

05. I Meet an Unusual Young Man

As I reflected upon it, I saw that my days in Kent were filled with fascinating moments. I began to entertain the notion that my life was entering a very fulfilling phase.

I have already written about my very exciting Tuesday and Wednesday. There had been a promising start in treating my patient. I had made remarkable good and immediate progress with Sir Reginald. Of course, his case was not without challenges, but I viewed the situation as far from hopeless. Also, I admit I was drawn by Sir Reg's good looks, and his saucy, if negative, wit.

While Sir Reginald's well-being was, of course, my principal focus, I also was getting a marvelous orientation to the people of the village of Hawking, learning about some of their personalities and habits. I was well aware generally that every person has a fascinating story, but I was surprised that this maxim held true even in a sleepy village in the south of England.

Thursday, June 15, 1865

I awoke in an optimistic and enthusiastic state of mind. I could not precisely account for my positive feelings, and to be realistic, I knew that I must anticipate some days being quite routine, and even some that would be distinctly negative.

I groomed and dressed. I packed two books and my Eccles cakes in my carrying bag.

I disdained to break my fast at Betty Bourne's table, although I was quite confident of a good meal. I knew I could expect dried bread in hot milk and possibly leftover cabbage or potatoes. And I understood from Mrs. Bourne that one might frequently expect kippers or kedgerree, the haddock dish from India.

Once again, it was quite an easy walk to Folkestone Manor at an early hour. My first stop was at the postal office. I had no letters to mail, but I found it pleasant to visit for a moment with Sam Fowler.

"Good morning, Mr. Fowler."

"Why, good morning, Mrs. Goodman. Might I mail something for you today?"

"Today I have no letters. I wanted to enjoy a moment of your company. You seem to be ever a cheery man."

"Well, I must say, I'm not as grumpy as our blacksmith, as formal as Dr. Prang, or as strange as that young poet. Oh, and please, do call me Sam."

"And you must call me Patricia, of course."

"Isn't that rather informal for a fine professional nurse?"

"From what I gather, Hawkinge is incredibly informal. And also, I find 'Mrs.' to be an honorific that makes me feel a bit matronly. By contrast, using my Christian name helps me to feel a bit younger than I am."

"Well said! Now, I'll ask a favor. Will you take this package and letter to Meg Bates at the manor? They've come all the way from India."

"Of course. I'll be happy to do so."

I said goodbye and began the short stroll to the manor. I marveled at the blue sky, the greenery, and the flowers. How different this was from foggy and smoke-filled London!

As I approached the manor house, I was greeted by a nice surprise. I saw that there were workers cleaning the glass outside the conservatory.

I went directly to the kitchen. Of course Meg was there. It would seem impossible to find her anywhere else but in her kitchen.

“Good morning, Meg! How are you?”

“I’m better-most, Patricia. I got my share of exercise last night, thanks to Jack. And I’m sure you’ll agree that exercise contributes to health.”

“Did you use Indian clubs or a medicine ball to exercise?”

“Well, missy, there was a club and a couple of balls involved. We both broke out in a sweat and we groaned a lot! Ah, me! There’s nothing like a long ride after a good day’s work.”

“Oh, my! I’m sure Jack is limping around the grounds today. Now tell me, did I indeed see men cleaning the conservatory windows?”

“Oh yes, both inside and outside. When you give Jack a task, he don’t let any grass grow under his feet, as the saying goes. The gardeners will be removing dead plants and putting in new ones in a day or two. And Jack will soon have those wheelchair ramps built.”

“This is marvelous.”

“And there’s more. When I served Sir Reg high tea yesterday, Jack and I prevailed upon him to authorize repairs to the roof, too. I might add, Patricia, that I made several ‘compelling arguments,’ as them barristers in London would say. And he relented. Since you arrived, we’re determined to fix some things about the place that Sir Reginald has neglected.”

“Oh, Meg, this is too good! And this is only my third day! My thanks to you and Jack. I maintain that all this will improve Sir Reginald’s attitude, and as a bonus, the image he has with the villagers. Should he walk again, I can see him proudly hosting a country event for the farmers and shopkeepers.”

“On that, Nurse Goodman, we are lined up in a row, you and me. Feed that man, get him healthy, and give him a fine place to live in. And, of course, he should have a wife to give him comfort through the nights. Now, if you will, sit down and have some tea.”

“Thank you. I will. Oh, here! You’ll want to see these right away. A letter and a parcel from India.”

“Holy hops from Herefordshire, Miz Pat! That would be from my boys.” Meg tore open the letter and read.
“Goodness! They’ve been in a war!”

“Oh, no! Are they all right?”

“Yes, all of them. Young Charlie, who’s doing the writing, calls it ‘a walk in the park.’ They speak of it as the Bhutan War, and as you might imagine, it was with Bhutan, wherever that is. The enemy soldiers attacked with matchlock guns, and they were wearing chain mail. Ho! Why, of course they were no match for the modern

British army! Anyway, the fort has fallen and the local strongman has given up. They are about to sign a treaty.”

“Oh, I’m so glad of that!”

“Well, it’s a lovely note, indeed, and otherwise all is well. And look at this: a package of garam masala!”

“What’s that?”

“Why, it’s a blend of about ten spices from the Punjab. I can tell you exactly what’s in it: black peppercorns, white peppercorns, black cumin seeds, white cumin seeds, black cardamom, brown cardamom, green cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, star anise, malabar leaves, mace blades, and coriander seeds.”

“Meg, you amaze me. Where did you learn that?”

“Years of cookin’, dearie, and bein’ married to a man who’s been in the eastern campaigns. So, dinner will be chicken tikka masala. I’ll need to kill a chicken.”

