

DON HEWSON'S CHILDREN SOAR

(Book 8 in the Don Hewson series)

CHAPTER 1: Ali Miah

I do not follow the movements of the Crown Prince of Bahrain because the Crown Prince's movements are none of my business.

The Crown Prince often attends meetings in place of his father.

The Crown Prince cancelled a couple of our scheduled meetings because he had to go to important meetings abroad for his father.

That is fine.

Our projects are going well.

I do not need any decisions from the Crown Prince at the moment.

I have ordered the caissons for the four islands.

Island 1 is the airport island. It is not quite as big as Schiphol airport but it is much bigger than Bahrain currently needs.

The Crown Prince says that air travel will continue to grow, so bite the bullet and build a large airport now.

If when the airport is up and running there is clearly too much capacity then the Crown Prince will close the current airport and combine everything onto the island. That would free up flat land at the original airport for commerce, industry, and housing.

We will begin with Island 1.

Island 1 is the island I was originally employed to build when my friend and mentor Arthur Miller became ill and was dying.

Since then I have been put in charge of the entire project!

Island 3 and Island 4 are now to be combined, with a series of reservoirs which eventually will be full of clean water generated by solar power.

Islands 5 and 6 are also to be combined in the same way.

Island 2 will be built last. That is intended to be warehouses and factories for businesses connected with the airport.

There will be a series of bridges that will permit vehicle movement from island to island. As the two outer islands will not attract much traffic their road can be fairly narrow – one lane in each direction.

The pipelines will run on the sea bed under the bridges. There will be a pipeline from each reservoir island rather than having the islands sharing a pipeline. If one pipeline should be broken or contaminated, the other will still be operative.

Every island is to have wharves and a service road around the perimeter.

Islands 2, 3 & 4, and 5 & 6 are primarily anti-tsunami barriers.

If I was just building reservoirs each reservoir island would be a mile long by roughly eighty metres across. For engineering integrity and for safety I am building reservoirs that are roughly 80 metres square.

On each island there will be twenty reservoirs in line abreast.

The depth of each cell varies with the depth of the sea bed. The tops of the reservoirs are all fifteen metres above sea level.

I will need more than thirty million bricks for each reservoir island.

I sent an email to my friend Mark Johnson saying that the order will be for more than sixty million bricks.

“No problem” Mark has replied.

I have my friend Fan experimenting in China to work out how much rice we must cook to generate the starch water to make a cubic metre of mortar.

Mark Johnson has thrown in a couple of miles by eighty metres of a fabric that collects solar power. It will power the solar desalination and it will provide power for lighting the islands at night to reduce the navigation hazards.

When the Crown Prince had time to see me I was pleased to see the Crown Prince to tell him about progress.

I have even prepared a time line for the various stages.

Not being stupid, I have built in some slack all the way along.

The backup documentation for the timeline would be taller than me if it were all to be printed out.

I told the Crown Prince about my proposed deal with Mark.

The Crown Prince is pleased that I have saved him well over a million pounds on the cost of bricks and on the costs of solar power.

Given the huge numbers of bricks that will be needed the Crown Prince authorised me to get production going as soon as possible. The Crown Prince wishes me to assign someone trustworthy to be my representative at the brickworks in Spain.

The Crown Prince is pleased with my time line. He had expected the project to take longer. Then the Crown Prince looked sad.

The Crown Prince changed the subject.

“Mr Miah.

“Bahrain is a proud country but we are a small country.”

I said nothing.

“We do not have a large population.

“We do not have large armed forces.

“We have to accept that in terms of influence we are not the equal of Iran and Iraq and Saudi Arabia.”

I nodded.

“Yes, sir.”

“We cannot stand alone against all three of Iraq Iran and Saudi Arabia when all three are united.”

“No, Your Royal Highness.”

Why is the Crown Prince telling me this?

I do not follow diplomacy or politics unless they impact upon me in some way.

Why is this information relevant?

On what topic have Iran and Iraq and Saudi Arabia all been on one side and little Bahrain all alone on the other?

Why has that not been on the television news?

Why is the Crown Prince telling me?

“Have you been following the problems of safety at Holy Mecca?”

Every Muslim intends to go on pilgrimage to Holy Mecca if and when they can afford it.

Apart from being a holy duty it is something that we all wish to do.

I have not gone on pilgrimage yet.

First I was too poor and since then I have been too busy.

We must have our personal and business affairs in order before we can go on pilgrimage.

I was planning to take Shakoora when our children are grown up.

As Shakoora and I are waiting for our first child to be born, going on a pilgrimage has not been anywhere near the top of our agenda.

There are crowd safety issues at Holy Mecca that cause dozens or hundreds of deaths almost every year.

The safety issue at Holy Mecca is something that mildly concerns me.

If I intended to go on pilgrimage any time soon then the safety issue at Holy Mecca would worry me more.

"I imagine every Muslim is aware that there are problems, sir."

"What is the solution?"

I had to phrase this tactfully.

"The people who are in charge of Holy Mecca are very holy and wise people, your Royal Highness.

"They are not Engineers.

"I think the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has to appoint a Site Engineer with the power and the financing to make whatever changes are needed to improve safety.

"It would have to be a Muslim.

"A respected Engineer."

The Crown Prince said,

"Under a committee of Engineers representing say Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Iran, Iraq, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?"

"In one sense, that is not necessary.

"But in negotiations with the holy and wise custodians of Holy Mecca it would be enormously helpful to have that committee of engineers confirming that what the Site Engineer proposes to do is the right thing to do."

The Crown Prince asked,

"And what nationality should this Site Engineer be?"

A strange question, I thought.

"I do not think that the nationality of the Engineer matters, Your Royal Highness.

"What is important is the quality of the Engineer."

"You are a true Engineer!"

The Crown Prince spoke more slowly.

"Some of the large countries do not have a respected engineer to put forward.

"Other countries do have a respected engineer, but they wish to keep him at home to work on projects there."

The Crown Prince looked into my face as he said,

"But no big country wants any of the other big Islamic countries to have the prestige of providing the Site Engineer for Holy Mecca."

There was a silence.

I felt that the Crown Prince expected me to say something.

"Quite a problem, Your Royal Highness.

"I don't know what to suggest."

I had no idea whom to suggest, either.

The Crown Prince looked at me sharply.

"Can you think of a respected Muslim Engineer who is not from one of the large Muslim countries?"

I thought hard.

By now I know most of the Engineers leading or supervising on large projects around the Middle East. I have met most of them.

A lot of leading Engineers are not Muslims.

Those Engineers who are Muslims leading big projects are doing it in their own countries.

They are all from big Muslim countries.

I sat and I thought.

I thought.

The Crown Prince was looking at me.

The Crown Prince was sad.

The Crown Prince looked disappointed.

The silence continued.

It is incredibly embarrassing when a silence runs like this.

I felt so stupid.

The Crown Prince so obviously expected something intelligent from me.

Eventually, the penny dropped.

"Me?"

"Yes.

"I argued that you are too young.

"I said that you are too inexperienced to be given such a responsibility.

"The others pointed out that you are already in charge of one of the largest projects in the world.

"You are famous for your ingenuity.

"You are "Genghis The Water Giver."

"You would be a hugely popular appointment.

"Your nationality is British, not one of the large Muslim countries.

"You look Bengali, you are married to an African, and you live here in Bahrain. You are Quran Hafiz.

"You are a hero.

"No-one objects to you."

"You will continue to work on our project here in Bahrain.

"You will spend one week each month in Holy Mecca until you are released."

"Released, sir?"

"If you solve all the problems at Holy Mecca you may be released.

"Or you may stay on as Site Engineer at Holy Mecca for life."

I was never in a million years expecting to become the Site Engineer for Holy Mecca!

Mrs Shah would be beside herself with joy if she were alive.

So would my mother, were she alive.

"I am overcome, Your Royal Highness.

"I never imagined such an honour."

The Crown Prince smiled.

"There are silver linings to this cloud."

"Yes, Sir?"

"It adds prestige to Bahrain.

"It adds prestige to you.

"And I am confident that the safety problems at Holy Mecca will be solved."

"Thank you, your Royal Highness."

CHAPTER 2: Rebecca Johnson

My campaign at the Groatpie by-election made me a nationally known figure.

I am better known than most Members of Parliament. I have more face recognition than some Cabinet members.

Jenny Hallam MP and Charlie Kent MP are still being really helpful to me.

I am not going to go on television programs or radio until I feel more confident. The fact that I am not readily available actually adds allure for the program makers!

The staff whom my predecessor had employed all lost their jobs when their employer died. I re-employed them.

I explained that I am still feeling my way.

I began by putting the workers on three month temporary contracts to see how things work out.

I don't particularly like Martha, the woman who runs my constituency office. She is a bit of a dragon. Martha is a member of the Groatpie Constituency Labour Party.

Martha lives only a hundred yards from the constituency office. My brother Mark used Martha's kitchen when Mark was cooking for the election workers.

Martha's daughter Cheryl is really interested in Mark.

A lot of young women are interested in Mark, or they would be if Mark showed interest in anything outside his work and his Calls.

I don't think that Mark is interested in Cheryl, but I am not saying anything.

I said to Martha that a lot of the people who will contact the office are emotionally vulnerable. It is very important that Martha is welcoming and gentle and kind and so forth.

The secretary in London is very efficient.

Caroline had more or less assumed that she would be kept on, so when I arrived in London Caroline had already opened my post and she had printed eight hundred letters for me to sign.

Caroline told me that although there are machines that can produce a signature Caroline believes that people can tell the difference. So get signing!

The letters are all dated for the day after tomorrow so I may take them home to sign.

Where the correspondents have Labour MPs it is protocol to forward the letters to their Labour MPs. Where the MPs are not Labour it had to be my decision.

Caroline's advice was that I will be inundated with requests for help. If I am not careful I will become drowned in casework.

I am better to instruct Caroline to refer all letters to the senders' Members of Parliament.

If there is a category such as children in care, or former children in care, where I wish to become involved, then I can take those cases.

There were thirty letters that Caroline needed guidance upon before she could draft the replies. This is because Caroline does not know my views on the issues raised.

Caroline is a godsend.

I must admit that a number of the issues are not ones that I have ever thought about. Those letters just get polite acknowledgements.

I inherited half a research assistant. Piers Halfwheat is known to all at Westminster as Piers Halfwit. Politics is a cruel game.

Piers is a complete waste of space.

On advice from Jenny Hallam I told Piers that I wanted figures for every local authority in the country. I wanted to know how much money they received from Central Government. I

wanted to know how many children each authority had in care. I wanted to know their Child Protection budgets. I wanted a lot of detail.

I wanted this information broken down by every ten thousand of population. I wanted the local authorities ranked, and cross referenced to who the local MPs are. I wanted Piers to do all the associated number crunching.

I wanted it by this time tomorrow!

Within an hour, the MP with whom I share Piers asked me if I would release Piers to work for him full time.

I said that I was very happy to release Piers immediately.

Well done, Jenny!

Caroline sent an email to the House of Commons Library, who said they would provide most of the information tomorrow.

Piers Halfwheat, it turns out, is the son of a trade union leader. Piers is probably going to become a Member of Parliament.

Piers will spend a couple of years here at Westminster learning how Parliament works. Then Piers' father will try to get Piers selected for a safe Labour seat.

Good luck with that!

I am staying at Tohur's house at the moment.

I need to find somewhere to live in London. I want to be somewhere between King's Cross Station where my train to Groatpie leaves from, and Westminster.

We have decided that Mark will buy the house in Tryton from me. Given Mark's huge salary as a Director of the Byram Group and Mark's good savings any building society will lend Mark the small balance that Mark needs. Cecil Byram would probably lend it!

I can use that money and my savings and a loan from Charlotte to buy a house in London.

Mark is so practical!

Mark has decided to build a ground floor extension for the house in Tryton. The extension will have a bedroom with a bathroom en suite. It will be ideal for our mother's cousin Sister Sally Cuddy. That way Mark also keeps a bedroom available for me for when I come to Tryton.

Mark says that he has no alternative now but to stay with Byrams. Mark had been thinking of leaving Byrams. Mark earns so much money at Byrams now that Mark would be mad to leave.

My sister Charlotte is busy and happy.

Mark saw one of Charlotte's shows in America. Mark says it was terrific.

The rest of the family are fine.

David Wilkins still has a key to Tohur Miah's house even though David has sold his half of the property to Tohur. I came home one evening to find a stack of political books outside my bedroom. They look interesting.

CHAPTER 3: Kevin Hanson

Mark Johnson is our Director for Exports and Expansion.

Mark's current assistant Dick Shepherd once described Mark to me as "a bulldozer on steroids".

I have worked as Mark's assistant.

I do not disagree with Dick's assessment of Mark.

In any situation Mark works out what is needed and then Mark does it or Mark gets it done.

Mark helped Merseyside Plastics to find a site.

Mark was heavily involved in building the new factory.

Mark is growing a chain of builder's merchants.

Mark bought a disused brickworks, a disused cement works, and a sand quarry, all in Spain, for relative buttons. These were all bought to supply goods to the chain of builder's merchants.

Cecil Byram's daughter Karen Byram is supervising the three Spanish businesses while studying in England for a degree in Production Engineering and Spanish.

Now Mark has done a deal to supply English style bricks from the Spanish brickworks to a large building project in Bahrain. Mark reckons to make six pence to eight pence profit per brick. On seventy million bricks, that is five million pounds in profit.

That one deal will pay for the three Spanish purchases!

Mark is going to need containers to store and to transport the bricks.

Mark also needs pallets, preferably made of metal. Mark is not selling the metal pallets but he is just lending them for a few years.

Mark will stack the filled containers at the brickworks until the Bahrainis need them. When the Bahrainis need them they will want huge amounts, so production starts next week even though the bricks are not needed for probably a year.

I was surprised when Mark told me how cheap containers are to buy.

In Western Europe containers cost about a thousand euros or less for a twenty foot container, about fourteen hundred euros for a forty-footer. Given how much bricks weigh we are working with twenty foot containers.

Mark has his assistant Dick Shepherd purchasing empty containers and shipping them to the brickworks in Spain.

Mark has given Dick the maximum prices we are prepared to pay.

Dick is to go back to Mark for further instructions when Dick has assembled a hundred containers at the brickworks.

Dick says that life as Mark's assistant is very hard work but it is a very interesting experience.

Dick is based in a tiny office above the first builder's merchant shop.

As Mark's assistant Dick is now on the payroll of Byram Investments instead of Merseyside Plastics where Dick worked originally.

Mark has appointed a researcher for North America to identify opportunities for exports or for business purchase. The researcher is based in Mexico.

Karl Styles is our man in China, looking for opportunities all over the Far East.

Charlie Kent MP introduced Byrams to a man who has spent a lot of his life in Development in the Third World, particularly Africa.

Mark and David Taylor and Cecil and Daniel Mason are trying to decide whether to set up a factory making solar energy "fabric" in Ghana. Should the fabric sold in Africa be manufactured in Africa or in China?

David Taylor runs our Energy Division.

Daniel Mason works under David but Daniel is also an ideas person for Cecil Byram.

Our new Managing Director Robert Iredale is a strong character, and a great contributor to the business.

Robert says that the "band of brothers" feel within the Byram Group management team is priceless.

All of our managers are working flat out. There is no manoeuvring for position or for influence. We all have as much on or more on than we can handle.

None of us are looking for anyone else's job.

We do not have turf wars, which in Robert's experience is unusual.

We managers cooperate with each other in a way that Robert has rarely seen.

Robert says that one advantage of not having enough managers is that we have all learned to concentrate on what is important.

It is possible for Karl Styles to have three bosses. Karl has David Taylor over him for the energy business, Barney Stephenson over him for Purchasing in Shanghai, and Mark Johnson over him for exports and expansion. Apparently this is called "matrix management" rather than "too many bosses".

Robert says that in all his years in industry Robert has never before thought of or seen catering used as a contributor to industrial productivity.

Well done Mark Johnson and Rebecca Johnson for demonstrating that the concept works, and well done to Cecil Byram and Garth Stead for bringing catering into the Group's managerial repertoire.

Mark Johnson has praise from Robert for recruiting Georgina Arron, myself, and Dick Shepherd to the management team, and for bringing in Rebecca Johnson and Sahid Daar. Robert and Cecil Byram have agreed that Cecil only comes to Willerton one day a week. This is so Robert can properly exercise his role as Managing Director without Cecil becoming involved in operational issues that Robert should deal with.

Cecil Byram is finding it hard just to be Chairman of the Board.

Cecil is supposed to be thinking deep thoughts, and networking.

At the moment Cecil is watching the crisis in the steel industry. Cecil might buy a steelworks if the price is right. Even more important is whether Byrams and Ming's can sell the production if we were to buy a steelworks.

A steelworks working properly produces a heck of a lot of metal.

Daniel Mason has suggested that Byrams should go deeper into house building. We would need to assemble a land bank or purchase a construction firm that already has a land bank. We could employ a team of ex prisoner builders. We would use sand and cement and bricks that we manufacture ourselves, with other supplies from our chain of builder's merchants. Irene Byram now has significant experience in commissioning and building homes for single people and couples, which is where the need is.

Cecil is looking into this.

David Taylor is happy running the coal pits, and the miners are happy with David's approach. Every morning each mine manager receives statistical information for production and for profit up to ten pm the night before.

David has a good personal relationship with each manager.

The chap who was a researcher for the National Union of Mineworkers was poached by David to be David's personal number cruncher and researcher. The NUM could not compete with the Byram Group on pay.

David did a pay deal with the National Union of Mineworkers.

David showed the NUM negotiators a chart comparing NUM base rate with Engineering Union base rate over the last thirty years. After viewing the chart the NUM agreed to tie the NUM base rate to the Engineering Union base rate. The NUM does not need to go on strike every time they wish for a pay rise.

Every miner is now building his individual pension fund, with a contribution from the Government related to the miner's past pension entitlements. As employer, Byram Coal Ltd also contributes to the pension funds.

The ten thousand miners have a Catering Manager. She is Kate Alcock from Groatpie Colliery.

The factories have Daphne Tamms from the Newcastle factory. The two managers share a financial analyst Mary Ingham.

Everyone is content on the food side.

Martin Jenkins is still working on the Groatpie expansion. All the planning permissions are granted. Breaking ground is just beginning.

Our training and education regime is already paying for itself.

If a worker can set and operate his machine, identify problems and make adjustments and minor repairs, then there is generally no loss of production. We do not have a machine and a worker idle while they wait for the fitter to appear, and a further loss of production while the fitter fixes the problem.

The worker ties a yellow bandanna to his machine, and the next time a fitter passes they discuss the problem. Each fitter has his group of machines for which he is responsible.

If there is still a problem at the end of a shift then it is reported and resolved.

Cecil Byram is still hostile to the factories working more than one shift. Cecil reckons it is not good for the health of the workers. The only exceptions are the monthly foundry run at Neverthorpe and the "Help The MOD Month" each year.

The coal pits have always had twenty-four hour working. Cecil has not interfered with that.

The first intake of management trainees have virtually all been given promotions and additional responsibilities, freeing up their managers for promotion.

The message has got through to all of our managers that the road to promotion is to grow managers to succeed you.

Our Cadet scheme is a raging success. Our Cadet intake is incredibly sharp and committed.

Everyone is impressed with the Cadet intake.

The Cadets are well worth what Cecil is paying them.

The Cadets are very happy to be earning sensible wages whilst training.

Our Cadet intake will be increased next year.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has told Byrams that Byrams has to change our recruitment procedures.

We may not give preference to applicants who have family members who already work at Byrams. Apparently this practice serves to exclude people from other backgrounds.

Cecil swore about this instruction for a couple of days and then Cecil accepted that this is the law and that we cannot fight it.

Rose Howarth our HR Director has hired a Consultant to work through all our personnel related procedures to make sure that we are compliant with good practice in every way.

Apart from this being the right thing to do we do not wish for the management team to be pestered with court and tribunal cases.

Every part of the Byrams operation is generating cash. The sixty million pounds invested in the new Merseyside Plastics factory is bringing in a good return already.

Cecil is sitting on a mountain of money in various currencies.

Steve Collins the new Group Finance Manager has almost all the money out on short term loans because no-one knows what else to do with it.

One of the workers at our Bradford factory was in very deep trouble over credit cards and payday loans. He did not tell anyone.

He tried to hang himself in a toilet at the factory.

Within days Steve Collins had set up a loan scheme whereby Byrams Finance will lend any Byrams Group worker the money to clear credit card and similar loans, arrears, or anything similar. The new interest rate is five per cent per year, which is still more than Byrams would earn from depositing that money in a bank.

Byrams will lend up to a year's salary to any Byrams worker at seven per cent, with no questions asked. Cecil's view is that if there are no questions asked then the worker is not forced to tell lies to borrow the money.

Chester Wilson is in the United States at the moment. Apparently there is some family issue that Chester needs to resolve before Chester marries Rebecca Johnson next year.

Sahid Daar and his marketing have made a huge difference to Byrams.

Sahid's targeted marketing on social media pays for itself many times over. Cecil says that Sahid is one of the best value consultants whom Cecil has ever had.

The internet magazine (which was my idea), with its ferociously funny cartoons is seen by more than one million people each month.

Next month I will be opening a factory in Liverpool manned by "reformed" petty criminals, in the factory that Merseyside Plastics has moved from.

The "tealeaf" or thief factory will be doing simple metal bashing at first, building to more complex work later.

My charge hands are coming from our Ellesmere Port factory.

Nearly all the thirty maimed soldiers in the first Birmingham intake have moved from Birmingham to Liverpool to become charge hands at the new Merseyside Plastics factory.

Irene Byram had a block of flats renovated for the soldiers to live in.

Some of the former battered women have also become charge hands at Liverpool.

By Liverpool standards the charge hands are well paid. The soldiers have their Army disability pensions on top, so the soldiers have very respectable incomes.

The Birmingham factory filled up again quite quickly. We can take any maimed soldiers who are capable of work.

We are now taking former soldiers who have nothing wrong with them.

There is an inexhaustible supply of formerly battered women.

The hostels for battered women used to have a huge problem resettling their residents. At Birmingham we have jobs, childminding, and housing in a package that many women are happy to accept. By providing somewhere for the women to resettle we have freed up scores of hostel spaces.

We are using less than a fifth of the Birmingham factory at the moment. If Garth can release more work to Birmingham then we will recruit more workers.

The Byram Willerton Brass Band and the Academy are well. The other brass bands are formed and they are rehearsing.

The Groatpie Philharmonic Orchestra has had its first public performance.

Ming's and its Belgian subsidiary Chang's have been ordered to run down their steel stocks.

That is a big clue that Cecil intends to buy a steelworks within the next couple of years.

Given the size of their steel stocks it will take a while to run their stocks down significantly.

CHAPTER 4: Emma Hewson

Opening a Nursery at the theatre school has been a great success. When we announced the move to parents of children at the theatre school we gained six children in Nursery within two weeks. The sheer convenience of having both or all your children at the same school was a factor.

In reducing the fees we created a situation where if you previously had two children at the school you could have three attend the school for the same price.

We decided to offer a further 20% reduction for siblings.

That brought in another five children.

Once the new fees were in place we had a significant jump in numbers.

This September we have taken in even more children. We are now on seventy children between three years old and fourteen rising fifteen years old.

Each year group is small.

The younger end cohorts are larger, so we expect numbers to grow.

Our oldest child Max is just revelling in having so much disposable time now Max is no longer an actor in "Terrible Tykes".

To my astonishment Max has started studying Modern Arabic.

Max says that Arabic and Chinese are where the future is. Max is studying French Spanish Latin and Arabic along with his normal subjects.

Max has passed Grade 8 on piano and Grade 8 on Guitar.

If Max wishes to party and sing and kiss girls and drink cider at the weekends then really Max has earned it.

Max works hard and Max plays hard.

Peter Wilkins works a lot less hard, but Peter keeps up with his school commitments. Peter has instrument lessons alongside Max, and Peter has achieved the same instrument Grades. I maybe am being a little hard on Max and Peter.

I was a nose to grindstone girl during the week but I spent almost every Saturday window shopping.

I was a bit older than these boys when I started partying but my parents were pretty strict.

Also my parties were evening parties rather than afternoon parties.

Alice and Damien and Arthur and Kate are too young to go out partying.

Alice has quite an active social life with sleepovers at the homes of friends from school.

Alice put her GPS tracker on Heinz's collar to see if Don would notice. Mischievous hussy!

Don did notice and there was Hell to pay.

I have told Don that Don cannot ground Alice until she is twenty-five years old.

I explained to Alice that Don sees the issue as a matter of trust. Don is enormously hurt that Alice has shown that Don cannot trust her.

The GPS tracker is an issue of Alice's personal safety, about which Don cares deeply.

Don is frightened for Alice.

With lots of tears and apologies from Alice the grounding was eventually rescinded.

Damien has not thumped anyone for ages.

Damien is a lovely sweet boy and he is quite a good musician and singer.

Arthur is a good little lad.

Kate is just a joy.

Don is well.

Our sex life has slowed down a bit, but we are still doing fine. Just not as often.

CHAPTER 5: Amina Daar

We did really well out of Rebecca Johnson's election campaign. Sahid worked it so that the Daar web site kept coming up whenever someone typed "Rebecca Johnson" into a search engine. We have twenty photos to see of Rebecca wearing Daar clothing.

Some of the photos are a few years old, which interested a surprising number of people. Some of the photos were downloaded by viewers.

The web site for "Terrible Tykes" has an opportunity for anyone looking at Sally, Andrew, or Michael Johnson to meet their big sisters – on our web site.

Sahid also linked from Charlotte Johnson's YouTube site

Quite soon we were inundated with orders for Rebecca's clothing range.

I am proud that almost everyone who spends more than three minutes on the Daar web site becomes a regular visitor.

We have bought larger premises for our business. We have large stocks of cloth because we buy large numbers of rolls of cloth all from the same batch. That ensures consistency across say our apple green bridesmaid dresses, which sometimes are not all ordered at the same time.

We are by far the largest supplier of Chinese made bridal dresses in the United Kingdom. Under the old system a bridal wear shop would order a dress online and it would take six weeks to arrive from China by sea. Now the shops order online from us and we supply the dress from our warehouse.

We provide a service where we will make any alterations requested by the shops. Our promise is two working days to make the alterations, and then we send the altered dress by courier to arrive the next working day. We will even alter a dress as soon as it is ordered, to save time for the bridal shop and for the ultimate customer.

I keep thinking that we will have to shed workers but every quarter we take on one or two more workers.

All our new workers are initially employed on temporary contracts. If their work or their attitude does not fit our needs then they are not employed again.

We are still an all Muslim all female workplace. The working language is Somali because some of the older women are weak in English.

We have a long waiting list of people who have asked to work for us.

Mina and I have employed a warehouse manager and a factory manager just to give us space to think and to manage.

We have appointed a red carpet manager to manage the red carpet dresses and the ballroom dancing dresses.

It is going to be a real challenge for Mina to be in solo charge when I go to Bahrain to help Shakoora in the last weeks of Shakoora's pregnancy.

Abdullah is still strong that we should replace a quarter of our range each year, culling the designs that do not sell.

Mina and I have just been too busy to generate new designs. Mina has her design course which takes a lot of time.

Shakoora bless her sends us new designs about three times a week. Without Shakoora's input we would be in difficulties.

Mina had a brilliant idea.

Daar Fashions now sponsors an annual competition for wedding dress designs, judged by a panel of some of the dress shops who use us.

We will pay five thousand pounds to the winner. Every design school in the country and quite a few freelance designers compete

We will pay a royalty if we decide to use any design.

Our family is one of the largest employers in our community.

We Daars are one of the wealthiest families in our community.

When our community learned that Shakoora Daar's husband has become the Site Engineer for Holy Mecca our family jumped to undisputed leading family in the community. By this connection we Daars have all become much more prestigious.

It would be a bit pointed if we did not provide a member for the Mosque Committee.

Abdullah has come under pressure to join the Mosque Committee for our Mosque and its Madressa.

Lucky Sahid has escaped to London.

My father frankly is not up to it.

Abdullah has promised to join the Mosque Committee after his final exams have finished.

My Abdul might be a substitute except that he is not yet my husband. He is also away in Oxford a lot and Abdul travels to California every couple of months or so. Also, Abdul is not a Daar.

We plan to marry next summer. We have booked the same hotel and the same caterer as for Shakoora's wedding.

We have booked eight rooms at the hotel for Abdul's family.

Abdul cannot live under the same roof as me.

Sahid owns a house in the next street which has come empty. Abdul lives there in solitary splendour until we marry. Then I will join him.

We will have decorators in during April to have the house right for me to marry into.

Kali is in the top five in her class at Bradford Girls Grammar School. Kali is very pleased with this result, as she should be.

Fosia is just below the middle of her year. Fosia is young yet.

Jabril has entered the two year zone for GCSEs. Jabril is in the school team for judo and he helps Sahid with Sahid's consultancies sometimes. Jabril minds the web site for Muslim children in care, which Tohur Miah still funds.

Jabril also helps with the web site for Mormon children in care, because of our friendship with the Johnson family.

Amal is happy. Amal is still a champion ballroom dancer. The Hudsons have almost adopted Amal!

Sahid enjoyed his trip to California.

Sahid says that my Abdul's family looked after him very well.

Sahid is so impressed with Silicon Valley that Sahid is trying to set up something similar in Doncaster. After we moved out of the buildings that Sahid owns Sahid used the buildings to set up a technology centre.

One of Sahid's friends is General Manager.

The physical security of the centre is incredible, because of the cost of some of the technology that Sahid has installed.

In one building there is a kind of high tech youth club with laser sabres, "shooting" games, and four dimensional strategy games at lightning pace. It is such a geek heaven that people come from Leeds and from Sheffield and even from Manchester.

If you can beat Sahid's outer firewall you may have free membership for a year. No-one has, yet!

There are already eight IT businesses in the other building.

On weekday mornings, which are quiet, people may come in off the street to use the computers for free.

The centre shop sells hot and cold drinks and refreshments and a wide range of computer accessories and consumables.

Sahid says that the centre is an investment in Doncaster's future.

Sahid is willing to invest in local IT businesses.

Sahid wants equity though. Sahid will not just lend money to a new business.

Little Abdul is very popular on "Terrible Tykes". Abdul is going to be in the "Terrible Tykes Christmas Special".

My father is much as ever. His improvement is slow.

Sahid's friend Hassan is still my father's companion and helper.

Sahid is still paying Hassan cash over and above his wage to help Hassan's uncle's family. On a fifteen year prison sentence the uncle still has a long time to serve.

Sahid says that he is enjoying his student life in London. Of course Sahid is still consultant to the Byram Group and that takes some of his time.

I am content.

CHAPTER 6: Tohur Miah

I am out all the time now.

As part of the Public Relations exercise around the Olympics I visit schools and colleges every week. I have the free time that many competitors do not have because they are still working at their paid jobs.

I have done a couple of store openings for the supermarket that sponsors me. The supermarket has a range of halal food, so sometimes I cook in the store for an hour or so. When I visit a College or a University I quite often have a run with the University Judo Club or sometimes with a student running club.

I need to run a hundred or so miles each week so some mornings I get up at five and I run along the Thames towpath to somewhere like Staines, and then I run back.

I have planned ahead so my TV programs from now until the Olympics begin are all in the can, and my cookbooks are virtually complete. Robert Graham is going to cover my TV programs for three months over the Olympic period.

I visit dojos in London virtually every night. I need the physical activity of fighting maybe twenty bouts in a night. And it is all Public Relations.

Rebecca Johnson MP is staying with me but I rarely see her.

I am up before Rebecca most mornings and I go to bed at a sensible time. Rebecca is often out at evening meetings and Rebecca returns after I have gone to bed.

Sahid Daar kindly cooks for both of us, and usually Sahid leaves the kitchen better than he found it.

Sahid must have an odd body clock because apart from being a student Sahid is an information technology geek. I have known Sahid to be on the computer when I go to bed and still to be on the computer when I get up to go on a run.

David Wilkins still bullies me to invest my income, which otherwise I would forget to do.

Sometimes I go to David and Annette for a meal, or they come to us. Sahid cooks because I do not have the time.

I get to Tryton once every two weeks to see Fulesa and Monika and Moklisur. Usually I stay in Don Hewson's study but sometimes I sleep at the Johnson house.

I am still great mates with Dennis Wilkins but I am uncomfortable with a house where booze is so freely available to the teenage children. They are still children.

Derek Donkin does not need me to take him to mosque any more but Derek, Colin and I go to mosque together most Fridays. At weekends Linda, Derek and Colin sometimes visit Sahid and me.

I speak to my brother Ali on Skype every week.

Ali is totally enthused by the huge job he is doing in Bahrain.

When Ali was made Site Engineer for Holy Mecca Ali was walking on air for weeks.

The Crown Prince of Bahrain claims that he tried to prevent Ali being appointed as the Site Engineer.

Ali reckons that this is verbal camouflage.

Ali's appointment is hugely prestigious for Bahrain and for Ali's employer the Crown Prince.

As part of the negotiations the Crown Prince had to pretend that the other countries were forcing the appointment upon him, and the Crown Prince still maintains that pretence.

Ali says that Shakoora is content.

Shakoora speaks to her brother Sahid on Skype as well. Shakoora seems to be happy.

Just a few months to go now before I become an uncle!

I arranged with Jabril for there to be a forum between all the children on our Muslims in Care web site and Rebecca Johnson MP. The children have lodged their questions and now Rebecca is preparing for her appearance.

CHAPTER 7: Mark Johnson

I managed my youth camps well.

My reward is a Call to be Director of the Mormon boys youth camp next year.

I have to train up a Camp Organiser to succeed me.

I am thinking ahead and I am also training up a Director to succeed me.

In many Stakes the Camp Organiser and Director roles are combined, but the job then becomes very challenging.

The Hewson camp was a great success. The youngsters all had a great time. There were no problems at all.

Dennis Wilkins will run next year's Hewson camp because I have so much on my plate now.

I have been appointed Counsellor to the Mormon Youth President. The current Youth President is getting married next summer and he has given notice that he will ask to be released as President because he and his fiancé will move to Somerset after their wedding.

Unless I disgrace myself I will be leading the Mormon Youth in a year's time.

Unless I can find some good excuse I am likely to be Youth President for four or five years!

I will be the Grand Old Man of the Young Mormons!

Bishop Singleton has given me his blessing for me to be involved in Stake wide activities.

I feel bad that I am not helping in my Ward at all but Bishop Singleton says helping at Stake level is a greater contribution.

I am organising a weekend day conference within West Yorkshire for all Mormons who are contemplating becoming missionaries. I have lined up a good group of speakers and workshop leaders.

If Chester and Rebecca were married Chester would probably live in London with Rebecca.

The deal they have worked out is that Chester collects Rebecca from her fortnightly surgery at Groatpie at lunchtime, and they have each other from then until Monday morning when Rebecca catches the train to London. The alternate weekend Rebecca spends her weekend based here in Tryton so she sees the rest of the family.

I visited Sister Sally Cuddy in Cardiff.

Sister Sally is wonderful!

Sister Sally reminds me so much of my mother and Rebecca and Charlotte!

My mother died when I was young.

I really don't mind if I am landed with Sister Sally for the rest of her life.

Our house extension has planning permission so I am having it built.

Rebecca is hugely popular for meetings all over the country.

Groups of young people in care wish to see Rebecca.

Survivors of abuse need to meet Rebecca.

Hundreds of Constituency Labour Parties and Mormon Churches have given Rebecca standing invitations for whenever she can get to them.

Cecil Byram is funding Rebecca to employ a qualified social worker to do all the casework for the poor souls who have had appalling experiences while in care. A lot of the people are in Yorkshire so the social worker is stationed in the Labour Office in Groatpie.

There was a lot of excitement and publicity when Rebecca advertised the job, because the job pays what a senior social worker like Elizabeth Mountford earns, not the low wage that most Parliamentary researchers and assistants earn.

Elizabeth Mountford helped with the selection process. Rebecca says that Bernadette Evans is a star!

Rebecca had to give her London secretary Caroline a significant pay rise and a change in job title to keep Caroline as the senior employee.

Caroline is now Rebecca's Chief of Staff.

Caroline runs everything.

Rebecca has been warned to avoid burnout so her weekends tend to be fairly quiet. She generally has a Friday night at some Constituency Labour Party dinner or social, her Saturday morning constituency surgery on alternate Saturdays, and a Mormon Church somewhere on Sunday mornings.

Charlotte says that she is enjoying her concert tour. The organisation is terrific. The Mormon participants are good people and fine musicians. They are raising tens of millions of dollars for the Relief Fund.

Sally is smiling as ever.

Sally tells me that there is nothing romantic between Sally and Gerald Butler. Their need to generate great musical performances requires them to spend a lot of time together.

I do not totally believe Sally but as soon as Sister Sally Cuddy moves in I will have my Enforcer.

I may be doing Sally a great injustice but I don't think that I am.

Gerald Butler is a very good looking lad. Gerald is intelligent and well mannered. Sally is feisty and gorgeous. Both are very talented. If there was not some chemistry between them I would be astonished.

I am not happy about Sally and the other children going to the Wilkins house for parties where there is alcohol flowing.

I am disappointed that Rebecca and Chester allowed it.

Now I am in charge of the household that will stop.

I had a word with Dennis and Peter Wilkins so they could have the hard word direct from me rather than second hand.

The Wilkins will have a family discussion to decide what to do.

Work is fine.

If Cecil buys a British steel works we can purchase all the steel for Ming's and Chang's there. Chang's is the Belgian replica of Ming's, also owned by the Byram Group.

We can lean on the companies that provide pit props to the coal industry to purchase steel from our steelworks.

I think we can set up a business making containers because there is a huge international market for containers.

Kevin Hanson's "tealeaf" (thief) factory is already making metal pallets for my bricks.

Most pallets are made of wood or plastic. The plan is that the pallets of bricks are going to be stacked on top of one another inside a container, putting a huge weight onto the bottom pallet. Then the containers may stand for a year or two. I fear that wood or plastic pallets will collapse over that time. So we are using metal pallets instead.

I flew to Ghana with Sebastian the development expert to talk to local people about building a factory to make energy gathering fabric.

I don't like the climate in Ghana.

The poverty is frightening.

On the positive side a lot of the Ghanaians speak English. Their accent is odd but then so was the American accent when I was in Nevada.

I do not know if it is my unfamiliarity with African or Ghanaian culture, or whether I am more racist than I had thought, but I am twitchy as heck about this project.

David and Cecil have signed off on this project.

The factory at Heckmondwike is producing machines for Ghana.

I wish to heck I could find a manager I trust to run this. We have recruited a local Ghanaian manager for day to day management.

Charlotte got cross with Rebecca and me.

Charlotte does not want Rebecca and me borrowing money at interest when Charlotte is swimming in money. Charlotte loaned me the money to buy the house in Tryton, and to build an extension. Charlotte has loaned Rebecca enough money to buy a house in London. Rebecca has not yet made her maiden speech.

Rebecca is having fun in Parliament.

Rebecca is plaguing the life out of the local government Minister about the funding for Child Protection work. Allocations for local government funding generally are skewed against the poorer areas. This affects the allocations that the local authorities can make for Child Protection.

Rebecca keeps raising that this Minister or that Minister has a local authority that spends x amount on Child Protection as against less than x for the local authority of their Labour shadow. But the Labour shadow's authority spends a higher proportion of its income on Child Protection. It is Rebecca's apparent innocence as to the underlying reasons for the disparities that gets under the skins of the Tories.

Sometimes Rebecca even asks why the poorer areas get less money when they have the greater needs?

On average a child each week dies whilst "at risk".

Rebecca is a tiger for pointing out that the local authority concerned has less money to spend per child at risk than the Minister's local authority has.

Rebecca is a picador.

The Minister gives the impression of being a blundering and not very intelligent bull.

Quite a few Labour MPs now come into the Chamber whenever Rebecca is going to ask questions. They come to give moral support and because they enjoy a blood sport.

At one point the Minister complained that Rebecca was being party political about the important issue of Child Protection. If Rebecca's party was in power would things be all that different?

Rebecca's face went white!

“Yes they would!

“I can only nag the Minister politely once a fortnight.

“If Labour were in power imagine the tongue lashings I would give to Labour Ministers day in and day out until Child Protection has the money it needs!

“They can’t hide from me in the division lobbies.

“The Minister gets off lightly!”

There was laughter around the chamber. Even the Speaker smiled!

The Minister shook his head and he said,

“I am so glad that I am getting off lightly.

“I had not realised!”

The incident was on the television news, for no good reason except that it was a quiet news day.

The televising of this scene has done Rebecca further good within the Labour Party and nationally.

I bumped into Gwen Sykes at Birmingham. Gwen and I were apprentices together a few years ago.

Gwen is Women’s Officer for the Engineering Union, and Gwen was checking that the women at the Birmingham factory are happy. I was at Birmingham because I wanted to see if the layout is appropriate for the project I have in mind to manufacture shipping containers.

I invited Gwen to lunch.

Gwen wanted to speak “off the record”.

Gwen is really unsure what to do with her life.

Gwen turned down management training at Byrams because Gwen feels that joining the bosses would be selling out.

Gwen has done straightforward factory floor work as a Byrams fitter. That is interesting and varied but ultimately is not very exciting. The work Gwen does as a union officer is all right, but Gwen is not sure that she wishes to do this work for the rest of her life.

“What would you like to do?”

“I don’t know.”

“Gwen, all the management know that you are a very sharp cookie. We all like you.

“Even if you stay on the union side for the rest of your life it is in Byram’s interest that the union negotiators are sharp.”

“Why?”

“Byrams has no intention to do down the workers or to break the union. That is not what Byrams is about.

“If the union negotiators are stupid then we get into stupid and potentially damaging disputes.

“If the union negotiators are intelligent then we can have more nuanced discussions and better agreements.

“So within reason if there is something that you want to do or to study or you want a secondment then in principle we are interested to help.”

I already have this from Cecil and from Garth.

Gwen thought.

“Byrams has operations in China and Spain. Could I visit them?”

I thought.

“The foundries that Cecil owns are not part of the Byram Group, but the energy project is.

"I would have to clear it with David Taylor but I cannot think of any reason why you should not visit the energy project.

"You can certainly visit the Spanish operations.

"I'll check with Tony Hart but I imagine you can visit his Belgian operation."

"Belgian?"

I explained that Chang's is basically the same as Ming's.

It turns out Gwen has not been to Ming's either because there are no engineering apprentices or female union members there.

"We have just opened a factory in Ghana. You can visit that.

"Leave it with me.

"I will have some conversations but there is no obvious reason why not.

"So what else do you want to do?"

Gwen is still undecided.

"Would you like to be seconded to Charlie Kent or to Rebecca? Or to another Member of Parliament?"

Gwen does not wish to be a Member of Parliament. Gwen is not interested in working as a research assistant to a Member of Parliament.

"Do you want to go to University?"

"Mark, I don't know what I want."

CHAPTER 8: Don Hewson

I am a bit bored.

Our youngest child Kate and Guy Thornton attend Nursery at the theatre school part time, so for a few hours each day I am completely alone.

I have not been alone since I started fostering.

Emma and I decided that we should not take on new foster children, and in any case the house is pretty full.

Emma has an interesting job managing the theatre school.

We agreed long ago that I would stay away from the school because of the danger of conflicting messages from the top.

I pop round to the Johnson house about once a week. I have a cup of hot chocolate with Sister Sally Cuddy. Sister Sally is alone during the day, too.

Sister Sally tells me how the Johnsons are doing.

Rebecca has paired with a Tory MP.

I thought this was a new and very surprising romance, but I had totally misunderstood what "pairing" means.

Every MP needs to have the odd day away from Parliament, whether it be to go to the dentist or to see to some issue in their constituency. This absence could affect how the voting in Parliament goes.

Most MPs try to pair with an MP of an opposing party so the voting outcome is not affected. MPs in marginal seats are not very attractive as regular pairs.

Imagine your mixed feelings as you see your party sweep into Government or your party increases the number of your party's MPs but you see your regular "pair" lose their marginal seat!

An opposing member in a safe seat is the best "pair" so quite a few Tory MPs asked Rebecca to be their regular "pair".

After some discussion with Charlie Kent and Jenny Hallam Rebecca chose a Tory MP who has a safe Tory seat and who is not an appalling person.

Rebecca has been co-opted onto some Labour Party and cross party committees. Rebecca was happy to join the cross party committee on Child Protection.

Rebecca had the hard word from the Shadow Local Government Minister. Mary West said that if Labour wins the next election there is going to be one heck of a job producing acceptable Child Protection provision from the very limited additional money that the new Labour Chancellor will make available.

Mary wants Rebecca to immerse herself in that problem now because Rebecca has the brains to find a workable policy and the political firepower to help Mary to implement it.

There are about a dozen Labour MPs who have been middle managers in commerce and industry. Rebecca has joined that dining club, which meets four times a year.

Rebecca is also an informal member of the NUM group of Labour MPs because Rebecca has a coal mine in her constituency.

Rebecca is still looking for a house to buy in London.

Mark Johnson has intervened sensibly with the Wilkins family. I know about this because Max told me.

The Saturday afternoon barbecues and parties at the Wilkins house continue, but there is no booze now until seven o'clock at night. This allows the Johnsons and the Miah's to come to the afternoon event and enjoy it. It is up to the Johnson and Miah families what time their children come home.

Max has to be home by eight unless it has been agreed that Max may stay over.

Freda and Robert Graham are allowed to stay out until nine because they are older than Max, but usually they walk back with Max.

Charlotte Johnson has created an amusing situation. There are various music industry awards in America for lighting, sound, choreography and so forth. Given that there is no charge for Charlotte's concerts should Charlotte's concerts be considered for these awards? Al Way, who is some kind of promoter, says that the financial structure behind the concerts is not relevant so Charlotte's concerts should be included.

The impact of Charlotte's series of concerts is hard to gauge.

The profile of Mormons has certainly been raised across the USA and Canada.

That Charlotte is doing all these concerts as part of her missionary commitment is newsworthy. Almost everyone is taking part without payment, which is also unusual.

One of the Mormon missionaries who came to Tryton, George Smith, is involved with managing Charlotte's tour.

The Johnsons say that Charlotte is happy in her Mission.

Mark Johnson is working very hard.

In the last six months Mark has been to about a dozen countries. According to Sister Sally Mark has not spent a full week at home since Sister Sally moved in.

