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He often broke the speed limit. In fact he was impatient with all kinds of rules. It was a contradiction in him, he recognised that. He hated peace marchers and drug takers, homosexuals and feminists and rock musicians and all nonconformists who flouted American traditions. Yet at the same time he resented anyone who tried to tell him where to park his car or how much to pay his employees or how many fire extinguishers to put in his laboratory.

As he drove he wondered about Jim Proust's contacts in the intelligence community. Were they just a bunch of old soldiers who sat around telling stories about how they had blackmailed antiwar protesters and assassinated South American presidents? Or were they still at the cutting edge? Did they still help one another like the Mafia, and regard the return of a favour as an almost religious obligation? Or were those days over? It was a long time since Jim left the CIA; even he might not know.

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Should we know what he did while he was
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It was late, but Jim was waiting for Berisford at his office in the Capitol

building. "What the hell has happened that you couldn't tell me on the phone?" he said.

"She's about to run her computer program on the FBI's fingerprint file."

Jim went pale. "Will it work?"

"It worked on dental records, why wouldn't it work on fingerprints?"

"Jesus H. Christ," Jim said feelingly.

"How many prints do they have on file?"

"More than 200 million, as I recall. They can't be all criminals. Are there that many criminals in America?"

"I don't know, maybe they have prints of dead people too. Focus, Jim, for Christ's sake. Can you stop this happening?"

"Who's her contact at the Bureau?"

Berisford handed him the printout he had made of Jeannie's e-mail. As Jim studied it, Berisford looked around. On the walls of his office, Jim had photographs of himself with every American president after Kennedy. There was a uniformed Captain Proust saluting Lyndon Johnson; Major Proust, still with a full head of straight blond hair, shaking hands with Dick Nixon; Colonel Proust glaring balefully at Jimmy Carter; General Proust sharing a joke with Ronald Reagan, both of them laughing fit to bust; Proust in a business suit, deputy director of the CIA, deep in conversation with a frowning George Bush; and Senator Proust, now bald and

wearing spectacles, wagging a finger at Bill Clinton. He was also pictured dancing with Hilary Clinton, playing golf with Bob Dole and horse riding with Ross Perot. Berisford had a few such photos, but Jim had a whole damn gallery. Who was he trying to impress? Himself, probably. Constantly seeing himself with the most powerful people in the world told Jim he was important.

"I never heard of anyone called Ghita Sumra," Jim said. "She can't be high up."

"Who *do* you know at the FBI?" Berisford said impatiently.

"Have you ever met the Creanes, David and Hilary?"

Berisford shook his head.

"He's an Assistant Director, she's a recovering alcoholic. They're both about fifty. Ten years ago, when I was running the CIA, David worked for me in the Diplomatic Directorate, keeping tabs on all the foreign embassies and their espionage sections. I liked him. Anyway, one afternoon Hilary got drunk and went out in her Honda Civic and killed a six-year-old kid, a black girl, on Beulah Road out in Springfield. She drove on, stopped at a shopping mall, and called Dave at Langley. He went over there in his Thunderbird, picked her up and took her home, then reported the Honda stolen."

"But something went wrong."

"There was a witness to the accident who was quite sure the car had been driven by a middle-aged white woman, and a stubborn detective who knew that not

many women steal cars. The witness positively identified Hilary, and she broke down and confessed."

"What happened?"

"I went to the District Attorney. He wanted to put them both in jail. I swore it was an important matter of national security and persuaded him to drop the prosecution. Hilary started going to AA and she hasn't had a drink since."

"And Dave moved over to the Bureau and did well."

"And boy, does he owe me."

"Can he stop this Ghita woman?"

"He's one of nine assistant directors reporting to the deputy director. He doesn't run the fingerprint division, but he's a powerful guy."

"But can he do it?"

"I don't know! I'll ask, okay? If it can be done, he'll do it for me."

"Okay, Jim," Berisford said. "Pick up the damn phone and ask him."

For this to work well, we need to feel B's fear and desperation to the point where we even feel some sympathy for him. And I wonder if that's possible without our knowing what he's so afraid of.

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Jeannie switched on the lights in the psychology lab and Steve followed her in. "The genetic language has four letters," she said. "A, C, G and T."

"Why those four?"

"Adenine, Cytosine, Guanine and Thymine. They're the chemical compounds attached to the long central strands of the DNA molecule. They form words and sentences, such as *Put five toes on each foot.*"

"But everyone's DNA must say *Put five toes on each foot.*"

"Good point. Your DNA is very similar to mine and everyone else's in the world. We even have a lot in common with the animals, because they're made of the same proteins as we are.

"So how do you tell the difference between Dennis's DNA and mine?"

"Between the words there are bits that don't mean anything, they're just gibberish. They're like spaces in a sentence. They're called oligonucleotides, but everyone calls them oligos. In the space between *five* and *toes*, there might be an oligo that reads TATAGAGACCCC, repeated."

