

Faith and Hope Fly South.

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How nice of you to take the trouble. It isn't everyone who would give up their time to listen to two old biddies with nothing much to do with themselves but talk. Still, there's always *something* going on, here at the Meadowbank Home; some domestic drama, some everyday farce. I tell you, some days the Meadowbank Home is just like the West End, as I often tell my son Tom when he calls on his weekly dash to somewhere else, bearing petrol-station flowers (usually chrysanthus, which last a long time, more's the pity), and stirring tales of the World Outside.

Well no, not really - I made that last bit up. Tom's conversation tends to be rather like his flowers; sensible, unimaginative and bland. But he *does* come, bless him, which is more than you could say for most of them, with their soap-opera lives and their executive posts and their touching belief that life stops at sixty (or should), with all of those unsightly, worrying creases neatly tucked away. Hope and I know better.

You know Hope, of course. Being blind, I think she appreciates your visits even more than I do; they *try* to find things to entertain us, but when you've been a professor at Cambridge, with theatres and cocktail parties and May Balls and Christmas concerts at King's, you never *really* learn to appreciate those Tuesday night bingo games. On the other hand, you do learn to appreciate small pleasures (small pleasures being by far the commonest) because, as some French friend of Hope's used to say, one can imagine even Sisyphus happy. (Sisyphus, in case you don't know, was the fellow doomed by the gods to roll a rock up a hill *forever*.) I'm not an intellectual, like Hope, but I think I see what he means. He's saying there's nothing you can't get used to - given time.

Of course in a place like this, there are always your malcontents. There's Polish John, whose name no-one can ever pronounce, who never has a good word to say to any of us. Or Mr Braun, who has quite a sense of humour in spite of being a German, but who gets very depressed when they show war films on TV. Or Mrs Swathen, whom everybody envies because her son and his family take her out every single week, who has grandchildren who visit her and a sweet-faced daughter-in-law who brings her presents; but Mrs Swathen gripes and moans continually because she is bored, and the children don't come often enough, and her bowels are bad, and the food is dreadful, and no-one knows what she has to suffer.

Mrs Swathen is the only person (except for Lorraine, the new nurse) who has ever made Hope lose her temper. Still, we manage, Hope and I. Like Sara in *A Little Princess* (a book Hope loved as a child and I re-read to her just last month when we finished *Lolita*) we try not to let the Mrs Swathens of this world poison our lives. We take our pleasures where we can. We try to *behave* like princesses, even if we are not.

Of course, there are exceptions. This week, for example, this August 10th, on the occasion of the Meadowbank Home's annual day-trip to the sea. Every year in August we go, all of us packed into a fat orange coach with blankets and picnics and flasks of milky tea and the Meadowbank nurses – cheery or harassed, according to type – on what Hope calls the Incontinence Express to Blackpool.

I've always liked Blackpool. We used to go there every year, you know, when Tom was little, and I remember watching him playing in the rock-pools while Peter lay asleep on the warm grey sand and the waves sighed in and out on the shingle. In those days it was *our* place; we had our regular guest-house, where everyone remembered us, and Mrs Neames made bacon and eggs for breakfast and always cooed over how much Tom had grown. We had our regular tea-shop, too, where we went for hot chocolate after we'd gone swimming in the cold sea, and our chip shop, the Happy Haddock, where we always went for lunch. Perhaps that's why I still

love it now; the long beach; the parade of shops; the pier; the waterfront where the big waves crash over the road at high tide. Hope loves it by default; you'd think Blackpool would be a bit of a climb-down for her, after holidays on the Riviera, but Hope would never say so, and looks forward to our trips, I think, with as much enthusiasm and excitement as I do myself - which made it all the harder to take when Lorraine told us that this year, we couldn't go.

Lorraine is our newest nurse, a poison blonde with pencilled lips and a smell of Silk Cuts and Juicy Fruit gum. She replaces Kelly, who was dim but innocuous, and she is a great favourite of Maureen, the General Manager. Lorraine, too, has her favourites, among whom Hope and I do not count, and when Maureen is away (which is about once a week) she holds court in the Residents' Lounge, drinking tea, eating Digestive biscuits and stirring up unrest. Mrs Swathen, a great admirer of hers, says that Lorraine is the only really *sensible* person at the Meadowbank Home, although Hope and I have noticed that their conversation revolves principally around Mrs Swathen's undeserving son, and how much he is to inherit when Mrs Swathen dies. Far too much, or so I understand - with the result that after only a couple of months here, Lorraine has already managed to convince Mrs Swathen that she is badly neglected.