Sally Johnson is terrific fun. Her cookery segment is really good, and Sally is still an actor in "Terrible Tykes".

Sally still visits her maimed servicemen and prosthetics departments across Britain.

If an ex-serviceman has an issue Sally suggests that he should write to Rebecca Johnson MP, saying that Sally suggested that he should write. So far, one letter from Rebecca to the relevant Minister has resolved each issue.

Sally is composing and recording, usually with Gerald Butler.

Sally has her Mormon activities.

Sister Sally is concerned that Sally is so busy that Sally has no time for fun.

Sally says that she enjoys what she does.

Andrew is learning the accordion.

Michael is improving further on both the guitar and on the piano. Michael is a very good musician and singer.

The theatre school is doing fine.

Emma is happy, the teachers are happy, and the children are fine.

Financially we are fine.

Most important, our school is no longer financially dependent upon the "Terrible Tykes" actors. Should "Terrible Tykes" close it would make no difference to us.

Derek Donkin is still a big star in juvenile TV.

Derek is a lead actor who carries his series.

The family Agent Tom Driburg is clever about publicity for Derek. Tom had Jabril Daar set up a web site just for Derek Donkin.

A face mask that Derek carved sold at a charity auction for sixty thousand pounds. The face is that of the current Prime Minister.

Colin Donkin left the Terrible Tykes series because Colin's voice broke unexpectedly early.

Colin Donkin is a bit richer than Derek Donkin because Colin's income from the supermarket sponsorship went on for longer.

They are both millionaires because of the supermarket sponsorship and the "Terrible Tykes" Christmas Goods.

Colin has decided to stay on at the theatre school in London in hopes that an appropriate part comes along.

Linda Donkin is happy and well at the Cordon Bleu College. As Linda says, with a degree from the Cordon Bleu College Linda will be made for life.

Robert Graham is a good looking young man who attracts young ladies just by walking along the street. I have seen the heads turning.

The film about Robert's mobility transformation will be on television on Boxing Day.

Robert now is ridiculously wealthy with his TV Chef earnings and his music royalties.

Freda Graham is working away at her A levels. So far as I am aware there is no romance in Freda's life.

The little Grahams are fine.

Sally Thornton came second in her year at Bradford Girls Grammar School (BGGGS).

Apparently the girl who came first is from a family of academics.

Sally actually wants tutoring!

I said to Sally's father Paul Thornton that coming second in her year at BGGGS is incredibly good going and it should be celebrated. Sally should not beat herself up over it.

Paul told Sally that she may have tutoring during her GCSE year if at that point Sally still thinks she needs tutoring.

Rupert Thornton should not have been put in for Winchester because Rupert is not amazingly bright. Rupert did not pass the Winchester entrance exam well enough.

This led to Rupert living in London with Paul and Paul's girlfriend.

Rupert attends St Paul's School.

Rupert is not happy with Paul's girlfriend so Rupert may return to us.

Sally, Lucinda, and Guy Thornton are still with us.

Max is blossoming. Now Max is no longer involved with "Terrible Tykes" Max has free time.

Max is just enjoying life.

Alice is in the "Terrible Tykes" Christmas Special playing her double bass with Abdul Daar. That will be fun.

The Christmas Special has been recorded.

At the moment each episode of "Terrible Tykes" shows Alice having arguments and tantrums with her fellow actors because it is supposedly physically impossible for Alice to play the double bass.

By now everyone knows that this is the traditional "Terrible Tykes" pre-Christmas teaser and that Alice somehow will play the double bass in the Christmas Special.

Michael Johnson has taken over Peter Wilkins' role in "Terrible Tykes" as the teller of terrible jokes and puns.

Life is good.

Christmas should be quiet this year.

The children will cater on Christmas Day. None of the children are working at the Tryton Hotel.

Freda Graham and Robert Graham are leading the catering. There are no Muslim or Jewish children with us over Christmas so the Christmas dinner will be boiled ham with a parsley sauce. Hooray!

One would not think that our house needs any more musical instruments but most of Santa's presents are musical instruments. The others are a "makeover" for Freda Graham, "shoot em up" computer games, construction toys, and books.

CHAPTER 9: David Wilkins

I had my intended meeting with Gerald Edwards over the Christmas holidays. Annette Edwards and I spent a few days of Christmas at Gerald's house.

Gerald said he was deliberately going to get me drunk because Gerald wanted the unvarnished truth about his business.

Annette and her mother Charlotte disappeared because Gerald told them to.

I wanted to let Gerald get me drunk on the excellent wine from his own vineyard, but I said that I would drink water until the business part of the conversation has finished.

I explained to Gerald that Gerald has a succession problem because Gerald has filled his organisation with over educated academically gifted gutless weaklings who do not have gumption or testicles.

I used colourful language to convey the message with more emphasis.

Gerald had told Annette some months ago that in Gerald's opinion I am "a flyboy with a market trader mentality".

I suggested to Gerald that Gerald should recruit more flyboys with a market trader mentality instead of the type of people whom Gerald currently employs.

Flyboys and market traders are readily available in London at a fraction of the wages that Gerald pays his underperforming inadequates.

Selling shares you do not own in hopes that the share price will go down carries a lot more risk than buying shares.

I accept that "selling short" can be profitable. Should there ever be a takeover situation or some kind of squeeze on shares the price of shares might go astronomically high, wiping out Gerald's profits for a whole year.

The potential downside of "shorting" shares is in my view greater than the potential upside.

Very simply, would any of these traders risk their own money the way they risk Gerald's money?

If I were in charge of the business I would ban “shorting”.

“Gerald, I have had six months working in your operation.

“I think you are overstaffed.

“I think you recruit the wrong people.

“I do not like your business model.

“On that basis, I do not think I have a long-term future with your business.”

Gerald looked troubled.

Gerald knows that I have not finished yet.

“I have not discussed anything with Annette because really these are my decisions rather than hers.”

Gerald nodded.

We both of us didn't say that neither of us rates Annette's business acumen.

“I have three scenarios I am considering.

“At the moment I play with twenty million pounds of your money. I make more than four million pounds a month, most of which goes to you.”

Gerald nodded.

“I have more than thirty million pounds of assets, so I could cash in twenty million, or I could borrow twenty million.”

Gerald smiled.

“Then I would be playing with my own money and I would keep the four million pounds a month I earn, instead of the current about six hundred and fifty thousand.”

Gerald nodded.

“That is a winning scenario for me.”

Gerald nodded, knowing there must be more.

“I like the idea of recruiting flyboys with a market trader mentality.

“What I propose doing is to set up a “playpen” like you have in your business, but I will open the playpen online so that anyone can play in the playpen.

“I would run a monthly competition, the winner of which lands a job at ten thousand pounds a month, for so long as they can continue to earn money for me.

“Most people in Britain would kill for a job that pays ten thousand pounds a month.”

“The upside is that if they continue to be successful they can rise to twenty-five thousand or even thirty thousand pounds a month.”

“I could afford to fund say ten people playing with two million pounds each.

“The third scenario is that I start with say thirty-five million pounds. I have family and friends who would invest with me or who would lend me money at a good interest rate for say five years.

“I can start bigger.

“After say five years my model is shown to be a success.

“You then buy my business for a multiple of its value, paying in shares of course.

“You catapult me into Chief Executive of the combined operation.

“If it happens to be your children who had each invested five million pounds with me then they would gain a huge allocation of shares.

“Your family still owns most of the firm, but because most of my money is tied up in your firm I have an incentive to minimise risk and to maximise profit.

“As Chief Executive I split your firm of course.

“The computerised stock jobbing is one firm, which I float or hive off.

“I get rid of the investor customers. I can sell that part of the business easily enough.

"An investment operation just speculating with our own money does not need Compliance." Gerald looked very interested. Compliance is a significant expense that does not contribute to profit.

"We do not need prestigious premises.

"We can be based in Brixton or Bradford or wherever premises are cheap.

"So that is what I am thinking."

I was not expecting Gerald's reaction.

Gerald telephoned the kitchen and Gerald ordered that the Rothschild white wine be brought through.

The Rothschild white wine is a very rare treat even in this household.

Gerald called for two bottles of the Rothschild white wine.

"David, I knew I was in trouble.

"I didn't really know what the trouble is.

"You have explained why I have trouble.

"And you have come up with some solutions.

"You have even solved a problem that I could not ask you to solve, which is how to align your long-term interests and my long-term interests.

"I need to think.

"I need to discuss around the family.

"But basically I like your ideas.

"Bringing you into the business was one of my better ideas."

Although Gerald was trying to get me drunk, Gerald I think was drunker than I was because Gerald had started on wine while I was still on water.

Or maybe Gerald's medications mixed with the alcohol. I don't know.

The Rothschild wine is utterly wonderful.

Gerald told me some of the comments about me that have come Gerald's way from some of my managers and supervisors.

The one I liked best was from the Compliance Manager. It is a quotation from "Don Juan", a poem by Lord Byron.

The quotation refers to a Corsair or pirate who appears in the poem.

"He was the mildest mannered Man

That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat,

With such true breeding of a Gentleman,

You never could divine his real thought"

I will try to make sure that the Compliance Manager keeps a job with one or other of the businesses.

We watched the "Terrible Tykes" Christmas Special.

Some of the children I did not recognise because they are new to the series.

The famous name was not a name I recognised but I have seen him in at least a dozen films.

I had not realised that the famous name had been a child actor too, until the children played the theme tune from the series he had appeared in as a child and the TV showed photos of him as a child actor. Then I recognised him.

I was interested to see how Alice Hewson was going to play the double bass.

The Christmas Special kept that almost to the last.

Alice's double bass was propped against a piano.

Alice was sawing away.

The camera slowly lifted to show a pair of black knees kneeling on the piano on either side of the neck of the double bass. Then black hands were touching the strings and it became clear that two people were playing the instrument together.

The smiling face of Abdul Daar appeared!

Abdul is a lovely kid!

The two of them swapped over and they played another piece.

Alice said,

"I always said I could play the double bass!

"I never said I could play it alone!"

The famous face played piano, Alice and Abdul played double bass, and Robert Graham played violin in a rousing jazz piece that Robert had written. That was just before the finale. It was a good show.

On Boxing Day we saw the documentary program about Robert Graham and his struggle for mobility.

The program was so moving!

Rebecca Johnson appeared in the excerpt about the summer camp eighteen months ago.

Rebecca was unknown then.

Robert was cheeky to Rebecca so Rebecca picked Robert up and Rebecca threw Robert into the lake!

Rebecca Johnson looks really good in a swimsuit.

Rebecca always has looked attractive.

Annette and I went to stay with my family in Tryton.

Helen told me not to interfere with Andria's reproductive plans. Dennis is already making Andria an allowance equal to what I give Andria for little Angela.

Andria has enough income.

Andria will have another child when she wishes to.

I told Helen about my career plans.

"David, you are rich already.

"Do you really want to spend the rest of your life just shuffling money?"

That was a thought that had not occurred to me.

At the Hewson Reunion we had recorded messages on Skype from Shakoora Daar and Ali Miah, and from Charlotte Johnson. Everyone else was there.

Paul Thornton and his girlfriend were there, with all Paul's children.

I am not much struck on Paul Thornton's girlfriend, but it is not my relationship. I feel that the girlfriend has cash register eyes.

Apparently Rupert Thornton does not like St Paul's School so Rupert is starting at Repton School in January. Amal and Jabril Daar attend that school so they will look after him.

Rupert will keep a bedroom and be based at the Hewson house.

Rebecca Johnson is still enjoying being a Member of Parliament.

Rebecca led the singing of "The Red Flag" at the Labour Party Annual Conference, which took place not long after Rebecca was elected.

I gather that Rebecca leading "The Red Flag" may become a fixture at Labour Party Conference.

Many politicians would kill for that exposure!

The Shadow Local Government minister has Rebecca beavering away on how to improve Child Protection significantly as soon as Labour is elected. Rebecca has to find a way to

make an immediate impact on Child Protection when there probably will not be much extra money.

Rebecca is having meetings with all kinds of people from Chief Constables to Directors of Social Services and children in care themselves.

One hugely expensive area is the residential homes for teenagers which in many cases are not really giving value for money. Rebecca has been to America to look at the "Boys Town" model.

The social worker whom Rebecca hired to do the casework on children in care and former children in care needed an assistant. Bernadette has co-opted Rebecca's Groatpie office worker Martha.

Rebecca has appointed someone else to run the Groatpie office.

Cecil Byram is meeting the extra cost.

Mark Johnson is now a Director and Vice Chair of the Byram Group.

If the Byram Group were a public company Mark would be too young and too inexperienced to be considered as a Director. Conversely were Mark a son in law of Cecil Byram no-one would raise an eyebrow.

Byram Group is not a public company so it does not matter.

Mark says that the other directors of the Byrams Group are all in their forties and upwards. Mark's Vice Chair role is to provide continuity to the management of Byrams and to assist the Byram family should Cecil pass away unexpectedly.

Mark accepts that he may have to stand back to make way for Karen Byram should Karen wish to run the Byram Group. Mark would also have to stand back for Karen's boyfriend or partner should one appear whom Cecil or Karen thinks is capable of running the Byram Group.

Mark is quite relaxed about this prospect.

Mark lives modestly. Mark is saving hard against the day when he is no longer needed by the Byram family.

Mark will find something else to do with his life if his time with Byrams ends.

There is no young woman in Mark's life.

Mark is fine with that. Not many young women would put up with Mark's lifestyle.

Mark reckons he will meet someone. There is no rush.

Rebecca and Chester have decided that they will marry.

The wedding will take place in the Tryton Mormon Church next September. Charlotte will be back in England by then. We will all attend.

CHAPTER 10: Mark Johnson

I cannot understand why people keep asking about my love life.

I am young and single and busy and happy.

My work with the Mormon Youth gives me a lot more satisfaction than I thought it would do when I was first Called to it.

My job is to train up young people to be effective as missionaries and then when they return to be effective within their Wards and within the Stake.

I know I am making a contribution to our future.

If while I am doing this work for The Lord I meet a young woman who is right for me, then that will be wonderful.

If The Lord has other plans for me I am good with that.

I have lost count of the airline hostesses and hotel reception staff who have shown more interest in me than I might have expected.

Lightning might strike.

But relax!

I am young.

There are many more young female Mormons around than male Mormons. Apparently this discrepancy is common in a lot of religions, particularly in the stronger religions.

There are people from Mormon families who drift away in their early twenties. They come back when they are ready.

Also, the best young women in my age group are still away on missionary service. I will meet them as they return.

Five years from now there will still be lots of young Mormon women.

My conference for intending missionaries was judged a terrific success. So much so that an internet link to the plan, the program, the conference documents and the budget have been circulated to every Youth President in England.

I have been told that I will be Called to be the Youth President for our Stake when the current President leaves Yorkshire next year.

I am thinking about what to do as Youth President that is better or different.

I enjoy evenings with Sally Cuddy, when after the little ones have gone to bed we chat about Sally's life experiences.

Sally has seen so many people who did not follow their star and who in later life regretted it.

Sally says I must follow my star.

Sally Cuddy married too young.

Sally was in love with love.

There was nothing wrong with Sally's husband, but there was not enough that was right.

By the time the scales had fallen from Sally's eyes it was too late.

Her husband was a worthy man, but really there was not enough spark.

They jogged along.

There were no children, but not from want of trying!

Sally's mobility degenerated.

Sally's husband died.

By the time Sally was free Sally had greatly reduced mobility and greatly reduced self-confidence.

Sally's husband was also a Mormon. Hopefully they can grow closer together in the afterlife.

Sally's advice is that I should not rush into marriage.

Sally loves living with our family.

Sister Sally sits while my sister Sally practices and composes with Gerald Butler. Gerald is a really good boy.

Sister Sally says there is friendship and closeness and mutual admiration between Sally and Gerald but nothing untoward.

Well there wouldn't be with Sister Sally in the room!

At work our top management have settled into their roles.

Although I am the Vice Chair of the Byrams Group I am paid less than David Taylor or Garth Stead or Robert Iredale the Managing Director or Steve Collins the Group Financial Controller.

I cannot honestly say that I should be paid as much as any of them. They all have important responsibilities.

If I think of myself as a young man on the fast track to higher things, that would be right. I am earning what most people would think is an exceptionally good income. I tithe more than most people in Britain earn.

The Vice Chair is really an honorific position unless something happens to Cecil Byram. Exports and Expansion is a challenging enough brief for me. Being young and single it is no problem for me to travel all over the world.

I enjoy the work I am doing.

I am building for the Byram Group's future.

Cecil Byram works from home a lot. I see more of Cecil at his home than at the Willerton Head Office.

Sometimes Cecil uses me as a sounding board for his thinking.

Cecil believes in manufacturing.

Cecil says that a country that cannot manufacture will be in real trouble should a war ever break out.

As in so many things, the time to prepare is before the need is obvious.

Successive British Governments of all colours have not made enough provision for war. Yet how likely is it that Britain will never be involved in a war again?

When a tsunami in China flooded the Chinese coal mines and badly damaged China's infrastructure the Byram family stockpiles of metals saved a huge number of British companies from collapse.

For a few months we were the only business in Western Europe with big stocks of metal to sell.

Cecil believes in "green" power, but Cecil bought the coal industry because it helps to maintain fuel security for Britain.

Cecil is making good money out of the coal industry. Much of the productivity increases come from better catering inspired by Rebecca, and more comes because the men know that their jobs are secure.

Cecil will be able to make plastic from coal even when the Middle East is in turmoil and plastic prices go through the roof.

On top of this Cecil will be able to manufacture diesel oil from coal.

Building a facility to make plastic and diesel oil from coal adds value to the coal stocks in the mines. It also gives Britain a secure supply of plastics and of diesel oil.

There is logic for Cecil in having a steelworks, but a steelworks that cannot sell its output is a financial catastrophe.

Not knowing which steelworks we might purchase makes it difficult to make detailed plans.

The Byram Group including Ming's and Chang's buys a lot of steel each year.

Of course transferring our business to one British steelworks from another might cause the first to close. Fortunately most of the steel we purchase is not purchased from the United Kingdom so any jobs lost will be lost abroad.

Given that we produce our own energy and we have a guaranteed market Cecil reckons that the worst that happens is that he makes maybe only four per cent return on the steelworks investment rather than the ten per cent Cecil usually reckons on.

Even at four per cent return now, a steelworks is potentially a gold mine should the market turn.

So which steelworks?

Cecil has told his financial advisor Mr Porteous that Cecil is interested in purchasing a steelworks.

The industrial research company that Cecil uses has made preliminary analyses on each UK steelworks to help with the decision making.

Much turns on the price Cecil pays. As we have no great need to own a steel works Cecil is not minded to purchase unless the purchase is a virtual gift.

CHAPTER 11: Shakoora Daar

My marriage is good.

The only down side is that Ali works such long hours on his project.

I don't know what I expected from marrying Ali Miah but I did expect to have more of Ali's company.

Once the caissons begin to arrive I will barely see Ali.

Just at the moment though, Ali is on a forced wait because he is waiting for his caissons to be made.

I am so amazed and pleased for Ali that he has been appointed as Site Engineer for Holy Mecca. There is no more important job.

When Ali told me he was going to use this enforced waiting period to visit other sites that attract vast numbers of pilgrims or tourists I collapsed in tears.

I am too far advanced in pregnancy to travel, and I do not think it right that I should be abandoned like this.

I am very lonely at the best of times.

Ali has now assigned some of his young engineers to visit all these sites instead. The "young" engineers are all older than Ali!

There will be a pooling of experiences and ideas when they all get back.

Ali is spending time with me!

A lot of the time we just sit on the balcony looking over the sea. It is so nice just to sit together.

From our balcony we can see the buoys that mark where the islands will be. For the furthest islands we use binoculars to see the buoys.

Ali sold the holiday home in Minnesota that Ali inherited from Arthur Miller. We would never have used it much.

When we are not in Bahrain I would rather be with my family in Doncaster.

Ali also sold Arthur Miller's boat.

David Wilkins has invested the holiday home money for us in what David says are safe investments appropriate for Muslims. David has also invested about two thirds of Ali's savings in appropriate investments.

Mark Johnson sometimes visits us on his way to China or on the way back.

According to Mark, Cecil Byram has renegotiated the contract that Cecil made with my brother Sahid.

Sahid has reduced the percentage of turnover that Sahid takes from the Byram internet sales. Sahid still does well out of the relationship.

Cecil really values the input from Sahid.

Cecil has plans for expansion. Marketing is the key. Sahid is an exceptionally good marketer.

Cecil knows that Cecil could hire an internet marketer for a fraction of what Cecil pays Sahid.

But would the new marketer be as good?

If the new marketer was that gifted, for how long would he stay?

The bricks for Ali's project are being made in Spain. The Bahraini man stationed in Spain approves each pallet of bricks before the pallets are loaded into containers. Ali pays Byrams for the bricks produced each month.

The containers are being stacked at the brickworks. There is plenty of storage space at the brickworks. Fifty million bricks will take up a lot of space so they stack the containers seven high.

Karen Byram went out with Mark Johnson years ago. Karen and Mark are good friends but they are no longer interested in each other romantically.

At a housewarming party for Rebecca Johnson in London Karen met an Army captain who is a brother of David Wilkins' current girlfriend. They just clicked and that was that.

According to Mark both Karen Byram and Chris Edwards are from very wealthy families, and they are always suspicious that a new partner may only be interested in them for financial reasons.

Each of them is cautious in mentioning their family's wealth.

It took a few weeks for them to learn that each of them stands to inherit billions of pounds.

Once they both knew where the other stood they were both happy to be in a relationship that is not about money.

Karen divides her time between her university course, supervising three Byrams businesses in Spain, and a passionate relationship with her young man.

Chris is an officer in Special Forces, so Chris's timetable is completely unpredictable.

Karen understands that Chris has an important job and that Chris has to be allowed to follow his star.

Chris accepts that Karen must often spend weekends in Spain.

Chris lives near his job in Hereford and Karen lives near her studies in Leicester. Karen is a pilot so fairly often Karen flies to Hereford to see Chris and to stay overnight with Chris.

At the same party Rebecca tried to match Mark with a young woman who has just returned from her Mormon missionary service but Mark sidestepped.

Mark says that he will marry one day but he will choose his own young lady, thanks!

Tohur is now in the preparation period for the Olympics so Tohur has left home to live in a training camp near Minehead. They will transfer to Brazil later.

Sahid is now in Tohur's house all on his own. Chester Wilson technically lives there but Chester is out almost all the time.

Abdullah is trying to decide what to do with his life.

With Sahid away Abdullah has to be present in Doncaster to act as head of the family. The honorific head of the family is our Uncle Jalil but Uncle Jalil is just not up to running our family.

Abdullah discusses everything with Uncle Jalil as a mark of respect and courtesy.

Uncle Jalil has wisdom and experience.

Abdullah will join the Mosque Committee after Abdullah takes his final exams.

Abdullah says that he is not looking forward to this obligation.

Also, once Abdullah is on the Committee it will be very hard for Abdullah to escape until one of the other males in the family is old enough to be credible as a Committee member.

Amina is looking forward to marrying her Abdul. Abdul has agreed that for the next few years at least Abdul will live in England.

The unspoken statement is that once Mina is old enough to run the fashion business Abdul will wish Amina to move to California with him.

Mina is too young to run our large business but in a few years Mina will be able to run the business and to run it well.

CHAPTER 12: Rebecca Johnson

My first impression of the House of Commons was that the House of Commons is a crazy way to run a country.

Charlie Kent explained that I am looking at the House of Commons the wrong way.

The House of Commons does not run the country.

The country is managed by the Civil Service, with some direction from the party in Government.

Cecil Byram is very small "C" conservative in how the Byram Group businesses run. Cecil likes consistency, predictability, and continuity. Cecil plans decades ahead.

How would Byrams cope with a totally new top management coming in every four or five years?

One major weakness of the civil service is that the higher civil servants move jobs every two or three years. Imagine Byrams if the top and middle people moved in and out and around every two or three years!

Combine the two sets of changes and it is a wonder that the government functions at all.

The civil servants try to run their departments in an intelligent way, but the civil servants are subject to the interventions of Ministers.

The Ministers are subject to scrutiny by the Opposition parties, but also by their own backbenchers.

There are differences of opinion within each party, and sometimes there are great internal hatreds.

Some of the Ministers even stir up back benchers against other Ministers!

There are several processes going on in parallel.

The main role of the House of Commons is to provide a platform for political argument about the wisdom of the policies of the current government. The Opposition policies may also be discussed.

My steady chipping away at the Local Government minister is part of this process.

Mary West the shadow Local Government Minister is grateful for my input in harassing the Local Government Minister, but am I making a play for Mary's job?

Mary has deployed one of the oldest tricks in the book.

Mary has asked me to sink my teeth into an impossible job.

If I fail, as I will, it diminishes my impact within the Labour Party. If I succeed, Mary can steal my ideas and claim most of the credit.

It does not really matter because if Labour wins the next election the new Prime Minister may not keep Mary in Local Government.

The new Prime Minister might promote Mary, demote Mary, or move Mary to another area. In which case, if I appear to be a safe pair of hands, I may be promoted to become a junior Minister.

Alternatively, I may be redeployed to some other area of work.

I might still be a back bencher when Labour is in office. This is unlikely, because there are many jobs to do and usually not enough capable people to do them.

About forty per cent of the current Conservative MPs are in some way officially part of the Conservative Government. It is unlikely that Labour will be much different when we are in power.

The day after the General Election a significant number of the new Parliamentary Labour Party will be new to Parliament. Most new Labour MPs will have won seats from the Conservatives and other parties. Some others will have replaced Labour MPs who retired at the General Election. They will all be too new to be appointed to anything.

Some present MPs of all parties have shown that they are not up to any job. Sometimes their problem is that they are just not up to it.

Too often the disqualifying factor is alcohol.

Some serving Labour MPs may be so disliked by the Prime Minister or by the Chief Whip that they will not be selected.

Some Labour MPs may prefer not to be in the Government.

Given that any sensible Prime Minister and Chief Whip will build for the future, MPs over sixty years old will not be given junior positions. Junior posts are reserved for younger comrades as stepping stones to their futures.

Given how many elderly MPs there are that is to my advantage.

Charlie Kent says his chances of office are slight because Charlie will be near sixty at the time of the next election.

Charlie's constituency is a marginal so there is a fair chance that Charlie could lose his seat should Labour become unpopular. That would be the end of Charlie's political career.

A junior job is much more likely to go to someone younger, like me.

I represent a safe Labour seat and I am likely to be in Parliament for the next half century. I am bright and hard working.

So far I have not embarrassed the Labour Party or the Labour Leader.

My chances of junior office are good.

According to Charlie I will eventually rise to the Labour front bench.

Charlie is relaxed about his lack of a promotion opportunity.

Charlie says that because he has no likelihood of climbing the greasy pole of politics Charlie can do what he wants and say what he thinks is right.

Provided Charlie does not vote against the Party too often the Chief Whip will not ask Charlie's constituency party to deselect Charlie.

Marginal seats are often won or lost by a few hundred votes, so deselecting an MP for a marginal seat is not wise. The Chief Whip would rather have Charlie than risk a Tory winning Charlie's seat.

Charlie is not a frequent rebel so Charlie does not get into trouble with the Chief Whip very often.

Parliament is also a showcase for the talents and qualities of MPs, if they choose to display them. This is important not just for one party against another, but for MPs within their own parties.

Charlie is pleased that I am visiting so many Constituency Labour Parties.

My visits raise my visibility within the party.

That a well-known MP like me comes to speak to Constituency Labour Parties in our hopeless and marginal constituencies raises their morale enormously.

I did not say anything to Charlie but I am not really interested in becoming the junior minister in charge of paperclips.

I never intended to become a Member of Parliament.

I only became a MP by a series of coincidences and accidents.

I intend to use my position as a back bencher to push for whatever needs doing whoever is in power.

I have done a lot of researching into the problem of resources for children in care. I think I can see a way forward.

There is a huge problem in relation to children over say ten years of age. Finding foster carers for older children is difficult, and is much more difficult as the children grow older.

I discussed this problem with Cecil and Irene Byram.

Cecil has agreed in principle to fund a project to provide accommodation and fostering for children over ten who are in care.

I have known Elizabeth Mountford a long time, so we have agreed to bring Elizabeth in as a paid consultant.

I will be on the committee, but unpaid. I earn enough money as a Member of Parliament.

The project will require someone to do a lot of work on the ground.

Mark tipped me that a Byrams employee called Gwen Sykes might be an appropriate person. Byrams would second Gwen to me or to the project for as long as is needed.

Cecil Byram approved for me to approach Gwen.

Gwen knew me as the Catering Manager at Byrams but we have never had any conversation.

I asked to meet with Gwen, much to Gwen's surprise.

When I told Gwen what the job is about, Gwen laughed!

Apparently Byrams has been trying to coax Gwen Sykes into management since before Gwen completed her apprenticeship. This is a nice try!

My project plays to Gwen's need to fight for the underdog and for the vulnerable. It gives Gwen management experience away from Byrams.

Gwen's knowledge of how Byrams works and who the players are makes Gwen an obvious person to bring into the project.

I told Gwen that if she wishes to study for a degree with the Open University while working on the course Cecil will pay the fees.

Gwen made the point that she lives with her parents in Neverthorpe. It is a long way to travel to Groatpie each day.

I said to Gwen that the secondment carries junior manager pay, out of which Gwen ought to be able to pay for accommodation.

Gwen asked how much junior managers earn, so I told her.

Gwen was tempted!

I told Gwen that I own a cottage in Groatpie that is usually empty from Monday morning until Friday night. If Gwen wishes to stay there that causes me no difficulty. I might be there the odd night if I have constituency issues or meetings in the North. I would not charge rent but Gwen should buy her own food and contribute to utilities bills.

Gwen laughed again.

"Cecil Byram is a cunning bastard.

"Listen, Rebecca, I need to sleep on this."

Chester is in discussions with Cecil about Chester's PhD and also about whether Chester can be based in London after we are married. The general answer is "Yes" but there are details to work out.

Chester has to visit Meldon about once every two weeks to see his supervisor at Meldon University. While in West Yorkshire, Chester will spend a day or two at Willerton or with Cecil.

Kevin Hanson is finding the new project in Liverpool really rewarding. Taking people who had written themselves off and bringing them back into the normal stream of life has its challenges. It also has huge personal satisfactions.

Kevin is happy to recruit some builders to build the hostels once we have the planning permissions. Kevin may take them from his Liverpool workforce or straight from prison.

Martin Jenkins spends virtually every weekday on site at Groatpie.

Martin says that on the land that Byram Group owns there is a derelict farm complex that might be an appropriate site for the hostels.

There is also a site further down the A road that used to be a nudist camp. The site is derelict now because the South Yorkshire climate and nudism are not a good mix.

Gwen telephoned me to say that if she can squeeze a mileage allowance as well she will play.

I said that was fine.

I told Gwen that as Gwen is seconded at junior manager grade Gwen is entitled to a low interest loan to purchase a car.

Who does Gwen report to?

Me!

For day to day purposes Gwen will report to Bernadette Evans.

We agreed to meet at my constituency office on Monday morning at ten.

Bernadette as a senior social worker briefed us on the likely issues surrounding the management of a village or hamlet for young people in care.

Martha commented on the councillors who represent the wards around the colliery.

Where the wards are rural the councillors tend to be Tories. Some are decent people and some are not. A bit like Labour councillors, really.

The High School nearest the colliery had a poor OFSTED report recently. The new Head Teacher is having a huge struggle to turn the school around. She might be open to whatever input Byrams can provide.

The High School has room for more pupils.

We decided that the constituency office is a bit cramped for Gwen to be based there.

There is room at the colliery offices. The colliery is a Byrams plant.

Were Gwen to be based at the colliery she would become involved again in internal Byrams issues.

We decided to rent a little office in Groatpie for the project. Martha will help Gwen to find premises.

CHAPTER 13: Cecil Byram

There are three huge advantages in Byram Group being a private company rather than being a public company.

The first is that a private company can make decisions without being second guessed or affected by the City of London, the financial institutions, and the financial press.

It seems to me that many of the players in the City have a horizon of perhaps thirty minutes. There is also a herd mentality in the City where people do stupid things because everyone else is doing them.

There are intelligent people in the City but there are an awful lot of short term short sighted operators.

I am so glad that the Byram Group is not at the mercy of the City casino.

The second advantage is that there is always a conflict between long term planning and short term returns.

The Byram family is supportive of long term planning. There is no pressure from shareholders to cash in profits quickly or to maximise returns on investment. There is no danger of asset strippers coming in and trying to maximise their profit by breaking up the Byrams Group.

The third advantage is that everyone in the company knows that there is no danger of a hostile takeover or of any major change in management and management style. We have consistency in the way we operate.

Having no borrowings was a tremendous advantage when I purchased first the munitions factories and then the Groatpie Colliery.

Many loan agreements allow the bankers to give or refuse permission before changing the nature of one's business significantly. Explaining to bankers why one wishes to purchase a loss making business is a pain. It also causes delay and uncertainty.

The bank can refuse permission.

Refinancing a loan is often difficult, particularly if you are simultaneously embarking upon what looks like a risky venture.

When I purchased the rest of the coal industry the Government loaned me the money at a low rate of interest. The Government tried to impose a "permission" clause for further purchases but I flatly refused to have it.

Provided that I meet my repayment obligations the Government has no influence on how I run the Byram Group.

I know that the banks would be reluctant to lend for Byrams to purchase a loss making steelworks.

I have money set aside that I may purchase a steelworks with cash if the price is low enough.

If the price is not that low I probably will not buy.

I personally do not need a steelworks.

Byrams does not need a steelworks.

If Britain has no steelworks we would be unable to fight a war for long.

Given that British Governments will not protect the British steel industry I will buy a steelworks when it goes bust.

If I have paid virtually nothing for a steelworks I do not need much profit to make a decent return on investment.

I can more or less guarantee a decent return on investment because I can be sure of steel purchases by Ming's, Chang's, and the Byram Group.

But who would I put in charge?

Robert Iredale my Chief Executive has no knowledge of steelworks.

In my top group of people the only person with relevant experience is Mark Johnson.

Mark is doing a terrific job in "Exports and Expansion".

Running a steelworks would occupy Mark fully.

I can justify doing that.

But is it the right thing to do?

Irene worked on designing accommodation for children in care.

Irene had a bit of a brainwave when she realised that previously battered women could be trained up to foster children. The women and their biological children would be the centre or core of the household with the foster children staying with them.

Each house takes eight children. Allowing for the children of the house mother there is room for between four and seven foster children. It gives the house mothers better accommodation than they have at present, higher incomes, and the opportunity to work at home.

Gwen Sykes pointed out that the same deal would gratefully be accepted by single people and couples with and without children living in and around Groatpie. There are tens of thousands of people around Groatpie on benefits or on low incomes who would jump at this opportunity.

Byram Housing bought a disused camping resort about a mile and a half from the industrial estate we are building. There is a bus service that links both.

Rebecca is hosting a public meeting in Groatpie soon.

Rebecca and Gwen Sykes have squared the head teachers of the junior school and the high school that will serve the community.

The local councillors are Tories.

Gwen and Rebecca met with them.

The Tory councillors like the idea of taking local people off benefits and of creating jobs locally. Given that both schools are under subscribed the introduction of extra children rescues the schools from any suggestion of closure or of staff reductions.

The Tories are supportive.

The plan has evolved from what we originally intended.

The foster carers will each be self-employed and will therefore earn good money for themselves. Now Byrams' involvement is limited to providing the physical infrastructure of the site, and job opportunities for the youngsters.

Where there are two parents it is practical to employ the second parent as a security guard, grounds man and so forth.

The foster carers will sign up to minimum standards of provision.

We will build twenty homes and a community centre. We have space for more building there if we wish.

At the moment it all looks good.

The Groatpie Philharmonic Orchestra is providing free instrument teaching to the pupils at the local junior and high schools, along with free instrument loans and a Saturday morning Youth Academy at the High School.

CHAPTER 14: Don Hewson

Emma says that the parents are very happy with the education that our school gives their children.

The parents are really pleased that we have extended the period during which we offer to educate their children. Virtually all the parents have said that they intend to keep their children at the theatre school during the two extra years leading up to the GCSE examinations.

Apart from the Hewson children and the Tykes, nearly a third of the current children perform on television or have had parts in films or in TV programs.

Some children have had advertisement or modelling opportunities.

We are very much "on the map" for casting agents and for producers.

We do not provide anything much different from the London theatre schools, but living outside London is so much cheaper than living in or near London.

We have even had a few children transfer to our school from London theatre schools. The families choose that their children should board with family members in the North and save their families thousands of pounds each year in school fees and in travel costs.

Our Deputy Head Edna reports that her friends in London are enquiring whether we have a boarding facility.

At the moment we have no plans for a boarding facility.

At one time I had thought of buying a house for our adult foster children where they could live when they leave care.

There is no need at the moment.

The idea for a jazz group involving Kali Daar and Abdullah Daar seems to have fizzled out.

Max and Peter and Gerald Butler and Robert Graham have decided to form a boy band pop group.

We had a bit of discussion about this wording because the boys are clear that they are a pop group.

They happen to be very good looking boys.

They are contemptuous of boy bands because most boy bands just sing without playing musical instruments.

Apart from being good singers our boys are excellent instrumentalists.

They intend to write their own music.

They will not be a group assembled by some greedy manager but they will be their own group.

As the boys are already millionaires they are in a position to be their own managers or to hire a manager.

They like Tom Driburg, but they are very much open to suggestions as to whom to choose to be their adult organiser.

They have not chosen a name for the group.

Each of them is going to write four songs over the next month. Our gym will be their rehearsal room.

Our daughter Alice surprised me.

Alice came to me and she apologised again for putting her satellite location device on Heinz's collar. Alice had only meant it as a tease.

Alice had not considered the trust issue.

Alice had not appreciated the personal safety issue.

I was really surprised because this was dealt with months ago. I had been very upset at the time, but the issue was all done and dusted.

What brought this on?

According to Alice there was a piece on the television news about the dead body of a girl of Alice's age having been found in a garage in Peterborough. The photo of the dead girl looks a lot like Alice.

That has brought home to Alice what I am frightened of.

I am frightened for Alice.

Alice and I had a huge cuddle.

Alice understands me better now.

Damien is such a sweetie. Damien said that Kate spends so much time in Damien's bed that perhaps Kate should be allowed to move into his and Arthur's room officially. There is a spare bed.

Arthur does not mind, says Damien.

Arthur says he does not mind.

Kate is all for it!

Freda Graham has taken up with Jacob Grundy again. We will see how that goes.

Robert and the younger Grahams are fine.

Sally Thornton appears to be sweet on Gerald Butler. Gerald is such a nice lad and such an attractive lad that there will always be girls sweet on him.

Sally Thornton is bright, attractive, and reasonably musical. Sally has a good singing voice.

The poor lass is trying to get up to Grade 8 on the piano in hopes of impressing Gerald. From Grade 4 that is a long way to go!

Given how far Gerald is above even Grade 8 I think that Sally is going down the wrong road.

But obtain higher piano Grades if you wish, darling!

I do not know if Gerald is even aware of Sally Thornton's interest in him.

Gerald seems to spend a lot of his free time at the Johnson house or in Robert Graham's gym practicing their pop music.

Sally Thornton disingenuously suggested that if the band does not wish to be thought of as a boy band they should add a girl.

"That's a great idea!" said Gerald.

"I'll ask Sally Johnson!"

Max understands what is going on, and he shared the information with Emma. Poor Sally Thornton!

The band has settled on a name, "Tryton".

Jabril Daar helped the band to prepare an album. The boys' thinking is that as soon as they have launched a popular single they should launch an album to use the wave of publicity to maximise their income and their popularity.

Freda prepared the album cover, using some of the Daar computer software. I think the cover is terrific.

The band went to see Tom Driburg.

Tom said that at least five of the pieces on the album are worthy of release as singles. Tom suggests that the album launch should be delayed.

Tom agrees that having at least one female member would widen the band's appeal.

Sally Johnson has so much going on in her life that a pop group really is just too much to add. Sally already has a solo career.

Does the band have anyone else who is not so heavily engaged as Sally Johnson?

CHAPTER 15: Kevin Hanson

Rebecca Johnson has caused trouble in Parliament, without meaning to.

As a professional catering manager Rebecca was asked to advise the committee that supervises catering and other services

Rebecca was shocked to find that the House of Commons has 13,000 people eating there every working day but it still manages to lose money on its catering!

Rebecca's appointment as an advisor was no secret, particularly as at an early stage in Rebecca's investigation Rebecca asked to meet with the catering union shop stewards.

The shop stewards were very pleased to be consulted.

The shop stewards explained their issues, some of which surprised Rebecca.

The shop stewards explained their view that it is their duty to defend their members. It is not their role to tell the management how to run its business better.

Rebecca said that if that was their approach that would explain why some managers are reluctant to share information with the union. The union's approach meant that relations always have to be antagonistic.

The union said that some members of the committee and some managers wish to break the union. With that background the union has no choice but to be suspicious and defensive.

Rebecca said that she welcomes all proposals from whatever source.

Rebecca came up with proposals that offended everyone!

The first surprise was a proposal to improve the poshest restaurant and bar. Rebecca proposed that it should raise the quality of its food and wines even further, and increase its prices fifty per cent!

Rebecca's argument was that only very rich people and rich organisations will ever use these facilities, so give them what they really want and make more profit!

At the other end of the scale, soup and rolls and scones and tea should be reduced in price. They are quite profitable, but the users tend to be the lowest paid staff, many of whom are on minimum wage or are on not much more.

Rebecca devised a menu of filling hot meals that could be priced fairly cheap.

Rebecca suggested raising booze prices to close to London pub prices "because no-one needs to drink in the quantities that some people do".

Given the number of Islamic and vegetarian workers in and around Parliament one of the restaurants should become a halal and vegetarian restaurant. Rebecca suggested asking Tohur Miah to advise on menus and organisation.

Rebecca suggested closing three of the bars!

Although Rebecca had done calculations to show that there could be these changes without redundancies the union was upset because they feared that management would use these changes to make redundancies.

The proposals made perfect sense, but they offended almost everyone!

The Committee was impressed by Rebecca's calculations. The Committee said that they will implement the proposals "gradually".

Rebecca bought a four bedroom house in Shepherds Bush for just over two million pounds.

The money for this was largely borrowed from her sister Charlotte.

Rebecca has filled the house with Mormon graduate students. Rebecca says that this is for security as much as for any other reason.

Rebecca is very popular in the Labour Party because Rebecca is just so nice.

Rebecca smiles at everyone, and Rebecca has a kind word for everyone.

Although at every party social Rebecca makes a rousing barnstorming speech, Rebecca manages to do it without offending any wing of the Labour Party.

Rebecca offends the Tories regularly.

Rebecca speaks from a "good housekeeping" perspective laced with humour that makes it very hard for the Tories to respond effectively.

Rebecca keeps asking why despite evidence that tax evasion is increasing the number of tax inspectors keeps being reduced?

Rebecca suggested that any business that was losing more and more money from theft would employ more security staff rather than fewer. Unless perhaps some of the managers are happy to see their friends stealing from the taxpayer?

That led to uproar!

Rebecca's maiden speech during the debate on local government finance was a savage forensic analysis of the costs in prison accommodation and psychiatric hospital costs for people who had once been children in care.

Rebecca charted how the money saved by reducing local authority support for children leaving care has only five years later thrown costs onto national government at a level literally hundreds of times more than had been saved.

Rebecca suggested that the government should cancel their further proposed cuts and in that way reduce the extra costs of prisons and mental hospitals that would be incurred in consequence.

In these debates contributions are restricted to five minutes, so Rebecca's savage analysis penetrated like a jackhammer.

Rebecca's white faced impassioned delivery was not needed but it added to the effect of Rebecca's contribution.

When Rebecca had finished there was first a silence and then a roar of approval.

The Tory who followed noted that this was Rebecca's maiden speech.

"The Honourable Member has a clear grasp of the subject.

"If I dare to suggest that in future the Honourable Member could make her points with slightly less venom she might find that her contributions are respected even more."

The Labour MPs who spoke after Rebecca all referred to their Honourable Friend from Groatpie favourably.

The local government press, the social worker press, and the financial press all picked up on Rebecca's speech.

"Rebecca Johnson's logic is remorseless" said the Daily Telegraph.

By the end of the week the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that these particular cuts would now not take place.

An amazing victory for Rebecca!

All this has further increased Rebecca's popularity in the Labour Party and in the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Articles have appeared in the press speculating that Rebecca Johnson might become one of the youngest front benchers in history.

Guided by Charlie Kent, Rebecca has been very cool.

"There are a lot of very good Labour MPs.

"In the next Parliament there will be even more very good Labour MPs.

"The Party leader has a lot of very good people to choose from.

"I have a lot that I wish to do as a backbencher.

"I will keep plugging away!"

Cecil Byram has been waiting patiently for a steelworks to go bust, and now one has.

Cecil did not rush in, but Cecil stood back to see if anyone else would buy it.

When it was clear that absolutely no-one wishes to buy Redcar steelworks Cecil offered an abysmally low price, one hundred pounds!

Cecil took on responsibility for hundreds of millions of pounds of debt, and for one hundred pounds Cecil has bought a steelworks.

Cecil pumped hundreds of millions of pounds into the business as a capital injection so the business immediately cleared all the debts.

Redcar steelworks was so burdened with debt that every penny Redcar made was swallowed in debt servicing.

Redcar now runs like a normal business.

With guaranteed orders from the Byrams Group the business is reasonably secure.

Byrams improved the food of course.

Mark Johnson is the Director in charge of Redcar steelworks. Mark is now based at Redcar, but Mark is only there two days a week. Mark normally flies to Redcar by air taxi rather than waste his time driving.

Mark Johnson is the Director for Exports and Expansion. Wearing both hats Mark has done incredibly well.

Large orders from Ming's and Chang's to help them rebuild their steel stocks gave the steel workers immediate work.

Byrams uses steel in components. Byrams also has factories making shipping containers and metal pallets.

The companies that manufacture pit props were leaned on to purchase their steel from Redcar.

A large order from Bahrain came in at just the right moment.

Bahrain is building about eight miles of bridges and Redcar is to supply the steel. The Redcar steel mill makes virtually no profit from this order but the order keeps the steelworks busy for at least three years.

CHAPTER 16: Amina Daar

I went to Bahrain to support Shakoora through the birth of her first child.

