

CHAPTER ONE

29th June, Sunday

Roissy 2 airport. Waiting to embark. An agitated week, with the business of the NMC (network maintenance center) predefined reports that had to be supplied with data: created, edited, transferred, and integrated into the INTERLOAF document. For memory, given a predefined report format, you must navigate to the right spot, make a collection of the data, generate a report after giving it a name, with an additional filter including the “*time scope*”, usually on its own, but sometimes along with another parameter. From there, after generating the report, you must select the display from among several views that are predefined (as is the report format) but between the two tasks there is a further stage, which is the addition of the report name and of any additional filters to be used, in particular the time-day range. The next stage is the edition of the report (in fact, only the views themselves are predetermined for a given type of report.)

At the second degree, for sum and detail reports, we have Operator (carrier), Organization or trunk line, Extension, Direction or CCN (city country name), and Cost center. In all of these cases, it is the grouping of details for all selected calls (all calls for all call types) according to the data collected, i.e. one PBX at a time.

Glenelg took the PBX with the call accounting data from the in-house R and D department, a great success for all the reports that agreed to work. Finally, what has changed is that the Marketing department has deleted the “*call type*” options, which allowed the user to make multiple choices over a set of values, for example, factorial n divided by two selections of any two parameters out of the n that are available for

reporting purposes. The call type “*private call*” does not produce any results (check).

Finally, to get out of this mess, you have to set up the data tables (cross reference matrices) and from them deduce the formulae in third normal form for each application. When he said three weeks of work, that was far from enough; it would take three weeks per application for this type of analysis. The applications are: directory, traffic analysis, scheduling, and work orders.

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He landed in Toronto on a Sunday evening, at around 5 p.m. local time. It was “Gay Day” when he arrived, but he didn’t see any of the parades, just the leftovers, since by the time he got downtown it was 6 p.m., or even a bit later. He enquired at the bus station about the nearest hostel, then walked a few hundred yards with his rucksack to a place called Ryerden Polytechnic.

He checked in, and went upstairs. There were dormitories for three, in student lodgings. It cost about twenty five dollars per night. He booked for two nights only. The day after tomorrow was a public holiday, Canada day. So he would stay at least one full day in Toronto, maybe two. He went out for a walk, back a few blocks to the bus station for more information, then a mile or so down towards the waterfront. Crowds of people with children were coming back from the lake. There’s a small bay in front of downtown Toronto, with recreation grounds and a tiny airstrip. Glenelg sat on the grass beside the big tall condominiums. Before this he went to a cafe, and had a cup of tea and a donut. Some quaint person in a fifties dress was sitting at the table in front of him with a handbag. Probably a left over from Gay Day, but he did not realize this yet. He said nothing, not wanting to be disturbed while he inserted a few more pages into his “*diary*”.

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...*About 10 hours later.* A café in downtown Toronto. He hasn't made the switch of language yet, but the people here speak English. It's warm, 29°C, whereas it was quite cool in Paris. Downtown Toronto is quiet on a Sunday night. You take the bus from the airport, just one private bus service does the rounds of the main hotels. Airport express busses. Odd balls wandering around. Bus station. Youth hostel.

On the plane he saw a fantastic movie sending up (ex compatriot) Rupert McDermott, with John Close in the role of a zoo manager threatened with a twenty percent return on capital. He has to turn the zoo into Wonderland. McDermott is called McCain. On the plane, Glenelg met a Sabra, sat next to her. They talked about politics in the Middle East.

Seen from the café, a thin graceful black girl with rucksack and roller blades goes skating by on the other footpath, across the street. They all look like individuals, quirks in a strange land. But the place itself is not unfamiliar. It's the people who attract his attention; people look very uninhibited, regardless of their age or attire. Not *fashion conscious* in the least. When he landed it was 5 p.m. local time. Must be 9 p.m. by now. Very little car traffic.

Monday 30th June, 8.10 a.m.

This place is called Ryerden Polytechnic University. The hostel is on the fourth and fifth floors, used for student accommodation during university terms, with apartment-like places, kitchen and sitting room for each dormitory of three.

