

Living with Myra

W-T Only

Tuesday 18th July 1944.

Following the success of the D-Day landings and bombing raids over Germany, newspapers and the wireless were predicting the War would be over within a few months.

Myra knew her position at St George's Co-op was at risk. She felt certain she would be demoted when the men came home. Her appointment was War-Time Only. Poor Gordon Galbraith, always off work with chronic back and neck pain, after his fall from a high ladder at his home. Everyone said he would be retired or moved to a desk job as soon as a suitable man became available.

Mrs Myra Kaywood had been pleased to be left in charge and had met every challenge without complaint, only visiting Gordon at his home on rare occasions. Although Gordon struggled to sign off the stock-takings in September and February, everyone knew it was Myra who had done all the work, made all the decisions. Myra loved being their boss and was not looking forward to taking orders again.

When she saw the advertisement, "Chief Buyer for Haberdashery based at SCWS Head Office", she decided to try for it. Gordon had written in support.

"Mrs Myra Kaywood is an exemplary employee who has been at St George's since she joined us from school, aged fourteen.

During her nine years she has progressed steadily and is now second-in-charge to myself as my Branch Under-Manager.

Despite her youth, I really cannot recommend her more highly and I am confident she would make an excellent Chief Buyer for Haberdashery."

She had coached him, choosing words in his own style then sent it off in the internal mail system, clipped to her application, listing a few of her qualifications and her experience.

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After three weeks Myra thought she had been overlooked. Late on Tuesday afternoon the telephone rang and she wondered if it would be Head Office or Harry. She was talking to a customer who was complaining the new table she had bought before Christmas had

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still not been credited to her Dividend. This was another problem which seemed to be on the increase.

From the shop floor Myra heard the sharp knock on the glass. She glanced over to see Daisy Donovan, her Cashier and second-in-charge, waving through the cash office window, holding the telephone. It must be Harry, she thought; this was his usual time for calling. Although Daisy was in Myra's confidence in certain matters relating to the shop, Myra had kept her personal problems with Sandy, and her affair with Harry Hunter, a closely guarded secret. Only Billy the Budgie knew anything of these.

The irate customer was in full flight, complaining loudly. Several other customers were earwiggling, nodding in agreement, muttering about their own missing 'divvies'. Myra shrugged her shoulders to Daisy, mouthing "tell them I'm coming", and turned to her customer.

'Well, Mrs Sutherland, please be assured I have noted everything here in my little book. I will give this my most urgent attention. Now, your Share Number is 7222, yes?'
'Oh, yes. Thanks Mrs Kaywood. You remembered my Share Number? How nice of you.'

Myra said a polite goodbye then rushed to the office, entering just as Daisy was putting the telephone down.

'It wiz Morrison Street jist aff the blower fur ye', Myra. It wiz yon crabbit bitch Lena Harrison, Powdenhill's secretary. "Tell Mistress Kaywood I'm far too busy to await the likes of her." 'Cept, Myra, she didnae huv her wallies in right, or mibbi she hud been drinkin'.

Daisy was an excellent mimic. Myra had caught this habit from her, and had developed several voices, practising at home in secret, talking to Billy.

'Aye, stuck up bitch, then she sayed yi've tae go an' see him it nine a'clock the morra mornin.'

'Oh God, Daisy, I thought I'd lost it! Do you think I still have a chance?'

'A course yi' huv Myra, there's no' a better manager in the hale o' the Co-op. And yer posher than maist o' them Managers as come in here lording it ower us. And yer smarter tae, smarter than any ten o' them pit the gither.'

'But maybe they'll bring in an outsider, from Manchester, like Mr Ralph?'

'No, fur God's sake Myra, surely they'd never try that yin oan, wid they?'

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Myra

November 1931.

The Primary Seven class was restless. Because of the heavy downpour both morning and afternoon playtimes had been staggered. When released for their break the children had been confined to the playground rain shelter, corralled by the class monitors and Mr Docherty, the janitor. Miss Pettigrew's class was bursting with unused energy. They waited impatiently for the final bell to signal their escape, freeing them to splash their way home through the puddles.

Myra was seated in her customary place at the right-hand corner of the back row, 'enthroned', the Queen of the Class, as she secretly thought. She had occupied this position throughout her school career. The tall slim girl was starting to change into a woman and small bumps pressed against her grey pullover.

Myra Gallagher was in no hurry to get home. She often stayed behind for an extra hour with Miss Davina Pettigrew, reading aloud to her teacher, learning to project her voice and articulate, under the elderly spinster's stern but friendly tutelage. At home Myra would be crowded out, buffeted by the swirl of family and friends who filled their small tenement flat. Here at school, after the bell, it was quiet and 'conducive to learning', a phrase she had used recently in one of her stories.

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Money and space were always tight in the Gallagher household. They lived in a one room and kitchen in a tenement building in Yoker, a close-knit working-class community on the banks of the River Clyde. When her parents married, Michael Gallagher had a good job in Yoker Distillery, just around the corner from their home. He had been one of a small group syphoning off raw spirit for personal use. Two years into their marriage, Michael had been caught red-handed and sacked on the spot. Their life had become much tougher. Because of his size and strength he became an itinerant stevedore, seeking employment in the many Glasgow Docks. At forty-nine, his strength was failing. During the depression years he had earned a reputation for rabble rousing, which was still remembered by many hiring Foremen. As a result work was harder to find.

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Mary Gallagher (nee Nellis) had done her Catholic Duty and first borne him four girls then young Francis (Frank), the long-awaited son. When Myra arrived seven years later as a bonus baby, Mary had shut up shop on her husband. This knock to his manhood had coincided with a long period of unemployment. Michael joined the Pioneers at the Chapel and turned back to the faith of his childhood, becoming very devout, giving up smoking and even banning alcohol from the family home.

After school when Myra got home, she was hoping to be allowed to go to the pictures with her big sister Jean, to the early evening show, just after tea-time. The film was *The Devil's Circus* and starred Norma Shearer and Charles Mack. According to Jean, the board at the picture-house door said Charles had eyes which were 'irresistible'. Myra had looked up the word in the large dictionary Miss Pettigrew kept with her other reference books, on the shelf behind her desk. Myra had permission to 'consult' this tome at playtimes, provided she first washed her hands. "Irresistible": another word Myra was planning to use soon. Once studied in this way a new word would belong to her forever, to be spelled out confidently in any future class test or used in one of her stories.

Jean had already seen this film three times. Myra knew from her there was a lot of kissing, but it was Jean's descriptions of the trapeze artist and the lion tamer which had attracted Myra. Their father had taken against the film because of the word 'devil'.

Jean, who was nearly twenty, worked as a fishmonger. She was a talker, not a thinker, and seldom read the danger signs. She had rattled on about the film regardless of her father's frowns and scowls until finally he had snapped: "*That's enough o' that tongue o' yours, Jean Gallagher! Stop filling the wean's heid wi' yer drivell! She's got way too much nonsense in there already, fur ma likin'.*" This reprimand had been spoken in his angry voice and silence had descended. It had lasted only a few minutes: Myra's eldest sister Lizzie (Elizabeth) had arrived with her four kids, filling the kitchen with its usual hubbub of noisy chatter.

Although Myra knew she might not be allowed to go with Jean, she was still hopeful. She had been working on her Mum for days, even agreeing to postpone her birthday celebrations on the 19th, which was a Thursday, until the following day when Jean would be paid. Myra knew she was her Daddy's favourite: he was always grabbing her as she passed his chair, pulling her onto his lap, cuddling her, giving her a 'beardie',

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tickling her all-over as if she was still a toddler, making her wriggle and giggle with delight until her mother spoiled it by shouting: "Michael Gallagher, that's enough, leave her be, do you hear me!"

On Friday Jean would get nine-pence from her wage packet as pocket-money. This was provided to her by Mary on condition the brown envelope was handed over unopened. Mary was keeper of the family purse and juggler of their debts. One time Jean had been stupid, opening the pay packet and taken out her pocket money on the way home, to buy cigarettes. She had received a slapping from her mother and was confined to the house for the rest of the weekend. Mary did not want any of her children to tread the path her husband had travelled in those first difficult years of their marriage.

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In recent months Jean had stopped smoking again. She had been smoking (a secret shared with everyone except her father), since she started work, aged fourteen. During the last few months she had been saving up - this time a secret known only to Myra - for a new dress she had seen in Rendell's the posh dress shop at Partick Cross. This new direction in Jean's life was because of Sandy, her brother's new best friend from the Partick Wheelers' Cycling Club. Jean knew herself well enough to know she was likely to spend this money if she kept it in her purse. She had entrusted it to Myra, who had hidden it in one of her secret places.

Myra was a quiet girl who listened carefully, storing away what was said, keeping her head down in a book. In a family group which was a great deal older, Myra understood more than she was meant to. Normally she spoke sparingly, but when asked to tell one of her stories, she gave free rein to her tongue, projecting her naive fantasies in various voices, drawing on her growing stock of words, making her tales sound almost real. Telling stories was Myra's party piece; and she could always be relied upon to invent another, on demand.

She was also good at keeping secrets. For years now Jean had trusted her younger sister with all her dreams and desires, sharing all her romantic successes and failures, often in inappropriately lurid detail.

But it was her brother Frank Myra loved. He was tall and handsome with curly red-brown hair and pale grey-green eyes. He slept in what had been a walk-in cupboard, re-modelled into a cramped bedroom. At eighteen he was studying for the Police

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Test, hoping to become a cadet, and Myra was helping him. In his room they could shut out the rest of the family and get some peace. There was nothing Myra would not do for Frank, her Prince.

Frank's friend Sandy Kaywood had become a frequent visitor at the Yoker flat. Sandy was twenty-two, four years older than Michael. He was quiet and politely spoken and had a good job and always seemed to have plenty money, often splashing out to buy chips or ice cream for everyone on Thursday nights, when Mary's purse was usually empty. Sandy had two light-weight racing bikes and a sturdier work bike. For big events, he often allowed Frank to borrow the older of his racers, now his 'second' bike, even though it was only a few years old.

Jean had decided she was 'out to get him' but Sandy seemed oblivious to her flirting. Jean had to be careful, because Sandy was a Protestant. Jean's not too subtle advances had been quickly spotted and she had already been warned off sternly by her father several times: "Jean Gallagher, yer oan yer last warnin'. Next time Ah'll skelp yer erse wi' ma big belt. Dae ye hear me, girl?"

Although Sandy was welcome as Frank's friend, he was definitely not acceptable as a son-in-law.

Sandy did not smoke and seldom drank more than a bottle of sweet stout. Frank looked up to his new friend as the elder brother he did not have. By this association, Myra also saw Sandy as a sort of brother or cousin. Mary, the person in whom real power lay within the family, had delivered her opinion on this new addition to their family circle on several occasions with the words: "That Sandy Kaywood's such a nice boy. Polite, well mannered, and so good for our Francis". Initially her husband had objected but over time he too had come to appreciate Sandy's quiet presence. When Sandy did speak, what he said was seen as 'sensible'.

Before Mary Nellis had fallen for the handsome six-foot-tall red-haired Michael Gallagher, her parents had hoped their daughter would become a teacher or a nurse. Mary had always tried to speak 'properly', and strove to bring up her children after her example, correcting their every slip and refusing to allow them to fall into their father's Glasgow/Irish patois.

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Granny Nellis - also Mary but known as Maisie - had been an additional burden to the Gallagher family for many years. Mary had been born to Maisie six weeks early. The birth had been difficult, and Maisie had suffered damage to her womb. As a consequence, Mary had been an only child, a rare thing in a Catholic family.

Mary's father, Malcolm Nellis, had met Maisie in the Pollokshaws Police Office, where she worked as a Telegraph Clerkess. Shortly after Mary's marriage to Michael, Malcolm had died when his police horse reared at a football match, causing him to fall, crushed under the animal. This was the start of Maisie Nellis's steady decline; she ended her days bed-ridden, losing her mind and control of her bowel and bladder. This had brought Mary and her girls the extra burden of daily travel to Granny Nellis's home in Tantallon Road, near Shawlands Cross, over an hour's trek each way across the city to the south side of Glasgow to bathe and feed Masie and renew her bedding. When the older girls left home and Jean had started work, Myra became her mother's main helper. Together they had endured the worst of Maisie Nellis's final years.

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The janitor rang his bell and the class stood noisily to attention. James Duffy, Myra's worst enemy in the class, a small thin boy with a withered left leg and a vicious streak in him, was now hidden from Miss Pettigrew's vigilant gaze. He turned and let a large gob of spittle dangle from his tongue until it dropped into Myra's inkwell. Smirking, he filed out in turn. Myra stored the hurt. She would get him back at the first opportunity.

On Miss Pettigrew's command, the class filed out. Myra waited until they were gone then sat again and opened her desk to retrieve her thick leather-bound story notebook. This book was a private gift from Miss Pettigrew, designed to encourage Myra in her story-writing. Her wooden pencil case held six pencils, a pencil sharpener and a double-ended hard and soft rubber. The case was an expensive one, last year's birthday present from her brother.

Myra opened the book at the first draft of her latest story and began to scan through it, checking for spelling errors before she gave it to Miss Pettigrew to read. The story about the puppy was only partly written, with the balance of it in her head, in her mental notebook, as she thought of it.

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It was one of a series about a fictitious rich girl, called Marguerite, who 'resided' in a huge red-sandstone 'mansion'. Marguerite's father, Reggie, (Reginald Bertram Goodfellow-Smythe), was a man of 'independent means' who owned a Rolls Royce. This vehicle was driven by a 'chauffeur'. The current chauffeur was called Teddy, (Edwardo), a young Spaniard who was 'ravishingly' handsome. Jean was not a reader but loved to hear Myra recount her stories as they lay side by side in bed at night. Myra regularly adjusted the details of the chauffeur at Jean's request, to fit the latest screen star inhabiting Jean's nightly fantasies. But to Myra, in her mind's eye, Teddy was identical to her brother Frank, but with black hair rather than red.

Marguerite's mother was a pale, 'alabaster-skinned' and 'heart-stoppingly' beautiful woman with waist length jet black hair, called Maria-Angelina. She was a gifted 'exponent' of the 'pianoforte' who composed and recorded highly successful jazz music which earned her a fabulous income. As she had no need of further wealth, she gave it all to the needy children of Africa.

Reggie also had a sports car which he drove himself, often taking a lady-friend with him when he went off to fish for salmon, shoot birds or hunt for deer. This lady-friend was Priscilla DeBeeren and she too was rich. Everyone knew of their 'secret liaison' but no objection was raised.

Because her mother played and composed 'obsessively', when Reggie went off in his sports car, which he did a lot, Marguerite had free rein to order Teddy to drive her around in the Rolls. They roamed all over Glasgow and the Clyde Coast Resorts, visiting expensive shops and tea-rooms. When Reggie returned from a trip he would always bring Marguerite a 'fabulous' gift to mark his 'triumphant' return.

Myra was already planning part of her next story: Marguerite would receive a present of a 'petite' and 'fluffy' white poodle from Reggie. This dog would be called Bertie or perhaps Scoot. The little dog would have 'iridescent' pale blue-grey eyes which were 'irresistible'. Bertie/Scoot would be 'mischievous' and would only obey Marguerite, deliberately ignoring everyone else.

Myra was wrenched from her reverie by Miss Pettigrew, speaking in her friendly voice, used only when they were alone.

'Myra, please go directly to see Mr Walsh.'

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'Have I done something wrong, Miss Pettigrew?'

'No, quite the contrary, actually. Run along, he's waiting for you.'

The girl put the book and pencil case carefully into the scruffy schoolbag which had been handed down from her sisters and brother and eased it onto her shoulders. She was ashamed of this schoolbag with its ink stains, broken buckle and the still raw "FG" scraped into the front flap by Frank.

After Frank, Miss Pettigrew was the most important person in Myra's life, even more important than Miss Isobel Chalmers at the Whiteinch Public Lending Library.

'Will I come tomorrow afternoon, Miss Pettigrew?'

'No Myra, not this week, my brother is coming tomorrow. Off you go now. And remember, dear, *Carpe Diem!*'

'Yes, Miss Pettigrew, *Carpe Diem!*'

This was their special secret code. On Saturday afternoons Myra often went to Miss Pettigrew's house to learn Latin, in preparation for starting secondary school next year. It would be impossible to get into Glasgow University, any university, without passing Latin, Miss Pettigrew had emphasised repeatedly.

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Irresistible

Most members of Staff had already left and the school was almost deserted. The lights were off, the corridor was dim, silent. The door marked "Thomas A. Walsh MA (Hons) - Headmaster", was closed. Myra could hear the murmur of several voices. Two she knew well but there was a sharp, irritated voice which she had not heard before: it was 'cultured' and 'distinctive', she thought, like most people on the radio.

Mr Walsh must have 'Visitors'. The rule was she must not interrupt; she must wait until the Headmaster was free to see her. Myra stood to one side of the door, pressing her back against the wall, leaning against her schoolbag, merging into the shadows.

Suddenly the unknown voice silenced the others. The man was speaking urgently, impatiently. Myra thought the voice was either 'overbearing' or perhaps 'imperious', two words she had added to the back of her story notebook only recently.

'Listen, Thomas Andreas, and take care to answer carefully, my time is precious. According to you this child is some sort of genius?'

Mr Walsh did not answer in his usual loud, firm and 'commanding' manner, but spoke very quietly, timidly - Myra tried to choose between 'deferential' and 'subdued'.

'Yes or no, Thomas Andreas?'

'Yes, Monsignor Creity, I truly believe Myra Gallagher is exceptional and well worthy of a scholarship to support her entry to *Tower Ridge*. I am not alone in this; I have questioned every member of my staff carefully. Miss Pettigrew, my Deputy Head, has taken Myra under her wing and, with her parents' agreement and my full support, has given the girl extra lessons both after school and on Saturday afternoons at her home. The child is unprecedented, the best pupil any of us has ever seen. We can find no flaw: reading, arithmetic, perfect grammar and brilliant story-telling. She already has a vocabulary greater than most members of my staff. Although the Gallagher family are poor, they are devout. Michael Gallagher, her father, is a stalwart of his Church. And, if I may add...'

'Enough, Thomas Andreas, Patrick Augustus here has already answered all my questions about this family. Leave us, both of you. Wait in the Staff Room until I send for you. But first, find this protégé of yours and *get her in here!* I'll be the judge of her, not you!'

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The door opened and Mr Walsh and Father Donnelly walked past Myra into the corridor closing the door softly behind them. The Headmaster sensed her presence and swung round. The tall slim girl with the long pigtail of crinkly red hair and fathomless green eyes stepped forward and curtsied.

'Ah, Myra, there you are, child. Have you been listening at my door?'

'Oh no, Mr Walsh, I have just this very moment made my arrival. Regrettably I was detained by James Duffy who grabbed my pigtail again. He simply would not let go until I told him I was urgently expected at your office.'

She saw Mr Walsh exchange a secret smile with her priest and knew she had carried it off. Mr Walsh knocked at the door on her behalf.

The stern voice said: 'Come!'

Father Donnelly rose onto his toes and whispered into her ear: 'Myra, remember to kneel and cross yourself. And always call Monsignor Creity, "Monsignor". God Bless you, girl.'

Her tiny priest gave a gentle shove and Myra stepped forward into the warm, dim room. Standing to the right of Mr Walsh's desk was a tall, thin man with tonsured dark hair. He wore a black eye-patch over his left eye. He was dressed in a full length black robe with creamy white vestments showing below it. The robe was fresh and looked new. A large silver crucifix hung from his long thin neck, suspended on a necklace of black and red glittering gemstones. His face was twisted into a smirking, self-satisfied scowl. His right hand held his left hand, his right index finger caressing an ornamental ring on his left pinkie.

Myra felt the hairs on the back of her neck rise, just as in her story, when the ghost had appeared at the window of Marguerite's bedroom. She could see a blue shimmering light around his head, like a halo. Perhaps it was an 'aura', another of her recent words.

His right eye bored into hers, making her feel guilty. Myra knew with certainty this man knew what she had done for Frank, giving him 'relief', as he had called it. She had done it willingly, repeatedly, enjoying the power it gave her over him. More, she had connived to enable their intimacies, pretending to leave to go to the library or Miss Pettigrew's and then sneaking back to be alone with him in his box bedroom. She was guilty of mortal sin, repeated many times and as yet unconfessed. How could this man know? Surely Frank would not have confessed to Father Donnelly? If he had, was it possible her priest had told the Monsignor?

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'Kneel!' barked a voice, as a woman stepped forward, hauling downwards on Myra's schoolbag, forcing Myra to her knees.

'Ah! At last we have our rustic genius. You are *late*, child. Where on earth have you been?'

'Well, Monsignor, as I have just explained to Mr Walsh and Father. . . .'

The slap across her cheek from behind caught Myra completely by surprise and set her ear ringing.

'Hold your tongue, impertinent child!' barked a sharp female voice.

Myra held back the tears and lowered her eyes.

His shoes were of shining black leather and he wore purple socks. They are probably made of silk, she thought. His white trousers had red piping around the bottoms. They looked a bit like fancy pyjamas, she thought.

'State your name, child.'

'Myra Gallagher, Monsignor.'

'This is a lie!' hissed the man.

'Sorry, Monsignor - my name is Maria Agnetta Nellis Gallagher.'

'My fear, Maria Agnetta, is that you have been over-indulged since a child. You are the youngest of six and your parents dote on you. You have lived a life of ease. This school has cossetted you and built you up beyond your place. You are now a proud and arrogant child and well on the way to perdition. "Pride of Self" is an affront to God. You must learn to follow the example of The Holy Mother and tread the path of meekness and humility.'

'Forgive me, Monsignor, for I have sinned. Please forgive me, in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen. And please God the Holy Mother will watch over me and guide my ways. Amen.'

'You are forgiven, Maria Agnetta.'

'Stand,' said the man.

The nun moved to stand in front of Myra. She was small, heavily built, and wore a blue habit with a stiff white cotton winged hat. Her crucifix was made of ivory and hung on a simple black cord over her enormous bosoms. Her face was small, round and fat and her skin was a florid purple-red. Her tiny black eyes pierced angrily beneath thick grey eyebrows. She smelled of carbolic soap.

'Check her, Sister Apologia Constanta.'

'Child, take off your knickers and sit here on this chair.'

'**What?**'

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The two slaps came, one from each hand, bringing tears. Myra, stunned by the violence, was bundled backwards onto a chair. When the nun lifted Myra's skirt, she instinctively resisted only to receive a further, harder slap. Her skirt was lifted over her face, her pants pulled down to her ankles, tugged over her wellingtons and removed.

The nun took Myra's dark blue knickers to Mr Walsh's desk and smoothed them out flat for the priest to examine. Myra pulled her skirt down to hide herself. The nun returned to Myra with her hand raised ready to strike at the girl again:

'Close your eyes and lift your skirt above your face.'

The nun stooped onto her knees and her strong hands grasped Myra's thighs, forcing them outwards and upwards, exposing her private part. A finger probed, gently.

Myra lowered the top of the skirt and saw the man had lifted her knickers to his face with both hands, as if smelling them. Before she could look away his eye caught hers and held them. With one hand he opened his robe; with the other he lifted his vestment before stuffing her knickers inside the front of his trousers. Myra tried to close her eyes against him but she could not. His hand stayed inside his trousers until the nun wheezed and struggled to her feet.

'Clean, Monsignor - virgo intacta.'

'Very good. Wait in the corridor, Sister Apologia Constanta. Make sure I am not disturbed.'

The door closed leaving Myra alone with Monsignor Creity.

'Come child. Kneel before me. ...'

His voice was now friendly and melodic, almost a whisper.

'Closer child, come close to me that I might bless you. Good, there's a good girl now.'

One hand wrapped itself slowly and gently into her pigtail and the other cupped under her chin. Tugging her pigtail, he eased her head forwards into his crotch which smelled of lavender.

'Maria Agnetta, do you wish to serve your Church with all your heart and all your soul?'

'Yes, Monsignor.'

'I am advised you have a brother, Francis Joseph, who is eighteen and hopes soon to join the Police, if he can pass the test.'

'Yes, Monsignor.'

'So far he has failed twice, is this true?'

'Yes, Your Holiness.'

'Do you think Francis Joseph would make a good policeman?'

'Yes, Your Holiness.'

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'Do you love your brother Francis Joseph as a true sister should?'

'Yes, Monsignor.'

'Francis Joseph has a box bedroom where you help him practice his hard sums? Is this true, child?'

'Yes, Monsignor.'

'You help to make him happy in everything you do for him?'

The story began to run in Myra's head.

Reggie had a present for Marguerite.

In the shoebox was a puppy.

The lid was moving, the puppy yipping.

She knew it was irresistible.....

'Yes, Monsignor.'

'Do you know where your knickers are hiding, Maria Agnetta?'

'Yes, Monsignor.'

'Do you like treasure hunts, child?'

'Yes, Monsignor.'

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'May I go home now, Monsignor Creity?'

'Now, now, no need for tears child. Here, use your pants, wipe your mouth and dry your eyes. And do stop snivelling.'

'Thank you, Your Holiness.'

'There, there. All better now, Maria Agnetta? Yes, now you may leave. God Bless you in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. And may the Holy Mother continue to lead you in meekness and humility.'

'Thank you, Monsignor, and may She continue to bless you also.'

Myra rose and turned to leave. His hand grabbed at her schoolbag.

'Maria Agnetta, do you understand you must never speak of this Act of Contrition?'

'Yes, Monsignor.'

'Give me your knickers.'

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On her way home Myra slid out a farthing from the lining of her schoolbag and bought a sherbet lemon to take away the taste.

By the time she arrived home she had decided Marguerite did not like dogs after all. Dogs were horrible smelly things. Instead Reggie would buy Marguerite a blue and white bodge with irresistible pale blue-grey eyes. As she neared her tenement close Myra tore

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the pages from her mental notebook and ripped them up, attempting to erase her encounter with Monsignor Creity.

During the days and weeks which followed, at home and school Myra continued as before, pretending nothing had happened. Myra was good at this, blessed with an ability to deliberately block out or misremember unpleasantness, as she had done when Granny Nellis had died while Myra was reading her one of her stories.

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Father Donnelly waited two weeks before trying to telephone Monsignor Creity. Under pressure from her father and from Thomas Walsh, over the next month he left messages on three occasions.

In early January, a curt note was received from the Monsignor's secretary explaining Father Donnelly must be patient: Monsignor Creity had many other candidates to evaluate: a decision would not be reached until next June at the earliest, when further final interviews would take place.

In March 1932 Francis Joseph Gallagher passed his Police Test at his third attempt.

A few weeks later a short article in the *Glasgow Herald* stated Monsignor Creity had been called to the Vatican to serve in the Curia. He would relinquish his current post and leave Glasgow immediately. The great man had received a letter of thanks from Glasgow's Lord Provost, thanking him for his unstinting service on many of Glasgow Corporation's appointment committees, and in particular for his influential work with the City of Glasgow Police Force and the Education Department.

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Sandy

Sandy Kaywood had attended Dowanhill Primary School and later had been given a place at the Boys' High because of his mother's employer, Uncle Albie. Albrecht Gurovich was the proprietor of AG Jewellery, Glasgow, a small manufacturing business with premises in St Enoch Square. Sandy's mother, Sadie Kaywood, had worked for Uncle Albie for years and was now his bookkeeper. Albrecht Gurovich had been good to Sadie and Sandy.

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Sadie Kaywood nee Milligan was originally from High Blantyre, near Rutherglen. Her mother Edith Milligan was the widow of Victor, who had owned a Chemist's shop, before dying from a drug overdose. Because of his morphine addiction, Milligan's business had been struggling for years. At the time of his suicide it was on the verge of bankruptcy. In one of his more lucid periods, Victor had signed the family home over to Edith and this was her only legacy: the remainder of his assets were consumed by his many creditors.

Sadie had carried the secret of her father's suicide through childhood into adult life. It remained in the back of her mind, haunting her, because gradually she had come to realise she too had an addictive personality.

With a large house and two school aged girls to care for, Edith had eked out a living from a steady round of travelling salesman who found her friendly, accommodating, and very willing to offer them discreet comfort on dark lonely nights, for a fee.

Grace, four years older than Sadie, was a plain girl, awkward and introverted and seemed born to become a spinster. On leaving school she worked in a florist's shop and did most of the cleaning and cooking for the lodging house. Sadie had no wish to be trapped in a similar life of drudgery and decided she must escape.

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As a sixteen-year-old, Sadie Milligan had been tall, slim and, with the bloom of youth, moderately attractive. By observing her mother closely, she was already experienced in the ways of older men when she turned up at AG Jewellery.

Albrecht Gurovich, the owner, was heavy-set, newly forty-six and married to Bertha, his older and asthmatic nagging wife. Their only child, Albert, was soon to become a Rabbi. Albie's marriage had been almost sex-free, and the alluring Sadie appeared to be offering delights he had never dreamed would ever come his way.

On her first day, clutching a newspaper open at the advertisement for an Office Junior, she smiled coyly at Albie. She had daubed herself liberally with her mother's best

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perfume. Like her mother, the youthful Sadie was already a good negotiator. After a short discussion, he agreed to a wage which was twice what Grace received as a fully trained florist. He knew the agreed amount was too high, but he did not care, he wanted Sadie near to him and her smile hinted at further possibilities.

As those first months passed, Sadie had played the temptress to establish a bargaining position. It took her the best part of a year of tantalising fumbblings in the large walk-in safe with the door locked from the inside.

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When Sadie finalised the deal, it included a rented flat in Caird Drive, in the name of Mr Alexander Kaywood. Several of the tenement closes in this street were owned by a member of Albie's synagogue in Giffnock, Mr Joseph Bellhouse. There would also be an increased wage to be paid monthly as a salary and a £100 'wedding gift' deposited as the opening balance for a new bank account in the name of Mrs Sadie Kaywood, to match her step up in the world.

In preparation for her move to Caird Drive, together Sadie and Albie had created the fiction of her husband, to give her the respectability required for a life in Dowanhill, a location safely far removed from both St Enoch Square and Albie's home in Giffnock.

In real life, the bachelor Alec Kaywood had been a trusted jewellery courier, travelling anonymously to and from Jewish communities throughout Britain, carrying diamonds, jewels, precious stones, small ingots of gold and silver and completed items of jewellery made or repaired by Albie and his small skilled team.

Alec, a chain smoker, had died of cancer the year before Sadie joined Albie. Because of the nature of the work Alec had done on his behalf, there was little which Albie did not know about Alec Kaywood and, crucially, Albie still held the birth certificate for his now dead employee. Albie had a friend who had a "friend" who worked at Martha Street Registry Office. This helpful "friend", for monetary gain, provided a 'genuine' wedding certificate to create Sadie Kaywood, the young bride of Alec, now in the merchant navy, on board a ship which would never arrive at his home port of Glasgow. When the Great War came along Alec's ship was conveniently lost at sea.

When Sandy was born on the 2 September 1909, he was circumcised, a not uncommon practice in those days. Sandy was at once entered on the cradle roll of the local Church of Scotland and when older was sent to Sunday School. Sadie rarely went to church although she considered herself to be a Protestant. It had been a difficult birth and

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Sadie made sure Albie sired no further children to her by insisting he underwent a vasectomy as a prior condition to continuing their sex life.

Despite having no formal qualifications, Sadie had a quick mind and soon became Albie's confidante and help-mate in every aspect of the business. AG Jewellery was small in size but highly profitable. Sadie soon learned to exploit this by sifting off money into her new bank account, looking to a future when Albie might tire of her.

Albrecht Gurovich was a frequent visitor to Caird Drive, mainly on Sunday afternoons and an occasional weekday evening for a few hours. As the years unfolded Albie would never regret a penny of the money he lavished on Sadie. Against all odds, the unlikely couple grew to love each other deeply.

Uncle Albie provided the toddler Sandy with a red trike which the boy bumped up and down the stairs, to the great annoyance of the neighbours, whose protests were orchestrated by Euphemia Fraser. This spinster quickly discerned the true nature of the man's visits. As the years rolled by, Uncle Albie provided further bikes to fuel his son's passion for cycling. Sadie had no interest in socialising with her snooty neighbours, or considering their wishes. She ignored their remarks and complaints to the factor brought no action.

When Albie arrived, Sandy was given money for sweets and encouraged to take his bike and play in the local park. With the boy away, Sadie fulfilled her side of the bargain, closing her thick bedroom curtains against the bright afternoon sun. On rainy days Sandy was farmed out with Mrs Riddell across the landing, another key influence in Sandy's upbringing.

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Mrs Mavis Riddell was ten years older than Sadie Kaywood. There was in fact no Mr Riddell, there never had been. Mavis was unconcerned with such niceties as Sadie had insisted upon with Albie.

At the age of twenty-five Mavis had left her direct employment with Gideon Horovitz, a small gents' tailoring business in Govanhill and, with her employer's help, had set herself up as a self-employed seamstress/tailoress working from home. Initially she worked

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mainly for *Gideon*, who was keen to provide her with as much 'personal business' as he could afford. However, *Mavis* was ambitious and enterprising and within a few months she was kept busy by a constant flow of regular customers who visited to deliver and collect their 'orders'. Her customers were mainly older men, mostly Jewish.

Mrs Riddell and *Mrs Kaywood* provided the other tenants with a welcome source of self-righteous gossip. Living directly across the landing from each other, the two women soon became great friends, sharing secrets, cigarettes and bottles of sweet sherry.

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Pamela

Pamela Riddell was five when Sandy was born. When inebriated, Mavis had complained to Sadie many times, she had never intended to have children, Pamela was her 'big mistake'. If Pamela understood what her mother had meant, she said nothing.

From a child Pamela had set her sights on being a nurse, practising her skills on the infant Sandy, at first under the guidance of her mother. Later, when fully trusted by both mothers, Pamela became the boy's regular minder and playmate. Sadie and Mavis often left Pamela in charge of Sandy when they went off on shopping trips or to the pictures. Within a few years the two children became like brother and sister.

Pamela always seemed pleased to have her 'own baby', as she called Sandy, feeding him, bathing him. When he stayed overnight with Mavis, he slept with Pamela in her bed, where she cuddled and tickled him until he was about to explode. Sandy was very susceptible to tickling and frequently she kept going until he wet himself. This was then followed by her stripping him, washing and drying him and putting on fresh clothes before the tickling began over again.

As Pamela matured she took a deeper physiological interest in Sandy's body, forcing him to close his eyes while she slowly undressed him, stroking him and caressing him, until his tiny penis was rigid then holding it while he did a 'stream' into the toilet pan. He was never allowed to open his eyes until she said he could. Over the years this behaviour developed.

When he was seven and Pamela was twelve her ritual included making him stand in the bath for the first part of the 'game', until he had peed; she holding his "Wee Willie Winkle", as she had now named it, guiding his stream up and down and across, near to the edge of the bath, nearly but not quite going over the edge onto the floor. If he moved, causing her to 'miss', he was punished, as her mother did with some of her Clients.

For the second part, Sandy was made to lie in the bath, his eyes tight shut. Pamela then mimicked what she had seen her mother do with some of her more pathetic visitors. Afterwards cold water was then splashed on him to wash away her urine. When the bath was clean she ran hot and cold water together and they sat facing each other. The water rose until it reached to the overflow. She guided his small hands to touch her intimately,

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again following what she had seen in her mother's encounters. As he touched her, she in turn gently soaped and rinsed his body, crooning to him: "Rock a Bye baby, on a Treetop". Through trial and error Sandy learned what pleased her, what prevented her from getting angry and hurting him again. Throughout this part of the ritual Sandy must always keep his eyes closed: if she caught him looking, she would twist both his pinkie fingers until they almost broke, making him whimper, begging her to stop.

These sessions, undetected by both mothers, led the seven-year-old Sandy to become a bed-wetter, much to the disgust of his mother who continually scolded him for the extra work it caused her, and the smell which filled his bedroom.

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When Pamela turned thirteen she was enrolled in a junior drama group by her mother. Mavis Riddell had an ambition: Pamela would one day become famous as an actress of stage and screen. The girl, well developed physically and quite attractive, threw herself into the enterprise and soon became noticed. This meant she was no longer available to take Sandy to the pictures on Saturday afternoons so he went alone or went out on his bike in order to enable Uncle Albie's visits. It was then he joined the Junior Section of the Partick Wheelers' Cycling Club. At other times, when Sandy and Pamela were left alone, their ritual continued as before, both mothers still unaware of what was happening.

At the drama class Pamela met Sarah Johnston, the younger daughter of a bank manager who lived near Milngavie. Sarah had a horse called Bruno and a brother called Sam who was fifteen. Pamela became enamoured with all things equine and engineered an invitation to visit and stay over for a weekend. This led to further visits and Pamela soon became a regular visitor to Milngavie. She now treated the eight-year old Sandy as an inferior being, either ignoring him or making him miserable with her comments, often bending his pinkies out of spite, although he had done nothing to deserve it.

Sandy's bed-wetting continued but now he was in charge of washing his soiled bedclothes, rising early each morning to take his dirty linen to the public wash-house, ('Steamie'). It opened at 6:00 am and the boy was always among the first to arrive, washing and drying his bedclothes and pyjamas before returning to remake his bed then breakfasting alone before setting off for school. Sadie was now a late riser, becoming increasingly addicted to alcohol.

After a few months, Pamela's friendship with Sarah and Sam came to a sudden end when she was discovered in the bathroom with Sam, both naked, Pamela in the middle of her

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peeing ritual. She was bundled onto the tram at Milngavie and sent home early. She offered no explanation to Mavis.

The next day Mr Johnston made a brief visit to Caird Drive, describing what had occurred, including the torture of his son whose pinkie fingers were both badly sprained. Mr Johnson advised Pamela needed psychological help. Mavis kept this revelation from Sadie, but Pamela was no longer allowed access to Sandy unsupervised.

Sandy's bed-wetting gradually diminished, and by his eleventh birthday it had almost stopped.

In April 1918 Pamela turned fourteen and was accepted as a trainee nurse. She moved to Paisley to live in the Nurses' Home. Thereafter her visits to Caird Drive became sporadic.

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The Visitor

June 1921.

Sandy would be twelve in September. His mother had told him after the school holidays he would be moving from Primary Seven at Dowanhill Primary to the first year of secondary at The Boys' High School of Glasgow. He still had nearly four weeks till the end of term and was looking forward to the Dowanhill School Sports Day. He was hoping to win several of the running races and throwing the cricket ball the furthest distance.

On Thursday morning Uncle Albie called in his car to collect Sadie. They would be away for a week to Lytham St Annes, near Blackpool. As on previous occasions this excursion was disguised to Bertha as a business trip to Manchester to meet clients. The boy was given two ten shilling notes by Uncle Albie for sweets and to go to the pictures. Sandy had readily agreed to stay at home, promised several times over to feed the budgie and 'behave himself'. If he needed anything, Mrs Riddell was just across the landing.

On Saturday afternoon Sandy lay on his bed. He had been for a long hard run on his bike, out beyond Milngavie Water Works, and was sweaty and relaxed. His shorts were unbuttoned and his right hand was inside his underpants. With his left, he was leafing through a well-thumbed dirty magazine he had bought from an older boy called John Barnes, a boy he knew at Partick Wheelers'. Sandy had only recently learned how to masturbate successfully, following the older boy's advice.

Pamela called unannounced to visit her mother who was not at home. Pamela took Sadie's spare key from Mavis's kitchen and decided to pay her 'baby brother' a visit.

Sandy had his eyes shut, concentrating hard, making it last.

Pamela turned the key and opened the outer door, quietly.

Sandy's bedroom door was ajar. Pamela swung it open, leering down at him.

'So, Sandy this is why you have been avoiding me, wanking off to these big tits and bums. Are my tits not good enough for you now?'

'Oh no, Pamie, you have very nice tits, I mean ...'

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She snatched the magazine and dangled it above his head, moving it just out of reach when he tried to grab it. He fumbled his fly buttons closed and tried to sit up. Pamela pushed his chest hard, forcing him onto his back again.

'No, please, don't Pamie. You won't tell my Mum, please say you won't, please. She'll go mad if she finds out.'

Pamela threw the magazine to the corner of the room, sat down on the bed beside him, fished in her cardigan pocket, took out a cigarette case. She lit one with a match which she then blew out, sending a puff of acrid smoke towards his face, making his eyes smart, making him feel nauseous. The cigarette was black, a small cigar or a cheroot.

To Sandy the smoke smelled odd, perfumed, and different from the smell of his mother's cigarettes. Pamela sucked in the fumes then held her breath, keeping her mouth closed, letting the smoke seep slowly out down through her nostrils.

He could taste the smoke in his mouth and began to feel light-headed.

'Sandy, how do you know they are nice, my tits?' Her speech was slurred. 'Did you look at them when you were told not to? Do I have to punish you again?'

She lowered the glowing ember until it was just above his forehead.

'No Pamie, no, I didn't look, honest, just that once and you already did me for it. My pinkies hurt for months after.'

'So how do you know my tits are nice?'

'No, well I can see them, through your blouse.'

'Through my blouse, Sandy? So, you have X-Ray eyes, like in one of those films?'

She stubbed the remains of her cheroot on the linoleum, shrugged off her cardigan and began unbuttoning her blouse. Sandy tried hard to look away but could not. She wore no bra. She threw her blouse behind her and began fondling her breasts, squeezing her nipples viciously, her head back, her eyes closed.

'Are you looking Sandy?'

'No, but, well. . . .'

'Have a good look, Sandy. You were right, nice tits, eh? Better than those ones you were wanking yourself off to, eh? C'mon then Sandy, do your stuff and suck them, there's a good boy, but no biting or else you know what.'

'No Pamela, please, please don't make me, please. . . .'

'Do you have a bigger willie nowadays Sandy, now you're all grown-up, ready to go to 'The Boys' High?,' she sneered. 'It must be quite big. I can see it bulging in there. Do you want to show me? Do you still remember what to do? What you did when you had a tiny wee willie, and I had to help you pee-pee? Or are you still posh? Do you still say, 'doing a

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stream'? Now Sandy, c'mon, close your eyes and start sucking on these fucking tits, or else.'

Pamela's eyes closed and she seemed to forget where she was.

Suddenly she looked down, saw her cardigan, fumbled a replacement cheroot into her mouth and lit it, again drawing deeply and holding her breath.

Sandy moved his hands to hide his erection. Ducking her outstretched cheroot-wielding hand, he lurched past her, staggering backwards towards the window.

'Sorry, excuse me Pamie, please, but I'm desperate for the toilet.'

As he moved towards her, hoping to get to the door, she stepped sideways, blocking his path while sucking again to make the end of the cigarette glow red then blowing the smoke into his face, making him cough.

'Do you want me to come with you, and hold your friend "Joey" for you, Sandy? Eh? We don't want you spraying it all over the floor, do we? Or did we call him "Twinkie"? Maybe we should have called him "Albie" since you've been snipped like a Jew-boy, eh? What is his name again? To be honest, Sandy, there have been so many names I get them all mixed up, in here.'

Pamela tapped at the side of her head. For the first time since she had entered the room Sandy forced himself to look at her eyes. What he saw terrified him.

'No, please Pamie, please. Please let me past, please. I'm really, really desperate, please.'

He moved sideways to try to squeeze past her, but she draped her arms around his neck and stuck her horrible-tasting tongue into his mouth. When she sensed he was not willing to kiss her back she shoved him away and took another deep drag on her cigarette.

'All right, Sandy, you can go alone for a pee, but only on one condition.'

'What?'

'Have a pee, but don't chug yourself off in there. Just come straight back and see the nice surprise I have for you.'

She stubbed the second cheroot on the window sill. Her right hand moved up to cup her breast as her left hand reached behind to unfasten the zip on her skirt. Her eyes became blank, drooped closed, and she began to sing in her low husky voice of old: "Rock-a-bye Baby on the tree top".

Sandy slipped out, closed the door quietly, leaving her behind in his bedroom. He walked quickly past the bathroom door, opened the outer door, then pulled it slowly behind him, using his key from the outside to prevent the noise of a click when the door closed. He leapt the ten steps to the half landing, where he had parked his bike, hoisted it on to his shoulder then ran down and out into the fresh air.

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As he cycled away, the cool air rushed against his legs and he realised he had wet himself. He rode all out until he reached the toilets at Anniesland Cross, a regular meeting place for the Partick Wheelers' and other cycling clubs. There was a small group of older boys, more boys than bikes. They were rough boys, talking dirty and smoking, cursing and spitting. They were strangers and he pretended to ignore them and he skirted them and dived inside past the attendant's room to safety.

Locked in a cubicle, he was violently sick, heaving over and over until he was retching dry. He washed his face and hands with red carbolic soap, the smell of which reminded him of his visits to the Steamie.

When he went back outside, the rough boys had gone. They had taken his bike. It was his best bike, a recent present from Uncle Albie.

He knew he could not go home and had no idea where else to go.

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Refuge

Sandy saw a man riding towards him, pedalling hard, his hands down on his droop handlebars, his mouth wide open, eyes staring straight ahead. Probably on a time trial training run, Sandy thought. Now the man was closer, Sandy saw the bike was hand-painted with a canary yellow frame and a pillar box red front fork and realised the rider was Hugh Barclay (known as 'Shuggie'). Mr Barclay was the Secretary of Partick Wheelers' who lived in one of the streets near Caird Drive; and he was a policeman.

'Mr Barclay, Mr Barclay, please can you help me,' shouted Sandy.

The man powered on, unheeding.

'Mr Barclay, Mr Barclay, please Mr Barclay.'

The man flew past.

'**Shuggie!** Sandy screamed.

The man's head came up and he looked back over his shoulder, then skidded to a halt, turned back, and footed his way back to Sandy.

'Mr Barclay, can you help me please. Some big boys have just stolen my bike. It was my best bike, less than a year old.

'What's your name again, son?'

'Sandy Kaywood.'

'Are you all right? You look as if you've just seen a ghost, son.'

'They were rough boys, Mr Barclay. I was very scared. They punched me in the stomach and I ran into the toilets to be sick and when I came back out they had gone and my bike was gone too.'

'Have you ever seen them before, son?'

'No, Mr Barclay, never.'

'Tell you what, Sandy, I'll give you a backie, eh? We'll go to Partick Police Station and get all this down on paper, before you forget anything.'

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Later, standing together outside the police station, Hugh Barclay made his pitch. During the course making the entry in the petty crime book, Sandy's address rang an alarm bell.

'Now Sandy, do you want me to come up with you, tell your Mum and Dad what happened?'

'No, my Mum's away. She's gone to Blackpool with Uncle Albie. My Dad died in the War, when his ship sank.'

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'Who's looking after you while your Mum's away?'

'Nobody. But if I need anything I can ask Mrs Riddell.'

From the numerous letters of complaint received from a Miss Euphemia Fraser, Sergeant Hugh Barclay had heard quite a bit about Mavis Riddell and her alleged activities. He had paid her a few visits but she had plausible answers, many half-finished garments and an expensive sewing machine to prove she was a home tailoress. She did not appear to be guilty of breaking any law, not in a way which could be easily proved, but her manner and garish make-up gave her away for what she was. The rest of the property was considered highly respectable. As often happened in such cases, it was decided to turn a blind eye.

Perhaps Mrs Kaywood was in a similar profession, the policeman surmised.

'Sandy, how old are you, son?'

'Eleven, nearly twelve.'

Hugh and Moira's own boy would have been thirteen next month, if he had survived his bout of scarlet fever, aged three. It had taken Hugh years to get over this loss: probably his wife never would.

'What do you say to coming home with me, stay for your tea and we'll see what we do afterwards?'

Sandy was glad to have a safe haven. He had to stay away from Caird Drive for as long as Pamela was around. If he could stay at this man's house for a few nights, it might be enough.

After he had eaten, Sandy did not say anything about going home. He wanted to stay at 'Uncle' Hugh and 'Auntie' Moira's house and casually let it slip he was not expecting his Mum and Uncle Albie to return until late on Thursday evening, to allow Uncle Albie could go to the Synagogue for the Sabbath. From their whispering, Sandy could tell they wanted him to stay but did not want to ask him outright. The evening drifted on with the three listening to the radio.

Uncle Hugh brought Sandy a pair of his own pyjamas to wear: they were too big, making them all laugh. They ran a bath for him and Auntie Moira took his soiled clothes and washed them. After supper, Auntie Moira told Uncle Hugh to move the radio through to the spare room where Sandy was to sleep. He was allowed to listen to it for as long as he wanted. Uncle Hugh gave him a bike torch to switch on if he was afraid. Without debate it was settled. Sandy would stay until Thursday.

Next day (Sunday) Uncle Hugh was out on shift when Sandy woke. His first thought had been he might have wet the bed but he was dry. After breakfast Auntie Moira took him to the shops in the centre of Glasgow near the Barra's and bought him new clothes,

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including a pair of smart sandals, new gym shoes and a pair of running shorts. He offered to pay for some of the things with his holiday money but she refused.

Both adults attended the school Sports Day on the Tuesday afternoon. Sandy won the 440 yards and second prize for throwing the cricket ball. As a treat, he was allowed a ride on Hugh's special racer.

This was how it started. Hugh and Moira took the boy under their wings, and for the years which followed he became an intermittent house guest, especially when his mother was off on her jaunts with Uncle Albie.

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Living with Fear

On Thursday after tea Sandy said he had to go home. Uncle Hugh was out on shift. Sandy offered his thanks to a tearful Auntie Moira who made him promise to visit again soon. At the door he gave her an extra tight hug, before reluctantly making his way home, carrying his new sports kit, clutching the gifted bike torch with a new battery in it. It was a special torch, almost new and bigger and brighter than his own.

At Caird Drive, he stood for hours in the backcourt beside the middens, looking up to see which houses had lights on. He kept hoping his Mum would come home but his house was in darkness. Climbing the stairs to his door, opening it and calling into the empty house was the hardest thing he had ever done. From the door he shone the torch along the corridor, checking his other bike was there. He left the front door wide open and crept quietly along to the hall cupboard and fumbled for his spare bike torch. Terrified, using the light from both torches he searched the house carefully, room by room. When he was certain he was alone, he went back to the front door, closed the storm doors and barred them with the drop-down steel bar, double locked the inner door and went to bed by torchlight, afraid if he put on any lights they might attract Pamela.

Eventually he fell into a troubled sleep and his bed-wetting started again.

In the morning, bleary-eyed, he lit the kitchen fire before returning to his bedroom where he stripped the bedclothes then wiped disinfectant over the waterproof sheet he had used since a baby. After dragging his mattress through to the kitchen, he propped it in front of the fire and draped the waterproof sheet over the clothes' horse to dry while he went to the Steamie. It was a familiar routine which he had hoped was behind him. In years past Sadie had taken Sandy with her on her early morning visits before he went to school, moaning at him morning after morning how she should never have had him, saying it had been Albie's fault for not taking precautions.

From about his tenth birthday, desperate to conceal his bed-wetting, Sandy had been going to the Steamie on his own, using his generous pocket money to pay for his share of a washing machine. All the early morning regulars knew him and accepted him for what he was; a little boy with a big problem. Within a few weeks of going along by himself, he was on friendly terms with several women. There was always one glad to have his cash contribution for adding his few bedclothes and pyjamas to her own load, putting them

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through the mangle with their own and then into the heated drying cupboard. While this was going on, he sat in the waiting room with his comics.

Now, as he loped down the stairs and ran to the wash-house, Sandy knew he had to hurry to ensure everything looked normal before his mother's return. Back home with his freshly laundered bedclothes and pyjamas, he quickly re-made his bed before setting off for school wearing the new clothes and sandals gifted by Auntie Moira.

He never talked to anyone about what had happened and he never saw Pamela again, except frequently in his dreams.

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The Visitor Returns

September 1923.

Sandy was fourteen and had recently started his third year at *The High School for Boys*, in Elmbank Street, near the centre of Glasgow. He would have liked to ride to school on his bike but it was not permitted. On rainy days he travelled by tram, but most days he preferred to walk and save the fare to buy sweets. Like his mother, Sandy had a very sweet tooth. Unlike some of the other boys, he was not a secret smoker. His mother smoked heavily and he hated the smell, especially when she stubbed out a cigarette in the heavy dark green glass ashtray she repeatedly left in his room. The smell polluted the air with a sour stench which turned his stomach.

Nowadays Sandy did all his own washing and ironing. He shopped and cooked rudimentary meals, mainly fry-ups, or bought fish and chips for himself and his mother. Sadie Kaywood was now an established functional alcoholic and chain smoker. She still worked most days for Uncle Albie but almost never did any housework, although in the past she had been house proud.

Sadie Kaywood always had plenty money, and could be generous, especially when she was maudlin drunk. Any money Sandy got this way he hid and saved for sweets and for his next bicycle. Sandy blamed what had happened to his mother and Uncle Albie on Mrs Riddell, their neighbour across the landing, his mother's drinking companion. He blamed a lot of things on Mrs Riddell and on her daughter, Pamela.

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Sandy was nearing home at the end of a long day which included staying behind to complete a mountain of home exercises. He was in the top stream and hoped to be allowed to sit his Lowers (Scottish Leaving Certificate (Lower level)) at the end of the following school year. He harboured a secret plan to apply to Glasgow University to study Engineering, perhaps Aeronautical Engineering.

As Sandy turned the corner into Caird Drive he sensed immediately something bad had happened. An ambulance and a police car were parked outside his close.

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The boy stopped, watching the ambulance from the corner, unsure what to do, afraid to get involved. Pamela's face swam into focus and he could hear her singing her ditty. Suddenly his bladder was full. He was desperate, as always happened when he saw her staring eyes. Two men came out of the close carrying a stretcher, and disappeared into the ambulance.

His mother walked down the flight of steps from the close entrance and climbed up into the back of the ambulance. She seemed older, shrivelled. The ambulance driver slammed the door behind her then climbed into the front. The ambulance pulled away from the kerb then raced off down the street, its bell ringing loudly.

Two policemen came out of the close and stood looking about. One of them was Uncle Hugh, wearing his sergeant's stripes. Sandy turned to walk away but he had been spotted. 'Sandy, come here son. Let's go up to your house, I've got something to tell you. We can't do this here in the street, not with everyone listening in, eh son?'

Sandy sat in the front room alone with Uncle Hugh. A tall, thin, younger constable brought cups of tea then, on getting the nod from his sergeant, left to go and interview neighbours. As the story unfolded, Sandy kept his eyes down, studying the linoleum, afraid he would give himself away as Uncle Hugh explained his understanding of what had happened.

Mrs Kaywood had found Mr Gurovich when she returned from a shopping trip with her neighbour Mrs Riddell. He was in shock, lying in a bath filled with tepid water. His eyes were closed and he said afterwards he had been afraid to move in case his attacker returned. Sadie had screamed for help. Miss Fraser had dialled 999 from her telephone.

Mr Gurovich was her employer, Mrs Kaywood had advised Sergeant Barclay. It was most likely Mr Gurovich had called to see her on a matter of business, as he often did. He had not been expected but Mr Gurovich had a key and must have used it to let himself in to await Mrs Kaywood's return.

When questioned by the police, Mr Gurovich explained a person with a low frightening voice, probably a woman, had crept up on him from behind while he was dozing in a chair. He had been told to keep his eyes closed at all times, else he would die. The attacker had threatened him initially with a knife, drawing blood just above his Adam's apple. Then the

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weapon had changed to burning cigarettes. Mr Gurovich had been made to strip naked and lie in the bath. The person had urinated on him. The man had burns on his face, hands and on his body, including his private parts. While explaining to the police what had occurred, Mr Gurovich had suffered a bad turn and an ambulance had been called.

The police had informed Mr Gurovich's family through Giffnock Police Office, and his relatives were making their way to the hospital.

The identity of the attacker was unknown. The neighbours had not seen anyone suspicious, not even Mr Gurovich, although they had confirmed he was a regular caller on Mrs Kaywood.

'Sandy, do you have any idea who could have done this?'

'No, Uncle Hugh.'

'Are you sure, son?'

'Yes, Uncle Hugh. Were they torturing him for money? He's quite rich, I think.'

'Sandy, I have to ask you, son, was it you who did this to Mr Gurovich?'

'No Uncle Hugh! Uncle Albie is good to us. It's through him I got into *The High School*. He put my name down. He helps us. He comes here all the time. No, why would I hurt him? And he's much bigger and stronger than me.'

Sandy started to sob.

Sergeant Barclay was satisfied. His 'nephew' was innocent.

It must be someone else.

The Gurovich family did not make a fuss about what happened.

After a few months of intermittent enquiries, the case was forgotten.

Living with Myra

Legacy

A week after the incident Mrs Riddell confided to Sadie. Pamela had written explaining she had been living in London for almost a year, working in a large hospital called St Thomas's. She was doing very well and although not yet married, she had found a wealthy gentleman who suited her very well. Wedding bells might be heard soon, Mrs Riddell hoped.

Mr Gurovich languished in hospital. Three months later he caught pneumonia and died. His family sold the business. Sadie, who had not returned to AG Jewellery since the attack, was ousted.

The gossip died down but Sadie Kaywood was greatly changed. She had lost both her beloved Albie and her well-paid job.

She now dedicated herself to chain-smoking and drinking, sometimes with Mavis Riddell as before, but now more often alone. She gave way completely to her addictive nature and escaped into a world of fantasy. Within a year she had become incontinent and her mind was wandering. Sandy had lost both his mother and his Uncle Albie. Sandy's visits to the Steamie now involved a larger load of washing.

The Partick Wheelers' became his main escape and he entered for every event, even tailing the seniors, sometimes beating the more elderly members back to the tiny wooden clubhouse where they met for tea and banter. During these years he became a more frequent visitor to Auntie Moira in Chancellor Street. Moira was always pleased to see him and too fearful of losing her surrogate son to ask awkward questions which might drive him away. He came only when he needed her, and for Moira this had to be accepted as satisfactory.

At home Sandy was thrown into the role of his mother's nurse. His daily round usually began with a visit to the Steamie. He did most of their household shopping, cooked his simple cuisine as before and did a little house-keeping. He did his best for his mother, but when she became violent he fled to Chancellor Street, often sleeping over.

On occasions when she was less drunk, Sadie would give him money, usually a £5 note, sometimes a £10 note. He thought it must be money she had saved over the years and

Living with Myra

worried it might run out. She kept the money in her handbag, to which she clung tenaciously, taking it everywhere with her, including to bed. She had always kept her bedroom locked to stop him prying, and now she took to locking herself inside at all times, shutting out reality.

When her alcohol supply was running low, Sadie would rally herself and pay a visit to the bank to make a withdrawal. Sandy was unaware of these outings. Mavis was now Sadie's personal shopper, her supplier of alcohol and cigarettes and Sandy would frequently find both women drunk, often bickering, muttering obscenities to themselves or sometimes already asleep creating the constant fear that one of them would set the place alight with a dropped cigarette.

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In the years after the attack on Uncle Albie, Sandy came to see Mrs Riddell and her daughter as the root of all his problems. His schoolwork suffered and his grades dropped. And he knew that without Uncle Albie, there would not be enough money for Glasgow University. He must get a job. He decided to apply to Barr & Stroud, where John Barnes was now a third-year apprentice. When he was called to the Personnel Office, the Apprentice Training Officer was pleased to take on a presentable, well-dressed boy from Glasgow High School and who lived in a good area.

Sandy's passion for cycling became an obsession, his escape from the sad world of his home in Caird Drive. In the years which followed, Sandy's bed-wetting slowly diminished. By age nineteen he hoped it had gone for good.

He found sleeping during the day suited him and he liked summertime best. He applied many times over for the nightshift but, as this was normally reserved for older men, he was refused. However, it was noted his timekeeping was exemplary and his standard of workmanship was very high. Eventually the Night Shift Supervisor, Ian Barnes, father of his friend John, gave in to his persistence and accepted Sandy as part of "The Elite", as the nightshift squad dubbed themselves.

Being at home during the day Sandy found he could sleep better. He always slept now with his bedroom door locked to keep his mother and Pamie out, with the curtains open to let in the sunlight. Sleeping in the dark put him on edge. On Saturday nights, the only night he was forced to spend at home, he kept his bedroom light on but seldom slept well, usually dozing rather than sleeping, listening to his wireless. To help him get over, he started taking sleeping pills.

Living with Myra

As he got older his Pamela nightmares became less intense and usually he managed to wake up just in time before he leaked. He still took sleeping pills on a regular basis, especially in winter when the days were dark and short.

When Sandy met Frank Gallagher at the Wheelers' and was invited to his home in Yoker, his life changed for the better. Now Sandy had somewhere to go where there was a real family and his visits to Moira Barclay became sporadic.

Living with Myra

Inheritance

Saturday 27 October 1934.

During her years at secondary school, Myra had matured quickly, making her look much older than her years. Now almost fourteen, her breasts pressed inside her school blouse, straining the buttons, making it impossible to close her serge jacket which looked two sizes too small. Her strong shapely thighs and buttocks filled her tight grey skirt which was now two inches too short for her long-muscled legs. Myra was proud of her new body and had experimented in secret with Jean's make-up while closeted in Frank's room with the door wedged shut. Sometimes she thought she could pass for twenty-one or older.

Today her face was scrubbed clean, her hair wet and matted. Heavy rain had been falling all day, soaking through her thin old trench coat which had been Frank's, and making her feet squelch inside her flat school shoes.

This was still her best outfit, which is why she had worn it for her visit. It had been funded by Miss Pettigrew, a necessary charity, which Mary had welcomed and Michael had resented. Inside her new black handbag, an early birthday gift from Frank, she carried her thick book of stories, wrapped in an oilskin cloth for extra protection.

Myra pulled the bell knob. A Green Lady answered the door. This was another new one, probably a 'supplementary locum', the kind they sent only at weekends, Myra thought. The woman was wearing a pale red cotton knitting smock over her green uniform with balls of wool in various colours snaking their way from its pockets to the group of needles in her left hand. Something complicated was in progress and the woman was impatient, unhappy to be disturbed.

'Yes?'

'I've called to see Miss Pettigrew.'

'Are you family?'

'Yes, she is my aunt. My mother Mary is her twin sister,' Myra lied glibly, as she had done on several previous occasions.

'Well, come in then, but only for a few minutes. Your aunt is very, very poorly. I thought you might be Father Donnelly, he is expected any minute.'

The room was warm. The standard lamp threw a soft glow over the shadow of the woman who had been Myra's friend and mentor over these last difficult years at secondary

Living with Myra

school, where she had been bullied and ridiculed for her posh voice, fancy words and highfalutin ideas. The Green Lady's clicking needles could be heard through the door which had been kept ajar so she could hear from the kitchen if her patient cried out for more painkilling morphine.

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At secondary school Myra's grades had been "Excellent" in every subject except in Latin. She was the top of every class, often scoring 100%, making her popular with most of the staff but either ignored or shunned by many of her class mates. Myra had always been a loner, superior, as she knew herself to be, so for her it was of no concern.

Among the staff, only Miss Edna Grierson, the Senior Woman Teacher and Head of Latin had taken strongly against her. This antipathy had its roots in an unguarded moment when Miss Grierson had addressed the January intake on their first day at school.

Edna Grierson was a small greying waspish woman who burned with the fervour of a life frustrated by carrying the never-ending burden of caring for her ungrateful and demanding parents and her mother's sister, also called Edna. A few years before she died, this aunt had taken to leaving home in the middle of the night to wander the streets naked, looking for her teddy bear called "Topsy". One such incident had been misreported in the local newspaper under the heading of "Naked Midnight Rambler", identifying this person as "Miss Edna Grierson, a Latin teacher at a Glasgow RC School". This had been seized upon by a few of the gossip-mongers on the staff and several copies of the piece still circulated, for the benefit of new teachers. The name "Topsy" had been altered to "Topsy".

This gossip had impelled Edna to write to the newspaper. Tongue in cheek, the Editor had been happy to publish a full apology, explaining, "The Naked Nocturnal Peregrinator" had in fact been the eponymous aunt of Miss Edna Grierson, a revered teacher of Latin at a well-known RC School in the Yoker area. This apology served only to re-ignite the flames of interest in the staffroom and community. Over the ensuing weeks, the letters page was full of reported sightings. The gossip-mongers now claimed both aunt and niece had been rambling naked together. Edna Grierson was further caricatured, becoming remaindered as a lonely figure of fun in an otherwise happy and well-run school.

Edna Grierson took her revenge on her pupils.

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On the first school day of January 1932, the new intake of boys and girls were seated on the floor in the Gym Hall.

'Now, boys and girls; sit **up** straight and pay attention.'

She spotted a boy pulling at the pigtail of a tall thin girl who sat in front of him.

'**You** boy! What is your name?' she roared, pointing.

Living with Myra

'James Duffy.'

'James Duffy what?'

'Just James Duffy!'

'Come **here**, boy!'

The strap appeared from nowhere.

'Hold out your hands.'

'It's - James - Duffy - Miss - Grier - son!' she cackled, as six blows crashed down on to his hands with great ferocity.

James Duffy did not flinch. He was used to getting the belt, changing from right hand on top to his left hand and back again with the practised ease of a veteran. He made his way back to his place, his face smirking with pride. When he turned to face the front he wore a practised blank expression. Edna Grierson knew this boy would be difficult and noted him down for close observation.

The effect on the others was immediate. The class sat to attention and in complete silence for the rest of her discourse.

'We have strict rules in this school', she intoned, getting into her stride again after the interruption. 'Our school motto is 'amore, fide, obsequiem', which means 'love, honour and obey'. Of these the most important is you *must* 'obey', and do so *at once!* This motto is the basis of all we do together, staff and pupils pulling in the same direction at all times, in order to help prepare you for the difficult years ahead. This is our mission and...'

As her hectoring continued, Myra became steadily more agitated. Jean and Frank had both been pupils here and this motto had been stamped on all their school books. It had intrigued Myra. She had copied it down and asked Miss Pettigrew who in turn had asked Mr Walsh, to be certain. Together they had explained, "amore, fide, obsequium" meant "love, *loyalty and service*".

When Miss Grierson had finished her talk she asked in a rising voice,

'What is our school motto?'

'**Amore, fide, obsequiem, Miss Grierson!**' chorused the children.

'And what does it mean?'

'**Love, honour and obey, Miss Grierson!**'

'And what is the most important part of this motto?'

'**We must always obey at once, Miss Grierson!**'

Living with Myra

At this point Myra stood up, raising her hand to the air.

'You have something to add, girl?'

'Yes, Miss Grierson, please Miss Grierson. I am sure there must have been an oversight in the translation you used to ascertain the meaning of this motto. The Latin for obedience is *obedientio*.'

'Exactly what did you just say?' exclaimed the teacher, unable to comprehend the audacity of this tall thin girl with the large nose and sticking out ears.

'Yes, Miss Grierson, you see 'amore, fide, obsequium' actually translates to 'love, **loyalty and service**'. I asked Miss Pettigrew and she asked Mr Walsh and he says the most important of these is 'love'. It is well known Our Lord emphasised this many times over, in the Scriptures and in particular in the Beatitudes when..."

Edna Grierson's brittle equilibrium shattered.

'**SILENCE!** You ignorant, impudent child! Go at once to the Headmaster's room! Wait outside. We will deal with you at our convenience.'

'And you, James Duffy, get out here at once. We will see how keen you are to giggle like the idiot you so obviously are after another six of the strap!'

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Davina Pettigrew coughed harshly and used her handkerchief to discreetly remove the blood and phlegm from her mouth. The pain creased her face making her look a thousand years old. Myra waited as her mentor struggled back to a semblance of herself.

'Oh Myra, it's so good to see you. Have you got a nice story for me? I could do with cheering up.'

'Well, I have recently completed two stories you might like. There is one about an intrepid lady explorer who goes to Africa and finds a huge diamond. The other one is about a gifted teenage girl who wants to learn to ski but has no money for lessons. However, this girl can sing like a linnet so her mother takes her to a famous man, an impresario who puts on operas.'

'I think I would rather like to find a diamond today, Myra. I was never keen on the idea of skiing and cold, wet snow. Brrrrr.'

Myra turned to the page, steadied her breathing and prepared to 'project; as she had been trained to do. The notebook was merely a prop, she had rehearsed the story and was word perfect. As she spoke she watched her friend closely, waiting for the opportunity, which she knew must come.

Living with Myra

"As the boat sailed into the harbour Marguerite waved to the smiling dark-skinned natives who were dancing and singing their welcome song to the rhythm of drums which played at both high and low sounds.

The young woman was dressed in a brilliant white . . ."

Miss Pettigrew's eyelids grew heavy and eventually closed. Her breathing became shallow and she drifted away. The knitting needles clicked steadily in the background. Myra lifted the spare pillow and lowered it slowly onto her friend's face, pressing down gently. As she did so she kept her tale tripping along, reciting her words from memory.

Just as Marguerite in the story rolled back the rock and saw the huge diamond lying at her feet, glinting in the bright sunlight, Davina Pettigrew, now free from any further pain and suffering, slipped over to join her parents and her older sister Georgina, escaping at last from the tyranny of her younger brother Kevin.

Kevin had lost his right arm in the Great War, his good arm, he always whined. He had sponged off the family and Davina for years, operating in the shadowy world of greyhound racetracks as a trainer and race 'fixer'. Davina had shared her misery with Myra one afternoon when the girl had arrived just as the unkempt, highly odorous man was making his farewells. No doubt he would inherit her furniture and wealth, Myra thought, as there was no one else.

The knitting needles clicked on, providing a rhythm for Myra's words.

She placed the pillow on the floor, on the far side of the bed, arranging it as if it had fallen, with the blood-stained side downwards, hidden.

As Myra continued her story she noticed the bulky envelope with Miss Pettigrew's neat handwriting on the bedside table.

Maria Agnetta Nellis Gallagher.

(Carpe Diem!)

Myra slipped the envelope inside her book of stories, pressing down hard to flatten it. She would read it alone, later, when she was free to mourn her friend in private.

All the while she kept up the narrative, as she had done when she had helped Granny Nellis pass on from her misery. Anyone listening would not have guessed what she had done.

Living with Myra

Time passed. Myra continued with Marguerite's exploits.

The clicking stopped. The Green Lady returned to check her patient.

Myra remained seated, her head down as if reading from her notebook.

She was ushered from the room, told to wait in the kitchen.

Father Donnelly arrived and Myra joined him, standing shoulder to shoulder with her diminutive Priest, as together they recited the Prayers for the Dead, in Latin, a language which she had strenuously avoided in secondary school as it would have involved suffering further under Edna Grierson had she been in the top group.

The Green Lady left them to find a telephone box.

Myra waited with Father Donnelly in the kitchen while the Doctor came and went.

The priest left, he had another urgent visit; a young woman was dying in hospital.

Myra closed her eyes and said her own version of a prayer for her friend, then made sure she had everything in her handbag.

The funeral undertaker's men arrived and took the body away.

As she was about to leave, Mr Walsh arrived.

Myra was obliged to join him in yet further prayers. She no longer closed her eyes for prayers as she had been taught as a child. She had given up her faith after the Monsignor Creity encounter. Her former Headmaster spoke by rote, sometimes faltering, his mind clearly elsewhere, Myra thought.

She was drawn to his hands: they moved slowly, intertwining, one hand caressing the other as he spoke, then becoming still while his right index finger moved to the ring on his left pinkie finger, caressing it, then holding it between thumb and index finger, rotating the ring back and forth. In a flash the image of another similar ring came back to her: Myra was afraid.

The Green Lady was bustling about in the bedroom cleaning up, changing the bedclothes, tidying away the debris of the recent death, getting ready to leave. Myra did not want to be left alone in Miss Pettigrew's house with Mr Walsh. She gathered her things, checked again she had everything in her handbag and shrugged into her warm, damp coat which the Green Lady had kindly draped in front of the kitchen fire.

'Myra, don't rush away girl, come through to the parlour. I want to talk to you, in private.'

This room was cold. It was only heated for special occasions; Davina Pettigrew had lived a frugal life. It had a gas fire and he fiddled with it. Myra edged herself away, closer to the door. The fire popped into flame and he stood with his back to it, warming himself, his hands plunged into his trousers pockets.

Living with Myra

'Ah, there we are. Much better. Come closer girl, over here beside me, get some heat into you.'

In the background, the Green Lady was whistling to herself.

'No, thank you Mr Walsh, I am adequately warm here. This trench coat is double lined, thank you,' she lied.

'Myra, what are you going to do when you leave school?'

'I intend to look for suitable employment, Mr Walsh. As you know we are hard pressed for funds at home. Sadly, my father has been out of work for several months now and my poor dear mother is at her wit's end. The only wages we have are from Jean who, as you will understand, earns but a pittance as a fishwife. We are trying our best not to take anything from our Francis, so he can save, now he's engaged to Deirdre.'

'What sort of job do you think you'd like to do?'

'Are there any employments which you might suggest as suitable, Mr Walsh? So far everywhere I've tried has said, "Sorry, no vacancies for juniors".'

'Look, Myra, I know it's not what you might have hoped for, but I can get you a job at St George's Co-op, as a Junior Sales Assistant. Gordon Galbraith, a friend, a member of, eh, a sort of second cousin. Well, Gordon is the Store Manager. He's a nice man, amenable, and he said he'd make an opening for you. But you'll have to watch yourself and cut out all this fancy talk. Do you understand me, Myra? You can't speak to ordinary folk as if you're a talking book. It annoys them. Try to speak more like your mother and Jean.'

'Yes, Mr Walsh.'

'Good. Do you know where to go, Myra?'

'Yes, of course. I'll get the tram to Merkland Street then the Subway to St George's Cross.'

'Good girl. I'll be seeing Gordon on Thursday night. I'll tell him to expect you on the Monday after your birthday.'

'Actually, my birthday is on the Monday. My last day at school is Friday 16th November. Mr Walsh, do you think I could start the next day, on the Saturday?'

'Yes, I'm sure it will be all right with Gordon. But remember Myra. Don't try to take over the place, at least not in your first week, eh?' he chuckled.

'Is it all right to tell Mother?'

'Yes of course, child. If there is any woman I know who deserves a bit of a helping hand it's your mother. What she did for her own mother over all those years was nothing short of saintly. It was a blessing God in His wisdom took your Granny Nellis away when He did.'

Living with Myra

'Yes, Mr Walsh. And thank you for your help. You and Miss Pettigrew have always done what you thought was best for me. I'll never forget it - never! I'll really try hard to be a good shop assistant, I promise.'

'Now let's say a wee prayer for you and your new job, will we?'

She watched his hands as he prayed checking again that his ring was the same. As before he was praying by rote, she thought, his mind wandering. There was a hint of a smile on his lips and at the corners of his eyes.

The Green Lady called her farewell and banged shut the outside door as she left.

He stopped praying, looked up, smiled at Myra in an odd way and took a step towards her. She acted quickly: 'Amen. If you will please excuse me, Mr Walsh, I simply must fly, I have an errand to execute for Father and he will expect me back without further delay.'

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On her way home Myra stopped at Whiteinch Library, ducking past the desk to avoid being caught in a long, whispered conversation with Miss Chalmers. The Reading Room was almost deserted, just three old men enjoying the free warmth, snoozing while pretending to read. The place was hot and muggy. She hung her coat over a radiator to dry, slipped out of her sodden shoes and propped them against it.

The envelope contained a mixture of notes in various denominations to the total of £137. As always with Davina Pettigrew, her epistle was brief.

Myra,

this is all the money I have left and so it is a mercy God is calling me away.

I thank Him for bringing you into my life. You have never once disappointed me.

Do not give this money to your family. Please, I implore you to resist your own kind nature.

This money is for you alone, Myra, for your personal use, so, when you identify it, you will be able to boldly take any opportunity which presents itself.

Always remember, Carpe Diem!

Do not hesitate. When a thing must be done, do it boldly.

Living with Myra

Remember, God gave you special skills and a first-class mind. It is your duty to use them. And do keep writing. Story-telling is your forte. In many, many years from now, when we meet in Heaven, I expect you to give me a good account of your life.

Good-bye and God bless us both,

Davina.

Living with Myra

St George's Co-op

Saturday 10th November 1934.

Myra dressed in her best non-school clothes, shabby though they were. She wore an old hat of her mother's, with her hair pinned up and a pair of spectacles which had belonged to Granny Nellis. She risked a little of Jean's make-up applied on the tram, which she hoped made her look much older.

At St George's she mingled with the other shoppers, picking over various items, wandering along in the bustle, buying nothing. It took an hour, watching the hierarchy of this busy multi-department store and in particular how the most senior people dressed. Myra had been in similar shops many times with her mother or Jean and knew the most common weakness in those who served was simple arithmetic. She observed this again in abundance at St George's, as customers queried the totals, sometimes coming back when they realised they had been wrong changed. Some members of staff were lazy and disrespectful to their customers, often reluctant to break off a personal conversation to serve those waiting to be served, or continuing to chat with a colleague while serving. The most common trait was they omitted to thank customers for their business, rushing them away, missing an opportunity of a further sale.

When she had seen enough, she was ready to make her purchases, but not from this store. She caught the Subway and went to Bridge Street. From there she walked to Shawlands, to what had been Granny Nellis's former Glasgow South Co-op. She took her time and after an hour or so of browsing, decided in favour of two smart business suits, one in charcoal grey, the other in a lighter grey, with shoes and smart blouses to match. For the first time ever, she bought two new bras, four new underskirts, six pairs of black knickers, three pairs of nylon stockings and a new comfort-fit suspender belt like Jean's. She also bought a dark brown leather travel bag in which to transport her purchases. Never before had she spent so much money at once.

She went to Woolworths where she bought a selection of make-up, taking advice from the older girl behind the counter. This included an assortment of brushes, foundation creams, rouge, a compact case, cleansing lotions, eye make-up and a selection of lipsticks. She bought the largest vanity mirror she could fit into her new travel bag. Her final purchase, from H. Samuel Jewellers, was a Rotary watch with fluorescent hands, the same make Frank owned.

Living with Myra

On the tram heading home Myra decided it would be helpful if she became engaged, wearing an engagement ring during office hours. Her fiancée would be a fictitious travelling salesman from Hamilton called Gianfranco Giannini. She would wear Granny Nellis's engagement ring, which she had taken from the bedside drawer the day Maisie died. Her Granny had openly promised this ring to her many times, but Myra did not trust her mother and sisters to honour the pledge. They had hunted everywhere for it as it was said to be 'worth a fortune', and she had helped, putting on an equal show of frustration and the missing ring which was wrapped in a hankie, inside her knickers.

Back at Yoker she sneaked into the house and locked herself in Frank's box bedroom, using the wedge. Over recent years she and Frank had modified the door so it always stuck and was difficult to open, giving them time, even without the wedge in place. They had a secret knock and often brother and sister could spend hours alone together without the family being aware.

She removed the panel under his built-in bed, the hiding place which they had made together years earlier, to create a secret void where she stored some of her hoard, but only the bulkier items. It was here Frank kept his locked box. He was unaware Myra had obtained a copy of his key and had studied his magazines and bundles of risqué photographs, pleased she had a better body than most of the models.

Over the ensuing week, locked alone in Frank's room, Myra repeatedly dressed and made herself up, trying to get used to the feel of being dressed in business clothes and studying carefully 'the look' of herself made-up as a much older girl, aiming at becoming at least twenty or twenty-one. For her plan to work, the last thing she wanted was to be seen as a mere girl fresh from school. When she arrived at St George's she did not want to be treated as a skivvy or a 'Saturday' girl to be bossed about by everyone. 'Miss Myra Gallagher' would demand respect by her dress and demeanour, as Vivienne had done in the *Woman's Own* story. As a result Vivienne had soon been promoted, not just because she was clever and hard-working but because she 'looked the part', something seen by Managers as most important in a Sales Lady, according to the story.

On the following Saturday morning before Frank returned from his night shift, Myra was up early, rising as soon as Jean left at just before 6.30 am, heading for the fishmongers' shop. Locked in Frank's cubby-hole, Myra sponged herself clean, did her make-up, dressed carefully and was out before her parents were awake. As she skipped down the stairs to catch the tram she carried her travel bag containing her old clothes to change into after work. She planned to do this at the lavatories at the Mitchell Library, which in recent

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times had become one of her favourite haunts now she had read most of the interesting books at Whiteinch Library.

Myra was at St George's by 7.45 a.m. When the shop opened at 8.00 am, she stood just inside the main doorway to wait for Gordon Galbraith. As others arrived she nodded to them, occasionally checking her watch, displaying her ring. Since neither Myra nor her family were known in the shop, people assumed she was older than she was. They also made the initial assumption this smartly dressed young woman was a new arrival from Head Office, sent to check up on them, giving her a wide berth.

When Gordon Galbraith arrived at just after nine o'clock he found it hard to believe Myra was only fourteen as he had been told, and concluded he must have misheard what his 'cousin' Tom Walsh had said about her age. He recalled Tom had said this young woman was excellent at arithmetic and knowing what was in the offing, he sent her to understudy Mrs Girvan in Haberdashery. This department was a place most women disliked because of the unremitting arithmetic associated with the sale of hundreds of small value items. There was the additional hazard of measuring and cutting what were often expensive curtain and upholstery materials, with the arguments which often followed when customers discovered some cut sizes were short.

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Margaret (Greta) Girvan was a heavy-set woman of forty-five who suffered greatly from bunions. She moved slowly and carefully as a result. Within a few hours of Myra joining her at the busy Haberdashery counter, Greta saw how well the girl performed and stood aside to let her new assistant do the majority of the work.

Three months later, Greta's husband, Brian, who worked for an insurance company, was finally promoted to Head Office in Edinburgh, and Greta grasped her longed-for retirement. On Greta's recommendation, Myra was left in charge of Haberdashery for a trial period. Galbraith saw how easily she coped and left Myra to get on with it.

The next eighteen months flew by during which she continued to impress everyone with her cleverness. She also took heed of Thomas Walsh's advice and learned to communicate with her customers in their own parlance, keeping her ornate language for her stories, scribbled furiously at home, in Frank's cupboard bedroom using a new more powerful torch to provide her with a place of her own.

When the house was noisy on Sundays she absconded to the Mitchell Library to find a quiet corner and immersed herself in the world of Marguerite and her kin. Gradually her stories began to move towards more ordinary people, the sort to be found in the *Peoples' Friend*.

Living with Myra

As her confidence grew, Myra began to dream larger dreams, dreams she held close to her chest. In these she saw herself taking charge of St George's: Miss Myra Gallagher would replace the weakling Gordon Galbraith, and make Thomas Walsh's jokey remark a reality.

When the opportunity eventually presented itself, she would take it - *Carpe Diem!*

Living with Myra

Absent and Odious

Gerrard Henson, or, as he insisted on being called at work, Mr Gerrard, was Head of Furniture at St George's, in his mid-thirties and six foot three inches tall. Wearing a self-satisfied smirk, he stalked around his department, skeletal hands looped behind his back, continually curling and uncurling. It was as if he was party to a great secret which his colleagues could never fathom. Both the customers and staff avoided looking at his odd, gaunt face, preferring instead to focus on his size-fourteen lacing shoes, always well shined. No one had ever seen Mr Gerrard wear anything other than his three-piece dark brown suit with yellow pinstripes, a cream shirt and a silk tie with pale green shamrocks on a mustard background, secured with a tiger eye tie-pin.

Seen in profile, his upper body seemed disproportionately short compared to his long legs. Like many tall people his neck was stooped, hunching into his shoulders, giving him the appearance of a heron about to strike its prey. He had a slight inward turn to his left eye for which he wore thick corrective glasses. Blocked sinuses caused him to snort every few minutes. His teeth protruded slightly from his wide, thin mouth and he seemed unaware of frequently sucking saliva from the left side before flicking his tongue over his upper lip. He was a heavy smoker, preferring perfumed cigarettes. Wherever he went, he trailed a reek of these intermingled with the flowery bouquet of his aftershave.

At primary school, always the tallest in his class, he had used physical violence to get his way. In later years, he learned to use sarcasm, innuendo and derogatory remarks to bully those around him. In his rare, better moments, he came over as smarmy. If crossed while suffering from one of his frequent mood swings, his tongue was caustic.

The staff knew he lived with his widowed mother and her friend, referred to as Aunt Julia from Birmingham. Little was known about this aunt. It was said she was a recluse, seldom seen outside their home. Magda Henson, was an important figure in the Co-operative and Labour Movement, attending committees in Manchester and London. The threesome lived in a comfortable four-in-a-block Glasgow Corporation council house in the favoured Jenny Lind housing suburb at Spiersbridge, on the south-west periphery of the city's gradually expanding boundary.

Living with Myra

Henson was lazy, always behind with paperwork and his weekly returns. His attendance record was poor to dreadful but when he did show up at St George's, he gave the impression of being second-in-charge. Everyone, including Mr Gordon, knew of Gerrard Henson's reputation and tip-toed around him. It seemed the man was bullet-proof.

Some staff said he was a womaniser but Myra was not convinced. To her, everything about him was odd, off-putting. There was something shifty, creepy and unwholesome about him which made her skin crawl whenever he was nearby.

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In the spring of 1935, Henson absented himself on one of his frequent 'illness' breaks. This time he was off for three months. The shop gossip was Henson had a murmur on his heart continually calling: "Gerrard, don't work, don't work!"

Although Furniture Sales carried great kudos, the other senior members of staff when approached by Gordon to cover for Mr Gerrard refused to 'volunteer to act up' in his absence, fearing what would probably happen on Henson's return. The three women who worked under Henson were petrified, frozen, unwilling to make decisions in his absence. Soon there was chaos, causing delays and customer complaints, including several letters sent to the SCWS HQ at Morrison Street. Everything, even the smallest problems, were being referred back to Galbraith for resolution, forcing him into making decisions, an activity he preferred to avoid.

Eventually Gordon Galbraith imposed the responsibility on Myra, sending her to 'support' the assistants during Gerrard's absence.

Myra, now an established figure at St George's, asserted her personality on the weak Gordon Galbraith. At the point of 'negotiation', as Myra thought of it, she stood her ground and agreed only on the basis she would be allowed to continue in her position as Head of Haberdashery, as she had insisted on being called over the previous months. Myra had thought about this situation in advance and had expected an argument but Galbraith accepted her terms without demur. Myra was given a rather slow-witted but methodical widow woman called Senga Simpson to do the day to day work at the haberdashery counter. Myra continued to do the paperwork and Head Office replenishment requests, as well as sorting out the many problems Senga left in her wake, while sailing through the often stormy seas she stirred up around herself.

Living with Myra

Following Vivienne's example, Myra had learned in Haberdashery to always put herself on the customers' side of the sale/purchase scenario, giving them her best advice, never pressuring her customers or treating them with disdain, as Henson had habitually done with his Furniture customers. In Haberdashery, she had learned by trial and error how to deal with difficult customers over small value purchase items: she now applied the same approach to the higher value furniture items. Coming from a poor background Myra understood, for most of her customers, buying a new table or a lounge suite was an expensive and difficult decision.

On Henson's return he seemed to accept the new young woman with the big nose and odd make-up had been sent to help him but did not realise she had been 'in charge' in his absence. Nor did he notice the ethos of the Furniture Department had changed although he was happy to claim the gradually improving sales figures were his doing. As Galbraith had not told her to vacate her 'support' role, Myra continued as before but deliberately kept a low profile. She had greatly enjoyed being his stand-in, and even after Henson's return 'her ladies' continued seek her advice (surreptitiously) rather than risk a snide remark from Henson.

Myra did not intend to relinquish her bid for control without a contest, but she knew she had to bide her time.

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Her guess was right. As the weeks rolled into months Mr Gerrard was more often out of the shop than in it, and Myra remained their de facto leader, much to the relief of two elderly sales ladies and their French Polisher, who now saw Myra as their true boss, their buffer against Henson.

There were only two telephones in the shop; Daisy's in the main office which had to be shared by everyone including Gordon Galbraith, and the other in Mr Gerrard's office, which only he had access to. It often rang when he was absent, his door locked against intruders. Myra puzzled why Gordon Galbraith allowed this situation.

Overhearing snippets of his whispered private telephone calls from the windowless cubbyhole which served as his office, Myra began to sense Mr Gerrard had a sinister side to his life.

Although Henson was untidy and forgetful about many things, he always locked his cubbyhole office door, carefully checking it was secured. Myra sensed there was

Living with Myra

something very odd about Gerrard Henson and decided to find out what it was. He certainly did little or nothing to earn his keep at St George's.

As time rolled by, Myra and her team now smiled to each other when he announced his absences:

"Just popping out to do a wee message";

"Just popping over to Head Office";

"Just off to meet Ted MacElhose for lunch".

His outings were always welcomed, leaving Myra and her ladies to get on with business, unhindered. As soon as he left the store, Myra resumed her role as their boss and they lined up behind her, using her as a buffer and a listening ear against his continuing stream of spiteful remarks.

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As the November returns showed, the autumn sales figures for the Furniture Department were the highest they had ever been.

Myra was still hunting for the spare key for his office, convinced it must exist. One day it literally fell into her lap, disturbed when she decided to use a long feather duster to clear the cobwebs from the lintel above his cubbyhole door. It had been Sellotaped down, but the tape had become tired. Before the end of the day she had a copy key made and had replaced the original with its tired old tape.

One Thursday evening, after Mr Gerald and Mr Gordon had left early as they always did for their mysterious weekly meeting, (an appointment never missed and never explained), Myra sent her girls off a few minutes early, letting them skip out through the back door and she had the department to herself.

What she discovered in Gerrard's cubbyhole office made her skin crawl.

Myra began to write a story for Gerrard Henson, watching, waiting and planning her *Carpe Diem* opportunity. It would take some considerable time until she had worked out how to deal with him.

Meanwhile the Christmas rush was in full flow.

Living with Myra

Living with Myra

Daisy Donovan

Daisy was one of a handful of women at St George's with whom Myra had struck up strategic friendships. Myra had deliberately avoided the few men in the shop, particularly the senior men. Within a few weeks of starting at St George's she had become aware her hour glass figure had attracted attention. Initially she had been shocked by their suggestive sotto voce remarks, deliberately voiced as she passed by. None of these men, she judged, matched Frank in looks or ability, and she had long since decided to ignore and avoid them.

Daisy, from a poor background was in her early thirties. Over many years, and through a series of retirements of more senior women, she had inherited her place in charge at the Cash Desk. In this role she proved herself reasonably competent, unwilling to 'cheat' in order to make the many numbers add up. In her new role, Daisy was drawn into helping Mr Gordon with his 'reconciliation', as he insisted in calling this. He changed her title and promoted her to the additional role of Bookkeeper, paying her a little extra above the usual rate to ensure her silence about his weak arithmetic.

Over the years, Mr Gordon had taken to sharing his 'problems' with Daisy, often retailing his version of the happenings at SCWS HQ at Morrison Street, the centre of bureaucracy in the Co-op Empire in Scotland. Gradually she became recognised as his unofficial deputy. Everyone on the shop learned if Daisy 'put in a word' to Mr Gordon on an internal matter regarding a member of staff or even a manager, normally he took her advice.

Daisy Donovan was a rough diamond, but energetic and hard-working. Over many months, Myra had observed Daisy was scrupulously honest and trust-worthy, unlike many others who were skimming small amounts of cash or filching items from the shop whenever an opportunity arose. However, under the high pressure of time which always arose during the end of week "Saturday reconciliation", Daisy often cracked, descending into tears of frustration.

Myra saw an opportunity. For several months, undetected by Gordon Galbraith, Myra had been "supporting" the older woman, helping her to balance the books and match them to

Living with Myra

the cash from each department before transferring the figures to the Master Ledger. With Myra's unofficial help, Daisy's life became simpler, more enjoyable.

Although she was not the only one Myra mentored and supported in this way, Daisy was the most important, not just because of her influence over Mr Gordon but because she overheard almost every telephone conversation made by him and others. In this way, Daisy was able to provide an insight of 'goings on' at Morrison Street, the centre of Myra's small universe of commerce.

By accident, late on a Saturday afternoon, just ahead of the 1935 Christmas rush, Gordon Galbraith learned at first hand of Myra's uncanny ability with figures when he discovered her helping Daisy Donovan. When Gordon Galbraith discovered it was Myra who had wrought this recent improvement in Daisy's performance, he was delighted to endorse their partnership, particularly as Myra did not press for extra wages or seek to replace Daisy as his confidante and adviser. Myra could now help her openly and Daisy was able to escape to her home and family earlier at the end of each long working week. Gordon Galbraith had also noticed although she had many strange ways, Myra Gallagher did not indulge in shop gossip.

Without fuss or fanfare, Myra added the role of 'Assistant to the Bookkeeper' to her growing portfolio of responsibilities. Before Myra, Daisy's attempts at reconciling her books could take hours. With Myra's help her task was often completed in fifteen minutes.

At their annual 1936 New Year get-together, Gordon congratulated his 'cousin' Tom Walsh, for his powers at 'talent-spotting', half-joking in a few years' time the fifteen-year old Myra would probably be able to run the shop better than he could.

Unknown to either man, these were prophetic words.

Living with Myra

Losing Francis

October 1937.

Frank, now twenty-four, was studying for his sergeant's exams. He had been engaged to the beautiful Deirdre Conway for nearly four years. At last their wedding could go ahead. His turn had come round and he had been allocated a flat with two rooms and a kitchen in the Police Houses near Glasgow Cross. As Frank had no brother, Sandy was to be his Best Man. Myra was nearly seventeen and was to be a second bridesmaid, after Orla, Deirdre's younger sister. (Jean had had her turn of being a bridesmaid, several times over.)

The three older Gallagher girls were married with homes and families of their own. At twenty-six years, Jean was feeling the pressure of being 'left on the shelf'; although a fishmonger, she seemed destined never to 'land her catch'. Although she had a pretty face and a cheery nature, she was beginning to pile on the beef, morphing into the rotund body shape her mother had already become after six children. From behind, scuttling along arm in arm inside their drab coats, headscarves and hefting shopping bags, Mary and Jean now looked more like sisters than mother and daughter.

Myra's twin sisters, Ellen (Ella) and Christine (Chrissie), had moved to digs in Clydebank to work in Singers' Sewing Machine Factory where they had found themselves hard-working husbands and immediately began to generate further members into the Gallagher Clan. As time passed, the twins drew further apart from the chaos at Yoker by moving to Old Kilpatrick.

In recent times the twins' visits to Yoker had become sporadic but were still noisy. They almost always came together, trailing their gaggle of children with them. Myra saw they were going their own way, supporting each other, quietly prospering, drifting almost beyond the reach of Mary and Michael.

Elizabeth (Lizzie), the eldest of the family, now lived in Granny Nellis's old house at Tantallon Road in Shawlands. Lizzie was almost the opposite of the now self-sufficient twins, cascading down into dire poverty, despite the good start she had received at the expense of the others. Lizzie normally made the long trek from Shawlands to Yoker on foot, unable to afford the tram fares for herself and her brood. Lizzie was an almost

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constant presence, scrounging money and cigarettes, or tea and sugar as she struggled to make ends meet.

Every few months another child was delivered by the restless and energetic stork circling the Gallagher Clan. As their auntie, the schoolgirl Myra had often been imposed upon to take a small tribe of them to play in the street or to Queen Victoria Park in Whiteinch, thereby giving their mothers an hour of peace and quiet to drink tea, smoke and gossip. Myra had soon found she had no interest in nurturing girning, dribbling, teething toddlers or screaming, hungry infants with bulging, smelly nappies. In recent times, now she was a working woman, Lizzie had started badgering Myra for yet another 'loan', and her kids clamoured for 'pennies for sweeties'.

With each passing year, Myra had become increasingly frustrated by living in this cauldron of family life, where it was impossible to get time alone to enjoy a good play on the radio or read a book without being asked "What's it about?" or "Is it any good?". Worse still, if there was nothing good on the wireless, she would be coaxed into reading her current book aloud to them, suffering their interruptions and jokey remarks, disrupting the flow of the story and making her angry. This meant she had to be careful what books she let them see she was reading. When the hubbub got too much for her, Myra would retreat from the bedlam, shutting herself in Frank's box bedroom using the wedge to lock them out, ignoring their knocking until they eventually tired and left her alone.

