

## 07. Adventures in Kent

**Monday, June 19, 1865**

The day dawned quite gray. In fact, I could scarcely say the day dawned at all, since the sun was not in evidence. As I gazed out my sitting room window, I noted that the sky displayed a full palette of grays. In fact, I surmised, there must be at least fifty shades of gray in the skyscape.

Although the early summer had been pleasant, today's "June gloom" was not unexpected in the south of England. Since it appeared to me that rain might threaten, I was struck by my neglecting to bring a decent raincoat to Ken. I slipped into a nurse's uniform, adjusted my hair, and descended the stairs.

In the dining room, I asked Betty if she might have a coat she could lend me. She disappeared for a minute and returned with an excellent wool cape and hat. Being thus protected against the weather, I set out for Folkestone Manor.

I walked at a brisk pace. I saw no value in tarrying, neither at the postal office nor in Barnhurst Lane. I had a very pleasant walk, despite a chill in the air, but I noted as I walked up the manor's main drive that small drops of rain were beginning to fall.

I entered the kitchen, removed my cape, and draped it over a kitchen chair. "Good morning, Meg. How goes it?"

"Well enough, Miz Patricia, but the day bodes ill. Monday is wash day, and the rain will complicate things. Well, be that as it may, the maids are here, there's hot water in the tubs, and we'll get the washing done."

"Well, you are as sunny as ever, although the day is not. But how will you dry the clothes without the sun?"

"Well, I may need to hang the items in front of a fire in the parlor or dining room. Besides, in any given week the manor doesn't generate that much linen to be laundered. You should bring your clothing here and I'll toss the items into the washing."

"Where's Julia?"

"Oh, I don't let her come on Mondays. There's too much cleaning to do."

"Well, then, I'll get out of your way."

"Oh, no! Have yourself a seat. We must at least share a cup of tea."

So I sat. Meg filled the teapot with hot water and in a few minutes it was ready for us to drink.

I ventured, "Today Simon Shepherd is to visit."

"Yes, indeed. And I'll give ye some good news. My Jack has prevailed upon Sir Reg to meet with him."

"Meg, that's wonderful! Many thanks to Jack. When will this happen?"

"About half ten, I believe. You said the boy will arrive at ten o'clock. I want to get him in clean clothes before he meets Sir Reg."

“Very well. I’ll pop in at about ten, but won’t linger.”

I left Meg well before nine o’clock. At 9:00 AM precisely, I walked to the library to meet Sir Reg.

Our meeting was uneventful. We exchanged the usual pleasantries, and I took his vital signs. I had no recommendations as to changes in his medications. I then merely returned to my day room, where I began to plan a program of increased exercise for Sir Reg.

As ten o’clock approached, I returned to the kitchen. Jack was having tea. I noted that he was wearing his whitest linen shirt and newest vest.

At half ten precisely, Simon Shepherd arrived at the kitchen of Folkestone Manor. His face and hands showed obvious effort at washing. His hair was untrimmed, but had been well combed. I was saddened that his clothing was rather dirty and very tattered.

“Why, Simon. Here you are! Come in, please. I’m so glad you could come.”

“I almost didn’t, Mrs. Goodman, uh... Patricia.”

“Well, it is so much the better that you did come. Here, I should like to introduce trooper Simon Shepherd to Colour Sergeant Jack Bates.”

“Good morning, sir!”

“Aye, good morning, Simon. I’m not an officer, but merely an old ex-Colour Sergeant. You need only use that title.”

“Good morning, Colour Sergeant Bates.”

“Much better. Now have a seat and a cup of tea. This is my wife, Meg, serving it up.”

“Thank you, sir, I mean, Colour Sergeant Bates.”

“You know, Simon, I have quickly determined that we are much too formal. I might have to call you ‘trooper’ in every sentence. Let’s just settle on ‘Jack’ and ‘Simon.’”

“Right.”

I left. I didn’t see or hear any more first-hand, but I have the following story, as reliably reported by Meg.

“Enjoy the tea. When we’re done, I’ll get you outfitted. Your garments have seen better days.”

“Yes, Jack. I understand. It’s one reason I hesitated to call, but Mrs. Goodman was most insistent.”

“Ah, yes. You found out early.”

“She is quite a woman.”

“Indeed. I’m very fond of her, because she is very good for Sir Reginald. However, it’s the love of my life who just poured your tea.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Bates.”

“Call me Meg, my sweet thing, or I’ll box your ears.”

After a little bit of talk, there were no oddities revealed (as I understood from Meg). Jack took Simon to another room to equip him with new pants, a new shirt, and a new vest. “New” actually meant “a little used,” but the garments were clean and well mended. I suspect they were from Jack’s leaner days. After Jack had acted as clothier, they returned to the kitchen.

“Ah, Simon, me lad, I see that Jack has you outfitted.”

“Yes, ma’am. I’m very grateful to you and Colour Sergeant Bates. Jack, I mean.”

“Simon, I’m not a ‘ma’am.’ You’ll make me feel like a grandmum. Just call me Meg.”

“Yes, of course. Tell me, Meg, how are your four sons doing in India?”

“Doing fine. Wait! How did you know that I have four sons and that they are in India?”

“Actually, I don’t know it. Perhaps it’s just a lucky guess.”

“If that’s a ‘guess,’ tell me if they will live to come home to me.”

“Each and every one of them. It appears that they are smart soldiers. There are old soldiers and there are bold soldiers, but there are no old, bold soldiers.”

“Ho! Simon, I think you are wise beyond your tender years.”

“I believe you’re going to have ploughman’s for dinner. Excellent choice, if I may say so.”

“Why yes. A ploughman’s lunch—a very good cold meal indeed, with cheese, bread, maybe ham slices, pickle, and apples. WAIT! I haven’t decided on lunch yet. What makes you think it will be a ploughman’s?”

“I seem to have a talent for making accurate guesses. Perhaps Nurse Goodman told you so.”

“As a matter of fact, she did. You are a startling fellow. Do you know anything else you can share?”

“You and your husband will, er, make love on the bluffs tonight!”

“Well! I never... Actually, that’s an excellent idea. Jack?”

“It is, my love, rain and all, it was on my mind.”

“There are too many magicians in this room. Jack, you and Simon should visit Sir Reg. Leave Simon’s old clothes here. I’ll get them laundered, and I’ll patch ‘em up, too.

-----

Jack knocked. Upon hearing Sir Reg’s acknowledgment, he and Simon entered the library.

“Good morning, Major Pleydell.”

“Hello, Simon. Call me Reg. And you and Jack seat yourselves.” They did so.

“I don’t think I could, sir.”

“And what if I order it? I order it.”

“Yes, sir. I mean, yes, Sir Reg.”

“I understand you acquitted yourself well in the charge of the Light Brigade.”

“As well as anyone could. I lived.”

“Do you remember any details?”

“Only of the charge. Essentially, I remember nothing of my life, domestic or military, before I was wounded.”

“I understand you struck your head.”

“Yes, it was my horse that exploded. I merely hit a rock on the ground.”

“I see.”

“Really, that’s nothing. You were outgunned Balaclava Haro Priei.”

“What do you know of it?”

“Nothing personally. I simply feel as if I had been there. Yes, it was case shot from a Russian six-pounder that did you in.”

“Simon, you are a great surprise to me.”

“As you are to me, Sir Reg, if you’ll permit me to say so. You look every bit as fit as you were in 1854.”

“Young man, do you not see that I cannot walk?”

“Yes, of course. No one uses a wheelchair for fun. That’s but only temporary.”

“Indeed?”

“Oh yes, Sir Reg. After the surgery, you’ll not only be walking, but you’ll be dancing.”

“And what operation might a surgeon perform?”

“He will remove a small piece of Russian shrapnel from the foramen of the fifth lumbar vertebra.”

“How do you know this?”

“Actually I have no clue what my sentence means, but I’m confident that it’s true.”

“Very well.”

“Oh, by the way, if you don’t mind, would you invite me to your wedding? I want to see you dance.”

“WHAT? Are you here to mock me? I have no plans to walk, much less dance, and I have no plans to marry.”

