

Annotated by Zuckerman, Patty, Mary & George.

The Third Twin

KEN FOLLETT

2nd draft

1 April 96

135,000 words approx.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, organizations and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, organizations or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

(Copy editor: This disclaimer has been drafted by a lawyer. Do not edit.)

Sunday

I

A heatwave lay over Baltimore like a shroud. (The leafy suburbs were cooled by a hundred thousand lawn sprinklers, but the affluent inhabitants stayed inside with the air-conditioning on full blast.) On North Avenue, listless hookers hugged the shade and sweated under their hairpieces, and the kids on the street corners dealt dope out of the pockets of baggy shorts. It was late September, but fall seemed a long way off.

A rusty white Datsun, the broken lens of one headlight fixed in place with an X of electrician's tape, cruised through a white working-class neighbourhood north of downtown. The car had no air-conditioning, and the driver had rolled down all the windows. He was a handsome man of twenty-two wearing cutoff jeans, a clean white T-shirt and a red baseball cap with the word SECURITY in white letters on the front. The plastic upholstery beneath his thighs was slippery with his perspiration, but he did not let it bother him. He was in a cheerful mood. The car radio was tuned to 92Q—"Twenty jams in a row!" On the passenger seat was an open binder. He glanced at it occasionally, memorising a typed page of technical terms for a test tomorrow. Learning was easy for him, and he would know the material after a few minutes of study.

At a stop light, a blonde woman in a convertible Porsche pulled alongside him.

I

A heatwave lay over Baltimore like a shroud. The leafy suburbs were cooled by a hundred thousand lawn sprinklers, but the affluent inhabitants stayed inside with the air-conditioning on full blast. On North Avenue, listless hookers hugged the shade and sweated under their hairpieces, and the kids on the street corners dealt dope out of the pockets of baggy shorts. It was late September, but fall seemed a long way off.

A rusty white Datsun, the broken lens of one headlight fixed in place with an X of electrician's tape, cruised through a white working-class neighbourhood north of downtown. The car had no air-conditioning, and the driver had rolled down all the windows. He was a handsome man of twenty-two wearing cutoff jeans, a clean white T-shirt and a red baseball cap with the word SECURITY in white letters on the front. The plastic upholstery beneath his thighs was slippery with his perspiration, but he did not let it bother him. He was in a cheerful mood. The car radio was tuned to 92Q—"Twenty jams in a row!" On the passenger seat was an open binder. He glanced at it occasionally, memorising a typed page of technical terms for a test tomorrow. Learning was easy for him, and he would know the material after a few minutes of study.

At a stop light, a blonde woman in a convertible Porsche pulled alongside him.

He grinned at her and said: "Nice car!" She looked away without speaking, but he thought he saw the hint of a smile at the corners of her mouth. ^{Her face half hidden} Behind her big sunglasses she was probably twice his age: most women in Porsches were. "Race you to the next stop light," he said. She laughed at that, a nice flirtatious musical laugh, then she put the stick shift into first with a narrow, elegant hand and tore away from the light like a rocket.

He shrugged. He was only practising.

He drove by the wooded campus of Jones Falls University, an Ivy League college much swankier than the one he attended. As he passed the imposing gateway, a group of eight or ten women jogged by in running clothes: tight shorts, Nikes, sweaty T-shirts and halter tops. They were a ^{track} hockey team in training, he guessed, and the fit-looking one in front was their captain, getting them in shape for the season.

They turned into the campus, and suddenly he was overwhelmed, swamped by a fantasy so powerful and thrilling that he could hardly see to drive. He imagined them in the locker room—the plump one soaping herself in the shower, the redhead towelling her long copper-coloured hair, the black girl stepping into a pair of white lace panties, the dikey team captain walking around naked, showing off her muscles—when something happened to terrify them. Suddenly they were all in a panic, wide-eyed with dread, screaming and crying, on the edge of hysteria. They ran this way and that, crashing into one another. The fat girl fell over and lay there

He grinned at her and said: "Nice car!" She looked away without speaking, but he thought he saw the hint of a smile at the corners of her mouth. Behind her big sunglasses she was probably twice his age: most women in Porsches were. "Race you to the next stop light," he said. She laughed at that, a nice flirtatious musical laugh, then she put the stick shift into first with a narrow, elegant hand and tore away from the light like a rocket.

He shrugged. He was only practising.

He drove by the wooded campus of Jones Falls University, an Ivy League college much swankier than the one he attended. As he passed the imposing gateway, a group of eight or ten women jogged by in running clothes: tight shorts, Nikes, sweaty T-shirts and halter tops. ~~They were~~ ^A hockey team in training, he guessed, and the fit-looking one in front was their captain, getting them in shape for the season.

They turned into the campus, and suddenly he was overwhelmed, swamped ^{his mind was seized} by a ~~fantasy~~ ^{vision} so powerful and thrilling that he could hardly see to drive. He ~~imagined~~ them in the locker room—the plump one soaping herself in the shower, the redhead towelling her long copper-coloured hair, the black girl stepping into a pair of white lace panties, the dikey team captain walking around naked, showing off her muscles—when something happened to terrify them. Suddenly they were all in a panic, wide-eyed with dread, screaming and crying, on the edge of hysteria. They ran this way and that, crashing into one another. The fat girl fell over and lay there

weeping helplessly while the others trod on her, unheeding, as they tried desperately to hide, or find the door, or run away from whatever was scaring them.

He pulled over to the side of the road and put the car in neutral. He was breathing hard and he could feel his heartbeat hammering. This was the best one he had ever had. But a little piece of the fantasy was missing. What were they frightened of? He hunted about in his fertile imagination for the answer, and gasped with desire when it came to him: a fire. The place was ablaze, and they were terrified by the flames. They coughed and choked on the smoke as they milled about, half naked and frenzied. "My God," he whispered, staring straight ahead, seeing the scene like a movie projected on to the inside of the Datsun's windscreen.

After a while he calmed down. His desire was still strong, but the fantasy was no longer enough: it was like the thought of a beer when he had a raging thirst. He lifted the hem of his T-shirt and wiped the sweat from his face. He knew he should try to forget the fantasy, and drive on; but it was too wonderful. He struggled to resist temptation, though only for a second. "I want it," he murmured, and he turned the car around and drove through the grand gateway into the campus.

He had been here before. The university spread across a hundred acres of lawns and gardens and woodland. The buildings were mostly made of a uniform red brick, with a few modern concrete-and-glass structures, all connected by a tangle of narrow roads lined with parking meters.

weeping helplessly while the others trod on her, unheeding, as they tried desperately to hide, or find the door, or run away from whatever was scaring them.

He pulled over to the side of the road and put the car in neutral. He was breathing hard and he could feel his heartbeat hammering. This was the best one he had ever had. But a little piece of the ^{MOVIE} ~~fantasy~~ was missing. What were they frightened of? He hunted about in his ~~feeling~~ imagination for the answer, and gasped with desire when it came to him: a fire. The place was ablaze, and they were terrified by the flames. They coughed and choked on the smoke as they milled about, half naked and frenzied. "My God," he whispered, staring straight ahead, seeing the scene like a movie projected on to the inside of the Datsun's windscreen.

After a while he calmed down. His desire was still strong, but the fantasy was no longer enough: it was like the thought of a beer when he had a raging thirst. He lifted the hem of his T-shirt and wiped the sweat from his face. He knew he should try to forget the ^{suppress the fantasy} ~~fantasy~~, and drive on; but it was too wonderful. He struggled to resist temptation, though only for a second. "I ~~want~~ it," he murmured, and he turned the car around and drove through the grand gateway into the campus.

He had been here before. The university spread across a hundred acres of lawns and gardens and woodland. The buildings were mostly made of a uniform red brick, with a few modern concrete-and-glass structures, all connected by a tangle of narrow roads lined with parking meters.

Suppression to memory

The hockey team had disappeared, but he found the gymnasium easily: it was a low building next to a running track, and there was a big statue of a discus thrower outside. He parked at a meter but did not put a coin in: he never put money in parking meters. The muscular captain of the hockey team was standing on the steps of the gym, talking to a guy in a ripped sweatshirt. He ran up the steps, smiling at the captain as he passed her, and pushed through the door into the building.

The lobby was busy with young men and women in shorts and headbands coming and going, rackets in their hands and sports bags slung over their shoulders. No doubt most of the college teams trained on Sundays. There was a security guard behind a desk in the middle of the lobby, checking people's student cards; but at that moment a big group of runners came in together and walked past the guard, some waving their cards and others forgetting, and the guard just shrugged his shoulders and went on reading *The Dead Zone*.

The stranger turned and looked at a display of silver cups in a glass case, trophies won by Jones Falls athletes. A moment later a soccer team came in, ten men and a chunky woman in studded boots, and he moved quickly to fall in with them. He crossed the lobby as part of their group and followed them down a broad staircase to the basement. They were talking about their game, laughing at a lucky goal and indignant about an outrageous foul, and they did not notice him.

His gait was casual but his eyes were watchful. At the foot of the stairs was a

small lobby with a Coke machine and a pay phone under an acoustic hood. The men's locker room was off the lobby. The woman from the soccer team went down a long corridor, heading presumably for the women's locker room, which had probably been added as an afterthought by an architect who imagined there would never be many girls at Jones Falls, back in the days when "coeducational" was a sexy word.

The stranger picked up the pay phone and pretended to search for a quarter. The men filed into their locker room. He watched the woman open a door and disappear. ~~She~~ ^{She} entered the women's locker room. They were all in there, he thought excitedly, undressing and showering and rubbing themselves with towels. All he had to do to complete the fantasy was to scare them. He made himself calm. He was not going to spoil it by haste. It needed a few minutes' planning.

When they had all disappeared he padded along the corridor after the woman.

Three doors led off it, one on either side and one at the end. The door on the right was the one the woman had taken. He checked the end door and found that it led to a big, dusty room full of bulky machinery: boilers and filters, he guessed, for the swimming pool. He stepped inside and closed the door behind him. There was a low, even electrical hum. He pictured a girl delirious with fright, dressed only in her underwear—~~He~~ ^{He} found a bra and panties with a pattern of flowers—lying on the floor staring up at him with terrified eyes as he unbuckled his belt. He savoured the vision for a moment, smiling to himself. L

He had done this kind of thing before, ^{but} ~~though~~ never on such a scale. He had ^{needed} always loved to frighten girls, ever since he could remember. In high school there was nothing he liked better than to get a girl on her own, in a corner somewhere, and threaten her until she cried and begged for mercy. That was why he kept having to move from one school to another. He dated girls sometimes, just to be like the other guys, and have someone to walk into the bar on his arm. If they seemed to expect it he would bone them, ^{that} but ~~it~~ always seemed kind of pointless.

Everyone had a kink, he figured: some men liked to put on women's clothing, others had to have a girl dressed in leather walk all over them with spike heels. One guy he knew thought the sexiest part of a woman was her feet: he got a hard-on standing in the women's footwear section of a department store, watching them put on shoes and take them off again.

His kink was fear. What turned him on was a woman trembling with fright. Without fear, there was no excitement.

Looking around methodically, he took note of a ladder fixed to the wall, leading up to an iron hatch bolted on the inside. He went quickly up the ladder, slid back the bolts, and pushed up the hatch. He found himself staring at the tires of a Chrysler New Yorker in a car park. Orienting himself, he figured he was at the back of the building. He closed the hatch and climbed down.

He left the pool machine room. As he walked along the corridor, a woman

coming the other way glanced curiously at him. Her eyes lifted to his cap and took in the word SECURITY, and she looked away and turned into the locker room.

He grinned. He had bought the cap for \$8.99 in a souvenir store. But people were used to guards in jeans at rock concerts, detectives who looked like criminals until they flashed their badges, airport police in sweaters; it was too much trouble to question the credentials of every asshole who called himself a security guard.

He tried the door opposite the women's locker room. It opened into a small storeroom. He hit the light switch and closed the door behind him.

Obsolete gym equipment was stacked around him on racks: big black medicine balls, worn rubber mats, indian clubs, mouldy boxing gloves, and splintered wooden folding chairs. There was a vaulting horse with burst upholstery and a broken leg. The room smelled musty. A large silver pipe ran along the ceiling, and he guessed it provided ventilation to the locker room across the corridor.

He reached up and tried the bolts that attached the pipe to what looked like a fan. He could not turn them with his fingers, but he had a wrench in the trunk of the Datsun. If he could detach the pipe, the fan would draw air from the storeroom instead of from the outside of the building.

He would make his fire just below the fan. He would get a can of gasoline and pour some into an empty Perrier bottle and bring it down here along with some matches and a newspaper for kindling and that wrench.

The fire would grow quickly and produce huge billows of smoke. He would tie a wet rag over his nose and mouth and wait until the storeroom was full of it. Then he would detach the ventilator pipe. The fumes would be drawn into the duct and pumped out into the women's locker room. At first no one would notice. Then one or two would sniff the air and say: "Is someone smoking?" He would open the storeroom door and let the corridor fill with smoke. When the girls realised something was seriously wrong, they would open the locker room door and think the whole building was on fire, and they would all panic.

Then he would walk into the locker room. There would be a sea of brassieres and stockings, bare breasts and asses and pubic hair. Some would be running out of the showers, naked and wet, fumbling for towels; others would be trying to pull on clothes; most would be running around searching for the door, half blinded by smoke. There would be screams and sobs and shouts of fear. He would continue to pretend to be a security guard, and yell orders at them: "Don't stop to dress! This is an emergency! Get out! The whole building is blazing! Run, run!" He would smack their bare asses, shove them around, snatch their clothes away, and feel them up. They would know something was badly wrong ~~about the situation~~ but most of them would be too crazy to figure it out. If the muscular hockey captain was still there she might have the presence of mind to challenge him, but he would just punch her out.

Walking around, he would select his main victim. She would be a pretty girl

The fire would grow quickly and produce huge billows of smoke. He would tie a wet rag over his nose and mouth and wait until the storeroom was full of it. Then he would detach the ventilator pipe. The fumes would be drawn into the duct and pumped out into the women's locker room. At first no one would notice. Then one or two would sniff the air and say: "Is someone smoking?" He would open the storeroom door and let the corridor fill with smoke. When the girls realised something was seriously wrong, they would open the locker room door and think the whole building was on fire, and they would all panic.

Then he would walk into the locker room. There would be a sea of brassieres and stockings, bare breasts and asses and pubic hair. Some would be running out of the showers, naked and wet, fumbling for towels; others would be trying to pull on clothes; most would be running around searching for the door, half blinded by smoke. There would be screams and sobs and shouts of fear. He would continue to ^{act like} pretend to be a security guard, and yell orders at them: "Don't stop to dress! This is an emergency! Get out! The whole building is blazing! Run, run!" He would smack their bare asses, shove them around, snatch their clothes away, and feel them up. They would know something was badly wrong about the situation but most of them would be too crazy to figure it out. If the muscular hockey captain was still there she might have the presence of mind to challenge him, but he would just punch her out.

Walking around, he would select his main victim. She would be a pretty girl

with a vulnerable look. He would take her arm, saying: "This way, please, I'm with security." He would lead her into the corridor then turn the wrong way, to the pool machine room. There, just when she thought she was on the way to safety, he would smack her face and punch her in the gut and throw her on the dirty concrete floor. He would watch her roll and turn and sit upright, gasping and sobbing and looking at him with terror in her eyes.

Then he would smile and unbuckle his belt.

Good, on the whole, but he seems
 so calm and cool. There is some
 look, danger, the fire could spread,
 people could get hurt or killed.
 Better, I think, if he's a bit
 anxious, tense, short of breath,
 determined to push ahead, but
 also worried.

2

Mrs Ferrami said: "I want to go home."

Looking around the room, her daughter Jeannie could see why. The Bella Vista Sunset Home was all Mom's health insurance would pay for, and it was ~~cheap~~^{tawdry}. The room contained two high hospital beds, two closets, a couch and a TV. The walls were painted mushroom brown and the flooring was a plastic tile, cream streaked with orange. The window had bars, but no curtains, and it looked out on to a gas station. There was a washbasin in the corner and a toilet down the hall.

"I want to go home," Mom repeated.