The bus ticket to Detroit costs 55\$ Canadian, to Chicago costs 140\$. But there's an unlimited travel ticket at \$199 to be investigated. Worth a try.

Time goes by very slowly for some strange unknown reason. A walk around Chinatown and hamburger at Tina's cafe. Toronto in a day. Three unripe nectarines from a Chinese food store. Then a sundae near the dome, an enormous goon-like place.

It was Gay Day here yesterday, maybe that explains the off beat characters walking around. But he got here after it ended, read about it all in the paper, the Toronto Sun. Tomorrow, he moves on, first to Detroit, and then... Where to? He hasn't seen any train station here, but he's sitting on a bridge located just over the rails (and turned into a park). His sunglasses are broken. Too bad. It's very warm. The next move is to Detroit. Few people here and very peaceful, as though they were all on holiday. Skydome, probably he won't venture in.

On the question of this famous novel. *What happens next?* This is the burning question for most novels. His sight is not what it was. This comes from working too much on a computer; behind the cathode ray screen for 8 hours a day.

The Canadian number one highway stretches across some 8000 kilometers. That's an enormous distance to cover. And that explains why the place is so hard to fill up; it's huge. Bigger than either the US or Australia.

One of the things to be considered in the novel is the role of the narrator. Who is he this time, and what is he going on about?

These big long cars in front of a luxury hotel don't shock him here, they don't seem out of place. The sculptured goons on the wall of the skydome are all comic characters: a girl is pointing at something, a bloke beside her is staring through binoculars, lower down a bloke with beret is poking out his tongue, a girl is clapping, a man is munching a hot dog, another has his thumb pointed downwards. They're spectators at the skydome, in the front row, doing all the things spectators do when watching the ball game. Not for him.

... *So it's like this... We start off for a trip to A-murcky, via Canada.* The weather is superb; people are sailing or rowing in the bay, a small enclosure just in front of the downtown city area, with ferries crossing. Beyond it is the real lake, the main inland waterway. He doesn't see any bars or pubs. It almost looks like a dry city. Tourists and holiday makers, but

no-one seems to be working. These ferries go cruising past, plowing the water from one side to the other, and waving a Canadian maple leaf flag. In the bay of Toronto, just like in the bay of Toulon, the rich people are having fun in boats. While others, homeless, are begging in the street.

—Any spare change, sir? say the two young fat guys sitting in front of a fence beside the footpath.

Glenelg doesn't stop. Being a tourist, he's on guard. But they are friendly, just the same.

—Any dollar bills, then ?

Toronto is on holiday. It's summer. There is a large Chinese community here, you can see that from Chinatown which is bustling with activity, while the rest of downtown Toronto is calm and quiet, deadly quiet. The University campus is empty; it's summer. Roller blades are in fashion; a lot of young people go around using them. The town is flat, like a *limande* fish. No hills, no panoramic viewpoints except for the tower which has 130 stories, and claims to be the highest in the world.

A paddle steamer crosses the bay, impressive.

Glenelg visited the Ontario provincial parliament this morning, very quickly. There is not much trace of history here in Toronto, but in fact there should be some, though they have demolished it for the most part. A mistake, you must respect the spirit of a town. As someone once said (Fred Millpond): *a country with no past has no future*. It's a phony idea, easy to utter. Who are we to say who has a future or not? The future is for those who have children, not for the others !

The rich show off on their boats in the bay. What a bore! To try to look as though you are having fun on a boat with an engine. Glenelg watches the passers by as they pass him by, on a slow summer's walk near the water's edge. Impossible to feel what is underlying all this; a profound boredom, perhaps? The least that can be said is that elegance is not the strongpoint of the people here.

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...*Framework. We are searching for the lost generation.* The lost generation is the children of the sixties, the children we didn't have. How many of them were there? Where are they now? O's children, the children she didn't want. And the others? Who are they?... That's what it's all about.

