

Mr. Bradley's
Garden



Queen of Spades 

Mr. Bradley's Garden by Queen of Spades and All Authors Publishing
House

Copyright © July 2014 – May 2020 Queen of Spades & All Authors
Publishing House

All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced in any written, electronic,
recording, or photocopying form without written permission of the
publisher, All Authors Publishing House.

Books may be purchased in quantity and/or special sales by
contacting the publisher, at admin@allauthorspp.net or visiting
<http://allauthorspp.net>.

Published by: All Authors Publishing House

Interior Design by: All Authors Graphic Design

Cover Design by: All Authors Graphic Design

Editing by: All Authors Publications & Promotions

BISAC: Short Story

Second eBook Edition

Printed in the United States

6:30 AM.

The bedroom door creaked open. No blares of an alarm or the talking of a morning announcer could be heard. Mr. Bradley never needed those things. He naturally rose at the same time every day. Eight steps later, he was in the bathroom. The wooden walls just above the bathtub still needed to be tiled. *There just weren't enough hours in a day.* Mr. Bradley would get to it, eventually.

Mr. Bradley turned on the faucet: eighty-five percent hot water and fifteen percent cold water. That was his preferred temperature mix. He unscrewed the blue Noxzema jar top with his right fingers while his left fingers grabbed the fuzzy green washcloth hanging on a nail. Familiarity with modern appliances was not his specialty. The long nails hammered in the walls would do as towel rods.

Soon Mr. Bradley's dark brown face was covered in white cream. He inhaled it and smiled as the eucalyptus mist from the product tickled his nose hairs. He let the Noxzema set for a few minutes before soaking the washcloth and removing the product from his face. After doing so, he noticed the prickles of hair jutting from his chin.

“Time to shave.”

The medicine cabinet opened and the razor was grabbed. He turned the knob at the bottom of the gray razor counterclockwise to open up the top. The blade required changing. Mr. Bradley removed one from the pack and carefully swapped the old for the new. Then he used clockwise movements to seal the top. Mr. Bradley also secured a small black bowl, a beige shave brush, and the red and white striped can that held his shaving cream.

About ten minutes later, Mr. Bradley had a smooth face. He was going to take a bath but decided against it. He would wait until the work outside was completed.

Mr. Bradley went to the bedroom and proceeded to get dressed. He threw on a white A-line shirt and a light green cotton button-down that had seen better days. Then, he pulled up and fastened his dark denim overalls. He looked around for his boots but just as quickly recalled they were in the living room. Mr. Bradley's oversized straw hat hung on the bedpost. He didn't want his head to get too hot. Plus, he was self-conscious of the center bald spot of his head but wasn't brave enough to shave the rest of his pepper-colored hair.

After pulling a pair of white socks from the chest of drawers, Mr. Bradley made his way to the kitchen. To his surprise, his huge brown ceramic mug was

already filled with hot tea. He carefully lifted the mug and sampled a taste. It was perfect—extra sweet just as he liked it!

Mr. Bradley glanced around. He didn't hear the TV so he knew his wife wasn't up yet. The mystery of the tea was solved when he looked out the screen door and saw his granddaughter drawing. Although pleased with the productivity, Mr. Bradley worried about the amount of time she was spending alone. *It's hard for a kid to survive with little to no friends.*

Mr. Bradley sat on the couch to savor all the hot tea before putting on his socks and boots. The third step was a bit unsteady as he made his way outside. *I will have to repair that later on today.* Mr. Bradley didn't want his wife or his granddaughter getting hurt.

“G'mornin', Grandpa!”

“G'mornin', Maggie. You want to help out in the garden?”

Maggie was a bit reluctant. On her last attempt to help, she accidentally stepped on an ant hill in the garden. Her right foot hurt for many days. Sensing her thoughts, Mr. Bradley chimed in, “You won’t have to wander through the garden with me. You’ll just stand on the edge, and I’ll pass you the buckets.”

Maggie smiled, then gave a sound of relief. She could definitely do that.

Mr. Bradley unlocked the utility shed and grabbed four plastic buckets—two white, one green, and one red. He gave the colored ones to Maggie while he carted the white ones. While Maggie waited, she watched her grandpa put on his gloves and wander near the crowder peas. It wasn’t long before one of the white buckets was filled. He brought it over to Maggie.

“Sit this next to the bottom of the step. Do that with all of them.”

This bucket wasn't extremely heavy, but every so often, Maggie would have to swap between her hands during transport. The second white bucket also got filled with peas—that time, black-eyed peas. Maggie made the trek again, placing the black-eyed peas on the opposite side of the crowder peas. She was excited about all the yummy vegetables to eat throughout the year.