Jeannie's younger sister, Patty, said: "But Mom, you keep forgetting things, you can't take care of yourself any more."

Mom had Alzheimer's, though she was not yet sixty. Jeannie and Patty had hoped she could take care of herself for a few more years, but that hope had been shattered this morning at five a.m., when a Washington cop had called to say he had found Mom walking along 18th Street in a grubby nightdress, crying and saying she could not remember where she lived.

Jeannie had got in her car and driven to Washington, an hour from Baltimore on a quiet Sunday morning. She picked Mom up from the precinct house, took her

home, got her washed and dressed then called Patty. Together the two sisters made arrangements for Mom to check into Bella Vista. It was in the town of Columbia, between Washington and Baltimore. Their Aunt Rosa had spent her declining years here. Aunt Rosa had had the same insurance policy as Mom.

"I don't like this place," Mom said.

Jeannie said: "It's all we can afford." She intended to sound matter-of-fact and reasonable, but it came out harsh.

Patty shot her a reproving look and said: "Come on, Mom, we've lived in worse places."

It was true. After their father went to jail the second time, the two girls and Mom had lived in one room with a hotplate on the dresser and a water tap in the corridor. Those were the welfare years. But Mom had been a lioness in adversity. As soon as both Jeannie and Patty were in school she found a trustworthy older woman to mind the girls when they came home, she got a job—she had been a hairdresser, and she was still good, if old-fashioned—and she moved them to a small apartment with two bedrooms in Adams-Morgan, which was then a respectable working-class neighbourhood.

She would fix french toast for breakfast and send Jeannie and Patty to school in clean dresses, then do her hair and make up her face—you had to look smart, working in a salon—and always leave a spotless kitchen with a plate of cookies on the

We don't yet know what any of these people look like. How old are Jeannie and Patty? ✓

table for the girls when they came back. On Sundays the three of them cleaned the apartment and did the laundry together. Mom had always been so capable, so reliable, so tireless, it was hard to believe she was the same person as the forgetful, complaining woman on the bed.

Now she frowned, as if puzzled, and said: "Jeannie, why have you got a ring in your nose?"

Jeannie touched the delicate silver band and gave a wan smile. "Mom, I had my nostril pierced when I was a kid. Don't you remember how mad you got about it? I thought you were going to throw me out on the street."

"I forget things," Mom said.

"I sure remember," said Patty. "I thought it was the greatest thing ever. But I was eleven and you were fourteen, and to me everything you did was bold and stylish and clever."

grinned

"Maybe it was," Jeannie said with mock vanity.

Patty giggled. "The orange jacket sure wasn't."

"Oh, God, that jacket. Mom finally burned it after I slept in it in an abandoned building and got fleas."

"I remember that," Mom said suddenly. "Fleas! A child of mine!" She was still indignant about it, fifteen years later.

"I'd better go," Jeannie said, standing up.

"Me too," said Patty. "I have to make dinner."

Mom said: "When will I see you?"

Jeannie hesitated, knowing she had a busy week at work. Patty rescued her, saying: "I'll come tomorrow, and bring the kids to see you, you'll like that."

Mom was not going to let Jeannie get off that easily. "Will you come too, Jeannie?"

"As soon as I can." She leaned over the bed and kissed her mother. "I love you, Mom. Try to remember that."

When they got outside, Patty burst into tears. Jeannie felt like crying too, but she was the older sister, and she had long ago gotten into the habit of being the strong one. She put an arm around Patty's shoulders as they walked along the antiseptic corridor. Patty was passive, accepting, fatalistic, where Jeannie was stubbornly self-willed. Jeannie was like Mom, but ironically Mom always criticised her and said she should be more like Patty.

"I wish I could have her at home with me, but I can't," Patty said woefully.

Jeannie agreed. Patty was married to a carpenter called Zip. They lived in a small row house with two bedrooms. The second bedroom was shared by her three boys. Davey was six, Mel four and Tom two. There was nowhere to put a grandma.

Jeannie was twenty-nine and single. As an assistant professor at Jones Falls University she earned thirty thousand dollars a year—a lot less than Patty's husband,

Jeannie is the P.D.V. character. I imagine she would be flooded with emotion at abandonment by her mother in such an institution. Outwardly she may be the strong one but inwardly she should

she guessed—and she had just taken out her first mortgage and bought a two-room apartment and furnished it on credit. One room was a living room with a kitchen nook, the other a bedroom with a closet and a tiny bathroom. If she gave Mom her bed she would have to sleep on the couch every night; and there was no one at home during the day to keep an eye on a woman with Alzheimer's.

But Jeannie could not bear the thought of leaving Mom in Bella Vista. As they stepped outside into the torrid heat, she said: "Tomorrow I'll go to the bank and get a loan. We'll put her in a better place and I'll top up the insurance money."

"But how will you ever pay it back?" said Patty practically.

"I'll get promoted to associate professor, then full professor, and I'll be commissioned to write a textbook and get hired as a consultant by three international conglomerates."

Patty smiled through her tears. "I believe you, but will the bank?"

Patty had always believed in Jeannie. Patty herself had never been ambitious. She had been below average at school, and had married at nineteen and settled down to raise children without any apparent regrets. Jeannie was the opposite. Top of the class and captain of all sports teams, she had been a tennis champion and had put herself through college on sports scholarships. ^{to pay the next} ~~Whatever~~ she said she was going to do, Patty never doubted her.

But Patty was right, the bank would not make another loan so soon after

she guessed—and she had just taken out her first mortgage and bought a two-room apartment and furnished it on credit. One room was a living room with a kitchen nook, the other a bedroom with a closet and a tiny bathroom. If she gave Mom her bed she would have to sleep on the couch every night; and there was no one at home during the day to keep an eye on a woman with Alzheimer's.

~~But Jeannie could not bear the thought of leaving Mom in Bella Vista.~~ As they stepped outside into the torrid heat, she said: "Tomorrow I'll go to the bank and get a loan. We'll put her in a better place and I'll top up the insurance money."

"But how will you ever pay it back?" said Patty practically.

"I'll get promoted to associate professor, then full professor, and I'll be commissioned to write a textbook and get hired as a consultant by three international conglomerates."

Patty smiled through her tears. "I believe you, but will the bank?"

Patty had always believed in Jeannie. Patty herself had never been ambitious. She had been below average at school, and had married at nineteen and settled down to raise children without any apparent regrets. Jeannie was the opposite. Top of the class and captain of all sports teams, she had been a tennis champion and had put herself through college on sports scholarships. Whatever she said she was going to do, Patty never doubted her.

But Patty was right, the bank would not make another loan so soon after

financing the purchase of her apartment. And she had only just started as assistant professor: it would be three years before she was considered for promotion. As they reached the ~~car park~~^{apartment} Jeannie said: "Okay, I'll sell my car."

It was a twenty-year-old Mercedes 230C, a red two-door sedan with black leather seats. She had bought it eight years ago, with her prize money for winning the Mayfair Lites Tennis Challenge, five thousand dollars. That was before it became chic to own an old Mercedes. "It's probably worth double what I paid for it now," she said.

"But you'd have to buy another car," Patty said, still being remorselessly realistic.

"You're right." Jeannie sighed. "Well, I can do some private tutoring. It's against JFU's rules, but I can probably get forty dollars an hour teaching remedial statistics one-on-one at the weekend with rich students who have flunked the exam at other universities. I could pick up three hundred dollars a week, maybe; tax-free if I don't declare it." She looked her sister in the eye. "Can you spare anything?"

Patty looked away. "I don't know."

"Zip makes more than I do."

"He'll kill me for saying this, but we might be able to chip in seventy-five or eighty a week," Patty said at last. "I'll get him to put in for a raise. He's kind of timid about asking, but I know he deserves it, and his boss likes him."

Jeannie began to feel more cheerful, although the prospect of spending her

financing the purchase of her apartment. And she had only just started as assistant professor: it would be three years before she was considered for promotion. As they reached the car park Jeannie said: "Okay, I'll sell my car."

It was a twenty-year-old Mercedes 230C, a red two-door sedan with black leather seats. She had bought it eight years ago, with her prize money for winning the Mayfair Lites Tennis Challenge, five thousand dollars. That ^{had been} was before it became chic to own an old Mercedes. "It's probably worth double what I paid for it now," she said.

"But you'd have to buy another car," Patty said, still ~~being~~ remorselessly realistic.

"You're right." Jeannie sighed. "Well, I can do some private tutoring. It's against JFU's rules, but I can probably get forty dollars an hour teaching remedial statistics one-on-one at the weekend with rich students who have flunked the exam at other universities. I could pick up three hundred dollars a week, maybe; tax-free if I don't declare it." She looked her sister in the eye. "Can you spare anything?"

Patty looked away. "I don't know."

"Zip makes more than I do."

"He'll kill me for saying this, but we might be able to chip in seventy-five or eighty a week," Patty said at last. "I'll get him to put in for a raise. He's kind of timid about asking, but I know he deserves it, and his boss likes him."

Jeannie began to feel more cheerful, although the prospect of spending her

financing the purchase of her apartment. And she had only just started as assistant professor: it would be three years before she was considered for promotion. As they reached the car park Jeannie said: "Okay, I'll sell my car."

It was a twenty-year-old Mercedes 230C, a red two-door sedan with black leather seats. She had bought it eight years ago, with her prize money for winning the Mayfair Lites Tennis Challenge, five thousand dollars. That was before it became chic to own an old Mercedes. "It's probably worth double what I paid for it now," she said.

"But you'd have to buy another car," Patty said, still being remorselessly realistic.

"You're right." Jeannie sighed. "Well, I can do some private tutoring. It's against JFU's rules, but I can probably get forty dollars an hour teaching remedial statistics one-on-one at the weekend with rich students who have flunked the exam at other universities. I could pick up three hundred dollars a week, maybe; tax-free if I don't declare it." She looked her sister in the eye. "Can you spare anything?"

Patty looked away. "I don't know."

"Zip makes more than I do."

"He'll kill me for saying this, but we might be able to chip in seventy-five or eighty a week," Patty said at last. "I'll get him to put in for a raise. He's kind of timid about asking, but I know he deserves it, and his boss likes him."

Jeannie began to feel more cheerful, although the prospect of spending her

Sundays teaching backward undergraduates was dismal. "For an extra four hundred a week we ~~might be able to~~ get Mom a room to herself with her own bathroom."

"Then she could have more of her things about her, ornaments and maybe some furniture from the apartment."

"Let's ask around, see if anyone knows of a nice place."

"Okay." Patty was thoughtful. "Mom's illness is inherited, isn't it? I saw something on TV."

Jeannie nodded. "There's a gene defect, AD3, that's linked to early-onset Alzheimer's." It was located at chromosome 14q24.3, Jeannie recalled, but that would not mean anything to Patty.

"Does that mean you and I will finish up like Mom?"

"It means there's a good chance we will."

They were both silent for a moment. The thought of losing your mind was almost too grim to talk about.

"I'm glad I had my children young," Patty said. "They'll be old enough to look after themselves by the time it happens to me."

Jeannie noted the hint of reproof. Like Mom, Patty thought there was something wrong with being twenty-nine and childless. Jeannie said: "The fact that they've found the gene is also hopeful. It means that by the time we're Mom's age, they may be able to inject us with an altered version of our own DNA that doesn't

Sundays teaching backward undergraduates was dismal. "For an extra four hundred a week we might be able to get Mom a room to herself with her own bathroom."

"Then she could have more of her things about her, ornaments and maybe some furniture from the apartment."

"Let's ask around, see if anyone knows of a nice place."

"Okay." Patty was thoughtful. "Mom's illness is inherited, isn't it? I saw something on TV."

Jeannie nodded. "There's a gene defect, AD3, that's linked to early-onset Alzheimer's." It was located at chromosome 14q24.3, Jeannie recalled, but that would not mean anything to Patty.

"Does that mean you and I will finish up like Mom?"

"It means there's a good chance we will."

They were both silent for a moment. The thought of losing your mind was almost too grim to talk about.

"I'm glad I had my children young," Patty said. "They'll be old enough to look after themselves by the time it happens to me."

Jeannie noted the hint of reproof. Like Mom, Patty thought there was something wrong with being twenty-nine and childless. Jeannie said: "The fact that they've found the gene is also hopeful. It means that by the time we're Mom's age, they ^{should} ~~may~~ be able to inject us with an altered version of our own DNA that doesn't

have the fatal gene."

"They mentioned that on TV. Recombinant DNA technology, right?"

Jeannie grinned at her sister. "Right."

"See, I'm not so dumb."

No body thinks you are
"I ~~never thought you were~~ dumb."

"The thing is, our DNA makes us what we are, so if you change my DNA, does that make me a different person?"

"It's not just your DNA that makes you what you are. It's your upbringing too. That's what my work is all about."

"How's the new job going?"

"It's exciting. This is my big chance, Patty. A lot of people read the article I wrote about criminality, and whether it's in our genes." The article, published last year while she was still at the University of Minnesota, had borne the name of her supervising professor, ~~as well as~~ ^{above above} her own, but she had done the work.

"I could never figure out whether you said criminality is inherited or not."

"I identified four inherited traits that *lead to* criminal behaviour: impulsiveness, fearlessness, aggression and hyperactivity. But my big theory is that certain ways of raising children counteract those traits and turn potential criminals into good citizens."

"How could you ever prove a thing like that?"

"By studying identical twins raised apart. Identical twins have the same DNA. And when they're adopted at birth, or split up for some other reason, they get raised differently. So I look for pairs of twins where one is a criminal and the other is normal. Then I study how they were raised and what their parents did differently."

"Your work is really important," Patty said.

"I think so."

"We *have* to find out why so many Americans nowadays turn bad."

Jeannie nodded. That was it, in a nutshell.

Patty turned to her own car, a big old Ford station wagon, the back full of brightly colored kiddie junk: a tricycle, a folded-down stroller, an assortment of rackets and balls, and a big toy truck with a broken wheel.

Jeannie said: "Give the boys a big kiss from me, okay?"

"Thanks. I'll call you tomorrow after I see Mom."

Jeannie got her keys out, hesitated, then went over to Patty and hugged her.

"I love you, Sis," she said.

"Love you, too."

Jeannie got in her car and drove away.

She felt jangled and restless, full of unresolved feelings about Mom and Patty and ^{her} the father who was not there. She got on I-70 and drove too fast, weaving in and out of the traffic. She wondered what to do with the rest of the day, then

"By studying identical twins raised apart. Identical twins have the same DNA. And when they're adopted at birth, or split up for some other reason, they get raised differently. So I look for pairs of twins where one is a criminal and the other is normal. Then I study how they were raised and what their parents did differently."

"Your work ^{sounds} ~~is~~ really important," Patty said.

"I think so."

"We *have* to find out why so many Americans nowadays turn bad."

Jeannie nodded. That was it, in a nutshell.

Patty turned to her own car, a big old Ford station wagon, the back full of brightly colored kiddie junk: a tricycle, a folded-down stroller, an assortment of rackets and balls, and a big toy truck with a broken wheel.

Jeannie said: "Give the boys a big kiss from me, okay?"

"Thanks. I'll call you tomorrow after I see Mom."

Jeannie got her keys out, hesitated, then went over to Patty and hugged her.

"I love you, Sis," she said.

"Love you, too."

Jeannie got in her car and drove away.

She felt jangled and restless, full of unresolved feelings about Mom and Patty and the father who was not there. She got on I-70 and drove too fast, weaving in and out of the traffic. She wondered what to do with the rest of the day, then

remembered that she had a whole social program: she was supposed to play tennis at six then go for beer and pizza with a group of graduate students and young faculty from the psychology department at Jones Falls. Her first thought was to cancel the entire evening. But she did not want to sit at home brooding. She would play tennis, she decided: the vigorous exercise would make her feel better. Afterwards she would go to Andy's Bar for an hour or so, then have an early night.

But it did not work out that way.

*

Her tennis opponent was Jack Budgen, the university's head librarian. He had played at Wimbledon once, and though he was now bald and fifty, he was still fit, and all the old craft was there. Jeannie had never been to Wimbledon. The height of her career had been a place on the US Olympic tennis team while she was an undergraduate. But she was stronger and faster than Jack.