“Pardon me, Sir Reg. I can’t help making these statements. You can believe what you like, of course, but I must tell you that I’ve never been wrong. I hope to see you in the fall.”

“Simon, you are perhaps the most intriguing fellow I’ve met in a long time. Tell me, do you read the works of Monsieur Jules Verne?”

“Yes, Reg, I do. But it is fiction, and I find my odd dreams about science fact to be far more interesting.”

“Give me one, if you please.”

“Well for example, in 1887 the Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel invents a smokeless propellant. In 1889, it replaces gunpowder as a military propellant and changes warfare forever.”

“Well, I suppose I shouldn’t be surprised.”

“But Sir Reg, there’s more. In 1896, Henri Becquerel of Paris—he’s only 13 now—accidentally places a lump of uranium on an envelope with a photographic plate. The plate is ruined by some sort of ray. It’s called ‘radioactivity.’ Then, in 1898, Marie and Pierre Curie discover radium. In 1903, they share the Nobel Prize in Physics.”

“Pardon me, but what is a ‘Nobel Prize?’”

“I surmise that Alfred Nobel felt a bit guilty about blowing up hundreds of thousands of soldiers with his explosives, so he established—or will establish, rather—the prizes in 1895. A committee gives prizes in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, and peace. That starts in 1901.

“It’s good if this Nobel fellow feels some remorse. Modern warfare is hardly personal, since any random shell can kill you. As you might imagine, I’ve never been fond of losing even one man in battle.”

“There’s more, Sir Reg. The implications of radioactivity are amazing. The materials can be made into a bomb, and in 1945, a single bomb destroys a complete city.”

“That seems impossible, but how can I dispute man’s ingenuity for harnessing destructive power? Simon, you are either an excellent visionary or totally bonkers. I like you very much. I hope you’ll visit again. Jack, considering that Simon’s regiment has not been a source of support, will you make sure that he lacks for nothing?”

“Yes, Sir Reg. Happy to oblige.”

“Please escort him to the kitchen and have Meg load him up with her food, both for eating here and taking away. Then come back here.”

Jack took Simon out, and then returned shortly.

“What did you think of that, Jack?”

“As you say, Sir Reg, maybe he’s mad, but there’s a lot, it seems, in his mad stories. I wonder what he thinks the London stock exchange will do next?”

“It’s a little early to buy into the business of... who was it? Alfred Nobel.”

“You might consider Remington Arms. That company was founded in 1816 by that American, Eliphalet Remington, and I believe he did very well in their Civil War. And that Gatling gun seems to be quite destructive. There’s also the Henry repeating rifle, which—as I recall—the American rebels called ‘that damned Yankee rifle that they load on Sunday and shoot all week!’”

“Jack, you have an excellent knowledge of military things, but I must say I grow tired of stories about more efficient ways for soldiers to kill each other.”

“Indeed, sir. We all end up dead, but there’s no point in rushing the occasion.”

“In any event, please be sure that Simon Shepherd knows to return here soon. He seems to be a good fellow and has stood too much abuse.”

-----

Jack stopped by my room and informed me that the interview was over.

“How did it go?”

“Rather well, I think. Such meetings might be good for both Sir Reg and Simon. By the way, Simon was quite explicit with Sir Reg about a surgery, his recovery, his dancing, and his wedding.”

“Indeed? Each of those is very startling!” We went to the kitchen together.

“Simon, please come with me. We’ll talk about you and the state of your health.” We went to my day room and sat ourselves.

“Overall, Simon, how do you feel?”

“Quite well, thank you. When you saw me last, you noted my limp and my walking stick. That was merely due to my twisting my ankle, and I believe I’ve healed.”

“I’ve seen your cabin. Is it comfortable?”

“It more than meets my needs.”

“Are you eating reasonably well?”

“Yes, Miz Patricia. I’m with my flock most of the day, so at noon I generally eat bread and cheese, and drink some ale if I have it.”

“What about your main meal?”

“That would consist of stews made in a single pot.”

“You must be something of a cook.”

“Not really, but I learned a good deal from a Basque shepherd from Bilbao named Hermano Borquez.

“Well, if you need more bread, or other miscellaneous foodstuffs, just ask Meg. Sir Reg and Jack are intent on supporting your efforts. I will point out to you that Meg’s bread is excellent.”

“Oh, I couldn’t accept charity.”

“It’s not charity, Simon. Bring Meg a lamb or a joint of mutton for roasting occasionally, but with some regularity. Or ask Jack if he wants a breeding pair. And I’ll tell you this: as the flock at the manor increases you’ll have a job tending it.”

“Well, that would be fair.”

“Now tell me, who pays you now?”

“Oh, I sell wool and meat. I drive the flock into Folkestone. I doubt that I get a fair price.”

“That will change the first time the Colour Sergeant accompanies you.”

“I fear it’s too much to ask.”

“It’s not. Both Sir Reg and Jack are intensely loyal people. That quality has never failed them. Now tell me, do you have a girl friend?”

“Oh my, no! Who would have me?”

“Simon, I suspect that many a lass would have you, if only they knew you. Or do all the girls in Hawkinge despise shepherds?”

“Well, I suppose not. There are several shepherds.”

“I speculate that in time you will find yourself much sought after.”

“No, Nurse Goodman. I cannot believe that.”

“Then don’t believe it. But like you, I have visions, and I’m not often wrong, either.”

“What about my mental state?”

“As I mentioned when we first met, your lost memories of the past will likely not be restored. What will now be more important is that you build a future.”

“Miz Goodman, shepherds don’t usually have futures.”

“Can you not envision your own future?”

“No, those revelations never come.”

“Then I’ll give you one. You will, in time, become Kent’s leading sheep rancher, with a fine estate to go with it.”

“That seems impossible!”

“Oh, my! You and Sir Reg are very much alike. Yes, you are, as sometimes you both seem to display the most negative of attitudes. I prefer my vision to your lack of a vision, so—as they say in London—shut up and put a sock in it.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Now, I want you to go to Meg and request to have a hot bath.”

“Well, I must say, that would be a change from washing in the Pent Stream.”

“It’s for your health, you know. You will leave here clean, with clean clothing, likely mended, a new outfit from Jack, and a supply of food. Oh, and I recommend that you allow me to trim your hair.”

“Thank you. Thank you very much.”

“Now tell me more about what you’ve said to Sir Reg about surgery, walking, dancing, and marriage.

“It’s very simple, really. The shrapnel in his spine will be discovered. That will lead to a risky surgery. If the earl doesn’t die, he will recover, walk, and dance.”

“And about the marriage?”

“He will marry someone by fall, but I cannot say who it will be.”

“Good! This is all good, Simon. I much admire you as a prophet. Now, please hear this: do you know where I live?”

“Yes, you board with Mrs. Bourne.”

“Do you know where Betty Bourne lives?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Now I ask you to come to dinner Sunday next. Dinner will be at two o’clock, and I prefer that you do not make excuses as to why you cannot.”

“I don’t think I...” Pause. “Very well, Mrs. Goodman, er, Miz Patricia. I will do as you ask.”

“Good. Now, get thee to the kitchen for your bath, clothing, and food.”

And with that, Simon took his leave of me. This gave me a little time before dinner to make notes in my journal.

-----

When I entered the kitchen, I found that Simon Shepherd had departed. “Simon’s gone, it appears.”

“Oh, yes. I sent him on his way, quiet content, I believe.”



“But I was to cut his hair.”

“He mentioned that, and I volunteered as your substitute. Now, are you ready for a fine a ploughman’s luncheon?”

“Certainly.”

“It’s easy to fix, and perfect choice on wash day. Both Jack and Sir Reg like such meals, as well.”

“If I may, let me wheel Sir Reg’s meal into him.”

“Enough food for one, or two?”

“Two, I think. I hope to speak with him about Simon.”

“He’ll take it in the library.”

We filled the cart with a first-class array of food. There was not only cheddar cheese, but Stilton, as well. There were slices of ham, with pickled onions, beetroot, carrot, hardboiled eggs, and of course, lots of bread and butter. A flagon of ale and two large mugs completed the arrangement.

