

11. An Exceedingly Unpleasant Woman

Monday, July 3, 1865

Ah, Monday! I gazed through my French windows—or doors, if you prefer—to see that today would be another beautiful Kent day. I had worries, of course, but I could hardly object to the weather and the landscape.

Again, I was drawn to a dress other than my uniform. I picked a simple brocade in the color of cream and white, quite restrained, although actually a bit too dressy compared to country cottons. It was more “London” than “Kent,” but I had had no opportunity to write Mme. Anabelle Davies to order different additional items.

Up, washed, and dressed, I walked to the kitchen.

The young *chef de cuisine* rushed through the door. “Mrs. Goodman! Mrs. Goodman!”

“Calm yourself, Julia. Are you injured?”

“Oh, no, but as I drove here, Mr. Fowler fairly flew into the road. He cannot leave his office, but he has a telegram for you. From Scotland. He wouldn’t give it to me, but he says for you to come quick!”

Scotland! That could mean only one thing. I ignored tea and rushed to the barn. I saddled Old Gray and set off for Hawkinge at a trot. I arrived at the telegraph office two minutes after leaving the manor.

“Mr. Fowler! Mr. Fowler! Sam, what have you got for me?”

“Who sent you?”

For a moment, I was confused. I paused to think, and to catch my breath.

“Ho! All right. I understand. It was the King of Bohemia.”

“Pass, friend. Here’s your telegram.”

I tore it open. I read the first line.

Will arrive on Monday, July 10, 1865.

And the last:

Lister

I flew into Mr. Fowler’s arms and covered him with kisses.

“Oh, thank you, Sam! Thank you! Thank you!” Sam Fowler was a bit flustered. I kissed his hairless forehead. I kissed his handlebar moustaches. I could have kissed his hands and feet.

“There, there! Be assured, Miz Patricia, I’ll advise you of future telegrams and letters, as I know all this is mightily important to you. And, as you may surmise, I know why.”

I thanked Sam again, and jump astride my horse. I was back at the manor in minutes, although I kept Old Gray at a fast walk, not a trot. At the manor, I dashed to the kitchen.

“Meg! Meg! He’s coming! Dr. Lister is coming!”

“Excellent, my dear. Now, Julia, keep on with the dough, whilst I pour our good nurse some tea and provide her with a scone, clotted cream, and strawberry jam.”

I gladly took the food and tea, and read the telegram aloud:

Mrs. Patricia Goodman
Nurse of the Nightingale School
Folkestone Manor
Hawkinge (near Folkestone)
County of Kent

Will arrive on Monday, July 10, 1865.

Will do the operation on Tuesday, July 11, 1865.

Must first visit London to discharge an obligation.

Will send details by post for preparing for a surgical procedure.

Arrange for rooms.

Glenkinchie. Otherwise, Glenlivet.

Lister

“Well, Meg, what do you think?”

“That’s better-most. Collect his post and we’ll know what to do before his arrival.”

“He says ‘Glenkinchie. Otherwise, Glenlivet.’ Have you any idea what that might mean?”

“I have no clue, but I suggest you ask Betty Bourne. She knows all things Scottish.”

I finished my tea and went to my rooms. I told myself that I must be calm and stay rational. While I had received very good news, I must not appear to be too flustered or excited. Certainly, it was too soon to share this with Sir Reginald.

At 9:00 AM precisely, I walked to the library. My session with Sir Reg was unremarkable, which is rather how I wanted it to be. He was fairly cheery, and I very much matched his cheer, knowing I had a very positive telegram in my room.

After a brief discussion about his dumbbell exercises, appetite, and general state of health, I gave him pills for pain. There appeared to be no need to supply an injection. We agreed that it was too soon after the shrapnel “event” to shoot pistols or race wheelchairs.

I left him and returned to the kitchen.

“Sit down, dearie, while I continue my cooking. We can talk as I work.”

“What are you doing?”

“Boiling vinegar and spices so I can pickle onions. And I’ll soon be putting a shepherd’s pie in the oven. It’s made from yesterday’s ham. If you like, you may use your French and call it a *casserole*.”

“How did Sir Reg eat yesterday?”

“At Sunday dinner, for some reason, he ate like a starving man. The meal was an excellent Wiltshire ham, which I had Tom Brown bring from his parents’ grocery store on Saturday.”

“Well, I look forward to eating some.”

“And so you shall. Now, get ready, Nurse. I have something for you.”

Meg went to a kitchen shelf and removed a large glass jar. It contained a green liquid, with leafy herbs in the bottom. She set it before me.

“What’s this, Meg?”

“A medicinal rub. My mother Dora used to make it from willow bark. It was a help to my father when he had aches from working.”

“And you made this?”

“Yes, of course. Here in the country, we have little use for doctors. And it was quite easy. I needed to simmer your Chinese herb in spirits, and then let the mixture sit for two days. Of course wine or whiskey would leave an unpleasant odor. Fortunately, Jack makes a horse rub out of fermented potatoes, so I got some of it from him. It’s quite clear, and has no odor.”

“That’s fascinating.”

“The rub is good for the horses, so I reasoned it should be good for a man. And given that you had that Mary herb, I reasoned further that they should go together.”

“This is excellent. I’ll try it on Sir Reg this afternoon.”

“I’ll give ye a shock, as well. Folks in Poland *drink* the potato liquid. They call it the ‘water of life.’”

“A beverage made from fermented potatoes? How strange! Well, I doubt that it will ever catch on.”

Meg produced Monday dinner just as promised. She served an excellent pie, and it was accompanied by the usual accoutrements. There was, as well, a Cumberland sauce—fruit-based, made with currants and port wine.

Dinner being concluded, I waited a bit, and then took myself and my new tincture of marijuana to Sir Reg in his bedchamber.

“Good afternoon, Sir Reg.”

“And good afternoon to you. Shall we proceed as usual?”

“Yes. As we go, I will apply this new liniment. Tell me, please, if it produces a beneficial effect.”

I began with Reg’s calves, applying the tincture. Sir Reg reported no immediate effect, but by the time I had moved to his hamstrings, he spoke.

“Oh, I daresay!”

“What is it?”

“The constant and uncomfortable tingling has disappeared from part of my legs.”

“That is excellent to hear. I doubt that the effect is permanent, but this substance may be applied numerous times without harm.”

I concluded my work, and left Sir Reg to rest in the bed or return to the library, as he pleased. He was determined to nap, as he felt the reduction in ‘tingles’ would improve his sleep. I left the jar of tincture and a small cloth, so that he might apply more if he so desired.