Ali is a member of a Health Plan that covers all the highly paid expatriates in Bahrain.

The Crown Prince's wife took a personal interest in the pregnancy. She visited most days!

Shakoora was well supported. Ali had paid for shifts of English speaking nurses to be constantly in the apartment.

There were three shifts of British qualified English speaking midwives on call, and one of the midwives visited almost daily.

Ali was so pleased to see me!

Ali is torn between this multi million pound project in Bahrain, and Shakoora. Now I had arrived Ali could reduce his time commitment to Shakoora.

Ali left early in the morning, got in late at night, and went to bed. Ali is working six and a half days a week.

When the time came Shakoora was taken by ambulance to a fantastic hospital with all the electronic kit one could imagine, and with more medical staff than patients.

Ali's position as Site Engineer for Holy Mecca raised respect for the Daar family in Doncaster.

Here in Bahrain Ali Miah is Site Engineer for Holy Mecca and Ali is also "Genghis the Water Giver".

Ali is one of the most respected non-Royal people in Bahrain.

Mrs Ali Miah could not have asked for better care.

I kept Ali informed of progress by telephone.

Once the birth was very close Ali took a helicopter from his island to the roof of the hospital. Ali was wearing white overalls and overshoes so that Ali would not bring any dust into the hospital.

Ali was escorted to the post delivery room by a bevy of high-ups including the Director of the hospital.

Everyone cooled their heels until a beaming doctor entered the room carrying the baby.

Shakoora and Ali had agreed that if the baby were to be a girl it would be named Fatima after the Royal Princess whom Ali had rescued. Baby Fatima is fit and well.

After a while Ali was allowed to meet Shakoora.

We agreed that I would telephone the family in England while Ali got back to work.

The following day Ali took the morning off.

We had time to chat!

Ali is working like a dog on this project.

Ali is ahead of schedule and well under budget, so Ali is in line for some very significant bonuses, and for merit awards.

Ali says that so far there have been no deaths on the project, because Ali and his team of engineers are paranoid about the safety of the workers.

Ali is paranoid about safety anyway.

Ali built safety bonuses into the contracts of all the engineers he employs, to encourage them to be concerned about safety.

The islands project is going very well.

Ali told me that he is supervised in his role of Site Engineer at Holy Mecca by a committee of prestigious engineers. They meet over Skype once every two months.

Ali has drawn up proposals for what should be done at Holy Mecca as a first step to improve safety. Ali has circulated these proposals as "private and confidential" documents to the committee of engineers for their approval prior to the meeting next week.

Doing anything at Holy Mecca is highly controversial because Holy Mecca is the most important site in our religion. When the plans are publicised the publicity will be done extremely carefully.

All the plans are highly secret.

Ali cannot tell anyone, not even Shakoora!

Ali left the apartment after lunch. We did not expect to see Ali until ten at night, his usual time for return.

We had a telephone call from Ali to say that he would be home even later than usual. Ali's plans for Holy Mecca have been leaked to the media!

Since the first telephone calls started coming in Ali has been holed up with the Crown Prince of Bahrain while the pair of them tried to deal with the wave of publicity.

When Ali arrived home at midnight the poor man was physically and emotionally shattered!

Ali had designed a series of tall narrow barriers around the edge of the huge courtyard at Holy Mecca, angled to the direction of movement. The idea is that people could shelter behind the barriers when there is a panic or a stampede. The availability of shelter reduces the fear and reduces the likelihood of a panic.

The barriers are narrow grilles. Each grille supports a fountain along its entire length.

Each fountain is a work of beauty in itself.

The water recycles endlessly, with a simple system for adding water to replace water that evaporates.

There is also a process for cleaning and disinfecting the water out of general sight.

The cooling effect of the water should help to reduce the panics that lead to the stampedes.

Ali has named this series of fountains "The Fountains of Khatija" after the first wife of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

To Ali's horror the leaker has called them "Genghis's Fountains".

"Genghis" is a nickname that Ali picked up when he was working in China and which has followed Ali to Bahrain.

During the afternoon the Crown Prince placed a security detail outside Ali and Shakoora's apartment. We did not know because we did not go out.

The Crown Prince arranged for Ali to be interviewed by Bahrain TV in the Crown Prince's Palace. Ali spoke in Arabic.

That interview is now being viewed all over the Islamic World.

The graphics that Ali and his team had prepared are stunning. They show what you would see as you walk around the square both as it is now and once the fountains are in place.

These graphics have also been leaked.

People can see that the fountains will be an addition to the spiritual experience rather than be damaging to it.

The general reaction to the plans is surprisingly favourable. The fountain designs are so beautiful!

Ali just went to bed because he was shattered.

In the morning Ali telephoned the Crown Prince and then Ali went off to the Palace again.

Ali had been a little sneaky.

Each set of documents sent out had an identifying feature so were there to be a leak Ali could identify which set of documents had been leaked.

Ali knows now.

The set of documents that has been leaked is the set that Ali had given to the Crown Prince before sending out sets to the committee of engineers.

CHAPTER 17: Ali Miah

The Crown Prince pretends that he has no idea how the information given to him has been leaked.

"I assume that whoever did this is more of a politician than I am."

"Ali, any of our palace cats is more of a politician than you are."

"It is one of the things I like about you."

"Concentrate on what you are good at, being an engineer!"

"Let other people do the politics for you."

"I know, Your Royal Highness, that you would not leak documents given to you in terms of strictest secrecy."

"So why would someone in your service think it a good idea to leak the plans to all the news media?"

"Religion helps to maintain social order."

"Every religion is by nature conservative."

"Those who run or administer a major religion tend to be even more conservative than their followers."

"The publicity and the general approval of the Islamic world for your plans will make it easier for the custodians of Holy Mecca to agree to your plans."

"Without the publicity there would have been huge delay."

"There have been eighteen offers to fund the fountains, in less than a day."

"When you look at who has offered this funding you see some enormously important people who are prepared to fund your idea."

"And you, Genghis Miah, you are totally innocent of any naughty political actions."

"Why did you, sorry, your servant, call them "Genghis's Fountains"?"

"That is not the name I had intended."

The Crown Prince smiled.

“Yes.

“The holy and wise custodians can slap down any suggestion of “Genghis’s Fountains”.

“They can insist on the correct name of “Fountains of Khatija”.

“That asserts their authority.”

The Crown Prince is overlooking something important!

“But you know what people are like!

“These fountains will always be known as Genghis’s Fountains!”

The Crown Prince smiled.

“Yes they will.”

He looked at me.

“You will always be Genghis.”

The Crown Prince smiled.

“And I will always be the enlightened prince who was your employer.

“A thousand years from now you and I may well be the only people from our time whose names are known to hundreds of millions of Muslims.

“I can live with that.”

The Crown Prince changed the subject.

“You remember that problem that you raised about rice?”

The Chinese have discovered that the mortar in the Great Wall of China has lasted so long because it was made with water that rice had been cooked in. The starch from the rice strengthened the mortar.

Working in China at the time my MSc thesis was about the science behind the ancient Chinese practice.

My mentor Arthur Miller had given a copy of my MSc thesis to the Crown Prince, This action led to my being hired by the Crown Prince to succeed Arthur Miller when Arthur sadly died of liver failure.

I would need to cook huge amounts of rice to produce the starch for the huge Bahrain islands project. My problem was what to do with all the cooked rice. There was a danger of causing economic damage if I sold the cooked rice locally.

“I have had two sets of answers come back from our religious experts.

“One possibility is to freeze dry the rice and set it aside as emergency rations for people when disasters strike.

“The problem with that idea is that we will have manufacturing expense, storage expense, and distribution expense.

“The second idea is to sell or use the cooked rice as a constituent in dog food. Apparently rice is used to make dog food in Europe.

“We will go with the dog food idea.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Your wife has just had a baby.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Take three days off.

“Enjoy your baby.

“Enjoy the company of your wife.

“And keep out of contact with anyone except me.”

“Yes, Your Royal Highness.”

So I am at home for three days.

Shakoora is delighted!

I am getting used to the idea that my team can cope with me being absent for a few days.

CHAPTER 18: Rebecca Johnson

I am very happy.

Chester had some family issues about our intended marriage.

Chester's family had more or less expected that whoever Chester married would support Chester in Chester's career. Chester would be the major breadwinner and Chester's wife would be the secondary earner, taking time off to have children when the couple started a family.

My being a high earner in England when I was working for the Byrams Group put a dent in that idea.

Now that I have been elected as a Member of Parliament for a safe seat it is clear that I am not going to be trailing around after Chester.

Some of Chester's family were saying that Chester should not marry me. Chester should marry a young woman more in accordance with the family's expectations.

Chester went to the United States and Chester sorted out his family.

Chester's parents were fine but some aunts and a granny needed firm talkings to.

Chester's family are all fine with the proposed marriage now.

Chester is still a researcher for the Byram Group, working particularly closely with Cecil Byram. Chester is doing well in his doctorate research.

Chester and David Wilkins are looking for businesses that the Byrams Group could or should invest in.

Cecil's financial advisor Mr Porteous is also scouting for decent purchase opportunities.

Cecil is awash with money. Cecil wants to spend it before the financial year end if he can.

Otherwise Cecil takes a tax hit.

Buying a poor business will cost more in the long run than the tax hit that Cecil might otherwise face, so Cecil does not want just any business.

Cecil "only" wants a business that is potentially very profitable, is easy to run, and is a good buy. Ideally it should fit in with Cecil's other businesses or it should be a logical extension of the Byram Group. It should be a "good value" purchase.

I am marrying Chester Wilson in Tryton in September.

I will attend the Labour Party Conference in early September. I will lead the singing of "The Red Flag" again.

Eight days later we get married at Tryton and then we go on honeymoon. Chester has booked a honeymoon in Hawaii.

Charlie Kent and Jenny Hallam are still looking after my interests.

Jenny has been in Parliament for more than ten years, and Jenny seems to know everybody. Many of the Labour MPs are old enough to be my father or even my grandfather. They are happy to share their wisdom and experience with an attractive young woman.

I get the inside story of how some person I have never heard of shafted some other person I have never heard of. In all this there is also a lot of good advice.

Smiling at all these older men has built my popularity in the Parliamentary Labour Party!

It doesn't hurt to smile at people or to listen to them.

The Chief Whip "asked" for me to visit him.

The job of Chief Whip is to make sure that all Labour MPs vote as they should. He is also a major conduit of information from the ordinary MPs to the Leader.

Although the Chief Whip does not technically appoint, promote, or demote Ministers the Chief Whip advises the Party Leader.

The Party Leader usually follows the Chief Whip's advice.

Most Chief Whips are pretty strong characters. They need to be forceful at times. Some of them in past years have given the impression that they enjoy being ruthless.

The current Chief Whip was born into a strong Communist family, and he was named Vladimir in honour of the Russian leader Vladimir Lenin.

Vladimir is a strong character.

Behind his back everyone calls the Chief Whip "Vlad" after Vlad the Impaler. That tells you all you need to know about Vladimir's personality!

I have done nothing wrong, so I was surprised to be "asked" to see the Chief Whip.

"So, Rebecca, what do you think of it so far?"

"I did not know what to expect, sir."

"Don't call me "sir".

"Call me Vladimir."

"Yes sir, Vladimir."

"Everyone is impressed that you forced the Tories to abandon their cuts for children coming out of care.

"You have done very well.

"The Local Government Minister has asked the Conservative Chief Whip for a transfer. That is not all your doing, but you are giving him a hard time and that has contributed."

"Thank you, sir."

"Vladimir.

"You have done everything right and so far nothing wrong."

"Thank you."

"You have probably heard that there is a reshuffle of the Shadow Cabinet coming up."

The proposed reshuffle has been in the press for days.

"Yes."

"If you were me, what advice would you give to the Party Leader?"

I thought for a couple of minutes.

I decided to say what I really thought.

I realised that I was taking a risk.

On the other hand, I am not after any kind of promotion.

"We have an Education Shadow Minister who has never taught and who seems to specialise in upsetting teachers.

"We have an Agriculture Shadow Minister who knows nothing about farming or food, an Industry team who have never worked in manufacturing, and a Business team who have never managed a market stall between them.

"I would shift all of them."

"So which should I suggest for you?"

That was a surprise!

"I have taught, but mainly I was an administrator for a theatre school. I am not a qualified teacher.

"I have worked in a manufacturing business but I was on the catering side.

"You probably know I led a team providing forty thousand hot meals a week at fourteen locations.

"I spent more than three million pounds a year on food.

"I have management experience and I know something about food."

"So, Agriculture and Food, or Business."

Vladimir nodded.

"But I have been in Parliament less than a year.

"I am not expecting a promotion so early.

"Really I am honoured that you even know who I am."

"Oh I know who you are, Miss Johnson."

"I have had more comment about you since you were elected than I have had about any new Member.

"Do you know that there are people who think you should not be a Labour MP?"

"Yes.

"Look. I spent a year and a half as a Mormon missionary. We are trained to cope with rejection and with not being liked."

The Chief Whip nodded.

"These characters think that I should have been a Party member for at least two years before I became a Member of Parliament.

"I won within the rules.

"Those comrades have to accept that I am here to stay.

"I am not going anywhere."

"Good."

"The Sally Johnson who visits disabled servicemen is your sister?"

"Yes."

"The Charlotte Johnson who wrote "Helmand" is your sister also?"

"Yes."

"You are a talented and strong minded family?"

"Yes."

"Were you seriously earning four hundred thousand pounds a year and you gave that up to become a Labour MP?"

"The four hundred thousand pounds was my base pay.

"I had a company car, free meals, and bonuses approaching a hundred thousand pounds a year."

Vlad looked impressed.

"Thank you for your time."

Jenny and Charlie told me not to get my hopes up.

I am too new in Parliament and I am far too young to be given a serious job.

The most likely job is as an unpaid Parliamentary Private Secretary to a Shadow Minister.

That is the normal entry level appointment to the greasy pole of political office.

I have filled my London house with Mormon postgraduate students who are happy to have pleasant and relatively inexpensive accommodation in Central London. They are all about my age. They are fiercely protective of me.

One morning when I got up Rachel Unwin told me that a difficult and unpleasant man had been telephoning at intervals all morning.

Rachel was not prepared to wake me up.

The man had been persistent.

Rachel is a strong minded Australian. Rachel had got quite forceful with the caller.

Eventually Rachel had told the man that if he did not stop telephoning she would telephone the police.

So who was it?

It was Vladimir!

I telephoned Vladimir.

I was most apologetic!

Vladimir thought it was funny.

"It is thirty-five years since a young lady told me so forcefully where to stick my didgeridoo.

"She was Australian, too.

"Can you see me in my office in say an hour?"

"Yes!"

I asked Rachel to hail and hold a taxi while I finished dressing.

I arrived at the Chief Whip's office in the House of Commons about ten minutes early.

I had to get through a knot of journalists who were hovering in the corridor outside the Chief Whip's room.

Naturally they all wanted to know what offer I had received.

When I said I had not been offered a job, they asked what job I would like to be offered?

"No idea.

"I assume Vladimir has something in mind.

"We will just have to see!"

The Chief Whip was running late.

I waited half an hour before the Chief Whip was ready for me.

"Right, Rebecca.

"This reshuffle is wider than originally planned because three members of the Shadow Cabinet have asked to be relieved for various reasons, and the Party Leader is sacking two others.

"Humphrey (the Party Leader) does his own firings, so I am administering the bottom end of appointments to the Shadow Cabinet.

"Four of those going are women, which is your good fortune.

"The Party Leader needs four new women for the Shadow Cabinet.

"Humphrey wants to reduce the average age of the Shadow Cabinet.

"The easiest way to reduce the average age is to appoint a very young preferably female MP.

"You are selected because everyone knows who Rebecca Johnson is, and almost everyone likes you. You are female, young, and everyone knows you have a significant political future ahead of you.

"You are high profile and you attend a lot of Labour Party socials to promote the party.

"Nobody hates you yet!

"So, Northern Ireland or Agriculture?"

"Not Northern Ireland!"

"Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs it is then.

"Keep this to yourself for now."

"That is a bit difficult with all those journalists outside."

"This is the real world.

"You can cope!"

When I left Vlad's room the journalists were all over me. They knew the Chief Whip was still dealing with Cabinet level appointments, so am I in the Shadow Cabinet?

I smiled, and I waved them to silence.

"Can you keep a secret?"

“Yes!”

“So can I!”

They all laughed, and I left the corridor.

I went straight to my office in the Norman Shaw Annexe across the road from the House of Commons. My secretary Caroline was there.

“Caroline, hold all my calls.

“I need to sit quiet for a few minutes.”

I went to my inner room.

Caroline keeps bottles of water in a refrigerator. Caroline brought me a bottle of water.

Caroline was obviously curious, but Caroline asked nothing and Caroline said nothing.

Caroline left the room.

I prayed.

The Lord sent no negative signal.

In fact, the Lord said nothing.

It is up to me!

After a few minutes I emerged.

“Caroline, can you find out whether Jenny or Charlie are about? If they are, could they spare me ten minutes more or less now?”

“They are both two minutes away. You going to see the Chief Whip was on the news and they want to know what you have been given.

“So do I!

“The report was that you were smiling and joking as you left, so obviously you have been given something!”

Soon the four of us were sat together.

I told the others my news.

All three are delighted for me.

Charlie Kent said that nearly two hundred Labour MPs will be cross because I have become a Shadow Minister instead of them.

The line for me to take is that anyone who has complaints should take them to the Chief Whip or to the Party Leader. I have been asked to do a job and I will do it to the best of my ability.

Presumably Vlad has been impressed by the work I do in Parliament and outside Parliament. Any other MPs could try to impress Vlad the same way.

The agriculture job gives me lots of photo opportunities, so use them!

Jenny said that I will have the opportunity to pick a Parliamentary Private Secretary. This normally goes to someone on his or her way up. She suggested three possible MPs.

“Alan Roe is a shit faced bastard”, said Charlie.

“I am not disputing that.

“Alan is very bright, though.

“And he knows about the dirty side of politics!”

I decided to sleep on the question of whom to ask the Party Leader to appoint.

The media loved my appointment.

I am the youngest front bencher in living memory.

I am an attractive feisty young woman.

My first television interviewer I think was not very well briefed. She intended to put me down by saying that I lacked experience.

“Lack experience!

"I led a team preparing forty thousand hot meals a week in sixteen locations!

"I was purchasing more than three million pounds of food a year.

"I know a fair bit about food.

"When I was feeding miners at Groatpie Colliery I went underground and I ate with the men down there.

"I changed their food for the better.

"I am looking forward to learning about how food producers produce!

"I am really looking forward to getting into farming and food processing and fishing and everything else!

"It is a great job for me."

"I meant that you are a bit inexperienced in politics to be a front bencher already?"

"It just shows how sensible Humphrey our Party Leader is that he does not work to that kind of shallow thinking."

Whoops! Another journalist offended!

The Party Leader lost a quarter of his Shadow Cabinet in the reshuffle. That could have been a major publicity disaster but instead my appointment gave the press something positive to focus on.

CHAPTER 19: David Wilkins

I am now the managing director of Tad Investments, a company registered in a tax haven. A trust in Monaco, which is really Gerald Edwards, made unsecured loans to Chris Edwards, Annette Edwards, a trust fund for young John Edwards, and to me. We used the money to buy the shares in Tad Investments.

We have seventy million pounds of issued share capital.

Chris Edwards will always own the vast majority of the shares in the company and Chris will earn most of the money from it.

I have a majority of the voting shares.

I also have stock options.

I will own enough and earn enough that by most standards I will be filthy rich.

Chris Edwards will be phenomenally wealthy through inheritance and through my efforts.

The plan is to play with Gerald's family money as a speculating company, and to make a shed load of money from speculating.

As a growing and very profitable company Gerald's company will buy us at a multiple of our value.

When the purchase happens it will be done by an exchange of shares. This operation is sometimes called a reverse takeover.

Gerald's interest in his current company will be transferred to his children totally legitimately, without anyone having to pay tax on the transfer of value.

I will take over the combined company as Chief Executive.

I will float Gerald's stock jobber business. I will float off the advice clients.

Currently I run Tad Investments as an independent speculating business should be run.

The software house that designed the investment "playpen" Gerald's company uses was happy to replicate the playpen for Tad Investments.

I hired an internet marketer to promote the opportunity to people under thirty. I had a few interviews with mainstream media to publicise the project.

At any one time I have about ten thousand people speculating in the playpen.

Those who are consistently successful are offered the opportunity to move to the next level.

On the next level the players have a very restricted group of shares in which to speculate, usually about fifty shares.

After a month or two of successful operation they are offered jobs trading in the same fifty shares with real money, earning a share of the real profits.

We rented an empty office block in New Malden, which is where all operations take place. My first hire was the compliance manager from Gerald's company. I told Mr Havelock that he is the only manager in Gerald's company who has impressed me, so with Gerald's consent I was poaching him.

Although Compliance is not needed in a pure speculating company with no outside clients, the Compliance mentality has its positives.

Mr Havelock is on a significantly improved salary and a profit share capped at twice his new salary. Mr Havelock will not be going anywhere!

Sahid helped me with selecting my software security manager. The applicants had to break through Sahid's outer firewall during a twelve hour time window to learn where and when their job interview would take place.

Only three applicants broke through to be interviewed.

We currently have fifteen people each playing with a million pounds, and three playing with two million pounds. All are profitable. All are earning more money than they have ever earned before.

Our people are well motivated.

Either they perform or they don't. They have profit targets which they meet or they lose their employment.

There is no need for our traders to have a strict time to arrive at work, or a fixed working day. They choose their own hours.

People can only trade from their desk at New Malden. If a person is meeting their targets I do not care whether they are at New Malden for forty hours a week or for only forty minutes a week.

Annette is fine. Annette has a job as an assistant buyer for a London store. Annette's portfolio of purchases is selling well.

Annette also designs clothes, and markets them under another name. There is a lot of interest but so far no sales!

I do most of my managing remotely from home, so I do not waste time travelling to New Malden each day. I pop in to New Malden randomly.

I have time to do a lot of reading. The good stuff I pass to Rebecca Johnson for Rebecca to read when she has time.

Helen and Martin are taking our parents on holiday with them.

Andria is pregnant with her third child. All the family are pleased.

Dennis broke up with his girlfriend Jeanette.

Dennis is solo at the moment.

Peter is not in a relationship so far as I am aware.

Peter is making a lot of advertisements with Olivia Hudson. Peter and Olivia are having a lot of fun.

I see Peter's advertisements on television sometimes.

Janine is still happy in "Terrible Tykes". She will be in the "Terrible Tykes" Christmas Special again. This will be Janine's last season because Janine is maturing physically. Emotionally and intellectually Janine is already pretty developed.

Annette's brother Chris met Karen Byram at Rebecca Johnson's housewarming party. Two really nice people! They have dinner with us sometimes. I cook because I am a better chef than Annette and because I have more time.

CHAPTER 20: Charlotte Johnson

The end of my missionary service is nearly in sight.

Two million people have attended or viewed our concerts.

One thousand eight hundred people have performed before enormous audiences. Some people who have musical talent have had a level of exposure that one can normally only dream of.

The Mormon leaders are hugely pleased with our concerts.

Mormons have fun!

Mormons are not boring!

Mormons are known for our music and for our generosity of spirit.

Our Relief Fund has impressed non-Mormons.

Mercy left me after five months to go to other missionary service. The next partners Fay and then Alexandra have worked with me. My current partner is a fantastic guitarist and singer called Jesse.

I am physically fit like I have never been before.

The experience of working with choreographers and lighting and sound technicians has raised my level of knowledge and my understanding of what is possible.

On my Tuesdays off I have been writing hymns and pop songs. I have almost enough material for a CD/DVD.

Clothes were provided mainly by the Daars and by students at Brigham Young University.

Although I have the body to do it, I have not seen the need to show huge amounts of bare skin.

There has been huge press and television coverage of the concert tour. The media know that I could make millions of dollars by making a commercial tour but I am doing all of this for free.

I tell them that I am Called by The Lord for this service and that I am pleased to serve The Lord in this way.

I was interested to see that some magazines say that I am a model to young performers.

George Smith from Idaho is now engaged to a musician we met in Florida. Serena is a really good person. I wish them well.

I know that my sister Rebecca was elected as a Labour MP but I have no idea what she has been doing.

Mark is some kind of international representative for the Byrams Group. Mark even saw one of my concerts!

What will I do when I get back?

Take a week off to see the family and then meet with Tom Driburg to decide what to do next.

I do not want to tour for a while.

I keep bumping into people who met Mark when he was in the United States. There is a really nice guy called Mark Walker who was Mark's missionary partner. After my missionary service ends, and I have the time to be romantic, I really would like to see Mark Walker again.

Al Way has been a rock. He is such a nice guy.

When I work in the USA again I will ask Tom Driburg to engage AI again.

A few journalists have asked me to comment on politics and events in the United States. When I said that I thought the Commandment "Thou shalt not kill" was more important than the Second Amendment (the right to bear arms) there was a storm of excitement. George Smith told me that the Mormon Elders are not cross with me for what I said, but they want me to keep out of politics.

Since then I have smiled sweetly and I have told the journalists that I have been told not to comment on American politics.

CHAPTER 21: Kevin Hanson

The Byram Group is still expanding. Mark Johnson added a wireworks and a company that makes wire fencing.

With the cement works and the sand quarry in Spain, and cheap power from solar energy, Karen Byram has set up a company in Spain that makes concrete blocks, concrete fencing posts, concrete roof components and whatever. They sell in Spain but mainly they are shipped in containers to Liverpool for sale by the builder's merchant chain.

Chester Wilson had a very bright idea. There are industries that we have identified as logical for the Byram Group to enter. We do not wish to enter an industry from scratch but we wish to take an existing business and to grow it.

Chester identified ten companies in each industry that might be appropriate to purchase. Chester prioritised the companies for us. Financial weakness or other issues that we could resolve were part of Chester's criteria.

Our Managing Director Robert Iredale then wrote to the first five companies in each category a letter setting out our criteria for purchase, and enclosing an information pack about the Byram Group.

Robert found a taker or two in each industry

We now have a company that develops industrial estates, another that builds houses, and a specialist company that turns disused mills and factories into flats for sale or for let.

In each case their problem was that they wished to expand their land bank and their volume of operations but they could not raise the capital.

The joy of these purchases is that we have kept on the management teams.

There are savings for the acquired companies on the cost of borrowing money, the cost of raw materials, and the cost of transport. There are payroll and central services savings.

They have access to Sahid Daar's marketing skills.

Some of the surplus managers now help in our other operations.

We have a quarterly management away day that all the management teams of all the companies attend. All Byrams managers at least know each other by sight!

Cecil still has money flowing in faster than he can use it. Cecil says that this is better than the alternative!

Our representative in the Americas Jesus Montales, our representative in China and the Far East Karl Styles, and our Ghana manager John Addo all met at a quarterly away day.

It turned out that all three of them want Byrams to manufacture a heavy duty small tractor that is robust and easy to maintain. They say that if we can sell it for £1,250 it will sweep the market. We will have economies of scale from the outset.

The product will establish the Byram brand in these growing markets.

The three of them approached Mark together.

Mark and Cecil have agreed to fund a design team. This is all top secret of course.

I used to work directly to Mark, and Gerald Styles used to be my assistant.

So I know.

Mark's assistant Dick Shepherd is looking for a site for the factory. It needs to be near a port as almost all production will be exported. We need an area with a heavy engineering tradition.

Middlesbrough is the front runner at the moment, with Redcar as an alternate. Dick is still trying to attract jobs to his home city of Liverpool but he knows that there are not any large sites available in the Liverpool area.

We need an engine manufacturing company and a pump manufacturing company to contribute to the tractor project. Mark is looking urgently.

CHAPTER 22: Rebecca Johnson

I sat down with Alan Roe.

The general view of Alan Roe MP is that he is a total shit. I know that Alan invented "Little Miss Congeniality" as my nickname.

That got shortened to "Little Miss".

"So, Alan, why has "Little Miss" asked for you to become my Parliamentary Private Secretary?"

Alan looked a little embarrassed.

"I don't know."

"Well, Alan, you are an Oxford graduate."

"Yes."

"So I will keep this simple."

Alan smiled appreciatively.

"As Miss Sweetness and Light I do not wish to be nasty and unpleasant.

"But it is useful if a sweet and lovely person like me carries a big stick.

"You are the big stick."

Alan nodded.

Alan was pleased to be respected.

"You are very good at making up jokes and nicknames."

Alan looked at me warily.

"From now on you only make up jokes and nicknames about members of other parties. You do not target Labour Party members."

Alan looked surprised.

"I do not need for you to make enemies in the Party for me, or in the Parliamentary Labour Party."

Alan nodded.

"The thing is, Alan, I should not be in the Shadow Cabinet. I am too young and I am too inexperienced."

Alan raised his eyebrows.

"Whatever the media say, I am not going to become Party Leader next year or the year after."

Alan nodded.

"I could be the MP for my safe seat for the next fifty years."

Alan looked me in the eyes for a while, and he nodded.

"If I am half way competent I could stay in the Shadow Cabinet or in the Cabinet until I am sixty or so."

Alan looked at me without comment.

"I am told that what tends to happen to people like me is that I rise to be in the top half dozen of the Shadow Cabinet or the Cabinet.

"And I stay there forever.

"No-one takes me on because I am competent and well liked and because I have a vicious attack dog held on a short leash."

Alan nodded.

"So part of your personality, the vicious shit, is still there.

"But it is directed outwards."

Alan looked at me without speaking.

"I am told that you are a talented political analyst."

Alan nodded slowly.

"I want that strand of your personality, too.

"I want to know what our side are saying about me, what the other side are saying about me, and what the other side are saying about each other."

Alan was fine with this.

"I am told that you are a sharp political operator."

Alan did not speak.

"I am not a very good political operator.

"I need you to spell out to me the things that most other politicians took in with their mothers' milk.

"Any comments or questions yet?"

Alan thought, started to speak, and then shook his head.

"Go on."

Alan asked,

"What do you wish to achieve?"

"I don't know yet. A year ago I had no idea I would become a Labour MP. A month ago I had no inkling that I might be in the Shadow Cabinet today.

"Everything is moving too fast.

"I want to do the best I can for our people, the people who Labour represent.

"I am in a safe seat.

"I have no great ambition for myself.

"So really everything is open."

"If you do not know what you want, you probably will get nowhere.

"I can't guide you if you have no idea what you are after."

"Honestly, Alan, that is fine.

"I want you to help me avoid making mistakes.

"I need to get my head round Agriculture. That will involve lots of trips out, and photo opportunities.

"In the meantime I would like you to make a list of all past Labour Agriculture Ministers and spokespeople. I want to meet with as many of them as possible as soon as possible.

"Particularly the sharp ones.

"I need information on our agriculture policy.

"Is there an Agricultural Workers trade union?"

"Unite The Union.

"The Agricultural Workers Union merged with the Transport and General Workers Union which later joined with Amicus to form Unite The Union.

"They are the largest trade union in Britain.

"It would be a good idea to make friends with them.

"I will see to it.

"I know you will not like me saying this, but I am no good to you if I only tell you what you want to hear."

I had no idea what was coming.

"Secure your base.

"Make sure you have a reasonable relationship with every Labour Party activist in your constituency, and preferably with every member.

So that is "thank you" letters after every election, Christmas cards every Christmas, birthday cards to everyone whose birthday you know.

"Go to every branch at least once a year, whether it be attending a meeting or a social.

"Have tea meetings with your elderly members twice a year.

"Meet the new members.

"Send members a quarterly email or letter reporting on your doings.

"Be seen to help in the Council elections even if you do only one or two canvassing sessions.

"Make sure you are close to your Constituency Executive.

"Do not employ your Constituency Officers as your paid staff. From time to time the Executive needs to speak to you frankly. They can't do that if you are also their boss in their day jobs.

"Then in the constituency visit all the old people's homes, all the high schools, all the large employers.

"Be seen to shop in your local high street rather than the supermarket. Hold advice sessions at the supermarket if they will let you.

"Take the time to listen when people want to tell you things! Don't just fob them off!

"Put out an Annual Report with lots of photos reporting on your activities.

"Make sure your Annual Report purely by coincidence has photos of you with every councillor or council candidate who is up for election this year. They will make sure that your report gets distributed in their wards.

"Take teenagers and school trips to Westminster

"Build a red hot political organisation and an electoral organisation that people are in awe of.

"Take two dozen of your gang into other constituencies to help at General Election time and you will create political friends for life!

"You want to create a situation where everyone knows that political activity against you in Groatpie or against Labour in Groatpie is a waste of time.

"So the Greens or UKIP or whoever will decide not to attack Groatpie but they will go to some other area or constituency.

"Once you have all that sorted, then you can think about building your future!"

What Alan said was so obvious that I felt stupid when he said it.

Alan is right!

My first Shadow Cabinet meeting was weird. I have attended many management meetings at the Byrams Group, so of course I judged the first Shadow Cabinet meeting by those standards.

Dire!

Byram's management meetings are very well organised.

There are full scale half day long presentations by each business at least annually.

At each meeting each manager or team in turn gives a brief presentation on where they are with their various plans.

All the managers understand what issues there are in each subsidiary, so the monthly updates build upon what everyone already knows.

Byrams has these "report" sessions, followed by in depth presentations on issues that may affect the entire group or large parts of it. As the Catering Manager most of what was going on was not really relevant to me, but I knew what the issues within the Byram Group were, and what the principal subsidiaries were doing and planning.

I knew for instance the Group's policies should the recession worsen or should the recession ease. I knew why Cecil did not wish to invest in Northern Ireland.

The first Shadow Cabinet meeting was so bad, so undirected, that I did not speak. It was more like a mothers' meeting at a school gate than like a management meeting.

Afterwards Vlad asked me what I thought of the meeting.

I was so cross that I told Vlad exactly what I thought.

The following day I was called to see Vlad.

Humphrey the Party Leader was there.

I decided that if I was going to be sacked it did not matter.

I told them what I thought.

The following day I had a message from Humphrey's office saying that I was to visit his House of Commons office in the afternoon.

Humphrey does his own sackings.

I assumed I was going to be sacked at this meeting.

I was slightly surprised to see not only Humphrey but Vlad and Derek as well. Derek is the General Secretary of the Labour Party.

For the third time I explained what had been wrong with the Shadow Cabinet meeting. I explained how I thought the meetings should be structured and what should be being discussed.

The three men looked at each other, and nodded.

I had thought I was about to set the record for the shortest ever membership of the Shadow Cabinet. I thought I was going to be sacked.

Humphrey said,

"Rebecca, I want to thank you for your honesty.

"I want to thank you for your integrity.

"You have identified a huge set of problems.

"It is our responsibility to solve these problems."

I have been given an important new role.

I am "Agenda Secretary" for the Shadow Cabinet. I must plan and prepare a program of meetings over the term of the current Parliament, similar to the management meetings that Byrams has.

The National Executive of the Labour Party is technically run by the General Secretary. Derek appointed me as unpaid agenda assistant.

I now write the agendas for the National Executive of the Labour Party and for the Shadow Cabinet!

Alan Roe was in ecstasies when I told him.

Alan explained that I have singlehandedly done more for the competent management of the Labour Party than any individual in the last twenty years!

It has certainly helped my career!

As Alan travels on my coat tails, Alan's career is helped, too.

CHAPTER 23: Linda Donkin

My mum Deborah and her mum are happy to be together again.

I can't say that they are always sweetness and light but most of the time they are pretty good.

Grandma owns her house without any mortgage. Grandma has some pensions to live on, so Grandma is all right financially.

Mum earns more money from being a chaperone to Derek and Georgina every week (and Colin sometimes) than Mum ever received from Social Security, so Mum is happy.

Derek and Colin are both wealthy so their trust funds support the family. Georgina also contributes, because Georgina is an actor in "Terrible Tykes" and Georgina also has income from the "Terrible Tykes" supermarket deal. Derek and Colin each pay two fifths and Georgina pays only one fifth.

My fees at the Cordon Bleu College are paid for by the Sal Hewson Memorial Trust. The Trust also pays my living expenses and board.

I have male friends, some of whom are sometimes boyfriends.

I am not getting heavily involved with any of them because so far none of them have impressed me to the point where I am willing to sacrifice my career.

I am in the top five of my year group at the Cordon Bleu College but I have to work hard to stay there.

Tohur Miah has a couple of walls of cookery books that I may use as a reference library.

Tohur is away at an Olympics training camp at the moment.

I always have to check that Sahid Daar is at home or will be at home to let me in. Chester Wilson is there sometimes, but normally not during the day.

London is a great place because there are so many interesting people here. There are some weirdoes as well but you learn how to avoid them.

I work in a restaurant on Friday night and Saturdays, earning money and gaining experience.

Derek's agent Mr Driburg is in conversations with a range of television and film producers about work for Derek in addition to his current leading role in a school based drama.

One of the possible roles is a series where Derek is a boy living wild on the streets and having all sorts of horrible experiences. It is adult drama and the programs would only be shown after nine at night.

Colin is being selected for a few acting parts, but Colin's character usually gets killed in the first ten minutes. Again, this is adult television.

Colin and Derek can afford not to work, but they enjoy acting and they are grasping their opportunities.

The boys are still filming for the Muslim Children in Care podcasts, which are now repeated on a generic Islamic web site run by Sahid Daar. Sahid says that thousands of Americans view the podcasts.

Derek does not have a girlfriend but Derek spends a lot of time with a girl called Mary who attends the same theatre school. Mary is still waiting for her opportunity to shine.

Colin is still slightly wild.

Tom Driburg roasts Colin once a month because Tom is terrified that Colin will do something stupid.

Sahid Daar has a girlfriend that his family do not know about. I bumped into her at Tohur's house once.

Sahid was very upset because his family would be down on Sahid like a ton of bricks if they knew that Sahid was seeing an Ahmadi girlfriend.

I am not a Muslim so I had absolutely no idea what an Ahmadi is. Sahid had to explain it all to me.

The Ahmadis are a sect that says that they are Muslims when all the other Muslims say that they are not.

The Ahmadis have split into two sects one of which says that its sect is the only true Muslims and that absolutely everyone else is not Muslim. You can imagine how popular that makes them!

It all sounds like a can of worms to me!

I will keep Sahid's secret.

I love the advertisements that Peter Wilkins is in. They are so sharp and so amusing!

Olivia Hudson and Peter are so young that there cannot be any suggestion of sexual contact, not even a kiss.

When the two of them plaited dough together this totally innocent activity took on an erotic content that would have been barred before the watershed.

The sexual tension in these ads is all in the viewer's mind.

But golly is it there!

The Daars have me modelling for them sometimes. Freda Graham and I model the adult dresses.

My little sister Annie and Freda's little sister Jenny model the Daar bridesmaid and ballroom dancing dresses. It is a lot of fun, and a good earner!

We are looking forward to the Hewson summer camp this year. Tohur Miah will be at the Olympics in Brazil. Charlotte Johnson will not be back from America. Ali Miah and Shakoora Daar will be in Dubai. Helen and Andria Wilkins have very young children. I don't think Rebecca Johnson will be there. Apart from that I think we will all be there

Dennis Wilkins has asked me to lead the catering this year. Fulesa Miah and Colin Donkin are going to help me with the halal food. Lionel Sachs has told me that his family should be counted as "Islamic and vegetarian" for planning purposes. Freda Graham is going to lead on salads and puddings.

Karen Byram's boyfriend Chris Edwards, who is also David Wilkin's girlfriend's brother, has bought an estate near Hereford which has hundreds of acres of land and woodland. Chris is letting us camp there for free.

Chris says that because he is intending to have a camp site there permanently he will install a cookhouse and a covered dining area. Chris has ordered a toilet block and a showers hut which will be delivered before we arrive.

What a nice guy!

We are all invited to Rebecca Johnson's wedding in Tryton in September. For the actual marriage service we will be excluded because only Mormons may attend that part, but we will all be at the Reception.

Catering will be by Dennis and Peter Wilkins, Jennifer Wilbey, Don and Max Hewson, and Robert and Freda Graham. The Daars will bring halal food.

Nigel Williams is now a Community Support Officer, often called a plastic policeman, so Nigel will not know if he can attend the wedding until Nigel sees his shift pattern for September. Nigel was going to go to University but Nigel decided he did not want to take on a huge amount of debt. As a Community Support Officer Nigel can become a policeman and then study for a degree with the police paying the university fees.

CHAPTER 24: Emma Hewson

I am saddened for Damien that Damien has not been recruited for “Terrible Tykes”.

We had hoped that Damien would be selected because Damien is such a good singer and musician. Damien is obviously disappointed, but Damien is resilient.

Damien intends to improve his singing and music skills further and “kick his way in” when “Terrible Tykes” recruits again next year.

I blame Don for that language!

I credit Don for Damien’s resilience and determination.

Alice is doing fine on “Terrible Tykes”.

Arthur and Kate are happy youngsters. They enjoy the nursery school. They have lots of friends.

Don gave Max the hard word. It is good that Max is scoring “A” and “B” on everything, but Max is capable of “A+” and “A”.

For entrance to a good university Max needs to show he is an A+ student. Max has his language GCSEs this summer so Max must crack on with those subjects.

Bless him, Max is buckling down to his school work.

Max even goes into the theatre school language lab on Saturdays. Miss Addie teaches dancing classes all day on Saturday so she lets Max in and she locks up when Max wishes to leave. Miss Addie says that whenever she looks into the language lab through a corridor window Max is always on task.

At Easter Max will spend a week with Ali Miah and Shakoora Daar in Bahrain, with the intent that Max will speak Arabic for a week.

Max still parties on Sunday afternoons!

I am fairly sure that there is no young lady in Max’s life.

I think Max still has a tendresse for Michelle Sayer in Staines. Michelle is coming to the Hewson summer camp.

The pop group that Max and his friends were going to set up has hit a problem. All the musicians are just too busy!

Robert Graham is preparing for covering Tohur Miah’s television cookery program for three months while Tohur is at the Olympics. Robert has ten GCSE exams this summer.

Gerald Butler is writing his first symphony and Gerald is preparing to sit ten GCSEs.

Max is working on his four language GCSEs.

Peter Wilkins has two language GCSE exams forthcoming. Peter is booked to make more advertisements for sanitary towels.

Peter has significant romantic interests. The three young ladies all know about each other, so Peter is not in any way being dishonest. Peter’s love life is time consuming!

Don is not sure what to do with himself when the children are at nursery school. He often visits Helen Wilkins and Andria Wilkins to see their little ones. Don visits Sister Sally once a week to keep up with news from the Johnson family.

Our theatre school is amazingly profitable.

We keep finding ways to lower the fees, but that always leads to a freshet of new students and yet more income!

I am on a junior school Head Teacher salary plus profit share so I have a very good income.

I bank or I invest virtually all of my income.

Don’s capital costs for setting up and expanding the school are long since repaid.

Don is talking about possibly creating scholarships or bursaries to our theatre school.

Sally Johnson entered the zone where Sally needed to be inducted into her financial situation.

Sally is normally sweet and calm and sensible.

Sally threw a raging paddy when Sally learned that Don is not tithing for the Mormons as Sally had thought the situation to be.

It took Mark Johnson to deal with Sally and to get Sally to understand that the "Sally B" account that Don runs for Sally is acceptable to the Mormons. Mark and Bishop Singleton approved the "Sally B" account when it was set up.

When Sally turns eighteen her accumulated "tithings", and earnings upon the tithings, can be given to the Mormons if Sally is still a keen Mormon then.

After about a week Sally came to Don and Sally apologised for her tantrums.

Janine Wilkins is by contrast tremendously calm. Don described Janine as like a calculating machine.

Don thinks Janine must have had briefings from her brother David because some of the questions Janine asked were more like an accountant would ask than what one would expect from a very young teenage girl.

Georgina Donkin is much like her brothers. Georgina had a lot of difficulty in understanding that Georgina is rich beyond the dreams of most girls. Georgina will never have to work.

Fulesa Miah is so laid back about her wealth that I am worried for her.

Fulesa perceives herself as a custodian of her wealth rather than as the owner of it. Fulesa explained that Allah has given this opportunity to Fulesa for a purpose. Fulesa has to try to work out what Allah wishes Fulesa to do.

All four girls have to decide what they will do with their lives.

All four girls understand that Tom Driburg as their agent has earned them enormous amounts of money.

There is all hell on because a "Terrible Tyke" who goes to a London theatre school has discovered that she has been betrayed. It seems that the girl's father used her earnings to invest in risky share derivative dealings that have gone terribly wrong. In consequence the child owes millions of pounds that it is unlikely she can ever repay.

Tom Driburg now pays all the child's earnings into a High Court bank account while all this excitement is going on. The Official Solicitor is involved to protect the child as the parents are compromised.

We are not involved, thank goodness.

There has been a significant shakeup in the Daar family.

The clothing cooperative was originally set up by Shakoora Daar, Amina Daar, and Mina Daar.

Shakoora has had to step out from active participation because Shakoora's marriage has taken her abroad and Shakoora has since started a family.

Amina went to Bahrain to help with the birth of Shakoora's first baby.

This left Mina in charge.

Mina enjoyed being in charge.

When Amina returned from Bahrain Mina said to Amina that if Amina wishes to live in Los Angeles with Abdul Amina may do that.

Amina thought on this for two weeks and then Amina decided that she would go to Los Angeles after the wedding.

There is no way that Amina is going to become a chef in Abdul's family restaurant. Amina is going to make dresses for movie stars!

Once Amina decided to go to America Mina took charge. Amina is now Mina's assistant. Mina is going to leave College in the summer and thereafter Mina will concentrate on the Daar clothing business.

Abdullah Daar will join the Mosque Committee for his local mosque after his exams.

Sahid is having a good time in London. He enjoys University.

Sahid is still a marketing consultant to the Byrams Group, and Sahid has a number of small projects he works on.

Jabril helps Sahid with some projects.

Kali and Fosia are doing well at the Bradford Girls Grammar School

Amal is still dancing!

The Thorntons are all happy and well.

Sally Thornton's interest in Gerald Butler has cooled. That is fine by me.

Rupert loves Repton School.

Don and I are fine.

CHAPTER 25: Mark Johnson

I feel incredibly stupid.

I have been fretting about a possible relationship between my youngest sister Sally and the handsome and talented Gerald Butler. I was worried that Sally might compromise her good name in the Mormon community by having a relationship when in Mormon eyes Sally is far too young.

Sally has explained to me that Gerald is not interested in girls.