“Oh, yes. I know the dish. My mother’s cook is Irish and cannot, or will not, make it.”

“Now that’s a shame. She must be quite a silly girl. The Irish rely too much on the potato. Well, you hang on until dinner, dearie, and you’ll be pleased.

“I look forward to it.”

“Take my word, Miz Patricia, someday chicken tikka masala will be a British national dish, along with the Sunday joint, of course. Would you like a preview of how to make it?”

“Why yes, of course. I hope someday to have a husband and do some cooking of my own. At the least, I must understand what our cook will do.”

“Well, roasted chicken chunks are called ‘tikka’ and masala is a spicy sauce. It comes out as chicken in a creamy and very orange-colored sauce. My sons tell me that the chicken should first be grilled in a clay oven called a *tandoor*—also called a *bhatti*—but this is modern England, so I’ll grill up the chicken chunks over the fire while making the sauce, and then cook the dish in a crockery pot on my Castrol stove.

“Now that sauce is nothing more than the garam masala, which we have here, mixed with lemon juice, yogurt, and maybe some heavy cream. Chopped tomatoes make it orange. Fresh tomatoes won’t be available for a month or two, but I have some preserved from last year.

“When you see that the sauce is right, put it in a clay pot and mix in the grilled chicken. Then chuck the pot into the firehole. When it’s hot and steamy, like my Jack, you’re done.”

“Oh, Meg, you make it sound so simple! And, by the way, here’s a tin of Eccles cakes from my mother. I’ve had three, and I hope you and Jack will help me finish them.”

“Excellent! I’ll even lay out a couple for Sir Reginald. Won’t that be rich? Your mother making cakes for the Earl of Radnor!”

“Meg, you are truly extraordinary about food.”

“Well, if you want love to grow, tend to a man’s heart, a man’s stomach, and a man’s loins. Actually, Miz Pat, if you tend to the loins and the stomach, the heart will follow.”

I finished my tea and excused myself. I stopped in my day room just long enough to collect two medical instruments. The time was approaching nine o’clock. I went to the library and knocked. Sir Reginald was in.

“Good morning, Nurse Goodman.”

“Good morning, Sir Reginald. How are you feeling today?”

“Very well, thanks. I seem to be eating better. My pain is by no means gone, but I thank you for managing it more effectively.”

“I notice that workmen are in the conservatory.”

“Yes, so they are. It appears to me that you have exerted an extraordinary influence on the household in just two days of service.”

“Yes, I suppose I have. Please pardon my presumption, but I believe that you will be better off because of the changes.”

“Tell me, did you so dominate the affairs of your husband when he was alive?”

“Indeed not. Nor do I do so with you. If I may say so, I only appeal to your intelligence and common sense. I also recognize that Jack and Meg Bates have an enormous love for you, and I make the most of it.”

“Very well. Tell me, what oddities do you have in store for me today?”

“Why none, Sir Reg. On many days, you will find me simply attempting to maintain your diet, address your pain, and improve your muscle tone. In addition, I continually read medical literature that may pertain to your recovery.”

“Well, of course I thank you for all that. Also, I might mention that you are quite attractive today, despite the plainness of your nurse’s uniform.”

“And you, too, sir, are quite attractive today. Now, if you do not object, I will do two things to determine what we call your vital signs. This is a thermometer for measuring your body temperature, and this is a stethoscope for listening to your heart. Please open your mouth for the first and undo a button on your shirt front for the second.”

He did so. I inserted the thermometer. While it was in his mouth, I listened to his heart. I removed the thermometer and “read” the temperature.

“Very good. You have no fever, and your heart seems quite sound.”

“Well, I am grateful for both.”

“I propose that we have a shooting match, but postpone it—and a massage—until tomorrow. Besides, I’m informed by Mrs. Bates that you may expect a fine and unusual dinner today.”

“Excellent proposal about the shooting. I look forward to beating your pants off again, if you’ll pardon the expression. A massage tomorrow will be welcome. And lastly, if dinner will be special, I’ll ask you to join me.”

“Thank you, I will. Now, if I may, I’d like to introduce another subject.”

“Try me, Nurse.”

“I will mention exercise.”

“You are astounding! Are you blind? I am in a wheelchair, and that rather precludes exercise.”

“No, it doesn’t. First, I note from the massage I gave you that your upper body development is good. This comes principally, I’m sure, from your driving your wheelchair the few dozen feet from your bedroom to this library, and from merely lifting yourself out of bed via an overhead pull. But it could improve, and you would benefit from exercising with dumbbells.”

“Please go on.”

“You are a trifle flabby and have a bit of a paunch. No, please don’t object! I surmise that it comes from your extensive reliance on Old Bushmill’s Irish Whiskey.”

“Is there more, may I ask? After all, I’m only a flabby earl with thin arms.”

“I further observe that even if you cannot walk, you could do a great deal more in your chair. That includes touring the very lovely grounds of Folkestone Manor.”

“Absolutely not! I will not subject myself to the peering eyes of farmhands, milkmaids, local hunters, or strangers.”

“Might I point out that everyone in the village is well aware that you cannot walk? They are hardly negative. In fact, after two days in Hawkinge, I get a distinct impression that they appreciate you, the employment you give several of them, and for that matter, the baked goods that Julia Prang takes back to the village.”

“That doesn’t change things.”

“You know what, Sir Reg? I’ll bet you one pound and my new frock that you cannot drive that chair down the main hall of the manor. If we race, I’ll beat you by a mile.”

“Dear Mrs. Goodman, don’t make bets you can’t afford to lose. I’ll beat *you* by a mile. The hallway is only 200 feet in length.”

“192 feet, precisely, from this door to Meg’s kitchen. Let’s do it now.”

