

04. A Shooting Match

Wednesday, June 14, 1865

The morning of Wednesday, the 14th of June, 1865, dawned clear and bright. Yes, I repeat myself, but indeed the countryside was in the middle of what Mr. Jules Verne calls the “fine season.” I rose early and found myself in an excellent mood. I donned my uniform and packed my day bag, including in it my anatomy book and my medical journal.

A curious notion suddenly struck me. I went to the bureau and removed my revolver and its paraphernalia. I packed these items as well. I fancied I might make some use of the firearm at Folkestone Manor.

At eight o’clock, I set out for the manor. As I reached the corner of Barnhurst Lane, I turned into the postal office.

“Good morning, Mr. Fowler!”

“And good morning to you, Mrs. Goodman! Are you off to the manor already?”

“Oh, yes. But first I wanted to leave these letters with you for the post.”

“Very good. They will go today from the Folkestone West station by train.

“Then good day to you, sir. I shall see you again when I return to the village this afternoon.”

I proceeded down Barnhurst Lane, moving well to the side of the road when I heard the brisk clip-clop of a horse and wagon behind me.

Ah! It was Julia Prang, driving to Folkestone Manor in her pony cart. I waved, and she waved back.

When I turned into the manor’s drive, I lingered. I walked slowly under the beeches and again absorbed the loveliness of the bluebells.

I went to the entry at the west end of the manor, where Meg’s kitchen was located.

“Good morning, Meg! And hello again, Julia!”

“Hello, Miz Pat. As you can see, we’re hard at work here.”

“Yes, I see that. Julia is wearing a good deal of flour.”

“Indeed! She looks like a snowman an Arctic explorer might find. Today, we’re baking up sweet things along with the bread. And when you’re free, I’ll tell you about a new dish my young friend is preparing.”

“Excellent. I’ll return in a moment.”

I went to my day room to unpack. I put the revolver and accessories in a drawer in the bookcase, and laid out my journal and medical book upon the writing table. I then walked briskly back to the kitchen.

“Hello again.”

“Ah, seat yourself, Miz Patricia, and I’ll pour you some tea.”

“I must ask you, how is Sir Reginald?”

“Last night, he ate like a railway navvy. Cleaned two plates, he did. And he kept his hands off me bum—no, Julia, don’t ask about that! He seemed pretty well off.”

“Where’s Jack? I didn’t see him near the barn.

“Oh, he’s out about the estate. Up early, he was. Talking with the gamekeepers, the stable boy, the milkmaid, and the gardener. He’ll be in directly to attend to Sir Reginald.”

“So what is this new thing from Julia?”

“I’m makin’ it for dinner. Something from France called *boeuf à la bourguignonne*, or Burgundy beef. Julia tells me to say it ‘biff boor-geen-yon.’ Can’t say why they’d name it after someone named Biff, though.”

Julia spoke: “Oh, Mrs. Bates, that’s the French word for beef. It’s really just beef cooked in Burgundy wine, with onions and mushrooms. Well, we must also add lardons if the beef is too tough.”

“I must say, Julia, it sounds wonderful. Is it difficult to make?”

“No, Mrs. Goodman. Just like Lancashire hotpot. It goes in a crockery pot and we just set it in a firehole to cook. We needed to fetch a bottle of wine from the cellar. Another day, I’m hoping that Mrs. Bates will let me make *coq au vin*. It’s similar.”

“Young lady, I won’t show my ignorance of French. I’ll be assuming that the dish has nothing to do with Van’s cock or Van’s cocoa,” said Meg.

“No, ma’am. Just chicken in wine. There is a boy in the village named Van.”

“Best tend to the cooking and baking, child. You’re a little young to be thinking about a boy.”

“Meg, I have a favor. If it’s convenient for you and Julia, would she please drive into the village and return with six sheets of foolscap from the general store?”

“No problem, Miz Pat. We’ll soon enough have the goods ready for the oven, and Julia loves to drive her little rig.”

“Then, when Jack comes in, please ask him to visit me in my day room.”

I finished my tea and went to my room. I was gradually developing a plan for nursing Sir Reginald. It was more therapy than nursing, actually. I had some thoughts about varying the different pain medications I had brought with me, as well as planning for nutrition and sanitation.