They played on one of the tennis courts on the Jones Falls campus. They were evenly matched, and the game attracted a small crowd of spectators. There was no dress code, but out of habit Jeannie always played in crisp white shorts and a white polo shirt. She had long dark hair, not silky and straight like Patty's but curly and unmanageable, so she tucked it up inside a peaked cap.

Jeannie's serve was dynamite and her backhand smash was a killer. There was not much Jack could do about the serve, but after the first few games he made sure

remembered that she had a whole social program: she was supposed to play tennis at six then go for beer and pizza with a group of graduate students and young faculty from the psychology department at Jones Falls. Her first thought was to cancel the entire evening. But she did not want to sit at home brooding. She would play tennis, she decided: the vigorous exercise would make her feel better. Afterwards she would go to Andy's Bar for an hour or so, then have an early night.

But it did not work out that way.

*

Her tennis opponent was Jack Budgen, the university's head librarian. He had ^{once} played at Wimbledon ~~once~~, and though he was now bald and fifty ^{something}, he was still fit, and all the old craft was there. Jeannie had never been to Wimbledon. The height of her career had been a place on the US Olympic tennis team while she was an undergraduate. But she was stronger and faster than Jack.

They played on one of the tennis courts on the Jones Falls campus. They were evenly matched, and the game attracted a small crowd of spectators. There was no dress code, but out of habit Jeannie always played in crisp white shorts and a white polo shirt. She had long dark hair, not silky and straight like Patty's but curly and unmanageable, so she tucked it up inside a peaked cap.

Jeannie's serve was dynamite and her backhand smash was a killer. There was not much Jack could do about the serve, but after the first few games he made sure

Suggest you cut the exposition about her work. It seems to stop the action, and you can weave it in more profitably later. x

remembered that she had a whole social program: she was supposed to play tennis at six then go for beer and pizza with a group of graduate students and young faculty from the psychology department at Jones Falls. Her first thought was to cancel the entire evening. But she did not want to sit at home brooding. She would play tennis, she decided: the vigorous exercise would make her feel better. Afterwards she would go to Andy's Bar for an hour or so, then have an early night.

This scene needs the narrative drive of your first. But it did not work out that way. Maybe Patty is content with the facility. Mom, after all, soon won't know the difference. But I'm determined to do better for her. She couldn't bear to visit her mother in a place like this. By the way, you should visit one - see how it smells.

Her tennis opponent was Jack Budgen, the university's head librarian. He had played at Wimbledon once, and though he was now bald and fifty, he was still fit, and all the old craft was there. Jeannie had never been to Wimbledon. The height of her career had been a place on the US Olympic tennis team (while she was an undergraduate. But she was stronger and faster than Jack.

what kind, red clay, green hard-wood? ✓

They played on one of the tennis courts on the Jones Falls campus. They were evenly matched, and the game attracted a small crowd of spectators. There was no dress code, but out of habit Jeannie always played in crisp white shorts and a white polo shirt. She had long dark hair, not silky and straight like Patty's but curly and unmanageable, so she tucked it up inside a peaked cap.

Jeannie's serve was dynamite and her backhand smash was a killer. There was not much Jack could do about the serve, but after the first few games he made sure

she did not get many chances to use the backhand smash. He played a sly game, conserving his energy, letting Jeannie make mistakes. She played too aggressively, serving double faults and running to the net too early. On a normal day, she reckoned, she could beat him easily; but today her concentration was shot, and she could not ^{overcome} ~~second-guess~~ his game. They won a set each, then the third went to 5-4 in his favour and she found herself serving to stay in the match.

The game went to two deuces, then Jack won a point and the advantage was to him. Jeannie served into the net, and there was an audible gasp from the little crowd. Instead of a normal, slower second service, she threw caution to the winds and served again as if it was a first service. Jack just got his racket to the ball and returned it to her backhand. She smashed it and ran to the net. But Jack was not as off-balance as he had pretended to be, and he returned a perfect lob that sailed over her head and landed on the back line to win the match.

Jeannie stood looking at the ball, hands on her hips, momentarily suffused with anger. Although she had not played professionally for years, she still retained the unyielding competitiveness that made it hard to lose. She deliberately calmed her feelings and put a smile on her face. Then she turned around. "Beautiful shot!" she called. She walked to the net and shook his hand, and there was a ragged round of applause from the spectators.

A young man approached her. "Hey, that was a great game!" he said with a

she did not get many chances to use the backhand smash. He played a sly game, conserving his energy, letting Jeannie make mistakes. She played too aggressively, serving double faults and running to the net too early. On a normal day, she reckoned, she could beat him ~~easy~~; but today her concentration was shot, and she could not second-guess his game. They won a set each, then the third went to 5-4 in his favour and she found herself serving to stay in the match.

The game went to two deuces, then Jack won a point and the advantage was to him. Jeannie served into the net, and there was an audible gasp from the little crowd. Instead of a normal, slower second service, she threw caution to the winds and served again as if it was a first service. Jack just got his racket to the ball and returned it to her backhand. She smashed it and ran to the net. But Jack was not as off-balance as he had pretended to be, and he returned a perfect lob that sailed over her head and landed on the back line to win the match.

Jeannie stood looking at the ball, hands on her hips, momentarily suffused with anger. Although she had not played professionally for years, she still retained the unyielding competitiveness that made it hard to lose. She deliberately calmed her feelings and put a smile on her face. Then she turned around. "Beautiful shot!" she called. She walked to the net and shook his hand, and there was a ragged round of applause from the spectators.

A young man approached her. "Hey, that was a great game!" he said with a

she did not get many chances to use the backhand smash. He played a sly game, conserving his energy, letting Jeannie make mistakes. She played too aggressively, serving double faults and running to the net too early. On a normal day, she reckoned, she could beat him easily; but today her concentration was shot, and she could not second-guess his game. They won a set each, then the third went to 5-4 in his favour and she found herself serving to stay in the match.

The game went to two deuces, then Jack won a point and the advantage was to him. Jeannie served into the net, and there was an audible gasp from the little crowd. Instead of a normal, slower second service, she threw caution to the winds and served again as if it was a first service. Jack just got his racket to the ball and returned it to her backhand. She smashed it and ran to the net. But Jack was not as off-balance as he had pretended to be, and he returned a perfect lob that sailed over her head and landed on the back line to win the match.

Jeannie stood looking at the ball, hands on her hips, momentarily suffused with anger. Although she had not played professionally for years, she still retained the unyielding competitiveness that made it hard to lose. She deliberately calmed her feelings and put a smile on her face. Then she turned around. "Beautiful shot!" she called. She walked to the net and shook his hand, and there was a ragged round of applause from the spectators.

A young man approached her. "Hey, that was a great game!" he said with a

Note: Jeannie's anger is directed at a stupid move

she did not get many chances to use the backhand smash. He played a sly game, conserving his energy, letting Jeannie make mistakes. She played too aggressively, serving double faults and running to the net too early. On a normal day, she reckoned, she could beat him easily; but today her concentration was shot, and she could not second-guess his game. They won a set each, then the third went to 5-4 in his favour and she found herself serving to stay in the match.

The game went to two deuces, then Jack won a point and the advantage was to him. Jeannie served into the net, and there was an audible gasp from the little crowd. Instead of a normal, slower second service, she threw caution to the winds and served again as if it was a first service. Jack just got his racket to the ball and returned it to her backhand. She smashed it and ran to the net. But Jack was not as off-balance as he had pretended to be, and he returned a perfect lob that sailed over her head and landed on the back line to win the match.

Jeannie stood looking at the ball, hands on her hips, momentarily ^{frustrated with} suffused with ^{herself} anger. Although she had not played professionally for years, she still retained the unyielding competitiveness that made it hard to lose. She (deliberately) calmed her feelings and put a smile on her face. Then she turned around. "Beautiful shot!" she called. She walked to the net and shook his hand, and there was a ragged round of applause from the spectators.

A young man approached her. "Hey, that was a great game!" he said with a

broad smile.

Jeannie took him in at a glance. He was a hunk: tall and athletic, with curly brown hair cut short, and nice blue eyes, and he was coming on to her for all he was worth.

She was not in the mood. "Thanks," she said curtly.

He smiled again, a confident, relaxed smile that said most girls were happy when he talked to them, regardless of whether he was making any sense. "You know, I play a little tennis myself, and I was thinking—"

"If you only play *a little* tennis, you're probably not in my league," she said, and she brushed past him.

Behind her, she heard him say in a good-humoured tone: "Should I assume that a romantic dinner followed by a night of passion is out of the question, then?"

She could not help smiling, if only at his persistence, ~~and~~ she had probably been ruder than necessary. She turned her head and spoke over her shoulder without stopping. "Yes, but thanks for the offer," she said.

She left the court and headed for the locker room. She wondered what Mom was doing now. She must have had dinner by this time: it was seven thirty, and they always fed people early in institutions. She was probably watching TV in the lounge. Maybe she would find a friend, a woman of her own age who would tolerate her forgetfulness and take an interest in her photographs of her grandchildren. Mom had

broad smile.

Jeannie took him in at a glance. He was a hunk: tall and athletic, with curly brown hair cut short, and nice blue eyes, and he was coming on to her for all he was worth.

She was not in the mood. "Thanks," she said curtly.

He smiled again, a confident, relaxed smile that said most girls were happy when he talked to them, regardless of whether he was making any sense. "You know, I play a little tennis myself, and I was thinking—"

"If you only play *a little* tennis, you're probably not in my league," she said, and she brushed past him.

Behind her, she heard him say in a good-humoured tone: "Should I assume that a romantic dinner followed by a night of passion is out of the question, then?"

She could not help smiling, if only at his persistence, and she had ~~probably~~^{knew she knew that she} been ruder than necessary. She turned her head and spoke over her shoulder without stopping. "Yes, but thanks for the offer," she said.

She left the court and headed for the locker room. She wondered what Mom was doing now. She must have had dinner by this time: it was seven thirty, and they always fed people early in institutions. She was probably watching TV in the lounge. Maybe she would find a friend, a woman of her own age who would tolerate her forgetfulness and take an interest in her photographs of her grandchildren. Mom had

broad smile.

Jeannie took him in at a glance. He was a hunk: tall and athletic, with curly brown hair cut short, and nice blue eyes, and he was coming on to her for all he was worth.

She was not in the mood. "Thanks," she said curtly.

He smiled again, a confident, relaxed smile that said most girls were happy when he talked to them, regardless of whether he was making any sense. "You know, I play a little tennis myself, and I was thinking—"

"If you only play *a little* tennis, you're probably not in my league," she said, and she brushed past him.

Behind her, she heard him say in a good-humoured tone: "Should I assume that a romantic dinner followed by a night of passion is out of the question, then?"

She could not help smiling, if only at his persistence, and she had probably been ruder than necessary. She turned her head and spoke over her shoulder without stopping. "Yes, but thanks for the offer," she said.

She left the court and headed for the locker room. She wondered what Mom was doing now. She must have had dinner by this time: it was seven thirty, and they always fed people early in institutions. She was probably watching TV in the lounge. Maybe she would find a friend, a woman of her own age who would tolerate her forgetfulness and take an interest in her photographs of her grandchildren. Mom had

Except that probably half the inhabitants are as confident as Mom.

once had a lot of friends—the other women at the salon, some of her customers, neighbours, people she had known for twenty-five years—but it was hard for them to keep up the friendship when Mom kept forgetting who the hell they were.

As she was passing the hockey pitch she ran into Lisa Hoxton. Lisa was the first real friend she had made since arriving at Jones Falls a month ago. She was a technician in the psychology laboratory. She had a science degree but did not want to be an academic. Like Jeannie, she came from a poor background, and was a little intimidated by the Ivy League *hauteur* of Jones Falls. They had taken to one another instantly.

"A *kid* just tried to pick me up," Jeannie said with a smile.

"What was he like?"

"He looked like Brad Pitt, but taller."

"Did you tell him you had a friend more his age?" Lisa said. She was twenty-four.

"No." Jeannie glanced over her shoulder, but the man was nowhere in sight.

"Keep walking, in case he follows me."

"How could that be bad?"

"Come on."

"Jeannie, it's the creepy ones you run away from."

"Knock it off!"

"You might have given him my phone number."

"I should have handed him a slip of paper with your bra size on it, that would have done the trick." Lisa had a big bust.

2 Lisa stopped walking and (looked shocked.) For a moment Jeannie thought she had (gone too far, and) offended ^{her} Lisa. She began to frame an apology. Then Lisa said: "What a great idea! *I'm a 36D, for more information call this number.* It's so subtle, too."

"I'm just envious, I always wanted hooters," Jeannie said, and they both giggled. "It's true, though, I prayed for tits. I was practically the last girl in my class to get my period, it was so embarrassing."

"You actually said: 'Dear God, please make my tits grow,' kneeling beside your bed?"

"Actually I prayed to the Virgin Mary, I figured it was a girl thing. And I didn't say tits, of course."

"What did you say, breasts?"

"No, I figured you couldn't say breasts to the Holy Mother."

"So what did you call them?"

"Bristols."

Lisa burst out laughing.

"I don't know where I got that word from, I must have overheard some men talking. It seemed like a polite euphemism to me. I never told anyone that before in

"You might have given him my phone number."

"I should have handed him a slip of paper with your bra size on it, that would have done the trick." ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Lisa stopped walking and looked shocked. For a moment Jeannie thought she had gone too far, and offended Lisa. She began to frame an apology. Then Lisa said: "What a great idea! *I'm a 36D, for more information call this number.* It's so subtle, too."

"I'm just envious, I always wanted hooters," Jeannie said, and they both giggled. "It's true, though, I prayed for tits. I was practically the last girl in my class to get my period, it was so embarrassing."

"You actually said: 'Dear God, please make my tits grow,' kneeling beside your bed?"

"Actually I prayed to the Virgin Mary, I figured it was a girl thing. And I didn't say tits, of course."

"What did you say, breasts?"

"No, I figured you couldn't say breasts to the Holy Mother."

"So what did you call them?"

"Bristols."

Lisa burst out laughing.

"I don't know where I got that word from, I must have overheard some men talking. It seemed like a polite euphemism to me. I never told anyone that before in

my life."

Lisa looked back. "Well, I don't see any good-looking guys following us. I guess we shook off Brad Pitt."

"It's a good thing. He's just my type: handsome, sexy, overconfident and totally untrustworthy."

"How do you know he's untrustworthy? You only met him for twenty seconds."

"All men are untrustworthy."

"You're probably right. Are you coming to Andy's tonight?"

"Yeah, just for an hour or so. I have to shower first." Her shirt was wet through with perspiration.

"Me too." Lisa was in shorts and running shoes. "I've been training with the (hockey) team. Why only for an hour?"

"I've had a heavy day. I had to put my Mom into a home."

"Oh, Jeannie, I'm sorry."

Jeannie told her the story as they entered the gymnasium building and went down the stairs to the basement. In the locker room Jeannie caught sight of their reflection in the mirror. They were so different in appearance that they almost looked like a comedy act. Lisa was a little below average height, and Jeannie was almost six feet. Lisa was blonde and curvy, whereas Jeannie was dark and muscular. Lisa had a pretty face, with a scatter of freckles across a pert little nose, and a mouth like a bow.

my life."

Lisa looked back. "Well, I don't see any good-looking guys following us. I guess we shook off Brad Pitt."

"It's a good thing. He's just my type: handsome, sexy, overconfident and totally untrustworthy."

"How do you know he's untrustworthy? You only met him for twenty seconds."

"All men are untrustworthy."

"You're ~~probably~~ right. Are you coming to Andy's tonight?"

"Yeah, just for an hour or so. I have to shower first." Her shirt was wet through with perspiration.

"Me too." Lisa was in shorts and running shoes. "I've been training with the hockey team. Why only for an hour?"

"I've had a heavy day. I had to put my Mom into a home."

"Oh, Jeannie, I'm sorry."

Jeannie told her the story as they entered the gymnasium building and went down the stairs to the basement. In the locker room Jeannie caught sight of their reflection in the mirror. They were so different in appearance that they almost looked like a comedy act. Lisa was a little below average height, and Jeannie was almost six feet. Lisa was blonde and curvy, whereas Jeannie was dark and muscular. Lisa had a pretty face, with a scatter of freckles across a pert little nose, and a mouth like a bow.