In my day room, I immediately recorded the results of the experiment. After that, I walked briskly to the kitchen, where Meg was doing her accounts.

“Success, Meg!”

“What do you mean?”

“You are an apothecary, like Mr. Aull in London! The tincture you made provided Sir Reg with immediate relief.”

“From pain?”

“Yes, I think so. It certainly reduced the constant tingling he feels in some parts, and that is progress.”

“Fine. I hope you’ll be able to *increase* tingling in other parts, if ye catch my drift. And I’ve some good news, too: the accounts show that Sir Reginald is richer than ever.”

“That should be a comfort to him. As for me, I remain with my anxiety about Dr. Lister’s letter. The telegram said, ‘Will send details by post for preparing for a surgical procedure.’”

“Do not panic over items you cannot control. Here, take this towel. My mother frequently suggested I should carry one to avoid panic. Isn’t that odd?”

“Yes, it does seem odd, but who am I to dispute your mum?”

“She learned it from an itinerant tinker named Arthur Dent. And indeed, it worked for me when my Jack was away at war. Now drink your tea and have a biscuit or two.”

I did so. I thanked Meg, and went with my new towel to my room. Improbably, the touching and squeezing towel gave me a certain sense of security. I found I was able to take a short and very refreshing nap before tea.

Our tea was very simple and satisfying, consisting mainly of oysters. Jack, I learned, had been to Folkestone to buy fish, and decided to purchase oysters as well. They were accompanied by a spicy sauce made from cayenne peppers and vinegar. Of course, we had bread and butter, which was a good thing, as ale did not remove the “heat” from the sauce.

After tea, I took a short walk, but I limited myself to the manor grounds. I visited the barn, the woods beyond it, and crossed the meadow to the Pent Stream. I had my first close look at the small lake on the property. Maybe it was from here that Jack drew water for Meg’s garden.

It was rather a lovely lake, only a few hundred feet in width, and perhaps a half-mile in length. The waters were calm, the banks a vivid green, and in several spots groups of trees overhung the shore. *This would be a wonderful place, I thought, to go boating with Sir Reg—if only he were willing.*

In my room, I had two writing tasks. First, I wrote Dr. Won Kei in London, describing the usefulness of tincture of marijuana. I also asked him to send more of the herb. Second, I wrote Mme. Anabelle Davies and ordered additional dresses and hats. I wanted items appropriate for summer, and not of the latest London *mode*. I desired that the clothing reflect the simplicity of country living. Of course, I could not resist ordering two “dressy” dresses of the highest fashion and the most formal cut—one in red and one in purple.

What a notion, I thought, given that I had had little requirement for fashionable dresses for the last several years. Of course, there had been no need for more than one hat, as I generally wore the head covering affected by Miss Florence Nightingale.

My clerical work being done, I slipped out of my clothing and lay upon my bed with a book. After a little reading, I found myself drifting off. My prayer tonight was simply that a letter from Dr. Lister would arrive soon.

Tuesday, July 4, 1865

The day began without incident. The weather persisted in being fine, and there was no harbinger of any storm to come. But indeed, a storm did come, and quite soon.

I was tending to Sir Reg when came a knock on the library door. Meg poked her head in.

“Excuse me. Sir Reg, may I speak with Nurse Goodman for a few moments? There is something important I must tell her.”

Perplexed, I left the library. Meg and Jack were in the hall.

Meg said, “You have a visitor.”

“Who? I’m expecting no one.”

“Miss Eustace Pleydell, Sir Reginald’s sister.”

“Oh, I’ll alert Sir Reg.”

“No, she has asked specifically to see you. She and a gentleman await you in the drawing room.”

Jack said, “Be cautious. She is not a nice woman. I’ll be just outside the room if you need me.”

I drew a breath and entered the drawing room. There I found a man and woman seated.

The woman was rather heavy, overdressed in brocade with false sleeves—*engageantes*—that were rather balloon-like. She wore a large hat, but it was insufficient to hide a long, thin nose, a mouth with thin lips, and what I generally found to be a nasty facial expression.

The man was a smallish fellow, with no hair upon the crown of his head. He wore a neat, but undistinguished, brown suit.

“Good morning. I am Nurse Patricia Goodman.”

The woman gave me a long hard stare.

“So you are the *whore!*”

I was taken aback. “I beg your pardon?”

“I believe you heard me. You are the tart my brother has hired for his entertainment.”

I was not to be cowed. “No, to paraphrase Nell Gwynn, I am the *nurse*. The whore comes in on Wednesdays!”

“What cheek! How dare you answer so!”

“There is no cheek at all, since you, a stranger, accuse me falsely. I presume you are Miss Eustace Pleydell, Sir Reginald’s sister.”

“I am. From Grosvenor Square, Mayfair, London, to be sure. And this is Ebenezer Crenel, my solicitor, of the lawfirm of Merlon and Crenel.”

Ah! Grosvenor Square. This woman, of course, was the recipient of telegrams from Uriah Grimstead!

“You will leave my brother’s employ at once.”

Now, I thought, what would be the best response?

“NO.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“May I recommend that you have your hearing checked? I said ‘NO.’ It is Sir Reginald, not you, who hired me. I am responsible for aiding in his cure.”

“I see you have hypnotized him. There is no cure for his condition.”

“I believe you are mistaken. There is a cure.”

“Nonsense. He has been infirm for ten years. It’s clear that there is no hope for him. He should have died by now.”

“Is that what you wish?”

“That is his fate.”

“Indeed? And what should be done with him until he meets his fate?”

“He should be at the soldier’s hospital in Chelsea.”

“Are you aware of the kind of treatment he would get there?”

“The best, I’m sure.”

“Surely not.”

“I marvel at your capacity for cruelty and insensitivity.”

“And I marvel at your appetite for ignorance.”

“Tell me, I hear you dance naked in front of him to keep him under your spell.”

“Indeed, you hear wrong. Or lack the wit to know what a nurse is trained to do.”

“If you do not do as I say, you trollop, it will go hard on you.”

“How so?”

“I shall find a way. I am not without influence in London.”

“Yes, of course. Why don’t you tell Florence Nightingale that I am a fraud? Or you could tell my mother’s beau, a seated member of the Commons.”

“That will not be necessary.”

“I see that you are quite eager to have Sir Reginald out of the way. Why would that be? Surely not out of concern for his health, since you believe he should have died by now.”

“I will tell you bluntly: His estates rightfully belong to me. He should have died in the Crimea. But no, he managed to live. Then he came to this house, which should be mine, to waste away. He has no wife or children. I am to inherit upon his death, which is as it should be.”

