

# Moonbeam Shadows

A novel of personal growth in Victorian Brighton



*John C. Nash*

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Queen Victoria has presided over the Great Exhibition of 1851 and commands a great empire that is splashed red across the globe. Despite the wealth that is the Empire, the ordinary people mostly do not have running water, and very few towns have sewers. That is changing, and the agents of change are enterprising people who are scrambling energetically to build a new world in which they can live and prosper.

Among these are Cassandra Cohen, née Match, and her circle of friends and associates, who are building a modest commercial empire of their own in Brighton. This motley assortment of individuals all have their own trials, such as Tony Brown, donkeyman and carter, who is actually Antonia Crown and trying to decide how to go forward in life with Moonbeam, his jenny.

And Tony is just one of our protagonists.



## **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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The obligations of a writer are generally only to his or her own ambitions, but in this present work I am charged with honouring an unspoken promise. My duty is not one recorded in pen and ink, but it is nonetheless as binding as the shackles employed by the constables at the Old Bailey. I am burdened with continuing the stories of a group of assorted but unlikely characters who have found common cause to assist each other to find fortune and contentment in the middle part of the 19th century in Brighton.

The previous account of this band of friends was centred on one Miss Cassandra Match. She came to Brighton in 1851 after leaving a house of entertainment in Greenock, Scotland, with her friend Mary McNair. Cassandra had managed the establishment, in the process rescuing Mary from the traditional activity of the house. Cassandra had been astute, and had accumulated sufficient funds to buy two houses that formed the nucleus of her economic activities, but she also became the manager, now essentially the proprietor, of a haberdashery.

Mary, who had been at one time about to become the cook in a large country house, turned her skills to creating saleable delicacies, now promoted as Tastes for the Tongue, which she creates in the two kitchens of numbers 21 and 23 Fortescue Road that Cassandra acquired.

By hiring two sisters from the Workhouse – Maud and Ethel Soulton – then their brother Tom, whose ingenuity and manual skills were turned to convenience and profit for all, Cassandra and Mary were able to provide attractive and profitable accommodations. Ethel is becoming a competent understudy in the enterprise of making delicacies, and Mary's now-stepdaughter Elizabeth is beginning to learn. Along the way, Adeline Naismith joined the group as tenant then as educator, translator of French dress designs and commentary, creator of promotional drawings, and general odd-job person. Henry Mortimer came as the law clerk of Mr. Archibald Turcotte QC, who rented offices in one of the houses. Henry and Maud are, at the start of the current history, trying to figure out how they may marry.

Maud, though she started as more or less a housemaid, was soon promoted, albeit without any formality, to buyer and seller of second-hand furniture. She proved to have a very good eye for value and Cassandra has allowed her to team with Joshua Goldman and Abraham Cohen, pawnbrokers and furniture dealers, where she has learned well how to profit in the

second-hand furniture trade. Indeed, when she experienced her first (and extremely rare) loss of a few pennies, it was a great shock to her. Joshua and Abraham had to counsel that in business there were going to be occasional setbacks. Overall, she is very astute, and has negotiated the purchase of the donkey Moonbeam and her cart at a favourable price.

Cassandra and Mary, who began our previous tale with firm resolve to avoid matrimony and the coverture that would render their wealth to their husbands, have both married. However, Henry Mortimer had, in a casual comment, noted the possibility of a contract called a separate estate. Cassandra has such a legal arrangement so that a goodly portion of her assets, particularly two houses, two carts and two donkeys, are protected should anyone manage to put a lien on the property of her husband, Abraham Cohen. Abraham is the much-younger cousin of Joshua and Rachel Goldman, who managed through hiding under a dung heap to escape the 1821 pogrom in Odessa. Abraham's parents did not.

In July of 1852, Cassandra had managed to reconnect with her mother Frieda, who was taking a holiday in Brighton with her friend Winnifred. Both Frieda and Winnifred were widows of merchants and, if careful, could live comfortably on the proceeds of sale of their husbands' businesses. Through a serendipitous visit to Bartlett and Jones haberdashery, Cassandra was able to meet with her mother and discover that her father had not told Frieda that Cassandra, widowed after just 4 days of marriage, had written to ask if she might return home. He had, without informing Frieda, told Cassandra that she was disowned and not to contact them again. This was not Frieda's wish, and the reunion was a happy one. Now Frieda and Winnifred have purchased a property next to B & J, where they have established the Brighton Ladies' Garment Emporium with a pleasant living space above. Here they sell manufactured apparel for women and organize custom dresses, often in current French styles courtesy of translations and interpretations by Adeline Naismith and the skills of a pair of local dressmakers, Sarah Ritchie and Catherine Campbell, as well as providing highly professional adjustments and repairs by a Mrs. Baldock. The neighbouring businesses, one managed by mother, the other by daughter, promote each other, and are looking into opening a communicating wall in the back yard so deliveries to B & J could be made without the need for draymen to pass through the front of the shop.

The donkeys owned by Cassandra are named Annabelle and Moonbeam. We have used the latter as our central character for this tale. Though she has no words, her peripatetic movements will allow the stories of our characters to be revealed. As we begin our tale, Moonbeam is about 6 years old and a female, or Jenny. Her companion Annabelle is about twice as old, and acquired by Cassandra when her owner, Archie Temple, dropped dead in the pub where he regularly drank himself into a stupor. Cassandra removed



the awkwardness of a dead body in the bar by offering to pay for Archie's funeral against the value of his estate, which was essentially Annabelle and her cart. It turned out that Archie sheltered Tony Brown, an urchin who watched Annabelle in exchange for a place to sleep in the lean-to where Archie stabled Annabelle and slept himself. Tony became Annabelle's driver, assisted by Tom Soulton. Tony is about 14 now, and by appearance a young man, though actually Antonia. On the street it was marginally safer to be a boy, and we will adhere to male pronouns. Tony now did well, sharing the Best Bonnet cartage business with Joseph Upton.

Joseph's father James had been a rather unsuccessful purveyor of second-hand furnishings. His jealousy of Joshua Goldman caused him and a drinking associate, Sam Taylor, to try to burn down an old barn Joshua had rented to store acquired furniture and to stable Annabelle. Tony was there as watchman, but James Upton did not know that. Fortunately, Annabelle created a fuss and Tony, Annabelle and their cats were able to escape. Sam tried to grab Annabelle's bridle, but she bit him and kicked out, catching James Upton in the stomach. He died a few days later of peritonitis. Taylor absconded before the constables could arrest him – it would have been attempted murder with Tony inside.

Though the fire cost our protagonists – Cassandra, Maud, Abraham and Joshua – some considerable profits in the short term, Rachel and Maud approached Upton's widow Rebecca with an offer of help. As we start our present story, Rebecca is doing reasonably well in the business. Maud, Abraham and Joshua supply furniture along with valuations, and Rebecca and her 12 year old daughter Valerie sell it, along with soft furnishings about which they are quite knowledgeable. They have been joined by Vera Smith, who had been persuaded to accompany a Mr. Forsythe in one of Cassandra's apartments until the real Mrs. Forsythe showed up with her brother, a Harley Street consultant. Vera, abandoned by Forsythe but treated with some charity by Cassandra, has turned out to be a shrewd and capable shop assistant, and perhaps more. She has a cot in the Uptons' shop, a great help in keeping her cost of room and board low.

The Upton premises had an empty stable at the time of James' death. In the arrangements to get Rebecca on her feet, Joshua rented this to store furniture and to house the donkeys and their carts. Indeed he needed a space after the barn was burned. The financial arrangements for this are rather informal; the rent is small and the convenience of ready transport for goods – Goldmans pawn shop is but a few steps away – means neither Rebecca nor Joshua are too concerned. Moreover, the 11 year old Joseph is very comfortable with the donkeys and doing well with Tony in what they have titled Best Bonnet Cartage, since both donkeys sport hats when out and about. The two youths get half the profit of the enterprise, while Tom gets

1/6 for maintaining the carts and generally keeping things well-managed, while Cassandra gets 1/3 as return on her capital.

The two cats acquired to keep vermin down at the now-destroyed barn have followed along and live in Uptons' stable. One of them, Percy, is especially attached to Annabelle, and rides in the cart, sitting under the driver's seat. In the stable, he sleeps in the fodder rack next to Annabelle. A strange animal, but now part of the enterprise. Tony and Joseph think the cats keep rodents out of the donkeys' feed, and the donkeys provide warmth for the cats.

Mary Yarrow, formerly McNair (and also an earlier name), has been doing well with Treats for the Tongue, that is, the baked delicacies. In this she is now partnered, though it is an asymmetric partnership as yet, by Ethel Soulton. Ethel will be 19 later this year. She has gone from timid inmate of the workhouse to a minor chatelaine. Though Mary is technically the housekeeper of Cassandra's Drake Apartments at 21 and 23 Fortescue Road, she now lives with Michael, her husband, and Elizabeth, her stepdaughter of 13, in a rented house across the street.

Michael supervises maintenance for the Railway and makes a decent wage for the time, but Mary's enterprise is actually bringing in a larger income and they will soon be thinking whether to purchase their own house. Elizabeth is learning how to cook, and she and Ethel do a fair proportion of the tasks related to the running of the Drake Apartments and Treats for the Tongue. With Mr. Forsythe gone, Cassandra and Abraham have taken over the second floor of Number 21, except for the small room 2C where Adeline sleeps. The first floor has Mr. Turcotte's offices, with a partitioned area where Henry Mortimer sleeps and serves as guardian for sensitive documents. Rose Bingham serves as the secretary to Mr. Turcotte.

Number 23 is rented to the Grant Family. Mr. Grant is a merchant in leather and runs a tannery in London. His wife Jessica is sister to Mrs. Jeffery whose family were Cassandra's first tenants. They have a son, Alfred, now 15 and a daughter, Penelope, now 17.

The basement kitchen of Number 23 is where Maud and Ethel sleep, with Tom on an improvised bed in part of the pantry. This, however, may change soon, as the kitchen in Number 21 now has no residents, though Tom has yet to take down the partitions that give privacy to two single beds that Cassandra and Mary used to occupy.

We continue our narrative on May morning 1853.

\* \* \*

Cassandra woke to the chirping of birds. Light was coming through a gap in the curtains and it was bright enough that she could read her wristwatch

that Abraham had given her as a present on their marriage. It was the first watch she had ever owned, and it was most convenient to know the time.

She reached for the watch on the bedside table and squinted at the dial. Almost 8 o'clock. She carefully wound the watch, then looked at the dial again and waited, listening for the hour to be struck on a nearby church clock. Hmm. She really had to struggle to read the watch face. It may be time to consider spectacles. Close work was getting uncomfortable.

Abraham stirred, and said "What time is it?"

At that moment, there was the sound of the clock bell starting the full hour sequence. When it paused before striking the hour 8 times, Cassandra said "Eight. And my watch is keeping good time."

"As it ought, given the cost, which I would only begrudge if it did NOT keep good time."

"Let me come in your arms for a few minutes," Cassandra said.

They had not been married yet a month, but had found that they both liked – almost needed – a time in close proximity with Abraham's arm around Cassandra.

"Are we going to church today?" Abraham asked.

"Unless there is some reason not to. Are you indisposed to do so?"

"Not at all, though I hope we get a decent, or at least short, sermon."

"Yes. The vicar should mind the attention of his flock.

And what of the rest of the day? I don't have any particular plans, do you?"

"I thought we might review how our enterprises have been doing. I believe you have some capital that you may wish to invest somehow. I have some also. Cash does not earn anything and is a temptation to thieves."

"Let us do that this afternoon. Perhaps we could make some notes and then take them on a walk, assuming the weather cooperates."

\* \* \*

The weather was fine enough that the Cohen's walked to church, and were joined by Henry Mortimer and Maud and Ethel Soulton and Adeline Naismith. At church they saw Rebecca Upton with her daughter Valerie. Vera Smith was with them. It seemed that she had escaped gossip about her relationship with Mr. Forsythe, but then she had never been known locally under her real name, and she had modified her dress and hair style considerably. Cassandra and Abraham rented a pew in St. Nicholas, but the vicar was, in fact, one of those now arguing for free and open seating. Cassandra actually supported this, but had rented a pew as a measure towards becoming part of the community.

Tom Soulton and Tony Brown were not in church. They had, in fact, never attended, though Tony was wondering about the possibility. Adeline had taught him to read, and now he voraciously read everything he could lay his hands on. There was always a book or magazine or newspaper in a box under the driver's seat of his cart. The box had a cover in the form of a crude frame with oilcloth tacked to it to keep the box dry inside. Percy's space was beside this box. The seat, one of its supports, and the box made a fairly cosy space for the cat, who could survey the passing world in relative comfort.

Tony was, in fact, at Uptons' with Joseph, getting Annabelle and Moonbeam brushed and saddled for offering rides on the beach. It was early in the year, and custom would likely be thin, but it was a good opportunity to check all the tack was in good order. Indeed, Tony had a jar of dubbin he planned to apply to leather as necessary when there were no customers. He also had with him a newspaper, the *Illustrated London News* and a rather dog-eared copy of *Oliver Twist*. The twin interests of making money and reading were in fierce competition in his wishes.

Though the donkeys could be ridden, Joseph and Tony rarely did more than mount their animals to check that the saddles were properly installed. Indeed, though they had the saddles on the beasts, they would only loosely tighten the cinches until there was a paying rider. They did, however, take a pair of saddle bags with some bottles of fresh water, some oats, a canvas bucket and a nose bag, along with a few carrots, a pair of brushes and some soap. If there were no custom, one of the drivers would roll up his trousers and wade into shallow water and call the donkeys. If one or both came, they would see if they could give them a bath. Tony had found that Annabelle sometimes seemed to like this, but not always, so there would be no insistence.

With the saddles, Percy would not be accompanying them. He had been allowed one time to ride in a basket tied to the saddle, but the beach was not a good place for a cat. There were sometimes dogs being walked, but no place for a cat to jump up away from them. Moreover, there was sea water, which Percy definitely abhorred.

As it turned out, there was enough custom to make the trip to the beach worthwhile this day, and also enough opportunity to brush the donkeys' coats and to do some reading. However, neither animal seemed very interested in the water, and Joseph said the couple of minutes his feet were in the water left them without feeling, so it was hardly surprising that the donkeys were not interested in getting wet.

As they walked slowly back to Uptons yard, Tony said "We took in 12 and 3 today. Not bad for a quiet Sunday early in the season."

Joseph said "We didn't see anyone else out today, either. Think there'll be much competition later in the season?"

“Last year there was that fellow from Hove, but he generally stays over that way, and there was old Bill Sharp and his Jacko. Annabelle gets upset when Jacko’s around, but then Bill doesn’t like Jacko getting all interested in her rather than giving the kids rides. But there’s enough custom for us all most times. Unless some other drovers come along, we should be all right. And if it gets too busy, I’d say we stick to cartage. We’re doing well enough at that, and have a good reputation plus the work with your Mum and Mr. Goldman that is ours anyway.”

“Yeah. The beach rides are more or less cream on the top of the milk,” Joseph said.

\* \* \*

That same afternoon, Cassandra and Abraham took a walk in Queen’s Park.

Cassandra said “I think I told you I have over £700 at the moment.”

Abraham responded “I’ve about £300, but you know that there is stock of about £200 assured value, but possibly we can get more than double that for it, though perhaps not in a hurry.”

“My goodness, we have about a thousand pounds together. It has accumulated faster than I expected.”

“But Cassandra, you do have fingers in lots of pies.”

“Abraham, you know I keep my money mostly in a strong-box in what we call the wine-closet. And Mary shares that strong-box with me and we have the only keys to it and the closet.”

“Yes. You told me, I think one night when I was rather anxious to gain access to a different ... er ... closet.”

They both laughed. Cassandra continued “I realize I don’t know where you keep money, but I assume with Joshua.”

“Yes, we have a strong-box under some floorboards, but you and I should probably consolidate our funds.”

“Indeed, I think I will suggest to Mary that she take over the strong-box, though I will keep access to the wine-closet. She may even choose to move the strong-box.”

“Can she not just carry it across the road?” Abraham asked.

“No. There are two screws into the heavy shelf, and the are angled to make removal more difficult if the box is locked.

“We talked beforehand of acquiring such a box, and putting it in the bottom of the wardrobe with screws through to the floorboards.

“I will visit the locksmith this week and you and I can install it. And I will talk to Mary.”

“And I will visit the Union Bank. I am a bit cautious, since Wigney’s failed in 1842. Still, it is becoming a nuisance to not be able to receive or write cheques. We do not need them often, but they could allow some transactions to be much more easily conducted with clients or suppliers some distance away.”

“Abraham. Am I wrong in thinking that Joshua must have some assets beyond his shop, given that he has been here considerably longer than I?”

“No. You are right. He has been investing in some land that is currently more or less unused, as he feels it will appreciate markedly in the next decade. He watches for derelict properties, buys them and tries to clean them up. He missed getting the barn he was renting when he was outbid on that property. And the fact he invests was the reason he borrowed £20 from you after the fire, since his capital was not liquid.”

“Perhaps we should ensure we keep a respectable working capital.”

“As we have mentioned, but I do not think fully resolved, I could get a bank account, which would allow us to receive cheques and other bills of exchange as well as write cheques. But I would also want to keep some cash.”

“Would it make sense for you to have an account of about £100 and I keep cash of about the same amount.”

“Indeed. Put that down in your notebook under today’s date as a decision, and we will implement it as soon as possible. I will have to investigate what is involved in having a bank account, and whether there are any major costs.”

Cassandra said “I will record it now, though I only have pencil.”

“That will do. It is only for ourselves, not a historical record.”

They both laughed. Then Cassandra said “I do hope there are no restrictions on accounts. I was reading in yesterday’s Brighton Herald about the Jewish Disabilities bill that is under discussion in Parliament.”

“That has been going on for some time. In 1830 Catholics were finally allowed to be elected to Parliament. There is some issue, which indeed I can appreciate, that those who are not Church of England should not vote on matters of the Church. I, and I suspect many of all faiths, would prefer government to be apart from religion, but I fear that will be long in the future.”

Cassandra, realizing that they were drifting off-topic from their intended purpose, said “I wanted to ask you how I should deal with Arbuthnot. He has served us well, but now will not get the commission on 2B, nor 2A. We have been taking over Number 21 for our own purposes.”

“Yes. I was even thinking that now that the kitchen has no occupied beds, it may be useful to suggest Adeline take either the cubby hole that Mary used or your partitioned area. The Soultions use the kitchen and pantry of Number 23, with Tony rather here and there.”

“Yes, we need to rationalize the space. Should we re-rent 2C if Adeline moves?”

Abraham said “I think not. For one reason, when we ... er ... enjoy each other, you are quite noisy, and I fear that I am conscious Adeline might hear. It is not that it is wrong or bad, just my own sensibilities. But 2C could, for example, become a nursery should we have a child, or a study or office for one or both of us.”

“Oh. Yes. We might consider that.”

Abraham continued “We also need to discuss Arbuthnot, as you have noted.”

“Yes. Well, he does still get a commission on the Grants’ rental of Number 23 and Turcotte’s use of 1A and 1B with Henry there, even though he’s more or less lost the top floor of 21,” Cassandra commented.

“But he has used Tom and Maud to acquire and improve furnishings, I believe at generally quite favourable terms.”

“Perhaps,” Cassandra said by way of closing the topic “we should simply have a meeting with him and express these ideas, letting him know we want to continue to do business ensuring there is satisfaction on both sides. After all, he may get a commission if he finds us another property, though I am not sure what I ... no I should say we ... are interested in putting money towards.”

“Yes. I think that very sensible. He can only state his complaints if we make clear we want to maintain a good working relationship.

“Now on what we might like, I think it may be helpful to think of the people who work with and for us first, since we seem to do very well when they prosper in partnership with us.”

“Tony and Joseph seem to have Best Bonnet in hand. They were even going to offer donkey rides on the beach today, though it is early in the season.”

“Tony told me it was a good occasion to check the tack. He was going to take the dubbin and use idle time to polish it up.”

“But he’ll have a book or some other reading as well!” Cassandra rejoined.

“What is Tom up to today?” Abraham asked.

“I’m not sure. Even though it is Sunday, he may be making some deliveries or helping move someone with his hand cart. Or trying out some project or other. He is never idle for long.”

“To return to the property question, can I suggest that we put Tony and Adeline in the kitchen of Number 21, and come to some agreement with them that they handle the fire and hot water. It seems to me that some small list of tasks like that – particularly if they share them – are not unreasonable in return for room and board.”

“You mean, Abraham, that the Saultons stay at Number 23, and Tony and Adeline in Number 21? And that we don’t pay them any wage, at least Tony, but they get room and board in exchange for some housework?”

“Yes. Is that reasonable?”

“I think so. Adeline has been paying rent, then we pay her dribs and drabs for all sorts of jobs. It may be simpler as you suggest, but we will have to ask her. And Tony of course.”

Abraham said “You seem to have set up a fine collaboration between Frieda and Winnifred and B & J. The Emporium and the haberdashery both seem to be doing well.”

“They are, but I must get the gate in the wall between the yards attended to. I will send Brougham a note this week, and also talk to ... Frieda.”

Abraham said “I think you almost said "mother"” and they both laughed. The public story was that Frieda was a family friend.

Abraham continued “I was also wondering if we should talk to Tom about whether he still needs a wage. Did you not say his commissions meant you hadn’t paid a wage for some time?”

“Yes. In fact, I probably need to revise my figure for capital. There are likely some payables that might diminish it. Remind me to check the ledger when we get home. It is possibly he is owed as much as £30. He rarely spends much, and often when he does it comes out of cash in hand, though he is good about recording the amounts. A lot of the time it is for tools, though he has bought himself a couple of garments and some gloves and boots.”

“He told me the other day he was looking for a pocket watch, as he would like to be able to keep better account of his time. He even asked me if I had advice on where to look. I suggested he should talk to Joshua, who might even have something that is unclaimed from being pawned.”

“Oh. That makes sense. But he is certainly getting to be quite the entrepreneur. We may want to start looking for a replacement, at least in his role as general odd-job man for heavier tasks, as he will undoubtedly move on eventually, much as it will pain me to see it happen.

“But what of yourself, Abraham. What do you see for your own future in business?”

“Well, you already know I make most of my income from dealing in furniture. Of course, I spend some time in the pawn shop to allow Joshua and Rachel a respite, and I aver that I find that useful to keep myself aware of the value of items that may be pawned or traded. But when we came to England and Joshua decided to open a pawnshop – which he did, mind you, at some risk since he had almost no capital, and an annual fee of £7 10s – the 1800 Pawnbrokers Act meant that furniture was not worth pawning, but we felt it worth dealing in it. Of course, not for loans, as we would then have



to store the stuff for up to 15 months, when profit is in NOT storing it, but trading as quickly as possible from vendor to client.”

“Oh, is that why the shop has the odd sign with the three balls hanging from a chair?”

“Indeed. And there is some confusion whether the three balls are a reference to the Medici, who were Lombards and one of the traditional groups who were prominent in banking and lending, hence pawnbroking, or else a symbol of St. Nicholas who gave gold to three maidens who could not marry for want of a dowry. But I would estimate well over 4 in 5 items pawned are redeemed within six months. A lot of the stuff for sale in the shop is actually purchased, but we have to be very careful to know the origins. We don’t want to deal in stolen goods. In fact, we often have a quiet word with the constables if we are suspicious, and almost never pay out cash when buying items, but have a couple of days for us to, as we say, "get an evaluation".”

“So you intend to stay with the furniture dealing and helping out with the pawnshop.”

“Unless there are compelling reasons otherwise. You do not object?”

“Not at all. I sense your deep feelings of obligation to Joshua and Rachel, and our association with them is a provident one. You seem to do well with the furnishings trade. I take it there is no wage for working in the shop.”

“Not as such. But there are informal benefits. My pocket watch was a pledge that was unredeemed, which is why I mentioned that Tom should ask. Joshua wrote my watch off the books and told me to use it. That sort of thing. If I ever felt there were an imbalance of contribution, I would speak up, but I am content with the current arrangement.

“To change the topic, do you think Maud and Ethel will stay with us?” Abraham asked.

“I am fairly certain Maud will stay with us in business, but not in the houses. It is clear she and Henry want to marry.”

“What would Turcotte do for a presence in the office?” Abraham asked.

“Perhaps we should talk with him also. I think the fact that Adeline and Tony are below and we above might suffice. In particular, we could give notice if there were to be no person in residence overnight. In fact, perhaps we should talk about always having one person present in one of the two houses, and if necessary engage someone we trust – for example Mary or Michael, or even Elizabeth, should everyone have to be away. Or it may turn out that Rose Bingham wants to live away from her parents. I have no idea of her wishes or interests in that regard.

“Abraham. We should also talk to Mary and Michael. I have a feeling Treats for the Tongue is at a point where the kitchens of our houses are a limitation on that business. They are domestic kitchens, when a small factory would be better suited, though how that would be arranged I have

no idea.”

“Would it be sensible to ask Mary how, if she had a blank canvas, she would lay out her fabrication? Then we could look for a property amenable to such a layout as long as the requirements were not too inflexible. I would, however, think that good light and ease of access for delivery and shipments would be of importance. And we could consider investing in the property if the ideas seem to make sense.”

“Yes. There is much to discuss. Also at the Great Exhibition, there was an oven fueled by gas. It meant the flame was instantly adjustable, and one did not have to let burning coals go to waste. However, I’ve no ideas how much such an oven would cost, though I read or heard somewhere that Alexis Soyer at the Reform Club in London has been using such an oven.”

“We will all need to do our sums carefully. No doubt whatever we do, there will be losses somewhere.”

“Yes,” Cassandra said wistfully. “We have been prodigiously lucky to have almost no losses so far. The fire was, however, a close run thing.”

“Yes,” Abraham agreed, after which they sat quietly for a while before walking home arm in arm.

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The aforementioned Tom Soulton was this Sunday not making deliveries or helping someone move. Instead he was at Uptons’ yard with Vera Smith going through some of the furniture Maud and Abraham had recently acquired to see if there were any pieces needing repairs or polishing. Vera wanted to learn more about different types of damage or wear and which were easily remedied. Tom brought his handcart laden with tools and they examined some pieces.

“What about this occasional table,” Vera asked. “It has some scratches and rings from wet glasses and this looks like a cigar burn.”

Tom moved the table into the light.

“Looks like the top is solid. If it’s veneer, you have to watch that the scratches or burns aren’t all the way through or you can’t properly polish it. But this one should be all right. Lets try some rouge or rotten stone on it.”

“Not sandpaper?” Vera asked.

“Fine sandpaper would work, but it’s more expensive. Sometimes takes off too much too quickly. You do need it for deep scratches. And you can’t always make it look right if you have a deep valley. It shows up in the light. So do warps. Can’t usually fix them.”

“What’s the difference between rouge and rottenstone?”

“Rouge is harder. Takes off more stuff quicker. I’m told it’s iron oxide. I don’t know what rottenstone is. Some sort of rock that crumbles to powder.”

“Ladies use rouge for their cheeks, though I never bothered. I wonder if it’s the same material.”

“Probably,” Tom said. “You want to try the rottenstone on those marks? Probably need to do it lightly on the whole surface too to get the colour more or less even afterwards.”

“Yes. I’d like to try.”

Tom took a soft rag and wet it, wrung it out, and dipped it in a small pile of rottenstone he had poured onto a square of wood. He handed this to Vera, saying “Generally circular strokes work best. Avoids getting patterns.”

After a few minutes, Tom took another rag and wet it and said “Try wiping off with this and we’ll see how you’re doing.”

Vera wiped off the greyish mud of rottenstone, folded the cloth and passed it over the surface again. The table top wasn’t fully clear of residue, but she was able to say “Oh, my! That looks a lot better. The cigar burn needs a bit more work, though.”

Tom handed her the cloth with rottenstone and took the wiping cloth and rinsed it while Vera did more work on the burn. Then they did a careful wipe with the cleaned wet cloth, then with a dry one.

“That looks a lot better,” Vera said.

Tom took a rather stained cloth, though it was clean, and a bottle with a stopper that had a brown liquid. “Boiled linseed oil diluted with turpentine.”

He wet the cloth with the brown liquid and gently applied it to the surface, then rubbed it in well. The surface came alive with a lustrous finish.

“It looks almost like new,” Vera said.

“Take a day or so to dry. Then we can apply another coat. Now we need to hang out this cloth or it can catch fire spontaneously if it’s bunched up.”

“Really! I never knew that.”

“Same idea as wet haystacks or some dung heaps, but oily cloths are dangerous because people put them down near where they live. Now I hope there’s a bit of hot water. Getting the oil off me ’ands is always a nuisance. I’ve even brought a brush and soap.”

Vera had a kettle going in the kitchen and went to get it. There was a bowl on the hand cart, along with the soap and the brush and even a small, rather dilapidated towel. Tom came prepared.

“While you wash up, I’ll get some lunch ready. Do you want to eat out here?”

“Yeah. Nice out.”

Tom enjoyed Vera’s company. He was now approaching 18. Vera was, of course, at least half a decade older, but she was an attractive woman. He also knew she had some worldly experience, indeed concerning a subject

about which he knew very little but was intensely curious. And there was also this shared interest in furniture and its maintenance.

They ate sandwiches in silence. There was also some cider. As they finished the sandwiches, Vera said “Thanks for showing me this, Tom. I’ll be able to watch for pieces that can be polished up. But you’ll also have to help me learn how to spot other sorts of damage and to know what can be repaired easily and what can’t.”

“All right. Actually, in this lot there’s nothing much that isn’t easy to polish or fix. A couple of tables to shim as we did with that big table. Oh. I’ve got you an aggie – a marble to test for level. Here it is.”

“Oh. Thanks very much. You’re a real brick, Tom. I just hope I can repay you somehow.”

Tom wasn’t sure if he should take this as a good opportunity, but decided there was only one way to find out. “Actually, there is something, but I’m not sure how to put it.”

“What’s that?” Vera asked.

Tom lowered his voice. “Well, me Mum and Dad both died when I was pretty young. So I never ... er, you know ... got to learn proper how things are between men and women. Perhaps I shouldn’t mention that to you, but ... well, boys are always saying things, probably a load of rubbish. I’d rather know how things work so I don’t make a fool of myself or cause embarrassment to some lady I might like to know better.”

There was a long pause. Then Vera said “I made rather a hash of things by getting involved with Forsythe, but I suppose I do know how things are when men and women get close. But we should find somewhere where we can talk without other ears about.”

“That makes sense. People seem to get all in knots about body stuff.”

“I could walk back with you to Fortescue Road then we could go somewhere for a walk,” Vera suggested.

On Tom’s side, there was the intense energy of the youthful male who did not have an adequate outlet for sexual tension. Vera, despite the age difference, recognized that Tom was an attractive young man, and moreover one with a bright future. It occurred to her that Tom’s bright future might possibly be shared with her.

\* \* \*

Cassandra, never one to put off actions, wrote a note that Sunday night to Arbuthnot suggesting that they should meet to exchange ideas about business. She also wrote a less formal note to Mary, suggesting that they take some time after dinner one night in the coming week to catch up on

what they had each been doing. As Mary, Michael and Elizabeth ate most of their dinners in the kitchen of Number 21, this would not be awkward to arrange.

On her way to Bartlett and Jones in the morning, Cassandra dropped off the note to Arbuthnot. The note to Mary she simply left on the kitchen table with a word to Ethel to say that it was there. “Mary and I have both been busy in our new lives, and I want to learn what she has been doing.”

Ethel said “Mrs. McNair – I mean Mrs. Yarrow – said much the same the other day.”

Indeed, that Monday night Mary suggested they stay for a cup of tea after dinner. Cassandra proposed they adjourn upstairs to the drawing room. There were others present, and in fact several conversations were going on at once, and would likely continue. The kitchen of Number 21 was the centre of activity for all the denizens of Cassandra’s world, and they would not be able to have an uninterrupted conversation there. Elizabeth decided to stay in the kitchen to play a game of draughts with Ethel. Henry and Maud were setting off for a walk on the Promenade, and Adeline was discussing some books with Tony, who was now becoming quite well-read, albeit in some peculiarly selective areas. They were also working on his arithmetic and penmanship, as he had decided he wanted at least to try cursive.

Abraham offered a glass of port to their guests, which was accepted. Cassandra asked Mary and Michael “Are things working out with the new living arrangements?”

“Oh yes. I was honestly worried how I would manage as a married woman,” Mary said, “but Michael has been wonderfully kind.”

“That isn’t difficult, Mary. You are easy to be with, and I just hope you are as comfortable with me as I with you.”

Mary said to Cassandra and Abraham “I hope things go well with you also.”

“Most definitely,” Cassandra said.

“I could not agree more,” Abraham said.

Cassandra continued “Now we have conquered the novelty of our new situation, Abraham and I have started to consider how we should continue our business interests. You may recall, Mary, that we intended to offer well-appointed apartments, along with, perhaps, some delicacies. Now we have some interests of that sort, but fingers in other pies, particularly furniture and cartage.”

“That you do,” Michael said, “but you seem to carry along the rest of us with you. It rather amazes me.”

Abraham said “We have done quite well. Better than expected I would say. We are wondering if Mary’s Treats are now constrained by the domestic kitchens of the houses. There is also the possibility that the two of you may

want to purchase your own house rather than rent the one across the road.”

Mary said “I have been thinking how we could enlarge production. Indeed how to do it with less labour per item while maintaining quality.”

“And we have talked a couple of times whether we could buy a property,” Michael added. “The twin desires for a small factory and a family residence are awkward to reconcile.”

“There is also the need to allow for the possibility of children,” Cassandra said.

“I’m not quite beyond that possibility,” Mary said, “and we would welcome a child if one arrived, though at our age we would, I think, find a child challenging.”

“We have talked about it,” Michael added, “but I agree with Mary that I wonder how well we would cope.”

“You likely have enough resources to hire a nursemaid,” Cassandra said. “It would not aid either you nor the child for you to get worn out.”

“You clearly have been giving the topic some thought for yourself,” Michael observed.

“Indeed,” Abraham answered. “We are going to suggest Adeline move to the kitchen. It will relieve her of paying rent, and allow us a study or nursery in 2C.”

“Mr. Arbuthnot will lose another commission,” Mary said.

“Yes. I left him a note this morning suggesting we meet to discuss future business. Part of that is why we wanted to talk with the two of you. We have some funds that might be sensible to invest in another property, but like you we are not sure what we should be looking for.

“At the moment, to be honest, we are just thinking out loud. But a possibility is that we could look for a modest factory property that would suit the making of the Treats, allowing the pair of you to find a family residence nearby.”

Michael said “Would you want to rent the factory to Mary’s business, or would this be in a form of investment?”

“I don’t think we’ve fixed ideas,” Cassandra said.

“Well, I think we all want to prosper, if that is a fixed idea,” Abraham said, and all of them laughed.

Cassandra said “Tonight was just to make sure you knew that we are giving thought to the future, and hope we can share a part of it with you.”

“Of course,” Mary said. “And Michael and I will try to keep you aware of our thoughts too.”

The conversation changed to other topics, then Elizabeth knocked at the door to ask if more tea was wanted. This triggered a general conclusion to the evening. With cordial good-evenings, the Yarrows retired across the street.

\* \* \*

Cassandra and Abraham arranged that Arbuthnot would be their guest for a modest luncheon at a small tea-room near the Promenade.

“This is most kind of you to invite me to lunch. Should I hope that you have some new ventures to discuss?”

“Nothing precise, but in general, that is why we wanted to talk with you,” Abraham agreed.

“From what I hear, you are quite busy in a number of activities. And of course both you and Mrs. McNair have recently married. A very busy year.” Arbuthnot was addressing Cassandra.

This lady replied “Indeed. But let us order, and we will share some of our thoughts to get your opinions.”

They gave the serving girl their orders. Then Cassandra said “We recognize that your commissions on Number 21 have declined since Miss Cameron left and the unfortunate incident with Mr. Forsythe. And we wanted you to learn from us rather than anyone else that we plan to take over 2C for ourselves as an office or eventually a nursery.”

“Will that mean Mrs. Naismith must seek other accommodation? I sensed she was fitting in well.”

“She is. In fact, we will make her an employee and she will sleep in the kitchen in one of the partitioned areas where Mary and I used to sleep. We will put Tony Brown in the other. Adeline – Mrs. Naismith – does a lot of odd jobs for us.

“Now we did want to make sure you knew that we have found it most agreeable and productive to work with you, Mr. Arbuthnot, and that we are considering a possible investment in another property, though at the moment we are not quite sure what type of property that would be.”

“I appreciate your direct communications. Also, as you are aware, I am fairly regularly in touch with Maud Soulton when we or our clients need furniture. And also with the ingenious Tom Soulton when such items need repair or improvement, and I think there has also been another job where some wainscotting needed a repair. So there is certainly business going on between our enterprises.”

“I’m glad you see it that way. We do too.

“Ah. Here is our luncheon.”

\* \* \*

Adeline Naismith was more than happy to move to the kitchen. It was where she spent most of her time anyway, and not having to pay for room and

board was of significant benefit to her straitened finances, as was the modest wage for what were very loosely specified duties. She had been paid several minor amounts for different work, and Cassandra, upon further reflection after talking with Abraham, proposed a modest wage of 4 shillings a week plus room and board rather than separate amounts, though there would be extra for dress illustrations and translations related to work with the dressmakers. The lack of precision in Adeline's role was not a concern for either her or Cassandra. She was sufficiently aware of the various activities to simply do what was necessary. And when there was too much to do in a given time, she was not afraid to talk to either Mary or Cassandra. She also had an easy cooperation with Ethel, such that they managed the household almost as one.

She was, we recall, with Mary one of the two members of the household who discovered Tony was really Antonia. The fact that Tony had the cubby-hole sleeping space while she had the corner partition Cassandra had previously occupied would perhaps be an issue if Tony were actually a young man, though the partitions offered a good deal more privacy than many of those living in Brighton at the time were fortunate to have.

If she had any anxieties, they were because she had recently passed her 65th birthday. She was still, as far as she knew, in good health, but the days came and went inexorably. Still, she was much better-off than she had been before she moved to Fortescue Road. She had better accommodation, better food, a little more spending money, plenty of jobs to keep her busy with tasks she found agreeable, and people whose company she liked, and who she liked to be with.

\* \* \*

In the evening of the 14th of May, 1853, Abraham and Cassandra were invited to an evening meal with Frieda and Winnifred. Cassandra, in her time at B & J had shared several brief conversations with the two older ladies, but these conversations were always in the general presence of the various staff, suppliers or clients of the businesses.

After they had all taken seats in the modest dining area of the apartment above the Brighton Ladies' Garment Emporium that Frieda and Winnifred had established, Frieda said "I'm afraid we decided to be lazy and bought a steak and kidney pie from that nice little bakery a couple of streets away."

The pie, however, had been heated and there were some potatoes, carrots and cabbage, so "lazy" was hardly an appropriate adjective. Abraham did not mention that kidney could be awkward under the kosher rules. Indeed, he greatly enjoyed the very English steak and kidney pie when properly



prepared, though he eschewed the pudding version, not by virtue of the suet generally used in such concoctions, but because he found the texture rather unappetizing. He also chose to ignore the possibility that the pie-crust was made with lard, though later Cassandra would ask him about it.

Cassandra said “Did Mr. Brougham confirm that he would be coming on Wednesday to begin the gate between the yards?”

Winnifred responded “He sent one of his young men with a note. They’ve asked us to make sure there is a couple of yards of space around the location that has been marked with black paint so they can work properly.”

“Yes, B & J got a similar note. We’ve paid Brougham for the materials, and I’ll also make sure you get the first year’s £5 payment this week for deliveries through the Emporium yard.”

“It’s not urgent,” Frieda said, “but I share your inclination to do things in a timely fashion.”

Abraham asked “Has the Emporium any new initiatives for the summer?”

Winnifred said “We are looking into bathing gowns. As yet we have not found a supplier with whom we are happy. We are reluctant to order garments sight-unseen, especially as the amount of material makes them relatively expensive.”

“The number of hours of wear in their lifetime is also rather few,” Abraham observed.

“We are talking with some of the dressmakers to see if we can come up with a simple pattern that can be fabricated without a great deal of labour. If we can have the garments cut and sewn by less-skilled workers, and also reduce the amount of stitching, then we can offer a lower price or make a better margin.”

“Oh. Adeline says she has some drawings for you to look at that could be used with suitable bolts of stuff from which the garments depicted could be made up,” Cassandra said.

“Wonderful,” Frieda replied. “We really can’t afford to have complete dresses or other items on display that are made up by the dressmakers. Though we have been talking to our customers to see if they will lend us items that we have supplied and allow them to be displayed in exchange for a consideration. I think one lady is prepared to let us display her gown that Miss Campbell made for her to wear at an occasion last New Year’s.”

“Let us hope you get one or two more ladies. That would give enough to be able to rotate them every few weeks,” Cassandra said.

Winnifred added “We’re also getting a steady trade in repairs and adjustments. We put up a sign in the window that did not dominate the display but was very visible, saying we did quality repairs and alterations. Now we probably need to find another seamstress as Mrs. Baldock can’t work all the

regular times.”

“Have you advertised yet,” Abraham asked.

“Not yet,” Frieda answered. “But we have told all our contacts that we are looking. Indeed, we asked Mrs. Baldock herself if she had anyone she could recommend. We have a couple of names, but not been able to talk to any of them yet. We need to be careful. Ruining a job could badly hurt our business.”

Conversation turned to other topics. The older ladies wanted to hear about Paris, where the Cohen’s had taken their honeymoon. Cassandra said “I found it surprisingly claustrophobic in most places, and decidedly smelly and crowded. There are some wonderful places and buildings, but it is difficult to get good views of them for the narrow and noisy streets close in on the attractions to prevent a good aspect.”

Abraham said “As you are aware, Napoleon III took power last December in a coup. There is talk he wishes to renovate the city, and having lived in London was very taken with the wide streets and open parks. He would do well, however, to pay attention to the drains. London has, I hear, also become very smelly, and we did not enjoy that aspect of Paris. The crowding is, to all intents and purposes, making some parts of Paris a cauldron of disease. I think we were lucky not to get more than an upset stomach that lasted us a couple of days and had us stay close to our hotel and its water closet.”

“Oh dear, that is unfortunate,” Winnifred opined.

\* \* \*

“There you are Miss ... I mean Mrs. Cohen,” Archibald Turcotte said by way of greeting.

“Then you definitely got my message that I would take the air on the Promenade today during my mid-day break.”

“Indeed, and your suggestion was welcome. It is a fair day, even if not quite a summer one.”

“Indeed. I like to get some fresh air. The haberdashery can get a little dusty with all the fibres from the cloth.”

“Yet I hear that business, particularly in concert with the ladies of the Emporium, is going rather well.”

“That it is. Though this week Mr. Brougham is making noise and dust putting in a communicating gate between the yards.”

“If I recall correctly, Bartlett and Jones has no egress from their yard to the street, while the building with the Emporium has a side alley which does.”

“That is correct, so B & J is paying for the gate plus a yearly fee to be permitted to bring deliveries through the yard of the Emporium. It will avoid a great deal of disruption for deliveries to the haberdashery.”

“Yes. The men in that trade are not the epitome of good manners.”

“There has been some improvement since we started to arrange that goods be shipped by the Railway and our young men in Best Bonnet do the final few hundred yards with the donkeys or a hand cart.”

“And it will not harm your own estate, Mrs. Cohen.”

“That is true, though I did not set out with that in mind. As you know, my entry into the cartage business was largely accidental in that I offered to pay for Archie Temple’s funeral against his estate, and I did so because I felt the presence of a corpse in the public house was unseemly, especially the corpse of an associate, though I knew Archie only for business.”

“Would you act in the same manner again? That is to ask, was the overall outcome worthwhile, either financially or morally?”

“I think I did very well out of the affair. Though I am a businesswoman and apparently I am thought to be shrewd, it was not shrewdness that caused me to act that night. However, I must acknowledge that all round it has been most beneficial, and we have new friends and associates as well.”

“Indeed you do, which is gratifying. The usual cliché is that the business person profits by excessive greed and sharp practice. You show an alternate path of integrity and good sense. One doesn’t have to be soft to do good in the world.”

“Mr. Turcotte, I wanted to ask your view on what might happen in your own business should Henry Mortimer and Maud Soulton marry. We have talked before of the possibility, but they have been walking out now for the better part of two years, and may be considering their next steps.”

“Your question is timely. Henry has been with me about 6 years and he has learned quicker than I expected. His family does not have the money or connections to let him be called to the Bar, but he will make a fine solicitor. I suppose the question is how to get him set up with the irrepressible Maud by his side.”

“My thinking was more in the short term. If Henry and Maud marry, they will almost certainly not reside at Number 21. I was remembering that Henry started living with us so you would have someone present much of the time to secure sensitive documents.”

“Ah, yes. Well, I am thinking that if Henry begins his own practice as a solicitor, I would probably still involve him in some of my work, but also take his maturing in the profession as a signal that I should look to gradually reduce my volume of cases, given I am in my sixties now.

“Rose Bingham is decidedly sharp and has, in fact, caught a few errors or slips, and not only of spelling and grammar. So she and I could manage

the load if we were not to chase new briefs, though we would still accept appropriate ones referred to us. I have also realized that the house is almost always occupied. Am I correct in assuming that will continue.”

“To my knowledge, yes. We are moving Adeline Naismith to the kitchen, and making her an employee. She is generally about the property, though she does shop and run errands, and sometimes works at B & J or the Emporium. However, Ethel is generally in one or other kitchen, and we don’t leave doors open, as you know. Abraham and I are taking over the whole of the upper floor, and while we are out and about, we are also present frequently in the house.”

“Given I have a safe, I believe things are relatively secure, and my most sensitive case has been concluded, albeit in a manner unsatisfactory to all.”

“You mean nobody won the case?”

“That is so. Both sides ran out of money. And, more fools us, we lawyers did not see the bankruptcies coming and some men spent the expected fees that will not now be paid. A goodly case of chickens and hatching.”

“From what you have said, Rose will stay working for you?”

“I truly hope so. Actually, I will have to ask her if she would be interested in taking the small sleeping closet Henry uses and becoming a resident of Number 21. She is now past 25 years of age and, I believe, finds her parents still treat her as if she is but a girl. I would not be unhappy were she to sleep at Number 21, since it would give my office more consistent security.”

\* \* \*

The first Wednesday in June, Cassandra came home at about two o’clock, it being early closing. She had a cup of tea and some bread and jam in the kitchen and shared some inconsequential pleasantries with Ethel and Adeline, then decided to enjoy an hour or so in reading a novel. Despite her obvious success in her various activities, she had difficulty taking time to herself.

With a glass of lemonade and two of Mary’s shortbreads on the occasional table beside a comfortable wing chair in the drawing room, she read for some minutes before falling asleep, and had been so for nearly half an hour when Abraham came in.

“Oh. You are home earlier than usual. I thought I would read, then fell asleep.”

“A modest luxury we should allow ourselves from time to time,” Abraham responded, picking up one of the shortbreads.

“Thief!”

“I should have made less noise coming in and could have had them both.”

“In actuality I do not begrudge you it. Have you had a good day?”

“Yes. I got payment for the last of that big purchase of furniture. A man out the other side of Hove made a offer that took everything that was left. I could have got perhaps £20 more by selling items one by one, but this cleared the lot and allows me to consider new opportunities. And one such was raised by Joshua today.”

“Oh. Do tell me. I am all ears.”

“You know I mentioned he has been accumulating land. Well, there is one parcel that he asked me about today. It has a somewhat odd shape, as it is constrained by the columns of the London Road Viaduct. Joshua managed to buy it in three parcels, but they are not amenable to traditional houses. He asked me how I thought they might be used, so I got him to show me a survey of the land, and I made a rough sketch with dimensions.”

“Since you have mentioned it, are you going to show me?”

“Of course. Shall we sit together on the settee?”

“Do you want some of my lemonade?”

“Oh. Yes. That would be most welcome.”

After Abraham had sipped some lemonade and removed his jacket, Cassandra joined him on the settee and he showed her his notebook, in which there was a small diagram on the open sheet.

“You see it is about 130 feet long but only 30 feet wide, and each end is a triangle. One side is bordered by several of the pillars of the viaduct, while the other side is the back fence of some houses. There are some restrictions on building too close to the pillars in case they need maintenance, in fact the land starts 6 feet from them. There could no doubt be some common law obstacles to windows that overlook the houses. But there is a good road access at one end.”

“But you are thinking of a factory or warehouse, I think.”

“How well you know me, Cassandra. Yes. I think a building 120 feet long and 20 wide, with a lane-way between the building and the viaduct. With a high ceiling and windows high up, the walls would be usable for different equipment or storage, and a second floor could hold offices or even apartments, though probably it would be better to keep to commercial or industrial activities. The upper floor could also be warehousing.”

“Do you not have to be aware that long buildings can allow fire to run their length?” Cassandra asked.

“Possibly. I am not an architect or engineer, just a businessman. But that I am in business suggests we could also approach the Railway to ask if space under the viaduct can be rented for some uses. Probably no construction, but possibly the storage of carts, or even simple platforms to store furniture under tarpaulins. The viaduct might also provide some shelter.”

“Is gas available for lighting, and possibly an oven?”

“That would have to be ascertained, but if I follow your drift, you are thinking of a factory for Mary’s Treats.”

“Yes. But she may not need the whole space, at least not at first. The two kitchens in 21 and 23 add up to at most 700 square feet, say 1000 if you include the pantries and scullery. What you have sketched is about 2200 square feet on one floor, even allowing for the thickness of the walls.”

“The big question is how to apply our capital and Joshua’s land, along with Mary’s ventures and possibly others,” Abraham said. “And no doubt we should make sure some of that is protected in your separate estate.”

“Yes. We need to be able to pool our resources, but it is not easy to provide a way where the ownership and rewards are clear,” Cassandra replied.

“I read something about the Joint Stock Act of 1844, but the legal details escape me. Possibly Henry can help me to understand, but I fear that the establishment of a company is fairly costly and the investors are each liable for any and all losses.”

“That could mean all of us are at risk. If we keep our own businesses, then individual failures don’t bring down the others.”

“It is possible Joshua could keep the land and build a building if he were to borrow money from us or other trusted associates. Our return would, of course, then be constrained by the terms of the loan, and that is likely lower than we would hope to get by trading. Moreover, the risks would not be any less.”

“True,” Cassandra agreed. “Perhaps it is possible to do something like arrange a leasehold on Joshua’s land and build a modest factory on it in a way that can be extended as revenues grow. There would then be separate contracts for the different participants, even though we would prefer to act together.”

“We will have to keep learning and talking to each other. It is also likely a good idea to find out if the Railway would be willing to allow use of the land under the arches and how that can be arranged. I will start asking tomorrow.”

“Would Michael know anything about that?” Cassandra asked, setting in motion their inquiries.

\* \* \*

Michael did have some suggestions about who might be the person to talk to about the Railway property. Over a few months, however, Abraham and Cassandra came to understand that there was nobody specifically in charge of renting land around the viaduct, or at least nobody who would so

admit. As Michael pointed out when he was asked, the railway staff found it much easier to NOT have anyone on the property, even if it would please the shareholders to have more revenue. The awkwardness of the spaces would not bring huge rents, of course. However, the real obstacle was that the Railway staff got no extra benefit from administering such rentals, but did have to do extra work.

After a few months of desultory enquiries, it was clear that it might be simpler to quietly let sleeping dogs lie. This would especially be the case if there were no fences or walls erected between Joshua's land and that of the Railway, since then carts could temporarily be parked on the Railway land. That was, however, for the future.

\* \* \*

Our title character and her companion Annabelle, meanwhile, were kept busy with moving furniture for Maud, Abraham, and Joshua, delivering Treats for Mary, Ethel and Elizabeth, transferring bolts of cloth and other haberdashery items from the Station to Bartlett and Jones, though the gate was only just completed and delivery though it had not yet been tried as late as the second week of June.

There were also other commissions, as well as tourist rides on the beach. Moonbeam liked the small children. They always vied with each other to give her a carrot or apple, or even some other nibble that was not really proper food for a donkey.

Some days Moonbeam was in the charge of Tony, on others Joseph. Though Joseph had a greater affection for the donkeys, Moonbeam was generally more content with Tony, who had an instinct for allowing her to choose her own path and pace apart from the most subtle of direction to get Moonbeam to go to the proper destination. Only a keen observer of human-animal communication would see the signals Tony gave to Moonbeam or Annabelle, and gave with seemingly no particular effort.

The two donkeymen treated their animals with considerable care. When Tony and Annabelle were discovered by Tom Soulton and Cassandra in a decrepit lean-to when Archie Temple dropped dead in the pub, both urchin and donkey were filthy, hungry, and ill-kept. That had now changed. Clean and well-brushed, both donkeys were likely fed as well as any in the country, but they were not spoiled. Children trying to give them inappropriate items received sharp words and would lose their chance for a ride.

As we have noted, Tony liked to read. But his reading had led to an eagerness to see other places. One evening at supper, he asked to nobody in

particular, "I wonder if I'd be able to take a few days this summer to take a look up over the Downs to see part of Sussex and West Kent?"

Cassandra said "You've got some commissions owing, and I think we could manage without you for a few days as long as we plan ahead. But would you go alone?"

"Be easier with a companion, but I think I can manage on me own if I have to."

Tom said "I've wanted to explore a bit too. Would Joseph be all right for a few days?"

Abraham said "I can keep an eye out and give him a hand if needed. He does pretty well now on his own with regular jobs. I already go along if Tom can't for anything new or special."

Cassandra said "Do you want to take one of the donkeys with a cart and camp?"

"Ooh Miss. Could we?" Tony asked. Everyone still used "Miss". Cassandra was happy to ignore the error.

\* \* \*

It was the start of August when Tony and Tom set off with Moonbeam and one of the carts. While they could both have ridden on the cart, mostly one or both of them walked. The Downs were hilly, and they had no wish to cause Moonbeam extra effort. Tom had made sure the sailcloth cover of the cart would keep them dry should it rain, and had fashioned some props so the cart would securely stay level when the donkey was unhitched.

In the cart were plenty of oats and a few treats for Moonbeam, some jugs of water for both beast and humans, and some biscuits and some cheese in a biscuit tin that Tom had managed to acquire. These were still relatively rare.

Cassandra had cautioned both youths to dress tidily. Nobody would expect the drivers of a donkey cart to be dressed in a suit, but they put on the garb that Best Bonnet had established as a sort of uniform. Moreover, the cart had Best Bonnet Cartage and the Fortescue Road address on each side. Tom, moreover, had recently, and after some conversation with Vera Smith, acquired some cards that read

Thomas Soulton  
Furniture Repair and Refinishing  
21 Fortescue Road, Brighton, Sussex



When Tony learned that Tom was carrying some cards with him – indeed, Ethel had sewn a small pouch of oilcloth to keep them dry in his pocket – he asked

“Any use bringing them?”

“Never know. May find some second hand shops, or people wanting things fixed up. We’re not going so far that a decent commission would be impossible. And we might even see some items to take back. I brought a bit of money, just in case.”

“Me too, and under me clothes.”

“Yeah. Never know if there’s villains about. Hope not.”

\* \* \*

The first day they made it to Plumpton Green by early afternoon and decided that it would be a pleasant place to explore. They found the Plough Inn and decided to buy some food and drink.

As they returned their plates, Tom gave the landlord his card and said “My colleague and I are taking a few days holiday to explore the countryside, but I keep an eye out for items of furniture that could be made good, either for their owners or for profitable resale. I can provide references to my work from clients in Brighton.”

The landlord said “And you run a cartage business. Nice looking rig.”

“My colleague Mr. Brown takes care of Moonbeam, though I helped to renovate the cart. I’m particularly pleased with the fringe on the front of the cover. It allows rain to run off to the side.”

The landlord took a few steps so he could see the cart outside.

“Well I never. Clever, that.”

Tony said “If you know a place we could camp for the night, that would also be welcome. We’re willing to pay a small amount, and would leave no mess.”

“I’ll be happy to let you camp round the back of the pub in exchange for some advice on how to polish up a few of the tables here.

“I’m not sure I know of any shops particular to furniture. I think Mrs. Hancock over in Cuckfield deals in curios and may have some small pieces. Probably worth a look in if you get that way, but it’s a few miles.”

Both youths offered their thanks. Tom looked at the tables. They had the usual depredations of ale tankards and being a bit knocked about, but suggested that a mild sanding with rottenstone and then the turpentine-diluted linseed oil to polish them. The landlord made some notes and thanked him.

Before their explorations, they moved the cart behind the pub and tethered Moonbeam with a bucket of water and a bowl of oats. There was a minor risk of theft from the cart, or even of the donkey, but all was in view, and anything of particular value they would take with them. Tom had a canvas bag with a long strap that he could carry over one shoulder and Tony a leather messenger bag he had acquired somehow.

\* \* \*

Tom and Tony enjoyed their explorations of the Plumpton area, but did not make any acquisitions, and Cuckfield was too far to walk there and back for leisure. They returned to the Plough and bought their supper, then retired to the cart to sleep. Moonbeam seemed happy, as there was some fresh grass to nibble in addition to her oats.

The next morning threatened rain. Tony picked up Moonbeam's droppings with a shovel – there was always one on one of several hooks on the cart – and put them next to a flower bed. They were on their way before 7 o'clock. They decided to forgo making breakfast. They had brought Tom's metal stove and some small bits of wood so they could make tea, but thought that they could perhaps find something along the way. Water and some cheese and biscuits would hold them until then.

Unfortunately the rain soon started, so when the ground was level, they both sat where the sailcloth minimized the drenching. Moonbeam plodded on. On gradients, either up or down hill, they were careful to lead her. Many carts did not have brakes, but Tom had insisted they have them given the loads of furniture. Two drivers allowed one to attend to donkey and the other to the cart in the sometimes hilly region of the Downs, but for a while the Plumpton Plain let them ride.

They had not been to Cuckfield, but this day, without much real intention, passed through. There was a bakery and they purchased a couple of meat pies and some currant buns that they carefully put away in Tony's book box under the seat of the cart to keep them dry.

They took a look in Mrs. Hancock's shop. It was a bit like the Old Curiosity Shop of Mr. Dickens. Nothing, however, was of interest either personally or professionally to our companions. There was, nevertheless, a greengrocery nearby, and they purchased some plums and some carrots. The latter could be eaten raw by either man or beast.

In the continuing squalls they followed a northward path towards Crawley, where they thought to find a place to stop for the night, hopefully with a bit of shelter to dry out. However, not far short of the town, near a sign pointing to somewhere called Tilgate, they heard a cry for help.

“Seems to be from over there, behind them bushes,” Tony said.

“You keep hold of Moonbeam, and I’ll go look,” Tom answered. “Hello! Anybody there.”

As Tom moved to go around the bushes, a woman’s voice said “Over here behind the brambles. I’ve stepped in a rabbit hole and turned me’ ankle.”

Tom found a woman half lying on the ground, very wet and shivering. It wasn’t a cold day, but not warm either, and the wet and shock were having their effect. Tom helped the woman up, but then realized she was likely too heavy to carry, despite he was quite strong, though not very tall.

Tom called “Tony. Tie up Moonbeam and come and help.”

Between them – one either side – they helped the woman to the cart, then opened the back and lifted her onto the platform. With some awkwardness, they got her inside the cart.

“I’ve a handcart. It’s in the bushes there. Someone’ll steal it, and my jars.”

Tom said “Hold on a minute. Let’s see what we can do.”

He went and found the cart. It wasn’t so different from his own.

“All right, I’ve got the cart. Now what should we do with you? That ankle might be broken, and you need to get warm.” Tony had already given the woman a blanket – they’d have to find a way to dry it later.

“I’m Martha Vance. My husband and I have a smallholding near Pease Pottage. I’ve been to Crawley to deliver some honey to Mr. Sutton who sells it for us and get empty jars back. Can you take me home? I can’t offer you much payment, but there should be some honey.”

“Let’s get you there,” Tom said.

They turned Moonbeam around. Tony led her while Tom took charge of the handcart. In the rain they spent about a half hour to get to a modest cottage a bit off the road they had traversed. Tom knocked at the door and a girl of about 14 opened it.

“Mrs. Vance has turned her ankle and can’t walk,” Tom said. “Is there someone can help lift her in.”

“Dad! Dad! Come and help. Mum’s hurt her ankle.”

A man came round from the back of the cottage. Martha said “Oh, Ronald. I think I stepped in a rabbit hole when I went behind a bush to take a pee. I was stuck there, unable to get up. If I hadn’t heard the hoofs of the donkey, I’m not sure what’d have happened to me.”

Ronald said “Let’s get you inside. And you two look like drowned rats too. There’s probably space in the barn to stable the donkey. Maggie! Get some tea brewing and cut some bread.”

Ronald was a robust man in his middle years. He lifted Martha into the cottage and set her on a chair beside a table in the kitchen that seemed to

be the main room. Then he said “Come with me and we’ll get your beast settled and you can dry out in here.”

There was, indeed, room in the small barn for Moonbeam. Tony gave her some water and oats while Tom got the cover of the cart closed and the props under it so rain would run off. They parked the cart adjacent to the barn so it was a bit out of the wind and rain.

When they came back into the kitchen through the rear door, Ronald was feeling his wife’s ankle.

“I don’t feel anything broken, but it’s likely a bad sprain. Better rest it and we’ll see how it is in the morning. Now, who do I need to thank for rescuing my wife.”

Tom and Tony introduced themselves and explained their presence in the neighbourhood. Ronald said “Well, you’re welcome to join us for supper tonight. We’re packed in here, but you can sleep in the barn, and let’s hope the weather turns brighter.”

Indeed, looking round, Tony and Tom saw a bassinet with an infant, a pair of four or five-year-old girls who were likely twins, two boys of between 10 and 12 who had arrived the moment before, apparently from doing chores, and the girl who had answered the door.

On the stove was a large pot that was bubbling. It turned out to be a rabbit stew, which was served up almost immediately with wedges of tasty bread, as the family had been waiting for Martha to return home, and she was over an hour past the expected time.

The Vance’s produced vegetables, fruit and honey from a modest property of about 10 acres. They seemed to have food and shelter, but clearly not a lot of extras. No doubt only the older children could assist with earning money.

Ronald said “That’s a fine cart you have. If Martha were not already soaked, the inside would still be dry.”

Tom said “I made the cover from some sailcloth, and after seeing how the water ran off, added the front pelmet that directs the water to the side. But Tony and another colleague run our two donkey and cart pairs. My line is making, fixing and refinishing.” He took out one of his cards and put it on the table. “I work with the lady who got me and me sisters out of the Workhouse to help with running some houses, but we found we could also make some brass from trading furniture, especially if I did some improvements to them. On this trip we’ll keep our eyes open in case we see some likely items.”

Martha asked “Isn’t it a bit of a distance to move things?”

“With the donkeys, yes. But depending on the items, we might think of the train.”

Ronald said “It might be worth looking into the old manor house. When t’squire died last year, they closed it up, but I hear the heir is in Nova Scotia

and likely to sell. I think there's a sign about an agent on the gate."

"We'll definitely take a look in the morning," Tom replied.

With Martha in some discomfort, the evening conversation was truncated. Tom and Tony were not put out, as the rainy day had tired them. They found some hay and settled down and were soon asleep.

\* \* \*

In the morning Martha was hobbling about and had made a large pot of porridge. After this, Tom and Tony packed up and set off first for the aforementioned manor house, where they were copying the name and address of the estate agent who was apparently in charge of disposition of the house and its contents when a horse and cart came up with a driver and a man in a top hat. This man said, very officiously, "Who are you?"

Tom said "Mr. Tom Soulton, furniture repair and refinishing and occasional dealing, and Mr. Tony Brown, carter and donkeyman." He handed the man one of his cards. "We are taking a few days holiday, but in helping a local lady who had twisted her ankle badly yesterday, we learned that there may be items for sale of interest to us, or possibly refinishing to raise their value."

"It's all destined for an auction house in Crawley, so you're wasting your time and mine. Be off with you."

Tom started to move back towards Moonbeam, but Tony noticed the driver whisper something to the man, who said "On second thoughts, are you interested in some cartage work? We've apparently too much for one load, and we need the items delivered today."

The sign gave the agent's name as J. Singer. Tom asked "Are you Mr. Singer, the agent?"

"That I am. What would you charge?"

