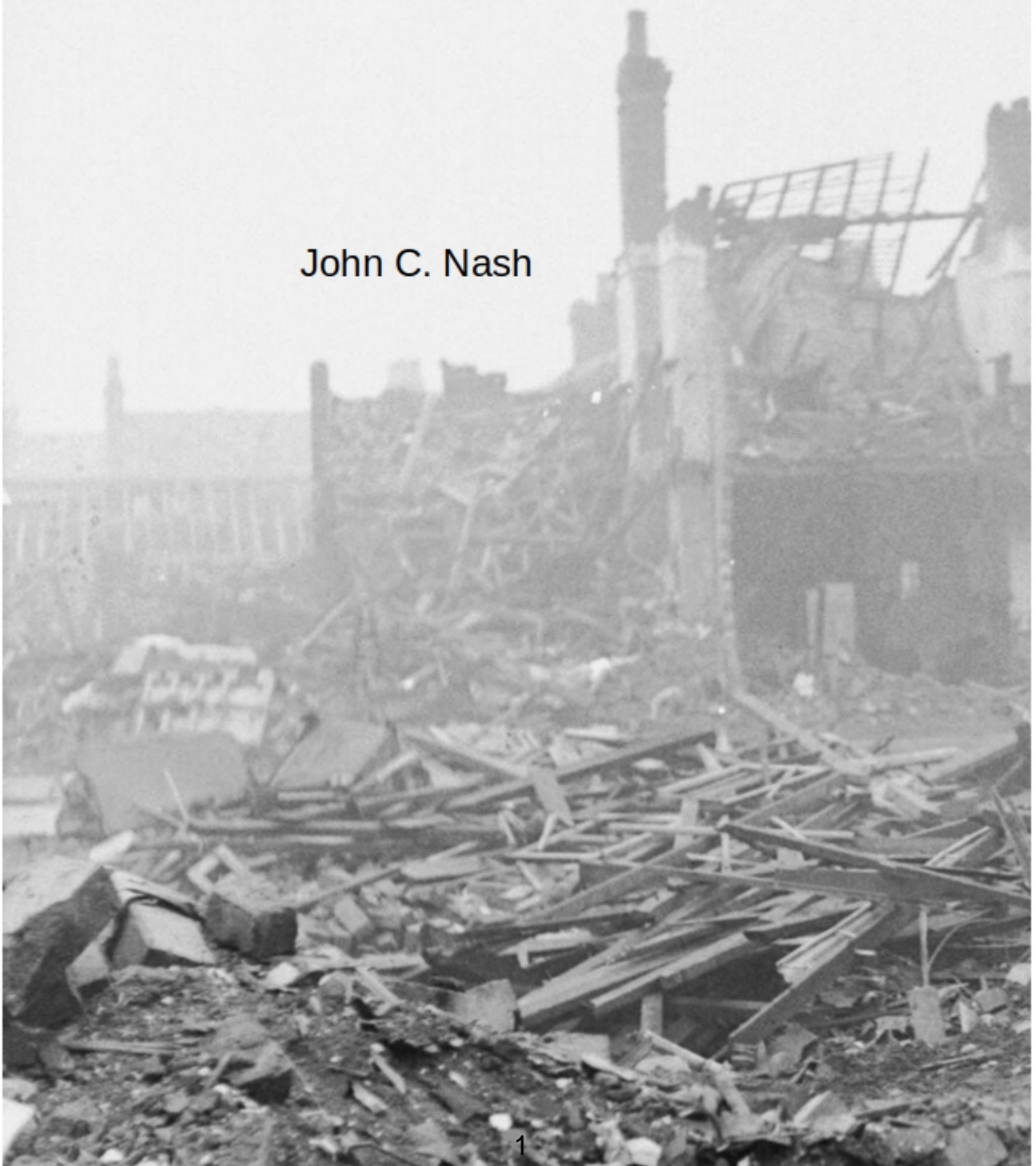


Leftovers

John C. Nash



Leftovers

John C. Nash

Copyright ©2021 John C. Nash
nashjc @ ncf.ca
18 Spyglass Ridge
Ottawa, ON K2S 1R6
Canada

The cover image is a cropped portion from
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Birmingham_Blitz_D_4126.jpg
which is in the public domain.

This is an authorised free edition from www.obooko.com

Although you do not have to pay for this book, the author's intellectual property rights remain fully protected by international Copyright laws. You are licensed to use this digital copy strictly for your personal enjoyment only. This edition must not be hosted or redistributed on other websites without the author's written permission nor offered for sale in any form. If you paid for this free edition, or to gain access to it, we suggest you demand a refund and report the transaction to the author and Obooko.

Feasts, famines, wars, parties – they all leave leftovers. Mostly rubbish, of course. But some of the leftovers are people. Damaged, fragile people who missed dying but aren't sure how to go on living.

Sometimes, however, leftovers can be made into something special, something better than new.

Preamble

Leftovers is a work of fiction. The initial text was written in early 2022.

Some people named were real, but except for publicly recorded actions, their role in this story is fictitious. For example, there was a Father Walsh at a Catholic parish in Bitterne, not Woolston. A Mr. Clitheroe, much as described, was the headmaster of St. Patrick's School in the early 1950s. There was also a Mr. Newton and a Mrs. Clements whose names I remember. Some descriptions for 1946 have been drawn from childhood recollections that were registered 7-10 years later.

In some cases addresses are real, but not the buildings at those addresses, or I have invented a street, such as the 9th Street NW in Calgary. I used to live on 9a Street, but at that level there is no 9th.

However, if there are historical details about the events on which my fiction is built that make some of the narrative impossible or implausible, I would be delighted to learn about them.

I am extremely grateful for the thorough edit of this work by Leah Levert whose comments have, I believe, substantially improved the work. Her observations have led to the glossary that follows this preamble. Leah can be contacted via leahsmlevert_at_hotmail.com

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, 2022

Glossary: Some notes on 1940s English jargon and usage

Thanks to Leah Levert for pointing out that some of the colloquial expressions used by my characters are likely to be unfamiliar to contemporary readers. Below are some explanations, as far as possible in alphabetic order.

17/6 = seventeen shillings and sixpence. Read “seventeen and six”.

ARP = literally “Air Raid Precautions”. The people were referred to as Air Raid Wardens, and were under the administration of local councils. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_Raid_Precautions

council house = See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_house. Living accommodation, in the time of this book mainly houses, built under the auspices of the Housing Act of 1919 and generally administered by the local municipal authority or “council”.

demob = demobilized, that is, discharged from military service.

DP = displaced person, that is, a refugee or stateless person. Many were from Eastern Europe where the tide of war caused many boundary changes. Many were also Jewish. Estimates range from 11 to 20 million in the European theatre.

POW = Prisoner Of War

seconded = assigned to work elsewhere

V-1 and **V-2** – German vengeance weapons. The V-1 was a pulse-jet pilotless airplane and essentially the first cruise missile, but unguided, while the V-2 was a true rocket powered, supersonic ballistic (unguided) missile. See Wikipedia or other sources for more details. YouTube has videos of both devices, which carried approximately 1-ton warheads.

WC = toilet. More recently, the colloquial expression in England would be “loo”, but in the 40s “WC” or “lavatory” were more common. “Toilet” was also used, but somehow considered less polite than “lavatory”.

I returned to Southampton on February 7, 1946. Cardington dispersal center tossed me out with my demob clothes in the morning and I arrived late in the afternoon. I'd left the town two years before, having been seconded from Supermarine to work on logistics for the RAF. They gave me the rank of Flight Lieutenant, though I hardly ever was on an aeroplane.

Southampton was pretty banged up, though from the train it didn't look any worse than it had two years before. Except, of course, I'd nobody to welcome me.

My old job at Supermarine was waiting for me. Well, it would be different now that the War was over. Labour was in power, and the Bank of England had just been nationalized not a fortnight previously. My age – I'll be 41 in April – and my job bumped up my demobilization. Supermarine had written to say they expected me, and I'd replied asking about accommodation. Somehow the fact that the house my wife and I had had in Bitterne was now apparently a crater had been forgotten or overlooked. I didn't even know where Agnes, my wife, and Margaret, our 15-year-old daughter – she'd now be 17 – were buried. I'd been in Normandy when one of the only two V-1's to hit Southampton destroyed my house. And my life.

The last letter from Supermarine reached me ten days ago. It told me that they had arranged for me to board with a Mrs. Crighton in Woolston. Well, that would mean I could walk to work. I used to cycle from Bitterne. Not a great distance, though the climb up Upper Deacon Road took a bit of effort. Or a dismount and push.

I was somewhat familiar with Woolston, but Radstock Road was not a place I knew. However, the letter from Miss Helen Shoreham of Supermarine said it was not far from Sholing railway station, and that is where I disembarked from the local train I'd picked up at Southampton Central.

I found the house at the address in the letter. In the fading daylight I could see the bay window in the front was blocked with a mixture of bits and pieces of wood and corrugated iron. The upstairs window had one pane glass and the other wood or something approximating wood. Bomb damage, probably from whatever hit where there was a crater across and

down the road. I knocked on the door, using the heavy knocker in the middle of the door. After a few seconds I heard footsteps, the turning of the Yale lock, and the door opened.

“Hello, Mrs. Crighton?”

The woman who had opened the door nodded. I continued “I’m Edward Newman. I believe you are expecting me.”

“Yes. Come in please.”

There was a narrow hallway and a staircase. A very dim light bulb tried to prevent serious accidents. The light was so poor I could not make out Mrs. Crighton’s features.

“You’d better follow me upstairs to your room, then we can sort out arrangements,” she said, turning and mounting the stairs, which had an almost threadbare runner.

The stairs took a turn to the left at the top and I heard the click of a light switch and a weak beam came from inside a room there. The house had two bedrooms up here it seemed, with a toilet and bathroom.

“This will be your room. I’m afraid it isn’t very welcoming. It was my daughter’s room, but I couldn’t bear to see her things after well, that’s really not your concern.”

“I’m sorry. I understand losing a child.”

“Well. Yes. Most of us have lost someone. It’s still difficult, isn’t it?”

“Yes. The emptiness is always there.”

For some seconds we both just stood in the room awkwardly.

“Well, I’d better let you get sorted. Come down when you’re ready, and we’ll discuss things. I assume you brought your ration book. I’ll need that so I can try to put some food on the table.”

“I’ll come down in a few minutes. Just want to use the ... lavatory.”

Mrs. Crighton stepped by me without comment and went down the stairs. I’d have to be careful in the night. The stairway was opposite my door. The toilet door was adjacent and the bathroom door at right angles to that in the stub hallway. To the right was another door. No doubt Mrs. Crighton’s room.

There was a single bed, a small table with a simple chair, and a frame hanger with a couple of wire coat hangers on it. No wardrobe or anything with drawers. Well, I’d find or make something. Light to read would be a problem. I looked but did not see an outlet. I’d have to see about getting a stronger bulb or an extension I could plug into the light socket. Or else a candle! At least in winter. There was a window to the rear of the house, and I noticed the curtains move a bit as I heard some wind outside.

Well, it was a place to put my head. There was a fireplace on the common wall with the other room – no doubt it had one too – that had cardboard in the opening. It would be cold in here, but fuel was scarce. I noticed the bed had a quite decent eiderdown, for which I no doubt would be thankful.

I used the toilet then washed my hands and face. The face in the small mirror looking back at me was older and greyer than it should be, but, if I was honest, younger than I felt. I opened the top of my kit bag – it wasn’t all that full – and pulled out a shirt and cuffs and collars. There was a tobacco tin for my collar studs. Better not lose them. I took out the ditty bag with my other shoes and put them under the bed. My suitcase had underwear and pyjamas. I set it on the floor next to the table and opened the top. Not a lot of stuff for four decades of life.

* * *

I went downstairs and was confronted with two doors. Guessing – correctly – that the rear one was where I would find Mrs. Crighton, I knocked and went in. The room was a reasonably large kitchen and general-purpose room. A boiler was in the position directly under the fireplace in my room, and it was clearly in use, giving the room a much cosier feeling than the rest of the house. There were two modest wing-back chairs in the corner beyond

the boiler, rather ill-fitted in the corner but obviously there between the boiler and the stove for comfort. The gas stove was nearer the other corner, with a counter beside it across the rear wall with a sink under the window. A table and two chairs were just inside the door on the wall nearest the door to the right, with a wireless on the table. The curtained window obviously looked out to the rear, with a door to its right that was bolted top and bottom.

“Would you like a cup of tea, Mr. Newman?”

“Yes please. With milk if you have it, but I gave up sugar in ’41.”

“Didn’t we all,” was the rather resigned comment in reply. But the tea was steeping on the table.

“Thank you,” I said as Mrs. Crighton handed me my cup. It was difficult to judge her age in the dim light from what was probably a 40 watt bulb. “Shall we try to work out the details of my room and board?”

“Yes, I suppose we’d better. It’s all new to me.”

“Do I take it that you had this house with your family?”

“Yes. It’s a council house that I had with my husband and daughter.”

“Both lost in the War?”

“Jeremy was on HMS Hood. Jenny and I were here, and we survived the blitzing we got. But you’re with Supermarine, so you probably know about that.”

“I was here until late 1943 when the RAF took me to manage aircraft parts and logistics. That was what I did – maybe will still do – for Supermarine. We had a house in Bitterne. A V-1 got it in July ’44. My wife Agnes and daughter Margaret, who we called Peggy, were both there. I’ve still to find out where they’re buried and what, if anything, I can recover of the house or land. We were fortunate enough to own it.”

“It seems you and I are a pair – an unmatched pair of leftovers,” Mrs. Crighton said with a great tiredness. “Jenny was killed in a stupid road accident last May when an American dispatch rider came down the wrong side of the road. Just two days before the War ended.” The bitterness in her voice was palpable.

“You have no other family here?”

“I was raised in an orphanage, and Jeremy was a late only child.”

“I’ve an older brother – ten years older in fact – in Calgary in Canada. My parents died just before the War. Agnes’ family is up North in Manchester. A sister and her husband. Her parents died during, but not directly of, the War. Your label for us is sadly appropriate.”

I realized that while in Warmwell waiting to be demobbed, I’d managed to “liberate” some Rich Tea biscuits. Now seemed appropriate to share them. I excused myself and went to get the tin in which I had them. At the same time, I got my ration book. Coming back down, I put these on the table and sat down, saying,

“Here’s my ration book. And I managed to acquire these a week ago. Perhaps they’ll help to get us off to a good start.”

“Thank you. It’s kind” Mrs. Crighton was crying. I saw now she was somewhere in her late thirties, but looked older with the sadness that seemed to be a miasma around her. She was wearing a cardigan and a tweed skirt, some very heavy lisle stockings and plain shoes. An apron was around her waist.

“My apologies. I don’t want you to cry.”

“Sorry. It’s my fault. Kindness makes it harder, but I do appreciate the biscuits.” She had a handkerchief in the pocket of the apron and dried her eyes. “Now I gather you want room and board. Well breakfast and tea. Will you get dinner at Supermarine?”

“I used to eat dinner at the canteen. Well, before the War I’d cycle home to Bitterne and Agnes would have a hot dinner ready. But I think now that the canteen will be better, and I believe it doesn’t chew into the rations.”

“You may have to give them some points. I don’t know. I worked in a small engineering shop making pieces for Thorneycrofts until a few weeks ago, when the men started to come back. Now I’ve just Jeremy’s pension, the miserable pound a week and taxed at 50% because they say it’s “unearned”, and the Council said one person in this house wasn’t right and wanted me out. A neighbour said I should get a lodger, so here we are.”

“We’re both novices then,” I said.

“As far as I can tell, I should charge something like a pound a week for rent and the two meals. But they said that baths and laundry and heat would be extra.”

I knew I’d be earning over 15 pounds a week – that was my wage before I left and there was no reason to suspect less. I said “I like a bath, and I know I’m going to want to put a better light in my room so I can read. And I hate to fuss about this and that and the other thing. Would it be easier to say 30 shillings all in? And if you keep a good record of your expenses, you can let me know if you are out of pocket. Also, if you think of some treat that will cost a bit more, I’d rather you asked and we had something nice, that is, if it’s available.”

Mrs. Crighton looked confused. There was a fairly long silence, then she said “That would be very nice. Though I’ll be so embarrassed to ask.”

“Have you got an old jam jar or teacup without a handle?”

“I think so. Was going to throw it out, but thought it might be useful.” She rummaged under the sink and brought out a floral pattern cup with the handle broken off.

“Put it on the shelf there and I’ll suggest we each put in a shilling a week for treats, but you’ll be in charge of spending it.”

Mrs. Crighton looked at me quizzically, then said “All right. We’ll give it a try for a month and see how we get on.”

I took out my wallet and took out a pound note and a ten shilling note and gave them to her. I said “When you get a chance, get a small notebook and we’ll use it as the rent book. It can live here on the table if you like.”

“I should have already thought of that.”

“When do you prefer we have meals?” I asked.

“I presume that you want your breakfast in time to get to the factory by a quarter past eight,” she replied. I nodded. She continued “I’ve no great preference for time for tea. Jeremy just had a cup of tea when he came in from work – that was before he joined the Navy in 1935 – then we’d have a sort of supper at 7 or 7:30.”

“Would you mind if we did that?” I said. “It would allow me some flexibility at work or else if I want a pint on the way home.”

“What about if you have someone to meet in the evening?” Mrs. Crighton asked.

“Perhaps we can find a slate and some chalk and set it here on the table so we can leave a message for each other if we’ve no chance to arrange things. Truthfully, I’m new to this. I went from home life to the RAF, and the latter has been a series of changes. I’ve not been in one place for longer than three weeks in more than two years.”

“What about tonight? I’ve a couple of sausages each and some potatoes and cabbage. They’ll take me the better part of an hour unless I rush.”

“No need to rush. It’s about five now. Why don’t we plan for seven? I’d like to take a walk and familiarize myself with the neighbourhood. Oh. Will I have a key, or will you be here?”

“I should have remembered. It’s here by the clock. I’m sorry to be so disorganized Mr. Newman. You seem a nice man, and I appreciate your

patience with me.”

As I put the key on my keychain, I said “Let’s hope we get along well, Mrs. Crighton. Why don’t you put my biscuit tin somewhere obvious and we’ll fill it when we can from the teacup money?”

In putting the key on the keychain, I realized that there were two keys on it that likely were no use at all. One was for my house, now gone. The other was for a small metal box that had some mementos in it. Likely also gone.

Mrs. Crighton said, “Yes. I’ll do that. Thank you. Rich Tea, by the way, are a particular favourite of mine. I’ve not had one since well, a long time.”

* * *

My raincoat – my only coat now that I’d had to hand in my greatcoat on demobilization – was upstairs. As I exited the kitchen, which is what I came to always call it, I noticed some hooks on the wall of the hallway, as well as an umbrella stand. I used to have an umbrella. Used to.

I got my coat, hat and scarf, and made sure my gloves were in the pocket. Touching my pocket to ensure I had my key, I left the house and turned down towards the Itchen. I might as well figure out my route for tomorrow, and hopefully find a pub for a drink.

The air was misty and the few street lights still working made cones of dim light. My footsteps rang strangely in the darkness. I got to Manor Road and turned left. After a hundred yards or so the skeleton of St. Patrick’s Church loomed out of the night. I walked round the corner to the left and found the front of the church. It had been gutted by an incendiary bomb early in the War. I expected, and found, a notice saying that masses were in the School next door. There was one at 9 in the morning on Sundays. Agnes had been a Catholic. I wasn’t. Now I found less reason to believe than before, but I thought it might be helpful to at least sit in a pew of a Sunday morning. It would pass an empty time. And possibly someone in the church would know where Agnes and Margaret had been placed.

I turned round and headed toward the Chain Bridge. The Itchen works were just to the right of the ferry that pulled itself across the river on chains. I could get here in less than 10 minutes in a hurry or 15 at a gentler walk from Radstock Road.

Having satisfied myself of this, I walked casually back to the church. Well, to the Cricketers' Arms which was opposite. I went into the smoky bar and ordered a pint of bitter, then found a seat near a corner.

I'd just taken a good swig of my drink when a voice on my left said "Ted. Ted Newman. Heard you were coming back."

I turned and responded "Charlie. It's good to see a familiar face. I just got demobbed today."

"Sorry to hear about Agnes and your daughter, Ted. And the house too, of course, but that's just bricks and mortar."

"Thanks, Charlie. It'll take me a while to get used to, I'm afraid. And the last couple of years have been so frantic that I've not had time to think about things much. I'm going to have to watch myself."

"Where're you staying?" Charlie asked. He was about 60, and had been one of the army of quietly competent people who "got things done" for me, finding sources of materials or services or places or transport when nobody else could.

"I'm lodging with a Mrs. Crighton at 161 Radstock Road."

"Ah. Then we'll see you here, I think. Probably not too nice lodging. All grab the money and feed you rubbish."

"Perhaps. She's new to the role of landlady. Lost her husband on the Hood, and her daughter to a road accident."

"Oh. I heard about that. Stupid American dispatch rider on a motorbike. The girl was riding her bicycle to bring home the shopping and he went to the right-hand side and straight into her. Right before VE Day."

“Yes. Mrs. Crighton said.”

“Well, if she’s new to being a landlady, she may be all right. If not, let me know, and we’ll see what can be arranged, but things are pretty awkward now for accommodation. You could say Gerry did a lot of slum clearance. Mind you. He got a lot of the good stuff too.”

We chatted a bit about different people we knew and what might be going on at the works. I’d find out more in the morning. Looking at my watch, I saw it was 6:30, so I excused myself and walked back to my digs.

* * *

Supper wasn’t much to write home about – but then I didn’t have a home to write to. Still, from what I read in the papers, there was precious little available. In the Forces we did all right, but in the winter of ’42-43 I remember Agnes crying because she couldn’t feed us a decent meal. And apparently now there was even less available than during the War. I was determined not to complain. Mrs. Crighton had had enough misery.

There was a rice pudding. Not terribly sweet, but all right. I made sure to express my gratitude.

“Mr. Newman. I’m not sure how it might work, but I’m willing to suggest that if you want to read or listen to the wireless of an evening, you could do so here in the kitchen. It’ll be cold upstairs. I can’t afford much coal, besides it being rationed, and those upstairs fireplaces simply send the heat up into the sky, so we blocked them off.”

“That would be much appreciated, Mrs. Crighton. I’ll try to keep out from underfoot. By the way, I’m quite good with my hands. If there’s anything needs fixing, I’ll be happy to give it a try.”

“There probably are. Perhaps on Saturday morning I can show you where I keep Jeremy’s tools. Somehow I still think of them as his.”

“Of course.” Who was I to destroy a way of remembering? I needed to find some of my own.

I had a couple of newspapers, and read them for the next hour. Mrs. Crighton, without asking, made another pot of tea and poured me one, then turned on the wireless as the BBC Nine O'Clock News was soon to start.

After Alvar Liddell finished, I said "Can you use old newspaper?"

"Yes. I keep some in the box there beside the coal scuttle. Just put papers there when you're done with them. If there's more than I need, I'll find a use for them. Don't worry."

"It's been a long day for me, so I'll turn in."

"Is porridge all right for breakfast. We only get an egg every fortnight or so, and I'm not much of a fan of the powdered kind."

"That'll be fine. Thank you, Mrs. Crighton."

"Oh, I should tell you that I leave the hot water upstairs off except when it's bath night, so do let me know. And there's a jug here for you to use for shaving water."

"Thank you, Mrs. Crighton. Can I ask which night you'd prefer for baths?"

"Oh. I'd not thought. On my own, I just pull the curtains and wash here in the kitchen. Doesn't seem worth going to the fuss of turning on the tap and stoking the fire up. What would you prefer?"

"Shall we aim for Sunday night and see how that works?"

"All right. That suits me too. I hope the tap isn't seized."

"We'll sort it out. Good night, Mrs. Crighton."

* * *

The next morning, I was up at half-past six so I could be sure I was presentable. I didn't have much in the way of clothing except my demob suit. I'd got a few coupons for the points with my release, but not nearly enough for much clothing. I'd have to look for second hand. Probably dead

men's clothing. Hmm. Maybe Mr. Crighton was about my size. A delicate conversation, but perhaps asking where to get second-hand clothing might elicit a response.

The porridge was, unfortunately, unadorned. I'll have to find a way to liven it up. Sugar was not likely to be available. Possibly some of the Nestle's condensed milk. It needed points, or else a big premium on the black market. We'd see. Maybe some jam. Similar issues.

I got to Supermarine at 8 o' clock and waited in Mr. Gooch's ante-room. Miss Shoreham came in at five past eight and we introduced ourselves. She was a tidy, plain woman of perhaps 35. All business but not unfriendly.

Leonard Gooch had been company works engineer at the outbreak of the War. He'd managed the dispersal of the factory operations in reaction to bombing. In December 1940, he'd been made Works Manager. His predecessor, a man named Platt, had got into a flap with the Ministry of Aircraft Production, and there were rumours that Lord Beaverbrook pushed for Gooch to take over. Miss Shoreham probably had as much a hand in running things as Gooch himself. I didn't recall her from before I left for the RAF, so she must have either been promoted or been engaged more recently.

"I hope the lodgings are satisfactory, Mr. Newman."

"I think they'll do fine. Well, at least as good as I may expect to find given all the damage that's been done around here. Mrs. Crighton is new to being a landlady, and I'm new to being a tenant, so hopefully we will learn together, and cordially."

We got no further in this conversation, as Gooch came in. I spent an hour with him learning what he wanted of me. Supermarine was transitioning to post-war production of fewer aircraft but more advanced types. In particular, we were going to produce a jet version of the Spiteful, which would be called the Attacker. There would be slightly different logistics, even though the engine came from Rolls Royce. The Nene jet rather than the Griffon piston engine in the Spiteful.

I learned my wage was increased to 19 pounds a week. But there was more income tax than I remembered. However, right now I had no large expenditure in mind. My immediate plan was to find my feet at work and to avoid falling into a pit of despondency outside of work hours.

Truthfully, I'd no real idea what I should be doing or what I wanted to do. Perhaps first, I should find out where Agnes and Margaret were buried and if there were anything left of value from the house, or the land.

* * *

After my conversation with Mr. Gooch, Miss Shoreham took me in hand and showed me the office from which I would work. It had a telephone, a desk, two chairs and a filing cabinet. I was present enough to ask what was my telephone number, and Miss Shoreham rattled it off almost too fast for me to write down. Fortunately, I had a pencil and a small notebook. Somewhere in the last two years my fountain pen had disappeared. I wonder if one needed points. Perhaps again, second hand.

Miss Shoreham also told me there was to be a group meeting at 11 to introduce me to the rest of the logistics group.

Before Miss Shoreham left, I asked her if she knew where I might find out about the disposition of my house, and she said she would either telephone or leave me a note once she had information. She guessed also that I would want to know about Agnes and Margaret, and said she would attempt to get me information. I told her I also planned to investigate with the church Agnes used to attend. It was around 9:30 when we parted agreeably.

At the 11 o'clock meeting, I was pleased to see Charlie present. Not so agreeable was the obvious disappointment of a Mr. James Hall, who had been acting in my position. I'd have to try to find ways to bring him on-side, or else move him out.

I spent much of the morning apart from the meeting, which did not last very long, looking over various reports for the last few months and familiarizing myself with what was going on. At a quarter to one, I put on my coat and went to the canteen. It was Friday. Whether the Catholic dictum was in

force or not, the best offering available was a vegetable pie. It was reasonably tasty, and it was filling enough. We seemed to be permanently hungry, of course. There was a cabinet pudding with custard. Forgettable, but not so bad as to push aside.

At a quarter to two, I knocked on Mr. Hall's office door.

"Is it convenient to have a chat so I can get up to speed?" I asked.

"Would you mind if I finished these figures first? It will only take me a quarter hour."

"Yes. It will waste your time to interrupt. Come to my office when you're ready. I'll see if I can get some tea. Milk?"

"Yes, thanks."

Twenty minutes later, Hall came into my office. I motioned for him to shut the door.

"My return is likely to be awkward for both of us," I said. "I was grabbed by the RAF, and Supermarine more or less has to take me back now the RAF has finished with my services. But in the meantime, you've been effectively promoted, and now you are pushed back again. Does that more or less sum things up?"

Hall looked nervous, but said "It pretty much describes the situation, Mr. Newman."

"I'd like to suggest that we make the best of a bad situation, if I may.

"In your place, I'd feel a good deal of resentment, and I'd be the obvious target, though clearly, I'm not the villain here. In fact, nobody really is, except Mr. Hitler. Now we have two generals and one army, and that is only going to work if one of us takes a subordinate role. Supermarine has said you're going to be the number 2. However, I know I'd not like that after running the show.

“So my suggestion is that both you and I try to find you a job at least as good as the one I’m being dropped back into. Or else a suitable move for me – with what’s happened to me and my family, I’m not insistent on having this job rather than something roughly equal. And in the meantime, we focus on making sure we both do a good job of work here and avoid the temptation to try to one-up each other, because if we fall into that trap, I suspect we’ll both end up poorer for it.”

I stopped and waited to see how Hall would react.

“Your directness is appreciated, Mr. Newman. I was available after you left because I had TB a few years ago. I was turned down for the Forces. Supermarine got me from Vickers when you left. I’d guess I’m a decade younger than you, and I’d like to move up. What you’ve said makes sense, and I agree the temptation is to try to show how much better I am etc. You’ll have my cooperation assuming you mean what you say.”

“I mean it, but no doubt it won’t be a piece of cake for either of us, though where a piece of cake is to be found these days is a good question.”

Hall chuckled. “Indeed, Mr. Newman. Now would you like me to bring you up to speed on the current situation?”

We spent the rest of the afternoon going over different aspects of Supermarine’s current activities and making some plans to address likely problems. By 5:15 I was tired. I closed my office – there were now 5 keys on my ring with the filing cabinet and office door. I took with me a note from Miss Shoreham giving the address and phone number of council offices for land use and for births and deaths. Before Hall had left my office, I told him I would be taking time off in the middle of Monday to sort out my bank and matters related to the death of my wife and daughter. He said he would make sure anything that arose was taken care of, which he would have done anyway had I not been there.

I did remember to ask if we worked on Saturday now. During the War, we’d worked shifts on Saturday and Sunday. It seemed we were now back to peacetime hours.

* * *

“Good evening, Mrs. Crighton,” I called as I came in.

The kitchen door opened and Mrs. Crighton said “Good evening, Mr. Newman, I hope you had a good day.”

“It went as well as could be expected Mrs. Crighton. I hope your day was also productive.”

“I managed the shopping for the weekend. Then I realized we didn’t talk about lunch on Saturday and Sunday, and I wondered if you expected me to prepare something for you.”

“For now, why don’t we assume I’ll look after myself. Oh. I noticed that St. Patrick’s has mass at 9 on Sunday in the School somewhere. Will that be inconvenient for you for breakfast?”

“No. No. Not at all. I go to mass myself then. And if I go to communion, I don’t eat until after, but you could have some toast. There should be some dripping, but please use it sparingly. I even have some Marmite if you like that. We could see about getting some marmalade if you like that, but it needs points or else substitution in the rations.”

I was still standing in the hall.

“Perhaps I should come in the kitchen so we don’t let the heat out?” I asked.

“Oh, yes. Silly of me. It’s going to take some getting used to.”

“But need not be too unpleasant, I hope.”

“I was going to suggest fish and chips tonight, Mr. Newman. I took your ration book to the grocer, but his delivery won’t be in until next Tuesday, so there’s a bit of mismatch between supply and demand.”

“No. That’s fine. Do you want me to go?” I suggested.

“I could use a walk. I’ve been flapping around in here, I’m afraid, trying to think what I’ve forgotten.”

“Don’t get too panicked. By the way, you mentioned points. I am going to have to learn how many I need to get some suitable clothing. My civvie clothes probably got blown to pieces or else grew some looters’ legs.”

“If you find second-hand, you don’t need points. Actually, if it wouldn’t bother you, I’ve a couple of bits of Jeremy’s that might be serviceable. I’ll bring them down after supper. Perhaps, if you don’t mind, I’ll go now and get the fish and chips. Is there anything you particularly like or don’t? Mind you, there’s probably just Hobson’s choice.”

“It’ll be a treat. Haven’t had fish and chips for a couple of years.”

* * *

After we’d eaten what was most satisfactory – actually from the newspaper, since I insisted Mrs. Crighton not dirty dishes unnecessarily – we cleared away and washed hands and she went upstairs to get some of her late husband’s clothes.

She came down with a big armful. There was a suit with two pairs of trousers, 3 white shirts, nine collars, six cuffs for the shirt that had removable cuffs, a pullover, a cardigan, and a pair of flannels.

“We unravelled the socks, I’m afraid, so we could knit other things.”

Surprisingly, the garments fitted me well-enough. They were a half to a full size bigger, but would not need altering.

“If there are any studs that you have, I’d be glad of those too, Mrs. Crighton. They always seem to manage to get lost.”

“I know. But it’s easier to starch collars and cuffs when they’re off the shirt.”

“Can I suggest that we find a second-hand shop and use their prices for me to give you a fair amount for these? If you are prepared to sell them, that

is.”

“For a long while I wanted to hang onto them. But it’s time to let go before the moths eat them up. I’ll be very happy with amounts based on prices in the second-hand shops.”

* * *

Saturday morning, by arrangement, I had breakfast at the same time as on Friday, then went into the center of Southampton to look in the shops. I particularly wanted to find a suitable fountain pen and to know the prices in money and points of some clothing items. I probably wouldn’t buy today, since I could inconvenience myself greatly if I used up my points then needed them for something particular.

I took the Chain Bridge and walked into town. I could have taken a bus, or even a train, but wanted to see things, and walking was the best way to do that. Still, almost all of the department stores had been blitzed. Many of the shops had set up covered barrows in the streets – Woolworths included.

British Home Stores let me learn that I could get some underwear and socks with not many points. Shirts would drain my points allocation very fast. But I did note the prices of the shirts, collars and cuffs. Down some side streets I found some second hand shops and noted prices there. I’d show my notes to Mrs. Crighton and she could decide what she wanted for Jeremy’s clothes.

I went in W H Smith and looked at pens. There was a Conway Stewart for 17/6 that I liked so I bought it and a bottle of ink, as well as a pair of small notebooks, as I might as well have a rent book right away.

It was now about noon, so I found a pub and managed to get a beer and a rather indifferent sandwich with fish paste. Then I took the train to Bitterne and walked to where my house used to be. As I approached the crater, which was all that was left, my pace slowed. There was a fence that might prevent the cautious from falling into the crater, but it would not inhibit any reasonable attempt to enter.

For some reason, I imagined how someone might fall into the hole some night and not be found until the next morning. Then I thought about Agnes and Peggy being in the bottom of the hole. I tried to recall them in the house – all of us together – but the images were shimmering or foggy or kept reverting to the ugly crater in front of me. And I had to work to try to remember the voices and sounds. Still, there were some memories. I'd have to struggle to hold onto them.

For some minutes I stood and remembered. Then I heard someone say "Ted Newman? Is that you?"

"Hi George," I said. It was George Cummings, with whom I'd been an ARP warden. "I was demobbed Thursday and started back at Supermarine yesterday. I thought I should come and see the remains."

"So sorry about Agnes and Margaret, Ted. I was on duty that day. With a couple of the boys, we gathered what we could of mementos – there wasn't a lot I'm afraid – and I've got it in an old biscuit box. One of the wholesale ones. You can come and get it now if you'd like."

"Yes. Thanks. Sorry, I'm a bit at sixes and sevens. Most people got a leave on returning to England, but there was some fuss about me getting demobbed quickly and that got lost in the shuffle, so I've not been back 'till now."

"Got to be a bit of a shock. Where're you staying?"

"With a Mrs. Crighton at 161 Radstock Road in Woolston. She lost her husband on Hood and her daughter less than a year ago to a road accident with an American motorcyclist."

"That case got some attention. The American soldier hadn't been here more than a couple of days and had been given no instruction on British roads and signs. I'll write down your address. Some of the other boys probably would like to share a pint with you sometime."

I knew where George lived and we talked as we walked there, no more than a couple of hundred yards. When we got to George's house, his wife and

children were not there. “Gone up the town to see if there’s anything worth buying, especially if it doesn’t need points,” George said, letting us in. “Go in the kitchen and we’ll have a cuppa. I’ll get the box from under the stairs.”

The box was a one-foot cube and bigger than I’d expected. George said “I’m afraid the contents were just tossed in.”

“I appreciate the effort. You mustn’t forget I was with you when there were similar situations. However, can you tell me anything about where Agnes and Margaret were buried?”

“I probably should have made a better note of that, but the Council offices should have a record. Or Beeston’s, the undertaker. They did the funeral, not that I was able to be there.”

George looked a little awkward. I didn’t pry but said. “Gooch’s secretary, Miss Shoreham, gave me the address and telephone of the Council. I’ll follow up on Monday. And tomorrow I’ll go to mass at St. Patrick’s and see if I can find out what they may know.”

“Yes, it wouldn’t surprise me if they knew. But Ted, I must warn you the V-1 was a nasty business. My guess is that your wife and daughter are in the same casket, it pains me to tell you, though I think you’ll understand from the times we dealt with such things.”

“Sadly, yes. I’m still trying to deal with these things. Not sure I’ll ever escape the ghosts.”

“Yes, Ted. The ghosts haunt us even in the daylight.”

* * *

I got back to Radstock Road around 4 o’clock. Mrs. Crighton heard my key in the lock and invited me for a cup of tea. I gave her one of the notebooks and the pages with prices of clothes.

“Oh. These are much more than I expected. A couple of quid would do.”

“With the suit and trousers, my calculation is closer to 4 times that. How about a fiver?”

“No, that’s too much. 4 pounds at most.”

I had about 25 pounds in my wallet still, having yet to go to my bank that was in the center of town, if it hadn’t been bombed out. I should arrange to see the bank manager and let him know my current address. I had been in touch by letter, but that was some time ago. In any event, I gave Mrs. Crighton 4 pounds.

“I found myself a pen and some ink, as well as that notebook and one other for myself.”