And before I make assumptions Gerald is not interested in boys either!

Gerald is just not interested in sex or in relationships. Gerald has his head down composing and playing music, and that is all that Gerald is interested in.

Sally said that when a young man has his head down and he is obsessed with what he is doing it is just impossible for a girl to gain his attention short of hitting him.

Like me!

What?

Sally asked me if I know why after virtually every Mormon event I end up having to give a girl or young woman a lift home?

I never have to give males a lift home.

It is always females.

Do I know why?

Sally is right. I am always having to give girls a lift home.

So why?

"Because numbskull it is the only way a girl can have any of your time or any of your attention!

"You are so wrapped up in your Call or your day job you never have any interest in these Mormon girls!

"They need a lift home so they can have some private time with you in hopes of gaining your attention!"

Oh!

Well that is interesting!

I will think on that.

"Mark, have you kissed any girls since Karen Byram?"

I thought about that.

It took quite a while.

“No.”

“Are you ever going to kiss a girl?”

“Yes.”

“This year?”

I stopped to think.

“I don’t know.”

Sally stamped her foot.

“Mark.

“You are good looking. You are a really nice guy.

“Girls drool over you and you don’t even notice!”

“Oh.

“Why are you concerned?”

“Because the girls telephone for you and half the time I answer the calls.

“They are crying on the telephone because they gave you their telephone numbers and you never telephone them.”

I thought about that. Since I came back from my missionary service about twenty-five girls have given me their telephone numbers.

I did not realise they wanted me to telephone them.

Whoops!

That has given me something to think about.

Not telephoning these girls is bad manners.

And stupid!

Sister Sally laughed when I raised the question with her that night.

“Oh, Mark!

“I answer the telephone calls that Sally does not answer.

“I just tell them you are out.

“I tell them I will tell you that they telephoned. Then I leave a note on your pillow if I remember.

“It seems to me that if you wanted to telephone these girls you would.

“If you do not wish to telephone them then don’t.

“Five years from now, or whenever you decide to make time in your life for young women, there will still be young women about.

“Follow your star for now.

“When you are interested in young ladies there will be no shortage of young ladies interested in you.”

So that has been something to think about!

With my Calls I am working all hours. I have a lot on my plate.

When I meet a young woman I wish to spend time with I will, but so far there has been no-one who seems so wonderful that I must make time for her.

I am much more excited about my latest projects.

I was in South America with our Americas agent Jesus Montales. It took us all day to get from one town to another town only forty miles away. There is a mountain range between the two towns and no direct road.

The roads along both valleys were narrow, twisting, and badly maintained. If we met a vehicle coming in the other direction one vehicle had to back up.

Backing up a car around hairpin bends is terrifying. Reversing a lorry must be even worse.

That night after dinner Jesus said that if I wish to build a dirigible or an air ship to use as a bus or freight service between towns in South America then Jesus is all for it.

Jesus and I are both Mormons, so neither of us had been drinking wine or beer.

After a silence Jesus laughed.

“Earth to Mark.

“Are you still in contact?”

“What?”

“You have been sat in a trance for the last fifteen minutes.”

“Sorry, Jesus.

“I have been thinking about your idea.

“I was thinking that in many parts of the world there is a transportation problem.

“If we could build an air ship that could carry one container from A to B, then drop off that container and move a second container from B to C, and so forth, we could offer a daily or twice daily freight service.

“Or three times weekly or whatever.”

Jesus said,

“Would Cecil Byram play?”

“I have not thought about that.

“My first question is whether it will work.”

I sent an email to Dick Shepherd my general assistant. I said it was “hush hush” but if we were to build these air ships in quantity what kind of costs would there be?

I authorised Dick to use a consultant. I want the answers when I return to England in four days, or soon after.

The tractors project is still being developed. We have bought an engine company and a pump manufacturer. We are not going to buy a tires company although we would if one were available fairly cheaply. We now have in the Byram Group all the skills we need to build tractors.

The current holdup is the detailed designs for an idiot proof simple small tractor that is easy to maintain. The designs have been promised for the end of next month. Dick Shepherd telephones the design team every second day to make sure the team understands that the deadline is a deadline and is not an optional target.

We bought a property in Middlesbrough in which to manufacture the tractors. It is being fitted out with Computer Assisted Manufacturing tools at the moment.

We will slot the detailed designs into the machine tools and hopefully we will begin production within days.

Training the workers starts in six weeks.

Jesus was saying that a lot of the cheap Chinese hand tools imported into South America look nice, but as soon as you try to use them they bend or break. The Chinese tools have put many traditional tool manufacturers out of business.

If Byrams could produce heavy strong hand tools even at a higher price than the Chinese goods we would sweep the market.

I know that we have all the technology we need to do this.

I will put it to Cecil.

I have booked to see Charlotte’s New York concert, and then I go home.

Jesus has agreed that if Byrams will provide him with a web site Jesus will have it translated into Spanish and Portuguese. The idea is that it will be a trilingual web site serving South America, Central America, and Mexico. I will ask Sahid Daar to help with that.

CHAPTER 26: Ali Miah

Baby Fatima is a total delight!

Shakoora has persuaded me that changing Fatima's nappy is a life skill that will always be useful.

We have a resident nanny who does most of the nappy changing, but she has a day off each week when Shakoora and I have to look after our own baby.

I do not think it is a coincidence that the nanny's day off is Friday, which is the day that I promised Shakoora that I would spend with Shakoora each week.

As a wise husband I pretend that that thought has never occurred to me.

We have a fair amount of privacy on Friday because the maid leaves us at ten and the chef does not arrive until five in the afternoon.

The Crown Prince's wife visits twice a week, but never on Fridays.

Sometimes Princess Fatima comes with the Crown Prince's wife.

The islands project is on track. There are no excitements or delays or problems other than what you would expect on a project of this size.

I have learned to use my engineers to run the project rather than having me try to run all of it.

On Bahrain's National Day Shakoora and Fatima and I will all be declared Citizens of Bahrain by special decree. This is a rare honour, but the decision to honour us is popular all across Bahrain.

The "Fountains of Khatija" concept has met with great support across the Islamic world. The media are generally supportive.

In countries that permit opinion polls, opinion polls show about sixty per cent support, with only ten per cent against.

The holy and wise guardians of Holy Mecca feel, with some justification, that they are being bounced into a decision.

As the Crown Prince predicted, the holy and wise guardians have jumped upon the alternative name "Genghis's Fountains" with hobnailed boots.

Of course, once you are arguing about the name of a structure you have implicitly conceded that the structure will be built.

The Crown Prince could give master classes in political manipulation!

In his line of work these skills are essential.

I am due to visit Holy Mecca next week to formally put the "Fountains of Khatija" concept to the holy and wise guardians of Holy Mecca.

The Crown Prince has told me that I will not have a decision the same day. The guardian committee will need to discuss and pray and reflect on the question. That will take the guardians a few weeks at least.

My brother Tohur is in Brazil now acclimatising before the Olympics.

Tohur is in good spirits. Tohur says that the competition in judo is very strong. If Tohur finishes in the final eight, Tohur will be delighted.

My sister Fulesa has now had Don Hewson's explanation of Fulesa's personal finances.

Fulesa was pleased to learn that all her investments are in businesses that a Muslim may properly invest in. Fulesa is also pleased that Don has spread the money over a number of investments.

Fulesa has no idea what she will do with her life.

Fulesa is too old for "Terrible Tykes".

Should Fulesa ask Mr Driburg to help her build a career now she has left "Terrible Tykes"?

I said that if Fulesa wishes to make a career in drama and entertainment that is fine. If instead Fulesa wishes to have a quiet life then that is Fulesa's choice.

Moklisur and Monika are growing up well. The switch to the theatre school has been good for them. They are mixing with hard working well behaved children who are preparing themselves for careers in entertainment.

Moklisur and Monika have had to raise their standards, which is no bad thing.

I was invited to dinner with Doctor Hank, who works as a cultural attaché at the American Embassy in Bahrain.

Hank explained that contrary to my suspicions Hank does not run America's spies in Bahrain. The Americans do not have any spies in Bahrain.

I thought it possible that Hank was not being totally truthful with me.

Hank explained that Hank's role is to try to understand the politics and personalities of Bahrain.

Specifically Hank wishes to understand the process by which I have become the Site Engineer for Holy Mecca and what that means within the politics of the Muslim world.

Hank also wanted briefing on "Genghis's Fountains".

I explained to Hank that I am the last person to ask about politics. Any of the cats in the Crown Prince's palace has more understanding of politics than I have.

I said to Hank that Hank would do better to ask the Crown Prince.

Hank said that Hank has already asked his Ambassador to ask the Crown Prince to explain all!

Hank said the file that the Americans keep on me requires Hank to generate quarterly reports on me.

Hank knows about the baby.

I assured Hank that little Fatima is well.

Hank said that he understands that I am visiting England in September?

I said that Shakoora's sister is marrying an American in September. We are going to the wedding.

I will be in England briefly again in November.

I am giving a lecture in the Cambridge University Engineering Department about the Bahrain project. Then the following day I will give a talk to the Cambridge University Islamic Society about the "Fountains of Khatija".

Hank raised that since he last saw me I have given contracts to a British firm for huge amounts of steel and bricks without giving any American firms the opportunity to bid for the contract. Is there a reason for this?

I told Hank that Mark Johnson and I used to share a room at Mr Hewson's house. Mark and I are great mates. So Mark got the contract.

So far as I am aware Mark's employer does not make anything else that the Bahrain project needs.

Hank was happier after that.

Max Hewson spent a week with us. Max has an examination in Arabic in a few weeks so Max wanted to improve his spoken Arabic.

I put Max with a young man who has limited English. I told Javed to pretend that he has no English.

I told Javed that Max will lose marks in his exam if Max uses crude or foul language, so the young man has to make sure that no-one teaches Max rude words.

CHAPTER 27: Max Hewson

I have been working really hard on Modern Arabic. In less than two years I have gone from Zero to being ready to sit a GCSE examination.

Ali Miah and Shakoora Daar are two of my favourite people. They live in Bahrain. It was easy to wangle an invitation.

Don paid the fares and Don has given me more money than I have ever held in my life as “expenses”.

The only condition is that I must speak Arabic all the time. But that is why I am here!

Meldon is a nice little town, with the emphasis on “little”.

Bahrain is a country and the capital is amazing for shopping!

I was in a computer games store, looking for a computer game to buy for my sister Alice and another for my half-brother Dan Wilbey.

The assistant spoke to me in English.

I explained to him, in Arabic, that I am under strict orders from my father only to speak Arabic while I am in Bahrain.

The assistant smiled.

I explained in Arabic what I was looking for. I do not want battle games. I am looking for strategy games. One is for a girl, and one for a boy.

I noticed one of the other customers looking at me.

In England I quite often have people looking at me, trying to decide if I am a child actor who used to be with “Terrible Tykes”. I was surprised that this should happen in Bahrain, but maybe the young man has been in England at some point.

The young man watched me as I moved around the store.

I am blond and good looking and fit. I always look good. I am used to girls watching me for a while before finding an excuse to speak to me.

I felt that this guy was going to speak to me.

I was a lot less enthusiastic about that!

I am not against gays, but I have no interest in kissing a bloke.

I have no interest in doing anything sexual with a bloke.

The guy was wearing pretty good clothing. He is not from a poor family.

He started by talking to Javed my escort.

Javed nodded and the young man came over to me.

We spoke in Arabic.

“Forgive me.

“Were you an actor in a television program in England? About a group of musical children?”

“Yes.”

“And you speak Arabic?”

“I do not speak Arabic properly. I am in Bahrain to improve my Arabic before I sit an Arabic examination.”

“My father is an executive with Bahrain TV.

“Dad was saying over dinner last night that he needs a young actor. He needs a young man who is obviously English or perhaps German who has acting experience and who speaks good Arabic. It would be good if the young man is a musician and singer.

“And now I see you.

“Your Arabic is good enough for us. Your Arabic does not need to be perfect. In fact it is better if your Arabic is not perfect.

"I must speak to my father about you.

"If my father wishes to contact you, do you have a telephone number where you can be reached?"

Javed gave the young man Javed's mobile telephone number.

I gave the young man the web site for "Terrible Tykes" and for the fan club that Sahid Daar runs for us.

About two hours later Javed's mobile telephone rang.

Javed and I agreed to come to the offices of Bahrain TV to talk to the young man's father.

Kamran Hussain is very much like Mark Johnson's boss Cecil Byram. Kamran Hussain is completely clear headed, and even more intelligent than he seems.

Some Arabs have sad eyes but Mr Hussain has shiny bright eyes.

Mr Hussain spoke to me in Arabic

"I have looked at both the web sites you gave my son.

"But you left the program a few years ago. What are you doing now?"

I told Mr Hussain what I am doing in terms of music and study.

Don has booked flying lessons for me as a post examination treat. I will not be allowed to fly solo until I turn sixteen, which is not until August.

"You are younger than I really wanted, but we can give you a moustache or a thin beard to make you look older.

"The film I wish to make is a comedy.

"Your character comes to the Middle East and he thinks he knows it all.

"He does all kinds of stupid things and he gets into all kinds of fixes because he just keeps blundering into things.

"A lot of the humour you may not understand. You would have to know our culture to understand why some of the things that you do or say are funny.

"Would you be willing to do a screen test?"

Mr Hussain was very pleased that I can read Arabic.

Mr Hussain gave me a page of script, and he told me just to read my lines. An assistant will read the other lines.

Reading the script I am sat outside a café.

A very attractive young woman walks by. I see the young woman and my head follows her as she walks past the café. I try to catch her eye but she ignores me.

I ask the guy I am drinking coffee with whether it would be a problem if I spoke to her.

He says that it is perfectly fine for me to speak to her should I see her again. According to this man the young woman has noticed me and she wants me to speak to her.

Even from the little I understand of the Arab world my character's behaviour is already rude, and following the guy's advice would get me into huge trouble.

I played the totally naïve Westerner.

Mr Hussain was entirely happy.

"You are a young man. Is there an adult with whom I should negotiate?"

"I have an agent in England.

"This is his name and his email address.

"This is my email address. Could you email me the full script, please?"

"Certainly.

"Now, about an adult here in Bahrain?"

"I am staying with friends."

I gave him Ali Miah's address and the telephone number of the apartment.

“And this gentleman?” he asked, referring to Javed.

“Javed is my escort. His job is to keep me out of trouble.”

“That is a very expensive address. What do your friends do?”

“My friend is an engineer. He is working on a big project building some islands here in Bahrain.

“So he works with Genghis the Water Giver?”

I said nothing.

Javed said,

“His friend is Genghis the Water Giver!”

Mr Hussain was shaken.

Mr Hussain looked at me differently.

“I am honoured to meet you.

“When Genghis the Water Giver has time to see me I will happily visit him.

“Wherever he wishes.

“I will email you the script.

“When you have read it please let me know when Genghis The Water Giver has time to see me.”

I felt that the relationship with Mr Hussain is massively affected by my relationship with Genghis The Water Giver, known to me as Ali Miah.

I said to Javed that we need to get home because I need to compose an email to my agent.

When I told Shakoora what had happened she smiled. Ali Miah is very highly respected in Bahrain, and so is anyone associated with him.

It took me an hour to compose my email to Mr Driburg. I sent a copy of the email to Don, too.

A few hours later the script arrived. I decided to read it in the morning.

I agreed that Shakoora could read it while Shakoora waited up for Ali to return from work.

In the morning Shakoora told me that the film is hilariously funny.

My character is amazingly crass. All the stupid things that non-Muslim foreigners do are rolled into one film! What also comes over is my total innocence and naivety and lack of intent to offend.

After breakfast I sat down to read the script.

So many things made me wince! No doubt there are other things that I do not recognise as offensive or amusing.

Tom Driburg sent me an interesting email.

Tom said that the film industry in the Middle East is booming. There is a constant demand for Westerner villains who speak Arabic. Once I am established as an Arabic speaking Westerner actor I will become the “baddy” of choice.

Tom sent me a copy of the email he has sent to Kamran Hussain.

Every February all of Mr Driburg’s clients have to update our photographs and our CVs. My CV spells out that I have had martial arts training, that I can swim, and that I can do gymnastics and rope climbing. My dancing, my musical skills, my languages, and my acting experiences are all in the document.

Mr Driburg sent a copy of my CV to Mr Hussain.

Mr Driburg asked me to consider with the Hewsons how my education would continue if as is likely I am to spend much of the next few years working in the Middle East.

We also have to consider a tax efficient model for the future.

I think “a tax efficient model” means “how to legally dodge taxes”.

Ali told me that evening that on Friday morning Kamran Hussain is to visit the apartment. I fly to England the following day.

I spoke to Don and Emma over Skype that night. We decided that I would make no decisions until I return to the United Kingdom. I am still only fifteen years old.

I will be sixteen in a few months.

When Mr Hussain visited he was hugely respectful to all three of Ali, Shakoora and me.

Mr Hussain would like me to keep my hair long.

Mr Hussain said that he has been hugely impressed by my CV.

Mr Hussain presented me with an "oud".

An "oud" is a musical instrument a bit like a guitar but with eleven strings. As soon as my exams are over Mr Hussain would like me to start learning the oud. Mr Hussain will pay for the lessons.

Mr Hussain would like me to sing as I play the "oud". He gave me some traditional Arab love songs and a "woe is me" song. He also gave me CDs upon which these songs have been recorded by various Arab singers.

The Arabs use a different musical notation, so learning that will be a challenge.

Assuming everything can be agreed Mr Hussain would like to film all of my scenes during August.

Ali said that if we wish to film on the islands that Ali is building that would be possible.

Mr Hussain was in ecstasies for meeting Genghis The Water Giver and Mrs Genghis and a very intelligent and talented friend of Genghis (me).

Shakoora said that I may stay with Ali and Shakoora over August.

And so I flew home!

CHAPTER 28: Rebecca Johnson

I could not believe that the leadership of a major political party could be so incredibly disorganised!

Alan Roe and I worked our socks off to produce a program of activity for the National Executive and for the Shadow Cabinet.

Shadow Cabinet solidarity mirrors Cabinet solidarity. We are supposed to support everything our colleagues do or say even if we do not agree with it. Cabinet collective responsibility means that we must not speak against or indicate dissent from decisions made by our colleagues.

It is much the same at Byrams.

Byrams managers support each other. Most of the time we actually agree with or are not against the decisions made. If we have a disagreement with each other we discuss it, but that is rare. One of the reasons for this is that so much is discussed in our monthly management meetings.

Alan Roe and I set up a schedule where once a month a shadow minister spends half a day discussing his or her area of responsibility. The Shadow Chancellor would be first, followed by the shadow Home Secretary, the shadow Foreign Secretary, and so forth. It was intended to be a seminar so we would all understand the basic situation, what had been decided, and what issues are still undecided. Possible contentious issues would be highlighted, with explanations of the pros and cons.

Humphrey the Party Leader was fine with our proposals, but most of my Shadow Cabinet colleagues were not happy. They were used to a situation where they discussed and agreed

policy with Humphrey alone. Exposing these private conversations to a wider audience was unpopular.

As one colleague reminded me, a good third of the Shadow Cabinet think that they should or could become Prime Minister. The temptation to leak these discussions to the media for petty advantage would be overwhelming.

At the first meeting of the Shadow Cabinet I set out my views on how we as an organisation should operate. I also said that leakers should be sacked, whoever they are. I said that if people were sacked for leaking that would show we were a serious group.

Humphrey chairs these Shadow Cabinet meetings but Humphrey seemed in no rush to curb me.

I went round the room asking each person if they were happy that leakers should be sacked or whether they felt that leakers should be allowed to stay with the group.

"Rebecca, of course we all agree with what you say, but it won't work.

"First, it is hard to find out who leaked.

"It is even harder to prove who leaked.

"Things do get out. Things will always get out. That is the reality of modern life."

Vlad spoke.

"If people make sure there is nothing confidential in their briefings, does that reduce the problem?"

I was not happy with this proposal but I had to accept it.

Within hours the first leak was out - that Rebecca Johnson is now running the Shadow Cabinet!

This leak was put to a former Labour Minister on "Question Time" that same night.

"Well thank goodness somebody is!

"Rebecca Johnson has been a manager in industry.

"She is a sharp young woman.

"If Rebecca Johnson can get that show on the road then good luck to her!"

That is the general view in the PLP and in the Labour Party nationally.

As the person who is supposedly running the Shadow Cabinet and the National Executive I am even more popular for meetings.

I am still young enough to be eligible for membership of Young Labour. Not surprisingly I am booked as the keynote speaker at their National Conference.

I am also still a student! I somehow find the time to work on my Open University degree. I am the keynote speaker at the Labour Students Annual Conference as well.

The most surprising invitations are from the National Farmers Union, the Food and Drink Federation, the Pet Food Manufacturers Association and the Scotch Whiskey Association.

Because I am photogenic and interesting, and potentially I am the next Labour Minister for Agriculture and Food, they all wish me to speak.

I have lots of photo opportunities with calves, piglets, chickens, tractors and the like.

I am booked to visit most of the major food markets in London.

I work closely with Vlad and Humphrey to make sure that I am not seen to be a challenge to Humphrey. To my mind that is laughable but some of the media are running a campaign that I should mount a coup against Humphrey.

I was surprised that Humphrey and Vlad are quite comfortable with the media campaign.

Humphrey and Vlad reminded me that any Labour Leader is always under attack. If it was not me who was the front runner to replace Humphrey then someone else would be.

They accept that I am loyal to Humphrey, which makes me feel really proud.

“Rebecca, if Tommy Sutherland reads that he has the support of sixty per cent of the Labour Party membership to replace me, then Tommy is stupid enough to believe that. Tommy might try to challenge me.

“But if Tommy sees that he has twenty per cent support, and that you have forty per cent support, then anything Tommy does against me would probably make you the Party Leader.

“Given that you are so much younger than Tommy, Tommy then has no chance ever to become Leader.

“So Tommy stays loyal, or as loyal as Tommy Sutherland ever can be.”

The National Executive accepted my proposals with almost no amendments.

It is a very strange feeling to be seen as one of the four pillars of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Humphrey is Leader, of course. Vlad is the Chief Whip. Brian is Shadow Chancellor – and me!

Our Deputy Leader Brenda is not a major player for reasons I am not fully aware of.

Alan Roe is like a new man.

For various reasons, some of them honourable, Alan was relatively late arriving at Parliament. Alan was nearly forty when he arrived, which is almost too late for a political career in Parliament.

The then Chief Whip had a down on Alan because of an obscure quarrel within Labour Party politics in Birmingham.

Then Alan’s wife died.

About the only positive thing you can say is that her death was quick. Her liver went cancerous and she died very quickly.

There were no children.

So Alan Roe had no home life, and the then Chief Whip was blocking Alan from everything.

Alan did not hit the bottle, as many men would have done.

Alan became very bitter.

By the time that Chief Whip went, Alan was one of the most unpopular people in Parliament. After eight years in Parliament Alan had nothing to show that he had not wasted his life.

I rescued Alan.

Alan now walks tall, and Alan is respected.

One thing Alan said about me was reported back through Vlad.

“Rebecca Johnson has a mind like a laser surgical scalpel powered by a chain saw.

“She is really rough on sloppy thinking.

“Every session with Rebecca is like an Oxford tutorial where I have not prepared well enough.

“For someone as bright as me an hour with Rebecca Johnson is humbling.

“I write a speech or a document for Rebecca and Rebecca lifts it from what I wrote to a different dimension.

“Rebecca uses the language of ordinary people and Rebecca uses common sense imagery to express what I was trying to say better than I could say it.

“Rebecca’s only weakness is that she is a really nice person.

“That is why she has me as her adviser and Sherpa.”

I spoke to the National Farmers Union Annual Conference. I surprised the audience by saying that as soon as I become the Agriculture Minister I will place all of the Ministry’s contingency plans on the Ministry web site.

“If the contingency plans are good plans, then it helps if everyone knows what the contingency plans are.

“Individuals and businesses can see what the Government will do, and they have the opportunity to make their own contingency preparations that will work with the Government’s plans rather than across them.

“If the plans are bad plans, then let us discuss how to improve the plans before a crisis actually happens.”

There was great applause for that.

“As Minister, the most important plans to me are the plans that are not on the web site because no-one in the Ministry foresees that problem.

“If you farmers tell us about dangers and problems that the Ministry never even thought about that would be hugely useful to the planning process.

“Will we be open to criticism?

“Yes. Why not, if we deserve criticism?”

The audience applauded.

“I would rather that we have all the contingency plans that we need – and that the plans are right!

“Who could possibly object to that?”

The Tory Minister who spoke at the conference the next day had a really hard time from the Conference because he refused to publish the Ministry contingency plans.

The Minister attacked me, only to find that the conference agreed with me.

Vlad said that to get a National Farmers Union Conference barracking a Tory Agriculture Minister took some doing. Well done, Rebecca!

The national political press all say the same, that Rebecca Johnson is doing well as Shadow Agriculture Minister.

David Wilkins did a terrific job in my campaign to be selected to be the Labour candidate at the Groatpie by-election.

Once I was selected as the Labour candidate for Groatpie constituency David had to give way to the Labour Party professionals.

David is still being helpful to me now I am in London.

Our wedding preparations are largely sorted.

Chester’s family will stay at the Tryton Hotel, where I used to work. It is within easy walking distance of our Church.

Catering is almost a joke, with a dozen competent chefs helping. Sally will make my wedding cake.

The Daars are making my wedding clothes and my honeymoon clothes.

Bishop Singleton will perform the ceremony.

Mark will give me away.

Charlotte and Sally will be my bridesmaids.

It all looks good.

CHAPTER 29: Kevin Hanson

Cecil Byram appointed Mark Johnson to be Director of Exports and Expansion for the Byrams Group.

Mark has delivered the goods and then some!

Mark’s current assistant Dick Shepherd has been keeping me informed.

Once Mark got involved in the Merseyside Plastics project the various problems and issues there fell aside like skittles flying.

Our Merseyside Plastics operation now employs over four thousand people. They make plastic components, plastic containers, and a very wide range of plastic products. As well as normal sales a lot of the products sell well over the internet thanks to Sahid Daar's wizardry. The Merseyside Plastics manager Georgina Aaron found the time to become pregnant. Georgina and Douglas have had twins, which has led to a lot of jokes about Georgina taking production efficiency far too seriously!

Georgina and Douglas are helped by Georgina's mother who now lives a few doors away from them.

The DIY chain that Mark set up and which is run by Mike Appleyard is very profitable. The Byram Group now has experienced developers on our team. The developers purchase a large property and they develop it as an industrial estate. The DIY shop is given the most prominent position, with excellent parking and facilities. The facilities always include a cafe that serves good food at very reasonable prices. Of course while people have stopped for lunch they are likely to pop into the DIY store. The ready availability of good food makes the industrial estate popular.

The Spain companies ship their goods to Liverpool.

Instead of a central warehouse facility for the concrete, concrete blocks and posts, cement, bricks, tiles, bagged sand, loose sand etcetera the Spanish goods are packed into containers in Spain for delivery direct to the individual DIY shops. Every shop has space for containers and forklift trucks to empty them.

Byrams factories and Merseyside Plastics between them produce a huge range of metal components many of which are shipped to the DIY stores. Again, distribution is by carrier to the individual stores.

The savings from not running a central distribution depot more than compensate for the additional transport costs.

The Redcar steelworks now runs sweetly.

It is a problem of steel manufacturing that the production facilities are rigid. To achieve economies of scale a steelyard will often fill spare production capacity with speculative production.

The speculative production achieves lower unit production costs but the practice will lead to excess inventory if no-one buys the excess production.

Ming's Metals do all the purchasing of metals for Ming's and for Chang's their Belgian operation. The excess production from Redcar Steelworks is always bought immediately by Ming's Metals at production cost price. There is no profit for Redcar but Redcar gains maximum profit on what they do sell commercially.

When Ming's Metals are getting low on a steel stock they order the exact quantity that is the most profitable for Redcar to produce.

In Middlesbrough we make containers with steel from our Redcar Steelworks.

We make tractors in Middlesbrough for export to South America, Africa, and South East Asia. We make the engines in Birmingham and the pumps in Wolverhampton.

The tractor repair kit is just two spanners that fit everywhere that a spanner is needed. The repair manual has no writing save for part numbers and the internet address of the full repair manual on the Byrams Tractors web site.

If you click on the Byrams Tractors web site you may choose your language. Then you follow an expert system to help you to diagnose faults and then to make repairs.

The videos that illustrate the diagnosis and the appropriate repair are in many languages. The attractive young woman who services the tractor and who makes the repairs on the video is one of our former apprentices, now a fully qualified fitter. She speaks in English and she is dubbed into about forty languages.

You may also order parts and consumables and register your tractor ownership online. Sahid Daar earns every penny that Cecil Byram pays him!

The tractors travel in the containers that the Byram Group make a few streets away. We now recruit five hundred cadets each year. They are all bright and committed. The cadets earn qualifications as an apprentice and then a degree in some kind of Engineering. The cadet chooses what to study at degree level.

During the cadetship the cadets earn good money and they come out with no student debt. If the student should earn a First Class Honours Degree then that carries with it guaranteed support to undertake a Masters Degree.

Cecil says that if this means Byrams has to fund a hundred and fifty Masters Degrees each year then that has to be good for Byrams.

Cecil says that the cadets emerging from the cadet program will be able to write their own tickets. The challenge for Byrams is to make sure the cadets wish to stay with us after they have earned their degrees.

Our son John is a Byrams cadet.

John comes home every night and John tells us what he has learned today. I have never seen John so enthused and so excited.

Competition for a Byrams Cadetship is very stiff. The fact that we run a transparent points based online application scheme is a real plus. There is no opportunity for favouritism or discrimination.

Some of us queried why we have so many cadets.

Cecil Byram said that by the time the cadets have completed their Engineering degrees it is likely that Byrams will be at least twice the size that we are today. Cecil's concern is whether we have enough cadets.

Mark Johnson has come up with three ideas, each of which is a stunner.

The first is to diversify into the manufacture of traditional hand tools. The tools are heavier than usual, made of stainless steel, and they will last forever. The idea is to build the Byrams brand name across South America, Africa, and South Asia. The tools will be more expensive than the Chinese flimsy equivalents but they will last the buyer a lifetime. With very long production runs we can make the tools very cheaply.

We will also make tool boxes of various sizes.

What is so good is that these tools and tool boxes are generally pretty simple to make. My former convicts can make the tools in our Liverpool factory. They will be proud to be making bloody good tools.

I will be able to employ more former criminals at the Liverpool factory.

The second brain wave is to follow on from the hand tools with a range of power tools and all the spares and accessories. These will all be made in the large factory in Birmingham that Cecil bought a while ago. We will have to increase our workforce in Birmingham.

Eventually we will have a product range that runs from garden fork through to small tractor. Mark Johnson's third idea is so exciting that Daniel Mason has had to be taken away from the Energy Division to lead it.

In many parts of the world transport of freight is a real problem.

Mark's proposal is two-fold.

Byrams Aeronautics will manufacture air ships capable of lifting twenty-five tons. The freight will travel in the standard containers that we already manufacture. We already make engines, pumps, metal, batteries, and virtually all the components that we will need. We will buy the gases and fabrics we need.

The air ships will be purchased by offshore trusts belonging to the Byram family, who will smartly lease the air ships to Byram Air Services.

Byram Air Services will employ pilots and mechanics and will operate the air ships for our local subsidiaries.

Our local subsidiaries will be little companies based all over South America initially and later Africa and Asia. The company will own or rent a storage hut and secure space around the building. It will accept goods for transport and it will release goods that have arrived. Some local subsidiaries will have a very small collection and delivery fleet.

As an example to travel from Salta (Argentina) to Buenos Aires (Argentina) is 930 miles, which takes over 16 hours by road. That is an average speed of 58 miles an hour. The roads are good and we would barely be competitive on time. We would be competitive on price. The flying distance from Salta to Mendoza (Argentina) is 597 miles as against a road distance of 797 miles. Over that journey we are very competitive in time and we are very competitive on price.

Initially our services will be within each country but we will offer capital to capital freight services as well.

Where we have a customer who has a container to move we will collect and deliver from and to the customer's premises.

Mark's estimates are that we will need three hundred pilots and mechanics within three years.

The pilots and mechanics will be trained in our Cleckheaton training centre. They must speak English for Air Traffic Control purposes. It makes sense for them to speak local languages if that is possible.

The project will keep Daniel busy!

Martin Jenkins is leading the developments at Groatpie. The outer industrial estate is already fully let. The estate designed for Byrams companies to manufacture plastic goods is virtually finished. The plant to turn coal into plastic and into diesel fuel is on track. The plant that will produce clean electricity from coal is slightly ahead of schedule.

Martin has been told that when he finishes these projects Cecil has another big project waiting for him. Cecil wants Martin to get these jobs finished before Martin begins Cecil's new project.

Cecil Byram gave Mark Johnson a shock.

Cecil said that Mark is not taking his holidays as he should. Although Cecil accepts Mark's commitment it is not healthy to have someone working sixty hours a week for months and months without a break. Cecil cannot afford for Mark to have a breakdown or for Mark to begin to make mistakes through tiredness.

Cecil says that Mark has ignored Cecil's hints. So Mark is on a compulsory two month paid holiday with immediate effect.

Dick Shepherd will field all of Mark's calls and will "sit in" for Mark until Mark gets back. If Dick needs decisions then Cecil will make them.

CHAPTER 30: Emma Hewson

I am so proud of Max!

Max passed GCSE Latin and Arabic at Grade A and French and Spanish at Grade A+. These are very good results.

Max sits the rest of his GCSEs next year.

Don has made it very clear to Max that Don expects Max to average an A grade overall next year because Max is capable of achieving these grades. Whatever else is going on in Max's life the GCSE grades are extremely important.

For a long time Max had intended to study sciences at A level. Now Max is thinking that Music, Drama, and Arabic may be more appropriate.

Max has over a year in which to decide.

We have agreed to let Max take up his acting opportunity in Bahrain.

Don will travel out with Max to meet the people whom Max will be working with.

Don is also looking forward to meeting baby Fatima because Don and I fostered both of Fatima's parents.

Immediately the examinations finished Max began learning the "oud" and the Arabic musical scale. A competent and experienced musician like Max who learns and practises for six hours every day over two months can make an enormous amount of progress.

The oud teacher says that Max is the best student that the teacher has ever had.

Alice was nominated for "Best Actor" award for her role in "Terrible Tykes". Alice did not win, but it was a tremendous honour to be nominated.

Dan Wilbey is the only member of the original cast still with "Terrible Tykes". Dan is older now than Max was when the program began. Dan probably has eighteen months before his voice breaks and Dan has to leave the series.

Dan bought a detached house for his family to live in. Dan has earned so much money that Dan will never have to work.

"Terrible Tykes" won "Best Children's TV Program" for the fifth year in a row.

Both Malc Dow and Carlo Stewart say that the Tryton Theatre School has made a huge difference to the series. They are so grateful to us for producing the original cast and for producing a significant number of new performers.

The latest entrant is our son Damien, who sings, and who plays guitar, piano, and drums to a very high standard.

Damien's character loses his temper quite often. There is another new lad, and in the series he and Damien have a running quarrel. In reality the lads get on well.

Arthur and Kate are happy.

My parents are still fostering. They say they like it. They particularly like being paid for work that they enjoy.

Sally Thornton is doing well at school. Sally's competitive spirit is engaged by another girl in Sally's year who is always top of their year. Being second at that school is tremendously impressive but that achievement is not good enough for Sally.

Rupert Thornton is thriving at Repton. Rupert is in his year's soccer team, cricket team, and tennis team.

Rupert's academic progress is less impressive.

Don's displeasure is fearsome and is best not earned twice. One weekend Rupert came home to find his double bed had been replaced by a single bed because of slacking and poor behaviour in class.

The punishment has not had to be repeated.

Repton School is now happy with Rupert's approach to his studies.

Lucinda and Guy Thornton are happy at their prep school.

Dennis Wilkins is organising this year's summer camp. The camp is further afield than the kids usually go but the camp site is free. It belongs to a Special Forces officer called Chris Edwards who is a brother of David Wilkins' partner Annette Edwards.

Mark Johnson had a shock when he was put on two months of compulsory holiday, but Mark is enjoying it.

I have not seen Mark so relaxed in a long time.

Sally Johnson was in some ways relieved to leave "Terrible Tykes".

Sally now concentrates on her TV cooking segment, writing songs and music, and visiting maimed servicemen.

Sally is doing fine at the Theatre School.

Rebecca Johnson is getting married in September.

Rebecca has taken to politics like a duck to water. Rebecca has principle and passion and integrity. Also important is that Rebecca has Charlotte's money behind her so Rebecca does not have to do anything for financial reasons.

Politically the fact that Rebecca Johnson gave up a job paying four hundred thousand pounds a year plus bonuses to become a Labour MP is impressive in itself.

Everyone can see what Rebecca brings to the job.

Freda Graham took an impressive portfolio to her Art School interviews.

Freda has a series of life studies of her boyfriend Jacob Grundy.

Freda has character studies of most of the adults she knows. The drawing of Don showing Don as he is but also illustrating the hard man underneath is very impressive.

Freda has had five years of drawing sketches of the characters in "Terrible Tykes".

Freda had good A level results.

Freda has won admission to the Royal College of Art, apparently the best Art School in Britain.

Freda enters Art School as someone who has already sold her work.

Freda is really looking forward to living and studying in London. Freda will stay at Tohur's house in London.

Robert Graham has nine A grade and A+ grade GCSEs. Robert's grade in English Literature is only a B.

Robert still intends to study for A levels at Meldon College, attending the Northern Royal College of Music in Manchester on Saturdays.

We suggested to Robert that Robert might be interested in studying for A levels at one of the leading public schools, like say Wellington or Marlborough.

"The other kids there, they have not made their own money.

"What can I learn from them?"

"Here I have the gym where I have my own piano. I have terrific food. I have really good company and friends.

"My brother and sisters are here.

"No. I am happy here."

The other Grahams are fine.

Gerald Butler is going to stay on at Manchester Grammar School for his A levels. Gerald will also attend the Northern Royal College of Music on Saturdays.

One of the Tory newspapers tried to produce an expose on Cecil Byram. The journalists visited Byram's operations in China and the two foundries that Byram family trusts own out there.

The journalists found that the workers are reasonably well paid by Chinese standards.

The journalists found child labour operating at Byram Energy (China) Limited.

The child labour was that the children have to feed the chickens in the morning before they go to school, and they have to search the nesting boxes for eggs. When the children come home from school they have to do it again.

Children doing limited work this way is legal in China.

When the story was published Byrams pointed out that the children eat more chicken and eggs and pork than is the norm in China. The local doctor at the Byram funded Health Centre said that the children in the village weigh on average four per cent more than the Chinese norm for their ages because of their better diet. The children are also healthier than the norm in China.

Byrams also pays for a high school in the village, so the children have more education than is the norm in China.

The other part of the expose was that Byrams allegedly exploits battered women by giving them jobs at Byrams factories and then makes money out of renting them accommodation. So Byrams Group exploits vulnerable people in their employment and then stiffes them with high rents.

The women themselves put out press releases saying that Byrams pays them Engineering Union rate, dozens of the women have had promotions to charge hand, and that the accommodation is good quality and extremely good value.

The Battered Women's hostel in Meldon disclosed that Byrams has been paying the hostel's running costs for the last five years, nearly a million pounds over this period.

Cecil Byram and Byram Group sued the newspaper for libel.

The journalists had to apologise in the High Court.

Heavy damages had to be paid to two charities nominated by Byrams, Women's Aid and the Save The Children Fund.

Don is well, but Don is still slightly bored. Don is getting a little frustrated by our easy life.

We don't know what to do about that.

Chapter 31: Ali Miah

The holy and wise custodians of Holy Mecca have accepted the "Fountains of Khatija" concept wholeheartedly.

It took them a few weeks of prayer and reflection but they have said "Yes".

The Saudi Royal Family has put its collective foot down. They will pay for the "Fountains of Khatija" to be built. The Saudi Royal Family will not permit outsiders to pay for the fountains.

The proposal had a reasonable cost alternative of being made from metal. Making the fountains from stone was the excruciatingly high cost option.

Given that the fountains should last a thousand years at least, the fountains will be assembled from hand crafted stone. The detailed plans for each fountain have been given to stonemasons who are making every little piece of the fountain or fountains that they are working on.

We are looking at a three year manufacturing time. So be it.

I had no part in the negotiations between the stone masons and the Saudi Royal Family. My role is to inspect each piece when it is manufactured and to approve payment.

As a quick safety measure we have installed fairly simple fountains made out of stainless steel where the Fountains of Khatija will ultimately be erected.

The simple fountains have already improved the atmosphere at Holy Mecca. We hope the fountains will avert the panic situations in which people are trampled.

Baby Fatima is well and happy.

Shakoora is pretty happy.

Shakoora says that when we return from Amina's wedding Shakoora thinks it will be time to start another child.

I was concerned whether Shakoora could cope with a second child.

Shakoora pointed out that a lot of women manage to have a second child, even those who do not have a maid, a nanny, a chef, and a driver.

So I am happy in principle.

The islands building project is ahead of schedule, under budget, and there have been no deaths at all.

My bonuses are piling up nicely.

David Wilkins invests my money for me. I receive quarterly reports on how my investments are doing.

David takes no commission for helping me like this. He is just a good man.

I do not work Fridays. Apart from the security staff no-one works on Fridays.

We would like to buy Amina a sensible wedding present.

The United Kingdom has an importation tax on luxury goods. In any case after Amina's honeymoon in Rome Amina and her Abdul are moving to Los Angeles.

We have agreed with Amina that we will pay for Amina's set up costs for designing and making dresses in Los Angeles. All the high tech equipment that Amina needs, six months rent on a studio, and advertising and running expenses for six months.

Sahid will do Amina's social media advertising as soon as Amina is ready to accept customers.

Tohur is in Argentina now, acclimatising before the Olympics. Tohur is in good spirits.

I checked out Mr Hussain. He has a reputation as a sharp and competent television producer. I have only heard good things about him.

When Max arrives Javed will be his escort as before.

Javed is usually Shakoora's escort, but with the baby Shakoora does not go out much.

Javed has been loaned to me by the Crown Prince.

I did not realise for quite a while that Javed is a former sergeant in the Bahrain Army. Javed has also been trained in Personal Protection.

My sister Fulesa and the twins Moklisur and Monika will come to Bahrain in the last two weeks of July, so they go back to England just before Max arrives. They are all three going on the Hewson extended family camp that Dennis Wilkins is organising.

Fulesa says that now she is no longer a "Terrible Tyke" she has a lot more time. Fulesa is learning the accordion just for fun.

Abdullah Daar has joined the Committee for the mosque and madressa that serve the Somali community in Doncaster.

Abdullah argued that he should not take office as Secretary or Treasurer or anything else until Abdullah has served for a few years on the committee. So far Abdullah has been successful in his arguments.

Abdullah is waiting for his degree results.

Abdullah really does not know what to do now. Abdullah is giving Mina a lot of support in running the clothing business but Abdullah does all that unobtrusively. So far as the workers are concerned Mina runs the business.

Mina has finished her Fashion course and she is waiting for her result. Based on Mina's course work results the overall result should be a Distinction.

In normal circumstances Mina would be likely to attend university, but with Shakoora in Bahrain and Amina about to go to the United States Mina has to stay in Doncaster to run the clothing business.

Mina is thinking about following a degree with the Open University as the only practical way to combine running a business and obtaining a university degree.

CHAPTER 32: Rebecca Johnson

Alan Roe has instructions from me to be a generally nice guy, which Alan does. Sometimes Alan does it through gritted teeth.

Alan has a research assistant known to all as "the poison dwarf". The poison dwarf is called Aiden Tordoff.

It is said jokingly that Aiden has Alan's ability but Aiden has none of Alan's warm personal charm. The joke is because Alan Roe had no visible personal charm before Alan began to work with me.

Aiden has a degree in Maths and Statistics.

Aiden is the best number cruncher I have ever known.

Aiden has the ability to scan ten pages of statistics and to point to a contradiction between a figure on the top of page four and another figure half way down page eight. If you give Aiden another ten minutes Aiden will delve into the discrepancy and Aiden will find four others.

Working with Alan and I Aiden's talents are fully used.

The National Farmers Union (NFU) always complains about late or slow payment of European Union (EU) agricultural subsidies. The EU subsidies are administered and paid by the British Government on behalf of the EU. The Ministry computer system is inadequate. One poor farmer has had his payments further delayed on suspicion of fraud four years in a row.

The NFU conducts a survey each year about these delays. The NFU asked me to take up their campaign to speed up payments.

I said that I was happy to help, but I would like my statistics whizz kid to meet with their surveys manager to see what ammunition they could produce between them. The more ammunition I have the better my contribution will be.

Aiden spent a week at NFU headquarters going over the surveys and other information.

Then Aiden spent two weeks working from home.

Aiden had taken the information from the NFU survey, other information that the NFU holds, and then Aiden had done further research and crunching. What Aiden came up with was so frightening that I had Aiden check it all twice more.

I said to Aiden that if I am putting my political future at stake I need to be utterly certain that everything I say can be proved to be true. So I was sorry but everything had to be checked from Ground Zero.

It all checked out.

It is all documented and printed out.

I asked for a meeting with Humphrey, Vlad, Brian the Shadow Chancellor, the Shadow Attorney General, and Brenda the Deputy Leader.

I explained Aiden's findings.

I said that I am still in my first year as a Member of Parliament. I have no experience of how to handle this situation.

The Electoral Commission records disclose those who make large payments to the political parties. "Large" is £500 or more in any one quarter.

Aiden also identified farmers who had signed Conservative nomination forms for councils and for Parliamentary Elections. Aiden had my office send queries to Labour Party paid staff all over the country to gather this information.

Aiden had found a correlation between being in the first tranche of payments and active support of the Conservative Party.

In a sense this is not surprising because most of the farmers who receive large payments are wealthy people and so they will tend to support the Conservative Party. The larger payments are made first so that the Ministry can say that sixty per cent of payment is made within six weeks of the Government receiving the money from the EU.

What was particularly telling was that out of the four possible quarters in the year the quarter in which the farmer received the EU payment and the quarter after tended to be when the political donations were made.

Another correlation was that farmers in safe Labour constituencies tended to be in the last two tranches to be paid and were never in the first three tranches to be paid unless they made contributions to the Tory Party.