“I would alert Sir Reginald to your views, but I believe he knows them already.”

“There is one more thing: I am not without resources. I will give you £10,000 if you will promptly leave. I expect you to travel, to relocate to the south of France, or to simply return to your real home and never intrude upon our family again.” She glanced at Crenel, who had begun to sweat profusely. He reached into his waistcoat, no doubt searching for a cheque.

“NO.”

“What?”

“I have no interest in your money. Now, I believe our interview is at an end.”

I rang for Jack, who entered the room instantly.

“Yes, Nurse Goodman.”

“Jack, these pleasant people wish to leave now. Please show them to the door and help them into their carriage. First, let me offer our guests my final sentiment.”

I turned to Eustace Pleydell. “You have spoken your piece. Both your threats and your offers are refused. As I see it, Miss Pleydell, there are two ways to exit. The easy way is for you to leave quietly now, as the gentlewomen you probably think yourself to be. The difficult way is for us to speak with Sir Reginald now. You will *not*, I assure you, receive a warm welcome. Sir Reg will, as we whores of London say, kick your bloody arse up into yer throat.”

Eustace Pleydell turned quite red. She was livid, which was rather to my liking. “Very well, I’ll go. But you haven’t heard the last of me, my pretty. This manor, *and* the other estates, belong to me. I’ll get you, and your crippled little Sir Reginald, too.”

Jack said, “This way, please.” They left.

I was shaking. Jack returned and I flew to his arms. I got an excellent hug from this bear of a man. “Well, Mrs. Goodman... Pleasant people, no?”

“Jack, what can she do?”

“Little, I think. Nothing, in fact. I believe it is all bluster, but I’ll ask Meg.”

“Must I tell Sir Reginald?”

“Yes. I think you should recount the entire meeting to him.”

I returned to the library, and walked immediately to the decanter of whiskey. I helped myself to a generous drink.

“Is something wrong?”

“Yes. Of that you will learn in a moment.”

“Who was in that carriage? I saw it pull away from the portico.”

“I’ll begin. That was your lovely and talented sister.”

“WHAT? Please pour me a drink as well.”

I settled in to a club chair. “Sir Reg, it is decidedly unhealthy to drink at ten in the morning. Cheers!” I paused, and Sir Reg tossed off his shot.

“She and I had a rather candid conversation. She was most horrid, but I believe I gave as good as I got.” With this, I began a recitation of all key points in the conversation, from Eustace Pleydell’s opening salvo to my final statement. At first, Sir Reg nodded slowly, and then began to nod more vigorously. Then he gave forth with a hearty laugh.

“You said ‘kick your bloody arse up into yer throat?’ Did you really?”

“Yes, and with great pleasure, I’ll admit. Your sister turned several shades of crimson.” From there, I went on to describe my theory, now practically proven, that Mr. Uriah Grimstead was acting as her paid spy.

“I am not surprised. Given the timing of Grimstead’s arrival in Hawkinge and his odd behavior—lurking about the estate, that is—this makes sense to me.”

“Yes. It’s much like a Poe story, where the protagonist puts together the full story from pieces.”

“Well, I commend you. And I apologize for this wretched intrusion. Are you feeling reasonably calm?”

“Yes, although some feelings are just now boiling up within me.”

“Then join me for dinner. I will show you something special. To see my demonstration, you must ask Jack to come here post haste.”

I went to the kitchen and asked Jack to see Sir Reg. I then went straightway to my bedroom, not my day room. My hope was that a short nap would have a calming effect.

I came to dinner at one o’clock in the dining room. I found Sir Reg to be there already. He sat in his wheelchair with his sword in his lap.

On a side table, I saw the most unusual sight. There were two large cantaloupes, each set upon a tray. The bottoms had been cut off so that they sat upright.

“What is that, Sir Reg?”

“It is the demonstration I promised you. Now watch...”

With that he withdrew his sword from its scabbard, which he cast aside. He drove directly to the melons, raised the sword, and with a vigorous yell brought it down upon a melon! Of course, the melon instantly split from crown to neck.

He handed me the sword. “Now, you try it.”

Always game, I did my best to imitate him. I went to the other melon, raised the sword, and struck a blow. I even managed a yell.

“There. Now, do you feel better?”

I thought a moment. “Actually, I do, Sir Reg. Where did you learn that?”

“It’s a bit of my army training, and, er, I have some actual experience. Had I been in a cavalry regiment, I’d use a long curved saber and slash from the neck to the waist.”

“It’s rather a violent move.”

“In war, yes. At other times I like to think of it as ‘anger management.’ Now, I shall ring for Meg.”

In a moment, Meg entered the dining room with her cart.

“Here, my friends, we have a platter with stewed plaice in manageable slices, still giving off steam. Came straight from the Barents Sea, it did. Over it is a lovely sauce made from the juices, onions, beaten eggs, and lemons.”

Meg served up the main dish, and allowed us to serve ourselves vegetables. “Note well that today we don’t have tatties. I’ve made a dish of rice, using oil I obtained from Mrs. Zamboni in Folkestone.”

She cleared the detritus from our melon experiment. A little later, she returned with a plate of cut melons. “Here we have sliced cantaloupe, a process begun by you two, with a sauce of thick Devonshire cream with sugar and lemon.”

As I ate my melon, I giggled. “What is it, Mrs. Goodman?”

“I was just thinking... how funny you are!”

“Indeed? We of the lesser nobility rarely think of ourselves as funny.”

“And yet, you must reflect that our dessert was prepared by an earl with an infantry sword, and a frustrated nurse!”

Sir Reg paused, and thought a moment. Then he, too, began to laugh.

“Thank you for today’s exercise, and for dinner. I should like to visit you in an hour, simply to check the basic indicators of your health.” With that, I left him.

I returned to Sir Reg at half-two, going directly to his bedroom. My focus was not on massage, but merely to assure myself that Sir Reg was taking the medications he needed. He reported the continued effectiveness of the tincture of marijuana and indicated that his need for opium derivatives seemed to be declining.

Thus satisfied, I returned to my room. I changed from my uniform to a convention dress, and walked to the village. I entered the post office, and handed Sam Fowler my letters for London.

“Have you a letter for me, Sam?”

“Nothing, Patricia. I’m sorry. We’ve had the post both via coach from Canterbury and via train from Folkestone.

Disappointed, I thanked Sam and walked to Betty Bourne’s house. “Betty, are you here?”