With that, Sir Reg went to the library door and opened it. He easily wheeled himself to the hallway. I followed.

“Now, sir. I caution you that I do not wear the “bloomers” popularized by Amelia Bloomer in America. As you can see, I wear a dress, with pantalettes beneath, and you will see part of my legs. This is rather immodest, by current standards.”

“Trust me, young lady. I have seen legs before.”

With that, I hiked up my skirts. I counted, "On your mark, get set, go!"

I couldn't believe it! The words were scarcely out of my mouth, and it seemed as if Sir Reginald was twenty feet ahead of me.

I ran as fast as I could in my high-button shoes, damn them. I spent a good deal of my time wondering if I would fall. In any event, I report that such shoes are most inconvenient for running. Next time, I vowed, I would run barefoot.

I ran, and yet Sir Reg reached the door of Meg's kitchen well before I did.

Meg came to the doorway. "So what's this all about?"

"Why, Meg. Mrs. Goodman and I have just had a little foot race."

"Ho! And you came in first?"

"Indeed. I think she thought I didn't have a leg to stand on."

Out of breath, I said, "Very well. I concede. Would you like the emerald green or the sapphire blue dress?"

"Neither. But I'll take that one pound."

"Well, actually, I didn't bring any money with me."

"Then I'll take a kiss!"

"Why, Sir Reginald, that would be very unprofessional. However, I am no welsher, and here it is." I gave Sir Reg a kiss on the cheek. Actually, I was a bit slow in pulling away.

"Sorry that I can't comment on your legs, but I was concentrating on staying ahead of you."

At this point, Meg said, "Dresses? Kisses? Legs? Oh, my! I'm going back to my kitchen."

"Mr. Pleydell, I assure you that in the future, I will run barefoot."

"You can ride a velocipede if you like. I'll still beat you. And best you get some of those, what were they? Oh, yes, bloomers."

"Bloomers. You just wait. Now if you'll excuse me, I must adjourn to my day room and do some writing pertaining to your treatment."

Sir Reginald wheeled himself down the hallway, laughing too loudly and too frequently, I thought. Actually, I was pleased with the race. I hadn't thought that Sir Reg would "take the bait."

The regimen in my office was simple and pleasant. I updated my medical journal and read a brief medical article about chronic spinal inflammatory conditions. Then I wrote letters to Dr. Wong Kei, the herbalist, and Mr. Rexford Aull, the apothecary, in London. My purpose was to report on the efficacy of the various medications I was giving to Sir Reg.

In addition, I mentioned to Dr. Wong that I sought his help in obtaining ten pounds of Chinese rice. I was confident that he would manage this small task with no great inconvenience to himself. I enclosed a £5 note to cover the expense.

The race had inspired me, and suggested a requirement for additional medical devices from Mr. Bunsen, the purveyor of such equipment.

Thursday, June 15, 1865

Arthur Bunsen, Medical Equipment
№ 11 Addington Street
Lambeth, London

My Dear Mr. Bunsen,

It is my fondest hope that this letter finds you in the best of health.

I seek the several items from you, viz.:

- 3 pairs of dumbbells, 5 pounds, 10 pounds, and 15 pounds avoirdupois
- 1 set of leg braces for a male, age 35, of approximately 6 feet in height, to support the upper legs and lower legs
- 3 wheelchairs. The first may be quite standard. I will have it modified to be a “lifter.” The other two must be a bit different from the ordinary article.
 - They must have leather seats and backs.
 - They must employ your largest available wheels.
 - If possible, the wheels must have pneumatic tires (such as those created by Robert William Thomson). If possible, the tires must have knobs instead of a smooth tread.

Sir, I hope I have been sufficiently specific with this order. I enclose a cheque for £80, signed by Mrs. Bates, the estate manager at Folkestone Manor. Please expedite this order, and use all of the funds you deem necessary.

I remain, always hoping for your success and prosperity, faithfully yours,

Mrs. Patricia Goodman, Nurse of the Nightingale School
Folkestone Manor, Hawkinge, Kent

Having finished my letter, I left the room, and went to the kitchen to pass a message for Jack to Meg.

When I got there, I saw Jack with his back to me. Meg wasn't in sight, but I did see two hands clasped around Jack's buttocks.

Ah! Meg was on her knees. She looked around Jack and said, “Oh, hello, Miz Pat!”

“OH! Excuse me!” I turned to leave.

“Not to worry dearie. I’m just looking at a condition Jack has developed. Must attend to his health, you know. Please wait in the hall. I won’t be a minute.”

I retreated to the hall, and did wait one minute. I soon heard an incredibly loud groan from Jack.

Meg stuck her head out from the doorway. “Okay, me honey. Come on in. Jack is all better now.”

The room smelled wonderful, on account of the chicken masala! Meg was drying her hands. “Oh, Meg. I’m so sorry! I didn’t dream I was interrupting an intimate moment.”

“Well, the man needed a break from his morning labors, and I’m not one to let me husband suffer with unmet needs.”

“You are a true humanitarian, Meg. Now, I notice that Jack hasn’t lingered here, so I’ll ask you to pass a message on to him. I need two pairs of durable farm gloves — one pair in my size and one pair in Sir Reginald’s.”

“Consider it done. But tell me, isn’t that rather an odd request?”

“Yes, but wait until you see the results. Also, there are two other things. First, we need a supply of foolscap from the village store. Sir Reg and I will shoot tomorrow, and I’m sure there will be future matches, as well. Second, would you be good enough to write a cheque for £80 in favor of Mr. Arthur Bunsen, the medical equipment supplier in London?”

“Sounds as though you’re buying more than bandages and a glass eye, dearie.”

