

10. Life at the Manor

Thursday, June 29, 1865

A night of sleep, fitful as it was, did me a world of good. I awoke with an attitude of calm and with energy sufficient to groom, check my packing, and go to the kitchen for a cup of tea.

As expected, Betty was there. We spoke of nothing important, indulging only in a warm exchange of affection. She assured me she would give my goodbyes to young Frank.

At seven o'clock, Jack arrived in his wagon. It took only a few minutes for the brawny man to bring my trunk downstairs. He lifted it to the wagon bed with ease. With a wave to Betty, we set off.

Thank goodness that the day was sunny! Jack was cheery and I found his disposition to be infectious. When we reached the manor, Meg was at the front portico. I had previously paid little attention to the appearance of the manor's front, and now I took a moment to absorb it. Various shrubberies were in place—*were they new?*—and were well tended. The front turnaround was planted completely with flowers.

"Welcome to Folkestone Manor, Lady Goodman!"

"Oh, Duchess Margaret! Thank you for the welcome."

"Then get down, come in, and take a look at your rooms." I dismounted and followed Meg. She opened the door next to my day room.

What I found was a lovely chamber, of the same or perhaps slightly greater size as my day room. The walls were typical of the manor, with its wainscoting and wallpaper throughout. The wainscoting, however, was not dark wood; rather, it was of pine, painted white, rising perhaps thirty-nine inches from the floorboard to a capping rail. The wallpaper was a simple floral pattern, leaning toward yellow, and (mercifully) with a pattern neither too large nor too bold. Light entered from the same sort of French doors that graced all rooms on the north side of the manor—identical to those in my day room and Sir Reg's bedchamber. The pattern of the curtains was quite restrained.

"This is wonderful, Meg. Oh, and look at the carpet!"

"Indeed, a Persian it is. Fetched from the basement, unrolled, beaten, and laid for your pleasure."

"The bed, armoire, table, and chairs are lovely. And, my, what a beautiful commode!"

"Aye, and of course that's where the chamber pot is kept. Do you notice that everything here is quite old? Antiques. I especially like the pitcher and basin."

"You are indeed treating me like 'Lady Goodman.' Recall that I'm only a working nurse."

"It's nothing, I assure you. You should see the elaborate four-poster bed that Jack and I sleep in. It must be a hundred years old, and I guarantee that neither the Colour Sergeant nor I grew up living thus. But what with our being here at the manor for ten years, we have built ourselves a cozy nest. Also, we have gradually restored many rooms that Sir Reg has neglected. Many a carpet, tapestry, and armoire has been cleaned and polished."

"But tell me, shouldn't the sleeping chambers be on the second floor?"

“Indeed they should be, but from the beginning of Sir Reg’s return to the manor, it was obvious to Jack and me that he could be best attended to if he were on the first floor. It was only a matter of time before Jack made an elaborate bathing room next to Sir Reg’s first-floor bedroom.

“It followed that Jack and I would sleep on the first floor, near my kitchen and the servants’ dining room. Otherwise, we have done little in the way of major improvements. The renovation of the conservatory didn’t take place until you arrived and only recently has Sir Reg cared to fix the roof.

“Does anything else require repair?”

“Rest assured, missy, I have a list of things needing attention. Of course, Jack always keeps the barn and corral as they should be.”

“But what of the greenery at the front?”

“Well, the groundsmen have been working like Trojans. They are paid whether they are idle or no, and they rather welcomed the task. Jack reasoned that the front needed flowers, shrubbery, and even some plants that looked like animals.”

“Topiary?”

“Is that the word for it? Oh yes! They are quite silly, aren’t they?”

“Indeed. Imagine a bush shaped like a tiger or a dove! Very French, if you ask me, but no matter. Now, how is Sir Reg doing?”

“Well enough. He didn’t eat dinner yesterday, as he was sleeping. At tea time, I brought him opium tea, but he would not eat solid food. This morning, I gave him more such tea.”

“I’ll go immediately to check on him. Then I’ll join you in the kitchen. I plan to unpack a little later.”

It was necessary only that I stop in my day room. I prepared a strong injection of morphine in anticipation that it might be needed. I knocked on the door of Sir Reg’s bedchamber and was answered with a rather weak “come in.”

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

With a wan smile: “Greatly enlightened by my experience of yesterday.”

“You make an understatement.”

“Indeed I do, nurse. I must say, I have never before had such a thorough encounter with intense pain. What happened?”

“Sir Reginald, yesterday I accidentally pressed *something*, likely a piece of shrapnel located near your spinal cord. *The* piece, I surmise, that accounts for your condition. I caused you much pain. I am so sorry.”

“I marvel that a tiny scrap of Russian iron could have such an effect. Horatio Nelson lost an arm at the Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. His upper arm was destroyed by a large musket ball, yet he walked to the surgery

under his own power. Of course, I recall that it took only a small sharpshooter's bullet at the Battle of Trafalgar to finally do him in. Still, I wonder if he felt as I did yesterday."

"If you don't mind, I will check your condition."

"Pray, be careful."

"Now, more than ever, I shall be careful."

With this, I turned Sir Reg on his stomach, and began to explore from the soles of his feet up his body. I gently stroked his calves.

"Do you feel anything?"

"Merely some tingling."

I moved to his thighs. "What now?"

"Tingling and pain."

I was startled, but made a concerted effort not to react. From there I moved to his buttocks. "What of this?"

"I do believe you are touching my bum."

Going for all, I took a firm grasp on his scrotum. "And what of this?"

"My God! That's my cod!"

"And that, sir, is the best news I've heard. Take them all together. You are now experiencing new sensations in your lower body."

"And what of the pain?"

"I sincerely regret the pain, but please do not worry. I have a plan, but it is not yet fulfilled."

"Nurse Goodman, are you never at an end of plans?"

"Indeed no, Sir Reg. Not as long as you employ me. Now will you take some medication?"

"Do you mean one of your injections?"

"No. I should like you to be awake at dinner, so you might take some simple nourishment. Here, please swallow these pills and wash them down with tea."

He did so. "Now, please try to rest. I'll return at dinner time."

I left Sir Reg in a very comfortable state—as comfortable, at least, as he could be. My head was swimming with new details. I hurried to my room to record my findings, and then made haste to Meg's kitchen.

"How is he, Patricia?"

“As well as might be expected, Meg. His body is undergoing changes—good ones, I believe.”

