

**Monday 4 May 2009**

You've gone. You've left me. You couldn't even wait until I got to the hospital to say goodbye before you went. I tried my hardest to get there, but you had gone before I did. I called Nick and he came up straight away, and I have to confess I flung my arms around his neck and cried all down his jacket. Sue and Alan were on their way up to see you, so I had to text them (I couldn't speak to them) and let them know that they were too late. Sue was brilliant. She didn't cry like Wendy would have done, which would have been much harder for me to deal with. I suppose now I need to get the funeral arranged. Good job we discussed what you wanted. I'll give the Rev. Ray a call later on. I just can't think at the moment. I'm still in shock, I think. Nick, Sue and Alan all took me back to the house after I'd seen the doctor, and stayed with me for a little while. Nick left first, to let me and Sue have a 'family chat'. I'm really impressed with Sue, only having met her the once at your father's funeral. I think if anyone will get me through this, she will. Nick came back later on just to make sure I was all right. Thank god the doctor has already given me those tablets - I'd never have got to sleep without them. I must make an appointment to get some more - hopefully a stronger dose this time.

As I said to Sue, my main thought today was 'at least it doesn't hurt any more'. I hope you're at peace, my love, and you're looking down on me from somewhere. I still can't believe you're gone, and I'm not going up to the hospital to see you again.

**Tuesday 5 May 2009**

Nick has been brilliant. He came round to see me this morning, and I cried all over him again. I suppose it's only to be expected, but I really wish I could stop crying. I know you never liked to see me cry, so I'll try and control myself. I have to wait for the death certificate to be signed before I can go back to the hospital and collect your stuff. I really don't want to have to go up there again, but I'm going to have to.

I've spoken to the Rev. Ray and told him you're gone, and he's been wonderful. He's going to check dates when he's available. I want the funeral on a Friday, so that as many people as possible can come to it - for some reason, bosses are more likely to give staff time off for a funeral on a Friday afternoon than any other time of the week. Very strange.

The Rev. Ray rang when I got home. He can't do the funeral this week, so it will have to be the 15<sup>th</sup>. Better in lots of ways I suppose, because it will give lots of notice about

I've also spoken to the DWP about claiming benefits and stuff. I really can't do anything until I get the death certificate, and because you died on a Bank Holiday (you always did have a lousy sense of timing, my love) they are a day behind. It will be Wednesday (tomorrow) before I can pick anything up at the earliest.

I had a phone call from Capital One as well today, chasing you for payment. I could only deal with this by being extremely formal with them ('I regret to inform you that Mr Boyce has passed away,' etc. etc.) and they also want a copy of the death certificate. I suppose I should get at least five.

Nick came with me to pick up all your stuff and the paperwork. I'll have to go and register the death tomorrow - you have to make an appointment for that! I also need to go and see the funeral directors. Heaven knows how much that's going to cost. Thank heavens for life insurance, that's all I can say.

Had a lovely phone call from Crosslee - they were really upset when I told them you'd gone. They want to send me a bunch of flowers, so I said that would be lovely.

### **Wednesday 6 May 2009**

Debbie came with me to register the death. She also came up on to the ward when I left them a little present in gratitude for all they did for you. She asked if there was anywhere else to go, so I explained I had to go and see the funeral directors as well. I asked if she'd be all right coming, and she said no problem. When I spoke to the funeral directors and discussed what we wanted, I nearly fell off my chair when they told me they would need £1000 as a deposit. Where they expected me to get that sort of money from is beyond me. I had visions of you lying on a slab in the morgue until I could raise the deposit. I offered them £300 and told them that was all I had, so they accepted that. Debbie volunteered to take the clothes you'll be cremated in to the funeral parlour in the morning, so I gratefully accepted her offer.

The Registrar was very nice, kept everything nice and business-like which was a welcome relief. If people are too sympathetic, then I start to cry, which isn't good for me or for anyone else.

The flowers from Crosslee arrived today while we were out - they're absolutely beautiful. All white, a mix of chrysanthemums, lillies, and some I don't recognise. See, I told you they cared about you. Julie asked if I wanted to go in to discuss money, and what would be due to you (me!) from your final salary. I said that would be most helpful, so I rang Nick and asked if he'd come with me tomorrow. Of course he said 'yes' straight away, which is just like him.