"Ambulance-chaser," says Hope in disgust. You get them from time to time in places like this; insinuating girls like Lorraine, flattering the malcontents, spreading their poison. And poison is addictive; in time people come to *depend* on that poison, as they do on those poisonous reality shows Lorraine enjoys so much. Little pleasures fade, and one comes to realize that there are greater pleasures to be had in self-pity, and complaint, and viciousness towards one's fellow-residents. That's Lorraine; and although Maureen is no Samaritan, with her Father-Christmas jollity and vacuum-salesman's smile, she is infinitely better than Lorraine, who thinks that Hope and I are too clever by half, and who tries in her underhand way to rob us of every small pleasure we still have left.

Our trip to Blackpool, for instance.

Let me explain. A few months ago, Hope and I escaped from the Home - a day trip to London, that's all, but to the Meadowbank staff it might as well have been a jailbreak. That was just before Maureen's time - Lorraine's too - but I can tell that the thought of such a break-out appals her. Lorraine is equally appalled - for a different reason - and often speaks to us in the syrupy tones of a cross nursery-teacher, explaining how *naughty* it was of us to run away, how *worried* everyone was on our behalf, and how it serves us right that we missed the chance to sign up for the Blackpool trip this August, and must now stay behind with Chris, the orderly, and Sad Harry, the emergency nurse.

Sign up, my foot. We never *used* to have to sign up for our day-trips. With Maureen in charge, however, things have changed; Health and Safety have got involved; there is insurance to consider, permission slips to sign and a whole administrative procedure to put into place before even the shortest excursion can be considered.

"I'm sorry, girls, but you had your chance," said Lorraine virtuously. "Rules are rules, and *surely* you don't expect Maureen to make an *exception* for you."

I have to say I don't much like the idea of Tom having to sign a slip - it reminds me so much of the times when he used to bring those forms home from grammar school, wanting permission to go on trips to France, or even ski-ing in Italy; trips we could barely afford but which we paid for anyway because Tom was a good boy, Tom was going to do well, and Peter and I didn't want to show him up in front of his friends. Now of course, Tom holidays all over the place - New York, Florida, Sydney, Tenerife - though he has yet to invite *me* on any of his trips. He never had much imagination, you know. He never imagines, poor boy, that I might dream of hurtling down the *piste noire* at Val d'Isère, or being serenaded in Venice, or lounging in a hammock in Hawaiï with a Mai Tai in each hand. I suppose he still thinks Blackpool's all I've ever wanted.

As for Hope – Well, Hope rarely lets her feelings show. *I* see them, because I know Hope better than anyone, but I doubt Lorraine got much satisfaction.

“Blackpool?” she said in her snootiest, most dismissive Cambridge voice. “Not really my cup of tea, Lorraine. We had a villa, you know, in Eze-sur-Mer, on the French Riviera. We went there, the three of us, twice a year, all the time Priss was growing up. It was quiet in those days – not as overrun with film people and celebrities as it is now – but we used to pop down to Cannes from time to time, if there was a party we *really* wanted to go to. Most of the time, though, we stayed by the pool, or went sailing in Xavier’s yacht – he was a friend of Cary Grant’s, you know, and on *several* occasions Cary and I -”

By then, though, I was laughing so much that I almost spilt my tea. “It’s all right,” I said, taking Hope’s arm. “She’s gone.”

“Good,” said Hope. “I hate showing off, but sometimes -”

Lorraine was watching us from the far side of the Residents’ Lounge. Her face was a study in pique. “Sometimes it’s worth it,” I said, still grinning. “If only to see that woman’s face.”

Hope, who couldn’t see it, smiled. “No Blackpool, then,” she said, pouring tea expertly into one of the Meadowbank cups. “Still, there’s next year, God willing. Pass me a Digestive, Faith, if you would.”