“Well, that’s better-most.”

“Now, if it’s not too late to suggest dinner, I will propose it to you: Could we have a simple soup made from chicken?”

“Yes, of course. There’s not a chicken in the barnyard that wouldn’t give its life for Sir Reg. And I have a lovely recipe. It takes no time at all and is considered to be quite a good regenerative.”

“Then please do that. At tea, perhaps then Sir Reg could have something more solid.”

And so I left, not wishing to meddle any more in the operation of Meg’s kitchen. I returned just before one o’clock, and found that she had made a lovely chicken soup. I filled the dinner cart and rolled it to Sir Reg’s room. I knocked and entered.

“Sir Reg, I assume that you do not yet feel like sitting in your wheelchair. Therefore, please sit up and let me feed you.” And so, I sat at the edge of the bed, a bowl of soup in my hand. I put a spoonful of the contents in Sir Reg’s mouth. I wiped his lips after each spoonful.

“What is this soup?”

“A special chicken soup, with some tiny dumplings filled with meat. Meg tells me she learned it years ago from Mrs. Kreplach in the village. Meg says it will restore health as well as any medicine.”

“Well, I must say, it’s very good. I wonder why I’ve not had it before.”

“Meg says you’re never sick, so you’ve never been in need of it. Try a dumpling.”

He chewed and swallowed. “Done. Very good!”

“Excellent. Now I shall soak a small piece of bread in the broth and tuck it into your mouth.”

And so the meal continued. I fancied myself to be a bit like a young mother feeding her child.

“Sir Reg, it appears that you do not yet need an injection. Merely have some of this tea, and take two of these pills. They should reduce any pain.”

“What are they?”

“They are codeine, an opium derivative. To put it indelicately, the pills are potent enough to drop a horse. Should you have a severe attack of pain, I shall come running with a syringe.”

“Didn’t your mother warn you about running with syringes?”

I laughed. “You are surprisingly positive, under the circumstances.”

“I am accustomed to adversity. I see now that it has been boredom that does not fit me. Since you have arrived, I confess that I have been anything but bored.”

“At tea, I shall check in on you, and encourage you to eat more, if you feel you can ingest truly solid food.”

“At tea? Normally, you return to your rooms at Betty Bourne’s for tea.”

“My rooms are now at the other end of the hall. I have moved into the manor, at least temporarily.”

“Indeed?”

“Yes. You may ring for me any time. Now, rest and recovery is most important. Tomorrow, if you feel like it, perhaps you will go about in your wheelchair.”

“Forgive me if I don’t challenge you to a wheelchair race.”

“Yes, of course. And I won’t challenge you to a shooting match, considering that you are filled with ‘doop,’ as the Dutch call it, or ‘dope,’ to use the Americans name. By that, I refer to the opium compounds.”

I stood and pushed my serving cart out of the room. I could see that Sir Reg was already dropping off for a nap. I returned the cart to the kitchen and reported Sir Reg’s eating to Meg. I helped myself to a bowl of the soup, and ate bread and butter as well. Then I discussed with Meg what a suitable high tea would be. It was a trivial task, as Meg was always infinitely resourceful in the realm of meal planning.

In my room, I changed into a conventional frock, a simple light green brocade with no lace trim at the collar and plain trim at the cuffs. I donned my straw boater and the pair of flat shoes I had borrowed from Betty. I did so, as I was determined to set out upon a walk before tea.

At Barnhart Lane, I turned to the east as usual, in the direction of Hawkinge. After walking about half the distance to town, I turned to the right and set off for the ten hops pickers’ cabins I had seen on a previous walk. They were quite run down, but the summer verdure lent an unexpected beauty to the scene. As a bonus, the songs of birds filled the air.

Passing the huts, I soon came to the nameless wagon track I had taken in the past. I took a turn and in just a few minutes found myself at the Canterbury Road, in front of the blacksmith’s shop.

I peeked in. Bill Black was busy at his forge. I gave him a wave of my hand, and he nodded back. Like the blacksmith in the poem by the American Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, I noticed that Mr. Black did indeed have “muscles of his brawny arms as strong as iron bands.” However, his forge was in a large wooden building, not “under a spreading chestnut tree.”

I walked briskly north to Mr. Fowler’s postal and telegraph office.

Hello, Sam!”

“Hello, Miz Patricia! Good to see you!”

“Do you have any mail for me?”

“No, not today, but I do have a story.”

“Pray, tell it.”

"You are either a sorceress or a spy well connected to the King of Bohemia. Today, events unfolded exactly as you predicted. In the morning, at perhaps half eight, a very agitated Uriah Grimstead came here. He was quite anxious to send a telegram."

"If I may pry, what did it say?"

"The nightingale has left the town, likely she is London bound."

"Ah, yes. I moved out of Betty Bourne's rooms at 7:00 AM."

"But then, after dinner, as you also predicted, an even more agitated Grimstead rushed here. He was even *more* anxious to despatch a second telegram."

"And it said?"

"There is more news, and not the best. At Folkestone Manor she makes her nest."

I laughed. "Sam, that is terrible poetry! I assure you that it refers to my moving into Folkestone Manor this morning. No doubt Grimstead found out when Betty served dinner. Whoever is watching Sir Reg will be mightily disturbed."

"You moved into the manor?"

"Yes. Sir Reg has had a sudden change—for the better, I believe. However, Uriah Grimstead doesn't know that. I'm sure Betty would only tell him, quite truthfully, where I had moved."

"Shall I keep mum?"

"No need to at this point. The village will soon know of my move. And the people will welcome any news of Sir Reg's improvement."

"But what of your telegram, the one I sent yesterday to that doctor?"

"That must remain a secret. Even Sir Reg doesn't know about it. But please, should a reply come, you must alert me instantly."

"I'll be happy to oblige you, of course."

I reached into my pocketbook. "Then I must formally initiate you into the King of Bohemia's spy ring by giving you this 1£ note."

"Do I get a cloak and a dagger?"

"Sorry, no. You do not even get a laboratory coat and a scalpel." We had a good laugh, and I left his establishment. I proceeded to the manor via the shortest route, straight down Barnhurst Lane.

I looked in on Sir Reg. He was napping.

"Hello, Meg. What of high tea?"

"Sit down and chat. Jack will join us in a moment."

“Thank you for adding me to your list of diners.”

“That is trivial. With my kitchen, there’s always room for another. And, I must say, you are rather a light eater for a big, strapping girl.”