There was a knock, and upon my acknowledgment, Jack entered.

“Good morning, Miz Patricia! You wanted to see me?”

“Yes, Jack. How do you do?”

"I'm better-most, thank you. The horses and milk cows are fine, the stable boy's shoveling manure, and the milkmaid's milking. They're casting each other big-eyed glances, too, ma'am. The gardener is working our plot of vegetables. No maids today, and that's Meg's lookout, anyway."

"And the gamekeepers?"

"All is well. They tell me the farmers, them that can afford guns, have been taking their share of pheasant and grouse, and they always make sure to bring back a bird or two for Sir Reg.

"They also tell me they had to direct Mr. Uriah Grimstead off the estate yesterday. The woods and fields, ya' see, are for huntin', not poetizin'. A man could get himself shot. Plus—as you know—Sir Reg likes his privacy."

"But what about the workers you have? And the maids?"

"Ah, he knows 'em and likes 'em. Even so, he don't like them to see him in his rolling chair. Now what can I do for you today?"

"You'll help him bathe, as usual?"

"Yes, you may not know that I've even installed a boiler at that end of the manor, so Meg don't spend the morning heating up hot water. And, I'll be flogging the earl to get him to work his legs on the stationary bicycle machine."

"Excellent. Now tell me: Can you help me with this plan? I'd like you to find two bales of hay and set them up about twenty-five yards from the French doors here in my room. When Julia returns with foolscap from the store, please paint a black ring of perhaps six inches diameter on each piece of paper."

"What for, Miz Pat?"

"Sir Reg and I are going to have a shooting match! They will be the targets."

"Har! Does he know that?"

"Not yet. I'll discuss it with him in the library this morning. I intend for us to shoot at eleven o'clock. Oh, my! Does Sir Reg still have his service revolver?"

"Does a man have his stones? Is the Pope Catholic, as those accursed Irish say? Of course! It's a Beaumont-Adams five-shot cap-and-ball revolver in .442 calibre. A bit costly, but that's what officers carried in the Crimea. He don't shoot it much, but I make sure it stays in perfect shape."

"Excellent. I have my Colt."

"*You* have a Colt?"

"Indeed."

"You've shot before?"

"Many times, Jack. I learned hunting and shooting from Lt. Goodman when we visited his parents' home."

"Ah! Nurse, you are a woman of many talents."

“Yes. I only appear to be a nurse. I am actually a spy for the King of Bohemia.”

“Har! Excellent! Very well, I’ll fetch the bales to the meadow outside your window here. I’ll set them up halfway between here and the ha-ha.”

“What’s a ha-ha?”

“Do you not know?”

“Why, no.”

“It’s the trench we have over yonder there, but you can’t see it. One side—the manor side—has a stone wall. Then the land drops off a bit. You can see neither the wall nor the trench, because that’s the way such things are planned.”

“But what it is for?”

“Keeps any cattle from comin’ too close to the manor, but it don’t mar the view of the meadows.”

“Jack, you are an educator. Now, you must go. Please tell Sir Reginald that I intend to call upon him in the library at half ten.”

“All right, missy. I’ll ready the revolver. And now I see your reasoning. You two will shoot from these here French doors, where it’s nobody’s business but your own.”

“Just so.”

A little later, I returned to the kitchen.

“Hello, Meg.”

“Hello, Patricia. Julia got your foolscap and I’ve given the sheets to Jack. You’ve got a fine plan there, I think.”

“I hope so Meg. Here is a supply of the tablets that Sir Reginald took yesterday. Please take two of these to him, and give him two more after dinner this afternoon. Then, I ask you to follow with two more after tea.”

“No problem, missy.”

“Do you have hot water?”

“Near always, Miz Patricia.”

“Good! Here is an herb mixture. Would you brew a pot of tea for Sir Reg, and take it to him? With two cups, please. I believe I’ll try it myself.”

“What is it?”

“Opium buds, and there’s some ginger, as well. The opium gently relieves pain and the ginger should reduce inflammation. Oh, and it will taste nice, as well. Despite the opium, I believe that Sir Reg will not be too intoxicated to shoot.”

“Ho! I might try it, too. Consider it done.”

At half ten, I knocked and entered the library.