Aiden identified that farmers in the constituency of a Tory Cabinet Minister are 95% likely to be in the first two tranches to be paid.

The Shadow Attorney General, Heather, said that I was right to bring this information forward to a small group like this. It does need very careful handling.

Heather said that it was unlikely that this was intentionally politically motivated.

Over the years farmers would have asked their Members of Parliament to make representations about late payment. If a Cabinet Minister made a query the civil servants would have taken it upon themselves to make sure that the Cabinet Ministers did not have to complain again.

Again, those farmers who are politically committed to the Tory Party would have less reluctance to ask their local MP to intervene, because they would know their MP personally. Making payments when you are flush with money is more likely than making payments when a farmer is short of cash waiting for the subsidy payment.

Farmers in Labour constituencies are unlikely to ask their Labour MP for help.

Over thirty years there would be a drift where people with political links to the Conservative Party would push into the first few tranches and everyone else would drift downward.

In Heather's view there is no corruption, dishonesty or the like.

Vlad said that if it walks like a duck, it talks like a duck, and it looks like a duck, then it is a duck.

Politically this finding is definitely a duck.

Brenda the Deputy Leader said that it is very dangerous to suggest dishonesty. We could lose credibility that way.

I said that what I proposed to do was to point out these unfortunate statistical correlations.

I would ask the Minister to confirm that he agrees that no-one wishes to create a situation that gives the appearance that giving money to the Tory Party speeds up the payment of the subsidy.

I would suggest that were the Agriculture Minister to promise Parliament that next year all payments will be made within a week of the money arriving from Brussels that would resolve the issue.

Without that promise, we would put down a motion of censure and report the circumstances to the Electoral Commission and to the European Union Court of Auditors. It was agreed that I would write to the Minister with the statistical information three days before Agriculture Questions and lay a question asking the Minister to confirm that all payments will now be paid within a week of the money arriving from Brussels.

I will also put out a press release as I write to the Minister setting out the statistical correlations, that no allegation of dishonesty or corruption was intended, but that it was important that the Government should not give the appearance of a correlation between giving money to the Tory Party and early payment of the agriculture subsidy.

Everyone was happy with this.

My brother Mark is on holiday from Byrams so Mark has spent some time in London. Of course Mark lodges with me.

When a good looking fit young man appears on the Mormon singles scene there is usually quite a lot of interest. As the brother of Rebecca Johnson MP, Charlotte Johnson and Sally Johnson Mark is not just any anonymous gorgeous Mormon hunk.

Mark is successful in his work at Byrams.

Mark is a very eligible bachelor.

Mark is invited to meals, parties, and other opportunities to meet people.

It is a long time since Mark has been out with other Mormons just in fellowship rather than through the work of his Call.

Mark goes on some of the St Georges outings.

Mark does not go to the services at St Georges ward because he says he should worship in Tryton with our family.

Mark is not looking for romance at the moment, or so he says.

Chester cannot live under the same roof as me before we are married.

It makes sense for Chester to lodge with Tohur and Sahid. Tohur is in Argentina for the Olympics at the moment.

Chester and I have meals with David Wilkins and his partner Annette Edwards. They are great people.

David helps me by researching the people and organisations I am going to visit. David provides me with very good questions to ask.

The guys running the businesses I visit are often surprised by the questions I ask. They are usually very willing to discuss the questions I raise.

A lot of their issues boil down to the need to have cash available for seasonal peaks and troughs. They need working capital to pay out for planting, fertilisers, and pesticides, and rent or mortgages and wages, but they gain no income until the crop is safely harvested and sold.

David is also doing some work with Chester, looking for companies for Byrams to purchase or for industries that Byrams might enter.

Byrams is not looking to buy businesses for the sake of it.

Byrams wants businesses whose product lines fit well with existing Byrams products or are a logical extension of the Byrams product line. Having skills and machinery that Byrams does not already have is an attraction.

Byrams wants to add value where possible. Replacing expensive loans with cheaper loans, extending working capital, adding skills or gaining from economies of scale are all the kind of thing that Byrams is interested in contributing.

David Wilkins' day job takes up maybe three hours a day. David has a team running the speculating business. David uses some of his time to make spot checks on individuals in the company, analysing how they are doing.

Sometimes David issues an edict that the speculators may not purchase shares in a particular company because David believes the company is in trouble.

About once a fortnight David visits his staff.

David says that his company is doing well.

David has the time to attend classes at the Cordon Bleu College with the intention of completing his Catering degree.

David does a lot of reading.

If a political book is interesting David passes it to me. I have a stack of books to read!

About once every two weeks I am photographed doing something in my role as Shadow Agriculture and Food Minister. It usually involves animals or chickens.

The Daars have made me some overalls that make me look even more attractive and photogenic. The Daily Telegraph has published more photos of me than of most of the Shadow Cabinet put together.

One joke within the Labour leadership is that my arse is obviously more attractive to the Daily Telegraph than Tommy Sutherland's face. This is about the only point where Humphrey and Vlad agree with the Daily Telegraph.

I even went shooting!

The invitation came from a Tory peer.

The peer explained that game shooting is an important rural industry that employs thousands of people.

Many people in the industry are worried that knowing nothing about the industry I might agree to ban it or I might otherwise damage the industry.

I took Don Hewson with me, because I knew that the Tory peer would provide an opportunity to shoot. I do not wish to shoot, so Don came to shoot in my place.

There was a slightly joshing situation between the peer and Don. The peer was trying to josh Don.

Don has dealt with officer types before so Don would not rise to the joshing.

Don was totally deadpan.

"You have fired a gun at a live target before?"

Don hesitated and then said,

"Yes."

"Birds?"

"No."

"Animals?"

"No."

"People?" jokingly.

"Yes."

Everyone looked at Don.

"They were shooting back, which made it more interesting."

The group was silent.

The joshing atmosphere had died.

After a silence one of the party asked,
“Dare I ask where you shot people?”

Don hesitated again.

Then Don said,

“Northern Ireland.”

Another silence.

“And which side were you on?”

“I was in the British Army.”

There was a sense of relief!

Don did respectably well. Apparently in the Army Don was trained in how to shoot at moving targets.

The shooting industry makes a lot of money for some people. The beaters are poorly paid but they are often allowed to take home grouse or pheasants for their own families or for resale. In some years the prices for the dead birds are so low that the bodies are fed to dogs!

Rich people will spend £5,000 a day or even £10,000 a day just to shoot birds or deer.

People also pay enormous amounts of money to fish for salmon.

It is not to my taste but I am happy to support tourism and agriculture in almost any form.

As a Mormon I do not drink alcohol.

My colleague Alan Roe comes with me to events where I am likely to be offered alcohol to drink, and Alan drinks it for me. Then I drive us away.

I regularly read that I am the leading Labour politician best positioned to challenge Humphrey for the Party Leadership.

Humphrey knows I won't.

I know I won't.

Our Shadow Foreign Secretary Tommy Sutherland keeps reading that I am better positioned than Tommy is to make a challenge by a long way. It keeps Tommy loyal to Humphrey. But Tommy would shaft me if he could.

Alan Roe has quietly assembled a huge file on Tommy, so should Tommy start trouble I have plenty of ammunition.

Alan quietly told Tommy's Parliamentary Private Secretary that Alan has compiled this huge file. I have been too saintly to look at it, but Alan is not saintly.

Should Tommy start trouble against Rebecca Johnson Tommy will regret it within days.

Only then did Alan tell me anything.

Alan's perception is that he is covering my back by making me too costly to take on. I preserve my saintly reputation because it is nasty Alan Roe who has done the dirty work.

I am not sure that Alan has been wise but the damage is done.

CHAPTER 33: Helen Wilkins

I enjoy being a mum.

We have two super little boys who are a barrel of fun.

Alan is walking and running. Alan has very little sense of self-preservation so I have Alan on reins when we go out.

Little Martin is sitting up by himself.

Both boys go totally gooey when they see Martin, which Martin just loves.

We are a happy family.

My father is not terribly well.

Dennis or my mother Angela has to help him up in the mornings. Dad gets to the sun room and he stays there all day.

On a good day Dad goes to the dining room to eat but often Dad has his lunch in the sun room.

We are all worried about Dad but there is nothing that can be done.

David has paid for very expensive consultants to examine Dad. None of them have any sensible suggestions.

Apart from worrying about Dad, Mum is fine.

Mum loves my children.

Mum loves Andria's children.

Mum keeps making comments to David that it is time that David married Annette. Mum cannot suggest that they should start a family before they are married, otherwise she would.

As soon as they are married Mum will start drip suggesting that they should start a family. We all know this.

Dennis is older than David.

Dennis does not currently have a girlfriend.

About twice a day Mum suggests to Dennis that Dennis should have a girlfriend.

Dennis asked Mum if it would be all right if Dennis starts a family without marrying the young woman? Or perhaps Dennis could speed things up by marrying a woman who already has some children?

Mum is not keen on either scenario.

Dennis says that he is in no rush to settle down.

Fair enough. Dennis is young yet.

Peter and Janine are too young to be pressured to marry, but it will not be long before Mum starts on Peter. After all, Peter turns sixteen soon.

Peter has a great time recording these advertisements with Olivia Hudson. The advertisements are all about a beautiful teenage girl and her eye candy. No sex or romance, just two teenagers of opposite sexes having fun together.

Some of the other lads are sometimes in the advertisements, to add spice to the situation between Olivia and Peter.

Janine retired from "Terrible Tykes" because she is too old.

Janine still goes to the Tryton Theatre School but Janine is not too bothered whether she acts again or not.

Janine is having a lot of fun at the school, and Janine gets good reports.

Andria is pregnant with her third child, but there is another five months to go.

David is in a world of his own down in London. He is happy.

Emma and Don Hewson hold frequent parties to which we are always invited. Andria and I and our children sometimes go, with our partners if they are free.

The food is always terrific.

Sally Thornton has taken over cooking the TDF (To Die For) and TKF (To Kill For) cheesecakes that Charlotte Johnson used to make.

Rupert Thornton has taken to marinades the way that Tohur Miah used to specialise in.

Alice Hewson is not ten yet but already Alice is quite a capable cook.

Freda Graham and Robert Graham are both very good chefs. Max Hewson is pretty good.

CHAPTER 34: Max Hewson

After my GCSEs I got stuck into learning the “oud”, learning the Arabic musical notation, and learning how the Arabs sing.

I had four CDs of Arab music to listen to, including the four songs that I needed to learn before I went to Dubai to film.

I worked really hard.

I have been playing musical instruments for the last eight years and I had nothing else to do for a couple of months.

I had a good tutor

By the time I got to Dubai I was performing to broadcast standard.

Mr Hussain had intended to film me playing the oud but then to substitute a sound track using an Arab musician.

In Cecil Byram’s phrase I was blessed if that was going to happen. Cecil Byram uses another word beginning with “b” instead of “blessed” and I agree with Cecil Byram.

On the second day of filming I was supposed to play and sing a lament because a young woman had told me that my attentions were distinctly not wanted.

I started to play.

The music director and Mr Hussain kept exchanging looks.

I could see that the entire filming crew were touched.

My only fear was whether I was incredibly good, as I believed, or whether I had so butchered the music that the team were hurt.

The film’s music director came up and he hugged me, so I knew I was fine.

I didn’t like the garlic on his breath or the patchouli in his aftershave, but I did appreciate that he was very happy with the quality of my playing.

Then I asked for their indulgence.

I played and sang my old standby “Greensleeves”, in English. I had arranged the music for the oud.

There was absolute silence while I performed the song, and absolute silence when I had finished.

When I told Mr Hussain that “Greensleeves” is supposed to have been composed by King Henry VIII for his future Queen Anne Boleyn Mr Hussain looked thoughtful. When I said that “Greensleeves” is out of copyright, Mr Hussain smiled.

Then I played and I sang “Greensleeves” in Arabic.

Over the next four days I performed the pieces that I had been told to prepare. I had to perform four takes of each, to make the editing easier.

The music director told me that one of the musicians I had been told to imitate has a strong East Yemen accent. When I sing his song I also have a strong East Yemen accent.

For the purposes of the film that change of accent just adds to the humour.

Then I was asked to sing Greensleeves in English with an English accent, again with an East Yemen accent, and again with the local Dubai accent.

The working title of the film translates into English as “Gormless”.

We filmed a number of scenes where I was just so ignorant!

I was amorous towards females whom I should have respected, including the wife of my host.

I poured whiskey for an imam.

We filmed a few scenes in a market.

On my first purchase I made the mistake of agreeing to pay the first price I was asked, which was ridiculously high.

Then I bargained far too hard with a poor man who was so desperate to feed his family that he had to sell me his oud.

I practised the oud in the early hours of the morning, waking babies and causing dogs to bark.

Playing the oud in a mosque led to a chase scene.

I ran through washing lines, over roofs, along high walls, and through a private ladies area in an important town house. With the angry worshippers still on my heels I jumped off a wall onto a Rolls Royce, denting it.

I stole a motor cycle that conveniently had the key in it, and I drove through narrow alleyways.

For a moment I thought I was in a plaza, but I had ended up outside the mosque from which I had been chased.

I was chased again, still clutching my oud.

Along the way I supposedly played and sang these songs.

I managed to cause more offence, and I was chased again.

Eventually I am at the end of a very high crane on the seaward side of Ali's outmost island.

There is an angry mob climbing the crane.

I play a "Woe is me" song.

A stuntman wearing a long blond wig and a long blond moustache to look like me dives off the crane.

I swim to a motorboat.

I shout out "So long" to the angry crowd at the foot of the crane, and I wave goodbye to them.

I set off towards the Indian Ocean.

The angry mob all pull out mobile telephones.

The next scene is of a fleet of boats taking to sea from the harbour at Bahrain, obviously all chasing after me.

The boats are catching up with me when the motorboat I have stolen makes noises that show my fuel supply has just run out!

The film ends with an aerial scene where a dozen boats are converging on my powerless boat!

Mr Hussain was hugely pleased with me.

Mr Hussain says that I am so professional that all the safety margins Mr Hussain had built into his timings were not needed.

We have recorded a scene that allows for a film "Gormless 2" because when the boats return towards the harbour I am seen to be clinging onto a rope that dangles from one of the boats.

Am I available to film another film next July?

Mr Hussain does not know if the second film will be "Gormless 2" or something completely different.

I said that I am available.

All Mr Hussain has to do is to contact my agent Mr Driburg.

Shakoora chided me when in conversation at her and Ali's apartment I used an Arabic phrase that is not polite.

I apologised profusely of course. It was simple ignorance, and Shakoora accepted that.

Mr Hussain also asked Mr Driburg that I should record a CD/DVD in England to coincide with the release of the film in October. The oud player who has been helping me in England will be glad to help me to prepare for recording a full CD/DVD.

CHAPTER 35: Mark Johnson

When Cecil Byram put me on compulsory leave I was not a bit cross.

I was a lot cross.

“The thing is Mark I want forty years of work out of you. I don’t want you to burn out in five years.

“Mark, if you burn out or you have a mental breakdown, it could be three years before you return to work, and you would never be the same again.

“I can’t stop you thinking, but I can stop you working a sixty hour week.

“Take the holiday.

“I promise you that you will return to work a happier man than you are today.”

Cecil was right.

In the first week I tried to step up my Mormon activity but our District President David Swift stopped me. President Swift said that just because I have a spare fifty or sixty hours a week for a couple of months should not mean that I should devote all these hours to my Call.

“Take the holiday or for your own good your Call will have to be withdrawn.”

That was a bit strong!

So Cecil Byram and David Swift think I have been working too hard.

I offered some time to Bishop Singleton but Bishop Singleton said that I must take my holiday.

Sister Sally said that she has never seen a Mormon Temple so one Saturday I drove the family to our Mormon Temple at Preston. That was a good day.

Sally has me playing duets with her on the piano.

Andrew and Michael have me playing guitar with them.

Andrew plays the accordion as well as the bagpipes. Sometimes all four of us jam together.

I am not a conspiracy theorist but I am sure there is a conspiracy around me.

When I went down to London Rebecca let me cook a few times, but Rebecca basically launched me into Mormon social circles in London with the instruction to have a good time.

My sister Sally asked me,

“Mark, what is a workaholic?”

As I explained what a workaholic is Sally’s eyes bored into me.

Sally is so like Rebecca sometimes.

“So are you a workaholic?”

I could not hit Sally.

I could not answer Sally.

As I stormed from the room Sally said,

“So you are a workaholic!”

I cried and I prayed.

Then I went back to Sally and I apologised.

I don’t know if there is a Workaholics Anonymous like there is an Alcoholics Anonymous.

I suppose if there was a Workaholics Anonymous they would all be fighting to be the Secretary.

I understand that at Alcoholics Anonymous everyone takes turns to stand up and to say that they are an Alcoholic and to say how long it is since they had a drink.

I have to start by recognising that I am a workaholic.
I am a workaholic.
I was a workaholic.
I have no social life outside my work and my Call.
I did some flying. Not from A to B but just a few fly arounds for fun.
I started taking Sally and the boys swimming, and I swam myself.
We started going to the cinema as a family.
We started eating out as a family.
We went to all the Hewson parties.
I started going to the Wilkins parties.
Sister Sally asked me why we never had any parties.
I agreed we Johnsons would have a party.
Sally and Sister Sally and Andrew and Michael told me that I may not cook for the party.
I may do the shopping.
I may practice the piano and the guitar.
I can clean the house a bit, but as we have a cleaner really all I can do is to tidy the house and mow the lawn.
Everyone I know in Tryton came to our party and it was really good.
The Daars came from Doncaster and they brought huge quantities of kebabs and samosas.
Rebecca and Chester came.
Rebecca stayed with us and Chester slept at the Wilkins house.
After a while I had an invitation to dinner with Bishop Singleton.
After dinner we had a long chat.
I have seen the error of my ways. But I do not know how to regulate myself.
"No-one expects a man in a responsible job like yours to work nine to five.
"But there comes a point where long hours of work become self-defeating.
"So suppose you said that on average you will work a forty-five hour week. If you can't do your job in forty-five hours then the problem is that you are working hard instead of working smart.
"Delegate.
"Share.
"Don't have dogs and then bark yourself.
"You must count travel time within your forty-five hours.
"With Skype is it really necessary for you to be flying around the world every three weeks?
"Book Fridays clear. If you have done forty-five hours before Friday morning then take Friday off.
"If you have not done forty-five hours by Friday morning take Friday off anyway and make up the time the following week, if you need to.
"You are paid for results, not for the long hours that you put in."
Bishop Singleton's advice shook me.
I have never thought of my job that way.
I should focus on the essential and delegate everything else.
That takes a lot of digesting.
Sister Sally says that I look much better. She says that I do not look constantly tired now. I am not stressed like I used to be.
Andrew and Michael are always wrestling with me now. They never used to.
Sally teases me constantly.

I told Sally that Sally is not too big to take over my knee and spank.

"That is for your girlfriends, Mark.

"If they like it.

"As a Mormon you should not use violence against women.

"You could try using your brain.

"I know that will hurt!"

Sally scampered out of reach.

I took Sally to visit some of her maimed servicemen.

Well that stopped me feeling sorry for myself.

Seeing these guys coming to terms with losing limbs and making the best of what they have is an inspiration.

They all know about jobs at Byrams when they are fit to work. They tell me that knowing there are jobs at Byrams waiting for them gives them an incentive to get better quicker.

I had to explain that although I am a Director of Byrams I had nothing to do with the Birmingham project.

The people they have to thank are my future brother in law Chester Wilson, and Cecil Byram.

Sally is working on another CD/DVD to release for Christmas. Sally performed all her music for me.

I thought it was pretty good.

"That's not good enough!

"It has to be excellent!"

Sally is definitely Rebecca's sister!

Rebecca eventually confirmed that there has been a conspiracy.

Cecil Byram telephoned Rebecca to tell Rebecca what Cecil was going to do and why. Cecil wanted support from the Mormons.

Rebecca telephoned Bishop Singleton.

Bishop Singleton telephoned President Swift.

Even Don Hewson and Sister Sally were in on the conspiracy.

Sally having a go at me about being a workaholic was not part of the plan. Rebecca had intended to confront me on my next trip to London.

Some wonderful and loving people worked together to do the right thing.

Chapter 36: Sahid Daar

My university course is "Computing with Marketing". As I have practical experience of both activities the first year was really no trouble to me. I learned a lot. I confirmed a lot of what I already knew.

The lectures are not compulsory but we are expected to attend.

One of the lecturers was a bit sniffy because I sometimes missed some of his classes on online marketing.

When I showed the lecturer the online marketing that I do for the Byram Group and for Daar Fashions and the web sites that I built and I manage for Terrible Tykes, for young Muslims, and for Muslims in Care the lecturer looked at me differently.

"Why are you following this course?"

"You don't need to be at university at all.

"You could land a job anywhere now."

"I don't want a job.

"I earn more money working for myself than I would ever earn in a job.

"I hope to learn a lot from this course. I have bought and read most of the books written by the lecturers here. Some of it is very good."

A few days later the course leader asked me to see him. He had my application form in front of him.

I had much the same conversation with him.

"I understand that you do not have a student loan.

"Are you funding this course yourself?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I do not like to borrow money.

"I do not need to borrow money.

"So why do it?"

He nodded.

"Dare I ask how much you earn from your marketing activities?"

"It isn't really your business but on the Byram Group contract I earn nearly two million pounds a year from their internet sales.

"I earn extra money from bit work I do for them.

"I do other freelancing."

The course leader looked at me a bit oddly.

"Are you going to do postgraduate studies?"

"I don't know. It depends what else is going on.

"Cecil Byram wants me to work for him as an employee but I prefer to be freelance."

The lecturers just leave me alone now.

I earn good grades on my course work.

My first year degree results were good. At most universities your first year results do not count towards your degree, but it is better to do well than not to do well.

I was in the top five students on my course, which is good enough.

Tohur is very excited in Argentina. He is looking forward to the competition beginning.

Mina is running Daar Fashions now.

Mina and Abdullah get on really well. Abdullah never has to suggest anything twice.

Abdullah says that the meetings of the mosque committee are tedious beyond belief.

Decisions that are pretty simple take forever, and difficult decisions are just deferred.

People seem afraid to plan ahead for the organisation lest they be criticised.

Our family pay our obligatory charitable contributions to the mosque. We pay 2.5% of our income and wealth after some allowances. I pay about £70,000 a year and the rest of the family together pay about £30,000. The mosque and the madressa more or less run on what our family pays in.

Of course many people in the community also contribute, but most of our community are financially weak and cannot contribute much.

If the mosque had financial problems the Daar family would be expected to contribute significantly.

Abdullah has persuaded the committee to set up a building fund to allow the committee to build another mosque and madressa when the current buildings reach the end of their useful lives.

Abdullah tries to avoid speaking at the meetings.

Abdullah says that the meetings are like spending two hours of every Wednesday evening in a dentist's waiting room.

Our Uncle Jalil says that Abdullah should be grateful.

Meetings of an inharmonious mosque committee are much worse to endure and they go on for much longer.

Amina is working on her wedding, choosing presents for her future in-laws, designing invitation cards, and all that kind of thing.

The house Abdul lives in was redecorated in April for the couple to live in after marriage, but since then the couple have decided that after marriage they will live in America.

It seems that when they return from honeymoon they will apply for Amina to have a visa as a wife. Hopefully within a month the visa will be processed and Amina will be able to emigrate to America.

There are horror stories of refusals and delays with American immigration but hopefully Amina will not be caught up in this.

Abdul has a job lined up with a friend in Silicon Valley so Abdul's finances should not be a problem.

Jabril and Amal enjoy their school. Kali and Fosia enjoy their school.

Little Abdul is just happy all the time.

Abdul says that life could not be better!

Uncle Jalil is not really improving any further. I have had him to Consultants who just say that recovery from Uncle Jalil's injuries is a slow process. My mate Hassan still looks after Uncle Jalil.

My mini Silicon Valley project in Doncaster has now reached the financial breakeven point, so I am pleased with that.

CHAPTER 37: Don Hewson

Sally Johnson decided that she is getting close to the age when she will be too old to be a child chef on children's TV.

Mr Driburg agreed.

Mr Vincent created the child chef slot and Mr Vincent hired David Wilkins as the first child chef.

That one good hiring increased audiences for Mr Vincent's channel by a quarter. Together with buying "Terrible Tykes" the two decisions doubled the channel's early evening viewings and led to Mr Vincent's rising two levels in the TV channel hierarchy.

Mr Vincent is too high up in his company to be bothered normally with employing individual performers.

It is hugely important to Mr Vincent that the current child chef is always replaced by another excellent chef, so it was Mr Vincent who received the traditional telephone call making an early afternoon appointment with Mr Driburg but for Mr Vincent not to have lunch.

Mr Vincent is still a gyroscope in a suit.

Mr Vincent seems to me to be a rather more rotund gyroscope than he was when I first met him, but he is still a gyroscope.

"Sally.

"You have come to tell me you are going?

"And you are going to suggest your replacement?"

Given that Sally was carrying two hampers Mr Vincent was as usual spot on.

Mr Driburg and I and Sally were sat at Mr Vincent's desk. The Producer of the child magazine program that gives a slot for the child chef was there. Steve Sullivan is a sensible guy but this appointment was not his to make.

Sally smiled.

Sally opened the first hamper.

The soup was chicken and vegetable. The roll with it was half covered in poppy seed.

Sally then brought out a slice of "pork pie for the Gods", a dish invented by Robert Graham after Robert had left children's TV. It is a terrific pork pie with pureed sweet chutney injected into the top after the pie has fully cooled.

The tossed green salad with a light dressing was next.

"OK.

"I am on a diet and I have an industry dinner tonight.

"Take over, Steve."

Steve ate the sausage roll, the fluffy meat pasty, the fish rissole, the mashed potato with flecks of spinach, and the tomato, red onion, and lettuce salad with a different dressing.

The apple turnover, Dorset Crunch biscuit, and TKF lemon cheesecake concluded.

Steve clearly enjoyed the food.

"So what is in the other hamper?"

Sally smiled.

Shish kebab, shami kebab, fish pakora, meat samosa and vegetable samosa were the first dishes out of the hamper. With them were a sweet chili sauce and pieces of chicken tikka.

Steve tasted them, smiled broadly, and Steve said,

"You have to take the rough with the smooth in this job."

The pilau rice, spicy chicken, beef satay, bhindi curry, and potato and pea curry were all stars.

The slices of aromatic roast lamb and the couscous based salad were from a different culture but they were very acceptable.

Steve tasted the jelabi but he did not eat all of it.

Mr Vincent smiled.

"Two different cuisines are from one chef, or from two chefs?"

"Two chefs."

"Do I know them?"

"Alice Hewson and Abdul Daar."

Mr Vincent and Steve were impressed.

"Can I afford them?"

"The supermarket says it will pay for both."

Mr Driburg long ago did a deal where one of the large supermarket chains effectively sponsors for a child chef to appear on the program and in return it has a monopoly of supermarket advertising for two and a half hours in the late afternoon. The segment is a real draw for children and it all costs Mr Vincent's TV production company nothing.

Since David Wilkins decided to retire as a child chef we have used the hamper technique because the hamper provides convincing evidence that the child can cook a range of dishes very well despite being so young.

"Sally, I really want to thank you for your services.

"From my point of view you have been a perfect performer.

"So thank you."

They shook hands.

“Mr Hewson, thank you for training all my child chefs.

“It is a long time since I have seen you. This is my first opportunity to thank you.”

“I take it Alice Hewson is your daughter?”

I smiled and said “My elder daughter.”

Mr Vincent smiled resignedly.

“How many children are there?”

“Five. Three boys and two girls.”

Mr Vincent smiled.

We shook hands.

“Tom, you give me diversity and you cost me nothing.

“Will I see you at the industry dinner tonight?”

“Yes. See you there!”

We left.

The fine detail of timings and studio needs will be negotiated between Mr Driburg and Steve Sullivan.

Tom Driburg met our family through our first child chef David Wilkins. Since then Mr Driburg has become a multi-millionaire through representing our children in their various media and musical endeavours.

Most of the children have become multi-millionaires as well, so we have no complaints.

Mr Driburg has been clever in positioning himself as the supermarket chain’s link to the TV and film companies. Tom’s cunning works to the benefit of our children, and Tom sometimes does something for nothing.

Mr Driburg earns his money. I don’t care how much money Mr Driburg makes provided he does not make it by stealing from our children.

Alice and Abdul are delighted to be in line to be the next child chefs. For the last three weeks they have been trying to devise program segments that will attract other children.

The hard part is that there is only eight minutes in which to generate a dish or dishes.

Jabril Daar will be involved on the technical side of the production as Sahid Daar used to help David Wilkins.

All of our children are growing well and doing well.

Max enjoyed his experience as an actor in Dubai. The likelihood that Max will be acting quite a bit in the Middle East has really boosted his confidence.

Max was not lacking in confidence before but he has a real solid self-confidence now. Max is not bumptious but he is solidly confident.

Emma and I have told Max that if he does not work on his GCSEs he will not be going to the Middle East in the foreseeable future.

Max knows us well enough that he accepts our warning.

Max missed the Hewson camp because he was in Dubai. Everyone reports that the holiday was great. Max’s friend Michelle came. Michelle had a good time without Max.

Apparently Chris Edwards had set up an obstacle course for adults that our older lads completed. Most of the children attempted some parts of it.

Chris was surprised one morning to see more than a dozen youngsters doing synchronised one arm press ups and synchronised one arm body presses.

Max is on holiday now so Max is working on his proposed CD. The boy spends more than five hours a day preparing for the CD.

Max spends the rest of most days at the Wilkins house playing music, listening to music, and generally chilling with Peter Wilkins and Peter’s group of young ladies. Sometimes the Butler

boys and the Kellner boys and Robert Graham are there with a significant number of young ladies including the two Sallys.

Emma says that over the last month admissions for September have shot up. We are looking at a theatre school now approaching a hundred children.

Apparently one of the motivating factors for parents is that the local state schools are under stress.

Some parents have decided that they have to bite the bullet and pay for private education. Once that decision is made our theatre school is better value for money than the competition.

We have to provide some free places because that is the right thing to do. What we don't know yet is how to decide who to give the scholarships to.

Damien and Arthur and Kate are fine.

Emma is enthused by the new children and the energy they will bring. So many of our children are successful in acting we have become a drama beacon for the North.

Emma has hired more full time and part time staff, who will join us on 1st September.

CHAPTER 38: Mark Johnson

After two months of compulsory holiday I feel like a new man.

At the end of my leave I reported to Cecil.

"Welcome back, Mark.

"I need you."

Cecil took me to lunch at his house.

Irene sat with us.

"You have read most of the textbooks I bought for my MBA?"

"Yes."

"You could take it all in?"

"Yes."

"Good.

"I need you to complete a MBA straight away."

There is a slight problem with Cecil's idea because I do not have a first degree.

"Meldon Business School looked at the information I have assembled about your personal history and management experience.

"They will waive the requirement for a first degree."

I was surprised but strangely excited.

"Now, I am going to be a little unfair. I chose my options according to my perception of Byram's needs at the time.

"Byram's has changed since then, and I need you to study particular options.

"The international aspects of the Byrams Group are going to grow particularly when the air ship project takes off. I need you to study International Business.

"The Byram Group will quite soon be so large that I need you to study Corporate Governance.

"Given that we are into projects and possibly acquisitions I need you to study Cost and Management Accounting. I am sorry but you have to understand this in a lot of detail. You need to understand the different accounting assumptions used.

"The MBA only has three options so I am sorry I have taken any choice of options from you."

"I don't mind." I said.

“Georgina Arron will be studying for her MA alongside you. She earned her Engineering degree so the MBA is a logical next step. Merseyside Plastics is doing fine so I do not need to return her there.

“By the time Georgina finishes her MBA I will have something for her to do.

“I have booked you into an intensive Arabic course over this summer starting next Monday. You should be adequate or good in Arabic by the time you begin your MBA course.

“After your MBA if there is time I need you to learn Spanish.

“With important Export languages like Chinese, Arabic, and Spanish, a MBA, your Apprentice of the Year award and your practical managerial experience I can put you into any situation knowing you will carry credibility.

“I am not sure what Karen’s plans are, because Karen herself is not sure.

“For the moment Karen is running the Spanish operation. I think you can resume as her line manager. You will also be Mike Appleyard’s line manager for the builder’s merchant chain.

“That is enough responsibility while you study for your MBA.

“Dick Shepherd is still standing in for you and Dick will continue to report to me.

“Robert Iredale is going to advertise for an Exports Manager. You will eventually be the Export Manager’s line manager so I need you to help Robert Iredale and Garth Stead with that selection.

“Use this week to go round and say hello to everyone.”

I popped round and I saw many of my friends and colleagues at Byrams. The Byrams Group does not stand still so I met some newly promoted managers as well.

The intensive Arabic course was never intended to be fun but by the time I begin the MBA course I will have a working knowledge of Arabic.

Charlotte came home. I took a day off to go to Heathrow Airport to meet Charlotte and I took her home to Tryton.

We all had several days of hugging and kissing.

Charlotte looks really well.

Charlotte says she had a wonderful time on her missionary tour.

Charlotte has built her personal confidence, performing live before huge audiences.

Charlotte has learned a lot on the technical side about lighting and sound balancing.

Charlotte’s certificate of discharge, that she has completed her missionary duties satisfactorily, is signed by President Henderson himself.

Charlotte is so proud that President Henderson signed Charlotte’s certificate of discharge.

This is further proof that Charlotte’s concert tour has delivered the goods for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Charlotte listened to Sally’s music for the CD that Sally will record shortly. Charlotte said that Sally’s music is excellent.

Then Charlotte and Sally spent three days tweaking Sally’s music.

Sally’s music is now excellent.

Sister Sally and Charlotte spend a lot of time talking about all sorts of things.

Sister Sally, Charlotte, and Sally are the hub around which the household operates.

Before Rebecca took on being Shadow Minister of Agriculture “Agriculture Questions” were normally attended by fewer than twenty Members of Parliament.

Rebecca’s fan club in the Parliamentary Labour Party started turning up for Agriculture Questions. Attendance was up by eighty enthusiastic Labour MPs and a hundred dragooned Tory MPs.

Rebecca is so coolly rational that arguing with Rebecca is like having your teeth drilled at the dentist but without an anaesthetic.

Rebecca kept asking questions about two issues. One was why the Agriculture Ministry does not publish its contingency plans on its web site so the industry can see what the plans are for an epidemic or other disaster.

Rebecca pointed out that viruses and germs cannot read!

Enemies and terrorists do not care about the Ministry's contingency plans.

There is no good reason not to publish the contingency plans.

Only last month the Minister announced that the plans are currently being updated. The contingency plans will be published on the Ministry web site over the next few months as the revisions are completed.

A victory for Rebecca.

The second issue is that some farmers and farm workers are being poisoned by the pesticides and other chemicals they use on the land. Rebecca thinks that the Agriculture Ministry should be monitoring the problem. The Agriculture Ministry should be identifying which pesticides and chemicals are the culprits.

At the last Agriculture Questions Rebecca read out a list of donations to the Tory Party by the suppliers of these materials. Rebecca suggested that the reason the Agriculture Minister is not doing anything about the poisoning problem is because these donations to the Tory Party might stop.

Rebecca suggested that it is more important to the Minister to keep these large political donations running than to try to save lives of people working in Agriculture.

There was uproar and shouting in Parliament.

Whenever Rebecca gets up in Parliament Rebecca attacks the Tories and there is uproar.

Rebecca always has the facts and the evidence.

Last week Rebecca caused close to a riot in Parliament.

Rebecca brought up a statistical link between financial support for the Tory Party and the Agriculture Ministry's early payment of the EU agricultural subsidies.

The Labour MPs were all shouting and the Tories were on the back foot.

With the publicity that Rebecca had generated about the payments issue before Agriculture Questions almost every Opposition MP was present. The Tories had a full turnout because they were told they had to be there. It was possible that Labour might try some kind of Parliamentary procedural snap vote.

Most of the Cabinet were dragged away from their work to support the Agriculture Minister.

Rebecca was superb.

It was just like how Rebecca used to conduct a cross examination about missing biscuits before we Johnsons went into care with the Hewsons.

I wriggled with those memories.

Rebecca conveyed sadness but Rebecca held out the possibility that a swift confession might lead to forgiveness and a light punishment.

After the Minister had waffled his reply, Rebecca asked

"Is the Minister saying that that he is unable to make sure that all farmers are paid in the same week, or is the Minister saying that it is by his choice that farmers in the constituencies of Conservative Cabinet Ministers should be paid first and that farmers in Labour constituencies should be paid up to three months later?"

There was uproar and shouting.

When Rebecca could make herself heard Rebecca asked,
“Is it by the Minister’s will that those farmers who contribute to the Conservative Party should have priority in payments over those farmers who do not contribute to the Conservative Party?”

Vintage Rebecca!

The Labour MPs were all shouting “Resign”.

The Tory benches were silent and embarrassed.

The Prime Minister was in the House of Commons for Agriculture Questions, the first time any Prime Minister had attended Agriculture Questions since the last Foot and Mouth epidemic.

Rebecca commented on this.

Rebecca asked the Agriculture Minister if the Agriculture Minister had consulted with the Prime Minister before giving his initial evasive answer?

“Is it the Prime Minister’s will that Tory donors should receive special treatment from the Agriculture Ministry?”

It was that question to the Agriculture Minister that caused the near riot.

Rebecca putting the Prime Minister in the dock excited the Labour MPs hugely. The Labour MPs were all shouting.

The Tory MPs looked sick.

There are quite a lot of honest Tory MPs who were very unhappy that things had got to this stage.

The man in the street would be unsympathetic to the Tories.

A lot of Tory Party members and supporters would be very unhappy.

By convention the Prime Minister does not speak during Ministerial Questions.

With all the uproar going on and the Speaker vainly crying for order the Prime Minister spoke in the ear of the Agriculture Minister.

The Agriculture Minister rose.

Once the uproar had reduced a bit the Minister said,

“There are very considerable difficulties in meeting the request by the Shadow Minister that all agriculture subsidies should be paid out in the same week. If it were easy to do we would already be doing it.”

The shouts of derision from the Labour benches were very loud.

The Tory MPs still looked sick.

“As a Conservative Government we are committed not only to being honest but to being seen to be honest.”

The Labour MPs were hooting and shouting rude remarks.

“So the answer to the Honourable Member’s question is that from now on the European Union agricultural subsidies will all be paid out in the same week.”

The Tory MPs stood and cheered.

The Labour MPs stood and cheered.

A chant of “Re-bec-ca” came from the Labour MPs.

The Speaker did not rush to end the chanting.

All this was shown on the television news all that day and evening.

Rebecca’s triumph was the big political news story of the week.

Sister Sally suggested that I should invite my missionary partner Mark Walker to stay with us.

Mark Walker is a good guy. I do not recall mentioning Mark Walker to Sister Sally, but I must have done.

I emailed Mark inviting him to visit whenever.

Mark sent an email to say that he will come for a week in October.

CHAPTER 39: Rebecca Johnson

After my triumph in the House of Commons Humphrey, Vlad and I had a celebratory drink in Humphrey's room.

I drank tomato juice.

Humphrey and Vlad said that I had played my cards very well.

There is a real and genuine problem with the computer systems in the Agriculture Ministry because they are not compatible with the European Union computer systems. Everything has to be transferred between the two sets of computer systems but there is no computer programme that will make the transfer. Everything has to be transferred manually and checked manually.

The Tories had thought that they could weather the storm and not make any changes.

When I put the Prime Minister at risk the Tories had to pour water on my burning issue, at whatever financial cost.

The Tories had handled the situation badly. The Tory backbenchers would be furious with the Prime Minister and with the Agriculture Minister.

The National Farmers Union President went on television to say that I was the most effective Shadow Agriculture Minister of all time.

Through my efforts the Ministry of Agriculture's contingency plans will be publicly available.

In only four months as Shadow Agriculture Minister I have achieved having all the European Union agriculture subsidies paid in the same week when every Agriculture Minister for thirty years had said that it could not be done.

Well done Rebecca Johnson!

To have the President of the National Farmers Union praising a Labour Shadow Minister is unheard of.

Over the weekend "friends of the Agriculture Minister" told the Sunday newspapers that the Agriculture Minister had wanted to concede simultaneous payment of the subsidies.

When the Prime Minister learned what it would cost to achieve simultaneous payments the Prime Minister insisted that the Agriculture Minister should tough it out.

As soon as the Prime Minister realised that he personally was at risk the Prime Minister chickened out.

According to "friends of the Agriculture Minister" the debacle is entirely the fault of the Prime Minister.

"Sources in Downing Street" blamed the Agriculture Minister, saying that he had briefed the Prime Minister inadequately.

Opinion polls conducted over the weekend showed that among Labour voters 70% think that I ought to be Leader of the Labour Party, 25% think Humphrey the Party Leader should be Party Leader, and 5% support Tommy Sutherland.

Among Tory voters, 8% would vote Labour if I were the Labour Leader.

Among UKIP voters 20% would vote Labour if I were the Labour Leader.

In the Parliamentary Labour Party I am very popular.

Labour MPs from every wing of the Labour Party are desperate that I should visit their constituency. There are not many farms in the big cities but there are a lot of people who work in food processing, food transport, food retail, and catering.

I would be a big draw in any constituency.

I have standing invitations to speak at meetings and dinners of almost every Constituency Labour Party in the country.

I discussed with Derek the General Secretary of the Labour Party.

Derek has begun planning for the next General Election.

Derek gave me a list of the one hundred and fifty target seats for Labour at the next election. Those are the seats where Derek really needs me to go.

Derek also gave me a list of the forty constituencies with the smallest Labour majorities. It would help if I could visit them also.

During the next General Election campaign Derek intends to use me mainly in East Anglia and in the West Country. These are largely Tory areas with some marginal constituencies that we need to hold or to win. I am popular in these areas where most Labour Shadow Ministers are either unknown or are not popular. So these are the areas that need me. Over this summer I will spend time in both these areas, working with the Labour Party Regional Offices to decide priorities.

My Groatpie seat is a safe Labour seat. Provided I work the seat in the years before the Election people will understand that at election time I need to spend a lot of time in other areas.

I asked my Constituency Labour Party to set up a canvassing team that will visit marginal constituencies in East Anglia once a month. If I can take twenty canvassers once a month starting this autumn that will help the Labour Parties in those marginal constituencies.

The Labour MP for Barrow is a really nice guy, very genuine and very intelligent.

Barrow has relatively high unemployment. The largest industry is in making and maintaining the Trident nuclear deterrent.

The Labour Party is in process of changing its policy from supporting Trident to refusing to renew Trident. The swell of opinion in the Party is very strong. Short of a miracle the official policy will change.

Dave says that at the Council Elections next May many Labour councillors in Barrow will lose their seats over the Trident issue.

Dave uses fairly robust language to fight for his people and for his constituency. Most of the Shadow Cabinet are not interested in helping Dave because Dave has been so forceful and so offensive in putting his case.

No-one in the Shadow Cabinet wants to know about Dave's problems.

I promised Dave that during the Council Elections next year I will give a couple of days to campaign in Barrow in Furness.

Chapter 40: Linda Donkin

I have completed the second year of my degree at the Cordon Bleu College. I am enjoying the course very much.

I will pass my degree but I do not expect to earn a First Class Honours Degree.

If I earn a good degree I will be happy.

I bump into David Wilkins at College sometimes. David is trying to complete his degree for his personal satisfaction. David only has time to study for the degree part-time.

I work Friday nights and Saturdays in a very good restaurant. I am learning a tremendous amount.

I have a number of male friends, but none of them is "the one".

There is no rush.

Derek has landed a really great part in a new TV series. Once again Derek is the central character of his series.

Derek's character "Alf" is a nasty piece of work who is clawing his way upwards in a large London criminal gang. Only late in the first episode does the viewer discover that Alf is secretly working for the police.

According to the story line the Metropolitan Police are not trusted by the police nationally. Alf was supposedly recruited by a very small section of the National Anti Gangs Unit (NAGU). As NAGU is paranoid about the possibility of infiltration only one person knows that Alf is on the side of the angels.

Alf was never a police officer and Alf will not show up as a police employee on any computer.

Every episode requires Alf to commit criminal acts, to hurt people, and generally to be bad. Every week Alf has difficult situations and crises of conscience.

Alf's NAGU Controller does not share the information that Alf gains because the infiltration by Alf is a long term project.

It looks like it could be a long running series.

The series will make Derek as an adult character actor.

Colin is in a pop group based at the drama school. Colin is pianist guitarist and one of the lead singers. The group is rehearsing at the moment before releasing their first single.

Georgina has retired from "Terrible Tykes". Georgina has stayed on at the London drama school.

Poor Tohur Miah broke a shoulder bone while in Argentina for the Olympics.

Tohur has worked so hard. It is so unfair on Tohur.

Tohur decided to come back rather than to hang around feeling sorry for himself.

CHAPTER 41: Kevin Hanson

Cecil Byram asked for me to see him.

Cecil rarely asks for me, so I was curious. Usually when Cecil does ask to see me it is to give me a new project.

I already run Byrams Housing, Byrams Construction, and the Liverpool factory where I now have nearly two hundred "reformed" criminals employed.

I am in charge of the hand tools division, which manufactures hand tools in runs of twenty thousand at a time. Organising the production, the packaging and the marketing is an all-consuming task.

I am link man to Cecil for the three brass bands but that takes up little time.

I have more than enough on my plate, but obviously I had to go to see Cecil.

"Kevin, would you say that I am a socialist?"

That was unexpected.

Cecil is no way a socialist.

I thought for a moment.

"Cecil. You are a forward looking benevolent capitalist.

"And, I say this most affectionately, you are a cunning bastard.

"What are you planning?"

"I have decided that it is in my commercial interest that Labour should win the next General Election."

I know that Cecil now favours Labour, but how is it in Cecil's commercial interest that Labour should win?

Cecil will tell me that when he wishes to.

"I was going to give Labour a million pounds a month, but I realised that early money is more valuable than late money.

"I do not wish to be accused of attempting to influence Labour Party policy.

"So I would like to meet with someone from the Labour Party and just give the Labour Party the forty million pounds in one payment.

"I want you to set that up for me.

"I want you to be my link man to the Labour Party.

"I really want to keep Rebecca Johnson and Charlie Kent out of this so far as I can.

"I do not wish for anyone to say that Charlie and Rebecca are Byrams MPs rather than Labour MPs."