“What shall we have to eat?”

“A meal a bit more solid than the soup we ate at dinner. There are little sandwiches, some of beef and some of herring. In addition, cucumbers in sour cream, as the Russians eat them. I’ve not only boiled potatoes, but mashed them as well. In that way, Sir Reg should have no problem with eating.”

“Shall I feed Sir Reg, as I did at dinner?”

“I think not, Miz Pat. He told me between naps that he could eat on his own. I think he was, however, fond of the attention you gave him. Granted, he’ll eat in his bed, but on the morrow, all will be as before.”

“Very well.”

“Further, he told Jack he did not want to move his bowels until morning, if possible. He doesn’t want Jack to be responsible for wiping his bum. He thinks that tomorrow, he can use the porcelain appliance.”

Having heard all this, I was comforted. After she served Sir Reg, I joined Meg and Jack in the simple repast.

Tea being concluded, I looked in on Sir Reg one last time. The high tea seemed to have agreed with him. He was sleeping soundly, and his breathing was regular and untroubled.

There was, today, nothing left for me to do. Overall, I found much comfort in my actions: I had written Dr. Lister and had moved into the manor. In addition, the attentions I had paid to Sir Reg provided me with an element of comfort, and it appeared I had not damaged him excessively.

All I might do now was to disrobe and to read in bed. Although there was a good deal of daylight left, I employed it simply to read, with no attempt to write letters or make notes. As it grew dark, I lit the kerosene lamp next to the bed and continued to read from various novels.

At last, I found myself drifting off, and so doused the light. I was content to count my blessings, as the churchmen say. Sir Reg was not harmed, as nearly as I could determine. Dr. Lister had been written. And, I had been well welcomed as a resident of Folkestone Manor. So in time my eyelids grew heavy and I found sleep.

Friday, June 30, 1865

I woke with light filling my room. Ah! I had not drawn the curtains the night before. At first I was confused as to my location, and then realized double quick that I was at the manor, not in Betty Bourne’s rooms.

The combination of a good night’s rest, Sir Reg’s stable condition, and Meg’s cooking had helped to calm me. I felt I could focus well on my next plan for Sir Reg. In particular, I knew I must explore the phenomenon of his increased sensitivity.

It being quite early, I determined not to dress, but to go to the kitchen in my kimono. Of course, Meg was there.

“Ah, so!” Meg said, “Sayonara. Good morning to you! You look like a little Japanese girl.”

“That’s not so likely for a ‘big, strapping girl,’ as you called me yesterday. And that I am. Anyway, I believe that in Japan they say, ‘Ohayou.’”

“As you wish, Miz Pat. You are the well-educated one amongst us. But it seems odd that the Japanese mention one of the states in the United States in the morning. It would be like my greeting you with ‘Nottinghamshire.’”

“Just a coincidence of pronunciation, Meg. Yes, I know many things, except for all things I do not know.”

Jack entered the kitchen. “Good morning! Why, Patricia, you look like a harem girl. Oh no, Meg, not that I’ve ever seen one! Well, no nevermind. Now marvel at this: I’ve just been visited by Nick and Ned Bowles. We unloaded four stout casks. They said this note was to be given to you.”

Jack handed me an envelope. I opened it and read aloud.

Dear Patricia, Meg, and Jack,

To celebrate Patricia’s taking up residence with you, I’ve prevailed upon the Bowles brothers to deliver to you four firkins of ale, two from The White Horse and two from The Black Horse.

They are of the “imperial” variety, also called “double India Pale Ale.” That is, they’re stronger than the regular ale, and of course they are made with the special hops my Angus developed.

Until we meet, I remain,

Yours,

Mrs. Elizabeth “Betty” Bourne

“Tell me, Jack, what’s a firkin?”

“An ale firkin is 9 imperial gallons. That became the law in 1824, and I know it because that’s the year I was born.”

“Well, what a nice surprise this is! I shall write Betty and the Bowles brothers notes of thanks.” I finished my tea and went to my room to dress. It would hardly be proper to greet Sir Reg in a dressing gown.

At nine o’clock, I visited Sir Reg’s bedroom, armed with a hypodermic needle and pills. To my surprise, he was not there. I descended the ramp into the conservatory, but did not find him there, either. Thence, I ascended the other ramp into the library. I found Sir Reg in his wheelchair, fully dressed.

“Sir Reg, you are not in bed.”

“Ah, Nurse Goodman. Please come in. I marvel at your capacity to grasp the obvious.”

“But why have you left your bed?”

“I will not be confined to a bed.”

“But how do you feel?”

“Fairly well, thank you. Some new pains are here, but several old ones have disappeared.”

“Do you require an injection?”

“I think not. The pills and opium tea seem to be sufficient. If you don’t mind, would you refill my cup?”

“Very well, but tell me this: I see a sword in your lap. What is it for?”

“Yes, that is my sword, absent from its usual place on the mantel. What you see here is a Model 1822/1845 infantry officer’s sword. It is still the model used in the service. I have been studying it, as it reminds me of my capacity to overcome adversity.”

“I must say, I rather marvel at your positive attitude.”

“Be assured, the Reginald Pleydell you see today is not the only version that exists. Flexibility is essential on the battlefield. It only makes sense to me that such flexibility must be applied to all the exigencies of life. Now, to be direct, will you join me for dinner?”

“Yes, of course. Are you comfortable eating solid food?”

“Yes, and I do not require that you feed me with a spoon, although I must say that I rather enjoyed that ritual. I have already given the order for food to Meg. Please meet me in the dining room.”

After a bit more conversation, we parted. I returned to my day room. In what I thought to be a bold move, I exchanged my uniform for a bright blue frock. I reminded myself that the requirement to wear a nurse’s uniform need not be so stringent in private service as it would be in hospital. At the hour of one, I walked the short distance to the dining room.

I sat. A moment later, Sir Reg entered, followed by Meg.

“Here, my children. Eat hearty.”

“Margaret, may I remind you that I’m scarcely five years younger than you. I am not twelve years old.”

“Reginald, my wonderful employer, my heart is full, but my mouth will remain empty.”

I laughed! “Sir Reg, if you act as though you are twelve, you may be treated as though you were twelve.”

“Very well. Were you able to prepare what I asked for?”

