

# Miss Match's Misadventures

A novel of women of enterprise in Victorian Brighton



*John C. Nash*

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Diana Cassandra Baldwin was born two years after the death of Jane Austen and two years before the death of Napoleon. Clearly she was a product of a romantic and heroic time. Thus it may be presumed her elopement to Gretna Green with her father's assistant apothecary Gerald was exciting and romantic. Unfortunately, Gerald drank some water in Glasgow and died four days into the marriage.

Our heroine did not, fortunately, abandon hope and fade away. We find her a decade and a half later, under the name Cassandra Match, with a modest fortune earned by honest trade, albeit in a disreputable locale. Timely information allowed her and a companion to escape becoming embroiled in possible criminal proceedings, and they have decided to try to improve their fortunes in Brighton. The challenge is, however, that women are legally limited in how they may own and manage property in Britain in the middle of the 19th century.



## Preamble

*Miss Match's Misadventures* is a work of fiction. The initial text was written in 2021.

This work started out as a small piece of "fluff" using some words supplied randomly as seeds for a weekly creative writing exercise of the Stittsville Creative Writing Group. Soon the characters muscled their way into my consciousness, largely in the form of questions about how single women with business sense would have been able to make money and hang onto it. The main difficulty is that women ceased, upon marriage, to be separate persons. They were subsumed into their husband's identity. Many women had large amounts of money stolen with the full support of church and state at the altar. Some were extremely badly treated as well. In such a situation, how would they have lived their daily lives and tried to make their fortunes and cope with life's disasters in the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851. As I discovered the very sketchy details of certain aspects of life at the time, I realized that we have some distorted images of that time, but many aspects are difficult or impossible to learn. Thus much of Miss Match is an attempt at describing and animating a possible rather than an actual social condition. It is an invention – or possibly the period word would be confection. In some cases I have taken period materials and constructed objects that may never have existed in reality, but which form a species of "might have been". I hope you enjoy this fantasy of the almost real.

If there are historical details about the events on which my fiction is built, or facts that make some of the narrative impossible, I would be delighted to learn about them. It has been very difficult to get good numbers for prices of all kinds of objects, materials and services. For example, the price of a donkey, or a desk, or a table and chairs.

One aspect of the narrative that may give readers difficulty is the presence of pounds, shillings and pence in any mention of money. I have tried to be very diligent in getting the details of this correct, but from conversations with those close to me recognize how alien the old sterling currency now seems. While I am old enough to remember farthings (they ceased to be legal tender on December 31, 1960), and my wife and I were living in the UK on Decimal Day (15 February 1971), few people will be comfortable with the old currency. There is a brief outline following this preamble.

I welcome courteous communications, including criticism if the sender is

willing to engage in discussion that can bring better understanding. I may be contacted at nashjc \_at\_ ncf.ca.

*John Nash*, Ottawa, 2021

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# Pounds, shillings and pence

British currency before 1971 was based on the **pound sterling**.

This was divided into 20 **shillings**.

The shilling was divided into 12 **pence** or pennies.

The penny was (at least in 1851) divided into 4 **farthings** or 2 **halfpennies** or more commonly **ha'pennies**.

Needless to say, the arithmetic is tedious and error-prone. I hope I have got everything correct in my narrative below.

An amount might be written £23 13s 5¾d.

This would be read as

23 pounds, 13 shillings, 5 pence 3 farthings

or perhaps archaically

23 pounds, 13 shillings, 5 pence ha'penny farthing

The "£" is the abbreviation for pounds, but precedes the number. "s" is for shillings. "d" is for the pence. These symbols derive from the Latin 'l' for libra, s for solidus and d for denarius used in the Middle Ages.

Colloquially, of course, there were other names for particular quantities. Here is a table of some of the units, where those which had coins or notes are indicated.

- ¼d == 1 farthing (coin)
- ½d == 1 halfpenny or ha'penny (coin)
- 1d == 1 penny (coin)
- 2d == 2 pence or tuppence. No coin
- 3d == 1 threepence or thrupence (coin)
- 6d == 6 pence or a "tanner"
- 1s == 1 shilling or a "bob"
- 2s == 2 shillings or a "florin"
- 2s 6d == 2 shillings and 6 pence == half a crown or "half crown"
- 5s == crown (coin. Rare in circulation. Largely commemorative.)

- 10s == half sovereign (coin). Note that the 1844 Bank Notes Act prohibited notes under £5 in England, so 10s notes did not exist during the time of this novel.
- £1 == 1 pound or sovereign (coin). No pound notes existed at the time of the novel.
- 1 guinea == 1 pound 1 shilling. No coin or note was available for this at the time of the novel, but it was used as a unit of payment, ostensibly as a way to provide auctioneers with a 5% commission, but often simply to inflate prices.



In the Summer of 1851, Cassandra Match was engaged as manager by the Brighton haberdashery and drapery firm of Bartlett and Jones. Miss Match was thirty-two years old, and had grown up in Manchester, the daughter of an apothecary and his religiously pious wife. Indeed, her maternal grandparents held the vicarage of a Lancashire coal mining village.

Match was not her real name, though Cassandra was the middle name with which she was baptised. She was also not correctly addressed as Miss, since she had eloped at the age of 17 with the apothecary's apprentice to Gretna Green. The drama pursuant to that elopement would, I am afraid, not add up to even a modest paragraph. The apothecary's assistant was foolish enough to drink some water in Glasgow and promptly died of cholera, though it was not one of the notable years for that illness. Cassandra – we will use the name she has chosen – wrote to her parents and received by return of post a very short epistle saying that she was no longer their daughter and to not contact them again.

In the decade and a half between the untimely death of her freshly married husband and her arrival in Brighton in the Spring of 1851, Cassandra – under yet another name – had landed on her feet, more or less. She did not find Glasgow an attractive place to live, especially if one had no money. The most obvious potential for earning was, unfortunately, on her back rather than her feet. Having luckily avoided getting pregnant in her truncated marriage, she did not wish pregnancy nor disease, but she recognized that in port cities prostitution was a significant economic activity, and one available to a good proportion of young women having no other opportunities.

A short distance from Glasgow, however, the town of Greenock was becoming an important hub of shipping that avoided the awkward navigation of the Clyde, especially now steamboats were common. She repaired to Greenock and rented a room for a few days with her dwindling monies, using her time to observe and locate the town brothels. She selected one in an unassuming but well-maintained building and just before noon on a Tuesday knocked on the door and asked for an interview with the proprietress.

The madam was taken aback to be so approached. However, Cassandra was a nice-looking girl, and the madam thought she might appeal to her customers. However, Cassandra stated she had no wish to earn her keep in the usual brothel occupation, but could offer her services as a book-keeper,

hostess, emergency seamstress and unofficial apothecary. As a girl, Cassandra had been fascinated by her father's books and journals, including *The Lancet* for which he maintained a subscription. She had learned much from these sources, all of which had been kept secret from her parents, and in fact, from her short-lived husband.

That she claimed knowledge of drugs, potions and the diseases they purported to cure or at least ameliorate elicited some questions pertinent to the health of the girls in the brothel, and Cassandra was able to provide sufficient answers that she got trial employment. This employment included food and lodging – the madam had bought a pleasant house elsewhere, and was actually looking for someone to look after her interests. This was not revealed immediately, but when Cassandra proved an excellent custodian and manager of the brothel, as well as able to assist the girls in avoiding some of the negative aspects of the trade, the madam was most happy to give her the reins and take her retirement along with her cut of the steady profits.

All good things have a finite life, and a friendly constable who enjoyed the company of one of the girls gave Cassandra a timely warning of impending legal interruption of business. She called Mary, one of the women who had become the cook and general housekeeper, and asked her if she would like to accompany her. Then she called the women together and paid them off, packed two carpet bag valises and a large reticule, and left. Mary took a single, but somewhat larger carpet bag, including her favourite pot and two knives, one large and one small, that she favoured when cooking. Both ladies had the preponderance of their money secreted in their corsets. Five pound notes, folded in greaseproof paper, could replace some of the whalebone.

"Mary, I suggest we change our names. I will use the name Cassandra ...." She spotted a box of lucifers and added "Match. We will develop our histories while we make our escape."

"Mary is common enough, so I'll use McNair, my grandmother's maiden name."

By this time the two ladies were making their way to the docks at a very, very early hour of the morning. They did not take a hansom cab, but lugged their baggage – Cassandra's reticule was on a long strap over right shoulder and under her left arm. The driver of a cab might remember them.

There were some modest boats whose captains sometimes frequented the brothel. Cassandra had had the foresight to know the names of several, and she and Mary soon found one that was getting ready to sail. Cassandra hailed it "Captain, may I urgently communicate with you?"

The captain swung himself onto the dock and in a few minutes Cassandra had negotiated a price to be conveyed to Troon. It was a bit out of the captain's way, but Cassandra offered enough cash to make the detour worthwhile. The fifty miles or so was cold and a bit rough, but the two ladies

stayed on the deck in the lee of the wheelhouse of the fishing boat, thereby avoiding the worst of seasickness.

Railway passenger service from Troon to Kilmarnock had opened a few years previously. From Kilmarnock the two ladies booked to London via Carlisle. They arrived in London tired and rather grimy from the trains. Sleeping cars were not yet a possibility. On the journey, they had agreed that their story would be that Miss Match had been the manageress of a private hotel for distressed gentlewomen, and Mrs. McNair (who in actuality had never been married, but would claim to be a widow) had been its housekeeper. It was not uncommon, however, for housekeepers to be referred to as if they were married or widows. They decided to locate this establishment in Falkirk rather than Greenock.

Given their arduous journey, they decided to take a two-night hiatus to recover their energies. Engaging a hansom, Miss Match asked to be driven to Brown's Hotel. It would cost them a bit, but she felt it worthwhile to have some comfort and regain her energies.

Mary was a little intimidated by Brown's, but Cassandra asked her to take note of the accoutrements and observe especially those that she felt were particularly likely to attract clients. Though Cassandra had not given Mary details of her plan, they had talked of offering well-appointed furnished apartments for rental in a sea-side or similar town easily accessible from London. Brighton was their first choice, and they intended to go there first, but Cassandra noted that Eastbourne or even Tunbridge Wells would be possible. However, Brighton had been the playground of the Prince Regent some years before and was now well-established as a resort. They would repair there in a couple of days. The intervening day they spent exploring Piccadilly, particularly the shop windows. Many notes were taken, but they only spent money on food and drink and, as a treat, a visit to a theatre for what was, unfortunately, a rather uninspiring melodrama.

\* \* \*

The trip to the theatre was, however, a good occasion to agree their new life histories.

Cassandra said "Mary, Have you thought of details of your past – your new past?"

"Let me think. My accent will give me away as from the Lowlands, so let us say I was born in Paisley in 1810."

"The month and day?"

"May 10."

"Is that actually correct?"

“Yes I suppose I should change it. How about July 31, 1812?”  
 “Say July 31, 1807.”  
 “But that will make me older.”  
 “Yes, and look younger.”  
 “Oh. And most women lie the other way, of course. What about you, er... Cassandra?”  
 “I will keep the year, as it is more difficult with my bone structure to slip my age much, at least for now. So let us say September 9, 1819. It is a little off. And I will say I was born in Chester.”  
 “And you will be a spinster?”  
 “Yes.”  
 “I will say I am a widow and that my husband died in the cholera in 1832 and we had no children.”  
 “How odd that you choose that?”  
 “What?”  
 “The cholera. I had a husband for 4 days and then he died of it.”  
 “Just before you arrived in ....?”  
 “Yes. My family disowned me. We will mention it no more. It is time for new lives for both of us.”

\* \* \*

In Brighton, the two women found a modest boarding house and shared a room by the week. It was not as comfortable as Brown’s, where they had enjoyed the luxury of bathing and washing their hair. However, it was respectable and served as a base to explore the town. Unlike the tourists and early-season holiday-makers, they walked the streets to observe the houses and the neighbourhoods.

Mary had spotted two houses, the end units of a row, on a corner, with a small notice indicating they were for sale. The London, Brighton and South Coast Railway had its station not much over 200 yards away. The houses each had a below-ground area for the kitchen and scullery.

Cassandra went to visit the named estate agent, a Mr. Arbuthnot, to enquire about the houses, which were indicated to be for sale or rent. She would prefer to own the property if she could. It was difficult, if not impossible, for women to open bank accounts, and cash could invite robbery as well as not earn interest. Ownership would also avoid the need to arrange payments for the rent.

Before she mentioned purchase, Cassandra asked Mr. Arbuthnot whether he arranged rentals and leases on apartments for people seeking a holiday or for a getaway pied-a-terre. He replied that indeed he was already in that line

of business, given how popular Brighton had become now the railway offered such splendid, rapid and regular service to London.

Mr. Arbuthnot then launched into a long and awkward soliloquy about his attention to ensuring the tenants would be of upright character and moral rectitude. Cassandra allowed him to talk for a full ten minutes before saying

“Mr. Arbuthnot, I am pleased that you take respectability so seriously, but I am not unaware that a particular attraction of rental properties such as those I hope to buy have special interest to gentlemen and some ladies who wish to have the company of an intimate friend. Clearly it is unfortunate that some of them will not respect their obligations or promises. However, my first concern must be that my properties, if I can find suitable ones, make a return on the investment in them. As long as my tenants – and I would prefer yearly to weekly or monthly ones – are quiet and attract no untoward attention, I will allow them their privacy.”

Mr. Arbuthnot was relieved. He was very relieved. He had had a very unpleasant experience with a titled lady who had invested in rentals similar to those Miss Match was seeking, then had happened to see a man, who was known to her by acquaintance, enter with a lady she also knew, and also knew not to be married to the gentleman. There was a very awkward scene when a constable was summoned. It was clear that Miss Match would be the soul of discretion, and he communicated this sentiment to her.

Cassandra then asked what would be Mr. Arbuthnot’s commission for finding tenants. The answer was 5%, generally organized by quoting the rental in guineas but paying the owner in pounds. Cassandra asked if rent were generally paid in advance. The answer was yes, and generally Arbuthnot preferred if it were paid to his agency, as he found this avoided what he termed “awkwardness”.

“Mr. Arbuthnot, I understand your wish to ensure payment is made promptly, for I share the same wishes. Should I succeed in acquiring property for the purposes of renting it out, I will be pleased to engage your services, and I presume we can detail an agreement to that end. Furthermore, as I wish to ensure that my properties are well-regarded, and I presume you commission advertisements to elicit tenants, I will welcome conversation on whether extra attention to those communications and therefore some additional payment to you is merited.”

Arbuthnot was most happy to hear this. Cassandra realized she needed to be cautious with this man, but it was worth dangling a carrot. She already had a good idea about commissions from overhearing the men in the house in Greenock, but she also knew there were some who took the commission but did not earn it.

Cassandra asked when it might be possible to see the houses, and found that it could be that very afternoon. Collecting Mary from the bench on

the front where they had agreed to meet, they had a pie and cup of tea in a small tea-room, and walked to the Seven Dials area to meet Mr. Arbuthnot. The houses were quite new, only a few years old. Why the owner was selling was not exactly clear, but a death and some debts were mentioned. On their walk, Cassandra asked Mary to be very observant in case there were any dilapidation in the structure. Two pairs of eyes were better than one.

Mary was introduced as Cassandra's housekeeper, and the trio proceeded to inspect the houses. Mary noted that each had an exit at the back to small yards that might become gardens. There were steps from French windows on the main floor down to the gardens, if they could be called that, since at the moment both yards were a wasteland. The actual pattern of the steps was different between the houses, as were the steps up from the lower service areas. Between the two yards was a wooden fence.

"That's good. A wall would be more work if we want a gate between the yards," Mary noted. Indeed, there were walls on all the other sides of the property, with a gate in the rear wall of each yard. These gates had locks – presumably there was a path behind, as the only other access to the yards was through the houses.

Mr. Arbuthnot made the useful observation "Since the end house is accessible from the side street, you could put a coal shed in the yard, which would avoid moving coal where it might create cleaning work."

They found that there was a water closet in each service area for servants, as well as one on the upper floor of each house for residents. There was a water cistern on the lower level of each house, apparently fed from the gutters at the roof, at least from the rear. Cassandra wondered if the drains from the front part of the roof could be connected, or be provided with their own cistern, possibly in the "area" at the front of each house. Each had a walkway across this sunken area, under which they discovered the present coal storage. Clearly it might be possible to convert one of those to house another cistern, thereby enlarging the water supply.

"Are the stoves in the kitchens only for cooking and heating, or do they have boilers," Cassandra asked.

Mr. Arbuthnot did not know. Mary, however, took from her reticule some workmen's gloves and proceeded to open the panels and grates and discovered pipes in both stoves. Water could be heated, and it appeared there was a reservoir at the rear of the stoves that would hold several gallons. There was a pipe leading into this with a valve. It apparently was fed from the cistern, which must be raised somewhat to provide for flow. Cassandra wondered what was under the cistern.

"Do you know plumbers who might allow us to connect the two sets of plumbing?" Cassandra asked. "It would be useful at times of the year when hot water is less needed to be able to use a single boiler. I would also like

to explore the cost of being able to pump hot water to the upper floor so it need not be carried up for the residents.”

“I am the third generation of my family to deal with property here, and we keep good connections with a number of tradesmen, Miss Match. I’m sure we can find someone to suggest the most economical way to do that. I admire your foresight in so thinking. Carrying water up two flights of stairs is heavy work, with the risk of spills and consequent damage to the fabric of the houses.”

Mary had a notebook. She surprised Cassandra again by pulling a rolled tape from her reticule. It was of sturdy cotton or linen in an off-white colour. Then Cassandra noticed it had inked divisions. So that was why Mary had been looking for a yardstick yesterday. Now Mary asked that Cassandra or Mr. Arbuthnot hold the end of the tape while she made rough measurements of the rooms and plotted them in her notebook on a crude sketch of the floor plans.

After making two tours of each house and looking at the exteriors from the yards and across the street and round the corner, the two women were satisfied with their inspection. Cassandra said she would call on Mr. Arbuthnot in the morning at half past nine if that were acceptable, and tell him of her decision.

\* \* \*

Cassandra and Mary returned to the boarding house. Their room had a double and a single bed, being meant for a family group. Cassandra had taken the single bed, it being what she was used to. Now she sat upon it with her own notes. Mary spread her notes on the other bed. They pulled back the curtains for light.

“What do you think?” Cassandra asked.

“How much will they cost?”

“The asking price is £350 each. I am not sure how much one bargains for property, but I think I shall offer £640 for the pair and see if it is accepted.”

Mary looked shocked. “You have that much? My savings from all my years in the ... Greenock ... I mean Falkirk ... are only £115.”

“I have been very assiduous in saving and in increasing my money. I was able to buy some goods wholesale and sell a portion to the house and the rest to other people, using the seamen who came to visit us as carriers of the goods and partners in trade. Nothing that was individually very large, but we would buy wine, some foodstuffs, cloth for the girl’s costumes. And I split the profits of the house with the owner, and the house got the goods I dealt in at cost, so she had no complaint about my trading.

By the way, I'm glad you remembered that the hotel for distressed gentlewomen was in Falkirk. Why have anyone look near where they might find us?"

"Yes. While I was fortunate in my time in that house, I am very glad to move on to something more congenial to me."

Cassandra did not reveal that she still had almost £950 in total. She had left Greenock with somewhat more, but exodus had, however, depleted her funds by a considerable amount, in fact by an amount not much different from the yearly salary of a butler in a modest house. It was time, she thought, to establish what she expected of Mary.

"Mary, are you agreeable to being the housekeeper of the properties? We need to decide how many apartments to create within the houses, and also the services we will offer our tenants. My suggestion is that my contribution be the capital invested in the purchase and fitting out of the properties, as well as the management and bookkeeping, though I would expect you to review all transactions with me. If we are partners, you need to be confident that all is fair. You would, of course, have a room at no charge and we would share the cost of our food and fuel, though I am hopeful that we can arrange that we buy wholesale and then retail such items to our tenants so that our portion costs us next to nil. We will need to work out fees for delivering meals, baths or other services, and how we will divide the proceeds as well as the costs if we engage help. I am going to rely on you to be straightforward with me on such matters. We are best to have any frank discussions early and not risk our friendship."

"So you are anticipating that I will gain my income from the services we offer rather than paying me a wage?"

"I do not mean it as undervaluing your talents. In fact quite the opposite, as I am convinced that by our partnership we will both prosper. Moreover, I believe that the kitchen space, given that we have two of them, would allow you to consider using your talents for outside trade."

"Like making confectionery, or delicacies?"

"Precisely. Or undertake enterprises we have yet to imagine. The one thing I will want you to assure me, however, is that, should you decide you wish to marry, you will not do so until any interest I have is outside the possible control of your husband. It is entirely regrettable that women have almost no financial rights, and especially if they are married."

"I doubt that will ever be an issue. I had so many men, but can hardly say more than a couple ever made me feel I was worthy of their attention except, and I know it is rude to say so, for what is between my legs. I'm just glad I didn't get some awful disease like some of the girls."

"It was hard for me to send them away, but once they showed symptoms, like chancres, they had to go."



Anyway, I hope you will think about what we have discussed, and write down any questions or suggestions. If we get the houses, we will need to have prices for different services, and they will need to be both profitable to us as well as attractive to our clients. It will take some working out.”

“I will. It’s a good job you taught me to read and write and figure.”

“You would not have been terribly useful as a cook at the house if you could not write the tradesmen your orders, nor understand their bills and check them for cheating.”

“That’s true. Remember that new butcher who came to try to get our business. He wrote down “best sirloin” but delivered scrag end.”

“And you were able to catch him! That’s the kind of thing that led me to want you with me when the house had to close.”

“Thank you ...er... Cassandra. I nearly forgot there.”

“But you recovered just in time!”

\* \* \*

Cassandra made her offer in the morning, and the owner must have been local, because Mr. Arbuthnot sent a message by hand to the boarding house in the evening to say it was accepted, though conditionally. Arbuthnot had hemmed and hawed about the level of the offer, saying it was possibly enough but that he wasn’t sure, and perhaps this and perhaps that. Cassandra, holding her tongue but with difficulty, asked simply that the offer be transmitted and she would consider her options depending on the answer.

The condition on the acceptance was that the seller wished to settle the sale as quickly as possible.

Cassandra was now on the spot. She was somewhat concerned that the sale might be fraudulent, so she asked the landlady of the boarding house if she knew a reliable solicitor. Indeed, the landlady’s cousin by marriage was a local solicitor. Cassandra and Mary were at Mr. Cavendish’s office at 9 o’clock the next morning, were satisfied with his appearance and manner, and arranged that he would verify the title to the properties and complete the conveyancing.

Cassandra gave him £25 on account for the deposit plus his fee and some disbursements and obtained a receipt for same. Cavendish sent his clerk to Arbuthnot to transmit the acceptance of the sale offer and collect appropriate documents and information to verify the validity of the title to the property and that it was unencumbered.

Mr. Cavendish thought the sale would complete by the end of the week if it were genuine, and it was now Wednesday. Assuming the offer to sell were genuine, Cassandra would deliver the balance owing to Mr. Cavendish

at 10 o'clock Friday, and he would convey it to the seller and get the keys within the hour. Since Cassandra did not have a bank account – very few women did – cash would be used.

The previous evening Cassandra had written a note to Mr. Arbuthnot saying she was consulting a solicitor to verify the transaction, but assuming it went ahead, she would be pleased to engage Arbuthnot as her rental agent. Would he please draft their agreement for her review and signature?

The boarding house room was rented until Saturday, so if the house were available, they would after that time avoid a minor expense at the cost of potential discomfort in an empty house. On leaving Mr. Cavendish's offices some time before 10, Cassandra said "Let us find a place where we can sit and plan. I do not want to let my excitement of buying the houses cloud my thinking on what we need to do next."

"That is an excellent suggestion," Mary replied. "I have my notebook, so we can make a list of what needs to be done."

They thought they might find a bench on the promenade, but it was cool and blustery, so they opted to have coffee in a small shop. There were only a few patrons, it being early in the season, so they were able to quietly discuss plans.

"Do you think we should try to get all modifications complete before we try to find tenants?" Cassandra asked.

"Will that not strain your capital and limit our income?" Mary responded. "I can understand not wanting builders clomping about and making a mess, but perhaps we could try to rent one house now, essentially as it is but divided into apartments, while working on the other."

"That is sensible. Do you have your sketches? We can try to decide what we can do with the different rooms."

Mary reached into her reticule and brought out the notebook. She asked, "Where do you think you and I should have our living quarters?"

"Is there enough room for us in the lower level of the end house – or perhaps we should call them by their numbers, 21 and 23. 21 is on the corner." Cassandra was trying to remember the space.

"The lower level has the kitchen occupying somewhat over half the total area, and it is at the front, with a door and a window, then the coal shed under the path that leads to the front door. The scullery is at the back, with the sink under the window. The doorway to the yard is opposite the corridor that comes from the kitchen and the pantry is on the other side of that corridor from the scullery. The water closet and the laundry copper and the water cistern are between the scullery and the kitchen, but reached from the scullery. I wonder where the smoke from the firebox of the copper goes. It's not in the wall where the rest of the chimneys are."

Cassandra said "I saw a metal pipe going across near the ceiling of the

scullery. Maybe that was it. And perhaps the intent is to use charcoal or coke. But perhaps we'd be better to send out the laundry. That would save us some work. We could wash our own things in a small tub and put some lines in the kitchen or outside."

Mary added "Yes. Strange we didn't see any washing lines. Maybe the people who occupied the houses sent out all their laundry. It wouldn't surprise me."

"The pantry was quite large. Almost a waste of space." Cassandra observed.

"We could put a cot in there for one of the staff if we wanted. Particularly if we had a man or boy to help with the heavier work or the garden or other things. Except it might be rather cool, especially at the end furthest from the kitchen."

"When and if we get to that point, we'll think of some modest alterations perhaps. A small partition to divide the pantry and removing the wall to the kitchen, providing it isn't load bearing. But I think that's for later."

Mary said "The houses are approximately 20 feet by 36 feet on the outside. As far as I can tell, the walls are such that the interior of the kitchen is about 18 feet square, though possibly it is 16 or 17 feet front to back because of the wall that makes the corridor to the rear. I think it is to support the upper part of the house. The stove was awkwardly placed on the outside wall. That is likely because all the chimneys are on that side of the house away from the entrance hall and stairs. But it is still a big room, and possibly the cubby hole between that wall and the stairs – I measured it at about 5 feet by 7 – would be fine for a bed. We could put another bed in the corner that is in the front next to the shared wall with number 23."

Cassandra asked "Would that suit us for now, until we get our revenue established? It would mean all the upper level space is available to rent, and we could use the lower level of number 23 to accommodate any staff we hired, though the big kitchen there would be rather under-utilized."

"Some help would be nice. I'd prefer not to have to do all the heavy work ourselves. And I'd be comfortable sharing a warm kitchen with you for now. We seem to get along."

"What staff will we need?" Cassandra asked.

"Doesn't that depend on the number of apartments and their level of ... er ... usage?"

"Yes. Let's think of how we will divide the space. The houses are essentially mirror images, except that number 21 has some windows on the open side. It might be useful if number 23 had a skylight."

"It rather seemed to me that there were essentially two decent-sized rooms on each floor, which could mean 8 apartments. And the lower level of number 23 will be rather under-employed I fear, as you have noted," Mary

said.

“Since it is a good-sized kitchen, you might think how you could use that space for some enterprise in delicacies that would be saleable at a good profit. For myself, I intend to find some sort of employment, as much to keep in touch with the local society as to make money.”

“I hadn’t thought of anything like that,” Mary noted.

Cassandra changed the subject. “What do we need urgently? Assuming that is, that the purchase succeeds this Friday.”

Mary responded, “I’ll start a list. We need a bed each, with mattresses and linen and blankets. And a couple of pots and pans, and a few dishes and cutlery so we can cook and eat.”

Cassandra added “Some curtains or curtain material, particularly for the kitchen where we’ll be living. Somehow to hang them too. And I think a good table and some chairs. We could find something temporary, I suppose.”

“We’ll need some coal for the stove. I should have checked in the coal sheds. I’m sorry,” Mary apologized.

“I saw what looked like half a sack in the shed for number 21. That one had a lock – Arbuthnot had to open it. But number 23 didn’t, and it looked like someone had been in and taken whatever was there.”

“I also saw a few mouse droppings in one of the pantries. Should we think of a cat?”

“Yes, but why don’t we talk to the neighbours. We’ll knock on some of the doors and see what we can learn, and cats often have kittens to be disposed of.”

In this fashion, a couple of hours went by, then the two women decided to start to look for likely places to find some of the items they would need. They first looked at the regular shops, and indeed looked in at Bartlett and Jones, not knowing it would figure in Cassandra’s later ventures. They noted the prices of some curtain material. Similarly in some furniture shops their notepad and pencils recorded some prices. They did this so that when they visited the second-hand shops, they would have some knowledge of the level of prices to be expected.

Of course, they were not planning to buy today, though Cassandra did offer that they would, in any event, need some linen and towels, of which they currently had none. “If the current purchase fails, I think we should consider renting a room somewhere at lower cost, in which case we may need linens.”

“Do you think a laundry might have some sheets and perhaps blankets for sale?” Mary asked.

“Oh, you mean from clients who failed to collect their laundry or did not pay their bill?”

“Yes. Precisely.”

There was a shop selling pies, so they bought one to share, using the opportunity to ask the pie-man where they might find a laundry. With directions, having eaten the pie, they found the steaming premises of the suggested washhouse and squeezed into the tiny office – clearly walk-up trade was uncommon.

“What may I do for you ladies?” said the middle aged portly gentleman behind a cluttered desk.

Cassandra answered, “My colleague and I are setting up some apartments and will need some linen. We wondered if your establishment had unclaimed or unpaid-for items we might purchase if suitable.”

“We do get some such items. Generally gather them up and then pass them to charity. But I’m not above a mutually profitable transaction. May I ask who I am addressing?”

“Miss Cassandra Match and my friend and housekeeper Mrs. McNair. We are not yet in possession of the properties we plan to offer for rental, but are hopeful to have them in hand by early next week. Perhaps I might suggest we see what you have, agree a price if we are able, and I will leave a deposit of 50% to hold them for, say, a fortnight. Should I fail to complete our transaction, you will have my deposit and still be able to donate them to charity.”

“That sounds like I’ve little to lose other than spending time with some handsome ladies showing them some linens. I’ll have to apologize for the steam and noise. We’re not a shop, you understand. By the way, I’m Mr. Richards, the owner of Richards Laundry. We’ve been in business here a while, and I hope I may count on your future business.”

“Indeed,” Cassandra replied.

They found that there were a number of items they could use, but there were others that were of difficult sizes or in poor condition. Nevertheless, they would have more than enough to serve their own needs plus perhaps two apartments, and all for less than a pound. The items were put aside in a basket and Mr. Richards attached a label. They returned to the tiny office and Cassandra suggested Mr. Richards write up a receipt describing the sale.

“What would be the total if we were to purchase the basket as well?” Mary asked. “We are going to need some containers for linens, both clean and soiled.”

“If we make the total a pound, I’ll toss in that one since it’s far from new,” Richards said.

“Then here are four half-crowns,” Cassandra replied, placing the coins on the desk.

“I look forward to seeing you again in a fortnight or less,” Richards replied, handing her the receipt.

\* \* \*

They were walking away when Mary went back. Cassandra wondered if she had forgotten something, but she was soon back.

"I asked where we might find decent second hand goods such as curtains and table and chairs."

"Good for you. Can we go there?" Cassandra asked.

"Yes, there're a few shops like that quite nearby. They don't generally choose to situate on the fashionable streets."

They spent a couple of hours looking at a number of items, and made some notes of possibilities, but decided that they had better not purchase anything because while linens were fairly easily transported, indeed in the basket they arranged to receive them in, tables and chairs would require cartage to be arranged. If the purchase failed, that would make them highly inconvenient.

It was now mid-afternoon. They decided to return to the boarding house and take a nap. The excitement was quite tiring.

However, once they had partly undressed, removed their corsets and were lying down, they could not help but continue the planning.

"Do you think the workhouse might have some girls suitable for housemaids?" Mary asked.

"Possibly," Cassandra replied, "but I'd want them to be able to read and write tolerably well. We will likely communicate with our tenants mostly by note or by post, and if they are illiterate it will add to our load, since we would have to review all messages personally."

"True," Mary added, trailing off.

"On the other hand, we could approach the workhouse and offer a trial to a couple of girls for one month. We could afford to be generous and pay an extra week if we decide not to continue, thereby avoiding bad feeling."

"Yes, that might be an idea."

They both ended up sleeping for a while, then woke around 6, washed and dressed. As she was fastening her blouse, Cassandra said "Clocks! We need to make sure we have clocks about the premises, since residents will expect meals and such at particular times. We can't presume we or our staff will have a watch. I have been hoping to acquire one for myself for a while, but good ones are expensive."

"Indeed you are right, Cassandra. I'll add clocks to our list. My goodness, cats to clocks. There are an awful lot of things to think about."

They went down to the dining room, and as they entered, Mrs Crompton, the landlady said "Oh, Miss Match, I just had Mr. Cavendish's clerk here to deliver this note to you. He indicated it was quite important and I thought perhaps to bring it up but heard you on the stairs."

Cassandra undid the seal and read the message. “Oh, it is excellent news. Mr. Cavendish has cleared all impediments to our purchase of the houses. Your advice to consult him was most fortuitous, Mrs. Crompton.”

“I hope I shall not regret assisting a competitor, but I am glad my advice was helpful.”

“I doubt, Mrs. Crompton, that we will become competitors. Indeed I sincerely hope not. It is my ardent objective to offer well-appointed apartments for lease over periods of months or years rather than weeks, and further to become a resident member of the Brighton community and contribute to its prosperity and development. So I believe that if my intentions are realized, we will be in different divisions of the accommodation trade.”

“Then my best wishes to you Miss Match. And, of course, to Mrs. McNair. Are you also investing in property, Mrs. McNair?”

“I’m afraid my resources don’t quite run to houses. I will serve Miss Match as housekeeper, but I will also explore the possibility of some enterprise that can use my talents. I have dabbled in confectionery and also savoury delicacies in a couple of the houses where I have been employed. But it is too early to be precise.”

“Miss Match is lucky to have a housekeeper who can prepare nice things. Some of the guests here complain the meals are too plain. I know they are substantial enough, but fancy they are not. Some modest special items might consolidate loyalty of my guests for future stays, so long as they weren’t exorbitantly expensive.”

“Perhaps when Miss Match and I have got on our feet, we can take tea and talk of what might be possible,” Mary said, her mind working at a fevered pitch with various ideas.

Indeed, the excitement was such that they didn’t notice the decidedly unappetising boiled rabbit. The meat was stringy and tasteless. However, it was food, and they would need strength for the work of the next few days.

\* \* \*

After dinner, Cassandra indicated they should return to their room. She locked the door and put a chair in front of it, then said “Mr. Cavendish has asked me to come at two o’clock tomorrow afternoon with £635.3s.6d, which will cover the balance of the purchase as well as his fees and some minor items. I am to send a message by quarter past nine in the morning if I cannot do same. So we need to count out the money.”

Cassandra undressed and took off her corset and proceeded to extract some of the rolls of notes. She had a small bundle of whalebone that the

rolls had replaced, and she slotted these into the pockets from which the rolls were removed.

Both women carefully unrolled the greaseproof wrapped £5 notes and smoothed them on the top of the dresser as well as pulling them back and forth across the edge of this piece of furniture to try to flatten them. It took a while, but eventually they were able to create moderately tidy stacks.

“Let us stack them in bundles of 20,” Cassandra suggested. “I was rolling 10 in each roll, and I have pulled out 14 rolls, so there should be 7 piles.”

Fortunately this was the case. Cassandra then withdrew 13 of the notes and put them in the purse in her reticule, and was fingering the coins therein when Mary said “Here’s 3 and 6. My contribution. You’ve been paying for the teas and the pies, and even though we’ve split the bigger expenses, I’m sure I’m still in your debt. And if not in coin, then certainly in that you taught me to read and are going to share your houses with me and give me chances I wouldn’t have dreamed about.”

“Very well. Thank you. Now where to put this money.”

Mary said “I’ve a canvas sack with ribbons. I’ve had it for years to keep things safe when out on the street. You put the ribbons over your head and the sack can lie under your shift below your bosom where it does not show. I’m sure Mr. Cavendish has a water-closet at his office, or else some other private place where you may retrieve the money.”

“I’ll also write to Mr. Arbuthnot and ask him to recommend a good handy man, a coal merchant and a locksmith, as well as the plumber we mentioned. I want to change the exterior door locks. The interior locks will also need to be changed I suspect, as so many people lose keys or have houses with locks that use a common key, but we can greet that task when we are further along with preparations.”

\* \* \*

On the Thursday morning, the women decided to go to the workhouse to enquire if there might be girls suitable to be maids. They decided two would be the right number to start with. Some of the work really would need two pairs of hands, such as putting up curtains. This reminded Mary that they would need at least one stepladder as well as some sturdy chairs, and those were added to the list. Cassandra told her to add some simple tools – hammer, screwdriver, pliers, chisel and a small saw, as well as cleaning implements such as mops, buckets, brooms and rags. But more than two girls might require more supervision than they could handle immediately.

They were quite early, and put the note to Arbuthnot through his letter box as it was before his opening time. Then they made their way toward



St. Nicholas church near where the sombre and imposing workhouse was situated. As they walked along, Cassandra suddenly said "Aprons!". Mary didn't even reply, but took out the notebook and pencil which were now in her pocket for ease of access and wrote that down too.

Mr. and Mrs. Hodges, the Governor and Matron of the Brighthelmstone Poorhouse seemed pleased to receive Miss Match and Mrs. McNair. Indeed there were a number of young women who might serve as maids, though they were not trained as such, Mr. Hodges apologized.

"Can they tolerably read and write?" Cassandra asked.

"I should think so," Hodges said, but didn't seem so sure.

"Would it be possible for us to interview some girls? I have an appointment at two o'clock today to conclude the purchase of two houses, and would like to engage two girls to help ready the properties for rental as furnished apartments. If the girls prove suitable, there will be continuing employment to provide for the cleaning and upkeep. Mrs. McNair will be housekeeper and we also anticipate some residents will want meals delivered to their apartments, so we may wish to train our staff to assist in the food preparation."

"The employment is then for the foreseeable future?" Hodges asked. Mrs. Hodges was very silent.

"Assuming the candidates prove suitable. As a measure of good faith, we will undertake to employ them for at least 4 weeks, but if we decide not to continue, payment will be made for 5 weeks."

"That is more than most would offer, and very fair."

"Are there any girls who we might interview today?" Cassandra asked.

"What about the Soulton girls?" Mrs. Hodges finally spoke.

"Indeed. I'll fetch them."

Hodges disappeared and Mrs. Hodges offered tea and rang a bell. A girl in a brown uniform came in and Mrs. Hodges told her to bring tea and biscuits.

After about 10 minutes, Hodges came back with two rather skinny girls in tow, both wearing the brown uniform they had noted on the servant with the tea. Hodges introduced them as Maud and Ethel Soulton, and said they had been at the workhouse for about a year, ever since their father had died and they and their then 13 year old brother had been evicted from a tenement room.

Cassandra said "I am Miss Match and this is Mrs. McNair, my housekeeper. We are about to acquire two houses that we will use for well-appointed apartments. We need two house-maids to help clean and maintain the properties. Could you each write your name on our notepad please with your age beside your name?"

She handed them the pad and pencil.

The older girl – it turned out to be Maud – quickly wrote her name. Well, actually she printed it, followed by 16. Then she said “Acshully, I’ll be 17 next month.”

Ethel also printed her name, but very slowly, and put 15 after her name. Cassandra quickly wrote below the names “If I pay you 4/- a week, but guarantee you 5 weeks of employment, how much will I owe each of you in total?” and handed it back to Ethel, who looked confused.

“I’ve written a question on the paper, Ethel. Can you answer it?”

Ethel looked at it, puzzled and moved her finger along the lines of writing. Maud intervened “She don’t read so good, ’specially not handwritin’. Can I try?”

“All right,” Cassandra answered.

Maud took a quick look and said “A pound – 20 shillings.”

Cassandra turned to Mary and said “Maud seems sharp enough. I will assume the sisters want to stay together.” There was nodding from the two girls. “Should we give them a try?”

Mary said, “I think they might do. Can they start tomorrow?”

Hodges said “That can be arranged. You girls can go back to your work and I will deal with the arrangements with Miss Match.”

It turned out there were some papers attesting that the young female former inmates of the workhouse would be given proper accommodation and food and supervision to maintain their moral character. Cassandra (and Mary too, though she was not mentioned) were expected to provide uniforms. The girls would get a set of clothing – likely cast-offs – and a pair of shoes and would present themselves at the address Miss Match provided. Cassandra wrote down the address again – it was on the papers she had signed – and also gave 9 o’ clock as the time to appear. This was relatively late in the day for most workers, but she and Mary would no doubt be busy trying to get everything organized.

Cassandra asked “Would it be possible for the girls to have two sets of clothes? Our initial work will not require uniforms, but a change of clothing would be sensible, perhaps not extra shoes. Would two shillings cover the cost?”

Hodges pondered, but Mrs. Hodges wasn’t going to miss the opportunity. “We could manage for 1 and 6 a girl, I think.”

“That is acceptable, but only if the spare clothes have been boiled, dried and folded. I want no small passengers on them,” Cassandra said.

“So be it,” Mrs. Hodges said. “I’ll get the girls to choose right away and we’ll boil the lot for them. Pity you can’t throw them girls in the copper too. Tough to keep ’em clean around here.”

\* \* \*

The two women decided to go back to the second-hand shops. Right away they would need 4 beds, assuming they did not expect the girls to sleep on the floor, but decided new mattresses would be safer in avoiding bedbugs or lice. One shop had four single bed frames in iron, with wire mesh. The mesh was a little rusty. Mary said she'd put down old sheets to protect the new mattresses, and actually found a box of old linen and one of old curtains. The linen would need washing, and Cassandra suggested that a test of one of the coppers was in order. They'd definitely want more coal fairly soon. The curtains would need to be beaten and it might be that they could be washed. They paid for their purchases and arranged delivery after 9 the next morning to 21 Fortescue Road.

In another of the second-hand shops they found some buckets and brooms, as well as a hammer, screwdriver and sharpening stone. Mary said "Buy a new saw and new chisel. The blades of old ones may have been abused." This shop also had some lanterns and cheap candlesticks which went on the list of purchases. They would have a lot of bookkeeping to do to keep track of all the expenditures. However, since they were getting receipts and having things delivered, there would be a paper trail. This shop had a large box of decidedly miscellaneous cutlery – they bought it – and a large collection of rather sad crockery offered at a penny a piece. Mary filled a box - they'd have to pay a penny for it too. She also found a pair of good cast-iron frying pans and two large and two small saucepans and a large and a small kettle. They looked filthy, but Mary said some sand or sandpaper and hard work would clean them up.

In a third shop they found a large kitchen table, six feet by 8. Mary asked if the legs were removable – they were – otherwise the table would not be installable. They also found some rather scratched but otherwise solid chairs and bought eight, along with two smaller tables, 6 by 3. Mary pointed out that these could go under the windows in the kitchens and be used for work needing good light. They saw some clocks, but were concerned that they might not work well. Possibly it was better to go to a clockmaker and see if there were something not too expensive to be had. The proprietor saw them discussing this and said

"Ladies, do you see this clock here?" He pointed to one on a shelf behind the rather dusty counter with his till where he sat on a high stool. "You will note it says it is just about 11 o'clock. Let us listen for the church clock to strike."

Indeed, at that moment, the bell was heard.

"What are you asking for the clock?" Cassandra enquired.

“Five shillings. Unfortunately, it no longer strikes the hour nor chimes the quarters, but as you see it keeps time.”

“Make it 4 shillings and throw in those tarnished brass candleholders beside it and I will buy them,” Cassandra said. The candleholders were the type with a handle so you could have a light when you went about the house at night.

“You drive a hard bargain madam, but I like a lady who makes her mind up quickly. Sometimes I spend all afternoon with a lady helping her to select goods and my till ends the day as it began. I shall add these two and the clock to the list.”

The shopkeeper made the list and copied it out as a receipt and Cassandra paid him, arranging the delivery for "after 9 o'clock Friday morning".

They walked back to the more respectable streets and found a shop that sold bedding. Here they spent as much as at all the other shops combined so far to get four mattresses and some towels, four pillows, as well as four pillowcases, since they weren't sure that the laundry basket had suitably sized ones.

Next door was a shop that sold women's clothing, and Mary suggested two nightgowns for the girls. This would reduce the temptation to sleep in their clothes.

There was an ironmongers two shops down and they bought a small hand saw and a half-inch chisel, along with candles and lamp-oil, a few assorted nails and two new mops, a dustpan and brush, a carpet beater, a hundred yards of rope for a clothesline plus other uses (Mary pointed out one always needed rope), a ball of good twine, some clothes pegs, some turpentine, some wood polish, and some sandpaper to clean the pans. This last they intended to use sparingly and see if they could find sand on the beach for rough use. They ordered a 6 foot stepladder as well, all to be delivered early tomorrow. Almost as an afterthought, they bought four carpenter's aprons. These would protect their clothes better than kitchen aprons, even if they were not suitable for receiving clients. A last-minute addition was a tin hip-bath.

“I think some lunch is needed,” Cassandra said. They heard a clock sound the half-hour. It was half-past noon.

“There was a nice public house back there,” Mary said. “We might get a glass of beer and some bread and cheese.”

On their way, Cassandra noticed a stationers and dragged Mary in. She bought a quarto sized account book, ruled in pounds, shilling and pence, a small packet of writing paper, some India ink and some pen nibs, and a dozen pencils and several sheets of blotting paper. Miss Match had for a long time kept a pen-knife in her reticule. Odd that we said pen-knife but more often used it for sharpening pencils.

“I have a pen and actually some nibs in my valise, but the nibs are old

and possibly unserviceable,” she explained. Then she asked if the shop had any paste suitable for attaching labels to shelves or cupboards. The shop assistant produced a small bottle and said that the shop produced their own paste. Cassandra added that to her purchases.

They then repaired to the public house, and over their food and drink wondered if Mrs. Crompton would consider the pub entirely respectable. It was well-appointed and clean, and the clientele was not rowdy like some they knew of in their earlier lives.

Mary took out her notebook and they crossed off many of the items on the lists. So many, in fact, that they started a new list with the remaining items.

“When will you get food?” Cassandra asked.

“I was thinking that you and I are at the boarding house until Saturday, so we could buy some pies for the two girls for Friday evening and make sure they have some bread and jam and tea, and possibly some eggs or cheese on hand for Saturday. However, I would like to get more supplies in for Saturday night. By the way, have you thought where we’ll put the girls? I’d rather not have them in the same room with us.”

“What about upstairs at the back. There’s the water-closet up there – we’ll need to make sure it works – put that on the list. What do you think of having them there. Or maybe on the ground floor so they can answer the front door.”

“We may want to give them a bath and check them for nits before we have them sleep on the new bedding.” Mary was a realist.

“I’m glad I asked that their clothes be boiled. I wonder where we can get clean but second-hand clothes,” Cassandra mused. “We’ll need maids’ uniforms eventually, and if the girls leave, it is customary that they keep their uniform.”

“Maybe simpler to boil everything that comes in. We got nightgowns new, so they can wear those overnight while clothes dry. I’ll watch for a way to dry clothes in the kitchens in case of rain.”

\* \* \*

They were a few minutes early to Mr. Cavendish’s office, the excitement getting the better of them. He heard them coming in, and said there was no need to wait, as Miss Match could sign the papers and then his clerk and that of his colleague acting for the vendor would convey the money and the papers to that other gentleman and bring back a signed copy of the agreement and the keys.

Cassandra had used the water closet at the public house to move the canvas money-sack to just under her jacket, which she buttoned shut. Since she wore a blouse under the fitted jacket, it was not immodest to unbutton the jacket to extract the money.

Thus all the parties who had come to the office of Mr. Cavendish watched as Miss Match counted out the money and set it on Mr. Cavendish's desk. The cash was then placed in a leather case. Mr. Cavendish wrote Miss Match a receipt. She read and signed the papers and the two clerks departed.

"It will not be long, Miss Match. They are just across the road."

Cavendish now elaborated that the vendor was the son of a recently deceased man who had invested in houses. The son did not wish to be a landlord and did want funds for some urgent reason.

Tea and biscuits appeared, but before the cups were empty, the clerk was back with the keys. They had cardboard labels on them, identifying which fitted which doors, though there appeared to be some orphan ones. In all there was rather a heavy collection of keys. Mary's canvas sack was pressed into service again, but it would no longer be possible to put it under clothing with all the keys inside.

Thus it was that shortly after three o'clock on that Thursday afternoon in the Spring of 1851, Miss Match and her housekeeper and friend Mary McNair took possession of 21 and 23 Fortescue Road.

In all they spent a half hour looking over the houses again. The weather was cloudy, but with no rain, and they went out into the yard of Number 23.

"I find I want to stay and start organizing things, but I know we should arrange for the grocer to deliver some supplies tomorrow," Cassandra said.

"Why do I not walk to the grocery we saw nearby. We can try it once, and if satisfactory, continue to deal with them. There is also a bakery there. They may be closed now – I shall see."

"Thank you. Do take a key, however. We should each have one for the front door, but there are only two."

"Let me take the kitchen door key, and you, Cassandra, keep the front door key."

"Ah. That is a good idea. It will save us immediately dealing with the locksmith. And on the way back to the boarding house ...."

There was a knocking on the front door. They went in by the kitchen and Cassandra was about to go up the stairs when she realized she could unbolt the kitchen door. She also observed that she could also open just the top half of the door if she wished, for it was a Dutch door with top and bottom separately hinged, with suitable bolts if one wished a single door operation.

The key was in the lock where they had put it to test the door a few minutes earlier. She quickly drew back the bolts and put her head out and said "Yes, Who's there?"

Mr. Arbuthnot stepped back from front door and looked over the railing.  
“Mr. Arbuthnot. I’m sorry, we were in the yard and had to come through the house.”

“Miss Match. May I come down, or should I wait here for you to open the front door. I have some information for you and also a possible tenant.”

“Already? Please come down.”

Arbuthnot came down and into the kitchen.

“Good afternoon Mrs. McNair.”

“Good afternoon to you also, Mr. Arbuthnot,” Mary replied. “I regret we are not yet in a state to offer tea or refreshments.”

“That is quite understandable, but I wanted to let Miss Match know that this very morning I had a letter from a gentleman in London who wants to lease an entire house from the second week in June to the end of the second week in September. I realize it is not quite what you had in mind, but thought that it could provide revenue while you establish your properties.”

“Thank you for thinking of me, Mr. Arbuthnot. As you know, the houses are not in a presentable state, but it is now but early May. Do you think we could have number 23 presentable in time? We plan to occupy parts of number 21, and I would rather not have to do two rearrangements of our private living situation.”

“Miss Match, I think that number 23 will probably be acceptable. The gentleman says he and his wife will have five children aged 4 to 13 with them. They want a house with at least a cook and a maid. Perhaps I might suggest the house to Mr. Jeffery, for that is his name, and ask him to write to you with details of his requirements. Then you and I can propose a rental agreement to him if you feel it suitable.”

“I would be much obliged to you Mr. Arbuthnot, and hope we can collaborate to our mutual prosperity.”

“I heartily concur. Oh, here is a list of tradesmen for you, and two copies of an agency agreement. If you could review the latter and sign at least one copy and return it to me, please.”

“Certainly. Ah, that list is most welcome. We need to order some coal and possibly some coke for the laundry copper too.”

“Allow me to order 4 hundredweight of coal and 2 of coke for you from the man I use. I will ask him to establish an account for you. While I know that coal merchants have a certain notoriety for short weight or watered sacks, I’ve no serious complaints about Mr. Black – I assure you that is his name.”

“That is most kind of you, Mr. Arbuthnot.

Oh, before I forget, I would prefer if you presented me as the manager of the property. Perhaps I am being over-cautious, but a woman with property

can sometimes attract the attention of those interested in her property rather than her person.”

“Certainly, Miss Match. That is an unfortunate reality in our world.

Now I must be along, and I suspect you also have much to occupy you. Good Day, Miss Match, Mrs. McNair,” and Arbuthnot was away up the area steps.

Cassandra said, “Mary, off you go to the grocer, and, if you see fit, other merchants. Make sure you get receipts. Do you have money?”

“Yes, I do. And I’ll see if I can get some beer and cider, especially if I can get it delivered.”

“Yes. That is true. While you are gone, I will try the lower water-closet here in number 21. And make more notes of things to be done. I’m afraid we are going to be very busy.”

The water-closet was of a fairly modern design, but it still needed water pumping into the flushing tank from the cistern, which fortunately appeared to have water. Mr. Arbuthnot said it was filled from the eaves drains. Cassandra wondered what happened when it was full up and there was still water coming from the roof. Another item to try to remember to put on the list of things to find out about.

The mechanism of the water closet cleared the waste satisfactorily. There were three other WCs to check, and Cassandra realized she had no idea how the water was delivered to the upstairs ones. Another item for the list of things to be learned. It was going to get quite long. Cassandra had run the house in Greenock, but it had already been set up and the proprietress was there to explain things. These houses had been emptied – she wondered about their history – and there was much still to be understood.

The WC was quite dark. Oh. There was a gas light. Matches! And she was Miss Match and didn’t have one to her name at the moment. Another list item.

The notepad was with Mary, but she had some paper and pencil in her reticule. She went back outside in the yard and sat on the step and scribbled down what she could remember.

When Mary returned she was accompanied by a young man with a hand-trolley with two crates of bottles and a box of groceries. “Two dozen each of beer and cider,” Mary said, and I’ve some bread and tea, but no milk.

Cassandra tipped the boy a penny and he left, then she said “The water closet in the back works, but we need to figure out the upstairs ones and how they work. Also we need matches for the gas lights, and can you add to the note to Mr. Arbuthnot to ask how we set up an account with the Gas Company. Sorry to be such a bother.”

“Not to worry. If we don’t get matches and an account for gas, I’ll be in the dark too.”



They found matches on their way back to the boarding house, then realized they would need some kindling to start the stove fire in the morning.

\* \* \*

Mrs. Crampton was extremely inquisitive over supper about the houses and what in detail they planned to do with them. Cassandra gave the address and a very loose description, then said that decisions on the actual apartments would wait until they had cleaned top to bottom and knew what material they had to work with. It was clear Mrs. Crampton was less than satisfied, but Cassandra's answer could not easily be dismissed. Indeed it was essentially the truth.

After dinner, Cassandra and Mary retired early to their room. They decided to pack one of their carrying bags each so they would have some clothing and personal items at the properties.

"I have another item for our list, though not immediate: printed stationery," Cassandra said.

"I'm not sure what you mean, Cassandra. Do you mean some paper for our clients?"

"More for our own use. Notepaper with the address and name. What do you think? The Caledonian Apartments, though that hints at our past. Maybe we want something neutral. The Drake Apartments. How does that sound?"

"Do we need a name?" Mary asked.

"It would be good if clients felt pleased to say they could be found at the Drake Apartments. So let us think of that as the heading of our notepaper, followed by 21 - 23 Fortescue Road, near Seven Dials, Brighton, then in a discrete font size and a bit lower on the left, Miss C. Match, Manager, and on the right, Mrs. M. McNair, Housekeeper"

"Oh, It would seem very well-established."

"Exactly. It is unfortunate that envelopes are still rather expensive. No doubt someone will find a way soon to make a steam engine driven machine to make them cheaply. For now, we will use sealing wax and a candle. Of course, we won't need printed stationery for a few weeks, but I wanted to see if you liked the idea."

"Oh, I do, I do."

\* \* \*

Maud and Ethel arrived punctually, which was to their credit given that neither had a timepiece. Neither did Cassandra and Mary, at least until the furniture arrived, so all were dependent on the bells from local churches. That would hopefully be remedied soon. Cassandra and Mary had arrived shortly before half-past eight, and they had found the half sack of coal that remained in the coal shed of number 21. They had to rummage through the collection of keys. Cassandra set them out on the window-sill of the kitchen – there was no other convenient surface. Fortunately the coal shed had one of the labelled keys.

They had asked Mrs. Crompton if they might have some sheets of old newspaper for kindling and were pleasantly surprised when she included some shards of broken wood.

“You’ll want lots of hot water to clean up a house that’s been empty for a while,” she said. By the time Ethel and Maud arrived – just before they heard a clock strike nine – the reservoir of the boiler was moderately warm.

The two girls were dressed peculiarly in what likely were old-fashioned rural clothing. They had a small bundle with them – a tea towel in which there were a few mementos, as well as a parcel that was the spare clothing. Apart from that, they had nothing.

Cassandra made a quick decision. She brought them all into the kitchen of number 21. It was cloudy outside, so she had Mary light one of the gas lights.

“Everyone. I want to let you know that the next few days will be quite hectic, since Mrs. McNair and I will move here tomorrow, while Maud and Ethel will be here from today onward. There are some key tasks to be done, and the first of these will be to make our living area habitable and clean. We should get deliveries very soon of beds, some furniture, some bedding, curtains, and other things. I am going to send Mrs. McNair to get some other linen – sorry Mary, I forgot we had to collect it. Engage a hansom to bring it back.”

Mary put on her wrap and was about to leave just as the furniture arrived, so she took off her outer garment again and helped direct the delivery. The two second-hand shops where furniture had been purchased had consolidated the delivery. Cassandra wondered if, indeed, they were really under the same ownership and only gave a semblance of being competitors. Mary took charge and sent all the small items and two beds to the kitchen, along with the large table and one of the smaller ones and half the chairs. The other two beds and the remaining table and chairs went to the front room. It was beginning to be called that, and the name would stick, at least until they subdivided the houses. Cassandra was in the kitchen, and supervised the positioning of the smaller tables at the window where the light would serve well for writing or other tasks needing good visibility. Cassandra tipped the

delivery men thru'pence each for moving the beds and other things into place and also putting the legs on the big table.

Mary put on her wrap again, and once again a delivery arrived, this time from the ironmongers. "You get to the laundry, Mary. I'll man the ramparts here."

The deliveryman put all the items into the kitchen. Cassandra offered him a bottle of beer as a tip, which was warmly received, and he sat on the area steps while he drank it. He was out of sight and a little break was welcome.

Meanwhile, Cassandra had the girls setting up bed-frames when Maud asked "Where should we put our beds, Miss?"

"For now, wherever you like in that room. I think the table by the window, as here, so you can profit from the light. But down here Mrs. McNair will have her bed over there in the cubby hole, while I will have mine in that corner over there."

In the light that now struck the back of the cubby hole, she could see that there was a set of hinged doors in the wall. "Ethel, see if those doors can be opened."

Ethel found there was a small bolt at the bottom of each door, with a hole drilled into the red tile flooring. She opened the door and shrieked, "Something moved!"

Cassandra found a candle and put it in one of the holders that came with the tables and beds and lit it with a spill of newspaper from the stove. The doors hid the cistern, which was raised and had a four-foot high space below it with a pipe leading out, but was otherwise empty except for a lot of dust and dirt, some mouse droppings and cobwebbs and ... what was that?

"Ethel, I think there are mice. We're planning to get a cat or two as soon as we can, but I want house-trained ones. I really need a broom to get what that is at the back there without getting all dirty."

"There was a broken walking stick upstairs, then you won't get the broom full of cobwebs," Maud said, and went to get it. However, while she was gone there was a knock at the kitchen door, and Cassandra said "See who that is, Ethel," while she blew out the candle and put it on the table.

"It's the man with bedding, Miss. Where d'you want everyfing?"

"All in here for now, and we'll sort out things and put away as much as we can."

The girls both set to and brought in things, and the deliveryman departed without hovering for a tip, though indeed he'd not actually had to bring anything down. Cassandra hoped all the order was present. It looked to be.

And before Cassandra could check the bedding, Mary came back with one of the laundry wagons. Mr. Richards was driving.

"Can't let a nice lady like Mrs. McNair take a hansom cab."

Cassandra and Mary smiled and thanked him. They both knew the way men looked at women, but there was no need to create friction with Richards unless he became offensive. As he drove off, a boy with a hand-cart came from the bakery. They as yet had no bread box – possibly one of the cupboards would serve after it was cleaned – so the loaves and a pound cake went onto a towel on the big table. Cassandra gave the boy a penny.

Somewhere nearby a clock struck 10. Cassandra said “Maud, rinse out that small kettle and get it on for a cup of tea for us all. I’m afraid there’s no milk, but ...”

“I just saw a dairy-girl in the street, Miss,” Ethel interrupted.

Cassandra had been careful to keep her reticule with her at all times, as had Mary, and she reached into it and took out two pennies. “Here, Ethel, rinse out a jug from that box in the scullery and get us some milk. I’ve not bought any here, but that should be enough.”

Ethel rushed off to the scullery, then came running through and out the door. She came back in about 5 minutes with the jug and a penny and gave the coin to Cassandra. “Jug’s not full Miss, but I thought we’d not need more for our tea today.”

“Thank you Ethel. Well done. Can you, as soon as possible, make sure the pantry is clean. It has some shelves, and we want no mice droppings or other dirt near our food. There should be a tea-towel in the basket of linen Mrs. McNair brought back you can use to cover the milk jug, and you can use the candle to see what you are doing.

Maud, I’ll have you work with Mrs. McNair once we’ve had a cup of tea. Our biggest problem is deciding what to do first, I think, and I’m sure we’ll be at it until Monday or Tuesday, though I think some time off on Sunday would do us good.”

“Yes Miss,” was all Maud said. Perhaps time off was not a concept she understood.

Ethel started to work on the pantry while the kettle was heating. Mary took Maud upstairs and they put bedding on the two beds the girls would occupy. In fact, Mary had them make up the beds to see how the linen would work out. It was a bit unmatched in appearance, but serviceable, and Maud seemed rather bright in spirits when they came down and she made the tea without being asked.

In the meantime, Cassandra used the cracked walking stick to pull out the object she had seen in the cistern cupboard. It was filthy, but she took some of the old newspaper they had for kindling – it would still burn as well or perhaps even better if dirty – and got rid of the worst of the dirt to reveal a wooden box. When Maud and Mary came down, she asked Mary where there might be a rag and cleaned it some more, then opened it to reveal a collection of small coins. She tipped these on the floor in case they harboured mouse

droppings or spiders, dusted them off, and discovered a total of 2 shillings 8 pence three-farthings. Apart from this, the box was empty. She gave the box a vigorous cleaning, wiped the coins and put them in the box.

“Tea,” Maud said.

Cassandra set chairs around the small table by the window where the light was best. The clouds were lifting a little. Still no sunshine, but definitely brighter. She made a note about the tips paid out and the milk money. She had started her ledger last night at the boarding house. It would need keeping up assiduously.

Maud put the tea out. She had managed to wash some cups, but not bothered with saucers. Mary rummaged through the groceries, which were wrapped in paper and brought over a packet that contained some biscuits. Ginger snaps.

The girls drank their tea, eyeing the biscuits, while Cassandra and Mary each took one.

“Go ahead, have a biscuit or even two,” Cassandra said.

“Ooh thanks, Miss,” Maud said. “At the work’ouse only the toffs were allowed the biscuits and cakes, or any real food.”

“That won’t be the case here,” Cassandra said. “Of course, when we have tenants who order special meals, we’ll not pilfer their delicacies, but that applies to myself and Mrs. McNair too. However, in almost all circumstances, whatever she and I are having, it will be shared with you.”

“Gor’ blimey, Maud, that’s a look up for us,” Ethel said.

“You really mean that, Miss?” Maud added.

“Mrs. McNair and I have not always had as much as we do now, and we understand penury and want. We plan to be fair in both what we offer and what we expect. Furthermore, we want you both to consider that these houses are an enterprise in which I hope all the participants will prosper by our common efforts and initiative. That is, if you have ideas that can bring profit, we should try to ensure you profit by them.”

“Yes Miss,” Maud said, possibly unconvinced. Ethel was silent.

Cassandra continued, “Now under the cistern, where there is still much detritus, I found the box that is on the table. Inside I found some money – 2 s 8 3/4 d. I propose to label the box "Housekeeping" and put it in a cupboard for which we will obtain a lock for which each of us will have a key. This kitchen is likely to be a place where lots of people come and go. We don’t want to offer unnecessary opportunities for theft.

Beside or under the box will be notepaper and a pencil. If we need, for example, milk, any one of us may take what coins are needed and write down the amount and the reason for the expenditure, as well as the date. We will replenish the coins as necessary.

Ethel, you look concerned. Is there a problem?”

“Well, Miss, me writing and figuring ain’t so good. I can do it, but I’m a bit slow at it.”

“Then we shall have to help you to learn, won’t we? You seem clever enough, but probably have not had good instruction nor sufficient practice.”

“Yes, Miss.”

It was time to get to work. Cassandra took off her jacket and put it over a chair. She rolled up her sleeves and put on an apron. Mary and the girls copied her actions. The girls were quite surprised, but liked the carpenter’s aprons.

Ethel went back to cleaning the pantry. Mary found the rope and set Maud to stringing a clothes line. “Come and fetch me if you don’t find an obvious place to tie it, or if you need to use the step-ladder. I don’t want you falling on your first day.”

After Maud went out into the yard, Cassandra whispered to Mary “We need a safe place to put our reticules.”

“That cupboard in the wall between here and the pantry has a lock. Is it open now?” Mary asked. This was to the right of the stove. Cassandra tried the door, which was like the door to a regular room. It was locked.

“Let’s try different keys,” Cassandra suggested. This meant trying a number of the unlabelled keys, but the size limited the possibilities. The tenth or eleventh unlocked the door and revealed a chamber about 3 feet deep but 6 wide, with the door very much to one end. There were some shelves across the yard-wide enclosed end away from the door, with a wide one, two inches thick like a counter at waist level, and under it an array of thin wooden sticks in a double array of diamond slots. A wine storage.

“The wine-cellar, of sorts,” Mary said.

“Let’s see if there’s another key that fits,” Cassandra said. It took them about five minutes, but they found one. And another five minutes to verify that there was no other.

“Good. Here is a key for you, Mary, and I will take the other. Do you wish to put your reticule in here for now?”

“Yes, it will avoid carrying it about. I think I will make a small version of the little sack you used yesterday so I can keep essentials upon my person, but this will give some peace of mind. Oh. I have some of the tape I used to make the measure. Where did I put it?”

She rummaged in her reticule and came up with a length of about a yard and a half. This she stretched, then folded in two, then picked up a knife and cut it, handing one length to Cassandra.

Cassandra was about to ask why she would want it, then realized it was just right for having the key around her neck. They both put their reticules inside the cupboard and then each tested their key, then left it locked.

Just as they finished, Ethel came in and said “Shall I put the food in the pantry, Mrs. McNair.”

“Please, Ethel. Then I think you should work with Miss Match to organize this room while I toil with Maud to get some of the curtains beaten and some laundry started.”

\* \* \*

Cassandra decided to continue with the keys. Those not around their necks – Cassandra should add the door key that was in her reticule – were still on the window-sill. There was a large set of shelves and cupboards along the outside wall to the left of the stove. This started just far enough into the kitchen that the door swung 6 to 8 inches clear of it. It had a large shelf or counter at waist height, but more shelves and cupboards above. Clearly a place to keep things and to keep them organized. She remembered that number 23 had a similar set, so they were likely part of the house design. There were several modest cupboards about 18 inches high and a foot or so wide. Cassandra chose one. It was essentially empty.

“Ethel, What do you think of putting keys in here? We could put in some nails and label them for specific keys. And the nails can be long enough to hold keys of which we have more than one.”

“It would surely help to find ’em, Miss.”

“See if you can find the hammer and nails, Ethel. The hammer was from the second-hand shop, but the nails from the ironmonger.”

“Hammer’s here, Miss.” She moved among various items on the floor and picked up some heavy paper packets. “This feels like nails.”