“Yes, of course. Go to the parlor, and we’ll have a bit of low tea.” I did so, and in a few moments, Betty entered with a tea service and some tiny sandwiches of cucumber and watercress.

I quite set aside thoughts of my wretched morning with Eustace Pleydell. I had much better news.

“Betty, look at this telegram! It’s from Dr. Lister!”

Betty took the paper and read it. “Why, this is excellent, Patricia. It asks for rooms to be sorted.

“Rooms to be sorted?”

“Allocated, cousin. An old Scottish term. Lister wishes you to arrange for his shelter. That, of course, is no problem. I have a suite of two rooms that will be ideal for him.”

“I’m puzzled by one thing. He writes ‘Glenkinchie. Otherwise, Glenlivet.’ What does he mean by that?”

“No puzzle at all. Glenlivet is a highland single-malt Scotch whiskey, while Glenkinchie is a lowland single-malt whiskey.”

“Oh, I see. Dear me, where can I find them?”

“Search no further. They are in my cellar. I have several bottles of each.”

“Oh, Betty! What a joy you are!” The telegram having been discussed, we then talked of this and that, such as Frank’s progress in school and my order of new dresses from London. I felt most relieved in knowing that Dr. Lister would come.

I stood, gave her a goodbye hug, and I left. I walked slowly back to the manor, taking the time to reflect. Eustace Pleydell had visited and there was nothing more to be done about that. Dr. Lister’s letter had not arrived, and there was nothing to be done about that, either.

I joined Jack and Meg for high tea. We spent only a few moments condemning Sir Reg’s sister. Further, there was no more to be said about Dr. Lister. Instead, we had a good laugh about preparing melons using a saber. I then listened quietly as Meg and Jack sorted through various issues concerning the manor. I must say, having had a hearty dinner and little sandwiches at Betty’s, I could only take high tea as a snack. I ate some wedges of apple and a slice of Stilton, and found myself to be entirely content.

Evening drew on, but darkness was yet some time off. I had no urge to walk, and so I went to the French doors of my room and opened them wide. I brought a chair to the porch outside and sat, gazing out upon the meadows and the lake in the distance.

I was then inspired to do something my mother had taught me. I retrieved my journal, and made a list of items for which I was grateful. I was making what I can only describe as a “gratitude list.” I “counted my blessings,” as the churchmen say.

I found it soothing to list the people who had affected my life positively—especially my Michael, my father, and my mother. There were as well the many fine people of London, Hawkinge, and Folkestone Manor. Of course there was Sir Reg. I further noted down my good health, my education, and my good looks.

Noting my good looks was odd, because confident and forthright as I am on many topics, I worried about my appearance. I believe I join with most other women in this; we are terrible judges of how we look. *Perhaps, I thought, such worries by women will disappear time.*

As the daylight faded, I slipped out of my dress. I lit the lamp, intending to read from *Wuthering Heights*. My intentions lasted only a few minutes, as sleepiness was overtaking me. I doused the lamp and fell into a sound slumber.

Wednesday, July 5, 1865

I awoke feeling a bit glum. My first thought was there had been no letter from Dr. Lister. In addition, the sky was overcast, a solid mass of unpleasant, dull gray.

Today was the fifth day of July, and Lister was to operate on July 11th. How was I to prepare an operating theatre if I had no instructions? I knew only the basics. Further, my experiences at St Thomas' Hospital in London and the Royal Hospital in Chelsea had dealt mainly with feeding, sanitation, and rehabilitation. Surgeries were few.

I donned a nurse's uniform. I hadn't the spirit to wear a colorful summer dress.

"Good morning, Meg. How goes it?" I sat at the kitchen table, and accepted a cup of tea.

"All is well. There's nothing new. Jack went to Folkestone some time ago to fetch us more fresh fish, as we've consumed the oysters and the plaice. And he had errands of his own to do. The milkmaid is milking, the stable boy is feeding the horses, and I've already scattered meal for the chickens."

At this point, the doorway of the kitchen filled with Jack's large, bearded form.

"Letter! Letter for Nurse Goodman! Is Nurse Goodman here?"

I leaped up and ran to Jack.

"Oh, Jack! Thank you! Wait! Is it from Scotland?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Thank you! Thank you very much! Excuse me, Meg, but I must go to my rooms to study this."

"You run along, missy. I'll bring you a pot of tea and some scones."

I dashed off, sat at my desk, and tore the letter open. Ah! It was an elaborate missive, comprising many sheets of details. Intent on absorbing every word, I read carefully.

It began:

Glasgow, July, 1st inst., 1865

Nurse Patricia Goodman
Folkestone Manor
Hawkinge
County of Kent

My Dear Nurse Goodman,

I hope this communication finds you well.

I thank you for your letter, very descriptive of the condition of Sir Reginald Pleydell. Your documentation is, frankly, a good deal better than some of the items I get from my students. Additionally, I queried Florence Nightingale, and she attests to your very high level of competence.

Although, as well you know, it is impossible to formulate a diagnosis without seeing your patient in person, I will give you some detail here about his likely condition.

Further, I will come to Folkestone Manor, Hawkinge, personally. I wish to examine the patient and am prepared to do a surgery. As my telegram stated, I will arrive on Monday, the 10th of July. I shall embark from London's Charing Cross station on the 8:00 AM train of the South Eastern Railway, arriving at Folkestone West station at 10:07 AM.

Please find enclosed addenda pertaining to diagnosis and preparations for a surgical operation. In addition, I have included a very brief note of a personal nature.

Dr. Joseph Lister
Professor of Surgery
University of Glasgow Medical School
University of Edinburgh Medical School
Glasgow Royal Infirmary
Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

Thus went the letter. I was eager to read the sheaf of attachments, but nine o'clock approached, and I was determined to maintain my daily routine with Sir Reg. I would read the rest a little later.

My time with Sir Reg was brief, but I by no means neglected him. I took his vital signs, discussed his program of exercise, provided medications, and engaged him in a generally cheery conversation. I was not yet prepared to discuss the surgery.

I returned to my day room to continue reading the documents Dr. Lister had sent.

DIAGNOSIS

1. The item you describe as shrapnel is impinging on a large, complex bundle of nerves—the cauda equina, which is Latin for “horse’s tail.” These nerves affect the pelvic organs and lower limbs—hips, knees, ankles, and feet. When blocked, motor function will be lost. There will be sensory effects, as well—numbness, pain, or both.
2. I am not surprised at the conditions you describe, including loss of sexual function. I am surprised that Reginald Pleydell has control of his bladder and anal sphincter.
3. I wish medicine had a device that permitted us to look into the body and perhaps take a photograph. Sadly, no such device exists. Therefore, only an exploratory surgical procedure will confirm my suspicions. Depending upon what is discovered, a repair may be affected.

