LADY LUCINDA

Lady Lucinda was born in the Duchess of the Land of Pleasure's bedroom, attended by Doctor James and his two experienced midwives. It was a long labour and Penelope, the Duchess, was screaming for much of the time. "Come away Sir," the Duke's secretary, said. "You can do no good here. Doctor James says there is nothing to worry about – it's just like the Earl's birth three years ago. A nice cup of coffee and a glass of port will see you through." Montgomery, the Duke, had just settled down when a maid rushed in and said, "The doctor says come quickly, the baby is about to be born!"

Lucinda was born like all her aristocratic forebears yelling and flailing her tiny arms around and causing as much trouble as she could to everyone concerned. Montgomery and Penelope were delighted, and all the anguish of the past hours was forgotten. Everyone doted on Lucinda from her parents, little brother, wet nurses and washerwomen who only saw Lucinda's nappies and beautiful garments. As she grew so quickly, her beautiful clothes were sent to the Anglican church of Saint Peter's on the estate for

distribution to the poor. “Oh! my darling Betty-Anne can’t wear this frock. Look at all the handmade lace. I shall hang it in a picture frame in my little cottage. It will be ever so admired,” cried Mrs Angela Smith. Other mothers sold the garments they received because they were desperately poor, and it would buy the family two fine piglets to fatten- one to sell and buy much needed things and the other to eat at Christmas and keep in the larder for the cold months that lay ahead. The Duke and Duchess were thrilled when the Rector told them what the poor people had done. And the good thing is, that Lucinda continued to grow and need more and more shoes, hats, coats dresses and all the necessities for a little lady. And, of course, there were Peter’s clothes as well.

Lucinda had a Nanny called Rosie, and Peter a nanny called Betty who loved their little charges and spoilt them rotten. This did not improve their characters as their parents, cooks, pages and the whole staff did the same thing. Lucinda and Peter only saw their parents for an hour before dinner as was fashionable among the aristocracy. They

looked forward to it especially as they were given gifts. “Good evening, my dear children,” said the Duke. “Mummy and I have presents for you that you will like very much. They are in the nursery.” “Please take us to the nursery now!” Peter begged. “No,” answered Mummy, “it will do you good to have a lesson in patience.” And because they were so spoilt they sat and sulked while their parents grinned and spoke to each other. But it was worth the wait. Two small bicycles were in the nursery, a blue one labelled Peter and a red one labelled Lucinda. Shrieking with delight, they tried to mount them and fell on the carpet with the bikes on top of them. “Two young pages will teach you how to ride them tomorrow. You must eat your dinner, say your prayers and go to bed.” said Mummy. “Daddy and I are going to a ball in the city.” And they kissed them and left.

Jimmy was the fourteen-year-old page assigned to Lucinda. “Call me Lucie,” she said. “No, your ladyship, I will lose my job if I do that, and there’s only me and my sister Betty who is ten and works as a cleaner in the Castle’s kitchen. Our Dad can’t work. He damaged his back badly working in the

coal mines, and my mum has six other children to feed and clothe, so Betty and me really need our jobs. Things will be better next year when the twins turn ten and they can work in the garden until they become page boys, and then the family will be alright, and we can eat meat twice a week." Lucinda was appalled. "That's terrible, Jimmy," she said, "We have meat every day at all our meals." From then on, when Nanny wasn't looking, she wrapped some bacon in paper and gave it to him. "Thank you, your ladyship," he said, gobbling it down. Lucinda did not tell Peter because she knew he would tell their parents and Jimmy would be dismissed. Lucinda and Peter were soon expert bikers, and they rode around the walled garden and up and down the long road from the Castle's gate and the pages went back to their daily work.

When Lucinda was eight, several teachers came to teach her all the arts that she should be expected to know as a lady, and especially as a lady of consequence. Madame Desouza came every morning and taught her to play the harp and piano in the large schoolroom and was dismayed

when she found Lucinda had no ear for music and sang out of tune. “I am very sorry, your Ladyship,” she said to Penelope. “I fear this will count against her.” Then Mister Feet came to teach her all the fashionable dances but found Lucinda a difficult pupil. “I am afraid, your Ladyship,” he said to Penelope, “it would be better not to take her to balls.” There was one subject at which Lucinda excelled and that was writing stories. She had a fervid imagination, and Miss Once, Lucinda’s English teacher, gave the Duke and Duchess one of her stories to read. They were shocked. “It is all about politics!” exclaimed the Duke. “Whatever will become of her?” gasped the Duchess. Peter, meanwhile, had a succession of tutors. He learnt to speak French, hunt grouse and deer in season, read the daily newspapers and books - especially of poetry, that was in fashion. He was musical and loved dancing, was not interested in politics and loved the status quo and his parents doted on him, thrilled that he was so different from Lucinda. However, they loved both children dearly.