“They won’t be ideal – there are probably special hooks. But we can make do with nails, and they’ll be out of sight inside the cupboard. Bring a pencil and we’ll mark the positions. Oh. There’s Mary’s tape on the table. I’m glad she took it out of her bag.”

Cassandra had Ethel hold the tape while she marked out a grid of points that would keep the keys well-spaced with room for labels above each.

“Oh, now I need my pens. They are in my carpet bag. Let’s set up my bed-frame in the corner and we can set my valise on top of it.”

It took them a few minutes to do this. Once she had the pens, Cassandra found the notepaper and the glue she had purchased and then realized she wanted a pair of scissors.

“Ethel, I need to ask Mrs. McNair if she has some scissors. While I do that, can you sweep out the space under the cistern. There’s a broom and a dustpan. Put the dust in one of those pails and we’ll bury it in the garden. Oh. We don’t have a shovel – all these things we need.” As she said this, she

was writing on a piece of paper that already had some entries. A coal shovel and poker for the stove fire would be needed too. Perhaps Mary and Maud could go shopping soon.

Maud and Mary were just finishing getting a clothesline established. Maud had discovered a prop – a stick with a Y at the end – that had clearly been used before for a laundry line. And there were marks on a somewhat spindly tree next to the fence at the rear of the yard as well as a ring in the wall of the house, so they had reused these anchors for the ends of the new line.

“I’ve some scissors in my carpet-bag with my sewing things,” Mary said. “But finding them won’t be so easy. Now I did see a rather rough pair with the mixed cutlery. If those are not good, you could use a knife. I haven’t got mine out yet. But we should choose one for rough work – perhaps this one I used for the rope – and keep it for such uses.”

Cassandra folded the notepaper and used the knife to make a set of labels. Ethel looked panicked when Cassandra suggested she write the labels, so Cassandra wrote the few for which the keys were known, such as the coal shed, the yard doors and the kitchen and front doors. Ethel put in the nails. She was tentative at first, then quickly got the knack. Then she pasted those labels carefully and put the keys on the appropriate nails.

“Ethel, we have all these other keys for which we don’t know the doors. I suggest that you and Maud can try out the keys when you tire of cleaning or other tasks. I will leave some squares of paper here with a pencil and you can push a temporary label onto the nail when you find a working key. Perhaps we can make a bit of a game of it – a farthing a key.”

“Oh, Miss, that would .... I never ’ad someone try to make work a game.”

“Well, it’s not a great expense, and it may render a chore a bit less onerous.”

“Thank you, Miss.” Ethel was smiling.

“If you find a key for one of these cupboards we could get a copy made for each of us and put the housekeeping money away. Wouldn’t stop a determined robber, but we might as well discourage the opportunists.”

A clock toned noon. Then a voice called "Black the Coal Man" at the top of the area stairs.

“Fetch the key and open the coal-shed, Ethel,” Cassandra said. “Then count the sacks of coal and coke. There should be 4 coal and 2 coke.”

Ethel did this quickly. Cassandra was watching at the window. At the last sack, Cassandra went outside to thank the coal-man and ask if a bill would be rendered.

“Mr. Arbuthnot said to set up an account. Miss Match is it not? I won’t shake hands, given the coal. A bill will be delivered either by post or by hand to your mailbox. Payment before the end of the month would be



appreciated or I charge extra. This time I come me'self, but in future one of my men will come."

"Thank you, Mr. Black. Please excuse my attire – we are cleaning and sorting, I'm afraid. However, I much appreciate the prompt service and look forward to giving you my business."

"Much obliged, Miss Match," Black said, and was gone.

Ethel, without prompting, locked the coal shed and put the key away on its nail.

Cassandra and Ethel went back to sorting things in the kitchen. Cassandra made a label "Tools" and they put it on a cupboard that was below the key one. They decided not to label the key cupboard – it might make it too easy for robbers. Ethel put in some nails to hold the tools they had, which was not many. But it would be useful to have them in a known location. The "rough" knife went there too, as did the nails and the sharpening stone.

They started to set up the bed for Mary in the niche as that lady and Maud came in with some curtains. The window had a wooden pelmet on top and there were some nails on the inside.

"We could make some button holes in the curtains, or else sew on some rings if we had them." Mary said.

"Well, we need some more things from an ironmonger, such as a shovel, a rake, a coal shovel, a poker – maybe more than one of each of those. Why don't Maud and Ethel wash some plates and cutlery and prepare some bread and cheese and more tea while Mrs. McNair and I make a list of necessities."

\* \* \*

As before, they sat at the table by the window. This would need to be moved back to install the curtains.

"Do we have suitable food for Ethel and Maud for tonight?" Cassandra asked Mary.

"I ordered a meat pie from the baker's yesterday. It should be in the pantry. And there's eggs. Some butter. Some cheese. I got a small cabbage, some carrots, and some potatoes. And some non-perishable items. No meat yet. I want to look at the butchers and fishmongers."

Maud and Ethel looked stunned. Ethel even had her mouth open.

"It's not all meant for one meal," Cassandra explained. "But there is some choice, at least tonight. Mrs. McNair and I have already paid for the boarding house, so will eat and sleep there. Now before bed, I'll ask you both bathe and wash your hair and check each other for nits, as I hear the Workhouse is somewhat afflicted with them."

"It's why our 'airs short," Maud said. "But what do you mean by bathing? Ain't that in the sea."

"I meant a hot bath in the tub there."

"You mean sit in it? Wash all over?" Ethel said.

"In warm water it can be quite pleasant, and if one of you pours water gently over the other's head you can soap and then rinse your hair. If you wish, Mrs. McNair or I can assist before we leave for the evening. We used to do this quite often for ... the ladies in the hotel for distressed gentlewomen where we were employed."

"Washing in 'ot water. That might be all right," Maud said. "And I guess we can manage, bein' sisters. We used to nit-pick each other before we 'ad to go in the work 'ouse. But I don't 'ave a comb for it."

"I have one in my valise," Mary said. "But if we're going shopping, Maud, we'll get one for you and Ethel to have. It's unpleasant to have ... passengers."

"Don't we know it," Ethel confirmed.

"I'll also make up some lard and vinegar to dip the comb in," Mary said. "It helps to make the comb slide through your hair and the nits have more trouble holding on to your hair."

"What about nits ... you know ... down below?" Maud asked.

"The same general approach can be used, or you can shave. In fact, any hair can be a place the lice hang on to, though some like clothing I think, but still come out to bite. In the house ... er... hotel where we were employed, I would sometimes be asked by the ... er ... ladies to shave them," Mary said.

\* \* \*

After their light meal, Mary and Maud went out to shop. They would be back within an hour, indeed just as half-past two rang out. While they were gone, Cassandra and Ethel got the clock set up on a shelf in the set of cupboards and shelves by the door. It was a good place for the clock, but draughts might affect its timekeeping.

"Ethel. Can you take charge of winding the clock each morning? Choose a time that suits you and wind the center spring each day. The other two are not working. They are for the chime and the hour. Perhaps I will one day take it to a clock-maker, but in any case I may prefer no bells in the night."

"Yes Miss. I'll do it each day when I light the fire."

"Oh. I hadn't thought about who would light the fire."

"Maud said since I was one of those charged with fire lightin' at the Work 'ouse, I should do it here. I don't mind. Used to it."

"Thank you, Ethel. That is appreciated."

Ethel looked confused. After a few seconds, Cassandra asked "Is something wrong?"

"No. Miss. Just nobody said thank you to me before for doing what I'm s'posed to."

"Ah. I see. Well, I hope to continue to show you, and everyone associated with the Drake Apartments as I plan to call them, courtesy. And I hope that such courtesy will become a characteristic of the properties and attract a good class of client."

\* \* \*

Cassandra overheard Maud say to Ethel, "Mrs. McNair told me to go in that second 'and place and get some fireplace tools. I've never had much chance to shop, but I fink I did it all right, 'cos she said she thought I got good bargains. I didn't know if I should, but I asked the shop man if he'd let me have the lot for 5 shillings when the total should have been 6 and a ha'penny. And 'e said yes!"

"Good on ya, Maud," Ethel said. "I think we might do all right here if it goes on as it's started. Sure nicer than the Work 'ouse."

"I bet anyfing's better than that horrid place and those awful guvners."

It was clear their accents were stronger when talking to each other.

Cassandra decided that the one set of poker, brush and coal-shovel that were on a stand would be kept by the stove and the several unmatched others would be distributed around the house, possibly to be augmented or replaced later. Mary had seen and purchased a coal scuttle when she returned from her other shopping to collect Maud. She had found a nit comb, and had also purchased some rags for when the women got their courses, though she felt that she herself was starting to approach the change, possibly early at the age of 41. She had purchased 5 dozen brass rings for the curtains, as they would be needed later, if not now, and she had found some needles, 2 thimbles, and some strong thread, some pins, as well as a pair of modest scissors. The house needed its own pair.

"Can you put the amounts or receipts on the shelf there?" Cassandra asked, pointing to the counter. "I thought I would put some paperweights there if I can find some so we may have bills, receipts, a to-get list, a to-do list, and messages to each of us."

"Would stones from the beach not serve, Miss?" Maud asked.

"Indeed, they would. My imagination must be failing me. We can get some tonight after dinner," Cassandra said.

"Can Ethel and I go, Miss? Haven't been by the sea since our Dad died."

"I don't see why not. Though perhaps tomorrow night – Saturday night – we'll all go together then we won't have too much weight to carry each."

"Here's some paper for lists," Mary said. "And a pencil stub."

"Perhaps we should review where we are, so we get what must be done today finished by six o'clock. It's almost 3 now – you'll notice the clock is in place and Ethel has agreed to do the daily winding and to light the fire."

"I'll air the beds each day, Miss," said Maud.

Cassandra said "Perhaps the curtains are the most urgent matter."

Mary answered "My thoughts exactly. Can you girls sew rings on the tops of the curtains?"

It turned out that they could, so needles, thread and rings were distributed and they all sat as near as practical to the window and each took a curtain. In half an hour four curtains were done. Mary and Maud took the stepladder upstairs and hung the front room curtains while Cassandra and Ethel used chairs and did the same in the kitchen.

With the curtains in place it was dark in the kitchen, and the gas light was the only real light and it was on the end of the cubby hole so more or less in the center of the back of the room.

"Ethel, where is the remains of the clothes line. There should be a good length."

Ethel found it with the tools. Cassandra put a pin through the rope and the edge of the curtain at the level of the windowsill, ran the cord behind the curtain to a nail in the corner of the pelmet at the top of the curtain, where she passed it through a ring that she slipped over the nail, then brought the rope down at the side of the window.

"If I pull down on the rope ...." The curtain came up nicely.

"That's brilliant, Miss," Ethel said.

"Can you sew the rope here. And we'd better bend the nail up a bit with the pliers so the ring doesn't slip. And I'll put a nail in the underside of the window-sill for now until we can get a proper cleat."

Within ten minutes, the curtain was properly set up. There was still enough rope that they would be able to do the same upstairs, so they went up to see how the other women were doing. The curtains there were almost in place, so the rope was installed similarly to that in the kitchen. Ethel ran down to get the hammer, nails and pliers and the job was essentially finished.

"I'll ask you girls to be very careful with the gas lights. Perhaps use candles until we are all here and can watch out for each other," Mary said.

"I'm a bit wary of the gas," Maud said, "so I'm 'appy to use candles."

It was now almost four o'clock. They had plenty of daylight to work in, and decided to test the water closets. There was a reservoir in the upper floor closets, and they found a pump by the copper downstairs. It took quite a bit of pumping to fill the reservoir, which had an overflow to the outside. The

process wasn't very efficient, especially as there was probably water from the roof that could be used. Indeed, Maud wondered why they didn't fill the upstairs reservoirs first and then overflow them to the cistern.

"Oh. Mary, add checking the fireplaces to your list. The kitchen stove works, and tomorrow we'll try a coke fire with the copper. The others we'll test as soon as we can, but not today. By the way, the ancients boiled water to purify it, and I believe that does help, so we will only put out jugs of boiled water unless people request otherwise."

Mary asked "Can you show Maud and me where we have the keys?"

Cassandra and Ethel showed the others the cupboard and the current labels as well as the temporary ones. They talked about which doors should be locked by key (the front ones) and which bolted from the inside (all the rest for now).

Cassandra said "I think a key should be hung on a hook somewhere in the front hallway where it is not easily seen, but so that whoever answers the door can unlock it. And also for egress in the event of a fire."

"In the corner there, Miss, under the sill of the glass," Maud said. There was a narrow glass window – fortunately too narrow for anyone to squeeze through – beside the door to give light. It had a sill, and there was a space between the frame of the sill and the wall underneath. Maud had a good eye for such detail.

It was going to be a nuisance not to be able to go from one house to the other directly, but Cassandra said she planned to put a lockable gate in the fence between the yards as close as practical to the houses, and to lay pavement stones to avoid the path between becoming muddy. Then they would possibly use keys for the back doors and the communicating gate, but could leave these unlocked when it was convenient.

"On our list of things to get, I think a couple of wardrobes are in order. We can put one at the foot of my bed for us to share for our clothes, Mary. And another for Maud and Ethel. Eventually, each apartment or bedroom will need one, so we should start to look. New ones will be expensive. I wonder how difficult it would be to renew an old one."

"Last year the Work 'ouse 'ad our brother Tom sandin' and varnishin'. Took a while, but 'e did a nice job."

"We will need to see what are the prices for such items new and second-hand. I should have made a more thorough prediction of the costs of furnishing the properties," Cassandra said.

\* \* \*

On Saturday morning after breakfast they settled up with Mrs. Crompton. Before taking their leave they gave her their new address and invited

her for coffee on the following Friday at half-past 10, guessing that she would want to be "at home" for the arrival of weekend guests. The smile they got at the invitation was gratifying.

"I'll wager that if we keep on her good side, she'll send trade our way if people ask about longer rentals," Mary said.

"Yes. Pity that Arbuthnot wouldn't earn his keep for advertising in those cases, but we'll take any decent rental while we're getting established."

When they arrived at the properties around half-past 8, the fire was properly burning and the two girls had mopped the floor from kitchen to scullery and had beaming smiles. The copper was boiling some of the second-hand linen and curtains. They'd also managed to match up a dozen keys, including two for one of the small cupboards. They'd found a key for each of the back gates and for several of the rooms, which they had numbered on a crude sketch of each floor, as well as the "wine-cellar" of number 23.

Cassandra said "Maud, I'm going to have you prepare an inventory of the keys we have so we can get sufficient keys made. And we'll put a list of keys not in the cupboard – which of us has which keys – in that cupboard so we know where they all are. And remember to take threepence out of the housekeeping for yourself and Ethel for sorting the keys."

"Where'll we put it Miss? Don't want nobody takin' it."

"You could find a jar or mug and put it in the same cupboard as the housekeeping," Mary suggested. "And later today one of you could go to buy some tape like Miss Match and I use for our keys." As she said this, she was putting away their reticules and had her key out.

"Ooh. That'd do," Maud said.

Mary took Ethel to 23 to start cleaning top to bottom. She took with her the measuring tape she had made and some paper and pencil to measure windows for curtains. All the women had put on the aprons. They were a good way to avoid getting dirt on their clothes.

Cassandra busied herself sorting through the various second hand crockery and cutlery while Maud was recording keys. Maud was in a loquacious mood.

"Miss, we stepped outside this morning to do a check on number 23 and we met one of the maids from number 25. She told us lots about the people on the street."

Cassandra was interested, but did not want to appear too nosy, so said, "Did you learn much?"

"Some. She said 25 is owned by a Mr. Ormsby who runs a fishmongers in the town. The Ormsby's are unhappy because 27 has several women who live there who seem to be well-dressed but it isn't clear where they get their money. Still, nobody can complain because they keep very quiet and don't 'av men calling.

And across the road at number 20 and 22 are two families who are in trade as well, but I didn't get to learn what because Mrs. Ormsby yelled out to Rita to stop gossiping and get the breakfast on."

Maud was proving a mine of intelligence. Cassandra was rather pleased, but realized she would have to caution the girls not to share too much information with other servants on the street.

\* \* \*

After mid-morning tea, Mary took Ethel to explore local shops. She wanted to get something for dinner and to learn where there might be butchers and fishmongers. Mr. Ormsby would be an obvious candidate, but it was worth comparing his offerings with those of others. Meanwhile, Maud and Cassandra took a candle and tested all the gas lights to see that they worked. It was clear that having to use the key for the front door of 23 and to lock up 21 while they were there was going to be a nuisance.

"Maud, I'll give you a note for the odd-job man after we have something to eat, and we'll get him round as soon as possible to start putting a gate between the houses at the back. Then as long as the gates to the lane are locked, we can move back and forth more easily."

"We found the keys for the back gates, Miss, but they're fearsome stiff."

"Glad I have this apron on and some notepaper in the pocket with a pencil," Cassandra observed as she wrote down "oil for locks". "Perhaps you can buy some oil suitable for locks when you take the odd-job man a message this afternoon. You use a small straw or stick dipped in the oil to pick up a drop at a time and put it in the lock and use the key to work the oil in."

It turned out that all the gas lights were in order, though their location and degree of brightness was not exceptional. While they were in 23, Cassandra realized they may want to open windows.

"No time like the present. Let's see if the windows are all working properly to open."

Most were fine, some moving very freely, but a couple were clearly quite stiff. "We'll get the odd-job man to help open them and see what can be done to make them work properly," Cassandra said, noting which ones were stuck. "Let's go back and check at 21."

Once more the ritual of locking up had to be followed.

In 21, all but one of the windows was fine. The window of the large room at the rear on the top floor was stuck, however, and seemed to be painted shut. Cassandra made another note on her sheet.

\* \* \*

Mary had found a butchery she thought might be suitable and had purchased some mutton to stew and found a greengrocer where she purchased some potatoes, some herbs and other things, including a few apples. Given the season, these last had clearly been stored.

They had bread and cheese and tea for lunch. The girls had taken the initiative to buy another pint of milk, necessitating a second jug, though that did keep the two batches separate. They were concerned that there would be none available on Sunday. Cassandra appreciated the foresight. She made a list of keys wanted and wrote a note asking the locksmith if he could arrange a time to visit, as there was a question of whether to change the locks, just in case. But she gave Maud one of the cupboard keys to see if two copies could be obtained today, though it was Saturday. Furthermore, Maud was told she could buy five yards of the tape Mary had used. "Take the rest of the housekeeping money," Cassandra said, "You can put the change back after, but I don't want you to have to make two trips."

Ethel and Mary worked on starting a stew for their supper. It would do for two days. Actually, Mary started with cutting meat and onions and vegetables while Ethel was busy in the scullery scouring a large cauldron-like pot which had a matching heavy lid with some hot water, some soap and some sand found in number 23. This was one of the second hand purchases that Cassandra wondered about. However, it came up clean, though still worn-looking.

Somehow Mary had found a cutting board. Cassandra had thought she might use the large table surface, but a separate board made sense. Later she learned the board was a purchase while food shopping when she found the receipt. She also found a receipt for a pair of second-hand baskets. Of course! To put the shopping in.

Cassandra occupied herself with the record-book, noting all the receipts plus the threepence for the girls, the milk – no receipt but a note for that, and so on. She remembered the milk yesterday and added that – it had been purchased before the housekeeping money was set up. She then started on the last page and wrote the heading "Capital" and transferred all the amounts for acquisition of property etc. She put cancelling entries in the current transactions that were at the beginning of the book to give just ongoing expenses. Taking a piece of paper, she used the scissors to make a tab that she folded around the margin of a page near the middle. That page she headed "Monthly operations". For now, it would contain no entries, but she would tally up the current entries at the end of each month and transfer them there so she had a way to know how they were doing on revenue and expenses. As long as there WAS revenue. She hoped the Jeffery family would



take up number 23, even though it would mean a lot of work and demands on capital. Still, she did still have some money to work with, and in conversation in bed last night, Mary had suggested she could invest some of her money and they could partner. That might be a good idea, or it might not. She was unused to sharing her enterprises with others.

A thought came in her mind. "Mary, did you get a chance to test the stove in 23. Or the coppers there?"

"Not yet. The sinks in the scullery in both houses are fine. The taps and the drains are working well too."

"I wanted to see if the chimneys are open also."

"Why don't you take Ethel and try the fireplaces with a bit of paper or a pair of candles. When you snuff the candle, the smoke should be sufficient to see if the chimney draws."

"That's a good idea, Mary. And we should get the chimney's swept. We don't want a fire. Though possibly Arbuthnot knows when they were last swept."

It turned out that Arbuthnot did not know, when asked in a note about this and the gas company account, but suggested a local sweep he used. The man and a boy came the next Thursday and partly undid some of the cleaning work of the women. Men!

Mary not only made the stew, she made pastry and then took some of the stew and thickened it with flour and made pies. Where did she find those pie pans? Cassandra then realized that Mary had been very observant in the second-hand shop and had kept Ethel rather busy cleaning them up. However, there were no complaints about the work, or else all were swept away once the food was tasted.

\* \* \*

They enjoyed Mary's stew sitting horseshoe fashion around the window table. It was becoming their gathering place, while the large table was reserved for various work tasks and projects.

"Weren't ever like this at the Work 'ouse," Ethel opined.

Maud had successfully got two more copies of the cupboard key, though the locksmith warned there were many such locks that used the same key, so not to trust them for any important items. The locksmith himself would come between noon and one on Monday.

The four keys were given out and put on the tapes. Cassandra recorded the amounts and added 2 shillings to the housekeeping as it was nearly depleted. An old jar and a chipped mug with no handle any more were assigned to Ethel and Maud respectively and labels were made and pasted on.

"Ain't never 'ad any money worth putting somewhere before," Ethel noted.

"Let's hope it isn't a flash in the pan," Cassandra said. "Now, let's wash up the dishes and ourselves and take a promenade on the front."

In a quarter of an hour they were ready. There was still plenty of light outdoors this early May evening, with sunset at about half-past eight and it now but seven o'clock. They took the shopping baskets and made their way to the front, then found steps down to the beach. They soon found eight good sized rounded stones, though nearly twenty went into the baskets and most then out again as another was deemed "better".

They walked along the beach a ways, then went up on the promenade. It was early enough in the year that there were few people about.

"Shall we head home for a cup of tea and a biscuit?" Mary asked.

The girls looked at each other, then Maud said "Yes please, Miss. I mean Ma'am."

"It's all right if you address us both as Miss," Mary said. She didn't explain or excuse, but Cassandra knew it was to let the girls feel more at ease.

"Miss," Maud said as they walked, addressing Cassandra, "Ethel and I were talking last night. We think you're going to need some more help, and 'specially someone who can do odd jobs. Would you let Ethel and I take just one wage and get our Tom out the Work 'ouse. He's clever wiv 'is 'ands, and 'e 'ates the place. Our Dad was a joiner and Tom used to work wiv 'im."

She had blurted all this out and now stopped, embarrassed.

"How old is Tom?" Cassandra asked.

"'e'll be 15 just 'afore Christmas. 'e's a year and a month younger than Ethel."

"Well, I won't let you give up your wages, though I might allow we could pay some for the jar and some on account, to be paid later when rents start to come in, but it would still be owed to you both. Let me think upon it and if I think it a good idea, I'll visit Mr. and Mrs. Hodges again early next week.

Now, are you girls wishing to go to church tomorrow?"

"Thank you, Miss," Maud said. "But about church, we was made to go to church by the Work 'ouse. I don't mind the church, but it were no joy to be looked down on by the other folk."

"Perhaps we should wait until we can get you fitted out with good uniforms or we can find some decent dresses or other clothing for you both," Mary said.

"You wish to go to church, Mary?" Cassandra asked.

"I think I would. It would help us become part of the local society and perhaps make some new acquaintances. And I like singing the old hymns."

If Cassandra were surprised by this revelation, she did not show it. In all the decade and a half she had known Mary, neither of them had shown an inclination to Sunday services. Still, Mary was right, it could help cement their position here.

\* \* \*

On Sunday, they all worked steadily to clean and measure and plan what would be needed, for number 23 at least, with the addition of a rather abstract indication that wardrobes and washstands were needed for themselves. Mary made bacon and eggs for breakfast. The two girls said it was some years since they'd had such a breakfast. They were even more delighted when allowed to toast a slice of bread over an opened plate on the stove and have it with some jam Mary had bought.

The work wasn't that heavy this Sunday. Lists and sketches were made and re-made, and where needed, cleaning and adjusting was done. Maud had bought a small bottle of oil and they oiled all the locks they were using and managed to get all those with keys to function smoothly.

A slice of bread with cheese and cups of tea at a bit after one o'clock prefaced Cassandra saying "As it is Sunday, you girls may have the afternoon free until 5 o'clock. We will eat at 6, and then Mrs. McNair and I will take our baths at 7, for which we would like our privacy."

Maud and Ethel looked surprised.

Cassandra said "Have I said something wrong?"

There was a moment of silence before Maud said "No Miss. We just never had free time at ... "

"Well, I think you know I like people who work hard, but are cheerful in their work, and overburdened people do not work well."

Ethel said, "Thank you Miss."

Mary said, "Perhaps on a rainy Sunday, we could consider practice in reading and writing. I will endeavour to find some books or magazines or newspapers."

"A good idea," Cassandra added, "Reading material gives a house a good countenance."

\* \* \*

Monday morning Cassandra was at the Workhouse by nine. Mary and Maud were off to shop for wardrobes and for furnishings for number 23. Actually, they were only going to look unless there were an astonishing bargain.

There was a huge list of curtains, carpets, washstands, chairs hard and soft, a sofa, some beds, bedding, oddments of decoration, plus a general commission to be open-minded to opportunities. They would be gone a number of hours and each carried a basket for small items they might encounter.

Their plan was to first look for second-hand items that were at a very good price. Cassandra felt that the two pairs of eyes would be sharp enough and doubted she would be offended by whatever they acquired. In the meantime, she would try to see if Maud and Ethel's brother Tom could be hired and therefore released from servitude in the Brighthelmstone Poor-house.

Mr. Hodges was surprised to see her again so soon, and before she spoke said "Oh, dear, Miss Match, already back to report that things have gone awry?"

"Just the opposite, Mr. Hodges. The girls seem to be good workers and of sunny disposition."

Mr. Hodges expression seemed one of disbelief. Cassandra continued, "However, we appear to have more work than we can handle, and of a type more suited to male hands. The girls mentioned their brother Tom is here too, and I wondered if he were available for employ."

"A bit work-shy that one. Always skiving off, then turning up just when we want to charge him with theft of Institution property for taking the uniform."

"So you don't wish him to leave?" Cassandra asked, knowing the answer already.

"No, we'll be happy if you can get some use out of him."

This, Cassandra thought, played to her advantage. "Then shall we say the same wage and 1 and 6 for an extra set of clothes as before?"

"Boys clothes is more costly, Miss Match," said the wily Mrs. Hodges.

"Surely if he's work-shy, the advantage is the other way?"

"We'll match the previous terms if the boy meets your satisfaction. Let me get him called in." Hodges said, not wanting to lose the chance to off-load a troublesome expense.

The servant Cassandra had seen before was called and sent to find Tom. No tea was offered, but fortunately Tom was nearby. The situation was explained. Tom seemed to struggle to keep a straight face, but answered that he'd be more than happy to work beside his sisters for Miss Match, and would appreciate the chance to show what he could do.

Hodges sent him to select two sets of clothing. That would mean laundry today and bathing this evening, with the clothes he was wearing being washed tonight. There'd also be the question of where he'd sleep, though the girls already had spoken out that they'd share a bed and Tom could have the other. Mary told them they'd have to move one bed to the other room for now. Things would be rearranged later, when they'd had a chance to consider

different options.

Cassandra completed the paperwork and paid for the clothing. Tom was back in a quarter of an hour in strange but serviceable clothing. Cassandra thanked the Hodges' and swept out of the building with Tom in hot pursuit.

"Thank you, Miss. That place is awful. The girls said it was right terrific with you."

"You've seen them?" Cassandra was surprised.

"They walked over yesterday and got someone to find me who was out in the yard. So we 'ad a chat through the fence so to speak."

"Did they indicate what my intentions are with my houses?"

"Said you want to fix 'em up to rent 'em, and 'av 'em nice and proper furnished."

"That encapsulates things succinctly." Cassandra realized Tom might not know those words, but he would capture the sentiment.

"I need a man or boy to handle some of the minor repairs, as well as some of the heavier chores when we need to bring in or move furniture and so forth."

"Might I get a chance to do some joinery? Me Dad showed me 'ow."

"Possibly, though we have very limited tools, and I don't know where you'd do that."

"The girls said there's a yard behind each house. If there's a shed, that'd do."

Cassandra realized that a shed would be useful. Also Tom could, in fair weather, spend most of his time outside if the work suited. She said "I'm hoping you'll also be able to help tidy and manage the gardens. I don't think the tenants will want to do that, but they probably would like to see a garden, though for one house I hope to grow some vegetables. Perhaps in both have a bit of a mixed garden if it can be made attractive. The space is rather small." She realized she was wandering in her thoughts.

"Do you 'ave a 'and-cart, Miss?"

"What's a hand cart, Tom?"

"Like a wheelbarrer, but usually two wheels. Be real 'andy to bring back furniture and stuff and to move it about."

There were clearly more possibilities to consider.

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They got back to the houses at a quarter past 10, just as a rather rough looking man was descending the area steps of number 21.

"Can I help you?" Cassandra asked.

"Name's Voyce, Charles Voyce. I think you sent me a note."

“Yes, Mr. Voyce. Mr. Arbuthnot gave me your name as a reliable tradesman who could do a variety of things related to houses.”

“That’s me. Odd-job man extraordinary. What d’ye want done?”

“We need a gate between the houses through the back fence. Let me take you through. Tom, have Ethel show you this house so you know where things are, and I’ll talk to you once I’ve arranged things with Mr. Voyce.”

She ushered Voyce through to the back and showed him the situation.

“I ... er ... manage both houses and plan to have apartments in each. It is a nuisance to have to use the key to go out and in between them. With the lane-way gates locked, a lockable gate that could be opened here would let my servants and myself go back and forth more easily. I’ll get my young man-servant to lay down some stones to render the pathway less prone to mud.”

“So you’d like a gate about ’ere,” Voice said, pointing almost exactly where Cassandra would like the gate.

“Which way should it open?” Voyce asked.

Cassandra was at a loss. “I’m not sure I understand.”

“Do ye want the lock toward the back of the yard? And should it swing to this side or the other house?”

“Can you suggest why that might be important?” Cassandra could not immediately grasp any significance.

“Well, if you are mostly opening from this side, then you want it to pull inwards, or you might give someone on the other side a nasty knock. And if the gate doesn’t swing all the way, then it could be an obstacle. I think unless you are going to put plants or things just back from the gate towards the lane, I’d have the hinges at the rear, open the gate toward this house and have a hook to hold it against the fence while it’s open.”

“Ah. I see. You are an education, Mr. Voyce. Let us talk costs.”

“Well, Miss Match, I’m not much for locks. They need a joiner’s touch to get them straight so they don’t bind. But I can cut the gap and make a gate, and put on a bolt. Probably use some of the fence material too – avoid getting extra wood. But you’d need a couple of good posts and I’d have to dig. Probably a total of two to three day’s work. That’s 18 shillings at my rates, and I reckon about 10 shillings in wood and bits, counting a latch, bolt, hinges and hook, but not the lock. You’d need a locksmith for that.”

“I am waiting on the locksmith for some other tasks. However, the amount you propose is acceptable to me. Do you present a bill for your labour and have me pay the suppliers directly? I can have my young man or one of the girls – they are very sharp – come with you to make purchases and make choices if needed?”

Voyce looked disappointed and said “Generally I get all the stuff and add it to the bill.”

Cassandra knew the reason, but was prepared to allow a bit of extra profit, but no padding. "Very well, but if the materials are going to be more than you have suggested, please let me know so we can consider alternatives. When will you start?"

"Tomorrow mornin', Miss. I'm working today just up the road. This was a short break."

"What time would you like to start, Mr. Voyce? I can make sure the rear gates are unlocked for you."

"Half-past seven, Miss. Like to get the heavy work done before the sun is too high."

"Then I shall see you out and we shall expect you tomorrow." Cassandra showed Mr. Voyce through the house and out the kitchen door.

Tom and Ethel were at the window table.

"Hope it's all right I gave Tom a cuppa tea, Miss," Ethel said.

"Perfectly. Now Tom, did you overhear any of my conversation with Voyce?"

"Yes Miss. I fink 'e's making extra on the materials."

"I'm sure he is, but I'll allow him a modest perquisite. Keep an eye out if the materials are inferior, though."

"An' I've done a lock with me Dad. Not that difficult."

"Then we will consider giving you a chance to do so. I will not mention it to the locksmith and only if you are unsuccessful will we approach him about it later."

"Might find an old lock and key somewhere, Miss. It's not the crown jewels we're 'iding, is it?"

Cassandra was beginning to wonder why the Workhouse did not see what an enterprising trio they had let go. She just hoped they were as honest as they seemed.

"What d'you want me to start on, Miss?" Tom asked.

"Let's plan for the next few days.

I want to get both gardens tidy. They don't need to be a work of art. I think before tenants come we can find some pots of plants and flowers to decorate, but it appears that the houses have been empty for a while."

"Rita said they were runnin' some sort of whorehouse that was closed sometime last year, Miss," Ethel said.

"That might explain why they've been empty for a while, as well as the fact the owner died. Anyway, Tom. We need to get rid of the wilderness and start to make the garden look cared for. I'd like to have some vegetables and some flowers, possibly some bushes eventually. You mentioned a shed, so once you've cleared a bit, we'll take a look with Mrs. McNair too and see what might work."

"I can do that, Miss."

“Now Maud and Ethel confirmed that the Workhouse had lice as inmates along with the rest of you. I’ll suggest you work mostly outside today, and I’ll get Ethel to wash the spare set of clothes. Then you can take a hot bath and have one of the girls check you for nits and we’ll wash the clothes you’re wearing now. For tonight we’ll have you sleep in the back room a floor above, but we’ll talk at supper about a more permanent arrangement. And we’d better ask Maud or Mary to see if they can buy you a nightgown so you don’t sleep in your clothes.

As we think of them, we can also see about other tasks and think about the most efficient way to do them. I forgot to ask if you can read and write.”

“Better than Ethel, not so good as Maud,” Tom replied. It was clear he was still wondering about the bath. She’d have to make clear he would not be embarrassed in front of any of them, but allowed to bathe on his own.

“Mrs. McNair and I plan to see if we can improve Ethel’s skills in that regard. A lot is practice and there are no books in the house yet. We’ve only been here a few days.”

“I’ll get to work, Miss. Ethel showed me where the shovel and rake are. Pity you don’t have a scythe or sickle.”

“How much would one cost do you think?” Cassandra decided to see how much Tom was aware of prices.

“Figure I could get one for a bob one or two places. 2 bob new I reckon, but that’s equal ’arf my week’s wages. A bit costly for you.”

“Ethel, Give Tom two shillings from the housekeeping and we’ll send him off to get one, and also a nightgown. If you can, get receipts please. Ethel and Maud will show you how the housekeeping money works later.”

Tom looked like he might fall over when Ethel went and got the money, actually a shilling, a sixpence, a threepenny bit, two pennies and two ha’pennies. But he soon recovered his composure and raced off out the kitchen door.

Cassandra put the papers from the Workhouse under the appropriate stone for expenses. The stones were neatly arranged on the main shelf of the cabinet. They’d need to add one for Tom. Good job they’d got a couple of extras. There’d just be one left now. The stones were labelled To-Get, To-Do, Spending, CM (for Cassandra Match), MM (for Mary McNair), MS and ES for the two Souldon girls. They’d add TS and have one for future eventualities. She didn’t, however, take much notice of the stones.

What next? Sometimes there was too much to do, and one rushed about getting nothing done like a kitten chasing its tail. Which reminded her about a cat and the mice problem.

As if someone read her mind, Ethel came back from lighting the copper to wash Tom’s spare clothes – they’d not needed to do their own yet – and said “Miss, there’s a cat sitting on the step by the back door.”

“Does it look healthy?”



“I think so.”

“Put down a saucer with a splash of milk and see what it does.”

The door to the yard was open, so Ethel put a saucer just inside and poured a small amount of milk into it. The cat – a female tortoiseshell – trotted in and quickly lapped it up. Then it licked its paws and proceeded to wash itself. Suddenly its ears perked up and it scampered through into the kitchen. Cassandra and Ethel gave chase, finding the cat mewing at the door to the cistern.

“Ethel, can you gently open the door?”

Ethel pulled the bolt up and opened the door a few inches and the cat rushed inside. There was a noise of scuffling and some growling of the cat, then it came out with a dead mouse in its mouth, which it laid on the floor a foot and a half from Cassandra’s feet. The cat went back inside the cupboard and returned with another which it placed beside the first. It repeated this with a third small corpse, then sat on its haunches as if expecting praise, which it duly received.

“Well done, Puss,” Cassandra said. “Ethel, I think more milk for our new member of staff. I wonder what we should call her?”

Ethel got the saucer and more milk. The cat drank it all, then ambled back to the scullery and settled under the sink where there was a small space just right for a cat to lie. Without being asked, Ethel got the dustpan and put the dead mice outside. Tom could bury them. Then she rummaged in the collection of oddments of linen Mary had found and pulled out a bit of blanket that was somewhat in tatters.

“Can I put down a bit of this for Puss, Miss?”

“Yes, the tiles are cold. If she likes it there, it can be her place. I hope she’s house trained.”

“So do I, Miss.” This was spoken by one likely to have to clean up the mess if the cat were not tidy. Ethel cut a corner off the remnant of blanket and put it beside the cat, but did not try to move the cat onto it. The cat understood, however, and quickly clawed the piece of blanket under her. A clever animal, as well as a potentially very useful one, Cassandra thought. It appeared the cat was to be Puss. Unimaginative, but then the animal seemed to be a stray, and might yet decide to decamp again.

Ethel came from the scullery to ask “Miss, did you see the letter for you? The post came while you was fetchin’ Tom.”

When Cassandra looked, there was a letter under her stone. With some chagrin, she realized she had not been watching out for her messages, yet she had set up the system! She took a knife and cracked the wax seal and opened the letter.

It was from Mr. Jeffery. He was indeed very interested in the rental of the house at 23 Fortescue Road if it were suitable to his family’s requirements.

Mr. and Mrs. Jeffery had three daughters, ages 4, 6 and 13, and two sons, ages 9 and 11. They would like to have bedrooms for the parents, the boys and the girls, with, if possible, a separate room for the 13-year-old. Of course, they would need a dining space and a drawing room. The children would need three meals a day, though they might picnic sometimes. Mrs Jeffery would be in residence for the full three months – Saturday June 14 to Saturday September 13 – while Mr. Jeffery would arrive on Friday evenings and depart Monday morning early. The adults might wish to dine out on occasion.

She would need to talk to Mary to work out what they should charge. Food, fires, baths, what else? She found a piece of paper – the last stone was being used and sitting in a corner of the shelf with blank paper. Who had the sense to do that? It was gratifying not to have to think of everything, and this initiative was to be encouraged as long as it did not get out of hand. Tom came clattering back in. He had a paper parcel that no doubt had a nightgown. Also a rather rusty and dirty sickle and two unmatched metal wheels of the same diameter, about a foot, that seemed not more than blobs of rust.

“Got these thrown in. All for 9 pence. And the nightgown for sixpence.”

Ethel held out her hand and Tom gave her a threepenny bit and a sixpence which she put in the housekeeping then locked the cupboard after writing down something very slowly on the paper that was there. Tom watched but said nothing. Then she took the nightgown and disappeared toward the rear, presumably to put it in the wash. To break the silence, Cassandra said “Better clean up the sickle outside. We have a sharpening stone with the tools. I’m afraid only a few tools so far.”

“Not to worry, Miss, we’ll get things sorted out in a bit,” and off he went.

Ethel stayed with the washing. The copper seemed to work all right, though it made a bit of smoke. Possibly the firebox needed a clean-out, as the coke should burn fairly clear. Cassandra heard Tom ask her for a rag and if there were some oil, then some noise of sharpening. Tom whistled a tune. It seemed familiar but she didn’t know it. Ethel clearly did, for she started to sing. A good sign. And she had a voice that was high and clear but not grating. Interesting.

Cassandra sat at the end of the window table, where the light came from her left and she could see both the kitchen door and the passage to the scullery. For several minutes her mind wandered, but finally she pulled herself together and started to make notes on a proposal for Mr. Jeffery.

She would have to discuss the proposal with Arbuthnot, but could at least try to establish how much she would need to receive to break even. And then some extra would be needed to defray the inevitable vacancy between tenancies. That was a worry. But it was silly to worry now. At least the

houses were free and clear. They – and she found herself realizing that she was including the Soulton family – would have to find ways to cover their costs.

What was a reasonable rent? In Brown's Hotel there had been an old Illustrated London News from 1846 that discussed costs of accommodation in London. It wasn't Brighton, but the figures she remembered suggested a modest house in a respectable but not posh district would rent for between 1 and 2 pounds. But that was unfurnished. She guessed that furnished would be more or less double, and indeed her costs would be double, since furnishings were more likely to suffer dilapidations at the hands of tenants. Even good tenants had spills and accidents.

Baths, for example, could put water on the floor and hence onto the plaster of the ceiling below. She wondered if it would be possible to put a waterproof flooring in one of the bedrooms. Or tile around the fireplace, which would also resist the damage from sparks and embers. She wondered if Tom would know. Or Mr. Arbuthnot. Another notation on her sheet of paper.

So far, she decided, she would estimate a rent of 2 pounds a week. She took another sheet of paper and put down a grid of seven columns and a number of rows. She labelled the columns Saturday, Sunday through to Friday. No sense with the usual way – the Jefferys wanted to come on a Saturday. When she filled in the dates, there were 13 weeks.

She wrote down "Amounts desired – net" and then "Rent - 2 pounds/week".

She wrote down "Meals" and sub-headings "Mr. Jeffery", "Mrs. Jeffery", "5 children" and columns for "Breakfast" "Lunch" "Dinner" and "Refreshments". Mary would help to estimate the costs, but Cassandra could work out the maximum number of each meal. For the wife and children there were 91 of each meal. Mr. Jeffery would possibly have 39 dinners and lunches, but perhaps would not breakfast on Monday before departing, or else have a cold breakfast. She put the numbers down, with "26?" beside the breakfasts for Mr. Jeffery.

Baths? There would be a need to ensure adequate hot water, and that would be a nuisance to carry upstairs. Possibly she could negotiate that baths were taken in the kitchen of number 23. Would it make sense to acquire a screen that could be set up to give privacy. A maid could stand by to assist, but could hand a towel over the screen. Hmm. It might work, and the water would be there. However, they would still need jugs. Another note was made to acquire several. In any event hot water would be needed upstairs for face washing and for Mr. Jeffery to shave.

The thought of baths reminded Cassandra that they should think of their own needs. It might make sense to plan that Tom bathe on a Monday, since he would start today, the two girls on Friday, and possibly she and Mary

on Sunday or some other night. A screen would be a very sensible idea. She would talk to Tom about that. The one for this kitchen could be the prototype to see how difficult it would be to set one up.

She heard Ethel wringing out the clothes. Somewhere she had seen an illustration of a small mangle for wringing out clothes. Probably expensive. And where to keep it? Possibly under the cistern if it could be made to fit. Or in the still-to-be constructed shed.

The thinking having given her a bit of a fuzzy head, she got up and went out into the yard to see how things were going. Tom had managed to mow down most of the wilder weeds.

"'S'not so bad, Miss. There's a brick pathway here to the back gate. D'you know if there's a key?"

"Maud and I found one for each of the gates," Ethel said.

"I'll ask the locksmith to duplicate them, I haven't had any message from him yet."

"There's some knocking now, Miss," Ethel said and ran off. Cassandra followed. There was, indeed a man at the front door and it was the locksmith, a Mr. Cranmer. His small wagon was outside, the horse with a nosebag eating. Cassandra invited him to come down to the kitchen and showed him the key cupboard.

"Nice to see some organization, Miss Match. We often get given a box of assorted keys and asked to sort them out. Then people get cross because we have to charge for our wasted time."

"We had such a pile. I offered my maids a farthing a key for each one identified."

"Clever of you, and a perk for them. I'll have to remember that, even if it means less revenue for me, though I'd rather be paid for the work I'm skilled at."

"I also want the locks to the front doors and the kitchen doors changed in case somebody has these still."

"You might save a lot of money if I simply swapped the locks around. It looks like the front door and this one 'ere are the same type. I'll have to examine the others."

After a quick thought, Cassandra agreed. They would need some discipline at the rear, but possibly swapping some of those locks would also work. Maybe Tom could handle that.

"Yes. Proceed with that Mr. Cranmer as soon as we've settled the number of keys."

Cassandra went through the keys with Mr. Cranmer and worked out the number of copies of each needed. She decided to get extras of the front door keys – it was possible that tenants would want one for the husband and one for the wife, and losses were possible. Oh. Another item for the

tenancy agreement. She stepped away and wrote that down on her notes for the proposal.

"My apologies, Mr. Cranmer, but I am about to propose a tenancy agreement for the rental of number 23, and it just occurred to me that I should provide a contingency for the loss of keys."

"Indeed, Miss Match, here in Brighton a goodly portion of my trade is because tenants lose keys. The beachcombers find a few every week, and foolish is the person who has the address on the key fob."

"I hadn't thought of that. But it may be difficult to stop tenants from adding a fob."

"All the more reason to make the charge for a lost key rather punitive, Ma'am."

Cranmer had a bundle of cardboard labels on string and was attaching them and labelling them with the same indications as in the key cupboard and writing the number of duplicates to make: 3 for each front door, 2 for each kitchen door and garden door, 1 for each lane-way gate.

"That's a few, Ma'am. I'd be quicker to do the copies in the shop. And don't worry, I won't mix 'em up. I'll switch the labels as I fix the locks."

"That will be fine. Shall I send one of my staff to fetch them later? If you tell me how much they will cost, I will have them bring payment."

"Say six o'clock this evening to be safe. Was there anything else?"

"There are some interior doors, but I think perhaps we need to decide whether they need to be locked. Locked doors are a nuisance when unnecessary, but I am planning to divide at least one of the houses into apartments, and better locks may be needed, along, of course, with additional keys for the front door."

"I'm not far away when the time comes, Miss Match."

"Oh, do you supply such items as a strong-box. I am not wealthy, nor do I have anything of great value apart from my houses, but there are always some items that one would wish to protect from robbery, and with tenants, I would prefer to reduce opportunities."

"Yes, we have several options, including the possibility of securing the box to the fabric of the house."

"Then I may come myself to collect the keys, Mr. Cranmer, to see what is on offer."

Cranmer unfastened the kitchen lock and left, and Cassandra noticed it was now gone one o'clock. Where were Mary and Maud? As the thought came into her head, these two ladies came in.

"What a time!" Mary said, "But I think we've found a lot of things if we're prepared to do a bit of spit, polish, and mend."

"Did you actually buy anything?"

"We decided on two modest wardrobes. They wanted a pound apiece, but accepted 30 shillings the pair. I had some money with me, just in case. They'll be here in an hour, one for us and one for the girls. Oh, and Tom."

This person came it at that moment, and there were introductions. It being fine, they would have preferred to bolt the kitchen door and take chairs to the garden, but instead left the kitchen door open and had bread and sardines with tea for their lunch. Puss was introduced and allowed to lick out the sardine tin.

As they ate, Cassandra mentioned the letter from Jeffery and that she and Mary would need to spend time working out the proposal. The visits of Messrs Voyce and Cranmer were described, the location of the mouse corpses was pointed to by Tom, and Cassandra's suggestion for a bath schedule presented.

"Can't remember a bath, ever," said Tom.

"You'll like it," Maud said. "Never felt so fresh and clean in my life."

"Yeah, won't take much gettin' used to," Ethel added.

"When the Jeffery's are here, we may want a separate tub for them in 23," Mary suggested.

"And I meant to ask Tom if he thought we could make a screen with hinges so someone could bathe by the stove and still have some privacy."

"Hinges cost a bit, but it's possible, Miss. But could you use a cloth screen? Then some poles with bricks on the bottom would be enough."

"What a good idea!" Mary said.

"Can you make it 5 and a half feet high. A small gap at the bottom of a few inches would be acceptable," Cassandra said.

"I'll start finking," Tom said.

"I'll seek some suitable material," Mary added. "And Maud and Ethel can keep their eyes out too."

"I think I shall bring the housekeeping up to 4 shillings," Cassandra said, "and give Tom a shilling to keep with him in case he sees useful materials for the screen or other things needed for the houses. But Tom, I will want notes for every – and I mean every – farthing. We need to know what our costs are, and also to provide a measure so we can reward your initiative. Let us arrange that after dinner this evening."

"Not even a day gone, Miss, and I'm already enjoyin' meself, and eatin' good grub."

Mary set Maud and Ethel to vigorous cleaning of the top two floors of number 21. 23 had had one go, and now they'd need to start outfitting it as well as making any repairs that might be needed. For this summer, Cassandra did not plan to repaint or repaper number 23, though there were a few corners needing repasting and some mildew spots to whitewash over. They could do that themselves, she believed.

Tom continued working on the garden. He was digging up some of the plant beds by the wall. There was even a brick edging that appeared after the weeds were cleared. He had a pile of detritus at the back wall to the right of the gate.

"Miss, I think the gates are locked. Can they be opened?"

"Oh dear. Mr. Cranmer has just left." Indeed he had been very quick in swapping the locks. "He is duplicating the keys, so it will be easier to wait. Do you have enough to keep you busy?"

"Yes, Miss. I can do some diggin' of the plant beds. And I've these wheels to clean up. I'm going to make a 'and-cart. Should be able to do it for a couple of bob if I can find some scraps. Then I can more easily get odds and ends and start a shed over there in the corner. On the other side, where I've piled the weeds, I wanna build a box for the ashes from the fires – we can get a few pennies from that – and another for compost so we can make the garden better."

"Good. Continue to plan those projects, but speak to me or Mrs. McNair before you start construction. That way we can avoid any mistakes."

There was a minor commotion at the front of the house. The wardrobes had arrived. Mary was already directing the two deliverymen, but Cassandra went and got Tom to help, mainly holding doors and steadying corners to avoid scratches and dents.

After the wardrobes were in place, Mary gave each of the men a bottle of beer as a tip, which seemed well-received and almost instantly downed. She got Tom to take a shovel and bucket and collect the horse droppings from Cranmer and the current delivery as soon as the wagon departed. "Useful for the garden," she explained as she joined Cassandra at the window table.

"Here is my quandary," Cassandra said. "I want to charge enough that we gain sufficient revenue to ensure we can prosper, but I know too high a price will lose the rental. And I really do not like having to charge for each pinch of salt, but a flat charge may invite overconsumption and ruin us."

"I thought the long list of tariffs at Brown's was rather discouraging of taking baths or enjoying a cup of tea," Mary said. "On the other hand, I do realize that unlimited chocolate bon-bons with five children would be a quick road to bankruptcy."

"Could we present a statement of what would be included for a comprehensive charge? For example, a bath per person per week, but in the kitchen to save the labour of carrying the water up and the wastewater down again. If Tom can make a satisfactory screen, that would let us have the hot water direct from the stove and the waste can go down the drain in the kitchen floor easily."

Mary said "You might specify that the two younger girls and the two boys be bathed together. I will anticipate that the mother say the "maid"

should bathe them anyway.”

“Then we have a plan for baths. I think we can offer hot water for morning washes – two jugs should suffice. I’ve made a note we need to get some jugs. I think the tin ones are likely more robust against breakage.”

“But we need some bowls and ewers. I think they could be emptied into the WC to save carrying water down.”

Cassandra added “I’m going to investigate putting a tile flooring around the fireplaces. It would protect them in the event of water spills and against sparks from the fires.”

“What a good idea.”

“But for later. For now, it’s the cost of food that bothers me. Or rather how to pass that cost on to our tenants in a way that does not seem burdensome to them nor ruinous to us.”

“Perhaps we could work out a sample weekly menu and estimate the cost,” Mary said.

“Oh, yes. Let us do that now.”

Over the next half hour, they prepared this menu, including refreshments. The idea of one picnic a week suggested that a picnic basket be added to the list of items to be procured. They decided not to consider meals foregone by the adult Jefferys, but did detail each meal to provide a sense of quality and quantity. They included morning coffee, afternoon tea and late night snack. Beer or cider was listed with dinner. Wine or spirits were noted as "by arrangement".

It was just gone three, and Cassandra wished to see Mr. Arbuthnot before the end of his hours of operation. She carefully but quickly transcribed the Sample Weekly Menu while Mary tallied an estimated cost for the seven-member family.

“What do you get for a week?” Cassandra asked.

“I think the cost a little over a pound.”

“Then I will say 45 shillings. We need a cushion, and I don’t want you cooking separate meals for them and us. It will be more economical to just cook the same.”

“Yes, it will.”

“We need to remember we also will be serving the meals, and we’re paying Ethel, Maud and Tom, and ourselves!”

“I sometimes forget that this is my way of earning a wage,” Mary said.

“I think we should put a cost of a florin a day for each of us as a cost for accounting purposes. That’s less than £75 total per annum, but more or less in the range for domestic servants. I’m not so much thinking of paying ourselves that – I think we deserve more – but as a way to work out charges.”

“Yes, when one is one’s own employer, there is a risk of forgetting the wage.”



“I think we’ll use a couple of hundredweight of coals for cooking and heating water and maybe a fire in one room. I’ll double that as a contingency, and say 5 shillings cost approximately. 2 pounds minimum for rent, 45 shillings food, 12 shillings staff wages, and say, 5 shillings for contingencies. So allowing for labour and recovery on the house investment as well as direct costs I reckon around 90 shillings – 4 pounds 10 – a week. I wonder if 5 and a half guineas a week would be too much.”

“Have you factored in the cost of soft furnishings? There may be some losses in tears and stains.”

“No, I haven’t. Then I’ll propose 6 guineas a week, inclusive as per the Sample Menu, baths in the kitchen, linen, oh ... clothes laundry ... and service for the meals, cleaning and the aforesaid laundry. However, I won’t offer our staff for personal services nor on-call, except for bathing the children. I will expect a note each morning requesting when meals and refreshments should be served.”

“That makes a lot of sense,” Mary agreed.

Cassandra wrote a brief description of the house: Terraced house on two levels plus service area with modest garden at rear. A drawing room, dining room, master bedroom, second large bedroom that could be used by the three young ladies, with available screen for to divide this for privacy, and a small bedroom for the young gentlemen. The bedroom level with a water-closet.

She added that the rental would include all meals similar to the sample menu but with reasonable accommodation of particular needs. The bathing and hygienic arrangements were described, with laundry and linen provision and the service conditions, in particular that staff would provide pre-arranged duties, but not be on-call. She added a £3 fee per lost key. Collecting that might be difficult, of course. Then she gathered her reticule from the closet and left for Mr. Arbuthnot’s office.

\* \* \*

Cassandra had to wait for Mr. Arbuthnot to return until just after four o’clock, as he had been showing a property in Hove to a prospective buyer.

“Ah, Miss Match. Have you had communication from Mr. Jeffery?”

“Indeed I have, and Mrs. McNair and I have prepared a proposal.”

“Excellent. How much rent do you propose to ask?”

“We are thinking 6 guineas a week.” Mr. Arbuthnot’s eyebrows rose. “That is inclusive of all meals as per this Sample Menu, which gives the general amounts and quality. We propose to include hot water each morning for washing and shaving, a bath each week, though in the kitchen by the stove – we are preparing appropriate screening – so that the water need

not be carried up two flights of stairs, nor the spent water carried down for disposal, and we suggest the smaller children be bathed in pairs. Further we will clean and handle the linens, but do not propose that a maid or other staff be on-call. Refreshments can be provided at times that are requested by a note in advance from the Jefferys."

"Most interesting, Miss Match. Most establishments have a detailed array of charges, but that then imposes a lot of administrative overhead."

"It also means payment in arrears and possible bad debts, as well as disputes over whether services were delivered as expected. I aim to ensure there is no complaint. Of course, there are always clients who can never be satisfied."

"As in the two dinner guests who complained the food was terrible – and also that there wasn't enough of it."

Miss Match laughed. It was an appropriate joke for anyone who dealt with such clients.

Arbuthnot said "I will propose 6 guineas per week to Mr Jeffery, and ask him for 4 weeks deposit to secure the tenancy. May I use this copy of the Sample Menu?"

"Yes, I made it up for you, though I am anticipating it will need to be recopied for your records." As Cassandra said this, Arbuthnot rang a small bell and his clerk came in. "Armstrong, can you get this Sample Menu and the tenancy conditions below transcribed as quickly as possible and in a fair hand, please. Then put it together with our regular proposal letter for Mr. Jeffery whose file is here. If possible I would like to review and sign it to go out on tonight's post."

"I appreciate your prompt attention to this, Mr. Arbuthnot."

"Business never waits for the indecisive, Miss Match. Actually, I think we should propose 6 and a half guineas. Your proposed services are quite comprehensive and the menu is one that is whetting my appetite at this moment." He rang for Armstrong to adjust the proposed price.

\* \* \*

Cassandra walked slowly back to Fortescue Road. She felt drained from the day's bustle of activity, but somehow elated at the progress that had been made. Still, weighing on her mind was the fact that they still needed to obtain so much to furnish and equip number 23, as well as start working on number 21. Oh. She needed to get to the locksmith. Well, there was still plenty of time, as she heard a clock strike 5.

She decided to go to the locksmith now and take a chance the keys were ready, as well as to see what sort of strong-boxes Mr. Cranmer could offer.

She was used to keeping money on her person, but it would be good to put some in a separate place.

Cranmer had, in fact, completed the duplication of the keys.

"I'll ask that you verify that they all work satisfactorily. Sometimes the original is a bit close to the mark, and the copy not quite exact, so give them all a good try, and let me know if any don't work properly."

"Thank you. Now, can you show me what you might have in a strong-box?"

"This one is quite small, but easily secured," Cranmer said, putting a box about 15 inches by 10 by 6 on the counter. He opened it to reveal that the walls were about 1/2 inch thick and the lid had pins that engaged the box.

"The hinges are inside, so they can't easily be cut. And these holes in the bottom can be used to fasten it to the house. If you put some screws in at an angle, either a V or spread, then it's hard to pry up the box. It has one of the Burmah locks that there's a £200 prize at the Great Exhibition if anyone can pick it. So far nobody has."

"How much is it?"

"30 shillings." That was a lot. Still.

"I'll take it. How many keys does it have?"

"Just two. Don't lose them. I don't have tools to copy them properly."

With the keys that had been duplicated, Cassandra was lighter by £2 and heavier by one quite weighty box. Cranmer had included two screws, each 6 inches long with square heads that would need a spanner to put in. They would also have to decide where to place it that would be unobtrusive but easily accessed when needed.

When she got to Fortescue Road, she stepped carefully down the area steps of number 23 and put the strongbox in the coal shed there. This coal shed – really just an enclosure of the space under the bridge to the front door – was not locked, of course, but she would see where everyone was and move it into the wine closet as soon as she could.

Mary was at the stove, putting on some potatoes. Cassandra said "Mary, I need to bring in something that I would prefer the Soultons not see. Can you collect Tom and go with him to number 23 and all of you review the list of any needed repairs and decoration, particularly for a few minutes in the back rooms while I get the item from the number 23 coal shed? I'll explain later."

Mary dropped the rest of the potatoes into the pot and went out the back to get Tom. They came back through and went up through the front door of number 23. Cassandra carefully followed and listened to hear that they were in the back of the house, then quickly retrieved the strong-box and hurried it into the wine closet with her reticule. She pushed it out of an

obvious sight line, wondering if there were a good place to fasten it. The floor of the closet was tile. Would the shelf be secure enough? It would certainly be easier. Perhaps it would do in the short term.

\* \* \*

Mary and Maud had brought home some haddock, actually from Mr. Ormsby's shop, and after the repairs inspection were about to fry the fish to accompany some potatoes and carrots already cooking. Despite the crowding, they decided to use the window table with the Soultions along the long side facing the window and Cassandra and Mary at either end.

"Would anyone like beer or cider?" Mary asked.

"A cider please," Cassandra said.

The Soultions were quiet, then Maud said "At the Workhouse there was ale for the men and a half-measure for the women sometime, but we never got the chance on account of being too young, though I guess I might have been old enough."

"If you'd like some, just say. Otherwise there's tea or there's the jug of boiled water," Mary said. "Oh, I meant to ask if one of you will take charge of the boiled water. As you know, I prefer we drink only boiled water."

"Might as well be me, Mrs. McNair," Ethel said. "I'm doin' the fire and gettin' the milk, so it sort of fits."

"That does make sense," Cassandra said. "Now, for tonight, perhaps Ethel and Maud would like to share a bottle of cider?" The girls nodded and Maud got up and poured. Tom asked for some water.

Cassandra then said "Now tonight after half-past seven we will let Tom take his bath and put on either his clean clothes or nightgown. Ethel can wash the other clothes in the morning. Either Maud or Ethel can come down to check Tom for nits under the gas light here. Mary – Mrs. McNair – and I will take a walk and not come back until after half-past eight. Between now and half-past seven, I'd like to plan the rest of the week and have Maud and/or Tom check the new keys all work and put them away."

"Have you thought about where we will arrange to sleep when we fill up with tenants?" Mary asked.

"That has been going through my head a bit lately. It seems that this room is going to be the heart of our little empire, but that you and I need some level of privacy from time to time. Tom, do you think the cubby hole over there and the corner behind me could be partitioned off so Mrs. McNair and I each have a small room. The partitions would not need to go all the way to the ceiling, and we could have some glass or even just curtains that could be pulled back to give some more light."

"There's plenty of room, Miss. How soon is it needed?"

"Not immediately, and we need to provide that the cistern door can be opened easily without moving the bed. There's quite a lot of space there to store things, at least rough goods.

A more pressing issue is where you will sleep. Do you think there is enough room in the pantry at this end. The main problem is lack of light. Eventually, I think we'll put Ethel and Maud in the kitchen of 23, with Tom in the pantry there. But only if there's enough room."

"Let me look at this one." Tom hopped up.

Mary protested, "We've not had pudding yet. There's an apple cobbler."

Tom hesitated, then went to look in the pantry quickly, then returned.

"There's room. I'll have to tap, but I think a small window could be put high on the wall that would let some light through. I can make a small platform for a palliasse. Could even make it swing up against the wall when I'm not there. Maybe find an old seaman's chest for my clothes and stuff."

"Better eat your cobbler and custard," Maud said.

Tom's serving seemed to instantly disappear. "My 'eavens, that's good!" Mary gave him some more without asking him. The girls laughed.

"Tomorrow, Tom, I'll have you clear the other garden. Then I'll get you to work with Maud and Mrs. McNair and me to find and install furnishings for the houses, but particularly number 23. Let's hope we can remember everything.

If, as I hope, we have the Jeffery family next month, we have very little time to bring everything up to standard. And we will need screens for bathing here, in number 23, and likely for the bedroom of the three young ladies. That is, for the larger of the rear bedrooms."

"There's a lot to find," Mary said. "I realized this evening that we're drinking out of old cups and mugs and have almost no glassware."

"We'll be busy looking in the second hand shops and pawn shops. We might even want to take the train to Lewes if we don't find everything here. And as a last resort, we can buy new. Actually, we'd better make sure we have a good idea of prices of new things."

"Maud and I have been making lists. I think we've lists coming out our ears."

Maud and Ethel laughed.

"It occurs to me that Ethel's writing could be practised by copying and consolidating those lists. Perhaps by organizing them by the alphabet. For example, Glass, drinking - and a price. And put all the G's on one sheet of notepaper."

"That's a good idea," Maud said. "And she'll likely have to ask us what the notes are about, which will force us to remember the items and prices when we go 'unting for stuff."

"Is that agreeable to you, Ethel."

"I just worry I might mess it up."

"It isn't a Royal proclamation, so we're not going to get upset by some mistakes," Mary observed.

Cassandra decided "Then I think tomorrow morning after breakfast, which we'll have at half-past seven, we'll spend an hour or so with notes on prices, after which the hunt will begin. Ethel, I plan to leave you in charge here at the houses, with Tom of course in the yards, except when we need him for fetch and carry. But it seems you do very well keeping the kitchen and scullery operating smoothly."

"I like it 'ere, Miss. I can just remember me Mam by the stove we 'ad, and it feels a bit like that."

"You're right there, Ethel," Maud said.

\* \* \*

"I'm glad the keys all worked," Mary said. They were sitting in the pub where they had eaten the other day. Both had a glass of port to celebrate the progress so far.

"I'm glad too," Cassandra responded. "And I hope the switching round of the locks is sufficient. If the properties were indeed a brothel, there may be outstanding keys."

"Is that why you brought home the strong-box?"

Cassandra had told her that was the item she had wished to keep confidential.

"Yes. Well, also because I'm getting a bit weary of always having to keep this corset on. It's in need of a good wash. In fact, I could do with a new one."

"For me too, though I still want to keep half my money on me. Never want it all at risk."

"I thought to put half in the strong-box too. You know it can be fastened to the house. I'll start looking where to put it. I think in the wine closet, but we don't want to have to struggle to get at it, nor have it very obvious."

"Do you trust allowing Tom to know where it is, assuming he installs it?" Mary asked.

"Partly I said nothing tonight so you and I could discuss that. I suppose we could learn how to do the installation ourselves."

"That may be wise. Tom is young and while he may be honest, he may blurt out something that gets heard by others."

"Mr. Cranmer told me how to do the installation in general terms. But I think we need to drill holes in the floor to hold the box. Or even if we

attach it to a shelf that is well-secured. But we could ask Tom how that is done by means of seeming curious. Or Mr. Voyce. Oh, did I tell you he will come at half-past seven too.”

“I don’t think you did, but I somehow knew, so one of the Soultons may have said something. Likely Tom. He’s an enterprising devil, but I like him.”

“Yes. The three of them are all sharp. I wonder if the story of the houses being a brothel is right. It doesn’t seem to fit the neighbourhood. And Rita’s story of the women in number 27. I can see that working girls at the top end of the trade might live on Fortescue Road, but it doesn’t seem a place they’d ply their trade. The middle class wives would notice the men coming and going.”

“In our own properties, what do you think might happen if a man keeps a girl in one of our apartments?”

“I think we should act very respectable and see our tenants as a husband and wife, no matter our suspicions. That is, we will rent to Mr. and Mrs. Smith, and Mr. Smith works out of town most of the time and Mrs. Smith cannot abide the stink in London.”

“Yes, that was the least pleasant aspect of our visit there.”

“There are starting to be discussions of better drains for the city. In any event, the stink is a good reason for people to be here and not there, so good for our business.”

\* \* \*

There were two pleasant surprises for Cassandra and Mary on Tuesday morning. First, when Voyce started to cut the fence, it tended to move with the saw, making progress uneven and untidy. After just a few strokes, Tom, who was in the yard of number 23, spoke up.

“Mr. Voyce, could we use the posts you brought to hold the fence fast while you cut?”

Voyce looked a bit annoyed, as if Tom were simple, but Tom said simply “Put a post next to where you want the cut and put a couple of nails through the fence into it – not all the way then you can pull ’em out easier – then put the other post diagonally here and nail it to the upright post, and I’ll take this bit of stake from the garden and secure the bottom of the post to the ground.”

With brilliant simplicity, the sawing was much faster and straighter. The second cut was even smoother. Voyce dug pits for the posts – he had a special shovel that helped. Tom kept clearing the garden, but Voyce asked him to help when it came time to put the posts in the ground. Cassandra smelt something rather sharp and went to the scullery and noted Voyce painting

the bottom of the posts with something – it turned out to be coal tar – then she heard Voyce ask for a bucket of water. Apparently he made up some sort of concrete to anchor the posts. Tom was called in to help ensure the posts were straight, and he installed some small temporary braces on each that would stay for a day or so while the cement cured. Voyce then left. He said he would return Wednesday morning with the gate and install it.