#### **Thursday 7 May 2009**

Went to see Julie at Crosslee today. She was so lovely, really nice and helpful. She explained what was due, and it was considerably more than I was expecting. Nick made a joke about me being able to go to America with that amount of money, and that got me thinking. A break is probably just what I'll need after the funeral. To hell with work - they can learn to live without me for a few weeks longer!

Rob from the funeral directors rang, and confirmed that 15 May was all set for the funeral, and asked about what should go in the paper and when. We agreed that the notice should only go in tomorrow, so as to avoid confusion over the date. We're asking bikers to join us at the Chapel of Rest, and we'll all ride on from there. I'll be taking your bike, of course. Wouldn't be proper to go on anything else. I just hope the weather stays dry. I'll be putting all my leathers on, I suppose I'd better make sure every thing's been Nik-waxed and is waterproof!

#### **Friday 8 May 2009**

You would not believe how much paperwork is needed when you die. I feel as if I'm drowning in a sea of it. On top of that, I can't find my birth certificate and passport. I found all your stuff, and our marriage certificate, but I can't find mine, and without my birth certificate I can't apply for my bereavement benefits. I've tried getting a copy on line, but the damned website in Hertford won't play, so I've had to write off for one, which meant getting a postal order. The post office in Halifax is closed, so I had to stop off at Boothtown to get one. I've finally got it sent off first class, with a return envelope also first class, so it shouldn't take too much longer. I've sent off the bereavement benefit form anyway, as it said not to wait, which means I'll have to take my birth certificate into the Job Centre when I finally get a copy. Why the job centre is beyond me.

I received some flowers from work today - they are also beautiful, and a riot of colour. I bet Sue W had something to do with that - she would probably have said to get something cheerful. I'm glad I kept those two crystal vases, they're now both full of flowers on the living room window sill. It's a good job Tia isn't around, otherwise she'd have had them off within five minutes! Poor Tia. Jake and Tara just look through them, they don't try and knock them off.

Tara obviously knows something's wrong. Whenever I get tearful (which is more frequently than I'd like), she comes and very gently licks my face, to take the tears away. Jake also knows something's up, but he just comes and asks for a cuddle. I don't know what I'd do without them - they give me a reason to get up in the morning.

### **Saturday 9 May 2009**

Felt bloody awful this morning. If it hadn't been for the dogs needing to go out, I would have stayed in bed longer. Took the mutts out, and bumped in to Margaret. She had already heard that you'd gone, and offered me her condolences. Of course, I started crying again, but she was wonderful, not embarrassed at all. She just gave me a hug, and cuddled me until I could stop. Aren't people wonderful? Of course, it helps that she's also a widow, like Pam, and knows some of what I'm going through. I think most people know about my losing you now, through the dog walkers' network, so most people have offered me their condolences. Arthur, Carol's husband, paid me a great compliment this morning. His daughter lost her husband in an explosion in a pie factory in Huddersfield a couple of weeks ago, and she's gone to pieces, so he's almost lost Carol too, because she's had to go and look after her daughter. Arthur told me he had the greatest respect for me, because I was getting on with my life, and making the most of what I still had left. He then added that he wished his daughter could be more like me. I felt so touched. But I figure I have two ways to play this - I can either hide away in a dark room, beat my breast and cry all the time, or I can be grateful for what we had together, however short it was, and know that I still have my memories of you. I'm also grateful for what I've still got - my health, my life, so many friends, and the dogs.

Had a really indulgent afternoon. I made up a play list on Windows Media Player of all the songs which reminded me of you (including those I've picked for the funeral) and then sat and listened to it. It certainly did the trick - I spent about three quarters of a hour crying. Not sobbing, just letting the grief come and work its way through me. I have to say I felt better afterwards. I rang Pam later on, and told her what I'd done. She told me that when she lost Roger, she

found she had to just let the grief work its way through, and she would find herself walking down the street making a note of funny things she'd seen to tell Roger, only to realise with a bump that she wouldn't be able to tell him. She said much the same thing - you have to let the grief work through, and give in to it when you are able to, otherwise you just bottle it up inside. It has to come out, and you have to let it.

### **Sunday 10 May 2009**

Decided that I couldn't put off going through your things any longer. I was dreading going to your wardrobe and seeing all your clothes, but in fact it wasn't as bad as I expected. I was amazed at the amount of stuff you had that you never wore! All those pairs of trousers (most of which I had bought for you), all those shirts - so much stuff that I didn't even recognise. I sorted it all and packed it into black bin bags - I'll get Nick to help me take it down to the charity shop in town tomorrow. Six bags of clothes - not a lot to show for your life, my love.