"For casual engagements like this, a shilling an hour for the donkey and cart and both of us."

"I'll offer a flat 3 shillings, which should be more than enough to load, deliver, and unload."

"We'll need directions, as this isn't our home territory," Tony said, taking out his notebook and pencil.

The driver gave directions to Tony while Tom followed Mr. Singer as he unlocked the house. Tony tied Moonbeam to the fence to ensure she did not stray or get startled. The cartman did the same with his horse on the other side of the gate, saying under his breath "I don't mind letting you have some of the work. Singer's a bit of a bastard, throwing his weight around. All bluster, of course. I'm Charlie, by the way, Charlie Hancock."

“Tony Brown.” They shook hands as they went in.

Inside it was clear that all the small items had already been removed. What was left were the larger pieces of furniture, but none were upholstered. Singer commented, “The old man had let the place go. Mice had got in the settee and mattresses, and they’ve had to be burned. And he’d got dodderly and forgot to order coals, so broke up some pieces to burn them. So now we have to dispose of that pile over there. For today, there’s the dining and kitchen tables and associated chairs, two beds, and a chest of drawers.”

Charlie said “If I can get one of you on the other end, we can take this table out and load it.”

Tony was heading for the other end of the table when Tom said “Won’t it be easier to load with the legs off, and less risk of damage?”

“You mean the legs on this are removable?” Singer asked.

“If it’s like most of this type, yes,” Tom answered and bent down to look underneath. “Can we pull back a curtain so I can see for sure?”

Charlie drew a curtain and Tom could see that the legs unbolted.

“Tony. Can you get our spanners? These unbolt. I’ll look at the other table.”

Within twenty minutes both tables were dismantled, along with the bed frames. Tom used a piece of chalk they always had with them to mark the legs and their sockets so they could be properly mated later. They then proceeded to load the cart, reserving some items that would fit best in the donkey cart. Tony cleared the back of that cart, putting what he could under the seat or in the foot well, and hanging some things on hooks. Fortunately they’d brought all their ropes as well as a modest toolkit.

With most things gone, Tom took a brief look at the pile of broken furniture. Mr. Singer was checking that things were clear and came back through towards the front. Tom said “If you want this pile removed, we could pick it up after we deliver the furniture, and do it at no charge in exchange for having the firewood.”

“All right. You showed your worth in your knowledge of the tables. You get this pile outside so I can lock up. Then I’ll see you at the auction house and pay you there.”

“Right oh. Just in case, I should tell you Moonbeam may be a bit slower than the horse. Shorter legs. But we won’t be far behind.”

“Why is the cart named *Best Bonnet*?”

“That was Tony. Found hats for the donkeys – Annabelle and Moonbeam. Kind of a trade symbol, and now we’re known for them, but we didn’t bring Moonbeam’s hat on holiday with us.

“Tony! Let’s put the scrap out back to collect after.”

Tom and Tony took less than 5 minutes to do this, and Charlie gave them a hand, whispering “I’ll be surprised if much of this goes on the fire,”

and Tom smiled. Tony said nothing. He didn't want to undo whatever plan Tom had in mind.

It took them about an hour to wend their way to the center of Crawley, and it was by then mid-day. By the time all the furniture was unloaded and reassembled to the satisfaction of the auctioneer it was nearly half-past one. Singer paid Tom the 3 shillings and the two youths bid him farewell and gave Charlie a wave. As quickly as they could they made their way back to the manor house. On the way, Tony asked "What's the treasure?"

"There's a couple of table tops from occasional tables. I think they're Tunbridge Ware. Joshua showed me some. Even if not, the worst we do is firewood. But I'm pretty sure I can put some legs on them, and maybe the legs are there already."

The wood was still behind the house, untouched, and they quickly loaded it into the cart and reorganized their load. It would be a bit awkward to sleep in the cart now, but they would manage somehow.

Tony said "Moonbeam's had a fair walk today. We should look to stop soon."

"Perhaps we should go back to the Vance's and sleep in the barn. They did us a favour, so we could see if we can take them something."

"Could do," Tony answered. "But what would serve them best?"

"Some beer or cider. But in particular, the shovel they had in the barn was almost rusted through. We passed an ironmonger back a little way."

That is what they did, but also bought some currant buns at a bakery. The total of their purchases was greater than half what they'd been paid, but that didn't include the value of the supposedly scrap wood. The news of their success with the manor house was well-received, as was the beer and cider by the older members of the family, and the buns by all. Ronald seemed at the same time embarrassed and pleased about the shovel.

"Been meaning to replace that old one for a while. I appreciate your generosity."

Tom answered "Come and look at the stuff Mr. Singer was throwing out. I've got to re-load it anyway. Want to wrap up the table tops in a tarpaulin and hang them under the floor of the cart so we have the deck free."

As Tom took the pieces out, there were clearly two tops to occasional tables with the legs ripped off. The legs were all mixed up, but some could be salvaged in all likelihood. Then there was a table top with a drawer. Ronald said "The squire broke up his writing desk! My goodness. He must have gone all queer in the head. I remember seeing him at that desk."

"Funny. No legs to this, and they look to be chopped off. At least the top is all of a piece and it has the drawer and the knobs. I'll have to figure out how to make new legs and fit them cleanly."

"Well, Tom, I'll be surprised if you don't," Ronald said.

\* \* \*

Our youthful adventurers said their farewells in the evening to make a start at first light, though Ronald was up and about to start his rounds of his beehives and waved as they parted. Martha had given the boys a jar of honey with a wooden cover sealed with beeswax. They had put this carefully in the box under the cart seat.

This day – a Saturday – they progressed to near Uckfield where the second inn they approached to ask if they could camp was happy to have them for sixpence. There was some fear of gypsies, but gypsies didn't generally have a sign on the side of their waggons. Nor were they dressed in matching garb, albeit simple. On the Sunday, they left early and on the quiet roads made the twenty miles to Foulride Green, a quite large patch of common ground near Eastbourne.

On the Monday they made their way to the front, then up to Beachy Head where it was blustery and cool. They took a break near the Belle Tout Lighthouse to eat some scotch eggs and apple turnovers they had purchased earlier.

“Look at the white tops on those waves,” Tom said.

“Yeah. Don't think I'd be happy in those boats out there,” Tony replied.

“Ever been out in one?”

“Nah. Might be interesting. Miss Match and Mr. Cohen took the steam packet to France from Newhaven. We'll pass by there later, I think.”

“I've been on a rowboat. Me Dad took us one day along the river a bit inland. I don't remember exactly where, but 'e had a friend who had the boat. It was a hot day, so he went in the water, 'cos he knew how to swim. Took me in too, and I managed to swim a little. In water that ain't too cold, I wouldn't mind trying again.”

“Yeah. Might be nice. I've only paddled a bit in the sea.”

“Me too. Generally pretty cold.”

“Lot's of things we 'aven't done yet,” Tony mused.

“For you 'specially,” Tom answered, in an understanding voice.

“You mean 'cos I'm pretending?”

“Yeah. Got to give you pause. If you keep to being a fella', it means you ain't able to walk out with someone. If you switch to skirts, you can't easily run the cart.”

“If I do decide to switch to women's clothes, I think I'd have to do it away somewhere, where nobody knows me.”

“That would be difficult in other ways. Friends is a help, and we both know it.”

“Yeah. Too true. Think I'll talk to Mrs. Yarrow and Mrs. Cohen on the quiet. Mrs. Naismith too. They may have some ideas. And they already



know my secret.”

“You won’t go too far wrong with them. Best day of my life when Miss Match got me out the Workhouse.”

\* \* \*

Later that week, in the kitchen, Tony happened to be reading a newspaper that was a few days old.

“Mrs. Naismith, it says here that all babies must now be vaccinated against smallpox. Some new Act of Parliament.”

“Yes. No doubt will upset a lot of people. But the smallpox is a wicked disease. Not only kills many, but disfigures others.”

“Does the vaccination work?”

“So the medical men say. Given you probably weren’t vaccinated, are you thinking of having it? The previous Vaccination Act made it free to get, though I’m not sure where. Probably at an infirmary or the Sussex County Hospital.”

“Might ask around. I’ve seen a couple of people who’ve pretty awful pockmarks.”

\* \* \*

It was sometime in late October or early November before Tony talked to Cassandra or Mary about his choice of gender. There was a fortuitous early-closing Wednesday afternoon when it was rainy and Joseph and Annabelle could handle the only remaining cartage commission. Ethel was in the kitchen of Number 23, and Mary came to have a cup of tea with Cassandra in the kitchen of Number 21. Adeline was also there, preparing the communal supper.

Adeline said “There you are, Tony. Like a wet rat. Better get you dried out.”

“I’ll go and change into some dry togs and bring these back to dry out. Got wet walking back from Uptons.”

When Tony came back Mary put a cup of tea and a couple of biscuits in front of him.

“Let me know what you think of those,” she said. “I’m trying out a fairly simple jam sandwich with two madeleines.”

“Good!” Tony mumbled, his mouth full.

There was about a minute of quiet. Then Tony said “Can I ask a question or two?”

Cassandra said “If you don’t ask, we can’t answer. And you know we’ll do our best to give you a fair opinion.”

“Well, ... er ... I’m wondering how to go forward if I stay ... er ... being Tony.”

Mary said softly “You mean that it will get more difficult to keep up the appearances?”

“I won’t have a beard. Though I’ve not grown much ... er ... in front, I’ve still a highish voice I think. But also, when Tom and I travelled together in the summer, he mentioned that I’d find it difficult to have someone as a ... partner.”

“Are you thinking of taking on women’s garb?” Cassandra asked.

“Actually, I don’t find that very attractive. Seems a lot of bother and inconvenience. Especially in my line of work.”

The women all laughed, and Adeline said “There is that, with which I don’t disagree at all.”

Cassandra said “We all know that there have been women who have worn men’s clothes and mannerisms in the past. Unless I’m mistaken, you enjoy your work with the donkeys.”

“Yes. I’m more than fine with it. I just wonder what people would think. Would they hire a female carter?”

“Doing the job in women’s clothing would be inconvenient and possibly dangerous, since skirts might get snagged or in the way,” Mary observed. “As far as I know, there’s no law against a woman wearing men’s clothing.”

Adeline, with the wisdom of age, said “Why not continue as you are, but don’t make a fuss about your sex. People mostly will want the work done. When and if it makes sense, you can tell people who you are and that your dress is appropriate to your trade. No doubt there will be some awkwardness, but you have your friends here, and we will support you.”

Tony said “Thanks. What you say makes sense, and gives me some ... comfort.”

\* \* \*

The winter of 1853-1854 did not produce any momentous changes in the lives of Cassandra’s circle. That does not mean nothing was happening.

Mary made a set of notes about the type of facility she would find ideal. She suggested that if she could, she would follow the lead of chef Alexis Soyer, who had been using gas for cooking at the Reform Club since 1841. There was also the matter of having space set out so supplies and product could be conveniently stored appropriate to the tasks associated with them. Moreover, it would be important to be as systematic as possible to ensure

consistent high quality. Some of this thinking was applied as well as it could to the operations at Fortescue Road, which now included some preparations at the rented house across from Numbers 21 and 23. However, a true factory was still in the realm of thought.

Cassandra, Abraham and Joshua also talked about possibilities. The obstacle was one of sufficient capital in the hands of just one agent to be able to effect the decisions allowing buildings to be constructed. For the time being, Cassandra applied some of her capital to different smaller investments in trading furniture and in the haberdashery and clothing emporium. Given her sharp eye, these increased her wealth, but well over half her monies were not well-employed.

Indeed, on the eve of the New Year 1854, early in the morning, Cassandra and Abraham were lying in each other's arms, as much to keep warm as for affection. Cassandra said "Should I try for another house or houses to offer to let? I was leaning towards a factory, but it will be too much for my, or even our, funds to do it properly."

"If you do purchase a residential property, who would you put in place to manage it, and also who would provide the services? Or are you thinking of a tenancy that would not involve service?"

"There is a much better return on the luxury market, but it requires good staff. At the moment I've nobody in mind. All our people are well-occupied. And with these houses Mary and I were in place to keep an eye on everything and make decisions. We gave the Saultons some room for initiative, but I think that there was always ourselves to provide a check. Definitely for another property I'd want someone with initiative and good sense. My own time is quite occupied and I'm not sure whether I want to take on more responsibility. Though that might be out of our hands."

"Meaning?" Abraham queried.

"I'm late in my courses."

"Oh. That would certainly change our routines." Abraham kissed her.

"It has happened before, when there was no chance it could have been a child, so we should not jump to conclusions. If I am with child, it will soon enough be clear, and we will plan accordingly, as we have discussed. I know the child will be loved and well cared for, and we have enough resources to hire a nursemaid, which I would aim to do as early as is reasonable."

"Yes. I'm afraid I'm not very knowledgeable. There were older children, but no babies around the Goldman household when I was growing up. But I know I shall be eager to be a good father."

"There are certain to be other babies in the next year or so. I rather wondered if Mary and Michael might have a child, but it may be that Mary has passed the change."

"We have the marriage of Henry and Maud coming just after Easter,"

Abraham noted.

“Indeed. That was part of my thinking about babies. And Henry is setting up his own solicitor’s practice.”

“Do you know where they are planning to live, or where Henry intends to have an office?”

“Not at all. We should ask, as it could be that I could purchase a house and rent it to them. I cannot think of tenants I would trust more.”

Abraham said “Alternatively, you could lend them the purchase money, or a goodly part of it, against the value of the property.”

“I have heard that some of the building societies, particularly in the Midlands, are doing something like that,” Cassandra said.

“Yes. And I’ve heard they use an old word from medieval times – "mortgage" – for this type of loan.”

“Well, no doubt Henry will know how to prepare a suitable contract. That is, if he and Maud are interested.”

\* \* \*

It turned out that Henry and Maud had thought that they would have to rent a house, though their ultimate wish was to be owners of their abode and office. Thus early in the year 1854, they began looking for a suitable property. Arbuthnot’s listings were, unfortunately for him, rather thinner than usual. Maud and Henry took to walking likely streets to get an idea of what type of building would suit them. They told the denizens of Fortescue Road that they were looking, and scoured the local newspapers for advertisements. However, it was Tony who first noticed an advertisement in the Gazette for a house a few streets away from Fortescue Road at the outer edge of the Seven Dials area.

The house in question was one in the middle of a terrace. It had no basement, but had two quite decent reception rooms on the ground floor plus a modest kitchen. Upstairs were two large and one small bedroom, plus a water closet. There was a back garden, but small and only accessible via the house. This yard had an extension of the house with two outside doors, one for a storage area for tools and coal, the other another water closet.

Having inspected this house and found it of potential interest, Maud and Henry asked Cassandra and Abraham as well as Tom to join them for a second look. Tom brought his handcart to carry a few tools and a stepladder. The owner sent a rather mousy young man to let them in. After doing so he sat on the wall in front of the house and smoked a pipe.

Their first simple walk about got general approval of the property. Tom noted that the rear reception room on the ground floor had French windows to the garden.

“You could think of putting a glass roof out the back here and enclose it. I’ve heard people talk of a conservatory, whatever that is. Give you more space, at least in the warmer months. Some people use them to grow potted plants.”

“What about the condition of the house?” Henry asked. “We don’t want to end up having to put in money to repair deficiencies.”

“Well put, Henry,” Cassandra said.

“Seems to be in good condition,” Tom said. “But I think we should look up in the attic, and test all the taps and gas lamps.”

Tom and Henry carried the ladder upstairs and found the hatch into the attic. It turned out to be in decent condition, with no apparent mice, bats or birds, nor sign of leaks. There was a tank, presumably for water, but they did not try to get to it from the hatch. Without some considerable work, the attic was not usable for habitation.

Maud, Cassandra and Abraham tried the taps and water closets, then went round and lit each gas light. All were working, but two had stiff valves that Abraham thought could be lubricated if the main tap could be turned off. They wondered how the water was supplied. Brighton had one water works, but the supply had mostly been only for two hours per day, and only a minority of houses were supplied. Some houses captured rain water into a tank in the attic, and that was a possibility. For the rest, people relied on public pumps in the street.

“Can we find the main gas tap?” Cassandra asked.

Eventually they found valve a few yards down the street and then one under the front window behind a bush.

Tom said “If you do buy the house, it would be worth testing that the main valve actually works and is not frozen. Otherwise it’ll be a lot of work to lubricate those lamp stopcocks.”

They decided on one more walk around. In the front room, Maud said to Henry “This room would look good in that green we saw in that house we looked at a fortnight ago. Would you like your office in that colour?”

“Whether I like it or not, I read recently that in some parts of Europe some green – Scheele’s green it is called – is now banned because it is made with arsenic.”

“Oh. That would not do at all.”

“Yes, though probably there are other greens that are not made with arsenic. Though I am partial to a cream paint or wallpaper with wainscotting. The wainscotting would protect the walls from bumps from chairs and tables and cabinets.”

“Henry, surely you aren’t planning to throw the furniture around,” Maud said.

“Not at all, but tables and chairs do get pushed against the wall, and

files of paper can be heavy enough that when a drawer is closed, the cabinet shifts and hits the wall.”

“Ah, good thinking,” Cassandra said, as she had been listening. “One never wants dilapidation of the property.”

\* \* \*

Henry and Maud were able to purchase this house, at 84 Chorley Terrace, for £250 with a loan of £200 from Cassandra. Tom earned a decent commission to install the wainscotting of what came to be called the Office. However much of the decorating was done by Henry, Maud, Tom and Ethel, with the labour being a wedding present from Tom and Ethel.

Maud, thanks to her trading, managed to furnish the house well with remarkable economy, but it was important for a solicitor to appear prosperous, so "remarkable economy" still depleted the modest fortune she and Henry had accumulated. Still, by the time of their return from a brief honeymoon, they had a pleasant house fronted by a brass plaque advertising "H. Mortimer, Solicitor" and another "M. Soulton-Mortimer, Dealer in Furnishings". The latter brass was at the suggestion of Abraham, and was enthusiastically seconded all round.

Henry and Maud married on Easter Monday, and took several days honeymoon on the Isle of Wight. They returned to the official opening of Henry's office on the following Monday, and thanks to Mr. Arbuthnot the first client, who needed to convey a property, then had Henry draft a will. It was a good omen, but it would be a year before the law office produced a true living income appropriate to a solicitor. Fortunately, Maud was bringing adequate commissions, and Henry assisted by keeping good records for her.

By this time, Cassandra had learned that the suspected child was not on the way. She wondered if the late, somewhat painful and heavy bleeding she experienced were perhaps an early miscarriage, but did not share this conjecture with Abraham, only that she had considerable discomfort.

She had also visited an optician and acquired some reading spectacles. These made detail work and attention to figures easier, though she realized that she had sufficient vanity to eschew them in general.

In the wider world, there was the excitement and worry of the declaration of war on Russia on March 28 because of the hostilities with the Turks in the Crimea. Many people had no idea where this was. While the unthinking mass cheered on the British Lion, thoughtful voices such as that of Mr. Turcotte and Joshua Goldman were concerned that much harm and little good would come of war.

\* \* \*

June 4, 1854, was Whit Sunday. Now that Maud and Henry were married, Ethel found herself missing Maud on the walk to church, though she still had Adeline's company, and quite often, as today, Cassandra and Abraham. They would all sit in the pew that Cassandra had rented when she and Mary had decided to attend St. Nicholas as part of joining the local community. Pew fees had been a topic of some controversy in recent years, and Rev. Wagner, the Vicar of St. Nicholas, had angered some of the more established members of his congregation by encouraging "free sitting" in order to encourage the poorer residents of the town to attend church.

Whitsun services were always better attended. Henry and Maud were already seated – Henry also considered pew rent essentially a cost of doing business as a solicitor – as were Michael, Mary and Elizabeth a few rows away. They all greeted each other after the service in front of the main door, before starting for home. As they were about to leave, a man by appearance in his twenties who was passing by said "Good morning, Mr. Yarrow."

Michael replied "Good morning to you, Mr. Haig. Mary, this is Thomas Haig, one of my foremen."

Haig said "Allow me to introduce Mr. Percy Jones. Mr. Jones is an engine driver just transferred down here to Brighton to drive the shunting engines. We knew each other some years back when I was working up near London."

Michael said "That will explain why I don't recall you. Let me make some introductions."

The introductions took a while, given the size of the group and the general milling about of parishioners. In the middle of this exchange, Tom appeared with Vera. Apparently they had been in church too. Perhaps they had managed to find some of the free sitting seats.

At the time, none of these incidents seemed of any import, but they allowed for later developments, as we shall reveal.

\* \* \*

The following Wednesday, it being early closing, Cassandra was at home in the afternoon. She was in the bedroom at the rear of Number 21 and noted that Tom was working by the shed. She realized that she had not kept up with Tom's various activities, though he had been assiduous in making sure transactions were recorded. However, as she had noted to Abraham, he would, eventually if not sooner, want to move on. Thus she went down to the kitchen and out into the yard.

"Hello Miss ... I mean Mrs. Cohen."

"Don't worry yourself, Tom. I'll take "Miss" from any of you without offence."

"Thanks. Just hard to get used to."

"Tom. I realize we haven't talked for a while about what you've been doing and whether it's what you want."

"I'm pretty happy, Miss. Seem to be earning good money."

"Yes. You cleared about £25 from that so-called firewood, though I suspect it cost you quite a bit of time to make the repairs."

"Yeah. The old man who'd owned them had smashed them up, so it wasn't easy to put the legs back on. I ended up with the tables making some half-legs and splicing them in. Luckily found a timber merchant with a bit of mahogany of the right colour. That was my biggest cash expense. And lots of glue."

"Yes, I recall Ethel's admonitions to keep the glue well out of the house."

"Yeah. Seems the better the glue the worse the stink. And you need to heat it."

"What about the writing desk?" Cassandra asked.

"No legs, so I had a clear field. Some of the stuff from the fire James Upton set and nearly killed Tony and Annabelle was actually oak. I planed off the charring and made some legs out of some of that. Actually I think it was the top of a chest of drawers, so I glued together three strips for each leg. Came out all right."

"You put in a lot of work."

"Acshully, Vera did quite a bit. She likes the work. Says it helps her know the product for the shop."

"Good for her."

"Miss. Do you think it's all right me walking out with her? Some folk would say it ain't right as she's a bit older."

"You like her?"

"Yeah. Like 'er a lot. We get on. An' I know about her history, so that's above board. Think she's trying to live that down."

"How do you see your friendship evolving? You know, down the road a bit?" Cassandra asked.

"It'd be nice to be able to have a place together, if possible with a workshop big enough to have several pieces at once. Things need to dry or set, and it'd be good to have the tools laid out proper on 'ooks. And a good vise. I use that stool I made with some clamps now for 'olding work when I need to plane or chisel."

"With a proper place you could put up a sign for Thomas Soulton, Furniture Repair and Restoration?"



“Yeah, summat’ like that. Vera and I were walking Whitsun afternoon out by Preston Manor and saw this cottage with a stable behind. Probably an old farm-house, but really run down. It had a sign that it was for sale or lease, and we were talking how, if it were fixed up, it’d be just the ticket.”

Cassandra realized there might be an opportunity, but also a cost.

“Tom. I’m going to have you show me. But I also have a concern that I’ll lose my odd-job man, part-time gardener, and so on. So I think we’d better start looking for someone to replace you around here, because the way you’re talking, you’re ready to move on. No. Don’t object. It’s normal that you’ll grow and change over time. We just need to make sure it doesn’t cause too much upset to things that are working well.”

“Yes, Miss. Guess that’s it. When did you want to see the cottage property?”

“Can we go now?”

\* \* \*

Cassandra, when she saw the property, was somewhat taken aback. There was a small cottage, possibly two rooms, all boarded up, as was the stable behind. There was apparent damage to part of the slate roof of the cottage. The stable had what was likely a roof of tarred cloth. The cottage was set back from the road about 15 feet, with a cobbled lane-way on the left side leading to the yard, with the stable behind the cottage. A narrow, likely unpaved lane led behind the stable on its left, but there was a lot of mud and weeds.

“Not in good condition, I fear,” she said.

“No. It’d need a good bit of work. Depends on the condition of the foundations and walls.”

“There seems to be a decent yard, and it’s cobbled. The garden in front is all overgrown. Is there much land behind the stable?”

“I ’opped the fence and took a look. Paced out about 30 yards behind the stable. It’s about 20 yards across.”

The property looked like it had been a farmhouse that was being engulfed by the town. There were some modest terraced houses a little way up the street, then a stretch of unkempt ground, and finally a small, probably one-room cottage on a skinny parcel of land before the stable. Beyond was a meadow. That possibly was part of the Preston estate, though not contiguous with the main manor.

Cassandra wrote down the name and address of the agent, and the approximate address of the property. She would ask Arbuthnot to contact

them. It would be worth paying him to keep at arms length while learning the details.

\* \* \*

That same Wednesday, Ethel was surprised to receive a personal note in the regular post.

Dear Miss Soulton,

I hope you will not find this letter impertinent, but I wondered if you would join me after church this coming Sunday for a walk on the Promenade and some luncheon.

If you are agreeable, simply meet me after the service.

Yours sincerely,

Percival Jones

Percy had included his address, so Ethel could, if she wished, communicate with him. However, he had offered a simple and effective way of agreeing. The novelty of being asked to walk with a man was enough that Ethel sought Adeline's counsel.

"He's been polite and correct in how he asked you. It isn't a secret assignation. If you are inclined to walk with him, it is perfectly in order."

\* \* \*

Cassandra suspected that Vera and Tom were more closely acquainted than Tom admitted. She hoped, given Vera's unfortunate involvement with a Mr. Forsythe, that they were not risking a pregnancy, but was reluctant to probe too aggressively, since if the couple were innocent, such enquiries could cause upset to what might be a very profitable outcome.

To an extent, Cassandra was correct in thinking Tom would be under the influence of the tendencies of young males. However, Vera recognized that she had made a mistake once, and would not again. She knew ways to give and receive physical pleasure that avoided direct coupling, and used these to keep Tom more happy than unhappy, even as these activities would

be considered scandalous by a majority of respectable society. However, she very much appreciated the times they spent working together. There was a keen satisfaction when a piece of apparent rubbish became a valued and profitable item for sale.

Arbuthnot, on receipt of a note from Cassandra delivered by Tom the very afternoon they looked at the cottage, was able to reply that Jarrett's Stable, as it was known, was up for sale or lease, with an apparent preference for sale. However, several people who had looked at the property had more or less departed hastily. Arbuthnot could, however, arrange for an inspection.

This took place on the Saturday after Whitsun. Arbuthnot, curious about the property and Cassandra's interest, came himself with the key that had been supplied by the owner's agent. Tom used his handcart to bring the stepladder and some lanterns, along with some tools. "Might need to take off some of them boards so we can actually see things."

Vera, Abraham, and Ethel also came along. Cassandra had, however, warned that it may be dirty, so all of them wore old clothes. Arbuthnot was in his usual garb and realized on meeting the others at the cottage that he should also have thought of potential degradation of his apparel.

"Oh dear. I wish I had your foresight. It is bound to be a dirty exercise. I will have to avoid some areas, I'm afraid."

There was a lock on the front gate – Tom as we know had jumped the fence to take a look at the grounds. Once this was open, it was apparent that the cobbled lane and yard were in good shape. The rest of the ground was overgrown.

"That will take some mowing," Arbuthnot said.

"Or some sheep," Ethel offered.

"Good thinking, Ethel," Tom responded. "Clear up the rear area too."

On opening the cottage, they could see a hole in the roof. They lit lamps, as the windows had no glass and were boarded over. There was no ceiling to the rooms, but a wall to the height of the outer walls, and what would be the normal ceiling level, divided the two rooms of the building. This wall had a chimney in its middle that extended up through the roof. There was a doorway that had neither frame nor door at the rear, that is, yard side of the chimney.

The room they entered from outside was possibly 16 feet square. The other room was a bit smaller, 10 or 12 by 16. It would likely become the bedroom. There were fireplaces into the chimney in each room, but no sign of a stove. The larger room fireplace was bigger and probably was used for cooking, but it would be inconvenient.

Below where water had entered the roof over the main room, the wooden floor was damaged. Possibly one or two of the roof joists were damaged too, and almost certainly some of the floorboards and beams. At least the floor

was a good 18 inches higher than the cobbles outside, with two steps up to the level of the doors.

There were boarded up, now glassless, windows front and back for both rooms, but none on the side. Oddly the main room had doors at both the front – the road side – and the back facing the stable. The door facing the road was near the corner of the building, but that at the back was near the wall dividing the two rooms. There was a sink to the left side of the front window with a barrel and pump next to the wall between the rooms. Tom tried the pump, and after a few strokes some brackish water poured forth into the sink and down the drain that led outside. It looked like there had been a draining board the other side of the sink from the pump, but it had clearly been taken away.

“Must be pipes from the roof to fill the barrel,” Tom said.

“Yes. No piped water here,” Arbuthnot answered.

Tom put his head back out the door and could see some guttering and a pipe down to where the barrel would be. No doubt some repair or maintenance was in order. “Some guttering here and a pipe down to the barrel. Looks like there might be a well near the front door, but it looks covered over.”

They examined the second room, which seemed more or less dry, though there was evidence of mice and many spider webs.

Tom checked the walls. They appeared to be simply parged and white-washed, though "white" was at this point an exaggeration. Abraham took a couple of pages of his notebook and lit them with a match and put the papers in one of the fireplaces.

“Seems the chimney is not blocked, anyway.”

Tom walked the perimeter of each room, checking the walls and floors. They all stayed clear of the damaged floorboards.

Outside, Tom went round the cottage looking at the walls top to bottom. The brickwork was in reasonable shape, though some repointing would be needed.

The stable was made of wood. Arbuthnot undid a large padlock on the main door and they swung it open. Inside was cobbled and surprisingly clear of detritus. There were four stalls along the left wall, with an open area in the middle with a trough, clearly meant for the animal waste, and this extended under the rear door. There were ceiling planks at about 7 feet from the floor, with an opening to the right of the main door with a ladder.

“Do you think that’s for storing fodder?” Abraham asked.

Tom climbed the ladder and yelled “Looks like it’s for hay and straw. All clean at the moment. There’s a quite large door in the front and another in the back.”

On the right of the main floor was an area for tack with a bench about

6' long and 3' deep, as well as a number of wooden pegs for hanging harness. At the back there was a large door that presumably allowed animals into the rear area and also allowed the stable to be mucked out. The bench was below a boarded up window – the glass again either missing or broken. Each stall had a small door at about head height, likely openable for ventilation for the animals.

At the back right was a regular-sized door. Vera went to this door and opened it.

“Oh. It’s the privy.”

“Well, we now know where that is,” Cassandra observed. “And it is about as far from the well as possible.”

Indeed, the privy was an addition to the back of the stable.

As with the cottage, Tom toured the perimeter inside and out. He declared the wood of the stable more or less sound apart from one or two easily-replaced boards.

Cassandra said “I think we may close up. Let us repair to Fortescue Road and formulate an offer.”

“You think it worth a try, Mrs. Cohen,” Arbuthnot asked. “You know they are asking £250.”

“Let us meet in an hour at my house, Mr. Arbuthnot. Though if you can, I would like to know who are the owners and why they are selling, though the story told may not be the truth.”

“I will see if there is anything in the file that may enlighten us and see you in an hour, Mrs. Cohen.”

\* \* \*

The walk back to town – Arbuthnot had come in a pony cart that he drove himself – allowed Cassandra to talk to Abraham. Tom, Ethel and Vera, recognizing that this conversation should be private, said they were going to Uptons to talk to Rebecca and Valerie. Unless Cassandra managed to acquire the property, there was nought to discuss anyway.

Abraham said “You intend to offer on it?”

“I’m thinking £130, with an outside bid of £150.”

“At those prices, you would only risk a slow recovery of your money because it might take time to sell. If my memory is not mistaken, the cottage has been for sale for a while.”

“Over two years. Arbuthnot says 6 months, but I got Tom and Tony to ask around, and it was put up for sale in late 1851, then withdrawn from sale in September of 1852. It came on again last December. Henry said similarly.”

“Have you learned what was behind that?”

“Not with any certainty. But Maud asked Henry and he managed to discover that there was a sequence of deaths in the family of the owner, so first one, then another will had to be probated. There would have been costs to get the details, so we’ve really only gossip, though it accords with what Tom and Tony learned. Actually, as long as the title is valid, and I can get the property for the amount I have suggested, I believe the full story is only a matter of curiosity.”

“Yes, Cassandra, I agree. My guess would be that £150 might be a bit low, but your instincts are, I believe, better than mine for land and buildings.

You know I talked to Joshua about this property yesterday. He said that the land was worth between £125 and £150, and that if he were interested, he would largely ignore the buildings, unless there was going to be a large cost to demolish them.”

“Then it seems my figure is not too far from where I should bid. The vendors of course, may see it as a pearl or ruby of unspeakable value.”

Abraham laughed. Cassandra could sometimes have a very caustic wit.

\* \* \*

Arbuthnot’s information was that the owner was someone named E. Pierce of County Wicklow in Ireland, and that the ownership had been transferred to this person from the estate of an F. Pierce of Oban in Scotland, who had acquired it by inheritance from a Mrs. K. Simpson who had lived on the property until 1848 and apparently died in 1850.

“Well, Mr. Arbuthnot, after discussion with my husband, I am going to make an offer of £130, to which, of course, your commission will be added. While I might be willing to entertain a counter-offer, you have seen the dilapidation yourself. Considerable expense and/or effort will be needed to bring the property to a liveable condition and to profitable use.”

“While my business interest regards all but a sale yielding a commission as irrelevant, as a friend I think your offer about right for the condition of the place. But may I ask your intent should you acquire it?”

“Tom and Vera Smith have been working on furniture together. They would like to combine their fortunes and have a proper establishment where they can carry out repairs and restoration of furniture. I am willing to invest in the property and rent it out to them, possibly with a share in the business profits as an offset on the rent.”

“Fixed up, it would fit that role quite well,” Arbuthnot said. “That explains Miss Smith’s presence and Tom Soulton’s diligence in examining the fabric of the place. In any event, let us prepare an offer that you can sign,

and I will convey it to the owner's agent. If communication with Wicklow is needed, we may have some delay in getting an answer."

As it turned out, there was delay of several weeks in the full paperwork of the transaction, but the telegraph allowed Cassandra to know that her offer was generally acceptable by the Tuesday following. The time until early July before the final closing of the sale allowed for discussion of how Tom and Vera would become tenants and business partners to Cassandra.

\* \* \*

After church the Sunday after Whitsun, Ethel saw Percy waiting a little to one side as she exited the main door. He had chosen his place well. If Ethel did not want to accompany him, she simply had to walk away with Adeline and the others and leave him standing where he was. However, she was rather excited to be asked out by a man, and gently drew Adeline over to say hello.

"Mrs. Naismith, I believe you were introduced to Mr. Jones last Sunday. He has invited me to walk with him on the Promenade and take some lunch together."

"Then I will simply wish you both a very fine afternoon. But do, please, Mr. Jones, make sure Miss Soulton is safe to home when your walk is concluded."

Percy thanked Adeline and offered Ethel his arm. This was new to her as well, but she recognized the offer and slipped her arm through his and they made their way towards the front.

We should perhaps point out that Ethel was, in some eyes, rather plain. She had a trim, if unremarkable, figure. Her features were tidy rather than pretty, and she had never learned about adornment or make-up. About a year ago it had become clear that she was near-sighted, and she now wore spectacles. But if her appearance were ordinary, we already know that she learned quickly and had become, one might say, the chatelaine of the Drake Apartments, as Cassandra had named numbers 21 and 23 Fortescue Road. We also know she has a pleasant singing voice, and can attest that her smile is warm and genuine.

When Ethel had asked Maud about what to expect with Percy on their outing, Maud had said "It's up to you to make sure he knows you expect him to behave proper. No funny business. And you let him know you have a position and status here, and he better respect that. You don't have to say so in those words, but make it clear by how you act and what you tell him about how you live and behave. You're a good catch, Ethel, the way you can look after a house and cook up those meals."

“Mrs. Mc ... Yarrow did have a lot to do with teaching me the cooking.”

“True. But now you have the skill too. That doesn't mean we don't owe Mrs. Cohen and Mrs. Yarrow lots – in fact we'll never truly repay them for rescuing us from the Workhouse – but it does mean we're part of the local society now. Doesn't mean we're the Lords and Ladies, but we're respectable and have an honest station.”

Now that Percy and Ethel were walking, both were tongue tied. Then, at the same time Ethel said

“Can you tell me something about ...”

as Percy said “Have you always lived ...”

Recognizing the absurdity of the situation, the both laughed.

Percy, deciding honesty was the best policy, said

“I should tell you I'm pretty shy. It was Tom Haig said I should write that note. He knows I've never ... er ... walked out with a girl.”

“Me neither. Er. You know ... walked out with a man,” Ethel spluttered.

“Could make it more difficult or perhaps easier. We now know we're learning together. I suggest we each tell the other about ourselves, and see how we go.”

“All right. That makes sense,” Ethel said, noting they were almost at the Promenade. “I'll start. Me Dad and Mum are both dead. I think they were here from the time they were kiddies. Maybe even their parents. They didn't talk much about them. Think they died when our parents were in their teens, both sets. Anyway, me Mum died when I were about 10, then Dad when I was 14. Maud's a bit over a year older and Tom about the same younger. After Dad died, we was put in the Workhouse. Terrible place that. Lousy, cold, and rotten food. Thankfully Miss Match – now Mrs. Cohen – needed some 'elp cleaning up and running the houses on Fortescue Road. She treated us real good, but expects us to use our own initiative and do what's needed without anyone telling us. That was a bit daunting at first. But she and Mrs. Yarrow taught me lots, helped me learn to read, write and figure a lot better, and Maud jokes I'm now the chatelaine, which is a big word for queen of the housekeeping I think.”

Percy laughed. “Good for you.

“Well, my folks were navvies, and me Dad helped build the London and Brighton, as it was then. Well, the Railway had some other names along the way. We lived in Croydon. I've a younger brother – he works on maintaining locks and drydock gates. And a sister. She's working in a laundry. Pretty 'ard work. Makes 'er 'ands all red and raw. Don't know why she sticks it. Anyway, I got apprenticed as a fireman on railway locomotives, then managed to get a change to learning how to drive engines. Actually, that wouldn't 'ave happened, but the driver I were stokin' for about three years ago in the shuntin' yard had a fit and the engine was running towards the



mainline points. I managed to stop the engine, but realized we were close to the mainline enough that we'd get clipped, and I remembered how to reverse 'er. The foreman wrote a letter to the Directors, and when one of them came down to give me a commendation, 'e asked what my plans were, 'an I said I'd like to be a driver, so 'ere I am. Only shuntin' engines yet, but actually they give you more work starting and stopping and reversing."

"I 'ear the pay's pretty good."

"Not bad. About 50% more than most men my age earn. I guess women like yourself have to penny-pinch."

"Not too bad. Miss ... er Mrs. Cohen – they only got married last year, 'cos she didn't want to risk havin' a husband take all her money, but Henry who you met told her about some sort of 'separate estate' so she could protect it, so she and Mr. Cohen could marry. Anyways, Mrs. Cohen has me more or less running the houses, but Mrs. Yarrow runs Treats for the Tongue, and she's taught me how to make them, well some of them, and for that work I get a small share of the profits. Mrs. Cohen found Maud had an eye for furniture, so she goes buying and selling. It wouldn't surprise me she makes more than most men. Sharp is Maud."

"Sounds like you're not doing too badly."

"Better than I expected. Probably better than most. The houses provide accommodations with service, but to be efficient the guests – really just one family now since we've got into other ventures – get the same food as us, or maybe we get the same as them. Apparently that's pretty unusual in service, but I wouldn't know for sure since I've only ever worked in the one place. From what other girls on the street say, we 'ave it good, and I'm not complaining."

They'd now been walking the Promenade for a few minutes. Percy said "I promised some lunch. Do you know anywhere good?"

"Not from actual experience, but I've heard Mrs. Cohen and Mrs. Baldwin talk of that pub over there as being nice."

"All right. Let's try it. Who's Mrs. Baldwin?"

"She's an old family friend of Mrs. Cohen from Manchester, though in the kitchen we've been wondering if she isn't actually her mother. Sometimes when they smile a certain way there's a real similarity of expression. I think you just missed being introduced at church on Whitsun. Mrs. Baldwin and Mrs. Moss run the Ladies' Garment Emporium next door to Bartlett and Jones where Mrs. Cohen is the manager, but has an investment interest too."

"Mrs. Cohen seems quite the financial magician."

"Yes. But not like you get in stories about being all greedy and nasty. I think she does well by thinking things through and telling the people she's working with what's going on and inviting them to work with her. Not a lot of 'Do this. Do that.' But you're expected to think and act on your own. In

some ways it's 'arder, but in others, a lot easier 'cos you don't feel someone breathin' down your neck."

They were now at the door of the pub and went in. We shall leave them to a pleasant lunch, then a further walk along the Promenade and finally back to 21 Fortescue Road where they agreed to meet two Sundays later at church, as Percy had a shift on the engine in a week's time.

\* \* \*

In late June, once again on a Wednesday, Tom and Vera joined Cassandra and Abraham in the drawing room.

"Exciting times," Abraham said.

"Gives me some butterflies in the stomach," Tom said.

"Well, we don't have the property for certain just yet, but I think we can be reasonably confident that it will be transferred within a few weeks," Cassandra responded.

"What do you want to happen then?" Vera asked.

Cassandra said "That is really the reason for talking today. Assuming I acquire Jarrett's Stable, do the pair of you intend to take it on and get it established as a home and a place of business for what I suggested to Tom would be Thomas Soulton, Furniture Repair and Restoration?"

Tom said "Yes. Assuming we can work out how to do so, though we think it will be T. and V. Soulton in the name. We want to be partners."

"But from the form of name, you intend to marry?" Abraham asked.

"Absolutely," Vera said. "I've done with anything else."

"Then we need to think how we can arrange that you can do so," Cassandra said. "Have you given any thought to how you would see things?"

In this, Cassandra was hopeful she could gauge how realistic the younger pair were in regards to investment and property.

Vera said "There's several ways we could do things, but the biggest obstacle is that Tom and I, while we're better off than a lot of people, don't have much capital. From what we're doing now in repairs and refinishing, we'd be considered to be a going concern, but of course we don't have an established business. Jarrett's Stable needs some work, and that will require a bit of money, at least if we don't want to live in squalor for a while, and I suspect that wouldn't be a good idea."

Cassandra said "Let's suppose that I add £60 to my investment. With Arbuthnot's commission, we can say the total investment is £200. That gives a figure on which I'd calculate a return."

"Would 10% per annum be a target? That is, £20 per year clear after all expenses on the property?" Vera asked.

“I think I’d be more than happy with that,” Cassandra said, recognizing that it was Vera who was doing the calculations for her and Tom.

“So would something like £60 per year for five years return your capital and the 10%, with the property then belonging to us?” Vera asked.

“That’s an interesting way to put things,” Abraham commented. “But it does put quite a bit of pressure on you, especially at the start.”

Cassandra said “I had not thought of things in the fashion Vera has expressed, but the concept of a figure of £300 returned in five years is interesting. Let me propose – and for the moment my figures may be quite wrong but still useful as a point of discussion – something like £30 per year as a base and then 10% of the profits of your enterprise, not counting the £30 in the calculation of profit, with the property becoming yours when £300 total has been rendered, presuming that is complete within 5 years.”

“You are thinking of the £30 more or less as the cottage rent?” Vera queried.

“Again, I had not thought in quite those terms, but that does make sense. You would have to pay something like that to rent a living space anyway.”

Tom said “What would happen if we don’t make the total within 5 years?”

Cassandra said “That would, of course, be awkward, but we do need to make sure we cover that eventuality.”

Vera said “What if we said that we would be considered to be in default if we paid less than £40 per annum, which would be the nominal direct rent, and that we would lose our right of ownership if we did not complete the agreed £300 by the 5th anniversary, but would be repaid anything over £200.”

Abraham said “That seems fair. And if you prosper, you own the premises earlier, but Cassandra will then have done better than expected on her investment.”

Tom still looked worried. Vera said “Cheer up, Tom. How many other men have a chance to own a house and business before they’re 25? And a very good chance at that. You’ve earned £54 in the last 10 months.”

“But I had the good fortune to get that so-called firewood,” Tom objected.

“We’ll find other things like that. And you’ve taught me how to do a lot of the fixing and finishing. With the stable properly set up, we can have more things on the go and work more efficiently.”

“Well, we should get Henry to draw up an agreement so everything is clear,” Cassandra said. “And we’d better think who we’re going to get to replace Tom as the general factotum around here.”

“Oh, Miss. I’d meant to say that I asked Dan Dixon, Joe’s son, if he’d be interested. I can have him come so you can interview him if you like.”

“I think we’d better do that soon, please. Perhaps tomorrow or Friday evening after 7.”

\* \* \*

Dan Dixon was born in 1840, so now was about 14. He’d been the messenger who came to tell Cassandra and Tom that Archie Temple had died in the pub some time before. He was eager to work for Cassandra, and seemed to understand how to do the general jobs needed around the properties, including some of the gardening. The Dixon home was a very modest tenement, and there would be general approval of Dan’s taking a job where room and board was provided.

With Maud gone, Ethel had had the kitchen of Number 23 to herself for the last couple of months. Cassandra had told Ethel she was welcome to participate in the discussion with Dan, and after they had talked with him for a few minutes, Cassandra asked him to wait in the kitchen for a few minutes while she and Ethel talked in the scullery. Ethel was agreeable – she had known Dan since he was a baby – so the discussion was extremely short.

Cassandra suggested Dan come on trial for three months at 4/- per week plus room and board. He would take over the pantry bed in Number 23 that Tom had occupied. For his remaining time at Fortescue Road, Tom himself suggested he camp in the shed. It would be summertime, after all.

Jarrett’s Stable became Cassandra’s on July 3, 1854, and she immediately suggested that Tom start the work to repair the cottage. This would give him some income, and she could be confident that the work would be done well. They aimed to start their business agreement for the property on October 1, which gave about three months for the repairs to the cottage and stable. That first Monday, Tom and Vera went to the cottage and took off the window boards, nailed them to a suitable frame, attached rings and made it possible to open the window frames for light but also close up at night or when they weren’t there. This was a very crude job, but one that needed to be done first.

A detail that was outstanding was that Tom and Vera wanted to satisfy the conventions of society before they took over the cottage. This would mean arranging a wedding, of course, even if it was a very quiet one. However, one thing at a time.

The two immediate tasks, in order, were the roof and the floorboards. Tom had, over the last couple of years, accumulated odds and ends of building materials and had enough slates to carry out the repair, but he wanted to reinforce the joists that would have been made wet by the leak. He would need to get some extra rafters and screw them to the ones he thought could

be weakened. To get the right length, those, as well as the floor joists and floor boards would have to be purchased.

For safety, Tom arranged that Tony would be with him when he worked on the roof. The main problem was to be able to get to the rafters and the slates. They put planks across the horizontal beams. The stepladder would allow them to climb onto these, but first they put in a few nails so the planks would not shift. Tom then used screws to fasten extra beams, cut to fit tightly in the space, to the diagonal rafters. Some of the cross-battens for the slates had rotted. That was the next step.

Using a stool, Tom could put his head out the hole in the roof. He carefully undid the copper ties and removed some undamaged slates and passed them down to Tony who was with him in the rafters. Then he crudely cut the broken battens on a diagonal with a carpenter's knife so new ones could be spliced in across the rafters. With slates in place, nailing these would be almost impossible. However, he could and did use copper wire to tie the new battens to the old. Then they slid slates, old and replacement, into place and tied them onto the battens with copper wire.

Surprisingly, this entire repair was completed within a single day. The floor, however, took most of the rest of the week. The difficulty in doing that was the care needed to lift a quite large number of the floorboards, which were, of course, longer than the region of water damage.

Getting the first board up was the most difficult. This was a job Tom had not encountered before. When they could, Tony and Joseph came to help. Joe Dixon told him that some floorboards were shaped. There was talk that an American had even developed a machine to make tongue and groove planks, so one edge had a projecting tongue, the other a slot into which this tongue would fit. Given the age of the cottage, these would not be present. However, an alternative system used a simple pair of tabs. On one edge of the plank, the tab ran along what would be the top of the plank. On the other, it was at the bottom. Such planks would be installed so the tab went under the overhanging tab of the previous plank. The first plank would have the tab – at the bottom – cut off or covered with a moulding.

These sorts of planks made for a floor where the floorboards stayed down, but also meant that repairs required cutting or breaking of the tabs. Fortunately, the cottage used plain planks. This could lead to gaps down which small objects like pins and coins could fall. Moreover, it was still difficult to find the nails, which were generally not driven vertically, but at angles so they resisted lifting. And sometimes the flooring men would use a gouge to lift a small piece of wood and drive in the nail, countersink it, then push back the wood, possibly adding a bit of glue.

On the first day of work on the floor, Tom probed the wood that had got wet. Eventually, he chose an old and somewhat mistreated chisel and

sharpened it, then used it to cut out a hole about a foot across of rotten wood. This revealed the structure of the floor. There were joists about 2 by 8 inches every foot. Near the hole, several of these were damaged near the top. He would need to reinforce these by screwing boards to the sides. Still, the damage did not appear to be too bad, though there was the question of whether to cut out the rot. It probably was wise to remove it before covering it with new planks.

On day two, Tom was mostly on his own. He used the old chisel, a claw pry bar that could remove nails, and a crowbar to lift the planks. Quickly he realized it was important to get the bar as far as possible between the planks and the joists. To make this easier, he spent half an hour or more sharpening the crowbar and the claw. He also got out a 2 lb hammer so he could drive these if needed.

By mid-afternoon when Tony came to help, Tom had managed to lift and remove planks over a ten foot long by 4 foot wide area. Unfortunately, about a third of the planks had either split or were damaged and would not be returnable to the same position from which they had been lifted. Fortunately, only a few feet of these lifted planks could not be repurposed in some way. Tom did not consider use as firewood as an alternative purpose, though of course what he was fully unable to employ on the cottage did end up burned for fuel.

Tony was with a cart and Moonbeam. Tom asked “Tony. Can you go to the timber merchant and get me this list of boards? Here’s some money.”

“There’s eight half-crowns here. That’s a pound. Isn’t that too much?”

“Hopefully a lot too much. But I need eight foot lengths of 2 by 6 and 1 by 4, and the 1 by 4 should be in oak or beech. I’m not sure how much they cost.”

While Tony was gone – it took a bit over an hour and a half before he was back – Tom managed to saw and chisel out the rot. In one case, this took half the wood out of a joist over a three foot span. He had some 2 inch timber that he’d brought earlier for the rafters, and cut a suitable piece. He was glad he’d brought his small metal fire-box, which he set up in the fireplace to heat some glue. While this was heating, he drilled two holes in the patch, put it in place and marked where the screws would go by pushing in an awl. Then he drilled a smaller pilot hole in the damaged joist.

Putting lots of glue in the opening of the joist, he screwed the patch in place. Then he glued a six-foot length from one of the damaged floor boards to the side of the joist at floor level, then put screws through the old nail holes to hold it in place while the glue set as well as provide some strength.

He was working on the second of the three damaged joists when Tony came back.

“Twelve bob. Here’s your change and the receipt for Miss ... Mrs Cohen.”

“That’s good. Better than I expected,” Tom answered.

“Heh. That’s a good repair. Should hold pretty well, and you’ve cut out the rot.”

“Yeah. Two more to go.”

Given that it was summer, they decided to keep going until dark. Seeing a boy watching them, Tony called out “Hey, boy. Want to earn threepence?”

The boy was interested. Tony gave him a penny-ha’penny and a note for 21 Fortescue Road which said

Working late.

Please keep us some dinner.

Put name on note and give back

to boy so he can get second half

of his commission.

“Bring the note back with a reply written on it and you’ll get the other half.”

By dark they had the joists repaired. On the morrow – Friday – Tom put on the floorboards, nailing them down and using a countersink to ensure the nail-heads would not be a danger to feet or stockings.

This work was complete by mid-afternoon, and Tom was very pleased to see Vera come through the gate as a nearby clock struck three. He kissed her and they opened the bottle of lemonade she had brought and sat on the front step.

“That’s really welcome,” Tom said.

“Have you eaten your sandwiches?”

“Not yet. Been trying to get the boards down. I’ll have them now.”

“You stay sitting. I’ll get them. Where are they?”

“Just inside the door on the right.”

“Oh. That floor looks very good. And the roof is fixed. That’s so good.”

“Yes. I’m really pleased, though we’ll need to sand and finish the floor to get it proper. Maybe even put some putty in the cracks between the boards so we don’t lose sixpences down them.”

“Well, I can help for the rest of the day, and tomorrow and Sunday. And I’ve more good news,” Vera bubbled.

“What’s that then?”

“Maud sent a note to come to look at some furniture at an estate sale. She helped me to buy a bed, a chest of drawers, a wardrobe, a table and four chairs. They all need some refinishing, but we think they are fundamentally sound and easily brought to a nice condition. We can use them ourselves and choose to sell them later if we find something we prefer. But I got the lot for under £2.”

“Well done, Vera.” Tom kissed her again.

“We’ll want a fresh mattress. No sense having bedbugs or fleas.”

“That’s true,” Tom said. “Though I suppose we could buy new ticking and use clean straw and replace it regularly.”

“Let’s keep that as a choice if we find we’re short of money. I’d like a nice bed. Probably more fun for both of us,” she said with a grin.

“One thing we will need is a stove. I think they just used the fireplace, but I’m guessing cooking wasn’t easy, and no warm water in a reservoir.”

“Yes, it won’t be comfortable if we can’t keep the place warm,” Vera said.

“I’ve gotten used to a warm bath, too, regular like.”

“Then we’ll need a tub too,” Vera said. “But draining it out the back will be a chore.”

“I’ll see if I can figure out a way to have a drain in the floor somewhere, but it might not be for a while.”

“What jobs do we still have to do?” Vera asked, taking out a small notepad.

“Windows next. Probably be the most expensive job, though I’m not sure how much it’ll cost to get a stove and fix in smoke pipes.

“For the windows, I’ll see if I can make them myself, though it may not be worthwhile. We can do some measuring tomorrow and work out some drawings.”

“What else?”

“Repoint some of the brick. I’ll buy a pointing trowel and get Tony to get some lime, sand and Portland cement with one of the carts. If we buy ourselves a bathtub, we could use it as a mixing bin. Do double duty.”

“Will it clean up all right?”

“Should do. Only leave a bit of concrete anyway.”

“Men always think that way, then there’s still dirt and grime, but the idea does make some sense.”

“We need to do a bit of organizing in the stable. ’cept I’d like to call it the workshop.”

“I’m going to add that we need a sign,” Vera said.

“Yes. We do.”

“And I’m wondering whether the privy can be made ... er ... a bit less smelly.”

“Probably could be emptied. There’s some fellows do that sort of work. Course, they could do it quicker if I made a hatch at the back so they didn’t go through the hole in the seat. There may even be some boards that come off. I didn’t see a hatch.”

“Could you do that?”



“Put it on the list. It’s not going to be a job I really want to do, but it would be nice to not have the stink.”

“What about the grass and weeds?” Vera asked.

“Tony says he knows a shepherd might be willing to bring some of his flock for a few days. Have to keep the gates closed and check the fences first, too.”

“We should just use them in the front at first. The back we can clean up bit by bit. Maybe even the donkeys could come off and on.”

“That’s not a bad idea,” Tom agreed.

\* \* \*

Tom and Vera worked all weekend together. Normally Vera would take a turn in Uptons shop on Saturday, but Rebecca told her the new place was more important at the moment. Tom had managed on Friday evening to get a pointing trowel and enough material to make up some mortar. He’d also got a wire brush and made a crude scraper by heating and bending an old screwdriver to clean out the old mortar.

Tom arrived at a quarter to seven and started making a ladder out of two 10 foot rafter beams and some of the broken floorboards, screwing each crosspiece against the rafter beam. It was crude, but with two screws in each side of each cross member, would be strong enough. Fortunately, the cottage was not too tall, though doing the chimney might be awkward. They’d have to make some sort of scaffold, or else use a system of ropes across the top of the roof for safety, and the work should not be done by someone alone.

Vera arrived as the ladder was half complete shortly after seven was struck on a nearby clock. She brought some food and drink for later and put them on the counter beside the sink. This counter would need replacing soon, but would have to do for now.

Tom interrupted his work with the ladder to show Vera how to use the wire brush and his crude scraper to clear loose mortar from between bricks.

“If there’s loose stuff, the new mortar won’t stick,” he explained. “There’s also an old paintbrush – bit stiff with old paint and no good for paintin’ any more, but it should help get out some of the dust and grit.”

Vera set to work on cleaning the mortar up to shoulder height. The mortar was in better shape than they’d expected, and by about 9 o’clock she had gone all the way round the house. Tom had finished the ladder and moved to look at the back of the privy. Indeed, the boards were set so some could be removed, but they were nailed on, and with the moisture in the privy, those nails would be rusty. Probably meant broken boards. Tom would fashion a new hatch that would be more easily removed but not today.

He then set up his metal firebox again in the fireplace of the main room. It would be easier to boil water on this, and he'd brought an old kettle and teapot in the handcart. He'd also put in a half sack of coal, and got a fire going and made tea, then went outside to see how Vera was doing.

"Tea's on. My, you've done well. We can point the lower strip and I'll clean the upper."

"I could do it if I weren't in skirts. Women's clothing is so awkward for so many jobs."

"Yeah. That's why ... oh, nothin'."

"You were going to say something. What?" Vera almost demanded.

"I know someone who wears men's clothing so they can do mens' work. But it's not my secret to tell."

"Oh. Well, I've my own secrets, or at least things I don't want gossiped about."

Quietly, Vera realized who Tom was talking about. Of course! But as she had implied, it was not nice to have gossip.

They managed to finish the pointing that day except for the chimney. Tom had made a sort of levelling trowel out of a piece of quite nice thin board screwed to a block of wood to serve as a handle. It was like a rectangular painter's palette, and Tom had waxed it to keep the board from getting waterlogged. Mortar could be trowelled onto this and the pointing trowel – a narrow device that let the mortar be flattened in the space between the bricks – could push it off the board and into place. At first about half the mortar fell off to the ground, but soon both Tom and Vera were reasonably proficient. Working up the ladder took more time and care, and Vera insisted on working with Tom. She would mix mortar while Tom pointed, and as appropriate Tom would step partway down the ladder, pass the board for reloading with mortar, then continue. Or he would come completely down, Vera would attend to the mortar while he shifted the ladder.

As noted, by Saturday evening, the pointing was done except for the chimney. Cassandra had told Tom to bring Vera back for supper, and that they could each take a hot bath if they wished. For some reason, Vera had never been introduced to the system of bathing at Number 21 using the screens Tom had constructed. She thought it wise to have fresh clothes after a bath, so they walked via Uptons. After supper, Tom went to the shed to reload the handcart for the next session at the property while Adeline assisted Vera with the tub. When she was dressed and the bath refilled, they called to Tom and drank a cup of tea sitting in the yard on the steps leading up to the French windows on Turcotte's office while Tom bathed. Then Tom escorted Vera back to Uptons and kissed her goodnight. It had been a long day, but a productive one.

\* \* \*

Tom and Vera went to church that Sunday. They had talked very little about regular attendance, except for a minor comment and agreement that it was part of belonging to the town's respectable society. They sat in some of the seats that Rev. Wagner had managed to get assigned as free sitting rather than join the rest of the Fortescue Road members.

After church, they would have liked to return to the stable to advance the repairs, but there were some items of furniture that Abraham and Maud had acquired that would be notably increased in value with some refurbishment. There were also the things Vera had bought at Maud's suggestion for their own use, but those were going to be stored until they could find time to improve them. Moreover, the stock of things ready for Goldmans or Uptons to sell was lower than desirable. They changed into working attire and spent the rest of the day in these tasks in the yard at Uptons.

With respect to dealing with scratches and other minor damage, Vera was becoming quite adept. She was also learning from Tom how to use matchsticks, sometimes with the addition of glue, to allow wood screws in worn sockets to be re-tightened. This was especially important for some chairs. Loose screws on chairs let them become wobbly, and when they were wobbly, they could break, especially if people leaned back on them. Vera had also seen how thin wedges of wood – Tom said cedar or pine worked best – could level furniture. However, this worked best if the shim could go between two parts of the piece of furniture that were screwed or bolted together, since that would allow for adjustments to be made from time to time. Glued parts had to be undone very carefully with vinegar or steam, and both approaches could damage wood and finishes.

This Sunday afternoon, the main work was cleaning up scratches and other minor marks on different surfaces. There was also a chest of drawers which, in addition to needing its top polished, was missing two of its eight drawer handles.

“What'll we do about the missing ones?” Vera asked.

“There's a couple of flat boxes with divisions that I found and I've been putting odd knobs and handles in them. After the barn fire, there were some pieces only good for scrap, but we took off all the hardware, especially knobs and handles, hinges and locks. See if you can find either a full set of matching handles or else a pair we could use on the top drawer that would look all right with the rest.”

“You mean we'll move one of them down and put two new ones on the top drawer.”

“Yes. I think also we want to check that the supports of the drawers are solid. There may also be some tabs on the bottom rear of the drawers so

they don't come out unless you pull them up or down in a particular way. And it sometimes helps to have drawing pins on the rails the drawers move on. And to put talcum powder on those rails."

"Lots of things to check."

"Yeah, but none of them is very time consuming. And when a customer finds the drawer fits well in the chest frame but can be moved in and out with one finger, you get a quicker sale or they don't quibble on the price."

They worked away for a while. Vera found that somehow they had three handles that matched those in the drawer, and she installed a pair of these. Tom had shown her how to fasten several types of handles and knobs. Moreover, he'd shown her how with older ones, a longer screw would allow a washer to be put on the screw to make the handle more secure. When screws got loose but people didn't tighten them right away, a wobbly handle could make the screw hole bigger so it wouldn't give a good fit any more. Putting on a washer helped to even the pressure of the screw and hold the handle fast.

As mentioned, they were working in Uptons yard and stable. Vera found the chest of drawers was not sitting well on the ground.

"Tom. I think the floor is flat here, but the chest isn't sitting properly."

"Get one of those old rugs we use to protect the pieces on the carts and we'll have a look at the feet."

Vera found a piece of old rug and laid it on the ground beside the chest and they tipped it on its back.

"There you are. They've put on some things like big headed drawing pins on the bottom of the feet, but one's fallen out. Easiest solution is to take out the rest. You can use that claw pry tack lifter."

Vera did this. Tom continued working on a table top. Then they put the chest upright.

"That's better, but what'd we do if we wanted to get things level and the floor wasn't flat?"

"I've seen people use wedges or blocks, but then you can't move the chest or it'll fall off the blocks. I've seen machinery that uses screws as the feet so you can make each foot higher or lower. Guess I could buy some machine screws and put some covers on the heads. Trick would be to figure out what to put the screw into. You want some sort of threaded metal or it'll just get worn and wobble."

"Can you put screw threads into things?"

"Yes, of course, as long as it's metal, though sometimes you can do it in hardwood. Drill a hole – has to be the right size – then use a tool called a tap that cuts the threads. I've never done it, but saw it done once. If you want to put a thread on a rod you use a tool called a die. Taps is like screws and dies is like nuts. Except they have to be really precise and hard, with

openings to let the scrap fall out. Expensive. Might be able to fit a nut into a slot in a foot and hold it in with a wooden plug and glue.”

“It doesn’t sound easy.”

“No. Pretty tricky to make something that easily adjusts to uneven floors. Still, maybe worth thinking how to make something that could be screwed or bolted to a piece of furniture. For instance, think of a circle of wood, but put the hole off center and screw it to the back of the feet of the chest. Then the chest can be levelled by turning the wood circles, then tightening the screws.”

“Oh. That would work.”

“Yeah, but tricky to adjust and tighten. Nicer if you can use a spanner to adjust each foot while the chest is sitting where you want it. P’rhaps worth thinking about some more.

“Anyway, for this one, lets leave it without those feet protectors, though put them away in case we can find a fourth. If we really need something on those feet, I think I’ll drill and put in a screw to hold a piece of wood with a countersunk hole for the screw head. Then some bits of cardboard between the piece of wood and the foot of the chest will allow for adjustment.”