Next year, next year. That’s all well and good when you’re twenty-five, but at our age, *next year* isn’t something that all of us can count on. Hope and I are still all right, not like Mrs McAllister, who hardly knows what day it is, or Mr Bannerman, whose lungs are so riddled that he has to have a machine at night to help him breathe – and who *still* smokes like a chimney, foul-mouthed old tosspot that he is, because in his own words, *who the hell wants to live forever?*

Besides, I happen to know how much those occasional day trips mean to Hope. Oh I enjoy them, of course, even though most of the things I remember so well have gone. The

Happy Haddock is an Irish pub nowadays, and the guesthouses have all been knocked down to make way for that new housing estate. Hope, on the other hand, does not have to bear with these small disappointments. She can still smell the Blackpool sea, that peculiarly *British* seaside-smell of tidal mud and petrol, fried fish and suntan oil and candy-floss and salt. She likes the sound of the waves, the long crash-hiss of the water on the pebbly shore, the cries of the children testing the water with their toes. She likes the feel of the sand beneath her feet – in my wheelchair I can't guide her on the soft sand, but Chris always takes her down to the beach – and that half-yielding crunch of shingle before the beach gives way to pebbles. She enjoys the picnic we share – always in the same place, a part of the beach that slopes down a cobbly ramp to give wheelchair access to the ones of us who need it – the thermos of tea, the two neat quarter-sandwiches (always the same, barring allergies; one tuna, one egg) and the single pink fairy-cake, nine-tenths sugar with a bright red synthetic half-cherry on top, like the ones we used to have for our birthdays when we were girls. She likes to pick up shells on the tideline – big, thick, English shells, flaky and barnacled on the outside, pearly-smooth inside – and line her pockets with worn, round stones.

What she doesn't see, I can always describe to her, although in many ways, Hope notices far more than I do myself. It isn't a sixth sense, or anything like that; it's simply that she always makes the most of what she has.

"It'll be fine," she told me, when I complained once again about being left out. "We'll manage. Remember Sara -"

Remember Sara. Easily said. But it's the unfairness of it that kept me awake at night; the petty unfairness of it all. *Rules are rules*, Lorraine had said, but we both knew why we were being denied the treat, like children caught smoking behind the sheds. It's about *power*, like all bullying, and Lorraine, like all bullies, was both weak and addicted to the weakness of others. Of course we knew better than to show her our disappointment. Cheery Chris saw it – and was

angry on our behalf, though there was nothing he could do to help. We never even complained to Maureen – though personally I doubted it would have any effect. Instead we talked about the Riviera, and the scent of thyme rolling off the hills, and the Mediterranean in shades of miraculous blue, and barbecued mackerel and cocktails by the pool, and girls in isty-bitsy polka-dot bikinis lounging on the decks of yachts with sails like the wings of impossible birds.

Only Chris knew the truth. Cheery Chris with his one earring and messy hair drawn back in a ponytail. He isn't actually a nurse at all - although he does a nurse's job on less than half the pay – but he's our favourite, the only one who really talks to us like fellow human beings. "Bad luck, Butch," was all he said when he heard the news, but there was more real sympathy in the way he said it than in all of Lorraine's syrupy little lectures. "Looks like you're stuck with me, then," he said, grinning. "Seems like I'm not wanted, either."

That made me smile too. Lorraine doesn't like Chris, whom all the residents like even though he isn't a proper nurse, who calls me Butch and Hope Sundance, and who shows none of the proper respect and deference to his superiors that you might expect from someone in his position.

"We'll have an old sing-song, just the three of us, eh?"

Chris often sings to us when the boss is out of earshot; rock ballads, tunes from the musicals and old vaudeville songs he learned from his Gran. He has quite a nice voice and he knows all the old hits, and he has been known to waltz me about in my wheelchair so that I feel quite dizzy with laughter; although in all his silly nonsense I have never caught a glimpse of the kind of condescension you see in people like Maureen or Lorraine.

"Thank you, Christopher, that would be lovely," said Hope with a smile, and Chris went away feeling he'd cheered us up a little. I knew better, though. Hope would never say it, but I knew her disappointment. It wasn't the Incontinence Express and the flasks of lukewarm tea; it wasn't the single fairy cake; it wasn't the feel of sand between her bare toes or the smell

of salt coming off the water. It wasn't even the hurt of being talked down to as if we were children; or the knowledge that we were being left out. It was the illusion of freedom; the promise of parole; the smell of the air; the sound of young people going about their business on an ordinary summer's day. Meadowbank air has a certain smell; of floral air-freshener, school cabbage and the bland, powdery smell that comes off old people living in close proximity to one other. Hope wears Chanel Number Five every day because that way, she says, she can at least avoid *smelling* like an old woman. I know exactly how she feels.