“Indeed, sir. It’s roasted lamb, not four hours old since the killing. These ribs come together in what you rightly referred to as a rack of lamb. Further, you’ll find tatties, garden vegetables, and bread.”

“Excellent! That’s a meal fit for a woodsman.”

“And there is more. I’ve made you Garibaldi biscuits, one of your favorites. And we’ll try some double strong ale, sent this morning by the Bowles brothers.” With that, Meg left to enjoy dinner with Jack.

“Nurse Goodman, I must confess that for some reason I feel an increase in appetite.”

“Excellent, Sir Reg. I take that as a very good sign.”

“So, you are to reside at the manor?”

“Yes, if you don’t mind. I feel that I must remain close to you until at the least I am convinced that you are not worse off for my accident with your body.”

“I imagine the people in the village will be scandalized.”

“Perhaps, but that is of no matter to me. Besides, the villagers I’ve met seem kindly disposed toward me. And also, ‘What happens in Hawkinge...’”

“‘...stays in Hawkinge.’ Yes, I know.”

Except for things that Uriah Grimstead telegraphs to Grosvenor Square, I thought. Having consumed the meat from one rib, Sir Reg held up the bone to gnaw like a caveman.

“Well surely, the villagers cannot accuse me of chasing you through the halls. Now tell me, what new trials do you have for me this afternoon?”

“With your permission, I will offer you a massage, but one done with much greater care and attention than my last one. I assure you that I will skirt the area of your lower back that is the source of difficulties. In addition, I should like to carefully discover your new sensitivities, quiz you, and note the results.”

“I must say, that doesn’t sound very romantic.”

“Indeed not. It should sound professional. We can benefit, you and me, by gaining new understanding of your infirmity. Oh, and by the way, there is one other thing.”

“Nurse Patricia Goodman, with you there is always ‘one other thing.’ What is it?”

“Tomorrow is Saturday. I should like you to host a dinner.”

“I do that every day.”

“For seven.”

“WHAT?”

“I’m sure my speech is clear. Tomorrow, I should like you to host a dinner for seven.”

“Absolutely not.” There was a long pause. “And who might these seven people be?”

“To begin with, you. Followed by Meg and Jack, your devoted retainers. Followed by me, your medical professional. And thence, Simon Shepherd, a young man you like and have spent time with.”

“And the others?”

“Betty Bourne, my landlady, and Frank, her son.”

“You must be mad. Why on earth should I expose my infirmity to Betty and her son?”

“My answer is simple: All of the people I have named know of your condition. They respect you. Frank Bourne idolizes you. Betty has sent you 36 gallons of ale from the Bowles brothers. They, like all the village, do not get any of your company. *Nor* do you get any benefit from their company. Further, you are very fit. No, please don’t object, as I affirm it, and I should know, as I am your nurse. Further, I would consider it a personal favor, and...”

“Stop! Stop! Simple answer, indeed! Indeed *not*! I will assent to this if you will agree to stop supplying reasons.”

“Agreed. Thank you. I admire your excellent judgment. And... you’ve made me very happy.”

“Good! Now finish your ribs, please. We shall both gnaw them like Neanderthals.”

And so we did.

There was silence as we enjoyed our lamb. Then, “I may wear a new cravat.”

“I may wear a dress instead of a uniform, much as today.”

Our meal concluded, I made a bold move. I rose, went to Sir Reg, and kissed him upon the cheek.

“Thank you... Reginald.”

“You are quite welcome... Patricia.”

With that I left. I fairly bounced out of the room, and went to the kitchen to speak to Meg.

Meg was delighted at the prospect of a dinner party, although it was to be held on a Saturday and not on a Sunday. I stressed to her that we must have simple dishes, as I did not want to spoil Sir Reg’s digestion, nor did I want him to think of the event as being formal.

“You leave it to me, Miz Pat. I know his favorites, and I’ll speak with him as well.”

I returned to my rooms, and changed into my uniform, in anticipation of giving Sir Reg an afternoon massage. Just before dinner, I returned to Meg’s kitchen, and found the meal to be nearly ready.

“What have we today, Meg?”

“A simple ploughman’s. My bread, of course, with butter and some chutney. There are wedges of cheese and some hard cooked eggs. Add to that a simple broth made from beef, and being that the weather is growing warmer, a nice bit of ale.”

“Lovely!” I proceeded to eat with enthusiasm.

“Now, Patricia, let me share an idea with you. Do you have more of that herb from California that the Chinaman gave you?”

“Ah, you mean Dr. Wong Kei of London. The herb is called marijuana, and to answer your question, I have a great deal of it. Why do you ask?”

“I was thinking of a useful medicine my mother used to make. If you can give me some of it, I’ll brew it up.”

“Yes, of course. I’ll be happy to supply you.”

Later that afternoon, I gathered up my anatomy book and a notebook. I went to Sir Reg’s bedchamber, knocked, and was bade to enter. My task was to be a thorough and yet gentle examination. I undertook the following procedure, viz.: carefully address a portion of the musculature, consult the anatomy book, query Sir Reg as to pain or sensitivity, record the results, and gently massage.

Sir Reg’s upper body was very much the same as before I disturbed the shrapnel, but now my documentation was quite thorough. He retained control of his muscles and was generally sensitive. The same, sadly, was not true of his lower body.

He reported tingling throughout the front of his thighs, the rectus femoris, vastus medialis, vastus intermedius, and vastus lateralis. Sadly, the back of his thighs, the biceps femoris, produced constant shooting pain, whether I touched them or not.

“Excuse me, Sir Reg. I must now touch your penis.”

“I do not know the term. Is that another muscle?”

“Some call it the love muscle.”

“Oh. Er, yes. Well, I feel something, much as when you had my bollocks in your hand. A bit of a tingle.”

“Pardon me for asking, sir, but do you feel aroused?”

“No, of course not. You could put seventy-two houri from an Arab harem in front of me, and that would not take place.”

“Sadly, we are not in a position to test that theorem.” I completed my work. I gave Sir Reg a mild injection of morphine, and I waited until he drowsed off. There was nothing left to do but return to my office and annotate my findings.

I was very much on my own for the rest of the day, so I removed my uniform and put on my simplest dress. I placed a large quantity of marijuana in a bag, and went to the kitchen. Meg wasn’t there, but I egressed the building and found her in the vegetable garden.

“Hello, Meg. What are you doing?”