I've also decided to get rid of your stereo, and the cabinet it sits in. I don't want to get rid of your memory, but I really want to change things just enough that it's not a constant reminder of what I've lost. I've decided to get a desk and chair, and set up the computer as if it were in an office. I'll ask Nick if he wants the cabinet; I'm afraid your stereo will have to go to the tip. I know you loved it, but it's so old and unreliable that it really does need to go.

### **Monday 11 May 2009**

Took all your stuff down to the Tia Greyhound Rescue shop in Halifax. Nick came up to give me a hand. He thought he was going to be helping me to pack things up - he was most surprised when he realised I'd already done it.

I also sent off a load more paperwork today. I'm slowly working through it. I emailed Lance and Deb, and asked if I could go over for a couple of weeks. Like the wonderful people that they are, they immediately said 'yes, come on over.' I get your final pay on Friday, so I'll book my ticket first thing, before I get ready for the funeral. I have no idea how many people are coming, just that as many as I have asked have said 'yes'. I really hope it will be a proper send off for you.

I can't believe it's been a week since you died. I still don't think I really believe it - half of me keeps expecting a phone call or something telling me there's been a horrible mistake, and you'll be coming back to me.

Capital One are still phoning up, even though I've told them you're not here any more. Do these people have no sensitivity? They wanted to know who was dealing with your estate, whether you'd left a will, did you have funds available to pay off the credit card. I'm so glad you signed your bike over to me before you died, my lovely. At least with me being the registered keeper and owner of the bike they can't take that to settle the debt. I think that would crucify me. You didn't leave much behind you, except memories, but your bike is one thing I'm going to keep. I'm seriously considering selling mine and keeping yours. After all, I only bought mine because Paul ruined my Zephyr, and I couldn't find a decent Zephyr at a price I could afford. The Spectre is a lovely bike, but given a choice between the two, I'll take your Zephyr any day of the week.

**Tuesday 12 May 2009**

Didn't do a lot today. I seem to have dealt with the current mound of paperwork. The funeral parlour rang up to finalise the arrangements for Friday, and Ray has rung and said he will come round tomorrow evening at five to go through what he's going to put in the eulogy. I've written a poem which I want him to read out, which will hopefully express my feelings. I'm determined I'm not going to cry on Friday. I'm sure some people will not understand, but that's their problem, not mine. You always hated me crying, and you were really annoyed with Wendy when she cried all over every one at your dad's funeral. I really hope she doesn't do the same again, or else I'll probably join in, and that would never do. We are there to celebrate your life, and to remember you, not to mourn your death. That is my tragedy, especially as we had so short a time together. Sue keeps telling me that you told everyone that you 'loved me to bits' and that I was the best thing that ever happened to you. I was looking for some photos to put on Facebook, and I found one which had been taken at the first rally. That brought back the memory of how proud of me you were that night - you kept telling everyone 'that's my wife, she organised this, you know.' Of course you never told me - that wasn't you - but the look in your eyes told me everything I needed to know. Well, I'll just have to manage without that this year. I hope I still do you proud though! I'm going to ask that we name the longest distance trophy after you - call it the Gyppo Boyce Memorial Trophy. I hope they agree.

**Wednesday 13 May 2009**

Another quiet day. Ray came round at five, and we went through everything he was going to say. I'd already sent him the remembrances from Sue and Maz, and told him the story about Abby and the snowball fight. Hopefully these will go to lighten the mood on Friday. I really don't want people wailing and beating their breasts - I want people to have a good time and remember the day with happy memories. Chris and Terry have said not to worry about numbers for the wake - if there isn't enough food out on the day they'll just do some more! I sometimes wonder what we did to deserve such wonderful friends.

The Coroner's Office just called. The second doctor who is required to sign the cremation certificate is not going to sign it. I've just found out that you fell out of bed just before you died, and the doctor is concerned that this may have contributed to your early death. He wants to do a post mortem to ascertain whether this was the case. The coroner's clerk has assured me they'll get everything sorted out for the funeral, but it's just one more thing for me to worry about. And why didn't they tell me this at the hospital?

Having thought about this, I'm sure that what happened was that you got out of bed to have a pee in your bottle, and just collapsed, and then couldn't get up again. If you hadn't been so damned stubborn, you might have lasted long enough for me to get to the hospital to say goodbye. But then, if you hadn't been so damned stubborn, you wouldn't have been you, and I wouldn't have loved you as I did. I hope they get the post mortem sorted out - can you imagine trying to reschedule the funeral at this late date?