Weeks after Myra's eleventh birthday her monthly periods had started. It had been Jean who had told her 'the facts of life', showing her grubby pictures of well-muscled men wearing tight swimming pants, images which left little to the imagination. This was not entirely new knowledge for Myra who, following her intimacies with Frank in his box bedroom, had visited the Mitchell Library to study medical reference books.

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At the Conway family's insistence, Deirdre and Frank's wedding was celebrated in the rather grand Partick Burgh Hall, a venue which Michael Gallagher called toffy-nosed and which spooked Mary into further debt to purchase suitable outfits for her, Michael and Lizzie and her tribe.

On the night Sandy was obliged to engage in a round of duty dances, including several with Myra, repeatedly standing on her new white shoes: he was a hopeless dancer and

Living with Myra

she surmised he had never been 'out to the dancing' in his life before. The best part of the evening for her was partnering Frank who was an excellent dancer, as she had become under his tutelage. They put on a good show, annoying Deirdre in the process, which pleased Myra greatly.

Frank and Myra were both tall, taking after their father, and at five-foot-ten, she was one of the tallest girls in her shop, with a good full figure and long shapely legs. She had often overheard customers say, sotto voce:

"look at the classy chassis on that big lassie" and,
"she's just like a model, that yin."

It's true, I am elegant, Myra thought. Her face was the problem, not exactly ugly, but not pretty like Jean's.

As in the past at weddings, Myra stood on the periphery of the celebration for almost the entire evening; the only other dances she enjoyed were with Mr Conway, who was average, and her own father, who was nearly as good as his son.

Myra shared a bed with Jean and after the wedding she learned, emboldened by several whiskies, her sister had dragged Sandy into a clinch in a cleaner's cupboard. Over the next weeks Myra heard the lurid details of this encounter whispered to her many times. Sandy, Jean revealed, was 'very good' with his hands, which had been 'everywhere'.

With Frank gone, Myra had lost her soul-mate. She had been hoping, planning, a move into his old box bedroom to escape from Jean and her endless whispered ramblings, her nicotine tainted breath and, in particular, Jean's ice-cold feet on the back of her legs.

Living with Myra

First Stirrings

Frank moved out of Yoker on the day of his wedding. His old single bed was sent on a coal lorry to Shawlands, to Lizzie, who was desperately in need of another. The day after the wedding his box room reverted to a cupboard filled with spare cots, prams and toys to amuse visiting grand-children. Myra had protested vociferously but was ignored, condemned to continue to listen to Jean and her fantasy love life. Luckily, she had already moved her secret cache of items and money to a more secure location at St George's, as a temporary measure.

Even though Frank was gone, Sandy continued his visits to Yoker. Sandy Kaywood had been a part of Myra's life since she was twelve years old. He had been twenty-three when he first came to their crowded tenement flat in Yoker as the new best friend of her brother Frank. Both were keen members of Partick Wheelers'. Over the years the boys' friendship had endured. Though Sandy was a Protestant he had been accepted, and soon became an honorary member of the Gallagher family, like an extra older brother or cousin to Myra.

Within a few months Sandy had merged into the background of their routine, appearing quietly most days, usually just after their evening meal, always a busy time in the Gallagher household.

As the house was usually packed with family, friends and neighbours, the Gallagher's front door was left on the latch, the Yale lock snibbed open, the factor's key hanging on a string behind the letter box, used only rarely. When Sandy arrived, he followed the established protocol, rattling the letter box before entering, leaving his work bike on the half-landing beside the communal W.C which served all three families living on the top-floor landing.

Sandy Kaywood worked at Barr and Stroud, one of the few things he talked about. He was fully qualified 'fitter-turner', part of their nightshift. Now another war was on the horizon the company was gearing up, increasing production. Sandy boasted several times he had been chosen for the 'Install Team', the elite group of hand-picked men who went with new and repaired periscopes to make sure they were fitted properly into the host submarine, to make sure they were calibrated correctly. He always talked of these periscopes as 'his', even after they had gone, occasionally interjecting the information about a particular periscope number destined for a particular submarine, quoting its name

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and ship number. Although the family always joked about this after he had left, Myra thought it was a good trait, demonstrating 'professionalism'.

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For a few weeks after her wedding encounter, Jean had continued her pursuit of Sandy more boldly, often waiting for him at the close mouth. This seduction had to be done secretly, because of her father. When Sandy had first arrived, Michael Gallagher had made it plain to his two remaining girls: although Sandy might be welcomed as a friend of his son, he was most definitely *not* acceptable as a son-in-law.

It seemed from Jean's whispered nocturnal reports Sandy was not taking her bait. Then, following the established pattern, the focus of Jean's stories changed. A new delivery driver from the Fish Market called Jimmy Byrne was eyeing her up. He wore a crucifix and was definitely a Catholic. Although he did not wear a wedding band there was still a chance he might be married - Jean was trying to find out more about him.

Without Frank to share her selected dreams and Co-op secrets, Myra found she was lonely for the first time in her life. She had always had Frank - now he was gone. As a family they had hoped Frank would visit, but they knew what to expect from Deirdre who was keeping him all to herself. Mary grieved for him, as if he had died or was quarantined by serious illness, constantly mentioning his absence, asking Sandy if he had any news. Sandy eventually reported Frank had resigned from the Wheelers'. Frank's short letter had said he "must concentrate on family and career". This epistle had upset the committee by demanding the refund on his annual subscription, which Frank had inadvertently paid by mistake the week before his wedding.

With Frank gone, Myra had felt sure Sandy would soon drift away, but still he came most evenings, even earlier than before, often arriving as she was washing up the last of the tea dishes, claiming his usual place at the corner of the kitchen table, donating a quarter pound of expensive Brooke Bond tea, or a large bag of sugar. For the next few hours Sandy occupied 'his' spot, mostly silent except when joining in the laughter, only occasionally adding a remark to the noisy banter. When it was time to depart for his night shift, he would rise quietly to thank Mrs Gallagher for her hospitality, then ride off on his bike. Almost always, on the following night he would re-appear, another small gift in hand.

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As the weeks rolled past Myra began to 'feel' Sandy's eyes on her, tracking after her every time she moved. It was only then she started to think of Sandy Kaywood as someone other than a surrogate brother.

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For Myra, now seventeen, at twenty-eight Sandy seemed much too old for her. But as she considered him further her view changed.

Although he was dark and swarthy, he was not tall and handsome. At more than two inches shorter than her, he was thickening around his waist, nearly chubby. Looking at Sandy Kaywood critically as a prospective husband, Myra saw his nose was large and his lips were thick. He had always bitten and picked at his nails, sometimes making them bleed: but at least they were always clean, unlike her father's. On the positive side Sandy Kaywood had kind, soft brown eyes which often looked sad. He spoke properly, slowly, carefully, something Myra liked very much; he was in a well-paid steady job, with plenty money in his pocket; he was open-handed in a family always tight for money, continuing to buy ice cream or chips to share on a Thursday night when the family purse was almost empty. Importantly, like her, he was ambitious, albeit in a slow, modest way, as his pride at being part of the Install Team demonstrated. Crucially for Myra, he didn't smoke. Myra loathed the smell of it, especially when Jean insisted on smoking in bed when she relapsed from her intermittent attempts to quit and save up for new clothes.

Studying him more closely, surreptitiously, she realised he was more than simply quiet. Sandy was reserved, mysterious, and perhaps secretive, all of which, she decided, she found 'alluring'. She thought back over the years. All the Gallaghers knew about Sandy was second-hand information from Frank. It seemed Sandy lived alone with his mother in a flat with three rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom, in a red sandstone building, in Caird Drive in Dowanhill. Frank had been to the close, which was fully tiled and in good order, but he had never been invited up to the third-floor flat. Myra knew Caird Drive was a well-to-do area, near to where her boss Gordon Galbraith lived on Highburgh Road and not far from where Miss Pettigrew had lived at Havelock Street. Even though he was not a 'looker', Myra knew Sandy Kaywood was a good catch for any girl, as Mary had often said ruefully after the young man left them to ride his bike to work.

In the past Myra might have asked Frank's opinion, but now he had deserted her, she began to try out romantic stories, with Sandy as her lover. She now watched for his glances, and sometimes smiled to him, when no one was looking.

Since Miss Pettigrew had died, depriving Myra of a quiet place to write and a proper listening audience, Myra, frustrated, had almost given up writing her fantasy stories; now they came again, unbidden, spinning exasperatingly in her head. Surely at Caird Drive her life could be different, she projected. With so much space and just three of them, surely

Living with Myra

she could listen on the wireless to plays she wanted to hear, without the endless arguments and disappointments required by family compromise. Perhaps Sandy might listen to and comment on her stories, as Miss Pettigrew had done. He had been to The Boys' High School, so he must be fairly well educated, she reasoned. His mother might prove difficult, but she would work hard to befriend her, Myra vowed, just as she had won over Daisy Donovan and other awkward ones at the Co-op. It was all a matter of establishing what the other person needed and trying to provide it.

Myra began to dream, to plan and to hope for an opportunity. She knew she would have to be very careful: if her father got a sniff of this, Sandy would be banished and she would be confined to barracks. If she was to win her man, she had to use subterfuge. Never mentioned, and unknown to everyone but Mary and Myra, her Grampa Nellis, a man Myra had only seen in photographs, had been a Protestant who had 'converted' to enable a proper Catholic wedding. During an afternoon of near incoherent rambling reminiscences, Granny Nellis had shared this family secret with her nine-year-old granddaughter:

"Myra, it was because I 'started' your Mamma before Malcolm married me. It's what brought down God's punishment on me and why I couldn't have any more babies. It's why Malcolm's been taken from me so early."

When Myra had attempted to check this revelation with her mother, she had been told, it was untrue and she should "wash her mouth out". But Mary's red face had given her away.

If it was to be made real, to come true, the first chapter of this new story about Sandy Kaywood and his new bride Myra had to be a good one.

Living with Myra

Back Courtship

Two months after Frank's wedding, on the evening of Mary's forty-ninth birthday, a Friday, Myra 'arranged' to be alone in the flat. This was achieved by the simple stratagem of encouraging her parents and Jean to go to Housey-Housey at the Chapel Halls. Myra had earlier added a ten shilling note to her weekly contribution to the household purse, her mother's surprise birthday present.

The trio chattered their way down past various neighbours then into the night. Myra closed the front door behind them, checked the Yale was snibbed-up, permitting the usual free access. She then stood at the window to be sure they had really left. Alone now, she opened her expensive lavender perfumed shampoo and washed her hair in the kitchen sink, singing along to the wireless. Nervous, she checked the mantle clock every few minutes. At seven o'clock she slipped off her underskirt and bra to kneel in front of the coal fire to dry her hair, wearing only her knickers. She did not have to wait long.

Sandy rattled the letterbox then breezed into the room. Feigning surprise she turned quickly, to find him staring at her, a wide grin spreading on his face, revealing his large, widely spaced teeth. It was a version of the scene from a lurid tale of the widow and her lodger from a novella Myra had borrowed from the local penny lending library, a book Isobel Chalmers would not have allowed on her shelves at Whiteinch Public Library.

Myra made no attempt to cover up and rose to stand boldly before him, half-naked, as in the story.

'Enjoying the view, Sandy?' she said, leering at him and looking down to see if he had a bulge, as in the story.

He caught her glance. His hands had moved quickly his crotch. His face turned crimson. Then he was gone, racing along the hall and banging the outside door behind him, leaving her giggling.

Later, as she lay beside Jean, she prompted her sister into another re-telling of her clinch in the cupboard with Sandy and his wonderful hands. As Jean threw herself into the retelling, recounting, every detail, Myra smiled into the darkness and let her hand move to rub slowly between her thighs, making it last.

Living with Myra

The next night, when Myra got back alone from the early showing at the pictures, Sandy was waiting for her, standing quietly at the back of the close, in the shadows, beside his bike.

'Well, Myra, here you are at last. Was it a good film?'

'Oh, it's you Sandy. So, are you coming up then? Jean should be in. I'm sure she'll be pleased to see you, even if she's in her curlers. You already know she really fancies you, don't you?'

'Yes, she's made it a bit too obvious, and I can see your old man has noticed. But it's you I fancy, Myra. Did you not know?'

'Me, Sandy?'

'Yes, do I have any chance, Myra, because if not, maybe I should move on, look for someone else.'

'But what about Jean?'

'Never mind Jean. What do you say, will I do?'

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In the darkness behind the dustbins shed, Myra responded enthusiastically, encouraging him in a very non-sisterly way, pulling him hard into her and rubbing her hands up and down his back then down onto his buttocks, as the widow had done with her lodger. Although Myra had almost no experience of kissing, she judged he was good, and liked his peppermint breath. His hands roamed all over her body and she let him explore, enjoying the feeling of him squeezing gently at her breasts and teasing her nipples. Now she was in new territory; with Frank, she had been the one who had done all the touching, guided by his hand during their first few sessions when she was seven years old and he was newly fourteen.

On her first night with Sandy she had stopped him wandering 'downstairs', although she let him rub himself against her, pressing back and pushing into him until he groaned his finish.

Normally Myra was expected to stay in on a Sunday night, to do her washing and ironing for the week ahead, but she had hurried straight home from Chapel to get it done so was in the clear. After she had gobbled down her tea and brushed her teeth, she announced she was off to meet a new friend called 'Rita Miller', a girl who worked in a shoe shop on Great Western Road, near the Co-op. Rita lived in Kinning Park, a place Myra knew her parents had only vague information about. Myra still had to face several questions from her father but she had answers ready. He eventually nodded his consent before telling her to make sure she was back by ten o'clock, at the latest.

Living with Myra

Beneath her coat Myra wore loose clothing, one of Jean's old elasticated bras and a pair of her sister's baggy knickers. The Gallagher close in Yoker was too risky; too busy. She caught the tram to the foot of Hyndland Street where Sandy was waiting with his bike. After the short brisk walk to Caird Drive they stood in almost complete darkness, inside a walk-in cellar which housed only an old broken mangle, the space dimly lit by the slit of weak light which spilled under the door from the feeble gas lantern in the close.

This meeting place had been suggested by Sandy before they parted the previous evening. The old lady whose cellar it was, never crossed her threshold after six o'clock of an evening, summer or winter, he explained. Using the wedge from young Frank's box room, Myra jammed the door shut so they could not be surprised by a passing neighbour taking out rubbish or ashes to the middens.

Jean had been right - Sandy did have excellent hands, transporting her to a new level of desire and fulfilment by bringing her slowly to a crescendo then releasing her, before gently guiding her hand down to his open fly.

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Myra and 'Rita Miller' became firm friends. Almost every night during the weeks which followed, Sandy was there when she alighted from the tram. Afterwards he would walk her back to the tram stop, before riding off to his nightshift.

Sandy was the only proper boyfriend Myra had ever had, and her mind whirled ahead on romantic notions of their life together, planning to enjoy the freedom to do as she wished, without being controlled by her parents or laughed at by her sisters for her 'daft' ideas.

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After a few short months of secret courting, Myra began to worry. She had almost but not actually given in to him yet, although her thighs had been splashed twice. He had steadfastly refused to take her strong hints about getting married so they could do it properly, in a bed. A recurring thought nagged at her - Sandy seemed so accomplished at pleasuring she realised he must have done it with many other girls. She began to think he might tire of her in frustration, and start looking for someone new.

Myra plotted her way forwards following the outline of another more recent romance from the penny library. This tale was of a servant maid called Janice, who 'lived-in' at the country house of a wealthy doctor and his difficult wife. Janice was already twenty-three and time was slipping away. Her employer's son, Jocelyn, arrived home from university for the long summer break. Janice enticed Jocelyn into her bed, repeatedly,

Living with Myra

where they consumed each other in an ecstasy of torrid lovemaking. When Janice became pregnant, Jocelyn, being an honourable young man and now deeply in love with the mother-to-be, opposed his parents' advice and married their deceiving servant. Harsh words were said on both sides, but when the new baby arrived, a beautiful bouncing boy, Jocelyn's parents had been reconciled to their son. In true romance fashion, Jocelyn and Janice had made a wonderfully successful marriage, despite the discrepancy between their social positions, as yet more storybook children arrived to delight their grandparents.

In accordance with her plan Myra allowed Sandy to go 'all the way', but still pulling back just as he climaxed. For Myra this first coupling, coming at the end of a long period of gradual but slowly diminishing resistance, had been almost as good as being 'finished' by his hand. At their next and subsequent couplings, Sandy seemed entirely focussed on himself, selfishly pressing himself on her without the long and arousing foreplay she wanted and had become used to. Now his acts of conquest were quick and direct, forcing into her, to gain his own satisfaction before she was ready, making her sob with frustration, which, she later imagined, he had probably interpreted as requited passion.

After these unsatisfactory flurries, and lying awake beside a snoring Jean, Myra soothed her disappointments away by recalling the recurring advices in the Readers' Letters pages and Agony Aunt columns of the *Woman's Own*. Here it was emphasised, the new bride must accept it was 'the novelty of excitement' which had caused her husband to behave in this selfish manner, giving rise to his premature climax, without proper regard for his new wife's personal needs. Myra gradually convinced herself she must be patient, bide her time, because later, after a few months of marriage, both parties would learn how to please each other, and true love would begin. And, of course, there was the prize of a wonderful house at Caird Drive to dream about. The only time Myra had been in a house as posh as she imagined Sandy's to be was when she had been in the select area called Kirklee, when as a child she had served as her father's assistant, during his periods as an itinerant painter and decorator.

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After their seventh hurried coupling, Myra decided to break the news. They were walking, side by side, almost at the tram stop.

'Sandy, I thought I should tell. You're going to be a Dad.'

'What? What?'

As he looked at her, his eyes filled first with disbelief and then with what she thought might be fear. She guessed (wrongly) he was afraid of her father and possibly of her brother Frank, and sought to re-assure him.

Living with Myra

'Look, don't worry, Sandy. Dadda will come round, eventually, and Frank will be alright about it too. Everybody likes you and we are not the first mixed marriage ever to have happened. Grandpa Nellis was a Protestant but he 'turned' to marry Granny. Oh, but remember, that's a dark family secret. I've already told Mamma about us and she'll make Dadda agree. He'll go mad for a bit, of course, and he might try to punch you, but don't worry. It'll all work out, Sandy, you'll see. Everybody likes you. When our baby comes everyone will forget it's arrived a bit early, you'll see. Don't worry.'

'Oh God, Myra, it's not I don't want to marry you, I do. You know I want to. It's just, well, I can't, well, not yet.'

'Sandy, are you saying you don't love me?'

'No, I do, I do! Look, I'm really sorry Myra, I can't marry you, not yet. I just can't. Oh God, I just can't. Look, Myra, it's not I don't love you. I do, I really do. But I can't. Oh God, Myra, I'm bursting for the toilet. I have to go. Sorry.'

Myra had been completely unprepared for this reaction, and before she could say anything further to reassure him, Sandy was pedalling quickly away from her. She had spooked him. However, within a few minutes her frown turned to a smile. She had thought of a way to make it work, a ploy taken from another story. It would all work out for the best, she was almost certain.

For the rest of the week Myra stayed at home in the evenings. Rita had a bad cold and was off work, she explained. But Myra could not fully conceal her excitement: every time the letterbox rattled she almost jumped up from her chair. After a few nights of this behaviour Mary eyed Myra and nodded her into the girls' room for a stern heart to heart. Myra, in accordance with her plan, tearfully spilled the story of their secret romance and her pregnancy. She had 'missed' twice now, she told Mary.

Not for the first time in her rebellious teenage life, the often-truculent Myra Gallagher got a severe skelping across the back of her legs with the carpet beater and was sent to bed while her mother considered what to do.

At first Mary Gallagher found it hard to believe Sandy Kaywood would deceive them: he must know the rules, she reasoned, even though he had not been told them explicitly. Then it occurred to her this might be another of Myra's romantic notions taken too far, and decided to wait for real signs of a pregnancy - morning sickness, strange eating and so on. In fairness to Sandy she would not tell her husband until she was absolutely sure. Jean cajoled, trying to find out what had transpired to put Myra in the bad books again, but soon gave up. Everyone knew if Myra clammed up about something, she would never change her mind.

Living with Myra

Facing Up

At seven o'clock on the following Saturday evening Sandy Kaywood arrived at the Gallagher door. He did not enter as in the past but pulled at the doorbell, and waited. Mary sent Jean to answer the door.

'Oh, Sandy, it's you! Well hello, stranger. Come in, come in. Are you going to a wedding or a funeral, all dressed up in your suit? Look who it is Dadda, Sandy the toff from Dowanhill has come at last to visit us poor Yoker people. It's been weeks and weeks, Sandy, I missed you.'

Sandy's face was burning red and his eyes were brimming bright. He did not sit at his usual spot but stood with his hands thrust deep into his trouser pockets. Myra judged everything he was wearing looked new; a white shirt with a dark green tie and black brogue shoes; a dark grey suit, almost black. The material looked expensive, but it did not fit him well. His bicycle clips, still in place, made him look comic.

He seemed to want to say something but was unable to find the words.

Jean realised what she had just said and added: 'Oh Sandy, I'm sorry, is your Mum all right? She's not died at last, has she?'

'No, no. It's not that.'

Catching the look between Sandy and Myra, Mary took the initiative:

'Sit yourself down, Sandy son, and welcome back. We've *all* missed you. Have you been away with your job? Is your mother well enough in herself? Are you keeping well? You look well enough, a bit hot, maybe. Will you not take your jacket off and have a wee cup of tea with us?'

At last Sandy found his voice. The speech was clearly rehearsed, the words formal, the delivery stilted:

'Mr Gallagher, sir, I have come to apologise to you and your wife and to ask you both for your forgiveness. I know I have abused your trust in me, but I hope you will let me marry your daughter. I want to do the right thing by her.'

Michael Gallagher lifted his head from the newspaper and stared at Sandy, uncomprehending.

Living with Myra

'Whit ur ye trying tae tell me, Sandy, son. Huv ye been messing about wi oor Jean?'

'No, sorry, Mr Gallagher, it's Myra I want to marry, if she'll have me. I've loved her for years but I had to wait until she was old enough. It's only recently I realised I might have a chance with her, and found out she loves me too.'

'Naw, son. This'll no' dae, it jist cannae dae. Naw, Sandy, ye see u're a Proddy in' as well's ye know, we're Caithlics. So, Sandy son, the answer's goat tae be naw. Away in' git yersel' oot o' here before Ah get up oot ma chair in' cuff yer lugs fur ye. Aff ye go son, and find yersel' a nice Proddy lassie. There's aye plenty o' them to go roon, nae doot o' that. Why no' try yon new dance ha' place these two blethers a hell huv beenin' goin' oan about for these last weeks, eh?'

Before Sandy or Michael could say more, Mary intervened.

'Sandy son, go round to Capaldini's and get this bowl filled with ice cream for us, there's a good lad. You go with him Jean, and make sure he comes back. But don't rush, back by eight o'clock will be fine, all right? Off you go, the pair of you.'

Michael watched, mystified, as Mary bundled Sandy and Jean out of the kitchen and down the hallway, closing and locking the door behind them.

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When Sandy and a very tearful Jean returned, Michael Gallagher was absent, having said he could not trust himself in the same room as Sandy. As usual Michael left any hard decisions to Mary:

'I'm very disappointed in you, Sandy Kaywood. Myra already knows what we think of her, but you Sandy, well it's a shock. I thought you were a true gentleman. However, be that as it may, it seems there's nothing else can be done. It'll take time to talk Michael round, of course, but leave him to me. I take it you are willing to convert to the true Catholic faith?'

'Yes, Mrs Gallagher.'

'What does your mother think of all this?'

'Eh, well, to be honest, I haven't told her yet. She doesn't keep too well. I thought I'd try to break it to her when she is stronger. But I'm sure when she meets Myra she'll love her too, just like everybody does.'

'Mmm, I think you'll find our Myra is not so well liked as you imagine. Myra is far too clever and conniving for the likes of us simple folk. But you've known her since she was a girl, Sandy, so you have no excuse. You should know by now what you're getting. I take it Myra will move in with you and your mother? Or are you planning to find somewhere else?'

Living with Myra

'No, Mamma, we'll stay at Caird Drive, there's plenty room, there are three rooms and . . .'

'Myra Gallagher, get you to your bed, right now, madam! It's Sandy I'm speaking to, not to you.'

Myra flounced out and slammed the door behind her.

'So, Sandy?'

'Yes, Mrs Gallagher, we'll stay at Caird Drive, for the meantime anyway. I've been saving up and I thought maybe we could find a place of our own, later, when Mum's feeling better.'

'All right Sandy. Just to be clear, you can't move here. Michael will not have it, even if there was room. At least Dowanhill is not as far as Lizzie's place, away over there on the South Side, or Old Kilpatrick - what a God forsaken place that is, in the wilds of nowhere. Or like our Frank in the Police Houses, where we need permission before we can get in to visit him. But never mind son, off you go. I'll send Jean round to your house with a note when I've brought their Daddy to his senses. But hold on a minute, son, we'd better get the ball rolling with Father Donnelly, so meet me at the Chapel tomorrow night at seven o'clock, alright?'

'Yes, Mrs Gallagher, seven o'clock.'

'And you have to stay away from here and from Myra until you hear from me, all right?'

'Yes, Mrs Gallagher.'

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Despite her denials, Myra knew it was Jean who had spread the news of her condition. The other Gallagher sisters arrived to bask in their superiority, now they had something to cast up at her, at last. She knew they had always been jealous of her, because she was their Dadda's favourite.

Over the course of these sisterly visits, Myra had to endure the many harsh words which were spoken about her, and about Sandy, in his absence. She knew they were trying to goad her but, as she had planned, she had already set her mind to the role of the penitent daughter. Keeping her head down and her eyes fixed on the floor, or closed, she shut them out and let her mind race ahead, already planning her new life in Dowanhill, away from her tormentors.

It wasn't her fault she was cleverer, better looking, tall and shapely while they were all fat and dumpy, like Mamma. But Myra knew what annoyed them most was she was to get

Living with Myra

Sandy with his well-paid job and posh flat in Caird Drive: this pleased Myra very much indeed and she held back her wide grins for when she was alone.

Jean was the worst, always stirring the pot, never letting the conversation flow to something new. Mary still hoped to keep it a secret from her neighbours and so impressed sternly on each daughter this problem must not go outside the family. There would be time enough for everyone else to have their gossip later, after they were married, she emphasised. This seemed to have worked because, as far as Myra could tell, no one at the Co-op had discovered the news of her 'situation'.

Myra planned to tell her work colleagues her new 'true' story, but only after she and Sandy were married. Meanwhile she would prepare the ground by dropping judicious hints to Daisy. The rest of the story would deal with itself. She would remain silent and let them make of it what they wished. Thankfully being in the Co-op she would not have to give up her position on marriage. In any case, some men were talking of joining up for the War which everyone said must come, and women would be needed to replace them.

Living with Myra

Wedding

Moving to Caird Drive would be a big step. Nice houses were hard to come by and Sandy's red sandstone building was very grand compared to Yoker. Myra already had a good knowledge of the beautifully tiled entry and the tidy back-court, but like Frank, she had not been invited upstairs.

The only model she had to build her dreams on was Granny Nellis's flat in Shawlands, where Lizzie now lived. But Lizzie only had two rooms and a kitchen, with an inside toilet and a wash-basin, but no bath, and a mere dribble of hot water from a gas geyser.

From quizzing the evasive Sandy, she knew the flat had two bedrooms and a front room, which Mrs Kaywood called her Parlour, and an inside bathroom with hot water from a back boiler in the kitchen. Myra had never been in a house as big as this, except when helping her father in Kirklee. The thought of living in such a large flat made her head spin with excitement.

As she waited for the first part of her dream to reach its fulfilment, Myra went through in her mind what she had gleaned of Sandy and his family.

Sandy had been an only child, and his father Alec Kaywood had died during the Great War when his ship sank. Sandy's Granny Milligan and Aunt Grace lived in High Blantyre, near Rutherglen. Myra had heard High Blantyre was very well to do, but Sandy had only been there as a child a few times and had no clear memory of it. His mother still visited but only very occasionally and always alone. Myra knew nothing of the rest of Sandy's family but was sure she would learn in due course, once she befriended Mrs Kaywood. There was also Mrs Riddell, his mother's best friend, who lived across the landing. The other neighbours - were 'difficult' and Mrs Kaywood and Mrs Riddell did not speak to them, Sandy had explained.

Myra had long ago resolved to do her best to get along with Mrs Kaywood; make it work for the three of them. She would make the old lady like her, whatever it took, and when her baby came, eventually, everything would be perfect. Mrs Kaywood could look after the baby while Myra went back to work, like Daisy and her mother. Myra had no vision of being stuck at home with a baby: if the Co-op refused to take her back she would get a job elsewhere, maybe in an office. Why should she not do well? She was the smartest person in the Co-op, much smarter than Gordon Galbraith and the odious Gerrard Henson.

Living with Myra

By badgering Sandy, she learned Sadie Kaywood had been the Bookkeeper for Uncle Albie, Mr Albrecht Gurovich, a wholesale jeweller. Armed with this information, Myra projected: being a bookkeeper was a good job; maybe she would enrol in evening classes next autumn. In larger firms like solicitors and banks a Bookkeeper could be a very responsible job. At the Co-op, Daisy Donovan was assumed by many to be next in importance after Mr Gerrard. Myra knew she was much smarter than Daisy and could add long columns of figures in her head in a flash, regularly pointing out Daisy's errors. Of course Daisy could cope, but only if she was given plenty of time. Under stress she often went to pieces. Myra had started helping Daisy informally but now Mr Gordon expected her to help by doing a 'double check' of the Cash Book to make sure it balanced with the till. This reconciliation had to be done daily, but on busy Saturdays it could be fraught, as Daisy rushed to get away to the pictures or home to change for the dancing with her husband Marty.

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The wedding day approached. Mary had to pressure her husband enormously: only on the very last day did he reluctantly sign the papers, allowing the wedding to go ahead. But Michael still refused to meet Sandy until the actual wedding day, a notion from which Mary did not try to dissuade him, given his earlier threats to mete out retribution on Sandy for defiling his special daughter.

Mary held the view it would do Myra good to learn to make her own way in her new life. Sandy was clearly very attached to his mother. Mary imagined when Sadie Kaywood learned she was to have a new daughter-in-law, a young girl she had never met; she might not be happy to share her son and her kitchen with a headstrong girl with odd notions. There would almost certainly be fireworks, if not at first, eventually. Perhaps her new mother-in-law would be able to teach Myra some hard lessons in how to accept compromise with good grace. Father Donnelly had been right, Michael had spoiled the girl. From when she was a toddler, they had all given in to Myra too many times for the girl's own good.

On the eve of the wedding Michael Gallagher made his further portentous pronouncement:

'Efter this weddin', neether Sandy Kaywood nur his wife ur tae come tae this hoose here, right? Ah'll no huv eether wan o' thum owur ma doorstep. Let it be weel unnerstood, right? Yoo mak' sure ye tell him, Mary Gallagher, right?'

Living with Myra

Mary let this speech pass without opposing it: when Myra's baby arrived, all would be forgiven. Michael was as soft as she was herself when it came to their grandchildren but she could not resist adding her own rider to Michael's:

'Myra Gallagher, you heard what your Dadda has just said. You've broken his heart, with your selfishness. Remember, Myra, you've made this bed for yourself and you must learn to lie in it, come what may. Don't think you can run back here and weep on my shoulders if Mrs Kaywood doesn't give in to your daft notions. Who ever heard of a girl taking away an only son from his mother without even meeting the woman? She probably thinks we're tinkers. So, just keep a civil tongue in your head. You're not married yet, and even when you are, I'm still your mother and I'll skelp your legs with the beater, if you need it.'

Myra heard out her mother silence, swallowing the response which leapt to her tongue:

"Well that's fine with me. If you want to ban me from Yoker, well I'm banning you from Dowanhill, every single one of you. Don't bother coming to our door with all your pleas for financial help because we shall be completely deaf to them."

Myra felt she could live quite happily without the chaotic Gallaghers visiting her. In fact, she was very much looking forward to it.

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Saturday 7th May 1938 arrived at last.

The wedding ceremony was held in private in the Chapel House. A shocked and disappointed Father Donnelly officiated with tears in his eyes. They had all had such high hopes for Myra and now she was entering a 'shotgun wedding' with an odd looking older man, a man who looked Jewish, not of the true faith, even though he had gone through the motions of converting, claiming he was Church of Scotland.

Frank, acting as Best Man, received a generous cash sum from Sandy to be used to provide a full sit-down purvey, with free drinks and a six-piece dance band. As Mary had insisted to Sandy (who funded everything) the wedding party was held at Partick Burgh Hall. Mary was pleased, and thanked Sandy warmly, out of Myra's hearing.

Sadie Kaywood had been expected but, at the last minute, Sandy advised his mother had decided to go visit her family in High Blantyre for a few days, to give the newly-weds time and space to enjoy a working honeymoon at Caird Drive. Mary was relieved.

Living with Myra

The Gallagher Clan responded in full strength, enticed by the prospect of plentiful food and free beer and whisky with sherry for the ladies. From the outset, the party went well, their merriment encouraged by the stoic absence of the father of the bride whose anti-alcohol outbursts were not popular. Knowing her father was not to be present, Jean invited Jimmy Byrne to come along after the food. Jimmy was said to be a great dancer.

After the meal and while the dancing was in full swing, the happy newly-weds slipped away to begin their new life together in the salubrious surrounds of Dowanhill. Although Myra had not yet revealed it to Sandy, she was dreaming of a proper honeymoon later, maybe in St Andrews, which Miss Pettigrew had visited several times and praised as: "a jewel of a town, perhaps the nicest in Scotland".

Living with Myra

Caird Drive

The newly-weds scurried through the warmth of an early summer night to arrive at Caird Drive just as the last of the light left the sky. At Yoker they lived by gas light and torches and she was looking forward to the brightness of electric lights at last.

Myra wore a new mauve costume over a dark purple blouse and a strand of fake but impressive pearls, her outfit purchased from Rendell's of Partick, using some of her secret money. Given her alleged condition, she had thought better of wearing white, which she would have preferred, but wore white sandals with a low heel, so as not to seem too tall beside Sandy.

Myra was walking fast, her long awaited new home only minutes away. It had been weeks since they had had sex. Sex lying down had filled her mind night after night, wondering how it would be. Before setting out from the wedding reception, in the lavatory, Myra had taken off her stockings, suspender belt and knickers, stuffing them into her large black handbag. This handbag was of real leather, an old friend, the one Frank had been persuaded to buy her all those long years earlier, still in good condition. Sandy trotted alongside her carrying two large borrowed suitcases containing the total of Myra's worldly possessions from Yoker.

On entering the top floor flat, the first thing Myra noticed was the smell of urine, reminding her of Granny Nellis, mixed with stale tobacco and alcohol, making her feel queasy. She switched on the hallway light, a first novelty. His work bike leaned against a cupboard door, making the hallway feel narrow, cramped and untidy. The cupboard door and the walls were scored and scratched by years of scuffing by pedals and handlebars. Sandy's two racing bikes were suspended from the ceiling by a complicated pulley system, throwing dark shadows, spoiling the faded grandeur of the entrance. At one time the hallway must have been very presentable, she thought, now it was grubby, sticky with dirt, needing restoration and re-decoration.

Sandy's bedroom seemed reasonably clean. The bedclothes looked clean and fresh but even here there was a faint odour of urine. His bed was only a single although wide enough for two to snuggle in tightly to each other. Why had she not thought to ask? Why had he not told her? She could have ordered a double bed to be delivered from the Co-op. She would order their new bed first thing on Monday morning.

With the bedroom door shut and the window cracked open top and bottom, it would do for tonight. Tomorrow she would clean the house and make it fresh. She would redecorate it in time, but take it slowly, so as not to offend Mrs Kaywood.

Living with Myra

Myra relaxed and smiled at Sandy, who grinned widely.

'This is a nice room, Sandy, so very spacious. I'll just have a quick look round the others, just to see what you have here, or rather, what **we** have here.'

She made a move to pass him but he backed towards the door, his arms wide, blocking her, terror in his eyes:

'Look, Myra, I'm sorry, I should have told you. I know, I know. I tried to tell you a few times, but well, I didn't want to lose you. It's Mum, she's not been well since Uncle Albie died. I've tried to stop her, but if I try to take the bottle away she screams at me, saying it's all my fault.'

'What do you mean, Sandy? Why is it your fault?'

'I don't know. It all seems nonsense to me. I think it's because she's drunk most of the time. It's Mrs Riddell who gets it for her. Nowadays Mum hardly goes out, just stays in her room with the door locked and the radio blaring all the time. The neighbours hate it - they're always stopping me on the stairs to complain.'

'Have you told her about me, Sandy, about us getting married?'

'Well, not really, I tried to tell her, but I knew if I did, she would fly in to one of her rages and start throwing things again, so I, well . . .'

'Surely she knows we were getting married today? You said she knew.'

'No, not really, but now, with you here, I know it'll be alright. Mum will be fine when she gets to know you, when she finds out how nice you are.'

'So, how did you get her to go to High Blantyre?'

'Ah, well, I wanted to tell you but . . .'

'Where is she Sandy?'

'Ah, don't get mad at me Myra, please don't. I, eh . . .'

'Where is she Sandy?'

'In her room . . .'

'**Just now?** In her room, in there! Right now? **Just through that wall?**'

'Yes, please don't shout at me. Myra. It's not . . .'

'But no radio, Sandy? Why is she so quiet? Is she alright?'

'Yes, I think so. She'll be asleep for hours yet. It's the only way I could . . .'

'**Asleep?** What did you do to her, Sandy?'

'Nothing, it's alright, Myra, trust me. I've done it before. Quite a few times actually. And she's much better, nicer, when she wakes up after a good long sleep. I think it's what the doctor had in mind when he gave her sleeping pills to help her shut out her nightmares. But nowadays she won't take them, won't let the doctor in to see her. She only wants to drink.'

'Tell me what you did, Sandy.'

'Look Myra, you have no idea what it's like for me; most of the time Mum just sits through there, in the kitchen, smoking and drinking; and singing, screeching out mad songs, different from the ones playing on the radio; and crying. She didn't used to be like this. She used to be house-proud. She liked getting dressed up and going shopping with Mrs Riddell, or to the pictures. I try to get her to eat but she just pushes it away. Sometimes

Living with Myra

she gets angry at me. She's hit me a few times with the poker. She broke one of my fingers once. I told everyone at work it was from a fall off my bike.'

'Sandy, does she wet herself? I can smell urine.'

'Ah, well, not all the time. For the past few years she's had problems making it to the toilet when she's drunk and well . . . I've tried to get her to stop drinking so much but she just won't listen to anything I say. Some days she seems quite good and gets herself cleaned up and goes out with Mrs Riddell. A few times she said she's been to see Granny and Aunt Grace in High Blantyre, but I'm not sure about it now. I think they've fallen out over something. The worst of it is Mum just keeps saying she wants to die. She says it over and over. It's because of what happened to Uncle Albie. She really misses him. Mrs Riddell says we have to keep it all a secret, or else the police will come again, because of what happened to Uncle Albie.'

'What happened to Uncle Albie, Sandy?'

'Oh, it wasn't what you might hear from the neighbours. Uncle Albie had a heart attack. It happened while he was here. Mum was out with Mrs Riddell and when she came home she found him. He used to come a lot to see us, make sure we were alright. When Uncle Albie died, the family sold the business and Mum lost her job. She's never been the same since.'

'How old is your mother, Sandy?'

'Well, I think she's about fifty, but she hates to talk about her age.'

'And Mrs Riddell, how old is she?'

'About sixty, I think. Why?'

'And you Sandy, you're nearly twenty-nine and you're still under their thumbs?'

'No Myra, it's not what you think, it's just, well, it's very complicated. I can't just . . .'

'Sandy, we can't make this work if you won't tell me what is going on here. You're hiding something. I can tell by the way you keep avoiding my eyes. What is it?'

'Excuse me a minute, Myra, please. I need to go to the toilet.'

She heard the toilet flush but did not hear him slip out through the front door, closing it quietly behind him.

Living with Myra

Death Wish

Myra sat on his bed and waited. After five minutes, she went looking. Sandy was gone, with his work bike. She would not allow herself to cry. She had read a story like this where the newly-wed husband became jittery and ran away on the honeymoon night. It had all worked out well because his new wife had been "patient, sensible and understanding". Myra decided Sandy would come back when he was ready to tell her the whole truth and she would sort things out, as in the story. She decided to close the storm door and put the locking bar on while she explored, quietly. If he asked why, she would say she was scared to be alone in the house without him.

At Mrs Kaywood's bedroom door she knocked gently. No reply. She tried the door handle, twisting quietly, but the door was locked. She knelt to look through the keyhole to see if the key was showing on the other side. No key. She concluded Sandy had locked her in and hidden the key. She had no doubt she would find it - she was expert at hiding things herself and knew where to look. It took her less than a minute.

Myra switched off the hall light then opened the door but left the bedroom light off. Using only the shadowy light from the curtained window, she stood still, waiting until her eyes adjusted. The woman was asleep, slumped in a heavily upholstered brown leather chair, her arm hanging, hand draped, fingers clenched tightly, an empty glass below on its side, on the floor.

Myra lifted the glass and sniffed. Whisky. The ashtray was overflowing. The arm of the chair had countless burn marks. There were two empty whisky bottles on the floor on the other side of the chair and a half-full bottle jammed into the space between her skirt and the side of the chair, half hidden by her arm. The hairs on the back of Myra's neck rose and she gasped. There was someone else in the room. She glanced across and saw the outline of a tall woman standing watching her. As Myra's hand moved to her mouth in alarm, the woman copied her. It was her own reflection in a mirror. She let out a sigh and waited until her breathing returned to normal.

'Mrs Kaywood, are you alright? Do you need anything, a cup of tea?'

The woman stirred slightly, gulped for air, swallowed noisily then, snoring loudly, slid back into the arms of Morpheus. Gradually the snoring subsided, becoming a quiet, intermittent wheeze.

Living with Myra

Quietly, Myra stepped away towards the curtains and slid into the gap. She could not get either of the top sashes to move down but she raised both bottom sashes, shoving them up as far as they would go. The left-hand window jammed itself at half open but the right-hand side went fully up. At once the room seemed fresher. She closed the heavy curtains and they swung slightly in the breeze. She switched on the overhead light.

The woman slept on. Mrs Kaywood looked much older than fifty, more like seventy. She was tall with a long thin neck and wore no make-up; her skin was a brown-yellow shade and puffy. Her mouth hung open, showing badly stained teeth; her jowls were bloated. Her lower body was pressing out of her expensive dark blue dress, which was stained and grubby. Her hair was a dark grey-black colour and badly matted, as if it had not been washed for weeks. Her right forefinger, middle finger and thumb were heavily stained and most of her nails were broken. She wore a thick wedding band engraved with a strange design and above it an ornate engagement ring of diamonds and sapphires. She also wore rings on both pinkies, each with a tight ring of seven diamonds centred with a pale blue opal. Given Sadie Kaywood had worked for a jeweller, these stones might just be real, Myra thought.

From the ripe stench it seemed Mrs Kaywood was double-incontinent, as Granny Nellis had been towards her end. Her skirt was rucked up, as if she had been scratching her private parts. She wore no stockings and her legs were covered in a fluff of greying hairs; her shins were bruised and her calves webbed with varicose veins. Her thin ankles ended in smallish feet encased in grubby, wine coloured satin slippers badly stained with what looked like dried faeces.

Myra moved slowly and quietly around the room, easing open drawers, checking. She did not find the brooch and silver ingots until much later: Sadie Kaywood was very good at hiding things too, Myra learned eventually.

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On her first almost cursory search Myra found an important prize, Mrs Kaywood's passbook for the Glasgow Trustees Savings Bank. It was in a shoe box, the lid held down by two thick rubber bands. It was under a pile of old photographs. It showed a balance of £7,153-12-9, including interest to 31th March, 1938.

Myra's heart pounded blood into her head, making her feel giddy. To a girl who had lived on the edge of poverty her whole life, this was an amazing sum. With her inheritance from Miss Pettigrew and her own savings Myra had £220 in cash, sewn into the lining of

Living with Myra

her black handbag on a temporary basis, until she found a better place to hide it, here in Caird Drive.

Sandy had said he had savings. Was it this, his mother's nest egg he had meant? Surely if he had known about this amount of money he would have bragged about it to her. With wealth on this scale they could probably buy one of those enormous four-storey mansions in Kirklee. No, Myra told herself, Sandy did not know of this money. How could he? It was his own savings he had been talking about. He had a good job and no obvious expensive habits except his bikes. She had not pressed him about how much he had, knowing it was just a matter of time until she found out.

Taking the shoe box, Myra switched out the light and closed the bedroom door, locking it, pocketing the key. In the kitchen, sitting at the table, she studied the withdrawals - usually for £100 each time, sometimes £150. The last withdrawal had been made at the Ingram Street Head Office two weeks earlier, to the amount of £250. Where was the woman's handbag? It must be bulging with money.

She sifted through the photographs, examining each one with great interest, studying every detail. The snaps showed Sadie at the seaside with Sandy and Uncle Albie. In the early shots, Sadie was thin and glamorous, with a very pretty face and laughing eyes. She looked like a young mother with her son and what might have been his grandfather, or an uncle. The facial resemblance between Uncle Albie and the present Sandy was unmistakable.

Uncle Albie had been very good to his Mum, Sandy had repeated. Now Myra began to see what the true story of Sandy, Sadie Kaywood and Uncle Albie might be. She scrutinized their faces: the most striking thing about these holiday snaps was all three figures looking genuinely happy. It seemed to Myra, however it had happened, this sham family had been a loving one. Sandy had said everything had changed when Uncle Albie died. Sadie Kaywood was a very rich woman with enough money to see out her life in great comfort, if she wanted to do so. Perhaps she had decided life without her Albie was not worth living, much as Granny Nellis had done.

Memories of the long treks to Tantallon Road flooded back, days wasted when she could have been at Miss Pettigrew's or with Frank, lying side by side, chatting quietly in his room, cuddling into him.

Living with Myra

Myra closed her eyes and imagined a future of living with Sandy and Mrs Sadie Kaywood and quickly concluded it was a future she did not want. She must think of a plan. Perhaps she might be able to help Mrs Kaywood get back to normality. If not, maybe she could be moved to a nursing home, if Sandy could be persuaded to agree. There was also the unknown factor of the influential Mavis Riddle. If Myra was to make her marriage to Sandy work, she must first find out what made him unable to face up to his mother and Mrs Riddell. There must be something.

Myra's mind churned, examining options, looking for ways to resolve these issues, trying to decide what to do for the best. Eventually, the answer came, bringing with it clarity and certainty. From her long established self-destructive behaviour, it was evident Sadie Kaywood did not want to be saved: she wanted to join her Albie.

Myra slipped the passbook inside the lining of her handbag, beside her own money, and then sewed it up again with the needle and black thread she always carried for this purpose.

Carpe Diem!

Myra began to act out her story.

The nurse unlocked the patient's door. The room was dim and she stepped inside, closed the door and waited until her eyes adapted before returning the shoe box to its high shelf in the cupboard behind the row of out-of-date sales ledgers for AG Jewellery, Glasgow.

The nurse opened the right hand curtain and the gentle breeze brought welcome fresh air:

'Come on Mrs Kaywood, up you get dear, time to go for your tram, time to go and visit your Mum and Grace.'

'Oh it's you, Mavis. Thanks. Yes, Thanks.'

'Here we are, dear, the tram is over this way today.'

'Oh, my knees are so sore, Mavis, so sore.'

'Here we are, dear, sit down. Everything will be fine. The conductress knows when you need to get off. Now lean back and have a wee snooze. Bye-bye, dear.'

Sadie Kaywood leaned backwards into the darkness, dropping to oblivion.

Living with Myra

The nurse closed the right-hand curtain. Standing inside the curtains she closed the partially open left-hand window sash, leaving the right one fully open as before.

She checked the curtains overlapped fully before switching on the light. She found the handbag at once. The patient had been sitting on it; it was soaked with urine. It contained a large purse, dirty handkerchiefs, Sadie's key to lock herself in the bedroom, a sodden packet of cigarettes unopened, and a large make-up bag.

She left £35 in notes and handful of coins in the purse. She switched off the light then pulled the cork from the whisky bottle and dribbled the pungent liquid across the floor to the window. Next, she splashed enough on the sill to cause it to run down the wall and flow along the skirting board. Finally, she arranged the almost empty bottle at an angle where it could drain on to the floor.

After a careful check, the nurse switched out the light then pulled both curtains fully open and left to attend to her other duties.

With Mrs Kaywood's bedroom door locked, Myra replaced the spare key in Sandy's hiding place on the nail inside the hall cupboard. Laid out on the kitchen table, she dabbed the other notes using a cloth made only slightly damp with pine disinfectant, then patted them dry with a dish towel. Added to her own money she now had £423 in cash sewn into her handbag, plus the potentially staggering sum in the pass book if she could find a way to retrieve it. However, the pass book was a problem which must wait.

Myra returned to a modified version of the story she had been writing in her head for weeks. In Sandy's bedroom, she opened the borrowed suitcases and decanted her things into his wardrobe and the two tallboy drawers he had cleared out for her. She laid her new peach coloured satin nightie and panties across the bed, draping them 'alluringly', as she had imagined she would do, in her story.

Dressed in her old housework clothes, with her hair tied up in a scarf she cleaned out and re-set the kitchen fire, getting it roaring to keep the supply of hot water coming. Shutting everything out she went into a role-playing dream mode, as she often did when she was forced into things she did not really want to do.

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Now Myra was a hard-working spinster, Viola Morton, the Housekeeper in a big house. Viola must prepare for the Master's return from an overseas business trip. She started in the kitchen, scrubbing the table until it was spotless. Then she emptied every plate and pot out onto the table before cleaning the cupboards, leaving the doors open to dry. She washed and dried the pots and plates, placing them in the cupboards to her own requirements, then washed the table a second time.

Working through the night, she cleaned the house, visiting every nook and cranny, everywhere except Mrs Kaywood's bedroom.

During this exploration, she found Sandy's hidey-hole. It was like a false drawer built on top of the wardrobe. It had been created by placing an accurately crafted piece of shellacked hardboard resting by gravity on a perimeter ledge of wooden batons screwed into the upright ornamental surround above the main wardrobe, forming a false top, creating a hidden void below.

In this void was Sandy's library of dirty postcards and a few single pictures torn from other magazines. She thumbed through them. They did not shock her; they were similar to those which Frank had had. In fact, finding Sandy's harem of substitute women reassured her. Perhaps he had been truthful asserting he had not had any girlfriends before her, as he said many times during their clinches in the cellar below. No doubt he would get rid of these props later, as Frank had done when he found his Deirdre.

Myra was about to replace the panel when she spotted a small bottle. It was dark brown, pushed into the right-hand back corner, turned to hide its white label.

Postal Pharmacy Ltd,
3, Market Lane, SOHO, London
"Sleeptight" (Contains Morphine)
Take one pill only, one hour before bedtime.
Contains 60 pills

She counted the tiny white pills - 38 remaining. She took five and wrapped them in her handkerchief, returning the rest to the bottle and placing it exactly where she had found it.

Living with Myra

When she had finished her sleuthing, and was satisfied she had found as much as she could without more time, she returned to her previous story, written for their honeymoon night.

Sandy would find his way back to her: after all, where else did he have to go to?

She unlocked the inner door, opened the storm door, glancing down the stairs expectantly.

Living with Myra

Discovery

Sandy arrived home at seven o'clock, bringing freshly baked rolls, a pound of bacon slices, a dozen eggs and two packets of potato scones. There was a place in the Gorbals area which opened very early on Sunday mornings, he explained. He had cycled to Ayr and back, trying to think things through, to find words to explain his behaviour. He had been stopped by a policeman in Shawlands because his lights had failed. But the man let him off with a five shilling fine.

Myra watched his eyes - Sandy had told the truth, so far. Her new husband looked hot, sweaty and comical in his wedding suit, his green tie bulging out of his jacket side pocket. Myra almost giggled, turning away briefly to conceal her mirth. Despite bicycle clips, his right trouser leg was badly oil-stained, probably impossible to remove. An expensive suit ruined. He threw the penalty receipt onto the table in disgust. Myra examined it, saw it was not an official receipt. The policeman had conned him. She checked the signature, written in a schoolboy hand.

P.C. S. Witherspoon.

When Sandy looked away she palmed it into her pocket. Next time she saw Frank, she would ask him about this man.

Sandy continued, working himself up to his 'confession', she surmised. This suit had been a recent purchase, off the peg, bought for his 'proposal visit' to Yoker. Good riddance, she thought, I'll buy him a proper one, made to measure, from a proper tailor, with proper matching shoes.

Myra was dressed in a new cream blouse with a pale grey cardigan and dark grey skirt. She had enjoyed a long luxurious bath using her expensive lavender oil, washed and dried her hair, and made up her face to be nice for him. She smiled brightly and watched the tension drop away as he relaxed and smiled back sheepishly.

'Myra, what can I say. I'm really, really sorry. Honest. I should have told you, I know, I know. Please don't be mad at me, please.'

Living with Myra

While she had waited for his return, she had written a story for this moment, based on one she had read in the *Woman's Own*. She would be forgiving, loving but firm, the wife who would make everything right for them, acting the part of the loving mother he had lost years ago, but had now found again in his new wife.

'Yes, Sandy, you're right, you should have told me. What good does running away do for us? It's a very bad way to start out in married life, surely? And you told several fibs. Now is your chance to explain what this is all about. Sit down there at the table and get ready to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God, while I make breakfast for us.'

'Myra, you've cleaned up. Everything looks nice. Did you stay up all night?'

'Yes Sandy, I kept hoping my new husband would come and take me in his arms. But look, let's just say it's water under the bridge now. Agreed?'

He nodded and returned her smile.

'But Sandy, surely you must realise how really lucky we are. At least compared to everyone I know. We have a great place here and we must make the best of it. It'll all work out, you'll see.'

After they had eaten, with a fresh pot of tea made, they sat together at the table, facing each other. The room was warm and bathed in sunlight. She had let the fire die down and edged the window top and bottom. As in the story, she wore no bra. She took off her cardigan and loosened the top three buttons of her blouse, watching his eyes sneak a look. She grinned at him, and he grinned back. She reached over the table and held his hand, her chin on her other hand leaning forward, making sure he could see her cleavage.

'Right Sandy, time to tell all. Tell me everything about your life.'

It took him a long time, with a lot of prodding from Myra to get him started, but eventually it came gushing out.

She watched his eyes.

Sandy Kaywood told her a highly-edited version of his upbringing in which he made only a passing mention of Pamie, the girl from across the landing who had been like his older sister until she had left to be a nurse. Pamie worked in London now, he thought. No, he had never seen his father or at least could not remember seeing him. Alec Kaywood had been drowned when his ship was sunk during the War. Uncle Albie had been his father's

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friend and had helped his mother, giving her a job. It was only later, when he was in his teens he had realised Sadie was more than just an employee to Uncle Albie.

Myra waited for him to say he knew Uncle Albie was his father, but he moved to Mrs Riddell.

After Pamie had left home to be a nurse, Sandy had worked out Mavis Riddell's callers were not actually men needing suits made up or altered. But his mother had not been part of what happened next door, of this he was certain. He thought Mrs Riddell had more or less retired now, with only a few elderly customers left visiting.

Miss Fraser downstairs seemed to know all about Mrs Riddell and Uncle Albie and he had heard the whispered gossip, which still went on. The Kaywoods and Riddells were outcasts in their own close, despised, he explained:

'The thing is Myra, Mum really misses Uncle Albie. She just doesn't seem to want to go on living without him. She keeps saying she wants to go and join him, up in heaven. Even Mrs Riddell can't get through to her nowadays. Mum keeps forgetting things. Sometimes she calls me Albie and wants to kiss me. It's horrible, her breath stinks. I should have told you. I didn't want to risk it. I'm sorry, Myra, what can we do? I want to move out of here but I know I can't because I have to look after her. It's a mess, a real mess. Oh Myra, what can we do?'

As she had listened, she saw his eyes dart away from her gaze when he decided to omit or avoid some part of his story. She knew instinctively there was more to come but this was a good start, she reasoned. She would befriend Mrs Riddell and her daughter Pamela, who had been 'like a sister' to Sandy. Myra had been a 'good sister' to Frank and knew what a brother wanted. Had there been a secret 'romance', of sorts, like hers with Frank. She would find the missing pieces in due course, when she had Sandy fully under her thrall. His untold history needed to come out, for his own good. In time he must be made to tell her, everything, every detail. Only then could she fix it and forgive him, make a strong marriage, change him for the better. Meanwhile this first part must be played out.

'Sandy, we'll manage it together, don't worry. We'll think of something. And when our baby comes, your mother will change back to her old self, you'll see, don't worry. We'll redecorate, get the place nice again. Then she'll see things differently, won't she?'

'Oh Myra, do you think it'll all work out? Really? Do you?'

'Yes. I'm sure it'll work out fine, you'll see.'

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'I was right, Myra, I knew you would help me. I've been dreading telling you, but deep down, I knew . . .'

Hysterical screaming reached them from the back court below. They moved together to the window to listen to the voices, but could not see anything. The sound of feet running on the stairs was followed by a door being banged with a fist.

A woman's voice shouted, 'Miss Fraser, Miss Fraser, open up, you have to telephone 999. Mrs Kaywood's fallen out of her window. I think she might be dead.'

Sandy looked at Myra in disbelief, 'Oh God, Myra, she's done it at last.'

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Two policemen made a visit to Sadie's bedroom. Sergeant Barclay whispered to his younger colleague and they quickly agreed: her death had been self-inflicted.

Sandy was stunned by grief, hardly able to speak. With her face buried in her handkerchief, Myra sobbed out her story, telling of their marriage the previous evening, explaining she had not had the privilege of ever meeting her mother-in-law.

It was left to Mrs Riddell to give the policemen the background to the woman's mental condition.

Sergeant Hugh Barclay, aware of the circumstances of the attack on Albrecht Gurovich, had the good grace not to mention this unfortunate incident from Sadie's past.

The sergeant finalised his decision quickly. He patted his weeping friend on the shoulder and left him in the care of his new young wife. Sandy had not told him he was to get married, but Hugh was happy to know his 'surrogate son' had found someone at last. Perhaps, Hugh thought, he and Moira would become 'surrogate grandparents'. Moira would enjoy being a 'granny'.

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Hugh Barclay would be off shift in an hour and was planning a run with the Wheelers up the side of Loch Lomond to Crianlarich and back through Callander and Aberfoyle. It was a lovely morning and he had no intention of missing it. At Partick Police Station, Sergeant Barclay framed his report accordingly. There was no mention in it of drink or the unsavoury side of the woman's condition - it was the least he could do to spare his friend.

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Sandy had already suffered enough, maybe now he would be able to move on to enjoy his life without the burden he had carried alone down through these last years.

Based on this police report, the Coroner returned a verdict of 'death by misadventure': the woman had died from a fall while attempting to clean the outside of her windows.

Living with Myra

Living with Myra

Mavis Riddell

After Sadie Kaywood's funeral, on their return to Caird Drive, Myra bought a box of six cakes from Bradford the Bakers. She hoped to entice Sandy into a counselling session at the kitchen table, to try to lift him out of his dumb melancholy. He refused her offer, locking himself in his room for a while.

Suddenly he emerged dressed in his work clothes:

'Myra, I'm off to see Ian Barnes, round at his house. I should have telephone the Works Office before this. Why did you not remind me? They'll be wondering what I'm playing at. I've never once missed a shift or been late the whole time I've worked there.'

'Why not just telephone from the box at the corner, surely they'll understand. The Barnes live in Partick, don't they. Someone must have heard what has happened, surely the family will know and Mr Barnes will have told the office, will he not?'

'Maybe, but it is down to me to keep to the rules, isn't it? Look, I'll tell him first and then ride out to the works and try to catch up. We're very busy. I'll work unpaid overtime to make up the time. I don't want a black mark against my record. I don't want to be dropped from the Elite Squad, do I?'

'Sandy, give me a few minutes, I'll run down and get some cheese and tomatoes and a fresh loaf and make you some pieces. It won't take me too ticks. Would you like a couple of cakes with you too?'

'Thanks, Myra, but leave it, OK? I'll get something from the wee bakers across from the gates. They know me well.'

'At least take a couple of cakes, then.'

'No, thanks. I'm not hungry.'

'OK then, dear. I'll make you a nice breakfast tomorrow. Would you like porridge?'

'No, no. Look, I might do a half shift tomorrow morning, if I feel OK. You see I have a new periscope being finished and, well, I don't want someone else messing around with it, do I? Did I say I would be the squad leader for this one, a first for me.'

'OK, you must do what you think is best, dear. I'll try to get some nice silverside for tomorrow's tea, from the nice butcher at the top of Clarence Drive.'

'Oh, look at the time, Myra, I've got to go!'

He backed away, turned and pushed his work bike to the door.

'Sandy, . . .'

Living with Myra

She had been hoping for a cuddle and goodbye kiss, but he was gone. Standing in the hall inside the door to the stairwell she realised that these were the first coherent words he had spoken to her since the policemen had left on the Sunday morning of the accident. She took this as a sign of hope.

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Alone with her box of cakes intact, she crossed the landing and pulled the bell chime. It was time to find out more about Mavis Riddell and 'sister' Pamie. Mavis answered, cigarette dangling from her mouth, smoke curling up, making her squint.

'All right in you get Mannie, hold your horses. Oh, it's you Myra. I thought it might be someone else. Never mind, if he comes I'll make him wait. He's missed the last two weeks so he'll be 'needy', if you know what I mean. In you come, Myra, in you come. We'll have a cuppa and a wee blether, eh?'

'But Mrs Riddell, if you're expecting company, I'll just pass these in for you and we can chat another time.' She held out the box of unopened cakes.

'No, it's all right, Mannie is easy,' Mavis lowered her voice to a whisper, 'all he wants is a good spanking then he's off again. Ten minutes is all it takes, usually. It depends on how bad he's been. It's like a Confessional for you Catholics, but I do it for Jews. She chortled, causing her to cough, ripely. 'Then we'll be free to chat. Oh look, here he is, in you come Myra, quick, we don't want him to see you, do we. I don't need competition. He was always keen on Sadie, you know, but she couldn't see by her Albie. Quick dearie, away into the kitchen and get the kettle on for us, eh? I'll just do him first, in the bathroom, give him a wee treat. It's his favourite.'

Mavis tugged Myra over the threshold then shoved her in the direction of the kitchen where Myra kept the door ajar, listening. The storm door bolts slammed up and down, followed by the inner door banging shut.

'And what time of day is this to get home from school, Mannie Silvers? Where have you been? Playing football with the gentiles again, eh? Look at your shoes. Do you think my money grows on trees, eh? Get yourself in there and get your clothes off. C'mon, hurry up. You know what you need, don't you?'

A deep voice, with a pronounced lisp whispered:

'Yeth, Mummy. I'm tho thorry.'

Living with Myra

'Quick, get in there right away, Mannie, I'm very busy today. C'mon, hurry up. You bad, bad boy!'

The bathroom door slammed and Myra peeked along the hallway, checking it was clear. She moved along to kneel and look through the keyhole.

A huge ginger cat scuttled towards her and jumped onto her shoulders. Instinctively she shrugged it off and lashed out with her elbow, batting it away to land heavily near the front door. It hissed and meowed at her but the sound was drowned out by the deep wailing of Emmanuel Silvers. Myra opened the inner door then the storm door and kicked the cat onto the stair landing. She returned to the keyhole. Mannie was spread-eagled over the edge of the bath, naked. Mavis was slashing at him with a carpet beater, his legs, his back, his bottom. These were not pretended or playful blows but administered with vicious force.

'Right Mannie, my big bad boy. It's ten for this week and twenty for the two weeks you missed. Don't you think I'm going to wait in here for you every Thursday so you can come or not as it pleases you. Into the bath and keep your eyes shut.'

Myra could not believe what she was seeing but could not take her eyes away until it was over. As Mavis climbed out of the bath and started to dry herself, Myra stood up, fled from the flat, bounded across the landing, closed and locked her storm door behind her and switched her hallway light out. When Mavis came calling later she did not answer the door.

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It was nearly a week before they met on the stair.

'Oh, there you are, Myra. What happened to you the other night? You just disappeared. Mannie was in and out in no time. Why don't you pop in tonight, eh? We can carry on where we nearly started?'

'No, Mrs Riddell, there will be no popping in between us. I chose not to believe Sandy when he hinted at your activities. From now on you will please keep yourself to yourself. Don't come ringing our bell again, because if you do, I'll go straight to Partick Police Station and lodge a complaint. I hope I've made myself clear?'

'Aye, quite clear, Pinocchio. I knew it was too good to be true. There'll never be another one like Sadie. Aye, so be it. And good luck with wee Humpty Dumpty. It'll be a modern-day miracle if you can make a man of him. Me and Sadie, we did try, but we gave up in the end. You'll be kept busy at the Steamie then?'

Living with Myra

The witch of a woman was off, trailing a wreath of smoke and dribbling ash as she went, cackling at her attempted humour, leaving Myra puzzled. The woman must be going senile, if she was not already mad, Myra concluded.

Living with Myra

Making her bed

The following morning, (Monday), after an early visit to the Undertakers, Myra headed to St George's where she ordered a new double bed. This was a 'superior' quality item with a spring interior mattress. She also ordered a full roll of linoleum (middling quality) which would serve as a stop-gap, until she had decided what she really wanted. Daisy telephoned to Sheildhall to check these items were in stock, requesting they be labelled, 'Reserved for Staff' and for 'Immediate Delivery'.

To expedite the order, Daisy stamped Myra's order in red ink as "Urgent" and asked Gordon Galbraith to countersign it. Myra gave a junior a shilling for fares and sent her by subway and tram to the SCWS store at Sheildhall to deliver the paperwork. She settled the discounted staff price amount in cash, as she always did, never seeking a staff 'deferment for a few months' as many members of staff thought their due. Officially, Daisy was the only one who knew of Myra's recent wedding but when she asked how the wedding had gone, Myra shook her head, gave her a 'not yet' look: Daisy knew to let it drop.

Myra then sought out Mr Gordon to tackle him on the matter of 'leave of absence'. She explained she would need a few days off to attend to family matters, without offering details. He refused, knowing sudden favours always bred petty resentments, both among members of staff and their managers. She reminded him she had 'eighteen days lying in lieu' which she had accrued gradually over her three years at St George's. As he always did, Gordon Galbraith feigned disbelief, always his second riposte.

As required in this game, Myra presented the book from Daisy to prove the validity of her assertion. Everyone, particularly Gordon Galbraith, knew Myra had always willingly 'covered' for anyone feeling unwell or needing time off for domestic reasons, and did not ask for these kindnesses to be noted in 'Daisy's book'.

Myra's own current entitlement had been accumulated by providing 'official' cover for others to have extended lunchtimes to do messages, visit a relative in hospital or early departures for special occasions, such as weddings, special birthdays and funerals. These 'covers' were counted in days, half-days and quarter days, often balanced by the recipients working their own half-days off to clear their 'debts'. In this way Myra

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however had accumulated several weeks of extra entitlement and a great deal of goodwill at the same time.

Myra had encouraged Daisy to employ this 'booking system', devising and setting it up for her. Before Daisy's book, there had been chaos and endless bickering, as people had a bad habit of forgetting favours they had received. Now all swaps were tightly controlled and logged by Daisy.

To underline her entitlement, Myra also reminded Mr Gordon her own entries in Daisy's book did *not* include her extra hours staying late on Saturdays evenings to help Daisy with her weekly reconciliations and monthly accounts.

She emphasised her need for time off was both urgent and personal, adding, if she might be released at once, she would endeavour to be back for Saturday. With this final thrust, the matter was settled with both parties having completed the ritual with honour intact.

Before leaving, Myra made several direct purchases from St George's and set off for Caird Drive with new bed linen and pillows, towels and sundry items bound in a huge brown paper parcel.

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Through the Depression years, and at other times when Michael Gallagher had been thrown out of work, Mary had encouraged her husband to a second career in painting and decorating. During school holidays, from the age of six, Myra had been sent with him as his helper. She had been happy to go, enjoying the opportunity to visit other homes, to meet people outside the close-knit Gallagher Clan. Her favourite houses were the mansions in Kirklee, where the very posh people lived; professors, surgeons, wealthy business owners. Over those years Myra had become accomplished with scissors, paste and paintbrushes, and was now much quicker and cleaner than her father had ever been. Throughout her teens it had been Myra, not Michael, who had been pressed into action each December to freshen up the Yoker house ahead of Hogmanay.

Her goods were duly delivered from Sheildhall on Tuesday afternoon. She had the men place them in Sadie's old bedroom and, for a small tip, persuaded them to take away the worn and unwanted items of furniture and scraps of tired linoleum.

Myra had already made a start at cleaning out this room. The heavy wine coloured curtains were top quality and she took them to be dry-cleaned, express service, at the

Living with Myra

expensive specialist shop on Byres Road. She planned to have their bedroom fully re-decorated and the curtains back in place by Thursday, the day of the funeral. When everything was fresh and new, and with the funeral over, she would be ready again for the romantic encounter she had been denied on her wedding night.

But, despite her hard work, Sandy refused to even enter Sadie's/Myra's bedroom, and would not respond to her cajoling. When she tried to cuddle him he shrugged her off and almost ran to his own room where he locked his door against her.

Myra would not, could not, beg; and she refused to weep.

She resolved to continue to be "understanding", to leave him to mourn for as long as he needed to grieve. Sandy would come around in due course, she reasoned, and see the benefits of a life free of the tyranny of tending his alcoholic mother.

While she waited for 'time to heal him', as all the magazines promised it would, she forced herself to be cheerful and raced ahead with painting and decorating the other rooms, laid new linoleum throughout and re-hung her expensive curtains in her bedroom, pleased to observe that they 'complemented' her new wallpaper.

As she neared completion of her project she reflected with quiet satisfaction on what she had achieved. The shop girl Myra Gallagher who a few months earlier had lived in her parents' chaotic, crowded and grubby flat in Yoker, was very much enjoying being Mrs Myra Kaywood, a lady of substance, a lady with substantial wealth, and with a very fine flat in Caird Drive, in the quiet leafy suburb of Dowanhill. It seemed to Myra she was living out one of her stories. What the energetic and understanding young wife needed to complete her idyll was to solve the problem of her 'absent' husband.

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On her return to St George's, Myra dropped selected titbits to Daisy. Sandy Kaywood was a really nice man, slightly older than she was, well-spoken and a good friend of her family. Careful not to boast about her good fortune, she confessed 'in strictest confidence' to Daisy Donovan she and Sandy had been secretly engaged for years, and apologised for her cover story about the fictitious Gianfranco from Hamilton. Sandy had been devoted to his mother, a very possessive frail elderly lady who had suffered ill health for many years. However, Mrs Kaywood's collapse and sudden death while travelling on a tram to Rutherglen had been unexpected, freeing up Sandy to marry her at last. No one at St George's knew or suspected the true circumstances surrounding her

Living with Myra

sudden marriage, but they smiled, now used to the clever Myra Gallagher and her strange quiet ways.

Almost everything Myra needed she purchased from the Co-op, at special Staff prices. Daisy had leaked Myra's secret and it was assumed her sudden absence had been her honeymoon fling. A baby would soon come, they predicted. Everyone was pleased to help their new young bride set up home, at least to her face. Behind her back, petty jealousies continued with snide remarks about the folly of marrying an older man, a man who took on a few years with each re-telling.

Gradually, as the weeks unreeled with no bulging tummy or swelling breasts, no food fads, no bouts of sickness to confirm their early speculations, their gossip turned to expressions of sympathy. Perhaps Myra's Mr Alexander Kaywood was too old to father children, they murmured. However, the man must be quite well off; Myra looked smarter, better dressed and her new diamond engagement ring must have cost over fifty pounds, if it was real. From Daisy who had seen the order for the bed, Myra now lived in Dowanhill, near Gordon Galbraith. This was a big step up from Yoker and much easier to reach directly by Subway to St George's. Within a few weeks Myra's unexpected marriage was old gossip.

Living with Myra

Good Riddance

The only mourners at Sadie Kaywood's short funeral service on Thursday morning had been Sandy, Myra and the funeral undertaker. Myra had popped a note through Mrs Riddell's letterbox advising of the time and place, but she had not appeared.

News of Sadie's tragic death did not seem to have reached Yoker. There was no involvement of a minister or priest and no death notice in the newspaper. The Funeral Director said a few appropriate words as the coffin was lowered by his assistants, releasing Sadie to be with her Albie once again.

Immediately on leaving the funeral parlour, Myra browbeat the still dazed Sandy into making the trip to High Blantyre to break the news. Grace Milligan listened to their sad tale at the threshold of the run-down boarding house, but did not invite them in.

'Hello, you must be Aunt Grace? I'm Myra Kaywood and this is your nephew, Sandy Kaywood.'

'Who?'

'Your nephew, Sandy Kaywood, he came here years ago, as a wee boy.'

'Did he? Are you sure?'

'Yes, his Mum, Sadie Milligan, married Alexander Kaywood and Sandy is their son.'

'Oh, she didn't tell us. He doesn't look at all like Sadie.'

'Who is there, Grace?' called out a querulous voice.

'**No one Mum, stay there. I'll not be a minute.** Look, whoever you two are you're not welcome here. Mum is very frail, and I'm far too busy for this nonsense. Is this some sort of begging thing?'

'No, no, we're family,' said Myra. 'I'm not sure what to say. Look, I'm sorry to have to break the bad news in this way. Can we come in for a minute, please?'

'NO! Go away whoever you are or I'll call the police.'

Grace made to shut the door but Myra stepped forward and pushed against her.

'Look, Miss Milligan, I'm sorry to have to tell you, your sister had a bad accident, she fell from her bedroom window. She's dead, I'm sorry for your loss. Sandy has been stunned by it all, as you can see.'

'So it was suicide, was it? Just like Dad. Same weak mind.'

'Oh, I'm sorry, your Dad'

'Who did you say you are?'

Living with Myra

'I'm Myra Kaywood, and this is your nephew, Sandy, Sadie's son. Sandy's my husband.'

'As I said before, he doesn't look at all like Sadie. Are you sure he wasn't adopted?'

'Grace, who is it?'

'Sorry Mum, Jehovah's Witnesses again, I won't be a minute. Look, she's on the commode. I need to go. We keep ourselves to ourselves. If you are who you say you are, and Sadie's dead, it's no great loss to anyone. She walked out of here years and years ago and left me to do everything. She always was a selfish, superior, spoiled little brat. So, she's dead, good riddance. Don't come back, even if you are who you say you are. You both look very Jewish to me!'

The door slammed. To Myra it seemed there was little likelihood of any ongoing relationship with her new relatives who were clearly living in penury in High Blantyre.

She and Sandy were on their own.

Living with Myra

Carpe Diem!

By the second Saturday of their marriage, their new bedroom was finished. Next day, to celebrate, she went to the noon Mass at St Peter's RC Church, only a few minutes' walk from her door, forsaking Father Donnelly and her home church in Yoker. Myra had no desire to meet the Yoker Gallaghers on Sunday mornings, or any other day.

She told her new priest she was Mrs Myra Kaywood recently moved to Glasgow from Hamilton, following the sudden death of her husband. She advised she would write to her old church and ask them to send her papers to St Peter's. Free of her parent's nagging, Myra's church attendance reduced as she became anonymous in the large, busy church. She had not believed in God or the Holy Mother since her eleventh birthday but she still enjoyed the theatre of the rituals involved and, in particular, the singing and reciting of the liturgy.

Later these Sunday outings would give her an opportunity to wear some of her new wardrobe. As was usual for Myra, she kept this church-going activity in its own mental box, made nodding acquaintances only, and cultivated no friends. As the months rolled into years, her visits to St Peter's reduced as Myra shook off the church-going habit and its attendant guilt.

Now she was a married woman, Myra was free to choose her life and friends without the continual scrutiny and interference of her family. She was aware she was following a similar path to her twin sisters in Old Kilpatrick and her brother Frank, helped by his nagging and ambitious Deirdre.

As Myra saw it, her oldest sister Lizzie had squandered her opportunity. When Granny Nellis died, Lizzie had been in lodgings with her husband and her expanding brood, with a landlady who complained endlessly. The day after Granny Nellis's death and every day which followed, Lizzie had brought her tribe to Yoker and stayed from early morning until late. Throughout the entire day she had whined. It worked.

Mary, flush with the money from her mother's purse and the sale of her jewellery, allowed Lizzie to 'borrow' £30 to pay a 'cash surety', as Mr Watson the factor for the close had called it. In return, the tenancy of Tantallon Road passed to Lizzie's husband. Such payment of non-refundable 'key money' was a common perk which many factors

Living with Myra

harvested, particularly when their building owners exercised only a light hand in the day to day management of their properties.

In theory, Lizzie was expected to pay it back to her mother. The twins were naturally livid at Lizzie's good fortune, and scratched at the scab of their lost inheritance at every opportunity, with Jean chiming along when it suited her, although she too was in constant debt to her mother.

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The only person from her family who Myra missed was Frank. Although she thought it unlikely, she nurtured the hope he might drop in to visit her at Caird Drive. However, Myra knew Deirdre would not approve, especially since they had escaped to the Police Houses, properties 'defended' by a retired police constable called Henry Quigley, who lived in the gatehouse.

On Deirdre's instruction, Mr Quigley made visitors wait outside a locked gate while he checked whether the requested resident was at home to receive them. As they soon came to expect, young Mrs Deirdre Gallagher never was at home to the Yoker Gallaghers. Eventually Mary and her girls stopped trying to visit, bad-mouthing Deirdre for stealing 'our Francis'.

During the first months of his marriage Frank had made only short, furtive visits to Yoker. Mary and Jean would sometimes meet him on his rounds, but when his beat changed to the posh area of Cardonald and Mosspark, an exotic and foreign land to folk from Yoker, the hen-pecked Frank's visits were reduced to once every few months.

Her Francis was lost to her forever, Mary whined, every day.

Myra had seen immediately her father's ban from Yoker would be to her advantage. She had no wish to encourage any of the Gallaghers to trail their poverty and myriad of problems into her new prosperous life. If she helped them, it would be on her terms, not theirs. Miss Pettigrew had understood this imperative, and her pupil had learned this lesson well. Now she was rich, Myra had no intention of ever being poor again.

She had made an excellent start.

As further opportunities arose she would grasp those also - *Carpe Diem!*

Living with Myra

A Marriage for One

The first weeks of their unconsummated marriage stretched into months. Each time Myra reached out to touch her husband, to hold him, try to cuddle him, he shrugged her off and left, either locking himself in his room or taking one of his bikes and making off in silence.

She refused to weep, refused to vent her frustration at his refusal to respond, to come to her bed as she craved. If Sandy needed more time she must wait. It was not an uncommon situation, Myra was not alone: many stories portrayed similar situations. As least she was not being 'punished', as these stories often implied could happen with a selfish bullying husband. Sandy had been an only child, his loss was deep, Myra reasoned. Often men lost their ardour for a period after bereavement, the *Women's Realm* helpfully explained in its letters page. Myra must accept she was 'fortunate' in her situation. Wives must be patient. Time was the great healer and wives must never, ever complain, must never, ever force the issue.

Meanwhile there was plenty to get on with. She would draw him into her plans by asking for money to fund her ideas, make him part of it. If she could persuade him to give up nightshift working, they would have their evenings together. Spending more time together must surely help.

Realising now her first rush at redecorating should be considered as a stop gap, she started dreaming of further improvements. At least now her house was sparkling clean, smelling of fresh paint with fresh linoleum throughout. The only room which remained untouched was Sandy's, a room he kept locked, a room she had not been in since her inspection after Mrs Kaywood's demise. Sandy had fitted a new and expensive lock to shut her out. If there was a spare key hidden she had not found it. He must carry both keys with him at all times, she concluded.

Fuelled by the ideas for a 'house beautiful' as depicted in magazines she now studied with real intent, she was hatching grander plans. Her hoped for new elegance was spoiled by Sandy's bikes dangling from the hall ceiling and she suggested, tactfully, he should put them in his 'own room', as he had taken to calling it. He did not reply and the defiant bikes hung in the newly decorated hallway as before, dripping oil and water onto the newspapers she spread out beneath them.

Living with Myra

He ignored her repeated requests to ask for a change to the day-shift. When she persisted with her suggestion/request, he fought back:

"Nightshift working in the Elite Squad is *my life*."

She refused to let this unintended barb hurt her, refused to cry.

Saturdays were the only nights they spent overnight together in the house, sleeping side by side, separated by a partition wall, Sandy's radio played softly through the night, his door locked against her, unnecessarily. Myra would never allow herself to go to him, he must want her: she would not be rebuffed again. She shut him out by locking her own door and pleased herself to the image of the man she had lost.

One weeknight, lying alone in bed, Sandy at work, her mind drifted back to their encounters in the close below only short months earlier. Aroused, craving to be touched, to be satisfied, to be wanted, she remembered another story from a penny dreadful and decided to try her own version, running it in her head, full of hope it would work.

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It was a Saturday, three months since their failed wedding night. Myra had washed up the tea-time dishes and left Sandy listening to the kitchen radio beside the fire. She took a quick bath, shaved her legs, rubbed them with soothing lavender oil, and did her hair. She made up her face using garish scarlet lipstick and heavy eye-makeup, in accordance with her story. She hardly recognised herself in the mirror. Wearing only her peach bridal nightie with matching knickers, she splashed her best perfume liberally.

She would play it out as a slut, the ploy which had excited the reluctant husband in the penny dreadful story.

Sandy was dozing, legs akimbo. She kneeled before him, leering wantonly and put her hands on his thighs, raking her thumbs upwards. He looked at her, startled. She could feel the blood pounding in her ears, desire filling her nipples, making her wet below. Licking her lips, she moved her fingers, reaching for his fly. When she had done this for both Frank and for Sandy in the cellar off the close, it had been dark, unseen, all done by touch alone. Now she stared, curious to see everything at last.

'C'mon big boy. Let's allow Wee Willie Winkie out to play. Or maybe you have a different name for him? What shall we call him, Wee Sandy? No, of course not! Oh look! We should call him Big Sandy or even Big Eck? Did you know Loch Eck is also called Loch of the Horse?', she laughed.

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As she reached inside his underpants she felt him shudder and looked up to see terror in his eyes. He shot to his feet, knocking his chair over backwards then was off, crossing the room at a trot, slamming the door behind him. His work bike scraped along the new wallpaper and rammed into the front door. It opened then crashed shut. He rattled his way down the stairs then there was silence.

At last the sobs came and she buried her face in her hands, inconsolable.

She was alone again. Sandy did not want her.

It was true; she admitted to herself at last, she was ugly. She had the wrong face, a man's face. No man could really want her, ever. Jean had been right.

It was Jean whom Sandy wanted; Jean with the pretty face, babbling her hundreds of stupid funny stories, with her huge firm breasts like footballs and her big fat bum and cheeky, laughing, hazel eyes.

Maisie left the storm doors unbarred, something she had never done before when left alone at night.

She did not sleep.

Throughout Sunday she paced to and fro, checking from the front windows, scanning the street, expecting him at every moment.

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Next day at St George's she could feel herself on edge, snappy, and the others took it as a sign there was definitely a baby on the way.

When she came home from work on Monday and again on Tuesday there was no tell-tale evidence of his usual dirty dishes in the sink or unflushed urine and dribbles around the toilet. The kitchen fire had not been lit. He had not been back. The notion he had had an accident began to prey on her mind and she thought of going to Partick Police Station. Perhaps she should telephone Barr and Stroud.

As she arrived at the flat Wednesday evening he was leaving, his work bike already on his shoulder, a large brown canvas kitbag dragging behind him. She got the impression he had mistimed things. Was he moving out?

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'Look Myra. I'm really, really sorry. It's me, not you. Just give me some time, please.'
'Shhhh! Keep it down!' she hissed. 'Look, Sandy, as I told you before, unless you tell me what this is about, I can't help you. A man and his wife are supposed to sleep together. It's called marriage.'

With his head down he pushed forward. She backed out onto the landing to let him pass. He bumped his bike down the stairs with one hand, dragging the bag with the other. She was alone yet again; her dream story of married bliss in a smart and comfortable home in elegant surroundings was shattered.

Contrary to her fears, Sandy seemed almost back to 'normal' when she saw him briefly on Thursday. She had arrived later than normal. They crossed paths on the stairs.

'Just off for a wee spin before work, Myra.'

'Yes, Sandy.' she replied, choosing her words for the benefit of any listening neighbours. 'Don't wear yourself out, dear.'

On the first Friday after her 'slut approach', she had wondered if he would retaliate financially, on the basis she was no longer the wife he wanted. But her house-keeping money was there as usual, under the salt cellar on the kitchen table as it had been every Friday. There was no Sandy to feed but his tell-tale untidiness showed he had spent some time at home.

Myra was haunted by the idea of him having someone else, perhaps a widow, someone from his past, someone who welcomed him when he ran from her. Or perhaps there was someone else he had met recently. If he fell into the clutches of Jean, or someone like her, and the other women became pregnant, it would be a story hard to un-write. Myra told herself she *must* find out what was coming between them before it was too late. Whatever she did, now was not the time to admit she was not pregnant.

The following night, (Saturday), Myra waited until they had eaten. It was pouring heavily. Sandy was in his chair by the kitchen fire as he had been seven days earlier. As she washed the dishes she began her rehearsed speech, talking to him over her shoulder, trying not to spook him again, trying to be reasonable.

'Sandy, you are such a nice person. I'm sorry if I offended you last week. You know I don't talk dirty normally. It was just something silly I read about, a story I thought might help us. So, Sandy, dear, I wondered if we might start again. We could sit quietly at the

Living with Myra

table over a nice cup of tea and you could tell me what it is I'm doing to upset you. Or, if there is some other problem, you must tell me, please. I promise, Sandy, if you tell me what it is, I'll sort it for you. I really do promise I will. Just look at the lovely house we have here. When our baby comes, well, won't it be wonderful. You don't have to worry about having relations while I'm pregnant like this. It's still all right to do it, honestly. I've spoken to the Doctor and he says it's normal to have relations, almost until the baby comes. And our new bed is so lonely and cold without you. So, Sandy, dear, what do you say?'

Myra turned to look at him but his chair was empty. Despite the heavy rain, his work bike was missing and she was alone again. She sobbed herself to sleep, weeping tears of frustration into her pillow. She knew of no other story which could help her or Sandy.

When she entered the kitchen the next morning she found him dozing in his chair beside the kitchen fire, already dressed in his cycling clothes.

'The Wheelers' are meeting at Anniesland Cross at ten o'clock,' he mumbled, 'it's a big day, the Leckie Cup. I've got enough points to win if I get home in the top five. It's round the five lochs. There's a wee get together at the hut for the presentation, so I'll be back late.'

She made him up six cheese and jam sandwiches and a flask of hot sweet milky tea.

He took his best racer down and went off, leaving her with tears in her eyes.

In the weeks to follow, this pattern of a 'wee spin' each evening before work continued. At weekends, he went off to join the Wheelers'.

Sandy was reverting to his old lifestyle, as if she was his mother and he was unmarried.

Living with Myra

Finding Fault

Myra and Sandy co-habited the Caird Drive flat, living almost as strangers, hardly speaking. Some weeks she might go from weekend to weekend without seeing him. The death of his mother seemed to have cracked Sandy mentally. It was as if he had withdrawn into a shell, merely going through the motions of living with her.

Nonetheless, each Friday his brown envelope was in its place, under the salt cellar on the kitchen table. To Myra this was a sign he was 'satisfied' with his side of the bargain, but she definitely did not want a sterile marriage. Myra's dream had been of an energetic and satisfying sex life growing over time into a strong marriage with a husband willing to share her plans. Two friends with much in common, learning to love each other, as many of the *Woman's Own* stories had promised.

What she was stuck with was a version of a careless and selfish schoolboy. Not once did he ask about their expected child and her guilt at trapping him into their marriage ebbed away.

And now she had the place decorated and furnished more to her liking, his slovenly ways started to niggle at her and she catalogued them in her head:

- *While at home all day he seemed to spend most of his time in the kitchen, but never made any effort to tidy up. He never re-set the fire for her coming in.*
- *Many nights she returned to a cold and empty house, even though he had grunted a reply at breakfast that he would be home for dinner.*
- *He seldom ate the nice things she had left for him for lunch, preferring his staple of bacon, eggs and Lorne sausages with fried bread and brown sauce.*
- *Food piled up uneaten and had to be thrown away, a crime for a Gallagher.*
- *He never washed up dirty dishes or the greasy frying pan. He left bread and biscuit crumbs everywhere.*
- *He never used the bathroom to wash or shave, not that she could detect, choosing instead to use the kitchen sink, scrubbing his fingernails clean and sparking dirty water everywhere, always leaving beard shavings in the sink and on the draining board, instead of rinsing them away.*
- *He picked and bit his nails constantly.*
- *He frequently used up all the hot water, letting it run away when he was shaving or strip washing, even on Sundays, whistling loudly and tunelessly to himself.*

Living with Myra

- *He seldom lifted the toilet seat, often 'missing' when he urinated.*
- *He often forgot to flush, sometimes even leaving his faeces floating. For someone like Myra used to communal living, this was an arch crime.*
- *He never did any preparation for evening meals, even though she repeatedly asked him to scrape vegetables. Even her father had peeled potatoes occasionally.*
- *He left his filthy oily overalls stuffed in a corner of the bathroom, wearing fresh ones every day. He seemed to have dozens of pairs.*
- *He dismantled and worked on his bikes in the kitchen, in front of the fire, leaving black skid marks everywhere, including on her new table which had suffered several chips and stains.*
- *He used the bath to wash down his bikes before drying them with her new towels.*
- *His suspended bikes made the hallway dull, despite her new brighter light fitting. They dripped water and oil onto the new linoleum in the hallway.*
- *He had already scored the new paintwork and wallpaper in the hall with his pedals and handlebars.*

The weeks spun on without a break-through. In the beginning she attempted to ignore him but after a few days of fuming in silence, she would soften and try again. Each time she offered her 'gentle rebukes' or made 'reasoned requests', he rose in sullen silence, took a bike and went off.

Myra eventually gave vent to her frustrations by turning to the pen, leaving him terse notes of complaint/instruction. His response was to store these notes up over the course of a few weeks, ignoring their content, then rip them up and leave the confetti heaped over her weekly brown envelope on the centre of the kitchen table. Gradually she hardened her heart to him and decided to make the best of her life alone, ignoring a Sandy who did not want her or need her.

One morning she exploded when he refused to say whether he would be in for tea. He did not return and was absent for three nights. A thought occurred - perhaps she should encourage him to leave permanently to live with whomever he was staying during these periods, absences for which he offered no apology or explanation.

Another more outrageous possibility occurred - had he set up Jean in a place of her own? Was he laying his plans to desert Caird Drive and divorce her? With her new wealth, Myra could afford to live alone; the problem would be the factor, if Sandy gave up the tenancy. To be compelled to move from her new home would shatter her dream entirely.

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As she bounced back from this nightmare, Myra resolved to take charge of the situation, to become mistress of her own destiny. She began to think this through and make her plans for a time she might be forced to live alone. In parallel she decided to move on emotionally, and find her own escape to something better than her sham, sexless marriage to Sandy Kaywood, a man who clearly did not want her other than as a housekeeper.

Focussing on her fictitious friend Rita Miller, Myra began to invent her alter ego's new life, develop her background, family and love life. These fantasies were the seed of what would become a major part of Myra's life in the months to come. If Sandy had found someone else to stroke his ego, she would write a story a new love life, based on the phantom girl from Kinning Park.

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The daily round at St George's kept her busy. No one asked about the baby, and now she had settled from her earlier tetchiness, it was assumed her baby had miscarried. She heard their whispers and ignored them.

Myra had her routines. Sandy had his. After he left for work each evening, she usually raced through her chores then enjoyed a long, hot, lazy bath before turning in. How different from Whiteinch Public Baths, she thought, with its indignities and lack of privacy suffered during fifteen short minutes in the bathing cubicles. She would never go back to Whiteinch Baths, come what may.

Now she had a bed to herself, she became used to self-pleasuring without having to wait until Jean was asleep. It was not Sandy she called to her mind at these times. It was someone else, a tall handsome man who had been taken from her by a stunningly beautiful girl.

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Myra and Sandy went through the motions of living, hardly seeing each other and avoiding controversy as they both waited for event to change things. As his twenty-ninth birthday approached (2 September) she made plans for a special meal. His birthday would be on a Thursday. She bought a Sheaffer pen and pencil set for him and had the box engraved with his name. It was the latest model with a new lever fill action. For Saturday evening she planned a special surprise meal.

In the Mitchell Library, she scoured the books on modern cuisine, eventually settling on three course: haddock with a mornay sauce; beef bourguignon with new potatoes, carrots

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and garden peas, and Pavlova with fresh fruit. She went to a licensed grocers on Byres Road and took advice on what wines to buy: dry white for the fish course, a full red for the beef and a sweet white for the dessert. The owner persuaded her to a bottle of champagne.

Hoping for a breakthrough, she bought a new nightdress in a pale green colour.

The planned seduction did not happen. On the Friday before his birthday, Sandy wrote on the brown envelope:

Off tonight with my periscope to Portsmouth.

For the first time I am in charge.

Back in two weeks, if all goes to plan.

Living with Myra

Charity begins at Home

During her lonely times Myra went over everything which had passed between them, forensically examining every word, every gesture, searching for clues of what she might have done differently.

After the accident, Sandy had point blank refused to enter Sadie's old bedroom or have anything to do with clearing it of his mother's personal effects. Nor did he ask about Sadie's jewellery.

Late on the Sunday evening, the day after Sadie's fall, when Sandy locked her out of his bedroom, Myra suddenly remembered a story in which expensive rings on a corpse had been substituted by a rogue undertaker. Once implanted, this thought haunted her. The next morning, Myra almost ran along Dumbarton Road to Monahan and Monahan's office, banging hard on the door at half-past-seven, to reclaim them. She used her visit to make the necessary arrangements for the simplest of funerals, resisting Mr Monahan's repeated requests he provide a Minister or a Priest to officiate. Her mother-in-law had been a life-long atheist, she had finally invented, in an exasperated voice. With these words, the problem evaporated.

On the Friday evening on their return from High Blantyre she had offered Sandy his mother's purse, telling him of the £35 inside. He had merely nodded, then shrugged, saying:

"So, that's all she had left. I did think she must be nearly broke. I asked her last week if she needed any money. She seemed to think she was talking to Uncle Albie. She started to cry again, and tried to kiss me. No Myra, I don't need the purse money, I've got plenty saved up. You keep it for yourself. Buy yourself something nice. At least you won't buy whisky or cigarettes with it."

In the days which followed, Myra had held her breath, expecting him to raise the subject of Sadie's missing passbook, but no questions came. Gradually she accepted her first guess had been correct: he had no knowledge of his mother's great wealth. Myra had wondered how Sadie had come by the money. Had it been earned, gifted or stolen? Maybe Albie had given it to her as a legacy for his son. It was clear if this was so, Sandy was unaware. Myra decided she must claim this passbook as her 'insurance policy', against a marriage which did not seem to be thriving.

Living with Myra

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On the Friday before their marriage, Sandy had given Myra a generous housekeeping allowance/wedding present of three twenty-pound notes in a sealed brown envelope. This practice of making her a weekly allowance continued, the amount varying only slightly. He was generous, always leaving her more than twice what she earned herself. In the cellar of the close below, during their early fumbings, he had boasted how well he was paid, because of his highly skilled job and the opportunities for overtime this threw up. Indeed, he had never asked what she earned and she had never volunteered the information. It seemed to Myra he thought her wage was entirely for her own benefit and probably trivial, compared to his own. Eventually she concluded that Sandy Kaywood had never been short of money in his life.