“Tending the herbs. We have thyme, mint, marjoram, savory, and basil. You’ve already worked with our sage and rosemary plantings. All these herbs are the basic ones Mrs. Isabella Beeton advises in her book of household management.”

“I understand. I left the marijuana in your kitchen. Oh, and there’s Jack by the barn. I must speak with him.”

I walked briskly to Jack. “Mr. Major Domo, I have a favor to ask.”

“And what might that be?”

“Do you have a small cart that I might drive?”

"I can transport you when you require it."

"No, Jack. I must be self-sufficient. I've ridden before, but never driven a 'team,' even a team of one. Even that child Julia knows more than I."

"Then follow me to the barn, and we'll fix you up."

As we entered, Jack pointed to a small, two-wheeled cart.

"Here's the trap. Note well that it has no shafts. You will attach these leather traces to the collar on the horse."

We walked to the third stall.

"This here is Old Gray. She's a beauty, and very gentle. You may saddle and ride her, if you like, as well as using her to draw the trap. Now, let her out, become friends, and lead her to the front of your 'carriage.'"

I followed Jack's directions. I gave Old Gray a stroke or two and she rewarded me by nuzzling me hard enough to nearly knock me off my feet. When Jack handed me a bridle, she easily took the bit, and I led her to the trap.

"Now, throw this ring—it's a terret—over her neck, attach the traces, and tighten their girth straps. Good. Now see here, the reins are attached to the terret, so just throw them back to the driver's seat. Lastly, I'll give you a little whip, but you'll find that Old Gray doesn't need it."

"Jack, this is wonderful!"

"Do this whenever you need a buggy, and when you don't, you'll find saddles on yonder rail. Now, I caution you that this rig is not well sprung, so it will make yer bobbies bounce. Meg rather likes the feeling."

"How do you know?"

"She has told me when we take this cart out after dark. And, I must say, we don't consider clothing a necessity."

I blushed. "Why, Colour Sergeant Bates, you make me color considerably." With that, I mounted the driver's seat. I gave but a slight tug on the reins and Old Gray was on her way. By the time I had driven the driveway and turned into Barnhart Lane, I felt that both horse and driver were doing well.

I pulled up at the postal office and went in. "Hello, Sam. Do you have anything for me?"

"Yes, I do, Patricia. Here are letters and also a package from the Isle of Wight."

"Excellent! Thank you! Now, I must be running." It took me less than a minute, given the small distance, to pull up in front of Betty's house. I tied the horse to the hitching post at the street and entered.

"Betty, are you here?"

"Patricia! Yes, of course. Come in and sit down." I quickly brought Betty up to date on events at the manor. Most importantly, I tendered a dinner invitation for Frank and her.

"We'd be delighted to come, of course. What shall I bring?"

“Meg insists that she will prepare everything.”

“Just the same, I have a new supply of fish from Folkestone. I believe I’ll come early and offer them to her.”

“One more thing. I hope you don’t mind going to church with me on Sunday. I feel very much in need of it.”

“No problem. It wouldn’t hurt me, and it might do me some good.”

All being well, we hugged, and she escorted me to the curb. I drove off. It now remained that I find Mr. Simon Shepherd.

I parked the trap on Barnhurst, about three-quarters the distance between the Canterbury Road and the manor. I dismounted, and began to walk the meadows south of the manor. I was pleased to quickly find a large flock of sheep.

I walked briskly to the flock. On the hillside above, there was Simon, sitting under a tree. He was, I am happy to report, looking fit. I proffered the invitation. While he was at first hesitant, I prevailed. That task complete, I had not one thing to do except to return to Folkestone Manor.

I drove to the barn and unharnessed Old Gray. I put away the rig. Also, I immediately gave my gallant steed a quick curry and some oats. Then, I went straightaway to the kitchen, and I sat down for tea with Jack and Meg.

“Well now, young lady, how do you do?”

“To tell the truth, Jack, I find that today’s successes with Sir Reg, your teaching me to harness the horse, and your wonderful company, have all conspired to produce a good deal of calm in me.”

Said Meg, “That’s the way, girl. Make the most of the good, and do not allow yourself to be set back. Now, eat up. We have cutlets of pork and boiled potatoes. Dear me, I hope that’s not too heavy a meal for Sir Reg.”

“I think not, Meg, as you also supply him with plenty of vegetables and alternates to pork. He also seems to me to be mostly recovered from the blow I dealt him. Now do tell, is dinner for tomorrow planned?”

“Yes, it is set. There are many simple and pleasant items.”

“I should mention that Betty Bourne, Frank Bourne, and Simon Shepherd will all come. I should also say that Betty wants to come early and bring you a quantity of fish.”

“Well, that will be welcome. We’ll work fish into the menu.”

After dinner, I repaired to my room. I did not peek in on Sir Reg, as Meg reported to me he looked quite good when she cleared his dishes.

I had almost forgotten my letters and package. First, I opened the package from the Isle of Wight. A note was enclosed.

June, 26th instant
Nurse Patricia Goodman
c/o Folkestone Manor
Hawkinge, Kent

Greetings to our favorite Angel of Mercy!

Our summer is quite lovely here on the Isle of Wight. On the week-end, Squiggy and I went to the central town of Newport. It was a bit of a busman's holiday for us booksellers, as we toured all the book shoppes.

We thought you would enjoy these excellent novels. Even if you have read them before, they always satisfy upon re-reading. They are:

Wuthering Heights, by Ellis Bell

Jane Eyre, by Currer Bell

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, by Acton Bell

Do these names ring a bell? I thought not. You will know the authors better as Emily Brontë, Charlotte Brontë, and Anne Brontë. However, the men's names are those used upon first publication of these books.

All the boys are great fun. Verne insists on wearing a dress and being addressed as Vera.

I remain yours,

Leonard Leonard

L. Leonard & B. Bruce

Leonard & Bruce, Booksellers

Gull Cottage

Freshwater

Isle of Wight

Oh! What a generous gift! I resolved to write Mr. Leonard and Mr. Bruce back as soon as possible.

I opened one of the letters. It was from Florence Nightingale.

Thursday, June 26th, 1865

Nurse Patricia Goodman

c/o Folkestone Manor

Hawkinge, Kent

My Dearest Patricia,

I read your letter about Sir Reginald Pleydell with the greatest of interest. Indeed, I was intrigued by "foot races and shooting matches."