"Everyone has TATAGAGACCCC?"

"Yes. but the number of repeats varies. Where you have 31 TATAGAGACCCC

oligos between *five* and *toes*, I might have 287. It doesn't matter how many you have, because the oligo doesn't mean anything."

"How do you do compare my oligos with Dennis's?"

She showed him a rectangular plate about the size and shape of a book. "We cover this plate with a gel, make slots all across the top, and drop samples of your DNA and Dennis's into the slots. Then we put the plate in here." On the bench was a small glass tank. "We pass an electric current through the gel for a couple of hours. This causes the fragments of DNA to ooze through the gel in straight lines. But small fragments move faster than big ones. So your fragment, with 31 oligos, will finish up ahead of mine with 287."

"How can you see how far they've moved?"

"We use chemicals called probes. They attach themselves to specific oligos. Suppose we have an oligo that attracts TATAGAGACCCC." She showed him a piece of rag like a dishcloth. "We take a nylon membrane soaked in a probe solution and lay it on the gel so it blots up the fragments. Probes are also luminous, so they'll mark a photographic film." She looked in another tank. "I see Lisa has already lain the nylon on the film." She peered down at it. "I think the pattern has been formed. All we need to do is fix the film."

Steve tried to see the image on the film as she washed it in bowl of some chemical then rinsed it under a tap. His history was written on that page. But all he

could see was a ladder-like pattern on the clear plastic. Finally she shook it dry then pegged it in front of a light-box.

Steve peered at it. The film was streaked, from top to bottom, with straight lines, about a quarter of an inch wide, like grey tracks. The tracks were numbered along the bottom of the film, 1 to 18. Within the tracks were neat black marks like hyphens. It meant nothing to him.

Jeannie said: "The black marks show you how far along the tracks your fragments travelled."

"But there are two black marks in each track."

"That's because you have two strands of DNA, one from your father and one from your mother."

"Of course. The double helix."

"Right. And your parents had different oligos." She consulted a sheet of notes then looked up. "Are you sure you're ready for this—one way or the other?"

"Sure."

"Okay." She looked down again. "Track three is your blood."

There were two marks about an inch apart, half way down the film.

"Track four is a control. It's probably my blood, or Lisa's. The marks should be in a completely different position."

"They are." The two marks were very close together, right at the bottom of the

film near the numbers.

"Track five is Dennis Pinker. Are the marks in the same position as yours, or different?"

"The same," Steve said. "They match exactly."

She looked at him. "Steve," she said, "^{you and Dennis are} ~~you're~~ twins."

He did not want to believe it. "Is there any chance of a mistake?"

"Sure," she said. "There's a one-in-a-hundred chance that two unrelated individuals could have a fragment the same on both maternal and paternal DNA. We normally test four different fragments, using different oligos and different probes. That reduces the chance of a mistake to one in a hundred million. Lisa will do three more: they take half a day each. But I know what they're going to say. And so do you, don't you?"

"I guess I do," Steve sighed. "I'd better start believing this. Where the hell did I come from?"

Jeannie looked thoughtful. "Something you said has been on my mind: *I don't have any brothers or sisters*. From what you've said about your parents, they seem like the kind of people who might want a house full of kids, three or four."

"You're right," Steve said. "But Mom had trouble conceiving. She was thirty-three, and she had been married to Dad for ten years, when I came along. She wrote a book about it: *What to Do When You Can't Get Pregnant*. It was her first bestseller.

She bought a summer cabin in Virginia with the money."

"Charlotte Pinker was thirty-nine when Dennis was born. I bet they had subfertility problems too. I wonder if that's significant."

"How could it be?"

"I don't know. Did your mother have any kind of special treatment?"

"I never read the book. Shall I call her?"

"Would you?"

"It's time I told them about this mystery, anyway."

Jeannie pointed to a desk. "Use Lisa's phone."

He dialled his home. His mother answered. "Hi, Mom."

"Was she pleased to see you?"

"Not at first. But I'm still with her."

"So she doesn't hate you."

Steve looked at Jeannie. "She doesn't hate me, Mom, but she thinks I'm too young."

"Is she listening?"

"Yes, and I think I'm embarrassing her, which is a first. Mom, we're in the laboratory, and we have kind of a puzzle. My DNA appears to be the same as that of another subject she's studying, a guy called Dennis Pinker."

"It can't be the same—you'd have to be identical twins."

"And that would only be possible if I'd been adopted."

"Steve, you weren't adopted, if that's what you're thinking. And you weren't one of twins. God knows how I would have coped with two of you."

"Did you have any kind of special fertility treatment before I was born?"

"Yes, I did. The doctor recommended me to a place in Philadelphia that a number of officers' wives had been to. It was called the Cotswold Clinic. I had hormone treatment."

Steve repeated that to Jeannie, and she scribbled a note on a pad of Post-Its.