Week on week without fail every Friday evening when she returned from St George's, the sealed brown envelope was there waiting for her, placed centrally on the kitchen table under the salt cellar. Sandy paid all other household bills, keeping the receipted copies in a large vase in the parlour, open to her inspection. As their stilted co-existence continued, Myra kept tabs on these to be sure he was still paying them. She had to admit, Sandy Kaywood was a good provider.

For the first time in her life Myra had her own wages entirely to herself. She opened a bank account, a thing she had been dreaming of for years. Over time, she had sold most of Sadie's rings and other jewellery paying the money into this account.

Within six months of her wedding day Myra Gallagher was now richer than she had ever dreamed she might be, her personal savings account at the Clydesdale Bank on Byres Road showing a balance of £734-11-9, growing week by week. For ready cash, she held back £150, in £5 and £10 notes sewn into her handbag, spread around and flattened to make it undetectable. In her purse, she always carried at least £20 in cash, a mixture of £1 and 10/- notes and coins, sufficient for most day to day purchases. Being in control of such great wealth gave her a poise she had always yearned for, just like the ladies she had observed in the Kirklee mansions during her days as a decorator's assistant.

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One day Myra boarded a tram behind an older, shabbily dressed woman who reminded her of her mother. It struck her Mary Gallagher would be amazed at the wealth her daughter now controlled. The story of an heiress who gave anonymously to needy causes came to her. The idea matured and the following day Myra began what would over the years ahead become an enduring habit. The only way to help the Gallagher Clan was to do so anonymously. If they knew she was rich they would pester her, make her life a misery.

Living with Myra

She went to the Post Office in Byres Road and bought twenty £3 postal orders. She took them to work and, during Daisy's lunch break from the office, she typed each to be 'payable' to "Mrs Mary Gallagher". She typed her mother's name and address on twenty brown envelopes. Each Tuesday on her way home she took a detour on the Subway to St Enoch's Square, where she posted an envelope, knowing it would arrive at Yoker when Mary's purse would be almost empty.

The following week as she posted the envelope, she was struck by the memory of Grace Milligan and her ailing mother in High Blantyre, living in near poverty, prompting Myra to repeat this postal order process, now sending off two envelopes each week.

Over the ensuing years, as other deserving causes drifted into her orbit, Myra gradually expanded her charity giving, always remaining anonymous to protect herself from the risk of being pestered with unwanted attention, as Miss Pettigrew had suffered from her brother.

Living with Myra

Rupture

On Sunday 24 October 1937, a month before Myra's 'baby' was due to be born, Mary and Jean arrived at Caird Drive without warning. It was mid-afternoon. They refused to cross her threshold, standing shoulder to shoulder against her, two small shabbily dressed overweight persons from her old life.

'Well, it was a lie after all?' said Mary. 'There never was any baby, was there, Myra?'
'I lost her, my dear little baby girl. It happened after Mrs Kaywood died. I was so overcome by grief. It was horrible. Sandy's still not over it yet, poor soul. He's taken it badly.'

'It's God's curse on you, losing it!' spat Jean. 'Poor Sandy. He has no idea what you're like, does he?'

'That's enough, Jean. God will see to His Own work without you getting in on the act. And how did Mrs Kaywood die, Myra?' asked Mary, her face now anxious.

'A heart attack, they said. She was on the tram for Rutherglen, going to visit her mother and sister in High Blantyre, we think. At the terminus the conductress tried to waken her, thinking she was asleep, but she was dead.'

'So, it's just you and Sandy here? Alone, in this nice big place? Is it? Is it? Just the two of you, nobody else?' asked Jean, spitting the words.

'Yes, Jean, just Sandy and me, just us two in our own little love nest. It's so peaceful here and such nice quiet neighbours. The lady downstairs is a retired head mistress. We have Billy now, of course, such a cheery wee chap.'

'Who's Billy?'

'Billy's quite new, actually. Felix was the last one; green and yellow with red eyes. To our horror he escaped and flew off to play with his sparrow friends, out through the top of the kitchen window. Then we got Billy. He's blue and white and has such lovely pale blue-grey eyes. He's a great talker too, is our wee Billy. Every time he starts chattering his nonsense he reminds me so much of you, Jean.'

'You fucking bitch. You fucking, fucking bitch; she stole Sandy from me, Mamma. It was me he fancied, not her.'

'That's enough Jean. Let's get back before your Dadda misses us.'

'Oh, are you *sure* you don't want to come in?' said Myra, describing her future plans as if they had been already realised. 'I've had the whole place completely modernised, new curtains, new carpets and a new bathroom suite. Look, you can see the Hallway from here. Nice, is it not? It's all like this. In fact, it's like a dream home from *Woman's Own*. Oh,

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did I say? I have a new gas cooker with a special oven. It bakes wonderful cakes. And we re-wired to provide electricity throughout, dozens of outlets. Of course, I have all the latest gadgets, a new Hoover for my carpets and an electric food mixer, with all the attachments. I'm just about to pop some scones in the oven and there is a sponge cake I baked this morning, with strawberry jam filling and vanilla icing. Please, do come in and enjoy afternoon tea with me and listen to our new radiogram. It has such wonderful sound quality.'

'You can take your radiogram and stick it where the sun never shines, Myra Gallagher. And I warn you, if I get you alone on a dark night I'll fucking . . .'

'Jean! Come, we'll leave her ladyship to stew in her own juice, alone, as she always wanted to be. It's plain we are not good enough for her now.'

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There was no further contact between Myra and her family, although she continued to send her anonymous postal orders, justifying her superiority. On the weeks of her mother's birthday and at Christmas she included an extra Postal Order for £10.

(Perhaps Mary thought the money was being sent by 'our Francis', her darling son, keeping his generosity secret from the grasping Deirdre.)

Through her weekly acts of charity, Myra attempted to erase the Gallagher Clan from her conscience. They did not want her anyway, just her money, she told herself. Jean wanted Sandy, of course, she always had. She would never get him, Myra vowed. She no longer needed them, she had good neighbours and her other friends, the ones she wrote about increasingly, now she had time to be alone, using her new typewriter, tapping away with the radio playing quietly in the background, often working late into the night before her hot bath then bed.

In these stories, her heroines had friends who were true friends, self-sufficient people who led interesting lives, people with whom one could hold a good conversation. Her stories, stored in her head since Miss Pettigrew's departure, flew thick and fast through her fingers onto the keys.

She sent three to *Woman's Own*, under the pen-name of Gladys Goodfellow-Smythe, using Celia as her *post restante*. The return letter from the Assistant Editor advised, with a little editing they would publish later in the year, or early the following one. Gladys, as a new contributor, would be paid a smaller rate for the first three stories. Thereafter, depending on reader's responses, she could move up to the full fee. If she could devise a suitable series of twenty or more episodes to take a character through a 'difficult' or

Living with Myra

'romantic' period of her life, they would add a premium, graduated, depending on readers' enthusiasm.

Gladys was soon established with *Woman's Own* and Myra started to look about for other outlets for her other true-to-life stories and her much more lurid penny dreadfuls based on her imagined 'Rita nights'.

In parallel, the outline of a book was beginning to run in her head, a story of a girl from a poor background who, despite many difficulties would rise to become one of the richest and most respected women in Europe.

Living with Myra

Sadie's Secret Hoard

Sadie Kaywood's wardrobes were home to a large selection of expensive garments. One wardrobe also housed another, less evident cache, but this would take weeks to find. In her prime the tall and curvy Sadie Kaywood had been one of the best dressed women in Glasgow's West End. Her clothes were a good near fit on Myra, only a half-size too large in most directions.

Although many of these garments were no longer at the forefront of fashion, all were of the highest quality, several of the finest cashmere. This hoard was jammed into three ornate walnut mirror-fronted double wardrobes, each door fitted with an internal mirror affording an all-round inspection. In addition to dresses, there were skirts in various lengths, blouses, tailored shorts, full length pants, three quarter length pants, tailored trousers, underclothes, nylons, scarves, hats, and over a hundred pairs of shoes and sandals with a selection of handbags in assorted sizes and matching colours. There were ensembles for every occasion, including several oddballs such as a risqué female lion tamer's outfit with a bolero jacket, a garish sequenced blouse with a plunging cleavage, tight pants, mesh stockings, complemented by tall high-heeled boots and a top hat and fake whip. Myra smiled; perhaps this one had been used to titillate her ageing Albie.

Myra sifted through each piece thoughtfully, holding each against herself in turn, checking the mirrors, dreaming. Finally, she had them sorted into various categories. Only a few items were beyond redemption; most were in excellent condition, possibly unworn for many years. Over a period of weeks she selected those she liked best, and had them dry-cleaned. Some she might wear to work, others for special occasions, in line with notions which started to run in her mind. She repacked everything with sachets of lavender to protect them against moths. Her plan was to have them altered to fit her, if she could find someone expert enough to do the work. These garments were too expensive to trust to an amateur or a slap-dash alterations shop. Sadly, the beautiful and expensive shoes were too small: Myra gave these and the unwanted clothing to the Salvation Army. She would enjoy buying her own shoes, perhaps with Rita's help, she smiled. After all, Rita worked in a fancy shoe shop.

During this clearing-out she made her astonishing discovery - Sadie's secret hoard. This was located inside the largest, most ornate wardrobe, concealed behind the deep full-width drawer at its base. When she had fully removed this drawer, with some difficulty,

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to check behind it, she realised this drawer was shallower than the depth of the wardrobe. On her knees with a torch, behind the drawer space, she found a false back concealing a hidden compartment. It was like the hiding space she and Frank had created under his box bed. The only item in this secret compartment was a black ebony box.

The box was lined with pale purple velvet. It contained a stunning opal brooch and six heavy match-box sized bars of what appeared to be dull silver. Myra immediately concluded they were genuine. (Later, she copied the hallmarks and checked their veracity at the Mitchell Library.) If the ingots were genuine, she reasoned, then the opal in its white gold and diamond setting must also be genuine. Myra returned these items to Sadie's original hiding place while she decided how to deal with them. Further research at the Mitchell Library revealed in the Victorian era, such secret compartments had been a common feature provided by high-class furniture makers for the safe keeping of jewellery and other secrets, such as love letters from old admirers.

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This find spurred her to look again for Sandy's passbook, although she thought it was probably somewhere in his bedroom, perhaps under a loose floorboard.

Following weeks of night-time foraging, Myra eventually found it, hidden behind the high-level flushing cistern in the bathroom, in the slight gap between its back and the wall. The account was at the Bank of Scotland, Anniesland Cross, and showed a balance of £323-7-5 in the name of Alexander Kaywood, Esquire. It pleased Myra she was now wealthier than Sandy. Like his mother, he may have other wealth stashed, but given the thoroughness of her searches this seemed unlikely; unless it was stashed in his room.

Sadie's passbook was now re-homed beside the ebony box while Myra considered how she might gain access and control of this vast wealth. Recalling a story she had read years earlier, she went to Whiteinch Library. With the help of Miss Chalmers and her encyclopaedic memory, Myra found the book and read it again. Myra now had a plan, a variation of what she had read.

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During her lunch hours Myra made several visits to the Ingram Street office of the Glasgow Savings Bank, where she mingled and studied how the customers and staff behaved. For each visit she dressed differently, changing on her way from St George's in the Ladies' Lavatory at the Mitchell Library, bringing her ensembles from Caird Drive in her leather travel bag. She noted one teller wore very thick glasses. This man was in his mid-thirties, she estimated, with a thin face and a nervous manner. She rehearsed her plan many times over.

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After a slight hagggle with Mr Gordon, she booked a day off from her entitlement in Daisy's book on the pretext of visiting her mother-in-law, in High Blantyre. The old lady was very poorly, she explained, and may not last.

The day arrived. This was Myra's fifth visit to the bank. It was the last Friday of the month, always a busy day in most banks. It was lunchtime, the queues were long. The waiting customers, mostly office clerks and businessmen, were pushed for time and agitated. She was dressed as Mrs Kaywood Senior, an elderly widow, in a dark outfit, wearing a dark coat, a wide-brimmed black hat with her red hair pinned up high underneath, and a pair of glasses with heavy black frames and clear lenses, purchased from a shop which supplied artefacts for amateur dramatics groups. Her own clothes were in the travel bag, deposited in the Cloakroom at the Mitchell Library.

Myra was nervous but focussed, as she knew she must be. As the 'customer', she held the initiative she believed, and fortified herself with the certainty any customer with such a large balance must be treated with deference.

By kindly allowing a few others to go ahead of her, 'Mrs Sadie Kaywood' timed her arrival at the head of the queue then stepped forward to 'her' chosen teller. In her hand, she had Sadie's passbook and a withdrawal slip already signed in the amount of £50. She had taken a batch of these withdrawal slips on a previous visit and had practiced the signature, copying it from Sadie's scrawl at the bottom of each page of the Sales Ledgers of AG Jewellery, Glasgow. The money was paid over without demur. Relieved, she reversed her track, changed back into her own clothes, then travelled to Byres Road and paid this money into her own account.

At her next visit, a month later, Myra withdrew £500 without difficulty. She decided to open a separate account in another bank and used this cash to create an opening balance. It was part of a legacy from a great-aunt, she explained to the manager. More deposits would follow as her aunt's estate was wound up. She would require a chequing account.

Now secure in her fraud, she repeated the process, month on month, and established similar accounts at different banks, all growing steadily. Myra was in no rush. It would take her eighteen months until she left the deceased Mrs Kaywood's account with a residual balance of £13-11-10, including interest to date. At this point she burned the now redundant passbook in her kitchen fire.

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As Susie Did

By the end of September her mind was elsewhere, focussed on a new plan.

In a story of a girl from a poor background; Susan, a nurse, had married well. Edwin her husband had taken over a GP Practice in a small rural village. At first Susan did not fit in. The villagers were snooty, closed to incomers. Susan, who had a heart of gold, decided to go about quietly, watching and when she saw a need, would offer her help.

Susie's story began to run in Myra's head.

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To make a start Myra brushed the stairs and entry close from top to bottom most nights after Sandy left for work. In addition, twice a week she mopped them top to bottom with a generous slurp of pine smelling disinfectant in the water. She bought potted plants and put them out on each half-landing and at both sides by the close mouth.

Mavis's smelly moggy called Tom-Tom was her next target. She bought fish scraps and poached them in milk and watched while he gobbled the food down along with three crushed *Sleeptight* pills in the process. Within minutes he snoozed off to catty Hell. She wrapped his grubby corpse in an old towel and consigned it to the midden with her ashes on top. No more would the ginger cat leave his pungent calling card on their doormats. He had paid the ultimate price for ruining a perfectly wonderful cardigan with his sharp claws.

When meeting her neighbours on the stairs or in the close Myra/Susie always stood to one side to let them pass, wishing them a "Good Morning, Miss Fraser" or as appropriate. Now Sadie was gone, there was no more loud radio playing to annoy them. The remaining running sore was the mess Sandy's bikes made, but as she was now cleaning up after him regularly, particularly on wet days, this was being minimised.

She wrote to Mr MacAuley, the factor for their building, to ask if the common close might be painted, offering to pay the Owner's fifty percent share, as well as her own contribution. As an afterthought, she added she would be willing to pay the share for any other tenant unable or unwilling to pay, providing she might be allowed to do so anonymously.

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It took more than a month for Mr MacAuley to reply, confirming he had consulted the owner, Mr Joseph Bellhouse. Mrs Kaywood's kind offer of anonymous financial support had been declined by the other tenants, with the exception of Mr Glover, who was pleased to accept this offer. Mrs Riddell had made no reply, an outcome which was not unexpected, he added. Mr Bellhouse hoped Mrs Kaywood would pay both Mr Glover's and Mrs Riddell's contributions. If so the planned redecoration work would proceed. An estimate was included with her augmented share detailed. It requested she call and pay this amount, in advance. The other tenants would also be invoiced for the work, to be paid in advance, as Mr Bellhouse was a cautious man.

Myra made the payment in person, in cash, the next day, meeting John MacAuley her Factor, for the first time, at his one-roomed office in Royal Crescent. His room was one of a suite of similar small offices which shared a common Receptionist. MacAuley was younger than she had expected, a man of medium height and build, wearing large tortoiseshell rimmed glasses with thick lenses. He wore a brown pin-striped suit which had once been smart but was now shiny. He spoke in a clipped, almost military manner, using his words economically, avoiding small talk and banalities, which Myra liked.

Myra enquired after Mr Bellhouse's health to be told the building owner was now over eighty and frail. And yes, he believed the gentleman might be willing to sell all the flats in the close, as a block, should a good offer be made. Myra asked what this amount might be. Mr MacAuley said he would write to Mr Bellhouse and enquire on her behalf. During this conversation, Mr MacAuley's demeanour changed markedly and swiftly, from almost brusque and business-like initially, to 'attentive', tipping up on his toes to help Myra into her raincoat, before accompanying her to Reception to open the front door for her.

At their parting, she tested him:

'Mr MacAuley, may we expect our little close will receive your personal attention, and you will at all times use your best endeavours on our behalf?'

'Yes, Mrs Kaywood. I promise the work at Caird Drive will proceed as soon as the others have paid. I know this painting contractor very well and I will emphasise to him everything must be done to the highest standards. I give you my word.'

'Mr MacAuley, this is the reply I hoped to hear. Thank you. Perhaps we are two people who can do business together in the future. We shall see. Goodbye.'

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The next day Myra decided it was time to act more directly, to take the initiative, as Susie had done.

Living with Myra

The elderly Miss Celia Glover lived on the ground floor with her brother David. They were clearly Jewish, a fact confirmed by the small wooden box called a mezuzah which was fixed to their door surround placed just above head height. This box contained a small piece of parchment, a portion of the Torah from the Hebrew Bible, to ward off evil from the household.

It was a Friday evening, and nearly dark, the start of the Jewish dusk to dusk Sabbath. Myra had chosen Friday, knowing Jewish people were not allowed to switch on and off lights or gas for cooking, nor were they allowed to pay anyone to do it for them. Unsure of what might be expected, Myra wore a black beret. She pulled the door chime, listening as the peal echoed. After a short delay, she heard shoes clip-clopping smartly towards the other side of the door. A querulous high-pitched voice piped its question:

'How you want something? *Go*-way, *go*-way I get police you, you bad boys.'

'No, it's all right Miss Glover. It's only me, your neighbour, Myra Kaywood from the top floor, Sandy's wife.'

'Ah, you come bad time Mrs Mywa. Today Friday, is Shabbat. David, he Schule, he no here. No good now. Come after, Mrs Mywa, come David here.'

'Oh, what a pity Miss Glover. You see I've brought you a nice cake, from Abraham's bakery, in Giffnock. It's got vanilla icing and is filled with strawberry jam. And I brought lemon tea, so we could have a wee cuppa together.'

'Ah, wait, Mrs Mywa. I keys. I come. Wait Mrs Mywa. I come at you.'

The door eventually opened. The house was cold and dingy. Celia and David Glover, whatever their past held, nowadays were poor. Celia was small, fresh faced with piercing brown eyes centred with charcoal irises which seemed ready to laugh. She was clearly very old but when she smiled back at Myra she changed into a pixie, her eyes shining with daring and mischief. Her skin was amazing, a smooth bright pink and as fresh as a child's. 'So, beauty bride me come. Sandy, he lucky man. But Mamma no more, no over Albie die, no?'

'No, but she's at rest now. Thanks. Is it all right to come in? It's just I want to ask you for a favour?'

'Ah, you want one? One my creations? My special dresses?'

'Oh, sorry. Ah, you make dresses? I'm sorry, no, I didn't know.'

'Ah, come princess, come. Come, my dresses.'

'Would you like me to switch on the lights for you, Miss Celia?'

'Ah, you know to do? You know Jewish no can make light do for Sabbath? You come make off, tomorrow?'

'Yes, of course.'

Living with Myra

'You make gas? And off?'

'Yes, of course.'

'You angel to Moses! Wait I tell David. He no' believes happen. But he see!'

Celia took Myra on a tour of her small exhibition. The dresses were haute couture in various styles from years long past, extremely well made. As Celia spoke, Myra realised they were theatrical dresses, not intended for ordinary wear. Celia explained in her younger days she had been a theatrical dresser and hair artiste, travelling around Europe with various serious and light opera companies. Later she had settled to making and mending dresses. In her travels Celia had accumulated a full range of high quality theatrical wigs which ranged in colour, length and style, now individually mounted on rows of featureless wooden heads.

'Ah, look, this one opera Diva. She no come it, she famous no pay, her. David get agent pay first. So, I dress, she lost! Ha, ha, ha! No? Ah, this one, look! For West End, Duchess. Dresser send me wee repairs. Duchess go Hollywood, no come back.' She laughed. 'No? You actress, Mrs Mywa. You look actress. You model? I you *special* dress. What you want? Tell Celia you want, I make! How Sandy get you, eh? You too good, Sandy. I no mean he bad. He no bad. He strange. Wash, wash, wash. Strange. David get you actress job. David still big man theatre. He Pamela job. She strange, strange. Mad maybe. Like all actress. No?' She laughed again.

Eventually they settled in the parlour with the tea and cake:

'So, Mrs Mywa, what you want to me?'

'Well, if I understand it correctly, you have exclusive use of the store room in the close, under the stair well. I just wondered if you might be willing to let us use it, make it secure, for Sandy. It would save him making such a mess dripping his wet bikes all the way up the stairs.'

'Ah, sella? I David ask. He boss, big boss, all thing. Me, I Celia, I woman. I nothing! But you pay sella, David maybe yes, maybe no. Eh, you pay? What pay sella?'

'Well, I wondered. Would a shilling a week be enough?'

'No! No! Big sella. Big for four bikes, more. Half a crown, more. David boss, maybe yes, maybe no. He boss. You do Lights, Gas, no pays? No allows to pays.'

'Lights and Gas are free, to a friend and neighbour. I could top up your fire, if you like. On Saturday mornings, before I go to work rake it out and set it, get it going. Perhaps bring any shopping or such things as you need. Just ask. I think one and sixpence is enough for the store? What do you think? Can I call you Celia? What do you think, Celia?'

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'I say two shillings. David big boss. David decide. Wait I tell. Lights! Gas! Fire! He no' believes! You ashes too? David no ashes. Fears to Mavis! She mad too!'

'Yes of course, emptying your ashes is included with lighting the fire, of course it is.'

Two days later Myra made a further call on her neighbour, this time with a dark purple satin dress draped over her arm. It was from Sadie's wardrobe. The seamstress immediately rose to the challenge. Three days later it fitted Myra perfectly. Myra brought another. By adding in panels of coloured material from her stock Celia transformed Sadie's dresses into modern eye-catching clothing which fitted Myra like a sheath. The elderly woman readily accepted the praise and the money, paid piece by piece, in advance, at David's insistence, Celia told her. For less than the cost of two dresses of equal quality, Myra soon had over thirty outfits in her wardrobe, with a range of Sadie's hats to match. She could easily have graced any of Glasgow's expensive restaurants and coffee houses, had she had a suitable companion.

After her first successes with *Celia Glover*, Myra waited until the painting work had been completed, meanwhile making her plans to tackle the formidable Miss Fraser. The close now smelled fresh and since the mysterious disappearance of Tom-Tom, the stench of cat no longer marred an otherwise perfect stairway.

Living with Myra

Sandy's Secret

Myra had been surprised by how readily Sandy agreed to allow his bikes to be re-homed in Celia's walk-in cellar. These were expensive bikes and she had feared he might resist on the grounds of security. They both knew how easy it had been to defeat the original simple mortise lock with an old crochet hook. She arranged for a joiner to come on a Sunday afternoon, knowing Sandy would be out with the Wheelers. The joiner, an elderly man called Mr Bryce, had been recommended by John MacAuley. His first task was to fit a Yale lock to the cellar door to give added security. She asked for three keys. When she gave Sandy two keys for his new bike store, his face lit up. Myra kept her copy undeclared.

Mr Bryce was most helpful about the 'lost' key for the Yale on Sandy's bedroom door. After rotating through his master set, Mr Bryce found one which fitted. There were fourteen variations, he revealed, slipping his copy off the ring and passing it to her. She offered to pay extra but he refused, pleased to help such a good client of Mr MacAuley's.

With Mr Bryce gone, she made a quick tour of Sandy's bedroom. Nothing had changed from her inspection on her wedding night but she resolved to investigate more fully, when he was safely at work and could not discover her in the act.

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Later, as soon as he arrived back from his run, Sandy announced he would be leaving after tea to travel with the Install Team, with his latest periscope. He refused to say where, except it was somewhere in England. After their evening meal, he left with his usual travel case tied onto his rear bike rack. He also trailed a large brown canvas travel bag, saying he would be away at least a week, probably more. She watched from the parlour window, wondering how he could manage this bag on his bike but when he rode off the canvas bag was not with him. He must have left it in the cellar, she reasoned. She would check later, curious to know what he was concealing from her.

Myra was itching to complete her re-decoration and make Sandy's room fresh and bright. She already had plans; in time, when she and Sandy got going with their sex life this would become Baby's Room. For a start, she would dismantle Sandy's bed and have the Cleansing Department uplift it from the middens in the back court. She had been to *The Pram Shop* on Byre's Road and placed a 'hold' order on a convertible cot of the type which could be later remodelled into a toddler's bed.

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It was nearly six months since their failed wedding night and it was time flush him out of his hidey-hole. She entered his room, ready to search it thoroughly.

When she stripped the bed-clothes she discovered the waterproof sheet, saw the stains. The mattress had been sprinkled with scented talcum powder to mask the smell. The truth rushed at her - Sandy was a bed-wetter. Mrs Kaywood had wet herself. Perhaps it was a family weakness. Was this why Sandy had remained unmarried for so long? Was this what Mavis Riddell and Celia had been hinting at? Myra knew from her mother Frank had been a bed-wetter, wearing a night-time nappy and rubber pants until after his tenth birthday. Mary had said she had been told by the doctor not too worry, because most boys were slower to become 'dry' than girls. As Myra remade the bed she wondered if her mother had known or suspected of Sandy's problem. She flew downstairs to the bike cellar; the brown canvas bag was there. She opened it to discover a heap of damp, smelly bedclothes and pyjamas.

The next day she telephoned and cancelled her order for the cot, forfeiting her five shilling deposit. On her journey home visited the Mitchell Library and read up on adult bed-wetting. It surprised her to learn it was not uncommon, often related to fear, stress and particularly to bereavement. It had been very common among returning soldiers after WW1.

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On his return from his jaunt, Myra began to observe Sandy's movements more closely, checking his bed every night after he left. She quickly deduced he must have several sets of bedclothes he washed and dried in rotation, probably at the Steamie. Or perhaps he used a laundry service, as she did herself for their normal wash. During the weeks which followed his return, she regularly checked Celia's walk-in cellar and found he had several kit bags of soiled and fresh bedclothes and pyjamas. She monitored his sleeping pills and noted he was using them regularly.

Myra could think of nothing which might offer her a solution, nor did she have any ideas of how to help him. She had no desire to sleep with a bed-wetter, even in exchange for much needed sex. Sandy would have to find his own way out of his problem.

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With Sandy's bicycles banished, at last Myra was free to redecorate her Hallway again, this time with a large chandelier, getting Mr Bryce to replace the damaged cupboard door, laying fresh linoleum and a replacement carpet runner. She forewarned Sandy she was also planning a new bathroom suite, one with a shower attachment and the new style close-coupled cistern to the toilet pan. She repeated, several times over, there must be

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no bike-washing in the new bath. If bikes needed wash he must do so elsewhere, perhaps in the back court. He winced but did not argue.

Living with Myra

The Good Neighbour

Myra wore a plain black dress which Celia had altered, her grey cardigan resting on her shoulders, her hair pleated and pinned up into a tight bun. She wore no make-up or jewellery. As she looked at herself in her wardrobe mirrors, she felt herself to be a younger if taller version of the straight-laced Miss Fraser. It was called "reflecting" the other person's style, she had read.

It was two-thirty on a Sunday afternoon when Myra pulled Miss Fraser's bell knob, ready to act out her story. The door swung open almost at once.

In her hands, Myra held a brown paper parcel containing her purchase from a saleroom on Great Western Road. Although she knew almost nothing about sheet music, Myra had believed the shop owner when he told her this batch was unusual, precious, and most interesting. He claimed it had come from the house of a professor of music who had lived near the Botanical Gardens. At twenty-five guineas, this music was a bargain, he had assured.

'You are very early Letitia dear, I was'

'Oh, I'm very sorry, Miss Fraser, I didn't realise you were expecting company. Perhaps I should call again, later, at a more convenient time?'

'No, no. No, Mrs Kaywood, in fact I have been meaning to call to thank you. Our close is so much better painted in the cherry purple colour, don't you think. And making all the storm doors identical is so much nicer, is it not? I wrote to the Factor insisting. He tells me you initiated this work, although he was a bit coy about this at first, but I got some of it out of him. In fact, I must advise I have been writing to our Mr MacAuley for years but Mr Bellhouse our owner is ever reluctant to pay his fifty percent share. What could have changed his mind, I wonder. Yes, and thank you for your help in keeping the stairs and close clean, at last. Those plants are very nice too. It's so good to have someone who cares as one does oneself. Such a strange man your husband, coming and going on his many bicycles at all hours of the day and night. What does he get up to, I do wonder? Verging on the extremely odd, I always say. Works during the night? Or so they tell me. Makes periscopes I understand. Obsessed he is, if you don't mind me saying so. And yes, Celia told me all about your visit. She runs the show, you know, even though she says David is her 'authority'. He is quite famous, is our David Glover, in his own small way, as is Celia Glover. In the past all the big names used to beat a path to her door. A genius with couture. Celia can make a twenty stone Diva look like a slip of a girl. An amazing talent,

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quite amazing. Nearly eighty now, is Celia. Some days she looks no more than fifty-five. So annoying, really, to have young skin when all around have wrinkles. You seem to have young skin too, from the look of it. Oh, do forgive me. My sister Letitia is always scolding me for being so pass-remarkable. How on earth Sandy Kaywood found such a nice pleasant wife as you is a mystery to all of us. Yes, and I hear you have made the split with the Riddell woman. Well done! Good for you. Oh, I do get carried away. No, now, what was it you wanted Mrs Kaywood?'

'Well, Miss Fraser, when I heard you playing your piano so beautifully I knew at once you are obviously very gifted. I was given this sheet music by a family friend when her father passed away. I wondered if you might like to have it. I don't play pianoforte myself, although I do love to listen to good music, well played.'

'Oh, how kind! You are a thoughtful girl. Will you come in for a cup of tea while I have a look? Oh, this feels like Christmas Day. Look, why don't you call me Phamie, and you are Myra, Celia tells me.'

'Oh, thank you, thank you. This is like a dream for me, Phamie. I've hated the tension of living upstairs from you with this bad atmosphere between us. When Sandy told me of the feud between you and his Mum, caused by him scraping your door with his trike all those years ago, well, I just didn't know what to do for the best. From the first minute I heard about the difficulty I thought, "Myra, this all needs to be sorted". Don't you agree, Phamie?'

'Is that what he told you? What rubbish the man speaks, always has done! But you seem to be getting somewhere with him. It's such a blessing he's no longer trailing his bikes up and down every single day. Anyway, as you suggest, let's put all that behind us, Myra. The best thing to happen in this close for years was when you came to stay. Poor Mrs Kaywood was obviously very ill, in the end. Yes, and no wonder, with her way of life. But no, no, let's leave such matters unsaid. Oh, look at this! This is wonderful! Quick, come in, Myra, come in and listen while I try this one. I've heard it played of course, many times, but trying to source this class of special music, well . . . I simply must try this out on the piano . . .'

After Phamie Fraser the other neighbours fell easily to Myra's charm offensive. Just 'As Susie Did', Myra established herself as their perfect neighbour. She proved to be a great listener, always discreet. She always brought a small gift or a home-made cake. She was pleased to do shopping or make deliveries, to pay bills, whatever was required. Myra gave only the minimum of information in return. Nor did she invite any of them to her flat or boast about the upgrading she had done.

As with her colleagues at the Co-op, Myra kept her neighbours each in separate compartments, changing her demeanour with her surroundings, while acting out her

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reflecting stories. The business woman Myra at St George's Co-op was quite a different person from the Susie/Myra good neighbour cum thoughtful 'daughter' who befriended and cared for her neighbours at Caird Drive.

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Woman of Property

The letter arrived directly from Joseph Bellhouse, offering her ownership of the entire Caird Drive property at a price set at fifty times the annual rental. This sum seemed very high. Myra decided to seek advice, but meanwhile wrote a holding letter advising Mr Bellhouse of her continuing interest, asking for his patience while she garnered the necessary funds and made preparatory arrangements with her Solicitor.

At the Mitchell Library, she studied the Classified Directory and found a clutch of solicitors specialising in property matters located in Clifton Place, a five-minute walk from Charing Cross. She walked along the terrace of town houses, many of which had been converted to offices for Solicitors, Architects and other professionals, looking for which one looked to be the most successful, the most go ahead.

One stood out as the smartest, most modern:

"Robert M Irvine LLB, Solicitor and Notary Public"

After a few days of thinking things through, she made a further visit to the Mitchell Library to discover the long-established Henning & Henning, Solicitors and Notaries Public of nearby Newton Place, another terrace of town houses like those in Clifton Place. This practice, she learned, acted as Trustees for many charities operating in the West of Scotland. She wrote to their Senior Partner, Herbert Henning, asking for a meeting, with the purpose of setting up a small charitable foundation. She set out the details for him in a simple one-page document, typed on the St George's typewriter while Daisy was out at lunchtime.

The Trust would be called the Margaret Miller Foundation (MMF). Mrs Kaywood would be the sole administrator of the Trust, acting on behalf of Miss Goodfellow-Smythe, a writer. Mrs Kaywood lived as a Companion to the great lady's relative, Miss Glover, at her flat in Caird Drive, in Dowanhill.

At their meeting, Mrs Kaywood explained to Mr Herbert Henning her friend Miss Goodfellow-Smythe moved around constantly, often travelling abroad, writing under several pen-names which he would most certainly recognise. Miss Goodfellow-Smythe had

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appointed Mrs Kaywood to act on her behalf to deposit and dispense any necessary funds to carry forward good works and beneficial investments in the Glasgow and West of Scotland area. Miss Margaret Miller, who had hailed originally from a poor area of Glasgow, had been a dear, dear friend to Miss Goodfellow-Smythe. Recently, sadly, Margaret had died while travelling abroad with Miss Goodfellow-Smythe. The Trust would be named in her memory.

Secrecy and discretion were paramount, Myra stressed several times over. Miss Goodfellow-Smythe was insistent on this. The lady was somewhat fickle and, regrettably, often vindictive, should any hint of her involvement leak to her adoring public. Previous indiscretions by other firms of Solicitors had resulted in immediate removal of business and in some cases, law suits for damages.

During Myra's soliloquy, Herbert Henning nodded sagely, tut-tutted appropriately. When she had finished, Henning responded with a laboured speech of his own, confirming to Mrs Kaywood he fully understood. Everything in connection with the great lady's business would be dealt with behind Chinese Walls and correspondence sent in sealed, plain envelopes, unadorned with logos identifying the sender, and marked for Mrs Kaywood's personal attention, care of Miss Glover at the Caird Drive address. Absolutely no attempt would ever be made to directly contact the author, Miss X.

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Myra then made her pitch to Celia Glover, explaining she had hopes of a secret career as a writer. Several manuscripts were doing the rounds with publishers, whom she invented. She did not want Sandy to be aware of her plans. He would object, be jealous of any success she might have, do his best to thwart her ambition. Myra knew reading English was not one of Celia's strong points. She could not read or write, except in simple German, she had admitted once in her ramblings.

Celia readily agreed to act as her *poste restante*, her cut-out between those who wrote to "Mrs M Kaywood c/o Miss Celia Glover." The primary and overriding condition was that Celia must never share any information of this arrangement with anyone else, not even David. After a round of gentle bargaining Celia's fee was set at five shillings per week, to be paid monthly in advance, regardless of whether any letters were delivered to her or not.

With this arrangement in place she instructed John MacAuley to send all further correspondence to her c/o Miss Glover. He raised his eyebrows at this instruction but agreed to do so, without comment.

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It took three long weeks of badgering and many visits to consider and adjust drafts of the various deeds initially proposed by Herbert Henning. In the end, the great man capitulated and completed the paperwork to Mrs Kaywood's entire satisfaction.

Armed with the necessary authority and papers for the bank, Myra deposited £2,000 cash into the MMF account, ready at last to put part of Sadie's wealth to work. At their final meeting, Myra eventually signed her first MMF cheque to pay Herbert Henning his due, a fee re-negotiated downward, substantially, to reflect what Mrs Kaywood considered many unnecessary revisions, a process she had resisted steadfastly from the outset, as she demonstrated to him, line by line from the sheaf of his earlier draft papers taken from her large black handbag. Herbert Henning did not demur, merely nodding, accepting her rebuke without riposte by closing his eyes and fixing his face with a wan smile, as he did at home when his wife read the riot act to him for some real or imagined misdemeanour.

Mrs Kaywood then thanked Mr Henning and explained it was unlikely his further duties would be onerous. She would pay him a retainer of £25 per calendar month and would be in touch, as and when he was required to act. When such a moment arrived, she would expect him to act as required immediately 'without delay of any kind'. Henning smiled his smile, stood and shook her hand warmly then rang his little bell. His secretary, Miss Hilary Templeton, appeared at once. As the two women passed through the outer office, the other members of staff carefully avoided looking towards the forceful Mrs Kaywood. They had never heard their boss dressed down in this way before. Miss Templeton escorted Myra down the flight of thickly carpeted steps to the front door. As she opened it for Myra she said:

'Thank you, Mrs Kaywood. Although it is un-Christian to even think it far less say it, I cannot resist the temptation to say this has been one of the most enjoyable afternoons of my working life. If you need anything done in future, do telephone ahead and ask for me personally. I will see to it we keep our Mr Herbert- how shall I put it - 'entirely focussed'.'

Myra returned Miss Templeton's small smile with one of her own:

'Thank you, Miss Templeton. Perhaps, if I had but known . . . Yes, thank you, next time I will do as you suggest; until then, goodbye.'

They parted with their faces fixed in solemn pose as at a funeral, but with smiles in their eyes.

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As she walked away from the offices of Henning & Henning, Myra decided she must learn more of Hilary Templeton, the young woman with the dark blue eyes which shone with bright intelligence.

What Myra could not know at that juncture was this encounter would lead to a life-long friendship.

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In parallel with this process of creating the Trust, Myra had several meetings with Robert Irvine, Senior Partner, at his offices in Clifton Place, acting in her capacity as Mrs Myra Kaywood, the Sole Agent for the Margaret Miller Foundation. Her purpose was to purchase the property at Caird Drive, at a fair and reasonable price and improve it under the auspices of the MMF. Irvine must only correspond with her through Mr Herbert Henning of Henning & Henning, based at Newton Place.

Six weeks after the establishment of the Margaret Miller Foundation, the Trust became the new owner of the entire block of eight flats in Caird Drive. The price Myra paid was much less than Joseph Bellhouse had originally proposed. Robert Irvine had proved to be an acceptably good negotiator although, to her way, he indulged in excessive paperwork, and suggested too many trivial 'conferences', clearly padding his fee.

Myra had no doubt, despite Herbert Henning's assurances, Robert Irvine would have learned on the Solicitors' grapevine the MMF Trust was in receipt of considerable funds, with more promised, if required.

Over this round of meetings and by earwiggling while sitting waiting at Reception, Myra learned 'Buyers for Tenement Properties' were very much in demand. Unlike her, those around waiting to see Mr Irvine were intent on selling, escaping from property ownership. Like Joseph Bellhouse, they were making their wealth liquid, anticipating the opportunities the looming war would create.

At the 'closing meeting', when she signed the MMF cheque for Caird Drive and his cheque for Professional Services rendered to date, Robert Irvine made his pitch: 'Perhaps Mrs Kaywood may wish to ascertain if the Trustees might have an interest in purchasing other such properties', he suggested, sifting through a large bundle of papers with sage deftness of a seasoned professional, mentally starting his fee clock ticking for the next run of business he could see ahead. As he shuffled he prepared his ground.

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'If the Trust would also consider allowing us to appoint and manage such factors and other support services as may be required for the efficient running of the MMF Portfolio of Properties, I can give you my personal assurance the Trust would enjoy significant savings in fees and ancillary charges over running such properties in a piecemeal fashion. Take for example, Caird Drive. You are surely not intending, Mrs Kaywood, to continue with John MacAuley as your Factor. Now, although John is a very nice man, the reality is that he is a very small player in our business, very small, dreadfully small, really. Poor John is virtually a one-man outfit, working with only the part-time help of his sister.'

His smile widened with practised sincerity and now at last his finger easily found the page he had been searching for so diligently, while keeping his eyes down, avoiding her bright narrowing green eyes, in case he should give himself away. He had learned early this young lady was very sharp, and not easily persuaded against her will.

'No, Mr Irvine, thank you but...'

'Ah, yes, now *this* one might suit you. This is an excellent property...'

'No, Mr Irvine! But thank just the same. I have my own list.'

'But Mrs Kaywood, I have the very *widest* range of properties on offer here, commercial properties as well as'

'Please, Mr Irvine, *please!* Let us *both* be quite clear on the rules of engagement in this little debate. Allow me, please, to remind you I act with the *full* and *sole* authority of the Margaret Miller Foundation.'

His eyes blinked rapidly then opened wider. His brow tightened into a puzzled frown as he glanced down at her sheet of paper listing the addresses of the Gallagher household in Yoker, Gordon Galbraith's address on Highburgh Road, Miss Pettigrew's old house in Havelock Street, Daisy Donovan's mother's house in Maryhill and Lizzie's address in Shawlands.

Myra added, '*These* are specific properties in which our Trust has particular *charitable* interests. However, I will consider their purchase *only* if they can be made available at affordable cost. Of course, as you will readily understand, I would require the *entire* property, as a unit, to service all the tenants in the common close. I will have no truck with split ownerships and the problems these can throw up.'

His head was nodding wisely; his smile was fixed, verging on anxious.

'Be assured also Mr Irvine, I *will* continue to engage John MacAuley as my Factor for all such properties, providing he too continues to meet my specific demands. Mr MacAuley

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is a man I have come to appreciate, a man who actually listens to what I say and does exactly what I ask him to do. He does it with alacrity, something I demand on behalf of the Trust. He is *not* a man who takes it upon himself to interrupt me, or delay me with unnecessary paperwork or meetings, or offer advice which I neither want nor need. Nor is he a man who seeks to lead me in my decision making.'

It was a small speech, a practised speech, a speech in the persona of Miss Euphemia Fraser, in the manner she might have used in days long gone to put into his place one of her headstrong but able pupils. Myra waited and watched. Irvine froze. His eyebrows shot up but his tongue did not spring to action. Perhaps he has learned his lesson, Myra mused. It was time to relent a little, offer him a little room for his input, his initiative.

'However, later, after we have made these purchases, should you wish to make suggestions for additional properties exhibiting *affordable* target prices, perhaps then I will see what can be done. Funds are available.'

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It took several months but Myra was in no hurry. Her own target properties came to her at very reasonable cost. It seemed many owners were indeed moving out of Property, Mr Irvine reluctantly admitted. Myra's settlement monies would probably be used to invest in munitions and ship-building, he explained. Naturally such investments were out-with the remit of the Trust, she replied, a statement which appeared to please him.

Later, after several visits to inspect these 'other' properties in the company of John MacAuley, she agreed to several of Irvine's suggestions while rejecting many others. Those she chose were in the area around Dowanhill and Hillhead, an area she had come to know well, localities with long-term investment potential, all parties agreed.

By the late autumn of 1938, Robert Irvine, like John MacAuley and Herbert Henning, now firmly understood who directed the affairs of the MMF's steadily increasing property portfolio and charitable distributions. Business came first, well ahead of fake friendship, bluster and bonhomie. When Mrs Kaywood made a request, it was responded to without demur or delay. Fees invoiced, if reasonable, were paid immediately at first presentation. Myra's cadre of professionals learned although she was meticulous and demanding, she was not mean; margins were sensible. If one did exactly as she asked and did it quickly, a steady profit could be turned on the work she required. This was a young woman with a bright future, the two solicitors concluded at their weekly bridge club meetings.

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Hilary and the Thomsons

When Myra Kaywood (nee Gallagher) of the MMF entered her life, Hilary Templeton was twenty-seven. Due to her mode of dress and demeanour, she appeared older. Her sharp eyes darted from a long thin face with a determined jawline and thin pursed lips, her clothes and heavy make-up were chosen to make her seem severe. Among those who looked to her for leadership Miss Hilary presented a forbidding and implacable manner set on a face which seldom smiled. Some office colleagues observed, *sotto voce*, Hilary had become a younger, more able version of her predecessor, the never to be forgotten tyrant, Miss Agnes Thomson.

Away from the office, relaxed, devoid of make-up, Hilary's complexion was fresh and pink from her many hours outdoors, walking her dogs. Observed in this light, it could be seen Hilary had matured late into an attractive young woman in the mould of her mother, with a similar tall and slim body but with smaller, more proportionate breasts.

From their first shared moment of confidence at the doorway of Henning & Henning, Myra and Hilary struck a chord of friendship. Initially this had centred on Myra's need to 'manage' the often obtuse and obstinate Herbert Henning. Over the first months of the MMF, Myra and Hilary had devised a plan of attack. Ahead of each encounter with Mr Henning, Myra would ring Hilary at Henning & Henning and arrange to discuss issues, usually meeting at the King's Café in Elmbank Street, often on Sunday afternoons. At these meetings, Myra would explain what she wanted done, seek Hilary's advice and together they would plan an approach to ensure Mr Herbert did exactly as Mrs Kaywood desired, without deviation or delay. The process worked well. In turn, Hilary found she could confide in Myra, sharing her problems about her staff at Henning & Henning, difficulties at the Gospel Hall, her life at the Brotherton cottage, gossip about friends she met during her dog walks with Mack and Freddy, and the comings and goings at the Pollok Estate.

As she always did, Myra listened attentively. Had she been able to, she might have shared more of her life with Hilary, whom she gradually grew to admire above all others she knew, both men and woman. Now she understood most of what there was to know of Hilary Templeton, Myra began to write a story for the young woman she considered to be the clever sister she did not have.

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Hilary Templeton's roots were humble and (almost) respectable; at least while her father was alive. At Sir John Maxwell's primary school in Pollokshaws, Hilary had been noted as bright and studious. She was the only child from either parent's family to eventually progress to the senior secondary stream at Shawlands Senior Secondary School. The clever Hilary was the light of her father's world and he repeatedly boasted his intention to send his 'brilliant' daughter to College, perhaps even University.

Charles Templeton, (known by all as Chick), was the runt of his family, the youngest and smallest of six sons, a diminutive boy always failing to impress his brothers. His three oldest brothers trailed each other to Toronto, joining the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; the younger two becoming policemen in Glasgow, following in the footsteps of their father Hamish Templeton, a Highlander originally from Dingwall, north of Inverness. Charles, too short to be a proper policeman, became a police clerk in the Shawlands Office.

Evelyn (Evie) Thomson had been tall, slim and a passingly attractive girl who worked at the cash desk of the Pollokshaws Public Wash-house and Swimming Baths, (the local "Steamie"). Evie's finest assets were her disproportionately large breasts, always displayed inside tight blouses opened alluringly to create an eye-catching cleavage.

To the dismay and shame of her family, Evie soon discovered she enjoyed teasing men, manipulating an ever-changing clutch of 'suitsors', running them ragged on a parallel course. After a few years of refining her talent, persisting as a notorious and fickle spinster, Evie gravitated to the Old Swan Inn where she spent most of her evenings imbibing men's favours of sweet sherry. Enthroned in the Ladies' Lounge, Evie entertained her 'boys' as she termed them, captivating them with sultry looks and subtle under-the-table caresses, designed to heighten their desires. Later, after closing time, the successful stallion, provided he had flashed paper money in a suitable denomination, might be invited to her squalid lodging room.

By her mid-thirties, when the bloom of her early beauty had long faded, Evie pursued and snared big-talking fifty-two-year old Charles Templeton by convincing him he was responsible for making her pregnant. For Evie the attraction of Chick was his secure job and that he was easily persuaded by her pouting endearments. With this marriage, Evie escaped from the boredom of the mainly female company of the Steamie. Whether Chick was the father, Evie was never sure, but with Hilary to care for, Evie 'retired' and spent her days listening to the wireless, reading penny dreadfuls, and smoking languidly as she dreamed of better days. Only occasionally did Evie stir to attend to housework, limiting

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this to flipping a duster over her few items of furniture. She soon learned her new husband was a poor catch. Her purse was almost always empty.

The blustering Chick handled the outgoings for rent and other recurring bills, though always running in arrears due to his gambling habit. Like most secret gamblers, Chick dressed his unrealistic fantasies as ambitions, his many 'soon to be made real plans' which would magically materialise without the need for hard work or sacrifice on his part.

On one occasion when flush, Chick used part of his winnings to pay 'key money' to the Factor of the very impressive red sandstone tenement in Greenview Street in Pollokshaws, known locally as the 'Bank Building' because on the ground floor it housed a branch of the Commercial Bank of Scotland.

With this audacious move, Chick had elevated his small family high above the other Templetons and Thomsons on the social ladder. Aged eight, Hilary moved from a tiny single-roomed house (a single end), to a spacious two-bedroom flat with a kitchen, front room and bathroom. In an attempt to impress, this grand description was broadcast by Chick and Evie at every opportunity. It was however a hollow assertion; they lived on a financial knife edge, actively deterring other family members from visiting their new home as this would reveal their frugal lifestyle. Chick vowed to solve this problem with one further big win at the greyhound races: then he would quit forever, he promised Evie.

Hilary was thirteen when her father died on a cold February evening at Shawfield Stadium. On this fateful Friday Chick had been flush, with £53 stuffed in his jacket pockets. The excitement of this long-awaited big win raised his blood pressure, killing him with a massive thrombosis. The lone police officer 'on duty' was PC Samuel Witherspoon, (Spoonie), loitering in the warmth of the Janitor's office, scrounging tea and digestive biscuits while he warmed his large backside over a paraffin stove. Spoonie recognised his former colleague Chick, knew of his reputation, threw his cape over the dead man and rifled his pockets. The policeman was adept at this and took everything, even the coins from Chick's trouser pockets. However, he missed Chick's "back-up money" for the week ahead, two one-pound notes he kept stuffed in his left shoe in the hope it would help prevent him gambling it away when 'the rush' took hold of his senses. This money was discovered by the undertaker's assistant, and honest woman, a friend of Evie's sister from the Gospel Hall.

During the months following Chick's demise, Evie attempted various employments, none of which she managed to hold down for more than a few weeks, due mainly to her addled

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brain and uncertain time-keeping. Her salvation came from Moyna Murray, an older widow lady who ran a small shop which sold confectioneries, newspapers, cigarettes and tobaccos. Moyna gave Evie a part-time job behind the counter. This allowed the hard-pressed Moyna to slip upstairs to tend her aged father who was in steady decline. As Moyna's shop was only a few steps from the Bank Building and Moyna had a forgiving nature, Evie managed to cling to this post, struggling financially from week to week, eking out Chick's small pension for the police.

As in the past Evie was helped with donations of fresh seasonal vegetables and home-baked bread by her virtuous sister Elspeth Brotherton (nee Thomson). During their many earnest Prayers of Intercession at the Gospel Hall Midweek Meeting, Elspeth continually brought the wayward Evelyn and her bereft niece Hilary before God and to the attention of their eldest sister Agnes.

Miss Agnes Thomson was Hilary's spinster aunt, the matriarch of Evie Thomson's family. Agnes Thomson and her 'brother in Christ', an older man called Thomas Doig, were leading lights at the Gospel Hall in Pollokshaws. Theirs was a platonic but dynamic relationship which had endured over many years. Both were dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Christ to the poor people of Pollokshaws, mainly children and lost souls who drifted into their orbit, attracted by the free tea and buns at the end of the Lantern Slide Shows depicting even poorer people in Africa, people who lived in mud huts.

When Charles Templeton had been alive, Agnes had shunned her sister Evie and had steadfastly ignored her niece Hilary. Now Chick was gone, her attitude to Hilary changed: Agnes saw the girl as a waif, a soul to be saved for the Lord Jesus. In Agnes's heart, her sister Evie was beyond redemption, already doomed by her lifestyle to Eternal Damnation, as she so justly deserved. Agnes made it her personal mission to mould Hilary in her own image, thus making her acceptable for Eternal Life in Heaven.

At her father's death Hilary's chance of a College education seemed gone forever. However, her uncle Walter Brotherton, Elspeth's husband, brought Hilary's plight to the attention of his employer. Sir John Stirling-Maxwell, 10th Baronet of Pollok, who owned the vast Pollok Estate where Walter was Head Gardener. After making discrete enquiries of her academic record and character, Sir John, as he had done for other promising youngsters before her, restored Hilary's dream. On the following Christmas, aged fourteen, Hilary left Shawlands Senior Secondary and enrolled at Skerry's College, her studies funded by a scholarship from her benefactor.

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With the encouragement of Agnes, Elspeth and Walter, Hilary was drawn into the ethos of the Gospel Hall enshrined in its Circle of Virtue - (Prayer, Praise, Spreading the Word of the Lord Jesus, Self-Discipline, Personal Endeavour, and Charity to the 'deserving poor'). The tight knit and claustrophobic Gospel Hall community offered the girl partial escape from her errant mother and set the tone for the first part of her adult life. The teenager became a regular attender, falling into the thrall of her highly-opinionated Aunt Agnes. Hilary had previously heard her father call Agnes Thomson a 'bigoted ogre' but soon the Gospel Hall was the centre of Hilary's universe with stern Aunt Agnes as Hilary's role model, much to Evie's disgust.

With the unexpected opportunity to attend Skerry's, Hilary worked exceptionally hard while praying fervently, night and day. A year later she had earned her precious Skerry's College Certificate, with top marks in Shorthand, Typing and Book-keeping. Armed with a 'Letter of Character' written by Mr Doig and kindly counter-signed by Sir John, Hilary applied to Henning & Henning. This long-established practice comprised of Herbert, his wife Avril, also a qualified lawyer and full Partner (the second Henning in Henning & Henning), three Associate Partners and a small cadre of legal assistants. As Senior Woman, Agnes Thomson ensured the administration of the practice ran smoothly by dominating the small squadron of clerks and typists who served the 'legals'.

At Miss Thomson's request, Herbert Henning inspected both Certificate and Letter proffered by the painfully thin, fresh-faced girl sitting before him in her new dress, and nodded his head wisely. The girl commenced her employment at Newton Place a few days after her fifteenth birthday. From her first day at Henning & Henning, her diligence, quick mind and ruthless attention to detail marked her out from the other young women who drifted through the general office, most moving on to other more exciting employments or leaving to marry.

On joining Henning & Henning and at both aunts' promptings, Hilary became a full adult member the Gospel Hall. Secure in the arms of the Lord Jesus, she was now made aware of the full extent of her mother's sins, her father's gambling, and other secrets of the fractured Thomson family. She learned the Thomson sisters had a brother, her uncle George Thomson, who, like her paternal uncles had also become a policeman. According to Agnes, her brother had let his branch of the Thomson family down badly by marrying a Roman Catholic. Uncle George and whatever had become of him was never to be discussed. In secret, her Aunt Elspeth whispered Christmas cards sent by George's wife Annie revealed they lived in the Hillhead district of Glasgow's West End. Such cards had been denounced fiercely by Agnes as the creeping commercialism of Christmas and, she

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advised with great certainty, Hillhead was a well-known student-infested haunt. As such Hillhead must, therefore, be a place of lax morals, unrestrained drinking and worse. All communications between this reprobate brother and his sisters had been severed, at Agnes's insistence. This mantra Hilary had accepted without demur, at least while Aunt Agnes was alive.

Henning & Henning provided Hilary with a small but steady wage and the teenager became the financial mainstay of the Templeton family, taking on the role of purse keeper, dispensing money to her mother day by day for shopping and to meet the rent and other recurring bills. Three years passed in this manner: Hilary progressed upwardly within Henning & Henning and at the Gospel Hall: meanwhile Evie declined, smoking and drinking more, skulking off to the cinema. Or, if Hilary went to the Gospel Hall, Evie slipped out to ensconce herself in her haunt of bygone nights of delight, the Old Swan Inn, hoping to find an old flame to titillate with her dubious charms and fumbblings..

It took time, but one day Moyna finally caught Evie red-handed stealing cigarettes and money from the shop till. Evie was dismissed under a cloud, becoming the subject of enjoyable gossip throughout the neighbourhood, to the great embarrassment of her now deeply religious daughter. Evie's fall from grace was soon followed by another slip. Three weeks later, on a wet November night, she had been trotting through a smirr of rain, crossing Pollokshaws Road, returning from the off-licence at the Old Swan Inn, clutching an unopened half-bottle of sweet sherry. The cobbles were slippery. Evie had already imbibed alone in the Ladies' Lounge. The speeding tram dinged its warning, dropped sand to assist its braking and released its cowcatcher, which unfortunately jammed, failing to drop. "If yer wuman hid stoapped runnin, Ah mighta mist hur", the tearful driver insisted. But the inebriated Evie had kept trotting then skidded, tumbled onto one outstretched hand. Both feet were sliced off at the ankles. Evie died in an ambulance on her journey to the Victoria Infirmary.

Hilary, newly eighteen, was alone. The Factor for the Bank Building refused to allow the tenancy of such a desirable property to pass to 'a mere slip of a girl', as he had referred to her. There was also the matter of six weeks unpaid rent, money which Hilary had given faithfully to Evie, but which her mother, the Factor alleged, had not paid.

With Hilary homeless, Uncle Walter and Aunt Elspeth stepped in and 'adopted' their clever niece, bringing her into their lives at the gatehouse lodge cottage on the Pollok Estate which they occupied rent free, a perquisite of Walter's employment. Now Hilary

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had daily contact with her cousin who was now twenty-two, and the cousins became close friends.

In his youth, William (Bill) Brotherton had also attended the Gospel Hall with his parents. Aged sixteen, following a theological difference of opinion with his Aunt Agnes, Bill had moved to test his convictions at the Pollokshaws Methodist Church, where he became a member, befriending the like-minded John MacAuley.

The Brothertons' cottage was on the edge of the Pollok Estate, close to Pollokshaws Burgh Hall (built by Sir John Stirling-Maxwell), and adjacent to Sir John Maxwell's school (built by the grandfather of the current Sir John). This was the school which both Hilary and Bill had attended as primary pupils, the less academically able Bill continuing in the school's Junior Secondary department. The Brothertons were part of the Pollok Estate 'family', with licence to walk through the extensive grounds without hindrance. With this new space and freedom, Hilary established her life-long interest in dogs, acquiring two Cairn Terriers pups on which she lavished her repressed maternal instincts.

On leaving school Hilary had been a self-contained, slim, flat-chested girl with a long thin nose under intelligent and serious dark blue eyes. In her secondary school years, believing herself to be undesirable, she had avoided physical contact with boys. Her single emotional crush had been on a girl called Marianne MacAuley, an attractive and cheerful girl, busty beyond her thirteen years. Marianne, who lived above Hilary in the Bank Building also attended Shawlands Academy. With a pretty face and cheerful nature, Marianne was a girl whom everyone had fallen for, including several plainer girls like Hilary.

During the years before Hilary's move to the Brothertons cottage and her re-orientation by Aunt Agnes, Hilary and Marianne had shared their lives and secrets on a daily basis. Almost unnoticed by Hilary, Marianne had an older brother, John MacAuley, who worked in an office in town. As a teenager, Hilary had thought John with his suit, fob watch and thick rimmed spectacles, to be already a man, remote from her and Marianne, and their girlish interests. However, John, who was shy with women of his own age had noticed Hilary, the slim girl with the laughing dark-blue eyes and long pigtail.

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Aged sixty-two, Agnes Thomson died of stomach problems after a mercifully short illness. During the previous eight years, Hilary's career in Henning & Henning had been on a continuous upward trajectory. At twenty-three, Hilary was the unanimous choice of the Partners to succeed her aunt, although this relationship had been a secret which both

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niece and aunt had kept from their work colleagues. Hilary Templeton became the youngest Senior Woman the firm had ever allowed in their long history. They quickly came to realise they had made a wise choice. During the years which followed, and operating within the tight-knit 'family' of senior people within Henning & Henning, Hilary Templeton earned the right to the respect she received by dint of her diligence, vigilance and unflappable professionalism.

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At the Gospel Hall, Hilary had also inherited the authority of her aunt, assuming leadership of the dwindling band of mainly middle-aged and middle-class ladies and gentlemen, gently cajoling the now clearly deaf Thomas Doig. With Agnes gone, Hilary's fervour slowly waned. This gradual change of heart was due mainly due to her contact with her cousin Bill. As a result, the older Hilary had become less dogmatic, more willing to see a different path to Salvation for those around her.

During the years which followed, Hilary, now a confirmed spinster, became stuck in a rut of her own choosing, devoting her life according to the following priority:

- to her dogs, Mack and Freddy,
- to managing the idiosyncratic and occasionally unpredictable behaviour of Mr Herbert and the constant demands of Henning & Henning,
- and, with cooling ardour, to her role as the principal Sunday School teacher at the Gospel Hall while acting as its de facto leader.

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Rita Nights

Myra re-bounded from her discovery of Sandy's bed-wetting with what might be considered as self-righteous defiance. She was eighteen and had been married for six frustrating sex-free months. This was not the story she had written for herself. She began to think of what Rita Miller of her penny dreadful stories might do in her situation.

Listening to the older girls gossiping at St George's, (some married, some still hoping), the idea of 'playing away from home' took hold. But these girls were taking chances. Myra had no plan to become pregnant out of wedlock. The solution came from Daisy Donovan, who now openly shared her innermost secrets with Myra, prattling away like a budgie as they did the books together.

Daisy Donovan and Martin (Marty) had three kids, more than enough, Daisy stated repeatedly. Space and money were tight. They lived with Marty's widowed mother in Raeburn Street in Maryhill, suffering the complications and tensions this produced. At least it allowed Daisy to work full-time as her mother-in-law was always available to watch over the kids. Marty was a road-sweeper and earned very little. Daisy's wage was the mainstay of her family. When Marty came a-calling in the night, Daisy fended him off, whenever she could. Another pregnancy would sink them.

Daisy, a plain, larger-bosomed woman with a waspish tongue when riled, was proud her Marty was very good looking, but worried constantly about losing him. Marty was a chatty guy, good at talking to people. What she had seen might be nothing, or it could be more, she said, but several times she had seen Marty laughing and kidding with a glamorous widow who lived in the next street. Lexie Chisholm worked as a waitress in a cocktail bar in a fancy hotel somewhere in town. Everyone said Lexie was a man-eater. One day Daisy had caught Marty out. Daisy had watched from a distance as Marty propped his brush and shovel against Lexie's close mouth and followed her inside. He was away for ages and came out alone, whistling, happy. Later, when challenged, Marty had said Lexie's bedroom curtains were jamming, and he had volunteered to fix them. There was nothing in it, he protested. To ensure Marty did not stray from home, Daisy decided to give in to his demands when he wanted sex. Being a good Catholic, he refused to buy protectives, so it was up to her. Once Daisy had done it, she told everyone where to get them. It was easy, so long as you could prove you were married, she whispered.

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During a lunch break, sporting both her wedding band and her largest most expensive engagement ring, (one of three she had kept from Sadie's collection), Myra made a visit to Daisy's chemist shop near Queen's Cross. She bought their entire stock of protectives from the astonished elderly male assistant. Myra had Father Donnelly's marriage certificate with her. This proved unnecessary. The man would not meet Myra's bold eyes and did not dare to ask for proof.

Now she was free to be Rita Miller, Myra began to make Rita's story real.

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Most Friday evenings, as soon as Sandy had left for his night-shift, she dressed as Rita Miller, her dancing outfit concealed by her long gabardine coat, her hair under a dark grey scarf, wearing flat, soft soled 'quiet' shoes which did not click-clack on the stairs as she left and returned. She carried her accoutrements in a new larger handbag, one which had a strong zip and a lockable clip.

After some experimenting, The Plaza Ballroom, near Eglinton Toll on the south side of Glasgow became her usual destination. It was easily reached by taking the Subway from Merkland Street to Bridge Street then walking the short distance. Occasionally she would catch a tram as far out as Shawlands or Pollokshaws and several times went as far as Thornliebank. Once she made the long trek to Denniston Palais, to check out the men there. However, The Plaza suited her best; it was easy to get to and always busy, offering a wide choice of men who hailed mainly from the South Side. These were men whom Myra would be unlikely to meet in her other lives at St George's or Caird Drive. If she did, she judged it was unlikely they would recognise her as the elegantly dressed Mrs Kaywood, the professional business woman.

Rita's outfits were garish, chosen to demonstrate she was 'available'. Her standard outfit comprised a fulsome knee length black skirt with long slits on both sides which could be easily hitched. She always tanned her legs and did not wear stockings or underwear. Her blouses in red, green or dark blue were tightly fitting with plunging necklines. In her large handbag, she carried shiny black dancing shoes and her choice of wig from the selection purchased from Celia's collection. While travelling, her outfit hidden under her raincoat, her face scrubbed clean, she gave the impression of an ordinary woman returning home late from work or a shopping expedition. In the ladies' restroom, she changed in a WC cubicle, deliberately applying heavy make-up under her chosen wig and spectacles, completing her transformation into Rita Miller, a dance hall tart from Kinning Park. Rita always chewed spearmint gum, cracked bubbles like an expert and generously offered her dancing partners several chicklets as most had poor oral hygiene.

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With her coat and bag deposited in the cloakroom she was unencumbered, giving her complete freedom to move through the throng while she sought out her man of choice. Friday nights at Glasgow's dance halls were always busy, as most people had been paid on leaving work and were keen to get in the mood.

Her ideal dancing partner would have been a duplicate of her brother Frank, but this fictional being never materialised. More realistically her targets would preferably be taller than her, reasonably good looking, hopefully good dancers. Most definitely they must not be smokers. Getting started had been the most difficult part. After several evenings failing to 'click', Rita became bolder at giving her chosen man 'the eye', leering, smiling, making it plain she wanted to be asked to dance. Being obviously alone helped, she found, compared with being part of a pair of women or worst of all, a threesome. Soon her success rate at hooking the first-choice man was high.

After Rita got a man to ask her for a dance, normally the rest was easy. She made it immediately obvious she was 'willing' by the way she rubbed against her partner as they danced, resting her cheek in the crook of his neck in the slow numbers, whispering he was a "dream dancer". When she sensed he was aroused, she would at once suggest they catch a breath of air or more boldly, they leave early, so they could be together, away from the crush of the crowd. Some men took fright at her boldness but most were delighted to accept her lead. Outside she looped her arm through his, pulled him to her, chatting brightly as Rita, regurgitating versions of the banal rubbish the girls in the shop considered to be conversation, while guiding him quickly to her chosen location.

Rita did not fret if her escorts wore a wedding band, as she did. Indeed she found married men were often more light-hearted, less ready to mumble their undying love as their hands sought to unbutton her blouse. If they asked, which was seldom, Rita had a story ready, which she delivered in her father's Glasgow patois . . .

Rita's husband Kevin (Kev) was an invalid, paralysed below the waist from a broken back caused by a fall in Fairfield's shipyard. Kev had been a top earner but now had a low-paid office job. Sadly, Kev's dancing and romancing days were over. Poor Rita was still young and had urgent needs . . .

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Over the months which followed, Rita learned which quiet closes and backcourts in the stolid middle-class tenements of the Pollokshields area provided the most secure locations for her encounters. Often these had tiled entryways similar to her own in Caird

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Drive and were inhabited by respectable people who would have been shocked to know what was happening a few feet from their bedroom windows.

Through Rita's dance hall excursions Myra discovered many of the younger men she snared were virgins. Most, even married ones, were often completely inexperienced at using a protective. She often got splashed as she tried to help put it on. If this happened, she quickly produced a hand towel from her commodious handbag, and soon had both herself and her man dry. After a bit of ego soothing, she then found they could start again.

Usually at the second attempt, all went to plan. Observing from 'above', Myra saw Rita throw herself enthusiastically into her role, clawing at their backs, searching with her tongue, talking dirty, even climbing up onto them, shoving back hard as they thrust up into her, and playing to the full the part of the sex-deprived woman which the impotent Kev made her. Rita the slut wanted these men badly and in response to her abandon they wanted her in equal measure. Most encounters involved three or more couplings. Playing out her role as Rita, Myra became desirable, no longer odd, verging on ugly. Unlike Sandy these men truly wanted her, fulfilled her, and gave her the shuddering release she craved.

Without fully realising what was happening, Myra was becoming a very accomplished lover.

Occasionally Rita would be offered money for her services, usually a few coins, very occasionally a crumpled ten shilling note. In keeping with her Rita persona, she always accepted, pretending grateful surprise:

"Oh thanks! It's that kind o' ye. This'll help get new claites fur the weans. Everythin's sae hard noo, wi' nae overtime fur ma man."

Only when she was extra needy would Rita hook the same man a second time and only if he had been accomplished. Myra had no desire for a long-term relationship and its complications - she had too much to lose.

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An unexpected bonus from her dancing nights were the many tales of sexual bravado gleaned from the bold chatter of those around her in ladies' cloakrooms at whatever dance hall she visited. As Rita carefully applied her garish make-up, staring back at herself in a small mirror hanging from the coat hook behind the locked toilet door, what she heard followed a common pattern. The 'experiences' of these girls and women were

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heightened versions of the whispered snatches of the fantasies she heard when she occasionally visited the small staff canteen at St George's.

Although Myra realised very few of their tales matched her own 'Rita nights' experiences; these simpler, more romantic confections were clearly what her readers had once experienced or expected. Suitably embellished and woven into fuller tale, these snippets provided highly combustible fuel for the new more explicit down-to-earth romances which she began to scribe in the quiet of her Caird Drive kitchen. Her literary output veered now more fully to the penny dreadful genre which was flying off the bookshelves in the run up to war, as people increasingly jitterbugged their way to a future lived for today while ready to damn a tomorrow they might not live to see.

During her early weeks as Rita, Myra's weeknight routine changed. After Sandy left for work, and sitting at the kitchen table with her foolscap pad and pencil box, dressed and made-up as Rita, Myra found it easy to scribble a first draft. If she could find a Jazz programme on the wireless, this was a plus. She then used her new typewriter to create the final drafts. On several occasions she tried typing out her stories directly, but soon reverted, preferring pencil and paper until the story was 'first crafted', and ready for final composition.

What surprised Myra was how well low-end magazines paid: this was probably because they had higher circulations and glossier, bawdier advertising, she reasoned. Often they published her work unedited, something *Woman's Own* and *Woman's Realm* would never condone. As an experiment, with a gap of only a few weeks and with the same magazine, Myra re-used one of her most lurid stories a second time, with a simple change of names and minor adjustments to the plot and character descriptions. It was accepted and published without challenge. The same happened the next time she tried her ploy - acceptance. She began to sell the same basic story formula several times over, often separated only by a month, keeping a diary to keep track of which stories she had re-used and with which magazines. It seemed the public's appetite for this material was voracious, insatiable. This was a need she understood, as she too enjoyed reliving her own 'Rita nights' as she typed furiously before taking her fictional men to her lonely bed with her, as perhaps her readers did also. By late January 1938, Myra's earnings from her writings exceeded her wages from St George's.

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Although her clandestine sex life as Rita Miller from Kinning Park was highly educational, it would occasionally throw up strange and sometimes pathetic or revolting requests, even

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from men who looked and had acted 'normal'. Myra began to understand where Mavis Riddell filled a niche. Over time she became more discerning, harder to please and sometimes, if the man became aggressive, afraid. As the spring approached and nights became lighter, her ardour began to pale. The reality of furtive fumbling in dreary backcourts with dull men who had little or no conversation was far from her dream, and so unlike the thrilling romantic encounters she fabricated from them afterwards.

Gradually her 'Rita nights' became less frequent. These tawdry encounters had served their purpose, giving her confidence she could arouse the man of her choice, given control of the circumstances. What she craved was proper sex, lying down sex, what the actors hinted at on the silver screen, as she had dreamt of repeatedly since she was a teenager. Although she could boast a comfortable new bed in a nice bedroom in a very presentable modernised home, this had come with the liability of a husband she no longer wanted.

The thought he might inadvertently urinate on her after sex made her shudder. And, now she had crossed the line by her encounters as Rita, Myra found she could not bring herself to woo Sandy again.

What Myra wanted was someone from one of her *Woman's Own* stories, but she saw no possibility of finding one without losing her newly found status as a respectable business woman and neighbour. Seeing no immediate prospect of fulfilment, she decided to leave Rita to one side meanwhile and concentrate on another story she had been researching and drafting for months.

It was time to act out the story she had written for this odious man.

Carpe Diem!

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Private Tramway Track

Sunday 20 February 1938.

Gerrard Henson was on the tram from Barrhead heading to Glasgow. Sunday was the most important day in his week, when he was free of his responsibilities at St George's Furniture department, a day when he could visit his contacts and clients. Sitting on the top deck, enjoying a cigarette, he was looking forward to reporting his latest success to his mother and 'aunt'. His hand moved to the bundle of envelopes bound together with several elastic bands; as he caressed it he smiled his knowing smile. This batch was worth hundreds of pounds. He was already making a mental list of the men and women who would buy them.

It was almost dark. Rain fell in steel grey sheets. The tram reached the section of private tramway track where, free of other traffic, it accelerated to top speed, swaying as it rollicked through the late afternoon gloom, sparks flashing between the pantograph and the overhead line. The hard, grey stone whin chips, which formed the ballast between and to the sides of the rails, glittered as the brightly lit tram hurtled past.

Later accounts from passengers reported the man had been in the enclosed central section of the top deck, smoking cigarettes which gave off a perfumed odour. It was reasoned Henson was intending to dismount at Speirsbridge, where he lived. He had moved from the inner compartment and passed through the door to the open rear section, then steadied himself before moving forward to descend the steep, narrow steps.

No one saw the woman in the rear section reach forward with her silver-topped cane, inserting it between the man's legs as he stepped downwards. Henson was heard cursing as he tumbled down the stairs and sailed headfirst out from the open entryway into a rainy oblivion of the tram onto the trackside.

On hearing the passengers' screams, the driver made an emergency stop. He then ran back to render first aid but found the man beyond help. Everyone rushed to the rear of the tram, the upper deck passengers jostling with those on the lower deck to be first to ogle the twisted remains.

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No one recalled a woman wearing a grey headscarf, grey spectacles and a long gabardine raincoat. After the top deck passengers had disembarked, she quietly made her way from the rear to the front of the tram, where she descended to the empty driver's station before disappearing into the rain-swept twilight. Her walking aid, now suspended from a cord around her neck, was hidden by her loose-fitting coat.

The man's face was unrecognisable. Its impact with the stone chips had erased the smirk from his thin face, leaving only a mush of pink meat and sinewy white bone.

The conductress later said: "He must huv slipped on they wet stairs."

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PC Samuel 'Spoonie' Witherspoon, a veteran with twenty-six-years, was heading for retirement and a decent pension, if he was lucky enough not to be caught. Spoonie ordered the driver and conductress to marshal their passengers back into the tram while he used his torch to examine the corpse for clues as to its identity. He discovered Gerrard's wallet containing several hundred pounds. Only seven of these appeared on the Inventory which accompanied Henson's corpse to the morgue.

Spoonie also filched the package from the commodious inside pocket of Gerrard Henson's expensive mohair overcoat. On examining it later in the comfort of the nearby blue police box, Spoonie found his 'find' contained bundles of brown envelopes totalling hundreds of photographs of naked boys and girls; some posed alone, some in small groups, and some with cut-off images of anonymous men exposing themselves. This was dynamite. Spoonie knew exactly which newspaper hack to leak this information to, anonymously, for a fee. Soon Spoonie was even richer.

During the first round of revelations, Gerrard's mother made an energetic attempt to hush up what had been discovered, pulling favours from past deals.

Unfortunately for Magda Henson, Myra, anonymously and free of payment, sent several local and national newspapers an almost complete list of the men and women who had been Gerrard Henson's clients. She had removed this evidence from the filing cabinet in Mr Gerrard's cubbyhole office at St George's.

The story ignited into a short but explosive blaze of national publicity. The denials which flared brightly and vehemently lasted for a record two-week period. The lives of many

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of those exposed to this scandal would never be the same again, tainted by the acrid stench which accompanied the searing heat of negative publicity when their names escaped into the public domain, despite repeated strenuous efforts to quash the rumours. One broadsheet editorial intoned

“Indulging in child pornography and possible physical abuse is a taboo which every civilized society holds dear. Perpetrators of this most pernicious of crimes should and must be rooted out from all decent company, no matter in which strata of society such deviants seek to skulk.”

Myra held back several names from *Gerrard's little black book*. A few of these were people whom she knew intimately and who were now at risk of suffering a similar fate to the swanky, smirking *Gerrard*. Certain others she knew only by reputation but, because they were within her reach, she felt compelled to deal with them personally, after diligent research.

Her success with *Gerard Henson* had proved careful planning worked.

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Sea Change

Late Spring 1938.

Myra had the home she had dreamed of but her marriage to Sandy seemed a lost cause. She was unsure what to do about him but felt she still needed him to maintain her respectability and her martyr status with her neighbours.

Her secret life as Rita Miller, who offered serial vertical sex to a favoured few, no longer excited her as it once had. The days were growing longer: finding suitable dark places to consume these hurried 'romances' was becoming more difficult. It was time to move on.

Henson's disposal had needed very careful planning and boldness, but she had taken her chances, proved to herself she could succeed. She immediately began the process of writing stories for the others on her hit list.

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At St George's, as soon as it became known Henson was dead, Myra 'assumed' full control of Furniture. Secure in the knowledge he would never return, several men from other departments now vied for the more prestigious post of Head of Furniture, whining to Gordon Galbraith Myra was far too young, claiming she had jumped the queue. Her response was to move into Gerrard's old room, clearing it out, bringing Mr Bryce in at her own expense to change Henson's Yale for a special high security Chubb lock of her choosing, retaining all three keys. She even painted the tiny room herself to make it fresh and bright. Unfortunately, Gerrard's 'private' telephone had been disconnected within a few days of his death, on orders issued directly from Morrison Street, Mr Gordon said.

In the face of this pressure, her ladies rallied round in support, providing details of the tittle-tattle being circulated against her. Including the hapless Senga, the seventeen-year-old Myra had four 'girls' (all in the fifties), working under her. These women now saw her as their clever 'daughter', who looked out for them first, covered up their mistakes, gave them wee treats, allowed them to sneak out the back door early, if they needed away for shopping or grandchildren. They told everyone Myra was the boss they wanted, the best boss they had ever had.

Over the weeks which followed, she ignored the men muttering amongst themselves, including the comments deliberately said in her hearing, hinting at her closeness to

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Gordon, implying sexual favours had been given. She was used to this sort of talk: these men continually used smutty innuendo when joking amongst themselves and even, on occasion, to the women under them.

In preparation for Gerrard's departure Myra had worked on Gordon Galbraith, showing him the figures, reminding him he had 'promoted' her during Mr Gerrard's long sickness leave, using the dates of each sale entry to demonstrate the improved sales were due to her, not Henson.

With Henson gone, Galbraith dithered. Myra redoubled her pressure on him, mercilessly, reminding him of the past when these complainers had been unwilling to 'act up' to cover for Mr Gerrard. The fact she now knew about at least some part of Gordon Galbraith's unsavoury secret life made her bold.

Myra felt her clincher argument related to the Monthly Books for Head Office at Morrison Street. Galbraith's arithmetic was not his strongest attribute. Before Myra's involvement, these returns had been a major problem for Daisy and Gordon, causing him stress and making Daisy tearful. Since Myra had been helping them, these difficulties had evaporated. Although Daisy was still in nominal charge, Myra did the hard work, Daisy the fetching and carrying of the departmental records, acting as Myra's assistant.

When they had them ready for sign off, Mr Gordon completed his ritual by tutting and harrumphing as he scanned them quickly, then gladly signed them without proper checking. Visibly relieved his ordeal was at an end, he would ask obsequiously:

"Oh Daisy, my dear, would you please, please wrap these in stiff brown paper and tie them up for my Monday morning meeting with Mr Edward".

This final part of the ritual had become a standing joke between Daisy and Myra and they struggled to hide their mirth. It seemed the highlight of Mr Gordon's life was his Monthly Meeting at HQ with Ted MacElhose.

As the weeks unfolded, Gordon Galbraith continued to waver, trying to be everyone's friend, refusing to openly confirm Myra's promotion. She decided to act by reminding him of his previous difficulties and on three consecutive Saturday afternoons Myra made her excuses and left promptly at closing time, leaving Gordon and Daisy to struggle with the end-of-week reconciliations. To create extra leverage when he pleaded for help, Myra pointed out, forcefully, this time-consuming and onerous task of preparing the

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Monthly Books should be his responsibility alone, as neither she nor Daisy was a qualified Bookkeeper.

Myra knew this approach was below the belt. *Gordon Galbraith* had made a space for her, to give her a start straight from school at *Thomas Welsh's* behest. However, with the evidence she had about both of them from *Gerrard's* secret lists, this obligation was set at nought in her metal balance sheet. She had a different story hatching, awaiting her opportunity. Accordingly, she had no compunction in pressurising him as she did, many times a day.

As the Monthly Books hove into view, *Gordon Galbraith* crumbled and openly acknowledged Myra as the new "Head of Furniture and Haberdashery" as she had insisted many times she should be 'titled'. As was *Galbraith's* style, this was done only verbally but in front of a relieved Daisy who could be relied upon to disseminate the big news. There was no formal announcement posted to the staff notice board or letter of appointment issued to confirm this but Myra, her Furniture ladies and *Senga Simpson* in Haberdashery carried on as before. Some of the younger men began to sign up for the forces, leaving gaps for other able women who took the girl Myra as their role model.

Outside Myra's world of *St George's* and *Caird Drive*, Britain was being propelled towards another War and she pondered on what would happen at the Co-op when the remaining younger men were called up by the military. While she was satisfied she had progressed well enough, she was beginning to see a much bigger opportunity ahead and was already editing and finessing her bolder story.

Living with Myra

Night School

The fact Sadie Kaywood had been a bookkeeper sowed the seed of an idea in Myra's head. Over the months she had flicked through Sadie's old AG Jewellery ledgers, but now began studying them. Using a library book, she compared the methods Sadie had used. It was clear Sadie was untrained, an amateur using her own plausible method. Sadie's entries did not seem overly complicated but there was something odd about them, something off-key, hidden. Myra could not see what it was: it irritated like a deep-seated skelf, a nagging toothache.

In the anonymity of the Mitchell Library she studied *The Glasgow Herald* employment pages and saw bookkeepers were always in demand. She was surprised their wages were not as high as she thought they should be, given the level of responsibility they carried. In the section headed "Educational Opportunities" an advertisement from Skerry's College announced courses in "Bookkeeping".

The college also offered "Shorthand and Typing". Myra was already fully proficient in these latter skills from her schooldays, but decided an intensive four-week refresher was required in order to gain formal qualifications, something emphasised as 'highly desirable' in the Bookkeeping job advertisements. With her first ever formal qualification secured, she enrolled for her Bookkeeping course which she found simple to follow and utterly boring but made herself complete to gain the necessary diploma.

These classes ran from Monday to Thursday from 6.30 pm to 9.30 pm. This left only Friday evenings which she set aside to concentrate on her homework assignments before writing on into the small hours on her Gladys stories, her first drafts always hand-written in pencil before being fleshed out, edited then typed up into final versions.

In memory of Miss Pettigrew, Myra had enrolled with Skerry's under as Maria Davina Gallagher. Unlike most of the girls and the few men around her, she was diligent, did her homework, and found the courses easy. By September she had passed through every level available with top grades.

Now, with her new bookkeeping knowledge, when she examined the AG Jewellery Ledgers she saw Sadie had been systematically skimming variable amounts of cash week by week for many years, apparently without detection. Simple arithmetic suggested this was not

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the only source of Sadie's wealth. Perhaps Albie had been generous with gifts of money as well as jewellery and clothing. These ledgers showed he could easily afford it.

Advertised on the notice-board at Skerry's she saw a course on Accountancy. It was expensive, costing £35, but she decided to apply. The tutor was Dr Saul Schofield, a lecturer at Glasgow University, where the course would be held. Using her Skerry's qualifications and adding a few others she did not actually possess, she enrolled to find she was the only female in a class of forty.

The course was intensive, running for ten weeks, meeting on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays for three hours each evening. There was constant pressure to complete assignments and homework exercises, the incentive an "Elementary Diploma in Accountancy".

On the first night of the class Myra arrived early to claim her seat at the right-hand-side of the back row, as if she was back at primary school, knowing from this seat she could easily watch her fellow students with little chance of being observed herself.

Dr Saul Schofield was in his mid-thirties, she thought. He was good-looking, tall with curly black hair, large hazel eyes which flashed with intelligence. He sported a small military style moustache. Several times on the first evening she glanced up from her note-taking to catch him looking at her in a way Rita was very used to from her dance hall nights. Each time she caught him he looked down at once to the safety of his desk or back to his blackboard. Desire surged through her in a way which had never happened before. He seemed perfect - clever, educated, well-dressed, obviously rich and she hoped, available. He did not smoke, she noted at the breaks when the others stood outside in the corridor. Later, as she left, she checked: he did not wear any rings.

As the weeks rolled out, she caught him watching her repeatedly but he made no move. She realised her status as a young and obviously newly-married woman was his stumbling block, putting her off limits to him.

From this first night Myra began to fantasise. If she was to win him as a true lover and perhaps make her life with him, the Rita Miller approach would not work. She must impress him with her cleverness and hope he would step over the line to her. She saw it as a sophisticated version of her dance hall game of getting the chosen man to ask her for a crucial first dance. Once he made the first move, Myra would have a story which he would want to accept.

Living with Myra

On the few occasions when she had been near him, to hand in or get back assignments, he had been friendly but strictly professional. She had smelled a hint of spicy after-shave though not worn to excess as Gordon Galbraith the peacock did at St George's. Dr Schofield was clearly attractive and highly desirable but the absence of a wedding ring began to arouse suspicions. Did he have a dark secret, like Sandy? During the short mid-evening breaks she watched him even more closely: Saul Schofield was open, chatty and jokey with the men in the class. It was only with her he was guarded. As the weeks passed and still he made no move despite her practiced shy and encouraging smiles, the disconcerting thought crept into her mind: perhaps Saul might be the type who preferred other men.

During these intervals, listening intently while apparently checking her notes, she gleaned Saul seemed to be very well-to-do. He had a car and, she overheard, he lived in a large house in Kirklee, prompting one of the men to remark, out of his hearing: "Kirklee is the most desirable part of Glasgow's West End".

From his name and black hair she surmised Dr Saul Schofield might be of Jewish origin, although his features were fine and his skin pink and clear. As the course progressed, his interest in her seemed to grow: his attention was obvious, constant, arousing and distracting. At every opportunity, when heads were down, solving a set problem, if she glanced up quickly, she caught him watching her. She concluded the other students were oblivious of their 'courting', as she now thought it.

Back at Caird Drive after these classes she would complete her assignments with his face swimming before her. Following her usual late-night bath, she would take his stolen glances to bed with her. As she pleased herself to his imagined smile, she dreamt of what it would be like to make love to him, to somehow make him want her, forever, to become part of his life. What would it be like to live in a mansion, she mused. Surely, such a marriage would satisfy Miss Pettigrew's dream for her.

A story of their future life together in Kirklee began to run wild in her head.

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Thursday 24th November 1938 was the last day of the course, a few days after her eighteenth birthday. Myra had made no effort to make friends on the course and had not been invited to join them for the traditional end of course celebratory drink to take place at "The Curlers" public house on the following night.

Living with Myra

In fact, she had sensed they were in awe of her cleverness, which pleased her. For them Accountancy seemed to be important, even interesting. To Myra it was entirely unappealing as a career: she needed to be with real people, not dusty ledgers and double entry bookkeeping. What she needed was the paper qualification to further her career, to be used if and when the opportunity presented itself, to become the person making the decisions for her team, not serving in a sterile office serving higher Management in an Accountancy or Bookkeeping role.

Meantime, if she could also snag this perfect man who seemed to be available and was clearly signalling his interest, it would be her bonus. However unlikely it might seem, she decided, Dr Saul Schofield was most definitely worth pitching for.

What Saul Schofield needed was encouragement: tonight must be the night she drew him to her, she had written their story around this moment. She had made a special effort for him, wearing a charcoal skirt which hugged her figure, making her feel desirable. Crossing her legs revealed panels of dark red silk which Celia had inserted. Her stockings were sheer, 15 Denier, with thin black seams which displayed her excellent legs to best effect. Her heels were low and the leather matched the silk panels exactly. She wore a figure-hugging silver-grey blouse, with a short collar which buttoned to her throat, where she fastened Sadie's opal brooch, its first outing from Caird Drive.

Earlier, at home checking in the wardrobe mirrors, she had judged herself demure, debonair and sophisticated. Now, with Saul so near, Myra felt Rita fighting to take over and her mind raced ahead to an imagined coupling in the dark walk-in cupboard behind him which housed a large electric Gestetner duplicating machine.

Using the short break before the presentation of awards, she had checked her hair, brushed her teeth and applied make-up, lightly. She dabbed a little perfume behind both ears and below her chin. This scene had been written several times to make sure she looked as good as she possibly could in order to present herself 'alluringly'. If he did not make his move tonight, she must surely have misunderstood his repeated glances. She could not envisage another opportunity short of a direct approach as Rita.

Throughout the course Myra had worn stern spectacles with black circular rims, chosen to add to the solemn and studious persona she thought he would like. Now she changed to her pale grey spectacles, her favourites. In her best large black handbag (Frank's long ago gift), she carried all the items she hoped she might need, carefully wrapped in a fresh towel. She was excited, ready for true romance, sensing their encounter would be a success. Slightly flushed, feeling very girlish while fighting to appear calm, she re-took

Living with Myra

her seat for the first act. When the results were revealed, she learned she had passed every segment of the course with full marks and had been given a special additional certificate of merit to mark her outstanding achievement:

Maria Davina Gallagher

Top Student - Autumn 1938

Elementary Diploma in Accountancy

As the others filed out, chattering noisily, Myra took her time packing her things, carefully rolling then re-rolling both parchments tightly together, before easing them into the black diploma tube. Miss Pettigrew would be proud of her. Only when the classroom had cleared and the hubbub in the corridor had died away, did she pick up her handbag, heading towards the coat stand, moving languidly, she hoped. She smiled and he smiled back as she removed her coat from the row of hooks and draped it over her arm.

Opening the door to the corridor before turning back to step towards him:

'Goodbye, Dr Schofield. And thank you for everything. I have really enjoyed these evenings. They have been, well, quite inspiring.'

His face was flushed, his lips parted in a shy smile, revealing a perfect set of teeth. His head went down again to his papers and reluctantly she moved to leave.

As she pulled open the door, he spoke, his voice husky, his words uncertain:

'Ah-ah-ah, emm, excuse me one moment please Mrs Gallagher, perhaps, ah-ah-ah, emm, if you're not in a hurry, perhaps, emm, could you possibly wait behind, just for a few minutes, please?'

She checked the corridor was clear, closed the door, turned the key softly and then moved toward him, hoping her smile looked innocent. Her heart was thudding so loudly she thought he must hear it. She pulled a chair from behind the front row bench and sat in front of him, keeping to one side about six feet away from his desk, so he would have an unobstructed view, playing out a variation of what she had planned in her story.

She crossed her legs, arranging her skirt, easing it up a little to make sure it revealed her perfect legs. She sat erect and cocked her head slightly, inviting him to take the initiative. She was now at the end of Act One, Scene One of her story for them. Myra desperately wanted to be more like Rita but judged her current level of gauche brazenness was as far as she could go. In her story, the next move *must* come from Saul.

Living with Myra

Her strategy was to keep him focussed on her legs and her body, diverting him from her face. She moved to Scene Two.

His face was anxious. His hand shot up to hide the slight deformity on his left ear, a missing ear lobe. He cleared his throat, dug out a handkerchief and blew his nose.

Tilting her head forward, her eyes focussed on her skirt, she gave him permission to watch. She moved her legs once more, placing her right thigh over her left knee before entwining her legs as she again adjusted the hem of her skirt, exposing her knee. After a few seconds, she allowed a moue of apparent discomfort to cross her face then wriggled her derriere before unwrapping her legs and placing her left thigh over her right knee. While doing this, she folded back the hem several inches to examine it for an imaginary loose thread. She searched diligently for this invisible irritant, gave up, then smoothed the hem flat, its edge now an inch higher than before. This sequence was exactly as she had written it in her story and as she had played it out in front of her mirrors.

Allowing a small smile of satisfaction to creep onto her lips, she raised her head slowly, to look into his face, offering her wider innocent smile as before. His eyes flicked away to his papers then back to her legs, then away again, escaping downwards once more to the safety of his desk.

Despite the heat in the room, Saul was frozen. They waited: the only sound was a quiet creaking from the slowly cooling heating pipes. He was stuck, unable to find the words she had written for him, requiring her to offer a prompt:

'Yes, Dr Schofield, how can I be of assistance?'

'Emm, I suppose, emm, I don't know how to put it, emm, I suppose, emm, maybe the best way is, emm, to just say it? What do you think?'

An idea came to Myra and she quickly re-wrote her lines:

'Well, perhaps I could read your mind instead, Dr Schofield?'

'*Can you read minds too?* '

'Let me try, but only if you're not too afraid I might get it right?'

'Emm, no, no, all right then.' His eyes darted to see her leering at him and dived back to his hands which fluttered then settled on his papers. 'Eh, yes, yes, go ahead, please. What is it, emm . . . ' He coughed then swallowed. ' Pardon me, what is it I want to say to you?'

'You're quite sure?'

'Ye-es, yes, I'm sure. Yes, go ahead please. Read my mind, if you can?'

Living with Myra

He was smiling broadly now, and she beamed back.

'All right, Saul - can I call you Saul?'

'Yes, please - it's Maria?'

'If you wish, but my intimate friends call me Myra. I am no longer religious as I once was.'

'Myra? Yes, I like Myra better.'

'Excellent! Now, at long, long last we are Saul and Myra, two friends having a tête á tête, agreed?'

He nodded. Myra smiled and he smiled, rocked back in his chair. Now relaxed, his thumbs found the side pockets of his fancy yellow silk waistcoat.

'Do you know, Saul, I began to doubt we might never actually have a chance to be alone together. This is what you wanted, am I reading your mind correctly?'

'Yes, yes, emm, I was hoping we might, emm . . .'

Rita leered again, raising the hem of her skirt even more, her eyes seeking out the bulge at his crotch. He flushed a bright red and looked down at his papers, sat forward. Then his eyes glanced across sideways at the door.

'It's all right Saul, I locked it. We are quite alone.'

'What? You locked it? You're sure?'

'Yes, it's most definitely locked. Well Saul, let's see if I can read a little more of what you wanted to say to me?'

Rita took hold and Myra flashed a glance over his shoulder at the walk-in cupboard, causing Saul to swivel around to look at it.

Myra fought back and stuck to her new script:

'Well, Dr Saul Schofield, over the previous nine weeks, every time this class came to an end, you wanted to ask me if I might be 'available', to ask if I have a husband who 'cares'? Now at last your opportunity has arrived you want to ask if I would like to have an affair with an eligible bachelor, who has very strong feelings towards me, whose eyes have been ravishing my body at every opportunity?'

'Oh my God, have I been so obvious?'