“Good morning, Sir Reginald. How do you feel today?”

“Do come in, Nurse Goodman. I feel rather better, largely because of the tablets you have provided. Will you join me in a cup of tea?”

“Yes. Note that it is not our common East India Company tea. This is a special brew.”

“What’s in it?”

“Opium and ginger. I believe you’ll like it.”

“Very well. Now tell me, what regimen do you have in mind for me today?”

“Quite simple, sir. I believe you have bathed and exercised. At this point, you may share any observations about pain, appetite, etc. You will have an excellent dinner at one o’clock. In the early afternoon, I propose to come to your room. You will undergo a treatment called therapeutic massage. It is designed to improve your muscle tone and general a feeling of well-being. Later, you will have an excellent high tea, with a good appetite after a pipeful of *cannabis sativa*—marijuana, that is. The evening is yours to spend as you wish.”

“Very well. I report to you that I seem to have less pain. Yesterday, I enjoyed dinner and tea very much, and that was a surprise, both to me and Meg. I shall spend today much like yesterday. In the evening, I will read an English translation of Verne’s *Journey to the Center of the Earth*.”

“You know of his writing?”

“Indeed! I am quite enthusiastic about him.

“As am I! I’m reading that title myself right now.”

“Wonderful! What do you think of his speculations?”

“I am inclined to believe them. I think, for example, that one day we may exceed the telegraph code, and be able to *speak* to each other over wires.”

“I agree. And I should like to see such speech executed, without wires, through the air, although I cannot imagine how that would be done.”

“Yes, yes, Sir Reginald! Can you image a small device you hold in your hand, which would let you talk with, and perhaps even see, another person? And further, what if it could tell you the weather and play music, too?”

“Ah, Nurse Goodman, it all seems too much! But when I think of the cleverness of the English and Scots in science and mathematics, I believe all things are possible. Even the Irish and Welsh have given us inventions.”

"I agree. Now, if I may, I wish to bring two things to your attention. One item concerns Folkestone Manor; the other is a bit of recreation."

"I'm quite intrigued. Please go on."

"Regarding the first. I grant you that this is only my second day in your employ, but I observe this: your conservatory is much neglected. It communicates with both this library and your bed chamber, and should be a source of interest, comfort, and even solace to you. However, it looks like a neglected patch of weeds."

"And what do you propose?"

"Please instruct Jack Bates to have your staff clean the windows and to have the gardener revitalize the room with new plants. I maintain that your environment is important, to both your physical and mental health."

"I cannot access the room. It has steps and I'm in this damned wheelchair."

"We shall install ramps for your wheelchair."

"I would not enter the room."

"Yes, I believe you would, when you saw the beauty of the new plants and flowers. And you would have the pleasure of the room even in the cold of winter. Your alternative, it seems to me, is to stare at these library walls, or those of your bedroom. You have told me directly that you do not tour the grounds."

"And who, Mrs. Goodman, better knows what I need – you or me?"

"If I may be quite blunt, Sir Reginald, *I* do."

"My! That *is* quite blunt. Why do you say that?"

"Until I see your behavior change, I must consider what I told you when I interviewed for this position. In my opinion, your attitude sucks your life force, much as a weasel sucks eggs. Your attitude sucks, and that will damage your health."

"Do you believe that?"

"I have seen it, sir, in old soldiers and amputees. Those who want to heal have a better chance of healing. Those who want to die are headed for death."

"Then let it be as you wish. I yield the point. Restore the conservatory, if you think it wise. I will instruct Jack."

"Thank you, sir."

"Now, what on earth is your second item?"

"I challenge you to a competition."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Must I treat deafness as well as paralysis? I challenge you to a competition."

"I don't think you mean a footrace. What do you have in mind?"

"Pistols at twenty-five yards."

"What? Am I supposed to duel with you?"

"No, sir. I propose that at 11:00 AM today, we shoot pistols at targets."

"I refuse to go outside."

"I anticipated that. We will shoot from the French doors in my day room."

"We have no targets."

"Nonsense. Jack has already set them up."

"I cannot find my revolver."

"Please, Sir Reginald, do not be obstinate. Jack keeps it in perfect order and has it ready."

"Damn Jack!"