Most people described Jeannie as striking-looking, and men sometimes told her she was beautiful, but nobody ever called her pretty.

As they climbed out of their sweaty sports clothes Lisa said: "What about your father? You didn't mention him."

Jeannie sighed. It was the question she had always dreaded, even as a little girl; but it invariably came, sooner or later. For many years she had lied about it, saying he was dead or disappeared or remarried and gone to work in Saudi Arabia. Lately, however, she had been telling the truth. "My father's in jail," she said.

"Oh, my God. I shouldn't have asked."

"It's okay. He's been in jail most of my life. He's a burglar. This is his third term."

"How long is his sentence?"

"I don't remember. It doesn't matter. He'll be no use when he comes out. He's never looked after us and he's not about to begin."

"Did he never have a regular job?"

"Only when he wanted to case a joint. He would work as janitor, doorman, security guard for a week or two before robbing the place."

Lisa looked at her shrewdly. "Is that why you're so interested in the genetics of criminality?"

Jeannie shrugged. "Maybe."

Most people described Jeannie as striking-~~looking~~, and men sometimes told her she was beautiful, but nobody ever called her pretty.

As they climbed out of their sweaty sports clothes Lisa said: "What about your father? You didn't mention him."

L Jeannie sighed. It ~~was~~ the question she had ^{learned to dread} ~~always~~ dreaded, even as a little girl; but it invariably came, sooner or later. For many years she had lied about it, saying he was dead or disappeared or remarried and gone to work in Saudi Arabia. Lately, however, she had been telling the truth. "My father's in jail," she said.

"Oh, my God. I shouldn't have asked."

"It's okay. He's been in jail most of my life. He's a burglar. This is his third term."

"How long is his sentence?"

"I don't remember. It doesn't matter. He'll be no use when he comes out. He's never looked after us and he's not about to begin."

"Did he never have a regular job?"

"Only when he wanted to case a joint. He would work as janitor, doorman, security guard for a week or two before robbing the place."

Lisa looked at her shrewdly. "Is that why you're so interested in the genetics of criminality?"

Jeannie ~~shrugged~~. "Maybe."

"Probably not." Lisa made a tossing-aside gesture. "I hate amateur psychoanalysis anyway.")

They went to the showers. Jeannie took longer, washing her hair. She was grateful for Lisa's friendship. Lisa had been at Jones Falls just over a year, and she had shown Jeannie around when she arrived here at the beginning of the semester. Jeannie liked working with Lisa in the lab because she was completely reliable; and she liked hanging out with her after work because she felt she could say whatever came into her mind without fear of shocking her.

Jeannie was working conditioner into her hair when she heard strange noises. She stopped and listened. It sounded like squeals of fright. A chill of anxiety passed through her, making her shiver. Suddenly she felt very vulnerable: naked, wet, underground. She hesitated, then quickly rinsed her hair before stepping out of the shower to see what was going on.

She smelled burning as soon as she got out from under the water. She could not see a fire, but there were thick clouds of black and grey smoke close to the ceiling. It seemed to be coming through the ventilators. There was a fire.

She felt afraid. She had never been in a fire.

The more coolheaded women were snatching up their bags and heading for the door, (she observed) Others were getting hysterical, shouting at one another in frightened voices and running here and there ^{in panic} pointlessly. Some asshole of a security

man, with a spotted handkerchief tied over his nose and mouth, was making them more scared by walking up and down shoving people and yelling orders.

Jeannie knew she should not stay to get dressed, but ~~she~~ she could not bring herself to walk out of the building naked. There was fear running through her veins like ice water, but she made herself calm. She found her locker. Lisa was nowhere to be seen. She grabbed her clothes, stepped into her jeans and pulled her T-shirt over her head.

It took only a few seconds, but in that time the room emptied of people and filled with fumes. She could no longer see the doorway and she started to cough. The thought of not being able to breathe scared her. I know where the door is, and I just have to keep calm, she told herself. Her keys and money were in her jeans pockets. She picked up her tennis racket. Holding her breath, she walked quickly through the lockers to the exit.

The corridor was thick with smoke, and her eyes began to water so that she was almost blind. Now she wished to heaven that she had gone naked and gained a few precious seconds. Her jeans did not help her see or breathe in this fog of fumes. And it did not matter being naked if you were dead.

She kept one shaky hand on the wall to give her a sense of direction as she rushed along the passage, still holding her breath. When there was no more wall, she knew she was in the small lobby, although she could not see anything but clouds of

smoke. The stairs had to be straight ahead. She crossed the lobby and crashed into the Coke machine. Was the staircase to the left now, or the right? The left, she thought. She moved that way, then came up against the door to the men's locker room and realised she had made the wrong choice.

She could not hold her breath any longer. With a groan she sucked in air. It was mostly smoke, and it made her cough convulsively. She staggered back along the wall, racked with coughing, her eyes streaming, barely able to see her own hands in front of her. With all her being she longed for one breath of the ^{cool} air she had been taking for granted for twenty-nine years. She followed the wall to the Coke machine and stepped around it. She knew she had found the staircase when she tripped over the bottom step. She dropped her racket and it slid out of sight. It was a special one—she had won the Mayfair Lites Challenge with it—but ~~she had won the Mayfair Lites Challenge with it~~ ~~she had won the Mayfair Lites Challenge with it~~ she left the racket behind and scrambled up the stairs on hands and knees.

The smoke thinned suddenly when she reached the spacious ground floor lobby. She could see the building doors, which were open. A security guard stood just outside, beckoning her and yelling: "Come on!" Coughing and choking, she staggered across the lobby and out into the blessed fresh air.

She stood on the steps for two or three minutes, bent double, gulping air and coughing the smoke out of her lungs. As her breathing at last began to return to

nothing burning

normal, she heard the whoop of an emergency vehicle in the distance. She looked around for Lisa but could not see her.

Surely she could not still be inside? Still feeling shaky, Jeannie moved through the crowd, scanning the faces. Now that they were out of danger, there was a good deal of nervous laughter. Most of the students were more or less undressed, so there was a curiously intimate atmosphere. Those who had managed to save their bags were lending spare clothes to others less fortunate. Naked women were grateful for their friends' soiled and sweaty T-shirts. Several people were dressed only in towels.

Lisa was not in the crowd. With mounting anxiety Jeannie returned to the security guard at the door. "I think my girlfriend may be in there," she said, hearing the tremor of fear in her own voice.

"I ain't going after her," he said quickly.

~~From the speaker~~

"~~Brave~~ man," Jeannie snapped. She was not sure what she wanted him to do but she had not expected him to be completely useless.

Resentment showed on his face. "That's their job," he said, and he pointed to a fire truck coming down the road.

Jeannie was beginning to fear for Lisa's life, but she did not know what to do. She watched, impatient and helpless, as the firemen got out of the truck and put on breathing apparatus. They seemed to move so slowly that she wanted to shake them and scream: "Hurry, hurry!" Another fire truck arrived, then a white police cruiser

normal, she heard the whoop of an emergency vehicle in the distance. She looked around for Lisa but could not see her.

Surely she could not still be inside? Still feeling shaky, Jeannie moved through the crowd, scanning the faces. Now that they were out of danger, there was a good deal of nervous laughter. Most of the students were more or less undressed, so there was a curiously intimate atmosphere. Those who had managed to save their bags were lending spare clothes to others less fortunate. Naked women were grateful for their friends' soiled and sweaty T-shirts. Several people were dressed only in towels.

Lisa was not in the crowd. With mounting anxiety Jeannie returned to the security guard at the door. "I think my girlfriend may be in there," she said, hearing the tremor of fear in her own voice.

"I ain't going after her," he said quickly.

"Brave man," Jeannie snapped. She was not sure what she wanted him to do but she had not expected him to be completely useless.

Resentment showed on his face. "That's their job," he said, and he pointed to a fire truck coming down the road.

75/ Jeannie was beginning to fear for Lisa's life, (but she did not know what to do). She watched, impatient and helpless, as the firemen got out of the truck and put on breathing apparatus. They seemed to move so slowly that she ^{longed} wanted to shake them and scream: "Hurry, hurry!" Another fire truck arrived, then a white police cruiser

with the blue-and-silver stripe of the Baltimore Police Department.

As the firemen dragged a hose into the building, an officer buttonholed the lobby guard and said: "Where do you think it started?"

"Women's locker room," the guard told him.

"And where is that, exactly?"

"Basement, at the back."

"How many exits are there from the basement?"

"Only one, the staircase up to the main lobby, right here."

A maintenance man standing nearby contradicted him. "There's a ladder in the pool machine room that leads up to an access hatch at the back of the building."

Jeannie caught the officer's attention and said: "I think my friend may be inside there still."

"Man or woman?"

"Woman of twenty-four, short, blonde."

"If she's there, we'll find her."

For a moment Jeannie felt reassured. Then she realised he ^{could} had not promised to find her alive.

The security man who had been in the locker room was nowhere to be seen.

Jeannie said to the fire officer: "There was another guard down there, I don't see him either anywhere. Tall guy."

The lobby guard said: "Ain't no other security personnel in the building."

"Well, he had a hat with SECURITY written on it, and he was telling people to evacuate the building."

"I don't care what he had on his hat—"

2.57 "Oh, for Pete's sake, stop arguing!" (Jeannie snapped.) "Maybe I imagined him, but if not his life could be in danger!"

Standing listening to them was a girl wearing a man's khaki pants rolled up at the cuffs. "I saw that guy, he's a real creep," she said. "He felt me up."

The fire officer said: "Keep calm, we'll find everyone. Thank you for your cooperation." He walked off.

2.57 Jeannie (glared at the lobby guard for a moment. She felt the fire officer had dismissed her as a hysterical woman because she had yelled at the guard. She) turned away ^{from the lobby guard} in disgust. What was she going to do now? The firemen ran inside in their helmets and boots. She was barefoot and wearing a T-shirt. If she tried to go in with them they would throw her out. She clenched her fists, distraught. Think, think! Where else could Lisa be?

The gymnasium was next door to the Ruth W. Acorn Psychology Building, named after the wife of a benefactor but known, even to faculty, as Nut House. Could Lisa have gone in there? The doors would be locked, on Sunday, but she probably had a key. She might have run inside to find a laboratory coat to cover

The lobby guard said: "Ain't no other security personnel in the building."

"Well, he had a hat with SECURITY written on it, and he was telling people to evacuate the building."

"I don't care what he had on his hat—"

"Oh, for Pete's sake, ~~stop yelling!~~" Jeannie snapped. "Maybe I imagined him, but if not his life could be in danger!"

Standing listening to them was a girl wearing a man's khaki pants rolled up at the cuffs. "I saw that guy, he's a real creep," she said. "He felt me up."

The fire officer said: "Keep calm, we'll find everyone. Thank you for your cooperation." He walked off.

Jeannie glared at the lobby guard for a moment. She felt the fire officer had dismissed her as a hysterical woman because she had yelled at the guard. She turned away in disgust. What was she going to do now? The firemen ran inside in their helmets and boots. She was barefoot and wearing a T-shirt. If she tried to go in with them they would throw her out. She clenched her fists, distraught. Think, think! Where else could Lisa be?

The gymnasium was next door to the Ruth W. Acorn Psychology Building, named after the wife of a benefactor but known, even to faculty, as Nut House. Could Lisa have gone in there? The doors would be locked, on Sunday, but she probably had a key. She might have run inside to find a laboratory coat to cover

herself, or just to sit at her desk and recover. Jeannie decided to check. Anything was better than standing here doing nothing.

She dashed across the lawn to the main entrance of Nut House and looked through the glass doors. There was no one in the lobby. She took from her pocket the plastic card that served as a key and swiped it through the card reader. The door opened. She ran up the stairs, calling: "Lisa! Are you there?" The laboratory was deserted. Lisa's chair was neatly tucked under her desk and her computer screen was a gray blank. Jeannie tried the women's rest room at the end of the corridor. Nothing. "Damn!" she said aloud. "Where the hell are you?"

Panting, she hurried back outside. She decided to make a tour of the gymnasium building in case Lisa was sitting on the ground somewhere catching her breath. She ran around the side of the building, passing through a yard full of giant garbage cans. At the back was a small ^{parking} ~~car park~~. She saw a figure jogging along the footpath, heading away. It was too tall to be Lisa and she was pretty sure it was a man. She thought it might be the missing security guard, but he disappeared around the corner of the Student Union before she could be sure.

She continued on around the building. At the far side was the running track, deserted now. Coming full circle, she arrived at the front of the gym.

The crowd was bigger, and there were more fire engines and police cars, but she still could not see Lisa. It seemed almost certain that she was still in the burning

herself, or just to sit at her desk and recover. Jeannie decided to check. Anything was better than standing here doing nothing.

She dashed across the lawn to the main entrance of Nut House and looked through the glass doors. There was no one in the lobby. (She took from her pocket) the plastic card that served as a key ^{she} and swiped ~~it~~ through the card reader. The door opened. She ran up the stairs, calling: "Lisa! Are you there?" The laboratory was deserted. Lisa's chair was neatly tucked under her desk and her computer screen was a gray blank. Jeannie tried the women's rest room at the end of the corridor. Nothing. "Damn!" she said aloud. "Where the hell are you?"

Panting, she hurried back outside, ^{was} She decided to make a tour of the gymnasium building in case Lisa was sitting on the ground somewhere catching her breath. She ran around the side of the building, passing through a yard full of giant garbage cans. At the back was a small car park. She saw a figure jogging along the footpath, heading away. It was too tall to be Lisa and she was pretty sure it was a man. She thought it might be the missing security guard, but he disappeared around the corner of the Student Union before she could be sure.

She continued on around the building. At the far side was the running track, deserted now. Coming full circle, she arrived at the front of the gym.

The crowd was bigger, and there were more fire engines and police cars, but she still could not see Lisa. It seemed almost certain that she was still in the burning

building. A sense of doom crept over Jeannie, and she fought it. *You can't just let this happen!* ~~she told herself.~~

She spotted the fire officer she had spoken to earlier. She grabbed his arm. "I'm almost certain Lisa Hoxton is in there," she said frantically. "I've looked everywhere for her."

He gave her a hard look and seemed to decide she was reliable. Without answering her, he put a two-way radio to his mouth and spoke into it. "Look out for a young white female believed to be inside the building, named Lisa, repeat Lisa."

"Thank you," Jeannie said.

He nodded curtly and strode away.

Jeannie was glad he had listened to her but still she could not rest. She remembered the maintenance man saying there was another entrance to the basement. She turned and ran around to the back again.

The hatch was set into the ground close to the building, partly hidden by a gray Chrysler New Yorker. The steel trapdoor was open, leaning against the building wall. Jeannie knelt by the square hole and leaned down to look inside.

A ladder led down to a dirty room lit by fluorescent tubes. She could see machinery and lots of pipes. There were wisps of smoke in the air, but not thick clouds: it must be closed off from the rest of the basement. Nevertheless the smell of the smoke reminded her of how she had coughed and choked as she searched blindly

building. A sense of doom crept over Jeannie, and she fought it. *You can't just let this happen!* she told herself.

She spotted the fire officer she had spoken to earlier. She grabbed his arm. "I'm almost certain Lisa Hoxton is in there," she said frantically. "I've looked everywhere for her."

He gave her a hard look and seemed to decide she was reliable. Without answering her, he put a two-way radio to his mouth and spoke into it. "Look out for a young white female believed to be inside the building, named Lisa, repeat Lisa."

"Thank you," Jeannie said.

He nodded curtly and strode away.

Jeannie was glad he had listened to her but still she could not rest. She remembered the maintenance man saying there was another entrance to the basement. She turned and ran around to the back again.

The hatch was set into the ground ^{next} close to the building, partly hidden by a gray Chrysler New Yorker. The steel trapdoor was open, leaning against the building wall. Jeannie knelt by the square hole and leaned down to look inside.

A ladder led down to a dirty room lit by fluorescent tubes. She could see machinery and lots of pipes. There were wisps of smoke in the air, but not thick clouds: it must be closed off from the rest of the basement. Nevertheless the smell of the smoke reminded her of how she had coughed and choked as she searched blindly

Jeannie choked at the thought.
 building. (A sense of doom crept over Jeannie, and she fought it) *You can't just let this happen!* she told herself.