“Maggie,” Mr. Bradley called. “I’m going to help you with these last two. They are too heavy for you to handle alone.”

With teamwork, Mr. Bradley and Maggie carted over the remaining two buckets—one overflowing with green bell peppers and another with red tomatoes.

“When your grandma wakes up, let her know I picked some more stuff. Watch that next-to-the-bottom step. It’s very loose.”

“I know, Grandpa. I usually skip over it.”

Maggie grabbed the handkerchief dangling from Mr. Bradley's pocket. She beckoned him to come closer in order to wipe the scant hints of Noxzema still on his face.

He nodded and went back inside to prepare. It was almost time to make his rounds in the neighborhood. But first, he would ask Maggie to fix him some more hot tea.



Once a week during the summer months every year, the neighbors would awaken to a bagged surprise at their doorsteps. There was never a note, but everyone knew the identity of the culprit. When this practice began, the locals were appreciative of this gesture. As the years progressed, the neighborhood began to change. The generations that remained were

not as grateful and began seeing the delivery of fresh fruits and vegetables as a requirement.

Mr. Bradley's energy, along with his infectious zest for life, started to decline. He was a man who loved being outdoors and took pride in his garden and yard. More often now than not, he couldn't finish mowing the three acres of land in one day. Since Mr. Bradley didn't have the stamina to maintain a huge garden, he opted to operate one on a smaller scale. There weren't as many crops grown; therefore, not as many deliveries.

One day while Maggie was watching television, there was a knock at the door. It was Mrs. Murphy peering at her from the other side of the screen.

"Oh, Maggie, it's you!"

"Well, who else would it be?" Maggie snapped. She wasn't exactly Mrs. Murphy's biggest fan.

"Is your grandfather in?"

“He’s resting. What message would you like me to give him?”

Mrs. Murphy pulled at the latch to the glass door. “Maggie, I’d rather tell him myself. Could you wake him? It’s rather important.”

Maggie emphatically shook her head. “I told you, Mrs. Murphy. He’s RESTING!”

Mr. Bradley’s bedroom door opened, and he made his way up the hallway. Maggie’s voice was unusually loud so he had to check on the commotion. He clamped his hand on Maggie’s shoulder.

“What’s going on?”

“Grandpa, I told Mrs. Murphy you were asleep, but she insisted on talking to you.”

Mr. Bradley sighed. “Well, I’m here now. Gertrude, may I help you with something?”

“I sure would love some black-eyed peas to go with the greens I’m cooking at the house. You think you can drop some on by?”

Mr. Bradley regarded Mrs. Murphy carefully before replying, “Perhaps a little later. Like my granddaughter said, I was resting.”

“You’re usually so good about these things. The peas aren’t going to do any good later since the greens are on the fire as we speak.”

Maggie looked from her grandfather to the demanding Mrs. Murphy.

“Fine,” Mr. Bradley conceded.

Mrs. Murphy smiled in pleasure, got in her car and drove back to her house. Maggie believed this was a stupid practice when Mrs. Murphy’s house was within walking distance of their own. Mr. Bradley sat on the couch. Maggie looked at him in disbelief.

“How could you let her bully you like that? She went to the grocery store and bought the greens. That beggin’ ol’ bitty could have gotten the black-eyed peas there, too!”

Mr. Bradley pointed to the half-filled bag in the adjoining room. “Take those to her, Maggie.”

“Grandpa, didn’t you hear what I just said? Those special deliveries aren’t a right, yet everyone in this neighborhood behaves like they’re entitled!”

Mr. Bradley gave Maggie a stern look. That was her cue to stop talking. As he made his way back to the bedroom, Maggie shoved the bag under her arm, rushed out the door and stomped up the street.

Less than five minutes later, she made it to Mrs. Murphy’s brick home. The dog rushed out and started barking. As soon as he saw Maggie, the dog stopped barking and his tail joyfully wagged.

“How could you have such an old crone for a master?” Maggie crooned as she ruffled the top of the dog’s hair. The brushing of his wet nose and tongue against her palm made her chuckle for the moment.

Initially, Maggie was just going to mimic her grandpa’s actions—leave the bag and walk away. But she just couldn’t let Mrs. Murphy off the hook *that* easily.

Her knuckles rapped on the glass door. Mrs. Murphy was there instantly and flung it open. Maggie dumped the black-eyed peas out of the brown sack. The dirt from the outer shells coated Mrs. Murphy’s pink fuzzy slippers. Maggie ran back to her grandfather’s house while Mrs. Murphy cursed and raised her fist in anger.