And so when the day came it was with a secret sense of desolation that we watched them go, although we would have rather have died than show it. One by one, the residents shook out their summer coats (Meadowbank chic dictates that coats, hats, scarves and, sometimes, gloves *must* be worn on even the hottest day) and collected bags, hankies, umbrellas, dentures and a variety of other items indispensable for a day at the sea.

Mrs Swathen gave me a look as she picked up her handbag. "They're saying it's twenty-five degrees by the coast today," she said. "Just like the Med, today, they're saying."

"How nice," said Hope. "But Faith and I don't like it when it's too hot. I think we'll just stay in and watch TV."

Mrs Swathen, who would normally have spent all afternoon watching *Jerry Springer* and getting more and more indignant about it, ground her teeth. "Please yourselves," she said, and stalked off towards the coach.

Polish John watched her go. "Don't listen to her," he said. "It will rain again. I know it will rain. It always rains when we go to the sea. I myself do not enjoy the sea, but anything is better than another day in this Auschwitz, no?"

Mr Braun, who was passing, turned round at that. He is a small, neat, bald man who walks with a stick and likes to bait Polish John. "You ignorant," he said fiercely. "Don't you know my father *died* at Auschwitz?"

Well, that fairly stumped Polish John. It was the first we'd heard of it, too, and we all stared at Mr Braun, wondering if he'd suddenly gone strange, like Mrs McAllister.

Mr Braun nodded. "Yes," he said. "He got drunk one night and fell out of the guard tower." And then he was off, leaving Hope and I laughing fit to burst and Polish John frothing (not for the first time) with indignation in his wake.

"Well if that's the level of camaraderie we can expect on this trip," I said, "then I for one can bear to give it a miss."

"I agree," said Hope. "Imagine being stuck in a coach for two hours with those two – and Maureen - and Lorraine – and Mrs Swathen. I'm beginning to believe Sartre was right when he said; *Hell is other people.*"

Sometimes Hope forgets that I'm not familiar with these French colleagues of hers. Still, that was a good one. But as the party got ready to leave at last, I felt that sense of desolation return. The orange coach opened its doors and the staff nurses got on board, little Helen, cross Claire, then Lorraine, looking pleased with herself (as well she might) and finally fat Maureen, swollen with jollity, baying; "Isn't this *fun!* Isn't this *fun!*" as she shooed the last of the residents inside. At the back window, Mrs McAllister, small, shrivelled and bright-eyed, was piping; "*Goodbye! Goodbye!*" in her thin, excited voice. I suppose she thought she was going home again. Mrs McAllister always thinks she's going home. Perhaps that was why she seemed to be wearing *all* of her wardrobe that day – I could see at least three coats, a tartan, a brown and a light blue summer raincoat, pockets bulging with extra pairs of shoes. That made me laugh; but as the coach finally pulled out of the drive, making the gravel *hishhh* underfoot like breakers on shingle, I felt tears come to my eyes, and I knew Hope was feeling just the same.

"Remember Sara," I muttered, but this time I knew that *A Little Princess* wasn't going to help. A cup of tea might not help either, but I poured one anyway, from the urn on the sideboard, and wheeled my chair to the bay so that I could look out of the window.

It was going to be a long day.

My tea tasted of fish. It often does when it has stood for too long, and I put it aside.

Hope came to sit next to me, using the ramps to feel her way forward, and she sat there quietly for a while, drinking the fishy tea and feeling the morning sun on her face.

“Well, Faith. At least we’re alone,” she said at last.

That was true; The Meadowbank Home doesn’t have a hospital wing, and anyone needing day-to-day medical help has to go to All Saints’ down the road. I went there once when I had my bout of bronchitis, and Mr Bannerman goes there every week for his check-ups. But today even Mr Bannerman had gone to the sea, and we were alone with Denise, the receptionist, Sad Harry, the emergency nurse, and Chris, who had been given so many jobs to do in Maureen’s absence (washing windows, changing light-bulbs, hoeing flower-beds) that I doubted if we’d see him at all.