I should, I suppose, have bought some stationery, but I did have three or four envelopes and some sheets of letter paper in my suitcase. I had meant to look for a small chest of drawers this morning. Well, I suppose it could wait. I’d only been here a couple of days.

“And you obviously bought some other things,” Mrs. Crighton said.

“Actually no. I went to where my house had been, and ran into a colleague from the ARP. We were wardens together. He and some others attended when my wife and daughter were killed and they put what things they could salvage and keep from looters into this wholesale biscuit tin. It was a favour to a friend, but I am most grateful, even though I’ve yet to take a look.”

“I’m sorry I spoke so quickly. You’ll want some privacy to go through the contents.”

“Yes, I think I’ll go upstairs and spend some time doing that.”

“I found a stronger light bulb for you. I hope it helps.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Crighton. I’ll go up. What time do you want supper?”

“It can be at seven, but if you are happier with a bit earlier, it would mean I don’t have to rush to meet Enid, a neighbour I’m going to have a drink with.”

“Would half past six be better?”

“Yes, perfect. Thank you, Mr. Newman.”

* * *

I had some trepidation in opening the tin. The lid was on tightly, and I had to wrestle it off. Inside was a messy mass of bits and pieces.

There were several letters, including one I remembered writing to Agnes from near Caen. There were some loose photographs among some silver cutlery, which could be worth something, I supposed. I would have to carefully organize the pictures and put them in an album. There was also the small album that Agnes and I had made of when we married and when Margaret was a baby. It struck me suddenly and forcefully that George had given me back some memories. I felt tears running down my face and found my handkerchief.

And there was my tin box. I still had its key and opened it. Inside were my birth certificate and that of Agnes and also of Margaret. Our marriage license. I would need to get death certificates, though there was no insurance depending on their presentation. There were ten gold sovereigns. Our "just in case" reserve of money. A string of cultured pearls that I'd bought Agnes on our 10th wedding anniversary. My father's pocket watch. He'd been a railway station master at a small station on the London-Portsmouth line.

I didn't find my bank book, nor my cheque book, though I'd taken a half dozen blank cheques with me and still had those in an oilcloth bag in my suitcase. My pay was to be sent to me in three instalments as postal money orders. I'd not drawn any for the period from D-day to demob, having sold my cigarette allowance. And in any event, my pay was supposed to go to Agnes, but after the V-1, there was a hiatus. Several visits to the paymaster at Warmwell were needed to sort that out, but I'd be getting over 450 pounds soon. Still, there should be a couple of hundred in my bank account. As I've related above, I had written to the bank to tell them where I was, but that my permanent address was still uncertain. They did have my employer's address at Supermarine of course.

There was a pair of woolen booties – Margaret's first. A couple of her school reports. Oh. Her Post Office Savings Book. Maybe I would need a death certificate after all. I opened the small, thin notebook. The final balance was 11 pounds 4 shillings and 2 pence. I wondered if I'd have trouble recovering that. I didn't need the money, but didn't want it to disappear into some government coffer either.

Then there was an envelope with "For Mr. Edward Newman: rings from Mrs. Newman." and a signature I didn't recognize and the date July 21, 1944. I opened it to see the modest engagement ring – a tiny diamond in a silver mounting, and a thin gold band. There was a card as well. It gave the name of an undertakers and the name matched that on the signature. Well, it gave me a way to find out where my family was interred.

There were some other items. Indeed, a fountain pen that Agnes used to write with. It was likely too small for my hand, but I'd clean it up and see. Be nice to have one close at hand here as well as the new one I'd acquired.

Time was marching on. I'd been rather slow taking things out, and it was 6:25. There were still some odds and ends in the bottom of the box, but I put the rest of the things back in the box and put on the top, then I used the WC and washed my hands and went down to supper.

* * *

The next morning, I didn't set my alarm clock, but was awake anyway by seven. It was hardly beginning to get light out yet this early in February. I put my raincoat over my pyjamas and went downstairs and got some water to shave, then came back up and did this, noting my breath steaming as I did so. I should look for a dressing gown. Another item to remember, and hopefully to find without using points. The details of rationing added to the bleakness. Still, we weren't being bombed and strafed any more.

I was returning to my room when I realized I could hear weeping from Mrs. Crighton's room. Should I knock and try to offer comfort? Probably not. Grief was everywhere with the War, and I knew myself that people were genuine in wanting to give comfort. Still, just as Mrs. Crighton had cried when I shared the Rich Tea, their kindness made the pain of loss more

acute. I'd had my share of tears against whatever passed for a pillow during the weeks after I learned about Agnes and Margaret. Learned from a yellow and muddied slip of paper passed down from "channels" to our transport depot in northern France as we chased the Werhmacht into Belgium.

I dressed and put on my tie. Hmm. I'd better talk to Mrs. Crighton about laundry, as I was getting low. Indeed, tomorrow I'd beg Monday off to shop for some underwear and socks and go to the Council offices and the undertakers to learn what I could.

Mrs. Crighton hadn't left her room. I decided to make some tea and some toast. Bread wasn't rationed, thankfully. While in the kitchen I put a couple of lumps of coal into the boiler. Just enough to keep the fire from dying. When I was making tea, the gas died and I had to put a shilling in the meter. I took one from the teacup for now, as my pockets had no shillings. I say pockets, but coins and keys can make holes, so I use a small leather purse I've had since a teenager.

I drank a cup of tea and had two slices of toast lightly spread with dripping and a bit of Marmite. Strange – hadn't had it since four or five years ago. As I was finishing, Mrs. Crighton came into the kitchen.

"Good morning, Mr. Newman. Oh. You've made yourself something."

"Just tea and toast, with a minimum of dripping on it. The pot's still hot if you want a cup. Oh. And I took a shilling from the cup for the gas. It ran out while I was boiling the kettle."

"Thank you, Mr. Newman. I really should have been up and done that."

"Mrs. Crighton. I really don't want you treating me like a hotel guest. Things can be a lot less ... stressful ... if we behave like two people who are sharing accommodations. I doubt either of us are used to the landlady and lodger roles anyway."

"Yes. You're right, but somehow working things out is awkward."

"Are you going to church today?" I asked.

“Yes. But I think I’ll have some tea and toast and forgo holy communion.”

“What time should we leave?”

“It’s almost 8 now. Shall we leave at half-past? We’ll be a bit early, but I like to look at the notices. They have a temporary board they put up in the back of the classroom we use for mass.”

“That would be fine. I’ll go and get a letter I’m writing to my brother in Canada. I want to send it now that I have an address for him to write back to.”

I returned with my letter, my new pen, which I’d filled with ink, and a varnished thin plywood board that served as a portable writing desk. There were advantages to working in aircraft manufacturing, since plywood was generally unavailable. This was a corner where some sheathing had been shaped and left a scrap that yielded a 12 by 15-inch board I’d sanded and finished. It fit nicely in my suitcase top and provided some substance to the old and rather cheap leather of the case.

“That’s a nice idea,” Mrs. Crighton said as I sat in one of the wing chairs and wrote the address for my brother on the envelope.

Mr. Joseph Newman
312 - 9 Street NW
Calgary, Alberta
Canada

I stuck on the 6d stamp I’d bought some weeks earlier in Warmwell. After I’d got the stamp, I realized a reply, if any, would have to chase after me when I was demobilized. At the time I didn’t have a stable address, and somehow didn’t want to use Supermarine. Now I did have an address. Last night I’d written Joseph a fairly comprehensive account of the last couple of years on two rather crammed sheets of paper. Weight was critical for air letters. I wrote AIR MAIL in big letters on the envelope, and put the return address on the back, as well as having written it inside. I hoped we could reconnect.

It was almost time to go. I sprinted upstairs and used the WC. It would be awkward to need to go during mass. When I descended, Mrs. Crighton had on her hat and coat. I put on my hat and scarf and we exited together without saying anything.

Once on the pavement, I felt rather awkward. It had been years since I'd walked beside a woman other than Agnes, and I was used to offering my arm, and found myself starting to do so. But then Mrs. Crighton was about to take my arm.

"Sorry!" I said hurriedly. "It's an automatic reflex from when my wife and I walked to church together. I didn't mean to be forward."

"I almost took your arm for the same reasons. And it's been more than five years."

We walked without engaging arms, each in our own thoughts. When we came to a pillar box, I posted the letter to Joseph.

"Have you maintained contact with your brother?" Mrs. Crighton asked.

"Until the end of 1943, yes. Then somehow things went awry. I suspect some letters were lost, then Agnes died and the house wasn't there, so I've no idea if letters were returned, discarded or whatever. This is an attempt to re-establish communications."

"I hope it works out for you."

"Thank you."

* * *

The classroom used for the mass was a high-ceilinged room in what seemed to be a wartime corrugated iron structure rather like a barn. The exterior was painted green, likely to camouflage it in the trees that were around. It was on property right next door to St. Patrick's Church, with the main part of the School – Victorian or Edwardian brick – further back from the road behind a yard.

As we came in the door at the back of the room, we were greeted by a very tall man with grey hair probably ten years my senior who said “Good morning, Mrs. Crighton.”

“Good morning, Mr. Clitheroe. I’d like you to meet my lodger, Mr. Newman, who just got demobbed and is returning to Supermarine to work.”

I interjected “We have actually met, I believe just once, when my daughter Margaret began here as a pupil.”

I saw a cloud pass over Clitheroe’s face. “Yes, indeed. I am sorry for your loss, Mr. Newman. Your wife came to help out a few times when things got a little ... disorganized ... with the bombing. It was a great sadness to learn of their deaths. So much sadness, I’m afraid. Let us hope for a brighter future.”

Looking down at his hands for a moment, there were the nicotine-stained fingers I remembered. When he wasn’t in front of students or here in church, I suspect he always had a cigarette in his hands. Possibly he wasn’t as old as he looked.

Other people were backing up behind us so we moved along. Mrs. Crighton paused to check the announcements board. Some requests for help with setting up and taking down the altar each week. Meetings of the Catholic Women’s group. Invites to sing in the choir. Appeals for various missionary and charity funds.

“Are you comfortable if we sit together?” I whispered. “I don’t want to cause gossip.”

“I think now you’ve been introduced, well reintroduced, to Mr. Clitheroe, your presence will be explained. It would likely cause more gossip if we sat apart.”

We found chairs half-way into the room. It did not have desks.

“There aren’t desks here. Is it really a classroom?” I asked.

“It’s used for the infants’ classes, so they want to be able to clear space. Also used for assemblies, since it can accommodate everyone if they are standing.”

“And easier for mass, but a bit hard on the knees.”

“I forgot to pick up a kneeler. They are over there.”

Indeed, there was a box of stuffed leather rectangular cubes, each of which had a leather loop to make it easier to lift or carry. I went and got two from the box – they fitted tidily on end inside.

A small bell rang and the priest came in behind the altar boys. The mass commenced. “In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.”

As I said, I’m not a Catholic, but I went to mass with Agnes and the form was familiar. I even understood enough of the Latin to appreciate the words.

“Confiteor Deo omnipotenti”

Yes. I confess to Almighty God. But what do I confess? That I’m a living ghost. That I move, eat and sleep, but that I no longer have much will to do so. And neither, I fear, does the woman who is here beside me. A woman who I suspect has an even less solid connection to life than I.

But I also confess I would like to feel alive again.

“Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis”

Well, maybe I could forgo glory to God, but I genuinely welcomed – if it were really so – peace on earth to men of good will. Did that mean no peace to the rest, to those of ill-will. And there were surely plenty of those. Stalin. Some of the Nazi thugs no doubt slithering away under false names and false stories. Profiteers using the cover of chaos to kill, rob, rape, and despoil. We’d seen lots of that recently. But here, in this rather unimpressive room, a group of 50 to 60 people were trying to find peace, myself included.

The ritual continued. We sat out the communion, and soon the Last Gospel was being recited. “In principio erat Verbum – in the beginning was the Word.” But what word was that?

We said nothing as we filed out. I thought I might see the priest and could ask about Agnes and Margaret, but no doubt the undertaker would have better, or rather more precise, information, and the Register Office could provide death certificates.

* * *

“Do you wish to go home right away?” I asked Mrs. Crighton.

“I ... I’m not sure what you mean?”

“I’m thinking of taking a walk to Miller’s Pond if you wish to join me.”

“Oh. All right. It just never occurs to me, I’m afraid.”

We walked for a while in silence along the Portsmouth Road. When we came to the green area of Miller’s Pond we followed one of the paths.

“Will you be coming to mass regularly, Mr. Newman?”

“I think so. I hope I won’t scandalize you, but I don’t know if I’m actually a believer. I do believe in the sentiments of prayer, and the hope for peace and prosperity. But whether the doctrines and dogmas have any reality, I can’t be confident.”

“Given what we’ve both experienced in the last few years, I think that is understandable.”

“Were you weeping this morning?” I asked, probably too abruptly.

“You heard? I should learn not to make so much noise.”

“Sometimes we need to weep,” I said, knowing I had.

There was a silence while we walked for about a minute, then Mrs. Crighton said “In the night I heard you cry out. Did you know that you did?”

“Once before, one of my assistants in the RAF mentioned I had. I’m sorry. I hope I didn’t alarm you.”

“You have probably seen too much that you should not have been burdened with.” Mrs. Crighton was stating truth, and fortunately not asking me to explain.

“Yes. Well, perhaps we can both just accept each other’s frailties and do our best to put them aside. Not forget, or ignore, but put in perspective, or else we won’t be able to go on. I know I sometimes feel like a ghost. Not really here.”

“Yes. That’s not far from how I feel a lot of the time.”

We had come round to an exit of the park area, and I could see the Millers Pond pub.

“Pity they are likely only open at 12,” I said.

“Yes, I could use the lavatory.”

We walked back to Radstock Road, which wasn’t far. I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do for the rest of the day. I had Graham Greene’s *The Ministry of Fear* to read. I could walk back to George Cummings’ and thank him. If he was amenable and not busy, I’d buy him a drink at the local. Perhaps see if any neighbours were around to say hello.

Thus, after a quick visit to the small room, I set off again to Bitterne. George and his wife were preparing for Sunday dinner, so I gave my thanks to George, explaining a little of what I’d found, and made a loose and indefinite promise that we’d meet up one evening for a drink. I suggested that when we did, his wife Mildred could join us too, but I suspect she would excuse herself.

I went back to the crater and knocked on a couple of doors nearby. Three houses each side, and those immediately behind and in front were boarded up. The V-1's had nearly a ton of high explosive and did a lot of damage. Only one person I knew answered, an elderly lady named Jamieson. She insisted I come in for a minute, and I gave her a capsule account of what had happened to me. She said her house had lost all its windows, but the Council had helped to get them replaced, though the glaziers only finished within the last six months, as glass was in short supply.

"I'll leave you my current address Mrs. Jamieson, and Supermarine will have my office telephone if anyone wants to get in touch. It would be nice to hear from people I knew. So many are no longer here, either moved or dead. A terrible pity."

"Indeed it is, Mr. Newman."

I left as soon as was politic, or she would insist on giving me tea or a sherry, and I knew how limited resources could be at this time. Walking up into Bitterne village, I found the Red Lion open and went in.

The food options were few, but it turned out they did have a Cornish pasty. Since the filling was vegetable, the ingredients were a bit easier to come by, and the one I got was substantial and quite tasty. I had a half of cider to wash it down. After a visit to the rather antiquated urinal, I walked back to Radstock Road.

Sundays, I feared, might be a difficult day for me. I'd need to find some activities to keep me occupied.

* * *

"There you are, Mr. Newman. I wondered if you'd want something to eat."

It was now a quarter past two.

"I got a Cornish pasty in the Red Lion in Bitterne," I answered. "I hope you didn't make anything special for me."

“No. Just wondered if you were going without. That’s all.”

“Even though I sometimes wonder if it is worthwhile, I’ve got in the habit of looking after myself. The other night, we talked of possible jobs that might need doing. Do you think it wrong to tackle some this afternoon?”

“No. It’s really the time when a working man can get to them, isn’t it? Mostly I’ve some doorknobs and things that are loose. I’m not good with mechanical things, generally, even though my job at Thorneycrofts involved parts for landing craft.”

Mrs. Crighton showed me the tool box, which was under the stairs.

“I’ll be doing a wash tomorrow. That’s actually a job that does need doing – the washing line is loose, I think. I’m worried it’ll pull away and the laundry’ll be on the ground.”

“Where should I put my things to be washed, Mrs. Crighton?”

“We have a hamper. I’m afraid it’s in my bedroom, but I think there’s enough space in the bathroom.”

“If you set it out, I’ll put my things in it tonight, though my pyjamas tomorrow morning. I should get a second pair. And a dressing gown. And should we turn on the tap for the bath?”

“Yes. I’ll have to show you where it is. And if I find anything more of Jeremy’s things we can see if they’ll do for you. There’s probably some old and possibly moth-eaten stuff, but maybe we can find something useful.

“Coming home to just ... well ... a hole in the ground must be very disturbing.”

“I’m not sure I’m disturbed because there’s nothing really there. But it is beastly inconvenient. For example, I just realized that you have a garden, and I used to do the digging for Agnes, and she tended the plants. It was nice working together. But now I’ve no wellingtons or even work shoes.”

“Oh. There’s a pair under the stairs. And a boiler suit. I’m glad now I didn’t get rid of them. I like the garden too, and we’ll be able to grow some vegetables. ... Oh. But only if you want to.”

“Mrs. Crighton, that’s the first time you’ve shown a spark of enthusiasm for something. I’m very glad. It’s a good sign. Now for today, I’ll stick to jobs that aren’t messy. And supper can be when it’s convenient for you, as I’ve a book and perhaps we can listen to something on the Light Program this evening.”

“Yes. That would be nice.”

* * *

Monday, February 11.

I went in to the office and around 9 o’clock telephoned the number of the undertaker and asked for the name on the card I’d found in the envelope.

“Alexander Beeston. How may I be of service?”

“Mr. Beeston, my name is Newman. I’ve been in the RAF until last Thursday, and I was just given an envelope with my wife’s rings and your card on Saturday afternoon. I wonder if you might have information on where my wife and daughter – Agnes and Margaret Newman – are buried?”

“Ah yes, Mr. Newman. My sincere condolences. The V-1 case. Most sad.”

“Then I am correct that you took care of the burial?”

“Indeed we did. I will have to check the records for the exact location. I can do so and call you back.”

“Today I’m running errands. For example, I need to go to the Register Office to get death certificates because there are some bank accounts that need to be closed. And I want to find out if there is anything that needs to be done with the house, or rather the lot.”

“Yes. I gather you were in Normandy serving when the bomb fell. It was most generous of your ARP friends to pay for the funerals.”

“Oh. I had no idea, and was about to ask if anything were owing. I will have to write a proper thank-you. They also salvaged some photos and mementos for me. In fact, all in one tin box that in some ways gives me back some memories. Sorry, I’m being a bit soft.”

“Not at all, Mr. Newman. In my business, we sometimes are more than usually aware that people keep their emotions too much inside. But since you are out and about today, if you come by our establishment – we’re in Woolston at 35 Bridge Road – I’ll make sure the location of the graves of your loved ones are in a note for you to pick up, and if I’m in, I’ll ask that you say hello.”

“That would be perfect. I know your building, as I work at Supermarine.”

“I thought you did, but was afraid to say in case I had it wrong.”

“I’m much obliged to you, Mr. Beeston. Until later.”

We rang off. I took a sheet of paper from a pad I had discovered in my desk and wrote "Personal telephone call log" on the top and drew a line underneath. Then I noted the date, the time, the number and the purpose of my call.

I called Miss Shoreham. When she answered, I said “Good morning, Miss Shoreham. I thought I’d telephone to let you know that I’m sorting out some administrative matters relating to my wife and our property, and I’ll be making a couple of telephone calls. I’ve set up a log to record these and will be happy to reimburse the firm.”

“I doubt that reimbursement will be necessary, but the log is a good idea to keep tongues from wagging. I suggest you submit the log to me at the end of each month. I’ll file it in case there’s a need.”

“Thank you, Miss Shoreham.”

“Before you ring off, can I ask if you are making progress with those matters you mentioned?”

“Indeed. I was just talking to Mr. Beeston, the undertaker, and it appears my friends in the ARP paid for the funeral. And they rescued some photos, documents and mementos and put them in a tin box for me. One of those was my daughter’s Post Office Savings Book. That’s one of the administrative details I have to sort out, unfortunately, but I would not have thought about it if they hadn’t found it in the rubble. Unfortunately, no civilian clothing or furniture, but Mrs. Crighton had kept some of her husband’s things, and they may find use, at least for gardening. Sorry. I’m rambling on.”

“At least you ARE rambling on, which shows you are getting back into the swing of things. Good luck, Mr. Newman.”

“Thank you. Goodbye.”

* * *

I had no difficulty at the Register Office, except for finding the right part that dealt with certificates, etc. I had my RAF Discharge and my identity card, and got the certificates for Agnes and Margaret without trouble. Then I had an appointment I’d made for noon with Duncan MacKenzie at the bank I use. He was now 75, as he’d been brought back from retirement when his successor was called to work in some sort of economic warfare unit, then died in an air accident. Soon he’d be replaced.

“Come in, Mr. Newman. Welcome back, though it must be sad given what happened with your wife and daughter.”

“Indeed. I need to talk to you about some administrative matters arising, as you may have guessed.”

“Then let’s get at it. If we’ve time to chat after, we will.”

“First, I’ll need to get a new cheque book. I’ve half a dozen I took with me. And I’ll need a new bank book.”

“I took the liberty of getting your file. You’ve 212 pounds 11 shillings and 6 pence to your credit. Since I suspect anything else will use that account, let me call one of our staff to get that in progress so you have the book today as you leave.”

MacKenzie picked up his phone and a youngish woman came in. Some instructions were given and she left, saying “If you ask for Miss Taylor at the enquiries desk when you leave, I should have your bank book for you.”

Before I could thank her, she was gone. MacKenzie said “What’s next?”

“I think we need to close my wife’s account. She was getting my pay until the V-1. And before I left I put some money there – about 50 pounds – so she could keep the household going.”

“Yes. That account has 67 pounds 3 shillings and 4 pence ha’penny. I’ll instruct that it be closed and credited to the account we just talked about with Miss Taylor.” He wrote a couple of lines on a pad with his fountain pen.

“There’s also the matter of my RAF pay since the V-1. It will come to me in three installments as postal money orders or similar. Can they be deposited here, or do I need to get cash at the Post Office and bring it over. It’s a total of around 450 pounds. We had no opportunity to spend money on the Continent, and I don’t smoke, so could buy minor luxuries with cigarettes. I even got a special allocation of 1000 one time.”

“That’s quite a sum. Today I’m going to make a note that the monies will be coming in – where are they being sent?”

“I gave the Supermarine address, as I wasn’t sure of where I’d be living. Oh. That’s something else – my address is now 161 Radstock Road in Woolston. I’m lodging with a lady who lost her husband on the Hood and last year her daughter was run down by an American dispatch rider ... ”

“Oh, that poor woman. It got in the papers. You have much in common.”

“She told me we are an unmatched pair of leftovers. It’s a description a little too accurate in some ways.”

“Don’t dwell too much on the past, Mr. Newman. You have life and some money, and you are young enough to build something new now Mr. Hitler isn’t trying to kill us all.”

I could have taken MacKenzie’s advice as gratuitous, but his tone was kindly. Did I dwell on the past? Not that I was aware of. Mostly I was numb. Numb from seeing destruction and death. Numb from not having a place to call home. Numb from Well, running on habit and following orders. I’d better focus on the here and now.

“So. Will the RAF postal orders be able to be deposited here?” I asked.

“I may have to check the particulars, but it seems extremely likely. And if this is going to be the pattern for the Services, I think I will get my staff to arrange something with the Post Office so we handle the transaction rather than have a lot of people risking sums of money on the street. You surely won’t be alone in your requirement.”

I said “Lastly, though you may have no knowledge of what are the arrangements, I am about to try to see if there is any recoverable money from the land on which the house used to exist. Do you know if people are buying and selling?”

“I’m afraid I’ve only heard what I term gossip, though with reconstruction, there has to be some flow of money. And what I was about to say earlier is that you have enough – not a grand fortune, but enough – to merit consideration of how to invest it. I suggest we meet again in a month or so when some of the more tedious details have been regulated.”

“That would be welcome, Mr. MacKenzie. Thank you. I’ll be getting along.”

On my way out of the bank, I collected my new bank and cheque books. Agnes’ money would be deposited either today or tomorrow.

Next was the Post Office in the High Street. Like most buildings there, it had taken quite a few knocks. In fact, it was widely gossiped that only the Lyons Corner House survived intact on the Street.

“Good morning. My name is Edward Newman. My wife and daughter were killed in the V-1 attack in July of 1944. I’ve been in the RAF and unable to get home until now. My daughter had this Post Office Savings Account. Can you tell me what I need to do to close the account?”

The thirtyish man behind the wicket said “We need to see proof of death – I see you have a Death Certificate there – and your proof of identity and once those have been inspected, we give you the money. I’ll see if Mr. Williams is available. He’s the Senior Accounts officer. Perhaps you could take a seat over there. It shouldn’t be too long.”

I fortunately had brought along Margaret’s Birth Certificate which named me as father. I had my Discharge papers and identity card, and the Savings Book.

“Mr. Newman?” a sixtyish man asked at a doorway. “Perhaps you could come with me and we’ll try to sort out your daughter’s account.”

Williams took me to a small office where he sat one side and I the other of a modest desk. He had a form on his desk that he began to fill out.

“Can I have the Savings Book, please?”

I passed this across and he looked at it carefully, checking each page. “My goodness, no entries since 1943.”

“I was called up at the end of ’43. As a War effort, I think Margaret stopped taking pocket money. Not that there were sweets or other things to buy.”

“Yes. And still they are rationed. I recall the V-1 bombing. Heard it myself, then read in the paper how your wife and daughter had perished, and you serving in Normandy.”

“I only got back on Thursday – demobbed that morning.”

“That will serve well as your identity, I think,” Williams said, nodding at the Discharge papers.

He looked over the document, noting Supermarine was my employer. “Ah. I see you’re at Supermarine. Well, that makes things a bit easier, since you can be found there, I assume.”

“Mr. Gooch or his secretary, Miss Shoreham, are personally aware of my role in the Company,” I said.

“I’ll still, unfortunately, need proof of death.” I passed over the Death Certificate and got the Discharge back. I took out the Birth Certificate just as Mr. Williams looked up and said “Good. A birth certificate identifies your relationship to the deceased and that she was a minor, so we don’t need to worry about a will.

Now I need your current address.”

I gave this and it was written down.

“Would you be offended if I called Supermarine? We’ve had some attempts at fraud. If I confirm by telephone, I can note it on the form and likely avoid auditors complaining.”

“Do you have the number?” I asked.

“Our operators will. Yes, Williams here in Savings Accounts. Can you get me Miss Shoreham, secretary to Mr. Gooch at Supermarine please?”

There was a bit of a delay, then a very short conversation where it was clear Miss Shoreham gave Williams a succinct description of me and a statement that it was known to her that I was planning to close Margaret’s account today. I think Williams may even have got a flea in his ear, and I had to suppress a smile.

“I’ll get you to sign and date the form here, Mr. Newman, and then I’ll meet you at one of the cashiers and we can give you the money right away.”

“I’m very grateful for the quick service, Mr. Williams.”

“When someone has all the right paperwork, it is much easier. In fact, the only problem is that it represents sadness, and we can’t repair that. A good day to you, Mr. Newman, and my best wishes for your future.”

* * *

It was nearly two o’clock. I’d overlooked lunch. There was Lyons, so I went in and had the Welsh rarebit and a coffee. Just what the doctor ordered, and, I suppose, Margaret paid for, at least today. Rarebit was one of her favourite things. I forced back a tear, but still found pleasure in the cheesy snack.

Then I went to the Council office that dealt with houses and land. I wasn’t sure what I’d find here. I didn’t even know where our documents were. Well, the solicitor we’d used probably had copies. What was his name? Still, I could find out today what, if anything, had to be done.

A young woman was behind the counter. “Good afternoon, sir. How may I help you?”

“I came to enquire what I need to do, if anything, about a bombed-out house I own – or at least used to own.”

“You weren’t there when it was bombed, I take it?”

“I was in Normandy. It was late July 1944 ...”

“Oh dear. The V-1. Margaret Newman. She was a good friend of my youngest sister.”

“Yes. I’m Edward Newman, her father.”

“Give me the address and the date you purchased the house.”

Fortunately, I remembered the date, June 28, 1931. We used to celebrate each year with a toast. And we’d paid off the mortgage in 1937. It occurred to me that there would be complications if we had still had a mortgage, since the payments would have ceased with Agnes’ death and my essential imprisonment in the Forces.

“Let me check the files.”

I had a wait of perhaps ten minutes before she returned.

“Well, the property transaction is registered in your name. There’s an annotation that there was a compulsory demolition in late July 1944 to render the site safe, but nothing more. It would seem that you are the owner of the site, Mr. Newman, but there are a number of discussions going on right now about reconstruction. I probably shouldn’t tell you this, but I suspect that the Council will try to buy up the sites and redevelop that portion of the street, or at least consolidate the land to allow for new building.” Dropping her voice to a whisper, she said “If you want to get the most out of the site, it may pay to put in a request to rebuild. If the Council is planning something, they’ll possibly offer more that way. When they get round to trying for a block of sites, they can try compulsory purchase, claiming the land is rubbish at the moment.”

“Thank you. You’ve given me much to think about.”

* * *

I walked back to the Chain Bridge then to Beestons’. Mr. Beeston was out at a funeral, but there was an envelope waiting for me. I opened it and read the brief information that Agnes and Margaret were together in a burial location the note identified in Hollybrook Cemetery.

It was getting toward half-past four and daylight was weakening. Back in my office, I checked for messages but there were none. I put my head round the door of Hall’s office and asked if everything were going well, and he said he’d have some things to discuss in the morning, but there was nothing urgent or bothersome and that I might as well go home rather than start something now.

He was right. I’d done a lot today. Time to quit while I was winning.

* * *

“Mr. Newman. You’re early.”

“Yes, I had a very busy day and got a lot done. My number 2 suggested I not start something late in the day. And I must admit all the running around – well walking around – was tiring. I see you’ve been busy too. I hope my laundry wasn’t too demanding.”

“No. I tend to think of people as heavy or light on clothing. You’re definitely light. By that I mean you don’t seem to get a lot of real dirt on things. More just everyday sweat. Of course, collars and cuffs get pretty bad. My Jeremy was a terror. He liked Brylcreem, and his collars got every cinder and bit of fag-smoke in Southampton. Yours aren’t nearly so bad. I hope you don’t like a lot of starch.”

“Never liked it. In the Forces we didn’t bother. Why get dolled up to get shot was how one of my drivers put it. Sorry. Maybe that was insensitive.”

“I suppose it could be, but I know you aren’t insensitive. Perhaps a bit the other way. Sorry, letting my mouth run on. Were you successful in your investigations?”

“Indeed I was for the most part. I got my bank account sorted out and saw the bank manager. My wife’s account should be closed and deposited to my account tonight or tomorrow.

“I got Death Certificates for Agnes and Margaret. A bit sad, but it does help to close the books. And I used Margaret’s to close her Post Office Savings account. They did it right away. Phoned Supermarine to check I was genuine, but it isn’t worth getting my nose out of joint because they paid it out right away and I don’t have to go back and forth again.

“And Beeston’s got me the location of the grave Agnes and Margaret are in, apparently together.”

“Oh, that’s sad. It means”

“Yes, I know. That they weren’t very complete. Still, they are together in Hollybrook, and I found the ARP paid for the funeral. I shall have to write a thank you. Maybe get a nice card.”

“That was generous of them. The American Army paid for Jenny’s, and a bit of ‘pain and suffering’ that by British standards is quite generous, but”

“But we’d rather have them back, wouldn’t we?”

“Yes” She wiped a tear from the corner of her eye.

“Would you like to go to the cemetery on Saturday or Sunday? It might be easier together.”

“Yes yes ... it would be easier. Especially with someone who knows how it hurts and you don’t dare scream even though you want to.”

“You don’t have to go if it hurts so much.”

“But it would hurt more not to go.”

* * *

Within a couple of weeks I fell into a routine. After two years of constant movement and change, this was comfortable.

On the Thursday after I arrived, Mrs. Crighton said she intended to go to the pictures with a neighbour, Mrs. Brownlow, whose husband was in the RAF in India. She said I’d be welcome to accompany them. If I did, we’d eat quite early. If not, my supper would be kept warm on the boiler. I’d only seen a couple of films over the last two years, and those in not terribly favourable conditions to get the best experience of the films.

“Do you know what you want to see?” I asked.

“We’re thinking of *Anchors Aweigh*. Neither of us likes serious films with war subjects.”

“That would suit me. What time should I be here for supper?”

“Can you manage 6 o’clock so we can meet Enid outside at half past. The film starts at 7.”

“I’ll make sure I’m home in good time.”

* * *

After the film, which we enjoyed, we went to a pub for a drink.

“I needed that,” Mrs. Brownlow said. “There’s too much gloom and doom. And Fred wrote that the men in the RAF in India figure British ships are being used to take American GI’s home rather than them.”

“There are too many of us here in Britain who want to be an Imperial power. The wireless and education mean the people in the Empire are figuring out what they want for themselves. The Americans will pontificate about democracy and an end to colonialism, then set up their own form of imperialism based on large corporations – chewing gum and Coca Cola if you will.”

“Mr. Newman. I believe you’re a cynic,” Mrs. Brownlow challenged.

“Quite possibly, Mrs. Brownlow. But I hope that the government realizes that the men who volunteered or were conscripted for the War didn’t sign on to be a police force to maintain commercial profits. I’m no communist, but I do believe in national self-determination within some limits of protecting the rights of the individual.”

“You were lucky to get released so quickly,” Mrs. Crighton said.

“I think Supermarine had some role in that. The demob score is based on age and months of service, plus some element of essential occupation. I’m not sure why my particular skills are regarded as necessary, since we’re no longer at War, but my guess is the various bits of push and shove in the world mean airplanes are going to be needed.”

“With the atomic bomb, it seems madness,” Mrs. Brownlow said.

“I agree. Let’s hope stupidity and nastiness don’t get too much room to influence our lives. And I hope Mrs. Brownlow’s husband get’s home soon.”

Mrs. Brownlow said “I need to get home. Mrs. Kirby is looking after Jack, my six-year-old.”

* * *

My conversation with Mrs. Brownlow led me to pay closer attention to news items from India, though there weren't many. I wondered if reports were being censored or suppressed. After all we'd been through in the War, it seemed wrong to lose the peace. Our men should come home and India should become their own country. Of course, there were plenty of people who thought otherwise, our erstwhile leader Mr. Churchill right in the front row.

That Sunday afternoon Mrs. Crighton and I went to Hollybrook Cemetery together. I'd bought a small bunch of flowers on Saturday and kept them in water overnight. Mrs. Crighton had an almost identical bunch. We gave each other a wan smile when we realized that we'd bought flowers at the same shop.

We took two buses to get to Hollybrook and went to Jenny's grave, which had a simple flat stone with her name and dates. Then we figured out the plan of the cemetery and found where Agnes and Margaret were buried under a simple concrete marker with a number.

“Will you get a gravestone,” Mrs. Crighton asked.

“I'm not sure. I'll have to think about it. I'd like some sort of memorial, but I'm not sure that a gravestone is the right approach.”

“Gravestones are more for the living than the dead, I feel.”

“Yes. They serve us, not those we memorialize.”

Despite what Mrs. Crighton had said, neither of us shed tears that afternoon. We walked back toward town and found a small café where we had a cup of tea and an indifferent bun. We said little, but there was no awkward silence.

Mrs. Crighton had made some Woolton pie, which we heated up in the oven and had with some baked beans.

I took my bath and put on the somewhat dilapidated dressing gown Mrs. Crighton had found in an old suitcase. She'd had to boil it to kill off the moths and darn some holes. Still, it gave warmth and provided for modesty. She'd also found an old duffel coat that somehow had been packed with lavender and was in quite reasonable shape except for a bad stain on the pocket.

"Jeremy started to use a fountain pen and forgot it was in the pocket when he sat down on the bus," Mrs. Crighton explained. She suggested it be used for being outside for working. However, I asked whether buying some cloth for bigger pockets – or really fake ones – would cover up the stain.

"What a clever idea. It would make it usable as a regular coat. I'll do it."

"Only if you let me pay you a reasonable amount for it," I cautioned.

* * *

Whether it was the visit to the cemetery I can't say, but that night I woke from a terrible dream. Mostly it was the same dream – well nightmare – that I often had. Teniers Square in Antwerp. November 27, 1944. A cold day. I was trailing a British motor convoy and was a couple of hundred yards away or more when a V-2 came down right on the square above the MP who was directing traffic. Apparently, it exploded in the tram lines, as we didn't find a crater, but it burst a water main and flooded the square. 126 killed, about a fifth of them military, but many civilians given that Teniers was possibly the busiest intersection in the area. Mostly the Germans couldn't hit a barn door from 10 feet with their V-weapons, and their destruction was random. This time it was a bulls-eye. The water bubbled up from the water main and floated the corpses, or rather the pieces thereof. And petrol from the vehicles floated too, and caught fire. A terrible and ghastly mess. I and many others rushed to help as best we could. The rocket hit just after noon and I was ordered away at 5 o'clock by an MP who told me I was too exhausted to be of more use.

But tonight, my horror was amplified by body parts that belonged to Agnes and Margaret. I must have made a lot of noise, because I awoke to Mrs. Crighton saying “Wake up, Mr. Newman. Wake up. You’re having a bad dream.”

As I recognized what she was saying, I realized where I was.

“Oh. Mrs. Crighton. I’m so sorry. My regular nightmare.”

“Why don’t you tell me about it?” she said very quietly.

“You’ll get cold.” She was wearing a dressing gown, but our breath was fogging.

“I could come under the covers. I’m wearing my dressing gown over a nightdress.”