Mom went on: "The treatment worked, and there you are, the fruit of all that effort, sitting in Baltimore pestering a beautiful woman six years your senior when you should be here in DC taking care of your white-haired old mother."

Steve laughed. "Thanks, Mom."

"Hey, Steve?"

"Still here."

"Don't be late. You have to see a lawyer in the morning. Let's get you out of this legal mess before you start worrying about your DNA."

"I won't be late. Bye." He hung up.

Jeannie said: "I'm going to call Charlotte Pinker right away. I hope she's not already asleep." She flicked through Lisa's Rolodex, then picked up the phone and dialled. After a moment she spoke. "Hi, Mrs Pinker, this is Dr Ferrami from Jones

Falls University. I'm fine, thank you, how are you? I hope you won't mind my asking you one more question. Well, that's very kind and understanding of you. Yes....Before you got pregnant with Dennis, did you have any kind of fertility treatment?" There was a long pause, then Jeannie's face lit up with excitement. "In Philadelphia? Yes, I've heard of it. Hormone treatment. That's very interesting, that helps me. Thank you again. Good bye." She cradled the handset. "Bingo," she said. "Charlotte went to the same clinic."

"That's fantastic," Steve said. "But what does it mean?"

"I have no idea," Jeannie said. She picked up the phone again and tapped four-eleven. "How do I get Philadelphia information? Thanks." She dialled again. "The Cotswold Clinic." There was a pause. She looked at Steve and said: "It probably closed years ago."

He watched her, mesmerised. Her face was alight with enthusiasm as her mind raced ahead. She looked ravishing. He wished he could do more to help her.

Suddenly she picked up a pencil and scribbled a number. "Thank you!" she said into the phone. She hung up. "It's still there!" She dialled again, punching the numbers feverishly. "Good evening, is that the Cotswold Clinic? Do you have a night manager on duty? Thank you."

There was a long pause. She tapped her pencil impatiently. Steve watched adoringly. As far as he was concerned, this could go on all night.

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"Good evening, Mr Ringwood, this is Dr Ferrami from Jones Falls University. Two of my subjects attended your clinic twenty-three years ago and it would be helpful to me to look at their records. I have fully notarised releases from them which I can fax to you tonight....That's very helpful. Would tomorrow be too soon? Shall we say two p.m.? You've been very kind. I'll do that. Thank you. Goodbye."

"Fertility clinic," Steve said thoughtfully. "Didn't I read, in that *Wall Street Journal* piece, that Genetico owns fertility clinics?"

Jeannie stared at him, open mouthed. "Oh, my God," she said in a low voice. "Of course it does."

"I wonder if there's any connection?"

"I just bet there is," said Jeannie.

"If there is, then...."

"Then Berisford Jones may know a lot more about you and Dennis than he's letting on."

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28

It had been a pig of a day, but it had ended all right, Berisford thought as he stepped out of the shower.

He looked at himself in the mirror. He was in great shape for fifty-nine: lean, upright, with faintly tanned skin and an almost flat stomach. His pubic hair was dark, but that was because he dyed it to get rid of the embarrassing gray. It was important to him to be able to take off his clothes in front of a woman without turning out the light.

He had begun the day by thinking he had Jeannie Ferrami over a barrel, but she had proved tougher than he expected. I won't underestimate her again, he thought.

On his way back from Washington he had dropped by Paul Barck's house to brief him on the latest development. As always, Paul had been even more worried and pessimistic than the situation warranted. Affected by Paul's mood, Berisford had driven home under a cloud of gloom. But when he walked into the house the phone had been ringing, and Jim, speaking in an improvised code, had confirmed that David Creane would stop the FBI cooperating with Jeannie. He had promised to make the necessary phone calls tonight.

Berisford towelled himself dry and put on blue cotton pajamas and a blue-and-white striped bathrobe. Marianne, the housekeeper, had the evening off, but there was a casserole in the refrigerator: chicken provençale, according to the note she had left in careful, childish handwriting. He put it in the oven and poured a small glass of Springbank malt whisky. As he took the first sip, the phone rang.

It was his ex-wife, Vivvie. "The *Wall Street Journal* says you're going to be rich," she said.

He pictured her, a slender blonde of sixty years, sitting on the terrace of her California house, watching the sun go down over the Pacific Ocean. "I suppose you want to come back to me."

"I thought about it, Berry. I thought about it very seriously for at least ten seconds. Then I realised a hundred and eighty million dollars wasn't enough."

That made him laugh.

"Seriously, Berry, I'm pleased for you."

He knew she was sincere. She had plenty of money of her own. After leaving him she had gone into the real estate business in Santa Barbara and had done well.

"Thank you."

"What are you going to do with the money? Leave it to Harry?"

Their son, Harry, was studying to be a certified public accountant. "He won't need it, he'll make a fortune as a CPA. I might give some of the money to Jim Proust.

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He's going to run for president."

"What'll you get in return? Do you want to be the US ambassador in Paris?"

"No, but I'd consider surgeon-general."