THE SURGICAL OPERATION

1. With your assistance, I will determine Reginald Pleydell’s condition by operating.
2. I will locate and remove, if possible, the offending shrapnel.
3. I pray we will not find other neurological conditions, such a compression or tear of the discus intervertebralis (commonly called a “disc”). However, I do not rule it out.

RISK

This is a lengthy, serious operation. Please be aware, nurse, that the procedure carries significant risk, viz.:

Death due to anesthesia
Death on the operating table for any of several other causes, including loss of blood
Death due to subsequent infection
Worsened paralysis
No improvement in condition

OUTCOME

Assuming none of the risks become reality, the prognosis looks fair to good.

Your patient's condition is such that, if corrected, I think normal function may return. The duration of the recovery process, however, is likely to be long. It may take years for him to fully recover.

In many cases, nerve regrowth is impossible; thus the nerve damage will be permanent. However, in cases where the nerves have been damaged but are still capable of regrowth, the patient may recover, but recovery time is widely variable.

PREPARATIONS

I enclose a detailed list of essentials—preparations you must make and things you must do before I arrive. Broadly, I have listed details regarding:

- A spotless room to be the operating theatre
- Antiseptic, carbolic acid in particular
- Provision for sterilization of surgical instruments
- Linens
- Clothing, consisting of laboratory smocks, headdresses, and masks
- Two nurses

I will, of course, bring surgical instruments and anesthesia.

PERSONAL NOTE

One of my students is Lee Wong, more correctly Wong Li, the son of Dr. Wong Kei in London. Apparently you have impressed his father. In particular, Li asks me to send his regards to the woman with "big battleships." For the life of me, I cannot fathom what he means, as you did not mention service in the Royal Navy.

I stopped, and practically swooned. In so many ways, the news was entirely pessimistic. Even if it were not, the preparations Dr. Lister detailed were many and complex. Still, after a few moments, I regained my composure and did what my mother and father taught me. I calmed myself and thought—slowly and carefully.

After a short while, I was far more composed, and actually grew a bit optimistic. Really, I had but two tasks, although I granted they were both formidable. First, I must work quickly to accomplish the various preparations. Second, I must talk with Sir Reg right away.

It being the time for dinner, I went to the kitchen to meet with Jack and Meg.

"Well, my dear Miz Pat, have you read the letter you received?"

“Indeed I have, Meg. There is quite a lot to it.”

“Well, sit down. I’ll serve Sir Reg, and return. We can eat together and talk about it all.”

Upon returning, Meg filled our plates with unusual objects. They seemed to be neither meat, nor fish, nor fowl.

“My! What are these?”

Jack answered, “Have ye never seen a lobster before?”

“Only in a schoolbook. And indeed, that illustration was of the entire crustacean.”

“Well, the whole animal is here, but in sections. You’re about to eat a bowl of lobster bisque, and I make it by my creating a broth of the shells and later adding cream, sherry, and spices. I put the meat from the claws in it, too.”

“Then what’s sitting on my plate must be the tail.”

“Just so. I boil ‘em a little to get them all firm inside, and then I put the tails to the fire so as to broil ‘em. Lastly, I make sure each of us has a nice cup of melted butter by his plate.”

I ate, and found immediately that I loved this variety of seafood.

Jack offered, “I got a bunch of them in Folkestone. They come from Brittany, just across the channel. Bein’ that they’re alive when you buy them, I had to work mightily to avoid bein’ bit. When Meg gets ‘em, she gives them a plunge into boiling water and that stops their protests.”

Meg said, “So tell us about Dr. Lister’s letter.”

I did so, and promised to bring Meg a detailed list of tasks in the afternoon. “Meg, when you clear Sir Reg’s dishes, please ask him to meet me at two o’clock in the library, not in his bedroom.”

After lunch, I went to my day room to prepare myself for an important conversation. At two, I walked to the library and entered.

“Good afternoon, Sir Reg.”

“Good afternoon. Come in and sit, and tell me what’s on your mind.”

“I have some good news, sir. You will find it to be very good news if you entertain the possibility of recovering from your condition and walking again.”

I was met with a long silence. “Should I repeat myself?”

“That’s not necessary. I heard you well. I’m startled at the summary quality of your statement. Well, please elaborate.”

And so I did. I gave Sir Reginald a history of all that had passed since I had so painfully located and disturbed the foreign object in his back. I concluded my tale with details of Dr. Lister’s letter.

Sir Reg remained silent, and then said, "I don't like the idea."

"For heaven's sake, why?"

"I have distinct memories of my surgeries in the Crimea."

"Which you will readily admit were done slapdash by military surgeons."

"I was later told—in England, mind you—that further surgery cannot be done."

"Yes, Sir Reg. On Tuesday, June 6th, of this year, you said 'I'm told it cannot be done. The doctors say they cannot find it, and if they could, they wouldn't dare remove it. The surgery is not safe, they tell me.'"

"Nurse Patricia Goodman, you have the insufferable habit of remembering and quoting my words."

"Perhaps you should be married. It is a habit that most wives display. Regardless, what I quote is true. And now I will say this: First, the shrapnel is located, so there is no issue of not finding it.

"Second, I have engaged the finest surgeon in the United Kingdom. Further, Dr. Joseph Lister is keenly aware of the work of Dr. Pasteur and others as to the cause of deadly infections. He has techniques to prevent such infections."

"What of the pain?"

"Dr. Lister has anesthetics at his disposal. Whether he uses ether or chloroform, you will be unconscious, and won't feel a thing."

"Not like on a naval vessel, where they lop off a limb and cauterize while you're screaming. Well, what about pain later—if I live?"

"You will have pain after surgery, a situation I am prepared to treat. Later, you will have pain as you learn to walk again."

"That is likely impossible."

"You are likely obstinate."

"Perhaps the operation is costly."

"Tell me: You have four estates, three of them quite large. Can you not afford the surgery?"

Pause. "I can afford it."

"Do you like being in constant pain?"

"Not at all."

"Would you like to be free of pain?"

"Very much."

"Do you desire to walk someday, if possible?"

"Of course."

"Then... what problem do you have with surgery?"

Pause. "Do you want the truth, Nurse Goodman?"

"Very much, sir. I should expect no less from you."

"I fear dying."