The other surprise was when Ethel started to transcribe the notes in ink. She may have trouble reading other people's handwriting, and she herself printed rather than wrote in cursive, but her product was remarkably clear and fine, even though she was quite slow in doing so.

After they'd reached a reasonable stopping point with the notes and discarded those now transcribed to the kindling pile, Mary cut some strips of paper about 2 inches wide. She folded one so there was an inch doubled, then folded that doubling in half again.

"Here, Ethel, can you write "Sweet" nicely centred just here. This was on the top of the doubled strip with the 1 inch overlap behind and a fold mark half an inch down."

Mary then took the strip and made several 1/2 inch folds in zig-zag fashion. She found the paper paste and a small nail and glued the nail between the overlap and the back of the strip, then glued the zig-zags together and to the bottom of the portion with the nail. Folding it, she put it on the table, where it stood nicely, indicating "Sweet", the weight of the folds and the nail keeping it nicely upright.

"Shall we make one with "Savoury"?"

Ethel was smiling. Cassandra was intrigued, but not sure what these were for.

Mary explained "I'm going to try out some small biscuits on Mrs. Crompton on Friday. Some will be sweet, and the others will be cheese and rosemary. Now we just need two nice plates to serve them on."

"I'll look through some of what's still in the box," Ethel said.

\* \* \*

With a list of prices for new items, Maud, Mary and Cassandra sallied forth to the shops, notepaper and pencils at hand. Maud would go to knick-knack shops, Cassandra to shops selling both new and second-hand furnishings, and Mary to the pawn shops. They split up and agreed to meet by a particular horse trough when the clock struck eleven. Maud, worried about being late, was there first and was enjoying watching the people shopping and going about their business when Cassandra joined her. Mary was just behind.



The trough was not a good place to stand and talk, so Cassandra suggested they move to a nearby tearoom where she ordered a pot of tea.

"I found some quite nice wine goblets," she said. "But in one of the other places where I was looking, all the cutlery was of mixed patterns, and some was very bent and tarnished.

However, one of the shops had some plates and bowls that are not exactly the same pattern, but I think they would be usable. And there were some table cloths, blankets and sheets, with the prices about half of new."

Maud said, "I found some glass tumblers that would be good for children to drink milk from, and some mugs and some pewter tankards and goblets. They're really dirty, but some work will get them clean I think. And there were some boxes of cutlery, and I'll swear bits in each box that match. A lot of it tarnished and some pitted, but it might clean up. But I was also in some of the shops where stuff goes before it gets to the dust yard, and nothing was any good there."

"I was in pawn shops," Mary said. "So the stuff was more or less decent, as it had been pledged but not redeemed."

"I was in two dealers who had both new and second-hand," Cassandra said. "The prices were like those we noted earlier for the most part. But perhaps we can bargain a little since we need quite a few items."

"I'd rather do the work, Miss, and find the gold among the dross, but I think the .... my recent experience has made me tight with the pennies."

"That's supposed to be me, as a Scot," said Mary.

"I once heard a sailor say that wire was invented when a Scot and a Dutchman spied a penny at the same time," Cassandra said.

Maud guffawed and tried to suppress it, while Mary chuckled.

"Now, shall we work in reverse order of quality, and see Maud's finds first, then Mary's and finally mine?"

They finished their tea and went to the knick-knack shop. Indeed there were three old flower pots of cutlery marked at half a crown each. There was certainly some overlap in the patterns, and the pots were full. Mary said, "There's about four dozen pieces per pot."

"We'll take all three," said Cassandra, and they carried them to the counter.

"All three," said the wizened man behind the counter.

"Yes," said Cassandra, but we have some other needs as well. They followed Maud to the pewter goblets and tankards. The latter were for beer and far too large for table service, though a man might find them desirable for an evening quaff. The goblets, though filthy, were of a good size. Maud was right. They were on a wooden tray, equally filthy. Cassandra put two tankards on it, which exhausted the space, and told Maud to take it to the counter. Then they looked at the glassware. There were a dozen small sherry

glasses, but two were chipped, and all deep in dust, packed in a small basket of straw. Cassandra handed it to Mary and nodded to the counter.

Cassandra looked about and walked to the counter. Was there anything else. She spied a bunch of frames leaning against an old cabinet. They were much scratched, but when she pulled one back, it had a pleasant if innocuous still life of wildflowers. There were some modest landscapes and two sea scenes.

Cassandra went to the counter. The old man had written "Cutlery 7/6", "tankards 2/-", "pewter goblets 5/-" "Glasses 2/6". The total by his reckoning was 17/-.

"What do you want for the paintings?" There were 8 of them.

"3 shillings each."

"The frames are in poor condition." It was a statement of fact, not an opinion.

"But there might be a great master there."

"And my friend here might be Queen Victoria escaping from the Royal Pavilion."

The old man chuckled, "Well, I might make a bit of an allowance ..."

"What about a sovereign and a half for the paintings and this lot on the counter?" Cassandra said, placing those coins on the counter, but close to her.

"Oh, I don't think ...." But Cassandra swiped her hand across the counter and picked them up and turned away.

"All right, but you'll make me a pauper."

"Add 8 paintings to that list as a receipt, and I will send back Maud here with our footman to get the paintings in about an hour."

"Very well Madam. Who should I write the receipt to?"

"Miss C. Match, 21 Fortescue Road. Come ladies, we have more purchases to attend to."

\* \* \*

The baskets strained under the load of the flower pots and pewter. Cassandra held the glassware herself in its box.

"Let us walk past the pawn shop where Mary saw the dishes, linen and so forth. But Maud will stay outside with these items."

Inside the pawn shop, Mary showed Cassandra the sets of plates and bowls. They were of the Willow style, and not quite the same pattern, but close enough as Mary had suggested. There were some good sets of table cloths, a half dozen blankets and a dozen sheets, 4 of which were double sized. The total of all was £5 7s 8d. Cassandra approached the proprietor.

“Sir, I am in need of a number of items to equip several apartments. May I point out what I wish to purchase?”

The proprietor took a keen interest as Cassandra pointed and said “This, and this, and these, and these, and that, and ...”

The man scribbled on a slate, then took a long time doing arithmetic. Finally he said “£5 5s 6d.”.

“In that we wish to purchase so much, would this £5 note suffice? I will add that we are just beginning to furnish the apartments I have recently acquired.”

“I think I can manage that. My partner who usually handles the shop is unwell, and trade has not been brisk, so he will welcome the news of your purchase.”

Cassandra had wondered at a pawnbroker whose arithmetic was so slow. Or had she made a mistake. They had written down the prices so she could check later and had no compunction to risk losing the bargain now. “Can you give me a receipt please? It need not be itemized, just ‘From Miss C. Match, 21 Fortescue Road, £5 for crockery and linens.’ Then if you have a sack, we will put them in it and I or my housekeeper Mrs. McNair here will return shortly with help to carry them.”

Outside they rescued Maud from the attentions of some ragged boys who were threatening to steal some of the cutlery – the glassware she had under her skirts. Quickly they made their way back to the houses.

“I think we should go back immediately and collect the rest of the items,” Cassandra said.

“We can empty our travelling bags and use them to carry some dishes and some linens in each,” Mary said. Cassandra immediately got out her bags from below her bed where she had put them, calling out “Ethel, Can you and Tom make sure the gates and doors are all locked. And a rough sheet would be useful for bringing the pictures, as well as some rope if we have it.”

They went back to the shops, and Cassandra sent Maud and Tom to get the pictures. With proper straps, this would be easy enough for Maud alone, but Cassandra did not want to chance an accident. However, by using the old sheet and a piece of rope, Tom quickly got the pictures fastened together inside the sheet, and made a loop of the end of the rope so she could carry them with only minor awkwardness.

At the pawnbroker, Cassandra, Mary and Ethel packed the dishes in the carpet bag valises with tablecloths and blankets. There still remained the sheets, which Tom was assigned to carry, his arms wrapped around them. They all struggled back to the houses.

“Tom, you may accelerate your attempt to build a hand-cart,” Cassandra said.

"I'll start right away, Miss," Tom said and disappeared before Cassandra could stop him.

\* \* \*

Maud checked Cassandra's arithmetic from the pawn shop while Mary counted the sheets and blankets with Ethel.

"£5 7s 8d. is the total," Maud said.

"And everything we bought is here," Mary added.

Cassandra had been unpacking as Mary checked the linens and blankets.

"These are nice plates," Maud said.

"I don't think the numbers are quite even," Mary said, so they counted. There were 14 dinner plates, 16 bread and butter plates, 13 shallow bowls, 12 saucers and 13 cups.

"I'll start washing them," said Maud, carrying one pile to the scullery. "Ethel, get some 'ot water and some salt and wipe down some space in those deeper cupboards."

Mary had opened up each cloth or blanket or sheet to check it for stains or tears. There were a few marks, but no serious issues.

"Do we want to wash these?" she asked Cassandra.

"Better yes. We should start with everything clean. I think we need to decide where to put things," Cassandra answered.

"Perhaps that is why the pantry was so large. We can use the one in number 23 if we set up some shelves, allowing space for Tom to sleep, of course."

"We're in a chicken and egg situation. That's why Tom's idea of a hand-cart makes sense. For now, take one of those large sheets and we'll use it to bundle the rest in and we'll help Ethel to work through them. I also want to get Tom to string some lines in here and in 23 for when it is rainy. If we have tenants who expect laundry, we can't wait on the sunshine, and while we have able hands, I'd rather not send stuff out. Later, perhaps, when we need Maud and Ethel to deal with tenants, we can send things to Mr. Richards."

"It may mean being nice to the man. I think I've done that too much in my life," Mary said, then realized there might be too many ears.

They pushed the bundle of linen and blankets under the table and started to take the cutlery out of the flower-pots, which they had placed on the floor.

"Let's put some newspaper down on the table to keep the dirt off," Mary suggested. There were still some sheets from what Mrs. Crompton gave them.

"We should get a newspaper each day. Be good to see what's going on. And then we'd have paper for the fire or whatever," Cassandra said.

"I'd like that," Mary said. "Used to enjoy a newspaper or magazine. We've been too busy to sit and read. I did think of buying one today, then we got busy with looking for things."

"Yes. Do us good to have a paper, and may help the Soultions with their reading. Oh, look at this in the weekly Brighton Gazette. There's an announcement of an auction to settle an estate. And another by the trustees in bankruptcy. Pity they were last week, but we should watch for such sales."

"We'll want to have a good idea of prices, though," Mary commented. "I fear the list we prepared this morning is nowhere near detailed enough."

"That is very true, Mary. I did well in ... our previous situation because I knew very well the products in which I traded. Here I am a novice. A fish out of water."

"Then we must both learn, and learn quickly. Though I fancy our staff is quite astute about some of the things we need. I am most impressed with Maud."

By now there was a layer of newspaper on the large table, and they started separating the knives, forks and spoons into separate groupings.

"I'll take the knives, you take the forks," Cassandra said.

This they did. They found two main sets of knives and forks, plus quite a number of oddments. Then they started to segregate the spoons, first by size, then by pattern.

"There's a dozen knives in this pattern," Cassandra said. "Do those forks match?"

"Yes. And I've 11. What about these forks, I've 13."

"11 knives. Is it worth chasing a match on the rest, Mary?"

"No, let's see if any spoons are similar enough."

There were 10 soup spoons, 12 dessert spoons and 9 teaspoons of one pattern, but only 8 soup, 10 dessert and 6 teaspoons of the other one.

Mary said "We've got lots of odd ones – let's see, 23 knives, 24 forks, 4 fish knives, 7 assorted cake forks, 14 large spoons, 9 medium ones, 13 teaspoons and 7 very small spoons."

"Well, we'll not lack here – those will be for our own use, or perhaps we could make up some small sets later for individual apartments.. They're perfectly functional, though it looks like there's no more than three of any pattern in any size or type. Now what should we do with them?"

"Put each more or less full set in its own flower-pot and we'll get them washed and put away next door. Probably we should only bother to put out one set for now, and keep the other for when we furnish another apartment." Mary was thinking ahead. They would need to find appropriate storage places. And clean them. Drawers could be lined with paper, or cloth. But some of the drawers and cupboards still needed some handles tightened or other minor repairs. Tom would be kept busy.

They put all the oddments in the last flower-pot – the pots themselves would be useful in the garden later – and carried them to the scullery and put them under the sink, Maud stepping aside for a moment. Puss had to shift a bit to make room for them. The cat looked annoyed by this usurpation of her domain. Too bad Puss. Maud laughed “Look at ’er face. Right indignant she is.”

Ethel was cleaning all the empty spaces in the set of cupboards. There was a similar arrangement next door, so there would be space for crockery and cutlery.

Where were the glasses and tumblers. Oh, yes. On the window table. Mary seemed to have stayed in the scullery and was helping Maud with washing the crockery and cutlery. Actually drying it.

Cassandra considered the pewter-ware. The tankards would be used for offering ale or beer. The tumblers and goblets – there were about 8 of each, and some were a bit dented and scratched, and all were pretty grimy – could be used for dinner drinks. They might be useful for the children, being less fragile than glass.

She looked at the sherry glasses. They had a cut-glass pattern, but a very simple one. Were they pressed glass? If so, quite nice. There were two glasses with small chips in the rim, but none with cracks that she could see. She wondered if the chips could be gently annealed out with a blowpipe. The whole glass would need to be gently heated to almost melting before trying that, but it might be nice to get the whole dozen.

She wondered how they could arrange a way to know more quickly what they needed and in what quantity. They were getting things done, but it was difficult to see how much progress they were making. Even more, how much was being spent. Cassandra knew she was doing well from the point of view of value for money, but she was now starting to feel that if the Jeffery family did not come, she might be in considerable trouble. They needed number 21 rented as well. They had only had the houses 5 days, of course. She mustn’t panic, but there was certainly a sense thereof.

Ethel had wiped the large table and was ferrying items from the scullery to it, putting some of the items they would use in the cupboards. They had plenty of cutlery now.

“Ethel. If you want a bit of change of task, see if any of the cutlery we already had matches what we bought today.”

“Yes, Miss. A change is as good as a rest.”

Cassandra took out the record book and found the receipts from today and recorded them. The outflow in two days was quite large. Then she looked at the To-Do and To-Get notes and started adjusting them, mainly adjusting numbers rather than scratching things out. She added a few items, including "hand-cart", but was able to remove keys, at least for the moment.

However, To-Do got "Plan division into apartments".

\* \* \*

Tom came down the area stairs carrying a heavy box – a tool box. On its side was painted "R Souton" and an address, though the box was soiled and dark, so this was hard to read.

"I went to see Joe Dixon, me Dad's joiner friend, and 'e had me Dad's tools. Seems Dad knew 'e was not so well, and asked Joe to keep them for me. Didn't know what to do when I was in the Work'ouse, but figured I'd come round to see 'im when I got out. Bloody marvelous it is. Oh. Sorry Miss. Me mouf' gets away on me when I get excited."

"So you are now better equipped with tools?"

"Some of the bigger ones Dad 'ad pledged to buy food, I s'pose. But I can do a lot with these, and in time use my wages to get others. Man always 'as 'is own tools, me Dad said."

"I had heard that. However, I'll gladly pay for tools as needed."

"Then I'll take me wage in tools, Miss, and make sure we get proper good ones."

"Very well. Now did you get materials for a hand cart?"

"Some – got to go back tonight to Joe's. P'raps Ethel could come with me to help carry. There was a couple of wagons smashed yesterday down the town. They 'ad to put one of the 'orses down, and the driver of one of the wagons broke 'is leg and the other was drunk so the constables arrested 'im. But Joe got to clear the smashed wagons and some of the broken wood is back of 'is workshop and he said I could 'ave some of it as a memory of me Dad. And 'e said that Mr. Howard the blacksmith would probably do an axle for me for less than a shilling. That's the difficult bit otherwise. Can't get the wheels to stay straight if the axle isn't solid."

"Maud, why don't you make Tom a tape for the back gate keys and we'll give him one of each. That way he can move materials in and out. But Tom, do keep those gates locked except when we all know they are NOT locked, such as tomorrow morning when Mr. Voyce will be here at half-past seven."

"Yes Miss. If Tom has stuff in the yard, the gates'll be locked up when 'e's not there, you can be sure."

Cassandra was looking through the paintings and prints she'd bought. They needed a good clean-up, first with a dry cloth, then gingerly with a wet one, possibly even with some spirits to unglue the muck. She put the pictures beside the wardrobe and when Ethel was in the kitchen, told her what to do with the paintings if she had time, but to be very careful not to use too much wetness. Also she mentioned that they might like Tom to look

at the frames that were in poor condition to consider what might be done, if anything, to improve them.

\* \* \*

Cassandra noticed it was getting light from the glow behind the curtain. She squinted and made out the clock. Only one hand! Oh, it was half-past six. She heard quiet footsteps. Not burglars already? Then she heard a bolt move and a door open above and at the rear of the house and heard footsteps descend to the garden. Ah. Tom going out the French window. She heard quiet scraping. He was working some more on the wheels for the hand cart.

Last night he and Ethel, joined by Maud who Cassandra could see was desperate to go with them – she knew Joe Dixon and his family – had carried back a prodigious amount of oddments. It looked like most of a wagon could be built of the pieces they struggled home with.

Mary and Cassandra had used the time to consider where to affix the strong-box. they had eventually decided to put it at the front of the wide shelf in the wine closet, tight against the wall. However, they did not do the installation, as the screws provided were too long and would protrude below the shelf.

“I will see if the ironmonger has shorter ones. And I think we need to drill a pilot hole. I will ask Tom how he will fasten the pieces of the hand cart and see if I can learn that way.”

\* \* \*

As seven o'clock sounded from a nearby tower, Cassandra and Mary got out of bed and started their day. Ethel had stolen into the kitchen a few minutes earlier.

After visiting the water-closet, Cassandra washed her hands and used a cloth to wash her face at the sink. She was still in her night gown, and Tom was at the bottom of the garden. This scullery window would need a curtain of some sort. Possibly some muslin would let in light but provide for privacy. And a heavy curtain at the end of the scullery would shield the occupant from the passage to the back door. She mentioned this to Mary and Ethel as she returned to the kitchen.

“Would you like me to go out while you dress, Miss?” Ethel asked.

“It may be better for you to keep watch that neither Tom nor Mr. Voyce invade our domain before we are dressed, Ethel. And we'll try to advance the construction of partitions and the installation of curtains.”



Indeed, soon after breakfast, Maud was sent on several commissions. First, to order subscriptions and delivery of *The Times* as well as the *Brighton Gazette* and the *Brighton Herald*, but to bring copies back now if she could. Also to go to a drapers and purchase four yards of muslin. Doubled this would serve in the scullery. For now they would simply use clothes pins to hang it from a length of rope or twine stretched across the window. Cassandra or Mary would ask Tom for ideas for a proper installation later. Mary would look through the odd curtains to see if anything would suit for the passageway curtain. They gave Maud 6 shillings, but told her to try to get an account set up for the newspapers, and Cassandra wrote suitable instructions so Maud's word would be less likely to be discredited.

"If these curtains work well, I think we could do the same in number 23, though for effect, we will want them properly adjusted and installed for appearance," Mary said, and Cassandra agreed.

\* \* \*

Voyce finished up around 11 o'clock. Tom had actually done almost all the garden clearing by 10, and it was plain he was watching Voyce carefully, almost in a proprietary way. So, indeed, was Puss, who had shown good manners and meowed to go out last night, then scratched to come in just before they all were abed. And no unpleasant messages left in the house from her.

Cassandra had been working on moving some items into the cabinets of the kitchen in number 23, but by dint of climbing and descending the area steps. Before Voyce left, he asked her to inspect the gate. Cassandra tried the gate and it seemed to work acceptably, to latch and unlatch from both sides properly, and to hook back with no likelihood of swinging shut in a gust of wind. She tried the posts to see they were secure, and glanced at Tom, who gave an almost imperceptible nod of the head.

"Very good, Mr. Voyce. Have you your bill?"

"I can write you one if you've a piece of paper, Miss Match."

Cassandra had him do this in the kitchen, then paid him and had him so mark and sign on the bill.

"Nice not to have to wait for payment, Miss Match. Be happy to work for you again."

"Thank you, Mr. Voyce. A very good day to you."

After he had left, Cassandra carried one more set of things to number 23, then locked its kitchen and exited at the rear. She called to Tom – he was in the rear of 21 doing something with the materials gathered last night – and asked if he were satisfied.

"Mr. Voyce does the rough work fine, and his materials were good, but 'e's no joiner."

"So now we need a lock. Do you have an idea where to get one?"

"Asked Joe Dixon last night. There's some in a scrap handler about a mile and a half away. Joe thought a bob might get one. Two bob for sure."

"What about poles for the screens? I think Mary, I mean Mrs. McNair, has some old tablecloths that might do. She has ideas to sew on some decorative patches."

Maud had succeeded with getting muslin, and the booksellers who dealt in newspapers wanted only a half a crown on account, and had copies of all the desired publications. Maud and Mary were installing the muslin. They had asked Tom to put in nails to hold the twine, but he had somehow found some screws that he said would do a better job in the long run. Moreover, he had used a brace and bit and drilled a pilot hole. Ah, thought Cassandra, that was how things are done. She overheard Tom say, "An' if you want to hold something flat to somefink else, you better put a washer on to spread the force."

Hmm. Yet more useful information. She would ask about washers and possibly drills when next near the ironmonger.

Tom was saying something about poles. "... an' I think there's a timber merchant near the scrap man. I think some 2 inch square wood – birch would be nice, but deal will do."

"If I give you 5 shillings, will that be enough for the lock and the wood."

"Prob'ly only need 'alf that, but I'll bring the change."

"And a receipt if you can, please, though we can make a note if the bargain merits no receipt."

And Tom was away like a mouse that had just seen Puss staring at him.

\* \* \*

Wednesday still. Cassandra wondered what she should do. They'd not had a proper break. Voyce didn't even stop for tea either, seeming to want to finish and shift to another job up the road.

To use up a few minutes, she tidied up the record book and made notes of the monies Maud and Tom had used or were using. There were certain to be things forgotten, but she would try to minimize the extent of those.

Mary and Maud had managed to get the muslin draped with only 1 cut. In fact two pieces each of two yards, each folded over the cord between the two screws Tom had put in. He had also put two screws high on the wall of the passage way, one each side of the scullery opening, and they had found some old curtains that still had rings and threaded a rope through these.

Possibly a thinner rope would be better, but twine was too thin. Doubled perhaps? For now the clothesline rope would do.

A problem was that the curtain was three feet short of the floor. They remedied this gap with a second curtain. Maud was about to cut it and do a fine seam between the two, but Mary said “Get a heavy thread and a strong needle and we’ll overlap the curtains to get the length and pin them, then tack them at both ends of the overlap. If we repurpose these curtains, we just cut the tacking thread and unpick it.”

“That’s brilliant, Mrs. McNair.”

They were finishing this operation as Cassandra put away her record book and poured water from the kettle into the big brown teapot. While it steeped, she looked at the curtains in the scullery.

“Eventually we’ll find a way to open the muslin better, but for now a clothes-pin or two will have to suffice,” Mary said.

“Botheration,” Cassandra said. “I wanted some cheesecloth too, so we could cover the pantry vents to stop flies.”

“I’ll get some next time I’m out, Miss,” said Maud. “An’ I’ll ask Tom how we might fasten it over the grille.”

“Thank you Maud.”

Where was Ethel. “Maud, can you find Ethel?”

Maud went off upstairs, calling for Ethel. She came down again after a few minutes.

“What is it Maud?” Cassandra asked.

“Oh. She’s all upset. Seems ’er monthlies just started, and I guess nobody warned ’er properly. I should ’ave, really. I just assumed she knew.”

Mary said “I’ll show you where there are rags. We all need them, and it’s nothing uncommon. Get her down in the scullery with a jug of warm water to clean up and tell her to wash her things in cold water so it won’t stain.”

This small drama over, they had tea and bread and jam, which would serve for mid-day eating. Ethel was a bit reserved, but ate a wedge of bread and jam and two mugs of tea.

“Ethel, can you use the rest of the bacon – cut off the rind – and make some bubble and squeak with the cabbage and potatoes, and throw in a bit of carrot and onion, though it isn’t traditional,” Mary said. “We’ll aim for six o’ clock.”

“Will you be about, Mrs. McNair.”

“No, I think we need to find possible furniture and furnishings for number 23. There’s a list here of curtains we need, and I’ve copied that twice. Cassandra, you take the master copy to save one transcription. Maud and I will have the other. And similarly for beds, chairs, tables, washstands, and so on. Each of us will note where and for how much we have found items

today and meet back here at half-past three, which may give enough time for a further sally to actually go and buy some of them.”

Cassandra was actually pleased Mary was taking charge of this. They each got ready and were off to shop before Tom returned. Ethel said she would make sure he got something to eat, and she had some table-cloths Mary thought would work for screen material on the big table. Cassandra had also said she might try to read some of the newspapers if she liked. Ethel had decided she would try to make a rice pudding, which she remembered her mother making.

\* \* \*

Maud and Mary were going to see what could be found in the second-hand and pawn shops, and each carried a basket for immediate purchase. Cassandra gave Maud 5 shillings for such eventualities. However, the main goal was to find furniture. Cassandra would look in shops dealing in new goods.

The job was tedious. There were plenty of offerings at high prices. There were also far too many that would not suit. Cassandra felt her task was likely easier than that of the others, for as a prospective purchaser of new goods she attracted the attention of the merchants, especially when she said she was looking essentially for a house-full of items.

Mary had worked with Ethel and Maud to make some more measuring tapes, and had even given one to Tom. They were not fancy, and had only inch divisions at one end of their 8 feet, plus a couple of inches to allow a clear initial and final mark. Shopkeepers were somewhat surprised to have a customer measure things, but could not really fault the intent to ensure a piece would fit in the space where it may be needed.

There were some very nice objects, but Cassandra had no intent of venturing them on the sea of small children. Even well-behaved children could make a mess and scratch and dent things.

Cassandra returned to the houses soon after three was struck. Tom was back, full of enthusiasm. He had carried no less than 10 lengths of deal, each almost 8 feet in length.

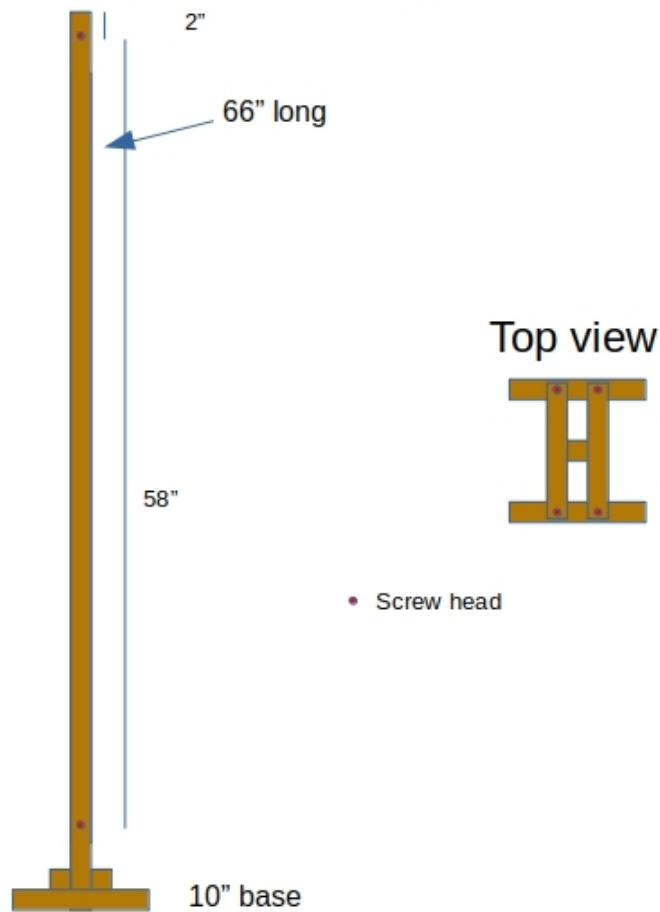
“They ’ad these that were near a fire, so the ends are burned. Got ’em for over ’alf off. 1 and 4 the lot. And the scrap merchant had this lock – I made sure it ’ad two keys – for 1 and 6. So 2 and 2 back in the pot.”

“Do you know how you will make the screens?” Cassandra asked.

“I’ve a sketch ’ere. One stick, 5 foot 6 vertical, leaving about 2 feet over. Two 9 inch pieces either side so the end of the pole is the cross on an H, and some blocks to fill in, about 3 and a half inches each. They should stand

well, but if you want more stability, we can put a couple of bricks on each, and wrap the base in cloth and glue it. I figure some nice brass screws top and bottom, and I found a broken leather belt from an engine at the scrap man. Two inches wide and 6 feet long, but a bit torn in places. I figure cut some squares, glue them and possibly sew them to the cloth, drill a hole and you have grommets you pop over the screws so the cloth won't rip."

### Bathing screen drawing



Cassandra had to marvel at his imagination and ingenuity. This could and would work. If Mary or the girls could come up with some ornamentation, the screens would be fit to purpose and easy to put away as well.

"I think you'd better start on them. Are you able to work outside?"

"Let's hope it don't rain."

"You could work in the kitchen of 23, but please ensure you clean up any mess after each work session. And do wear one of the aprons."

"No fear, Miss. Those are perfect for a joiner. Oh. I will need some glue, and that has to be heated, but I could put it on the back of the stove."

"No you don't, Tom Soulton. I remember Ma complaining of the stink," Ethel said.

"I could set up some stones or bricks outside. I've found a few around, and I'll watch for more. And I'll keep working on the 'and cart while I'm waiting for paint to dry. S'pose I'd better look for some paint too, Miss."

"Did you have some in mind?"

"Something dark. 'ide some of the burn marks. May need a bit of sandpaper too, though I think Mrs. McNair got some already. I'll have to see the grade."

The other ladies came in, and tea was poured. They were all tired, but some progress had been made. Maud found two bowls and two ewers all in a style that would match – they wouldn't have to worry which was with which, and a single breakage would be less of a problem. She had put down a deposit and come back with Mary at the end of their search.

Mary had found a half dozen pressed glass tumblers. They could be used for lemonade or similar drinks, and she got them for sixpence. But these were really small beer. What was important was the furniture.

Cassandra said "I found there are several furniture emporiums, but the prices are rather high," Cassandra said. "I want to offer quality accommodations, but we could easily spend several hundred pounds on a couple of rooms."

"Did you like the pieces," Mary asked.

"Actually not, they were not comfortable as far as I could tell, and they had such baroque decoration. Maud and Ethel could be dusting into their declining years and not finish."

Maud laughed. Mary said "I saw some pieces in the pawn shops, but only a couple did I feel would work for us. A tall chest of drawers, and a pair of washstands."

"Were they expensive?"

"I noted £4 for the chest and £1 each for the washstands."

"Maud, how about you."

"I found a double bed. Well I found a headboard and the other end by your feet, and there was an iron frame with wires. I'm not sure how it goes together. The price on the ticket was £5. I think that would be right if it all can be put together."

"We should take Tom and see what he thinks," Mary said.

Ethel, who was watching some food she was preparing, said "I tried reading the paper and saw an announcement for an auction tomorrow. The big printing caught my eye I think."

This precipitated a scramble for the aforementioned newspaper to verify the time, place and description of goods. They found that the auction was not too far away, at the house in which the goods had been located for some time.

"We should go, Mary, even just to learn how these sales work."

"Yes, but are we to do anything about what we have seen today?"

They called Tom and decided to look at the items that had been identified. It was five by the time they reached the second-hand shop where Maud had seen the bed. The head and foot boards were fine, according to Tom, and the frame was tolerable, though some wires needed tightening, and he was not sure of the correct way to do that, but could think of several possibilities. The main issue was that the side supports had fittings that were all bent out of shape or broken.

"I think someone lifted the frame out of the bed, then they pushed sideways on the foot of the bed so it didn't stay square and then the fittin's broke. I think it worked like a hook droppin' into a slot so the 'ead and foot are held both together and apart by the sides, but you need the frame to keep it square."

"Can you fix it?"

"Dunno. Might have to make new fittin's. S'Pose I could do it with wooden blocks and screws. Wouldn't be so easy to take apart and put together, though."

Cassandra approached the man behind the counter of the shop.

"I quite like that bed. Can it be put together so we know the frame and the bed are really of a piece."

The man was immediately nervous. "Madam, there's not enough room, but it is an exceptionally fine bed, I assure you."

"It is exceptionally fine, but I believe nobody is going to be able to sleep in or on it because the fastenings to put it together seem to be broken. But if you can have it assembled, and my footman here will assist you, then I will pay you the asking price."

"Well, ...., actually, you are correct that the hooks are damaged. The furniture part and the frame are fine, but some repairs are needed, but they are apparently trivial."

"I fink it will need a blacksmith to make the parts to fit," Tom said.

"Surely you will be able to find them available for a very reasonable cost," the man said rather desperately.

"Then why have you not done so to raise the value to you?" Cassandra asked.

“Well, ... er ... we are just a retail establishment, Madam.”

“I am willing to risk my money to the extent of £2 10s, but no more. If that is acceptable, and you can deliver to Fortescue Road, you have a sale, otherwise we will look elsewhere.”

“Well, it has been here a while. We sold it and had to collect it back from the wife of a town magistrate. Give me £2 10s and your address and I will write you a receipt.”

When formalities were complete, they bustled to the pawn shop. Mary was correct that the washstands and chest seemed fine. Tom checked the pieces and declared that they seemed fit. Cassandra approached the proprietor and confirmed the pieces were for sale, the pledges not redeemed.

“Would £5 for the bundle be acceptable?”

“Ah, Madam, my wife and children would starve if I sold them for that.”

“Come then, let us go. We will see what the auction offers tomorrow,” Cassandra said, opening the door.

“I might be able to make a small accommodation, Madam,” the man offered.

“Yes?” Cassandra asked.

“£5 10s and you arrange collection tomorrow.”

Cassandra pondered, or appeared to, though she already knew her response.

“£5 10s delivered to Fortescue Road.”

“Agreed if the transaction is cash today, and I will of course give a receipt.”

“That will be acceptable – I have three witnesses!”

They walked home rather gaily. Cassandra heard Tom say to Maud “That Miss Match, she can really ‘aggle. Them pawnbrokers are tough as nails, but she’s tougher.” She hoped she was. Time would tell.

\* \* \*

Supper was almost ready to eat when they got home. They could smell the bubble and squeak when they came down the area steps. They quickly washed hands – the furniture had been quite grimy – and sat down so Ethel could serve.

“Does Tom want some beer or cider?” Mary asked.

“I’ll share with someone,” he said, and it ended up that he and Mary took beer, Cassandra and Maud cider and Ethel – her monthlies still giving her some distress – had tea.

The surprise of the meal was the pudding, for Ethel had made the rice pudding. And a good one.



“Do you have a recipe?” Mary asked.

“No, but last night I was dreaming of me Mam, and somehow she was makin’ it and I remembered the proportions when I woke up. They seemed right, and they were.”

After dinner, there was enough light that Tom went back to the yard to look at the wood he and the girls had rescued last night for the hand cart. Cassandra contemplated asking him to try the stuck windows, but decided that could wait until tomorrow.

\* \* \*

Thursday morning. Tom was up at six today, but relatively quiet as he picked and sorted through his pile of treasures. Cassandra realized the sooner they got a shed the better, but for now they could tolerate a little untidiness.

As they finished breakfast – boiled eggs and toast, then more toast and jam – Arbuthnot’s clerk Armstrong arrived to say the morning post had brought an acceptance of the rental with a cheque for the first four weeks. He said that Miss Match could call tomorrow after one o’clock and there would be £26 for her.

Thus Cassandra and Mary were in a good mood when they arrived at 10 o’clock to look at the articles on sale at the auction, which would start at 11. They soon realized they might better have arrived a little later, as there were only a few items that interested them. Too many pieces were showy rather than functional. Still, there was a decent kitchen table, a pair of armchairs that were simple in design, and two single beds.

Cassandra asked the clerk at the entrance how the sale would proceed and was told all bidders would need a numbered card which they would be given upon providing their name and address. Bids would be in guineas, and made by raising the numbered card in response to the auctioneers suggested amount. The winning bidder would be expected to pay the clerk and get a receipt for payment and arrange to remove the goods by the end of the day. The last condition was one that could be troublesome.

Cassandra obtained a card, but was not sure that she wanted to bid.

Just before 11, they went into the largest room of the house, which was clear except for a podium. A man stepped up to the podium and greeted everyone, then began the sale by saying “Lot 1, a fine French armoire from the last century. Shall we start at 30 guineas.” Nobody moved. There was silence for a few seconds. “20 guineas then”. Still no response. A voice from somewhere to Cassandra’s left said “10 guineas.”

The auctioneer then said “Will someone give me 12. 12 anyone.” A card went up in the front. “I have 12. Is there 14. 14 anyone? ... 13 then?” The original man who had spoken up raised his card. “13 with the gentleman on my right. Will anyone try 14? ... 13 and a half. Then going once, going twice, sold to number 22.”

Cassandra watched and waited until lot 19 came up – a pair of beds. She was not sure how they would get them home, but the worst case was getting everyone and carrying them, so there was a feasible outcome. She thought a pound a piece was about the price.

It turned out that nobody wanted these simple beds, so as the auctioneer dropped from 5 guineas to 3, then a bit of a silence, she spoke out “One guinea,” and held up her card – number 3.

“Surely Madam, these fine beds are worth more than that.”

Cassandra simply shook her head. She did not think any discourse on the subject was useful.

“Then will anyone offer 2 guineas, 2 anyone? ... 1 and a 1/2 ... 1 and a 1/2? Then going at 1 guinea to the lady with card number 3, once, twice. Sold.”

Cassandra wondered whether she had to stay to the end, and looked around for the clerk. He was not apparently in the room. She tapped Mary on the elbow and moved to the door and saw that the clerk was in the next room where he was listening to the proceedings. He had noted 3 beside a 19 on a ruled page of a large account book, and a 1 in next column. There was 1 more column and as Cassandra put a sovereign and a shilling on the table in front of the clerk, a boy standing at the side wrote PAID 1 guinea on a card with the lot number and description and handed it to her with a second slip with the lot number and description. The boy whispered, “’ave your carter present the redemption ticket ’ere by 6 o’clock or we charge 10% demurrage per day, and you ’ave to apply to our offices in town during reg’lar hours. An’ we charge even for Sat’days an’ Sundays when the office is closed.” The auctioneers clearly did not want to wait for buyers to claim their goods.

Cassandra and Mary went outside.

“Home! As quickly as we can and find out how to get the beds collected.”

\* \* \*

The resourceful Tom knew a carter who had worked with his father and Joe Dixon. “Archie Temple ’as a donkey and cart. Bit of a drinker. Shall I see if I can find ’im?”

“Tom, Here’s the ticket and 2 and 6 in mixed coins. Do you know where the goods are to be found? Here’s the announcement from the newspaper with the address.”

“Yeah. I know where that is. Just ’ope I can find Archie, but if not, there may be another carter about, but might cost a bit more.”

“The coins are so you don’t have to ask the carter to make change.”

“Good thinkin’ Miss. They’d ’ang onto a ’arf crown and swear that was really the agreed fare.”

This was at one o’clock. Tom didn’t come back until almost half past three. While Tom was away, Mary and Ethel were baking the biscuits for Friday morning’s visit of Mrs. Crompton. Mary was not just doing this for Mrs. Crompton but to learn the wiles of the stove and to resurrect her skills. Ethel was an eager assistant. Good, thought Cassandra, as it would be excellent to have a reserve in the kitchen should Mary become indisposed or have other opportunities.

Cassandra spent some time in 23 considering where she would place furniture and what more was needed. There were no floor coverings yet. Carpets or rugs were nice underfoot, but could be expensive and extra work to keep clean. The girls would have to beat them to get out the dust – an unpleasant task. But one or two would be needed.

And uniforms. They had better start to look for those. She thought that they might want to allow for the girls to fill out. The near-starvation of the Workhouse had rendered them awfully skinny, but even a few days had given them a more robust appearance. It would be a shame to have to replace uniforms if they outgrew them.

Would Tom need a uniform? Probably not, but he could do with some true workman’s clothing and better boots. So much to think about.

She was in the front room – what should they call it for the Jefferys? – when she saw the pawnbroker arrive on a flat wagon pulled by a pony. She went outside to greet him.

“Good afternoon, sir.”

“Joshua Goldman, Miss Match. Do you have anyone can help me unload? I’ve got your bed from Mr. Upton, too.”

Maud had poked her head out from the kitchen. She had been tacking a seam to make a pocket for the twine on the muslin, and had, in fact, gone to buy more and also some cheesecloth and some heavy material for the scullery passage curtain in number 23. She was also working with Mary – who was splitting her attention between cooking and sewing – on some decoration for the bath screen in the form of some coloured material that would be sewn on repurposed table cloths.

“Ethel, Come an’ help please!” she called out.

Cassandra helped too and they got the bed pieces up to the master bedroom. Tom would have to do the repairs in place. The washstands were heavier than she realized and Mr. Goldman and Maud took them up one at a time. One in the front bedroom and one in the larger rear bedroom.

Cassandra wondered if there were enough space for one in the small bedroom where the boys would sleep. She would have to measure. The chest of drawers Goldman instructed the girls to take a drawer at a time separately, then he and Maud lifted the body of the chest with Ethel and Cassandra steadying it so there were no collisions with walls.

As they finished placing the chest in the master bedroom, Mr. Goldman said "Miss Match, might I have a word about possible business?"

"Of course, Mr. Goldman. Here? Or ..."

"Perhaps by my pony. I don't like to leave her unattended."

They walked back down to the street.

"Miss Match, I figure you for a clever woman. You're shrewd and know your mind. But, unless my mind is going, you don't know the furniture trade. You've done well in some business or other that you know, and now are trying something new."

"You seem to have my measure, Mr. Goldman. But what business might we have?"

"I can see you're fitting out some properties to put to lease. There's opportunities now, what with the railway to London and other places. And you need furniture and other things. But you've just seen why those of us in second-hand and pawnbroking don't like big items. The shop is always too small. We only keep items there to show we deal in furniture, not to really trade in it there."

"My boy is this very moment trying to get a carter to bring back two beds I bought at auction today."

"I know. Well, I know you bought the beds, not how you were going to get them here. My cousin was at the auction, and you would have had some competition if I were looking for beds. But both he and I noticed you don't fuss around when it comes to dealing, and I like that."

"That is fine, but we should talk of trade, I think."

"Which confirms my impression. Miss Match, I can probably put you in the way of various bits of furniture to suit your needs. If I am right, you are likely to do well, and will then purchase more properties to repeat the pattern. Now, as I said, having furniture in a shop uses a lot of space and takes a lot of effort to shift, especially to avoid damage. So it would be very attractive to me to be able to buy items and sell them to you direct from where I buy them, adding a percentage that puts food on my table but still keeps the price at a level of interest to you. We avoid much – very much – handling and transportation."

"Your suggestion is most interesting, Mr. Goldman. From my viewpoint, the issues are price and availability."

"Is it not always thus, Miss Match? Trade is always about having the right merchandise at a price that is affordable to the buyer and profitable to

the seller, else the economy collapses.”

“Just so, Mr. Goldman. So how should we proceed?”

“If you will give me, or have sent to me, a list of things you are looking for, I will endeavour to find some of them and communicate to you what I may be able to provide. There is always a level of uncertainty in what is available, when it can be moved and the price, as you no doubt observed at the auction. And as you noticed, I brought the bed from Upton’s. I do some trade with him, but he’s not the merchant his father was. The trick in furniture is to minimize the handling and administration.”

“Mr. Upton could have doubled his price if he’d fixed the bed,” Cassandra observed.

“But now you have to arrange a repair,” Goldman answered.

“The young man you saw with me yesterday is very enterprising. His late father was a joiner, and he has talents. He believes he can effect a solution.”

“How did you come by him?”

“The two sisters I engaged were from the Workhouse, and they told me their brother was also there and clever with his hands. Almost an understatement.”

“A lot of the local people look down on the Workhouse inmates. And others. My wife and I were under 20 when we escaped Odessa after the pogrom there, when the Greeks attacked our community. England has given us a good living, but a hard one, and we are not well accepted. Others would have been condescending when trying to bargain with me, but you stuck to the transaction.”

“I have had to deal with many people in all walks of life, Mr. Goldman, and I shall be honoured to work with you and treat you with the courtesy I also expect for myself.”

“If your young man can fix that bed, ask me to come and look at it. I may have work for him if you will allow him to undertake it, with, of course, a consideration for you. Business is business.”

“So it is, Mr. Goldman. You may expect a list from me before tomorrow evening.”

“Not late, please. We have the sabbath dinner.”

Between the time Goldman departed and Tom returned with the beds, Cassandra and Mary just had time to begin to make some tea. Tom was walking beside a creaking cart. This was pulled by a mangy donkey led by an even mangier man – Archie Temple – with Tom attending the precarious load that was balanced on the cart.

“Should’a taken some rope, Miss,” Tom apologized. Cassandra knew he wouldn’t forget again.

Tom was counting out 10 pence ha’penny when Cassandra intervened. I think we will give Mr. Temple a shilling, Tom, but on condition he buys his

donkey a bag of oats.

“Thank’ee Ma’am. I’ll honour that condition, and be pleased to serve you again,” Temple replied. Cassandra knew that a penny would feed the beast and a ha’penny would double the volume of beer in the tankard for Temple. But she felt they might need a carter in the next few weeks.

Archie Temple did not look in a state to be trusted not to put a corner of a bed through a plaster wall, so Cassandra simply got the beds unloaded onto the pathway to the front door of 23, since they were in flat pieces. After Temple and his donkey – and a cloud of flies – had meandered off down the street, Cassandra watched the beds while Maud and Tom took them up to the rear bedroom. As they took the last pieces, Tom said “Shall we set ’em up to check they’re all right?”, to which Cassandra assented and returned to the kitchen.

By a quarter past four, all of them were in the kitchen. It was warm enough that the kitchen door had its top half open, and the back door to the yard was similarly open to get a bit of air flowing. Tea was ready, and Mary declared a quarter hour break to compare what everyone had been doing.

“I think I’ve been to every tavern in the town to find Archie. ’e was down on the beach with Annabelle, touting for rides for children, but it’s too early in the year yet. Anyway, we got the beds all right.

Oh, ’ere’s the change. But you saw I didn’t get no receipt from Archie. Doubt ’e’d give one.”

“Can you put it in the housekeeping and make a note? Maud or Ethel can open the cupboard. If we remember, we’ll get you a key too.”

“Don’t bother, Miss. Either Maud or Ethel is likely to be here, and I’ve got the gate keys clanking already.”

Mary said “Ethel’s been doing a grand job on the home front. She’s washed some of our clothes, aired and made the beds, and helped me prepare the sweet and savoury shortbread for tomorrow. And made gammon and leeks with potatoes for tonight, with a plum duff and sweet sauce for pudding. Well, they’re not yet ready to eat, but she’s done the work.”

“Good for you Ethel. And you already know what Mary – Mrs. McNair – and I did today, and we also did some review and measuring in 23. Mr. Goldman has said he can probably suggest some furniture if we send him a list of our needs, and that he can do this on a continuing basis. He also would like to see the double bed when Tom has repaired it, and may be able to send some jobs Tom’s way that will reward us all. But it may be premature to spend much time pondering how we will share the rewards before we have the money in hand.

Maud, I’ve some idea what you have been doing, but tell us in your own words.”

“The scullery curtains are done both sides, Miss, including putting a

sleeve on the ones here in 21. And we've got two table cloths – they're old ones and a bit yellowed – that are 5 feet by 9. We can use them both and put the 'oles for the posts in the ends and in the middle top and bottom, so 6 'oles per sheet. We can have a 2 or 3 post screen with just 1 sheet, or use 4 posts and two sheets. Mrs. McNair thinks some beetroot would dye the sheets pink, and then we could put on some diamonds of this dark red material to fancy it up. But we want to test if Tom's grommets will work first."

"'Course they'll work. Got to," said the ever-confident Tom.

"I know you've been busy, Tom, but do you want to tell us about the state of other endeavours? There's the lock on the gate, the stuck windows, the posts for the screen, and your hand cart, not to mention the bed that came this afternoon."

"Acshully, I got the winders opened this morning. Used a sharp knife real careful like and a block and stick to not damage the paint and tapped gently and they came open easy. I was goin' to ask if you or Mrs. McNair 'ave any talcum powder to put on the sash to 'elp it slip nicely."

"Does that work?" Cassandra asked.

"Real well. Good under a sticky drawer too.

Now I've a couple of posts ready to test, but not sanded and no bricks to make 'em sit nice. Oh, and I got the lock on this morning. Weren't too 'ard. The chisel you 'ad and the ones in me Dad's box were all sharp, so I didn't 'ave to spend a lot of time getting ready.

Afraid I ain't given much thought yet to the partitions in 'ere. But I think you'll tell me if you want to make that number 1. I'm guessin' we need 23 ready first.

The 'and cart is still a bit of a dog's dinner, though. I've not had time to do enough sorting through the stuff we've got from the wagons. An' I want to go see Joe to buy a bit of glue from 'im, 'cos I know he'll 'ave good stuff. An' talk to Mr 'oward the blacksmith about the axle. I've really got to start with it, and build the cart around it."

"Why don't you bring in the two posts so we can try out the screen idea, then we can start decorating and dying the cloths while you go to see Mr. Dixon and Mr. Howard. Will we be able to drill holes for the grommets in the cloths?"

"I'll probably punch 'em. There's a couple of punches in the tool box. But we need the glue and a brush, and a pot to 'eat the glue in."

"Not one of the kitchen pots, you don't," said Ethel.

"I'll see if there's somethin' in a rubbish shop near Joe's. For now I can use a rag on a stick to apply the glue."

"Or I can get a brush, as I'm going to the ironmonger to look at some things for myself," Cassandra said. "Did you want some brass screws, Tom?"

“Yes, Miss. About 1 and a half inches and not too skinny. 'Bout a third of an inch for the 'ead, and a bit under a quarter for the shaft.”

Tom went and got the posts he had made. There were already two screws in each, one at the side of the top, about an inch down, the other about 7 inches from the bottom.

“They're 58 inches apart, so 1 inch from each edge of a 5 foot cloth,” Tom explained. “And here's one of the screws I used – rescued them from the wagon, but they aren't very fancy. Brass 'd be real nice.”

He was itching to get going, so Cassandra bid him good luck and as usual he was off like a shot.

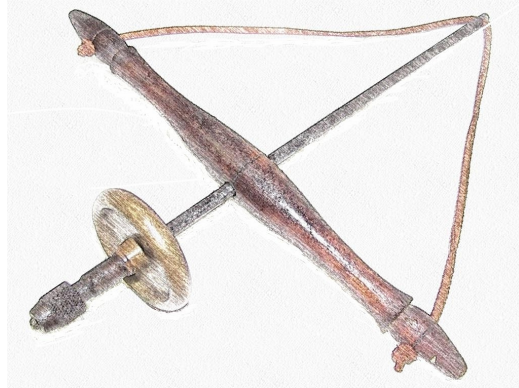
Cassandra and the others held a cloth to the posts. Yes, they'd work fine, and the leather Tom wanted to add to the cloths would give them some extra durability.

\* \* \*

In the ironmongers, Cassandra showed the proprietor the screw Tom had shown her, and asked if the shop had any in brass. They did, though of a slightly different shape, but likely suitable, and with round heads. Cassandra bought two dozen. She asked about a screw for securing a metal plate to a wooden plank, probably with a washer to spread the load. The ironmonger seemed surprised that a lady would know about such things, but indeed he had some, though the larger size was in iron and had a square head and no slot. That would be fine, but was some other tool needed? Indeed a spanner was generally used, and the ironmonger produced one. Cassandra bought half a dozen of the screws – the ironmonger called them lag screws – and the spanner. Finally she asked about whether she would need a drill to allow the screws to be effectively installed, since they were blunt on the end. Yes, a drill was needed, and of the right dimensions.

Cassandra knew Tom had a brace and bit, but she really did not want to share the installation of the strong-box with him. So she asked if the ironmonger could show her a suitable drill that might serve both sizes of screws she had. The ironmonger went to a drawer and took out a strange device that looked like a child's spinning top. It had a metal rod, on one end of which was a quite heavy disk and a cylinder with a square hole in it in line with the rod. The other end of the rod had a small hole through it. There was also a wooden bow about a foot long with a stout cord.





The ironmonger found a scrap of wood, he put the bow, which had a hole in its middle, over the rod, then threaded the cord through the hole and fastened it to the end of the bow, one end already being tied. Then he reached into the drawer and found a paper packet of four metal rods.

“Here are the bits, Ma’am. You will see they are squared off and tapered and go in this hole below the disk, like so. Then we wind the cord by spinning the rod like this.”

The cord wrapped itself around the spindle. The ironmonger then put the point of the drill bit on the scrap of wood and put two fingers of one hand either side of the spindle and pressed down on the bow. The cord tightened and spun the disk and the bit chewed gently into the wood. When the cord was unwound the man let the momentum of the disk wind it around the spindle in the other direction. He let it get almost fully wound, then pushed down again. The disk turned in the other direction, with the bit also biting into to wood. This was repeated about six times, then he stopped and took the top of the bit and pulled up.

“You lift here, or the bit will fall out, and possibly cause the hole to enlarge so the screw you put in will not hold properly. Why don’t you try? some people use one hand each side for heavier jobs. It’s called a pump drill, or sometimes an Archimedes drill, but really they are a bit different.”

Cassandra found it remarkably straightforward. It was a couple of shillings, but worth it, even as a toy top. A silly but amusing thought. She almost forgot the glue brush, but remembered and bought two – they would get clogged quickly.

With her screws, washers, drill and brushes she returned home in time for the gammon supper, which was most appetizing. Ethel was becoming a minor chatelaine.

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“Savoury shortbread! Such a delightful surprise. Mrs. McNair, you are a genius.”

“I was just testing out the oven here, Mrs. Crompton. But I will admit they turned out rather well.”

Mrs. Crompton had been shown the houses and said she thought they would be a good investment. Her occasional expressions, however, rather suggested otherwise, though she seemed to find the kitchen very airy and comfortable. Cassandra suspected hers was cramped and awkward.

“We still have a lot of furnishings to find and install, but are becoming more confident all will come together well before our first tenants.”

Indeed, Cassandra had already prepared a list for Mr. Goldman:

- carpets or rugs
- sofas or chaise-longues – preferably leather rather than fabric to reduce the likelihood of bedbugs. She and Mary had already agreed mattresses would be new.
- dining room table and chairs
- armchairs – preferably not too large or bulky, since they would then be difficult to move around.
- beds – single and double
- curtains, blankets and linens
- small occasional tables, washstands (and accoutrements like jugs and ewers, even chamberpots)
- chests and wardrobes, though preferably not too large.
- lamps or candlesticks, and similar items of convenience.
- other items that may be of use in outfitting apartments.

Her mind had wandered, but Mrs. Crompton was now asking Mary if the shortbread might be available to order from time to time.

“I will have to examine my costs and the time it takes to make them, but I would definitely think so. Let me send you a note early next week. I will confess that I would like to try another batch to ensure the oven is reliable in heat. Burnt or mis-cooked shortbreads would be wasted, and there would go my profit,” Mary said.

“I quite understand, Mrs. McNair, and will look forward to hearing from you,” Mrs. Crompton responded.

When she had gone, Mary asked “Do you think I can do well-enough with such small items as the shortbread that it is worth my while?”

She addressed this to Cassandra, but Ethel and Maud were still present, the former tidying the teacups, the latter working on the screen decoration. They could hear Tom in the yard sanding posts.

Ethel jumped in “Ma’am, I think they are so good they’d be gone in a trice at a very profitable price. An’ I think with two kitchens, it wouldn’t be ’ard to make enough to get some silver coins to rub togever.”

"If you make too many, they won't be special," Maud cautioned.

"Good advice, Maud," Cassandra applauded, "But I think that a few chosen customers could be given sufficient supply to whet the appetite of others, and a market established. Some elegant packaging would not be amiss. But I think we should avoid tins, unless we aim to make them collector's items."

"Quite a lot to think about," Mary concluded.

\* \* \*

Mr. Goldman was as good as his word. Over the next few weeks, various young boys would knock at the kitchen door with notes listing some items with an address to go and see them. On the first three occasions, Cassandra took Maud with her. But Maud proved to have a good eye – her father had, after all, been a joiner. Cassandra learned that her mother had informally learned how to upholster, and Maud had absorbed some knowledge of that also. In fact, she was more knowledgeable than Cassandra, who decided to allow Maud to carry out the buying. At the start, Tom came with them so he could go and fetch Archie Temple in the event they bought the items, but it soon became clear that Goldman always had at least some item of interest, so when Maud was deputised as buyer, Temple was engaged to take her and bring back the goods.

That didn't mean they bought everything that Goldman listed, but there was always at least one item of use.

On the first occasion that Maud was sent off on her own as buyer, Cassandra went to an auction in Hove. When she was approaching the house where the sale would take place – in fact, the house which had housed the merchandise to be put under the hammer – a dark-haired man of Cassandra's general age with a beard wearing in a dark suit greeted her

"Miss Match. May I have a word?"

"What may it be about?"

"I am Abraham Cohen, Joshua Goldman's cousin. Yes, I am much younger because I am the youngest child of his youngest sister, who died in the troubles in 1821 in Odessa. I was young enough that I don't remember her very well. The Goldmans raised me as if I were their own son.

Joshua was most impressed by your coolness in bargaining, and I noticed you only bid the other week what you wished to pay. We thought that perhaps we might collaborate to attempt to purchase items. We would avoid bidding up the price. And in some cases, there are people who will try to outbid me for some items ...."

"Because they are offended by your religious persuasion?"

“That, or something else. But primarily we should avoid bidding against each other.”

“Do you then trust my judgement on the lots and their value?”

“I will suggest that I get a catalogue and mark the items in which we, Joshua and I, are interested, and I will then set it down for a moment and pick up yours as if it were my own. When you bid on items in which you have an interest, then I will either pull my beard or take out my handkerchief when the bid is close to the maximum I believe the lot is worth.”

“That should work. But what if we should be interested in the same lot?”

“Since, hopefully, the lot will be in our joint possession, Joshua and I are confident that between us we will find a satisfactory outcome. For example, it may suit you to try the items, or part of a lot, but later find something more suitable, in which case the objects are available for another sale, hopefully at a profit to us all. Clearly there are details to discuss, but perhaps later.”

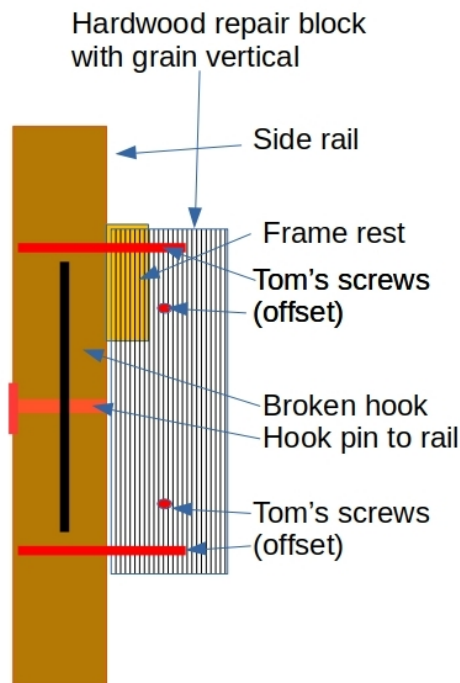
“Very well, Mr. Cohen, let us proceed.”

\* \* \*

During this same period of time, Tom had kept himself frenetically busy.

Two bath screens were complete. He had sanded the posts and he, Maud and Ethel had rubbed boiled linseed oil into the sanded wood rather than painting the posts. The cloth panels were reinforced with leather squares into which holes were punched, thus creating grommets to take the strain on the cloth from the brass screws.

He had also used blocks of wood to join the side beams of the double bed to the headboard and footboard with screws. In this, he was eminently pleased when Cassandra suggested he might profit from her drill, which she omitted to mention had made fastening the strong-box to the shelf of the wine closet rather straightforward. What Cassandra and Mary were unprepared for was that Tom carefully offset the screws in the side beams from those in the head and foot boards.



“Mustn’t let ’em collide or get close, since they’re at right angles,” Tom explained.

An added benefit of the blocks was that they added to the support of the iron frame with its wire mesh that would support at least one mattress.

Over the same time, Tom had managed to cobble together a hand cart of sorts. He complained it was still just an interim version, but it was clear to all around the supper table that he was pleased as punch. Yes, it was rough and ready, but it was functional, and he would find ways to gradually improve its appearance. His priority now – apart from his regular duties – would be a work and tool shed in the yard. His regular duties, Cassandra and Mary agreed, would be to set up partitions for their sleeping areas in the kitchen.

Cassandra sent Goldman a note and he came to see the repaired bed and was pleased to admit the repair was more than competent. He also found the bath screens to be of interest, to the extent that he would like to have a couple in his shop. They could be spread out for showing, but would occupy remarkably little volume of the shop.

“Miss Match, I believe you should converse with Mr. Thomas Soulton, and possibly his sister Maud whose eye and judgement appear very acute, as to possible arrangements for them to make repairs to furniture we acquire

for resale. Think, if you will, on how all of us may profit fairly and we will, God willing, come to suitable terms.”

At supper that evening, and into the evening afterwards over several cups of tea and some of Mary’s shortbreads, though made by Ethel, there was a discussion of how they could apportion the profits which seemed to be likely to accrue from their assorted enterprises.

Eventually it was decided that for the time being, the work for the houses would have first priority, and the Soultons would be paid their wages weekly. Cassandra suggested that Ethel and Maud be paid Thursday evenings and Tom on Sunday evening to reflect their starting days, but the three were adamant that they would count from Monday to Sunday and all be paid on Sunday. The girls said the first three days were simply a try-out, especially given the feeding and bathing they’d needed.

For the additional work, they decided as an interim arrangement that Maud, Tom and Cassandra would try to keep a record of all income and outflow for these extra jobs. Tom and Maud would be paid half of the net profit from their extra jobs. They would still get their wages of 4/- a week and their bed and board. If the "extras" intruded onto their tasks for the houses, there would be a reconsideration.

“Lots of folks ’d give a fair bit for the grub here,” Tom said.

The delicacies being considered by Mary and Ethel were, of course, Mary’s income, and deciding how to reward Ethel was less clear.

Mary said, “We need to consider how to reward Ethel for extra effort with the delicacies or shall we call them Treats.”

“Treats for the Tongue,” Tom said.

“That is a good name,” Mary agreed. “I may use it. If we make the specialities in the kitchen of number 23, it would probably be easier to keep the ingredients separate from the household food, and I could account for purchases separately.”

Cassandra added “Let us consider that use of that kitchen and the fuel are taken with your lodging as part of your compensation for running the house, but you should estimate an amount for rent, fuel and equipment so you have a fair reckoning of the trade should you expand to other premises. Similarly keep a rough estimate of any items you supply to our tenants or ourselves to give an idea of income. And you should estimate what you would be paying yourself as manager and Ethel as staff in reckoning what the business would earn on its own.”

Mary continued “If we keep a good record, as you suggest, we will get a measure of the success of the business. I think that as a cook in a modest house, I’d get about 10/- a week. And I’d guess that 15/- a week would be a good guess for rent and fuel for a kitchen, possibly more. Supposing we keep track of our outlay for food, wrapping, special pans or tools, as well

as deliveries, and make the allowance for my wage, though I will not take it directly, Ethel could then have a portion of the net profit.”

Cassandra said “Remember, Mary, that you are taking the risks. There will certainly be times when items do not turn out well. and your profits will suffer. Also when clients order but don’t pay, or claim they don’t like things. But if we assume that Ethel will be working alongside you much of the time, I can see 3/- of each pound of profit, or maybe a little more as her skills progress. Does that seem fair?”

“Does that mean I still get my 4/- a week, no matter the Treats make no money,” Ethel asked.

Mary responded “Yes. The risk is all mine. You can only gain, but if we do well, then the major benefit is to my credit.”

Tom said “Ain’t heard of any other employers giving anythin’. Three bob in the pound and nought to worry about seems a bit of all right to me. You agree, Ethel?”

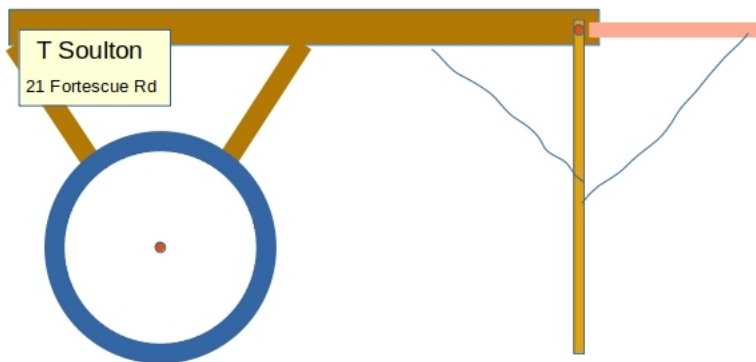
“It’s all a bit new, havin’ money to consider. But I’ll be happy to go along with that.”

The arrangements did, of course, assume there would be a profit. But all of them felt that there was going to be success, either in the shortbread or the furniture repair, or the acquisition and resale of items.

Cassandra wrote down the arrangements in a short and simple statement, and pinned this to the back of the cupboard with the housekeeping money. It was a good idea to have such conditions in writing, as memory was always slippery.

\* \* \*

The few weeks until the middle of June were busy, but not quite as frantic as the first few days. The residents of number 21 Fortescue Road gradually found their different roles. The one who was least sure of her place was Cassandra, who ended up doing all manner of small jobs from sewing rings on curtains to touching up ceilings or gluing down lifted wallpaper. The paintings and prints – frames sanded and oiled or painted by Tom – she found places to hang, and Tom put them up. With Mary she shared some of the gardening, though Tom did the heavy digging and lifting. His hand cart was now tidy and was about to acquire a coat of paint as well as "T Soutlon" and the address in two places. It had a "leg" that could be swung down to provide a more or less flat top, or tied up to make movement easier.



Moreover, Cassandra decided that Mary, Maud and Ethel could arrange between themselves the day-to-day running of the properties, which would adjust when the Jefferys and other tenants came. Tom would adapt his tasks to the needs that arose. Now that most of the rooms were furnished, though not necessarily in the style desired by Cassandra and Mary, nor even the increasingly perspicacious Maud, Tom had been working on partitions for sleeping areas for Cassandra and Mary. Somewhere he had found some sailcloth that had come ashore from a wreck or a blown-out yardarm. This he stretched on frames he made, then painted the result, giving light but opaque partitions. They decided to use heavy curtains rather than doors, and the partitions stopped more than a foot below the ceiling to allow for ventilation and light.

It was decided that the pantry of number 21 would become storage, and Tom would sleep in the pantry of number 23, the cubby hole of that house being converted to a pair of bunks for Maud and Ethel, with a partition for their privacy. This did mean Ethel had to go out and in to light the stove at number 21, but when the Jefferys came, it was realized that the stove of number 23 would be needed first each morning anyway. The compromise was that Mary and Cassandra would attend to the stove in number 21, which they felt they might like to keep lit through the night in winter.

During this time, uniforms for Maud and Ethel were found and altered, and Tom acquired clothing suitable to his station. All of them had gained some weight, but were far from becoming fat. Tom started on construction of a shed, even as he was busy with setting up the rooms of number 21 as apartments.

After some discussion around the dinner table, it had been decided to do no structural changes, but keys were found for all the locks. This meant that each room could be a separate apartment, even the small bedroom, though



it had no fireplace, so would be very cold in winter.

It was realized that baths would be the awkward service to provide. To avoid water on the floors – and in the ceilings below – Cassandra’s idea of tiles on the floors around the fireplace was revived. Cassandra paid a man who knew how to do this in the back bedroom on the top floor. Tom made sure he saw what was done, and then tried the same in the front bedroom with enough success that it was felt it could be repeated if necessary.