"Hey, Berry, you're serious about this. But I guess you shouldn't say too much on the phone."

"True."

"I gotta go, my date just rang the doorbell. See you sooner, Montezuma." It was an old family joke.

He gave her the response. "In a flash, succotash." He cradled the phone.

He found it a little depressing that Vivvie was going out for the evening with a date—he had no idea who it might be—while he was sitting at home alone with his whisky. Apart from the death of his father, Vivvie's leaving him was ^{had been} the great sadness of Berisford's life. He did not blame her for going: he had been hopelessly unfaithful. But he had loved her, and he still missed her, thirteen years after the divorce. The fact that he was at fault only made him sadder. Joshing with her on the phone reminded him of how much fun they had had together in the good times.

He turned on the TV and watched *Prime Time Live* while his dinner was warming. The kitchen filled with the fragrance of the herbs Marianne used. She was a great cook. Perhaps it was because Martinique had been a French colony.

Just as he was taking the casserole out of the oven, the phone rang again. This

time it was Paul Barck. He sounded shaken. "I just heard from Dick Minsky in Philadelphia," he said. "Jeannie Ferrami has made an appointment to go to the Philadelphia clinic tomorrow."

Berisford sat down heavily. "Christ on a pony," he said. "~~The bitch never stops!~~ How the hell did she get on to the clinic?"

"I don't know. Dick wasn't there, night manager took the call. But apparently she said some of her subjects had treatment years ago and she wanted to check their ✓ medical records. Faxed over her releases and said she'd be there at 2pm. Thank God Dick happened to call in about something else and the night manager mentioned it."

Dick Minsky had been one of the first people Genetico hired, back in the seventies. He had been the mail room boy then: now he was general manager of the clinics. He had never been a member of the inner circle—only Jim, Paul and Berisford could ever belong to that club—but he knew full well that the company was not what it seemed. Discretion was automatic with him.

"What did you tell Dick to do?"

"Cancel the appointment, of course. If she shows up anyway, turn her away. Tell her she can't see the records."

Berisford shook his head. "Not good enough."

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"Why?"

"It will just make her more curious. She'll try to find some other way to get at

the files."

"Like how?"

Berisford sighed. Paul could be unimaginative. "Well, if I were her, I'd call Landsmann, get Michael Madigan's secretary on the phone, and say he ought to look at the Cotswold Clinic's records from twenty-three years ago before he closes the takeover deal. That would get him asking questions, wouldn't it?"

"Well, what do you suggest?" Paul said tetchily.

"I think we're going to have to shred all the record cards from the seventies."

There was a moment of silence. "Berry, those records are unique. Scientifically, they're priceless—"

"You think I don't know that?" Berisford snapped.

"There must be another way."

Berisford sighed. He felt as bad as Paul did about it. He had fondly imagined that one day, many years in the future, someone would write the story of their pioneering experiments, and their boldness and scientific brilliance would be revealed to the world. It broke his heart to see the historical evidence wiped out in this guilty and underhand way. But it was inevitable now. "While the records exist, they're a threat to us. They have to be destroyed. And it had better be done right away."

"What'll we tell the staff?"

"Shit, I don't know, Paul, make something up, for Christ's sake. New corporate

document management strategy. So long as they start shredding first thing in the morning I don't care what you tell them."

"I guess you're right. Okay, I'll get back to Dick right away. Will you call Jim and bring him up to date?"

"Sure."

"Bye."

Berisford dialled Jim Proust's home number. His wife, a wispy woman with a downtrodden air, answered the phone and put Jim on. "I'm in bed, Berry, what the hell is it now?"

The three of them were getting very snappy with one another, (Berisford thought. It was the strain they were under.)

He told Jim what Paul had reported and the action they had decided on.

"Good move," Jim said. "But it's not enough. There are other ways this Ferrami woman could come at us."

Berisford felt a spasm of irritation. Nothing was ever enough for Jim. No matter what you proposed, Jim would always want tougher action, more extreme measures. Then he suppressed his annoyance. Jim was making sense this time, he reflected. Jeannie had proved to be a real bloodhound, unwavering in her pursuit of the scent. One setback would not make her give up. "I agree," he said to Jim. "And Steve Logan is out of jail, I heard earlier today, so she's not entirely alone. We have

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to deal with her long-term."

"She has to be scared off."

"Jim, for Christ's sake—"

"I know this brings out the wimp in you, Berry, but it has to be done."

"Forget it."

"Look—"

"I have a better idea, Jim, if you'll listen for a minute."

"Okay, I'm listening."

"I'm going to have her fired."

Jim thought about it for a while. "I don't know—will that do it?"

"Sure. Look, she imagines she's stumbled on a biological anomaly. It's the kind of thing that could make a young scientist's career. She has no idea of what's underneath all this: she believes the university is just afraid of bad publicity. If she loses her job, she'll have no facilities to pursue her investigation, and no reason to stick to it. Besides, she'll be too busy looking for another job. I happen to know she needs money."