Whatever the propriety of the situation, I was still confused by the dream and let her slip in beside me. The space was tight, and she had to lie on her side and I was against the wall. Without thinking I extended my arm as she came in the bed. I could feel she was wearing bed socks. A good idea. I should get some.

“Tell me about your dream,” she repeated, calmly rather than as a command.

I related what I’ve described. There was silence for some seconds.

“I can see why you have the nightmare. And it was one of those terror weapons too that killed your family. Here we think of them as being aimed at England, but the Germans used them against Belgium too.”

“Yes. Two weeks later and only a short distance away on the same street they hit the Rex Cinema. 561 killed, many of them Allied servicemen. Two were members of my unit and one I counted as a friend. The authorities forbade big groupings after that.”

“You don’t have nightmares about that?”

“I don’t think so. Or at least none I can remember. And I wasn’t a witness to it, though a few days afterwards I did see the ruin.”

“And you probably saw other horrors.”

“Yes. In Normandy, as we broke out, our Tactical Air Force planes – mostly Typhoons with rockets – nailed a German column. They rocketed it then passed over it with their cannons firing. A lot of dead. My transport people had to pass by after the engineers had simply bulldozed everything – vehicles, bodies, weapons – through the hedgerow so we could use the road to move up supplies.

“And at the end of the War, I took supplies into the Hague and saw a place called Bezuidenhout. We and the Americans tried to get the V-2 launching sites that were in what is called the Haagse Bos – the Hague Woods – which is, or was, a big park. But there was cloud and they missed by about a mile and dropped 67 tons of explosive on this suburb. And in the chaos the Germans tried to launch rockets so they wouldn’t be destroyed on the ground, but a couple fell back on the same area. 511 killed but more to the point, 20,000 homeless. Hardly anything left. Makes Southampton look like it got a few scratches.

But again, I wasn’t in the midst of it like Antwerp.”

“Well, you’ve told me now. Perhaps that will dilute the horror a little and let you get some peace.”

“Thank you for listening.”

We were quiet for a while. Somehow we must have fallen asleep, because my alarm clock was ringing. Mrs. Crighton almost fell out of bed and I sat up – my arm had gone to sleep and I had to use the other to turn off the bell.

“I’d better get breakfast on,” she said.

* * *

We were both very quiet at breakfast. Was it embarrassment? Shame? I don't think so. Anyway, we had our porridge and I went to work. There were some new arrangements to set up for instruments that were needed for the jet engine tests we'd need to make, so plenty of details to sort out. Hall and I worked well together. Nothing yet on the horizon to give him a promotion, but we did discuss advertisements or news items that might be relevant, and I was contributing about half of these to the conversation. I'd meant what I'd said about helping his advancement. Or mine.

At supper we were still rather quiet. Finally, when we were washing up the dishes – I'd drifted into the habit of drying them – Mrs. Crighton said "I didn't mean to stay for the rest of the night."

"No. No. I realize that. But I think both of us feel awkward."

"Yes. Very awkward. But we weren't ... intending to be immoral. We didn't do anything that was impure."

I recognized the language of the catechism. I felt I had to try to reduce Mrs. Crighton's anxiety.

"Mrs. Crighton. We are both people who have had very unpleasant experiences in the last few years. Somehow we are trying to cope. When I came here, I was at a very low point. I have started to find I want to make something of my life, and that was not the case before the last couple of weeks.

"The situation of the landlady and the lodger is a cliché that is exploited by comedians of bad taste. I know both of us wish to stay far from such a situation. But I will say that your companionship has been extremely helpful to me, and I hope I am able to be a decent and helpful person in your life."

"Yes. I've found things a little brighter since you came."

There was another silence, but it wasn't awkward, just thoughtful.

"I wonder if I should see a doctor about my nightmares."

“Do they come every night?”

“No. Probably about once a week. But last night was different with Agnes and Margaret”

“Perhaps the visit to the cemetery triggered something.”

“Possibly.”

“Why don’t we see how you get on for a week or so. Doctors sometimes get all in a hurry to do something, when time is the best medicine. Or rather, time and a peaceful life.”

“Mrs. Crichton, are you talking about me or you?” I smiled.

“Perhaps both of us.”

Again there was a silence.

I said, “You know, last night was the only time I’ve slept – and I mean slept – with a woman other than Agnes. And I’ve no ... er ... physical experience of a woman other than her. I had one girlfriend before Agnes. A bit of what the ranks used to call slap and tickle, but really adolescent fumbling and definitely nothing approaching intercourse.

“When we went into Holland there was a woman. She couldn’t have been more than 24 or 25 and she spoke pretty good English. In fact knew some words that related to sex I’d never heard before. She offered me pretty well any fantasy I wanted. Turned out the reason was she had two kids aged 2 and 3. The father was one of the reprisal executions for some resistance operation.”

“If you are telling me, I doubt you took up her offer.” Mrs. Crichton was getting to know me.

“You’re right. But I actually committed a crime and stole some supplies from our lorries for her. Well, mainly for her kiddies. The RAF can court martial me if they want. I’ll be happy to plead guilty, especially if those children are all right.”

“Mr. Newman, I feel rather strange calling you Mr. Newman after the stories we’ve shared. Can I use your first name?”

“Yes. Call me Ted. My friends do. And I’ve no idea of your name.”

“Maud. Used to be Maud Smith. Very plain. Now Maud Crighton. I’d have been married 18 years this Easter. Well, April 14. The Saturday after in 1928. Easter’s going to be late this year. April 21.”

* * *

Tuesday night there was a knock on the door. It was Ralph Dixon, one of the ARP men I’d volunteered with. I’d found a card and written a sincere thank you to the men – I sent it via George, since I was pretty sure the office had been closed. There was talk of disbanding the entire service, but already most volunteers had been released.

“Ted, I wanted to come round to say hello and tell you about your bicycle.”

“Better come in.”

I brought Ralph in and introduced him to Mrs. Crighton, who was sitting in one of the wing chairs.

“Well, Ted. When we cleaned up your place, the back shed was flattened. I found your bike and a girl’s one under the roof planks pretty banged up. I’d got a bunch of similar wrecks from other places with permission of the owners, but couldn’t contact you and didn’t want to waste the parts. The bike I’m on tonight has bits of yours, and I didn’t want anyone to get the wrong idea.”

“I’m glad you used it. Rather that, than have it dumped or used by someone I don’t know.”

“As a bit of payback, maybe you want to come by my allotment sometime – leave a note at my house. I’ll give you the address, and you can let me know when you can come. We’ll see if we can find enough to make you a bike.”

“That’d be helpful.”

We had a cup of tea and Ralph left. I’d have to figure out where to put a bicycle here if I got one. Never had a car, though I did learn to drive in the late thirties. We were starting to look for a car when war loomed, and we’d postponed our search.

* * *

There was no repeat of Maud having to wake me from a nightmare. The bad dreams didn’t exactly stop, but they changed. Sometimes I’d be by the Rex Cinema as a spectator to the rocket hitting it. Other times I was riding one down onto Teniers Square. Horrifying, but somehow when I was in the dream, I was a detached observer. And I’d wake up before being confronted by the things that upset me most. In fact, I started to have a realization that I was in a dream and there was a sort of wake-up switch I could flip if I felt I wanted to.

Moreover, I didn’t hear Maud weeping. Had she stopped, or was she crying when I wasn’t about?

In the meantime, we lived simply. We didn’t give anything up for Lent. Rationing had achieved greater strictures than were necessary for spiritual growth.

We went to the pictures with Enid Brownlow again later that week. Saw *I know where I’m going* with Wendy Hillier. The crux of the story is the choice of marriage for security over marriage for love. Being cinema, the girl falls in love, then finds the object of her affection is rich.

“What did you think of the film?” I asked Maud as we walked home. Enid had taken a bus right away to get her son from the lady minding him, while Maud and I had a drink and a packet of crisps before making our way back to Radstock Road.

“I liked it. It shouldn’t be taken seriously though.”

“What do you mean by serious?”

“The cinema, and novels and magazine stories for that matter, make it seem like there’s this magic called love that turns everything right. I thought I had that with Jeremy when we got married, but I soon realized that it doesn’t put bread on the table, even if the emotion is real and the people are honest and moral. The longer-term loving can’t do much about money either, but it is less fragile.”

“But gives more pain when we lose someone, I think.”

“That too.

“Ted. Do you think you’re still in love with Agnes?”

“I don’t know. I still miss her. I mentioned the Dutch woman. But you know, I’ve not had the kind of ... er ... physical urges for a woman since I learned Agnes had died. Only in the last little while have I even started to notice myself looking at a woman and registering that she is attractive. I’m not sure if that’s a good sign or a nuisance.”

“Probably a good sign as long as you don’t find yourself chasing around after them.”

“What about you, Maud. Do you think you’ll want to try again?”

“The idea ... interests me rather than attracts me. I think the War and Jenny kept me more or less on ice. Then Jenny’s death nearly finished me. I think for the last year I’ve just been running on automatic pilot.”

“Yes, that rather describes the feeling.”

* * *

On Saturday the second of March I went out to Ralph Dixon’s allotment. He had moved an Anderson shelter there and made a shed of it, with a sort of awning in front to keep the rain off a bricked area. The shed was full of bicycle bits.

“Let’s see if we can find enough for a bike for you,” Ralph said. “Won’t look like much, of course.”

“If it gives me transport, I don’t care what it looks like.”

We set to looking for parts that would fit together. It turned out the only workable combination was a women’s pattern frame, but it was large enough for me. The wheels were slightly different in style, and we had to fit unmatched brakes to them. Single speed. There was a basket for the front, but no carrier at the back. There were mudguards in two very different colours and styles. It took us about two hours to get it together, and it would likely need an hour more of adjustment, plus we needed to ensure the inner tubes wouldn’t simply deflate in a minute or two. We decided to leave things until the next Saturday and I’d take three inner tubes and try to check them back at Radstock Road. Ralph gave me a puncture repair kit and a tyre pump. He implied I’d need them.

I spent the better part of the Sunday afternoon with a basin of water and the pump and repair kit, but ended up with three inner tubes that I thought would hold air. Two for the bicycle and one spare. I’d need to buy another repair kit and probably a new pump.

* * *

Maud thought it curious and somewhat comic that I used a female pattern bicycle. That is, until I pointed out that we could share this vehicle since we were not terribly different in height. I am not a large man in either height or weight, making possible this sharing of the bicycle.

I spent several shopping sessions looking for a padlock, chain, pump, carrier, spanner, spoke adjuster and puncture kit, but by Palm Sunday we had a bicycle.

“We’ll have to look for another so we can cycle together,” I said to Maud one evening.

“Oh. All right. How shall we go about that?”

“Given that we have a female pattern, we can look for either a male or female one. The Echo may have advertisements, but we can also look in shops, though I’ll have to see if we need points.”

* * *

Monday March 18.

A pretty ordinary day at work. The real event was opening the post when I got home. A letter from Joseph.

312 - 9 Street NW
Calgary, Alberta
Canada

Dear Ted,

It was a great relief to get your letter. We had written two to your Bitterne address. One actually came back marked "bombed out -- deceased". The other got no reply. Truly we wondered what had happened and we started to make plans to come to England as soon as travel was possible. That is now, most fortunately, unnecessary, though the loss of Agnes and Margaret must surely be most painful to you. It is a pity we never knew them, having emigrated before you married.

I hope we can reconnect, and that we can meet up again. It seems a long time ago. Caroline and I read and re-read your description of what has been happening to you. I'll bring you up-to-date on our story.

.....

There was a quite long description of what had happened to them. Joe was a manager with the Calgary Transit system. His wartime was spent keeping aging buses and trams working. He called the trams street-cars. Their two children were now grown. The girl, Martha, was 25 and married with children. Her husband had served in the Canadian Navy, but on the West coast of Canada on an armed fishing boat. Lucky, because he avoided any real action.

Their son, Geoffrey, was now 18, so he just missed being called up, though Canada had had a lot of trouble over conscription, and conscripts were not supposed to serve outside of Canada. Still, it was good that they were safe. Geoffrey would likely go to the University of Alberta in the Autumn. Canada seemed to have more opportunity for young people than England.

I shared the letter with Maud. A few days before, I'd bought a bottle of sherry on a whim. We opened it and had a small toast to re-connections.

I wrote back that night to let Joseph know I'd got his letter. From there onwards we had a fairly regular correspondence.

* * *

By Easter, I was becoming settled in my routine. We'd dug the garden and done some planting. I even went to the crater, as I thought of it, and dug out some raspberry canes and put them in 161's garden.

World events were observed from the distance of newspaper articles or the BBC News. We didn't take part in jitterbug dancing, but read about it. We noted, rather than felt, Churchill's famous Iron Curtain speech in Missouri. Both Maud and I agreed we would have liked to have seen *The Sleeping Beauty* performed by the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden, though neither of us had ever seen a ballet.

A week after I'd been bicycle making with Ralph, there was a terrible disaster at the Burnden Park Football Stadium. 33 dead and over 300 injured. And the game went on after the corpses were laid out on the touchline. Too many fans tried to get into part of the stadium and people were crushed to death or badly injured. There was going to be an enquiry, but that wouldn't raise the dead.

On the ides of March, Atlee announced that Britain would grant India its independence. Maybe this would let Fred Brownlow come home.

On the 24th of March we heard Alistair Cooke's *American Letter*. We both rather liked it, and will have to watch the Radio Times for when it is on next.

On Good Friday Maud and I had hot cross buns for breakfast – a particular treat I'd found in a local bakers. We were sharing a third bun with a second cup of tea when we heard the bell of an emergency vehicle. I went out the front door to see an ambulance in front of a house a few doors down the street.

I came back in and told Maud. She stuffed the remaining portion of her half of the bun in her mouth and put on her coat. I copied her and we went down the street, where a clutch of neighbours had gathered, including Mrs. Brownlow and Jack. A policeman arrived and went inside. After about ten minutes, the ambulance men carried out a stretcher with a covered body. That was not a good sign. The policeman followed the ambulance men out of the house but came over to our group of neighbours.

“Is anyone here acquainted with Mrs. Bonin?” He pronounced it "Bone In", but we later learned it was French and pronounced "Bon Ann".

Maud said “I used to talk to her at church, and my daughter used to mind her great-niece Paula sometimes.”

“Perhaps you might go inside in a minute and see if you can help the girl compose herself. The great-aunt appears to have died this morning of a stroke. We’ll have to see if we can find the girl’s family.”

“They were waiting for the Red Cross to see if they could be found,” Maud said. “Paula’s father was Jewish, and in early 1940, as a precaution, Mrs. Bonin, who was originally English – she told me her name was Moore – and was widowed, decided to come back to England. She brought Paula with her, and almost immediately we had Dunkirk. Apparently, Paula’s parents were grabbed by the Nazis sometime a bit later, I think 1942.”

“Lord ’elp us,” the policeman said. “There’re some emergency services for child protection, but the proper people won’t be at work until Tuesday. I don’t want to leave the girl here until then. The house is split into rooms, and a couple of them are single men. They’re probably harmless, but we can’t take chances. So I’m wondering if she can stay with someone nearby until Tuesday.”

Maud whispered to me “Ted, would you be upset if we set up a cot in the kitchen for her?”

“That seems a possibility. Why don’t you suggest it?”

“Constable, I think I can offer space in my kitchen, which has a boiler and is relatively warm. We might need to move Paula’s bed, though.”

“Thank you, madam. May I have your name and address?”

“Mrs. Maud Crighton, 161 Radstock Road.”

“And this is your husband?”

“No, this is Mr. Edward Newman, my lodger.”

The policeman’s eyebrows raised a little at this. I said “I’ve recently been demobbed to return to Supermarine. Mrs Crighton fortunately had space since my house was the victim of a V-1 and ...”

“Ah, yes. I’m very sorry for your loss, Mr. Newman. I was the constable sent out that day.”

“Should we ask Paula if she’s agreeable to stay with us for a while?” I asked. It seemed to me important that the girl feel that she had some choice.

“Perhaps Mrs. Crighton could go in and suggest that, then we’ll work out a tentative plan of action,” the constable said.

While Maud was inside, I took the opportunity to get the constable’s name, which was Murray, and the station from which he worked so we could ensure communication. There would no doubt be some confusion and Paula might be lost in the shuffle.

After a few minutes, Maud and Paula, who we had not seen until now, came out with a small suitcase. She was a girl of about 12 or 13, wearing a simple pinafore skirt and blouse under her coat. As we made the short walk back to 161, Maud explained “I’ve locked up. We’ll give Paula something to eat and figure out how we’ll manage until Tuesday at least.”

Paula said nothing. Her eyes were red, but for now she wasn’t crying.

We came into the house and I put on the kettle and toasted another pair of hot cross buns. We sacrificed a bit of our butter ration for Paula. After she

had consumed these and drunk some tea, I decided to see what we could learn about the girl.

“Paula. Can you tell us about yourself, and we’ll see what we can work out to keep you safe and sound?”

“Well, ... I think Mrs. Crighton already knows that Aunt Matilda brought me here from France in 1940. My parents have been taken somewhere by the Germans. We have asked the Red Cross where they may be, but so far nothing.”

“How does your aunt provide for you?” I suppose I should use the past tense, but too late now.

“She has some money in the bank. I don’t think a lot, as we live in just one room, and we share the WC with the others in the house, and we cook on a gas ring by the gas fireplace. But it eats shillings, so we are often cold.”

“Do you know if there are any other family members in either England or France?”

“I don’t think so. I asked Aunt Matilda once, and she said they all died. She said her family died in the influenza of 1919.”

“Do you know if the furniture in your room is your aunt’s?” Maud asked.

“I think it is all Aunt Matilda’s.”

“Because if it is possible you don’t have other family, we had better see if we can find your aunt’s bank book and other documents, as well as any of your own,” I said.

After a bit of discussion, we headed back to the house where Paula and her great-aunt had their room. Paula had her own set of keys – Maud had that of the aunt. As we opened the front door, there was a man trying to open the door of one of the rooms.

“What are you doing, Mr. Heatherington?” Paula asked.

“Nothing. Nothing. Thought you might need help.”

I said “Mr. Heatherington, I will state right now that I intend to inform the constable who was here that I and Mrs. Crighton observed you trying to gain entry to the room of Paula and her aunt, with the possibility that your intent was to rob them.”

“No! Don’t do that. I didn’t mean any harm. Figured the old biddy wouldn’t be needing anything now and the girl’d be looked after properly. I’m a pensioner, and don’t ’ave anything.”

“Well, if – and that is a conditional statement – if Paula tells me nothing is missing today or later, then I will not submit a report to the police. That means not only missing due to your efforts but to any other intruders. For your efforts, Mr. Heatherington, you are now the watchman.”

“All right. All right. Don’t get yer knickers in a twist. I’ll go back to my own room, an’ I’ll keep an eye out that nobody steals ’er miserable rubbish.”

Heatherington disappeared upstairs and we unlocked the room. Paula went to a chest of drawers and opened the top one and pulled out a bank book.

“Here’s Aunt Matilda’s bank book. Do you want to see it?”

“We’ll look at it together later. Do you have a bag we can put it and any other important things inside? We’ll take them with us, make a list and some notes, but you can keep hold of them. I’m afraid you are rather going to have to act like a grown up, Paula. But I think that will be better than being treated like a baby.”

“Yes, I suppose.” She didn’t seem sure.

In the top drawer were also some documents. We found Paula’s identity card – I noted her name was Paule Ronen – and her French birth record, some letters and some photographs. Also the rent book. It had been paid for a week on Thursday. No. Paid until the following Friday. The rent collector had come early because of Easter.

Paula knew where Matilda's handbag was kept in a small cupboard and we found Matilda's identity card inside – Matilda Bonin, aged 74 – along with a wallet purse with a small amount of money and her and Paula's ration books and coupons. I suggested Paula take Matilda's handbag and eventually use it for herself. I had a notebook and we made a list of things in the room. We gathered some more clothes for Paula and put them in a pillowcase. There were two beds in the room. The one Paula said she used was a very simple cot that could be folded. We probably could have done the moving of the cot and important items in one trip, but decided to take two.

When we were back in 161 with the cot, I asked Maud if there were space in the front room to put one of the wing-back chairs. The kitchen would be too crowded otherwise.

“I've not been in that room for over a year, and then only because Jenny heard noises. It was mice, and we put down some poison.”

I suggested we'd better take a look. Maud got a candle. I could, I suppose, have got the German dynamo torch I had picked up in Belgium from a POW. It fit in your palm and you squeezed a flat paddle to spin the dynamo inside. A bit noisy and the light was uneven, but it did work and didn't need batteries. Or there was my bike lamp. Oh well, the candle was lit now.

The door was stiff from not having been used. Inside the room was essentially empty. The ceiling was missing some plaster where it was clear some shrapnel had come through the window and sliced through the light fitting. There were big gouges out of two of the walls. The frame of the window was gone and the inside of the makeshift cover was all that could be seen. A desiccated mouse corpse was near the fireplace that was blocked like that in my room.

I said “We could sweep and then use this for storage. And perhaps contact the Council to ask if they'd either do some repairs or let us do them.” In my mind I thought possibly it would allow for other options, but then again, the Council might say a complete house should be given to a family and Maud and I would have to move.

“Yes. Paula, hold the candle. I’ll get a broom and dustpan and bucket,” Maud said.

We did a peremptory sweep to get the worst dust out. It had clearly been swept earlier of the plaster and debris from the bomb damage. The dust was bad, and we opened the front door, which allowed some light into the room too. Then we moved one of the wing-back chairs into this room and closed the door again. Paula and I set up her cot where the wing-back chairs had been in the corner. It just fit, possibly a bit close to the cooking stove, but it was in. We put the remaining wing-back chair in front of the boiler. It was going to be a bit awkward. One of us would have to sit on the bed, the other in the chair and one at the table if we were all in the room and wanted to be close to the heat. Well, it was now Spring.

Maud put on a cup of tea, the universal response in England to any difficult situation. A knock at the door came as we were just taking our first sips of tea and finishing the last of a packet of Rich Tea I’d managed to buy at work from an informal and almost certainly dubious source among the workers under my general command, moreover at double the official price.

“Ah. Constable Murray. What can we do for you?”

“Well, Mr. Newman, my sergeant pointed out that we have a deceased person and we need to establish that there are natural causes. If it wouldn’t be too disturbing for the young lady, I’d like to ask her some questions. I’ll be as gentle as I can.”

I ushered Murray into the kitchen.

“Paula, I’m sure you heard what Constable Murray said. Do you think you can try to tell him what he needs to know?”

“I think so. It didn’t seem much different than once before.”

Murray said “Why don’t you just tell us in your own words and I’ll make some notes.”

“Well, I woke up when I heard Aunt Matilda making some noises, like grunting. She did that a month ago, and had some trouble speaking for most of a morning, and her left leg seemed to not work. Then this morning the same, but her face was crooked, and then she sort of went to sleep and I noticed she wasn’t breathing so I got dressed as quickly as I could and went to the telephone box and called 999.”

“Thank you, Paula. I know that was difficult to tell me. Oh. I need your last name.”

“It’s Ronen. R O N E N. My father’s family was Polish and moved to France where he was born. But they were originally also Jewish, which is why Aunt Matilda brought me here in 1940, just before” She started to cry. Maud put her arms round her.

Murray said “I’m sorry to hear all that, but you have been very brave to tell me everything. I think we have enough information to guess that Mrs. Bonin had a stroke or something like it. Unfortunately, we have to be sure.”

“Where have they taken Mrs. Bonin’s body?” I asked.

“I was told the hospital mortuary. It’s likely the coroner will have to provide information for a death certificate, then the body will be released for a funeral. I know you and Mrs. Crighton are ... well, you’ve been kind to Paula, but perhaps you and Paula can talk about that, especially if there’s enough money to cover the costs.”

“We’ll talk about it,” I said, and Maud nodded.

We said goodbye and I closed the door behind him. I thought that actually he could have been more thorough, given that the symptoms might hide a poisoning, such as accidental ingestion of something like Maud said she had used in the front room to get rid of mice. Well, it didn’t change the facts on the ground that Paula had lost her aunt.

* * *

We went back again to Paula's room to get the modest bits of food that were there, as well as gathering as many of any items of clothing, bedding, towels, and other objects that might be of value for Paula. Maud had an old suitcase, and my kit bag was now empty, which allowed for easier transport.

I'd found a small chest of drawers for my room in the last couple of weeks. It had needed some repairs, but the Supermarine people were good about leaving some metal strapping and screws in a newspaper on my desk after I'd talked about it over dinner one day.

Paula's stock of fresh food was some bread and milk, a tiny piece of cheese, two onions, 4 carrots, 3 potatoes and some mushrooms. More useful were two cans of baked beans, one of corned beef, and one of the Nestle's sweetened condensed milk. On our return to 161, we spent some time talking about the meals we would have until Tuesday, when hopefully we would learn more about what needed to be done.

"What'll happen to me now Aunt Matilda is dead?" Paula asked.

Maud looked like she was about to make some comforting noises, but I realized honesty with compassion would be more kind in the long run, so I said "I think that the first thing that has to be arranged is your aunt's funeral. I have met a Mr. Beeston, who was the undertaker for my wife and daughter, and I'll be willing to help you with that. But as Constable Murray said, there has to be a death certificate. I had to get copies of those each for my wife and daughter recently."

"Oh, yes. I knew about them. I'm sorry. I was ... "

"That's all right. You're probably in shock. We'll try to make this weekend as ordinary as possible for you, and assume that on Tuesday things will start to get arranged."

"Where will I live?"

"I honestly don't know. I suspect you shouldn't stay where you have been. Heatherington and whoever else is there aren't reliable neighbours I fear."

Paula nodded.

“Do you know if your aunt had a will?”

“She never mentioned a will.”

“No doubt we’ll need to arrange that you have whatever money and possessions she had. I’m willing to help you sort that out, though we may need a solicitor to do the forms.

“Are you going to school?”

“Yes, I go to the secondary school. I’ve one more year until I can leave. Aunt Matilda was very upset that school finishes here so young. In France she said I would have gone to the Lycée and then to University.”

“Yes, there’s Butler’s new plan, but things got messed up with the War. I went to grammar school, then was apprenticed in engineering at Supermarine. I was lucky.”

“I left at 14,” Maud said. “Worked at one of the department stores, then met Jeremy and we got married. Sometimes wish I’d had more schooling.”

“I believe you go to church at St. Patrick’s, Paula?” I said.

“Yes. I was baptized in France. I’ve seen you and Mrs. Crighton at mass. In fact, on St. Patrick’s Day when there was tea after the mass because it was special.”

“We’ll go together Sunday. Perhaps we’ll write a note to the priest to ask for prayers for your aunt. Hmm. Maud, do you know where the priest lives or how he is contacted.”

“It’s written on the notice on the front of the church where they give information on services.”

“Oh. Right. I should have registered that when I looked the night I came here. We’ll write a note then go and find where we have to deliver it. That will give us a walk this afternoon.”

* * *

The weekend was one of waiting for Tuesday. We went for some walks. We did some gardening, and Paula seemed to like that. On Saturday, I went out to get some bread and managed to find a small – very small – Easter egg at the newsagents. It cost me a coupon as well as a shilling. Still, something for Paula. She was very emotional about it, and at supper insisted we all have a piece. A moment to remember.

On Monday we looked at the letters we'd gathered from Paula's room. That's what we called it now. We'd have to decide whether to pay the rent on Friday. To forestall the matter, we pinned a note to the door of the room asking the rent collector to contact me at Supermarine since Mrs. Bonin had died. We decided to empty the room and store things in the front room of 161. In the unlikely situation that Paula went back to the room, we could return things.

The letters were of four main types. First, some letters from Paula's parents. I had some large envelopes that had already been used that I'd salvaged at work, so we put the family letters in one of those and labelled it. Similarly, we put all the letters from the Red Cross in another. There were just a few, and they really didn't say much, though they did give the office address and a name. I had Paula write a letter saying her aunt had died and that she should be contacted via Maud at 161 Radstock Road, or by telephone via me at my office number.

Mrs. Bonin had a fountain pen in her handbag. We cleaned and refilled it – there was a bottle of ink that we found when we went back to the room for more things – and Paula wrote this letter. Good job I'd bought some more paper and envelopes, and we had some stamps. Odd, I said "we", though it was actually me.

The third group of letters were about Paula's status. It seemed that Her Majesty's government had decided, sometime in 1943, that Paula could be considered a bona fide displaced person and she had been granted residency in the UK, with Matilda her guardian. I put these letters and documents in another envelope and marked them STATUS. There would be a change of some sort regarding the guardianship.

Finally, there were letters to and from friends, mostly in France. These were primarily in French. Paula said “Should I write to them?”

“There seem to be quite a few. At least a dozen people. Why don’t you write down a standard letter saying your great-aunt has died and put it in French and English. Then when we have better information about where you’ll be we can copy the text for each, starting with the addresses that have the most recent dates. Some are surely no longer valid.”

“That makes sense. My French is all in my ear. I need to use the dictionary. I think we brought it over.”

“We’ve cleared the room except for your aunt’s bed and the chest of drawers. I’ll get some friends to help with those tomorrow or Wednesday so the room is empty. We’ll use the front room for storage.”

* * *

Tuesday I went to work as usual, and we had quite a bit of catch-up to do from the holiday weekend break. At dinner I sat with Charlie and told him of the events on Radstock Road. He said he’d come round this evening with his son or a friend and help me move the last items from Paula’s room. Good old Charlie. But the more important events of the day were not revealed to me until I got home.

“There you are Ted. We’ve a lot to tell you.” Maud said.

“Let me wash up and I’ll be all ears.”

By the time I came down to the kitchen and we were sitting round the table – a third chair from Paula’s room was now in use too – there was a cup of tea poured for me.

Maud said, with Paula listening intently, “A Mrs. Carbury from the Welfare came by at about half past 10 to enquire about Paula. We talked for about an hour. In the middle a man came from the mortuary. The coroner has declared death by natural causes and they wanted to know where to send Mrs. Bonin’s body. You’d suggested Beestons, so Paula and I both signed a

form that they would take charge. I hope I did right. I guess signing means I'm responsible for paying."

"If I can use Aunt Matilda's money, you shouldn't have to," Paula said. "It wouldn't be right."

I joined in "On that front, I remembered the name of the solicitor Agnes and I used when we bought our house. He's now died, but his son is in practise and his secretary said they'd be happy to take on any necessities. She had been there when Agnes and I did our house purchase, and she remembered us and said she'd make sure the fees were as small as they could be."

"Oh, that's helpful," Maud said. "I'm certain the money will be important to Paula."

"Now Mrs. Carbury seemed very uncertain what would happen regarding Paula, though she was quite adamant that Paula would have a place to stay and proper food and safety. But it seems there are several complications."

"First, Paula is older than most children coming under the umbrella of the Welfare. They have very few places for a girl her age. Then too, she is technically a French citizen, though she has residency in the United Kingdom. Third, her parents are missing, so guardianship is uncertain. Fourth, she has some money, which seems to be more problem than being destitute for some technical reason. And finally, it seems clear they would try to oppose her staying in the room."

"Then the man from the hospital mortuary arrived and we had to sort that out."

"After he left, I asked whether Paula could remain with us, at least until she left school and got a job. Mrs. Carbury thought that a good idea until she asked about my husband. The whole story took quite a long time to tell, and I could see she thought it unsatisfactory for a girl of 13, well almost 13, to be living with two people who were of opposite sex and not married."

"I also mentioned that there was the front room if we could get it fixed up. That actually might work, but Mrs. Carbury said there was a big waiting list"

for Council repairs.”

I said “I’d meant to call the Council to ask about that, though really since you are the tenant it should be you. However, I’ve the office telephone, so I’ll do it tomorrow. At least I can find out what the policies and situation are. But it wouldn’t surprise me that there’s a long wait, and we probably don’t have the luxury of much time.”

Maud said “Anyway, I asked Mrs. Carbury if she had anything to offer Paula right now, and the only choice would be some sort of emergency hostel, but that is more or less for homeless people, or else a camp for displaced persons. So I said would the present arrangement be acceptable for the time being. She hemmed and hawed, but said there didn’t seem to be much else, and it would save a lot of bother if we were willing. Unfortunately, the new Family Allowance won’t give anything until there are two children in the house.”

“I think there’ll be enough money. What about any legal requirements?” I asked.

“Actually, I completed a temporary guardianship form she had.”

“Did the two of you manage to get to shopping today with all this going on?”

“Yes, we did. Paula didn’t go to school today. I thought she should be here. Oh. And Mr. Beeston dropped by this afternoon to say he would take care of funeral arrangements. I asked him to please keep the funeral as modest as possible.”

There was a knock on the door. I went and opened it and it was the parish priest, Father Walsh. I brought him in.

“I can’t stay long, as there’s a parishioner needing the last rites. I’m only sorry I missed that sacrament for your aunt, Miss Ronen. However, given the request for prayers yesterday, some parishioners have indicated that they wished to help out in a more worldly way and I wanted to let you know that there will be a small fund to help cover funeral costs and you should ask me

in a few days and I'll give you the money. I've also reserved a time on Saturday coming for a requiem mass. If the undertaker can manage that time, it could also be used as a funeral service. However, given we're using the school, it may be a bit difficult to coordinate with them. Possibly we'll have a separate committal at the grave."

Paula said, "Thank you, Father Walsh. It's all very confusing just now."

"Well, it seems you are being cared for here. I know the history of Mrs. Crighton and Mr. Newman. They have had their own sorrows. But I must be along. Good luck to you all." And he was gone in a whoosh of his cassock.

He nearly knocked over Charlie and his son David. Paula and I went with them and within a quarter hour we'd moved the remainder of the objects from the rented room to the front room of 161.

David said "This room wouldn't take that much to put in order, at least to be functional. Wouldn't be Country Life or such, but could work as a bedroom or a parlour. Just need to work out a new frame for some glass."

"I think the Council wants to put it back the way it was, and that gets in the way of a quick fix," I commented.

"Ah, yes. The council pooh bahs never can just get on with it," Charlie opined.

They wanted to be off. Apparently some sort of darts tournament at one of the pubs, so I thanked them profusely and they left.

"My goodness. Do you think we'll get a chance to eat supper?" I asked coming back into the kitchen.

"I've made a sort of shepherd's pie with the corned beef Paula had."

We sat down and ate, largely in silence. We were all a bit exhausted from the day. After supper I decided to go for a walk. Paula was preparing her satchel for school in the morning. Maud was sorting laundry which we'd all

helped to do yesterday. That was Monday, when Maud did the wash, but of course also a holiday. Also, Maud wanted to wash all the linen from Paula's room. I don't know if this embarrassed Paula. She'd been a bit odd about a bath on Saturday – we decided then because the hot water might not run to three baths on Sunday. I wondered how the fuel ration would work. We ought to get a bit more for the three of us. I might have to explore the informal sector for fuel. Or try some of the old RAF tricks.

One of my LAC's had a neat way of using a dried turf of grass and a small copper pipe attached to a can of used engine oil. The pipe was set to drip oil into the turf which he put in a grate and lit. Gave pretty good heat. Not as smokey as one would imagine. I'd have to look around. There was probably a bit of used oil at the works that could be liberated. The War had awakened my larcenous streak.

And there was quite a lot of coal dust in the shed. A bit of cement powder and some cardboard for a form and I could make some "bricks" that would burn in the boiler, cardboard and all.

* * *

I was in bed by about ten, being rather tired. I had an Agatha Christie novel I was reading and was about to turn off the lamp I'd managed to find that was on a small bedside table I'd also acquired second-hand when there was a soft knock on my door.

"Yes," I said.

"May I come in," Maud responded.

"Of course."

She came in.

"I wanted to ask if it was all right that I told Mrs. Carbury that Paula could stay."

“Yes. I’d have done the same.” I motioned for her to sit on the edge of the bed.

“Oh. That’s a relief. I was worried it might annoy you that she’s now in the kitchen and we’re all rather crammed in.”

“We’ll manage, and perhaps the front room can be fixed up. I’ll start asking tomorrow.

“Do you think the Welfare will kick up a lot of fuss that Paula’s here with two unmarried people?”

“It’s a worry, especially if they force her into a hostel that truly is unsuitable, and all to maintain some appearance of propriety,” Maud said.

“There’s lots got to happen before they do that, I should think. And it means work for types like your Mrs. Carbury compared to just letting her stay here.”

“Thanks Ted, you’re a great comfort and keep me going.”

“It’s mutual,” I said. I thought of giving her a kiss. Then I realized it would only confuse things more. Let things evolve.

We didn’t say goodnight. Maud just quietly got up and went to her own room.

* * *

The requiem mass on Saturday morning was surprisingly well-attended. About two dozen people were there. Beeston couldn’t manage to do a funeral that day. It would be Monday morning at 9. I’d told Hall I’d be away for a couple of hours but would stay late. Maud knew and supper would be at 7:30.

With all the fuss about Mrs. Bonin and Paula, my 41st birthday had slipped by on Friday. Not a single "Happy Birthday". In fact, I’d had no such good wishes directed to me since a card from Agnes and Peggy in ’44.

In my dinner hour on the Tuesday after the funeral Maud and I met Paula at the offices of Mr. Rushworth, the solicitor. I brought along all the documents I could think of, including a death certificate that Beeston passed to us.

Rushworth said he should be able to sort things out fairly quickly, then asked for some document showing that one of us had temporary guardianship for Paula. Maud fortunately had put this in her handbag and Rushworth took it and gave her a receipt for it.

“The bank may quibble, but the amounts are not huge and I know the manager, Mr. MacKenzie.”

“He knows me too,” I said.

“Good, it will oil the works.

“Now, Miss Ronen, do you want to take over the account or put the money in something like the Post Office?”

“The Post Office is open longer hours, aren’t they? It’s hard to get to the bank when I’m at school except for Saturday,” Paula said.

“That’s a good point. I suggest that you open an account if you don’t have one, so when we get the money you can put it in easily.”

I thought Paula was showing a great deal of maturity. There had been some tears at the requiem mass, and glistening eyes at the committal. Beeston must be well-connected with Father Walsh, because when I approached him discreetly after the coffin had been lowered – again at Hollybrook – to ask about payment, he said “Not to worry. The parishioners’ collection was a bit less than our regular fee, but enough to cover costs. I’ve already told Father Walsh there’ll be nothing owing. And you’ve enough knowledge of the world to know that I’ll probably get more business when Walsh tells people about my gesture than I’d ever make from collecting the difference.”

