

SURVIVORS

AFTER POWER

A novel based on characters, locations, situations, the novel, and the TV series 'SURVIVORS'. All created by the late 'Terry Nation', in the mid 1970s. written by, ROBERT.C.MEADE □. 2000.

Chapter one

It was a quiet evening, for Jimmy Garland. Three years since the death plague had almost wiped out mankind. He called out of the cottage door "Abby, have you finished grooming Spartacus?" "No she replied - I shall not be long". "Dinner will be ready soon" he reminded her. Jimmy went back to the Rayburn cooker, and stirred the potatoes, then he closed the cooker's damper a little. The candle, illuminating the scene, flickered a little, in the breeze that had sprung up at dusk.

Twenty minutes later, Abby strode in. Slim and with a haunting kind of beauty that Jimmy loved, they kissed. Abby said, "what's cooking?" "Beef stew and boiled potatoes" smiled Jimmy. "Fine, I must get cleaned up for this great feast" she laughed, going through to the bathroom.

Jimmy served up the meal a little later, as they sat down, Jimmy said, "wine Abby?" "Not that lethal stuff that's been brewing since February?" Abby retorted. "The same" he laughed, pouring out a glass for her, he was about to pour his own drink, when there was a explosion in the hallway, instinctively they both dived under the table for safety. "What was that?" whispered Abby, "shush" Jimmy replied, at that moment, there was a click as the deep - freezer's compressor, long starved of electrical power, started running. Two heads cautiously rose from under the table. Glass littered the hallway; "the lamp bulb must have exploded" muttered Jimmy. Abby stood and stared at the freezer, as if expecting it to stop, when it continued running, she looked across at Jimmy and said "I know its my birthday today, but I never expected..." she tailed off. "Its not my doing Abby, but its a miracle nevertheless", he turned on the radio, it crackled and whistled, Jimmy tuned up and down the waveband, to no avail. "Oh well, two miracles in one day is too much to hope for" said Abby. "Look out of the window" she exclaimed, "the street lights have come on". They went out of the front door, and walked on to the overgrown lane, that used to be the A49 trunk road between Leominster and Hereford. Nature had taken back most of its own back by now.

"I just do not believe it, how can anyone have done it" wondered Abby. "I don't know", replied Jimmy.

"Let's finish our meal, electricity or no, I'm hungry" he continued. Abby laughed, and they went back in.

Jimmy switched on the light, as they went through to the kitchen - diner, and for the first time in four years, their meal was flooded with light. "Lets save this" said Abby, blowing out the candle.

The lights stayed on all the evening, later Abby and Jimmy walked, as they often did down the road to the crossroads, watching in wonder, as the traffic lights changed from red, amber and to green, and back again, "In electronic hope of traffic to come" grinned Jimmy.

Abby's eyes glowed, reflecting the lights, then they went dark as the lights dimmed, and extinguished. "Oh well" said Abby, "It was good while it lasted". They walked back to the cottage hand in hand in the moonlight. The cottage was in darkness. "I wonder what happened," said Jimmy. "Perhaps we will never know" replied Abby, relighting the candle "Its good to know that out they're somewhere, an engineer is trying to restore the electricity.

Meanwhile, two hundred and eighty miles north from where Abby and Jimmy were Alex Cambell frowned. The main circuit breaker at Lochey power station had tripped. Alex thought he knew why.

As the communities and hamlets still connected to the national grid switched on, many faults and overloads occurred; this was all too much for the two turbines he had running, causing the trip to operate. Alex knew he would have to bring many other hydroelectric stations in Scotland on line, to cope with the load.

The individual on the horse clung on as the animal headed south. He was unshaven, gaunt, and very thin. He looked as if he were 60 years old. In reality he was 35.

The horse strode on, past a sign that said 'St. Mary's settlement.' By this time, the man was almost unconscious. The horse knew where it was going; it had been there before. The girl in a white uniform saw him first, and half broke his fall as he fell from the horse.

It was an old manor house complete with a generator, though recently it had run out of fuel. As there were sick people there, the raiding parties had left them alone for fear of catching their diseases. The man was put in bed. He regained consciousness briefly, so was able to be fed, washed, and shaved. He then fell into a deep sleep for two days.

When he awoke, he heard voices, as his eyes were bleary, he could not see yet. One of the nurses noticed him waking, and called "Dr. Ruth - Dr. Ruth." Dr. Ruth came in and stood in front of the bed. The man's vision improved slowly, and then he smiled in recognition.

"Hello Greg" said Dr. Ruth; "It's been a long time."

They talked for a long time, Dr. Ruth Anderson had left the 'white cross' commune, shortly after Greg, Jack and Agnes had flown off in the balloon heading for Norway. Ruth wanted to set up a place as a small hospital in a central spot, she found other like-minded people, and together they set it up, swapping their medical skills for food and other necessities. The horse that brought Greg to Dr. Ruth's hospital had been stolen from St. Mary's, some months ago, by "the captain", who's own horse had gone lame. He was in a hurry to return to his people so he just took it, after Dr. Ruth had tended to his dislocated shoulder.

"How is Jenny and Paul?" Said Ruth. "I wish I knew" groaned Greg. "I think we've been looking for each other for months now and keep missing each other." His thoughts started to return to him. "Ruth, I think I may have smallpox, Dr. Adams who I caught the disease from thought that was what it was." "Oh I don't think so Greg, you have had a bad skin and flesh disease, but I don't think you would have recovered from smallpox without tip top medical treatment, which you obviously have not had." Ruth smiled, "Greg

Preston, you're on the road to recovery, though with the state of you it's a miracle, you must be like a cat with nine lives. It looks like a knife wound in your back, you may have picked up an infection from that."

Greg interrupted "yes I was knifed and thrown in a river, could I have picked up an infection from there?"

"Quite possibly" said Ruth, "but that's enough talking for now. You must eat now, then get some more sleep—that's nature's greatest healer, Greg"... Which is what Greg did. Ruth went to her own room, and cried a little from the emotion of their reunion, then went to look for Freddie. She found him in the

generator room. "Hi Ruth" he called, "Any luck with the monster Freddie?" "Well now I've overhauled it, it should be OK" he replied, "But we will have to find a new source of diesel fuel." He concluded. "Oh" said Ruth; "Surely there must be some somewhere." "Well" replied Freddie, "perhaps we could break into one of those air force bases, there must be some there" "yes" said Ruth "Its a pity whoever got the power going the other evening, could not keep it going". "Yes the only thing that achieved was to blow up the phone link," he said sadly. Freddie Stringfellow loved engines; it was largely due to him that the power from the hospital generator had been working for so long.

Jenny Richards, Charles Vaughn and Hubert Goss were heading back to Felbridge camp, the headquarters for the British administration. Charles pulled up his horse, and dismounted. "He's lame Jenny, poor old boy". Jenny dismounted, as did Hubert. "What do we do now?" said Jenny. "Well, it's nearly dark now, so I suggest we find somewhere to camp for the night". They were near a village, which seemed deserted.

Hubert muttered "all we seem to do is chase around the country, I need to find some medicine for my tooth" he groaned. "Is that still bothering you?" said Charles. Looking concerned, "all that rushing about at Lochay set it off again," Hubert said. "Let's see what we can find here," said Charles, he led the way up the steep overgrown high street.

"I'm not sure, but I think I've been here before" said Jenny. "Oh," Charles mused. "Yes, in the eighteen hundreds, three daughters of a parson, who wrote some classical books lived here." "You don't mean the Brontie sisters" replied Charles, "that's it," said Jenny "I did a course on them at college. Ann, Emily, and Charlotte".

They rounded a corner; their built in Yorkshire stone was a hotel. Jenny walked up to it and picked up a board, lying on the ground, cleaning it off the name started to appear. "The Black Bull, that's where Branwell Bronte used to get drunk" said Jenny. "Sounds ok to me," said Hubert. The door was open so, tying up their horses outside, they went in.