**Thursday 14 May 2009**

I really hope the weather brightens up for tomorrow. It's been pissing down all day here, and the forecast doesn't look too good. My main worry is that if it's raining too hard, people won't want to turn out on their bikes for you.

The Coroner's Office has rung. They've got everything sorted out, and they're happy that your fall didn't contribute to your death. The second doctor has signed the cremation certificate, and everything can proceed as planned. I'm so relieved - I only told Sue about this, as I'm sure Maz and Wendy would have been too upset to consider the matter rationally. Still, it's all sorted out now, so no worries there.

I'm really not looking forward to tomorrow. I know I'm trying to be all positive about things, but I really hope I don't break down and make a fool of myself.

Sue and Alan are coming, Maz and Tony, and Wendy, Matthew, Liam and Hollie. Steve's coming up as well. Can you imagine the cheek of it? He rang me up to ask if I could ring the guest house to see if they had an ironing facility! I was on my way somewhere at the time, and told him to ring himself. He's the one staying there, after all! Wendy booked her and the kids into the Travelodge, so that's all right. Sue is going back after the service, as are Maz, Tony and Toni, so I don't have to put anyone up in the house. Steve asked if he could stay at the house, and I said no, I didn't want anyone under my feet on the Friday morning. He was pleading poverty (as usual), but as he spent the week he was up here telling me how much money he was making selling sandwiches and curries at the pub, I'm not sure if I believe him. Anyway, as I said to Sue, I don't want him staying anyway now I'm on my own. He might think it's all right because he's my brother in law, but I don't want the neighbours gossiping about me having men to stay as soon as my husband's died. Sue got the point straight away - I'm not sure if Steve would even consider it a problem.

Still raining. I really hope it stops. The latest weather forecast said it should start to clear 'by lunchtime', but I don't place any great faith in that. They probably have a late lunch.

### **Friday 15 May 2009**

Checked the bank account first thing this morning, after walking the dogs. The money has been paid in as promised. So, the next thing I did was to book my ticket to USA. Not a bad price - only £354 return, plus taxes of course. I can't go on Monday, I just realised, as I have a dental appointment on Tuesday, and if I miss that, it'll be months before I can go again, and it's just not worth risking it with my wobbly tooth. I don't know if I told you, but Jake headbutted me when he was on the bed one night, and he's knocked one of my teeth loose. The last thing I need is to have a bad tooth when I'm in America. I'll be getting travel insurance, but you can bet your bottom dollar that they'll find an excuse not to pay if I don't see the dentist before I leave. So, it's sorted, I'm off to America on Wednesday to stay with Lance and Deb for two weeks. I've got an appointment at the doctor's on Monday, so hopefully I'll get signed off for a couple of weeks so I won't have to use my annual leave.

I can't believe it, it's still coming down stair rods. It looks like you're going to have a wet send-off, my love. In fact, thinking of it, you're probably up there laughing your head off now thinking of us all getting wet down here! I just hope someone else turns up on a bike, or I'll look at bit silly all by myself behind the hearse! Well, last check of my leathers - I've just re-done the trousers, and



think I went a bit overboard with the Nik Wax. I'll get Wendy to take some dry clothes for me in the car so I can get changed at the pub. I intend to really tie one on this afternoon (I think I'm entitled), so I'm going to give Terry the bike keys when I get up there and tell him not to let me have them back until tomorrow.

I'd just got changed into my leathers when Wendy rang - could they come up the house? I couldn't think why they shouldn't, so they all arrived. I think Wendy's a bit nervous about finding the Chapel of Rest in town. Sue and Alan are also coming to the house to start with, probably for the same reason. Wendy tells me that Maz and Tony aren't starting out until 10 - I hope they make it!

We set off for the Chapel; me on your bike, Wendy and Alan following in the cars. I was amazed when we got there - I needn't have worried about nobody turning up on their bikes! I was so touched at the number of people who knew you, and who bothered to turn up. There were even some of the Slaves there, whom I didn't know, but who said they knew you. It seemed like everyone you ever knew with a bike had arrived. Even Graham from the garage made it! There must have been between 20 and 30 bikes there. The Rev. Ray's trike and hearse was fantastic - just what we wanted. We all set off on time, and Billy and some of the Slaves acted as marshals for the traffic so that all the bikes could stick together. Ray had to do a bit of an emergency stop at one set of traffic lights when they turned amber just as he got there, but despite the slippery road no-one came to harm. You had a bit of a bumpy ride though!