“But you’d have to take out the screw to put on each piece of cardboard,” Vera objected.

“Nah. Think of a cardboard washer, but then cut across one side of the ring. Loosen the screw a bit and you can open the cardboard to get it around the screw shank.”

“I keep learning things,” Vera said.

\* \* \*

Monday, Tom was going to work on the windows. They had spent some time on the Saturday measuring and recording what they would need. The plan was that ready made windows would be used for the four window frames in the cottage, but they would be plain glass in frames, without sashes. In the stable – now starting to be called the workshop – Tom would replace the glass as the frames needed only minor attention.

It was unfortunate that this workshop window was nearly the undoing of a great many plans, hopes and expectations. Tom was trying to get some pieces of broken glass out of the frame, and he was not wearing leather gloves as one should for that sort of work, and a piece of glass that was almost a full 1 foot by nine inch pane suddenly came adrift and as it fell caught his left hand, giving him a nasty cut.

Beyond the shock and swearing, the real difficulty was that there was no proper place to clean the wound, nor means to bind it. Tom used the pump

in the sink, but as yet no-one had taken the time to clean and flush this. Still, Tom got much of the blood and dirt away, and used his handkerchief to staunch the majority of the bleeding. He locked up as best he could, and took his handcart back to 21 Fortescue where Adeline attended to the cut and found a better dressing.

“No more work for you today, or you’ll do your hand a damage,” she said.

“Got to put the window-board back or people’ll get in there.”

“Then go to Uptons and find Tony or Joseph to help you.”

Tom did that, but still could not be dissuaded from helping, and this caused the wound to bleed again. He realized Adeline was right, and he went back to Fortescue Road. As he and Joseph were leaving the cottage, however, Tony arrived with a man and dog driving a half-dozen sheep. After Tom’s injury was explained, Tony said “Me and Joseph’ll sort out the fencing. You look after that hand. Don’t want that to go pussy.”

Unfortunately, the wound did, effectively, "go pussy". By the next morning Tom was feverish and did not wake until after 8 o’clock. Cassandra stayed late at home until he was awake. The left arm was swollen and red. His left hand was almost twice its proper size.

“Oh dear, that needs attention. I’ll be back,” she said.

Now she did go to B & J, but only to tell them she would be away to attend to an emergency. Then she went next door to find Frieda, who was not in the shop, but upstairs in the apartment.

“Frieda. Tom cut his hand and now his arm is terribly swollen. I need to obtain some leeches, preferably of the medicinal variety.”

“You have not needed them before while you have been in Brighton, I am assuming?” Frieda said.

“I’ve had no need. Though I came here mainly to ask if you would come and take a look at him. Two heads are better than one.”

“Agreed. If the wound is suppurating we may also want some maggots, and honey never hurts as a wound treatment.”

“The honey will be the easy part. There is still half the jar Tom and Tony got from the woman they rescued near Crawley. There is an apothecary about two hundred yards away, I will go there first to ask about leeches.”

“I will join you, in case we are given more than one option to follow.”

They were fortunate that the apothecary did provide leeches, but did not keep them in the shop. “People tend to find them disturbing, and they need to be kept alive, of course. I charge 3d apiece for them at retail, which I know is expensive, but I do have my own aquarium to raise them, so I can assure you they are of the best type.”

Frieda and Cassandra had been in Manchester when the Royal Infirmary there used about 50,000 per year, and knew that the Infirmary had paid

between a penny and thru'pence ha'penny per leech. Cassandra said "How soon can I get a dozen?"

"Let me give you a note for my wife and the address to go to. If you pay me three shillings, I'll give you a receipt."

"Do you also know where we might find clean maggots?"

"Those I do not supply, as the demand is less steady. I would expect you may need to produce some on some rotting meat, then wash them before use on a wound."

"That is what I feared," Cassandra said.

As they walked to the apothecary's house, Frieda said, "I will stop at each butcher's shop we see and ask if they have any maggoty meat. It may be a false hope, but I am guessing it is our best chance for a quick result."

They passed one butcher on the way to the apothecary. Though Frieda was careful to ask if she could talk to the butcher out of hearing of his customers, she was sent away with a flea in her ear and no maggots, to extend a metaphor using insects. Between the apothecary's house and 21 Fortescue, she tried in another butcher shop, but prefaced her request by saying that she had need for medical reasons of some bluebottle maggots. This butcher responded "You can look in the bin at the back, but the air ain't nice just there."

Frieda was made of stern stuff. She had, on leaving her apartment, grabbed a small pan with a lid as well as a knife and fork. Now these turned out to be of great use. The bin, when the lid was lifted, sent forth a cloud of flies. It was, after all, July. The stench was awful and she recoiled. Then, holding her breath while returning to look in the bin, she spied a piece of bone with scraps of meat on the end, and these scraps were writhing with maggots. Using her large fork, she lifted the bone into her pan and cut off some of the meat, then threw the rest back into the bin. She replaced the lids on the bin and the pan and retreated as quickly as she could. At the back door of the butcher's shop she yelled "Thank you. I am much obliged," and hustled to catch up with Cassandra.

\* \* \*

It would be pleasant if we could relate that Tom recovered miraculously. Unfortunately, the cut festered. The leeches – three dozen were eventually used – did keep the oedema and related pain to a moderate level, and the maggots, washed in boiled water and carefully placed on the wound, ate the dead flesh. But Tom had a fever and even delirium over much of the week.

In fact, no work was done on the cottage and stable for three days. Vera was worried not only for Tom, but for the possible loss of the property.

She asked Rebecca Upton if she might take some time, unpaid of course, to continue the work on the cottage and workshop. The summer was generally quieter in the furniture business, and Rebecca and Valerie could manage, so the answer was naturally positive, though Vera had a better touch in gauging the price to ask for an item, and would usually bring more profit to the shop.

Vera went to see Tom, and was mightily worried by his appearance. Cassandra had put him on a cot in the drawing room, which was closer to the water closet and generally more congenial. After she had seen him and helped him have some nourishment, she descended to the kitchen, where she told Cassandra and Abraham that she intended to continue what work she could on the property.

Abraham said "I am willing to take charge of bringing the windows and glass that Tom had ordered, though I'm not sure how they should be installed."

At this point Dan Dixon, who was there, said "I've seen some window work, but why don't I ask my Dad."

This seemed sensible. Vera said "I've learned how to repoint the brickwork, but the chimney needs doing. If I do that, I'm going to need someone who can hold fast to a rope in case I slip."

"Well, I can certainly do that," Abraham said.

"You'd better put on some trousers rather than a skirt," Cassandra said to Vera. "Women's clothing is a menace up a ladder. Let's see if some of Tom's would fit you."

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The next morning was Friday, July 14, and Vera started by putting on a shirt and trousers of Tom's, then gathered what she needed for the chimney. She had Tom's handcart, and in it put a canvas sack in which she intended to put mortar so it could be hauled up on a string. She made sure there was plenty of twine, and several ropes of different thickness.

In considering how to tie the rope to herself, she realized it would cut into her and make it hard to breathe or move. However, in the handcart was a pair of woven canvas straps with grommets in the ends. They were about 2 yards long each. No doubt they were for tying down furniture so a rope would not damage the finish. One of these wrapped around her twice was about right, especially if she used a clothes pin to keep the loose ends tidy. After all, she only wanted the rope to stop her from falling should she or a slate slip.

When she got to the cottage, Tony had just arrived with Moonbeam, a cart, and a mother cat with three kittens. There were some odds and ends of supplies on the cart as well.



“Thought the place could use a few cats to keep down the rodents,” Tony said. “And Mrs. Cohen said you were going to repoint the chimney, so would wear some of Tom’s clothes.

“Did she suggest you wear a singlet to keep ... er ... things from ...er ... bouncing.”

Vera laughed. “No, she didn’t. But it would help.”

“That’s what I thought. So I brought one along.”

“I’ll go put it on.

“By the way, it looks like the sheep cleaned up the front quite well.”

“Yes. The shepherd was here last night to take them somewhere else, but he said to ask if we wanted them for the back of the property.”

When Vera came back, she said “That does help. Thank you, Tony.”

“I don’t advertise, but I don’t intend to deny either,” Tony said, and Vera just nodded.

“I’m hoping Mr. Cohen will get here soon,” Vera said. “I need someone strong enough and big enough to hold me should I slip or a tile come loose.”

“He’s bringing the windows and glass from a place Joe Dixon suggested. Two sets should fit all right, but two are a bit smaller than the measurements you took. The glass for the workshop will be in panes the size you measured. Let’s hope they’ll fit. Mr. Cohen said he’d get some putty to put in the panes, and Dan said he’d come to help do it, since he said he’d done it with his father.”

As Tony said this, Dan could be seen coming up the road carrying a sack. Cassandra had said one of his first tasks should be to make a hand cart of which she would pay up to £1 of the cost. However, Dan was still gathering the materials, and until the cart was functional would be carrying whatever he needed.

As Dan got to the front of the lane-way, they saw Abraham on a cart with the windows. The supplier of the windows was delivering them. Over the next few minutes, everyone but Vera worked together to put the windows and glass in one of the stalls in the workshop. The carter left and Abraham said “Vera. You seem ready to work.”

“Yes. I’ve laid out the tools and the material for the mortar, as well as my ropes and some twine to help get it over the roof.”

“Where do you want me?” Abraham asked.

“In front of the house, please. There’s a gutter there, so I don’t want to lean the ladder against it. We’ll toss over a bag of pebbles on a string, and the string will be tied to a rope, and the rope will be tied to this strap that will be around me. When I climb the ladder then the roof, I want you to take up the slack. Not to pull, but to hold the rope fast in case I slip or a slate comes loose. I think if you wind the rope one time round your waist, it will be easier for you to hold me if that happens.”

“All right. Yell when you are going to throw the string,” Abraham said as he walked away.

Vera wound the strap around her mid-section and tied the rope through the grommets. In the meanwhile, Tony tied the string to the pebble bag and to the other end of the rope.

“Ready?” Tony asked.

“Yes,” said Abraham, and then Vera yelled loudly “Here comes the string.”

Vera was not used to throwing things. Her first two tries fell back on the back side of the cottage. The third try, however, sent the sack sailing over the roof.

“I’ve got it,” Abraham called, and clearly was pulling in the string. When he had the rope pulled in, he asked “Is that taut?”

“Taut!” Vera called back. “I’m about to climb.”

With a wire brush and the scraper in a small sack over one shoulder, Vera climbed the ladder, with Abraham taking up the slack.

“I’m at the top of the ladder,” Vera called. “But I think I’d better take off my shoes or I’ll slip on the slates.”

The ladder was against the roof edge.

A couple of minutes passed while Vera carefully, and with one hand, untied her shoes and removed them. Then she said, “I’m going to try to get on the roof now and move up to the chimney.”

Doing this was clumsy, but her bare feet gave enough friction that she didn’t slip, and slowly crawled up to the peak of the roof beside the chimney. She could now talk directly to Abraham who was more or less below her.

Abraham said “Was it more difficult than you thought to get there?”

“Not really. But now I need to stay on the back side of the roof to benefit from the rope. Tony. Can you drive in a stake and tie the rope so Mr. Cohen can help Dan while I clean up one side of the chimney.”

Vera started to clean out the mortar, which turned out to be in quite good shape. After half an hour, she was happy with her work and sat astride the peak of the roof and called for the others to release the rope. They did this, Vera pulled the rope up and dropped it at the back. With the rope secured there, Vera cleaned the other side of the chimney.

“Tony, I’m done cleaning. I’ll drop down the brush and scraper. I’ve done with them.”

“I’m out the way,” Tony replied.

“I’ll need the mortar and the tools that are with it, but don’t really want to climb down.”

“I’ll bring them to the top of the ladder and toss up the string so you can pull them up.”

Vera wondered how this would be accomplished, but Tony had the pebble sack and said “I’ll tie one end of the string to the top of the ladder and toss the sack over the peak of the roof. Then we can pull the string back and forth so you can pull up the tools and mortar.”

This proved less awkward than it sounded, since the sack anchored one end of the string and the ladder the other and they simply looped the string around each item and moved it the few feet between the ladder and peak of the roof. Vera quite quickly pointed the back and nearer side of the chimney. Then they moved the rope to the front again and she carefully worked herself to the other side of the chimney, leaving the mortar and tools on top of the chimney while doing so. The pointing was complete in another twenty minutes.

Getting down from the roof looked to be more difficult than getting up. Tony called “Mr. Cohen, can you come to help Vera get down?”

Abraham came out of the workshop. He was holding a ball of putty. “Dan says you should check the lead flashing of the chimney to see it hasn’t any gaps.”

The ball of putty was passed to Tony, who climbed the ladder and pressed it around the string so Vera could pull it up. She was able to sit on the roof peak and press putty along the edge of the flashing. There was fortunately only one apparent gap, but she smoothed putty along the edge of the lead, and also across overlaps in the lead, even though she wasn’t sure if this was necessary.

Using the string, the tools and left-over putty and mortar were lowered to Tony, who carefully dropped them down. They called Abraham to take the rope again, and Vera backed down the roof on all fours to the ladder. Tony said “Let me guide your foot to a rung of the ladder. Mr. Cohen. Have you got the rope? We’ll need about a foot of slack.”

“Yes. Got it. Moving forward a foot.”

Vera felt the slackening of the rope and used her hands and right foot on the slates to ease the left foot to the rung guided by Tony. Tony descended and steadied the ladder. “Got the ladder,” he said.

Vera then reached back with her left hand and took hold of the upright of the ladder, then slowly shifted to get her weight as close to the ladder as possible. “Another foot of slack, please.” Then she carefully shifted around the ladder, and moved the other foot onto the rung. “About to descend. Slack off another foot or so.” One rung at a time, she got down and untied the rope. “I’m down. You can pull the rope over.”

“Well done,” Tony said.

“Oh. Am I ever glad to be done that job. That is, done with climbing down from the roof.”

Abraham came round the cottage with the ropes. “I thought you might

come down after cleaning the old mortar.”

“I thought it would be hard to come down, and I was right. So I felt it would be better to press on and finish. But now I need the privy and then a cup of tea.”

“I’ll join you in a cup of tea and then I have to help Joshua – Mr. Goldman.”

“And Moonbeam and I have to pick up some parcels for B & J from the station and deliver them,” Tony said. “But I’ll get the kettle on.”

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When Vera returned from the privy, there was a small fire going in the metal firebox Tom had made and a kettle was sitting on it. It didn’t take long and it was boiling. They made tea – Tony had brought some milk in a bottle. He put some in a saucer for the new cats. That would help get them to stay.

There was some bread and cheese, along with some tomatoes. It was already gone noon.

After Abraham and Tony left, Vera went with Dan to see what he’d been doing.

“I’ve been working on the workshop window. I’ve got it out and on the ground here, and I’ve laid in panes. Had to use a knife to shave a bit of wood from the frame in one or two places so the glass would fit. Some glaziers have special things called points to hold the glass in place, but I’m just putting the putty in and leaving it flat to set.”

“How do you get the putty to do that?” Vera asked.

“Knead it until it’s smooth, then roll it into a sort of snake about as thick as a finger, then lay it in and press it so it’s more or less right, then use a putty knife – a sort of thin chisel – to make a nice clean bevel. Want to try on this last pane?”

Vera thought it looked simple, and getting the snake of putty made and in place was not so difficult, but she found it very hard to get the bevel to be even and smooth.

“It’s not easy,” she said.

“I’ve had some practice. I rather like doin’ it. The trick is getting it smoothed in one movement. When you have to go over an area it seems to get uneven.”

Vera had been working on the last side of the last pane to be fitted, so Dan did this last edge and they moved to the cottage.

Dan said “Let’s try the front window in the main room.”

They found the windows that were supposed to be for that opening and brought them to the outer side of the opening, one of them holding each side.

“Which way is up?” Vera asked.

“It’s best to find the bottom. The putty goes to the outside, and the bottom edge of the window should be slightly bevelled because the bottom sill slopes to the outside.”

“Oh, yes.”

“We need to put on the angle brackets. A lot of windows have the sash sliding mechanism. Nice, but complicated. Or hinges. But those you need to mortice into the frames. You can see where the old ones were. I puttied over them while you were on the roof so moisture won’t get in the screw holes. Tom may want later to take out the putty and glue in a thin bit o’ wood.”

“Oh. I hadn’t noticed. But I remember Tom saying something about hinges that I didn’t quite follow. And he said we’d use angle brackets to let the windows swing out for air.”

“Yes. Real simple. Ah. The window has a mark on this edge that says "top".”

They lifted the window into the frame, and it fitted quite well, with a small clearance. They took it out again and set it against the wall.

Dan said “Let’s do the sill and sides.” By this he meant some 3/4 inch thick strips about 2 inches wide that would go on the sides and the bottom of the window. The window would have two angle brackets at the top which would act as pivots so the window swung out at the bottom. They would put a piece of 1 by 4 across the top of the window on the outside to keep water out.

Dan measured and cut the bottom piece and had Vera drill screw holes while he measured and cut the sides. They placed the bottom piece and Vera held it while Dan drilled pilot holes and the screwed it down. This they repeated for the sides. Vera noticed they didn’t go quite to the top, but stopped a couple of inches short. She was about to ask, but things were moving ahead.

“When I get a chance, I’ll put a little putty in the cracks to keep out moisture,” Dan said. “Let’s put the window in place. Oh. Where are those wedges? And we need to be outside.”

He looked about and found several pieces of wood that looked like scraps, but Vera realized that they were wedges, rather rougher than the ones she had seen Tom use for shimming tables and chairs. They carried the window outside. Dan set the bottom of the window on the sill and tilted it up into place.

“Hold it there while I put in the wedges.”

First he put two wedges in the bottom, then stood on a stool and put two in the top.

“Can you tap the one at the right at the bottom gently. We need to come up about a 1/16 of an inch.”

Vera did this.

“A small tap on the left, we need to come up there a tiny bit more.”

Dan then tapped the top wedges. “Just to make sure it doesn’t fall out, but I’m going to get you to stay here with a hand on the window while we drill to put on the angle brackets.”

He went inside and stood on the stool to mark the position on each side of the window, then used an Archimedes drill to make a small hole in each side and screwed on angle brackets a couple of inches below the top. Then he drilled a pilot hole through the angle bracket into the frame piece recently installed and put in a screw with a washer. This would be the pivot. There was one each side.

Dan came back outside and pulled out the wedges.

“Can you go inside and gently push the bottom of the window out. I’m afraid that the top of the window may rub on the frame as it swings. If it does, I’ll have to chamfer the top, but there may be enough clearance.”

They were lucky that there was enough space that the window swung out quite smoothly. However, Dan loosened the pivot screws and got a jar of what turned out to be lard and put a bit on the screw and washer, before gently tightening it again. This made the movement easier.

“We’ll put another angle bracket on the bottom of the window and attach a rod to let you fix the opening or keep it closed. Can you go outside to hold the window while I drill and attach it.”

Dan did this quite quickly, then attached a 1 inch square piece of birch to the angle bracket with a screw and washer, which he again lubricated with lard. He used the stick to pull the window closed. Vera noticed a pencil mark on the side of the rod, and Dan used this to make a mark on the sill, where he drilled a pilot hole and put in a round head screw.

“Can you hold the window out while I saw off the head?”

Dan had a fine toothed hacksaw blade and proceeded to work at this. The screw was clearly of quite hard metal, and sawing off the head took time. When the head was off, he took the stick from Vera and pulled the window closed and put the stick down on the now headless screw. Vera realized there was a hole in the bottom of the stick, in fact several holes. The one nearest the window allowed the window to be held closed.

“Oh, that’s what Tom was talking about. It’s wonderful.”

“We need to file it a bit so you don’t get caught on it. Or we could use sandpaper on a stick. Maybe you could do that. Pr’aps for now just stick a blob of putty on it. We need to put on the outside board.”

Dan had already cut a piece of 1 by 4 and had drilled some screw holes. They went outside and now used the stepladder. Dan drilled some pilot holes

and screwed on the wood over the top of the window. The cover would keep rain from coming in when the window was opened and the top rail of the window was pivoted inwards.

“Maybe you can also put some putty around the join to seal the crack,” Dan said.

It was now near 4 o’clock. Vera said “Do we have time for the other window for the main room at the back?”

“I think so. But we probably want to put the boards back so nobody has a go at getting in. There’s not much to steal, but someone might try. Think we may just put a screw or two in the old boards to hold them.”

“Would it be easier to put them on the inside?” Vera asked.

“Good thinking, they’ll pop right in, and we can use one of those rafter beams Tom brought to hold them in place for now. Not pretty, but it will do. The other room we didn’t even open today, thankfully.”

They did finish the second window and closed up in time so that Dan arrived for supper just as it was being served. Vera had gone back to Uptons as she wasn’t sure whether she would be welcome to supper on Fortescue Road.

Tom was feeling sufficiently better that he came to table, but it was clear he was far from fully recovered. However, he showed great interest in the progress on the windows, which indicated he was on the mend.

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Vera was going to work in the shop on the Saturday, and had asked Dan to tell Tom this. Also that she would come at six in the evening and they could go to the cottage to decide what to do next. When she got to 21 Fortescue, Adeline told her to sit down and have something to eat. There was brawn and salad and some new potatoes, and she and Tom ate this with appreciation. The others would eat later. They got to the cottage about seven, so there was plenty of light.

“You did well, Vera. That pointing on the chimney looks good, and the windows in the main room is done a treat.”

“That was Dan. And he did a nice job on the workshop window. It’s still lying on the bench so the putty can set a bit.”

“Shouldn’t dry out totally. That’s the idea of putty. And we should paint or varnish the windows to keep ’em from getting rotten over time.”

“I’m coming back tomorrow. What do you want me to do?”

“I’ll come too.”

“Not to do any work, you won’t! You could’ve died with that arm all blown up. And you’re still not out of the woods. Look how we had to take a couple of breathers walking here.”

“Yeah. Never felt so weak, ever. But I can be here to share ideas and sort screws an’ nails an’ tools.”

“Yes. I suppose that would work.”

“Ethel’s goin’ to come after church too. She sent a note to Percy to tell ’im their walk was off because she was going to come here to help out. But Dan’s going to his family for the day, but partly ’cos Joe Dixon said he’d give him some ’elp with his own ’and cart.”

“What should we get Ethel to help with?” Vera asked.

“Well, let’s think of the jobs still to do and then we can give ’er a choice.”

“Didn’t you say the floor should be varnished?”

“Yeah. But got to time that carefully so it has 3 to 4 days to dry. Though we might just use the linseed oil and turpentine. Could walk on that in a day or so, and we could put on more coats as we needed them, and even only put the extra coats on places where it was needed. Still, there’s a fair bit of the floor that could use some sanding,” Tom noted.

“Didn’t I hear you say you’d got some coarse and fine sandpaper for that?”

“It’s in the workshop, on the shelf under the bench. We need to find some good blocks about 3 to 4 inches a side, like some of the rafter beam, but only about as long as the paper is wide.”

“You mean to wrap the paper around and essentially scrub the floor with it?”

“That’s the idea,” Tom agreed.

“I think I know where we put some pieces that should work if we cut them to length, but I’d better make sure we have some bits of rug to kneel on. Hard on the knees.

“Tom. You’ve seen how Dan and I put the old boards for the windows up to secure the place. Should we have shutters?”

“You mean on the outside?”

“Or the inside. Would that be possible, and not crude like we have it with a big beam wedged against a rafter?” Vera asked.

“Should be easy. Might even be able to salvage some of the boards.”

“As long as it looks nice. How are you thinking of making it?”

“Just a frame with boards. We can paint it. Even put on some decoration. If the frame is inside, we drill holes – 2 per side should do – and then put a heavy nail or pin through into the window frame. Can go deep enough that it’s into the brick even.”

“Would it have to be all the way to the top? Be nice to have some light come in, but still stop someone getting in easily.”



“Good thinkin’. We could leave 9 or 10 inches at the top. Hard to climb up that high and too narrow to get in unless you’re really skinny.”

“Let’s put that on the list, and we might want to do it soon to save work locking up every night.”

“True. I can start measuring and drawing tomorrow. Don’t need my left ’and to make notes, but might need some ’elp with the measuring tape or yardstick.”

“Tom, When we’re set up here, we’re going to have to think about the possibility someone may want to steal stuff. We’ll likely have some money here too, even if it’s just for buying and selling and housekeeping. And your tools, and furnishings we’re working on.”

“Probably safe enough when we’re ’ere. It’s if we go off, even to church, that we’d need to worry.”

“What did Mrs. Cohen and Mrs. Yarrow do?”

“Well, there was pretty much always someone in one of the two houses. In fact, I don’t know of an occasion when there wasn’t someone present.

“For us, I was thinkin’ of a strong box. I’m pretty sure Mrs. Cohen has one. I think it was in the wine closet, since just she and Mrs. Yarrow had keys there, and sometimes I think they went in there when they had to have some coin or notes to pay for things.

“Are you thinkin’ we need to work out how to have someone here all the time?”

“It wouldn’t hurt if we could afford it,” Vera answered.

“Could go see if there’s someone at the Workhouse, I suppose. Oh. I’ve an idea. I sent a note at Christmas to Mrs. Vance – the woman who stepped in a rabbit hole that Tony and I rescued. She ’as two boys probably 13 or 14 now. Wonder if either would be interested in learnin’ how to work on furniture with us. And they run beehives. Maybe one of the boys knows apiary work. We could put a hive or two out the back. I’ll write tonight. If that doesn’t work, we’ll talk some more.”

“Tom. People don’t talk much about feelings, at least I’ve not heard ’em. But I really like it when we work and plan together. I want that to go on. It’s got a sort of excitement that’s really different from when ... well ... you know.”

“Yeah. I like when we’re doing things together. But I’m sort of lookin’ forward to when we can be man and wife and don’t have to be so flippin’ careful.”

“Me too,” Vera said, with feeling.

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Percy Jones met Ethel after church. Tom Haig was with him. They were both carrying bags.

“We figured you might want some help this afternoon, so we brought our work togs,” Percy explained.

“Ooh. You don’t ’ave to. But that’d be really nice. Better come with me to Fortescue Road. I’ve got to change too, and I want to take along some food and drink. Tom and Vera are going straight to the cottage. They’ve left some work clothes there.”

When Ethel and the two men got to the cottage, Tom and Vera had laid out the sandpaper and Vera had managed to saw some blocks to wrap it around. She also had cut some pieces of carpet into strips that she folded in three and then used a heavy darning needle to tack shut with twine. These would serve as kneeling pads.

Ethel said “Four of us may be too many. Maybe Tom has something one of us can ’elp him with.”

“What jobs have you in mind, Tom?” Percy asked.

“We think that just the windows would make it too easy for thieves, so we’ve been putting the boards that were on the place back each night. But Vera asked me about shutters, and we’ve an idea for those that’s pretty simple and could be made up. They’ll eventually need painting and makin’ pretty, but we could get ’em sorted out today for the main room – maybe we should say kitchen – if I had some ’elp.”

“I used to help me Dad with some woodwork around the house,” Tom Haig said.

The sanding team decided to start in the other room, since it would not have anyone in it. They did open up the window boards, but in this room these were still attached by rings and hooks, since the windows had not been installed.

Vera said “Let’s call this the bedroom, since Tom has christened the other one the kitchen.”

The two Toms got to work too. We’ll use Tom for Tom Soulton and Thomas for the other. The design was simple. Two rails about 2 inches square were drilled with a 1/4 inch hole about 4 inches from each end. Boards 1 inch thick of between 3 and 6 inches in width and as long as the window frame was wide, minus a 1/4 inch tolerance, were screwed to the rails. The rails were 10 inches shorter than the height of the window, and the whole assembly fitted in the frame. Then they pushed an awl through the holes in the rails and then lifted out the shutter once the marks were made. Tom held the window open while Thomas used a brace and bit and drilled a 1/4 inch hole into the frame.

“Careful to stop when you’re through the wood or hit the brick or mortar,” Tom said.

“I was about to ask about that.”

“I’ve a drill-bit I made out of an old screwdriver on the hand cart,” Tom answered. They went and found this. It was made into a shallow arrow-point, and Tom had then heated it cherry red and plunged it in oil to harden it. Thomas used this and it worked well enough, though slowly, to drill into the brick or mortar. It took about 5 minutes for each hole to get about an inch and a half into the brick. Tom also had several lengths of fat straw, and they used these to blow out the dust regularly so it didn’t choke the bit.

“I’ve some 40-penny nails I found in the bottom of a chest Mr. Cohen bought at an auction. Had a lot of old knobs and handles and other stuff all mixed up. Still sorting through it, but I’ve got a dozen of those and they’re 5 inches long and just under a quarter inch thick.”

The collection of hardware Tom was talking about was already in the workshop, as Tom had had the foresight to bring it on the handcart on one of his first days here. When the two Toms tried the nails, they worked well.

At this point, they heard a clock strike two, and a general halt was declared. Vera came to look at the first shutter and said “That’s really good. It’ll look nice when it’s painted up and maybe decorated with some design. The only problem’ll be losing the nails because they’ve been set down when the shutter’s taken down.”

Tom said “I’ve some staples somewhere – U-shaped nails. We’ll put one in each side, halfway between the ’oles and tie the pins to the staple with some good twine.”

Ethel said “Tom never stops thinkin’” and they all laughed.

By evening – they stopped around 5 as all were tired – the bedroom floor had been sanded to Tom’s satisfaction and the kitchen had its shutters and the repaired part of the floor was sanded. Vera thought that she could finish the sanding in the kitchen in a day’s work, but would do it over three days since the work required a posture that was very uncomfortable after a while.

Tom, though he would not admit it, was exhausted, and went straight to bed after a small bite to eat as soon as Vera delivered him to Fortescue Road.

Ethel told Percy she was extremely grateful to him and Tom Haig for the help, and promised them a dinner next weekend. She realized Percy would have made much less impression upon her in a normal outing, even if he’d taken her to a nice restaurant. Seeing a man working gave you an insight into his character.

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Dan and Vera met at the cottage at 8 o’clock on Monday and through the day managed to get the windows done in the bedroom. These were a pair that

Abraham had obtained from the supplier recommended by Joe Dixon. They were discounted because they had apparently been made with the wrong measurements. Indeed, they were a little too small for the bedroom window, being 2 inches shorter and 1 inch narrower than the opening in both cases.

Dan and Vera had both talked to Tom about this, and knew that the chosen solution was to put in a plank on one side and two at the top of the window. Moreover, the top planks would be the full width of the opening, with the side one shorter by the thickness of the top pair. It was fortunate that there was some suitable wood of the right width to span the whole opening, though the bottom of the side plank would be cut slightly on an angle to match the window sill in its slope to the outside. As soon as they had arrived, Vera had started a small fire in Tom's fire box, and glue was heating while they cut and drilled these planks, and positioned them and drilled pilot holes. It took them about a half hour to glue and screw the planks, after which they took a break for a cup of tea.

Hearing the teapot, the cats came from the workshop, where Tom had, on Sunday, had Percy tidy an existing but partly rotten board to provide a small opening for the cats to get in and out. From some scrap wood and an old pullover, a cat bed had been put in the rearmost animal stall, which Tom and Vera had decided to reserve for the moment as a place for visiting donkeys. The cats, correctly, expected there might be a saucer of milk for them. It was anticipated that there would be enough mice and other prey for the cats to survive.

Vera said "Do you think we can get the windows done by early this afternoon?"

Dan answered "I think so. We know how to proceed. Let's hope everything fits all right."

"If we set the windows on the floor beside each opening, with the top towards the wall, we can do all the angle brackets together, and fit on the birch rods. While you do that, I can be working on the sills."

"That makes sense. We can get most of the work done without each other waiting about."

Of course, there were times when one was waiting for the other, or for a tool of which there was but one available. Still, just after one o'clock both windows were in place on their pivots and the pins for the opening rod were in place, though none of the four pins had been filed smooth yet. That could wait a while yet.

They stopped to eat some bread and cheese and drink another cup of tea, then started to make the shutters for the bedroom windows. They left off the bottom plank of these because the rod that held the window closed or open to a particular distance would be in the way. Indeed, on Sunday, the two Toms had had to remove the bottom plank of the kitchen window

shutters. Dan said “If we cut a slot, the rod will fit, and the shutter will hold the rod onto the pin so the window can’t be opened.”

“Let’s do that after we’ve got them up. I’m thinking it will be fiddly to cut the slots to the right depth and width,” Vera commented.

“Yes. For now we can leave off the lowest cross piece of the shutter.”

They worked quite quickly. A casual observation by Tom about the holes for the pins led to Vera drilling the side beams first, before the shutter was assembled. Then Dan cut and Vera drilled the cross pieces with a brace and bit, following which Vera drilled pilot holes with the Archimedes drill and Dan drove the screws. They worked quietly together to mark and drill the holes for the mounting pins, and Vera held open the window so Dan could drill into the brick.

By now it was four o’clock. Over the next two hours, they managed to cut slots for all of the four bottom cross pieces of the shutters. The first was initially too tight, and making it larger needed some messy filing and chiselling. They made the other notches larger.

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By the time they locked up, 6 had sounded from various clocks. Dan headed back to Fortescue Road, while Vera went back to Uptons. She was going to work Tuesday there. However, Dan and Tom were going to come back on Tuesday. Tom had been told he must only do very light tasks. Indeed, he spent most of Monday in bed after the exertions of Sunday. The main job planned was that Dan was going to take off the boards at the back of the privy.

On Tuesday morning, they got to the cottage about a quarter-past 8 and went more or less straight to the privy. Using the claw pry and crowbar, Dan pulled off the boards below and behind the seat of the privy and outside its box. As Tom had anticipated, the nails were rusty and the boards broke. The job was a bit smelly, but not as bad as feared. As the boards were stained, they placed them at the back of the property against a fence that was quite dilapidated. The privy boards could cover some holes in rotten fencing. Using some other wood, they fashioned a sort of trap door. They used staples and pieces of wire to fasten it in place. It was hoped the privy emptier, known only as Potter, would come in a few days, and the trap door could easily be removed and replaced.

Dan asked “Where’s Potter going to dump the shit and stuff?”

“I’m hoping you’ll dig a bit of a ditch about 5 feet from the back fence across the property and pile the dirt on the far side of the ditch. I’ll give you a shillin’ extra, ’cos I know it’s heavy work. But we don’t need a really

pretty ditch, just one about a foot deep and a foot wide and 25 feet long. After Potter's been, we'll pull some of the dirt back on the shit with a hoe or rake. Guess we better think of bringing one of those."

"I can use the bob extra for a present for Mum, but I agree it's a heavy job. I'll start now. What're you going to do?"

"Going to start figuring out what materials we're going to need over the next few weeks. With my hand, the jobs won't go as fast as we want, but I want to get the wood and other materials here so we're not chasin' 'em. And I need to figure out what new tools we'll want for the T and V Soulton business. There's some measuring, designing and planning to do as well."

\* \* \*

Truthfully, Tom was still in far from good condition. He was still in some pain, slightly feverish and light-headed. Still, he could sit and think. If, of course, he could find a place to sit. At the moment, there was just the steps. He got some water from the kettle and sat on the front step for a few minutes.

He was thinking he really must try to get up and do something when he heard the clip-clop of a donkey and the noise of cart wheels and saw Tony with Moonbeam.

"Here's some of the furniture Vera bought with Maud. When we get a chance, either Joseph or I will bring some more. Should get it here in one more load."

"We'd better put most of it in the stable – what I'm now calling the workshop."

Tom helped Tony unload, but Tony warned him to only use his right hand. There was the chest of drawers, the parts of the bed, the table, and four chairs. The table legs were off, and would stay off until it was set up in the kitchen.

The chest was lying on its back in the cart and the last item to remove. Tony said "Let me pull the drawers out. Make it a lot easier to move."

He lifted each out and passed it to Tom, who could manage each with his good hand. The frame of the chest could now be lifted easily onto the ground, then moved into the workshop. Dan and Tom had opened both front and back doors because the window was not yet in place, and the frame was still boarded up.

"I've got to figure out how to put some shutters so we don't get robbed," Tom said. "Actually, I'm waiting to see if Mrs. Vance replies to a letter I sent asking if one of her boys would like to come work for us. It would be a bit of an expense, but I can train 'im to polish and such and do odd jobs,

but mainly to be here if Vera and I aren't. But meantime we do need to lock up."

"Has it gotta be shutters? Couldn't you put bars on the inside?"

"S'pose so. 'Specially if they were fastened too far from the edge of the window for anyone to get at the screws."

"Where might we get some bars?" Tony asked.

"Mr. Howard the blacksmith should be able to supply some, but be cheaper if we can find some being scrapped, even if we have to clean them up. If we install them inside, then they won't be so likely to rust, though I 'eard from someone that wrought iron don't rust so easily, but you can't sharpen it well for some reason."

Tony said "I can pass by Howard's later today. I'll ask 'im what might be likely.

"And you know, if one of the Vances does come, 'e might be able to set up a beehive. You need beeswax don't you?"

"Yeah. It does a nice job if you don't need a tough finish, and it's nice 'cos you can do it several times and fix minor blemishes. Smells nice too. Women like it compared to linseed oil."

\* \* \*

After Tony left, Tom heard a clock strike eleven. He went in the workshop and put one of the chairs that had just arrived where he could sit and look at the workbench. The bench would need some reinforcing to make it solid enough for planing and chiselling, and it needed a good vise, which was something he didn't have anywhere yet. Maybe two vises, possibly different types, would go on the bench.

Tom had a notebook and started a list under the heading "Tools etc." The first items were "vise" and "reinforcement". Then he wrote "shelves" and "pegs". Yes, plenty to do. He put a star next to "reinforcement". That would need to be first. He added "dogs", which meant pegs to help hold material while it was being worked on.

Recognizing that woodwork created shavings and dust, he added "broom" and "dustpan and brush", then added "waste bin". Considering this some more, he climbed the ladder to the loft. It was rather dark, but there was enough light to see the doors, and he opened the front one. It swung outward, and had a rope to pull it back. Why not open inwards? Of course, because that would limit how much hay and straw could be stored.

The space up here in the loft was constrained by the slope of the roof, but there was a good usable space of maybe 15 feet by 10. If downstairs were for woodwork, then this might be where varnish, paint or oil would be

applied. If there were a curtain or partition, the dust from below could be kept from getting on wet and sticky surfaces while it dried.

They would want more light, yet not have the doors wide open. Removing some boards beside the doors would accomplish that, and the spaces could be glassed over. For now the doors each end of the loft would allow them to get started, but a simple pole and some sort of cleat on each door would mean they could control the degree of opening. Tom wrote "loft doors" on his list.

Getting items up here might be an issue, especially if they were heavy. The ladder leaned against the floor of the loft with its base towards the corner of the stable to the right of the main front door. Easy enough for a person, but awkward or impossible for shifting furniture.

Looking up, Tom realized there was a ridge beam. A beam could be attached to this with iron straps, but projecting through the front of the roof. Then a hook on such a beam could be used to hoist furniture or other heavy things to the level of the loft. He wrote "hoisting beam" to the list, and under it in brackets added "hook" and "straps". He thought of adding "pulley", hesitated, then did so.

Feeling tired, he closed the loft door preparatory to descending. It took more effort than he would like. They'd want to make opening and closing easier. A bar on the door about 18 inches from the hinge and a fastener with a long screw or bolt through a hole at about 2/3 height could be swung horizontal and used to lever it shut maybe. Have to think about that. Talk to Vera maybe. Before he forgot, he put a note "door closer" in his notebook.

Having descended the ladder, Tom found a chair to take to the kitchen. Only the back door was open, but the front window was propped on the pin so air could flow. He got the fire-box going for tea and, somehow daydreaming, sat to wait for the kettle to boil. Dan would probably be thirsty and wanting a break.

There was the sound of a horse and Tom saw a brougham go by. He heard it stop a few yards down the road. There was the yelp of a dog, and the horse moved on. Looking out, Tom saw a not-very-large dog limping after the brougham, but clearly not going to catch it.

Tom went outside and walked to the gate, which was closed but not locked with the chain. The dog, about 60 or so yards away, looked round at him. Then it looked back at the rapidly disappearing carriage.

"Better come here, boy. They don't seem to want you."

With apparent reluctance, the dog limped towards the gate and Tom let him come in. The dog's injury seemed likely from being thrown out of the carriage. Apart from that he seemed to be relatively clean and healthy.

Not quite knowing what to do, Tom found a bowl – Vera had brought a few decrepit ones so they could give scraps or milk to the cats or for other



purposes like mixing things. He pumped water, allowing the first brackish pulses to clear, and put water in the bowl. The dog was sitting by the back step, licking its paw. Tom set the bowl down and the dog drank. Then it lay down beside the step.

The kettle was boiling, so Tom made the tea, then walked to behind the workshop and called to Dan that tea was on. Dan disappeared into the workshop. Privy visit, no doubt. He came out and walked over to the step.

“Where’d ’e come from?”

“Brougham came up the road, stopped an’ they tossed ’im out. I think he hurt his paw in the fall. I gave ’im some water, and he seems to think this is an all right place. If you want to wash up, there’s soap on a saucer by the pump there.”

Tom made tea and he and Dan came and sat on the back steps.

“You all right?” Dan asked.

“Still a bit out of sorts. I’ll take it easy. Been making a list of tools and stuff for the workshop before the dog showed up.”

“What’ll you do with ’im, assuming it’s a him.”

“Could possibly use a dog here to make noise if anyone’s poking about. Have to find summat’ for ’im to eat, though,” Tom said.

“Shouldn’t be too hard to get scraps from the butcher. The dog isn’t a big one.”

Indeed, the dog was some sort of terrier with curly hair.

Tom asked “How’s the ditch coming?”

“Got it dug down a couple of inches. Used the spade to cut the sides. Gonna go back and deepen it. Should take about another hour or hour and a half. What’s the time now?” Dan asked.

“Must be nearly half past noon. I heard the quarter a few minutes ago, but not yet the half hour.”

“Perhaps have a bite to eat now. Maybe the dog’d like a bit of cheese and bread.”

The dog did, indeed, like the cheese, and did eat the bread, but only after the cheese.

“Think I’ll call him Limper, on account of how he walks now,” Tom said.

Dan went back to digging, and Tom, feeling again very tired, went into the bedroom and lay down on the floor using a clean piece of rag on a pile of the kneeling pads Vera had made as a pillow.

\* \* \*

Tom woke when Limper barked. For a moment he was disoriented, then realized he’d fallen asleep in the empty bedroom. He could hear a horse and

cart and familiar voices. Vera said “Oh. There’s a dog here. Nice looking fellow, too.”

Vera was with Joshua and his pony and cart. As Tom came out the back door, Limper stopped barking and laid back down. Vera said “Mr. Goldman offered to bring the rest of the furniture, and I found an old cupboard I think we can use.”

“Oh. Good for you. And thanks, Mr. Goldman. It’s really helpful of you.”

Joshua said “My curiosity about the place was rather extreme, and I had to satisfy it. May I take a look about?”

“Of course. And I’ll welcome your observations. We aim to have this as a home and a place to make a modest fortune if we can.”

“I don’t doubt you will. But take care you don’t do more damage to your hand.”

Dan came round the side of the workshop and said “Don’t worry Mr. Goldman, I’ll help Vera unload.” They proceeded to do this while Tom accompanied Joshua. Tom knew Joshua well enough that they said nothing during an inspection of the cottage and then the workshop.

Joshua then said “You’re doing well. It’s got the makings of a decent dwelling – not luxurious but potentially comfortable – and quite a good workshop for repair and refinishing of furniture.”

“I was looking this morning at how I could use the upper level of the workshop for the refinishing, and the lower for repair. Carpentry makes shavings and dust, but a curtain around the top of the ladder could keep the upstairs cleaner, though we’ll need to give it better light.”

“Will you put in a skylight?” Joshua asked.

“Not at first. I think we can remove some boards next to the upper doors and fix some glass in frames over the holes. And probably figure out a way to hold the doors open partially rather than swing all the way. I also think it should be fairly easy to fix a beam to stick out the front about three feet with a hook so we can hoist up or lower pieces of furniture.”

“Hmm. As usual, Tom, you’ve been casting your eye for how to improve things. Yes. I think those are, if not the precise steps to take, in the right general direction.”

Vera planned to stay for the rest of the afternoon, but Dan was finished the ditch and Tom gave him the promised shilling and he took the opportunity of a lift with Joshua, which would save him part of his walk.

“I’ll stop at a butcher when I see one and get some scraps for Limper and I’ll arrange for someone to bring them, even if I have to come myself,” Dan said. “Since I’ve got the shilling, you can pay me back later.”

“If you see Mr. Cohen, I’ve some things we need to get. Let me give you a note,” Tom said.

He quickly wrote down that they needed some linseed oil and turpentine. They had a little, but it would not cover the floor. He added that Tony was looking for iron railings or narrow bars, and that he would want several feet of iron strapping, pre-drilled with holes, to secure a beam for lifting furniture. Dan took the note, said his farewells and left with Joshua.

After they'd gone, Vera asked "How are you feeling today?"

"Not so clever. Still hurts, and I've not got much get up and go."

"You're still getting some things done. And we seem to have acquired a dog. Do you plan to keep him?"

"Might be a she. But you saw how he barked when you came, but settled down when I came out. So he might be a good addition as a watch-dog and a sort of door-bell."

"True. Dan said how he was thrown out of a carriage. Said that's why he limps and you gave him that name."

"Yes. Hope his paw gets better. Anyway, I should tell you what I've been thinking. Let's go in the workshop."

Tom took out his notebook and told Vera what he was thinking about the loft of the workshop. Limper followed them. As they came in the workshop, the cats saw the dog and the mother cat arched her back and hissed, but Limper did no more than look at her then follow Tom and Vera to near the bench. After a bit the mother cat calmed a bit, but shooed the kittens deep into the animal stall where they had their bed.

"I'll have to ask Mrs. Cohen about some suitable material for curtaining off the upstairs, though we might have some old, stained sheets at Uptons. In any event, I want to get some curtains for the cottage. Make it more of a home for us."

Tom said "Let me show you a couple of ideas for upstairs. I'll go first."

Vera said "It's much too dark for working."

"Yes. Let me get the door open. Now if we take off some of the boards of the building – they run up and down and nailed to those cross pieces – then we can probably simply screw some windows over the openings to get light. I'm thinking either side of the big doors at each end. Might have to putty around the windows to keep water from getting between the wood."

"We'll need the light, so I agree."

"I also want to strap a beam to the ridge beam – the top one there – and have it project about 3 to 4 feet outside and have a hook so we can lift pieces up here."

"Oh, yes. I can't see how we'd lift them up the ladder. That makes a lot of sense."

"I already sent a note to Mr. Cohen to ask if he can find some iron straps with holes for screws to attach the lifting beam to the ridge beam. We can

make a reasonable beam from a pair of pieces of the wood I got to fix the cottage roof joists.”

“It seems awkward to open the door,” Vera asked. “Why did they make it swing outwards?”

“It’s so more hay or straw bales can be stacked and not hinder the door movement. But I think we could put a screw through a hole in a stick about 4 feet long, and put that into the door about 4 feet from the bottom of the door and about 18 inches from the hinge.”

Tom pulled on the rope that was attached and brought the door nearly closed. The door was, of course, hanging out over a clear drop of about 7 feet. Tom continued “The stick will hang from about here. If you swing it up towards the hinge, it’ll stick out a bit more than 2 feet and give a handle to push to close the door without leaning out over the drop.”

“Clever. You’d better do that soon.”

“Might even be able to use it somehow to hold the door a bit open for air.”

“Even when you are under the weather, you’re still coming up with ideas, Tom.” She gave him a kiss. “What should we work on now?”

“We could hang that cupboard, measure for curtains, draw up what we might do for the draining board next to the sink, think about how to adjust the kitchen drain so we have a way to empty a tub. We probably want to have an iron stove so we don’t ’ave to cook on an open fire. And there’s no end of stuff to get. We should figure out when and where we’re going to find them.”

“Yes. And we still have to keep on with other work.”

“And arranging to get married.”

“That too.”

\* \* \*

When they came down from the loft, they found Limper lying with the cats in the last stall.

“Well, that will avoid at least one problem,” Vera said, laughing. “Oh. Did you and Dan get the opening of the privy done? I got a note from Potter that he’ll be here Thursday morning.”

“Good. We did that first. Dan was coming back from digging a ditch at the back of the property when you arrived. The ditch is for Potter to dump the muck in. Otherwise have to pay ’im to haul it away, and he’d probably just put it in the ditch down the road. You probably saw I gave Dan a shilling out my pocket because that was a heavy job I’d have done myself if I’d been able.”

“He deserves it if the job’s done well.”

“We can go and look, but I think he’s reliable.” The dog quietly stood up and followed them as they went to the ditch, then back to the cottage to carry out some of the tasks on their lists.

That evening Vera came back with Tom to Fortescue Road and Mary and Cassandra insisted she stay for supper. There was some discussion of the different items needed and tasks still to be done, but it was clear progress was being made.

Tom was clearly tired, and since there was still daylight so Vera could walk back to Uptons before dark, he was able to go straight to bed.

\* \* \*

Over the next few weeks, progress gradually accelerated in repairs as Tom’s hand healed. Adeline found a single left hand kid glove that fit quite tightly, and Tom could wear this over a thin dressing. It kept the hand clean, but was tight enough to allow him to do many light jobs.

A house fire near Portslade yielded a slightly damaged box stove. Joseph Upton was delivering some goods with Annabelle and passed the ruin as some workmen were demolishing the blackened carcass of the building. The stove was in pieces on the ground. A man in a top hat was talking to the foreman and clearly giving instructions.

Joseph said “Excuse me, sir, but can you tell me what plans you have for the scrap iron?”

“Probably cart it away and sell it. You’ve a cart. Want to buy it?”

“Four bob?” Joseph offered.

“Worth a lot more if you can get it reassembled. How about 10 shillings?”

“And if it can’t be reassembled, it’s just scrap iron, and cast iron’s only good for the furnace. Have to take it to Every’s in Lewes.”

“Five bob and it’s yours.”

Joseph did not know for certain whether he was making a good bargain, but he put all the pieces he could find in Annabelle’s cart. Percy the cat looked on with apparent concern for the black and dirty iron. Indeed, Rebecca Upton would give Joseph a haranguing for getting filthy in the process of shifting the stove, which he delivered right away to Soultons as it was becoming known.

Tom helped Joseph put the pieces in front of the workshop where he could clean and examine them. Joseph was interested enough to stay while Tom did this, using a rag and a bucket of water. Later he’d need to use stove blacking to cover the quickly generated rust, but all stoves needed that.

Cleaning took about half an hour, then Tom started to put the pieces together. The only damage seemed to be the front legs, which were broken in two.

“Probably the ceiling falling on it,” Joseph ventured. “Place was gutted. Completely burned out.”

“Shouldn’t be too hard to make some sort of replacement, though it won’t be as pretty. Will 7 and 6 give you enough reward for your initiative?”

“Yeah. ’alf a crown for picking up what someone thought was rubbish.”

Indeed, Rebecca was annoyed at the soot on Joseph’s clothes, and was vocal in complaint, but quietly happy that her son kept an eye out for business.

\* \* \*

The stove meant quite a lot of work for Tom.

First, it was of a design where the stovepipe came out vertically at the back of the box. This meant he would have to run a pipe upwards, then at right angles into a hole he would need to make in the chimney. Taking bricks out of the chimney could risk bringing it down.

He also needed to find suitable pipe, but there were tinsmiths around who could no doubt be persuaded with money to make some of the right dimensions.

The broken front legs were another matter. When he went to talk to Mr. Howard, the blacksmith, he learned that cast iron was difficult or impossible to weld, or at least impossible for normal blacksmiths. However, he also had come to talk to Howard about making a frame out of angle iron, which was made of wrought iron. The horizontals of this would be riveted to the verticals with some overlap at each corner in each direction. The horizontal parts of the frame would have the unriveted part of the L filling the gaps between bricks, while the verticals would be out from the chimney, but could be used to fasten the stove pipe if necessary. This frame Tom intended to be set so that it matched the mortar gaps between the chimney bricks where the stove pipe would pierce the chimney. By chipping out the mortar at the right places, the frame could be tapped into place and would support the weight of bricks above if necessary. Then the hole could be made by chiselling out necessary bricks with the frame in place. Cut bricks and mortar would seal the stove pipe in place, with fastening to the iron frame if needed.

Howard said “Could you support the stove on some of the same type of angle iron? I could make a simple bridge of two legs and a cross piece just wider than the stove in the same way as your frame for the stove pipe. Rivets

would be tight enough to hold it square. Then a bolt and plate each side to hold the bridge to the stove.”

This would work. Some filing of the broken end of the legs would avoid a hazard to shins. Of course, it turned out the bridge and frame cost about 25 shillings, but the stove was quite a good one, all in all.

The final cost of the stove was a hearth for it to stand on. Vera said “Isn’t it dangerous to have a stove over a wooden floor?”

“Yes. ’Course it is. We need to decide what we want.”

There was already a layer of bricks in front of the fireplace, but the size of the stove meant it had to be extended to over double the distance into the room. They found some plain unglazed tiles to cover this layer of bricks, thereby hiding differences in colour and maker’s mark of unmatched bricks. If they were building from scratch, no doubt they would have had this supported by a brick foundation rather than the wooden floor, but the three or so inches of ceramic would likely not move. Tom put a triangular piece of moulding along the edge in case the mortar between the bricks cracked.

The final task was a piece of metal to close off the old fireplace. Tom made this out of some scrap tinsplate. The edge was carefully bent to fit the opening and its springiness held the cover in place. If necessary, it could be removed easily, as could the stovepipe, except a plug would be needed for the opening. Vera said she preferred to always use a stove.

\* \* \*

In mid-August, Tony became the hero of a near-fatal incident on the beach.

He and Moonbeam were giving rides not far from the Ladies Bathing Machine area. It was a warm day, but there had been a storm a couple of days previously, so the waves were a little higher than usual. In mid-afternoon, Tony had two small children aboard Moonbeam, who he had on a long rope so that the children felt that they were in charge of the donkey, though she would walk up and down or round in a circle as she chose. Tony was watching the children to ensure they did not fall off, though that was unlikely with the particular saddle Moonbeam had on her back, which had a raised edge to the seat, much unlike that of traditional equestrians. Indeed, someone had said it looked like something out of Arabia, but who was to know. It had been with Annabelle and Archie Temple earlier.

There was a shout of “Leave ’er alone. Don’t touch the harness. Ow!”

Looking round, Tony saw a bunch of louts, four of them, and they had pushed the youth who was in charge of one of the horse-drawn bathing machines to the ground. They were unharnessing the horse.

Tony ran over to Moonbeam and stopped her motion. He called to the children's parents.

"Sir, Madam. I must go and help Mr. Norris, the boy with the bathing machine. Can you try to fetch the constables?"

He lifted the children off the donkey one by one and handed them to the parents, then made for the bathing machine. By now the driver had tried to stop the louts, but had been punched in the face and was down on the shingle again. And the horse was now unharnessed. One of the louts jumped on its back and held onto its mane and yelled "I'm for a ride on the beach," and the others slapped the poor animal's rump so it started and trotted away up the beach, followed by the other miscreants, who had bottles in their hands, likely of something intoxicating.

Now the bathing machine, untethered to the horse, was rolling further into the water. There was a young woman who had been about to descend into the water with the assistance of one of the bathing assistants, a stout woman of middle years who Tony knew as Fanny Wentworth. One of the wheels of the machine caught Fanny and she let out a scream and momentarily disappeared in the water. The machine kept rolling another few feet, now into water deep enough that the deck of the cabin was awash. Then it hit something in the water, a rock or a hollow, and it stopped suddenly with a lurch, launching the young lady bather into the sea with a yell.

Tony had been making towards the young driver to help him, but now moved towards the edge of the water. He untied the rope from Moonbeam's bridle and tied it to a ring on the saddle. "Stand, Moonbeam. Stand here."

Tony tied the other end of the rope to his belt. He hoped it was strong enough. Then he walked into the sea towards where the young female bather was flailing and spluttering. The water was up to chest level, then a wave came in and water was over Tony's head momentarily and his feet lifted from the sea floor. But now he could grab onto the young woman, and did.

"Moonbeam. Walk on!" Tony yelled. Moonbeam hesitated a moment, looking round to see where he was, then she slowly walked away from the water. Tony felt the tug around his waist and struggled to both hang onto the young woman and keep some sort of footing. Fortunately, it was only a few yards until the water depth was low enough to walk, albeit with some waves. "Whoa. Moonbeam. Stand girl."

By now a crowd was gathering. Two men who had been walking their ladies on the beach had risked damage to their clothes and helped pull the bathing assistant ashore. She pulled her skirt up to her thigh and there was a welt and a small cut from where the wheel had hit her. One of the men said "I am a physician and surgeon. Let me examine your leg."

A constable arrived with the couple whose children were riding Moonbeam at the start of the fracas. He realized that he would possibly need



support, and commanded one of the urchins who frequented the beach to inform the Sergeant at the police station.

“What’s in it fer me?” the urchin cried.

“A bun and a cup o’ tea if you do, and a wallop around the ears if you don’t and I ever see you again.”

The constable, named Jacobs, started to take down information. This was difficult, as there was now a crowd and people wanted to make a fuss over Tony and the others who had been involved in the drama, when Tony really just wanted to get away and get dry clothes.

The young woman bather managed to regain her composure after some coughing and spluttering. Then, after a couple of minutes, she realized she was in her bathing costume, which clung to her curves rather tightly, and became somewhat hysterical that people could "see me".

One of the men who was already wet – not the physician – offered to collect the young bather’s clothes, and the operator of another of the bathing machines which was high and dry said the young woman could change in it. The physician turned his attention to the horse driver, Charlie Norris, who was more shocked that grievously hurt, but would no doubt have a black eye tomorrow.

Constable Shaw arrived and helped Jacobs get information and supervise the recovery of the unharnessed bathing machine. The urchin who had gone to fetch him appeared leading the horse.

“Horse tossed the bloke from ’is back and they scarpered,” he said.

“Well, you’ve earned your bun,” Jacobs said. “Well done.”

Shaw said “Well done to you, too, Mr. Brown. And your beast. Moon-beam isn’t it.”

“Yes. She followed my commands perfectly. I don’t know how to swim, and the water went over me head.”

“Better get some dry clothes,” Shaw said. “And you’ve lost a button at the top of your shirt. Might want to hold that closed.”

“Oh.” Tony realized that from some angles it would be possible to notice that he wasn’t quite as he was dressed. Under the shirt he had a vest which kept things more or less flat, but the reality would be visible to the observant.

“Not to worry,” Shaw said, “We’ve all got to make a living. Moreover, you showed a lot of courage there, getting that young woman out of the water.”

Tony gathered up a few things he had placed on the beach, including the sign they used to advertise the rides and the price. 2d for 15 minutes. Then, rather bedraggled, he made his way back to Fortescue Road, where he knew there would be some dry clothes, and it was a lot closer than Uptons. Once there, he rang the bell to have Ethel or Adeline open the gate to the yard so

he could bring in Moonbeam. Normally he would have gone back to Uptons yard.

Seeing a wet Tony, Ethel, who was alone in the house, quickly found some towels and made a cup of tea. Once dry and changed, Tony related the story.

“You’ll be quite the local hero,” Ethel said.

“Don’t really want to be,” Tony said. “Rather like the quiet life.”

“Bit of attention can’t hurt business,” Ethel rejoined.

“Yes, but ... I don’t want attention, that’s all.”

“Oh. Not sure I understand that.”

“You might as well know why. I’m actually a girl, but I’ve worn men’s clothes so I don’t get, you know, bothered by men.”

“Oh. ... I didn’t realize. But now you say, you ain’t got any moustache like Tom ’ad when he was 15.

“Does anyone else know?”

“Mrs. Yarrow and Mrs. Naismith, and I guess Mrs. Cohen. And Tom worked it out, when I started, you know, the monthlies.”

“That must’ve been a shock. I know it was for me.”

“Mrs. Naismith had given me warning, but it was still a surprise. At least I knew what it was.”

“Are you gonna stay in men’s clothes?”

“For now. Maybe always. I don’t think there’s any law against it, and women’s togs aren’t much good for work on the carts.”

“True. I often think I’d prefer to wear trousers for working. And don’t get me started about stays.

“Don’t worry about your clothes. I’ll get them out of the basin and give them another rinse so the salt’s out, and I’ll put a new button on the shirt.”

\* \* \*

When he’d finished his cup of tea and a pair of biscuits – very nice biscuits thanks to Ethel’s generosity – he took an apple with him for Moonbeam and led her back to the stable at Uptons’, when he brushed her and made sure she had fodder and water. As he finished, Joseph and Annabelle returned from moving some furniture for Joshua and Abraham.

“’eard you went in the water and pulled out a bather.”

“Yes. Some ruffians unhitched Charlie Norris’ horse from the bathing machine and gave him a bit of a bashing. The machine rolled over Fanny Wentworth. I think she took a nasty knock to the leg. Hope nothing’s broken.”

“There’ll be plenty of gossip in the pubs tonight,” Joseph said.

“Yeah. Just hope not too much about me.”

“Why not? Take all the credit you can.”

Tony said “Well, Constable Shaw and Ethel both learned a bit about me today. And it’s not something that I want gossiped about.”

“What’s that?”

“Well, I want to be known as Tony, the donkeyman and carter. But I was born a girl, and I started wearing boys’ togs so I wouldn’t ... you know ... get bothered by some boys or men.”

“Oh. Yeah. That might be sommat’ that you’d prefer to keep to yourself,” Joseph said.

“Most of the Fortescue Road people know, and Mrs. Naismith says to just keep on doing my work. There’s no law against wearing men’s clothes, but some folk get upset I guess.”

“What if you want to ... you know ... walk out with someone?”

“Have to cross that bridge when I come to it, I suppose. But I hope you won’t treat me all different like. Tom figured things out about a year ago. He said if I wanted to be Tony, I’d be Tony to him, but I’d better work like a fella’ if I did.”

“I think you’re stronger than I am.”

“Till next year maybe. You’re pretty young yet. Still growing,” Tony said.

\* \* \*

Having settled Moonbeam, and hearing six chimed on a nearby clock, Tony headed back to Fortescue Road. The excitement had given him an appetite. However, when he got to the end of the street, there was a carriage outside Number 21 and a man in a top hat and expensive coat was ringing the bell. Tony thought it would be someone for Mr. Turcotte, though he usually left at six. In any event, it was Adeline who answered the door as Tony came within earshot.

“Good afternoon, Madam. My name is Sir Oliver Crouch. I am looking for a Mr. Tony Brown who did me the service of saving my daughter Olivia from drowning when some louts unhitched the horse from the bathing machine in which she was preparing to enter the sea.”

“Yes. Sir Oliver. The news reached us but a short while ago. And here is Mr. Brown now.”

Tony, not quite sure what to do, doffed his cap and nodded to the gentleman.

“Mr. Brown, I wanted to personally thank you and reward you for your quick thinking and bravery. And from what my daughter says, your excellent donkey whose obedience to your commands allowed her rescue.”

Tony, recovering his voice, said “I only did what’s right in the circumstances, sir. And I ’ope the constables get the toughs that caused all the trouble.”

“On that account, I have told the constabulary that I will be willing to engage someone to track them down if they are unable to arrest someone. After all, the driver of the horse was assaulted and the bathing assistant has a nasty injury to her leg. And two gentlemen have ruined their trousers, though I understand that a Mr. Richards who has a laundry has offered to attempt to bring them to a good condition if he can, and to do so at no charge.”

As they were talking, a man stepped up and said “Sir Oliver. Timothy Lester of the Brighton Herald. May I report your last statement.”

“Definitely not. At least not until the miscreants are under arrest and preferably doing hard labour.”

Lester, being a newspaperman, persisted. “Mr. Brown. Tell me what you did. People want to know.”

Adeline had the good sense to intervene. “Mr. Lester. Why don’t you give us your card and when Mr. Brown and Sir Oliver have had a chance to recover from the excitement, you may – and that is not a certainty – get your story. Now I am going to invite Sir Oliver, should he wish to talk to Mr. Brown, to come inside.

“Tony. Let me check if the drawing room is available. If not we shall use the kitchen.”