I arrived at the library, and knocked at the door.

“Come in, Meg.”

“Oh, sorry, M’Lord. It’s not Meg. Just me, the servant girl.”

“Ho! As I recall, you are Patty. Well, bring in the meal.”

“Would you deign to eat with a scullery maid?”

“Yes. Be seated. You possess a passing resemblance to Mrs. Goodman, my nurse. She’s quite attractive, you know.”

I blushed. “Thank you, sir.” I served up the plates.

“You know, Patty, I saw Simon Shepherd today.”

“I heard that, sir.”

“You—or Nurse Goodman, rather—had nothing to do with that, I suppose?”

I studied the butter a moment as I applied it to my bread. “Er, yes, Sir Reg. I did. Was his company satisfactory?”

“He was jolly good company, actually. He has the oddest visions, and I’m somewhat envious of his brief military career, as I always had an urge to join the cavalry. Now tell me, do you know the term, ‘foramen of the fifth lumbar vertebra?’”

“I know of the lumbar vertebrae in general. Lower back. I’ll look it up in Gray’s Anatomy. How did you hear of that?”

“From ‘Simple’ Simon, as you might surmise.”

“In what context, sir, if I may ask?”

“Simon says it’s the location of a piece of Russian shrapnel.”

I paused a moment. “We will need to look further. This could be important.”

“But Nurse Goodman, he may be mad.”

“Sir Reg, so were the Russians when they fought in the Crimea. So were the generals who put you in harm’s way.”

“You’ll get no argument from me, Patricia. One of our historians has already condemned that war as having an ‘unparalleled confusion of purpose,’ and called it ‘notoriously incompetent international butchery.’ I have no quarrel with that statement.”

The rest of our conversation was limited to talk about the weather, Sir Reg’s estates, and books he and I were reading. I cleared the table.

The rest of the day proceeded without any event of import. Indeed, the afternoon and evening passed without a singular occurrence.

## **Tuesday, June 20, 1865**

On Tuesday, I arose as usual, dressed, and made my way to the manor. En route, I stopped at the post office. Good morning, Sam. How are you?”

“Better-most, Miz Patricia. And you?”

“Better-most, as well. Have you anything for me?”

“Let me check. Yes, I do. There is a soft parcel, and it’s quite light. There are three other ones—one weighing about ten pounds and the other two a good deal heavier. I don’t believe you can carry them to the manor.”

“Very well, Please give me the light one, and I’ll ask Jack Bates to come fetch the others.”

I walked on to Folkestone Manor, savoring the June weather. The day was cool, but not cloudy. The meadows and their dusting of wildflowers were quite lovely. In fact, in my nurse’s uniform, it struck me that I was the only drab object on the landscape.

I found Meg in her kitchen and joined her for tea. “Hello, Meg. How are you?”

“Oh doin’ fine, Pat. I’ve finished up the accounts and the dinner is planned. It will be something a bit finer than yesterday, seein’ that laundry day is now past. Care for some tea?”

“Why yes, thank you. What will you serve?”

“A mulligatawny soup, I believe. More of a stew, actually, as I use lots of chicken and include rice. And, as well, today I’ll make flatbread, much as the Hindoos make it.”

“So, it’s based on chicken and rice?”

“Yes, indeed. With lots of turmeric and other spices I get from me boys. I use chicken, because, although our woods are filled with wild mulligatawny, you can’t capture them.”

“Is that so?”

“No, Miz Pat. Not a bit. There ain’t no such thing. Hunting for mulligatawny would be a bit like hunting for snark. Here’s an old brag from a huntsman: ‘I’ll capture them wild and I’ll capture them scrawny, I’ll capture a scraggle-foot mulligatawny.’”

“Oh, Meg. There’s another thing. Sam Fowler tells me there are parcels at the postal office that he judges to be too heavy for me to carry. Would you ask Jack to go for them?”

“Certainly. Or I may hitch up the wagon and drive there myself. I scarcely get off the estate as it is.”

With that, I finished my tea and left for my day room. There, I opened my parcel. I found a woman’s outfit and a letter.

Madame Patricia Goodman  
c/o Folkestone Manor  
Hawkinge, Kent

My Dear Mme. Goodman,

I hope you are doing very well, and that the items I made for you earlier this month are entirely satisfactory.

In response to yours of the 15th instant, I have promptly filled your order and enclose herewith a pair of “Bloomer” pants with a matching skirt and top. I must caution you that the “Bloomer suit,” is distinctly out of fashion. In fact, it was ridiculed in the American press. Further, our famous African explorer Richard Francis Burton was very insulting toward it.

However, the items were quite easy to run up, and—I must confess—were rather fun to make. I return to you £5 of the £10 you sent. I remain,

Yours,

Mme. Anabelle Davies  
№ 38 Savile Row, London

Despite the advice that the bloomers were hardly *la mode*, I was quite excited. I doffed my uniform and immediately tried the outfit on. In the mirror, I found the suit to be quite lovely. It featured very full trousers in cream, trimmed at the ankle with pink ribbons. The overskirt was in pale pink, with a bright pink band at the waist, and the top matched the trousers.

I had to laugh. I felt a bit like a painting by Thomas Lawrence. I needed only a pink bonnet with long pink ribbons with which to tie it!

Being quite satisfied with my purchase, I quickly donned my nurse’s uniform, and went to visit Sir Reginald.

Sir Reg was in good spirits. I had no easy way to gauge his weight, but it struck me that he had lost a bit of the bulge around his waist.

“Tell me, Sir Reg. Have you been spending more time on that stationary bicycle that Jack rigged?”

“No, only as much time as Jack forces me to spend. I don’t doubt that it has value for my health, but I rather despise it. I have essentially no use of my legs, but Jack forces the pedals to turn, even if I cannot.”

“Very well. That’s good. If you want to keep any muscle on your leg, you need the bicycle. This afternoon, let me offer you an addition, although not an alternative to the bicycle. Then tomorrow I will propose three bits of recreation. I assure you that only one will strain you physically.”

“Can these ‘bits’ be undertaken inside the manor?”

“Absolutely. I know you have little appetite for venturing outside. In the meantime, I recommend another massage for you after dinner. We must tone your muscles as well as possible.”

“Are you not concerned about my medications?”

“Not at all, sir. Your vital signs are good. Your appetite has improved, and your substituting a bit of port for Irish whiskey serves you. I would not increase, decrease, or change your ‘meds,’ as we call them.”

“Well, I’m pleased. I do, in fact, feel a good deal better than I did one week ago.”

“Good! I propose that we meet in this room after dinner, so I may share a new instrument of torture with you. After that, we should attend to the massage.”

I returned to my day room. After making notes, I went to the kitchen to meet Meg and Jack for our luncheon.

“Ah, Patricia. Sit yourself. I’ve been to the post office and back, and I tell ye it was a fine thing to drive the wagon. You see two large parcels in the corner there and a small one on the table. Open them if you like while I get Sir Reg’s dinner to him.

I first opened the large parcels. I was delighted to find the dumbbells and the leg braces I had ordered from Mr. Bunsen. There was a letter, as well.

Nurse Patricia Goodman  
c/o Folkestone Manor  
Hawkinge, Kent

My Dear Nurse Goodman,

I hope all goes well in the rehabilitation of your charge. From the nature of your order, I surmise that this is so.

I have sent you dumbbells and leg braces, each in separate cartons. The three wheelchairs will arrive via rail at the Folkestone West railroad station.

Your purchases amount to £62 — £20 each for the wheelchairs with pneumatic tires, £14 for the regular chair, and £8 for the dumbbells and braces together. If you do not object, I shall retain the remaining £18 on your account, as you may wish to order more items in the future.

Wishing you the best, I remain,

Yours,

Arthur Bunsen, Medical Equipment  
Lambeth, London

The package on the table was from Dr. Wong in London. It contained rice, just as I had requested. I read his letter.