"I believe you said, 'Thank Jack.'"

"Then consider this: I haven't shot in ten years."

"Neither have I."

"You don't have a revolver."

"Yes I do."

"Excuse me, nurse, but would it be pointless to object further?"

"With respect, Sir Reginald, it would, indeed, be pointless."

"I must say, Mrs. Goodman, you are a woman vastly different from any woman I have ever met before."

"I will take that as a compliment. Now, sir, please finish your tea and meet me in my room at eleven o'clock."

And with that, I left. I kept my back to Sir Reginald so that he might not see the very broad smile crossing my face.

At 11:00 AM precisely, Sir Reginald entered my room. Jack was there with Sir Reg's pistol and all accessories.

"Ah, Jack! My *loyal* colour sergeant."

"More loyal to your overall health than to your immediate objections, m'Lord."

“Ho! ‘m’Lord’ indeed!” I am but a spear carrier in Mrs. Goodman’s opera.”

“That would seem to be the case, Sir Reg. Now, ye both, I am the rangemaster here today. We’ll have no staff or cattle getting shot. Please follow my instructions perfectly. Note well that the doors are open and the targets are well in view. The weapons are on the table between you. Each of you is to let off five rounds on my command. Mrs. Goodman, you have the left target, and Sir Reginald, you have the right. Do you understand?”

We both answered, “Yes, colour sergeant.”

“Sergeant, if I may suggest, you might put some of this cotton wool in your ears. While I’m sure the sounds of battle are much louder, the reports in this room will be quite loud.”

“Very well, Miz Patricia. Now, make yourselves ready.”

We picked up our pistols.

“On my call, fire. Fire!”

I carefully cocked the hammer and fired. Hmmp! I could see no damage to the target. My next shot was better, as were the final three.

Simultaneously, Sir Reginald was firing his rounds. His pistol was known as a double-action revolver, so he merely pulled the trigger to fire. Mine was called a single-action revolver and required cocking every time.

When we were finished, Jack said, “Cease fire.” We placed our pistols on the table.

“Now I shall fetch the targets, and install new ones.”

“Sir Reginald, you have a larger calibre and no benefit of single-action shooting. I think I shot better.”

“Yes, Nurse, but I am a trained soldier, and have fired more rounds than I can count.”

Jack returned with the targets.

“See here. Mrs. Goodman put only four shots on the paper—three in the white and one in the bull’s eye. Sir Reginald placed all five shots on the paper, none of them in the bull’s eye.”

“Nurse, if your pistol has so many advantages, you might have placed all five shots on the target.”

“Sir Reginald, if your training has so many advantages, you might have put at least one shot in the bull’s eye.”

“Ye are both children! Now, I will reload the pistols and we will shoot again.”

And so we did. Jack again retrieved the targets. This session was considerably better. I put all my shots on the paper—and mind you, the paper was merely 8 1/2 x 13 1/2 inches in size. I had two in the bull’s eye. Sir Reginald had three in the bull’s eye.”

“Much better, my young shooters. Now, I remind you to pay close attention to yer grip on the pistol. And, as always, do not pull the trigger, but squeeze it.”

"Jack, my friend, I might remind you that Balaclava Haro Prii, there were 25,000 damned Russians coming up the hill. We did not worry about 'squeezing' the trigger."

"Yes, Major, but you now have a more formidable opponent in Nurse Goodman, and must shoot more carefully. Now, I will make the pistols ready for our third session."

After Jack loaded the weapons, we fired again on his command. I was most careful about following his instructions. I suspected Sir Reginald was, too. As before, we finished, laid our pistols down, and Jack went to the targets.

"Well, after this, I *might* let ye join The Buffs. Nurse, you have put all five on the paper, four of them in the bull's eye. Sir Reginald, you have placed all five shots in the bull's eye. I declare Major Pleydell to be today's winner."

Sir Reg grinned broadly. "Ho! I will be gracious in victory. Mrs. Goodman, are you free to join me for dinner?"

"Why, thank you, Major Pleydell. I work for a mean, old earl, but I think he will let me attend."

"Excellent. Jack, if you will, please ask Meg to set two places in the dining room. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll return to the library." With that, Sir Reginald wheeled himself from the room.

"Well, Jack, what do you make of all this?"