"Maybe you're right."

Berisford was suspicious. Jim was agreeing too readily. "You're not planning to do something on your own, are you?" he said.

Jim evaded the question. "Can you do that, can you get her fired?"

29

Do we know what month this is?

It was a hot night in Philadelphia. In the tenement building, all the doors and windows were open: none of the rooms had air-conditioning. The sounds of the street floated up to apartment 5A on the top floor: car horns, laughter, snatches of music. On a cheap pine desk, scratched and marked with old cigarette burns, a phone was ringing.

He picked it up.

A voice like a bark said: "This is Jim."

"Hey, Uncle Jim, how are you?"

"I'm worried about you."

"How so?"

"I know what happened on Sunday night."

He hesitated, not sure how to reply. "They've arrested someone for that."

"But his girlfriend thinks he's innocent."

"So?"

"She's coming to Philadelphia tomorrow."

"What for?"

"I'm not sure. But I think she's a danger."

"Shit."

"You may want to do something about her."

"Such as?"

"It's up to you."

"How would I find her?"

"Do you know the Cotswold Clinic? It's in your neighbourhood."

"Sure, it's on Chestnut, I pass it every day."

"She'll be there at 2pm."

"How will I know her?"

"Tall, dark hair, pierced nostril, about thirty."

"That could be a lot of women."

"She'll probably be driving an old red Mercedes."

"That narrows it down."

"Now, bear in mind, the other guy is out on bail."

He frowned. "So what?"

"So, if she should meet with an accident, after she's been seen with you...."

"I get it. They'll assume it was him."

"You always were quick-thinking, my boy."

He laughed. "And you always were mean-thinking, Uncle."

"One more thing."

"I'm listening."

"She's beautiful. So enjoy."

"Bye, Uncle Jim. And thanks."

What if an (thing) had she done, or
thought or (felt) about her father's
robbing her? Need a return choice
fact. Y. the

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Jeannie had the Thunderbird dream again.

The first part of the dream was something that really happened, when she was nine and her sister was six, and their father was—briefly—living with them. He was flush with money at the time (and it was not until years later that Jeannie realised he must have got it from a successful robbery). He brought home a new Ford Thunderbird with a turquoise paint job and matching turquoise upholstery, the most beautiful car imaginable to a nine-year-old girl. They all went for a ride, Jeannie and Patty sitting in the front on the bench seat between Daddy and Mom. As they were cruising along the George Washington Memorial Parkway, Daddy put Jeannie on his lap and let her take the wheel.

In real life, she had steered the car into the fast lane and got a fright when a car that was trying to pass honked loudly and Daddy jerked the wheel and brought the Thunderbird back on track. But in the dream Daddy was no longer there, she was driving without help, and Mom and Patty sat quite unperturbed beside her even though they *knew* she couldn't see over the dashboard, and she just gripped the wheel tighter and tighter and tighter, waiting for the crash, while the the other cars honked the doorbell at her louder and louder.

"Unusual for the FBI to worry about a little thing like that."

"It seems the *New York Times* feels the same way." Ghita showed Jeannie the newspaper. On the front page was an article headed:

GENE RESEARCH ETHICS:

DOUBTS, FEARS AND A SQUABBLE

Jeannie was afraid the "squabble" was a reference to her own situation, and she was right.

Jean Ferrami is a determined young woman (the report began).

Against the wishes of her scientific colleagues and the president of Jones Falls University in Baltimore, Md, she stubbornly insists on continuing to scan medical records, looking for twins.

"I've got a contract," she says. "They can't give me orders."

And doubts about the ethics of her work will not shake her resolve.

Jeannie had a sick feeling in the pit of her stomach. "My God, this is awful," she said.

The report then moved on to another topic, research on human embryos; and

Jeannie had to turn to page 19 before she found another reference to herself.

A new headache for college authorities has been created by the case of Dr Jean Ferrami of the psychology department at Jones Falls. Although the university president, Dr Maurice Bell, and leading psychologist Prof. Berisford Jones both agree her work is unethical, she refuses to stop—and there may be nothing they can do to compel her.

Jeannie read to the end, but the newspaper did not report her insistence that her work was ethically blameless. The focus was entirely on the drama of her defiance.

(It was shocking and painful to be attacked this way. She felt hurt and outraged at the same time, the way she had when a thief had knocked her flying and snatched her billfold in a supermarket in Minneapolis years ago. Even though she knew the reporter was malicious and unscrupulous, she was ashamed, as if she had really done wrong. And she felt exposed, held up to the scorn of the nation.)

"I may have trouble finding *anyone* who will let me scan a database now," she ^{was in} _{d s. in} (said despondently). "Do you want some coffee? I need something to cheer me up. Not many days start as badly as this."

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"I'm sorry, Jeannie, but I'm in trouble too, for getting the Bureau involved."

As Jeannie started the coffee machine, she was struck by a thought. "This article is unfair, but if your boss spoke to you last night, it can't have been the newspaper that prompted his call."