“Indeed, I am, Meg. All the items are part of an aggressive program of physical therapy for our earl. Perfecting one of the items will require the mechanical skills of a certain Jack Bates.”

“Excellent. Now don’t forget dinner, Miz Patricia. Will you join Jack and me?”

“Actually, Sir Reg has asked me to join him in the dining room.”

“Maybe it was that kiss in the hallway.”

“I think not. He asked me before we raced. And he feels so grand about winning, I’m quite confident that he won’t change his mind.”

“Very well. I’ll serve at one o’clock.”

I was well occupied with my journaling, reading, and sorting various drugs until the clock struck one. Then I hurried to the dining room. Sir Reginald was there, and I took my seat. Meg instantly appeared with a cart.

“Well, Sir Reg, here I am to serve dinner to you and a guest, just like you was one of the crowned heads of Europe.” She ladled chicken tikka masala from a fine china tureen. There was no rice, as one might see in India. Meg had relied on potatoes and turnips from the root cellar to balance the meal. There was, of course, Meg’s wonderful bread, and fresh fruit, too. And there were the Eccles cakes.

"Mrs. Goodman, I will not gloat over beating you this morning."

"You are very gracious, Sir Reginald. I will not gloat when I beat *you*. And it will no doubt cost you at least one frock, one pound sterling, and one kiss."

"Ho! That will be the day! Now tell me, what are you reading?"

"As I mentioned yesterday it's *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, by Jules Verne. I will delay, for the present, starting *A Strange Story*, by Edward Bulwer-Lytton."

"As we discussed, I rather like Verne, improbable as his stories are."

"Sir Reginald, I encourage you to let your imagination run free. Today's fantasy, I believe, is tomorrow's fact."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. If Verne were to speculate on a flight to outer space, as he does in *From the Earth to the Moon*, you might believe that someday it will be possible."

"And how does Verne attain such flight?"

"By firing a giant artillery shell, which holds men, from a large barrel buried in the ground."

"I suppose such a thing is possible, but what happens on the moon is hardly a concern for those on earth."

"Then consider this. Someday, both armies and civilian populations may be bombarded by shells dropped from ships that fly in the air."

"Mrs. Goodman, today we only know balloons. They could hardly carry a regiment and bombs."

"That, sir, is today. Who knows what tomorrow will bring?"

"Well, I will concede this about the science of war: Henry Shrapnel was honored and rewarded for his invention of spherical case shot, and that was in 1784. Indeed, it was shrapnel that put me in this wheelchair. Also, does not the American national anthem cite *rockets' red glare and bombs bursting in air*?"

"Yes, Sir Reginald, it does. The future is filled, I believe, with both wondrous and terrifying inventions."

"How about a way for the crippled to walk?"

"Not today, but it will come. In the meantime, you and I must find the way."

"By the way, the chicken is wonderful! Where did Meg find the ingredients?"

"They arrived this morning, sent by her sons in India. They've just been in a war—the sons, not the ingredients—the Bhutan War."

"We won, I imagine."

“Yes, it was a ‘cakewalk,’ as they say in America. Meg’s sons weren’t hurt.” We continued to chat about this and that. I was glad that Sir Reginald was in such a good humor and enjoyed the dinner.

I adjourned to my day room. It was essential to complete several letters for the afternoon post. First, I wrote to my dressmaker:

15th inst. of June, 1865

Mme. Anabelle Davies
c/o Davies and Son
№ 38 Savile Row, London

My Dear Anabelle,

I hope all is well with you and your family.

Once again I have an immediate need of your services. Please make up and send me, as soon as you possibly can, a pair of those “bloomers” popularized by Amelia Bloomer in the United States. This item is essential for my activities at Folkestone Manor.

Please send by fastest method. I enclose £10 for your trouble.

I remain, always and eternally, your devoted,

Mrs. Patricia Goodman
Folkestone Manor
Hawkinge, Kent

I then wrote my mother in Kew.

June 15th, 1865

Mrs. Elizabeth Richardson
№ 41 Gloucester Road
Kew, Richmond

My Dearest *Maman*,

I hope you are very well! Thank you for the Eccles cakes. I have shared them—including with the Earl of Radnor—and they were very well received.

In your next post, you *must* write me more about the mysterious stranger courting you. And whether Bridget has learned to cook anything besides potatoes and the Sunday joint.

Today is merely my third day here, and yet I have made marvelous progress! I do believe Sir Reginald is a bit healthier and happier.

I lost a footrace to Sir Reginald and had to surrender a kiss. No, mother, I am no wanton, and do not freely give kisses away. However, to the victor go the spoils.

Although the race caused me to “jiggle” quite a bit, I was well-corseted and did not make a spectacle of myself.

As I say, I believe I am doing Sir Reginald much good.

With the eternal love of your devoted daughter, I remain your...

Patricia

Then, to Florence Nightingale:

June 15th, 1865

Miss Florence Nightingale
St. Thomas' Hospital
Stangate, Lambeth

My Dearest Nurse Nightingale,

I must report to you that my first week at Folkestone Manor, Kent, has been more successful than I had hoped.

Sir Reginald Pleydell is eating better and experiences reduced pain. In addition, I have begun a program of exercise for him, which he resists mightily!

All is well.

I remain, your devoted student,

Mrs. Patricia Goodman
Folkestone Manor
Hawkinge, Kent

Lastly, I wrote Agnes.

15th June

Miss Agnes Elizabeth Jones
Nursing Superintendent
Liverpool Workhouse Infirmary
Liverpool, Lancashire

Dear, Dear Agnes,

I hope all is well with you! How goes your new job?

While you are dealing with the downtrodden, I'm here working with the uprodding exploitative nobility, except that Sir Reginald does not seem to tread on anyone. He appears to be a fair employer and a good master to his two devoted estate managers.