Now I paused. "Sir Reginald, if I may, please permit me quote you. Again, Tuesday, June 6, 1865, the day of our first meeting."

"*Must* you?"

"Yes. 'I will summarize the end for me: Battle of Balaclava Haro Prii, October 25, 1854. We had 4,500 troops and 26 guns. The Russians had 25,000 troops and 78 guns.' Did you fear dying at that time?"

"Yes, of course."

And what did you do?

"I, er... I fought, of course."

"So, now what will you do?"

A long pause. "You know, Mrs. Patricia Goodman, Nurse of the Nightingale School, if you were not so irritating, I should say I love you."

"Believe me, Sir Reginald, I echo the sentiment. You are a fine man, and I feel the same way about you."

"One reason I fear dying is..."

"Yes?"

"I have come to treasure your company very much."

"Do you love me?"

Pause. Quietly, "Yes."

"I can't hear you."

"YES, damn it! I love you."

"Excellent! I love you, too."

"Then how might we end our conversation?"

“By your consenting to the operation.”

Pause. I held my breath. At last, Sir Reg said, “Very well. All right. Okay. Right-o. Good. Fine. Perfect. I will submit to the knife.”

“Sir Reginald Pleydell, I commend you on your intelligence and discernment.”

I rushed to him and, to the extent his wheelchair would permit, gave him a hug. I kissed his cheeks many times. As I returned to my seat, I had only one thought: *Oh, God. What have I done?* There was a chance that I was condemning Sir Reg to an early death.

“Now, Nurse Goodman, despite my recent growing affection for port, I shall have a large Irish whiskey.”

“May I join you?”

“I thought you were supposed to be the very model of Victorian sobriety and restraint.”

“You thought wrong. Talk to my mother.”

“Very well. Let’s drink to the surgery. The decanter is behind you.”

I fetched the container.

“Shall I bring the water?”

“No! Camel dung! Water is for boys and vicars. We’ll drink like the men of Ireland and Scotland.”

“And like women such as my mother in Kew and Betty Bourne in Hawkinge.”

Sir Reg poured. He raised his glass. “To your health!”

“And especially to yours!” We knocked back our drinks. Sir Reg poured another round.

“A toast: may your pussy never willow.”

“May your pizzle never fizzle.”

“May your Bristol bits point toward heaven.”

“May your cock be like a rock, and point to heaven also.”

We were now laughing too hard to continue. We tossed off our shots. Sir Reg poured two more rounds.

“Is there anything else?”

“Just one important thing.”

I went to Sir Reg and kissed him. It was a long, intense, passionate kiss on the lips. I gave his forehead several gentle strokes to straighten his hair, and finished with a peck on his cheek. My heart racing, I turned and left.

I staggered to my bedroom, slipped out of my uniform, and lay down for a nap. The glow imparted by the whiskey was exceeded only by the glow my entire body felt from the kiss. To add to the effect, I felt as though a tremendous weight had been lifted from my shoulders, now that Sir Reg had consented to the operation. I slept soundly until tea.

I went to the kitchen and seated myself. Jack was already there. "Oh, Meg, is there tea? I feel a little unstable."

Jack said, "Yes, when I was tending to Sir Reg this afternoon, he said you two had had a fine bout of drinking."

"Indeed we did. Sir Reg gave his assent to the surgical operation. Now, there is a great deal of work to do, and little time in which to do it. As you know from Dr. Lister's telegram, he will arrive on Monday next, meet Sir Reg, and perform the operation on Tuesday."

"Well then, what's to be done?"

"First, Jack, you must determine a suitable room to be the operating theatre. Perhaps there is a vacant one down the hall from Sir Reg's bedchamber. Remove all items, as it must be bare. Then you your crew must clean the floor and windows with your strongest solvents. Finally whitewash the walls, as that technique is superior to cleaning them."

"This is no problem. Today is Wednesday, and the work can be completed tomorrow."

"Meg, please locate a very sturdy table, not as big as the one in the dining room, but more the size of those in the library. We can then move it into the surgery. Perhaps the groundsmen can lend a hand."

"Jack, if you will, please locate a lighter table and fit it with wheels. This will serve as a trolley to conduct Sir Reg to the operation and back."

"Meg, in addition, we must find small tables to hold surgical instruments and various bowls. Then, we need linens to drape the table and Sir Reg. Meg, best that they be your whitest, cleanest items. In addition, we will need a large quantity of towels and cloths. There must also be pans to hold them as they are used, for there will be blood."

"We will need pots on the stove to boil water. These are to be used to sterilize the operating instruments. Also we must have pots with in the surgery to hold cool boiled water, as I know Dr. Lister will ask us to 'irrigate' the opening he makes."

"Us?"

"Yes, Meg. Dr. Lister requires two nurses. We must be dressed in white laboratory coats, which I have. Also, we must cover our hair and wear face masks. I'm sure you will not be squeamish, as you have killed many a chicken and dressed many a hog."

"You know," Jack said, "an army surgeon or a sawbones on a naval vessel isn't so fastidious."

"Granted, Jack. Sir Reg mentioned that. But I point out that during the just-ended American Civil War, about twice as many soldiers died of disease as were killed or mortally wounded in combat. And you are aware of the unsanitary conditions Florence Nightingale found at the Selimiye Barracks in the Crimea when she visited. It

was disease, not wounds, that killed my dear Michael. The evolving theory is that disease is carried by small creatures we cannot even see.”

“Well, I’ve had my share of bad food and bad water. They’ve both made me sick. Maybe those little animals were the cause.”

Meg said, “What else is there?”

“Dr. Lister will bring his instruments and anesthetic. I must immediately order a large quantity of carbolic acid from my purveyor in London. Here, I’ve written everything down, so we may be sure of missing nothing.”

I left Meg and Jack, and walked to my room. There, I composed a telegram to my London apothecary.

Wednesday, July 5, 1865

Rexford Aull, Apothecary/Chemist
№ 39 Black Friars Lane
Blackfriars, London

My Dear Mr. Aull,

Please send me, with all possible haste, one carboy (of five gallon capacity) of carbolic acid, also known as phenol.

I will use this substance in a surgical procedure. My intention is to dilute the phenol with 10% water to make a strong disinfectant. It may also serve, in more dilute form, to cleanse the patient.

Please ship the item by express train to the West Folkestone Station, Folkestone, Kent, where I will call for it.

I will send by post a cheque for £50, signed by Mrs. Bates, the estate manager at Folkestone Manor.

All possible speed is essential. I must have this substance no later than Monday, the 10th inst. of July. Earlier arrival preferred.