Every Sunday the Duke and Duchess went to the Anglican Church of Saint John in the Castle's grounds where all the servants worshipped with their families. The Duke's family sat in the box and all the servants on wooden pews behind them. When Lucinda was twelve, the Rector, Reverend Green, preached powerfully and passionately. "I am preaching today on the two most important verses in the Bible from the Gospel according to John, chapter three, verses sixteen and seventeen: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.' If anyone here believes that, please come to the altar and I will pray for you." Three young stable lads walked up and then Lucinda opened the box and joined them. Afterwards the servants said, "God bless you, Lady Lucinda." And her mother asked, "How could you make such a spectacle of yourself, Lucinda?" The next day, Lucinda got on her bike and rode to the bookstore where she spent her pocket money on a book of daily readings and a copy of John Stott's

BASIC CHRISTIANITY. Her parents didn't allow her to join the Youth Group, but Lucinda continued to grow in knowledge and grace.

When Lucinda was eighteen, it was time for her introduction to society at the Assembly Balls. She had grown into a beautiful young lady with sparkling green eyes, a slim figure and long red curls which cascaded down her back. She was the belle of the ball, and she had many suitors. They did not care that she could not dance, play the harp or sing – she was just ravishing! Her first suitor was Percival, Duke of Percival Castle and the catch of the season. "I won't marry him, Daddy" she said. "He's dumb - all he talks about are his hundred and five piglets. I would be bored stiff, and any children might take after him." The next suitor was Sir Simon of the Manor House and a man of vast wealth. "No, he's gross – older than you, Daddy darling, fat, bald and full of himself." The next suitor was the Earl of Mistletoe. Mummy was pleased. "You will find him charming - he loves reading and quotes Byron endlessly. I have heard him myself." "But does he read the newspapers and keep abreast of current events? I think not" replied

Lucinda. Many other suitors came and failed. “Lucinda’s impossible,” said Daddy and Mummy wholeheartedly agreed.

When Lucinda was twenty, the butler brought in The Times and handed it to the Duke. There was a large head and shoulders picture of Lucinda on the front page. He read the article, The gist was that Lady Lucinda was inviting women from all ranks of life to form a group to fight non-violently for the right for women to vote, that they should keep their inheritance and it must not be given to their husbands, and that the problem of poverty in the country should be speedily addressed. The Duke’s face turned red, and he had an apoplectic fit. The butler cried, “Call the doctor!” And the page ran upstairs to the Duchess and shouted, “Come quickly – the Duke is very ill!” After a glass of port, the Duke demanded that Lucinda come immediately. “You are no daughter of ours!” he cried. “Leave the Castle immediately. You shall go without a penny of mine. You’ve made your bed, stupid girl – now lie in it.”

Lucinda had laid her plans for this day well in advance. She had saved most of her very generous allowance for two years. Her maid tearfully packed her clothes and jewellery – a pearl necklace from her parents, several bracelets and necklaces encrusted with sparkling gems and two tiaras she had inherited from her grandmother. One was gold encrusted with sapphires and diamonds, the other silver with emeralds and rubies. “I shall live modestly, and this will last a lifetime,” she said to herself. She called for the Rolls, her trunks were put in the boot, and she left with not a look behind. Reaching the capital city of Pleasure, called the City of Plenty, she said to herself, “What a misnomer - the streets are filled with the poor.” “Please take me to a very reasonable hotel in a poorer part of the city,” she said to Allan, her chauffeur. He drove to the Happy Hotel. “I have often stayed here, your Ladyship. The rooms are simple, clean and every room has its own bathroom.” “Thanks, Allan,” she replied, “it sounds ideal.” And it was - the owners, Bert and Betty Barnes, did everything they could to

help her settle in. Over a delicious lunch, she said, “While I am in Plenty, everybody must call me Lucinda.”