* * *

My enquiries about fixing up the front room met with great sympathy and equally great inaction, or rather inability to act. It seemed that there were lots of regulations and policies, or at least perceived ones. Unless the Council workmen did the job, there was inordinate fear of corruption. But the Council workmen had been largely drawn into the Forces and some still weren't demobbed. The ones left were old, lazy, possibly incompetent, or all of the above. After a couple of phone calls, I decided this was not a profitable pursuit.

* * *

Paula's letter to the Red Cross must have prompted someone to check some files, because on Friday May 24 she got a letter. It was not good news.

British Red Cross
Family Reunification Unit

May 20, 1946

Miss Paula Ronen
c/o Mrs. M. Crighton
161 Radstock Road
Woolston, Hampshire

Dear Miss Ronen,

With sadness, I am writing to you to let you know that we have information from former inmates of German concentration camps about your parents.

It appears that your mother, Maria Ronen, died on or about the 31 October 1943 in Auschwitz, almost immediately on her arrival there.

Your father, most tragically, died at Belsen on the 18th of April last year, just after the liberation by the British Army. Unfortunately, his name was mis-spelled and we only very recently corrected the documentation. Your father was, sadly, one of nearly 14000 prisoners who have died since the camp was liberated.

I recognize the extreme weight of this letter, and can only wish for a brighter future for you.

Yours truly,

Anna Radetska (Miss)

We stayed quiet while Paula read the letter. Then she passed it to me, and Maud and I read it together. I think we both expected Paula to weep, but she simply said “I already knew they were dead. I dreamt it. But I didn’t know when or where.”

Perhaps there would be delayed consequences. We could only try to be attentive and supportive. It was one of the days when Maud and I wanted fish and chips, so I prepared to go out to get them. Almost by a sort of habit, though we’d not had much time to develop patterns, I asked if Paula wanted to come with me, and she said yes.

As we walked to the chip shop, she said “I’m not sure if I should be relieved or sad or angry or ... I don’t know what.”

“You’ll probably be all of those in the next few weeks or months. Both Maud and I have been there. When I came in February, I used to hear Maud crying in her room. And I used to have nightmares where I would cry out. One time she had to wake me up. Now I still have the dreams, but I seem to be able to wake myself.”

“Thanks Mr. Newman.”

“Perhaps it’s time to call me Ted. And we’ll see if Mrs. Crighton wants you to call her Maud. I think that Red Cross letter and the way you handled reading it means you’ve mostly grown up. And grown up far too quickly.”

“Yes. I suppose I have.”

* * *

To give ourselves a bit of a change, we took the train to Winchester on the Sunday. We had afternoon tea in a small café. It wasn’t very good. There

was a so-called Battenburg cake, but any hint of almond in the fake marzipan was inhaled in one breath.

But we did have an outing. The cathedral and the old town were a pleasant diversion. We were waiting for the Paula penny to drop, I think, though I cannot say it ever did, at least not in any stereotypical way. But at this point in time we were worried that there might be some spark that would ignite a petrol vapour of overwhelming grief.

As we made our way back to the station in Winchester, I saw the three of us reflected in a shop window. We looked like a regular family of father, mother and daughter. Were we what we appeared to be? As I was about to look away from the reflection, I saw Maud looking too. She had a strange expression on her face.

We were able to have a salad for supper, using some rather young lettuce and radishes from the garden. Our first produce. Maud and I took our baths in sequence – Paula's bath was now established as Saturday – then in pyjamas and dressing gowns listened to the wireless until after the news. Despite the letter on Friday, there was a gentle companionship in the kitchen.

At the top of the stairs, Maud said "I saw you looking at our reflection this afternoon, just as I was. Did it give you a funny feeling?"

"Not so much funny, as familiar. We looked like a family out for an afternoon, rather than what you so aptly referred to as "leftovers" when I came here."

"But we are leftovers, aren't we? Paula included."

"Yes. Or perhaps we were, rather than we are. Time will tell, no doubt. Good night, Maud. Thank you for a nice day and a pleasant supper."

"Good night, Ted. Thank you too for, well, everything."

* * *

On Monday, about mid-morning, my telephone rang.

“Newman here.”

“Hello. It’s Nigel Hughes.”

“Nigel! Good to hear from you. We lost touch around the time of VE Day. What’re you up to?”

“Just got demobbed a few weeks ago and got back to Leicester to take over the family scrap business.”

“Oh. That probably means your Dad got worse. You mentioned he wasn’t well, and that must have been two years ago.”

“Died actually, but in the end it was a release. But he’d had a fairly good life, so all in all not nearly as bad as for you. But that’s not why I called.”

“All right. Better tell me. But first, give me your address and phone number.”

Nigel did this, then said “My reason for calling is that I’ve had a bit of good fortune. East Anglia had lots of air fields, as you know. Well, a lot of them will go back to farmland or other uses, but there’s plenty of scrap and salvage.”

“Yes. Should be an opportunity. Building materials like corrugated iron, pipes, probably old toilets too.”

“Yes, I’ve got some German POWs to work on that. Labour for that sort of work is hard to come by. And the POWs are almost free if you’re a skinflint, but I slip them a bit extra and they work well because they’ve been bored out of their minds in camps. But the salvage I wanted to talk to you about is aircraft parts.”

“Interesting, though here at Supermarine we’re into new stuff.”

“Yes. I know that. And you know that. But we’re both in the parts game, and you’ll likely meet people who may want stuff I might be able to supply.

Besides getting in contact again which I really wanted to do anyway, I wanted to let you know about what I might have so the word could get out.”

“Yes. It makes sense to get the word of mouth going, and I’ll be sure to let anyone vaguely likely to need parts know. Can you send me a summary of what you have?”

“Sure can. If that doesn’t sound too Yank an expression. But top of the list are a few Merlin engines. There were plenty of crashes on landing, and while the fitters got some of the obvious salvage, we’ve found a few buried in mud or set aside and forgotten because they were tied up in barbed wire fencing the plane had plowed through. I think we’ll have the better part of a dozen complete and a fair number of parts. I’m training up some folk to clean and measure to make sure things are up to the mark.”

“Yes. You don’t want to sell something and have it fail. That would kill your business.”

“Well, you of all people will know that the value of a good part is about 1000 times its value as plain metal, which is more or less what we’re paying, though our contract is more or less ‘if you clean up, you get to keep the salvage’.”

“You should be able to do very well, Nigel. I’ll keep a sharp eye out. Be a shame to waste some good Merlins. And we should see if we can get a chance to meet and catch up. I’d better not start in on personal history now, but I’ll write. Oh, I’ll give you my personal address for non-business stuff.” I figured there might be some things that shouldn’t go in letters eyes at Supermarine might see.

Nigel wrote down my address and we signed off. It was good to reconnect with an old buddy.

* * *

We never quite learned how Mrs. Carbury discovered that Paula’s parents were dead. Or maybe she didn’t find out, and her visit on June 3 to talk to Maud was simply a routine one.

When I got home, Maud was upset and angry. “That Mrs. Carbury just about accused me of being a ... whore!” Paula had been invited by a school friend down the street to listen to some records that the girl had got as a birthday present. Her parents had a gramophone.

“Maud. I doubt you’d use that word if Paula were around.”

“Don’t make fun of me, Ted. I’m very cross.”

“I know. And I’m not making fun of you, just noting that you are generally less ... expressive.”

“She’s just a self-righteous busybody. And she has no more to offer Paula now than she did when Mrs. Bonin died.”

“So is she insisting on that hostel "solution", if we can call it such?”

“Not yet. I think that it’s still too much work for her and her minions. But I think she has friends over at the Council who might poke their noses into our tenancy. Probably some sort of rule that a Council house can’t be used for unrelated people. I don’t know. It just worries me.”

“You care about Paula?”

“I do. She’s a good soul. And, if I’m honest, she helps me get out of the funk I was in due to Jenny’s death.”

“I care about her too,” I said.

“Yes. I know. It’s obvious in how you treat her. Not like a baby or an infant, either, but like a friend, which I think is very valuable to her. It could tip her over the edge if they take her away.”

“I care about you, too. I won’t pretend to be in love with you, and I’m sure you’re not in love with me. But we’re friends, and I want things to go well for you.”

“That’s about how I feel about you too, Ted.”

“Well. There is one solution that would put Mrs. Carbury in her place, but I don’t know if any of us are ready for it.”

“What do you mean?”

I said “If we are a genuine family, the Council will have no reason to question the tenancy, and the welfare authorities would have no say on taking Paula away.”

The moment of realization swept over Maud’s face. “You mean that you and I marry and we adopt Paula?”

“Assuming we all think that is a good idea. I suspect we’d be unhappy unless all the parts came together.”

“It’s strange. If someone had suggested such an idea were a reasonable one to me in talking about someone else, like gossiping on the bus, I’d say it was foolish and stupid and ...”

I shut Maud up by kissing her. She kissed me back. Then we heard a key in the lock. Paula was back, since it was time for supper. We ate later than the rest of the street. I quickly whispered “Does Paula know about Mrs. Carbury?” and Maud shook her head.

* * *

After supper, I mentioned that Mrs. Carbury had been round. Maud said “Now that it’s known your parents are dead, there is some concern about me being temporary guardian. Not that Mrs. Carbury or anyone else has a good idea of what they want to do.”

“But I like it with you and Ted,” Paula said in a worried voice.

“The authorities don’t like us being unrelated,” I contributed.

“Meaning that you and Maud aren’t married but living under the same roof?”

“Yes. Most girls your age wouldn’t recognize the issue,” I said.

“Aunt Matilda was English, but lived a long time in France. Such things are more open there, though there is still gossip.”

“Ted and I talked before supper about a possibility, but we’d like to know what you think.”

“What about?”

“About us. The three of us. Ted and I are wondering if it makes sense for us to marry then see about adopting you so we can be a family. Adoptions generally don’t seem to be allowed for single people.”

“But do you want to be married – both of you?”

Paula was looking at us both, her eyes moving from one to the other.

I said “Truthfully, Maud and I have not known each other long, nor had much chance to get to know each other. But we seem to work well together, and we understand each other pretty well, perhaps because of what we’ve been through in losing our families. Without you in the picture, it would be a while before we reached the point of discussing marriage, I think. However, that doesn’t mean that the idea is a bad one. Still, some careful consideration is warranted.”

“I’d be very happy to be your daughter,” Paula said. “You don’t talk down to me, and you don’t coddle me, but you do make me feel safe and valuable.”

“What shall we do now?” Maud asked.

“Why don’t we go for a walk and see if Father Walsh is willing to hear our idea and give us his reaction?”

“All right,” Maud said. Paula was already getting on her jacket.

* * *

It was a bit after 8 when we rang the bell at the house where Father Walsh and two other Catholic priests lived. The housekeeper ushered us into a

room that looked like a dining room with a fairly large table with chairs and asked us to sit down. Walsh came in and joined us.

I said “Good evening, Father Walsh, we wonder if you have time to give us a few minutes to get some advice from you, or if not now, if we can arrange another time?”

“Better now, since you are all here,” Father Walsh said. “How can I help you?”

“We are here because, since Paula has learned that her parents are dead, her living situation with Mrs. Crighton and I may have become tenuous. The house we live in is owned by the Council, and it has been suggested that it is not suitable for unrelated persons. A welfare worker has hinted that Mrs. Crighton and I might be considered inappropriate ... examples.”

“I suppose all of those ideas have some consequence, but I suspect you have a more direct question.”

“It has occurred to us that if we were a family, there would be no discussion. Thus we are wondering if it is appropriate for Maud and I to marry and adopt Paula.”

“It would indeed solve some of the concerns, but marriage is a sacrament not to be treated as a convenience, though many do treat it so.”

“Both Maud and I have known happy marriages. We have had daughters. We have, sadly, lost spouses and daughters to the War. But we do know the pros and cons of marriage. Truthfully, we are not head over heels in love, but there is affection and respect, and we get along better than most couples.”

“Though it is but a short time since your arrival, Mr. Newman?”

“That is true, Father Walsh,” Maud said. “But many marriages made in the last few years have been built on much, much less.”

Walsh nodded. “And what of Miss Ronen? What do you think?”

Paula said “Mr. Newman and Mrs. Crighton have been very kind, but also they have been very straightforward with me. They talk to me as a grown-up, which since my aunt’s death and the realization I am an orphan, I know I must try to be. I would be very happy to be their daughter, if that’s possible.”

“Well, the three of you at least seem unanimous in your wishes. This is a new situation for me. At least, it has never been put so directly to me, though perhaps others who presented themselves for marriage did not admit their concern. But you would make a handsome family, and you do all attend the church, though I understand, Mr. Newman, that you are not a Catholic.”

“That is true. Faith is a gift that has not been granted to me. But you are well-aware that I supported my late wife and daughter in their religious observance, and will do so again. And truthfully, I find mass important to me.”

“Yes. It is a pity some who claim full membership are less regular.” Walsh said resignedly.

“Have you any critical objections to what we suggest?” Maud asked.

“No. I don’t think I do,” Father Walsh said. “It may be just that our recent times put great store in romantic love. Respect and affection have a lot to commend them in marriage. And Paula has said you give her not only practical security, but also a sense of belonging to a family.

“I would only counsel that you give it a few days’ thought. Then if you are still happy with your intentions, let me know by Saturday night so we can call the banns, and you could marry by the end of the month. Unless I mistake your story, there is concern that the Council might act soon. While a Special License would be even quicker, I would advise against it. The banns serve a good purpose in giving people a chance to consider what they are doing. And your intentions will be public, which should be enough to quiet some noise.”

“Thank you, Father Walsh. We’ll let you know.”

* * *

The first banns were announced the following Sunday, and Maud and I got quite a few congratulations. It was also the day of a victory parade in London to celebrate the end of World War II. It had been more than a year since VE Day, with thousands of servicemen yet to be demobilized. Several hundred thousand German POWs were still detained in Britain, largely working as agricultural workers or in rebuilding destroyed roads and buildings. Some probably helped get things ready for the parade.

Sunday afternoon, we wrote to Mrs. Carbury of our intentions as well as the tripartite wish that Paula become our adopted daughter. We were not sure whether the reaction would be a positive one, but by return of post got a short letter saying that our plan would solve a lot of problems. Well, Maud and I were certain that the letter meant one of Mrs. Carbury's problems would be solved. There were, after all, thousands of displaced persons all over Britain and the rest of Europe.

Later that week, we visited Mr. Rushforth to set the legalities in motion. He had managed within a month to probate Mrs. Bonin's estate. He now set the adoption process in motion, but not before advising both Maud and I to prepare wills.

We were a strange trio. Had we put the cart miles ahead of the horse? Here we were, doing the legalities before arranging the wedding or what we would wear to our wedding. We'd not thought about a reception. A cake. A honeymoon.

* * *

Mid-week I came home a bit earlier than usual. Maud was going to be late coming in from a meeting at Mrs. Carbury's office to complete some formalities, and we were still cautious not to leave Paula alone in the house. Perhaps too cautious. In any event, it was a nice evening, so I suggested Paula and I go for a walk.

Without any planning we wandered southwards to the Weston Parade where we could watch the ships in Southampton Water. For the first several

hundred yards, we said nothing. Then Paula asked “Should I call you and Maud Mother and Father?”

“You know, I’d not given that any thought,” I answered. “I’m not sure it sounds right compared to just Ted and Maud. How do you feel?”

“I think I’m more comfortable calling you Ted and Maud. Mama and Papa were what I called my parents, and I think I want to keep them remembered that way.”

“That makes a lot of sense. I know I’ve no wish to displace them in your thoughts, and I’m sure Maud feels the same. For us there are Peggy and Jenny to remember.”

“Yes. I remember Jenny, and I think I may have met Peggy, but I think I was introduced to her as Margaret. I find the English use of Peggy for Margaret difficult.”

“It is a bit silly isn’t it?” I offered.

“Do you miss her a lot?” Paula asked.

“Perhaps I shouldn’t say this,” I said, “but I’m finding it more and more difficult to remember her precisely. I have to really struggle to remember exactly how she looked, the sound of her voice, the pattern of her feet on the stairs when she rushed down to meet me when I came home. I know that I used to have a clear memory of those things, but now the memories seem to be fading, and it makes me very anxious sometimes.”

“Oh, and I thought it was just me having trouble remembering. What you said about Peggy’s voice – that’s what I find terribly hard to remember about Mama and Papa. And lately I remember them talking to me, but my memories have them talking English, which they never did to me. So I get all mixed up inside. But I didn’t want to say anything because it seems like I’m failing them by not remembering properly.”

“We’re all doing our best, but it doesn’t seem enough, does it?”

“No. It’ll never be enough,” Paula said.

We’d reached Archery Road Playground and our rather maudlin conversation was cut short by an errant football from some boys who were playing three-a-side some distance away. Paula kicked the ball hard and sent it back to them.

“Pity they don’t let girls play football,” I commented.

“Yes. We play netball at school, but I think I’d prefer football. You could kick the ball hard and not be so cross with the world.”

“Should I buy a ball so we can do that?” I asked.

“Possibly. But it won’t really change things, will it? The important change is what you and Maud are doing. I’ll do my best to help us be a family, Ted.”

I thought of saying something more, but it seemed that Paula had summed up the situation as well as anyone could just at the moment. We got to the Parade and watched the water and a couple of ships for a few minutes, then made our way back by a slightly different route in time to arrive just as Maud was coming in.

* * *

On Saturday June 15, Enid Brownlow invited us for tea. Maud had invited her to be her matron of honour. Initially, we were just going to have two witnesses, but somehow people around us were absolutely convinced that we should have a proper wedding.

I had already asked George Cummings if he’d stand up for me, and he’d agreed.

Paula had gone to a matinee at a cinema with a school-friend, so there were just the three of us along with Jack, who was busy with a set of wooden blocks. “Those belonged to Fred when he was a nipper,” Enid explained.

She poured our tea, then asked “Did you find the dress you want to adjust to work as a wedding outfit?”

“Yes, and it seems to have avoided moth or mice damage. It needs a touch of adjusting, but I think it will do.”

“I’ll be using my demob suit, I’m afraid,” I said.

“Will you have a honeymoon?” Enid asked.

“I’ll have to talk to Supermarine. I’ve only been back since February, but I actually didn’t have any leave since the beginning of 1944, so I expect they’ll give me a few days.”

“If you bring Paula’s cot over here, she can stay with me for a few days.”

Maud said “Thank you Enid. That’s really generous.”

After we got home from Enid, I said “I’d better sort out things with Supermarine Monday or Tuesday so we know what our options are. Do you have any particular wishes, Maud?”

“Mainly to have a bit of time to ourselves to get used to each other. What about you?”

“Essentially the same. We’ll need to get used to being in the same bed, unless you want separate beds.”

“No. And we already know we can sleep together, even in a single bed.”

“True.

“Did you and Jeremy find comfort in each other’s arms.”

“I suppose. We were younger then, and didn’t think about the comfort of being together quite as much.”

Paula wasn’t home. I put my arms round Maud and kissed her. We spent a few minutes with me leaning against the back door smooching. This was

new to us, but we seemed to both enjoy it. Once again, Paula came home to interrupt us.

* * *

As we were walking home from church the next morning, one of Paula's schoolmates said hello as she passed us by on a bicycle.

I said "It's a pity we only have one bike between us as yet."

Paula responded "It wouldn't make much difference as I've never learned to ride."

"Then we'll have to teach you. It could make getting to school easier."

"Yes. Some of the girls ride to school. It saves them time."

Thus that afternoon, we adjusted the saddle of the bicycle – the fact it was a women's pattern now an advantage – and taught Paula to ride. She learnt quickly, and after an hour or so was moderately competent. After a few evenings of practice, the bicycle was truly hers.

* * *

On Tuesday I already had a short meeting scheduled with Gooch at half past 8. I was able to tell him that my team had the parts management for the Attacker organized and ready to implement. This pleased him. We would also be continuing the Griffon parts system for the Spiteful.

"I gather you have been re-establishing your life, Newman."

"I have indeed, Mr. Gooch. Did Miss Shoreham tell you that I plan to get married on the 29th."

"She did, and I wonder if you would think of taking a short holiday with your bride in Derbyshire. There is a meeting at Rolls-Royce in Derby about the Nene engine on July 5 that I'd rather like you to attend, but I'll be happy to pay for you and your wife to get there and back and for a couple of nights of your accommodation in Derby."

“While I intend to make all such decisions mutual with Maud, I am fairly certain that we’ll be happy to take up your offer, Mr. Gooch.”

As I was walking back to my office, I was about to come round the corner of one of the passageways when I heard the squeak of the tea trolley and Mrs. Noonan, the tea lady, said to someone near my office – it must have been one of the char women who tidied the offices – “Did you ’ear his nibs is marrying his landlady?”

The other replied “Yeah. Wonder how far up the spout she is. Widow and widower and their families not much more than one foot in the grave.”

The gossip mill was churning. I decided not to cause an embarrassing meeting and quietly snuck back down the corridor to the toilet door where I could make a hasty retreat or else appear to be returning from a call of nature.

Mrs Noonan said “They’ve been coming to church regular-like since ’e got demobbed. But ’e’s not a Catholic even. Bit hypocritical if you ask me.”

“Yeah. Can’t think a situation like that can be all innocent.”

I opened and then shut the toilet door loudly and walked briskly back to my office so my footsteps would be heard. The two ladies looked away and pretended to be busy. I was more disappointed than angry.

.

* * *

Maud was indeed happy about the idea of accepting Gooch’s offer.

“Oh. I thought we’d at most go for a night or two to Bournemouth.”

“Well, what about a few nights in London, then go to Derby on the 4th. You’ll have to entertain yourself on July 5 in Derby, but the two nights there will be on expenses, and also the train.”

We found a hotel in Chelsea for our London nights and I used the telephone to book a room with a private bath. Extravagant, but I thought worthwhile.

* * *

161 Radstock Road
Woolston, Hampshire
June 20, 1946

Nigel Hughes,
Hughes Salvage Ltd.
Leicester

Dear Nigel,

Just a quick note to give you some news. Rather sooner than either of us expected, my landlady Maud and I have decided to get married. On the 29th in fact. No, don't jump to false conclusions. The realities are, I think, somewhat more serious and more sensible.

In any event, our honeymoon, if it can be called that, is being subsidized by Supermarine because they want me to attend a meeting with Rolls in Derby on the 5th of July. It struck me that we could come to Leicester on the Saturday, stay overnight and say hello, then come back to Southampton on the Sunday the 7th.

If this fits with your plans, let me know. We'll need a hotel room if you know of something nice. Our budget can cover anything below Claridges or the Ritz.

Your pal,

Ted

I got my answer the following Monday afternoon by telephone.

"Ted – I guess you want me to use that now were in civvy street – you're staying at the Star Inn in Thrussington. My shout, and I won't take any argument. Tell Maud Queen Elizabeth or someone else historic slept there. I just hope they've changed the sheets." Nigel was always a bit of a card.

“Thanks, Nigel. I suspect we’ll take a morning train and arrive on Saturday around mid-day, but I’ll phone you from Derby on the Friday.”

“I’m likely to be out, but there’s someone in the office until half past 5, so you can leave the time the train arrives with whoever answers. I’ll meet you on the platform. Look for a tweed cap, with an RAF badge pinned on the front if it’s crowded.”

* * *

We hadn’t really thought out a reception, and we hadn’t sent out real invitations, but told people we knew we were going to marry at St. Patrick’s at 10 a.m. and have a reception in the garden at the back of 161 Radstock Road. Given the rationing, people were very generous in bringing things. We did manage a modest cake, and I got in some beer and some cider. The main worry was rain. As it turned out, not too bad. And we were fortunate that bread for sandwiches wouldn’t be rationed until July 21. Flour disappeared quickly from shop shelves. Maud and Paula went into shops separately and managed to get a total of six bags. I suppose we were being hoarders. It was hard not to. A lot of long faces and angry comments about this move, since bread hadn’t been rationed for the entire War. The claim was that there were people starving in Germany. Quite a few remarks of “Let the bastards starve”, which ignored the fact that a lot of the starving were the people overrun or displaced by the Wehrmacht.

We were a bit shocked that there were about two dozen people in the garden, but almost everyone brought something to contribute to a modest feast. Enid and George told us to stay until noon, then get on our way. They and Paula would make sure things were tidied up. Paula surprised us by finding a key to the door between the kitchen and the hall – it was probably a very common key – but it would mean we could avoid people going into the rest of the house. Paula said “We’ll want to come and go in the kitchen, but we don’t want people wandering through the house when we’re not around. But they’ll need to come in and out of the kitchen.”

And there was, fortunately, a toilet next to the coal shed.

* * *

By 1:30 we were half way to London. Someone had a car to drive us to Southampton Central. My suitcase and Maud's were more full than I can previously recall. Well, I would need to be presentable on Friday. I'd use the suit that used to be Jeremy's between today and Friday. It was good material but if you looked carefully, it wasn't a perfect fit.

Thinking we may want to have raincoats with us but not always wear them in the summer weather, I'd bought a modest rucksack I'd found second-hand. It would serve us well for this trip. Already we had our coats in it as the temperature was mild.

We took a taxi to the hotel. There was the interesting moment of realization that we were married after I said "Good afternoon. The name's Newman. We have a reservation."

The clerk replied "Ah, yes. Mr. and Mrs. Newman. You're with us until Thursday. I hope you have a nice stay. Could you just complete the entry in the Register, please?"

There wasn't a porter in this hotel, which was pleasant but modest. Our room was just one floor up. I unlocked the door and we took in our luggage. Maud went through to the small bathroom.

"It's nice. I've never stayed in a place like this."

"Yes. It is nice."

We were silent for a moment. I shut the door and put the key in the keyhole.

"Shall I lock it?" I asked.

"Oh, yes.... Should lock it anyway."

"Anyway?" I queried.

"Ted. We're not children. And we just got married."

"Sorry. Just teasing a little."

“I know. I feel a bit awkward, that’s all.”

“So do I. Worse than the first time with Agnes I think. Oh, I shouldn’t have mentioned her. Sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. We’ll get ourselves tied up in knots if we try to tiptoe around the memories. The best thing about you coming into my life is that we tell each other how we’re feeling about things. I don’t think Jeremy and I did that, or not as ... openly.”

Maud was near the window, which had some sheer curtains as well as some heavy ones – likely needed for the blackout. We embraced and then kissed. Not a long kiss, but a nice one.

“Do you want to go out for a bit and look around?” I asked.

“It’ll be light until late. I think I’d like to ... er ...”

“Would it help to sit in the bath together? We really aren’t very familiar with each other physically.”

“All right, but you’ll get the taps. And I hope you won’t be disappointed. I’m not a young girl any more.”

“I’ll love you anyway,” I said.

“Yes. I believe you will. And I you.”

* * *

It was about six o’clock when we stepped out of the hotel and began to explore the area around the hotel. After about an hour we found a small restaurant with a Greek name. We managed to get a pleasant meal with some dishes that were new to us. Mousaka was one. And spanekopita another. And a chicken soup with rice and lemon. Finally some very small and sticky pastry called baklava.

We were offered some red wine called retsina, but I remembered a friend saying the taste was unusual, so I asked if we could just have a sip first.

That turned out to be sensible, as we didn't find it very interesting and chose some beer instead.

"This was really different, Ted. I could get used to being on honeymoon with you."

"That's good. I was a bit afraid I'd caused you pain this afternoon when you sort of gasped and let out a little cry."

"Actually just the opposite. Especially when you kissed me ... er ... all over. Jeremy never did that. The sensation was – I guess I can understand why you thought I was in pain – really intense."

"Actually, I'd never done that with Agnes, either. It just seemed that after the bath, when we could see each others bits ... I was curious, then, somehow, it seemed to be what I should do."

"Yes. Well, I liked it, and it seems you liked it, and we both seem to have a good time. I'm glad we thought to put down a towel. I'd be mortified to think the housekeeping staff would be able to figure out what we'd been doing."

"We are married now, Maud."

"Yes. I've still got to get used to that."

"Do you think we did the right thing to re-use your wedding ring?"

"Waste of money to get another. And you've got Agnes' rings still."

"Are you interested in either of them? They're in the locked drawer by my bed. Well, now it'll be Paula's bed I guess."

"No. Actually I don't have much interest in jewellery. You can't use it for much, can't eat it. You have to worry about it being stolen, and then you have trouble selling it if you need money."

"The jewellers won't like to hear that, but a parsimonious husband will be happy."

“Do you think you’re parsimonious, Ted? I guess there’s lots still to learn about each other.”

“I think I’m cautious with money, but I don’t think I’m afraid to spend. Consider the hotel room.”

“Actually, I was a bit put out that you booked such an expensive room. Or relatively expensive anyway. But having the bathroom turned out to be an inspiration.”

“It wasn’t intentional. More a matter that I don’t like having to get up and put on clothes to go to the toilet in the middle of the night. Or even in the morning before I’ve shaved.”

“That does make sense. And especially after Well, I was very wet this afternoon.”

“It’s been a while for me. And I’m sorry it was rather quick.”

“Talking about it has me wanting to get back to the hotel.”

“Mrs. Newman, I’m not sure that’s proper language for a good Catholic lady.”

“Not even for a good MARRIED Catholic lady. Oh. What about church tomorrow?”

* * *

We discovered that our hotel was only a few minutes walk from the Church of Our Most Holy Redeemer and Saint Thomas More. However, the hotel told us it had been hit by a bomb in September 1940, with 19 people killed. But St. Mary’s on Cadogan Street had an 8 o’clock mass, and the hotel breakfast could be had until 10 on Sunday. Maud decided to take communion, as this fitted the timing. The 8 o’clock service was quite short, with a very modest sermon.

The hotel was able to offer a particularly good traditional breakfast. Where they found the eggs, I don’t know. We accepted the luxury, and the quite

high price. It was worth it.

The rest of the day we spent sightseeing. A lot, sadly, included bomb damage. We'd walk for a bit, then take a bus. I'd had the foresight to go to the bank mid-week and get a roll of tanners and one of thruppenny bits, as well as a good collection of shillings, florins and half-crowns. And of course some notes, to a total of 25 pounds actually. Last night I found Maud had put 15 pounds in her handbag too.

After our enthusiasm to enjoy each other on our return from the Greek restaurant, we'd talked about what we might do during our time, and the topic of money caused us to consider how we should be a bit careful with it, in case there were pickpockets about. Maud thus took half my coin in her handbag, and pinned an envelope of notes in the pocket of her costume jacket. I'd did the same with half my notes in my suit jacket. Some of the coin was in the rucksack with our coats and a lemonade bottle I'd refilled with water. My coin purse was rather full, but it turned out we used quite a few sixpences on the buses we took during the next few days.

I didn't have a camera – it was blown up I'd guess with the V-1 – but Maud did, and she'd bought three films during the previous week. Enid had been present enough to ensure that some pictures were taken of the wedding. Maud and I clearly were not focussed on such matters, to express it aptly, but now I was glad someone was. And I noticed that George's wife was taking pictures, as was Ralph Dixon. We'd have to ask for prints.

We didn't go into any museums or attractions. The places were enough, and there were more than enough to keep us busy for a few days, as we were not in a rush.

One thing the hotel arranged – for a commission of course – was tickets to Sleeping Beauty at Covent Garden on Tuesday evening. For each of us the first ballet we'd seen in person. I think I'd seen some ballet sequences in some film or other, and perhaps Maud had too.

Before breakfast on Wednesday, I did the Prince Charming bit and woke Maud with a kiss. Her response was "I don't think Prince Charming should be wearing pyjamas, or Sleeping Beauty any nightgown."

After the natural consequence of this invitation, we lay in each other's arms. It was still quite early. Well, it wasn't yet 8 o'clock.

"Maud, Are you still having monthlies?" I asked. We lived in the same house, but I had no idea.

"Yes. Probably start on the weekend. Are you wondering about the possibility of babies?"

"Yes. We've talked about all sorts of other things, but not that."

"Would you be bothered by a baby, Ted? Would you want me to have one?"

"This will seem very silly, but I haven't given it any thought. My mind was on other things, and not what we've just been doing. My focus was looking after you and Paula."

"I know, or at least I could feel that. But would you be upset, or would you be happy? I suppose we should have talked about this beforehand."

"I wouldn't be upset. It would be a big change, especially at our time of life. But I'd be happy about a child. I'll also be happy even if one doesn't come about."

"Well, after Jenny, I had some sort of infection, and the doctors said it wasn't likely I'd get pregnant again. I didn't with Jeremy, and we had a pretty normal married life. Though the last few days have given me something a bit different that I didn't experience before."

"Me too. Agnes and I probably had what you called normal married life, and she didn't fall pregnant again after Margaret. She even went to the doctor to ask about it. But she'd had a difficult birth with Margaret. And like you, I think there may have been an infection."

"We'll see what comes, then. And enjoy ourselves too."

"Yes. Maud. I think we will."

* * *

The meeting in Derby on Friday morning was useful to bring me, and Supermarine, up to date on the progress being made with the Nene engine, which was going to power the Attacker. I was also invited to a meeting in the afternoon that was mainly to let different people involved in the management of parts inventories for different Rolls-Royce aero engines get to know each other. Rolls knew that to have quick access to parts, different users would keep modest stocks on hand. However, sometimes it was really helpful to be able to "borrow" a part from another user, since getting items from Derby might take longer than desired, especially if they still had to be made.

This meeting turned out to have a pivotal role in my life, though at the time I regarded it more as a social event. Basically a bunch of men – in that era it was always men, though because women are used to running a household they are often better at inventories and supply matters than men – and we sat around a big table in a cloud of smoke. I was almost the only non-smoker. We each introduced ourselves and gave a capsule summary of our company and our role in it. There was also a man from Rolls who would be keeping a directory of contact information and would maintain an approximate list of what we had on hand from deliveries and orders placed. It was a useful idea, though given Supermarine was building new types, there would be fewer places we might find parts than for some others.

The meeting had a desultory and indecisive discussion of whether there would be any compensation for helping out, but the consensus seemed to be that until we learned how much the process would be used, we would be better to leave things to be worked out as and when there was actual sharing. Still, it was clear that some contacts were made and names and faces were being put together. It would likely not directly help Rolls, but it was fairly certain it wouldn't hurt either.

* * *

During the mid-day dinner break, I found a pay phone and called Nigel and left a message that we'd arrive at around half-past 11. Might as well get an easy morning. The journey by train was only half an hour.

I got back to the hotel at 5 and found Maud taking a rest on the bed. She'd been window shopping. There were now more things available, but anything interesting required points.

We decided to eat in the hotel restaurant and went down around 6. As we were waiting for the head waiter to come to seat us, two of the men from the afternoon meeting came up behind us.

"It's Ted Newman of Supermarine, isn't it?" said the man I recalled was with TCA – Trans-Canada Airlines.

"Yes. If I recall you are Gerald Lapointe of TCA, and you are Michael McPhee of Canadair. Let me introduce my wife, Maud."

"Actually its Gerard, but with the noise in the room, I'm surprised you got our names at all. If you hadn't been sitting one over from me, I'd not have got your name."

The head waiter was hovering. We decided to eat together.

"Not many wives get to come along to these events," Gerard said.

"We only got married last Saturday," Maud answered. "Ted's boss said I could come and be included in the expenses here. We took a few days in London."

"Wow," Michael said. "A working honeymoon."

"We might not have had that. I only got demobbed in February."

"If we weren't in transport and aircraft manufacture, both of us might just be getting out now ourselves," Gerard said.

"I gather the War postponed your marriage," Michael said.

Maud explained how we'd come to meet. She didn't add how our decision was based on situations that were in many respects unromantic. Strange, I now knew that I would – did – love her. We'd do all right together.

Michael and Gerard were explaining their names.

“Given my name, you’d think of me as the French Canadian,” Gerard said. “My grandfather was a true Quebecker, “pure laine”, but he fell in love with a Scots lass whose husband died of some disease or other on the boat over. And now my generation mostly is anglo, though I manage some of the joual or local dialect. Now Michael here is the true French-Canadian.”

“Yes. My great-grandfather was orphaned in the cholera epidemic when the Irish were escaping the potato famine. He was adopted by a French-Canadian family near Trois Rivières. The Archbishop of Québec asked families to do this, but the adoptions weren’t formal, so they kept their names. There’s folklore that the orphans asked the bishop if they could keep their names. I don’t know if that’s true. And from what I’ve heard in my family, the families wanted the Irish kids as servants or cheap labour, though apparently my great-grandfather said he was well-treated compared to Ireland. But then he married a local Québec girl and I grew up with French first, and learned English on the street in Montreal from Jewish kids.”

“There’s a Jewish community there?” Maud asked.

“Yes, several streets. Quite busy.”

“We are looking after a French girl who is an orphan because the Nazis killed her parents in the camps. The father was of Jewish origin. We plan to adopt her.”

“Will it be easier to adopt her now you are married?” Gerard asked.

“Probably,” Maud said. “I think it advanced our decision to get married, but I can tell you that I’ve not been happier for a long time.”

“Me too,” I said. To change the subject, I asked “Was your visit here useful?” directing the question to both.

Michael said “Canadair is building a variant of the DC-4, but rather than use the Pratt and Whitney radials that Douglas puts in, we’re going to use

Merlins. Hence the interest in part.”

Gerard added “And TCA is already flying Lancastrians, so already have a need for a reliable parts supply. But both of us were also here to learn about what might be coming down the pipe.”

“Yes, I was here to get up to date on the Nene. I’d guess you’d be looking into the Dart turboprop?” I answered.

“We’re taking notes on the whole range, but met with the Dart people this morning so missed the Nene presentation,” Gerard said.

“When do you head back to Canada?” I asked.

“Monday. Long, noisy flight on a Lancastrian from Prestwick. You folks?”

“We’re going to Leicester tomorrow to see an old RAF pal before we go home on Sunday. He runs a salvage operation. Actually, might be of interest to you. He’s got about a dozen Merlins and some parts that he’s getting off some of the wartime airfields in East Anglia.”