Mr. Bradley had always been a fighter. He had gotten his diagnosis a while back. When it was initially sighted, the doctors convinced him all he needed was to get the operation. The operation had been a success, and all of Mr. Bradley's activities resumed. Everything was back to normal.

Or so he thought.

When his activity level started decreasing rapidly, Mr. Bradley had no choice but to return to the hospital. The ailment that all believed was originally defeated was back, stronger than ever. Due to his advanced age, it was too risky to get on any type of radiation. His wife agreed. All she wanted was her husband to be at home—to be around those who loved him.

As the deliveries slowly became nonexistent, the number of visitors and calls dried up as well. Mr.

Bradley never expressed it, but Maggie could tell the switch bothered him. There was a sadness that lingered in his eyes. Mr. Bradley's moments of laughter dwindled, and soon Maggie couldn't pinpoint the last time he had exhibited any expressions of joy.



“Don’t give me my flowers when I am dead. Give them to me when I’m alive and can appreciate them.”

Maggie's aunt (her grandpa's sister) always said that from time to time. The truth of it came crashing down the day of Mr. Bradley's funeral. So many people far and wide had come to pay their respects. The church was jam-packed.

Maggie couldn't understand. The hypocrisy of the scene sickened her. Her fury and sadness wrestled for

position throughout her body. *How could they all be here when none of them even stopped by the house to check on him, Grandma, or even offer a helping hand with the yard and garden he treasured so much in his prime?*

Maggie's body was stiff as each person embraced her. The "sorry for your loss" muttered from each person sounded garbled. Everything became deafening. She excused herself and stumbled to the bathroom. Maggie locked herself in one of the bathroom stalls. Several dry retches transformed into body shaking sobs. *How could God snatch such a wonderful person like Grandpa but permit these heathens to still walk the earth?*

Although it felt like hours, it was only minutes Maggie took to compose herself. Maggie walked back into the church. Everyone was standing up. It was time to journey to the cemetery. Maggie resumed the

position next to Mrs. Bradley. Although the grip on her hand was snug, Maggie didn't have the heart to tell her grandma to loosen the hold.

After the burial, Maggie and Mrs. Bradley were asked if they wanted to go back to the church. Maggie ordered the driver to return to the house. Mrs. Bradley grumbled that she wanted to get out of her thigh highs. But Maggie knew the truth—her grandma was experiencing a bit of social overload and just wanted to be left alone. While Mrs. Bradley sat on her husband's favorite couch, Maggie sat curled in his favorite lawn chair under the carport. Her last coherent thought before she drifted off to sleep was of the tea she used to make her grandpa.

When Maggie woke up hours later, she rubbed her eyes. Perhaps she was dreaming. Maggie closed her eyes, and then slowly opened them. The same images

were still in front of her: rows and rows of bagged fruits
and vegetables—all of them unmarked.

About the Author



The best way to describe Queen of Spades is an Antiquated Hybrid: a contemporary author whose writings have a down-to-earth resonance to anyone who reads them.

Since the age of eleven, Queen of Spades flowed with the fire of ideas indicative of rhythm inundated with stanzas. She made her writing debut as a presenter and poet in the anthology *Soulful Branches: Words and Sounds*. Her other poetry works include *Reflections of Soul*, the Eclectic collection (*Skin Edition & Beyond the Skin*), the Spaded Truths collection (*Themes and Proclamations and Life-O-*

Suction), Private Pain: Amidst These Ashes, and R.I.P.(E).:
Random Inspirations on Paper: (E)ve-olution.

Queen of Spades also collaborates in subjects she is passionate about. She provided works in the April 2014 poetry anthology Words of Fire and Ice by Durham Editing and E-books. In addition, she partnered with fellow author MJ Holman addressing the stigma of mental illness: The Sea of Conscience and Waves to Light.

Storytelling took spotlight alongside poetry in Queen's literary evolution. She has written four independent short stories: "Taint on Religion", "Mr. Bradley's Garden", "When Summer Lingers", and "Finding My Heart". Furthermore, she has participated in a number of short story compilations, such as Continuous Drips, the Concordant Vibrancy anthology series (Unity, Vitality, Lustrate, Inferno), and the Divergent Ink collection (Crackles of the Heart, Pleasure Prints). She released her first short story collection A Scribe's Sentiments in 2019.

Some tout Queen of Spades is a Poet of the People. Others classify her as a Life Writer. The primary quality that remains consistent is her dedication to contemporary creativity while remaining true to herself.