When we got to the crematorium I nearly broke my resolution and cried. There were so many people there! It was a good job we decided to have the service there rather than at the Chapel of Rest, because there wouldn't have been room for everyone there. Even Douglas and Stan made it up from London. Mo came from Bacup; Lynn from Sheffield; Tony came down from York - it was really lovely to see how many people really gave a damn about the two of us. About 15 people turned up from Crosslee, which surprised me. Even Boeey turned up, with Becca.

The service was fantastic - Ray did you proud! You would have enjoyed it, I'm sure. There was a little bit of religion, but not much. In fact, the first laugh Ray got was when he said 'going to church doesn't make you religious, any more than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger.' That set the tone for the whole service. He told us to interrupt if he missed anything out, and promptly forgot to include Steve in the list of your brothers and sisters, so Sue and I reminded him. He told the stories we'd given him, and had the crowd laughing with him. At

the end, he asked Gyppo's family and friends to stand round the coffin for the blessing, and there were so many we couldn't fit them all round. It was standing room only at the back.

Everyone said what a great service it was; it really brought back the memories of you that people wanted. I managed not to shed a single tear, which pleased me, and I stood at the door and thanked everyone for coming. We had a collection for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance. I don't know how much we got yet, because I left it with Terry at the pub.

Afterwards, we all retired to the Causeway Foot for the wake. Terry and Christine had done us proud with the food, and everyone was buying me drinks. You'd have been proud of me - according to Christine I drank about a litre of vodka that afternoon, and I was still upright and coherent when I left the pub at nine that night! Sarah from work was disappointed because she said she really wanted to see me drunk, and I just didn't play! I think everyone enjoyed themselves, I only had to buy one drink all afternoon, and finally went home at nine o'clock. Debbie and Keith took my keys, so they could feed the dogs and let them out, and Keith astonished me by offering to take me to the airport! It was so kind of him. Mike Powell said he would be back up if Keith couldn't pick me up, so I won't be short of a lift! If necessary, I can ask Nick to do it - he's got access to my card for the savings account, and he can use that to top up the car before coming to get me. Keith has also offered to pick me up when I land back in Manchester, which is really kind of him. Debbie volunteered to look after the dogs, as I couldn't afford kennels and Pam is fully booked, so that's one thing I don't have to worry about. All in all, a really good day.

### **Saturday 16 May 2009**

The dogs got me up bright and early this morning. No after effects from my drinking yesterday, so I went up about eight to collect the bike (I called a taxi to get up there). Drove home, and put the bike away, then went into town for breakfast. I texted Wendy and asked if she wanted to join me for breakfast, and she said 'yes', so I told her how to get there. I ordered my breakfast, and then ate it, and she still hadn't turned up, so I texted her again, and she was just leaving! I ordered extra toast and another cup of tea while I waited.

They eventually turned up, and I waited while they ate, and then they all came up the house. I asked Steve if he would get me a suitcase out of the loft, which he very kindly did, and then they all went home and I had the place to myself again. I started packing for America.

In the afternoon I decided to go and get my new desk and chair, so I visited Argos and made the necessary purchases, and then dropped the cabinet round for Nick, as he said he could use it, and then dropped your stereo at the dump. I felt so guilty doing that - as if I was letting you down - but I really couldn't see anyone else wanting it. Then I went to see Ian at Hedleys, and told him to see if he could sell my bike when it was finished. Apparently he has already had someone interested in buying it, so he's going to get in touch with them, and see if they still want it. I can't see why I would need two bikes, and I prefer the Zephyr anyway.

Went home and put the desk together. It was a piece of cake, although putting the keyboard drawer in taxed my ingenuity somewhat, and I damaged one corner of the desk when I dropped it. However, it's all together now, including the chair, and everything's set up and running. I'll have to get Nick up to check the speakers though, as I can't get any sound out of them. I'll give him a shout tomorrow or Monday and ask him to come up.