Getting water for washing and shaving to the second floor was going to mean carrying jugs, at least for the immediate future. But discussions continued as to where and how hot and cold water might be made available to the different rooms, as well as ways to empty the tub or bowls afterwards.

\* \* \*

Saturday, June 14.

The Jefferys arrived just after 2 o’clock. They had walked the short distance from the station, with a cart with their trunks leading the way. Cassandra was waiting for them in the drawing room – the front room as they had been calling it – and called down to Maud, Mary and Ethel who were making sure all was ready for refreshments and the first dinner. Tom was working in the back of number 21. Ethel would go to fetch him to help bring in the baggage.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Jeffery and family, I presume. I am Miss Match. Welcome to Brighton and the Drake Apartments.” The name had been much talked about, and printed stationery now prepared. A brass plate for the front pillar between the two houses was being considered.

“Thank you, Miss Match.”

“Might I suggest we bring in your luggage, then show you the house, after which we can provide refreshments in the drawing room which is here on the right.”

“That seems like it may be the most efficient process, Miss Match. Proceed.”

“This is Tom, our general factotum. Mr. Jeffery, can you identify which of the trunks will go to the master bedroom?”

The two boys of the group were already lifting a small trunk off the cart.

Jeffery said, “Boys. You should leave that to be carried in.”

“But Father, we are perfectly capable,” which given the modest size of the trunk was true.

“All right. But be careful you do no damage to the walls.” Cassandra had to second that motion.

Mr. Jeffery had the carter and Tom put the trunks near the door while Cassandra invited Mrs. Jeffery and her daughters to follow her upstairs. She showed them the location of the rooms and particularly the water-closet. The eldest daughter Julia asked if she might make use of it right away.

"Certainly. And you will find a ewer of water ready on the washstand in your room."

The two younger girls were bickering over which bed each would have. One of Tom's screens partitioned that for the older girl. Mrs. Jeffery said "Susan, you will have the one on the right, since it is against the wall and you will be less likely to fall out. Jenny, you take the other."

There was stomping on the stairs, and Cassandra directed the two boys – one either end of the trunk – to the small bedroom. The beds were quite tight, and the wash stand was, in fact, a concoction Tom had fabricated rather nicely out of an old stool so that it used very little space. The beds were fortunately quite high, so the trunk would fit under one of them, but there was not a lot of space. Still, with the window now having some pleasant curtains, it was not an unattractive room.

"Toss you for the bed closest to the window," said the elder of the two, who turned out to be called Michael. The other said "How do I know you won't cheat?" Cassandra decided to forestall a dispute and said "Perhaps if I tossed the coin and Master ...", the younger boy said "Robert", "were to say his choice of head or tail, that would be considered fair."

"Yes, I suppose," said the older boy, whose demeanour suggested that he had indeed intended to cheat. It turned out Robert won and got the choice, but Cassandra suggested, "Of course, you could swap at the end of each week, which would be even more fair," and both boys agreed, though perhaps with some reluctance.

By now the adults' trunks had been brought up by Tom and Maud, and Mr. and Mrs. Jeffery were perusing their bedroom. Julia exited the water-closet and Michael decided to use it. Cassandra said, "Would refreshments in the drawing room in a quarter hour suit?" and Mrs. Jeffery said "Perfect. It will give me time to get my tribe in order."

\* \* \*

Cassandra led Maud and Mary up the stairs with the refreshments – tea and lemonade, with some biscuits Mary and Ethel had made.

Cassandra carried a tiered cake server in one hand and knocked on the drawing room door, which was ajar.

"Yes," came Mr. Jeffery's voice.

Cassandra entered and held the door for Maud and Mary. She noticed the latter stiffen slightly, and a fleeting look of consternation on Mr. Jeffery's visage. Hmm. He looked somewhat familiar. Was he a former customer at the house in Greenock. It was the only one where Mary had plied the profession. However, that was – must be – a forgotten world now.

"Here we are. Let me introduce Maud, who with her sister Ethel will be handling your meal service and attending to your rooms and laundry. You will see a covered basket in the upstairs hall for your personal laundry. The beds will be taken care of directly.

And this is Mrs. McNair, the housekeeper and cook, who ensures we are well-fed and otherwise well provided. Before I let her and Maud return to the kitchen, what time would you like your evening meal?"

Mrs. Jeffery spoke first. Half-past six would suit very well, if that is convenient.

Mary said, "That will be fine. Will you want beer or cider or lemonade?"

"Beer for me please. Mildred?"

"It has been a while since I had cider. I will have that. Children, are you all happy with lemonade?"

There was a general murmur of assent. Mary said, "Thank you sir, madam," and disappeared, followed by Maud. Cassandra wanted to ensure that arrangements were in place so the Jefferys could communicate any particular wishes. She said, "As this is your first day here, I am sure there will be questions, some of which I will try to answer now. But I will suggest that I come back here after you finish your supper, say at a quarter past seven, so we can set the time for breakfast tomorrow, and if you like for the week to come."

"That would be agreeable," said Mr. Jeffery.

"Here is the front door key," Cassandra said. "As far as I am aware, there are no particular dangers here, but we keep the doors locked when there is nobody able to watch them.

You will have noticed a small table in the hall, on which there is a low basket where we will put post or messages for your attention. There is also a notepad and pencil, and a pebble with a question mark on it. If you have questions or requests, please leave a note under the pebble. We will do our best to accommodate you. You are the first tenants here, and we will appreciate knowing how we can make your stay pleasant within, of course, the reasonable limits of our small staff.

Now before I return to other duties, are there any questions?"

Before his parents could say a word, the elder boy, Michael asked "Will we get these ginger biscuits every day? They are very excellent."

His mother said "Michael, I'm not sure that it is polite to ask so enthusiastically."

Cassandra smiled and said "Mrs. McNair and Ethel are, we believe, very good at making biscuits and other delicacies. If there is a general consensus that it should be ginger snaps every day, that could probably be arranged. However, you might then miss some other possibilities."

The oldest girl, Julia, said "The shortbreads are a surprise. I didn't see the label "Savoury", and expected a sweet biscuit, but these are very nice."

"Savoury shortbread! I hadn't realized," said Mr. Jeffery, reaching for one.

Cassandra said "Until a quarter past seven, then," and made her exit.

\* \* \*

In the kitchen of number 23, Ethel was working on the supper, a pork and egg pie, which would be served cold with new potatoes and a salad. There was the apple charlotte that Tom had so enthusiastically scoffed for dessert, and a vegetable soup for starter. Mary was supervising, but not very effectively, as she seemed distracted. As soon as Cassandra descended, she whispered "May I discuss something with you in private?"

Cassandra, in a fairly clear voice, said "If Ethel has things under control, perhaps Mrs. McNair and I could take some time to consider if we have overlooked any details."

Ethel had things well in hand, so Cassandra and Mary went to the kitchen of number 21. Maud was in the scullery, sorting dirty and clean linen. Tom was in the yard, working on the shed that was now a frame with a roof that had a lattice of thin wooden lathes over which an old sailcloth had been stretched then painted with pitch. Tom was gradually acquiring boards that were climbing the open two sides of the structure, the other two being the garden walls. His ongoing concern was to stop rain from getting between the walls and his roof, and some experiments with pitch and strips of the sailcloth were being tried. Maud made him wear his old clothes from the Workhouse when he was busy with this untidy material.

In a low voice, Mary said "Did you see him?"

"You mean Mr. Jeffery? Yes, he looks somewhat familiar."

"He was one of the men who came to the house about nine years ago, but after I gave up the game."

"I am sure he never met me, but I think I may have seen him from the office through the observation hole. How did he see you?"

"He had hired Josephine – that was the name she used anyway – for the night, and wanted food brought up. I carried up the tray."

"And you think he recognized you?"

"Did you not notice?"

"I'm afraid I did."

"What are we to do? This could undo us," Mary said.

"I think we have to be who we are now, which is respectable women who offer well-appointed apartments with superior meals. Jeffery must have been married when he came to the house, unless Mrs. Jeffery was a widow with children, and I very much doubt that. So Mr. Jeffery will not, I think, wish to reveal how he came to be acquainted with you. If any question is put, I will say that I have known you for a decade and a half and have every confidence in you. Since that is eminently true, I can state it firmly if I must. Remember, we both did what we had to in order to survive. I will not – repeat not – give up what we have gained."

"I just hope I can be as confident and resolute."

"You will because of the person you are now. You have told me your history. You were violated, yet your employer decided to vilify the victim rather than the perpetrator of a crime. You were banished without resources, and fell into the only means of earning a living that was available to you then. That you have become the woman you are today is to your credit. It is a pity that, unfortunately, so many in society would still castigate you even as they take their pleasure in houses of the type we know too well."

"Yes. That is so," Mary said quietly and with a measure of despondence.

"Keep your head up, Mary. Be who you are, not what evil made you pass through."

\* \* \*

When Cassandra returned to the drawing room at quarter past seven, only Mr. Jeffery was there.

"I asked my wife to put the younger children to bed, as I wished to talk to you about a matter of some delicacy," Jeffery said.

Cassandra, though she knew the subject, played her role and said "That sounds rather ominous, Mr. Jeffery."

"Well, Miss Match, I have reason to believe that Mrs. McNair, if that is her real name, was but a few years ago working in a house of ill-repute."

"My goodness, Mr. Jeffery. That would be most unfortunate. But I have known Mrs. McNair since 1836, and she has always been hard-working and reliable, as well as a good friend. You must be mistaking her for someone with a close resemblance."

"I am almost sure of my recollection. I was in Greenock nine years ago to review Scott's graving dock, with a view to my company building a similar dock ... well, in another port."

"Mrs. McNair and I were then in Falkirk. But I would presume your knowledge is that the woman you remember was before the magistrate and you remember the case."

"Well .... not precisely."

"Surely you do not admit that your knowledge comes from ...." Cassandra deliberately tailed off. Jeffery was looking very uncomfortable.

"No, no, of course not .... But perhaps you are right and I have confused a respectable lady with one who is not. We shall say no more."

"Then let us move to talk of happier possibilities."

May I ask if the supper was to your taste? We found the soup and the pie were most appetizing."

"Yes, they were very well received."

"And was there enough for everyone? Our aim is to make sure that you are fully satisfied, but also that there is as little wastage as possible, since that allows us to keep our prices competitive."

"Yes. Everyone had their fill. But I am surprised that you mention that you had the same supper. Is it not unusual for servants to have the same food as their clients?"

"Possibly in some houses. But by serving to you what we ourselves have, and what we believe to be of good quality, we can confirm that we believe the meals to be appetizing. Moreover, if we are to give you the very best we can, we must try to be as efficient as possible. Hence we cook – well, usually Mrs. McNair cooks, since that is her occupation, though now aided by Ethel – just one meal, though we would certainly accommodate any reasonable request, and we also try to have enough variety that some particular dislike can be avoided without penalty of hunger."

May I ask if the children enjoyed the apple charlotte? Our young man Tom is very partial to it."

"Indeed, it was rapidly consumed. I gather it will be a request, particularly from the boys, but then they were exceptionally enthusiastic about the biscuits."

"That is most gratifying. I will tell Mrs. McNair and Ethel, who is rapidly becoming her equal with the wooden spoon."

Now, there will be a suggested menu for the week left for you tomorrow morning. Please let us know as soon as possible if there is anything that will be unwelcome so we can adjust the selection appropriately.

May I ask if breakfast at 8 is suitable?"

"That is the time we normally breakfast in our house in London, so yes."

"And given that it is Sunday, will you be wanting coffee at 11, or would you prefer it a little later, should you be attending church?"

"Can you tell me where the nearest Church of England church is to be found, and the time of worship? I think it would be well to maintain

standards, even if it is a holiday for the children.”

“We attend St. Paul’s.” Cassandra added the time, but also mentioned Evensong. She did not mention that they had been but once to the church a fortnight before, though Tom had remained at home so he could work on the shed.

“And do we need to order a hansom cab?” Jeffery asked.

“We walk. It is but a leisurely quarter hour,” Cassandra explained.

“Then we will walk also. It will do us good, presuming no rain.”

“Indeed, I must confess we have missed church on at least one Sunday with precipitation.

Now are there any other matters to consider?”

“I wondered if we might arrange some sherry for my wife and some brandy for me as preprandial aperitif?”

“Certainly. As we indicated in our proposal, wine and spirits are by arrangement. If you wish we can arrange delivery of items you request and leave the tradesman’s bill in the post basket. We can set out glasses on the sideboard in the dining room or else here on the small table. Or perhaps you or Mrs. Jeffery would prefer to shop for the beverages and just have us deal with the tray and glasses. Many people are quite particular about their drinks.”

“Yes, quite. Though we would not know reliable merchants here.”

“You or Mrs. Jeffery would be welcome to accompany Maud or Mrs. McNair early next week to be familiarized with the merchants. Or we can suggest where we purchase beverages for ourselves, though I am afraid our tastes in drink are rather plebeian.

On another matter, I would ask if you and Mrs. Jeffery can provide sufficient notice of when baths will be wanted so we can ensure adequate hot water. If it is wished that Maud or Ethel assist the smaller members of your party in this and/or in bedtime procedures, do let us know.”

“Miss Match, am I correct that you will not yourself be providing service?”

“That is so. My role here as manager – representing the owners of course, who I am glad to say give me full latitude in decision making – is but part of my time. I am endeavouring to find employment with a local merchant as a manager or buyer, so that I might enlarge my fortune. My expertise is in keeping books and in negotiating a fair price for things bought or sold, or a fair wage or rent so that parties on both sides of the transaction are, if not happy, at least content.” Cassandra preferred that her ownership was not open to public discussion.

Jeffery responded “An unusual occupation, Miss Match. I wish you well and bid you a good evening.”

“Good evening, Mr. Jeffery.”

\* \* \*

Now you may recall that we began this history by noting that Miss Match took employment with a haberdashery. Yet, as you now know, she was, at the time of her joining the firm of Bartlett and Jones, a propertied woman.

Employment was, in fact, a part of her original plan to join the ordinary society in Brighton. She did not want her properties or herself or her associates to in any way seem unusual or different from other people. There were people who knew that she owned the houses. Mrs. Crompton, for one, but she was herself a landlady. Arbuthnot and Cavendish, and Armstrong who was Cavendish's clerk. And Goldman, of course. But they were in business, and if they were good at their trade, they would be too busy to gossip and speculate. It was the leisured class with time to gossip that she wanted to leave her unnoticed, and a working woman was more likely to be invisible to their notice.

Now that the first tenancy was in progress and the apartments in number 21, although not quite ready, were advertised, Cassandra's presence was not mandatory. She could begin to consider outside employment that would bring her even more into the Brighton society.

Near the middle of June, she had spied an advertisement that Bartlett and Jones had placed in the Brighton Gazette. They were looking for an assistant manager – Cassandra could read that this meant a man, but she deliberately ignored that – who could manage bookkeeping, orders and sales. Now haberdashery in America was, as Cassandra had learned from a Texas captain from Galveston who visited the brothel, men's clothing and accoutrements. In Britain, however, it was small items for sewing, dressmaking and knitting. And part of Cassandra's work in managing the house of ill-repute (though in the case of the house in Greenock of quite wide reputation among men of the type to come there) was maintaining the outfits the girls wore to present themselves. So she had a fair understanding of many aspects of haberdashery. Also the girls frequently did bits of sewing, knitting and crochet to occupy their time. Indeed one of them had introduced Cassandra to the works of the prolific Jane Gaugain with her "Receipts" or recipes for knitting.

Having reconnoitred the shop of Bartlett and Jones, Miss Match presented herself at the premises a few seconds after opening on the Wednesday morning following the Jefferys' arrival – the early closing day. She was dressed very properly and asked to see the Owner or Manager to enquire about the position of assistant manager. The two shop girls looked embarrassed and the youngish man behind the counter to whom Cassandra had addressed her enquiry looked nonplussed, so Cassandra said

"Quickly, my good man. I am an experienced manageress, formerly of



a private hotel for distressed gentlewomen with experience in dealing with money, people and goods, both durable and perishable. And I have my reference to substantiate that.”

Indeed, in her reticule, there was a letter, ostensibly from the owner of the now-defunct private hotel mentioned. Ethel’s fine penmanship might have been employed, but she was still learning cursive, and questions might have been raised about the letter’s content, so Mary had done the handwriting. The purported author of the letter had suffered an illness and decided to close her establishment and sell it to finance an attempted cure in the south of France. Sadly, this fictitious person had suffered a fictitious death en route to that sunny location, which was extremely convenient in limiting enquiries.

The man Cassandra addressed was about to go into an office behind the shop when a small, balding, middle-aged man appeared from that location.

“And who might you be, Madam.”

“Miss Cassandra Match, sir. I presume I am addressing Mr. Bartlett or Mr. Jones.”

“I am Mr. Jones, the proprietor. Did I take it you wished to apply for the position of assistant manager?”

“Indeed I do. As I have explained to ...”

“Yes, I heard. And do you believe you have the knowledge and skills to be useful to a haberdashery and drapery shop?”

“Of course, or I would not be here. Indeed I would still be in Falkirk, managing the private hotel I mentioned, but the owner became ill and sold up to seek a cure in the South of France. Sadly, I received word only recently that she has not survived the journey, though her passing was, my informant tells me, over two months ago.

My particular skills are in both keeping and being able to interpret account books. Indeed, my board and lodging are remuneration for the financial management of the Drake Apartments on Fortescue Road. The detailed administration is handled by a housekeeper, so during the day I can offer my labour and skills elsewhere. I also have had responsibility for handling purchases of goods, both durable and perishable, and on occasion to re-sell these to other establishments or to our hotel clients, and to avoid losses in the process.”

“Your accent is not Scottish. I cannot place it.”

“I have lived several places, mostly in the North, but have found that as Manageress, one needs to speak in a way that does not appear to ally one with any particular group.”

Mr. Jones nodded. It was a good sign. Cassandra decided to play her Joker.

“I have a reference from Mrs. Mackintosh, written when she decided to close the hotel. But as a practical suggestion, since words have no weight

compared to action, I will offer you a fortnight of my services at no pay, after which if you find me suitable, we will negotiate appropriate remuneration.”

Cassandra had chosen Wednesday in case the shop were a horror of poor organization, so that she could remove herself after just a few hours if necessary.

Mr. Jones looked thoughtful. He said nothing for some period of seconds, possibly half a minute, then said, “When would you start?”

“Is there a better time than the present? As you see, my attire is appropriate to the manageress of an establishment such as this, and my investigations into where I feel my talents would be well-employed have suggested Bartlett and Jones to be a likely establishment. Chasing multiple opportunities at once can risk them all, so I rank the possibilities and work through a list. Bartlett and Jones came out first on my list.”

Mr. Jones was somewhat taken aback. A prospective employee who investigated the employers. In a sense, he felt is showed a lot of gall, but he could not fault the logic. He had been in business some years, and recognized firm dealing. If she was as good as her performance this morning, she would be an asset to his business, which frankly he was getting tired of running alone. His children were grown and married, and his wife had a wish to travel, and to travel with Mr. Jones as her guide and guardian.

“All right, you’d better come in and we’ll discuss what you can do.”

Cassandra had, in fact, not actually looked elsewhere, and if she had been asked about other possibilities would have bluffed that giving information about other establishments could compromise her future employment. She had acted purely on the advertisement and her previous visit to the shop when seeking material for the houses. Her luck had held.

\* \* \*

That Wednesday morning, Cassandra forced herself to listen. To listen and say very little. Bartlett and Jones was rather old-fashioned. There were fabrics that had sat on shelves for ten years and were likely to remain there ten more unless somehow offered in a way to entice the buyer. Or moths might fly them away.

On the other hand, it was clear the wide selection of threads, needles, pins, ribbons, tapes, and other notions was a great advantage over other haberdashers who might carry only a limited choice of each. And even on the drapery side, the selection was wide. It did, however, have more than its fair share of dead weight, and there was rather little to entice a younger woman of the type who might be sharing one of the Drake Apartments with a

man. Nor were there fabrics presented as suitable to upholster the furniture of those apartments.

Mr. Jones called in the man who clearly was the supervisor in the shop.

“Mr. Collier, can you come in the office please?”

Collier was possibly 21 or 22 years old. It soon became apparent that he wanted to have the aura of authority, but had little or none of the merchandise knowledge to support it. Still, Cassandra realized she would be better to have allies than underlings among the staff.

Mr. Jones was giving the history of the business, which was largely his own history, and indeed that of his father. His knowledge of drapery and haberdashery had been breathed in or absorbed. It had not been learned actively, nor with enthusiasm.

“Is there a Mr. Bartlett?” Cassandra asked.

“My mother’s maiden name. My father thought Jones, on its own, was too plain and too easily confused with other businesses.”

“Should either you or Mr. Collier show me the shop and the stock so I may assist customers?” Cassandra asked.

“Indeed. Mr. Collier. Could you show Miss Match the shop and what we have for sale, as well as our procedures? She will be with us for a fortnight as a trial.”

Most of the rest of the morning was spent looking over the shop and the storeroom behind. Cassandra was introduced to the two shop assistants, Sally Shaw and Joan Yardley. They were no more than 18 or 19. Cassandra carefully extracted from them that neither did sewing or knitting beyond some basic skills taught to them as a necessity. When a customer came in, it was clear they had to look at labels to know the material on the shelves.

“Do you mind if I make some notes, Mr. Collier? Some thoughts enter my mind, but I believe I should allow some time to organize them before formulating any questions, or I will waste time for all of us.”

“Not at all, Miss Match.”

Later, Cassandra found a bolt of sturdy poplin. It would do well as the covering of a sofa or arm chair, but was among the materials for dresses. And the dust that arose when she pulled out the bolt to examine the material suggested it had been on the shelf for a while. There was a scent of lavender. Ah, yes. Keep the moths at bay. It was a reminder to alert Mary, Maud and Ethel to watch the carpets and curtains for little invaders.

There was still so much to think about in all realms of Cassandra’s life in Brighton.

\* \* \*

Being early closing, Cassandra was back to the houses by two o'clock. Mary had saved her some soup from the lunch. She related a little about her morning, then said "How do you feel the Jefferys are finding the house?" This was asked mostly to Mary, but Ethel was moving about near the stove, and Maud was working on some laundry. Tom had strung some lines just below the ceiling in both kitchens so they could, at a pinch, dry linens when it was rainy. However, it was proving convenient to use the lines for small items that were washed by hand, so she was in and out.

Mary answered "We seem to be establishing a routine, both above and below stairs. The children seem to like the meals. I'm not really making anything very fancy, but from comments by Mrs. Jeffery, their London housekeeper cannot be a very good cook. It seems they have just a housekeeper and maid, plus a nanny who has, in fact, had to take leave to be with an invalid parent. That was one of the reasons they decided to come here for the summer."

Maud added "When I was clearing away lunch, I heard Miss Julia say that she thought sharing with her two little sisters would be a problem, but she likes Tom's screen. 'e set it up so she has a bit of the window, so it's bright enough for her to read there."

Mary joined in "They seem to want reading material and things to do. I overheard Mrs. Jeffery ask one of the boys to go to the shop to fetch her a London Illustrated News. I suppose we could offer them the newspapers after we have read them."

Cassandra said "Perhaps in passing we could suggest that. We might mention that we have the newspapers delivered by subscription, and their subscriptions could be added."

Ethel joined in "The boys asked Tom if they could help in the garden. Before he said yes, I asked if they had clothes suitable for that, and I think Mrs. Jeffery is considering getting them some. And the little girls love the garden, though we do have to watch them."

"So does Puss," Maud added. "The little girls will love her to death, but the cat seems to allow them liberties. As if she knows they aren't being cruel."

"It would not do if they got scratched," Cassandra noted. "Now I think I will take a nap for about an hour, then perhaps I can assist with the refreshments which will give Mrs. Jeffery an opportunity to communicate with me."

\* \* \*

"Miss Match. What a surprise, I did not expect you to be serving refreshments."

"I thought, since I have the afternoon free from my current employment, it would allow me to learn if there are any difficulties or questions without you having to write me a note."

"I appreciate that, Miss Match. We have enjoyed our stay so far, and there have been really no particular difficulties. If I have a complaint, it is that the food is such that the children will complain when they have to return to London. But obviously, that tells you that the meals and refreshments have been most satisfactory." Mrs. Jeffery laughed.

"Thank you for telling me that, although I do hope the transition back to your London residence will not be too troublesome."

"I also should acknowledge the offer of the newspapers. We will leave a note with the publications we wish. I gather you would like the paper afterwards for use in the kitchen. We do that also at home."

"And are the children more or less content?" Cassandra asked.

"Indeed. Tomorrow I will take the boys to find some clothes in which they can spend time in the garden. At their age, clothing seems to attract dirt."

"Should you decide to purchase second-hand clothes for them to wear in the garden, we can boil them in the copper. It would not do if there were nits or fleas."

"But I would not know where to find such garments."

"I believe Maud or Tom may know of some shops where such items are for sale."

\* \* \*

Dinner was quite late that evening. The two youngest children were excited from an outing earlier in the day when they had seen a Punch and Judy show on the promenade. The violence of the story had upset the younger of the little girls, so it took a while to get them into bed.

"Finally, I get my dinner," Maud said. "They're nice little girls, but even nice little girls can be a lot o' work."

"How are you managing, Tom," Cassandra asked.

"The Missus is going to get the boys some rough clothes so they can do some gardening and maybe some help with the shed. As long as they don't want a wage. They won't really give much help."

"But if they are a hindrance, we should inform Mrs. Jeffery."

"I'll not let 'em bother me, Miss. And it keeps them from charging about the 'ouse."

That was a consideration. Their outdoor activities would use up juvenile energies.

“What is the state of the apartments?” Cassandra asked. “Are we ready for tenants?”

“I think so, Miss,” Tom said. “We got all the keys and locks sorted out today. And Ethel painted the numbers on the doors, so we can easily identify the keys.”

“Yes, I saw the numbers done in the gold paint. Thank you Ethel. And, Mary, thank you for suggesting that we use 1A and 1B for the main floor, and 2A, 2B and 2C for the upper floor. It will make it easier if we decide to have more than one room per apartment.”

“An’ I’ve got the bolt on the door at the top of the kitchen stairs, Miss, as well as a lock and key.”

“Yes, we will want our privacy. We’ve a bolt on number 23, but if you find time, Tom, it would be good to have a lock that could be opened from above there too. Though I think for most of the time, we’ll just use the bolt in both houses. Still, we are going to all have to be aware that there may be people in the houses who could come down to the kitchen when they are not wanted. In particular, we have our housekeeping money and some of your savings in this room.”

“Do we need to talk about how we plan to offer meals and baths and such for the tenants?” Mary asked. “I think we are learning with the Jefferys that the times that they choose for meals and baths can make it easier or more difficult to meet their requests. And that is after just a few days.”

Tom said “I’ll ’ave a bit more time now that we’ve done with settin’ up the rooms. I can give a’ ’and. Prob’ly need some lifting jugs o’ water until we sort out ’ot water upstairs. An’ I’ve been thinkin’ of how we could pour away the waste water rather than carryin’ it down again from the main floor, since on the top we’ve the water closet. Maybe a drain from the washstand.”

“That would be a help,” Mary said. “We should think where to try the idea.”

“What about 1B? The down-spout goes just to the right of the window. If we ’ad a washstand with a bowl that drained, it shouldn’t be ’ard to put a pipe through the wall.”

“While I admire your enthusiasm and ingenuity, Tom, I think we had better be cautious so we don’t damage the fabric of the house,” Cassandra said.

“I might know a mason who could advise, Miss. Should I ask ’im to come round?”

“Might it be wise to pay him for his advice, so that he may tell us the advantages and disadvantages?”

“’e’d prob’ly like that. No risk.”

“And Tom, since it is in what is the dining room of the house, perhaps we could think of a way that the bowl can be hidden when not in use. In fact,

before we get your mason round, perhaps you can prepare a rough example of your idea.”

“That makes sense Miss. What’s in your ’ead sometimes looks diff’rent when its wood and metal.”

\* \* \*

On her second morning at B and J, as she thought of the haberdashery, Cassandra asked Mr. Jones if she might show him an idea she had had. She did not tell him that she had the idea from the moment she applied for the job.

“Yes, Miss Match. What did you have in mind?”

“If I am not mistaken, your trade is largely by word of mouth from those who have already dealt with you or by walk-in custom, which was how I first entered your shop some weeks ago for some items I needed.”

“That is probably the case. We have on two occasions put an advertisement in the local Brighton newspapers to announce important anniversaries of our business, and that did seem to increase trade for a while. But you are, I believe, correct in your description of how we get our business.”

“Mr. Jones, part of the difficulty of selling haberdashery items is that many of them are needed only on occasions. So the reading of an advertisement may be distant in time from the need for your shop and its products. Advertisements do, I believe, work best for special events that will shortly be upon us. You need some way that is ongoing as a reminder or as an introduction to your business.”

“And you have an idea of how to do that?”

“I can show you one idea upon which your opinion, and perhaps that of the rest of the staff, might be useful.”

“You said show, not tell.”

“That is correct. You may recall I asked if I might borrow a couple of needles and pins yesterday evening. Here is a rather clumsy version of what I had in mind.”

Cassandra laid a small envelope she had made of stiff paper on Mr. Jones’ desk. It had written on it:

Bartlett and Jones Haberdashers and Drapers

The Ladies’ Rescue

followed by the address.

“But this is just a bit of paper,” Mr. Jones started to protest.

“Examine it more carefully, please.”

Jones picked it up and realized there was a small card inside. Pulling this out, he found two threaded needles, one with white thread and one with black, and a few pins carefully pushed through the card so that it was still flat and the thread wound to keep it tidy.

“Hmm. That seems a useful item. I presume we would get the outer envelope printed and possibly glued by a printer?”

“And possibly the card as well, to get the Bartlett and Jones name in front of people.”

“But we couldn’t charge much for them, it is more or less a ha’penny item.”

“I think they could be for sale for that sum, but put in with sales that are above a few shillings as a bonus to customers. The object is to get the shop name and address spread around.”

“Who would we get to make up these little items?”

“We could have Sally and Joan work on them when custom is quiet. I suspect that we will give away quite a few, but never many at a time. Perhaps if the outer part were printed and left flat, we could make and assemble them more or less as needed, since the components are very much a part of the shop stock.”

“It may be worth a try. Can you get a printer to suggest how much it would cost?”

“Certainly Mr. Jones. Would you like me to do that today?”

“Take some time after your mid-day break, Miss Match. But ask a couple of printers. It’s not my line of trade, and one never knows what they’ll say if they think they have the advantage.”

“I concur wholeheartedly, Mr. Jones. May I show Mr. Collier and the young ladies?”

\* \* \*

In the last week of June, Mr. Arbuthnot sent a note saying he had a pair of enquiries about the apartments in number 21. One was from a gentleman stating that he and his wife wanted to spend weekends in Brighton. The other was from a widow who was already lodging in Brighton in a situation similar to that operated by Mrs. Crompton, but who wished more private accommodation.

Cassandra arranged with Mr. Jones that she would take an hour from half-past one to half-past two as her mid-day meal time. By note she alerted Arbuthnot that she would come to see him to discuss the responses that should be made to these enquiries.



Arbutnot said “I believe that the London gentleman is possibly the kind of tenant we initially discussed. However, I have no knowledge of the truth of his wife, nor yet what accommodations they desire and services they would expect.”

“How do you recommend we proceed?” Cassandra asked.

“I understand you are now occupied most days at Bartlett and Jones. So perhaps Mrs. McNair could show Mrs. Naismith, the widow, the available apartments?”

“Yes, that would be possible. And the gentleman and his wife?” Cassandra was going to accept prospective tenants presented at face value unless it threatened her income and assets.

“Mr. Tait is intending to stay at an hotel this coming Saturday to view properties. Could he visit you late Saturday afternoon? I would like to come at the same time to meet the gentleman, and also to get a look at what you have done with the properties.”

“That would be acceptable, though number 23 is occupied and I would prefer not to disturb the Jefferys. Can you ask that Mr. Tait send word of a time between three and six that we should expect him?”

“Certainly. And Miss Match, you may be assured I shall do my very best to make very sure that our revenue – for I watch my commissions carefully – is not compromised by late rental payments.”

“Thank you Mr. Arbuthnot. Business does not do well when payments are uncertain.”

“Before you go, Miss Match, I will mention that I have heard that you and your ... shall we say company ... are doing rather well with acquiring and restoring furnishings. Would you – that is the collective you – be interested in doing so for other property owners? In managing properties, I have mentioned that we deal with a number of tradespeople, but new furnishings are a significant investment. I believe there might be opportunities.”

“Indeed. Come and view number 21 with Mr. Tait, and then we will arrange to talk later. I will suggest that Mrs. McNair and the others be present. They all have contributed ideas, especially young Tom Souton. And Maud has proved a highly competent buyer.”

“I had heard that. Some of the merchants are, of course, inclined to look down on people who have escaped the Workhouse, and also those of the Hebrew faith, with whom you have, I understand, been able to conduct business.”

“Mr. Goldman and his family have proved very helpful and straightforward. I suspect that their hard work and tight bargaining are a source of jealousy. In time, I will probably also be similarly regarded, but I’m afraid that cannot be helped. I will deal with whoever is willing to deal fairly and with courtesy, and hope that we may all prosper together.”

“Well said, Miss Match. And a good afternoon to you.”

\* \* \*

Returning to the haberdashery, Miss Match had an appointment with Mr. Jones to negotiate her position, assuming he would like her to stay. The other staff had recognized the cleverness of the Ladies’ Rescue idea. For a few shillings, the business name and address was printed on paper rectangles that could be easily folded to make the envelope and on cardstock for the pins and needles. Cassandra had realized that would allow different names for different versions of the sewing kit to be added by hand. It turned out Mr. Collier had fine penmanship and a hundred kits were produced easily in a couple of days.

The first lady who was given one – she bought nearly 10 shillings’ worth of curtain material and some hooks besides – was delighted with the little gift and bubbled with how she must show her friends. In the next couple of days several ladies came by to ask how much one had to spend to get the bonus.

Cassandra had had the foresight to confer with Mr. Jones on this subject, and it had been decided that the kits would be threaded on a cord and hung from the top of a cabinet behind the counter. They could be easily pulled off since they were threaded just near the edge at the top, but while hanging were in full view of customers. Mr. Collier wrote a fine notice that was attached at the top of the string of sewing kits:

1/2 d

Gratis with purchase 3 shillings or over.

By the time Cassandra’s two week trial expired, there had been a modest but noticeable increase in trade.

“Miss Match, you seem to have fitted in here quite well,” Jones said.

“Thank you Mr. Jones. I have enjoyed my time here, and trust I have shown that I may be useful to the business.”

“Yes. And you seem to get along with the rest of my staff.”

“Some businesses run on the owner or manager telling everyone what to do. I have found most situations are more conducive to profitable work when the workers can function without direction but still carry out what is desired by the owners. It is not, of course, always easy to accomplish that, and there are always some staff who are looking for pay without work.”

“I noticed that you donned an apron and rolled up your sleeves to reorganize some of our drapery stock. You are not a stranger to manual labour.”

“There have been hard times in my past. I prefer to keep those memories as a motivation to do what I can to avoid penury and a source of gratitude that I have been fortunate in more recent years.”

“Supposing you were to be manager – well, assistant manager – here. What would you expect, and what could we expect of you?” Jones asked.

“Mr. Jones. I believe I can provide ideas of how to increase trade and how to be efficient with the assets the business possesses, namely the premises, the stock, and the staff. You have, in Mr. Collier, a shop man who I believe is reliable and interested, but who could learn more about the shop’s products and customers. The two girls are quite young. As with most such employees, they will wait to be told what to do, pass their time with the least trouble possible, and hold out their hand for their wages at the end of the week. It may – and of this I cannot be certain – be possible to interest them in being more positive in their role. Action rather than reaction.”

“You have already given some signs of that, Miss Match. How would you like to be recompensed?”

“First, I am not sure that my role here needs to be for all the hours you are open. There are quiet times. You do need the books kept, and those need daily attention. In such matters, I always believe two people should be working to verify each other’s entries. That avoids not only error but also fraud. And also reduces suspicion of fraud, which can be corrosive of the personal interactions of the company.

So if I join Bartlett and Jones, I should be present often, but perhaps for a reduced number of hours, thereby reducing my wage.

Second, however, I believe that for a business to involve its staff, there should be reward when the general prosperity increases. Thus I would suggest that you consider setting aside a proportion of the profits to be divided among the staff.

I see your eyebrows rise, Mr. Jones. But notice I said "profits" not "revenues". If there is no profit, then there is no distribution.”

“Yes, I suppose that is true.”

“Now you have had me working on your books, which generally are in good condition. They could, perhaps, be adjusted or more correctly augmented to reveal more clearly costs and gains. I have more to ponder before being precise on that subject. However, from the accounts I have a knowledge of what Mr. Collier and the others are paid. It is of a pace with what other businesses pay.”

“What is it you propose, Miss Match?”

“Bartlett and Jones, from my reading of the accounts, is returning a gross profit on the operation of a little over £600 per annum. But I believe you own the premises. Renting would cost you perhaps £100 to £150, though I am not fully current with Brighton figures. So let us say for discussion that

£450 is a fair value of the return, free and clear.”

“I had not thought of looking at things so,” Jones said.

“I believe that I could usefully apply my particular skills for about half the time the shop is open, and sometimes working on accounts when it is closed with you or with Mr. Collier. For that, I would expect to get – if the business grows as I believe it can and should – somewhere above £75 per annum.”

“That is preposterous!” Mr. Jones expostulated.

“Of course it is,” Cassandra rejoined. “If, and I stress that, if you were paying me a wage, or paying me only a wage. What if we were to agree that my remuneration – for working more or less half the hours the shop is open – were to be 10 shillings a week and 30% of the profits over £450, after allowing £125 paid to you as owner of the premises as rent. That, by the way, is one of the adjustments in the accounts that I propose, since it more correctly values the cost of the shop.”

“You have given me much to think about, Miss Match. May I sleep on it?”

“Of course. If you do not feel comfortable with any arrangement we come to, then there will be trouble down the road. Why do we not talk again on Monday? You can pay me 10 shillings until next Tuesday night, assuming we come to a suitable agreement to start on the Wednesday morning.”

“Thank you, Miss Match. Could you ask Sally to bring me some tea? I think I need some.”

\* \* \*

Adeline Naismith called on Saturday morning. She was a woman of possibly fifty, and had clearly been a very handsome woman in her earlier years. Indeed she was still quite striking. However, her clothes, though good quality and impeccably clean, were of an earlier fashion.

Cassandra was at the haberdashery until three o’clock, so Mary and Maud greeted her. They showed her all the rooms in number 21.

Mrs. Naismith asked “Can meals be provided?”

“We can probably provide meals, but not with personal service,” Mary replied, remembering a discussion earlier in the week that the major constraint on providing service was that the staff was of a fixed and quite modest number.

“My situation is that my income is handled by a solicitor here in Brighton on behalf of my late ... husband’s estate. My preference would be to know in advance my costs for board and lodging. An hotel would be nice, but beyond

my means I fear. Currently I am in a boarding house, with all its rules and detailed charges for this and that.”

“We may be able to propose a rent that is inclusive. We have done so for the family in the adjacent house. Can you leave your current address and when I have talked with Miss Match, our manager, we will send a communication to you.”

\* \* \*

Mr. Tait was a middle-aged gentleman who apparently worked in some form of bank. That was a world outside the experience of anyone in the house. What they did understand, almost immediately, was that the nominal Mrs. Tait was not his wife. She was, however, dressed conservatively and comported herself with quiet decorum. Despite his intention to come at the same time, Arbuthnot sent an note saying he would be unable to be present.

The couple looked at the different rooms and asked which were available together. Could meals be provided? And other questions, both weighty and trivial. Cassandra was uneasy with this couple. She sensed they would be troublesome, if not outright causing trouble for her small empire.

After they left, Cassandra and Mary retired to the kitchen for a cup of tea.

“I did not feel at ease with Mr. and Mrs. Tait,” Cassandra said.

“He was a man used to getting his own way, and that his own way was the only way,” Mary said.

“We want revenue, but perhaps we should forego this opportunity.”

“I would not oppose that,” Mary said.

“They have not indicated which rooms they would want, so perhaps, if they do ask, we can suggest that those are no longer available.”

“That might be the easiest exit. But we do need to find occupants for our rooms, I fear.”

\* \* \*

On Sunday afternoon, there was a knock on the kitchen door. It turned out to be Mr. Arbuthnot.

“Mr. Tait came to my residence – how he found it I don’t know – but he said he wanted to negotiate only with the owner, and not with some underlings in dresses. I said that I would have to consult the owner, who was difficult to contact and may not be able to reach "him" before Sunday night.”

Cassandra said “I appreciate your care, Mr. Arbuthnot. Truthfully, we were not at ease with Mr. Tait. We suspect he would not be a comfortable tenant. As you have observed, we try to treat all persons with courtesy, and expect to be so treated ourselves. Would you be very inconvenienced if we decided to decline a proposal to him? We recognize – indeed it affects us also – that it does mean foregone revenue.”

“Actually, I was going to suggest the same. I don’t like such intrusion into my Sunday.”

“Then let us seek different tenants, Mr. Arbuthnot. We will likely offer Mrs. Naismith a trial of a month or so if she is interested.”

“I suspect her resources are not great, but that she would be little trouble. And she has been in Brighton for almost a decade, I believe.”

“Very well, Mr. Arbuthnot. Thank you for taking the trouble to come and talk to us. Shall we see if the Jeffery’s will allow you to see the repair Tom made to the double bed?”

\* \* \*

By the Wednesday following – now into July – Adeline Naismith had accepted a tenancy of 36 shillings and 11 pence per week, of which 35 shillings would come to the house. She would occupy room 2C, the smallest room, but would eat in the kitchen of number 21. She moved in on the Thursday and joined them for dinner.

“Welcome Mrs. Naismith. I hope you will not object to the informality of our somewhat unorthodox arrangement,” Cassandra said.

“It will be, I think, an improvement on the boarding houses where I have resided since I became widowed. I found having to verify all the different charges very onerous, and though your charge is likely somewhat greater than I usually paid in a week, I am hopeful that I will feel more at home.”

“You’ll like the food ’ere, Mrs. Naismith,” said Tom. “We ’aven’t ever ’ad such good grub ... I mean food.”

“Indeed, whatever is about to be served smells wonderful.”

This evening, Ethel had prepared a beef stew with dumplings. Mrs. Naismith was surprised, almost shocked, to be offered a second helping. Ethel explained “I made plenty because the Jeffery boys have a good appetite, and we don’t like to run out. We serve them first, and once we’ve had to have some bread and cheese to make up a full meal for ourselves, but tonight there’s still some in the pot. You want some more too, Tom?”

“Silly question,” Mary answered, but with a smile.

\* \* \*

That same day, Arbuthnot sent word that there were three other enquiries. Tait had been annoyed that no proposal would be made – Arbuthnot had presented the case that the owner had complete and total confidence in Miss Match and would not in any circumstance countenance overruling her management. But then, Tait was a man who would always be annoyed with every situation.

One enquiry sought a single room, preferably quiet and upstairs. No meals would be needed. The gentleman wished to have a room to get away from London from time to time, and to do so on the spur of the moment. He wished a three month trial, for which he was willing to pay in advance, and would accept a tenancy sight unseen if Arbuthnot could provide a decent description and an assurance it was comfortable.

Cassandra and Mary together developed a proposal of one and a half guineas per week, which they suggested Mr. Arbuthnot round up to £20 guineas per quarter. They proposed room 2B, which overlooked the garden. They would ensure the fire was laid and fresh linen on the bed and washstand. There would be a bottle of boiled water and a tin of biscuits. If a note was left under the stone labelled "2B" on the shelf in the front hall (Tom had set this up), hot water would be brought up in the morning at a time requested between half past seven and half past nine, and could also be requested in the evening until nine.

Mr. Forsythe – that was the name he gave anyway – accepted this proposal. He came with a woman on the Saturday following and they left early in the morning of the Monday. They were quiet and were hardly noticed. So now 2B and 2C were rented, at least for now. And number 23 was a hive of juvenile activity.

Negotiations on the other rooms – 1A, 1B and 2A – also moved forward, though not quite so rapidly.

2A rented for six months from the start of August to a lady named Sarah Cameron who was a writer of novels. She wanted a room with a good window where she could write. No meals were wanted, but she did ask if it were possible to order some small foodstuffs so she could have sustenance while she worked. She planned to come for periods of a few days at a time when she wanted to work intensively. There was also a request to have writing materials on hand. For the food and other items, money would be put on account in advance. Arbuthnot had asked specifically that Cassandra include that provision. They did not wish to chase debts.

This left the main floor of number 21 still to rent, plus the rental of number 23 after the Jefferys departed. However, in the second week of July,

Arbuthnot sent a note saying he had an enquiry he would like to discuss. Cassandra met him during her mid-day break.

“Miss Match, I have a somewhat unusual request from a Mr. Archibald Turcotte, who is a solicitor and barrister who deals with chancery cases. He is persuaded the smoke and stink of London are sufficient to move his office to Brighton, from whence he can journey by train to attend court when it is in session. He plans to purchase a house here, but wants an office, and asked if I had suitable property for rent. I believe the main floor of number 21 would be suitable, particularly if it is possible to put a connecting door between the two rooms.”

“We would want to ensure our costs of removing some of the current furnishings and putting in the door were not wasted, Mr. Arbuthnot.”

“Indeed. And I will suggest a Mr. Brougham, a builder I have used in the past, come to suggest if the wall through which the door must pass is bearing a load.”

“That is a matter I would not have considered. Thank you, Mr. Arbuthnot.”

“Your reaction suggests you would not oppose having a lawyer’s office in your house.”

“Not at all. By now I believe you are aware I consider the principal goal is to ensure a return on investment of either time or money.”

“Indeed. It is why I enjoy working with you, Miss Match. You get quickly to the point and your decisions generally align with what I would myself choose.”

\* \* \*

Frederick Brougham was a small, wiry man. He wore a suit, but in the manner of a man who had not worn suits for very many of his forty-something years.

“Miss Match, I can’t say for certain that this wall bears a load, but I’d not put in a door without a good frame.”

“Would you do that in masonry?”

“I think in timber, but what you would see would be overlaid on some fairly heavy pieces. Those need not be planed since nobody would see them. But I think at least 4 inches square, and possibly a plate of iron at the bottom to spread the load, just in case.”

A price of £12 was quoted, including the door and the finishing wood, but not the painting. Cassandra met again with Arbuthnot, and a proposal for 3 guineas per week, payable quarterly in advance, was proposed, with a 15 guinea outfitting fee. The rental would include fires in each room and gas



light. The outfitting was to cover the connecting door and assistance of Tom to install furniture for the office.

Mr. Turcotte came by train the next day to consider the rooms. Mary showed them to him, pointing out that they were set up as residential apartments. Turcotte was not deterred by this, and noted that they were a good size and appeared comfortable. He was rather brusque, but not rude, and asked directions to Arbuthnot's office.

Thus in early August the house was in a minor turmoil as furniture had to be removed and the door installed. Mr. Turcotte came with a Mr. Henry Mortimer, his clerk, to view the rooms. He asked if Miss Match could be present, and it was arranged at a time convenient to her work at Bartlett and Jones.

"I like the appearance of the work, Miss Match. Have you a suggested paint?"

"Mr. Soulton, our young man, has some varnish that is not too dark. There is a fashion for dark colours and varnishes, but perhaps we might suggest a lighter tone would be helpful for office work."

"Yes. That would suit.

Now we have another question. We have realized that our office may from time to time have rather sensitive documents. We will be bringing in a strong-box or safe, but have thought that the corner here in the rear room would be suitable for a bed for Mr. Mortimer."

"Would this be on a permanent basis, or just from time to time?" Cassandra asked.

"Mr. Mortimer, I think that is for you to decide, but I am sure that Miss Match is considering costs of heat and hot water, cleaning and other expenses."

"I appreciate your directness, Mr. Turcotte," Cassandra said.

"If suitable arrangements can be made, I think it would be simpler if it can be permanent," said the young Mr. Mortimer.

"I shall consult with my housekeeper, Mrs. McNair, who you have met, and will communicate what we think will cover our costs. We have a tenant in 2C who eats with us in the kitchen. Her rent is just under £2 per week, inclusive of meals and linen, but her room has no fire. A rather crude approximation would be that the room is half of that. Mr. Arbuthnot, of course, takes a commission. We prefer to have a fixed fee and avoid detailed bills. I would think something around a pound a week, but we will need to do our sums."

"So Mr. Mortimer would not have to arrange a place to live, nor meals nor laundry?" Turcotte asked.

"No. But he might have to put up with a late dinner. We eat after we have served the family in number 23, though their tenancy ends in mid-

September.” Cassandra had a fleeting thought that Mr. Turcotte might be interested, but Arbuthnot had said something about him buying a house. And probably he had a wife and family and servants ....

“It would be very convenient, except for my bed being in the office,” Mr. Mortimer said quietly.

“If you can suffer the clutter of our kitchen, I can show you some partitions and some screens that our Mr. Soulton fabricated. We use them so baths can be taken in privacy by the stove. It saves carrying water, and possibly spilling it on floors and doing damage, and as well is so much warmer for the bather,” Cassandra suggested.

Thus they all trooped down to the kitchen, where Mary and Ethel had just finished a batch of shortbreads, both sweet and savoury. Cassandra noticed the nostrils of Messrs. Turcotte and Mortimer twitching.

The men regarded the partitions that Tom had constructed for Cassandra and Mary. These had doorways which were curtained, and they were open for a foot at the top to allow ventilation and light. Mary pulled out the bathing screens, saying “We use these for when we take our weekly baths here in the kitchen. It means we are in the warm, yet have sufficient privacy.”

As she said this, she held out a small tray of the shortbreads with Ethel’s Sweet and Savoury labels.

“These are remarkable!” Turcotte said. “Miss Match, I will gladly pay a guinea and a half per week for Mortimer if we can have refreshments twice a day with biscuits such as these.”

“In which case I will write up such a proposal. If a partition such as these around our sleeping area are acceptable, I think we could have Tom construct them. They would be installed in a way that would allow their removal without damage to the existing structure.”

“Are you satisfied with that, Mortimer?”

Mr. Mortimer could only mumble through his second shortbread.

\* \* \*

Undoing the furnishing of 1A and 1B was almost as much work as furnishing them. The double bed for 1B had to be sold, but it was one that Tom had repaired in a way not dissimilar to the bed Mr. and Mrs. Jeffery were sleeping in. Thus it could be sold at an attractive price that was still profitable in a small way to Tom, Cassandra, and Mr. Goldman, who brokered the sale. Before Turcotte had departed with Mr. Mortimer, it had been decided that the sideboard and sofa in 2A would stay, but the table and chairs would go. Tom had little difficulty with a partition for the corner

niche of 1B, and a bed was found fairly easily. Maud, now coming into her own as a buyer and seller of linens and drapery, found the necessary bedding.

Mr. Mortimer came to Brighton a week before his employer. He fitted in easily to the household, though now the large table in the kitchen got cleared for meals. At this time, everyone was a little wary. The original denizens of the kitchen took some weeks learning about Mrs. Naismith and Mr. Mortimer.

Mr. Turcotte decided to move the desks – one huge one for himself and two modest ones for his clerks – along with some document cabinets, chairs and the safe from his office in London. He would keep a room in Lincoln's Inn as a formality, and would use his club when he needed to stay in Town.

Mr. Arbuthnot, when Cassandra saw him, was all smiles. Mrs. Turcotte, if Arbuthnot's narrative were accurate, took the view that her role in life was to spend all of Mr. Turcotte's wealth. She had cajoled and pleaded and harangued her husband so that he purchased a very fine house in a fashionable row. And Mr. Arbuthnot was the estate agent who got the sales commission, which explained his smiles.

While Mr. Turcotte had two desks for clerks, it turned out that he did not have two clerks at present. In need of someone who could quickly and accurately copy documents and prepare correspondence, he advertised in the Brighton weeklies. He expected all candidates to be men, but the most promising turned out to be a young woman of perhaps twenty-five named Rose Bingham. Miss Bingham had been working in one of the offices of the Corporation of Brighton, but the pay was not particularly good and, as was learned later, her superior was pressing her for favours she was decidedly not going to confer.

Thus by the middle of September, the legal offices of A. Turcotte QC were fully operational at 21 Fortescue Road, Brighton. Mr. Turcotte and his family were furthermore well-installed a comfortable walk away. Henry Mortimer was now called Henry in the kitchen, though everyone was careful to use Mr. Mortimer upstairs. Similarly Rose Bingham was Rose when she came to the kitchen for water for tea, while remaining Miss Bingham upstairs.

\* \* \*

The primary outstanding issue, of course, was the tenancy of number 23. The five offspring of Mr. and Mrs. Jeffery and the reality of just three true bedrooms when six would have been ideal created an inevitable arithmetic conundrum. Fortunately, Mrs. Jeffery had a sister, Jessica, who was married to William Grant, a merchant in leather and owner of a tannery. They had but two children, Penelope and Alfred, who were 15 and 13 respectively.

The Grants came to Brighton for the last weekend in September, arriving on the Friday and leaving on the Monday. Mrs. Jeffery asked if Mary would be willing to provide refreshments and dinners for the Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons and evenings, and what would be the charge for this. It was decided £2 would cover the food and service, and would madame like Mrs. McNair to arrange wine or other beverages?

Ethel and Mary, without undue effort, somehow outdid themselves, in particular with a roast of beef on the Saturday and a spotted dick with custard on Friday. By Monday morning, Mr. Grant had decided that his wife's whining could only be stopped by taking over the Jefferys' tenancy. They could sell the London house, and he could rent a two-room apartment closer to his office and the tannery. He didn't mind the stink, his nose had long ago become inured to it. And there was a pleasant young bar-maid in the local tavern nearby who was always friendly to him.

The two sisters – Mildred and Jessica – plotted further to have Mr. Jeffery buy or rent a house in Brighton. Jeffery needed little persuasion. He found the air in London noticeably unpleasant now that he was used to weekends by the sea. And the train journey was perhaps a bit of a chore, but by no means a torment. He was able to find decent lodgings close to his office, and London had plenty of places to eat.

For Cassandra, and for Arbuthnot, the tenancy change took almost no work. However, Mr. Arbuthnot was disappointed that he was not the agent who got the commission on selling a house to the Jefferys.

\* \* \*

The Jefferys did not, however, have a house in Brighton when their tenancy expired on September 13, but the Grants were not planning to move in until the 27th of the month. They had some furniture of their own they wished to bring, about which many notes were made. Maud complained "All that rush to get stuff, an' now we have to see where we can get rid of it."

Thus the Jefferys paid another two weeks' rent and stayed until almost the end, so the removal of furniture and wall hangings – the ones Cassandra had found and cleaned up – had to be done quickly. Fortunately there was a place to store them, as I shall relate. And there was transport, of a form, in Annabelle and her cart, while Archie Temple drank in the pub. Still, Tom and Maud had to work into the evening darkness two days in a row.

Cassandra and Mary were more sanguine. They now had tenants for all the spaces. Furthermore, Goldman had found a ramshackle barn in which they could store furniture if they took some care to keep out vermin. The supply and demand for second-hand furniture was very up and down, so

those unable to store items were harshly penalized, while those who could afford to be patient could make a healthy profit.

The barn was from a farm that the expanding town had gradually enveloped. It was likely to be demolished in the not-so-distant future, but would serve now to store large, relatively inexpensive items while buyers or uses were found. Maud soon realized how this game would be played and increased her buying and selling once she had a handle on what items were available or in demand, and Tom recognized how the barn would give him time to effect repairs and improvements to items acquired for a song that could later be sold at almost-new retail prices.

Tom and Maud found a pair of stray cats and put out a saucer of milk for them in the barn. Tom found a board that was rotten at the bottom where it was near the ground and knocked out a hole the cats could use to get in and out. A few days of milk had the cats regarding the barn as their domain, and rats and mice were not seen, and nor were their droppings after a good sweep had been completed.

Archie Temple had a few more pennies for ale for a while, and Annabelle got more regular oats. She came to know the route from Fortescue Road to the barn so well that Tom didn't need to lead her, just walk beside. Perhaps the nose bag when they got to the barn was an incentive.

\* \* \*

How the idea to take a day at the Great Exhibition came about, nobody now can recall. Nevertheless, the topic came into the dinner discussion sometime early in September, and very early on Wednesday September 17, Cassandra, Mary and the Soultions all took the first train to London. They got to London Bridge Station and found a horse-drawn omnibus to Knightsbridge where they joined the throng to pay their shilling each admission. (It was half a crown on Fridays and five shillings on Saturdays.) Once inside, they realized that they had different interests. Ethel and Mary decided they wanted to stay together to explore exhibits about improvements in domestic situations. Cassandra and Maud decided to stay together, but to wander wherever the mood took them, while Tom wanted to look at new tools and engineering exhibits. They agreed they would meet at a particular column near the entrance at half-past four.

"Has everybody some coins? You need a penny for the water closet." Cassandra asked, though she had already asked before when they were on the train.

"Yes. We'll be fine," Mary replied. Tom had already vanished.

There were crowds of people, but the space was so vast in the Crystal Palace that one was not oppressed with others. Mary had made up packets of bread and cheese that would fit in pockets or reticules. They had read that there were several places to buy refreshments, but that prices were quite high for the quantity available. Nevertheless, they decided that they would probably buy drink. No alcohol was permitted, but Schweppes and Co. had the contract to operate the main tea room, and were offering carbonated water, and that was what Cassandra and Maud chose. The others they did not see until the half-past four meeting.

By then they had been at the Exhibition since just after ten in the morning, given the time to get from London Bridge and obtain admission, and all were present just before the agreed time. Since none had a timepiece, this was somewhat of a miracle, but there were clocks in some exhibits. Since the newspapers and magazines, particularly the London Illustrated News, have used much ink on the topic, I will not spend words here describing different exhibits. It is the story of Cassandra Match and her party that is our business here.

“My poor feet!” Mary exclaimed. “There was so much to see, and all of it of at least some interest, though I found the Koh-I-Noor diamond impressive only for its size, for it was rather dull in appearance, though perhaps a diamond needs to be in sunshine to give us its best face.”

They walked from the Crystal Palace south and then east, looking for a place to eat before returning to London Bridge Station. Tom spotted a curry house, and asked what sort of food was there. The smells emanating were interesting, so they decided to try it. The head waiter was a Londoner, but wore a turban, but it was clear the cooks came from India.

Trying to cover up a London accent, the head waiter said “We have a range of authentic Indian curries here, some of which are exceptionally spicy. However, I suggest that you request mild curries, especially if this is your first experience of Indian food.”

“Perhaps you could recommend what we might try, but describe their contents in case there is something we cannot eat?” Mary asked.

The head waiter suggested four dishes plus some rice and naan bread. He also recommended they start with some papadums, and offered beer as drink. Mary asked him to point out the names on the menu that was on a slate so she could write them down to remember them. One was, he said, translated as butter chicken. That turned out to be a very tasty dish that all declared excellent. A lamb korma turned out to be lamb and vegetables in a sort of cream, though the waiter said it was a form of curdled milk. There was a curry of cauliflower and some sort of beans – the head waiter said chick peas – that the waiter said had many names. And finally one called sag paneer that was spinach with a form of cheese, though unlike any cheese

they had tried before.

The papadums that came first were very popular. Mary said she would have to look into how they were made – likely on a very hot frying pan and very quickly. And the spicing was most interesting.

Though they had ordered mild spicing, they all found the dishes quite peppery, though not in any way to the extent of needing to grasp for a gulp of beer. The waiter also brought some chutneys and something he called raita, which was more of the special curdled milk with cucumber in it.

Of course, when the bill came, the chutney and the raita were all additions, but the total was not outrageous and the waiter had, in fact, chosen well for them and they left him a respectable gratuity.

They were fortunate to find an omnibus that went close to London Bridge Station and caught a train not long after eight o' clock. It was still much later than their usual bedtime when they stumbled into the house and fell into their beds, even though all of them slept on the homeward train.

\* \* \*

It was a bright but cold December day when Cassandra took her mid-day break on the promenade. The air in the shop was heavy, and they had a fire going to make the space comfortable for customers, so Cassandra wanted some fresh air. In gloves and with a warm coat and muffler, she was enjoying watching the waves when she heard her name called from behind.

"Ah, Miss Match, I see you also like the fresh air despite the cold." It was Mr. Turcotte.

"Indeed I do, Mr. Turcotte. The day is cold, but the sun is shining."

"Yes, I would not have ventured forth on a grey day. But the sun had a stronger argument than a rather tiresome case we have been pursuing for some years."

"I hope you are finding your offices suitable, Mr. Turcotte. I can say that Mr. Mortimer has proved most congenial in our kitchen group. Almost like a family member."

"I'm glad to hear it, Miss Match. Actually, I did have one concern, but it is not related to the offices. I've a colleague I encountered in chambers a few weeks ago who hails from Falkirk." At this Cassandra felt a chill, but managed to keep her composure. Turcotte continued, "I mentioned your name, but he did not recognize it, so I wondered if I had mis-recalled your history."

"No, Mr. Turcotte. You recalled correctly."

Cassandra wondered how to respond. Turcotte was in law, and she did not know to what extent he could cause her trouble. She decided that

some directness might serve her best. She added "The history I gave you is correct in its main line. However, for reasons I do not wish to divulge, Mrs. McNair and I have altered our names. I can, however, assure you that our resources have been acquired through hard and honest work along with fair but profitable trade. There are people who may want to unjustly appropriate our modest wealth. In your profession, I am sure you are more than usually aware that two women alone may be vulnerable to loss."

"I thank you for your candour, Miss Match. From my dealings with you and Mrs. McNair, and from what Mr. Mortimer has said, I can only say I am most impressed with your skills in management of money and property. And if the parties that threaten your well-being should appear, I hope you will let me know. I may be able to help."

"Thank you Mr. Turcotte."

"I will add that when I first learned of the origins of the Soultions, I wondered whether I had made a bad decision in renting the offices. But you have made a fine choice of staff, Miss Match. They are all treasures."

"I think so too, Mr. Turcotte. And each day they seem to grow in ability and in confidence, which it has been a great joy to me to see. They were, of course, in the workhouse because their parents died. I fear that the poor souls who come there as infants are condemned to a sad existence with little chance of earthly redemption."

"Yes, yes. A sad situation. The Soultions were lucky you found them, and possibly vice-versa."

\* \* \*

That evening, when all had gone to bed, Cassandra crept over to Mary's cubicle.

"Mary. Can we talk for a minute?"

"Is something wrong, Cassandra?"

Cassandra related what had transpired that day with Turcotte.

Mary said, "Well, "honest" might not describe how we earned our living."

"It may be regarded as immoral, but was there not an honest exchange of money for service?"

Mary answered, "Yes. Though I wish such "service" were not in demand. I always felt so used and dirty. And it started because a man took from me what he wanted by violence, then I was accused of wrong-doing. Then I ended up having to submit to more men."

"Sometimes I'm surprised you can face men at all."



"I think I see them in two worlds. In one they are going about their business – sailors, tradesmen, workers, men of the professions. In the other, they are dropping their trousers and trying to clamber on top of me."

"I was fortunate to avoid that," Cassandra said.

"Did you enjoy ... you know ... that? With your husband, I mean."

"At the time, I think so. It was new, and the first time I was nervous and it hurt. But I liked the closeness and there were some moments of mild pleasure. Some of the girls in the house talked of waves of pleasure, in a climax, but I never had that in the few days before Gerald died."

"I used to pretend," Mary said. "The men would finish quicker and be gone, and I could clean myself off and wash myself out. I was lucky to never fall pregnant or get the pox. But you came to the house a bit over a year after I got there and let me get back to cooking. I was the under-cook in a large house, having been promoted from scullery maid when the cook found I was adept in the kitchen when both she and the under-cook got sick. I was only twenty-nine when the son of the house ... attacked me. It is fortunate for me that I didn't forget my cooking and baking."

"Let's hope our fortunes continue. So far things have gone quite well. I'm hopeful that we can prosper enough to provide for times that will not be so easy."

"Yes. To be secure. Though I must say, Cassandra, that in all my life I've not been happier than recently. For example, our visit to the Great Exhibition was such a treat. And with Ethel I had another pair of eyes that helped me see two sides to things."

"Yes. I can say the same about Maud. We have been fortunate. And I, too, am as happy as I've been in life. It is a concern, though, that Turcotte was, and possibly is, suspicious of us. As we become respectable members of Brighton society, we become more vulnerable to those who would reveal our past, even if that past is one we could not have avoided."

\* \* \*

Adeline Naismith became a regular occupant of the kitchen. She found that her small room was cool, small and oppressive in which to spend a lot of time, and the kitchen was warm and had the wonderful smells of good food cooking and the company of agreeable women. When she had been in a boarding house, she had become accustomed to many long walks on the promenade and even further to occupy her time. This was good for her constitution as long as it was not wet nor too cold, but she tired of the lonely perambulations. She continued to walk regularly, but now spent a good deal of her time in the kitchen.

However, there was the awkwardness of how to stay in the kitchen, when really she was a tenant and therefore expected to be in her room. Given the situation, after a few days where she lingered after meals in the kitchen, she waited until she was alone with Ethel, then asked "Ethel. You know that I am a woman alone. I find the kitchen here very congenial, but it is really not part of my arrangement to be here except at meals. Do you think Mrs. McNair and Miss Match would be happy if I spent time here but gave some help with the household tasks?"

Ethel replied "I'd think it likely there's somethin' useful you could do. Not sure how Mrs. McNair and Miss Match might take your asking, but generally I've found they listen to anythin' that might bring some profit or comfort to us all."

"To you all?" Adeline echoed.

"Yeah, we get paid a regular wage. Nothing special, but similar to other men and women in service. But Miss Match and Mrs. McNair, if we do something special, like extra baking and such, they work out the profit and give us a part. Well, it's all in the account books until we do a pay-out. And it's likely only a penny or two each time, but it adds up, though so far mostly for Maud and Tom. Mrs. McNair and I are just starting to get going well with the Treats, so there's not a clear profit to be seen yet, but there will be. And you've seen we 'ave good meals. None of this fancy stuff for upstairs and rubbish below."

"Yes the food here is very good," Adeline noted.

\* \* \*

At supper that evening, Adeline repeated her request to Cassandra and Mary. Cassandra responded "Mrs. Naismith, I think we would be amenable to your request. Can you tell us something of the skills or knowledge you possess that might be pertinent?"

This question might be taken to be sharp or critical, but it was said with a kind voice. Adeline replied "Before William and I were ... married, I was a governess to some young ladies. I am capable of some plain sewing, and I can knit. I have never spent much time in the kitchen, but no doubt I could learn to assist."

Cassandra asked "Were you asked to help the young ladies choose their apparel?"

"From time to time, yes, but I am much out of the way of knowing modern fashions."

"May I also ask if you read French?"

"I was required to teach French to my young charges," Adeline replied.

Cassandra said “I asked because it occurred to me that you may at least be aware of fabrics and how they can be employed. My ideas are just beginning to form on that. Perhaps it may be possible that you can interpret some of the ideas in a journal such as *Le Follet* which I have seen some ladies reading on occasion. It could be useful to some of the dressmakers and also to Bartlett and Jones in supplying the necessary fabrics and notions.

But I’m also sure that if you wish to be in the kitchen and are happy to assist in some of the day to day tasks, you will be welcome for that as well.”

Mary added “Even if you act as guardian of the door, it will be a help. Unless the weather is most inclement, we like to leave the door – at least the top of it – open. However, if we are running about the houses, this means anyone might come in and pilfer from us. And there are always minor jobs like attempting to remove stains from the tablecloths or napkins, or repairing small tears in the sheets.”

Thus Adeline came to spend quite a bit of her time in the kitchen. On her walks, she also undertook to deliver messages or do some of the shopping. From Ethel she learned some rudiments of the cooking and baking, and her hands and mind were kept occupied.