Nurse Patricia Goodman  
c/o Folkestone Manor  
Hawkinge, Kent

Dear Big Battleship Nurse Goodman,

*Jo san!* I write you today not as Doctor Wong Kei, but as a “stupid Chinaman.”

Ho, missy! Your letter make me laugh. You want rice? I send rice. You find here ten pound of good “lice” from China. Let me know if you likee.

You cook it right, you make any man happy. Happy man give you many sons. If rice not melt man’s heart, you do *chui xiāo*. That means “play flute.” Man’s flute, you know?

Also, please also to inform about kimono. My daughter want to know if you likee. And one more thing: please find enclosed your £5 note. No problem, Missy. You take food with much compliments from me!

To be serious for a moment, Mrs. Goodman, it is my sincere wish that the treatment of your patient is proving successful. I believe the substances I provided you are effective and appropriate, but I encourage you to write back to confirm or contradict this belief. Until then, I remain,

Wong Kei  
Chinee Coolie, Herbalist, and Medical Doctor  
Limehouse, London

I was still laughing as Meg returned and Jack came in for dinner. Jack asked, “What have we here?”

“Ah, we have medical equipment that will force Sir Reg to work a little harder. These dumbbells, similar to those I used at the Royal Hospital in Chelsea, will build Sir Reg’s arms and various muscles in his upper body.”

“What’s them other gadgets?”

“A set of leg braces. They provide support that Sir Reg cannot provide himself. They may help him to walk.”

“I don’t think he’ll like them.”

“I’m inclined to agree with you, Jack. Just the same, I will prevail upon him to use them.”

“You may need to threaten him.”

“Yes, that’s possible. Or perhaps I will ask Meg how I might charm him. And speaking of Meg, for her we have ten pounds of Chinese rice from Dr. Wong in London.”

Meg said, “Jack, at the postal office, I got this telegram from the freight company. There are three large crates for us at the Folkestone Station.”

“Oh, yes! Mr. Bunsen, the equipment supplier, mentioned that in his letter.”

“Do these crates contain more surprises, Patricia?”

“They certainly do, Jack. Could you get the crates and open them tomorrow?”

“Aye. Whatever they are, I yearn to see Sir Reg’s face when you show him.”

“One of them will require your skills as an engineer.”

“Ho! Happy to oblige. I like to stay handy in the shop. So what’s it ye were laughing about?”

I showed Jack and Meg the “coolie” letter, written by one of the finest physicians in England. I had to explain the “big battleship” part.

“My thanks to you and Dr. Wong. I can think of ten ways to put the rice to good use.”

Meg ladled out the mulligatawny for Jack and me. Oh, what a wonderful Anglo-Indian dish! I ate eagerly. “Meg, I love the soup!”

“Thank you kindly. Have some of that flat bread. It’s called roti.”

-----

In the afternoon, I loaded Meg’s serving cart with dumbbells and made my way to the library. I knocked.

“Come in.”

“Good afternoon, Sir Reg.”

“What have you there?”

“Three pairs of dumbbells—5 pounds, 10 pounds, and 15 pounds in weight.”

“And their purpose?”

“Exercise for you. Exercise that will build muscle and strength.”

“I don’t see how I can use such things.”

“Yes, I believe you. These weights would work better if you were to lie back on a small bench, which is certainly a possibility. In the meantime, however, you may use them in your wheelchair. I have employed them before with patients, to their benefit. Here, I’ll show you.”

I picked up the five-pound weights and demonstrated the alternate bicep curl. “That will build your biceps. You may lift the dumbbells alternately or at the same time. Now this is a lateral raise for your shoulders.” I held both dumbbells at my navel and raised them to my sides, fully extending my arms.

“Well, that must work, Nurse, because every time you repeat that, your bosom grows in size, jumps up, and moves forward.”

I blushed. “That is an accident of female construction.”

“Yes. One I’ve always welcomed.”

“I’ll take a moment to jot down a brief list of exercises. I recommend you begin with the small weights until you feel ready for the heavier ones.” I wrote. As I completed the list, I was struck by an impish idea.

“Now, if I may, I’d like to wheel you to your bedchamber for a massage.”

“I usually undress myself before you come in.”

“Well, the undressing will go faster if I assist you.” I cannot account for myself. On reflection, there was no reason to save time.

Sir Reg nodded agreement, and I pushed his wheelchair into the hall and then into his bedroom. “Please sit on the bed and remove your coat.”

I hung his coat on a clotheshorse. He removed his waistcoat and then his cravat. I got on my knees to remove his shoes and stockings. I was rather enjoying the exercise. I asked him to pull himself to a standing position, using the trapeze that Jack had rigged. Still on my knees, I undid his belt and dropped his trousers to the floor.

He lowered himself to the bed and undid his shirt while I removed his pants entirely. As expected, he wore no underthings.

“Nurse Goodman, this is a bit embarrassing. I’m usually flat on my stomach when you perform a massage.”

While it was quite unprofessional of me, I confess to having felt some excitement in undressing him. Here I was, on my knees, facing his lovely penis and testicles—his Hampton wick and cobbler’s awls, as the Cockneys say. Sir Reg offered me the only proximity to a man’s private parts, barring old soldiers, I had had in years.

“Please do not be embarrassed, Sir Reg. I am used to such things.” I lied, of course. “I won’t bite your Roger.” Odd, but I had an urge to do just that.

“Where did you learn to talk like a soldier?”

“Recall, sir, that I was married to one, and I worked at the Royal Hospital in London. Now here is my reasoning: you have ten or so muscles on your front that must not be neglected.”

“Very well. Here’s my shirt.” He then lay back; we were ready.

“Sir Reg, your calf muscles are the peroneus and tibialis. I will massage them.”

“But I don’t feel anything.”

“That is of no matter. Let us proceed to the front of your thighs. These are your quadriceps. Now for the rectus abdominis in your abdomen, where you should begin to experience feeling. As I ‘pinch an inch,’ to use a common nursing term, I find that you have lost a bit of the fat around your middle.

“Now, we will address four different muscles in your forearms and upper arms.” I gave the muscles firm strokes and presses, gradually applying greater and greater pressure.

After a minute or two, Sir Reg groaned.

“Yes, that’s it! There is built-up tension there. No wonder, since you use your arms so much. Now, for your pectoralis major and deltoids. By that I mean chest and shoulders.”

After a few moments of my work, he groaned again. “When you groan, I like to think that I have hit the mark. Please drink a lot of water, as it may help prevent fatigue that can arise from deeply massaging the tissues. I’ll mention this to Meg.”

I finished, took one last look at Sir Reg’s lovely, but useless, penis, and covered him with a sheet. He was quite relaxed and had already closed his eyes. I walked to my day room and spent a few minutes making notes and writing thank-you letters to Mr. Bunsen and Dr. Wong. I made sure to praise my new kimono to Dr. Wong’s daughter.

I dropped in on Meg. I encouraged her to serve water to Sir Reg, as well as beer, whiskey, or port. We said our goodbyes for the day, and I walked back to Hawkinge. I had little to do before high tea, so I chose to read and to take a brief nap.

At tea, I was struck by a very sensible notion. I determined that I had been eating a great deal in Hawkinge and that if I kept up the pace, I should grow quite fat. Therefore, I limited myself to a clear soup, some pickled herring, and a slice of buttered bread.

My evening was spent in the most lovely way. For a long time I merely sat at the table in my rooms, staring out at the village of Hawkinge and the meadows and woods beyond. Later, I poured a glass of port and read from *A Strange Story*, by Edward Bulwer-Lytton.

I went to bed with a rather abundant feeling of contentment. I fell asleep thinking about Sir Reg.

### **Wednesday, June 21, 1865**

I rose to a lovely June day. My *habiliment* was unchanged, of course, being always the uniform of a nurse.

As I stepped into Oak Lane, I recalled with pleasure the words of the American poet James Russell Lowell in “The Vision of Sir Launfal:”

And what is so rare as a day in June?  
Then, if ever, come perfect days;  
Then Heaven tries earth if it be in tune,  
And over it softly her warm ear lays;  
Whether we look, or whether we listen,



We hear life murmur, or see it glisten.