"It's better-most. I say, I haven't seen Sir Reg work so hard at anything in a long time. And he seemed to enjoy himself a good deal. Further, he hasn't wanted to dine with anybody in recent memory. Meg will be very surprised."

"Good. I had fun, and I believe you did, too. Oh, there is one other thing."

"And what would that be, missy?"

"I have exhorted Sir Reginald to restore the conservatory. He should, if he keeps his word, order you to have the glass cleaned. In addition, the gardener should be tasked to install new plants of all kinds. Oh, and are you a bit of a carpenter?"

"Of course! I am the estate's cartwright and wheelwright. I mend fences and fix barn doors. I am also, in fact, a spy for the King of Bohemia."

"Ha! You are outrageous! My point is, I should like you to convert the steps from Sir Reg's bedchamber to the conservatory and those from the library into ramps suitable for a wheelchair."

"Yes, I grasp the concept. It will not be a problem."

"Do you see the method in my madness?"

"I do indeed. If you can't get Sir Reg to tour the grounds, you will at least help him view nature in our large glass room."

"Yes. I shall reverse what Francis Bacon said in *On Boldness* in 1625: "If Mahomet will not come to the Hill..."

"The Hill will go to the Mahomet."

“Exactly. The plants will be soothing and they will make the air better. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I must make some notes and prepare for the afternoon. Thank you again for making our shooting match a success!”

Jack left, and I settled in to record this morning’s events. I also spent some time reading about the musculature surrounding the spine.

I entered the dining room at precisely one o’clock.

A few seconds later, Sir Reginald joined me.

“Ah, you are here!”

“Yes, it is my pleasure to join you.”

“You shot well today.”

“And you as well.”

“Where did you learn?”

“Lt. Goodman taught me shooting and hunting when we visited his family’s estate.”

“You must hunt here sometime.”

“I would, if you accompanied me.”

“That is quite impossible. You can go with Jack.”

At this point, Meg entered with a cart. “Good afternoon, Sir Reg. Good afternoon, Miz Patricia. Here’s the victuals.”

“Thank you, Meg. Please set them here on the table and I will serve.”

“There’s plenty here, but you be ringing for me if you want more.”

Sir Reginald offered me a dish of burgundy beef.

“Here you are, Mrs. Goodman. Please help yourself to the other items.”

I found myself to be extraordinarily hungry after the morning’s shooting match. I took the shallow bowl and added bread and butter to the side plate. I was already looking ahead to having some of the sliced fruit.

I said, “I thought Jack Bates was a very fine master of our shooting range.”

“Yes, I agree. He remains a colour sergeant to this day. Also, I should like to shoot pistols with you again someday soon.”

“And I as well. Tell me, Sir Reg, how do you feel?”

“Rather well, thank you. I attribute this to the tablets that you’ve given Meg to dispense, and to the unusual tea we shared this morning.”

“That’s excellent. Reduction of pain and inflammation is an important starting point.”

“Well, I still remain clueless as to your overall method, but I cannot dispute the short-term results.”

“That is well, sir. This afternoon, we will try an exercise which is useful, I think, but not guaranteed to produce results.”

“You are referring to ‘therapeutic massage’?”

“Indeed. I have found it to be satisfying to the patient, but there are no studies to confirm its efficacy.”

“Then why will you do it?”

“I believe it will make you feel better and that it will relieve tension.”

“I? Do I need relief from tension?”

“Yes, sir. I believe so. I think, Sir Reginald, that you have lived with the condition of tension so long that you now take it for granted. In addition, such tension was in evidence yesterday when I examined your muscles.”

“Very well, Nurse Goodman. Do what you will.”

“Thank you, sir. I propose that I give you a massage at half two.”

“Very well. I will be in my chamber. Buck naked, I suppose?”

“Yes, sir. That will help. I intend to use a special lotion, and your clothing would be a hindrance.”

“Am I to expect such treatment in the future?”

“Yes, you are, unless it is thoroughly objectionable to you. However, I think you will feel better. And such good feeling may improve your attitude.”

“You know, nurse, this would rather excite me, if I were not so... incapable.”

“Sir Reginald, my first priority is to help you to walk. After that, let us consider your excitement simply as a future problem to be solved.”

