

BEWARE

My

**Brother**

FORBES

by JESSIE BURNHAM



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I remember vividly one Sunday while Forbes and I were studying and the rest of the family either resting or relaxing; a religious programme "BRINGING CHRIST TO THE NATION" was on the radio. The preacher was so enthusiastic that he shouted himself almost breathless. It was indeed disturbing to anyone studying. Forbes told me to switch off the radio.

I complied.

Mother a few minutes later queried about the sudden halt in the programme. Forbes replied quickly, "Jessie turned off the radio." Forthwith, I had to defend myself and state my case. The same attitude is still there. "I plan, others implement."

Mother was a religious woman with strict ideas on morals and proper conduct. She used to speak often about the importance of honesty and the worth of good character.

Often, especially as he grew older, I would catch mother watching Forbes with a worried eye. I knew she was concerned about him, about an apparent change generally. When he left for studies in England, her fears about the kind of man he was becoming deepened.

I couldn't see it at the time. Forbes and I were very close. As brother and sister, we shared many, many good times and confidences. I was not old enough to understand or appreciate what was happening in his life and character.

But I know now.

I have watched this brilliant brother use his brain to scheme, to plot to put friend against friend, neighbour against neighbour, and relative against relative. I have watched him use this one and that one, and then quickly discard them when they have served their purpose. *I have watched him, with his clever wit and charm, manipulate people like puppets on a string.*

All this I have seen. But up to now, I must repeat, I **HAVE BEEN SILENT**. After all, I told myself, he is my brother.

But I can be silent no longer.

For today, I fear for my country and my people should my BROTHER become PREMIER or PRIME MINISTER. It is from this fear, this concern, that I speak.

BEWARE, I say, "MY BROTHER, FORBES." His motto is, the personal ends of power justify ANY means used to achieve them. His bible is *The Prince* by Machiavelli. And we the people should he come to power will be only pawns in his endless game of self-advancement.

Make no mistake about it, the attraction of political life for Forbes is the attainment of the power and the glory. The number of times he has ignored the offer of a coalition supports this. And I know from personal experience what I am talking about.

It was not always so.

Forbes and I grew up in the family home at 4, Pike Street, Kitty. Our father was head-teacher at the Kitty Methodist School for 37 years as well as a member of the Village Council and lay reader in the Methodist Church for about 51 years.



Myself, Mother and Forbes

# *"I have watched him with his clever wit and charm, manipulate people like puppets on a string"*

Our home life centered around my mother, whom Forbes adored. It was frequently said, by old family friends, that Forbes began to change when mother passed away. But as I look back now, the signs of his selfishness and boastfulness now so familiar a part of his personality, were evident long before.

He was small for his age. His schoolmates at Central High School were so jealous of his ability, that they took to giving him daily whippings. Mother became concerned about his health and he changed to Queen's College.

I vividly remember one Sunday afternoon, when Forbes was shaving my father, I heard them both talking about what he would be when he grew up. He told daddy he had six goals:—

1. To win the Percival Exhibition.
2. To win the Guiana Scholarship.
3. To be Mayor of Georgetown.
4. To be Chief Justice of British Guiana.
5. To be the first Prime Minister of the West Indies Federation.
6. To be Prime Minister of British Guiana.

"Boy, you're mad or what?" asked my father. "Be sensible, start as a magistrate and work up to be Chief Justice."

"Magistrate?" retorted Forbes scornfully, "There're always exceptions and why can't I be one?"

This burning ambition, if channeled properly, could have made him one of our country's greatest Statesmen-leaders. It would have, had he coupled this ambition with a genuine concern for the welfare and needs of people, given him all he sought, in life. But along with ambition he developed a certain slickness, a sly glibness. He began even as a boy, to depend more and more on his skill with words to achieve his goals.

Today, he runs his Party like the way King Christopher once ran Haiti. While terror is no stranger to our country, it has never been used to suppress FREEDOM, the liberty of speech, worship and the press. Would these freedoms continue under my brother? It is my concern in this area . . . personal, individual freedom . . . that causes me to say to my people, to Guyana "BEWARE, MY BROTHER, FORBES. Watch carefully to whom you hand your GOVERNMENT."

By the time he left this country to pursue his legal studies, my father had retired. He had a pension of \$22.00 per month, and so it was necessary, since



Forbes at Queen's

Forbes was going abroad, for me, the youngest, to become the breadwinner.

I became a teacher at the Plaisance Methodist School, and later at the Bedford Methodist School. My salary was \$20.00 a month to start. Eventually, I earned \$120.00 a month, but this was much later. Each month, I would give all my earnings to Mother, keeping out \$10.00 for personal needs.

Every other month, the family would send \$120.00 to Forbes in England. "Help out now," Mother told me, "and when Forbes comes home, he'll make it up to you." It is perhaps, an indication of his basic indifference to others that my brother has never found occasion to "help out" or, for that matter to even express his thanks for the sacrifices all of us made to help him get his start. I don't regret assisting him. I'd do it again. He is, after all, my brother.

He was never very keen on my entering political life. When asked to assist me to come to a decision his answer was in half-anger, "You have to make that decision yourself." But I wanted a part in helping my country receive its independence, so I ignored his opposition.

The Monday week before the 1953