Reading between the lines Cecil is saying that at some point in the future there may be adverse repercussions. Cecil wishes to protect Charlie and Rebecca so far as he can.

This is worrying.

I telephoned the Labour Party and I ended up speaking to the woman in charge of Donations called Josephine.

She telephoned me to say that the General Secretary Derek could be free on Thursday morning for an hour.

So Cecil and I went to London.

We met in a meeting room. Me, Cecil, Derek, and Josephine.

Cecil started.

"I am going to make a very large donation to the Labour Party.

"I am not a socialist, but I want Labour to win the next General Election.

"Originally I was going to pay you a million pounds a month."

Derek's eyebrows shot up. Josephine's face froze.

"But then I decided that it made more sense to just give you all the money.

"It saves any worries that I might stop sending money if you do something I do not like or if you say something I do not like.

"I do not wish to control the Labour Party and I do not wish to be thought to control the Labour Party."

Derek was looking very suspiciously at Cecil.

"So here is a Byrams Group cheque for forty million pounds."

Derek looked at Cecil very hard.

"I stopped believing in Father Christmas a long time ago.

"You will forgive me if I am just a little twitchy about this huge donation."

"I want the Tories to lose because they are no good for Britain.

"Of the other political parties you are the party most likely to beat the Tories so I am backing you.

"I like the general thrust of your policies.

"As the election gets closer your policies may change here or there but the general thrust is in the right direction.

"It cannot be right that I have any say in your policies or in your campaign. It is your party, not mine.

"I don't know if this will help. It is a proof copy of a leaflet I intend to send to every household in Britain early next month."

The leaflet advertised the Byrams Group, with information about the Byram companies and their product ranges.

The front page was a personal letter from Cecil Byram. Cecil's photograph is at the top right hand corner.

"Dear Elector,

You may not know who I am.

If you do know who I am you will know by now that I have made a donation to the Labour Party of forty million pounds.

Originally I was a Tory. I inherited a family manufacturing business.

I believed that the Conservatives were acting in my interest and in the interest of Britain generally.

I no longer believe that.

With nearly 35,000 workers I am one of the largest private sector employers in Britain.

Our education system in Britain is so poor that to employ good technicians and engineers I have to train them myself. I run the equivalent of a small university to train the people I need.

I can afford to do that, but what about the thousands of little businesses that just cannot find good workers and cannot afford to train them?

What about all the people who wish to be trained?

The Conservatives have no serious plans to improve technical education or to encourage real apprenticeships. Labour is serious in its intent to prepare Britain's workforce to play its part in world beating businesses.

The National Health Service used to be the pride of Britain. The Conservatives always say that the NHS will be safe with them.

They lie.

My business runs a loan scheme for our workers. The most common reason why our workers need big loans is to pay for private operations because members of their family have to wait too long for NHS treatment. These loans should not be necessary.

Many Tory MPs have shares in health related companies. They intend to become richer as they leach money from the taxpayer.

The Conservatives want to break up the NHS because the Conservatives really believe that an anarchic system with providers driven by profit must provide a better service than a properly planned and well organised NHS.

Labour founded the NHS.

The NHS always runs better under Labour.

Local Government has been slashed under the Conservatives.

The result is that road maintenance has reduced with the roads getting worse each year.

Social Services budgets had to be slashed, with obvious consequences for Child Protection and support for the elderly.

Support and treatment for people with alcohol and drug problems is desperately inadequate – from which we all suffer.

At the next election it will be a choice between the slash and burn policies of the Conservatives or the reasoned policies of Labour.

Labour has positive plans for Britain that make sense, so I now back Labour.

I have put my money where my mouth is

My request is that at the next election you place your cross where your head and your heart tell you that you should vote.

Vote for a rational and better organised nation."

Derek and Josephine read the letter carefully.

Derek said to Cecil,

"It may seem strange to look a gift horse in the mouth, but part of my job is to protect reputation of the Labour Party.

"Are there any skeletons in your closet?"

"The odd bone, perhaps.

"But no skeletons."

Derek nodded.

"This is such a big decision that I wish to discuss it within the leadership.

"With your permission I will keep the cheque.

"I will talk to a few people, and get back to you early next week."

Cecil and I went back to Yorkshire.

Rebecca Johnson was consulted.

Rebecca apparently said,

"Cecil is a clever man.

"If Cecil donated a million pounds, that would be fine.

"If Cecil Byram is parting with forty million pounds it is because Cecil somehow thinks it is in his interest.

"What Cecil has up his sleeve I have absolutely no idea."

Humphrey as Party Leader had to make the decision.

"We take the money with our eyes wide open.

"That amount of money makes it possible for us to make our case as we never have before."

The next step was how to structure the publicity about the donation.

Cecil invited the journalists and Humphrey to Redcar Steelworks. The steel works was working at full pelt.

"The Tories were prepared to see this steelworks close because keeping it open did not fit with their dogma.

"I bought it and I have turned Redcar Steelworks around.

"Look around this Redcar community and imagine what it would be like if the Tories had had their way."

Most of what Cecil said was what was going out in the letter that Cecil had shown to Derek and Josephine.

"Surely you do not support the Labour Party on Trident?" a journalist asked.

"I believe in an independent nuclear deterrent.

"Trident is not independent. An American officer has to approve each firing or the missiles cannot fire.

"Simply, Trident is not independent.

"Trident is a waste of money.

"Labour is right on that."

"For a lot less than four hundred million pounds Byrams could make an independent nuclear deterrent. We would use very dirty nuclear bombs that would make our opponent's country uninhabitable for forty years. We would rain down cheap and cheerful rockets. It would not matter if they were shot down over the target country because the nuclear contamination would be almost as effective.

"I agree with scrapping Trident.

"Where I differ from Labour is that I think we should replace Trident with an independent nuclear deterrent."

Humphrey was at the press conference.

Humphrey's comment was

"Cecil Byram is entitled to his views, like every other citizen.

"Cecil Byram cannot buy the Labour Party and all credit to him Cecil Byram is not trying to change our policy.

"Cecil Byram has his policy on nuclear weapons and we have ours."

CHAPTER 42: Mark Johnson

Cecil Byram is up to something.

Cecil is conserving cash in a way that he never has before.

Cecil is not making long-term loans or loan capital investments. Cecil is not investing his investment income. Cecil has literally billions out on very short term loans.

Cecil has some project in mind.

Despite conserving his cash Cecil has given a huge gift to the Labour Party, for no obvious reason.

I could ask Cecil.

If I did ask Cecil he would say that he is operating on a "need to know" basis and as yet I have no need to know.

So I don't ask.

I am sure that Karen Byram knows something because Cecil always gets buy in from the Byram family before starting any big new project.

I don't ask Karen because if I can't ask Cecil I should not ask Karen.

Daniel Mason and Martin Jenkins are running some kind of operation in a disused pub about five miles from Willerton. I know that Daniel and Martin are supposedly working on the air ship transport project.

Why the air ship project should require security fences, alarm systems, 24 hour security guards, and almost no communication is a mystery.

Cecil visits their pub once a week.

I think the air ship project is a cover for whatever Cecil is up to.

Cecil is always complaining that he does not have enough managers.

Chester Wilson has been given full time paid leave to complete his PhD. Georgina Arron and I have been put onto full time MBA courses. Daniel Mason and Martin Jenkins are tied up in Cecil's project.

Either Cecil has a sudden surplus of managers or Cecil is training up Chester, Georgina and myself to join a major project starting in a year or two.

Purely by coincidence of course David Taylor our former Finance Manager who now runs Energy has hired two assistants and Garth Stead our Components Production Manager has hired three assistants.

One would almost think that Cecil is trying to free up David and Garth for some major new project.

My former assistant Dick Shepherd has been seconded to help Rose Howarth our Director of Central Services including HR. Presumably Rose also needs to be freed up.

It must be one heck of a project that is going to need for so many of us to be involved.

If Cecil is keeping it quiet Cecil will have a good reason.

Karen Byram was visiting her parents.

Karen made time to see me as her line manager and friend.

Karen's businesses are all making good money. There are no significant managerial problems.

Containers of bricks leave for Bahrain three times a week.

We have a supply of empty containers at the brickyard.

All is under control.

Karen said,

"Do you know Melanie Petworth?"

"Melanie is a Mormon."

I was surprised.

"I know of Melanie Petworth but I have never met her.

"How do you know her?"

"Sometimes I drive or I fly her young women to safety.

"Chris and I sometimes house the women for a few days until permanent accommodation can be arranged."

"I am impressed.

"Good on you."

"Sometimes I am in Spain or otherwise unavailable. It would be helpful to Melanie if you could sometimes drive for her or fly for her."

"Are you saying that Melanie needs back up occasionally?"

"Yes."

"Well, thank you for that compliment.

"I must help."

Melanie rescues young women from danger and spirits them away from Leeds. What Melanie does is important and dangerous.

I cannot refuse to help.

Karen gave me Melanie's telephone number. We agreed that Karen would telephone Melanie to tell Melanie that I will telephone tomorrow evening.

So the following afternoon I telephoned Melanie Petworth.

We both knew of each other.

Karen values both of us as people.

There is a bookstore in Leeds that has a coffee shop inside. We agreed to meet there at four the following afternoon.

"How will I know you?"

"It's all right," she said.

"I have seen you at a social."

"OK".

The following afternoon I arrived at the bookshop early. I looked around in case there were any young women looking for me.

Then I bought two hot chocolates and two pieces of cake and I waited.

Eventually Melanie appeared.

Melanie apologised for being late but she had been cornered outside a lecture room by a young woman whose life is a mess and who has latched onto Melanie.

"You would like me to do some driving?"

"Yes.

"Usually at short notice.

“You would be taking someone to a safe house usually a few hours away.”

“I also have a pilot’s licence but I do not own a plane. With notice I can book a plane easily enough.”

There was a lot going on in our conversation besides the words. Melanie is not a beauty in the way that Karen Byram is, but I liked what I saw.

I also liked the way that Melanie was “operating” to resolve a managerial issue.

We both knew that Karen Byram had put us two together to make sure that we met.

Karen thinks highly of both of us.

As we both respect Karen we were disposed to consider being interested in the other.

We talked about each other and about ourselves.

Melanie has a younger brother who needs a firm hand. Melanie’s parents have difficulty managing Luke. Melanie needs to be around to help her parents with Luke.

Melanie had wished to become a Mormon missionary but because of Luke that was not possible.

Melanie more or less fell into rescuing young women.

If you walk around Leeds or any major city with your eyes open you will see people who need rescuing. The challenging part is in helping the people to escape.

Finding safe housing afterwards is a very real problem and that takes up most of Melanie’s free time.

Melanie networks like crazy among feminists and Left women and religious groups, seeking trustworthy people who can take in a young woman and care for her properly.

Melanie has some “safe houses” who can take someone in on no notice, but then Melanie has to find long term support for the women.

Melanie says that what she is doing has value.

I agree.

I explained what my job normally involves.

With Exports and Expansion I am helping to create jobs in the UK. I am helping to sustain jobs in the UK.

I have been taken off that work temporarily.

I am on with learning Arabic at the moment. I begin my MBA in October but I have already read most of the books.

My Call as Counsellor to the Stake Youth President is more interesting than I thought it would be.

I talked about my family including Sister Sally Cuddy.

I said that I am slightly surprised that we have not met in Mormon circles, given that we are both in our early twenties.

“I have seen you at events, but you are always surrounded by young women like flies around a honey-pot.

“From the information that you never seem to have had a girlfriend I just assumed that you must be asexual or gay.”

That was a surprise.

“Karen tells me you are wired the right way.”

I smiled.

“I haven’t visited the swamp of homosexuality.

“I was just about to ask you to rescue me from the desert of asexuality.

“But why were you asking Karen about my sexuality?”

"It was about whether the young women you might be transporting would be safe with you.

"So Karen told me some of your history with her."

Some parts of my history with Karen are fine. Some parts would be better not discussed in Mormon circles.

I must have looked uncomfortable.

Melanie laughed.

"She said that you are definitely heterosexual.

"You were a perfect gentleman when you were with her.

"She said that you are a slow starter and that you are too straight laced."

I smiled.

I think there was a twinkle in my eye.

"We were both much younger then."

Thank goodness Karen has not mentioned our holiday in France.

"So will you rescue me?"

Melanie smiled.

"I might do.

"Karen tells me you can dance.

"On Wednesdays there is Ballroom Dancing in Morley. Would you like to go ballroom dancing?"

How much has Karen told Melanie?

"Yes."

We agreed I would collect Melanie from her home in Armley, a suburb of Leeds, take Melanie to dinner, and then on to the dancing.

When I went to collect Melanie her younger brother Luke was there.

Luke is a bundle of unresolved frustrations and angers. Luke at seventeen has stopped going to school but Luke is not doing anything useful with his life.

I was surprised when Luke suddenly punched me. It was a weak punch like I used to do before I learned how to punch.

Luke was very surprised that he hurt his hand when he punched me.

"What are you wearing under there?"

"Armour?"

"No.

"It is just me.

"The difference between us is that I am physically fit and I have been taught to fight properly.

"You are neither."

"Are you going to fuck my sister?"

The boy really is wound up.

"We are both Mormons.

"You know our rules.

"Not any time soon. Not until after marriage.

"And after marriage I will not fuck your sister anyway."

Luke looked surprised.

So did Melanie!

"If we marry we will make love together.

"This is a first date so you are jumping the gun a bit.

"So relax about that.

“Anyway we will get off now and I will bring Melanie home fairly late.

“Don’t wait up!”

Melanie was very pleased that I was so calm about being punched. Melanie was so sorry about Luke.

She was grateful that I had not hit Luke back.

I said,

“There is good in that boy.

“It will be hard work to bring it out but I will do what I can.”

I take Luke camping and climbing about once a month. I have started teaching Luke our fitness exercises. I have told Luke that when Luke has built up his strength properly I will teach Luke how to punch properly.

Melanie says that Luke is still a pain at home, but less of a pain. Luke looks forward to our outings and Luke talks about them for days afterwards.

The whole Petworth family is grateful to me for the time I am spending with Luke.

Melanie and I are getting on well.

Chapter 43: Cecil Byram

I put Mark Johnson on leave because I was concerned for Mark’s mental and physical health. It was the right thing to do.

My business is big, and we are profitable. It is virtually all low tech to medium tech.

We are now manufacturing electronic components on the Groatpie Trading Estate but that is pushing the boundaries of our capabilities. Electronic components is a very competitive industry, competing with the Chinese on price and with some very well established producers on quality.

Martin Johnson has worked very hard to make that division a technical and a financial success.

At Groatpie we have cheap energy, cheap plastic, cheap metal and cheap premises.

The return on capital I normally require is ten per cent. I am willing to accept nil profit in the business building phase, but we are more than breaking even already.

The electronic components were simply added on to our existing marketing arrangements with a long burst of internet marketing to create sales.

My relatively small workforce at Mings and Chang’s generates well over ten million pounds profit per worker per year. I have a two billion pound investment in that project

Engineering profits are well over twenty thousand pounds a head. That is only achieved by high expenditure on training and by constantly upgrading the kit my workers work with.

It is my coal mines and the steel works that drag down the average profit significantly. I do very well to average thirteen thousand pounds profit per worker per year.

My secret weapon of course is the catering. Not the catering profits but the way that excellent catering boosts worker attendance and productivity.

Internet sales are very profitable. Internet marketing has transformed my bottom line.

Sahid Daar’s marketing skills are utterly essential to me.

I have bought a number of businesses for buttons or for relative buttons and my team have transformed them into profit making enterprises.

No businesses lose money.

Byram Group earns over seven hundred million pounds profit a year. On top of that our significant investments bring in close to two hundred million pounds.

We have debt because I borrowed to purchase the coal mines, but that debt is very cheap and it costs little to service. I could clear it easily if I chose. The mines service the debt and they make reasonable profits.

Otherwise we have no debt.

On the normal multiple of twenty times earnings I could sell the Byram Group without the investments to an investment group for fourteen billion pounds or so. I could sell the investments for two billion easily.

I have metal stocks worth more than two billion pounds lying on the ground at Ming's and at Chang's.

With a price / earnings ratio of 17.6% BABE Systems the huge Defence contractor has a market capitalisation of just over sixteen billion pounds. If it looked like Labour might win the next General Election, and Labour was still committed to abandoning Trident, the share price of BABE Systems might drop by a quarter, leading to a market capitalisation of twelve billion pounds.

Could I purchase BABE Systems PLC?

At twelve billion pounds the p/e ratio would be 13.2%. I normally reckon on earning at least ten per cent on investments. At 13.2% the investment is still good, just not as good as I would like.

If I did a stock market raid but I failed to gain control, the shares in BABE Systems would still be a moderately good investment.

If the Conservatives won the General Election the share price would bounce back. I could stay with the investment or I could take a very healthy profit and reinvest elsewhere. Or sell enough shares to recoup the original investment and keep the profit in BABE Systems shares.

If Labour won the General Election BABE Systems would have help from the Labour Government to reduce the damage to the business from losing the Trident work.

All this is a fairly obvious finance discussion.

The attraction to me of BABE Systems is not financial.

I have a different purpose.

My interest is qualitative.

There is not a lot of profit in components unless there are special circumstances.

The reason I wish to take control is a form not of asset stripping but of asset sweating. I intend for Byrams to make extra money from the assets that BABE Systems has.

What I want is the high level of skills and expertise within the workforce - production workers, technology, scientists, and engineers.

If I could set that knowledge to work in the current operations of the Byram Group, and devise new operations and products to exploit all that expertise, I would upgrade the Byram Group in no time.

If my workers were manufacturing high end products I could double or triple our profits on that production.

The upgrading of the capabilities of the Byram Group would ensure our future.

BABE Systems spends billions of pounds on components and materials. If some of that could be directed towards the Byram Group we would make even more profit.

I am a patriot. I am proud to own four munitions factories that produce almost all the bullets and shells that the British Armed Forces use.

I would be enormously proud to own our main Defence contractor.

BABE Systems would be run for what it can produce, without undue attention to short term profits. Given how long Defence projects take to begin, and to run, I think the Byram family approach is better for Britain than the approach of even a well-run public company like BABE Systems which has to worry about the short termism of the stock market and of shareholders.

As with the Byrams Group the knowledge that control of the business is with people who will never sell the business would be psychologically important to the workforce and to the management.

If I fail to gain control I end up with a reasonably profitable investment.

If I gain control then I have huge benefits for Byrams.

My financial adviser Mr Porteous was an early port of call.

Without giving any specifics, I asked Mr Porteous to give me advice on how one buys a public company.

Mr Porteous said that he assumed I was not asking out of idle curiosity.

I confirmed that I was not asking out of idle curiosity.

Mr Porteous arranged for me to spend an entire day being briefed by a hatchet faced man in his middle thirties who Mr Porteous said would be Mr Porteous' team leader should the purchase go forward.

Geoff is not a nice guy, but I was not paying for a nice guy. I was paying for a full blooded briefing, which is what Geoff gave me.

Neither Geoff nor Mr Porteous know which is my target company.

Geoff "knows" the market capitalisation is twelve billion pounds but as the market capitalisation is currently over sixteen billion pounds Geoff's information is incorrect.

I felt Geoff gave me a terrifically good briefing.

When banks and other lenders are considering whether to lend on a project like mine one of the factors is the extent to which I am risking my own money. The lenders like to see me putting hard cash into a project and not relying entirely upon borrowing.

As I am not an established stock market player, and I have no relevant track record, my having real substance to put in is hugely important.

My task breaks into three parts.

First, I have to raise twelve billion pounds to make the purchase. Geoff taught me about the mechanics of how one goes about making such a large purchase.

BABE Systems and its major shareholders are so tied into the British banks that whatever I cannot raise from my own resources I will have to borrow from abroad. I will do the borrowing during the three weeks or so before I launch the bid. Any longer than that and the information might leak. Also, I have to pay fees once I start borrowing.

Alternatively Byrams Group can borrow say two billion pounds for "acquisitions and investment".

Assuming the two billion pounds in investments and the billion pounds I have out on short term loans, and the two billion pounds I have lying on the ground at Ming's are turned into money, and I borrow two billion pounds, I could have seven billion pounds.

With seven billion pounds of BABE Systems shares bought I could borrow against those shares a further five billion pounds. That is my twelve billion pounds. Depending on the share capitalisation at the time of purchase, that would buy between 100% and 70% of BABE Systems.

I can service the loans out of dividends on the shares bought.

Much of the money invested will be mine rather than borrowed so I hope to clear the bank loan over a few years.

Once I have control I could take the business private

I know in general terms that there are stock market raids. I have no idea whether I should raid six months before the election, six weeks before the election, six days before the election, or when.

Geoff says that I need to put everything except the borrowing into order so that I am ready to go when I think the time is right. If I leave it too late someone else might bid.

Given that some shareholders will not sell their shares, do I need twelve billion pounds or would say eight billion pounds be enough? Eight billion should give me control. I could buy the rest over time.

Once I have won, the borrowing of the rest of the money I need should be easier and cheaper.

So the first problem is the technical problem of how to make the takeover.

I need to set up an acquisition team. Who should be on it? Who should lead it? Should I disguise it for general security? Where should it be based?

Who needs to know?

The second technical problem is what to do the day after a successful raid. What do I say to the workers and the other stake-holders? Given that more than half of BABE Systems workers are not British and do not work in Britain, what do I say to them?

What will I do with what I have bought? It would be a disaster were the human capital to walk or to be poached. We must reassure people about their futures immediately.

The reasons why I do not wish to float the Byrams Group are still valid.

Should I live with BABE Systems being a public company? How does one take a public company private?

The third technical problem is the sweating of the assets. Sweating must begin immediately we have made the purchase.

Martin Jenkins has finished at Groatpie so I put Martin onto planning the engineering side of exploiting the acquisition. When Georgina finishes her MBA I will have Georgina work with Martin and send Martin on his MBA.

How will the two businesses interact? Do I wish to integrate the businesses or will BABE Systems continue to run independently? Will I have to increase the pay of Byram Group key managers and staff? There are many issues here.

I am thinking that Mark's air ships program could be an immediate source of work for BABE Systems workers. The BABE Systems people could take the plans and drawings and in say six weeks improve the plans out of all recognition. BABE Systems could manufacture the air ships. Better, BABE Systems could provide the expertise.

Do I want Labour to win the General Election? Would BABE Systems be even cheaper the day after the election should Labour win?

What can I do to make it look as though Labour will win the General Election? What will that cost?

The forty million pounds I have put into the Labour Party is a well worthwhile expenditure to depress the share price of BABE Systems.

Should I put more money in?

I instructed Tony Hart to run down metal stocks at Ming's and Chang's from five years Byrams Group usage to four months usage. There is no rush. Given the turnover at Ming's the rundown will take much less than a year. Tony is to keep quiet.

I told our financial team that generally speaking I do not wish to make any new investments outside the Byram Group. Just stash the money in short term loans, and keep quiet.

If it is say two years before I bid I will have more than twenty-eight hundred million pounds of manufacturing income and four hundred millions of investment income.

Near the time I could sell the two billion pounds of investments.

Altogether I can point to a likely war chest of at least 7.2 billion pounds, £9 billion pounds if I borrow.

The Byram family has over a billion pounds offshore, mostly on short term loans. That is intended to fund the purchase of air ships but if push comes to shove it could be loaned to the Byram Group to help with the BABE Systems purchase.

I told Daniel Mason not to spend any money beyond design costs on the air ship project. And Daniel is to keep quiet.

I told Daniel that the air ship project needs room for about forty people and to be isolated from the rest of the Byrams Group. I told Daniel to put the design team in a totally different building or even a different city because I wish the air ship design team to be distinct from the air ship project team. I said to Daniel that I wish the project team office to be within twenty minutes of our Head Office in Willerton.

I am quite relaxed where the air ship design office is located. The air ship project team office is going to become the acquisition team office in time.

Geoff had warned me that once it becomes known that Byram Group is planning a bid, computer hackers will attack our security. In particular the hackers will target my personal workstations.

I decided to play a little trick on the hackers.

I had my industrial research company generate some research on the current Directors and major shareholders of BABE Systems.

I chose the Director who is the least wealthy of the group. I made an opportunity to speak to him socially at a charity function. Then I composed a letter to him which I placed on my personal workstation.

The letter referred to our meeting. I said that I had been pleased to meet with him.

Then I told lies. I supposedly confirmed our agreement that he would appear to be vocal in his objections to my proposed purchase of BABE Systems once the bid became known.

He would of course let me know what the Board was doing to defend itself. Once I had won the purchase I would appoint him as Chairman of the Board. I felt that the salary of the Chairman of the Board is not as high as it should be, and accordingly I would double the salary immediately. Of course his pension fund would have to be increased commensurately.

I stressed that he would receive only small amounts of money from me until after the bid had been successful.

I will follow up with letters thanking him for information and supposedly enclosing cash.

I then prepared a second set of letters relating to a different director, also offering him the Chairman's job as a reward.

Should hackers not break in to my workstation no harm will be done.

Should hackers in the direct or indirect employ of BABE Systems break in they would no doubt report their findings. The repercussions should waste the time and the emotional energy of the key Board members at a crucial time.

In the stock market crash after the BREXIT Referendum I bought BABE shares as they briefly dropped to under £4.00 each.

I now own eight per cent of the shares, which were all the shares that we could buy at £4.00. That took just on a billion pounds, which I could meet out of maturing three day loans.

I have vacuumed up many of the loose shares not held by long term investors. It makes it harder for a predator to get started.

I am not ready to start a bid yet.

The devaluation after BREXIT sent metal prices went up, which has helped Ming's and the Redcar steelworks to generate extra profits.

Our brick and steel contracts with Bahrain are expressed in American dollars so with the devaluations of the pound and the euro both contracts bring much better returns.

Buying eight per cent of BABE Systems does not trigger any bid formalities. It did of course trigger interest from the BABE Systems management.

CHAPTERZ 44: Rebecca Johnson

Amina's wedding was great fun. It was the first time in years that all the Hewson children have been together.

Ali Miah looks really well. Shakoora is clearly very happy.

The Doncaster Muslims are impressed by all the media stars in our extended Hewson family, but Ali Miah was the most important person at the wedding.

Ali Miah is Site Engineer for Holy Mecca. In prestige terms Ali eclipses every Muslim in Britain. It was funny to see so many people queuing up to be photographed with Ali.

Baby Fatima is a gorgeous delightful baby. All us Hewson kids see ourselves as aunts and uncles.

Amina's husband Abdul seems to be a good guy. Abdul says that he is happy for Amina to make clothes for movie stars.

Abdul will be working for a friend's business in Silicon Valley.

Abdullah Daar is going to set up a business selling car parts. Abdullah says that if the first shop is a success Abdullah will set up a second shop.

Abdul has a map of South Yorkshire and Abdullah has marked on the map where all of his competitors are. Abdullah will set up where there is no local competition. Abdullah will run the shop for a month, ironing out systems and gaining experience. Then Sahid will give Abdullah a blast of internet marketing targeted at the area local to the shop.

Sahid Daar is doing very well at University. Sahid is still earning good money from his consultancy for the Byram Group.

Sahid says that he does not intend to have a normal job. Sahid will just stay self-employed.

Dennis Wilkins has completed the second year of his Engineering degree at Meldon University. Dennis will be applying for graduate apprenticeships over the next year. Dennis can afford not to work but Dennis says that if he had to sit at home all day he would be climbing the walls within weeks.

Dennis has taken up stock car racing as a hobby. He says he enjoys it.

Tohur Miah is disappointed that after all his preparation Tohur did not in the end compete. Tohur hopes that by the next Olympics his shoulder will have made a good recovery and Tohur may be able to compete.

After Amina's wedding I went straight to the Labour Party Annual Conference.

At the Conference each Shadow Minister has the opportunity to speak.

I had a bit of fun about the Tories and their political donations. Then I had to deal with Cecil and his huge donation.

I said that I could only quote Karl Marx,

“From each according to his abilities, to each according to his need.”

I told the conference that I had always thought that the quotation is from Fredreich Engels, but it turns out that I was wrong. It is Karl Marx.

“We need the money, so thank you Cecil!”

I plugged my wish that the Agriculture Ministry should set up a study group to research the pesticide linked deaths and illnesses. I announced that the Shadow Health Secretary has agreed that when Labour is elected the Health Ministry and the Agriculture Ministry will set up a joint study group.

I had a standing ovation for that.

At the Conference the leaders of “Unite The Union” asked why I had not stood in the elections to be a member of the National Executive of the Labour Party. The Union would support me if I were to stand next year.

I thanked them for their support.

I said that I would give the idea some thought over the next few months.

At the end of the Conference I led the singing of “The Red Flag”.

My leading “The Red Flag” at Labour Party Annual Conference has become a popular tradition very quickly.

The opinion polls still have me as the popular choice to be Labour Party Leader, well ahead of the current leader Humphrey, with both of us miles ahead of Tommy Sutherland.

I wanted to make a public statement of support for Humphrey, but Humphrey and Vlad asked me not to.

Their thinking was that the media will always put up someone as an alternative party leader. If I rule myself out then the media will encourage some other candidate. So I should not rule myself out.

The following week Chester and I married.

Everyone I knew from Tryton was there. The Hewson gang were all there, except for Ali Miah and Shakoora Daar who had gone back to Bahrain, and Amina Daar who was on her honeymoon.

A surprising number of people travelled up from Groatpie.

My missionary partners were there, some with husbands and fiancés.

My sisters Charlotte and Sally were bridesmaids.

The Daars had made all our dresses. We looked really good.

Mormon marriage ceremonies are a bit different to those of other religions. When two Mormons marry we bond for eternity, not just for life. We do not allow non-Mormons to witness this ceremony.

If one of the partners is not a Mormon then we are only bonding for life and non-Mormons may witness the ceremony.

A considerable number of people therefore could not attend the ceremony itself, but of course they came to the Reception immediately afterwards.

I was very surprised that the national media sent photographers to cover the wedding, but they did. The photographers had to stay outside, which they really did not like.

Tough!

The food was fantastic of course.

We sent some food out to the photographers.

The press were keen to have a photo of me with the Byram family but Cecil and I did not give the photographers that opportunity.

Mark made quite a good speech, saying that this was the first time in years that Mark was able to speak without Rebecca interrupting him.
There was laughter at Mark's statement.
Mark mentioned both our parents and he expressed Mark's confidence that they approve of Chester Wilson.
Chester said that he was confident that in our marriage,
"Rebecca will do exactly what I tell her to do
– if she wishes to!"
Everyone knows me, so there was laughter at that.
Sister Sally stood in as the bride's mother, but as Sister Sally was in tears all day Sister Sally did not contribute much to the organisation of the day.
There was so much food left over that the missionaries we have at our Church were pressed into service to distribute the spare food to the needy.
Chester and I flew to Hawaii for our honeymoon.

CHAPTER 45: David Wilkins

I made a point of watching one of the cookery segments that Alice Hewson and Abdul Daar now produce.
Alice and Abdul are each of them good performers.
Their banter sounds like it is not scripted, which is how good banter should sound. There is so much friendship and affection tied in with the banter that you cannot help but enjoy the segment. They are two happy and confident youngsters having fun.
They make simple food that any child could make.
Having two people involved allows for discussion for when things do not quite go right.
I had to be didactic. Discussing the same issues Alice and Abdul can be consultative. They can smile and laugh in a way that I never could.
Good for them!
Amongst us older Hewson graduates marriages and babies seem to be in the air.
Amina Daar and Rebecca Johnson have just married.
Shakoora Daar and Ali Miah have had their first child.
My sister Helen is pregnant with her third child.
My sister Andria and Sam have decided to marry.
Andria intends to have the baby she is carrying, her third, and then to marry Sam a few months after that.
Karen Byram is going to marry Annette's brother Chris Edwards. Cecil Byram has booked a hotel outside Meldon for the ceremony and for the reception. The wedding will take place in early August next year.
After the wedding Karen and Chris will continue to live on Chris's estate near Hereford.
Chris's estate has a small landing strip.
Karen commutes for studies and for business.
Chris employs a couple of retired Special Forces sergeants as security for his estate. The sergeants have already caught some local poachers. As they were only poachers and they were not intruders the sergeants just gave them very clear warnings about the consequences should the poachers return.
Although Chris has not said this I suspect that had they been intruders they would have been questioned and then buried.

Annette and I probably will marry but neither of us is in a huge rush. We are thinking maybe to marry the summer after Chris and Karen marry.

Chris and Annette's brother John Edwards crashed and burned in his GCSE examinations.

Then John carried on experimenting with drugs.

Gerald Edwards arranged for John to be placed "voluntarily" in rehab. John was flown by private plane to a remote part of New Zealand. The rehabilitation colony there is about two hundred miles from the nearest town, with no roads or paths linking them.

In theory John can walk out anytime because there are no fences holding him in. John would have no money as the rehabilitation colony uses toy banknotes as its internal currency.

John has no communications save a monthly letter to his father.

John will be at the rehabilitation colony until the guys running it are satisfied that John will not revert to drugs once he returns to civilisation.

Tough love, which only very rich families can afford.

The business I run is more profitable than the speculating side of Gerald Edwards' business although we employ fewer than half the staff.

We use much less working capital.

The people who work for me believe that they are well paid, and by the standards of ordinary people they are.

Gerald's underperforming toffs and brainboxes are paid much more than my workers.

Almost everyone in my operation produces profit.

We do not have client relations managers because we have no clients to wine dine cosset and sell to.

We have no analysts because each speculator is his or her own sector analyst.

We make and we receive virtually no telephone calls, and we have no visitors. We have no student interns or postgraduate interns.

Recruitment is strictly through our share trading playpen. There is no HR team.

As we do not use money other than our own capital we do not need a Compliance team.

We have no Public Relations team.

We do not speak to journalists or to analysts or to prospective investors. The only person in the business with authority to speak to journalists is me.

I rarely speak to journalists.

We have a General Manager who doubles as HR, a Financial Control Officer, and a Security manager. We balance our books at the end of each week. The General Manager and I monitor every employee's trading activity daily.

We not only look at the individual trades but we monitor the total volume of each trader's trades as a sudden increase in trades can signal desperation or trouble.

We never trade with Gerald's business because whatever one side gained on a deal the other side would lose. As Gerald or Gerald's family own both businesses trading between the businesses would be silly.

I am not worried about my traders being poached because they are the "wrong" kind of people for the financial institutions.

I do not meet the traders until I have decided to hire them and they come in to sign contracts. By this point they have established that they are competent, which is all that I care about.

Until I meet a trader I have no idea whether the computer identity is for a young person or an old person, a male or a female, disabled or fit, or what colour the person might be. A

significant number of them have criminal records or they have extremely patchy work histories. I suspect that some use drugs or have used drugs.

The deal is clear.

It is only possible to deal from their desk at the New Malden building.

It is only possible to deal in the shares to which they are assigned.

They must make profit each working week. Their income is based on their profit.

The computer notes the speed and pattern of the trader's keystrokes and alerts Security if there is cause for concern. By the time a trader starts there is at least two months of records of this individual's key strokes on record, to use as a comparison template. Coming to work drunk drugged or suffering the after effects of substance misuse will be discovered quickly and will lead to instant dismissal.

The amount of money some of these traders earn is very significant. They earn it and we earn also.

If they want more income they know what they need to do.

Fairly soon the point comes where they could take the money they have earned and they could speculate from home with their own money.

Most of them do not wish to do that.

It is their choice.

I have nearly completed my catering degree. Unless I plough the last course I should exit with a First Class Honours Degree.

My brother Peter passed his German and Spanish GCSEs well enough.

Peter gives the impression of coasting.

Peter says that he uses his time effectively – it just looks like coasting.

Peter is reducing his romantic life as he enters his GCSE year. My sister Helen told Peter that Peter must do two hours homework each night or Helen will ban visitors from the house and ground Peter until Peter's exams finish next May.

Can Helen do that?

No-one in the Wilkins family is going to contradict Helen.

Rebecca and Chester were on their honeymoon in Hawaii.

Rebecca had turned off her Labour Party pager and her mobile phone. Chester had turned off his mobile phone. They were spending time just with each other, like you should do on a honeymoon.

They were astonished to be interrupted at dinner during their first week by a British journalist who had flown to Hawaii from Los Angeles.

The journalist explained that he was sorry to gate-crash their honeymoon but what was Rebecca's comment on the Alan Roe story?

Rebecca asked,

"What Alan Roe story?"

Chester Wilson stood up.

Chester had already told the hotel security people that Rebecca is a British Member of Parliament. It was just possible that paparazzi might appear.

Chester frogmarched the guy out of the restaurant.

Chester told him,

"Rebecca has no comment on anything until after this honeymoon.

"I am really angry with you for spoiling our honeymoon.

"If you wish to keep your teeth in your mouth you had better stay away from us."

Chester threw the journalist over a balcony onto a cactus bed.

Chester told Hotel Security that this incident over dinner heralds more difficulty.

Chester and Rebecca left their dinner and they went up to the bedroom.

Rebecca telephoned Vlad the Labour Chief Whip for information.

Vlad told Rebecca that a newspaper had published photographs of Alan Roe MP in female clothing. Apparently after the death of his wife Alan had developed an interest in wearing female clothing.

Alan says that when he is stressed he does it. Alan has offered his resignation as Rebecca's Parliamentary Secretary.

Vlad and Humphrey are reluctant to have a long running negative story in the Press, but Alan was doing nothing illegal. They also wanted Rebecca's views.

Rebecca said she needed to pray. Rebecca would get back to them.

Rebecca prayed.

Then Rebecca prepared a statement.

"I was surprised and upset that the British media decided to interrupt my honeymoon to ask me for a comment on a non-story.

"There is no suggestion that Alan Roe MP committed adultery, gambled on the stock market, associated socially with Tories, or breached Party policy. All of these things are deplorable, but they are all legal.

"It seems that the worst Alan has done is to wear women's clothing from time to time. So what?

"I see no reason why Alan should resign from anything.

"I think the media have to explain why an innocent activity which is part of Alan's private life is so newsworthy. There are lots of other stories which are much juicier that the journalists are not running with because it does not suit the interests of their paymasters to publish the stories.

"What I would say to the journalists is Matthew 7:1-5."

Matthew 7:1-5 is the biblical quotation

"1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

"I would also ask that the media leave us alone to enjoy what is left of our honeymoon."

Vlad issued the statement for Rebecca.

The Hawaii police took the view that if you interrupt a couple on a Hawaii honeymoon you deserve all you get. In their view Chester's actions were proportionate and moderate. The journalist is lucky not to be arrested for disturbing the peace.

The British journalist published a piece about his experience of visiting the honeymoon couple in Hawaii.

The general reaction was that Chester did was absolutely right. Chester is a real man.

Rebecca Johnson has gained lots of Brownie points from the politically correct croissants and muesli brigade. Chester Wilson has gained Brownie points from the bacon sandwich macho brigade.

What got everyone laughing was what Humphrey did next.

The Shadow Foreign Secretary Tommy Sutherland could politely be described as “Old Labour” if not “Antediluvian Labour”. Tommy’s social attitudes are much more bacon sandwich than muesli and croissants.

One of Tommy’s assistant shadow ministers needed to stand down for personal reasons. His replacement was an openly gay Glaswegian former boilermaker who had previously been Labour’s Shadow Media spokesperson.

Humphrey promoted Alan Roe to the vacant Media post as one in the eye for the journalists who had tried to destroy Alan’s career.

There is a theory that the source of the story about Alan Roe was Tommy Sutherland. It would be a way for Tommy to weaken Rebecca Johnson.

Tommy ends up with a strong minded tough gay on his team, to which these days Tommy cannot publicly object.

Tommy sees Alan Roe promoted.

Even if Tommy Sutherland is totally innocent there is nothing to which Tommy can object.

CHAPTER 46: Emma Hewson

We are now a hundred strong in the school. Our top years are small but we have classes of ten to fourteen in the lower years.

The staff team works well. Many of the teachers work part time. We have every subject taught by subject specialists.

All the resources a teacher could need are in place.

We have a full time worker who listens to the younger children read and who helps the children with maths.

The resource centre is terrific. I have a paid librarian running the resource centre now. We do not call it a library because the library concept is too narrow.

The librarian teaches study skills, how to research, and creative writing. She also gives low level help with information technology and how to use the commonly used computer programmes.

The children are really terrific.

The school ethos of working hard and of not being disruptive is very strong. All of the children are encouraged to help each other.

The children have grasped that the teachers are facilitators to help the children to learn. It is amazing how that changes attitudes.

The children can see that theatre and cinema work and television opportunities happen for children at their school. In almost every class there is a child who earns money or who has earned money from modelling or from working in advertisements.

The children are motivated.

Every half term every class performs at least a scene from a play or a chorus from a musical. Every child does dance and gymnastics.

Every child sings. Every child is learning a musical instrument.

Max spent time in Bahrain over the summer for the comedy he was filming. Max has another filming opportunity pencilled in for after his GCSE exams. Not surprisingly interest in foreign languages has blossomed.

We brought in the teaching of Quranic Arabic and Quranic studies for Kali Daar when she was a pupil with us. Fulesa Miah and the Miah twins are currently studying these subjects.

Most of the private schools locally do not offer these subjects.

We now have children from local wealthy Muslim families, diplomats based in Leeds and Manchester, and children of foreign students funded by their governments to study at universities in Leeds Manchester and Sheffield.

Modern Arabic, Urdu, and Bengali are currently taught but we can teach any language if required.

Our Islamic pupils enliven and enlighten our discussions about Ethics.

The oud teacher who is working with Max now teaches two other children as well.

Max has recorded his CD/DVD of Arabic music.

In October Max and Don fly out to Bahrain for the Premiere of the film.

Alice and Abdul work pretty hard preparing and practicing for their cookery program. They also learn music and learn lines for "Terrible Tykes".

They sail through their school work because they are both bright and hard working. I quite often find them jamming at home with the other children.

Don and I worry more about them than we need.

The "Terrible Tykes" are rehearsing for their Christmas Special.

This year's star is another American recruited by word of mouth in Hollywood. Among the leading American actors it has become mildly prestigious to appear in the "Terrible Tykes" Christmas Special.

There is already controversy about this star appearing on "Terrible Tykes" because her filming history is of playing ladies of no virtue.

She is taking part because she knows that her sexpot days are ending. She needs to show that she is musical, that she can sing, and that she can do straight acting and comedy.

Damien is involved in filming with her.

The theme is loosely based on "Mother Hubbard".

Alice and Abdul have appearances in the Christmas Special. They are playing a piano duet where at one point there are five hands involved. The "duet" has been specially written for them by Robert Graham. The fifth hand turns out to be that of the star.

Damien is fine.

Damien has not hit another child in years. Damien is happy in himself.

Arthur and Kate are just delightful children.

I must admit that when Don read out the journalist's article about Chester Wilson throwing the journalist into a bed of cactus I just roared my approval.

Chester Wilson is a Man!

Rebecca is fortunate to have chosen such a good man.

When Rebecca and Chester arrived home they found that Rebecca's tenants had installed window boxes at the front of the house. The tenants had painted cactus plants along the outside edges. There is a sunken area at the front beside the street which is also painted with cacti.

Cecil Byram says the Byram Group is in a "consolidation" phase rather than an expansion phase. Cecil says that he would like Chester Wilson to follow his PhD full time to finish it sooner. Chester is on full salary during his study leave. Chester is on standby to give advice to Cecil should Cecil need it.

Don thank goodness has found something to do with his time.

Don has taken up golf again. Don plays twice a week.

Don is so much better for getting out of the house more.

Amina Daar's husband Abdul has had to go back to Los Angeles to take up the job he was offered.

Amina Daar has applied for her visa to go to the United States as a wife. Once Abdul was actually in work the application could be lodged.

Mina is really enjoying running the Daar Fashion business.

Amina keeps away from the business. Amina fills in her time sitting with her father and designing "red carpet" dresses.

Tohur Miah has taken up his cookery program again.

Tohur says that he has learned a lot of new dishes in Argentina. One of them translates as "bruised shoulder", which Tohur says he will prepare later in the series.

My top year students are all buckling down to their GCSE studies as they should.

CHAPTER 47: Charlotte Johnson

Now that Rebecca's wedding is over I can work on my career.

I could go to University but there is nothing that I wish to study.

I sat down with Tom Driburg and we prepared a six year plan. This year and next year I will write and record as much material as I can.

I will launch two albums.

The pre-Christmas album is religious of course. Most of my sales will be in the United States so I will be going to the United States in November to plug the religious album.

In about May next year I produce a pop album and then a religious album the following autumn.

About March of the year after next we start a major publicity effort in Britain culminating in a pop tour over the autumn. Tom has already booked the venues.

In a fit of wild optimism Tom has booked options for additional days at some of the venues so if the series is a sell-out we may put on additional concerts.

The following year I have a tour in Australia and New Zealand, followed by a pop tour in China and Japan, followed by a tour in the United States.

I then have a year of composing and recording. I may perform at British military bases, unpaid, to raise money for military charities. My sister Sally will probably tour with me.

Assuming things are still going well I will have tours of the United States, Japan and China, and Australia and New Zealand.

Sally now only has her music and her maimed veterans to occupy her, so Sally is writing lots of music. Sally has a patriotic album coming out this autumn.

Sally may pick up acting parts while at the theatre school, so it is too soon to limit Sally's career options. Sally will continue studying until her career develops or until it is time for Sally to go on missionary service.

Sally says that if her media career does not take off she would like to work as a medical technician fitting and repairing prostheses for people who have lost limbs. As Sally is now wealthy Sally could work as a volunteer somewhere in the Third World.

Andrew and Michael are as happy as can be. They both enjoy their performances in "Terrible Tykes".

Michael was slacking a bit at the Theatre School.

Emma Hewson spoke to Mark.

Mark gave Michael the hard word, and Michael is now applying himself again.

Mark is happier than I can ever remember.

Mark had already read most of his textbooks before he began his MBA studies. Mark is enjoying his course.

Mark has time for the family.