'No, actually, you've been quite discreet Saul, and very sweet with it too.'

'Emm . . . So, emm . . ., is there a chance?'

'Well, Saul, there *is* a husband but he is a very *nominal* husband. An older man who works permanent nightshift. This arrangement suits both of us very well. So yes, I am 'available', perhaps. But more to the point, dearest Saul, do you have an existing "attachment". What

Living with Myra

dark secret has kept a handsome chap like you from marrying? Or, perhaps you run a harem of women like me? If so, please say now, because, to tell you the truth, Saul, if you are hoping to add me to your stable of fillies, you can count me out. I don't share a lover with another - far too complicated.'

'My God Mrs Gallagher, you surely know how to get to the nub of the matter.'

'Well, Saul, tell me your tale, but make it the truth. Remember, I can read your mind, if I choose.'

She watched him squirm, allowing the silence to grow. He studied his hands as he thought over how to explain matters, then suddenly a smile spread slowly across his face.

'Myra, I think you need to meet my mother. Only then you will understand what has shaped my life.'

'No, Saul, absolutely not! Your proposal suggests your mother is someone who needs help. I've been snared into this situation before, helping elderly ladies with problems. I'm not the type. No, you and I might share a common desire to fornicate, but I am *not* in the business of becoming your mother's help maid. No, thank you very much!'

His smile disappeared, replaced with a frown of concern, anxiety. He was telling the truth, Myra judged.

'No, Myra, my mother is already beyond help. It was a hard thing for me to do, but in the end she was a danger to herself, so Papa and Uncle David agreed. Have you heard of Lennox Castle Hospital?'

'Ah. . ., your mother is in hospital, not at home being cared for by you and a squad of nurses and relatives?'

'Yes, Lennox Castle, for the last year. They say she is very unlikely to return to us. Her mind has gone completely. So, it seems at last I'm free. And yes, to answer your other question truthfully, there have been a few others but because of Mum . . . emm, well, none of them worked out. Mum seemed to know at once, and well . . .'

He looked at her hopefully. She smiled and he smiled back, rising to his feet and moving towards her. She stood to meet him. Close too, Dr Saul Schofield was a little taller than Frank:

'Well, Saul, now we have cleared things up on both sides we can move ahead. I understand you have a car?'

'Yes, I do.'

'And a rather nice house in Kirklee?'

'Yes, I would say it's very nice indeed.'

Living with Myra

'Do you live alone, Saul?'

'Yes. There's Rene, my cleaning lady, but she's always away by six, at the latest.'

'Good. But Saul, forgive me for asking, are you a bed-wetter?'

'What?' Of course not!

'Good. Then perhaps you would like to invite me to your very nice house in Kirklee?'

'Now?'

'Yes. And I am very much hoping you have a nice comfortable bed, Saul. Do you?'

'Emm, eh, yes. I find it very comfortable.'

'Has it been used for any of your previous "encounters"?''

'Emm, eh, no . . . Mum, would have . . ., emm . . .'

'Well Dr Saul Schofield, let's try out this very comfortable *virgin* bed of yours, shall we?'

Living with Myra

Disintegration

On Saturday 10th December 1938 catastrophe struck the Gallagher family. Jean wasn't sure what happened; she had been out at the dancing. Her parents had been into town, she thought, to see the Christmas Panto at the Pavilion Theatre.

The elderly couple alighted from the Yoker tram on the opposite side of the street from their tenement close. It had been wet and windy all day. Thunder was rumbling and the heavens opened. The Conductress heard him shout: "C'mon Mary girl, let's hightail it!" Michael had grabbed Mary's arm. They ran out from behind their tram into the path of another tram racing along in the opposite direction.

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The news reached Myra when her brother Frank yanked repeatedly at her door-pull at three o'clock on Sunday morning. He was wearing his new Inspector's uniform. In the rush to respond, he had forgotten to wear his new trench coat. Wearing only a Rita bra and knickers under her pale pink fluffy dressing gown, her hair still damp after her bath, Myra was up late, listening to background dance music on her radiogram while typing a chapter of her latest raunchy penny dreadful story. (Checking afterwards, Myra knew that Sandy, drugged by his sleeping pills, had probably slept through the entire visit.)

'Our Francis, my God, what is it? Come in, come in. No wait, no, not there, here. No, look, stand on this old newspaper and take your jacket off. You're drookit! Do Inspectors not get capes, nowadays?'

'It's Mamma, Myra, she's dead. She's dead. And Dadda is really bad too. He's in the hospital. His spine's crushed, his legs are frozen. He's in the Western but there's nothing they can do, the Doctor said. They're sending him home later today. What'll we do, Myra? Can you help?'

Myra blew her nose and dabbed her eyes, then immediately saw what this urgent nocturnal visit was about. They wanted her to take charge, perhaps even to take her father in, bring him here, to Caird Drive. Immediately her resolve stiffened. It would be like Granny Nellis all over again:

'Oh, and what about you Frank, you have a good job, don't you? So, tell me Inspector Francis Gallagher, why does it suddenly fall to me, the youngest, the one no one has any time for? Why me when I have you and four sisters all older and wiser?'

Living with Myra

'Ah, of course, you won't have heard? No, but it's just I'm off to London in a few days. I've been accepted by the Met, to work in Scotland Yard, in a new unit, Royal Protection it's called. So, I'll not be here, not after the funeral.'

'Congratulations! Well, Frank, I'm sure you'll do well in London. You certainly look the part. Be sure to send me the occasional postcard, maybe get the King to sign it. Just let it say, "Love to Myra", no need to elaborate on your feelings for me, we all must keep our secrets safe. But no, of course you'll probably be far too busy down there to think of me, since you didn't ever think to come to visit me here in Caird Drive. Not once. It's been eighteen months since I clapped eyes on you. I thought maybe you had forgotten all about me? Me, Myra, who used to be your little princess. Do you not remember those times, Frank, just you and me in the box room, with the door jammed shut? Did you confess to Deirdre, like you did to Father Donnelly?'

'Look Myra, don't go over it again. We were children, for God's sake. Listen, Myra, you've got to help. I've got my Deirdre and the twins to think about and another wee one on the way. And well, it's just you and Sandy. You've got no kids and you've got plenty of money and well, we all think . . .'

'No, Frank, you were nearly eighteen, as I recall. It was me who was the child. But, oh how nice to have you *all* suddenly thinking about me at last! At first I'm banished from visiting Yoker for marrying Sandy. Then my mother-in-law dies and as a consequence of the shock I lose my baby but no one wants to comfort me. Like you they have all ignored me for over a year but now, suddenly, *everybody* is thinking, "Myra's rich, she must help us". Well, the answer is no, Frank. You and Jean and the rest of them are on your own, just like me and Sandy. I *will* come to the funeral, of course. When is it?'

'Can I speak to Sandy? Where is he?'

'Try his bedroom, he might be in there or he could be out on his racer riding about the streets, who knows? Oh yes, our Sandy is a man with lots of secrets. But if he is in there, you may find him difficult to waken. He takes sleeping pills now, another of his secrets, so don't mention it to him, please.'

'In *his* bedroom?'

'Oh yes, since we lost his "Mummy" and our baby, Sandy has decided to live a celibate life. But he's a good provider, as you can see, and I have many other interests now, many other friends to occupy my life. Oh yes, and truly wonderful neighbours, some of whom are very well educated. My marriage has certain compensations. So, Frank, you will understand I have little ambition to return to the bosom of the Gallagher family, and become embroiled again in all its pettiness and squabbles. Your Deirdre is wise to keep you away from them. Is she the one behind this move to London?'

Living with Myra

'Oh for God's sake Myra, stop talking like one of your stories. This is our own Dadda we're talking about, and our Jean. If Dadda lives it'll be Jean who gets stuck with him. Remember what it was like with Granny Nellis? Well, think about it, this'll be worse. And he's a big heavy man. How's she going to get him up and down to the toilet?'

'Have you never heard of a commode, Frank? Nowadays there are many devices available to assist the infirm - slings, wheelchairs and so on. What do you think? Would a hundred and fifty pounds do it?'

She opened her purse and counted the money into his hand. He looked at the crisp £10 notes, astounded she would have such a large amount of cash to hand.

'There *is* one condition only, our Francis. This money must be given from you, **not me**. Is this clear? I want no notion implanted in the other Gallagher heads I am some sort of Benevolent Fund to which they can make their whining applications. Agreed?'

'Yes Myra, that's very generous of you. Very generous. But are you sure you want them to believe me to be the one paying for everything?'

'Yes, don't you dare tell **anyone** about that money, no one, not even your precious Deirdre.'

'Right, Myra, if that's what you want.'

'And may I request we leave Sandy undisturbed? You can speak to him at the funeral. So, when will it be, Frank, or is that information to be kept a secret from me, now you have my money?'

'No, no, it's just we don't know yet. We're hoping for Tuesday, Wednesday at the latest. I've got our train seats booked for Thursday. I've got a meeting at Scotland Yard on Friday.'

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Myra and Sandy attended the Tuesday night Vigil. She had snapped at him when he had suggested riding his bike, so he could carry on to Barr & Stroud afterwards. She had insisted they go together, by tram. It was their first time outdoors as a married couple since their long tram trip to High Blantyre on the day of Sadie's funeral.

After the service Sandy had to rush off to avoid being late. He had a near perfect time-keeping record, he reminded her for the millionth time.

Myra sat quietly in the dimness of the small chapel, waited until everyone had left then made a private visit to Father Donnelly in his Vestry. She passed him two envelopes. One was labelled "The Gallagher Family"; this envelope contained £500 in well-used £5 notes:

Living with Myra

she had insisted on these at the bank. The second was marked, "For the work of the Parish". It contained five £20 notes, all new.

'Father, will you please accept these as *anonymous* donations. If I am to help Jean and Dadda, I must be allowed to do so in my own way. This money is for them, and *not* for the others, and *especially* not for Lizzie. That slut can burn money like a forest fire. To the best of my knowledge she has borrowed over two hundred pounds from various members of our family since she got married. Her husband is a wastrel. He has never worked. Mamma did everything she could to help them. Edward Hennery plays on the fact he has an artificial leg, but it clearly has not affected his libido. Lizzie has been pregnant nine times I know of. It will probably shock you Father, but I am truly glad only five of them made it into this world. You will understand I do not wish Lizzie and her darling Eddie beating a begging path to my door in Dowanhill, thank you very much. If you fail me in this matter Father, I will no longer be able to support the work of this parish. So, are we agreed, when you dispense these funds to Jean and Dadda, it will be done on an absolutely anonymous basis?'

'Myra, is it *you* who has been sending me those £10 Postal Orders? Thank God for your goodness, girl.'

'No, Father, *no!* I understand the money is from the *Margaret Miller Foundation*, not me. I merely advised them of the excellent work you do among the poor of Yoker. Be assured that the money in these envelopes is from my personal wealth. And also be assured, this is exactly what I intend it should remain, *my* personal wealth. I am no longer poor. Now I have escaped from that particular form of Purgatory, I have absolutely no intention of returning to it.'

'But Myra, we did try to get help for you. Do you remember *Monsignor Creity*? Well, he . . .'

'**NO!** No more of such drivell! I have had more than enough of *Monsignor Creity* from Thomas Walsh with his multiple lamentations of what might have been for me. I have escaped and that is an end of it. So, will you *promise* me before your God, to honour my request and eke out this money to Jean and Dadda, "From the Parish", as it were? Do you give your promise you will never, ever mention its source?'

Father Donnelly lowered his tired old body to its knees and closed his eyes, preparing to deliver one of his lengthy homilies:

'Yes, Myra, as it says in the Bible, never let the right hand know what the . . .'

Living with Myra

But the smartly dressed lady he hardly recognised as the clever girl he had once nurtured had gone. Father Donnelly was left alone staring up at the silent Jesus who hung above the door, still impaled on His cross - as Paddy Joe was himself.

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At the time of receiving the envelopes Father Donnelly had expected them to contain a few pounds only. He did not open them until later, just before he knelt to offer up his final prayers of contrition and thanksgiving before easing himself into bed beside his hot water bottle. The money they contained was the greatest amount of cash he had ever held in his hands. He was dumbstruck, thinking at first it was all a mirage, a mistake. Then, as he remembered what she had said, her calmness, her poise, he began to fear for her. Was this money legal? Had she become a gambler? What had happened to the brilliant child she had once been, the girl who had changed at secondary school, becoming remote, closing in on herself.

He had felt it earlier, when she was speaking to him. Her manner had not been reverent; not as a Petitioner to her Priest, as it should be. It had been as if she had commanded him, issued instructions, making him promise to do her will. Then Father Donnelly remembered the odd man she had married out of the blue, the one who, despite claiming to be a Protestant, seemed very much more like a Jew. Maybe he had more money than he had let on.

After a short period of contemplation, the tiny priest decided the money was needed for God's work, and must be accepted at face value. He offered up his prayers for Myra Gallagher and his thanks for her money, knowing it would hold back Jean and her father from the abyss of poverty which surely beckoned. And her other money, her 'bribe', if that was what it was, would help other needy souls in his care.

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The following morning after the Requiem Mass, Father Donnelly led the cortege. The men filed out to follow the coffin through the wet streets to the cemetery.

Myra wore a Mink Stole and a fur hat she had bought from Celia. She stood apart from the other women and their children and watched as Sandy fell in beside young Frank at the head of the column of mourners. As the cortege disappeared she walked off to catch the tram back to Caird Drive. By noon she was at St George's Co-op, explaining she had felt unwell earlier but was now much better. In keeping with her normal manner, she did not share her domestic troubles or triumphs with her fellow workers.

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Living with Myra

Mary Gallagher's funeral had been a huge affair, reflecting the high esteem in which she had been held, a woman who would share her last half-penny with you. Sergeant Francis Gallagher, Mary's boy who had done so well for himself, led the line, with dignity and decorum. Frank paid for the new commode, the funeral expenses and the food and alcohol for the wake. He gave Father Donnelly a £5 note. His mother would have been proud of him.

Frank was one of the first to leave the wake at the Gallagher room and kitchen in Yoker, under instructions to return to help Dierdre to finish packing for the move to London. Tucked into his wallet was the remainder of the money which Deirdre had insisted they keep for themselves to cover the extra costs setting up a new home in London. Unknown to the family, Frank and Deirdre did not intend to return to Yoker. Frank decided to hope Myra would never discover he had betrayed her trust.

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In the evening when Myra returned to the flat at Caird Drive, it was quiet and cold. Even Billy was subdued, hunched in his fluffed-up feathers, pretending to be asleep.

Sandy had not yet returned. She went downstairs to check - all three bikes were in the store room. He must be attending the wake, she reasoned. If he fell into Jean's clutches afterwards, her sister was welcome to him. Myra already had plans for the evening and may well stay overnight. She would take with her a selection of clothing, including her peach nightie and knickers, the ones she had worn on her first night with Saul.

Myra lit the fire. When the water was hot, she washed her hair, had a bath, did her hair and applied make-up. While she waited for her hair to dry, she backed-up the fire, put the fireguard in place. She dressed in her Royal blue satin dress with the white piping. After combing her hair, she checked her appearance in the mirrors, smiling at her reflection while fastening a string of fresh-water pearls from Sadie's collection.

She shrugged into her ankle length dark grey serge coat, slipped on a pair of long evening gloves, picked up her handbag, and double locked both the inner door and the storm door. Toting her new overnight case, she walked through the misty rain to Highburgh Road and hailed a taxi. Saul had booked a table at *The Rogano*. Afterwards she planned to spend the night at Kirklee.

If Sandy did come home and found her absent, well and good. She would have a suitable tale ready for him.

Living with Myra

Sandy jumps Ship.

Sandy did not return to Caird Drive after the wake.

Myra's guess had been right, her bird had flown.

Jean acted out a melange of motives beyond her ability to articulate:

- There was disappointment: Jimmy Byrne had gone back to Girvan, back to his wife and five children. Jean had been one of the lucky ones; she had believed his story of being in love with her and had nearly let him do it. After he suddenly disappeared, his tale had leaked back to her from the Fish Market. Three other lassies were pregnant by him.
- There was Sandy: he was here, in her house again. At last he had come back for her as she always dreamed he would. Who in their right mind could put up with Myra and her vicious tongue? The time with Sandy at Frank's wedding had been as near as she had got to actual intercourse. He had the best hands she had ever had on her and in her.
- There were her hormones: Jean knew the word, but did not understand their power: she had been feeling 'ready for it' for the last few days, as she always was when her period was coming.
- Sandy had been watching her constantly and quite openly, she thought. She checked, again and again - no one else was interested, all busy talking over each other. All night long she had repeatedly caught his eyes following her as she poured teas, toasted cheese on bread, emptied ashtrays and washed teacups and whisky glasses. Jean had felt the heat in his intense stare, his secret smiles, making her giddy with anticipation.
- There was her need for money: Jean had several big bills needing paid, and there was money she had borrowed from her employer, Mr McPhee, wages in advance, her recurring 'sub' which he was getting nippy about. Frank had told her the hospital had said Daddy would never work again.
- No matter what they said with a wee drink in them, despite their big promises, Jean knew her sisters would desert her, leaving her to do everything for Dadda, just as they had left her and Mamma to look after Granny Nellis, travelling backwards and forwards across the city every day for almost four years with Myra in tow.
- Our Francis might have helped, she thought, but he was off to London. Anyway, everyone knew what Deirdre was like, controlling him, telling him what to do at every turn, keeping him away from Yoker, away from Mamma. Going for the job in

Living with Myra

London was her idea, Frank had confessed to Mamma, one time he had met her by accident, in town.

- This was like Granny Nellis all over again but she, Jean the Mug, would be left alone to fend for both herself and Dadda. Earlier, before he left to go home, Frank had said he had had a private word with Sandy asking him to help her with Dadda. It seemed to her Frank was more or less telling her what she should do.
- There were Mamma's bills: Jean would need to find money for those, as well as her own. She had to keep working or they would starve.
- Mamma had said there was a new Factor for the close, a Mr MacAuley, and somewhere out there, a new owner. The place was in Dadda's name: if he died she might lose it, especially if she got any further behind with the rent. If Sandy was here with her and working nights, he could watch over Dadda during the day while she went out to work.
- She had to work. It would be up to her to pay the bills. She would need to stop wasting money, try to be sensible, be more like Myra - who had always seemed to have money.
- Then there was Myra. Myra had always been mean about money, skimping, hoarding, hiding it, even as a wee girl. Now she seemed to be rolling in it. It must be Sandy's money. Showing it off by wearing a Mink Stole and dressed up to the nines - could she have spent it all on herself. She had certainly been splashing out on Caird Drive and those fancy clothes. If Sandy had any left Myra would never give him a divorce, not until she had every penny out of him.
- Jean was certain that Myra would never give up Caird Drive, not now she was in cahoots with her fancy neighbours.
- There was Sandy's great job: even if Myra had spent Sandy's saved-up money, he still had his fabulous wages. There would be enough for them if he came to live with her as a sort of lodger. Who cared nowadays? Lots of people lived in sin. If Father Donnelly complained she would send him packing. What good had he ever done her, apart from spoiling her evenings when she wanted to listen to music on the radio? Now she was stuck with her father, the old priest would keep coming to drink their tea and subject her to his long boring prayers in Latin and his whining complaints about how poor his parish was compared to others nearby.
- There was opportunity: if they were quiet, Daddy need never find out. He was stuck in the kitchen bed, doped up with strong painkillers. If he got really bad, maybe they might take him back to hospital.
- There was a chance of a baby: Jean had longed for a baby for years. All her sisters had ladled it on, whispering words she was supposed not to hear, saying that she, dumpy Jean, could never get a man and she would end up childless, talking down to her as if she was a dope.
- If Sandy gave her a baby, he would have to stay with her. He had done the right thing by Myra when she had said she was pregnant, even though she wasn't.

Living with Myra

- If Jean didn't get Sandy, she would be stuck with Dadda. And Dadda would be worse than Granny Nellis because she would have to look after him on her own.
- Sandy was her only hope, her only way out of all this mess. It wasn't her fault Mamma had died.

Most of what had whirled through Jean's mind had, in a complementary fashion, been churning in Sandy's thoughts as well:

- Sandy wanted away from Caird Drive: he had wanted away since the day with Pamela and her burning cigarette tip. With Mrs Riddell across the landing Pamela could turn up at any time. He had been trapped into staying by his mother, and now he was trapped by Myra. She had taken over completely, even from their first night, before Mummy had committed suicide.
- By rights, it was his house, even though it might still be in Mummy's name. Myra should have asked for his permission before she had spent Mummy's purse money doing it all up.
- He wanted away from Myra: why had he not seen what she was like, blowing hot and cold, trying to boss him, writing out "rules" for him to obey? Who did she think she was, scolding him like a child? And she seemed to know what he was thinking, always one step ahead of him.
- Maybe he should have cut off her house-keeping allowance? He had thought about it but there was something scary about her eyes. Her eyes were not mad, like Pamela, but still very strange, vacant sometimes, as if she was not really there with him. He had sneaked a look at her stories. Some of them were very weird, unsettling, people dying in odd ways, falling off trams, falling down stairs into basements.
- He wanted away from Shuggie and Moira. Although they always welcomed him to their home in Chancellor Street there was something not quite right between them. They never fought or argued openly but, he could see they did keep secrets from each other. Maybe all married couples were the same, keeping secrets. He had never wet the bed or slept badly when he stayed with them. He always felt safe there, a place where Pamela could not reach him.
- At least he had managed to keep his bed-wetting and nightmares from Myra. If she had found out about those she would have really let her tongue have a go at him.
- Auntie Moira and Uncle Shuggie never asked awkward questions or nagged him: they had treated him with respect. If Shuggie and Moira had not been there, he would have gone mad.
- Like Chancellor Street, Yoker was safe too, which is why he had kept coming to the Gallaghers down through the years. And, to be fair, until he had crossed the line with Myra, they too had treated him with respect. And again tonight,

Living with Myra

deferring to him, they had given up his favourite corner at the kitchen table for him. He had expected some snide remarks but they had left him alone.

- They would be quiet. It would work. Mr Gallagher would never guess. If the man died as had been whispered, or even if he didn't die, maybe they could find a better place, maybe a place with a garden; maybe somewhere on the South Side, away from all the bad memories in Dowanhill.
- He still had his own money: Myra had no idea how well off he was: £400 in the bank now. But he would need to sneak back to Caird Drive for his passbook and other stuff. Maybe Shuggie would let him store his racers in his big cellar. He could keep his work bike here, at Yoker, in the bedroom, on an old towel so there would be no mess.
- Most of all there was Jean: from the minute he had arrived back here after the burial, Jean had been smiling at him, asking him if he needed another cup of tea, more toasted cheese. She had even touched him, deliberately, twice, resting her hand lightly on his inner thigh while she leaned across the table to pour tea for someone else. And she had said he looked very smart in his new dark blue suit, like a toff. Every time she caught him looking at her she had smiled her sly knowing smile. She still wanted him, it was obvious. And he wanted Jean, who was not nasty and hurtful, like Myra.

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It was approaching midnight when the house eventually cleared after the Wake. Sandy held back, making sure he was amongst the last few to go. Everyone was drunk it seemed, except Jean and Sandy. As the stragglers filed along the hall to leave, Jean called to him:

'Oh Sandy, please, just before you go, could you help me to get Dadda onto the commode?'

It took nearly half-an-hour of careful manoeuvring to get Mr Gallagher back into the recessed bed in the kitchen. The man was drowsy, doped with painkillers and several whisky toddies the others had forced on him, a measure of how far he was from his former abstemious self.

Sandy did not know how to say what was tumbling through his mind. But, as he made to leave, Jean grabbed his arm:

'Sandy, could you be a pal and empty the commode down the loo for me?'

'Sure Jean, my pleasure.' This gave him the chance to empty his bladder, which always filled up when he was nervous.

Jean hid her nightie, damp face cloth and perfume in the hall cupboard. On his return she made her next move:

Living with Myra

'Thanks, Sandy. You're a wee diamond. No need to rush away, is there? I've made us a cuppa. It's on a tray, in there, in my bedroom, so as not to disturb Dadda. I'll just pop down to the toilet myself, back in a minute. Make yourself comfortable.'

When she returned to the bedroom Jean was in her nightie and very fragrant. She pulled back the covers and lay down, lifting them invitingly, exposing herself, leering up to him.

'So, Sandy, what do you think? Will I do?'

'Eh, well, yes, Jean yes, but I just wanted to say...'

'Sandy, put out the gas mantle and come in beside me. This room's cold. Come on, quick, before I freeze.'

'But Jean, what!'

'Sandy, come on in. It's all right. I've dropped the snib on the Yale so we'll be fine until I need to check on Dadda later. And I've got the day off tomorrow.'

'But Jean what if. . . .!'

'No Sandy, no matter what they said they won't be back in a hurry. And our Frank will be off on the first train to London tomorrow morning. It's just me, you and Dadda now.'

'But Jean, what if Myra!'

'No, Sandy, if that snotty bitch ever dares to come to this house I rip her fucking hair off. Sorry, Sandy, it's just she is, well But never mind, eh? I'm sure I don't need to tell you what she's like.'

'Are you sure it'll be all right, Jean?'

'Yes, Sandy, you'll be safe and sound here with me. You know it's me who's always wanted you, don't you?'

'Jean, I'm so sorry, I should've!'

'Sandy, no more talking, put the gas out and get in here and give me a cuddle. I'm desperatel!'

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The next day Sandy went to a phone box and telephoned the Timekeepers' Office, explaining he would be absent from work until Sunday night, due to a family emergency, a sudden bereavement.

Jean stayed off work until the following Monday as well.

The outside door was kept locked continuously, to deter unwanted drop-in visitors and to give Sandy time to hide in the bedroom if necessary. They had the commode so did not

Living with Myra

need to use the toilet on the landing, except for disposals. Sandy provided money and Jean did the shopping. The next few days served as their honeymoon.

Father Donnelly visited on the Sunday afternoon to see how Michael was doing. To Jean's astonishment he gave her two £5 notes. Then he prayed with her for her Dadda, unaware Sandy was a few feet away, naked under the covers, snoozing on the matrimonial bed.

Michael Gallagher continued his downward trajectory to what would be a peaceful end six weeks later.

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Their first coupling on the night of the Wake had been rushed, but they had both professed it to be wonderful. As they practiced they helped each other and it got better and better.

Jean's period did not come and she began to hope. Although she was excited she did not say anything. She must be sure. This time Sandy deserved the truth.

Over these first days they talked about their future life together and after a few versions, they agreed on a final plan.

- Sandy would ask Myra for a divorce. Jean was encouraging but secretly sceptical.
- He would collect his things, get his bikes during the day when she was out.
- He would ask Shuggie if he could leave his racers at his place.

Jean had been right. The first of the family to visit her father was Lizzie, one week to the day on from the funeral. Within minutes of coming through the door her oldest sister had asked Jean if she could spare a couple of pounds. The kids needed new shoes, she claimed. Jean sent her packing.

After that, Jean, Sandy and Dadda were alone again.

By the end of the following week, they had become like a happily married couple, as they might have been all along, had Myra not stolen him, Jean thought.

Her period still had not come. She kept it a secret but she knew she was pregnant.

She just knew.

Living with Myra

Living in Sin

Four days after Mary Gallagher's funeral.

Sandy arrived at Caird Drive much later than he had planned. Jean had been very romantic after breakfast and then Mr Gallagher had soiled the bed: Sandy had volunteered to take the bedclothes to the Steamie.

He met Myra in the close, returning from work earlier than usual. As he attempted to wheel his work bike away from Caird Drive for the last time, she blocked his path, outside Miss Glover's door.

'Oh Sandy dear, there you are at last. I seem to keep missing you. Have you been away with the Install Team?'

'No, eh, well yes, we had a big rush on, and I might have to go away again next week. But I'll try to let you know.'

'Have you already had a meal, dearest, you must be hungry, surely?'

'No, no, I'm not hungry. It's just I promised Frank I would help, you know with your father!'

'Oh yes! Of course, our Francis was keen you help as much as you can. Well, Sandy, don't let me keep you, off you go, and be sure to pass on my love to everyone, including in particular, dear Jean. She must be so anxious about her future.'

'So, you don't mind? You're all right about it?'

'Of course, Sandy, darling, if you think it to be your duty, who am I to interfere? My Father always did think highly of you. I take it he is back home now, in the bosom of the family?'

'Eh, yes, how did you know?'

She leaned forward and whispered harshly in his ear:

'Hospitals have telephones, Sandy. And walls have ears. If it's Jean you want to share a bed with, don't worry about me. Just remember it's still me you are married to. "Until Death do us part", Sandy, that's the arrangement. Remember to keep paying the factor and other bills for our lovely house here in Caird Drive. I just hope your dirty washing is up to date! We don't want you stinking out Jean's place, as well as Dadda, do we? Oh, and have you taken your horrible photographs? You dirty little pervert!'

In a louder voice, she added:

'Just a guess, Sandy, I suppose. Off you go, we don't want to keep anyone waiting, do we?'

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Living with Myra

Saul had a Flying Club Dinner so Myra was high and dry. She lit the fire and went through her routine, but could not settle to a story.

Later in the evening Rita slipped out of the close at Caird Drive wearing soft soled shoes and carrying her large handbag. She walked to Merkland Street where she took the Subway to Bridge Street before walking up to The Plaza.

In the toilets, she changed into a tight dress with a low back which showed her curves to best advantage, supported by a self-coloured halter-neck bra. She put on her dancing shoes again. It was the first time she had worn her Rita outfit since meeting Saul. Her legs were tanned and she wore no knickers. Her lips were a bright slash of red and she had her hair up, in a swirl.

Since being with Saul, Myra was less self-conscious of her ears and nose. During foreplay at Kirklee, Saul had whispered over and over she was the most beautiful girl in the world, and she had decided to believe him.

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Myra did not see Sandy again until Michael Gallagher's funeral. By then his cohabitation with Jean was old gossip in the Yoker Chapel.

After the Vigil, Father Donnelly had offered Myra his sympathies and attempted to return £480. She refused and asked he use it for the Good of The Parish, or as he saw fit.

Frank did not return for the funeral and Myra did not attend the wake.

When the factor's and other bills arrived at Caird Drive, Myra forwarded them to Yoker. Afraid if he did not pay them, Myra would visit them, Sandy settled these immediately.

In accordance with their 'contract', Myra left Sandy to Jean.

Like Sandy, Myra had already moved on from their sham marriage. In Caird Drive she was still Mrs Myra Kaywood, although to Saul at Kirklee she was Mrs Maria (Myra) Davina Gallagher, originally from Tantallon Road in Shawlands.

Living with Myra

Kirklee

On the night of her Diploma award their first couplings had been failures, as she had expected, even hoped for. Arriving at Kirklee they almost ran upstairs to his bedroom where they stripped each other in the darkness then tumbled between the sheets, kissing frantically and exploring with their hands, Myra at last giving way, allowing Rita to take charge.

Saul had not made it past their first embrace before releasing, calling out in frustration and sobbing his apologies into her shoulder. Myra recognised the virgin in him which pleased her greatly.

In one sense Myra was also a virgin; this was her first time making love in a bed. Neither of them knew rightly how to accommodate each other when lying together, how to move, where to put their arms. When she insisted he use a protective he seemed at first reluctant, then over-excited, pre-ejaculating for a second time when she moved to help him put on the sheath. Rita was practiced, and soon, after a short period lying quietly together, they were ready to try again, moving more slowly and building gradually to a climax.

By dawn they had coupled properly six times, each time improving, edging closer to the expectation she had dreamed of through her lonely years at Caird Drive while pleasuring herself to the image of another boy from Yoker who had been stolen from her. With each coupling, Rita in her became increasingly rampant, noisy.

From their first night, a new story began to run in her head. Now she had found everything she had been hoping for, she would never let Saul go. She did not want to be merely his mistress; she wanted everything which went with a life lived in a house like this.

Living in Kirklee was something she had only dared to dream of as a poorly dressed waif walking alongside her father through these same streets which now surrounded her while writing extravagant stories in her head. As she lay in the dim light of dawn beside his quietly snoring form, she slipped back through time, becoming the child of long ago, knocking at doors of houses like this. They had been touting for painting and decorating work, her father hefting his two step ladders and long plank of wood, she with a rickety pram crammed with pots, brushes and old sheets to protect floors and furniture.

Living with Myra

She studied Saul's sleeping form and sensed his vulnerability: this beautiful man had a story he needed to tell her, to relieve himself of a deep hurt. During the weeks which followed she encouraged him to unburden himself. When it came out, it surprised but did not shock her. It was a familiar story for those born into sufficient wealth, those who did not have to worry about what they might eat at their next meal.

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Saul's father Nathan Schofield had been a man of narrow authoritarian views who demanded excellence in everything and from everyone around him. Unlike Daniel his brother, Nathan had thrown over the constraints of his Jewish faith as a young man. Turning his back on the Torah, Nathan instead worshiped before the Golden Calf of Commerce, making his fortune by importing raw timber from the Baltics to process in his sawmill. This enterprise had created sufficient wealth to maintain a comfortable upper-middle class lifestyle and he sent his son Saul to the nearby Kelvinside Academy.

Sylvia Robinson, Saul's mother, had been a beauty. When she turned sixteen the forty-five-year old Nathan had taken her as his trophy. Sylvia was the daughter of his general manager, Ralph Robinson who surrendered her willingly, thereby securing his future in the expanding business. Sylvia had been too soft, too compliant, and too generous in her nature to stand up to the demands of her dominating husband. After years of verbal bombardment, Sylvia's mind had finally shattered, leading her to attempt suicide, the first of many such attempts.

As a child, Saul had lived in the shadow of their unhappy marriage until he was nine. His father had failed to return from an overseas trip. At first the office staff raised no concern. This type of delayed return had happened before, usually ending in another triumphant arrival, with their employer heralding a new commercial coup of some sort. When he was still missing after three months, Ralph Robinson contacted the police who in turn contacted the Foreign Office who made enquiries but discovered nothing, either positive or negative.

The eventual conclusion was that Nathan Schofield had disappeared without trace, possibly in Latvia.

Uncle Daniel, now a successful Dentist, readily admitted he had no flair for commerce. It was agreed the best way ahead was to promote Sylvia's father, Ralph Robinson, (Saul's Papa Ralph), to run the business on a *pro-tem* basis until Nathan turned up or could be legally declared dead. In time Papa Ralph led a buy-out from Daniel and the Schofield family, securing the future for Sylvia and Saul by way of The Robinson Family Trust,

Living with Myra

which provided mother and son with a generous monthly allowance while paying the bills for the Kirklee property and a small holiday cottage on the shores of Loch Lomond, near Gartocharn. Both properties were owned by The Robinson Trust. By judicious questioning Myra learned The Robinson Trust was administered by their family lawyer, coincidentally Robert M. Irvine.

Saul had chosen to read Law and Accountancy at Glasgow University. Because of his natural brilliance, he had been snapped up by the Faculty and persuaded to dedicate his life to teaching. He also taught Yiddish at the synagogue in Garnethill, a legacy from his time under the influence of Uncle Daniel, the man who became his de facto father after Nathan had disappeared. Saul also had passable Polish-German, his father's mother dialect tongue, and reasonable High German. Saul's passion, apart from teaching, was flying. He was an accomplished airman with a share in a six-man syndicate which owned and maintained a four-seater aircraft, based at Renfrew Airport, a trainer, rigged with dual controls.

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Myra could not compete with this exotic life story and did not dare to reveal her lowly background. Accountancy was merely a hobby, she professed, an intellectual challenge set for her by her widowed father, a Glasgow man who now lived in Brighton, where he owned a large luxury hotel called "The Brighton Belles". John Young was generous but he still steadfastly resisted her wishes to carve out a career as a budding author, hoping eventually she would see sense and join him as a partner in his thriving enterprise.

Her marriage to Raymond Gallagher, an older man, a friend of her father's, had been a horrible, horrible mistake, she explained. But she was a Catholic, as he was, and there could never be a divorce. Maybe one day he would die and free her. "People die all the time", she had said, whimsically, "just look at the newspapers". Nowadays she and Raymond lived parallel lives, her husband residing in Skelmorlie with his incontinent mother, in a mansion overlooking the Firth of Clyde. Raymond, a fully qualified Engineer, was working on secret projects for the War Ministry, she revealed, details of which he could not discuss with her. Mr G worked at nights and often left, unannounced, for secret trips, to where he would not tell. Their marriage was moribund and nowadays they seldom communicated.

Effectively she was a widow, she smiled wanly.

Myra had further details ready but Saul accepted this fiction without further probing. If Saul had a weakness, it was being an only child he was self-centred, ever keen to rotate

Living with Myra

the conversation back to himself, which suited her purpose very well. But he was clever, witty, generous, gentle, pliable and accepting she needed her own parallel life. Saul Schofield suited Myra and Rita very well indeed.

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Through the first half of 1939 their affair rollicked along. She learned to drive his car, a black Austin Fourteen. She also flew with him over her native Glasgow and, on several occasions, swooping as far out as the Inner Hebrides to Jura and Islay. He encouraged her to take the dual controls. Soon she could land and take off with ease, even in blustery conditions. Twice she executed a perfect three-sixty degree roll.

In March Saul signed up with the RAF Volunteer Reserve, which was also based at Renfrew. He was thirty-two and, after a simple test, was given the rank of Flying Officer and assigned to the duty as Chief Training Officer. This commitment consumed his weekends and, as the lighter nights arrived, to this was added two or three nights a week.

Myra hoped this crucial role, taken with his age, would exempt him from War Service. However, in mid-August she began to sense him drifting from her. Everyone else at the Volunteers was being called up, alphabetically, it seemed. It was only a matter of time, he told her.

In October 1939, Saul's Call Up papers arrived, shattering her fragile dream. He must report immediately as pilots were in very short supply.

After dinner, they made love for the final time. He made her promise to drive his car at least once a week, to keep the engine and gearbox sweet then gave her the keys for Kirklee and the property at Gartocharn. They had used the cottage as a love nest on several occasions, doodling around the islands in his small motor yacht.

She drove him to St Enoch's station to catch an overnight train to England, to start his full RAF training. He was hoping for Spitfires, he told her, if his legs were not too long for the cockpit. Unsaid, Myra hoped he would be assigned to training others.

They stood on the platform, beside the open carriage door.

Locked together in a desperate embrace, Myra's thoughts chased each other round and round:

- He loved her deeply, he whispered, sobbing, clinging to her.
- She responded with appropriate soothing and reassuring words.

Living with Myra

- She cupped his beautiful face in her hands, burning its image onto her heart.
- He would write to her as Mrs Myra G. Schofield, at Kirklee.
- She would wait for him forever. He must keep himself safe, come back to her.
- Tears were spilled.
- Kisses were fervent.
- With her serge coat open, their bodies pressed and gyrated with desire which must be denied.
- He would write to her at every opportunity, he vowed, his hot tears dripping on her neck.
- Time stood still, until the blast of the Stationmaster's whistle wrenched them back to the unwanted reality of the crowded platform.

The train pulled away:

- He leaned out, blowing kisses.
- She waved and waved until it disappeared, becoming a black smudge in the centre of her tear-filled eyes.

She drove back to Kirklee, her heart heavy with foreboding.

Living with Myra

Love Letters

Through the remainder of November and December then into January 1940, Saul wrote to her every Sunday evening. He once hinted he had been discouraged to write more frequently because of the burden on the Censor. His letters were always two sides of a single page, crammed with his distinctive tiny hand, written in brown ink with a fine nib.

For security reasons, although he could not reveal details of where he was based, she gleaned from cryptic codes they had devised to convey sensitive issues, he was based at a group of airfields somewhere in the south of England. He wrote about "FH", (meaning Flying High, their code for Spitfires) and she desperately hoped his role was restricted to that of training others, able to avoid combat missions.

(In fact Saul Schofield was flying a modified Spitfire, unarmed and fitted with extra fuel tanks and an innovative high-speed camera, gathering aerial photographs over Germany. He was operating under the auspices of MI 13, a sub-section of MI 6 within the Directorate of Military Intelligence. To make the camera effective, he had to swoop down to low altitude and slow to near stalling speed when over the designated sites, making himself a target for ground fire. When his film was exhausted, he would then fly back home at maximum altitude to avoid being brought down by chasing German fighters while managing his speed to eke out his remaining fuel. These missions were highly secret and could not be revealed to Myra, who had no idea of his daring exploits nor of his promotion to the rank of Wing Commander.)

By using their codes, he conveyed his life as being busy and enjoyable, although 'Home Leave' was not permitted, not for anyone. Every second when not flying, he spent dreaming of her. The other non-secret parts of his love letters, were written in gushing and heartfelt language, some in very intimate detail, the more risqué descriptions obliterated by a jealous blue pen.

His letters always began:

"My Dearest Darling Myra,

Living with Myra

I love you with all my heart and hold your photograph to my lips and kiss you every night before slipping into my dreams with you by my side. I carry it with me on every sortie.

Do you remember, my darling Myra, the night”

The Battle of France then the Battle of Britain raged on, reported on the radio and in newspapers with graphic snatches shown on Pathé News in cinemas.

Without explanation, Saul took to typing his letters. Myra wondered if this was because the Censor had complained at his tiny handwriting being so hard to read. Using a typewriter resulted in spelling errors and type-overs which surprised her.

Over the following months, the nature of Saul's letters changed, becoming vaguer, shorter, introducing random topics such as asking to be reminded to his sisters and a mother who, apparently, worked for the Women's Voluntary Service devising nutritious recipes and encouraging the Dig for Victory effort by developing new community allotments.

There was a total absence of his previous intimacies and endearments and Myra felt Saul slipping away from her. She comforted herself by reasoning he must be mentally and physically exhausted from the fight to keep Britain free from invasion, dismissing the recurring suspicion he might have sought comfort in some pretty WAAF's bed.

On several occasions it seemed he had mixed up his love letters, opening with:

My Dearest Darling Avril

or, occasionally,

My Dearest Darling Susie,

The information contained in these wrongly addressed letters sparked several stories which seemed to chime a chord with her penny dreadful readers; tales of soldiers and airmen snatching at romance whenever they could, expecting to die on each sortie or attack.

Living with Myra

In her enthusiastic and loving replies to Saul using the finest quality rose-water scented paper, always typed at his desk in his study in Kirklee with her new portable typewriter, Myra gave no hint of the hurt he had caused her by receiving the letters intended for other women. While he may have taken other girlfriends, she reminded herself she was in prime position, being the only one to have use of his car plus the keys to both houses. Their now one-sided long-distance love affair continued by post. As they had agreed before he went to War, she always signed her letters as:

Your ever-loving wife, Myra.

Over time the frequency of his letters dwindled from one a week to one a month or longer. Undaunted, Myra continued to write once or twice a week, to whichever new mailing address he provided. To relieve what she presumed was his stressful way of life, she decided to award Saul her own version of "Home Leave" by describing a series of invented romantic outings which mirrored their earliest encounters. In these adventures, Myra always drove, allowing Saul to rest as they roamed the length and breadth of Scotland to famous beauty spots, many of which she had only read about. These letters gave her great comfort, making his presence seem real.

Later, back at Caird Drive, she re-crafted these imaginary romantic confections to more structured versions for her magazine stories, stories which struck a chord with her *Woman's Own* readers who clamoured for '*more like this, please*'.

Living with Myra

Uncovered

Through the remainder of 1940, Myra became a frequent visitor to Kirklee, often calling at lunchtime, hoping for mail from Saul, frequently returning in evenings on her journey from work to Caird Drive. On occasion she stayed over, enjoying the ambiance of luxury living, feeling Saul's nearness, sifting lazily through his drawers, tidying his wardrobes, organising his shirts, running his silk ties through her fingers.

Initially Myra had made an attempt to keep on friendly terms with the garrulous and ever-complaining Mrs Irene (Rene) Boyle. Soon the woman's inconsistent retellings of her past life began to irritate, as did her constant smoking while she flicked her way around the house with a feather duster, leaving a trail of stubbed dog ends in her wake.

Rene Boyle, a slovenly woman in her late forties, was a fantasist who eagerly portrayed herself as Mr Schofield's "Housekeeper", a role which appealed to her sense of herself as a woman of higher breeding. In her past, she asserted repeatedly, she had been used to commanding a cohort of lesser servants. Myra knew the truth. When Mrs Sylvia Schofield went into Lennox Castle, Mrs Arbuthnot her nurse and live-in companion had decided to return to her roots in Forfar. Mrs Boyle had been employed by The Robinson Family Trust to provide Saul with "housekeeping" but, since she was not supervised, Rene interpreted this to mean 'daily cleaning with no additional duties or responsibilities'.

After weeks of watching and waiting, Myra detected Rene had acquired a fondness for Saul's sweet sherry, port and brandy. Myra pretended not to notice, allowing this situation to develop. Rene Boyle became bolder, now drinking more and cleaning less. One evening Myra turned up to find Rene asleep, drunk in charge of a large and expensive leather sofa with a deep cigarette burn in its arm. Myra, with firmness and fairness, relieved Mrs Boyle of her duties, paying her two months' wages as a goodbye and good luck award for loyal if erratic service.

Myra now had the house to herself, which suited her well. She was beginning to form another story, planning ahead for Saul's return and wrote at once to The Robinson Family Trust, introducing herself as Mrs Myra Kaywood, explaining she and Mr Schofield were longstanding friends and that on the eve of his sudden Call Up, Mr Schofield had appointed her as his Custodian for Kirklee and Gartocharn. There was a letter to this effect, should the Trust wish to view it. This fiction had been typed on Saul's personal letterheaded paper which she 'authorised' with an accurate copy of Saul's signature.

Living with Myra

In her letter Mrs Kaywood advised Mrs Boyle had resigned, due to her worsening arthritis and she, Mrs Kaywood, had found a suitable replacement. Mrs Rita Maynard was willing to stay over on some nights, enhancing the security situation for Kirklee. Mrs Maynard was totally trustworthy, someone Mrs Kaywood had known for many years. Mrs Kaywood requested the 'Housekeeping allowance' be paid into her personal bank account at the Trustee Savings Bank (Rutherglen branch) in order she could settle disbursements directly with Mrs Maynard who had a difficult husband and wished to be paid cash.

As Robert M. Irvine, representing The Robinson Family Trust, knew Mrs Kaywood very well, this arrangement was immediately acceded to.

To Myra the Kirklee house standing alone unoccupied in its large grounds seemed unsafe. Over time she set out to relocate irreplaceable objects to Caird Drive, including what Saul had told her were very valuable artworks and expensive bottles of wine and port which he had collected over the preceding decade.

As was her way, Myra searched the house carefully, slowly, expectantly, checking and testing every panel, every floorboard, peering and prodding into every nook and cranny, hoping to find another cache similar to Sadie's hoard. She was not disappointed and soon had unearthed several wads of money in different currencies and a large collection of ornate jewellery which, from her experience with Sadie's collection, she was now able to assess as genuine.

One evening Myra was in the Library at Kirklee, perusing its shelves and came across "The Book of Knowledge", compiled by the Grolier Society and published by the Amalgamated Press (1922). This arcane repository was located on the highest shelf, requiring her to climb the wooden ladder secured on a rail suspended from the ceiling. From the index in Volume One she read that the entire set comprised twenty volumes. However, only thirteen were in place. Intrigued, she checked every shelf without success.

Hours later, using a torch, she found the missing seven volumes stashed below what had been Nathan Schofield's large heavy wooden bed, located in his separate master bedroom, an oppressive room crowded with dark ornate furniture. These seven 'Book of Knowledge' tomes had each been hollowed out to accommodate a large hallmarked ingot of gold.

Examining this huge bed further, her second astonishing find was a pistol with six boxes containing in total over two hundred rounds of ammunition. The pistol was well-oiled,

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unmarked, and appeared to be in working order. A bullet was pre-loaded in the firing chamber with the catch set to "Fire". The heavy handle encased a spring-loaded cassette which held bullets in reserve. Myra set the catch to "Safe", took measurements and a sample bullet, and replaced the weapon beside the ammunition before returning her find to its hiding place.

At the Mitchell Library she read extensively about similar pistols. She concluded the Schofield pistol was 0.32 calibre intended for work at close quarters designed to fire bullets at low velocity which in most cases would not cause exit wounds. She concluded it was a perfect assassin's weapon for someone bold enough to get close to their intended victim.

With this information, she checked the pistol again before returning it to the secret drawer built into the edge of Nathan's bed. Perhaps Nathan Schofield had kept it for self-defence and to protect his great wealth, she surmised.

Living with Myra

Premonition

During the first week in March 1940, a strange, disturbing letter arrived at Kirklee. It was unstamped, uncensored and had, apparently, been delivered by hand.

The envelope said merely:

*From a dear friend of your husband.
(Dictated to me in utter secrecy.)*

The letter was written on cheap flimsy paper:

Darling, I am so near to you now. We must not use names, which might reveal us. I hope to be able to get a few days leave soon, perhaps at Easter, and if so I will come to you, to hold you close. They have promoted me, given me my own people - but they are just boys! I feel so old, like their father. Remember me in your dreams, and wait for me, my darling one. I will come to you soon. I promise.

Easter passed without further contact from Saul. Myra forgave his absence, understanding from the news on the wireless and in *The Glasgow Herald* what was happening in the skies over the south of England must be a form of hell on earth for seasoned flyers like Saul, his fine young men being blown to smithereens around him, flight on flight. Then it dawned on her, perhaps Saul had meant this note for someone else, such as Avril or

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Susie, someone close to wherever he was based. Promiscuous sex was a balm for many hurts, losses and frustrations, as Rita Miller understood well.

As a solace, Myra wrote the story of their possible reunion in her head, editing it repeatedly, obsessively refining it, adding every small detail such as what they would eat, drink, say, do, what clothes she would insist he wear. At each re-telling her dread grew, squeezing at her heart like a fiendish unremitting, unthinking claw, making her gasp whenever she closed her eyes and saw his plane spiral from the sky to explode into the sea.

She could not escape this cloud of traumatic images, no matter how hard she tried. He was in danger, perhaps already dead, her subconscious screamed at her. In an attempt to escape her nagging pain she wrote her story in fullest detail, projecting herself into a fantasy future where everything would be made perfect.

When Saul returned to her they would go on as if nothing had happened. They would settle in Kirklee, have children who would attend Kelvinside Academy then on to Glasgow University where Saul would be promoted to Professor. Their four children, all boys, (Paul, Francis, Jonathan and Ralph) would follow in their father's guiding footsteps, going on to even greater wealth and fame.

Sandy would be removed from her life to facilitate this ambition. Myra would write whatever story was required to make this happen.

Although no further letters from Saul arrived, Myra kept writing her love letters to him at the last address given. Perhaps he had been moved again, she hoped, refusing to yield to her growing foreboding.

The year ahead unwound without any news from Saul but because her own letters to him were never returned, Myra kept writing them.

She settled into a new stasis, writing and listening to Jazz, refusing to accept what she must eventually face, living out the fantasy she had written for herself.

In her story, her four boys were growing up, inhabiting the rooms above her, studying hard for their exams, enjoying long summers at the cottage at Gartocharn, sailing swimming, fishing with their father. . . .

Living with Myra

Shared Grief

One year later - Thursday 13 March 1941.

After work Myra caught the tram along Great Western Road to Kirklee.

She had a story running in her head which she was keen to get down on paper. It involved a woman in her mid-thirties called Valery whose husband Tim was the Captain of a submarine. They had a boy, Richard, aged twelve and twin six-year old girls, Rosemary and Rosalind. Tim had telephoned from Portsmouth. His periscope had been pranged and he was being allowed fourteen days shore leave while the dockyard sorted things out. He was racing for a train to head up to York, hoping to arrive late on Friday evening, when they could hold each other. Then he would be there, as a surprise, for the girls' seventh birthday breakfast on Saturday.

Tim foresaw difficulties: trains had been badly disrupted by the enemy bombing raids, buses were chaotic, with security checks everywhere....

Her story would never be written.

On the doormat lay a telegram from the War Department. It had a black edging.

Mrs Myra G. Schofield.

It was what she had feared since their last kiss on the fateful Sunday at the railway station. Her heart stopped beating, freezing her mind. Her body refused to move towards it, refused to make the letter real by picking it up.

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The next morning, she wakened with a jolt. Filled with a sense of impending disaster, her heart was pounding, adrenalin pumping through her system, making her ready to fight or flee from an imminent danger. Instead, when she made herself listen, all she could hear was an eerie, foreboding quietness.

Myra had broken her own rule and taken one of Sandy's sleeping pills, trying to escape the pain. Wide awake now, the words slashed again at her psyche:

Dear Mrs Schofield,

Living with Myra

I am writing to you with a heavy heart.

It is my sad duty to inform that your son Wing Commander Saul Robinson Schofield is reported missing as a result of operations over Belgium several months ago.

On behalf of....

She looked across at the mantle clock ticking uncaringly on the chest of drawers - it was nearly six o'clock. A dim shaft of morning light spilled around the crack at the edge of the Blackout sheet: for weeks past she had been meaning to pin this sheet properly against the window frame. Myra did not believe in Anderson Shelters or reinforced basements, refusing to respond to the knocks and shouts of the ARP Wardens, at whatever location she found herself during an air raid or alert.

Ambulance bells began dinging, racing first towards her, then receding. An air raid siren began to wail, joined almost at once by Ack-Ack guns filling the skies with their rattle, blocking out every other sound.

She ran upstairs to the top floor, to Saul's Observer's Room, and took up his binoculars. She followed the lines of tracer shells; saw the red glow on the horizon and the billowing black smoke. The sky was lightening as the sun rose, indifferent to the disaster it would reveal.

It must be Yoker or Clydebank, she thought. She ran to the telephone, looked up the number for Yoker Police Station. There was a disconnected sound. She rang Partick Police Station. A harassed duty constable confirmed her worst fears. Yoker Distillery and the adjacent streets had been hit. There were few survivors.

She telephoned the taxi rank a mile away, at Botanic Gardens, but the number rang out unanswered. She considered using Saul's car but decided to walk instead: there would be glass and rubble and replacement tyres were hard to find.

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The police cordon was crowded. She saw Sandy at the back of the crowd, alone his work bike lying uncharacteristically on the ground at his feet.

She stood beside him:

'Sandy.'

He turned to her and her heart melted. She wrapped her arms around him, and hugged him to her, cooing away his tears. Slowly his sobs abated:

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'I saw it, Myra. There's nothing but rubble. They must have been in the shelter, in the back of the close. I nearly made it. I pedalled as hard as I could but it was too late. I could have saved them; I could have got them away, away to somewhere safe'

'Come on, Sandy, come back home with me. We're all we've got now. It's just you and me.'

'No, no Myra, I can't go back to Caird Drive, I just can't. You don't understand'

'You must, Sandy; where else can you go now? And this time you have to tell me why Caird Drive scares you. Is this to do with Pamela?'

She saw at once from his eyes, and from his rigid body. Her guess had been right. But he had to face it, had to verbalise it to someone before he could move on. She had read of this extensively in the Mitchell Library in the Modern Psychology section. This was the window of opportunity for Sandy. If he did not do it now he would never do it, she surmised. And it had to be done at Caird Drive, if he was to conquer his fear.

His mind recoiled from Pamela and re-focussed on his more recent hurt:

'Myra, what about my Jean and my wee Sadie and my wee Sandy'

'They've gone to be with Mamma and Dadda and Granny Nellis. Just think of the nice party they'll be having up there. They wouldn't want you to spoil it by crying, now would they?'

'But Myra, what can you do? You have no idea what it was like, before, with Mummy and'

'If you tell me what it is you are afraid of, I'll fix it. I told you on the morning your mother went to join Uncle Albie. I meant it then and I mean it now.'

Myra looped her arm through his and they turned away together to face a new future, with Sandy walking beside her still wearing his bicycle clips, wheeling his work bike.

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Behind them, now about a mile away, Sergeant Hugh Barclay was carrying a terrified three-year old called Walter Carruth in his arms. Hugh had rescued the boy and his mother Margaret from a top-floor flat where they had been hiding under her bed. The three of them were on the first-floor landing when the building collapsed around them.

Sandy's 'Uncle' Shuggie was gone.

A week later his 'Auntie' Moira placed her head in her gas oven, unable to face her second loss. Sandy Kaywood had lost his place of refuge.

Living with Myra

Catharsis

As they walked back through the chaos to Caird Drive a new story was running in Myra's head. Sandy was only a small part of it. Meanwhile he would stay with her. This time their cohabitation would be strictly on her terms.

After he had picked at his evening meal, she gave him two sleeping pills in hot sweetened milk then helped him make up his new bed, including his water-proof sheet. She sat with him, holding his hand until he slipped under.

She leaned forward and kissed his forehead, softly.

It would be Sandy's last ever kiss from his wife. The chasm of personal histories between them was too wide to bridge with ersatz sex. After Saul, Sandy could never match up. After Jean, Myra's strength was too overpowering for him. Sandy needed someone who needed him, she realised, someone who would look to him for strength and salvation. Myra was not the woman for him, nor had she ever been.

Starting at breakfast next morning they had talked non-stop for fifteen hours.

His first focus had been Jean and his kids. Jean had been the one for him all along. She had loved him unconditionally. Jean had many faults, including poor purse management, (he was down to £253 in his savings account, he smiled ruefully). Even though his passbook was gone in the rubble, his money was safe. A new passbook would be issued. Reading between his lines Myra gathered Jean had been a loving, lustful, generous and affectionate 'wife', tolerant of his failings. Jean had always listened to what he wanted and tried to make him happy. When the kids started to arrive, his life had been fulfilled. He had not understood how children would change him; make him stronger, less self-centred. With Jean and the kids his life had been truly worth living. Now they were gone he was back in a deep pit of despair. Without them Sandy wanted to ride his bike into the darkness and die.

At her prompting Sandy revisited his life before Jean, seemingly unaware it had involved Myra. Slowly she manoeuvred him back to his childhood, making him start with his first bike. The floodgates opened and his tale gushed out in a torrent of tearful words, many incoherent, mixed with sighs and sobs of self-pity.

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When he had talked himself dry, she had made him start again, slowing him at times in her search for fine detail. The whole sad tale unfolded, every nuance. She checked with a few subtle questions, offering more benign explanations for certain key moments. He had immediately denied her reinterpretations, re-asserting his original story, which she came to accept as the full and unabridged truth, as best he understood it.

According to Myra's distillation of Sandy's account, perhaps Mrs Riddell had played only a secondary role in twisting Sandy from his original destiny as a University entrant. Clearly, as mother of the diabolical Pamela, Mavis must accept responsibility for damaging her daughter then failing to get her medical help. Apart from Sandy, Albie, and probably David Glover, there must also be others, Myra reasoned, men probably still living in terror of a return visit from this monster.

Myra began to write a new story, this time for Mavis Riddell and her deviant daughter. In parallel she began to write a new life for Sandy Kaywood. As she often did, Myra was now writing several inter-related stories.

Saul no longer featured in her thoughts. Her fantasy of their perfect future with their four sons was dead and buried, just like Jean and her children. Whenever Saul 'spoke' to her, she shut her ears to him and turned inward to herself and her stories. It was her way of grieving. Myra understood she too must move on, as she urged Sandy to do. The dead must look after themselves. She must continue to focus only on the living, those within her sphere of influence, those who might benefit from her help while ignoring the hapless and punishing the wrongdoers, as necessary, in order to protect the innocents, especially the children.

As a final act of closure, she sent the War Department's sad letter (but not its envelope) to Saul's Uncle Daniel, who on retirement had moved to Birkdale, near Southport, the village his wife's family hailed from.

Living with Myra

Finding Pamela

'Hello Celia, how are your knees today?'

'Ah Mywa, liebe, come, come. You stawby kuchen? You tea, sugar? You Angel to Moses. Wait, I David you. Feier, say, party, no?'

'Oh, hello David. How are you feeling today? You've got your colour back. That flu bug was vicious, wasn't it?'

They followed their set routine. Myra lit the gas, switched on the lights. The house was much warmer nowadays; Myra's anonymous weekly postal orders were affording coal which they had, of previous necessity, denied themselves. Celia took the cake and went through to the kitchen to set a tea trolley. David led Myra to the parlour where she loaded a few pieces of coal onto the dull ashes and used the bellows to re-ignite them.

'Well, Myra, it's been a while. Thanks for everything you do for Celia. Without you, well . . .'

'It's a pleasure, David. Excuse me, but while Celia's busy, I have a favour to ask on behalf of Mrs Riddell. Look, I know you don't get on with her, but I have to ask, for her sake.'

'Y-es?'

The small heavy-set man had changed from open to closed, wrapping his arms into a protective self-hug. Myra pressed on, trying to get what she wanted before Celia returned to stop Myra cajoling her brother.

'Well, Mavis Riddell is getting a bit, well, to be kind, shall we say befuddled?' said Myra. 'She's still throwing those empty bottles out of her bedroom window you know! She'll kill someone. I've been to see John MacAuley but he said the Riddell woman always pays up on time and she's been here for years. She should be in a mental hospital. She's worse than bad, she's pure evil, the Riddell woman.'

'Be that as it may, David, but Mavis hasn't heard from Pamela for nearly two years and she's very worried. I said I would do my best to help locate her. Do you have any ideas?'

'**Pamela?** Please Myra, do **not** go anywhere near her or the Riddell woman. Stay out of it, please. Mavis Riddell surpassed Satan when she brought Pamela into the world.'

'Please David, do it for me. I don't think Mrs Riddell will last too much longer.'

'No, Myra. I know where Pamela is but I refuse to tell you. I'm sorry, I can't risk it. I don't want Pamela coming back to this building. Look what happened to Albie!'

'What "No" my Mywa, David Glover?'

Living with Myra

'Please, Celia, please stay out of this. You don't understand, please.'

'DAVID! Say Mywa want! Direkt!'

'Please Celia, please, don't make me, please.'

'Sagst dem Mädchen was du weiss! Direkt, David. Tell Mywa you know it!' scolded Celia.

'What if I go to see her, take a message from her Mum, would it work? Maybe I can persuade Mavis to move to live with Pamela. Now there's a good idea, yes?' added Myra, who had no intention of bringing Pamela to Caird Drive; quite the opposite.

'Oh God, Myra, you don't understand. I can't let you go near her, she is. ...'

'DIREKT, David!'

At this imprecation David Glover rushed from the room, sobbing. They heard him in the bathroom, crying. The WC was flushed. He was moving about noisily. Celia tutted and held her finger to her lips. The two women sat in silence, sipping tea.

David Glover returned, wearing his overcoat and a homburg to cover his yarmulke, carrying a copy of "*The Stage*", folded open. He handed it to Myra, pointed, his hand shaking badly. Without speaking, he turned and almost ran to the front door which banged noisily behind him.

A new avant-garde theatre group was in the midst of a provincial tour, aiming to open soon in London's West End, in a bizarre new version of the smash hit film "Good-bye, Mr Chips". Pamela Penchant would co-star as Mr Chips' wife, Katherine. The Newest Company would open in Edinburgh, at The Assembly Rooms, 54 George Street. The show would run for five days, starting the following Tuesday.

Living with Myra

Good-bye Mrs Chips

It was a few minutes after 4.00 am on the morning of Thursday 24 April, 1941.

Myra, following her script, arrived at Hyndland Street near its corner with Caird Drive, where she parked Saul's car.

She tugged on Mavis Riddell's bell pull. There was no answer. She waited and pulled again, then again, then again. After a further long delay, a bleary-eyed Mavis opened the door.

Rita Miller wore thick-rimmed darkened glasses under a black headscarf. Her make-up gave her the face of a man. She was dressed in a khaki-coloured army jacket and billowing black pantaloons tucked into shiny black Wellington boots. She was unrecognisable as Myra Kaywood.

Rita immediately pushed the door open. Mavis teetered backwards but Rita caught her wrists and steered her into her bedroom. The room was appalling: soiled clothes and empty whisky and sherry bottles fought for floor space with greasy newspapers cradling the remains of many half-eaten fish suppers with ashtrays overflowing with dog ends and crushed cigarette packets.

Rita affected what she hoped might be perceived as a strong Edinburgh accent:

'Right then, yer Pammie's Mammy, eh? Yer in wan helloh-ah state there Mavis, henny, eh? Come oan noo, yer apposed tae be riddy, so ye urr. Did ye no rid the letterie, eh? Let's be gettin yir best caottie oan ye, eh? That's it, henny. An ye better hae yer baggy wi ye, eh?'

Mavis was wearing slippers with her stockings bagged around her ankles. Rita had to almost carry her down the three flights then they were off, moving slowly into the early gloom, heading for the car, about five minutes shuffle away.

At the vehicle Rita wrapped her passenger in an army great coat, securing her inside it with a piece of washing line cord:

'There ye ur, henny, intae the back seat ye go, just like the Royalty, eh?'

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Once seated Mavis was force fed hot sweet tea laced with two sleeping pills and was soon revisiting her recently interrupted world of familiar stupor.

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Rita sat in the car. She was parked near the Edinburgh Assembly Rooms. It was almost 11 pm, nearly pitch black with swirling haar spilling along the streets from the Forth estuary. The car lights were dimmed behind wartime slits. Myra had fabricated a cosh by using a piece of lead pipe she had kept when her bathroom had been re-modelled, wrapping it in a dirty hand-towel which Sandy had used to dry down his bikes.

Rita was wearing a male theatrical wig, bottle-dyed black. She wore red horn-rimmed glasses with dark lenses and a man's suit which hung on her like a sack.

Earlier, when she had sat through the play in the front row of the stalls, she had been part of a small band of aficionados who had suffered the turgid performance. Now Myra knew exactly who Pamela was; the strange looking woman with close-cropped greying hair who had ruined so many lives. When Pamela had given her the eye, Rita had leered back, licking her tongue slowly over her slash of dark red lipstick. On leaving Rita had passed a note to the man minding the Stage Door.

Rita watched as the little crowd of performers gaggled out onto the pavement. The Stage Door banged shut behind them, unceremoniously, as if the doorkeeper was pleased to be rid of them.

Pamela lit a cigarette before kissing adieu to her companions. The others left in one direction, and Pamela, alone now, sauntered towards Rita now standing beside the car.

Rita was still in her man's suit garb. She opened the rear door, invitingly.

Pamela stopped, seemingly unsure. Perhaps she had not expected a car.

Rita raised her hand, curled her index finger, pouted her lips and mewed invitingly.

Pamela was on the move again, nearly at the car.

Rita tried for a posher Edinburgh voice:

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'Well hello again! It's the famous Pamela Penchant, previously the infamous Pamela Riddell, unless I'm much mistaken?'

'What?'

'Well Pamela, my Editor wants me to be very sure I have the right person. It's why your mother Mavis Riddell here agreed to come with me. Poor Mavis, bit fond of the old John Barleycorn, dear thing, I think you'll agree? There she is, fast asleep. Look for yourself.'

'Eh? Mum? Mum is here?'

'Yes, she's definitely Mavis Riddell; I can vouch for her myself, since she lives across the landing from my very good friend Sandy.'

Pamela ground out her cigarette and leaned forward into the car.

Rita brought the lead cosh down viciously on the nape of her neck, stunning and paralysing her, but without killing her outright. She then bundled the daughter into the back of the car beside her long-lost mother.

Two hours later, at the sewage works both women were semi-conscious and naked when they took their final slither towards the machinery rotating at high speed. Removing their clothing had been a trial. Had she brought tailoring scissors, it would have been simpler. Manoeuvring the inert but not yet dead bodies had also been a trial. Some sort of bogey or barrow would have been useful.

When Pamela did not appear for the play on Friday evening, her colleagues assumed her life had taken a new direction, as it had several times during these past years. The offbeat and secretive Miss Pamela Penchant was not missed.

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The other residents of Caird Drive did not immediately notice Mavis Riddell was missing. It took Myra two weeks of midnight disposals to various local dustbins to rid the flat of Mavis's detestable accoutrements and malodorous clothing. In the process of doing so she uncovered several secret caches of notes in various denominations. There was no bank passbook to be found. Myra concluded the departed Mavis had lived her life in a cash-only economy. The MMF was now £1,152 richer. Mavis's jewellery was virtually worthless and was dumped with the other contents.

The flat was in disgusting condition. Unlike Sadie, Mavis had never been house-proud and the grime was ingrained. Myra put on her old house-cleaning clothes and with the radio

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playing softly she set about the task of deep-cleaning the flat before redecorating it to make it acceptable for a suitable replacement tenant.

Living with Myra

Release

On 4 July 1941, Myra made her usual Friday call on Celia and David.

In her hands, she held an envelope containing a letter written in a scrawl which she hoped would pass as Pamela's. It was addressed to Mrs Sadie Kaywood. Its postmark was authentic. Three weeks after disposing their bodies in Glasgow, Myra had driven again to Edinburgh and posted the envelope. As she had hoped, Sandy, seeing it was addressed to his mother, had opened it. Buzzing with happiness at its content, he had been waiting for Myra when she came home the next evening after work.

In the letter, Pamela explained to Mrs Kaywood of her mother's decision to join her daughter on a permanent basis. The touring company was being sent to Australia and her mother had been given employment as their wardrobe mistress and dresser. Their ship was about to sail from Southampton which left no time for them to return to Glasgow. She asked Sadie to dispose of the flat's contents and send on any monies due with her mother's better clothes. Pamela promised to send her new address in due course and asked Sadie to advise the Factor of her mother's decision never to return to Caird Drive.

Celia asked Myra if she might keep the letter for a few days to show others. News of Mavis and Pamela's departure spread quickly.

Phamie wrote immediately to Mr MacAuley asking if her unmarried sister, Letitia Fraser, also a retired schoolteacher, could be given tenancy of the vacant flat.

The Factor consulted the Owner then advised this would be in order, but there would be a short delay to allow electrical rewiring and renewal of the plumbing pipes plus the installation of new kitchen and bathroom fixtures, in accordance with the owner's desire to upgrade the property at each opportunity.

Phamie wrote by return asking if she might be allowed to relocate to the refurbished flat adjacent to Mrs Kaywood's, a friend of long standing. Letitia would be very willing to move into her old flat, if this was acceptable to the Owner.

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Mr MacAuley wrote saying, in the light of Miss Fraser's vigilance in support of his endeavours over many years in his quest to maintain the correct tone in the property, the Owner had intimated this alternative proposal was indeed acceptable. He added, if her sister would be willing to delay her entry or suffer the unavoidable disruption, Miss Fraser's present flat would also be upgraded, in accordance with the wishes of the Owner.

This news, when it leaked, caused the other tenants to ask for parity. MacAuley responded quickly, explaining, with their cooperation, the Owner proposed a complete general upgrading of the property including new electrical wiring throughout the building, installation of electric lighting to the common close and stairs, immersion heaters to provide quick hot water, re-roofing, renewed plumbing, replacement sanitary ware, gas fires throughout and removal of coal bunkers to allow new kitchen fitments. The letter also assured the tenants that the Owner would fully fund these improvements and would not seek increased rental. The tenants snatched at this unexpected and generous offer. Completion of the works was followed by a further re-painting of the close, also courtesy of the Owner.

Mavis's money was paying reparation for the years of misery imposed on her neighbours at Caird Drive during her tenancy. Although these actions could never fully mend the hurt she and her daughter had caused, it was the best story Myra could write for them.

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In late August Myra showed Celia a letter written by a theatrical friend of Pamela's informing Mrs Kaywood of the tragic deaths of Mavis and Pamela whose ship had been holed in three places and sunk by a submarine near the coast of Australia. This letter had been written on paper made from a cloth-like material, so favoured by acting types.

There was no envelope for Sandy to inspect this time. Myra told him it had been addressed to "Mrs Kaywood". She, being Mrs Kaywood, had opened it then used the envelope to kindle the fire.

This second letter appeared to have been written by a left-handed person whose spelling was poor, but this did not detract from the joyful finality: both Riddells were now no more.

Celia was permitted to borrow this letter also. David seemed to visibly shed ten years. Many months passed before both letters, now well-thumbed, were returned by Celia.

Living with Myra

Myra surmised they had been seen by many others who, like David, had continued to live in dread of either Mavis or Pamela's return. If so, her ruse may have served to release them.

Living with Myra

Kirklee Allotments

Sandy and Myra would never be a proper married couple, but their apparent reconciliation was welcomed. The neighbours were not aware of what had happened to him during his absence, but saw from the time of his return he was gradually changing, becoming more normal, more courteous, more considerate, no longer wheeling his wet bikes backwards and forwards through the close to Miss Glover's cellar. They were too circumspect to ask or hint of what had taken him away, but it was clear to everyone Myra had been blameless. Everyone knew the young Mrs Kaywood was a kindly woman. She must be a saint to take him back. Maybe he had been in hospital, perhaps a mental breakdown?

As his mind mended, Sandy gradually morphed into a man with strong views, some of them very fixed. Few younger men were left in the Wheelers' now, which comprised mostly of boys and veterans. Those of Sandy's vintage were away fighting the war, now raging world-wide. Sandy had become a leading light in the Wheelers', allowing himself to be sucked into the vacuum Hugh Barclay's tragic death had created. Now he was eating better and cycling less, Sandy was steadily replicating his father Albie's rotund body shape, his head shining brightly through his thinning hair. He would have been welcomed at any synagogue, had he worn a yarmulke.

With his release from fear and self-absorption, his own great loss of Jean and his children rankled with Sandy. He must do more for the War Effort, he muttered repeatedly to Billy. Myra suggested he might like to *Dig for Victory*, advising they needed men at Kirklee Allotments. He applied immediately and was welcomed with open arms.

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Within a few months Sandy's new enthusiasm became an obsession. Myra puzzled over what she might do with any vegetables he might successfully nurture, since she had never been able to persuade him to eat any, apart from chips. This, of course, had taken its toll in recurring and extended bouts of constipation. Perhaps he might be persuaded to sup vegetables disguised in pureed soup, to help his bowels turn over faster. Any surplus produce would, no doubt, be welcomed by their neighbours and her colleagues at St George's, she reasoned.

Taken with his involvement in the Wheelers', Sandy filled his life with activity, spending his afternoons at his allotment before rushing in for tea then immediately out again to

Living with Myra

his merry-go-round of early evening committee meetings. The new Sandy Kaywood was happier, cheerier and mostly absent, which allowed Myra her freedom to continue as if she was a single woman, living as if a widow, which in a sense she felt herself to be.

Now she had lost her Saul, Myra changed her focus too. Work was the source of most of her stories now, and the occasional trip to The Plaza as Rita.

At the Co-op, most of the men had gone off to fight and Myra willingly took on more responsibility, often arriving home late, just as Sandy was leaving, hefting his bike on his shoulder, heading off to a meeting or going for a wee spin, before he started nightshift. Some weeks she hardly saw him, except at the weekend. Saturdays were the busiest days at St George's and there were always the usual problems cashing up and balancing the books. Sundays were the only days they might be together, unless he was at the allotments.

Myra persisted with his 'training', as she thought of it. His bed-wetting was now highly intermittent, insofar as she could detect. Slowly he was changing for the better, seeing outside himself, thinking of others. As she had known it would, time healed his wounds, as they were healing her own. They were both moving ahead, not quite in parallel, more of a slow drift away from each other, their life paths becoming increasingly remote. The difference was they now communicated more openly, both politely avoiding issues which might cause unnecessary angst.

Now she had done what she could for Sandy, and for the other Caird Drive residents, Myra began to write the next chapter of her life. She must move ahead. She decided to make a further donation of £3,000 to the funds of MMF in order to pursue the next part of a story she had been plotting and refining for some time.

Living with Myra

Visitation

Wednesday 17th September 1941.

Following a long discussion with Hilary in the King's Café, Myra made a visit to Herbert Henning. She understood from a friend, she explained, the property of the Schofield family in Kirklee was unoccupied. If the family would sell the property to MMF, she would arrange for it to be made available to returning Officers recuperating from war injuries. She mentioned she had been a close friend of Mr Saul Schofield who had mentioned the family was represented by Robert M Irvine. If the family were agreeable, she would prefer to buy the property for the MMF, complete with its contents, at fair market value, as good furniture and fixtures were difficult to come by with the War in progress.

In parallel, Adam Sherman wrote to Irvine from Myra's typewriter. Mr Sherman was a film producer, he explained, making propaganda films for the War Ministry. There was a car of the type they required at the home of Mr Saul Schofield. For reasons of national security, the Ministry had empowered Mr Sherman to make a compulsory purchase of this vehicle, to be paid in cash. The amount proposed was £154, in accordance with the valuation suggested by the Ministry. The money would be sent to Irvine in a sealed envelope, marked for his personal attention. The courier, Pamela Penchant, was an actress involved in the current project. She would require in exchange for the envelope, the vehicle, its documents and its keys. Miss Penchant would call at the offices of Mr Irvine on Thursday inst., around 6.30 pm. This matter was of great urgency. Delay would be severely frowned upon by the Ministry.

Myra was certain Mr Irvine would delegate this matter. He never missed his Bridge Club sessions on a Thursday evening, the highlight of his week, as he had told her several times, making what he thought was riveting small talk. As arranged, the garishly dressed Rita, identifying herself as Pamela Penchant, called at Clifton Place on the following Thursday evening, collected the car and its documentation in exchange for the cash then drove it back to its garage at Kirklee.

Timeously, at 4.30 pm on Wednesday 1st October 1941, Myra made the short trip from St George's to Henning & Henning. Prior to this she went first to the Mitchell Library. In the Ladies' Lavatory, she changed into the more elegant clothing of the other Mrs

Living with Myra

Kaywood, she of the MMF. At Henning & Henning, Myra completed the necessary paperwork and collected two sets of keys. The Kirklee property and its contents were now owned by the Margaret Miller Foundation. As it was a pleasant evening, she walked to Kirklee, savouring the moments ahead, the fulfilment of a fantastic dream she had never fully believed would ever come true.

Once inside she closed and locked the main door behind her, shutting out the world of hurt around her. She wandered through the house for hours, moving from room to room, working her way gradually higher until she found herself in Saul's eyrie, his Observer Room, where he had used his binoculars to watch aeroplanes landing and taking off from Renfrew Aerodrome.

It was a cloudy, murky night and the sun had almost set to the north-west over the Arrochar Alps, leaving them black and ominous. A bat flew around the eaves and finally the gloom settled into a grey-black darkness. She leaned against the window frame and closed her eyes.

"Myra, I need help. Can you come?"

She whirled around and peered in the direction of the dark corner, to the left of the closed door.

'Saul? Saul? Is that you?'

The silence pulsed back at her.

She ran to the door, hauled it open and peered into the darkness.

'**SAUL!** Is it you?'

The house was not blacked out and she did not have her torch - it was in her handbag in the kitchen, three floors below. She dare not switch on the light and risk a visit from the ARP.

'Saul? Are you there?'

Living with Myra

She crept down the dark stairs holding on to the banister, calling out to him as she went.

Starting in the Kitchen and using her torch, she searched every corner and cupboard, acting against reason. Eventually she gave up and cried herself to sleep, fully clothed, under the candlewick bedspread, in their bedroom, her head buried in his pyjamas.

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In the years which followed, Saul did not come to Myra again. Every night she spent at Kirklee, as darkness fell she expected him, hoped for him, conjured up his beautiful face.

Even an imaginary Saul was better than no Saul.

Living with Myra

Dig for Victory

Now that the idea Saul might still be alive had been implanted, Myra found she was unable to let go of visiting Kirklee as she had originally intended. She realised her initial idea had been naive, flawed and amateurish. Instead, she would need to find a suitable charity, she reasoned, one with funds and competent personnel capable of providing a home for Officers recovering from injury and trauma.

With each visit, Myra became more attached to the idea of living at Kirklee on a permanent basis. She was conflicted: her heart insisted quietly she should stay near to the ghost of Saul forever: her mind shouted she must give him up - he was gone and staying in Kirklee would pull her down, make her into a permanent and pathetic widow, leaching away her inner strength.

Uncharacteristically, Myra let the matter of Kirklee drift as grief wrapped her ever more tightly in tentacles of recurring melancholy. It was her love of music which saved her. 'Trad Jazz' became her antidote, providing an escape into a brighter, more positive world. Slowly her collection of records began to grow as she treated each new 78 rpm disc with the care she would have lavished on a child.

As she listened and tapped away at her typewriter the hurt scabbed over and the pain of loss diminished. Her writing was in full flow again, now she could fully empathise with the War widows who read her stories. She shared with them her fantasies of days gone by, when she and Saul had been together, telling them stories of what might have been, dressed convincingly as a recent history of the days before the hated War had shattered all their lives. She knew she was reverting, but these stories were her balm.

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By contrast it seemed Sandy was moving on more quickly, putting his loss firmly behind him. The new Sandy of the Kirklee Allotments was a busy man, always moving from one plot to another, offering his physical help and sage advice. The Schofield mansion overlooked the allotments, perfectly placed to allow Myra to monitor Sandy in his new passion. His plot was adjacent to that of an oddly mismatched couple with three girls, a toddler and slightly older twins. Myra watched and wondered. What she saw of Sandy's interaction with them and from his burblings back at Caird Drive, made her smile and hope. Based on what she was hearing she saw a new story was beginning to form for him,

Living with Myra

dulling the ache of her own loss. People who needed each other were being thrown together by chance and seemed to be grabbing their opportunity.

Watching the allotment hour by hour with Saul's binoculars gave Myra the author a source of new material. She embarked on a series for the *Peoples' Friend*, writing a long series of short pieces based on a fictitious allotment called 'City Community Gardens', populating it with stories of the cheery characters she was observing.

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By encouraging Sandy to tell her about his horticultural activities, Myra gleaned important snippets about the oddly mismatched couple in the adjacent allotment. In appearance Harry was like a younger, sandy-haired version of Cary Grant, but taller, almost as tall as Frank, or so it seemed from her long-distance comparisons with Saul's binoculars. Because of deafness in his left ear, he had been rejected by the Call-Up Board. Further probing revealed that Harry had been a joiner but had taken a job as a tram driver, preferring to work late and early shifts, so he could mind the kids during the day. This allowed Helen to go out to her various cleaning jobs, mostly large houses in Kirklee and the adjacent Kelvinside area.

Helen Hunter was oddly formed: her head and shoulders were small and thin, giving her a waspish look which jarred with her oversized bulging breasts and short muscular legs. She reminded Myra of her sister Jean, though less chubby and with a less pretty face. Like Jean, Helen had an ever-smiling face and a cheery disposition, always making fun with those around her, Myra deduced, watching her talking and joking with the other Plot Holders. Listening to Sandy telling of Helen, Myra learned she was much more like Mamma had been in her prime, bustling, organising, outgoing, and clearly bossy. Importantly for Myra, she learned Helen was very, very careful with money. Apart from her necessity, it was ingrained in her nature.

As time passed Myra learned to her surprise Harry and Helen were not in fact a married couple. Helen had been married to Harry's older brother Richard who had been killed at Dunkirk. Harry had been married too but, like Sandy, his wife and two boys had been wiped out in the Clydebank blitz. Initially, as a stopgap, Harry had moved in with Helen and her kids, to her flat in Garrioch Road, near to Wyndford Barracks, where her husband Richard had been based.

According to Sandy's account, as told to him by Harry, Helen was a Jekyll and Hyde character: full of fun at the allotments and a nag at home, making Harry's life a misery.

Living with Myra

Sandy's said Harry was exaggerating: Helen said she just wanted Harry to behave and come home every night when he said he would, instead of staying out, gallivanting heaven knew where.

Watching Harry from afar, and after months of absence, Rita surged back. A story of Harry and his nightly wanderings began bubbling in her head. Each night Harry visited Myra's lonely bedroom, standing naked before her, his tall strong body urging Rita to lure him to her.

However, the story of Harry, no matter how appealing, must be delayed temporarily. Myra had a more pressing story to play out; one she had been hatching for many, many months.

Carpe Diem!

Living with Myra

Gordon Takes a Tumble

Aged fifty-three years at the outbreak of the War, Gordon Galbraith had been spared from the Call Up. As Myra learned during her first few months at St George's, Mr Gordon was a fragrant dandy, a snide gossip and a windbag who relied heavily on bluster while hoping for the best. As the War progressed, it had gradually taken most of his placemen, or, as he called them, "my lost boys", leaving him increasingly exposed. When an awkward situation arose, or an unpopular decision had to be made, he dithered, wary of disappointing one or other of his 'W-T Only' senior women acting up to replace these lost boys. The pile of small unresolved niggles grew day by day until it became a mountain of disgruntlement causing increasingly noticeable undercurrents and factions which he pretended not to notice but which made him jittery, snappy.

In the past, he had used Daisy as his first sounding board. Since Myra's 'promotion' to Head of Furniture and Haberdashery, he more frequently sought her advice, breezing unannounced into her basement cubby-hole office on the Lower Ground Sales Floor (basement). Ensnared, with his back to the door, as if holding off the problems outside, he might stand there for an hour, trapped in a cycle of indecision, confiding his latest dilemma, ignoring her repeated advice, regurgitating who had said what to whom, going around in a confusing spiral. When he had irritated her beyond endurance, Myra would rise from her desk, make the excuse of needing the toilet and usher him outside before locking her door. Thus evicted, he would display his petulance by storming off tutting and harrumphing, heading for a repeat performance with one of his other confidants, often dumping his woes on Daisy, trapping her in her Cash Office on the ground floor.

On occasions, when it suited her purpose, Myra would offer to solve his problem by taking on added responsibility or work. Usually, Galbraith would accept with profuse thanks but by the next day would renege on this agreement. His default solution seemed to be one of working himself harder, rushing around, becoming uncharacteristically short tempered from trying to cope with every problem, resulting in increasing confusion all round.

Everyone could see the poor man was heading for a break-down. It was Myra's moment. She decided to act. *Carpe Diem!*

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Saturday 29 November 1941.

Living with Myra

It was early evening, almost seven o'clock. The Co-op doors had been closed for nearly an hour. Only Gordon and Myra were left behind. She noticed he had already put on his special ring, as he often did on Saturdays, clearly anticipating an encounter during the coming hours. Myra was deliberately taking her time, knowing he was becoming impatient. This was in her plan. It was unlikely he would chide her because he needed her expertise. Head Office required all departmental ledgers be reconciled to the Main Ledger on the last Saturday of each month and these entries collated with the Cash Book to show full agreement. The principal details were then abstracted to a summary pro forma, the Monthly Returns which, together with the Main Ledger and the Cash Book, were collectively known as the 'Monthly Books'. Mr Gordon would take these documents home, delivering them personally to Morrison Street first thing on the following Monday morning. After checking, the Monthly Returns summary was retained and the other books returned to St George's by a Head Office courier.

During the week which had just passed, Myra had devised a ruse to discover which electrical fuse controlled which electrical circuit. This involved pulling each fuse in turn to inspect it, to be sure the fuse wire was in good condition. She claimed her motivation was to avoid a recurrence of the overload problems which had occurred during the previous Christmas rush when the electrical system overloaded due to the garlands of fairy lights used to create a festive atmosphere. Mr Gordon like most others was petrified by electricity and had stood well back, in awe of her bravery.

As often happened when the Monthly Books were needed, Galbraith had allowed Daisy to get away sharp, to catch an early showing of a new film at the pictures, an idea implanted earlier in the week when Myra had given Daisy a birthday card with a £1 note enclosed. As her role as Cashier Daisy had already counter-signed the blank proforma 'blind', as she often did on these occasions. This act was against the rules, but Daisy trusted Myra whom she knew would never let her down. Mr Gordon was in on it too, aware this balancing act if left to Daisy, might take until mid-night and could end in a flood of tears and stream of street-menders' invective.

Fussing, prowling about the shop, tutting, whistling out of tune, he was re-positioning dustsheets to drape properly over their counters and wiping glass tops with a duster. As he worked, Mr Gordon continually whined about slipping standards, absence of professionalism, and the lack of dedication amongst his staff. It seemed he was unaware he was talking to himself; something Myra noticed he had been doing increasingly over the past months.

Living with Myra

When he was at the far side of the floor, Myra dodged out of Daisy's office, scuttled to the fuse box and from her concealed location, called to him.

'Oh Mr Gordon, would you be able to run downstairs and fetch my departmental ledger for me, please.'

'Righty-Oh, Myra, consider it job done. Tally-ho!' he replied, rushing off to take the stairs leading to the basement.

Whenever he got a chance Gordon always rushed, it made him feel busy, important, and being fit and spry, Gordon always took these steps two at a time. When Myra judged he was half-way down the stairs the lights failed, pitching the entire shop into blackness. Galbraith missed his footing, hurtled down the last flight head over heels, damaging his spine.

Myra switched on her torch and stood by the fuse box, listening. Silence beckoned from the Lower Ground Floor, not even a groan. Five minutes later she re-inserted the fuse restoring the lighting and returned to her double entries and piles of cash.

Twenty minutes later she went looking for the missing Gordon Galbraith. She had been trained as a first aider and saw at once he was unconscious, badly hurt, with a weak pulse but not yet dead. From Daisy's telephone in the Cash Office, she called an ambulance using Rita's Kinning Park twang, preparing herself for the role she was to play out later.

While waiting for help to arrive, Myra searched his pockets, removing each item of importance including his wallet, expensive gold watch, equally expensive fountain pen and his house keys. These she decanted into the inner zipping pocket of her black handbag. Things often went missing in hospitals, she had read. She slipped off his pinkie ring with its distinctive tiger eye gemstone, wrapped it in an old brown envelope and dropped it into the waste bin. He would never need it again, she had promised herself when writing his story.

Dressed as Myra but conversing as Rita, she went with him in the ambulance carrying her overnight case. While the driver and his assistant signed over their charge to the emergency department receiving team, Myra slipped into the toilets where she did a quick change, emerged as Rita in her blonde wig and heavy make-up wearing a too-short, tightly-fitting red dress with a long side split. Standing beside the comatose Gordon Galbraith, she made an overt show of concern by stroking his hand and cooing at him while allowing crocodile tears to smudge her eye makeup. When asked, she gave Gordon's name and address at Highburgh Road, and her own as Pamela Penchant of 54 George

Living with Myra

Street, stating she was his niece and next of kin. It was the nurse who assumed this George Street was in Glasgow. Her tale for the hospital authorities was of poor Uncle Gordon, who had been visiting her, falling from a high ladder while changing a light bulb. As the orderlies wheeled Galbraith's prone form off to the Treatment Room, Rita returned to the toilets where she changed back into Myra before slipping quietly away into the night.

She made her way to Caird Drive where she re-packed Rita's clothes in the dresser drawer which she always kept locked. As she waited for time to pass, she supped a plate of soup, ate two slices of toasted cheese with a pot of tea and read the Evening Citizen tapping her foot to a jazz programme on the radio. At midnight, she walked swiftly through the foggy blackout to Highburgh Road where Galbraith had a flat on the top floor. He had repeatedly said he was a bachelor, claiming the love of his life had left him in the lurch at the altar, gushing he could never risk his heart to another.

To be sure the house was empty she pulled the bell and waited. After several repeats, she concluded the place was empty. Using Mr Gordon's keys, she opened both locks on the storm doors. Standing in the entryway between the storm door and the half-glassed inner door she relocked the outer door and eased the security bar into place then opened the inner door locks, entered, and relocked them.

Standing in the long hallway, she did not switch on any lights. Using her torch, she searched the property carefully and thoroughly, room by room, expecting the evidence she sought would be well hidden. From Henson's records, Galbraith had been one of his best clients. She found the disgusting images filed in forty-three shoe boxes. Stuffed full, they were stacked in a locked cupboard, reachable only by standing near the top of his tall step ladder.

In the drawer of his bedside table, inside a slim rosewood mahogany box with a false bottom, she found a further selection of his current favourites. In this batch, she found an image with a diabolical inscription on its reverse side. In her experience Hilary was not a common name and the tight, dark curls of the child in the photograph were little changed in the woman who had become Myra's closest friend.

Myra raked out and re-kindled the fire. When it was blazing brightly she burned them box by box, and finally, with tears in her eyes, the print of Hilary.

Living with Myra

She took his cash nest egg of £737 and collection of expensive watches, cufflinks, rings and tie-pins. There was a passbook showing a balance of £2,340 which could be accessed by a cheque-book. She decided to hold these items in safe-keeping for him: he might need home nursing care, if he survived. He had a large wine collection and she helped herself to three bottles which she put into her overnight case.

On leaving, she had just quietly locked the inner door and was about to re-open the storm door when she had a stroke of luck. There was a sharp rap inches from her face - a policeman's knock. She checked her watch with its luminous dial: nearly 2:00 am. The knock came again. She waited, breathing slowly and, she hoped, quietly. Behind her, at the far end of the hallway the telephone bell rang out harshly. It rang for ages then fell silent. Myra heard what sounded like a sigh, followed by footsteps crossing the landing, where the person knocked on the door opposite. When there was no response the knocking was repeated.

Myra heard a high querulous voice ask, 'Who is this?'

'Police, madam, Sorry to trouble. I am a police officer. My name is Tommy Thomson. I'm here about your neighbour, Mr Galbraith,' replied a baritone.

In the short exchange which followed, Myra placed her ear against the storm door and strained to hear the muffled responses from a woman's trembling voice. Eventually, after the rattle of a safety chain and the turn of several keys in door locks, the woman repeated her name as Mrs Marsdene and without prompting, volunteered she was a widow who lived alone. She spelled her name slowly and then, getting into her garrulous stride, began confiding her doubts about her neighbour in a penetrating stage whisper:

"Well there we are at last. So many locks, but one simply cannot be too careful, as I am sure you will agree, but yes of course you would, being a - but oh, I see you are a sergeant, and so young, how nice. And a brand-new uniform? Very smart. Oh, do please excuse my appearance but I have church in a few hours. I sing lead soprano at St Bride's, such a demanding role and so I simply must keep my rollers in. But yes, Mr Galbraith, goodness me, where is the man?'

'He is in hospital, Mrs Marsdene. We understand he was injured in a fall. It is a serious injury, touch and go. ...'

'A fall, how ridiculous. You say Mr Galbraith is in hospital after a fall? Had he been drinking? There are always wine bottles in his rubbish bin, more than a dozen every week,

Living with Myra

can you imagine? A fall? Drunk, was he? Although I must say I've never seen him drunk, not once.'

'No, madam, there was no indication he had been drinking. I'm here to try to make contact with his next of kin. Can you help?'

'Well, I must say Mr Galbraith is a very private man, but always friendly, always cheerful. Rather effusive, really. It's his visitors, his 'cousins' he calls them, who are very strange, almost disturbing. They are odd people, very peculiar, mostly older but some younger ones too, and quite a few escorting their 'grandchildren', or so Mr Galbraith says they are. Such poorly-dressed little souls, some looking unwell to my mind. But what would I know about children as I've never been blessed. The men themselves look healthy enough, very swanky, perfumed. Toffs and spivs, I would call them. A few have cars and there is one very odd couple who come on a motorbike with a side car. He is short, with white-hair and peculiar eyes; she is a large, mannish woman. Did I say they were here earlier? Ringing his doorbell and banging on his door there for ages. And his telephone has been ringing non-stop. His bell is extra loud. Did I say he listens to music? Constantly, and very loudly, whenever he's home, which thankfully is seldom. He gallivants most nights, except Thursdays. His 'cousins' always come on Thursdays, did I say? We all talk about it you know, but "live and let live", Mr Marsdene used to say to me, God Rest his Soul. Did I say Mr Galbraith works at St George's Cross Co-operative? Says he's in charge, probably wishful thinking. Can you imagine it, working with him all day, every day, with him whistling out of key? Purgatory. Anyway, the Co-op is certainly not the sort of shop I would ever frequent. Did I say he keeps his storm door locked at all times, even when he is at home? Why, one must wonder? Very odd. Very, very odd. Did I say none of us has ever been allowed across his threshold? Then there is his boasting about his record collection and the new purchases he has made. Of course, he never comes to my little musical soirees. In fact, I've stopped asking him. Of course, he was from Aberdeen originally, I think he said, or was it Dundee? Sounds more like a Paisley twang if you ask me. Now, for your report, Sergeant, please make sure you spell my name correctly. That's Marsdene with an 'e'. Margery Blenheim Marsdene, nee McCulloch. . ."