“So they’re used ones, and also the parts?”

“Yes. But Nigel was with me in France and Belgium and Holland. He knows about keeping records on parts and hours of service etc. No doubt someone will get some decent engines and parts from him at a good price, and he’ll do well at the same time.”

“Be good to have his name and address for you, Gerard,” Michael said.

“Or you could come with us tomorrow morning and meet him. The train journey is only about half an hour from here, so you could make it there and back easily, though I don’t know when you were planning to go up to Scotland.”

“We’ll go up to Glasgow Sunday via Edinburgh, then get a car to Prestwick with the TCA crew. We don’t carry lots of passengers on the Lancastrian. Plenty of mail, of course.”

“Will you be able to use the new Heathrow airport soon?” I asked.

Gerard said “Supposed to be under wraps, but I think come September you’ll see something in the news.”

Michael said “Maybe we should go with Ted and Maud tomorrow. We’d have to entertain ourselves here anyway, and if Ted’s friend has anything useful, it would be a feather in your cap, Gerard.”

* * *

Nigel was on the platform. Our group turned out to be a bit of a nuisance blocking foot traffic so we had to move to the side of the platform and let the rush move past us.

After introductions, Nigel said “When I mentioned the stuff I’d found to Ted, I never thought he’d spread the word so fast, but I couldn’t be happier. I just hope we won’t bore Maud too much if I take you round the yard to show you the operation, then we’ll find something to eat.”

“That would be very good,” Gerard said. “Actually, if we just have a quick look at what you have and exchange addresses, then you can let us off somewhere interesting in the town and we can play tourist before going back to Derby, and you can catch up with Ted and Maud.”

“That works for me,” Nigel said.

Nigel had a ten-year-old Rover saloon. Well, all motor cars now were old, since no new ones had been marketed since 1939. It was, for England, a fairly big car, but five of us made for a squeeze in the back seat. Fortunately, the Hughes Salvage yard wasn’t far from the station.

Much of the yard was a typical scrap yard, and there were a few men working moving some cut up metal into heaps with a crane that had a magnet. However, Nigel led us to an area with a pair of large Nissen huts, each about 100 feet long. Each had a large garage-style door, but we went in through a standard personnel entrance. Inside it was spotless, with tables

having different parts laid out beside measurement jigs. There were several Merlins on engine stands.

“Nice operation,” Michael said.

“Yes. Not what I expected,” Gerard added.

“Wish we’d had such tidy conditions at Thorneycrofts,” Maud added.

I’d forgotten that she’d been working there. Stupid of me, and showed typical male prejudice.

There really wasn’t much to talk about now, since show trumped tell by a good margin. After a walk about both sheds, Nigel and the two Canadians exchanged information and we drove back towards the center of town. We let Michael and Gerard off near the Cathedral that they wanted to look at and Nigel drove us out to the Swan Inn which was about 8 miles north.

We registered and put our luggage away while Nigel waited for us in the bar, where we joined him for something to eat. There were some Cornish pasties and a good soup on offer which hit the spot.

“So tell me more about the two of you,” Nigel said.

Maud related the story, then asked,

“What about you, Nigel? You’ve not mentioned any wife or family. I hope you haven’t had the sorrows that Ted and I have.”

“No. Not very interesting. Had a girlfriend that I’d been going out with since 1938. We were starting to talk of a wedding when the war started. And we kept talking right into the end of 1942 when I was told I was going to join the RAF. Sort of like Ted, since the salvage yard was considered essential industry and I was in a reserved occupation. At least until they needed my special skills.”

“For some reason I got a higher rank as Flight Lieutenant,” I said.

“Probably because I gave some toffy-nosed twit in the administration a bit of sharp tongue,” Nigel confessed. “Anyway, Josephine decided that she didn’t like writing letters when she could be dancing with some Yank from the US Army Air Force. Except his plane was blown out of the sky by one of those Messerschmidt Komets after he’d put a bun in her oven. She and the kid moved away sometime soon after VE day.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, Nigel,” Maud said.

We spent the rest of the day in some pleasant villages. I suppose we could have done the tourist things in Leicester, but it was good to see some countryside that didn’t have bomb craters and also to walk along some country footpaths. Nigel took us to the Three Crows in Barrow upon Soar for dinner. He did let us pay for drinks before dinner at least. The food was, given the strictures of rationing, very good.

Fortunately, he recognized that we were tired from a busy day, and we were back at the Swan by half past eight. After a small argument, and the assurances that a local driver would serve as taxi to Loughborough which was nearer than Leicester for the train, Nigel paid for our accommodation and we said our farewells.

* * *

We didn’t have a bath in our room in the Swan. Too ancient. But they had put in a basin with hot and cold running water. We each took a good wash with warm water. A bit of a luxury. I shaved to save having to in the morning. We fell into each other on the bed and, in a manner that was a bit different from other times, simply enjoyed ourselves in a quick and rather unfussy coupling.

Lying in my arms afterwards, Maud said “It was a nice day. I’m glad you brought Gerard and Michael with us. Perhaps it will help Nigel’s business.”

“I hope so. And I hope he finds a nice girl. Well, woman. He’s got to be nearly 30, if not a bit more.”

“Yes. And a pity for the woman and her child.

“What did you make of what Gerard said about TCA looking for someone like you to run their parts operation? When you said your brother was in Calgary, he more or less implied you should be jumping to get to Canada. And that Joseph should have told you of the opportunities in Canada.”

“I’m not sure. Until Gerard mentioned the possibility, I’d not given any thought to leaving England.”

“Perhaps you should at least write up your qualifications. It’s likely a good idea even if you don’t send them. But somehow I think you should send them along with a whole lot of questions. And I should find out what I can about life in Canada.”

“It’s a big place. I think Montreal is not much more than half way to Calgary from here. I’m exaggerating a bit, but the scale is about right.”

“Hard to imagine.

“From what they said, there’s a lot of French spoken. And a Jewish community. I wonder what the education is like. It could be good for Paula as a place to finish growing up.”

“Maud, the more I get to know you, the more I like you.

“Why don’t we talk to Paula and also all three of us start to learn more about Canada and about Montreal as well as how we might get there. And I’ll get my history written down so we can send it to Gerard.”

Maud said “And Mr. Rushworth can now have a copy of our marriage license to start adoption proceedings.”

* * *

We were home before six o’clock on the Sunday. The journey was straightforward, though we did need a taxi across London between the stations. That was something that should be fixed. The railways could at least negotiate with London Transport and work out single tickets that allowed passengers to transfer more easily.

When we got in, we found Paula in the kitchen making us our supper. She was doing soup. As she put it, “I didn’t want to make something that would spoil if you were late.”

Before we’d left, I’d packed up my things and put them in the front bedroom. Paula and Enid had set up my old room for Paula. It looked different. Feminine.

It was strange being in the front bedroom. I’d hardly been in here at all. I carried up our suitcases and after she visited the WC, Maud came in.

“Hope I don’t make you feel pushed out of your own room,” I said.

“It was good to have a few days to get used to each other. It’ll be all right. We talk to each other. There’s bound to be some friction on some things.”

“The smaller the issue, the larger the fight,” I suggested.

“Probably true, but let’s hope nothing too annoying.”

“Shall we eat outside? It’s rather nice out.”

* * *

“Did you get the postcard of Tower Bridge,” I asked Paula.

“Oh. Yes. I meant to say thank you. It was nice to get that.

“Did you have a nice ... honeymoon?”

“We did, Paula. Very nice,” Maud said. “Ted and I haven’t known each other very long. During this last week, we’ve found we rather like being together, at least I like being with him.”

“Yes, I think we got along much better than I would ever have imagined. And we talked and learned more about each other,” I added.

“Did everything go all right here?” Maud queried.

“Oh yes. Mrs. Brownlow seemed to like having me there to help with Jack at bedtime. He’s a bit of a terror about wanting to stay up. I read him a story each night.”

“Do we owe Enid any money for food?” Maud asked.

“I had some money. I took 7 and 6 from the Post Office account and I used it to buy some of the groceries for here, but I split some of the items and gave her some. She said she didn’t want to take anything, but I could tell it was helpful. So, we had a sort of mock argument, and then she took the things.”

I said “Thank you Paula. We’ve also got a little present of a bottle of sherry for her. Actually got it before we got married. And one for George too. We’ll take them round later in the week.

“Also, we met some people who gave us some ideas about the future. Well a possible future for us.”

“Oh. Do tell. I’m all ears.”

“Well, first, are you still all right with us adopting you?”

“Of course. Where would I go?” Paula looked a little worried.

“It’s what Maud and I want, but it would be bad if you were just being polite.”

“No, No. I’ve not felt I ... belonged ... for a long time. Aunt Matilda really was not doing very well. She wasn’t always making sense. I had great fear she was going ... funny. Like old people sometimes do.”

This was news, but it made no difference now.

“Well, we’ve got the marriage certificate copies. Did you take one round to Mr. Rushworth?”

“Yes, on Monday on the way to school. I put it through his letter box.”

“I’ll phone tomorrow and ask if everything was in order, though I know it was.”

Maud said “In Derby, we met two Canadians from Montreal. One of them works for Trans Canada Airlines and the other for Canadair. They were looking into engines and engine parts. Mr. Lapointe – the TCA man – said there could be an opportunity for Ted with them. We’re going to at least investigate, but the decision has to be from all of us, because it’s a big step.”

Paula said “We had Canada in geography last year. It’s so big. I think Ted said his brother Joseph is in Calgary, but isn’t Montreal at the other end?”

“Not quite, but you are more or less right. Perhaps we should get a small atlas.”

“I’ve got my school one,” Maud said. “I always liked looking at the maps. I’ll go and get it.”

Paula and I were quiet, watching the early evening sun of summertime drift to the west. When Maud came back with the atlas and a ruler, we moved our chairs close, Paula on one side and me on the other of Maud.

Maud said “There we are. If I take the ruler I get about 4 inches between Montreal and St. John’s. And – where is the scale? Oh. There it is, 250 miles to the inch. So a thousand miles.”

“But St. John’s is in Newfoundland. That’s not part of Canada, is it?” Paula said.

“No. You’re right, but it gives us an idea of the size of the land. And Montreal to Calgary is ... 8 inches or 2000 miles as the crow flies.

“Ted, how far is Montreal from here?”

“I think 3000 miles give or take a few.”

“Wow!” Paula said.

“Anyway, Paula. Did you learn that a lot of people in Montreal speak French?” Maud asked. “Gerard said there’s a lot of English too.”

“I think I do remember something about that, since they were a French colony until 1700 and something when a man named Wolfe captured the city of Québec. I remember because the teacher left off the *accent aigue* on the e.”

“It looks like well over a hundred miles between Québec and Montreal,” I said.

“If we go there, we’ll have to get used to thinking of these distances,” Maud said.

I added “Gerard mentioned there was also a quite active Jewish community in Montreal. I don’t know if that is of any interest to you, Paula, but it could be a start to learn more about your family.”

“Perhaps. But I’m not sure whether I want to know.”

* * *

Bureaucracies usually grind slowly. However, in the case of our application to adopt Paula there was, it seemed, an almost indecent haste to get her file off the books of the welfare agency. By August 1, Paula was officially our daughter. We celebrated by taking a trip into the New Forest on a Saturday by bus and having a picnic. The New Forest ponies watched us carefully from the other side of a dry-stone wall which fortunately kept them from our sandwiches. Especially now bread was rationed. We were also back to the old National Loaf. Nutritious, but not very appetizing.

Paula and Maud spent some time in the library to learn a bit more about Canada and about Montreal. They wrote to Canada House – we’d seen it in London – and asked for brochures about emigration to Canada. Within 10 days, a packet came which listed the technical requirements but also described some aspects of Canada and Canadian life.

Just as we got the adoption confirmed, we decided to start to get passports or related travel documents. Whether or not we emigrated, it seemed a good idea to get our documents in good order. For Maud and I the passport seemed relatively easy, and it appeared Paula could go on either my or Maud's passport, though I feared her background might cause some concerns.

I wrote to Gerard Lapointe within a week after the end of our honeymoon. I had written up my background and work history and Maud took it to a typist who prepared it in 3 copies, so I'd have one for myself and another to send somewhere else if need be. I sent it off with a letter saying I'd be interested in learning what opportunities TCA might have for me.

* * *

On August 23, I got a letter from Gerard on TCA letterhead. It was an offer of a job running the TCA parts supply and inventory.

Maud said "It says a salary of \$6000 per year. How much is that?"

"About 1500 pounds," I said.

"1500 pounds!" Maud exclaimed. "Isn't that about one and a half times what you earn now?"

"Yes. And my salary here is considered quite good."

"Does that mean we're going?" Paula asked.

"I think so," I said, "but we need to think of what we'll need to do."

Maud said "They say we'll be given a place on one of the Lancastrian flights and an allowance to ship 5 hundredweight of boxes by sea. So, it is a good offer. Our main concern is going to be having some money when we get there, since there are exchange controls. I think we'd better check those in the next day or so."

I wonder where Maud learned about exchange controls. She must have been reading something in the newspapers. But she was right. It turned out that in

March the amount a person could take out for travel was reduced from 100 to 75 pounds, and from 50 to 40 for those under 16. So, 190 pounds for all of us. It likely would not go far in Canada.

In the evening of the 24th, Saturday night, the three of us decided after supper that we'd accept the offer. It would, of course, be conditional on getting immigration papers – the letter of offer said we could use it to get our immigration papers via Canada House. We would need medical examinations. The letter asked us to reply to Gerard Lapointe of our acceptance and direct any questions to him.

We wrote the letter of acceptance that night. I mentioned that I would follow-up with some questions once we had contacted the Canadian immigration people.

* * *

I decided to be open with Supermarine about the offer. I'd been with them a long time, and they'd treated me well. I telephoned Miss Shoreham in the morning and told her what was going on and that I'd like to tell Mr. Gooch myself. I figured Miss Shoreham would know very quickly anyway, and her reaction was

“Is it a good offer?”

“They're offering \$6000 a year and relocation to Montreal.”

“You really can't ignore that,” was the reaction of a very practical woman.

Gooch also took the news with equanimity. I mentioned that there were still a number of procedures to satisfy, so that it was not a *fait accompli*, and I would still be around for a while. Also, I told him of my conversations with James Hall, and that I thought there would be no serious issues of continuity.

“It's been a turbulent couple of years for you, Ted. I hope it will go well for you.”

“And for you and Supermarine, Mr. Gooch.”

* * *

The next day in the canteen I spotted Desmond Snow who ran the accounting section.

“Desmond. May I sit with you and get your ideas on something?”

“Sure, Ted. Not usual that you fellows in supply and inventory need too much help.”

“It’s a bit of a personal matter, actually. I’ve been offered a rather decent salary by Trans Canada Airlines in Montreal.”

“Yes. They can out pay us by a long mile. Let me guess. You’re wondering how you manage to move as much of your money as possible.”

“Has someone else asked you before?”

“Actually, wondered about it myself, mainly for my son. I’m too old to be emigrating, but I think it might be right for him.”

“Do you have any advice?”

“Well, the controls won’t let you convert much or take it out in currency. There’s apparently a premium market where you sell your pounds at a discount, but I’m not clear on whether that is properly set up yet. There’s the under-the-counter ways – some people smuggle notes out, or sovereigns if they have any. The fur and diamond trade are rife with fiddles to export stuff paid for in pounds and sold in dollars. Also, some art works and things like that. Trade like that’s legal if the value declared is fair, but full of bureaucracy and spivs. "Fair" is a slippery word.”

“What about something paid for here and sold there that is fair value?” I asked.

“That’s likely legal. Especially if you are resident there when you receive the dollars. UK law should not apply to a resident of Canada. The problem

is finding something you can buy here and ship over. All the ration coupons make that awkward, but perhaps not impossible.”

* * *

“Can I have a quick word?” I said after dinner, poking my head round the door of James Hall’s office.

“Yes. Come in. I’m working on setting up some tracking mechanisms for the Nene using your notes from the Derby meeting. But I’m not in the middle of anything critical.”

“It’s a consequence of that meeting I wanted to talk to you about.”

“Oh. I hope there’s no disaster brewing. Like the Vulture engine.”

The Vulture was an attempt by Rolls Royce to put two Peregrine V-12 engines together as an X-24 engine – four banks of 6 cylinders in an X arrangement of 42 litres displacement. It tended to shake itself to pieces. The slightly different H-block of the Napier Sabre had similar complaints, though it did get into production, particularly for the Hawker Typhoon.

But to return to James Hall, I said “No. I hope it’s nothing like a disaster. The thing is, I met a man from Trans Canada Airlines there, and they’ve offered me a rather good salary to work with them in Montreal. Assuming all the formalities work out – and there are an awful lot of them – my current job will be open again, and I’ll be recommending you take over.”

“Thank you Mr. Newman. You’ve honoured your promise – well, it looks like you will assuming things all go through satisfactorily.”

“Yes. Fingers crossed. Anyway, I wanted to let you know so we can make sure things here don’t see any bumps in the road. In particular, I suggest we write to all the people who were at the meeting and introduce you. For now, we needn’t mention I may be leaving, just stress the importance of maintaining contacts. And I’ll ask you to be a bit aggressive in taking notes and asking questions for the same general purpose.”

“That makes sense. And won’t hurt even if things should fall through, but for both of us, I really hope they don’t.”

* * *

I had to take a day off in the second week of September, and Paula missed one of the first days of the new school year – if we stayed in England it would be her final year – so we could go to Canada House. Fortunately, we had an appointment, as there were lots of people queuing to learn how to emigrate to Canada. Since I had an offer of employment, we were moved right to the front. We each had a medical examination, and all of these were satisfactory.

We wondered if Paula’s origins in France would cause trouble, but though all the documents we had for her were examined, and some notes were made, nothing was said. The very busy state of the offices seemed to work in our favour. About half-past three we were given a stamped and initialed document to present to immigration officials on landing in Canada, wished good luck and rather unceremoniously pointed to the exit.

There was a Lyons Corner House opposite Canada House and we went in and had Welsh Rarebit, iced buns and tea. Except Paula had coffee.

“I wanted to remember a bit of when father and mother were still alive in France. Here in England, I almost never smell coffee.”

Then she looked a little stricken. “Oh. I hope that didn’t mean I’m not grateful to you both and”

I said “Paula, in our family – and we are a family – we are never going to be afraid to talk about the other families we belonged to. If we try to do that, it will only be difficult and, besides, we should remember all the people we loved.”

* * *

161 Radstock Road
Woolston, England
Sept 10, 1946

Gerard Lapointe
TCA
Dorval, Quebec, Canada

Dear Gerard,

This is to let you know we now have passed our medicals and have our immigration permit, so now we will await confirmation that we fly to Montreal on October 28.

Following your instructions, we are packing household items and will arrange for them to be shipped by sea to Montreal with TCA as our contact address.

As you are aware, we are restricted to bringing only 190 pounds sterling with us. Nigel Hughes has been in touch to confirm you have asked me to arrange payment for a Merlin engine priced at 450 pounds FOB your Dorval address so you can evaluate one of his inventory. Since I will be repaid in Canada at the official exchange rate, it will allow us to bring our modest monies. We have been advised that this should not contravene British exchange controls. Given that a new Merlin was priced at 2,000 pounds, TCA should get a bargain, though I am sure you -- ultimately including me -- will be giving it a thorough evaluation.

We look forward to our new start in Canada.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Newman and family.

161 Radstock Road
Woolston, England
Sept 10, 1946

Lawrence Lorimer
80 Avenue 19e, Apt 1
Lachine, Quebec, Canada

Dear Fifty,

Since you left to go back to Canada last year, I've been meaning to get in touch, but have had a rather hectic time.

Given it is less than 12 months since we said farewell, I've returned to Supermarine, got married, adopted a daughter, been offered a job at TCA, and will be coming to Montreal by air, leaving London October 28. So maybe you'll forgive me not getting in touch beforehand.

It was my new daughter, Paula -- actually Paule, since she is originally French and her partly Jewish parents were murdered in the Nazi camps -- who pointed out that Lachine is a Montreal suburb neighbouring Dorval. I'm hoping that we can meet and catch up soon after our arrival. Moreover, we'll be very interested to learn of places where we can live, as I'll be surprised if accommodation is not in short supply, as it is here.

Looking forward to reconnecting,

Yours sincerely,

Ted Newman (with Maud and Paula)

Maud said "Why do you call him Fifty?"

"His initials are LL, in Roman numerals Fifty Fifty, which got abbreviated."

"You men! Always giving each other nicknames."

* * *

September 21 -- the equinox -- we took a walk on Southampton Common. As we walked, we talked and imagined what we might find in Canada.

"It will be very cold in winter. We'll need good clothing and boots," Paula said.

"If we could find some arctic clothing that didn't need points, we could use it instead of straw to pack the crockery," Maud mused.

"That's a good idea," I said. "What about the Friday market? Might they not have some stuff being disposed of by the military?"

“I’ve not been to the Friday market for at least a year,” Maud said.

“Given Paula will be leaving the school soon, why don’t you send a note saying you need her with you next Friday and go and see what you can find?”

“Yes, we can take a look.”

“Take plenty of coin and a few ten-bob notes,” I suggested.

“What about boots?” Paula said. “Wellingtons are no use in the cold.”

“Any chance they might have some at the Market?” I asked.

“Perhaps we’ll have to wait to get boots in Canada,” Maud said. “But we’ll look. Though how will we buy things for you?”

“Coats can – perhaps should – be loose fitting. I’m not so much different in height from you, and you can take a tape measure and see how much my current coat is loose on you if you pull it out at the front. For boots, we can make some cardboard outlines of my feet. And again, we don’t want boots too tight. I can wear double socks in the cold.”

Maud said “We may be building castles in the air and they’ll have no suitable items. On the other hand, if we can pick up some woollies, they’d be useful. I wonder if such items would be saleable in Canada.”

“No idea. But good woollens could be sensible, as long as we pack them with mothballs,” I answered.

“Mothballs. Paula. Make sure we get some.”

* * *

80 Avenue 19e, Apt 1
Lachine, Quebec, Canada
October 1, 1946

Dear Ted and family,

Great to hear from you. I'm writing my phone number at the bottom. If my girlfriend answers, you may want Paula to talk, as Denise' English isn't so good.

And her cousin Marthe isn't much better with English, but she does have a house, and a daughter Lise, but her husband Henri was in the mess at the Walcheren Causeway and didn't make it. She's had a couple of boarders, and they haven't been good experiences, so when I mentioned you had a family, she suggested that at least it would be worth a try if you are interested. Given the shortage of accommodation, I've taken a chance and given her a bit on account to cover October. You'd have two bedrooms and share the rest of the house, which is about 4 miles from the airport. There are buses, but you'll probably want to try to find a car or someone to pool with.

I've got myself a small trucking business. Not much different from the RCAF except I get to take the risks and keep the profits.

So you're in the loop, I called TCA and eventually talked with Gerard Lapointe. He was glad that I found you a place, and that you can go there straight away. I'll meet the Lancastrian. Lapointe says to start work formally the following Monday but to phone when you've got your head straight after the long flight.

Should explain that I came home to find my wife shackled up with her former boss. We're getting a divorce. Will fill you in when you're here.

Your buddy,

Fifty

Maud said "Fifty is really being helpful. I hope we can fit in all right with Marthe and Lise."

"I speak a little French. School stuff plus what I picked up in Normandy. We'll learn."

I wrote back to Fifty immediately to let him know we'd take up the offer with Marthe. We'd have to see how things worked out. Two women in one

kitchen could be another war.

* * *

We'd already started to organize our belongings and had found some tea chests to pack. I knew where to get things weighed, and, being in Southampton, we should be able to find a ship going to Montreal. Weighing the chests was something that would still be awkward to arrange to check that we did not go over 5 hundredweight. It occurred to me that the Canadians might mean the short measure of 100 pounds rather than the Imperial 112. A big difference. When I talked to Maud about this, she suggested we should just assume Imperial and that if we were wrong it would likely be overlooked.

Since July, Paula had been collecting straw and newspaper and other things to serve as packing materials. A necessity that neither Maud nor I had registered we would need, and which would be difficult to find in a hurry. Then, as mentioned, we thought of using clothing.

Sometime in the middle of July, I'd managed to figure out that the light in the front room could be made to work. The room was now our headquarters for organizing our belongings. On one side of the room were the things that we were going to ship, though we had some pieces of cardboard with the names of things to be shipped but that we still wanted to use.

On the other side of the room we put the things to sell, and indeed started to tell people about them. The newsagent charged threepence to put up small announcements on 3 by 5 cards. We used this to advertise some of the furniture and possessions to be sold. Maud was the only one of us to have any things really. We did have the furniture we were using, but decided to sacrifice some of it and use the tea chests instead of the table. We used our suitcases and other bags instead of chests of drawers. Gradually we got down to just a couple of kitchen chairs, and then I managed to make some bomb-damaged ones usable, though far from visually attractive. Two legs of each of these chairs were sticks cut from tree branches Paula and I picked up when the Council were pruning. They did this so that vehicles, particularly buses, would not hit the trees. These make-shift seats allowed the kitchen chairs to be sold.

The Friday market provided a few items worth packing and using as packing material, but only a few. We'd need to find proper cold weather clothes after getting to Canada.

Gradually our house looked more and more like we were camping, but we were counting down. Maud most, and Paula second, wanted to make sure things we were shipping were well-packed. Eventually, all but the most dilapidated dishes, pots, pans, and utensils were in the tea chests.

Friends who had taken wedding pictures were asked for double copies of prints, for which we would pay, and we put one set in a tea chest and another in one of the suitcases. At my suggestion, the three of us put together photos from our previous lives and paid a photographer to copy them for us so we could have two copies.

One night at supper, I said "Somehow I feel more unsettled than at any time during the War. I think it's the waiting for the "off" like the racehorses waiting for the tape to go up."

The others murmured their agreement.

* * *

Fred Brownlow stepped down from a ship in Southampton docks in the second week of October. Maud looked after Jack while Enid went to the dock, as we rightly anticipated the disembarkation would take some time. Fred would have leave for a number of weeks before he was officially discharged. Enid hoped he would, in that time, be able to find a job.

It was a pity we'd be leaving so soon after Fred got back. Enid had said, one evening sitting in our garden drinking tea, "I'm sort of nervous that we'll have drifted apart and have trouble getting along. It's been four years since we've seen each other, and I'm not sure how I'll feel getting into bed with a man who's essentially a stranger."

Maud said "Better just tell Fred that. You're not saying you don't want him. Just the opposite. You're saying you want him, but you want to go forward together."

“Thanks Maud. That could help both of us. There’s a whole lot of thinking and dreaming, but two separate sets of thoughts and dreams when you’re that far apart for so long have got to be different.”

“Perhaps I wouldn’t have been able to suggest that before Ted came. I never told you that we each discovered that we each had ... problems. He heard me weeping a few times, and I had to wake him from a nightmare. He used to have them pretty much every night, crying out and such, but one was particularly bad and I woke him. Then he said he could hear me weeping sometimes and we started to talk. And things gradually got easier for both of us. He still has the bad dreams, but now says he can wake himself up because he can realize they are dreams. And I still have weepy moments – more about Jenny than Jeremy, probably since more time has passed. But Ted and I share our feelings, and I’m closer to him than I ever was to Jeremy, who I loved deeply, but we didn’t really talk about emotions.”

“Yeah. I’d better see if I can get us to talk.”

“Make time to go for walks and just be together. Ask him about India and what he saw. The things that he liked and didn’t, particularly if he can describe things. Maybe see if there’s pictures or magazine articles or library books. You each need to know about the lives you had. And he probably knows nothing about how you were working on building landing craft at Thorneycrofts like I was.”

“Yes. That’s true. And all the little things about Jack growing up. Jack will have to get used to having a Daddy again. Well, to having a Daddy – he was too young to know when Fred went off to war.”

* * *

Maud and I were in bed fairly early and she was lying in my arms.

“Ted, I got Paula a belt today for ... well, you know.”

“Has she started monthlies yet?”

“No. We had a quiet talk the other day. Surprisingly, Matilda had already talked to her about such things. And sex, enough that she asked when we might have a baby.”

“You told me last week we’d have to postpone some fun yesterday, so I’m guessing I’ve at least 9 month’s grace.” That got me an elbow and “Awful man, but I still love you.”

“Well, it’s good you had a chat. Will she keep the belt and a pad or two with her?”

“I’ve told her to, just in case. Actually, I found an old flat cocoa tin at the market and thought it would be useful for something and got it for a penny ha’penny. It said Hershey’s, so must have been left by the Yanks. Just right for the belt and two or three pads, and it will fit in her satchel.”

“Maud, I hope it all goes well. I’m sure there’ll be some shock at how things are different in Canada. For example, I’ve no idea how the schools work there, or a lot of things.”

“Can’t be worse than we’ve been through, Ted. And we’re together.”

“Yes, we are. Though most of our household stuff should be half way to Montreal by now. It was delivered to the docks the day Fred came home. It actually was under 500lb – just. So there won’t be any argument over Imperial or American units.”

“How long before it arrives?”

“About another 10 days, I think, at the earliest. There’s a stop in Halifax and one in Quebec before they get to Montreal.”

“Let’s hope it all arrives,” Maud voiced my own misgivings.

* * *

At mid-day dinner in the canteen on the 25th of October Gooch came in and there was a bit of a goodbye for me. A crate of beer appeared and we had a few minutes of handshaking and well-wishes. Back in my office, which I’d

cleared out, I ushered in James Hall and we did a formal hand-over. I would leave work early on this day.

“You were good to your word, Ted. I’ll use Ted now, since I hope we’ll manage to keep contact, at least of the Christmas card and letter sort.”

“I’d like that. It’s easy to lose touch.”

* * *

Friday night we’d had fish and chips. Didn’t need plates. We’d found some military knife-fork-spoon sets and some tin plates and mugs that we were packing in our luggage.

On Saturday morning at 9 o’clock a couple came round with a lorry and driver to get the beds. We’d given back all but one key to the Council rent collector yesterday. The bicycle I’d passed on to Paula was picked up by a girl from school who’d arranged to buy it in advance. The buyer got a good price and Paula had access to a bicycle to run errands right up to our leaving.

We’d already had breakfast with Enid and Fred. They seemed to be settling in, at least Enid was smiling and Fred seemed comfortable, if quiet. We gave them the rest of our food, and Maud had shopped to use up all our rations. We kept the few points we had left in case we spotted something small we wanted like some chocolate.

“You’ll no doubt find it takes a bit of time to get used to being home and learning about each other,” I said to Fred as we moved the last of our odds and ends to their house. We’d told them they could do with these what they wished, even burn the chairs for heat.

“Yeah. Seems strange, but Enid told me right away she wanted us to make a big success and we’d need to tell each other how we were feeling. I hope she wasn’t indiscreet – she told me you’d had nightmares and Maud had to wake you, and that that had got the pair of you to talk so you ended up married.”

“Yes. Talking probably helped us get together. And the dreams aren’t such a problem now. Somehow a mix of what I saw when a V-2 hit a convoy of lorries in Antwerp and thinking about how Agnes and Margaret were killed. I usually know I’m dreaming now and wake myself up.”

“Guess we’ve all seen some nasty stuff.” Fred didn’t have time, or likely inclination, to elaborate.

“Hope you and Jack can get to know each other too.”

“Yeah. I never had the chance to be a Dad before.”

“Good luck to you, anyway. We can all use a bit.”

* * *

We’d booked a taxi to get to Southampton Terminus and got the train to Waterloo, then back out to Staines. We had a room booked for two nights at the Pack Horse. It had a double bed and a cot for Paula. A bit tight, but it did have a private bathroom.

Our luggage made the room tighter. We’d been a bit surprised to find we were allowed 66 lbs each, and managed to find a second kit-bag. One of the two we packed with just clothing so Maud could handle it and a suitcase. Still looked a bit odd, a woman in a coat and beret carrying a kit bag and a suitcase like a soldier off to war. We fixed up her handbag with a long strap so it could go over her head and tuck under one arm so she’d have hands free. We did the same for Paula with her aunt’s old handbag, then decided her school satchel would be more useful in this role. The satchel had a couple of pockets and could take books, snacks, and other odds and ends. The handbag was flattened and packed in the bottom of one of the kit bags. It was of decent quality and had some memory value.

The rucksack we used for coats on our honeymoon was going to be carried by Paula. It could take quite a lot, so we packed relatively heavy items in the bottom – for example, some books and our two photo albums of which the duplicates were in a tea chest. The top would be left partly empty to

take cardigans and pullovers. The sack had a drawstring then a large flap, so such clothing could be added and removed easily.

We made sure that we split up our money, with some pocket money for ready purchases. Over dinner one day in the canteen I'd overheard someone saying that a friend emigrating had their money – possibly over the limit – in a bag that was stolen. All the family's savings. I wasn't sure this was actually a true story or one of those bits of gossip that becomes a legend. It still made a lot of sense not to have all our money in one place and to be careful how we took out purses or wallets.

* * *

It was about half past three once we were established in the hotel. As we registered, I arranged for a taxi to Heathrow for Monday morning at half past 6. The lady at the desk commented that we'd miss breakfast, but she would see if something could be put in a paper bag for us. It was at least easier for us that TCA was now flying from London rather than Prestwick.

Maud had her shoes off and was lying on the bed. Paula was sitting on her cot. I'd just come out of the bathroom. There was suddenly an awkward pause.

"What are we going to do until we leave, Ted?" Paula asked.

"I've not actually had time to think. I know I didn't want to make any specific plans. Do you have any ideas what you would like? We need to think of dinner, and the hotel restaurant is possible, but not the bar because you are under age."

"Can we see London?" Paula asked.

Maud responded "It's probably a good idea to show you round London tomorrow when we can use the whole day. Even arrange to have dinner here tomorrow night – we'll ask today about that so we don't end up hungry. But then we can use the day well."

"That would be nice," Paula said. "So we need to think about tonight."

“Maybe we could go to the pictures?” I suggested.

“That would be good,” Maud agreed. Paula nodded.

“Let’s go, then,” I suggested.

We trooped down to the desk and made sure we could get dinner tomorrow night. The dining room didn’t close until 9. They were used to aero crews. So we suggested 8 o’clock and made a reservation. Then we asked about cinemas. There were a few and the hotel had a local paper under the counter and we looked up what was on. Nearby in Feltham we could see *A night in Casablanca* by the Marx Brothers. We decided something silly like that would be better than dramas or anything that might upset sleep. And we could easily get there on the train. However, we walked along the river for a bit first because it was picturesque.

Feltham didn’t offer much in the way of food. There was, fortunately, a small café. It would close at half past five, and we got there about five. Not a lot to choose from. Maud and I had beans on toast, and Paula a Cornish pasty. And rather strong tea. Still, it would hold us. It was a good job Maud had the good sense to pack some sandwiches for the train.

The cinema had a double feature, and the second film was a pretty standard western. I don’t remember the title, and woke up from a nice nap as the lights came on.

* * *

We made a decision to skip church and go directly to London after breakfast, to which we were the early-birds. For Paula’s sake, we visited many of the traditional sights and wore out our feet, even though we did take buses several times. Lyons gave us food and drink. Twice, in fact, which was a bit of a luxury, but we needed a rest and a toilet. People were about, doing much as we were. In the afternoon, we did actually go inside St. Paul’s. We hadn’t done that when we were here. Paula suggested that we sit and spend a few minutes simply enjoying the atmosphere of the place.

Apart from the issue of tired feet, it was a good day. We had dinner and Maud and I took a bath. We'd stuck to our usual days, fearing that hot water might run out if we tried all three, so Paula had bathed the night before, but she and Maud had washed their hair on Friday. Both had berets, which they pulled down a bit to avoid the smoke of the trains. Maud had packed her "church" hat in one of the tea chests, but she had a scarf she could wear if the beret would not go with her clothes. I noticed she had low heeled shoes. A good idea given the walking we were doing.

As I say, Maud and I took a bath. We wondered about sharing, then Paula said "If you share the hotel can't complain you're using too much hot water." Somehow, I can't think of Margaret being so direct and accepting of parents sharing a bath.

* * *

We were surprised that the terminal at Heathrow was a set of army marquee tents. There were wooden duck-boards between and leading to the aprons where the aircraft were parked. Despite the tent arrangement, the setup was well-organized and not uncomfortable.

We had to show what money we had, and on Saturday we had carefully made sure each of us had our allowed amounts set aside. We attempted to spend the rest, in fact paying for the hotel a day early on Sunday morning so we would know how much we were over the limit and could spend the rest.

By Sunday afternoon, we still had a little over 4 pounds in my pocket purse. Maud and Paula had given me their excess so we had everything together apart from a penny each for the toilet.

I figured 10 shillings more than enough for the taxi on Monday morning, including a good tip. So we had 3 pounds 10.

"The off-licenses will close soon," Maud said. It was about twenty to two.

"Is that one over there?" Paula asked. It was, and we went in and bought a bottle of brandy and a single malt whiskey, leaving us with about half a

crown. We used that, and our last points, on some Cadbury Fruit and Nut bars. The shop assistant's eyes were wide when we bought out the last he had. Little did we know they would also be the last we would see, since Canada didn't have them.

So at Heathrow we showed our money and Maud and Paula had to open their handbags or, in Paula's case, her satchel.

"American cocoa?" the official asked. Paula blushed and stammered "No. ..." as Maud leaned forward and whispered something to the man. He smiled and said "I've a daughter too. Miss. Just open the top a tiny bit and let me see and we'll say we're done."

I was asked to empty one pocket. However, the fact we had our money organized and were a family leaving for a new life possibly saved us a more rigorous inspection.

Of course, there were my 10 sovereigns. I'd decided not to carry them on the airplane. They were, in fact, tucked in the thick top hem of some curtains we packed in one of the tea chests. Paula didn't know this, but Maud did. The cloth was thick enough that you couldn't feel them, and Maud had sewed up the hems carefully. There was a risk they'd not make it. As I've indicated, the War made us all a bit less upright.

* * *

"Ted! Over here."