I soon arrived at Folkestone Manor and found Meg and Jack in the kitchen. "Good morning! Tell me, you sweet, young things, do you have a few minutes to spare this morning?"

"Yes. The cooking is well underway, and the ingredients are set out for baking. In a few moments, I expect Julia Prang, and she will be a great help with the bread and pastries."

"For me, Miz Pat, I'm free. The milkmaid and stable boy are at their tasks. After any chores you might have for me, I'll be going to the Folkestone West railway station to fetch them crates."

"Excellent. For one thing, I'd like Sir Reg and me to shoot from my day room window at ten. Your assistance is essential, Jack. However, I will need you both at nine in the hallway.

"For what?"

"A little race. Jack, I need you to make a chalk line at the library door and another one here at the kitchen door. And would you be so good as to load a revolver with powder only? That will serve as a starter's pistol."

"Ho! Very official, missy!"

"Where's Sir Reg now?"

"He's trying out those dumbbells you gave him. I'll was about to check on him."

"Please tell him not to overdo the exercises, Jack. He'll need his arms in a few minutes at nine."

I went to my day room. All was in order. I removed my uniform and my shoes. Then I donned my new bloomers.

At 9:00 AM precisely, I knocked and entered the library. "Good morning, Sir Reg"

Reginald was struck dumb for moment. He quickly recovered.

"Excuse me, but what on earth is that outfit?"

"It is, sir, the outfit that will lay you low in a race."

"But I believe you are wearing underwear! Is that so?"

"No, of course not. These are bloomers."

"Ah, I remember your mentioning them. I must say, those pantaloons and that short skirt are very startling, but you look quite good. Did you buy them with the medical equipment money?"

"Why, Sir Reg, you cut me to the quick. I purchased them with the generous salary you pay me."

"Well I must say, that ensemble takes some getting used to. Oh, and nurse, or 'Pinkie,' I might point out that you have failed to wear your shoes."

“All part of a plan for racing, Sir Reginald. And, I have brought a £1 note for a wager. It is a note which I shall certainly not lose.”

“In a race? Yes, of course! What about a kiss? You gave that up last time.”

“That, sir, I will freely give, to help compensate you for your loss.”

“You are very smug.”

“Exactly. Let me suggest to you a race much like the one we had last week. Now, this will be the most vigorous exercise of your day. Later, I propose a shooting match, and in the afternoon, you will need a good massage to help your exhausted arms recover.”

“Very well, Miss Overconfident. Bring it on.”

With that we exited the library and entered the hallway. Imagine, if you will, Sir Reg’s surprise to find Jack Bates there. Jack had drawn a chalk line on the hallway floor and stood with a starter’s pistol.

“All right, my children. Move up to the line, please, and take care not to advance beyond the mark. Now, are you ready?”

Both Sir Reg and I nodded.

“On your mark. Get set. Go!”

And with a bang, we were off! Once again, Sir Reg shot ahead, but I wasted no time in surprise, as I knew he was fast off the mark. It took only a moment for me to start running in well-paced strides. Oh, Lord! How grateful I was for the free-moving trousers. And there were no high-buttoned shoes to encumber me.

Reg didn’t look back. If he had, he would have seen me gaining rapidly on him. At the last, I began my sprint—exactly as I had planned.

My final dash paid off. We crossed the finish line, a point well-chalked and supervised by Meg, with my winning by a bosom and a bum.

“Well, damn it all!”

Out of breath, panting hard, I responded: “Ah, I believe I heard you say, ‘Congratulations.’”

“Yes, of course. That’s what I meant. Meg, have you a £1 note I might give to Nurse Goodman?”

“That I do, Sir Reg.” She handed the note to me.

“Well, Major Pleydell, would you like your consolation prize?”

“Under the circumstances, I’d like it very much.”

I gave him a long lingering kiss on the cheek. On separating, I rather brushed my cheek against his. As I straightened up, my breasts could not help but touch his neck and cheek as well.

Jack had joined us. He was doing his best to cover up his amusement.

“Jack, please wheel me back. I lack the strength to operate this chair.”

As he turned, I called out, “Oh, Sir Reg, shall we meet for pistol shooting in the day room in an hour?”

“I assure you, after this minor setback, I wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

Jack pushed him back down the hall. Meg and I went into the kitchen for a laugh.

“Oh, Miz Patricia! Why do you do such things?”

“To awaken Reg’s competitive spirit. He may be a master of the wheelchair, but that is no trophy position. Learning to walk is what is required, and that will require spirit he doesn’t yet have.”

Just one-half hour later, Jack brought shooting paraphernalia to my room.

“There, Miz Pat. All set up. The bales and targets are in place, as well.”

One-half hour after that, Sir Reginald entered.

“Are you ready, Nurse Goodman?”

“I am, Sir Reg.”

And with that, Jack commenced our match. Sir Reg was taking extraordinary care with his aim. I shot well, but Sir Reginald truly surprised me.

We shot three times, as before. At the end, I asked, “Tell us, Jack. How did we do?”

“Today’s winner is Reginald Pleydell, by a mile. His first target put two in the bull’s eye, with three nicking the edge. His second and third targets have all five in the bull. By contrast, you never put more than two in the center.”

“Congratulations, Sir Reg! That’s very impressive.”

“Would you like your consolation prize?”

“Thank you, sir.” I bent down to get a kiss.

“Nurse, will you join me for dinner?”

“I’d be delighted.”

Sir Reg left. I made some notes and then joined Meg in the kitchen.

“Meg, the shooting was a lot of fun, if I do say so myself.”

“Ah, Miz Pat, I’m glad to hear it. I understand Sir Reg beat the bloomers off you.”

“Yes, and I’m glad he did. He was very focused. Oh, and he’s asked me to join him for dinner, something to which I willingly assented.”

“Good, dearie. He seeks to profit from your company. Either that, or he wants to gloat over winning the match. Anyway, today’s dinner is quite good, in me humble opinion.

“What do you have?”

“Vindaloo, another Indian dish. It’s pork with vinegar, very hot Kashmiri chilés, and other spices. I’ve also boiled up a big batch of that rice from your Chinaman doctor friend to offset the heat. Rice and bread will do it, but water won’t work.”

Meg set up the cart and I volunteered to roll it to the dining room. I knocked.

“Come in, Mrs. Goodman.”

“Thank you for having me. Let me set these dishes out. Meg tells me that the main course is quite spicy.”

“Ah, I understand that we are to have vindaloo. Meg has informed you correctly.”

We began to eat. “Thank for you for the race and the match, Nurse Goodman.”

“I’m surprised you thank me for the race.”

“It taught me several valuable lessons. “First, that I must... Oh, my! Are you all right?”

Clearly I was not all right. I was far from all right. My first bites of vindaloo caused me to take on a high color in my face. In fact, beads of perspiration broke out on my forehead.

I gasped, and was barely able to groan, “Oh! Spicy, indeed!”

“Eat some bread. Lots of bread, and quickly. It will tame the fire in your mouth and throat. Water is useless.”

After some moments, I recovered a bit. I fanned myself, and dabbed my forehead with my napkin. “You were saying that the race taught you lessons. And what were those lessons?”

“First, to always expect surprises from you. Second, to be a good officer and be well-prepared for the unexpected. Third, to become more fit.”

“Excellent. Now, will you have a massage this afternoon?”

“No, thank you. I’d prefer to work with the dumbbells.”

“Very well. My! I’m still short of breath. I recommend you eat something more bland at high tea. I certainly shall.”

“You’ll forgive me, Miss, but it’s clear you don’t get to Constantinople too often. The Turks have a very spicy dish called *Adana kebab*. *Adana kebabi* is the spicy variant, opposed to *Urfa kebabi*. To cool things down, they make a strange form of clotted cream they call yoghurt.”

“Did you like the food?”

"It beat the tar out of the bully beef that the British government canned and sent us. In the field, we ate what the government sent. But for convalescing at Scutari Barracks, we relied on food from the locals and the ministrations of Mary Seacole."

"Mary Seacole?"