Dust and spider's cobwebs were everywhere, but the building appeared intact. Hubert pulled his way through the cobwebs and went behind the bar. He wiped the dust off a bottle of Bells whisky, opened it, and took a large swig. "That's disgusting" said Jenny, "no, its really rather nice" retorted Hubert, taking another swig, "this stuff keeps for years" he laughed.

Charles, waving a broom ahead of him, cleaned most of the cobwebs away in the long bar. Then, with the broom ahead of him, he went upstairs.

Hubert sitting on a dusty bar stool, said "look at this plaque, it says Branwell Bronte drank here, and very nice too"

Jenny laughed and said "I'll see if I can find the kitchen and look for some canned food" so saying, she found another broom and fending the cobwebs away in front of her, Jenny went through a door at the back of the bar. Down a corridor she found the kitchen. At the back was a pantry, which was closed. Jenny

opened it, and found shelves full of tinned food, which looked in fairly good condition, with only a slight coat of rust on some tins. There was the sound of footsteps behind her". "Ah, there you are Jenny, it looks like you've found enough to feed the Five thousand" Charles laughed.

Jenny replied "yes, they look ok do you think you can get that Aga cooker working Charlie?" "I'll have a go, I don't see why not," he said. A little later, they were tucking into a huge meal. By now, it was dark the hotel lounge flickered in the light of three oil lamps that Hubert had found in the cellar. "They must have had these for power cuts" he said. "Yes" said Charles, "now it's one long power cut." "Was there anything upstairs Charles?" Asked Jenny. "No" he answered, "no sign of life, or death for that matter. All the beds are neat and made. It looks like the spiders didn't like it upstairs as the cobwebs, are fewer in number. "Let's sleep here then," said Jenny. "Sounds good to me," said a rather tipsy Hubert. "See you in the morning, my pain is easier now, but if it plays up in the night, I know where the medicine is." Hubert tramped up the stairs.

Charles and Jenny laughed "Jenny, it's good to see you happy" she retorted "it's the first time for a while I've had a good meal" Jenny leaned back in the chair and touched a radiator. "Charles it's hot" she said. "It must be running off the Aga, let's stay here for a day or two Charlie, this place is perfect for the moment, and that will give your horse an opportunity to recover". Charles replied "that's fine by me Jenny, and I think it will be difficult to move Hubert on now" he grinned. Jenny did not smile. "What's the matter Jen?" "I was just thinking wouldn't it have been great, if Greg, Paul and pet could be with us" said Jenny sadly. "Well, we know Greg could not be with us Jenny..." Charles stopped. "How do you know? I don't believe anything Agnis said about Greg, she lied to all the people at Felbridge, until it was forced out of her that he was even ill".

Charles was silent for a few moments. "Jenny, do we have to see his body?" Jenny stood and thought, then said "well, if it is possible Charles?" Charles yawned.

"I don't know about you Jenny, but I'm ready for bed, let's get some sleep".

The next morning the sun rose, bathing Howarth with a warming glow. Jenny awoke to the sound of distant bleating sheep it was a quarter past ten according to her watch. She came down the stairs, having knocked on Charles and Hubert's bedroom with no answer. There was no one in the lounge. The kitchen Aga was burning well, it had been stoked up not long ago. Jenny walked back into the lounge, just as Hubert, followed by Charles came in. "Hi their lazybones" said Charles laughing. She grinned back saying "yes, I've no excuses" Hubert said "come on gell, we've found some chickens and eggs, so how about breakfast". A little later as they were sitting at the table Charles said "the place seems deserted, we had a good look round, there are loads of sheep on the hills though, so we won't go hungry here. Just past the church is a museum dedicated to your Bronties Jen, the door was open, we found a woman's body laying on a settee in one of the rooms, almost as if she was guarding the place, we could only tell it was a woman by the clothes she was wearing." Hubert went on "the place was like this, cobwebs and dust, but no one about. Perhaps most of the people went to one of the big hospitals in Bradford or Leeds." "Never to come back" Jenny ended. Charles continued, "there is loads of food in the shops, lots of tinned stuff, perhaps as its on the top of a hill in the winter people made sure that there was plenty of tinned food in stock. Over the other side of the valley, there is a wind turbine, I wonder if it still works?"

Changing the subject Hubert said "how is your horse Charles?" "I think a rest for him today will do it, his fetlock is a lot less swollen now". "Where did you put the horses Charlie" wondered Jenny. "There is a field with good grass at the top of the hill that the sheep could not enter, I've put them there." "Good, let's explore the rest of the village then" said Jenny.

They walked down the high street to the river valley; "oh look at those old train waggons," said Jenny. They walked nearer, 'the Keithly and worth valley railway co' an old flaking sign said. "This is where they made a film, I think it was called Railway children, it was on TV a week before..." Jenny tailed off, then went on "I remember they filmed it in fields of buttercups, it was very well made" "Just like they are now" said Hubert, "nature goes on you know"

They walked through the overgrown railway yard to the main line. "Look at this," exclaimed Charles, as he bent down, they could see the lines were shiny. "These have been used, not long ago either, I wonder why" Charles went on. The sound of baaing drew them to a shed the other side of the line. Ten sheep were inside.

"These havent shut themselves in here" said Hubert. "I reckon the people who use the railway have put them in here ready to be taken somewhere". A gun barrel poked out from some bushes followed by a man

and a boy. "You worked that out well old man, now drop your gun" he ordered. Hubert dropped the gun he habitually carried. "Are you all in good health?" he asked them, the answer was to his satisfaction.

"Where have you come from" was his next inquiry, they told him. "OK I think your no threat to us" he lowered his gun. "I'm John, John Mathews, and this is Peter" "Hello" Peter said nervously, "What are your names" they told him. "I found Peter down south a couple of years ago, his group had all died, leaving him alone. So we came to live up here for the fresh clean air, though with the end of the Supermarket society I suppose it's a lot fresher all over the world now. We live in that farm over the hill" he pointed.

"What Hubert said about the sheep was correct then, but who are you supplying them to?" asked Charles "There's a group not far from Keighley, just down the line who we trade with. One of them was a butcher before the death, but they don't have the sheep farming knowledge that I do. Sheep are funny creatures, they get bored easily with the same pasture, so we have to move them around a bit" replied John. "when do you expect the sheep to be picked up?" asked Hubert. "Oh sometime this morning, the train does not keep to strict timetables" John laughed and went on, "you can stay and help load them if you like" Jenny said to Peter "how old are you?" "14 and a half miss" "and how do you like sheep farming?" "oh it's fun and I love the country, I used to live in the country in a small village, before the...." He stopped and hesitated. Jenny's heart missed a beat as she replied "what was the village called Peter?" "Elmley Castle, near Evesham" he replied, and went on "why do you ask? I did go back, but it was". "Burnt down?" interrupted Jenny. Peter looked at her, tears running down his cheek, and Jenny started crying with emotion as well. She choked out "your Peter Grant, yes?". "Yes" he sobbed.

"Your mother, Abby survived Peter - we lived with her for a while" cried Jenny. "What happened to her?" Peter asked quietly, "she went off looking for you, and then we moved on, we've not seen her for over two years, but she did survive the death". Peter and Jenny hugged. John, Charles and Hubert were speechless. Eventually Peter and Jenny moved apart, he went a little red with embarrassment. Jenny said "Abby was always talking about you, and I can see why". John laughed and said, "yes, that's all I've been hearing from him, I wonder if mum is alive - it's as if they both knew....." Jenny nodded in agreement.

A chuff chuff and then a whistle interrupted them; "the trains here" said John.

The sheep were soon loaded, and bread, jam and other edibles were left on the platform for John and Peter. The train then returned to Keighley. "Come on up to the farm for dinner with us" said John. "Whats on the menu?" asked Charles, then wished he had not asked that when, with John's look up at the sheep on the Yorkshire hills, the chorus of reply was "Lamb".