### **Sunday 17 May 2009**

Sue W rang me up and suggested a walk around Ogden Water with the dogs. I thought this was a great idea, so we arranged to meet at 10.30. I asked Sue to ring me when she was leaving home, and I would set off 10 minutes later. We met up, and had a lovely (although somewhat muddy) walk around the reservoir. The dogs loved it, especially Tara, who found all sorts of things for me to throw for her! We finished up in the Causeway Foot, where I discovered I had left all my money and my cards at home. Sue stood me a drink (J2O, of course) and I collected and counted the collection from the crematorium. We managed to raise just under £250, which I will round up to £250. I'll have to process it through the MAG bank account, as I no longer have access to your cheque book (your account was frozen by the bank as soon as I went in and told them you were no longer with us). Had a lovely chat with Terry and Christine. Chris was amazed at how much I had drunk on Friday, and the fact that I walked out upright under my own steam!

Nick popped up to check the speakers. He couldn't come tomorrow as he has to go up to North Allerton again. He found that the internal sound card hadn't been disabled when I put the new sound card in, so it was over-riding the new card. He disabled the internal card, and that activated the new card and behold - I have sound! I think I could do with a decent set of speakers though.

**Monday 18 May 2009**

Two whole weeks since you left me. Still missing you dreadfully, but then I suppose I always will. I went to the doctor's and explained what I wanted. Much to my surprise I found it extremely emotional to talk about, and cried all over the doctor. However, she did sign me off for three weeks, so I suppose it was useful in a way. She also offered me counselling for when I get back from America. I told her I was going for a break, and she said that was a very good idea. That's what everyone else has said, so no problem there. I emailed Tommy at work, and he said to take as long as I needed, so we'll see how I am when I get back from the states. I finished my packing, and I'm all ready to go. I even found my passport - which had me a bit worried, I have to admit. I found it in my file of certificates and stuff which I keep on the unit in the kitchen.

I then spent about an hour making up a scrapbook in a photo album I ordered. I've put in all the cards, some photographs, and the poem I wrote. Having done that, I then spent a good half hour sitting on the settee hugging it, and crying to myself. However, I've now put it down next to the computer, so I can look at it any time I want to.

Nick texted me to say he had got back all right, so I asked him to come up. He said he was going to the pub, but he would pop up on Tuesday evening, about seven, and tell me all about it then. He sounded much more upbeat about the whole affair, which was a relief.

**Tuesday 19 May 2009**

Rob rang from the funeral parlour, and said I would be receiving some information from the crematorium about whether I wanted a plaque or anything else putting up for you. He also asked whether I wanted something putting in the Courier to say thank you to people for attending the funeral. I said that would be lovely, and he said he would make sure it went in Wednesday's paper. I must remember to ask Debbie or Keith to keep a copy of the paper for me, so I can put it in the scrapbook. The information arrived later this morning - addressed to you! Can you believe that! How insensitive can you get? Having looked at the prices they're charging, I've decided not to go ahead with any of that - I hope you won't mind too much. The important memory and memorial is in my heart, and nothing will change that. I'll keep you alive through my memories, my lovely, and nothing can take those away from me.

I attended my dental appointment. Mr Shepherd was reassuring about my loose tooth, and said he thought it had some mileage in it yet. That was good news, as I really don't want to lose it. The hygienist has said I need to use the correct size interdental brush to ensure that I clean around it thoroughly - she also recommended dipping the brush in the mouthwash before using it, to ensure that it got a good clean. At least I won't have a gap there - well, not for the moment, anyway!

Nick came up and gave me some examples of the questions he was asked yesterday. It really does sound as if there's nothing to go on. Anyway, it's out of their hands now, so he will just have to wait until he hears anything further. I really hope this is the last of it, for his sake.

Early night tonight, and the alarm clock is going on for the first time since 16 April. I've almost forgotten that there's two half past fives in one day!

**Wednesday 20 May 2009**

Met Keith outside at about five to six. I was half expecting to go in the van, but he'd arranged for someone else to drive that, and we went in his car. He was most surprised when I turned up with one small case, and a bag. We set off, and were soon on our way to the airport. It was a very good trip, and we were there for just before seven. He dropped me off, and said when I got back, he'd pick me up in the car, drive to where he was working, and then give me the car to drive back to Halifax. I'm quite flattered that he trusts me enough to drive it! I was due to check in at about eight thirty, so wasn't expecting a long wait. The check in desk opened at seven thirty, and I was one of the first through. I was told that although I'd requested a specific seat on the plane, I wasn't going to be sitting there - I had been given a seat in the middle of the aircraft! I wasn't at all happy with that, so the guy on the check in desk told me to ask at the boarding gate for a seat re-allocation. It was then I found out that the flight was delayed by two hours, due to a technical fault, and wouldn't be taking off until after one o'clock!! The boarding gate would be open at 12 noon, so I had over four hours to wander around the airport until then. Fortunately I had packed some magazines in my bag, so at least I had something to read. I visited Starbucks twice just to have something to do, and spent nearly all my sterling - I suppose I'll have to get some more somewhere, although I couldn't find a free cash machine anywhere in the airport. Twelve eventually arrived, and I went to check if I could change my seat. I was asked if I minded sitting further back, and said no, that would be fine, so I ended up with a window seat after all. When I got on, I found I was sitting just in front of the toilet - not a good location,