She spotted the fire officer she had spoken to earlier. *and* She grabbed his arm. "I'm almost certain Lisa Hoxton is in there," she said frantically. "I've looked everywhere for her."

He gave her a hard look and seemed to decide she was reliable. Without answering her, he put a two-way radio to his mouth (and spoke into it) "Look out for a young white female believed to be inside the building, named Lisa, repeat Lisa."

"Thank you," Jeannie said.

He nodded curtly and strode away.

Jeannie
 Jeannie was glad he had listened to her but still she could not rest. She remembered the maintenance man saying there was another entrance to the basement. She turned and ran around to the back again.

The hatch was set into the ground close to the building, partly hidden by a gray Chrysler New Yorker. The steel trapdoor was open, leaning against the building wall. Jeannie knelt by the square hole and leaned down to look inside.

A ladder led down to a dirty room lit by fluorescent tubes. She could see machinery and lots of pipes. There were wisps of smoke in the air, but not thick clouds: it must be closed off from the rest of the basement. (Nevertheless the smell of the smoke reminded her of how she had coughed and choked as she searched blindly

repet. of later
in page

28/ for the staircase, and she felt her heart beat faster at the memory.)

"Is anybody there?" she called.

She thought she heard a sound but she could not be sure. She shouted louder.

"Hello?" There was no reply.

She hesitated. The sensible thing to do would be to return to the front of the building and grab a fireman, but that could take too long, especially if the fireman decided to question her. The alternative was to go down the ladder and take a look.

29/ The thought of reentering the building made her legs weak. Her chest still hurt from the violent spasms of coughing caused by the smoke. But Lisa might be down there. She could be hurt (and unable to move) or trapped by a fallen timber, or just passed out from the fumes. (She had to look

30/ She ^{Jeannie}steeled her nerve and put a foot on the ladder. Her knees felt weak and she almost fell. She hesitated. ^{but}After a moment she felt strong^{er} and ~~she~~ took a step down. Then a breath of smoke caught in her throat, making her cough, and she climbed out again.

When she had stopped coughing she tried again.

31/ She went down one rung, then two. (If the smoke makes me cough, I'll just come right out again, she told herself.) The third step was easier, and after that she went down quickly, jumping off the last rung on to the concrete floor.

She found herself in a big room full of pumps and filters, presumably for the

swimming pool. The smell of smoke was strong, but she could breathe normally.

She saw Lisa right away, and the sight made her gasp.

She was lying on her side, curled up in the foetal position, naked. There was a smear of what looked like blood on her thigh. She was not moving. Jeannie shouted: "Lisa!" She heard the shrill overtone of hysteria in her own voice, and took a breath to keep calm. She made her way across the room, through the tangle of pipework, and knelt beside her friend. "Lisa?"

Lisa opened her eyes.

"Thank God," Jeannie said. "I thought you were dead."

Slowly Lisa sat up. She would not look at Jeannie. Her lips were bruised. "He raped me," she said.

? 8 | Jeannie's relief at finding her alive was replaced by a sick feeling of horror (that gripped her heart) "My God. Here?"

Lisa nodded. "He said this was the way out."

? 9 | Jeannie closed her eyes. She felt Lisa's pain and humiliation, the sense of being invaded and violated and soiled. (For a moment she was weak and nauseated. Then) She tried to pull herself together. "Who was he?"

"A security guy."

"With a spotted scarf over his face?"

"He took it off." Lisa turned away. "He kept smiling."

It figured. The girl in khaki pants had said a security guard felt her up. The lobby guard was sure there were no other security people in the building. "He was no security guard," Jeannie said. She ^{she knew she} had seen him jogging away just a few minutes ago.

(A wave of rage swept over her at the thought that) he had done this dreadful thing right here, on the campus, in the gymnasium building, where they all felt safe to take off their clothes and shower. It made her hands shake, and she ^{Rage} wanted ^{longed} to chase after him and strangle him.

She heard loud noises: men shouting, heavy footsteps and the rush of water. The firemen were operating their hoses. "Listen, we're in danger here," she said urgently. "We have to get out of this building."

Lisa's voice was a dull monotone. "I don't have any clothes."

"Everyone's half naked out there." Jeannie looked around the room and saw Lisa's red lace brassiere and panties in a dusty heap beneath a tank. She picked them up. "Put your underwear on. It's dirty, but it's better than nothing."

Lisa remained sitting on the floor.

Jeannie fought down a feeling of panic. She could probably lift Lisa, but could she carry her up that ladder? She raised her voice. "Come on, get up!" Taking Lisa's hands she pulled her to her feet.

At last Lisa met her eyes. "Jeannie, it was horrible," she said.

Jeannie put her arms around Lisa's shoulders and hugged her hard. "I'm sorry,

Lisa, I'm so sorry," she said.

The smoke was becoming more dense, despite the heavy door. (Fear replaced pity in her heart.) "We have to get out of here—the place is burning down. For God's sake put these on!"

At last Lisa began to move. She pulled up her panties and fastened her bra. Jeannie took her hand and led her to the ladder on the wall, then made her go up first. As Jeannie followed, the door crashed open and a fireman entered in a cloud of smoke. Water swirled around his boots. He looked startled to see them. "We're all right, we're getting out this way," Jeannie yelled to him. Then she went up the ladder after Lisa.

A moment later they were outside in the fresh air. Jeannie felt weak with relief: she had got Lisa out of the fire. But now Lisa needed help. Jeannie put an arm around her shoulders and led her to the front of the building. There were fire trucks and police cruisers parked every which way across the road. Most of the women in the crowd had now found something with which to cover their nakedness, and Lisa was conspicuous in her red underwear. "Does anyone ^{still} have a spare pair of pants, (or) anything at all?" Jeannie begged as they made their way through the crowd. People had given away all their spare clothing.) ^{She} Jeannie would have given Lisa her own sweatshirt, but she had no bra on underneath.

Finally a tall black man took off his button-down and gave it to Lisa. "I'll want

Lisa, I'm so sorry," she said.

The smoke was becoming more dense, despite the heavy door. Fear replaced pity in ~~her~~ heart. "We have to get out of here—the place is burning down. For God's sake put these on!"

At last Lisa began to move. She pulled up her panties and fastened her bra. Jeannie took her hand and led her to the ladder on the wall, then made her go up first. As Jeannie followed, the door crashed open and a fireman entered in a cloud of smoke. Water swirled around his boots. He looked started to see them. "We're all right, we're getting out this way," Jeannie yelled to him. Then she went up the ladder after Lisa.

A moment later they were outside in the fresh air. Jeannie felt weak with relief: she had got Lisa out of the fire. But now Lisa needed help. Jeannie put an arm around her shoulders and led her to the front of the building. There were fire trucks and police cruisers parked every which way across the road. Most of the women in the crowd had now found something with which to cover their nakedness, and Lisa was conspicuous in her red underwear. "Does anyone have a spare pair of pants, or anything at all?" Jeannie begged as they made their way through the crowd. People had given away all their spare clothing. Jeannie would have given Lisa her own sweatshirt, but she had no bra on underneath.

Finally a tall black man took off his button-down and gave it to Lisa. "I'll want

it back, it's a Ralph Lauren," he said. "Mitchell Waterfield, math department."

"I'll remember," Jeannie said gratefully.

27 Lisa put the shirt on. (She was short, and) It reached to her knees.

Jeannie felt she was getting the nightmare under control. She steered Lisa to the emergency vehicles. Three cops stood leaning against a cruiser, doing nothing. Jeannie spoke to the oldest of the three, a fat white man with a grey moustache. "This woman's name is Lisa Hoxton. She's been raped."

?? (She expected them to be electrified by the news that) A major crime had been committed, but their reaction was surprisingly casual. They took a few seconds to digest the information, and Jeannie was getting ready to snap at them, when the one with the moustache levered himself off the hood of the car and said: "Where did this happen?"

"The basement of the burning building, in the pool machine room at the back."

One of the others, a young black man, said: "Those firemen will be hosing away the evidence right now, Sarge."

"You're right," the older man replied. "You better get down there, Lenny, and secure the crime scene." Lenny hurried away. The sergeant turned to Lisa. "Do you know the man who did this, Ms Hoxton?" he said.

Lisa shook her head.

Jeannie said: "He's a tall white man wearing a red baseball cap with the word

SECURITY on the front. I saw him in the women's locker room soon after the fire broke out, and I think I saw him running away just before I found Lisa."

The cop reached into the car and pulled out a radio microphone. He spoke into it for a while then hung it up again. "If he's dumb enough to keep the hat on we may catch him," he said. He spoke to the third cop. "McHenty, take the victim to hospital."

McHenty was a young white man with spectacles. He said to Lisa: "You want to sit in the front or the back?"

Lisa said nothing but looked apprehensive.

Jeannie helped her out. "Sit in the front, you don't want to look like a suspect."

A terrified look crossed Lisa's face and she spoke at last. "Aren't you coming with me?"

"I will if you like," Jeannie said reassuringly. "Or I could swing by my apartment and pick up some clothes for you, and meet you at the hospital."

Lisa looked at McHenty ^{apprehensively} worriedly.

Jeannie said: "You'll be all right now, Lisa."

McHenty held open the door of the cruiser and Lisa got in.

"Which hospital?" Jeannie asked him.

"Santa Teresa." He got in the car.

"I'll be there in a few minutes," Jeannie called through the glass as the car sped

away.

She jogged to the faculty ~~car~~^{lot} park, already regretting that she had not gone with Lisa. Her expression as she left had been frightened and miserable. Of course she needed clean clothes, but maybe she had a more urgent need for another woman to stay with her and hold her hand and reassure her. Probably the last thing she wanted was to be left alone with a macho man with a gun. (As she jumped into her car Jeannie felt she had screwed up. "Jesus, what a lousy day," she said as she tore out of the parking lot.)

She lived not far from the campus. Her apartment was the upper storey of a small row house. As in many old Baltimore streets, there was a row stoop, a communal front porch that ran the length of the row, where neighbours had sat to cool themselves in the days before air-conditioning. Jeannie double-parked and ran inside.

She washed her hands and face hurriedly then threw on some clean clothes. She thought for a moment about which of her clothes Lisa could wear. Lisa was shorter than Jeannie but more rounded. She pulled out an oversize polo shirt and a pair of sweat pants with an elastic waistband. Underwear was more difficult. She found a baggy pair of man's boxer shorts that might do, but none of her bras would fit. Lisa would have to go without. She added deck shoes, stuffed everything into a duffel, and ran out again.

away.

She jogged to the faculty car park, already regretting that she had not gone with Lisa. Her expression as she left had been frightened and miserable. Of course she needed clean clothes, but maybe she had a more urgent need for another woman to stay with her and hold her hand and reassure her. Probably the last thing she wanted was to be left alone with a macho man with a gun. As she jumped into her car Jeannie felt she had screwed up. "Jesus, what a lousy day," she said as she tore out of the parking lot. ¶44

She lived not far from the campus. Her apartment was the upper storey of a small row house. As in many old Baltimore streets, there was a row stoop, a communal front porch that ran the length of the row, where neighbours had sat to cool themselves in the days before air-conditioning. Jeannie double-parked and ran inside.

She washed her hands and face hurriedly then threw on some clean clothes. She thought for a moment about which of her clothes Lisa could wear. Lisa was shorter than Jeannie but more rounded. She pulled out an oversize polo shirt and a pair of sweat pants with an elastic waistband. Underwear was more difficult. She found a baggy pair of man's boxer shorts that might do, but none of her bras would fit. Lisa would have to go without. She added deck shoes, stuffed everything into a duffel, and ran out again.

away.

She jogged to the faculty car park, already regretting that she had not gone with Lisa. Her expression as she left had been frightened and miserable. Of course she needed clean clothes, but maybe she had a more urgent need for another woman to stay with her and hold her hand and reassure her. Probably the last thing she wanted was to be left alone with a macho man with a gun. (As she jumped into her car Jeannie felt she had screwed up. "Jesus, what a lousy day," she said as she tore out of the parking lot.)

She lived not far from the campus. Her apartment was the upper storey of a small row house. (As in many old Baltimore streets, there was a row stoop, a communal front porch that ran the length of the row, where neighbours had sat to cool themselves in the days before air-conditioning.) Jeannie double-parked and ran inside.

She washed her hands and face hurriedly then threw on some clean clothes. She thought for a moment about which of her clothes Lisa could wear. (Lisa was shorter than Jeannie but more rounded.) She pulled out an oversize polo shirt and a pair of sweat pants with an elastic waistband. Underwear was more difficult. She found a baggy pair of man's boxer shorts that might do, but none of her bras would fit. Lisa would have to go without. She added deck shoes, stuffed everything into a duffel, and ran out again.

As she drove to the hospital her mood changed. Since the fire broke out she had been focused on what she had to do: now she began to feel enraged. Lisa was a happy, garrulous woman, but the shock and horror of what had happened had turned her into a zombie, frightened to get into a police car on her own.

Driving along a shopping street, Jeannie started to look for the guy in the red cap, imagining that if she saw him she would swing the car up on the sidewalk and run him down. But in fact she would not recognise him. He had taken off the bandana, and probably the hat too. What else had he been wearing? It shocked her to realise she could hardly remember. Some kind of T-shirt, she thought, with blue jeans or maybe shorts. Anyway he might have changed his clothes by now, as she had.

In fact it could be any tall white man on the street: that pizza delivery boy in the red coat; the bald guy walking to church with his wife, hymn books under ^{his} ~~their~~ arms; the handsome bearded man carrying a guitar case; even the cop talking to a bum outside the liquor store. There was nothing Jeannie could do with her rage and she gripped the steering wheel tighter until her knuckles turned white.

Santa Teresa was a big suburban hospital near the northern city limits. Jeannie parked ~~in the car park~~ and found the emergency room. Lisa was already in bed, wearing a hospital gown and looking miserable. A TV set with the sound off was showing the Emmy awards ceremony: hundreds of Hollywood celebrities in evening dress drinking champagne and congratulating one another. McHenty sat beside the

As she drove to the hospital her mood changed. Since the fire broke out she had been focused on what she had to do: now she began to feel enraged. Lisa was a happy, garrulous woman, but the shock and horror of what had happened had turned her into a zombie, frightened to get into a police car on her own.

Driving along a shopping street, Jeannie started to look for the guy in the red cap, imagining that if she saw him she would swing the car up on the sidewalk and run him down. But in fact she would not recognise him. He had taken off the bandana, and probably the hat too. What else had he been wearing? It shocked her to realise she could hardly remember. Some kind of T-shirt, she thought, with blue jeans or maybe shorts. Anyway he might have changed his clothes by now, as she had.

In fact it could be any tall white man on the street: that pizza delivery boy in the red coat; the bald guy walking to church with his wife, hymn books under their arms; the handsome bearded man carrying a guitar case; even the cop talking to a bum outside the liquor store. There was nothing Jeannie could do with her rage and she gripped the steering wheel tighter until her knuckles turned white.

Santa Teresa was a big suburban hospital near the northern city limits. Jeannie parked in the car park and found the emergency room. Lisa was already in bed, wearing a hospital gown and ^{staring into space} ~~looking miserable~~. A TV set with the sound off was p43 showing the Emmy awards ceremony: hundreds of Hollywood celebrities in evening dress drinking champagne and congratulating one another. McHenty sat beside the

↳ staring into space

As she drove to the hospital her mood changed. Since the fire broke out she had been focused on what she had to do: now she began to feel enraged. Lisa was a happy, garrulous woman, but the shock and horror of what had happened had turned her into a zombie, frightened to get into a police car on her own.

Driving along a shopping street, Jeannie started to look for the guy in the red cap, imagining that if she saw him she would swing the car up on the sidewalk and run him down. But in fact she ^{knew she} would not recognise him. He ^{would have} taken off the bandana, and probably the hat too. What else had he been wearing? It shocked her to realise she could hardly remember. Some kind of T-shirt, she thought, with blue jeans or maybe shorts. Anyway he might have changed his clothes by now, as she had.