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

Concluding my telegram, I wrote a short note, obtained a cheque from Meg, and placed them in an envelope for the regular post. Armed with my telegram and letter, I set off for the post office.

While my pace was brisk, I did not fail to appreciate the abundance of wildflowers I saw in the meadows. My mother always reminded me to slow down, breathe, and take in the sights. Bluebells were still predominant, with dandelions appearing where bluebells did not. The apple orchards had blossomed in May, and now the trees had the task of setting fruit. Betty had told me that one green variety was called the Flower of Kent. The legend is that it was this apple that Sir Isaac Newton saw falling to the ground, inspiring his laws of universal gravitation. Best of all, the gray of the early morning had disappeared and the sky was a glorious blue.

“Good afternoon, Sam!”

“And good afternoon to you, Patricia.”

“I will not ask you for our password. Please send this telegram with all possible speed.”

Sam Fowler looked over my text. “Disinfectant for a surgery. Shall I put two and two together, as they say? It appears that Sir Reginald will undergo an operation.”

“Yes! That’s so! I’m very pleased. You’ll recall from Monday that Dr. Lister wrote, ‘Will do the surgery on Tuesday, July 11, 1865.’ Sir Reg has assented. Now we must obtain phenol as fast as possible.”

“I’ll not only send this to London, but I’ll alert the telegraph office at the Folkestone railway station to inform me as soon as it arrives. Now, shall I stay quiet about this?”

“Only for a few days. Lister’s arrival on Monday will set the town talking.”

“Then why stay quiet?”

“I do not want to provoke another unwelcome visit from Sir Reg’s sister.”

“Oh, yes. I heard about that. It appears that you sent that woman from London packing. Also, Mr. Uriah Grimstead has recently been quite restrained in his sending of telegrams. The connection is now quite obvious to me.”

I thanked Sam, and walked back to the manor at a leisurely pace. While there was much work to do, I was relaxed and calm in the extreme.

At the manor, I knocked at the library door. Sir Reg bid me to enter, so I did. I found him with his sword on his lap.

“I see your sword, Sir Reg. Do you anticipate carving a melon?”

“No, Patricia. I contemplate a more serious fight.”

“You have courage, and I commend you.”

“If I have courage, I only hope that it persists.”

“I know it will.”

“I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

I thought it best to leave Sir Reg with his thoughts. I gave him a kiss on the cheek and left the library.

In my day room, I consulted my medical texts once again, hoping that by study I could somehow increase my contribution to the success of the operation. At tea time, I went to the kitchen, as usual.

“Ah, Patricia, sit down and have an ale. It may chase away some of the effects of your drinking whiskey.”

I took the proffered mug and drank. "Thank you, Meg. I cannot recall ever having drunk so much whiskey so fast."

"When Jack was in The Buffs, he actually encouraged new recruits to drink all the gin they could. They became so sick that they never repeated the experience."

"What will you serve today?"

"Simple sandwiches of meat and bread, with some cole slaw. I'll say more, but first I must take Sir Reg his dinner cart." In a minute or so, Meg returned. As Jack had arrived, she set out plates of food for us.

"Here, my children, is a dish called pulled pork. For your benefit, Patricia, I'll mention how it's prepared: I take a shoulder of pork, rather a tough cut of meat, and allow it to cook slowly in its own juices for about six hours. A clod of beef will work, as well. There's little work involved. At the end of cooking, I pull all the meat apart with two forks or with my fingers."

"But I can see that there's more than just meat here."

"Yes, I cook this dish with plenty of garlic, and at the end I stir in a sauce made from tomatoes, sugar, and Worcestershire, which is very popular in the western portion of the United States. Now, just put a spoonful of the pulled meat onto a slice of bread and have a bite."

"Meg, this is wonderful! I must write my mother about it."

"Remind her that anyone can easily prepare it, even that girl who cooks for her." We had a fine tea, and significantly, there was no need to discuss the preparations for the operation. We all knew what we must do.

"Oh, Meg, please let me clear the dishes from Sir Reg's meal."

"Of course. You do that, and I'll just sit here stroking Jack. I may kiss him a few times, too."

I went to the library and knocked. "Come in Meg."

"Oh, no, Yer Worship. It is only I, Patty, the scullery maid. I've come to collect the cart."

"Well, you are quite lovely, and you shake your hips well. But I must tell you that there is one who is lovelier. You see, I am in love with my nurse."

"Well, she must be a fine woman to attract such a fine man."

"She is attractive, although quite obstinate."

"Well, as you love her and not me, might I have just one kiss?"

"Well, just one, as I am spoken for."

I went to Sir Reg and gave him my best, long, passionate kiss. When our lips parted, Sir Reg was breathing hard, as was I. "Tell me, Patty O'Furniture, where did a country lass like you learn to kiss?"

“From the nurse, sir. She was married to a soldier, so she knows what soldiers like. Now, Yer Worship, I’ll bid you good evening.”

In my bedroom, I occupied myself with reading until night came on. As I settled in my bed, I found myself agitated a bit by two strong feelings: affection for Sir Reg and fear of the operation. But despite my emotions, sleep eventually overtook me.

Thursday, July 6, 1865

Jack, Meg, and I spent Thursday preparing the operating theatre. Jack had selected an excellent room, just two doors down from Sir Reg’s bedchamber, and about six doors up from my bedroom. As with all rooms on the north side of the manor, it featured large French doors admitting plenty of light.

Jack quickly had had the room cleared of curtains and tapestries. He had followed this by setting the maids to work scrubbing the floor and window glass. After that, the groundsman had whitewashed the entire room, including the ceiling! At this time, Meg and I located an excellent table in the drawing room, scrubbed it, and requested Jack to have it moved to the surgery.

The search for a table to make into a trolley was not so simple. Meg and I visited nearly twenty unused rooms on the second floor until at last we found a suitable candidate. Although made of solid oak, it was not too heavy to serve as transportation for our patient. We alerted Jack, and he had it moved to his shop so that he might install wheels.

As a bonus, we found two small tables suitable for instruments and such. Meg and I moved these together. At last, Meg and I sat in the kitchen. “Tell me, Miz Patricia, what’s next?”

“Ah, Meg, if you show me a collection of pots, I will choose those most appropriate for boiling instruments and holding bloody cloths. Please show me your worst ones for the waste from the operation, while the others must be your best ones. You, then, must go to locate linens.”

“Very good. We can each do our separate tasks. Now I’ll ask ye this: as it’s approaching noon, are you free to help with the dinner?”