For most of the morning I proved right. Tea came and went; then lunch (cottage pie), which we picked at without much appetite. Time passes at a different rate here, but even so it seemed unbearably slow. Usually there’s a film on TV in the afternoon, but that day there wasn’t; just a dull procession of people like Mrs Swathen complaining about their relatives. Hope tried her best, but by two o’ clock her conversation had dried up altogether and we just sat there like bookends, wishing it was over, waiting for the sound of the coach on the gravel. Even then, I knew, it *wouldn’t* be over. Even then we would have to bear with their talk of what they had seen, what they had done. Days out are rare at Meadowbank; this one might give them six months’ worth of gossip, six months of *do-you-remember-that-time-in-Blackpool*, so that I felt almost sick at the thought of it. Hope felt it too; in fact Hope feels it all the time to some extent – after all, she has to deal with a fair amount of that kind of thing, those thoughtless, well-meaning *if-only-you-could-have-seen-it* comments that only serve to remind her that she is blind.

I looked at her then, and saw the expression on her face. At first I thought she'd been crying; but Hope never cries. I did then, though. I made no sound, but Hope took my hand anyway, and I thought maybe I'd been wrong about that sixth sense. We sat there for a long time – for me, anyway – until I couldn't hold it any longer and had to call Sad Harry to take me to the bathroom.

I got back to the Residents' Lounge to find Chris waiting for me. "Hey, Butch," he said, grinning, and all at once I felt much better. There's something about Chris that does that; a kind of nonsense that pulls you along like a crazy dance. When I was a girl I used to ride the waltzers at the fair, spinning round and round in a two-seater chair shaped like a giant teacup and laughing breathlessly all the time. Chris makes me feel like that sometimes. I suppose it's because he's young – although Tom *never* made me feel like that, not even when he was twenty.

"Have you finished your work?" I asked, knowing that Chris works very hard, but hoping that he might spare us a few minutes, just this once.

"I'm all yours, sweetheart," he said, grinning, and spun me round in my wheelchair, causing Harry to protest. "In fact, I brought you a few things." He waved Harry away with an airy hand. "Secret things, Harry, so scat."

Sad Harry huffed and rolled his eyes. He's not a bad fellow - not so cheery as Chris, but not half as bad as Lorraine – and I saw his grin as he closed the door.

"Secret things?" said Hope with a smile.

"You betcha. Cop a look at these, for a start." And he dropped a pile of glossy magazine brochures into my lap. The Algarve, the West Indies, the Riviera, the Cook Islands all spilled out across my knees; lagoons, Easter-lily beaches, yachts, spas, wooden platters of tropical fruits piled high with pineapples, coconuts, mango, papaya.

When it comes to reading, Hope likes books and I have always had a soft spot for magazines. The glossier the better; couture and garden parties, city breaks and designer shoes. I gave a little squeak as I saw the brochures, and Chris laughed.

“That’s not all,” he said. “Close your eyes.”

“What?”

“Close your eyes. Both of you. And *don’t* open them until I say so.”

So we did, feeling like children, but in a good way this time. For several minutes Chris moved around us, and I could hear him picking things up and putting things down. A match flared; there came a chink of glass; then a rustle of paper, then a number of clicks and rattles that I did not recognize. Finally I felt him pulling my chair backwards into the window bay; a second later there came the sound of him dragging Hope’s armchair alongside. Warmth on my hair; soft air from the open window; outside, a distant drone of bees.

“Okay, ladies,” said Chris. “Off we go.”

We were sitting in the bay with our backs to the window. Late-afternoon sunlight illuminated the room, making the Residents’ Lounge into a magic-lantern show. I turned my head and saw that Chris had hung several of the crystal pendants from the hall chandelier in the bay, so that prisms of coloured light danced across the flock wallpaper. Several posters had been tacked to the walls (quite contravening Meadowbank regulations); white houses under a purple sky; islands seen from the air like flamenco dancers shaking their skirts; bare-chested, beautiful young men standing hip-deep among green vines. I laughed aloud at the sheer absurdity; and saw that he had lit four glass-covered candles on the sideboard (another Meadowbank rule broken). On them I could read a foreign word - *Diptyque* - that I did not recognize. From them a faint scent diffused.

“It’s thyme, isn’t it?” said Hope beside me. “Wild purple thyme, that used to grow above our house in Eze. Our summers were filled with it. Oh Christopher, where did you find it?”

Chris grinned. “I thought we might fly down to the coast this afternoon. Italy’s too hot in August, and the Riviera’s really so busy nowadays. Provence? Too British. Florida? Too American. Thought instead we could try that big dune at Arcachon, with the long white drop towards the Atlantic, or sit in the shade of the pine woods listening to the crickets and in the background, the sea. Can you hear the sea?”