In fact it could be any tall white man on the street: that pizza delivery boy in the red coat; the bald guy walking to church with his wife, hymn books under their arms; the handsome bearded man carrying a guitar case; even the cop talking to a bum outside the liquor store. (There was nothing Jeannie could do with her rage and she gripped the steering wheel tighter until her knuckles turned white.)

Santa Teresa was a big suburban hospital near the northern city limits. Jeannie parked in the car park and found the emergency room. Lisa was already in bed, wearing a hospital gown and looking ^{wretched} miserable. A TV set with the sound off was showing the Emmy awards ceremony: hundreds of Hollywood celebrities in evening dress drinking champagne and congratulating one another. McHenty sat beside the

bed with his notebook on his knee.

Lisa ^{remained} ~~was~~ ^{remained} expressionless and silent. She was still in shock, Jeannie figured. She was suppressing her feelings, fighting to stay in control. But at some point she had to show her rage. There would be an explosion sooner or later.

Jeannie put down the duffel. "Here are your clothes. What's happening?"

McHenty said: "I have to take down the basic details of the case, Miss—would you excuse us for a few more minutes?"

"Oh, sure," Jeannie said apologetically. Then she caught a look from Lisa and hesitated. A few minutes ago she had been cursing herself for leaving Lisa alone with a man. Now she was about to do it again. "On the other hand," she said, "maybe Lisa would prefer me to stay." Her instinct was confirmed when Lisa gave a barely perceptible [✓] nod. Jeannie sat on the bed and took Lisa's hand.

McHenty looked irritated but he did not argue. "I was asking Miss Hoxton about how she tried to resist the assault," he said. "Did you scream, Lisa?"

"Once, when he threw me on the floor," she said in a low voice. "Then he pulled the knife."

McHenty's voice was matter-of-fact, and he looked down at his notebook as he spoke. "Did you try to fight him off?"

She shook her head. "I was afraid he would cut me."

"So you really didn't put up any resistance after that first scream?"

bed with his notebook on his knee.

Lisa was expressionless and silent. She was still in shock, Jeannie figured. She was suppressing her feelings, fighting to stay in control. But (at some point she had to show her rage) There would be an explosion sooner or later.

Jeannie put down the duffel. "Here are your clothes. What's happening?"

McHenty said: "I have to take down the basic details of the case, Miss—would you excuse us for a few more minutes?"

"Oh, sure," Jeannie said (apologetically). Then she caught a look from Lisa and hesitated. A few minutes ago she had been cursing herself for leaving Lisa alone with a man. Now she was about to do it again. "On the other hand," she said, "maybe Lisa would prefer me to stay." Her instinct was confirmed when Lisa gave a barely perceptible nod. Jeannie sat on the bed and took Lisa's hand.

McHenty looked irritated but he did not argue. "I was asking Miss Hoxton about how she tried to resist the assault," he said. "Did you scream, Lisa?"

"Once, when he threw me on the floor," she said in a low voice. "Then he pulled the knife."

McHenty's voice was matter-of-fact, and he looked down at his notebook as he spoke. "Did you try to fight him off?"

She shook her head. "I was afraid he would cut me."

"So you really didn't put up any resistance after that first scream?"

(2) Lisa
She shook her head and began to cry. Jeannie squeezed her hand. She wanted to say to McHenty *What the hell was she supposed to do?* But she kept silent. Already today she had been rude to a boy who looked like Brad Pitt, made a bitchy remark about Lisa's boobs and snapped at the lobby guard in the gym. She knew she was not good at dealing with authority figures and she was determined not to make an enemy of this policeman, who was only trying to do his job.

McHenty went on: "Just before he penetrated you, did he force your legs apart?"

Jeannie winced. Surely they should have female cops to ask these questions?

Lisa said: "He touched my thigh with the point of the knife."

"Did he cut you?"

"No."

"So you opened your legs voluntarily."

"I guess, if you call that voluntary."

Jeannie said: "If a suspect pulls a weapon on a cop, you generally shoot him down, don't you? Do you call that *voluntary?*"

McHenty gave her an angry look. "Please leave this to me, Miss." He turned back to Lisa. "Do you have any injuries at all?"

"I'm bleeding, yes."

"Is that as a result of the forced intercourse?"

She shook her head and began to cry. Jeannie squeezed her hand. She wanted to say to McHenty *What the hell was she supposed to do?* But she kept silent. Already today she had been rude to a boy who looked like Brad Pitt, made a bitchy remark about Lisa's boobs and snapped at the lobby guard in the gym. She knew she was not good at dealing with authority figures and she was determined not to make an enemy of this policeman, who was only trying to do his job.

McHenty went on: "Just before he penetrated you, did he force your legs apart?"

Jeannie winced. Surely they should have female cops to ask these questions?

Lisa said: "He touched my thigh with the point of the knife."

"Did he cut you?"

"No."

"So you opened your legs voluntarily."

~~"I guess, if you call that voluntary."~~

Jeannie said: "If a suspect pulls a weapon on a cop, you generally shoot him down, don't you? Do you call that *voluntary*?"

McHenty gave her an angry look. "Please leave this to me, Miss." He turned back to Lisa. "Do you have any injuries at all?"

"I'm bleeding, yes."

"Is that as a result of the forced intercourse?"

"Yes."

"Where are you injured, exactly?"

Jeannie could not stand it any longer. "Why don't we let the doctor establish that?"

He looked at her as if she were stupid. "I have to make the preliminary report."

"Then let it say she has internal injuries as a result of the rape."

"I'm conducting this interview."

"And I'm telling you to back off, Mister," Jeannie said, controlling the urge to scream at ~~him~~. "My friend is in distress and I don't think she needs to describe her internal injuries to you when she's going to be examined by a doctor any second now."

McHenty looked furious but he moved on. "I noticed you had on red lace underwear. Do you think that had any effect on what happened?"

Lisa looked away, her eyes full of tears.

Jeannie said: "If I reported my red Mercedes stolen, would you ask me whether I had provoked the theft by driving such an attractive car?"

McHenty ignored her. "Do you think you might have met the perpetrator before, Lisa?"

"No."

"But the smoke must have made it difficult for you to see clearly. And he wore a scarf of some kind over his face."

"At first I was practically blind. But there wasn't much smoke in the room where...he did it. I saw him." She nodded to herself. "I saw him."

"So you would recognise him if you saw him again."

Lisa shuddered. "Oh, yes."

"But you've never seen him before, like in a bar or anything."

"No."

"Do you go to bars, Lisa?"

"Sure."

"Singles bars, that kind of thing?"

Jeannie boiled over. "What the *hell* kind of question is that?"

"The kind defense lawyers ask," McHenty said.

"Lisa isn't on trial—she's not the perpetrator, she's the victim!"

"Were you a virgin, Lisa?"

Jeannie stood up. "Okay, that's enough. I do not believe this is supposed to happen. You're not supposed to ask these invasive questions."

McHenty raised his voice. "I'm trying to establish her credibility."

"One hour after she was violated? Forget it!"

"I'm doing my job—"

289 "I don't believe you know your job. (I don't think you know shit), McHenty."

Before he could reply, a doctor walked in without knocking. He was young and

"At first I was practically blind. But there wasn't much smoke in the room where...he did it. I saw him." She nodded to herself. "I saw him."

"So you would recognise him if you saw him again."

Lisa shuddered. "Oh, yes."

"But you've never seen him before, like in a bar or anything."

"No."

"Do you go to bars, Lisa?"

"Sure."

"Singles bars, that kind of thing?"

Jeannie boiled over. "What the *hell* kind of question is that?"

"The kind defense lawyers ask," McHenty said.

"Lisa isn't on trial—she's not the perpetrator, she's the victim!"

"Were you a virgin, Lisa?"

Jeannie stood up. "Okay, that's enough. I do not believe this is supposed to happen. You're not supposed to ask these invasive questions."

McHenty raised his voice. "I'm ^{have to} ~~saying~~ to establish her credibility."

"One hour after she was violated? Forget it!"

"I'm doing my job—"

"I don't believe you know your job. I don't think you know shit, McHenty."

Before he could reply, a doctor walked in without knocking. He was young and

looked harassed and tired. "Is this the rape?" he said.

"This is Ms Lisa Hoxton," Jeannie said icily. "Yes, she was raped."

"I'll need a vaginal swab."

~~He was~~ charmless, Jeannie thought, ^{he} ~~but~~ at least he provided an excuse to get rid of McHenty. She looked at the cop. He stayed put, as if he thought he was going to supervise the taking of the swab. Jeannie said: "Before you do that, doctor, perhaps Patrolman McHenty will excuse us?"

The doctor paused, looking at McHenty. The cop shrugged and went out.

The doctor pulled the sheet off Lisa with an abrupt gesture. "Lift your gown and spread your legs," he said.

Lisa began to cry.

Jeannie could hardly believe it. What was it with these men? "Excuse me, sir," she said to the doctor.

He glared at her impatiently. "Have you got a problem?"

"Could you please try to be a little more polite?"

He reddened. "This hospital is full of people with traumatic injuries and life-threatening illnesses," he said. "Right now in the emergency room there are three children who have been in a car wreck, and they're all going to die. And you're complaining that I'm not being *polite* to a girl who got into bed with the wrong man?"

Jeannie was flabbergasted. "Got into bed with the wrong man?" she repeated

looked harassed and tired. "Is this the rape?" he said.

"This is Ms Lisa Hoxton," Jeannie said icily. "Yes, she was raped."

"I'll need a vaginal swab."

(?) He was charmless, (Jeannie thought) but at least he provided an excuse to get rid of McHenty. ^{Jeannie} She looked at the cop. He stayed put, as if he thought he was going to supervise the taking of the swab. Jeannie said: "Before you do that, doctor, perhaps Patrolman McHenty will excuse us?"

The doctor paused, looking at McHenty. The cop shrugged and went out.

The doctor pulled the sheet off Lisa with an abrupt gesture. "Lift your gown and spread your legs," he said.

Lisa began to cry.

Jeannie could hardly believe it. What was it with these men? "Excuse me, sir," she said to the doctor.

? 8 | He glared at her (impatiently) "Have you got a problem?"

"Could you please try to be a little more polite?"

He reddened. "This hospital is full of people with traumatic injuries and life-threatening illnesses," he said. "Right now in the emergency room there are three children who have been in a car wreck, and they're all going to die. And you're complaining that I'm not being *polite* to a girl who got into bed with the wrong man?"

Jeannie was flabbergasted. "Got into bed with the wrong man?" she repeated

stupidly.

Lisa sat upright. "I want to go home," she said.

"That sounds like a hell of a good idea," Jeannie said. She unzipped her duffel and began to put the clothes out on the bed.

The doctor was ~~dum~~struck for a moment. Then he said angrily: "Do as you please." He went out.

Jeannie and Lisa looked at one another. "I can't believe that happened," Jeannie said.

"Thank God they've gone," Lisa said, and she got out of bed.

Jeannie helped her take off the hospital gown. Lisa pulled on the fresh clothes quickly and stepped into the shoes. "I'll drive you home," Jeannie said.

"Would you sleep over at my apartment?" Lisa said. "I don't want to be alone tonight."

"Sure. I'll be glad to."

McHenty was waiting outside. He looked a little less confident. Perhaps he knew he had handled the interview badly. "I still have a few more questions," he said.

Jeannie spoke quietly and calmly. "We're leaving," she said. "Lisa is too upset to answer questions right now."

^{NERVOUS}
He looked a little scared. "She has to," he said. "She's made a complaint."

Lisa said: "I wasn't raped. It was all a mistake. I just want to go home now."

No more... incident...

(stupidly.)

Lisa sat upright. "I want to go home," she said.

"That sounds like a hell of a good idea," Jeannie said. She unzipped her duffel and began to put the clothes out on the bed.

The doctor was dumstruck for a moment. Then he said angrily: "Do as you please." He went out.

Jeannie and Lisa looked at one another. "I can't believe that happened," Jeannie said.

"Thank God they've gone," Lisa said, and she got out of bed.

Jeannie helped her take off the hospital gown. Lisa pulled on the fresh clothes quickly and stepped into the shoes. "I'll drive you home," Jeannie said.

"Would you sleep over at my apartment?" Lisa said. "I don't want to be alone tonight."

"Sure. I'll be glad to."

McHenty was waiting outside. He looked a little less confident. Perhaps he knew he had handled the interview badly. "I still have a few more questions," he said.

Jeannie spoke quietly and calmly. "We're leaving," she said. "Lisa is too upset to answer questions right now."

He looked a little scared. "She has to," he said. "She's made a complaint."

Lisa said: "I wasn't raped. It was all a mistake. I just want to go home now."

"You realise it's an offense to make a false allegation?"

~~Jennie said angrily:~~ "This woman is not a criminal—she's the victim of a crime.

If your boss asks why she's withdrawing the complaint, say it's because she was so brutally harassed by Patrolman McHenty of the Baltimore Police Department. Now I'm taking her home. Excuse us, please." She put her arm around Lisa's shoulders and steered her past the cop toward the exit.

As they left she heard him mutter: "What did I do?"

"You realise it's an offense to make a false allegation?"

(7) ^{'s voice was ice cold}
Jeannie said angrily: "This woman is not a criminal—she's the victim of a crime.

If your boss asks why she's withdrawing the complaint, say it's because she was (so) brutally harassed by Patrolman McHenty of the Baltimore Police Department. Now I'm taking her home. Excuse us, please." She put her arm around Lisa's shoulders and steered her past the cop toward the exit. ?

As they left she heard him mutter: "What did I do?"

"You realise it's an offense to make a false allegation?"

Jeannie said angrily: "This woman is not a criminal—she's the victim of a crime. If your boss asks why she's withdrawing the complaint, say it's because she was so brutally harassed by Patrolman McHenty of the Baltimore Police Department. Now I'm taking her home. Excuse us, please." She put her arm around Lisa's shoulders and steered her past the cop toward the exit.

As they left she heard him mutter: "What did I do?"

This works well, and the last part
is terrific. It would be good for
T to say so it least feel more
pain when she discovers Lisa. We
as readers should suffer more.
Also let's feel her more frantic
when she's searching and can't
find Lisa, imagining the worst.

3

Berisford Jones was watching himself on TV.

The show was *Larry King Live*. Berisford hated Larry King—the man was a red-dyed liberal, in his opinion—but the show was an opportunity to talk to millions of Americans.

He studied his image, and he was pleased by what he saw. He was a short man, but television made everyone the same height. His navy suit looked good, the sky-blue shirt matched his eyes, and the tie was a burgundy red that did not flare on the screen. Being supercritical, he thought his silver hair was too neat, almost bouffant: he was in danger of looking like a television evangelist.

King, wearing his trademark suspenders, was in aggressive mood, his gravelly voice challenging. "Professor, you've stirred up controversy again with your latest book, but some people feel this isn't science, it's politics. What do you say to that?"

Berisford was gratified to hear that his own voice sounded mellow and reasonable in reply. "I'm trying to say that political decisions should be based on sound science, Larry. Nature, left to itself, favours good genes and kills off bad ones. ^{→ natural} But our welfare policy works against natural selection. That's how we're breeding a generation of second-rate Americans."

3

Berisford Jones was watching himself on TV.

The show was *Larry King Live*. Berisford hated Larry King—the man was a red-dyed liberal, in his opinion—but the show was an opportunity to talk to millions of Americans.

He studied his image, and he was pleased by what he saw. He was a short man, but television made everyone the same height. His navy suit looked good, the sky-blue shirt matched his eyes, and the tie was a burgundy red that did not flare on the screen. Being supercritical, he thought his silver hair was too neat, almost bouffant: he was in danger of looking like a television evangelist.

King, wearing his trademark suspenders, was in aggressive mood, his gravelly voice challenging. "Professor, you've stirred up controversy again with your latest book, but some people feel this isn't science, it's politics. What do you say to that?"

Berisford was gratified to hear that his own voice sounded mellow and reasonable in reply. "I'm trying to say that political decisions should be based on sound science, Larry. Nature, left to itself, favours good genes and kills off bad ones. But our welfare policy works against natural selection. That's how we're breeding a generation of second-rate Americans."