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Over the weeks which followed, Myra made further nocturnal visits to Highburgh Road, checking to be sure she had unearthed everything of value and importance. These trips gave her the opportunity to re-position the man's wine, adding it to her selection from Kirklee. Gordon's wines were not as good as Saul's, but very acceptable for weeknights. She also arranged for his telephone be disconnected, thereby isolating him from potential external help, should any of his friends be willing to take up the onerous role as his daily helper. She also removed the major part of his extensive record collection

Living with Myra

of classical music, keeping the few which she enjoyed and selling the remainder to a dealer on Great Western Road.

Eventually, after four months, Gordon Galbraith returned to Highburgh Road in a wheelchair. Suffering great pain, his infirmities made him a virtual prisoner in his top floor flat. Aware of his impending discharge, Myra wrote to Rene Boyle from Highburgh Road purporting to be Mrs Russell, Mr Galbraith's second cousin visiting from Dundee. The letter explained her cousin Gordon was housebound and in need of a person willing to shop, clean and generally look after him. After a few days of being cared for by Green Lady nurses, Rene Boyle took charge.

The tenement close where Gordon Galbraith lived had been purchased by the MMF Trust many months earlier, as part of her plan. Now, having possession of his cheque book, which Myra freely operated on his behalf, she felt she had sufficient control of his life for her present purposes. She had long ago learned to mimic his flamboyant signature and now did so with his own Sheaffer Triumph pen.

Being a member of the most senior staff in the Co-op 'family' meant Galbraith would continue to receive his monthly salary until his retirement date when his pension would be paid. Only the Co-op elite awarded themselves this perquisite. Each week Myra called on her former boss to check his condition and progress, collected his bills for payment and topped up the small cash tin which held the money he gave to Rene for shopping and sundries. The key for this was kept on a string around his neck. Knowing Rene liked to be away by four o'clock to get to her other job (she was a school cleaner), Myra timed her visits to miss her, watching from a close-mouth nearby until the woman left, then swooping up for a short visit.

She was pleased to find Mr Gordon was still unsure of what had happened on the fateful night of his accident. Over the months in hospital he had changed from the cheery, bustling, wise-cracking man of old into a shrunken shadow of his former self, often becoming tearful and upset because his many friends had deserted him. His speech had been affected and he was now dependent on high-strength painkillers, the side effect of which was to visit him with bouts of powerful, cramping constipation. Should it prove expedient, a sadder addendum chapter in Myra's story for Gordon Galbraith could be easily devised. Meanwhile under the dubious ministrations of the chain-smoking, sherry-drinking Rene Boyle, Gordon Galbraith the blow-hard and child molester was locked in his own personal purgatory.

Living with Myra

Acting Up

On the Monday morning following Mr Gordon's tumble, Myra took the Monthly Books directly to HQ, avoiding St George's. She had used Galbraith's gold-nibbed pen with its dark green ink to make an excellent copy of his signature at the appropriate places on each of the pages. These signatures, together with Daisy's, would certify the books and satisfy the system, ensuring there would be no hiccup which might bring unwanted attention to St George's and Daisy. The books were wrapped in brown paper and tied with string, in the fashion Mr Gordon had always insisted upon.

At the Commissionaire's desk, she asked for Mr Edward MacElhose whom she knew was the Accounting Officer Galbraith reported to. She was directed to his office where she was confronted by Miss Lena Harrison. *Lena the Lioness*, so called partly because of her long widely spaced buck teeth, but mainly because of her ability to reduce most people to jelly, by the rasp of her tongue, both men and woman. There were many stories about the tall, muscular Lena Harrison: she was a woman best avoided, if she was indeed a woman.

Miss Harrison forcefully demanded she should take charge of the Monthly Books but Myra had been firm, polite yet dogged in denying her, acting the part she had written for herself:

'Oh, no, Miss Harrison,' said Myra, patting her large black handbag, 'I would love to be relieved of this burden of responsibility but I just can't. You see Mr Gordon was very insistent, very definite about it. "Myra, you must hand this package personally and directly to Ted MacElhose, no one else." He made me promise on my mother's grave, may she Rest in Peace. It has been bearing down on me all weekend, Miss Harrison. I've hardly slept a wink. I must insist on seeing Mr Edward personally.'

The Lioness had roared:

'Who on earth do you think you are? Mr MacElhose is far, far too busy to see a lowly member of staff such as you, Mrs Kaywood, if you are indeed she. I'm flabbergasted to find you are but a mere slip of a girl. From what Mr Galbraith has said of you in the past I had expected his acting assistant manager to be older, much older, perhaps even older than Mr Gordon himself. And where exactly is the man?'

But Myra had been resolute. She would wait all day, she advised, and, if necessary return tomorrow and the next day until she was permitted to discharge her promise to Mr Gordon.

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Lena was not happy. Myra was banished to the Commissionaires' Waiting Room on the ground floor. As she sat there watching the Front Desk through the partly open door, a steady stream of callers came and went, mostly commercial travellers. Shortly before ten, a police officer arrived, gave his name as Sergeant Thomas Thomson and asked to see Mr MacElhose. Myra concluded he had been to St George's and Daisy had advised him to contact Head Office. Covering her face with a handkerchief, pretending to blow her nose, she watched him through the gap while he stood waiting, rocking backwards and forwards from his toes to his heels. Rita stirred. Tommy Thomson was young for a sergeant, less than thirty, she thought, almost as tall as Frank and with similar curly hair, but in a blonde red colour rather than Frank's dark red. After a short wait, the sergeant was collected by Lena. His visit was short. Myra was made to wait until nearly eleven o'clock. Lena returned and, with a jerk of her head, escorted Myra in silence back to MacElhose's office.

It was Myra's first sighting of this shadowy figure, a man believed to hold great power at Head Office. To Myra he seemed a younger, smaller version of Gordon Galbraith, wearing a similar excess of sweet and spicy aftershave. He had the white hair of an Albino with twitching red irises. Whatever his predilections, Myra was immediately on her guard, sensing Edward MacElhose was very much smarter than Gordon Galbraith.

MacElhose's room was probably three times bigger than her front parlour at Caird Drive. It had two doors, one opening directly to the corridor and another which connected to Lena's room. It was dominated by a long conference table on heavy wooden legs topped with green leather. He waved her to a seat at this table. She chose to sit at the end near the door, furthest from his desk. He placed his hands on his desk, his right thumb and index finger nervously twisting the tiger eye ring on his left pinkie.

'Well Mrs Kaywood, you will have heard the bad news?'

'I'm sorry, Mr MacElhose, have we been invaded? I thought the War was moving to a successful conclusion in our favour. I've not had time to read my copy of *The Glasgow Herald* today.'

'I'm talking about Gordon Galbraith, woman, not the bloody War!'

'Mr Gordon? Has something happened?'

'Yes! He's in hospital. Surely you've heard?'

'I'm very sorry to hear that. Mr Gordon is such a nice man. What happened to him?'

'The police have several ideas, bizarre ideas, complete nonsense.'

'Mr Gordon's in hospital? Which one? I must visit him. Is it bad?'

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'The Western. And yes, he's very bad. Seems he had a fall. Paralysed from the waist down. Vegetable, if he lives. God, what a bloody situation, with so many of us depending on him. What on earth will we do?'

'We shall all pray for him, and ask God to heal him. I'll go to my very own priest, Father Donnelly, tonight, right after work, and ask for a special Mass to be said for Mr Gordon.'

'Galbraith is a Protestant, woman.'

'But it doesn't matter, Mr MacElhose, God heals everyone, if we pray in true faith.'

'Yes, yes. Good idea.'

'In fact, I'll write to our Bishop requesting him to add Mr Gordon to our Parish Prayer list, with all the names of those poor boys Missing in Action.'

'Yes, yes. But the shop, what will we do about the shop? We don't have anyone of the right type willing to work at St George's now, not after the Henson business.'

'Poor Mr Gerrard. I don't believe a single word of what they said about him in the papers, not one single word. Mr Gerrard was a gentleman, ask anyone in the shop. And his mother is a fine hard-working woman.'

'Yes, yes. Could you manage? Gordon used to joke if he stayed at home, the shop would probably run better with you in charge.'

'Mr Gordon is a real joker, always saying nice things. He's like a father to me. Did you know he gave me my first job? It was Mr Walsh, who is his second-cousin, I think he said, who put me up for it. Mr Walsh was my Headmaster, at primary school.'

'Did you know Walsh died of an overdose?'

'Oh my God, Mr MacElhose! May his eternal soul Rest in Peace. Or will he be in Purgatory, for committing suicide? Whatever caused him to do it?'

'I've no idea. One minute he was at, eh, em, at our meeting, hale and hearty, and the next evening, when his wife came back from visiting her sister, he was sitting in front of the parlour fire, dead as a doorstop. He had the wireless on, playing jazz, she said. Thomas Walsh bloody hated jazz, he told me so several times. He was a classical music man, like the rest of us. Why the hell was he listening to jazz?'

'I am amazed the news of Mr Walsh's demise did not reach me. But since the blitz everything in my life has been topsy-turvy, what with my sister and her three children being blown away. Just before the bombing my parents were run over by a tram. The world is in such a terrible state. I pray to God for them every night, may they Rest in Peace. Well, now I'll pray for Mr Walsh too. He was so good to me, just like Mr Gordon. It was as if I had three fathers, not just one like everyone else. God has been so good to me'

Ted MacElhose glanced at his gold watch, his mind spinning as the woman rattled on. He must get rid of her as the Senior Managers were due to join him, at noon, sharp. This

Living with Myra

odd-looking woman seemed to be competent, if a bit zealous on the religious front. Galbraith had thought highly of her. He would give her three months, see how things developed. Gordon might recover.

They would have to find somewhere else to host their meetings. Galbraith's place had been perfect. Such a nice flat in a quiet close and no nosy neighbours. It was all going off the rails. If anyone would know where to find another place to meet it would be the Monsignor, even though he was in Manchester.

The policeman had said Galbraith had been taken to the hospital by a woman claiming to be his niece and who knew his address. However, the nurse had said she looked like a prostitute and the name and address she gave turned out to be false. During the admission process, there was no sign of Galbraith's wallet, house keys or identification papers which led the police to conclude the injured man had been robbed, probably by the unknown woman who had not been traced. Ted MacElhose found it hard to believe Gordon had led a double life with prostitutes - incredible. The man had seemed so committed, one of the Tiger Eye Circle for over thirty years.

Myra kept talking nonsense, watching as he made up his mind. His head was down, his eyes closed, unsure what to do. She almost prayed for God to guide him. He looked up and saw the brown paper parcel which she had removed from her handbag and placed on the table in front of her. His eyes narrowed, suspicious.

'... I remember one time Mr Gordon even said ...'

'Are those the Monthly Books for St George's?'

'Yes, Mr MacElhose. Daisy and I stayed behind to help Mr Gordon finish them off, get them ready for you. He was very punctilious, as you will know, of course. Then we parcelled them up for him, as usual.'

'Why the Hell did he give them to you? Eh?'

'Well, I wondered about his decision as well. It was most unusual as he loved coming over here. He would mention it every day during the week before his meeting with you was due. He always anticipated it with great relish, your monthly get togethers. I think it was coming to ...'

'The Monthly Books, woman! Why did Gordon give you the bloody books?'

'Well, what happened was strange, very strange. We put the Cash Bag into the Safe Deposit at the Bank as usual. Daisy was in such a rush, she had to scoot, she said, or she would miss the start of the new Cary Grant film. So, it was just Mr Gordon and I walking away from the shop, towards the Subway. He lives near me, but his place is far grander

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than our little place. He has such a nice close. I've never actually been in his house, of course. I just know where he lives.'

Myra could tell MacElhose was getting annoyed, as she intended, waving his hand towards her, as if shooing her along.

'Oh, there I go, digressing myself, as my Sandy says. Sorry. Well, this *really* odd-looking woman, a blonde, obviously dyed to death, she shouted to him, waved him over to her. She called him Gordy, which he hated, as you probably know. I thought she was a, well, no, no, not for polite company. Anyway, she was standing in a close mouth. Did I say she was smoking? Well, she was, and Mr Gordon seemed terribly uncomfortable about it. It was the parcel, you see, it was the parcel he was worried about. He thrust it into my hands and whispered, right into my ear. I got such a shock; I thought at first he was about to kiss me and it gave me such a start, because it was so out of keeping. Mr Gordon's always been a perfect gentleman. You always feel safe with him, not like smarmy Terry Boyce from Sheildhall with his wandering hands, but no, no, stop tittle-tattling Myra. No, Mr MacElhose, I'm sure Mr Gordon was frightened. Now let me get this right, so I can tell you exactly what he said. Yes, he said:

"Myra, take this, she must never get her hands on these. It's all a mistake. She thinks these are something else. I'll come round to your house for them tomorrow, so stay in, will you? But if I don't make it, take them to Mr MacElhose first thing on Monday morning. Don't let this package out of your sight. And don't open your door to anyone you don't know. Now, quick, run, get down into the Subway, off you go. I'll head her off."

'Yes, I nearly wrote it down but, yes, I'm sure I've got it right. Yes, definitely what he said, Mr MacElhose.'

'What the Hell was he talking about?'

'Well, Mr MacElhose, I really have no idea. I stayed in all day Sunday. I didn't even go to Chapel; the first time I've missed a Sunday in years; of course, I'll go tonight on my way home, like I said.'

Lena Harrison knocked the door, before sticking her head round it:

'Mr Ted, it's time for your meeting.'

'Thanks Lena, tell them to wait, I'll be finished here soon.'

The door closed and he waited, listening until the outer door from her office closed then he leaned onto his desk, almost whispering:

'Well, Mrs Kaywood. I have a favour to ask. Not for me, but for Gordon Galbraith really, if you understand me. Will you do it?'

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'For Mr Gordon? I'd do anything for Mr Gordon; he's been like a father to me, one time he . . .'

'Yes, yes! Look, do I have this right, no one else knows of Gordon and this woman?'

'No, except maybe the people at the bus stop, but it was dark, because of the blackout, of course.'

'And you haven't told anyone else?'

'No, well, it's Mr Gordon's personal business. And I'm sure he was only trying to help her, not, well . . .'

'So, no one at St George's knows about it, not even this Daisy woman?'

'Daisy Donovan? Telling Daisy about it is the very last thing I would do! She is so indiscreet, a real fishwife, is our Daisy. Certainly not!'

'Can I be sure it's only you and me who know of this, not even Mr Kaywood?'

'No, I never share gossip with Sandy. Anyway, he's away at the moment. He's with the Install Team. They go away to secret places to put periscopes into submarines. Oh dear, maybe I've spoken out of turn. Don't tell anyone, *please*. As a matter of fact, I rather enjoy it when he goes away, then it's just me and my budgie. Poor wee Billy, he's hopeless, whistles like a canary, never speaks. The man in the pet shop said Billy thinks he actually is a canary. But well, I love him just the same.'

'Right, so it's just us two who know?'

'Yes, it is only you and I who know of this woman, I can swear to it!'

'And can I take it we can keep it a closed book, keep the gossip-mongers from having a field day with poor Gordon's reputation?'

'Yes, of course. As a matter of fact, Mr MacElhose, I don't think I would have told even you. But when you asked why I had the parcel with the Monthly Books, I had to tell the truth, the whole truth, didn't I? I always, always tell the truth, Mr MacElhose. And I can assure you, although I may seem talkative, I do not pass on unfounded rumour! Ask anyone at St George's - I am the soul of discretion.'

'Now, another thing, don't allow anyone to visit Gordon in hospital unless I give permission. If he's on medication he might talk a lot of nonsense and we don't want this sort of stuff going around either, do we?'

'Oh no, Mr MacElhose. But what if I asked Father Donnelly to make a visit, he's in and out of the Western every day. . . .'

'NO! No, Mrs Kaywood. Gordon is NOT a Catholic; a visit from a priest would only confuse him further.'

'Well, we'll send flowers instead, shall we?'

'Yes, yes. Good. So, all's well that ends well. Now, Mrs Kaywood, how do you feel about 'acting up' as General Manager at St George's for a trial period of, say, three months? Then we'll take it from there, see how you get on.'

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'Oh Mr MacElhose, do you think I can do it?'

'Well, do your best and we'll see. If you have any problems call me. If I'm out I'll call back. Speak only to me and never leave messages with anyone; I run a very tight ship here.'

'Oh yes, walls have ears. Do you know, Mr MacElhose, one time Mr Gordon caught Jean Fellows, one of our cleaners telling a customer about her son who makes maps from photographs . . .'

'Yes, yes, very interesting. Now off you go, Mrs Kaywood. I'm sure there will be *plenty* for you to do when you get back over the water. And I have my colleagues waiting.'

'Oh, of course! Your Senior Managers' Monthly Luncheon! How Mr Gordon loved those. He made us all jealous, such nice food. Will I be invited, if I get made permanent?'

'No, Mrs Kaywood. Let's be very clear here. Your 'acting up' promotion carries no extra payment for the first three months but, if things go well, and depending what happens with Gordon, we'll have a look at adding something. Remember, we will still have to go on paying Galbraith's his due, so anything extra we pay to you would have to come out of his salary, poor man. Look, Mrs Kaywood, I want you to understand, this is a temporary arrangement only; when this War is over we will surely find a man to take over from you, do the thing properly. Off you go now, run along, *please*. And remember your promise; if I hear one whisper of Galbraith and this blonde, I'll know at once where it came from and I shall act against you. Trust me.'

'Oh, I see, oh . . . Well, *thank you* Mr MacElhose. So, when the books are ready at the end of each month, shall I bring them to you personally, like today? Or shall I send Daisy with them; she is our Bookkeeper after all.'

MacElhose was upright at last. He snatched the parcel from her and shooed her towards the outer office, towards the door guarded by Lena. It opened to reveal an empty desk. Not a single piece of paper on it, everything filed or cleared to drawers. The only sign and smell of the odd woman was the ash and stub of the thick cigar in her ashtray. Myra surmised Lena Harrison must be on her lunch break and wondered if she always kept her papers under lock and key. The filing cabinets were of a special type, secured by vertical metal bars and hefty padlocks top and bottom. Why was such high security necessary, Myra wondered, her mind looping back to Henson's cubby-hole office which he had always kept locked.

His voice trailed after her as she made her way through the outer doorway:

'No, bring the books across yourself, Mrs Kaywood. Make sure they're here for eight-thirty sharp. Give them to Miss Harrison. If I have any queries, I'll call you back.'

'Oh, so I won't be invited for . . .'

'No. Now *please*, Mrs Kaywood, I *must* get on with my meeting, woman.'

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'Yes, off course Mr MacElhose, of course. And I'll pray for you too, all this extra bother you are having.'

The door banged shut and she was in the corridor, alone.

Ted MacElhose was not the only one wearing a tiger eye pinkie ring at HQ. So did Lena Harrison. It had surprised Myra to see several women's names in Gerrard Henson's black book. She had previously assumed it was only men who indulged in such despicable behaviour.

Living with Myra

Regime Change

On her return to St George's, Myra told the staff Mr Gordon had had a bad fall at home, from a stepladder. He would return to work as soon as he was able, but meantime Head Office had asked her to 'act up' in his place as a temporary arrangement.

The weeks rolled by. Myra's hoped-for letter of appointment did not arrive. Incoming correspondence continued to be addressed: "Mr G. Galbraith, General Manager". Her outgoing replies were signed: "Myra Kaywood, (Mrs) pp G. Galbraith, Esquire". Her salary did not increase. Myra did not complain, did not rock MacElhose's boat. At each month end she delivered the Monthly Books to *Lena the Lioness* on time and in perfect order.

Myra delegated power to her staff, supported them, trained them to think and act in accordance with 'her rules', asking them to strive always to do their very best. Every small success was praised and every failure explained and forgiven with the phrase, "To learn, we all must make mistakes, it's how life works". Week on week their self-confidence grew, knowing if they erred she would sort the problem and continue to support them, provided they tried hard under the new approach which actively scrutinised every careless action, every improvement. St George's sales figures and profit margins gradually improved, as her new routines took effect, information which she shared with her senior staff, praising them for their efforts.

During this initial period, the lazy and the dead wood left and new people were chosen based more on their attitudes and personalities as much as their ability and previous experience. These new recruits, mostly younger women and girls, were also trained, nurtured and motivated in Myra's ways. This she did mainly by working alongside them, teaching by example, helping those who accepted her lead to attain higher standards in both customer service and stock management. In this way she broke down barriers; during busy periods staff from less busy departments helped their colleagues, even with menial tasks like wrapping goods, fetching and returning items to and from store rooms, clearing rubbish, wiping and polishing counters and participating in a general clean-up at the end of each working day so everyone was able to get away together as soon as the doors closed.

Everyone knew where they stood with Myra Kaywood. Steal or skive and you were sacked: no second chances, no elaborate excuses accepted. Everyone knew their new boss was

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always one step ahead, watching when temptation teased. Balancing the books with the cash was much easier now. Daisy grew in confidence and learned to cope better without much help from Myra. Staff morale improved. Word got round of her being an excellent boss.

When Senior Managers arrived on 'the scrounge' from Head Office, Myra was ready for them and sent them away with a flea in their ears. Drop-in callers were discouraged, made to wait or given an appointment for another day. No outsiders were permitted to converse with or question her staff directly, as they had done in the past. Myra was their buffer. The bosses had to deal with her and could no longer ask individual staff members for favours by hinting at future kick-backs or favours.

By the end of her three-month probationary period, only Senior Managers on legitimate business made visits to St George's, accepted only by appointment, for reasons clearly stated in advance. There were no sudden telephone demands for stock to be transferred to other stores without proper paperwork in place, as had happened in the past. Every senior member of staff was treated with respect and was expected to reciprocate this courtesy. No handouts were offered, no business gifts from sales representatives were accepted. If someone was known to be devious, Myra and Daisy dealt with them, all three crammed into her tiny basement office. Such persons did not try to 'swing one' a second time.

No one queried the absence of Gordon Galbraith who already was fading from memory. Six months into Myra's tenure, St George's Co-op had been transformed into a cheerful, well run, profitable enterprise, as their *de facto* General Manager had always envisaged.

Myra attended the shop or not, as suited her, keeping her own hours. On occasions, without prior announcement, she might be absent for two or even three days at a time. If Daisy knew where she was, she never said. At other times Myra would remain at St George's when the staff left in the evenings. On such occasions she might stay for hours, doing stock checks, examining ledgers, checking arithmetic, endorsing, dating and adding comments to random pages, making it evident to everyone she was checking on performance and honesty. Those who did not like this approach, or had something to hide, soon left.

To get rid of old fashioned or damage stock, she used impromptu clear out sales offering goods at bargain prices, replacing them with higher quality items, if they could be obtained, given War Shortages. She visited Morrison Street and Shieldhall Works to

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negotiate for the best of what was available for *St George's*. During these sorties into what she thought of as 'enemy territory', she carefully pumped her contacts, sifting information on MacElhose and Harrison. Information was power: a lesson Myra had learned well. Her next moves must not be rushed, if she was to succeed undetected.

When Myra was 'not in residence', as Daisy coined it, this was not a license for anyone to misbehave or slack. Everyone presumed their boss must be on legitimate SCWS business, as Mr Gordon had often claimed. Unlike Galbraith, who had always said where he was going and when he would return, Myra never explained her outings. However, everyone soon learned she might return at any moment. What they did not know was Myra was seldom very far from *St George's*, regularly checking by telephone with Daisy to find out if there were problems. If urgently needed, she used a taxi to arrive and sort them.

Customers gradually noticed the new atmosphere and told their friends and families *St George's* was the best place in town to shop. Best for bargains. Best for quality. Best for service. People from miles around travelled to see for themselves.

Although it had taken longer than Thomas Walsh had joked in Davina Pettigrew's front room, Myra now had what she had planned from the first Saturday when, still a schoolgirl, she had visited *St George's*. It was the story she had written for herself, starting when she had presented herself to Gordon Galbraith as the older, experienced and capable person she had planned to become, a young woman determined never to be cast in the role of a junior, never to be undervalued.

Meanwhile, her story of Harry Hunter and his missing nights from his sister-in-law Helen's home at *Garrioch Road* was filling her thoughts, revealing possibilities.

Living with Myra

Harry Hunter

Sunday 15 February 1942.

Sandy and Harry were plotting a take-over of the Allotments Association Committee. Sandy had bored Myra endlessly, rehearsing his thoughts, expounding: their motives were good, pure, he said repeatedly. The old duffers who had been running the place for years needed to be ousted. Growing vegetables was a priority, not flowers and bedding plants. The Dahlia and Begonia brigade needed their power pruned back. They should be encouraged, even compelled to use their greenhouses to grow tomatoes and other edible tender plants. There were new Ministry of Food edicts to be followed and these dinosaurs were simply ignoring them. Everyone was behind Sandy and Harry. Helen had told them they should organise themselves, get the whingers out and shake the place up.

Myra was becoming tired of Sandy's repeated rhetoric but she was enjoying Harry's eyes wandering over her as she moved about, washing down surfaces, stretching up to show off her figure. As always, Sandy did most of the talking: Harry was the strong silent type, she mused.

The idea came to her in a flash, from a film she had seen years ago. Moving quickly to her bedroom, she changed into a tight black skirt, one from her first year at St George's and now two inches short for her. After a rummage, she found an old cream blouse which had fitted better when she was sixteen. She took off her bra and squeezed into the blouse, leaving the top three buttons undone.

She slipped quietly back into the kitchen, smiling, hoping, scheming. Sandy's back was to her but in any case, his head was down, reading, talking, scribbling.

'Oh, excuse me one moment, gentlemen. I'm about to make a pot of soup but before I get stuck in, I've made you another pot of tea.'

There was a tablespoonful of Celia's Senna Pod and Strawberry concoction in Sandy's cup. Myra had used this 'remedy' on Sandy intermittently and sparingly over the months. As she had learned, this was powerful stuff, only to be used as a last resort, when she could

Living with Myra

no longer suffer the grunts and groans of his unproductive exertions, suspended over her new chinaware. To this already sweet liquor she added his usual large dollop of honey from the allotment then another to disguise any taste. Sandy sipped, oblivious, studying his "Secretary's Minutes Book", reading out selected passages to a listening Harry who was repeatedly stealing glances at her.

It took ten minutes to work on him. He shot out of the room like a demented bee, buzzing for the bathroom, where they could hear him vacating his bowels, loudly. When his release came, it sounded like the rattle of a snare drum. Despite her repeated imprecations, Sandy had still not learned to close the door when he used the bathroom.

Myra shut the kitchen door against his groans and smiled to Harry:

'Must have been something he's eaten,' she said.

Harry lifted his head without comment, leaned back, and appraised her openly, the beginnings of his trademark smile playing at the corner of his lips.

He knows what I've done, she thought. He's not as slow as he pretends to be. Now she had him in close up, Harry was even more like Cary Grant than through the binoculars from her Kirklee eyrie. She felt herself stir more vigorously as Rita smiled wantonly. His smile widened to its full power. He had good teeth and she knew he did not smoke. She watched his eyes and felt the heat of them as they wandered boldly over her, assessing her before looking back to hold her gaze, confirming she had been correct: he was interested in her and, she sensed, confident in his ability to please women.

He winked at her. Rita leered and winked back.

'Myra, ye have really luvly hair, that sorta rid goes right well wi yer green eyes.'

Rita wanted him next door, in her bed, at once, but knew it could not be. She could not be Rita yet, not with Sandy crouched next door: she would extemporise. Opportunity was the issue.

'Thank you, kind sir. What a lovely compliment. And you Harry Hunter are a fine handsome man. Do you like broccoli soup at all?'

'Whit?'

Living with Myra

'Broccoli soup. It's what I'm making. Sandy says he doesn't like it, but of course he's never really tried it properly, if you understand my meaning.'

'Whit?'

'Well Harry, do you? Do you like it, broccoli soup?'

'Mibbae. Ah'm no sure if Ah've ever hud it afore.'

'Well I think you should try it, Harry. Maybe next time you drop by, eh?'

A wan-faced Sandy returned. Rita departed. Myra turned her back to Sandy, buttoned her blouse to the neck and proceeded to clean and chop her ingredients. She had played her opening hand and now the next bid must be Harry's.

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A month went by before Harry made his move, just as the first anniversary of the Clydebank Blitz loomed. Sandy had been restless for the past week, agitated. Myra misread the signs and checked his bed for dampness. He seemed to be dry. On the Friday evening before he left for his shift he advised he would be leaving on Sunday with the Install Team, although he must not reveal details.

Without sniping about the shortness of this warning, she slipped at once into caring wife mode to ensure his full complement of travel clothes was washed and ironed. He always packed himself - he had a fresh supply of dirty photographs which he was trying to hide from her and always took with him.

By eight o'clock on Sunday evening he was ready. On the doorstep he revealed this would be a longer trip, involving overseas travel, but she must not tell anyone. He would be away for at least three weeks, probably more, but she must not worry, he would return safely. She wished him luck, gave him a little hug and locked the storm door behind him as he whistled his way down the stairs.

To be sure he was not running away again, she checked his passbook was in its hiding place. It showed nearly £300 and she was pleased for him. Since his 'confession' a year earlier his bank account had not been mentioned again: Sandy seemed to have forgotten he had told her he had such a high sum of money saved.

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Three nights later Myra was on her way to close the outer storm door, wearing her heavy dressing gown and with her hair in rollers under a net. She heard a soft knock at her inner door and thought it was Miss Letitia, from downstairs, worried about her cat Timmy, who was a wanderer. It had been raining hard all day and Myra had no wish to go cat-hunting for Letitia again. Timmy would turn up again the next day, as he always did.

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Myra, flattened against the wall, peering through the mesh curtains which covered the stained-glass panel, waited for the elderly spinster to give up and go away. When the soft knock came again she saw the movement of a man wearing a uniform cap. She immediately assumed it was Frank, probably with further bad news.

She ran forward and hauled the door wide open to find Harry, his green uniform dripping water onto her door-mat. He held a soggy brown envelope in one hand and under his other arm he carried his boots wrapped in a newspaper. She noticed damp footprints from his socks leading back down the stairs and saw they were already drying. She understood at once and reckoned he had used this ploy before. They exchanged smiles, both knowing at once what was to come. There was no need to rush things.

'Hello Myra,' he said, in a quiet bass voice, 'kin Ah leave this fur Sandy? It's fur the vegetable competition. He's in charge o' the entries. Ah took aff ma tacky boots so as no' to wake yer neeburs.'

'Oh Harry,' she whispered. 'You gave me such a fright. I saw the uniform and thought it was the police. Look at you, you're drookit. Quick, come in, we don't want to start the neighbours talking, do we?'

'Ur ye sure, Myra?' he murmured, already stepping forward and easing past her.

He smelled of carbolic soap, as Frank had done before Deirdre had bought him aftershave as a Christmas present.

'Yes, of course. You go along into the kitchen. I'll be with you in a minute and we'll get the kettle on for a cup of tea, get you dried out. Shoo!' She pushed him gently in the small of his back.

He turned into the kitchen. She quietly closed and barred the storm door then snibbed the inner door. She skipped into her bedroom, brushed out her hair, applied a little make-up, dabbed perfume, and changed into a black nightie with a low front and black panties with a strategically placed heart picked out in ruby red sparkles. She kicked off her slippers and draped her new filmy red dressing gown over her shoulders, letting it flow loosely around her, deliberately leaving its belt behind on the bedside chair. She had bought these expensive lingerie items in expectation of Saul's homecoming: this was their first proper wearing.

Living with Myra

Harry had his jacket over a kitchen chair facing the fireplace, steam rising from it. She ducked round him, kneeled beside the fire and raked it to life before adding more coal. When she looked back over her shoulder he looked frozen, shivery, but he was beaming broadly. She found herself leering back at him, becoming a posher version of Rita.

'Harry Hunter, you'd better take your shirt off as well or you'll catch pneumonia. Good. Now bring another chair over and I'll drape the shirt over it.'

'Aye, Ah went an forgoat ma raincoat the night. Then Ah rememburt Ah hud these tae gie Sandy an' weel . . .'

'Go on, get your vest off too. I'll get some towels.'

She brushed past him, trailing her fingertips along his bare arm onto his hairy shoulder. When she returned with towels she brought Sandy's dark blue dressing gown. Harry's chest hair was thick, curly and darker than the hair on his head. Now he was semi-naked he seemed bashful but still smiling his cheeky smile. She resumed her kneeling position beside the fire.

She glanced up to see his eyes flit away from her breasts and she smiled. His smile widened to a grin as he towelled his head and chest dry.

'Ta, this is sae guid o' ye, Myra.'

'Oh, just look at you, Harry Hunter,' she said, reaching over to touch his right thigh. 'Your trousers are wringing as well. Goodness me, you're soaked through to the bone. Here, put this gown on then slip those wet breeks off. We'll lay them out to dry on towels down here in front of the fire, get them steaming as well.'

He shrugged himself into the dressing gown which was short on him, more like a long jacket. He turned his back and stepped out of his trousers and underpants. His legs were hairy too, much hairier than either Saul's or Frank's.

She reached up, took the garments, laid them out neatly then sat back on her heels holding herself erect, pertly, her hands on her thighs, smiling up at him.

Harry dumped himself into Sandy's chair and the dressing gown opened. He spread his knees wide apart, watching her eyes. He grinned. She looked down, lingered then, very pleased with what was on offer, she smiled and looked up to find his eyes were again on her breasts.

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This was not the story she had written for them, one centred on a long, lazy Sunday afternoon, involving plates of soup before progressing, in slow stages, to her bedroom where Harry would help her with a sticking blind, following the line of Daisy's husband Marty. Instead Myra/Rita was now acting out a version of a film she had seen about a lonely woman who, on a stormy night, had answered the door of her remote cottage to a hiker looking for lodgings.

'Good. We're both organised now. You get yourself warmed up while I get the kettle on.'

As she passed him she let her hand trail across his shoulder, lightly caressing his neck. She filled the kettle and set it on the gas, leaving it at low. She was in no hurry now she had him settled.

She rested in her chair for a second then rose and pulled it closer to him, allowing the front of her dressing gown to fall open. Re-seated, she leaned forward and took another longer, bolder look at his manhood, crossed her legs then dangled a foot across towards him, her big toe stopping just short of his shin. Leering, she glanced up and caught him staring at her breasts. His eyes shot up to meet hers. Rita smiled, licked her lips and winked as she had done when responding to an enquiring stare at The Plaza.

'So, hoo's Sandy doin'?' His voice was thick and growly.

'Fine, I suppose, who knows?' she chirped. 'You see Harry, when he's away with the Install Team he seems to forget all about me.'

'Duz he?'

'Yes Harry, when Sandy goes away it's just as if I'm a spinster or a widow. Poor wee me, eh? Would you like something to go with your cup of tea, Harry? I'm sorry I don't have any broccoli soup at the moment, but I'm sure there must be something else I could tempt you with, now you've remembered to drop by.'

'Aye, Ah'm starvin'. Any chance o' a bit o' toastit cheese? But jist if it's no' too much bothur.'

Following the film action, she leaned forward and poked the fire, knowing it would give him a fuller view in part profile:

'It's a pleasure to look after a hungry man, Harry. You see, when I'm just stuck here with nobody to look after, I get so lonely. Sandy went away on Sunday night. He said it could be three weeks, maybe even longer, who knows? It all depends how long it takes to get it right.'

'Oh, aye, Ah remembur noo thit he sayed he wud be away soon. Ah jist forgot . . .'

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'Of course, Harry, how could you possibly know I've been thrown aside again, widowed by the War. As you well know, Sandy likes to keep his trips a big secret, doesn't he? After all, a periscope is a precision instrument, as he is anxious to tell anyone prepared to listen. So, Harry, since Sandy left only on Sunday, I would expect we will not see or hear from for three weeks or more, which means I shall be stuck here alone at nights with nothing to do and no one to care for. As I said, it is very important we all keep at it, going at it vigorously until we get it right. Do you agree, Harry? In fact, I would say the principal of sticking to a task applies to everything we might be called upon to do. For example, given how the War has disrupted all our lives, I firmly believe we should grasp at any opportunity for a bit of pleasure which might, by serendipity, suddenly present itself, if you follow my drift?'

'Aye, right. Aye, Ah see whit ye mean. Aye. Naw, Ah suppose he duz nae say much about his trips, naw. So, Myra, is it jist yerself here, all on yer lanesome then, eh?'

'No, not really, Harry, not now you're here. Oh, and of course there's Billy.'

'Billy?'

'Shssh. Don't waken him up, please.'

'Look, Myra, maybe Ah should hit the road, eh?' he whispered, glancing round towards the kitchen door.

She reached across and laid her hand on his bare thigh and gave it a squeeze:

'Shoosh, Harry. Keep your voice down. We don't want Billy the Budgie to know all our secrets, do we?'

'Oh, ah, well, . . . Aye. Aye, . . ., Billy the *Budgie*,' he chuckled. 'Ah mean Sandy's got his secruts tae, so he huz, eh?'

The kettle began to sing.

'So, Myra, will Ah make us a wee cuppa, then?' he said, turning to look at it.

She rose, stepped out of her dressing gown and, giving a yawn, stretched her arms above her head then leaned across his shoulder turn off the gas:

'To tell you the truth Harry,' she cooed in his ear, 'I was just on my way to bed.'

OOOOO

Harry's tea and toasted cheese had to wait until later.

Myra discovered Harry was good in bed, in fact very, very good. He had his own protectives and was almost as slow and satisfying as the books from the penny library had promised. She learned from the outset he was better than Saul, preparing her more fully and waiting for her to start her climax before joining her in wanton, energetic and

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all-consuming fulfilment. Sex with Harry was a completely new experience and she needed more of it. Before she allowed him to go, she extracted his promised return on the following evening.

After a few further ad hoc visits and before Sandy's expected homecoming, they were planning their trysts with care: Myra wanted this to last. They devised a plan. When he was about to go out on late shift, he would telephone her at the Co-op, usually around four o'clock, pretending to be a driver from Shieldhall, the SCWS Co-op manufacturing and storage factory near Govan. If Daisy answered, he would tell her he needed to speak to the Manager about a delivery.

Harry came after his shift, walking through the blackout usually arriving around midnight, skipping up the stairs in his stockinged feet to the top floor where she would be waiting for his soft knock, closing her storm door and sliding the bolts quietly when he was safely inside. She always made him a good early breakfast before seeing him off into the morning gloom, either to return to Helen and her kids or to drive early morning trams.

Although he had little in the way of conversation, he was a practiced, energetic lover and never made any demands on her, always wore protection, and was obedient to her every whim. If he telephoned St George's posing and his proposed visit to Caird Drive did not suit her, he did not complain or ask for reasons, merely hanging up when she replied with their agreed code words: "No, sorry, call back another time". From the outset, Myra suspected Harry had other women like her he visited on a regular basis. In any case, she knew she could never love Harry as she had loved Saul but their nocturnal trysts suited her, until someone better came along.

A few months into their affair the MMF Trust became the owner of the close where Helen Hunter and her family lived, giving Myra an element of control over him.

Her penny dreadful stories became more explicit. From her fan mail she learned this development was welcomed by her readers, many with husbands on active service, some with partners who had been killed or were missing. Lonely, needy women without a true man in their lives, women in need of voyeuristic fantasy sex to stimulate old memories and aid their lonely self-pleasuring. Women very like Myra except, unlike them, she could enjoy the full reality of Harry Hunter.

When Sandy was home, sometimes Harry became less willing, sometimes leaving several weeks between his telephone calls asking if she was available. If she felt the urge, she

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went as Rita to The Plaza and on to the backcourts of Pollokshields. Despite the thrill of the snare and novelty of discovering a new man who wanted her, these quickie vertical sex sessions served to remind her how lucky she was to have Harry and a warm and comfortable bed to enjoy him.

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When their affair started in March 1942, Myra would not have predicted it would last until late May 1944.

After a period when Harry visited less frequently, his late afternoon telephone calls stopped entirely. Although she knew his address, she had no direct means of contacting him.

Then Sandy broke the big news: Harry had resigned from Kirklee Allotments and was engaged to a widow who had a house with a big garden, near the tramway depot in Bearsden.

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Head over Heels

Saturday 12 February 1944.

The black car was parked under a tree at the far end of the car park, its lights dowsed. It was difficult to discern, nearly invisible, Myra hoped.

She heard them arriving, racing towards her from the direction of Drymen, hurtling into the car park then noisily revving their engines to prime their carburettors for re-starting later, after their pit-stop. The group comprised nine single motorcycles and one motor-cycle side-car combination. It was late afternoon, already nearly fully dark. The group had been away for a run, their first outing of the new season. They dismounted and thronged into the warmth of the Carbeth Inn for a celebratory drink.

An hour later the first few left and roared off into the blackness. The last to leave, as usual, was Ted MacElhose with Lena in the side-car.

Five minutes later, as they accelerated towards the dangerous bend near the turn off for Milngavie the engine exploded and the motor-cycle combination, now alight, hurtled into a field of sheep nursing their lambs.

The black car slid past through the night without stopping, heading back to Kirklee.

The wreckage was not spotted until late on Sunday morning.

That the woman had survived was a miracle, the newspapers had opined.

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Prodigy

The Tiger Eye Circle was a paedophile organisation controlled from London with branches throughout the British Empire; it was frequently short-handed TEC (written) or The Circle (spoken).

In March 1944, three weeks after Edward MacElhose's funeral, its leaders sent Dr Ralph Criety Powdenhill to Morrison Street to investigate. Those responsible for organising TEC operations in Scotland found it impossible to accept the scale of misfortune which had affected the Glasgow section over recent years. MacElhose's death had been the final straw. In briefing his nephew, Monsignor Creity warned he was up against a highly organised and ruthless group, stressing thoroughness over speed was necessary to ensure every 'offender' was uncovered and dispatched, with circumspection. If help was required, there was a rogue policeman who could be called upon to help. This man (not a member of the Circle) was expendable. He was a heavy drinker and had a gambling addiction but had been protected and manipulated by his cousin, a high-ranking police officer and close friend of ABC, a man who also had ambitions beyond Glasgow and Scotland.

Ralph Powdenhill was 5' 6", slim, dapper, with thin hair dyed-black and a pencil black moustache. He was softly spoken, using almost perfect BBC English, polite and reserved in his manner. He was a confident man, calculating and persistent. If he had a fault it was arrogance, which bubbled impatiently under the self-assured and unflappable image he presented to others. For the duration of his sojourn in Scotland, Creity's man had to change his name to Ralph *Cunliffe* Powdenhill to gain access to great influence, yet another matter which the Monsignor had arranged. Ralph must not reveal his medical background which might put his prey on alert.

Powdenhill was a skilled psychiatrist working as a medical advisor with the Directorate of Military Intelligence when he received the summons to London from his uncle. To conceal his involvement with MI 6, Ralph had been awarded the honorary rank of Wing Commander, a strange irony. Like his fellow first-year students at Cambridge University, fired with the ambition to become a pilot on graduation, he had flown many times in training aircraft but had never taken control. On his first flight Ralph learned he suffered from a speed phobia, which he concealed and controlled with bravado and

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heroin, his first venture into drug-taking. During his second year a serious ankle sustained during a hockey match saved him from the spectre of joining the RAF.

During his career with the intelligence services, Powdenhill had become an expert at preparing spies for the British Military, and in interrogating double agents suspected of spying against UK interests. He brought with him to Glasgow a range of drugs, including the latest truth serum which had proved so effective in debriefing certain German spies, and for sifting the shattered minds of returning British secret agents who had suffered at the hands of the Gestapo and others. These 'treatments' were not aimed primarily at the healing of minds. This was left to others. What Powdenhill and his masters sought to elicit from these returners was which diamonds of vital information they had revealed to the enemy under interrogation and torture.

With the War winding down, the Monsignor had 'arranged' a leave of absence from MI 6 for his nephew. Creity was good at manipulating such matters, having previously 'arranged' many things in the younger man's life. In addition to his religious calling, Monsignor Alphonso Bernardo Creity was also near the top of the UK branch of TEC, where he was usually referred to by his code name of 'ABC'. Over the years, using his influence, the priest had not only shaped his nephew's life but had also moulded his proclivities during his prodigy's childhood.

On arrival in Glasgow, Ralph Powdenhill continued to portray the persona of a quiet, self-contained and thoughtful man, an approach which had served him well in his recent MI 6 career. Although he carried himself with a military bearing and spoke in the clipped tones of a high-ranking officer, the Wing Commander did not wear uniform and was deliberately vague about his background and history.

ABC, using his Tiger Circle contacts within the Co-op Movement, sent Ralph to the Morrison Street HQ with a fictitious remit to research and prepare a plan to modernise Scottish operations for expected post-War changes. On arrival, Wing Commander Ralph C. Powdenhill passed himself off as having been sent from the Manchester Headquarters of the Co-op Empire. This ruse afforded free access to the entire SCWS network, giving him the right to poke around as he saw fit. At Morrison Street, those who needed to know had been briefed to give Powdenhill whatever he requested without asking questions.

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Only those at the highest level in the Circle were aware Ralph Powdenhill was being groomed as ABC's successor. Ralph, like his uncle, was a dedicated paedophile, interested in pre-pubescent girls and boys. Unlike ABC, Ralph also had wider tastes and saw a future where all forms of pornography and sexual exploitation could be used for both financial gain and for blackmail. By the judicious use of his bespoke cocktails of drug, targets could be influenced into pornographic situations, filmed and photographed without their cognisance and the results used either overtly and discreetly. He had secretly dabbled in this approach during his time with MI 6 and knew his drugs gave him the power to affect and to some extent control key people. This experience had led him to the heady secret ambition of reaching Downing Street and beyond, rising to the upper echelons of British Society where the real power resided.

His redeployment to Glasgow had been rushed, leaving Ralph with many loose ends to sort out but he enjoyed solving puzzles. In his mind, he was certain he would soon root out the miscreants. After dealing with them, he planned to set about re-building and expanding the Glasgow membership, seeking out the larger market he was keen to develop. In time, perhaps he might even re-establish Glasgow as the centre of the Tiger Eye Circle, as it had been before his uncle had become encumbered by an undercurrent of allegations causing him to relocate to the greater anonymity of London and Manchester.

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The Interview

Wednesday 19th July 1944.

In compliance with the telephone message from Lena Harrison to St George's, which Daisy had taken while Myra was busy with Mrs Sutherland, Myra arrived at Morrison Street HQ thirty-five minutes early for her nine o'clock interview. Too excited to sleep, she had prowled around the house for hours, leaving before Sandy got home from his nightshift, so avoiding explanations about why she was all dolled up. Since Harry's desertion, the lack of sex was making her snappy. Today she must stay 'calm, poised and professional', as the article in the *Woman's Own* had advised. It was essential she avoid another potential heated discussion with the increasingly opinionated Sandy. According to him, Myra should have given up work when she got married, as he had intended all along, apparently forgetting his mother Sadie had always worked.

Sandy knew nothing of Myra's ambitions to be a career woman and would undoubtedly object, in principle. He was the main earner, the breadwinner, he pontificated. After the War things would return to normal; men would re-claim their prerogatives. Sandy was against woman working: they should remain in the home, especially a woman who had a husband with a good job. It was different for Helen - she had been forced out to work, to make ends meet. It was all such a problem for her, now Harry had gone to live with his Bearsden floosy.

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Myra felt over these last weeks she had got to know Ralph Powdenhill quite well. He had visited St George's seven times since his arrival from Manchester, and she was acutely aware of his views on women in management positions:

*"Why promote a woman just to lose her when her children come along?
No business can afford that sort of wastage."*

Not exactly the same line as Sandy, but close enough to irritate her. On several occasions she had sensed perhaps the man might have been deliberately trying to goad her. On the other hand, Wing Commander Powdenhill had always been pleasant enough, saying she should call him Mr Ralph. She knew from his questions he was sharp, watching his little knowing smiles when she answered, always defending Gordon Galbraith in his absence, even if it involved bending the truth a bit.

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Myra had dressed carefully for this interview and, after several try-outs, had decided on a simple knee-length black dress and the small pale grey-blue silk scarf she had inherited from Sadie's wardrobe. For this outing, nearly everything she wore had been bought from the Co-op, using her staff discount. She had taken extra time with her hair, styling it to hide her ears. For special occasions like this she wore glasses; not stage glasses but proper glasses. Her eyesight was nearly perfect, as the optician had pointed out forcefully, but she had insisted, choosing large grey frames. The idea was to make her nose seem smaller, another tip from the *Woman's Own*.

She wore plain black shoes with low sensible heels. Powdenhill was quite a bit shorter and she did not want to tower over him. Instead of a jacket she chose a dark grey cashmere cardigan she had bought as Sandy's Christmas present to her. She had checked slowly and carefully in the long mirror before leaving. With her smaller black leather handbag, she looked the image of the perfect Co-op business woman, she believed.

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At Morrison Street the corridor was cool and dim. The only illumination came from the fanlight above each main door and through the frosted glass of the secretaries' offices. Myra sat in the semi-enclosed waiting area, a narrow windowless alcove across the corridor from what had been MacElhose's room. The sign on this door had been replaced with a thin metal plate, white letters embossed on a black background; "Wing Commander R C Powdenhill".

There were several of these alcoves which served as waiting areas for each of the suites of offices opposite, all occupied by senior managers. To her right was a smaller slightly scruffy door marked "Pantry" with a line of light spilling out from the bottom edge. This seemed to be the source of the strong aroma of coffee which filtered across to her. Myra stepped forward, tapped the door lightly; when there was no reply, she turned the handle, opened the door and looked inside. It was a small room with a two-ring hob, a sink and a modern kitchen cabinet. This cabinet, not unlike her own at Caird Drive, had clear glass doors through which she saw several brown paper bags she guessed held coffee grounds. There was also a large black-enamelled tea caddy with the image of an Indian woman in a sarong carrying a basket of tea-leaves on her head. The shelf of the cabinet was down, supporting a large cafetière filled with rich black/brown coffee grounds awaiting a charge of hot water. It was real coffee; a luxury Myra had denied herself since her last romantic breakfast with Ralph at Kirklee. She closed the door and ducked back into sit beside her handbag in the alcove.

To her left, several paces away, was the door to Miss Harrison's office with its frosted glass. Myra could hear the tat-tat of Lena Harrison's now slower typing, interrupted from

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time to time by her deep, curt voice on the telephone. Myra leaned forward to look along the corridor just as Miss Harrison's door swung open. She pulled herself back into the shadows but not before getting a glimpse of the four filing cabinets, all of which were still barred and locked, as they had been when she visited Ted MacElhose after Mr Gordon's tumble. Lena limped past her manager's door and entered the pantry, either not noticing Myra or ignoring her presence.

As Lena returned with the cafetière the aroma grew stronger, assailing Myra's nostrils, making her lick her precious lipstick. Taking out her mirror to check for damage, she found it too gloomy to see much. Rather than use any more, knowing lipstick in this time of austerity stained lips, she instead dabbed a little petroleum jelly with a fingertip to create a sheen then replaced her make-up pouch in her handbag.

A few minutes later *The Lioness* made a further visit to the pantry, returning with a large tray with an array of cups, saucers and a white teapot with a blue design. She was walking slowly, dragging her left foot, concentrating hard on her task, a shadow of the robust and powerful person of a few months earlier.

Myra closed her eyes, breathed deeply as had been recommended in the article in *Woman's Own*, trying to relax, to slow her racing heart and stop her tummy churning, as it had been since the telephone call at four o'clock the previous day. She yawned, involuntarily. A sign of nervousness, she had read. She looked at her watch; thirteen minutes to nine. She lifted it to her ear to check - still ticking. She ran over what she knew of Wing Commander Powdenhill.

He had arrived at Morrison Street only three months earlier, they said. She wondered if his hair and moustache were dyed. He was quite good looking, with sharp blue-black eyes which had stared boldly at her. He was almost feminine, she decided, and definitely not her type; more Fred Astaire than Cary Grant. He had had a good effect on the other girls at the shop and she had overheard them discuss him in terms of what they hoped for, should they have the opportunity 'to get him in a clinch'. Even Daisy thought he was very polite, very nice, refreshingly different from the other Senior Managers who in the past had swooped in on them from Morrison Street, demanding one favour after another, as if they owned the place. Myra judged Mr Ralph was in his early forties, slightly older than Sandy. He wore a wedding ring but if there was a wife, the Co-op grapevine had yet to discover anything about her.

His expensive clothes were definitely not from the Co-op. He walked with a slight limp. They said he had damaged his foot when his plane crashed in bad weather. He was also

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thought to have been awarded several medals. Rumour said he was a graduate of Cambridge University. They said it was because his uncle was a politician high up in the Labour and Co-operative Movement that his nephew had been given his top job at Morrison Street. Myra was not sure of exactly how high up Ralph Powdenhill was, but certainly one of the youngest of the top people, well placed for the future, if he stayed in Glasgow.

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She checked her watch - nine o'clock.

The dreaded Miss Harrison, clad in a charcoal pin-striped suit, entered the waiting area, filling the space with the stink of the cigars she smoked. *Maybe I should have worn my grey suit?* - flashed through Myra's mind. The scar across Lena's left cheek was still a ripe red colour. Her voice had changed. It was still deep baritone but she now spoke with a whistle, caused by her dentures, needed because of the accident.

'Mr Powdenhill will see you now. This way please, Mrs Kaywood.'

The use of the word "please" surprised Myra.

Lena's tiger eye pinkie ring was absent.

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It was three-forty-four when Myra left the Underground at George's Cross. Daisy would want to know everything and she had to get her story right before she faced the inevitable grilling. She could not possibly tell Daisy what may have happened. Still too excited to go back to St George's Co-op, she found a café near Charing Cross where she ordered a cup of tea and an empire biscuit. These items remained untouched while she tried to sort out her thoughts and compose herself. She was alone in the rear of the café, out of sight of the counter and the girl who was whistling as she cleaned the glass display case.

Thinking of Mr Ralph, Myra felt the urge rise in her again as it had been doing ever since she had left Morrison Street, taking control of her mind. The blood whooshed through her head, causing the vein on her neck to pulse as thoughts birlled and rocketed, images flashing on and off like fairy lights. Yet again Rita in her became aroused. Her nipples pulsed and ached, the itch down below demanding attention.

Alone in the rear of the café, this time was different. An image persisted for a few seconds of Mr Ralph, naked, standing before her as she lay on her back, arched upwards,

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also naked, legs wide apart, ready to accept his enormous penis sheathed for action. She looked to the café door, expecting Ralph to enter at any minute. The desire subsided leaving Myra disconsolate for a few minutes. Then the sequence started again and once again Rita demanded satisfaction, demanded Mr Ralph 'attend' to her. She thought of finding a telephone box and trying to call him, to ask for an urgent meeting, a reunion. This sort of madness had never happened to her before, not with Saul and not with Harry. She must be misremembering, fantasising.

Myra closed her eyes and forced her mind to remember everything which had happened from the moment she had skipped past the Commissionaires' desk on her way up to the alcove to get ready for her interview, to check her make-up and do her deep-breathing exercises. By visualising these mundane actions, gradually Myra gained control.

Ushered inside by Lena, Myra was back in MacElhose's old room. Poor man, such a tragedy his motorcycle had blown up when he accelerated on the twisting Stockiemuir Road heading home from Loch Lomond. At least his passenger had recovered, although *The Lioness* was now much subdued, not the terror she had once been.

Myra had been surprised when Ralph Powdenhill had interviewed her alone: she had understood 'management positions' were always decided by a committee. When Lena left the room, he had waited, wordlessly extending their handshake, looking over her shoulder towards the door. When the rattle of Lena's typewriter re-commenced, he crossed to the door, seemingly to check it was properly closed. Myra heard the key turn in the lock. He returned and proffered a chair, inviting her to sit at a corner of the long table, at the end nearest his desk, furthest from the door. Without lights and the blinds down, the room was dim and slightly too warm.

He offered tea or coffee, serving from a credenza behind her, leaning over her shoulder to place the cup and saucer before her and again to pour. He wore aftershave, spicy and woody which she thought might be sandalwood. She had chosen coffee, something she had almost forgotten existed. It was strong, slightly bitter, and she had added two teaspoonsful of sugar, a luxury she seldom afforded herself, hoarding her supply for Sandy, had a sweet tooth. She sipped and sipped again. It was strong, sweet and she drained her cup. Without commenting he removed it, refilled it. She smiled her thanks, added sugar and sipped again.

As he sat down at the end of the table near to her, his left foot struck her shoe and a grimace of pain flared across his face and his eyes closed.

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'Aaah. God . . .'

'Are you all right, Mr Powdenhill? Can I do anything?'

Puzzled, she watched the fingers of her left hand as they feathered across the table towards him, landing softly on his right hand which immediately twisted round and grasped her wrist tightly and squeezed hard:

'Aaaah, old wound . . . my ankle . . . pain passes . . . gone now,' he gasped. 'Thanks, nothing to be done but to bear it.'

'Would massage help? My sister Jean is a nurse; she showed me what to do.'

This was something she had read about years earlier in the *People's Friend*. She had talked to Harry about the use of 'therapeutic massage' to relieve an ache in his shoulder from working the tram controls. She had 'good hands' he had said and her massages had become a regular part of their lovemaking.

She saw Mr Powdenhill look quizzically into her eyes and wondered if he could tell she had lied:

'Actually, your sister is correct, it does help. Before I left hospital they gave me physiotherapy. Since I moved to Glasgow I haven't found a therapist yet. Could your sister recommend anyone, do you think?'

'Yes, I'll ask her, although she's moved away. Actually, I'm quite good at it myself, I used to do it for my elderly neighbour, Mrs Riddell, she had arthritis in her knees. She always said I had 'good hands'.'

'Yes, well, eh . . . Well, mmm . . .', he had mumbled.

Myra felt Rita stir, try to take over, and sensed her smile twisting into a leer. Now floating above and outside herself, Myra thought this reaction to be very odd: Mr Ralph was most definitely *not* Rita's type. Myra fought back but she could not hold against his gaze and closed her eyes. He squeezed her hand again, but this time very gently, as one might squeeze the hand of an infant. Her heart was pounding blood into her brain, coursing hormones through her body, making her nipples tighten, making her thump and leap down below, making her ready.

He squeezed again and again, in a gentle pulsing movement, while his index finger stroked the back of her hand. It was wonderful, thrilling, something she had never experienced before: the word erotic swam into her mind. She glanced up. He was staring at her, his

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lips set with a small thin smile, but his eyes were strange, troubled, perhaps sad, perhaps unsure, perhaps afraid she might reject him, she dared to think.

She smiled and his eyes changed, his smile widened making him seem younger, boyish. His hand, connecting them physically, continued its slow, steady, seductive rhythm, squeezing gently, finger stroking. She closed her eyes again, unable to hold out against his probing gaze.

Her thoughts raced ahead wildly to consider crazy possibilities. He must want her as she wanted him. He must be 'making a pass'. Was Ralph Powdenhill the one she wanted, needed? Was he really the one for her? Was Ralph her new Saul? Harry had never been a real contender, just a physical need satisfied, while she waited and watched for a true lover to share her life with. Why had she not spotted this in Ralph Powdenhill sooner? Was it because he had now made it clear he wanted her? Making this overt offer? Unless she was misreading the situation. Her body was shouting "YES!", and her mind was already soaring to a new and unexpected story.

On and on went the gentle squeezing and stroking. It was relentless. She did not want it to stop. Not ever, because of what was happening down below, holding her at the precipice of fulfilment. She wanted him to take her somewhere safe where they could be alone. Did he want to do it here? Standing against the wall or lying on the table? She had read of this type of office sex but until now she had found it hard to imagine. Was this why he had locked the door. Was it really locked? Or had she imagined hearing the key turn? What if they were coupled and Lena barged in, as Jean had almost done one time when she had been pleasuring Frank in the box bedroom in Yoker?

She then realised it was herself, Myra/Rita, who had made the first move, by touching him, and by what she had said. It was a version, a repeat of what she had always done, making the first move. It was as she had done with Sandy, as Rita at The Plaza, with Saul, as she had done with Harry.

The old guilt returned screaming at her - it was just as she had done with Frank, reaching down and rubbing him while he lay on his back in the box bedroom, mumbling half-heartedly, telling her to stop, whispering it was a sin but still allowing her to undo his buttons and take hold of his penis, allowing her to fulfil the story she had created for them, whispered hotly and sensuously into his ear as her hands brought him to another climax, casting herself as Marguerite and Frank as Teddy (Eduardo) the handsome Spanish chauffeur, hidden together in the darkness of his bedroom above the stables, in

Living with Myra

the lurid version of her story she had never allowed Miss Pettigrew to read, the story she had shredded when Frank deserted her by marrying Deirdre.

Just as she was about to submit to Rita entirely and reach forward to touch Ralph intimately, the realisation dawned: this was very different from Frank, Sandy, Saul, Harry and her Rita nights, this time she was not in control. She must not give way here, not in this room - *impossible!* Was there a lockable cupboard? How could she make this work? Maybe a hotel? Perhaps the Central Hotel, where they could be anonymous. They said it was used for this purpose every day, at any time of day, not just at night. No - it was always full of commercial travellers and officers on the move, so tawdry. At Caird Drive? No, not good enough for Ralph! Kirklee would be a perfect love nest for them although if Saul appeared to her while they were making love it would spoil everything. Ralph was married, although it did not 'feel' as if he was married. Perhaps his wife was dead, killed in an air raid? Or was he divorced? Or maybe his marriage was dead, like hers. The only certainty Myra/Rita knew was she wanted this amazing small thin man as she had never wanted any man before, even more than she had wanted Saul.

Myra, hovering above Rita, heard herself moaning softly to him, telling him without words she needed release, climax, orgasm. But he was delaying and denying, deliberately holding her like this, so, so near to the edge with his gentle fingers on her hand.

Taking slow, deep breaths, Myra fought back:

"No!" Myra scolded Rita; it could not be now, not here. First, we must get the job.

Only then, working here at Head Office, near to him, possibilities would arise.

Mr Ralph seemed to sense her change of mood and released her hand.

She opened her eyes and he immediately looked away, smiling up at the corner of the room. Was he thinking along the same lines? Did he have a place of his own they could use? It was time for her to get back to business.

Rita faded.

Myra gave a small cough and he smiled at her again. His hand reached into his jacket pocket. He took out a purple leather note-book and a gold-nibbed Parker fountain pen.

Living with Myra

He reached forward to touch her hand again, this time with his left hand. He offered a top-up for her coffee and she accepted, sipped then added three sugars against the slightly bitter taste, a necessary extravagance.

The squeezing and stroking started again. His eyes held hers. As his hand moved away, she noticed her watch seemed to have stopped at nine-twenty-five but she was too happy to worry about this. She was suspended in a bubble of confusing, exhilarating happiness.

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As far as Myra could recall, there had been no formal questions, just gentle promptings in his quiet cultured mellifluous voice, a voice which reminded her of someone she had heard announcing the BBC News. She tried repeatedly to place the voice but the name kept eluding her.

He started by asking her to explain her job and then to give her views on the organisation of the SCWS as she understood it, and in particular the relationship between Morrison Street with St George's, probing for what she saw as the good and the bad aspects. As she spoke he nodded, occasionally asked for clarifications, making lots of quick notes before returning to stroke her hand.

What she had told him she was never able to recall. Her only memory was she talked and talked and talked, unburdening herself after years of living inside her shell, alone and lonely, so very lonely. The release was exhilarating, making her vivacious, releasing her to become her old self as a child, encouraging her to 'talk like a book', as Thomas Walsh had scolded her not to do while they stood together in Miss Pettigrew's front room on the day her friend had slipped over, escaping from pain.

Eventually she had stopped. His hand reached forward and touched hers and squeezed hard, for the final time.

He smiled at her:

'Thank you. You are an amazing person, truly amazing.'

She felt free, lighter, and full of energy. She felt happier than she had ever felt in her life. Ralph was the man she had been waiting for. His physical appearance was irrelevant, as was hers. Their souls had entwined. Their bodies would follow later, but not much later, she promised Rita.

Living with Myra

When the interview ended, she skipped down the steps past the Commissionaires' Desk out into the sunshine. It was dry, bright and breezy and she had decided to walk to St George's, making her way through the pedestrian tunnel under the River Clyde from the Kinning Park Rotunda to the one at Finnieston.

As she walked she calmed down. Had she dreamed this encounter? Was it a story in its first telling? Was she drifting away from reality? The surge of desire filled her mind and the wonderful thing was she knew it was real, not a fantasy. Rita stopped by a telephone box, opened the door and sorted her change. Rita would telephone Ralph, suggest a meeting. Myra fought back and replaced the handset and pressed button "B" to retrieve the coins.

She might have gone on to Caird Drive, but decided to double back along Dumbarton Road to the Subway at Partick Cross at the foot of Byres Road and catch the train for St George's Cross and then to the café.

Gradually, inevitably, her euphoria declined until she was full of doubts.

She had spoken too boldly, too certain of herself, expounded her controversial views, her firmly held opinions, her judgements of certain Senior Managers. Why had she not hoarded them, dripped them to him one by one? She already knew why - this man Ralph Powdenhill was not her inferior as the others had been. He might even be brighter, she would find out. In fact, she was almost hoping he would be smarter, someone to expand her horizons, stretch her intellect. He must certainly be better educated, despite her voracious reading at the Mitchell Library.

Then came a hammer-blow of insight which explained everything, bringing her to a physical and mental standstill:

Even before the interview the man had already known all about her. Had he known Saul? Had Saul explained her needs? Had Powdenhill been merely playing her along, to get the information he wanted? Surely Myra could never be so gullible; but what about Rita? Try as she might she could not remember what she had said. Had everything he had done and said been a big act, his clever way of getting her to reveal herself, her true self?

It was only his final question which she remembered, the one which caught her unawares because of the almost casual way he had asked.

Living with Myra

"I see you wear a wedding ring Mrs Kaywood, as I do myself. Is there a Mr Kaywood, by any chance?"

"My Sandy, yes, he works at Barr and Stroud, making periscopes. He's permanent nightshift, except when he is away with the "Install Team". He never says where he goes, or for how long. Doing his bit for the War Effort, he says."

"Ah! And no luck with children, then?"

"No. It seems I can't have children, so they say at the hospital. I've had all the tests and well . . . Anyway, it's all in the past now. Our marriage is, well . . ., eh, moribund."

"Ah! I see. I see. Mmm . . . Well then, yes. Interesting. Very."

She had been relieved she had been already half way through the door when this question came, enabling her to answer with her face turned away because she knew now, with absolute certainty, he would have spotted her deception.

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When Myra approached St George's Co-op, she saw it was closed, sealed up for the night. She held her watch to her ear, it was ticking. She looked at the clock in the window of the bank across the road: it showed quarter past seven. How long had she sat in the café?

She had lost many hours. What had happened?

The next morning, Thursday, she was at St George's by six-thirty, which was not unusual. Myra was often the first to arrive, with the cleaners. Daisy arrived at quarter to nine, late, explaining her problems getting the kids up and dressed because they did not have school to go to because of the holidays, to which Myra raised her eyebrows in warning. Daisy was often late and her kids always got the blame.

'So Myra, tell uz a' abootit, whit wuz it like?' asked Daisy, shutting the door behind her, trapping them in Myra's tiny office.

'Mr Ralph was very nice, professional. A bit cold actually. I had to wait for ages. All the others were men or older women. I think a few were from outside, not from the Co-op. At least they didn't wear Co-op clothes I've seen before.'

'So, dud ye dae a'right then, Myra?'

'Hard to tell, really. I think he thinks I'm too young for the job - and the old chestnut, kids, you know how it is.'

'Who else wuz there, on the Inturview Commitay?'

'The funny thing is, Daisy, it was just Mr Powdenhill, on his own.'

'So, he inturviewed ye alane, nae wan else thayur?'

'Yes. It was a bit unnerving, actually. I got a bit tongue-tied, I'm afraid.'

Living with Myra

'You! You tongue-tied Myra Kaywood! Ah wud hae loved tae be a fly on *tha' wa'*!

'Well, whatever. The plain fact is I think I've blown my big chance. So, Daisy Donovan, it's back to business - did anything happen while I was out?'

'Aye, anither three reg'lars complaynin' aboot thur Divvies. That's near fifty this quartur alane. Whit the eff ur they playin' it, ouer there it Morrison Street, that's whit Ah'd luv tae know?'

Living with Myra

Appointed

Saturday 22nd July 1944

Sandy was already out, off to the allotments. He had come straight home from his nightshift, swallowed a quick cup of tea, gobbled down toast with jam, made himself cheese pieces and had taken a flask of tea. Today was the big Summer Show, he had explained, and he had to be there early, Helen was waiting.

Myra was putting the dishes into the sink intending to wash them before heading off to the Subway. Normally she would have been away by this time but she had dallied, hoping.

The kitchen door was open and she heard the envelope drop onto the hallway floor. She sprang up and stood looking at it, afraid to pick it up, sure it was bad news. The SCWS banner ran along the top, above her name. Never in her whole life had she received such an important letter. Her breathing stopped. Her tummy was churning. She had not slept properly since the interview. Every time she closed her eyes she was aroused by visions of Ralph Powdenhill standing at the bottom of her bed, slipping off his jacket then reaching up to loosen his tie, shrugging off his braces and smiling at her.

After a long time she swooped to pick it up, held it with both hands and placed it on the kitchen table beside her tea cup. She made a fresh pot of tea and poured a cup - black, no sugar - War-time tea. Suddenly she was on her feet and hurtling towards the sink where she vomited her breakfast all over Sandy's dirty dishes in the basin. Her head was spinning. She spoke to herself as she had been doing increasingly since she got married.

'Come on Myra, it's only a job. It's not *that* important.'

Looking through the window across the backcourt, Myra saw the remnant of the girl from Yoker who had been in Frank's class at school, standing in the back court of the building opposite, beside the washing line. When Myra had first recognised Vera she had made it her business to find out more about her, learning Vera's husband Colin Maloney suffered from a chronic chest condition. As a younger man he had had a good job, something important in the Gasworks at Anniesland, Myra had heard. There had been an accident and fumes had affected Colin's chest, they said. Colin had been demoted and was now a storeman, when he was fit enough to attend.

Living with Myra

The bedraggled woman was hanging out her usual large daily washing as she continued her fight against the deluge of dirty clothes produced by her husband and her six children. The children were said to be bright. The daughter Angela was praised by everyone as a girl who set a good example for her younger brothers and who looked after her sister Jannette, the youngest child who had been born only weeks earlier. Without Myra's weekly Postal Orders, the Maloney family would have sunk without trace years ago. The MMF had also bought their close, improving it without increasing the Maloneys' rent. The surge of pity for Vera and her family brought the imprecation to Myra's lips anew.

'Look at you Vera. Do you remember we used to play in the street together, you and me and Jean? When I was in primary two you were nearly as pretty as Frank's Deirdre. All the boys used to want to kiss you. Now look at you, Vera, just look at you. You're probably only twenty-six, and look at you. Some days you look as old as Mamma was when she died. Vera, stop having kids! They're killing you. You're worn out by birthing them and by running after them, never a minute to yourself. At least I'll still have a job at St George's, even if I don't get to Morrison Street. And maybe, hopefully, the new boss they send us after the War will be alright. If not, I'll leave, and get myself an even better job somewhere else. But you, Vera, you're stuck now, for the rest of your poor, poor life.'

Myra cleaned up the mess, washed and dried the dishes. Sitting at the table she stared at the letter for many, many minutes. At last her hands moved of their own accord, slicing the envelope open with a clean knife.

Dear Mrs Kaywood,

Thank you for coming to see me on Wednesday, inst.

I found our discussions fascinating and most revealing. It is clear to me you have a sharp brain and a self-assurance which is most unusual in one so young.

I hope you will not be too disappointed to learn you have been unsuccessful in your application for the position of "Buyer, Haberdashery". In fact, this position had been filled long before your application arrived on my desk on Tuesday morning. I have no idea why it took so long to come through the internal mail system, something I intend to investigate in due course.

However, I would like you to consider joining me as my Personal Assistant (Future Planning). This is a new position which I have created and which I believe will allow you to develop your very special talents.

You would have the status and salary equivalent to your present position at St George's but, after a six months settling-in period, there may be an upward review, depending on your performance.

Living with Myra

You would be based here with me at SCWS HQ but you **will** be called upon to travel throughout the United Kingdom, acting as my eyes and ears, researching and discovering the inside information we require to shape the future of the Co-operative Movement both here and elsewhere. I intend what we do here together in Glasgow will be used as a model for the whole movement.

If you would like to accept this position, please telephone me at Morrison Street at 10.00 am on Monday first. I am keen to have this matter decided and certain actions put in train as quickly as possible. I have identified a Relief Manager to take over from you until a suitable replacement for Mr Galbraith can be found.

Yours most sincerely,

R.C.P.

**Ralph C. Powdenhill,
Assistant Chief Manager
CWS, Manchester
(Based at Glasgow Head Office.)**

Living with Myra

In Advance

During the week prior to starting in her new post at Morrison Street, Myra was making plans to meet the challenge of unlocking the secrets in Lena Harrison's filing cabinets. With Myra's encouragement, Daisy was now effectively running St George's and had Myra's promise of help, should any difficulties arise.

The new man Powdenhill sent to St George's to act up as General Manager arrived on the Tuesday. Archie Dickson had been the under-manager in the Dumbarton branch for nearly twenty years. At fifty-three he had not expected to be promoted so unexpectedly. Archie was the Secretary and Treasurer of his local church, and although lacking humour, he seemed to be a nice man, if set in his ways and a bit slow on the uptake.

Daisy soon side-lined him into overseeing a stock-taking exercise in preparation for the Monthly Books which Archie would deliver to Morrison Street on the coming Monday. This exercise no longer held any fear for Daisy who now had an able helper in Jan Maloney, a bright girl with a keen mind for numbers who had been fully trained by Myra and who was attending evening classes in pursuit of formal qualifications.

On Thursday, which was dull and wet, the shop was quiet. Myra told Daisy she had business to attend to in preparation for her move and slipped away after the round of lunchtime staff breaks. She took the subway to Merkland Street and climbed the hill to Caird Drive to change and prepare to act out her playlet.

Dressed primly, with thick-rimmed black spectacles, her hair pinned up inside a black felt hat, she paid a late afternoon visit to a seedy locksmith's shop located on Parnie Street, near the Tollbooth in the commercial heart of Glasgow. She had scripted her opening gambit in the role of a toffy-nosed but harassed and impatient businesswoman in need of help. Depending on his reactions, she could either bully him or wheedle.

This shop had featured in a news article a year earlier when the proprietor James J Mullen was arrested for attempted breaking and entering. There had been a spate of office break-ins in the Charing Cross area in recent months. Mullen escaped with a stern warning by claiming he was telephoned while working late at his office by a policeman. PC Witherspoon, Mullen alleged, asked him to attend the premises to help him gain entry to an office in Woodside Crescent. A cleaning lady telephoned the local police station to say she had fallen, twisted her ankle badly and was trapped inside.

Living with Myra

While waiting for the policeman to arrive, Mullen claimed to have heard a desperate cry for help and decided to act alone, to render assistance. At this point, a second policeman, Sergeant Thomas Thomson caught Mullen working at the lock on the rear door to the premises.

PC Witherspoon had denied involvement. He suffered from recurring bouts of severe gout which, when it struck, made it impossible to walk more than a few yards. Although Witherspoon agreed he had signed on for duty earlier in the evening, his gout suddenly flared up and he hitched a lift in a passing car to his Polmadie home.

On telephoning the key-holder, Thomson was advised their cleaning lady did not work beyond 6.30 pm when the premises were secured for the evening by a senior member of staff. When the key-holder arrived, he and Thomson checked the premises together. There was no injured person inside and Mullen was placed under arrest.

In court, Mullen's lawyer pressed for an absolute discharge based by claiming the telephone call to his client having been a hoax. Thomson admitted Mullen had not actually entered the premises. After a long exchange between the bench and Mullen's lawyer, and in the light of his record of petty offences, Mullen was fined £15 and awarded a six-month suspended sentence. Next time he would be sent to prison, the judge had warned.

Armed with this information, Myra entered the small dimly lit shop just as the weary middle-aged Mullen was about to close for the night. If the man asked, she would give her name and address as Mrs Beryl Bryson, 54 George Street.

'Good afternoon. Are you Mr Mullen, the proprietor?'

'Aye, who wants to know?'

'I represent the Scottish Legal Life Assurance Company in Bothwell Street. Do you know it? It is very famous, you know, one of Glasgow's biggest employers.'

Mullen listened to her with shifty eyes skipping down to look at her expensive engagement ring and the bulging purse she held in her hand. He shrugged his shoulders:

'Naw, never heard of it.'

'Be that as it may. Well, I am the Assistant Cashier and every single day, often several times a day, my busy routine is interrupted by some idiot who has lost his or her keys and cannot open a filing cabinet or secured cupboard. It has simply gone beyond tolerating. My superior, Mr Bailey agrees and has suggested I seek your assistance, Mr Mullen. Apparently, his brother-in-law, who is a policeman, Witherspoon I think Mr Bailey said his name was, has been helped by you in the past.'

Living with Myra

James Mullen's bushy eyebrows shot up and his skin paled. Myra judged he was in retreat, about to clam up on her so changed to a wheedling simper:

'You see, what I desperately need, Mr Mullen, to make my life bearable, is a full set of skeleton keys and the training to go with it. Can you help? Or should I look elsewhere?'

As she was delivering her plaintive request, she opened her purse and fingered a crisp £20-pound note, partially teasing it out from the fold of its companions.

The man smiled, chose to believe her, locked the front door and ushered her through to his tiny workshop area in the rear of the shop. Two hours later Myra emerged with the keys and lock-picks. Under his instruction, she had practiced on a wide variety of locks. Mullen had praised her deftness and called her 'a natural'.

As she moved to the final act of her subterfuge, she zipped the ring of keys and picks into the inner pocket of her large handbag before retrieving and opening her purse. After a short wrangle, during which she emphasised repeatedly to Mullen her superior Mr Bailey would be sure to tell his policeman cousin how helpful the locksmith had been, Mullen settled for thirty pounds. He had originally bid for fifty. Perhaps he should have retained possession of the keys and picks before making his pitch, she thought, as she offered her small, tired sad smile, closing the final scene of her playlet.

Living with Myra

Lazarus House

Tuesday 1st August 1944.

It was Myra's first day at Morrison Street Head Office. She was waiting in the alcove in the corridor across from Mr Ralph's office door. She heard him on the telephone but could not make out what he had said. Her watch showed three minutes before eight. She was fighting the hormone surge which made Rita want to shout his name.

Lena arrived and limped past. They did not exchange pleasantries.

Myra heard the quiet rumble of conversation from Lena's office and a few minutes later Powdenhill opened his office door, stepped out smiling, pulled it closed behind him. He then locked it and pocketed the key.

The lock was a simple double-throw mortice type which she reckoned she could defeat in seconds, if necessary. Since taking possession of her skeleton keys, she had become almost obsessed with keys and locks, practising at every opportunity, always carrying them in the secret zipped compartment of her black handbag, despite their weight.

'Shall we take a little ride in my car?'

They descended in the elevator, side by side, standing behind the one-armed operator who was whistling tunelessly under his breath.

'Well, Les, how's the arm today?' said Powdenhill.

'Not too bad, thanks Mr Ralph,' replied the attendant. 'It's all right in dry sunny weather but it's the damp what gives me gyp.'

'Snap! Just like my knees and ankle. Bloody war, eh?'

'Yes, Mr Ralph, but we've got them on the run now, sir. They'll soon be sorry they stirred us up.'

'Too true, Les, too true.'

Living with Myra

Ralph limped ahead and held the heavy main door open for her. They walked side by side to Admiral Street at Paisley Road Toll. He was smaller than she remembered and she was glad she had chosen flat shoes. She had to slow her pace to match his. He stopped beside a Rolls Royce. She saw it was not black, but a very dark blue. It flew a small pennant from the right wheel arch.

'You drive, I understand?'

How did he know this?

'Yes,' she answered.

'If you would do the honours, please. I can still manage, just, but it takes its toll.'

At first it had seemed complicated, so many extra knobs and switches, but he had a clear manner of explaining things, like Saul. After stalling twice, she got the feel of the clutch and they were off:

'Where are we heading, Mr Ralph?'

'Have you ever been to Ayr?'

Were they heading for a hotel? Rita hoped so.

'Only once, by train, with Miss Pettigrew. Never by road.'

'Oh yes, I remember, your first benefactor. Anyway, just head for Shawlands Cross; you know your way there, of course.'

She felt herself tense. *What had she told him?* She forced herself to be cool, calm and collected - professional:

'Yes, I know the area well. I have a sister who lives near there.'

'Yes, Lizzie. Tantallon Road, in Granny Nellis's old place.'

'But how'

'Shush, Myra, dear girl, shush. Be patient. Just drive. Get us to Shawlands Cross then follow the road signs. I need to rest. No more talking, not for now, anyway. It will all make sense soon, very soon.'

Ralph snored quietly as she drove.

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'We're nearly there, Mr Ralph, two miles to Ayr town centre.'

'Have we passed the turning for Auchincruive?'

'Yes, but I can get back to it, I think, by taking this next road.'

Living with Myra

The outside of the grand house was a bit run down although the grounds were neatly tended. Men were hoeing or kneeling to weed flower beds. Many were walking around the gardens, some with sticks, others with crutches. A few kept to themselves but most were in groups of three or more with the fittest pushing the less-able in wheelchairs, many of whom were missing limbs. Most were laughing and joking. As far as Myra could tell from their uniforms, they were all officers, from one of the three main services. It immediately felt like a scaled-up version of her unfulfilled plan for Kirklee.

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The room was on the second floor. They looked through a thick glass porthole in the door at the shrivelled, hairless man. A secure room, she reasoned.

'At times your friend seems almost lucid,' the elderly male nurse explained. 'We have reduced his medication over the last few days, knowing you may come. He is restrained, strapped to the chair. Sorry, but this is in his best interest, as well as yours. Please do not attempt to touch him. Sadly, he is prone to biting. And he spits, so watch your eyes. Eyes seem to be his favourite target, and he is fairly accurate.'

'Who is he?'

'Look again. Look at his left ear,' said Ralph.

'Oh God! It can't be! Oh Jesus, Mary and Joseph, it's my Saul!'

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Her visit had been very short. The shell of the man who stared back at her no longer held the keen mind of the old Saul. This shrunken corpus retained only a tortured spirit, his head and torso swaying and ducking to avoid the attack of invisible angry demons.

Against their repeated, specific instructions her hand had reached out to his face. His eyes flickered, then stilled to a moment of calm before he let out a howl. His mouth snarled at her hand. The nurse had been just quick enough to save her, hauling her backwards, roughly, before bundling her to the door. Saul's yowling had followed them down the corridor.

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They sat in the car, Ralph in the driving seat.

'What happened, please?'

'Saul agreed to it, volunteered in fact. But let me explain, from the beginning. Flying Spitfires was always an issue, because of his long legs and the length of the flights required by the photo-recon group. They made him a special version, an adapted Supermarine with extra fuel tanks. He was expert, daring, willing to fly low. I saw the

Living with Myra

images he brought back. Amazing, truly amazing. It was his outstanding work which brought him to my attention. I checked his background. I am responsible for what happened next. I had a specific role, which I cannot discuss. I saw from his record he had good language skills. I interviewed him, recruited him and took him out of circulation. We had to keep up the pretence about him, for his own safety. I am afraid we may not have been very good at it. This charade work was done by girls in another section who were inept, to say the least, and caused great pain to many relatives. To be fair we were all overloaded, and there were others in the programme. Quite a few mix ups, not enough checking, I'm afraid.'

He reached across and handed her a handkerchief. It smelled of lavender. He continued:

'What Saul Schofield was and what he did must remain classified. When I took him for our section, it caused a great hoo-hah with the RAF Wallahs - they wanted to keep him for photo-recon. Things said, harsh, harsh. I pulled rank, from above, and got him. What I can reveal is he was dropped behind the lines, in Germany, to the north of Holland. Immensely brave, particularly since he was of Jewish origin. He had an excellent disguise and a full set of papers. We lost contact after three weeks, in late January 1941. He knew the drill, knew what to expect. As in all such cases we had to assume he had taken his pill before they tortured him. We thought he must be dead. The official machinery was set in motion, the standard 'missing' letter sent to his next of kin, as you know. I understand this too was botched, sent to a wrong person initially, returned, re-sent. Can you imagine the hurt?'

Shaking her head, she sobbed, blew her nose. He looked away and continued:

'Then, six months ago Saul surfaced, on board a Swedish fishing boat, and was transferred at sea to one of our submarines off the coast of Norway. He had to be bound and drugged to prevent him from killing himself and those helping him. It took weeks to identify this half-mad creature as Saul Schofield. On arrival at Lazarus House, his weight was less than four stones and it's not a lot more now even though we have been force feeding him through a tube.'

After a short delay, he continued:

'He is one of only three we have received, the other two lasted only a few months before dying. Saul has somehow persisted, even though he is the worst of the three. He seems to be holding out for something, someone. I think it is you. It is not yet generally known or even accepted in some quarters the Nazis have concentration camps dotted all over Europe, meting out special treatment to those of Jewish origin. We have been trying to

Living with Myra

piece together what happened to him. His story is very confused, incoherent. In short, most of what we've gleaned surely cannot be true: if it is, the inhumanity of the Nazi regime is terrifying, unholy. So far Saul has told me nothing of what he might have revealed to the enemy, despite my best efforts.'

Ralph Powdenhill turned to look at her, holding her tear-filled eyes:

'You and your love for each other were the only threads we could untangle. The records we had were poorly managed, both at our end and in Glasgow. Initially we were looking for a woman called 'Mrs Myra Gallagher'. We found several Mrs Gallaghers but these were red herrings. Then we found a Mrs Gallagher and her children who had perished in the Clydebank Blitz. It was assumed she was 'his Myra' and so our people stopped looking.' He shrugged his shoulders:

'Then, by serendipity, when I was sent to Glasgow, I found you - Myra Kaywood, nee Gallagher, in charge at St George's. When I was sure you were 'his Myra', I had hoped you might be able to bring him back to us. To be honest, in my experience I thought it unlikely.'

He looked away and his face became sad and serious:

'You see, Saul has taken to holding his breath, sometimes for many minutes at a time. We've tried electric shocks to try to make him stop, but he resists us. Holds out, blanks out. It appears at times he wants to leave us, to escape fully from whatever horror has been imposed on him. At other times he swings back to us, as you saw today. Immensely brave. Humbling, truly humbling. Such a waste. A dreadful loss of a brilliant mind. The unspeakable horror of War none wish to face up to. He was one of our best.'

He turned to face her again:

'Myra, I hope you will forgive me for what I've put you through, but I felt I had to try. I think we've proved he is beyond our help. Forgive me if I say I hope this meeting we had will be sufficient to release him from his torment, if you follow my meaning. I sorry to be the one to have to tell you, but there it is.'

'Oh my Saul, my darling Saul.'

She drank the coffee from the Thermos Ralph proffered. It was very sweet and milky. Ralph started the car and they drove in silence.

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Myra's mind began to slow down. Everything seemed either too small or too large. She closed her eyes. Released by the drugged coffee, her thoughts drifted from the shore of reality and her memories, like waves, began ranging back and forth through her time

Living with Myra

with Saul, revisiting key moments in little film snippets, some in bright and vivid colour, some blurred and grainy, all without sound.

She was back in the secure room, standing in front of Saul's swaying, emaciated body, looking into his expressionless eyes. Apart from the flicker of recognition before he had lunged at her, she realised he was beyond help. Her darling, darling Saul had been driven out of the realms of sanity.

The secure room morphed into their bedroom at Kirklee and her many hours day-dreaming of his imagined return and their future life together. It was true. From his Nazi prison, she knew now he had called out to her time after time. Perhaps this had been his way of sending her his everlasting love. She had been right not to believe he was dead as the stark War Department letter and subsequent silence had implied.

A stabbing pain thrust its way into her mind and she knew Saul had at last surrendered his life. She hoped he would be made whole again in Heaven. Saul's smiling face at Glasgow Central Station, the afternoon he left to begin his training, gradually became indistinct. The tiny flame of hope which Myra had cradled in her heart sputtered and died. Life without him was not worth living. Her heart shrivelled and she begged God to let her die too.

In her drugged sleep, Myra sobbed, unaware of Ralph stroking her hand while telling her to let Saul go entirely, telling her over and over that she must move on to a new and better life with him, telling her he would love her, care for her and expand her horizons, help her fulfil her true potential. But none of this was heard. Instead she felt herself slipping down, down, down into a velvety blackness. After a flurry of trying to climb back up, she finally let go, descending into the valley of sorrow which she had strenuously avoided during her long months of denial.

Living with Myra

Tower Ridge

The Rolls Royce stopped outside a different country house, much larger and grander.

Myra would discover she was at *Tower Ridge*, a rambling, run-down property which had once housed a residential school for gifted children. Later still, she would learn it had been under the control of Monsignor Creity, before his sudden departure from Glasgow shortly after Myra's eleventh birthday. Since then the house had remained unoccupied, neglected. Only recently part of it had been made habitable for its current occupants who were seeking a safe haven from the London Blitz.

In her drugged state, Myra saw and understood none of this.

A tall manservant dressed in dark blue livery opened the car door, supported Myra when her legs gave way. Watching, Ralph followed as the man swung her up into his strong arms, carried her up the external steps then, now inside, up an ornate stairway to the first floor and along the corridor to the morning room where he laid her gently on the sofa, nodded, then left. Ralph took a seat nearby. Glancing across at her sleeping form he closed his eyes, savouring the delights to come in the days and weeks ahead, now he had her under his sway. His tried and tested process had begun, initiated by shock of revealing her lost love and the consumption of the medicated coffee from the Thermos, designed to lower her resistance and imbue the obedience which he desired.

An hour passed before she stirred. Over many minutes she drifted up to a confused wakefulness and eventually pushed herself upright. When she saw Powdenhill holding a glass. She smiled and he moved to sit beside her. He slipped his free arm around her shoulders and encouraged her to sip. The purple liquor was sweet, heavy and sticky. Some part of her resisted but with his gentle encouragement, she continued until it was finished. Putting the glass down, Ralph took her hand and squeezed. His index finger began stroking the back of her hand as he had done at the interview in Morrison Street. As she slipped under, he spoke quiet words which, in her new stupor, she struggled to understand. She gave up trying and let the sound of his voice wash over her, its modulating tones like a slow, comforting jazz instrumental. A heaviness overcame her and she felt herself slipping down, down, down, leaned her head into the crook of his neck and fell asleep.

Living with Myra

Ralph continued with his brain-washing, whispering to her unhearing ears for several hours before releasing her with the words: 'My dearest Myra, sleep now, sleep long and deeply for sleep is the best natural balm for unexpected trauma'. He kissed her forehead gently, easing her down onto the sofa before caressing her long shapely legs into position. Rising, he crossed and pulled forcefully at the servants' bell call handle, keen to move to the next part of his plan.

After a short delay, the manservant returned, carried her upstairs and laid her out on a four-poster bed. His task completed, he was dismissed with a curt wave of Powdenhill's hand. A few minutes later, Lady Miriam arrived, carrying her bag camera equipment and other paraphernalia. Closing the door behind her, she locked it then switched on every light in the room. While Ralph supported Myra's head and shoulders, Lady Cunliffe produced a bizarre theatrical wig of grey ringlets from her bag. Using the wig's elasticated hairnet and spring-loaded clips she put in place over Myra's red hair. With a careful application of stage make-up and a mask, she converted her subject into a character from a musical comedy opera. Their final act of preparation was to select a tiger eye ring which they slipped onto her left pinkie finger, making her a temporary member of the Tiger Eye Club.

With their 'model' fully readied, they laid her out on the bed, and began the undressing process, designed to simulate a slow strip-tease. As Ralph worked on his prize, his 'aunt' took a sequence of high-quality colour images using flash photography. When Myra was reduced to her undergarments, the photographic process became slower as they placed their subject in a series of erotic poses, moving her legs and arms and placing her hands. Stage by stage they loosened her bra to reveal first one breast and then the other. Continuing, they removed each stocking in turn, inch by inch, then her suspender belt and finally her knickers, creating a sequence of images to be compiled into a slow-motion picture show.

When she was fully naked, Ralph delved into Lady Miriam's bag and produced a purple leather roll which he unfolded to reveal a set of realistic dildos in different sizes and colours. In the photographs which followed the subject was arranged, with Ralph's assistance and by careful framing of each shot to make it seem as if she was performing sex acts on herself, rubbing the chosen dildo against her breasts then proceeding to oral, vaginal and anal penetrations. The Wing Commander and Lady Cunliffe worked as a team, silently, applying a familiar routine they had used often with drugged children and pubescent teenagers of both sexes. Seldom had they been privileged to work with such a beautiful young woman.

Living with Myra

When they had completed their session, Lady Miriam had generated over three hundred high-quality images. With the mask, wig and ring wig removed to the bag, Miriam worked diligently to remove all trace of the garish make-up. Finally, they slipped a nightdress over Myra's head, Powdenhill gently manipulating her unconscious body to allow his collaborator to pull the gown down before they eased Myra under the covers. Myra would never become aware of the part Lady Miriam played in her treatment or her desecration. With her role completed, Lady Miriam lit a cigarette, closed and locked her bag and left to greet and meet her early evening guests who were due. Powdenhill crossed to the window and closed the heavy curtain against the low sun streaming into the room then switched off the lights, leaving the room lit only by the flicker of the coals. After checking Myra's pulse and temperature, he pulled the call for the servant.

While he waited, he lit a special cheroot as to fortify himself against the boredom to come. His next task was to prepare the cards for the *Tower Ridge Bridge Club*, an establish gathering held on Mondays whenever the Cunliffes were in residence. Ralph dreaded these sessions with elderly men and women who played slowly and poorly while repeating their inane stories of days gone by. He much preferred the cut and thrust of poker, a game played alone, unshackled by plodding donkey for a partner.

On entering the bedroom, the manservant wrinkled his nose at the distinctive tobacco odour. Averting his eyes from the man he had grown to detest he nodded to acknowledge his instructions. Left alone with the patient, he added fresh coals to the fire and moved a chair closer to the bed. Believing himself to be unattractive to women, he took this rare opportunity to study her strangely attractive face, admiring her perfect skin and long, thin nose, watching as her beautiful lips mouthed silent words.

After several hours of intermittent mumbling, she became extremely restless, screaming, 'Saul, Saul don't go. Saul, darling. Come to me . . .'

In her frenzy, she threw off the bedclothes.

Seeing her near-naked form, the servant was aroused, knowing a woman of such beauty could never be his, immediately jealous such delights must always fall to the rich and famous. He covered her, tucking the sheets and blankets firmly back in place. As he had been briefed to do should there be any material change in the patient's condition, he moved to the bell pull three times to alert the others in the servants' quarters Powdenhill was required.

Living with Myra

When Powdenhill arrived a few minutes later to take charge, he was slurring his words, although the man did not smell of alcohol.

Alone with her, Ralph tried to soothe her, holding her hand and crooning his mantra. From her angry mutterings, he deduced Myra was with Saul in his prison. Gradually this agitation passed and she subsided once more into her drugged sleep.

During his debriefings of returning POWs, Powdenhill had been through this process many times and knew this first part of her trauma had to be faced before the real crisis arrived. Her treatment was unfolding as he expected. Ralph smiled and, to celebrate his cleverness, he treated himself to another special cheroot, another reefer.

In response to the call pull, the manservant returned to take over. Gradually her outbursts became more intermittent and less violent.

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Shortly after mid-night, when the last of the guests had gone, Powdenhill returned briefly to check on his patient. Satisfied, he left the remainder of the night vigil to the manservant. As the hours spooled towards Tuesday morning, the man dosed in a chair, within touching distance of her, his mind spinning notions of disrobing and climbing into bed to lie beside her.