John noticed Hubert wince a couple of times during the meal, and asked what the problem was. Hubert told him of his jaw ache. "There's a place been set up near Nottingham by some people, nurses doctors and the like, just to help people like you" said John. "The group at Keighley mentioned about it, you just take along a few spuds or parsnips, and in return they will sort out your problems. It's a sort of National Health Service by barter" laughed John. "We shall have to try that when my horse is himself again, perhaps the queues there, are not as bad as the old NHS" Charles grinned in reply. After lunch they talked over things well into the afternoon. At length Hubert said "Its time to see how the horses are" Jenny and Charles agreed. They all shook hands and wished each other well. Jenny promised Peter that if they found Abby in their travels, they would tell of him. As they made their way back across the valley and over the hill, through the fields of Buttercups, they were silent – thinking only of the strange fate that led to finding Peter.

After seeing that the horses were safe, Charles's horse was much better. They went back to the Black bull hotel. Hubert decided to have another dose of his 'medicine', while Jenny talked Charles into a walk across the moors as Jenny's heroine, Emily Brontie had done all those years before.

They stood at Penestone crag, overlooking the reservoir, now overflowing the road, and into the valley beyond. "Charles" said Jenny, "Yes yes" he awoke from his Welsh contemplation. "When I was studying the Brontie's, there was a poem that Emily wrote, it was one of many, but for me it was so true. I wrote it down and kept it, now and then I read it to myself". Jenny's eyes were glazing. Charles put an arm round her, and said "read it to me Jenny, please". Jenny fished in her pocket and pulled it out, the paper was a bit crumpled, so she ironed it out as best she could. "Its called 'Sympathy' I think its just right for this moment". Jenny recited: -

"There should be no despair for you
While nightly stars are burning;
While evening pours its silent dew

And sunshine gilds the morning
There should be no despair – though tears
May flow down like a river
Are not your best beloved of years
Around your heart forever.
They weep you weep, it must be so;
Winds sigh as you sighing,
And winter sheds its grief in snow
Where autumn's leaves are lying
Yet, these revive, and from their fate
Your fate cannot be parted;
Then, journey on, if not elate
Still never broken – hearted.

Jenny folded up the poem, and returned it to her pocket.

"That was beautiful Jen" he breathed, they stood and looked as the breeze stirred the buttercups a little. Then, as the sun's rays were dying, they slowly walked back to Haworth, and the Black bull.

Chapter two

As Greg was slowly recovering, he related his adventures to Ruth, he told her of his plans to get part of the electricity system working again, powered by several of the Hydro electric power stations in Scotland. "We were hoping to push the power right down to the communities in Devon. The major cities like Birmingham, are a problem because of damage to the infrastructure, so we had to isolate the feeds to those areas. There are very few people living in what were the heavily populated areas anyway, people have found it much more healthy in the country" Greg told Ruth " Yes" she replied. "I remember reading somewhere that God made the country, and Man made the towns" Greg laughed "that says it all really". Greg took Ruth's hand and went on "Would you like me to help your Freddie to get some fuel for the generator, I think it will be a while before Alex will reliably get enough Hydro – stations working." "If you feel well enough in a day or so" smiled Ruth "I know your itching to get going again" she laughed. "There is one problem" Greg went on, "We mistakenly used the National grid wires as phone links between some communities, which of course led to the phones being destroyed when Alex tried to energize the system. I hope no – one was using their phone at the time, so now we will have to work out some other form of communication between communities." "Is that important?" asked Ruth "all important" was Greg's answer, he went on "As the communities are all so far apart, which is essential for obtaining the best from Nature's resources, the most simple way will be to set up a radio station, which everyone can hear. Of course we need to get the power working first, so people can hear it" he laughed. Freddie Stringfellow had walked in during this conversation, and sat down. Ruth, introduced them, they shook hands. "Greg, when I was a bit younger" Freddie explained "I became involved with a bunch of rogues running an Offshore radio station." "You mean a Pirate station?" laughed Greg. Freddie went on "laugh if you will, but it was all you need in one place. Power from the generator, the mast, transmitters and studios – even somewhere to put your head down at night." "What happened to it?" enquired Greg, now becoming interested. "Oh I don't know, I assume it was OK, just before the death they went off the air a week or so before, as I recall." Answered Freddie. "Where was the ship stationed?" enquired Greg. "Oh, a few miles off the Essex coast – I think they may have come ashore before it all ended" was Freddie's answer.

A few days later, Greg was feeling a lot stronger, so he and Freddie broke into an R.A.F. base, a few miles away. There, they found some Diesel fuel in a road tanker. It was almost full. It took quite a bit of finding, as it was locked in a hardened building. "Its funny" said Greg as they were leaving, "all this to defend our country". As they looked over the main runway and taxiways, now overgrown with grass and weeds finding and making new homes for themselves. A wind - sock still clung to its mast.

"I expect the aircraft are still in their shelters, fancy a flip Freddie?" Greg joked. Freddie grinned "I don't think I'll risk it, these things needed loads of maintenance and if your flying is anything like your driving, I don't fancy it at all, thanks all the same" he retorted.

They returned to Saint Mary's, and a little later the lights were burning from electrical power again.

That night, Greg and Freddie talked about the plans for uniting all the communities, and the communication problems. Later they came to a decision. In the morning they told Ruth that they were both going to go down to Essex. Greg had found a brand new land rover at the RAF camp. "It must have arrived

just before the death," he said. "If it conks out, there are still plenty of horses about" laughed Freddie, he went on "we will go near Newmarket, so perhaps we will find a fast one".

They left later that day, the Land rover making easy work of the rutted and overgrown roads. When they arrived at the Great north road, they turned south. At times, to avoid fallen trees or rusting cars that blocked the road, they changed to the opposite carriage way. They saw no one, though here and there, in the distance a puff of smoke showed them there was some human habitation.

As they passed Newmarket, they saw a few horses, some with foals. They ran away in fear when the land rover passed. "Looks like the stable people let some of them loose when they knew that that things were over, and that the wild was the horse's only salvation" said Greg. " Yes, I'm glad they cared enough to do that" answered Freddie.

They drove on, round a still and silent, Bury St Edmunds. "I used to live near here" said Freddie "There used to be clouds of steam from the sugar – beat factory" he went on.

Still they drove southeast; it was dusk by now so Greg pulled up in a lay – by. "Let's eat and see if we can sleep" he said. Joy, one of the nurses at Saint Mary's had made some sandwiches for them. "Were only a mile or two from the coast now" said Freddie "can't you smell the sea air Greg?" he said. Greg nodded. With difficulty, they slept for a time in the cramped land rover, later Freddie awoke and nudged Greg "look, up there on the hill, lights from those buildings". Greg rubbed his eyes and looked, "we will go and see them in the morning" he said.

The cock crowing awoke them at dawn. And, having consumed the rest of the sandwiches, Greg and Freddie walked up the hill to the buildings where the lights shone. "That's far enough!" A man's voice came from above them, as they were about to go through a gateway in the wall. "What's your business here?" he went on. "We're not looking for trouble" answered Greg, seeing the man was holding a shot gun "we're making for the Essex coast, looking for the offshore radio station ship that used to broadcast to this part of the country" went on Greg. "Well you won't find it here" laughed the man, lowering his gun. "Come on in, my names Paul, Paul Venables" Paul climbed down the ladder he had been standing on. " I hope you have no sickness" he inquired. "Thankfully no, not now" answered Greg "Apart from being sick of sandwiches" said Freddie. "We've driven that land rover down here from Nottingham" he went on. "Oh don't keep them talking out there Paul" came a woman's voice from behind him "come on in and have a proper breakfast". They all went into a rather tumbledown farmhouse. "The names Nell" she said. They all sat down around a large oak kitchen table. " My names Greg, and this is Freddie". Nell poured them out a glass of milk each. "Goat's milk I'm afraid" "its fine" said Freddie.