Cassandra and Mary, by asking around, found some older copies of *Le Follet* for her to read so that they all were satisfied with her abilities to understand the content. Adeline admitted to them all that at first this was somewhat difficult for her, but soon she became, if not facile, at least competent in reviewing the magazines.

\* \* \*

Late in November of 1851, Cassandra invited two Brighton dressmakers for a glass of sherry one evening. Mary and Ethel made some small treats, modest in appearance but potent in flavour and texture. After some introductions to the members of the kitchen household, and into the second glass of sherry, Cassandra said “Mrs. Ritchie and Miss Campbell, I must confess to having a reason besides a convivial social interaction in inviting you tonight. Mrs. Naismith here has been reading some issues of *Le Follet*. It publishes, as you may know, descriptions of the fashions in France, particularly in Paris.”

“I sometimes look at the illustrations, but it is difficult to know what materials are used, and some of the details. That would be worth knowing. Here we generally wait until some lady is seen wearing a dress purchased in Paris, and then we try to work out how to imitate it, but of course we are always out of date.”

“Perhaps,” said Cassandra, “we might think of how Mrs. Naismith could review with you a current issue of, say, *Le Follet*, and you could work out how to offer dresses in the styles described or illustrated.”

Miss Campbell said “We could certainly charge more for such offerings. I know I can sew them competently, but Mrs. Ritchie is better than I in developing patterns.”

Mrs. Ritchie added “Cynthia is too modest. Her abilities in sewing silk and satin far outshine mine. But she is right that I can develop patterns quite quickly from seeing a garment, and sometimes even from an illustration.”

“So I was correct in my surmise that you are – though ostensibly competitors – quite happy to collaborate?” Cassandra offered.

“Of course,” Miss Campbell said. “we pretend to compete, and do each try to get the business, but we really can’t afford to be enemies. Business comes in fits and starts, so we share the load. Like the bookmakers when they get too many wagers on one horse, we lay off the work when we have too much and take it from those who have a surfeit.”

“Then let me propose that we form a modest enterprise as follows. I will invest in a six-month subscription to *Le Follet*, Mrs. Naismith will review them with Mrs. Ritchie and Miss Campbell, and we will consider prototypes using fabrics that I can find and purchase through Bartlett and Jones. If we keep good records and measure our success – hopefully there will be success – then we can consider how to organize a continuing arrangement for our mutual benefit.”

“So you would not ask any financial investment from Miss Campbell or myself?” Mrs. Ritchie asked.

“Nor from Mrs. Naismith,” Cassandra answered. “I will fund the magazine subscription and the material, but you will all be contributing your expertise and time. By my rough reckoning, I think that the two of you making the dresses will do about three times as much as either Mrs. Naismith or myself, so if we divide any net proceeds into eight shares, we will give one each to Mrs. Naismith and myself, and three each to Mrs. Ritchie and Miss Campbell. This is, however, a trial. You should each keep track of the number of hours you spend, and of course, of any revenues or expenditures.”

“I believe that is very sensible,” Adeline said. “We all get to explore if the idea will give us a satisfactory reward for what we put into it without, hopefully, risking ruin. And I, for one, am prepared to do my best to make it work. But are the two ladies who will actually sew the garments amenable?”

“It’s definitely worth a try. And the shares are of profits, not revenues,” said Miss Campbell.

“That’s so. I’m agreeable,” said Mrs. Ritchie.

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By the Winter Solstice, the residents and workers of 21 and 23 Fortescue Road were all busy. All the enterprises Cassandra had put in motion were

seeing progress. It was too early to report any great profits, but there were positive signs, and no evidence of calamity, or even a minor loss on any of the enterprises, at least when looking at the operating figures.

On the morning of Sunday, December 21, the gas light was needed to eat breakfast. As she finished her tea and toast, Mary said, to nobody in particular, "How many of us will be here for Christmas dinner?"

"Ethel and Maud and me'll be here for Christmas dinner, but Joe Dixon's asked us round for a glass and a sing-song in the evening."

"And tonight's Tom's birthday, and I've made a cake," Ethel said.

"Congratulations, Tom, 15 at last," Cassandra said, and others echoed the sentiment.

"Regarding Christmas. I'll be happy to be here," said Adeline. "I've really nowhere else to go."

Mary picked up her thoughts. "Perhaps we might omit the Christmas pudding on the day itself, and save it for Boxing Day. I thought to have an At Home and invite Mr. Goldman and his wife along with Mr. Cohen, possibly Mrs. Crompton, and Mr. Arbuthnot and his wife, whose name I must confess I do not know."

Mary said "We have only the kitchen here where we can receive them. It may not suit some of them."

"True. But the persons I have mentioned mostly know us in this place. Nevertheless, Mary, you have pointed out that we are not yet to the point of being fully middle class citizens of Brighton. Do you think we should perhaps hold a reception in a hired space, and perhaps not on Boxing Day?" Cassandra was beginning to doubt her idea.

Mary responded "No. I think if we want to show a welcome to those who we regard as friends, let us do it in our home. And I think perhaps we should prepare invites for, say, half-past 10 for our immediate neighbours as an opportunity to get to know them, then invite others who we already know at half-past two. Maud, Ethel, Tom: do you have anyone you'd like to invite?" Mary was in full gallop now the idea was launched. The immediate neighbours were, at this moment, hardly more than acquaintances, and some more or less characters in accounts related by the Soultens, whose interactions with the below-stairs residents of the street had allowed some information to be gathered.

Mary added "Henry. Will you be here for Boxing Day?"

Henry answered "I will probably leave on Christmas Eve to get to my family's home in Hatfield, Hertfordshire. Mr. Turcotte has allowed that we will close the office until Monday, December 29. Thus I shall return on the evening of December 28. I shall be sad to miss what I am sure will be a very congenial gathering."

"That's a pity," Maud said in such a way that Cassandra realized the

two young people were forming an attachment.

Adeline said "Should we invite Mrs. Ritchie and Miss Campbell?"

Cassandra said "Indeed. Can you write those please, Mrs. Naismith? For the afternoon, if you will, since they are our associates in the dressmaking enterprise."

\* \* \*

December 21, 1851

Dear Mr. Goldman,

Mrs. McNair, the Saultons and I would be very pleased if you, your wife and Mr. Cohen could join us At Home on the afternoon of Friday, December 26 at half-past three. If I am correct, this will not interfere with your sabbath meal.

I understand that you may have some foods or drinks that you would not consume. Perhaps you could communicate with Mrs. McNair so that you may be at ease in sharing our hospitality.

Yours,

Cassandra Match

\* \* \*

Mr. Cohen came by late in the afternoon on Tuesday 23rd to talk to Mary. He was apologetic that the Jewish dietary rules were quite extensive, but said that he and the Goldmans were among the very few Jews in Brighton, so were more or less forced to be fairly liberal in interpreting the kosher kitchen. He said that they would avoid shellfish and pork, and would not have meat and dairy products in the same dish, so cheese and meat would not be put together or eaten together.

Mary suggested that there would be some sherry and some lemonade to drink, along with possibly some hock. There would be the sweet and the savoury shortbreads, which were made with butter and cheese, but no lard. There would also be some sandwiches with smoked salmon.

Mary said she suspected that the Christmas pudding – beyond its very name – would not be acceptable since it had beef suet in the pudding and milk in the sauce that was traditional to go with it.

“Actually, Mrs. McNair, it is probably the suet that is the problem for us, even though it is not from a pig. Our kosher rules make no real sense. I gather Catholics do not eat meat on Friday for some similar reasons. I confess I did once have a piece of Christmas pudding before I learned that is what it contained. And I must say it was most tasty. Perhaps someone will in future find a way to make the pudding without the suet.”

“If there is sufficient demand, I’m sure that will happen, Mr. Cohen. Just this October, we were in London for the Great Exhibition, and we ate afterwards in an Indian curry house. New people bring new tastes and dishes, and these become part of the general selection, I am pleased to say.”

“Indeed Mrs. McNair. My sister-in-law Rachel will no doubt be asking you how things are made.”

“And perhaps I will ply her with questions about Jewish delicacies.”

“Please do. She should get more into society. She fears the prejudice against us.”

“We will do our best to show her a kind face, Mr. Cohen.”

“Thank you, Mrs. McNair. We look forward to your At Home.”

“Oh. I nearly forgot. Miss Match and I also wondered if there are others in your household we should invite. It is not kindly to extend an invite that does not include family members at this time of year.”

“That is appreciated, but I am a bachelor, and Joshua and Rachel’s children, a young man and woman, have emigrated to America. Both have married and live near Boston.”

“Then we will welcome the three of you and try to bring a sense of family to the occasion.”

\* \* \*

That evening, Cassandra asked “Maud, were there any messages from either the Forsythe’s or Miss Cameron?”

“Not messages as such, but I saw Miss Cameron in the street and she told me she was going to Edinburgh for Christmas and would not be here until the New Year. The Forsythes did leave a note – I was about to put it under your stone – and they will not be here either, though as usual there was no additional information.”

Cassandra said “The Grants will be spending Christmas Day at the Jeffery house. They have asked for breakfast only, and also said that it should be a very light breakfast of just toast and marmalade. No doubt they will

want meals on Boxing Day. I did not, however, invite them to our At Home, as I wish to preserve the business nature of our relationship. Ethel, did you get the invitations done for our neighbours?"

"All done. And I got to meet some of the servants too."

"Perhaps you would like to invite them too. But possibly the kitchen is not big enough."

"We could invite them on the Saturday night, after dinner. That's the 27th." Ethel said.

"Certainly. Do so. It will serve us well to know our neighbours, both above and below stairs."

You know, Mary, if Forsythe gives up the tenancy in 2B, perhaps we should keep that room for ourselves, as a receiving room."

Tom, whose plate had emptied very quickly, said "You could have a folding cot or two so the room could be used if needed as a bedroom. Or perhaps I could build a rather simple sofa that could be turned into a bed by removing the seat cushions."

Mary said affectionately "Tom, I don't know where you get all these ideas, but it is always a joy to hear of them."

\* \* \*

The 11 o'clock At Home was rather sparsely attended. Jeremiah and Nora Ormsby from number 25 and Michael Yarrow and his daughter Elizabeth from number 24 came. The rest sent their regrets. Cassandra was not sure this was simply a polite snub, or if the excuses were real, but Maud assured her she had talked to people on the street, and those who declined the invitation seemed disappointed they would not get to meet those at Numbers 21 and 23.

Mr. Ormsby was in excellent cheer. "Miss Match, Mrs. McNair. I'm exceedingly glad to make your acquaintance."

His wife Nora added "And we're embarrassed that we didn't think of an At Home to get to know you. But we're so glad that someone has taken over here who seems to want to get things on a proper footing."

Cassandra answered – not quite sure if the Ormsby's would be entirely happy to know about the Forsythes – "Having these houses to manage has been a great opportunity for me and Mrs. McNair. It allows us a modest place to live, a partial income, and time to consider other opportunities."

"Yes, of course," Nora responded. "You're now the assistant manager at Bartlett and Jones. And I've heard rumours about Mrs. McNair's delicacies."

At this, Ethel presented a platter with the sweet and savoury short-breads. Mary used the opportunity to say "Miss Ethel Soulton here has been cooking with me. She made these."



There was a short pause, then Nora said "Well, the rumours are true. These are truly excellent. And are they as expensive as I hear?"

Mary said "We have only a limited capacity here to make them, and there is considerable demand, so we have set the price rather high at the moment, mostly to avoid too many disappointed customers. But I expect if our success so far continues, we will be able to consider expanding our production somewhere nearby and manufacture them more efficiently."

"Supply and demand, Mrs. McNair. Supply and demand," Ormsby said. "I'd do the same."

Meanwhile, Cassandra was welcoming Michael Yarrow and his daughter, who was thirteen. Cassandra explained her situation as manager of the houses and assistant manager of Bennett and Jones. Michael Yarrow, who seemed to be perhaps a few years older than Cassandra, explained that he was a superintendent of railway maintenance.

"Mrs. Denton, our housekeeper since my wife died three years ago, said she is sorry she had to miss coming today, but she was kind enough to make Christmas dinner for Elizabeth and I, so I gave her leave to go to her sister's family until Monday."

"So you are fending for yourselves."

"Mrs. Denton has been teaching me how to keep house and cook," Elizabeth said, then added, "But everything here seems to be so much nicer."

"Mrs. McNair and Ethel are very good cooks," Cassandra explained.

"Yes. You are getting a bit of a reputation. A very good one, too," Michael said. Cassandra noted a sparkle in his eyes. He was a good-looking man.

NO! I must not countenance any intimacy with a man, she thought. If only the laws did not strip a woman of her fortune should she marry. Or polite society allow men and women to enjoy each other's company outside of marriage.

Despite these worries, Cassandra did enjoy her conversation with Michael Yarrow and his daughter. They were able to talk about their employment and the challenges of each. Elizabeth was a serious young woman. She could probably use some better-fitting clothes, Cassandra was thinking when Michael said "Elizabeth could probably learn much from you and Mrs. McNair about the finer things in life. My wife took an interest in trying new ideas around the house. Mrs. Denton is honest and straightforward, but her perspective is somewhat limited."

Adeline was nearby, bringing a plate of smoked salmon on thinly sliced brown bread, which she offered to the guests, and said, "I'm usually here, and if Elizabeth feels like a cup of tea sometime, she is welcome to knock. If we're busy, then we'll say so, and if not, we can have a nice conversation."

"Thank you, Mrs. ...."

“Naismith. Adeline Naismith. I live here and help out with odd jobs around the houses and also do some translations of the French fashion magazines to assist some local dressmakers.”

“There does seem to be a lot going on. All of you involved in different employment or enterprises. I’ve seen your young man – I’ve heard him addressed as Tom – with his hand cart or leading a donkey cart with furniture.”

“Yes, we all keep busy and try to improve our fortune,” Cassandra said. “Tom, in particular, is very talented and full of ideas. You see these cloth screens. We use those so residents of the house can have privacy to bathe in the kitchen near the stove. It is warmer, and saves a lot of labour carrying water upstairs and down.”

“A splendid idea. I may have to get him to make some for us. Bathing is such an effort when water must be carried and when the room is cold.”

“I’m sure Tom will be willing when he can find time. He is our general factotum, does work for Mr. Goldman with Maud in gathering, repairing, refinishing and delivering furniture, and keeps coming up with lots of ideas.”

“Is this as your employee?”

“In part. We try to ensure that initiative and effort are properly rewarded. It is such a waste when people of energy, like Tom, are not given a chance to benefit from their efforts. You know the Soultions were put in the Workhouse when their father died a couple of years ago. Mary – Mrs. McNair – and I hired them from there. Their father had been a joiner, and their mother had done some upholstery. We’re so glad they joined us.”

“A true find, Miss Match.”

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The morning At Home lasted only an hour. It served its purpose of developing the acquaintance of Cassandra, Mary and their household with those who came. There being no great sense in clearing away, since the kitchen would serve again at half past two, Cassandra and Mary decided to take a walk. Maud asked if she might join them, and was warmly invited to do so. Having dressed to keep warm and dry, the trio left.

Adeline said she thought she would take a nap, and asked to be woken at ten past three if she were not already down. Ethel was reading Charles Dickens "A Christmas Carol". Her reading had improved greatly in the past few months. Tom said he would be in the shed – he had a small stove he had made that could be lit if he were cold – as he wanted to continue work on some ideas he had for simplifying the repairs to furniture.

“Don’t get your clothes dirty, Tom. It’s me gets to clean them,” Ethel cautioned.

“Nah. I’m just doing some drawing on paper and putting some bits of wood and metal side by side to see if I think things’ll work. Not doing anything with paint or glue, or even cutting stuff up.”

Ethel sat in one of the pair of wing chairs that somehow had been acquired. She could sit under the gas light not far from the fire. A cup of tea was on a stool beside her. Puss came and jumped up and squished in beside her leg. Ethel thought of putting her back on the floor, but the cat was already purring, so she allowed the intrusion and continued reading until around 1:30 both girl and cat were asleep.

Thus until around two o’clock, all was calm in the kitchen. The trio of walkers came in. Ethel awoke. Puss jumped down and slowly ambled off to her place under the scullery sink, where not a minute later Tom washed his hands. Not much was said as everyone started to put out the refreshments, set the large kettle to boil water, or rearranged the chairs.

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“Mr. Arbuthnot, welcome,” Cassandra said in greeting.

“Miss Match, may I introduce my wife Theodora.”

“Very pleased to meet you, Mrs. Arbuthnot. Your husband has been most helpful to Mrs. McNair and I in getting ourselves established here.”

“Percival has been most complimentary in how you and Mrs. McNair have managed to establish yourselves here in Brighton. And I was fortunate enough to try some of the famous shortbreads at the house of one of his associates.”

“If the guests have not descended upon them like a plague of locusts, there should be some on the table. Do help yourself.”

“Thank you, Miss Match. I will not miss the opportunity.”

“Oh, There you are Mr. Goldman. Mr. Cohen. And you must be Mrs. Goldman.”

“Please call me Rachel. Joshua has been most pleased to work with you and your family, if I may call them that, Miss Match.”

“Then I will suggest you call me Cassandra. And indeed, though we are a mixed bag here, I do consider Mary – Mrs. McNair – and the Soultens as family. Do come in and shut the door. Tom will take your coats and wraps and hang them up.

Now there are labels on the dishes. Apart from some Christmas pudding and the mince pies, I think all else is likely to be acceptable to you.”

Mary had come over and added “But do feel that you can ask Ethel or me what is in anything. We want you to be welcome in our house.”

"You are very kind to take the trouble. So few would do so," Mr. Cohen said.

Mrs. Crompton was sitting in one of the wing chairs with tea and a plate of refreshments. She and Adeline were talking about the dress designs that the two dressmakers were working on when these two ladies arrived. Arbuthnot, Tom, Maud, Goldman and Cohen were seated at the small table with glasses of beer. Ideas for property and furniture were being exchanged. Cassandra would have liked to sit in on the conversation, but she and Mary felt they should circulate. For the two dressmakers who had just come in, Tom brought down two more chairs he had stashed at the top of the stairs.

Ethel busied herself with making sure everyone had food and drink, but managed to exchange some greetings with most of the guests. She was becoming less shy as she realized she had skills and abilities that were as good or better than most.

"This bread brings out the best of the salmon," Cohen said to her.

"Mrs. McNair taught me how to make it so it is firm enough to slice thinly, and to use a really sharp, thin blade to slice the salmon. There are just a few drops of lemon juice on the fish to maintain its colour."

"So you are to be thanked for it. I am most appreciative, Ethel."

Mary and Rachel were deep in conversation about pastries. An invitation for Ethel and Mary to the Goldman's kitchen was set up for next Wednesday afternoon, the last day of the year.

It turned out that Mr. Goldman had done business with Mrs. Ritchie, and after a while he came over to where the two dressmakers were talking to Mary and Rachel.

"Have you sold my wife a dozen dresses, Mrs. Ritchie?" he teased.

"Not a thread, Mr. Goldman. But I would be most glad to do so."

"But Joshua. You know I sew my own clothes."

"And they are well-sewn. But it is high time you had something special. I suggest you make an appointment to see Mrs. Ritchie and let her show you some nice clothing for different occasions. Probably not the latest frills, but still something of quality and style."

"I'm sure that I or my colleague Miss Campbell will have something that will both please and serve."

"Are you not competitors?" Rachel asked.

"Well, we are and we aren't. Perhaps friendly competitors. Each of us alone would probably not do nearly so well as when the ladies of the town can compare. But if one of us gets more work than we can easily handle, we share the load and the profits."

"As do most businesses here in Brighton," Goldman added. "A bit of fair competition keeps everyone on their toes. When people try to cheat or take excess profits, then eventually we all end up poorer."

Mrs. Ritchie said "Well said. Some people accuse you of unfair practices, Mr. Goldman. And I admit I was inclined to accept their prejudice until I got more acquainted with you. Look how you work with the people in this house. There are those who want to profit by a cartel that keeps profits high without much effort. I've realized that you work long and hard. I will be more than happy to do what I can to provide Mrs. Goldman with quality clothing."

People were enjoying the At Home. Unlike the morning, it lasted almost three hours. As the last dishes were cleared away, Mary said "I hope nobody was expecting dinner after all the things on the table. Not that there was a morsel left."

Ethel said "Tom, there's some bread cut and buttered and some slices of ham."

Tom's appetite was seemingly inexhaustible.

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December 27 was a Saturday. Cassandra expected, and her expectations turned into a reality, that business would be brisk at B and J, as she now thought of the haberdashery in her own mind. Some shops did open on Boxing Day, but most decided to close, and there was talk of the day becoming an official holiday. As she arrived at a quarter past eight, Sally and Joan were coming down the street, but Collier had already opened the door and had several lamps lit. These three, and Mr. Jones and his wife, had not been invited nor informed of the At Home, as Cassandra did not wish at this time to allow them any more information about her status than was absolutely necessary.

Cassandra entered and called out "Good morning, Mr. Collier. I trust you had a good Christmas."

"Excellent. Thank you, Miss Match. Good morning Joan, Sally."

Cassandra said "I think that there will be quite good custom today. For those who have received presents of garments, there will likely be a need for alterations. That means needles and threads, ribbons and buttons, etc. Perhaps not so much material, but we shall see."

As Jones and his wife were away, Cassandra and Mr. Collier were in charge. Normally Collier and the two shop girls were quite able to cope, but this day Cassandra was called upon to assist customers, and she stayed the full day. As she anticipated, most of the sales were of smallish items, but the volume led to a decent revenue. By the end of the day, Cassandra was tired.

The only notable detail in the day was that a boy arrived with a note from Abraham Cohen for Cassandra, inviting her as his guest to a pantomime. It

was a slightly odd invitation from a man who must be of Cassandra's age or a little older. Still, it might be amusing, and Cassandra liked talking to him. The boy had been told to wait for a reply, which she quickly wrote and folded.

Mr. Cohen had written that if she accepted, he would collect her at six o'clock on Tuesday following, as the performance started at seven, and if she wished, they could have a light supper after the performance, which was scheduled to end at nine given that many of the audience would be young.

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"What a coincidence!" Mary said at the dinner table. "I had a similar invitation from Michael Yarrow and his daughter Elizabeth. Will you accept?"

"I already did," Cassandra said. "I have enjoyed talking to Mr. Cohen when we have been at auctions and other times. Are you going to go?"

"If Mr. Yarrow had asked me on his own, I think not. But Elizabeth should be a suitable chaperone."

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Mary and the Yarrows left earlier than Cohen came for Cassandra, as they were going to eat at a local establishment first. Mary was both nervous and excited. Truthfully, though she was more experienced in the interactions of men and women than a vast proportion of the population of women, she had never been asked out by a man. Cassandra hoped it would be a good experience for her.

Cassandra realized that she, also, had never been asked out before. She had had a number of propositions when at the house in Greenock, which one of the large and rather uncouth men hired to maintain security would ensure did not go beyond verbal expression. She had always declined. Despite the fact she had enjoyed the carnal aspects of her very short marriage, she had kept her focus and avoided entanglements. She wondered how things would go with Abraham Cohen.

These thoughts were pushed aside by the practicalities of getting to the theatre, lining up to get into the building, deposit coats and scarves at the cloakroom, and finding their seats. Abraham – they decided on their walk to the theatre to graduate to first names, though many couples remained more formal even after their marriage – had booked seats in one of the boxes. There was much hubbub and excitement in the stalls, which had many children of all ages. Cassandra spotted Mary and the Yarrows on the balcony and gave a gentle wave, which was answered. The noise was too

great for real conversation, and Abraham and Cassandra simply enjoyed the scene that presented itself.

Then the gas lighting in the auditorium was turned down and the orchestra – if 7 instruments could be called that – started the overture. Soon the curtain rose and an entirely preposterous spectacle devolved. But since pantomime fails if it is not entirely preposterous and outrageous, the performance could be judged a success.

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On exiting the theatre, Abraham asked “Would you like something to eat or drink?”

“Indeed, I feel some appetite. Possibly a glass of beer or cider and a sandwich or a Scotch egg. There is a public house nearby where Mary and I had lunch one day.”

“I have never tried a Scotch egg. Do you think it has any pork in it?”

“I have always been told not, but perhaps it would be better to wait until Mary or Ethel can make some so that we can be sure.”

“I apologize for the awkwardness of the kosher restrictions. We don’t obey them strictly – that would be nearly impossible in Brighton – but it is a way of honouring our heritage, and we try to do our best.”

“I think it good that you keep that remembrance. Do you have memories of Odessa?”

“Some. Mostly domestic scenes and events. And the end, where the Greeks – the Russians stood by and watched – attacked us. They burned our house, and my parents could not get out. Rachel pulled me away down an alleyway and we hid in a dung-heap. She covered my mouth so the Greeks would not hear my cries.”

“That is terrible! I had not heard about this atrocity before. I am so sorry.”

“You, least of all, need to be sorry. You have shown us kindness.”

“Abraham – now that we have agreed to first names when we are not in public – I will tell you it is simply courtesy, not kindness. I have not always had an easy life, and I have seen many bad things, but I have learned that courtesy allows me to communicate with all sorts of people, and thereby do business to my benefit. However, I enjoy our conversations and the pantomime tonight, with all its silliness, was a very pleasant escape from everyday concerns.”

They were now at the door of the public house and went in to the warm, smoky and beery main saloon bar. There was a table in a corner where a couple were just leaving. Cassandra said “I will sit down and hold the table.

Here is half a crown for some food and drink. I will have cider and bread, cheese and pickles.”

Abraham looked concerned, about to refuse the coin, then took it and went to the bar. Cassandra watched as he waited for the barmaid to finish with another customer, then ordered and got their drinks.

“I decided to have a glass of stout,” he said, setting a glass of cider in front of Cassandra. “And here is your half-crown. You are my guest tonight, as I was yours on Boxing Day. But I did not want to argue before we gave our order.”

“Very well. But you should know I am a very independent woman.”

Abraham said “That was clear from the moment we met, Cassandra. Can you tell me more about your own history? You have said that your life was not always easy, so perhaps some things must be omitted.”

“Thank you for being understanding, Abraham. Ah. Here is our food.”

Abraham had ordered the cheese and pickles as well. Each plate had a large wedge of bread and a pat of butter as well as a good portion of cheese, which turned out to be Double Gloucester and well-aged. The pickles were small onions.

Cassandra decided that Abraham was someone who she could treat honestly, at least in general terms. She continued “As I was saying, I appreciate your understanding. I will tell you that I grew up in a middle-class household with my father in trade. When I was seventeen I eloped with a man of whom my parents disapproved.”

“You are, or were, married?” Abraham looked concerned.

“’Were’. He died of cholera four days after we married. Five days after we eloped. I was not accustomed to being ’Mrs’ so kept my spinster title.”

“And you went home again?”

“My family disowned me. I had, however, some skills learned in the family business that I was able to use to get a position keeping books and managing a sort of public house – Mary and I describe it as a private hotel. Through contacts with tradesmen and guests I was able, with the approval and sometimes in partnership with the house owner, to undertake profitable trading of goods for hotels and restaurants. But then it appeared that there were people who wanted to close down our enterprise, so Mary and I decided it was time to move on.”

“Would there be anyone trying to follow you?” Abraham was perceptive.

“We are not sure. It is improbable, but nevertheless we are cautious.”

“Am I correct in thinking you have changed names? In my own case it has been simplified and rendered in the English fashion.”

Cassandra took in a breath. “Indeed, we thought it best. And the story we tell of our past is largely correct, but the location has been altered.”

“I will not ask for details, especially concerning the private hotel.”



“Thank you, Abraham.”

They both took some minutes to enjoy their food. Then Abraham said “Do you plan to stay in Brighton for a while?”

“Yes. If possible, I would like to become a member – a respected member – of the community.”

“This may be an impertinent question, but does that include the possibility of family and children?”

“I could take that as impertinent, but you and I seem to cut through the cloud of niceties and get to the center of things.

I will say that in my very brief marriage, I found great joy in the partnership, however short-lived, that I had with my husband. You will not hear me say his name – it ties me to a past that is gone, and to a future that is barred to me. The reason is that if I marry, my husband would control all my fortune. It is not huge, but it is mine, and it allows me independence. I will not say where or when, but I overheard a conversation between some men who were laughing about one of their group who married a Mrs. Sarah Guppy. You may have heard about her. In 1811 she got a patent on a method for building bridges. Quite a lady. However, a little over a decade ago, as a widow of 67 she married a man 28 years her junior, who proceeded to neglect her and spend all her money on gambling, horses and other, shall we say, entertainments. In 1842 she moved to Bath, where I believe she still lives modestly, but much less well than she should, I am sure.”

Abraham had been listening carefully. “Yes, the laws of property for women here in England are not very just. That is a great pity, as from our rather limited acquaintance, I find you a very congenial companion. I believe you are honest enough that when you look in the mirror you see what I see – a handsome woman. It is almost certain that there will be men who wish to court you, and from what you have said, that is not entirely unwelcome.”

“True,” Cassandra said with a tone of resignation. Then she added “Was your invitation this evening along such lines?”

“There is no sense denying that I wanted – want – to know you better. And given how many women have been victims of men after money, using laws that are so prejudicial to women, I can appreciate that you do not feel you can risk marriage.”

“Would you not bring down the wrath of your Jewish family and friends to marry a – do you say Gentile?”

“Yes. Or sometimes the Yiddish "goy", but I sense that has a pejorative tone in that language. And strictly, Jewishness is carried on the maternal line. However, my life is here, and Jews have enough troubles fitting in, without forcing the very few men and women who are marriageable into unsatisfactory unions.”

“Can I suggest that we try to be friends – supportive friends – and see

what we can do to help each other cope with the world?"

"Cassandra. That would make me very happy, and at the same time I can see how it could make us both quite frustrated. But better to be frustrated than to lose a friend."

\* \* \*

Mary was in bed when Cassandra came into the kitchen, using her key as the door was locked. She bolted it behind her, and heard Mary say "Cassandra? Is that you?"

"Yes, we went to that nice pub where we had lunch the day we got the houses. Mr. Cohen and I were both a little hungry."

"So were we, but since Mr. Yarrow and Elizabeth live across the street, I invited them here and we had some tea and cake."

"Did you enjoy the pantomime?"

"Indeed. It was extremely silly, but it made me laugh and we had a very jolly time. However, I worry Mr. Yarrow may be wanting to walk out with me. I'm not sure if I want that."

"It is not so different for me, but I found Mr. Cohen very sympathetic. He told me something of his history, and when he asked about me, he prefaced it by saying that he would understand if there were details I would prefer to keep private."

"It is not as if I would not like to have a companion," Mary said, as Cassandra put on her nightgown in her own cubby-hole and then came to sit on Mary's bed. "It's just that I'm not sure I could – well – become a wife to someone like Michael without being honest with him. I don't think it would be a fair partnership if I thought his finding out about me would end things."

"Surely it has not gone anywhere close to that yet?"

"No, but I'd rather not start if that might be the outcome."

"Abraham – Mr. Cohen – and I have decided to be friends and allow ourselves some time to get to know each other. We used the word "supportive" in our conversation. But I did tell him about Mrs. Guppy and how she was tricked out of her money through marriage. And how I do not wish to put my own independence at risk."

"Was he not disappointed?" Mary asked.

"I'm sure he was, but he was also understanding. The Goldmans went through terrible things to bring him to England. Nevertheless, we shall see how we get on. I feel very good about Mr. Cohen, though I wonder if I may be unable to give him the partnership I think he wants, or perhaps needs."

"I do not know if Mr. Yarrow has any intentions towards me, but I fear that he would toss me aside in an instant if he knew my history."

“If it comes to a serious relationship, you will probably have to tell him so that you do not have a sword suspended over your head. And if he then abandons you, he has proved he is unworthy of you. As I have told you before, your life until quite recently was one where your choices were few if any, and even those were dictated by the evil that had been done to you.”

“I know that to be true, but it is so hard to believe.”

\* \* \*

Miss Cameron did not renew her tenancy when it expired at the end of January. Around the middle of the month, over dinner, Cassandra asked, to nobody in particular, “Should we try to find a new tenant for 2A when Miss Cameron leaves?”

“Better ’ad if you want the income,” said Tom.

“Perhaps Cassandra has something different in mind,” Mary said.

“Thank you Mary. It occurred to me that when we had our At Home parties on Boxing Day, we had everyone here. But this space is where we live, sleep, do business transactions, and all else. We do not have a receiving room.”

“While this space is very comfortable and welcoming, it is not really suitable for meeting some potential clients or business associates,” Adeline added. Generally she was quiet, but lately had been finding her voice. She went on “When I go to look at furniture and such, I’ve noticed houses often have a room where visitors are received. I think you’re right Miss Match. And 2A is not large, but it has a good window. It could be made into a very attractive room. Though I don’t know what we’d call it.”

“The drawing room?” suggested Cassandra.

There was a general murmur of assent, but dessert forestalled further discussion.

\* \* \*

February 1, 1852 was a Sunday. All the household attended church, then assembled in the kitchen for a morning coffee and a Dundee cake Ethel and Mary had made the day before.

“How is the reform of 2A coming?” Henry Mortimer asked.

“Rather well, I think,” Cassandra answered.

“We’ve taken out the bed, but the settee is long enough that someone could sleep on it,” Maud said. “We just need to figure out suitable bed-clothes.”

Mary ventured "We could sew a large sheet so it is more or less a sack, but partly open, then it would not need tucking in. Then an eiderdown like they apparently use on the continent could serve for warmth rather than a set of blankets."

"Yes, that would do fine. It would only be used in a pinch for our personal guests. Or possibly, we could have a folding cot or two somewhere in the house too. What do you think, Tom?"

Tom was about to answer, but Maud jumped in. "We've a couple of folding cots in the barn. I bought them a few weeks ago. I was beginning to think it was a bad idea, and they wouldn't be useful. Still, I got them for a song. Tom. You'd better look at them to make sure they don't collapse when they're used."

"What other furniture do we want for the drawing room?" Cassandra asked.

"I'd think a table that is relatively small but can be made large enough for a dinner or luncheon. A drop-leaf design perhaps?" Adeline suggested.

"I've seen one or two," Maud answered. "But they need some watching. The drop-leaves are often uneven and then the table looks shoddy. I'd wager even Tom would have trouble getting them right."

"Maybe," said Tom. "But I'd give it a good shot."

Mary added "We need some decent chairs, but not fancy ones. Perhaps use some of the chairs we already have, and maybe get one or two more. And I think some side tables if we have a group."

Maud said "There's a nest of tables I bought last week. Tom's going to refinish them. Awful lot of rings from people putting their glasses down on them."

"Well, you'd better make sure the house pays for them so your own accounts give you proper credit," Cassandra enjoined. "And let us plan to have a meeting next Friday night after dinner to review our enterprises. Everyone take a look at your books before then. Henry, you will be welcome as an observer, and you may give us your opinion as well. We will try to make sure everyone is given their due and make some plans for the coming year. Adeline, I think perhaps we can invite the dressmakers for refreshments at eight o'clock that evening, so that we will be finished with discussing the houses, Mary and Ethel's delicacies, Maud's furniture and Tom's projects."

"It's hard to think that less than a year ago, we were in the workhouse," Maud said pensively.

\* \* \*

On Friday night, the meal was a beef stew and fresh bread, with dessert postponed until the dressmakers were able to join in.

Cassandra said "Let's get started on tallying up your wages and checking amounts owed."

Without anything being said, Ethel went and got the books.

Cassandra said "Ethel, how much is owing to each of you?"

"I've done the tally, Miss Match, and I had Maud check it. We had a bit of trouble sorting out Tom's odds and ends, but we think it's more or less right."

Tom looked very sheepish. "I lost track of some items. Then Maud showed me 'er notebook that she keeps in an oilcloth sack in her pocket to record things, and she got one for me, so now things are good."

"So what are the amounts owing?" Cassandra asked.

"Tom's owed £4 7s 6d. He only spent a bit on our trip to the Exhibition and a couple of tools. Maud is owed £7 11s 4d, and I'm owed £3 6s 8d. But would you like to double-check?"

"Not at this moment. I can do so later if I wish. But I do have a question for Henry. Henry, do you think Mr. Turcotte would allow you to put three small boxes in the safe?" As she said this, Cassandra took three cardboard boxes about an inch and a half high and 4 inches on a side out of a paper sack by her feet. Each had the name of one of the Soulton's on it.

"Ah. Yes. I see," said Henry. "I will, of course, have to ask him. But I am sure he will be agreeable."

"You don't want to keep them down here?" Tom asked.

"The kitchen is a busy place, and you all are accumulating some money. Ethel, can you write the amounts, your names and the date on slips of paper and put the slips in appropriate boxes. I will replace the slips with money when we know if the safe is available. Or some other secure place if Mr. Turcotte should decline our request."

In the event, Turcotte did not decline, but took some joy in seeing the young people prosper.

Cassandra said "Mary, tell us about Treats for the Tongue."

"Well, the books show that we had a gross revenue of £100 11s 2 1/2 d. Our ingredients cost us £25 0s 7d. I had some labels printed with the name Treats for the Tongue and

Supplied by Mrs. M. McNair, 21 Fortescue Rd., Brighton

below in smaller letters. Plus, I purchased some sheets of thin white card and worked out how to cut and fold this into some suitable boxes, into which sheets of greaseproof paper are laid to package the treats and delicacies. Those extras cost us about £3, and we spend about £2 10s on messages and deliveries, of which Tom got the lion's share, so we kept the money in the house, so to speak. We allowed, as we discussed at the start, 10/- per week for my apparent wage and 15/- for what we call 'rent and fuel'.

That left a net profit of about £22 10s, from which we calculated Ethel's commission."

There was a pause for a moment, then Cassandra said "You seem to be doing well. Ethel, are you happy with the arrangement?"

"Yes, Miss. I'm learning a lot, and I never 'ad any money like this before. Maud and I are going to shop for a new dress and things."

Mary said "Assuming business continues to increase, which it has been doing, I think I should increase Ethel's share to 4/- in the pound. Cassandra, are you still happy that rent and fuel are part of my compensation for acting as housekeeper here?"

"I see no reason to complain. If you have to take on premises to be able to increase your production, we will need to talk about arrangements, but for now, things seem to be going well."

"Very well indeed," Henry said. "I admire all this enterprise."

Cassandra said "We have been here 40 weeks. Less than a year. I can say that I feel very satisfied that we have done better than I had expected."

Maud said "If you'd told me I could earn this much with the furniture, I'd never have believed it."

Tom said "Same for me, Miss. I'm really happy to work on anything around here, making sure everything works, and do that first, in exchange for the great grub and a warm bed. And a regular bath. Never thought I'd think that beforehand. According to Ethel, I've made nearly £5 fixing things for Mr. Goldman and Mr. Cohen and making some screens and stuff for people and doing some odd moving with the hand cart. And I'm happy you're getting a bit too for takin' us on."

Cassandra said "I think we need to consider how Mrs. Naismith acts as watch-person and running errands, and lately watching the stove so food doesn't burn. Would 2/- a week gratuity be fair?"

Adeline answered "Actually, I love being here. It's cosy and the company is very congenial. But the pocket money would be a nice bonus."

"How are the houses doing?" Mary asked.

"Once more, let us ask Ethel."

"Um. I think ... I might have made a mistake. When I add up the rents and subtract the costs, it's over 150 pounds."

"I will look later, as the houses are under my management, both the investment and the expenditures. But I can tell you that 150 pounds – from which the investment to purchase the houses must be repaid – is about what I had estimated recently. It is why I felt we could use 2A as our drawing room. And, of course, my own income must be considered in that profit as well. It is, nevertheless, a good return, and I am much relieved."

Let us set out our dessert. Miss Campbell and Mrs. Ritchie should soon be here."

Indeed, at that moment, there was a knock on the door. Adeline answered it.

“Come in, come in. Let’s shut the door to keep the warmth inside.”

Tom took the ladies’ wraps and hung them on a hooks he had installed near the door last Autumn when he realized they would be needed.

Cassandra said “You timed things perfectly. We had just finished discussing our other enterprises. Mary. Can you and Ethel proceed with getting dessert ready? Hopefully we will have finished discussion of the French dresses trial quite quickly. Maud. Perhaps you can record numbers for us, and you and Henry can check our calculations.”

“We’ll be happy to,” Maud said.

Cassandra continued “Now I have recorded that the materials I sent from Bartlett and Jones to Miss Campbell were charged at £18 10s approximately, and those to Mrs. Ritchie – there was one very special silk – at £20. I paid 2 pounds for the Le Follet subscription in order to get it delivered promptly, and though there is some time to go before it expires, I suggest we add £1 to each of the totals for materials. Can you each tell me how many garments and total revenues? Round numbers for now. We can decide later if we need to be more precise.”

“I got £84 for 7 dresses that were using the new French designs,” said Miss Campbell.

“66 pounds for 5 of them,” said Mrs. Ritchie.

“That’s a gross profit of over 111 pounds in just 8 weeks, though it was the Christmas season,” said Cassandra. “Oh. But we did not account for your shop costs. Would 4 pounds a week total be about right including fuel and staff?”

“Quite close,” said Miss Campbell.

“I own the premises, so I don’t know,” said Mrs. Ritchie.

“Let’s allow 4 a week for each of you, so 32 for the period, and we can apportion over other garments. How many dresses total for the period did you each make?”

There was a pause while each lady looked at her account books. “18 for me,” said Miss Campbell. “16 for me.”

“That gives a shop cost estimate of about 12 and a half pounds for Miss Campbell and 10 for Mrs. Ritchie. So our net is about 53 pounds for Miss Campbell and 36 for Mrs. Ritchie. 89 pounds – over 10 per week net profit, and since we agreed 8 shares, they also are £10 each. Well done all.”

Miss Campbell had her mouth open. Mrs. Ritchie had a furrowed brow. Adeline had put her hand to her mouth.

“Well,” Cassandra continued, “We now need to apportion the spoils. But perhaps a glass of sherry or port.”

“Indeed I need one. That’s an extra 30 pounds,” said Mrs. Ritchie.

“But you might have sold some other dresses,” Cassandra cautioned.

“Some, certainly, but the French designs were definitely of great interest to a number of ladies.”

When the glasses had been filled and a toast made, Cassandra returned to the topic. “Mrs Ritchie, did you keep a record of the time taken to make the special garments?”

“Yes I did. They took about 20% longer to sew than most of my dresses, and I put in about an hour and a half working out the pattern for each. But I didn’t do all the sewing for all of them. Catherine did a good deal.”

“Yes. The silks were a bit longer to do, but not too bad.”

Cassandra said “Is it worth continuing our collaboration on the same basis? I feel sure Adeline and I can, with a modest effort, propose fresh designs and materials. I know Adeline put in some time before we began learning the particular terms in French that appear. But the hard graft was done by the two of you who wield the needles and scissors.”

Adeline said “I agree with Miss Match that Miss Campbell and Mrs Ritchie have done the lion’s share of work, and in future we may want to work differently. However, I have greatly enjoyed exploring the fashions, and am eager to continue if the rest of you are willing.”

“In my case, I’m quite convinced that the major share of the result of our experiment is new profit,” said Miss Campbell.

“Yes I can certainly go along with our arrangement,” said Mrs. Ritchie.

“In my case, I believe it is over 200% per annum interest on my direct capital investment,” Cassandra said.

“My goodness,” said Henry. “It still beggars the imagination. I am in the wrong career.”

“Of course, it WAS a new venture, and I did conceive it, but it all could have come to nought,” Cassandra cautioned. “Still, I am most pleased to have been able to promote local trade.”

“It has certainly been worthwhile,” Mrs. Ritchie said. “I noticed Mrs. Naismith made some good suggestions on which dresses we should propose. She did some drawings that helped us. If they were done larger, they could be used as window promotions, especially if we could water-colour them.”

“Around Miss Match, there always seems to be some ferment of business ideas,” Henry Mortimer observed.

\* \* \*

Just three evenings later, there was a knock on the kitchen door just before 9 o’clock. Tom was closest to the door and opened it to reveal one of



Joe Dixon's children, who announced "My Dad told me to come and tell you Archie Temple's died in the pub round the corner from us."

Cassandra told the child – a boy of about 10 or 11 – to come in and get warm while she got her warmest coat and scarf and would come with Tom and Maud. Ethel hardly knew Archie.

"Bring a lantern, Tom. We may need to find where the donkey is stabled."

"I think I know where that is, Miss," Tom said. "But you're right about us wanting a lantern."

They hurried away to the pub where Archie had, apparently, drunk a pint or two, then everyone thought he had taken a nap. Then he fell off his chair and the fact he was dead became apparent.

Cassandra joined the small throng in the pub. Tom introduced her to Joe. She listened to the confused talk about what was to be done. The publican had sent for a constable because he was concerned there would be trouble otherwise, and the constable arrived just after Cassandra and Tom. This man seemed unsure of what to do, but he did ask if there were any known family, and took notes that were clearly related to ensuring the death were from natural causes. He said he would inform the coroner, and then asked who was going to pay for a burial. This led to an awkward silence. Finally, Cassandra said "I have in the past engaged Mr. Temple to move things for me. He has a donkey and cart, so I will offer to advance up to two pounds to bury Mr. Temple, with the amount to be repaid from his estate."

The constable seemed unsure about this, but the publican said "Constable, this lady is offering us a way out of a difficult situation. I can't have Archie's body lying here in my public house. It isn't right."

"All right, Madam. I'll accept your offer to ensure a burial. Please can you give me your name and address. And can someone call an undertaker?"

Cassandra had one of her cards, which she handed to the constable, but there was some quiet discussion about who was the nearest undertaker. Joe Dixon settled things by sending his boy out with a note and saying "I've sent my boy to Conroy's. Let's hope he can get here quickly."

Cassandra said "Thank you Mr. Dixon. Tom and I will go to see that Mr. Temple's donkey is stabled acceptably."

Perhaps because it was a cold night, nobody accompanied Tom and Cassandra to the nearby yard behind a house where there was a lean-to shelter. Tom said "Archie rents this from the owner of the house for two bob a week."

The lantern had been lit before they left the pub. In the dim light from the lantern, Cassandra could see a rain barrel to capture water from the roof of the lean to. There was a rickety door, which Tom opened, causing a scurrying noise – rats or mice. Then a voice said "That you, Archie?"

Tom said "No, it's Tom Soulton and Miss Match. Who're you?"

“Tony. I look after Annabelle. Why’re you here?” This came from an urchin who could not be much older than Joe Dixon’s boy, but dressed in very tattered and dirty rags.

Cassandra said “Mr. Temple fell asleep in the pub and didn’t wake up. I’m afraid he’s dead. Are you part of his family?”

“Nah. I don’t think he has any family. ’e gives me food and a place to sleep in exchange for watching Annabelle when ’e’s in the pub.”

In the dim light, Cassandra could see Annabelle in a stall. She had her head turned and was watching them. They had seen the cart beside the lean-to in the yard. In the middle of the small space left over from the stall was a circle of bricks for a small cooking fire. The low-side wall of the lean-to was made up of the door and a wall of which the top third was a panel that clearly swung up and could be held by a hook and would allow smoke to escape. Even so, it would be smoky and unpleasant inside when the fire was burning. Against the high side wall was a cot, while against the low side was a layer of straw where the urchin clearly slept.

Cassandra said “I have told the constable I will advance up to two pounds to bury Mr. Temple, and that I will be reimbursed from Mr. Temple’s estate, though I suspect he has little beside Annabelle and the cart. We came to make sure Annabelle was all right. It seems that we will need to make sure you have a place to sleep and something to eat, but all else will have to wait for daylight.”

Tom said “I’ll stay here for the night, Miss Match, and make sure nobody tries to nick Archie’s things, such as they are. You take Tony with you and have him sleep in the shed. There’s some sacks there. He can probably use a good breakfast of eggs and bacon. I’ll give you my keys so you can get in through the yard gate. Tony, is there a candle here? Miss Match should take the lantern.”

It turned out there were a couple of candles, and Tom lit one and put it on one of the bricks of the fireplace, if it could be called that. Tony said “Archie said ’e did some work for a Miss Match. Said you gave ’im more work than anyone else. And I’ve seen Tom about. I’ll get my bundle.”

This "bundle" was a sorry and very small collection of a few items and some rags. Tony had an old coat much too big for him which dragged on the ground. It should be cut down. The cloth looked sturdy enough.

Tony said “There’s some sticks I gathered over there. You may want to make a small fire. Annabelle’ll like that.”

Tom thanked him with, Cassandra thought, a certain tone of gratitude. It was a chilly night. She would see if there were a spare blanket. No doubt it would need boiling after. Tony was filthy and likely lousy too. She was glad Tom suggested he sleep in the shed.

\* \* \*

Cassandra had asked Mary, Maud and Ethel if they could rise early so she could take something hot to Tom at first light. In the event, it was Adeline who arose early and started the breakfast. Eggs and bacon were inhaled by the definitely hungry Tony. Then with a tin jug of hot cocoa and some bacon sandwiches in greaseproof paper, Cassandra and Tony set off back to the yard where Annabelle was stabled.

When they got there, it was in the middle of an argument between Tom and a man who claimed to own the yard.

"I'm 'ere to get that donkey and cart, 'cos Archie owed me for rent of the stable," he said.

"You'll have to wait to talk to Miss Match and the constable," Tom replied.

"Whose she?"

"The lady whose paying for the burial against Archie's estate. And witnessed by the constable and all the customers in the pub."

"I'm still goin' to 'ave that animal and cart. Archie said they were mine when he passed on."

Cassandra was now close and said "Then I presume you have a witnessed document to that effect, which will mean I am out of pocket unless Archie had other property."

The man looked uncomfortable "Don't hold with no documents. Man's word and all that."

Tony said "And Archie gave you 4 shillings two days ago. Two for the week 'e was late and two for the week coming. I saw 'im pay you."

"Well, I ..."

"Sir. I am Miss Match. Who are you?"

"Jackson. Howard Jackson. I own this 'ouse."

"Fine, Mr. Jackson. I will suggest that as I have undertaken to bury Mr. Temple, which I urge you to verify with the publican round the corner so you may be assured of my integrity, my man and I will clear the stable and remove all Mr. Temple's property and provide for Tony. We will be gone by midnight latest so you may re-rent from that time forward."

"But,... All right. Was becoming a nuisance anyway. Me wife didn't like Archie comin' back drunk of an evening."

\* \* \*

Jackson went back into his house. Tom started eating his breakfast – he looked very appreciative of the sandwiches and cocoa.

Tony asked “You mean to provide me a place to sleep, Miss, an’ a bit o’ food.”

“Given what Tom and his sisters said of the workhouse, I will endeavour to keep you out of it. Will that be sufficient assurance for now?”

“Thanks, Miss. I’ve dodged ’em so far.”

Cassandra realized she knew essentially nothing about this urchin.

Tom had given Annabelle what few oats remained in a box in the stable, along with some hay and water. He brought her out into the yard.

“Shall I hitch up the cart, Miss?”

“Tony. Can you do that? Tom and I will bring out anything we can find of Archie’s. Is there anything of yours?”

“No. Miss. I left my bundle in your shed.”

Tom had raised the shutter that let smoke out, and presumably air in. The door was propped open and the sorry state of the small lean-to was now evident.

“Tom. Let us burn the straw bedding and sweep out this place in case Archie has hidden anything. As you put the straw on the fire, you can make sure there is nothing in it. But use that hay fork or the shovel – I don’t want you bitten by any rats if they are lurking.”

Tom started to do this, while Cassandra took out a few items of Annabelle’s tack. There was a sort of saddle used when Archie sold donkey rides on the beach and some spare, but rather dilapidated, straps. There were a few tools, some assorted and dirty kitchen items, and a three-legged stool. She put these in the cart, and asked Tony if Annabelle were secured so she would not run off.

“She won’t move normally anyway, but I’ve tied ’er up to the gatepost just in case.”

Cassandra got Tony to come and take away the ragged bedding. It was filthy.

“Just fold the blanket, Tony. We’ll burn the rest. If it’s boiled it will just fall apart.”

There were a few of Archie’s clothes hanging on nails. Cassandra had Tony put them in the cart too, after she had him check the pockets, in which there was a dirty handkerchief, some scraps of string and a penny.

“You’d better keep that, Tony,” Cassandra said as she saw him wanting to hide the found coin.

There were a couple of old beer bottles with water in them. Probably a farthing deposit if they were returned. Into the cart too.

By now the lean-to was getting clearer. Cassandra had Tony sweep out the stall, making pile of straw and dung. She was about to get Tom to put that on the fire, and she wanted to burn Archie’s palliasse, though it would need cutting up, when she had an idea.

“Tom. Before we burn any more, can you lift each brick. Use the shovel, as they’ll be hot. I want to check underneath.”

There was a small fire still burning, but straw burns rapidly, though hot, but Tom was able to get the shovel under a corner of each brick sufficient that Cassandra could see underneath. The fourth brick revealed a small metal box, and Tom moved the brick and dug out the box. Inside were some coins and an old letter. The coins totalled 14s 3 3/4d. Cassandra put them back in the box, which she had wiped with a rag.

“You’ve both seen the contents and know the amount. We will report that to the constable, and we will read the letter back on Fortescue Road.”

No more bricks revealed any hidden items, so they started to burn the waste from the stall, or rather Tony fed the fire while Tom cut up the palliasse and Cassandra used the hay fork to go through the straw. However, this revealed nothing of interest save a lot of insects, dust, and one mouse nest. The mice had left, fortunately.

By the time the nearest church clock struck 10, the fire was dying. The space was tidy and clear. They poured the water from the beer bottles on the embers and stirred them with the fork, then closed up and left.

\* \* \*

Back at Fortescue Road, Cassandra had Annabelle tied up in the yard. The cart was unloaded and the contents put on the bricked pathway in front of the shed door. Ethel and Maud came out to see.

“Tom. What should we do about the cart?” Cassandra asked. “It’s too big to get in here, and we can’t leave it in the street. At least not for long.”

“Could we ask Mr. Goldman if we could keep it at the barn?”

“Maud. Can you go to Mr. Goldman and explain what has happened and ask if the cart, and possibly also Annabelle, can be kept at the barn. If so, possibly Tony could be there as watchman. Ask Goldman what he thinks, and if he is not there, then Mr. Cohen.”

“Right. Miss. I’m on my way immediately.”

“Tony. Annabelle needs oats. Do you know where to buy some.”

“Yes. Miss.”

“Then here is a shilling. Buy as much as you can for that. Tom. Give Tony a good sack – we don’t want the oats falling in the road. And when you come back, we’ll talk about possible employment for you. As you no doubt heard, it may be possible that you continue to look after Annabelle in a barn Mr. Goldman uses to store some furniture.”

“Right ’o, Miss.” And Tony scampered away in his oversized coat.

“Ethel. Mary. Will you have time to get these filthy clothes and things in the copper?”

“We’re working on some of the Treats, but boiling clothes doesn’t require too much attention,” Mary said. “Oh. I sent Maud to Bartlett and Jones to tell them someone had died and you were attending to the funeral arrangements.”

“Oh. I’d meant to send a message and forgot. Thank you, Mary. Keep on with your cooking and I’ll watch the copper if Ethel gets it started. There’s a letter we found among Archie’s things. I’d better take a look at it. Tom. You’d better sort out these things. Make a list. Perhaps put a value on the tools. And if you can, make a guess at the worth of Annabelle, the cart and the tack. I want to be ready to answer any questions the constable or others may raise.”

“I’ll do that right away, Miss.”

\* \* \*

An hour later, everyone was seated at the big table. There was a pair of fresh loaves and slices of ham, along with pickles and a big pot of tea. Goldman had said he would be pleased if Tony looked after Annabelle and the cart at the barn. If Miss Match undertook Tony’s employ, then there would be no rental charged, since there would be someone watching the barn and its contents.

Cassandra said “It seems, Tony, we are to employ you. So we’d better know more about you, starting with your name.”

Tony looked uncomfortable. Tom said “Tony’s been dodging about to avoid being sent to the Workhouse. Does odd jobs running errands, like ’e was doing for Archie.”

“That’s fine, but we still need to know who we’re engaging to work with us. So, Tony, tell us about yourself.”

“Brown. Me name’s Tony Brown.”

“How old are you Tony,” Mary asked gently, offering a slice of ham on a fork and laying it on a slice of bread already on Tony’s plate.

“Not sure. Me Mam died when I was little. She told me I was born in 39. She said the Ides of March, but I don’t know what that means.”

“The 15th of March, 1839. You’re nearly 13, but you look so much younger,” Adeline said.

“’Spouse that’s right. Mam died when I was pretty small, and I don’t think I ’ad a Dad. For a couple of years, me Grandma kept me with ’er in an Almshouse, but had to hide me. Kids not ’sposed to be there. Then she

died, and I've been on the street since. 'Fraid of the Workhouse. Mam said to keep out of it."

"Right there," said Ethel.

Cassandra made her decision. "All right, Tony. Since Mr. Goldman is agreeable, if you wish you can be our watchman at the barn where furniture is stored. Maud. You'd better arrange a key for Tony."

"I got one copied on the way back from Mr. Goldman, Miss. Figured even if Tony didn't want the job, we'd need to have a spare key for someone."

"That, Tony, is the kind of initiative we like around here," Cassandra said. "Now I must go to my work at Bartlett and Jones, so I am going to quickly suggest how we will proceed.

First, I will offer to pay you 4 shillings per week as our watchman. That is the same rate as the others here started at, though they now have other arrangements that we believe are more advantageous. They get room and board here. Unfortunately for you, it will be more difficult to feed you the same meals as we have, but we will arrange something. Tom. I'll get you to look into a way that Tony can heat food at the barn.

Second, we will get you some decent clothing, though possibly your big coat can be cut down and made more suitable. We do, however, like to avoid passengers – lice and fleas – on ourselves and our clothing. Tom. If you have a spare set of clean clothes you can give to Tony, you can take money from the pot for some new ones. You've been growing and I think there are some you've outgrown, though Maud or Ethel may need to make some adjustments."

Tony's eyes were wide in astonishment.

Cassandra wasn't finished. "We'll get you at least one change of clothes. Those will be yours if you stay with us at least six months. We'll also set up an account so we keep track of feed for Annabelle. She could probably use a good brushing too, so there may be expenses for that to record. Can you read and write?"

"No Miss. Never went to school."

"Can you figure money?"

"Yes, I can count. Archie taught me."

"Well, once we get you settled, we'll see about teaching you to read and write. It's essential if you are to make your way in the world. For example, to send a message to me or Mr. Goldman or Tom."

"I'll offer to start that if you like," Adeline jumped in. "When Tony's settled, of course."

"For today," Cassandra continued, "Tony should take a bath and have one of the women check for nits. Then take Annabelle and the cart, along with some feed – pick up some hay if you can on the way – to the barn. Oh.

Mary or Ethel. Can you pack up some food and drink enough for a day or two for Tony."

Tony said "How do I take a bath?"

Tom said "Easy. We put up these 'ere screens around the stove and you doff your togs and get into that tub there which we'll have put water in."

Mary said "If you aren't embarrassed, one of us can help you wash your hair."

Tom said "First time, I was real uncomfortable 'till I got in that warm water. Lovely. Makes you feel real new again."

Cassandra said "Before I go, there was one more item. In the box Tom and I found, Archie had 14s 3 3/4d and this letter. It seems he had a sweetheart some years back. The letter had been returned with a note on the outside "Died of cholera, September 13, 1832." I won't read what the letter says, but it's clear Archie cared about her deeply."

\* \* \*

Cassandra got home after six that evening. The books at B & J had taken a bit of extra work due to a small error in an invoice from one of the suppliers. Dinner was going to be at seven that evening because of all the day's events. She found Mary in a state of excitement.

"We had a bit of a surprise," Mary said.

"Do tell," Cassandra responded.

"Well, Tony was very reluctant to take a bath, but Tom threatened to rip off his clothes and dump him in the bath, so he did as he was told and threw out the dirty clothes. I'm afraid we had to burn some of them.

Anyway, we told him how to wash his hair using the tin mug to rinse off the soap, and then said we'd pass the fresh clothing round the screen when he was ready. But he grabbed them too quick and knocked the screen over."

"So. Some awkward embarrassment, but not the end of the world," Cassandra said.

"But it seems Tony is really short for Antonia."

"Oh. So what now."

"She made a huge row about not wanting to be known as a girl, as that might attract the wrong kind of interest, with which I am in agreement. So Adeline and I – there were just the two of us here at the time – said to put on Tom's things that we'd put out. They fitted well enough, though a little big of course. We then combed out his hair for nits – we've decided to play along with the situation and haven't told the others. He went off with Tom and Annabelle and the cart. I think Tom's back in the shed."

"I'm not sure I like the idea of a girl alone in that barn."



“Nor me,” said Mary. “But it’s what he’s used to, and he does have Annabelle and the cats. And you’ve seen the tombstone of Phoebe Hessel in St. Nicholas’ churchyard, so it’s not as if a woman hasn’t pretended to be a man before. Tom is making some sort of small stove and he found a tin pot. Water might be a problem, though it seems there’s a pump down the road about a hundred yards. Tom fortunately put the bucket from Archie’s place in the cart. And there’s a sort of fenced area Tom says will do as a midden for waste.”

“That young man is a treasure,” Cassandra said, as the person in question came in.

“Is Tony settled all right?” Cassandra asked him.

“Think so. I’ll go back in the morning to check. I’ve made a small metal box for a fire. We need to find a safe place it can be used and not set the place on fire. I think I’ll find some old bricks and make a place for it by one wall and put the bricks in place of the wood where I run the chimney pipe out. For now Tony’ll have to keep it outside, but he’ll be able to make tea or cocoa and heat up some things.”

“Did you find some hay and straw?”

“Yes. We spent half a crown, but have enough for a while.

What do you intend to do with Annabelle, Miss Match?”

“Well, it seems that you’ve been working with her more than Archie this last few months, so I think unless someone comes forward with a claim, I plan to keep her. I’ll pay for Archie’s funeral ...”

“There’s a letter from a Mr. Conroy for you,” Mary interjected.

Cassandra picked it up and read it. “Yes, he says he’ll bury Archie tomorrow and send a bill for 30 shillings. Fine. And as I was saying, I’ll keep Annabelle until and unless someone brings a claim that can be substantiated, and then they can pay me back for the costs of the burial. But we’ll find something for Tony to do, and my guess is that Annabelle will be with us until her time is up. Have you any idea how old she is, Tom?”

“Well, I was a nipper when my Dad took me round to see her when Archie got her. She was smaller then than now, so I’d guess she was around a year old. Maybe eleven or twelve now. And I’ve heard they can live as long as 50, but I think 25 to 30 is more common. I meant to buy a brush for her. There’s one in Archie’s stuff, but it may not be any good, I’ll need to clean it up. She hasn’t had a brush in a while. On a warm day, maybe take her down to the beach and see if she’ll come in the water.”

“Well, let’s see how things go. You and Tony can look after her and see what business you can get with the cart or even rides on the beach. But do make sure Annabelle is well-cared for. Don’t overwork her.”

“That would be bad for business, Miss. She’s the main source of revenue in a donkey and cart. But I plan to get Tony to work with me to fix up the

cart.”

\* \* \*

The lives of the members of 21 and 23 Fortescue Road were now seemingly more settled. In the outside world, the newspapers had reported the loss by fire, on her maiden voyage, of the paddle-steamer *Amazon* in the Bay of Biscay on January 4. Wooden ships and steam boilers do not live well together. No wonder Mr Brunel had built the SS Great Britain of iron, and moreover, used screw propulsion which was less vulnerable to waves.

The new House of Commons chamber opening on the 3rd of February was remarked upon by Mr. Turcotte, but in the kitchen the mention was not repeated, and the article in the newspaper was ignored, while the death of 81 people in the 1 a.m. collapse of the Bilberry reservoir in Yorkshire had been talked about for most of breakfast in early February.

The opening of the first public toilet for women on Bedford Street in London on February 11 was discussed one evening. The penny toilets in the Retiring Rooms at the Great Exhibition had been much appreciated. However, it appeared that the new installation would charge 2d.

“That’d buy me a bun and something on it,” said Ethel. Cassandra and Mary agreed, but wanted the idea to catch on, hopefully at a lower price. It was a challenge to take an outing when one could not relieve oneself decently.

By the middle of March, it had become clear that Michael Yarrow wished at least to get to know Mary better. His housekeeper, Henrietta Denton, had been over for tea one afternoon, and had invited Mary and Ethel back on another. Elizabeth had been told she was welcome to drop in to say hello, and about once a week would do so, showing a considerable interest in how different foods were made. Mary realized that Henrietta, though kind and assiduous in her duties, was limited in her cooking repertoire.

Abraham and Cassandra had come to enjoy sharing some time together each week. In mid-March, one Sunday afternoon when the weather was benign enough, they took a train to Lewes to walk there along the River Ouse.

“Is Maud doing well with the furnishings?” Cassandra asked.

“Indeed. She has a good eye and her judgement of what will make a decent profit is generally very good. I did have to reassure her last week, when I think she had her first experience of a loss on an item. She had bought a chest of drawers that looked very fine, but Tom discovered it had been much abused. After fixing, I think we lost a shilling on an item we sold for two pounds. But one item out of fifty or so she has handled is nothing to raise an alarm about.”

"She is still young. Not eighteen until June."

Abraham said "I had not realized. She has a very mature demeanour."

"I agree. But we must keep in mind her age. It is certain she will make some mistakes. We all do."

"Even you, Cassandra? I would never believe so!" Abraham teased.

"You are wicked, Mr. Cohen." Cassandra laughed.

"How was church this morning?"

"The hymns were well-sung by the congregation, but Reverend Wagner's sermon was rather dull. I actually fell asleep during his peroration. Usually he does better."

"I'm sorry to hear it was dull. Actually, I have been wondering if I should come with you sometime. Some of the Jewish community have decided to join the Church of England, I believe as a way to diminish the negative attitudes towards us."

"You mean to convert?"

"That might be hypocritical. I don't really practise my own religion. Keeping the shabbat meal and kosher dietary rules are more a cultural tradition – one I'd like to maintain to hang on to the memory of my family."

"For what it's worth, I cannot be aroused to any enthusiasm for peculiarities of doctrine. I like church for the sense of community and the reminder to be grateful for the good things that have come in life and to help others less fortunate."

"That was my appreciation of what you would say. Do you think I would be welcome? I would be happy to be present, but possibly not participate in special rituals."

"You mean like Communion? The symbol of Christ's body and blood in the bread and wine that commemorates the Last Supper before he was crucified."

"And for which Jews are blamed?"

"I suppose they are. Though I think the Romans were at least as much responsible. And in both cases, it was people of 1800 years ago, not the Jews and Romans of today. It's worse than blaming the Danes of today for the Viking raids in the dark ages. Or the Normans because some people have names like Turcotte."

"Well said, Cassandra." Abraham wanted to kiss her for it, but he was a model of propriety and had to satisfy himself with a wide smile.

"Why don't you call on Reverend Wagner and simply ask him if you would be welcome to attend, but not take Communion. If he is opposed, then I will stop attending his church, as he would be un-Christian."

"It is an odd word, "christian". A pity it implies other religions are less interested in morality and kindness."

"I agree. And the divisions between denominations demonstrates a very nasty lack of the very essence of the Christian message, which I suspect is just as strong in the Jewish or Mohammedan faiths, or others about which I know nothing at all. There seems to be some unpleasantness brewing about Catholics in Britain. And there has been friction between different Protestant groups. I know that the Methodists and Presbyterians seem to have differences with the Church of England, but the reasons have not captured my interest enough for me to learn why."

Abraham said "I am mainly wanting to become invisible, or at least unremarkable, within the community where I am living."

"So do I. Let us try to do so together."

\* \* \*

Later that week the weather mid-day was temperate, and Cassandra took her break on the Promenade. She was sitting on a convenient bench when Mr. Turcotte asked "May I join you Miss Match?"

"Please do. It is an exceptionally pleasant day for the time of year."

"Indeed it is."