"She's the Florence Nightingale you don't hear about. England wouldn't let her go to the Crimea, mainly because she was Jamaican. Wrong color, you know. But she went on her own. She opened a shop called the British Hotel near Balaclava. She sold tins of soup, boots, and tooth powder. She also helped the wounded soldiers on the battlefield, and they called her 'Mother Seacole' for her bravery. As I say, I met her later, when she brought good food to the barracks. If I had not met her, I surely would have died from the British product."

I was quite fascinated, both with Mary Seacole and with Sir Reg's summary of the situation. Dinner concluded, I cleared the table.

There was little to do at the manor, so I said goodbye to Meg and walked home.

High tea was pleasant, with nothing unusual in the fare. I spent a peaceful evening reading and reflecting upon Sir Reg's condition. As always, I was forming new plans for his treatment.

#### **Thursday, June 22, 1865**

On Thursday's walk to Folkestone Manor, I stopped at the postal office. I was delighted to find that two letters had arrived for me. One was from my mother, the other from Florence Nightingale. Sadly, there was no letter from my friend, Agnes.

At the manor, I sat down to morning tea in Meg's kitchen. Julia was there, practically covered with flour. "Good morning, Julia. I swear, you have more flour on you than is in the bread."

"Oh, good morning, Mrs. Goodman. I shall soon be covered with egg and fine sugar as well. Today I'm making pastries, principally strudels, pies, and tarts."

"Well, Meg. What's the news?"

"Jack went to the railway station early. The wheelchairs are here and unpacked; there they are in the corner. And here's Jack. Maybe you'll have some words for him."

"Good morning, Jack. I see that two of these chairs are just as I ordered. See the tires on two of them? They are quite serviceable for use outdoors."

"Aye, the outdoors. You're talking about a place Sir Reg doesn't want to visit."

"Oh, that's of little consequence, Jack. Give him, and me, a little time. Now, please come here, as I'd like to sketch for you what's to be done with the third wheelchair."

Jack and I huddled for a few minutes while Meg and Julia worked at the baking. I gave him a sketch, and he quickly saw what I had in mind."

He nodded. "I'll start on it. Could take several days to work out the details."

"That's fine. Now if you will, please take one of the other chairs to my day room. I'll bring the other along in a few minutes. Oh, and you placed gloves there, if I saw correctly."

"Yes, gloves are there. When I return, I'll be taking that third chair to me shop next to the barn."

Meg turned to me. "Patricia, Sir Reg asks that you meet him this morning in the conservatory. Jack is quite proud of the work, but, as it turns out, Sir Reg is even prouder."

It being very close to nine o'clock, I pushed the second wheelchair to my day room. Then, I went directly to the library, and from there entered the conservatory. I walked down a short ramp that Jack had constructed for Sir Reg's wheelchair.

I must say, I was pleased with and rather overwhelmed by the transformation of the conservatory. Its floor plan was that of a semi-circle, embracing the entire east end of the manor. It rose three stories and was made entirely of glass, including a glass dome. The glass was sparking!

"Good morning, Mrs. Goodman. Isn't this space lovely?"

"I am glad to hear you say so. Yes, it's quite beautiful."

"As you see, there are raised beds making up the perimeter, as well as others forming aisles. Most are planted, and a few items are blooming. And see how the glass gleams! See all the sunlight that enters!"

"Yes! This is wonderful. It is certainly the kind of room you and Folkestone Manor deserve. I truly hope you enjoy it."

"Well, I'm rather proud of my decision to renovate it." I held my tongue. I thought it impolitic to remind Sir Reg whose idea this had been.

I said, "The plants are quite lovely, and impressive, too! Tell me, what are those tall ones?"

"If you can believe it, they are banana plants. They will soon grow to the ceiling. It is much more convenient to see them here than to go to the Caribbean or South America. Tell me, have you ever been to Kew Gardens?"

"Frequently. My mother lives nearby."

"These specimens are from the Palm House at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew."

"But how did you...?"

"As you know, Meg handles the money from my four estates. Some of it is invested with Richard Turner, the ironmaker. He designed the Palm House, and along with Decimus Burton he built this very structure years ago. Meg figured that old Dick 'owed me one,' as they say. So she got him to send some plants."

"Oh! I didn't know."

"Nor could you have. Nurse, there are a few things about me you do not know."

"For example?"

"I'm a Mason. Have been since I entered the military."

“Anything else?”

“Yes, of course. Over time, you will no doubt learn more.”

“Well, Sir Reg. Let us review your health and plan the day. After that, I will leave you to enjoy this wonderful room.” As had become usual, I took vital signs and suggested activities. Then I rose to go.

“Feel free to visit it any time. And, I must say, if you ever feel a desire to make love with a man in a banana grove, this is the place to do it.”

I blushed a bit. “May I remind you that I am an unmarried widow.”

“May I remind *you* that you are not unattractive. Perhaps even pretty. Perhaps someone will marry you.”

I must say, I found this to be rather a narrow compliment. “Perhaps” I was pretty. “Perhaps” someone would marry me.” “Perhaps” Sir Reg was a bit of a snob, or half blind, as I recalled being called pretty a goodly number of times in my life.

“Yes, that’s possible, of course. Well, with your permission, I take my leave of you.”

Back in Meg’s kitchen, I took great pleasure in describing Sir Reginald’s satisfaction with the conservatory. “Jack will be pleased, I’m sure. It was a good idea, and the work was well done. The conservatory places Sir Reg a bit closer to the outdoors, even if the outdoors has had to come inside. As they say, ‘If Sir Reg will not go to the forest, the forest must come to Sir Reg.’”

“Now, Miz Pat. I should mention to you that I’ll be sending Jack to Canterbury on Saturday. He needs things for the manor, and I have a list of cooking ingredients for him to buy. Would you like go along with him? You’ll see the big outdoor market and all.”

“Certainly. That would be wonderful, Meg. I’ve not been to Canterbury before.”

“Prepare to be amazed. The faire is quite enormous. It’s even bigger than Scarborough faire in Yorkshire. Oh, and you should mention it to Betty Bourne. She loves to shop there. She says she can ‘buy till I die.’”

“I certainly will.”

“Meg, I wanted to ask you about something. Along the Pent Stream, near the bluffs, there is a small hill with a bench, trees, and a statue. Do you know anything about it?”

“I do indeed. Oh, yes! Up on the leas, near the cliffs of Folkestone. Me mother told me that the trees were planted by Sir Reg’s mother and father, and they erected the statue and its canopy. Our local legend is that Sir Reg was conceived at that very place on a warm August night.

“And the statue is of what person?”

“That’s Venus, as you might expect. We call the place the Mound of Venus. I know it works like a charm, and I’ve got four boys to exhibit as proof!”

“Who built it?”

"I wasn't but five or six years old at the time. Wait! Me mum told me. The spot was designed by Ernst Gräfenberg, an architect from Germany, hired by Sir Reg's mum and papa. We also call grove the G spot, after Gräfenberg.

"But if it's so old, how is it so well-maintained?"

"Call us sentimental, but Jack sends the groundskeepers there regularly. They keep the trees pruned and the moss on the stone to a minimum. Now, sit down, I'll have a nice shepherd's pie on the table in just a few minutes."

Dinner was quite lovely, every bit as good as the many other dishes Meg made.

In the afternoon, I showed Sir Reg two new dumbbell exercises, namely the weighted crunch to help his abdominal muscles and the dumbbell side bend to improve the external oblique muscle of the abdomen. I did not object to demonstrating the exercise, but I couldn't help but feeling he was enjoying my demonstrations as a show. Well, that was fine with me, as long as he gained benefit.

After the demonstration, I left his room to allow him to undress on his own. I returned to give him a good massage.

My day's tasks at the manor were complete, so I said my goodbyes and walked back into Hawkinge.

At my boarding house, I found Betty in the kitchen. "Hello, Patricia. Step in and sit down. Would you care for a cup of tea?"

"Certainly." As she brewed a pot, I told her my stories of the day. That is, I mentioned my race, my shooting match, and the new conservatory.