Sitting beside Berisford on the couch, Senator Jim Proust took a sip of whisky and said: "Good phrase—a generation of second-rate Americans. Quotable." Jim was a bald, suntanned man of sixty with a big nose and heavy spectacles. Berisford had never liked him, but they had been colleagues and partners for twenty-five years.

On TV, Larry King said: "If you have your way, what happens to the children of the poor? They starve, right?"

Berisford's face on the screen took on a solemn look. "My father died in 1942, when the aircraft carrier *Wasp* was sunk by a Japanese submarine at Guadalcanal. I was five years old. My mother struggled to raise me and send me to school. Larry, I *am* a child of the poor."

It was close enough to the truth. His father, a brilliant engineer, had left his mother a small income, enough so that she was not forced to work or remarry. She had sent Berisford to expensive private schools and then to Harvard—but it *had* been a struggle.

The third man in the room, Paul Barck, said: "You look good, Berry—except maybe for the country-western hairstyle." Barck, the youngest of the trio at fifty-five, had short black hair that lay flat on his skull like a cap.

Berisford gave an irritated grunt. He had had the same thought himself, but it annoyed him to hear it from someone else. He poured himself a little more whisky. They were drinking Springbank, a single malt.

They were in the den of a house in an affluent suburb of Baltimore. The house was owned by Jones Falls University and loaned to visiting professors. Berisford, who had professorships at Berkeley in California and at Harvard as well as Jones Falls, used the house for the six weeks of the year he was in Baltimore. There was little of his in the room: a laptop computer, a photograph of his ex-wife and their son, and a pile of new copies of his latest book, *To Inherit the Future: How Genetic Engineering Will Transform America*.

On the screen, Larry King said: "Philosophically speaking, how do your views differ from those of, say, the Nazis?"

Berisford touched the remote control and turned the set off. "I've been doing this stuff for ten years," he said. "Three books and a million crappy talk shows later, what difference has it made? None."

Paul said: "It has made a difference. You've made genetics and race an issue. You're just impatient."

"Impatient?" Berisford said angrily. "You bet I'm impatient! I'll be sixty soon. We're all getting old. We don't have much time left!"

Jim said: "He's right, Paul. Don't you remember how it was when we were young men? We looked around and saw America going to hell: civil rights for negroes, Mexicans flooding in, the best schools being swamped by the children of Jewish communists, our kids smoking pot and dodging the draft."

Suggest
name it or

"And boy, were we right!" Berisford said. "Look what's happened since then! In our worst nightmares we never imagined that illegal drugs would become one of America's biggest industries and that a third of all babies would be born to mothers on Medicaid."

Jim said: "Where are we with the Germans, Paul? Bring us up to date."

"We're close to a conclusion," Paul said. "They want to announce the takeover at a press conference one week from tomorrow."

The three men were owners of a small private biotechnology company, Genetico Inc. It was Paul who ran the day-to-day business: Jim was in politics and Berisford was an academic. Berisford had met the CEO of Landsmann, a German pharmaceuticals conglomerate, on a plane to San Francisco, and had got the man interested in making a takeover bid.

"A week from tomorrow?" Berisford said with excitement in his voice. "That's great!"

Paul shook his head. "I have to tell you, I still have doubts."

Berisford made an exasperated noise.

Jim said: "I still don't really understand why they want to buy into a company that's never made any money."

"The clinics have always made money," Paul said. Genetico owned three fertility clinics that specialised in *in vitro* conception—test tube babies. "Fertility is the

biggest growth area in American medicine. Genetico will be Landsmann's way into this big new market. They want us to open five new clinics a year for the next ten years."

"How come we never saw any money?" Jim asked.

"We always spent it on research." Genetico did some work in its own labs, but mostly of its research was done by giving contracts to the biology and psychology departments of universities. Berisford handled the company's links with the academic world.

"I just can't believe that I own one third of a company that's worth a hundred and eighty million dollars, and I'm driving around in a three-year-old Crown Victoria."

Berisford said testily: "We were never in it for the money, and we aren't now."

"I know, I know. But I'm still looking forward to buying a new car."

Paul resumed: "We're going through a process called disclosure. We have to open our books to Landsmann's accountants, and tell them about anything that might affect future profits, such as debtors who are going bust, or pending lawsuits."

"We don't have any of those, I take it?" Jim said.

Paul gave him an ominous look. "We all know this company has secrets."

There was a moment of silence in the room. Then Jim said: "Hell, that's a long way in the past."

biggest growth area in American medicine. Genetico will be Landsmann's way into this big new market. They want us to open five new clinics a year for the next ten years."

"How come we never saw any money?" Jim asked.

"We always spent it on research." Genetico did some work in its own labs, but mostly of its research was done by giving contracts to the biology and psychology departments of universities. Berisford handled the company's links with the academic world.

"I just can't believe that I own one third of a company that's worth a hundred and eighty million dollars, and I'm driving around in a three-year-old Crown Victoria."

Berisford said testily: "We were never in it for the money, ~~and we aren't now.~~"

"I know, I know. But I'm still looking forward to buying a new car."

Paul resumed: "We're going through a process called disclosure. We have to open our books to Landsmann's accountants, and tell them about anything that might affect future profits, such as debtors who are going bust, or pending lawsuits."

"We don't have any of those, I take it?" Jim said.

Paul gave him an ominous look. "We all know this company has secrets."

There was a moment of silence in the room. Then Jim said: "Hell, that's a long way in the past."

"The evidence is out there walking around."

"But there's no way Landsmann can find out about it—especially not in a week."

Paul shrugged as if to say *Who knows?*

"We have to take that risk," Berisford said harshly. He had been afraid Paul would get cold feet. "The injection of capital we'll get from Landsmann will enable us to accelerate our research program. In a couple of years' time we will be able to offer affluent white Americans who come to our clinics a genetically engineered perfect baby."

"But how much difference will it make?" Paul said. "The poor will continue to breed faster than the rich."

"You're forgetting Jim's political platform," Berisford said.

Jim said: "A flat income tax rate of ten per cent, and compulsory contraceptive injections for women on welfare."

"Think of it, Paul," Berisford said. "Perfect babies for the middle classes, and sterilization for the poor. We could start to put America's racial balance right again. It's what we always aimed for, ever since the early days."

"We were very idealistic then," Paul said.

"We were right!" Berisford said.

"Yes, we were right. But as I get older, more and more I start to think the world

will probably muddle along somehow even if I don't achieve everything I planned when I was twenty-five."

"But we can," Berisford said. "Everything we've been working toward for the last thirty years is within our grasp now. The risks we took in the early days, all these years of research, the money we've spent—it's all coming to fruition at last. Don't get an attack of nerves at his point, Paul!"

"I don't have bad nerves, I'm pointing out real, practical problems," Paul said peevishly. "Jim can propose his political platform, but that doesn't mean it's going to happen."

"That's where Landsmann comes in," Jim said. "The cash we'll get for our shares in the company will give us a shot at the biggest prize of all."

"What do you mean?" Paul looked puzzled, but Berisford knew what was coming, and he smiled.

"The White House," Jim said. ~~"I'm going to run for president."~~

will probably muddle along somehow even if I don't achieve everything I planned when I was twenty-five."

"But we can," Berisford said. "Everything we've been working toward for the last thirty years is within our grasp now. The risks we took in the early days, all these years of research, the money we've spent—it's all coming to fruition at last. Don't get an attack of nerves at his point, Paul!"

"I don't have bad nerves, I'm pointing out real, practical problems," Paul said peevishly. "Jim can propose his political platform, but that doesn't mean it's going to happen."

"That's where Landsmann comes in," Jim said. "The cash we'll get for our shares in the company will give us a shot at the biggest prize of all."

"What do you mean?" Paul looked puzzled, but Berisford knew what was coming, and he smiled.

"The White House," Jim said. "I'm going to run for president."

This chapt. is almost all exposition and in my view is not working. We need to introduce B more richly and in an active context with Barch and Prooit. What if Jim and Paul want to sell and B doesn't because he's fearful that either in the disclosure process, or with new people coming in, that their secret will come to light?

It's not wholly clear what B wants; and he seems to want he should want it from Barch and Prooit. Or maybe he wants funding from them for some crucial research project? Or maybe the scene is about Prooit's wanting to "kill off" the secret, so there'll be no deal.

4

A few minutes before midnight, Steve Logan parked his rusty old Datsun on Lexington Street in the Hollins Market neighbourhood of Baltimore, west of downtown. He was going to spend the night with his cousin Ricky Menzies, who was studying medicine at the University of Maryland in Baltimore. Ricky's home was one room in a big old house tenanted by students.

Ricky was the ^{only} ~~greatest~~ hell-raiser Steve knew. He loved to drink, dance and party, and his friends were the same. Steve had been looking forward to spending the evening with Ricky. But the trouble with hell-raisers was that they were inherently unreliable. At the last minute Ricky got a hot date and cancelled, and Steve had spent the evening alone.

He got out of the car, carrying a small sports bag with fresh clothes for tomorrow. The night was warm. He locked the car and walked to the corner. A bunch of youngsters, four or five boys and a girl, all black, were hanging out by a video store, smoking cigarettes. Steve was not nervous, although he was white: he looked as if he belonged here, with his old car and his faded bluejeans; and anyway he was a couple of inches taller than the biggest of them. As he passed, one of them said quietly but distinctly: "Wanna buy some blow, wanna buy some rock?" Steve shook

his head without pausing in his stride.

A very tall black woman was walking towards him, dressed to kill in a short skirt and spike-heeled shoes, hair piled high, red lipstick and blue eye-shadow. He could not help staring at her. As she came closer she said: "Hi, handsome," in a deep masculine voice, and Steve realised it was a man. He grinned and walked on.

He heard the kids on the corner greet the transvestite with easy familiarity. "Hey Dorothy!"

"Hello, boys."

A moment later he heard tires squeal and glanced back. A white police car with a silver-and-blue stripe was pulling up at the corner. Some of the kids melted away into the dark streets; others stayed. Two black patrolmen got out, in no hurry. Steve turned around to watch. Seeing the man called Dorothy, one of the patrolmen spat, hitting the toe of a red high-heeled shoe.

^{We are} Steve was shocked. The act was so gratuitous and unnecessary. However, Dorothy hardly paused in his stride. "Fuck you, asshole," he said (disdainfully.)

That should have been the end of it, but it seemed the patrolman was in a bad mood. He grabbed Dorothy by the arm and slammed him against the window of the store. Dorothy tottered in the high heels. "Don't *ever* speak to me that way, you piece a shit," the cop said.

Steve felt indignant. What did the guy expect if he went around spitting at

his head without pausing in his stride.

A very tall black woman was walking towards him, dressed to kill in a short skirt and spike-heeled shoes, hair piled high, red lipstick and blue eye-shadow. He could not help staring at her. As she came closer she said: "Hi, handsome," in a deep masculine voice, and Steve realised it was a man. He grinned and walked on.

He heard the kids on the corner greet the transvestite with easy familiarity. "Hey Dorothy!"

"Hello, boys."

A moment later he heard tires squeal and glanced back. A white police car with a silver-and-blue stripe was pulling up at the corner. Some of the kids melted away into the dark streets; others stayed. Two black patrolmen got out, in no hurry. Steve turned around to watch. Seeing the man called Dorothy, one of the patrolmen spat, hitting the toe of a red high-heeled shoe.

Steve was shocked. The act was so gratuitous and unnecessary. However, Dorothy hardly paused in his stride. "Fuck you, asshole," he ^{muttered} ~~said~~ disdainfully.

That should have been the end of it, but it seemed the patrolman was in a bad mood. He grabbed Dorothy by the arm and slammed him against the window of the store. Dorothy tottered in the high heels. "Don't *ever* speak to me that way, you piece a shit," the cop said.

Steve felt indignant. What did the guy expect if he went around spitting at

people, for Christ's sake?

The cop's partner stood leaning on the car, watching, his face a blank.

"What's the matter, brother?" Dorothy said seductively. "Do I *disturb* you?"

The patrolman punched him in the stomach. The cop was a beefy guy and the punch had all his weight behind it. Dorothy doubled over, gasping.

281
"The hell with this," Steve said to himself, and he strode to the corner.

Dorothy was still bent over, gasping. Steve said: "Good evening, officer."

The cop looked at him. "Vanish, motherfucker," he said.

"No," Steve said.

"What did you say?"

"I said no, officer. You leave that man alone."

His defiance made the kids cocky. "Yeah, thass right," said a tall, thin boy with a shaved head. "You got no call to fuck with Dorothy, he ain't broke no law."

The cop pointed an aggressive finger at the boy. "You want me to frisk you for dope, you just keep talking that way."

The boy lowered his eyes.

"He's right, though," Steve said. "Dorothy isn't breaking any laws."

The cop came over to Steve. "You blind?" he said.

"What do you mean?"

The other cop said: "Hey, Lenny, who gives a shit. Let's go." He seemed

uncomfortable.

Lenny ignored him and spoke to Steve. "Can't you see? You're the only white face in the picture. You don't belong here."

"But I've just witnessed a crime."

The cop stood close to Steve, too close for comfort. "You want a trip down town?" he said. "Or do you want to get the fuck out of here, now?"

Steve did not want a trip down town. It was so easy for them to plant a little dope in his pockets, or beat him up and say he had resisted arrest. Steve was at law school: if he was convicted of a crime he could never practise. (He wished he had not taken this stand.) It was not worth throwing away his entire career just because a patrolman bullied a transvestite.

But it was *wrong*. Now two people were being bullied, Dorothy and Steve. It was the *cop* who was breaking the law. Steve could not bring himself to walk away.

But he adopted a conciliatory tone of voice. "I don't want to make trouble, Lenny," he said. "Why don't you let Dorothy go, and I'll forget that I saw you assault him."

"You *threatening* me, fuckhead?"

"Just making a friendly suggestion." Steve began to feel afraid. This cop seemed to want trouble. Steve could not see how the confrontation could be defused. He wished Dorothy would walk quietly away now, while Lenny's back was turned; but

uncomfortable.

Lenny ignored him and spoke to Steve. "Can't you see? You're the only white face in the picture. You don't belong here."

"But I've just witnessed a crime."

The cop stood close to Steve, too close for comfort. "You want a trip down town?" he said. "Or do you want to get the fuck out of here, now?"

Steve did not want a trip down town. It was so easy for them to plant a little dope in his pockets, or beat him up and say he had resisted arrest. Steve was at law school: if he was convicted of a crime he could never practise. He wished he had not taken this stand. It was not worth throwing away his entire career just because a patrolman bullied a transvestite.

But it was *wrong*. Now two people were being bullied, Dorothy and Steve. It was the *cop* who was breaking the law. Steve could not bring himself to walk away.

But he adopted a conciliatory tone of voice. "I don't want to make trouble, Lenny," he said. "Why don't you let Dorothy go, and I'll forget that I saw you assault him."

"You *threatening* me, fuckhead?"

281
"Just making a friendly suggestion." (Steve began to feel afraid). This cop seemed to want trouble. Steve could not see how the confrontation could be defused. He wished Dorothy would walk quietly away now, while Lenny's back was turned; but

the transvestite stood there, watching, with one hand gently rubbing his bruised stomach, enjoying the cop's fury.

Then luck intervened and ~~and Steve~~. The patrol car's radio came to life. Both cops froze, listening. Steve could not make out the jumble of words and number codes, but Lenny's partner said: "Officer in trouble. We're out of here."

Lenny hesitated, still glaring at Steve, but Steve thought he saw a hint of relief in the cop's eyes. Maybe he, too, had been rescued from a bad situation. But there was ~~only~~ malice in his tone. "Remember me," he said to Steve. "Cause I'll remember you." With that he jumped into the vehicle and slammed the door, and the car tore away.

The kids clapped and jeered.

"Whew," Steve said gratefully. "That was scary."

At that moment Ricky came along. "What happened?" he said, looking at the disappearing patrol car.

Dorothy came over and put his hands on Steve's shoulders. "My hero," he said coquettishly. "John Wayne." *it's his*

Steve was embarrassed. "Hey, c'mon."

"Any time you want a walk on the wild side, John Wayne, you come to me. I'll let you in free."

"Thanks all the same...."

the transvestite stood there, watching, with one hand gently rubbing his bruised stomach, enjoying the cop's fury.