In fiction, you are allowed to make people come alive; that's the basic principle of it... The gulls, enormous, near the water, sing *hoorab*. At the edge of the quay, they are looking out for something in the water.

New York is not far away. On the other side, to the south west, lies Chicago. One day more here is possible. But Glenelg is itching to be on the move. First day, hardly ashore, twenty four hours just on.

Canadians are the happiest people in the world, the advertisement says, on a hoarding in front of him on the quay. After all, this is not impossible. For himself, Glenelg sees a city which seems to be imitating; it lacks originality, inventiveness, and spice. It doesn't bite yet!

The Power House exhibition is closed today, a pity. There is certainly a history here, as rich as in Sydney or Melbourne, or even Montreal. But they haven't done what they should have done to preserve it, to put it in the limelight.

Exhibition on photography in the Toronto parliament, where Glenelg learns a lot... about the French parliament!

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With nothing but a small touring map it was easy to get around Toronto. Toronto is flat with a lake on one side, so you can't miss it; from there you can get your bearings. Two Dutch footballers were sharing his dormitory. They were staying at Ann Arbor near Detroit, teaching the locals how to play football. But they had come up to Toronto for a few days to have a good time. They went out quietly at about 10 p.m. and came back noisily at 4 a.m., turning on the lights.

Glenelg had no apparent jet lag, so he got up normally on the Monday morning to set about his business, to go to the bank and the bus station. Then he went down to see the waterfront again. This was where he met Margarete G. First

he went through Chinatown, bought a film; stopped in a cafe for a hamburger and then walked down towards the Skydome. At 3 p.m. he tried the coins in a public phone to ring Paris. You needed nine dollars in coins, he didn't have enough. He stopped for an ice-cream sundae, to get out of the heat.

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Interlude in which he meets Margarete G, Austrian, on holidays for two months in Toronto. Age, about forty five. She came to sit on his bench, so she started. She sat down with a smile and a comment that he didn't catch, so from then on it was downhill, plain sailing. But like Cinderella, she had to be back home at midnight, or well before. The hosts, her friends, had gone off on an excursion to see the Niagara Falls for the day.

Margarete lives with her boyfriend in a small village outside Vienna. She works in a factory making sports clothing. Has no children, is not married. That's about all; they had iced coffee beside the water, he was undercharged. Miss G came to fill in his solitude on a late Monday afternoon in Toronto. Miss G is free as the breeze, but very shy. She told him the sights to see, the museum out to the east, for example. Spending one day in Toronto is like spending one day in Melbourne. You can't see very much in one day, just the downtown part. But that's all he needs to see for now. Maybe he'll be back later.

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It was around 29°C. Glenelg hadn't spent more than one hour at the waterfront before Margarete Gruber came to sit on his bench. He had explored back and forth, strolling along the jagged strand near the water, among the shops and restaurants. He figured she had seen him already, because he had seen her pass by at least once while sitting somewhere else, on a bench in front of terraced cafes.

Polite conversation starts with: *Where are you from?*

Margarete was on holiday for a month, staying with friends, she said. She often came to Toronto to stay with these friends. Today they had gone to the Niagara Falls with some other visitors, so she was having the day alone. They lived out east, along the coast a few miles. She told Glenelg the things he should visit in Toronto, the museums, etc. He knew that he wouldn't see much of this. His plan was to head south west tomorrow, direction Detroit, but he didn't know if he would be able to go there without a visa. She spoke English with slight difficulty. They looked at the map of Canada, thereby getting closer on the bench. Then he suggested having iced coffee at a place on the corner, near the wharf. This was what he had planned to do himself. They went in, waited for a while at the counter before being served. The waiters seemed to be serving on the other side of the queue. Then finally he only paid for one iced coffee. The kid serving them forgot to count the other one, served five minutes earlier. Glenelg said nothing, took it as a stroke of luck. Money would be scarce on this trip. He had broken his piggy bank, but there wasn't much for a four week trip. But on the first day you don't worry about this very much. He tried to take Margarete's hand while they were walking back along the strand beside the bay. No go. Was she married, he asked, straight out.