We'd staggered off the Lancastrian after 15 hours of noise and some bumping around. Well, some of that was on the ground refueling at Gander, Newfoundland. The flight had not been a bad one, but Merlins don't have an exhaust pipe, just a stub for each cylinder – all 48 of them, of which half are facing the cabin. The service on the aeroplane was very good, and we were fed well. Better, in fact, than many restaurants.

An Immigration official took our document and stamped it and said "Welcome to Canada". It was evening, and near supper time, so Customs made a show of asking me to empty my kit bag onto the inspection table

then put it all back. But that was the only bag they asked about, and they didn't dig around once things were out. Mostly clothing, and no particular packing system. A minor nuisance. Then we were out into the main part of the building, which was better set up than Heathrow's tents, though those had been quite well organized, just ... tents. They'd be cold in winter, especially the nasty one that would be coming to England at the beginning of 1947. Of course, we learned about that later.

"Ted!" There was Fifty.

"Hello Fifty. Here's Maud, my wife, and Paula, our daughter."

"And plenty of luggage!" Fifty grabbed the larger kitbag. "Come on, we'll get you to your new home."

We followed Fifty out to a road that circled in front of the building and to a large car. "Boy, Am I glad my Dad and I bought this '38 Dodge 4 door before the War started. Cars are starting to be made, but lots of people want them, and this beauty is good because it has lots of room and plenty of trunk space."

"Trunk?" Maud said.

"You call it a boot," Fifty said. "But nobody here'll understand that. And this is a fender, not a wing," he added, tapping one of them.

We got in, feeling awkward because it was facing what we perceived as the "wrong" way and Fifty started the obviously big engine and we moved off. It was already dark now. Fifty gave a running commentary, but I think all of us were still woozy from the long flight. It didn't take long to our destination on a residential street of two-storey houses, clearly in wood. Fifty pulled into the driveway of one with a hip roof, the upper storey being covered in roofing. I discovered later that it was shingles. Rare in British roofs.

"Here we are 687 25th Avenue, or Six Cent Quatre Vingt Sept, Vingt-Cinquieme Avenue."

We were ushered inside with our luggage and introduced to Marthe, Lise, and Denise. English and French seemed to get all mixed up, but Paula – who now became Paule again – was in her element. Lise was about a year younger than Paule, as we later learned one day less than a year younger.

Our rooms were two of the upstairs bedrooms. Marthe used the front room downstairs. There was a dining room which was now also the living room and a quite big kitchen on the main floor. Upstairs Maud and I would have the front room, Paule the next and Lise the smallest. There was also a bathroom with a claw-foot tub. And here the toilet wasn't separate.

The house was cosy. We learned later that Henri had got one of the earliest oil furnaces. It made for a very convenient and comfortable house. The only discomforts would be the social and linguistic adjustments.

I realized I owed Fifty some money and whispered “When can we settle up?”

“For sure not tonight – get a good night's sleep and I'll come by for breakfast and we'll set you on track. I've a busy day, so you'll be on your own or with Marthe. But given what we did in France, Belgium and Holland, you'll get organized quickly.”

“The first thing I'll need to do is get some money changed and a bank account.”

“Yeah. That's important, and you should be able to do that tomorrow. There's a Bank of Montreal nearby. Probably as good as any.”

Though we'd eaten, Marthe had some pea soup for dinner. She said "souper", and it took a while before I realized it was supper, not about soup. More to learn.

After we'd eaten the soup, Denise said “Ils sont completement fatigué, Lawrence. Il faut les laisser dormir.” [*They're completely exhausted, Lawrence. They need to be allowed to sleep.*] She pronounced Fifty's name with a decided accent. We'd need to tune our ears to the different pronunciations here.

Indeed, we were falling off the chairs, so we proceeded up to our rooms and within 15 minutes were asleep.

* * *

I woke when it was still dark. Pulling the curtain aside – I could reach a corner of the window from in bed, I saw a sliver of dawn.

“You awake too, Ted?”

“Just now. Have you been awake long?”

“No. About five minutes. What time is it?”

I picked up my watch from the bedside stand. “Just gone ... 11!”

“The purser on the aeroplane said there was a 5-hour difference, so it’s just gone 6. We don’t have to get up quite yet.”

I offered my arm and Maud scuttled in.

“I love you "Mowed",” I said, mimicking how Marthe and Denise said her name.

“Guess I’ll get used to it. And to Paule instead of Paula.

“Ted, Do you think Paula – Paule – should go to French school?”

“I was talking to that diplomat fellow on the plane when we stopped in Gander. Couldn’t really talk easily other times. He said the school system in Quebec is divided on religious grounds, with the Catholic Church really hanging onto their control, mainly with French schools. And I don’t know if he was prejudiced – I didn’t let on we were Catholics – but he said the Church more or less only gave girls about 7 years of schooling, then generally expected them to get married and have hordes of good Catholic babies. Some sort of expression that translates to the revenge of the cradle. We’ll need to see whether that’s got any truth.”

“So the English education is under the Protestants?”

“It seems so, and the Jews tried to set up their own schools, but now muck in with the Protestants. I got a hint that English Catholics do too.”

Maud said “Paule speaks French, but probably the French of a child, and from France, not here. Her grammar and spelling could be a big handicap, and she’d already be about to leave school too. I’m not sure religion should interfere with education.”

“Me neither. But maybe we give Paule a chance to decide. If she is already nearing school leaving age, there won’t be a truant officer breathing down our neck. The diplomat walla said a lot of people send their kids to private schools. Apparently private day schools aren’t that pricey here.”

* * *

We came down to breakfast at about a quarter to eight. Lise was getting ready for school and had just finished eating. She went upstairs to the bathroom, I think to brush her teeth, then yelled “A plus tard!” [*See you later!*] and was out the door just as Fifty came in with a bag of groceries.

“In case Marthe didn’t get out,” he said, kissing her on the cheek.

“Assois-toi, Lawrence. Toi aussi, Ted,” [*Sit down, Lawrence. You too, Ted*] she said.

Maud and Paule were right behind me and we sat at the kitchen table, which had six chairs around it. Marthe poured coffee and put it in front of us. There was milk – actually it turned out to be a sort of cream – and sugar. Maud and I didn’t know quite what to do. Paule did. She added cream and some sugar, as did Fifty, so we copied them.

Paule said “C’est beaucoup moins fort que le café de Paris il y a six ans. Mais je l’aime.” [*It’s a lot less strong than the coffee in Paris six years ago. But I like it.*]

“Oui, c’est probable. Les français aiment le café foncé.” [*Yes. That’s likely. The French like dark coffee.*]

Marthe opened the oven and there was a luxurious smell of bacon. She put a big plate of crisped streaky bacon on the table with a bowl of scrambled eggs and a plate of toast.

“Bon appetit!”

“Fifty. Does Marthe know that’s a whole month’s ration in England?” Maud asked.

Fifty tried to explain. Paule had more success, but it was clear Marthe did not quite believe her.

“Sacrément!” was her eventual conclusion.

* * *

Fifty wrote down some addresses and phone numbers for us for his business and home (which we already had), as well as the address and phone number here. The phone was on the kitchen wall.

“We’ll have to keep a log so we can pay for our calls,” I said.

“Not unless you’re doing long distance. Local calls are free. Well, part of the monthly bill.”

Well, we could contribute to that. Fifty also sketched a map and marked a couple of useful places. We’d go out and explore, with the first priority the bank.

The rent was going to be \$75 a month. We weren’t quite sure about things like heat and electricity or telephone. At my salary, the amount was not going to be a problem. The main difficulties would be communication and getting along cordially. I figured we could if Marthe and Lise could. I’d talked to some of the Walcheren veterans and could possibly tell Marthe a bit about that campaign once our skills in communication improved. Fifty seemed to manage, though it was clear he broke a lot of rules of grammar and vocabulary.

* * *

We went out at about a quarter to ten and found the Bank of Montreal. After a short wait, all of us were brought into the manager's office – a Mr. Green – and explained our situation. We were able to set up an account for me. Mr. Green explained that we might want to have a joint account for Maud and I, or she could – with my permission – have her own. I sensed Maud's annoyance as this was said, but she said nothing.

Mr. Green added that a slight problem with joint accounts was that they were frozen if one of the signatories died, which meant a family may be without resources in that situation. We decided to have separate accounts, chequing for me and savings for Maud, roughly half each of our capital apart from that we knew came from Paule.

“Can we get an account for our daughter?” I asked.

“Yes. Usually there is are limitations to prevent imprudent withdrawals, and usually a savings account.”

“Paula – well, her name is really Paule and we think we'll go back to that here – has had her own account in England, in fact about twice as much money as she was allowed to bring out.”

“How interesting. Miss Newman, you must be quite mature for your age.”

“But my name is Ronen, Paule Ronen. Ted and Maud adopted me after Aunt Matilda died. She'd brought me from France in 1940, and the Germans took my parents to the extermination camps.”

Green blanched. “I'm sorry to hear that. And I actually know a couple of people here named Ronen. It's a Jewish name. Are all of you Jewish.”

I said “Paule's mother was Catholic and so are she and Maud. I go to church with them, but can't seem to believe all the doctrine, but I'm happy to support them. And at sometime I'll be interested to see if we can find connections to Paule's family here, though they will likely be distant relations.”

“If my arithmetic is correct, Paule has been educated in English but speaks French and is not far from being of school leaving age.” Green was quick to understand.

“Green can be a name from a variety of origins,” I commented.

“I’m actually Jewish. I don’t advertise it. The Bank, like many Canadian institutions, have fairly strong male, white, and Protestant lines.

“Paule has probably grown up a lot quicker than most young women here. We’ll set up a savings account for her. And you can leave me a message if you’d like to have an informal chat about what educational choices may be open to her. Quebec has a rather strange structure for schools.”

We thanked Mr. Green, who passed us to one of his staff and we got our accounts set up, our bank books and some Canadian money. The coins seemed small compared to our familiar British ones.

* * *

Maud and I had got almost exactly \$300 each for our 75 pounds. We each decided to have \$100 in hand, because we would be giving Marthe \$75 and I didn’t know what I owed Fifty. Probably almost the same, since there’d been almost a month since he’d written about staying with Marthe.

We saw a shop with a sign Drug Store. We looked in, then went in when we realized it was something like what we called a chemists’, indeed very like Boots. We took a look at the products and the prices, largely out of curiosity, but did see a rack of newspapers and I bought a Gazette.

Further along the road, we saw a sign that said *Diner*. We realized it was something between a café and a restaurant. We’d have to try it.

It was a bit cool. We had walked to the St. Lawrence River. It was impressive. There was a bench and we sat down and unfolded the newspaper to get a quick look at advertisements. There was a fairly large one for a grocery shop called Steinberg’s. Actually, it was a quarter page.

We later learned that once a week – often Thursday – there would be a full-page advertisement. Even the quarter page caught Maud’s attention.

“They have butter and eggs and ham and ... lots,” she said. “Ted. Did Mr. Lapointe or Fifty talk about ration books.”

“Not specifically, but we were given Temporary Ration Books at Immigration last night. I put them in your handbag in the inside pocket.”

Maud said “I must have been asleep almost. Here they are. Well, they can stay there for now. But from what we had for breakfast, the allowances are much better than at home.”

Paule said “But isn’t this going to be home?”

We all looked at each other, but said nothing.

Somehow we’d brought with us the two small notebooks that I’d purchased at Smith’s when I first arrived in Southampton. The one we used as a rent book only had one page used, so Maud and I had each used one of the notebooks when packing as a way to keep track of things. Paule had a slightly larger one somewhere. I took mine out and wrote down a question mark at the top of a page and then wrote RATIONING.

“Ted. Where’s your fountain pen?”

“They tend to leak with the pressure changes on aeroplanes, or should I say airplanes to get into the vernacular. So I cleaned it out, and also the one Agnes used to use. And I made sure the bottle of ink was double wrapped. I’ve several pencil stubs and my pen-knife. Perhaps you didn’t notice that I’d emptied and cleaned the pen in your purse. I forgot to tell you.”

“And I have straight pens plus Aunt Matilda’s fountain pen, but we combined the ink with Ted’s,” Paule said. “I’ll use pencils. I have a couple and a sharpener.”

“You could have Agnes’ fountain pen if you wanted. It might fit your hand better than the one your aunt left, which I think is large and probably her

husband's." I said.

"I'd like that," Paule said.

* * *

We came back to the house on 25th and I gave Marthe \$75, which she seemed to appreciate. Then we spent some time with trying to work out how we'd pool the cooking and cleaning. Between Paule, our very impoverished French and an old French-English / English-French Larousse, we came to an agreement to set up a weekly roster of tasks, baths, shopping and a housekeeping fund. We would put in 60% of the food and supplies since we were 3 of the 5 bodies in the house.

When we asked about fuel, we were told "compris", which was most welcome. But there was something about snow and a shovel that I'd have to ask Fifty about.

As I thought about him, Marthe said "Fifty. He say you in Belgique."

"Oui. Antwerp. Anvers. Et après, je suis au Pays Bas." [*Yes. Antwerp. Anvers. And after, I was in the Netherlands.*]

"Dommage. Henri est morte là." [*Sad. Henri died there.*]

"Paule, how do you say 'causeway'?" She had to look it up.

"Marthe. J'avais des amis qui sont partis du bataille de la chaussé de Walcheren." [*Marthe. I have friends who were part of the battle of Walcheren Causeway.*]

"Alors, tu comprends. Et aussi, Fifty m'a dit que ta femme et ta fille ont subi une bombe volant. Et que Maud a perdu son mari sur le cuirassé Hood et ta fille par un accident routier toute à la fin de la guerre. Et Paule n'a plus de famille a cause des Nazis. Nous sommes tous les pauvres survivants." [*Then you understand. Also, Fifty told me your wife and daughter were hit by a flying bomb. And that Maud lost her husband on the Battlecruiser*]

Hood and her daughter in a road accident at the end of the War. And Paule had no more family due to the Nazis. We are all the poor survivors.]

Strangely, we were starting to understand each other already without translation. No doubt we'd have some misunderstandings. Let's hope minor.

We had a sandwich – some sort of luncheon meat, but hearty and not cut so thin it was transparent as in England. I almost thought "as at home" again. Then I telephoned Gerard Lapointe to tell him we'd arrived all right.

"Ted, I think it best if you start on Friday rather than Monday, since it's the first of the month and will simplify the accounting, but why don't I pick you up at 8:30 tomorrow morning and you can come in and be introduced and we can get most of the paperwork out of the way. Bring your documents in case we need to note them. We actually have a photostat machine if we need it. And once the bureaucracy is out of the way we can get you set up so you hit the ground running on Friday."

"That would be good. And the couple of days will let us get organized. It seems that my friend Fifty – that's Lawrence Lorimer, his initials led to the nickname in the Air Force – did us a huge favour in finding accommodation for us."

"Right now housing is awkward. Will the sharing a house work?"

"I hope so. It may or may not help that we have a lot in common with losing family members in the War. We'll have to see, but I'm optimistic."

"Good. Good. You'll probably have lots of questions. Take a bit of time to sort out. But you've not been here 24 hours and seem to be getting along."

"Yes. We went to the bank and have accounts and got our allowed number of pounds converted."

"Oh. Even better. We pay salaried staff by cheque. And, by the way, bring receipts for your expenses so far. We won't be able to pay you for the Merlin until it's received and signed off by the engineering team, unfortunately."

“I think we’ll be all right unless my pay is delayed by more than a month. Then things could get a little tight,” I said.

“All the more reason to get things in progress tomorrow. See you at 8:30.”

Since the telephone was in the kitchen, I only had to tell Maud a couple of the details.

* * *

Maud, Paule and Marthe went out shopping. I decided to stay and unpack our things. We’d rather tumbled into bed and then this morning wanted to get the money sorted out.

There was built-in closet in our bedroom, which overlooked the street. The trees were mostly bare, but I noticed a few leaves. Some were bright red – maple leaves. Unusual that. Or unusual to me.

I found my bottle of ink and my pen and filled it. I had Agnes’ pen in my tin box which I’d brought in my suitcase. The box would be useful for our passports and documents. I filled Agnes’ pen too and put it on the little table in Paule’s room. Funny how we’d gone back to her real name – that was how it was on the passport and other documents anyway.

I transferred all the things that could be hung up on hangers to the closets in both rooms, though some of Paule’s things were in her bags and I’d let her do those. Marthe had left us enough hangers – cintres – which was thoughtful of her. It must be difficult to have a bunch of strangers move in. It WAS difficult to be the strangers! And messing around in two languages. We’d adapt. Paule already had once, and I wondered whether she found it comforting to hear French again. Have to ask her.

There was a chest of drawers – was it "commode" – and I decided we’d use the top drawer for personal items, then have one each of the other three for Maud, then me, and the bottom one we’d discuss later. I found myself putting Maud’s knickers and bras and stockings in the drawer. I realized that I didn’t even know what Canadians used in English for "knickers". "Panties" perhaps. "Smalls" probably not.

I put my collar and cuff studs box in the top drawer. For some reason I got a sense that separate collars weren't as common here in Canada. Have to ask Fifty, but if I thought about it, I can't remember seeing him with such a garment. There were a lot of differences, and they'd take some getting used to. No doubt the accumulation of those would be upsetting and we'd need to be careful to avoid letting such things get us down.

The other side of things was that life looked to be immensely easier here. There was still rationing, but it was nothing like as stringent as we'd got used to in England. And the advertisements in the Gazette suggested that there was more, and more variety, available. This morning's eggs and bacon for example, though it seemed the bacon might be rationed, but a quite large ration.

I picked up the Gazette that was on the bed. There were classified ads, and I turned to "Apartments for rent". There seemed to be none that were not shared somehow. And \$75 was more or less in range. "Apartments wanted" offered up to double that for "private" apartments. So we might have to wait to get our own space. Well, it might be helpful through the first period so we could learn how to live here so we knew how the houses worked for electricity, heating and plumbing.

The suitcases and kit bags, at least mine and Maud's, were empty. I folded each kit bag and put each inside a suitcase, then slid the suitcases under the bed.

I heard the front door and voices. The women were back, so I went down to see what they had brought back.

Maud said "There you are. We learned a lot. There's quite a difference in what is available from what we're used to, and different products in some cases. And the ration amounts of things still rationed are quite generous."

I'd noticed the refrigerator before, but now that things were being put away, I realized how big it was. Refrigerators were rare in England, and tiny by comparison. I guessed the word would be similar, but probably mangled the pronunciation in commenting "C'est un très grand réfrigérateur."

Marthe replied “Non. C’est plus ou moins normale. Mais nous avons de la bonne chance que Henri a remplacé la glacière en trente-neuf.” [*No. It’s more or less normal. But we had the good luck that Henri replaced the ice-box in thirty-nine.*]

“Glacière?”

“Une coffre refroidis par de la glace. Nous devons avoir une livraison trois ou quatre fois par semaine.” [*A chest cooled with ice. You have to get a delivery three or four times a week.*]

“Oh, an icebox,” Maud said. “We rarely had those in England except in some of the big country houses perhaps.”

“So, did you make some plans for dinner?” I asked.

“Tonight we’ll have a stew, and, since we’ve not had the chance for some years, a treacle tart. But here it’s called *tarte au sucre*, but with the rationing, we’re going to use maple syrup from Marthe’s brother’s farm. I couldn’t see Golden Syrup. But there’s some decision still to be made about using the breadcrumbs. I think we’ll make two small pies and try the recipes separately. I couldn’t find custard powder either, but Paule had learned that it’s made with cornstarch and a little turmeric for colour, so we can do that, and Marthe got the milkman to leave plenty of milk.”

Paule had gone up to her room, and I heard noises that I guessed were unpacking. When she came down she said “Ted. Thank you for the pen. It writes beautifully. Can I have a sheet of paper and an envelope to write to my friend Judy in Southampton and and tell her about our journey?”

“Of course, and we’ll have to find the post office for you so you can get a stamp to send it.

I put the writing paper and envelopes – they’re in the leather writing compendium – in the top drawer of the chest of drawers. Just make sure we know to replenish the supply so we don’t run out, and there’s a little folder thing for stamps, but we’ll need to have some for Canada, some for England

by sea and some air mail ones. For Christmas cards, we'll have to do something almost right away, since they'll go surface mail."

"I hadn't thought of that," Maud said.

"Qu'est-ce qu'il y a?" [*What's that?*] Marthe asked.

Paule explained the issue of sending Christmas cards early. Marthe nodded. She was making the pastry for the pies. Maud was watching while making some breadcrumbs from some left-over toast crusts by rubbing them against a grater.

There was a small discussion on how to make the syrup for the pies, mostly concerning the proportion of sugar to thicken the maple syrup. It wasn't at all an argument, more a collective questioning. Eventually it seemed that roughly equal parts by volume – here cooking seemed to use volume in cups rather than weight, and Marthe had a very nice-looking glass one that had a scale on the side and measured up to 2 cups or 16 oz. or – how could this be? – 1 pint!

I asked "Marthe. Est-ce qu'un "pint" est égale seize onces?" [*Marthe. Is a pint equal 16 ounces?*]

"Oui. Pour les Américains. Mais ici – officiellement – c'est vingt. Particulièrement pour la bière! Autrement les hommes se pleignent beaucoup." [*Yes. For Americans. But here – officially – it's twenty. Particularly for beer! Otherwise the men complain a lot.*]

Maud said "Yes, I forget where I heard it – possibly on the BBC – that the Americans say 'A pint's a pound the whole world round', which is clearly silly."

* * *

That evening we had a stew supper followed by the Treacle Tarte au Sucre as it came to be called. Fifty and Denise joined us, and they brought some beer. I found it thin but drinkable. The cooperative effort on the supper was a success. By trying the two different forms of the tart – with and without

breadcrumbs – the verdict was that the breadcrumbs allowed it to be less sickly sweet. Denise, in a mix of French and English, made this observation.

Maud responded “But I think the maple syrup – *érable* – gives a very special taste compared to Golden Syrup, which I think is just a form of dissolved sugar.”

The Canadian contingent reserved judgement on custard. Fifty said “Probably best with whipped cream when it’s available,” and the English party seconded the suggestion.

During the meal, I raised the question of schooling for Paule.

Fifty said he’d gone to the Protestant schools through to school leaving. Denise, mostly in French, said she had managed 9 years, but that a lot of Quebec girls got less than 7. That did not seem a good omen for Paule’s education.

Marthe made a comment that I didn’t quite understand completely to the effect that she was a good Catholic, but the Church was too insistent that they controlled the lives of everyone, and that it was single men deciding how women would live. At least I think that was the message. Lise looked uncomfortable. Fifty explained that there’d been a bit of an argument with the local priest, who implied Marthe should lean on Lise to enter the convent. Lise thought she wanted to become a nurse, but that career needed more and more some formal education. The church thought nursing should be the role of nuns, as it had been historically, but medicine was becoming more and more scientific.

“How do you feel, Paule?” I asked.

“All my school was in England. In English. My French is fine when I’m talking, but I’ve only written it with Tante Mathilde.” She laughed. “I just slipped back from calling her Aunt Matilda.”

“So you think you might do better in an English school?” Maud asked.

“I think so. We need to find out what is needed and where I could go.”

“Though I’m Catholic and fairly devout, I don’t like the idea of the Church intruding on the lives of young people. Religion should be something that one wants, not something imposed.” Maud and Marthe seemed to be on the same page.

Marthe asked what Maud had said, and nodded when it was explained. “Le prêtre se plaindra, bien sûr.” [*The priest is going to complain, certainly.*]

“Well, we’ll have to do what we can. Possibly resurrect Paule’s Jewish side.” Maud surprised me when she said this.

* * *

My notebook now had SCHOOLING, POST OFFICE and BUS along with RATIONING, but the last was now stroked out, since Maud thought she had enough understanding of how things worked. I added LIBRARY – it would be sensible to have access to some information resources. Maud and Paule were going to look into that today while I was at TCA.

Gerard picked me up in his car as arranged. He had what he said was a 1939 Ford Standard Sedan. Large, but only 2 doors.

After I’d answered the standard “How are you getting on?” question, I asked him if he had any advice on schooling for Paule. I got more or less the same story as from Fifty and Marthe. I’d see about talking with Mr. Green. He likely had a different perspective.

The morning was mostly taken up with various documentation and other issues. However, I did get paid – in cash – for the train, hotel, and taxis. For the train and hotel I had documentation. The rest was on a *per diem* basis, which was for a Canadian standard and actually gave me more than I expected. I had to sign that the claim was true and honest etc., but came away with some more money. With Gerard busy, I was assigned a young man who it turned out would be one of my assistants. Brian O’Neill was about 18. He said he’d missed having to decide how he felt about conscription. When I asked what he meant, he said that he was talking

about the conscription crisis. I let that slide – I realized I knew very little of the local political and social currents and had better inform myself. LIBRARY was definitely going to be important.

As we walked from the staffing office where I'd filled in lots of forms, including one for a security check that hopefully my military discharge will satisfy – they made a photostat – I asked Brian where he'd gone to school.

"I went to the High School of Montreal. It's considered pretty good around here. Possibly could have gone to University, but my Mom's a widow, not from the War though. The pay here is better than average."

I asked about using the bus, since I'd need to get here and back home. It appeared one could put money in a fare box next to the driver, or a ticket. The tickets were cheaper, but you purchased a strip in advance. Trams worked pretty much the same way.

Brian introduced me to the team I'd have – himself, a young woman clerk/typist called Janice Armstrong, and a man of possibly 55 or 60, Remy Houle. I told them I'd be starting Friday and hoped we'd get along well together. My office was partitioned off the square room that was "Supply and Logistics" and was four desks and lots of filing cabinets.

I asked Remy if he had time to show me the filing system and he agreed. It was in good shape, at least as far as it went, and I said so. When I asked him, he said he'd been with TCA since the start, and it had been a good job. Clearly he knew the ropes.

There was something bothering me – why didn't they just promote Remy?

"What happened to my predecessor here?" I asked as innocently as I could.

"He went to TWA. His wife didn't like Montreal – she was American."

"I'm surprised they didn't offer you the job. It's costing them a pretty penny to bring me in."

"Vous êtes anglais. C'est ça." [*You're English. That's it.*]

“Ce n’est pas juste.” [*That’s not fair.*] I knew that expression somehow.

“Not your fault.”

“No, but I can be careful to avoid making the situation worse, and to make this unit as good a place to work as possible.”

“Even though any manager should, some do not. It will be appreciated by all of us, myself especially.”

* * *

I took the bus home. Yes, it had better be "home" or I’d get into a funk and want to be back in England. Then we’d all be the poorer in so many ways.

Brian’s description of the bus was fine. I got a couple of strips of tickets. I noticed there were different coloured ones, then when I was seated saw a notice that gave the prices and they mentioned that there were ones for adults, students and children. Paule would travel for less.

It was about three when I got in. My key worked – Maud and Paule each had one too. The house was quiet and I thought the women were out, but when I came up to the bedroom, Maud was lying on the bed reading the Gazette for the day.

“You’re back. Did it go all right?” she asked.

“Yes. Fine. I even got our expenses money. A bit over actually because they work on a flat rate *per diem* for meals and incidentals and Canada is more expensive. And I took the bus back. Got some tickets which are cheaper than cash. But Paule will need to get some student ones, I think, once she’s in school.”

“Yes, I had a chat with the librarian.”

“Good. You found it.”

“Yes. We need some sort of proof of our address. Typically a bill or something like that. We’ll have to think. But that’s only to sign books out.

We can still use the library.”

“I had to fill in a whole lot of forms today about tax, so maybe a letter will come that way.”

“Are they as bad here as in England.”

“If you mean in rate of tax, I think not. But I’m sure there’s bureaucracy. It was implied that there’s both Quebec and Canadian offices, so on that front maybe worse. We’ll have to see.”

Maud said “It’s an awful lot to take in.”

“I agree. But what is possible for us to have here should be very good once we get settled. The first few weeks will likely be the most awkward for us. I think Marthe is rather where you were last Winter. And Lise is so quiet, I don’t know quite what to make of her.”

“I don’t think she quite understands that Henri – her father – will never come back.”

“What’s Paule doing?” I asked.

“She was going to read. We bought *Le Devoir* so she can get more familiar with French. I don’t think Marthe has a newspaper, and even on the wireless – I guess I should say radio – she doesn’t listen to the news.”

“Possibly we should get a radio for up here. I’m sure our tastes are different, and I don’t want to ask her to change station for us.”

“Are they expensive?” Maud asked.

“We’ll have to look – you have the newspaper, after all.”

“Here’s an ad for one at about \$27 at Morgan’s department store.”

“Let’s give ourselves one for Christmas. Not necessarily that one, but we’ve some time to look around,” I added.

“Yes. But to change the subject, I’m thinking we need a chair or two in here. I don’t want to be in Marthe’s way downstairs. I think we’ll get along better if we can have some time to ourselves. That doesn’t mean I don’t like her, because the opposite is true.”

“Yes. Something like the wing-back chairs.”

“Pity we didn’t ship them,” Maud said.

“Have to see what’s available here.”

* * *

On Thursday morning I telephoned Mr. Green at the bank at 9:30. I figured that it would be better to call before opening. When I said I wanted to leave a message, I was told I could speak to him directly.

“Good morning, Mr. Green. It’s Ted Newman. I wanted to take up your offer to discuss Paule’s schooling with you and was going to leave a message to ask when it would be convenient.”

“Could you join me at the Snowden Deli on Decarie at 12:30 on Sunday? I’m going to be meeting a fellow named Nate Ronen then. It seems we could achieve two goals at once.”

“That’s most exciting. Thank you. Yes, we’ll be there. Can you give me the address?”

“I’ll have to look in the telephone book since I usually just go there. Ah, here we are, 5265 Boulevard Decarie. See you there.”

“Yes. Thanks,” I said, but he’d rung off.

* * *

We spent Thursday window shopping in downtown Montreal. We looked at some winter clothing and boots for each of us and noted what we liked and the prices. We did buy our own French-English dictionary for Paule, as we

felt she would need it. Her old dictionary was French only, and very tattered.

And we got to know the city a little.

We also went in Woolworths on Ste. Catherine and got two dozen Christmas cards. That would be an activity this evening. While we could only think off-hand of about a dozen recipients, there's always someone else that you remember later. Maud said she would get stamps tomorrow.

In the late afternoon before supper we made a grocery list with Marthe, using the advertisements in the Gazette and La Presse, which we bought for Paule to read. With five of us, the quantities were larger. It was also clear that when Maud would cook, the choices would be different. This could be an issue, but seemed more likely to simply widen the food perspective of all.

While we three adults were sorting out the shopping list, Lise and Paule were cutting into a pumpkin. In England I don't think I'd ever seen this melon-like fruit or vegetable.

"C'est l'Halloween," Marthe said.

In our fractured French, we explained that it was new to us, since it was a Scottish rather than English celebration. However, we found the resulting "Citrouille d'Halloween" with a candle inside to light up his macabre face quite interesting. Later we learned that this was "Jack o' lantern" in English.

I was disappointed I could not join the Friday shopping as I wanted to become familiar with products and prices. Later I realized shopping was very different from England, and being able to select the vegetables from the pile meant none of the bruised or mis-shapen ones. The barrow boys in the markets always had a good selection at the front of the barrow, but always took items from the rear when giving you a requested item. And they insisted that you not touch the produce.

Friday was a meatless day, and apparently by government decree as well as Catholic tradition. Today was going to be tuna casserole. That would be

new to us, but it was apparently popular here. It turned out that we enjoyed it, and it was a dish tolerant of variation and, moreover, useful if time of eating were uncertain.

I'd started work this Friday, which was November 1. After dinner, when Marthe and Lise had gone out to visit a neighbour, Maud, Paule and I talked of fish and chips, and wondered where they could be had. They seemed to be unknown here. Surely not. We'd have to ask around.

"Of course, we are almost a 1,000 miles from the ocean," I said.

"Really. That far. But the ships come here," Maud said.

"Think of a very, very, very long Southampton Water. Actually the St. Lawrence here is fresh water I think," I said.

Paule jumped in "Actually at the Ile d'Orléans just east of Québec is where the salt and fresh water meet." I wondered where she had read that.

"That explains some of the lines on the Plimsoll mark on ships," I mused. "Salt water is more dense."

Paule asked what a Plimsoll mark was, and did it have to do with shoes.

"No. Nothing to do with what they call sneakers here – I saw some in Eatons. It's a mark on the side of ships to show when they are fully loaded. The supercargo – the man who looks after loading – is supposed to make sure the ship doesn't ride lower than an appropriate level on the Plimsoll mark, which has lines higher on the hull for hotter, fresher water."

After Maud and Paule got groceries Friday morning, they had smelled baking and, following their noses, found a small shop that advertised and was clearly producing bagels. They didn't know what they were, but bought half a dozen.

Unable to resist, they each munched one going down the street, then Paule went back for another half dozen so they had some to share with Marthe, Lise and me. I could imagine they tasted even better hot.

I was tired after my first day at work, but it had gone well and we had started to consider how to include the parts for the forthcoming North Stars. We wanted the system fully organized before the first one was delivered from Canadair. Thinking of Canadair, I'd phoned Michael McPhee and we chatted about developments. Their facility I had learned was over at the Cartierville airport. I'd need a car to get there, and wasn't yet sure how that was arranged, so we made an indeterminate future meeting promise.

* * *

We walked all over the "Mountain" on Saturday during the day despite the sporadic rain. It had rained on Friday too. In the evening we went to the cinema – correction "movies". We offered to take Lise, but she wasn't sure she'd understand, and besides she and Marthe were going to visit a friend in Outremont and have dinner there. That we were on our own for supper was actually helpful, as Paule and I had a little present for Maud – it was her 35th birthday. And now she looked that age, not the tired and aged woman who rented me a room last February.

Paule had found some small cupcakes at a bakery and managed to make some tiny candles by melting some candle wax around some string. Just one on each cupcake, and they burned rather unevenly, but I brought them in quickly to the room that had the big table where we were eating. And we gave Maud a locket I'd found at the crater of my old house. It wasn't one I recognized, so may have been lost by someone other than Agnes or Peggy. It was open and the hinge was bent and the chain broken, and I only found it when I dug up the raspberries to transplant. It was lurking beside one of the canes. The raspberries had given us some fruit in the summer – a bit of brightness against the grey. In fact, the garden had done rather well for us and improved our meals immensely.

I'd fixed up the locket at work at Supermarine with a bit of advice from one of the machinists who I knew had a lot of extra skills. Paule and I had had an extra copy of photos of Jeremy and Jenny made and we put them in the locket in anticipation of Maud's birthday. When we gave it to Maud, she was a bit weepy but it was clear she liked it. "I've a bit of Jenny's hair. I'll put it behind her photo. Thank you both for this."

At the pictures – I guess we should say movies now – we saw *Brief Encounter* with Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard. It was a good film, but perhaps not the best choice for us at that moment, given it deals with difficult choices.

On the other hand, we were starting to know our new city. And we were together, we had a roof over our head, I had a job, and we would – of this I was sure – find our way, though I was beginning to realize it would be different from the path I had imagined.

Differences could take you by surprise. Coming out of the movie, there was a policeman standing on the corner. Just a cop on his beat. But I found that the gun on his belt to be a shock, even after all the guns and bombs of the last few years. In England, coppers didn't carry guns. It was a sort of strange honour system that almost all of the crooks respected too. Here was clearly different.

* * *

Today – Sunday November 3 – there was wet snow. A lot, but it melted on hitting the ground.

The Snowdon Deli was an interesting restaurant, if it could be called that. We found Mr. Green outside and he ushered us in and we found a booth. Booths were new to us, with the leatherette benches and the smooth tables in what we learned was called arborite.

“I recommend the smoked meat sandwiches,” Green said.

However, before we could order, one of the men behind the counter came over and said to me “Don't I know you from somewhere? I'm Joe Morantz, by the way. My brother and I set up this place when we got back from the War.”

“I'm Ted Newman. And you do look familiar Oh. I remember.”

At the same time, so did Joe. We both said “Teniers Square.” Loudly enough that other patrons looked at us. So did Maud, Paule, and Green.

Joe said “You held that Belgian guy’s head out of the water so he didn’t drown while I and some woman got that light post off his legs, then we carried him up the street to where an Army medic was trying to see who he could save.”

“Yes. Do you think that man survived?” I asked.

“Dunno, but we did all that we could.”

“Yes. I’m afraid it still gives me bad dreams,” I admitted.

“Yeah. Me too. I didn’t see the bomb go off. Came up ten minutes later.”

“I was right behind the convoy. Saw more than I wanted to.”

“Well. I’d better get back behind the counter or there’ll be unhappy customers, but leave me your address and phone before you go. And your check’s on the house. Maybe we can catch up some time when this place doesn’t need my full attention.”

“Ted and Joe were witnesses to a V-2 strike on Teniers Square in Antwerp in Autumn 1944,” Maud said after he had gone back to his place behind the counter. “There was a convoy of vehicles going through when it blew up and many were killed and injured, and a water main broke so the street flooded.”

“I can understand the horror,” Green said. “I missed serving because I’m actually blind in one eye. The glasses tend to mean people don’t notice that I can’t see out of the left one, and it looks more or less normal.

Ah, here’s Nate Ronen.”

“Hi there Zack,” said a man in his fifties who had come in and was standing beside the table. Wiry, balding, with hands that clearly worked on something or other. He shook hands with Green. We were all introduced and Ronen sat beside Green, while the three of us took the opposite side of the booth. In England it would have been a squeeze, but these booths were quite large.

A waiter came and we all ordered smoked meat sandwiches. Maud and Paule asked for tea, Green, Ronen and I coffee. The minor drama with Joe Morantz was recounted for Nate, then the story of how we came to adopt Paule.

By this time, we had our sandwiches, which for those of us who had experienced wartime meat shortages were quite unbelievable.

Maud said “I keep expecting the police to arrive and arrest us for black market food. But these are so good!”

The approval was reflected all round.

Nate said “I’ll have to ask around, but I think Paule’s father is a second cousin of mine or something like that. Actually, it really doesn’t matter these days. Like Ted and Maud, we’ve lost people, and we’ll just make our families out of those of us who are here.