“Me, cook with you? Why, Meg, you flatter me.”

“Well, young lady, I need the help, and all this experience will be useful when you marry.”

“Perhaps I shall not marry, although Simon Shepherd insisted over dinner at Betty’s that he saw marriage in my future.”

“I rather hope Simon’s prediction comes true. Now, here’s what you do, missy. When that pot of water boils, put in twenty potatoes. Let them boil a quarter of an hour. In the meantime, slice these six loaves of bread.”

“What will you do?”

“I’m slicing a tenderloin of beef into ten steaks. Best part of the steer, you know. I’ll put them to the fire when the potatoes are half done. Also, I’ll slice some vegetables.”

“What’s the occasion?”

“A meal for the many women and men who worked to prepare our operating theatre. Now, take these mugs outdoors. Jack has set up a trestle table and benches.”

I followed Meg’s instructions precisely. Before too long, both potatoes and steaks were ready. “All right, my dear. Drain them tatties, and don’t be scalding yourself. Cut each one into about four pieces and put them in these bowls. Me, I’ll fill a large platter with beefsteaks.”

When I went out of doors, I found ten people seating themselves and Jack pouring ale into mugs. I set down the potatoes, and went back to the kitchen to fetch bread, butter, and crunchy vegetables. I sat with the people, and at last, Meg arrived with sizzling steaks. We began our banquet.

Jack rose with his mug. “Here’s to my Meg, the *chef de cuisine*.”

Amid shouts of, “hear, hear,” we drank.

Meg rose. “Here’s to Jack Bates, the major domo.”

Jack said, “And to Nurse Patricia Goodman, responsible for Sir Reg’s health!”

With more shouts of, “hear, hear,” we drank.

I rose. “Here’s to Sir Reginald Pleydell. May his health improve!”

Amid yet more shouts of, “hear, hear,” and “aye,” we drank again. “And also, I give my most sincere thanks to you all!”

Jack said, “Now eat, eat, eat, I pray you. We have made excellent progress, and there is little left to do in the afternoon. Tomorrow, we can return to our regular work.” Indeed, we ate, experiencing a fine sense of community. I had not previously had a chance to meet the stable boy, the milkmaid, the maids, the groundskeepers, or the gamekeepers, and I was very happy to do so.

After dinner, I helped Meg a bit to clean up from the dinner. Also, we agreed on the appropriate pots and pans for the operation and set them aside.

My afternoon was simplicity itself. I gave Sir Reg a massage, and spoke encouraging words about the surgical procedure. I was free until tea. My chief occupation, I’m sorry to say, was wondering and worrying what Mr. Aull in London would do regarding my order for phenol—and when he would do it.

I welcomed teatime. I prevailed upon Meg to let me serve Sir Reg in the library, and she had no objection. When she said, “Have a good time,” I swear I saw a distinct twinkle in her eye.

I pushed the tea cart to the library, and knocked. Having been bid to enter, I brought the dishes to one of the library tables. Sir Reg showed no surprise at seeing me.

“Sir Reg, here’s tea. May I join you?”

“Of course. I welcome your company, and I no longer wish to spend time contemplating my operation.”

“I’ll set before you a light meal, *à propos* of summer in Kent. Three kinds of cheese, sliced Wiltshire ham, and fruit.”

Sir Reg placed a slice of apple in his mouth, chewed, and swallowed. "You know, I rather liked it when you fed me after my big attack of pain."

"I rather liked doing so. Here, have another slice of apple." He opened his mouth, and I placed a slice between his teeth.

He placed a small piece of cheese on a fork. "Stilton, Mrs. Goodman?"

"Yes, please. And you might consider calling me 'Patricia.'" I opened my mouth, and waited. As it entered my mouth, I wrapped my lips over it. Then I offered him a morsel of ham. Staring intently at me, he bit into the slice. And, back and forth, we proceeded until our plates were cleared.

"I say, shall we play at backgammon, Mrs., er, Patricia?"

"Certainly. I suppose you have forgotten my success in our last session?"

"Not at all. I remember it distinctly. And I am prepared to counter your techniques. Would you mind fetching the port? I cannot manage the decanter and the glasses together from this chair."

Sir Reg wheeled himself to that table which served for games. The backgammon board was already set up. We played our first game. Sir Reg won handily.

"HA! The first game goes to me." It was clear to me that I had been overconfident. We played again, and this time I won. Our third game was neck-and-neck, as they say. Sir Reg won while I had two men left to bear off.

"Well done, Sir Reg. How do you account for the skill you show today?"

"I read a book by that Egyptian, Michel Demitri Shalhoub. He is quite the expert on both whist and backgammon."

"Well and good, but let us play again, Reg."

Our fourth game was close, and finally there appeared to be one turn left. "Patricia, be prepared to lose again. I have the turn, and only two men to bear off. Therefore, I shall win."

"I think not. Your men are at 6 and 5. Only three rolls, 6-6, 6-5, and 5-6, will get them off the board. Add to that double 3, double 4, double 5, and double 6. But there are thirty-six possible outcomes of your roll. You have only seven chances in thirty-six."

I was correct. Sir Reg rolled a 4-3, and could only advance his men, not bear them off. "Now, Earl, watch carefully. I have thirty-three chances to bear off."

My men were at 3 and 2. I rolled a 4-3, and bore them off, making me the winner.

"And what, might I ask, gives you such confidence?"

"Knowledge obtained from Professor Borg."

"I beg your pardon?"

“Professor Borg was one of my teachers at girls’ school. She taught probability and statistics. We didn’t like the work, but she said ‘resistance is futile,’ and indeed we learned the topics required of us. I *knew* that most rolls favored me. I might also point out that Florence Nightingale, my mentor, is a pioneer in statistical graphics.”

“Odd. I used to yearn for an intelligent woman in my life.”

“Well, now you have one.”

“If you don’t mind, I shall retire. We have each won two games. May I ask a kiss from you?”

“Yes. There is nothing I would more willingly give.” *Well, one more thing*, I thought.

I went to Sir Reg, and despite the impediment of his wheel chair, lingered over another deep, passionate kiss.

“Sir Reg, you rather take my breath away.”

“And you, mine.”

“Then until tomorrow, I bid you good night.”

I went to my room, removed my clothing, and spent some time in contemplation of my moments with Sir Reginald. I prayed that my Michael would forgive me my new found feelings of love, and yet I also felt that he understood. I spent considerable time fondling myself, and did not hesitate to elevate my strokes to those imitating sexual performance. And so, with a kind of warm relaxation, I fell asleep.