Then luck intervened and saved Steve. The patrol car's radio came to life. Both cops froze, listening. Steve could not make out the jumble of words and number codes, but Lenny's partner said: "Officer in trouble. We're out of here."

Lenny hesitated, still glaring at Steve, but Steve thought he saw a hint of relief in the cop's eyes. Maybe he, too, had been rescued from a bad situation. But there was only malice in his tone. "Remember me," he said to Steve. "Cause I'll remember you." With that he jumped into the vehicle and slammed the door, and the car tore away.

The kids clapped and jeered.

"Whew," Steve said gratefully. "That was scary."

At that moment ^{his cousin} Ricky came along. ^{Ricky asked} "What happened?" he said, looking at the disappearing patrol car.

Dorothy came over and put his hands on Steve's shoulders. "My hero," he said coquettishly. "John Wayne."

Steve was embarrassed. "Hey, c'mon."

"Any time you want a walk on the wild side, John Wayne, you come to me. I'll let you in free."

"Thanks all the same...."

"I'd kiss you, but I can see you're bashful, so I'll just say goodbye." He waggled red-tipped fingers and turned away.

"Bye, Dorothy."

Ricky and Steve went in the opposite direction. Ricky said: "I see you've already made friends in the neighbourhood."

Steve laughed, mainly with relief. "I almost got in bad trouble," he said. "A dumbass cop started beating up on that guy in the skirt and I was fool enough to tell him to stop."

Ricky was startled. "You're lucky you're *here*."

"I know it."

They reached Ricky's house and went in. The place smelled of cheese, or maybe it was stale milk. There were graffiti on the green-painted walls. They edged around the bicycles chained up in the hallway and went up the stairs. Steve said: "It just makes me mad. Why should Dorothy get punched in the gut? He likes to wear miniskirts and makeup: who gives a damn?"

"You're right."

"And why should Lenny get away with it because he's wearing a police uniform? Policemen should have *higher* standards of behaviour, because of their privileged position."

"Fat chance."

"No-one's arguing" ^u

"I'd kiss you, but I can see you're bashful, so I'll just say goodbye." He waggled red-tipped fingers and turned away.

"Bye, Dorothy."

Ricky and Steve went in the opposite direction. Ricky said: "I see you've already made friends in the neighbourhood."

Steve laughed, mainly with relief. "I almost got in bad trouble," he said. "A dumbass cop started beating up on that guy in the skirt and I was fool enough to tell him to stop."

Ricky was startled. "You're lucky you're *here*."

"I know it."

?S/ They reached Ricky's house (and went in. The place smelled of cheese, or maybe it was stale milk. There were graffiti on the green-painted walls. They edged around the bicycles chained up in the hallway and went up the stairs. Steve said: "It just makes me mad. Why should Dorothy get punched in the gut? He likes to wear miniskirts and makeup: who gives a damn?"

"You're right."

"And why should Lenny get away with it because he's wearing a police uniform? Policemen should have *higher* standards of behaviour, because of their privileged position."

"Fat chance."

"That's why I want to be a lawyer. To stop this kind of shit from happening. Do you have a hero, someone you want to be like?"

"Casanova, maybe."

"Ralph Nader. He's a lawyer. That's my role model. He took on the most powerful corporations in America—and he won!"

Ricky laughed and put his arm around Steve's shoulders as they entered his room. "My cousin, the idealist."

"Ah, hell."

"Want some coffee?"

"Sure."

Ricky's room was small and furnished with junk. He had a single bed, a battered desk, a sagging couch and a big TV set. On the wall was a poster of a naked woman marked with the names of every bone in the human skeleton, from the parietal bone of the head to the distal phalanges of the feet. There was an air-conditioner but it did not seem to be working.

Steve sat on the couch. "How was your date?"

"Not as hot as advertised." Ricky put water in a kettle. "Melissa is cute, all right, but I wouldn't be home this early if she was as crazy for me as I was led to believe. How about you?"

"I looked around the Jones Falls campus. Pretty classy. I met a girl, too."

Remembering, he brightened up. "I saw her playing tennis. She was terrific—tall, muscular, fit as hell. A service like it was fired out of a fucking bazooka, I swear to God."

"I never heard of anyone falling for a girl because of her tennis game," Ricky grinned. "Is she a looker?"

"She's got this really strong face." Steve could see it now. "Dark brown eyes, black eyebrows, masses of dark hair...and this delicate little silver ring through her left nostril."

"No kidding. Unusual, huh?"

"You said it."

"What's her name?"

"I don't know." Steve smiled ruefully. "She gave me the brush-off without breaking stride. I'll probably never see her again in my life."

Ricky poured coffee. "Maybe it's for the best—you have a ^{girlfriend} ~~steady date~~, don't you?"

Steve nodded. He had felt a little guilty, being so attracted to the tennis player. "Her name is Celine," he said. "We study together." Steve was at law school in Washington, DC.

"You sleeping with her?"

"No."

Remembering, he brightened up. "I saw her playing tennis. She was terrific—tall, muscular, fit as hell. A service like ~~it was fired out of~~ a fucking bazooka, I swear to God."

"I never heard of anyone falling for a girl because of her tennis ^{serve} ~~game~~," Ricky grinned. "Is she a looker?"

"She's got this really strong face." Steve could see it now. "Dark brown eyes, black eyebrows, masses of dark hair...and this delicate little silver ring through her left nostril."

"No kidding. Unusual, huh?"

"You said it."

"What's her name?"

"I don't know." Steve smiled ruefully. "She gave me the brush-off without breaking stride. I'll probably never see her again in my life."

Ricky poured coffee. "Maybe it's for the best—you have a steady date, don't you?"

Steve nodded. He had felt a little guilty, being so attracted to the tennis player. "Her name is Celine," he said. "We study together." Steve was at law school in Washington, DC.

"You sleeping with her?"

"No."

Remembering, he brightened up. "I saw her playing tennis. She was terrific—tall, muscular, fit as hell. A service like it was fired out of a fucking bazooka, I swear to God."

"I never heard of anyone falling for a girl because of her tennis game," Ricky grinned. "Is she a looker?"

"She's got this really strong face." Steve could see it now. "Dark brown eyes, black eyebrows, masses of dark hair...and this delicate little silver ring through her left nostril."

"No kidding. Unusual, huh?"

"You said it."

"What's her name?"

"I don't know." Steve smiled ruefully. "She gave me the brush-off without breaking stride. I'll probably never see her again in my life."

Ricky poured coffee. "Maybe it's for the best—you have a steady date, don't you?"

Steve nodded. He had felt a little guilty, being so attracted to the tennis player. ^{Sort of.} "Her name is Celine," he said. "We study together." Steve was at law school in Washington, DC.

"You sleeping with her?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I don't feel that level of commitment."

Ricky looked surprised. "This is a language I don't speak. You have to feel committed to a girl before you fuck her?"

Steve was embarrassed. "It's just the way I feel, you know?"

"Have you always felt that way?"

"No. When I was at high school I did whatever girls would let me do, it was like a contest or something, I would bone any pretty girl who would take her panties off...but that was then, and this is now, and I'm not a kid any more. I think."

"How old are you, twenty-two?"

"Right."

"I'm twenty-five, but I guess I'm not as grown up as you."

Steve detected a note of resentment. "Hey, it's not a criticism, okay?"

"Okay." Ricky did not seem seriously offended. "So what did you do, after she gave you the brush-off?"

"Went to a bar in Charles Village and had a couple beers and a hamburger."

"That reminds me—I'm hungry. Want something to eat?"

"What have you got?"

Ricky opened a cupboard. "Boo Berry, Rice Krispies or Count Chocula."

"Oh, boy, Count Chocula sounds great." Ricky put bowls and milk on the table

and they both tucked in.

When they had finished, they rinsed their cereal bowls and got ready for bed. Steve lay on the couch in his undershorts: it was too hot for a blanket. Ricky took the bed. Before they went to sleep, Ricky said: "So what are you going to do at Jones Falls tomorrow?"

"They asked me to be part of a study. I have to have psychological tests and stuff."

"Why you?"

"I don't know. I ~~can't seem to find out~~. They said I was a special case, and they would explain everything today."

"What made you say yes? Sounds like kind of a waste of time."

Steve had a special reason, but he was not going to tell Ricky. His answer was part of the truth. "Curiosity, I guess. I mean, don't you wonder about yourself? Like, what kind of person am I really, and what do I want in life?"

"I want to be a hotshot surgeon and make a million bucks a year doing breast implants. I guess I'm a simple soul."

"Don't you ask yourself what's it all for?"

Ricky laughed "No, Steve, I don't. But you do. You were always a thinker. Even when we were kids, you used to wonder about God and stuff."

It was true. Steve had gone through a religious phase at about age thirteen. He

and they both tucked in.

When they had finished, they rinsed their cereal bowls and got ready for bed. Steve lay on the couch in his undershorts: it was too hot for a blanket. Ricky took the bed. Before they went to sleep, Ricky said: "So what are you going to do at Jones Falls tomorrow?"

"They asked me to be part of a study. I have to have psychological tests and stuff."

"Why you?"

"I don't know. I can't wait to find out. They said I was a special case, and they would explain everything today."

"What made you say yes? Sounds like kind of a waste of time."

Steve had a special reason, but he was not going to tell Ricky. His answer was part of the truth. "Curiosity, I guess. I mean, don't you wonder about yourself? Like, what kind of person am I really, and what do I want in life?"

"I want to be a hotshot surgeon and make a million bucks a year doing breast implants. I guess I'm a simple soul."

"Don't you ask yourself what's it all for?"

Ricky laughed "No, Steve, I don't. But you do. You were always a thinker. Even when we were kids, you used to wonder about God and stuff."

It was true. Steve had gone through a religious phase at about age thirteen. He

had visited several different churches, a synagogue and a mosque, and earnestly questioned a series of bemused clergymen about their beliefs. It had mystified his parents, who were both unconcerned agnostics.

"But you were always a little bit different," Ricky went on. "I never ~~know~~^{saw} anyone score so high in tests without breaking a sweat."

That was true, too. Steve had always been a quick study, effortlessly coming ^{in at} ~~the~~ top of the class, except when the other kids teased him and he made deliberate mistakes just to be less conspicuous.

But there was another reason why he was curious about his own psychology. Ricky did not know about it. Nobody at law school knew. Only his parents knew.

Steve had almost killed someone.

He was fifteen at the time; already tall, but thin. He was captain of the basketball team. That year, Hillsfield High made it to the championship semifinal. They played against a team of ruthless streetfighters from a Washington slum school. One particular opponent, a boy called Tip Fredricks, fouled Steve all through the match. Tip was good, but he used all his skill to cheat. And every time he did it he would grin, as if to say *Got you again, sucker!* It drove Steve wild, but he had to keep his fury inside. All the same he played badly and the team lost, missing their chance at the trophy.

By the worst of bad luck, Steve ran into Tip in the car park, where the buses

had visited several different churches, a synagogue and a mosque, and earnestly questioned a series of bemused clergymen about their beliefs. It had mystified his parents, who were both unconcerned agnostics.

"But you were always a little bit different," Ricky went on. "I never knew anyone score so high in tests without breaking a sweat."

That was true, too. Steve had always been a quick study, effortlessly coming top of the class, except when the other kids teased him and he made deliberate mistakes just to be less conspicuous.

But there was another reason why he was curious about his own psychology. Ricky did not know about it. Nobody at law school knew. Only his parents knew.

Steve had almost killed someone.

He was fifteen at the time; already tall, but thin. He was captain of the basketball team. That year, Hillsfield High made it to the championship semifinal. They played against a team of ruthless streetfighters from a Washington slum school. One particular opponent, a boy called Tip Fredricks, fouled Steve all through the match. Tip was good, but he used all his skill to cheat. And every time he did it he would grin, as if to say *Got you again, sucker!* ~~It drove Steve wild, but he had to keep~~ his fury inside. All the same he played badly and the team lost, missing their chance at the trophy.

By the worst of bad luck, Steve ran into Tip in the car park, where the buses

had visited several different churches, a synagogue and a mosque, and earnestly questioned a series of bemused clergymen about their beliefs. It had mystified his parents, who were both unconcerned agnostics.

"But you were always a little bit different," Ricky went on. "I never knew anyone score so high in tests without breaking a sweat."

That was true, too. Steve had always been a quick study, effortlessly coming top of the class, except when the other kids teased him and he made deliberate mistakes just to be less conspicuous.

But there was another reason why he was curious about his own psychology. Ricky did not know about it. Nobody at law school knew. Only his parents knew.

Steve had almost killed someone.

He was fifteen at the time; already tall, but thin. He was captain of the basketball team. That year, Hillsfield High made it to the championship semifinal.

They played against a team of ruthless streetfighters from a Washington slum school.

One particular opponent, a boy called Tip Fredricks, fouled Steve all through the match. Tip was good, but he used all his skill to cheat. And every time he did it he would grin, as if to say *Got you again, sucker!* It drove Steve wild, but he had to keep his fury inside. All the same he played badly and the team lost, missing their chance at the trophy.

By the worst of bad luck, Steve ran into Tip in the car park, where the buses

had visited several different churches, a synagogue and a mosque, and earnestly questioned a series of bemused clergymen about their beliefs. It had mystified his parents, who were both unconcerned agnostics.

"But you were always a little bit different," Ricky went on. "I never knew anyone score so high in tests without breaking a sweat."

That was true, too. Steve had always been a quick study, effortlessly coming top of the class, except when the other kids teased him and he made deliberate mistakes just to be less conspicuous.

But there was another reason why he was curious about his own psychology. Ricky did not know about it. Nobody at law school knew. Only his parents knew.

Steve had almost killed someone.

He was fifteen at the time; already tall, but thin. He was captain of the basketball team. That year, Hillsfield High made it to the championship semifinal. They played against a team of ruthless streetfighters from a Washington slum school. One particular opponent, a boy called Tip Fredricks, fouled Steve all through the match. Tip was good, but he used all his skill to cheat. And every time he did it he would grin, as if to say *Got you again, sucker!* It drove Steve wild, but he had to keep his fury inside. All the same he played badly and the team lost, missing their chance at the trophy.

By the worst of bad luck, Steve ran into Tip in the car park, where the buses

were waiting to take the teams back to their schools. Fatally, one of the drivers was changing a wheel, and had a tool kit open on the ground.

Steve ignored Tip, but Tip flicked his cigarette butt at Steve, and it landed on his jacket.

That jacket meant a lot to Steve. He had saved up his earnings from working Saturdays at Macdonald's, and he had bought the damn thing the day before. It was a beautiful tan blouson made of soft leather the colour of butter, and now it had a burn mark right on the chest, where you could not help but see it. It was ruined. So Steve hit him.

Tip fought back fiercely, kicking and butting, but Steve's rage numbed him and he hardly felt the blows. Tip's face was covered in blood by the time his eye fell on the bus driver's tool kit and he picked up a tire iron. He hit Steve across the face with it twice. The blows really hurt, and Steve's rage became blind. He got the iron away from Tip—and he could remember nothing, after that, until he was standing over Tip's body, with the bloodstained iron bar in his hand, and someone else was saying *Jesus Christ Almighty, I think he's dead.*

Tip was not dead, though he did die two years later, killed by a Jamaican marijuana importer to whom he owed eighty-five dollars. But Steve had wanted to kill him, had *tried* to kill him.

Steve was sentenced to six months in prison, but the sentence was suspended.

After the trial he went to a different school and passed all his exams as usual. Because he had been a juvenile at the time of the fight, his criminal record could not be disclosed to anyone, so it did not prevent his getting into law school. Mom and Dad now thought of it as a nightmare that was over. But Steve had doubts. He knew it was only good luck and the resilience of the human body that saved him from a murder trial. Tip Fredricks was a human being, and Steve had almost killed him for a *jacket*. As he listened to Ricky's untroubled breathing across the room, he lay awake

on the couch and thought: *What am I?*

The first part is story, but ~~there~~ there's a lull in the direct part of the scene with Ricky. To tie it all together, I suggest you introduce some of the stuff from the end at the beginning. As soon as he gets involved with the cop, let him think and worry about his murderer's impulses, wonder if he'll get to his psychological test or end up in jail.