Paul cleared his throat "Nell and me used to live here before the plague, we were fairly self-sufficient then, we have to be now. I built a wind generator so we have some power. There are ships in the docks, but most of them are full of rats. The ship you boys are looking for is in the river, not far from Bradwell nuclear power station. That was all shut down by the bosses we heard, on government orders" Nell went on "There was a man on board the radio ship, three months ago, we had a cruise in a rowing boat from West Mersey, only a mile or two from here. He shot at us, Keep away he shouted I don't want your germs, so we turned back. I think he had some power working, as there was a chugging noise coming from behind him." "There was stacks of tinned food on deck that we could see" went on Paul "But we were not short of it, so we left him too it". "Are there many people still alive in these parts?" asked Greg. Paul answered "no, it seems the closer London you get, the less people are alive, We did hear of a group from there, did try to get to the Isle of wight, never did hear if they made it though" Greg answered "we had first hand knowledge of that lot". He told them of their adventures in London "Talk about the lights of London, we were lucky to escape alive" he finished.

Later following Nell's breakfast "Best meal in ages" said Greg and Freddie. Greg went on "If we're going to see this radio ship, its time we moved". They thanked Nell and Paul for their hospitality. "We will listen out on the radio for you" said Paul "What record shall we play for you" laughed Freddie.

Paul and Nell waved as the Land rover drove off towards West Mersea. Freddie mused to himself "I wonder?" "What are you wondering?" asked Greg "Well, when the ship was on the air, they had this cranky Scottish engineer on board. Macdonald, Jock Macdonald he was called, used to drop his tools all over the place as I recall, but a good man with engines" Freddie went on "Its just that he's the sort to have stayed on board, he loved the sea"

By now, the road was very overgrown, three winters had taken their toll, the land rover rolled and weaved its way. Arriving at West Mersea, they passed the shops, they noticed that most of the doors and windows

were broken or open, though one souvenir shop looked intact. There was no sign of human life, though two cats sat washing themselves on a doorstep. They drove on, past lines of rusting cars down to the main quay. The wide river spread out in front of them. "Look, there it is" cried Freddie "yes, I've never seen a mast on a ship like that, so tall" replied Greg. "It is about 300 feet" replied Freddie "It had several different masts over the years, but this was the tallest. The crew and disk jockeys built it at sea, I helped them, along with a couple of mates" Freddie said with a little pride.

Greg looked in admiration "with this fine ship, we can unite our small nation" he said. "Look, there's a trail of smoke coming from the generator exhaust, it looks like he's still on board" said Freddie.

They parked the Land rover, and walked to the quay 'boats for hire' said the flaking notice, they walked on. Many of the boats were sunk or damaged. "Perhaps by winter storms" said Greg. Right at the end of the quay was a small speedboat, painted blue 'Essex police' it proclaimed in flaking letters, but it looked in better condition than the rest. "Let's have a look," Freddie said, jumping aboard. The boat rocked, he went below, into the cabin "phew, it stinks of old fish" he called to Greg, who also jumped aboard. "Let's see if it will start," said Greg. The ignition key was tied to a piece of string on the wheel. Greg inserted it, the ignition light came on as he turned it, he turned it further to start it, but the light went out. "The battery must be flat" observed Freddie "though it was used some time in the not too distant past, to show that bit of life, come on lets try the Land Rover battery" said Greg.

Later, with the Land Rover battery connected by jump leads, they tried again. This time, with some coughs and much smoke the Police boat engine started.

"Let's go," said Greg. They weaved their way along the river, past the partly sunken boats. "Look, Bradwell power station," said Freddie, looking at the dark mass on the far side of the wide river estuary. The radio ship was ahead, growing larger and even more impressive. As they drew closer, Greg said "we should shout or sound our horn to warn him we are here, and not take him by surprise" this they did. By now they were about twenty feet from the ship. They saw a movement; a gun appeared over the side, with a bearded face behind it. Greg stopped the engine. "What do you want?" the question came in a heavy Scottish accent "Jock, Jock Macdonald?" Freddie called. Jock saw him, and said "Hey Freddie, what the hell are you doing here?" he said in a more friendly, but wary voice. "Can we come aboard Jock, this is Greg. We are both well, are you ok?" asked Freddie. "Och I'm alright, come on up then you scalawags, come aboard".

They tied up to the rusting radio ship. Jock dropped a rope ladder over the side, and they climbed aboard. "Come on up to the mess room, and have a cuppa" said Jock, leading the way, through a hatchway, along the corridor, and into the Mess room. "Sit down boys, I'll get the kettle on" Jock busied himself in the galley next door. "Its not changed much" said Freddie, "still the same old mess" Greg looked around him at the various posters of pop groups 'Genesis' 'Pink Floyd' and others, decorating the place.

"So what are you two up to here?" asked Jock, bringing in the tea. Greg and Freddie told him of their plans. Jock lit an old pipe and said; "Well lads, it sounds a bit ambitious, but I felt there might be a use for this old tub, so I've been overhauling her engines and generators, and she's mechanically very sound, I had a bit of a problem with the hydraulics on the steering, but that's ok now. I don't know much about the transmitters or the studios, I think you can help there Freddie, but it was all working when we closed down, three years ago. I've had the heating on during the cold weather." "Is there plenty of fuel?" asked Freddie "Oh I filled her up two months ago, I sailed her round to Harwich and ran power ashore from our generator on the ship to power the pumps"

Greg leaned forward and asked "Do you think she could sail around the south coast to the Isle of Man area?" "I don't see why not" replied Jock. "We could top up with fuel if we need it, at any of the southern ports, there should be some still in the navy dockyards I would have thought".

"Good" said Greg "Do you think you could start up one of the big generators later today, when Freddie and myself have checked and cleaned the transmitters of salt?" "No problem, come on Freddie, let's see if you remember where all the switches are" Jock laughed.

They walked along the narrow corridor to the front of the ship, then down some steep steps. There were several large cabinets 'RCA Ampliphase' was the sign on one of them. Greg tripped on a large spanner lying on the floor. "Och, I was looking for that one earlier," said Jock, Greg and Freddie grinned. Freddie opened up the cabinets "Look for signs of dampness or verdigris Greg, if its got in, its important to clear it before we put the power on" Freddie started to brush dust and cobwebs out, Greg followed his example. Then Freddie moved to some large coils and capacitors near the base of the aerial and cleaned them as well.

"The radio frequency power will track across the insulator unless all the salt is cleaned off," said Freddie. Later they had a lunch break.

There was a roar from the room next door, as the big generator came to life. The transmitter room was flooded with light. Jock put his head round the door "There was a bit of air in the injectors, but I bled it, and it's cleared now" he said. Freddie and Greg had finished cleaning all the transmitter parts; Freddie shut the cabinets and said, "Lets give it a try, it all looks ok now". He moved to a large MEM three- phase switch, pulled out the lever, and pushed it up. A low moan changed to a high pitched roar as the cooling fans ran up to speed. Freddie adjusted controls and switches until he was satisfied with all the meter readings. "Its set to 558 khts" shouted Freddie above the roar of rushing air. "Are we transmitting yet?" asked Greg. "No not yet, I've a few more checks to make" replied Freddie.

Having done these and saying to Jock "Ready for the load increase?" Go ahead, I'm ready. Jock retired to the generator room. Freddie turned a keyswitch, and pressed a green button, there was a loud noise as contactors completed circuits, the lights dipped, Four meters registering current flew up, then steadied. The generator groaned with the extra load, Jock put his head round the door and gave the 'thumbs up'. Freddie stood back, and said "That's it, we're on the air, it all looks ok to me" "It was like a great animal coming to life" laughed Greg, shouting above the roar of the 50kw transmitter.

"Come on, let's see if the studio still works, I've switched on all the audio processing equipment". Freddie led the way to the center of the ship, and the wheelhouse. An old map room had been converted into a radio studio. There was all sorts of equipment there, that Greg did not recognise.

Freddie switched on the power, motors ran, lights lit up. Freddie sat down on the studio chair. "Well what shall we play, we need to do some test transmissions" Greg found an album, in the record library next door. He took it through and gave it to Freddie, who grinned as he saw it. Freddie turned up the fader on the mixer, and the music started 'Riders of the storm', came the lyrics from the studio speaker. "I used to like the Doors" grinned Greg apologetically. They looked out of the porthole, and there was Jock, laughing. "Its alive" he shouted "I can hear it, she's alive" Greg Grinned and said to Freddie "Yes, she's certainly one of the Survivors".