I don’t know how much Paule wants to learn about her Jewish heritage, but I’m sure we can find people to provide information for her. I really don’t practise the rules, nor go to synagogue. But I’m hooked into the community. And if you need a suit, or need a suit altered, I’m a tailor.”

Green said “The other reason we’re here is to talk about schooling for Paule. She went to a Catholic primary school in England and would be starting what we call grade 8 in a secondary school there.”

“So you speak French pretty well, but all your schooling was in English, right?” Nate asked.

“Yes,” said Paule. “I find it hard to read *La Presse* or *Le Devoir*, but I think I should read them to improve my language. I only used to write with Aunt Mathilde when we wrote to my parents, but that stopped in 1942 when I was about 8. And in any case, she would help fix my grammar and spelling.”

I said “We’ve got the impression that the French schooling is not very well-suited to help young people in modern life.”

Green said “I hope I’m not showing prejudice, but I think that the Ultramontes – those who believe Catholic education is the sole route to maintain French-Canadian values – are mistaken. They even veered in recent years towards support of Nazism. But for Paule there is a serious issue of whether pursuit of French via the French schools here is worthwhile. That is, if looked at without any reference to language, is the education a good one. It may be more sensible to get as good an education as possible, then pursue French afterwards, possibly in France.”

“And what opportunities are there in the Protestant system?” Maud asked.

Nate said “It’s more or less an English or maybe Scottish system. There is a Jewish People’s School, but it doesn’t cover high school, so the Jewish kids go to the Protestant ones and recite the Lord’s Prayer anyway. They do a lot of Anglican ritual, but don’t seem to push a religious line outside of that. I think some English-speaking Catholics send their kids there because otherwise their chances of good jobs are limited.”

Green added “If the priests know you’re Catholic, you may get some fuss from them, but I don’t think they can do very much about it.

There is the Loyola High School, but I’m almost certain it’s not for girls. It’s kind of the feeder school for Loyola College which is for English Catholics. I think it grants degrees through an affiliation with the Université de Montréal. Most anglos go to McGill, of course.”

I said “I can claim to be Church of England if we need. Is that called Anglican here?”

“Yes. Anglican Church of Canada,” Green acknowledged.

I said “I’ll still support Maud and Paule in whatever religion they follow. Well, as long as it espouses caring for all and leading a good life.”

“World would be a better place if more people felt that way,” Nate said.

Despite Joe Morantz’ offer of a free lunch, we left a enough to cover the bill – or should it be check?

* * *

Maud decided to simply go with Paule to the High School of Montreal. Perhaps this rather direct approach was the reason that Paule started there the following Wednesday. The girls' section of the School was separate from that of the boys. Paule quickly learned how to get there by tram – I mean street car – and by the end of the week was starting to fall into a routine.

The School followed a 12 grade system, and Paule, based on her age and past schooling, was put into Grade 8. Her teacher gave her a list of things to read, and actually lent her some materials. When Paule mentioned that she was trying to get a library card, the teacher, a Miss A. Rutledge, had the list of remedial reading typed and sent by post addressed to Maud and I with reference to Paule Ronen – a form of identification that got all of us library cards.

I very quickly recognized that Paule worked very hard each evening with the remedial study. She worked out a schedule in her notebook and was going to grind through it. Her tenacity both surprised and inspired me.

Maud and I looked in the Gazette and found a desk lamp. It wasn't cheap, but we got it so Paule wouldn't try to read in the imperfect light of a single central bulb in her bedroom.

Marthe was impressed, too. "Paule donne un bon exemple. Lise a commencé à être plus assidue dans ses devoirs." *[Paule gives a good example. Lise is starting to work harder at her homework.]*

* * *

November 11. Remembrance Day

TCA was going to start work at 1:30 in the afternoon, except for Brian, who manned the office in case something critical was needed. Our 4-person team was actually big enough to handle the supply of parts for the current fleet TCA had. The foul ups – Americans would say snafus – came from the mechanics grabbing the parts from the various parts stores at the landing

airports where we did our own maintenance and not filling in the forms so we could maintain an inventory. At some airports, like Heathrow, we contracted with other airlines, so the inventory of parts was their problem, unless, of course, they didn't have something when one of our aircraft broke down.

We needed some method to encourage better reporting. I was toying with ideas of parts racks that had "good" parts in one tray and "bad" ones in others. The trick would be to provide the right incentives that the number of total parts at the end of a shift had to match that at the beginning of it.

These ideas were in my thoughts when I got ready to attend the 11 o'clock ceremony at the Cenotaph on Peel Street. Unfortunately it was pouring rain. I had kept my uniform, but had used it for gardening, since the so-called blouse was warm. But it had been through rather a lot since I'd got it before Normandy, and it wasn't presentable for a ceremony and was in one of the tea chests as working clothing. I did have one of my two RAF badges on my raincoat. Besides the rain, it was cool enough on this day that I realized I'd better think of a better overcoat for Canadian weather, and I changed my mind about going to the ceremony.

Maud and Paule had previously decided not to join me at the Cenotaph. They decided instead, with Marthe and Lise, to listen to the ceremony on the CBC, actually the version with French commentary. I joined them and we listened quietly. Then I went out into the wet to catch my bus, which was on reduced schedule to add to the misery. With the wait for the bus, I arrived wet and bedraggled to the office.

I was glad Maud made me some sandwiches, because I only arrived near to half past one. Most of the office "brown bagged it" anyway. Unlike England, most people ate their main meal at night. That actually suited us. And there weren't the works canteens of the UK. We could have found something in the coffee shop at the terminal building, but it was some distance from our office. Moreover, the cost of lunch there – it was, after all, an airport coffee shop – would eat into money useful for other things.

* * *

On November 21, I got a message at work that our chests had arrived and could be collected the next day. We would need to bring our shipping documents and a means of conveyance. Fifty had already told me he'd lend me a truck and a driver, and we arranged I'd be picked up at 8 a.m. at home and get to work late. I told Remy to expect me sometime around 11 hopefully.

Paule came with me, and I'm glad she did. I wrote a note for the School that there was an immigration issue to be sorted out. That was more or less true.

The truck was let into the dockyard based on my showing the shipping documents and we were told to proceed to a numbered doorway on the long dock shed. Inside a customs agent looked at the documents and led us to the chests.

"What's inside that one?" he asked.

I'd fortunately numbered them and had a list.

"Saucepans, cutlery, eiderdown, blankets, curtains, ..."

"Let's check." He nodded to another man who had a crowbar and roughly popped off the top. There was the eiderdown. The agent pulled at it and discovered the bottom of a saucepan.

"OK" He chalked it. Then under his breath "Encore un maudit anglais," as he moved to another chest.

Paule said "Pourquoi "maudit anglais" monsieur? Il est vraiment anglais, mais il m'a adopté après les allemands ont tué mes parents aux camps d'extermination. Et moi, je suis originalement française." [*Why "damned English" sir? He is truthfully English, but he adopted me after the Germans killed my parents in the extermination camps. And me, I am originally French.*]

"Alors, ma petite, je me trompe. Bonne chance ici à Montréal." [*All right, dear, my mistake. Good luck here in Montreal.*]

And he chalked the other chests.

* * *

The next day, Saturday November 23, it was below freezing all day,

Nevertheless, we had made up our minds and were going to buy coats and boots. I'd withdrawn \$100 from the bank to make sure we had enough to buy what we needed. Between Eaton's, Morgan's and other stores we ended up spending a good deal of that. We rode the street-car home with many others, all of us carrying several parcels. Maud and I had bought ourselves galoshes. In my case I got some "dress" ones as well as some that were more like boots and had felt lining too. I thought of getting some boots alone, but the overboots would be easier for the office. Because it was harder for the women, we got a pair of winter boots for Paule, who had been talking to Lise and saw what she used. We debated getting her a second pair, then decided to get one pair now, since it might be essential, but to look for bargains in the newspapers or in some of the smaller shops.

We got Maud some overboots that fitted her low-heeled shoes that she had deliberately selected for today, she and Paule having had a conversation and show and tell with Marthe and Lise. We'd definitely want to look for some true boots for Maud if we were going to be outside walking. The heeled overboots might keep the snow off her feet, but would not be good for walking far. Canadians seemed to use their cars a lot.

I found a nice hat for myself when Maud picked it up and said "Ted, look at the ear flaps on this hat."

"Didn't have those in England. I'm going to get it."

That prompted toques for the ladies, but we decided to each have one and decided to get them in matching patterns as a family winter uniform. We already had some woollen scarves from England. A little old and faded, but still functional.

We got Paule a nice coat in a so-called "high-school" pattern in wool, but with a lining, and we got me a moleskin coat with a lining, called

"sheeplined", but very unlikely to be a sheepskin. This coat had some leather in the sleeves to keep out the wind.

Selecting the size for Paule took some discussion. She was still growing, so we needed to allow for that, but also not have the coat so large that she was swimming in it. After a few had been tried on, we found one that had plenty of room but did not look like she was wearing a tent.

A coat for Maud was our most difficult purchase. We looked at a fake Persian Lamb coat for about \$35 compared to the real thing at over ten times as much. Maybe later I'd get her a fur. The look was nice, but while real fur was probably warm if the style allowed it to be closed against the wind, it was not clear that the fake fur would suffice in the Canadian winter. And with real fur, I'd heard that it had to be specially stored in summer, and cleaned. Lots of extra expense.

Before I bought the moleskin coat, I had tried on some Mackinaw ones, and Maud liked them a lot.

"Why don't you try one on?" I suggested.

"But they're men's coats."

"Let's see if there are women's versions."

It turned out there were, but they were not as thick or well-made.

"It's not fair that men's things are so much better made and better suited to the outdoors," Maud complained.

"So let us go back and, as I've suggested, try one on."

The men's coats were too big for her, but Paule said "What about a boy's coat? I saw some in Eatons."

Back we went and found one that was a dollar cheaper than either the men's or women's versions we'd seen, and it was solidly made. It wasn't as long as most overcoats. In fact, we heard someone call the length a "car coat".

“You may need slacks or tights when it’s really cold,” I said.

“Yes. I think we should get a pair of tights each for Paule and I. Will you want long underwear?”

“Let’s get me one pair, but not the all-in-ones that we saw in the newspaper advertisement. I can’t see myself with the rear flap.”

My two female companions laughed, but I think they would not have let me buy the old-fashioned undergarment.

Eatons seemed to be as good a source as any for these items, which were our last purchase for the day. We had some gloves from England, but had plans to get some gloves and mittens at Woolworths or some similar store soon.

That would be later. Now we went to the store restaurant on the 9th floor.

“What a place!” Maud exclaimed. It had a high ceiling and art deco design with a large mural at one end.

“Yes, quite a place,” I agreed.

We had to wait a few minutes for a table. Like others, we had a lot of parcels. Paule had a grilled cheese sandwich and a malted milk. She had heard about malted milk at school. I decided to have a hamburger. Very North American. I liked them, and could put on relish and ketchup or mustard. Maud chose a chicken salad sandwich. We both ordered coffee to drink. Here, what was called cream for coffee did not taste right in tea. We were adapting.

* * *

Monday November 25, a truck (I used to say lorry) delivered the Merlin from Nigel. I saw it come in, and later went over to the test area where it had been uncrated and put on a test stand. It looked to be in good condition, and I asked the head technician if all was in order.

“I thought for a few moments it was brand new. Seems excellent, but we’ll know in the morning when we run it up on the dynamometer.”

Thankfully, Nigel had done an excellent job, and the test was flawless. That Tuesday afternoon, I exchanged an invoice for 450 pounds for a cheque for \$1800. I decided to take a taxi to the bank and deposited it. The taxi saved me waiting for the bus in the wet snow in Dorval, though I did have to walk home from the bank a bit carefully.

To make up some of the time I’d taken off, I decided to work in the morning of Saturday November 30. I wanted to write up some ideas on how we might get better inventory records from the mechanics. However, we had almost 6 inches of snow. Well, it proved a test of my new clothing and boots, and I’d need to get used to the winter conditions. As it turned out, it wasn’t all that difficult, as the streets seemed to have been quickly cleared for the buses, and at the airport there were men shovelling to make paths between the buildings, even though there were few workers on duty in any of them, which were mostly similar to the one where I had my office.

My task was a tricky one.

A lot of managers try to make pronouncements that recording withdrawals from parts inventories are required, with the unstated threat of loss of job. However, true aircraft mechanics aren’t that common. There might be half a dozen in, say, the province of Alberta, and they’ll be in three cities. There will be helpers, but the key guys know that firing them is going to leave your airplane on the ground for quite a while.

We needed a way to make it worthwhile for the mechanics to keep our information up to date. If a mechanic used a gasket and didn’t record that it had been used, a ‘plane might come in needing a new gasket and there would be none available. All the passengers and mail would be delayed until the part could be flown in.

The mechanics needed to want to record what was used. But how could we do that? During the War, we had the muscle of the military discipline system. That didn’t exist here. And, besides, the military invoked the

concept of pain for NOT doing what was needed, rather than an advantage for doing it.

The mechanics liked it when the parts they wanted were ready at hand and did not need to be flown in. In that sense, there was an incentive, albeit a rather loose incentive. However, there was perhaps an opportunity to ask the mechanics how we could structure things so it was really easy for them to report information to us. Something like putting tickets from parts and the equipment they came from onto a common form, for example with a stapler. I'd need to think how we could tweak the identification of aircraft and parts so we could track the information, possibly more information than we were keeping now. In the future it could be important. There was some chatter at Supermarine about metal fatigue and there had been cases where the tails of Hawker Typhoons fell off. I'd actually been around in the Netherlands when one of those happened in 247 Squadron.

We also needed to know what engine or similar large unit or other aggregation of parts was being repaired. Could we use some sort of pre-prepared tickets to help us? But there would be situations with parts that were multiples. For example, the spark plugs. It would be important to know if particular ones failed, like the front or rear plug more than any other.

It might be that we could stratify the parts and treat different types in different ways. It was not an easy issue. I would need to talk to the mechanics and learn what they would be willing and unwilling to do. I suspected that chaps with greasy hands didn't like to touch documents and put oily thumb-prints on the forms. Was there a way to get the information recorded without them having to touch paper? Lots to think and talk about.

* * *

C Rushworth
Solicitor
Woolston, England
Nov 30, 1946

E Newman, Esq.
687 25e Avenue

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Dear Mr. Newman,

Thank you for forwarding your address by air mail. It turns out to be timely, as our enquiry about reconstruction procedures had elicited a response from the Council asking if you would be willing to sell your parcel of land in Bitterne. They have been rather cautious and not suggested an amount, but I am relatively sure 100 pounds would be possible.

If you wish, I can act for you if you can get a witnessed signature to the enclosed document allowing me to act for you. There is a place to put the minimum amount you would be willing to accept.

So you will not be surprised, my fees and disbursements will likely be somewhere between 7 and 10 pounds. As you are aware, funds cannot easily be sent to you, but I can deposit monies to your bank account here, as we have already discussed. Indeed, we have your bank information on file, and you told me that Mr. MacKenzie had been informed.

My sincere best wishes for you and your family.

Yours sincerely,

C. Rushworth, Solicitor

* * *

It was just gone 10 p.m. and Maud and I were in bed slightly earlier than we might have been. I offered my arm and Maud scooted in.

“Love you,” I said, kissing her forehead since it was the only kissable surface.

“I love you too, Ted. It’s been quite a year for us hasn’t it?”

“Still two months to the anniversary of our meeting. We haven’t even been married six months. Yes. A lot’s happened. I hope you’re not disappointed.”

“No, not disappointed at all. A bit ... I don’t know ... anxious. So much new, and I’m not sure what I should be doing.”

“You mean that since it’s Marthe’s house, you aren’t really a housewife, and figuring out who should do what isn’t easy?”

“Yes, I guess that’s it. I’ve wondered if I should look for a job. Marthe and I get along well, and I’m picking up enough of French words and expressions that I think I’ll manage all right that way, but we don’t really need two of us in the kitchen preparing meals. It might be better under a different arrangement.”

“Have you thought what you might do, or looked at any job ads in the paper?”

“Not much. Ted. I wanted to make sure I’d talked to you first.”

“Thanks. But I’m OK with you finding something to do that you find rewarding, either in money or otherwise. Oh. I just used ‘OK’.”

“Yes. I found myself saying ‘bien sûr’ yesterday, and I wasn’t talking to Marthe either. I was in the library.”

“You know, Maud, I’ve no idea what you really used to do at Thorneycrofts.”

“I worked for a part of the company that made some of the bits and pieces of the landing craft they built for D-Day and after. My job was to use measurements and calculate if the parts had the right strength. Things like the latches on the drop-down ramps.”

“So lots of arithmetic?”

“Yes. A couple of the engineers and a man from Southampton University College developed some templates for the different calculations, and we had some mechanical calculators, either Marchants or Facits or Monroes.”

“Was it interesting or just tedious?”

“A bit of both, I suppose.”

“Well, we’ll have to see what might be on offer.”

“Yes. I may also look into doing some volunteer work to help DPs in case I don’t find paid work. There’s a lot in camps in Europe and talk some will be allowed to come here. Some of them will need help.”

“That would get you meeting people. Do you know where you can do that?”

“I got a few ideas at the Library. I want to look into them before I jump in and then have to ease myself out if I don’t like it.”

“Makes sense.

“On another topic, are you OK with going to church at Saints Anges with Marthe like we do? The Latin means there’s not so much we miss.”

“Yes. Though we may get some flak from the priest at St. Agnes about Paule going to the High School. But I think Paule is re-evaluating her Catholicism. She’s asked if she can talk to Nate Ronen. I’ll go with her one day, though Saturday a lot of the Jewish businesses close.”

“Maybe meet her after school and go then. She could also phone him. Here it’s not costing extra like in England.”

“True. Hard to get my head around that.”

“At least the priest won’t complain she’s missed a holy day of obligation on the 8th, since it’s Sunday.”

“Yes, I’m glad of that. Truthfully, Ted, I’m wondering about my own religious feelings. I liked the community at St. Patrick’s in Woolston, though I can see that if the Irish priests had got their way, it might be a lot like here, where the priest is kind of a local dictator. I like time to pray, and I like the liturgy. I can’t get very exercised about different theological

issues, though. Maybe, something like you, I don't have the gift of faith. But so far here I've not been to Confession, in part because of the language thing, but also because it doesn't seem so important any more."

"There is a St. Pat's here, and it's an English church but downtown."

"Yes, I may look it up and go to Confession there. I'll see if Paule is interested too, but I'll be sure to tell her she is free to decide."

"Yes. We'd better keep trying to treat her as a young woman, not as a girl."

"You know, talking of holy days, tomorrow is St. Nicholas, where we get the Santa Claus from."

"Really?"

"Yes. The Dutch say Sinterklaas. It's when Dutch kids get sweets and presents, or when they did before the War. You'll remember I said there was a woman who wanted food for her kids."

"The one who offered to sleep with you?"

"Yes. Part of the food I gave her was a bit of dolly mixture and barley sugar that somehow was on the lorries. Two years ago tonight. Seems a lot further away."

"Perhaps that's something to be thankful for," Maud said, easing out of my arm and rolling over then snuggling against me. In a few minutes, we were too hot, and I folded down the eiderdown.

"Never would have thought it would be so much more comfortable here when it's freezing outside," I said.

"No. And the double windows seem to stop the draughts. Oh. I got the sovereigns out of the curtains, speaking of draughts. They're in your tin box with the documents."

* * *

Calgary, AB

Dec 2, 1946

Dear Ted,

It seems you are getting on very well in Montreal. I'm glad to hear this. Canada offers lots of opportunities, but it is very different from England. I know Caroline and I found it took us some time to adapt and discover the beauty and comforts of the country.

I (Joseph) have been busy with the change-over from streetcars, that is, trams, to electric trolley-buses. We also have a number of more or less standard motor-buses, but our fleet is pre-war, so we have a lot of maintenance, as well as some new buses on order.

As you will have realized, Canada is very large. I'm hoping either we can get east or you west in the coming year.

Caroline is going to put some news of the family overleaf, as I must run to a work meeting.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Joseph and Caroline

* * *

Today was going to be a Christmas shopping day. That's how we referred to it, though in our little trio, we had decided that there was a \$1.50 limit to spend on presents for each other. On the other hand, we were going to buy a radio for ourselves.

We'd had a rather careful chat with Fifty about how Christmas would take place, as we felt that we were, in many respects, intruders. It turned out Marthe had talked to Fifty as well, feeling the same awkwardness. She and Lise had been invited to the house of Denise's parents in Lachute, a town some miles away. Fifty and Denise were going to go there too, which posed its own diplomatic issues, given that Fifty was still waiting for his divorce.

Denise had a number of siblings – we had some trouble working out all the names and relationships – and there were going to be mattresses and cushions all over the large farmhouse. They would all go to midnight mass then have the reveillon meal that featured a meat pie called tourtière. Marthe and Maud were going to make some, so we'd get to try it too, but I doubted we'd eat it at one in the morning.

The Gagnon's were concerned that we would be alone for Christmas, but we were actually relieved to be able to have a quiet Christmas, as we had found the last couple of months quite hectic, and a quiet day would be welcome. However, we did plan a bit of a private celebration with Fifty, Denise, Marthe and Lise on the 21st – the solstice. And we'd use the occasion to set up a Christmas tree – just a small one, as there wasn't a lot of room.

As part of this Solstice celebration, Paule and Maud made some cheese straws and mince pies to complement the tourtière we would have as our savoury course. A real trans-national mixture of items, along with some gingerbread that seemed to belong to everyone and no-one.

We decided that we would give Fifty and Denise the bottle of whiskey we'd got in London. The brandy we would keep for ourselves. But Fifty had found us housing, and had helped us move the tea chests, and got us up and running in our new country.

Lise had seen us writing letters and seemed very intrigued by our fountain pens. In the whole house when we arrived, there were just pencils and a couple of old straight pens. Possibly no ink. Paule saw a Waterman fountain pen at Eaton's for \$2 and we got that and a bottle of ink and added in one of our Fruit and Nut bars. They weren't available here. Dommage!

When shopping for the pen, we noticed the new Eversharp pens that didn't have a nib, but used a ball point. These were pretty expensive – about as much as a regular week's wage. If they came down in price, they'd probably become more popular than fountain pens.

A suitable present for Marthe was a challenge. Though we'd been living in her house with her for over a month, we didn't really know her tastes. Maud

said “She’s where I was when you arrived in Southampton last February. Emotionally frozen and running on automatic pilot. We’ve probably stirred things a little, and we’ve provided some measure of financial security for her. But we don’t know what, if anything, would give her a particular joy.”

“Lise said she used to go to shows with a folk singer called La Bolduc, who made a lot of recordings.”

“You mean we get a radiogram, or what they often call a radio-phonograph here, rather than just a radio, then get Marthe some records?”

“Yes. Would that be possible?”

“They’re rather expensive, and we’d have to figure out where to put it so Marthe could use it. Then the radio part would not be usable by us.

“But the general idea is a good one.”

We talked some more, but at the end of the day had not found anything for Marthe.

* * *

“I bought a book for Marthe,” Paule said Wednesday night.

“What did you get?” Maud asked.

“It’s called *Pieds nus dans l’aube* by Félix Leclerc. He’s a writer and poet and singer, except here they say *chansonnier*, which may mean he almost talks the songs. But Lise mentioned Marthe liked his programs on Radio-Canada, so when I saw the book in a small librairie – that’s a bookshop here, and library is bibliothèque – I thought I’d buy it. I hope that’s OK. It’s only just come out.”

“It’s likely the best idea we’ve had yet,” I offered, and in the event Marthe was delighted with it.

* * *

We went to mass on Christmas morning. It was less well-attended than the usual Sunday mass. We had heard that it was difficult to get a seat at midnight.

It was snowing as we walked to and from church, and quite cold, but we had our winter clothing and boots and managed all right, though some hot coffee when we came back was welcome.

Though we had planned to have our own Christmas dinner, using a quarter ham rather than a turkey, since we thought the latter too much for just the three of us, we'd had a telephone call on Christmas Eve from Nate Ronen. Paule had called him once, and they seemed to get on, chatting about where the Ronens came from in eastern Europe. Nate asked if we had plans for the 25th – he didn't say Christmas – and we said we were going to have just the three of us.

“Hannah and I generally have a very quiet day. Our daughters are both married and live in New York city and Princeton, New Jersey. Why don't you come and have a meal with us?”

“Let me check that Maud and Paule haven't planned anything.”

There was a moment when I put my hand over the telephone microphone, then I was able to respond “Yes. We'd very much like to. Can we bring something to contribute to the meal? I know there may be some dietary rules.”

“As I said at the Deli, we're not strict, but we avoid pork or shellfish. And for some reason suet, so mincemeat, Christmas pudding and such, which always smell rather delicious,” Ronen laughed.

“We'll avoid those things,” I said.

* * *

The streetcars were running, but on a Sunday schedule, so we got a little cold waiting for one. We got to the Ronen's apartment above his small

tailor's shop around 2:30 and shed our coats and boots. Maud now had a pair of boots, but had brought some slippers she'd knitted, as had Paule.

We were introduced to Hannah, Nate's wife, and gave her our contribution to the day, some of the cheese straws Maud had made – the first since 1939 – and some rock cakes. Maud said apologetically "I'm afraid I'll have to ask for the tins back – they belong to Marthe, the woman whose house we live in."

"That's OK. Changing country, you can't bring everything," Hannah observed.

We were ushered into a cosy living room.

I said "This time last year, I only had my uniform and a few personal items. My civilian clothing went up with the V-1."

It turned out that Nate hadn't shared our story with Hannah, and it got related.

"So you're almost newlyweds. My goodness. Well, we'll wish you well, and Paule as well, of course."

Nate said "Is what you're wearing one of the British demob suits?"

"Yes, I got this last February 7. The day I met Maud."

Nate came over and felt the cloth and looked at the lining of the jacket.

"Good material and well-made, but the style is almost Chicago gangster."

"Yes, I'm afraid so. The only other suit I have is one of Jeremy's – Maud's late husband. It doesn't fit me perfectly, but I can get away with wearing it if nobody looks too closely."

"Come and see me with it and it can probably be adjusted," Nate said. I realized that was true.

Through the afternoon we chatted. Nate and Hannah brought out some photo albums and found a few old photos that might overlap with Paule's side of the family. At one point, Paule commented that a man looked very much like her father, but he was of at least one generation earlier. I made some notes of names and dates, but it was all a bit uncertain.

We ate dinner around 5, a very nice roast chicken.

Hannah asked "How are you finding things, Maud. Will you be happy as a housewife here?"

"With Marthe around and sharing the household duties, I've time on my hands. I've thought of looking for a job, or doing some volunteer work."

Hannah said "Nathan. I think you should see if Maud might be able to help you out. We had a young man as a shop assistant – if Nate is working on a garment, it is an interruption when people come in the shop. But he joined the army, and we heard that he's going to move to Toronto now he's back, as he has a girl there he wants to marry."

Nate said that it might work. "Did you adjust Paule's skirt?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"It's done well, but the thread is a shade off in colour."

"Yes. I had trouble finding the one I did use. Things in England were – still are – in short supply."

"Here too, but getting better quickly. And there will be men home from serving who will want new suits. I'm thinking of opening Saturday, but I might not show my face then to avoid talk from the rabbis."

It was decided Maud would try a few hours each week on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The pay was not much, and I was not sure if Nate hadn't offered as a form of charity. We'd see.

* * *

Also, on the 18th, Fifty had phoned us and said he'd been offered six tickets for the Canadiens - Maple Leafs hockey game on Boxing Day. Would we like to go with him, Denise and one of her brothers? I agreed, providing he let me pay him for the tickets. He said OK and that they cost around two bucks each. Up in the gods, but he said it was a real Canadian thing you had to experience.

He gave us the tickets at our little party on the 21st, and since they would drive in from Lachute before the game, Maud, Paule and I would meet them in the seats. Maud found out about buses at the library – the schedule was reduced, but the librarian said that after the game there were usually extra buses and streetcars, but to have warm clothes in case there were a wait.

Fifty was right that it was an experience. We were amazed how fast the game was. It made football look very pedestrian. And rough. Just one minute into the game and Toronto player Gus Mortson got two minutes in the penalty box for something called "roughing". Montreal then had an extra player, though both teams had sixteen players dressed, with six on the ice at once. All but the goaltender kept changing. That probably helped keep them moving so fast.

Montreal didn't score during the advantage. It seemed that you couldn't shoot the puck all the way to the other end of the ice normally. If you did, the referee or linesman – I couldn't quite figure out who was who – would blow the whistle and there would be a face-off in your own end. But when you had a man in the penalty box, you could get rid of the puck, which would let you change tired players.

Soon after both teams had six players on the ice – only 3 and a half minutes into the game, Montreal's captain Toe Blake – an odd name that, apparently a nickname – scored. The noise in the Forum was deafening. Maud noticed – she had to shout in my ear – that the men were mostly in suits and the women dressed up. At the break – we made a mistake and said "half-time" but there were three 20-minute periods – Fifty said it was a Montreal tradition to dress up for the Habs games. Habs was another nickname. Like "gunners" for the Arsenal football team I supposed.

Though we didn't need it, I went with Fifty and we got hot dogs during the intermission. They would have substantially exceeded the meat allowance limit in England. Canada definitely had some advantages for us.

We learned from chatter that Mortson – the player who got the first penalty, then another at the 12-minute mark that also got him ejected from the game with a misconduct – was the most penalized player in the league. But apart from the misconduct, there were three penalties to each side in the first period alone.

Montreal won the game 4-1. I found I enjoyed watching. Later on, Maud admitted she liked it too, and listening to her, I realized she had a better eye than I for how patterns on the ice were developing that could lead to goals or to good chances. Paule thought it was "interesting", but I don't think it took her imagination, though she said she would like to learn how to skate. That seemed like something we could arrange.

* * *

As we rode home on the streetcar, Paule said "The ring Fifty gave Denise was really pretty."

"Yes, it was nice. It must have been expensive," Maud added.

I felt awkward that I had not noticed. Fifty had told me that he and Denise were anxious to get married. He was waiting for the divorce proceedings to be completed. There were, it seemed, a lot of marriages that had broken down with men away fighting. Well, with men away. In Canada the conscription rules supposedly required consent to be sent overseas. Apparently only 12000 conscripts fought overseas.

Then also there was the HMCS Uganda vote. If I had the story straight, after VE Day, the Canadian government said servicemen had to re-volunteer for the Pacific campaign and would get 30 days leave before they were sent. But Uganda was already in action. Still the ship took a vote, and 2/3 of the crew said they wanted out. Some comments suggest it was because the ship wasn't set up for tropical service and things were pretty miserable on board. Anyway, they stayed for two months, then were on

their way back to Canada when a boiler broke down. In Pearl Harbour there was resentment that they were "quitters", as the War hadn't ended, though this was about the time of the A-bombs.

Canada had some awkward differences between the different factions. We'd have to tiptoe through a new sort of minefield to avoid trouble for ourselves.

No doubt Fifty and Denise had similar delicate matters to worry about. Divorce wasn't contemplated in French-Canadian families. Nor was living together. And an anglo and a franco under one roof? I was beginning to learn the sub-texts of conversations.

* * *

Saturday, December 28, 1946

Maud decided she wanted to lie in, but for some reason the rest of the household was up by 8 o'clock, and having some toast and coffee in lieu of breakfast. Outside it was cold and there was a bit of snow falling.

Paule said "Can we go and see if the river is frozen over?"

For some reason, we decided just to do that, but Marthe and Lise wanted to clear up some of the leftover turkey they'd brought back from Lachute. They also wanted to clear out other odds and ends to make space in the refrigerator. Paule and I dressed warmly and were out the door by 8:30. Another walk to water, like we'd done to Southampton Water last Spring.

"Look. It's mostly frozen over," Paule exclaimed.

"But I gather it's very dangerous to walk on, even when parts are thick ice, other parts are weak," I responded, not recalling who had told me that.

"Yes. We got a warning at school the other week. There are stories about people skating on the river, but now I think most skating is on prepared rinks like the one we walked by in the park."

"You said you'd like to try skating," I commented.

“Yes. Lise and I have started to look for skates for me.”

“Have you got enough money?”

“Of course I do. You know I took fifteen dollars out of the bank the other week, and not spent five yet.”

“Good for you, Paule.”

“Maybe we should say ‘Good for us’” Paule sounded pensive.

“Yes. I think we’ve done well. I hope you don’t feel too ... oh, I’m not sure how to say this ... perhaps mixed up is the expression. What I mean is, all the changes in your life – our lives – in the last year could be pretty overwhelming.”

“I suppose so.” Paule said this softly, then we were quiet for a few minutes, just watching the river, which still had some open channels where moving water could be seen.

Then Paule said “I actually think I’m more settled now than a year ago. Then I was worried about Tante Mathilde. You know, was she getting ... in England they sometimes say ‘dotty’ which sort of hides the sadness of getting ... is the word ‘senile’?”

“Yes, that must have been worrying for you.”

“It was. Especially as I’d heard nothing about my parents, but as I told you, I’d dreamt that they were dead, and somehow I’d accepted that. But I didn’t know what would happen to me, and that had me very scared.”

“I think both Maud and I realized that.”

“Ted. Was that why you and Maud got married? For me?”

“Like we said when we suggested we become a family, it pushed the timing forward. I think Maud and I would eventually have got together. Your situation – or really lack of a situation – just pushed the timing forward.

And, you know, it's really been a good thing. I've found I really love Maud and get along with her."

"Did you not get along with Agnes?"

"Yes. We had a good relationship. A good marriage. But each person is different, and I suspect each marriage. Each family."

"I don't remember my French family much. That bothers me – I think I told you before and you said how hard it was to remember voices and faces in detail. But with you and Maud I feel ... I belong. And that despite all the changes. With my French parents I felt secure and loved. I missed that when Tante Mathilde took me to England, even though she was very kind and caring. Somehow a mother and father who love you is special, and you and Maud have given me something of that, but since I'm older it feels different."

"Perhaps because all of us have more history and experience. We're probably also afraid of the pain of losing someone we love. I know when you came into our lives I had a few moments where I wondered what would happen if we formed our family and then for some reason you were taken from us."

"I didn't tell either of you, but I had a couple of bad dreams where Mrs. Carbury came to say I had to go to the hostel because you and Maud were unsuitable."

"That must have been upsetting."

"A bit. Somehow I think all the preparations for coming here took all our time and pushed aside the time to think and fret about anything like that."

"Do you like it here?" I asked.

"Oh yes. I still feel a little lost, but you have to remember that in Southampton Tante Mathilde and I were more or less camping in that awful room. After I was taken away from France until we formed our family

together, I didn't really have a home. Now I feel OK. Not perfect, of course, but I think I'll be fine."

"What about school? I've seen how hard you work."

"School's fine. I've made a couple of friends. And I get along well with Lise, so I've connections outside of school with people in her circle."

"I hope there's not any bullying at school. Kids can be nasty sometimes."

"I think there was one girl who tried to be nasty, but I told her bluntly that I'd survived the Nazis coming into Paris, the fact they'd killed my parents and their bombing of Southampton. I told her that if she insisted that I was her enemy I couldn't do anything about it, but I wouldn't let her push me around. She said she guessed I was OK. We're not friends, but we say hello and she doesn't bother me."

"Good for you, Paule."

"I was actually pretty scared. It was all bravado, but it worked."

* * *

We spent a quiet New Year's Eve and went to bed right after a midnight toast to 1947 in a tiny drop of our brandy. We even let Paule have a taste.

In bed in my arms, Maud said "I wonder if 1947 will have as many changes for us as 1946."

"Hope not," I answered. "While I think most of the changes for us were good ones, it makes me tired thinking about them."

"Me too. But I'm really, really, really happy you married me."

"Ah. Admitting to being a sex maniac, are you?"

"If I did, would you mind?"

“Probably not. Though I sincerely doubt you are. We like that side of things, but I don’t think it’s the key to what makes us tick together.”

“True.

“You know, Jeremy and I never talked about "us". That is, our feelings about each other. I think it was that day we went to Winchester when we caught each other looking at our reflection together that was the moment that everything changed for me.”

“For me it was definitely a pivotal moment, too.

“You know Paule and I walked to look at the St. Lawrence on Saturday and she asked if we’d got married just for her. I told her ’no’, but that her situation or lack thereof had pushed us forward. Talking to her made me realize I’m very, very happy we did find each other. Paule also asked if I got along with Agnes, and I told her that I did, but that each person and marriage and family are unique. Certainly our current family is.”

“I heard a French-Canadian the other day say ’for sure’, but it sounded really emphatic, with a long, long ’sure’. FOR SHOOER.”

“Well, I think that describes how I’d answer the question ’Are you happy with Maud?’”

“Me too. Well, with you. Oh. It’s too late to sort out the grammar!”

We kissed. Gently and unhurriedly.

“’Night Ted.”

“Sleep tight, Maud.”

* * *

On the evening of Sunday January 12 Gerard Lapointe called at about 8 p.m.

“Ted. We’ve got a problem at McCall Field in Calgary.

We were down to 1 mechanic because the junior man decided to go with a new start-up – they’ve made him a partner. Flying charters into northern Alberta and BC. And Pritchard, the man who was left, has had appendicitis. He’d started advertising and was going to interview tomorrow, which can’t go ahead now. We’ve got someone from the office in Calgary – the booking staff actually – postponing the interviews until Tuesday. The candidates who are coming in from elsewhere are going to be upset and we’ll have to compensate them if we don’t want a stink.

We’ve also approved a clerk/warehouseman to handle the parts inventory, but hadn’t even advertised yet. So, I’m going to send you out to do the interviews and try to engage someone – make it probationary for 3 months – for the clerical position.”

“I assume this means tomorrow morning’s flight 301,” I said.

“Fraid so. I’ll make sure there’s money available to you there. Just sign for it and make sure there’s a good paper trail. But that’s sort of what you do, so perhaps it goes without saying.”

“Never hurts to give people a reminder.”

“All right. I’ll leave a file at the check-in desk for you. Plan to be away for up to a week, though hopefully it won’t take that long. Your outward flight’s OK. May have to mess around a bit on the way back depending on how full the ’planes are.”