"Well, I must say, you seem to have a profound influence on Sir Reginald Pleydell and upon Folkestone Manor."

"Apparently, I do. And I have done no harm, as those who take the doctor's oath say. Now, Meg Bates wants you to know that Jack is going to Canterbury on Saturday. I will go with him. Would you like to come along?"

"Of course! I love going to the Canterbury faire. Have you ever been?"

"No, never."

"Then you shall have a unique experience. I think you'll like the adventure."

I went to my rooms and changed my clothing. Today, I wanted no long walk. I merely went to the park to sit upon the grass, lean my back against a tree, and read some Edward Bulwer-Lytton.

At tea, no conversations of great import took place. Even Mr. Uriah Grimstead was bearable. At the end of the meal, I retired to my rooms to read my letters. I began with the one from Florence Nightingale.

June, 1865, 20th inst.

Nurse Patricia Goodman  
c/o Folkestone Manor  
Hawkinge, Kent



Dear Nurse Goodman,

I am encouraged by your words of progress with Sir Reginald.

I'm confident that your education, training, and London experience will serve you well. Certainly you are skilled at assessing conditions, ameliorating pain, and making nutritious food the core component of maintaining health. And, your work with soldiers at the Royal Hospital should have provided you with experience in the art and science of rehabilitation.

By all means, please keep me informed of your patient's progress. And, of course, let me know of your adaptation to country life.

With affection, I remain,

Florence Nightingale  
St. Thomas' Hospital  
Stangate, Lambeth

I greatly appreciated Miss Nightingale's encouragement. The second letter was from my mum.

Miss Patricia Goodman  
c/o Folkestone Manor  
Hawkinge, Kent

My Dear Child,

I anticipate that this note finds you well. All things are good here. Bridget has not poisoned me with her cooking, and occasionally I'm able to teach that ignorant girl something new.

In reference to your footrace, I'm glad you managed your jiggling bosom. We Richardson women have dignity, and do not let our thruppenny bits—as the Cockneys call tits—fly about the room. In our family, we have breasts something more like guineas, not threepence coins, and it would not do to jiggle too much. Why, we'd give ourselves a blackened eye if one of our breasts were to hit us in the face.

Of my mysterious stranger, for now I will say only that he is called Howard Staunton and his family is from Cheshire. He is the Member of Parliament for Richmond Park in our Borough of Richmond upon Thames. He was an officer in India, and is both handsome and charming. I met him at Kew Gardens. We have an adventure planned, but I prefer not to reveal it until it takes place.

I love you very much, and will send more biscuits.

Your Mother  
Elizabeth Richardson  
Kew

I was delighted at the news that my mother had met a man. It struck me that she was ready to marry again, should she be so moved. I made a mental note to look up Howard Staunton in Burke's Peerage, as I was confident that Sir Reg kept a copy.

It required but a little time to pen brief notes back to Miss Nightingale and my mother. I then sat quietly at my table as the sun went down and the room grew dark. The day had been quite lovely.

**Friday, June 23, 1865**

On the way to the manor, I stopped at Sam Fowler's to post my letters and then walked briskly into the country. As usual, Meg and I shared a pot of tea.

Meg glanced down at her newspaper. As I prepared my tea and buttered a scone, I saw her expression darken.

"You look a bit disturbed. I hope you're well, Meg."

"Oh, I feel fine, Miz, but I am, as you say, a little disturbed. I'm no yarper, though, so I'll hold my tongue."

"Oh, no! Please explain. What's the bother?"

"Well, there's something here in the Times of London that Sir Reg gets daily. I worry. There's an attack on me love."

"Your Jack's in The Times?"

Meg let out a hearty laugh. "No! Goodness, no! Not that love. Jack's me first love, sure, but I'm talking about me other love."

"Cooking?"

"Just so."

"Please tell me all about it."

"It's that accursed Salisbury, *and* a Scot, *and* a Belgian. Do you know the name Salisbury?"

"Yes. You mean Lord Cranborne, the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury. He fights with Disraeli, Gladstone, and Derby all the time in Parliament."

"No, not him."

"You cannot mean the Salisbury Plain, where we find Stonehenge."

"Oh, no, Miz Pat. This is more important than a political windbag or a pile of rocks. I'm speaking of a Dr. James Salisbury, of New York, in America. I've got me knickers in a knot because of his 'Salisbury steak.'"

"Oh, yes. Now I recall him. We learned about him from Miss Nightingale."

"And your opinion?"

"He is a doctor, but he is also a food faddist. Of course, like Miss Nightingale, he believes that good food is essential to health. But at this point, he goes off the rails. He thinks that fruit, vegetables, bread, and potatoes are poisonous to the digestive system—a belief that flies in the face of the food that healthy peoples around the world eat. Such 'poisons,' he believes, cause heart disease, tumors, mental illness, and tuberculosis."

“Poisons, indeed! I’ve me four strappin’ boys, and they don’t look poisoned to me. Had their share of all those foods growin’ up. If you don’t mind, I’ll give you a bit of a speech.”

I warned to this. Meg was about to declaim. “Yes, of course. Please go on!”

“Well, he and his steak are part of a problem. Now I don’t quarrel with our good English minced beef or veal. Maybe a Hamburg steak, and so forth. I’ve been mincing meat since I was a girl. It’s in the *Art of Cookery*, which came out a hundred years ago. That was the cookbook that taught me how to read.

“In the main, I favor a roast or a good steak and kidney pie, not chopping meat up. And if you mince it, best you mince it yourself—not some butcher. Otherwise, I guarantee you’ll be sick as a dog.

“Here’s the worst part: This doctor grinds up beef, adds breadcrumbs—breadcrumbs!—and onions, and then deep-fries or boils it. The first method will fill it with grease; the second one will leach all the flavor out. That’s terrible!”

I took a sip of tea. “I understand. Tell me more.”

“That ain’t the half of it. The existence of Salisbury steak is but Exhibit A.”

Meg stood up and struck a dignified pose.

“I will now orate like them barristers at the assizes in London.

“Exhibit B. There is a Scotsman who proposes to place this ‘steak’ of chopped meat on a girdle scone. You’d call that a griddle scone, Miz Patricia. It’s fried, not baked.

“Exhibit C. The chip. You may not know it, but they’ve sold fried tatties in Oldham for years. And a good English wife certainly knows how to fry potatoes. But now there’s some Belgian in Dundee who’s selling them, too!”

“And so, Meg, how do the chips relate to the steak and scone?”

Meg, in her best dramatic style, thrust her index finger forward. “Now, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I will spin all items together into a dramatic conclusion.

“This penny-pinching Tam o’ Shanter proposes to put his fried ‘steak’ of minced beef on a fried scone and serve it with fried chips. There ain’t enough grease in all of Caledonia to handle that! You could keep all the lamps in Portsmouth lit for a month with all that oil.

“Add to all this, my final exhibit, which I shall style Exhibit D: The *worst* part of it all is that you will *not* sit down to eat this delight. This Scottish Ned declares that the farmer or other working man should drive his wagon up to a window at the side of his shoppe, and take the food away wrapped in paper!”

Meg sat down at the table with a triumphant plop.

“Meg, I’m truly impressed with your narrative. You should have studied for the bar. The food certainly doesn’t sound healthy, and it’s not a good idea to rush eating. Even the farmer enjoys his ploughman’s lunch in the shade of a tree. So tell me, who is this debaucher of good eating in Dundee?”

“The *Times* says his name’s McDonald. Ronald McDonald.”

I thought a moment and took another sip of tea. “Well, don’t worry yourself into a fit, Meg. I’m sure that nothing will come of this. We can trust in the good judgment of English-speaking people everywhere. They will never eat such items.”

“Well I hope that’s the case, Miz Patricia.”

I was startled and pleased that Meg could add to my education. I also saw that a passionate dedication to one’s work sharpens the mind.

I pushed the second wheelchair to my day room and proceeded to inspect both of them. They were, I was happy to see, exactly as I had specified them. That is, they had very large wheels, leather backs and seats, and the latest tires. I was delighted that Mr. Bunsen had located pneumatic tires with a knobby tread. There was a pump included, as well.