"Maybe he knew the article was coming."

"I wonder who tipped him off?"

"He didn't say exactly, but he told me he had had a phone call from Capitol Hill."

Jeannie frowned. "It sounds as if this is political. Why the hell would a congressman or senator be interested enough in what I'm doing to tell the FBI not to work with me?"

"Maybe it was just a friendly warning from someone who knew about the article."

Jeannie shook her head. "The article doesn't mention the Bureau. Nobody else knows I'm working on FBI files. I didn't even tell Berisford."

"I'll try to find out who the call came from."

Jeannie looked in her freezer. "Have you had breakfast? I have cinnamon buns."

"No, thanks."

"I guess I'm not hungry either." She closed the refrigerator door. (She felt

2.8/

? s/ despairing) Was there nothing she could do? "Ghita, I don't suppose you could run my scan without your boss's knowledge?"

She did not have much hope that Ghita would agree. But the answer surprised her. Ghita frowned and said: "Didn't you get my e-mail yesterday?"

"I left early. What did it say?"

"That I was going to run your scan last night."

"And did you?"

"Yes. That's why I've come to see you. I did it last night, before he called me."

Suddenly Jeannie was hopeful again. "What? And you have the results?"

"I sent them to you by e-mail."

Jeannie was thrilled. "But that's great! Did you look? Were there many twins?"

"Quite a lot, twenty or thirty pairs."

"That's great! That means the system works!"

"But I told my boss I hadn't run the scan. I was scared and I lied."

Jeannie frowned. "That's awkward. I mean, what if he finds out, at some time in the future?"

"Exactly. Jeannie, you have to destroy that list."

"What?"

"If he ever finds out about it, I'm finished."

"But I can't destroy it! Not if it proves me right!"

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Ghita's face set in determined lines. "You have to."

"This is awful," Jeannie said miserably. "How can I destroy something that might save me?"

"I got into this by doing you a favor," Ghita said, wagging a finger. "You have to get me out of it!"

Jeannie did not see that it was entirely her fault. With a touch of acerbity she said: "I didn't tell you to lie to your boss."

That angered Ghita. "I was scared!"

"Wait a minute," Jeannie said. "Let's stay cool." She poured coffee into mugs and gave Ghita one. "Suppose you go into work today and tell your boss there was a misunderstanding. You gave instructions that the sweep should be cancelled, but you later found it had already been carried out and the results e-mailed."

Ghita took her coffee but did not drink it. She seemed close to tears. "Can you imagine working for the FBI? I'm up against the most macho men in middle America. They're looking for any excuse to say that women can't hack it."

"But you won't get fired."

"You got me over a barrel."

It was true, there was nothing Ghita could say to force Jeannie. But Jeannie said: "Come on, it's not that way."

Ghita did not soften. "Yes, it is that way. I'm asking you to destroy that list."

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"Then there's nothing more to say." Ghita went to the door.

"Don't leave like this," Jeannie said. "We've been friends for too long."

Ghita went.

"Shit," Jeannie said. "Shit." *Need to feel her pain.*

The street door slammed.

Did I just lose one of my oldest friends? Jeannie thought.

Ghita had let her down. Jeannie understood the reasons: there was a lot of pressure on a young woman trying to make a career. All the same, it was Jeannie who was under attack, not Ghita. Ghita's friendship had not survived the test of a crisis.

Jeannie wondered if other friends would go the same way.

Feeling miserable, she took a quick shower and began to throw on her clothes. Then she made herself stop and think. She was going into battle: she had better dress for it. She took off her black jeans and red T-shirt and started again. She washed and blow-dried her hair. She made up her face carefully: foundation, powder, mascara and lipstick. She dressed in a black suit with a dove-gray blouse, sheer stockings and patent-leather shoes with a heel. She changed her nose ring for a plain stud.

She studied herself in a full-length mirror. She felt dangerous and she looked formidable. "Kill, Jeannie, kill," she murmured. Then she went out.

*What does she anticipate, hope for?
Who does she think she's up
against? What must she do
she now want?*

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Jeannie thought about Steve Logan as she drove to JFU. She had called him a big strong kid, but in fact he was more mature than some men ever got to be. She had cried on his shoulder, so she must trust him at some deep level. She had liked the way he smelled, sort of like tobacco before it is lit. Despite her distress she could not help noticing his erection, although he had tried not to let her feel it. It was flattering that he should get so excited just hugging her, and she smiled as she recalled the scene. It was a pity he was not ten or fifteen years older.

Steve reminded her of her first love, Bobby Springfield. She was thirteen, he was fifteen. She knew almost nothing about love and sex, but he was equally ignorant, and they had embarked on a voyage of discovery together. She blushed as she remembered the things they had done in the back row of the Moviedrome on Saturday nights. The exciting thing about Bobby, as with Steve, was a sense of passion constrained. Bobby had wanted her so badly, and had been so inflamed by stroking her nipples or touching her panties, that she had felt enormously powerful. For a while she had abused that power, getting him all hot and bothered just to prove she could do it. But she soon realised, even at the age of twelve, that that was a foolish game. Still she never lost the sense of risk, of playing with a chained giant.