The equipment was tested for the rest of the day; they carried on playing records. Just after dusk, Greg went into the studio, sat down, in front of the microphone and started to speak; "Good evening, to any listeners we may have. My name is Greg Preston; some of you may have met me, when I landed in my hot-air-balloon. I'm speaking to you, from what was the Radio Caroline ship, which at the moment, is moored near Bradwell, in Essex. Tomorrow, we are planning to sail round the south coast and through the Irish Sea, to anchor near the Isle of Man. The plans of setting up an administration of co-operation, between all communities is going ahead. This radio ship, in a central position, covering the whole of the British Isles and Ireland, will become a vital link between all of us. Also there seems to be more Survivors, in the country areas in the north and west of England plus many more in Scotland, than in what was, the heavily populated south. I suspect this will be similar in the rural areas of Ireland. Our group in Scotland, using Hydro Electricity, is trying to put some power back into the national grid. This will take time. It may be an impossible task, but this is one of the projects, the new administration is attempting. Mr Stringfellow and Mr Macdonald shall assist me on the trip; we expect the trip to take about seven days. So for now, good luck to you all, we will close down shortly".

A few more records were played, then Freddie turned the Transmitter off. The big generator was shut down by Jock. "Och, all that fuel for a bit of music" was Jock's comment.

In the Oval cricket ground community, Amil sat transfixed. He had been tuning round the wavebands, and as he turned the dial, the huge signal tuned in. He turned on the public address system, and said; "People of London, there is still life in England". He connected the radio to the PA system. The Londoners stopped what they were doing, as Greg Preston's voice echoed around them.

Meanwhile, Charles Jenny and Hubert were making their way to St Mary's near Nottingham. Hubert's jaw was very painful by now. He complained constantly. The people at gleefully believe that Keithly had given them directions.

As the trio rode along a stretch of the M62 Charles joked "I wonder what the police would have said about horses on the motorway".

At nightfall they arrived at St Mary's. Ruth came out to greet them. "Jenny, Charles and Hubert, are you well?" She said excitedly. Charles said "yes - apart from poor Hubert who has a raging toothache again". They jumped off their out horses, Jenny and Ruth hugged "its really great to see you" said Jenny. "Yes Jen" replied Ruth it is by shame you did not come a couple of days ago"she went on "you just missed him".

Jenny's heart skipped a beat " missed who?" She hesitatedly asked. "Greg turned up here" Ruth said "Greg!, Greg" Jenny screamed out the second Greg. Jenny turned to Charles and hugged him sobbing, she said through her tears "you see Charles, he is alive, never give up." "Jenny, Oh Jenny" was all Charles could say. They went into the hospital. "Come on Hubert, let's have a look at that tooth of yours" said Ruth. Sheila, a very kindly lady said to Jenny and Charles "come on, are you hungry or thirsty - I'll get you a cup of tea" they went into a large lounge. "Sit you down and I'll get things organised" Sheila went out to a room at the back. Jenny and Charles sat down "they certainly look organised here" said Charles "electric lights, music" he nodded to a radio playing. One of the patients who had been sleeping in an armchair awoke, yawned and said "the radio only started today, Ruth tuned it in". "Where's the radio station?" Asked Jenny, amazed. "I'd don't know, I did ask when I heard it myself, but I was still a bit groggy from my operation my hernia, you know. Dr Ruth said something about a ship". The song on the radio changed to 'Riders on a storm' "Ah, I remember that one" said Charles, "Greg used to li.....". His voice tailed off as a voice came through the static on the radio "hello to any listeners we may have", Jenny sat up at the first word. "It's, it's" she gasped "my name is Greg Preston" the voice went on. They listened to Greg's announcement, Jenny and Charles were silent.

Ruth came in "Huberts going to be OK, he had an abscess under a tooth, but I think we've got him sorted out" she saw Jenny was tearful "what's up Jenny?" Ruth asked. Charles answered, "we've just heard Greg on the radio "oh yes, he said he was going to try to start up Radio Caroline or something" said Ruth. "of course, I've not had time to tell you about Greg" Sheila came in with some tea and home-made made cakes "why not do it then telling a over tea" she said

Ruth told Jenny and Charles of Greg's plans and what had happened to him before he arrived at St Mary's. By now, Jenny had dried up her tears and "why did Agnes lie about Greg, do you know why Ruth?" "I don't know Jen, perhaps it was some form of jealousy." "anyway" said Jenny after she had told Ruth of their adventures "how are you doing here now?" "well, I've trained up nurses to be doctors and we've six nurses, who may be doctors one-day. It's been a struggle but it is worth while. We trade food for our skills and it's working." Ruth noticed the music had stopped coming from the radio, "my guess they will soon be sailing around the coast" Ruth added. "Have you heard anything from Abby?" Jenny asked. "No, not at all, not since she went off looking for Peter – just before we were burnt out and moved up to White cross, why do you ask?" "Because we found Peter" Jenny replied. " He's helping a man look after sheep, near Hawarth in Yorkshire." "Well there's a turn up for the book" Ruth replied "I think we will have to have a big reunion party before much longer" Jenny looked sad "If only we could have arrived here a few days earlier, I could be with Greg now" she mused.

Later that night, the lights came back on and stayed on in the little cottage near the A49 trunk road, the traffic lights began their endless cycle of colours again, but Abby and Jimmy did not see them or their fridge start to freeze again. They had gone to Whitecross.

Meanwhile in Scotland, after much hard work with the help of some men McAlister the Laird had found, Alex Cambell had been able to get a second Hydro – electric power station working at Pitlochry and, having synchronised it with the Killin station, was able to apply power to the National grid lines. The two stations running together were just about able to cope with the load. In some parts, the United Kingdom was no longer in darkness.

Chapter 3

It was 8 o'clock in the morning and the tide was rising. There was a loud roar as the main engine of the Ross Revenge came to life. Jock had been working for hours to find a fuel line blockage.

Greg, with Freddie's help had raised the anchor. The huge ship, with its long mast pointed towards the heavens made it's way out towards the open sea. Greg was at the helm. "Steer towards Coln bar buoy, that's the big one straight ahead," said Jock. "Then across the Spitway, past the Wallet and Swin buoys, then turn north east, up the east Swin channel. We have to go round all the sandbanks, before we can head for the Dover straits." "I'm glad you're here" said Greg "I would have turned southeast, and most probably got stuck on a sandbank" Greg went on. Freddie arrived with a rattle of cups. "Tea up folks, I know my job now" He laughed. "And most important too" said Greg, going on "It's a shame we only have tinned milk" "Put a drop of Whisky in it for me, milk indeed" laughed Jock . He went on "We should be getting towards the Dover straits by nightfall, if we have no problems. We won't travel by night as I'm not sure what buoys are still there, or if any channels are blocked." "Any instructions for where we steer?" asked Greg. "If your in the slightest doubt about anything, just ask me. There's no Lifeboat service to get us out of trouble now." Answered Jock