All is well. Please write me with your particulars when you can.

I remain, your friend,

Patricia
Folkestone Manor
Hawkinge, Kent

Thus I concluded my letters, and I made preparations to leave the manor. It had been a fine day, but now I wanted some time to be alone and to think about Sir Reginald's kiss.

I bade farewell to Meg and walked to the village postal office. There I dropped my letters off. I again observed three businesses—the general grocer, the green grocer, and the blacksmith's—and made a note to visit each of them in the near future.

As I approached Oak Lane, I saw Mrs. Bourne. She carried two wicker hampers.

"Elizabeth! Hello!" We chatted on the corner, next to The White Horse.

"Why, it's Patricia, the hardest working woman in Hawkinge! My dear, I don't see you in the mornings, and you're not in my dining room for dinner. At best, you come to high tea."

"Yes, my work at the manor takes me there early. Once there, I have only a few things to do, but I must stay in close attendance of Sir Reg. Besides, *you* are the hardest working woman in the village. Look at those baskets.

"Oh, yes. Pub grub. One for The White Horse and one for The Black Horse.

"You do that regularly. I assume that you find the work agreeable."

"Indeed. My rhyme is 'One for The White Horse, one for The Black. And I'll have a good time when I'm next on my back.'"

"Why, Mrs. Bourne. You shock me!" We had a good laugh.

"Come with me on my errands, dear Patricia. First, we'll go to The Black Horse, and then we'll bide a wee at The White Horse for an ale. There's still time before I put up high tea."

And so we walked "uptown" from "downtown." As we passed the grocery stores, I asked about them.

"Why are there two grocers?"

"Well, one is for general merchandise and the other is for greens."

"But why would Hawkinge need two grocers when one might serve?"

"Well, Jack and Willa Brown, the general grocers, manage dry goods and sundries very well, but they've never been successful with fruits and vegetables. Actually, they buy cheap and choose poorly. Also, most folks have their own gardens. Nobody ever wanted their wares, so they gave it up.

"The Browns are a bit stiff. I find them to be dark and cranky. And wait until you meet Tom, their son. He delivers groceries to the manor. He's a little older than my boy Frank, and I find him to be quite strange."

"I've not yet seen him at the manor. In what way is he strange?"

"When you meet him 'close up,' tell me later if he stares at you in a most peculiar way."

"Oh, really? That is remarkable! I'll watch him."

We came to The Black Horse and entered the establishment. The proprietor was standing behind the bar, polishing glasses.

"Hi, Bess!"

"Hello, Nick! How's your dick?"

"Why, Mrs. Bourne! To talk in such a way in front of a stranger. And me, an upright Christian man."

"I like it when you're upright. Anyway, she's not a stranger to me. Nick, meet Mrs. Patricia Goodman."

"Oh yes! Sir Reginald's nurse."

"I am, Nick. Bess, er... Elizabeth, has sung your praises."

"Well, the feeling is mutual, as they say. What's in the basket... Elizabeth?"

"The usual Thursday fare... Nicholas. Potatoes in jackets, jellied eels, pickled cockles, some hard-boiled eggs, and a couple of kidney pies."

"Excellent! Want an ale?"

"No, can't do it. I've got to deliver to your brother."

"Well, come in another time. When the hops harvest begins, the place will be too crowded. And you're always welcome here, Mrs. Goodman."

"Please, call me Patricia, or just plain Pat."

"Right, but you don't look plain to me."

We left and went directly to The White Horse. There were only two customers off to the side, and the proprietor was behind the bar, polishing glasses.

"Hi, Bess!"

"Hello, Ned. Want some head?"

"Why, Mrs. Bourne. To talk in such a way in front of a stranger. And me, an upright Christian man."

"I like it when you're upright. Anyway, she's not a stranger to me. Ned, meet Mrs. Patricia Goodman."

"Oh yes! Sir Reginald's nurse."

The oddest sensation came over me. What else could I do but answer as I had before?

“I am, Ned. Bess, er... Elizabeth, has sung your praises.”

“Well, the feeling is mutual, as they say. What’s in the basket... Elizabeth?”

“The usual Thursday fare... Edwin. Potatoes in jackets, jellied eels, pickled cockles, some hard-boiled eggs, and a couple of kidney pies.

“Excellent! Want an ale?”

“We surely do. Pull two, please, and we’ll drink in the corner, as dignified ladies do.”

We seated ourselves and waited for our ales to be delivered. Our conversation continued.

“Betty, didn’t we just have an identical conversation at The Black Horse?”

“Indeed. I swear Nick and Ned communicate by telepathy.”

“You told me about the Browns, the general grocers. What about the greengrocer?”

“He’s a good fellow. His name’s Jedediah. Jedediah Green, if you can believe that name for a green grocer. He and his wife have a giant garden at the edge of the village, and he knows his vegetables. He can bring vegetables into season before the other villagers can. And he experiments with making new kinds out of old ones—just like my dear Angus and his hops.

“Of course, his greenhouses are nothing like the conservatory at Kew Gardens, but for Hawkinge, we are abundantly well served. And he regularly takes his produce to the big market along the wall in Canterbury. And there’s more. He won’t hesitate to go into Folkestone, or even to Canterbury, to find unusual items.”

“Well, I guess that he is rather well named.”

“But wait! There’s more! Get ready for this: The blacksmith is Bill Black. You’ll meet him. He’s a grumpy codger, but he’s got a big heart—and the biggest biceps, too. He has brawny arms.”

“Do you think they’re as strong as iron bands?”

“Yes. I’ll wager they can hold a woman tight. And Bill can fix a wagon better-most.”

“You haven’t... er...”

“No. At least, not yet. I haven’t used up the Bowles brothers.”