May I enquire if life is treating you well?"

"I believe so. Mrs. McNair and I have been in Brighton not quite a year, but we seem to be getting our feet beneath us, so to speak."

Is your office here working out well?"

"It is. It is. I find myself much content and comfortable. Henry – Mr. Mortimer – seems exceptionally happy with the arrangement, though perhaps that is due in part to Miss Maud Soulton being about the place. I believe the interest is mutual, and even that Miss Soulton's spoken English has improved."

"These things have not escaped my notice," Cassandra replied. "Is that a source of concern?"

"Not especially. She is, I gather, not yet eighteen, though she seems to have an old head on her shoulders. A good old head, mind you. If they join forces, Henry will have to hang onto his hat. She will make a good life for him if allowed to, but it will not be a quiet one."

"That is my appreciation also. However, I do believe they should not rush to marriage. It would be well for them to ensure that they have sufficient resources to maintain a household. The appearance of children can throw things into turmoil."

"I could not agree more. I am, in fact, waiting for a good occasion to have a talk with Henry on that matter. Not to discourage him in his courtship, but to counsel patience and attention to practicalities."

“I think those are the words – patience and attention to practicalities. They neither deny nor encourage the development of their affections, simply direct them to a happy, or at least happier, outcome.”

“Indeed.

May I be impertinent to ask if Mr. Cohen has intentions towards you? I have seen you with him on a couple of occasions. He seems a solid fellow.”

“I think he would have intentions, as you put it. But you, perhaps more than anyone else in Brighton, will recognize that if I marry, I lose control of what modest fortune I have. Our laws are unkind to women of enterprise.”

“I must agree, the law is indeed an ass in that respect. But I would consider your fortune to be – at least in comparison to most – more than modest. While I recognize you present yourself as manager of the houses, you are the owner. It is in the public, albeit tedious to access, records. And your work with the haberdashery has, my wife informs me, be most salutary in raising its prospects and profits. You have my admiration.”

“Thank you.”

“I will also repeat that you can count on my support and help should you perceive a threat to your well-being.”

Cassandra was taken aback, but recovered enough to say “I am most appreciative of that offer, Mr. Turcotte. We have had to rely on our own strengths for quite some time. That we are beginning to build friendships is, while new to us, most comforting.”

For about a minute, both were silent, then Cassandra said “In December I told you something of our history. And that our money, such as we were able to earn, was gained in trade, in fact of goods related to food and drink. The place where we were employed was, however, of a less than proper reputation. Mrs. McNair was a cook, and I managed the books and acquired the provisions. Other women worked there by necessity rather than choice, and I must confess I came there at a moment of extremity, though my employ was not in the main activity of the house. I have some knowledge – I won’t say how I acquired it – of medicines and diseases. I was sometimes able to help some of the women avoid some of the dangers of the trade, and that was why I was initially engaged. But others came in the direst of situations. One had been a servant in a great house. She was raped by the scion of the family, but then was punished as the one who committed the crime and dismissed without a reference. She fell into prostitution as her only option, though later I helped her leave the game, as we called it. And when I had sufficient resources, I suggested to Mrs. McNair that we should move on ourselves.”

“Would anyone believe you took some of their money?”

“I don’t believe so, since our money was kept fully apart from anything of the house’s operation. Moreover, the owner got a commission on the trading, so was fully aware of it. Of course, someone might want to steal from us, or

blackmail us, or even from jealousy or some excess of moral dignity castigate us so we are driven out of the community. We want to be left alone to make our living as ordinary women. I hope what I have told you will not turn you against us.”

“Not at all, Miss Match. I have seen how you helped the Soultions, how you have inveigled Mrs. Naismith – who I know for a fact is not a Mrs but a Miss – into a more comfortable life where she contributes and earns, and how you provide a comfortable place for me and my colleagues. My only complaint – if I am even allowed to complain about it – is that Mrs. McNair’s biscuits have made my stomach press against my waistcoat.” At this Mr. Turcotte laughed heartily.

“Thank you, Mr. Turcotte. But I hope you won’t pop Mrs. Naismith’s bubble. We sensed that she was probably the mistress of the man of whom she claims to be a widow.”

“No. Not at all. I knew Naismith as an acquaintance. His real wife was a harridan. Adeline – your Mrs. Naismith – gave him contentment towards the end of his life. A sad story, but you are doing much to salvage her self-worth, and in return I believe she is helping around the houses and with some local dressmakers.”

“You are extremely well-informed, Mr. Turcotte.”

“I have my spies!” Turcotte said conspiratorially. “Well, my wife, who is inordinately nosey. However, it is well for an attorney to be well-informed. Oh. Look at the time. I must away.”

“So must I. Thank you Mr. Turcotte. You have settled my mind a little.”

\* \* \*

At three in the morning of Sunday April 4, the household and indeed the street were awakened by the braying of a donkey – Annabelle. Tom hurriedly dressed and found her in the street and calmed her down, then took her into the yard, tied her near the back wall, and gave her a handful of oats and a bucket of water. He kept some oats in the shed for when she was working near Fortescue Road.

He came inside again, where everyone was in the kitchen, and said, “She’s calmer now, but she had blood near her mouth, but I could find no injury.”

“We’d better get to the barn. Tony may have been hurt,” Cassandra cried. Within five minutes, Cassandra and the Soultions, along with Henry, were hastening to the barn, a brisk 20 minute walk. As they approached, they could see flames and a crowd that had made a bucket chain from the street pump.

Tony was in the thick of it, directing buckets on particular sets of flames. The Fortescue Road group joined in where they could, and Tom and Henry took charge from Tony.

As they did so, Cassandra saw that there was a group of people around a man on the ground. Cassandra recognized him.

"Mr. Upton. Are you hurt?"

The man on the ground only groaned.

"Does anyone have a cart to convey Mr. Upton to a doctor?" Cassandra asked.

"I'll see if I can find someone," one of the women said, and left.

Tony came over. Ethel asked "Are you all right?"

"I think so, but my few things are probably gone. Annabelle woke me and I smelled smoke. I let her loose and opened the door and there were two men setting fire to the barn, one at each end. If Annabelle hadn't woken me I'd have been burnt alive. She charged forward and one of the men tried to grab her bridle, but she bit his hand, but as she did so she turned and she kicked out at this other man and got him in the belly. The man she bit swore and said "Upton you never said there was someone inside. Said it was just the Jew's dirty profits." Then he ran off."

"Did the cats get out?" Ethel asked.

"I think so. They have a small door on the other side, so I reckon they scarpered. Hopefully we'll find them again, but we need to find Annabelle."

"No need," Ethel said. "She came to Fortescue Road. I guess she knows the way, and that Tom keeps oats for her there."

The flames were now dying down. A constable arrived, the same one who had dealt with Archie Temple. He shouted "Ladies and gentlemen, I'll ask that any of you who are not involved with this property or the fire, please go home so that we may attend to the formalities of determining what has happened. If you were a witness, please stand over here and be ready to give your name and address. Has a doctor been called for this man who appears to be injured?"

There was a generally reluctance to leave, but now the fire was clearly out, people who had not contributed buckets were leaving. Those who had brought buckets were busy finding them, sometimes with arguments about who owned which. Henry had the good sense to say loudly "Ladies and gentlemen, as a law clerk I will be pleased to help mediate any disputes over the buckets, which I am sure the owner of the property will be eager to help settle."

He did not, of course, have any such assurance about the owner's intentions, but knew that such an announcement would calm some of the arguments. At that moment, Mr. Goldman appeared with Maud, who had had the good sense to go and fetch him.

“Oh my, this is a bad business.”

Cassandra could see he looked shaken. Just then Abraham came up too, and he also looked shocked. “Oh. No. Not again.”

Cassandra suddenly realized the meaning. “No, Abraham, it is not a pogrom, but it may yet be a result of evil prejudice.” She then related to Goldman and Cohen what had transpired, as far as she knew. By this time, a pony cart had come and Upton was being taken away. Ethel came over and said “I went over to see if I could learn anything. He reeked of drink. Possibly the man who ran away was drinking with him somewhere and they decided to set fire to the barn to cause harm to Mr. Goldman.”

“That would seem to be a likely scenario,” Henry said. “We should write down as much as we can as soon as possible. I will talk to the constable and ask him if I may organize two men to watch the place until the morning so scavengers do not disturb things nor steal what is left. Then we shall return to Fortescue Road and try to detail as much as possible of what we know.”

Henry’s presence of mind was welcomed by the constable. There were two men just leaving with their buckets who Henry approached and offered a shilling each to watch that nothing was touched. He suggested that one remain now while the other went to get warm clothing and a stool or chair, as well as some tea or cocoa, then the other could do the same and they could spell each other off until about 11 o’clock in the morning, when Henry said he or the Goldmans would return to deal with the ruin and pay them another shilling each if all was untouched.

It was nearly five by the time Henry and Cassandra had recorded all the stories, with Adeline performing the job of secretary and annotating and filing the sheets of notes. She said she would make a copy first thing in the morning rather than go to church. There was always the chance notes handed to the authorities could be lost.

As it turned out in the long run, the notes never were used in court nor elsewhere.

\* \* \*

At half past eleven on the Sunday morning, all the household turned out to see what could be salvaged. Tom brought his hand cart and Annabelle, though it was likely her cart was not usable. Goldman was already there with his pony and cart.

The barn had lost its roof, of which the charred remains were lying across what had been the furniture stored in the barn. Mary had had the good sense to bring as many pairs of rough gloves as she could. Adeline had paper and



pencils. There was a cloudy sky that threatened rain and even more damage to the goods, if that were possible.

Cassandra asked "May I suggest that Tom and Tony first see what can be recovered of the cart and of any of Tony's things, while you, Abraham, Maud and Henry look to the furniture. You may get Mary and I to help as far as we are able, for example, in carrying smaller items to the cart or at least next to it for conveyance. Mrs. Naismith can be called upon to record notes. Just call to her. I have brought along a shooting stick so she can sit upon it if needed. And Ethel will take care of food and drink."

Indeed Ethel, Adeline, Mary and Maud all had carried baskets in which there were sandwiches and bottles of beer, cider and lemonade.

The group worked for an hour, finding about half the furniture was recoverable with some cleaning, and about a quarter was usable for parts. The rest had value only for handles, hinges, and firewood.

Tom and Tony found that the cart box, which they had been gradually improving, was badly burned. The shafts had charring, but were probably usable, as were the wheels and the platform of the cart once they were cleaned. Some of the harness was burnt, but some of the spare tack could be substituted, though it looked rather haphazard. They decided to try to set it up and harness Annabelle so more material could be shifted so the site would not need guarding tonight.

They stopped at one o'clock for sandwiches.

"Here Mr. Goldman, you look like you could do with a bit to eat," Ethel said, pushing a basket towards him. "Those are all egg or cheese. The bacon sandwiches are in the other basket."

"Thank you for your kindness Ethel. It is much, much appreciated on a day such as this."

"You've been good to us, Mr. Goldman. We've got to stick together."

Cassandra sat down next to Goldman. "Joshua, How bad is the loss?"

"I'll have to look at Mrs. Naismith's notes, but there was almost £200 in estimated sales in the barn. I'd actually received £60 for a large table and a dozen chairs, and those were upholstered, so I'll have to give it back. That could lose us reputation, though a fire, and one deliberately set, will not be put down to us. Still, I may have to sell something at a loss to come up with cash."

"No you won't. Give me a few hours notice by letter, and I'll bring you up to £75. There'll be no interest and a year to repay, but I would like us to write it down."

"If you didn't ask, I would insist anyway. It is not good for friendships if one omits the business formalities. But are you sure? It is very generous."

"You heard Ethel, we've got to stick together. Now do you have enough tarpaulins to keep the salvaged goods dry. I'll assume they will be stored in

your yard.”

“Perhaps we can send Maud to a couple of people who may be able to lend or sell us tarpaulins or sailcloth. Oh, I should have brought some cash.” Goldman said.

“It occurred to me to bring ten pounds in coin,” Cassandra said.

“If it would not get me murdered by my wife, I would kiss you Miss Match.”

It was then that Cassandra noticed two cats sitting on their haunches next to Annabelle. They had survived. Tony was stroking one of them.

\* \* \*

Once the wreck of the barn was cleared of anything worthwhile, the two carts and their party made a motley parade to Goldman’s yard. The two cats somehow managed to jump on the cart. Tony said “Annabelle likes the cats. They keep the vermin out of ’er feed, and they like the warmth in her hay rack. Maybe if we cut open a sack, they can ride on ’er back.”

This, of course, was a minor distraction from the serious matter of unloading the carts. Maud had managed, by knocking on the doors of a pair of houses for which Goldman had provided the addresses, to gather a half-dozen tarpaulins or canvas sails, which the suppliers had been kind enough to deliver to Goldman’s yard on a Sunday once they had been informed of the reason.

It took them another hour to unpack Goldman’s cart and cover the furniture from it. They unharnessed Annabelle and simply covered her cart and tied down a tarpaulin over it. Annabelle would come back to Fortescue Road.

Rachel insisted they all eat something first. Furthermore, Goldman wanted to talk about what they should do about the men who had set the fire. While it was fairly clear Upton was one of the pair, there was also a second culprit with a hand that Annabelle had bitten. Money would be needed to repay the client who had ordered the table and chairs, and for capital to restock in furniture or for Tom to repair the pieces that were salvageable. The rent on the barn had been paid for a full year, and there were still several months to go. It was not on the cards for the owner to offer any compensation, and indeed he had not been in any way at fault and had lost a barn, though Goldman knew he wanted to demolish it anyway. Not only had the arsonists caused loss to Messrs. Goldman and Cohen, but Maud’s commissions were in jeopardy too.

Still, all of them were alive, and their assets were enough to recover from the setback, especially as Cassandra’s offer would avoid the need to sell anything at a loss in order to cover their immediate cash needs.

They squeezed into the dining room of the apartment that was above the shop and Rachel plied everyone with a variety of food. Tom and Tony, for the first time in recollection, both declared that they were full. As the women were clearing up and washing dishes, a knock came at the door. It was the constable. He reported that he felt that it was clear that Upton and another man, who he identified as a Sam Taylor, were responsible for the fire. The constable had asked at a couple of local pubs and found where Upton drank, then who he drank with. On knocking on Taylor's door and finding a man with an injured hand, he simply asked if Taylor would confirm that Upton had asked him to help set fire to a barn.

The constable, whose name was Shaw, said "The main question is whether you wish to press charges. There may, of course, be a prosecution started by the sheriff. However, Mr. Upton appears to be seriously injured. A doctor has suggested that the donkey's kick may have broken his pelvis and perhaps ruptured his bowel and that he will not be long for this world. However, if his guilt is established in a criminal court, you might be able to claim recompense from him for your losses."

Goldman said "How soon must I decide? It has been a very trying day, and I feel I should consider carefully my actions."

"Very wise, Mr. Goldman. Very wise. I believe that you will have to calculate your losses. And if Mr. Upton dies, then charges are moot anyway, though you may still have a claim upon his estate."

\* \* \*

Monday morning of April 5 was different from usual at Fortescue Road. Tony had been put on a folding cot that Tom had made from bits and pieces and had slept in the drawing room. Annabelle was in the yard, where she seemed quite happy. Tony had somehow smuggled the two barn cats in a basket. When Tom put a sailcloth roof on the shed, he made it overhang the doorway by a yard so there was a small outdoor space out of direct rain. In the corner of this space next to the garden wall, Tony placed the basket with the cats. Annabelle was tied up just beside, and somehow both the cats and the donkey found this was as it should be and made themselves at home. Of course, Puss was not happy. There was some hissing and arched back, but with Puss controlling the house end of the garden and the other cats by the wall, a truce was declared.

Over breakfast, Cassandra said "I will be at B & J for a good part of the day. Maud and Tony, I fear both of you will be a bit at a loose end. I suggest that you see if Mr. Goldman can use some help. Tom, you go too and do what you can with repairs to the cart as the first priority so that

Annabelle is able to work, but also attend to the damaged goods as you and Mr. Goldman see fit.

For the near future, I suggest Tony work with you to take what commissions you can for cartage, using both Annabelle and her cart as well as your hand cart. You may even consider getting some handbills printed to advertise your services in this regard, but get estimates of the cost first so we can consider if they are worthwhile. When you are not attending to cartage tasks, I'm sure there will be more work to repair or restore the fire-damage or work on new stock. Keep a record of what you do for Goldman, but don't bother him with details of this now. I will ensure you are not out of pocket."

"Not to worry, Miss," Tom said. "Mr. Goldman will see us right once he gets things sorted out."

"My sentiments entirely. So I'll see you all at dinner."

\* \* \*

Late in the morning, when some papers were brought to him for review by Rose and Henry, Mr. Turcotte asked what was known of the fire. It turned out Miss Bingham was able to contribute the most recent information, which later Henry communicated to Maud. It seemed that Sam Taylor had panicked and left town, fearing a charge of attempted murder because Tony had been in the barn. And she knew people who lived next to the Uptons, and apparently they were unable to sleep well due to Upton's groans and screams.

Mr. Turcotte, of course, was well-connected to the legal community. In the afternoon, he called Henry into his office.

"Mr. Mortimer – Henry – I believe that you have witnessed at least a part of a criminal drama yesterday, and as it affects some people for whom I have a positive regard, I want to provide some advice of a legal nature without them having to pay for it."

"I am sure that would be most helpful, Mr. Turcotte."

"Well, I believe that it is likely that the guilty parties in this affair have either absconded or are critically injured. In neither case are they likely to be able to directly or quickly recompense Mr. Goldman and his cousin, Mr. Cohen. Nor is Miss Maud likely to get her commissions lost due to the damaged goods."

"Your assessment accords with my own, Mr. Turcotte."

"Therefore, though it is unpalatable to have to do so, I would counsel that any prosecution of charges be delayed until the situation becomes more clear, or at least as long as possible. If, as seems probable, Upton does not survive, then his business and premises may be on offer, possibly at a good

price. That might offer a form of recompense, albeit rather slow and with a measure of risk.”

“Should I communicate these ideas, Mr. Turcotte?”

“If they come under my name, there would be a fee for legal advice, at least as regards pressing charges. But a conversation between you and Miss Maud is a social interchange, I think.”

“Thank you Mr. Turcotte. I understand.”

“You are welcome, Henry. And as regards Miss Maud, I was in conversation with Miss Match recently, and was apprised that Maud is not yet eighteen, though she presents a much older character. I feel she is a fine young woman who could in time make a man a very good wife, but both Miss Match and I would urge patience and attention to practicalities. Should you end up together, I would wish you a solid foundation for the future.”

“Thank you for your confidence in Miss Maud, sir. I had feared her time spent in the Workhouse would be a source of disapprobation.”

“If you had asked me last year, possibly. But the Soultions are an energetic and likeable group, who I believe work hard to better themselves and their associates. I wish them all well.”

\* \* \*

Upton was dead by Wednesday night, and his passing was a cruel one. His widow and two children, a boy of nine and a girl of eleven, were, it was reported to Fortescue Road on Thursday morning by Rose, distraught and not managing to deal with the practical matters of their own survival, the burial of Upton, and of course not making any plans for the continuance of the second-hand shop.

Tom was working in Goldman’s yard. The cart had a bit of smoke and blackening on the shafts and wheels, but it was superficial. The cart was a two-wheel type. The shafts supported a simple box which sat on the wheels. Tom had added a sailcloth hood on lightweight wooden sticks that were simply bolted to the corners of the box. This hood had suffered the main damage, in particular the sailcloth. But there were now plenty of tarpaulins and sails being used for covering the damaged furniture as well as the cart, and Tom had asked Maud where they came from. By mid-day Wednesday, he had purchased an old sail – he invested 10/- of his own money to do so.

As he told Tony “The old cover was just a square top and sides. The rain went down me neck when I was on the seat. But I think if I extend the top forward and let a few inches drop down, then slope the hem to the sides, the water’ll run along the edge and off the side and we won’t get wet.

We'll make the sides come down to the box, and have a flap at the back with grommets we can tie if needed."

"Wish I could write," Tony said. "You could have "For hire" and your name and address, like on the hand cart."

"You better get Mrs. Naismith to teach you. That's a capital idea. But that won't be 'till next week. The sailcloth is hard work cutting and sewing. Not difficult, just hard on the hands. Anyway, you've got a lot of polishing to do to make some of that furniture saleable."

This exposition of Tom's activity with Tony at Goldman's yard is by way of explaining that when Rose said Upton was dead, Ethel realized that Goldman should be informed. She asked Mary "Can you spare me to go and inform Mr. Goldman that Mr. Upton is dead? Maud may be there too. They may need to act quickly in case Upton's assets are removed."

"I had not thought of that," Mary said.

"Joe Dixon 'elped us when my Dad died. That's how Tom got the tools back. There were people round before me Dad was cold trying to grab stuff. And I'm sure most had no real claim, but Mr. Goldman certainly does."

\* \* \*

Ethel's cynicism was a minor exaggeration of the situation at Upton's shop and apartment. Mrs. Rebecca Upton was, after all, now the widow and heiress to the premises and stock. She was, as reported, distraught, but by mid-day Thursday her sister Ruth Stanley and brother-in-law Colin from Hove had come and were organizing the funeral. Since Mr. Stanley was a curate there, he knew the procedures.

Ethel did not stay long at the Goldmans' shop. She relayed the information, and left Joshua and Rachel to discuss their options. While Goldman considered if he should make a claim, Rachel proposed a different plan of action.

"Joshua, Upton's business was in decline because he was not very good at it. Mrs. Upton will likely not be in a state to take charge, and may fall victim to those vultures who would want a quick profit. Indeed, we could take that course. However, I believe we have an opportunity to gain some credit in the community, to give Miss Maud a chance to develop her skills and recover some of her losses, and to possibly regain some of our losses."

"And how do you propose we proceed, my dear?"

"I could take a plate of pastries and offer my condolences. Assuming I am not met with discourtesy, I will say that we are prepared to provide assistance in keeping the business running until Mrs. Upton can make arrangements to take over. We also would suggest Maud Soulton manage the business in

the interim. We would only engage to do this, however, if someone were appointed – it could be Mrs. Upton herself – to oversee operations to ensure all is above board.”

“What would be the remuneration for Maud, if she were willing?”

“I would ask that Mrs. Upton send us a message when she is ready to discuss details. However, Maud should get some wage plus commission to encourage her energies.”

“Well, here is Maud. Why don’t we ask her?”

\* \* \*

Rachel and Maud presented themselves at the Upton shop at four o’clock. While Mrs. Upton and the Stanleys showed some consternation on opening the door, Rachel simply said “I am Mrs. Goldman and this is Miss Maud Soulton. We wanted to offer our condolences to Mrs. Upton and her children and show that, for our part, anger and recrimination have no part in how we should assist a bereaved neighbour. I have brought some of my own pastry, as no doubt there will be mourners to be offered refreshments.”

The aforementioned consternation had allowed this rather long introduction to proceed uninterrupted, but Mr. Stanley recognized that the gesture of the two women on the doorstep would help defuse bad feeling in the neighbourhood. He had heard gossip that the owner of the barn was, apparently, annoyed that someone would attack his tenant, even though the demolition of the barn saved him that expense.

Rachel and Maud were invited in for a cup of tea, and the pastries were tried. Rachel was able, after some minor pleasantries about the timing of the funeral to ask if Mrs. Upton planned to continue the business.

“With the two children, I’m not sure how. James was not doing as well as his father. He didn’t have the same nose for what would sell or for the correct price.”

“Unlike my friend Maud here,” said Rachel.

“James said that there was a young woman who was astute at buying and selling furniture,” Rebecca commented.

“If it would help you get on your feet, we might come to an arrangement where I work for you for a while,” Maud said. “But to stop tongues wagging, I would want you, or someone you trust, to oversee what I do.”

“Would you countenance that?” Ruth Stanley asked her sister.

“If we don’t stay in business, I must sell, and in the second-hand business, closing down means the wolves are out and we will get very little, and then have no future income.” Rebecca was aware of the realities.

“Send a message to our shop if you would like to discuss details,” Rachel said. “Today is not the day for decisions.”

\* \* \*

Upton was buried on Friday morning, and on Friday evening the Goldmans received a message from Mrs. Upton that she would like to discuss Maud working for her. Despite the Sabbath dinner, Goldman sent a boy to tell Maud and say that he was proposing that they meet at the Upton shop at 2 o'clock Sunday afternoon.

The result of all this was that Maud was engaged for a period of 8 weeks at 25/- per week. This was a handsome wage, but Goldman pointed out that Maud would see if she could instruct Mrs. Upton how to manage the business, and that Maud would be interrupting her own progress in trade.

Mr. Goldman also noted that he would not be pursuing a claim against Mr. Upton's estate if he could use the Upton shop yard to store goods. It was quite a large yard, but was, surprisingly, almost empty.

“Tom Soultan will have ideas on how to protect goods from the weather, and also to better secure the yard against theft and intrusion. There is also a small stable, but I believe you have no animals, so we could stable Annabelle here with her cart for the benefit of both your business and ours in transporting goods. Either we would pay Tom and Tony for the transport if it conveniences a profitable transaction, or the client would be encouraged to use their services.”

Mrs. Upton, beginning to recover her sense of the world, said “My late husband led our business into decline and has cost you and Miss Soultan a considerable loss. As long as we are able to prosper together by fair trading and hard work, I will be content to have the yard so employed. Moreover, I will involve myself in the business, and will ask for your general assistance in helping me educate my children in trade. They are yet rather young, but are but a few years younger than Miss Soultan.”

“I am agreeable. Miss Maud?”

“I will see you here tomorrow at eight in the morning,” Maud said, “and will have Tom or Tony or both bring Annabelle and the cart with some goods. We will try to get right to work.”

\* \* \*

While Maud went straight to the Upton yard on Monday morning, Tony and Tom led Annabelle with two cats in a basket on her back to Goldman's



shop. Annabelle was hitched to the cart, which was already loaded and had Tom's hood in semi-finished form. A couple of other tarpaulins or sails were thrown in so more goods could be protected at Upton's yard. Abraham had realized they would be needed, and had managed to buy most of those that had been lent immediately after the fire. As they left Goldman's yard, Tony captured a very battered top hat that was blowing down the street.

"What ho! I could be a right toff with this," he said. (We shall for now accept the gender Tony has adopted.)

"Or maybe Annabelle'd like it?" Tom suggested.

"Got a pen knife?" Tony asked. Tom did, and thought to himself that if Tony did well, he would reward him with a gift of this one, as he had spied a better model he wanted.

Tony took the knife Tom proffered and cut two holes in the hat, then gently talked to Annabelle as he put her ears through them. The donkey took on a surprisingly jaunty appearance. This would eventually become a sort of trademark of the modest business Tom and Tony came to operate.

\* \* \*

Over the next month, the Goldmans managed to recover from the fire reasonably well. Abraham found replacement items for the fairly large order that had been paid for, and was fortunate that he bought them at a very good price. There was still a minor loss, but it was not catastrophic. Cassandra lent Goldman just £20 so there was enough ready cash for the pawn shop to operate smoothly, and it was repaid by the start of June.

In her first week working with Rebecca Upton, Maud arranged a rough and ready stocktaking and the two women quickly shifted a large pile of largish or unattractive items by discounting them steeply. As Maud said "That lot isn't worth space when we could have more profitable items."

Also in the first week, Rebecca Upton realized she knew rather little of furniture, but was quite aware of fabrics. She had a good sense of the value of upholstery material, curtains, linens, blankets, towels and rugs. Moreover, her daughter Valerie, though only 11, had a similar acuity and was eager to work in the shop. The son, Joseph, also found the shop fascinating, but was being sent to school during the day, while Valerie, her mother thought, could well get her education on the job, so to speak. Still, Joseph did contribute, in that he was difficult to keep out of the stable, where he would make sure Annabelle had water and hay, the cats had a saucer of milk, and even that waste was raked out to the dung heap.

When Maud's eight weeks ended in early June, the business was earning enough to keep the Uptons from starving. Rebecca Upton was finding her

feet, and being busy was the best remedy for her grief at losing her husband. She invited the Goldmans, Abraham Cohen, Maud and Tom Souton, Tony Brown, and Cassandra (who she knew to have taken Tony in charge) to come for tea at three o'clock on June 6.

"I wanted to talk to you all to see if we can arrange how to go forward together."

"If you had not done so, I would have, Mrs. Upton." Goldman said.

"I owe you a debt of gratitude, especially so given how we came to work together. And I have learned a lot from Maud."

"Do you feel you can carry on the business now without her?" Rachel asked.

"In part, yes. I have realized I know something of soft furnishings, but I do not feel confident in appraising the value or likelihood of sale of furniture. If it is possible, I would like to focus on the soft furnishings, but some of the furniture has upholstery, in which I do feel I have some understanding of the fabrics, but not the wooden parts. Also there is enough space for at least some furniture in the shop, and it does bring in trade for the soft furnishings as well. The question is how to run things so that I do not get caught making a loss on the furniture."

Maud said "Rebecca – Mrs Upton – and I have had some conversations on this topic. One suggestion is that Mr. Goldman, Mr. Cohen or I select items that we think will sell or will display well, and that we provide a price for them. To avoid customers altering the price, we will simply number the items in a form that is clearly not a price and provide a list to be kept in the till. We will also provide the price we – let us say Goldmans – expect to get. If Mrs. Upton sells an item, then she must pay us that amount. But she has both the guidance of what we think it will sell for and the latitude to change that price if an overall sale is more helpful to her, for example, even at a shilling loss if it means a pound of gain on other items. And she may even increase that price if it seems possible."

"As usual, Maud, you have a nose for making profits," said Abraham.

"The other flexibility will be in whether the customer pays for cartage or Mrs. Upton does so to gain the sale. She knows more or less how much Tom and Tony will want," Maud added.

"There is the matter of the usage of the yard and stable," Goldman said. "Have you thought about that?"

Rebecca answered "In that I would have no furniture to sell if you did not have a place to warehouse it, and it would be more awkward to get cartage if Annabelle were not stabled here, I am happy that you use the yard. Tom has already strengthened the gate and added a good lock, as well as a bar if we feel we need it."

"It would be more business-like if there were a rent, albeit small. Can I

suggest £10 per annum, paid as £2 10s at the beginning of January, April, July and October, to commence this July?”

“That would be quite agreeable. Thank you, Mr. Goldman.”

\* \* \*

During this time, Tony had been living at Fortescue Road, sleeping on a cot in the kitchen of Number 23. Most evenings, he would spend some time learning to read with Adeline Naismith. A fast learner, by the beginning of June he was almost becoming a nuisance asking about particular words in books or the newspaper or on signs.

Tony’s writing – to be precise printing with pencil on paper or chalk on a slate – was gradually improving, especially as he read more and saw words in different fonts. Adeline was not inclined to teach him cursive. That could wait, or be overlooked entirely.

What could not be too much delayed was a discussion of female puberty and what would happen. Adeline had learned from Mary about the minor drama when Ethel started her courses. It could be even more traumatic for Tony.

Thus one evening when the two of them were alone, Adeline took out her bible, which was a King James version, and asked Tony to read Leviticus Chapter 18, verse 19. Slowly but surely, Tony read out loud

“Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness.”

Adeline asked “Have you any understanding of what that verse is about?”

“A man should not try to undress a woman, but I don’t understand why that is only when she is somehow dirty.”

“Do you have any idea of what happens once a month to grown women while they are capable of having children?”

“I never thought about it.”

“Then, if we are to avoid you having a very unpleasant surprise, I had better explain.”

\* \* \*

Despite being pre-warned about menarche, though not by that name, Tony decided to remain in male dress. Adeline told him about Phoebe Hessel and they walked to St. Nicholas and Tony had managed to read the tombstone.

Tom was kept busy repairing and refinishing furniture. Given that he had built the shed on Fortescue Road, he preferred to carry out repairs there, then have Tony and Annabelle move the pieces to Upton's yard where he had built a sailcloth lean-to roof where he or Tony could refinish them in a well-aired space.

With Tom thus occupied, Tony took over most of the cartage and delivery. With either the handcart or Annabelle, he was in motion most days from early until late, often coming to dinner after the others were sitting down. The handcart quite often got used for delivering the Treats for the Tongue, and Tony fashioned a wooden sign that attached to the cart when such deliveries were in progress.

We are delivering  
Treats for the Tongue  
from 21 Fortescue Road

This garnered several enquiries about the Treats, and some new orders were received.

\* \* \*

One morning in early July, Cassandra was at B & J working on the books when two women came into the shop. They were in their late 50s as far as she could tell, but one looked very familiar. She had to stifle a cry. Her mother! Being in the office, Cassandra was not directly visible from the shop, but she had installed a small mirror above the desk so she could have an idea of what was happening at the counter. Quickly she turned the mirror so she could not be seen in its reflection, and moved her chair further to the side from the doorway.

She listened. The two women were discussing wool and knitting needles, then embroidery. A normal conversation for the shop. There was another customer that Sally was helping who was paying for some material to make a cushion cover. Cassandra heard the farewell. Where was Joan? Collier?

At that moment, Collier came into the office.

"Miss Match. Shall I send off the order for the calico to the factory in Salford?"

Cassandra put her finger to her lips, then motioned for him to shut the door. When he did this, she said quietly

"Yes the order can go, as I believe we have made our decision on quantities and patterns.

However, one of the two women in the shop seems familiar. The one with the green jacket. There is a matter of some delicacy due to a rift in one part of my family that I may be able to mend. As I am not entirely sure that the

lady is who I suppose, do you think you can try to ascertain her name and where she is lodging?"

"I'll try, Miss Match."

\* \* \*

Collier took the initiative to serve the two ladies himself. By dint of showing them some skeins of wool which had been put in the back store-room because they were in dye-lots of one or two and difficult to sell, he managed to get the ladies interested in making cross-stitch cushion covers which needed only modest amounts of several colours.

"My ladies, I believe your purchases will be awkward to carry, since you do not have baskets. May I suggest you leave your address and I will deliver them on my way home?"

Cassandra made a note to give Mr. Collier a gratuity out of her own funds.

\* \* \*

After she finished the book-keeping and some correspondence, Cassandra decided to walk home via the hotel where the two ladies were staying, carrying the package of their purchases. When she arrived at the hotel, she presented the package and asked if she might have a message sent up to Mrs. Baldwin directly. The desk clerk said

"Of course, madam. Do you have the message?"

"Indeed, it is here. I wish to talk with Mrs. Baldwin privately to attempt to heal a family argument. It may, of course, be a fool's errand."

Cassandra had prepared a message.

Dear Mrs. Baldwin,

May I request a brief private meeting about a family matter. I will wait at the hotel reception for your reply, and can meet you now or at a time and place you suggest.

Yours,

Cassandra Match (Miss)

The clerk rang a bell and a boy arrived from somewhere. The clerk gave him the package and the message.

After five minutes, the boy returned and spoke to the clerk, who said "Miss Match. Mrs. Baldwin asks that you go to her room. Number 134. It is left at the top of the stairs."

Cassandra went up and knocked on the door.

"Come in," said a voice she recognized.

Cassandra went in. Mrs. Baldwin was sitting on a divan near the window. She startled and said "Diana! Your father said you were dead."

Cassandra closed the door.

"No Mama. I am not dead. I wrote to Father to tell him ... my husband had died. That was four days after we married in Gretna Green, and five days after we left Manchester. I received a reply in Glasgow that I was never to contact you again."

"He didn't say. The blackguard did not give me the chance to make up my own mind. I didn't like Gerald. Well, I didn't think much of his prospects. He was a nice enough boy. But for your father to decide that I was never to see you again. That was monstrous."

"I take it Father is not here?"

"He died of an apoplexy last year. I sold the business and fortunately there are enough funds that if I am not extravagant I can live comfortably. Winnifred – Mrs. Moss, who is also widowed – persuaded me to take a holiday here in Brighton."

"It is a pleasant town. I very much enjoy living here."

"How did you find me?"

"I am the manager – some would say manageress – of the haberdashery, and noticed you come in. I got the shop-man to find out where you were lodging."

"I am so glad. Sit beside me and take my hand so I can feel it is real."

"I am also glad. But it feels strange after fifteen years. By the way, I am known here as Cassandra Match, and would ask that you use that name."

"You do not acknowledge the one you grew up with?"

"I have been fortunate and am reasonably well-off. At least now. And since you were unaware that I was still alive, I cannot blame you for the ... difficulties ... I had in the first few years after Gerald died of the cholera. But during a good part of that time I had to live by my wits. I personally did nothing that was against the law, but did work in and around places which are not respectable. A while ago, I learned that there was to be a move to ... well, reform where I worked, and with a friend I came here. I believe that in Brighton I am considered respectable and modestly prosperous, but there are some people who might treat me unkindly if they knew of my past. On the other hand, just the other day, one of my tenants who is a barrister

in the Court of Chancery learned of my history and was most charitable in commending me on my success in life.”

“One of your tenants? And a barrister!”, Frieda Baldwin exclaimed.

“Mother, I own two houses, where I let apartments and help run some other enterprises.”

“Dear God. I recover not only a daughter, but a prosperous business-woman.”

“I suppose that is the case. But more importantly, are we going to renew our familial connection?”

“Don’t be silly. Of course we are.

Can we dine together?”

“I should get back to the houses. I don’t quite have a family, but there is a collection of assorted characters of somewhat disparate origin who seem to have become that for me. But there will almost certainly be enough food that you can join us.”

“Yes. Certainly. Though I must tell Winnifred that I will not be at dinner tonight.”

“Is it already paid for? I abhor waste.”

“Fortunately, no. In fact we were going to be rather daring and go to a public house that was recommended for good food.”

“Then we shall invite your friend to come too, but we do need a way to explain things. May we say that you are an old family friend? That is what I told our shop-man. And the way in which I recognized you and brought the parcel can be told truthfully. But I will call you Frieda, and you will call me Cassandra. Will you be able to sustain that fiction, at least for a while. I believe it could be important to my reputation here.”

“Since I have thought you dead for fifteen years and you appear such a changed character, but a very pleasing one, I will somehow manage to do so.”

“Would you like me to give you the address? Then you can organize your friend Winnifred and take a hansom in three quarters of an hour.”

“Oh. Yes. Though I hate that you will leave.”

“I will write the address. It is 21 Fortescue Road. Not far from here. Come to the downstairs kitchen door. We mainly use the kitchen as our living space and let out the rest of the two houses, though recently we decided to have a drawing room for ourselves – I also own number 23. Oh. Please say I **MANAGE** them to your friend. I tell people that. It avoids too much interest of an unwelcome sort.”

“You mean suitors after your money?”

“Frieda, you understand me perfectly.”

“Well, Cassandra I am your ... old family friend. And Winnifred and I already have found our rather modest fortunes attract the wrong sort of man.”

Cassandra hastened back to the house. It had been a shock to meet her mother, but the meeting could not really have gone better. Now she must hope Frieda – she must herself get used to using that name for her mother – would not mis-speak.

\* \* \*

“Mary, I met an old family friend today. Is there enough food for two more. She is staying at a hotel near the Promenade with a friend. I invited them to join us for dinner.”

“I can do some more potatoes. Ethel. Is there enough of the plum pudding to go round for two more?”

“I think so. The Grants generally aren’t big pudding eaters. And there’s always some ginger cake we could use. I’ll make extra sauce – we’ve plenty of milk.”

“What about meat?” Mary asked.

“The pork roast might need slicing a bit thin. But why don’t we put out some head-cheese cold. People can have a slice of each, then we’ll be fine, and even have some extra. And we’ll tell Tom to wait until last. I’ll promise him some extra pudding if he behaves.”

“I don’t think you give him credit,” Cassandra said. “Tom is generally quite careful to be polite with guests. And he might be a bit enthusiastic with just the household, but he isn’t unkind.”

“You’re right, Miss Match. He’s got a good heart, has Tom.”

The kitchen was busy. Adeline was already down and without a word set two extra places at the big table. They would be ten, what with Cassandra and Mary, Frieda and her friend, the Saultons, Adeline, Tony, and Henry Mortimer. And Abraham or the Yarrows might come to visit as the dinner ended. It was a good job there were plenty of chairs, though some were in the hall on the main floor.

Cassandra quietly asked Mary if she could come into the garden for a moment.

“What is it?”

“My mother came into the shop. She is coming to dinner, but will call me Cassandra and I will call her Frieda, which is her name. My father never showed her my letter that my husband had died. He just wrote back that I was never to contact them again. My mother did not know.”

“Will your father not cause trouble?”

“No. He died last year. Mother is angry that he did not give her the chance to make up her own mind about me. But we do now have a chance to be friends.”



“And you would like that?”

“Yes. Mother seems to genuinely want that also.”

“Then we will welcome her as we always welcome friends here.”

“Thank you Mary.”

\* \* \*

The dinner passed in a way neither Cassandra nor Frieda had expected. None of the others except Mary had any idea how Winnifred and Frieda might be linked to Cassandra. Thus they treated them like any other newcomers to dinner. There was a fairly noisy, but truly friendly, conversation, or rather set of conversations. Though Frieda was placed next to Cassandra, she found herself talking mostly to Ethel, discovering how Cassandra rescued the Soultions from the workhouse, in the process spawning a group of enterprises.

“Do you need a hansom back to the hotel?” Cassandra asked. “Or shall we walk you back? We often like a walk after supper of a summer evening.”

“That would be very pleasant,” Winnifred said, and Frieda agreed.

Everyone helped clear away and wash the dishes while Cassandra showed Frieda and Winnifred the houses with Henry, who suggested that the legal office showed some of the best rooms.

“From what I have seen, these are fine houses. Not grandiose, but solid and well-appointed,” Frieda said, then added, “Did the owner get them for a good price?”

Cassandra answered “I believe they were acquired in early May last year for £640 the pair, which I am informed was a good price for them.”

“Indeed, I got a little over £500 for the Apothecary shop with the apartment above, and that was but a single building.”

Cassandra and Frieda walked together. Henry and Maud led their parade, followed by Tom and Ethel with Winnifred, who was learning about Tom’s various projects and minor adventures.

Cassandra slowed her pace and allowed the gap to the others to grow.

“Frieda. We got less time to talk than I had intended. I hope we can find some quiet moments. There is much I would like to know.”

“Yes. I had hoped to learn more of the time since you left home.”

“To safeguard our situation, that of Mary and I, I may have to be circumspect in relating some details.”

“I will understand that, from what you told me earlier. It is, however, a relief to find you so well placed, and with such a household. They all seem to hold you in high regard, but you have chosen to help talented and able people. The dinner was very tasty – better than at the hotel.”

“We like to eat well. Mary – I don’t know if she or the others told you – has a modest business preparing confections and delicacies that are sought after and for which she can charge a good price. Ethel is learning how to make them too, and we are considering how the business may be expanded without diminishing the quality.”

“Yet with all these activities, you are still in the employ of the haberdashery.”

“When we arrived last year, I wanted to become a part of the local community as quickly as I could. Women come to Bartlett and Jones to get material, wool and accoutrements, so it is a very good place to meet people. Well, to meet ladies of the town. And I get a good reward, as Mr. Jones, the owner, is in the process of retiring, so I have more or less a free hand. He had been unimaginative, and I have been able to increase business. I am rewarded mostly on the increase in profits, in fact 10/- a week for half-time work, plus 30% of the profits over £450 per year.”

Frieda said “The Apothecary made about £600 – I did the books. Your arrangement’s not a bad reward if you do anything similar.”

“I realized you would understand. Most people want a fixed salary, but at half-time, that would not be particularly attractive to me. We’ve just completed my first year, and we did £716. Mr Jones was rather unhappy to hand over nearly £80. At least until I pointed out he was still nearly £160 better off since I joined and he had less work to do.”

“Your father was an idiot to let you get away. Do you think if he had been a bit friendlier to Gerald, you would have waited a while so things could have worked out for all of us?”

“Possibly. We’ll never know now.

How long are you here in Brighton?”

“Another three nights. We leave on Sunday morning.”

“You must give me your address if the shop has been sold, or we could lose touch again.”

“I will write it down when we get to the hotel, but I hope we can talk more before I leave.”

“Naturally, but it is always good to take care of things while they are in mind. I too want to rebuild what we lost.”

\* \* \*

Frieda and Cassandra met for lunch on the Friday, where Winnifred was present, and dinner on Saturday, when Winnifred went to the theatre.

On Friday, Winnifred had a lot of questions about Brighton. She was also a widow, like Frieda, whose husband had been in trade and left her quite well off.

Cassandra said "You wish to avoid fortune seekers?"

"Ah. A woman who understands the evil of the matrimonial property laws."

Frieda said "Cassandra is also a woman with some fortune, as you have seen."

"Yes, my dear. It is why you and I support each other," Winnifred said.

Cassandra asked "I take it you have enough to live comfortably."

Frieda said "Yes. But we are not sure we want to just bump around until we pass away. I wouldn't necessarily want to run a shop again – the having to be up every day and open up, close down, and do the books. But something not too demanding that kept us in touch with the world would be of interest. Or even a shop if we found someone like yourself to help spread the work."

"When Mary and I came here, we thought to offer well-appointed apartments and make our income in that fashion. But we seem to have become involved in much more."

"Do you think it easier to rent out property here than in Manchester?"

"I have no knowledge of the state of the rental market in Manchester, but here and in some similar places, there is a demand for places where those who can afford it come to take a holiday or respite from their day to day lives."

"And London and some other places are easily reached by train," Winnifred said. "Frieda, we should consider whether a move here would be good for us. Manchester is so industrial and grey. Here the sea air is fresh and uplifting."

\* \* \*

A month later Frieda and Winnifred came back for two weeks to look for a house they could set up more or less as Cassandra had done with Numbers 21 and 23 Fortescue Road. This time, however, Cassandra had invited them to stay in the drawing room if they were willing to have a cot each.

Cassandra introduced them to Mr. Arbuthnot, who Frieda told "Mr. Arbuthnot, do not be concerned that we will look at as many houses as we are able for the next few days. If there are any that seem appropriate to our needs, we will try to purchase one."

"The day Miss Match came to my office was indeed a good one for me. We have done much profitable business together."

"And I hope Mrs. Moss and I will similarly prosper with you, sir."

\* \* \*

The search for property undertaken by the two ladies was quite frustrating. Cassandra and Mary had been prepared to undertake some heavy cleaning and furniture moving themselves if they had to, and they had taken risks the older women were loath to chance. Moreover, they had some money, and did not have the motivation to involve themselves so deeply in new enterprise. After a week, it became clear that buying a house and renting out rooms or apartments was not nearly so attractive as it had seemed but a few days earlier.

As dinner was ending on the ninth day of their visit, Winnifred said "It would still be nice to live here, but possibly we should consider something more modest for ourselves and look for other opportunities to occupy our time."

Mary asked "What are your interests?"

"Well, Frieda used to help her husband in the apothecary shop. My husband was a tailor and we had a shop for men's apparel, and I used to run the till and sell the manufactured items, while he took care of adjustments and clothing made to measure."

Cassandra asked "Would working in a shop, perhaps just for part of the time, be possible?"

The two visitors looked at each other, then Frieda said "I think it might. It would depend on the type of merchandise."

Cassandra said "Let us take a walk to the Bartlett and Jones shop. There is a shop next door that I believe will soon be for sale. It even has a modest apartment above it."

"Why might it be for sale," Winnifred asked.

"The owner, a Mr. Catchpole, died last week after a lengthy illness. His wife and daughter have been trying to keep the business going – it is a tobacco shop – but I don't think they have the inclination to continue if they have a suitable offer."

"I would not be much drawn to tobacco. All that stink and ash," said Frieda.

"If – and that is far from a certainty – you could acquire the shop, I would suggest using it as a place to sell ladies' clothing items, primarily of the manufactured variety rather than bespoke, but display examples or images of dresses by local dressmakers. With Bartlett and Jones next door to provide ideas about material, and the activities of Adeline with Miss Campbell and Mrs. Ritchie, there could be profit from cooperative trade."

"It is the sort of possibility that might be interesting. We can, in any event, benefit from a walk on this fine evening," Winnifred said.

\* \* \*

The Catchpole tobacconist shop was set up with a rather tiny front area for customers. There was supposedly, however, a reasonable store-room behind, with an apartment above that Cassandra had heard consisted of a drawing room, two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a water closet. The roof was pitched quite steeply, and Winnifred asked "Do you think there's an attic?"

"You are thinking that it would give space for additional rooms or storage," Frieda responded.

"Of course," said Winnifred. "More space to store stock, or to have rooms for servants or staff. Do these shops have a yard you can get at besides through the front."

"I think not," Cassandra said. "It is a nuisance sometimes when we get a large delivery of bolts of cloth. Or even if two or three shops get deliveries at the same time. The draymen shout at each other and it is unpleasant. I have been meaning to discuss the possibility of night-time delivery with our suppliers, and even have thought of taking delivery at Upton's yard, then having Tony and Annabelle transfer the goods, but it is an additional expense."

Later that evening, Cassandra raised this issue with Tom at the big table over a cup of cocoa.

"If the goods come by train, Tony and I could be the carters," Tom pointed out. "Then we could come at a quiet time. If the collection had to be early in the day, we could put the cart at Upton's for a few hours."

"Would that not mean you were then unable to take other commissions?" Mary asked.

"It would," Tom agreed. "But Tony and I have already found that sometimes we collect furniture from a place that Mr. Cohen or Maud have bought it, but the buyer don't want it for a while. We've been watching for another cart, probably a bit tatty, that we can fix up so we just unhitch Annabelle from one and slip her in the other."

"Tom, you're always on the lookout for a chance," Mary laughed.

\* \* \*

The next day, Cassandra approached Mrs. Catchpole when she saw there were no customers in the tobacco shop.

"Hello, Miss Match. Are you in the way of purchasing some tobacco or a pipe?"

"No, Mrs. Catchpole. I was sorry to hear about Mr. Catchpole, though I believe he was poorly for a long time. My visit today was actually to ask

if your premises might at some time not far in the future be for sale. Some of our clients who make dresses are considering a shop where they could present samples of their work to encourage orders. With Bartlett and Jones next door to give ideas about materials, your shop could be of interest to them. I hope you do not feel it rude of me to enquire, but in business one can sometimes miss good opportunities if one does not express an idea. But if you do plan to continue in business here, you have my best wishes."

"Thank you for being direct, Miss Match. I have, in fact, had one of the other tobacconists visit – indeed the day after we buried my husband – but he wanted to buy the stock at four shillings on the pound. And I would still have to sell the premises, and find myself and my sixteen-year-old daughter a new home."

"There are always vultures, I'm afraid," Cassandra responded. "And I would not be here if I did not feel there was profit to be made. However, there is fair profit and there is robbery. Now that you know that there is some interest, I will return to the drapery. You can let me know if you would like to discuss possibilities, though two potential investors are only here in Brighton for the next few days. It might be advantageous to offer them a viewing of the premises without an obligation on your part, as that would allow things to advance later should you find you do wish to sell."

Mrs. Catchpole looked suspicious. "May I ask who these investors are, since they are not local?"

"Indeed. They are two widows from the Manchester area whose husbands, like yours, were in trade. They are considering moving here for the sea air, but want some activity to occupy them. Mrs. Baldwin is an old family friend with whom I reconnected quite by accident just a month ago after we lost touch more than a decade ago. Mrs. Moss is her friend. After their bereavement, they support each other as companions."

"Well, why not come round tomorrow evening at half-past seven. It is still light then for a while, and that is when I close the shop, though there are men who think I should be open until late so they can get their 'baccy. Don't take that as a sign I'm ready to sell, but it won't hurt to think upon, and three widows no doubt have common cause."

"Would you object if I brought my young handyman so we can take some measurements. A garment shop has need of a different aspect from a tobacconist's."

"Is that young Tom Soulton? I knew his Mum and Dad. I'd heard how you took in the three of them and that they were doing well. Saw him last week with old Archie's donkey, and they had a top hat on her."

"Yes. That's him."

\* \* \*

The visit to the tobacco shop was informative. While the front shop was 18 feet across, it was only 10 deep. The merchandise was on shelves or in humidors on the counter, or behind glass under the counter. However, behind the shop there was a large store-room, almost empty, that ran back 28 feet to a door onto a small yard which was about 25 feet deep and walled on all sides. The yard was essentially untended and weedy. It had a covered set of steps down to what must be a cellar, which they did not examine.

At the back of the store-room there was a water closet in the corner by the door to the yard. That would be useful, but it would need refurbishment if lady shoppers were to be offered its use.

By contrast, the apartment, accessed by stairs just behind the shop, was beautifully maintained. The kitchen, at the rear overlooking the yard, had a fine cooking stove, though Tom noticed it did not have a water boiler. The sink was to one side of a largish window and the water closet to the other. The stove was along the front wall. Running along the length of the apartment was a corridor off which there were two bedrooms, one rather small, the other a reasonable size, and at the front a quite good living room. All the rooms had fireplaces, but they were small.

Cassandra noticed that there were windows in the bedrooms. "There is a space between this building and the next, Mrs. Catchpole?"

"Indeed. The door to one side of the shop leads into an alley-way to the yard."

In talking of the shop previously, Cassandra had assumed access to the yard was only via the shop. This alley-way could be helpful. B & J had access only through the shop to their yard, which was simply paved and served when workers might need to do something that would create dust or dirt. If this shop were acquired, a gate could be put between the premises if needed.

Cassandra would have liked Mary to be present, but felt that Frieda, Winnifred, Tom and herself were enough of an imposition. However, Mary did provide some excellent ginger snaps, which with tea offered by Mrs. Catchpole and her very shy daughter, led to some general conversation on the woes of being a widow.

"You are lucky to be a spinster, Miss Match," said Mrs. Catchpole in her ignorance of the reality.

\* \* \*

It was in the second week of September that Cassandra received a note from Mrs. Catchpole asking if they could meet. Cassandra invited her and

her daughter to tea on Sunday afternoon, September 12 on Fortescue Road. She asked Mary and Abraham to join her, and the five of them congregated in the drawing room, where a fire had been set as the weather had turned wet and chilly.

Ethel brought in refreshments, then retired.

"I now see why your delicacies have captured the fancy of so many, Mrs. McNair," Mrs. Catchpole observed.

"Thank you, Mrs. Catchpole. Ethel and I are sometimes hard pressed to make enough, but we do not wish to compromise the quality."

Cassandra said "I am assuming you asked to meet because you wanted to talk about your shop. I invited Mr. Cohen and Mrs. McNair to join us so that other perspectives might be presented. So you are aware, it would be myself and Mrs. Baldwin and Mrs. Moss who would be the interested parties. I will ask Mr. Cohen and Mrs. McNair to try to be impartial and offer ideas that are of benefit to your interests as well as mine."

Whether Mrs. Catchpole believed this, she did not say. Instead she offered "I have thought a great deal about the possibility of selling the premises and business. I can see that ladies' apparel might have a greater potential for profit than tobacco given Bartlett and Jones next door. For Emma and I, the central concern is having a living and a place to live, and I have no illusions that we would continue to reside there."

"I will not contradict you, Mrs. Catchpole. I believe that my two colleagues from Manchester are most attracted to the apartment."

"They did not hide their interest. Therefore I have been to see my sister in Tunbridge Wells. Her husband is a builder there. She is some years older than I and their children are married and live apart. There is plenty of space. It also turns out that my brother-in-law needs a book-keeper upon the retirement of a long-standing employee, so I can be useful and we will come to an arrangement. However, I do need to get as much as I can for the business and the premises."

"Have you had any interest in both the business and premises as a package," Abraham asked. "That would likely get you the most return if someone were looking."

"It's no secret that my husband's illness led to a decline in the business. There are three other tobacconists within a half mile radius. One of them approached me already, but the offer was very small. To get a good price, I think it would need to be someone from outside Brighton. I've thought of advertising, but not tried so far. And I thought I should at least hear what Miss Match might be able to propose."

Cassandra had wondered about the likely price of the premises, and had visited Mr. Arbuthnot. "Mr. Arbuthnot, I need some information, and I realize giving it will not add to your income, so I am willing to pay for it. I



need to know what amounts have been paid for shops in Brighton recently.”

Arbuthnot said only a few shops had been sold, and he only knew the prices of three of those, since two were traded within families. He said that he would write down the addresses and prices, and Miss Match did not need to pay him, as he was getting some revenues from the rentals on Fortescue Road. Cassandra had forecast this reluctance to accept payment – she suggested that Mrs. Arbuthnot could expect a discount on the material for a dress should she order one from Miss Campbell or Mrs. Ritchie. Since Arbuthnot had just that morning had his breakfast accompanied by a plea for a new dress, this offer was very agreeable. Thus Cassandra was in possession of at least an approximation to the value of the Catchpole property. The numbers Arbuthnot provided were from £425 to £600. From a brief view from the street, Cassandra and Abraham, who had come along to look, thought the lower figure was closer to the value of Mrs. Catchpole’s shop.

Cassandra said “I have looked at a couple of properties, and my estimation is that your premises have a value somewhere around £400. There would be some premium if a survey showed all the fabric to be in top shape, though few buildings of the age of yours are perfect. There is also the matter of timing. A very early possession might allow the new enterprise to participate in the Christmas trade, which is becoming ever more important.”

“If you had a survey, I presume it would be at your expense,” Mrs. Catchpole said.

“Naturally,” Cassandra answered.

“£400 is less than I hoped, but I believe my husband maintained the building well. When would you conduct such a survey?”

“As soon as it could be arranged. You would like to sell quickly?”

“My brother-in-law has become impatient to have the books brought up to date. Selling tobacco is not my forte, but I do keep accounts well.”

“If I may interject,” Abraham said, “Do you have an accurate record of your current stocks? It may be that we could distribute it to tobacconists in a radius of, say, 20 miles and request sealed bids. It may or may not be helpful to provide the purchase prices of the goods.”

The previously silent Emma spoke up “I made such a list last week. The total is over £170, and that doesn’t include the humidors and cabinets.”

“Then perhaps prepare a separate list of the shop fittings, since they are peculiar to tobacco. I fear trying to sell things piecemeal will leave a lot of loose ends with concomitant effort for you and delay in receiving monies.

To ensure confidence, we could engage the auctioneers as intermediaries. They would insist on a deposit with each bid to avoid false bids.”

“Why would someone put in a false bid?” Emma asked.

“A high bid from Mr. A is submitted with a lower one from Mr. B. When he “wins”, Mr. A then makes some excuse when arriving to collect the

goods and make payment. Mr. B, his accomplice, happens to be present and states he will honour his bid and save the goods having to be re-auctioned. And so forth.”

Mrs. Catchpole said “It is an idea that makes some sense. We should first proceed with the survey. Let me know, Miss Match, when the inspection will be held. As long as it is not too disruptive, it can be almost any time.”

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Cassandra got Frederick Brougham to do the survey, with Tom accompanying him. Tom had been given a general outline of the renovations that would be desirable. That is, the wall at the back of the shop would be opened so the shop and store-room became a much larger shop suitable for display of items of clothing. This might entail some reinforcement of the underpinning, and the cellar would need to be looked at. Also the attic might be used for storage of lighter elements of the stock. And there was the longer term possibility of opening the wall between the adjacent shops to give street access for B & J’s yard to the street, though that was, Tom was told, to be kept under his hat.

It turned out that the cellar was in good order, being clean and dry. It had a number of solid piers, and Brougham pointed out that it would be fairly easy to put in one or more cast iron supports where the back wall of the shop would be removed if Cassandra’s plan were implemented. Brougham said it would not be very expensive. Hiding the damage where the wall was removed might be more trouble, but Brougham said “With the job you did with that door in Number 21, you’ll not have a lot of trouble making it look tidy.”

This was high praise from Brougham, but the builder had watched Tom’s activities and approved of his ingenuity and energy. Tom would, he knew, make some mistakes, but they would be mistakes of enthusiasm rather than laziness, or simply bad luck. He liked the boy, and wished his own son had a fraction of Tom’s ability. His own son couldn’t put one brick on another without it falling off. Tom was somehow easy to talk to, and they enjoyed companionable conversations when they came across each other. And Tom was out and about – if people wanted a builder, Brougham knew his name would get mentioned first.

\* \* \*

Cassandra had written to her mother with an account of the meeting with Mrs. Catchpole and the plan to conduct a survey. The day after the survey was conducted, the household of Number 21 was having dinner when they heard a horse stop in the street and Frieda's voice. Tom scrambled up the area steps while Ethel ran up the interior stairs and opened the door.

Frieda and Winnifred had decided that they would chance coming right away. After the initial confusion of the ladies' arrival, Mary put together plates of food for them – slightly odd bits and pieces given the late arrival. Tom had finished off the pudding, but there were some shortbreads and, of course, tea.

Cassandra said "The survey showed the Catchpole shop to be in excellent condition, and Mr. Cohen suggested that a form of auction of the stock and fixtures might get a fair price for them. He proposed that a detailed list of stock with original prices and a list of the fixtures such as the humidors be printed and distributed within a wide radius. But there remain the questions of how much to offer for the premises, what contributions each of us will make to that offer, and whether it will be acceptable to Mrs. Catchpole."

"Have you thought how much she might accept?"

"I persuaded Mr. Arbuthnot to tell me the prices for three recent shops that were sold. They ranged from £425 to £600. However, it turns out the fabric of the building is in excellent condition from the survey Mr. Brougham the builder conducted with Tom."

"It was tip-top," that young man said.

"I suppose that we need to make a respectable offer to get the property, but not one that is beyond the value," said Frieda. "Are you in agreement, Winnifred?"

"I am. I think it may be useful for you, me and Miss Match and perhaps Mrs. McNair to write down a number and then we can compare our estimates. Though I think it should be the two of us who actually contribute funds or we will have a committee trying to run a building."

Mary declined to participate, saying she knew far too little of properties, but she did find paper and pencils and the numbers were written down. When they were revealed, Cassandra had written £440, Frieda and Winnifred £450.

Cassandra said "Then let me suggest it be £450, and that I concur with Mrs. Moss that I not be a contributor to this particular offer, though I will be most interested in the outcome. Will you be ready to increase the offer, and, if so, by how much?"

"Winnifred. Do you think we would go to £500?"

"Possibly. But not in one step, and reluctantly. And that would be my limit." Winnifred was a woman who, like Cassandra, knew her mind.

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The two ladies wrote their offer, giving their price and suggesting a possession date of November 1. It was delivered the next morning, Friday September 17. There was a reply by that evening, asking for £500 and a settlement on October 15. On Saturday, the parties agreed on £475 and October 15, with the buyer supplying cartage for the vendor to move personal possessions to the railway station. Mrs. Catchpole wanted reliable transport for her household property, and she knew Cassandra had Tom, Tony and Annabelle. Her builder brother-in-law could presumably handle the other end.

For transport to Brighton station, Cassandra could indeed arrange Tony and Annabelle, with Tom to assist, and even use the hand cart. Moreover, it should be possible to hire Goldman's pony and cart too, which Tom could manage. The cost of all this would be no more than a few shillings. It was clear the condition was based on knowing the people providing the services.

Arranging for the conveyancing of the property had to wait until Monday, though Henry Mortimer was able to say that with Mr. Turcotte's permission, he thought he would be able to act for the ladies. This was helpful, as Mr. Cavendish, who Cassandra had engaged before, was going to act for Mrs. Catchpole.

The auctioneers engaged to handle the sale of the stock and fixtures were assiduous in advertising the sale. They did, however, ask a fee of 10% rather than 5, as they would give collaborating auctioneers the opportunity to receive bids, and they printed the stock and fixtures lists with the address where to deliver bids left blank, so that those participating auctioneers could supply their own address. This was, it turned out, a sensible measure, for the winning bid for the stock came from Taunton in Somerset at £160. With packing the stock in chests, and the commission, over £140 was recovered. The fixtures were relatively old, and bids were only received quite local to Brighton. A shop in Lewes took them for £25 and carted them away on the afternoon of October 11 when the bids were opened.

On October 14, Tony and Tom, with help from Ethel and Maud, loaded the Catchpole household goods that were going to Tunbridge Wells and took them to the station. A few items that were not going Maud acquired for £1 10s.

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In the afternoon of Friday, October 15, Frieda and Winnifred took possession of the property. They planned to move into the apartment as quickly

as they could. Brougham would start on Monday to replace the rear shop wall with a large wooden beam and a cast iron pillar.

The two ladies had returned to Manchester to pack up some of their possessions. These they packed in six large trunks. Furniture was sold. They decided to get new or new-to-them items in Brighton. Maud was able to increase her earnings even as she gave the ladies a reduced mark-up. Since the immediate requirement was for two beds, two wash-stands, a good table and six chairs, an armchair, a sofa and two occasional tables, Maud, Abraham and Joshua were easily able to provide, though over the next few weeks new needs were discovered on a fairly regular basis.

\* \* \*

Oct 25 1852

Cassandra had invited Abraham to dinner, and afterwards they took coffee in the drawing room.

“Abraham, I wanted to ask your opinion on a possible investment.”

“Oh my! What is your next enterprise, Cassandra?”

“I think Mr. Jones would like to cash in his interest in Bartlett and Jones. I am thinking of making an offer, but clearly I need to make sure I know the value and prospects,” Cassandra said.

“You should be in a good position to do that, since you do the books. Have you any idea of what Jones might take to sell?”

“He’ll likely want a good premium on the asset value. I think B & J could be a very good long term business, especially combined with the shop Mrs. Baldwin and Mrs. Moss have purchased. I believe displaying dresses and selling smaller garments – manufactured rather than made on command – in the new shop could enlarge the revenues more than would be possible in two shops because of commissions from dressmakers.”

Abraham said “Is it possible it isn’t worth trying to buy out Jones? I think besides the shop, which can be more or less valued at something like £500, and the stock, of which I’m sure you have a valuation, his major asset is you as manager.”

“There’s about £280 in stock. At least that’s what we paid for it. I’ve been trying to shift some of the dross. Still, in round figures, the shop and stock could be close to £800. And the profit last year, allowing £125 for rent that would have to be paid if the premises were not owned, was £716, out of which I got about £80. So Jones would want some return for what is generally called "good will". I don’t even have the £800 for premises and stock, so I’d need to come to some arrangement to pay him off.”

“That puts you under an obligation for a long time. I take it you want control of the business, and see ownership as the route to that.”

“Yes, naturally,” Cassandra said, rather wondering what Abraham was getting at.

“But I don’t think you need to own the business to have that control. You may be able to agree a take-over of management for either a fixed yearly payment or a fixed proportion of the profits.”

Cassandra thought for a moment, and then said “A fixed payment would be much less, but would mean I would have an amount to come up with every year. Illness or injury could put me in the poorhouse.”

“And if the amount were relatively small and the profits grew, then Jones would be tempted to sell the business out from under you unless you had a contract that gave you first refusal to buy.”

“Thank you Abraham. It is good to have those cautions. But on the other hand, I could potentially set up anew in competition in the shop Mrs. Baldwin and Mrs. Moss have acquired. They are already acquiring stock of manufactured small garments and plan to open shortly. Mrs. Moss had some names of suppliers because her husband was a tailor, and they did a bit of such trade apart from Mr. Moss’ principal work. They will also need to find one or two staff, but we are canvassing the Soultons and some others to find recommended candidates.”

“The threat of competition may spur Mr. Jones to negotiate with you. You can be quite open that your preferred aim is to have the businesses cooperate, even to the extent of providing access to the rear yard.”

“Yes. It would indeed be best if Mr. Jones hears from me that my associates have purchased the Catchpole premises.”

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Cassandra sent a note to Mr. Jones asking if they might meet confidentially to discuss developments concerning the business of Bartlett and Jones. She suggested Wednesday October 27 or the week following, allowing for early closing. Jones replied directly that he would be at the shop at half-past one on the 27th. Cassandra sent a note saying that would be acceptable, but that she would like to have Mr. Cohen present as a potential interested party. She did not wish to surprise Jones by Abraham’s presence.

Cassandra made sure Collier and the other staff were gone soon after the early closing. She did not want the discussions overheard. She had also asked Abraham to come as she preferred not to be alone with Mr. Jones. She had no particular reason to be concerned about Mr. Jones’ behaviour, but preferred to err on the side of caution.