Now I *could* hear it; the soft *hissh* of water with a throatful of stones. Behind it, a burr of crickets; above me, the wind.

Hypnosis? Not quite; now I could see the Residents’ Lounge tape recorder running; from the four big speakers came the sounds. Chris grinned again. “Like it?”

I nodded, unable to speak.

“There’s lavender, too,” said Hope dreamily. Blue lavender, that we used to sew into our pillows. And grass – cut grass – and figs ripening - ”

More of those candles, I thought; but Hope’s sense of smell is better than mine, and I could barely make them out. I could hear the sea, though, and the sound of the pines, and the *scree* of birds in a sky as hot and blue as any in those brochures.

Now Chris was on his knees in front of us. He took off Hope’s shoes, then mine – Meadowbank slip-ons in sensible brown – and flung them (rules, rules!) across the room. Then, turning, he came back with a square basin, water slopping messily over the curved edges, and placed it at Hope’s feet. “I’m afraid the Atlantic’s a little cold, even at this time of year,” he warned, and looking down I saw that the basin was filled with water and stones, the flat round pebbles you find on a beach. Hope’s bare old feet plunged into the water, and her face lit with sudden joy.

“Oh!” Suddenly she sounded fifteen again, breathless, flushed.

Chris was grinning fit to split. “Don’t worry, Butch old love,” he told me, turning again. “I haven’t forgotten you.”

The second basin was filled with sand; soft dry, powdery sand that tickled my toes and made small crunching noises in my insteps. Deliciously I dug my feet in – I can move them a little, though I haven’t done any dancing in a long while – and thought back to when I was five, and Blackpool beach was twenty miles long, and the candyfloss like summer clouds.

“After that lunch I don’t expect you’re hungry any more,” went on Chris, “but I thought I’d try you on this, just in case.” And from some magical place at the back of the Resident’s Lounge he brought out a tray. “Not quite champagne and caviar, not on my budget, but I did my best.”

And so he had; there were canapés of olive and cream cheese and pimiento and thin-sliced salmon; there was chocolate cake and mango sorbet and strawberries and cream. There were iced whisky sours (*definitely* against the rules) and yellow lemonade; best of all there was no tuna, no egg and no pink fairy cake.

I hadn’t thought I was at all hungry, but Hope and I finished the lot, to the final cracker. Then we paddled again, and then Chris opened the Lounge piano that no-one but he ever seems to play and we sang all our old favourites, like *An Eighteen-Stone Champion* and *You Know Last Night*; and then Chris and Hope did Edith Piaf with *Non, Je ne Regrette Rien*, and then we were very tired and somewhere along the line we both fell asleep, Hope and I, and awoke to find the empty tray gone, and the water, sand and pebbles gone, and the posters removed from the walls and the danglers back on the chandelier.

Only the tape was still playing (he must have turned it over while we slept). But although the candles were gone, we could still smell them, grass and fig and lavender and

thyme, quite covering up that Meadowbank smell, and when I popped back to my room I found the brochures there, stacked tidily behind a row of books, with a note from Chris lying on top.

Welcome back, it said.

I returned to the Lounge just in time to hear the coach pulling up into the driveway. Hope heard it too, and neatly removed the tape from the machine before putting it into the pocket of her dress. Neither of us spoke; though we held hands and smiled to ourselves as we waited for our friends to return; Polish John and Mrs McAllister and Mr Bannerman and Mr Braun and poor Mrs Swathen, who had, she said, lost her lace handkerchief on the beach, had sand in her shoes and had *surely* caught heatstroke from that horrid sun, it was a *disgrace*, no-one *knew* how much she suffered and if she had only *known* –

No-one noticed, among that disorder that we, too, had sand in our shoes. No-one saw us pick at our “celebration dinner” (rissoles) - unless it was Sad Harry, who never talks much anyway - and no-one seemed to care when we went to bed early, Hope to smell the candles that Chris had slipped into her bedside drawer, and I to read my brochures and dream of orange groves and strawberry daiquiris and plane rides and yachts. Next week we might try Greece, I think. Or the Bahamas; Australia; New York; Paris. If Tom can do it, so can we – besides, as Hope always says, travel broadens the mind.