentionally, of course. Powerful men often do inspire hatred in some, for no reason other than the power they possess.”

Without shifting my steady gaze I pursed my lips, shrugged helplessly, and finished, “But I’m afraid I can’t point a finger at anyone in particular, Detective Kennelly.”

His partner said, “Was Mr. Locke in the habit of coming up to Connecticut alone?”

Genuinely puzzled, I frowned. “He was no longer married to Betsy Bethune, his last wife,” I responded. “But I suppose he might have come to the farm alone. Unless he brought a friend or colleague along, or invited special guests to join him for the weekend.”

“I meant was he in the habit of coming up to the farm when the servants were off?” Detective Miles clarified.

“No, he wouldn’t do that . . . well, I shouldn’t say that. Actually, I don’t really know what he was in the habit of doing anymore. We had been divorced for a number of years, and I saw him infrequently of late.”

“However, you did see him a week ago, Mrs. Trent, and only a few days before his death,” Detective Miles reminded me.

“That’s true. We had lunch together, as you most obviously know. From his appointment book, I’ve no doubt.”

Detective Miles nodded. “Yes, we did see your name in his book, along with the other appointments he had that day.”

“We spent a couple of hours lunching at Le Refuge on Eighty-Second Street on the East Side, just a few blocks away from my apartment,” I volunteered. I had nothing to hide.

Detective Kennelly’s tone was brisk when he asked, “How *was* Mr. Locke? What kind of mood was he in that day? Did he seem despondent? Troubled in any way? Worried perhaps?” The detective raised a brow quizzically.

I shook my head. “None of those things. In fact, just the opposite. He was very Sebastian Locke, very much himself. . . calm, cool, collected. That’s the way I always think of him—” I broke off. I felt the tears filling my throat. *Sebastian was dead*. It didn’t seem possible. I still hadn’t taken it in; I found it hard to conceive that he was no longer alive.

Taking a deep breath to steady myself, I cleared my throat, and went on slowly, “That’s the way he always was. Very much in control of himself and the situation. And his demeanor was perfectly normal at lunch.”

As the words came tumbling out of my mouth, I realized this wasn’t the truth. Not quite. Last Monday Sebastian had not been himself at all. He had been ebullient, excited, and certainly not as low key as he usually was. That somber streak of his had not been even remotely in evidence. In fact, he had actually seemed *happy*, a most unnatural state of affairs for him. But I did not confide this to the two detectives. What was the point? I was absolutely certain Sebastian had dropped dead of a sudden heart attack. He was no more the kind of person to commit suicide than I was. Nor was he a candidate for murder, for that matter. He did have a few ene-

mies, such as political factions, at least so *I* believed, but looking at it rationally, I seriously doubted that anyone would go so far as to kill him.

“Yes, Sebastian was absolutely *normal*, Detective Kennelly,” I reiterated, and with a degree of firmness. “There was nothing at all untoward in his behavior, and he spoke very positively about his plans for the rest of the year.”

“And what were those plans?” Kennelly asked.

“He was going back to Africa again, to oversee a particular distribution of aid to the poor and the sick, and then he was going on to India. To Calcutta, to be exact. He said he wanted to pay a visit to Mother Teresa. He’d always been a big supporter of her clinic, had given her significant financial contributions in the past. He told me he would be coming back to the States in December, because he intended to spend Christmas here in Connecticut.”

“And you didn’t see him again that week?” Detective Miles leaned forward, zeroing in on me as he asked the question.

“No, I didn’t, Detective Miles.”

“What about up here in Connecticut this weekend?” he asked.

“I had a deadline to meet, and I was locked up finishing my story, first in the city and then here. In this very room, in fact, and I hardly left it for the entire weekend.”

“I see.” Detective Miles inclined his head in a small show of courtesy, and slowly stood up. His partner Kennelly also rose.

I said, “When actually *did* Sebastian die?”

“Time of death hasn’t been determined yet, but probably some time on Saturday evening,” Miles answered me.

It was Kennelly who said, “Thank you for your time, Mrs. Trent.”

“I haven’t been much help, I’m afraid,” I answered.

“At least you’ve established Mr. Locke’s mood for us, his frame of mind, and corroborated what everyone else has said so far, mainly that he was acting like himself right up to the time of his death,” Kennelly said.

"I'm sure he died of natural causes. Jack and Luciana agree with me."

"We know that, Mrs. Trent. We've talked to them at length," Detective Miles volunteered.

I was fully aware of this, but I made no further comment as I walked the two policemen to the door of the library. "When will you have the results of the autopsy?" I inquired quietly.