And that had come back with Steve.

He was the only good thing on her horizon. She was in bad trouble. She could not resign from her post here at JFU now. After the *New York Times* had made her famous for defying her bosses, she would find it hard to get another scientific job. If I were a professor, I wouldn't hire someone who caused this kind of trouble, she thought.

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But it was too late for her to take a more cautious stance. Her only hope was to press on stubbornly, using the FBI data, and produce scientific results so convincing that people would look again at her methodology and debate its ethics seriously.

It was nine o'clock when she pulled into her parking space. As she locked the car and walked into Nut House she had an acid feeling in her stomach: too much tension and no food.

As soon as she stepped into her office, she knew someone had been there.

It was not the cleaners. She was familiar with the changes they made: the chairs shifted an inch or two, cup rings swabbed, the waste basket on the wrong side of the desk. This was different. Someone had sat at her computer. The keyboard was at the wrong angle: the intruder had unconsciously shifted it to his or her habitual position. The mouse had been left in the middle of the pad, whereas she always tucked it neatly up against the edge of the keyboard. Looking around, she noticed a

cupboard door open a crack, and a corner of paper sticking out of the edge of a filing cabinet.

The room had been searched.

At least, she reflected, it had been done amateurishly. It was not like the CIA was after her. All the same it made her deeply uneasy, and she had butterflies in her stomach as she sat down and turned on her PC. Who had been here? A member of the faculty? A student? A bribed security guard? Some outsider? And why?

She retrieved her e-mail. There was only one message: the results of the FBI scan. "Hallelujah," she breathed.

She downloaded the list of names and addresses with profound relief. She was vindicated: the scan had in fact found pairs. She could hardly wait to check them out and see whether there were any more anomalies like Steve and Dennis.

Ghita had sent her an earlier e-mail message, saying she was going to run the scan, Jeannie recalled. What had happened to that? She wondered if it had been downloaded by last night's snooper. That could explain the panicky late-night call to Jeannie's boss.

She had the list in her hand
She was about to glance at the names on the list, just out of idle curiosity, when the phone rang. It was the university president. "Maurice Bell here. I think we had better discuss this report in the *New York Times*, don't you?"

Jeannie's stomach tightened. Here we go, she thought apprehensively. It begins.

"Of course," she said. "What time would suit you?"

"I was hoping you might step into my office right away."

"I'll be there in five minutes."

She copied the FBI results on to a floppy disk then exited from the internet. She took the disk out of her computer and picked up a pen. She thought for a moment, then wrote on the label SHOPPING.LST. No doubt it was an unnecessary precaution, but it made her feel better.

She slipped the floppy into the box containing her backup files and went out.

The day was already heating up. As she crossed the campus she asked herself what she wanted out of this meeting with Bell. Her only objective was to be allowed to continue with her research. She needed to be tough, and make it clear she was not to be bullied; but ideally she would soothe the anger of the university authorities and de-escalate the conflict.

She was glad she had worn the black suit, even though she was sweating in it: it made her look older and more authoritative. Her high heels clacked on the flagstones as she approached Hillside Hall. She was ushered straight into the president's lavish office.

Berisford Jones was sitting there, a copy of the *New York Times* in his hand. She smiled at him, glad to have an ally. He nodded rather coolly and said: "Good morning, Jeannie."

Maurice Bell was in his wheelchair behind his big desk. With his usual abrupt manner he said: "The university simply cannot tolerate this, Dr Ferrami."

He did not ask her to sit, but she was not going to be carpeted like a schoolgirl, so she selected a chair, moved it, sat down and crossed her legs. "It was a pity you told the press you had cancelled my project before checking whether you had the legal right so to do," she said as coolly as she could. "I fully agree with you that it made the college look foolish."

He bridled. "It was not I who made us look foolish."

That was enough being tough, she decided; now was the moment to tell him they were both on the same side. She uncrossed her legs. "Of course not," she said. "The truth is we were both a little hasty, and the press took advantage of us."

Berisford put in: "The damage is done, now—there's no point in apologising."

"I wasn't apologising," she snapped. She turned back to Bell and smiled. "However, I do think we should stop bickering."

Once again Berisford answered her. "It's too late for that," he said.

"I'm sure it's not," she said. She wondered why Berisford had said that. He ought to want a reconciliation: it was not in his interests to be inflammatory. She kept her eyes and her smile on the president. "We're rational people. We must be able to find a compromise that would allow me to continue my work and yet preserve the university's dignity."

Bell clearly liked that idea, although he frowned and said: "I don't quite see how...."

"This is all a waste of time," Berisford said impatiently.