you might think, but actually we had more leg room sitting there that we would have had elsewhere. So apart from the occasional flushing sound, it was a good place to sit.

The flight was mostly smooth, although it got bumpy after we crossed the Canadian coast, and the food wasn't bad either. I chatted to my seat partner, and we generally had a pleasant flight. I had texted Sue at work to email Lance and tell him the flight was delayed, so I hoped he hadn't spent all afternoon sitting in the airport waiting for me.

The immigration guy was really offensive when I went through the gate. Talk about the third degree! I began to feel unwelcome - and I hadn't even got out of the airport yet! After that, customs were a breeze.

Lance was there waiting for me - I almost didn't recognise him at first! I was so glad to see him! We drove back to the house, and Deb and Abby were both pleased to see me as well. I didn't feel tired, unlike last time! I stayed up until after ten o'clock, which amazed me. Deb asked if I minded sleeping in the basement - it seemed like a great idea to me! Lance showed me all the light switches, and I finally settled down about ten thirty. I remembered to take my pills, and I went almost straight to sleep.

#### **Thursday 21 May 2009**

Woke up fairly early - about nine o'clock I think. I felt nicely rested, and looked forward to having a great day. It was very warm - much warmer than I'm used to in May! Lance isn't working this week, so he was there, and we had breakfast together. Deb was bustling about getting ready for a workshop which she was doing, and Clarissa was due to come over to work on the newsletter. She was going to bring lunch over - something to do with asparagus and pasta - which sounded lovely (you know I like pasta, and I love asparagus). She was pleased to see me as well, which was lovely. It's great to just be able to kick back and relax, and not to have to worry about paperwork, or what might be coming in the post, or anything like that. Work seems a million miles away as well! Had a lovely time just doing not a lot. Lance introduced me to this neat new game, which I've signed up for, and I'm enjoying getting into that at the moment, and also just chatting to Lance about anything and everything that pops into our heads.

#### **Friday 22 May 2009**

Another relaxing day, pottering around, not doing anything in particular! However, Abby had some glasses to collect, so we all went over (along with two of Abby's friends), and then went on to the 'King of Prussia' Mall, which is apparently the second largest mall in America. I have to say it was impressive! Deb and I wandered around as the girls had their own agenda, (Abby wanted some 'trip' pants, whatever they are), and we ended up in the food hall - where else! There was a staggering amount of food on display, so we settled for Chinese. I have to say it was delicious! You would have loved it, I think, and would have wanted to try all the Mexican stuff. They had fajitas, tacos, chilli - you name it, it was there. It's no wonder Americans have a weight problem! We got back home at about 9 o'clock, so it was quite a long evening. And it seemed a very long way to go for a pair of glasses, but Deb said it was worth it, so who am I to object?

### **Saturday 23 May 2009**

Lance was out all day doing gardening jobs, so Deb and I went shopping, and pottered around the place. Still really hot - it feels as if we could be in for a thunderstorm! That would help clear the air. At least I won't have to worry about frightened dogs if we have one.

### **Sunday 24 May 2009**

Deb and I went to Q-Mart today, over in Quaker Town. I love that place! There's so many fascinating shops, and food!

### **Monday 25 May 2009**

Well, I've been in the USA for just under a week now. The weather has been generally hot and sunny, although we had a wild thunder storm last night. You would have loved the storm - it was right up your street, with the most amazing lightening display I've seen for a long time. To add another dimension to it, as the clouds moved away to the east, we caught the last of the sunset. The colours were unbelievable - I really wished I had my old 35mm camera with me, it would have captured the scene perfectly. I was glad we had the storm, the weather was really getting so hot and humid it was unbearable. You know I don't like the heat much, but the humidity would have affected even you, I think.

I'm continuing to play this new browser game Lance has introduced me to. It's actually very good. I know you never liked computer games, but this one is worth playing.

