

Almost right in the middle of Vancouver Island lies the small town of Haverton, British Columbia, Canada. The town took its name from Lord Haverton, an English gentleman who originally settled the area in 1872. The reason for Lord Haverton settling the area is an unusual one. He was a fan of dime store novels, which were all the rage at the time. He wanted to become an adventurer, just like the characters in the stories.

Being a man of leisure, Lord Haverton had plenty of time to read adventure novels, and unfailingly, he came to see himself as the hero of the story in every one of them. In fact, like the heroes in the novels, he fancied himself a rugged frontiersman, and even adopted the language of the dime novels, peppering his conversation with a lot of 'derns', and 'dag nabbits'.

Lord Haverton's favorite author was Marmaduke J. Tuttle, professional author, adventurer, and school teacher. Tuttle himself was a weakly looking man, not weighing more than 120 pounds and the pallor of his skin hinted of underlying conditions. Still, Tuttle always wrote his adventure novels in first person, like he had been right there at the time. He weaved a web of adventure as he made his way through rugged mountains, rainforests, and vast lakes; all the while wrassling bears and killing cougars with only a knife and his bare hands.

Flanked by several servants, Lord Haverton sat for hours on the lawns of his estate dreaming about himself on one of those adventures. Oh, wouldn't that be lovely? Finally, he couldn't take it anymore and bought a parcel of land on Vancouver Island. As mentioned, it was in the middle of the island. This was where Tuttle placed most of his adventures, as it was untamed as could be, and there was friendly trade with the native population. From the population, he created sage like trackers and faithful sidekicks to aid him in his adventures.

Lord Haverton's new home was of such a scale that an entire village formed around during its building. The village became known as Haverton. While Lord Haverton lived, the village flourished due to his lavish spending, but on his passing, the money dried up, and people gradually moved away, leaving only a few remaining settlers. Later a pulp mill was set up near by, and Haverton became a village again, but then the mill shut down, and Haverton was once again just a sprinkling of a few homes.

Today, Haverton is not even a hamlet, but Haverton Manor is still there. The home is situated on acres of land with orchards, streams and well manicured lawns. Of course, the property is no longer owned by the Havertons. Lord Haverton died of a bee sting shortly after the manor was completed. His wife, anxious to introduce her fifteen year old daughter to society, sold the property at an extreme loss and she

and her daughter rushed back to England. The property then became a swank hunter's lodge, but has since passed hands several times. Haverton Manor is now owned by Miss Florence P Grimshaw, proprietor and head mistress of 'Haverton Orphanage', a home for Pathetic and Unwanted Orphans, as stated in its brochure.

If you were to enter the manor through the front entrance, you wouldn't see anything to make you think you just walked into an orphanage. You would find yourself in a well-decorated and spacious formal reception area with a large, expensively carpeted staircase in the center and a number of rooms and hallways to the sides. To the left was a grand but never used ballroom, and to the right was the library which was used, and had the nameplate, "Miss Grimshaw", which hung above the french doors of the entrance. The nameplate was the only clue you were in an orphanage and not someone's grand home. The children themselves were seldom seen in the manor. They were kept and tended to in a barracks-like dormitory on the farthest reach of the property.

The "Miss Grimshaw" room was a reflection of the woman herself. It contained little. No more than a large oak desk, and a few chairs placed discreetly alongside the immense bookshelves filled with books, which rose from floor to ceiling, along most of the walls. Equally expansive windows filled the others. The windows had been tightly shuttered and blackened out and lighting was supplied by overhead fluorescent bulbs. There were no plants, tables, ornamentation or pictures cluttering the sparsity of the room. The books were there, because they were there when Miss Grimshaw bought the property. The books had remained through successive ownership, as no-one was willing to commit to the undertaking of removing them.

On this day there were three people in the "Miss Grimshaw" room. The least noticeable was a young girl of seventeen years, who was quietly dusting the books in the bookcase. She was standing on an attached sliding ladder which was on runners and could be moved from one shelf to the next. It allowed her to climb up and reach the books on the top shelves with her duster.

If anyone cared to know, the girl's name was Mary. She was the oldest charge at the orphanage. Mary was a beautiful young woman who surpassed the drabness of the faded uniforms the children of the orphanage were issued. She had an elegant bearing and a natural kindness in her eyes. Her long black hair drew attention to the fine, almost delicate features of her face. She looked like someone you could believe in.

Seated in one of the smaller chairs in front of the desk was the Headmaster, Mr. Kinkly. A rather rotund man, he attempted to dress professionally, but wasn't quite up to it. He wore a summer suit that creased easily and did not look to be of much

quality. The pattern of his shirt was faded and the buttons strained to contain his belly, except for one in the middle which had been defeated and was now missing. His greasy, thinning hair needed trimming, and wire framed glasses sat askew on his round sweaty face.