Mark has time for himself. Mark goes out socially with friends.
On Wednesdays Mark goes out ballroom dancing with Melanie Petworth, a Mormon from Leeds. Mark often goes out with Melanie on a Friday night or a Saturday night.
Mark even brought Melanie Petworth to Rebecca's wedding.
We are all of us biting our tongues.
We really do want Mark to have a girlfriend.
We really do want Mark to have a Mormon girlfriend.
But please not Melanie Petworth!
Melanie Petworth is a very tough minded young woman. Melanie does not do "delicate".
Melanie is very black and white.
Melanie is studying for a degree at Leeds University.
In her free time Melanie works in the roughest areas of Leeds trying to rescue young women from gangs. Melanie has so far rescued seven young women and found them sanctuary in other parts of the country. Melanie has been beaten up twice.
In Melanie's eyes Mark measures up. I don't know why.
Sally measures up because of her work with maimed soldiers.
I do not.
I do not measure up because as Melanie told someone,
"Charlotte sings about it but she does not do it."
I did not like that when it was reported to me by a mutual acquaintance.
Melanie has not commented on my sister Rebecca.
Don Hewson had an interesting view.
Don said that Mark is one of the few young men around whom Melanie Petworth can respect.
I agree with that.
Melanie is attracted to Mark because Mark is an Alpha male.
Yes Mark is an Alpha male.
Of the current crop of Yorkshire Mormon young women Melanie Petworth is a standout.
Melanie is an Alpha female.
Mark is attracted to Melanie.
Don said that if I do not enjoy Melanie's view of me then perhaps I should do something to change it.
What?
When was the last time I gave actual practical help to someone who needed it?
I had to think about that.
I help in Primary, the education of our youngest Mormons.
It is a few years since I actually gave practical help to someone who needed it.
Don suggested that I should volunteer for Meals on Wheels, soup runs, helping the disabled or the elderly. Something like that. But I should give practical help, not just money or singing.
I have had so much praise and recognition over the last few years that Melanie's views come like a bucket of cold water.
Don implicitly supporting Melanie's views was not welcome either.
I prayed.
I did not like the answer so I prayed again.
No change.

We Mormons have a well-established support network of both male visitors and female visitors. In our ward there are so many calls on the active members that households like ours where there are no obvious issues are not visited as often as should happen.

I went to see Bishop Singleton.

Bishop Singleton heard me out.

"Is that it?"

"Yes."

"Melanie Petworth has judged you and she has found you wanting.

"Is she right?"

I knew that Bishop Singleton can be tough. This was the first time that I had seen Bishop Singleton's less nice side.

Very quietly I said,

"Yes."

"What are you going to do?"

I cried for a bit.

"I will volunteer for something that gives practical help."

By now I was really regretting going to see Bishop Singleton.

I had wanted a warm comforter to give me reassurance. I did not want what I was getting instead.

"You think that Melanie Petworth is not right for Mark?"

I had not actually said that, but that was the real reason for visiting Bishop Singleton.

"Yes."

"Melanie is doing The Lord's work.

"Melanie risks her life to save these girls.

"And you think that Melanie Petworth is not good enough for Mark?"

"Or that Mark is not good enough for Melanie?"

I was amazed to hear Bishop Singleton coming out so vigorously in support of Melanie.

Attending Church on Sundays is a really important duty for Mormons.

I have heard that Melanie is very slapdash about attending Church on Sundays. Melanie does not help with any part of the organisation of the Mormon Church.

I mentioned these failings.

"Do you know why Melanie misses Church so often?"

"No."

"It is because on Friday night or Saturday night Melanie rescues these girls. Melanie drives them hundreds of miles away to sanctuary. Then Melanie either sleeps away overnight or Melanie drives all the way back.

"So Melanie is not in town or Melanie is asleep after driving all through the night.

"Melanie risks her life.

"Melanie drives very long distances. She needs her sleep.

"So Melanie misses Church.

"What do you think The Lord thinks of that as an excuse?"

Ouch!

"With Melanie's erratic timetable Melanie would be unreliable. Melanie cannot take on regular duties for the Church.

"These poor young women take priority and that is right.

"Melanie helps as and when she can.

"Melanie does a lot of the cleaning and the gardening for her Church.

“Charlotte, you have to understand the difference between following the form of our Mormon religion and really living as God wishes.

”Melanie is an inspiration and a role model.

“You think that Melanie Petworth is not good enough for your family?

“Think again.”

If Bishop Singleton had literally slapped me around the face that would be better than what the Bishop did to me.

Maybe us Johnsons are not as well thought of in our Mormon Church as I had thought.

When I got home I had a good cry.

Then I shared the discussion with Sister Sally.

Sister Sally said,

“We were wrong.

“I will apologise to Mark when I see him.”

Apologise to Mark?

After a few moments of shocked silence I realised that Sister Sally is right.

I have to apologise to Mark.

When Sally came home from school I shared my information with Sally.

“OK.

“Melanie Petworth is OK.

“That’s fine.”

CHAPTER 48: Ali Miah

The music that Max Hewson recorded has been playing on all the radio stations in the Middle East. It is so odd to hear a Yorkshire accent under the East Yemen accent or under the Bahrain accent that Max qualifies as exotic.

Max’s performances are very good. For at least one of the songs the general opinion is that Max’s version is the best ever recorded.

Extracts from the film have been shown on many television stations. Audiences always crack up laughing.

The film is going to be a success.

When Max Hewson and Don Hewson arrived at Bahrain Airport many people recognised Max even without the false moustache.

Javed was at the airport to greet Max and Don.

Javed brought them to our apartment.

On the evening of the Premiere there were two thousand people stood outside the cinema to watch the actors arrive.

Don and Amina and I had good seats. Max’s seat was beside us.

Max was delayed by the red carpet and the presentation line but Max eventually came to his seat.

Max said that he had signed probably a hundred autographs.

The film deviated a bit from the script that we had originally read.

The film was hilariously funny.

The entire audience was sometimes rocking with laughter.

There were digs at some common Arab stereotypes that received appreciative laughter.

Max’s playing of the oud and Max’s singing were very popular, with the audience giving standing ovations at the end of each song.

The film ended with the fishing boats going back to Bahrain harbour with Max clinging to a rope that drooped from a boat.

At the end of the film the audience rose again and applauded.

Mr Hussain the Director and the Musical Director came onto the stage. They spoke to the audience.

Max went on stage with his oud. Max played the theme song for "Gormless".

The audience stood and applauded again.

After the Premiere we gathered for a small party in a private room. All the major actors were there. Everyone was complimentary of Max.

Max had the sense to be complimentary about everyone present and about many of those who were not present.

Max spoke in Arabic of course.

Almost everyone wished to speak with me to be able to say that they had met and spoken with Genghis The Water Giver.

Eventually we got home.

We all went to bed.

In the morning Don played with our baby Fatima.

Max had the news channel on. The film premiere and the crowds outside were news.

The Crown Prince's wife arrived unexpectedly, with the Princess Fatima.

It soon became clear that the reason for the visit was because the Princess Fatima had wanted to meet Max Hewson.

Max was really nice to Princess Fatima.

Max told Princess Fatima about the origins of "Greensleeves".

Then after asking permission of the Crown Prince's wife Max sang "Greensleeves" to Princess Fatima in Arabic.

What thirteen year old girl would not be entranced?

When Max and Don flew back there were hundreds of people who had come to the airport to see Max leave.

The islands project has been going much faster than anyone had expected. I had built in delays to the time planning so as to be ahead of schedule rather than behind schedule. We are well ahead of schedule.

I have ordered that the Byram Group should speed up their shipments of bricks and steel.

We have processing plants on both outer islands cooking rice to create starch for the water that we mix into the mortar. The reservoirs we are building are going up without difficulty. It is a huge job to lay seventy million bricks but we are doing it.

Mark Johnson also sold me the scaffolding that we are using. Quite deliberately the pallets that the bricks arrive on fit onto the scaffolding to provide a walking surface. As we use bricks we liberate pallets to use within the scaffolding.

Mark Johnson is clever.

The cooked rice is bagged as we dehydrate it. The dehydrated rice goes in the bags in some of the containers that once held bricks. Then the rice goes off to Europe to become an ingredient in pet food.

I am immensely proud that we still have had no deaths on the construction project.

If I bring in the islands project ahead of time and under budget I will be made for life as a construction engineer.

We have had our first "Hajj" season at Holy Mecca with the steel fountains installed. The entire Muslim world was watching to see what happened.

I was there of course.
Nothing happened.
There were no panics.
There were no stampedes.
Everything was just as it should be.
There were the normal deaths from heart attacks and the like, but with millions of elderly and older people present they happen every year.
I was so relieved!
The King of Saudi Arabia later awarded me the King Abdulaziz Order of Merit, which is normally only given to very important people indeed. There is only one higher civil honour, but normally only Heads of State are awarded that.
The Crown Prince's father was too ill to come and collect his medal so the Crown Prince accepted the medal on his behalf.
Amina has told me that she is pregnant again. We are both very happy.
Life is good.
God is great!

CHAPTER 49: Rebecca Johnson

On the way back from honeymoon we stopped off in Utah to see all of Chester's extended family. They had gathered in Utah for a family event. There were nearly a hundred people there in all.
Most of them had not been able to go to England for the wedding so I met them for the first time.
When I returned to England I made a point of seeing Vlad immediately.
It seems that all the MPs, of all parties, are tickled that Chester picked up an intrusive journalist and threw the journalist onto a bed of cactus.
Almost every MP has wanted to do something like that at one time or another. My husband did it!
Naturally I am now known as "Mrs Cactus".
Alan Roe has taken to his Media job with vigour. Alan has taken to analysis of particular political stories and identifying the likely sources. Alan also tracks the hierarchies within political reporting at the various media outlets. Alan is mapping the lines of communication between leakers, stories, and individual journalists.
Alan's assistant Aiden is in his element. Aiden is building a database of statistics that Alan circulates to Labour MPs and to journalists to steer them in the right direction.
Vlad said that he has heard a rumour that I have over a hundred thousand pounds in a political fund.
Jenny Hallam MP has recently been appointed as a junior Whip, so I suspect that Jenny is the source of Vlad's information.
I told Vlad that Vlad's information is out of date. I now have over two hundred thousand pounds in a political fund.
Vlad was very surprised. Very few Labour MPs have access to this kind of money.
What am I going to use the money for?
I told Vlad that I am seriously contemplating running to be elected a member of the National Executive of the Labour Party.
What does Vlad think?

Vlad thinks I am a bit premature. Vlad would leave that for a year or two. The political damage I risk from losing that election is significant.

I said to Vlad that I am going to ask the larger trade unions if they would support a bid by me. If I have backing from the larger trade unions then I will stand.

Vlad nodded.

Vlad said that one of the senior members of the Shadow Cabinet has health issues. He may be leaving the Shadow Cabinet fairly soon.

Should that happen there will be a reshuffle of the Shadow Cabinet.

Vlad is trying to do some contingency planning.

Would I like a promotion or a transfer?

"Vlad.

"You know I never expected to be in the Shadow Cabinet.

"Like every MP I am ambitious.

"At the moment I wish to stay at Agriculture.

"It is a job I enjoy, and it is a job I am doing well at.

"I am not in a tearing rush to be one of the important Ministers. I am happy to sit at Agriculture for ten years if necessary."

"When Humphrey goes, will you run for Party Leader?"

Given my approval ratings within the Labour Party that is a reasonable question.

I had thought about the question.

"No, Vlad.

"Because of his age Humphrey will go sometime in the next ten years. I am twenty-six now. I will be only thirty-six in ten years' time.

"It is too soon."

I looked at Vlad.

"I might go for Deputy Leader.

"I might sit it out and make my move at the leadership election after that.

"Or even the leadership election after that.

"I am under no time pressure at all.

"If I never become Party Leader I will lose no sleep whatever.

"I was elected to serve.

"I am serving."

Vlad asked if he could leak to the media that I have this very large fighting fund? It would discourage Tommy Sutherland further.

I asked Vlad not to leak the information. The last I heard Tommy was running at five per cent and I am running at seventy per cent. That is discouragement enough I would have thought.

Also, if it becomes generally known that I have this large fighting fund the information might destabilise Humphrey instead of helping him.

Vlad accepted my argument.

My new Parliamentary assistant is a Member of Parliament called Julian Jenkins. Julian was a shop floor worker in the Engineering industry.

Julian apparently had a short placement with Cecil Byram before Julian was elected as a Member of Parliament. Neither of us recalls meeting or even seeing the other. It may have been at a time when I was not working at Byrams.

Julian is obviously destined for higher things. This post as my Parliamentary Assistant is a stepping stone for Julian.

I asked Julian to talk to the larger trade unions about whether I should put myself forward for the National Executive. I asked Julian to take soundings among the Parliamentary Labour Party on the question.

My fan club was in full attendance at Agriculture Questions.

Dozens of Tory MPs had been marshalled to give support to the Minister.

Predictably the first question was from a tame backbench Tory MP about whether the Minister had any comment on the aphrodisiac qualities of cactus?

Laughter.

The Minister replied that he had no personal knowledge of this issue.

As in so many other matters agricultural he would bow to the expertise of the Shadow Minister, known to her many friends as "Mrs Cactus".

I stood up to roars of laughter and approval.

"Since the last Agriculture Questions at least six farmers or farm workers have died as a result of poisoning by agricultural chemicals."

That silenced the House.

"Could the Minister tear himself away from investigating the aphrodisiac qualities of cactus and set up a review group to monitor the deathly effect of some agricultural chemicals?"

There was a roar of approval from the Labour benches.

"It is disappointing that the Minister wishes to have some cheap fun when there are people for whom the Minister is responsible who are dying because of the Minister's lack of care for the people who work in the Agriculture industry."

The Labour benches roared again.

The Tories were silent. The Minister was not quite sure what to say.

The Minister had to say something.

"I thank the Honourable Member for her interest.

"I am considering that question."

"Is the Minister aware that he is the third Tory Agriculture Minister to say that he is considering that question?"

"It would seem that for a very long time the flow of political donations to the Conservative Party has been more important than the lives of people who work in the Agriculture Industry!"

A Labour MP with close ties to UNITE THE UNION shouted out "murdering bastards".

The Speaker gave the MP the opportunity to withdraw the comment.

When the MP refused to withdraw he was suspended from the House for one day and he had to leave the Chamber.

I decided to stoke the issue further.

"I note that there are forty Tory MPs present who receive political donations from the agricultural chemical companies or who own shares in agricultural chemical companies.

"Is the Minister unduly influenced by this group?"

The Labour benches roared.

Quite a few Tory MPs looked uncomfortable.

The Minister obviously could not say that he was unduly influenced by this group.

The Minister said that he was not influenced by this group.

"They have never tried to influence me."

"Is that because the Minister always does what the chemical companies want anyway?"

There was a huge amount of shouting before the Speaker declared Agriculture Questions to be over.

Now we are married Chester and I are touring the country pretty regularly.

Not much happens in Parliament on a Friday.

On every second Friday I visit businesses in a city or in a country area. This almost always generates news stories in the local press and short viewings on local television. Often I appear on local radio stations.

On Friday night I speak at a fund raising dinner, either for one constituency Labour Party or where several constituency parties come together to host a joint dinner. These are usually packed to the doors.

On Saturday I go out with local Labour Party members leafleting in their high streets or shopping areas.

There is a lot of public interest in me as a personality.

The most common question is "How's married life?"

My answer is always a big wide smile and,

"It was worth waiting for!"

We will hit several high streets over the day.

Then there is usually a free evening meeting in a large hall where hundreds and sometimes thousands of ordinary people come to hear me speak. This has had extensive publicity locally and the meetings are well attended. It is a rare meeting when we do not sign up at least half a dozen new Labour Party members.

Sometimes there are hecklers.

I protect the hecklers from the audience.

Usually I can use heckles for unscripted asides and I can generate a laugh or two around the entire hall.

Constituency Labour Parties are often short of money. I fund the big hall and the publicity out of my campaigning fund.

We take a collection for the expenses of the meeting which of course I donate to the local Labour Party.

It was Alan Roe MP who suggested this idea to me.

A campaign fund is for using.

I generate good publicity for the Labour Party. I generate an enormous amount of goodwill within the Labour Party for myself.

Almost always there is a group of survivors of sexual abuse who wish to meet with me.

These meetings gain no publicity for me. They are hugely important to the people whom I meet.

On Sunday Chester and I go to a local Mormon Church where we socialise with the congregation and I listen to whatever they wish to say. Sometimes a ward will invite their neighbouring wards to meet me.

On Sunday afternoon Chester and I drive back to London and we have a quiet evening.

On one Saturday a month I go canvassing with a gang from my constituency somewhere in East Anglia. I have Sunday off with Chester, either in London or in Tryton.

On the fourth Saturday in each month I have my constituency surgeries.

My Chief of Staff Caroline works her socks off to arrange all these events.

Should there be five Saturdays in a month Chester and I luxuriate in an entire weekend with nothing to do.

Chester is now working on his PhD full time. Chester can organise his time around my availability.

My sister Charlotte has come to live with me for a while.

Charlotte really does wish for Mark to marry a good woman. Mark's girlfriend Melanie Petworth comes for a meal once a week. Charlotte cannot bear to be in the same room as Melanie for very long.

Charlotte recognises that there is nothing wrong with Melanie. The problem lies with Charlotte.

Charlotte would not forgive herself if the relationship between Mark and Melanie were to break up because of Charlotte. So Charlotte has moved to London.

Chapter 50: Mark Johnson

Georgina Arron (also Mrs Douglas Trail) and I attend the monthly management meetings of the Byram Group.

We have all known for months that Cecil is up to something big and secret.

It has been in the media that the Byram Group has invested a thousand million pounds (a billion pounds) in shares of BABE Systems PLC. That gives us a pretty big clue about what Cecil is up to.

Cecil's explanation to the next management meeting was only that the purchase was a good investment.

There was a silence while we waited for more.

Once it was clear that Cecil was going to say nothing more the entire management meeting burst out laughing!

Even Cecil smiled.

Cecil moved onto the next item on the agenda, so that is all the information that we managers have.

If we are intelligent enough to be managers at Byrams, that is all the information that we need.

I have no misogynist tendencies. Having grown up with Rebecca and having been brought up by Emma Hewson there is no way that I can believe that women are inferior.

Women are different.

Women are not entirely rational, but women are not stupid.

I really like and I admire Melanie Petworth.

I think that what Melanie and I are growing together is love.

We Mormons marry for eternity, so it makes sense to take time to be sure that what we have together is right. Being Mormons there is no nookie possible, so the pace of our courtship is by non-Mormon standards slow.

Our family difficulties have not helped.

Sister Sally and Charlotte and Sally have been like Chinese water torture –“drip, drip, drip,” that I should find a Mormon girlfriend.

Then when I met Melanie Petworth the three of them were “Oh not her!”

After the boys had gone to bed one night Charlotte started again and I just blew.

“If I had wanted a cookie cutter dumb brood mare who would not argue there are dozens of them around.

“I want someone I can come home to.

“I want someone I will want to come home to.

“I need someone I can respect, not someone who has latched onto me as a meal ticket for life.

“If I have problems at work I want to talk about, or problems in my Call, I want someone intelligent and who I respect.

“Melanie does not bat her eyelashes and stick out her chest and say “Oh Mark you are so wonderful.”

“Melanie is building her own life, not waiting for Prince Charming to come along.

“Melanie shows more gumption than any Mormon woman I know.

“If Melanie and I break up there is a strong chance the next woman will not be Mormon.

“I am not looking for Mormon.

“I am looking for someone I wish to live with for all my life at least.

“Melanie is the first woman since Karen Byram that I have even thought about.

“The trouble is Charlotte that you are the Queen Bee in this family and you can’t stand the idea of another Queen coming in!

“If you don’t like it Charlotte you can go and live with Rebecca!”

I know that Charlotte went to see Bishop Singleton.

Sister Sally and Sally came round soon after that.

Charlotte sort of apologised to me. Charlotte said she was going to get out of the way.

About a week later Charlotte moved to live with Rebecca.

My friend Mark Walker came from America to visit me. Charlotte whisked Mark off to London where Mark apparently had a good time.

There may be something between Charlotte and Mark. I don’t know. I gather they were singing duets!

Luke Petworth is desperately upset that should Melanie marry me she will move away from the Petworth family home. If Melanie is to marry someone I am probably OK but Luke does not want Melanie to leave home.

“Would you like me to move in?”

Luke considered this.

“Or I have two empty bedrooms at my house. You could move in with us.”

Luke smiled.

“My house.

“My rules.”

Luke nodded slowly.

“No-one in my house is idle.”

I looked at Luke.

“You get off your arse.

“Now.”

Luke looked surprised.

“You stop feeling sorry for yourself.

“Get on the Internet. Find some courses you want to do. You are still in time to register for exams next year. I will pay for private tuition.

“By May of next year you will have studied for exams and you will have passed them.

“Then we will decide what you study or what you work at next.”

“If I did not think something of you I would not bring you into my house.

“I think you are worth investing in.

“You are better off working and doing than sitting in your bedroom sucking your thumb like you do now.”

Melanie was cross with me for offering to pay for Luke’s education.

“I would rather pay out a few thousand now to have a brother in law who can support himself than to be subbing him for the rest of my life.”

“Do you think you can run everyone’s life?”

"I don't want to run Luke's life.

"Whether you call it a helping hand or a kick up the bum I don't know. Luke needs both.

"I care about you.

"So I care about Luke."

Melanie accepted this.

The next thing was an attack on Rebecca.

There is a group who say that the law and the courts favour women over men in disputes about contact with children of a relationship. There is some truth in what they say, but it is very hard for this group to get anyone to listen to them. They get involved in stunts to block traffic or to occupy properties to gain publicity.

They have tried other stunts like bursting in on a radio program that was being broadcast. Within the group there is tension between those who wish to conduct more dramatic stunts to gain publicity and those who are aware that if a stunt fails or if someone is hurt the negative publicity would set their cause back a decade. Throw in huge amounts of testosterone and beer and any stupidity might happen.

The stupidity was that a breakaway group decided to gain publicity by kidnapping a high profile female politician.

Rebecca is a high profile female politician.

Coming away from an agricultural show Rebecca was confronted by three strange men who attempted to kidnap her.

Rebecca struggled, and one of the men punched Rebecca in the stomach.

Rebecca gave this man one huge punch into his throat, right on his Adam's apple. This blow had all Rebecca's weight behind it. The punch crushed his larynx and he choked to death.

While the first guy was choking to death the second guy got a broken knee.

The third guy was lucky just to receive a kick where he kept his brains. He was able to try to hobble away but he was caught.

Rebecca told the police that she was pregnant and that she had been punched in the stomach.

Rebecca was rushed to hospital but it was too late to save the baby.

None of us knew that Rebecca was pregnant.

Rebecca had missed two periods. Rebecca was planning to tell Chester of the pregnancy that weekend.

The publicity was immense.

The dead guy who had delivered the punch had an earlier conviction for assault on his former wife. The former wife appeared on television and she said that she fully supported Rebecca.

The two other guys made full confessions, saying that it was only a stunt that had gone terribly wrong. There had been no intention to harm Rebecca.

Had they known that Rebecca Johnson was pregnant they would not have chosen her as the target.

The guys had it explained to them that as all three took part in the kidnapping all three of them are jointly responsible for the death of Rebecca's baby.

The two surviving attackers will be in prison for a long time. Public feeling against these guys is so strong that the judge refused them bail for their own safety.

The Crown Prosecution Service announced within days that Rebecca was not to know that the kidnapping was only a stunt. Rebecca was entitled to use reasonable force in her own self defence.

No British jury would convict Rebecca for what she did. There will be no prosecution of Rebecca.

It seems that Tohur Miah gave Rebecca a quick course on self defence soon after her honeymoon, so when the attack happened the training about what to do in an attack was very recent.

Rebecca is desolate about the loss of her baby.

Rebecca is desolate about having killed a man.

Rebecca thinks that were she not an MP she would still have her pregnancy and all this would never have happened.

Rebecca is distressed.

Chester or Charlotte sit with Rebecca at all times.

There have been thousands of sympathy letters and cards, many from women who have themselves lost babies just through the hazards of normal life.

The Agriculture Minister wrote Rebecca a nice letter. It seems that his wife lost a baby three decades ago, but the unborn baby is still part of their family.

Vlad and the Tory Chief Whip have arranged "pairs" for Rebecca for a month. Rebecca is not expected to return to work for at least a month.

At Agriculture Questions the Minister said nice things about Rebecca. He also announced that the Agriculture Ministry and the Health Ministry and the Health and Safety Executive have set up a team to monitor all deaths linked to agriculture because of the public disquiet so ably voiced by Rebecca Johnson MP.

I took Sister Sally and the children to visit Rebecca.

Lads do not usually endure cuddles for long but I had given Andrew and Michael their orders. Andrew and Michael endured hugs and cuddles and tears from Rebecca all afternoon.

Michael told lots of his jokes from "Terrible Tykes" and Rebecca eventually laughed.

That was the first time that Rebecca has laughed since the attack so Michael was also hugged by Chester and Charlotte.

I hugged Michael later on.

We had agreed that Sister Sally would stay with Rebecca to give the others a break.

Charlotte came back to Tryton with us.

When Melanie came to dinner on Sunday Charlotte gave Melanie a big apology and they had a huge hug. So that is looking good.

CHAPTER 51: Cecil Byram

I was invited to lunch with Sir Hector Parsons the Chairman of the Board for BABE Systems.

As one would expect Sir Hector is a suave and very sharp cookie.

"We were concerned when our share price dropped so deeply.

"We were really grateful that you effectively put a floor under our share price.

"So thank you."

Rats!

Mr Porteous and I decided that I was better to fill my boots at £3.90 to £4.00 a share than to see if the price dropped further. I had not intended to show my hand so soon but the opportunity to pick up a good quantity of the target's shares cheaply was too good to miss.

I smiled.

"Glad to be of assistance!"

"So what are your plans?"

"I run a large industrial group.

"I am not sure that I have any plans beyond that."

"With eight per cent of the shares a concern has arisen that you might make a bid for the company?"

"Has it?"

"Yes."

"Are you seeking a bid?"

"No."

"Fine!"

"Does that mean that you do not intend to launch a bid?"

I hesitated.

"I don't know.

"At £4.00 I would buy the entire company. At £5.00 I would probably not bid. Your share price today is nearer £5.00 than £4.00.

"So, not today!"

Sir Hector looked concerned.

"If you were to make a bid, what are the benefits to you?"

"First, I am a patriot.

"I would hate to learn one day that control of BABE Systems had passed to the Americans or to the Chinese."

Sir Hector nodded.

"The only two ways I know of to prevent that is for a private British company to have control or for the Government to have a Golden Share."

A "Golden Share" is where the Government can veto a change in control of a strategically important company

"And frankly I don't trust this Government to use a Golden Share against the Americans or even against the Chinese."

Sir Hector nodded.

"So a private owner would be best."

"Or a consortium?"

"Yes, but it would have to be a consortium of people I trust. There are not many of those."

Sir Hector nodded.

After a silence Sir Hector said,

"You said, "First I am a patriot."

"What is second?"

"I am a manufacturer of components. I would like the opportunity to make components for you. Potentially, that is worth a lot of money to my Group."

"We have subcontractors with whom we are happy."

"I am sure you do.

"I think, though, that they are not significant shareholders in BABE Systems."

Sir Hector winced.

"Being unable to supply you unless we have control would push us towards having to make a bid earlier than we might otherwise do."

There was a pause while Sir Hector considered.

"So your price for not making a bid is that you have the opportunity to manufacture components for us?"

"That is too simplistic.

"Your question was about the benefits to our Group of making a bid. If we can supply components without having to make a bid, that would reduce the urgency to make a bid."

"You appear to be saying that your Group making a bid is likely. We can buy you off, but a bid is inevitable?"

"Not inevitable."

"Your share price has to be low enough that the deal is good for us."

"We have to have the cash available."

"We have other investment opportunities."

"If we are heavily engaged in another purchase it is unlikely that we would have the capacity to buy BABE Systems at the same time."

I smiled.

"So you cannot rely on us to be willing to buy when you need to sell."

Sir Hector laughed.

"We have been looking at the Byram Group."

"Your purchase of the Groatpie Colliery was masterly, if a bit devious."

I knew that Groatpie would be mentioned. The purchase of Groatpie is my most publicised master stroke.

"You bought the munitions factories for nothing."

"You persuaded the Government to lend you the money to allow you to buy the other deep coal mines."

"All your returns on investment are better than ours, and our returns are pretty good."

"Your Spanish operations are so profitable that we had the figures checked twice. How can you earn a return on investment approaching one hundred per cent from a brickworks?"

"Buy cheap."

"Sell the product."

"Even your steelworks makes a profit. How do you do that?"

"Buy a steelworks cheap."

"Obtain a very large order."

"Simple!"

I smiled.

Sir Hector knows it is not so simple.

"Is it true that you sacked your own daughter for not pulling her weight?"

"Not quite."

"Her line manager sacked her for not pulling her weight and for arguing."

"I promoted the line manager immediately."

"He is a Director now."

"I'll bet that sent a message."

"It reinforced our three Ps message."

"What is your three Ps message?"

"You contribute to Production. You contribute to Profit. Or you get the Push."

"You certainly run lean."

"It seems to us though that you are under managed."

"You do not have the managerial capacity to run what you already have and to run BABE Systems as well."

A very good point, Sir Hector thinks.

"Why do you think I wish to run BABE Systems?"

"BABE Systems has a good management team."

Sir Hector looked astonished.

"You are contemplating bidding for a company that you cannot run?"

"I would expect to employ all of the twenty top managers at BAE Systems for sure.

"I would not put forward any of my current management team into the work your top managers do because my managers do not have those skills.

"I see BAE Systems as a stand-alone subsidiary under its current management.

"What's wrong with that?"

Sir Hector looked very surprised.

"So the business will run as it does now?"

"Largely.

"For a mature business like BAE Systems I do not expect a huge return on investment.

"I normally require a ten per cent return.

"At £4.00 a share, counting retained earnings, you return just over ten per cent. Either I buy the company when it comes down to £4.00 again or I have to believe that I can generate more profit from BABE Systems PLC than your experienced and competent managers already achieve."

Sir Hector nodded complacently.

"Fortunately I do."

Sir Hector blinked.

"How?"

"For today, that is my secret. It means though that I can justify going over £4.00 to gain control."

Sir Hector's face showed that he was perplexed.

After Sir Hector had thought for a bit,

"Do you request a seat on the Board?"

As one of the largest shareholders of the company I could reasonably demand a seat on the Board. That would open me up for accusations of insider trading or of conflicts of interest.

It is better not to go on the Board.

"Not at the moment.

"I imagine the Board has to discuss what attitude to take towards the Byram Group.

"If you agree to give us components work then it is probably a conflict of interest for me to be on both sides of the same deal."

"And if you don't give us components work it increases the likelihood of a bid.

"There is also an issue about your support for the Labour Party. Giving forty million pounds to the Labour Party is definitely against the interests of BABE Systems PLC."

"At the time I was not a shareholder of BABE Systems."

"True.

"Why did you give forty million pounds to the Labour Party?"

"Because I believe that the Labour Party will act more in the national interest than the Tories do."

"The fear that Labour might win has knocked at least fifteen per cent off the value of our shares!"

"Yes.

"I estimate that my forty million pounds donation allowed me to buy my BABE Systems shares at least a hundred million pounds cheaper than if I had not made the donation.

"A one hundred and fifty per cent return on my investment in less than a year is a pretty good deal."

Sir Hector looked at me with utter loathing.

“May I just mention though that if any of the shareholders wishes to sell their shares I am interested to buy.”

I am pretty sure that I will not be offered a seat on the BABE Systems Board any time soon.

CHAPTER 52: Don Hewson

Ali Miah and family visited us. Ali was in England for a couple of weeks giving talks at Cambridge University and visiting the Daars and his own family.

Baby Fatima is in bouncing good health. She wants for nothing.

Shakoora looks well and happy.

Shakoora is pregnant again, and Shakoora is in good spirits.

Amina’s visa has come through. Amina flies to Los Angeles soon.

Ali’s project is going very well.

The islands are well enough established that Ali can begin building a six lane highway from the airport island to the mainland, and a four lane highway from the airport island to the second island which will house many businesses to serve the airport.

The first step is to build the bridges upon which the highways will run. Ali says that although petrol is ridiculously cheap in Bahrain Ali will have rapid transit installed alongside the highways.

The first of the reservoirs are completed. They are already filling with distilled water from a solar still. When all the reservoirs are built and filled the water produced will be piped to the services island and to the airport island. There will even be a pipe to the Bahrain mainland in case the water from the reservoirs is needed on the mainland.

Ali has a large team of engineers. Ali is not tied to Bahrain although of course Ali does not wish to be away for long.

The crowd safety problems at Holy Mecca seem to be resolved by Ali’s fountains. Ali still spends a couple of days a month in Holy Mecca to stay on top of the job.

Ali has to inspect and approve hand made parts for the stone fountains that will replace the metal fountains over the next few years.

Ali brought in some specialist safety engineers who inspected every cubic inch of the holy part of Holy Mecca looking for repairs that need doing or for improvements that need making.

Ali has prepared a schedule of works that Ali is pushing through the decision making process.

Ali says he is now the “star” construction engineer of the Middle East. Unless there is some major disaster Ali will be in work as a construction project manager for the rest of his life.

Ali says that what has done this for him is not only his quiet competence but also Ali’s ability to generate innovative solutions that work.

Ali has learned that despite his control freak tendencies Ali does not need to work beyond sixty hours a week. Ali’s current target is to get down to fifty hours a week by the time the second baby is born.

Tohur Miah has just signed a new contract for TV chef work, and is still churning out cookbooks. There seems to be no love interest for Tohur at the moment, but Tohur seems very relaxed about it.

Tohur says that he enjoys life at the moment, so Tohur sees no problem. Judo has to wait until the doctors say that Tohur’s shoulder is good again.

Fulesa Miah has started the first year of her two year GCSE course at our Theatre School. Fulesa is a calm and determined young lady who will earn good grades.

Fulesa has utterly no idea what to do after her exams. Fulesa says she may go to live with Ali for a while.

Moklisur Miah aged nine in many schools would be the class clown. The Tryton Theatre School does not permit class clowns.

Emma and Moklisur bumped heads a few times before they came to an accommodation. Moklisur has permission to make notes in class from which Moklisur then writes little skits for his classmates to perform. Moklisur writes his notes in Bengali so the teachers cannot read them. Effectively Moklisur writes down his jokes rather than saying them out loud.

Monika Miah Moklisur's twin just has her head down and she works at her studies. Monika is more academic than Moklisur. Monika seems destined to go to University.

Mina Daar now heads her clothing business. As the largest employer of females in her community Mina has huge powers of patronage. Mina accepts discreet managerial support from her brothers Abdullah and Sahid.

The annual culling of a quarter of the lines stocked or made by the clothing business is a Darwinian process. The Daars lose less than ten per cent of their sales. There are always more than enough product lines to enter the list, designed by Shakoora, Amina, and Mina herself.

Once the web site is revamped to display the new product line Sahid uses the social media to make sure that anyone in the UK who mentions "engagement" or "wedding" learns of the Daar clothing business web site.

Abdullah Daar is enjoying his newly formed car parts business. Abdullah is still learning the business but he hopes next year to open second and third shops.

Abdullah says that his contributions to the Mosque Committee are to turn up at every meeting and to try to remain silent.

Abdullah is at least ten years younger than any of the other Mosque Committee members, so Abdullah has been given responsibility for "Youth". This means that Abdullah has to spend time with the younger adults in the congregation to find out what their views are.

Sahid Daar is expected to earn a First Class Honours Degree in Computing and Marketing because Sahid has a good mind.

Sahid has a lot of experience, and Sahid is a very hard worker. Sahid is self disciplined and is very much a self starter.

Sahid is even making money from his academic research project.

The clever young man has a list of twenty products that are on sale in every supermarket. On Tuesday afternoons Sahid goes around five different supermarkets making a note of the "sell by" dates. After a month Sahid was able to draw conclusions about the quality of the stock control in each supermarket chain. Sahid wrote to the Marketing manager of each supermarket showing his spreadsheet template and saying that for fifty pounds they could purchase Sahid's information. For ten pounds a week they could have each weekly update emailed to them. Three of the five supermarkets are now customers. Sahid has now met with the Marketing managers of two of the largest supermarkets in the country.

At these meetings Sahid displayed on his laptop what Sahid does for the Byrams Group and for the Daar clothing group.

Sahid now has placements lined up at both supermarket chains.

Cecil Byram was frantic when he learned what Sahid is doing with the supermarkets. Cecil says that he cannot afford to lose Sahid's services.

Sahid is now on one quarter of one per cent of internet sales for the Byram Group, so Sahid's annual income is in the multi millions.

Jabril Daar helps Sahid on the routine work.

Sahid pays Jabril of course.

Jabril's careers master at Repton was discomfited to learn from Jabril that Jabril earns more money from working part time for Sahid than the Head Teacher of Repton earns for working full time.

The money is currently in trust for Jabril.

As Jabril is still only a schoolboy the house that Jabril has bought from his earnings is held in the names of Jabril's trustees Abdullah and Sahid.

In view of the past stupidity of banks the Daar family bank manager has been made perfectly aware that all of the family income is legitimate. The Daar bank manager knows that any stupidity by the bank towards any family member will lead to the immediate loss of several very large accounts.

Amal Daar has reduced his dancing commitments because he has his exams next May.

Kali Daar and Fosia Daar are thriving at the Bradford Girls Grammar School.

Abdul Daar and my daughter Alice are producing a really good cookery segment twice a week. Everyone is raving about how good the segments are.

David Wilkins and Robert Graham and Sally Johnson all agree that Abdul and Alice are fantastic performers.

Mr Vincent even visited the studio whilst Abdul and Alice were recording to tell them how much he likes their performances. This could very possibly be connected with a recent four per cent surge in viewings of the children's program on the days that the cookery segments are shown.

The supermarket sponsor gives Abdul and Alice a "practice and experiment" allowance of two hundred pounds weekly, which more than covers any food the children use. The allowance goes a long way towards paying my food bill.

Abdul and Alice are also popular on "Terrible Tykes".

Sally Thornton has entered the two year GCSE examination zone.

Sally is very competitive at school. She has persuaded her father Paul to fund for tutors in French and German.

Sally is now interested in Gerald Butler in place of Robert Graham.

Gerald is just interested in his music. Gerald has no interest in any girls at the moment.

Sally could understand being rejected or that someone else is thought more attractive. Sally finds it very hard that Gerald is just switched off sexually.

Gerald is good looking, talented, rich, and a really nice young man. If Gerald were switched on sexually Gerald would be chest high in girls who are interested in him.

Sally goes for quality, but there are frustrations!

Rupert Thornton is thriving at Repton School. The Daar boys are looking after him.

Lucinda Thornton is thriving and little Guy Thornton is a really good kid.

Paul Thornton is between girlfriends at the moment. The woman that David Wilkins thought has "cash register eyes" has been kicked into touch.

Our family are fine. Max is working hard on his GCSE exams which he sits next year. Alice is blossoming. Arthur and Kate are just good wholesome children.

CHAPTER 53: Kevin Hanson

The Byram Group Chief Executive Robert Iredale convened a small meeting of the inner core of managers to brief us about BABE Systems PLC.

There are Takeover Panel rules about takeovers so we all have to watch what we say. We are all ordered not to buy or sell any shares we may hold in BABE Systems. We must notify David Taylor of any BABE shares that we own or that our families own.

The “party line” is that we as individuals know nothing and say nothing.

Even within the Byram Group we say nothing.

Daniel Mason took us through the accounts of BABE Systems PLC. The company spends even more on technology per worker than Byram Group does and in return the workers each generate much more profit than our engineering workers generate.

Martin Jenkins took us through the technologies used by BABE Systems so we may think how we would apply these to our existing businesses.

Martin and Daniel are working up a range of new products we might manufacture if we had access to the technologies BABE Systems uses.

As Mark Johnson now speaks Arabic then should a takeover happen Mark will fly to Saudi Arabia to talk to the BABE Systems workers in Saudi Arabia. As an American Chester Wilson is the right person to send to the BABE Systems factories and offices in the United States.

Senior managers in Britain will be sent to BABE Systems plants in Britain.

Martin and Daniel will prepare briefing packs when they are needed.

That there will be a bid one day is inevitable.

Cecil is not going to pay silly money to purchase BABE Systems.

Cecil is accumulating cash and setting up loan agreements to enable Cecil to make a purchase when the time is right. Once Cecil has control Cecil intends to take BABE Systems private so it is wholly owned by the Byrams Group.

Cecil has sent out another letter to every household in the country. Part of the document is updated information about the Byram Group.

The export order that Mark Johnson secured for the steel to build a six lane highway bridge nearly two miles long, and a four lane highway bridge just over a mile long, is the letter’s big news.

The plant at Groatpie to turn coal into plastic or diesel oil has been completed. So has the Groatpie clean energy coal powered electricity generating facility. More miners have been employed at Groatpie because more coal is needed.

Another coal to clean energy plant is to be built beside the Redcar steel plant. Byram Group has applied for planning permission. No-one imagines that it will be refused.

The Byram Group is the largest employer of maimed ex servicemen in the United Kingdom.

We are one of the largest employers of former soldiers in the United Kingdom.

We are doing a lot to reduce crime by providing employment opportunities for criminals who would otherwise be unemployed.

We also provide employment and accommodation opportunities for victims of domestic violence.

Our cadet scheme gets a plug, with a photo of a gorgeous female cadet who invites readers to visit the Byram Group web site for more information.

Cecil mentions the investment in BABE Systems PLC as another example of Cecil’s patriotism. Cecil says that he is helping to make sure that BABE Systems stays under British control.

Cecil finishes with a plea that people should vote for an opposition party that can run the country properly. Although Cecil does not tell the reader which party to vote for, the photo of Cecil with the Labour Party Leader Humphrey beside the article is a hint.

Cecil takes up nearly half the document with political cartoons and savage attacks on the ways that the Conservative government is acting against the national interest. It lists some of the Labour Party pledges.

I understand that David Wilkins, Sahid Daar, someone called "Adrian The Poison Dwarf", and an artist called Freda Graham collaborated to produce it.

I have never seen a political leaflet that is so effective.

The Tories are furious.

Cecil's reply was that the media tell lies or ignore the truth so Cecil's letters are a necessary corrective.

My son John is still thoroughly enjoying being a Byrams cadet engineer. John says that the youngsters in the two year groups below him are even sharper than John's cohort.

John has completed his apprenticeship. John is now studying part time for a degree in Engineering.

Our brass bands and orchestras are all doing well.

The Byram Group sponsors a competition for brass band compositions. The prize is a cash prize and a two year sabbatical anywhere in the world. The only condition is that no composer may win the competition twice.

Every Byram brass band and orchestra now runs a Youth Academy and provides free music tuition to local schools.

The Byram Willerton brass band is booked to play at Karen's wedding next summer. The music at the reception will be provided by players from the Youth Academies.

Our range of simple heavy duty hand tools made of steel is selling well. The tools sell well in the DIY chain.

My former criminals tell me that Byrams hand tools are the tools of choice for burglars.

The sales in South America and Central America are almost as good as the sales in Africa.

Sales in South East Asia are amazingly good.

The most common request from abroad is that we extend our range of tools.

We are expanding the range as fast as we sensibly can.

The initial twenty thousand unit runs on hammers, lump hammers, saws, pickaxes and shovels have been extended indefinitely because demand is so strong.

I am hiring more prisoners. Each former prisoner brings the sixty thousand pound dowry from the Prison Service that was negotiated by Georgina Arron. At one hundred and fifty former prisoners the dowries so far amount to nine million pounds.

My guys make pallets for the bricks being sold to Bahrain. That production is being transferred to the factory in Scunthorpe that makes containers because my tool business has expanded so much.

The Byrams tractors are selling well in South and Central America, Africa, and South East Asia.

We sell abroad in United States dollars so the devaluation of the pound after the BREXIT vote has increased the profits on our tool and tractor sales.

Fortunately the contracts for bricks and steel with Bahrain are made in US dollars, so converted back into pounds both these contracts are now very profitable.

The devaluation of the pound after BREXIT led to an increase in the price of metals in the United Kingdom. With running down metal stocks at Ming's and Chang's and generally not undertaking large investments Cecil is awash with money.

Cecil has also negotiated a two billion pound overdraft facility. Cecil pays 3% on that money just to have the facility, rising to 18% should we draw upon it.

I think it cannot be long before Cecil launches a bid.

There was a collection taken up in all our canteens for Rebecca Johnson after the attack on Rebecca and the loss of her baby. Rebecca gave the twenty thousand pounds raised to the Save The Children Fund.

Chapter 54: Rebecca Johnson

There is only so long you can mope.

Eventually you have to get up and get on.

That child will never leave me. But I have to move forward.

Chester and I are not working on a replacement. We are working on having another child.

The House of Commons was pleased to welcome me back.

I thanked the Agriculture Minister for having set up the monitoring group for agriculture related illnesses and fatalities whilst I had been off.

I said to the Minister that with the BREXIT vote the EU agricultural subsidies would soon end. Given the very long lead times in Agriculture farmers and the agriculture industry generally need to know what the Government's plans are for post BREXIT agricultural subsidy.

I pointed out that the system of agricultural subsidy operated in Britain before we joined the Common Market was better than the Common Market system. Would the Minister confirm that the old system of subsidy would be reinstated?

The Minister said that no decisions have yet been made.

It is always a pleasure to listen to me. The Minister would be delighted were I to write to him with my suggestions as a bipartisan policy is always easier to implement.

While I was off the monthly coach party from my Constituency Labour Party went to Peterborough to canvass. The CLP needed two coaches as so many people insisted on taking part. Peterborough Labour Party is very grateful.

At the Groatpie CLP monthly meeting I visited I had a standing ovation that went on for a long time. The Chair told the meeting that I would not speak except for a few words at the close of the meeting. We do not normally sing the Red Flag but the CLP listened to my few words and then they stood up and they sang it to me.

I was in tears.

They followed with "The Internationale".

I was in more tears.

My secretary Caroline and my Parliamentary Private Secretary Julian Jenkins looked after my interests whilst I was off.

Julian has secured support for my National Executive bid from seven of the eight largest unions. One union says that it is committed to Piers Halfwheat to give Piers an opportunity to begin to build a public profile before Piers attempts to become a Member of Parliament. Julian has told the organisers of the "Left" slate and the organisers of the "Right" slate that as I hope to become Party Leader one day I do not wish to be identified with either slate.

Julian has suggested that the slates next year should be one space short so their supporters may vote for me.

Well done Julian!

I am booked to speak at twenty Constituency Christmas Dinners during December. Well done Caroline!

Chester is well and fit and happy.

Chester has nearly completed writing his doctoral thesis. Chester's thesis is based on managerial problems that Cecil had three years ago. Chester has solved the problems so the thesis seems a little dated.