Sir Oliver called out “Olivia. You may join us, please.” That young lady, now dressed in a full summer outfit, was assisted from the carriage by the driver. Sir Oliver said “Thompson. We will not be long, but if the horse is thirsty, you may take him to a nearby trough then return, please.”

“Yes. Sir Oliver.”

Lester realized that he would only do his cause harm by persisting, and skulked away. As a good journalist he would, however, not wait for Tony to approach him but try again tomorrow.

Cassandra had been in the kitchen, as dinner was not long away, and had overheard the conversation. She quickly ascended, nodded to Adeline and went up to the drawing room before Adeline showed Sir Oliver and Tony up.

“Good afternoon, Sir Oliver. I overheard your conversation with Mr. Brown. I am his employer and, I believe, friend, Mrs. Cassandra Cohen, or by convention Mrs. Abraham Cohen, though my husband and I are but recently wed and have separate businesses.”

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Cohen. Let me introduce my daughter Olivia, who Mr. Brown rescued.”

“As I said, it’s only what needed to be done,” Tony said. “I was lucky to have Moonbeam and a long rope, or I wouldn’t have been able to do as much.” He was as careful as he could to pronounce the H’s.

“Moonbeam is the donkey?” Olivia asked.

“Yes. We have two. Moonbeam and Annabelle,” Tony said.

“Well, I am glad you were there. Who knows what might have happened otherwise,” Sir Oliver said. “And to underline my gratitude, I hope you will accept this £5 note. You no doubt need to replace some clothing, and I am sure you have missed some revenue from giving rides. Courage and initiative like that deserve recognition and reward.”

“I ... thank you, Sir Oliver. It’s very generous.” Tony said. He had been about to refuse, but saw Cassandra nod to him.

Cassandra said “I very much appreciate your gesture, Sir Oliver. In this establishment I try to encourage enterprise and initiative, and Mr. Brown is a very positive example. Thank you.”

Sir Oliver said “If the delightful smells rising from below are a sign, we are keeping you from your meal. We will take our leave.”

With that, there was a general descent, first to the main floor where farewells were issued to the Crouch’s, then to the kitchen for supper.

\* \* \*

After supper, Adeline and Tony were getting ready for bed in their respective niches. Adeline said “Tony. Unless I’m mistaken, Mr. Lester of the Herald will not leave you alone.”

“What should I do? I don’t want ’im writing about me.”

“He’ll write something anyway. It may be best to think carefully about what is the story and what is about you. There are enough people who know about your rescue of Miss Olivia that Lester will have the bones of it anyway. So he’ll be angling to tell about you, and you don’t want that, I’m thinking.”

“Yes. There’s plenty of people saw what happened, and I can tell him what I saw and did. I just don’t want to talk about me.”

“You’re probably safe to say that you’re Tony Brown, donkeyman with Best Bonnet Cartage, and you’re 15 years old. Then ask him about the newspaper business. Be really curious. How did he come to it? Does it pay well. He’ll probably not like be on the receiving end of questions. And you can ask what he knows about the ruffians. Have they been identified? Caught? Was the bathing machine damaged?”

“You mean the best answer is a question?”

“Yes. And also not be afraid to tell him you aren’t the story and you want a quiet life. Don’t want the attention in case the ruffians decide to bother you. Mr. Lester can’t argue with that. And I’ll bet Sir Oliver Crouch would have him sacked if he pesters Miss Olivia.”

“Mrs. Naismith, I didn’t say anything at supper about the £5 pounds, but I think Fanny Wentworth and Charlie Norris could use a few shillings, especially if they’ve missed any work.”

“You’re thinking of giving them a bit out of what Sir Oliver gave you?”

“By the way, I think you did the right thing to say nothing at supper about that.”

“Yes. I wanted to ask Rose if she could put it in my box in Mr. Turcotte’s safe. But then I was thinking that maybe 5 shillings each to Fanny and Charlie, and so I’d need the note broken. It’s still in my pocket.”

“Well, there’s two things to sort our. First, if you want, I’ll give you a note saying you’ve given me the £5 to be put in your box in the safe.”

“Why do I need a note?”

“Because sometimes even friends cheat each other. A note protects your money and my integrity.”

“Yes. Mr. Goldman would say that it’s businesslike.”

“And I think that the amount you suggest – 5 shillings each – is generous but not foolish. And you will give me a note that I have given you 10 shillings, which you will repay me when the note is broken or you have the right coin.”

“Oh. Excellent. That will save me having to ask Mrs. Cohen.”

\* \* \*

We have mentioned that Rose Bingham worked for Mr. Turcotte, a barrister who pled cases before the Courts of Chancery. Now that Henry Mortimer was established, or at least becoming established, as a solicitor, Turcotte could have been considered to need a new clerk. However, Rose had considerable experience with the Town’s administration, even at a quite young age, and she was a very competent secretary. Turcotte decided that he could manage the cases he had with just Rose to assist him. If other briefs were sent to him, he would consider taking on those that interested him.

One afternoon in March, Mr. Turcotte had asked Miss Bingham if he might discuss the future of the office with her. He said he planned, health and other considerations permitting, to keep his practice going for at least 5 years, but likely no more than 12. He also wondered if she would like to take on the rather modest living accommodation in the back office that Henry used. This would provide additional security to sensitive documents that might be in the safe.

Rose lived at this time with her parents. She was a handsome woman, but her parents had somehow managed to cause awkwardness with any young man who paid her even the slightest attention, so she had remained single. While she enjoyed her life, she would have enjoyed the company of an agreeable man, but opportunity seemed to have eluded her. Thus the idea of not living with her parents was attractive. Also attractive was the food that went along with living at Fortescue Road, as well as the companionship of the residents and associates.

Rose was an ideal legal secretary, in that she was sharp but discreet. Even before she moved to live in the house, she had assessed that Cassandra and Mary had a history that might be a shade less than respectable, even though the ladies in question were the epitome of kindness as well as exceedingly practical and helpful. The fact that the Saultons had been hired out of the Workhouse, and Rose was friendly with them, would have caused near apoplexy for her parents. Like Mr. Turcotte, Rose accepted that they worked hard, were honest, and their friendship was firm and lasting.

\* \* \*

Tony didn't see Lester the next day, but then he was busy with deliveries away from the town center. However, the day after, there were fabrics and other supplies for B & J to be delivered from the station. Afterwards, he went to the tenement where Fanny Wentworth lived. It turned out she was at home, but the main reason she was not working was not her injury, which the sea-water fortunately cleaned immediately, but the procession of well-wishers who came bearing food or small gifts. Tony said his hello and gave Fanny best wishes, but for now kept the pair of half crowns intended for her in his pocket.

Leaving Fanny's apartment, he was accosted by Lester.

"Mr. Brown! Mr. Brown! Tell me about how you saved Miss Olivia Crouch."

Tony, remembering what Adeline said, took several seconds to reply, but through that time looked Lester straight in the eyes. Interesting. Lester seemed very uncomfortable with this examination.

"Mr. Lester, I'm sure you know the story, but if you wish I will tell you what I saw and what I did."

"Please. It was you who saved Miss Crouch."

"I would give most of the credit to Moonbeam."

"You mean the donkey?"

"Yes. I saw Mr. Norris being assaulted by the ruffians, who unhitched the horse from the bathing machine in his charge, which led to the injury to

Mrs. Wentworth and to Miss Crouch being thrown in the sea into quite deep water. With the waves, I found it was above my head. Before I went in the water, I tied a rope to my belt and to Moonbeam's saddle and when I had hold of Miss Crouch, I asked Moonbeam to walk on, then to stop when we were safe. She did exactly that, thereby pulling us out of the deep water."

"But you acted with bravery in the face of danger."

"I acted to help someone in trouble. I didn't have time to recognize the danger until it was over."

"Can you tell me about yourself, Mr. Brown?"

"I drive a donkey and cart for Best Bonnet Cartage. I'm just a worker trying to make a living."

"Have the police caught the louts who caused the trouble yet?" Tony asked to forestall more questions.

"I'm on my way now to the Police Station. There's a rumour that two of them have been named and arrest warrants issued."

"Then I will detain you no longer, Mr. Lester," Tony said, knowing full well that any detaining was being done by Lester.

\* \* \*

Tony didn't know precisely where Charlie Norris lived, but he did know where the horses were stabled that were used for the particular bathing machine Norris commanded. It turned out Charlie was at the stable. He had a black eye and some cuts on his face that were not a pretty sight. The owner of the fleet of bathing machines told him to stay at the stable for a couple of days and groom the horses and clean out the stalls instead of going to the beach with the clients.

"Thought I'd come to find out how you were," Tony said. Charlie was very much of a similar age to himself, and, while his parents were still alive, he'd not had a much easier life than Tony so far.

"Those louts broke me nose according to the physician who was on the beach, And I bit my cheek, I think when I 'it the shingle. Still, could'a been worse."

"You lose any pay?" Tony asked.

"Not pay, but sometimes the ladies give me thru'pence or sixpence as a tip, like."

"Well. Here's 5 bob. Sir Oliver Crouch gave me a bit of a reward for rescuing his daughter. Might do you some good."

"That's really good of you, Tony. You're a real friend."

"We better both thank Moonbeam. If she hadn't followed my commands, who knows what'd have happened."



“Yeah, I don’t think these nags’d follow me as well. An’ I should apologize for sometimes making nasty remarks about the donkeys. They might look a bit ... er ... common compared to ’orses, but I guess they do the work real steady.”

“Yeah. I like ’em. They ’ave their own character.”

\* \* \*

This same day, Tom received a letter from Martha Vance. The letter said that indeed one of their sons, Robert, was now 13 and would be interested in learning about furniture and handling general duties around the workshop. Recalling Tony’s suggestion about a beehive, Tom wrote back both to state that Soultons would pay Robert 4 shillings a week and room and board. He also asked if Robert would be interested in setting up a hive or hives, and that some sort of profit sharing on that could be discussed. Recalling how Cassandra offered him gains from initiative, he thought a quarter of the profits if there were any, but no risk of losses. He’d have to hope there’d not be losses to bear.

Before he sent this letter to Martha Vance, he showed Vera.

“Be nice to have honey and beeswax. And I think the offer a generous one.”

As it turned out, Martha and Ronald decided to bring Robert. They walked with their handcart – it was about 19 miles and took them all day. However, this was planned. Martha had sent a note saying they would come on September 29 as she and Ronald wanted a bit of a holiday and to experience the sea and the Promenade.

What Martha did not mention was that they would bring a small beehive, with bees. This was mainly to get Robert started. In the decade before 1854, some advances had been suggested in hive design to avoid having to kill the bees to harvest honey and wax. Already ideas from the Comte de la Bourdonnaye of almost a century before were in use to allow the bees to attach their honeycombs to wooden slats that could be independently lifted out of the hives, but proper frames were more or less still experimental.

In any event, the Vances would easily be accommodated in the cottage, even if Vera and Tom were both there by then. They could borrow some bedframes and put fresh straw into ticking to make palliasses. The decision as to where Robert would sleep had been made more or less when they decided to invite Robert to come and work for them..

“Tom. Do you think Robert should sleep in the workshop? We might like our privacy, you know, when ....”

“It ’ad occurred to me that we might like to be able to talk freely like. I think we could make a place in the last stall where the cats ’ave their bed. Or maybe free up the next one so we keep one stall for a donkey.”

“What about warmth? Could get real cold out there in the winter. Though a lot of folk have less.”

“I’d already been thinking we’d want some sort of stove out there, ’cos we need to heat glue, and I might want to give a try at a bit of metal work. Biggest concern is not settin’ fire to the place. Lots of wood and shavings and turpentine.”

“Would it make sense to put the fire outside somehow?” Vera asked.

“Well, you want the heat to be inside to keep the workshop comfortable. But having the fire somehow outside makes sense in a way. I could put a little addition made of corrugated iron maybe six feet by six feet and put a stove in it. Be better in brick – hold the heat better – but I’d have to try my hand at brick layin’ and I think that’s ’arder than it looks.”

“And I’d guess you’d need a solid foundation, or it’ll settle.”

“Yes. But the project appeals to me. Maybe we can start on it as soon as we can, and get Robert to ’elp with it so there’s heat for ’im.”

“And us.

“By the way, I bought us a proper book to keep our ledger, and a couple of smaller notebooks to record other ideas and projects.”

“Good on you, Vera. We’ll need to know ’ow we’re doin’. I really want to make sure this place is ours as soon as possible.”

“Tom. There’s something else we should talk about.”

“What’s that?”

“Children. There’s a good chance they’ll come along anyway, but I know some ways to ... er ... slow down the chances a bit.”

“Wouldn’t hurt to get our feet under us before we’re trippin’ over some kids. Is that what you’re thinking? It makes sense to me.”

“Good. When the time comes, we can talk about the details. But I can tell you it shouldn’t get in the way of the fun.”

“You lookin’ forward to that?” Tom asked, genuinely and without any edge to his voice.

“I am, Tom. I want us to enjoy everything we do together.”

“Good for us, then,” Tom said, and gave her a hug.

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A few weeks later saw a stove installed in a corrugated iron addition to the workshop. They’d had some discussion of where to place it, then realized it would be easiest to open a doorway at the end of one of the stalls, as

the workbench side of the shop could have shavings and other combustibles. Moreover, they now planned to use the second to last stall for a cot for Robert Vance. Thus he would be close to the stove. Tom had made the very small stove out of scraps of sheet metal and some bricks and mortar, with a simple sheet metal stovepipe exiting from the side of the addition away from the main building.

This stove was now installed and worked well, but the realization that their stoves would need fuel stored somewhere started another discussion between Tom and Vera. For the moment, late in August, the sack of coal they had was sitting in the corner on some newspapers. One of these newspapers reported that the French and British had conducted three-day bombardment of the island of Bomarsund and the Russian garrison had surrendered. In the first battle there on June 21, the Russian artillery used explosive shells, and Royal Navy mate Charles Davis Lucas threw a live Russian artillery shell overboard before it exploded. In 1857 he will retroactively be awarded the first Victoria Cross. Before this, naval artillery generally used solid shot, as it did not start fires so quickly and the prize rules encouraged capture of the enemy rather than his destruction.

“Could you make a coal bin outside the back door?” Vera asked.

“That wouldn’t be ’ard, but rain might make the coal wet, and it’d be easy for someone to steal. I could put a padlock on it, but that’s a nuisance for us, ’specially when it’s cold or wet.”

“Have you any ideas?”

“What about the first animal stall. Already more or less partitioned. And a lot of the time we’ll be in and out of the workshop, and its lock is less fuss than a padlock, but it looks like we’ll have Robert in there anyway. We could maybe put a sheet of tinsplate on the floor and bend up the edges to make it easy to sweep out, otherwise the floor’ll get all black and difficult to use for anything else.”

“Isn’t tinsplate expensive?”

“Yeah. Bit that size might be awkward to find too. Or we could try some sailcloth and varnish it. Even put a board for a bit of a lip at the front to stop coal dust going all over. The sailcloth could go up the sides a bit too. If we ever change our minds, it shouldn’t be too bad to remove.”

“If you get me started on that, I can probably do it, Tom. Will something like drawing pins do to hold the sailcloth to the wall there?”

“Big drawing pins. I should ’ave some somewhere.”

"Somewhere" was getting to be within the workshop, though it was for the moment still disorganized. Before the start of August, Tom had, after a brief conversation with Cassandra, moved to what was now called "Soultons'". He and Vera had set up the bedframe. As with others before it, the fittings were damaged. Though the ones on this bed worked sufficiently well, Tom

made some reinforcements.

Vera teased him “Don’t want to have us on the floor now, do we?”

There wasn’t yet a mattress, but Ethel pointed out that there was bedding from Adeline’s cot from Apartment 2C. It looked a bit odd on the double bed frame, but would serve until they got the proper mattress and bedclothes.

Now Tom was living at the cottage, Tony, Joseph and even Joshua would deliver and pick up pieces for him to work on, with Vera helping when she could. The lifting beam was installed, and pulleys and straps transferred or acquired fairly quickly. These even had pegs beside the upper door over the yard to hang on so they were ready to use.

Old linen dug up from storage at Uptons was dried with tea and coffee grounds to hide stains both existing and new, and hung to keep dust out of the loft. The bars to close the big doors were in place. Vera, realizing that the doors would blow in any sort of wind, found some ring bolts and rope to limit how far they would open. Then the closing bar could be propped against a couple of bricks to maintain the gap.

Windows for the loft had arrived at the end of the first week of August and Percy and Ethel came the following Sunday to help get them installed. The loft now was a good place to put the final finishes on restored pieces of furniture. That there was plenty of space meant several pieces could be worked on at once.

Soon after Tony’s adventure in the sea, Cassandra came to Saultons to review the progress. It was a Wednesday afternoon, and Tom and Vera were working on restoring some pieces Maud and Abraham had purchased at an estate sale the week before.

Limper barked. She – it had been determined that the dog was a bitch – now had a crude kennel Tom had fashioned that was set beside the back door steps of the cottage. Tom looked out of the front door of the loft.

“Hello Mrs. Cohen. What can we do for you today?”

“I came to look at the progress. It certainly looks much better than when we first saw it.”

Vera had descended from the loft. Tom had made steep steps – rather like those on a ship – to replace the ladder. “Shall I show you round? But let me move the kettle so we can have some tea.”

Cassandra noted that all the major tasks were done, but also that there were many small improvements. The kitchen had a hip bath and a shallow pan about 2 feet across hanging on pegs. There was a cupboard fastened to the wall, and a utilitarian china cabinet with drawers for cutlery and other things. In the back corner was what looked like an old wardrobe. Vera saw Cassandra looking at it.

“Tom noticed that we had an old wardrobe that Maud thought could be

fixed with a new back, but putting it there and making a hole in the bricks we could have a pantry. Look, we've put in a piece of marble to keep butter and milk when it gets hot out, and I've put cheesecloth over the vent to keep out the flies."

Cassandra noted that the vent was not just a few bricks knocked out. Tom had boxed the opening, with a lip at the front so the cheesecloth could be tied to it with a string.

While the kettle boiled, they went to look at the workshop. The coal storage was now set up, and there were a number of pieces of furniture stacked in two of the other animal stalls, with the cats now having their bed under what would likely be Robert's cot in the second to last stall.

"Weren't you going to keep one stall free in case one of the donkey's came late?" Cassandra asked.

"We did think to keep one free for Annabelle or Moonbeam if they come late. But we're expecting Robert Vance to come to work for us and help us keep an eye out to stop thieves. In any event, if a donkey stops over, there's quite a bit of grass out the back, even if we put in a vegetable garden next Spring. If we need the space, it's always here, but for now we can manage. Some pieces Tom is putting straight away by the bench."

"Oh, and you've got the bars in."

"Yes. Used two pieces of material like roof joists and drilled holes for the bars, then screwed them at least a foot and a half above and below the window. And Tom has put a proper lock on the main door. We simply bar the doors in the back and in the loft."

"But you then need the key for the privy."

"True. But mostly we're here or in the cottage and Limper barks if anyone comes. As we mentioned, we expect to have Robert Vance here. We're still discussing precisely where he should sleep, but leaning towards having him out here and in the stall leading to the addition with the stove. We'll make that addition fireproof, of course, and Tom figured to put it as far away from sawdust and shavings as he could. But he still sometimes needs glue, and Robert will need some warmth.

"And in case the privy is too inconvenient, Maud found us a chamber pot."

"Tom seems to have really turned that bench into a proper work-bench," Cassandra observed.

"Cost us a bit for those two vises, and for those dogs and clamps to hold work, but already they're saving us time. Just this last week we made almost £2 in repairs and refinishing, but one of the items already sold for three times what Mr. Cohen got it for. Valerie sold it to a very hoighty toighty woman. I think Valerie upped the price just to spite 'er."

"Good for her. And I know that it means more revenue for Rebecca,

since under our arrangement, she pays Abraham as per the schedule.”

“Yes. That’s so, but the extra means Uptons have a motive to sell more items.”

Tom came down from the loft and washed his hands in a simple basin that was on a crude table near the door. There was a big metal pitcher of water. Tom said “Getting varnish and French polish off the ’ands is work. I use the brush here and wash twice, but sometimes my hands are still sticky.”

They went to the cottage and were able to sit at the table now set up there. Vera went to the "pantry" and got some scones and butter.

“Tried making these yesterday. Not up to the standard of Mrs. Yarrow or Ethel, but they’re not too bad, and Mrs. Upton gave us a pot of jam.”

Cassandra buttered one and put on some jam. “Not bad, Vera. Most women would be very happy with these. I know I couldn’t do them, but I really can’t cook at all.”

“Still figuring out the stove, but Joseph did us a big favour in finding it from that fire.”

“Yes. In fact, I need to talk to you both about the repairs here. I think we’re under the £60 budget.”

Tom said “I’ve my notebook here, and I’ve recorded all we’ve spent, but I’m not sure what to put to the property and what to me. I mean, I’ve spent some on things like nails and screws and timber that I’ve used for things like the bars or fixing the workbench. Tools really belong to the workman. Apart from those, I think we’ve mixed up your investment with ours.”

“Not to worry. How much is the total you have at the moment?”

“I’ve spent £39 10s 6d altogether.”

“And my records show I’ve given you £40 total in bits and pieces to get things, but not paid you anything. What’s still to be done?”

“We need to think of painting the exterior and distemper on the inside. Don’t like working with the colours indoors. Painters tend to die young. Said to be the lead in the paint.”

“Well, it cost me £144 12s 4d altogether for the property, commission and Henry’s conveyancing. Suppose I make up my investment to £200 by paying you ... mmm ... er ... £15 17s 2d and you and Vera arrange to get things painted as you like. Does that reward you enough for the work here? I know Vera has put in a lot of effort too.”

“I think that would be generous Miss,” Tom said.

Vera said “Yes, Mrs. Cohen. It gives us some working capital too, so we can get bits of wood and fittings to improve the furniture from Maud – I mean Mrs. Mortimer – and Mr. Cohen.”

“Working capital is important.

“Anyway. I’m happy with the state of the property and the directions you are taking it. Assuming everything goes as we discussed, it will become

yours in under 5 years. Do we want to stick with October 1 as the start date? It would mean your making a payment to me of at least £40 on or before September 30, 1855 and each anniversary for a further four years to 1859.”

“We should probably keep that date, Miss,” Tom said. “Otherwise we’ll be scrambling to get started properly.”

“That’s true,” Cassandra said. “Have you thought when you’d get married?”

Vera said “We’ve asked the vicar at St. Nicholas for September 13, and he’s set 3 o’clock in the afternoon, since that’s early closing and also my father can come. He has to preach on Sundays. ”

“Good. You’d mentioned you hoped for that date a few weeks ago. If you’d like, I can offer your father 2C for a couple of nights if that is helpful. No charge.”

“Thank you very much Mrs. Cohen! At the moment we’re waiting for my father to reply. I’ve been writing to him from time to time over the last year or so, ever since you recommended I do so. His replies have been polite but ... I think the word is non-committal. I hadn’t mentioned Tom and our plans until I sent him a letter 10 days ago telling him of our intent to marry and inviting him to come to the wedding. Thinking of what you said to me, I told him I would be honoured if he would answer the minister’s question ‘Who gives this woman in marriage?’”

“Well, he should have it by now,” Cassandra said. “In any event, if you marry then, I have no objections to your being here beforehand at no rent and we start the contract for the property as agreed on October 1.”

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The Reverend Henry Smith was surprised to receive an invitation to his daughter’s wedding. He had been extremely angry with her when she ran away to avoid marrying his quite well-off widowed parishioner who needed a wife to take care of his children, and who would pay a large portion of the cost of a new roof for his parish church.

Over two years later, he had received a letter from her, saying she was living in Brighton, working as a shop assistant in a second-hand furniture shop with the widowed owner. She said that despite their estrangement, a friend had persuaded her that it was important for parents and children to maintain a conversation, and that she hoped he would write back to her. A desultory correspondence had ensued, but a correspondence nonetheless.

The invitation letter put Henry in an awkward position. Vera had chosen a date that would not require him to get a locum to conduct services. It was quite possible to get to Brighton from his village in East Anglia in under

a day of travel. Admittedly, it was an hour and a half hour walk or cart ride to the railway in Colchester, then a bit over two hours to London, an hour across that city, then the couple of hours to Brighton, and this did not include waits for train schedules, but an early start still allowed supper in Brighton.

There was an old woman of the parish who tended the flowers in the church. She saw the postman deliver Vera's letter of invitation, and noticed that the vicar looked troubled.

"Vicar, I believe that letter has upset you."

"It has, Mrs. Braithwaite."

"Are you able to share your trouble to lighten its load on your shoulders?"

Henry told his parishioner that his daughter, the daughter who had run away to avoid marrying his widowed friend, was getting married in Brighton and had invited him to give her away.

"And you feel at the same time a wish to do so, but that she has been disloyal to you? Yet she should also be her own woman and live her own life."

"That is about the sum of it, I'm afraid."

"If you do not accept the invitation, you will lose a daughter. Go and you may gain a son and possibly grandchildren."

\* \* \*

Tom and Vera met Rev. Smith when he arrived the evening of the 11th of September. Having decided to come to see his daughter married, Henry wanted to learn more about where she lived and who she was marrying.

When it was learned he was coming, Tom said to Vera "I'm assuming he knows nothing about Forsythe."

"I sincerely hope not. And if he does, I hope it goes unmentioned. There is not a lot I can do, of course, if he does."

"Tom. I'm really sorry that I'm not coming to our marriage ... you know ... like I should."

"But p'rhaps we'd not have come together if you hadn't come 'ere with 'im. And your Dad might get all upset if he learns about me and that me and me sisters were in the Workhouse."

"We can't change that either. But I've the response to that if he complains."

"What's that?" Tom was intrigued.

"Just have to remind him of Jesus' occupation."



“Oh. You mean carpenter. Yeah. That could be a bit awkward for a vicar to complain about. Of course, I like to think of meself as a joiner rather than a carpenter. Or hopefully even a cabinetmaker.”

Rev. Smith’s train arrived late in the afternoon. Tom and Vera were waiting in their good clothes near the end of the platform.

“Father! Over here.”

“There you are, Vera. And looking very well.”

“Father. This is Tom Soulton, my intended.”

“Welcome to Brighton, Rev. Smith.”

“Father. You will be staying in a room with some friends of ours, and we have another friend here, Dan Dixon, who’ll take your bag there while we show you our new house and workshop. We’ll all have supper in the house where you will sleep.”

Tom and Vera had decided to use a hansom to get to the cottage. Their sign was now fully finished and installed, and Henry found himself strangely affected by noting that his daughter was somehow becoming established in the Brighton community.

Henry said “Do you rent this property?”

Vera answered “Mrs. Cohen purchased it, then paid Tom – though I helped as he hurt his hand badly – to do a lot of repairs and clean-up. We will own the place if we pay back £300 in five years.”

“That is a not inconsiderable sum.”

“We think we can do it,” Tom said. “We can show you some of our work over in the shop. Oh. Here’s Limper, our dog. Limper, you behave yourself with my future father-in-law.”

Vera gave her father a tour of the cottage and then they walked across to the workshop, where Tom had opened the doors wide to allow things to be seen.

“This was originally a stable by the stalls,” Henry observed.

“Still have the stalls for beasts, but use them otherwise, though we could easily turn them back to their original use. Mrs. Cohen has a cartage business, which we use to transport pieces we work on. Sometimes we work on commission, sometimes we buy and sell, with refinishing along the way.”

“How did you come to furniture refinishing, Mr. Soulton?”

Tom had decided to be direct.

“Me father were a joiner. He died when I was about 14, and my mother had died earlier, so my sisters and I ended up in the Workhouse for the better part of a year. Fortunately, Miss Match – now Mrs. Cohen, who you’ll meet – wanted maids for ’er houses that she was turning into nice apartments, with meals provided and linen laundered and such. Then Maud and Ethel suggested she get me out the Workhouse to ’elp with fixing and gardening

and lifting. She's keen for the people she works with to use their noggin, and shares the profits so we all get ahead."

"So you're a local man, Mr. Soulton."

"Yes. Me and my sisters all born here."

"How did you meet Tom, Vera?"

"It's a bit of a long story, but I worked – still do work sometimes – as a shop assistant for Mrs. Upton who does business with Mr. Cohen and Mr. Goldman, who you'll probably also meet. Mrs. Upton has the second-hand furnishings shop, and Tom and I ran into each other in the course of things."

Henry Smith was beset by a plethora of mixed sentiments. It was clear his daughter was making her way in the world. But she had friends – indeed was marrying – former inmates of a Workhouse. And she clearly associated with people of Jewish extraction. This troubled him, in part because he knew that his feelings were uncharitable and unchristian.

His confusion was amplified over supper. He was introduced to Rose Bingham as "Secretary to Mr. Archibald Turcotte QC", then learned that this barrister had his offices right above where he was eating. And Mrs. Cohen, who he had assumed was the landlady of a rooming house, was indeed its owner, but the manager of a haberdashery and also an investor. And she held a loan against the house of Tom Soulton's sister Maud who had married Turcotte's clerk who now had a solicitor's practice.

"Then Mrs. Mortimer no longer works as a maid here?" Henry asked.

Ethel said "She 'as an eye for furniture, so she and Mr. Cohen here do the buying, and Tom, and now Vera too, improves the pieces and makes 'em saleable, then Mr. Goldman or Mrs. Upton where Vera works too, or sometimes Mr. Cohen and Maud, sell them on, almost always at a good profit."

"So has that left you as the only servant here?" Henry asked Ethel.

"I suppose, but it don't feel much like being a servant. You see, Mrs. Yarrow, Mrs. McNair that was, taught me how to make the Treats, so I spend time with that."

This evening, Mary, Michael and Elizabeth were eating elsewhere for reasons that have not been shared with your narrator.

Adeline was seated next to Henry, and said "Though I came as a lodger, the kitchen and its occupants were so welcoming that after a while Mrs. Cohen found some employment for me, and I take on some of the housekeeping tasks too."

Cassandra had kept rather quiet, as frankly she realized Henry's discomfiture and was enjoying watching how he dealt with it. Now she said "Ethel, we've mentioned that we should have a bit more help, as you and Mrs. Naismith have profitable activities apart from the household. Perhaps the two of you could see who you can find, possibly at the Workhouse."

“Mrs. Cohen, I applaud your efforts to improve the lot of the poor by finding them employment,” Henry said.

“It is in my own interest to get staff willing to work. In the case of the Saultons, they were eager and proved very able. However, I suspect that those who have been a long time in the Workhouse will not be as suitable to our needs.”

Ethel said “Yeah. Grinds you down. Bad food, cold, filth, and rotten work. Mrs. Cohen gave us a chance to live proper, but we have to use our ’ead. Not much tellin’ us what to do all the time, but we’re expected to know nonetheless.”

Tom was quieter than usual as well. Observing the conversation, he realized how Cassandra had, in a way, set the cat among the pigeons around Henry Smith. It was a lesson in social management, and his estimation of her magnified.

Abraham asked “Reverend Smith, did you see any evidence of measures to deal with the cholera in London?”

“I took a hansom between the stations, so did not see much of the city, I’m afraid. However, it seems last week Dr. John Snow persuaded the authorities to remove the water pump handle in Broad Street, Soho, to limit the spread of the cholera. There is much agitation about this, but apparently 10000 have died in London in the current outbreak.”

“We boil water that we drink,” Cassandra said. “It is a modest measure, and if Dr. Snow and others of his persuasion are correct, then we are wise to do so. If they are wrong, the cost is the fuel for the kettle.”

“That, madam, is as good an argument as I have heard favouring the practice.”

\* \* \*

Vera had arranged to spend a good part of the Tuesday with her father. Tom had work to do on some pieces Abraham and Maud had managed to acquire at good prices. There was a lot of minor damage to these, but all were fixable with quite minimal measures, though these did, of course, take time to carry out. Limper lay at the foot of the steps to the loft. She couldn’t manage these. Well, she could manage the ascent, but getting down again had proved impossible and Tom had had to lift her. Wisely the dog did not ascend again.

“’ave to change the steps for you, Limper,” Tom said, thinking perhaps that talking to a dog was a bit foolish. Then he realized that the dog, even if she didn’t understand the words, would recognize by his tone that she was being addressed, and know that her company was welcome.

Vera and her father did a walk along the Promenade and visited the Royal Pavillion, since 1850 owned by the Corporation and largely converted to assembly rooms. They found a modest tea room for some luncheon, which Henry insisted on paying for.

“Vera, I wish to apologize for trying to push you into marrying Coburn. It made sense to me at the time, but I was insensitive to your wishes.”

“Thank you father. To be honest, if I had been given some time, I might have accepted his suit, particularly if it were possible to have a maid to help with the children.”

“He ended up hiring two maids, so that would have been possible. You are right. We rushed our fences and you balked.”

“Should we not be happy that we are here enjoying a lunch together, having a conversation without rancour?” Vera asked.

“Indeed we should, but I will not forget that I drove you away.”

“In truth, I did not acquit myself well either. Had it not been for Miss Match – now Mrs. Cohen – I might have ended up in ruin. She found me a position with Mrs. Upton, who at that moment needed an assistant, and it turned out we had complementary skills. Her husband had almost destroyed their business, and after drinking much with a friend tried to set fire to a barn where Mr. Goldman stored furniture. He did not know that Miss Match had stabled Annabelle the donkey there with Tony Brown to look after her. Fortunately, Annabelle raised the alarm. When Tony let her out, the drinking companion tried to grab her bridle, but she bit him and kicked out, catching Upton in the stomach. He died a few days later of a burst bowel.

Upton had been a competitor to Mr. Goldman, but Mrs. Goldman apparently went with Maud Soulton and offered support rather than playing the vulture to close down the business. You will see the place tomorrow, as we will hold our wedding tea there. It had a stable that was unused, and they eventually worked out a helpful collaboration.”

“How does Mrs. Cohen arrange to get all these things done with seemingly little effort. I distinctly had the feeling last night that she was the conductor of the orchestra in that kitchen.”

Vera laughed. “Yes. She does have that effect on the world around her. I think it is her focus on what will work rather than the niceties of social convention. A very rigorous pragmatism. She apparently did not plan to marry, as that would normally mean her fortune would then come to the discretion of her husband. However, Henry Mortimer – now Maud’s husband and a solicitor – mentioned something called a ‘separate estate’ that lets her protect assets and have them to her own control.”

“Does Mr. Cohen not find that somewhat galling?”

“If so, I have not learnt of it. He is a younger cousin of Mr. Goldman,

and Mrs. Goldman apparently rescued him during the pogrom in Odessa in 1821. Maud Soulton says they hid from the Greek murderers by hiding under a dung heap, but his parents were killed. They came to Brighton shortly after. The Goldmans raised him, and they share a lot of business, also with Mrs. Upton and now with Tom and I. I think Mr. Cohen respects his wife's abilities, and there are plenty of examples of men who have taken advantage of women of property, with the Church as the tool of their larceny."

"Yes, my dear. We treat matrimony as a solemn and holy event, but it is, as you note, sometimes used for less happy reasons. And in that, I was almost a villain."

"Do not worry yourself too much, father. It has worked out well. I have found a good and able man who I love and will cherish."

"This is a very different society from where I am vicar. I hardly know what to make of it. If someone had told me my daughter would marry a workhouse orphan, I would have reached for my cane to thrash them. But it is clear that the cottage and workshop are well arranged."

"That was not the case two months ago. It was quite the wasteland, with a hole in the roof and all the glass broken from the windows. That was how Tom cut his hand badly."

"Was he able to still work?"

"No. Had fever and his left hand swelled up and the wound suppurated. This was when he was supposed to be fixing the cottage and workshop for Mrs. Cohen before we took it over. So I ended up repointing and puttying the chimney."

"What! Up on the roof?"

"Yes. In men's clothes because a skirt might have caught and had me fall. But I got it done. And Mrs. Cohen and Mrs. Baldwin found medicinal leeches and fly maggots to bring down the swelling and clean the wound to save Tom."

"This woman has depths that defy imagination. But who is Mrs. Baldwin?"

"You will meet her and Mrs. Moss tomorrow. They are widows from the Manchester area whose husbands were in business. Both Mrs. Baldwin and Mrs. Cohen talk of working in an apothecary shop. Tom thinks they are mother and daughter, but they say they are old family friends. The two widows run the Brighton Ladies Garment Emporium which they set up next door to Bartlett and Jones, the haberdashery. Mrs. Naismith translates and draws Paris dresses, and some local dressmakers work with the Emporium to sew them. They use fabrics from B & J, and also sell pre-made items."

"My head is spinning. All this activity, and from what I gather, all of it profitable."

"Mostly. There are always some transactions that fail to bring reward,

but the majority – the strong majority – bring a profit. There seems to be an unwritten rule that we try to make sure all of us get something, so we are all, at the end of the day, a bit better off than at its beginning.”

“Yes. I’ve not heard anyone talk of striving for a great advantage,” Henry observed.

“Well, occasionally there are situations where one does succumb to such temptation.”

“Such as?”

“One example occurred last year, not long after I started with Rebecca – Mrs. Upton – and her daughter Valerie. A lady came into the shop who I had observed in town with her husband, a flashy sort of man who liked to show off his wealth. She was looking for some linen, and I inflated the price before Valerie, who is still of tender years, could state our regular price. Then she saw some chairs that Mr. Cohen and Maud has acquired and Tom had polished. We only had room for two chairs in the shop, the table and another six chairs were under a tarpaulin in the stable. We’d agreed to pay £17 to Mr. Cohen when the table and chairs sold, but I asked £40 as I knew the people were snobs, and I said we would want to make an appointment to set them up for a showing, which we arranged for the next day.

Tom set them up and levelled the table and gave me this aggie to prove the table was level and flat.”

“What an odd girl you’ve become, but such a practical one. And did you get the £40.”

“Not quite. I knew the husband would want to appear clever and would bargain. But Rebecca could plead her recent widowhood with two children not quite in their teens, and I set the marble on the table, which Tom had given an extra polish, and we got £37 10s.”

“Well, that is a big profit, but it is not stealing or cheating. I am beginning to think I underestimated my daughter.”

“Father, I am glad that we are again friends. Now, shall I show you the Emporium and the haberdashery? They also do credit to their managers.”

\* \* \*

We need not dwell on the wedding of Tom and Vera. The event drew a modest crowd, including an array of members of the commercial class in Brighton, though to be honest, these all had links to the kitchen at Fortescue Road.

The tea at Uptons yard, with a tarpaulin stretched to provide shelter in case of rain or shade should there be sun, was noisy and congenial. Henry

Smith had to wonder at the array of characters, including the polite young man introduced as Tony Brown who came with a donkey wearing a hat.

After the tea, Tom and Vera boarded the cart pulled by Moonbeam to go to their own place, where Robert Vance would soon be working and serving as watchman. The Saultons were not taking a honeymoon, as both wanted to complete a fairly large set of restorations that would bring revenue to give them a cushion of funds. Already they had talked of how and where they should put money for safekeeping. Before the end of the year, they would have a strongbox, and like Cassandra would discreetly fix it in a wardrobe with some blankets on top to conceal it.

A week after the wedding, the British and French won the battle of Alma, and there was some cheering and conversation in the streets and public places about this. Locally, it did not mean very much to people's daily lives.

By the time of the Battle of Balaclava in late October, a victory for the allies but with the disastrous charge of the Light Brigade, Ethel and Adeline had been to the Workhouse and found Martha Murphy, an Irish orphan. She had somehow been about to emigrate to Canada from Liverpool when her parents had died of cholera. There was confusion about how she came to Brighton, and she had only been at the Workhouse for 3 months. She was 14 but looked a few years older. Adeline found that she had some, albeit limited, reading and writing skills.

Ethel remembered how Cassandra had arranged to hire Maud and herself in 1851, and offered the same arrangement of 4/- per week plus room and board for a trial of four weeks, but a guarantee of £1 should the probation not lead to continued employment.

While Cassandra had paid for extra clothing to the Workhouse, Ethel and Adeline knew there were bits and bobs in the house, and that the Emporium or the haberdashery would let them do much better than the rags the Workhouse would supply. Martha walked back to Fortescue Road with Ethel and Adeline. When they arrived, Mary was working with Elizabeth Yarrow on Treats, the smell of which clearly interested Martha.

Ethel said "Martha. We'll 'ave tea and biscuits after we get you bathed and into fresh clothes."

Adeline was already setting up a screen around the hip bath. She said to Martha "Do you want me to pour warm water for you to wash your hair?"

"I don't know what to do. Never had a bath." She had a quite strong Irish accent.

"Here's a piece of linen if you are concerned about modesty, though the screens keep other eyes away. Take off all your clothes and put them in a pile. We'll boil them to kill lice and fleas and give you fresh. Then sit in the tub and use soap and the flannel to wash. Call if you want help with your hair or back. When you're finished washing, I can help you dry and we have

the fresh clothes I think will fit. Then we'll use the comb to check for nits."  
"Oh. I'll certainly be glad to get rid of them."

\* \* \*

Freshly washed and in clean clothes, Martha looked more respectable. She was larger than most girls, and probably had not been in the Workhouse long enough to get the emaciated, grey look that came of poor nutrition.

Mary Yarrow and her step-daughter Elizabeth were introduced and some of the business activities of the house explained. A cup of tea and two shortbreads gave Martha's countenance a definite boost.

Adeline asked "Can you tell us about yourself, Martha? As time goes on, you'll also learn about us."

"My father was the foreman of a big stable in County Kildare. About a year ago he was helping stable a new stallion, but it got startled by a dog barking and kicked out and caught my Da' in the head and he died. That meant no income for my Ma' and I and my little brother James. My mother's sister is in Canada in a place called Bytown. We had enough money for passage on a decent ship – not one of the timber ships going back. But then in Liverpool Ma' and James got the cholera. So did I, but I survived. Then this man, Mr. Chipman, said he needed a maidservant for his wife in Brighton. But it turned out he didn't have a wife, and he used me and then left me at the station when we got here."

At this point Martha started crying. Adeline took out a handkerchief. She said "We cannot undo what has happened to you, but we can assure you that here you will be safe from that sort of predation. May I ask if there is a danger you are with child as a consequence?"

"I missed my monthlies, though I'd not long started. Then about six weeks ago I had a terrible pain, then bled some. The governor's wife used the word 'miscarriage'."

"No wonder they was a bit awkward-like telling Martha's story," Ethel commented.

The rest of the day was spent showing Martha where she would live and work. Supper – the usual good fare cooked by Ethel and Mary – did much to cement Martha's view that her situation was much improved thanks to these kind people. At supper she got to meet Abraham and Cassandra as Mr. and Mrs. Cohen. Rose Bingham was introduced. Dan Dixon she had met briefly. He was clearly the person who one talked to about any and all practical household repairs and maintenance.

Michael Yarrow came in to supper also, and after supper Percy Jones took Ethel for a walk. Martha asked Adeline if there were any other tasks



before she retired, and was told to make sure water jugs were ready for the morning. Mr. Grant in Number 23 would need shaving water, and the rest of the family warm water to wash.

\* \* \*

Around the time Martha Murphy joined the household at Fortescue Road, Tom and Robert finished enclosing the addition. They had dug down a foot and a half and brought in gravel to form the base of the foundation, then used two layers of mortared bricks to build a floor six feet by six, with a couple of extra courses of bricks to the outer edge beyond where Tom intended to try to put a wall and chimney. An opening had been made in the wall at the end of the stall to allow passage to the stove and to let heat come into the workshop. They hinged Robert's cot, but most of the time did not bother to lift it as there was enough space to get past to the stove, which they did not light every day.

To keep the amount of work down, They made the addition from corrugated iron, with windows on the sides and the stove at the back, with its pipe out the back wall then up. Not particularly attractive, but functional.

In truth, Tom had thought to make a brick chimney, but as he started to lay bricks, soon gave up on the idea. The corrugated iron worked reasonably well, though getting the sides and sloped roof fitted without too many gaps proved a challenge. Eventually some mortar and hessian were used to plug the spaces.

The corrugated iron roof proved noisy in the rain, but served to keep the water out. By late November when the addition was thus far advanced, Tom – and to be fair Robert – were able to lay bricks and apply mortar in a manner that met the basic needs. They decided that they would make an attempt at a stove. This they did by building a brick base two feet square against the wall. They then built a firebox and laid a heavy sheet of cast iron on top. The stove pipe exited the rear through a square hole in the corrugated iron wall, with the gap filled with tinplate flanges either side of the hole. The pipe made a right angle and went up the outside of the corrugated iron wall beyond the addition roof to which it was strapped. A pair of tiles were mortared to either side of the inner wall of the firebox against which a rectangle of iron could be leant to serve as a door that would limit air intake. It was crude but proved effective enough for some time. The mass of bricks turned out to be very helpful in keeping the place warm, yet the quite small firebox – the fuel was placed on a grill only a little over a foot square – did not consume a lot of coal. On the coldest nights, Robert, Limper and the cats could all be found sleeping in the stall next to the addition.

\* \* \*

The public account of the rest of 1854 is replete with stories concerning the Crimean war. The great storm on the Black Sea in November wrecked 19 allied ships and cost nearly 300 lives. More lives would, however, be lost to mismanagement of the supplies for the troops in the coming winter. Indeed, the allies killed more of their own men than the Russians would thanks to official arrogance and mismanagement. Eventually, of course, it took a stalwart woman, Florence Nightingale, to teach them how to do things properly.

Among our company of friends, the most awkward aspect of the last months of 1854 was the realization that Mary Yarrow and Ethel Soulton provided exceptional meals. Tony was now living at Uptons yard, since the donkeys were there. Maud, whose astuteness with furnishings we have applauded, was far less stellar in the kitchen. Her husband Henry was, however, observant enough to recognize that she had never carried out much of the food preparation. Maud, pragmatic as usual, suggested that as long as she could maintain even her lowest monthly income from furniture trading, they should have a cook-housekeeper. Henry was hesitating in rendering a decision when Maud also told him that there would be a child in the late Spring of 1855. A live-in cook-housekeeper would be engaged as soon as a good candidate was identified.

Tom had also to come to terms with the fact that Vera had been in charge of the kitchen at her father's vicarage, so she could manage some good results with plain dishes, but was not in the same league as Mary and Ethel when it came to cooking.

At the beginning of December, Cassandra invited Mary and Rebecca to join her for lunch so they could discuss directions for their businesses. Rebecca was somewhat concerned that Cassandra would decide something that would render her business more difficult. In this she need not have worried. Cassandra's main concern was that people who nominally worked for her were now no longer living at Fortescue Road, so the 'board and lodging' part of their remuneration was elsewhere.

"Rebecca. It is good to see you. We have not had a chance to talk more than pleasantries for some months."

"That is true, Mrs. Cohen – Cassandra. Our paths cross only via the donkeys and the ledger books it seems."

"From those I believe business is going satisfactorily," Cassandra said.

"Indeed. We are able to make a decent revenue from steady trade. Valerie and I seem to have a good nose for upholstered furnishings, linens and draperies, and the items from your husband and Maud Soulton, I mean Mortimer, sell well, especially when Vera is in the shop."

“Is she still in your employ?” Cassandra asked.

“On commission only. A quarter of the mark-up. She does well when she comes, which is now about half time. I think that will remain until and unless there are children. She says she likes the restoration work.

“And are the Treats going well, Mrs. Yarrow?”

“We sell all that we can make and have been talking this past year about how we might expand production. Finding a suitable premises is not easy, though unsuitable ones abound.”

To bring their discussion to a focus, Cassandra said “I was wanting to talk with you both to make sure we can keep our arrangements simple and agreeable. I have realized that Tony is now living with you, Rebecca, so no longer gets room and board here. Mary is living across the road, but she, Michael and Elizabeth do eat here, as do Mrs. Naismith, Dan Dixon, Martha Murphy, Ethel, and Abraham and I, with our tenants Rose Bingham and the Grants.

“First, I wanted to know if our arrangements for Treats to use the kitchens and Ethel’s help, along with meals is suitable recompense for the planning and creation of meals that Mary does with Ethel, as well as the Treats used in those meals.”

Mary said “There are usually 14 suppers, with 10 eating in the kitchen. It used to be that I did the planning, but now Ethel and Adeline are quite capable, and with Martha now providing a good portion of the work, I am spending more time on the Treats. The awkward matter is the purchase of food, drink and fuel, since we have become rather ... informal in our accounting. It is work to apportion the costs. I fear that at some point one or other of us may become dissatisfied.”

“That, Mary, was one of my reasons to invite you and Rebecca here tonight, though in Rebecca’s case, it is less about food.

“Have you any thoughts on how we might simplify the arrangement?”

“I thought perhaps that Treats might take on the entirety of purchase of food and drink, excluding wine and spirits. That is rather the arrangement we established for tenants like the Grants, and it has worked well. In exchange, you would allow Treats to use the kitchens and supply fuel. Treats for use in the houses would continue to be supplied gratis. I would still be willing to help plan the menus and so forth, but to be honest Ethel doesn’t need my help, though I think she likes to tell me out loud what her plans are.”

“It is often good to say out loud an idea. Then you hear its faults yourself. I would be unhappy if you were to refuse that, though I can see that it is not really necessary for you to create the menus yourself. Yes. I think I can agree that. I will write it down and later make a proper statement of which we each can keep a copy. It simplifies things in that we need to avoid a lot

of sums.”

Mary said “Yes. I find the calculations troublesome and tiring. Worse than skinning kidneys or filleting pike.”

The women all laughed.

Cassandra said “With Rebecca I wanted to talk about Best Bonnet. At the moment, I get a third of the profits for my investment, Tom a sixth, and Tony and Joseph a quarter each. While I know Rebecca has no direct interest, she stables the donkeys and their carts with rent paid by Joshua Goldman, and she houses and feeds Tony and Joseph.”

“But I have cartage available, often more or less free. And Joseph is my son.”

“Still, there is, once again, a lot of sums to do to apportion costs and revenues. I was thinking that I should probably arrange to sell my investment and Tom should be on a yearly service payment to cover the repairs and maintenance to the carts. I doubt he needs to be involved with the oversight any more, but he is good with fixing things.”

“Who would you sell the business to?” Rebecca asked.

“I rather wondered if you, or possibly Joseph, would like half and the other half to Tony. Think, if you like, of one donkey and cart each. I would imagine you would ask Tony for a contribution to room and board, but that would be outside the income and expenses of the carts. We should talk to Joshua about the rent for storing furniture, which currently includes the donkeys and carts.”

“It’s all very entangled,” Mary commented.

Cassandra answered “The reason for the present discussion, I believe.”

Again they all laughed.

Rebecca said “I appreciate that you have brought us to have these discussions, Cassandra. Can I suggest first that we try to put a figure on the value of the donkeys and their equipment.”

“Annabelle and her original cart cost me about a pound net for Archie Temple’s funeral. The fee was 30 shillings, but we found a box with about 14 shillings in his belongings, and no family have come forward. Now Tom did a lot of work on the cart, then did it again after the fire.”

At this Rebecca flushed. It was her husband who set the fire.

Cassandra continued “Even if we say Tom’s wages were 4 shillings a week for five weeks, Annabelle and her equipment had direct costs of about £2 plus a bit of feed. £2 10s at the outside.”

“I heard Moonbeam cost you £10” Rebecca said.

“Maud paid that to the carter who owned her in Hove. There were some minor costs, for instance the toll for the bridge and some feed, and eventually a saddle for the beach rides which we got for 35 shillings.”

“What if we said £20 was fair value as they are today?” Rebecca volunteered. “It makes for a round figure of £10 per each donkey and her equipment.”

“I would be more than content with that,” Cassandra said. “Would you find it fair also?”

“Yes. Though I think that I will have to talk to Mr. Goldman and see about the rental, which currently includes the animals. He pays me £10 per annum.”

“That is still fair rent for the space to store the furniture,” Cassandra said. “I can see that perhaps you suggest to him a reduction to £8 per annum and then charge £4 for each donkey and cart to the cartage business, no matter who owns it.”

“Does it make sense for Tony to buy one beast and I or Joseph the other? We could still share the costs and revenues of the joint operations.”

“That would seem to make sense,” Mary said. “When we engage Best Bonnet, we don’t care which animal or driver carries the goods. They both do a good job.”

“Are you not also now taking messages and suggesting times when service will be provided?” Cassandra asked Rebecca.

“Yes, we seem to have taken that over from whoever is here. In fact, we recently repainted the address on the side of the carts. I suppose I could take a fee for doing the bookings, but perhaps that could be incorporated into the stable rent.”

“Would £5 per year per animal be fair?” Cassandra suggested.

“There is still the goodwill of the business. That is, some return on your investment,” Mary said.

“It would be nice to have something, and I’ve had some so far. Also it would not be good to burden the operation. If there is a strong profit, then some dividend to me seems right, but it would be foolish to suck out the operating funds if the business is just holding its own.”

“What were the profits last year?” Mary asked.

“In total, about £72 for both donkeys. I’ve done well on my investment.”

“Will Tom be upset about your selling up?” Rebecca asked.

“You’ll still need the carts maintained, but I don’t think Tom’s going to be involved in working on moving items with the donkeys and carts. Perhaps £2 or £3 per year for each cart. Maybe less. I think it best to ask him.”

“Would it be sensible to suggest that to cover the goodwill of the business, Cassandra get £2 per year for three years, paid on the anniversary of the sale,” Mary suggested.

“I’d be happy enough with that. As I said I’ve done well so far, but I think to continue for Tom and I to take half, if others are carrying the risk, will lead to less dedicated workers.”

Rebecca said “I think that amount won’t be so large as to be a brake on the progress of the business.”

\* \* \*

Goldman thought the new arrangement sensible. For himself, it meant essentially no change, but he recognized that simplification of the business for his friends meant less work for them. The satisfactory transition showed Rebecca Upton was growing as a businesswoman. Very soon, however, it became obvious that it was Valerie who organized the day to day cartage operations in consultation with Joseph and Tony.

Tony jumped at the chance to own his own animal and rig, even though he now had to arrange to pay Tom £2 per year and Rebecca £5 for stabling and, it was agreed, 2 s per week room and board, for which he had a cot in a corner. On the other hand, fully half the joint net profits were his own. The only real expenses of Best Bonnet were feed, stabling and shoeing the donkeys, but those were shared, and only needed to judge the profitability. If Tony had any concern, it was where and how he should secure his money, which now amounted to almost £30 even after buying Moonbeam.

Joseph, when his mother suggested that Tony would buy one and she the other, evinced some disappointment. Rebecca said that she would be happy to share the ownership, which they agreed. Cassandra was now extricated from the cartage business, though B & J used Best Bonnet almost exclusively, as did the Emporium next door.

Tom agreed to £2 per cart per year to maintain them, with materials charged back at their cost. This gave him and Vera a quite secure £4 per annum clear income as long as the donkeys and their drivers stayed healthy.

The last potentially difficult decision was who would take which donkey. This somehow was settled almost entirely without words. Joseph said “Annabelle seems to be more comfortable with me, and Moonbeam with Tony. They behave well with either of us, just seem to drift the way I’ve said.”

\* \* \*

Like the year before, Cassandra curled into Abraham’s arm and pulled up the blankets to keep draughts at bay.

“Another new year,” Abraham said. “And I have a much loved and admired wife in my arms.”

“Thank you Abraham. I have had what I consider to be a very good year. B & J continues to bring steady revenue. I had thought to undertake some new projects, but am content to allow the current set to ripen. Perhaps that is laziness, but I feel satisfied with my earnings.”

“So do I. Though I believe our very successes have continued the problem – if we may call it that – of where to invest what fortune we have.”

“I managed to put about £200 towards the house Henry and Maud purchased, and another £200 to that where Tom and Vera have their abode and business. But I still have more liquid funds than I believe is most advantageous. Yesterday’s conversation with the Yarrows may help a little.”

“That may change, Cassandra. Henry tells me that there is a suggestion the rules for joint venture companies may become easier. The details are as yet unclear to me, but we must watch and learn.”

“That may be less easy in the coming year,” Cassandra said.

“Oh. Last New Year you said you might be with child, but then learned that you were not.”

“I think that this year I am more certain. Indeed, I need a basin or chamber pot rather urgently, as I feel a wave of nausea.”

\* \* \*

Being that New Year’s fell on a Monday and was not a holiday in England, though in Scotland a major day of celebration, the Cohens had spent some time the previous day with Michael and Mary Yarrow and Elizabeth in the drawing room. That was the conversation alluded to above.

There was some general exchange of pleasantries about the world, the weather, business, etc. when the topic turned to houses, and Michael said “We had a letter just this week from the owner of the house we live in. He says that he is planning to sell it and that we may be required to move.”

“Are you interested in buying it?” Abraham asked.

“It is convenient if we continue to take our meals in this house, and especially if I continue to make the Treats here,” Mary said.

“We should continue to explore the possibility of a better factory for that,” Cassandra said, “but if the price of the property is fair, it may nonetheless be a good idea. If there is only a small risk the future price would be lower than the current purchase, it is probably a worthwhile investment.”

“I am not sure we have enough capital,” Michael admitted. “We are doing well, but a house requires a lump sum.”

“It may be that we can make a loan to allow you to meet the price,” Cassandra answered. “We have made such a loan to Henry and Maud against the value of the house, with a repayment schedule. But in such a case we

would probably want to bring Tom and take a good look at the fabric of the property.”

“That would hardly be amiss,” Michael said. “If there are deficiencies, we should make sure we know of them. However, living in the place these last years, I have not seen obvious dilapidations, though it would look better for some improvements. We could perhaps also rent some rooms to reduce our accommodation costs.”

\* \* \*

Though keen to invest her money, in January of 1855 Cassandra and Abraham decided that they would retrench somewhat. They did lend £125 to Mary and Michael, as they had discussed, and the house across the road came into the Yarrows’ ownership. But Cassandra’s pregnancy created the possibility that later in the year she would be less able to conduct business. Also, though Martha Murphy was fitting in well, it was not impossible that Ethel and Percy Jones might decide to wed, and then more help, and indeed a nurse for the baby as well, would be needed. All these changes could deplete their capital.

A further complication to their well-ordered life was raised by Joshua and Rachel Goldman when they hosted Cassandra and Abraham to dinner on the first Sunday of 1855. As they were finishing a delightful dessert, Joshua said “We wondered if we might get your opinion on a project we had in mind.”

“Joshua. You know you may always raise any matter with us,” Cassandra said. “Are we not part of your family?”

“Indeed. And it is about family that Rachel and I wish to get your suggestions.

“Mordecai and Hannah, our son and daughter, live, as you know, near Boston in America. Rachel and I have not seen them for about a decade and are envious of so doing. The difficulty is regulating our business affairs to minimize disruption to our associates such as you both, and also to our own income when we return.”

“Indeed, your absence would leave a hole in various operations,” Cassandra said, “but your wishes are hardly reprehensible. Shall we presume you wish to speak of what may be possible?”

Rachel said “That is indeed what we hoped. We realize that there may be some difficulties.”

Abraham asked “When did you think of travelling?”

“We thought of leaving before the first of April and returning before the end of July. With the war against Russia, only Cunard is sailing to America of the British companies.”



Cassandra asked “Are you not concerned about the recent losses of Collins’ *Arctic* and Inman’s *City of Glasgow*?”

“It is a concern, yes, but Cunard has advertised their commitment to safety, and their record would seem to support that,” Rachel said.

“Then let us talk of what may be possible,” Cassandra said. “Have you thought how you would continue the pawnshop?”

Joshua said “Abraham is the only person we know who has experience in making loans on pledges, but we think Rebecca Upton might be able to do the job, or possibly even yourself, though we are thinking of both reducing the hours when the shop is open and also to make the maximum loan 10/- on any pledged item. That is, the Kohinoor diamond could be offered, but we would only lend 10/- on it.”

“Those steps would likely allow the business to continue, but at a reduced volume,” Abraham said.

“It would limit your chances to trade in furniture,” Joshua said, “so we would have to consider how to compensate you appropriately.”

“I think you can leave that detail until last, Joshua,” Cassandra said. “Assume that if we can find ways to allow the business to continue, the compensation will be worked out.”

“There is one detail, however, ...” Abraham started, looking at Cassandra.

Cassandra said “Yes. We should tell you that we are expecting a child, probably at the end of July.”

“Then we should move our travel as early as possible and return before the end of June,” Rachel said.

Cassandra said “Other than my pregnancy, I believe I can take some time away from B & J to possibly handle some hours in the pawn shop. However, I believe that a woman should never be alone in the shop. Perhaps we can think of engaging some quite imposing young man who can help with other tasks but provide some security for Rebecca or I, or even for Abraham.”

“That does make sense, even for us, Joshua,” Rachel said.

“It does, if we can find a suitable young man.”

\* \* \*

Joshua and Cassandra talked to Rebecca the next evening to sound out her interest. In essence, there would be a chain of substitutions. If Rebecca spent some time at Goldmans, then Vera would come to Uptons and work with Valerie, with Joseph likely present some of the time. While it had not been considered seriously before, the consideration of someone present as watchman in the shops became more prominent in their thoughts.

“I’m willing to work with Mr. and Mrs. Cohen to keep the pawn shop open. And with the limitation on the maximum pledge, I think I can manage, though there are some objects I would likely refuse to take as a pledge simply because I don’t know how to value them,” Rebecca said.

“I feel the same way,” Cassandra agreed.

The discussion moved to how to find the appropriate man or men to hire to watch, and also what other tasks they would undertake. It would be a considerable expense to have someone who just sat and did nothing.

“Someone who could cook dinner or do the laundry while discouraging robbery could be useful,” Cassandra remarked, more or less in jest.

“Indeed,” Joshua said, “but there are men like our Mr. Richards locally who do laundry, and there are chefs who cook in the most acclaimed restaurants.”

The difficult question was where to find someone who was willing and able to fulfil the tasks.

\* \* \*

Cassandra was thinking a great deal of how the pawn shop or Uptons could be given protection from robbery. She planned to ask everyone of her acquaintance for suggestions as to who might serve as a general servant with suitable presence to deter miscreants. Her mind was very occupied with these thoughts when she heard her name called.

“Mrs. Cohen! Mrs. Cohen!”

“Ah. Vicar. I’m sorry I was distracted and did not notice you.”

“We were on the other side of the road, but I was actually coming to see you.”

The vicar, Mr. Wagner, was accompanied by a black man of robust build. It speaks to Cassandra’s preoccupation that she had not noticed him with the vicar walking on the other side of the road, and almost overlooked them as they crossed.

“Allow me to present Mr. Jeremiah Quigley, late of the State of Georgia in the United States where, unfortunately, he was enslaved. He managed to escape via a sailing transport and the master was a Quaker who allowed him to work his passage. He has been seeking work and came to me to ask if I knew anyone who might employ him and I thought that your many contacts might have work, or at least ideas.”

“In that it is cold out, let us see if Mrs. Baldwin will let us talk in the Emporium. It is before its opening hour, so we have a few minutes.”

When Cassandra tapped on the glass of the Emporium door, Frieda opened it to her and, upon the explanation, invited them in.

“Frieda. Do stay to listen in case you have ideas also,” Cassandra said. “Mr. Quigley, do tell us what skills you may have.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Cohen. Mrs. Baldwin. I was a slave on a plantation which grew peaches and cotton and also foodstuffs for both the plantation and for sale in the nearby town, not far from Savannah. That is how I managed to escape to a ship.

“My tasks on the plantation were to fix the machinery, to help build and maintain the irrigation ditches and water gates, but I got sent to the orchards and fields during the harvest too. On the ship I learned how to help the cook, and I helped fix their pumps and also did some sewing of sails and splicing of ropes.”

“Can you read and write, Mr. Quigley?”

“Just a little. The State of Georgia passed a law in 1829 prohibiting anyone from teaching a Negro to read. But nobody taught me. I just watched and learned, and I practised writing in sand on the ground so I could make it vanish real quick, like.”

“And you said you helped the cook on the ship?”

“That was pretty easy. I used to cook for myself on the plantation, and sometimes others would share their food if I cooked it for them.”

“Well, it could be that I can arrange some employment for a little while. I’m afraid it would not pay very much, but we would provide a place to sleep and food. The duties would be very much a mixed bag, but likely include cleaning, helping with laundry, helping with cooking, assisting with moving of furniture, possibly some minor maintenance of carts or other equipment. From time to time, we may need a night watchman.”

“None of those duties seem oppressive, ma’am. I would be obliged if you would hire me, even if only for a few weeks.”

“All right. Come to the lower door of 21 Fortescue Road – I will write it down as well – at around four o’clock this afternoon. I pay my staff 4 shillings a week, and room and board is included.”