As dawn approached, Powdenhill returned and the manservant departed. The Wing Commander knew from long experience the second crisis which would be soon, and with it his next and best opportunity to seize control of her psyche.

As she reached her crescendo, now at her most vulnerable, he sat stroking her hand, telling her about the wonderful future he had planned for them. Under her breath, Myra muttered in an angry manner, but her words were garbled, incoherent. She was fighting, trying to resolve the mental conflicts which raged within her while his voice dripped its mellifluous words into her mind.

Little by little her mumblings subsided until eventually she slept, fitfully, her breaths coming in deep, urgent gasps, her body sweating profusely, as her liver expelled the residues of the medication in a torrent of perspiration.

Living with Myra

Confident his treatment had worked and only regular maintenance would now be required, Ralph rose, crossed the room to the fireplace and pulled the call bell handle. On leaving her said the manservant, 'Her crisis has passed, she is safe now. Let her sleep until she wakens naturally. At every opportunity encourage her to drink water or she will dehydrate.'

Through the long hours before dawn, the manservant remained on duty, wiping away the beads perspiration with a soft dry cloth infused with lavender oil, offering sips of water whenever she drifted up to wakefulness. Occasionally she would open her eyes, and stare at him, sometimes in apparent terror, still uncomprehending, unaware of the passage of time, where she was or what had happened since leaving Lazarus House.

By Wednesday lunchtime the patient's fever had gone, her breathing normal and her mutterings now intermittent, less fearful. By mid-afternoon on Wednesday she had stopped fighting and descended into a true sleep. Working with great care and gentleness so as not to disturb her slumbers, the manservant sponged her face, neck and her underarms, towelled her dry then sorted the bedclothes.

The room was warm, fetid; he edged a window top and bottom. Outside the bedroom, two birds were singing; one nearer, much louder, challenging, harsh. From a distance the other responded in defiance, singing its own, sweet, steady song from far away, receding until it stopped and silence returned. If the patient heard, she made no sign.

She slept on through the remainder of Wednesday, as the sounds of the house and its occupants rumbled in the background. As the overnight darkness glimmered from a deep purple black into a pre-dawn grey, Wednesday gave birth to Thursday. Throughout, the man in the dark blue uniform continued his vigil, sitting only a few feet only from his charge, studying her, wondering at the loose talk he had overheard among the small group of women servants who had come from London with the Cunliffes.

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By Thursday afternoon Myra was sitting up, pale, a little fuzzy but slowly starting to function again. Her first smile was to her 'nurse', the stranger in dark blue, who she thought at first was Frank: he had Frank's eyes and could be his twin brother, except for his soft, light brown hair and larger ears.

'Who are you?'

'Brotherton, Bill Brotherton.'

Living with Myra

'What happened to me? Where am I?'

'You are at *Tower Ridge*, the residence of Lord and Lady Cunliffe. The Wing Commander has demanded to be informed as soon as you awake. He is in Glasgow on business, apparently. He has been telephoned. I'm told he will be with you soon.'

'Is there a bathroom I could use, please?'

He loped across the room and opened a door through which she could see what looked like a bathroom. As she was about to ask how long she had been sleeping, but the man nodded and left.

Alone, she tried to rise, intending to wash her hair and have a bath and make herself ready for Ralph coming to her, but her limbs would not move. With rising panic, she realised she was wearing a nightdress, still damp with her sweat although she smelled of lavender, not body odour. Where were her clothes? Had the person who stripped her, washed her as well? Had it been Brotherton? Surely not, he was a servant, not a lady's maid.

'It was Ralph!' Rita cackled. 'Who else?'

Myra smiled, turned onto her side, curled into a foetal position and closed her eyes. How did she come to be here? Her limbs felt heavy and her eyes could not focus. Ralph would come soon and explain everything. All that mattered was she was safe and warm, the room dim, the heavy curtains shutting out the world and its demands.

She hovered just beneath the surface of wakefulness. In her dream Rita was filled by an urgent desire to see Ralph, to have him near. As on the night after her interview, she sensed him standing by her bedside, naked, just out of touching distance, teasing her, but each time she opened her eyes, he faded and disappeared.

Thursday rolled unstopably into another day.

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On Friday morning Myra was sitting up in bed, the remains of a light breakfast on the tray beside her, her rumpled nightdress buttoned to preserve her modesty. As Ralph Powdenhill entered, Brotherton nodded and left them, closing the door quietly, stealing a last glance at his patient, seeing her leer at the man he had come to detest for his arrogance and patent insincerity.

Ralph moved closer and stood by her bedside, almost within touching distance, as in her erotic dream. Rita tried to take control but Myra subdued her.

Living with Myra

'Ah, you are returned to us at last, Mrs Kaywood,' said Ralph. 'Please don't worry, I've passed a message to your husband at his place of business, saying you have been called away. A necessary trip to HQ in Manchester is what he's been told.'

'Mr Ralph, I had a horrible dream. In it I saw someone who is dead.'

'No Myra, it was not a dream. I'm sorry, but sadly it was true. And, I regret I must impart further sad news. Saul has left us. He slipped away while we journeyed here. It seems seeing you released him from his torment. Thank you.'

'The hospital exists? What I saw was real?'

'Lazarus House? Yes, you are free to visit anytime, if you wish, just ring ahead and say I said it would be in order. But I repeat, Saul is gone, buried this morning, with full military honours, in the grounds, surrounded by those who may survive, if we can love them enough. My only connection with Lazarus House was through Saul Schofield. But, Myra, dear Myra, please remember, life is for the living. The dead must look out for themselves. We who are left must care for each other, while we are spared. It is the duty we owe them, to make the most of our lives.'

She looked at his eyes and knew with certainty - *this is the man I want now; we are made for each other*. Miss Pettigrew's voice sounded in her head and the words escaped from her lips.

'*Carpe Diem?*'

'Well said, Myra, well said. Now, at Lady Miriam's suggestion, we have taken a chance on some clothes from her Ladyship's wardrobe. This dress is for tonight. Green, we thought, to match your beautiful eyes. Try them. If you need anything, ask Brotherton, the chap who's been keeping an eye on you. He runs the show here. Your bathroom's through that door. Time for lunch in about an hour. You must be hungry, surely. Brotherton will bring a tray. The family is lunching with friends, in town. I too must go into Glasgow, urgent business, personal. I suggest you take a walk through the grounds. Build you up. Chance to clear your head. Tonight, we shall dine with family, provided you are up to it. Lady Miriam's keen to meet you. Lord Neville Cunliffe is a distant relative on my mother's side, as it turns out, and by pure luck I learned about this connection from a family friend. I'm at three remove it seems, recently discovered, which means I'm new at *Tower Ridge*, just like you. During my time in Glasgow they are kindly giving me houseroom and the use of a vehicle, when required. My Uncle Neville is a stockbroker, political fixer, stinking rich, knows all the top people, particularly those running the bigger churches, including the Vatican. "Investing for the Ecclesiasticals" is his speciality, apparently. He deserted London because of the War but they plan to return soon, he says. I've offered no explanation about you, nothing of your life, your roots. However, if I might offer a *souçon* of advice, Maria Agnetta Gallagher-Kaywood-Schofield? Start your life anew,

Living with Myra

however way you wish it to go. Try to live for today and plan for tomorrow. Let Saul Schofield go, completely. The past has no hold over you now, let everything you have done go to its place in eternity. You must let go, as I've had to do many times, and especially when my own special one went on ahead. It is not easy, of course, but it must be done. I will be here for you, always. If you need anything, just ask.'

He smiled, made a short bow and left.

Rita leered as he slipped through the doorway.

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The clothes were a good fit and of the finest quality. Everything Myra needed for day and evening was laid out for her to try on. She held the green dress against herself and smiled back at the full-length mirror. Before carefully hanging it in the wardrobe, she held the soft material to her cheek, looking forward to the evening. Next, she tried on the daytime walking-out suit of fine tweed, complimented by a pair of what were clearly brand-new tan brogues. They too fitted her long narrow feet perfectly. After careful checking, she concluded every item was new, never worn by another. The major items were labelled "*House of Walker*", which meant nothing to her. An uncomfortable suspicion planted itself; despite what had been said, she was sure these clothes had been bought especially for her which meant someone had taken her measurements while she was asleep. Had they seen her naked? Who were they? Why were they doing this? Had it been Ralph?

'Of course it was Ralph!' Rita cackled again. 'Who else?'

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After a luxurious bath, followed by a delicious lunch delivered by Brotherton, Myra dressed in the tweed suit, pulled on the short white socks provided, slipped on the brogues and tied the laces with double knots. Looking at her reflection in the mirror, she saw a lady of class. The ensemble was a bit old-fashioned but spoke of money.

A knock at the door was followed by the deep voice of Brotherton announcing he was available to escort her around the grounds.

They walked through the woods to a clearing with views towards Glasgow. Ralph had been right to say exercise and fresh air would do her good. Inexplicably after to so long feeling down, she now felt lively, released, energetic and strode ahead of her escort to the edge of the escarpment which had given the house its name. From a child, Myra had never been a good sleeper and despite the recent assault on her body from the cocktail of drugs, the period deep sleep they had induced had rejuvenated her.

Although the city looked more distant, Bill Brotherton told her it was only five miles and could be reached easily by car or by tram from Barrhead, about an hour's walk away. He

Living with Myra

then apologised, explaining he must leave her to prepare for the rigours of the imminent Friday evening dinner party which, he advised ruefully, had become a feature of life at *Tower Ridge* where people seemed to come and go on a never-ending conveyor belt.

Alone, Myra felt the wind increase. High above her she heard or imagined a bird pouring out its song. It was a skylark, Saul's favourite bird. She looked for it without success. Its voice faded until only the rustle of grass and wind whining through the woods behind her remained. The skylark's song was Saul's gift of freedom, she realised.

Turning back towards *Tower Ridge*, Myra shuddered and finally let go of her most recent memory of Saul Schofield, the shrivelled remnant she had seen at Lazarus House. As she did so it was replaced by the real Saul - the beautiful, handsome, brave and kind man she had kissed good-bye on the station platform. Then, as this image faded, he smiled and waved goodbye, dispelling the horror of what she had witnessed. It was as if her visit to Lazarus House had been only a bad dream.

Unburdened, Myra almost ran towards the house, ready to grasp her new future with Ralph. His face swam into her mind and she smiled. Would he come to her tonight and enjoy their first coupling as Rita demanded? If so they must be quiet about their love-making, Rita could be noisy.

Back in the bedroom, Myra removed her walking shoes and tweed suit and arranged them in the wardrobe. After a quick strip wash, she applied make-up then brushed and arranged her hair before slipping carefully into the evening dress and matching shoes. The high collar of the gown emphasised her long neck and its rich colour complemented her hair and eyes.

After a final check in the long mirror, she sat at the dressing table waiting for Wing Commander Ralph Powdenhill to collect her for the evening ahead. As she smiled at her image, she wondered again if Ralph would come to her bed later, when the house was quiet. She conjured up his face in the mirror and blew him a kiss.

Living with Myra

Rank Outsider

At the Friday night dinner evening which turned out to be a rather stilted and very lengthy dinner party, she was introduced merely as, "Myra, a new friend of Ralph's". The conversations swirled around the table. She was isolated from Ralph, placed on the corner beside the very elderly Lord Neville who patted her hand from time to time, absentmindedly calling her "dear, dear girl". Perhaps he has forgotten my name, she thought - if he heard it: the man seemed to be deaf or perhaps sodden with drink.

Myra kept silent, out of her social depth. The long table was full, sixteen in all, but only five couples, if she included herself with Ralph in this category. The others, all men, were older, like the other couples. The youngest person after Ralph was probably in his late fifties, she guessed. It was soon clear the other diners all knew each other well, and she was the outsider. Like their hosts, all the other diners spoke with crusty upper-class English accents, including Ralph who adjusted his speech to merge in with them.

Brotherton was on duty in a dark blue jacket with gold piping, changing role, acting now as their Butler and Wine Waiter. Two smartly dressed women in black dresses with white aprons and French maid hats served the food and removed the remains. These women spoke deferentially with working-class English accents. Myra watched their faces and saw occasionally they exchanged tiny smiles with each other as Lady Miriam regaled her guests with "the latest news from London".

People and things Myra did not know were discussed. "Cambridge" and "the City" and "the damned Americans" and "coming opportunities" were mentioned repeatedly. Ralph seemed to be in his element, making jokey asides from time to time. Like the others Ralph drank heavily, Myra thought, but it did not show in his speech or demeanour. A stuffy elderly lady mentioned "this jazz business", which Ralph dismissed at once as "discordant rubbish, not proper music". Myra fixed her smile, gradually coming to the conclusion these were people whom, with the exception of Ralph, she could never learn to like.

The wines however were excellent and she sipped a little white and half a glass of red wary of the effect the alcohol might have on her after her recent bout of melancholy, as Ralph had described it. Port and Madeira were offered, which she declined. A wide tray of cigars and cigarettes was offered around. Everyone began to smoke. To her dismay, Ralph produced a slim enamelled box from his inner jacket pocket and lit a small cheroot. Its smell was distinctive, aromatic and sweet. This drew comments and jibes

Living with Myra

from several of the men who nevertheless eagerly accepted his offer of one in preference to their original choice from the tray.

Lady Miriam tinkled her tiny service bell, flourished her long black cigarette holder like a magic wand and stood: 'Ladies, shall we retire for a nightcap? Leave our menfolk to their poker and billiards?'

On leaving the dining room Myra took the opportunity to thank her hostess, claiming exhaustion, and headed upstairs for bed. It was during this brief encounter Myra spotted the tiger eye ring on Lady Miriam's left pinkie, making Myra suddenly tense, alert. On reaching her room she entered, checked it was empty, including checking wardrobes and cupboards before locking the door and covering the keyhole with a towel. Was *Tower Ridge* the destination from which Gerrard Henson had been returning on his frequent tram journeys from Barrhead?

Almost at once there was a soft tap on her door. Ralph called, identifying himself. She opened the door to a slit, then wider as he stepped closer, a freshly-lit cheroot in his left hand. His right hand took hers: he squeezed and his finger rubbed gently. At once she felt immediately relaxed, happy.

'Dearest, dearest Myra,' he gushed, his words slightly slurred. 'Do forgive us, please. I'm so sorry, I should have realised how boring we are when we get in a huddle. You must have felt so left out. Lady Miriam's crowd are very nice people, really, but narrow. Most of them have been left behind by events. Soon their lives will change forever and they fear it. None of them have ever had to strive, you understand, not like you and me.'

'No, I'm fine, Mr Ralph, thanks. Don't worry; it's just tiredness. The wine has affected me more than I thought and I'm not used to so much rich food.'

'Do call me Ralph, please, Myra dear one, and don't worry, all will be well, trust me. And yes, Lady Miriam is right - you do look stunning in that dress, by far the prettiest girl at our little gathering.' He bowed, twirled dramatically, and limped back to his friends.

Her fear was gone. Rita swam into her mind and later, after another long and perfumed bath, she lay under the bedclothes naked and brought his image to her. Ralph was the one she wanted now, she was sure. First, however, she must settle the other matter, clear the way for their romance.

In her head Myra began to write an addendum story for Lena the Lioness.

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Living with Myra

Later, Myra tried for sleep which refused to come. Despite what she had observed of Ralph during dinner, particularly his smoking, drinking and his high-blown conversations, leaving her stranded and left out, she could not free her mind of him. Her nipples were hard, her body ready for sex, Rita demanded she go to find Ralph, wherever he might be. As the heating system cooled, the old pipes creaked and banged. She glanced towards dark corners and glimpsed the pale image of a naked man, his face obscured. Ralph must have sneaked back to her, she thought, then realised there were two different images. The second man was taller, like Bill Brotherton, each image in turn becoming the other.

In her head Rita called out, becoming strident: "Brotherton, come to bed and do your duty, my man!"

When he refused, Rita pulled the sheets over her head and pleased herself to Ralph's thin smile, as she had done many times since the interview nine days earlier.

Released, she tried again for sleep but both men returned. Each time Rita chose Bill but as before, he refused to come to her and she had to make do with Ralph.

Eventually Myra subsided into a restless sleep filled with images of two men wrestling and punching each other, like schoolboys in a playground fight.

Living with Myra

Leave of Absence

Saturday 5th August 1944.

Myra had been waiting in the breakfast room for nearly half-an-hour, drinking coffee but holding back from ordering food, hoping to share time alone with Ralph. Still suffering flashbacks from the long night hours, she was edgy, needy. Perhaps she would persuade Ralph to drive her to Kirklee where they could be alone.

Brotherton had asked if she wished to order food, advising Lord and Lady Cunliffe normally ate breakfast separately, in their bedrooms. He had no knowledge of the Wing Commander's whereabouts, but volunteered both cars were still garaged. When he returned with a fresh pot of coffee, she placed her request for scrambled eggs and toast which he acknowledged with a friendly nod.

Ralph swooped into the room, forcing the butler to stand aside. They did not exchange greetings. Ralph sat beside her, held her hand, stroking it gently, causing Rita to stir, forcing Myra to place her hand lightly on his upper thigh and bringing a 'come hither' leer to her face. To her surprise, he did not react or acknowledge this intimacy.

'Myra dearest, please excuse me, I seldom eat breakfast. I am required to drive Lord Neville into Glasgow. Afterwards I have urgent business to attend to. Brotherton will look after you.'

Silently, Bill Brotherton slipped out of the room.

'Of course, Mr Ralph. I'll need to go home today but I'm free later, perhaps this evening?'

'No, Myra, it cannot be, sorry, I will be out of town, probably.'

'Oh well. I promise to be back in the office first thing on Monday. Or, if you need me, I could be there tomorrow. I'm sure the night commissioner will be pleased to let us in. There must be so much to catch up on, surely. Where will I be based? Do you have a room for me? I'll need a desk and a typewriter. Would I have a telephone?'

'No, no, no, please. Look, Myra. Not yet, no. You see, I'll be away from Morrison Street for a while. Not sure how long. You must take a few days at home, rest up, recover yourself. Yes? No, better still, Myra, take next two weeks to yourself. You're on the higher management level now, answerable only to me. I'll see you at the office a week on Monday, the 21st, is it? Yes, you need time to let your mind heal, let the recent past subside.'

Living with Myra

'But Mr Ralph, I already feel fine. Surely it would be better to be busy? Work will distract me, don't you agree?'

'No, no, I insist. Stay clear of the office until I am back in harness. Right? Now, sorry Myra, I must go, Lord Neville awaits.'

'But Ralph, I don't want to moulder at home, I want. . . .'

Ralph was on his feet, heading for the door where he stopped, turned and added:

'Now there you are, it's settled then. Monday week it is when we meet again. Adieu my dearest Myra. And do, please, do drop the "Mr". You must call me Ralph, except of course at the office, in hearing of others. Agreed?'

'Ralph, please'

But she was alone again wondering what his urgent business might be.

Brotherton arrived to serve her food, puffed his cheeks, blew out a long sigh of relief and smiled openly at her for the first time. There was an obvious antipathy between him and Ralph but why, she could not tell. As Myra smiled back, Rita stirred once more. Despite his odd face, Bill Brotherton was a handsome man.

Living with Myra

Bill Brotherton

As Myra was making ready to leave her guest bedroom, Lady Miriam entered in the company of Brotherton, who was carrying several cardboard boxes. The woman's tiger eye ring was absent.

'Dearest darling Myra,' said Lady Miriam, opening the first box to reveal its contents. 'Such fun choosing these for you yesterday. Such fun shopping for someone with a stunning figure like yours. Now, dear Myra, do keep the green dress from last night. It was one of my favourites, before the battle of the bulge,' she laughed. 'How you so much remind me of my younger self. It's uncanny, but I knew at once it would fit you. And do keep the other items too, like the dress these clothes no longer fit me, sadly. Do have Brotherton here take you back to *Walker's* if adjustments are required to anything, there will be no charge, you know. He will then take you to wherever you need to go.'

Myra hid her disappointment and thanked Lady Miriam for her many kindnesses. While the green dress was stunning, it was not a modern fashion item. The other clothes too were for an older woman, a woman of the hunting and shooting variety, a lady of leisure, not a woman of business as Myra had become.

An hour later Myra was ready to leave, her new clothes in an old suitcase which Bill Brotherton provided. She was looking forward to the opportunity to have a private chat with this man. He intrigued her. Was he related to Hilary's cousin of the same name? During her short stay, she had been monitoring him closely, listening as he gave his orders with quiet authority, choosing his words carefully, speaking slowly. She guessed his age at thirty or less and with his ruddy complexion, light brown hair and kind hazel eyes, he reminded her of Harry, if less handsome, but much brighter, more forceful. Mostly he reminded her of the boy she had lost to another girl.

Watching Brotherton from her bedroom window she had seen a man who moved quickly with a strange, long and loping gait. Released from the confines of the house he seemed different, more natural, stopping to speak to workmen, who were mainly elderly, some with obvious disabilities, and to visiting tradesmen, refusing the cigarettes they proffered. Indoors he had walked in an odd slow way, slinking, like a cat stalking a bird, alert, wary. Apart from this characteristic he had no obvious disability. Perhaps Lord Neville had used influence to shield him from Conscription. It was clear the *Tower Ridge* household could not function without Bill Brotherton: the man seemed to run everything.

Living with Myra

She sat alongside him in the front of the car. This was a different car, a huge, wide Daimler Mercedes Benz, not the Rolls Royce which Mr Powdenhill had taken to deliver Lord Neville to Central Station, Brotherton explained. In this role as chauffeur he wore his plainer dark blue uniform. Myra had no wish to reveal her humble home address in Caird Drive so directed him to drop her off at Paisley Road Toll, close to Morrison Street. When he left she would walk to the Subway at Kinning Park then on to Merkland Street. Hopefully Sandy would be at the allotments and she could stash her new clothes without him seeing them, questioning her.

'So, Bill, you and I seem to be the only Glasgow people here at *Tower Ridge*. Have you been here long? Do you live in?'

'Yes, Mrs Kaywood, most nights, unless the family are away. I have a room over the garage, in what used to be the stables. Whenever I get a chance, an excuse if you like, I get back to my own place, in Pollokshaws, a chance to check on Mum and Dad.'

'Pollokshaws?'

'Yes, Mum and Dad have a lodge cottage on Pollok Estate, Sir John Stirling-Maxwell's place. They are semi-retired but still help out at the House from time to time. I'm here with Lord Neville on secondment, on loan if you like. Just like the Rolls and the Daimler. Not my choice, really. But when Sir John asked, I couldn't refuse him. Sir John is under an obligation to Lord Neville, as very many people seem to be. It's political, I think, and possibly there is a Freemasonry connection. Sir John is very keen on the Freemasons. Not my cup of tea at all.'

'So, you still work for Sir John?'

'Yes. He pays my wages as before. I was born and brought up on the Pollok Estate and went to Sir John Maxwell's School. My father was Head Gardener and Mum worked in the kitchen. Sir John has been very good to me.'

'So, this arrangement is only for the duration?'

'Yes. I'll be more than glad to get back to my old life, which might be soon. Lord and Lady Neville are planning to get back to London. Lady Miriam in particular is very keen. Says repeatedly "Oh I so want to get back to Mayfair and my own people, those who have not been blown away by that dreadful little man and his doodlebugs".' He did a very good impression of the woman, making Myra smile. 'They came here to escape the blitz. *Tower Ridge* is owned by the Catholic Church. Lord Neville has it rent free, on a care and maintenance basis, although he is very tight on that front. The place is crumbling and, frankly, the grounds are a disgrace.'

'Ah, I did wonder why they were here. But Lady Miriam seems to be generous. The clothes she gave me are very expensive.'

Living with Myra

'I suppose so. But they're purchased 'on account'. She owes the *House of Walker* hundreds of pounds. I see the accounts; they've run up huge bills with everyone around here. She uses the *House of Walker* as a sort of coffee shop, spends hours in the place. At least when she's there I can slip away for an hour to see Mum and Dad.'

'They live nearby?'

'Yes, *House of Walker* is in Shawlands. It's only five minutes' drive to Mum and Dad's place, beside the Pollokshaws Allotments, behind the railway line.'

'The entrance opposite the Burgh Hall, beside the river?'

'Yes, do you know the area?'

'Only a little. My Grannie Nellis lived in Tantallon Road.'

'Nellis? I think there was someone called Nellis at school.'

'When you go back to Sir John, will you get your old job back? What was it?'

'Yes, I expect so. Sir John promised. I was Estate Factor, not just for the Pollok Estate but for his property interests elsewhere. Here at *Tower Ridge* I am expected to do everything, and on a shoestring budget. Roll on the end of the War.'

'Yes, I agree. So, Bill, Sir John needed you so much you were not called up?'

'Ah! I wondered how long it would be before that old chestnut came up.'

'Sorry Bill, no need to answer, please forgive me. I know many people have legitimate ailments and issues which . . .'

'Look, Mrs Kaywood, I would have gone willingly and Sir John would have been happy to let me go. But I have a gammy foot. Didn't you notice? I wear a special shoe. Caused by a boyhood accident. I was helping Dad with the motor mower. I slipped and my foot was damaged, lost four toes. Sir John paid for everything. Operations and special shoes. He made sure I was looked after. He is almost like an uncle to me and Hilary. So, when he asked if I would look after Lord Neville and *Tower Ridge*, I was obliged to say yes. Hopefully it will all be over soon.'

Myra decided not to reveal her connection to Hilary in case it caused complications with Ralph and with the operation of the MMF Trust. 'Ah, now I understand. Thanks. Who's Hilary, your wife?'

'Me married?' he chuckled. 'No, Hilary is my cousin, Hilary Templeton.'

A new story began to run in her head, a fantasy, based on Bill Brotherton, man of mystery. Perhaps he was the bastard son of Sir John, born on the wrong side of the blanket, hidden in plain view.

He drove competently and quickly but offered no further information.

'Well, here we are Mrs Kaywood, Paisley Road Toll.'

Living with Myra

'Thanks Bill. Bye for now. Perhaps we will meet again someday? Glasgow is a very small place, it seems.'

Living with Myra

Slip or Trip?

Friday 11th August 1944.

The heavy rain was unseasonably cold and had cleared the streets of casual shoppers and gossipers.

Myra left Caird Drive at quarter to four wearing her old raincoat and wellingtons and carrying her largest overnight bag. Inside her coat, suspended from her neck on a piece of string was a theatrical silver-handled umbrella she had bought from Celia.

She took the tram to Charing Cross and entered the Mitchell Library, where she made her way to the Ladies' Lavatory. It was deserted, as she expected. In a wide and ornately tiled WC cubicle she changed into her Isobel Chalmers persona, emerging as an elderly librarian who wore thick horn-rimmed glasses, her hair hidden under a tightly fitting felt hat held in place with two long pearl hatpins. She carefully folded and packed her original clothes into her overnight bag, closed and locked it with its small key. She checked herself in the mirror and apart from her eyes she did not recognise the person who looked back at her. She left her overnight bag in the Library cloakroom. She placed a penny inside the heel of her left shoe to remind her of a seemingly painful debility in her knee. On exiting the library back into the downpour she limped badly, making her seem very much older than her twenty-three years.

Myra caught a tram from Charing Cross, heading to St Enoch's Square where she waited at the entrance to the Subway.

Lena Harrison would be on her usual Friday afternoon journey, following her long-established routine, Myra hoped. All Myra had to do was wait: Lena would return to St Enoch's to complete the next part of her journey home by taking the Subway a second time, alighting at Bridge Street to catch a tram out to Thornliebank followed by a short walk to a semi-villa near Rouken Glen Park where she had co-habited with MacElhose.

Lena Harrison's home was only a ten-minute walk from the terraced house in Speirsbridge where Magda Henson had once lived. Sadly, the poor woman had died of asphyxiation while she slept, caused by a faulty paraffin heater, the Fire Brigade had concluded.

Living with Myra

At five minutes past five Myra saw her quarry approach and descended the crowded stairs onto the Subway platform. She saw her target arrive and eased her way through the crowd to the spot she had chosen directly behind Lena. Holding the closed umbrella like a prod with its hooked end forward, she carefully looped it through Lena's hand bag in readiness then waited as the subway train thundered into the station.

Amid the commotion the elderly lady left and retraced her steps, limping through the downpour back to the Mitchell Library. Before leaving St Enoch's, in a quiet corner, she decanted Lena's smaller handbag into her own large handbag, the one her brother had given her for her ninth birthday, as a reward for her services in his cupboard bedroom with the door wedged shut.

Myra's excursion, door to door, had taken just over two hours. Sandy was now working day-shifts as all nightshift working had been suspended a few weeks earlier. Myra was home before him, in good time to boil the potatoes, steam the carrots and runner beans then retrieve a shepherd's pie from the oven.

There was also broccoli soup. Helen had converted Sandy to eating vegetables, curing him of his life-long struggle with constipation. His bowels were working well and his bed-wetting had finally gone for good, Myra felt sure. He had been dry for over eighteen months. Perhaps she would buy him a new double bed and mattress as his going away present. She would miss Billy: they had become confidants over these last years.

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The following evening Myra rang the MacElhose/Harrison doorbell at fifteen minutes before midnight. While the house was clean, tidy and well cared for, the findings from her search disgusted but did not surprise her. The smart and well-appointed property was rented from a firm called "Church House Homes" based in Manchester, a rent book stated.

She found no passbooks or jewellery of value. To Myra the £1,260 in cash which she recovered seemed surprisingly low compared with the scale of the fraud at Morrison Street. From this she deduced she had not yet found the full value of their combined or individual hoards.

She left the house at just after five a.m. and caught an early tram back to Bridge Street Subway. At Caird Drive, with Sandy asleep and her bedroom door locked, tears ran freely as she forced herself to sift through the dreadful images, searching for clues before discarding them one by one to her coal fire. Many were singles. A few were negatives

Living with Myra

with two or three prints attached with paperclips. Myra realised these images of naked boys and girls had been taken in Gordon Galbraith's bedroom although, so far as she knew, he did not possess a camera. One negative was in an envelope with a dozen images of a naked girl in various en pointe ballet poses. This child had distinctive hair which Myra recognised immediately. This had been taken in Lena's bedroom. On the reverse of each print, inscribed in Lena's flamboyant scrawl was the child's name and a date which, by Myra's arithmetic made her friend six years old when the photographs were taken.

She retained one copy, for a special purpose, and consigned the others to the flames.

To be absolutely sure she had found everything of value, and to check on details revealed by her first incursion, she made a shorter repeat visit on the Sunday evening, arriving back at Caird Drive just after midnight.

Disappointingly, Sadly, Myra did not ever find the remainder of their suspected 'lost wealth'. Perhaps the cost of the many powders, liquids and pills in colours had been much greater than she imagined. These too Myra consigned to her purifying fire. The syringes she had previously smashed with a hammer on her first visit, dropping the debris into the dustbin at the Rouken Glen house.

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The remaining names from Gerrard Henson's list would be more difficult to deal with. More information about their habits and vulnerability was needed.

It was almost time to act out the next part of Sandy's story.

But first Myra must check out Ralph.

Rita demanded she must see him again, soon. He had said to wait a week, but a week was too long without him.

Living with Myra

Starting Over

Monday 14th August 1944.

Myra arrived at Morrison Street at quarter to eight. The three Commissionaires had their heads down sorting the incoming mail into bundles for delivery to each department. She slipped past them, avoided the lift, and made her way up the stairway to the fourth floor. Her plan was to sit in the dimly lit waiting room across the corridor from Lena's office, as she had done before. From Lena's office, no light shone through the fanlight, no typewriter rattled, however slowly. She tested Lena's door, then knocked at Mr Ralph's. There was no reply. Both doors were locked, as she expected.

Lena Harrison had been famed for her punctuality, often starting at seven or even six but always finishing at five o'clock sharp, except on Fridays when she left at half past three to make her weekly visit to an exclusive hairdresser on the third floor of a building in St Enoch Square, before calling at her tobacconist. There was not much Myra had not learned about this repulsive woman and her routines.

At nine o'clock, Myra crossed to the Pantry. The lock was easily defeated and she stepped into the tiny room, lit one of the two gas rings and put on a pan of water to boil. While it heated, she spooned rough coffee grounds into the large cafetière. Looking out crockery, she set the tray for three then, taking a small medicine bottle from her handbag, poured fresh milk into a China jug. With the water now almost boiling, she slowly poured it over the grounds before wrapping the cafetière in a crocheted tea cosy she had brought from home.

At quarter past nine he arrived, limping past her, his key poised to open the direct door from the corridor to his office.

'Good morning, Mr Ralph.'

'Oh, there you are, Myra! But did we not agree next Monday? Never mind. Actually, having you to hand is good! Yes, superb, most helpful. Excellent! You're feeling better? Come in, I'll have a go at making coffee and then we can get down to business.'

She skipped back to the pantry then followed him into his room, placing the tray at her 'interview' seat, close to Mr Ralph's large desk.

Living with Myra

'Ah,' he said, 'so you've already made coffee. Yes, I see. Good, good, yes. So, Myra, how are you? You look radiant.'

'Yes, I'm quite well thank you, Mr Ralph. I've written to Lord Neville and Lady Miriam thanking them for their hospitality and kindnesses. What a charming and thoughtful lady she is, and so, so generous. Did you say Lord Neville is your grand-uncle, or is it Lady Miriam who is your relative?'

'Ah, yes, a bit of both, really. Come Myra, coffee awaits us. And remember, when we are alone, it's "Ralph", agreed? Let's see how good you are at making coffee. Smells just right. The late Miss Harrison was expert but I'm afraid my own domestic skills are almost non-existent.'

'Yes, isn't it most unusual for Miss Harrison to be late? She's famed for her punctuality. They say she never wastes a minute of any day.'

'Ah, so you've not heard? *Of course not!* How could you know?'

'Is she unwell again, a legacy of her dreadful motorcycle injury?'

'No, worse, I'm afraid. It seems the poor dear slipped off the platform at St Enoch's, just as a Subway train was coming in. The place was closed for nearly four hours while they recovered her, er, bits. Caused tremendous disruption, my sources tell me, early evening, peak hour, queues like an execution, as you might imagine.'

'How awful for everyone involved! The poor driver! Was it Friday, the day it rained so heavily?'

'Yes, I think the papers said it was raining. I was in Manchester, actually.'

'I expect the platform was very slippery. Poor, poor woman. Miss Harrison hasn't had much luck recently. Still, it might be a blessing. I understand her dental impediment was making her nearly unintelligible on the telephone. And we all know how she was dedicated to her job. She will be greatly missed by all. I wonder if she will meet up with Mr MacElhose and Mr Gerrard in Heaven. They were very good friends, they say.'

'Yes, could be. Heaven, yes. *Of course, why not?*'

Myra unwrapped the cafetière and carefully removed one cup, saucer and teaspoon from the tray.

'Thanks, I'm ready for a coffee. Well done.'

'I've made it strong, Ralph, the way you like it. But I've decided to stick to tea. The way you take your coffee is a bit too bitter for my taste and so strong it made my head spin and my heart race. Yes, I'll definitely stick to tea in the future.'

'Ah, yes, I see, I see.'

She caught his glance at the coffee pot and saw the very slight narrowing of his eyes but he recovered quickly:

'So, no coffee for you then, even with extra sugar?'

Living with Myra

'No. I had a cup of tea while waiting, so no, no thanks to coffee, Ralph.'

'Ah well, so be it. Now Myra, would you mind awfully acting as Lena's substitute for a while, just until we can find a suitable replacement? After all you do have first rate short-hand and typing skills in your armoury, I understand.'

What other secrets have I revealed during my interview, she wondered.

'Yes, Ralph, of course, pleased to be of service.'

'Good. Thanks, Myra, dear. Just take messages if anyone telephones. Get a call-back number. I shouldn't think there will be many calls, now word has gone out about Lena's demise. Look, I'm sorry to say I must be away a lot over the next few weeks, unfortunately. Essential and urgent business, lots of travelling, important people to see, convince, negotiate. But all for the good, in the long run, as you'll learn on my return. I'll call you from time to time, as I get a chance.'

He checked his watch, looked at the door to the corridor and his hand slipped inside his jacket.

'Now, Ralph, try your coffee. How many sugars is it again?'

'Three. Drat. No pen. You haven't seen it, have you? No? I must have left it at Tower Ridge.'

'No, Ralph. Look, borrow mine.'

'Are you sure? Thanks. Oh my, this is a very smart pen, a Sheaffer Triumph, very expensive.'

Myra allowed herself a smile - this pen had been Gordon Galbraith's prize possession, but of course since his arms were now paralysed, he no longer had any need of it. When required, Myra had used it to sign his cheques and other Co-op documents, with the same green ink he had preferred.

Ralph's pale grey external telephone rang. He stared at it angrily then snatched it up. Before he spoke he stopped, composed himself. In a warm, melodic voice, he said, 'Ralph Powdenhill speaks.'

He listened for a few seconds then interrupted, his voice harsh, demanding, 'Is that really you Charles? This is a dreadful line.'

He listened again, with his eyes closed. The line of his mouth tightened into a snarl:

'So be it, Charles. So, so disappointing, but leave it with me . . . **No!** Tell no one else. I'll attend to it, thank you.'

Living with Myra

As he put his external handset down, his black internal telephone started to ring.

'Ralph Powdenhill speaks,' he barked. He listened, shaking his head in exasperation. 'Yes, yes, put him on, thank you . . . Brotherton, why are you here so early? To interrupt me like this, well, well, it's outrageous. I am in the . . .'

Cut short, he listened, a frown spreading across his forehead:

'So be it. But I need a few minutes to finish up here with Mrs Kaywood. You'll just have to twiddle your thumbs, man. Try a crossword, why don't you!'

He slammed down the handset and catching sight of Myra's puzzled face, changed to his former pleasant self:

'Ah, Myra, Myra, so sorry. I'd hoped we might have had time for a nice chat together, get you oriented sort of thing but, sadly, it seems our *tête-à-tête* must wait for another time. Brotherton advises I must now meet Sir John at ten o'clock. Brotherton is waiting downstairs to transport me to Pollok House. Sir John and I were to meet over lunch but his diary has changed. The entire wheeze is all Lady Miriam's idea. Without a by-your-leave, she's signed me up to do some work for Sir John. Did I say I'm a keen photographer? A shared passion with Lady Miriam. Well, she set up this project, to help Sir John and his family make an inventory of his paintings and *objet d'art* for his insurance company, create a proper photographic record. Given everything else I have on the go, I could well do without this extra burden. Still, higher command must be obeyed, in the letter, if not necessarily in the spirit, do you agree?'

Myra did not reply. Ralph rose, fished a bunch of keys from his trouser pocket and moved to his desk, where he dipped down, opened a deep drawer and removed a well-worn Gladstone bag, carefully relocking and testing the drawer again.

'But dear Myra, there is good news as well. Lady Miriam, or more correctly, Lord Neville, has a property near town I can use. Somewhere in Newlands, I understand. Old rambling place called "*Copper Beeches*". Haven't seen it yet, just had the description. Secluded, near a small park. Unoccupied since the start of the War, he says, but with a room I can use as a darkroom and a telephone which Brotherton will have re-connected. Between you, me and the gatepost, Myra dear, living out in the wilds at *Tower Ridge* was becoming such a drag. This Newlands place should suit me much better, if Brotherton can get the heating working. I simply cannot abide a cold house. It sets my ankle off, makes life hell.' 'So Ralph, shall I pour you a coffee, or not?'

'Ah, em, no. Ah, em, sorry but no time to enjoy it. Life's a bit hectic at present but bear with me my dear, dear Myra. My schedule over the next week is rather, well, how shall I put it? Challenging! Yes, definitely the word. So, sorry, no time for coffee, however

Living with Myra

appealing. Sadly, our chance for a little interlude of pleasure in each other's company must wait. But please, do go ahead and make a start at your side of our Co-op project. Yes, yes, why not? Yes, Myra dear, do set down your ideas for us to review when I get back.'

'Ralph, do you have a key for Miss Harrison's room?'

'Ah, ah, no, no. It seems they were with her when she fell. I've had someone check, but there is no sign of them, or of her handbag.' He unclipped a key from his bunch and placed it on his desk. 'Tell you what, Myra, why not use this room, give this old portable typewriter of mine a fright?' he laughed. 'Right? Goodness, look at the time. Adieu chère Myra. Bientôt, bientôt. Soyez patient, il sera alors notre temps.'

Less than twenty minutes after his arrival, Myra was alone in his office, bewildered, confused, frustrated, and very suspicious. While she waited to be sure he would not return, she removed the cafetière to the pantry, poured a little away and tried diluting it to make it palatable. In the end she made a fresh cafetière of weaker coffee. Back in Ralph's room she used his internal telephone to call down to the Commissionaires' desk, who confirmed Mr Ralph had been collected in a Rolls Royce driven by a Mr Brotherton. Only then did she begin to relax.

Using the key he had provided, she locked his corridor door, leaving the key inside the lock as surety she could not be disturbed unawares. She spent the next hour searching his desk. Despite her hopes, the locked drawer which had held his Gladstone bag was empty. Apart from a few stationery items, the rest of the desk was also empty. Insofar as she could ascertain, the desk itself held no secrets and no hidden compartments, confirming Lena's files were where she must look.

Confident she was free to explore, she used Lena's keys to unlock the pass door from Ralph's room into Lena's. She checked Lena's outer door and snibbed it. She left the lights off, keeping the fanlight dark. As required she would use her small torch and Lena's desk lamp.

Sitting on Lena's large and ornate wooden chair, she sipped coffee and studied the array of padlocked filing cabinets at close quarters. On a hunch, she turned Lena's chair upside down and was delighted to find a thick envelope secured under the webbing. This contained duplicates for each set of drawers and for the padlocks which secured the vertical steel bars. This package of duplicates went into her handbag for removal to Kirklee.

Living with Myra

Using the bunch of keys from Lena's handbag, she opened each filing cabinet in turn. Cloistered, with the pass door to Mr Ralph's room ajar to be sure she did not miss any telephone calls, she prepared herself for the task ahead by recording the file names and numbers for each drawer as she opened it, to be sure she could rehome the files exactly as she found them, typing the list rapidly using Lena's electric typewriter.

During the remainder of her first day no one knocked at either corridor door. Totally absorbed, she worked steadily until late afternoon. Myra was surprised how infrequently the telephones rang in either office, given Ralph Powdenhill was such an important man. Although she answered every call which came through to both of Ralph's telephones, she ignored those to Miss Harrison's internal phone. It appeared the news of Lena the Lion's demise had been slower to diffuse outwards to the Morrison Street rank and file. Within a few days even these calls ceased and Myra was left quite alone.

Totally absorbed, she worked steadily day after day, gradually building a picture of how the cabal managed by Ted MacElhose and Lena Harrison had operated.

Regrettably, she did not find the hoped for bank passbook. Perhaps the whole operation had been a 'cash only' business? Nor were there any names listed, only cryptic codes such as "S23" or "G51" or "M19". She had hoped for a list which would help her convert these codes to names but despite hours of searching nooks and crannies, she did not find it, concluding the list must be held for safekeeping elsewhere. What she was able to discover was that the fraud had started around 1936 and had expanded from 1939, accelerating during the last year as the War was heading to its close.

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Ralph Powdenhill's absence proved to be much longer than she had envisaged. During his travels, Myra devoted herself to research, both official and unofficial, occasionally taking an extended lunch break to visit the Mitchell Library and Walter Stirling's Commercial Library in Miller Street to check details.

Most mornings, always around nine o'clock, Ralph called to his external telephone which she answered from her extension in Lena's room. By routine he advised his location, before checking with her for urgent messages. In this way Myra tracked his alleged progress. His first call was from Edinburgh, he claimed. The next day she telephoned around all the main Edinburgh stores to be advised they had not heard of Wing-Commander Powdenhill. During his absence he called from Perth, Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness alleging he was checking other Co-op stores in the Scotland region. Once again, her telephone checks drew the same response - he had not yet visited.

Living with Myra

Each time he called Morrison Street, although he was friendly, he was always brief, To Myra he seemed distracted, perhaps even evasive, eager to escape from her questions, unwilling to discuss the progress of her report when she mentioned the subject.

After a gap, he 'called' from Dumfries, Stranraer, Ayr, then after another gap, from Kilmarnock and Oban, or so he claimed. After yet another gap, he said he was in London, with Lady Miriam, and then finally he called on three consecutive days, claiming to be in Manchester. Whatever he had been doing, it was clear she was not allowed to be part of it. On the next day, he called again, claiming to be in Edinburgh, to say he would soon return to Glasgow. Armed with this information, Rita began to plan their encounter.

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After her initial discoveries, Myra assumed authority which Mr Ralph had not actually delegated, requesting information in his name, normally by telephone and where necessary by memo, which she signed in his distinctive flowery handwriting using his Parker pen which she had swiped into her handbag when he was distracted by looking at the coffee pot.

Her study of Lena's documents had eventually provided the information which Myra's trained mind needed. The financial fraud took several forms, involving accounting deceptions endorsed by the departed Ted MacElhose. Lena had been the assistant spider at the centre of this web, one strand of which was the filching of dividends from customers. These webs were interlaced but not all the financial fraudsters were child molesters, at least not according to Gerrard Henson's list which although extensive, was swamped by the number of names assigned 'codes' which Myra had uncovered from Lena's filing cabinets.

She also paid several visits to Newlands, eventually finding the grand but tired edifice which was *Copper Beeches*. Returning after dark with her skeleton keys and a torch, her nocturnal inspection showed no evidence Ralph had moved in but there was clearly work in progress. Standing alone in the newly refurbished master bedroom, Rita concluded *Copper Beeches* would make an ideal love nest.

Myra decided to keep most of what she found from him, if she could. Mr Ralph seemed to have an uncanny knack of making her talk, even when she had decided to keep a secret. The main problem with the financial fraud was there were so many people involved, each taking their regular cut. To sack them all would probably disable the whole of the SCWS

Living with Myra

for months, perhaps years, and in particular its powerhouse at the Shieldhall Manufacturing Workshops, where it appeared the fraud was centred.

Living with Myra

All about Training

Wednesday 27st September 1944.

They were in Powdenhill's office to review Myra's findings and discuss options. Whatever crisis he had been through seemed to have passed and he was more relaxed, ready to focus on her and her ideas.

Since his return to Morrison Street two days earlier, he had been on his external telephone almost constantly. She had listened in, very carefully, from Lena's extension. Much of what was said was in acronyms and code words so loved by the Armed Forces. None of what she heard made much sense but she jotted it down in shorthand for future reference. She concluded he was dealing with legacy problems from his previous military duties.

During his absence, Myra had monitored *Copper Beeches* and knew he had moved in a week before his return to Morrison Street, while claiming in his morning calls he was still in Manchester. After saying he was keen to 'escape' *Tower Ridge*, the thought occurred he might be entertaining a lady-friend, now he was free. However, so far as she could tell, he occupied the house alone. He also seemed to have exclusive use of the Daimler which had been parked outside the house on the nights she checked his movements.

When she first revealed her findings from Lena's filing cabinets, Ralph was shaken but recovered his poise quickly. He neither asked how she gained access to Lena's room nor how she managed to open the filing cabinets. She had prepared a story for each contingency. Despite claiming a lack of accountancy skills, he appeared to grasp quickly what she was explaining, raising the suspicion this was not the first time he had studied the ledgers and correspondence in Lena's files. Later she thought perhaps his secret work for the government involved searching out and dealing with fraud.

'Well Myra, I knew there was something going on. Compared with Manchester, we could see Scottish operations were nearly twenty percent less profitable. I had thought it was due to inefficiency or incompetence. Your assertion of systematic fraud on such a grand scale threw me sideways. I was flummoxed. To be brutally honest, Myra, had you not guided me through this deception I would almost certainly have missed it. You clearly do have a gift for understanding the complexities of the numbers involved, particularly the ability to infer what data has been removed. Quite amazing, really. Well done.'

Living with Myra

She returned his volley: 'From my lowly perspective at St George's, I was only aware our profit levels were slowly rising, not how other branches were doing.'

'Myra dear, what has been going on here in Scotland is almost incredible. Quite shocking, really. Your findings show this started long before the War although I suppose in some ways, the War made it easier for them, do you agree?'

'Ralph, did you spot anything like this during your tour around the Scotland regions? How did you go about it? What did you expect to find?'

'Myra, I'll be honest, I was just poking around, using serendipity, hoping to find something out of kilter. My expectations? Tyranny, fear, unhappiness, demotivation, maybe. I came across those in the Forces, and yes, I did uncover such instances during my tour. But at St George's the situation was so different. Meeting you and seeing your staff in action is what impressed me, not just your high performance recorded in the Monthly Returns. I suppose my frequent visits to St George's became an exercise in trying to discern why the ambience there was so much better than everywhere else.'

'So, Ralph, what shall we do about this *shocking* fraud?'

'That, Myra, is too big an issue for you or me. Be assured however, you have done your bit, so leave all this with me. I'll put measures in place, get these files down to Manchester, let the top bods in Accounts have a good dekko at them. This whole debacle will take very careful handling. You do agree, don't you?'

She remained silent, impassive, her head down to avoid his eyes.

Is he hoping to sweep this under the carpet, unwilling to upset his masters in Manchester. Perhaps he presumed he had already squashed it. Or had Ralph himself doctored Lena's records, part of a cover-up after he had understood how it was organised? Worse still, was the fraud orchestrated from Manchester? Had they sent Powdenhill here to ensure their fraud continued now MacElhose had perished. Had Ralph been sent to Morrison Street to establish new rules? As he travelled around the branches was he genuinely looking for clues or instead briefing his co-conspirators, people like Gordon Galbraith? Or am I getting carried away by a story of intrigue, imbuing Ralph with a malign motivation he just does not have? Does he have another plan afoot which this fraud, if reported, would upset?

Ralph broke into her thoughts:

'Yes, Myra, surely you see with so many senior people implicated this will need careful handling, very careful handling indeed. So, thanks and well done, my dear. I'll sort it out, although it may take time. As I said before, honesty in business must be paramount, don't you agree?'

Living with Myra

'Well, Ralph, since we are set on being open and honest with each other, what exactly happened at my interview, all those weeks ago? I have no clear memory of those lost hours. It was the strangest and happiest time of my life. I need to know what happened to me. Tell me straight, Ralph.'

'Ah, I did say I was no angel. But what happened between us was more in the personal realm. It was not about business, not Co-op business anyway, not really.' He smiled and reached forward, held her hand, squeezing gently, stroking as before. Rita sprang inside her and he was difficult to resist. 'So, dear Myra, are you free to meet this evening at *Copper Beeches* for a *tete-a-tete*? Could it wait until then, do you think? It's so much better to keep personal matters out of day-to-day business, don't you agree?'

She nodded and they both knew the bargain had been agreed. Whatever his faults, Ralph Cunliffe Powdenhill would do very well, Myra/Rita agreed:

'Tonight then. Yes, thank you, that would be *very nice*, Ralph.' As she spoke she gently pulled her hand away fearing, despite his words, he was still trying to arouse Rita. 'Shall we be dining alone?'

'Yes. Just you and I, if that is acceptable?'

When he reached forward again she leaned back, eased her chair away a little to create a safe distance. "*Not here! Impossible!*" she scolded Rita. "*This is a place where business must come first!*" In any case since they were heading for *Copper Beeches*, Myra need only resist Rita for a few hours more:

'Yes Ralph. Yes, very acceptable. In fact, I'm looking forward to it already, very much.'

'Now, Myra dear, do have some coffee with me, please. Best consumed fresh, don't you agree? It's never the same reheated, is it? Let's not have it go to waste. You hate waste, Myra Gallagher, don't you?'

'No, no thanks, Ralph. I'm a tea person really. Black, no sugar. Wait, though, let me pour you another, shall I?'

Before he could stop her she was on her feet, moving to the credenza keeping clear of his hand which reached for her as she waltzed past. As she turned back with the cup, she caught the last of his lustful grin which morphed into a wide smile. Rita leered back. With Rita's arrangements made, it was time for Myra to convince him, get his backing. In her grand vision, once she had blazed the trail in Scotland, the rest of the Co-op movement must surely follow. She took her seat and at once felt the searing heat as his eyes wander over her body, resisting by keeping her eyes down on her list of key words as she launched into the next part of her script:

'Ralph, apart from this unexpected fraud business, you asked me to set out my ideas for the future, where we should take the SCWS organisation and its stores during the next decade, a decade where change is inevitable, and to be desired. Would you like to hear my suggestions?'

Living with Myra

'Yes Myra, yes. You know, you are a truly amazing woman. Truly amazing. Well, right-o, dear, I admit defeat for the present. Yes, do explain your ideas. Forgive me if I close my eyes. No disrespect intended but I want to give you my full attention, without distractions. Go ahead, my dear, I'm all ears.'

'Well Ralph, my own first approach, when I was appointed to act up for Mr Gordon, after his terrible accident - did you know he fell from high stepladders at home? Well, the first thing I did was to start training my staff. It was difficult, but only at first. It's not like in the Forces where you are stuck with those you are given. As you will know 'attitude' cannot be easily trained into someone. So, once I was sure I had identified all those with the wrong attitude, I gave them a chance to change, which I knew they would not take. Then I carried out my threat and sacked them. I got rid of all the slackers and bolshie ones. I had expected repercussions from the hierarchy here at Morrison Street but nothing happened. Of course, I did it over a six-month period and officialdom thought it was Mr Gordon, I suppose, since he did sign all the dismissal letters. It probably helped as he is so well liked by everyone. What a great pity he is virtually a vegetable. Anyway, sometimes I had to wait to catch them red-handed, threaten them with the Police, in which case they were happy to escape by resigning. In the end, I cleared them all out. I was very careful choosing replacements. Eventually I had a cadre of trainable people under me, doing it my way. Before, under Mr Gordon, we did have quite a steady turnover but not now. Everyone gets to know and trust each other and we all help each other to improve, another benefit of training.'

'Amazing, truly amazing. Look, I'm having another coffee, are you sure?'

'No. No coffee, not yet, perhaps this evening. Another aspect to improving our performance was refusing those Senior Managers who came calling on me, expecting favours, asking for 'specials' and 'freebies', and in particular demanding stock transfers without proper paperwork. My first suspicion was the they were coming because they believed Mr Gordon was still in charge. He is such a nice man, but soft. Maybe he gave in to them too easily. Of course, having studied Miss Harrison's files, I suspect Mr MacElhose was most probably behind this as well, trying me out, to see if I could be corrupted, sucked in to gain favour, become one of them. Before you say, yes, I agree this is speculation which I cannot prove. You see, I think it was part of their scheme, stealing I plain sight, so to speak, recycling goods from more profitable stores to shore up performance of MacElhose's placemen elsewhere. It seems clear to me crucial evidence has been skilfully removed, and recently too, perhaps by Miss Harrison, after he died in their dreadful accident.'

Living with Myra

Ralph Powdenhill stiffened, rose and moved to the credenza and poured himself a fourth coffee, adding several teaspoonsful of dark sugar and a few drips of milk before stirring vigorously.

She pressed on while watching him squirm. 'In fact, my money is on Miss Harrison. I think she did the tampering. It's a strange thing about fraudsters like MacElhose but once they have created what they consider to be a 'masterpiece', they are most reluctant to dismantle or destroy it afterwards. I mean, why else keep incriminating records from years long gone, evidence which could convict yourself as its mastermind as well the others involved? Or was it, in some way, an insurance to protect him from some other darker scheme at risk of exposure?'

At this Powdenhill looked down and fiddled out his fob watch and stared at it. When he looked up, his face was a mask of concentration:

'Myra, from what you uncovered in Lena's books, it seems the ringleaders were all well above you in the hierarchy. So, Myra, what did you do when these managers called at St George's asking for 'cooperation and favours'? How did you resist them?'

'I told them I acted only within the authority delegated to me by Mr MacElhose and if he authorised a "line", and signed it personally, I would be pleased to help them.'

'A "line"?'

'A note or letter of authorisation, sanctioning their request. I think you call it a 'Requisition Order' in the Forces?'

'And what happened?'

'Within a few weeks word got around, they stopped asking and came only on official business. When you first started coming to see us, for no apparent reason, without an appointment, I began to wonder what you were after, what you wanted. We had heard on the grapevine how high up you are, how influential. I expected you to ask for something. With Mr MacElhose gone, I could not refer to him. I didn't want to lose my job. It made me tense, which I'm sure you noticed. Of course, now I have your explanation, I understand, but back then, no. Oh Ralph, it's so refreshing to find another honest person, at last.'

He relaxed, smiled, sat up in his seat and leaned forward, re-energised:

'Ah, well, be that as it may but I must warn you again, Myra, I'm not an angel. In business matters I have very clear ideas with honesty at the forefront. When this War is over, within a year I think, the only way we can keep the Co-op competitive is to eliminate this type of internal theft. Do you agree?'

'Yes, Ralph I do agree. We must be able to offer quality goods at competitive prices backed by excellent service. Currently we are still dominant in our sector of the

Living with Myra

marketplace but there are lots of other organisations around getting ready to ease us out.'

'Oh, who?'

'Have you heard of John Lewis?'

'Lewis's Polytechnic, in Argyle Street?'

'No, the Lewis I mean is the John Lewis Group. They have shops in Manchester and Liverpool but not yet in Scotland. Everyone who works for the John Lewis organisation has a share in it. In fact, the employees are the only shareholders so everyone who works for the company has a stake in it. Effectively John Lewis is owned and run by the people who work in their stores, the opposite model from the Co-op. In our business, it is effectively the shoppers who are the shareholders receiving their profits as dividends paid to their accounts. In a sense, our Co-op customers are the ones who own us, albeit they have difficulty wielding their power to influence management. It is a battle of ideologies, really. Most crucially, all shoppers including our customers, are fickle and will readily shop elsewhere, if they can get an equal item cheaper.'

'Amazing. You seem to have thought the whole thing through but where does it leave us, Myra? What shall we do to fight them off? How shall we turn SCWS away from this petty thieving culture which is ruining us?'

'Ralph, tell me about Manchester. Why is Manchester so much better than Scotland. What do you do there which is so different? Surely we can learn from them?'

'To be honest, Myra, I've no idea what they do differently. I only touched down there briefly before being sent here. To be honest, my briefing was sketchy. I've no idea what they would make of this fraud. What you've uncovered about MacElhose and his cabal, well, you must admit it's so complicated. We need to tread warily. I think it might blow up in our faces, ruin us. You do realise, if we can make it stick, most of the men who run SCWS could be dismissed and might end up in prison. If it involves Manchester as well, it would be a huge scandal. Our customers would pillory us, and probably desert us. The smear would spread all around Britain. It could be political as well, all the way to the top of the Labour Party. It's a mess, a dog's breakfast. It would be impossible to attract the right sort of men to allow us to re-build.'

'Ralph **please!** Why do you insist we need men? In my experience women are easier to train, are harder working and intrinsically more honest. And yet they get paid less. Nearly every man I have ever worked with was lazy and full of himself. Present company excluded, naturally.'

'But what about all the men coming back from the War, expecting to get their jobs back?'

'We should start now, establish our new approach at once. We'll train our women and when the men come back we can train them too. Or, if they don't like it, they can leave, or I

Living with Myra

can move them on. I know how to do it, trust me. There are lots of women like me in the Co-op who have been 'acting up' over the last five years. Give them a chance.'

'Ah, yes, maybe it would work. But you know what I always say . . .'

'Yes Ralph, but don't say it *ever* again, **please**. Women are not lesser beings for having babies, you know. Far from it, in my view. Most women like me find it hurtful and demeaning to be told we are second class citizens. Those of us who have never been lucky enough to have children find it even more hurtful.'

'Ouch! You don't miss the dart board do you, Mrs Myra Kaywood.'

'Never! Except deliberately. Now, shall I draw up a list of actions, a 'tasking list' I think you call it in the RAF? Together we'll change the paperwork requirements and stop this fraud directly at source. The past is gone. As you implied, we must accept any scandal or disruption would ruin the Co-op. Our next step will be to restructure and carefully pick men and women with the right attitudes for promotion. Choose who is best for each position, see who we can find to join our team, people we can train up in our way of thinking. It will take a few years but it will work, I'm sure of it.'

'So, you agree, Myra? No witch hunts? Can I take it this puts an end to the fraud business forever?'

'Yes, Ralph, I agree this *particular* fraud is at an end, or soon will be. But we will always have to guard against petty theft and new grander deceptions.'

'Yes. Myra, I get the strong feeling you are already well down the road with this new plan? Am I right?'

'Yes, Ralph, I am.'

He fished out his watch and said:

'Goodness me, look Myra, it's almost time to wind down for the day. We've been hard at this since lunchtime so why don't you slip off home and freshen up? Good idea?'

'Yes Ralph, very. I'm looking forward to seeing *Copper Beeches*.'

'Did I say *Copper Beeches* is Lord Neville's place? He's been allowing me to use it from time to time, but now I've moved in full-time with all my equipment, clothes, all my paraphernalia. Lady Miriam arranged everything, so kind of her. I'll be living there alone with a bit of visiting help. I prefer not to have live-in servants, so no chance of food. Let's dine out first. I'll telephone and see if I can get a table, somewhere nice. Do you know the Sherbrooke Castle? They know me well so perhaps they could fit us in. Then we can slope over to *Copper Beeches* in the Daimler for a nightcap. What if I pick you up at say, seven o'clock, outside Bridge Street Subway? Yes?'

'Ideal. Now, Ralph, shall I make you some fresh coffee before I leave? Better still, maybe I should teach you to make your now. After all, "It's all about training!" A good slogan, wouldn't you agree?'

Living with Myra

'Amazing, truly amazing. You are one of the most fascinating women I've ever known, Myra Gallagher-Kaywood.'

Living with Myra

Second Courtship

Later, Myra drove the Daimler from Bridge Street: Ralph had insisted, saying he enjoyed her bold driving style. They dined at the Sherbrooke Castle Hotel and then she drove to *Copper Beeches* in Newlands, less than two miles from Sir John's Pollok Estate. From the outset of the evening Ralph was fired up, talkative, forceful in his statements. The word animated came to Myra as she smiled at his changed demeanour. He's nervous, she thought, worried his nocturnal performance might not match my expectations.

During the meal he explained the background to his move from *Tower Ridge*, which would soon become unoccupied again when Lord Cunliffe moved back to join Lady Miriam in Mayfair. *Copper Beeches*, he added, was set in an acre of ground populated by its eponymous trees. Like *Tower Ridge*, the Newland's house was currently under the day-to-day-care of Sir John and his factor Bill Brotherton.

Ralph had free use of this grand but run down blonde sandstone property. The previous Jewish owner had fled to the US shortly after the Dunkirk fiasco. The British Government had seized the premises to offset unpaid taxes. Ralph explained *Copper Beeches* had come to Lord Neville as part of a mixture of similar properties received in return for parcels of land and properties in Norfolk and East Anglia, assets required for military purposes which Lord Neville had signed over to them, but only for the duration of the War. Lord Neville was merely biding his time, waiting for the War to end when he would either sell or redevelop *Copper Beeches*, perhaps as a block of luxury flats modelled on the Art Deco building called Kelvin Court, near Anniesland Cross. Plans had already been drawn up, Lady Miriam had revealed. Few people would wish to own such grand houses after the War, what with the expense involved, Ralph harangued: the future must be to build smaller, modern centrally-heated houses with manageable gardens which were easier to look after.

Myra allowed him to talk uninterrupted, listening to the modulations in his warm cultured voice, keeping her opinions to herself. During her repeated visits to *Copper Beeches* she had concluded, despite its shabby appearance indoors, the impressive external structure of *Copper Beeches* appeared sound, although there was always the risk of wet or dry rot.

Ralph was content to live a bachelor life, he said, smiling lewdly, supported by two older visiting ladies who tended his needs. Mrs O'Neil was his daily cleaning lady, and Mrs

Living with Myra

Blackley, second cook at Pollok House, acted as his visiting housekeeper, making meals on request and attending to his personal laundry.

As he talked, her dream whirled ahead: if she and Ralph were to make a home together, this might be the ideal place. Perhaps if she sold Kirklee, she could afford *Copper Beeches*.

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As they entered the main door at *Copper Beeches* the telephone was ringing. Ralph apologised, limped quickly across to his study to take the call, closing the door behind him. Myra set off to wander, explore, switching on lights, seeing the house in its fading splendour. The call eventually ended but at once the telephone rang again. The calls kept coming. It seemed to Myra from the terse nature of Ralph's replies there was some new crisis in progress. During a break, Ralph appeared in the doorway and apologised, explaining these calls, although unwelcome, were both important and urgent, then, as the telephone rang yet again, he closed the door against her, as if casually, with his heel.

Eventually Myra had slipped away into the night to walk to Kilmarnock Road and hope for a late night tram or find a taxi. Listening at the study door before she left, she heard him talking earnestly to someone, his voice angry. The next day he telephoned her at Morrison Street explaining he had urgent matters to attend to and re-inviting her to *Copper Beeches*, on the following evening, Friday, for dinner - this time without telephones he promised then asked her to hold the fort at Morrison Street meanwhile.

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On Friday evening her second official visit to *Copper Beeches* was a very different experience. Flowers and chocolates welcomed her with a note of apology for the first failed evening. Their courtship recommenced. Ralph had been promised a casserole of venison and chestnuts to be prepared by Mrs Blackley, with all the trimmings. Annoyingly it had not yet arrived. While he was telephoning Pollok House, Bill Brotherton entered unannounced through the Tradesmen's Entrance at the rear and lit the oven to reheat the food. When Brotherton offered to serve the meal, Ralph declined brusquely and asked him to leave at once. It was clear to Myra there was a growing antipathy between the two men.

Immediately they were alone, Ralph closed and locked all the external doors so they could not be disturbed. He then served Myra a cocktail, explaining it contained gin, vodka and Angostura Bitters. When the glass was only half drunk, Rita took charge, slipping her hands around him and pressing into him as she kissed him hard, working her hands inside his clothing, gyrating into him, feeling him respond in kind.

Living with Myra

Ralph explained a game he liked to play. He produced a French Maid outfit including mesh stockings and a red suspender belt. Leering at him, she stripped off her clothes and changed into the outfit.

His voice coached her continuously, speaking softly in the cultured mellifluous tone she remembered from her interview in July. It was a voice she wanted to obey, a voice she *must* obey, a voice which had often spoken in her erotic dreams while in her bed at Caird Drive over these last weeks. Now it was real again.

Myra must be "Fi-Fi" for him, a girl who must behave as a ten-year old or younger, and must speak in a high child's voice, preferably with a lisp.

Fi-Fi needed lots of help, kisses and caresses from her 'Uncle' Ralph and Rita enjoyed playing out her part, rising to the occasion.

As Fi-Fi she heated and served their food, dispensed their wines, then lit her Uncle Ralph's after dinner cheroot, with his special lighter as he sipped a glass of Port.

As directed, she began pawing at him, unbuttoning his shirt, and pinging at his braces as he choreographed her moves in his cultured voice.

Another cocktail was dispensed and they moved to his bedroom with its huge four-poster bed, the one she had slept in at *Tower Ridge*, now relocated to *Copper Beeches*. The room was brightly lit. He must have good lighting to make love, his essential ingredient, he called it.

The cocktail took effect and a cloud of erotic desire enveloped Myra, blurring her memory of what followed. The only thing she could recall with any certainty was his voice talking to her quietly, telling her how to stand, lie down, how to pose as he satisfied her in ways she had never before experienced. The certainty pounded in her brain: Ralph's love-making was better than Harry, better than Saul, beyond what she had hoped for. Whatever he asked her to do she did willingly, released of all previous inhibition. They were made for each other, Rita told her.

Later, when the bubbles of ecstasy in her mind popped, as the effect of the cocktail lessened Myra was able to observe Rita's actions from above but unable to exert control, relegated to the role of observer, following each variation of her performance as his

Living with Myra

voice continued, coaching her during their multiple couplings, each new variation choreographed by Ralph.

At each consummation, Fi-Fi/Rita surged down on him in a sea of passion, pounding on him like a jockey hurtling to the finishing line, reaching her crescendo amid unrestrained screeches from Rita's lewd tongue repeating words and phrases in response to his urgent whispered demands, reminding her to use Fi-Fi's strange high-pitched girly screech.

Before this encounter, while travelling to her pick-up point at Bridge Street Subway station, Myra had been worried the pain in his ankle would be a problem, but throughout the evening she had no recollection of his limp. Her abiding memory was Ralph preferring to be under her, to have her serve him from above. This position suited her very well, allowing Rita to control their climaxes, as she had first learned to do with Saul.

Myra had always enjoyed being in control, as did Rita.

Ralph was the man for both of them, her brain pounded repeatedly.

Living with Myra

Copper Beeches

Friday 6th October 1944.

So much had happened since their visit to Lazarus House.

Leaving Bridge Street Subway station, Myra carried her small overnight case containing a new short nightie with matching scanty panties in vivid green and a pair of high stiletto heels. Ralph enjoyed her tallness, he had said, especially when she towered above him on her long thighs during their love-making. This was her fourth visit to *Copper Beeches* and she was planning to stay over again.

Ralph brought a different car, an Italian two-seater roadster which had been shipped to the UK by a Canadian *General*, a man who was perennially prone to holding a losing hand when indulging his passion for poker. Lord Neville graciously accepted the vehicle in lieu of the cash which the *General* had borrowed, Ralph explained, inviting her to drive. On D-Day the *General* grasped another losing hand on the beaches of Normandy.

As with *Copper Beeches* and *Tower Ridge*, this car was also under the care of Sir John, who had paid for it to be serviced, refurbished and had headlamp Blackout filters fitted. It had also been re-painted from black to a very dark blue, like the Rolls Royce and Daimler. Myra wondered anew what hold Lord Neville had over Sir John, recalling Bill Brotherton's words regarding Politics and Freemasonry. Perhaps it was just Sir John being kind, in keeping with his reputation. When she asked Ralph he shrugged, unwilling to reveal what he knew.

Although this vehicle had been mentioned several times, today was the first time Myra had seen the car and was more than pleased to have the chance of driving. Initially she found its left-hand drive awkward but was soon in control of the most powerful, responsive car she had ever driven. Her foot pressed the accelerator confidently.

As they sped through the junction at Shawlands Cross then out along Kilmarnock Road in the growing twilight, Myra thought again of Lizzie and her chaotic family at Tantallon Road, only a few yards to her left. On impulse Myra kept driving, passing Newlands to the left, heading past Giffnock leaving Glasgow behind.

Living with Myra

On reaching Fenwick and giggling freely, she at last gave in to his repeated pleas and turned the car to race back at high speed across the moor road. It seemed Wing-Commander Powdenhill had a fear of high speeds, something she found most odd in a pilot. Perhaps his crash had dented his daring.

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At *Copper Beeches* Ralph quickly recovered his poise. The evening proceeded as before. Keen to get down to the action, Myra gulped down their favourite cocktail. Almost at once Rita took charge. They chose from a selection of outfits for their charade. Ralph became Tarzan, the Lion Tamer with a real whip which he was expert at cracking. Rita became Eva, a Serpent Girl, donning a full-length figure hugging costume of simulated crocodile skin material which later unzipped from a revealing neckline to fall away when Tarzan cracked his whip and demanded she submit.

After a preliminary coupling on a real Polar bearskin rug before the newly installed gas fire in the upper withdrawing room, still naked they continued their routine to re-heat and consume dinner with wines, coffee and a glass of Port to follow. He offered a cheroot but she refused, happily lighting his for him as his lecherous and obedient Serpent Girl with the high girly, lisping voice.

Following a further cocktail, Rita took charge again in Ralph's bedroom to enjoy several high octane noisy couplings until finally Rita collapsed, fully spent and unable to rouse herself despite Ralph's entreaties. Although she was aware of him moving around, talking to her, moving her limbs and shining bright lights at her, she wanted only to escape into a dreamless sleep.

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In the early hours of Saturday morning they lay side by side naked under the canopy of the four-poster. The room was bright, clean and freshly decorated, as he had demanded of Brotherton and like the other rooms, was heated by a new gas fire burbling and sputtering in the fireplace. Rita was replete, satiated and drowsy, leaving Myra to sift over what she knew of his life's jigsaw, revealed to her piece by reluctant piece. Saul had been open but self-centred, Harry handsome but uninteresting. Ralph was intriguing, constantly probing, attempting to entice Myra to reveal more of her secret lives.

Ralph did not have great wealth, at least not yet, he had revealed, apologetically. His life had been shaped by his benefactor, a man who had rescued him from an orphanage in Manchester, nurtured him, paid for a private education then supported him through Cambridge where he had studied Politics and Economics. He had told her his love of flying had led him to join the RAF at the outbreak of the War. Following the crash and no longer

Living with Myra

fit to fly, he was transferred to Government Service but was not permitted to discuss this part of his life. Now with the War almost over, his benefactor, a man with great influence throughout public life in Britain had pulled strings, allowing the RAF Wing Commander to be seconded to CWS at Manchester to begin his investigations.

The recent link to Lord Neville had been discovered by this same man. The childless Lord and Lady Cunliffe had been surprised and delighted to welcome Ralph into the family as a long-lost, distant cousin.

Myra would have a chance to meet this benefactor soon but first, Ralph must make another trip to London and possibly again to Manchester. Final agreements were being put in place and his plans were coming to fruition. He would not be drawn on what this trip was about and she knew him well enough now not to probe further, believing he would be happy to tell her, when the moment was ripe.

Ralph rose and padded naked down to the kitchen. He was well endowed, despite his light frame, his penis larger even than Harry's and he was clearly pleased to exhibit himself to her. When he returned, his member was fully ready for duty, already sheathed for action. Under her tutelage, his coffee making was improving but this batch still tasted slightly bitter. Three heaped teaspoonsful of sugar helped.

Soon Rita was ready to begin again. Her passion unbounded, Rita took control and Myra was banished from their dawn performance.

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Later, around noon, Myra awakened to find herself alone in their bed, naked, with the bedclothes strewn on the floor. She had no recollection of what had happened; during their early morning love-making but knew it must have been special. Her head was floating and she felt ecstatic, akin to the aftermath of the interview at Morrison Street all those weeks before, the day her watch had stopped.

Rita was needy and called for Ralph to come to her. There was no reply. Still naked, she went to search for him, calling his name, but he was gone. The note of apology under the cafetière explained:

“Dear wonderful, beautiful, exotic, erotic and sumptuous Myra,

Living with Myra

Would I could remain with you, but no, sadly, I must leave you once again. I had expected the shrill of the telephone to awaken you but on you slept, your face smiling, which told me I should leave you to your slumbers.

Again, I have been called away. But this time, I dare to hope, at last, it is good news for both of us. I expect to return from Mayfair next Friday, perhaps sooner. Make our love nest decent for my cleaning ladies and lock up when you leave, please. Drop this spare set of keys through the letterbox.

Au revoir pour aujourd'hui, mon cher. Nous allons devenir comme l'un, très bientôt
Ralph”

Although Myra was disappointed, the feeling of well-being persisted and she found herself smiling, humming as she bathed, dressed in her sombre business outfit, and re-packed her overnight case. She left the house spick and span, showing no signs of their recent orgy.

In Shawlands she found an ironmonger's shop. While the owner made her a duplicate set of keys, Myra took a short walk and inspected the elegant window display of the *House of Walker*. Making duplicate keys were now part of her nature, a surety against unforeseen developments. Returning to *Copper Beeches*, Myra collected her case then relocked the door. After dropping Ralph's keys through the letterbox, she walked to Shawlands Cross where she boarded a tram back to her old life, determined to pave the way for a future with Ralph, either at Kirklee, or here at *Copper Beeches*.

Ralph was the one Rita wanted, of this she was certain. And so was Myra.

Living with Myra

Reality Check

As she arrived back at Caird Drive, her head began to throb. The sky looked thundery. As the pain increased she took two aspirin, the first time she had taken medicines of any kind in her adult life. To quench her thirst, she drank several glasses of water and many cups of tea. Gradually she began to feel normal.

The rain began to fall lightly. Then came the expected crack of thunder followed by a downpour. Sandy arrived back from the allotments, sodden. When she suggested a hot bath he agreed, the first time she had known him to use her new bath properly.

Through the remainder of a rainy Saturday, Myra's feelings towards Ralph Powdenhill slowly changed. Sandy, refreshed, decided to listen to football on the radio. She left him in the kitchen and sat in her front room alone, to escape from his burbled banalities. Unbidden images of her recent love-making with Ralph flashed intermittently and she was deeply ashamed. Now she was clear of his direct influence, his touch, Myra was able to subdue Rita, gain the upper hand and force her mind back to the onset of Ralph Powdenhill's invasion of her life.

Starting with the first time she met him at St George's Co-op in late April, she began sifting her memories slowly and carefully, becoming increasingly less sure of this small dapper man who had become the centre of her universe. Physically he was not her type, although like Saul, Ralph Powdenhill was evidently very clever. "Perhaps this is what makes him so desirable", she thought, "Although I seem to need him more than he wants me."

Later, alone in her bed, she closed her eyes. Instantly Ralph was with her. Rita needed him, urgently. Myra's doubts evaporated. She was sure of Ralph again, and pleased herself to his leering smile, taking herself through the full sequence of their French Maid charade, becoming again the simpering, pleading Fi-Fi. Her doubts did not return until the next day.

On Sunday evening, Sandy left on his bike for work, heading off for another fictitious 'emergency night shift'. Myra was alone at last, free of his intrusions and inane chatter, able to think.

Once again, she forced herself to analyse her situation by recalling everything Ralph had said. In particular, she focussed on the times he had obfuscated, delayed, and changed

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the subject when she had asked a question he did not want to answer, visualising what she remembered of his body language. To help her recall these events she decided she must write the puzzle of Ralph as a mystery story. She made notes to herself and found as her plot developed, her thoughts and doubts became more real, less ethereal. The process continued through the small hours. Myra dared not go to bed or Ralph would come demanding Rita and her growing conviction would again be lost. As Monday's dawn spilled through the gap between the kitchen blackout curtains, she fell asleep, exhausted, slumped over the table, her notes scattered on the floor.

Later, alone in Lena's office at Morrison Street and fired by strong coffee made properly, she re-started the process of examining her memories again, amending her notes, before tearing up the first version to re-type the story of Ralph the schemer and his romance with Myra the aspiring business woman and her alter ego, Rita the dancehall slut.

After an hour or so, a thought shouted at her and she re-examined the files in Lena's cabinet. In her previous study she had numbered each page lightly in pencil, placing an asterisk beside each page number which directly supported her fraud assertion. Every crucial page was missing, making it now impossible to 'prove' the fraud she had revealed.

Only Ralph could have done this. Myra was filled with anxiety, making her jittery, fearful. She must escape this room in case he returned, or telephoned. If he caught her as she felt now he would detect at once she had changed. He would make her talk, as he seemed to have the power to do.

She replaced the now sanitised files back inside Lena's cabinets and secured their padlocks. After locking both offices Myra left the building. For the rest of the day she walked aimlessly through the streets of Glasgow, stopping from time to time to drink tea in a café, scan through her notes and re-read her latest version of her story of Ralph. Every instinct now told her she had been duped. Wing Commander Ralph Cunliffe Powdenhill was clearly not the man he portrayed himself to be and each time Myra faced this unwanted conclusion, Rita in her shouted: "*No, there must be another explanation!*"

Directly after they had eaten their evening meal, Sandy left Caird Drive claiming he was off to work early. It was an emergency, he explained. The periscope he had been working on had not gone well. Complete stripping down and re-building was required. It was a special version and was desperately needed. As soon as it was fully functional, he would

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be required to go with a selected group from the install team to fit it and calibrate it on board. It would take until the weekend, or longer, he lied.

Myra guessed he was probably off to pay another visit to Helen, smiling as she listened to him whistling his way down the stairs to collect his work bike from Celia's cellar. From the front room, she watched him ride away with his small briefcase tied to the rear bike rack. He did not look up or wave, a habit which had developed after their re-union. Sandy had used various versions of this 'emergency night shift' ploy several times since Harry had moved to Bearsden. Myra guessed he was off to pay another visit to Garrioch Road. His romance with Helen was moving on apace, she told Billy.

Twenty minutes later Myra locked the storm door from the outside and skipped down the stairs wearing flat rubber soled shoes, cloaked in a long gabardine raincoat and wearing a nondescript grey headscarf which partially obscured her face. In her large black handbag she had a torch, two spare batteries and a spare bulb. At Merkland Street she caught a Subway train to Bridge Street then boarded a tram bound for Newlands.

From ten o'clock until midnight she prowled around the grounds of *Copper Beeches*, observing the windows, waiting in case Ralph or another might appear. When she was sure the house was unoccupied, she used her duplicate keys to enter by the rear door, the Tradesmen's Entrance. Using her torch and her knowledge of the layout, she began a systematic exploration.

Myra was an accomplished sleuth and made a methodical, meticulous search.

Living with Myra

Cloak of Darkness

After carefully and quietly checking each room to ensure the house was empty, Myra moved by torchlight along the short servants' corridor past the kitchen to the next door and tried the handle, more in hope than expectation. This was the room she suspected was Ralph's darkroom.

The lock was soon defeated by the second lock-pick she tried. The small narrow room was windowless and smelled strongly of a familiar odour. She wrinkled her nose at an ashtray with several stubbed ends of his cheroots. Ralph had claimed he only smoked on rare occasions, at dinner parties and the like. Although she had repeatedly smelled this sweet odour on him, she had persuaded herself it was contamination from someone else. She dabbed perfume onto her top lip as she often did in the company of smokers.

The low ceiling had two lights, one normal; she switched it on. A second lamp with a red bulb was operated by a pull cord. She closed and re-locked the door. The effect was claustrophobic. She studied the layout of each item in the room to be sure she left it exactly as she found it.

Apart from the untidiness of the ashtray, everything else was neatly arranged, set out according to a plan, she deduced. A long chest-high bench was fixed against one wall and dominated by what she took to be a photographic enlarger. To its left an inset Belfast sink contained three enamelled trays which smelled faintly of chemicals. Apart from the enlarger, everything looked new, including the laboratory seat under the bench.

Tucked into the near corner by the door were two dark brown bottles labelled as developing fluids. In the furthest corner, behind the enlarger, was a large, heavy-duty cardboard box. She removed the lid. Inside were several cameras in various sizes from tiny to very large. There was also an 8-mm movie camera of American manufacture, an adjustable tripod, array of six small floodlights, several interchangeable lenses and manually operated remote-control cables in different lengths. There was also an odd contraption which she eventually decided must be a spooling device for viewing and editing cine film. Standing upright in the corner of the bottom of the box were four envelopes of print paper and three boxes containing red lamps marked as "Dark Room Safe". Again, everything was neatly ordered.

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To the left of the sink, pushed back against the wall, were five syringes in different sizes and three pint-sized transparent glass bottles, one half-empty and two full. These contained a purple pearl-coloured liquid which gave off a pungent aroma which caused a bittersweet 'taste' which seemed familiar but which she could not place. There were dozens of small dark purple bottles, unlabelled, sealed with stoppers of tightly-fitting hard, red rubber. The bottles ranged from tiny pill-sized to larger cough medicine-sized. She sniffed a selection and again caught the same distinctive 'taste'.

Under the bench was a metal cabinet-sized trunk secured by three impressive security locks, each of a different manufacture, locks which proved unpickable. She had almost accepted defeat but his arrogant smile returned to encourage her.

After two further hours of searching, probing every nook and cranny, she found the prize. The bunch of bright metal keys winked invitingly in the beam of her torch, suspended from a cup hook high in a corner, inside a wardrobe behind his many suits and shirts. One ring held three complicated keys for the security trunk plus a fourth which she soon learned opened the darkroom door. The second ring held three duplicates for the trunk. Ralph Powdenhill had been confident and careless.

Back in the dark room, the keys opened the tightly-fitting lid of the trunk without difficulty. It was lined with a fireproofing material. She made a sketch of how the numbered cardboard boxes were stowed before removing each in turn onto the bench. Every box was filled with negatives, most with small contact prints attached by paper clips. These images showed children ranging from toddlers up to ages around ten, she guessed, all engaged in hideous sex acts with a variety of anonymous men and women. A locked ornate wooden box held Tiger Eye rings in various sizes.

One cardboard box stood out; it was larger and newer. After viewing the first few images, she sat in shock, tears welling up, sobbing as she tried to un-imagine what she had seen. Gradually her sense of loss and desolation subsided into cold rage.

During the hours which followed she forced herself to examine hundreds of contact prints clipped to their negatives. She retrieved the small hand-operated spooler/enlarger/viewer from the cardboard box and studied the six reels of 8 mm images in slow motion. It was obvious these images had been edited, spliced expertly to create a narrative in which she appeared to engage in the action, willingly proceeding from her various bizarre costumes to fully naked. By carefully checking and re-checking, in what became almost a detached academic exercise, she realised from the backgrounds

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the first assault had been during her interview at Morrison Street, the second at Tower Ridge and the others when she had dined and stayed over with him at *Copper Beeches*. As she studied his work it became clear Ralph Powdenhill had defiled her according to a scripted approach, not randomly.

His assaults on her had taken many forms involving conventional sex with condoms in various colours, unprotected sex in bizarre contortions including anal sex, and repeated sequences in which he had contrived images of her grasping his penis and sucking it, as if willingly, bringing back the hideous memory her childhood abuse under the 'irresistible' Monsignor Creity.

At this upwelling of long-suppressed emotion, both Rita and Myra broke down and wept. After a spell of utter loneliness, Myra dried her eyes, took several deep breaths and set her mind to the task of completing this investigation. Retribution must be planned. For a successful outcome, information must be gathered and a detailed plan prepared, as she had previously done before acting against MacElhose, Harrison, Henson and the others.

With all storage boxes removed, using the ring on either side, she lifted out a metal tray.

Stacked flat against one corner of the lower section of the trunk was a set of five foolscap-sized notebooks with purple leather covers, their spines engraved with his name in gold leaf. Rita featured in the latest volume. These notebooks contained "post-experience" notes, as he titled them. At each new entry, he verified his findings by giving dates, locations, circumstances, styled in a dispassionate professional idiom.

Reading through his entries made her both disgusted and at first afraid of what she might next read of her behaviour under the influence of his diabolical cleverness. On completion of her review, the cauldron of her emotions distilled to a cold and potent fury. This monster had manipulated her, drugged her, even noting details of dosages used and their lurid effects on her body, her eyes and her most intimate areas. From what Powdenhill had written, it was clear to Myra he believed he had the ability to induce complete co-operation and compliance, claiming he could activate obedience by the touch of his hand and the complimentary use of key words and phrases.

"Myra Gallagher-Kaywood is a "true responder", he had written, "probably one in a thousand, if not one in one hundred thousand."

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His notes covered the 'lost hours' during the interview, hours for which she had no recall. Following her "preparation" at Morrison Street with Lena tapping on her typewriter only a few feet away, he had first "tested her level of sexualisation" as he termed it. Then he had "interrogated" her. Myra/Rita had "willingly revealed" everything of her life - every detail of importance, which he had recorded meticulously. She had revealed almost everything, including her dance hall nights as Rita, every man, what they had done and where. He knew about her seduction of Harry, every detail of their love-making. He had taken her back through her life and knew of Myra in her various guises, about her personal wealth, about Sandy, his mother, the Riddells, almost everything, right back to Granny Nellis.

As if writing to himself, he highlighted his belief she was exceptionally cunning, dangerous, and lethal and had stated, despite an earlier prognosis by someone designated "ABC", she had almost certainly acted entirely alone against MacElhose's Glasgow Group. He set out his 'proof' by noting for the record every important detail of her "executions", as he termed them. He had also stressed, as if trying to convince himself, the subject is "amazingly bright", a "rare talent", and emphasising she must **not** be eliminated, insisting in his record he was confident he would "fully turn her". All he needed was a few more "treatment sessions". He went further and stated when she had been fully converted, he would lobby she should be "accepted" and predicted she would help transform and expand the Tiger Eye Circle concluding: "Myra Gallagher-Kaywood has an innate ability to operate at the highest level".

Although he noted her love for Saul, Powdenhill's details were very sketchy. In relation to Saul he had focussed mainly on her book-keeping and accounting knowledge. There was no record of their intimacies and/or of her continuing visits to, or her ownership of, the Kirklee mansion. On first reading, Myra assumed it had been her true love for Saul which had 'saved' them both from this line of probing. Many weeks later, she realised Powdenhill had most probably already garnered these intimacies from Saul while "preparing" him for his spying missions. Although Powdenhill had noted Myra Kaywood's involvement with the Margaret Miller Foundation, it seemed she had been able to resist him and withhold almost everything of importance. Alternatively, she surmised, he had recorded this information elsewhere, for another purpose. Nor did he seem to have discovered her writing career or perhaps had not thought it worthy of mention in the record.

As she reloaded the equipment and boxes in accordance with her sketches, she inadvertently pressed a tiny stud on the underside of the lid. A panel popped open and a large buff folder dropped out of a hidden compartment. The folder contained an

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expensive booklet fabricated from heavy purple card in which twenty-nine large photographs were professionally mounted as a formal portfolio. These images showed her as a garishly made-up version of the dance hall slut Rita Miller engaged in sex acts which disgusted Myra. The male in question could not be easily identified except by someone who knew him intimately. When his left hand was part of any image it showed a Tiger Eye ring on the man's left pinkie. Perhaps this portfolio was for personal use, perhaps for blackmail, perhaps to demonstrate his thesis and help convince others of her status as a "true responder".

This discovery alone would have dammed him, had he not already been dammed.

Inside the buff folder she also found a small purple leather-bound notebook. Written in Powdenhill's flamboyant hand was a listing of TEC Regional Controllers, each based in a different town or city, sometimes two or three individuals in larger cities such as Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, with seven in London. MacElhose's name had a heavy line drawn through it. She made a very careful copy of each of these names and addresses for future action.

Before leaving and while standing in the hallway, she studied the room and its contents, to be sure it was exactly as she had found it. Finally, she wafted the door for several minutes, to remove any lingering hint of her presence. Given the stench from his spent cheroots and the other smells which pervaded the small cubby-hole room, she was confident her visit would pass unnoticed.

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As she walked through the pre-dawn gloom towards Shawlands, the proof of what had been lurking in her mind shocked Myra and disappointed Rita. Later, back at Caird Drive, after she had thought everything through, she realised she had known all along her romance with Ralph Cunliffe Powdenhill had not rung true. She also acknowledged the monster, to an extent, had been truthful with her, openly confessing several times he "was not an angel". However, to Myra, this single, redeeming statement, taken with his apparent good works at Lazarus House could not excuse him. Rather, she saw it as testament to the monster's arrogance.

On Tuesday and Wednesday nights Myra returned to *Copper Beeches*, working to complete her investigations, checking and planning, making her preparations, her mind whirling ahead to a new story.

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Bringing to mind previous problems of man-handling the near dead Mavis and the corpse of Pamela, Myra checked there was a functioning wheelbarrow in the garden shed. She already owned a new pair of tailoring shears.

During each day while she waited and plotted her story for Powdenhill, she intermittently visited the Mitchell Library, Stirling's Library and used Powdenhill's telephone at Morrison Street to make several long-distance calls seeking crucial information.

By three a.m. on Thursday morning Myra Kaywood's script was edited to her satisfaction and she was ready to act it out. By good fortune, this proved to be excellent timing.

Living with Myra

Opportunity

Thursday 5th October 1944.

Ralph Powdenhill returned to Morrison Street a day earlier than he had said, arriving at his office a few minutes after nine 'o'clock. He seemed distant, nervy, Myra thought, or perhaps it was her new knowledge creating a barrier, providing a defensive shield. She forced herself to pretend their relationship was as before, despite the antipathy she felt.

'How did your trip go, Ralph? You seem tired. Was it all too much for you? Did your ankle act up again?'

'Ah, not exactly as planned, slight change in direction. But otherwise, still on track. Are you free tonight, Myra? People you *must* meet.'

'Oh, who are these people I *must* meet, Ralph?'

'Eh, sorry, sorry. Came out wrong. I meant to say people I would *love* you to meet.'

'Well, who are they, please?'

'Big secret, but it's important, in fact, crucial you come. Will you, please, Myra dear?'

'Well, if it's so important, of course. Do they have to come tonight? I had hoped we could have some time alone. It seems so long since we had time alone.'

'Sorry, Myra. It must be tonight, to suit their availability. Please don't fret, dearest, if things go as I hope, there will be many other nights for us.'

'Well, since you put it like that, tonight it must be. What time?'

'I'll pick you up at Bridge Street at seven-thirty, all right?'

'Oh, so be it, then. Perhaps if this is so, so important I should leave at lunchtime, have my hair done? What do you think, Mr Powdenhill?'

'Ah, yes, yes, of course Myra darling. And please, dear Myra, call me Ralph when we are alone. But yes, I should have said, for tonight, just until we complete the formalities please do call me "Mr Powdenhill". Look, Myra dear, why don't you take this and buy yourself something to wear, make it special. Take a taxi, try *House of Walker*, yes, and tell them my dear Aunt, Lady Miriam sent you, why don't you? I'm sure she would if she were here.'

'Fifty pounds! My dear, dear Ralph, how kind. Well, these must be *very* important people indeed. Thank you indeed, kind sir. I'll just clear the mail backlog and get it onto your desk before I go. Oh, I've found someone to replace Miss Harrison. Her shorthand and typing are excellent and she's an expert bookkeeper.'

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His eyes darted to the filing cabinet, giving himself away. Myra continued with her script: 'I took her through Lena's files and she understood exactly what I was talking about. I think she would be ideal for us, making sure the new fraud-proof system operates strictly. Shall I call her for a second interview?'

'Ah, no, eh, no, not yet. Could you put a hold on it, just for another few days?'

'Certainly Ralph, I'm sure she'll understand. Just let me know when you are ready to meet her. She lives locally, in Kinning Park. She could pop in on her way home from work, any evening, she said. Her husband is still away, in the Navy, I think she said. Shall I put a date in your diary?'

'No, no. Not yet, let's leave it until tomorrow. Let me catch up here first. Will I make us coffee?'

'No, darling Ralph, you are hard to train in some things, I'll do it for us. Off you go, get stuck into this pile. And remember, we have our first batch of trainees coming in for a half-day session next Wednesday afternoon. Have you got your part of the lessons ready yet?'

'Ah, yes, yes, thanks. A very good reminder. Right, right, yes, must get down to writing those notes right away.'

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Ten minutes later he made his next mistake. She saw the 'engaged' light and carefully picked up her shared extension. Powdenhill was speaking to the other name she recognised; the local high-ranking policeman, Philip Kernaghan who was widely rumoured in the press to become the next Chief Constable.

When the call ended, Myra was filled with a sense of foreboding. Her mind raced back over the last few confusing weeks. So much had happened. Like the War in Europe everything seemed to be racing to a conclusion, one which she could not fully comprehend or control. Her mind was filled with uncertainties, conflicting desires, physical fear and most strangely, a longing to bed Ralph one last time despite what she knew of him.

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'I'm off now, Ralph dear. See you at seven-thirty, at Bridge Street. Is it the Italian sports car, I hope?'

'Ah, no, no. I have the use of the Daimler full-time now.'

'But I can drive, please?'

'Of course, Myra dear.'

'Then see you tonight, Mr Powdenhill!'

'Eh, Myra, just a minute, please. Eh, eh, look, I'm getting ahead of myself here but this meeting, tonight, these are key people, they are **very** special. There is a wonderful opportunity ahead for you, for us. I've already explained to them how amazingly clever

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and marvellous you are at everything. This meeting, well, it *will* be a sort of test for both of us but you mustn't worry, Myra dearest, I'm sure it's a foregone conclusion.'

'A test? Who are they Ralph?'

'No, sorry, sorry, no. No questions, please. I really shouldn't have told you any of this; it's all *supposed* to be a big surprise for you, so keep what I've just said under wraps. Righty O?'