Jones had not come to the shop that morning, nor in fact for a few weeks, but arrived punctually, accompanied by his wife.

"I hope you don't mind, but when you mentioned Mr. Cohen being here, I realized that my wife has an important stake in the well-being of Bartlett and Jones."

Cassandra was not at all disturbed by this, as she suspected Mrs. Jones was anxious that the business was a tie that bound her and Mr. Jones to Brighton.

"Not at all. Bartlett and Jones and its fortunes affect you both."

"I have not been here for a few weeks, and to my surprise there is a sign going up next door at Catchpole's tobacconist shop. But it says, 'Brighton Ladies' Garment Emporium'."

"Yes. After Mr. Catchpole's death, his widow was unhappy at trying to keep the tobacco business going. Two widows from Manchester saw it and bought it. One of them turned out to be a family friend I had lost touch with fifteen years ago. They plan to sell manufactured garments and undergarments for ladies, but to display sample dresses for some local dressmakers I have put them in touch with. I am hopeful there will be some knock-on business for B & J."

"Miss Match, you are ever looking for the chances," Jones said. "It is what makes me both admire and fear you. Now what was on your mind."

Cassandra took a moment to prepare herself. "The Emporium, as I shall call it, should generate some need for items we sell here, but it is also potential competition. As your assistant manager, I believe it is my duty to inform you of business opportunities and threats. It would not be to my credit if you learned of them casually."

"That is indeed so," Jones agreed.

"If the Emporium display of dresses generates business, some need for material and incidentals should flow to us. However, I regard that as casual or chance business. A more direct arrangement could be much more advantageous. The Emporium has a side alley to the back. If we opened a gate in the wall, we could take deliveries that way and avoid draymen clomping through the shop with bolts of cloth."

"Aye. We've had our moments from time to time. We'd still have the commotion in the street, but going in the back would keep the shop clear."

"Some negotiation might allow profit sharing at the material, dressmaking, alteration and accoutrement levels. And all at one location."

Mrs. Jones said "If there were a pleasant salon, acquiring all the items for an ensemble at once would certainly be attractive."

Cassandra, seizing on this, said "As you know, Mrs. McNair, who lives in one of the houses I manage, is proprietor of Treats for the Tongue. It is not beyond imagination to think that some very valued customers might be

offered tea and refreshments of that sort while shopping.”

Mr. Jones looked defeated. Cassandra guessed he realized she could move next door and simply out-compete B & J. He said “Do you have any specific proposals, Miss Match. I can see that there are possibilities where I am almost out of my depth.”

Cassandra continued “Bartlett and Jones has a good reputation for drapery and haberdashery, so I feel the business name and general operations should continue. You may correct me if I am wrong, but I sense that you wish to step back from active business.”

“You are not entirely correct, but not wrong either. Since the business is of long-standing, we would be loath to lose income from it. But I do find I am less inclined to want to do the day-to-day work of it.”

Cassandra said “From my perspective, I am currently the assistant manager, though taking on more and more overall direction. My inclination is to want to be able to adapt quickly to opportunities such as those I have suggested. Also, if you do become less involved in the day-to-day operations, it should be clear who has responsibility for the different activities and obligations of the business. In some situations where there are opportunities but also risks, my pursuit of those should be largely to both my benefit and cost.”

“In other words, you wish to be Manager or Director. Am I correct?” Jones asked.

“Indeed. A carriage should not have two drivers,” Cassandra answered.

“Do you have a concrete proposal for us to contemplate?”

“I have thought of several possibilities, but I believe that there is a great dependency on how we all – you, me, the ladies who now own the Emporium, as well as our staffs – envisage the future and how we fit into it. So for now I suggest we talk of ideas and see if we can find a commonly agreeable plan for you and I, then see if it accords more widely.”

“I am somewhat relieved you have not booked me a passage to Cape Town,” Mr. Jones chuckled.

“Do not give her ideas, Mr. Jones,” Abraham said with a smile.

Cassandra continued “If I may verge on impertinence, Mr. Jones, when I came here, I realized quickly that you had a deep and comprehensive knowledge of materials and haberdashery stock, as well as good connections to the manufacturers and suppliers. On the other hand, there was – and still is – a good deal of outdated or mis-represented stock. If I have a good understanding of my own capabilities, it is in seeing how to present the stock or package it so it sells better.”

“I would have said impertinent a year ago, but I would take your assessment as fair.”

“My sense is that there may be new styles, materials, colours and patterns. It would behove B & J to have someone more actively investigate these



with both current and possibly new suppliers. If I recall correctly, you once said that you would like to travel to see places.” At this Mrs. Jones nodded and smiled. “With your knowledge, I believe you would be well-placed to do the investigations, and the costs of the travel could be on the business account.”

“That could be an interesting motivation to see different places, and I would love to see new fabrics and patterns,” Mrs. Jones interjected.

“It is not uninteresting,” Mr. Jones did not wish to tip his hand. “But we do need to settle a lot of details.”

Cassandra continued “That is true. And I will add that if we undertake these ideas, I would want at an appropriate point that either myself or someone like Mr. Collier be introduced in person to key suppliers. Some years ago, I entered into an agreement with someone who died of the cholera not four days later, which created a great hardship for me for several years. I now try to divide responsibility where possible to avoid such disaster. In our trade, as in most, personal acquaintance is of great importance.”

“Indeed, Miss Match. You understand well.”

“Now to consider some details. As you are aware, since my arrival, the profits went up from around £600 to £840, which we adjusted back to £716 by subtracting a rent allowance.

Of the additional £240 profits, I was paid about 105 in wages and commission on profits. Given your capital and long-standing history in the business, as well as your active role at the shop, I believe the distribution more or less fair.

If, as we seem to be considering, I were to take over the management, we would need to think of both obligations and rewards. You and Mrs. Jones need to have confidence in a reasonable income. I need to know my ideas, time and energy are appropriately rewarded.”

Mr. Jones nodded.

Cassandra continued “From my perspective, I would like full discretion in running the business, though of course not including power to sell the premises, subject always to audit of the books by yourself or someone you appoint.

My feeling is – even though I have not yet prepared a detailed forecast – that the business could pay you the first £600 per annum from the net profits, ignoring the rent allowance. That is, it would pay you the income before my arrival, and pay it before all other distributions. Also, before such profits were reckoned, the business would cover visits by you and Mrs. Jones to some suppliers. Who and when you visit are important for us to discuss, but I feel three or four such investigations per year would be helpful. Of the profits above £600, I would think 15 % should go to you, with the remainder for distribution to me and other staff. Further, since I could, by discretion,

overpay myself in wages, I would detail that no more than two persons, for example myself and one other, could take a wage of more than £1 per week.”

“You have been wearing your thinking cap, Miss Match. It had not occurred to me until this moment how the profits could be siphoned off by over-paying yourself. Are you also thinking that Collier’s wage should be so limited?”

“Collier, if he shows interest. I’m not sure his heart is in the drapery business. If we go ahead, I will see if he will take the bait of a share of the profits. You saw that it earned me much more than a wage, and at no direct cost to B & J, that is, to you.”

“That is true. I nearly choked when I saw you would get nearly £80, but I think you can reasonably claim much of the credit for the increase in business and therefore earned your dividend. And I must agree, I profited as well.”

“I would also suggest we include in any agreement the possibility of mutual consent to re-investment of some of the profits into assets that would become part of the business, such as new fittings, since that would reduce the monies available for distribution in the short term.”

“That would be sensible. New possibilities cannot be ignored, but may cost something, and they become part of the business holdings,” Jones agreed.

“So how should we proceed?” Cassandra asked.

“Could you draft an agreement and send it round to me? There will undoubtedly be some changes and discussion. Once we get to an agreement – and I’m sure we will – I’ll have a solicitor look at it. You may want to as well. But the overall idea seems sound, though just 15% seems a little small. Let me counter with 20%.”

“Hmm. At the current rate of earning, that would be £48. It is after the first £600, and after costs for travel for you and Mrs. Jones. Yes, I could agree that. Your investigations would be by first class, of course. ”

“Yes, there is that, John.” Mrs. Jones was clearly enthused about one aspect of the suggestion.

“How do you fit into this plan, Mr. Cohen?” Jones asked.

Cassandra answered “Obviously I have given these matters some thought. But the amounts involved are quite large. Mr. Cohen has in the past shown good judgement concerning business issues I have had to decide, so I asked him to act as another perspective on my ideas.”

“Miss Match is very astute,” Abraham said. “But I have observed that among her abilities are a willingness to consider different views and also to help others prosper at the same time as herself.”

“Indeed, bringing others along saves a lot of anger and confrontation,” Jones agreed. “For what period would you want this agreement?”

“Does five years seem suitable? Neither too short to accomplish some

plans, nor too long to tie us down. At the end of that time, we could choose to renew the arrangements.”

“Yes. That seems about right,” Jones said.

Abraham said “Would it be acceptable that Mr. Jones nominate an agent to receive payment who is located within the city of Brighton? Miss Match, as a woman, does not have easy access to banking or cheques. Arranging payment to a distant place might cause a delay such that she defaults by technicality.”

Mrs. Jones said “It is a great injustice that we women cannot have the same convenience as men in financial matters. We will have no trouble agreeing to that.” Mr. Jones was silent.

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Cassandra drafted a contract. There were a couple of minor adjustments that both sides were happy to accept. Cassandra asked Mr. Turcotte if she could pay either him or Henry a fee to have it reviewed. Turcotte suggested that Mr. Mortimer should be able to do this, and it would be good practise for him. A fee of £1 was agreed. Whether Jones had it reviewed or not, Cassandra never learned, but Miss Bingham made two fair copies and Cassandra signed both and sent them to Jones. One came back with Jones signature, duly witnessed. The contract ran from January 1, 1853, so the formalities were accomplished with some time for plans and preparations to be made.

An early step was to call in Collier to let him know of the changes in the management structure, and that there would be opportunities as well, should he be interested.

“What sort of opportunities, Miss Match?”

“I believe that the shop needs staff who take initiative and direct their own actions. That initiative, however, must be rewarded by a share in the profits. The key elements of any such arrangements are "profit" and "share". Clearly if there is no profit, there is no share.

As you already see the journal and ledger as we record and check them, you will know that for the year ending in June this year, B & J made a little over £700 after an allowance of £125 for the use of the premises, that is, in lieu of rent, since Mr. Jones owns the property. We will now not make that allocation, but need to pay Mr. Jones the first £600 plus 20% of the balance. He will also be paid expenses to investigate new suppliers and new products for us, and that will, of course, be deducted from our profits before they are summed. On the other hand, we have the use of the capital and 80% of the balance for distribution.”

Cassandra had not said anything about the wage limitation. Collier currently received 15/- per week.

“Mr. Collier, how old are you now?”

“I’ll be 23 in January, Miss Match.”

“Do you see your future working in a business such as Bartlett and Jones?”

“I can’t say I thought about it a lot, Miss Match. It was my first employment, and another fellow who had come a while before me was lazy and Mr. Jones sacked him. The girls – young ladies – came more recently.”

“The question is, Mr. Collier, whether you find sufficient interest and incentive to make a career in this type of work. And if you do, then you need to think of how you will do so. I suggest we talk again in a couple of days, and you can tell me of your ambitions, and also what you think a proper income should be if you are among the best men working in a business such as this.”

\* \* \*

The previous conversation with Collier was held on a Saturday. On the Monday following, Collier asked if he might have a word before Miss Match left for the day.

“Certainly, Mr. Collier. As custom is quiet at the moment, Miss Yardley and Miss Shaw can attend to it. Come in and shut the door.”

Collier did so, then said “What we talked about on Saturday has given me much thought, Miss Match. Indeed, previously I had not thought very much about what I would like for my future, and that was remiss of me.”

“One should always have a regard for one’s future, Mr. Collier. But I know that such considerations are not general in youth. But you are now at a stage in life when it becomes more important.”

“Yes, Miss Match.

Yesterday I spent several hours in conversation with Miss Yardley. We have – it is not a secret but has not been publicized, that we have been walking out together on Sundays for most of this year – we have recognized that if we were to continue our, er, progress, we will need to think of our income and expenses. At the moment we both live with our parents, and clearly that would likely change were we to marry.”

“Especially in the event of children. So have you arrived at any understanding of how that will affect your activities here at B & J?”

“Only in general terms. Presently, as you are well-aware, I earn 15/- a week, and Joan – Miss Yardley – earns 10/-. Together, that is a decent

enough revenue for Brighton, but you would likely dismiss Miss Yardley on marriage and ...”

“Mr. Collier, I believe an employee who contributes to the business should never be dismissed unless their behaviour damages trade.”

“Oh. That is most ... reassuring, Miss Match.”

“Let us discuss your own situation and prospects, Mr. Collier.”

“Upon deliberation, I realized that, though I had not particularly registered it in my mind, I do have the expectation of advancement over the years, so that I should have a more responsible position after some time.”

“With concomitant reward, I would presume.”

“Yes, Miss Match.”

“Is your understanding with Miss Yardley sufficiently developed that she should also be part of this conversation?”

“I believe it is, Miss Match.”

“Then let us continue this conversation at the close of business today, unless that is inconvenient.”

“I will inform Joan – Miss Yardley. Thank you, Miss Match.”

\* \* \*

At five past six o’clock, Collier and Joan came into the office.

“Fetch another chair, Mr. Collier. It will be awkward if you are standing while Miss Yardley and I are sitting.”

When Collier was seated, Cassandra asked, “I assume you are both now aware of the fact that I will have the management of B & J and that Mr. Jones is stepping back from direct involvement, though he will be investigating new products in which we may be interested. So today we should start to think of your role in this business, and from what Mr. Collier has told me, we should think of you as a unit. Is that correct?”

As she finished this introduction, Cassandra was looking at Joan, who mumbled “Yes, Miss”.

“As I have indicated to Mr. Collier, I am interested in having staff who contribute to the business, but also I believe that initiative and hard work should be rewarded. Moreover, as long as your personal arrangements do not impinge on trade, they are your own business. If, in time, there are children, and their needs are properly met, your employment here will depend only on your contribution here.”

Joan’s eyes widened at this. Cassandra continued “Currently together you earn 25/- per week. That would be a decent enough income for a family, but would be precarious if one of you were to have to stay home. So I would assume that Mr. Collier is looking to an improved income to support you

both, though Miss Yardley may wish to continue working as circumstances permit. Is that correct?"

"Yes, Miss," two voices said at the same time.

"Perhaps you could both tell me the aspects of your current activities here that you like and dislike. I will not judge you on your replies. If we are to advance in concert, it is not helpful if much of your employ is spent in things you find unpleasant. On the other hand, there are always tasks that are tedious but necessary."

There was a silence for a few seconds, then Collier said "I find I am pleased when I can get a lady – almost all our customers are ladies – to buy something she had not intended to purchase. I don't mean something she does not need or want, but something she had not thought about before she came into the shop. An example is the remnant skeins I sold to Mrs. Baldwin and Mrs. Moss who are now starting next door. I also find it interesting to look at the accounts to see where monies come in and go out, though the detail of recording the journal and posting the amounts to the ledger is somewhat tedious."

"And the less attractive parts of your work?" Cassandra prompted.

"I find I have to pay a lot of attention to the differences in materials, or colours, or sizes of needles, and many such details. It is not so terribly difficult, but learning takes a while."

"Alexander. It is because you are a man. Men never see colours or patterns as women do." Miss Yardley had found her voice.

"Then, Miss Yardley, perhaps you can suggest ways that might ease the difficulty of knowing what is what in the shop and the storeroom? That would be a help if we engage new staff, or temporary staff at times of increased business, such as Christmas time."

"I can give it some thought, Miss Match. Part of the trouble for all of us is that the materials are often stored more or less by the date when they are received. If they were by type of material, or better labelled, we'd be more efficient and could offer more choice to the customers."

"What you say is sensible and accords with my own view of the store-room in particular. And I suspect that if Miss Yardley were to organize the storeroom and fetch materials while Mr. Collier presented them to the customers, we might see some gain in revenues, though we would have two people serving one customer."

"We need anyway to keep one staff person in the shop at all times for security," Collier said.

Cassandra replied "That is true, though perhaps the office could be rearranged so the person at the desk can see the shop well. That would likely be you, Mr. Collier, or myself. In times when there is much custom, we can come forward to assist, or if each customer is being served, but the staff

member needs to fetch something from the storeroom, simply observe for the time there is nobody at the counter.”

“Yes, Miss Match. That might work.”

“How is Miss Shaw doing in the shop?”

There was an awkward silence, so Cassandra continued “I realize you may not wish to seem critical, but it has seemed to me that Miss Shaw is not as welcoming to customers or happy in her work as either of you. Would I be wrong in my opinion of Miss Shaw?”

Collier said “We do find we have to carry more of the load than we would if she were more engaged.”

“Thank you. I will see if she is willing to apply herself, and if not, I will suggest she seek other employment. In any event, may I ask you both to say nothing at the present, but also to consider if you know anyone who might like to work with us.

Now on the matter of possible rewards, it is clear that the business can only sustain paying staff more if the overall profits are greater. I am considering allocating 5 % of the profits over £600 as a share for each member of the junior staff to be paid additional to their wage. As well, I am looking at how we might re-invest a portion of such profits if such investment would amplify our earnings even more. This will, hopefully, be a hallmark of my management. The difficulty is always, of course, in the details, especially in gauging the fairness of each person’s contribution and reward. Suggestions will be welcome.”

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“Miss Match, I understand you want to speak to me?” Sally Shaw said the next day.

“Yes, I would. Can you come in and shut the door, please?”

Sally was, naturally, rather nervous, and took the chair Cassandra indicated and sat stiffly with her hand clasped tightly together in her lap.

Cassandra said “Miss Shaw, I believe you are aware that as of the New Year, I will be managing Bartlett and Jones. You will no doubt guess that I will be making some changes to try to improve trade. That includes what could be better remuneration for staff, but also a greater expectation of initiative and responsibility.”

Cassandra gave Sally a chance to respond, but she stayed quiet.

“I have been wondering if you find your work here interesting or enjoyable.”

“I’m glad of the employment, Miss.”

“Am I correct that you may find it difficult or uninteresting?”

At this, Sally seemed to perk up. "No, Miss. I find it ever so interesting .... but .... it's just hard."

"In what way? If you find it interesting, then we can, perhaps, help to ease the difficulties."

"It takes me so long to reckon the customers' change. And I get the materials and the needles and things mixed up in my head."

Cassandra had before her an invoice for some material from a fabric wholesaler in Burnley. The top two items were

bolt red check 3/8" calico 44" wide, 30 yds	4
bolt blue pattern linsey-woolsey twill 44" wide, 40 yds	2

She said, passing the sheet of paper to Sally, "Miss Shaw, what are the two first items on this invoice?"

"It says we got two bolts of cloth, Miss."

"And what type of cloth and colour?"

"Er ... calico, and red, and the other is blue."

"Sally, I don't think you can read properly, and I think that is slowing your work. There are 4 bolts of calico and 2 of linsey-woolsey, and the latter is a twill rather than a plain weave."

Sally started to weep, and said "Please don't sack me, Miss. I need the money 'cos me Dad broke 'is arm a month ago and it's still not healed. Me Mam takes in laundry and me brothers and sisters do all the odd jobs they can, and we're just making ends meet, but not if I lose this job."

"Calm yourself, Miss Shaw. I am not going to dismiss you, at least not until you've had a proper chance to learn to read better, for which I believe I can arrange a teacher. I will also pay that person – a Mrs. Naismith who lives where I do. Nor will I diminish your wages to pay Mrs. Naismith, but I will expect you to reimburse Bartlett and Jones if there is a bonus from increased profits. So if you succeed in learning to read better, you will never be worse off than now, and the business will get repaid if we progress as I hope. If you are truly unable to learn, which I sincerely doubt will be the case, you will not have to repay the attempt to teach you. Is that fair?"

"Yes, Miss. Not many would be so generous."

"All right, I will talk to Mrs. Naismith at the earliest opportunity. Are you willing to go to Fortescue Road each evening after work for half an hour?"

"Yes, Miss. I could do that."

Thus Sally started reading lessons, which were expanded to some arithmetic once she had gained some ability with words. Through the next few months, her work improved and this was noted by Collier and Miss Yardley, as well as Cassandra.



\* \* \*

December 1, 1852

Cassandra came in to the kitchen at about a quarter to two in the afternoon. Early closing meant here walk home was in the light.

“For once you aren’t wet,” Mary said. “I can’t recall a wetter month than November.” She had just come back to 21 from the kitchen of 23 where a large batch of different delicacies was being prepared. Ethel could handle the oven and its contents for an hour while Mary looked to the order book she now used to keep her operations running smoothly. It was a busy time, and though Christmas would no doubt be more demanding, some locals still held to the Feast of St. Nicholas for gifts and children’s celebrations, especially the parishioners of the local church by that name. We have already mentioned that Phoebe Hessel – the Stepney Amazon – was buried there with a prominent stone.

“Yes, I cannot agree more. It took two days or more to dry out my wrap, and the winds meant an umbrella was more hazard than help,” Cassandra replied.

“It is a bit early, but have you thought how many will be here for Christmas?” Mary queried.

“To be honest, my thoughts are with my taking on the direction of B & J, but your question will, I hope, be a happy diversion, as long as it is accompanied by a cup of tea, a sandwich and a surprise item from your delicacies.”

“I’ll move the kettle to the hotter area of the hob. I made you a roast beef sandwich with some piccalilli. It’s under the cloth there. And the surprise I’ll bring out when you’ve finished the sandwich.”

Cassandra, having worked rather vigorously with Sally in the storeroom all morning to set aside anything that was more than five years old to be examined for how it might be quickly sold, had a good appetite. The sandwich, with excellent thick crusty bread, was just what she needed. As she finished the last mouthful, Mary brought out a small plate with four brown cylinders, two of which were filled with a white cream.

“Italian Jumbles or Brandy Snaps,” Mary said. “Though I think that there is a distinction in that brandy snaps are left flat and not rolled. And of course, there can be other fillings than whipped cream, but I think I will only use that for now, and only for orders where I know they will be consumed within a short time, or the cream will go off or separate.”

Cassandra found them delightful, but had to say “The only complaint is that they crumble and threaten to leave one looking untidy. But I can see these becoming very popular. Are they difficult to make?”

“The batches must be very small because we only have a few seconds to roll them. Dessert tonight will be the ones where we did not succeed. They are still fine to eat, so I will crumble them on a baked custard, but they can’t be sold as delicacies.”

“Perhaps the flat brandy snaps would be safer,” Cassandra observed.

“Indeed, I am going to offer them as a standard item, and the Italian Jumbles as a premium product, with fillings for an extra charge. Ethel and I are hoping to get a standard order form printed that can be filled in by the customer. Ethel thought if we have two columns for the amounts of each item, we could tear off the second column and it would serve as the record for the customer and as their receipt for their deposit?”

“Can you make the quantities of each item so each unit could be the same price? It would simplify the reckoning of the total.”

“That IS a good idea. I think we could do it. My shortbreads are a ha’penny apiece, so a dozen for sixpence. I think the Italian Jumbles would be a penny, and the filled ones a penny-ha’penny or even tuppence. And so on for other products. I’d probably have to have to do special orders separately, though.”

“Of course, but the majority of customers would be easier and quicker to serve. Simply add the number of items and divide by 2.”

Mary said “To change the subject, I’m wondering if I should invite Michael Yarrow and Elizabeth for Christmas dinner.”

“Why not? You like his company. I’m thinking of inviting Abraham, as if we don’t have the pudding, we can probably arrange that most of the food does not cause them awkwardness. And we can probably tell them the menu with our invitation. As you know, Abraham has come to church a few times, though he will not take communion. He talked to the vicar quietly and was welcomed. He says the kosher dietary rules are a way of remembering his parents who were more or less killed in front of him. He and Rachel hid in a dung-heap. I don’t know how Joshua escaped. Sometime I’d like to ask him, but it may be a painful memory.”

“Yes, they had very terrifying trials.” Mary said.

Cassandra changed the subject back to Christmas dinner. “Have you talked with Mr. Yarrow about Christmas?”

“He mentioned that he wondered what he should plan for Christmas to give Elizabeth a happy time. I rather managed to be very silent and awkward.”

“I see no reason not to invite them. But perhaps we should say that we are having a cooperative Christmas Day, and perhaps put Maud and Ethel in charge of finding out what each of us will contribute. It will let everyone feel they are part of the celebrations.”

“Yes, let us ask the girls tonight if they are willing, though I doubt they

will be less than enthusiastic.”

“Will we have enough tables and chairs?” Cassandra asked.

Mary, taking out her notebook and making some entries, said “I’m putting down some notes, including calling it a Christmas Day dinner rather than Christmas dinner, as well as making sure there are enough tables and chairs, and food and drink.”

“To touch on a sensitive subject, can I ask if you are finding your time with Michael comfortable?”

“When I am with him – and generally Elizabeth is present – I find myself quite at ease. But sometimes, when, for example, I awake at night, I become anxious about where this might lead. Sometimes I want to allow more closeness, but if that is followed to the natural progression, I would have both the risk to my small fortune as well as the problem of keeping my past a secret.”

“Given your fortune is not huge, that risk may be less severe for you should you marry, especially if, as I think may be the case, Mr. Yarrow is honourable and steady. However, it would be good to learn more about him if that is possible. The other issue cannot, I fear, be swept aside easily. As I have said several times, as a person you are not your history. If you are to have a good marriage with Mr. Yarrow, you will have to at least give him the main elements of your story. Details might, of course, put both of us in jeopardy, so if you do tell him your story, I would not specify places or names. You could state that I assisted you to change your occupation, or rather to resurrect it, without saying how. Indeed, you could truthfully say that to be specific about how that occurred might create difficulties for us.”

“And if that is not sufficient for him? Or he spurns me?” Mary said with some distress.

“Then perhaps he would not be as honourable as we think,” Cassandra said quietly.

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Maud and Ethel were more than pleased to take up the challenge of a Christmas Day celebration that asked the participants to each contribute something. This year, Henry Mortimer said he had decided to visit his family during the week following Christmas, so could be in Brighton. Cassandra and Mary cast each other a knowing glance.

Before St. Nicholas was over, Maud, with enthusiastic assistance of the other younger members of the household, had arranged the celebration. Cassandra would pay for all the ingredients of the foods from Fortescue Road except the turkey. Mary and Ethel would contribute the preparation and

cooking. They said they would pay for some things, but were quickly shouted down, as the effort of baking and roasting and boiling would be a great one.

Tony and Tom took charge of finding and decorating a tree and the kitchen, where it was decided they would celebrate. It was so much easier to have the food at hand on the stove. Winnifred Moss said she could provide either decorations or material. Frieda said she would take care of punch and tea and coffee for those who preferred no alcohol. Henry and Maud said they would acquire and pay for a turkey. This was a luxury, but they wanted to make the meal memorable. Mary said she would have to ask how best to cook such a bird so that it did not dry out. She did, however, insist that Maud measure the turkey before buying it to make sure it would fit in the large oven. Maud also took charge of invitations, but these were all handled in person, or through other household members, so no letters or messages were sent, at least not for the invitations themselves.

Abraham agreed – in fact offered – to bring beer and cider, while Michael and Elizabeth took care of wine, sherry and a small bottle of brandy. There was going to be no Christmas pudding, since three of the party could not enjoy it, but Rachel said she would bring pastries for dessert, and Joshua undertook to find some fruit, if possible, oranges. In the event, he also found some dried fruit and nuts, and also some candied plums.

\* \* \*

Frieda and Winnifred had opened the Emporium. Through the Soultons, they had engaged Laurel Dixon, Joe's oldest daughter who was just 15. The Emporium business was quite slow to start with, but gradually started to pick up near Christmas. The ladies discovered that most of their sales were modest: a pair of gloves; stockings; a scarf; a shift; some stays or laces therefore; drawers, and similar items. Then a week or so later, the same customer would be back for something else, and the purchase would often be larger.

Another discovery was that customers would ask if the Emporium knew where they could get certain items repaired, particularly corsets. Then a lady came by with a tear in her velvet reticule.

Winnifred, who like Cassandra was always on watch for opportunity, asked for the lady's name and address and said she would consult their associates who made repairs to see if the item could be fixed. Truthfully, there were no associates yet, but she sent Laurel to Miss Campbell to ask if the velvet could likely be repaired, and what would be a reasonable charge, including a commission for the Emporium.

By Christmas, the Emporium was not yet making money, but it was hardly losing either, and as yet there were no sample dresses from local dressmakers. The two dressmakers who were already collaborating with Cassandra had been busy and did not have samples available. Frieda and Cassandra had a conversation over a luncheon at a local public house, and Cassandra sent Adeline to talk to the ladies. She knew a friend, Emma Baldock, who had been a seamstress but now had some stiffening of the joints and could only do short bouts of work. This gave a solution to some repair problems as long as there were not too many. They would keep a sharp look-out for other helpers. Adeline also was willing – she took the initiative to say so – to come for a few hours at a time to help in the shop if Frieda or Winnifred wanted to step out. And she might know other ladies who could assist for modest payment. After some conversation, it appeared 4d per hour was about right. Adeline was asked – with the incentive of "at cost" merchandise for her personal needs – to find a couple of other ladies who might like to come in on occasions.

Adeline also provided a temporary solution to the lack of samples. She had, she said, some skills in drawing. Could a drawing of an attractive dress or suit be displayed with two to four swaths of suggested materials? Tom would be able to build a stand, she felt sure, at a modest cost. And Cassandra could use full bolts of cloth so the sample materials would not need to be cut at all. A discreet card would identify that Bartlett and Jones were purveyors of the material. The only inconvenience would be if a B & J customer wanted that particular cloth, in which case it would need to be fetched from the Emporium window.

\* \* \*

In the afternoon of December 12, Michael Yarrow took Mary to an organ recital at St. Paul's. The organ had been installed just the year before. Elizabeth did not come, as there were decorations being made at 21 Fortescue by Tom, Tony, Frieda and Winnifred.

The recital, mainly of Bach selections, was pleasant. Afterwards, Michael suggested a cup of tea before they walked home. A pleasant small tea shop was found, and tea and scones were ordered.

Mary felt a bit nervous. She had rarely been with Michael without Elizabeth in attendance. "I don't often make scones. They are fairly easy. Perhaps they don't fit in with my Treats selections."

Michael smiled and said "I'm sure you would make them special somehow."

Mary was silent. She liked compliments, but wasn't sure how to respond to them, especially from Michael.

Michael went on "I've been wanting your opinion on something."

"Oh. If you think my views worthy."

"Of course I do. In any event, Mrs. Denton has indicated that her sister and an elderly aunt are trying to persuade her to come to them and act as their housekeeper. She has said she will not leave precipitately, but it means Elizabeth and I will have to consider other arrangements."

"Oh. ... Yes. Of course."

"But there really is not quite an 'of course'. In the last year, you and I have, I believe, enjoyed each others' company, albeit with Elizabeth in attendance almost always. It has occurred to me that we may have ... er ... affection for each other that we have not expressed. Mrs. Denton's announcement simply puts the issue to the fore."

Mary was now quite nervous. "Yes, ... oh, ... I'm sorry, I don't deal very well with such matters."

"Perhaps the first question is whether you think we should talk about how we feel about each other. I know I like you. From having been married, I am cognizant of the difference between infatuation and the abiding love that comes over time. I had the latter with Ada, and it is, I confess, compelling to me. But I have looked into my conscience, and I believe, Mary, that you and I could find that if we so chose."

"I... I... I'm flattered. But I'm not sure .... what to say."

"Am I mistaken that you like me, and like being with me?"

"I do like being with you ... I do like you. Oh. This is so difficult."

At this point the tea and scones arrived, which gave a minute of respite from having to say anything. Once they both had put clotted cream and jam on their scones and poured tea, Michael asked "Did you have a good relationship with your husband?"

After a very long pause, during which she took a sip of tea, Mary said "My title of Mrs. is from courtesy, much as with many cooks."

"Oh. You have not, then, been married?"

"No, never."

"That is my error. And it will mean you are not ... familiar ... with life between man and wife."

Mary realized that this was a moment where continuing to leave Michael totally ignorant of her past would mean she would relegate their interaction to that of acquaintances. Somewhere, somehow, she had come to feel comfortable in his company.

"Michael. I have just realized that I would very much like our friendship to continue. However, in my past I had some great difficulties. Miss Match rescued me from these. Both she and I could suffer if the story were public

gossip. I have talked to her about the possibility of you and I becoming closer friends, and she urged me to tell you the general story, without the specifics.”

“Go on. I am listening.”

“Can we finish our tea and go somewhere that we will not risk anyone eavesdropping?” Mary asked, though her main worry was that she may become emotional, especially if Michael reacted negatively to her story. For some reason she had confidence he would not.

“Of course. There is a small shelter on the promenade if we wrap ourselves well. These scones are good. You have a challenge to meet, I think.”

Their conversation returned to scones and related foods. They repaired to the shelter in the waning light of late Autumn.

“We have it to ourselves, Mary. I hope you are not too cold.”

“I think my nervousness is making me shiver more than the cold.”

“Then you had better tell your tale and we will see if the kitchen of number 21 is cosy.”

“Er. Yes. .... Well, I grew up in the Lowlands of Scotland and went into service in a large house as a kitchen maid. After some years, I advanced in skills and was made the under-cook. In fact, the cook was close to retiring, and I did most of the major items.

When I was about 28, the eldest son of the owner started to become interested in me, though I knew his intentions were far from honourable. For about a year, it was just words and attempts to touch me, but not long before I turned 30 he found me in the kitchen one evening and ... oh ... it is not easy to say ... ”

“He raped you?”

“Yes. And my cries brought down the butler and the master. But the master – sensing a scandal – immediately called me a harlot and said I must leave the house that moment, without reference nor my pay.”

“That is monstrous! What did you do?”

“I tried to find work, sometimes getting a shilling or two helping in the kitchen of an inn or somewhere else. The poorhouses were, at the time, quite evil with cholera and other dreads. A woman who had a house of ... entertainment ... liked a pie I made for an inn and said she would employ me, but her invitation was that I would have also to ... er ... oh, I can’t say it.” Tears were now running down her face.

“Cooking was the minor part of your obligation, and you had to sell yourself?” Michael said gently.

“Yes. And I am so ashamed. It is not who I was. I have always gone to church and tried to be a good woman.”

“You needed to survive,” Michael said dispassionately.

“That is what Cassandra – Miss Match – says also. She ... engaged me to cook and thus I escaped the ... other tasks.”

“But no doubt she had to trade with those who are not respectable to do so.”

“Indeed, which is why I have omitted details of who and where.”

“That I can understand. Do I take it your names have changed?”

“My real given name is Mary, but McNair is taken from a distant family member.”

“And you said you are not and never have been married?”

“No, never.”

“And... er... you managed to avoid the pox?”

“Miss Match has some ... knowledge ... of such matters and says she thinks not.”

“I am beginning to have an increasing respect for, and no little curiosity about, our Miss Match. But I will respect her privacy. She seems to help others, even while advancing herself.”

Michael lifted his arm and motioned for Mary to move close to him so he could put his arm around her. They sat quietly for about ten minutes, watching night fall on the sea. Then Michael said “You have had a difficult past. It gives me much disquiet inside. At the same time I have great admiration as to how you have lifted yourself from the depths of misery, but concern that your story may play in my imagination in ways that unfairly work against us. And the latter feelings give me shame that I may lack the proper generosity of spirit and charity. You have shown great courage to tell your story. I will not repeat it. And I would very much like to continue to have your company.”

This brought fresh tears from Mary. Michael said “The others will wonder where we are. Here. Take my handkerchief and wipe your eyes. We don’t want an inquisition when I bring you home.”

Mary took the handkerchief and tidied her face. As she handed Michael back the handkerchief, he gently pulled her towards him and kissed her gently on the lips. She almost pushed him away, then allowed the kiss to linger. Not over a couple of seconds, but long enough that there was a message of hope.

As they separated, Mary said quietly “That is the first time my lips have been kissed.”

\* \* \*

Mary wanted to talk to Cassandra that evening, but somehow the kitchen was not empty by the time that lady had retired and seemingly nodded off.



Thus it was late on Monday when they were both about to get into bed that Cassandra asked "Was the recital enjoyable?"

"Yes, and afterwards we went for tea and scones at that little teashop not far from the front that I pointed out to you. The scones were very good. I must see if Ethel and I can make as good."

"You seemed in good spirits when you returned, but perhaps a little flushed. I worried you might be getting a cold."

"Mrs. Denton is going to her sister's house, and Michael wanted to talk about the future. He has expressed an affection for me. It rather took me aback. After what we have said, I realized I must tell him the general course of my history, so we went to a shelter on the promenade."

"How did he accept your words?"

"Thankfully, with great kindness. He – we both – want to continue to be friends."

"That is good. He may, however, find on reflection he is disquieted at your revelations."

"He said as much, but then he kissed me."

"Oh! That is something."

"I am over 40, and it was my first kiss."

Cassandra said "Not even the ones that do not count as real, coming from the clients of the house?"

"I never allowed such."

"That I can understand."

So what, if anything, is envisaged for you and Michael, and I assume, Elizabeth?"

"My revelations rather set aside discussion of that. Mrs. Denton is not going to leave until Michael has arrangements in place."

Cassandra said "If he hired a charwoman and possibly sent some things to the laundry, we could possibly find an arrangement where they ate here, at least in the short term. From what you have said, am I correct that you may entertain a proposal if it were to be offered?"

"I am all at sixes and sevens in that regard. I worry the ... er ... private aspects of marriage might be difficult for me. But I have told him that I would like our friendship to continue. Your suggestion is most helpful and generous, as I know your concerns about property, though I believe my fortune is currently small enough that it is not in Michael's mind as regards our friendship. If you are sure, I will broach the subject of Elizabeth and Michael taking meals here, as it will give us time to learn what we all want."

"It is high time you had some joy, Mary."

"Thank you, Cassandra. Sleep well."

\* \* \*

Events in the wider world such as the fall of the government of the Earl of Derby on December 17 and his eventual replacement as Prime Minister by the Earl of Aberdeen on December 28 were not in the minds of our band of characters. The households of 21 and 23 Fortescue Road had a busy and happy Christmas in 1852. The fifteen people who crowded into the kitchen ate well, drank well but not to excess, and enjoyed some silliness with charades and musical chairs. The music, which was not anticipated, came from Rachel on an instrument she called a Gusli, like a zither, and Abraham on a violin, with Joshua on a lute-like dombra or on a tambourine called a buben. Maud turned out to have a recorder and Henry a concertina.

Cassandra realized how little she knew of Abraham's range of interests and abilities when he played a solo rendition of Boccherini's Minuet. To her consternation, she found she wanted to know him better, to be closer to him, even as she realized how much these feelings warred against her avowed independence.

Henry and Maud also realized that they shared yet another interest. Both knew Fanny Power by O'Carolan, and after two rounds Rachel joined in on the Gusli and then Joshua picked up the buben to provide the beat. Then they tried James Betagh, with Abraham picking up the melody too, finishing to rousing applause.

Not all the tunes were as melodic as might be desired, but there was enthusiasm and singing, with Ethel's clear and steady voice leading the others in a range of old-fashioned street songs. When Greensleeves was suggested, Rachel took a few minutes to pick up the tune, then she and Ethel did a duet that had several tears running down cheeks.

By now it was nearly ten o'clock. Frieda and Winnifred, who had managed to involve everyone in the earlier games, were quite tired, and asked for their coats. Tom's offer to walk them back to the apartment over the shop was gratefully accepted, and with this start the rest of the non-residents at the party found coats and scarves except for Abraham, who volunteered with Tony to clear and sweep.

The dishes somehow had been done during interludes in the games and music. Cassandra was in the scullery drying some plates when Abraham came to ask where to put the broom. She reached for it and set it in the corner, then – as much to her own surprise as Abraham's – she put her arms round him and kissed him. He didn't pull away, but embraced her too. After some seconds they parted.

"Perhaps a quiet talk is in order, but not tonight," Abraham said.

"Yes. I apologise. I ... er ... "

“There is no need to apologise. Just a need to find what happiness we can together.”

“Thank you, Abraham. May God – whichever God – keep you safe and well.”

“And you. Good night, Cassandra.”

\* \* \*

At about the same time, Maud was saying a very slow goodnight to Henry. She could go out the French window from the back of the Turcotte office to pass into the back of Number 23. Henry and Maud did not say much, but held a long hug after a short kiss. They both knew that it was premature to plan to wed, but their intentions were clear.

Mary and Michael’s parting was more truncated. With Elizabeth present, there was reservation and probity. Colds and sniffles in the past two weeks had mostly prevented discussion over the fortnight since Mary had revealed her past, except for a couple of nights before.

On the night of the 22nd of December, Mary had crossed the street to have a cup of cocoa with Michael. Elizabeth was already in bed, and it was past nine o’clock.

“Have you given more thought to how you will organize your household with Mrs. Denton gone?” Mary asked.

“A little. In some respects, a great deal is dependent on you and I and how we ... er ... decide to continue.”

“Well ... yes ... that is so. But perhaps we should first consider Elizabeth. She is now 13, and her future must be kept in mind.”

“Yes. I have tried to get her as much education as I can reasonably afford. My salary from the railway is reasonably good – over £100 per year, but out of that Mrs. Denton has nearly £28 with her wage and clothes and shoes. And there is the rent of this house at 15/- per week, though I get back 5/- for the top floor where there are two young women lodgers. They look after their own food, fortunately. Still, there’s not a lot left over.”

“Is Elizabeth yet capable of managing the house, or mostly so?”

“It may be time to ask that. Since Ada died I have been protective of Elizabeth. Now my attempts to ease her life may be stopping her from becoming her own person. I see others of her age making their way in the world. However, I had hoped that by giving her a better education than most – I pay 4/- a week to a lady a few streets away to give Elizabeth lessons – she might seek more advantageous employment and marriage prospects. Lately, however, I have felt that Elizabeth is not learning much that will help her

future. The lady who teaches her claims to be able to speak French, but I am beginning to doubt how well.”

“Would it be better to pay Mrs. Naismith. She used to be a governess and she does translations and interpretations of the Paris fashion magazines for some of the dressmakers. That would give Elizabeth a genuine focus for learning. I cannot say if Mrs. Naismith speaks French well, but it is clear from the material results that she reads it well enough.”

“Indeed that is a good idea. I am also thinking I have been remiss in not having Elizabeth learn more household skills.”

They sipped their cocoa for a minute or so, then Mary said “Michael, after what I have told you, do you still wish to spend time with me.”

“Oh! Absolutely. Why would you think otherwise?”

“Well ... I ... I ... Perhaps I am damaged. Spoiled. I hated what I had to do to keep body and soul together. When I am with you I want so, so much to be close, but then I get a ... a ... sort of panic that you will reject me, or that I will freeze and be unable to ... er ... please you.”

“I will not deny that I ... had some thoughts of that type. But in the fortnight since we spoke, I have come to the realization that the person you are now is the one I care for. You survived and have become – or rather regained your status as – a good and respectable church-going woman.”

Michael reached out his arm across the corner of the table where they were sitting on adjacent sides nearest the stove. Mary took his hand and they sat for a further minute.

Mary said “Suppose that Elizabeth took some instruction with Mrs. Naismith as well as learning some cooking with Ethel and I. If she is able to handle the cleaning and laundry for you both, perhaps at the start with a charwoman, would that not mean you could do without Mrs. Denton? When you are away, as I know you are sometimes for the railway, I could sleep here, or Elizabeth could have a cot across the road.”

“That would indeed be a plan. I will raise it with Elizabeth as soon as possible, and we can talk over the holidays. But Mary, what if you were to sleep here every night?”

“Yes. Mrs. Denton has a cot here in the kitchen. It could stay. That would work.”

“You would not be more comfortable in the bed upstairs?” Michael said with a smile.

“But ... Oh. You mean together?”

“Only if the proper formalities were observed first. Mary, I am asking if you will marry me.”

“I ... I ... I want to. It’s ... it’s just I worry about what I said before.”

“You mean what a man and wife share in bed?”

“Yes. I fear it may bring back bad memories. Particularly of when I was violated.”

“Did men other than the son of the master of the big house treat you badly?”

“I was lucky. Other girls sometimes had men who delighted in force and violence. We fortunately had a couple of men to handle the drunk and disorderly, and one of them treated me with kindness and would warn me off anyone he knew to be so inclined. But just the weight of a man on top of me would sometimes bring back the horror. I don’t want to feel that with you.”

“Yes. It would make it more difficult to find the joy that can be found in those actions. Though – perhaps I should not talk of Ada, but I ask you to forgive me – Ada and I sometimes did it with her on top. It was rather – oh, I should not speak of such things ...”

“Don’t hide your feelings, Michael, and don’t hide Ada. She was – is – Elizabeth’s mother. And there was enough talk from the other women when I was in the house that I am aware of a lot of ways that pleasure may be taken, though my history made my own experiences such that I did not enjoy them.”

“You have not given me an answer.” Michael said.

“Can we say that I want to marry you, Michael, but for a little while keep it to ourselves while we talk of how we will arrange our lives as man and wife?”

“Of course. You give me great happiness that you want to be my wife. And I appreciate your concern that our future be a full marriage.”

“Thank you. Michael.

Now, I had better be going so I don’t wake Cassandra.”

Mary got up and Michael did also. Without any words they embraced and kissed. Michael said “Yes, you had better go or I shall find it difficult to release you.”

“I noticed,” Mary laughed. “But I thank you for not allowing that to overcome propriety. And I surprise myself that I did not find myself trying to retreat from you, so I am optimistic for our future.”

They kissed briefly again and then Mary put on her coat and scarf and Michael let her out the kitchen door.

\* \* \*

Given that Christmas fell on a Saturday, the denizens of Fortescue Road had decided they would, in fact, go to church on the morrow, that is, Sunday. Henry had commented that the day had only been a bank holiday since 1834. This despite the fact that celebrating Christmas had been common

throughout the last millennium in England, even to the extent that pro-Christmas rioters had taken charge of Canterbury for several weeks in protest against the Puritan government exactly two centuries earlier.

Frieda and Winnifred were at church too, though Abraham had said he had some records he needed to check for an error in the accounting. Tom and Tony had decided to take Annabelle some carrots as a treat, and Maud went with them to take some of Mary's Treats she had bought to Rebecca Upton and her children. Mary had tried to give them to her, but Maud insisted that business must be observed. Adeline was going to meet Miss Campbell.

The two older women invited Cassandra and Henry, along with Michael, Elizabeth and Mary, to join them after church for a luncheon of soup with bread and cheese. It was the right offering on the cool morrow after the Christmas feast.

Frieda asked "Elizabeth, are you yet finished your schooling?"

"No, Mrs. Baldwin. I still take some lessons from Miss Sharp. But I am wondering if she is teaching me what I should know."

Michael responded "That is a happy coincidence, as I remarked upon the same matter to Mrs. McNair the other night. We wondered if we might ask Mrs. Naismith to teach you some French using the Paris magazines she reviews for dressmaking ideas. And we thought you might learn a bit about cooking from Mrs. McNair and Ethel."

"I'd like that. If Mrs. Denton leaves, that would let me prepare meals that are more ... Oh! That is uncharitable of me after church."

"But perhaps honest," Winnifred allowed.

Elizabeth continued "Yes. I like Mrs. Denton and she has tried hard to do well by us, but her cooking is awfully plain. The meals at 21 Fortescue are so much more appetizing."

"And to also be honest, with that we must agree," Frieda said.

Elizabeth again continued "If we are being honest, may I ask something?"

Everyone looked a little puzzled, because it was not clear to whom the question was put. Finally Michael said "What did you wish to ask?"

"Well, Father and Mrs. McNair have kept company regularly for a year now. It is quite clear they like each other. I am wondering if they are concerned I might be upset were they to want to ... er ... marry. Which I wouldn't. I think they would be good for each other. Oh. Perhaps I have overstepped." This last was said as she saw Cassandra and the two older ladies each trying to suppress a smirk.

Mary said quietly "Michael and I would like to marry, and I was indeed concerned that Elizabeth might be upset."

There was a silence which Cassandra broke. "Frieda, do you have some sherry or brandy. I think we need to toast Michael and Mary."

Winnifred went to a cupboard and returned with a bottle of sherry while Frieda, without any word spoken, fetched some glasses. Winnifred poured them each – including Elizabeth – a small portion.

“Michael and Mary,” Cassandra said.

“Michael and Mary,” everyone echoed except the two named persons.

“Thank you,” Mary said.

“Yes,” Michael said “Thank you. We will have to talk about many details, and I hope you all will be part of many of them.”

“I was fortunate to have a good marriage,” Winnifred said. “We were partners and friends, and if I may be bold, also lovers, even when common talk would have had us too old. I wish you the same good fortune.”

“Much of my marriage was also good,” said Frieda, “but my husband did not give me all the choices he should have. Indeed, he kept some important information from me that harmed my – our – happiness. In his own way, he was a good man, but even good men can make mistakes. Mr. Yarrow, I will urge you to allow Mary to have a certain level of autonomy to be her own person as well as your wife. I am sure it will magnify your joint happiness.”

Henry said “It is, unfortunately for many women of spirit and enterprise, a great burden that matrimony gives all their property to their husband unless a separate estate is arranged.”

“Indeed, that is the principal reason I have been careful to avoid overly close friendships with men,” Cassandra said. “I have a modest fortune, but still it is my own while I remain unmarried.”

“Unless, as I indicated, you were to have a separate estate for some of your property,” Henry rejoined.

This was a new idea to Cassandra. “Pray tell me more, Mr. Mortimer.”

“It is a contract document that establishes a body of property that is reserved to the control of the lady, or indeed other person, for whom it is established. Usually it is for a young woman of status whose dowry is thus protected from a husband’s gambling or profligacy, but in the last half century has been in increasing use, and also for widows who choose to remarry but retain the ownership and income of a legacy, or even married women whose husband is keen that his death might engender others to claim the property on some pretext or other.”

“That is most interesting,” Cassandra said. “I will have to speak with you or Mr. Turcotte professionally if I consider following Mary’s lead up the aisle to stand before the vicar.”

This provoked some laughter and more sherry was poured, though Mary made sure Elizabeth had but a drop. The girl’s cheeks were already flushed, though whether with emotion or drink was difficult to discern.

\* \* \*

That evening, it being a Sunday even though Boxing Day, Cassandra and Mary took their baths. They were comfortable with each other in a state of undress, and helped each other to wash, comb and dry their hair.

“Do you think Michael will be happy with me?” Mary asked.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, I am 42. Not a girl in the bloom of youth. My breasts droop a little, and my stomach is not tight and flat.”

“Is he not of a similar age?”

“Well, yes, he was born a few months after I in 1810.”

“Does he know your real age?”

“I told him my birthdate was as we agreed - July 31, 1807.”

“So he will not be disappointed! And he thinks you 45.”

Mary, you are a fine looking woman. And women through the ages have looked in the mirror and found themselves ugly, when their husbands and lovers have seen beauty.”

“Thank you for that. It will take me time to believe it.”

It was then Cassandra’s turn to have her hair washed, with Mary pouring rinse water over Cassandra’s head. As she did, Cassandra said “It may be that Abraham and I will follow your example with Michael.”

“Will that not risk your independence?”

“Yes. I suppose it will. But I intend to investigate what Henry mentioned about a separate estate. I feel confident about Abraham and the possibility of sharing life with him, but even so I know things can change. One must be careful, even as there is hope and optimism.”

“Yes, Hope and optimism. It is a good thought.”

\* \* \*

Some bad weather, a cold that Abraham caught that put him in bed for three days, and then assorted business tasks kept Cassandra and Abraham from meeting until Tuesday, January 4. Abraham sent a note with Tony on the Monday evening asking if she wanted to have a quiet dinner together the next evening, and she replied that she would be ready at 7 o’clock.

Abraham had hired a hansom cab, and kept it waiting while he fetched Cassandra from the downstairs kitchen. They spent the ride to the Old Ship Hotel catching up on the minor details of their past week and a half, including the news that Mary and Michael were talking of marriage. Cassandra noticed that Abraham seemed already to know about this. Oh, perhaps Maud or



Tony had said something. News in the Fortescue Road houses flowed rather quickly.

At the hotel eating salon, they were given a table not far from a fireplace that was most welcome given the winter night. The waiter offered them some rum punch, which they gladly accepted. The warm, spicity and spiced drink suited their need.

Cassandra ordered plaice, while Abraham chose a lamb chop, and both decided to have the mushroom soup. While they sipped this, Abraham asked "Are you still of the same frame of mind as on Christmas Day?"

"Oh, most surely, Abraham. I have felt a growing emotion between us. But I confess that my actions surprised me."

"And me also. But I was most gratified that my own feelings are echoed by yours."

"So now we must decide how to act on those feelings," Cassandra said.

"Yes. But I fear there are many details that will be obstacles to a smooth road for us."

At this point the waiter came for their soup plates, and they were silent until he had gone.

Cassandra said "Henry Mortimer said something on Boxing Day that night, at least in part, answer my worries about keeping my independence."

"To be sure we share a true understanding, may I first ask if we both wish to share our lives as partners, as man and wife? I realize that is a large leap from a simple, or perhaps not so simple, kiss."

"Yes. My understanding is that we do wish to marry, but that the prime obstacle is coverture, where my person vanishes into yours, so to speak."

The waiter brought their main courses, and for a couple of minutes they took time to eat while the food was hot.

"So tell me what Henry had to say that you found helpful," Abraham asked.

"He said there was an arrangement called a separate estate whereby a woman could own property and receive income from it. It was in former times used mainly for the dowry of a young woman of a wealthy family to protect the property from a profligate husband. However, more recently it has been used by widows to similarly protect a legacy or even married women whose husbands may wish to ensure their wives have money should someone make a claim on their estate which would impoverish the wife."

"The English laws of marriage, like many around the world, seem to consider women as if they are infant children. You have shown that you have a splendid head for business. And I can understand that you want to keep what you have built under the control of your own hand. I would not wish to surrender control of my own fortune, which I freely admit, is almost certainly somewhat inferior to your own."

"I would hope that together we will succeed jointly. I am convinced that you are both honourable and kind, and that you would not squander my resources. Indeed, I would hope that going forward the bulk of our wealth would be considered that of our joint enterprise. But there are all manner of accidents and crimes that can render the best will in the world null."

"That is so. And I am quite happy that we should do our best to ensure your security. There is, additionally, the possibility of children, and their financial well-being. Have you given any thought in that direction?"

"To be honest, I have not bent my mind in that direction. Do you wish children, Abraham?"

"In one sense, most assuredly. But my own experience in Odessa gives me pause. I have no evidence or testimony to the truth of what I am about to say, but my childhood nightmare hints that my parents were caught and killed by the Greek mob as they tried to find and protect me. It is a shadow that haunts me."

"You mean that having children makes us vulnerable to those who would act against us by threatening our children?"

"Indeed. Though somehow that seems foreign to England."

"Perhaps, but when I was but a newborn, cavalry charged a crowd in Manchester and eighteen died. The Peterloo massacre. I should ask ... Frieda about it."

"Yes, they come from Manchester. Am I wrong in thinking you are closer to Frieda than you have owned? If that is sensitive, you may ignore my query."

Cassandra paused, then said "She is my mother."

"I had thought there was some family connection due to some similarities of visage. The eyes, I think. Are you happy to have reconnected?"

"Oh. Most certainly. It turns out my father did not inform ... Frieda of my letter that my husband had died, and he wrote a cruel letter disowning me and telling me never to try to contact them again. Frieda – if you don't mind we will keep to our names and story – is most upset that my father kept her in the dark. She did not object to my husband except for his youth and limited estate."

"I am glad you have found each other again," Abraham said.

"Abraham, to return to your question about children, if I examine my own thoughts, I believe I would neither strive for nor work against having children. I hope that does not seem too cold."

"No. It mirrors my own feelings. But surely one can only strive against having children by not ... er ..."

Cassandra giggled. "Oh dear, Abraham. I apologize for my mirth, but your embarrassment is quite precious. And to answer your question, I have knowledge of some ways to reduce the chances of pregnancy, though they are

far from foolproof. But I sense this is neither the place nor time to talk of such matters.”

Abraham, having regained his composure, said “I must admit to being rather uninformed about such matters. Society does not give a bachelor any polite occasion to become educated.”

“That is unfortunately so, and leads, I fear, to much suffering from diseases that are spread through ignorance and bad behaviour. But let us talk about happier possibilities. Shall we consult Mr. Turcotte about a separate estate for me? Assuming that is feasible, we can begin to plan for ourselves.”

“Yes. I suggest you ask him at the earliest convenience. But do also ask if it is costly to arrange. Sometimes legalities can be very expensive I hear.”

“Indeed. I will write him a note this very night or else first thing in the morning.

So, if that is possible, how should we then proceed? Are you content with a ceremony at St. Paul’s?”

“Since we are known to the vicar, it is likely the simplest route. The new registry offices would seem rather cold.”

“Will Joshua and Rachel be upset it is not within your faith?”

“I believe they share my view of traditions rather than doctrine, though I will quietly ascertain that I am correct. I would hate to create a rift with them.”

“As would I. They are dear friends.”

“Where would we live, Cassandra? At the moment, I have a room with Rachel and Joshua.”

“Well, as you know, Mary and Mr. Yarrow are talking of marriage. I believe she will move across the road. That does leave her space in the kitchen, but that would present the awkwardness of two narrow beds rather than one for two people.”

“I’m glad you wish the latter,” Abraham said. “Perhaps the ingenious Mr. Thomas Soulton can determine if the partitions can be suitably revised. I am sure that with Maud, I can acquire a good bed, and we will furnish it with a new mattress and bedclothes.”

“I’ll ask Tom as soon as I can. If that does not suit, then we could take over the drawing room upstairs. Or we could determine if Mr. Forsythe plans to continue his tenancy, though that would reduce my income from the house.”

“We do have some alternatives at least. But perhaps we are advancing before our road is prepared. Let us ensure you can find a satisfactory disposition for your financial independence.”

The conversation continued amicably as they finished a cabinet pudding with custard. The dark and damp evening led them to engage the hansom cab that was standing in front of the Hotel, and while they managed a mild

embrace and kiss, Cassandra told Abraham to stay in the carriage when she got out at Fortescue Road. "There will be better times for closeness," she whispered by way of goodnight.

\* \* \*

By the following evening, that is, Wednesday, Rose Bingham had left a note from Mr. Turcotte that a separate estate for Cassandra should be possible and that, if it were convenient, she should meet him at 2 o'clock on Friday afternoon. Cassandra sent a note to inform Abraham, and he joined her. Henry sat in on the meeting as well, wishing to learn more about the subject to expand his knowledge.

"The precise boundaries of separate estates have not all been tested in court," Turcotte began, "but I feel confident that Miss Match can identify her houses and their rents, as well as some of the activities that go on here such as Mr. Soultton's refurbishment of household items and Mrs. McNair's Treats, even though such matters contribute indirectly to Miss Match's revenues. Her revenue from Bartlett and Jones is difficult to attribute to property, so I would not include it, even if it has great promise."

"Thank you, Mr. Turcotte. I will be satisfied with what you have suggested. Indeed, I am confident that Mr. Cohen and I will prosper together. My wish is to ensure I am not without resources should there be some untoward happening."

Turcotte continued "Such as a claim against Mr. Cohen, whether legitimate or false?"

"Precisely."

Abraham said "I may be uncharacteristic of my time, Mr. Turcotte, but I believe that a woman should have a right to her own person."

"Uncharacteristic, yes, but not alone. There is much agitation for a change in the laws, and I forecast there will be changes, but I do not hold my breath in anticipation. In the meanwhile, we will do what we can to isolate Miss Match – or Mrs. Cohen as I believe she will become – from some of the risks."

"Will it be costly to make the arrangements?" Cassandra asked. "Do not think I begrudge the fee for your knowledge, but it would be a poor bargain if the arrangement uses up the capital."

"There are some fees that are to the court to register the documents, but I think we may say that £15 will cover those plus my time – actually mostly the time of Mr. Mortimer, who will write up the matter and learn about the procedures. But I will review all before we finalize the separate estate."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Turcotte."

“I will have Mr. Mortimer communicate with you as and when he needs information or your signature. It will be a few days at least, then no doubt the court will take their own time, probably several weeks.

And my congratulations to you both. I believe you will build a formidable partnership.”

\* \* \*

On Saturday evening, Cassandra and Abraham joined Mary and Michael at the public house where Mary and Cassandra had enjoyed a lunch when settling the house purchase.

“To happy marriages,” Michael toasted when they had their drinks – beer for the men, port for the women.

“To happy marriages,” the others responded.

“But we now must make the arrangements,” Abraham observed.

“Indeed,” Michael agreed. “Mr. Cohen, have you and Miss Match planned when you would like to marry?”

“Perhaps we could use first names. Would that be easier?”

“Indeed,” Mary said. “Christian – I mean first – names would be easier. How odd. I had not realized how we built our religious beliefs and prejudices into our language so.”

“It is an unfortunate aspect of culture and language, and not just for those of us who are Jewish,” Abraham said. “But let us proceed. Cassandra and I have not fixed any date, though if the arrangement of the separate estate for her is settled in the next month, I would like to suggest some time at the beginning of April. Probably the week after Easter. Is that agreeable to you, Cassandra.”

“Yes, that would be fine. And would we marry at St. Paul’s?”

“I talked with Joshua and Rachel and they confirmed what I felt. We would like to maintain our Jewish cultural traditions, but given that we have not been assiduous in practising the religious exercises – indeed I have never studied the Torah – they have no objection to St. Paul’s.

What plans do you have?”

This last was directed to Michael and Mary.

“We could marry as soon as the banns have been read the requisite number of times, so mid to late February is easily possible,” Mary said.

“Yes,” Michael added. “We were concerned that Elizabeth might be opposed, but it seems she is happy for us and for the changes it may bring to her own life. There are some practicalities of what she will do with her days. I had thought she might become, in part, our housekeeper, but now we are not so sure.”

“Yes,” Mary added. “It seems that if we could make a suitable arrangement with you, Cassandra, it would be much more efficient for us to take at least some of our meals at number 21.”

“I’m certain that could be possible,” Cassandra said. “I have no great skill at cooking myself. Oh. Perhaps Abraham will withdraw his proposal!”

“Not a chance,” said that person. “And I think it sensible to avoid extra work. Though I have not had to cook except very simple things, I can understand that it is almost certain to be less work per person to feed several rather than one or two.”

“Let Cassandra and I work out the details, then,” Mary concluded.

“Yes,” said Cassandra, “Though I think that will mean that the kitchen of number 21 will not be suitable for Abraham and I to use as sleeping quarters.”

“Yes. A double bed would be difficult to fit along with both the large and small tables,” Michael observed.

Mary said “On the other hand, the two small cubicles that Tom made have served rather well for us as individuals.”

“I believe we will have to use the upstairs drawing room for our bedroom,” Cassandra said. “Though if Mr. Forsythe were to give up his tenancy, we could take over that room.”

“Cassandra, I do believe it might be sensible to commence with the kitchen as it is. I very much like the warmth there compared to my cold room where I am now.”

“But we would have to use separate beds!” Cassandra objected.

“Then let us use the current drawing room for now,” Abraham said, “but explore possibilities as we go on.”

“If you do move upstairs, do you think it would make sense for me to hire one or two more helpers for Treats for the Tongue. Then both kitchens could be used, and possibly the stoves could be enlarged, and I could pay you rent.”

“Would you consider that the bed spaces are still usable, either for your helpers or others? That is as lodgers. Or would you wish the space for manufacture of the treats or else for our meals?” Cassandra asked.

“The partitions Tom built are not difficult to take away, or even put back again,” Mary answered. “The use could depend on the opportunities that present. If those I engage to help for making Treats need lodging, then part of their remuneration would be their board. There are some items I would wish to try that require minding every few hours over a longish time, so someone would need to be in the kitchen overnight. But Ethel and Maud and Tom are at number 23, so that is already feasible.”

“There are plenty of ideas, in any event. And your suggestion provides possibilities, but attractive ones. Are you of the same mind, Abraham?”

Cassandra asked.

“Yes. I think it makes much sense. We can be quite comfortable for a while upstairs, and if Forsythe departs, we will have a drawing room too.”

Mary added “I am hopeful that Elizabeth may in time learn something of the making of the delicacies, but she is only just beginning to consider what she will do precisely.”

Michael said “It is a relief that she seems quite enthusiastic for Mary and I to marry.”

“Yes. We will have to talk to the vicar and ask him to call the banns,” Mary concluded.

\* \* \*

The next day after the church service, both couples approached the vicar together to ask when they might meet with him to arrange for banns to be called. The vicar was glad to oblige them that very morning, since he had but to record the details of their names, ages and residences, and to ascertain when they wished to marry. There were, as it turned out no difficulties with dates. Michael and Mary settled on Saturday the 26th of February in the morning, while Cassandra and Abraham arranged a similar time April 2. The vicar said he would inform the verger that they would communicate with him concerning detailed arrangements.

It was a cold Sunday morning, and they were ready for a warm drink and something to eat by the time they got to 21 Fortescue. As they arrived, a well-dressed couple were descending from a hansom cab and approaching the front door.

Cassandra asked “May I help you?”

“I am the Honourable Mr. Robert Hathaway, Consultant Physician. We are here to see Mr. Forsythe, who I believe has apartments here, about some important business,” said the man presenting his card, which gave his address as Harley Street in London. He was what most would call a doctor, but being at the upper end of the pecking order and a consultant, reverted to using the title Mr.

“I am Miss Match, sir, manager of these properties. We are just returned from church or I would announce you. May I suggest you go up directly. Number 2B.”

The reader will learn that Cassandra’s actions may have been misjudged. In accepting that Mr. Hathaway would be welcome, she was most singularly wrong, for the lady accompanying him was his sister, who happened to be the legitimate Mrs. Forsythe. Thus, before coats were removed and hung up, there was an outcry from the upper floor.

“Edward, you scoundrel!” cried the lady who had just arrived.

“Forsythe, you blackguard, I will have you before the magistrates for fraud in misappropriating Lavinia’s dowry.”

There were more loud voices, in fact several at once. Fortunately, Tom and Henry were in the house, and together with Abraham and Michael they ascended with Cassandra, followed by the rest of the household.

“Quiet!” Cassandra shouted, “or we will be forced to call a constable.”

Not expecting a woman to take charge in this way, there was, at least for a few seconds, silence, except for Vera, the false Mrs. Forsythe, who was weeping.

Cassandra went on “Whatever the rights or wrongs of those of you associated with Apartment 2B, I cannot allow a disturbance of the peace.

Now, if Mr. Forsythe – I will assume that name is correct – has misrepresented himself and his companion to me and the residents of this dwelling, it puts me in the awkward position of being suspected of operating a house of ill repute. Worse, my first floor tenant is a member of the Bar, and Mr. Mortimer here is his clerk. Thus if misrepresentation has occurred, Mr. Forsythe and his ... er ... companion will have to leave.

May I assume, Mr. Hathaway, that the lady who accompanied you is a family member?”

“Indeed, Miss Match, my sister, who married this piece of excrement.”

“Then I will ask the pair of you to descend to my kitchen while I attempt to determine a peaceful way out of the immediate situation. I will come down as soon as I can recommend a course of action. But I will NOT allow my house to be a place of riot, and I am sure it is not seemly for a Harley Street physician to be so involved.”

“Very well. Come Lavinia.”

Cassandra said “Mrs. McNair, can you take charge in the kitchen?”

“Certainly. Michael, can you come with me. I believe Mr. Cohen and Mr. Souton can ensure Miss Match’s security.”

After they had gone, and Henry with them, Forsythe said “I very much apologize for the disturbance, Miss Match.”

Cassandra wondered that he was not responding with more vigour. Hathaway must have some hold over him, she suspected. Perhaps he had misused his wife’s dowry after somehow getting his hands on the money.

“Do I take it that the other Mrs. Forsythe is your legal spouse?” Cassandra asked.

“It is true.” At this the lady they had known as Mrs. Forsythe, whatever her real name was, had another fit of weeping.