At this point, I had consumed my meal. I thanked Sir Reginald, took my leave him, and repaired to my day room. My intention was to prepare a lotion for his massage.

It took me a very short time to make up the massage lotion. I combined a good oil, cetostearyl alcohol, and rosewater to make an emulsion. To this I added a small amount of camphor.

To ease my work, I removed my uniform and dressed in a laboratory coat. Oh, what joy to be in only my chemise and pantalettes! This allowed my breasts to “blow freely in the wind,” as my Michael had always joked. Indeed, it would take a mighty wind for these heavy breasts to blow freely.

After that, I spent a few moments reviewing the muscle systems of the back and legs in Gray’s anatomy book.

At 2:30 PM precisely, I knocked at the door of Sir Reginald’s chamber and entered. He was lying face down on his bed, beneath a sheet.

“Hello, handsome, if that does not sound too unprofessional.”

“You are mistaken, Nurse. You should say, ‘Hello, cripple.’”

“Ah, you might suppress your terrible attitude for a half hour or so.”

“All... right. I must say, you have the look of a doctor, except no doctor has a bosom like yours.”

“That is understandable, Sir Reg, since all doctors are men. I will attempt to avoid dragging my breasts over your naked backside.”

“If I could feel the dragging, I wouldn’t object. And since I cannot feel their touch, it is of no matter. May I ask your husband’s view on the matter?”

“If I may be blunt, sir, although there was far more to our marriage than romantic cavorting, he was intensely preoccupied with my body, my breasts in particular.”

“I understand. It is that way with Jack and Meg.”

“Yes. I have the impression that there’s no couple in Kent more randy than they.”

I set out my bottle of lotion and removed the sheet from Sir Reginald. Again, I marveled at his scarred yet otherwise beautiful body.

I set to work, beginning with his calves and feet. I applied the lotion, which was an aid in effecting a smooth motion of my hands and a deep, penetrating massage of his muscles.

“What’s in that lotion? It smells like something from a bordello in Istanbul.”

“You would certainly know more about that than I. This is more costly than a toss with an Istanbul tart. You are smelling rosewater and camphor. The base is an oil from the Arabian country of Olay.”

“I must tell you that I cannot feel a thing.”

“That is to be expected. However, it’s clear that your muscles are experiencing some relief. There are hard knots that seem to be relaxing.”

“The last time I had such an ointment on me, the effect was quite the opposite.”

“Give it time, Sir Reginald. For the present, you must become fit for walking. Also, you will feel more as I move up your body.”

And so, I proceeded to massage Sir Reg’s thighs. The effect was similar to that produced in the calves and feet. I encountered knots of muscles, which in a short time seemed to relax. Rather than ask him to roll over, I massaged the front of his thighs merely by approaching them from the sides.

When I advanced to his buttocks, I had a chance to linger. For the second day in a row, I marveled. This was a beautiful man!

I once counseled my Michael that a man’s beautiful bum was a gift from heaven. Since God had given women the miraculous function of bearing children, His gifts to men were a handsome face, a nice penis, and tight ‘buns,’ as we sometimes call them. As a result, man was somewhat compensated and women were given three wonderful things to kiss.

But to work. I gave Sir Reg’s backside abundant attention. I also gave myself credit for restraint, as I didn’t fondle his bollocks.

“Now, Sir Reginald, I’ll work with the muscles that you use every day. You should be able to feel my touch.”

I proceeded to his neck (the trapezius muscles and the rhomboids) and shoulders (the deltoids). Here I found many knots, and gradually brought greater and greater pressure to bear upon them. The knots began to loosen.

“That feels very good, Nurse Goodman.”

“Excellent. Let us see if we can extend the effect.”

I turned my attention to Sir Reg’s upper, middle, and lower back, whose main constituent was the latissimus dorsi muscles. The results were the same—a general loosening of tight muscles.

After that I applied two thumbs to the muscles bordering his spinal column, working my way from his neck to the scarred region at the base. He groaned with pleasure at this.

I placed the heel of my hand on his spine in the region of the cervical vertebrae and pressed firmly down. There was an audible “pop.”

“My lord, nurse! Was that a bone breaking?”

“Not at all, sir. How to you feel?”