“Betty,” she said after lunch, “I must get cracking. Please could you call a shop so I can sell my finery and buy practical ordinary clothes, even pants. Also, a good and trustworthy jeweller who will buy my jewellery.” “Only a pleasure, Lucinda,” she said. “I will stay and help you when they come and ask Bert to take you to the bank when it’s done.” Tired, but very happy, she went to her room, read her Bible, said her prayers, climbed into bed and slept soundly. The following day she was up early. The first meeting of the Suffragets was scheduled for ten o’clock in the hotel’s lounge. To Lucinda’s surprise, fifty-six enthusiastic and talkative women came, sitting in the dining room drinking tea and eating apple tarts cook had baked that morning.

“Welcome everyone,” said Lucinda. “Write your first names on the nametags in front of you. I am Lucinda.” That accomplished she said, “Here is a Bible verse that will

encourage us in our endeavours. ‘Be strong in the Lord as I have commanded thee. Be not dismayed, neither be thou dismayed for I, thy God, will go before thee wheresoever thou goest.’ “I want our meetings to be democratically run. If you have suggestions where we should make our presence felt, please tell me. I think tomorrow we should gather with sheets of paper saying let women vote, and it should be outside the City Council’s building at ten fifteen, Does everyone agree?” “Yes!” they shouted enthusiastically. Lucinda dressed carefully. She had chosen to wear a dress suitable for a worker with a worker’s cap covering her luxuriant curly red hair. The women started to chant, “Men! Men! Give us the right to vote! Men! Men! Give us the chance to vote!” Buildings down the street saw windows opened and office workers staring out. People in the street stopped and stared so that traffic came to a standstill, policemen arrived shouting “Get a move on so cars can pass!” And, best of all, a hundred women joined the shouting women and asked, “Can we join your movement?” When the jubilant Lucinda reached the hotel, a policeman arrived and delivered a summons which read,

‘You are to appear in Court tomorrow and face the consequences of your movement’s actions this morning.’ “I need a good lawyer -do you know one Betty?” Lucinda asked. “Yes,” she replied Advocate Timothy Spartan. He won a difficult case for our hotel. A woman sued us for serving inferior food, not the food we advertised. She had to pay huge damages. Timothy was brilliant.” “I’ll give him a call then,” Lucina said.

Timothy came. He was a very tall man with a handsome, kind face, red haired like Lucinda, and a genuine smile. They looked at each other and fell instantaneously in love. After the successful conclusion of the court case, they were married in the Cathedral, for Timothy was a devout Christian too. There were no guests and there was no honeymoon either as the great work had to be continued. The women were now shouting, “Men! Men! Let women keep their inheritance! Don’t take it away from them! And “Men! Men! Put an end to poverty!” It was a time of rapid growth of the movement. Women all over the country were mobilizing and there were many court cases to be fought.

Timothy brought his two partners in to help him cope, and Lucinda was daily in the courts as a witness. At home, the Duke and Duchess read of Lucinda's achievements. "We really misjudged her," said the Duke. "Yes" agreed the Duchess. "Fortunately, she left with a lot of cash. For two years she has been very frugal with her allowance, and she left with all her finery including her jewellery and your mother's two tiaras."

Lucinda and Timothy had two children, Amy and Jack. After fifteen years, when the children were approaching their teenage years, Lucinda ran for President and, with an avalanche of support, was sworn in as the youngest and only female President in the history of Pleasure. She proclaimed a public holiday and a day of thanksgiving. Bells pealed out over the country and feasts were held in the streets and parks. Few people knew that Lucinda was a married woman with two children, and they did not move into the President's Mansion as it was being refurbished. "We must go to the Castle and see Daddy and Mummy and introduce you to them." she said. They drove to the Castle

on the public holiday in Timothy's spacious Tesla, approaching the Castle up it's long driveway." Did you really live here in this beautiful castle?" Amy asked. The Duke and Duchess were having tea in their favourite room – the Green Drawing Room. Lucinda ran in. "Hello, my darlings!" she cried hugging and kissing them. "I missed you so very, very much." "And we missed you and are so proud of you and so sorry that we chased you out of the castle," said Daddy tearfully. "If you hadn't, the Land of Pleasure would not have been transformed – so you did a very good thing. I have had the joy of following my dreams. But I have a surprise for you! You will never guess because few people know. Come in my darlings!' The family walked in. "This is Timothy, my husband, and our two children Amy and Jack. God has been so gracious and good to me. I am supremely blest."