At nine o’clock, I proceeded to the library. Hearing no response to my knock, I entered anyway.

“Sir Reginald?”

“I’m in the conservatory, Mrs. Goodman. Please come down here.”

I found him working with his dumbbells.

“Seat yourself, won’t you?”

I saw that Sir Reg had installed a small table and two chairs in the central space. They were of white wrought iron with striped cushions. Upon the table was a tea service in floral-decorated porcelain, which we call “China.”

“Pour yourself a cup of tea, won’t you?”

I did so. “Now tell me, sir, how are you feeling?”

“Tip top. I must say, my arms and sides feel sore, as they have not felt before. But since, as you know, I feel nothing from many other muscles, I welcome the sensation.”

“Good, Sir Reg. Let me give you what is formally called an evaluation. Based on my daily observations, I find you to be much more fit than when I met you.”

“Well, that might be so. How do you account for it?”

“I believe several factors are involved. First, the management of your pain is improved. Laudanum is rather corrosive, and you no longer use it. Second, your diet is improved. You eat regularly and more heartily. Meg’s cooking is robust and varied. And yet, I notice during massages that you seem a bit trimmer. Third, what you drink has improved. You have reduced your consumption of Irish whiskey and substituted a bit of port. You drink tea, although admittedly laced with opiates. I encourage you to drink more water or at least more ale, as water has excellent health benefits. Fourth, massage has benefits. There are two: improved muscle tone and relaxation. The first improves your body and the second improves your mind. Fifth, recreation is beneficial. We have had two races and several pistol matches. Those activities make demands of you.”

“I have you to thank for this.”

"I would accept your thanks, but I must say, the changes are very much due to *your* efforts."

"Well, then. I will tell you I appreciate the intellectual stimulation you bring to our dinners. Also, you were instrumental in causing Simon Shepherd to visit me."

"Sir Reg, I have several more things in mind."

"Nurse! Am I to be spared nothing? Surely there has been great progress made already?"

"Yes, there has. However, I will not rest..." I paused. "until... you... walk."

"Impossible."

"As your Cockney soldiers would say behind your back, that's a pile of Tom Tit. Say that again in ten weeks. In fact, I'll bet you five pounds."

"For a medical professional, nurse, you are no scientist. I'll take that bet. Do not go on about my attitude, please. I'm merely citing science."

"Ten weeks, Sir Reg, barring any unforeseen events. Please be a gentleman when you lose your money."

"Very well. Let's shake on it."

He extended his hand, and then gave me a firm handshake. I fancied he was a bit reluctant to loosen his grip. I left and returned to the kitchen.

"Tell me, Meg. Will Sir Reg be occupied this morning?"

"Yes. I'll go see him now to report on the finances. After that, he and Jack will talk about the state of the manor, and plan some further improvements."

"He's interested in improvements?"

"Indeed. Jack and I can't account for it, but it's so. And, as we say around here, it's better to ride a horse in the direction it's going. So Jack, you can be sure, will raise no objections."

I returned to my room and doffed my uniform. I got into my bloomers, put on work gloves, and sat in one of the wheelchairs. After a few minutes of practice, I found I was able to move forward, move backward, and steer without too much trouble.

I rolled into the main hallway. I drove up to the library, turned around, and drove down the full length of the hall. Then I repeated the exercise. I then did it again. Up, down, up, down, up, down, and so forth. Finally, I stopped at the door of the kitchen. I was panting, and my arms were aching.

"Tell me, Miz Pat, what are ye doing?"

Out of breath, I said, "Practicing driving a wheelchair. Ouch, I hurt. I'm not yarping, mind you, but I feel the strain."

"To what good end, missy? Are ye planning to become lame?"

“The answer is simple, Meg: wheelchair races. Sir Reg will see that I don’t need to run in order to compete with him.”

Meg gave out a hearty laugh. “Is this more of what you call physical therapy?”

“It certainly is. All part of a grand plan. I hope to demonstrate that if I compete with him in a wheelchair, perhaps he’ll compete with me in walking.”

“He won’t like losing.”

“Well, I have some practicing to do, or I’ll be losing.”

“He’ll be disappointed at not seeing your bubbies bounce around.”

“Nonsense. I don’t think he notices.”

“I think you are wrong. All men notice such things.”

“Oh, really? Just yesterday he said I was ‘perhaps’ pretty, and ‘perhaps’ someone would marry me. I did not feel richly complimented.”

“Well, dearie, a man will sometimes avoid saying to you what he might say to others. My guess is that he finds you more than pretty. Now, please, go get out of your fancy American underwear outfit and into a respectable skirt. I have some hearty food for dinner.”

I wheeled my way to my room and did just as Meg said. On reflection, I took it as a healthy sign that Sir Reg was showing some interest in my body. I then returned to the kitchen.

“Hello, Jack. Well, Meg, what delight do you have today?”

“Cutlets of pork, covered with a gravy. Applesauce to go with them. Boiled tatties with parsley. Will that not ballast you down?”

“Excellent, but I must watch my portions. I must train like an athlete. So tell me, Jack, did you and Sir Reg have a good talk about the manor?”

“Indeed, Patricia. I feel more useful now than I have in months. We talked up several projects, including repairs to the roof and planting an English garden. Well, of course, all gardens in England are English, but you ken what I mean. Not one of them French articles.”

“But Jack, you are useful already. Essential.”

“Managing the livestock and the game is all well enough, but it was the conservatory and the wheelchair ramp that drew on some of me skills. My biggest adventure this morning wasn’t much—I ran that poet fellow off the property again.”

“Again?”

“Yes. Given all the land surrounding Hawkinge, he seems to favor the woods of Folkestone Manor for strolls. There is no accounting for it. Now, are you and Betty coming with me to Canterbury tomorrow?”

“Yes! She’s excited and so am I.”

“Then I’ll be by to fetch you at eight o’clock.”

Meg, Jack, and I continued with small talk until our meal was complete. In the afternoon, I followed my usual practice; that is, I gave Sir Reg a massage and updated my journals. I made a note to write Florence Nightingale about my patient, and Mr. Bunsen about his wheelchairs.

I dawdled on the walk home. My mind was filled with thoughts of wheelchairs, handshakes, and bouncing breasts.

At Betty Bourne’s house, I found her to be free for a bit. We walked to town for an ale, this time to The Black Horse, a generally quiet place in the afternoon, although known to be rowdy at night. The ale was just the thing I wanted after a morning of exercising little-used muscles.

Further, Betty’s company was a delight. For the briefest moment, I felt a twinge of sadness. I remembered that someday, whether Sir Reg could walk or not, my time in Hawkinge would come to an end. Somehow, London did not seem as appealing as it once had been.

We returned to the house, and in Betty’s kitchen, I helped her prepare the pub grub. She had already made savory pies. I merely boiled eggs and baked potatoes. We filled plates and bowls with pickles of herring and cockles, and placed everything in hampers. She left to deliver food to the pubs, and I repaired to my rooms.

There, with great satisfaction, I removed my uniform, and set out books for reading and stationery for writing. I added my mother to the list of those I must write.

Unsurprisingly, our tea comprised the very same food we had prepared earlier. Betty also served a tureen of pea soup. Curiously, Mr. Uriah Grimstead was absent, but frankly, he was not missed, and the conversation was (so I thought) rather more light and lively.

“Thank you so much, Betty. A lovely tea!”

“You’re very welcome. What will you do this evening?”

“I’ve had a hard day, attempting to be an athlete. So I’ll take no walk, nor will I go to the park. My plan is simply to lay out an outfit for Canterbury. After that, I will merely play the part of an English gentlewoman. I shall read and write letters. Oh, and maybe have a couple of glasses of port. Join me if you’re free.”

Betty opted for a long hot bath. She was tired from cooking for two pubs and her own table.

So with that, I went upstairs and did exactly as I said. I slipped into my kimono and started several letters. Then, accompanied by good wine, I read until my eyelids were drooping.

I fell asleep, quite naked, giving myself a few caresses, and thinking about Sir Reginald.