“Better, actually. It is as though feelings are flowing better up and down my spine.”

“I cannot explain the phenomenon, but that is what other patients have told me. I’ll do a little more. I’m avoiding your lower back, as we know that area to be the source of your pain.”

I produced two more excellent pops, and each time Sir Reginald let out a pleasant moan. I then finished the massage by rubbing his upper arms, forearms, and hands.

“Further, Sir Reg, you would be surprised at how much tension we carry in our forearms and hands.”

“Yes, I am surprised. I can only tell you that those parts feel much better, although they seem rather heavy and tired.”

I put away my lotion and said, “There. That concludes our session. My advice is to rest a bit. Wait a while before moving around. I then recommend drinking lots of liquid. Perhaps water or fruit juice. You may still have whiskey or tea, but you’ll want more fluid than those beverages provide.”

“Water? Fruit juice? Is there a reason for that?”

“My answer is based on experience, rather than good medical science. In common words, you might say that I “moved a lot of stuff around” in your muscles.”

“Very well. Will you be doing this again? If this is nursing, I’ll take more of it.”

“Yes, sir. In two days, if you wish. Now, if I may, I will leave you to attend to other things. As I say, please rest a while.”

He was very quiet—ready for a nap, I believed. I left the room.

I spent a bit of time recording events in my journal. Having done so, I put on my uniform and left to visit Meg in her kitchen.

“Hello once again, Meg.”

“And hello to you, Nurse Patricia! How has your day gone?”

“For just two days into my work, I’ve made tremendous progress. And, I must say, I felt rather fine giving a massage in my laboratory coat, rather than this uniform.”

“Sort of frees up your big birds, right? So Sir Reg got his rubdown?”

“Yes. Therapeutic massage, we call it. I left him quite relaxed, and I hope he will nap for a while.”

“Much like my Jack, after a round of the old you-know-what.”

“Yes, a little. Except for the you-know-what part.”

“Still, it must be nice to fondle a man so much.”

“Professionally speaking, it’s just part of the job. Personally, however, I must tell you that I love it. Now, I’ll leave for the village. I have an errand or two.”

We parted, and I commenced the short walk into Hawkinge.

When I reached the Canterbury Road, I dropped in to the postal office.

“Hello, Mr. Fowler. Is there any mail for me?”

"Greetings, Mrs. Goodman. Yes, indeed. Wait one moment. Ah! Here are the biscuits your mother promised you."

"They are Eccles cakes. You knew about them?"

There was a twinkle in his eye. "I can neither confirm nor deny that. Perhaps it was a lucky guess."

"How so?"

"Yesterday, you said that a letter was from your mother. It came from Kew. Today's package comes from Kew, and if I give it a shake, it sounds like biscuits striking the side of a metal canister."

"Well, let us see." I tore the package open, removed the tin, and opened it. "Yes, Mr. Fowler. I can confirm to you that these are Eccles cakes, one of my favorites. Would you care for one?"

"Yes, indeed." He took one and bit into it. "Very good!"

Mr. Fowler went on. "Nor can I confirm or deny that Mr. Grimstead just sent a telegram. He is always quite nervous, you know, but today seemed more agitated than ever."

"What of the telegram?"

"It was quite obscure. Maybe you can help me with it. He wrote 'The nightingale flies to the injured warhorse.' Now what do you make of that?"

I marveled at hearing such a terrible poetic allusion, especially one that obviously referred to me. To whom could Mr. Grimstead be writing? I kept my own counsel on this.

"You know, it don't even rhyme."

"Well, Mr. Fowler, perhaps it is a bit of blank verse, as they call it, favored by Tennyson and Robert Browning. It mentions a bird and a horse, rather rural images. It is possible, however, that it is a code, and that Mr. Grimstead is a spy for some foreign nation."

"Har! If so, miz, spyin' has sunk to a new low standard."

A man entered the postal office. He was a short fellow, wearing a plaid suit but no hat. He had dark hair with graying sides, parted in the center and held in place by a generous helping of macassar oil. His moustaches were as thin as Mr. Fowler's were thick. I estimated his age to be fifty years.

"Ah, Constable! Welcome! Come meet Sir Reg's nurse."