The weather was beautiful, sunny with a gentle northerly breeze. Freddie was at the helm, when mid – morning he turned the 'Ross' south, through Knock deep channel. "This is where we used to anchor in the old days" Freddie told Greg. The ship chugged on, it's huge mast like a giant finger pointing at the cloudless sky. As they passed near Margate sand, a mist was starting to collect. Greg who was then at the wheel, called Jock. "What's up Greg?" Who answered "look over there, there's a ship, it looks like its stuck on the sand." Jock found the field glasses and aimed them "Yes, it is stuck, and I can see a flag a red flag, with a white one underneath. Let's take a look at it if no-one has any objections, it's not much off our course." "No problem" said Greg, turning the ship a little to starboard. "It's a ferry I think, the mist keeps coming and going – yes it is a ferry," Said jock. The ship grew larger "Don't get too close Greg, we'll heave-to in a moment, and I'll go across in our dinghy". They could see now, a white S.O.S. had been painted on the side of the ship. Freddie and Jock launched the dinghy while Greg held the Ross stationary. Jock started the outboard motor and headed towards the ferry, as he approached it, he could see someone waving. They drew within earshot. "Help, help us" A shrill voice cried, Jock looked, she was a teenage looking girl, Filthy dirty but with a cheery smile". "How many of you are there?" he asked warily. "Only myself and Kate" was the reply. "What's your name, and where have you come from?" asked Jock. "I'm Samantha, Kate broke her leg when we got on board, so she cannot come and greet you." "Are you both well, apart from Kate's leg?" asked Jock. "Yes, we're fine though a bit thirsty" she replied smiling. "I'll come aboard" said Jock, tying up the dinghy to a hanging rope, He climbed aboard. "Thank you, thank you," said Samantha hugging Jock. "Steady on there" Said Jock, "lets go & see Kate now" he suggested. Samantha led the way to a dining room "Hi" said Kate, "Hello there" Jock a little embarrassed replied. Kate looked to be about 35 & very slim – they sat down, there were plenty of chairs. "Thanks for coming over to us, we were about to give up" Said Kate "We were motor boating out from Shoeburyness to do some fishing, when our engine caught fire in our cabin cruiser" She went on "we were near this abandoned ferry, we could not put the fire out, so we jumped overboard – I cannot swim, but Samantha can, she helped me aboard this ship – it was about three weeks ago now. I broke my leg climbing aboard – I fell, Samantha has strapped it up with some stuff she found in the ships first aid room"

"How have you been living?" asked Jock "Well, we've been fishing & catching rain water" Samantha went on: "There was no food here, this Ferry must have gone aground ages ago"

Jock said "By the way, I suppose I should introduce myself, I'm Jock" Kate said: "Well you know my name, & this is my daughter Samantha – Sam for short" Jock smiled & said "Well, are you two coming with us? We'll put you ashore when we can" "Where are you going?" asked Kate.

Jock told her & of their plans, "Well perhaps we can come along & help?" asked Kate " We lived alone near Shoeburyness, everyone we knew died, so we have no-one to go back to, we'll catch fish along the way if you like" "Come on then" laughed Jock "Can you find some ropes Sam?"

With Sam's help, Jock lowered Kate into the Dingy, then Sam & he jumped in the little boat – they were soon back on the radio ship, being warmed with Freddie's tea & re-telling their story over again as Greg headed the ship towards the straits of Dover. When it was dark, they dropped anchor near Folkestone. Sam had been helping Freddie prepare a meal, meanwhile Jock had stopped the main engine. He had started a small generator for the lights. They were all in the mess room, the fish Sam had caught were gratefully consumed, "Cod & chips, great" said Jock. "I don't know why more survivors don't eat fish" observed Kate "there are millions more of them now there is no organised fishing" Greg commented: "I suppose my group went off them after some people we knew died after eating some river fish, but of course – that was three years ago now, man's poisons have probably dispersed by now". Kate observed: "When we first started fishing, a year & a half ago now, we were very careful to start with, I tried it out on my cat first" she laughed "But Thomasina the cat just got fatter, so we knew it was safe to eat – that is our story, what have you been up to?" Kate grinned.

They swapped stories long into the night. Eventually Jock said "Come on, if we are going to continue sailing round the coast tomorrow, we had better get some sleep.

He had earlier sorted out cabins for Kate & Sam. They all slept very soundly, it had been a long day.

Freddie was first to arise from his slumbers in the morning, the radio ship was rocking a little. After he had washed & shaved he put the kettle on – it was 6.30

Sam arose next, "We shall have to put into a port somewhere & get you two some clothes" laughed Freddie Sam grinned, she was a tough nut, the death had made her so. Jock meanwhile walked in. "We'll get underway shortly, probably within the hour, I'm planning to visit Portsmouth & try to get some fuel there, so young lady, perhaps you can find some clothes shops that have not been ransacked" "Great" Sam

replied – Kate had meanwhile walked in, “Is that all you can think of my girl: CLOTHES” she laughed, as they all did. Kate had been made a makeshift crutch by Jock the previous day, so she could get about the ship with less difficulty. Greg walked in, “Come on me hearties, lets get started then” he joked – so Kate poked him with her crutch! It was a happy ship. “How’s you leg now mum?” asked Sam “A lot better now I’m using Jock’s crutch, it should heal before long” She turned to the others “I worked before the Death, so I was able to tell Sam what to do & the Ferry’s first aid room was very good” “Was there anyone.....?” Greg hesitated with his question; Kate went on for him “Dead on the ferry you mean? – no, they must have been rescued long ago – the ferry must have run aground at the time of the death”.

After breakfast, Jock started the main ship’s engine “Here we go again” he laughed, as Greg & Freddie winched the anchor up & this time, with Sam at the helm, under Greg’s instruction, headed the ship towards Dungeness. Later in the morning, Kate became his pupil, by now they were passing Hastings. The seagulls & Gannets mocked & cried, but they saw no sign of human life – no smoke from the Kent coast, nothing at all.

“It was very quiet where we were” observed Kate to Greg “My husband Derrick was a victim of the death. Look after Sam – they were the last words he said” Greg took Kate’s arm & squeezed it “You’ve not done so bad – great Survivors, the pair of you” He paused “What will you do when we get up north?” “Well, I like the sound of the hospital, your friend Ruth has established, perhaps Sam & myself can assist her, if that is what Ruth needs” “I would think that would be no problem at all” Greg replied “But I shall want to do a bit of fishing now & again” Kate said, laughing “Well, if you do that, make sure you tow a spare boat along with you, there is no RNLI now you know” The practical Greg observed. “Don’t worry Greg, that’s what we were saying after being on that abandoned ferry for three weeks” laughed Kate.

Later that day, the sea started getting choppy – a storm was getting underway. By now, they were near Brighton, so Jock decided to drop the anchor. He came in as close to the coast as he dared to shelter from the storm. “That’s it for another day” he said “Come on Jock” said Sam, “You’ve been working harder than any of us keeping that old engine running so well, sit you down”

They were in the mess room, the ship was rocking in the storm “Do you think it will get much worse Jock?” asked Greg, closing a porthole near him “Who knows, there are no BBC shipping forecasts now - & they were often wrong anyway” Laughed Jock.

Later that evening, they were all more than ready for their bunks, when the lights dimmed, then extinguished. “Damn” said Jock in the darkness, “I forgot to fill the day tank for the small generator, I’ll bet that is what it is” “I’ll come down & help you with it” Said Greg.

As they walked along the deck, there was moonlight now & then to show them the way. Greg looked across at Brighton, “Look Jock, just think of all the lights that would have been glowing along the seafront in the old days, & now its all darkness” “I’m more concerned with OUR lights Greg lad, come on – there’s a hurricane lamp just inside the engine room door, we’ll light that & sort out this little problem” & they soon did.

Jock & Greg made their way back to the mess room, only to find it still in darkness. Sam & Freddie were looking out of two portholes. “Look Greg, a flashing light” exclaimed Sam. Greg looked, it was very faint short flashes, then long ones. Freddie said “It’s Morse code I think, can anyone read it?” Jock replied “I used to know Morse, but I’m a bit rusty now”

They rigged up a table lamp by one of the portholes, Jock flashed in Morse: “We-can-see-you,-what-is-your-message-slowly-please?” The rate of flashing slowed down as Jock wrote down: “Hello-my-name-is-eric-if-your-vhf-radio-works-please-tune-to-156.8mhtz-&-we-can-better-communicate-reply-yes-or-no” Jock said “I don’t know if the ship to shore radio works, but we will soon find out!” He flashed: “Yes-I-think-standbye-on-156.8” Heading for the bridge, Jock said: “Keep flashing at him”

Walking along the deck, Jock found it hard to keep on his feet, the storm was really wild now & the huge broadcasting mast, was swaying too & fro. Back in the mess room, Sam said “I can hardly see Eric’s light at all now through the spray”

Meanwhile, Jock & Freddie, who had followed, were on the ship’s bridge. Jock was trying to get the radio to work, he heard the odd word intermittently, but that was all. Meanwhile, Freddie had traced the wire up to the aerial & found a loose connecting plug, once that was fixed – the voice came through clearly: “Hello Radio ship, this is Eric in Brighton, do you copy my signal?” Jock picked up the Microphone & answered: “Yes this is Radio Caroline, from the Ross revenge, Jock here, what can we do for you, over” The reply came: Hi, thanks for answering. I’m a radio ham, & I remember well what your ship did, to turn it round – can we be of any assistance to you, I’m part of a small community here, what ios your destination, over”

“What should I tell him Freddie?” asked Jock, Freddie picked up the microphone & said: “Hello Eric, what was your job before the death, by the way, this is Freddie, over” “Hi Freddie, I used to work for the BBC at their Hannington Transmitter, mainly mast maintenance, over” “Well Eric, we are heading north, to the Isle of Man – if you want to join us, you’ve got the job, I’m no good with heights, over” There was a pause, then Eric came back with “I’ll call you in the morning, when I’ve had a talk with the rest of the group here – I have them to consider, over” Freddie replied “This may be the best way possible, to consider them, over & out” “Bye” came the reply.