“Oh, my! I must change the subject, or I’ll need to start fanning myself. Do tell me, Betty, are you able to buy fish in Hawkinge? In London, it’s considered to be rather healthy, although some take fish as only a Lenten food.”

“No fish in Hawkinge, Patricia; fish come from Folkestone. I just borrow a rig to fetch some. If Jack Bates is going that way, I ask him to pick up whatever the catch is.”

We finished our ales, said goodbye to Ned, and walked back to the boarding house. I immediately went to my room to change clothes and prepare for tea.

The evening's high tea was smörgåsbord, as they say in Sweden—many dishes of various foods. We had a clear soup, but everything else was more substantial. Betty described the items:

“There are fläskkorv (pork sausages), isterband (potato sausages), kåldolmar (cabbage rolls), baked beans, omelette with mushroom, cold herring, and bread and butter.”

The bread wasn't traditional flatbrød; instead I could tell by its look, texture, and taste that the bread was baked by Meg Bates.

I made small talk, mainly with young Frank Bourne, and brought him up to date about Meg's sons in the Bhutan war. It was much to my credit, I feel, that I actually knew where Bhutan was located. I had utterly no interest in engaging with Mr. Uriah Grimstead, as I had come to regard him as exceedingly nervous, evasive, and unpleasant. I remained polite, but was as cold and distant as possible within the limits of good manners.

After tea, I returned to my rooms, where I was able to ponder my choices for the early evening. I had no desire to walk to the park, and instead, I determined to write my thoughts and insights into my personal journal. They were, not surprisingly, chiefly about Sir Reginald Pleydell. I hoped my dear, deceased Michael would forgive me for these thoughts, and concluded that he would.

I started two letters in a desultory fashion. They were a good start, but in actuality, they weren't worth sending, so I put them aside. I then did some reading in Verne and Bulwer-Lytton.

As it grew quite dark, it was time for bed. I doffed my clothing, and studied myself in the mirror. While it was quite nice to admire my body, I found it to be increasingly galling that no man was doing so.

Anyway, I masturbated. My dear husband used to tell me that men called their self-abuse “spanking the monkey” or “choking the chicken.” Indeed, neither of us could determine why. Not wanting to be at a loss for terms—and sensing that Michael was looking down from heaven—I decided I would “pet the pussy.”

Having given myself what satisfied I could, I extinguished the lamp and fell asleep.

Friday, June 16, 1865

I arrived at the manor at half eight, as was now my custom. As I approached, I passed a boy driving away in a wagon. I waved to him, but he didn't respond. I went directly to the kitchen to see Meg Bates, now also part of my daily routine.

“Good morning, Meg!”

“Good day to you, Miz Patricia! Will you have some tea?”

“Yes, of course. With pleasure. Tell me, who was that boy who just left?”

“That would be Tom Brown, the son of Jack and Willa Brown. He was delivering groceries.

“He didn't seem very friendly. He didn't return my wave.”

“I expect not, Patricia. He's a strange one, he is.”

“Well, it's of no matter. Is all well at Folkestone Manor?”

“All is well. Jack and I had a simple tea last evening, and then, like two young lovers, we walked through the meadows toward the bluffs. There were no great frolics to tell you about today.”

“That sounds lovely. It reminds me of when my husband and I would walk the grounds of his family’s estate.”

“Aye. Jack and I very much have all of Folkestone Manor at our command. On days when we don’t have to weed the garden, bake the bread, clean the stables, fix the wagons, instruct the day maids, tend to the gamekeepers, and all, we might as well be Earl and Countess Bates.”

“Where’s Jack now?”

“I believe he’s helping Sir Reg get ready for the day, so the groundskeepers can work in the conservatory.”

“Did Sir Reg eat his supper?”

“Yes! His new gusto is still in place. And I was bollixed again.”

“How so?”

When I cleared his supper from the library, I made a move to bring him his Bushmill’s and a decanter of water. He refused. Instead, he asked me to open a bottle of port.”

“No! Did he say why?”

“He said only one thing: ‘Whiskey makes you fat.’ Now what do you think that was all about?”

I couldn’t help but laugh out loud. “Now Meg, well you know that communications between a nurse and her patient are to remain private, but as you are deeply involved with Sir Reg’s health, I will share my statement to him.” I quoted to Meg my words to Sir Reg exactly: “You are a trifle flabby and have a bit of a paunch. No, please don’t object! I surmise that it comes from your extensive reliance on Old Bushmill’s Irish Whiskey.”

Meg laughed heartily, too. “And they think us women is vain!”

“Indeed! Well, I’m off to work. Today, I will check Sir Reg’s well-being, we’ll have a shooting match, and I’ll give him another massage after dinner.”

And so our day went exactly as I planned. In the morning I found Sir Reg’s condition to be as good as ever and possibly better. Jack conducted an excellent shooting match, in which, by the way, I was again the loser.

In the early afternoon, I gave the good earl an excellent massage. I was rather businesslike, determined not to use every massage as an opportunity to ogle and grope a man, especially Sir Reginald.

In the time between the shooting match and the massage, I joined Meg and Jack in the kitchen for dinner. I liked eating with them, because such occasions allowed me to ask about things pertaining to Sir Reginald’s “case,” as opposed to making small talk with the man himself.

“Here, my girl. Have a bowl of steamed cockles. There’s bread on the side, of course, for you to dip in the broth.

I ate with enthusiasm, as I hadn’t had cockles in a long time.

“Meg, these are excellent! They are as good, or better, than those found in London. Where did you get them?”

Jack said, “I got them, Miz Patricia. I picked them up in Folkestone when I drove the wagon to town. I know all the fishermen.”

“Well, thank you, Jack! As I say, they’re very good.”