“There’s no deduction for food or bed?” Jeremiah asked.

“No. But you would not get room and board for 4 shillings a week.”

Mr. Wagner said “It is rumoured that the staff of Mrs. Cohen eat well.”

“The staff have the same food as Mr. Cohen and myself, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Yarrow who eat with us,” Cassandra explained. “Oh. I hope you have no objection to bathing, Mr. Quigley. We have a rota to ensure there is plenty of hot water for each person to bathe once a week. Several of my staff have joined us from the Workhouse, and we started their employ with a bath and boiling their clothing to eliminate lice and fleas.”

“On the plantation, we would bathe in the river, but I fear the sea or river here would be mighty cold. However, you mentioned hot water.”

“One of my staff who now runs his own business devised some excellent screens to allow for privacy in the warmth of the kitchen.”

“I will welcome it. I have been travelling a long time, and look forward to staying in one place a while.”

\* \* \*

In truth, since Jeremiah came in the middle of January, 1855, Cassandra did not have an urgent need for him. He arrived just after the vote that censured Lord Aberdeen for the mismanagement of the War in Crimea, where battles were won against the Russians but not against the obstacles of supporting the army in the field in winter.

After the vicar and Quigley left the Emporium, Cassandra thanked Frieda and went next door to B & J. Her first action, however, was to write notes to Abraham and Joshua, saying she had hired Quigley and he would come at 4 o'clock to Fortescue Road and that she thought he might be suitable for the job of watchman as well as other tasks. She also wrote to Ethel to say that they would have another person to whom they would provide board and lodging, but that she had not considered quite where to put him, and that a bath and clothes boiling would be in order.

“Mr. Collier. Could you arrange for these notes to be taken to Mr. Goldman's shop and to Fortescue Road. Here is sixpence.”

“I think thru'pence would do, Mrs. Cohen. There's almost always a competition to run the messages.”

\* \* \*

Cassandra returned to Fortescue Road at half-past three. Ethel was in the kitchen.

“Oh. Miss. I wasn't quite sure what to do, but I've made sure there's a bit of extra for supper, and I got out some bedding.”

“Mr. Jeremiah Quigley is an escaped slave. In truth, we do not have an urgent need for his services, but he is of a robust constitution, and I believe we will be able to use him as a watchman when Mr. and Mrs. Goldman go to America to see their children. Oh. I suspect that you did not know that until now. Well, we will be trying to work out how to keep the pawn shop going, probably on a reduced level, but should have someone there if just myself or Mrs. Upton are handling business in the shop.”

“Yes, Miss. It wouldn't do to be alone for that.”

“Mr. Quigley says he has some knowledge of cooking and maintaining equipment. I think we could get him to help with the laundry and garden and all sorts of odd tasks.”

“Be a big ’elp with Spring cleaning, Miss.”

“Indeed. Now he will be here at 4 o’clock, which is but a few minutes. I wanted to try to think where to put him.”

“You mean where ’e would sleep?”

“Yes. I think at worse, Mrs. Naismith could return for the time being to 2C and he could be here. The key cupboard is locked up with the housekeeping money and your everyday amounts, is it not?”

“Yes. Mrs. Naismith and I are particular to keep that locked except when we need to go in for a key or some coins.”

“I suspect that Quigley will be honest, but one never knows.

“Now we also will want to have him bathe and to boil his clothes. Perhaps we will have him bathe and give him the boiling of clothes as his first task,” Cassandra added.

“’e’ll need something to wear in the meantime, Miss. But we know the drill to keep extra passengers out of the ’ouse.”

“How silly of me. I’ll go up and see if there are some rough clothes that belong to Abraham.”

\* \* \*

Cassandra had just returned downstairs with some trousers, an old shirt and a rather tattered pullover that she and Abraham had acquired for work in the garden or with dirty acquisitions when there was a knock at the kitchen door. Ethel answered it and Quigley said “Have I the right place for Mrs. Cohen?”

“I am here, Mr. Quigley. Come in. This is Ethel Soulton, who more or less acts as our housekeeper and cook, though our situation is complicated by manufacturing some delicacies for sale in this kitchen and that next door, so you will also meet Mrs. Yarrow who initially was housekeeper. And this is Mrs. Naismith, who handles all sorts of jobs here and elsewhere in our businesses.”

“Welcome, Mr. Quigley, to Fortescue Road,” Adeline said.

Cassandra realized that, to avoid the risk of what had been termed "passengers" coming in with Quigley’s clothes, the first task was hygiene. She said “Am I correct, Mr. Quigley, that you have been living hand to mouth and sleeping where you can?”

“Unfortunately, that is true.”

“Then I am going to suggest, as I mentioned this morning, that we offer you a chance to bathe and to boil your clothes. Here I have some of my husband’s clothes that he uses when we do rough work. They are clean and will serve while yours dry over the next day or so. Now, Ethel, you probably need to be able to get at the stove. Where should we put the bath?”

Adeline said “The partitioned area where you used to sleep is clear, and we folded up the cot, so we won’t actually have to set up the screens. And Ethel will be able to keep on with preparing supper.”

Adeline’s suggestion was accepted. Ethel and Adeline ferried jugs of hot water from the reservoir on the stove to the hip bath, and when there was sufficient water for bathing, Adeline said “Here is some soap that is quite soft, Mr. Quigley. I find it works for washing the hair. There is a large tin mug so you can pour water over yourself, and there is a pair of towels over the chair with the fresh clothing. And, of course, the curtain for your privacy.”

Quigley, despite the novelty, understood what he was to do, and proceeded to do so. Cassandra said “Adeline, I have need of you upstairs,” and the two women went up to the drawing room. Ethel said “Call out if you need anything passed in, Mr. Quigley. I’ll be in the scullery at the back, so make sure you’re heard.”

Upstairs, Cassandra said “Actually, I have no task for you, but I wanted to ask if you would like to sleep in 2C if we give the partitioned corner in the kitchen to Mr. Quigley.”

“My cubby hole is partitioned. And it may be best to have someone watch him to start with. In other words, believe the best of people, but plan for the worst. Though by ‘worst’ I think more of running off with some cutlery or food, unless he has skills in lock-picking.”

“All right, as long as you are content with that. I’ll leave you to whatever tasks you were doing. I will, I think, take a short nap.”

“Mrs. Cohen, it may be impertinent of me, but would it be that you and Mr. Cohen are anticipating a child?”

“In other people, impertinent. But you, Adeline, are also a friend. And, yes, I am increasing. How did you notice?”

“Mainly a brightness of colour, and also a diminished breakfast appetite.”

“Unfortunately, the latter is rather unpleasant. I hope it discontinues soon.”

\* \* \*

Jeremiah had never taken a hot bath before. He found it most pleasant. He washed his hair and his body, which did not fit terribly well in the hip

bath, and some water went over the side onto the tiles. Not sure of the etiquette of relaxing in the hot water, he got out and dried himself. Ethel, realizing that his shoes would be uncomfortable, and also that they needed both cleaning and repair, had set out a pair of clogs Tom kept handy for the garden when it was wet. They had been cleaned and dried.

“Miss Ethel, how do we get rid of the water?”

“Are you dressed, Mr. Quigley?”

“Yes. I’m dressed and decent.”

Ethel opened the curtain and handed him a metal jug. We empty as much as we can with jugs or the tin mug, then tip the tub into the sink, which is in the scullery, then rinse the tub to get rid of the soap, and hang it on the wall to dry.

“The hot water gives a powerful good feelin’,” Jeremiah said.

“Yes. When my sister and brother and I came ’ere from the Workhouse, we’d never ’ad a bath before. Seemed strange at first. Now I wouldn’t feel proper if I didn’t bathe each week.

“Now in the scullery is the copper for boilin’ clothes. I’ll set you to do that, and then it’ll likely be time for supper and you’ll meet the rest of the ’ousehold.”

“A lot of people to get to know, I think.”

“Yeah. A few. But they’re good people, Mr. Quigley. You treat ’em well, and you’ll be all right.”

\* \* \*

Jeremiah had to ask how the fire for the copper worked. He had seen coal before, but coke was a novelty. However, he soon got the idea and his clothes got boiled. Indeed, he threw in just about everything he had, which was really only a spare shirt and some socks, a scarf, a pair of woolen gloves, and a sailor’s pea coat, plus a rather tired blanket he used to wrap his possessions in.

It was gone five and dark outside by the time the copper was coming to the boil, and Jeremiah returned to the kitchen and asked if there was anything else he should do. Ethel realized that it was best to keep him busy, so said “I think you could set the table and make sure we’ve enough chairs. There’s a couple more in the pantry there if we need ’em. We’ll be ... 2 for Cohens, Mrs. Naismith, Mr. Quigley, Miss Bingham, Dan, Mr. and Mrs. Yarrow and Elizabeth and me. Ten places.”

Adeline had returned to the kitchen and was sitting on her bed in the cubby hole, busy with her knitting needles, but the curtain was back. She

said “Don’t be afraid to ask if you need to know anything, Mr. Quigley. At the start I’m sure it will all seem strange.”

“Thank you Mrs. Naismith. It does seem strange. And the weather is much colder than we normally experience in Georgia.”

“After the table is set, I’ll help you set up the area where you bathed with the cot that’s there so you have a place to sleep.

“Oh. Did Ethel show you the water closet?”

“No. I was going to ask where the privy was.”

“The water closet is next to the copper where your clothes are. Postpone the setting of the table and I’ll show you where it is and how it works. Also have you used gas lights before?”

“No. Aren’t they like candles?” Jeremiah asked.

“Only in that they burn to give light, but you must turn off the gas to extinguish them. Blowing out the flame lets the gas still flow, and it can poison you, or else a spark can cause an explosion or fire.”

Having learned how to use the water closet, and indeed to enjoy the relief of using it after not wanting to ask, Jeremiah stirred his clothing then returned to finish setting the table. Dan came in and was introduced. Then Rose Bingham, and there was a rather long-winded explanation of how Rose worked for Mr. Turcotte, and he was a Queen’s Counsel, which also needed explanation and so forth. Then Mary, Michael and Elizabeth arrived, and more explanations were in process when Cassandra and Abraham descended. Ethel and Adeline took the Grant’s food over to Number 23 via the back of the house. It was raining, so they got a little wet.

As food was served, the arrangements with the Grant family were explained.

Dan said “We’ve talked of how to make a passage between the kitchens to save going outside, but Tom – Ethel’s brother who ’ad my job before – thinks the wall is load-bearin’, which would be tricky.”

“Sometimes on the ship I came on they’d spread a sail across the deck to provide shelter either from rain or sun. Would a sailcloth cover work?”

“Why don’t Dan and Jeremiah look into that over the next few days and work out what it would need and cost?” Cassandra said. “We put in the gate and made the brick path, so we might as well consider finishing the job.”

Supper ran later than usual that night. The denizens of the house wanted to know Jeremiah’s story, and he was eager to learn how he might fit in. The food, as forecast by the vicar, was very good.

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By dint of a conversation in bed, Abraham and Cassandra decided that their first task with Jeremiah was to ensure he knew the different locations of



their activities so he could be sent to the different places either as conveyor of items or to work there. The second task was to find which jobs he could do well enough to be useful. Their third task was to ascertain whether he was suitable to provide the security they wanted.

At breakfast, Jeremiah was surprised at the eggs and bacon and coffee. On the plantation the owner had these things, not the white servants, and definitely not the slaves, who might manage to hide an egg occasionally.

Abraham said "Jeremiah, I am going to have you come with me today to learn where are the different locations and people in our circle, and also what they do. We have found some socks and gloves and a hat for you, as well as an old coat, as I fear your pea coat is not dry."

"I'm mighty appreciative Mr Cohen. I find England cold, though not so raw as on the ship with the wind and spray."

"I'll also give you this notepad and a small pencil, and this oilcloth sack to keep them dry. You may want to make drawings or notes of how to find places so we can ask you to take messages or small parcels, or even bigger ones on the handcart Dan has. We have two donkeys and carts stabled at Uptons, which is one place we'll go. Assuming things work out, we can get Mrs. Naismith to help you improve reading and writing."

"Yes. My writin's not good, but I can draw passably. I appreciate you thinkin' about such matters to make the learning easier for me."

"We didn't ask if you are familiar with horses or donkeys."

"I used to drive a pony cart on the plantation to get to where we had to do work on the water gates."

"Good. Mr. Goldman has a pony and cart that is separate from our cartage operation. That's really for historical reasons, and he doesn't use it much now as the pony is quite old, but treated as a friend. Still, in a pinch we would use it, no doubt.

"Now, I will be a few minutes gathering some notes. I'll let Ethel or Mrs. Naismith help you with the clothing. I hope your shoes will survive another day of walking. We will have to see what we can find that will be more suitable to the local streets and climate."

\* \* \*

Abraham took Jeremiah first to Goldmans. Seeing the sign, Jeremiah asked its significance. Pawn shop had to be explained to him. There was no need of such an institution on a plantation.

Joshua was very polite to Jeremiah, but equally he was reserved. If this man was employed to watch the shop, he would likely have to sleep there. Indeed, it would be sensible for him to watch the whole property. And in

a pawn shop, there is always some cash. Like Adeline, he held to treating people well, but assuming some were villains. It was never easy to know which people would turn out to be the thieves.

“Mr. Quigley, I hope you will not be offended that I do not rush to enthusiasm for your employ with Mr. Cohen and, by extension, here. My wife and I have two children in Boston who we have not seen for nearly a decade. We will take a trip lasting about 3 months to see them, and our associates will attempt to maintain the business at a somewhat reduced level of activity. We are considering how we may provide the security that comes with someone on the premises, and you might be a person we ask to act as watchman, among other tasks. You will appreciate that trust is something that builds over time, and we do not have the luxury of a great number of days before we depart. However, you may be assured that I wish you well in your endeavours, and I believe you will find that you do well with my cousin Abraham, that is, Mr. Cohen, and his wife.”

“Thank you, Mr. Goldman, for your candour. I will try to earn your trust. Already Mr. and Mrs. Cohen have shown me great kindness, and, I might add, a lot of new experiences in less than one day.”

Abraham said “Joshua. It did occur to me that your pony will need care while you are away. Jeremiah says he has experience with animals.”

“Well, why don’t we go and see him. I was going to call him Pegasus, but on our first day together it rained so hard it was like he was parting the waters, so I call him Moses.”

Jeremiah laughed, then said “I hope my laughter does not offend. Many are sensitive about the great characters in the Bible.”

“That you laugh shows you know the story,” Joshua answered, opening the door to the small stable behind the shop. “Here he is. I’ve been quite remiss in getting him out to walk. I used to make sure he got a mile or so each day, but lately have been busy with arranging travel and planning how to keep the business going.”

“May I touch him?” Jeremiah asked.

“Certainly, as long as he does not shy from you.”

“It does no good to force your affections, either on animal or human,” Jeremiah said, reaching out and stroking the pony’s nose, which the animal seemed to like.

“The cart is over there. I’m afraid it can use some work, as one spring has come partly adrift and the wheels have not been greased for at least three years, maybe four.”

“If that is wished, it is a type of work that I used to do regularly.”

Abraham said “That could be useful. Joshua, if you decide that Moses is retired, we could consider selling the cart, or seeing if Tony and Joseph are interested.”

“It may be sensible to let Jeremiah fix up the cart and exercise Moses, then we can decide whether to put the pony back in harness or give him an honourable retirement and dispose of the cart. Moses has been with us since a few years after we came to England in '22, and I will let him have a peaceful end.”

“Then you are not English, Mr. Goldman. My knowledge of this country is very limited, I fear.”

“No, Mr. Quigley, we came here as refugees from the pogrom in Odessa where my wife hid Mr. Cohen and herself under a dung heap while the Greeks killed the rest of his family. I speak Greek, then with no accent, and passed myself off as one of the attackers then slipped away with our children to whom I gave crosses to wear so they would be taken as Christian rather than Jewish. We found each other late at night and stole away, wretched and stinking, and made our way here with but a few valuables that we sold at a discount to get capital to start the business. We have done well, but it has not been easy. England has opportunities, but also its own narrowness and poverty.”

At that point there was the sound of a bell. Joshua said “Shop!” and hurried back.

“Let us go to Uptons, which is nearby,” Abraham said.

\* \* \*

Jeremiah was introduced to Rebecca and Valerie and shown the second-hand furniture shop and the yard and stable. Tony was out with Moonbeam when Jeremiah arrived, and Joseph was about to depart with Annabelle. And Percy, of course. Jeremiah noticed the cat under the cart seat, next to the box.

“You’ve a passenger?”

“Yeah. Percy and Annabelle are friends. Percy likes it there. Tony made these boxes covered with varnished sailcloth 'cos 'e likes to read. But they're useful for keeping your sandwich out of the rain.

“Anyway, we’ve got to go. There’s a shipment to collect from the station for B & J, then I’ll be back to go with Tony on that house move this afternoon.”

“Could you help with that, Jeremiah? Joseph, though Mrs. Cohen is paying Jeremiah’s wage, this will be at no cost to Best Bonnet, as we want Jeremiah to learn about different parts of our activities so we can determine where he fits best.”

Jeremiah said “At what time should I come back here?”

“One o’ clock,” Joseph said. “See you then. Walk on, Annabelle.”

After he left the yard, Abraham said “Annabelle actually killed his father,” and related the story of how James Upton came to die trying to burn down a barn with furniture Joshua and Abraham were storing, and in which Annabelle was stabled, and where Percy and another cat and a young man named Tony were all sleeping.

He also related how Rachel Goldman and Maud Soulton had helped to resurrect Uptons business and give his widow and children a chance at a good life.

“Do you feel I am to be a part of this shop as well?” Jeremiah asked.

“It is one of the places where the furnishings Maud Soulton and I acquire get sold on. And Rebecca, Valerie and also Vera Soulton – Tom Soulton’s wife – are quite good at moving the pieces on to purchasers at prices that give us good profits but seem like bargains. Joseph and Tony allow us to move pieces quite easily, since even though the Best Bonnet business is more or less separate, the donkeys and carts are stabled here, so there is a natural efficiency.”

After visiting Uptons, Abraham and Jeremiah walked to Soultons. Limper barked a friendly woof as they came through the gate, and Vera and Tom looked out of the upper door of the workshop, while Robert poked his head out of the main door. Greetings were exchanged, and Tom and Vera came down and introductions were made.

“This is a fine workshop, Mr. Soulton. As good as any I’ve seen.”

“Thank you Mr. Quigley. I take it you have done joinery?”

“They didn’t give our work a title on the plantation. Nor the worker. Just ‘boy’. But I worked on fixin’ things, yes.”

“The upstairs is where we do refinishing,” Vera said. “That’s the work I like best, where the lustre of the wood comes up.”

“May I take a look?”

“Certainly,” Tom said. “Just be careful not to touch the surfaces as they may still be wet.”

Tea was made and drunk and Abraham and Jeremiah left to walk back to Fortescue Road. On the way, Abraham said “You’ve already been to the Ladies’ Garment Emporium which is operated by Mrs. Baldwin and Mrs. Moss, with Bartlett and Jones Haberdashery next door, which my wife runs. Though she is not technically the owner, she has the essential direction of the business. I suspect you will have only passing involvement with activities at either of those businesses, but sometimes we may want you to take messages or parcels there.”

They got back to Fortescue Road just after 11 o’clock. Abraham left again almost immediately for an appointment in Lewes where he hoped to negotiate the purchase of a parcel of furniture from a bankruptcy. Jeremiah went out the back of Number 21 to find Dan in the shed and familiarize

himself with the tools and space there. They then measured and Jeremiah made a drawing of the pathway between the two houses.

Dan said "Tom made some covers for the donkey carts that have a sort of fringe 'e calls a pelmet that lets the rain run off to the side. We could use somethin' like that."

"Could we get some poles, maybe 3 inches in diameter and put them in the ground about 6 feet apart, then use some wire between the top to keep them positioned. Some sticks and some flexible wood to make a bowed top to the frame would let us have a cover that shed the rain, with the fringe on the side."

"That would probably do the trick. I'll start lookin' about to see who has some of that stuff and get some prices."

Ethel called out "Wash yer' 'ands you two and come get a sandwich. Jeremiah has to get to Uptons by one o' clock and it's just gone noon."

\* \* \*

Jeremiah had no trouble helping out with the house move Best Bonnet were engaged to carry out. He was strong enough to make the job easier for Joseph, who was still growing, and Tony, who was slightly built, though possessed of surprising strength in particular ways.

"I never had a chance to work with donkeys before," Jeremiah said. "We sometimes had mules, but they're bigger and 'ornery."

"Both Annabelle and Moonbeam are jennies. My estimation is they are less trouble than the jacks," Tony commented.

"Is it all right to pet them?"

"If they'll let you. Otherwise they've been known to bite or kick," Joseph said. Jeremiah realized there was extra meaning to this statement. He talked to Moonbeam as he reached out slowly to stroke her main, which she allowed him to do happily. He'd try later with Annabelle.

The move was completed and the donkeys back at Uptons by half-past five, but the January night had already descended.

"You all right to get back to Fortescue Road on yer own, Jeremiah?" Tony asked.

"I think so," was the unsure reply.

"Let me draw you a rough map," Tony said.

\* \* \*

Even with the map, in the dark Jeremiah nearly went astray. In fact, he did have a deviation of about 50 yards at one point before realizing he'd missed a turn. Nevertheless, he got back to Fortescue Road by a quarter past six, and after washing his hands, he set the table and helped with some minor chores before supper was served. After this, and giving Ethel and Adeline some help with the washing up, he found he was much fatigued, and pulled the curtain on his cubicle and fell asleep quickly.

For the moment, we will leave Jeremiah and his introduction to the world of Cassandra Cohen in the middle of January, 1855. In two weeks Aberdeen will resign and be replaced a week later by Palmerston as Prime Minister, a transition from Tory to Whig. This transition had no direct consequence on our team of characters.

More important for all of them was that Joshua and Rachel booked passage with Cunard in early March, with a return in the middle of June. Other British lines were prohibited from transatlantic service on account of the need for transport to the Crimea for the War effort. The Goldmans would sail from and return to Liverpool, but in one direction, their journey was via New York. The Goldmans' voyage meant there would be changes in routine for several months. These changes would, no doubt, create anxiety and emotional discomfort, with extra work for several of our characters.

Jeremiah had not, as yet, met Henry and Maud Mortimer, nor their recent probationary servant, Yolanda Karwowski. Yolanda was the widow of a Polish radical. They had sought asylum in England in 1851. The cholera in Soho had, to put it starkly, relieved her of her husband and their two-year old son in 1854. Having no particular ties to Soho, she learned through some immigrant acquaintances of an elderly French countess who had escaped her native land after the 1848 turmoil and settled in Brighton. While Yolanda had left Poland because her husband was on the other side of the political spectrum from most aristocrats, her own inclinations were pragmatic. She was also rather young when she married. Her French was, thanks to good luck rather than family fortune, very good, and the Countess had, foolishly, declined to learn a language she considered uncultured, namely English, so was in need of a servant to deal with daily needs.

Unfortunately, the Countess inconveniently died in early 1855, well before Yolanda had managed to accumulate any savings. Indeed, she had to make strenuous representations to the agent from France handling the funeral and estate of the Countess that her employment was for £25 per year and she had yet to receive any of this. Surely she was due some money in lieu of notice? In the event, she did get £10, which was hardly more than would be due for the period she had been in Brighton.

The agent who came to settle the Countess' affairs approached Henry Mortimer to deal with legalities. The brass plate on the door-frame had

done its job, as the Countess had rooms in the same street. Yolanda assisted the agent in translating some of the more technical matters, and thus came to the attention of Henry and Maud. After the final session with the agent, Henry asked "Miss Karwowski, might I have a word before you leave?"

Yolanda nodded, and bade the agent farewell, since he had paid her in front of Henry and insisted on a receipt. There had been a conversation with many more words than Henry could follow as to whether the correct usage was *le reçu* or *la quittance*. *Quittance* was, Henry recognized, still in legal but not common usage in England, but he did not add to the discussion. It was clear also that Yolanda had already moved her meagre belongings to a tiny rented room.

After the agent had left, Yolanda said "It is actually Mrs. Karwowski. I am a widow."

"But without children?" Henry asked, to be sure engaging her would not bring additional responsibility.

"My husband and infant son died in the cholera last summer in Soho."

"My condolences. It cannot be easy to lose those close when you are not in your own country. And you appear still quite young."

"Thank you Mr. Mortimer. I married quite young, and am now but 23. Now may I ask why you wished to speak with me?"

"My wife and I are looking for a servant to help with the house and possible children. If you might be interested, I will arrange that you speak with both my wife and I at the earliest convenient time."

"Yes. I would be interested, since I have just lost my employment and am having to pay rent and find food."

"Can you come back at 4 o'clock? My wife is occupied with an auction sale today but should be back well before then."

"That is possible. May I ask if the brass plate that says 'M Soulton-Mortimer' is for your wife?"

"Indeed. We only married last year and she is known by her maiden name as a trader in furnishings."

"I had heard something about that, but did not quite understand. I approve of keeping the name by which one is known, though my own original name is not easily pronounced or even written here, as it uses an alphabet with characters not common in English.

"But to be known as a merchant already. I would doubt she is any older than I if she is the woman I have encountered in the street leaving this house."

"Actually about two years younger, but my wife is, as you will discover, quite a force of nature, but also kind and friendly."

\* \* \*

Maud and Yolanda found each other agreeable, and Yolanda was hired at the same £25 per annum as the Countess had agreed. The smallest bedroom was easily equipped with a bed, wash table and a small chest. Yolanda was resident within 48 hours of giving the Countess' agent a receipt.

One of the reasons Maud had been glad to engage Yolanda was, of course, that the latter could provide some advice on childbearing. Having lost her own mother, she had thought to talk to Rebecca Upton, Rachel Goldman or Frieda Baldwin, but having a servant with some experience would avoid an excursion should something occur that created anxiety.

As we have noted, meals apart from Fortescue Road were not of the same standard. Henry and Maud had for some weeks had a local woman come to cook and carry out some housekeeping, but had not found a suitable live-in servant. Moreover, Maud could not offer to share cooking skills she did not have, so Yolanda's answering a query about cooking in the positive added to her score. Then she cemented an offer of employment by asking "Would the English not say 'the proof is in the pudding'?"

It turned out that she cooked rather well, though not always in a style common in England. However, Henry and Maud were satisfied, and Maud was able to consider how she would sustain her business after their child was born, for she was determined not to lose her ability to earn a decent income. Henry was now making some money, but the furnishings were still important for their economic well-being.

The employment interview did reveal one aspect of English society that had been changing in the last few decades. Henry asked

"Mrs. Karwowski, my wife and I retain a pew at St. Nicholas' Church. Will you be wanting to join us?"

Yolanda looked uncertain and hesitated, so Henry continued "That is, of course, assuming you are Church of England, which coming from Poland you are not likely to be."

"Actually, Mr. Mortimer, I have been going to Mass at St. John the Baptist."

"That's quite a walk over to Kemptown in the eastern part of town," Maud observed. "They built that soon after the Catholic Emancipation in 1829 apparently, so it's about the same age as we are."

"Then you have no objection to my continuing to worship there?" Yolanda asked.

"No. Not at all," Henry said. "We live and work with people of many faiths and persuasions, and rather dislike anyone pressing their views on others."

"Thank you, Mr. Mortimer."



\* \* \*

About a week into February 1855 Tony and Moonbeam were transporting some pieces of furniture from a house near Roedean Road in the east end of town. Maud had managed to negotiate an exceptional price as an elderly bachelor had died and his heir, a Mr. Carshaw, owed an amount of money to a bookmaker. Said bookmaker had a personal servant of prodigious size. No explicit threat was implied when this large person came to request payment while Maud was trying to buy the pieces of furniture. Tony was with her, in part to provide some security to her person, since she had to carry funds to finance purchases. However, if the large person, identified simply as Horner, had threatened Maud, Tony would not have been much help.

Maud addressed Horner boldly "How much does Mr. Carshaw owe your employer?"

"£2 13s 6d. 'e wants it today. Been owing a week already."

Maud said "Tony. Do you have your notebook and pencil?"

"Yes. Maud. I mean Mrs. Mortimer."

"Then let me suggest that we write two receipts for the amount Mr. Horner has stated, one from Mr. Horner to Mr. Carshaw to say that £2 13s 6d has been paid in full, and the other from Mr. Carshaw to me to say that I paid him that amount for a dining table, a writing desk, 5 chairs, two chests of drawers and a bed."

There was some hemming and hawing, and some querying of the details while two men who were less than quick to understand came to a realization that Maud was offering both of them an exit from a potentially unpleasant situation.

"Tony. Please write those receipts and I will check them. Excuse me while I get myself some water."

Maud went to the back of the cart, out of sight of the men while Tony carefully printed the receipts and asked for the spelling of names. Maud did not actually need water, but wanted to reach under her outer clothing to extract money, which she did more or less by feel, having to put back but a florin.

"Mr. Carshaw, may I pay the money direct to Mr. Horner?"

"I suppose so. You have got a great bargain."

"Perhaps. Our restorer may yet find damage. Mr. Horner, can you make your mark there, please?"

Horner used an X. It seemed likely he was illiterate. He passed the sheet of paper to Carshaw. Carshaw signed the other receipt with a flourish and gave it to Maud.

"Thank you, gentlemen. Now, Tony, we must load the items and be on our way."

Carshaw showed great reluctance to provide any assistance in bringing out the pieces. Tony was a little concerned he might try to abscond with Moonbeam and the cart, though the donkey would no doubt make that troublesome for him. Maud had to help Tony with the larger pieces, though they managed to remove the table legs and disassemble the bed. The mattress was being left behind in case of bed bugs.

Once the pieces were outside on the road's edge, Tony positioned pieces carefully with as much weight as possible low down. The small writing desk, for example, ended up on top of the chairs with its legs in the air after the cart cover had been undone and folded. The resulting load was untidy, but relatively safe.

As they started walking home – actually to the Soulton workshop – Tony became increasingly aware that Maud was tiring.

“Are you all right, Maud?”

“Yes. Just I get a bit fatigued these days.”

“Mrs. Naismith suggested that both you and Mrs. Cohen are with child. Don't want to overdo things.”

“That is true. Perhaps I should sit down for a bit. If the load were not so large, I'd ride, but even the seat has furniture upon it.”

The day was cold, as there had been snow a couple of nights before and some remnants remained. Further west in Somerset and Devon it had been heavy. The newspaper today contained a report that a clergyman had noted some strange marks in the snow that he called Devil's Footprints. In the following weeks this would stir up various stories, none of which would yield any satisfactory conclusion. However, for Maud and Tony, the cold and melting snow meant no obvious comfortable seat was possible. Fortunately, Tony heard the clip clop of a horse and realized a hansom was coming up behind them. As it got near, Tony called out “Hey, cabbie. Can you take a fare?”

It turned out the cab was available, and though Maud objected a little – her Workhouse experience rendered her reluctant to spend on riding if she could have the money herself by walking – but got in and gave her home address.

Tony walked on with Moonbeam, though before restarting he found a carrot for her. He kept hold of a bridle, but had no need to pull on it. Moonbeam knew the way, even starting to turn before Tony did at a junction where they needed to go right to get to the workshop.

Once round the corner, Tony saw Constable Shaw sitting on the pavement clutching at his knee.

“Constable Shaw. Are you hurt?”

“That I am. Was walking along mindin' me own business and didn't see that icy patch. Flailed about and came down on me knee. Hurts like blazes.”

“Your trouser’s torn. And a bit of blood. Let me get a clean cloth and some water.”

They cleaned up the knee and tied the cloth around it.

“Glad you came along, Mr. Brown. An’ I’ll keep callin’ you that, as long as you want.”

“I’ve decided not to deny that I’m a girl with people of good will. I was orphaned young, an’ it seemed safer to not wear skirts. Just recently I met a girl who’d been orphaned a bit older, and this man offered her a job, but then used her and left her standing on the street. She was even with child, but lost it before it were born.”

“Any idea what you’ll do in a while when you want, you know, to get to know a fella’?”

“Not come to any conclusions. Might just stay as I am, at least as much as possible. I like working with the donkeys. Make decent money and Mrs. Cohen sold me Moonbeam and this cart, so I’m my own employer, if you like.”

“Good for you. And for ’er. She seems to give people a leg up and still do all right for ’erself in the process.”

“That about sums it up about Mrs. Cohen.

“You ready to try getting up?”

“Yeah. But I’m guessing it’ll hurt.”

Shaw managed with Tony’s help to get on his feet and hobble off in the direction of the Police station. Moonbeam, even before Tony said anything, started walking towards Soultons workshop.

\* \* \*

It was dark as Tony and Moonbeam came in the lane-way of the workshop. The doors of both cottage and workshop were closed, but there was a glimmer of light behind curtains of the cottage and through a chink in the door of the workshop. Tony rapped on the latter with a stick he had on the cart as a precaution against aggressive dogs. He wasn’t going to take off his gloves to knock.

“Hello there Tony. Ah. Got more stuff for us.”

“I’m thinkin’ there won’t be room in ’ere for the cart as well,” Tony said.

“No. We’re pretty full. Start unloadin’ and I’ll tell Vera you’ll be here for supper. Should be able to add to the stew.”

Tony’s staying over was not unexpected, and Rebecca Upton knew that he might not get to Soultons before dark. Travelling after dark was avoided if unnecessary.

Together Tom, Robert and Tony unloaded the pieces in the dim lamp-light. “’ave to take a good look in the mornin’” Tom said, “but they seem to be all right.”

Once the pieces were inside there was just enough room for Moonbeam, after Tony unhitched her, to get between them to the last stall, where Tony gave her oats and fodder as well as putting some water from a small barrel that was kept in the workshop for various tasks. Tom and Vera had assigned the next to last stall for Robert. Being between others meant it was a little warmer, but as we have noted, it was also the passage to the addition with the stove.

Referring to the water barrel, Tom said “Haven’t had chance to see if I can fill that from the roof of the workshop yet.

“Do ye’ want to put the cover back up on the cart, or shall we just throw a tarp over it for tonight.”

“Just the tarp. Been a long day.”

\* \* \*

The next morning was bright and clear. Vera fed Tony bacon and eggs and big wedges of toast for breakfast. Tom and Robert profited from the treat prepared for Tony. Most mornings it was porridge. It was still cool in the kitchen, as the stove had died to embers overnight and even after stoking up to cook the eggs and bacon had not fully warmed the room. Late the night before, Tony had quietly opened the kitchen door and let Limper come in and lie with him on the straw palliasse kept handy in case he had to stay over. At daybreak, Limper licked Tony’s face to be quietly let out. Vera didn’t like her indoors.

The Saultons and Robert had not awoken particularly early. The lack of light before sun-up hindered proper work on furniture. When they did get to look at what Maud had purchased, Tom asked “What’d Maud pay for these?”

Tony told the story of the purchase.

“Well, we don’t need to do very much to ’em. There’s a couple of scratches, and I’m guessing we need to make the drawers of the chests and the writing desk run smooth. Possibly some levellin’ of the table, and I’ll check the bed frame fittin’s. Chairs seem tight, which is good. She should easily clear ten quid on the lot, I think, even payin’ us a pound or so for that work and your cartage.”

Vera had come out from the cottage, hugging her arms about herself, even with a thick knitted pullover. Tony, too, had a pullover and also a short

coat, gloves, a scarf and a woollen cap. Robert looked cold, though he had stoked the stove in the addition that had been built for it to the workshop.

Yes, it was a crisp morning. As Vera looked at the new pieces, she said “Tom. Do you think I could handle the polishing and fixing of all of these? At least work out what needs to be done and then you tell me if I’m right, and if I can I’ll do them. I want to get so I can judge how much work is needed and how much effort it takes so I can give estimates on work.”

“That’s my girl,” Tom said, giving her a kiss. Tony, watching the affection between his two friends, felt both warmth for them and a sense of emptiness for himself.

\* \* \*

A few days later there was a lot of rain, and Jeremiah was more or less constrained to the house. He and Dan had calculated the materials for the awning over the path. It needed a good 20 feet by 8 of canvas, and that would cost a bit. The poles could be had – if one did not mind some imperfections – from saplings cut down where a new building was to be erected. Dan and Jeremiah discussed using creosote on them to slow the rot of the part that would be stuck in the ground. There was also some wire and some thin pine needed to make the bowed frame to support the canvas.

Dan said “Trick’ll be to find someone with an old sail they want to sell because it won’t take the strain of a good blow. Otherwise the canvas’ll cost too much.”

Dan canvassed the fishermen, but didn’t get much of a response. He also asked at Uptons, and there was some linen that might work, but not quite enough of it. However, when Cassandra was told of their researches, she said B & J probably had some linen that could be used to augment that found at Uptons. They would also need some shellac or linseed oil to waterproof the awning. The cost was not prohibitive, but equally it was several pounds.

Nevertheless, Cassandra decided to go ahead, as it would make the communications between the two houses more efficient. She did think of contacting Mr. Brougham to consider pushing a doorway between the kitchens, but Abraham pointed out that this might make the houses less easy to sell should they so wish. The awning and the gate in the fence were reversible installations.

Then Dan and Jeremiah changed their mind about a bowed top and chose instead to use a simple peaked "roof" using a frame of sticks about an inch and a half square. They had found some planks of about this thickness damaged when a rope on a dray had broken. A number of the planks were broken into odd lengths and others had gouges. But Dan, via his father Joe,

knew the foreman at a local timber mill where there was a steam-powered saw, and for a couple of shillings at the end of the working day got the damaged planks sawn into strips.

“We’ve enough to build ten awnings,” Jeremiah said.

“Yeah, but sticks that size are useful for all sorts of things,” Dan answered. “Might as well have ’em about.”

The frame for the awning thus had triangular cross sections which were easily fastened together with screws and some brass strapping. The frame pieces were assembled into sections, but not put on the poles, as it would be easier to attach the linen with the frame more or less on the ground – actually on some boxes and bricks to keep it off the soil.

The time-consuming step was cutting and hemming the linen, then carefully inserting eyelets using a small ball-peen hammer and a block of metal to serve as an anvil. This let the linen be tied to the frame pieces. They put some ochre distemper on the linen, then a couple of coats of linseed oil. Waiting for this to dry required patience, especially as they had a day with some rain, and had to let the water and the oil dry out. However, before the Goldman’s boarded a train to London, the awning was up and the passage between the houses was somewhat shielded from rain.

\* \* \*

During the month of February, Ethel set Jeremiah to cooking several times. He proved to be very quick at peeling and chopping vegetables and meat, and on two occasions did almost all the work on stews that were the main dish for supper. The principal discovery on those occasions was that none of those sitting at the table realized that Ethel had not prepared what they were eating until Jeremiah said “I would’ve liked to put in some okra, but I don’t think it’s known here.” This caused some back and forth of questions and conjectures, since the plant did not seem to be known in England.

The other task that Jeremiah soon took over was the heavy mixing of dough or batter. Some of that work was actually for Treats, and Mary had a quiet word with Cassandra to apologize that he had seen her struggling and simply took over the task.

Cassandra said “If you increase production, you will need more help of the sort that provides brute force. As and when Jeremiah takes on a lot of that, we can talk about how to adjust the money.”

\* \* \*

Tom had for some time realized having a watch would be helpful to ordering his day. Besides, he found timepieces fascinating and wondered about taking apart an old one and learning about its workings. In late February, he decided to walk with Vera when she went to spend an afternoon at Uptons and visit Joshua Goldman. Limper was left to guard the cottage and workshop with Robert, though the cottage was nevertheless carefully locked up.

Joshua greeted him warmly "Mr. Soulton. A good afternoon to you."

"And to you, Mr. Goldman."

"To what do we owe your visit?"

"I wanted to ask if you think there will be as much demand for furniture from the shop here when you are away, or if different items might be needed."

"Well, with the reduced hours of opening, the sales will probably be fewer, and possibly people will choose not to come here for furniture. I hope that overall you and Vera will still get as much work restoring pieces."

"It won't be forever, and Vera is good at selling the furnishings. We may try to sell some on from the workshop, possibly by order. Maud and Mr. Cohen have been talking to Mr. Arbuthnot about trying to get commissions even before we have the furniture, then try to buy things and deliver them directly, with just pieces needing restoration coming to us."

"Abraham told me as much. It is the right way to go with furniture. Let us hope that we get such business."

"May I suggest that you get some small labels printed to stick on the pieces you restore or refinish?"

"You mean to say something like 'Restored by T and V Soulton' and possibly our address?"

"You might also leave some space on such a label for a date and perhaps a number that would let you record what work you did on the piece. That way, if we see such pieces again, we will have a chance to learn about them."

"That's a good idea, Mr. Goldman. And the labels will serve also to advertise, even if they are stuck where they usually won't be seen, like under the table top, or the seat of a chair, or the back of a chest."

"I'll let you get on with your day, Mr. Soulton, and hope all goes well while Rachel and I are away."

"There was one other thing I wanted to ask about. I've thought it would be useful to have a watch so I can know the time and not have to listen for a public clock to chime."

"A pocket watch or a wristwatch?"

"Pocket watch be best for me. Wristwatch might get bust if I slipped when working on a piece."

"And you are wondering if I have a forfeited pledge that might suit your need?"

"I thought it worth asking before I looked anywhere else."

"Yes. That is sensible, though we do not get many watches pledged, and very few that are not redeemed, but I do happen to have one for which the pledge expired last month. Let us take a look at it."

Joshua reached in the back of a glass-topped display case and brought out a silver cased pocket watch.

"It needs polishing. The silver, especially for the chain, has tarnished. And I will be direct with you that I have no idea if it keeps good time."

"It is a fine looking watch, and it has a proper cover. Less chance the glass will get broken," Tom said, and lifted it to his ear. "It is ticking, at least."

"Be very careful winding it. Easy to break the spring. If you like it, why not take it with you and try it until I return from America. That way you can check that it keeps good time, though it may need lubrication."

"Assuming I want to keep it when you get back, how much will I need to pay you?"

"I lent 10 shillings on it, since it should be saleable for 30 shillings, but for you £1."

"That's a bargain. Thank you, Mr. Goldman."

"Let's hope you still think so in a few months. A good watch will help you, but a poor one will cause you much grief."

\* \* \*

At the end of February, it became urgent to decide how the pawn shop would be operated while the Goldmans were away. Cassandra and Abraham came for tea to Goldmans on Wednesday 28th. Rebecca joined them so they could plan what they would do.

During the month, Jeremiah had come every day for a short while to give Moses some exercise. This he did with simply a bridle and the inducement of a carrot or two, walking different streets for about a mile or so. This let him learn more of the geography of the town. On some visits he spent some time examining the cart and working out how he would repair the spring and grease the wheels. He made some drawings and showed them to Dan, who suggested that they both talk to Tom when they could do so. That conversation took place nearer the end of February when Dan met Jeremiah as he walked Moses to Saultons on an exercise outing. Tom said that he felt Jeremiah should be very careful working on the spring in case it came apart suddenly. The three mechanical minds decided that they would meet some time soon at Goldmans and work together to repair the spring and use their number to quickly grease the four wheel bearings.



“We’ll need a jack to lift the wagon,” Dan said.

“I’ve been thinkin’ of making one,” Tom said. “Ideally I’d like a couple, but truth is I can’t really say I need one for the furniture. Still, be nice to have tools like that.”

Jeremiah said “I’ve done it with a stout pole and a piece of tree trunk a little lower than the axle is high.”

“I’ll see what we have that might work for that at the workshop. I’m pretty certain I can do something like that. And I want to put together a pair of good clamps so we can press the spring together so we can fasten it somehow, probably with nut and bolt since we don’t have a forge to do rivets, though maybe we could remove the spring and take it to Howards.”

Such efforts to devise repairs take time, and at the time the Goldmans departed, the cart was still unrepaired. Nevertheless, there was a general appreciation that Jeremiah would serve as the watchman of the pawn shop and apartment.

“Is it then agreed that Jeremiah will sleep here while you are away?” Cassandra asked.

Joshua answered “Yes. We have moved the contents of our strong box to Mr. Turcotte’s safe, which he has been kind enough to let us employ, and also has refused remuneration, though he did ask me to keep an eye out for some candlesticks suitable for a dining table. There is a pair of brass candelabras that are likely to become unredeemed pledges shortly. While only brass, not silver, they are yet rather attractive. I have tied a note to them that they are not to be sold and reserved for Mrs. Turcotte to see. If she likes them they will be hers.”

“How will the cash box work?” Rebecca asked.

Abraham said “There will be three keys for you, Cassandra and I. At the end of each day, the balance left in the box will be copied from the ledger and if neither Cassandra nor I are here, then Joseph or Valerie or an urchin will carry a note to me so I can either replenish the balance to the amount we have agreed should be the float or take away profit to reduce it to that number. I will endeavour to ensure there is a goodly variety of different species of coin. If I or Cassandra are here, we will decide what to do to ensure that we are careful when we move cash in or out.

“I will suggest that either Valerie or Joseph assist at the end of each day’s trading to check the cash box balance.”

“What will Jeremiah do besides be here as watchman,” Rachel asked.

Cassandra answered “With Joseph, he’ll continue to exercise Moses, with one of them here while the other is out. We’re going to ask him to clean the shop and apartment, and to cook and do laundry for Uptons as appropriate, relieving them to work here. We will allow some latitude for him to explore other activities of benefit to himself and the rest of us, and I’ve told him

that.”

\* \* \*

Within a fortnight, the routine at Goldmans had been established. We may be thankful that no crime was committed or attempted upon the pawn shop. However, Saultons did attract the attention of some thieves. The particular group of malefactors was generally called a gang of gypsies, but none of them were, in fact, romany, and the attribution defamed such people.

It never did get revealed what had attracted this group of three young men who travelled from place to place pretending to be itinerant labourers, but in fact preying on the residents of wherever they were. Their target was generally money or valuables. In this they watched for houses where there was evidence of such plunder. Saultons did not fit this mould, though as we are aware, there was a strong-box in the cottage. Whether the gang had learned about this, we will probably never know.

On the 15th of March, the Ides, Tom and Vera had invited Tony to come for a small celebration of his 16th birthday. Vera had made pasties with some rabbit, onion and winter vegetables. There were potatoes and some cabbage to round out the main meal. Some cider to drink, with tea and rock cakes for dessert formed the core of the minor feast.

Given the early darkness, Tony and Moonbeam were staying the night. Well before 10, Robert had returned to the workshop, everyone had visited the privy, Tony had given Moonbeam some oats, and Tom had helped Vera wash the dishes. All were asleep when, near midnight, the three gang members slipped into the yard. By this time, Tony had let Limper into the kitchen to lie with him, but she stirred, growled softly and woke him.

For some reason, the gang thought whatever they were looking for was in the workshop, and made for the front door. At this time, this door was not locked, since Robert was inside and Limper was normally in the yard. The three gang members congregated near the door and had a whispered discussion of how to find what they were looking for. They were reluctant to strike a match outside where it might be seen. They were burglars rather than robbers.

By feel, Tony crept to the window and pulled the curtain aside. It was very dark, and the waning crescent moon gave hardly a glimmer of light. Nevertheless, Tony saw some movement, and Limper was still growling, so he went to the curtain to the bedroom and whispered “Tom, Vera! There’s someone outside. I think they’re trying to get in the workshop.”

Tom had, likely hearing Limper growl, woken. He gently woke Vera. Tom pulled on some trousers over his nightgown. Tony had lain down more

or less dressed. Tom whispered "I'll get a lamp," which he did, and found a match and lit it, but kept the wick low so they would not be blinded by it.

"What's going on," Vera whispered.

"We think someone's outside, trying to get in the workshop. Probably up to no good," Tony said.

"Better take a broomstick," Vera said. "I'll grab the carving knife."

"Pity the sticks are in the workshop," Tony said.

"Take the poker for the fire," Tom said. "Ready?"

They opened the door and Vera, who had the lamp, turned up the wick. Limper barked and ran into the workshop at the three gang members, one of whom was now over by the bench. The second was looking towards the back and Robert had run into him as he got up and came out of the stall where his cot was set. There was a scuffle, and Robert, reaching up, happened to get a thumb in the man's eye and slipped past him to get outside the door.

Tom yelled "What are you doing there!" and stepped forward. The last man of the three, who was just inside the doorway, turned and ran, but the lamp light caught his face. There was a deep mark over his left eye, and Vera and Tony got a good look at him. Tom was already almost upon the second man, Robert having run outside to join Vera and Tony, while Limper had gone for the first man and bitten him in the calf. The man yelled, but unfortunately he was carrying a cudgel. He swung this weapon and caught Limper a terrible clout on the head and she yelped and dropped to the floor. The man yelled "Bert, Joe. There's only one man, a woman and a youth. I got the damned dog." He hadn't noticed Tony yet.

Given the wide door, Tom was able to side-step the second man who seemed frozen by indecision. Having seen the first man hit Limper, Tom was flushed with a rage from a source he could not identify. While his first instinct was to swing the broomstick – it still had the brush on one end – like a club, but realized it would be more effective like a spear, especially as he could drive it forward using the brush to increase the force. He caught the man in the lower stomach near the left hip. The man collapse with a loud "Oompf!".

This left the second man who now was realizing he was alone and looked to escape. Vera was behind Tony, and held the lamp high. Robert was standing a bit to one side, still waking up and unsure what to do. Tony had the fire poker in his left hand, having used his right to open the door to the cottage. As the man started to break for the road, Tony swung the poker and caught him a sharp blow on the kneecap. There was a crack and the man howled and fell towards his left, partly managing to grab Tony by the arm. Tony fell on top of the man, and struggled to get the poker into his right hand. However, before he could do this, Vera put the point of the carving knife at the man's neck and said "Don't move!"

Tony scrambled to his feet. Robert now was realizing the situation. Like Tony, he had slept in his clothes, in part for warmth. With some presence of mind, he lit another lamp and hung it on a hook. Tom, standing above the man he'd felled with the broomstick, said to Robert "Toss me that cudgel and get some rope."

They tied the hands of the men behind their backs and also tied their feet. Tom said "Robert. Go to the police station and let them know we have two of the three men who invaded our workshop. Vera. Get some coin so Robert can take a hansom if he finds one."

Meanwhile, Tony had gone to where Limper was lying on the floor. After examining the dog, he said "Tom. I'm afraid Limper's dead."

"Give me the poker!"

"The dog bit me!" yelled the man who Tom wanted to bash. "I'm bleedin'!"

"Better leave punishment to the court, Tom," Tony said. "I'll take Limper outside. And Robert may get lost – he's new to Brighton and it's a dark night. I'll go and wake up one or more of the houses down the road and get them to go for the constables as the third thief may still be about and try to rescue his friends."

Vera said "Take Robert with you to the neighbours. He's met some of them, and two of you can watch for the thief, though I'll guess he's run off. Tom and I have these two tied up."

Tony and Robert managed to get two households up and one of the elder sons in one house said he'd go for the constables, while the father of one house, a Mr. Samson, came back with Tony and Robert to see the two men they'd captured. There were also two satchels that proved to contain jemmies and other tools of robbery.

Vera dressed and put on a kettle and got a couple more lanterns lit. There was a wait of over an hour before two constables arrived with a closed wagon. Neither constable was well-known to the Saultons or Tony. They were not very efficient. Vera had to ask them if they wanted statements before they started to record the stories of each person. And they did not keep each person separate, but had them all together in the kitchen, after the constables had put the prisoners in their wagon.

Eventually the constables and Samson and his son, who had directed the constables to the workshop, all departed. Robert returned to the workshop, bolting the door. The others returned to their beds, but none had a good sleep.

\* \* \*

The fortnight following the attempted robbery was one of emotional discomfort for the people in Cassandra's circle.

Tom, usually the bright optimist, was very subdued. The morning of March 16 they buried Limper behind the workshop in a corner of the property. This area now had a section that had been dug by Tom and Robert for the planting of some vegetables. To protect the garden from the donkeys, should they be allowed to graze, Tom had attached some rings to the back wall of the workshop so the donkeys could be tied so they could graze but not munch on the vegetables.

The concern about security led Tom and Vera to take some of their sovereigns and sew them into a belt for each of them. The only notes were the £5 ones as yet, after pound notes issued in Napoleonic times had ceased to be issued in 1821. But £5 was difficult to spend. Few merchants kept enough coin in the till to provide change, so Tom and Vera preferred the sovereigns. So now each had about a third of their fortune upon their person, with the remainder in their strong-box with some other minor treasures.

They also decided to keep a few stout sticks that would serve as cudgels in discreet locations in the cottage and workshop. These were out of sight but would be quickly accessible to Tom, Vera or Robert should the need arise.

The two captured thieves appeared before a magistrate but were bound over to the Borough quarter sessions that were to commence in Church Street on March 26. Constable Shaw came by to tell Tom, Vera and Robert that they would be called as witnesses. They would need to get Joseph Upton to watch the workshop while they were in court. Vera said "If the third thief knows his pals are up before the magistrate and we're witnesses, he'll figure it's a good time to come back."

Shaw had also told Tony, having met him in the street a couple of days after the attempted burglary.

"A rum business, Mr. Brown. The best 'ope is that the two we 'ave decide to rat on their former friend. We're pretty sure we know who 'e is, but don't have any evidence yet, though Mrs. Soulton thinks she got a good look at 'im."

We will not grace this story with the names of the offenders, save to call them A, B and C. A had the cudgel and killed Limper. B suffered a broken kneecap. C had initially escaped, but once his colleagues had been offered minor considerations for giving him up, his name was known, and also a shed they rented to sleep in. One of the constables thought it worth searching thoroughly and found a loose floorboard under which was a sack with some valuables and money. At this point, thief C wanted to recover this stash and foolishly came into the shed. There was a scuffle, and the constable knocked down, and C made off with the sack. However, the visit of the constable had

been noted by some urchins who had surreptitiously watched to see what the constable was about, and then saw C arrive. The constable's whistle made them realize that C was a fugitive and several of them followed him at a distance. He made for the Chain Pier, thinking he could get on a steam packet and get away, either to Dieppe or the Isle of Wight. His knowledge of how such vessels worked to a timetable was deficient, and he was arrested there with the loot mostly intact.

Guilty pleas saved our friends from having to testify, but they did have to present themselves at Church Street and wait while the pleas were entered. A, B and C received various periods of penal servitude, since it had become clear that the thieves had been active in several towns along the coast over a period of months. With the sentencing, Tom, Vera, Tony and Robert all had varying feelings that justice had been served for society, but not for their own loss of dog, time, or sense of security.

\* \* \*

For all our friends, work was, if not a cure, then a diversion from their anxieties and inquietude. Joshua's cart – a four wheel type of the style of the later prairie buckboard – was still needing a leaf spring repaired and the axles greasing.

The spring needed a metal band replaced. This was one of the iron straps that clamped the leaves of the spring together. The original was riveted, but it was clear it had not been well done. Tom had acquired some long and sturdy bolts, and realized he could make a workable replacement with these and a couple of iron plates a few inches long and an inch or so wide. He would need holes in these for the bolts and a tab in one of them to keep the clamp from moving along the spring.

In his pile of odds and ends, Tom found some short pieces of bar that were long enough. The tricky part was punching the holes and the tab into them. He could take the bars to Howards, the blacksmith, but decided that it was worth trying with one bar at least.

Some time before, Vera had found a pair of bellows which she thought would be useful to accelerate the lighting of the stove. Now Tom could get Robert to use these along with coke in his small metal fire box to heat the bar. Tom had bought a block of iron that had a hole in it to use as a form of anvil, and had set this into a heavy wooden frame so it would not move around. When the bar was as hot as he could get it, he had Robert hold it with tongs and used a rod of iron of the right diameter and a heavy hammer and tried to punch through the hot bar, with the rod directly above the hole in the anvil. The result on the first try was adequate, but of a rough

appearance. The hole in the other end of the bar worked a bit better. They made a second bar the same, then heated it in the middle and with a pointed rod Tom pushed out a tab that would engage a hole in one of the spring leafs. This would stop the clamp – the two bars held at either side of the spring with bolts – moving along the spring and allowing it to come apart.

Tom made a second clamp in the same way, but with longer bolts. He thought he would need that to help push the leaves of the spring together, but it turned out this was unnecessary. C-clamps of iron were available, but they were quite expensive, especially if well made.

\* \* \*

It was Vera who solved the problem of jacking up the wheels of the cart. She and Tom were lying in bed together. They'd both been subdued since the attempted robbery. Indeed, there had been a notable decline in their exuberance in bed together.

“Thinking about something, Tom?”

“Yeah. Trying to think how to make a jack so we can grease the axles on Goldmans' cart.”

“How does a jack work?”

“There's different types, but the best for general use would be with a long heavy screw. Like undoing a nut and bolt – pushes the nut and bolt apart with a lot of force, and you use that to lift things.”

“If I'm right, bolts and nuts like that are expensive, especially good ones.”

“You're right there Vera. But Jeremiah said they used to use a bit of tree trunk and a pole on the plantation. Like a big lever. There are special cart jacks work the same way, but they are sometimes only good for light carts. Gotta be careful not to get the wrong one for the job.”

“Couldn't you do something like what Jeremiah suggested?”

“Sure. But I don't like the idea that you have to find the right size of tree trunk and pole, and things are all loose so they can slip. Then you've a cart on top of you.”

“You mean you want the base – the tree trunk – more or less solid in its position, and some sort of hinge to hold the pole in the right place?”

“Yeah. Exactly. You've understood that well, Vera. And also you want to be able to have the tree trunk in different heights, because otherwise you don't get the pole under the axle of the cart nice and level.”

“Tom. If the pole had a metal rod through it and you had a frame like they put cannons on, would that work?”

“They call the bits that stick out the side of the cannons trunnions. And they go in grooves to bear the weight. Yes. That would work well. A base

with sides would allow the pole to be moved over a reasonable range too. The only problem would be we'd need a bunch of bases of different heights."

"Yes. You rather need a base that's like a pair of stairs, one each side, with a groove for the ... did you say trunnions ... at each level."

Tom kissed her. "Vera. That's it! You're wonderful. And not just because I get to play with all your nice woman bits." He kissed her again, and seemed to get distracted by the anatomical features he had just mentioned. Indeed, discussion of the making of a jack ceased for some time.

\* \* \*

Tom and Robert had no trouble making the jack out of essentially pieces of timber that had been bought for repair of the cottage roof. The base was made up of a stack of lengths about two and a half feet long, then vertical pieces of several heights were screwed to the sides of these, forming a stair-like arrangement with the based extending beyond the verticals so it would not tip forward or back. Under the bottom, they screwed some cross pieces on which the whole would rest and would provide some lateral stability.

The last touches on the base were some small pieces of birch fastened to the edge of each "step" to stop the pivot bar from falling off. The pivot was a round iron bar with a wooden disk on each end to stop it moving from side to side. They also attached some rope handles to allow the base to be lifted or dragged easily.

While cannon trunnions sat in semi-circular bearings, typically of metal, pieces of the strips of birch served as a barrier to movement of the pivot bar. Initially, Tom had thought to drill his lifting beam and put the pivot through it, but realized this would weaken the beam. Instead he and Robert braided some rope into a sort of strap and spliced it so it held the pivot bar loosely to the beam, which allowed the position of the lever fulcrum to be adjusted. To stop the bar sliding along the beam, a simple wedge was pushed under the rope and lightly tapped tight with a hammer to secure its position.

When Jeremiah saw the jack, he was impressed. "Mr. Soulton, I do declare that is the finest home-made jack I ever saw. My felicitations to you and Mrs. Soulton and Mr. Vance. This jack isn't just for one size of cart or just for carts."

They quickly set the jack to work, with Jeremiah's bulk making short work of raising a wheel, Tom undoing the nut and lifting the wheel off, and Robert smearing plenty of grease on the metal axle piece. Then Tom put the wheel back and put on the nut and tightened it up. Tom had learned – he couldn't remember where – that the nuts on the left hand side tightened counter clockwise, or leftwards, so the rotation of the wheels would not undo



the nut. Those on the right hand side were right-handed, or clockwise to tighten for the same reason.

The nuts were sunk inside the wheel hubs, and the spanner to undo them was like a small spade whose blade had been made U-shaped. The ends of the U could be put into the depression in the centre of the hub and fit either side of the nut.

They also wanted to grease the king-pin – the vertical pivot for the front axle – and the new jack was employed just behind the pin to lift the body of the cart off the front wheels. They put bricks front and rear of the back wheels so they would not roll, and Robert and Tom greased the pin and plate while Jeremiah again applied his weight to the jack lever.

\* \* \*

One day in April when Abraham was at the pawn shop, Tony and Moonbeam took Maud to an auction where there were some pieces she thought could be bought at prices that would turn a handsome profit. Tony had her ride, as her pregnancy was now obvious and she tired quickly.

At the auction, Maud hoped to get some decent but unpretentious furniture that could be sold quickly. Fancier items in relatively poor condition gave larger markups, but buyers with sufficient wealth to purchase them were fewer. There was a growing number of people coming to Brighton who were not rich but were, by most standards, well-off. These people needed to furnish the houses they were buying or apartments they were renting, but fancy pieces were outside their budget. They would, however, eagerly buy plainer items. The key for Maud was to arrange that there was enough profit on them.

Tony wanted to see what happened in an auction, and offered a street boy he knew thrupence to watch Moonbeam and the cart, and even sit on the driver's seat.

Maud said "First we go look at the lots. Here's the list of them. And we use a pencil to make notes. But I keep these to myself. No use tipping off other dealers. That man over there, for example. And I've seen the fellow with the morning coat at some sales. I think he's from Eastbourne. But most of them are looking to re-sell the pieces as they are. Our big advantage is Tom and now Vera and Robert too. As far as I know, none of the other dealers are doing more than bit of spit and polish, but we need to keep our eyes and ears open."

"There wouldn't be much we could do about it even if they did, would there?" Tony asked.

“Not to stop them. No. But our profit comes from getting enough from selling the pieces to cover what we pay for them and the repairs and restoration, and your cartage and my income. So we need to make sure we don’t pay too much to acquire the items as much as not selling them for too little.”

“So you and Mr. Cohen are looking at pieces and trying to see them not as they are now, but as they will be restored, an’ figuring the prices in the present and future condition, with some idea of the cost of restoring them? That’s a lot of figuring. And on top, you’ve got to figure what to pay now.”

“When you put it in those words, it is. I suppose Mr. Cohen and I do all that without thinkin’ too much. Though we usually make a note of what we feel is our upper limit on bidding. And we never – I mean never – go beyond that limit. That’s where auctions can be dangerous. People get all excited and get into a contest with other bidders.”

“I saw you put the lot number and a value in your notebook. Not on the catalog.”

“No. Just notes on the catalog. Keep what I’m willing to pay out of sight.”

Tony asked “What do you think of that chest? Is it a sea chest?”

“Yes. A sea chest or a seaman’s chest. They call those rope, or cordage, handles ‘beckets’. The catalogue says the key is lost. That could mean it’s got to be broken open. Probably then need quite a bit of work, and they aren’t a regular bit of furniture.”

“I can see it’s important to know what’s what.”

“If you’re interested in the chest, I could bid on it for you. How much is the most you’d be willing to pay? Remember, it might be not much more than firewood.”

“I think I’d be happy if I got it for 5 bob, but be uncomfortable if I had to pay 10.”

“Do you want to set a limit of 5, or maybe 7 and 6?”

“Call it curiosity and go as high as 7 and 6.”

In the event, they got the chest for half a crown, being the first and only bid.

This day there were several items that Maud acquired for almost nothing, but the bids on two sets of tables and chairs rose higher than she felt safe in contesting. She had set her limits and held to them.

She did however, get two small pedestal tables of the sort used to hold potted plants. Both had tops that were well out of level and badly marked, but she was confident Tom could fix the deficiencies. The slope of the tops was so pronounced she was the only bidder and got the pair for a florin.

There was also a chest of drawers that had no handles on the drawers. In fact, there were strings through the bolt-holes. Worse, someone had painted

the whole of it with a red distemper. At least it wasn't painted with glossy oil paint using lead colours. When they had looked at it, Tony opened one of the drawers and noted they were very solidly made.

Maud said "Let's see if we can get it for a few bob. My limit's 5 shillings, though."

Indeed, they got this for 4 by doubling someone's opening offer of 2 shillings after the auctioneer tried to start the bidding at 10.