The third person in the room of course was Miss Grimshaw herself. She was a small, angular woman, who's features might be considered sharp. Like Mr. Kinkly, she was in her mid-fifties. Everything in Miss Grimshaw's appearance was stringent. Perhaps in an attempt to give herself a contemporary appearance, she wore her hair drawn back into a ponytail, but it only succeeded in pulling the loose skin of her face towards the back of her head, and this caused a rather severe countenance. If this was not enough to warn off a stranger, her sense of fashion provided insight into the woman as well. Her dress was dated; almost Victorian, and was entirely black except for a small white embroidered frill around the two sleeves and the sparse collar. Like a plate of armor, the entire garment fit tightly to her bony body.

'The world hates me Mr. Kinkly, and that's all there is to it,' Miss Grimshaw sighed.

'Not a truer word has been spoken, Miss Grimshaw. It does indeed hate you,' agreed Mr. Kinkly, who leaned towards being an agreeable man.

'To think that terrible woman wants to come here and persecute me, when all I've ever done is love these children like they were my own. My very own Mr. Kinkly!'

'If I had been loved by my mother even half as much as you love these children, Miss Grimshaw, there is no telling how far I would have gone.'

'You would have been Prime Minister, Mr. Kinkly, Prime Minister!'

Mr. Kinkly bowed his head in conciliatory acceptance.

'It's inexcusable I tell you,' Miss Grimshaw continued. 'Thinking they can barge in here and tell us what to do. So what if they provide us with a small amount of financial assistance. Are we not to be compensated for providing an essential service to the province?'

'Well, you see Head Mistress,' Mr. Kinkly responded. 'The financial assistance provided by the Ministry is very generous and it expects us to meet certain standards if we are to receive the funding. As an example, they expect some of the funding to go towards feeding the children.'

'Feeding the children!' Miss Grimshaw exclaimed. 'Why Haverton Orphanage provides only the best foods for our wards. Why, we feed them right from our very fields. All winter long the children are provided with a hearty bowl of cornmeal in

the morning, and a baked potato in the evening. Now who doesn't love potatoes, I ask you? I have them with every meal'.

'Yes, at face value, it does seem overly generous,' Mr. Kinkly nodded gravely. 'But the ministry insists on a more varied diet, which would include such things as fruit, milk and colored vegetables'.

Miss Grimshaw angrily waved Mr. Kinkly off, while feeling especially persecuted. 'Do they not understand the costs of running this place? The electricity bill alone could put us under. It's a good thing we have the children to do the yard work and cleaning. We could never afford those services with what the government gives us, I can tell you that'.

'That's another issue we must address,' Mr Kinkly replied, then pointing at Mary and lowering his voice. 'It's a very grave situation this time.'

Miss Grimshaw turned her attention to Mary, who was in the process of moving herself from one bookcase to the next by grasping the top shelf and pulling herself into position.

'How many times have I told that girl to come down from the ladder and move it to the next shelf from the floor?' Miss Grimshaw asked herself. 'I swear, she's going to run that thing right into me.'

Now, with only a shelf between them, Miss Grimshaw pushed her chair back from the desk, so she was seated directly in the path of Mary and the ladder. Intent on her work, unsuspecting Mary didn't notice, and pulled herself one shelf length closer toward Miss Grimshaw. This brought Mary and Miss Grimshaw within a couple of feet of each other. Without warning, Miss Grimshaw swung round in her chair and with both feet pushed as hard as she could against the ladder, causing herself to fly off one way and poor Mary, hanging on for dear life, the other.

Angrily, Miss Grimshaw leapt from her chair and rushed to Mary. 'You stupid girl, you almost killed me!' she shouted, shaking the ladder. The already dazed Mary laced her arms through a ladder rung to keep from falling the ten or so feet to the floor.

'I'm so sorry Miss Grimshaw,' Mary cried. 'I didn't think I was that close to you.'

'You didn't think,' Miss Grimshaw interrupted, while continuing to snap the ladder back and forth. 'That's why you've never been adopted, because you don't think. You're a stupid girl Mary, a very stupid girl. Now get down from that ladder and get out of my sight.'

Mary tried to climb down, but every time she tried to lower her leg to the next rung, Miss Grimshaw gave the ladder a good yank in an attempt to make her fall. Finally, Mary held her breath and tried to hop down to the lower rung, but because of a particularly forceful yank by Miss Grimshaw, missed it and ended up tumbling down to the floor.

'Do be careful Mary,' Mr. Kinkly admonished, 'you're going to damage the ladder'.

'She doesn't care,' Miss Grimshaw exclaimed angrily, ignoring that the girl was rubbing her ankle. 'None of these brats value anything. Now get out. Go on'.

Apologizing again, Mary lifted herself up and started limping out of the office.

'Oh, and Mary,' Miss Grimshaw said as Mary reached for the door handle.

'Yes Ma'am,'

'You're a very ugly girl. That's another reason you haven't been adopted.'

'Yes Ma'am,' Mary replied, as she quietly shut the door behind her.