Meg continued, “And there’s nothing to cookin’ ‘em. I just steam them in white wine and scallions, with a little savory broth. I put ‘em in a copper and keep the fire low.”

“What’s on the stove?”

“Eels. When they’re done, I want them to cool, so they become jellied eels. They’ll be ready tomorrow. “

“Meg, if it’s possible. I’d like to do some gardening here tomorrow. It’s been so long. I haven’t worked in a garden since I lived at my parents’ home in Kew. Could you help me find some clothes?”

“No problem, Miz Pat. We’ve got clothes, and I might even admit that a couple of my frocks don’t fit me anymore. Stop, Jack! Don’t even think of speaking! We’ll array you like a fine country farm woman.”

“So tell me, Jack, what news of the conservatory?”

“Well, the windows are clean. Too much work for the maids, so I put the groundskeepers to it. It takes tall ladders and all, you know. There ain’t any cobwebs, and a body can actually see through the glass now. The dead plants are out, so the beds and the pots are bare, but looking good. We won’t put in anything new until Monday, unless I work the men on Saturday.”

“What about the wheelchair ramp into the conservatory?”

“The lumber is found and ready. No construction planned until next week, Patricia, but you should see progress by Wednesday. I’ll do the work myself, but I may have Bill Black out to take a look and make iron fittings.”

“Thank you both. You are too good!”

I went to my day room and made notes about this day’s activities in my journals. Then I walked into Hawkinge. I was going to my home, for that’s how I already thought of my rooms at Betty Bourne’s.

I stopped at the village postal office. It was pleasant to see Sam Fowler, and actually, I wasn’t particularly disappointed not to have received any mail.

Betty Bourne put out a hearty spread for tea. There was Scotch broth, which would have made a meal in itself, and boxty, the Irish potato pancake I teased my friend Agnes about. We had squash—green courgettes, which the Italians call *zucca*—from Mr. Green’s grocery. Add to that salad greens and a fresh pie, and we wanted for nothing.

I listened to young Frank Bourne tell tales of military heroism, and offered no interruption. There was no need to apprise him of all the broken, crippled soldiers I had nursed, or the details of Sir Reginald’s problems, either.

The days were growing longer, and it was not nearly dark. Determined to do something in the way of exercise, I went to the park to at least circle it.

As I crossed the park from the south to the north side, I heard a ruckus. Now what could that be?

I saw a bunch of boys and a man with a cane. And the boys were throwing stones while they shouted at him! He was holding up his arms to prevent being struck in the head. I could see that that made his cane useless and his gait all the more wobbly.

I heard: "Looney! Looney! Go away, crazy man!"

If there are two things I cannot countenance, they are ignorance and abuse. I was instantly "hot." Like a Peregrine falcon descending upon a dove, I rushed them.

"STOP!!! Get out of here! Yes, run, you little cowards!"

The little pricks—as shall I indelicately refer to them—took flight. As they ran, I recognized one boy in particular. I shouted, "I see you, Tom Brown! Wait 'till I tell your parents. You'll get a beating."

The group having scattered, I turned my attention to the man, whom I studied for moment or two. He was young, not much more than perhaps twenty-five years old, but so unkempt that I couldn't be quite sure. His clothes were dirty, but he was dressed as most of the laboring folk in the country. He wore brown pants, a formerly white linen shirt, and a simple vest.

I removed my handkerchief from my sleeve and daubed his forehead. He was bleeding from a small wound.

"Are you all right?"

He looked at me dully. "Yes, lady. I'm a bit used to it. I'd outrun those urchins, but I can't run with a game leg."

"Walk with me to the fountain, if you can."

He obliged me, and we walked a few yards to the park's fountain. There, I was able to moisten my handkerchief and remove more blood. He looked a bit better now."

"Why were they throwing stones at you?"

"For the same reason they always do. They think I'm mad."

"I must disagree. If you were mad, you'd be in Bedlam Asylum."

"Thank you for that, lady."

"I am not 'lady.' I am Mrs. Patricia Goodman, a nurse. What's your name?"

"Simon. Actually, I do not recall my last name, but since I'm a shepherd by trade I tell people my full name is Simon Shepherd."

"Indeed. Well, many a British surname comes from a family's original profession. Do you live nearby?"

"I have a hop picker's hut beyond the cultivated fields, near Folkestone Manor. I tend to my sheep, because the sheep leave me alone."

"Tell me, why do the boys think you are mad?"

"They don't understand what I say. So they call me lunatic."

"What sort of things do you say?"

"You wouldn't understand either."

"Try me."

"Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres."

"That's not difficult to understand. It is from Julius Caesar's account of the Gallic Wars. 'Gaul, taken as a whole, is divided into three parts.'"

"Yes, but I'd swear to you that I was in Caesar's tent when he made his notes."

"Well, that *would* strike people as a bit odd."

"Other things I say are odder, lady, er, Mrs. Goodman. I know science that doesn't exist."

"Indeed? And may I have an example?"

"Space is curved."

This startled me on two accounts. First, I knew relatively little science besides medicine, so such a statement about outer space made no sense. Second, I couldn't fathom the words being spoken by a shepherd. He went on.

"In particular, the curvature of spacetime is directly related to the energy and momentum of matter and radiation present. An anomaly—a body of great size—will actually bend the path of light. Space can be represented, roughly, as being curved, a bit the way a cannon ball on a feather mattress would form a bowl shape. This is, of course, non-Newtonian physics."

"Heavens, Simon. What makes you say that?"

"I don't know, Mrs. Goodman. I have no control over it. It's as though I was in the room when someone else said it."

"The concept is very difficult to grasp. I do not wonder that people are mystified when you speak."