The only other items they got were two footstools and a tea tray. All were in need of at least substantial cleaning and polishing. Before the sale was complete, Maud suggested they pay and collect their lots. The auctioneers were unlikely to be happy with their commissions on these items. However, Maud pointed out several items to Tony that drew winning bids of over £15 guineas.

\* \* \*

Tony took Maud to her home in Chorley Terrace, and was going to continue on to Souldons workshop. Henry was in his office in the front room of the house and saw them come up, and he came outside to greet them.

"Hello. Maud, are you all right, my dear?"

"Tony brought me back on the cart. I tire quickly these days. I think I'll be very happy when the child is born.

"Tony do you want some tea before you go on?"

"No. Think I'll be getting on. I want to ask Tom about opening the seaman's chest."

Maud said to Henry "I'll explain later."

Indeed, Tony's curiosity was very piqued by the weight of the chest. However, Henry said "Before you go, I have some news that might be of interest. This morning I had a lady whose father died two days ago come to have me arrange probate of the will. A complication is that the man had two dogs. They are currently in the care of a neighbour, but I gather the arrangement is day-to-day, and the neighbour is having to be paid. Given the unfortunate recent events, I wondered if Tom and Vera might consider taking on one of them."

"Where are the dogs now?" Tony asked.

"I have the address on my desk. Let me get it if you want to go to see what the dogs are like, as I've really no idea. They may be unsuitable entirely, but the place is nearby. I'll write a note to explain your coming if you hold on for a minute.

"I should probably add that some places charge a dog tax. There has been a lot of political discussion that dogs of ordinary people should not be taxed, and I have not seen or heard of it here in Brighton."

Tony waited while Henry, using printed letterhead, wrote a note saying he was handling the estate of a Mr. George Astley and Mr. Tony Brown was possibly interested in the dogs currently in the care of Mrs. Fermor. As solicitor, Henry Mortimer could be contacted if necessary.

Mrs. Fermor lived not 300 yards away. Tony knocked and a blowsy woman came to the door.

“What d’ya want?”

“Mr. Henry Mortimer, the solicitor, said I might see the dogs left by Mr. Astley’s daughter in case they were of interest to me. I have a letter here from Mr. Mortimer to explain that.”

“Useless curs. Been shittin’ in the yard and dug up some of me flowers. Try to ’elp out and where’s it get ya’? Come on through.”

Tony had tied Moonbeam to a railing, but was a bit reluctant to leave the furniture on the cart. Still, there was nobody about, so he came through the house to the yard. The dogs were medium sized mixed breeds. They had differing elements of English sheepdog and fox terrier which made them look decidedly odd. Both came up to Tony and sniffed him in a friendly way, and neither was aggressive or barking. Tony scratched one behind its ears and the dog sat down beside him. Interesting.

“Wish I’d told Mr. Astley’s daughter I couldn’t take ’em,” Mrs. Fermor said.

“Would you let me take them? I can write a receipt on the back of Mr. Mortimer’s letter.”

“I’ll be ’appy to let you take ’em. And I saw your sign on the cart. Best Bonnet’s known around town. You saved that Crouch girl didn’t you?”

“Yes. Well, I think Moonbeam should get the credit. Let’s get these two to the front and I’ll get some rope to tie to their collars and find my pencil.”

Truthfully, Tony had his pencil in his pocket, but wanted to be with the cart in case of opportunistic theft. When they got to the front, Mrs. Fermor holding one dog and Tony the other, everything was still quiet, which was a relief. Tony said “Keep hold of him for a minute and I’ll get some rope.”

In a minute or so, both dogs were tied to the back of the cart with enough slack to give some freedom of movement without getting too far away. Tony wrote on the back of Henry’s letter that he had taken two dogs from Mrs. Fermor. He wondered if Mr. Astley’s daughter would expect some payment, but thought it unlikely, though he could simply look after the dogs for a few days and return them in that case.

Thus a rather strange procession of driver, donkey, cart and dogs pulled into Saultons in the early afternoon. Tom said “Where’d you get the dogs?” and got the story. The dogs were let off the rope after the front gate was pulled shut. A clever dog would still escape, but these two seemed inclined to explore the yard. They sniffed particularly at Limper’s kennel, which was

really just a two foot by three awning with a single side wall of oiled cloth that protected the end away from the steps. The steps provided the other "wall".

Vera said "Tom. Do we want to consider the dogs? We could give them a try for a few days."

"Not sure I want two dogs."

"Actually, I was thinking of seeing about keeping the one that has the smoother fur and more brown colour," Tony said.

"Why not?" Tom answered. "Now let's see what Maud bought. Oh. She got a seaman's chest."

"No. That caught my eye. Maud got it for me for half a crown an' I paid 'er back. It's got something in it, but the key's lost, so I'll have to bust the lock or pick it."

"Might talk to Cranmer, the locksmith, about how to pick it. Be nice to avoid breaking the wood. Nice looking box, but not really something most people are looking for as furniture."

"I thought it might suit me, since I just have the cot at Uptons and a few hooks on the wall."

"Yeah. You've been more or less campin' ever since I've known you."

"Want a sandwich, Tony?" Vera asked. "You must've missed dinner."

"I'd love one, but after we unload."

Tom and Vera looked at the pieces and Tom wrote an estimate of the cost of the restorations. Vera had suggested that they compare how much time and money went into each piece with such estimates so they could improve their forecasts both for themselves and possibly with Maud and Abraham.

"These tables should come up pretty good. And not too much trouble to level I'm guessing. The chest of drawers has good wood from what we can see from the inside of the drawers, but might be a lot of work to get it decent with all the paint on it, and we'll want some nice knobs if we do succeed in that."

"Maud got it for 4 shillings, and she said she'd expect 30 in any sort of decent condition," Tony answered.

"We should be able to clean it up. Probably put it somewhere out of our way so we can work on it a bit at a time. Sanding is slow and boring work, but a quarter hour at a time ain't so bad."

Vera said "I'll put a piece of paper and pencil under a pebble so we can each record what we do on it. Did you hear that Robert?"

Robert was busy at the back of the workshop working on putting together some simple frames for bee-hives. There were now two in the rear garden as it was now being called, and he was planning two more. They would likely not become productive for a year, but the two current ones seemed likely to

give modest amounts of honey and wax. Robert made a mental note to tell Tom and Vera they should think of where to get jars.

Though it was nominally a workday, our friends took a rather long sojourn to eat sandwiches and drink tea in the kitchen. The dogs, having explored the yard, settled down, one – the greyish, fuzzy one – in Limper’s old shelter. The other dog, the one Tony wanted, went and lay down under the cart, which Tony had propped up after unharnessing Moonbeam and tying her to a corkscrew peg he placed in the front of the cottage where there was a little new grass coming in after the winter. Without much thought, he filled a bowl that was lying near Limper’s shelter with water and both dogs came and drank.

\* \* \*

Tony got back to Uptons around five o’clock. On the way, he bought a pennyworth of offal at a butcher’s shop. With Moonbeam in her stall and the cart parked, he tied the dog to the cart so the animal could get shelter under it. As he did so, he noticed the collar had a name burned into the leather. "Jolly". Well, that was a good enough name.

Coming up into the area behind the shop, he put the seaman’s chest on the floor at the foot of his cot. Rebecca looked in from the shop and asked "What you got there?" and had the day’s stories related.

Tony said "Are there a couple of old bowls in the shop somewhere? Jolly – the dog – will need food and water."

"You plannin’ to keep it?"

"Unless they want lots for ’im. Limper woke me when the thieves tried to rob Vera and Tom. If Jolly is good-tempered, he or she could be worth having nearby. I got some offal from the butchers. It’s wrapped in paper in the cart."

"There should be some old crockery in that box over there," Rebecca said. "If there’s a couple of cracked ones, just take ’em. They can always go back if the dog doesn’t stay, and I’ll not miss the penny they’d fetch."

\* \* \*

Jolly did stay. She was a bitch and Fuzzy, the name Vera gave to the other dog, was male. They had been siblings, as Mr. Astley’s daughter told Henry in thanking him for finding good homes for her father’s treasured companions. Soon Jolly was to be seen trotting along beside or just behind the cart, or sometimes just ahead when she knew where they were headed.

When Rebecca had asked what Tony had brought in, she was of course noting the seaman's chest. After supper that night, she said "Tony, bring up that chest of yours and let's take a look at it. Valerie, get another lamp, and Joseph, bring me that box of small tools from under the shop counter."

The chest had the name Samuel Crown painted on the top. Rebecca used the lamp to look at the chest from all sides.

"Nice construction. Lid overlaps the box and the box tapers up from the bottom. That's so it sits well if most of the weight is at the bottom, and you can use the top to sit on or as a small table. Lock looks like the lever type. If it's just three or four levers, we should be able to get it open."

"Mum. Do you know how to get it open?" Joseph asked.

"Your grandfather did a good trade in second-hand furniture, and part of that was because he could get pieces unlocked and then change the locks or find or cut keys. Let's see what's in that small tools box."

It turned out that there were some strange bits of wire with the ends turned up, as well as some other odds and ends with small blade-like projections. Rebecca said "When I was expecting each of you, your grandfather let me have a go at pieces that were locked. He showed me the rudiments then left me to it. I got big with child close to my confinements and couldn't bear to be on my feet too long, so it was a useful occupation. Let's see what I can do with this."

It took Rebecca possibly ten minutes of fiddling before there was a scraping sound and a click and the lid could be lifted on the chest.

The first thing visible was a sturdy pea-jacket. Under this were some canvas breeches, with two pairs of stockings and two of linen or cotton drawers. The breeches were, as Tony later learned, sometimes called slops. Below these items was a pair of woolen mittens in greasy wool.

"Them's for work in boats. Knitted from unwashed wool to keep 'em good in the wet."

They found two linen shirts that were sweat stained and needed washing. They were of a type with attached collar. Detached collars had become more common in the last few years. Tony put aside the shirts. Clean, they might be wearable. Near the bottom were a pair of buckle shoes. They were in good shape, but a relic of possibly half a century before. And there was a pair of boots, well polished and wrapped in brown paper. Finally, at the bottom was an oilcloth cape and hat, the latter with a strap to go under the chin and hold it in place.

"Some of those might be useful to you, or you could sell 'em," Valerie said.

"'ave to try things on, which I'll do when they've been laundered," Tony replied.

Joseph asked "What's at the side there?"

There was a narrow section of the chest along the right hand side, with a wooden cover that had two holes big enough for fingers to lift it out. Inside were several items. The first of these was a leather pouch? Tony took it out and opened it. There were two sovereigns, a half sovereign and a half crown.

“Blimey,” Joseph said. “Two pound ten profit right away.”

There was also a brass compass in a velvet case. Tony set it on the table and the needle settled to point seemingly to the North. Then there was a small box with large needles and stout thread, likely for sewing sails. A strange glove with a stout pad in the palm was likely used with these. There was also a pair of scissors in the box.

Finally, there was an oilcloth packet tied with a ribbon. They undid this and found some letters in faded ink and a pair of daguerrotypes. “I’ll see what they say later,” Tony said. He knew none of the Uptons were great readers.

Rebecca said “We can leave it unlocked for now,” as she put away the picks. “If we can easily get the lock out, I can probably make a key, or show you how to make it. Or you can see if a locksmith has a suitable lock, but sometimes that’s just as much work. Makin’ a key is slow and fiddly, but not all that difficult. Specially if you have the lock out and can get at the inside to see the levers.”

\* \* \*

About two weeks later, in fact the Tuesday after Easter, Tony brought the now restored small pedestal tables to Uptons. One each would be placed here and Goldmans to try to sell them. Tom had done a sterling job of levelling the tops, and Vera and Robert had got the items to a wondrous lustre using beeswax and a lot of rubbing after using rottenstone to take out some scratches and blemishes. Abraham looked at the table that Tony carried into the pawn shop and said “It almost makes everything else in here look cheap.”

“What’ll you ask for it?” Tony queried.

“We’ll expect 30 shillings per table, 50 the pair from Uptons, but I’ll ask at least £2 to customers and £3 10 shillings the pair.”

“That’s a good profit, unless Tom and Vera spent an awful amount of time on restoring them,” Tony said.

“I saw Vera the other day when she came to work at Uptons and she said it hadn’t taken them more than two days of time for one person, but we’ll likely pay them a bit extra if we get more than the amounts I’ve set for Uptons.”



“I’ll be away. Got to collect some parcels for B & J from the station, then Joseph and I have a bunch of furniture to move from a warehouse out towards Lewes to a newly built house over Hove way. Actually be today and tomorrow too.”

“You’re not complaining about too much business are you?” Abraham said with a smile.

\* \* \*

As he led Moonbeam to the side of the railway station where goods and parcels could be picked up, he saw Timothy Lester leaning against a light-post.

“Good day, Mr. Brown. And your fine beast that saves damsels in distress.”

“Good day to you too, Mr. Lester.”

Tony thought he might simply continue towards the goods office, but then added

“Mr. Lester. Have you heard of a seafarer named Samuel Crown?”

“As a matter of fact, the name does ring a bell. Is he of interest to you?”

“I recently acquired via an auction a seaman’s chest with that name printed upon it, and rather wondered about the man who had owned it.”

“Are you now branching out in business, Mr. Brown?”

“No. The item intrigued me, and I was with Mrs. Mortimer who trades in furniture and she offered to bid on my behalf.”

“Was there anything inside?” Lester was ever the reporter.

Tony did not rise to the bait. “A few scraps of clothing.”

“Well, I recall that there was a report that a Mr. Samuel Crown was working as a sailor working on one of the packet steamers. There was a storm and he apparently got washed overboard. That was perhaps two and a half years ago. It’s sadly a common-enough occurrence that it merited only an inch or so of column space. About three weeks ago his uncle died and I heard that the estate was being auctioned off, which would explain how you came by it.”

“Thank you, Mr. Lester. That answers most of my questions about the man.”

“I gather you found yourself in another adventure recently, Mr. Brown.”

“Meaning?”

“That some thieves tried to rob your friends at Souldons workshop.”

Tony, remembering Adeline’s advice from the previous summer, said “Did your newspaper not report on the Borough Sessions where the criminals entered a guilty plea?”

“Unfortunately, such a plea means we do not get to hear the testimony of witnesses like yourself, Mr. Brown.”

“Is the story now not old? They are already serving their punishment.”

“But there’s probably a good story about a young man – one who yet does not shave – who manages last summer to rescue a young lady of importance from the sea and now helps thwart a theft, as I have heard it with a poker.”

Tony sensed that Lester knew he was not a man. However, the newspaper was not a vehicle for revealing that part of his nature.

“Mr. Lester, did your newspaper report that the thieves managed to kill my friends’ dog, the dog that had alerted the household to the intrusion?”

“That was a detail I did not know. Will you tell me more?”

There was a pause – a long, somewhat ominous pause – then Lester said “Look, some of the street urchins who knew you from a decade ago have said that you’re actually a girl. That would probably be a good story, but it might also cause you some trouble if some louts felt they could push you about. And you have your work as a carter to do, which ain’t possible in skirts. But the story of ’ow the dog got killed and the crooks got captured is fair game.”

“You might say that a dog woke the household and bit one of the thieves who had entered the workshop. The thief had a cudgel and hit the dog on the head, killing it. But three members of the household armed themselves with a broomstick, a fire-poker and a carving knife and managed to capture two of the thieves while a third ran off. With the fourth household member, the two captives were tied up to await the constables, who were fetched by some neighbours. And the thieves were found to be carrying tools for robbery, like crowbars and jemmies.”

“But you have not given names.”

“It was a waning moon. Your witness really could not make out the identities of who did what in the darkness. And the crooks might have friends who wish to harm those who were only defending their house and home.”

“Ah. I understand. You wish me to write the story from the perspective of a witness who happened to be in sight of the workshop.”

“A witness who has personally related this to you.”

“Well, Mr. Brown. I suppose that will have to do. And, to be fair, a good barrister would probably spin a tale that the three men were lost and made a mistake in entering the workshop, and that the robbery tools were not theirs. It is good that they plead guilty.”

“As you have observed, Mr. Lester, we each have our living to make. The public interest in the story should not interfere with that.”

\* \* \*

Tony walked Moonbeam forward to just near the door of the goods office. "Sit Jolly – guard the cart."

Whether Jolly understood this instruction, she sat near Moonbeam's front legs near the curb. A few days before she had done this when Tony was unloading some chairs. Some youths approached and one yelled "Eh. Lookit the donkey with the 'at. That'd look good on you Billy."

The youth started to approach Moonbeam and reach for the hat but Jolly emitted a low but distinct growl. The youths decided to move on. So perhaps she did understand.

Today Tony collected several bolts of cloth and two large boxes of sewing notions. These would be needles and threads and some ribbons. There was also one parcel with an extra receipt that turned out to be some silver thread, as was revealed later when he delivered it to Cassandra at the haberdashery.

\* \* \*

The information Lester had imparted about Sam Crown was very much of interest to Tony. The letters in the oilcloth told a tale that was upsetting but nevertheless important to know. Possibly the most important was one from the summer of 1840.

August 10, 1840

Dear Sam:

You have no idea how joyful I was on receiving your letter carried by your sailor colleague Zachary. It was pure chance he found me, as my acquaintance Elizabeth only went into the Ship to deliver a message when he was asking if anyone knew Matilda Evans.

The important news is you have a daughter. She was born on March 15, 1839. The Ides of March. For Julius Caesar not a good day. Let us hope better for us. I have named her Antonia Crown, and she is beautiful.

I am going to try the new penny post and send this to the packet boat company with your ship's name. Let us hope it finds you.

Life here is not easy, but with help from my mother, who as you know did not have me until later in her life, we are managing to survive. The biggest challenge is to find a place to live. The address below is where we have been for three months now. I fear greatly that if you write, we will have moved and we will lose contact. You may want to add my mother's name Josephine Evans in any address.

Remember our love, and our daughter.

Yours,

Matilda

The other letters in the package were from people Sam had written to in Brighton trying to find Matilda and Antonia. The last was from early 1847.

May 12, 1847

Dear Mr. Crown,

Having received your payment of £ 1 via Mr. Penrose, we have made investigations and have discovered that Matilda Evans, also known as Matilda Crown, died in December 1843. Her mother, Josephine Evans, was buried within this past fortnight from a local almshouse. Both women were interred in paupers' graves. We could not find any record or knowledge of an Antonia Crown.

I am sorry that our information has to be so unhappy, but assure you of our appreciation of your custom.

We remain your obedient servants,

Jacobs and Newcastle, Investigators

The earliest letter in the small collection gave explanation to why Samuel and Matilda were not together.

September 16, 1838

Dear Samuel,

As you know, since your parents died in the tragic coach accident on the London road, I have been the trustee of their estate. It was not large, and I feel enjoined to preserve the capital for your use and enjoyment when you reach a suitable age, namely 39. That is almost two decades away.

To provide for your livelihood, I have arranged that your trust be credited with £100 from the packet boat company to which you will be indentured for the next 7 years. This should ensure you are freed from the clutches of that wholly unsuitable girl Matilda.

I remain, sir, your devoted uncle,

Ezekiel Crown, Esq.

The daguerreotypes in the packet were of a sailor wearing a pea-jacket and canvas pants – the very garments in the chest. On the back was a date – May 4, 1852 and the name and address of a photographer in Gibraltar. It must have been taken not very long before Samuel was washed overboard.

The other image was of an older man. It was undated and without annotation. Tony guessed it was Ezekiel.

Except for the picture of the sailor, Tony put the items back in the package and tied the ribbon again. He knew where there was a mirror in the shop and went to it and held up the photo while looking in the mirror. He didn't hear Valerie, who was wearing slippers, come in from the side, and she was out of the line of the mirror.

“Gor’ blimey, Tony. That man looks a lot like you. Older o’ course, but still a similar face.”

For a moment Tony was gripped by panic, then realized Valerie posed no direct threat.

“It was in the chest. I think it’s Samuel Crown.”

“Could ’e be your Dad?”

“Or a relative,” Tony decided to be non-committal. At this stage, as far as he knew, Valerie still assumed he was a boy. It was perhaps best to do nothing for a while.

“Do we have an envelope or some stout paper somewhere?” he asked.

“In the second drawer under the counter. You want to put the daguerreo-type in it?” Valerie asked.

“Yes. And maybe I’d better put it back in the oilcloth too.”

“Water’s not kind to a lot of things like that.”

\* \* \*

Tony did a lot of thinking over the next few weeks. There had been, it seems, a trust fund for Samuel. That had no doubt been subsumed into the estate of Ezekiel, along with two and six that Tony contributed at the auction, less the auctioneer’s 5%. It was intriguing to think what claim Tony himself or herself would have on the estate should identity be provable.

But did Tony want that money?

Realizing that answering such questions could direct the next few years of life, Tony decided to think hard about these concerns. Once he was satisfied in his own mind, he would talk to his friends, in particular Henry Mortimer.

Money was definitely of interest. Poverty was ugly. It was especially ugly if you were poor. Yes, Tony wanted money. On the other hand, he did have some money. There was now over £50 in Mr. Turcotte’s safe in his small box. It was, in fact, 22 sovereigns and 6 of the printed large, white notes declaring "I promise to pay the bearer on demand the sum of five pounds" that replaced handwritten ones since 1853. About his person, he also had approximately £10 in various coin, with the sovereigns sewn into his canvas and leather belt.

So Tony was, by the standards of the day, quite well off. He owned a donkey and cart, and now a dog, some clothes, and some odds and ends of other possessions. He did not have his own house or apartment, either owned or rented. However, among his friends were examples of people who were acquiring their own houses and buildings. With time it would be possible.

Sharing life and fortune with someone else who was a close companion would be more difficult. Money would ease that too, he supposed, though it

might then be difficult to discern dependency from affection. But as a result of much cogitation Tony knew he wanted at least a comfortable amount of money.

A second issue concerned the money that Samuel may have added to Ezekiel's estate. It was now likely to be transferred somehow – Tony had no idea how – to someone else, possibly far away.

Tony was troubled by whether he wished to contest for part of Ezekiel's estate. He felt the injustice that Samuel's fortune, though likely modest, had almost certainly been merged into Ezekiel's. Even if Tony never saw a penny of it, somehow it should not be lumped into Ezekiel's legacy. However, for Tony to make a claim, there was, first of all, the practicality of so doing. He probably would have to change gender, then attempt to show that he was genuinely the daughter of Samuel and Matilda. Then also that Ezekiel had improperly appropriated Sam's inheritance. And, on top of all that, unless his parents had married, which seemed unlikely, he could not inherit.

His real interest seemed to be to learn more about his parents. Was there any hope of that? Did anyone remember either Samuel or Matilda? Was there any documentary evidence of them?

\* \* \*

Maud gave birth on May 19 to a boy. Yolanda served as midwife, and mother and son were able to avoid the scourge of maternal and infant death. However, there was still the usual disruption of a new life in the house. It was not until early July that Tony was able to ask Henry how much he would charge to answer some questions. This was on a Saturday, a week after the baby's christening as William Henry Mortimer, when there had been a general celebration on Chorley Terrace.

Henry responded "Why don't you ask your questions, and if I think that my answer will constitute advice about the law, rather than advice to a friend, we will talk of a fee."

"The subject is rather sensitive."

"Almost all conversations with a solicitor are sensitive. Come in now and we can start. Will Moonbeam be all right there?"

"I've finished my deliveries and the cart is empty. Jolly'll watch out, and we can see her from the office."

Inside, Henry said "So tell me what is worrying you."

Tony explained what he had found in the chest, and showed Henry the daguerreotype.

"My goodness. That might be a picture of you in ten years' time."

"Do you want to see the letters?"

“Yes, let me take a look.”

There was a period of silence while Henry read the letters. Then he said “So it seems your real name is Antonia Crown. Have you any interest in taking up that name and identity?”

“I earn my living as Tony Brown. And unless my parents were married, I can’t make any claim anyway.”

“That is true, as far as my legal training informs me. So what did you want to ask me?”

“I wanted to ask you how I might go about learning more about my parents. And, I suppose, to confirm my interpretation of the letters and picture, which you’ve more or less done.”

“By that, I would assume you want to know how you might find out where your mother and grandmother are buried. Possibly where you might look for records that would show if your parents did marry. Is that what you mean?”

“Yes. And where I might find people who knew them.”

Henry said “I will not pretend that your search will be easy. And my advice will be that of a friend. I’ll only ask you to pay if there are fees to get some information, and those we will talk about before applying.

“There is, however, one thing that may be important. If Samuel was presumed lost at sea, that is, there was no body or other proof of death, then there is a seven year wait until death can be presumed. I think you said Lester told you Samuel was lost about two and a half years ago. It would, perhaps, be prudent to check the date and, if you wish, I will try to find out if there is an extant trust for him. If Ezekiel Crown appropriated that, it would be unlawful.

“There is also the possibility that Samuel would be the closest relative of Ezekiel, so the estate could not be transferred to anyone else before his death was certified.”

“But it would not benefit me.”

“We have no proof of your parents marriage, but no proof there was not. In that you wish, and seem likely to pursue, more information about them, it could be sensible to learn if there is a trust, and to protect it from being transferred until you have time to discover what facts can be found. And even to question the status of Ezekiel’s estate on the basis that Samuel is not yet presumed dead. You may choose later not to pursue that, but once the funds are transferred to a supposed heir it would be much more difficult to do anything.”

Tony said “Well. I am planning to ask around and learn what I can. Is there anything I should specifically do that would be important?”

Henry answered “Ezekiel Crown wrote his letter on September 16, 1838. You were born in March of 1839, so it may be estimated that your parents



were together in the summer of 1838. If there were a marriage, we might guess that it occurred before September 1838, and more likely in that year than earlier. Church records for then will record marriages, but finding all the likely churches may take you some time, especially if Matilda and Samuel were not in Brighton. Perhaps you will recall something your mother or grandmother said.”

“I will try to write down anything I can remember.”

“It may also be worth trying to learn more about how Samuel’s parents died. Their estate came to the administration of Ezekiel, and that should have some record. Remember, Mr. Turcotte is a barrister in the Court of Chancery, and I was his apprentice. Now sometimes there are fees. May I suggest that if I must pay to see information, we set a limit of £2 total. I may be able to learn, shall we say, informally about some things, since the clerks will occasionally be willing to gossip. Then we only need to pay if we need the information for a proceeding.”

“I can afford £2,” Tony said.

“I will not plan to charge any fees for what I have said I will attempt, but also will only be doing any investigation on your behalf when I can do so while carrying out other work. Is that fair?”

“Thank you, Mr. Mortimer. It’s generous of you.”

“Keep me informed if you learn anything. You may want to start a dossier with notes on your findings.”

“Yes. I agree. Already I feel I know more about my origins. The daguerreotype was a great surprise. And Samuel is wearing the jacket and trousers that were in the chest.”

“It strikes me that you might get an image taken in the same garments, then have the photographer make another image of both pictures side by side. I do not mean that this would necessarily be evidence in a courtroom, but I believe it would be helpful in persuading people to tell you their stories, and sometimes matters that are not strictly valid as evidence still have a power to persuade.”

\* \* \*

In mid-June, Joshua and Rachel had returned from the United States. They were both very happy to have seen their children and their childrens’ families and very sad to have to say goodbye again. However, they found the New World rather too brash and noisy for their tastes, and were happy to be home.

Their homecoming precipitated a discussion of where Jeremiah would work and what his duties would be. Rachel, particularly, noted how clean

and tidy the pawn shop and its apartment were. Joshua, when he went in the stable, was almost shocked at the good condition of Moses. The pony looked a decade younger than he was. Moreover, the cart was repaired and in tip-top condition.

Thus, two days after the return of the Goldmans, Joshua and Abraham were in the pawn shop and asked Jeremiah to join them when he had restabled Moses after walking the pony.

“Mr. Goldman, Mr. Cohen. You wanted to see me.”

Joshua said “First to thank you for an excellent job in keeping our shop and home so tidy, and for looking after Moses and helping the Best Bonnet boys with moves.”

“The work has been a pleasure, Mr. Goldman. I likes ponies, and now – though I wasn’t familiar before – donkeys. And the work is of a pace that I can get everything done that’s asked of me without feeling all pressed, so I can do the jobs well, which I likes. On top of all that, people here mostly treat me as they do each other. That means a lot to me.”

“We wanted to talk of how we might best use your labours in the future,” Abraham said. “There appears to be work here, with Best Bonnet, and at Fortescue Road, and even at Saultons, all of which are of value to us.”

“Yes, sir. I do a bit here and a bit there. That will make it awkward to decide who should pay me my wage and where I should sleep.”

Joshua said “It seems that it may be best if you sleep and usually eat here, which will allow you to look after Moses more easily. Mr. and Mrs. Cohen will pay you your wage, and if you can keep a record of the time you work – it only need be a rough measure – then Mr. Cohen and I will settle any imbalance between us. I understand that it has been arranged that Best Bonnet simply charges fourpence an hour when you join them. To give a bit of encouragement, since that work may be heavy, we will give you a penny of the four.”

“Would you like me to help Mrs. Goldman in the kitchen?”

“I will let Rachel decide that. As you know we are Jewish, and there are some dietary rules, such as no pork and no shellfish, but also no meal may have meat and milk together. It makes little sense, but is a tradition we follow to honour our past. However, I suspect Mrs. Goldman will be glad of help cleaning, washing, or going to the shops. And we are glad of your presence as a measure of security. I have only yesterday learned how our friends the Saultons were visited by thieves.”

\* \* \*

Biology does not attend human ambitions. No matter what enterprises Cassandra had in progress, she was forced to suspend them to give birth to

a baby girl on July 8, 1855. That neither she nor Frieda attended church that day is understandable, as the mother assisted the daughter. While engagement of a physician was considered, both Frieda and Cassandra had suspicions that these gentlemen were less than scrupulous about cleanliness. However, at this point in history, the germ theory of disease was, we might say, embryonic, though Doctor Gideon Mantell, who had practiced in Brighton and nearby Lewes, had published *Thoughts on Animalcules* in 1846. Frieda had been interested in Mantell's books on fossils, and had acquired the "Thoughts" hoping to read more about the fashionably popular topic, and found that it was about microscopic entities. With John Snow's work in Soho in revealing that tainted water was the vehicle of transmission of cholera along with Florence Nightingale's emphasis on cleanliness, Cassandra and Frieda considered that soap and boiling were sensible precautions. To assist the birth, they borrowed Yolanda from Maud, and both Cassandra and her daughter survived when the risks of childbirth at the time were high.

\* \* \*

About a week later, Tony went to Constable and Collier on 58 Kings Road and made an appointment for a daguerreotype portrait. Two days thereafter, Valerie came with him to adjust his appearance to match the image of his presumed father. The photographer – one of the assistants to Mr. Constable and Mr. Collier – was quite taken with the idea of matching the pose, and spent more time than with most clients to attend to details, and said he would be most careful to get a good image of both pictures side by side. A couple of days later, Tony returned to collect the daguerreotypes, and was even more surprised at the similarities. Indeed, the photographer had put paper labels 1852 and 1855 below each of the originals when capturing both together, though the observant would see minor differences in the backgrounds to the pictures. Tony had also ordered two exposures of the paired images – the process created unique versions in positive exposure, though sometimes reversed left to right unless the photographer had a suitable prism mechanism. Tony planned to deposit one copy of the joint images in the care of Henry Mortimer.

When Tony got to Chorley Terrace that evening in mid-July, Maud called for Henry to bring him through to the parlour where she was cradling the baby, who was asleep.

Maud said "Henry said you would be coming by, and I wanted to say hello, since I don't get out as much these last few weeks, though soon I hope to be able to resume some trading."

Tony said “We’ve noticed a decline in work to fetch and deliver for you, but know an infant takes a mother’s time and attention.”

“I’m also quite curious about what you and Henry have been discussing, but he would not tell me, saying it is between solicitor and client.”

“Well, I’m not really a client, since Mr. Mortimer has not charged any fees yet, but I don’t mind telling you the story. Perhaps this daguerreotype will serve to provide the most immediate element of the story.”

“My word! Tony. I take it that they are not both you, and the image labelled 1852 is someone else and you haven’t been indulging in theatrical make-up.”

Tony told Maud the story of the chest she had helped him buy, finishing with “I suppose I should share the 50 shillings profit with you from the found money.”

“No you don’t. That’s a windfall. I would not have bid except you wanted it, but I’m ever so glad you did. So now you are looking for more information.”

Henry said “Tony has a lot of digging to do. However, you may remember Maud that I asked who were the auctioneers. I sent them a note to ask who was the agent for the sale, and I plan to follow that trail.

“But indeed, at some point Tony has a decision of how much to reveal publicly, depending on what outcome he seeks.”

“Yes. Once revealed, there may be no going back,” Maud said.

“Should I consider engaging someone as an investigator?” Tony asked.

“It is not the usual type of investigation that such people undertake,” Henry said. “They are often engaged in rather sordid affairs to discover malfeasance on the part of a spouse.”

“It is a pity that the best source may be someone like Mr. Lester,” Tony said.

“Indeed,” Henry responded. “On the other hand, unless the story is more or less unravelled so the full picture is visible, there is no current excitement to it. It becomes worthwhile for a newspaper when it can be shown that someone has revealed that a mystery is solved or a wrong has been righted. Then there is an article worth paper and ink.”

“So you are suggesting I could talk to him?” Tony asked.

“I’d be careful, Tony,” Maud cautioned.

“Yes. I agree generally,” Henry said, retreating a little from his previous line. “It would be a bad business if Lester were to write a cock and bull story that were to create all sorts of untruths about you.”

\* \* \*

By late July, Henry Mortimer, though he was not formally engaged by Tony Brown, had written to the packet boat company in Samuel Crown's letters asking how and where a copy of the report on Samuel's loss could be obtained pursuant to his eventually being certified as dead. He also had managed to learn more about the estate of Ezekiel Crown. He had done so by the expedient, as he had mentioned, of asking Maud who were the auctioneers, then asking the auctioneers who was the agent for Ezekiel's estate, which led quickly to a solicitor named Dwyer, to whom Henry sent a modest request.

Henry Mortimer, Esq.  
Solicitor  
84 Chorley Terrace

Brighton

Jerome Dwyer, Esq.  
Solicitor

Dear Mr. Dwyer,

May I request a few minutes of your time in the next few days.

In the course of her business, my wife assisted a friend purchase a seaman's chest from the estate sale of Mr. Ezekiel Crown. The contents contained some materials that may suggest that a Mr. Samuel Crown has claims on at least part of the estate. Samuel was reported lost at sea less than three years ago, and his death has not to my knowledge been certified. Some information exists that there may be a child of Samuel alive. My purpose in writing to you is to serve as "amicus curiae" to prevent any mis-step in dealing with the case that might reflect badly on our profession.

I would be much obliged if you would let me know a convenient time for a brief conversation, and remain your humble colleague,

Henry Mortimer

Henry had anxieties that Dwyer would be offended by his approach in this way. He need not have worried. When they met a few days later – in a pleasant public house rather than in either office – Dwyer said

“Your note was a turn up for the books. Old man Crown was a tight-fisted miser. That there are loose ends – actually more loose ends – will mean extra fees. You and I can happily toast any delay in probate.”

“At the moment, I’m not yet engaged as solicitor to my friend who bought the sea chest. But let me show you something.”

Henry brought out the double daguerrotype.

Dwyer said “Are they the same man?”

“No. The left hand image is presumably Samuel Crown about three years ago. The right hand image is Tony Brown, my friend, whose birth and upbringing we are trying to ascertain more precisely. He grew up more or less in the gutter, but now ...”

“Runs a donkey and cart and saves young ladies from the sea.”

“Indeed. And the clothes he is wearing were in the sea chest, along with some letters, of which I have copies if you are interested, in particular this one from Ezekiel Crown which talks of a trust fund.”

Dwyer read the copy of the letter, then said “I’ve not seen any record of such a trust. Wouldn’t surprise me if the old man assumed the funds himself. Still, I’ll get my clerk to take a look, more from curiosity than otherwise. In any event, there’ll be no transfer of monies soon, even if we ignore the delay until Samuel’s death is certified. Would you be willing to file an objection to the transfer of funds at some point to extend the timing?”

“If necessary, yes. I should, however, add that Tony Brown may decide not to contest the transfer of the estate, especially if proof of parentage turns out to be difficult to establish.”

“Nonetheless, it will give me some delight to let Ezekiel turn in his grave because his scheme is disrupted.”

“You did not like the man?”

“No. He was grasping and cruel. I took over his account when my partner died, but I don’t believe my partner was happy with him as a client either. I can appreciate hard bargaining and making the most of opportunities, but somehow Ezekiel went beyond that.

“In any event, it seems your friend Mr. Brown has an interesting story to pursue.”

Henry said “I agree. And I thank you for your time.”

“Not at all. Ezekiel’s estate will be charged!

“By the way, Ezekiel’s will was from 1839, and it gave as executor ‘my solicitor, Victor Cole’. Since it seems all of Ezekiel’s assets are here in Sussex, actually the Diocese of Chichester, we don’t have to go to the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, and I have asked the clerk of the court here if I need a motion to be appointed acting Executor, but said I would proceed in that capacity presumptively.”

Henry answered "That makes sense, and you have informed the court, I suppose, though I might have postponed the estate sale."

"There was a lot of stuff to get rid of. The house is now rented out. It needed considerable cleaning, and there were rats and mice. I felt that the value was diminishing day by day without attention."

"Are you keeping a diary of such actions?" Henry asked.

"To protect myself from criticism you mean?"

"Yes. I think from what you say about the state of Ezekiel's house, what you have done is the proper course of action for an executor, and 'my solicitor' suggests you have standing now Cole is dead. Mr. Turcotte attended his funeral I recall. But a diary of actions with explanations would provide details supporting those actions."

"There are receipts and such, but you are right that explanations and a clear time line would indicate honest intent."

"Do you know who stands to inherit?" Henry asked.

"Oh. I was going to mention that as the other reason for delay. We have not managed to follow all the relatives. There was a brother to the father of Ezekiel and Roger, but he apparently emigrated to the Canadas around 1779. We have not even a hint of how we may track any family there. Ezekiel's will states that his assets be divided among any legitimate children, else Samuel Crown. So we are now reduced to searching for someone who could claim a familial connection, and verifying their claim will take time. That includes your friend Tony Brown."

"Normally, I would have a horror of such delay and process, but in this case I am more sanguine," Henry concluded.

\* \* \*

Despite Henry's warnings, Tony considered that Timothy Lester and possibly some of his colleagues might be a useful source of information. The difficulty would be in what had to be revealed in order to get information. He decided to carry his copy of the double image on his journeys and possibly get Lester's reaction to it.

It was not, however, until the second week in August that Tony saw Lester once again near the station as he arrived to collect two trunks that a family had sent ahead for a holiday at the seaside.

"Are you following a story, Mr. Lester?"

"If the Editor of the *Herald* asks, then the answer is yes. We 'ad a tip that, shall we say, a member of a prominent family was arriving. However, the information seems to be false, or else our quarry was well-disguised."

“They may have got off in Lewes. My colleague Mr. Upton was commissioned to collect some luggage there, and it was one of the constables from the Police who brought the note.”

“Have to remember that. Thank you Mr. Brown.”

“If you wait until I have my load, I may have something else of interest to you.”

Lester decided to wait. Indeed, he took one end of each trunk and helped Tony put them on the cart. Then he walked on the pavement while Tony did so beside Moonbeam.

“So what did you have for me Mr. Brown?”

“You may recall I purchased a seaman’s chest of a Mr. Samuel Crown. Well, your information that he had presumably gone overboard led me to investigate what was in the chest more closely.”

“And?”

“There were some clothes, as I mentioned to you when we last spoke. However, there was also a daguerreotype, and the image, which I think was of Crown, was rather surprising.”

“How so?”

“There is a trough here, and Moonbeam can drink if she wishes while I show you.”

Tony took an oilcloth packet from his box under the driver’s seat of the cart and unwrapped the dual image and showed Lester.

“But those look like you! One dished up to look older.”

“Only the one on the right. The other is, I believe, Crown.”

Tony put the picture away.

Lester said “There’s got to be a good story in this!”

“I believe so also, Mr. Lester, but I do not know much that I can yet relate. However, I am sufficiently interested to risk sharing what I know and my further investigations with you, and only with you, upon an agreement that neither I nor my friends would be subjected to mockery or insult, and I would insist that such an agreement be witnessed by my solicitor and friend Mr. Henry Mortimer.”

“There’s not a story yet, of course. And at the moment all the illustrated papers – mainly the Illustrated London News – have to use engravers for the pictures. The real shock to readers would be if that daguerreotype could be printed. You’d ’ave the London press people crawlin’ all over Brighton.”

“Would I be right that if the full story could be uncovered, and written up with some illustrations, it would be popular?” Tony asked.

“Yeah. Not the sort of thing for the Herald. We’re all print and just a few inches of it for each item. I’d ’ave to flog the story to the ILN or someone like ’em and if I wanted to keep my job, do so under a *nom de plume*.”



“There may yet be no story. So far I’ve not learned very much. You could end up scratching about and not have a manuscript worth more than the paper it’s written on.” Tony wanted to be sure Lester was willing to go the distance.

“True. But I get around a bit. Not a lot of skin off me nose to ask a few extra questions ’ere and there. I’ll write up an agreement and send it round to Uptons – that’s the address on the cart – and if you’re satisfied we’ll sign it in front of Mr. Mortimer.”

\* \* \*

Henry had some misgivings about Tony’s decision to involve Lester, but there was the advantage that a reporter would have contacts and possibly information already that would help Tony uncover what had transpired over a decade and a half previously. Lester was, however, only around 30 years old, so would not have been in the trade then. Still, Lester and Tony came one afternoon a few days later with two copies of a fairly simple agreement that said

Tony Brown and Timothy Lester agree to share information about the history of Samuel Crown and Matilda Evans as known or discovered by them only with each other for the use by Timothy Lester in preparing a written article for publication. This article will in no way contain material that will mock, insult or otherwise cause injury to Tony Brown or his associates and friends.

Henry said “This agreement is aspirational. That is, it expresses what you each now intend or desire. I trust both of you understand that the terms may not be enforceable in law, and though proceedings could be started based on a perceived violation of the agreement, the outcome of such proceedings could be far from what each of you would wish.”

“Always difficult to make contracts work exactly as people want,” Lester said. “But Mr. Brown’s got his hands on something intriguing in that dual daguerreotype. There’s gotta be a good story in it if we can get the proper facts beneath everything.”

“But that story could hurt Tony, Mr. Lester.”

“I know that. But I’ve a wife and child ’ere in Brighton and if I throw Tony to the wolves to make a quick bit o’ money, I won’t be able to stay. An’ I won’t be able to look meself in the mirror of a morning either.”

Tony said “I know I’m taking a risk. But I really want to know what happened between Samuel and Matilda. It may be as simple as a man using a woman for his own pleasure and tossing her aside, but I don’t think so.”

“What makes you so sure of that,” Lester asked.

“Let us sign the agreement, and I will show you some other things.”

When Lester read the letters, he quickly made some notes, then said “I’ll ’ave to ask around, but someone should know what ’appened to the parents in the coach crash. And Tony’d better try to get into all the churches for a ten mile radius to look at the marriage books. Probably 1838 or last ’alf of ’37.”

“That was my surmise also,” Henry said. “Unfortunately after the Marriage Act of 1836 civil marriage and also those registered in churches other than the Church of England were allowed. I don’t mean that to criticize the other registrars, simply that it adds to the number of places to look.

“On another matter, may I ask if you know if Samuel was seen to go overboard?”

“I’ll ’ave to check, but I recall ’e was on watch and then suddenly wasn’t there. I’m assumin’ that’s important for presumption of death, etc., an’ all this stuff about a trust. Might be some money in it for Tony.”

“From Ezekiel Crown’s letter, that probably isn’t a great amount,” Tony said. “Somehow, the money I get from my own work seems worth more.”

Lester said “I can understand that. In my trade, we see more trouble from unearned money than honest wages or trade. Look at the gold robbery in mid-May.” A large amount of bullion had been stolen from the night train to Paris via Folkestone. At this point in August, the culprits were as yet unidentified, though they would all be arrested in September.

Henry asked “Do you think the June 15 removal of stamp duty on newspapers will be of benefit to you and your colleagues, or will the owners and investors be the primary winners?”

“I’ve hope the market will increase so there’s more jobs. When there’s only one or two employers, they can keep the wages low because everyone’s fearful of getting the sack.”

\* \* \*

Henry Mortimer was involved with several more threads of our story. On July 31, the Limited Liability Act was passed. Henry had watched its progress through Parliament with some interest, as he knew it would be of import to Cassandra as a way to pool her resources and efforts with Mary, Joshua and others in a joint venture company, which now could be established without placing a small shareholder under the weight of the entire risk.

Given his own recent introduction to paternity and Cassandra's preoccupation with her daughter, who would be christened Catharine, Henry was content that it would not be necessary immediately to research the details of the new Act and understand its procedures and consequences. There would be time to let others discover unanticipated details and obstacles the new legislation presented. Nevertheless, he would need to be aware, to keep up his conversations with others in the legal community. Soon enough, his friends would need his help to set up a company.

\* \* \*

The newspapers on September 11 reported the retreat of the Russians from Sevastopol. Yet again, apart from the knock-on effects of depletion of the British Treasury and the deaths of some relatively few soldiers and sailors, ordinary Britons were not largely affected.

Indeed, Tony had a note from Lester that there had been a coach which had overturned when one of the wheel bearings failed and three people died, including both Samuel Crown's parents. This had occurred on the London Road where it crossed Bedlam Street near Albourne on June 17, 1837. A further piece of information was that the bodies were badly mangled as the heavy coach had rolled over them, so they were buried in the churchyard at St. Bartholomew's nearby.

Around the same time, Henry Mortimer heard from the packet boat company. They were kind enough to have had one of their clerks copy the report sent to the General Register Office about the presumed drowning of Samuel Crown on evening November 27, 1852 in the Bay of Biscay. Samuel had gone on the deck of the packet steamer to secure a tarpaulin. He was seen to be working on tying down a rope by a crew member and a passenger when a wave swept the deck. While Samuel was not seen to go overboard, due to spray on the portholes, he was not seen afterwards and presumed washed over the side.

Though he wanted to go to Albourne as soon as possible to learn what he could there, there was enough work that he could not in good conscience take time away before Saturday, Sept 29, when he told Joseph he would try to learn what he could. It was a day when a jacket was useful, and, liking the pea jacket and canvas trousers, he chose to wear them. Some people were superstitious about wearing a dead person's clothes, but Tony found comfort in sharing proximity to the same clothing his presumed father had worn.

Rising at six and putting some bread, cheese and a bottle of water in his satchel, he quietly whispered "Jolly!" and the two set off together after

Tony ate some bread with jam and Jolly a lump of offal Tony had put aside the night before.

The walk was almost three hours, so it was after nine o'clock when they got to the church. Tony tied Jolly to a railing and told her to stay, giving her a morsel of cheese as he did so. The church door was open, as there was someone inside carrying out some work or other, so Tony had no reluctance to enter, hoping to find someone who could help him with information.

Once his eyes adjusted to the dimmer light inside, he saw a middle-aged woman arranging flowers near the altar. Indeed, there were flowers and wheat-sheaves and baskets of different crops. Ah, yes. It was the time when different places held harvest festivals or thanksgiving services.

Tony walked towards the woman, who didn't hear his footsteps as he had quite soft shoes. He said "Excuse me. May I ask for some information?"

The woman turned and said "If I ... Oh my god! ... No. Can't be. It's been eighteen years."

"Then you knew Samuel Crown?" Tony asked.

"Yes. An' you look just like 'im."

"My name is Tony Brown, though I have reason to think I got it because people mis-heard Crown. My mother's name was Matilda, but she died when I was small, and my grandmother Josephine a couple of years after. For some years I lived hand to mouth on the streets in Brighton until a kind and enterprising woman took me into her employ as a donkeyman and carter, and allowed me to better myself. Then by chance I acquired a seaman's chest with this coat and trousers and Samuel's name on top."

"Aye. He got sent to sea by 'is uncle. Fair broke Matilda's heart. They was only just married."

"Really? They were married? I had thought that Ezekiel Crown had managed to block them."

"Almost, but not quite."

"Look. I've gotta finish these flowers for the harvest festival service, but I'll be glad to talk later. You may want to look in the churchyard. Roger and Eleanor Crown's buried in the south-west corner. Very small marker – 'Crown 1837'."

"Thank you. Oh. I don't know your name."

"Jenny. Jenny Dodds."

"Mrs. Dodds, shall I meet you at the gate in ... what? ... an hour and a half? I'll be happy to buy you a glass of ale or cider and something to eat, for you have given me a great gift of two real parents."

"Oh, my. Well, if you're sure it's not too much for your purse?"

Tony went out of the church and untied Jolly and they walked over to the corner of the graveyard where Jenny had said to look for the grave of Tony's paternal grandparents. He would have to see about finding those of

his mother and grandmother, though they would not be marked, and might even be communal graves, or even lost.

After finding the marker and spending a few minutes observing the place, Tony decided to walk to the junction of London Road and the Bedlam Street bridle path. It would fill the time. However, there was not much to see when he got there. In the eighteen years since the coach overturned, grass and shrubs had no doubt covered up signs of the accident.

After about a quarter hour, dog and master strolled back to the church and found a low bench where they settled to wait for Jenny. Tony had a copy of *Oliver Twist* in his satchel, which he was reading for the second time, so the time passed easily. Jolly slept at his feet, occasionally waking to watch birds or squirrels.

“There you are, Mr. Brown. I hope your wait was not too onerous.”

“Not at all. The churchyard is peaceful, and I have my book.”

“Before we leave, may I ask if the marriage of Samuel and Matilda was here?”

“It was. I ’ave the key to the sacristy, so why don’t we look at the register.”

“Thank you.”

They returned to the church door, and Tony said “Sit Jolly. Stay here.”

“Well behaved, your dog.”

“Yes, she and her brother belonged to a man who died recently. A friend and I each took one to look after. She’s very good company.”

Jenny unlocked the sacristy and then the drawer with the register.

“October of 1838. I was there. Matilda was a friend. She met ’im when Sam’s parents were killed in the coach, and ’er father too – ’e was the driver of the coach. Sylvester Evans. As I told you, their names were Roger and Eleanor.”

“I saw a marker next to the Crown one with Evans on it and wondered.”

“They got to know each other in their grief, and he’d come as often as ’e could to see ’er. Then ’is uncle forced ’im onto the packet boats, and she and ’er mother went to Brighton, since without the father there wasn’t much income round ’ere for them. I don’t know much what ’appened after. Can’t really read and write.”

Reading the register, Tony soon found the entry. Friday, October 13. Some would have avoided it, and triskadekaphobic superstition could certainly be amplified by the history of Samuel and Matilda. The marriage entry showed Matilda was a spinster of the parish, aged 17. The witnesses were Josephine Evans and Jenny Dodds. Samuel Crown was listed as aged 21. Tony was about to comment, then decided not to. Jenny may not be aware that Samuel had lied about his age by two years, and to sign the register, Jenny would have been guilty as well. But beside Jenny’s name was

an X.

Tony took out his notebook and wrote down what was recorded.

“Matilda and Josephine left the parish soon after the wedding?”

“That very week. And Matilda was born here. July 1st, 1820. Can you tell me what ’appened?”

“What I know, I can share. But let us find a glass and something to eat.”

They locked up and recovered Jolly who was sitting patiently by the church door eyeing some squirrels who were disputing occupation of a nearby tree. Jenny said little as they left the churchyard, but turned north.

“Duke of York’s our best bet for refreshment.”

“Then to the Duke of York. And I will tell you what I know.”

Tony related his growing up, first with mother and grandmother, then grandmother, then alone or bumping along with characters like Archie Temple, and finally falling into good luck with Cassandra Match. The name Antonia was not mentioned.

“Seems like life is turning round for you, Mr. Brown. Or will you now change to using Crown.”

“Think I’ll stay Tony Brown for now. People know me as that, with Jolly here and my donkey Moonbeam. It’s a life I find agreeable to me, and while I’ll not get rich, I can easily afford some modest pleasures, such as some honest food and drink.”

Tony and Jenny enjoyed some ale and a pork pie each. They exchanged some anecdotes of each of their lives. In that Jenny could not read or write, Tony made no effort to learn where to address letters to her. He knew where the church was, and could write to the vicar, whose name he had written down, to get confirmation of his mother’s birth, which Jenny had confided to him.

It was a bit after one o’clock when Tony and Jolly started their walk back to Brighton. Given what he had learned, Tony went straight to Chorley Terrace, and was invited to stay for supper. He declined this, knowing that Rebecca expected him back by half-past six, but did accept a cup of tea and some biscuits. While Yolanda was preparing the tea in the kitchen, Tony – having suitably admired the baby – related the story of his day. He concluded by “I was very happy to learn that Matilda and Samuel had married, then greatly disappointed that they said Samuel was of age. I believe that means the marriage was void, so any child would not be able to inherit.”

Henry said “Actually, the marriage would be voidable, rather than void. That means it could be annulled, either by the family or guardian before the parties to the marriage came of age, or by either the husband or wife at any time. However, if both parties were to wish to remain married after they came of age, then there is legal opinion that the marriage would be valid. However, I do not know if there is case law on the matter, that is, if

a court has ruled on such a case. In the present instance, we may assume that Matilda had her mother's permission since Josephine was a witness from what you have seen. It is Samuel's status that is open to question. However, do we know for sure what his age was?"

"Ezekiel's letter implies he is under 21," Tony said.

"But the letter does not state that directly. Indeed, we do not know what power Ezekiel had over Samuel. It may not have been that he was a minor."

"So I will need to find evidence of his age?" Tony asked.

"If you find evidence he was 21 or older, that would be of potential benefit to you. If there is absolutely no evidence he was under 21 when he married Matilda, that forces others to give reasons that your claim to any estate he left should be denied, since in the marriage register he has given his age as 21."

"Does that mean I should consider a claim?"

"I think for now we should aim to find out if there is an estate in Samuel's name. I've already talked to Mr. Dwyer, who was Ezekiel's solicitor. He did not like Ezekiel, and is quite happy to delay the dissolution of the estate. But we may need eventually to insist that there be a declaration of Samuel's death before his estate, if there is evidence of it, can be considered to be part of Ezekiel Crown's legacy. That means that even after seven years, we could ask that the death not be certified without the sanction of a court, which will give time to consider what might be done. Moreover, Samuel might be the nearest relative. Dwyer said they hadn't traced other relatives. Ezekiel's will did not specify an heir after Samuel, so it would be the oldest relative who would inherit."

"Would that not be oldest male relative?" Tony asked.

"That is a common misperception of our laws. Women can, do and have inherited in such circumstances.

"My suspicion is that it may be more difficult to prove your link to Matilda. You know for yourself that you are your mother's child and the grandchild of Josephine. But there may be no documentation, nor anyone to provide an attestation."

"I am beginning to find it always a step forward and a step back, with some side to side for good measure. However, I am happy to discover my parents wished to marry and, from what Jenny Dodds said, loved each other. And the way in which Jenny reacted to seeing me gives me confidence of the truth of my understanding."

"And you learned more about your grandparents, on both paternal and maternal lines," Maud added.

"Should I try to find if my mother registered my birth?" Tony asked.

Henry answered "That would be sensible, though sadly registration only

became compulsory two years ago, and my opinion is that many laws command certain actions, but have no way to ensure that those actions are taken. I am sure it will be some time before we get even close to full compliance.”

“I will try to remember more of what mother and grandma said when I was little in the hope that it can lead me to such information.”

Henry said “That Mrs. Dodds recognized you as resembling Samuel Crown could possibly be of support to you. I think there is enough evidence to at least argue a case, though at this point it is far from a solid one. However, given Mr. Dwyer’s intent to delay, we can pursue our investigations steadily and without panic.

“I think also you should try to find anyone who knows of your life here in Brighton. It may be possible to provide a link to your mother and grandmother that way.”

\* \* \*

The next night, September 30, 1855, Jeremiah was invited to have supper at Fortescue Road. As they were all finishing the main course, Adeline said “Mr. Quigley, I have just finished a most interesting book called *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by an American lady named Harriet Beecher Stowe. It has sold a prodigious number of copies here in England since it came out in 1852. I would have read it earlier, but with several friends we share the buying of books to reduce their cost to each individual, and I was low on the list to read that particular book. However, I wondered if you knew of it.”

“I have heard about it, Mrs. Naismith. In the South it was received like a skunk at a tea party.”

“I’m afraid I do not understand that expression, Mr. Quigley.”

“Nor me,” Ethel added. “But it sounded colourful, so please explain it.”

“Are there no skunks here in England?” Jeremiah asked.

“Not that I know of,” Adeline replied.

“Well, it’s an animal about the size of a cat or a bit bigger, black with a white stripe from his nose over his head and down his back and tail. They eat insects and worms as well as berries. They’d be easy pickin’s for dogs and wolves and bears and coyotes ’cept when they’re threatened they lift their tail and spray the attacker. And I’ve seen one get a dog 20 feet away. The spray smells bad, real bad. An’ you can’t wash it out. If you get sprayed, you just bury your clothes for a few days and don’t have no social life.”

“Oh, I can see why you don’t want one at a tea party,” Ethel laughed.

“You surely don’t. The stink is truly awful. But I gotta’ say, you don’t rush around and don’t do anythin’ sudden and they’ll leave you alone. I’ve had one walk right by my seat and just go about ’is business.”



\* \* \*

That week, Best Bonnet had a commission to deliver three large steamer trunks from the station to a grand house on the Promenade. Moonbeam and Tony took two, and Joseph and Annabelle one, with Jeremiah along to help load and unload.

The name stencilled on the trunks was E. Jackson. It became clear, to Jeremiah at least, when the two carts arrived in front of the house that the trunks belonged to a young woman from the American South. She was Elizabeth Jackson, and Jeremiah, on hearing the voice, realized she was the daughter of the owner of the plantation next to the one where he had been enslaved.

“Tony. Mr. Brown. Ah don’t wanna’ go in that house.”

Tony had become very observant over the last few years. He asked “Someone from your past?”

“Yes. Daughter of the next plantation. There may be servants who would try to take me back.”

“Joseph. Can you come here a moment?” Tony whispered the situation to his colleague.

Joseph said “We can manage one each end of each trunk. Tell ’em it’s to allow more care to avoid bashin’ the walls. Jeremiah can guard the carts. One of us has to.”

There was actually no query why the two slighter members of the team carried in the trunks one by one and manhandled them up two flights of stairs to the bedroom Miss Jackson had been assigned, which looked out on the landward side of the house. Thus she did not initially see Jeremiah. They had just brought in the last trunk, however, when Miss Violet Sturgess, who was the daughter of the hosts called out “Lizzie, do come look. The donkeys have hats.”

Miss Jackson went through to a front room to look.

“My, my. That’s the first negro servant I’ve seen here in England.”

Addressing Tony, she said “Boy. Where did you buy your nigger?”

“Mr. Quigley is my colleague, ma’am. He is a free man in England.”

“Impertinence! You shall not be paid.”

Very calmly, knowing that to create a disturbance might put him in the wrong, Tony said “Ma’am, if the carriage is unpaid, we must keep the goods as a lien until we are paid. If you are unaware of this, then please have Constable Shaw fetched from the police station.”

Violet said “Lizzy, I think he is right. And here in England, negro people are all free. He did not address you with any effrontery, and Father would not want to have a fuss and get the Quakers and others against us. It might even get our ball invitations cancelled.”

“Oh. Damnation! I’m beginning to wish mother were not so set on my finding a titled husband. I’ll end up with uppity servants who I can’t have thrashed or sold down the river.

“How much is the bill?”

“This is a copy of the bill of lading, Ma’am. The fee is quoted on the last line.”

“Very well. But I insist on proper change. You will get no gratuity.”

Tony said nothing, but was scrupulous to count out the change onto a small salver on which a half-sovereign had been proffered.

“Is that correct, Violet? This English money is passing strange.”

Lizzie said “Yes. He counted back the change very precisely.

“Aren’t you the young man who rescued my friend Olivia Crouch in the summer?”

“I was there, Miss Sturgess. Moonbeam – the donkey with the flowered hat – did the real work of getting Miss Crouch out of the sea.

“Joseph. We have work to do. Good day, Miss Sturgess. Miss Jackson.”

\* \* \*

“You ’andled that real clever-like,” Joseph said as they gathered at a trough round the corner to let the donkeys drink and regain some composure themselves.

“I heard Miss Jackson’s outcry,” Jeremiah said. “I couldn’t hear what you or Tony said.”

Joseph related that he had kept his mouth shut, and reported on what Tony had said.

“I thank thee for standing up for me and others of colour, Mr. Brown. And you did well to avoid more confrontation or even violence.”

“I’m not absolutely sure about the lien,” Tony said. “That’s why I suggested they call Constable Shaw, since he would likely know and the threat of his coming would be unwelcome enough to get our payment.”

“But you got no tip. That’s a pity,” Jeremiah said.

“Worth ten times as much to do the right thing,” Tony said.

“’ere, ’ere,” Joseph seconded.

\* \* \*

Both Maud and Cassandra found their infant children took more of their energies than they had anticipated. However, by October, Maud was making

forays to auctions, estate sales or meetings with people looking to buy or sell, but whereas previously she had been busy with trying to trade about four days a week, three was now a rare maximum and two was the norm.

Cassandra did, to be fair, get to B & J four times a week, but her time there was reduced. She also found she spent less time than before on following the activities of her associates. Of course, Best Bonnet was now no longer her own, though there would be a small revenue for a while yet. She got, or would get, income from the loans to Henry and Maud, Michael and Mary, and Tom and Vera. Her activities at B & J returned her over £125 per annum even though she did not push as hard as before and the joint ventures with the dressmakers and the Emporium brought another £25. Abraham was bringing in a minimum of £100 per year, and likely double that on average, though his income tended to be rather "lumpy" as she thought of it. He could have months with spectacular earnings and then a spell with just enough to cover expenses. No doubt the same applied to Maud's earnings. At least it seemed people were now coming to Henry and he was generating sufficient fees to cover the mortgage and housekeeping.

Tom and Vera Soulton were kept sufficiently busy with restoring and upgrading furniture from Abraham and Maud that their day-to-day costs were more than covered by such work. Other income would be a bonus, that is, what they would receive as annual fees from Best Bonnet, along with Vera's commissions from Uptons. From these sources, they would easily be able to meet the £40 minimum to pay Cassandra, but the amount to gain ownership was likely but not certain. Thus, in early October 1855, when Vera and Tom were lying together before sleeping, Vera said

"Tom. What do you think of having some small handbills printed to tell people about our service to restore furnishings?"

"You mean so we can get more business?"

"Yes. We need to make more income, or at least more certain income, to be sure of getting this place," Vera answered.

"We'd need to be careful not to promise what we can't do. Right now we look at the stuff Mr. Cohen and Maud bring us, and we select the pieces to fix up. But suppose someone came with a sofa, or a set of cane chairs, or an upholstered ottoman. We 'aven't worked on stuff like that."

"True. It may be worth asking around who does do that work and see if we can team up with them. Or else we can try to learn how to repair cane or upholstery. Rebecca and Valerie probably have some ability and knowledge. I'll ask them, and also Mr. Goldman."

"I might take a crack at fixing a cane chair. There was one came in the other day. I was goin' to use the frame and substitute the panels," Tom said.

"Better wait and ask around to see if you can get some tips on how to do it. No sense in starting with no knowledge."

“Yeah. Got to be a bit clever.”

\* \* \*

A few days after the incident with Miss Jackson, Tony met with Timothy Lester for some mid-day food in a pub near the front. They had not had a chance since Tony's visit to Albourne. After Tony had explained what he had learned, Lester said

“You've found out a lot, but also found out you need to learn more.”

“That's about the size of it. I'd like to find out if my own birth was registered, and also that of Samuel. Possibly when Samuel's parents married.”

Lester said “It looks like there's a lot of shiftin' sand under the whole pyramid, but somehow Ezekiel got control of the money, and now it's likely to go off to the ends of the world.”

“That might be what happens. We'll see if Mr. Mortimer and Mr. Dwyer can find out if there's a trust in Samuel's name, as that should definitely be held until his death is certified. It may be that Ezekiel simply said there was a trust, either with intent to pay the amounts he'd noted down or else to appropriate them for himself.”