She cajoled, badgering him, hoping to find out who other than Kernaghan would be present. Ralph was evasive, saying only it was to be a semi-formal dinner party, without the services of Brotherton, although he had insisted the man ensure the food was delivered from Pollok House by six o'clock at the latest. This special meeting had to be a private affair. He hoped she would assist by heating the food, serving his guests. When she asked if Sir John would be present Powdenhill made it very clear this venture was quite separate from Lord Neville and Sir John and their political group. This dinner evening was about both business and pleasure, about the future, the way ahead after the War, not about the past and the old guard.

As she listened she thought he was talking more to convince himself. He seemed anxious, uncharacteristically flustered. He was talking rapidly and his previous veneer of careful BBC English was showing slight cracks, allowing an underlying Mancunian twang into his speech.

He went on to say, after the meal, he had arranged for Brotherton or one of his men to drive her home because the group would need to discuss certain private matters alone and reach their decision.

'A decision, my dear Myra which could bring great opportunities for us both. Tonight might change our lives forever. *A c'est soir, mon ange.*'

Living with Myra

Dress Rehearsal

As she raced down the stairs at Morrison Street she checked her watch to find it was a few minutes before noon. She had much to do, many final details to put in place, journeys to make and times to check.

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It was quarter to four when she eventually arrived at Caird Drive, just on time, according to her unwritten schedule. This was a story which she must never commit to paper. She washed and dried her hair then lay naked on her bed with only the top sheet covering her, cooling herself after the heat of the bath. Now she had completed her dress rehearsal, her mind was calm and she was ready to carry out her final edit. This was the most important story of her life. With her eyes closed, she began to adjust her previous draft against the background of what she now knew and could anticipate, refining, revising and re-calculating times, distances, acting out each move. If necessary, she would adapt it to suit the reality as it unfolded, knowing if she got it wrong she would not survive.

At five-fifteen Sandy arrived, calling her name to find out if she was home. She lay silently behind her locked bedroom door, curtains drawn, with her bedroom lights out, a ploy she had used several times before when she was tired of his chatter. These last weeks since night shift operations had been suspended, Sandy had worked only 'bare time' Monday to Friday without overtime. Most evenings he had ridden off to the allotments, his excuse to visit Helen at Garrioch Road, Myra suspected.

She heard Sandy talk to Billy, as he often did when he thought she was away:

'Well Billy, she's out. What do you think? Probably at the pictures with one of the girls from the shop. Or maybe she's off to Manchester again. Just as well you have me to look after you, eh Billy?'

'Billy's a Good Boy. Billy's a Good Boy.'

'Aye, you're coming on son. Would you like to meet James and Louisa and Annette? Would you? And Helen? Eh, Billy? I bet you'd love it at Garrioch Road. Better than being stuck here all the time on your own, eh Billy? Well, we'll see, we'll see. Right Billy, there you are, all cleaned up. Nice fresh water and plenty of seed. In you get, there's a good boy. I'm off then, Billy. Might see you later and might not. We'll just have to see how it goes, see if Helen's in the mood, eh Billy? Maybe I should get you a wee girlfriend too, a wee pal to cuddle up to. What do you think?'

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A few minutes later the inner door closed, then the storm door, and he was gone. Myra rose and looked down from behind the curtain of the front room window, watching as he mounted up and headed off to Garrioch Road. She took a deep breath, steeled herself for action and let her story unfold.

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Myra dressed carefully: after an uncharacteristic dither, she finally decided on discrete, verging on dowdy - the reclusive writer, the person who always waited for others to drive a conversation, always smiling shyly, whimsically. This character was from one of her stories in which the rich peacock of an actor had yearned in his heart for a quiet mousy woman with whom he would feel safe, free from the pressure of continually projecting himself.

As she laid out her clothing and equipment for the evening ahead, she went through every scene again in her mind, checking she had everything she might need before packing each set of items into her leather travel bag, laying a sheet of stiff brown paper as a divider between each ensemble.

At quarter to seven, as the last of the light leached from the cloudy sky, the unrecognisable elderly visitor left the Caird Drive close and walked slowly away, weighed down by her heavy travel bag and carrying her talisman large black handbag, Frank's gift to her on her nineth birthday.

Living with Myra

Justice, Act One

The evening of Thursday 5th October 1944 would prove to be very important in the life of Myra Gallagher-Kaywood but not in the way Ralph Powdenhill intended.

Walking slowly with a stoop and carrying a large travel bag, the elderly woman emerged from the Subway and looked left. After a dull, cloudy and muggy day, the evening was overcast, almost dark. The Daimler was parked about fifty yards away at the usual position on the far side of Bridge Street. Behind a wall, a high-level railway ran parallel to the road with trains rumbling to and from Central Station.

Before crossing, Myra took time to study the car. It was pointing towards her. Powdenhill had already moved to the passenger side, closest to the pavement. As far as she could tell he was alone. She checked the far pavement, looking in both directions: as on previous occasions it was clear of pedestrians. She moved forward on her side of the road until directly opposite the Daimler, waited until a tram passed then walked directly across to the driver's door.

As she approached she saw him glance round. He failed to recognise her and his gaze moved back to check the others spilling out of the Subway station. She knocked on the driver's window. He reached across and wound it down. She laid down her travel bag, and leaned her left wrist lightly on the opening with her handbag resting against the door, suspended from the crook of her left arm, out of his sightline. She bent down and peered through the open window, keeping out of his reach should he choose to lunge forward as the scene unfolded.

Powdenhill asked, 'Yes, may I help you?'

She replied in the querulous, shaky voice which she had used for her tram journeys between the Mitchell Library and St Enoch Square on the afternoon of Lena's accident.

'Is this the car for Mrs Kaywood?'

'Yes.'

'I am she.'

'What?'

'Yes, I assure you young man, I am she, Mrs Kaywood.'

'I'm sorry, there must be some mix-up. I'm waiting for Mrs Myra Kaywood.'

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She reverted to her own voice:

'Yes, I am she. Mrs Myra Kaywood, in the flesh.'

'What? My God, it *is* you!'

His surprise turned to anger and his posh accent slipped:

'Myra, why the Hell are you dressed up like this? For God's sake, this is not a charades party. I *told* you how important these people are. Surely you understand this is a *serious* meeting.'

She unzipped the handbag with her right hand.

'Oh, I'm so sorry to disappoint you, *Mr Powdenhill*. Don't you like this outfit?'

He forced an insincere smile. 'Oh well, don't worry about it. I'm sure we can find something more suitable for you at *Copper Beeches*. Now get in please. We don't want to run late, not tonight. These are two of the top people. I've staked a lot on tonight, not just for you, for both of us. *Get in now, please.*'

His right hand reached across towards her and she pulled it back. A tram rumbled past on the rails just behind her and above them a train tooted to alert the signalman of its imminent arrival at the busy Central Station junction.

Her hand found the pistol inside her handbag. In one practised movement she eased the safety slide to "Fire", pulled out the weapon, took a step back and, still crouched, held the gun just inside the car, her arm now at full stretch in the firing position, her index finger pressing lightly on the trigger.

She raised her voice and snarled at him:

'**No! Sit back!** Yes, much better. Now, before I go anywhere with you, explain what you're planning and make it the whole unvarnished truth. Don't try to lie your way out of this. The whole truth, or else we may never meet again. Do you understand, *Mr Powdenhill*?'

'Ah, so it's serious then.'

'Yes, fundamentally serious; perhaps even deadly serious.'

'Ah. *Please, Myra*, can't this wait until we get to *Copper Beeches*?'

'No, absolutely not!'

'Ah. I'm rumbled then, right?'

'You have 5 minutes. Only the truth will do. Else.'

'Ah. Well, here goes. First, an apology - you are such an unusual case, *Myra*. Truly amazing, wonderfully compliant and unusually inventive in bed. I'll be honest, I even thought we might get . . .'

'No, tonight! Tell me about tonight!'

Living with Myra

'Sorry. Well, how should I explain this . . . Do you mind if I smoke? I'll open my window? Look, I know you hate it but I did warn you, I'm not an angel.'

'No smoking. Now only 4 minutes.'

Once more his hand reached for hers, seeking the contact he felt would re-establish his control over her. Stepping back, she kept her right hand on the pistol, steadied by her left hand holding her other wrist, pointing its silenced muzzle at his stomach, the biggest target.

'I told you Mr Powdenhill, **sit back** or else!'

'It's gone this far, has it?'

'Now only 3 minutes.'

'I'd really rather we did this at *Copper Beeches*.'

'Get on with it and make it the truth.'

'All right, all right. Keep your wig on, darling girl.'

He sprang forward but she was ready. She fired three shots and waited, ready with the other four, if required.

Ralph Powdenhill smiled his thin smile:

'Ah, God Myra, you nearly had me there.'

His dark eye beads flickered then dimmed as he went to join the others of his kind in the special version of Hell reserved for child abusers.

Following her discoveries at *Copper Beeches*, Myra had used her time alone at Morrison Street wisely to research her victim. Dr Ralph C. Powdenhill, a Psychiatrist from Manchester was indeed a graduate of Cambridge University as a long-distance telephone call had revealed. His graduation record showed his middle name as "Creity" not "Cunliffe". He was a man about whom Myra had learned a great deal, a Jekyll and Hyde of a man who it appeared, had done much good. What had led to his execution was what she had learned from his hoard of notebooks, condemned by the words written in his own flamboyant hand. She accepted she would never know what had made him as he was. She was uncertain if he had ever been in the RAF but deduced he had probably worked for the Government. Several telephone calls to Manchester CWS, checking at different departments, confirmed Ralph C. Powdenhill was unknown to anyone in authority.

In pitting himself against Myra Gallagher-Kaywood, Powdenhill had slipped up badly. Lord Neville and Sir John, no doubt encouraged by the deviant Lady Miriam, had clearly

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accepted what their guest had offered them as proof of his connection with the Cunliffe family. Ralph with his education and glib talk had seemed to be one of them, a servant of the ruling elite. Like most men, thought Myra, Powdenhill was lazy on detail, looking always for the quick, grandiose solution, one to maximise his value, inflate his ego. As a result of this arrogance their protégé had let his Tiger Eye Circle masters down. Hiding the keys for his security trunk in a bunch together had been nothing short of sloppy.

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About half-a-mile from *Copper Beeches* Myra pulled in leaving a couple of feet between the car and the high spiked railings of a private park which was for the exclusive use of the residents of the imposing stone villas bordering it. From previous visits she knew the entrance gates were locked and chained at dusk to prevent intruders. Looking along the line of houses, she was relieved to see the windows were shuttered for the night in compliance with blackout regulations.

Earlier, she had loaded Saul's car and driven from Kirklee to park it under the low overhang of a mature oak tree. She now manoeuvred the Daimler until the cars were boot to boot. After a quick check, she decided both vehicles would be hard to see from the houses opposite or by a passer-by.

From the Austin, she took a sheet of tarpaulin, laid it along the ground between the passenger door of the Daimler and the park railings then dragged Powdenhill's corpse from the car on to it. By torchlight and feel she rifled his pockets, removing everything to her handbag, including the Sheaffer Triumph pen he had failed to return. She trussed him like a mummy in the tarpaulin before tying her gruesome bundle with window cord. She hauled and heaved the packaged corpse across the rear passenger seat of the Austin before forcing it to slump in the foot well between the rear and front seats.

From her travel bag, she removed a biscuit tin stuffed with slightly soapy damp cloths which she had sprinkled with Dettol. She used two cloths to rub down the leather upholstery of the Daimler's front passenger seat. It surprised her how little blood had leaked from his wounds. Perhaps she had hit his heart, stopping it pumping, she thought.

From the Austin's boot, she removed ten one-gallon containers of high octane aviation fuel and placed them in the boot of the Daimler. These were from Saul's stockpile in the lock-fast hut hidden at the far end of the garden at Kirklee. She fetched a bottle of paraffin from her travel bag, stowed it beside the containers then locked the Daimler boot.

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She checked her watch. Its fluorescent hands showed she was running a little late; she did not want her quarry to become so impatient they might consider leaving. The night was completely dark now, the moon hidden by a thick covering of cloud. She changed from her old lady black lacing up boots into black slip-on plimsolls, locked the Austin and re-entered the Daimler.

Living with Myra

Justice, Act Two

Copper Beeches was shuttered, dark and appeared unoccupied. There were no cars parked outside. Myra drove the Daimler slowly up the driveway then reversed along the path leading to the rear of the premises. After parking, she walked to the front of the house, skipped up a dozen or so stone steps and hauled twice at the bell pull then raced back into the shadows. As expected there was no answer. The bell rang only on the lower ground floor in the corridor outside the kitchen.

She ran to the Tradesman's Entrance at the back of the house where she picked up her travel bag and bounded down the steps to the back door. Using her set of duplicate keys, she entered the kitchen. Her nose was assailed by aromas of good cooking. Brotherton had obviously delivered the meal earlier, as promised. She turned the oven off: no one would be eating. Tiptoeing along the corridor to the darkroom she unlocked the door. Before switching on the overhead light, she locked herself inside. Using her vanity mirror and garish make-up, she transformed her face to her Rita come-hither 'look' then pinned on her white-blonde wig.

Before switching off the light, she checked the silenced pistol was on 'safe', re-loaded it and put it back into her handbag beside the box containing a further thirty-odd back-up rounds. A few minutes later she emerged into the corridor dressed in Rita's dance hall outfit, her high-heeled shoes sticking out of her capacious handbag. Using her torch judiciously, she crept slowly and quietly up the stairs, following a low murmur of voices. The sound led her to the main Withdrawing Room situated on the first floor. Standing outside the door she listened for several minutes, weapon in hand, set to 'fire', breathing deeply, steeling herself for Act Two.

One high voice she remembered from the fateful Friday afternoon long ago, and the other deeper voice she recognised from the telephone conversation earlier while listening on the extension in Lena's office at Morrison Street.

Myra peered through the keyhole, checking. She saw two men; men she recognised, both in their 'uniforms', sitting in overstuffed leather chairs beside a modern gas fire, sipping what she took to be brandy from large balloon glasses. Slipping on her high heels, she threw the door open and stood sideways on to the men, as the manual from the Mitchell Library had stated she should, in the firing position, her arm outstretched, handle held firmly, she increased the pressure slightly on the trigger, following the procedure she

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had practiced repeatedly when test-firing the weapon at a remote disused quarry the previous afternoon.

Philip Kernaghan raised his stout body upright and moved across her aim to place himself between Myra and Monsignor Creity, raising both his hands, offering a gesture of conciliation. In doing so he revealed the tiger eye ring on his left pinkie, sealing his fate. As he beamed his wide, trademark smile, his right hand dipped and slipped inside his uniform jacket. Myra fired two shots into his lower abdomen. As he lurched towards her, the small gun fell from his shattered hand. She aimed higher and shot three further bullets, hoping to hit his heart. He stumbled and fell forward at her feet, silent.

Creity, rose quickly:

'Myra, do not kill a Prince of the Holy Church or you will rot in Purgatory for ever. If you stop now, I will give you Absol. . .'

As he stepped towards her, she fired a single shot into his leg. By luck it smashed his left kneecap. He screamed in pain and staggered backwards to fall into his seat.

She reloaded with practiced speed, sashayed around the corpse and held the outstretched muzzle over his eye-patch.

'How many pairs of knickers and underpants did you collect?'

'Ah, Maria Agnetta, you were the best of them by fa. . .'

It took only two bullets to blow his brain to smithereens.

She immediately set her pistol to 'safe' and re-loaded it. With her check-list running in her head, she collected and counted the spent cartridges and dropped them into her bag beside her weapon. Setting the other smaller pistol to 'safe', unloaded it, dropped both gun and bullets into her handbag then kneeled and turned off the gas fire.

Back in plimsolls, her high heels and wig back in her handbag, she ran downstairs to the darkroom where she delved into her travel bag and put on overalls and wellingtons.

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Disposal

It took her almost two hours to put the remaining pieces of her jigsaw in place. The now empty fuel canisters had been returned to the boot of the Daimler. She had moved the two corpses trussed in tarpaulin sheets from the Withdrawing Room to the car by bumping them one by one down the stairs in the wheelbarrow. The cleric had been relatively easy to handle but hefting the policeman into the back seat of the car was exhausting; it had taken most of her strength to complete the task. Before returning the wheelbarrow to the garden shed, she used it to move Powdenhill to the darkroom and returning with the security trunk, hauling it on top of the corpses.

The house was now primed, reeking of aviation fuel and unlit gas from the many gas heaters left with stop valves in the open position. As her final act at *Copper Beeches*, she lit the paraffin trail from inside the front door, stepped outside immediately, locked it then ran to the Daimler now waiting half-way down the long driveway with its engine running but lights off.

In the centre of the reception hallway, the paraffin trail forked. One branch of flame flickered up the carpeted stair heading for the open door of the Withdrawing Room: the other downwards to the darkroom and Ralph's corpse, minus its tarpaulin, was seated on the stool, his upper torso slumped over a tray of spilled chemicals. Ralph's body and both rooms were heavily doused with aviation fuel.

As she exited the main gate she heard a loud bang followed by a whoomph. From the wing mirror, Myra saw the heavy drapes burning fiercely, fed by the night air, in what were now glassless windows.

She parked under the oak tree behind the Austin. It took another tremendous effort to relocate the two corpses from the Daimler. After much pulling, pushing and cursing under her breath, she had the tarpaulin containing the tall, burly policeman propped up in the back seat, jammed in place with Powdenhill's trunk to keep the package upright. The smaller bundle of the priest was slumped against the front passenger door of the Austin.

Using fresh cloths from the biscuit tin, Myra cleaned the Daimler's upholstery as best she could by the pin-point light of the torch. When all the dirty tasks had been completed, Myra returned the other clothes to the travel bag which she stowed in the foot-well of the Austin, beside Creity's feet. Finally, she checked its doors were locked.

Living with Myra

Sitting in the Daimler, she checked her make-up, shielding her torch to minimise light spillage. Its battery was almost spent; she fitted a new one from her handbag.

Fire Engine bells pierced the quietness of the autumn night as they clanged their way to Newlands. Myra looked in the direction of *Copper Beeches* and smiled when she saw the skyline filled with a satisfying amount of smoke interspersed with the occasional flame leaping skyward. She was now certain the house was fully ablaze.

Before returning the Daimler to Sir John, she made one final check to ensure it was as clean as possible and that all evidence had been transferred to the Austin. As she started the engine, a police car sped past, its bell ringing. She waited until it turned the corner then swung out, heading away from *Copper Beeches*, taking a longer, quieter route to Pollokshaws, keeping the car's lights off until she was well clear of Newlands.

Shortly after midnight she parked the Daimler in the grounds of Pollokshaws Burgh Hall, where it was a familiar sight. Two hundred yards of walking brought her to Bill Brotherton's parent's cottage where she wrapped the car keys in one of Ralph's autographed handkerchiefs and dropped them through the letterbox. Jazz music was playing softly through a bedroom window which was open top and bottom. Perhaps Bill Brotherton had been given the night off.

Now in her high heels and wearing her wig, Rita walked through the dark night towards the Austin, quietly humming the refrain she had just overheard. If seen by anyone she might be taken for a single lady of doubtful character returning from a night of illicit passion. She checked her watch: she was back on schedule. At quarter past one, she drove the Austin in the direction of Paisley then swung back towards Glasgow and the sewage works at Shieldhall.

Once more she changed into overalls and wellington boots. Using her tailoring shears, she removed their clothing to a canvas kit bag for later inspection. The two naked bodies slid down the greasy slope into the churning machinery.

Still in overalls she drove to a disused quarry near Milngavie, located just off the road north to Aberfoyle. This was the remote place where she had practiced her pistol skills. The sheer face of the quarry dropped a hundred feet to the inky black surface of the deep water below.

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Working by torchlight she examined each snippet of clothing, piece by piece, removing everything of value or which could identify a former owner. She then bundled the dirty cloths used to clean the Daimler and the Austin plus the men's clothing fragments into the kit bag and loaded it with rocks from a nearby dry-stane dyke. She tied its end closed then, for extra security, she bound it like a butcher's joint with a length of window cord. She eased the package over the edge then listened for the sound of it hitting the water. Using the last photons of energy from the torch, she swept the ground with a handful of twigs fashioned as a make-shift broom, checking no evidence had been overlooked.

It was just before four in the morning before Myra, now in her own clothes, set off for Kirklee. She had written a cover story: if stopped by a police or ARP patrol. In this tale, she was a business lady returning to Glasgow from Oban who had suffered a puncture, delaying her greatly.

At Kirklee, after garaging the Austin, Myra hid the policeman's gun, haul of money, personal items and articles of value taken from *Copper Beeches* behind the false panel she had created in the wine cellar, screened by the nearly empty wine racks. After unscrewing the silencer from the Schofield pistol, she cleaned the weapon then re-wrapped both parts in suede cloth and zipped them into the false bottom she had created in the base of her large, black handbag. Her intention was to carry this weapon for personal protection until she judged any possible attempt at retribution was unlikely.

Leaving the overalls and wellingtons in the kitchen walk-in cupboard for thorough cleaning later, Myra stowed her brown travel bag with its equipment and ensembles alongside Powdenhill's fireproof trunk in the Schofield secure cupboard hidden in the basement. This cupboard had been constructed as a sort of safe but with the merit of looking innocuous. It had taken a year of exploring to locate it and she had been disappointed to find it contained only old photographs of Nathan, family heirlooms of little value and stacks of mouldy papers hand-written in what she took to be German. The security of this tiny crawlspace was now much improved since Nathan Schofield's original version. The new door had a steel core and was secured by two new high security locks of different manufacture, their keys hidden in different and very hard to find locations, as were the three keys for Powdenhill's trunk. In due course, she would deal with remaining issues arising from a detailed inspection of the trunk's diabolical contents.

The first light of dawn appeared as Myra walked from Kirklee to Caird Drive. Sandy's bed had not been slept in. Perhaps Helen had been in the mood. She kindled the fire and made herself a full breakfast including porridge, which she seldom ate. Due to her state

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of mind and the tight schedule required, she had not eaten since breakfast the day before.

She read through the purple notebook outlining her Myra/Rita 'confessions' one more time then drew a black line through the last two names from Gerrard's list of thirty-four names before throwing both books into the fire. There was one remaining name from Henson's Glasgow group of the Tiger Eye Circle to be exterminated but he could not race away, not in his wheelchair. Powdenhill's other, larger notebooks and his small note-book with its list of Controllers were locked in the trunk at Kirklee. She was undecided what to do about those additional names, only a few of whom she recognised. To deal with them she would have to travel from Glasgow, to operate in unfamiliar 'territory'.

After a quick bath and hair wash, Myra dressed once again as an increasingly successful woman of business then left early for Morrison Street, catching the Subway to Kinning Park. At seven-forty-five Mrs Kaywood, Personal Assistant to Wing-Commander Ralph C. Powdenhill, was seated at Lena's desk with a pot of very palatable strong coffee on her desk, busily preparing a presentation to be used by Mr Ralph at the forthcoming training sessions, should anyone dare to ask what she was doing. At her feet, propped handle upwards inside her handbag and covered by a headscarf, the silenced pistol was set to 'fire'.

The remainder of Friday 6th October began to unfurl. No one came to Powdenhill's office and neither he nor Lena received any telephone enquiries. When she completed the training notes, she made Banda copies for the trainees, compiling the sets of notes on the conference table in Powdenhill's room, the stench of the spirit filling the air. By late-morning she had completed her list of tasks for the forthcoming training sessions. Free of business tasks, she began a new story, typing on through the afternoon until she had a first draft w she was happy with.

At five-thirty she allowed herself a wry smile and set the pistol to 'safe', daring to hope no one else from the Tiger Eye Circle had been made aware of the previous evening's meeting at *Copper Beeches*, or its purpose. However, her smile faded quickly - she must remain alert while waiting to discover what would happen next. She could only hope Powdenhill had not divulged her life secrets to anyone other than the Monsignor or the Assistant Chief Constable.

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Uppermost in Myra's mind was what Lady Miriam may have been told about her by 'her nephew' and what the great lady might do about it when she discovered she was no longer able to contact her three collaborators.

Living with Myra

Manhunt

The late editions of the *Glasgow* broadsheets for Friday 6th October 1944 carried news of the complete destruction of a grand mansion in the Newlands area called "*Copper Beeches*". Fire Brigade officers from many parts of the city had toiled through the night to no avail.

On Monday 9th October, the fire story re-appeared but was no longer front-page news. This report explained the discovery of the charred remains of a body which they believed were those of the sole occupant, a photographer called Ralph Powdenhill. It was stated his darkroom chemicals had exploded, starting a blaze which had raced through the tinder dry property at lightning speed, overwhelming the efforts of the Fire Brigade to save it. The property had been infested by dry rot, one reporter had asserted. This was quickly denied by its factor Mr William Brotherton who could offer no alternative explanation as to why the building had burned so fiercely, other than it might be linked to the new gas heaters which had been recently installed in several rooms, at Mr Powdenhill's request.

A second newspaper told of Sir John Stirling-Maxwell hiring a Mr Ralph Powdenhill to photograph and catalogue his works of art and precious objects for insurance purposes. Mr Brotherton confirmed *Copper Beeches* and its contents were insured under a blanket policy held by Sir John, a policy which covered all properties in his care. There was no mention of the house being owned by Lord Neville Cunliffe.

On Tuesday 10th October, most Scottish newspapers headlined on the unexplained disappearance of *Glasgow's* Assistant Chief Constable Kernaghan and Monsignor Creity.

The Monsignor had been last seen in London but was known to travel extensively in his role as a Special Envoy for the Holy See. The men had formed a close friendship while serving on various committees during Monsignor Creity's period of residence in *Glasgow*, when he had been based at *Tower Ridge* near Barrhead. Checks had been made there but the house was found to be empty, its most recent occupants having returned to London.

The Police record showed ACC Kernaghan had been dropped off by a squad car at *Shawlands Cross* at 18:37 on Thursday 5th October. He told his driver to inform the Control Room he should be considered as officially 'off-duty'. The driver believed the

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ACC was heading for a meeting to discuss a charity matter and that he had said he would make his own way home later.

From what was reported in the newspapers, it seemed no connection had been made between the disappearance of these men and the fire at *Copper Beeches*.

The search for the missing men remained on several front pages for a few days before gradually working its way backwards. By early November it had morphed into a rambling article which advised people disappeared inexplicably every day. In such cases the authorities offered assurances investigations were ongoing and case files remained open. However, without bodies there could be no proof any crime had been committed.

Living with Myra

Short Solo Flight

From the first morning flying solo at Morrison Street, Myra kept to her "It's all about Training" plan by calling her selected list of key ladies to Head Office for training sessions. In his absence, Mrs Kaywood had assumed the authority to proceed issuing her invitations to participate by titling herself "Head of In-House Training and Development", adding pp "Wing Commander Ralph C. Powdenhill".

These lessons proved popular, some recipients said 'inspirational'. Over the next few weeks further batches of ladies were initiated. All returned to their places of work fired up, ready for change. Several of Myra's ladies caused problems by openly challenging their male colleagues. Gradually their store managers uncovered the 'subversive' nature of Myra's training doctrine, confiscating her Banda sheets.

When higher management at Morrison Street found out what Myra was doing, they reacted swiftly. Her training initiative was shut down. Without Ralph Powdenhill to back her up, Myra was demoted to a clerical job in a dingy office of the "Goods Receiving" section at the rear of the ground floor of SCWS Head Office,. This was no more than she had expected but Myra was playing a longer game. She forced herself to perform the menial tasks asked of her, presenting the persona of a much simpler woman who repeatedly said she had been "carrying out the orders left by Mr Powdenhill", instructions issued months before his tragic accident.

Myra was biding her time and planning her new future, one free of the imperative imposed on her by the late Monsignor Creity and his odious associates.

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In late October 1944 news reached Head Office from St George's; Gordon Galbraith had ended his sorry, pain-filled existence. While under the influence of drink and painkilling drugs, he had drowned himself in his bath. Unable to turn on the hot tap, he had eventually managed to release a dribble from the cold tap before hauling himself from his wheelchair over the edge of the bath, falling face downwards in the process. When found the bath was only half full of icy cold water. Mr Gordon was naked except for the badly soiled dressing gown in which he lived out his last years. From the front room, his radio gramophone was blaring out jazz music, a cacophony which had caused his neighbour Mrs Margery Blenheim Marsdene to call the Police who were slow to react.

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Mr Gordon's demise had been discovered by his live-in housekeeper Mrs Rene Boyle, on her return from the second showing at the pictures. The bathroom door had been jammed from the inside by his wheelchair and when she had shoved hard to open it, the wheelchair had overturned, splattering the brimming contents of its inbuilt commode over the floor and walls.

His suicide did not come as a surprise to the few who remembered him. Mr Gordon had been very poorly since falling from stepladders shortly after the outbreak of the War. It had taken nearly two years for partial mobility to return to his upper body but only to his left side. Being right-handed this meant everything he attempted was a double frustration, which he complained about each time Myra made her occasional secret visits to check his torment was continuing satisfactorily under the ministrations of the slovenly Rene Boyle.

A few weeks after his departure, and hoping to get help from the Co-op, Mrs Boyle had visited St George's with this news, seeking out Daisy who in turn told Myra when they met for their usual Sunday evening update session at Jaconelli's Café near her home at Queen's Cross.

Daisy said minutes into her 'performance', Rene had broken down, weeping floods of fake tears, reciting how she had cared and comforted Mr Gordon over these last years. It was as if he had been her brother, she had whined unconvincingly but now she had been left devastated and destitute. She had given up her house and life to minister to Mr Galbraith's every need but now the owner of his premises at the Highburgh Road wanted her out, as she was not actually the tenant. All she had to live on was the £25 legacy which Gordy had bequeathed her in a suicide note, thanking her for her years of loyal service.

There had been no such note. In the early hours of the morning after the funeral, while Rene was sleeping off the last of Galbraith's liquor, Myra had dropped an envelope through the Highburgh Road letterbox. It had contained £250 in cash and a typed note purporting to be from Galbraith's estranged niece who signed herself in a shaky scrawl as Miss Jane Smith. The note was undated and gave no contact address. In it Miss Smith thanked Mrs Boyle but explained she had no fond memories of her uncle. It invited Mrs Boyle to keep or sell the house contents including its expensive furniture, most of which had been damaged by repeated burns from Rene's careless cigarettes.

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In her outpourings to Daisy, Rene failed to mention she had profited richly from her sojourn with the stricken *Gordon Galbraith*. Every Wednesday morning when she checked the letter basket inside the outer storm door, she had found an unmarked brown envelope containing a Postal Order made out to her in the generous amount of £15 to cover her wages and weekly shopping.

Living with Myra

Frisson

For Hilary Templeton, the autumn of 1944 had raced by. A confirmed spinster, Hilary would be thirty on the 17th of December. Over recent weeks her life had become more interesting, bordering on exhilarating, confusing what until recently had been a strict and well-ordered trudge of dull duty. Now each day was spiced by the anticipation of meeting a man who had shown positive interest in her, a man everyone said had a promising future. In her emotional flights of fancy Hilary now dared to hope he might ask her to marry him.

She eased her dark blue Morris 8 saloon into the narrow space between the wall and the other three cars parked at the rear of the building which housed the offices of Henning & Henning. By common assent this parking space was now 'hers'. The other larger and grander cars belonged to the three partners of the firm of solicitors and notaries. For Hilary owning a car of any kind seemed amazing, unthinkable a few months earlier. Although new to her, it was second-hand but in prime condition. It had belonged to Sir John Stirling-Maxwell, the purchase arranged by her cousin, Bill Brotherton, who also taught her to drive, a skill which she had acquired easily.

During the War years Bill became an important man in the service of Sir John, becoming the mainstay of the dwindling band of employees who served Pollok House and maintained its vast estate. From her teenage years Hilary had looked to her older cousin for support and guidance and now she had money of her own, it was to Bill she turned for advice. He had encouraged her to purchase a recently-built bungalow in the Crossmyloof area. Her new home was about twenty minutes on foot from the Brothertons' cottage located on the far side of the estate which had been Hilary's home since her mother's tragic death.

The sudden wealth which had funded these purchases had come to Hilary following the peculiar death of her mother's second cousin. In late August 1944, a large envelope addressed "Hilary Templeton" and containing £1,260 in cash, accompanied by a "Will" signed by Helena Harrison, had been delivered anonymously, dropping through the letterbox of the Brotherton's lodge cottage shortly after Hilary had returned from her late night widdle walk with her dogs.

The simple Will, drafted on SCWS letter-headed note-paper and dated Wednesday 26th July 1944, comprised of one short sentence: "I name Hilary Templeton, my niece, who resides on the Pollok Estate with her Uncle Walter Brotherton, as my sole heir". This

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envelope also contained a newspaper cutting describing how Miss Helena Harrison had slipped from the crowded platform at St Enoch's station into the path of an intruding Subway train. Attached to this newspaper article was a short unsigned note which described Lena's failing health after a bad motorcycle accident in the early spring.

Clipped to the Will was a disturbing photograph of a smiling red-blond child with long curly hair, posed naked, her tongue sticking out cheekily, her bottom turned towards the camera with one hand on her hips with the other holding a bucket and spade. This child was standing on an unmade bed. Through the window behind her was a view of a seaside garden.

On the reverse of the snap was a hand-written:

"Hilary . . ."

The remaining part of the caption had been obliterated by black ink.

Hilary's memory of her 'Auntie' Lena was vague, reaching back to when she was about five or six. What she remembered most vividly was a burly woman dressed like a man and who rode a motorbike with a sidecar. She had arrived unexpectedly and imposed herself on the Templetons at their holiday cottage in Largo, Fife. She had stayed only a few days, leaving after a shouting argument with Hilary's father. After such a long gap, Hilary was puzzled as to why this odd woman had remembered her.

Troubled by the circumstances of this unexpected bounty, Hilary had consulted Mr Herbert Henning on the validity of the Harrison "Will" but did not tell him of the money or accompanying information. Her employer, believing the matter to be trivial, had endorsed the document as 'agreeable' and Hilary's conscience was clear.

The experience of driving into town from her new home was still exciting for Hilary, as was the prospect of a further meeting with the new man who, over the last weeks, had filled her mind during every waking moment, making her feel girlish and often foolish. She remained in the car for a few minutes to compose herself ahead of another chance encounter, and to check her make-up and recent, expensive perm. This use of lightly applied make-up was also new to Hilary and she allowed herself a secret smile, hoping John Phillip Owen, (who preferred to be called simply JP), might have another quiet quip of compliment for her as they passed on the stairs. JP had a very clever way with words, everyone said so. Unfortunately for Hilary, all was not as it seemed.

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JP, aged twenty-five, had explained although he was from a small village near Cardiff, he had won a scholarship to Cambridge to read Mathematics. On graduation, he had been recruited for top secret War Service. Now the War was coming to an end, he had been released from this onerous commitment. A friend had recommended Glasgow and had suggested he try Henning & Henning. As a result of the devastating War, trained lawyers and support staff were difficult to find and Henning and Henning had been pleased to employ him. JP was full of new ideas for energising the stolid old firm.

Hilary knew from the most recent Partners' Monthly Meeting, (which she attended as secretary and note-taker), 'the new man Owen' was believed to be a high-flyer. The Partners expected his enthusiasm and ability would soon to make a huge difference and ease their own workload, now business was returning to growth with the end of the War in prospect. The legal grapevine told of other firms which were already benefiting from such new blood. Although JP Owen was not a trained lawyer, he had 'a first-class mind', and 'plays Bridge like a demon', Herbert Henning had mused, in Hilary's hearing. The Partners had agreed unanimously, they were lucky to have found this man. Hilary agreed wholeheartedly but said nothing.

JP Owen was a short, thin, pigeon-chested man with a cheery, smiling face and forceful personality. He spoke in 'correct' BBC English with the remains of a pleasant Welsh lilt. What had first set Hilary's heart pounding was his unexpected appearance at the Pollokshaws Gospel Hall, with his smiles, firm handshakes and light-hearted compliments about her hair and eyes, sending her mind chasing after previously avoided and potentially sinful areas, making her very aware of her body and its sudden hormonal demands. JP was living in a room and kitchen, in a shabby apartment above a chaotic garage overlooking the entrance to the Gospel Hall. This was temporary, he explained, while he looked about for somewhere better. He had been encouraged to attend the Gospel Hall when he had seen Hilary enter one Sunday morning, arriving early, to prepare for the service to follow.

JP had a clear baritone singing voice and played the piano expertly, despite his slightly withered left hand, a result of childhood polio, he explained. He was from a Brethren tradition in his home village in Wales and had been looking for a new community of like-minded Christians. He would welcome the opportunity to help with Sunday School, he said several times over, keen to grasp any opportunity to serve the Lord by bringing His Gospel to young people while their minds were still receptive. In a smallish church short of younger men, JP's offer had been quickly and gratefully accepted.

Living with Myra

By early-November, Hilary had known JP for just over three weeks but it felt as if she had known him for years.

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After a light evening meal, Hilary decided to visit her Aunt Elspeth at the lodge cottage, planning to share her thoughts about her secret 'romance', hoping to hear her aunt agree JP Owen was a fine, upstanding Christian man. Normally, she would have walked her dogs through Pollok Estate but on this fateful Wednesday evening it was teeming down and she decided to indulge herself with the novelty of driving the mile involved. As she approached the junction of Hags Road and Pollokshaws Road near to the Old Swan Inn, she was held up behind a lorry waiting for a tram to pass. Glancing to her left, she saw JP emerge from the public house, followed by a well-dressed man wearing a wide-brimmed hat. The two men huddled inside a dimly-lit close mouth where JP exchanged a large brown envelope for several banknotes which the man counted from his wallet. The lorry moved ahead, the car behind tooted and she was forced to move on. The whole incident lasted only a few seconds but it was enough to dent her dream of a happy married life with JP.

Instead of visiting the Brothertons, she drove home to think things through and pray for guidance. JP had said several times he had signed the pledge and hated alcohol and all it did to people trapped in its clutches. Why would JP meet someone in a pub when there were several nice cafes nearby? What might be in the envelope? Had JP been selling information stolen or copied from Henning & Henning? None of what she thought she had seen made any sense and almost at once she began to deny her memory of it.

The next day in the office, she watched JP closely but he was his usual cheerful, bustling self. With each new compliment from him, Hilary chided herself for harbouring her damning suspicions. When they met at the Gospel Hall on Friday evening and again on the Sunday, he remained as open and cheerful as ever.

By Monday evening, Hilary had convinced herself she had made a horrible mistake. The night had been dark, wet and blustery. The windows of her car had been steamed up. Everything had happened in a flash. The man she had seen had not been JP, but a stranger who looked like him. It was the only explanation which made sense. As she prayed to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness, she wept tears of joy and gave thanks for His bounty in bringing JP into her life.

Living with Myra

The next morning, Hilary received a telephone call from Myra Kaywood who wished to conduct a full review of the MMF files prior to setting up a meeting with Mr Herbert. They agreed the King's Café would be an unsuitable venue for this and settled on the Thursday, meeting at six o'clock at Henning & Henning's offices. Mr Herbert and the other Partners would have left by five-thirty sharp, to attend their weekly Supper and Bridge Club evening.

Living with Myra

Inadvertently

Thursday, 9th November, 1944.

As the other members of staff were leaving for the night, Hilary made her way downstairs to the large walk-in fire-safe in the basement to collect the bulky Margaret Miller Foundation files. They were missing. She checked the sign-out book. They had not been signed out, breaking strict protocol.

After a systematic search, she found them in the room next door, buried under a welter of papers on JP's desk. As she eased the files out, a large brown envelope slipped to the floor, spilling its contents. Hilary kneeled to scoop the photographs back into the envelope and gasped in disbelief. These were images of naked and partly clothed children. She recognised several of Colin and Chrissie, the five-year old twins from the Friday Night Band of Hope at her Gospel Hall. In one photograph Colin was standing on a bed, laughing, with his pants around his ankles, urinating into a white enamelled bucket. In another Chrissie was stretched out naked on the bed with her legs apart, her eyes tightly closed, sucking a lollipop, a man's hand touching her intimately. It was a left hand, with a tiger eye ring on the pinkie finger. The hand was withered and the nails neatly manicured. Hilary knew at once it was JP's. Her head began to spin and she felt nauseous. She closed her eyes and the sick feeling passed, turning to anger.

She leafed through the other photographs and soon found a copy of the holiday snap of herself which had been sent with the Will. She turned it over. The inscription now appeared in full.

Hilary, (aged 6 years), with her naughty, naughty tongue. Delicious!

Her stomach heaved and she raced to the basement toilet and wretched.

As she rinsed her mouth, she heard the main entrance door tinkle, announcing a visitor and listened as Angela Maloney, (her office junior), welcomed Mrs Kaywood and invited her to take a seat in Reception, saying she would find Miss Templeton for her. From the bottom of the stair Hilary called up, 'One minute please, Mrs Kaywood.' She then returned to the toilet, splashed her face and patted it dry with a towel. Her make-up was smudged but it would have to do.

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Unsure what to do about the photographs, Hilary made her decision. Myra was someone she could trust, a strong-minded sensible woman who Hilary knew directed many good causes. This decision may have saved Hilary's life. She scooped the pornographic images back into the envelope, bundled it inside the MMF files and made her way up to Reception where she found Myra poking the fire, having added a few lumps of coal.

'Hilary, what on earth's wrong? You look as if you've seen a ghost.'

'Oh Myra, something awful, terrible, unbelievable has just happened.'

The clip clop of heels was heard as the girl approached:

'Oh, excuse me please, Miss Hilary,' said Angela. 'I'll be off now, with the mail for the Post Office. Do you have anything else for posting?'

'No, thanks, Angela. Now be careful crossing the road. Are you the last?'

'Yes, Miss Hilary, I think so. I've checked all round upstairs. Is there anyone in the basement? Will I check?'

'No, thanks, I'll do it. Off you go then.'

'Excuse me, Miss Hilary, but are you feeling all right?'

'Yes, yes, just a little queasy. It must have been something I've eaten. Don't worry. Off you go now, Angela, see you in the morning.'

As the girl skipped down the front steps to the pavement carrying her mail sack, Hilary double locked the main outer door behind her, then the inner glass fronted door. The girl was heading to her "Secretarial Studies" course at evening classes, paid for by an MMF bursary.

'Well, Hilary, I think you had better tell me all about it. If I can help, I will. Shall we make a pot of tea?'

'No, Myra, not yet. Before we do anything, say anything, will you please come with me. I want to check every room, every cupboard. I need to be sure we are completely alone here. Then and only then can I tell you what I've discovered. It's such a dreadful discovery I can hardly believe it.'

Twenty minutes later they sat in a room dominated by the large oak table crowded with seats for eight. Mr Herbert insisted it must be called the 'Conference Room'. In its original design, when the offices had been a family home, the conference room had been the Family Dining Room. It opened directly onto Mr Herbert's office, the room which had once been the Gentlemen's Withdrawing Room. This conference room had become the

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place were Myra normally met Mr Herbert, always with Hilary in attendance to keep him 'focussed'.

On one wall hung a portrait of a sombre be-whiskered man in a black frock coat, the original Herbert Henning, who scowled across the room fiercely at the room's main feature, a full-height ornate coloured-glass leaded window depicting a roaring lion, bright yellow against a red background. This window dominated the car park far below and when it caught the morning sun it filled the room with colour, to the evident irritation of the great man of long ago.

Hilary talked and Myra listened, sipping black tea.

The story was jumbled but Myra was good at puzzles. When she saw the photographs, she tensed and checked Hilary's eyes. There was no sign Hilary understood the connection between Lena Harrison and this new player. Either JP Owen had been sent to start afresh in Glasgow or to find Myra and eliminate her, or both.

While Hilary went off to make a fresh pot of tea, Myra skimmed through the MMF files. Torn strips of paper bookmarked the key dates of major purchases, and the dates and amounts when funds had been deposited with the MMF. This man was also an accomplished sleuth, Myra quickly realised. He had prepared a summary sheet written in a small flamboyant hand with green ink. This sheet included the initials GH, TW, LH and RCP. Myra at once recognised these as Gerard Henson, Thomas Walsh, Lena Harrison and Ralph Creity Powdenhill, a sample of Tiger Eye Circle members she had eliminated. There was no mention of the others she had dispatched, perhaps because Edward MacElhose, had been their "cut-out" to protect the hierarchy in Manchester and London. The similarity to Ralph's handwriting suggested JP and Ralph had been schooled by the same person. Myra removed the torn strips and summary sheet to her handbag.

Her first assessment was Ralph Powdenhill's information gleaned by drugging her had not fully escaped from his purple note-book at the time of his death. Otherwise there would be no need to hunt her down in this roundabout way. With this thought Myra realised her link to Hilary had put her friend and possibly others close to her at risk. Despite what he had written about her 'interview', Ralph had insisted during the overheard telephone with ACC Kernaghan he was still looking for a group, not a single person, emphasising Myra must be the cipher for others more powerful. Had he been using this as a ploy, to play for time, planning to continue her 'treatment' to get her more fully under his thrall? Her mind raced. If she was to be eliminated, and they were looking for a group, how many

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would they send to try to find her? How many innocent others like Hilary would become involved, inadvertently.

Myra wracked her brain. To the best of her recall, the name 'JP Owen' did not appear in any of Ralph's or Gerrard Henson's note-books. Perhaps 'JP Owen' was an assumed name. Given time she could probably find out if he was indeed a graduate of Cambridge University but clearly this matter was now urgent. Mr JP Owen must be dealt with without delay, no matter the risks involved. *Carpe Diem!*

If possible, Hilary must not be involved.

A story for JP sprang to mind. Although she was uneasy about acting it out without full planning, it must be made to work, before this JP reported back with his findings, assuming he had not already done so.

Hilary bustled in to the room with a fresh tea service and a plate of digestive biscuits. She was looking much better. The tension had passed and she was almost back to her normal self.

'Ah, thanks, and biscuits too! Well, Hilary, this man Owen seems very unsavoury. Do you have any idea how he found his way to Henning & Henning?'

'Not exactly. All I know is he arrived a few days after Mr Herbert engaged in several trunk telephone conversations. Betty at Reception said they were from a woman called Miriam Creity. Mr Herbert told me later this woman was well connected and the new man was coming on trial with a letter of introduction from her. He came without it, saying it would follow but so far it has yet to arrive. JP has been with us since mid-October, which I suppose is really only a few weeks ago, although it seems like much longer. He was so, well, charming, and very bright, very able. Myra, that despicable man fooled me completely. I thought he had taken a shine to me. *Me!* A silly old spinster who should have more sense, when all along he was this evil man masquerading as a true, born again Christian.'

'No, Hilary, do not do yourself down. This JP character is clearly cunning and devious, as all such men are. They are accomplished at creating a good impression as I well know from personal experience. In any event, you're not at all old, Hilary. Many a good man would be pleased to have you as his lady friend, I assure you. Indeed, I can think of one in particular.'

'Whoever do you mean?'

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'Our fine Mr John MacAuley, who as you know is my factor for the majority of the MMF properties. I believe you know his sister, Marianne, who works for him in his new larger office only a few steps from here, just round in Royal Crescent. You may remember John is very shy when it comes to the opposite sex. Apparently, Marianne tells me, John has harboured warm feelings for you since he first knew you as a teenager. It was Marianne who recently proffered this information, wondering if I thought you might be open to an approach. Of course, John is a Methodist, and perhaps not quite as ardent as you are, but he does have dogs, Westies, I believe. So there, you have a love of canines in common which I think is an excellent basis for friendship, don't you agree?'

'Oh, I had no idea he was interested, or he and Marianne worked so close by. Isn't it strange, you would have thought we might meet. But of course, I suppose I do come and go by the rear door, mostly. I realise now his name has been mentioned a few times in our conversations, but I had assumed he must be a different MacAuley. Is he not quite old, Myra? He seemed older back then. But no, I suppose he might only be thirty-four or maybe thirty-five?'

'Yes, he's thirty-four. He lives not far from you, in Minard Road, above the big café. He walks his dogs in Queen's Park, I understand.'

'Oh, well, yes, how nice. John MacAuley. Yes, so strange, but nice. And Westies too, how nice. Does he still wear thick glasses? Oh, but Myra, whatever can we do about this mess with JP? Should I tell Mr Herbert?'

'No, I think this problem is best left to me. Now, Hilary, does this JP character know where you live?'

'Yes, I told him one time. I even thought of inviting him for afternoon tea, after the Sunday service, with Mr Doig and a few of the Elders but I thought I was being too forward, since we had just met. So yes, he does know my address, if he remembers it.'

'Hilary, could you spend the night with your aunt and uncle, at the lodge cottage?'

'Yes, Mack and Freddy go there during the day and I collect them on my way home. I'm sure they'll give me my old bed back for a night or two, although Bill has started to re-organise everything, now he's back full-time with Sir John, free of *Tower Ridge*, which he hated. Lord and Lady Cunliffe have left. The place is empty, locked up, almost derelict, Bill says.'

'Good, we're all settled then. Now, Hilary, may I borrow your car for a while, please. I want you to continue to feel 'unwell' and take a taxi to the cottage. You must telephone from here to the rank at Charing Cross at once, please. I'll have a word with this JP character, see if I can persuade him to return to wherever he came from. Don't worry, I'll do lights out and lock-up before I leave.'

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'Myra, what *are* you planning?'

'Hilary, you must *not* ask or discuss tonight's discoveries with anyone. I must act to stop this fiend and I must do it alone. You must do your best to wipe these last few hours from your memory. Please leave me your office keys and your car keys. Now, Hilary, do as I ask. Telephone for a taxi and leave at once, please.'

'But Myra'

'*At once*, Hilary. Come, let's get you organised. When I've finished with your car, I'll leave it back at Crossmyloof and drop both sets of keys through the Brothertons' letterbox. But do not go back to your home until I have telephoned you here at the office to give you the all clear.'

'Myra, will you be safe?'

'Yes, Hilary. I think so. Now, call for a taxi. Look, it's almost eight o'clock and I have a lot to do. Now Hilary, **go**, please!'

Living with Myra

Act in Haste

With Hilary gone, Myra closed and doubled locked the outer front door then the inner door. Starting on the top floor and moving about using a small torch always carried in her handbag, she went from room to room, checking every light was switched off.

Standing over JP's desk in the basement, she searched by torchlight, looking for his purple contact book. It was in the left-hand bottom drawer, inside a locked cash-box which succumbed easily to her lock-picking skills. The box also held nearly £2,000 in mixed notes, some issued by the Bank of England. The contact book revealed a long list of previously unknown names to add to Ralph's list. These new names were in the Birmingham area. There was one entry near the top of JP's list coded simply MCC with no address, just a telephone number. Myra assumed this was (Lady) Miriam Creity Cunliffe. There was no corresponding entry for MCC's husband, at least not one Myra could detect. Perhaps Lord Neville was unaware of his wife's despicable activities. She replaced the book and cash in the box then re-locked and positioned it exactly as she had found it.

Her watch showed nine-fourteen. She knew from Robert Irvine the Thursday Supper and Bridge Club meetings finished at ten o'clock. They were held in a grand town house in Claremont Terrace, ten minutes' walk away. Now in her bare stockings, she padded up to Reception, checked Betty's list, found the number and made her call:

'Hello, doorkeeper here.'

'May I leave an urgent message for one of your members, please?'

'Name, please.'

'Mr JP Owen. This is Miss Templeton from his office. Some important files are missing which are urgently required for a meeting with one of our clients. She's with me now. Please ask him to come back to the Office at once. I need him to help me find them. Thank you.'

'Owen? Did ye say Owen? Oh, aye, the wee Welshie. Righty-o, goat it noo. Sorry, hen, could ye say it a' again. Ah huv tae write it ontae a private message slip. Hud oan hen, hud oan . . . Righty-o, go ahead, hen.'

It took several minutes to get the message across. She asked him to read it back, then added, 'Oh, and could you say I've left the back door unlocked. We are waiting for him in the Conference Room, please.'

'Righty-o, now, "*The back door isnae locked and youse is waiting fur him in the Conf-*", eh, how d'ye spell Confrince, hen?'

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Myra made her way upstairs and switched on the light in the Conference Room. She opened the pass door to Mr Herbert's office and crossed to his radio, which he used only to listen to news of the War, never for pleasure, he had assured her many times. She adjusted the dial to her favourite jazz programme and turned the volume to 'Full'.

As she descended to the basement she switched on lights for each hallway and for the Reception area then retraced her steps to JP's desk and replaced the envelope of photographs and the MMF files under the pile of papers on his desk, in case things did not go according to plan and she had to extemporise. In the corridor beside the back door she left the lights off.

Her watch showed ten minutes until ten o'clock. Holding a poker borrowed from the companion set at the Reception fireplace, she stepped into the cleaner's cupboard, leaving the door ajar and stood in the darkness, humming quietly to the music filtering down from Mr Herbert's room two floors above.

Time passed. Checking her watch, she counted the minutes one by one until nearly quarter past ten. If JP had not arrived by 10:45 p.m. she would confiscate his pornographic images and his cash box, visit Kirklee, collect her pistol then visit his flat.

At just after 10.20pm she heard him thunder down the short flight of steps from the raised car park and turn the door handle fiercely, throwing the door open. Ahead of him JP saw the glimmer of light leaking under the door leading to the stairs to Reception on the ground floor. He stepped forwards, kicking the back door shut with his heel and moved slowly along the corridor, wary now, alert, with a small pistol held at the ready. The first blow crashed down with venomous violence, glancing off his skull: he stumbled forward to his knees, moaned and tried to crawl to safety but three subsequent blows sent him to oblivion. She switched on the corridor light. The pistol was the same make and model the ACC had tried to pull on her.

Myra set it to 'Safe', unloaded it, and dropped gun and bullets into her handbag. She checked JP's neck for a pulse, searched his pockets, found the pink private message slip from the doorkeeper, shredded it to confetti and rinsed it down the cleaner's sink. She then searched every pocket thoroughly, removed his wallet, pocket diary, watch and signet ring, then found his tiger eye ring in a small buttoned pocket inside his jacket. Each item removed was placed in a suede zipper pouch then placed in the concealed section of her black handbag beside the gun and bullets.

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She then made a second search, feeling the lining of his jacket for possible secret hiding places. When satisfied she had left nothing which could easily identify him, she bundled him into the cleaner's cupboard, as a temporary measure. She swished the floor clean of blood stains with a mop then a second time with pine disinfectant.

She locked the cleaner's cupboard with JP curved inside like a human banana. The poker, unseen, was trapped underneath him.

Myra padded quietly to the first floor switching off lights as she moved back to the Conference Room where she stepped into her shoes, moved through to Herbert Henning's room, switched off the radio, reset its dial, relocked his pass door then doused the remaining lights returning the building to darkness.

Moving to Hilary's desk, she switched on her desk lamp and typed JP's resignation letter, explaining in it he had received an urgent telegram recalling him to the Ministry of War and could no longer continue at Henning & Henning at this present time. Should any salary be due he would like it to be given to Miss Templeton to further the work at Pollokshaws Gospel Hall. If his circumstances should change he would immediately be in touch, to ascertain if there was still an opportunity for him to make a further contribution to the future endeavours of Henning & Henning.

She practiced JP's flowery signature on a sheet of paper using his pen with its green ink. After several iterations, satisfied she could render a fair copy, she signed the letter, shredded the practice sheet and dropped the confetti into the waste bin. Finally, she slipped an envelope into the typewriter and addressed it: "Mr Herbert Henning, Senior Partner."

Living with Myra

Crucial Errors

Myra opened the inner front door from Reception and fiddled the resignation envelope under the lid of the wire basket which caught mail posted through the letter box of the outer door when deliveries were made by hand after the office closed in the evening or at weekends. The letter jammed in the narrow slot and she pulled hard at the wire grid to create a wider gap until the envelope finally dropped, landing on its edge, too far from the letter box to have happened naturally. She was about to search in Betty's desk for the padlock key to open the cage and place the envelope on the base as would be normal, when a loud knock echoed through the building from the back door. This was followed by the call of a deep male voice.

'Hello, is there anyone here?'

Myra froze momentarily then regained her poise, remembering she was a respected client of Henning & Henning with a legitimate reason to be on their premises. Hilary would back her up, if required. She grabbed her coat from the coat-stand and shrugged into it, lifted her handbag, switched off the Reception lights then descended the stairs to the rear corridor, calling out ahead: 'Yes, who is there?'

She switched on the corridor light to see the two figures framed in the open doorway.

'Police, madam. Do you realise your back door is unlocked?' said the one wearing sergeant's stripes.

'Oh, really? Thanks. Sorry to have caused you any concern. Actually, I was just about to leave. I've been working late, completing a few tasks.'

'Is this your vehicle madam?' said the older one, the Inspector.

Myra seldom lied unless it was premeditated and the risk calculated:

'Well, actually, no, it's not, but I do have the keys. It belongs to Hilary, Mr Herbert's secretary. She felt suddenly unwell, unable to drive so I sent her home in a taxi. I'll take the car home with me tonight and bring it back tomorrow. I don't think it's a good idea to leave it out there all night, do you?'

'No madam, especially as it has a flat tyre. Were you aware?'

'Oh, goodness me. Well, what should I do?'

'If you'll let us have a nice cup of tea, we'll put on your spare,' said the Inspector. 'Won't we Thomson?'

'Yes, sir. Of course. At once, sir.'

Living with Myra

Myra saw the impudent smile play on the younger man's lips, but his insolence remained undetected by his senior officer. Sergeant Thomson could have been Frank, about the same age as when she last saw him, except Thomson's curly hair was red-blonde rather than red-brown. Myra delved into her bag and handed the keys to Thomson who went about the business of jacking the car to remove the wheel.

'Now madam,' continued the older man, 'given this door was unlocked, are you sure you don't have an intruder on your premises? Thomson here said he spotted lights going on and off as we approached.'

'Oh, I think you saw us moving around. Hilary is very frugal, keeps lights off when not needed. She was very insistent about switching on and off, silly really. She's still in blackout mode I fear, even though all such nonsense is behind us, thankfully. Oh, I know, I know, we're in what they are calling "dimout" now, but, well, everyone is ignoring it, aren't they?'

'No, madam, everyone is *not* ignoring it. Yon great window up there was blazing like a beacon.'

'Inspector, please excuse me. I promise not to do it again. It's Inspector , , ,?'

'Campbell Laird. And you are?'

'Myra Kaywood, Mrs Myra Kaywood. And to explain, I don't actually work here, I am a client of Henning & Henning. Miss Templeton and I were having a business meeting then quite suddenly she felt ill, poor dear. It must have been something she ate, she said. Just as I was helping her out to her car she brought up everything, it was such a mess, horrible. I had to clean it up, just awful, actually. But first we got her a taxi to take her home.'

'So you are alone here? If so, surely I should come in and check for intruders?'

'Yes, *do* come in Inspector Laird, but watch your feet, please, this floor is still damp. Let's go up to the Conference Room, shall we, I'm sure we'll find a few biscuits, and perhaps a whisky from Mr Herbert's drinks cupboard. I know he would be pleased to offer you a libation to thank you for your vigilance, were he here with us.'

Myra switched on the lights as they went up through the building and, as she had expected, the policeman offered no admonishment.

'There we are, Inspector Laird, sit here, beside the gas fire. Now, do you take water or soda with your whisky?'

'Half and half, plenty of water.'

'Ha, ha. It's nice to meet a man with a sense of humour. Do I detect a Highland accent?'

Living with Myra

'Inverurie, near Aberdeen, God's own country. I'll be glad to get back there next year when I retire. Away from this patch with its spate of office break-ins. Endless bloody paperwork, excuse my French.'

Campbell Laird unbuttoned his jacket, eased his tie and filled his pipe, ready to settle into storytelling mode:

'Ah, yes, this is a very nice tippie, Mrs Kaywood. It almost makes pounding the beat again worthwhile. Thomson's neighbour, a new man called Witherspoon they've dumped on us, has called in sick again tonight. I thought I'd join young Thomas on his beat, find out if he's as smart as they all say. . . . Ah, yes, don't mind if I do, kind of your Mr Henning to be so hospitable.'

Myra smiled her most encouraging smile and cocked her head to one side, ready to listen to the next part of a tale which she reckoned had already had many tellings.

'Yes, been giving Thomas a bit of coaching for his Inspector's examination coming up soon. But between you, me and the goalpost, there was no need. Our young Thomas will do fine. He's a very bright young man, razor sharp. Perhaps they'll give him my job. Maybe he'll get on top of the epidemic of crime we've been having around here. I'm getting way past running after folk through dark lanes. I've had my share in the past. Do you know, I used to run the mile in four and a half minutes, before the beef went on. Aye, in my prime I was a weel kent name on the Highland Games circuit. Do you know, one time I'

As the man bumbled on, she topped up his whisky and he added water to taste. As she listened she was very tempted to ask Inspector Campbell Laird if he knew young Frank and how he was fairing in London, but she resisted. Then another thought occurred and she excused herself to make tea. Outside the Conference Room she slipped off her shoes and raced downstairs to the kitchen, leaving the senior policeman beside the gas fire with a nearly full bottle of Black and White whisky, smoking his pipe and tapping his toes to country dance music playing from Mr Herbert's radio.

On a hunch, she took a tea tray to the back door and called up to Sergeant Thomas Thomson.

'Ah, just a minute or two, Miss. I'm nearly finished, but let me wash my hands, Miss. I don't want to dirty your finest porcelaine, Miss.'

'Thank you so much, Sergeant. I hear you are soon to take the Inspector's exam?'

'Yes, Miss, next week, Miss. Almost done here, Miss, just tightening the nuts, Miss. I'll be with you in just a few minutes, Miss.'

Living with Myra

'Thomas Thomson, do stop being silly. Now, I have a question. Is your father a policeman, and is he called Thomas Thomson too?'

'Yes, how did you guess? But Pops died last year, stomach ulcer burst, like his sister Agnes. Family weakness they say. Let's hope it's not true.'

'I'm very sorry to hear about your father, Thomas. Perhaps you might like to know this car is owned by Miss Hilary Templeton? Is she your cousin?'

'Hilary, Aunt Evie's daughter?'

'Yes, from Pollokshaws.'

'Well, wait till I tell Mum, she'll be amazed. Does she still live in Pollokshaws, Hilary I mean? We heard through the police grapevine Aunt Evie was run over by a tram. Our two families lost touch years ago. I know Mum was upset, some feud with Aunt Agnes, she said, but she doesn't want to talk about it. There we are, Miss. Job done, safe to drive again.'

'Right, in you come and wash your hands Thomas. There's no gent's on this floor but you can use the ladies' toilet, in there. When you are ready, come up to Reception and drink your tea while I write down Hilary's address for you. Or you could contact her here. Would you like a whisky too?'

'Whisky? No thank you, never touch the stuff. No need to write it down, just tell me. I've got an exceptional memory, everyone agrees. I know who you are. I was there when your mother-in-law was found, when she fell out of her bedroom window, my first week on the beat. She was my first corpse. You look very different now, Mrs Kaywood, very much the lady nowadays, if I may say so. Do you still live in Caird Drive? I live in Cecil Street, still with Mum.'

'My, my, Sergeant Thomson, it *is* a small world indeed.'

Myra smiled in what she hoped was not Rita's leer, ignored his question and wished she had not engaged in conversation with this man. Thomas Thomson was indeed very sharp and Rita was inconveniently distracting her from the task in hand. What if blood oozed out from under the door of the cleaner's cupboard into the corridor? And, if he ever discussed this meeting with Hilary, he might discover the time discrepancies involved. There was nothing to be done but let it run. To be double sure, she checked the cleaner's cupboard was locked, then made her escape.

Living with Myra

At Reception Myra left the tea tray and added a few lumps of coal to the fire which was kept burning every day through the entire year, then retreated upstairs to try to oust Campbell Laird. The Inspector's tea and biscuits lay untouched. Unfortunately, his sails were set fair before the winds of the Muse and he continued to power ahead from one story gem to another, expounding his full repertoire. Eventually, when the bottle was nearly empty he rose, knocked out his pipe, pulled in his paunch, fastened his jacket buttons, and asked to use a bathroom.

On leaving the basement toilet, Thomas moved quietly to check the other rooms one by one. By the light of his torch he moved through each dark space to check its windows were secure and be sure no one was hiding in a storage room. Satisfied, he moved to Reception and made a slow inspection of the area before sitting by the roaring fire drinking tea and allowing his mind to drift. As he knew from his colleagues, few marriages ran smoothly. Myra's smile from the back door a few minutes earlier suggested she might be open to a direct approach, if he could get her alone for a few minutes, free of Campbell Laird.

Inspector Laird was pleased to accept a lift from Myra who dropped him outside his residence at Beaumont Gate, a street of very impressive red sandstone tenements off Highburgh Road, a few strides from where Gordon Galbraith had lived until a few weeks earlier. Sergeant Thomson was left in the dark car park behind Henning & Henning's offices to continue his patrol alone, his hopes dashed.

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As Myra drove to Kirklee she devised a re-write of her story.

She loaded Saul's car with what she needed before returning to Henning & Henning to retrieve JP's corpse. She was now dressed as a man, wearing overalls and wellingtons, her changes of clothing and other equipment in her leather travel bag and the canisters of high octane fuel and the bottle of paraffin in the boot.

Back in Henning & Henning's offices, she retrieved the MMF files and the envelope of pornographic images from JP Owen's desk. She confiscated the cash box with its money and JP's purple book. At Reception, she burned the envelope of odious photographs before returning the MMF files to the Conference Room table.

Living with Myra

In the basement corridor, she trussed JP's corpse in a tarpaulin, discovered the poker, cleaned it with Dettol and replaced it on the stand by the fire in Reception. She took the remains of the whisky to JP's desk and, leaving the cork on the desk, stuffed the bottle in a desk drawer.

Finally, she collected the crockery, washed and dried it and returned it to the scullery cupboard.

With the corpse and her travel bag transferred to the Austin, she returned and mopped the cleaner's cupboard and corridor with a strong solution of Dettol in soapy water. Satisfied everything had been returned to 'normal', she made her escape, double locking the rear door behind her. On entering the car, she glanced up to check no lights were showing. She checked her watch, almost twenty-past-one. She had a lot to do and wanted to be finished before dawn.

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About an hour before sun up, with many miles of driving behind her and now dressed as Myra, she parked Hilary's Morris at the bungalow in Crossmyloof, walked the mile to the Brothertons' cottage and dropped both car and office keys through the letterbox. Carrying her leather travel bag, she cut through Pollokshaws, heading for Shawlands Cross to catch an early tram to Bridge Street where she travelled by the Subway to Merkland Street.

Entering the cold, empty flat at Caird Drive, it was clear Sandy had been required to work another 'emergency night shift' with Helen. Myra switched on the radio at low volume, lit the gas fire and drank a pot of tea while the electric immerser heated the water cylinder. She washed her hair, took a quick bath then ate a full breakfast while listening to the news on the radio. So far there was no mention of the fire.

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By 8:00 a.m., Myra was back at her desk in "Goods Receiving" at SCWS Morrison Street, ready to face another normal Friday. At 11:30 am she called Hilary at Henning & Henning to learn the news of JP's resignation and to re-arrange her review of the MMF files for the following Thursday.

The late afternoon editions of most Glasgow newspapers headlined with a picture of the spectacular blaze which had lit the hills to the south-west of the city when the derelict property known as *Tower Ridge* caught fire in unexplained circumstances.

Living with Myra

During the following week, an exposé revealed the remains of the arsonist had been found at the scene, clutching a Zippo lighter. (This was the lighter which Rene Boyle had carelessly left at Kirklee on the day of her dismissal years earlier.) It was clear, the journalist opined, the man had made a serious error, allowing himself insufficient time to escape and had thus become engulfed in the inferno he had brought upon himself while committing this senseless act. As padding, there was also a psychological profile of famous arsonists concluding few were originals and almost all were thrill-seeking copycats.

A side bar recounted the history of *Tower Ridge* which had until the mid-thirties been a residential school for gifted children nurtured by the Roman Catholic Church and run by the well-known Monsignor Creity. Over many years these brilliant children had gone on to occupy positions of power and trust throughout Great Britain and its Commonwealth, to the great credit of Monsignor Creity and his dedicated staff.

A police spokesman had responded with a statement:

"Regarding these missing persons . . . every channel is still being investigated vigorously to locate the whereabouts of our missing ACC and the clergyman, although it is now feared both must have been caught up in an inexplicable tragedy. . . We have checked at"

Living with Myra

Secret Admirer

When Myra drove back from Kirklee to collect JP's corpse she was not, as she believed, alone and unobserved. The common service lane at the rear of Newton Place was shared with the rear aspect of a parallel street called Woodside Place. Sergeant Thomson was standing directly across from the rear of Henning & Henning in the car park of a similar town house, where he had been checking back doors and basement windows. On hearing the quiet purr of a car approaching, he stepped back into a doorway and watched. As the figure left the car, dressed in overalls and wellingtons, he had thought it was a man but when she pulled a woollen hat from her large bag and tucked her hair under it, he caught the distinctive profile of Myra's face.

He checked his watch - 12.13 a.m..

When she had returned driving a different car, it did not entirely surprise him. Thomas Thomson knew quite a lot about Myra Kaywood aka Maria Davina Gallagher. Although her behaviour was suspicious, so far as he knew she had done nothing illegal.

From what Hugh Barclay had revealed in the aftermath of Sadie Kaywood's death, Myra's new husband had many problems. Hugh had predicted the Kaywood marriage would not last. Thomas's interest in her had been sparked when, as a fledging police cadet, he had attended Skerry's College to learn short-hand and typing to help him with his police work. This course had been suggested and funded by his father. Entering the classroom on the first night, Thomas had immediately remembered Mrs Myra Kaywood, the young woman with the strangely attractive face and stunning film star figure. He saw she still wore her wedding ring and now a huge engagement ring. Curious about why Myra Kaywood had enrolled as Mrs Maria Davina Gallagher, Thomas had climbed the stairs at Caird Drive in the early hours one morning to check if the nameplate on the door still depicted: "A. Kaywood".

As the course concluded, Thomas, after a slow start, had finished in the top group. "Maria Davina Gallagher" had taken first place, earning an exceptional 100% in every class test and in the final exams. In the months which followed, Mrs Myra Kaywood/Gallagher had become one of Thomas Thomson's many 'special projects', as he thought of them. Nothing of these projects was ever written down, everything stored in his memory, available for instant recall.

Living with Myra

He had carried out a postal self-test and discovered he had an Intelligent Quotient of 163. To be sure this was not a fluke, he had repeated this several times with different testing organisations and each time his high IQ was confirmed.

During his overnight patrols when based at Partick Police Station, he had observed her strange nocturnal outings, catching her prowling the streets of the Dowanhill area in the small hours with her large handbag, sometimes totting a heavy travel bag. He had briefly entertained the notion she might be a burglar but could unearth no evidence to support this, either from watching her or from checking dates of her movements against the Incident Book at the station.

Several times he had spotted her leaving Merkland Street Subway station late at night, usually wearing her long gabardine raincoat or, more rarely, dressed as a tart, arousing lurid and forbidden desires. On a few occasions, he had trailed her to Caird Drive and stood in the shadows of her back court, staring up at the occasional tiny chinks of light around the edges of the blackout screen of her bathroom window. He knew from Hugh Barclay her husband worked nightshift at Barr and Stroud and surmised she would be in the flat alone. After what he imagined was a long hot bath, another image which aroused him greatly, the bathroom light would be extinguished, releasing him from his fantasy to resume his patrol duties.

When he had been transferred from Partick to Cranstonhill Police Station to understudy Campbell Laird, Myra had fallen out of his nightly orbit. Since then he had spotted her on a few occasions in the Charing Cross area, dressed as a business woman, as he had seen her a few hours earlier, his first sighting since August.

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As soon as Myra entered Henning & Henning, Thomas crossed the dark lane and checked the car's number plate. He had seen this Austin Fourteen several times before and knew it was garaged at a fancy house in Kirklee, a place where she often spent evenings and sometimes stayed overnight. This rekindled another fantasy. Although it was outside his beat, he had watched this house often and knew it was occupied only when Myra stayed over. The idea of the Kirklee mansion as a lovers' secret rendezvous again took hold and once more Thomas enjoyed the idea of following her there one evening to use the pretext of checking her blackout screens hoping, somehow, to persuade her to share her bed with him.

Thomson moved back to the shadow of the doorway at the rear of Woodside Place to wait and see what transpired.

Living with Myra

In the Henning & Henning offices a few lights came on, but only for short periods. Time passed slowly. When the last of the lights went out Myra re-appeared, opened the rear passenger door of the Austin and placed her large travel bag inside, leaving the door open. A few minutes later she emerged from Henning & Henning hauling a tube-shaped package. After a short struggle, she shoved and pulled it into the car and closed the doors. She returned to the building and, after several minutes, left for a final time, closed the back door and fished inside her handbag for the keys. She started the car but kept its lights off as she reversed carefully into the lane.

Thomas wondered if what he had just witnessed was theft. If so, perhaps Hilary might be complicit or get blamed as she had given her keys to Mrs Kaywood, if what the Kaywood woman had said was true. To satisfy his curiosity all he needed to do was step from the shadows into the lane and block her exit and ask what the package contained. Instead, mainly arising from a desire to get to know Myra Kaywood better and hoping to gain some 'hold' over her, Thomson decided to let her leave unchallenged. He must first check if the Morris was registered at Hilary's Crossmyloof address. If his cousin did own a nearly new car then she was doing well and any scandal might affect her adversely. He would check before he acted. If he made a false or unfounded accusation, as he had done several times in his 'raw' days, this firm of solicitors might cause him serious trouble. Thomas was already hatching another plan and he knew where Myra Kaywood lived and, probably, where she was heading - the house at Kirklee.

He checked his watch - 1.19 a.m..

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As the car turned out of the lane, he moved across to check the back door to Henning & Henning. It was locked. Using his set of skeleton keys, he entered. In the unlikely event he was discovered, he would claim he had found it lying open. Locked inside, he began his inspection. The floor of the corridor was again wet, smelling strongly of disinfectant. A thought flashed - perhaps what he had seen was Myra removing a carpet which had been stained by Hilary's vomit, intending to have it cleaned.

Moving slowly, using his torch, Thomas made his way around the building, opening doors and rifling through desks but did not steal anything. It was information he was seeking, not wealth. If a crime had been committed, he wanted justice, something the Courts did not always deliver. Thomas the policeman had learned this fact by bitter and often humiliating experiences, as defence lawyers danced around his evidence, weaving their fancy words until overburdened prosecutors gave in without a proper fight.

Living with Myra

Opening a door at the far end of the basement corridor, he discovered a cramped office area. The reek of alcohol offended his nostrils which led him to a particular desk. The papers heaped on it suggested it was used by a man called John Phillip Owen. In the top drawer of Owen's desk, he found a nearly empty bottle of Black and White whisky, its remaining contents spilled.

When he had checked this room earlier, there had been no such smell: this must have been done by Mrs Kaywood, unless there had been an accomplice who had left by the main front door. Why lead a trail to Owen? Who was he?

Intrigued, Thomas sat in the man's chair and switched on his desk light. As he pulled the chair closer, easing his long legs under the desk, his knees thumped against something.

Suspecting what he would find, he hauled the desk out from the wall. The handles of its front-facing drawer had been removed to allow the desk to fit flush with the wall. He eased the drawer open to discover it was stuffed with brown foolscap envelopes, each containing batches of photographs of young children, mostly naked or partly clothed. A thickly-made brown cardboard box contained hundreds of negatives. Although he had no direct experience of child molestation cases, he had studied the problem as part of his training and knew on the rare occasions when such perverts were brought to court, they almost always weaselled out, usually with the help of a glib-talking lawyer. It was well-known in police circles these people operated in a cabal, covering up for each other, sharing their 'conquests' through lurid snaps. It was rumoured a few senior members of the judiciary were involved.

He reset the desk as it had been, collected the odious materials and moved upstairs, his thoughts ranging ahead, exploring scenarios, turning over what had occurred earlier, trying to make sense of Myra Kaywood's actions, trying to imagine what had occurred inside Henning & Henning's premises *before* he had tested the rear entry door and found it unlocked. The seed of an idea planted itself. Perhaps the package he had seen Myra bundle into her car had been the corpse of the man Owen. He could not imagine her involvement with him but if this came out, linking these pornographic images with Henning & Henning, Hilary's name would be certain to come up, and Myra's. The scandal could ruin both women, probably to no real purpose. Still undecided, he climbed to Reception and placed the bundle of envelopes and the box on the receptionist's desk. A familiar smell assailed his nostrils. He picked up the poker; its blade was clean, damp. He checked his memory: it had been missing earlier, when he had sat here drinking tea.

Living with Myra

Moving to the inner door, he shone his beam through the glass panel and stared again at the lone envelope standing on its end at the nearside corner of the large basket. Earlier, while waiting on old man Laird to finish his storytelling session, Thomas had puzzled on this and had finally concluded any such letter was very unlikely to have landed like this if it had been posted from outside through the heavy spring-loaded inner flap of the letterbox. The inner door yielded to his skeleton keys as did the small padlock securing the lid of the letter basket. He held the envelope and stared at it for a long time. It bore no stamp and was not franked which meant it was not officially Royal Mail. However, he knew it was still a serious offence to open private correspondence.

He found Hilary's desk upstairs, sat in her seat and switched on her desk light. The typeface on the envelope matched with other items she had typed. Using her letter-knife, he slit the envelope and read the resignation letter, signed in green ink. After a few minutes, he reached for her waste bin and scrabbled until he found all the tiny scraps of paper showing traces of green ink.

Ten minutes later he had assembled sufficient of the jigsaw to reveal Hilary's subterfuge. To Thomas, it seemed certain his cousin had been directly involved in the murder of the odious JP Owen, abetted, possibly after the fact, by Myra Kaywood.

Thomas smiled. Owen and his like deserved to die. As did many other low lives he could name, including Spoonie, the rogue cop who had been moved constantly from one police station to another until recently dumped on Cranstonhill after a short spell at Shawlands. PC Samuel Witherspoon had recently become another of Thomas's special projects: Spoonie had called off from the previous evening shift with his eighth bout of diarrhoea in twelve weeks, seven of which had 'coincidentally' occurred when he was paired with Thomas.

Thomas slipped a new envelope into Hilary's typewriter and retyped:

"Mr Herbert Henning, Senior Partner."

He returned JP's resignation envelope to the wire basket, this time correctly placed, relocked the padlock and the inner door. He raked the embers then added a few lumps to give new heart to the fire. When the flames licked upwards he added the envelopes one by one, watching as they were cremated to a light grey ash which sailed up the chimney. The box of negatives was slower to burn but when it did, it gave off a kaleidoscope of bright colours.

Living with Myra

Feeling lighter in his heart, he returned upstairs to the Conference Room and took the pile of MMF files to Hilary's desk to make use of her desk light.

He checked his watch - 2:33 a.m.. He opened the files and began reading from the oldest to the most recent entries, creating a clear record in his mind of what he found. He read quickly, actively and accurately, as he had trained himself to do, flicking backwards and forwards, checking dates and amounts, taking snapshots in his mind of key pages. Three hours later he shut the file and smiled.

Although Thomas did not yet have a full understanding of what he had just read, it was clear the MMF was a wealthy benevolent fund which was directed solely at the behest of Mrs Myra Kaywood acting on behalf of a mysterious philanthropist. He had learned the MMF owned many properties, including the Kirklee house. What was clear was Mrs Myra Kaywood was a complex woman who had a heart of gold. Where the money came from to fund her operations Thomas could only speculate. The idea of a benevolent authoress did not ring true to Thomas. His first thoughts included gambling, possibly horse racing, as she had a car and could move around, or poker, which could involve very high stakes in the right company, he had heard. He decided to take the information away, in his head, to consider in detail later.

He switched off Hilary's desk light and replaced the MMF files on the Conference Room table, checked his internal photographs to be sure he was leaving everything as he had found it. The corridor to the back door was now dry and the smell of disinfectant faint.

On leaving the premises, he checked his watch - 5:42 a.m..

As he walked back to Cranstonhill to make his report and sign off from duty, Thomas Thomson allowed the image of Myra's leering smile from the doorway infuse his mind. She fancies me, he told himself, picturing himself calling at Kirklee to test his theory to be invited in for a night of passion.

Living with Myra

Last Lap

November 1944.

The War was almost over, everyone said so. The 'blackout' had been replaced by the 'dimout' which was being widely ignored. The air raid sirens were silent. The power of ARP Wardens was on the wane. The remnant who still patrolled intermittently had morphed into cheerful and friendly advisors, rather than the petty dictators they had recently been. Men were being demobilised (demobbed), at first in penny numbers but soon there was a steady flow. All were expecting to return to their old jobs.

At Barr & Stroud, all War work on new periscopes and range finders had been suspended. Nightshift working, which had become intermittent in June, was now permanently ended and the elite Install Team disbanded. Some W-T Only workers, mainly women, had been laid off. There was talk of a massive clear-out. The firm were looking to post-war markets. The War Department gravy train had hit the buffers.

Since he had been forced to work dayshifts, Sandy had been obsessing over this situation. He was looking about, ready to jump before he was pushed, as he had advised Myra many times, raking over the minutiae of who had said what to whom, advising her of the hot news on a daily basis.

In September, *The Glasgow Herald* ran a spread on Weirs of Cathcart, outlining their involvement in Middle East oilfields and stating they would soon be needing people. Sandy agreed, the grapevine had mentioned it, but Weirs was too far away, he had complained. Myra realised part of his fear was he had never worked anywhere but Barr & Stroud. She typed a letter of application to Weirs on his behalf, setting out his credentials, emphasising his vast experience and leadership talents. She badgered him and reluctantly he signed. Myra posted it and they waited. There was no immediate response.

Myra explained to Sandy he was not alone in seeking pastures new. He must be patient, the first flush of men returning from the forces would probably be given priority. Sandy shook his head in gloom, whining about the unfairness of his predicament. Myra tried to encourage him, pointing out repeatedly he was a very highly-skilled toolroom turner and experienced fitter. He was the right type, the right age, fit and healthy, well-liked with an exemplary attendance record. He must not give up hope. At this Sandy smiled, his face

Living with Myra

reddened, and he became bashful, self-conscious. Whenever he slumped again into pessimism, Myra repeated her praise and gradually Sandy began to believe in himself.

Some evenings, when she became exasperated by his endless round of scratching at his situation, she gave up, took a bath and locked herself in her bedroom. Even then she often heard him droning at Billy, either restating his fears or trying to boost his self-confidence by regurgitating what she had said in his praise. To shut him out she turned up her bedside radio or pulled the blankets over her head. At least on Saturdays Myra could take herself to the Mitchell Library to continue her research.

The occasions when Helen was 'not in the mood' were the worst. It meant having Sandy under her feet, pacing around, spinning endlessly through the Kitchen radio channels for something to hold his interest. Myra had become very used to a parallel life with evenings to herself, living not as his wife but as his surrogate sister.

The pressure of co-habiting with Sandy was an increasing strain, making Myra snappy. Since Ralph, sex for Myra/Rita had been relegated to the back burner. The only prospect she could imagine was Sergeant Thomson. As she lay in the bath then later in her bed, she toyed with the idea of meeting him casually somewhere, off duty, perhaps near his home, perhaps on Byres Road, and inviting him to inspect the security arrangements at Kirklee. However, after her recent experience with Powdenhill, Myra was nervous of this man with intelligent blue eyes who might uncover her secrets. Rita had proved a disaster with Ralph.

As a last resort, she tried staying over at Kirklee, explaining her absence to Sandy as business trips. He had long since stopped asking about her work and did not seem to realise she was no longer based at St George's. Living at Kirklee part-time did not work well. Everything there reminded her of her fleeting encounter with Saul. Several times she was jolted awake by images from Lazarus House, visited by the grotesque remnant of the lost man with his pleading, manic stare. She resolved when the time was right, she would sell Kirklee and donate the proceeds to Lazarus House.

Encouraged by Myra, Sandy returned to his regime of many years earlier with evening training runs on his racer, willing to sally forth in any weather conditions. It seemed clear to Myra where these nocturnal jaunts were taking him and she told herself she must be thankful for the solitude, allowing her to return to her writing. Now he did not have the excuse of 'emergency shifts', Sandy did not have the courage to stay overnight with

Living with Myra

Helen. Returning late, frequently after midnight, he crept in furtively, immediately retiring to bed, careful not to disturb Myra as she typed at the Kitchen table.

Based on conversations overheard daily in the Goods Receiving section at Morrison Street and in long queues at food shops, crowded subway trains and trams, her recent stories were now taking a new turn. They focussed on the difficulties which demobbed men and their wives were experiencing after the initial euphoria had passed and were confined to live again cheek by jowl, often in cramped accommodation. Because of the acute housing shortage, many newly married couples with a child on the way were now living with relatives or as sub-tenants of widows or spinsters, sharing kitchens and toilets. Added to their woes were the continuing deprivations of shortages and rationing. The settled arrangements which had developed during the War were being turned topsy-turvy by the coming peace.

For reasons never explained, some weekends now seemed to be 'unsuitable' for Helen. Myra wondered if she had found another 'friend' to entertain, maybe an old boyfriend now home and available. It was this thought which prompted Myra to write the first draft of a new story for Sandy.

Living with Myra

Bye-Bye Billy

Now thirty-five, Sandy was balding quickly. With wisps of grey in the remains of his once jet-black hair, he sported a salted moustache and goatee beard, a recent development. The balance in his passbook showed £390-12-6, confirming he had built up his savings again. It was now in a different hiding place, under the aspidistra in his bedroom, inside a small black oilskin bag.

Despite his strenuous regime of 'training runs' he was noticeably heavier around the waist. His constipation had eased, probably due to the ministrations of Helen, who had worked the oracle where Myra had failed: Sandy now ate greens and had been persuaded to try soups in various mixtures, carrying these to Caird Drive in jam jars in his panniers. No one could make soup like Helen, he opined.

He had slept dry for two years, he suddenly proclaimed, out of the blue.

His pill bottle was no longer hidden. This secret had been revealed during his fifteen-hour 'confession' after the Clydebank Blitz. It contained nineteen pills, his backstop protection against the return of his nightmares. This number had been constant for months. Myra removed twelve and waited. He did not react.

Now he seemed to be cured, she was ready to grant him the divorce he needed to make Helen an honest woman.

The scuttlebutt at Barr and Stroud was all about Weirs, who had won a big order: men were needed, urgently. Sandy's mood changed. In a whispered conversation with Billy, she overheard him tell the budgie several of his colleagues had moved there and had promised to put in a good word for him with the manager in charge of hiring, a man called Dougal White. All he had to do was wait, his friends would do the rest.

Myra immediately wrote to this man, including a carbon copy of her earlier letter, signing the new letter on Sandy's behalf, without his knowledge. A reply followed by return post, asking Sandy to start at Cathcart at his earliest convenience, as soon as his present employer could spare him. Weirs would match his present wage for a trial period of three months, thereafter an increase would be considered. If he was willing, he could apply for night-shift working, which would be starting soon.

Living with Myra

Myra had considered refurbishing Gordon Galbraith's flat in Highburgh Road, but it was too near Caird Drive - she had no wish to meet Sandy and his future family by chance. The problem solved itself when a letter arrived at the MMF from John MacAuley. It advised a neighbour of Mrs Elizabeth Hennery had called to his office to deposit the keys for Granny Nellis's old flat at Tantallon Road. Since the demise of her husband to lung cancer, Mrs Hennery had decided to re-locate to Liverpool to reside with her eldest daughter, also called Elizabeth. In his letter, Mr MacAuley explained the Hennery family had accumulated three years of rent arrears and outstanding factor's bills, a recurring default which he had highlighted in his monthly reports, he emphasised.

Myra lodged a personal cheque with the MMF account to settle the monies outstanding from the Hennery tenancy then held a meeting with John MacAuley to discuss her plans for the building. The factor then wrote to the other tenants to advise the vacated flat was to be renovated, re-decorated, including re-painting of the common close and upgrading it to electric lighting. The letter also detailed the process of upgrading envisaged by the owner, to include gas fires, an immersion heater, new wiring, re-plumbing and new sanitary ware. Should other tenants wish to participate in this upgrading process they could do so either for a one-off payment of £35, or agree to re-pay this amount to the owner over a period of years at 3/- per week, free of interest. The work would be put in hand as a matter of urgency as a new tenant had been identified for the vacant flat.

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On Friday 8th December 1944, Myra rang John MacAuley on his newly installed telephone to check the work on Granny Nellis's flat at Tantallon Road had been completed as promised. On her way home, she called at his office to collect three sets of keys. The following day, she visited Granny Nellis's old house to check everything was to her satisfaction. On her return to Caird Drive, Sandy was absent. She checked Celia's cellar and his racer was missing. He did not return until after midnight, by which time she was in bed, sitting up reading her copy of *Woman's Realm*, listening to the radio at low volume.

On Sunday morning Sandy was up and out by seven o'clock, despite the driving sleet. When he returned after lunchtime he did not realise she was in her bedroom, stripping and changing her bedclothes. She waited in silence expecting him to make his usual report to Billy:

'Well, Billy, are you surprised to see me? Aye, well I'm back here because old Aunt Vera's coming over from Paisley where she has this big house with a garden. It seems she's a bit of a snob. Her father was a minister, a Wee Free. Aye, Billy, you know the kind, nebbly,

Living with Myra

stingy and self-righteous. Helen says she never found a man good enough. Well, Billy, it seems Aunt Vera's struggling with arthritis, getting slower and slower. So, if Helen and the kids go and live with her, she says she'll change her Will and give the house to Helen when she dies. Aye, you're right, Billy, it would be a big upset for the kids. I've given Helen my tuppence worth but, well, she's swithering. Between you and me son, the kids don't like their old auntie all that much. She's a bit quick with her hands, slapping their legs if they speak when she's speaking. Aye, Billy, it's a right tricky one. You see son, Helen's place is just too wee and the kids are growing fast and, well, it's making it tricky for canoodling. Aye, Billy, it's a right bummer.'

After a late breakfast fry-up, he sat across from her, at the other end of the kitchen table, his end, with a sheet of newspaper spread to protect it, as she had insisted. In the background, quietly, the Kitchen radio was providing dance music. Myra was typing, Sandy was working on his latest project, building a Spitfire from balsa wood and fabric. He had been working on this model on and off for weeks. The acrid smell of glue and doping agent was making her nose run, smarting her eyes, making her fingers miss the keys, making it impossible to concentrate on her story.

Sandy piped, 'Did I tell you John Barnes has started a Model Aeroplane Club. If I can get this one to fly well-enough, I'm going to join.' (This was the fifth time he had told her this gem.) 'You know, Myra, I've always wanted to build aeroplanes. If Uncle Albie. . .'

'Sandy, NO! Give over on Uncle Albie, for goodness sake, please.'

'Aye, well, I could have gone to University, if . . .'

'Sandy, for the last time, will you desist from this childishness, please. Can't you see the horrible fume from your chemicals is affecting me?'

'Sorry. Five more minutes, then I'll finish up. All right?'

'Do you want another cuppa?'

'Thanks. Look, sorry Myra. It's just I'm nervous. Look at my hands, they're shaking.'

'You must be coming down with a cold, maybe the 'flu, after all those long hard hours in the saddle. Such dedication to cycling and fitness - you should get a medal.'

'No, no, I'm fine. It's the new job. Well, to tell you the truth, it's a bit nerve racking.'

'You'll be fine, Sandy. There's not a better fitter/turner in Glasgow, which you well know. Who else can say they've been all over the world fitting periscopes and range-finders?'

'Well Myra, I am the best left at Barr & Stroud, I'll give you that. But well, over there, on the South Side, maybe they do things differently.'

'Tomorrow is your first day?'

Living with Myra

'Aye, it's a seven-twenty-three start. It'll be a long day. Aye, I'll need to leave right early. It takes forty-eight minutes, providing the wind is light. Not just 'round the corner, like Barr and Stroud. Aye, and it'll be hellish if it's raining.'

'So, Sandy, you did a trial run over to Weirs today? Through a downpour?'

'Eh, well, no, no. I did it yesterday. Actually, I went 'round to see Helen and the kids this morning. She said the other day her tap washer was dripping and I was worried it might burst and flood the place. Aye, now Harry's away, she sort of depends on me.'

'Sandy, I think we should move on, both of us, and stop pretending. What do you think?'

'What?'

'Is Helen the one you want now?'

'Oh, so you know about us, do you? You've been spying on us? Haven't you?'

'Sandy, don't be silly. It's obvious. Your whole conversation is about Helen and her three children, as it has been almost from the minute you started at the allotments. Now, before I say 'yes' to a divorce, are you sure she's the one? You'd make a good catch for many a lonely widow, especially one with three kids to look out for.'

His eyes bubbled up with tears:

'Excuse me Myra; I need to go to the bathroom. No, don't worry, it's all right, I'll be back in a minute, promise.'

It took only an hour of talking to convince him. She explained she had spoken on his behalf to Mr MacAuley their factor. The rent for Tantallon Road would be equivalent to Helen Hunter's existing rent. Sandy had mentioned several times over the years this was a heavy burden to her, even though it was very much less than the rent Lizzie had seldom paid. Myra gave him the envelope with the address and two sets of keys inside. He said he would look at it on the way home after work then go directly to Garrloch Road to talk it over with Helen. He would probably stay over at her place tomorrow night, if this was alright with Myra. Yes, he had spare underwear, shirts and a shaving kit at Helen's, he admitted.

It was Wednesday evening before she saw him again, briefly: Helen loved the house at Tantallon Road. The proposal was acceptable to her, to both of them.

The new Mr and Mrs Kaywood would be unaware of the difference in their rent from the amounts paid by the other tenants in their close, not until many years later when the matter arose in a casual conversation with a neighbour.

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Living with Myra

On Saturday 16th December, Sandy returned to Caird Drive with a flitting lorry to collect the agreed items and his personal effects. Myra was elsewhere, attending a pre-Christmas soiree, at Sir John's house, on the Pollok Estate, an invitation which had surprised and intrigued her. Bill Brotherton would meet her at Bridge Street Subway, with a car, as the letter sent to the MMF via Henning & Henning had explained.

Billy the Budgie travelled in the cab of the lorry, on Helen's knee, Celia reported. The kids travelled on the lorry, on the back, with Sandy, sitting together on an almost new sofa Myra had donated as their 'engagement' present. She had already arranged for new beds and bedding to be delivered to Tantallon Road, her 'wedding gift' to the new couple. The actual divorce papers would take months to process, but she had agreed to Sandy's suggestion; with immediate effect Helen would be Mrs Helen Kaywood, to be fully ratified at Martha Street registry office in due course. Their new neighbours would never learn of the Kaywood family's past. For Sandy, Helen and her kids, their lives would start anew.

Myra had already placed her order for replacement modern items of furniture for Caird Drive. Because of war shortages she would be obliged to wait, but not as long as most other Co-op shareholders, given her new influence at Morrison Street as a valued if recent member of the Goods Receiving team.

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Myra's twenty-fourth birthday passed without a card from anyone, not even Daisy or Hilary. Sandy had never given a card or present. On the following Saturday, she celebrated by booking a special treatment at the new beauty salon on Byres Road. The package included a facial, eyebrows, nails and a full perm. On leaving the salon, she went directly to the *haute couture* fashion floor at *Copland and Lye* on Sauchiehall Street and shopped for a new winter coat, choosing one in cobalt blue cashmere with matching shoes. On her return, she avoided Caird Drive and went to Kirklee where she bathed and then, dressed to kill, ordered a taxi and dined alone at Rogano's in Royal Exchange Square.

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Myra's divorce was finalised on Thursday 4th October, 1945.

She retained her title as Mrs Myra Kaywood and her 'tenancy' of Caird Drive.