—*No.*

Living alone ?

—*No.*

Living with a man ?

—*Yes.*

Children ?

—*No.*

So by then he knew everything. She lived near Vienna in a small town, worked in a factory making toys or sporting clothes. This year she had taken two months off, for the

holiday to Toronto. He didn't ask her age, but you could guess she was over forty and under fifty. So about 48, shall we say. Born around 1949. Blonde, thin, attractive. Pretty shy also, it seemed. Did nothing on her own usually. Glenelg suggested going somewhere next day, to see the festival. To Chicago, or to Montreal after that. She laughed it off, pretending not to hear. They walked back towards the metro. He wanted to show her the spot he had felt to be the heart of Toronto: the square intersection, where the five skyscrapers meet, on the corner of Yonge and something streets. Then they saw the festivities for the liberation of Hong Kong. The Chinese community were out by the hundreds on the esplanade, with red balloons and loud speakers. They stayed a few minutes, then Margarete wanted to catch the subway before her friends got back from Niagara Falls. Exchange of addresses and quick kiss on the cheek. That's it, she went down to the subway at... wherever it was.

—The tower is the highest in the world.

The Russians had built a tower and then Toronto built this one to beat them. The highest in the world.

—Have you been up ?

—*Yes.*

For himself, Glenelg had taken one quick look at the queue at the bottom, at the elevator cost, and then moved on. He would stay on the ground.

After leaving Margarete Gruber, he went to have something to eat at one of the fast food chains, not MacDo, some other crowd. Two dark-haired girls sitting beside him, Brazilian-looking, chatted away non stop all the while. From there, he went on to the hostel, just for half an hour, and then went up to what you might call *Uptown*, the swank residential part of Toronto with smart shops. That was enough for one day.

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Next day was Canada day. The New Zealander at the hostel, not staying in the same dormitory, said he thought you needed a visa for the US. Glenelg tried to phone the US embassy, but they weren't answering, the phone was off the hook. He found the place in University avenue, went around to the back as indicated for visas, saw the queuing area, and imagined the hassle. The hassle of getting a visa would be too much and too expensive; so if a visa was needed, he would let it drop. There was a big high fence. From there he went up to the Parliament house to sit on the grass, then way north along Yonge street, for about three miles. Stopped in a park twice for long spells. Then went back down to the water to sit on the grass. Began to feel the jet lag for the first time. It's all written down in detail in the diary.

CHAPTER TWO

1st July, Tuesday

Time to work out his schedule from here: Detroit, Chicago and back, or else a round trip somewhere else. He's spending an extra day here, to avoid precipitating things. Some people shooting a film in the street, with a hired yellow taxi cab from Illinois, gave him the feeling to go that way.

The upshot of this morning's investigation is that it seems you need a visa for the US, even for short visits, which means it's out! Would have to be planned from Paris, straight off. So that's just too bad. A phone call to check, but a view of the queuing area is enough to get an idea of the hassle. So Glenelg will phone and see, but otherwise he will go on the Quebec/Ontario \$199-bus ticket (which amounts to about \$240 including tax) and get 14 days of kilometers done — could even make a round trip to Niagara first, for \$30, or \$50 with the boat ride thrown in. Say 14 days from the second of July, with an extension of two extra days possible at \$20 each, so as to finish in Quebec city or Montreal, around the 17th.

It's Canada day, around 2.30 p.m.. He had a hot dog for lunch, walked around uptown, the smart arty part of Toronto, then bought half a pint of milk. Thinking about the lesson that Margarete G had been trying to tell him, about sharing your experiences. She's right, it's better to share, but not so easy. He could go to watch the Niagara Falls, maybe that's what he'll do tomorrow, then catch the night bus down to Windsor, opposite Detroit on the Canadian side. Start his 14-day hike from tomorrow, and ride the buses non stop through Ontario and Quebec. Better than nothing. Leave the US till later.

If, just on the off chance, Glenelg could do the New York trip then he would go there straight away, via Niagara, and