“Well, I've made a few notes. You're not costin' any coin, nor more time than is worth spendin' to learn about an interesting story. I sometimes get in churches for an item for the *Herald* and if I get a chance I'll look at the births and send you a note about which church and what I see. March 15 1839, yes?”

“That's the date. I'll do the same. Do you want notes at home or at the *Herald*?”

“Best home. I'll write down the address.”

Tony said “Some time ago you mentioned that you'd heard from some people in the street who knew me when I was little. It might be helpful to me to talk to them to try to link me back to my mother and grandmother. Mr. Mortimer said that would be important, as people come forward all the time claiming to be who they're not if there's an inheritance involved.”

“Yeah. The old 'where there's a will there's a relative' joke. I'll try to figure out the names and where they hang around. In the past I often didn't make a note of names of urchins and other street people.”

\* \* \*

Tony's thoughts were heavily occupied by two topics in the next few weeks. The first concerned his parentage and status, about which he had

conflicting emotions. The second, inspired by several deliveries in the past few months, was an ambition to have more efficiency and quality in his work.

These latter thoughts led him to visit Tom in the middle of October 1855 when he was near the workshop between commissions. Tony's arrival with Moonbeam was announced by Jolly and Fuzzy, who bounced and barked a sibling reunion.

"Hi there, Tony. How're you today?"

"Fine Tom. Came to ask you if you know where I might get a porter's dolly."

"Got time for some tea? Vera made some scones. She's over at Uptons this afternoon."

"Yeah. I can afford a half hour."

"Robert! I'm puttin' on a kettle. Come over in about ten minutes and have some tea."

Before going in the cottage, Tony got some water for Moonbeam and gave her a carrot. Inside the kitchen, Tom motioned to a chair.

"So, you're wanting a two-wheel dolly or hand-truck to move things?" Tom asked.

"Yeah. I'm thinking that it would make it much easier to move things to and from the cart, especially if I can get some straps and padded blankets to allow delicate items to be protected."

"Makes sense. Could expand your business."

"D'ya know where I could get one? I'd want something not too heavy, 'cos I want to hang it on the cart so it's not in the way, but easy to get at."

"Better 'ave a padlock if you don't want it stolen when you stop somewhere."

"Yeah. Have to think how to make that easy."

Tom said "Afraid I don't know where you'd buy such a dolly. A lot of 'em is made up, sort of like I did the hand cart."

"Wonder who we could ask."

"'Ow about Mr. Yarrow. The Railway must buy things like that. An' maybe he knows of a broken one. If you can get me the wheels and axle, and possibly the bit of framing that holds that, the rest is fairly easy. Oh. Maybe the iron L to support the tongue at the bottom. You know, those dollies 'ave a shape a bit like the letter L, and that right angle at the bottom is where all the strength is needed. If you get the bits, I'll get it sorted out for you for a few shillin's."

"Thanks. That's a good idea. I'll try to see 'im tonight."

"Tell Vera her scones are going to make Mrs. Yarrow envious."

"She won't believe it, but I'll tell 'er, and she'll be pleased to 'ear it."

\* \* \*

Michael, it turned out, did have some ideas. The Railway actually made up their own porter's dollies, which were rather larger than Tony wanted. However, there were various places where broken bits and pieces of things were kept, and he had seen a pair of wheels that might work for a dolly. A few nights later, Tony was able to collect these and their axle and bearings, which were fixed to a flat plate. This wasn't quite the normal arrangement for porter's dollies. Still, when Tom saw what Tony had acquired gratis, he said that they would do. Two weeks later, Tony had his dolly.

Tom said "Let's put a couple of chains on the back of the deck of the cart and a couple of hooks beside. Then you can loop the chain through the frame of the dolly and it'll hang off the back."

"Yeah. Just loop one end of the dolly while it's set upright, then lift the other end and loop the chain through it. But how to make sure it isn't stolen?"

"Easy. Padlock through the chain links. Wouldn't stop someone with a hacksaw or one of them fancy bolt cutters, but anyone that eager is goin' to be hard to stop."

"Nice Tom. And I like that you've used an iron plate at the bottom of the dolly. Make it easier to slip under a trunk or crate."

"Unfortunately had to pay Howard 5 bob for that."

"Mr. Yarrow got me the wheels, so I don't mind that. How about ten shillings on top for your own work?"

"Nah. Seven an' six. I used the project to teach Robert and he did most of the work. And you're going to do the linseed oil and finishing."

"Well, here's half a sovereign and half a crown, and my thanks to both you and Robert."

"Let's put on the chains. I'll fasten one end of each chain with a big screw, and use these hooks for the other. You'll need to buy a padlock."

"You didn't charge me for the chain and ring bolts."

"There were some oddments with the stuff you brought from Mr Yarrow that I can use. Evens out."

\* \* \*

That same day, at Fortescue Road, a group of people met to form a trading company under the new limited liability rules. In the drawing room were Cassandra and Abraham, Mary and Michael, Maud and Henry and Rachel and Joshua, along with two sleeping infants.

Henry said “I’ve drawn up the documents for the new company, which is tentatively named Fortescue Factory Limited.

“These say the shareholders will be Cassandra Cohen and Joshua Goldman with 49% each and Mary Yarrow with 2% and an initial capital of £1000. The nominal activity of the company will be to acquire property and set up a factory and office suitable for Treats for the Tongue or similar enterprises. The capital is to be provided as the Railway Viaduct property and £245 from Mr Goldman, as £490 from Mrs. Cohen, and as a listed set of kitchen equipment from Mrs. Yarrow. The monies from Mrs. Cohen and Mr. Goldman will be provided as demand promissory notes, meaning funds in cash or notes will be delivered when the company needs them from the shareholders.

“Does that accord with what you have all agreed?”

There was a general murmur of assent. Henry continued “I believe it is a little unusual for the shareholders to give promissory notes for their shares, but it does allow for the company to avoid having to arrange investment or safe-keeping of the money. And I gather the three shareholders will be the directors of the company, with Mrs. Cohen as Managing Director. I will caution that our current matrimonial laws do mean Mr. Cohen or Mr. Yarrow could contest decisions.”

Abraham said “It is a reality we live with. I wish it were not so, as it colours the interaction between man and wife. It is like playing whist with one of the players having a card that trumps all the rest.”

Michael said “I direct much activity with the Railway, but I can admit I’d make a mess of running Mary’s business.”

Henry said “And I will stick to the law and let Maud trade in furnishings.”

\* \* \*

What had not been set down, in part because it was not entirely worked out, was how the factory corporation would earn revenue. A straightforward rent from Treats for the Tongue would be simplest, but at this juncture in time the future revenues were difficult to forecast. The investors – Cassandra, Mary and Joshua – each had a copy of a letter that stated that the factory corporation would receive 80% of the profits of Treats for the Tongue until the end of 1857, after which terms would be renegotiated or would devolve to a standard rental at £180 per annum. Truthfully, all the parties wanted the enterprise to prosper well, as then they would all benefit most.

\* \* \*

Even before the meeting we have just described, the prospective shareholders had been looking for architects and builders. Given the shape of the piece of land, and the intentions for the use of the building, the sketch Abraham had made at the beginning of June more or less set the design. However, detailed drawings for the builders would be needed.

To Abraham and Cassandra had fallen, rather by default, the task of finding a possible architect or at least engineering draughtsman. They arranged to meet with Mr. Brougham, as he had done good work for Cassandra and those in her circle. However, there was a concern that they only knew his work on parts of buildings.

Nevertheless, when they met Brougham and showed him Abraham's sketch, in reality several sketches, he showed considerable interest.

"I'll be honest, Mr. and Mrs. Cohen. I've done lots of jobs like those I've done for you, and I've built a dozen houses. This would be something new for me, but also something I very much would like my name on. The building in your drawing should be straightforward if we can keep from too many overly decorative features."

"When you built the houses, did you have a draughtsman prepare diagrams?"

"When I built my first house, I was in my 20s, and we just built it. But That meant we had to do a lot of fixing and patching where we didn't have a good plan. So for all the rest, I got drawings made and we carefully used them. There's a fellow over in Hove who does our drawings."

Cassandra said "Will you be offended, Mr. Brougham, if we get drawings made, possibly by the man you use, and then ask for estimates to erect the building."

"Without drawings, you're asking a builder to do the design as well as the building. That's a lot of work preparing a design and then not getting the job. There's still some work to estimate the cost of materials and men, but there aren't many clients willing to tell someone like me to build it and send along the invoice after.

"Of course, you'll also want to take note of the reputation of the builder. Don't want bricks that crumble at the end of the first winter, or crooked walls."

"We appreciate your candour, Mr. Brougham, and can assure you that you will be first to be asked to provide a bid."

\* \* \*

The waning days of 1855 were a time of transition on Fortescue Road, or perhaps of impending transition.



Ethel Soulton and Percy Jones had been walking out together for a year and a half. They had an understanding that they would marry, but as yet no plan was in place. Most couples married, found a house or apartment to rent, and lived off the man's wages, if they could, with the wife staying home with the inevitable children. However, Ethel had the examples of Cassandra, Mary and Maud, and of whom maintained business activities. She also had seen, in her own family, the disaster if a parent or parents died.

Percy Jones did, however, make good wages by the standard of the time. Ethel wanted to marry, even as she wanted to keep the opportunity to work. She also realized that marriage, even with the best intentions to maintain her work, would result in change. It was time to have a conversation with Cassandra, but Ethel didn't quite know what she wanted to ask or say, beyond the obvious matter of a wish to marry Percy.

Martha Murphy, too, had changed her daily activities in response to baby Catherine's arrival. She had just turned 15. Her past experiences meant that she would not be soon walking out with anyone. That didn't mean she did not want friendships, but she was still learning about her new home.

\* \* \*

By the middle of December, Abraham had collected the drawings of the factory building from a Mr. Catchpole. These had the important amendment that at one end of the structure a second-storey apartment had been added. It had a kitchen and two other rooms, plus a water closet. The factory water closet and various sinks and washbasins were aligned below to simplify the plumbing. Access to the apartment was via a staircase that started from a small vestibule with doors to the staircase and the factory.

The design of the building was such that it would be possible later to extend the second storey over the rest of the building, should that be desirable. It was 100 feet long – the original 120 had been trimmed to allow for more yard space for deliveries, and 20 feet wide, with the second storey 25 feet long. The roof was set to have an asymmetric shape over the 75 foot section, with the northerly side higher, allowing for glass the whole length to let in light high up. The area under the apartment was more conventional, with traditional windows. It was considered that this end of the building might be used more for an office or activities such as decoration or packaging. There were some windows and a pair of doors on the southerly side of the building, but they led out to the spaces under the London Road Viaduct. Abraham considered them as exits in case of emergency rather than regularly used points of access.

On the 17 of December, Abraham took one of the two copies he had ordered of the drawings to Mr. Brougham to ask him to make an estimate.

“This looks fairly straightforward, Mr. Cohen. I like the layout.”

“We added the apartment at one end, thinking to have someone in residence for security.”

“That makes a lot of sense. Otherwise you need to pay for a night-watchman, and then you have to have a hut, and on and on.”

“When might you be able to respond with an estimate, Mr. Brougham? I’m not trying to hurry you, just to have an idea so I can arrange my own calendar.”

“Shall we say by the end of the first week of January? I’ll get back to you if I have questions.

“Oh. One possible simplification would be to make the roof a single plane of corrugated iron. For example, it could be five feet of window on the one side and simply slope down to the other, with some extension, of course, to keep the rain off.”

“You are thinking that would avoid pieces to cap the point of the roof?”

“Yes. We could then use similar sheets throughout. It’s actually simple to overlap them to avoid having to cut, even though it does mean a bit of extra material.”

“I doubt we’d object to such a modification. By all means estimate on that basis, but do, of course, make a note of it.”

“Naturally.”

“And should we consider the roof trusses to be in timber? The alternative is in angle iron, which would be more fire-resistant, but more costly and heavier.”

“What would be your own preference, Mr. Brougham.”

“You are planning to have ovens, so perhaps iron. We may be able to get some more or less standard pieces and make up the trusses, either riveting or bolting them together on site.

“I see you’ve suggested the chimneys be along the wall of the second storey at the juncture with the main building. That makes sense, as it will give some warmth to the apartment.”

“I hadn’t thought of that, but it could be helpful. It was an accidental positioning to accommodate the ovens.”

\* \* \*

That same evening Ethel had asked if she might talk with Cassandra about her future. Cassandra had been expecting this for some time, and was neither surprised nor annoyed by it, though it might occasion some

inconvenience for the household. Ethel's cooking had become notable. She – or at least her dishes – would be missed.

Percy was with Ethel when she came to the drawing room at half-past seven.

Abraham said "Welcome, Mr. Jones. May we guess that you wish to talk not only of Ethel's future but your own, indeed your joint future."

"Yes. Mr. Cohen. Ethel and I have for some time had an understanding that we would marry. It's time to think of making some practical steps towards that."

Cassandra said "Ethel. Do you wish to stay working in some capacity?"

"Oh. Yes. Miss ... er ... Mrs. Cohen. I've come too far to throw it all away. But being married will change things, and we're not sure how we should ... er ... sort things out."

"You may have heard that Mrs. Yarrow, Mr. Goldman and I have formed a company to build a factory, which will at least in part be used for making the Treats."

"There was some talk, but I wasn't sure I should believe it."

Abraham said "Just today I've taken some drawings to Mr. Brougham. We anticipate he will provide us an estimate of the cost to build by mid-January. However, when it will be ready to occupy we do not know.

"On the other hand, we have included an apartment with a kitchen, two other rooms and a water-closet, as we will want to have someone living on-premises to provide for security and to possibly watch for deliveries."

"You mean we might be able to be the people who live there?" Percy asked.

"It would make sense, especially if Ethel stayed working on the Treats," Cassandra responded.

"Though that might be a bit further in the future than would suit both of you," Abraham added.

"P'raps we could live in your lodgings in the meanwhile, Percy.

"When do you hope to have the factory in operation, Mrs. Cohen?"

"I think that we'd be disappointed if we cannot have it finished, or at least finished enough to use, by the start of 1857. So roughly a year from now. The design is not a fancy one."

"Then would you be upset if we planned to marry in the Spring?" Percy asked.

Abraham responded before Cassandra could answer by rising to pick up a tray that was on the sideboard that had four small glasses and a bottle of sherry. Cassandra said "We rather anticipated the subject of this conversation. May we toast your future?"

\* \* \*

Lester had sent a note to Tony care of Uptons with the names and general locations of just two people he thought might have information on Tony's childhood and about Matilda and Josephine.

Tony himself has written down a partial timeline, starting with Samuel and Matilda's marriage.

1838 October 13: Samuel Crown marries Matilda Evans in Albourne

1839 March 15: Birth of Antonia Crown

Late 1843: death of Matilda Crown/Evans -- near Christmastime  
Was it consumption? She was only 23.

Approx 1846: death of Josephine Evans (who was then in alms house)  
Was it a chancre of the breast? She was approximately 50,  
but seemed older.

The first name on Lester's note was given simply as "Annie the cockle lady". This normally would not have been much use for an investigator, but Tony knew this character, who was probably older than his mother would have been, but younger than his grandmother. She frequented the Promenade when there was a likelihood of hawking small dishes of cockles.

At this time of year, she was more difficult to find, but Tony had some luck in that he saw her outside a tavern in one of the poorer parts of town. In fact, Tony rarely went to this part of Brighton, but there was a delivery of some goods from the station to a workshop in that area. He was glad that he did not see Annie until his delivery had been made.

"Hello, Annie. How are you?"

"Could be warmer and better fed, Tony Brown. Can't hawk the cockles in winter, so 'ave to wholesale 'em, which ain't so much brass. And I make's my sale 'ere and now 'ave to get 'ome up the other end of town."

"Would a ride on the cart help?"

"Not 'arf. Thank 'ee."

Tony helped her up onto the seat, but did not ride. He led Moonbeam away from the tavern – some louts were eyeing the cart and Jolly made a low grumble.

"You and Joseph Upton done well with these beasts," Annie commented.

"Indeed, thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Cohen."

"I'd 'eard she was a force o' nature, that woman, but a fair dealer an' all."

“That she is.

“Tell me, Annie, do you remember my mother or grandmother?”

“Your ma was a pretty gal. Came from up beyond Lewes with her mother Josephine. Both had lost husbands. Well, I know for a fact a letter came from your dad at one point, but they never managed to keep in touch. But Josephine said her man had been driving a coach that lost a wheel and he and your dad’s parents got killed.”

“Yes. That’s what I remember. But I was very young when Ma died. About 4 I think.”

“Be about right. I recall lots of chatter about the statue of Nelson being put on the tall monument in London. That was November of ’43 as I recall. Lot of rubbish, those monuments. Don’t fill the belly.”

“What about my grandmother?”

“She was poorly for quite a while. Used to do sewing and knitting for folk, but really wasn’t able to do much when she got ill. For the last year of her life she had a room in the alms house, even though she weren’t that old. Died right about the time of the disaster of the *Exmouth*.”

“What was that?”

“Emigrant ship from Derry, taking a about 250 souls to Quebec from the Irish famine. Only 3 survivors. Terrible. We got the newspapers in early May. In fact, I think it might ’ave been May Day when your grandma died. That’s when you sort of disappeared.”

“I was tryin’ to keep out of the Workhouse.”

“Good job you did. An’ I guess that’s when you stopped wearin’ skirts. Not a bad idea when there’s eager peckers about.”

“I’m glad you remember these things, Annie,” Tony said. “Would it be worth a shilling or two to tell my friend Henry Mortimer what you told me?”

“Why’d you want me to do that?”

“Seems I may have found what happened to my dad, and there may be some family somewhere. Henry is a solicitor, and he thinks I should make sure I have some evidence of who I am. Wearing carter’s clothes doesn’t ’elp of course.”

“But I wouldn’t be able to ride if you didn’t. And your Moonbeam – I ’eard you talkin’ to ’er – is a fine beast. Good on yer. Yeah. I’ll tell your Mr. Mortimer the tale. You can leave messages for me at the Top Hat pub just round the corner ’ere.”

“Thanks Annie.”

\* \* \*

On Tuesday, January 16 at 2 p.m., Angus Brougham presented his estimate to Cassandra, Abraham, Mary and Joshua. Michael was working.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I’m happy to present a bid, which is written down here for you to consider in detail later, to build the factory with apartment more or less as per the drawings I received, and to do so for £420. While I believe a building could be completed for much less, it would have wooden rather than iron roof trusses, fixed rather than openable windows, and minimal plumbing and amenities. I have taken the liberty of proposing built-in ovens, using gas burners as per the note Mrs. Yarrow sent in response to my query about them. It appears that removable ovens would have to be made to specification and would be much more expensive than putting gas burners in a brick oven. The burners, of course, would be removable if necessary.

“I have also specified the walls strong enough so that adding a second or even third storey is feasible, as to do so at this stage adds only about £20 to the total cost. There are notes to that effect in the bid.”

Joshua said “It does add a bit more than we had anticipated, but gives flexibility for the future.”

Brougham added “I’ve also made provision for plumbing and drains the full length of the building. There will be iron covers in the floor. The town is considering building proper sewers, but for now we don’t know where they will run. I have included construction of cesspool under the yard at one end of the building, as I do not anticipate we will see drains for about a decade.”

“I don’t think we had thought of that,” Joshua said.

“And with the preparation of food, it is important to keep our factory sanitary,” Mary said.

“That was my thinking, Mrs. Yarrow,” Brougham responded.

Abraham said “Mr. Brougham, I am going to suggest we thank you for your estimate and aim to respond by the end of the week. We would not be doing our duty if we did not read your written submission carefully and discuss it among ourselves. However, I believe I speak for all of us by saying we very much appreciate your thoughtfulness in the details you have suggested.”

“I would want to do the same myself, Mr. Cohen.”

After Brougham left, Joshua said “How should we proceed?”

Cassandra answered “I am of the opinion each of us should read the bid and make notes and questions, and that we should meet tomorrow at around this time and make our decision after considering our notes. Brougham seems to have thought of a number of matters we have overlooked, and I am thankful for that. But he still may have overlooked others.”

Joshua answered “Why do I not stay here, or in the kitchen, and carry out my review. That will avoid having to convey the bid back and forth.”

Mary added “And I can do so right after, letting Cassandra and Abraham have the evening. Does that work?”

“Excellent,” said Abraham.

The next afternoon it was decided to go ahead, and Henry Mortimer was asked to prepare a contract. This was signed and sealed at the end of January, and Brougham had a group of men commence work to prepare the site almost at once, though the materials needed would not be delivered until early April. Abraham, on behalf of the company, delivered a deposit of £100 to Brougham on February 14, 1856, and got a receipt for this.

\* \* \*

That same week Tony and Moonbeam conveyed Annie, whose surname turned out to be Calder, to Chorley Terrace where she told what she knew of Tony to Henry in the presence of Maud as witness, and signed a statement to that effect. It turned out she could read and write, which was partly how she remembered the events that she linked to Matilda and Josephine.

With the information received, Henry was able to get the date of Josephine's death from the administrators of the alms houses – indeed May 1, 1847. And Annie related that she had seen Tony dressed as a boy thereafter. A detail that was added was that she first saw Tony with Archie Temple in 1850. “It was when there was that fuss about a man 'ittin' the Queen with 'is cane.”

This detail was the assault on Queen Victoria by Robert Pate on June 27 of 1850. Tony was glad to give Annie a ride home, put a florin in her hand and wish her prosperity with the cockles.

With regard to Matilda's death, there was a lot more difficulty in finding a record of death. It must have been recorded somewhere, but possibly the name was mis-spelt or there was some other error or omission.

The other contact Lester had suggested Tony try to find was a street urchin only two years older than Tony, one Marcus Toll. Unfortunately, in the time since he had talked to Lester, he had taken to thievery and was being sought by the constabulary. Rumour had it that he had left Brighton and did not plan to return soon.

\* \* \*

It was Saturday afternoon, March 1, 1856, and Tony had finished his commissions for the day, and wanted to talk to Adeline.

“That's a nice bed of late snowdrops near the shed at the back,” Tony commented, coming in to the kitchen where Adeline and Ethel were carrying out various domestic duties. Martha now spent a lot of her time upstairs with the infant Catherine. While Cassandra loved her daughter, she was not

fond of the work involved with feed and nappies, though she had managed to avoid the need to hire a wet nurse.

Adeline responded “I’m hoping to take a bunch and put them on Albert’s grave.”

“Shall I walk with you, Mrs. Naismith? I’d like your advice.”

Adeline looked flustered, then, calming herself, said “Of course. I’ll be ready in about 20 minutes.”

“Certainly. The *Illustrated News* will keep me occupied until then.”

It was cool enough that Tony was wearing the pea-jacket and cap. When he and Adeline were a few paces out of the house, Adeline said “Before we get to the graveyard – Albert’s buried in the St. Nicholas Rest Garden – I’d better tell you that you may learn something that I’d prefer not become gossip. But you’ve shared similar with me, so I’ll trust you to be discreet.”

“Of course,” Tony replied.

There was a pause of about a minute as they walked on before Adeline asked “What was it you wanted to talk about?”

“The dilemma of who I am, I suppose, which will no doubt continue as long as I live as a man. Though I’m more or less happy to be the young man who has a donkey and cart, but wonder if that ... I suppose it is an illusion ... can continue.”

“Is that because you no longer wish to appear as a young man?”

“No. I’m happy to present myself thus. I worry others may not let me.”

“How do you see that might happen?”

“I’m not sure. Perhaps because I have to present myself as Antonia if I decide to make a claim against assets left by Ezekiel Crown. Or perhaps another carter saying a woman shouldn’t be allowed to do the job, or shouldn’t be allowed to wear men’s clothes.”

“I suppose that is possible. However, as long as you can do the job, I don’t think they would get the support to stop you from earning your living with Moonbeam and the cart.

“Is it not perhaps more likely that difficulties would come from your own need to have companionship, a life partner?”

“I would like to have someone to share time with, and I’ve seen how Tom and Vera have a closeness. I’ve also heard how, as with Martha, men use women. And I see how there is a sort of magnetism that draws men and women together, though I’ve not felt that very much. I think I’d be happy enough with someone who is a trusted companion, whether man or woman, and however they present themselves, though I realize that what I see with Tom and Vera would be lost to me.”

“Though I am an old woman, I still feel that pull and mourn my Albert. But the matter I alluded to earlier is that he was my husband in practice but not in law. He and his wife had separated, and she had gone to live in



Edinburgh with her sister. I never married in church, more's the pity. But I don't regret my time with Albert. He showed me a great deal of love and affection, and treated me with respect."

They were silent as they completed the walk to the Rest Garden, which had become the burial ground after the church yard of St. Nicholas filled up. It was not far from the church, which was one of the oldest in Brighton, and now in need of renovation.

There was a small urn in front of Albert Naismith's headstone, on which was carved his name and the years of his birth and death. Below this was an inscription "and his wife Theresa" and just a birth year.

Adeline said "I doubt she really intends to be buried here. The inscription was a last slap against Albert, and me of course, though I did not become close to him before they separated, and I doubt Theresa even knew my name."

"People seem so frequently to need to hurt others, even when it brings them no gain."

"You are thinking of your great uncle Ezekiel?" Adeline asked.

"Among others."

"It is true. Many people cannot seem to find any value in themselves unless they can cause trouble for others. And for some people I can imagine they could twist your choice to work in male garments to make some complaint against you. I can only suggest that you avoid direct lies, so nobody can accuse you of fraud."

"In other words, act as I have done, and say that I am a carter and donkeyman, and do not outright claim to be a man. That is more or less what Constable Shaw implied."

"You have talked to him?" Adeline seemed surprised.

"When Moonbeam and I pulled Miss Crouch out of the sea, my shirt top buttons had come undone, and I think he saw that I am not ... er ... flat. I had on a vest, so he could not have seen much, but he simply advised that I do up the buttons. And he said that people had to make a living. I've talked to him since when he fell on the ice and I helped him up and bound his knee which had a gash. You may recall he returned the handkerchief."

"Oh. That's why he had it. I was going to ask, then forgot. Well, he is a useful friend, and it is good he accepts you. There are many who won't, I'm afraid, just as I had many a frosty gaze on the street."

"Still today?"

"No. An old scandal isn't of much interest. And Albert and I were quite discreet. He and Theresa had lived in London, and he moved here after they separated. He was then 60, and he died when he was 70, and we had about 8 years together. He left me a little money, but most of his fortune was tied up in legalities. Miss ... Mrs. Cohen has made life much easier for me."

"Me too. We owe her a great deal of gratitude."

“I worry that I will get ill and be a burden. Yet also I find I am uneasy that I do not have that long left on earth.”

“Have you been feeling poorly lately?”

“No. Some aches and pains and perhaps more tired than a few years ago. But I think for a woman close to seven decades on earth, I am in good health.

“No. It is more a sadness that I will not learn how things turn out for those of you who have become such fond friends. What will be your fortunes?”

“You do not anticipate that you will look down from above and see us?”

“The churches would have us believe so. Or that we will anguish from below. To me most of the stories of angels and devils and heaven and hell are more hints or symbols than actual reality. A God of creation I can certainly believe. Forces of good and of evil there definitely are. The power of prayer, certainly. But whether there is a deity who takes a personal interest in me, who listens to and possibly tries to talk to me, I doubt. Each religion has its set of myths and doctrines, and many of them overlap. We see so much hate when one says all the rest are wrong, even when distilled to their essence, most have the same message.”

“I’ve never given such things much thought,” Tony said.

“When you’ve had nought to eat and nothing to keep you warm, such ideas are a luxury you can’t afford. I’d be surprised if you cared much for the niceties of theology.”

“That is likely the truth, though I do think quite a lot about what is the right way to behave. Mainly I think because if I live so, I will be more ... invisible I suppose. Sometimes I even whisper such questions to Moonbeam. She is a good listener.”

Adeline chuckled. “I laugh, but not at you. There is much to commend talking to Moonbeam, for she will never betray your confidences. And I’m sure just the matter of talking to her will help you understand your own feelings.”

“Yes. I think that’s it, Mrs. Naismith.”

“Perhaps it’s time you called me Adeline, Tony.”

“Yes. I will do that. Actually, Adeline, do you have any ideas where my birth might be registered. I’ve looked in many of the churches, but so far nothing has shown up. I’m wondering if my mother or grandmother did not do so.”

“But your parents were, you told me, married. And as far as you can determine, your mother and grandmother had moved here to Brighton before you were born.”

“That is what I believe.”

“I wonder if they went to one of the chapels Reverend Wagner set up. He established a number of them, but several closed rather soon.”

“What would have happened to the records?” Tony asked.

“Should have been moved to another church. Why don’t you write a letter to Reverend Wagner to ask? The worst he can do is say no, but I doubt that he will.”

\* \* \*

The following Thursday, March 6, 1856, there were news reports of the fire that destroyed the Covent Garden Theatre the night before. This was the second time the theatre had been lost to flames. A fortnight after Tony and Adeline visited Albert’s grave, Cambridge defeated Oxford in a boat race on the Thames, starting an annual competition between the two Universities that eventually became known simply as The Boat Race. These events were of only passing interest to the persons we are following in this account.

By the time of the Boat Race, Tony had received a reply to his request about the birth of his "family member" Antonia Crown to Matilda Evans in 1839.

St. Nicholas Church  
Brighton

March 7, 1856

Dear Mr. Brown,

I have reason to believe the record of your relative, Antonia Crown, is in the temporary register of a small chapel that was operating only for a short while in 1838 and 1839. This register is kept with that of St. Nicholas but in a separate drawer. If you wish we can consult it. If Monday, March 10 at half-past twelve is convenient, simply present yourself at the sacristy door. Otherwise, let me know by note before Sunday evening.

Yours in Christ,

Henry Wagner (Rev.)

\* \* \*

“Good afternoon, Rev. Wagner.”

“Ah. Mr. Brown. I believe you are the young man who rescued Miss Crouch last summer.”

“I like to think it was my donkey Moonbeam who did the rescuing. If she hadn't followed my commands, I'd not be here now.”

“A much underestimated animal, the donkey, Mr. Brown. Much underestimated.”

“Now. Let us go into the sacristy and find that sub-register.”

This they did, and a small volume was placed on the top of the cabinet.

“Did you say 1839?”

“Yes. March 15. My mother said the Ides of March.”

“Was Antonia your sister?”

“Um ... Actually, I am Antonia. My mother then my grandmother died when I was very young and I survived on the streets to avoid the Workhouse. It was easier to wear boy's clothing, and I attracted less ... er ... attention. After a while, it seemed more difficult to change to women's garb, and my way of earning a living as a donkeyman and carter would not be possible.”

“And you use Brown rather than Crown?”

“It is only in the last year that I heard the name Crown. I suspect it was simply bad pronunciation of Crown that led to my being called Brown.”

“In any event, last summer I was with a friend, Mrs. Maud Mortimer, as she was buying furniture at an auction and I took a fancy to a seaman's chest with Samuel Crown stencilled on it. Inside I found seaman's clothing and a daguerrotype that caused me quite a shock. Here is a copy of it with one of me in the same attire.”

“My goodness! Yes. I can see why you got a shock. Well. Let us see if your birth is here. It may not be.”

It took some seconds to find the right page.

“Ah. Here we are. March 1839 and ... yes! Antonia Crown. March 15, 1839. Mother Matilda Crown, nee Evans. And the address of a rather disreputable rooming house.”

“May I copy down the details, Reverend Wagner?”

“By all means, by all means.”

“But may I ask how you managed to pull yourself out of penury?”

“I believe you know Mrs. Cohen – Miss Match that was. She came to the pub where Archie Temple, who used to run a donkey cart, had died while drinking one night. Archie gave me food and shelter in exchange for watching his donkey Annabelle. When Archie died, nobody knew what to do, but Miss Match said that she would pay for 'is funeral against the value of Annabelle and the cart if no family member came forward to take charge

of Archie's estate, such as it was. When she and Tom Soulton came to check how Annabelle was situated, they found me. Miss Match took me 'ome with her, had me cleaned up and clothed and gave me a job, which was to look after Annabelle. Then she bought another donkey – Moonbeam, and Joseph Upton and I run them as Best Bonnet Cartage. This year Miss Match – Mrs. Cohen now – sold Joseph and I each a donkey and cart. Somehow Annabelle seems to like being with Joseph and Moonbeam with me, so that's how we let it be. We owe Mrs. Cohen a lot."

"She lost money on the project?"

"No. I think she did well, but so did we. She seems to have a knack of sharing the wealth so people work hard but when they do they prosper."

"The parable of the talents, Mr. Brown."

This, fortunately, was one passage in the Bible that Adeline had shared with Tony. "Indeed Rev. Wagner."

"Well, I don't know if to say 'my boy' or 'my girl', but I wish you success."

"For now, I will present myself as a young man, but I will not directly deny my state. Constable Shaw knows my situation, and has advised as much, as have a couple of friends who are cognizant of my story. They all point out I would not be able to work easily with Moonbeam in women's attire. Frankly, I am happy in the work."

"Then I wish you the best with it. If ever you feel need of counsel, remember that I am here. Also that it is never amiss to commune with God. Prayer can be important."

"Thank you, Reverend Wagner."

\* \* \*

Tony visited Maud and Henry the next evening to relay the news.

Henry said "There is still the formality of linking you to the record of Antonia's birth, but we have Jenny Dodds recognizing you and Annie Calder's statement too. I think we should try to visit Jenny and I will see if I can take a statement from her. It won't have the force of a court appearance, but better to get something down in writing."

Maud said "If you go to Albourne, could Tony take me and Billy in the cart with Moonbeam and we make a day of it?"

"That's a nice idea," Henry agreed. "Does that seem agreeable to you, Tony?"

"Absolutely, but what if we can't find Mrs. Dodds?"

"Let me write to the vicar, and we'll plan to go on the 29 of March, otherwise we'll get mixed up with Easter. I'll ask the vicar if he can arrange

that he and Mrs. Dodds can meet with us that Saturday, or else suggest another time.”

“Oh. That makes sense. Thank you Mr. Mortimer.”

“That’s why he’s a solicitor,” Maud chuckled.

“You will have to let me pay you for your work, Mr. Mortimer,” Tony said.

“Why don’t we allow you to supply transport and a part of the picnic?” Henry said. “And I think you should call me Henry. We were at the same dinner table at Fortescue Road since about three years ago.”

\* \* \*

Reverend Goring, Rector of Albourne and Twineham, suggested meeting at mid-day on the Saturday, March 29, 1856. Tony was at Chorley Terrace by a quarter to eight, as it was a goodly distance and he did not wish to have to press Moonbeam. Henry and Maud were ready, with Billy bundled up. Yolanda had prepared more than enough food, but Tony also had some bread, cheese and cider. He had also put some extra blankets and cushions in the cart, and made sure the cover was in proper condition should it rain. Jolly trotted along in front, seemingly knowing the way, while Tony and Henry walked beside her.

It was a pleasant morning, and there was little conversation as each enjoyed the journey. By dint of keeping a steady pace and only brief stops for refreshment of both beasts and humans, they arrived just before noon. Tony put a corkscrew peg in the ground near the lych gate to the church and tied both Moonbeam and Jolly to it, then they went into the church.

“Ah. You must be Mr. Brown,” a robust man in clerical collar greeted Tony. “And this must be Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer and, well, a bonny child.”

“Our son, William,” Maud said proudly.

“And I believe Mr. Brown already knows Mrs. Dodds.”

“I’m just Jenny to those ’at knows me.”

In this fashion, the story of Tony’s parents unrolled. Henry had written down a statement of fact that he read out and Jenny acknowledged, which recorded the basic history of how three of Tony’s grandparents had died, the marriage of Samuel to Matilda and the resemblance of Tony to Samuel. Henry explained that it would be useful to have this record should it be possible that Tony could inherit some funds that were due his father. To this end Jenny made her mark and Rev. Goring witnessed it.

Henry also asked if the parish records had information on the birth and marriage of Matilda’s parents. Thankfully, Jenny Dodds had a reasonably sharp memory, and it did not take too long to find the 1818 marriage of

Josephine Pierce to Sylvester Evans. The record showed they married March 23 of that year – Easter Monday as Jenny had recalled correctly. Josephine was shown as 21 years old, Frederic as 29.

“’e managed ’orses and carts for some regiment in the Iron Duke’s army,” Jenny said. “Was a welshman. Took me a while to be able to understand ’im, but a good man, treated Josephine like a queen.”

Jenny also remembered that Josephine’s birthday was in September, and they found the record of her birth in 1796 on September 12. Henry wrote down all the details that he could, which we will not repeat here.

Returning to the church proper, Rev. Goring said “The tale of the Evans and Crown family seems a sorry one, brought on by greed.”

“That seems to be the essence of it,” Henry agreed. “Fortunately for all of us here today from Brighton, we have come under the kindness of a Mrs. Cohen.”

“Yes. I and my sister and brother were in the Workhouse after our father died. She rescued us and now I have a furniture trading business, my brother has his own furniture repair and refinishing and my sister is a cook with Treats for the Tongue. Mrs. Cohen seems to have waved a magic wand.”

“And she set me up so now I own Moonbeam and the cart and work with another carter named Joseph Upton who she sold the other team. We call ourselves Best Bonnet.”

“Did you come here by cart today?” Goring asked.

“Yes. I tied up Moonbeam outside,” Tony said.

“Ooh. I think donkeys are special,” said Jenny, so everyone had to troop outside and say hello to Moonbeam who was enjoying some young grass beside the wall of the churchyard.

“A fine looking beast, Mr. Brown” said Goring. “Oh. Was there not a story last summer about rescuing a young lady from the sea?”

“That was our Tony and Moonbeam,” Maud said.

“Good for you,” said Jenny.

\* \* \*

Rev. Goring had an appointment, but Jenny Dodds joined the rest for a picnic beside the church. Then, as it was a goodly way home, our friends set off, but by a different route than that by which they had come. Maud could lay down in the cart with Billy. The cushions turned out to be a good idea. Tony allowed a stop whenever there was a chance for Moonbeam to take a drink. He simply guided here towards a trough if there were one and she decided if she were thirsty, in which case the humans took a break as well. A couple of times there were convenient hedges where they could relieve

themselves, and they snacked as they desired – there was plenty of food left over from the picnic.

About 2/3 of the way home, Moonbeam stopped to drink. Maud and Billy were fast asleep, but Henry went to check on them.

“They are lost to the world. I think it’s the fresh air.”

“Probably. I couldn’t be indoors all day. I like being out and about,” Tony said.

“If you are happy in that work and it renders enough income, you will be a happy man,” Henry said, then added “Or woman, as you may choose.”

“If I want to be a carter, I’ll have to stay garbed as one. We’ll see. I’ll stay with this life while I can, I think.”

“Do you think you’ll want to pursue the possibility of an inheritance?”

“I’m not sure. Has Mr. Dwyer found Samuel’s trust yet?”

“No. But I have started to see if I can find your Grandfather Crown’s estate record. I should also contact Dwyer again. He may have been busy. His comments before suggest he is quite happy to delay, as he gets to charge Ezekiel’s estate management fees.”

“I think Mr. Truscotte once mentioned a case that went on for many years until all the money was gone and the lawyers abandoned it,” Tony said.

“There have been a number of such cases. And I suspect Dwyer has no objection to having Ezekiel’s be another.”

“I’d rather not pursue things unless the outcome is clear. I am doing well enough that spending my time and energies in chasing money I have not earned is not attractive.”

“That is very sensible of you. I will keep what you have said in mind, but also be alert for any possibility that there is a solid argument that you should receive some funds.”

\* \* \*

In the middle of the next week, Henry happened to be passing Dwyer’s office. Actually, he made sure he had an errand that would take him by it. He entered and asked the clerk “Is there a possibility Mr. Dwyer would be free to talk to Mr. Mortimer for a few minutes.”

Dwyer heard him and yelled “Mortimer. Come in, come in. Just thinking of you. Trubshaw, please make some tea for us. How are you Mr. Mortimer?”

“Very well. In fact, I thought to bring you up to date on some developments. We went to Albourne last Saturday and I got a statement, witnessed by Rector Goring, from a Mrs. Jenny Dodds who recognized my client. Well, initially she was confused as she thought the person was the father, Samuel. And we verified the marriage record of Samuel Crown and Matilda Evans



on October 13, 1838. Rev. Wagner at St. Nicholas also found the birth registration of Antonia Crown on March 15, 1839 at one of the chapels that he set up for a while in 1838 and 1839.”

“Now who is the person we are talking about?”

“Can I rely on your discretion?”

“Mortimer. I am a solicitor.” This, Henry knew, was no guarantee. However, he went on.

“My client was born Antonia Crown, but for a number of reasons, in particular the early death of both mother and grandmother, and an unfortunate loss of contact with Samuel, grew up on the street as Tony Brown, who works as a donkeyman and carter.”

“And rescues maidens from the sea, as I recall from the newspaper last summer.”

“Indeed.”

“Well. I also have some news. Have a look at this letter.”

Marseilles  
June 10, 1840

Dear Uncle Ezekiel,

I am writing to say that when I was last in England, the letters that I found waiting for me at the packet boat company office had none from you.

The last time we talked, which is now over a year and a half ago, you promised to send me an accounting of the debts you said my father owed when he died and which you had paid on my behalf. It appears that I may have some good fortune soon, and would in that case like to pay off those debts and resume the life I had planned for myself.

Please get in touch via the packet boat company as soon as possible.

Your nephew,

Samuel Crown

“Have you found any record of debts on behalf of Roger and Eleanor Crown?”

“Absolutely none. They owned a house near Lewes free and clear. Ezekiel sold it, using his power of executor. But the will was never probated as far as I can tell. It was always ‘going to be probated’ but there was always some missing document from what we see in the files we have looked at so far. I had not realized that when I took over the account from my partner, but I only started taking care of it in 1851. I suppose I should have gone through the whole box of records, but ...”

“Do you happen to have a copy Roger’s will?”

“Let me get the box.”

Dwyer was gone a couple of minutes. The clerk came in with tea and biscuits. Treats for the Tongue. Henry helped himself to one. Dwyer returned, saying, “Those are very good.”

“I know. My wife’s sister is involved in their manufacture.”

“Indeed. I predict you will become fat and happy.” They both laughed. “Ah. Here is the will of Roger Crown.”

Henry read a very simple will. It left everything to his wife unless she was no longer alive when he died – which was presumed in the case they died together. Then all went to Samuel or was divided among living children.

“It says nothing about any trust or having to wait for a majority even.” Henry said.

“Indeed, though it does say all debts should be paid first.”

“And as I asked before: were there any debts?”

“And I answered that I can find none. In fact, I found there was a bank account with just over £129 in 1838, that was closed by Ezekiel, acting as executor.”

“Are you suspicious that Ezekiel manufactured some fictitious debts to maintain control of Roger’s money?” Henry asked.

“Sadly, yes. It unfortunately makes me look careless, in that I did not thoroughly review the account when I took it over after Mr. Cole died. I wasn’t even in practice until 1848.”

“In a sense you were a victim of a fraud also. May I make the suggestion that we consult my former master, Mr. Turcotte, and ask him for advice. I am willing to pay him for his time.”

“Let us let Ezekiel’s estate pay for it, in that Ezekiel appears to be the villain here.”

“As you wish. Shall I arrange an appointment?”

“I will keep Tuesday and Thursday mornings free for the next two weeks.”

“Would it be advisable for us to go through those accounts together and make notes? I would not like to have Mr. Turcotte ask questions that could be answered by anything in them and find myself in the wrong.”

“I would welcome the assistance, as I would be glad to do so, though reluctant to take on the effort of course.”

“Shall we say tomorrow evening at half-past seven?” Henry pushed.  
“That will work. I will see you then,” Dwyer reluctantly accepted.

\* \* \*

Thus it was that the two solicitors pored over many pages of dull records for about three hours on the evening of Thursday, April 3, 1856. They did not even mention that the Treaty of Paris had been concluded on March 31, ending the Crimean War. By the end of three hours, they had concluded that Roger Crown had left assets totalling £402 10s 3d. They had not found – indeed there was no mention whatever – of any debts except in the letter from Samuel to his uncle.

They had found that proceeds of the sale of assets of Roger and Eleanor Crown went into several bank accounts under slightly different variants of the name of Ezekiel Crown. Moreover, a payment of £100 “plus training and victualling” for the services of Mr. Samuel Crown for seven years was received and put in one of these accounts. Ezekiel’s estate totalled approximately £1050, but clearly nearly half was really the property of Samuel. And it was now known that Samuel had a child.

Henry asked “Do you happen to have any information on the date of birth of Samuel.”

“No. But Roger’s will is dated 1817 and Samuel is mentioned, so he would have been at least 20 and most likely 21 in 1838.”

“Then he did not lie on the marriage register. He put that he was 21. It falls into place.

“Tell me who is the nominal heir in Canada?”

“There is a possible distant relative. And we as yet do not have an exact name, or even certainty there is a relative. Roger and Ezekiel were brothers. Their grandfather had two sons, of which their father was eldest. The younger went to the Canadas at the time of the American Revolution. We have sent some letters to possible authorities there, but it is a new and rough sort of place, and so far we have no replies.

“But given what we have found, I believe your client – your friend too I believe – would appear to have a stronger claim. However, Turcotte can perhaps give us some guidance on how to undo Ezekiel’s mischief.”

“I do hope so, though it will be a shock to Tony should he gain such a windfall.”

\* \* \*

The Thursday morning following, Jerome Dwyer and Henry Mortimer met with Archibald Turcotte. Rose Bingham was asked to take notes. After hearing the rather long story, Turcotte said, "It is a complex tale, but I think the first matter to resolve is the will of Roger Crown. It will need a careful tallying of all the transactions Ezekiel Crown made to try to hide the fraud he perpetrated. I think hiring a respectable bookkeeper to do that is a valid expense against Ezekiel's estate, but not against Roger's.

"Now since Samuel is not, as far as we know for certain, dead, though very likely drowned, Roger's estate should go into trust until the death of Samuel is certified, which eventually it will be. But the funds truly ascribable to Ezekiel could possibly be released if there were a valid heir. Moreover, it is probable that Tony Brown is the likely heir to those as well. There will, of course, be a need to get his lineage formally accepted by the court.

"That is, we need to settle the matter of Tony's claim to be Samuel's child, Roger's grandchild and Ezekiel's great-nephew. That matter should be presented in probating Ezekiel's will. You have the daguerrotypes, Tony him/herself, Mrs. Dodds' statement, Mrs. Calder's statement, and possibly you will find some other information. However, I think the court will accept that Tony is the rightful heir to them all. And you can point out that any claimant in North America will have to provide evidence at least as strong that they are genuinely related to the two Crown brothers."

"When you put it that way, it makes a lot of sense," Dwyer said.

"Sometimes it helps to take a different perspective. But note that Tony will not be 21 until 1860. Until then, he or she will need a trustee." Turcotte answered.

"In any event, I think we had better find a good bookkeeper to start the audit of Ezekiel's machinations," Henry said.

"Indeed, but I will ask you to contact me soon to arrange that you and your wife come for dinner. It has been too long since we had a conversation about things not centred on the law."

"We will be delighted, Mr. Turcotte."

\* \* \*

The fee for Mr. Turcotte's consultation was 3 guineas. Both Henry and Jerome felt that was good value, as Turcotte had sharply delineated the case. Finding a suitable, and available, bookkeeper turned out to be a little more difficult than they imagined, but eventually they were put in contact with a man in Hove who was noted as a very thorough bookkeeper. Mr. Black was a very quiet man, but turned out to be very thorough and efficient. He

managed to provide a very clear and well-organized statement of Ezekiel's transactions with his brother's estate in just over two weeks.

Henry and Jerome worked together to write their petition to the diocesan court in Chichester. They counted themselves fortunate that Ezekiel did not appear to have assets over £5 in more than one diocese, or they would have had to petition the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, which handled probate for most of southern England, and all naval wills. In just over a year's time, the role of the ecclesiastical courts in inheritances would be transferred to the Probate Court, but for now church courts still proved wills.

The petition asked the court to approve the division of the initial assets under Ezekiel's control to restore the estate of Roger and Eleanor Crown, with the residue that of Ezekiel. Further, the petition asked that Samuel Crown be the presumptive heir to both estates, subject to a declaration of his death, which the petition asked be made on or before November 27, 1859, which would be the seventh anniversary of his going missing. The report of his loss was included, as the court could make the declaration earlier.

The petition further asked that Antonia Crown, known familiarly as Tony Brown, be declared the legitimate child and heir of Samuel Crown and Matilda Evans.

Finally, the petition asked that Messrs. Dwyer and Mortimer be named as trustees of the estates of Roger and Ezekiel Crown until March 15, 1860, when Tony Brown would be 21 years of age and could inherit.

\* \* \*

The courts, of course, never hurry. Henry, who was the corresponding solicitor, received an acknowledgement of the petition at the end of April. He had had a short conversation with Tony to explain that the petition would be filed whether or not Tony wished to claim his inheritance because it was necessary to have clarity on how much was in the estates of the brothers Ezekiel and Roger Crown. Tony would not be able to take control of any funds until his 21st birthday, though the trustees, assuming they were granted that status, could grant monies for specific benefits of the heir after Samuel's death was declared, which would likely not be until November 1859, so only a short while before Tony's majority.

Henry said "Even if the court grants the entire petition, there are still about 4 years to wait until you would have your hands on any of the money. However, I'm hoping that Dwyer and I get trusteeship, as some appointed trustees are notorious scoundrels."

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In mid-May, on a Friday evening, Henry and Maud were dinner guests of Archibald and Priscilla Turcotte. Maud carried a wrapped cardboard box she had been given by Joshua Goldman.

“Mrs. Turcotte, I have this parcel that Mr. Goldman has asked me to deliver. He says that it may not be quite what you were looking for, but that you may find it suitable nonetheless, and moreover that it is a token of appreciation for taking care of some valuables while they were away last year. He would have delivered them earlier, but had to wait for a pledge to lapse.”

“Oh. I must look. Archibald. Your pen-knife please.”

Opening the package revealed a pair of candlesticks. Priscilla had been wanting some for a while, preferably in silver. These were in brass, but of a good design and Joshua had asked Jeremiah to polish them, which he had done to splendid results.

Maud added “Mr. Goldman is still keeping an eye out for some silver or plated ones. He also said that these could be silvered by a process he called electroplating. A company named Elkingtons in Birmingham has become quite adept apparently.”

Archibald said “I think we should try them out. They are a handsome set. Sometimes I fear the fixation on silver causes us to overlook how attractive well-polished brass can be.

“But let me offer you both some sherry.”

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Though the purpose of the dinner between the Turcottes and the Mortimers was social and the law was not supposed to be discussed, the conversation naturally turned to members of the household at 21 Fortescue Road. Thus Tony’s situation was raised, and Priscilla, though pretending to be outside the circle who were knowledgeable, managed to prise some details out of both Henry and Archibald. She also clearly was aware that Tony was actually Antonia, in fact because she sometimes purchased shellfish from Annie Calder.

Truthfully, Priscilla loved gossip, but was fortunately one of those people who was careful to pass on the better half of it. She did not share information to cause scandal or harm, but because she found society and its diversity fascinating.

Archibald Turcotte had known Tony more or less since his arrival in Cassandra’s household in February of 1852. He thought to himself “My

goodness. Over four years,” as he took a walk on the Promenade in the middle of the a late-May day. And as if his thoughts had conjured up the person in question, he saw Moonbeam walking along the Promenade with Tony on the cart. As they got close, Turcotte said “Good day, Mr. Brown. I trust all is well with you.”

“It is, Mr. Turcotte. Mr. Upton and I are kept busy with commissions.”

“And are you in the middle of such a commission at this moment, or do you have time to pass a few minutes in conversation.”

“Actually, I came along the Promenade to see if there were much activity on the beach. It is still early in the season, but may be time to consider offering rides.”

“Yes. It must be tricky to judge when it is worth setting up. If it is cold, there will be few customers and not worth the effort.”

“That is the dilemma, Mr. Turcotte.”

“May I ask if you have made any decisions about your other dilemma? Mr. Mortimer and Mr. Dwyer consulted me about a matter of inheritance.”

“There are really two dilemmas, Mr. Turcotte. The first is whether I am interested in claiming anything from the estate of either my grandfather or my great-uncle. I rather prefer money I have earned myself, but there is the possibility I am the nearest relative, and who knows where the money would go.”

“I am afraid I am privy to your other dilemma, Mr. Brown.”

“Well. I’ve made a decision that I’ll not outright deny that I’m a girl who dresses in men’s clothes for my work. And truthfully, I’ve not ever worn women’s garb, so would find it strange. But I don’t intend to make any announcement of it.”

“As far as I, a QC, am aware, there is no law banning a person from wearing the garments of their choice so long as there is no fraud nor indecency.”

“That is what I have gathered from what others, including Constable Shaw, have told me.”

“Shaw knows about you?”

“When Moonbeam and I rescued Miss Crouch, a couple of my shirt buttons came undone and he could see I wasn’t ... flat. He said I’d better do up the buttons, but everyone ’ad to make a living.”

“It is good that he viewed things that way. Though they would be in the wrong, some constables exceed the law in prosecuting their own prejudices rather than the legislation.

“So you plan to continue as Tony Brown?”

“I think so. I like working with Moonbeam, being out and about. I’m comfortable in men’s garb and doing the physical work.”

“It may be difficult for you should you find someone you wish to share life with. You would have to marry as a woman. Otherwise would, in fact, be a fraud.”

“For now, I think I’m happy enough to continue as I am. But I have seen with others a joy in partnership.”

“It is good that you are not blind to the matter. Dilemma is the right word.

“And have you any feelings about the desirability of inheritance – it is almost four years until the trusteeship can conclude in any event?”

“I think it is more that I would like the injustice to my father and mother corrected,” Tony answered.

“Assuming the court accepts the petition of my colleagues Dwyer and Mortimer, I would advise you take the inheritance. You need not change your way of life, though you would have resources to do things that otherwise would be impossible. When and if you do have expectations, you should take time and talk to those you trust about what you might do when funds are under your control.”

“Could I come and talk to you, Mr. Turcotte?”

“Of course, but I suggest we talk as today, in the course of a casual encounter, so you do not get charged my fee,” Turcotte said, laughing. “Just leave me a note saying when you plan to take a turn on the Promenade or some other attractive walk.”

“I thank you, Mr. Turcotte. That’s exceedingly generous.”

“My pleasure. I like to assist those who work hard to better themselves and others.”

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That Saturday, May 31, Ethel and Percy were married in St. Nicholas. They were given a noisy send-off from Fortescue Road to a honeymoon on the Isle of Wight.

That Ethel was moving to Percy’s lodgings rather diminished the resources for cooking fine meals at 21 Fortescue Road. Mary was still living across the road, and Ethel would be coming most days, and Adeline was not without skills. However, things were not quite the same, and Cassandra had thought she needed to consider how she would meet her obligations to the Grants in Number 23.

This concern had removed itself rather suddenly in the middle of May when Mrs. Grant finally worked out that Mr. Grant and the barmaid of the tavern near his tannery in London were more than commercial acquaintances,



in that a child was born around that time and the family of the woman in question created an uproar that was reported by letter to Mrs. Grant.

Already the Grant's eldest daughter, Penelope, was 20 and there had been discussions as to her future prospects. The Grants were not of the class where the girl would be part of the London "season". However, they were moderately prosperous and Penny, though never likely to be celebrated as a beauty, was a handsome, quite intelligent young woman who had a knack of fitting into whatever society she found herself in. In so doing, she had attracted the attention of a young Brighton physician who recognized the value of a wife who could socialize with those who had the funds to pay doctor's fees. The young physician had not planned to propose yet, but events would advance his suit.

The son, Alfred, was now 18 and was interested in a career in the Colonial Office, particularly related to Canada or Australia. The Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1854 had criticized patronage in such appointments and would not be implemented for another decade and a half, though senior appointments now were overseen by the Civil Service Commission.

Alfred did not get recruited by patronage *per se*, but his name was put forward by a relatively minor functionary in the Colonial Office for a job keeping records of the quarantine station at Grosse Île, near Québec. This had been established in 1832. That Alfred had reasonable fluency in French was considered potentially useful in, as it was put "dealing with the local French-Canadians". For our present narrative, the important matter was that he departed Brighton just before the domestic uproar between his parents.

Truthfully, Jessica Grant was not entirely devastated by her husband's infidelity. She suffered from a gynaecological malady that meant marital relations were painful. Knowing that Henry Mortimer was now established as a solicitor and having over the time of her residence in Number 23 Fortescue Road got to know Maud and Ethel, she was able to communicate via Henry her wish to have an amicable separation from her husband, and that she would not object to his cohabiting with the barmaid and their child, subject to a comfortable provision for herself. Moreover, her sister Mildred Jeffery was now well-established in Brighton and had a house with an extra bedroom. Mildred would welcome help in managing her brood of children as well as some extra money that Jessica would give her that was not made known to her husband.

For Cassandra – and her agent Arbuthnot – the matter meant that they would have to find a new tenant. However, the Grants lease was until September 30, and there were no specific clauses that specified what would happen if the tenancy were abandoned. The rental, which included meals and baths, indeed "all found", was 6 guineas a week paid via Arbuthnot, who took a 5% fee and rendered £6. This was actually a bit less than the rental charged the

previous tenants, the Jefferys, of whom Mrs. Jeffery was Mrs. Grant's older sister. But the Jefferys only stayed one summer. The Grants leased by the year.

A letter came from Mr. Grant's solicitor in mid-June offering that the house would be empty and free to be re-rented as of July 1 if Mrs. Cohen would accept £40 with £4 to Mr. Arbuthnot for his fee. If the Grants had stayed, Cassandra would have received £78 for the period, but would have had to provide meals, baths, and other services. She accepted the offer. Arbuthnot could not refuse, as the offer was very slightly more than his regular commission. Moreover, he would get another if he could rent out the house.

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On Monday, June 16, Cassandra met Arbuthnot as he opened his office at 9 o'clock. By note she had apprised him of the situation concerning the Grants.

"A rum business, Mrs. Cohen. But they have paid my commission. Are you willing to accept their offer to vacate the premises by July 1?"

"On a number of levels it makes sense. Moreover, I was beginning to wonder what I should do regarding service to the Grants. We no longer have any of the Saultons to feed, and Ethel and Mrs. Yarrow are no longer on the premises, so our resources are thin as regards cooking. Mrs. Yarrow and Ethel still do the Treats from the two kitchens, but that will cease as and when we can get the factory running."

"I was by there the other day. It is coming along very quickly."

"The foundations and walls, yes. But even when the roof is on, we will have some work to ensure it is outfitted so the Treats can be manufactured. And that will also demand some hiring and training of new workers. Ethel – now Mrs. Percy Jones – will live there and become overseer of operations. And Mrs. Yarrow will no doubt not have time to be cooking at Fortescue Road, though she and her family eat with us there now. That may continue, but we are thinking that Number 23 might best be rented without the services we have been providing, though for the summer we would want to keep using the kitchen there."

"That is the period to the end of the Grants' nominal lease."

"Yes. It is also largely the summer season, so we might consider shorter term rentals, such as by the week."

Arbuthnot asked "Will you provide meals?"

"Breakfast and evening dinner only, I think. As staff we'll have Mrs. Naismith, Martha Murphy, Dan Dixon and Jeremiah Quigley. Jeremiah has

been spending more time with Mr. Goldman, but we think the summer is quiet enough that we can make things work. We won't offer morning coffee or afternoon tea or any special services. One bath per week except by special arrangement. We will make beds, but that gives us a chance to check that the guests aren't damaging the property."

"Would you consider renting separate rooms? That would likely be more revenue. I think you could think of at least a pound a week, perhaps even 30 shillings," Arbuthnot suggested.

"If I were more in need of revenue, that would be the case. I think I'll be happy to take £5 per week for the house and not have to find more beds and linen, and we do have the payment from the Grants. Indeed, it may be a better idea to think of renting the house either furnished or unfurnished – we can sell stuff on through Goldmans or Uptons or even Maud Mortimer."

"By that you are suggesting we try to acquire a long-term tenant now?"

"It would be easier through the summer to have use of the kitchen, but I think we could manage if we got such a tenant," Cassandra answered.

"I'll try advertising both ways," Arbuthnot concluded. "It would be, as you say, a lot less work to have a long-term tenant right away."

\* \* \*

The more complete story behind the previous conversation was that Cassandra, Abraham, Joshua, Rachel, Adeline, Dan, Jeremiah, Mary, Michael, Elizabeth, Ethel, Percy, and Martha had met on the previous afternoon – Sunday – to decide how they would reorganize their operations. They gathered in the drawing room of 21 Fortescue, which felt rather crowded with all of them there.

Cassandra said "While you all know in general that we are here to discuss how to manage the houses here, I will outline what are the concerns:

"First, the Grants are leaving. They have offered to vacate by July 1 with a fair offer of payment. That means we can re-rent Number 23.

"Second, Ethel and Mary will soon be transferring operations to the new factory, but of course we aren't quite sure when exactly that will be. Yet we still need to keep the Treats coming in the meantime. And Ethel is no longer living here, which makes some things less convenient.

"Third, Martha's time is becoming more occupied with Catherine, who is fortunately taking her nap just now. But she is starting to walk."

Jeremiah said "I should probably tell you that I ain't got no actual plans yet, but I've had a letter from a Rev. William King in a place called Buxton in Upper Canada. He has established a settlement for escaped slaves, and has confirmed that there are some people from the plantation where I was

enslaved, possibly some family members. I'm thinking I should go there. I've enough money for passage and a bit to cover my food. I think."

Abraham asked "Would it be possible to delay your departure until the end of September. We might be able to arrange a bit of a bonus to make that worthwhile."

"I might not be able to get a passage much sooner anyway. But a bit more coin would surely be helpful."

Cassandra continued "That will be helpful, as Jeremiah has shown he can cook rather well, and I'm hoping that he will be taking over leadership the cooking for the summer, or until we have a tenant who will not need meals. I am hoping that Adeline and Dan, with occasional support of Martha and myself, will make sure the rest of the tasks are managed. I realize that there are some outside obligations like exercising Moses."

Adeline asked "So you are thinking of getting out of the provision of a house or apartments with services and meals?"

"We would still have Rose, and those of you here who eat with us, but there is more ... er ... flexibility when we act as family rather than servants to others. Among ourselves we share the tasks and make sure everything gets done, and sometimes that means we shift the time of our meals or other activities. We have plenty of other work and business."

Mary asked "What are your ideas for the summer?"

"I think we could do shorter rentals, preferably of the house, but if we must then by rooms. And I think only breakfast and supper, with no special services. However, I would prefer a single tenant, and possibly with no meals, though that might cause some inconvenience of losing the kitchen in Number 23.

"Once the factory is up and running, of course, I'd like to let Number 23 as either a furnished or, if necessary, unfurnished house, with no services."

"That makes sense," Mary said. "And Jeremiah often helps us with the heavier work for Treats, so I can happily give some help on the meals here."

Dan said "I already sometimes do odd jobs in the kitchen. And I don't mind helping with laundry or clearing rooms."

"You do some shopping too," Adeline observed.

Jeremiah said "Dan and I can share exercising Moses occasionally with Tony. He's said to ask if we ever need help looking after 'im."

Joshua said "I think you have a plan. Rachel and I can manage the pawn shop together. We did before Jeremiah came, though we've got used to having him around for security. It's possible Tony or Joseph coming round to see to Moses would serve much the same purpose."

Cassandra asked "And going forward, once the factory is open, we'll run a simpler regime just in Number 21 employing only Dan, Adeline and Martha, assuming Jeremiah does go to the Canadas."

Mary said "It'll be a lot different than we intended when we came here."

Cassandra answered "But given all the other things we do, surely a sensible shift of direction?"

"Oh. Absolutely," Mary answered. "And we'll need our energies to get the factory working well. I'm beginning to realize we'll need to hire some new staff to expand production. Including, I might add, some strong fellow or other to do the mixing like Jeremiah does."

Abraham asked "Will you be able to manage with production for the summer?"

"Will you want the tenants of Number 23 to eat upstairs there?" Mary asked.

"I'm prepared to have everyone eat in Number 23 and let you take over the kitchen of Number 21 to use, plus of course your kitchen across the road," Cassandra answered.

Elizabeth said "Yes. I'm mostly taking care of everything there, but Mum and Ethel drop by to help."