“I’m tired, it’s way past my bed-time” said Jock, he turned & saw the rest of the crew had been behind them, listening – all the time. “Well, what do you think?” he asked them – a pause, then Freddie said “Well I’m all for it,, none of us can cope with heights, can we?” There were nods all round, “Fine it’s settled – provided he wants to come of course” said Greg.

The wind blew hard, all night, the rain soaked the radio ship, but by dawn, it was virtually over. They were all late, getting out of their bunks – when there was a bang on the side of the ship, Eric had arrived. “Permission to come aboard?” he called, tying his motor launch to the ship. Two eyes, preceded by tousled hair, looked at Eric, over the edge of the ship. “If you are well, permission granted” yawned Samantha. He climbed aboard, “where is Freddie & the rest of your crew? Asked Eric. “Oh they are still asleep, come on – you can help me make the tea for them” Samantha led the way to the mess room. One by one, the crew emerged, ready for their morning tea, nodding to Eric – who asked “Who wants eggs for breakfast?”

There were reply’s of “Yes please” “Well I’ve bought them & some chickens & feed – there are plenty at our settlement” Eric went on: “That mast needs it’s stays adjusting, some are very slack – another storm like last night’s & it will come down” “Can you do it?” asked Greg, “Yes, I’ve got most of my tools with me” said Eric. “There are plenty on the ship too” Jock called.

The Chickens, wire, feed & all the other things Eric had bought with him, were soon loaded aboard. Samantha & Freddie set to making a chicken run on the back deck for the chickens, there was a cockerel with them so, Freddie observed: “There should not be a shortage of chickens in the future, if he does his job properly” The birds soon settled into their new home quite happily. “We should not have any trouble with foxes here” Samantha laughed.

Meanwhile, Eric, with Jock & Greg’s help, started sorting out the stays on the 350 ft radio mast. All went well, until with a twang, a cable stay broke, & fell into the sea

“Damn” said Eric, “It’s about half way up” said Greg, “Can it be replaced” “We’ve got plenty of stays in our stores,

but it’s re-attaching it which is the problem” Said Jock. “Now it’s calming down, that should be no problem“ said Eric “We plan to get some fuel in Portsmouth, there should be plenty of fuel pumping stations in the Naval harbour area Eric?” asked Greg “Yes, that sounds a good plan” Eric replied.

“Right, let’s get going” said Jock.

With the sea calmed right down, they made good progress & by the evening, they were sailing into Portsmouth harbour – they could just see Ryde, on the isle-of-wight “I wonder if that group from London got to the Isle-of-wight” Greg asked Eric. “I did hear of some life there” Eric went on “They were not very friendly, people said” “Let’s hope we don’t stir them up then” laughed Greg.

There were warships moored, several had partially sunk. As the Ross Revenge threaded it’s way through the rusting Royal Navy ships, Jock said “Look, there’s a fuel dump over there” He pointed, Freddie who was at the helm steered towards it. There was no sign of Human life, apart from some seagulls, wheeling about in the wind & a very bright ginger Tom-cat who sat near one of the fuel outlets, as if guarding it.

As the Ross drew closer, the wary cat fled. Greg & Freddie moored the ship, as Jock coaxed it to the dockside. Jock then went ashore to check the fuel levels. “Och, there’s plenty here Freddie, can you get that long 3 phase cable set up & the generator started up” “OK” was Freddie’s reply.

Meanwhile Eric, with Greg’s help, was climbing up the mast, he had his safety harness on, so it was slow progress – but he finally made it to the point where the mast stay had broken off, he fitted the new stay, Greg at Desk level, tightened it up, & pronounced it satisfactory.

By dusk, Eric was safely back down to the deck & Jock & Freddie had completed the re-fueling of the Ross. Samantha & Kate had prepared a feast for them all. Later that evening, found Freddie & Kate on the aft deck chatting, “Will we make it Freddie, do you think?” asked Kate, “Yes, I’m sure of it, we’ve a few problems to come through, we will have to see about some more supplies – now there are more of us & of

course some fresh water. I'm going to have a look round one or two of these warships tomorrow, there should be some water purification equipment on them. We will have to find the most suitable"

"Great, I'm fed up with boiling water every time" said Kate "Freddie" she went on Quietly "Yes" he said, turning to her "Would you kiss me, please?" she said quietly.

Freddie said nothing, as they kissed and cuddled for a few moments, then he said smiling "Look, not another passenger" The Ginger cat had found his courage, and had come aboard, he walked over to them to nuzzle & be stroked "There I would have thought he would have been completely wild by now" Said Freddie. "He must come from a home with lots of love" Laughed Kate. There was a pause...

"Don't leave me alone tonight Freddie, please" He nodded and smiled then kissed Kate again.

The next morning, everyone was late getting out of their bunks. Greg and Jock decided to look for some stored food. Freddie & Eric, meanwhile, made their way to one of the nearby moored navy cruisers & went aboard. The rust was starting to come through the battleship grey, but she seemed in otherwise fair condition. As Freddie walked on, he noticed a creaking noise – "Shush, what's that?" he asked Eric. They walked on, only to find a cabin hatchway moving slightly with the ship's movement. "Tides rising" said Freddie, "Its rocking the ship slightly" he went on. They lit their hurricane lamps they had bought with them & went in – it was very quiet. "Do you believe in ghosts?" asked Eric "If there were such things, there would be an awful lot of them haunting us by now" said Freddie, grinning.

They walked on – "Galley stores" was the sign over the doorway, they went in "Bit of a niff here Freddie" said Eric 'probably frozen food gone off' answered Freddie "Yes, don't open those fridges for heaven's sake" Freddie went on. They walked in further to racks of tinned food "This is more like it" said Freddie – he checked some for rust or being blown. "These will do for us" he said. They went on down to the engine room, a deck hatch had been left open and light was streaming in, Freddie looked around. "There it is" he observed, a large notice proclaimed WATER DESALINATION EQUIPMENT "That's what we need" said Freddie "How can we get it out?" asked Eric – "the same way it came in I recon, through that hatch up there" answered Freddie. "Come on, let's find a block & tackle" he went on.

Later, the desalination was hauled up on deck "OK, let's go back & see what Greg & Jock have found" said Freddie.

When Freddie & Eric returned to the Ross Revenge, Greg & Jock had not returned, so they reunited with Samantha & Kate & enjoyed cups of tea. Later, Greg, followed by Jock walked in "Not a thing, not a bloody thing – all the shops & warehouses in the area have been emptied of tins & vermin have ruined the rest" Greg growled. "Don't worry Greg, we've found some tinned stuff under our noses – you know that cruiser we went on to explore? It had been filled up with food for a voyage that never took place" Greg laughed & said, "we'll have a cuppa too, then we will move the Ross alongside the Cruiser"

In the afternoon, the Ross Revenge was moved alongside the cruiser & tied up alongside. First the desalination plant was hoisted over & stowed aboard, then all the tinned food was carried over.

"The biggest problem now, is where to put everything" laughed Jock – however, it was all stowed away by nightfall.