"Not for a while," Detective Kennelly replied, pausing on the threshold, turning to look at me. "Mr. Locke's body hasn't been moved from the farm yet. But later, probably tomorrow, it will go to the Chief Medical Examiner's Office in Farmington. The autopsy will be performed immediately, however, the final results are not necessarily quick to come in." He gave me a faint smile that seemed somehow apologetic.

"We'll be in touch, Mrs. Trent," Detective Miles added.

Sitting down at my antique French country desk, I picked up my fountain pen but merely stared blankly at the pages spread out in front of me. Earlier, I had attempted to edit the piece I had finished on Sunday night, but without much success. The news of Sebastian's death this morning and the arrival of the police ten minutes ago, had broken my concentration. I was finding it virtually impossible to get back to work. Not surprising, I suppose, under these terrible circumstances.

My thoughts were entirely focused on Sebastian; I had thought of little else but him since Jack phoned me with the shocking news of his death.

Gazing blindly into the empty room, a myriad of thoughts jostling for prominence in my mind, I put the pen down and leaned back in my chair.

Sebastian had been a part of my life for as long as I could remember, and perhaps more than anyone he had been the greatest influence on me. Even though we had had our noisy quarrels,

heated differences of opinion, and stormy, emotional episodes that left both of us very shaken and upset, we had always managed to patch things up, to stick together, to remain close, no matter what. Knowing him all my life though I had, it was after our divorce that we had come to understand each other; and it was only then that our relationship acquired a certain degree of peace and serenity.

Our marriage had been tempestuous at times and short-lived; through the passing of time I had come to realize why it had been so volatile, and brief. Put simply, the forty-two-year-old experienced man of the world had not known how to cope with the twenty-two-year-old child who was his new bride. Me.

An image of Sebastian on our wedding day flashed before me, and once again my throat closed with a sudden rush of emotion. Tears were incipient, pricked behind my lids; I blinked them away. On and off, for the last few hours, I had been shedding tears. . . tears for Sebastian, dead at fifty-six, and with so much more of life to live. . . tears for myself. . . tears for Jack and Luciana. . . tears for the world.

Difficult, haunted, and troubled man though he had been, he had nevertheless been a great man. A good man. No matter what he was in his personal life, his shoulders had been strong enough to carry so many of the world's burdens, and his heart had been filled with compassion for those who were suffering and in need.

A French journalist had once written about him that he was a beacon light in these darkly turbulent and troubled times we lived in. Certainly *I* deemed this to be the truth. The world would be a lesser place now that he was no longer in it.

Oh Sebastian, you were too young to die, I thought, and I put my head down and closed my eyes, reliving Jack's phone call of this morning. I had been checking the facts in my story when Belinda had told me that Jack Locke was on the line. . .



“Jack! Hello!” I exclaimed. “How are you? And more importantly, where are you?”

“Here. In Connecticut. At the farm, Vivienne.”

“That’s great. When did you get in from France?”

“Two days ago, but Vivienne, I—”

“Come on over for supper tonight! I’ve just finished this long piece for the London *Sunday Times* Magazine, and it’ll do me good to cook, to relax with y—”

Cutting me off in a peremptory way, he said swiftly, “Vivienne, there’s something I must tell you.”

I detected an odd note in his voice, and it made the hackles rise on the back of my neck. Stiffening, I clutched the phone tighter in my hand. “What is it? What’s wrong, Jack?”

“It’s Sebastian. . . Vivienne. . . I’m not sure how to tell you this, how to break it gently, so I’m gonna come right out with it. He’s dead. Sebastian’s dead.”

“Oh my God! No! It can’t be! What happened? When did he die?” I demanded shrilly, and then I heard myself wailing, “It can’t be true. He can’t be dead. No, not Sebastian.” My stomach lurched, and then as agitation fully took hold of me, my heart began to pound against my rib cage.

“It *is* true,” Jack insisted. “I got a call this morning. Around nine-thirty. From Harry Blakely. The tree man. The aborist who looks after the trees at the farm. You know him don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Harry called me to tell me he’d found Sebastian’s body out back. Near the lake. Harry had gone to the farm as he usually does Mondays. He was heading down to cut off the tops of some dead willows. He stumbled over the body. Sebastian was sprawled face down, near those rocks at the far end of the lake. He had a gash on his forehead. Harry said he looked as if he’d been outside all night. Maybe longer. Once he’d established that Sebastian was dead, Harry went up to the house to call the State Police in North