

An Excerpt from *Hassam in the Garden* by Jeffrey Benoit

WHISTLING MARY: Of course, the artists sometimes stirred up more trouble than they were worth.

BAILY: What do you mean?

WHISTLING MARY: Well, like the time they were playing catch in the dining room and tossed an orange through the window.

BAILY: Through the window?

CHILDE HASSAM: It was an accident.

BAILY: I bet Miss Florence was very upset.

WHISTLING MARY: Actually, she didn't mind at all, said it would let in some much needed fresh air. She was like that, you know.

CHILDE HASSAM: Oh Mary, what about the *ring*?

WHISTLING MARY: Oh, Mr. Hassam, the story about the *ring*!

CHILDE HASSAM: Yes, tell Miss Baily about the ring!

WHISTLING MARY: Alright, if you insist. Well, it all happened one day when all the artists decided to go out to the aunt's place for an afternoon swim.

CHILDE HASSAM: They were relatives of Miss Florence, who had a house down at Griswold Point.

WHISTLING MARY: Now, on this particular day, included in the bunch was the artist William Henry Howe.

CHILDE HASSAM: Who we all called *Uncle*.

BAILY: Was he your uncle?

CHILDE HASSAM: No, no, we just called him that.

WHISTLING MARY: Now, it just so happened that Mr. Howe, after some time swimming, had lost his ring in the surf, a ring he fancied quite a bit. Well, of course, everybody there joined in to look to see if they could help him find it – but to no avail. Now, what Mr. Howe didn't know is that one of the artists actually *did* find the ring but didn't fess up to it then and there and kept it a secret. Well, later on that evening, back here at the house, the group sat down for dinner. Now, of course, Mr. Howe, being *Uncle* and all, was *always* the one to carve at table.

CHILDE HASSAM: Always.

WHISTLING MARY: So, when the meal was brought in – which happened to be fish that night – salmon, I believe – he began slicing and serving portions to everyone there. Well, after a few moments or so, he heard a light clink against his knife. Of course, he assumed it was a bone or something, so began diggin' in there to remove whatever it was. Well, wouldn't you know, when he pulled out the knife and held it up, there on the very tip of it was his ring – the very one he'd lost earlier that day! Well, for a few moments, he just stared at it in disbelief while all the other artists tried their best to contain their giggles. Of course, the secret was soon let out as laughter poured out round and round the table – and in the kitchen as well! Oh, it was the funniest, I tell ya! The funniest!

(Childe Hassam and Whistling Mary laugh heartily.)