There is a certain amount of urgency now because if Cecil makes his bid for BABE Systems PLC Chester will have to drop his academic work to help with the bid and its aftermath. The financial pages of the newspapers say that Cecil's track record of buying businesses for much less than their real value suggests that BAE Systems PLC must be worth much more than people had previously realised. If BABE Systems is a target for the Byram Group then the BABE Systems share price can only go up.

Cecil just says "No Comment" to all the questions that journalists ask him.

I was asked about Cecil and BABE Systems PLC.

I said that I have not spoken to Cecil Byram for months. I have no idea what is going on. I went into an inner team meeting to find that Humphrey the Party Leader, Vlad the Chief Whip, and Derek the Party General Secretary are all furious about Cecil's second letter to every household in Britain.

They are not angry about the content.

Their anger is that someone who is not involved in politics can create a political leaflet as effective as this.

In the week after Cecil's letter was delivered the Tories have dropped three per cent in the opinion polls, UKIP dropped five per cent, and Labour rose two per cent.

No political leaflet they have ever seen before has done this.

How the heck did Cecil Byram do this?

I piped up.

"The leaflet was written by a team of four young people.

"You know Aiden the statistician from Alan Roe's office?"

They looked surprised.

"The other three are people I have known for years."

"Did you know about this?"

"Well as you know I have been out of things for a while.

"Last night Chester and I had dinner with old friends, one of whom turns out to be the copywriter and editor.

"He told me who else was involved."

"Could they write leaflets for us?"

"I can ask."

"What will they charge?"

"I have no idea.

"Cecil paid the team a hundred thousand pounds.

"There are two millionaires in the team so they have paid their share of the fee into my political fund. If they are writing leaflets for the Labour Party they may charge less or they may recycle the fee into my political fund."

They all three looked at me.

Derek said,

"You run the National Executive and the Shadow Cabinet.

“Now you are going to write our leaflets as well?”

I could tell that Derek was upset.

“Look, Derek. I serve at your pleasure.

“I serve Humphrey at his pleasure.

“I can just go back to the back benches if you wish.”

Vlad intervened.

“No, Rebecca, you are doing a good job.

“It is just that when anything good happens we see your and Cecil Byram’s fingerprints on the job.

“We three are responsible to run the party and we do not like to feel that we are not in control.”

“You are not in control.

“Cecil Byram marches to a different drum.

“I don’t know where Cecil is going.

“I never have.”

“As a matter of interest, how large is your political fund?”

“I can’t tell you to the penny but with this latest donation just over two hundred thousand pounds.”

They looked at me.

“You could run two leadership bids on that money.”

“If I wanted to, yes.

“At the moment most of it is ploughed into supporting my monthly constituency coach trips to canvass in marginal seats, hire of halls, publicity for meetings, and travel expenses.”

I was asked to approach the leaflet team.

The artist and cartoonist is Freda Graham. The photo manipulator and layout artist is Sahid Daar. The copywriter and editor is David Wilkins. Aiden provides the statistics and does much of the research. It is a team effort.

I spoke to Aiden as he works in the House of Commons. Aiden said that the team would get back to me.

Charlotte is living with me again, and Sister Sally has gone back to Tryton.

Charlotte spends hours each day composing. She seems to spend hours on the internet each night conversing with Mark Walker.

From what I hear Mark and Melanie are still happy together.

My sister Sally is working for her GCSE exams in about a year and a half. Sally is still visiting her maimed servicemen. Sally is still writing music.

Andrew and Mike are happy hard working lads.

Sister Sally is fine.

With Sister Sally having mobility issues she was never put forward for much in the Church when she was based in Cardiff.

In Tryton Sister Sally lives in the same street as our Church. Her mind is fine. With the wheelchair Sister Sally can get to Church even on her bad days.

From January Sister Sally will be teaching “Gospel and Doctrine” at the Mormon Church in Tryton. Mark will help Sister Sally to prepare the lessons. Sister Sally is nervous but Sister Sally is also quite excited.

I had a letter from one of the men who attacked me.

He explained that he was very sorry for what had happened. It had never been the intention of these men to cause hurt or pain, but merely to publicise their political cause.

They never had any intention to hurt me or to cause a miscarriage.
He is personally devastated by what happened.
Such personal life as he had has been destroyed.
He will be appearing at the Crown Court for sentencing soon.
If I can find it in my heart to forgive him, a letter saying that I forgive him would probably motivate the judge to give a shorter prison sentence.
I directed Caroline to answer that because of his actions on that day I have been deprived of a child I was expecting.
I will never have that child.
Neither my husband nor I feel merciful or forgiving towards him.
Quite the opposite!
“Please do not bother to write again.”
When David and Annette came to dinner the other day David dropped a small pile of political books for me to read.
As I am still taking things easy I have the time to begin reading them.

CHAPTER 55: Max Hewson

I enjoy school. There are only a few of us in my year and for some subjects I am the only person in my class. Statistics and Accountancy are almost fun the way they are taught. With our small class sizes there is no messing about. We are on task in class. I spend a lot of time in my cubicle just working.
I would like to score A and A+ in the exams for my own satisfaction.
Don and Emma wish me to do well.
There is no reason why I should not.
In Britain there is a national database of bone marrow donors. I have given bone marrow for two people. It is not painful, just tiring and boring.
Apparently some child in Los Angeles needs my bone marrow. The distance from Yorkshire to Los Angeles is too great for a courier to take a refrigerated bone marrow donation. Sadly the child is in a charity hospital so there is no money to pay me for the bone marrow. There is no money to pay my transport costs.
In England donors are not paid for bone marrow. I thought the concept of being paid to give bone marrow was nasty but apparently in some countries people do sell their blood and bone marrow.
I have no idea how the charity hospital found me, but they did.
Don and Emma and I decided that I have to help.
I am a multi millionaire (only a small multi) so I can afford to fly to Los Angeles.
We decided that I would not fly First Class because that is hugely expensive. Also I am likely to be making half a dozen flights.
Our friend Amina lives in Los Angeles so I will stay with Amina for a week or so.
My American visa was easy. I stayed with Tohur Miah in London and Tohur took me to the American Embassy to queue for a visa.
Tohur is built like a brick outhouse. Tohur has so much chest and arms and legs that the security guards needed to see bare skin before they would accept that Tohur is not a suicide bomber.
I had all the documents I needed so things went smoothly.
Tohur took me to the airport that evening.

The stewardesses thought I was a bit young to be travelling on my own. I gave my most winning smile. I explained that at sixteen years of age I had demanded the opportunity to travel on my own rather than to have my mummy with me.

I am six foot tall.

I may be pretty but I am not vulnerable.

Don hates me having long hair.

I showed the stewardesses my pilot's licence and my pilot's log book.

One of my friends Ali Miah had had to land an airliner in an emergency. I was on the plane at the time. I was available to help should I be needed.

The stewardesses smiled and they said that they would bear me in mind should there be an emergency.

When they asked why I was flying I decided to say that I was visiting a family friend. I thought that saying I was flying to give bone marrow was too tacky.

It was a really long flight. The aeroplane crew changed over at New York but of course I had to stay on the plane.

When we arrived at Los Angeles we had to queue to be passed through immigration control. I had a visa so I thought I would have no problem.

The immigration officer looked at my passport and his eyebrows went up.

The immigration guy and his Hispanic looking supervisor took me to a windowless interview room.

I was told to hand over all my documents.

They both looked hard at my pilot licence and my pilot logbook. They did not like them.

"Why have you come to America?"

I showed them the emails from the hospital that I had taken with me to the American Embassy.

"That's a new trick!"

"You have been to Bayrain three times in the last six months?"

I explained why.

"You speak Ayrabic?"

"Yes. I also speak Spanish and French."

The immigration officer told me to say something in Spanish.

I spoke to the Hispanic supervisor.

"Your servant eats too many doughnuts.

"He will have a heart attack if he does not take care of himself."

The Hispanic supervisor was not amused.

He said in Spanish, angrily,

"Do you think this is funny?"

I replied in Spanish, also angrily,

"Look I have come to Los Angeles to help a very sick child."

I switched to English.

I was still angry.

"If you send me back, that child will die."

"It is your problem, not mine.

"It is you two guys who will get the bad publicity if that child dies."

The two guys went out.

I was sat on my own for a long time.

They came back.

"You say you were in a film in Bayrain?"

"Yes.

"I have eight copies of the film in my suitcase. I intended the films as presents.

"You can view one."

"Do you know eight people in Los Angeles?"

"Not yet, but I expect to meet people."

"Your luggage is in Boston, so that does not help us much."

This was the first I had heard that my luggage was not in Los Angeles.

Blast!

"So who do you know here in Los Angeles?"

I explained about Amina and her husband Abdul.

"They are Muslims?"

"Yes."

"Do you know anyone who is not a Muslim?"

I thought for a minute.

Oh dear!

"When I was a child actor I was in a film with Dee Lishus and Candy Gumm."

Only two of the biggest film actors on the planet!

The immigration officers really did not like that.

I gave the name of the film.

"If you can contact them tell Dee that he and I played an accordion duet on British TV.

"Tell Candy that she kissed three little lads on British TV.

"I was the blond one."

They did not believe me.

"If you are an actor why were you travelling Club Class?"

"I am not on expenses."

A good answer, I thought.

They left me alone for a long time.

They came back.

"OK. Your story checks out.

"The hospital would like you give bone marrow tomorrow morning at ten.

"Dee Lishus has given you a telephone number to call his personal assistant.

"Your friend Amina Daar is waiting for you.

"Welcome to America!"

On the positive side my homework is in my luggage. I can't attempt it if I don't have it.

Amina met me and we took a bus into Los Angeles.

Amina had shown the immigration officers photos on her mobile phone of Candy Gumm and a few other movie stars for whom Amina has made dresses.

Amina confirmed to the immigration officers that as a child I had been in the same film as Dee Lishus and Candy Gumm. Amina confirmed that she had seen the two Christmas Specials of "Terrible Tykes" in which I had appeared with Dee Lishus and Candy Gumm.

I telephoned the number for Dee Lishus.

I told Dee's personal assistant that I would be visiting the hospital in the morning and that after visiting the hospital I would telephone again in hopes of arranging to meet Dee.

I sent an email to Don and Emma confirming that I had arrived safely but that my luggage is in Boston!

That night we ate in Abdul's family's Lebanese restaurant.

The family had an oud at the restaurant so I ended up playing the oud to the customers to great applause. I played only instrumental pieces.

After the restaurant had closed I played the oud and I sang in Arabic to Abdul's family and to a few of their special friends. That was a great night!

At the hospital they were delighted to see me. I saw the poor little mite to whom I was to give bone marrow. He was unconscious.

I confirmed that I had not drunk alcohol in the last forty-eight hours and that so far as I knew I had no infectious diseases.

I confirmed that I had never had homosexual sex.

I volunteered that in fact I have never had sex of any kind.

Not yet.

I smiled winningly.

I gave the bone marrow and I slept for a bit.

When I telephoned Amina to check in with her Amina told me that my luggage was now at the airport.

I went to the airport and I collected my luggage.

On the positive side I now had copies of my film. On the negative side I now had my homework.

I telephoned Dee's assistant. I told him what timings the hospital had set for me over the next few days.

He told me that Dee had invited me to a party on Saturday where we would eat and then view a new film. The assistant agreed that I could courier a film to the assistant to give to Dee to view.

Amina had the address for Candy Gumm. I wrote a short note and I had my film couriered to Candy Gumm.

Abdul was at work.

Amina had work to do.

I just cracked on with my homework. I got a lot done.

Then I went out. I bought a coffee and I watched the world go by.

I am good looking. I am very fit.

I have long blond hair.

I look young and innocent.

Eventually I realised that I was in a coffee shop where a high proportion of the clients were gay.

After I had turned down four sexual opportunities I decided to go somewhere else.

The next coffee shop was full of teenage girls and ladies who just loved my accent.

I explained that I was only in Los Angeles for a short time. Again I did not say why I was in Los Angeles but only that I was visiting a family friend.

Sadly I had no offers of sexual opportunity.

I have had offers in England but I have never taken them up.

It is there when I want it.

Dennis Wilkins told me once that when you can't have it you want it and when you can have it you get choosey.

Dennis is right.

Amina telephoned me and she asked me to come home.

Amina took time off work yesterday. Amina was much longer at the airport than she had expected. In consequence Amina was now under time pressure.

I agreed to cook dinner.

I cooked a dish I had learned in Bahrain. It is basically spicy meat balls using minced lamb, tomatoes and spices. I added side dishes of corn on the cob and spinach. It was served on couscous with a side salad. Then for dessert I made a soufflé surprise which the Americans call Baked Alaska. Followed by real coffee.

Abdul was well pleased.

So was Amina.

In the morning I went to Abdul's workplace with Abdul. He gave me a tour.

It seems that they have a team of eight hackers who try to break into the computer systems of big companies.

If the hackers succeed they send a message to the computer systems manager to say that they have successfully hacked into his system. They are "white hat" but if they are able to gain entry then people with evil motives could also gain entry. They invite the security manager to contact their sales team to discuss improving his security.

Then they have another team who improve security for the customer for a fee.

Abdul is a bookkeeper for the business.

After two hours I left Abdul's employer's premises and I walked to a bus stop.

There was a conversation in Spanish at the bus stop. I did not take part.

It was not long before the conversation turned to this handsome young man (me) and why someone as well dressed as me was travelling by bus.

The consensus was that I was a foreigner, a European, and that I was on holiday.

I told them in Spanish that they were absolutely right. I was a visitor from England. I was staying with friends in Los Angeles.

They were delighted that I have reasonable Spanish.

We chatted all the way to the bus depot.

I then went shopping in the town centre.

This time before I entered a coffee shop I looked to see if the customers were mainly male or mainly female.

When I arrived at Amina's house she told me that one of the people I had sung to in the restaurant runs an Arabic cultural centre in Los Angeles.

He has arranged for me to be interviewed on an Arabic radio station that serves the Los Angeles area. I am to take an oud with me.

I am invited to Candy Gumm's house for dinner tonight. Candy has seen the film. Candy says that even though it was all in Arabic it is still a funny film.

CHAPTER 56: Cecil Byram

I was telephoned at seven one morning by Mr Porteous my financial advisor.

Was I aware that this morning a bid has been launched for BABE Systems PLC?

I was not aware.

There is a company called Rapacious Engineering, whose main activity is the manufacture of military jets. They have a reputation for late payment and for non payment of suppliers. The trade unions that deal with Rapacious are in a constant state of friction with them.

A number of companies including the Byram Group either will not deal with Rapacious or insist upon payment in advance, so bad is Rapacious' reputation.

Rapacious have bid for BABE Systems PLC. Their offer is not for cash, but for shares. Given today's share price for Rapacious the bid values BABE Systems at £5 a share. The current share price is £4.75.

The bid is conditional on Rapacious gaining enough acceptances to win control.
I have several choices.
I can do nothing and see what happens.
I can purchase BABE Systems shares and not bid.
I can bid for cash at some figure above £4.75.
I can wait. Both the European Union and the UK Monopolies and Mergers Commission might block the bid because Rapacious and BABE together would have a very large share of the European and UK aircraft markets.
I can sell my shares to Rapacious.
I can sell my shares to some other purchaser.
Were the Rapacious bid to succeed I would have to abandon my plans for BABE Systems PLC.
In theory I could wait until the combined Rapacious /Babe conglomerate hit trouble and then bid for the conglomerate.
Were the Rapacious bid to fail then the share price of BABE Systems would probably fall.
I asked Mr Porteous for his advice.
He said that he was thinking about the new situation. What value do I place on shares in BABE Systems?
I said I would think and get back to him.
I got up.
I washed and shaved, dressed, and brewed coffee.
Irene was up and dressed but Irene knows that her role in these situations is to stay out of my way while I think.
My thinking has always been that if I pay a fair price for something I make no profit on the deal. So why do it?
I had intended to wait for a stock market drop or a BABE share price drop before bidding.
I do not wish to have shares in Rapacious at any price.
As a straight investment and nothing else, BABE shares are worth between £4.40 and £4.50 to me.
With the extra benefit I could gain from BABE if I had control the BABE shares are worth £5.10 to £5.25 to me. Possibly £5.50.
I prepared a short statement for Mr Porteous to put out.
"Byram Group notes the offer made by Rapacious PLC.
"Byram Group will not accept an offer for its BABE shares taking shares in Rapacious PLC in exchange. There must be a cash option."
"So are you going to bid?"
"I don't know."
We chewed the question round a bit.
Mr Porteous will put Geoff and his team on standby.
I telephoned the team in the pub to have them research Rapacious PLC urgently.
I telephoned my daughter Karen.
Karen said that what to do had to be my decision. Karen agrees with whatever I decide.
My mother said the same.
I spoke again to Mr Porteous.
I have the cash to make a cash bid, so I could make an unconditional bid for shares at £4.75, but that is only the current price. I could offer say £5.00 in cash.

Or I could buy shares on the stock market until the price rose to £5.00. The Rapacious bid for £5.00 in Rapacious shares would stand against £5.00 in cash on the stock market. Rapacious would either have to improve its offer or see its bid fail.

I instructed Mr Porteous to fill my boots, but not to go above £5.00.

The other BABE shareholders were hoping the share price would rise further so even offering up to £5.00 I only bought 1% of the shares bringing me to a 9% holding.

Then we all waited for Rapacious to increase its bid.

I was telephoned by Sir Hector Parsons the Chairman of the BABE Systems Board.

He quite reasonably asked me the Byram Group's intentions.

I said "Undecided".

I said that in my opinion Rapacious would have to increase their bid or give up.

"Are you prepared to be a "white knight" bidder?"

"I thought you didn't like me?"

Sir Hector hesitated.

"I don't like you, I agree.

"Your track record is that you buy businesses and you make them run better.

"The track record of Rapacious is that they gut businesses and they let them collapse.

"Of those two choices for losing our independence, you are the least bad."

"Well thank you for your glowing endorsement.

"There is a problem though.

"The current share price is just too high.

"So we have to await developments."

That was the general view.

On my behalf David Wilkins telephoned Rapacious to say that should they decide to abandon their bid David is willing to purchase all their shares in BABE Systems at £5.00.

Over the next few days nothing much happened.

Rapacious increased their offering for BABE System shares to £5.50 in Rapacious shares.

To their horror the share price of Rapacious began to fall because it was believed that everybody who would sell BABE shares to Rapacious would smartly sell their Rapacious shares to turn their paper profit into cash.

The consequence of this was that no-one wanted to part with their BABE shares to gain Rapacious shares in exchange.

Ho. Ho.

Rapacious folded. They sold their four per cent of shares in BABE Systems to David who sold them on to me.

I now hold 13% of BABE Systems. On average I have paid £4.50 which is not wonderful but is acceptable as a simple investment.

The share price which had peaked at £5.05 is now down to £4.80.

There is a lot of comment in the financial press that I am not on the Board of BABE Systems even though I am the second largest shareholder. Have I declined?

In view of my public support for the Labour Party have I not been invited?

The financial press comment on the success of the Byram Group is that it owes a lot to my ability to spot value and to turn disastrous businesses into star performers. It says a lot for BABE Systems that I am so heavily invested in their company.

So why is a man of my genius not on the BABE Systems Board?

Sir Hector invited me to lunch.

"We were lucky with the Rapacious bid. And again thank you for driving our share price up.

“Next time we may not be as fortunate.”

“Yes. You cannot always rely on the Byram Group being ready to buy when you are ready to sell.”

Sir Hector winced.

“I am not sure which is the greater worry. To have you waiting in the wings waiting to swoop, or you deciding to pack your bags and go.”

“I see your problem.”

“One of our shareholders is worried about the next General Election here in Britain. Should Labour win the BABE Systems share price would fall through the floor.”

I said nothing.

“They own five per cent of the company. If they put their shares on the market our share price will drop. They would like to sell to you at today’s price of £4.80.

“What do you think about that?”

“I don’t mind doing that.”

“I think the time may have arrived when we have to talk seriously about your long term plans for BABE Systems PLC.”

“Perhaps.

“But first let me buy these shares you tell me someone wishes to sell.

“Would you like to have lunch next week?”

“Come to Willerton.”

My Head Office is at Willerton.

I bought the shares, bringing me up to 18% of BABE Systems.

I am now earning an adequate return on investment, but not quite ten per cent. Although if one were to count the growth in the share price of BABE Systems I am still ahead in investment terms.

I put some work into my preparations for my next lunch with Sir Hector.

When Mark Johnson converted this building into a headquarters for the Byram Group Mark thought that we did not need a Boardroom. This Yorkshire frugality is a facet of how we run our business.

When Sir Hector arrived I explained that we do not have a Boardroom, so we were to dine in the large meeting room.

Robert Iredale our Chief Executive, David Taylor the Energy Industries Director, Garth Stead the Components Manufacture Director and Mark Johnson the Vice Chair and Director for Exports and Expansion were present.

I introduced Sir Hector to all of them.

Sir Hector was I think unimpressed with Mark because Mark is so young.

Sir Hector snorted,

“Exports Director?”

“What languages do you speak?”

Mark smiled and said,

“Only Putonghua and Arabic, and English sometimes.”

Mark was not in any way intimidated.

Sir Hector was mollified.

Sir Hector recognised that despite his youth Mark must be the person responsible for the large orders from Bahrain for bricks and steel.

“How did you land those large orders from Bahrain?”

“It was not easy.

"I had to get into the customer's head, to understand what he really wanted.

"Then I gave it to him."

Sir Hector nodded.

I had instructed our catering team to provide Sir Hector with a fine lunch. Mark Johnson gave input into preparing the lunch.

The wine was from a private vineyard owned by Karen's future father in law. Mark had put the wine into a carafe so Sir Hector could not know it unless he recognised it.

Sir Hector's eyebrows lifted when he took the first sip.

The venison was from Karen's fiancé's estate.

The dessert was a Johnson lemon cheesecake designated TKF (To Kill For).

After coffee Robert and David departed leaving just Mark and Sir Hector with me.

I can say with pride that the lunch I provided was as good as the lunches that Sir Hector had provided.

I know that Sir Hector knew that the wine I served was even better than Sir Hector had provided for me.

Mark and I started by showing a film the Byram Group has produced to show to BABE Systems staff should we launch a bid.

The first part of the film sets out the origins of the Byram Group and what we do now.

There is a chart that shows for each of the last ten years the number of employees and the number of redundancies and dismissals.

Keith Toser our current Byram Group trade unions Convenor comes on.

Keith gives statistics about failures to agree and about active disputes across the entire Group. The numbers are laughably small for a Group employing nearly thirty-five thousand people.

Keith says that Cecil Byram is clever and Cecil Byram is cunning.

"Your job is safer with a boss who is clever than with a boss who is not.

"Welcome to the Byrams Group."

In the film, workers from most of the businesses we have bought talk about their experiences at work during a Byram Group takeover.

A man from a munitions factory talked about how Byrams sacked most of his management on the first day. Byrams sold the managers' company cars. Then Byrams demolished the management building.

Byrams used the building footprint and the managerial car park to build a plant to make the energy gathering "fabric". The worker told us about the Byram three Ps – Production, Profit, or Push.

He said that he earns more money now than he ever has in his life.

We had added a graph showing the numbers employed at his plant on a quarter by quarter basis. After an initial dip there has been steady growth.

A Merseyside Plastics worker told how the company had been on strike when Byram Group bought the company.

Byrams sacked most of the managers.

Byrams improved the catering hugely "Restaurant quality meals at works canteen prices".

He also said that the ability to eat a hot sandwich on arrival and have further food delivered to your work station is terrific.

Merseyside Plastics used to be on strike two or three times a year. They have not had a strike since Byrams took over. They now have four thousand workers!

Again we added an employment graph.

A coal miner talked about the improvement in the food, and that he could now eat good hot or cold meals two miles underground. He has cold water to drink when underground. His quality of life is much improved.

Smiling broadly the miner said one had to be careful about shaking hands with Cecil Byram. The miner waggled his stumps where he had lost a couple of fingers! The miner fades from the screen laughing.

Sir Hector smiled broadly.

We added an employment graph just to be consistent.

Some managers in a small real estate development company talked about the changes in their lives. There is enough capital to buy a land and property bank to provide for the future. There is enough capital for any project.

For each of the businesses purchased there are graphs showing the number of employees at the beginning of each quarter. There is often a dip at the beginning but always there is an overall increase in employment.

An attractive young female cadet talks about the Byram cadet scheme in glowing terms.

A youngish woman wearing a little badge with the figure 5 is holding an infant whose badge has the figure 6. She explains that she is a fifth generation Byrams worker. She would be happy for her child to work for Byrams in due course.

Then I come on. I explain that I am Cecil Byram. I am wearing a polo neck sweater. I wear a similar little badge with the figure 4 upon it.

I talk about the way that the family historically has never regarded the business as a money machine but as a vocation and as a stewardship.

The business is adequately funded.

Being Yorkshire we are careful with money. I personally drive a Bentley, but I bought the Bentley out of my own money.

I drive the car myself. I do not have a chauffeur.

I confirm that we recognise our trade unions. I talk about why trade unions are important.

I talk about the opportunities for training and education for our workers.

I mention the education opportunities for the children and the grandchildren of our workers.

I mention the loan scheme.

I mention our relocation opportunities. I mention the brass bands and orchestras we support. Every Byrams location supports a child football team.

The film ends.

At this point Daniel Mason and Martin Jenkins joined us.

"Daniel and Martin have been working on how the combined Group would operate."

Sir Hector looked at them with concern and with interest.

Daniel began.

"We looked at three options.

"The first option is that Byram Group totally owns BABE Systems and has taken it private.

"The second option is that Byram Group has control of BABE Systems but that there are minority shareholders whose interests must be safeguarded.

"The third option is that Byram Group does not control BABE Systems."

"Those are the options that we see."

Sir Hector thought, and then he nodded.

"Byram Group has no intent to interfere with or to micromanage BABE Systems so all three options leave all the BABE Systems operations unaffected."

Sir Hector thought about this, and then he nodded.

“BABE Systems owns a huge amount of technology that could be used for industrial products that could be sold to the civilian market.

“BABE generally does not go down this road because it would be a diversion of investment capital and management time.”

Sir Hector nodded.

“BABE earns much more from Defence products than it does from civilian projects, so the civilian production option generally does not work for BABE Systems.”

Sir Hector thought.

Sir Hector nodded.

“What BABE Systems needs is a collaborator that has significant experience in the manufacture and assembly and marketing of goods to the civilian market.

“The collaborator must have access to capital and have or be able to hire managers to run the new factories and businesses.”

Sir Hector raised his eyebrows.

Sir Hector is interested.

“Our interest is in collaboration with BABE Systems in a number of projects to exploit technologies and expertises held by BABE Systems.”

“In a collaboration situation the intellectual property rights and expertises would be BABE’s contribution to the joint ventures, gaining BABE a percentage of the profits without having to put in capital or significant managerial effort.

Sir Hector smiled slowly.

“We have set aside a further six billion pounds to gain control of BABE Systems.”

Sir Hector stopped smiling.

“It would cost us eleven billion pounds to buy out all the other shareholders and take BABE Systems private.

“For our purposes control of BABE Systems or ownership of BABE Systems is not necessary.”

Sir Hector nodded again, slowly.

“The money we currently have set aside to purchase further shares in BABE Systems would be better used to build our new businesses and to develop the product lines.

Sir Hector looked at me very hard.

“What percentage are you offering for the intellectual property?”

I said,

“Whatever we negotiate.

“Flat rate, sliding scale, whatever suits us both.”

Sir Hector is interested.

Sir Hector spoke to Martin.

“You have been very quiet.

“What is your role?”

“I am an engineer rather than a bean counter.

“I have so far identified one hundred and twelve product lines we could develop jointly, not counting the air ships.”

“Air ships?”

I think that this presentation is shocking for Sir Hector.

I spoke.

“We have a project to set up a transport company that uses air ships for goods transport across difficult terrain in the third world.

“The Lockheed twenty tonne pay load air ship costs forty million dollars per vehicle.

“On our projections we will need three hundred air ships within five years. We would like your expertise to set up and run a factory to build air ships.”

“Our profits for this factory will be low because the purchaser for the air ships is Byram overseas family trusts. So we would pay you on flat rate rather than on profit share. Either so much per plane or an annual flat rate.

“How much would we make out of your proposals?”

“You would make a huge amount of money for no significant capital or managerial input.

“Your share price will be over six pounds in no time.”

I know that part of Sir Hector’s pay as Chairman of the Board is affected by the share price.

Increasing the share price to six pounds would be worth tens of millions of pounds to Sir Hector. Given that I own eighteen per cent of BABE Systems increasing the BABE Systems share price to six pounds would be worth over a billion pounds to me.

Sir Hector turned to Mark.

“You have also been very quiet.

“What do you bring to the party?”

“I wear two hats.

“Exports and Expansion is the role that takes up most of my time.

“My second role as Vice Chair of the Byram Group is to provide continuity over time.

“I was a friend of the Byram family before I began work with the Byram Group.

“Should anything happen to Mr Byram I would advise the family about the then current issues and projects and problems.

“So will you be going on the Board of BABE Systems?”

“I have no idea.

“Mr Byram has not said anything to me about it.”

We left it that Sir Hector would report these proposals to the Board of BABE Systems PLC.

CHAPTER 57: Max Hewson

The dinner that evening with Candy Gumm was great fun.

Candy had invited half a dozen attractive young ladies aged from fourteen to sixteen to keep us company. They are the daughters of Candy’s neighbours or the daughters of Candy’s friends. The girls were all great people.

I played Candy’s piano and one of the girls had brought a guitar so we all sang.

We had a thoroughly good time.

The dinner itself was just good burgers, good chips, and salads. There was a wide range of soft drinks available including some that I had never tasted.

After dinner Candy played the recording of the “Terrible Tykes” Christmas Special in which Candy had kissed me.

Then Candy showed “Gormless”.

There is a lot of slapstick visual humour in Gormless, and a bit of fighting.

The girls loved “Gormless”.

The girls questioned whether I am really as physically fit as I appear to be in the film?

We ended up with me demonstrating the full Hewson exercise regime including one armed push ups and one armed hand stands. It was easier to demonstrate the moves with my shirt off, which the girls did not mind.

I showed that I could lift the girls above my head.

I had to help the girls to try to do one arm press-up and one arm hand stands.

There was a lot of fun and laughter.

I took a taxi home eventually. The girls stayed behind to wait for parents to collect them. The following day Candy said on the telephone that she had really enjoyed the evening. It was good for the girls to meet a young film star who behaves like a gentleman. All the girls would like to meet me again.

Candy says that she will show Gormless to some casting specialists.

That is kind of her.

I was back to the hospital the following afternoon to give more bone marrow. The child was looking better. He was almost perky.

I gave more bone marrow.

Once I was awake again I went back to Amina's house. I was behind with my homework so I spent the rest of the day finishing it off.

The next morning I was off to the Arab radio station clutching a copy of the film and a copy of my CD.

I was interviewed in Arabic. The presenter played four of my songs from the CD. I talked about my growing up in a house with Muslims from Bangladesh and Somalia. Then I told the listeners about my career as a child actor.

I had learned Arabic because I thought it was a good idea.

I have Muslim friends in Bahrain. I went to Bahrain to experience using Arabic for real.

While in Bahrain I had been recruited to star in a film. I learned to play the oud.

I am in Los Angeles to visit friends whose family run the Lebanese restaurant, which I named. I agreed to give a copy of the film as a prize in a contest, and the CD for the radio station to play music to their listeners.

The presenter and I thanked each other.

I felt it was a good show and he said that it was.

Dinner at Dee's house was really interesting. The other guests were important people in Los Angeles. They were famous actors, studio heads, and actors' agents. They were all in their forties or above.

A famous actress looked at me and she smiled broadly.

She looked into my eyes and she said,

"You are!"

"I am what?"

"My daughter told me that you are utterly gorgeous, and your eyes show that you are innocent."

I am not utterly innocent, but I am not depraved either. I decided that being thought innocent was better.

I suppose that in some eyes I am utterly gorgeous.

I had thought that I was only good looking, but why argue?

"Have I met your daughter?"

"Yes. You met her at Candy's house. Her name is Samantha."

"Sam" is beautiful.

Sam has a really sweet nature. I said so.

Sam's father smiled indulgently.

Dee announced that we were going to see my film "Gormless" first. After dinner we will see a new film from one of the major studios.

Even though "Gormless" is in Arabic the story is not difficult to follow.

This hard boiled experienced audience loved it.

Dinner was steak, chips or mash, and salad.

The second film I thought was very good.

The others were drinking alcohol. I explained that I have not acquired a taste for alcohol yet.

Sam's mother asked me to demonstrate my exercise regime including handstands, so I did.

I sensed there was something going on, but I did not know what.

None of this audience wished to learn how to do one handed press ups or one handed handstands.

Eventually the party broke up.

I thanked Dee for showing my film.

Dee laughed and he said it was a very good film, well worth watching.

The next morning I sent an email to my agent Tom Driburg telling him that I was in Los Angeles and what I have been doing. I also told him why I am in Los Angeles and that I will be returning to Los Angeles in January.

I was astonished to find myself in a gossip column. The piece reported that famous European actor Max Hewson has been visiting the homes of Candy Gumm and Dee Lishus showing his most recent film, a musical comedy filmed in Arabic. There was a photo of me with my shirt off at Candy's house holding a laughing Sam above my head. Sam is described as the fifteen year old daughter of the famous actress I had met at Dee's house.

According to the story several studios are interested in employing me for films.

I sent a copy of that piece to Tom Driburg.

On Monday I went back to the hospital to give bone marrow.

The hospital is keeping my bone marrow very cold but not actually frozen.

I will return in January to give bone marrow again.

On Tuesday I flew home.

CHAPTER 58: Don Hewson

Dennis Wilkins recently refurbished the wheeled cart that the children use to go down hillsides in the local park.

My son Arthur tried to harness Heinz to pull the cart but Heinz pretended not to understand what was wanted.

Heinz keeps getting into the cart and then hanging his head out of it with his tongue hanging out.

When Arthur pulls the cart Heinz barks appreciatively.

Whenever the cart leaves the house a High School or older person has to go with the cart.

The person has a mobile telephone with them in case of accident.

The end of term show at the Theatre School was terrific. All of the performances were excellent.

We update each child's CV each half term, to be sure that we have the information readily available. In a normal school this would probably not be necessary but at a theatre school we never know what we might be asked for or when. We record all the shows just in case we need to provide evidence to a casting agent.

Max enjoyed his trip to Los Angeles.

Max showed us his press cutting. Wherever Max goes attractive young ladies tend to gravitate towards him. Lucky boy!

Even with his long hair Max is a good looking well made lad. There is not an ounce of spare flesh on him.

The news from the hospital in Los Angeles is that the child is doing well. Hopefully after Max has visited Los Angeles again in January the child will make a full recovery.

Max brought back a sweatshirt for Alice as a souvenir. Alice now wears it as a nightie.

Alice is well and happy. The program segments Alice performs with Abdul Daar are hugely popular.

The "Terrible Tykes" program does hugely well. On Thursday nights when "Terrible Tykes" shows it beats the competition from BBC Children's Television easily. The "Terrible Tykes" Christmas Special always dominates the Christmas TV listings.

One of the children's comics has a cartoon series about the characters in "Terrible Tykes". "Terrible Tykes" is a team effort. The children are tremendous performers. The scripts are wonderful. The music chosen always seems fresh.

The "Terrible Tykes" theme tune "Dance To Your Daddy" has been played now for years. It still sounds good.

Even if my own children were not performers I would probably watch "Terrible Tykes" with my school age children. I like the music.

Freda Graham is back for Christmas.

Freda earns good money from her quarterly sketches of the characters in "Terrible Tykes". Freda earned a lot of money for helping to produce a publicity leaflet for the Byram Group and Cecil Byram. Now Freda has a contract to help to design political leaflets for the Labour Party.

Freda says that her fellow students are admiring rather than jealous.

Freda's lecturers say that one of the purposes of being an artist is to affect society. If no-one sees your work what is the point?

It adds to the reputation of an art school if students are selling their work even before they graduate.

Well done, Freda.

Robert Graham is on overdrive at the moment. Robert is studying for four A levels at Manchester Grammar School, studying on Saturdays at the Northern Royal College of Music, composing his second symphony, and learning an horrifically complicated violin piece.

I said to Emma that Robert is missing out on the wider world by such intense concentration upon his studies and upon his music.

Emma said,

"This is Robert's world."

I think Robert is aware that young ladies are interested in him, but Robert simply does not have time for romance or even for dalliance.

The younger Grahams are thriving.

The Thorntons are fun. Sally Thornton is working very hard at school.

Sally has achieved Grade 8 on the piano.

Sally has developed a little trick of composing a short piece of music and then asking Robert Graham for advice.

When there is some point in talking to a girl Robert is happy to do it.

Robert praises Sally's composition and then advises Sally on how to improve it.

Rupert Thornton came back from Repton full of enthusiasm for the school and for his studies.

Rupert is in one of the school's rugby teams. Rupert is very happy.

Lucinda and Guy Thornton are fine.

Rebecca Johnson is pregnant again. Rebecca and Chester are very pleased.

We are all pleased for Rebecca and Chester.

Mark Johnson is studying for a Masters Degree in Business Administration and has some management duties for Byram Group as well. Mark is helping in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

I really like Mark's girlfriend Melanie Petworth. There are some women of that age who feel that their own self worth is only validated if they have a boyfriend, but Melanie is not like that.

Melanie is a strong woman in her own right.

Mark and Melanie make a really strong team as well as being an attractive couple.

Charlotte Johnson has been helping with soup runs in the poorer districts of London.

Charlotte's role has been to be to provide human contact with the homeless people who are being fed. That has been so good for Charlotte.

I think the experience has been enormously important in helping Charlotte to develop empathy.

Sally Johnson is doing well at the theatre school. She still visits her maimed servicemen.

Sally wrote an amazing four page letter to Rebecca setting out what is wrong with prosthetics in the UK. It all comes down to a paragraph in the Regulations governing prosthetics that was badly written. Sally suggested an alternative wording that would achieve what the drafters had intended to achieve but which would not have the same negative impact.

Rebecca forwarded the letter to the Minister of Defence suggesting that the Minister might wish to change the wording of the Regulation before the Regulations became a party political issue.

The Minister replied smartly saying that he had passed the issue to his prosthetics advisory group.

Six weeks later the wording of the Regulation was changed as Sally Johnson had suggested. Not bad for a child of fifteen!

One amusing aspect was that an internal memo from the Defence Minister to his staff somehow got copied to Rebecca.

"FGS deal with this pronto. I don't want La Pasionara fixing her teeth into me."

Apparently the Agriculture Minister called Rebecca Johnson "La Pasionara" when talking to another Cabinet Minister about Rebecca. Now most of the Cabinet members refer to Rebecca as "La Pasionara" in private.

La Pasionara was a famous Spanish Communist who was a symbol to the people of Spain for about fifty years.

The memo continues,

"By the look of it there is a Little Pasionara to contend with as well.

"Give them what Little Pasionara wants or I can see the coming year being needless Hell."

Sally is now teased as "Little Pasionara" whenever she grows passionate.

Andrew and Michael are growing well. They are serious pleasant children. Andrew is consistent but Michael sometimes needs a firm hand.

Mark Johnson and Sister Sally and Sally between them keep Michael on the right lines.

Sister Sally has been given a significant task in her Church. She is daunted but she is enormously enthusiastic.

Emma is just happy. Emma is a little worried about her father's health but otherwise all is well.

I have a knee twinge but otherwise nothing exciting. It does not stop me playing golf.

Christmas seems to come round so quickly.

None of the current children are working at the Tryton Hotel.

The children also help with cooking for Christmas Day and for the annual reunion of previously fostered children.

I am amazed that every year we keep buying musical instruments.

The children who have learned on a small instrument wish to have a medium size or a full size instrument. Children who have learned one or two instruments wish to learn another.

The shoot 'em up computer games are always popular. From about thirteen years old the children are interested in car driving and small aeroplane flying computer programs.

We have construction toys and art and craft toys and enormous numbers of books. Dolls of course, and bicycles.

All the children are pleased to cook for Boxing Day, which is their collective present to me.

For Christmas Max wants more flying hours, which we are happy to give him.

Alice wants a viola, which is fine.

Arthur says that the household drum kit is battered to death and needs replacing.

Damien wants a trombone. Damien is barely big enough to play a child's trombone.

Kate wants a doll that realistically cries and wees and "interacts".

CHAPTER 59: Kevin Hanson

All of us managers were informed of a manager meeting the following day. Those who could not attend in person were instructed to attend over Skype.

Byrams managers meetings are timetabled weeks ahead. I do not think I have heard of an urgent manager meeting before except after the Chinese tsunami. An urgent meeting must herald something big that cannot be expressed in an email.

Odd!

Cecil led the meeting, as he normally does.

"I am pleased to announce a major agreement with BABE Systems PLC.

"BABE Systems is going to licence Byram Group to use all their patents, intellectual property, expertises, proprietary knowledge and everything else for us to manufacture products for civilian use.

"Rather than get into detailed negotiations about the value of each item of intellectual property BABE will take a percentage of the profits from any factory that uses BABE Systems information. There is an arbitration scheme set up that will rule upon the exact figures in each case. The arbitration scheme will deal with disputes.

"Research work by Martin Jenkins and Daniel Mason has discovered over one hundred products and product lines that we could manufacture with this new technology.

"Some of our existing products can and will be improved with BABE Systems Technology.

"BABE Systems is going to run a factory for us building air ships for freight movement.

"There is a lot of thinking and planning in the months ahead. You as managers will be heavily involved."

"Over the next few days and weeks a lot of documents will be coming out of Willerton.

"Please read them carefully.

"Do not be afraid to make suggestions or to ask questions. This is a huge project.

"I am expecting to invest at least six thousand million pounds in these projects.

"We will more or less double the size of Byram Group in the next five years.

"I need you, my cohort of managers, to grow with us!"

We all stood up and we cheered.

Well done Cecil Byram and those around him!

“I am going to need you managers to set up new factories and new product lines. Please make sure you have deputies who can step up to your current jobs.”

Mark Johnson is flying out to the huge BABE Systems factory complex in Saudi Arabia to talk to the BABE Systems workers there.

Martin Jenkins and Garth Stead will tour the BABE Systems plants in the United Kingdom.

Chester Wilson is going to tour the BABE plants in the United States.

The message from all of us at Byram Group is the same – we are in a long term collaboration that will make good profits for BABE Systems PLC. All your suggestions are welcome.

I have been told that my hand tool production is unlikely to be affected so I can simply press on with that. However, the power tools division based at Birmingham is going to come under me. The manager there is being freed for another task so I will have to take on his responsibilities, too.

My financial package is terrific.

My promotions came quite late in life so my wife and I still live in our modest terrace house in Willerton. We have cleared the mortgage.

We are saving and investing for ourselves. On top of that there is a very comforting pension fund as a Byram Group manager.

At one time I was facing redundancy because I could no longer stand at a work bench.

Mark Johnson rescued me to become his assistant and factotum. My management career took off from there.

I am so grateful to Mark.

Our deep coal mine at Skelton will come to the end of its useful life in about eight years, leaving nine hundred men to face redundancy.

Daniel Mason has applied for planning permission to build an air ship factory near to the colliery. It will employ over twelve hundred people. As the miners leave the pit they will be retrained to make components for the air ships. Until the pit closes a lot of the components will be made in our other plants and shipped to the assembly point at Skelton. The brand will be “Skelton”.

It may be surprising that Cecil Byram decided not to take up a place on the Board of BABE Systems PLC.

Cecil has explained that being Chair of the Byram Group which intends to double in size within five years is challenging enough. Cecil does not believe that it is fair to the Byram Group for Cecil to devote significant time to BABE Systems PLC.

The same argument applies to all of the Byram Group senior managers.

BABE Systems has two and a half billion pounds of Byram Group money invested in it. After the deal with the Byram Group was made public the share price rose to well over £6.00.

The Byram Group investment is now worth three and a half billion pounds.

Somebody should keep an eye on our investment in BABE Systems PLC.

Karen Byram is the person who will join the BABE Systems Board as the minder. Karen is in her final year at university.

Karen will eventually inherit the entire Byram Group.

Karen is a symbol of the Byram Group’s intention to maintain its shareholding in BABE Systems PLC. Being appointed so young Karen will one day become the longest serving Director on the Board of BABE Systems PLC.

Karen will gain by being exposed to problems and issues that she would never learn about on the Byram Group Board.

Karen also intends studying at INSEAD in a few years time.

Karen is not on the Byram Group Board.

This is not a slight on Karen. The Byram Group Board is a working Board composed of the most important managers. There is no obvious reason for Karen to be there. It will hopefully be another twenty years before Karen needs to become involved with the Byram Group, preparatory to taking over the leadership.

Karen sheds the Spanish responsibilities.

There was negative press comment about an undergraduate joining the Board of one of Britain's largest companies.

Karen was interviewed on television.

Karen pointed out that she began working in the family business at the age of eight. Karen can operate every machine tool in Byrams.

Karen has seven A levels all at A* grade. Karen is fluent in French and Spanish.

Alongside her undergraduate studies Karen managed four Byrams enterprises in Spain.

Minding the three and a half billion pound investment in BABE Systems PLC is an important promotion for Karen.

Karen is looking forward to it.

Our workers are surprisingly excited by the deal with BABE Systems PLC. The deal means that their jobs at Byrams are even more secure.

If we are going to double the number of workers or thereabouts then it is likely that we are going to need to double the number of charge hands and supervisors. All workers have had a message with their payslips inviting them to apply for training as a charge hand or supervisor to qualify for promotion.

Cecil has announced that the Cadet Scheme is to be increased again. We need a thousand cadets a year.

Cecil is happy to fund all of them through apprenticeships and engineering degrees. Many of them will be funded through Masters Degrees as well.

We are going to need hundreds of technicians to maintain a fleet of air ships, and around five hundred pilots for three hundred air ships.

The Industrial Society has made Cecil an award for Cecil's contribution to improving the image of the engineer in modern society.

Julian Jenkins MP once spent a couple of weeks shadowing Cecil. By coincidence Julian spent a short time as an assistant to Rebecca Johnson. Julian is on a Labour Party working party trying to firm up Labour policies on industry. Julian asked Cecil to contribute to this process.

Chester Wilson is currently writing Cecil's response.