What you have written me about the foramen of the fifth lumbar vertebra is not without merit. In the Crimea, I recall frequently seeing a direct relationship between that region and the traumatic injuries of shell and shot, including paralysis. Of course, my focus was on sanitation and nutrition, so I cannot give you definitive proof of this.

Please keep me apprised of the situation. I wish you well, and I remain,

Yours,

Florence Nightingale
St. Thomas' Hospital
Stangate, Lambeth

The last letter was from my mother.

Wednesday, 27th June

My Dear Child,

No biscuits accompany this letter, as I have been quite busy. Howard and I have been spending a great deal of time together. He is a frequent visitor here for dinner.

As to my adventure, Howard wanted me to meet his family. Both his father and mother still live, so we went to Crewe in Cheshire, via the London and North Western Railway Company, a mere 158 miles from London's Euston Station.

We were met at the railway station and driven about one mile to Crewe Hall, the family estate. It's quite modest, Howard tells me, having only 42 rooms. He says also that the estate covers 497 acres in gardens, farmland, pasture, and parkland. Yes, there is a *parterre*, a formal garden in the French style. But most curious of all, the center of the estate contains what Howard calls an "ornamental lake."

Howard's mother and I got on famously, I'm very happy to report. In addition, Howard and I had some time to ourselves. We explored the woods, which provided an excellent opportunity to explore each other. I don't mind telling you that I gave him all my favors and more.

I love you very much.

Your Mother
Elizabeth Richardson
Kew

Well! I marveled at two things: first, at my mother's candor, and second, that Howard Staunton's family must be incredibly rich. Indeed, that was not the environment in which I grew up. We were simple working people, neither rich nor poor.

I would respond, of course, to these letters, but not tonight. Instead, I merely removed my clothing and settled into bed. I read briefly from *Wuthering Heights* and eventually drifted off into a well-deserved sleep.

Saturday, July 1, 1865

I awoke suddenly, and with great enthusiasm. This was the day of Sir Reg's big dinner. I uttered a brief prayer that all might go well. As I had promised Sir Reg, I dressed in a rather informal frock, appropriate for the country. It was white with tiny blue flowers making up the pattern. Because of its tight fit and being unhampered by an apron of any kind, I must say, I was a very curvy—even voluptuous—creature.

In the kitchen, Meg and I sat down for tea. "Is all well, Meg?"

"Of course. Everything is going to plan. Now, wait! Here, put this fresh-cut flower in your hair." I did.

At nine o'clock, I went to the library and knocked. Sir Reg called for me to enter.

"Good morning, Sir Reg."

"And good morning to you."

Sir Reg, I saw, was attired in a new-looking suit of black. His shirt was whiter than white, and he sported a crimson cravat that fairly flamed.

"You look quite fit, sir."

"As do you."

"There is no issue of health I have for you today. Once again, I'm grateful that you will host a dinner. I believe that it will be beneficial for you."

"Then do nothing, please. Wait. Please hand me my sword from the desk. I wish to contemplate."

I did this gladly. With that, I left Sir Reg, determined to leave him alone until dinner.

When Betty arrived with Frank at about eleven, I was at the front door to greet her. Since she carried with her a large parcel, she insisted upon delivering it directly to the kitchen.

"Hello, Meg!"

"Why Betty Bourne, we see each other all too rarely."

"Yes, Meg, I'm afraid it's so. Now please take this package. I've brought you four pounds of whitebait, which may be quite fun at a dinner such as this. Also, here is one of my cherry tarts."

"All welcome, Betty. Patricia, sit down with Frank. Betty and I have some cooking to do."

Frank and I talked of this and that, mainly school and his playing at soldier. At noon, Simon arrived. He took young Frank in tow and they commenced to tour the grounds. Simon wanted to show him the breeding pair of sheep.

"Meg, what will we have for dinner?"

"Ah, let me declaim now, as it wouldn't be appropriate during the meal.

"First, we have a delicate consommé of beef. It's but a silly little beef soup, but made very clear by employing the whites of eggs. It's a technique that both Betty and I know well. There are also uncooked garden vegetables, to be served with a cold creamy sauce made with horseradish root. The French call these 'crudités.' But after this lightness, we will follow with steak and kidney pie, a favorite of Sir Reg's. And I have made mushy peas. There is, as well, rumbledethumps from Scotland, made from potato, cabbage and onion. Further, I have eliminated a fish pie in favor of a dish that Betty just made possible."

"What is that?"

"Whitebait, well fried. These little tiny fish are cooked whole. Those from Folkestone are better-most. We put the fish into iced water and drain them immediately. After that, they go onto a cloth onto which I toss handfuls

of flour. After shaking, they go thence into a pan of boiling lard, very few at a time, and I fry them to a nice golden brown color. When done, I put them on blotting-paper to absorb the fat. I pile them high on a hot napkin and thus serve them.”

“What shall we drink?”

“Surprises. For the answer to that, ye must wait for dinner.”

A moment prior to one o’clock, I entered the dining room. Sir Reg was there, seated at the head of the table. To my surprise, the table was set with fine china and crystal.

“Ah, Nurse Goodman. Please come in. Seat yourself at my right. Mrs. Bourne will sit at my left, with her son next to her. You shall have Simon Shepherd at your right. Then will come Meg at Simon’s right and Jack at Frank’s left.”

I seated myself. “Yes, I see. Shall I alert the others?”

“No. Jack knows the drill.” Immediately, Jack Bates entered with Betty Bourne, Frank Bourne, and Simon Shepherd. As Sir Reg greeted them, Jack directed them to their seats.

Meg entered with a cart. It featured a large, cut glass bowl and several small cups.

“Here, all, is an excellent punch. It’s a bourbon punch, made with tea, sugar, the juices of lemons and limes and the whiskey from Bourbon County, Kentucky, in the United States. Betty, you can let Frank have some, as I’ve not made it strong. Also, I’ll set two flagons of ale from The White Horse on the table.”

Meg filled the cups, passed them to the guests, and hoisted one herself. “Here’s to the health of Sir Reginald Pleydell, our host!”

And so, we drank. Meg left to fetch the cart with the victuals.

Frank spoke: “You have a VC.”

“Frank! Wait until you’re spoken to.”

“No, Mrs. Bourne. That is not a problem. Yes, young man, I have a Victoria Cross, but I am also shot up. Keep that in mind should you lust for a VC or any medal. I went to war for my country, not to collect decorations.”

“Mrs. Goodman says you have your sword.”