Joshua said "It may be worth starting to look for new staff now. You'll have several times the space in the factory. Even more if you use all the space."

"That's true," Ethel said. "We want everyone in the factory to know what to do. It'll be a big job learning how to work there, and training new folk on top of that could set us back."

\* \* \*

Ethel and Mary also had a conversation that Monday morning to decide how many people they would need and also how to find them.

Mary said "We'll have a working space of about 70 feet by 18, which is at least double what we have in the two kitchens here, or even including across the road."

"And we work now with just you, Elizabeth and me, with part-time help from Jeremiah."

"Yes. I think we are going to want four more people, as Jeremiah will disappear. But I doubt we can take on four just now. I think we should try to find two, one of which should be someone strong."

Ethel said "You mean a young man?"

"Not necessarily, but it is likely a young man will have the strength to do the heavy mixing."

Ethel changed the topic. "Do we need to start thinking of more pans and other equipment?"

“Yes. Let’s set up a "Wanted items" list and put it on the counter there. I’ll start with more flat baking trays. Our shortbreads and small items are our easiest items to sell.”

“We’ve been using cardboard boxes. Should we think of using tins? They are very popular for gifts, and they are easier to transport,” Ethel said. She had been given a tin of Huntley and Palmers as a wedding gift.

“I’d not doubt the tin boxes would cost more than the Treats, and we’d need to find a good supplier, which could be time consuming just now when we have so much on our plate.” Mary answered. “But I have been wondering if we should consider more distinctive packages. There’s unfortunately a duty on paper for such items. More costs.”

“Yes. We should concentrate on the factory. Do you know when we may be able to move in?”

“On Wednesday, Cassandra – Mrs. Cohen – and I have been invited by Mr. Brougham to inspect the work so far.”

“Then we’d better start training some people. How shall we find them?”

“Ethel. I think you should go to the Workhouse and ask if they can set up interviews with likely candidates. We want people who are lively. Also who can read and write enough to understand and prepare notes.”

“I’ll go round there after I finish the dough for the next batch.

“How will we ensure people are clean? And where will we have them sleep?”

“We could accommodate one or two here or across the road. And we’ve baths here, but I think I’ll talk to Cassandra about adding a bathing area in the factory, with a place for staff to lock up their own coats and things. There’s space in the area under the apartment. I’ve heard that Charles Dickens had a shower bath added to his house. In any event, we should make sure everyone can wash before and after working.”

“If I don’t see anyone suitable, should we put an advertisement in the *Herald*?”

“Yes. And perhaps do that anyway. In fact, I’ll go round to their offices today. It won’t hurt to have more candidates than we plan to hire.”

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Brougham was waiting for Mary and Cassandra at 9 o’clock on Wednesday.

“Good morning Mrs. Cohen, Mrs. Yarrow.”

“Good morning Mr. Brougham. My goodness, the building almost looks finished.”

“It’s just walls and roof, ma’am. You’ll see when we get inside. But the simple design let us get the walls up quickly. As you’ll note, we’re still finishing the second storey at the far end, and we need a door here. It should arrive within the week.”

They were standing in what would become the yard. It was currently packed clay and gravel, and slightly uneven and muddy. Plans called for it to be macadamized. Cassandra hoped this would be soon. There was a large opening in the end of the factory building big enough for a cart to be driven in.

Brougham said “We plan to have a door with two halves opening outwards so space inside is maximized. However, the regular doors on the side of the building will open inwards as is usual.”

They walked inside and found the large rectangular space impressive. There was a wall 75 feet from the doorway and two large brick ovens had been constructed already, but did not yet have doors.

Brougham continued “You will note iron covers at regular intervals. They cover pits down to the drain and water pipes. The drains slope to the far end on the north side and to this end on the south. That will let us connect to the city sewers whenever they get them built and no matter which end of the building the sewers pass. Its unfortunate they’re not here yet. We’ve dug a septic tank under the yard with a cover. You may have to get it emptied after a while.”

Cassandra noticed that the floor was tiled in large red tiles, but that there were occasional grey ones. She asked “What are the grey tiles for?”

“The foundation is under the walls with some pillars under those grey tiles. If you want to increase the height of the building, that’s where you’d put a post. We’ve put two under the apartment made of cast iron.”

They were now near the wall to the area under the apartment, which had a door in the middle with the ovens at either side, with good clearance. The backs of the ovens were against chimneys that went up through the corrugated iron of the roof. Pipes led to taps on the sides of the ovens. Brougham said “The gas burners are in place with iron plates above them. We hope to get the doors today or tomorrow. They’ll be hinged at the top and have counterweights so they are easy to open. In fact, the counterweights will be at the ends of bars that will lean a bit forward when the door is closed so they hold it shut, but will lie flat when the door is open and hold it there. There’ll be no need to have latches or springs.”

Mary said “I’m not sure how that would work.”

Brougham stood beside one of the ovens, which were about eight feet wide and had an opening about 2 feet high. The top of the oven was about 5 and a half feet from the floor. Brougham raised his arm. “Imagine my hand is the counterweight and my torso is the door with my chest to the oven.

If my arm is straight up, the weight doesn't push the door either closed or open, but if I have my arm a little back, then the weight will push the door closed. But once the door is opened, the weight will tend to keep it open. We need to get the right weight, of course, but can do that adding lead or iron until it moves correctly."

There was noise high up on the north wall, and they looked up to see workmen lifting a window into an opening. Brougham said "We just have to bolt the pivots in place to install the windows, but someone will have to go back to add the ropes to open and close them. There'll also be security latches that can be opened with a pole that has a T hook at the end."

Mary asked "Is water connected yet?"

"The main tap is connected, but we're still running the pipes for sinks and water closets. As you asked, Mrs. Yarrow, we've set up a place for a shower-bath, though we've not found anyone who makes one."

"We'll probably have to try to make our own, Mr. Brougham," Cassandra said. "But as long as we have the space and plumbing, we can do so when we have the time and resources. When do you anticipate the boiler for hot water will be here?"

"It's on order. As you know, we agreed on an adjustment of our agreement to get the higher capacity stove. Let us go through into the administrative area, that is, the one under the apartment, and you'll see the space and the opening in the chimney."

"I also see the markings on the floor for the cloakrooms," Cassandra said.

"Yes. And we should have the sinks and toilets installed before a fortnight's out."

"That's around the beginning of August. Do you think we'll be ready to start using the factory by the end of August?"

"That depends on whether we can finish all the details by then. I suspect there'll be loose ends on both our side and your own. For example, getting your equipment installed how you want it as well as things like the gas lamps, doorknobs, locks, the paving of the yard and so on. Also whitewashing the interior."

Cassandra said "Then Mrs. Yarrow and I had better get busy to make sure we have all the equipment delivered as soon as it can be secured. Then we'll bring some of our people to put it in place. We anticipate we may have to adjust where we put things after we start manufacture."

\* \* \*

'Get busy' was somewhat of an understatement for the activity of the summer of 1856 for Cassandra's circle.



When Cassandra and Mary were inspecting progress on the factory, Ethel was at the Workhouse to seek candidates to work in the factory. Mr. and Mrs. King had resigned as Governor and Matron in October of 1854. When they heard this, Ethel and Maud had wondered whether their resignations had anything to do with the takeover of supervision of the Workhouse by the Corporation and the dismissal of the Guardians, who had been reported to use Workhouse funds for their own dining and drinking, even to the extent of building a pavilion in the grounds for so doing. The Kings were the third pair in but a few years and the current pair, a Mr. and Mrs. Passmore, would be discharged before the end of the decade. Moreover, the Corporation was building a new Workhouse further from the centre, but there would be many delays and issues before it would open.

Mr. Passmore was, it turned out, an ineffectual blusterer. Ethel, though she had been an inmate of the institution, was now a married woman with some appreciation of her own abilities. Moreover, she had seen how Maud and Tom, by virtue of confidence and forthright expression, commanded attention and respect. Hence she gave no intimation that she had ever worn the drab uniform of the institution.

Passmore said "Well, Mrs. Jones, I think we must have many young women who might suit to do some bits and pieces of kitchen work and any of them would surely do for you."

"Mr. Passmore, I represent Treats for the Tongue, who manufacture high class delicacies. We need capable and responsible cooks and confectioners. However, we are willing to train those young women and possibly men who we feel have integrity and ambition. We will not just accept anyone who 'might do'. Now do you have any persons who I might interview as potential trainees?"

"Well, Mrs. Jones. Now that you put it that way, let me ask my wife."

Passmore asked a girl, who was clearly an inmate working as his personal servant, to fetch Mrs. Passmore. Essentially the same dialogue was repeated, with Ethel showing some impatience. She knew that there would be at least a few residents who would jump at the chance to become wage earners in an enterprise that was gaining a reputation in the town.

Ethel said "Perhaps there are some newly arrived youths who are recent orphans. I have been told that they don't fit in very well, but I suspect may suit my needs."

Mrs. Passmore said "Now you mention it, there's Felix and Janet Nuffield. Their parents were schoolteachers, but the school got the cholera and closed, then the parents died of it. The children were sent to an aunt here, but she said she couldn't deal with them and delivered them here. They think they're better than the rest. There's been some altercations and they don't fit in at all."

“Let me talk to them to see if they’re suitable.”

It turned out that Felix was 14 and Janet nearly 16. Felix had a black eye and Janet some bruises.

“May I interview them privately, please,” Ethel asked.

“Well, it is highly unusual,” Mrs. Passmore started, but Ethel interrupted “You may leave your young woman as chaperone if you wish.”

In the period of ten minutes, it became clear that some male inmates had attempted to molest Janet, but she and Felix had fought them off. They were very eager to leave the Workhouse. They could read and write, and Janet said she had done some of the cooking at home when her parents were alive. Felix said that he was willing to learn and seemed quite robust for his age. Apparently he had played some sports at the school where his parents were employed.

Ethel asked that the Passmores return, and she offered to employ both the Nuffields. There was some haggling over fees and costs, but Ethel left with both young people, who were now changed into some very odd clothing. Ethel had decided not to buy any rags from the Workhouse. Each of the young people had a small sack for personal belongings. Ethel had not even mentioned wages, as she knew the Nuffields were desperate to leave, and also that they would not yet be able to comprehend how things worked with the Fortescue Road household.

As they left the premises, Janet said, with some emotion “Thank you, Mrs. Jones. You don’t know how terrible that place is.”

“Actually I do. My sister, brother and I were rescued from it not 5 years ago by Mrs. Cohen and Mrs. Yarrow, who are our employers.”

“And you weren’t ... molested.”

“There were three of us, which helped. But we knew it went on. Terrible. Anyway, we’ll get you both back to Fortescue Road and get you cleaned up and find you some proper clothes.”

Felix said “Our Aunt Carrington has a box of our things. We knew they’d get stolen if we brought them with us.”

“All right. I’ll send you out with Dan, our odd-job man, who ’as a hand cart.”

\* \* \*

Lunch at 21 Fortescue Road was a revelation to the Nuffields. Ethel had Janet bathe while Dan and Felix fetched their box from the aunt, who was greatly pleased to learn that they had escaped the Workhouse. She would gladly have kept them with her, but she had only a tiny room and limited resources in her old age. Dan gave her a card with the address.

Felix' hair was still wet at lunch, and Ethel had asked the pair to check each other for nits after lunch, following which Mary would talk to them about their work. However, over lunch, Cassandra explained that there would be room, board and 4/- per week wages. Cots would be set up in the kitchen of Number 23 for them.

All in all, the Nuffields turned out to be a good fit, as they could read, write and figure well. Janet had not lied about knowing how to cook, but was, it turned out, quite ignorant of baking. Fortunately, she learned quickly.

Felix, on the other hand, was a natural at baking, and had the strength in his arms to mix the doughs and batters.

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Mary had, in discussion with Cassandra and Ethel, decided that the factory should have a marble slab on which confections could be made. Of course, a large surface made for easier working, but also the cost of a large slab was much more than the equivalent in two smaller pieces. Eventually, it was decided that two slabs 5 feet by three, and two inches thick would be installed. Tom Soulton was commissioned to make the stands, which set the surface at 30 inches from the top of the tiles. Tom made the stands so there were shelves below to store materials or equipment. There was nothing fancy about the stands, and Tom had made them in but a few hours, and moreover had them organized so he could dismantle them and reassemble them in the factory.

August 14, 1856, in the afternoon, Jeremiah hitched Moses to Joshua Goldman's cart and went to a stone merchant on the eastern edge of Brighton where the two slabs were carefully laid in the cart with wooden slats between. Jeremiah had, before he had harnessed the pony, verified the bearings and the brakes. The slabs were not unusually heavy, but he did not wish to take any chances.

At the factory, Tom, Dan and Abraham were waiting with Mary. The large doors were now installed and opened wide. Jeremiah carefully backed Moses to bring the rear of the cart to the opening. Tom, mindful that they still had some 45 feet to carry each slab, had some webbing straps. These he tied to make a loop and passed them under the top slab.

Tom said "Jeremiah. You and I will slide the slab out, then you will hold the end while Mr. Cohen and Dan pass the strap over their shoulders, one each side. Then on my command, each take a step forward and I'll take hold of the other end. Thus we'll have one each side and one each end and should have no trouble. Mrs. Yarrow. Can you watch that we are not going to bump into anything or trip. I'll count off so we keep in step."

This worked very well, and the first slab went on its stand with no fuss. They did have to lift it to remove the strap, however.

“Are we going to fasten the slab to the stand?” Mary asked.

“There is sufficient weight that I don’t think it needed,” Tom answered. “We could, however, put some putty on the top of each of the corner posts which would avoid any wobble if the wood shrank or the floor settled.”

“Is this the right way up?” Mary asked.

Indeed, the side showing was not the one most polished. With care, two men on each end, the slab was turned over. In the process, Tom had Mary put a ball of putty on each corner.

The second slab went into place in but a few minutes, and Mary was busy wiping the surfaces with vinegar and then water.

“Don’t they look nice,” she said, and the others could but agree.

\* \* \*

Cassandra, in the meantime, had been struggling to decide what to do with Number 23. Arbuthnot received nearly two dozen enquiries, and all but two were for one or two weeks and for single rooms.

The other two letters were about summer rentals. One was from a family who wanted the month of August. The other wanted two months, possibly more, and was from a retired military officer and his wife. The officer had been wounded in the Crimea and was still convalescing. They had two servants, or apparent servants, who were former soldiers who had also been wounded. This letter said meals would not be needed, but did want use of the kitchen. There was a query about a reduced rate given that meals were not wanted. Apparently nor were linens and their laundry.

It was July 28 when the request arrived. Cassandra immediately went to talk to Mary.

“It will be difficult, Cassandra, to manage Treats for August if we don’t have the kitchen. And where will we put the Nuffields?”

“We have been paying Brougham for a night watchman. I think we could use the Nuffields. I know the apartment is not ready, and we are still waiting for the plumbing for the water closet, but we could no doubt manage with them sleeping in the administrative area of the factory.”

“I think we could even commence some operations there. It will be awkward, but I agree we could manage.”

Cassandra sent a telegram to Captain Fraser, and by return learned that his wife would come on July 29 to view the house and discuss terms.

\* \* \*

Angela Fraser was a plain, thin woman with a prominent nose, likely not yet 30, and her accent immediately told of a lowland Scots origin. She warmed to Mary, noting the similar accent, and this allowed for a rapid progression to business matters.

“We have some furniture, but it is stored. At the moment we are renting in Chatham, where my husband’s men have been at the hospital and the doctors have been tending to my husband’s injuries as well. The house you have here is eminently suitable, but we will not need meals, as we indicated, as I will do the cooking. In truth, with my husband’s pension and that of his men, who he regards as his responsibility, we could not meet the full rent you have suggested. I should add that we have, as yet, no children, and it may be that none will be granted to us, as we have been married now eight years, though much of that time apart with the Crimea.”

Cassandra said “Our situation, too, is somewhat complicated. We are building a factory to manufacture delicacies under the name Treats for the Tongue. You have a sample in front of you.”

“Oh. They are most delightful. And you make them here?”

“Here in Number 23, in the kitchen of Number 21 and across the street. Hence the need for a factory. It is nearing readiness, but will not be fully complete before the end of September, though we are hoping to start operations at the end of August.

“Would a rental of £2 10s. for the house furnished, inclusive of coals, gas and water be sensible if there were no meals or linen?”

“I think we could manage that,” Angela replied.

“Then the issue remaining is how to deal with the first few weeks when Mrs. Yarrow would need to use the kitchen for the Treats, though some accommodation could be made to allow you to prepare meals. Or, possibly, we could come to some arrangement where you would share the preparation and meals with the rest of the household.”

“How would we apportion costs?” Angela asked, showing true Scots perspicacity.

Mary answered “Since a number of ingredients inevitably get shared with the Treats, it would probably be simplest to agree a flat amount that is acceptable to both sides, even if not perfect in its bookkeeping. Would 12 shillings a week be reasonable to cover all meals, not just breakfast and supper? Drink, other than tea, would be on your own account, however.”

“I’m spending roughly that now in Chatham, though the men sometimes like to eat at the tavern with their comrades. But they’ll no doubt want to do that here.

“I should warn you that one of the men has a rather shocking injury to his face, and the other is missing a leg and some fingers. My husband, too, has some injuries but they appear more in his awkwardness of movement.”

“It would be unpatriotic of us to object in any way to our wounded soldiers,” Cassandra answered. “Will you want us to remove furniture?”

“Would it be sensible to discuss that after your factory is running?” Angela replied.

“You understand us well, Mrs. Fraser. Thank you. Yes, let us arrange such matters when our situation is less chaotic.

“May I ask if you would possibly want to continue after the end of September?”

“We wanted to have a trial of Brighton, and to see if our resources could cope with the expenditure.”

“Then let us see how we get on. Please share your thinking with us so we may all work to make for the best outcomes,” Cassandra said.

\* \* \*

It turned out that the Frasers were rather desperate, as their rental in Chatham ended on Thursday, July 31, though they managed to negotiate an extra night and showed up on Friday August 1 with their trunks. Joseph met them with Annabelle by prior arrangement before Angela left Brighton on the 29th of July.

James McDowell truly did have a horrific injury to his face where a Russian musket ball had shattered his jaw. The surgeons had managed to make it possible for him to eat as long as his food was cut into very small pieces. Fortunately, he had use of his hands, and could manage to do this, though his eating and drinking were clumsy and untidy. The residents of the houses were, as we know, kind, and they made sure there was always an extra napkin. Adeline also found a finger bowl, which allowed him to maintain a measure of dignity in that he could use a wet napkin to wipe his badly scarred mouth.

His speech was also slurred because of the injury, but gradually people came to understand him, though sometimes he would have to write on a notepad he kept in his pocket.

Angus Sinclair had lost his left leg above the knee and two fingers of his left hand. He used a crutch. Stairs gave him difficulty, so the Frasers set up a cot for him in the back room of the main floor and used the front as their sitting room. He did, however, soon learn how to navigate the steps to the garden and thence to the kitchen of Number 21 to eat, especially after James McDowell helped Dan make some hand rails in strategic places.

While Angus was limited in his movements, James liked to walk. He wore a hat pulled low across his face, but could not always avoid the stares of passers by on the street. Still, he was able to wander all over, and particularly enjoyed the beach.

On August 11, as he left Number 23, Jeremiah was coming out of the lower area of Number 21.

“Are you walking anywhere particular, Mr. McDowell?”

James answered ‘No’, though the sound would not have been easily understood.

“I’m going to exercise Moses, an elderly pony of Mr. Goldman the pawnbroker. You are welcome to accompany me.”

James nodded, and in silence the two walked to Goldmans. Once there, James made a noise that sounded like a question. Jeremiah understood that to be a request to pet the pony, and answered “If Moses lets you pet him, by all means do so.”

Later that day, everyone learned that James had been in charge of some of the regimental transport horses. Over the next few weeks he became a regular visitor to Goldmans, and Jeremiah approached Joshua Goldman around the beginning of September.

“Mr. Goldman. As you know I now have booked passage to Quebec in early October. Mr. McDowell has been coming to help exercise Moses. I’m thinking you could do worse than let him continue, and possibly give him a few pennies spending money from time to time.”

“That sounds like a good idea, Mr. Quigley. Is he in the stable now?”

It was agreed that James would take over exercising Moses and maintenance of the cart, for which he would receive a shilling a week. At this time, it was not decided if the Frasers would continue the tenancy.

\* \* \*

Janet and Felix Nuffield had been sleeping at the factory for a couple of weeks already when on August 27, a Wednesday, Mary planned the first trial of one of the ovens. New pans had been acquired, and the ingredient storage – zinc lined in some places – was partly stocked with enough materials for some test batches. There were now sinks installed and connected, and one WC was functional, which saved the inconvenience of using a pot and emptying it into the cesspool, of which the cover had been partially opened for this purpose until the need for access was removed.

To not waste materials, the first tries at manufacture were to be with batches the same size as made in Fortescue Road. The choice was short-breads, as these had few ingredients, were very popular items, but demanded a good control of the oven.

At half-past eight, Mary addressed her team – Ethel, Felix and Janet. “Felix, I want you to mainly keep track of all our operations, in particular times and settings of taps, amounts and any notes I ask you to take. However, I will ask you to help with heavy mixing and other tasks where you are most able. The others will each try to make a batch of one type of the shortbreads, calling on Felix as necessary to record what you do or for short-term assistance. Ask me to make notes in the log if Felix is occupied. While it may seem wasteful, both Mrs. Cohen and my husband have told me to watch and make observations and suggestions today, or at least for the first batch.”

Ethel said “Shall we start by lighting the ovens?”

Mary said “Light one only today, then turn it down low, but check that the flame is there. I am anticipating that getting the oven right will be our challenge, though I think once we get used to the gas heat, we will find it very convenient. I propose to bake each of your batches separately with slightly different settings of the gas.”

By noon, the team had, in fact, made six batches. The first came out a little dry and pale. Many cooks would be happy with them, but Mary relegated them to use at Fortescue Road. The second, with a higher setting of the gas, was a little too coloured, though of good taste.

Ethel said “These are saleable.”

Mary responded “Yes. But not under our Treats name.”

Felix said “May I put a table in front and sell them as Factory Trials?”

“A dozen for thru’pence,” Mary said. “That’s half our Treats price, but we’ll still make a profit if you sell them.”

Felix had somehow found a folding table, which he set up outside with a cardboard sign

*Factory Trials – 3d / dozen*

He disposed of 10 dozen in 25 minutes and gave Mary the cash.

“Our first half crown revenue!” Ethel cheered. “And we’ve about 10 dozen that are good to sell at full price.”

Mary said “All right, let’s transfer the successful settings to a card. I realize we should have a board where we can pin such things, but for now I’ll put it on one of the marble slabs, which we’ll try out another day. I’d like this afternoon to do a much bigger batch to see if we can hold the quality.”

Felix said “The oven is 5 feet and a bit square and 18 inches high inside. The pans are 13 inches by 18, so ... er ... 12 at once on one level. But if you had metal racks you could get five times that. Three inches apart will allow 5 high, so 60 pans at once. Shall I measure and draw? I can use the cold oven to check measurements.”

“We get on average a dozen and a half per pan, so over a hundred dozen at once!” Mary exclaimed. “We’re going to need a salesman. And more



pans.”

\* \* \*

That evening, reporting on the successes of the day, Mary asked Cassandra if it made sense to ask Dan and Tom to consider making racks for the ovens to hold the flat shortbread pans.

“The 12 pans with a dozen and a half round shortbreads each – some sweet and some savoury – came out just fine with the settings and timings we’d worked out in the morning. That rate of production in one afternoon is what we’d do in a day. If we can use racks and the heat is still good in the oven, then our daily production from one oven would be ten times what we produce now, and two ovens 20 times.”

Cassandra said “That’s just the shortbreads though.”

“True. We’ve other things, and we did some extra work last week to build up some stock. But I’ll be trying other products over the next few days.”

“When I’m looking at cloth and comparing with your round shortbreads, I’ve wondered you don’t produce more rectangular ones. Would they not occupy more of the pan space?”

“Yes. Though too many and they don’t cook evenly. But I’d guess we can up the production by twenty to thirty percent if we were careful. More experiments needed.” Mary said, making a note. “But I realized if we get that high a production, we need to sell over a wider area or we’ll have too many.”

Abraham was present and asked “How long will they keep?”

“Quite a long time if they’re in an air-tight container. I’ll make a note to explore that possibility so we can build up stock if we can ensure they stay fresh. Yet more trials I think,” Mary sighed.

Abraham said “We’re waiting for the boiler to go in behind the north oven chimney. We could have a modest oven added behind the south oven for experiments and special products.”

“You mean in what we were calling the office area?” Mary asked.

“Yes. The chimney’s there, and gas pipes not far away. Would it make sense to have a way to be able to try out new products or make small batches of high-value ones?”

“Only if we can sell them,” Cassandra said. “I think, Abraham, that you and I should make some plans to visit likely merchants in appropriate towns. However, we’ll want some samples and a list of prices, including delivery, otherwise we’ll be in trouble.”

Mary said “Yes. We rather jumped into the factory before we realized just how high a production might be possible. Our demand is high at the moment relative to what we can produce, but we probably can flood our market.”

“We likely need to have distributors in different towns so we only do economical shipments, and do them in boxes that will properly protect the product,” Abraham said.

“Which towns would you think offer the best opportunity?” Cassandra asked.

“I would think along the coast here. The railway connects all the way from Portsmouth to Hastings quite well. We have a fairly good sense that the Treats do well in a town like Brighton, so I would think Eastbourne, Hastings and some of the smaller towns that cater to people taking a holiday. We know the big hotels have chefs, so they make their own delicacies. But the medium hotels and the grand houses will buy them. However, we probably should have local agents to make sure the right items get to the customers at the right time.”

“That, Abraham, is going to require us to find such agents, and I think we’d better start as soon as we can, first to work out our pricing for products as delivered to different locations and then to plan how we will seek agents who can conduct the sales.” Cassandra concluded.

Mary responded “I’ll work out our costs over the next week, though I’ll need your help to work out the transport costs, especially if we have to use the railway.”

\* \* \*

The next morning, Dan arrived at the factory with a square board made up of planks of poplar glued together about 18 inches on a side. He also brought a piece of slate of a similar size and some chalk. After confirming it was acceptable to do so, he fastened these on the wall between the two ovens and closest to the northern oven, with the wooden square above to which baking instructions could be pinned. The slate, with a small shelf for the chalk, was intended to record what was currently in the oven and the time it should come out. Indeed, one of the things Mary brought one day was a clock, which now was installed above the door to the office area that was between the two ovens.

Tom, Dan and Felix worked out a rough design for a baking rack that would be five trays high. Tom said “Angle iron an inch on a side for the horizontals and some flat iron for the verticals, bolted or riveted together

would work well. I don't think it'll be too heavy to lift in and out of the oven, though doing so when it's hot might be a bit challenging."

"What d'ya think it'll cost?" Dan asked.

"Why don't we see if we can get some of the iron and some nuts and bolts. We could try a rack two trays wide and five high but the full depth of the oven – four trays. If it works we can try extending it, but it may be that we use that size because we could have two of them and put trays between if there are angle irons projecting out one side of each."

Mary was present, so Tom asked "We think we can make a rack that is two pans wide, five high and four deep out of angle iron. That's fairly expensive. Materials might cost over a pound."

Mary hesitated "I'm not good with the monies. I wish Ca ... Mrs. Cohen were here. Well better go and find out. If it can be done for a pound or less, lets try it."

Dan said "Brougham had to cut angle iron for the roof trusses. It's a bit heavy for the racks, and the lengths might not be good, but there's a pile of the end cuttings out the back."

Tom, Dan and Felix went to look. Dan was right. There were lots of end cuttings. They would not be ideal, but could work for a test.

Tom said "Dan. Go over to Howards and see if you can get some iron bar between an eighth and a quarter thick, an inch to an inch and a half wide and 18 inches long. I'll need at least 8, preferably more. And thinner better than thicker, but at least an eighth. Mixed if necessary. Here's 5/-. Should be enough for that.

"When you come back, take them and the angle irons over to my workshop and tell Robert we need holes in the ends. You know where I think. In the angle iron in each part of the L. That'll be the hard work, probably drilling with the emery."

"I've not done that, but Dad talked about it."

"Well, here's the drawing. If I'm not there when you get to the workshop, have you and Robert mark the work with the scribe – it's got some sort of hard stone in the tip. And there's a pointed punch I made to make starting nicks for drillin'."

When Dan had gone, Felix asked "Could the rack be made out of tinsplate? If there were a long box with tabs punched out and folded down to hold the trays. It would be lighter, but unless we could take it apart, a bit bulkier."

Tom said "Yes! That'd work. And I can think of ways that it could be put together with pins – nails if you like. But it might not be strong enough. Anyway, we can try both ways. Why don't we try some drawings and work out what we might need. I'm thinking we don't necessarily make one that has quite the right dimensions if we can get some scrap to try out the idea."

Within an hour, Tom and Felix had some trial drawings. Felix returned to working with the women on experiments with different Treats. Mary and Janet were working alone as Ethel and Elizabeth continued production on Fortescue Road to satisfy existing custom, though it was becoming apparent that the gas oven was nicely controllable and results were, if not perfect, mostly acceptable. Even the seconds would sell at thru'pence or fourpence a unit rather than sixpence. Treats had a price list that used 6d as the standard price, but the number of Treats per unit package varied with the product.

Tom said "I'm off to see about some sheet metal and then go to the workshop to start work on the racks."

There were goodbyes yelled as Tom left and nearly bumped into Brougham who was coming to check on work. Tom told him what they were doing with the leftover iron.

"Had meant to sell that to Howard as odds and ends," Brougham said.

"You'll see the bits we set apart. The rest can go to Howard. Will half a crown see you right?" Tom asked.

"Save me moving it," Brougham replied and Tom gave him the coin and made a note in his book.

\* \* \*

After the conversations the previous evening, Cassandra had been quite anxious. In bed she lay in Abraham's arms and said "I fear we have not planned well. We have a factory that can produce prodigiously, but nowhere to dispose of the product profitably."

"But you had a similar situation when you came to Brighton with the houses. It was a matter of imagination and enterprise. But I agree we do need to act quickly. There was, however, no sense in trying to offer Treats when we could not deliver, and now there is a need for a place to deliver. But our knowledge that the ovens would work was imperfect. It seems that they are doing better than Mary anticipated."

"There is that. But what do we do now?"

"We will arise early in the morning and send messages to Maud and to Valerie – she is 16 now and knows the furnishings quite well. I think it is time she learned how to buy as well as sell. So Valerie will replace me at the auction we were going to.

Jeremiah can come to Fortescue Road and help Ethel with the Treats there and with cooking, errands or whatever is needed as he usually does. James McDowell is looking after Moses now. And he will, I think, be capable of doing other jobs. His face scares people, I think because they fear it could

happen to them. But he wants to work, I think, and it would be good for all if he finds tasks to suit him. At the least, he was a soldier, and can serve as security for Goldmans.”

Cassandra said “And what do you plan to do?”

“I will take some Treats from here – in suitable packages – and in one of our valises to protect them, and go to Eastbourne and see if I can find potential agents and/or customers. I will also try to ascertain the timing and costs for shipping goods there. We need to know our costs.”

“Make sure you keep a record of your expenses. You are not actually a shareholder.”

Abraham kissed her “In this, let me play the husband and claim my rights, even if I do not make any money from it directly.”

\* \* \*

Valerie got the message to meet Maud and go to the auction. Tony and Moonbeam were part of the team, since Maud anticipated there would be items. Tony now came into auctions and other sales and would pass along comments to Maud. Mostly these were observations that Maud had already made herself, but about a quarter were useful either to bid on or to avoid items.

Today, Valerie was present to learn. She had never been to an auction. However, she did point out a nice chaise-longe to Maud which had a beautifully upholstered seat, but one of the legs was broken and the frame had a crack.

Maud said “I don’t normally touch upholstered stuff. And there is a tear in the edge of the fabric.”

“I think we could put a ribbon all the way round the seat that would hide a repair. And the seat will, I think, be removable to do that.”

“What would it sell for in good condition?” Maud asked.

“Between £2 and 4.”

“Well. We’ll see if we can get it for under 10 bob. Preferably less.”

They got it for 4/-, and Tony delivered it that afternoon to Saultons, but waited while Vera looked at it and figured out how to remove the seat, which Tony then took home to Uptons so Rebecca and Valerie could work on the fabric. Tom, Vera or Robert would attend to the wooden parts. Before Tony left, Vera said “Properly fixed, and the right customer, we’ll get £5.” When the item sold, not long before Christmas, Vera was at Uptons and it went for £4 10s. A good return all round.

\* \* \*

Abraham took a train to Eastbourne and arrived about 10 o'clock. Too early might not find merchants available. Besides the valise with samples, he had a pack of business cards for the Treats. They fortunately did not list a person, as he was not technically employed or an investor by Treats.

For about three hours, Abraham walked the commercial streets and visited grocers who might seem to have the right kind of clientele. He also called on four modest but pleasant looking hotels.

His experiences could be summed up in two examples. The first was Ormsby's High Class Grocers.

Mr. Ormsby, on trying a Treat, called his wife into the shop to try one.

Mrs. Ormsby said "Ooh. Nice. We could probably sell these, but what'll be the price."

Abraham said "Those savoury shortbreads – and also the sweet ones – we aim to be retailed at sixpence a dozen. We're still working out the wholesale prices, as our factory is not quite complete, though we are now doing trials and they are going well."

"You'd 'ave to ship from London then?" Ormsby asked.

"No, our new factory – it's 100 feet long – is next to the London Road Viaduct in Brighton. We'd aim to ship in suitable containers by railway to here. And, I might add, we are looking for an agent-distributor to serve other clients here in Eastbourne."

Ormsby said "We'd probably like to 'ave a few of these on 'and for the fancier class of customer, but I can't see us selling lots. And there's just me and the wife and our assistant, so we've not the manpower to 'andle an agency."

Abraham, not wanting to waste time and energy, said "Should I take your address to let you know when we do have a distributor here?"

This got him a business card, but he suspected there would be only a small volume of sales.

Similarly, in the Monarch Hotel, the landlady – a rather fierce fiftyish woman – said "Very nice, but we pride ourselves on offering home-cooked food. And our clientele is largely couples who don't spend much time on morning coffee or afternoon tea. Or else families with children who would devour my profits if these were left around."

Abraham understood what was being said. However, as he was departing the woman said "You might try Mrs. Sifton down the street. Sells fancy confectionery."

Abraham yelled his thanks and walked towards this establishment, which was called *Siftons Specialties*. The window display had boxes of chocolates, tins of Huntley and Palmers biscuits, and some other fancy goods, along

with a few items that would serve to complement such items, such as a small bottle rack for wines.

The woman behind the counter was in her forties, Abraham reckoned, with a nice smile.

“Good morning, Madam. Do I address Mrs. Sifton?”

“You do, sir. What may I do for you?”

“I represent Treats for the Tongue, a Brighton firm making fancy edibles. I have some samples in this valise if you would like. We are just completing a factory by the London Road Viaduct that will increase our production capacity several times, and we are looking to find new clients beyond our current territory, and in particular seeking agents or distributors.”

“Well. Let me see some of the samples.”

“I actually urge you to try one or two. Thought I caution that they are generally good enough to perturb business judgement.”

Mrs. Sifton tried a shortbread. “Oh. This one is savoury, but delicious. I will take your warning to heart, Mr. ...”

“Abraham Cohen. It is actually my wife who is an investor in the factory. Here is a card for Treats, of which a Mrs. Yarrow is the principal. However, with the factory coming to completion, she is busy testing the new ovens, which are gas fired.”

“Very modern, but likely much more easily controlled than coal or other fuels.”

“That is her thinking also.”

A youth came into the shop and said “I completed the deliveries, mother. And Mr. Lawson paid me 14/6 that was owing and I gave him a receipt.”

“Ah. That’s a relief. I’m sure Mr. Cohen here will appreciate the anxieties when bills are overdue. Mr. Cohen, my son Arthur, who is rapidly becoming my business partner since my husband died 18 months ago.”

“My condolences to you both. Perhaps Arthur would like to try one of the Treats. The one you tried was savoury. In this box are some traditional sweet but not too sweet shortbreads.”

Arthur took one. “My, these are good.”

Abraham continued “As I said, the factory is just being finished – the builders are still about but we are trying out the ovens and other equipment and getting our new staff accustomed to our way of working. We will have more capacity than needed for our current Brighton custom by quite a margin, and I undertook to seek new custom and hopefully an agent or distributor here and possibly some other towns along the coast.”

“What do you charge for these?” Mrs. Sifton asked.

“Here is our Brighton price list, which you will note is also an order form. We hope to maintain the same retail prices universally, but I will be honest that we have not yet worked out the wholesale arrangements. That is largely

because we needed to discover the rate of production of the factory, which now appears to be even greater than we had expected. Of course, we want to maintain the quality.”

“Indeed. So you are not yet able to offer me a price?”

“Sadly, no. Today I am hoping to find who may be interested. We have so far only served the Brighton area, where we can handle deliveries either ourselves or with a companion firm Best Bonnet.”

“I’ve seen one of their carts, mother. And one of them rescued a young lady from the sea.”

“That would be our Tony Brown,” Abraham said. “In any event, we have been involved in several businesses over the years, and are well-aware our collaborators must make a decent return. Should you be interested, we would be happy to work with you to develop arrangements for mutual benefit.”

“You mentioned agent or distributor?” Mrs. Sifton said.

“Indeed. From our perspective, we would prefer to minimize the number of orders and shipments. Our thinking is that we would ship by the railway to a distributor, who would collect the goods and pass them along.”

“By straight wholesale, or by commission?”

“That clearly must depend on the particulars of the market and the agent-distributor. Straight purchase on a wholesale basis would carry more risk and should have a greater return. Truthfully, I do not usually participate in the Treats business, but with the press of detail surrounding the completion of the factory building and start of operations, I have stepped in.”

“You said your wife was the investor, but surely you would have control?”

“We married only a couple of years ago, and my wife has a separate estate for some of our fortune. My own business, which has been doing well also thankfully, is in furniture. And my wife is kept busy with a haberdashery.”

“Would that be Bartlett and Jones?”

“Indeed.”

“They maintain an excellent stock. And next door is the Emporium with such intriguing dresses.”

“Run by two friends of my wife from her childhood.”

“My word. An entrepreneurial lot.”

“But I think you have similar interests. This shop is very well appointed.”

“My knowledge, but Arthur’s energy. And I have a daughter of 15 too, but we allowed her a day off to go with friends, actually to Brighton.

“And I must confess, I have tried the Treats when I visited the Emporium one day. I wondered how I might get them in my shop.”

“Might I suggest that we exchange information and make some notes on what we would each hope to attain by a suitable agreement. I would expect that within a month, and likely beforehand, we can try to settle terms.”



“Arthur, Can you mind the shop? Mr. Cohen, do come in the back and we’ll write some things down.”

Mrs. Sifton was practical. Both she and Abraham wrote down notes on packaging, deficiencies, transmission of orders, general expectations of pricing, and so on. It appeared the Siftons had a hand cart to make deliveries, and Mrs. Sifton and her two children managed reasonably well. Abraham noted that the parlour into which he was escorted was clean, tidy and had good quality furnishings. While they were talking, he heard a steady traffic of custom in the shop. That was good.

Mrs. Sifton offered him a cup of tea, and he reciprocated by offering another Treat. He made sure she had a copy of the pricing and order form used in Brighton so she knew something of the range of products. There were some comments on both sides about products that had cream fillings or similarly limited freshness. Some of the Treats might have to be offered only near delivery days. When the tea arrived, it was put on a fine side table in Tunbridge Ware where Abraham could set his cup.

“I’m afraid that isn’t quite level, Mr. Cohen.”

“I had noticed, but it was impolite to comment. However, we have a young man who my wife rescued from the Workhouse who now, with his wife, restores furniture for me. It allows us a much healthier markup, even paying him well for the refurbishments. I believe he could level this.”

“Let me suggest this, Mr. Cohen. I will expect you to prepare a proposal and send it to me by post as soon as you can. Then I will arrange – preferably on a Sunday or a Wednesday or Saturday afternoon to come to see the factory, for it intrigues me how things might be manufactured, and I will bring along the table and your friend can tell me if it is fixable and how much that would cost.”

“Do you mind if I look underneath?” Abraham asked.

There were screws that attached the pedestal to the top. Abraham was fairly certain a fix was but a few minutes, but was not about to say so. Instead he commented “I believe it should be possible to level it from conversations I’ve had with Tom – Mr. Soulton. And I approve heartily of your suggested plan of action. Face to face will let us regulate any details. Let us hope for joint prosperity, Mrs. Sifton.”

“Indeed, Mr. Cohen.”

After he left *Siftons’ Specialties*, Abraham felt he should continue with his expedition, but could not bring his enthusiasm to a level to do so, since Mrs. Sifton seemed very likely as agent-distributor. Though it was only two o’clock, he went to the station and waited for a train back to Brighton.

\* \* \*

That same afternoon – Friday August 29 – Frieda was serving a well-dressed lady from Bognor Regis when Cassandra arrived with Catherine and Martha. Cassandra was going to spend a few minutes in consultation with Mr. Collier who now managed the haberdashery almost as well as she herself could, then she planned to have tea with Frieda to allow grandmother and granddaughter some time together. The baby was a joy to Frieda, to the extent Cassandra wondered if her own maternal instincts were not deficient. She loved her daughter dearly, but was not overwhelmed with feeling the way Frieda seemed to be.

After Cassandra had escorted Martha and the baby upstairs she returned to the main room of the Emporium. Frieda said “Mrs. Usher, let me introduce Mrs. Cassandra Cohen, an old family friend who runs the haberdashery next door among other businesses.”

“Good day, Mrs. Cohen. Tell me about your other businesses. I have a couple myself in Bognor.”

“I manage a pair of houses with a good class of tenants, and I’ve recently become a major investor in a factory.”

“A factory! What does it make?”

“We are just starting, but will be manufacturing the Treats of which there is a sample beside your teacup.”

“Really. How I wish we could get them in Bognor.”

“This very day my husband is exploring the possibility of an agent or distributor in Eastbourne. I believe Bognor will be on our list of potential markets. The factory trials suggest our production can be very much increased without harm to quality.”

“Let me give you my card. I run a modest hotel and we also do catering for events, such as meetings at the Town Hall and other venues. And I maintain a couple of hand carts and boys to do deliveries. The Treats might be a nice complement to other activities. As long as there’s decent profit of course.”

“Without profits, none of us can continue,” Cassandra rejoined, smiling.

\* \* \*

Dan got to Saultons’ workshop about half-past two with the angle iron and bar. Tom came in about five minutes after with Tony and Moonbeam with several sheets of thin metal on the cart. Tony had just returned to Uptons when Tom had sought him out to transport the metal. It was more awkward than heavy, or Tom would simply have carried it. Their arrival at Saultons was announced by Fuzzy and Jolly in a flurry of barks.

Tom said “We’ll try two versions of the oven frames then Mrs. Yarrow can decide what works best. I’ll suggest Robert and Dan mark the bars and angle iron, give them a good punch then try to drill them with the hard drill bits I’ve made.”

Robert said “We’ve had a couple of goes at drilling iron. Takes a lot of work. I’m wondering if it would make sense to take that old wheel we have left over from making Tony’s dolly and use it as a flywheel to turn the bit. It wouldn’t take much to build a frame with a top bar. Put a hole in the top bar down to the wheel and the bit under the wheel and let the weight of the wheel give the pressure but the frame’ll keep things straight.”

“Good thinkin’,” Tom said. “Go ahead. If you get stuck on anything, let me know.”

“Acshully already started to play around a few days ago for my own interest. Got the clamp for the bit set up and a rod for the wheel.”

“You could add a bunch of putty for extra weight, but make sure it’s balanced,” Tom said.

Tom asked Tony if he had a bit of time to help, since he needed someone to hold the sheets of metal while he drew markings on them. His plan was a simple square piece at the rear of the rack to hold the sides, and two straps of folded metal at the front to get the spacing right. He planned to cut 2 inch tabs into the "walls" spaced a few inches apart using an old chisel by placing the sheet metal on some soft wood and hitting the chisel with a mallet. The tabs every few inches would be folded down to support baking trays. Tom had learnt that he didn’t need fasteners but could fold the sheet metal to form channels into which sheet metal could be pushed and friction would hold things together. This would secure the back piece and the two spacers at the front. The spacers would also be positioned so they were at the level of the tabs and serve as supports for baking trays as well.

Tom put on some leather gloves. To Tony he said “Better put some gloves on too. Sheet metal can give you a nasty cut. I’m going to fold edges and hammer them to avoid sharp bits. May have to sandpaper as well.”

Within about an hour and a half, Tom’s rack was complete. He took a block of wood and a hammer to put the pieces together and called Robert and Dan to look.

“Nice,” said Dan. “And really simple. Pity it’s so bulky, even though I bet it don’t weigh much.”

“A hammer and a block of wood’ll take it apart. Here, I’ll show you.”

Tom tapped the front spacers off their perch on the walls, then tapped the rear square and everything fell on the ground with a clatter.

Tom said “Not sure that should be done too often. The metal gets weak after a bit. I suppose we could – maybe should – punch some holes for a few small nuts and bolts.

“How’re you two getting on with drillin’”

Robert said “The wheel works pretty well and makes a clean hole, but I think the bits get dull pretty fast. It’s slow work. We’ve been putting oil on the work, like you suggested, and it helps. But we’ll be a few more hours until all the holes are done.”

“We could try a dowel for the bit and emery as the cutting agent,” Tom suggested. “The holes would probably not be so regular. Maybe I’ll have to make and harden some more bits, but that takes time too.”

Dan said “Tell me what to do and I can be doing that. You and Tony can go back to the factory with the tin rack so Mrs. Yarrow can give it a try.”

\* \* \*

It was half past five when Tom and Tony got to the factory. Mary looked worn out, but was smiling.

Tom said “You look like you’ve had a busy day, Mrs. Yarrow.”

“Every batch today has been acceptable, and most were as good as any we normally deliver. We can sell all the production.”

Tom said “We’ve got one rack for you and Dan and Robert are working on another. The one Tony and I’ve brought is likely not very strong, but it may work.”

“Let’s set it up. The oven is still hot but then we’ll need to know if we can manage to put the racks in and out when they are hot.”

Tom quickly knocked the rack together. Mary was watching, and impressed with the simplicity. Tom said “I’ve not yet put any bolts in this, but we probably should. I can bring tools to do that ’ere, though.”

Two people could easily lift the rack into the oven and slide it to a suitable position. It was liftable by just one person, but awkward to handle. When hot, gloves would be needed, but it should present no difficulty.

Mary said “When we don’t need it, it can go on top of the oven or underneath.” The ovens were on a sturdy iron frame with about 2 feet beneath. Tom wondered what Brougham had used as a base for the brick floor he could see when he looked in the oven. There were bricks, the burners, the iron plate, then about 18 inches to the brick roof. How was that supported? Ah. There were metal straps and sheet metal.

Mary said “Let’s try putting pans in and taking them out with the baker’s peel.”

The peel was a long-handled paddle. She laid out ten pans and started laying them in the oven rack one by one, lifting them off the table and slotting them in.

“Not too bad. We’ll need practice to avoid the oven cooling too much. Now let’s try getting them out.”

This turned out to be not too difficult, but Tom asked “Would it ’elp to have a hook on the top of the peel that catches the edge of the pan so you can pull it back without having to risk the pan slipping off?”

Mary said “Tom, you never stop thinking. See what you can come up with and we’ll try it, but hopefully without ruining a peel if we have to take it off again.”

In a few days, Tom would deliver a peel with a hook like a gate latch. This would slip up and over the lip of a pan and the hook would then catch and the pan could be securely pulled back. Tom put a string to the hook that ran through an eyelet to the end of the handle and ended in a ring. Pulling on the string lifted the hook. Clever Tom. Even better, the hook device was set up so it was strapped around the handle of the peel and secured with a bolt, rather like a watch strap. Thus it was removable should the device eventually be considered a nuisance.

\* \* \*

On Saturday September 20, the principals of Fortescue Factory Limited and their spouses met at 4 o’clock to discuss progress, after which they planned to dine together.

Joshua said “I am anxious to hear from Cassandra and Mary. We have all seen the activities at the factory, in fact I have not been able to stay away for more than a few days at a time, but I’m sure there are many financial and other details we should know about.”

Cassandra answered “I wanted very much to make sure everyone knew where we stood on the matter of finances. Things have, of course, proved more expensive than initially proposed, though in most cases this is because we decided to have more or better features or materials or tools. The main message is that we will, I believe, sign off the factory from Mr. Brougham within a fortnight. The building is complete now apart from some painting, which should be done this week. We contracted with Mr. Brougham for £420, but have adjusted this to £445 in view of some changes we agreed. I have paid £220 so far to cover materials and items brought in pre-manufactured like the gas burners for the ovens. Joshua has provided the property and Mary her equipment, though a couple of items are still here in various Fortescue Road kitchens.”

Mary interrupted “Actually Elizabeth brought those over to the factory Friday evening. But they are not the main issue of finance.”

Cassandra continued “Of the capital, I am still holding £290 and Joshua £245, but I have a long list of oddments that add up to almost £70. There is also a new gas stove on order.

“The sundry expenses include, and I will itemize

- travel and expenses for Abraham to try to find agents,
- work by Tom, well, by Soultons since Robert has worked too, to build oven racks and supports for the marble work surfaces, some work tables and a new tool to extract the baking pans from the ovens
- materials for the above work, especially iron and sheet metal
- work by Dan on some details
- a wall clock to allow timing of the baking that Mary purchased
- transport of materials by Tony, that is, Best Bonnet
- aprons and work clothes, as well as protective gloves and holders, towels, cloths, etc.
- More pans and other kitchen equipment

“I have paid some of these out of pocket, and will reimburse myself. Everything is recorded, however, and open for inspection. Indeed, I welcome any of you, including our spouses, to peruse the records, as with so much going on it is likely there could be errors, though I believe they will be small. Moreover, in reading the records, one of you may have some ideas for the general improvement of our operations.

“The conclusion is that after paying Brougham and the other items, plus paying for a small gas stove Mary will mention, we will have a residual capital of £180.

“Mary, perhaps you should say something now about the trials and some minor income, then we will continue with discussion of next steps.”

“I think the first thing to say is that we have discovered that the new ovens have proved exceptional. With myself and four workers, using just one oven, we can produce at least four times what we were doing with myself and effectively three others in the multiple kitchens here on Fortescue Road. Felix and Janet are good workers. I’m glad Ethel found them. My feeling is that when we need to expand, we will want to hire two or possibly three more workers and start using the second oven. As Cassandra said, we plan to have a stove – also gas fired – in what we called the office area, though it needs a better name. It will be used to develop new products or make small-batch speciality items.”

Cassandra said “That stove will be approximately £45.”

Mary continued “On the positive side, we have managed to sell all our trial items, though some were discounted to half price due to imperfections. It took a couple of tries to get the gas settings and timing correct. We now have those written down and on a notice board by the ovens. Also a slate to

list current oven activity. I actually want Dan to make another set of board and slate for me so we know what is happening.

“We are currently only using one oven, and we have no stove top for preparing some items that are not baked, or for fillings or toppings to the Treats. We hope the new gas stove will arrive in the coming week and be installed, as for now we must still operate here.

“We also have an arrangement with Ralph Wixted, the baker. He heard we were putting in a gas oven, then there was a fall of bricks in the chimney of his oven, so he couldn’t bake. We’ve agreed £1 10s a week.

“We also have concluded trial agreements with Mrs. Sifton in Eastbourne and Mrs. Usher in Bognor Regis as agents and distributors. Mrs. Usher will also handle Chichester. We are hoping to conclude similar arrangements in Portsmouth and Hastings, and will be meeting with the people interested this Wednesday afternoon.”

“Early closing?” asked Joshua.

“Yes. They don’t like to miss trade unnecessarily. I don’t blame them.”

“Have we apportioned the different expenses to Treats and to the factory?” Joshua asked.

“I’ve made a preliminary assignment,” Cassandra said. “That is, in fact, the matter where I’d most like you, and indeed anyone here, to check what I’ve done. We’ve got our people trained to record everything, so I’m quite confident of the amounts, but less sure of where I’ve laid them to rest.”

Joshua said “We could be in a lot worse position, in that the ovens could have been faulty and so forth.”

Mary said “I’m now more bothered by the fact that a single failure causes a much bigger loss, though I am heartened that those items that came out imperfect were just that – imperfect – they were still saleable, though at a discount.”

“Did they still turn a profit?” Joshua queried.

“We’re selling shortbreads that are seconds at 3d or 4d a dozen rather than sixpence. The margin is much smaller, but my rough calculation from last year was that they cost us 2d a dozen to produce, probably less in the new ovens.”

“What further expenditure do we envisage?” Joshua asked.

“We need Tom to make us some zinc lined and quite well-sealed transport boxes to use to ship Treats to our distributors on the railway,” Abraham said. “Probably at least two such boxes per distributor, since they’ll likely not return them immediately, though we are discussing procedures. It may be that they will buy such boxes and we’ll label them appropriately. That’s if they want to hold on to them or use them locally.”

“Have we a design yet?” Joshua asked.

“We do. It even has rubber feet to cushion against shocks. That won’t stop all bumps, but we think it will reduce damages. And we plan to use some small cushions to stop the packages inside these boxes from shifting around if there are spaces. We have discussed with Mrs. Sifton who raised the matter how we should deal with broken or damaged Treats, and the plan is that they will be sold at a discount. In reporting damages, we must rather trust the agents, but we have set up a detailed chart to monitor such incidents. In fact, we are trying to do such monitoring of all our factory operations.”

“Abraham. You seem to be getting quite involved, but are not officially an investor or employee,” Rachel said.

“True, but my wife and daughter are owed prosperity to the extent I can supply it.”

“On that basis, I will undertake to read the accounts and ask questions,” Rachel said.

“I will very much appreciate it,” Cassandra said. “It is very important to me – I’m sure to all of us – that we have a great success.”

\* \* \*

Prior to this meeting about the factory, Cassandra had met with Captain and Mrs. Fraser on the evening of Tuesday September 9 to discuss their tenancy.

“Captain and Mrs. Fraser, come in.” They were meeting in the drawing room of Number 21 shortly after dinner.

Captain Fraser said “Good evening, Mrs. Cohen. We thought we’d better sort out our tenancy.”

“Yes. If you are leaving, I need to advertise.”

“Actually we’d like to stay, particularly if we can more or less continue the current arrangement.”

Cassandra said “That is £3 2s for house, coals, gas, water and food, but no linens or service. And Mrs. Fraser shares in the food preparation.”

“Yes,” said this lady, “But we are, as you know, tight to the limits of the pensions of my husband and James and Angus. We are thinking of opening a day school for young men and women for practical education for a modest fee. This would not interest the upper classes, but we think there are likely to be those of modest state who could afford a few shillings a week for their children to improve their reading, writing, arithmetic and knowledge of history, geography and current affairs. Would you object to that us of the main floor?”



“Some limit on the numbers to avoid dilapidation of the house might be appropriate.”

“I was a military officer, Mrs. Cohen. And McDowell and Sinclair my sergeants. There will be no indiscipline, but I do not believe learning can be imparted to an overly large group.”

“We also intend, if you do not object, to take our own furniture out of storage for the main floor.”

Cassandra answered “That should not be a problem, though we should probably put a tag discreetly on the items now present throughout the house to avoid later confusion. Then you may move things about as per your convenience.

“May I ask if you intend to continue participating in food preparation. On our side we will lose Mrs. Jones and Miss Yarrow to the factory, and Mr. Quigley is planning to remove to Upper Canada to a settlement where he believes some family may have escaped slavery.”

“That will leave only Mrs. Naismith with occasional help of Miss Murphy,” Mrs. Fraser said. “I was intending, if I could, to work more closely with the pupils we hope to enroll, but I was going to ask if Mr. McDowell might take a role in the kitchen. He was at one time a quartermaster, and also has, I understand, some knowledge of cookery.”

“Let me suggest, then, a rent of £3 per week inclusive of gas, coals, water and food supplies, with Mr. McDowell for 5 hours per day to assist in the kitchen. And might I propose this for the months October through December 1856, with a review on or before December 15.”

“I think we can manage that,” Mrs. Fraser said. Cassandra noticed it was Mrs. Fraser who spoke.

\* \* \*

The remainder of 1856 was busy for all our characters. The Frasers managed to get ten subscribers. The reward was small but steady. James McDowell knew basic cooking, but soon acquired a finer sense of what could be prepared. As others before him, he found the kitchen of 21 Fortescue Road had a very positive effect on his status and morale. On top of this, each day he spent some time with Moses. He and Dan found some ways to communicate, often with drawings, and without telling others they began to find materials and old parts to build a light two-wheeled gig that Moses could pull and in which Angus Sinclair could gain a way to get about.

James was paid essentially pocket money by the Frasers, though he gave them his small pension. However, they did look after him, and Angela Fraser

would repair his clothes or instruct him to buy something new, handing him a coin or two for the purpose.

Joshua also gave him some coin for exercising and looking after Moses. This transaction was almost always silent, as Joshua had particular difficulty in understanding James' slurred and awkward speech.

However, in late November, James wrote on his notepad "Can you come into the yard to see something?"

Calling Rachel to mind the shop, Joshua followed James to the yard where Moses was harnessed to the new gig, in which Dan was seated as driver.

Dan said "What do you think of this gig we made for Moses, Mr. Goldman?"

"Nice. Much lighter than the cart. But what do you intend by it?"

"James would like to take his friend Angus out a bit. With one leg, 'e ain't so mobile."

"I've no objections, as long as Moses is not over-tired. Where did you get the gig?"

"Made it out of all sorts of bits and pieces. Total cost 4 shillings, 7 pence ha'penny and a lot o' work."

"Well. Good for you both. When – hopefully a long time from now – Moses is no longer able to serve, you will make a nice profit."

\* \* \*

At approximately that same time, Tony had come to see Henry Mortimer, having received a message via Maud that he had some information.

"Tony. We have received a judgement from the diocesan court in Chichester, and they have approved our petition with some minor caveats."

"I've seen the word *caveat*, but I'm having to guess what it means."

"It's a notice of a specific condition or limitation. In this case – you are at liberty to read it, though the language is ponderous – the decision is that Dwyer and I are the trustees and we must render you an accounting each year as well as when we dissolve the trusteeship because you take the inheritance or else we must find an alternative recipient because you refuse it."

"Mr. Turcotte advised me to take the inheritance."

"Oh. You consulted him?"

"Not as such. 'e said to meet 'im on the Promenade or tell 'im where I would be if I wanted to talk. Actually just the once so far, but he told me I should take the money."

“He’s good that way. You don’t have to pay his fees, which are quite steep, but nonetheless fair.”

“So what were the limitations?”

“Well, they’re making us report to you annually, which is likely because they want to ensure transparency in what we do. Some solicitors would take it as a slight, but with all the machinations of your great-uncle, I think the court is concerned that you should know what is going on.”

“Was there anything else?”

“Well, the court also gave us permission to make payments for specific benefits you may request as long as we, the trustees, are satisfied that the benefits are long term and not trivial.”

“What would be examples of such benefits?”

“You might want to undertake some schooling or education. Or possibly you might want some particular clothing or equipment, or books.”

“How would I get such benefits?”

“Typically you write Dwyer and I a letter saying what you want and why, with an explanation of costs and the benefits expected. Given how you and I know each other, we can work out the wording to avoid mistakes.”

“Do we know how much could be paid?”

“Not over £100 per annum is specified. That is still quite generous.”

“It is,” Tony said, his thoughts clearly far away.

\* \* \*

The Christmas of 1856 marked a point of inflection in the paths of our characters.

Fortescue Factory Limited never did need the last £180 of capital. Cassandra and Joshua settled the imbalance so that each still was obligated to supply £90 on demand if the company should require it. However, that never happened, for the sales of Treats were going well by the end of October already. In the Christmas period, Mary was using both ovens with two racks in each. The small stove had arrived, allowing various special items to be prepared, as well as some of the materials that needed heating in a pot rather than in an oven.

In mid-November, some rearrangement of the equipment and activities took place. It had been discovered that the first arrangement – seemingly sensible at the time – led to people getting in each other’s way.

There were, of course, some minor setbacks. One day the gas was shut off because of a house fire close to the gas supply pipe some streets upstream of the factory. A whole oven’s worth of Treats had to be severely discounted, and production rescheduled for the night, with overtime bonuses.

One day a goods agent put one of the transport boxes close to the edge of the door, then in dragging a sack of something heavy let his derriere push the box off the waggon onto the platform, damaging the box and most of the contents. A claim for the damage was paid, since there were witnesses to the smash, and the Treats boxes were brightly labelled to serve as advertising, but the more annoying disruption of orders was a useful warning. After this, Mary and Ethel worked out how they could stockpile some of the more long-lasting Treats in boxes similar to the transport ones, but actually like cupboards. Tom made these. The trick was to cycle the stock to avoid shipping stale goods but still have a reserve on hand for making up deficiencies caused by disasters.

\* \* \*

The very busy September 29, 1856, had seen a quiet transaction where Vera Souton stopped by 21 Fortescue Road quite early in the morning by prior arrangement to deliver 12 £5 notes to Cassandra.

Passing Vera a receipt, Cassandra said “That’s two done. Three more and you own the property.”

“I hope so. I could pay more now, but we’ll keep the extra as working capital. Tom has some ideas. So do I.”

“Just some?” Cassandra laughed, and so did Vera.

\* \* \*

On December 21, Tony and Moonbeam went to St. Nicholas church at the request of Rev. Wagner to participate in a nativity scene. Some of the church women had made Tony a costume that was thought to resemble that which might have been worn by a donkeyman of the time of Christ. At least the robe was long enough that boots were hidden by it, for sandals would have been unpleasantly cold.

The display lasted about twenty minutes, then the participants and observers retired to a nearby hall for tea and refreshments. Moonbeam, of course, was tied up outside, and Tony stayed with her as children could be overly enthusiastic about petting, and donkeys, when annoyed, can bite. While Tony thought he had missed the refreshments, Ethel came out with a plate generously laden and a mug of tea.

“Can’t ’ave you missing the food after you brought Moonbeam,” she said. “And a Merry Christmas to you both, though we’ll probably see you sometime.”

Someone had thought of an apple and some carrots for Moonbeam. Tony rationed them, as well as gently controlling the petting by children. Still, they were the centre of attention.

“Good day and Merry Christmas to you, Mr. Brown.” There was Timothy Lester with a woman and child. “This is Maggie and our boy Tom.”

“A Merry Christmas to you all. I assume you got my note about the wills.”

“Yes. It’s a pity that we can’t print daguerrotype images. Your story ain’t goin’ to have much interest otherwise. And tellin’ folk about inheritances only attracts the vultures.”

“You’ve held to your bargain with me. I’ll try to let you know if I see any stories on my rounds.”

“I’ll appreciate that. Never hurts to get a lead on things.”

The crowd thinned and Adeline came out of the hall.

“Shall I walk with you back to Uptons, Tony?”

“I would welcome it, Adeline.”

As they walked, Adeline asked “Have you given much thought to your inheritance?”

“I have indeed. Mr. Mortimer – who I’m now to call Henry but still have difficulty so doing – has said I may request funds now for specific benefits. I thought I should perhaps suggest some monies for modest travels to learn about other places.”

“That seems reasonable, and likely to be acceptable as long as your manner of so doing is not extravagant. Have you thought where?”

“I’ve never been anywhere much, as you know. It would interest me to see London, and I’ve read of Yorkshire in the novels by the Brontë sisters. And Wordsworth lived in the Lake District.”

“All quite good choices, I believe.”

“Would you like to accompany me, Adeline. I feel that I would gain more by sharing.”

“I would love that. But can it be afforded? Or rather argued as sensible expense?”

“I don’t plan to toss coin about. And I though we could say you were my great-aunt and thereby share accommodations.”

“That would please me greatly.”

“Poor old Moonbeam. I can’t really take you with us on the train, and the places we have talked about are too far to expect you to walk.”

“You still talk to her?” Adeline asked.

“Of course. She listens and her advice is always perfect.”

\* \* \*

At this juncture – the end of 1856 – we will leave Cassandra and her friends for now. Much has been accomplished, but more is awaited, though there are months and years before processes already in motion will complete.