“I’ll send you summary information via teleprinter as it becomes available.”

“Oh. Thanks, Ted. I’d not thought of that, but it would be good to be kept up to date. Goodnight.”

Needless to say, we rushed around to pack my suitcase and try to remember what I would need. I emptied my fountain pen. Pressure changes could cause leaks. And I made sure I had sharpened pencils in a small briefcase I’d bought myself recently. It served well to carry my lunch! Then I tried to think of anything I might need, and made sure I had addresses and

telephone numbers, but copied them to my notebook so Maud would have them here in Montreal.

* * *

I got up at 6 a.m., which was about half an hour earlier than usual, and had some toast. I was fairly certain I'd get fed on the flights, and besides, being TCA staff would get me some perks.

It was up and down a lot for a long, long day. Ottawa took about an hour. About two and a bit more to Toronto Malton. Then hop, skip and jump to Winnipeg via Sault Ste. Marie and the twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William. Then another couple of hours to Regina and finally into Calgary at 10:15.

I was going to travel with the flight crew to the Palliser Hotel where the file from Gerard showed I had a reservation. I went with the pilots to the office, introduced myself – I had business cards now and apparently my name was known to the man on duty – and asked if I could use the telephone. The man pointed to a vacant desk and said to push any button not lit up to get a line.

“Hello,” said a voice that was not very familiar, though it must have been Joseph.

“Hello, Ted Newman here.”

“Ted! Are you calling long distance?”

“No. I've just got off a very long set of flights from Montreal. A minor emergency here in Calgary I've been sent to try to sort out. But I wanted to let you know I'm here and will be at the Palliser Hotel for a few days. Not sure at this moment about anything else at all.”

“But we'll be able to meet up, anyway?”

“Certainly. I just don't have specific times just yet. Still, we've made contact, and we'll catch up, come hell or high water. Oh. The crew is about

to leave. I've got to go or I'll miss my transport. I'll try to call tomorrow and leave a message with Caroline if possible. Or else call tomorrow evening much earlier."

"OK, Ted. Talk to you soon."

* * *

The Palliser was, from the outside, very nice. My single room was adequate, but didn't quite match the facade. It had hot and cold water, but baths and toilets were down the hall. Still, I slept well. I'd forgotten to bring an alarm clock, but could order a wake up from the staff. I asked for 7 a.m., but because of the time zone difference of two hours, I was awake at 6:30 and about to go down to breakfast when the knock came.

I'd had the good sense to ask the van driver the night before when there would be a similar shuttle for crew in the morning, and was ready and waiting for it. When I got to McCall Field sometime before 9, I found the office of the Calgary Operations Manager, a Mr. Charles McEvoy. He seemed to be a little younger than I, and had a limp.

"Good you are here to try to get parts and maintenance up and running, Newman. We've got a mechanic, but he's pretty new, and nobody else to make sure everything's checked and tikkety-boo."

"I gather the interviews have been set back to today," I said.

"Yes. We've set you up in Pritchard's office. Hope that's OK."

"Yes, fine. But is there a receptionist?"

"Up here, just my secretary, Miss Jenson, who runs errands all over the place. So we've told the candidates – there's just 3 – to report to the commissionaire in the hangar lobby and he'll let you know they are here in the waiting room. I suggest you give a time for him to send them up. That'll give you time to get a smoke or take a pee between interviews. However, I took the liberty of asking them to arrive at 10:15, 11, and 1 as I wasn't sure how ... er ... fresh you'd be this morning. The Montreal flight isn't a piece

of cake, no matter how we claim it is in our advertisements. Almost like being on a pogo stick.”

“You have me at a disadvantage – I don’t know what a pogo stick is.”

“Kids toy. Sort of a broomstick with a spring in the bottom to jump up and down. You’ll likely see them around in the Spring. By the way, is that an RAF badge?”

We took a couple of minutes to exchange service background. McEvoy had been a flight instructor, having flown in the 30s for a 2-plane charter outfit then qualified on hurricanes. He didn’t get overseas before a student he was training managed to prang the Harvard trainer into the runway so hard the undercarriage collapsed. That was, I understood, pretty difficult to do on the Harvard, which was notoriously robust. In this case, McEvoy lost a leg. The student pilot didn’t make it.

“Is there a labour exchange or employment office around?” I asked.

“Federal Government has one in the Public Building not far from the Palliser. You thinking of using it to get a mechanic?”

“No. We’re approved for a clerk/warehouseman to handle the parts and their tracking. I don’t have time to advertise – we need to track parts and make sure you can keep going – so I plan to hire someone on probation. I’ll definitely appreciate knowing anything plus or minus about how they’re doing later on, if you’re willing.”

“If I’m not willing, I’m shooting myself in the foot – my good foot!” McEvoy laughed. We’d get along.

As soon as I left McEvoy’s office, his secretary showed me Pritchard’s office. She was also helpful in bringing me some ink to fill my pen and thoughtful enough to bring a notepad and ask me how I liked my coffee. I made sure I knew the phone number of the office and the extension in the office I was sitting in, and asked if I could have the number of the labour office at the Public Building.

Whoever answered there didn't seem surprised that I telephoned and dictated my requirement. I suggested that prospective candidates could present themselves to the Commissionaire at McCall Field Municipal Hangar tomorrow at 9 a.m. with any documents they had to support their potential hiring and I would interview them. I knew I was probably not following TCA policy and procedure, but felt I could take that risk given what Lapointe had said.

* * *

Of today's three candidates, two were in their Sunday best in the American parlance. However, they were essentially garage mechanics who'd been drafted in on a few occasions to help get something like a Fairchild 82 started so it could get out of a remote lake. They wouldn't be that useful on DC-3s or Lodestarts, which both use Twin Wasp engines. And they wouldn't realize the importance of keeping track of what had been done.

The other candidate was rather rough-looking, in a lumberjack plaid shirt. There was the evidence of oil in the corners of his fingernails. He was, it turned out, the last candidate, and the only one likely to be of use to us.

"Tell me about yourself," I said.

"My name is Richard Boyer. I was born in Saskatchewan in 1920. My parents are Métis in origin, but my father fought in the Great War and somehow that let him get a job running a grain elevator. So I got to go to school, and I liked learning. And the local garage let me learn about motors. When the War came, I joined the RCAF as a fitter, and got to learn about other engines. Went to Europe – all over the place – and now back here. I'm working back in a garage in Red Deer. Only been back 6 months. It's more difficult to get a good job if you're Métis."

"Where were you in Europe?"

"I've got it all written down in my service record, but I can tell you the names of the places off the top of my head:

Debden, Redhill, Exeter, Ste Croix-sur-Mer, Douai, Melsbroek, Breda, Eindhoven, Twente, Luneberg.”

“So you’ve experience on lots of engines?”

“Yes. Wasps, Double Wasps, Merlins, Napier Sabres – very touchy they are – even a Griffon at the end. Got to look at one of the new jets one day on a Meteor, but not to work on it.”

“Where were you on New Year’s Day, two years ago?” I asked, as a check on his veracity.

“Jumping into a slit trench big enough for 3 men. Except there were 6 of us. Gerry gave us a pasting. 141 planes wrecked on the ground. That was Eindhoven.”

“I know. I wasn’t far away. I did parts and logistics for the RAF. They seconded me from Supermarine in Southampton. In fact, I was back working there until the end of October.”

Boyer smiled. “Then you know what it was like.”

“Yes. I was in Antwerp during the V-bombing and saw my share. And my wife and daughter were killed by a V-1 while I was in Normandy.”

“Mon Dieu. Then you’ve had it all.”

“But somehow doing all right now. I met a widow – I’ll leave out her story – and we’ve adopted a French orphan whose parents were killed in the camps. Our daughter is a joy and bringing us back to normal.

It’s none of my business, really, but are you married?”

“Yes. Very recently. It’s hard not to be able to give Jocelyne more. The garage pay isn’t great.”

“Look. This isn’t how it’s supposed to be done. But we need someone here rather urgently. I’m prepared to offer you a mechanic’s job here starting as soon as you can, on probation for three months, of course, but permanent

assuming things work out. This involves also keeping track of the parts so we can maintain inventory. We're also trying to hire a clerk/warehouseman to ease that burden."

Boyer asked "What would the salary be?"

"I'm embarrassed to say I'll have to look in this file. Oh. Here it is."

I showed him the sheet detailing the job.

"As I'm a logistics person, I don't know all the rules on hiring, so I'm going to have to ask someone. Let me call the secretary to the Operations Manager."

I buzzed that efficient lady and was told who was in charge of the formalities and phoned that office and to inform them Richard Boyer would be presenting himself to complete hiring procedures tomorrow at 9 a.m. for the probationary position of aircraft mechanic.

"I've one more thing to say, Richard. Here are two \$10 bills. I want you to come tomorrow in slacks, shirt and tie, or even a suit. You can pay me back when you can. But I don't want anybody to not give you proper respect because of how you're dressed. I'd have sent you today to do the paperwork, but think it would be better that you come in tomorrow looking top-drawer.

"I have seen that our mechanics in Montreal have monogrammed overalls that TCA supplies, so I'll assume the same here – so ask about them if nobody offers, as I'm sure there'll be some around for the ground crew here."

"Wow! Thank you, Mr. Newman. I'll go shopping right away this afternoon. And I'll have to see how long I can stay at the YMCA, or if I can find a place for Jocelyne and I. We're living with her parents for now. You can be sure I'll pay you back. It's really generous of you."

"Consider it Air Force solidarity."

* * *

It was getting towards two o'clock. 4 p.m. for me, and that was how I felt. I'd had a quick sandwich from the coffee counter in the waiting room between the last two candidates. What should I do now?

First, I wrote down notes on the interviews and a statement that I was recommending the hiring of Richard Boyer.

Pritchard! Better find out how he was doing. I went to the washroom – that was the expression here – and then went to find Miss Jenson.

"I've finished the interviews and I think we've got a live one in Richard Boyer. I'm having him start tomorrow morning. So now I should inform Pritchard and find out how he's doing. Can you tell me how we would do that?"

"I heard he's in the Holy Cross Hospital. You could telephone and see if he's allowed visitors."

That's what I did and learned that it would likely be better to visit on the next day, as Pritchard was recovering from surgery and they wanted to be sure he was willing to have a visitor. Visiting hours were 3-4 or 7-8.

So now I was more or less free from immediate tasks for today. I phoned Joseph's number and got Caroline. She was excited and wanted to meet me and suggested I come as soon as I could. I said that it would definitely not be before 4 as I needed to complete some things first.

In fact, the first thing I did was go to the communications room. A Mr Bevan who was monitoring the radio frequencies of our aircraft helped me by sending a teleprinter message to Gerard Lapointe saying I'd tentatively hired a mechanic and planned to interview clerks in the morning.

Then I returned to Pritchard's office and checked and updated my notes on the day's activities. I also made sure my expenses so far – rather few as yet – were recorded in my notebook. Finally, I phoned Miss Jenson and asked whether the hotel would want me to pay ("No" was the answer) and if I

could get an advance on expenses. “I’ve actually got \$40 here for you. I should have given it to you earlier.”

I said I’d pick it up on my way out. Then I put on my coat and hat (flaps up – I’d not be waiting outside in the cold), picked up the cash, then went down and found a taxi to the Palliser.

There I took a shower and changed, then asked the bell-hop where I could a) buy a bottle of wine or sherry and b) get to 312 - 9 Street NW.

The bell-hop told me where I could find the nearest Alberta Liquor Store – he warned me I’d need proof of age – and from there where the street car that went over the Louise Bridge was to be found. I was glad I’d brought my passport, since I didn’t yet have a driver’s license or other identification, though I did have my TCA card with my photograph which was needed to get into some of the sensitive parts of Dorval Airport. But that didn’t give my age.

* * *

The Alberta Liquor Store was clearly designed to make alcoholic drinks as unattractive as possible. I bought a bottle of Harvey’s sherry. It was practically the only thing I recognized, and I was never much for spirits, except in very small quantities.

I took a streetcar to the north side of the Louise Bridge and got off. There were electric trolley-buses crossing the bridge as well. Those were what Joseph had mentioned in his letters.

There was a bit of a breeze and I was glad of my moleskin coat. I walked north along 10th Street, passing some shops, including a furrier named Rudolph. Maud would love the full-length mink on display. I turned east at 2nd Avenue NW and found the address I’d been writing to.

The woman who answered the door still had the face of the Caroline I remembered from more than two decades before, but it was now lined and had a frame of grey hair. I was bundled inside and faced a machine-gun rate of questions. In a while Caroline calmed down a little and we fell into a

comfortable conversation for about 20 minutes, after which Joseph arrived and things got frantic again for a while.

I stayed until quite late – there was too much to talk about. Joseph walked me to the streetcar, which he said would get me to the Palliser as fast as he could drive me. He was probably right – the trip took only a few minutes.

We agreed that I would telephone when I knew what my plans would be after I had seen what candidates presented themselves in the morning. My hope was that I could find someone for the clerk position in the morning, see Pritchard in the afternoon, and plan to go home to Montreal on Thursday. It was most likely I'd be on the overnight flight that went out at 6:15 in the evening.

* * *

I used the shuttle again in the morning and checked for any messages. Gerard had sent a simple “Good work” on the teleprinter.

There were ten candidates who were downstairs at 9 o'clock. This could be awkward. They made the waiting room look more full than it would usually be.

I had given the commissionaire a sheet on which each candidate could write their name and address. I called out each name and when they responded I assigned times, starting with 9:10, then every 5 minutes thereafter. They should present themselves upstairs at their assigned time. I told each they would have 4 minutes to tell me their qualifications and interest in the job, and that I would inform everyone at 10 o'clock who was on the short-list.

Some of the candidates seemed annoyed by this, but I needed to bring the group down to a workable size.

Of the 10, only 3 had brought any documentation to support their claim of experience or training suitable for the job we had. Two of those were 1945 high school graduates, and their documentation was their report card for Grade 12. Some of the undocumented 9 might have been suitable. Two

claimed to have been part of transport units, and three claimed to have been NCOs, but they hadn't brought their service records with them.

Ivan Badyck had grown up on his Ukrainian immigrant parents' farm not far from the Saskatchewan border. When he graduated high school in 1940, he had volunteered for the Royal Canadian Navy. After some time in coastal protection vessels, he was assigned to a corvette in late 1941. Cold, wet, and very bouncy, Flower class corvettes fought the sea and bad conditions as much as German submarines. Ivan was ordered to assist the quartermaster in ensuring the ship had sufficient food, fuel, parts and ammunition to carry out her missions. When new ships were commissioned, he moved and was promoted, ending up as the quartermaster on another of Canada's Flowers.

At 10 I went down to the Commissionaire's desk and called over the 7 who had no documentation. I asked them to gather round me in a corner of the waiting room and thanked them for coming. However, I pointed out that in my task of finding someone to handle critical parts of our aircraft, I needed to be able to document objects and actions. Some of them might have expertise we could use, but the lack of documents to verify their claims did them no favours.

I then asked for the two new graduates from high school and thanked them, and also commended them for bringing their documents, but that they did not appear to have sufficient experience for the position. Finally, I asked Ivan to join me upstairs where I discussed what we needed in the new position to ensure he was what he claimed and that I was happy with hiring him. Then I told him that I was prepared to offer him a probationary position. In discussing the job, I had told Ivan the starting salary – good but not extravagant – and he had seemed very interested. In any event, he smiled broadly when I told him I was going to make the offer.

* * *

When I looked at the clock, I realized it was just before 11. Ivan was filling out forms with the administrative office. Richard Boyer had been there just before him. I walked over to one of our hangars where I had heard Richard was being introduced to the tasks he would be expected to undertake. The

mechanic showing him some job with a Twin Wasp engine was the only one we'd had on Monday. I noted that somehow Richard had on overalls. But then, there were other staff working the apron to service the aircraft, fuel, luggage and other things, so overalls were not exclusive to mechanics.

I chatted briefly with both men, reminding them that we wanted to make their work easier and would welcome suggestions and comments as we evolved better systems to support the documentation of the parts and maintenance. They seemed pleased I'd set in motion the hiring of Ivan and said they would help him to get going. They were, after all, doing the tasks now he would be taking over so they could focus on maintenance. Air travel was growing. Ivan's help wouldn't give them a long respite.

* * *

I had quite a lot of time until I could see Pritchard at three o'clock, so I took a bus to downtown. I went into the Hudson's Bay Company on 1st Street and ate lunch in the restaurant, had a brief look round the store, then went to my hotel room to drop off my notes. At a quarter to three I got a taxi to the Holy Cross and found the ward where Pritchard was recovering from his appendectomy.

"Hello. Mr. Alan Pritchard?"

"Who's asking?" came the reply, rather defensively.

"Ted Newman, Parts and Maintenance for TCA out of Montreal."

"They sent you out to keep things running?"

"Yes. A bit of a panic. How are you doing?"

"Sore. Hungry. Bored. But those are my problems. Did Jeff keep the 'planes flying."

Jeff was the lone mechanic on Monday and Tuesday.

"Yes. Fortunately, no problems. Just inspection checks. I interviewed the candidates who'd responded to your ads yesterday and a fellow named

Richard Boyer started today.”

“Think a French Indian will be reliable?”

Pritchard was maybe a year or so older than I. His attitude to a man who had fought across Europe for Canada left something to be desired. I said “He’s been in plenty of tricky situations and managed to keep going. And those can be verified in his service record. He’ll be useful when we get the North Stars and their Merlins.”

“He’s worked on them?”

“Yes. Have you?”

“No – reserved occupation – here the whole War. We pretty much just had the DC-3.”

“‘Reserved occupation’ can be a tricky situation to be in. Even if you wanted to volunteer you can’t, and other people give you the evil eye because you don’t have to.”

“Yeah, that’s about it.”

“Boyer should be an asset. Maybe make your team number 1 in Canada. I was in a lot of the same places he was, but probably not quite at the same time. And he was RCAF and I was RAF, but often we shared bases. But I was able to ask some questions he wouldn’t have been able to answer unless he’d really been there, so I’m confident he’s genuine. And unless I’m mistaken, he’ll prove a really good mechanic.

And today I hired a former corvette quartermaster for the clerk / warehouseman position. He’s happy enough with the pay, but he’s had more responsibility on a ship than we’re likely to give him. If he turns out well, we’ll want to see how we can use his skills to make all our lives easier.” I didn’t mention Ivan’s name. I’d heard negative slurs about ‘bohunks’.

“Well, it doubles the size of my team, anyway,” Pritchard admitted.

* * *

I phoned Caroline from the hospital lobby and suggested she and Joseph meet me at the Palliser and we have dinner there. My suggestion was 6:30 unless they left a message at the hotel, and I'd wait in the hotel lobby.

I put my hat flaps down as I walked to the street-car stop. It was cold, but not snowing and not too much on the ground. I realized I hadn't sent Lapointe a report. Have to do it in the morning.

For a few minutes I went over my notes, then made a list of things I wanted to do in the morning – if I had time, I'd see what I could do to get the new men up and running. Then I had a bit of a nap. On my way into the hotel, I arranged with the desk that I should be given a wake-up knock at 6:15 if I was not down in the lobby. I actually woke in time. A bit of an old habit from time in the RAF that I could more or less wake up when I wanted to if I thought about it enough before sleeping.

We had a very nice dinner – my treat since I was on expenses and I knew I spent less than my per diem most of the time. We all had beef, as apparently Alberta beef was considered pretty good. In fact, I'd never had such a steak before, and the roast beef Joseph and Caroline had looked excellent. And the portions were large. I'll have to watch my waistline.

It was a great comfort to reconnect with my brother. A lot of silly and seemingly inconsequential memories were revived, apparently for both of us. Caroline was a bit wistful about some of the places she remembered. One or two were now gone. I don't think either of them quite understood what the bombs could do, even though there had been plenty of pictures in newspapers and magazines.

* * *

I checked out of the Palliser in the morning. Indeed, I'd informed them the night before that I'd be leaving. Once again, I shuttled to the airport with a flight crew.

The first thing I did after putting my luggage in Pritchard's office was send Lapointe a teleprinter message to update him. Should have done that yesterday.

Then I went to the ticket desk and asked if there were space on flight 106 at 6:15 tonight. While they were looking, I had a moment of panic when I realized that I'd misread the schedule. 106 was the ONLY flight that let me get home without an overnight layover somewhere. And 106 was itself an overnight flight.

The booking agent came back to say that flight 106 was full – actually not from Calgary, but Winnipeg to Toronto.

Now I was in a pickle. But the agent said I could pick up the Vancouver to Montreal flight in Lethbridge. It left there at 03:05 in the morning! I could take either the 2:30 p.m. or 10:25 p.m. flights to Lethbridge. I wouldn't have to get off the Vancouver to Montreal plane at all – it went all the way to Montreal and kept the same flight number. I didn't find out if it was a DC-3 or a Lockheed Lodestar. Probably the latter, as we seemed to use them on the transcontinental run through Lethbridge.

I got myself booked on the 2:30 flight to Lethbridge. And I confirmed they'd a space on the Lethbridge to Montreal. In Lethbridge I could introduce myself to the maintenance staff there and hopefully find a meal and something to keep me occupied until the early morning. For some reason TCA started flying their trans-continental routes through Lethbridge rather than Calgary. Perhaps the mountain passes were easier on that route. Maybe I'd go into town and take a look, though winter and a prairie town might not be very interesting.

Getting the booking today was a close call. The timetable had jumps and sideways arrows. Even with the 6:15 flight, I'd have had to change from 106 to flight 40 in Toronto in the morning as it was. Some of the flights on the schedule stopped in awkward places. Others flew right over Calgary.

Since I had time, I went down to the hangar and found Jeff – I should make sure I know his last name – Richard and Ivan working out what they were going to do today. They had a list of what absolutely had to be done, and they suggested that for today they do it as a trio, with Ivan making notes. I told them I thought that made sense. Richard could be given some of the routine tasks as and when Jeff was comfortable passing them off to him. And I said quite honestly that the current documentation system was not as

efficient or useful as we'd like it, and suggestions for improvements were welcome.

Richard asked if it were likely that any engines would need an overhaul, and Jeff said there was one waiting for that on a stand at the back.

Richard said "Would it make sense for me to tackle that as a way to refresh my skills with them? Ivan could watch and make notes of the parts and learn what are critical steps. I assume there's an overhaul manual."

"Sounds like a plan if Mr. Newman approves. I'll shout if I get overloaded and need help," Jeff agreed.

"That would probably be a good start for both you new men," I admitted.

There really wasn't much sense my hanging about, so I went back to the passenger area and got myself some lunch. That is, I had soup and a sandwich from the waiting room counter.

Pen! I went to the washroom and emptied it and dried the nib on some toilet paper.

I bought the Calgary Herald and the Albertan so I'd have something to read, though I did have a quite new novel *Two Solitudes* by Hugh MacLennan I'd bought between Christmas and New Years. Better not lose it, as Maud said she wanted to read it. There was another novel by the same author about the time of the Halifax explosion. I liked the author's style. Probably would look for that one too. Maybe we could get it from the Library.

I'd been looking for something by Graham Greene, actually, but when I asked the woman serving in the bookshop where I bought the MacLennan book, she said he hadn't published anything since the Ministry of Fear.

It was about 1:30, and I'd used the washroom in our office area, so before I went down to the waiting room again, I stopped by Miss Jenson's desk and said goodbye to her, and to Charles McEvoy who was in his office and not occupied with anyone at that moment.

* * *

Lethbridge was a similar operation to Calgary in size, though likely I thought to diminish rather than grow relative to the larger city. I introduced myself and met some of the staff, including one of the two mechanics. The other would be coming on duty late at night to check the Lodestar I'd ride eastwards.

I had a lot of time until my flight. It was winter outside, and getting dark by the time I'd been able to share some of my intentions regarding parts and maintenance with both the operations manager and the mechanic on duty. I returned to the waiting room and asked the desk agent where might be a place to get a meal. He recommended the Shanghai Chop House. "Good chinese food" was the comment. I asked how to get there and he phoned someone and asked "Joe, You about to go home?"

Joe McLaurin was handing off to a colleague from his shift in the radio office. He dropped me at the restaurant, saying "Ask your taxi driver to show you the High Level Bridge."

I wasted no time in the windy cold street and went inside. The chinese waiter showed me to a booth and handed me a menu. He came back with a pot of tea and a small cup without handle.

I looked at the menu and wasn't sure what to order, but turning to the last page I saw some combination plates and meals for 1, 2 and 4 people. I decided to have one of the meals for 1 with an egg roll, chop suey, fried rice and beef with vegetables.

The food was tasty and there was plenty of it, at what I considered a reasonable price. My only complaint was how quickly it came and I ate it. I took my time with my tea and a "fortune cookie", a sort of biscuit twisted around a slip of paper with a statement *You are building happiness out of sorrow*.

I put the slip of paper in my pocket. Maud and Paule might get a smile from it.

* * *

I asked the waiter if he could call me a taxi. It took a while to come – there may have been only one or two in the town.

“Where to, my friend?” was the greeting my driver gave me.

“I want to go to the airport, but I was told to ask to be taken to where I could see the High Level Bridge.”

“That’s easy enough. Just up the road and we’re heading the right way, since the airport is easiest in the other direction, but we can work around to it pretty easily.”

We cannot have gone a lot more than a third of a mile when we came to a huge valley, and in the light that came off of snow-covered ground, a massive viaduct was visible.

“Over a mile long and over 300 feet high,” my driver said.

We were about to move off, when I saw a light in the distance.

“Is that a train light?” I asked.

“Unless you’re in a hurry, it’d be worth waiting,” was the reply.

Gradually the light got brighter, then a long, haunting whistle sounded and the locomotive pulling a long chain of boxcars moved towards the town across the Old Man River. Sometimes one is lucky with timing.

After the caboose slid out of our view, we said nothing as we got back in the taxi and I was driven to the airport. My driver got a good tip. I got his card which I could submit in lieu of a receipt. But I’d make a note of my driver’s name and recommend him to others.

* * *

It was around 8 when I got back to the airport. There was nobody about the hangar terminal except a radio operator and a single agent in the waiting

room. When I came into the waiting room, even that person was absent to visit the toilet.

My intention to take the 3 o'clock flight had been communicated to this agent. Indeed, my baggage was already behind the counter.

"If you want a bit of a snooze, there's a sofa in the flight crew lounge," he said. "Crews use it when there's a delay of some sort. I'll make sure you're woken up for the flight."

I took him up on his offer, but I dug out my shaving kit and got rid of my stubble first. The sofa was surprisingly comfortable, with my folded coat as a pillow. I fell asleep sometime around half past eight and looked at my watch what seemed a moment later to discover it was just after two o'clock. I used the crew washroom and then went down to the waiting room. There was just one other passenger there.

The sound of aero engines was perceptible, then faint, then louder and the Lodestar landed. Several passengers got off, and two were brought their luggage then went out to a waiting taxi. It wasn't clear they were together, or sharing by necessity. The rest of the passengers were using the washroom. The airplane had one, but airborne toilets were more about necessity than convenience. I'd found myself following the same practise.

My baggage and that of the other passenger were taken out to the aircraft, then at ten to three, the agent asked all passengers to board as quickly as possible to avoid letting the cabin get too cold in the winter air.

We actually got away a bit early and the airplane climbed away toward Regina. Then up and down all through the day, to land in Montreal after dark at nearly 7:30 in the evening.

I unscrewed myself from my seat and stiffly put on my coat to brave the cold walk to the terminal. Inside I waited for my luggage, then got a taxi home.

I found everyone in the dining/living room and was warmly welcomed.

“Do you want anything to eat?” Maud asked.

“No. We got food on the airplane, but a cup of tea would be very welcome. Then a bath and bed, though I’ve been sleeping on the plane.”

“Do you have to be at work in the morning?” Paule asked.

“Whether I’m expected or not, I plan to get up when I wake without an alarm.”

* * *

In the morning, I woke after Maud had gone to work at Ronens.

I learned over the next few weeks that she was doing rather well, it seemed. Hannah had suggested, and Nate took up her suggestion, that Maud should wear a tailored woman’s suit – what in England we called a costume – to exemplify the shop’s product. Later – it took a year or so – women who saw Maud in one of the two suits Nate made for her asked where they could get one. The suits had jackets, but could be worn without. The skirts had pockets so Maud could carry a notebook, pin box, and tailor’s chalk.

At this time, however, she was working in blouse and skirt, but the skirt had a pocket. Maud would handle greeting customers, getting them to try on the garments they had ordered, and doing sleeve and trouser cuff measurements and pinning. Nate would do the "gentlemen’s measurements" when a suit was ordered, and call out the numbers for Maud to write them down.

There were some items that were off-the-shelf, such as underwear and ties. They weren’t central to the business, but with growing availability in the post-war economy, Maud would talk to me about possibilities, and once she had convinced herself that an idea was good, she could share it with Nate and Hannah.

This morning, however, I felt like I had a hangover, though I’d had nothing to drink. I dressed and Marthe gave me some coffee and toast, and I got to the office about 10:30 and gave my report to Janice, our steno. I’d written it in pencil on the airplane.

“Ask me if anything isn’t clear – there was some turbulence so my writing may not be perfect.”

“No problem, Mr. Newman.”

* * *

It turned out I was getting a cold. Nevertheless, I went in on Monday January 20 because we were going to meet to discuss ideas to improve our systems. I made sure I had several handkerchiefs and made my way to work.

I let Remy lead the meeting. He started out exactly as I would.

“We have a lot of parts to order and distribute, but also to track where they go. The main problem we have is that we need to get the information back here and have it organized so we know where a part went and what happened to it. That can easily be done if we make lots of copies and have unlimited manpower, but we just have the people here, with some input from the mechanics and the flight crew if they send us the reports that they should.

Right now, we essentially file things by the supplier on orders and by the date on reports. But it would be very helpful to have files by the aircraft, so all procedures or events for a given aircraft are recorded. Even better if we also had files as well by engines, since they sometimes get swapped out, overhauled, and put back in a different aircraft.”

I said “Ivan Badyck sent a message asking whether multipart carbons or photostats might let us have copies we could file separately. Could we make either of those work?”

Janice responded “The second or third copy is often very difficult to read, and you have to use pencil, which I think the lawyers don’t like.”

Brian added “And photostats go all black after a couple of years.”

“So nice try, but no prize?” I asked.

“That’s about it, Remy said.”

“Could we use a card catalog for aircraft and engines and add entries that referenced the log sheets?” I asked.

“That might be sensible. We started something like that a couple of years ago, but then lost the person who was running it to the RCAF.”

The idea was argued and criticised, but eventually I asked Brian and Janice to try to come up with a plan and costs. We’d want something like this if anything happened to an airplane.

* * *

Late Thursday afternoon as we were about to go home the phone rang, and I answered.

“Newman!”

“Miss Rogers here.” She was Lapointe’s secretary. “One of the Electras, CF-TCQ, has crashed near Winnipeg. It was a training flight, and it seems to have been destroyed, and the two pilots on board don’t seem to have survived. I thought you’d better know, as there’ll no doubt be requests for information on the ’plane.”

“Thanks for letting me know, Miss Rogers. Never a good situation when an aircraft goes down. I’ll get started gathering information about that airplane. You have phone numbers for me and Remy Houle if there’s anything urgent.”

I called everyone to gather round and we discussed what we should do. Brian offered to stay late and collate any information on the particular aircraft in our files. I told him to keep track of the overtime, and that this would apply to everyone, though we may simply allow time off later. Remy and Janice left, but I stayed for half an hour to help Brian get started.

* * *

With my cold still hanging on and the crash, you can imagine I was in low spirits when I got home. A good meal of home-made baked beans improved my mood – the local nomenclature used *fèves au lard* for the food, but *binerie* for a place that made them. However, I decided to go to bed early and get up early in the morning. Indeed, I got to work before 7 and found Brian's file.

One thing he had done was note previous accidents. Given the War and the number of Electras and variants in the form of Hudson bombers, I was rather used to hearing about crashes, but the number of Electras TCA had lost still was a surprise. And all the occupants were killed in all crashes. Not good.

1938 Nov 18: CF-TCL crashed on takeoff from Regina. 2 pilots killed. Cause not stated.

1941 Feb 6: CF-TCP crashed on approach to Armstrong where it was diverting on the way to Winnipeg with engine trouble. 12 killed.

1945 Feb 27: CF-TCF crashed climbing out of Moncton on a test flight when an engine quit. 2 killed.

1946 Sep 2: CF-TCJ crashed on training flight approach after right engine failed. 2 killed.

1947 Jan 23: CF-TCQ. The latest crash, for which we didn't know the cause. 2 killed.

I saw that Brian had tried to track the engines, but our files had been evolving over the years, and we didn't have all the serial numbers to allow a full picture. But he was trying to do what I would, as the reports of engine failure had an ominous frequency.

By 8:30 everyone was present, and we talked about how we should proceed. We had regular work to do, so I undertook to work with Janice to look into the aircraft that crashed yesterday and what engines were on it. It was tedious and tiring work, but we made a bit of progress. Nothing, unfortunately, that pointed to a cause of a crash. It could, of course, be

something totally unrelated to parts and maintenance, but we wanted to know as much as we could.

Remy said “You know, we also lost a Lodestar at Malton when the engine failed on takeoff. That was in November 1943.”

I got Janice to find it and add to Brian’s list.

1943 Nov 4: CF-TCX made forced landing in a plowed field when an engine failed on takeoff. No fatalities, but the 9 passengers all slightly injured.

When I asked how many Electra 14’s TCA had purchased, Remy said 16. Five of 16 was a pretty bad rate of loss. There had been Electra 10A’s as well, but they used a different engine. But the DC-3s used the Twin Wasp. We’d need to check their records, particularly if any were swapped into the Electras.

Around noon, Gerard Lapointe came into our room and saw the files Janice and I had spread out on a folding table she had managed to dig up.

“Ah, I see you are already trying to gather information on the plane that crashed yesterday. I was going to ask you to do that.”

I said “Brian O’Neill stayed late last night – until nearly 11 actually – and we have been trying to get as much information on that plane and its engines as we can. It underlines our need to keep improving our systems to track the parts and procedures, and Brian and Janice Armstrong here have been preparing a report on what we might try.

Brian also has listed the five Electras we’ve lost, including TCQ, and the 1938 crash and yesterday’s don’t have a stated cause, but the other three suggest engine problems, so we’re trying to see if we can track the engines on TCQ for any reported issues. There’s also Lodestar TCX at Malton that suffered an engine failure in 1943. So engines are going to be high on the list of suspects.”

“Good work in a bad situation. Thank you all. Especially for getting onto it before you were asked. We’ll have to look carefully at that report as soon as it’s done. Any preliminary ideas?”

I nodded to Brian, who said “We get log sheets on maintenance and parts, but we need to be able to access those by date, aircraft, engine, and sometimes other features such as supplier, but at least the first three. We’re trying to work out how to have the logs stored, probably by date, then have some other file or card index that can be organized by the other index. The trouble is it takes time that we often don’t have, and it’s quite tedious and error-prone work, so we want to do what we can to make it efficient and reliable.”

Lapointe said “We’ll probably have to provide some extra resources, especially if we want to do some trials. Perhaps we can get some students during the summer if the projects are written up. Students from McGill are often looking for work starting in May.”

“Once we’ve discussed the ideas in our group, I’ll make sure we have some proposals that we think can be tried out,” I said.

“OK. Keep at it. There’s going to be lots of noise for a while. Never good to have a crash, even if everyone walks away. And they didn’t yesterday, unfortunately,” Lapointe said, leaving the room.

* * *

February 7, 1947

I arranged to meet Maud at Ronens shop at just after 6 p.m. We were going to go out to dinner. There’d been a couple of inches of snow, and it was normal winter freezing temperatures, but not excessively cold. Actually warmer than in Britain now. Crazy weather they were having, and fuel and electricity shortages too, besides not being prepared like we were in Canada.

We were getting used to it. Getting used to Canada, to new jobs, to a new life. Paule seemed to be doing well at school and her French was improving

at home, though with some decidedly local expressions included. She had started to skate with Lise at a local rink and was able to get around on the ice, if not yet gracefully.

Our destination was the Auberge St. Gabriel, which had been going for almost 200 years. It was in the old town. A bit of a walk, but Maud put her arm through mine and we trudged companionably along the sidewalks. I'd a reservation for 7.

"Do you think of today or our wedding day as the anniversary we should celebrate?" I asked.

"Both!" Maud answered enthusiastically with a laugh. We had just got to an intersection and the signal was against us, so I put my arms around her and kissed her.

"Ooh. You'll scandalize the good French-Canadian priests," Maud quipped.

"We have a license, though they may say it's English and not valid here."

"I'll tell them I don't care. It's you I want, and you I'll stick with."

We were walking again. I said "Thank you for that vote of confidence, Maud."

"It's mutual, Ted. A year ago we were both on our uppers, at least emotionally. In my case, I was also not doing too well for money either. And now we're married, in a new country, and both of us have jobs. Mine doesn't pay a lot, but I could probably survive on it – just. But yours has a good salary and you seem to be doing OK with it. Look – I just said OK like the locals."

"The last few weeks have been a bit unhappy with the crash in Manitoba," I said.

"You weren't to blame for that, though I think it's going to make lots of work and worry for you. But you've talked about your team, and they're trying to work out improvements in the records. You'll – we'll – make it."

We walked without talking for the last couple of blocks to the restaurant. "Blocks" was another new expression. We enjoyed a very pleasant meal, talking about everything and nothing.

As we finished our dessert, I said, "It's been a very special year in my life. I would never have thought I could be here in a very old building, eating such a good meal with such a wonderful woman who is my partner and best supporter. Thank you, Maud."

"I want to thank you too, Ted. But I think we have to thank us – the team we've become, and that includes Paule. If she hadn't come into our lives, we could very likely have bumbled along as landlady and lodger, both in our own little pits of unhappiness. We would have stayed leftovers."

"Yes. I think you are right. I don't feel that way any more, despite the turmoil of the last few weeks at work.

"No more leftovers, unless we get to take home some of the food from this place."

* * *