“That’s true. I’ll show it to you after dinner, if you like.”

“My friends and I play at army.”

“I did as well when I was your age.”

“But we have no opponents.”

Simon spoke. “That, Frank, may soon change.”

“How so, Mr. Shepherd?”

"I have been recruiting an army made up of the boys you do not play with. Your friends will find them worthy challengers."

"But sir, I thought we were friends."

"We are, and that's why I will get you good opponents."

Sir Reg turned to Betty. "Do you come from a military family?"

"Sir Reginald, you well know that I'm from a local farm family, but I'll tell you this: My husband Angus came from a family of Scottish engineers, and among them was William Bourne. In 1578, he invented a submarine boat, which could be formidable in naval warfare. However, nothing came of it."

Meg returned. She set forth the dishes. She served Betty first, me second, and Sir Reg third. After that, she filled plates for Frank and Simon. She served Jack and herself last.

"Now tuck in. I'll pass the whitebait, so that ye may take a handful."

And with that, we did indeed "tuck in." Conversation remained lively. Reg gave good attention to Frank, Simon, and Jack in matters of soldiering, but he also took time to discuss farming, gardening, and hops growing with Betty and Meg. I said quite little, except for the occasional comment about the environment of Kent and the beauty of the trees and flowers. Overall, I judged that the dinner was a success.

At the end, Meg poured a fine port, and we toasted each other all around. Then she began to clear the dishes. Betty insisted on helping, over Meg's objections.

At Sir Reg's request, I fetched his sword from the library. Young Frank was impressed, and it allowed Simon and Sir Reg to discourse over the relative merits of the cavalry saber versus the officer's infantry sword.

At the last, I conducted Simon and Frank to the grand front door of the manor. Those two would stay together until Betty was ready to walk home. And, I suspected, Frank would still have plenty of time today to play with his friends.

I went to the dining room. Sir Reg had left, so I walked to the library, knocked, and entered. "That wasn't so bad, was it?"

"No, I suppose not."

"I think you were witty and charming."

"You do?"

"Yes, indeed. You look very good, too."

"Excellent, and generally, I'm not easily flattered. If you will, please return here at tea so that we may spend a short time together."

I agreed, and took my leave. In the kitchen, Betty was finished. We bid each other goodbye, and then Meg and I chatted a bit about the dinner. We agreed that all had gone well. I suggested that, given the large amount of food at dinner, she serve only the simplest of items at tea.

Although I was a bit lousy from food and drink, I managed to pen responses to the letters from my mother, Florence Nightingale, and Messrs. Leonard and Bruce.

At five o'clock, I entered the library. Tea was laid out on a library table.

"Please come in, Mrs. Goodman, and have a bite or two to eat."

"What is there?"

"An array of light food, more appropriate to low tea than high tea. Meg calls this 'finger food,' but I cannot find a single finger on the plate." I must say, I giggled at Sir Reg's joke.

"The small sandwiches have no crusts. You will see cucumber, egg and cress, and smoked salmon. Meg has also made a Battenberg cake."

"Will that do for you?"

"It's more than enough, after all the kidney pie and fried fish I consumed at dinner. Now, pour us both a whiskey and join me in a game of backgammon. I assume you know how to play."

"Why, yes, Sir Reg. I do."

While I filled glasses, he wheeled himself to a second library table.

"You know, this game is very old. The ancient Persians played it in 3000 BC. It is, perhaps, the second oldest game for two players.

"Oh! I suppose I should ask, what is the *oldest* game?"

"Surely I need not tell you. It's much like cricket, except that you need no uniform and do not wear special shoes."

"Ho! The balls are lighter, too."

"Just the same, the bat should be large. Now drink up and let's play."

Those were words Sir Reg quickly came to regret. I beat 'the pants off him,' as they say.

"Lucky. Let's at it again."

I beat him again.

"That's nothing. Again, please."

After four more losses, Reg was disappointed, but kept his composure.

"Well! Nicely done. Where did you learn to play?"

"From me dad and me mum, Your Worship."

"Perhaps I should take lessons from your mother, or, in her absence, from you. Now, if you please, you must go. I'm ready to settle into bed."

"Do you require an injection?"

"I think not. The pills, the tea, and the alcohol seem quite sufficient."

"Shall I ask Jack to come and undress you?"

"No, thank you. I am fine."

We shook hands and I bid him good night. He wheeled and left the library. I went to my rooms. Although it was early, I felt like nothing else but to disrobe and lie in the bed. The day had been a long one, but had been prosperous in every respect. Before too long, I fell asleep, feeling rather content.

Sunday, July 2, 1865

I arose early, as was consistently my custom. Today, being Sunday, I dressed in what is called in America my "Sunday best" or "Sunday-go-to-meeting" clothes. I donned a simple cotton dress of a dark green color, never worn before, with no fancy trim, and very appropriate for church.

"Good morning, Meg!"

"Aye, good morning. Sit you down for some tea."

"Just one cup, thank you. I must go fetch Betty. We are going to church."

"Oh my! Well, say hello to God for me."

"Oh, Meg, I'd prefer not to wear my boater. Do you have a hat I might use?"

"Certainly. Bide a wee, and I'll fetch something." In half a minute, she returned with a bonnet. "Here you are. The very article we often wear in Hawkinge."

I thanked Meg and finished my tea. I left the kitchen for the barn. It took only a couple of minutes to hitch Old Gray to the trap, and then I was off.

At about nine o'clock, I arrived at Betty's. I tied up, and went in. I found Betty, as expected, in her kitchen. She, too, was dressed correctly for church. In her case, she wore a floral print dress, yet the colors were not too garish for Sunday services. As with me, her dress's trim at the neck and cuffs was minimal.

"Have some tea."

"Just a small cup, thanks, or I shall soon be in desperate need of the privy. I hope you don't mind going to church. I feel very much in need of it."

"Do you intend to pray for Sir Reginald Pleydell to heal?"

"No, I intend to pray for Dr. Joseph Lister to come to Hawkinge."

Of course, we did not walk to the church. We went on wheels. We arrived in short order, and tied up the rig.

I was startled by looks from some of the parishioners. There were obviously whispers, and furtive glances cast in my direction. I sensed snippets of gossip being exchanged, most likely about me.

Betty: “‘Od Rabbit It! I know what it is. Those old cows think you’re having a bunkup with Sir Reg. There is no other explanation.”