Nick put a message on my wall in Facebook. He had a very strange dream about you last night. He dreamt that I was in America, which I am, and that you were here with me, having a great time. Are you with me, sweetheart? I wish you were. I keep thinking of things to tell you when I get home, and then remembering that you're not going to be there when I get home, and it's just me and the dogs from now on. That's partly why I'm writing this diary - because I have things I want to tell you, and I can't. Putting them down on paper may be a poor substitute, but people will think I'm really strange if I start talking to you.

Being over here has one advantage - I got paid already! I know it's because of the time difference, but it was welcome. Being paid monthly has really made quite a difference to my salary, so hopefully I won't be too short of money when I eventually get everything paid off. I just hope the life insurance on the second loan comes off without me needing to add too much to it. Just have to wait and see, I suppose!

**Tuesday 26 May 2009**

Decided I'd treat myself to a new coat. I know you bought me that lovely parka, sweetheart, but I really can't wear that in the summer - such as it is. I've been looking over here for a coat like my yellow and black one which you described as being 'tatty' (and it is, I suppose), but couldn't find anything that was cheap enough to make it worthwhile. Anyway, I got an email from 'Cotton Traders', giving 20% off in their sale, so I had a look, and managed to get not one, but two, coats for a very good price. I ordered them on line, and they should be waiting for me when I get back.

Deb and I went shopping again. She wanted an entertainment unit for the TV downstairs, and we found a good one in the local thrift store for \$45. Deb paid for it and said Lance would pick it up later.

Deb's been having trouble with one of her teeth, and went to the dentist, who referred her to an oral surgeon to have it removed. I can't get my head round that! If I go to the dentist, unless it's a major problem, he will take a tooth out then and there! Weird system they have over here. Anyway, we drove over to the surgery, and she had the work done. She felt fine when we set off back, but



I have to say I was getting a little worried by the time we got back! She said she felt fine, although the Novocaine was wearing off, but her driving was getting just a little erratic. I was seriously considering whether I should actually drive home, but decided against it. She took two codeine and went straight to bed when we got in. I helped Lance cook dinner when he got back from the dentist, played Evony for a while and then went to bed myself, feeling more tired than I can remember for quite some time. I've been trying to wean myself off the tablets the doctor gave me, and haven't taken one for quite some time, so maybe that's why I'm feeling tired?

Had a text off Debbie today. She says the dogs are doing fine, although Jake is being a little sulky, and she has to walk him on the lead because he keeps running off home.

### **Wednesday 27 May 2009**

I had this really weird dream this morning. I got woken up about six thirty, and thought I'd go back to sleep. Well, I certainly went back to sleep, but whether it was restful is another matter entirely! I dreamt that 'they' were rearranging the office, and that it was being divided up into different areas, and each area was being decorated differently, by different people - almost like one of those craft fairs you go to, where every stall is different! People kept taking my stuff, or shunting me over to another 'area', and I couldn't get myself sorted out. Then I went to the toilet, and they'd taken away all the cubicles (and one of the walls!), and instead of individual toilets you had this weird arrangement whereby you had an 'all-in-one' toilet and washing facility, and you turned a switch to use the appropriate receptacle! Totally weird.

I was expecting Lance to be in when I got up. I'm sure he said that he would be working from home today, because his van wasn't ready. However, when I got up, everyone was out! Lance is at work, Abby is at school, and Deb is doing a presentation at Washington's Crossing. Apparently she gives this same lecture to bunches of school kids who come round in groups of 20. She never knows how many groups she has until she gets there. I hope she's all right, seeing as her tooth was playing up yesterday.

I got my usual Wednesday text from the bank, and I've been paid the first instalment of my bereavement benefit - a whole £2000! I know it will help me financially, but oh how I wish I had you instead, my lovely. I'm still missing you, and I'm dreading going back home next week, because although I can cope here, away from all my memories, I'm still worried about how I'm going to cope once

I'm back home. In fact just sitting here playing Queen on the computer I'm starting to fill up. All the money in the world won't bring you back, will it? I know I'm going to have to get used to being without you, but it's so difficult. That's why I'm writing this diary - I'm hoping that I'll be able to 'talk' to you through this, and work through the grief that way. And I still can't see why this had to happen to us, when we'd only been together so short a time. I know that wailing about life not being fair won't get me any where, but when you think of the total scroats who live in prison, doing nothing for anyone, it seems so unfair that you've been taken from me when we'd only just set out on our journey together. Seven years! So short a time. Damn.