"Indeed, ma'am. I have already borrowed a great deal of trouble. This is why I keep quiet about sub-atomic particles, such as the electron, neutrino, and boson. I am bright enough to know that they haven't been discovered—yet. And I've also learned not to speak about people traveling forward and backward in time. I have learned through my bruises."

My head was spinning. “Dear, dear Simon, I assume that you can read.” He nodded. “Perhaps you have absorbed too much of Monsieur Jules Verne.”

“No, Verne doesn’t write about such things. His modes of transport are common. He may place some of his stories in the future, but he doesn’t describe devices to transport people there.”

“Then how have you learned about time travel?”

“From a British author of scientific fiction, Herbert George Wells. He won’t be born until next year. But in 1895, he will write *The Time Machine*.”

“He won’t be born...?” I was reeling. This shows me, I think, that although I love food and sex, I love the workings of the mind even more. Could this man see the future? If not, perhaps he *should* be in Bedlam Asylum. If he could, he would be the greatest speculator the London Stock Exchange had ever seen.

“This is amazing! Do you have a sense of how you come to know these things?”

“No. I have no clue. Ever since the Crimean war, my memory has evaporated and my thinking has been very different. Do you know about the war, Mrs. Goodman?”

“Indeed, sir. My husband was killed in the Crimea, and I have spent the last several years nursing soldiers who survived the war.”

“Then, nurse, I will give you my ‘case.’ Perhaps you have advice that might save me from ruin, or at least from stonings by little boys. Please bear with me. I remember nothing of my birth, my education, or my upbringing. I feel as though my Christian name, Simon, is right, but cannot prove it.

“As to the war, I remember only a few details. As a very young man, I served in the 4th Queen’s Own Hussars, a cavalry regiment. On October 25, 1854, our regiment was one of five units known together as the Light Brigade.

“We were ordered to charge straight into the valley between the Fedyukhin Heights and the Causeway Heights. There were cannon everywhere—to the left of us, to the right of us, and directly in front of us.”

I offered this: “Perhaps you read about this in Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s poem.”

“Who?”

“Never mind. Please go on.”

“The maneuver was a disaster. Many were killed. There were 122 wounded, of which I was one. I remember that. Perhaps I was lucky. My horse took a round shot from a Russian field gun, a 6-pounder or 12-pounder I suppose. The horse fairly exploded. I fell to the ground and struck my head, receiving only a nasty gash.

“Fortunately, the French light cavalry cleared the Fedyukhin Heights of the Russian guns, and our unit withdrew without too much more loss of life. One of my mates must have seen me moving on the ground. He fetched me, and I ended up in Scutari Barracks to heal.”

I interjected, “How did you feel when you recovered?”

"I was fine, in the sense that my body healed. I had frequent headaches, however, and an almost complete loss of memory. I remember only the scant details I have provided you with. Needless to say, the army had no choice but to return me to England.

"On the return voyage, I had dreams. At first, they were nightmares concerning the battle. But the nightmares disappeared in favor of strange dreams. I have had those dreams for the past several years."

"Did you return to your family?"

"What family? Who would they be? I took what pay the army gave me and walked to the country. That is where you find me now. I don't get on well with people, so I herd sheep."

"But surely you could have found comradeship with your regiment. The 4th is highly regarded."

"Mrs. Goodman, tales of regimental camaraderie contain, if I may say, a certain component of sheep dung. When you are permanently disabled, or thought to be mad, you do not have many comrades. Anyway, it is of no matter. The 4th will be even more highly regarded when Winston Churchill serves in it. He joins in 1895."

"Who?"

"Never mind. Just another vision of mine."

"You have the most marvelous visions."

"Not all of them. For example, I cannot puzzle out this one: 'Billy Jean is not my lover, she's just a girl who claims that I am the one, but the kid is not my son.' Now what in perdition is that supposed to mean?"

"I truly don't know. But, Mr. Simon Shepherd, I will give you a medical opinion. And I have some medical advice I should like you to follow."

"Shoot! Well, not exactly. You know what I mean."

"My opinion is that you are suffering from a traumatic injury to the brain, sometimes called a concussion. It can occur in the sport of rugby, but is much more likely to occur when one hits his head on a rock. Sadly, in battle, soldiers have many opportunities to sustain a concussion.

"Usually the effects are temporary. In your case, they are not. First, you have lost your memories of the past. Retrograde amnesia, as it is called, means that it's likely your memories will not be restored. However, you may make a very successful adaptation. In fact, in several ways, you already have. Secondly, your visions, as we might call them, may be turned from a liability into an asset. We can discuss this. Third, I feel it essential that you reintegrate with civil society at some level."

"And how might these things be accomplished? In particular, how may a poor shepherd do them?"

"I shall oblige you with details if you will visit me at Folkestone Manor, Monday next at ten o'clock. Do you know where it is?"

"Of course. My flocks are on the bluffs between the manor house and the sea. But I can hardly visit a manor, as I'm not presentable."

"Please come. I'll take care of presentability. In addition, you will meet two veterans of the Crimean War."

“Ma’am, I cannot.”

“Sir, you can. Shall I see you Monday at ten?”

“Well, yes, if I can prevent myself from having a change of heart. You have been very kind and very patient.”

“Can you walk home without difficulty?”

“Oh, yes. This lameness isn’t too bad, and it’s a recent injury. I believe it’s temporary.”

“Very well. Have a good evening.”

I took my leave of Simon Shepherd, watching him limp away in the twilight. I figuratively scratched my head, as I had never encountered such an odd disability. I went home very puzzled.

I returned to my rooms. With no ceremony, I slipped out of my clothing and into bed. Between the day, and my chance meeting with Mr. Simon Shepherd, I was overwhelmed.