"Pleased to meet you, Mrs. Goodman. I am Daniel Dover, keeper of law and order here in Hawkinge."

"And, as you already know, Constable, I am newly arrived in Hawkinge. I'm please to meet you. Are you quite busy with your duties?"

"Not at all. There's very little crime in the village and countryside, and I wish to keep it that way. If there are any lawbreakers, it would be young boys, with their pranks and petty thefts."

“Do you throw them in jail?”

“Oh, no. With them, I am judge, jury, and executioner. I take a switch to their backsides, and then let them go. Then I tell their parents, so they will really—excuse me ma’am—catch *hell*.”

“You are exceedingly sensible, Constable. Tell me, will you have an Eccles cake?”

“Don’t mind if I do. Thank you. Now, my rounds are complete and I must return to the village hall.”

“If you don’t mind, I’d like to walk with you.”

“It would be a pleasure, Mrs. Goodman.”

With that, we bade farewell to Mr. Fowler. We crossed the Canterbury Road and entered Mill Lane. Consequently, our walk took us past The Black Horse. A tall, dark, and handsome man of about thirty years was in the doorway, polishing a mug with a towel.

“Hello, Nick!”

“Hello, Constable. I’m Ned. I’m helping me brother out today.”

“Ho! A common mistake! Right! Ned, I’ll be visiting here a little later for a pint.”

We made our way down Mill Lane, approaching the back end of the village hall, which actually fronted School Street.

“So, Constable Dover, you said there’s little crime in Hawkinge?”

“That is the fact, miz. Hardly any. There’s an upsurge of rowdiness in the pubs when the hoppers come in from London for the harvest. And we have a hunting accident about every five years—usually some out-of-towner who gets himself shot.”

“Are there others in your employ?”

“No, none. I am the law in Hawkinge, it seems.

“How long have you been constable in Hawkinge?”

“Near twenty years now. I was born in Hawkinge and went to London as a young man. Worked for Robert Peel on the Metropolitan Police Force, I did.

“Oh, you were a bobby!”

“Indeed, so called by them that liked us. And we were known as ‘Peelers’ by them what didn’t. No matter. I have always followed one of Mr. Peel’s main rules: ‘The basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder.’ And I do.”

We had arrived at the village hall, and walked around the building to the front.

“You must come in sometime, Mrs. Goodman. You can see my gaol, or ‘jail,’ as our American cousins call it. It has one cell.”

"I hope not to visit in an official capacity."

"Ho! I, too, should hope not. Oh, tell me, please. How is Sir Reginald Pleydell?"

"His condition is relatively good. He seems to be well taken care of by Jack and Meg Bates, and I believe that even in my first two days of service, I have done him some good."

"Excellent. If I may say so, the entire village and countryside have missed him. We commoners like our nobility, and he's a war hero, too."

"Well, sir, perhaps one day he will eagerly open his doors to the population. It only requires that his condition improve."

"Is that possible? We know he is paralyzed."

"All things are possible. I am here, in part, to revive his hope."

With that, I left Constable Dover and walked to my rooms. I had a little time before tea, so I changed into a day dress and wrote in my personal journal. I also had a glass of port, as I was not deeply motivated to share an ale with Mrs. Bourne.

At five, I went down to tea. It was pleasant and unremarkable. I made "small talk" with Mrs. Bourne and Frank, and not with Mr. Grimstead, as I found him a bit depressing. I was wondering who the recipient of his telegrams might be, but thought it prudent not to ask.

Our supper was simple country fare, and rather more than I expected for high tea: faggots, boiled potatoes, and pease porridge. Very hearty, or, as Mr. Grimstead might (and actually did) say, "Very hearty, to be sure."

After tea, I ate another Eccles cake. I then strolled to the park with my copy of Jules Verne. It was only my second day in Hawkinge, but this trip to the park was becoming a welcome habit. I was not interrupted by the precocious young Julia, and so enjoyed an extended period of reading. Feeling quite pleasant, I returned to my rooms.

As the evening dawned, if it is possible for an evening to "dawn," I found myself quite fatigued from the labors of the day. I changed into my kimono and read for pleasure just a little more. But before it was eight o'clock, I found myself nodding off. I removed my clothing, doused the lamp, and enjoyed a well-earned sound sleep.