“Let me suggest a course of action to allow this house to have a quiet Sunday,” Cassandra said. “I believe, Mr. Forsythe, that you should leave with your wife and her brother. Whatever your quarrels, you must regulate



them, I hope honourably. In a few minutes I will communicate that to the party downstairs.

Now may I have a name for this lady, so that we may consider how she may disentangle herself from the current mess. It will do none of us any good – and I am primarily considering my own reputation in this – if she is reduced to trying to sell herself on the street.”

Abraham had, in the meantime, handed the lady in question his handkerchief.

“My name is Vera Smith. I only took up with Edward because Lavinia’s so horrid to him.”

“Be that as it may, Mr. Forsythe has obligations to that lady. I have heard no mention of children, but if there are, then he has further responsibilities. I suggest, Miss Smith, that we go into 2A and consider your situation while Mr. Forsythe packs his things.

I will ask Tom to help him, and label any items that should be sent on later. Please, Mr. Forsythe, write down your address should we need to contact you, though I have Mr. Hathaway’s card. I will also ask that if you have any money to hand, a good portion of it should be left with Miss Smith, as I would not see her begging.”

Cassandra had given the key to 2A to Abraham who opened the door and ushered Miss Smith into the room. Cassandra followed and shut the door. As mentioned, apart from Tom, the rest of the household, including Henry, had descended to the kitchen.

Quietly, Cassandra asked “Miss Smith – I assume it’s Miss – do you have any family or resources?”

“Not much. I worked in a bookshop. That’s how I met Edward. He’s got a keen mind. We sort of got on, and then we wanted to be together. Once we were ... close, I gave up my job, though I recently started to work a part of the time again in another bookshop. I saved a bit of money. About £30. My father’s a parson in East Anglia. I doubt he’d have me back if he finds out. And I didn’t leave in the best of circumstances. He wanted me to marry a friend of his so the roof of the church could be repaired, so I ran away.”

“You have rooms in London?”

“A room. Not very respectable, but they don’t ask questions about Edward. He pays the rent. I suspect I won’t be welcome now. I think the rent’s paid week to week.”

“Do you have any things there you wish to keep?” Cassandra was being practical for the woman, who was not much more than a girl.

“My good clothes are all here. Except for what I wore or packed. So not really anything I could not replace as cheap as taking the train to get them.”

“And you keep your savings about your person, I would imagine?” Cassandra asked. Vera looked nervous, so Cassandra added “We won’t be stealing from you. I have had to look after my own savings in the past.”

“Oh. ...” It was clear Vera had not thought of that.

“Well, I am going to suggest that you stay here – on your own – for tonight at least. The rent for the quarter has been paid already, but I believe that my agent, Mr. Arbuthnot, will argue that the contract is nullified by the revelations of today. We will then discuss – without Mr. Forsythe’s involvement – how to allow you to move forward in life and avoid calamity.”

“You mean you’re not putting me on the street?”

“Not if it can be avoided, and certainly not today, anyway. And if we can find a way to preserve a good reputation for this house, preferably while giving you a chance to live respectably, you will avoid being without a roof.”

“Thank you Miss Match. It is a huge relief. I’m so ashamed.”

“Whatever your feelings, showing shame, or the reverse, will be of no help to moving on in your life. Now let us tell Mr. Forsythe farewell, for I plan to bring him to the others downstairs, but you should remain up here. I suggest you make an inventory of your things, and make sure they are in order, as I will likely want to find a use for the room once your situation is stabilized. You do not need to pack, but perhaps be ready to do so. And we will talk more later today.”

\* \* \*

Mr Forsythe had his carpet bag full and there was a chest Tom was pushing to the corner. A sheet of paper had his address, which Cassandra picked up.

“We will leave you to say your goodbyes. Tom. Please wait by the front door and direct Mr. Forsythe to the kitchen. Miss Smith will remain here.” With that, Cassandra swept out and down the stairs followed by Abraham and Tom.

Whispering, Cassandra said “Tom. I want to be sure they do not abscond together, or Mr. Forsythe alone, and in any case with property of the house.”

Tom, also whispering, said “No problem, Miss. I got your drift upstairs.”

In the kitchen, Mary had made tea and put out some biscuits. The magic of the biscuits had diminished the temper of the two Hathaways.

Cassandra said “Mr. Forsythe will be down shortly. He is taking his leave of Miss Smith and his belongings are packed. I then suggest you all leave together and return to London to sort out your affairs, hopefully without bringing disapprobation upon these premises.”

“What will you do with the trollope?” sneered Mrs. Forsythe.

Cassandra answered “I shall attempt to find as unobtrusive a way as possible that she can recover a semblance of respectability and more or less disappear into regular society. It does me no good and potentially some harm if she falls into the gutter. Or indeed if there is much salacious gossip. That is likely also the case for you. I plan to be pragmatic and not cut off my nose to spite my face.”

Mr. Hathaway said, addressing his sister, “That may be the best approach. And for the sake of the children, it may be best if we can scotch any scandal.”

So there were children. Forsythe should be whipped. But now the man himself came down the stairs into the kitchen.

“I am ready to go. Miss Match will send on my box.” He was clearly wanting to exit as quickly as possible.

Hathaway said “Miss Match, I thank you for your clear head and calm demeanour throughout a difficult situation. And Mrs. McNair, for the excellent biscuits – I have your card for Treats for the Tongue and will recommend them to friends here.”

Lavinia said nothing. Cassandra let them out the kitchen door into the area and they departed toward the station.

\* \* \*

“I could use a cup of tea, or even something stronger,” Cassandra observed. However, before her words were finished, a cup of tea was pushed before her at the table and one passed to Abraham.

“Would you like a small glass of brandy?” Mary asked.

“Perhaps not. But I’d better have a sandwich or we shall eat all your biscuits and spoil our appetite.”

Michael said “You seem to have freed a bedroom for yourselves.”

“Indeed, I thought for only a moment about the loss of rent, then realized the situation played into my hand – our hand. Henry, I know it is Sunday and I should not ask for legal advice, but am I correct in thinking we do not have to refund any of the rental, given the situation could damage our reputation.”

“Actually, there are several possible arguments, such as the disturbance, damage to reputation, difficulty in re-renting, etc., as well as some counter arguments that they should be at liberty to recover some funds by means of a sub-let. I will have plenty to discuss with Mr. Turcotte as a case from which to learn. However, I suspect that if you use the room yourselves you will not have to surrender either the room nor any money. Moreover, you would not risk a potential complication for another tenant.”

“That is a relief. Ah. Mary and Ethel have done us proud with soup and bread and cheese. Ethel, can you take a bowl up to Miss Smith. It will possibly prevent her being too weepy later on when I have to see what we can do to sort out the mess she is in.”

\* \* \*

After lunch, Abraham and Cassandra, joined by Adeline who had been quietly observing all that had transpired, asked Vera to join them in the drawing room, which was, after all, next door to the apartment she had shared with Forsythe.

“Are you feeling a little better after the soup?” Cassandra asked.

“Yes. It was a great tonic. Thank you.”

“Have you food for this evening?”

“No. Edward would usually take us somewhere to eat. There are some biscuits and some water. And he gave me a £5 note, though that is difficult to spend in a tea shop or public house. Still, I’ll be all right for food.”

“If you wish, you may join us. I would rather you were in good spirits to take on new challenges.”

“That is exceedingly generous, Miss Match. I don’t know how to thank you.”

“The best way to thank me is to regulate your life well. And that is what we are here to try to set in motion. Let me introduce Mr. Cohen, my fiancé, and Mrs. Naismith, your neighbour in 2C who has a long acquaintance with Brighton.”

“Good afternoon, Mr. Cohen. Mrs. Naismith.”

“First, I have an awkward question, Miss Smith. Is there any chance you are with child?”

Vera blushed, then stammered “I ... I don’t believe so. There was a book I found, and it said to use a syringe to ... ”

“Yes. I was trained in an apothecary shop. No need to go into detail.

Let us hope that there are no consequences. So the next step is to consider where and how you will live. You said earlier you did not wish to return to your family in East Anglia?”

“It would feel such a defeat. And no doubt I would be at even more of a disadvantage with Mr. Coburn who my father wished me to marry if he found out about ...”

“That bridge is one to be crossed when you arrive at it. Would Coburn be a decent husband? I mean, would he treat you well?”

“He is a widower with children who are now from 5 years old to 12 years old. His wife was a very nice woman who I liked greatly, but she died of

consumption at the end of 1850. He wanted to remarry right away for the sake of the children. That's when I ran away. Still, I don't think he would be unkind to me."

"Have you had any communication with your father since?"

"None. Though I do get occasional letters here from an old school friend who gives me news, though she cannot read or write very well, so it is a burden for her. Also she has very little money to spend on paper and stamps."

"Well, one option is to write to your father to explore the possibility of returning. You can say you tire of London and ask him to write care of myself at this address. I do not know whether it makes sense to consider the suit of Mr. Coburn, but it seems he rather rushed the fences."

"If I could, I'd prefer not to go home," Vera said.

"Then tomorrow you must begin to seek employment. You said you worked in a bookshop, even now a part of the time. There are several bookshops here in Brighton. And no doubt other shops are not so different."

"That is true," I shall have to look in the newspapers.

"There are some downstairs," Adeline said. "We can go through them together."

"But I have no reference. How will anyone hire me?"

"You can give my name," said Cassandra, "and I will say you are quiet, studious, and dress well, all of which are true to my observation."

"And I will have to find a place to live."

"We may know someone or other. For the first week, you might as well stay here and try to find your feet. I will, however, ask that you write to your father. I have personal knowledge that family connections are important. You need offer nothing but a daughter's affection. And it will allow your life other roads should those you try here be blocked."

\* \* \*

Abraham suggested a walk on the Promenade despite blustery conditions.

"Ah. Fresh air after the stench of scandal!" he said.

"That is one form of expressing the situation, though I would use other words. However, I too appreciate the change of air," Cassandra agreed.

"Forsythe's wife and brother-in-law rather gave us a bedroom so we can be a true married couple," Abraham observed.

"Yes. I just hope Vera is not pregnant. That will be a very awkward complication."

"She mentioned a syringe. You indicated you knew how it worked."

“Yes. You draw in dilute vinegar or lemon juice and flush the ... the anatomical word is vagina. The man’s semen is thus washed out. But it is not foolproof, though generally quite effective.”

“When we talked earlier, you mentioned not striving against children. But perhaps for a year or so, we might want to diminish the chances to allow some time to build our marriage. Would that make sense?”

“Yes. I believe that would be sensible for us, Abraham. Thank you. You seem to be tuned to my feelings, even when I have not quite voiced them.”

“And I thought it masterful how you forestalled a request for a refund of rent. Though had there been a public disturbance, you would have genuine cause. Even now, there could be some gossip, though here in Brighton a great many liaisons are maintained.”

“Yes. I did rather play the offended landlady. Frankly – and this is perhaps wicked of me – I actually enjoyed acting the scene. Still, I don’t think Forsythe was much of a man. He collapsed rather like a house of cards. Between his timidity and Lavinia’s anger, there would be nothing but the poorhouse for Vera.”

“What do you hope to arrange for her?” Abraham asked.

“I think Rebecca Upton may have some space for a cot in her kitchen. And she may be able to use a shop-assistant. Valerie is only 11 or 12, but quite interested in the shop. Joseph, however, doesn’t like being inside, and has limited interest in the furniture and furnishings. Tony actually said something to me the other day that might interest him. In any event, I will send Mrs. Upton a message. Or we could walk there on our way home – I mean Fortescue Road. And since I have Forsythe’s rent money in hand, I will offer Rebecca a pound to take her on for four weeks trial. If that works out, it will save us much distraction.”

“Let us make our way now, and tell me about what Tony said.”

Cassandra explained “Well, you know how Tony takes care of Annabelle. It turns out that Joseph has been visiting Annabelle each night to make sure she is all right. Now the shed at Upton’s has two stalls, and only one is being used. Tony thought there might be business for two donkeys if we could find another along with a cart. I think I’d have Tom in charge of the business, with Tony and Joseph running the donkeys and carts. Do you think there’s sufficient trade to make it worthwhile, assuming of course we can acquire the beast and cart at a fair price.”

They had been walking along the Promenade and there was a small shelter, on the seaward side of which Abraham had led Cassandra, since she had her arm through his.

“Well, a fair price is always a good idea. But this afternoon, I’m not sure that I’ve struck a fair bargain.”

“Really, Abraham. I don’t understand you.”

Now under the roof of the shelter, Abraham turned towards her and kissed her. He pulled her against him, enjoying the swell of her breasts against him, albeit under layers of clothing.

“Perhaps that will serve as explanation,” he said as they broke apart.

“I see. Yes. We have had too many distractions from enjoying each other’s company. Thank you for reminding me that we should not be too hasty in resuming our walk.”

\* \* \*

After working at B & J much of Monday, Cassandra asked Tom and Tony to stay at the table after dinner.

“I wanted to ask both of you about the possibility of getting a second donkey,” she said.

Tom jumped right in “You’d need another cart.”

“I realized that. And I also realize that if Tom is to use his talents in the manufacture, repair and refinishing of products, we will want another driver, such as Joseph Upton.”

“Yes,” said Tony. “’e’s quite got Annabelle to ignore me.”

“Nah,” said Tom. “She’ll never forget you. You can get her to let you re-shoe her, which saves us a bit, since the farrier wants two bob a set. But Joseph does like being around animals. And he’s pretty good with ’er.”

“Do you think you could find a cart or the makings of one, Tom?”

“I’ll keep an eye out this week and let you know. They’re not an everyday item. Nor are donkeys. Tony, do you know where to get one?”

“Archie used to talk about the Islington donkey market. Apparently takes place every Friday afternoon in London. Donkeys brought in from all over. Even from Ireland.”

“It would be better if we could get one locally. The cost of getting to London and walking a donkey back plus the uncertainty of the market, which we don’t know, could make that a poor bargain. Let’s keep our eyes out for donkeys and carts and talk again in a week.

Now we should also review how we are doing. Tom, have you the figures for December handy?”

Tom reached into a pocket and pulled out an oilcloth sack with a notepad. “I did up a weekly tally. For the four weeks ending January 3rd we had profits on donkey and cart of 9s 3d, 11s 9 1/2d, 14s 2 3/4d, and 8s 11 1/2d. Total is £2 4s 2 3/4”

Tony said “In September, we wrote down that once we’ve divided the profits into half for Miss Match for her investment in the donkey and cart, a sixth for Tom now he’s working mostly in the shed, and a third for me,

we get to keep at least half our portion but pay the other half until we've covered our wage. Is that right?"

Cassandra said "Yes, I want you always to get a part of the profits, but I am also paying your wage and board regardless. After you've paid your wage, though, you can keep all the rest of your share. So if your portion for the four weeks were over 32 shillings, you'd get that amount less 16/-. Of course, you'd have received the wages too. This is the bonus we're talking about.

We'll round up the farthing, and say that half of that is £1 2s 1 1/2 to me and a third of that is 7s 4 1/2d, So paying half back for Tony's wages leaves his bonus at 3s 7 1/4d but Tom paid his wage out of things he's fixed and made this month, so he gets 14s 9d bonus. Tony. Did you take your wages?"

"No. Ain't needed to. Plenty of food here, and I haven't had chance to do any shopping. But I think I'll look for a new cap and gloves."

Cassandra went to the housekeeping cupboard and paid them both out. The amounts in the cupboard were getting large enough that a more secure place for their funds was in order. She would talk to Abraham. Where did he keep his money? She would no doubt learn, as would he about her arrangements.

\* \* \*

That Wednesday afternoon, it being early closing, Cassandra had suggested by note that she and Frieda have a late lunch and a private chat. They repaired to the drawing room with a tray of sandwiches and some cider.

"Is it not a bit early in the day for some cider?" Frieda asked.

"Perhaps the occasion calls for a drink of some sort," Cassandra answered.

"Oh. You must bring my knowledge up to date."

"Well, apart from various minor dramas with Mr. Forsythe next door in 2B ..."

"Oh, Adeline – Mrs. Naismith – was by the shop and there was nobody about, so she told us the story."

"It is hard to keep anything private around here. Have you learned about Abraham Cohen and I and Michael Yarrow and Mary?"

"Adeline said Mary and Michael were planning to wed, but nothing about you and Abraham."

"Indeed, she may not have heard yet that Abraham and I are hoping to wed also."



“But your resources will then be his! Are you not breaking your intent. He is a good man, and attractive, but ...”

“You may recall Henry mentioning a separate estate. It appears that such can be arranged. It is not perfect, but it will seemingly protect my investment in the houses.”

“And Abraham does not object?”

“Just the opposite. He wants to be sure that any claim against him cannot impinge upon my resources, or at least a goodly portion of them.”

“Then I wish you both well and much happiness. And now understand the cider.”

After they had eaten some of the sandwiches and drunk some of the cider, Frieda asked “Will I yet be a grandmother?”

“Possibly. Though I think for a little while we will try to avoid my becoming pregnant. Neither of us is in our youth, and it would be good to get comfortable with each other. And we have a number of ongoing projects at the moment, as do you.”

“Indeed, I did not think at my time of life to be starting a new shop, but we are enjoying it immensely, and seem to be making money. Not great riches, but enough that our capital will gently be augmented, I believe. I can understand that adding a baby to the mixture might tempt fate.”

“It is, for both of us, a happy time. I am so glad we found each other again, Mother.”

\* \* \*

January turned out to be a very busy month for everyone associated with Cassandra, though trade was generally slow after the spending for Christmas. What kept our various characters busy was the unrolling of the carpets of their lives started on January 9.

Vera Smith went to see Rebecca Upton and – ignorant that Cassandra had paid an inducement for her to be hired – began work and residence at the second hand shop. In fact, by Tuesday night, Vera Smith was installed on a cot in the kitchen of Rebecca Upton’s apartment. She took easily to the shop and was able to generate extra sales, and would be kept on after the trial. What she did not share with anyone was her great anxiety until near the start of February that she might, perhaps, be with child. As with many women before and since, she was most relieved to see evidence that she was not.

Tom and Tony, by dint of carefully dropped questions, heard that an old carter over in Worthing had taken ill with a stroke. He had a 6 year old Jenny named Moonbeam with a two-wheel cart. On a particular day

in late January, Cassandra was occupied with a large order of fabrics that had arrived at B & J, but Maud and Abraham were able to go to inspect the animal and cart with Tom and Tony. Cassandra gave no instructions, but Tom and Tony gave a good report on the items for sale, and her four emissaries decided to try to purchase them. The asking price was £14, but Tom said the going price for a donkey was at most £5 and he thought the ensemble should be £10 at most. Abraham, Tom and Tony decided to let Maud do the bargaining, since the carter was now in bed in a small cottage. A neighbour had shown them the donkey and cart.

They knew crowding the sick man would not aid their cause, and felt Maud would be less imposing, and by that alone might gain a minor advantage. Maud, using the same technique Cassandra had employed in one of the second-hand shops, took out the 10 sovereigns that Abraham had brought along and laid them on the table beside the sick man's bed.

"Mr. Humphries, I have with me 10 sovereigns. I can leave them here and ride home with Moonbeam pulling the cart, or I can take a hansom. Which shall it be?"

The old man laughed. "A spirited lass. Well, it's not as much as I'd wanted, but I could be in the ground and not have the enjoyment of any money if I wait too long."

Maud prepared a receipt to which Humphries made his mark and Tony and Tom hitched up Moonbeam and they made their way back to Brighton. Since they now were with a vehicle, they had to pay the toll on the old bridge across the Adur.

That evening Abraham walked with Cassandra to see the new acquisitions.

"Cassandra, you now have two houses, two carts and two donkeys to list for the separate estate."

"I note you have put the cart before the donkey! And how did I pay for the new beast and her vehicle?"

"I took some money from our strongbox – Joshua's strongbox. But we will treat it as yours. Indeed, saying 'our strongbox' underlines that you and I will become the owners of the word 'our' shortly."

"Yes. It will take some habituation," Cassandra said thoughtfully. "But the idea is very ... compelling. Thank you, Abraham. Well, I will say thank you if the purchase seems a good one once I have seen it myself. And I will make a record that I owe you £10."

Cassandra was, in fact, delighted. Joseph Upton was still in the stalls brushing both animals. Somewhere, Tony had found a battered hat, this time a lady's bonnet with a silk flower in the front, so now both donkeys had a hat.

Joseph said "Tony says I'll be given charge of Moonbeam an' 'er cart,

Miss Match. Is that right?"

Cassandra had not explicitly stated this to Tony and Tom, but decided that it was the most expedient course of action. "Yes, we will allow you a try, and assuming you prove able, continue accordingly. Let us arrange to meet this Sunday afternoon to write down the arrangements. Can you ask your mother if it will be appropriate to meet here? I think she should be made party to the deliberations, as we will be stabling the donkeys here. And Abraham, can you tell Mr. Goldman that we will be prepared to contribute to the yard rental and ask his estimate of a fair amount."

Goldman's premises were, in fact, just around the corner, and Cassandra's statement was mostly to provide Joseph with the context in which the cartage business would be operating. Indeed, Abraham and Cassandra repaired to the Goldman's to enjoy a cup of tea and some conversation. Cassandra described what she had said to Joseph, and Goldman said "Why not offer Mrs. Upton another 10/- a quarter. The current rent is less than I was prepared to pay, and having the transportation at hand is extremely convenient. And for delicate items, we use the stable for storage. I want to talk to Tom about some minor improvements that could convenience such storage."

"We should also look to having the means at hand to fight a fire," said Abraham. "It is not just malevolence that is a threat. There are candles and lamps, and even the heat from animal dung badly heaped."

"Should we also think of that for the houses on Fortescue Road?" Cassandra asked.

"It would not go amiss," Joshua responded. "Buckets of water handy on each floor."

Abraham said "I think sand may be better, as it will not evaporate, and less damaging if spilled. After emptying on a fire, the bucket would still be available for water. We might also look to where a larger reservoir of water would be appropriate. Such a reservoir could be useful for the water closet as well, serving more than one purpose."

"I'll mention to Tom to start thinking of how we may be ready for the eventuality of a fire," Cassandra said. "He has a fertile mind and will surely come up with something."

\* \* \*

That night as she was retiring, Cassandra related all this to Mary.

"Another enterprise! Cassandra, you amaze me."

"But you also are thinking of expanding your operations."

"I suppose, but my mind is more on my upcoming marriage."

"You sound concerned."

"I fear I may disappoint Michael when ... you know."

"Perhaps the fear is the biggest danger. Your focus on that may cause you to fail to recognize that Michael loves you and wishes to bring you happiness, and, I suspect, pleasure."

"I have momentary recollections of the pain when I was violated. If such come when Michael beds me, it will ruin all."

"How did you manage at the house? Was there not pain?"

"I used a bit of lard beforehand. Then there was just the mental discomfort, but of course that was bad enough."

"It may be that you should use the lard again, at least until you and Michael know there will not be physical pain."

"You did not experience pain?"

"From the breaking of my maidenhead, there was a sharp moment, but other than that no. In fact, Gerald observed I was extremely wet with anticipation."

"Some of the women in the house talked of that, but it was not part of my experience."

"Yet!" Cassandra stated. "I'm sure it will happen. Try to get Michael to caress you and take his time. And you him, assuming you want to give him pleasure."

"I wish I had your confidence, Cassandra. And I really do want to give Michael pleasure. Being with him and feeling him close is already pleasing to me, so I will take comfort in your words and advice."

Oh. I had wondered how to answer the vicar should he ask where I was born and if I am baptized."

"I had not thought of that. It is not part of the marriage record, that I know. However, it may be asked. Where were you actually born, Mary?"

"Would you believe Falkirk?"

"Oh. That is rather rich. Well, what shall you say?"

"If I say where I was baptized, someone could check the baptismal records."

"So we need a church that has been destroyed."

"Oh. That would work. And in Glasgow there was a St. Enoch's that had to be rebuilt in 1827."

"So Mary McNair was born on the 31 July, 1807 in Glasgow. Father unknown, but baptized in St. Enoch's but the register is lost or destroyed, or at least not easy to verify," Cassandra concluded.

"We had previously agreed on Paisley, but I have never said that to anyone but you," Mary noted.

"That is well that we have not talked much about our past. I must think of my own story."

“You proposed that you were born in Chester. Where would you say you were baptized?”

“One time my father took me to Chester in the late 1820s for some reason of business. I think he was buying some stock from an apothecary who had died. In any event, it was noted that the reconstruction of the street had meant St. Bridget’s church was demolished. But I think I will say that my father was a sailor from the Baltic with a long name that was shortened to Match, and he died before I was one year old when we were in Manchester, then we lived a peripatetic existence all over the place, with my mother working in factories.

I can say I have no proof of baptism, but am willing to be re-baptized if needed, though I think for marriage it is not a requirement. After all, until quite recently, all faiths had to marry in the Church of England. And I am sure Abraham is not baptized.”

“It may be there will be few questions. I have been surprised how we are accepted,” Mary said.

“Yes. We have been fortunate to avoid too many nosy people.”

\* \* \*

On Sunday January 30 Cassandra, Tom and Tony walked to Goldman’s and collected Abraham to go to meet Rebecca Upton and Joseph. They managed to all fit round the modest kitchen table, though it was a tight fit. After tea was poured and some of Mary’s biscuits that Cassandra had the foresight to bring were passed round, Cassandra said “I’ve taken the liberty of drafting an outline of how we may run the donkey cartage with Tony and Joseph as the main operators. Shall I proceed and then we can discuss the details, which are open to negotiation?”

Rebecca said “Yes, we need some ideas on the table so we do not grasp at smoke.”

“My first observation is that I have – possibly almost by accident – become the owner of two donkeys and two carts, and thereby the major investor of the capital of the business. Rebecca owns the yard and shed or stable. I talked with Mr. Goldman, and he suggested that his rent for the yard is too low, and proposed we add 10/- per quarter to that for use of the yard and stalls for the cartage operation. That 10/- would have to come out of the revenues of the cartage operations of course.”

“An extra £2 per year will be nice,” Rebecca said. “I think it fair, and it will mean Joseph is not going far to spend time with the beasts. I’d rather he were near at night.”

Cassandra continued "Now as I said, Tony and Joseph will be our drivers, and they will get their wage from the business. For things to work happily, those wages and other remuneration will need to be agreeable and understood by all. My initial suggestion is that the wage be 4/- per week each. I will continue to house and feed Tony breakfast and supper at Fortescue Road, for which I will anticipate he performs minor errands and household tasks. Joseph I am presuming stays here. It may be that there should be some allowance for his food, but I would think Mrs. Upton will expect him to participate in household chores for his keep."

"You are correct, Miss Match. There's no lords and ladies here."

"If we can, I would be happiest if Tony and Joseph work out their own prices and tasks with the donkeys and carts, though I am sure Tom, Mrs. Upton and I will be most willing to provide counsel. But I have been quite adamant that in all we do that a record is kept of all income and expenditure, and this is transferred to the ledger in a timely manner. Tom, show everyone your notebook. Actually it was Maud who started using an oilcloth sack to protect her notebook."

Tom showed the notebook. Cassandra continued "I have here one each for Tony and Joseph, with a pencil."

"These are good, Miss," Joseph said. "We'll know what we did and how much we made."

"Or lost!" Tom pointed out.

"Yes, there will be times when your expenses outpace your revenues, I am sure," Cassandra added. "I am, however, within reason prepared to advance money to the business, but on the basis that it must be repaid within a month."

Now I would not have invested in a second animal had I not felt we would make money. I will further say that I expect Tony and Joseph to look after the donkeys and the carts. That means proper care and maintenance, shoeing, paint, etc., all of which are costs against revenue."

"What about advertising Miss?" Tony asked. "A while ago, we thought of handbills to tell people where to come to hire us, but we didn't get round to having any made."

"It would be an expense against revenue. And it raises the question of whether Mrs. Upton and her staff will receive and pass on messages, and perhaps even take bookings, in which case a small consideration is in order."

"You're going to teach them business, Miss Match," Rebecca Upton laughed.

"I don't mind, Ma. I want to do well and make you proud," Joseph said.

"What sort of handbill did you think of, Tony?" Tom asked. "We did mention them, but never even tried to write down what we might use."

"Well, we've now got 'ats for both Annabelle and Moonbeam. People'll

remember that. I drew a picture.” At this point, Tony showed a sheet of paper with a simple line drawing of a donkey’s head wearing a hat.

“Oh, that’s good,” Rebecca exclaimed.

“If we could get this printed on a handbill – not too big, maybe half a regular sheet – with our name and the address of where to find us.”

“A half-quarto, or octavo, sheet would be a good size. 4 inches by 5. But the engraving might be expensive, though the plate would do for a long time and many printings.”

“A donkey wearing her best bonnet,” Abraham quipped.

“That’s a good name,” Tom said. “Best Bonnet Cartage. Put that at the top. Then the picture, then ‘T. Brown & J. Upton’ and the address.”

“All right. I will allow an investment of up to £2 for the engraving and a first order of, say, 250 handbills, and will add that to my investment in the Best Bonnet enterprise.”

“Assuming there are profits, you had better decide how rewards will be allocated,” Abraham said.

“I was about to come to that,” Cassandra replied. “Let us assume the business pays Tony and Joseph’s wages, rent, tolls, the feed and care for the donkeys, upkeep or replacement tack, repair and refurbishment of the carts, ... oh, I had meant to suggest that Tony and Joseph should each get two sets of clothing and boots that will be their daily work wear. Not quite a uniform, but recognizable. I will allow that to be added to my investment, but the replacement should come from the business.

Now, as the main, in reality only, investor, once the net profits clear of any costs are calculated, I would expect no less than 40% to come to me. I would like Tom to take oversight and minor maintenance, though larger jobs should be charged by him. And I would like him to provide advice, sometimes accompany Tony or Joseph where it may be prudent to have two or more staff, and generally keep the business safe. For that, I think he should get 10% of the profits, leaving a quarter each for Tony and Joseph. However, I believe that we should be willing to entertain suggestions for reinvestment of part of the profits as and when opportunities are noted. I will suggest Tom look after transferring information to the ledger, but I will encourage all of us to review it. Note that Tom gets no wage. Like me, he will depend on profits being realized.”

“You’ve given this some thought, Miss Match,” Rebecca observed.

“I hope I don’t appear too calculating, Mrs. Upton. I’m hoping to provide incentive and encourage initiative while avoiding future arguments that the arrangements were unclear.”

Abraham said “Not many enterprises offer the staff such a portion of the profits.”

Cassandra answered “But I think cartage is an enterprise of the here and

now. I cannot prescribe how Tony and Joseph will decide what commissions to undertake. The day to day conditions affect the outcome."

"I'll be happy to work as you suggest, Miss," Tony said.

"Me too," said Joseph. "As long as Ma agrees," he added.

"It seems fair to me," Rebecca said. "And hopefully it will bring in some cash too. But it'll be good to have the cartage available in the yard, so to speak, to oil the sales in the shop."

"I will write up what I have proposed in five copies for myself, Tom, Tony, Joseph and Mrs. Upton and we can sign them when they are ready and each have a copy. That way we each know our intent and may hope to avoid misunderstanding."

\* \* \*

By Monday, February 7 the agreements were all signed, an engraver had prepared a suitable plate 2 1/2 inches square with the image of the hatted donkey, and 500 handbills were going to be available by the following Friday.

Tony and Joseph had managed for a little over 10/- each to get themselves equipped with dark blue trousers, blue shirts without collars, sweaters with leather shoulder and elbow pads, boots, caps, and gloves. Cassandra insisted they get these large enough for growth. After some argument, it was decided to just get one set for each of them, because Joseph pointed out that he was very likely to grow out of his set quickly, though it might be he could be handed down those of Tony. Nevertheless, he might sometimes be wearing other clothes should his main set need washing or repair.

Tony had a good hand, and managed to draw "Best Bonnet Cartage" on each side of each cart, though it took him several days to fully complete the task. Maud helped by suggesting he make a pattern in paper of the letters he needed so the outline could be traced rather than re-drawn freehand. The carts were varnished, so a bright red paint was chosen for the lettering.

In the first few weeks, only one cart at a time was in use, but a handbill was left with each customer, and the jaunty image of the hatted donkey caught the attention of others needing things transported from one place to another. In mid-March Abraham went to a large house near Lewes where the owner had gambled himself to ruin and was selling up. The distance was about 8 miles each way. Two trips a day was the most that could be accomplished and the animals and their drivers were very tired at the end of the first day. Abraham and Tom had accompanied them to assist in loading and unloading. One more trip by both carts would be needed to finish the job.



Cassandra went home via Upton's yard to see some of the items, which were being covered with tarpaulins after being put on wooden blocks to keep them off the ground. Upholstered items were crammed in the shed and covered with dust sheets. Cassandra addressed the cats "You two had better do your job and keep the vermin out." The cats, as cats will, did not comment on this charge.

Abraham pointed out a few items of some quality, and suggested they might replace those in 2A and 2B and have these better items themselves. "Certainly, Abraham. Let us get Tony or Joseph to make the exchange when convenient."

Standing beside him, Cassandra noted the smell of hard work. She had anticipated this and said "Before I left Fortescue Road, I had Ethel ensure there was plenty of hot water. Why don't you come at eight o'clock and bring a change of clothes and have a hot bath. I will save us some supper for afterwards."

"That would be welcome. And it will give me time to go over what I have acquired with Joshua here and perhaps select some pieces for ourselves and for early disposition otherwise. There is so much, we need to see if we can re-sell it quickly."

"Tell me more later. I had better get home and make sure you will have the kitchen to yourself to bathe."

\* \* \*

We have, of course, managed to jump over the wedding of Mary and Michael. As it turned out, the vicar had not asked about Mary's past, except to ask if she were a widow, since she used the title Mrs. However, he accepted the explanation that cooks traditionally were so addressed and registered her as a spinster of 45.

The ceremony at 10 o'clock on the last Saturday of February was simple and dignified. The bride, given the day was cool and blustery, wore a well-fitted skirt and jacket, with a simple bonnet. She had a wrap that was left on a pew during the ceremony. Michael had a friend from the Railway as his main witness, while Cassandra served for Mary. The church was not full, but there were a surprising number of people present. Treats for the Tongue was now quite well-known, and a number of people turned up to wish the happy couple good fortune. The party who returned to Fortescue Road was smaller, but twenty people were crowded in the drawing room, where Ethel and Maud had set up plates of sandwiches and other things. Michael's friend made a toast to the bride, and Cassandra one to the groom. Elizabeth asked to speak and said "It is sometimes considered that a step-mother is somehow

less than welcomed by her step-children. However, I want to say that Mary ... oh, I can't say McNair now, can I ... has been very kind to me, and I hope that she and father will be very happy together."

This drew applause. Soon after, it was noted that the clock showed noon, and Mary asked Tom to bring her travelling bag to the front door so they could walk to the station. However, when Michael and Mary went outside to the applause of the rest, there was Tony with Annabelle and a cart with a sailcloth awning Tom had managed to fashion, and two cushioned seats on a low bench fastened in the box. Off they went and the party started to disperse.

Michael had booked three nights in the Swan Hotel in Tunbridge Wells. From Brighton the London Brighton and South Coast Railway had a route to Hastings, where they could change to the South Eastern Railway to Tunbridge Wells.

Neither journey was particularly long. Both Michael and Mary said little on the first stage. They held hands and Mary leaned against Michael and watched out the window as the Sussex countryside passed by. There were two other people in the compartment, sitting opposite each other on the other side of the train. Mary and Michael faced forward with Mary by the window. She fell asleep for a short while, waking as another train passed in the opposite direction.

"Oh. I fell asleep," she said.

"It has been a busy day."

Mary noticed the man sitting facing backwards to the train direction eyeing them disapprovingly. He said "Sir, it is unseemly for a gentleman to sit so close to a lady and hold her hand."

Michael, who noticed the man was reading a bible, answered "Perhaps, sir, we may be forgiven, having married but this morning."

"That may explain and perhaps excuse your behaviour, even though neither of you seem in the first bloom of youth. I wish you well."

Mary asked, "Are you perhaps a parson, sir?"

"A methodist lay preacher. I am on my way to preach tomorrow in Hastings."

"I trust it will go well," Mary said.

They had to wait for almost half an hour for the train to Tunbridge Wells. Mary was able to find a water closet, and they found a bench on the platform.

"We could sit in the waiting room," Michael suggested.

"I'd rather sit here with you. I know it is a bit cold, but it is less likely we will be criticized for sitting close together."

"Yes. It is hardly immoral for man and wife to sit close and hold hands. We were not doing anything scandalous."

"I should not say so, but perhaps I should suggest that we are saving that for later," Mary said, chuckling.

"Oh, Mary, I am so glad to hear you show some warmth in that direction. I truly hope I can help you share enjoyment with me."

"I plan to try my best. Please don't give up on me if I am slow to respond. It will not be from lack of willingness or affection."

"Thank you. Oh, our train is being brought to the platform."

\* \* \*

The Swan Hotel was situated on the Pantiles not far from the station, though Michael did engage a hansom for the short journey down the High Street so they would arrive in style. The building and business dated from the 1600s. It was starting to get dark as they arrived.

They were shown to their room, which had a good fire and was well-appointed. After they took off their coats and outerwear, Michael asked "Shall we go out to find a meal?"

"I do not feel hungry. Perhaps it is nervousness."

"My appetite is not strong either. I just fear we will be hungry later."

"You will note that I have two bags. The smaller one may prove helpful in this instance," Mary said.

Intrigued, Michael opened it. "Ah. Some bottles of cider, and two pies, and some scotch eggs and some biscuits and two apples. My, my, I did do well in marrying you."

"Do you really mean it?" Mary asked quietly.

"Of course I do." He put his arms round her and they hugged for a long time, then kissed a very long kiss.

"Michael, shall we try ... er ...?"

"Given the fire is warm, we could undress before it and put the coverlet on the rug. Perhaps a towel under us to avoid leaving evidence of our activity."

Mary took a long moment to reply "Yes, I agree. But first I have some questions of a practical nature. I hope that is not unromantic."

"Better to ask first than suffer after."

"First, since our congress might be ... uncomfortable if I am ... er ... a little dry, I have a small jar of lard that can be used to lubricate. Do you want me to use it?"

"May I relate my own experience?"

"Of course. Oh, you are worried that you will talk of Ada. That does not cause me trouble. Please tell me what you have learned in the past."

“If I take my time, and lay my hands gently upon you in all places, especially the private ones, I believe you may become rather ... er ... wet, and the lard will be unnecessary.”

“I hope you will not be offended, but I talked to Cassandra about my fears, and she said much the same.”

“Then let us try without the lard, and only use it if, when I explore your woman’s parts, no slippery fluid is to be found. But you said "First".”

“Yes, the second matter is that I have with me a syringe. If we wish to inhibit the chance of a child, I can use it to wash myself after we join. But I believe we should share the decision for its use. And I must tell you that it is not foolproof anyway.”

“For a little while, let us use it. We need to become accustomed to each other before chancing another being in our lives. And while Elizabeth has been welcoming to you, I have not broached the subject of a baby in the house.”

“That is sensible, Michael. I appreciate your thoughtfulness. Now I will go to the water closet. Oh. There is a pot under the bed. That will be helpful later when we may wish to avoid venturing out of the room.”

“I will go there when you return.”

When she returned to the room, Mary decided to take off her costume and hang it up. She wondered if Michael would wish her to remain dressed. Some men liked to undress a woman. She decided to remain in her shift and corset.

Michael came back. Mary noticed he locked the door. She had not thought of that – it was a sensible action to avoid embarrassment.

“Michael, I was not sure if you would want to undress me, so I stopped after taking off my jacket and skirt.”

“An interesting thought. It had not occurred to me. But come near the fire and we will undress each other and take our time to get to know each other’s bodies. I wish to know you. All of you.”

Mary took the ewer of water and the bowl that were on the washstand and placed them to one side of the fireplace along with a flannel and small towel.

Michael looked puzzled. Mary said “So we can wash our private parts.”

“Oh.” He still looked puzzled.

“Hmm. I ... er ... well, know that some men like to have their .... er ... cock kissed or licked, and some like to do similar things to a woman on her ... ”

“Quim?”

“Yes. I have always avoided such actions, but with you I somehow feel that I would not object .... perhaps even enjoy it.”

“Thank you, Mary. It had not occurred to me. However, washing will be a good idea, especially if each washes the other.”

“Oh. Yes. ... It would be a very intimate activity.”

“Shall I unlace your corset?”

“You could, but it is perhaps less work now, and when I have to don it again, to use the hooks here in the front.”

After he had unhooked it, Michael said “Stays must be very uncomfortable when worn all day.”

“I will not deny it. But it is the custom. And the line of clothes demands them.”

As she said this, she undid Michael's waistcoat – he had already hung up his jacket. Then she removed his tie. As she did so, she felt his hands cup her breasts and she let out a gasp.

“You wish me not to touch you thus?”

“It was just surprise. Kiss me and you may do so again.”

This was a most sensible invitation. Things continued in this fashion until Michael said “I seem to have no more garments to remove from you.”

Mary removed his last sock and laughed “Nor I.” They knelt by the fire, and Mary put some water in the bowl and wet the flannel, then held it close to the fire to warm it before washing his privates. There was no doubt he was anxious to couple with her, and she felt a strange wish that it should happen, and not too much in the future.

Michael took the flannel from her and rinsed it in the bowl, then had her move her knees apart while kneeling and gently washed her. She was quite taken aback that he found the clefts and managed to work the flannel between them. He rinsed the cloth and repeated the exercise, this time spending some time at the front of her slit. The sensation was interesting.

Putting the cloth in the bowl he got a pair of pillows and laid them at one side of the fireplace and beckoned her to lie down. “Do you wish to be closest to the fire?” he asked.

“It is a goodly fire. Perhaps we should move a few inches back, then I will take the closest position.”

Lying on the coverlet and towel, with their heads on the pillows, they kissed and caressed each other for a while. When Michael moved his hand between her legs she opened them without thought and let him touch her. It was very pleasant. She realized she should reciprocate and touched him. He gasped “Perhaps not ... er ... on the head of my cock, or I will spill right away.” She moved her hand lower, around his balls and gently held them and moved them about slowly, enjoying the feel as he played with her lower lips.

“Can you feel that you are wet, Mary?”

“Yes. And when I touched you, you were quite wet at the tip also. Is it time to try to join?”

“Certainly, if you feel ready.” He kissed her and they remained a long time with joined lips. Then Mary rolled until she could have one knee each side of him and knelt up. She reached down and positioned him at her wetness and asked “Can you feel my opening?”

“Yes. I think so. Do you want me to gently push upwards rather than you try to come down?”

“Gently, yes.”

This action achieved a minor penetration, which felt pleasant enough for Mary. She almost involuntarily lifted slightly then moved down and he slipped further inside her. Once more and there was no further entry possible. Mary bent forward and kissed him. They fitted rather well. After about ten seconds, Michael started to gently move in and out, and Mary knelt back up.

“Oh. That feels nice,” she said.

“For me also, but I won’t last long.”

Indeed, with the view of Mary’s bosom and her involuntary movements, he came a few seconds later. Mary had not climaxed, but her experience was far better than any beforehand, so she was not disappointed. She bent back down onto him and kissed him again, then said “Thank you, Michael. I do love you, and if you keep doing that to me, I will love you even more.”

Over the next couple of days, Mary and Michael were able to find pleasure and joy together while taking in the town and its amenities. They attended church at St. Charles the Martyr, and sampled the water of the Chalybeate spring. I would overstep if I said they enjoyed this last amenity, for it was one they decided was not to be repeated nor recommended. There were some pleasant walks, and some good meals, and by the time they returned to Brighton, they were comfortable with each other in ways neither had expected.

\* \* \*

On the evening when the donkeys had completed the movement of many items of furniture and related things from near Lewes, Abraham came to Fortescue Road and enjoyed a hot bath. Cassandra thought briefly of staying in the kitchen, but decided that it was better to maintain proprieties. Once they were married, they could bathe by the fire together. It was a comforting thought, though she realized Abraham might apply a different interpretation.

After Abraham had finished his bath, he came up to the drawing room. Cassandra had already brought a tray with cider, a cold beef and vegetable pie Ethel had made, and some bread and pickles. There were some sweet biscuits as well. Recently Tom had managed to create a small hob that could be swung near to the fire to heat a kettle. It was a useful modification, and

Cassandra had the kettle gently steaming for tea later. The only concern was that one needed a thick cloth to avoid burning one's hand lifting the kettle, but that applied almost as much in the kitchen.

"Do you want cider or tea, Abraham?"

"Oh dear, I feel like both at once. And I am famished. It is all the labour to move that furniture."

Cassandra poured water for the tea, but passed him a bottle of cider. "You can certainly have both. Cut your self some pie and a triangle for me, but don't wait to start eating. You've had a busy day."

"Indeed I have. My muscles ache, but we got everything home and put away. Now to sell it."

"Did it diminish your capital severely? Or perhaps I shouldn't ask."

"Of course you should. We should be aware of each other's fortunes or lack thereof. For what we moved in the last couple of days I paid £170. That is more than a third of my money, and in one go. However, I think I can more than double it, possibly triple it if we find the right buyers and Tom does his magic on one or two dilapidated items."

"So you know how things are, I have about £740 at the moment. It is time, perhaps, to invest in another property, but I would like to keep some cash."

"Is it in a safe place, Cassandra?"

"I have a strong box in a locked closet in the kitchen, and it is secured to a heavy shelf. Perhaps you do not know it, but Henry arranged that the Soultons, and now Tony also, have small cardboard boxes in Turcotte's safe."

"That is good, as it means their resources are not proximate to your own should there be a robbery. When I move here, I think we should get another strongbox and I will put half my funds in it. We need to find a place that is not normally encountered by others, particularly anyone cleaning or making the bed."

Cassandra said "When I got my strongbox, the locksmith gave me some long screws. If a strongbox were put at the bottom of a wardrobe, behind some clothes, the screws could go through the bottom of the wardrobe and into the floor."

"Yes, that would do. You could get Tom to do it."

"I did the previous box with Mary. In fact her savings, which are not great, are in my strongbox and she has a key. But it may be time for her and Michael to have their own."

"Indeed. And you did not trust the ingenious Tom?"

"I got the strongbox when he arrived. Actually, though I now trust his own honesty, I am cognizant that he is young and may reveal something without thinking, so that others may guess where to seek to rob us."

"Yes. He cannot reveal that which he does not know."

What do you think of my getting a bank account, Cassandra?"

"There are certain conveniences, and possibly the writing of cheques, but banks do fail. But perhaps to spread our wealth so it is not all in one place would be sensible. Were these houses to burn down, we could lose a great deal."

"And we have already come close last year. Thank heaven for Annabelle," Abraham said.

Cassandra felt they had talked enough of business. "To change the subject, we have not talked of where we should go after our wedding. Mary and Michael seem to have enjoyed Tunbridge Wells. Have you ideas?"

"I read that the London Brighton and South Coast Railway is going to restart the ferry from Newhaven to Dieppe. We could go to Paris if you like."

"Really. Is that not extravagant?"

"Do you not deserve some extravagance?"

"Perhaps, but I am not accustomed to it. But Paris would interest me. I'm afraid my French is very poor and rusty. Do you speak it?"

"At one point we thought of moving there, as the Jewish community is well-established. But then we found that we were doing quite well in Brighton, though we have had to work hard."

"Only other people seem to avoid hard work," Cassandra said, swinging a double chair round from its place to one side and perpendicular to the fire so that it faced the warmth. She sat down and motioned for Abraham to join her. He had hardly touched his cider and had been drinking it from the bottle. Cassandra held out her hand and Abraham gave it to her and she took a drink.

"Thank you."

Abraham took the bottle back and did the same. "It is not a polite way to drink together, but rather congenial nonetheless."

"I must confess to some thoughts that are entirely not polite, and which we should probably wait to put into action for a couple of weeks."

"How terribly improper, Miss Match," Abraham said, putting down the bottle and kissing her. After a few moments, his hand cupped her breast and he broke the kiss. "You seem to have lost your stays."

"At the end of the day, I prefer without. I'm sorry that my bosom is not very ... er ... large, but it does mean I can omit the strictures of whalebone and laces in favour of comfort."

"Actually, it is delightful. May we try again?"

They spent some minutes enjoying each other before recognizing that they must either stop or go further.

"Damnation," Cassandra said. "We should have chosen an earlier date to wed."



"I agree. Also it is most gratifying to love a woman who wants to share some carnal pleasures with me. Oh. Perhaps that is rude of me to say."

"Rude or not, it is truthful. Well, only a little while more."

\* \* \*

Joshua told Abraham it was a good idea to select the best items of the recent purchase for himself and Cassandra to use in their personal rooms.

"But it will lose you some profit, so I should pay you something."

Joshua replied "Let it be a wedding gift. And we can sell what you take out. It was quite decent when it went in, as I recall."

"Yes, decent, but some of the new items are really outstanding."

"Look after them and we will sell them when and if you tire of them."

"Joshua, you are not too disappointed that I am marrying a Gentile?"

"No. She is a handsome and clever woman. And I believe she loves you well. Unless I am mistaken, you have found a good partner. Much happiness to you both."

\* \* \*

On Maundy Thursday, Joseph and Tony used Moonbeam to deliver a bed and a sideboard to Fortescue Road for Abraham and Cassandra, and were taking back the items that were being removed. At the house, Ethel had helped with the lifting and Adeline assisted with doors.

About two hundred yards from the house, an urchin started throwing stones at Moonbeam. Tony yelled "Stop that, you imbecile!" and quickly grabbed at Moonbeam's bridle, but she broke away. Joseph pulled on the reins, but she was racing away, with Tony running after. Fortunately, Joseph's voice was by now well-known to the donkey, and he kept saying "Easy Moonbeam. Easy now," in a voice much more calm than he was, and the donkey ran up on a grassy verge a further two hundred yards away. The load was at an awkward angle, and might have tipped, but Tony arrived and eased Moonbeam to back up so the cart was on more level ground.

"You stay here," Tony said. "I'm going to find that urchin and drag him to the constables."

However, when Tony had run back to the place where the stone-throwing had occurred, Constable Shaw already had the miscreant held firmly by an ear. Actually, firmly was an understatement. Much more force and the urchin would escape, albeit less one ear.

“Oowww! You’re pullin’ my ear awf!”

“And what of it, you dirty, evil, snipe. Why’d ye do it?”

“A man gave me sixpence to get the ass to gallop and wreck the load so ’e could pilfer it. ’ere – this is the sixpence.” The urchin held it up.

“I’ll take that for evidence,” Shaw said. Tony suspected it would never be offered as an exhibit in court, but possibly presented to Mrs. Shaw as evidence of her husband’s goodwill towards her.

“Can we find the man who started this, Constable Shaw?” Tony asked, rather out of breath.

“We might, if this guttersnipe will cooperate. Do I know you?”

“Tony Brown. I looked after Archie Temple’s donkey. Now I work with Miss Match and we – Joseph Upton and I – run Best Bonnet Cartage.”

“I’ve seen your handbills. The donkey with the ’at. Nice touch, that. And a good job I was just round the corner when I ’eard the uproar and caught this one just as ’e tossed a stone. Nasty, that. Could’ve caused injury or death. Might even charge ’im with attempted murder. See ’ow tall the noose can make ’im.”

The urchin said “Not that! If I point out the man, will yer let me off?”

“Might get the charge down to disturbing the peace, but first let’s find the man. Where’d ye meet ’im?”

Tony hung about for a few minutes, then realized that there was not much chance he could be useful there. He tore a page from the back of his notebook and wrote his name, address, and Best Bonnet Cartage and the date and time that the donkey had been attacked with stones.

“Constable Shaw, I need to help my partner, Mr. Upton. Here is my name and address if you need a statement.” In the process, Tony realized how valuable it was to be able to read and write.

\* \* \*

The instigator of the attack was, of course, well-known to the constables. When confronted, he swore black and blue that the urchin was lying. Then he decided that it might be a good idea to move operations to another town for a while. A few people were aware of his schemes, and there was no honour among this particular group of thieves. The urchin, as he deserved, was sent to the poorhouse. His history ended there some months later with a fatal abscess of a tooth.

More happily, Tony and Joseph delivered their load undamaged. Moonbeam, however, had thrown a shoe and Tony had to re-shoe her. This was a delicate operation, as a donkey kick can, as we have observed, be fatal. To avoid catastrophe, Tony fashioned hobbles from some stout rope covered

with rags. These were tied securely but were loose enough about the beast's legs to not upset her. Then one foot at a time was released and Joseph softly talked to Moonbeam while Tony re-shod her.

The next day, they fetched and delivered a new mattress and pillows for the bed. Cassandra and Abraham were going to start with fresh bedding. Cassandra had ordered sheets and pillowcases as well as a new blanket from suppliers known to B & J, so all was set when April 2 dawned.

\* \* \*

Very much the same congregation witnessed Cassandra Match marry Abraham Cohen as had been present for the nuptials of Mary McNair and Michael Yarrow. Similarly, the invitees enjoyed a buffet reception in the drawing room of 21 Fortescue Road. However, as the newlyweds were not departing until Monday for France owing to the schedule of the ferry, though they would need to rise very early on that day, there was a minor concern to get the guests to leave so the couple could relieve their pent-up frustration with carnal desire. Fortunately, Mary had the good sense to invite people to the kitchen of number 23, knowing the Grants were having dinner with the Jefferys and would not be home until late. Adeline, whose room abutted the marital bedroom, also went to number 23. She was, in any case, the soul of discretion, though the walls were, fortunately, quite solid.

It was about six o'clock when all had departed.

"Shall we retire, despite the early hour?" Cassandra asked.

"Of course. I can hardly wait."

Nor could Cassandra. Indeed, their marriage was consummated before a quarter past six.

Cassandra got up from the bed and employed her syringe while sitting on the chamber pot.

"Is that uncomfortable for you?" Abraham asked.

"The syringe or squatting on the pot?"

"Either?"

"Possibly it would be easier in the water closet. I will ensure I have a suitable gown and slippers for the future. It is but a minor inconvenience."

"Do you think the others heard us?" Abraham asked. "You made some interesting noises. I hope they were of pleasure and not pain."

"Did I. I had not specifically noticed. In fact I was quite in a state of abandon. It was rather nice."

"That is very pleasing to hear. What a wonderful woman you are, Cassandra. I suppose that is actually your name?"

“It is my middle name. My first name is Diana. But now I am Cassandra Cohen. Miss Match may, however, remain as a professional name. We will see if it is required.”

“What are we going to do for the rest of the evening? I am happy to try again what we just did, but perhaps you have other ideas.”

“Can we be wicked and dress in very plain clothing – I will definitely eschew stays – and walk upon the shore then find a public house and have bread and cheese or scotch eggs and a drink. Then we can come back and you can ravish me, or else I you.”

“Or both the other at the same time!”

\* \* \*

From a very early departure on Monday April 4 for Newhaven and eventually Paris, Cassandra and Abraham were away nearly a fortnight.

While they were gone, the enterprises Cassandra had set in motion continued their activities.

At B & J, Alexander Collier and Joan Yardley, assisted by Sally Shaw and overseen by Cassandra, had reorganized the store-room so that products were now more clearly labelled and arranged by similar types, which facilitated more rapid selection. There had also been a shipment of some new materials that Mr. and Mrs. Jones had discovered in a recent investigatory excursion, and Sally had set up an attractive display in the window to bring attention to them.

In early March, Cassandra had told the rest of the staff of B & J she would be away for a fortnight in April. “Should we think of engaging an extra person to help in the shop while I am away?”

“It might take more work than they would be able to save, Miss,” said Sally. “They’d really only be able to provide fetch and carry and make sure nobody robs the till.”

“Perhaps I will talk to Mrs. Baldwin and Mrs. Moss next door, as well as to Maud Soulton. I know the Emporium has one or two ladies who work on an hourly basis. They would not be able to give full service here, but would likely watch the till and sell small items. However, should one of you become ill, I think it would be sensible to shorten the opening hours or even close ‘On account of indisposition’. Do we have materials to make such a sign and hang it on the door?”

“I’ll make sure we have some card and a pen and ink under the counter, Miss,” said Joan.

Next door, the Emporium, which had only opened in the Autumn, saw a profit in each of January and March, and despite a delayed shipment of

goods in February that reduced the amount of product for sale, still broke even in that month. Trade was increasing steadily. As we already noted, Miss Campbell and Mrs. Ritchie had decided to bring Mrs. Emma Baldock, the seamstress, into their operation with Adeline. Mrs. Baldock always was called a seamstress rather than a dressmaker. Her particular skills were literally in seams. She could repair tears with results that required good powers of inspection to notice that there had even been damage. Moreover, she was a grandmother who did not wish to work full days as she looked after several of her grandchildren during the day. This suited all concerned. The revenues to all were rather small, but like many businesses, a collection of modest activities added up to a reasonable return.

Elizabeth Yarrow had quickly proved to be a competent assistant to Ethel and Mary in preparing the Treats, as well as efficiently learning to read French from Adeline Naismith. She showed interest in the dress designs, and Mary realized that it would enlarge her knowledge to have first-hand experience, so Elizabeth was allowed to serve in the Emporium on a casual basis, much like Adeline.

Maud Soulton had worked hard with Abraham and Joshua to catalog and price the collection of items Abraham had managed to purchase. A copy was provided to Rebecca Upton where Vera Smith had quickly taken to the system that was used. A couple of fine occasional tables were chosen for display, as well as two matched dining chairs.

Two days after Cassandra and Abraham left for France, a lady came into Upton's shop seeking a table cloth for occasional rather than formal use. Indeed, Upton's was a second-hand shop, so the clientele was generally seeking a bargain. Rebecca was upstairs and Vera and Valerie were in charge of the shop. Vera had seen the woman when out with Forsythe. She had been with a rather flashy man who had a loud voice, a man who seemed to like to advertise that he had money. The woman did not show any recognition of Vera, but then this was a different context from the occasion when they had been in the same hotel restaurant.

Vera said "We have a number of quite decent table cloths, madam. Also some that are serviceable but not, perhaps, for use with company."

"Can you show me some of the better ones?"

"Valerie, Can you get the box of table cloths down from the upper right shelf while I show madam those we have here in the case?"

Now madam, this white one is a fine plain linen. It is quite large – 8 feet by 5. This other in a light blue is part linen and part cotton and a bit smaller, 6 by 5."

The woman felt the material of each. "I like the colour of the blue one, but I fear I need the larger. I also like the fabric of the linen one."

"There is a blue one here in linen," Valerie said. "Generally we only have

white, but there was a household that favoured colour."

The woman felt the cloth, then said "Can you hold it up? I don't want to find gentlemen have burned holes in it with their cigars."

Vera and Valerie came round to the front of the counter and unfolded the cloth carefully and stood apart so it was revealed completely at 8 feet by 5 and a half.

"How much is it?"

Valerie was about to say a pound, given that they generally asked a pound for large and 15/- for medium and 10/- for small. However, Vera forestalled her by saying "Normally such an item would be 30/-, but the colour is often not so desirable. I can offer it for 25/-."

"I will take it. Please wrap it up so it does not get dirty on my journey.

Oh. What can you tell me of these chairs?"

"Those are a very recent acquisition madam. I believe we have a set of 8, along with a fine table in companion style. They came from a great house near Lewes where the owner was unlucky in cards. They are marked with the name of John Kay of Manchester. The quality is well above our usual stock."

"I presume that you wish to sell them as a set?"

"That would be our hope, madam."

"Can I see the entire set?"

"They are under wraps in our yard, as they were only delivered in the last few days. However, if madam were willing to suggest a time when she could return, we will arrange to have them here for inspection. It will likely take us a couple of hours to get them from where they are stored. I do apologize that you are the first to have the opportunity to see the sample pair here."

"What would be the price?"

"Let me consult our stock list."

Vera went to the till. She had, however, made a note of the chairs when she and Rebecca selected them for display. Also, the table and the rest of the chairs were easily reachable. As Vera well-knew, Maud had put down that Uptons would pay £1 10s apiece for the chairs and £5 for the table, which was 6 and a half feet by 4 feet in a single piece for the top, but with legs that bolted on ingeniously. It was, at this moment, disassembled, and Tom, Tony and Joseph were not around.

Vera said "It appears we are asking £40 for the ensemble. That would include, of course, delivery and assembly by our own men. As I said, the items are outside our general range of stock, but we did not feel we could miss the chance of their acquisition in the distress sale. There were actually merchants in firewood eyeing them."

"How ghastly!" the customer remarked.

Vera continued "Should we arrange to display the full set for you, madam?"

"It is a large purchase, so I will need to consult my husband. Indeed, I believe he will want to be party to the decision. I will send a message with a time that we will come here, probably late tomorrow afternoon. Will that be acceptable?"

"Indeed madam, as long as we have a couple of hours notice. As you see, our shop is not overly large."

"I understand.

Good day to you."

"We are much obliged, madam."

After the customer left, Valerie said "What a cock and bull story!"

"What's that? What cock and bull story?" Rebecca Upton said, coming down from the apartment above.

"Vera sold that lady the blue linen tablecloth for 25/- and then told her the chairs and the table will be £40. And I think she swallowed it. She said she'd come back tomorrow with her husband to see them set up, but Vera told her to send us a note so we could set them up in here."

"Well I never," said Rebecca. "I would've taken 15/- for the cloth and been happy. And Maud put, what was it, £12 total for the chairs and 5 on the table. Of course, that's what we'd pay to Maud and Mr. Cohen. Well, we'll see if they get bought near what you've said, Vera."

"I did say we'd deliver and assemble them 'with our own men'," Vera commented. "And I have seen the couple in town. The husband will likely want to make a show of bargaining, and we will probably have to make a fine pretence of suffering great loss to accept £35, or perhaps even £32."

"So be it. And the delivery is but small beer, but a nice touch. You'll do all right here, Vera. I'm glad Miss Match – I mean Mrs. Cohen – brought you along."

"So am I, Mrs. Upton. I enjoy the trading."

\* \* \*

It transpired that, thanks to Mrs. Upton pleading extreme poverty given the untimely death of her husband, the dining service sold for £37 10s 0d. Joseph had fetched Tom and they had brought in the items and with some beeswax the Uptons, Vera and Tom had polished all the wood carefully. Tom even used some rouge and took out a couple of scratches, and he shimmed the legs so the table sat firmly on the floor. Using a marble he showed it was level. "This is one of them new German glass marbles I found a few of in a shop last Autumn. Real useful to see if things like this are flat."

"Have you got one I could buy or borrow?" Vera asked. "I thought it would be a good trick to help make the sale." This turned out to be true.

The customers were intrigued when she set the marble in the middle of the table. Tom had lent her the marble he had there, and said he'd see if he could find her one for a few pennies.

Thus the polishing and levelling paid off. Tom accompanied Tony and Joseph and the two donkeys to deliver the items, and they carefully set them up and levelled them for the customer. Tom even got a commission to straighten a pair of small pedestal tables whose tops were not level, and there was possibly more work to come from word of mouth later. Thus, while Joseph went back to Upton's yard directly, Tony drove Annabelle with the tables to Fortescue Road. Given the light load on this trip, Tom was able to ride. He noticed a cat under the bench, the ginger one of the pair that seemed to cohabit with Annabelle.

Tony said "That's Percy. Likes to come along. I figured he'd get lost, but somehow he knows how to keep out the way. Goes and sits near Annabelle when we stop. Odd one, that cat."

Tom asked "You all right, Tony? You seem a bit sluggish today."

"I was feelin' a bit rough this morning. Headache and tummy not so smart. Not so bad now."

However, when Tony jumped down at the side of the Fortescue Road house so Tom could take the small tables into the shed, Tom said "Hey, Tony. You're bleeding. Look there's some on the seat and in the arse of your trousers. Get inside and see Mrs. McNair – I mean Mrs. Yarrow – or Ethel. They may need to get a doctor."

"Yeah. I'd better." Tony knew, thanks to Adeline's exposition, what this was. Tom was surprised his friend did not appear more disturbed, but he locked up the yard gate and wiped the seat. "Come on, Percy. Let's get Annabelle home." The cat hesitated on the ground, obviously watching for Tony. Tom said "Tony's not coming this trip," and whether or not the cat understood the words, it jumped up to the box and took its place under the seat.

\* \* \*

Mary was in the kitchen of number 23, which is where Tony found her.

"Can I have a word? Urgently?" Tony said from the scullery.

"What's the matter?" Mary asked.

"Mrs. Naismith told me this might happen. I'm bleeding from ... down below."

"Do you have rags?"

"In my box, but that's in the kitchen here. Ethel and Elizabeth are there, I think."



“Go in the water closet and take off your trousers and underclothes. I’ll bring fresh and rags. I’ll tell the others you fell in some mess. If necessary we’ll say in a butcher’s yard, but I’ll keep details to a minimum.

And I think we should have a talk this evening.”

“Thank you, Miss.” For some reason, Cassandra and Mary were always Miss still.

\* \* \*

That evening Tom was nominally working on the repair of the tables, but the evening came early enough that it was too dark for the delicate work to separate the pedestals of the tables from their tops. The feet on the pedestals would need re-gluing, possibly with some careful flakes of wood to fill the joints. The real source of the sloped table-tops was really that the pedestals had warped. The pieces were of an age where it was not clear whether the wood had been green, or bent by changing conditions of damp and dry, hot and cold.

What he planned to do was separate the tops from the pedestals. Then, since the tops were of a decent thickness, to use a set of short, fat screws to fasten them back, but with spacers to level the top, probably of simple card. Tom anticipated that the tilt would re-establish itself, but screws would allow for later re-levelling.

Tom had a small fire going in the tiny stove he had made. He was thinking, but not about the tables any more. Tony bleeding was not right. And then at dinner, it had all been more or less ignored. Why?

Staring at the glow of the small number of lumps of coke that were now three quarters down the road to ash, Tom suddenly realized what was going on. He had two older sisters, and despite the general secrecy about the differences of male and female, the cramped conditions where he had lived, he knew about "monthlies" at least as a fact, if not in the true anatomical mechanisms. Indeed, he was more aware of them than Ethel had been. Yes. Tony was a girl. It was, perhaps, a manner of survival when living on the street. But as he/she grew up, this would be a difficult – though not impossible – fiction to maintain.

Tom realized there was someone coming out of the scullery door. It was Tony.

“You all right, Tony? You gave me a scare. But nobody said nothin’ at dinner,” Tom asked.

“Yeah, just fell in some muck.”

“Really. Didn’t see you tumble. I kind of thought maybe the accident was putting on boy’s clothing, or putting them on without being ready for certain times of the month.”

“Who told you?” Tony sounded very disappointed.

“Nobody. I’ve two older sisters, so I know about monthlies. Ethel started just after Miss Match – Mrs. Cohen now – took us on. Ethel and Maud tried to keep it under their bonnets, but I overheard the odd mention, and they ’ad to wash and dry their rags.

You goin’ to be all right with it?”

“I’d like to just stay as Tony, not Antonia. Sort of like Phoebe Hessel, the one buried in St. Nicholas churchyard.”

“Well, I won’t be the one to stop you. You’re a good worker. But if you’re Tony, you’ll work as Tony.”

“Thanks Tom. You’re the best friend I’ve ever ’ad.”

\* \* \*

Our narrative now has reached an awkward juncture. Miss Match is now Mrs. Cohen. She returned mid-April from France with a husband she both loved and found a congenial friend. Abraham was equally happy with his wife. To demonstrate this, he had bought her a wristwatch of simple elegance. She had, after all, refused more than a simple and thin wedding band. However, she felt that a watch would be most useful in her daily activities. She had noted how Abraham consulted his pocket watch quite frequently.

The reader might well predict she is ready to purchase another property, but will have to wait until that story unfolds. Similarly, Henry and Maud have unfinished ... well ... not business. Mary and Michael, with Elizabeth, are building a new family. The other residents who congregate at 21 Fortescue Road also have their own lives, with advances and setbacks, that will evolve.

For now, however, there will be no more misadventures to be connected with Miss Match.

\* \* \*

THE END