Miss Fraser read the notice in the Courts section of *The Glasgow Herald*. A flood tide of gossip roared through the close at Caird Drive until the storm of speculation calmed and the familiar and comforting heave of normal neighbourliness returned.

Living with Myra

"Poor Mrs Kaywood - she is well rid of him. What an odd little man, always coming and going at strange times. He took away all her nice furniture too! I just hope she finds someone more appropriate, someone of her own class. She is young enough yet, and still very attractive. Did you know, one time he actually. . ."

It would be many years before Sandy and Myra Kaywood would meet again.

Living with Myra

Inspecting the Nest

Free of her sham marriage, Myra settled to write her story for Lady Miriam, the woman who she suspected had paved the way for JP Owen to take up his post at Henning & Henning. This required working evenings and weekends at the Mitchell Library and several visits to Stirling's Commercial Library, where the Post Office Directory for the London borough of Mayfair proved most helpful.

At Goods Receiving, Myra was now in charge of ledgers, consigned to a dismal, windowless office crowded with filing cabinets and an ancient desk. Crucially, however, she had a direct-line external telephone.

By Friday 26th January, 1945, she was ready to act. She locked herself in the office and made a trunk call, purporting to be Margery Marsdene, a solicitor from Richard Mellon and Partners, Edinburgh. Miss Marsdene was attempting to contact Miriam Creity, the long-lost niece of a Mrs Miriam Stoddard, recently deceased. Miss Marsdene was tasked with the settlement of the deceased's substantial estate. The telephone at the Cunliffe residence was answered by a brusque man who announced himself simply as "Fairweather". Myra took this person to be a butler or private secretary. On the first occasion, as she started with her confection, he interrupted: "Her Ladyship is not at home to impromptu telephone callers. Write and make an appointment.". He replaced the handset without waiting for her reply. Myra telephoned the railway booking office and transferred her pre-paid first-class sleeper reservation to the following Friday evening.

On the next Friday, Myra called again. This time Fairweather listened to her tale and asked her to hold while he "consulted". After a few minutes, he advised she "must put the matter in writing". Once more she telephoned and re-booked her sleeper for the following week.

On the third attempt Fairweather advised: "Her Ladyship is travelling.". Margery then asked for Lord Cunliffe to be told he was "greatly indisposed" and therefore "unavailable". Fairweather then added although it was "irregular", if Miss Marsdene cared to leave her telephone number, he would make a note and advise Her Ladyship at the first opportunity. Myra provided the telephone number for the Secretary of the Edinburgh Zoological Society which Fairweather duly reiterated by way of a check.

Living with Myra

A few days later a short piece in *The Glasgow Herald* told of the sad death of the influential Lord Neville Cunliffe, a man who had spent several years in Scotland at the height of the blitz, residing with Lady Miriam at *Tower Ridge*, the grand edifice recently destroyed in an arson attack. This gave the editor an opportunity to re-run the previous story with its spectacular pictures of the blaze at its height and the gruesome aftermath of smoking, smouldering ruins with an ambulance in shot and two men loading a stretcher with the remains of the arsonist.

After a decent interval of two weeks, on Friday 23rd February, Margery Marsdene telephoned again. This time Lady Miriam answered at the second ring, startling Myra who had expected Fairweather. Myra switched to a younger version of Celia Glover's voice and asked if she was connected to the home of Rabbi Goldstein. Lady Cunliffe slammed the telephone down without reply. Myra now knew her suspect was in residence at her Mayfair home.

Later, Myra caught a tram from Kirklee to the centre of Glasgow, heading for Central Station where she collected her sleeper ticket and boarded the overnight train for London. It was the first time she had travelled outside Scotland and she was nervous, unable to sleep as the train made its slow progress through the night to arrive in London behind schedule.

The purpose of this trip was to attempt to prove if Lady Miriam was indeed the same person as "MCC" referred to in Powdenhill's list. Retribution, if required, would occur only if the opportunity presented itself.

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On arrival, Myra made her way to Mayfair. From mid-morning, she patrolled the streets and service lanes in the vicinity of the Cunliffe mansion, trying to gain an understanding of how such grand houses operated.

At 7:30 p.m., the first of the guests began to arrive by taxi or chauffeur-driven limousine. Every visitor was well dressed and clearly affluent, chattering and calling out in upper crust accents as they mounted the grand stairs. By 8:00 p.m., twenty-two men and eight women had been welcomed at the front door by Lady Miriam wafting her long cigarette holder, wearing a lime green evening gown with long matching gloves and a white fur stole. Myra had seen no children enter, which made her suspicious.

When the flow of guests lessened, she moved to the service lane at the rear of the premises and was just in time to see a Hackney cab arrive. A woman wearing a headscarf

Living with Myra

ushered three young girls wearing party frocks and two thin boys dressed in oversized school uniforms towards the Tradesmen's entrance and rang the bell. The children disappeared inside. The woman lit a cigarette then sauntered back to the taxi which whisked her away.

At 11:00 p.m., the Hackney cab returned and the woman collected the children and drove away. A few minutes later a second cab arrived and this time a young man collected four party dress girls and a tiny boy dressed in a cowboy outfit. The boy looked about three years old. After a short wait, Myra raced to the front of the house and watched as the stream of vehicles collected departing guests who were shooed away theatrically by their hostess.

Myra now realised she was up against the ruling elite, or one segment of it. She had noted the registration and the taxi numbers for both Hackney cabs but was unsure how to trace their drivers. She thought of contacting Frank to ask for advice, but quickly rejected the notion, afraid to lose control and perhaps risk exposing him to harm.

Early next morning, Sunday, she repeated her patrols, intent on gathering information about a way of life danced to a tune which she knew nothing of. The main thing she took back to Glasgow on the noon train was the front door of the Cunliffe mansion was used only for formal occasions. Lady Miriam's comings and goings, deliveries, staff movements and the like all occurred via the rear Tradesmen's entrance.

Back home at her typewriter in Caird Drive, when she tried to plot a story of how to tackle this nest of vermin she found she was 'dry'. She deduced she needed to gain experience of how these people lived in order to get a 'feel' for her prey, concluding her attacks would require a massive effort involving considerable planning and energy.

Living with Myra

Impetus

During the weeks after her excursion to Mayfair, Myra remained on high alert, fearful and suspicious of everyone. Since the night she had eliminated JP, she had carried the silenced pistol with her at all times, concealed in her large black handbag, even keeping it at her bedside, as Nathan Schofield had done.

Using the notebooks from Powdenhill and Owen, she had researched these distant men and women. The rich and famous were relatively easy to find but many others remained anonymous. However, now Myra understood the extent and apparent power of this elite group, she was convinced they would not allow her destruction of their Glasgow network to pass without seeking retribution. From the way Ralph had behaved at the start of their 'affair', Myra was reasonably sure the hierarchy of the Tiger Eye Circle had convinced themselves she must have accomplices, unable to accept such a lowly person as Mrs Myra Kaywood was their sole adversary. As Lady Miriam had cackled during Myra's stay at *Tower Ridge*, she was "only a mere slip of a girl".

Afraid to draw attention to anyone close to her who might, by association, be placed in danger, Myra reduced her contact with Hilary and Daisy. She had not made any close friends at Morrison Street and now there was no Sandy or Billy, she was completely alone. Her only emotional outlet, her refuge, was her story-writing, and while she waited for inspiration on how to tackle MCC and her cohort, she began to plot a wartime thriller in which a lone woman spy was being pursued through enemy territory by many ruthless agents determined to capture, interrogate and torture her to make her reveal her secrets.

To wait for the Tiger Eye Circle to come after her again was not in Myra's nature. Increasingly her mind was steeling itself for a pre-emptive strike. As her thriller evolved she became convinced she must soon leave Glasgow behind to approach her quarry by stealth, take them by surprise on their home turf. Facing the prospect she might not survive, for the first time in years she made an early morning visit to St Peter's where she found comfort sitting behind a scattering of elderly people she now recognised as her from her neighbourhood. Myra did not make her Confession or take Mass but sitting alone in the back row she prayed for help and guidance and was answered by a strong conviction what she was planning was 'approved' and her work would be 'blessed'.

Living with Myra

In preparation for her departure she briefed John MacAuley, asking him to take over the maintenance of the external fabric and grounds at Kirklee and the cottage at Gartocharn. Both needed work to retrieve them from the neglect of the recent War years, particularly the cottage. Previously she had kept all knowledge of these two personal properties to herself, preferring to care for them using jobbing gardeners and tradesmen.

She must also devise alternative arrangements for the operation of the MMF Trust to ensure the many people who depended upon it would not be left high and dry if she did not return. Only when these arrangements were in place would she attempt her bold plan.

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By mid-March 1945, with her decision made in principle, Myra was feeling calmer, less vulnerable. One Saturday, on a whim, she decided to visit Kirklee to check on John MacAuley's progress. Planning to stay overnight, she packed what she needed into her travel bag and moved her keys for Kirklee from their hiding place to her handbag and double-checked the pistol was set to "safe". It was late afternoon when she set out from Caird Drive on her twenty-minute walk, taking the shortest route, weaving her way through familiar streets. Although warm for the time of year the sky was overcast, threatening rain from clouds scudding high above.

Striding with her usual quick pace and thinking only of the house and garden, she was unaware she was being followed, albeit at a considerable distance. Although the tall man lost sight of her on several occasions, he was not concerned. His 'person of interest' was following her usual pattern and he was confident of her destination. Since the small hours of the morning in November when she had driven away from Henning & Henning with the large package stuffed into the rear of her car, he had been making discrete enquiries, mulling over all he had learned, revisiting his memories of the MMF ledgers. Satisfied he had pieced the puzzle together, he was ready to make his move and, he hoped, claim his prize.

On arrival at the Kirklee mansion, Myra stopped at the entrance to the driveway to admire the daffodils which grew like weeds everywhere on the lawn rising to the front steps. This was her favourite view of the imposing sandstone house, its windows reflecting the red sky behind her. Walking up the driveway she saw John MacAuley's gardeners had visited. Looking up she saw the gutters had been cleaned and leaks repaired. The exterior paintwork was fresh, glinting in the last rays of the sun. When Powdenhill had hijacked her life, she had let this special place go over many months. Now it was neat and tidy again, her feeling of affection for this house of her dreams welled up and the words spilled onto her lips from deep in her psyche:

Living with Myra

*When this is over, I will find someone to love, someone who wants me like Saul did.
When I find him, we'll make this place our home.*

She moved along the side of the building heading to the rear tradesmen's entrance. Since Rene Boyle's dismissal, Myra had kept the double storm doors at the main entrance closed and barred from the inside and all windows on the ground and first floor permanently shuttered. Only the upper levels had been left as normal, most still with their blackout blinds in place. Now the sun had gone, the rear façade looked black, cold, and foreboding. She shrugged this off, knowing with the lights on and the oil-fired heating turned up, the inside of her house would soon be bright, warm and welcoming.

Looking ahead to a refreshing cup of tea and feeling buoyed by the prospect of a night beside the radiogram with a glass of red wine, she swung down the side of the house to the reinforced rear door, unlocked both locks, re-locking them behind her, her standard procedure. Now secure in familiar surroundings, happy to be 'home', she let out a quiet sigh of pleasure. Along the dim corridor a few paces ahead on her right was the kitchen and to her left the laundry and boiler room. Beyond the boiler room was the narrow staff cloakroom which Saul had used to store his flying clothes and angling equipment. Beyond this room, the corridor dog-legged to the right to connect to the service stairs leading up to the main house. Past the foot of these stairs, the corridor continued to the servants' quarters used when the house had supported a live-in staff of five.

Pushing open the kitchen door with its ornate leaded-glass upper panel depicting a flight of mallard, she reached inside and switched on the overhead light. This revealed a brightly-lit and modernised kitchen dominated by the original large square servants' table with seats for eight. This well-scrubbed table was the only item pre-dating her purchase of the house from the Robinson Trust. Facing her on the far wall was a new gas cooking range. In the middle of the wall to her right was the dark rectangle of the shuttered kitchen window and below it a twin sink with double drainer. In one quick well-practised manoeuvre, Myra breezed forwards, dropped her handbag on the table, draped her coat on a chair, swept the kettle from the stove, and whirled back to fill it at the sink.

A sixth sense raised the hairs on her neck: she knew she was not alone. She sprang forwards and hauled the large chopping knife from its wooden block and turned to face the unknown. In her peripheral vision, she glimpsed a huge blurred figure holding a gun. Instinctively she ducked and ran for safety. The gun fired and missed. As she dived through the open door to the corridor, her foot caught on the travel bag, bringing her to her knees. Her left shoulder thudded into the corridor wall. The knife fell from her hand but she scrabbled and reclaimed it. The gun fired again shattering the glazed upper panel of the kitchen door. She closed her eyes to the shards of glass which exploded around her, filling her hair, then hauled herself to her feet, flew along the corridor and

Living with Myra

threw herself sideways into Saul's cloakroom. As her assailant crashed into the table, the gun exploded a third time hitting the light switch, plunging the kitchen and corridor into darkness.

Now flat against the wall of the cloakroom, she raised the knife above her head, ready to strike.

A deep male voice cursed as he stumbled over her travel bag. He fell heavily, noisily, and swore loudly.

Somewhere in the far distance an urgent voice called her name. It did not make sense.

Was it Saul?

A mixture of rank sweat and stale tobacco reached her nostrils. Her assailant wheezed as he struggled to his feet then stifled a nervous cough as he kicked her travel bag to one side. His feet crunched on broken glass as he edged his way along the dark corridor towards her. His faint shadow came first, then his outstretched arm holding a gun. He shuffled forward and Myra saw the head and shoulders of an enormous man with a huge bull neck. He was wearing a policeman's helmet causing her to gasp in surprise.

As the gun turned towards her, she struck downwards with all her strength. The blade plunged deeply into the side of his neck, severing the carotid artery. Blood spurted, splattering her face and spraying her blouse. Almost at once the flow of blood stopped. Only much later did she understand the point of the blade had sliced into his spinal column, disrupting the nerves connecting the skull to its torso, causing his heart to stop.

His knees folded and as he fell backwards in slow motion, his trigger finger spasmed, causing the automatic weapon to discharge its remaining three bullets into the ceiling of the cloakroom, missing her head by inches. He was dead before he hit the floor. Myra hauled the knife from his neck. The blood was hot and sticky. The air smelled metallic. She reached up and switched on the dim cloakroom light and stared at her enemy, a police constable she had never seen before.

Her internal clock stopped and she was cocooned in a bubble of utter silence.

As she watched, outside herself, blood dripped from the knife onto her shoes. The image of an ice cream cone smothered with raspberry sauce made her giggle like a child.

Living with Myra

The sound of her voice re-started her clock and only then did she hear the frantic voice of a man calling to her, saying she must stay where she was and he would be with her any second. Her first thought was this second man must be an accomplice of the man dead at her feet.

Sobbing, tears blinding her eyes and with blood pounding in her ears, she ran towards her handbag on the kitchen table. Somehow, inexplicably, the rear door was open, cold air swirling towards her from the darkness. A shadowy figure moved towards her, blocking her path. She stabbed at it and a strong hand grabbed her wrist, twisting it expertly, making her drop the knife.

'Stop, Myra, stop. You're safe. It's Thomas, Thomas Thomson.'

Living with Myra

As Deep as the North Sea

To Myra's astonishment, after checking the corpse Thomas had congratulated her. She learned PC Samuel Witherspoon, known as Spoonie, had been a rogue copper, suspected of repeated thefts by breaking and entering to feed his drinking and gambling addictions. Throughout his long inglorious career, Spoonie had been protected by his cousin, Hector MacNeil, another rogue, the man who had been recently promoted to replace the missing ACC Kernaghan. Until this assault on Myra, there had been no record of Spoonie's involvement in serious crimes involving weapons. This confirmed Myra's suspicion the policeman had been sent by the Tiger Eye Circle, a thought she kept to herself.

Spoonie's corpse was locked in the laundry until they decided what to do with it. The broken glass had been swept, the blood mopped away, the body sliced out of its uniform by Myra, his valuables and identifying items bagged in an old leather shopping bag. While Thomas had been mopping the corridor, Myra had secreted the shopping bag in the Schofield secure room. She would study the contents later, when she was alone. She had also taken Spoonie's weapon. If Thomas had noticed, he had said nothing, so far. There had been no extra ammunition on the corpse.

Spoonie would be missed, Thomas had explained, although his fellow officers would secretly rejoice at his disappearance. Spoonie worked under him, based at Cranstonhill and was due to sign off-duty at midnight. Thomas knew from his roster Spoonie had been assigned to patrol the waterfront warehouses in the Broomielaw area. As it was well-known Spoonie often drank on duty, it might be assumed he had stumbled and fallen into the River Clyde. This was the theory Thomas would put forward, with a sent to request the Marine Branch asking they search for him. Despite what might be announced to the press, strenuous efforts would not be made to find PC Witherspoon.

Thomas, who was not in uniform, advised with a wry smile he was off duty until Tuesday morning. Myra had expected questions about why she was at Kirklee, but he had asked none, so far. He had explained his own presence by saying he had spotted her on Highburgh Road and decided to follow her 'to have a personal word', beaming at her, his eyes laughing causing Rita to respond with a come-hither leer. Myra made her excuse and left him lighting the fire in the smaller parlour and went to clean herself and change her clothing.

Living with Myra

Since their brief encounter at Henning & Henning, Thomas Thomson had been the image which Myra had brought to her bed when she pleased herself. Despite her recent trauma, or perhaps because of it, seeing him again made her need urgent. Returning aircrews had been desperate for sex, it had been reported, as if to prove the reality of their survival.

It would take time for the boiler system to heat enough hot water for a proper bath. She filled both kettles and put them on the stove. As the kettles came to the boil, she shredded her soiled clothes, forming bundles which she wrapped with sheets of newspaper, creating a batch of small anonymous parcels to be distributed randomly in dustbins in the Hyndland area over the week ahead. She took the kettles upstairs to her bathroom where she washed her hair then filled a basin and strip-washed while standing in the bath. Satisfied she was clear of blood, she towelled herself dry. Standing before her wardrobe, Myra tried different ensembles against herself, trying to decide what to wear. Rita, naked, leered back from the dressing mirror, demanding the black nightie and panty outfit which had proved so effective on the first wet night when Harry had pitched up soaked through at Caird Drive.

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They had shared the food she had brought and finished a bottle of wine. The new overhead light was too bright and he rose and switched it off. The radiogram played dance music at low volume. Her face was made up as Rita but without her blonde wig. After a short debate with herself, she had opted for black nylons and a red suspender belt to match the black diaphanous nightie and tiny panties. Thomas was sprawled in the fireside chair on the opposite side of the blazing fire with his shirt open, revealing his soft golden chest hair. His stockinged feet rested on a pouffe, his hands folded on his stomach. Their eyes met, checking, laughing. She was pleased he remained silent, allowing her to enjoy her fantasy, imagining him lying naked beside her, upstairs in her bed.

Desire surged through her body, triggering Rita to sit upright, lean forward on the edge of her matching leather chair, posing with her hands stretched sideways, her fingertips resting on its arms, causing her dressing gown to hang open as she leaned forwards to reveal the swell of her breasts and expose her cleavage. Resting one leg on the other, she rocked her foot towards him, her red stiletto with its long heel dangling from her toe, a more sophisticated version of the ploy which had worked on Harry. From time to time she changed from one leg to the other, moving slowly, enjoying the heat of his gaze on the triangle of panty at her crotch. The bulge at his groin and the flush of redness below his Adam's apple showed he too was aroused.

Living with Myra

Rita was ready to take him to her bed but Myra screamed *caution*.

Thomas Thomson was smart, handsome and single; and he was cheeky. He seemed to be everything she had ever wanted but his sharp mind and his profession made him dangerous. Perhaps she must have him only as a lover, like Harry, and never as a soul mate, like Saul.

Her mind swung away and her eyes closed. Tonight's attack showed the Tiger Eye Circle had not given up, although they must have been desperate to send a man who had missed three times at close range. Had JP made an interim report on his findings to MCC? Had JP also been authorised to kill her? Their frontal assaults showed the Tiger Eye Circle somehow knew who she was and where to find her. This meant she must bring her plans forward and make her way south soon to try to fumigate the mother nest in Mayfair. Although this approach would make her vulnerable by forcing her to operate in their territories, there was no other way she could imagine. *Carpe Diem!*

'A penny for your thoughts?'

His voice brought her back to the here and now. Thomas was with her, and clearly willing. She must trust they were safe for a few days. As she opened her eyes he smiled and Myra smiled back:

'Sergeant, do you intend to arrest me?'

'No, madam, on the contrary, perhaps if the world were a fairer place the authorities might strike a special medal for you. It's Inspector now, actually.'

'Well, *Inspector* Thomas Thomson, how shall we dispose of *our* problem?'

'Are you aware, madam, I've put my entire life and my career in jeopardy by becoming your accomplice after the fact. Perhaps the only rational way out of my dilemma is for me is to dispose of *you* also. Do you agree?' he smiled.

'Yes, I suppose I do, Thomas, but of course you're at a significant disadvantage.'

'Pardon?'

'Surely you agree killing people is much easier than escaping detection. Surely it is the disposal of the body which is the challenge?'

'No, but if I was certain the person deserved death, and I knew his or her misdemeanour could not be proved to a court, I might do it.'

'I assume Spoonie was one of those? If so, why did you allow him to live long enough to attack me? I must assume therefore you have never killed anyone, Thomas?'

'I did have a plan, but you got him first.'

'This plan, do tell, please. I'm always open to new ideas, for my story-writing, you understand.'

Living with Myra

'Well, possibly the only wholesome past-time Spoonie had was angling. Since I had the misfortune to inherit him with my command I have been studying his habits. He's always been a loner. He had a boat which he keeps beside his caravan at Inveruglass on Loch Lomond. He gets there by motorbike and goes out fishing and drinking, for hours on end, trolling two long lines behind him, hoping for salmon and sea trout. It's not my idea of fishing. I'm a brown trout man, a fly-fisher. Drinking and fishing is a very dangerous combination, especially if the weather blows up. Like most fishermen Spoonie had several favourite spots, one of which is well-hidden from both sides of the loch. My idea was to wait for a choppy day and row alongside him, whack him with my baton then weigh him down with chain and feed him to the pike. They say the north end of Loch Lomond is deeper than the North Sea, probably the deepest inland body of water in Europe, so deep no diver could ever reach the bottom.'

'Sounds overly complicated to me. Why not just use your policeman's baton on him one dark night and dispose of his body somewhere it could never be found? No body, no evidence, no crime. It's how the system works, yes?'

'Normally. You make it sound easy, but unlike you I don't have a car to transport a body to a suitable location for disposal. But, yes, better not to have a body which can be found. Provided we can get him there, I know the ideal spot.'

'Well, Thomas, why don't we carry out our disposal tomorrow? I suggest we leave before dawn, drive to my holiday cottage at Gartocharn, take my boat with its outboard engine and dump our problem at your ideal spot and perhaps the pike will oblige after all?'

'Good idea.'

'Well, Inspector, since we have a long hard day ahead, I think I'll turn in early. What about you?'

Rita leered and winked and Thomas winked back.

Myra stretched up out of her chair, stepped out of her dressing gown as she had done for Harry, offered a fake yawn, reached down for her handbag then clip-clopped across the parquet flooring, enjoying his eyes on her body.

At the door she stopped without turning, and added, 'Inspector, I consider it your public duty to check the security of these premises most diligently including my bedroom blackout arrangements.'

'Yes, Miss, of course, Miss, as you wish, Miss.'

'Thank you. Now give me twenty minutes to have a proper bath, before you start your rounds.'

'Certainly, Miss.'

Living with Myra

'Thomas?'

'Yes, Miss?'

'Remember the fire screen.'

Yes, Miss, of course Miss.'

Living with Myra

Odyssey

Myra's meeting with Robert Irvine took place at his office during the early evening Friday, 30th March. It was a short, tense meeting, entirely business-like. She explained her work now required her to travel extensively. During her absence, she would keep in regular contact by telephone or, if appropriate, she would write to him. Anything urgent which needed a decision on her absence, must be discussed with Hilary Templeton who would act in a personal capacity, not as an employee of Henning & Henning. Myra could see Irvine's surprise and sensed his inner conflict; after a short spell of 'eyebrow twitching', he wisely decided to say nothing and left the room to do her bidding. On his return, accompanied by his personal secretary who had copy-typed the document onto his letterheading from Myra's draft, she checked and signed it, retaining her original draft and both carbon copies and their carbon papers.

Irvine and his secretary notarised the mandate and his secretary was dismissed. Their business was concluded when the solicitor inserted the mandate and her personal letter of instructions in an envelope addressed to Hilary Templeton, sealing it with red wax imprinted with his flamboyant personal stamp.

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The following morning Myra visited Morrison Street for the last time where she cleared her desk, wrapping each personal item carefully in tissue paper before placing it into her brown leather travel bag. She had posted her short letter to the Head of Goods Receiving the previous Saturday, explaining now the War was over her husband insisted she become a full-time housewife. Her resignation had been accepted by return post, agreeing to her immediate release. No thanks were offered for ten and half years of loyal and diligent service to the SCWS.

The Senior Managers at Morrison Street had quickly re-grouped into a new cabal, led by an aggressive bully called James Duffy, a small man with a withered left leg, his personality unchanged from his childhood self in Yoker.

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On Sunday 1st April, Myra visited Crossmyloof where the two friends spent the afternoon discussing the affairs of the MMF. At the end of their meeting Myra passed Hilary the sealed envelope:

'Hilary, this contains a notarised mandate giving you and John MacAuley joint trusteeship of the MMF with a letter detailing my wishes. You must open it only if I fail to get in

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touch with you for more than a month. I'll try to call you once a week but you mustn't worry if I miss a week or two. I intend to continue to oversee the operation of the MMF Trust from wherever my travels take me. As required, I'll send any necessary letters of authority to you here, at Crossmyloof. If you're agreeable to this, I'll write to Mr Herbert to advise him of this new approach in which you will act as my proxy.'

'But Myra, where are you going? Why do you have to create all this mystery?'

'I'm sorry, Hilary, but no, this involves private business which I must not reveal, even to you, my dearest friend. You must allow an authoress to have her secrets. There is much to be done and, sadly, only I can do it. Hopefully this rather dramatic arrangement will not prove necessary. I expect to return in due course, when the mandate envelope can be destroyed and we will all return to normality.'

'Oh Myra, why do you have to go? I'll miss you. We all will. Please tell me this is nothing to do with JP!'

'Of course not! No, it's about developing my writing career.'

'Myra, did Thomas Thomson mention anything about JP, you know, when the back door was left open?'

'No, JP had departed long before the police arrived. As you know, it was while he was changing the flat tyre, I discovered he might be your cousin. He's such a nice man. Indeed, I think Thomas Thomson is a godsend.'

'Yes, he certainly is. Did I ever say he telephoned me at the office the next day, minutes after you called to explain what had happened?'

'Did he say he might be your long-lost cousin?'

'Yes, but he also asked to speak to Mr JP Owen. I explained Mr Owen had left the employ of Henning & Henning.'

'Did Thomas say why he was trying to trace the man?'

'No, but he asked for a forwarding address. I told him JP had lived in the flat above the garage on Pollokshaws Road, near the Gospel Hall.'

'So, Thomas gave no reason for his interest in JP?'

'No, but when he brought his mother over to visit Auntie Elspeth, I gave them a run home in my car. As we drove past the garage he told me he had checked it thoroughly and there was no sign JP had even lived there. He said it was as if JP Owen had disappeared in a puff of smoke.'

'Yes, probably the best way to think of the horrible man. Now, Hilary, if you do need to open the mandate envelope, there will be a period while the transfer of financial power over the MMF Trust is completed. As we both know, lawyers seem incapable of acting swiftly in such matters. This second envelope contains £1,500 in cash. I suggest you open a joint bank account with John to hold the money meanwhile. Make sure they provide you with a cheque book so you can easily account for all expenditure and transfer the closing

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balance to the Trust when the legals have been completed. Now, one further thing; I'd like you to have a telephone installed here so I can call you directly, not through Henning & Henning. Pay from it from this money. Finally, on a happier note, this is a personal cheque made out to you. Share it with John. Consider it as a fee for your time, or a retainer if you like. Are you willing to make this commitment?'

'Yes, of course. But £500, no, Myra, it's far too much! In any case I consider it my Christian duty to help you and the MMF Trust in any way I can. I'm sure John will share this view. I will pray for you, we both will pray for you. There is no need for payment. . . .'

'Shush, Hilary. Think of the cheque as an extra wedding gift to two extraordinary people. Now, I understand from John that your new-found cousin, the clever Inspector Thomas Thomson is to give you away and that Angela Maloney from the office is to be your second bridesmaid. Was there ever a prettier girl, even prettier than her mother Vera was in her prime. I hear she was top student in her course too. She is a credit to Henning & Henning and to you Hilary. All your extra tuition has paid off handsomely. As they say, it's all about training.'

'Yes, Angela has turned out well, as you predicted. We did ask Bill first, of course, but he said it would be inappropriate for him to officiate at a church wedding as he is now such a staunch non-believer. He almost insisted I ask Thomas. Those two have become like brothers since Thomas got in touch. Bill said it would be a good move to have Thomas as our Best Man which would act as a focus for reconciliation with the Thomson clan.'

'Yes, Hilary, Bill Brotherton is a wise man.'

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On the following evening Myra met with John MacAuley at his Minard Road flat over the café. They sat in his parlour with his dogs sprawled asleep before a roaring fire lit in honour of her presence. The room smelled musty with underuse and the flat needed improving, a suggestion John had tactfully resisted many times over, pointing out the café owner had always proved reluctant to pay his share of costs for maintenance and repairs. This tenement had been one of her first purchases after the formation of the Trust, done to secure John's tenancy. Now John would soon move to Crossmyloof, he had been briefed to upgrade and redecorate the entire close ahead of its sale.

'More coffee Mrs Kaywood, or perhaps another piece of shortbread?'

'No thanks, John. Well, only six weeks to the big day. And again, congratulations; you and Hilary seem very well suited, if I may be so bold to venture my opinion. She tells me the dogs get on well too.'

'Yes, thank you. My girls and her boys are like brothers and sisters, so to speak.'

'Well, John, I expect Hilary will have told what I need of you?'

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'Yes, Mrs Kaywood, of course I'll do whatever is required while you are away. You can count on me, I do swear before God. I hope you don't mind, but last night Hilary came round and explained the other work you do through the Trust. Until you told her, we had no idea of the full extent of the MMF's commitments. So many good causes. Indeed, what the MMF does is both extraordinarily good and kind and exactly what I believe, as a Methodist, we should all aspire to. Be assured we will do our best to carry it on without you, should the need arise, Heaven forbid. Thank you again for what you've done for Marianne, wee Colin and Chrissie. They love their new house in Highburgh Road. The twins have settled well at Dowanhill Primary. But are you sure about the rent, Mrs Kaywood? Now she's working with me almost full-time, Marianne could afford to pay a bit more.'

'No, John. I'm pleased to help Marianne and her two wee ones. After all they've been through, losing her husband on the beaches at Normandy, when the War was almost over. Such a brave man, I hear.'

'Yes, Malcolm McFetridge was a good man and true. Did you know he was a member at the Gospel Hall? Marianne is a Methodist, but she honoured Malcolm's wishes by sending the twins to the Gospel Hall Band of Hope. Since her move to Highburgh Road they've been attending Partick East Church of Scotland. It's adjacent to the school and by all accounts has a very good reputation. Marianne's joined the Women's Guild and the twins are in the Sunday School.'

'Yes, John, Partick East gets a good name. The Fraser ladies in my close at Caird Drive are members. So, John, everything seems to be working out for all of you, which is exactly as it should be, and no more than you deserve. Now, to the purpose of my visit. Here are some things I wish you to note in your little book. Ready? He nodded, his pen poised.

- The Glovers rent and factor's bills are to remain suspended. Celia and David live a frugal life. Thankfully, they are not too proud to accept the help they receive from the Trust.
- Suspend the rent and factor's bills for both Miss Frasers. If they ask why, say the owner wishes to thank them for years of loyal support during the difficult War years. They are proud ladies and very resistant to anything which smacks of charity. With prices for everything set to rise and their small savings diminishing rapidly, they need all the help they might accept.
- Please keep a close eye on the property at Kirklee. As I explained before, it once belonged to a dear friend, another brave man who was lost to that dreadful War. I would like you to restore it internally to prime condition, as you have done with the exterior and gardens. I may sell it, when the time is right. Mr Irvine is aware of this and is already circulating details to interested parties. He knows I will not sell it to just anyone. The buyer must meet the criteria I've set down for him.

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- Mr Irvine has advised the property we visited at Beaumont Gate now belongs to our Trust. Please upgrade the close in the usual way, but start with the vacant flat left by Inspector Laird and his wife. When you are satisfied it too is in prime condition, contact Thomas Thomson and give him first refusal. Now he has been promoted, I'm sure he can afford a reasonable rent, but you must allow a 50% discount on the market rate. After all, Thomas is family, now we've found him again. Hilary tells me his mother is struggling with arthritis and they are three flights up in Cecil Street. Moving to a main door flat should help.
- Finally, as you know, I'll keep in regular contact with Hilary by telephone but if urgent issues come up, you must both discuss it and then act at once on your best judgement. Remember, John - *Carpe Diem!*

'Mrs Kaywood, I'll pray for the wisdom and strength to serve you and the Trust to the very best of my abilities. This I do promise before God.'

'Thank you, John. Let's leave it there, shall we? If anything else comes to mind, I'll write or telephone Hilary. I hear you've taken the plunge at last and are learning to drive.'

'Bill is teaching me. Getting contact lenses was Hilary's idea; she gave me them as a birthday present. As usual, she was right; they've made such a difference. I have my driving test next week and Bill is sure I'll pass first time. Hilary has promised me the use of her car when I need it, but we're already thinking I should look out for a car of my own. What do you think, Mrs Kaywood?'

'Yes, John, a top-notch idea. Think of the time you'd save, now we have properties scattered all over Glasgow, not to mention your other clients.'

'Bill is on the look-out for a good one, nothing flashy, just one which is reliable.'

'Good thinking. Now I see you without spectacles, you look a bit like a young Cary Grant. Perhaps we have uncovered Hilary's true motivation?'

'No, surely not! Oh, did you hear? Bill's arranged to borrow Sir John's Rolls Royce for our Wedding, and he's agreed to be our chief usher. It's to be quite a big wedding, with all the Thomsons back in the fold, so to speak. We've booked Marlborough House, just across the road, though I must admit I'm beginning to feel nervous. I wonder how the Methodists and the Gospel Hall folks will mix? Most of the Thomsons are Roman Catholic, of course, so it will be quite an ecumenical gathering.'

'Everything will go well, John. Yes, I'm sure it will. I've explained to Hilary, I *will* try to be there but if I'm absent I'm sure Angela will make an excellent deputy as you Best Maid. She and Thomas will make a very handsome couple. Hilary tells me you are learning to play the pianoforte, and you've taken up golf as well. Is there no end to your hidden talents, John MacAuley?'

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'Yes, Hilary has been a Lady Member at Haggs Castle for years. She's put my name on their Gentlemen's waiting list. She's coaching me and says I'm quite good.'

'Well, John, did you ever imagine one day you would be driving a car, playing golf and living in Crossmyloof?'

'No, never. God is good! Praise be the Name of the Lord!'

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To avoid meeting with the lugubrious and increasingly forgetful Herbert Henning, Myra wrote to him, authorising Hilary Templeton as her proxy and conduit during her absence and stating future MMF correspondence should sent to Mrs Marianne McFetridge at Highburgh Road rather than Miss Glover whose eyesight was failing.

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On Tuesday evening, Myra made a round of calls on her closest neighbours.

For Celia and David Glover she had found an Italian boy, Ronaldo (Ronnie) Coia, a very Jewish looking young man. Ronnie lived in the next close and had been engaged to tend to Celia's lights, gas and fire during Myra's absence, this service paid in advance for a year by Myra.

With Phamie Fraser she left a set of keys for her flat and an envelope containing £150 to cover unforeseen emergencies. Mail would be collected daily by Mrs McFetridge who lived nearby. Myra advised Phamie she had pre-paid her rent to John MacAuley with an estimated share of factor's bills for the year ahead. As opportunity presented itself, she would telephone Phamie from time to time for news of Caird Drive.

Miss Euphemia Fraser, in full schoolteacher mode, pronounced pompously she would be most pleased to look after the flat and gave her assurance she would pass on the news of Mrs Kaywood's impending journey to join her friend, a famous but reclusive author. In Phamie's mind however, she had decided Myra's trip was to be an extended lover's tryst, a notion never spoken but implied as she passed on the big news of Myra's extended absence while tapping her index finger to her lips and smiling knowingly.

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An hour before dawn on Wednesday 4th April 1945, Myra walked away from Caird Drive, unaware it would be almost eight years until she would return from her odyssey.

From Caird Drive her only luggage was her large brown leather travel bag and her faithful black handbag, the one Frank had bought her sixteen years earlier for her nineth birthday.

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Certain items remained at Caird Drive in a newly installed safe concealed inside a specially constructed fireproofed and triple locked wardrobe. Other items of importance were stored in Powdenhill's fireproof trunk, sealed by its three high security padlocks. This trunk was now held for safekeeping in the vault of the Clydesdale Bank Headquarters at St Vincent Street.

For only the third time in her life Myra wore Sadie's opal brooch openly, as she would every day thereafter, when appropriate. Over time the brooch would become her badge of purpose, reminding her of the 'irresistible eye' of the man with the eyepatch who had altered the course of her life.

At Kirklee, she collected the Austin and set out on her travels. The car which had recently been serviced, was already packed for her journey. She had four suitcases containing many ensembles. As required she would purchase others. Assuming the persona of a writer, she was heading for the upmarket Goldstone House Hotel at Grasmere in the Lake District, where she was booked for three weeks from Thursday 5th April. Where better, Myra had reasoned, to experience the luxury life-style enjoyed by many of her opponents. Conveniently, two rich and famous names from Powdenhill's list had retirement cottages nearby.

Before Grasmere, she would overnight at Lazarus House, at the invitation of the Matron, Mrs Amelia MacPherson. Myra had organised this visit in her continuing role as the representative of the MMF on the Management Committee for the refuge. Normally Myra shunned such duties but she had been persuaded to take up this role by Sir John Stirling-Maxwell while attending the Maxwell family's Christmas Drinks Party at Pollok House, on the day she had re-homed Sandy for the second time. Extensive upgrading and refurbishment of Lazarus House was underway, funded by an initial MMF donation of £5,000. Work on a 30-bed extension to be called "The Schofield Wing" would start soon. Further MMF funds had been promised, money which would come from the sale of the Kirklee villa.

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Sewn into the lining of Myra's black leather handbag was Powdenhill's purple notebook listing the Regional Controllers' names and contact details. Fifty-three names remained on this list, including nine women. From Myra's research at the Mitchell and Stirling Libraries, she now knew many were public figures including three senior politicians and five top civil servants. One was an Archbishop.

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JP's list was smaller, only nineteen, but more this list included a serving Cabinet Minister and a Field Marshall.

The code *MCC* appeared at the top of both lists.

From Powdenhill's list, Myra had already deleted the code *ABC* and eight other names.

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Synopsis

After her stopover in the Lake District where there had been two recent tragic deaths caused by food poisoning, Myra sought out three men who were leaders of a large and thriving Brethren community in the Bristol area. These men died together in bizarre circumstances when they inadvertently swallowed cyanide, suffering a ghastly and painful death in the vestry an hour before the regular children's Friday evening Band of Hope meeting was due to commence. It was thought the men drank the sweetened concoction in the belief it was a new style of non-alcoholic communion wine, a sample bottle of which had been provided by a tall, odd-looking young man with longish curly red hair, a man whom the authorities failed to find.

Myra did not rush at her work. Each elimination was carefully planned; she studied her quarry covertly as she had done with Gerrard Henson and others on his list, often plotting for weeks or even months at a time, sometimes writing several parallel or interleaving stories simultaneously. Unlike her time in Glasgow when she had been constrained by maintaining her parallel lives at Caird Drive, St George's and later at Morrison Street, now she had time to devote her energies to her task without distractions. In her new role as a woman of means dedicated to research for her novels, Myra was free to move and act at will. Every story started with an initial hand-written draft, reworked many times until its plot was ready for enactment, awaiting the right opportunity. *Carpe Diem!*

As she had done with most of her targets and when circumstances allowed, she garnered their wealth and redirected it to the MMF account, sometimes using intermediary cut-out accounts which she then closed to cover her trail.

During her long campaign, the MMF funds grew steadily until the Trust became the richest in the Henning & Henning portfolio, possibly the richest of its kind in Scotland. Unlike many others, it had become the most active, dispensing charitable funds (reparations, as Myra thought of them) to people and organisations throughout the UK and Eire.

These beneficiaries included many families whose lives had been twisted or tainted by a long-entrenched and powerful Tiger Eye Circle group which she discovered had its centre not in London, but on the secretive Isle of Man. It had taken her over a year to eliminate

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this tight-knit group of paedophiles, one of the richest in the British Isles. In the final act, all twenty-eight members had been 'dissolved' while celebrating the Archbishop's birthday on board a huge luxury yacht moored in splendid isolation in the harbour at Nice, France. The cabal had been in the ballroom when a massive explosion of an ex-wartime incendiary bomb was detonated in their midst, creating a raging inferno. This was immediately followed by a secondary explosion causing the vessel to sink at its mooring within minutes.

During the weeks which followed, much of this group's great wealth mysteriously 'disappeared'. What was never uncovered was the whereabouts of Miss Martha Gurovich-Stein. This young woman, who had provided what had appeared to be impeccable connections and was clearly brilliant with numbers, had gained their confidence by appealing to their greed. Over a long period of living as one of them on the island, they had been persuaded to invest heavily in what she had called 'a diversified raft of highly geared and tax beneficial (avoidance) bonds', which she had short-handed as "Carpe Diem Bonds". These fiduciary instruments were backed, she had said repeatedly, by a secretive bank based in Zug, Switzerland. Those among the Tiger Eye Circle group who recognised its name had nodded sagely and told the others this bank was 'Kosher'. The impressive bond certificates they received from Gurovich-Stein in return for their cheques, would prove to be elaborate fakes.

Although the Swiss bank did exist, in the aftermath of the Nice explosion, it did not acknowledge receipt of funds invested in the names of these individuals, nor did it acknowledge contact with an Englishwoman called Miss Gurovich-Stein. No matter how assertively the families' solicitors cajoled and threatened, the Zug bank's officers were tight-lipped about whether the bank operated such bond schemes. If anyone at the bank connected the amounts disputed with the raft of deposits which had been made by the oddly dressed lady called Miss Pamela Penchant, they said nothing, regretting only her deposits, when consolidated, had at once transferred in a single block to a rival and equally secretive bank in Lichtenstein. From this cut-out bank, the money was quickly moved again twice, before appearing in a series of accounts in the name of the MMF within the equally secretive banking system on the Isle of Jersey.

Towards the end of Myra's long crusade, three names from these lists, fearing they might be next, committed suicide. Four others sought to escape Myra's retribution by moving to mainland Europe, two to Switzerland, one to Spain, and the last to Italy. Their attempts were in vain.

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Her odyssey years taught Myra that although the Tiger Eye Circle was no more, her work would never end; vigilance must be her watchword. Like Thomas Thomson had learned in his role as a policeman, from a child Myra had understood true Justice was as slippery as an eel, particularly when misdemeanours involved the ruling elite or their lackeys. To such people, Justice was like a putty, to be moulded to suit a given situation and to gain and maintain advantage.

Myra's hunt lasted until November 1952. Her experiences had transformed and cleansed her, although Rita still lurked in her psyche. As she pursued her quarry, additional miscreants had been uncovered. The original and discovered names red-lined totalled one-hundred and fifty-three including the *Glasgow* group.

Only then did Myra Kaywood return to *Glasgow* to try to reclaim her former life at Caird Drive. As she had learned from her regular telephone contact with Hilary MacAuley, during her absence many things had changed. One opportunity in particular had passed her by. After John and Hilary's wedding, Thomas Thomson had courted and married Angela Maloney and was, to all appearances, a happily married man devoted to his wife and four children, all girls.

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Educating Myra

Saturday 8th August 1953.

Myra sat in the examination hall at Glasgow University.

It was a few minutes before nine o'clock. This was the final paper of her diet of seven papers in the University Entrance Examination. The subject was Latin. At thirty-two she was the oldest person in the room, apart from a fresh-faced elderly gentleman who wore a badge entitled: "Dr William Watson Invigilator". The examination allowed three hours to complete four sections of questions, all questions to be attempted.

At quarter to eleven she raised her hand. The man limped towards her, concern throwing a shadow across his face:

'Yes?' he whispered. 'Is there something wrong, my dear, feeling unwell, are we?'

'I would like to leave now. May I give you this answer book, please?'

'Overwhelmed, are we? But don't worry. Now look, why don't you just close your eyes for five minutes and have a think. I'm sure the answers will come. Never give up, I always say.'

'No, it's fine, actually. I've finished and checked everything twice. I thought it a very fair paper.'

'You've *finished!* he almost shouted.

'*Shush*, Dr Watson. You're upsetting the other candidates,' Myra whispered.

'Oh, sorry. Yes. But are you *sure*, dear. Do you understand once I accept your paper, then there is no going back?'

'Yes thanks, I'm sure. Thank you very much.'

Myra slipped out of her shoes, collected her bits and pieces, placing them carefully into her black handbag. She then walked in her stockinged feet out into the sunshine of a beautiful August morning.

On Thursday 17th September, a letter arrived at Caird Drive confirming her exemplary marks and offering her a self-funded place to read English Literature and Psychology.

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Reconnecting

Tuesday 18th October 1960.

The evening class entitled "Building Blocks for Creative Writers" had just ended. It was the third meeting. The students were filing out.

'Hey Doc Kaywood - you were great, man! See you next week, eh?'

'Glad you liked it, Audrina. Remember, not more than two thousand words for next week. I'll take marks off if you exceed the limit again.'

'OK, you got it! Two thousand - and not one farthing more!'

Myra cleaned the blackboard and tidied the room, collecting sweet wrappers and empty crisp packets, dumping them in the bin. She did a final check all around and saw it, on the chair, under the desk. It was a nice purse, expensive, new, crocodile skin with a clasp of silver. She snapped it open. It was stuffed with notes and coins and a business card.

"William Brotherton: General Builder"

The address was Deanston Drive, Shawlands, not far from Sandy and Helen in Granny Nellis's old house in Tantallon Road.

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'Hello-oh, is there anyone there?'

The office door had been wide open but there seemed to be no one about. The desk was in disarray, chaotic. Instinctively, Myra started to tidy the papers into piles, sorting by date order, first the letters, then the Invoices from suppliers and Estimates and Invoices awaiting issue to customers. She lost track of time.

'Can I help you?' said the deep voice.

'Oh, you gave me such a start. Oh, I'm sorry, Mr Brotherton, I seem to have invaded you.'

'Mrs Kaywood? Is it really you?'

'How nice of you to remember.'

'Well, Mrs Kaywood, are you interested in the job?'

'What job is this, please?'

'Girl Friday, I think they call it nowadays. Running the office, typing, you name it.'

'Have you been looking for someone for a while then?'

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'Yes and no. No one seems to want to stay for more than a few days. I think they find it lonely, maybe boring. I did have someone, Audrina. She's been here for a few weeks, wants to be a writer, always hammering away at the . . . Hey, where has the typewriter gone? It was new! She insisted I get her an electric one. I haven't seen her for a few days so I thought she might be ill but it looks like she's done a bunk and taken the typewriter. Ah well, good riddance.'

'Audrina?'

'You know her?'

'Slightly. Is this her purse?'

'It could be, I'm not sure.'

'I found it and saw it had your business card inside, so, here I am, super sleuth, trying to return it to its owner. There's quite a lot of money in it, nearly a hundred and twenty pounds.'

'**What?** God, let me check the petty cash box. Bugger, all gone! I trusted her with it to pay for deliveries over the last week. I'm pretty well overrun at the minute but. . .'

'Perhaps we should call in the Police?'

'Forget the Police, what could they do? This could be her own money, although I doubt it. I've no proof, have I? I don't even have an address for her, I think she said somewhere in Govanhill, but I. . . Look, I'm desperate. Can you start now?'

'What about qualifications?'

'Well, do you have any?'

'Yes, lots, actually. But let's do it another way. How about I start now and we see what happens? Let's give it a week, no, let's make it until the end of November. I can't promise to be here every minute, I do have other irons in the fire, but I hope I can make a difference. Maybe we'll find someone more suited to your needs by then.'

'Would you? *Really?* Look, I must tell you something. I have a defect, they can't do anything about, they say. I can't read well or count properly. I can do it, but it takes a lot of time.'

'Ah, so you are what they call "a slow reader"? My brother was a wee bit slow at first. It's called dyslexia nowadays, which can be a sign of very high intelligence. Did anyone ever explain your situation, Bill? It can be treated, you know.'

'No, never. They just called me stupid and gave me the belt, told me to try harder. The crazy thing was I could always tell them what the answer was, just could never get it down on paper, everything jumped about.'

'Well, you're certainly not stupid, Bill. I remember you at *Tower Ridge* and *Pollok Estate*. You ran everything.'

'Well, I don't know. Sir John, he trusted me, gave me a chance, because of my father. He paid for a cobbler to make special shoes after the toes on my right foot were sliced off

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by the lawn-mower, so I could walk properly, just like everyone else. Oh, I told you all this before, right?'

'I was sorry to hear of Sir John's passing. Are the rest of the family well?'

'Yes, I suppose so, I don't really know. I'm out of touch. Glasgow Corporation people are running the place. I had no 'qualifications', they said. Only ran the bloody place for years! Anyway, Pollok Estate is all in the past. We had to move out of the cottage. We're in Shawlands now, up near the primary school. I just rent it, it belongs to some Trust or other, Hilary fixed me up with it. It's far, far too big, really. John MacAuley has been great, paying me to do it up, and the rent is very affordable. I suppose I'll have to move out sometime, when the Trust people are ready to cash in on their investment, what with house prices rising the way they are. It was John who put me up to this, helped me get started. He's gone up in the world, has John. He'll be Captain at Haggs Castle next year. He's really doing well. Who would have thought?'

'Bill, let's make a beginning then, shall we? Please call me Myra.'

At his genuine smile, Rita stirred. Myra rose, held out her hand. His handshake was warm, firm, trustworthy. Bill Brotherton was not much changed physically since she had seen him last, on the dreich Saturday he had dropped her at Bridge Street, after the Pollok House Christmas Party, the day she went home to try to re-start her life without Sandy or Billy.

'Myra it shall be. Right, then, good. If you don't mind me saying, you look even younger than I remember.'

'As do you, Bill! Being your own boss suits you.'

'Right, then, good. Oh, do you know anything about the sports car in the yard? It's blocking my truck, I need to get in for materials.'

'It's mine, sorry. Where should I park it?'

'Yours! My God, it's brand new! And Pollok blue, like the old days.'

'Right, so try not to scrape it, will you?'

'Oh, what if Audrina comes back? I can't prove the money in her purse is from the petty cash or if she took the typewriter. I suppose I might even owe her wages for a few days.'

'Why don't you leave her to me? I think I can handle Audrina Bessel.'

'Right, then, good. Look, I need to get moving. Will you be all right?'

'Oh Bill, excuse me being nosey; you said 'we' - are you married?'

'Me? Married? Who the hell would have me? Ears like a bloody elephant with a trunk to match! No, no. When I said "we", I meant me and Dad. It's just the two of us now Mum's gone on ahead.'

Living with Myra

Maisie

Thursday 19th November 1964.

Maisie's birth was Myra Kaywood's best birthday present ever.

At forty-four, she was designated as an 'elderly mother' and sternly advised to have her baby in hospital, in case unforeseen complications might arise. Despite the dire foreboding of the medical authorities, her child was born at home. It was a perfect birthing, Maisie arriving to the raucous strains of "When the Saints come Marching In" playing on a repeat cycle at full volume from the gramophone downstairs, filling the house with welcoming music, drowning out the "Rita language" which shocked even the two elderly midwives. The overall process took less than six hours, from the breaking of Myra's waters to the late arrival of the certifying Doctor and departure of the midwives.

The Kaywood/Brotherton home was a blonde sandstone villa in Woodstock Avenue, Upper Shawlands, with Shawlands Cross to the east and Pollokshaws to the west. It was the house which Bill Brotherton had previously rented from the MMF Trust, now owned by Myra as part of her personal investment portfolio. Conveniently located ten minutes' walk from Hilary and John MacAuley and their dogs in Crossmyloof, Woodstock Avenue was fifteen minutes from Thomas and Angela Thomson and their growing brood now living at "Denholm Castle" in Pollokshields. This twenty-two-roomed mansion had been acquired by the MMF Trust under mysterious circumstances. It was not common knowledge the Thomsons occupied Denholm Castle rent free, in return for unspoken services rendered by Chief Inspector Thomas Thomson in the pursuit of "Myra's Justice", a remit which now included the righting of wrongs of many kinds, large and small.

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In the first 'sharing months' of their relationship, Myra had persuaded Bill against marriage. No one, Myra argued, should be shackled to another out of a sense of duty and she insisted they should both be free to enjoy a 'modern relationship'. From her history and her travelling years, Myra knew monogamy could never satisfy Rita in her.

Free to pursue other women, Bill chose not to do so. Naively, maybe because he was incapable of telling a lie, he expected total honesty from others and accepted without question what Myra told him. Nor did he query Myra's 'writing breaks', the days or weeks spent alone at her Gartocharn hideaway or her 'study trips', when she might suddenly leave for several weeks or months in pursuit of Myra's Justice. Perhaps it was Bill's

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unquestioning trust which kept their commitment to each other strong and their sex life vigorous.

Although positive and ever cheerful, Bill was not a deep thinker. Being a physically restless man, his life was one of action, not contemplation. As the decades rolled by, he remained fit, slim, strong, and energetic in every aspect of his life. In short, Bill Brotherton possessed a combination of attributes which suited Myra very well indeed, giving her the security and freedom to live her several parallel lives unchallenged.

Throughout their decades of cohabitation, Bill Brotherton remained completely unaware of Myra's hidden past. The story which Myra wrote for him was centred on her deep friendship with the late Miss Gladys Goodfellow-Smythe, the woman who had given part of her wealth to Myra and the balance to the MMF Trust which, she told Bill, continued to benefit from irregular income derived from legacy royalty payments. While Bill knew of her active involvement with the MMF Trust and other charitable organisations, he was never party to any details.

Maisie's conception was planned, not an accident. Immediately Myra learned she was pregnant, she confessed to Bill he was not the father of her child. Although both Bill Brotherton and Angela Thomson must have had their strong suspicions that Thomas was Maisie's natural father, they each chose not to discuss the topic with anyone. If other people noticed the remarkable similarity between Maisie's white blonde hair and piercing blue eyes to those of her 'Uncle' Thomas, they had the good grace to say nothing. As a toddler and schoolgirl, Bill Brotherton was Maisie's "best Dad in the world". By the time she was old enough to suspect her 'Uncle' Thomas might be her father, he had been killed while on duty, in an act of bravery for which he was posthumously awarded the Queen's Police Medal for Gallantry. Perhaps Myra had hoped for a boy like Thomas who might be moulded to inherit her work, although she well understood the advantages of being female in what was still a man's world, despite the babble of the 'swinging sixties'.

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Although private education could have been easily afforded, Myra and Bill were both against this approach. Maisie Kaywood - she took her mother's name - attended primary classes Sir John Maxwell's School in Pollokshaws, as her 'father' had done. Unlike Bill Brotherton, Maisie went on to Shawlands Academy where she was Dux and Girls' Captain.

In September 1982 Maisie arrived at Cambridge University to read Mathematics paired with the emerging discipline of Computing Science. Towards the end of the first term Bill Brotherton died of a massive stroke. Maisie raced home to comfort and care for her

Living with Myra

mother, who was distraught at the sudden loss of her beloved life partner. Wracked by arthritis, Myra's health was already in rapid decline. The illness had been plaguing her increasingly during the previous decade. At the time of Bill's death, Myra was already in a wheelchair and could no longer negotiate stairs unaided, making the upper levels of her large home at Woodstock Avenue inaccessible.

Maisie wrote to Cambridge and explained the situation; she was granted a deferment to allow her to care for her mother until an alternative arrangement could be found. Without Bill, to Myra the idea of relying on strangers to care for her was unthinkable. Maisie was trapped, unable to continue with her studies and unwilling to leave her mother. Myra was no longer the woman she had been. Barely able to manoeuvre her wheelchair around the ground floor of her home, she took to locking herself in the lounge which had been converted to a temporary bedroom. Here, doped with painkillers, she spent hours at a stretch listening to her collection of jazz records and muttering under her breath, reliving scenes from her past.

On several occasions, Hilary volunteered to deputise for Maisie to allow the girl to socialise with her friends. Again, Myra locked herself in her room, unwilling to allow Hilary to help her to use the commode or change her underwear when accidents happened.

The impasse continued over the Christmas and New Year period with Myra refusing to attend the annual gathering of the Thomson clan at Denholm Castle. The next day, when Hilary and John called at Woodstock with their new puppy to try to cheer her up, she instructed Maisie to make them leave, saying she was allergic to dogs and always had been. This was a clear lie - Myra loved dogs but would not allow Maisie to have one as she wanted to keep her focussed entirely on her studies and to use any free time to practice her piano repertoire.

Over these initial weeks of mourning for Bill, Maisie had tried repeatedly to get her mother to discuss options such as a live-in nursing team or a move to a retirement home where she would have an 'adapted' room of her own with twenty-four-hour support.

A few days into January, an invitation from Glasgow City Council arrived at Woodstock Avenue, via Henning and Henning, the letter addressed to Mrs Myra Kaywood of "Art for All". This charity, which was close to Myra's heart, had been lavishly supported by the MMF Trust. It was only then Maisie learned *Art for All* had made a large donation to the Council to help fund The Burrell Museum, recently built in the grounds of Pollok Estate, after years of wrangling with the Burrell Trustees. An ornate gold-edged card invited

Living with Myra

Mrs M Kaywood and Partner to attend a Private Viewing and Reception to thank Benefactors who had helped make the new museum a reality.

In late February 1983, Myra attended with Maisie in tow. They were seated alphabetically in the crowded Burrell Theatre, with Sandy and Helen Kaywood to Maisie's right and Myra, confined to her wheelchair, placed at the end of the row in the passageway. Myra remained silent throughout the encounter, her head down with her eyes closed, trying to block overheard snippets of whispered conversation.

Maisie learned Sandy, now a slim and spritely seventy-three-year-old, had risen to become a Night Shift Foreman at Weirs of Cathcart, before his retirement. Like *Art for All*, Weirs were also Benefactors of The Burrell Museum and because of his long association with Pollok Estate and its Allotments, Sandy had been nominated to attend as Weir's representative.

During the remainder of the soiree, Sandy, who had become increasingly garrulous over the years, revealed a whole new world of family to Maisie, including her mother's roots in Yoker and her years at Caird Drive. Until this chance meeting, Maisie had been told by Myra she had no living relatives. Her only 'family' had been her honorary Uncle John and Aunt Hilary and, by association, the growing Thomson clan.

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On the 29th June 1983, locked in her lounge with her gramophone playing loudly, Myra committed suicide by a self-administered overdose of sleeping tablets washed down with an expensive bottle of red wine. Clutched in her hand was an envelope containing a notarised letter of instruction directing her body be cremated in the Linn Crematorium and her ashes scattered on the summit of Inchcailloch, Loch Lomond's burial island, clearly visible from the loch-side cottage at Gartocharn. For the Committal Service there must be no flowers and no prayers, hymns, psalms or self-indulgent songs. No poems were to be recited nor eulogies imposed on those attending. Instead, Myra requested that Maisie perform a short medley of her favourite jazz pieces, insisting they must be played on a grand piano carefully tuned for the occasion.

To Maisie's astonishment, hundreds of previously unknown men and women from all walks of life attended or sent letters of condolence.

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The following day, Maisie met with their family solicitor Robert Flynn Irvine, son of the firm's founder Robert Miller Irvine. In the style of his father, the young man with anxious twitching eyebrows, explained the synoptic headlines of her inheritance.

Living with Myra

In addition to the substantial personal wealth which had accrued to her from Myra and Bill, totalling £15.5 M, the eighteen-year-old Maisie was amazed to discover she would inherit sole control of the wealthy MMF Trust, with full authority to dispense its funds as she saw fit. When it became clear her mother had effectively 'owned' the MMF Trust and its charities, this did not come as a complete surprise. Although shrouded in mystery, Myra's charity work had always been central to her life. Maisie, used to her mother's strange ways from childhood, had come to think of her mother's obsessive secrecy and obfuscation as 'normal'.

Later, over many weeks of studying the ledgers prepared by Henning & Henning, Maisie learned for the first time the full extent of the MMF's activities, discovering it had been established in 1938 with an initial deposit of £2,000. Over the decades which followed, it had grown year on year to over £90M. The most recent annual outflow to its good causes for the year to December 1982 showed the MMF Trust had dispensed almost £10M, these monies closely administered by Hilary MacAuley and her small team at Henning & Henning. The ledgers also showed the Trust had in turn been supported by the inflow of many donations from anonymous sources, some of which had been eye-wateringly large.

Another major income stream for the MMF account came from its property portfolio. The development of these properties had in turn provided a steady and profitable flow of work for William Brotherton Builders (WBB), a privately-owned organisation which had grown organically under the guidance of Myra, providing excellent apprenticeships and continuing training for its workforce. On Bill's death, WBB had been sold for £5.3 M to a management buyout led by John MacAuley, the transaction secured by an interest-free loan from the MMF Trust. When Bill took partial retirement to care for Myra, John had become WBB's Managing Director. The majority of this money was still 'at large', due to be repaid to the Trust over a period of ten years.

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Her mother's personal papers and effects were passed to Maisie in a locked steel trunk secured by three vintage padlocks. Flynn Irvine suggested a locksmith be called. Maisie refused. At Woodstock Avenue, she searched in her old toy box. The three keys were still there, tied together with red string, sporting a brass label engraved *Carpe Diem!*

Opening Myra's Pandora's Box re-orientated Maisie, changing the trajectory of her life.

On first sighting, the presence of several well-oiled guns and ammunition was inexplicable.

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During Maisie's first read through of the neatly typed documents, she thought what she had found was a collection of her mother's unpublished stories, written under the pen-name of Gladys Goodfellow-Smythe. These stories, some set decades earlier, others more recent, described strange events in which evil people met with untimely deaths. Most were short stories, with a few novellas. One larger work was a full-length novel, set in the immediate post-war period. "Odyssey" was the story of a lone woman who had pursued and eliminated a powerful cabal of paedophiles. Maisie concluded this to be a closely-written fiction, supported by great deal of convincing detail. However, in the months and years which followed her discovery of the writings of Gladys Goodfellow-Smythe, the exploits of Rita Davina Gallagher, the protagonist in Odyssey, haunted Maisie and she returned to re-read it and the other Rita stories time after time.

Some years later, with the help of the growing internet, its search engines and online archives, Maisie was enabled to cross-check the details in her mother's stories against the dates and amounts of the many anonymous donations in the MMF ledgers. In doing so, it gradually dawned on Maisie these unpublished stories by Gladys Goodfellow-Smythe were disguised versions of the truth depicting Myra's life-long quest for justice.

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Unlike the stern demands regarding her funeral arrangements, nowhere in Myra's simple Will or among the papers in the sealed trunk was there a missive listing imperatives or objectives directing Maisie on what she must do with her life. If Myra had written a story for her daughter advising what she expected in return for the great wealth she had passed on to her, she had taken it with her to her grave.

The only request, contained a short note in her mother's neat hand, read:

*Maisie,
My angel, when you read this, I will be gone to face the music of eternity.
From time to time, as you play your piano, please think of me.
I ask only that you complete your education then follow your heart.
Carpe Diem!
Mum.*

Maisie realised this note had been part of her mother's long-term plan; Myra's ability to write or type had been stolen by her arthritis more than a decade earlier. Later, on further reflection, she realised her mother had been delaying her suicide until she was

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sure her daughter was old enough, legally and emotionally, to shoulder the responsibility which came with her inheritance.

Bill Brotherton's sudden death must have forced her hand.

Living with Myra

FCO and GCHQ

Maisie returned to Cambridge University in September 1983. Released from parental control in the hormone-fuelled world of student life on campus, Maisie threw herself into a series of romantic liaisons with her fellow students and several of the younger Dons. Like her mother, she had a passionate nature and a lewd streak which she exploited using her acting skills. Three years later she graduated with a Double First in Mathematics and Computer Science.

During her study years, Maisie's social life revolved around acting, writing and playing piano in a small jazz group. Learning languages started as a hobby but she soon discovered a talent, becoming fluent in several languages with great ease, including Russian, much in vogue in those years. At the behest of her tutor/mentor, a fearsome divorcee called Veronica Shearer, Maisie added Russian Studies to her curriculum. Ronnie, a brilliant mathematician and code breaker who had worked in the clandestine world of WW2's Bletchley Park, was a 'spotter' for the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO).

Immediately Maisie's results were known and before graduation, she was recruited by the FCO. During an intensive week of 'acclimatisation', she was assessed then 'starred for acceleration'. Her training culminated in a three-month spell with the SAS at their HQ at Credenhill in Herefordshire where she was trained in the use of weapons, personal combat and survival techniques.

It was during this course Maisie first met Tom Farquarson-Wright, a deceptively laconic man several years her senior who had recently returned from a third 'interference mission' behind the scenes of the ongoing the Iran-Iraq War. Tom, a Cotswold man with Scottish roots, had been a Colonel with the REME (motto: "By Skill and by Fighting") before his itch for danger led him to transfer to the SAS. Physically, he reminded her of her 'father', Bill Brotherton. Their emerging romantic liaison was stalled when Tom was sent on another deployment.

Maisie's SAS report card noted:

- exceptional in all physical disciplines
- a tough, never submit mental attitude
- daring and thorough in planning; thinks outside the box
- ruthless and devious in the pursuit of given objects and targets

Living with Myra

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Maisie was returned to the FCO as a stand-out candidate, ready for action. Women agents with Maisie's range of abilities were in short supply and she was catapulted into live projects. To test her abilities in the field, she was assigned to the long-running "DisInf" project, to serve under its project officer, a middle-aged bachelor called Alain Addley-Fisher. DisInf's remit was spreading disinformation and propaganda aimed at undermining the already crumbling Soviet regime of the mid-1980s. In its heyday during the 1960's DisInf had been useful; now it was running out of steam.

Addley-Fisher reported to an unwieldy sub-committee. It was a relic of post-WW2 and Cold War thinking, stuffed with aging representatives from the FCO, the Home Office and academia. A rotation of advisers from MI 6 turned up from time to time, mainly to be sure DisInf projects did not interfere with any of their own. By the late 1980s, no one took the committee seriously. It was a convenient place to park those recently retired with 'connections' and in need of a role to boost their egos.

In appearance, Alain Addley-Fisher was an effete man with a long thin face and a haughty, dismissive manner. He suffered from recurring outbreaks of mild psoriasis on his face and hands. During these bouts, wherever he went he left a trail of flaking skin particles and dried powder residue from his medication. Preferring the company of men of his own type, he styled himself as a bon viveur with a penchant for overblown rhetoric when in his cups. He worked hard to conceal he had never served in the field, recounting versions of what he had read in the reports made by other field agents, always suitably enhanced to make him like James Bond.

In his private life, Alain occupied a small attic flat rent-free in the Chelsea town house of an elderly spinster aunt, his godmother, from whom he hoped to inherit. The windows of his lonely garret were never clean, bespattered by feral pigeon droppings from the resident flock cooing endlessly on the roof inches above him. These flying rats made a living by raiding the dozens of bird-feeders his aunt kept filled to the brim throughout the year, watching her 'darling finches' from her morning room window three floors below. Both this address, and his office near the Houses of Parliament, meant he was within easy reach of his more able Old Etonian chums, many of whom were now up and coming ministers from both sides of Westminster's political divide.

Over several decades Alain had descended into heavy drinking. Bordering alcoholic, he sought to conceal his slurred speech and bad breath by bluster and smoking perfumed cigarettes. He lived his life in a befuddled dwam, arriving at his office late and leaving

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early, spending his working days at lengthy private lunches and dinners, either at his club or those of his friends, an activity he described as "oiling the wheels of England's empire". Saturdays, were spent travelling by train to and from racecourses, bedecked with wartime binoculars, wearing tweeds and a trilby. Most Sundays were spent sleeping off the excesses of the night before. Despite a good salary, he lived on a financial knife edge caused by his gambling addiction.

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Maisie's first two years serving on the DisInf programme were spent in Berlin, crossing regularly into East Germany and other satellite states within the Soviet sector. (When first assigned to Addley-Fisher, she was unaware she was his sole remaining field operative: previous agents had either resigned within a few months or used their contacts to get away to a more productive career path.) During these field trips, her purpose to exchange documents with her designated contacts and make payments, always cash in US Dollars, the Holy Grail for most Russians. Information was collected and instructions/requests exchanged using dead letter drops (DLDs) and occasionally, face-to face. These sorties, using a series of assumed names supported by counterfeit documentation provided by the FCO's team of forgers, were arranged by Addley-Fisher from a cubby-hole office hidden in the bowels of the FCO building. To those who did not know his real status, he broadcast a much grander story of his life at the centre of power at the FCO.

While travelling behind the Iron Curtain on public transport, Maisie would dress in cheap, oversized and well-worn clothing modified with padding to give her huge bosoms, hefty shoulders with thick biceps and a wide backside. Using her am-dram skills, she applied stage make-up and a wig of greying black hair to make her look like an older woman, thus concealing her fresh-faced youth and beauty. To fend off unwanted conversations, she would assume the role of a taciturn East Berlin frau, mimicking her mother's behaviour during her final years. Even in civvies, she now wore fake contact lenses and thick-rimmed spectacles to hide her piercing blue eyes.

Maisie was soon aware her trips were proving frustrating, sometimes dangerous. Seldom did her exchanges devised and 'arranged' by Addley-Fisher work out as planned. Frequently her contacts failed to appear, obliging her to revisit her DLDs several times to no avail. Watching from nearby she saw some of these contacts, frequently dressed like gangsters of the Al Capone era, were clearly double agents; often with an equally obvious KGB tail, causing her to abort the mission and make her escape. The information provided by these Soviet insiders was re-hashed or outdated or blatantly invented. Likewise, the DisInf created for her to plant by Addley-Fisher was equally unbelievable

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to Maisie. Soon she was using her writing skills to re-craft his propaganda 'leaks' in her own style.

Whenever she telephoned Addley-Fisher's Whitehall office he claimed, via the switchboard, to be in a meeting, advising she call back. Later, when his extension rang out, the FCO switchboard could never find him. As a result, all information between them was exchanged by secure teleprinter or through sealed documents carried in diplomatic pouches, a frustratingly slow procedure. In a commercial world, Addley-Fisher would have been fired for ineptitude but he clung to his senior post because he was part of the old school network which ran the FCO.

During Maisie's spell in Berlin, her controller did not visit her once, claiming pressure of other business. He also hinted as his face was well-known to the enemy from his previous exploits, he would place her in danger, by association. In exasperation, she eventually telephoned Ronnie Shearer who 'made inquiries' with her contacts at the FCO HQ in Westminster. From Ronnie, Maisie discovered her controller had been spinning a web of half-truths about himself. Addley-Fisher had never once served in the field. His sole exposure close to the real world of spying had been a five-month secondment as a relief signals clerk at the British Embassy in West Berlin in the early sixties, shortly after the Berlin Wall had been erected. Not once had he been over the Wall into East Germany nor had he been to any other part of the Soviet empire.

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The matter came to a head when Maisie was posing as a diplomatic attaché with the British Trade Mission in Minsk, Belarus.

Shortly after she had been 'placed', Addley-Fisher was dining in a swish restaurant in Mayfair called "The Chequerboard". Alain was the guest of a new contact, a charming and handsome man in his mid-twenties with impeccable BBC English. Alain had been 'ear-marked' by the PIRA, who had paid the KGB \$30,000 to have Addley-Fisher discredited. The KGB man claimed he was Count Ivan Jankowski, a Polish aristocrat living in London, keen to help the British get the Russians fully out of Poland and so allow him to reclaim his lands and property. Jankowski's real name was Tomasz Drueber, the only son of a surgeon, born on the Polish-East German border. Tomasz, a brilliant student, had earned a prized place at Lomonosov Moscow State University. On graduating, he too had been starred for greatness and recruited to serve in the KGB alongside their other rising star, Vladimir Putin.

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The *Chequerboard* served its extensive selection of expensive malt whiskies in a 'gentleman's measure'. After several, with his guard down, Alain failed to notice his drink being spiked. During the remainder of the evening Addley-Fisher was 'pumped', boastfully confiding he had a beautiful young woman in place in Belarus under the pseudonym Deborah Ferguson, posing as an expert in mineral resources. Her cover was she had been sent to source supplies of potash for British companies. Drueber might have let the information pass as hot air but, inadvertently, Addley-Fisher let slip that the young woman's file showed she was known personally to Margaret Thatcher.

The following day Alain surfaced in the early afternoon with a blinding headache. He had almost no recollection of what had transpired the previous evening. He could not understand why he was naked and his anus was bleeding. Nor did he recall he had been helped to this hotel bedroom by two men, one a young man with an unusually large penis and the other a photographer.

Four days later, Maisie, still in Minsk and unaware she had been blown, was duped into a romantic meeting with the handsome Drueber. They had met at a diplomatic soiree at the French Embassy two nights before. This lunch was a follow-up tryst during which the stated intention was 'to discuss the availability of potash and other mineral resources'. It soon moved on to a flirting session as they sipped their way through two bottles of locally produced *Sovetskoye Shampanskoye* (Soviet Champagne) which Drueber said he was keen to promote in a private sale to the West, hinting he desperately needed US Dollars to support his desired life-style. To Maisie this rang true, it was an angle she had heard many times before at diplomatic cocktail parties as the Soviets sought to gain a foothold in the race to personal wealth ahead of the expected collapse of the USSR. Mostly the various goods they were trying to peddle were of inferior quality, but this 'champagne' was excellent.

After a long, enjoyable lunch and now arm in arm, they entered the hotel where they planned to consume their passions. In the bedroom corridor, Maisie was snatched by a KGB team and taken to a secure dacha located in a remote forest. When the chloroform wore off, she continued to lie prone as she listened to her captors talking, slowly piecing together what had occurred.

She extracted herself by recalling a lesson Tom Farquarson-Wright had taught on the SAS course. Using halting Russian and a few mispronounced German words, she played the role of a damsel in distress suffering from monthly cramps and insisted she be given privacy to use the toilet to make herself decent. With basin and bath taps running full,

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she squeezed through the tiny high-level window, dropped to the ground. Using a gas cylinder intended for cooking, she arranged an explosion which killed three of her captors.

Drueber escaped. He was outside in his car reporting his success by radio to his superior and requesting the urgent despatch of a contingent of interrogators with their truth serums and punishment drugs.

When Maisie arrived safely back in the UK with her tale, she was closeted with Addley-Fisher to thrash the matter out. The inquest, led by MI 6, was a no-holds- barred session which lasted several days. Details were checked. Addley-Fisher's telephone records revealed his contact with Jankowski/Drueber, showing they had dined at *The Chequerboard*. As this was a well-known haunt for subversive politicians and intellectuals of all persuasions, these premises had been the target of CCTV surveillance by MI5 for many years. Eventually, trawling these tapes, lip-reading and using 'drug therapy', Alain's flaky memory of the evening was 'recovered'.

Addley-Fisher was at once dismissed. Protected by the old boy network he retired to his attic room with his pension intact. Unrequired for their original purpose, the compromising photographs of Addley-Fisher were sold by the PIRA to a man who ran a porn shop in SOHO. Within days, copies had found their way to the upper echelons of the FCO hierarchy. The tittle-tattle reached a brief crescendo and petered out. Addley-Fisher's record was 'sealed' and his name banished from all FCO conversation. Alain was dismissed from his gentleman's club. Within a few weeks it was as if he had never existed. A year later he died of sclerosis of the liver. Fifteen years later still, when his aunt expired aged 93, the descending flock of scavenging relatives were disappointed: their old aunty had bequeathed her entire estate to the British Trust for Ornithology.

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As the only current agent on the DisInf project, Ms Kaywood was promoted *de facto* to run it and now found herself making proposals to the unwieldy DisInf committee for approval. These monthly meetings, dominated by stuffy upper-class males of a previous generation, muttered their concerns when they re-assembled in the gentlemen's clubs later.

"That slip of a girl is too damned young, too damned lippy and too damned attractive for a senior role. Women are taking over everywhere. Look at "you now who!" Sign of the times. England's going down the bloody plug hole."

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However, with each new assignment, the young Maisie Kaywood impressed her colleagues and superiors, particularly the lady now in her third term at 10 Downing Street. Margaret Thatcher had met Maisie while dining at High Table at Cambridge University. Maisie thought she had been selected by ballot but she had been 'placed' by Ronnie Shearer, who could already see Maisie's sharp mind would lead her to greatness.

Closeted alone in her private study in the small hours of the morning, The Iron Lady, renowned for her voracious reading of the minutiae contained in the papers delivered in her ministerial 'red' box, spotted Maisie's name in the DisInf minutes and its addendum report from which Addley-Fisher's name had been redacted.

A private meeting was arranged, without witnesses, and the whole DisInf/Addley-Fisher/Belarus/KGB debacle was reviewed in detail. At this extended session, Maisie expressed her views forcefully and candidly then set out her alternative plan for the task, proposing a modern 'digital incursion' approach, based not at the FCO but at GCHQ. In Maisie's view, cyber interference and disruption would better achieve the original DisInf objectives, be more effectively 'targeted', more cost effective and less dangerous. Key powermongers throughout Europe could also be targeted, not just Russians. Naturally, field operations would also be required to place bugs and trail suspects in order to understand and exploit vulnerable individuals. If possible, Drueber would be snared and 'turned' or, more probably, fully debriefed then 'rendered ineffective', a euphemism fully understood by both women.

No minutes of this encounter were issued and the meeting was red-lined as "Cancelled" in the official diary for that day.

Mrs Thatcher acted immediately to release her new protégé from the dead hand of bureaucracy which was constraining her. "Ms Maisie Kaywood" was endorsed as a 'named person', and added to the list of recipients designated to benefit from funding ring-fenced by the Treasury under the overarching remit entitled: "the provision of special services to the Cabinet Office".

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Much to the chagrin of the FCO mandarins, Maisie was now given free rein to establish a small group known as "Section CD" (*Carpe Diem!*). Irritatingly for an organisation which vets and records every move with Rabbinical precision, this new section would take direction only from the PM or her authorised nominees, not through the normal FOC channels.

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The DisInf committee rumbled on for several months and was then disbanded, depriving many old hands of a comfortable sinecure and talking shop. This outcome also impacted badly on its lowly minute-taker, Gerrard McCance, then at the outset of his career as a servant of HMG.

This young man, much despised by those he served in the DisInf committee, was one of Thatcher's 'new blood' recruits, intended to shake up the workings of Government by disrupting its public-school ethos. Originally from Belfast via Balliol College, Oxford, Gerry had justified his scholarship by getting a Double First in Politics and Economics.

Physically he was a small man, with oily black hair, a thin moustache and wispy goatee beard. He spoke with the remnant of a grating Belfast whine and suffered a constant drip from his snub nose.

Unknown to his current FCO masters, the young man's chronic sinusitis was the result of tear gas fired by British troops. The ten-year old Gerry had been on his rounds as a lowly courier, making a routine exchange; drugs for information of troop deployments, supplied by needy individuals within the bureaucracy of the military and security camp followers. Early in his terrorist career, 'the McCance boy' had been noted for his cleverness, taken off the streets then sent to Manchester where he was schooled intensively to maximise his potential as a scholar. From the age of twelve, he had grown up as a 'protected person', groomed by the Godfathers of political wing of the PIRA with the intention of placing him as high as possible inside the British Government.

Gerry had few friends except those he met in the pub before and after his faithful visits to watch Arsenal's home games. On the bustle of the terraces, he passed over his floppy disks to various cut-outs, never seen. This was done by someone picking his left-hand jacket pocket. These disks held information titbits and, rarely, his own requests for assistance. When he checked his right-hand pocket in the quietness of his bedroom, very occasionally he would find a cryptic note of typed instructions or a request for specific information he must attempt to get. Never once was there a "Well done!" message.

Operating mainly blind, Gerrard McCance was unsure if the leaks he was providing were of sufficient value. Thus, deprived of supportive feedback, he lived in a constant state of anxiety, aware if he stepped out of line he would be liquidated without warning. This tactic was in part a deliberate ploy by people who had used blackmail, drugs and cash to place their boy from Belfast as a Trojan horse behind their enemy's defences. However, this lack of firm direction from his PIRA controllers was also caused by their uncertainty.

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Although McCance was bright they also knew he was not a tough man mentally. If they pushed him too hard he might get caught. If caught and put under stress, he might defect.

This had happened to a previous plant in the Home Office who had decided cash in his chips, reveal all and make a complete break from his first ambitious and shrewish wife who had been pushing hard to send their twin boys to Eton. This turncoat had been eventually tracked to New Zealand where he and his new family died in a freak accident. Their pick-up truck had been crushed by a runaway logging trailer which had become detached from its mechanical 'horse'.

With 'the McCance boy', the PIRA hoped if they played a waiting game he would rise through the ranks and become a 'diamond asset'. At least, they thought, he is unlikely to get married thus avoiding the tensions this might throw up.

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When Maisie appeared at the committee as Addley-Fisher's successor, Gerry had just been promoted to become its Secretary, (an appointment with the level, 'Principal, Grade 7'). The previous incumbent, Basil Hetherington, a man in his late forties, had applied unexpectedly for early retirement. This had been forced on him by an anonymous contact who threatened to reveal his addiction to hard porn videos. The blackmailer had sent him a video of CCTV footage in the SOHO shop (the one which had retailed Addley-Fisher's sodomy phot-shoot). Basil, a son of the manse with Clarissa a high-profile wife involved in several 'royal' charities, took the bait, resigned making it clear McCance was an excellent replacement. Once Gerry was safely embedded as his replacement, a further copy of Basil's SOHO CCTV video was sent to the News of the World. The SOHO shop owner signed an affidavit confirming the CCTV footage was kosher. After the NOTW exposé, the Hetheringtons were expelled from polite society. This promotion brought McCance his first opportunity for real success. His new elevated position allowed him access to many computer records far more interesting than the chaotic minutes of the DisInf committee.

Gerry, who was awkward in female company, was immediately jealous of the success of the young woman who arrived at his committee and disrupted its smooth workings. In public, he smiled wanly, held his tongue and decided he must wait his opportunity. He was certain no one could be as good as she seemed. His PIRA 'friends' would assist, if required, but he was sure she would trip herself up if he gave her enough leeway.

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In private, in his North London bedsit, under his duvet, he dreamed her up, closed his eyes and enjoyed slow fantasy sex of the kind he had longed for every night since his lonely teenage years.

When Maisie moved to GCHQ, Gerry missed watching her and hoped one day their paths would cross when he might, with luck, have sufficient power over her to be able to act out his fantasies in the flesh. When DisInf was disbanded, he had already found another 'target' in the FCO system.

Sir Jeremy Fallistow, Head of Personnel, was a serial philanderer who had strayed into the path of a younger woman whose older husband was a Cabinet Minister. It took a few months for the PIRA to organise his downfall. Key to this was an intermediary who wrote under the pen-name of Rory O'Riordan. Rory was an influential journalist with Irish sympathies and in need of ready cash for his heroin addiction. After some softening up by O'Riordan, Fallistow agreed to meet privately with the lowly McCance. As he had been coached to do by the journalist, Gerry feigned an earnest desire to help cover-up the matter as he delivered his dossier of compromising photographs provided by a PIRA photographer. Fallistow played his part and confided to McCance his detour from the path of marital fealty had been a single and unfortunate aberration. Gerry held out steadfastly for promotion to Under Secretary level, Grade 3, becoming one of the youngest to achieve this elevated level, demonstrating Mrs T's 'new blood' plan was working. In return Gerry would deliver a second set of prints with the negatives with the earnest assurance these comprised the sum total of the incriminating evidence.

A few months after McCance was posted to become GCHQ Deputy Head of Resources, Fallistow died of a heart attack, *in flagrante*. On the evening in question, he had been working late on important papers, in his locked office. Unusually he was being assisted by a very dishy twenty-two-year-old secretarial assistant called Siobhan Walsh, a native of Manchester born of Irish parents. The actual circumstance of Fallistow's demise was hushed up by the Old Boy network.

Aged thirty-two, McCance was home and dry. The PIRA now had their man in place with access to virtually all HMG secrets. His first move was to approve a batch of candidates for key posts, using a list which had been dropped into his right-hand jacket pocket at Highbury Stadium.

McCance would play a key role in delaying the peace accord which Tony Blair eventually brought to fruition with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1998.

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From its inception in 1988, Section CD achieved quiet success for thirteen years under Maisie's autocratic leadership. When Mrs Thatcher was ousted in 1990, Maisie continued to operate below the departmental radar, shielded by Liesel Shearer (daughter of Ronnie Shearer). Liesel, as GCHQ Deputy Director (Budgets), was the person who signed-off the necessary monies and fudged the inter-departmental cash-flows from the Special Services block grant. Section CD's drawdown was tiny by comparison to many other similar 'secret' groups and, unlike these others, Maisie never asked for more and so CD's annual funding allocation went through 'on the nod'.

Although Section CD was nominally based at GCHQ, because of its overseas activities, it worked closely with MI 6 and agents from the Special Services (SAS, SBS and personnel drawn from the other Elite Forces supplied by the British Military). When required, the FCO provided appropriate diplomatic cover and facilities, using its worldwide network of British Embassies, Consulates and mercenaries.

From its first days at GCHQ, Section CD abandoned the slow and timid approach of the original DisInf committee. When tasked to implement any specific request from Downing Street, Maisie acted entirely on her own authority and therefore created no bureaucratic trail. Without seeking approval, she also devised her own projects, bringing together an elite team of hand-picked experts who shared her vision. Her first recruit was Tom Farquarson-Wright, who suggested others she might recruit to her team.

As opportunities presented, CD actively subverted or eliminated enemy agents. On occasions where lethal action was used, it was always carefully planned, ensuring CD left no 'smoking guns'. Routinely, Maisie and her team used the tactic of spreading rumours of 'sightings', reinforced by false usage of credit cards and unused hotel rooms, airline journeys completed by actors using the documentation removed from the long dead owner, or specially created for the purpose. This approach was often used to create the impression the missing person(s) had defected or were fleeing, where necessary reinforced by a false money trail which, after many twists and turns, led to a digital cul-de-sac, usually at an impenetrable Swiss bank account.

Throughout this endeavour, Maisie's primary aim was the continuing downfall of the bankrupt Soviet empire. This was done by actively meddling in the swirl of data and ideas surrounding Gorbachev's 'new thinking' and Perestroika. The failed KGB (Committee for State Security) coup d'état of August 1991 led to it being disbanded. At the start of the revolt, Vladimir Putin and his acolyte Thomas Drueber both resigned from the KGB and

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quietly began a new approach to gaining power. For this they needed money and set up a bank scamming group in Belarus, safely distant from their previous colleagues. The 'loyal' remnants of the KGB quickly reformed as the FSK (Federal Counter Intelligence Service) which was soon purged and further reformed as the FSB (Federal Security Service).

Later, during the years when Boris Yeltsin drank his way through two terms of office, as the New Russia staggered forward into a Soviet-style 'market economy', Yeltsin failed to quell the Rise of the Oligarchs. Putin, no longer officially part of the FSB, was now focussed on political power and gradually morphed into a 'legitimate' citizen. Drueber remained with the FSB and operating at one remove, was one of Putin's main fixers. Now running a secret team of freelance operatives not dissimilar to Section CD, Drueber was headquartered in an anonymous office block on the outskirts of Minsk, still scamming bank accounts and doing freelance projects to augment their funding.

As the thinking in Moscow changed, the approach of Section CD adapted to suit, with 'projects' designed to accelerate the break-up of the USSR monolith and further weaken Moscow control.

Throughout its run, Section CD's successes and failures occurred without fanfare and, since it operated within a cocoon of deafening silence with no accessible records, it largely avoided criticism or jealousy. However, its low-key activities did not go entirely unnoticed by the sharpest of FCO minds responsible for overseeing GCHQ and its massive budget.

By November 1997, Gerry McCance had become this committee's Permanent Secretary. This position gave him wide-ranging access to the GCHQ signals and, crucially, the minutes of sensitive committees. During the run-up to the Good Friday Agreement signed in the spring of 1998, Gerry was providing his PIRA masters with an insider view of HMG's thinking and fears. On a personal level, he was still calling Maisie's image to his lonely bed, now in a much grander two-bedroom apartment in Highbury, within walking distance of his favourite pub and Arsenal's stadium. On several occasions, he tried to meet her 'by accident' during his visits to GCHQ. She proved elusive. Repeatedly, as a personal project, he also tried to find her on-line records in the GCHQ archive. Any records Maisie kept were never lodged in the GCHQ system. She was already aware of its weaknesses. All McCance could glean were vague rumours of her off-piste exploits.

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In 2001, amid a spate of Government reforms under the new broom wielded by Iain Duncan Smith and his cohort, Sir Gerrard McCance, now an established powerbroker in

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the FCO system, decided to flush out Ms Maisie Kaywood. To do this, he 'highlighted' her activities to Sir Crispin Bettell, a fellow Permanent Secretary who had the ear of the Cabinet Office. This man was the son of the chair of the long-gone DisInf committee. and after consulting his father, now in a care home in Tunbridge Wells, he brought these rumours to the attention of the PM. Cabinet Minutes were checked, unpleasant odours of possible unethical behaviour wrinkled noses. The unpalatable truth of Section CD's activities was whispered behind closed doors.

Kaywood, as the guardian of Section CD's many inconvenient secrets, was declared *persona non grata*. Maisie's CD fiefdom must be excised from the GCHQ organisation. This decision, in principle, was made at Cabinet level and the task of how to dispose of Section CD was delegated first to the FCO, and then to Gerry McCance and his committee.

Fortunately for Maisie, the scapula was not wielded immediately and while the mandarins argued about what to do with her she was 'suspended from duty'. By remotely sneak-peeking the minutes of these meetings she was aware she would not survive. Although quarantined in bureaucratic limbo, Maisie, as a veteran user of the complex and ultra-powerful GCHQ computer network, had previously tweaked areas to suit her own purposes. Now she used this knowledge to full advantage, intent on future-proofing her secure backdoor access via the Internet.

After three months of wrangling, the higher powers could find no 'proof of misdemeanour' but finally decided the secretive and irritating Ms Masie Kaywood must be retired and their system 'purified'. She gracefully accepted their offer and agreed to leave with the request her pension be encashed and the sum paid to the Glasgow City Mission, a long-established charity which worked with street people and others disadvantaged by life's rough and tumble.

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XCD and Lab 5 at GBG

In December 2001, aged thirty-seven, Myra returned to Glasgow to embark on a new career as a writer, itinerant actor and freelance jazz pianist. Self-funded, she enrolled for a PhD at Strathclyde University, leading to a period as a Post-Doctoral Fellow, later becoming a Personal Professor teaching and mentoring post-graduates.

Within a year of moving back to Glasgow, Maisie had established her own version of her GCHQ group known simply as XCD by the select few who were aware of its existence. During its first two years XCD was funded from Maisie's personal wealth. As it gained momentum, it became self-funding, its operations frequently contributing anonymously to the work of the MMF. As planned, Maisie had maintained access to GCHQ and its secrets but her projects were now self-selected.

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One of Maisie's principal collaborators from her GCHQ days was Sir Donald MacCorquindale, the man who became Thomas and Angela Thomson's son-in-law. After an exemplary career with Strathclyde Police, MacCorquindale was recruited in to the Metropolitan Police to become an Assistant Chief Constable. At the Met, he was tasked with re-vamping its anti-terrorist initiative. This led to the formation of SI9, working closely with MI5 and GCHQ. His ability was quickly recognised and he was knighted within two years of joining the Met.

Being part of the Thomson clan, Maisie and Sir Donald, known as Corky to close friends and family, became close collaborators in the mould of Thomas Thomson and Myra Kaywood, but without the tensions caused by sexual intrigue.

On retirement in 2003, Sir Donald and Lady Theresa moved back to their native Glasgow, taking up residence full-time with Teresa's mother Angela in Denholm Castle. As Thomas Thomson's widow, Angela continued to live rent-free in Denholm Castle, a guest of the MMF Trust. This grand property, set in extensive grounds in Glasgow's up-market enclave of Pollokshields had become the base for a dozen or so of the more public charities supported by the reclusive MMF Trust.

The nature and operation of the MMF Trust had changed markedly since 1983, when Maisie took over the reins. The MMF and its many subsidiaries operated entirely on the internet supported by distributed servers providing a secure cloud-based service. In this double-encrypted digital form, it is virtually anonymous, fronted entirely by private

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charities. Unlike those based at Denholm Castle, most of these charities are equally secretive, operating from offshore bank accounts on the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands and Switzerland. Where expedient, accounts in other similar anonymous banking centres may be opened and closed to act as cut-outs.

Having set her life's trajectory to fulfil her own version of 'Myra's Justice', Maisie remains unwed but sexually active. As the carrier of a faulty gene inherited from her mother, she has chosen to remain childless. However, following her unexpected encounter with Sandy and Helen Kaywood at The Burrell Museum gathering in February 1983, and despite her mother's terse and repeated requests not to fraternise with her first and only husband, Maisie actively pursued her friendship with Sandy's family. Gradually she unearthed her Gallagher, Thomson and Nellis roots leading to a life-long interest in her genealogy and a search for her other long-lost relatives. Over the ensuing years, Maisie has tracked down most of them, many of whom are scattered through the length and breadth of the UK and several further afield.

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Maisie's work leading post-graduate projects at Strathclyde University continues. Conveniently, it provides high-level access to academic databases in the UK and throughout the world. This global network, with its ultra-high-speed links provides Lab 5 access to staff and student records, details of research funding initiatives from Governments and International Corporations. As Maisie is well aware, not all university research is benign and it is often useful to be able to find out which pipers are calling which tunes.

Importantly, her teaching and mentoring work at Strathclyde University provides an intimate environment in which she can evaluate potential recruits for her Lab 5 team at Global Biogenetics (GBG). These post-graduate projects, selected and directed under her personal control, are generously funded by various charities supported by the MMF Trust. Like the low-key model she honed during her time at GCHQ leading Section CD, her projects are driven by desired outcomes, not paperwork.

Only very occasionally are her project results published in scientific journals. In most cases, the 'product' derived from her research work is provided free of charge to those who need it to help them make their part of the internet free of corruption. This list of beneficiaries includes banks, government agencies, online shopping enterprises, social media networks and similar organisations. As a result, and by design, Maisie and her Lab 5 team have established 'unauthorised surveillance access' to the databases and ledgers of these organisations through hidden subroutines embedded in the 'free' software they

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have provided. When required, such data is garnered to serve the needs of XCD operations.

Providentially, her role as Professor Maisie Kaywood provides her with an 'acceptable' public profile behind which she conceals the many other personae she adopts to maintain secrecy and achieve her objectives in the pursuit of Myra's Justice.

The nearest person Maisie has to a soul-mate is Sir Donald. Like Maisie, Corky is also an honorary member of the Thomson clan. He is one of very few people who have partial knowledge of Maisie's several parallel lives, her leadership of XCD and the workings of her Lab 5 Team at GBG.

Ousted from GCHQ in 2001, Maisie continues to pursue 'Myra's Justice' on a vigorous, self-directed and fiercely autocratic basis.