

**IN WHICH WE LEARN
HOW OLIVIA GOT
HER JOB**

A VERY SHORT STORY

PAULINE BAIRD JONES

Copyright © 2018 by Pauline Baird Jones

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

✿ Created with Vellum

INTRODUCTION

Some years back, I wrote this very short story, almost a snippet, for a blog post. I've lost the link to the blog post, but I did keep the snippet. Or very short story.

Olivia first appeared out of my imagination when I was working on a short story for an anthology. The short story grew into a novella that debuted as *Tangled in Time*. Thankfully this snippet resisted all efforts to make it longer.

An interesting side note to the story, it was partly inspired by some video I found from the time period of people riding the EL (elevated train).

I hope you enjoy this glimpse into how Olivia came to work for the professor!

THE VERY SHORT STORY OR SNIPPET

There was, Olivia conceded to herself—since she was currently unattended and had only herself to concede anything to—something quite exhilarating about riding the El, as opposed to the streetcar or the more sedate Hansom cab. Riding along the tops of the tenements and buildings, well above street level, seeing Gotham pass like a flowing river, made her feel quite breathless. It was definitely worth the expenditure of ten cents.

Not only was she up above the street, she felt lifted above societal restraints and cautiously optimistic about reaching her goal. When O. Carstairs, Esq had opened a correspondence with Professor Emelius Twitchet, distinguished Professor of Sciences, just over a year ago, Olivia had nursed no expectation of meeting him. Had he known she was a “Miss” and not an “Esq,” he’d have cut the connection forthwith, nor would he have proposed the possibility of her working as his assistant in his researches. She didn’t have to peruse the communication currently residing in her reticule to recall its contents or the proposed appointment

and possible offer of employment “if they found they suited.”

She should have penned a polite and regretful refusal, perhaps pleading previous and inescapable employment. She had instead, felt a tiny seed of hope give bud in a heart devoted to science. Surely, a proper application of scientific method could lead to a satisfactory resolution for both her and the Professor—who clearly needed her as his assistant.

She had given brief consideration to becoming a gentleman in every way but the anatomical. The idea intrigued, but was, in the end, illogical and impractical for any extended period of time. Her Mama would surely notice if her daughter became a son and could be counted on to respond badly.

In the end, the only truly practical way to secure the position was by persuading the Professor to alter his requirement that she be male. She had observed gentlemen responded badly to direct requests to alter a position. Outright requests did, in fact, make them quite immovable. But there were more subtle ways to change a gentleman’s mind. Why just this week, quite without intending to, Olivia had convinced Mr. Lester Heplinger to propose, totally against the desires of his—or her—heart. Typically, he’d been both relieved and annoyed when she gave him the muffin.

The incident, upon careful review of the events leading up to it, provided her with a method of sound scientific procedure that, if properly applied during her appointment with the Professor, could lead to a similar, albeit less permanent, result.

Olivia might have quailed at the boldness required to present herself at the Professor’s place of employment, minus that important Esq, but Mrs Pankhurst urged suffrag-

ists to “deeds, not words.” This was clearly the right moment for deeds.

Added to this was the unwelcome reality that—having given Mr. Heplinger the muffin—her only other option lay in employment as a governess to—she gulped—seven boys, ranging in age from two years to ten. She positively paled at the thought.

“First time on the El, miss?” The cheery voice recalled Olivia to her surroundings.

Olivia smiled, despite their lack of introduction and the obvious inequities in their social status. The democratic nature of the El was to be admired, not deplored—her gaze inadvertently intersected the bold one of what her Papa would have termed a “spark.” She lifted her chin, grateful for the sharp point of her parasol if the young man felt inclined to move closer, and turned to the lady on her left.

“Is it so obvious?”

The amply formed female gave a half grimace, half nod and gathered up her various bags as the El reached her stop. “You gets used to it, dearie.”

Oddly warmed by the brief contact, Olivia nevertheless felt anxiety increase as the EL resumed its forward progress, decreasing the number of stops prior to hers. Success was possible, she reminded herself sturdily. Observation was a lifetime habit, and such observation had convinced her that success in any endeavor had as much to do with inner confidence and determination, as other factors. According to the Professor, she had a “fine, scientific mind.” She deserved the opportunity to use it in scientific endeavors.

Added to these bracing reflections was the fact that the Professor wanted to hire O. Carstairs as his assistant. His mind was set upon it, so all she really needed to do was keep

him from changing his mind—something most men pursued as a lifelong goal.

Her stop approached. Steam hissed as brakes were applied. She retrieved her parasol and rose, twitching her skirt into place before disembarking. Noise and heat assaulted with equal force as she descended to a street-level teeming with a mostly unwashed humanity. It was not unexpected in proximity to the East River. She snapped her parasol open, confident in its point—and her concealed derringer—as she turned toward the warehouse that housed Professor Twitchet’s laboratory.

Mrs. Pankhurst liked smashing windows, but today Olivia would be content with smashing one, small expectation. It was, she was quite sure, in both their best interests that she succeed.



YOU CAN CONTINUE Olivia’s story in *Tangled in Time*. You can see how that job worked out for her.

ALSO BY PAULINE

Science Fiction Romance/Paranormal

Project Universe Series:

The Key (book 1)

Girl Gone Nova (book 2)

Tangled in Time (book 3)

Steamrolled (book 4)

Kicking Ashe (book 5)

Found Girl (book 6)

Lost Valyr (book 7)

Maestra Rising (book 8)

Project Enterprise: The Short Stories

Time Trap: A Project Enterprise Series Short Story

Operation Ark: A Project Enterprise Story

Cyborg's Revenge: A Project Enterprise Series Short Story.

General's Holiday: A Project Enterprise Story

The Real Dragon

Nebula Nine (time travel adventure)

Open With Care (Christmas collection that includes, "Riding For Christmas" and "Up on the House Top")

Specters in the Storm: A paranormal/steampunk/science fiction romance novella

Out of Time (World War II Time Travel Romance)

Just in Time (An Out of Time Story)

An Uneasy Future

(A science fiction romance mystery series set in future New Orleans)

Core Punch (1.0)

Sucker Punch (2.0)

One Two Punch: An Uneasy Future Bundle

Romantic Suspense

The Big Uneasy Series:

Relatively Risky (1)

Family Treed (A Big Uneasy Short Story)

Dead Spaces (2.0)

Louisiana Lagniappe (3.0)

Worry Beads (4.0)

Fais Do Do Die (5.0)

The Big Uneasy Bundle

Lonesome Lawmen Series:

The Last Enemy

Byte Me

Missing You

Lonesome Mama (Bonus short story)

(The *Lonesome Lawmen* is also available as a digital bundle)

Do Wah Diddy Die

The Spy Who Kissed Me

Perilously Fun Fiction Bundle (includes The Spy Who Kissed Me and Do Wah Diddy Die. Bonus: Do Wah Diddy Delete Short Story Collection)

Dangerous Dance

Dangerous Duet

Short Story Collections

Project Enterprise: The Short Stories

Do Wah Diddy Delete

Let's Fall in Love

The Real Dragon and other short stories

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Award-winning, *USA Today* Bestselling author Pauline never liked reality, so she writes books. She likes to wander among the genres, rampaging like Godzilla, because she does love peril mixed in her romance.

To find out more about Pauline or her books:

<http://paulinebjones.com>