“Well, I should suppose it will look that way. Please, Betty, say nothing, even though I am quite sure you are prepared to give the biddies a piece of your mind.”

Betty agreed. She did, however, approach Reverend Pritchett, and spent a moment talking privately and quietly with him.

We entered the church and made ourselves comfortable in a pew. The Reverend Pritchett was at his best today. “Good morning, my flock.”

All replied, “Good morning, Vicar”

“We are but few days from the start of the hops harvest. As well you know, our farms depend upon a rich and prosperous harvest. Hark ye well to the words of St. Matthew:

“Matthew 9:37. ‘Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.’ And also this, from Matthew 9:38. ‘Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.’

“If all goes well, we will have laborers in abundance for the harvest. My reminder to you is to treat our hops workers with dignity and honor. Greet them when you see them. Offer them a loaf of bread if they need it. There’s no need to offer them ale, as The White Horse and The Black Horse will sell them plenty of it.”

There were, at this point, numerous spontaneous recitations of “Amen!”

“They will live, as you know, in temporary huts, which are rather rude. See if you have an old blanket, stool, or cooking pot you might spare. Both you and the receiver will be blessed.”

There were more shouts of, “Amen!”

“Now, I will give you further from Matthew. Listen well, for it deals with our Savior and healing.” At his point, Reverend Pritchett fixed his eye on me, and then gazed at the biddies in the congregation.

“From Matthew 9:35, we learn that Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and *healing every disease and sickness*. Healing every disease and sickness, I tell you. Be well advised to honor the healers among us! Recognize that the healers are special in the eyes of the Lord. Keep that in mind daily.” He paused to let the sentiment sink in.

“Now, my friends, there is one more sentiment from which all—healer, vicar, merchant, or farmer—can gain. Matthew 7:8 says: ‘For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.’ So, open your hearts. Open your hearts and ask, so that ye may receive. Why should you not receive? You are children of God. You need only to ask. Now, let us pray.”

And pray we did for a few minutes, and then sang two hymns. The service concluded, and to the music of the church’s small organ, we all left the building.

I was deeply affected by the sermon. Betty and I were most careful to thank the vicar profusely. Although I did not mention it to him specifically, I could not help but feel that his words about healers had worked to my benefit.

At the trap, I asked: "Do you wish to go Angus' Acre today, Betty?"

"Indeed no. Angus knows I love him. I tell him at night from my bed. Now, will you join us for dinner today?"

"No. Mr. Uriah Grimstead will be there, and I prefer not to converse with him. Instead, I should like to go back to the manor, and thence walk to the Mound of Venus and the G Spot."

"Well, then, drive on. At my house, I shall fill a hamper for you."

When we arrived and were comfortable in the kitchen, Betty packed me a luncheon in a small basket. Into it, I saw her put napkins, a bottle of wine, some beef, Stilton, and bread. There were also strawberries from her kitchen garden.

With the basket in my hand, she and I exchanged a hug. And thereafter, I drove back to the manor and put away the trap.

I found all to be well at the manor. Meg reported nothing unusual in the way of Sir Reg's health, and she declared that she and Jack were having an excellent day of rest. I advised her about my upcoming walk so she wouldn't worry as to my whereabouts. Thus assured, Meg continued with her dinner preparations.

I changed into my gardening outfit and flat shoes, picked up my hamper, and left for my walk. I abled to the bridge over the Pent Stream, and followed the trail toward the bluffs. In a very short time, my objective was in view.

At the grotto, with its marble statue, canopy, and arc of trees, I sat on the old bench and unpacked my repast. At last, I had a bit of time in the open air and bright sun, unencumbered by people, conversation, or tasks to perform.

I ate slowly. I contemplated the statue of the goddess... and love. My love of my husband Michael, my mother, and my dear deceased father were first among my recollections. I found it curious, but on considering those who were rather casual acquaintances—including, among them, Agnes, Florence Nightingale, Mssrs. Leonard and Bruce, &c.—I recognized how valuable they were to me, and the deep affection I felt for them.

Then, in more recent memory, I reflected upon the various people of the village, and concluded that I rather liked them. Closest to me were Betty Bourne, Frank Bourne, Jack Bates, and Meg Bates. And Sir Reg. I had come to love them all.

Sir Reg, I confess, puzzled me most. In many ways, he was a vain and obstinate man, and yet in the context of his debilitating condition his behaviors were understandable. More puzzling was that he seemed to be changing, and I was, as well. I was becoming much more welcoming of his attentions.

These were but thoughts. Questions arose, but I was strangely untroubled by the lack of answers. After perhaps at hour at the mound, I packed away the remains of my lunch, and walked back to the manor.

At high tea, I briefly shared my day with Meg and Jack.

“So! Them old gossips are spreading tales, are they? Well, I’m glad the vicar put them in their place.”

“Well frankly, Meg, so am I. And he used the Gospel of Matthew to do it.”

“Would you like to go out tonight and throw hen’s eggs at their houses? I’m still a robust farm girl, and eager for sport.”

Jack smiled and said, “As you see, Patricia, my Meg has plenty of class.”

I laughed. “No, no, no! All is well. Now, if you will, let me have some of that soup. I think that’s all I can eat today, after having picnicked at the Mound.”

“Very well, but at least try one kipper and a slice of bread.”

I agreed. As I ate my soup, I merely listened to Meg and Jack speak of matters concerning the estate.

“What will you do this evening, Patricia?”

“Nothing, I hope. I’m a bit tired. Oh, but before you go, I’ll share one little tale, that of playing backgammon with Sir Reg last evening.” And so I told my tale. Although Meg and Jack had enormous affection for Sir Reg, I think they rather enjoyed it when I was able to best him at something.

Because Meg reported to me that Sir Reg had been in good spirits when she served tea, I felt no need to check his state of health. And so, I went to my bedroom, made myself naked, and leaped into bed. I read for a few minutes, but felt a bit agitated.

I had no sense of foreboding, neither of good nor ill, but remained nervous. I worried that Dr. Lister would refuse my request, but I also thought back to today’s encouraging sermon. The vicar had said, “Ask and ye shall receive.”

I prayed. “God, grant me this wish. Please let Dr. Lister come to Hawkinge to do a surgery. Oh, and also give me an occasional sexual climax, if you don’t mind. I’ll not ask you for anything else.” A few minutes later, God granted the second request, leaving the first one unanswered for the present. I fell into a sleep.