At dawn, with 'Ginger' the cat on the forepeak, the Ross revenge was weaving it's way out of Portsmouth & continued sailing westwards. Through the Solent & heading for Weymouth. Jock was doing some calculations with Greg's assistance. At length he said "We should be able to make it now, with no more fuel than we have now, still we will go into port for a final fill-up when we get up there" Greg replied "Good, let's hope the weather holds fine for us" And it did, apart from a couple of rainy days. On several occasions, lights & smoke were seen from south Devon near Plymouth, & from north Cornwall, Bude & from Aberystwyth in west Wales. They kept fairly close to the coast, for it's protection from easterly winds, but not so close to be reliant on the unmaintained navigation buoys. They sailed north-west. As they passed Bardsea island, its lighthouse flashed at them "That's perhaps, one bit of power Alex Cambell was able to get through" Greg smiled.

During the voyage, Eric, Greg & Freddie had been discussing their exact destination & expected medium wave transmitter coverage & also a location where the ship would have decent shelter from the storms. Eventually Morecambe bay was decided upon.

As they sailed into Morecambe & tied up – Greg said "Right, we must have a meeting to decide what to do next"

Abby Grant & Jimmy Garland had travelled south, from his cottage at The Vault. During the previous winter, a man passing by, had told them of a community near Monmouth called 'Whitecross' and of a thriving farm there "They are organised by a lady with long blond hair, Pet I think her name was. Her man, Charles Vaughn was away, but she seemed to have the folks & place well organised. Charles had gone north to get salt from some brine pits near Chester"

After he had moved on, Abby remembered where she had heard the name: Charles Vaughn before, "I met him shortly after the death" she told Jimmy "At the time, his ideas were shocking to me – he only thought the women should all have babies – mostly his! – but I think it was his way of trying to look forward to our future" she went on, "And all you wanted at the time, was to try & find Peter, your son" replied Jimmy. Yes, well I still do, though after 3 years, I'm wondering if he is still alive" Abby sighed "We've been west north & east, & no one – apart from Ruth had heard of him"

"So let's go south" Jimmy had said.

A couple of days later, after preparing food for the journey, they set off early in the morning, on Spartacus & Phantom, their two horses. In places, thick weeds grew across the A49 – threatening to trip up the horses. But they soon became used to the obstacles, & weaved their way along.

By early afternoon, the city of Hereford was to be seen. There was no sign at all of human life. "There is no easy way around" said Jimmy, studying a map. "We have to go through to cross the river" he went on. They passed rusting cars, a cat sat on the roof of one car, sunning itself, but scampered away at the approach of the two horses. A roundabout once tended and neat, loomed ahead. Daffodils & weeds fighting for possession of the island of earth in the tarmac sea.

Jimmy led the way, past this museum of mankind, with nature as it's curator. "There's the river bridge Abby" he pointed with his whip. The rusting rows of cars & trucks took up much of the road, some leaning to one side, as tyres or other parts of their structure had given way. "look" said Abby, as they crossed over the river "Not as many ducks & swans in the river now" "no, there are no people to attract them with food now" answered Jimmy.

They rode on, by the time it was nearly dark, they were well to the south of Hereford. They had bought a tent & set up camp on the village green at Kingsthorpe. It was a warm spring night. They listened to the hoot & screech of the owls, until they fell asleep.

In the morning, after cooking a hearty breakfast over an open fire, the two rode south again, turning off the A49 on to the A466. In places, where the road went through lower ground, the road was flooded – but the two horses waded through the water. They saw no signs of life, until, after cresting the top of a hill, "look" said sharp eyed Abby, "Smoke on the horizon ahead"

They rode on, with trees now on either side of the road, they could no longer see the smoke. "Its not very far from here now" said Jimmy. They were passing through a village, the sign said 'BUCK____' and the rest of the wording had flaked off. They were passing a side road, when Abby pulled up Phantom and exclaimed "Look, there's tracks up there" And fresh horse dung too" noticed Jimmy.

They turned off the main road and on to the track. It wound left & right, rising in height all the time, then to the right, there was a huge cultivated field on the rising ground. At the top of the hill, was a cottage, with smoke coming from it's chimney, A wind pump turning in the hill-top breeze was by a pond.

"This must be Whitecross" said Jimmy, as the two horses strained up the steep, long hill. Seedlings were sprouting in the cultivated field, a huge sloping roof barn, lay ahead. Two small figures came out of the cottage, then vanished – a bell was then heard ringing. "I think we've been seen" said Abby.

They rode on, past the barn & to the cottage where a group of people were assembled. A woman with a rifle & a man with his arm in a sling was beside her. "We're not looking for trouble" began Jimmy, when two children, aged about 12, ran through the gateway of a garden with a big white house behind them "Abby" said the girl, "Jimmy" said the boy. The woman with the rifle said "you know these people Lizzie?" "Of course we know each other" laughed Abby, as she dismounted Phantom. "Pet, this is Abby Grant" said Lizzie "Don't you remember me & John telling you about how we were found by Greg, Jenny & Abby – about 3 years ago it was" Lizzie went on. "The Man is Jimmy Garland" Lizzie blushed, "Her boyfriend"

"Are you well?" asked Pet – "Yes, very well, both of us" answered Abby "If you wish to stay with us, your welcome" said Pet – "Though we usually ask newcomers to stay in the quarantine hut that Jack built" Pet indicated to the man with his arm in a sling. "How did that happen" asked Jimmy – "It's a long story, but I was shot by Greg Preston" answered Jack. Abby exclaimed in surprise "Greg, you met him?" "Yes, but sadly, he was dying from smallpox" answered Jack.

Jack & Pet brought Abby & Jimmy up to date with events as they knew them. "After we heard the sad news from Greg, we decided to return to Whitecross farm – as we had to get this year's seeding in progress. We are quite a large community here now with 23 people altogether" Said Pet "And you would like to make it 25?" asked Jimmy. "Well if you would like to stay, you would be very welcome" Said Pet.

Abby asked about Peter – her son, but no-one knew of him "We have talked about things, and Jimmy & I would like to stay for a while if that is OK Pet?" "Yes that's fine, there is a house in the woods you could live in" answered Pet. Later, following their being installed in their woodland home, Jimmy & Abby were talking "It would be good to drive an alternator from that wind pump, these fat lamps are a danger & smelly" Jimmy the practical one observed. "That would be a good idea" Abby yawned, then blew out the bedside light.

A few days later, Jimmy took a pony-trap down to Monmouth, he returned with alternators, lamps, wire & batteries from the local Halfords, an intact shop, he also found some pulleys & belts in a workshop in the town. In a few days, with some help from Jack Wood, assembled a system where two alternators charged several batteries when the wind blew – as it did most of the time at Whitecross hill. At night, most of the small community then had a little light. Jimmy even fixed up a car cassette to play some music, to accompany the drinks & food that Pet & the other women served up at the small party that was held a few days later, as a housewarming for Abby & Jimmy.

By now, Alex Cambell, with much help from the Laird, had found & trained some engineers to maintain the Hydro-electric equipment. They were gradually able to bring back into service more of the stations dispersed around the highlands of Scotland. Alex then concentrated on clearing some of the faults that had occurred to the overhead power lines, mainly damage caused by tree or branch damage over the 3 years of neglect.

Gradually as spring turned to summer, lights started to burn again in Scotland & northern England. Gradually, Alex & his team carefully re-introduced power further down England. Many people from the communities Alex encountered, were able to assist in repairing their own local cables after Alex & his team had trained them.

Meanwhile, at Morecombe, the crew of the Ross Revenge were mooring the radio ship alongside the pier. Freddie had suggested this location, as there was a good power supply system for the pier amusements. "Once we have Alex's hydro-electric-power fed in, we won't need to run the ship's generator" said Freddie.

After this, they made their way along the pier to the sea front & the promenade. The wind & weather had damaged some of the sea-front boarding houses and everywhere, there was flaking white paint. "This one looks a bit better" said Greg, leading the way into the 'Sunview' guest house. There were no signs of human habitation, apart from a note dated 3 years ago, a week before most of mankind met their maker. It said: 'George, I'm very ill & have gone to hospital, don't forget to feed Tiddles. Love from Anne'