It was the third time he had made a quarrelsome interjection. Jeannie choked back another waspish rejoinder. Why was he being like this? Did he *want* her to stop doing her research and get into trouble with the university and be discredited? It began to seem that way. Was it *Berisford* who had sneaked into her room and downloaded her e-mail and warned off the FBI? Could it even be he who had tipped off the *New York Times* in the first place and started this whole row? She was so stunned by the perverse logic of this notion that she was silent.

"We have already decided the university's course of action," Berisford said.

She realised she had mistaken the power structure in the room. Berisford was the boss here, not Bell. Berisford was the conduit for Genetico's research millions, which Bell needed. Berisford had nothing to fear from Bell; rather the reverse. She had been focussing on the monkey instead of the organ-grinder.

Berisford had now dropped the pretence that the university president was in charge. "We didn't call you in here to ask your opinion," he said.

"Then why did you call me in?" Jeannie asked.

"To fire you," he replied.

She was stunned. She had expected the threat of dismissal, but not the thing

itself. She could hardly take it in. "What do you mean?" she said stupidly.

"I mean you're fired," Berisford said. He smoothed his eyebrows with the tip of his right index finger, a sign that he was pleased with himself.

Jeannie felt as if she had been punched. *Expends on this a bit* I can't be fired, she thought. I've only been here a few weeks. I was getting on so well, working so hard. I thought they all liked me, except Sophie Chapple. How did this happen so fast?

She tried to collect her thoughts. "You can't fire me," she said.

"We just did."

"No." As she got over the initial shock, she began to feel angry and defiant. "You're not tribal chieftains here. There's a procedure." Universities usually could not fire faculty without some kind of hearing. It was mentioned in her contract, but she had never checked the details. Suddenly it was vitally important to her.

Maurice Bell supplied the information. "There will be a hearing before the discipline committee of the university senate, of course," he said. "Normally, four weeks notice is required; but in view of the bad publicity surrounding this case I, as president, have invoked the emergency procedure, and the hearing will be held tomorrow morning."

Jeannie was bewildered by how fast they had acted. The discipline committee? Emergency procedure? Tomorrow morning? This was not a discussion. It was more like being arrested. She half-expected Bell to read out her rights.

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He did something similar. He pushed a folder across his desk. "In there you will find the procedural rules of the committee. You may be represented by a lawyer or other advocate provided you notify the chair of the committee in advance."

Jeannie at last managed a sensible question. "Who's the chair?"

"Jack Budgen," said Bell.

Berisford looked up sharply. "Is that already settled?"

"The chair is appointed annually," Bell said. "Jack took over at the start of the semester."

"I didn't know that." Berisford looked annoyed, and Jeannie knew why. Jack Budgen was her tennis partner. That was encouraging: he ought to be fair to her. All was not lost. ^{Relief? Hope?} She would have a chance to defend herself, and her research methods, in front of a group of academics. There would be a serious discussion, not the glib superficialities of the *New York Times*.

And she had the results of her FBI sweep. She began to see how she would defend herself. She would show the committee the FBI data. With luck there would be one or two pairs who did not know they were twins. That would be impressive. Then she would explain the precautions she took to protect individuals' privacy....

"I think that's all," said Maurice Bell.

Jeannie was being dismissed. She stood up. "What a pity it's come to this," she said.

They
her to punctuate more emphatically
emotional highs and lows.

Berisford said quickly: "You brought it to this."

He was like an argumentative child. She did not have the patience for pointless wrangling. She gave him a disdainful look and left the room.

As she crossed the campus she relected ruefully that she had completely failed to achieve her aims. She had wanted a negotiated settlement, and she had got a gladiatorial contest. But Berisford and Bell had made their decision before she walked into the room. The meeting had been a formality.

She returned to Nut House. As she approached her room she noticed with irritation that the cleaners had left a black plastic garbage bag right outside her office. She would call them immediately. But when she tried to open her door it seemed to be jammed. She swiped her card through the card reader several times but the door did not open. She was about to walk to reception and call maintenance when a dreadful thought occurred to her.

She looked inside the black bag. It was not full of waste paper and styrofoam coffee cups. The first thing she saw was her canvas Land's End briefcase. Also in the sack was the Kleenex box from her drawer, a paperback copy of *A Thousand Acres* by Jane Smiley, and her hairbrush.

They had cleared out her desk and locked her out of her room.

She was devastated. This was a worse blow than what had happened in Maurice Bell's office. That was just words. This made her feel cut off from a huge part

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of her life. This is my *room*, she thought; how can they shut me out? "You fucking creeps," she said aloud.

It must have been done by security while she was in Bell's office. Of course they had not warned her: that would have given her the chance to take anything she really needed. Once again she had been surprised by their ruthlessness.

It was like an amputation. They had taken away her science, her work. She did not know what to do with herself, where to go. For eleven years she had been a scientist—as an undergraduate, graduate student, doctoral student, postdoctoral, and assistant professor. Now, suddenly, she was nothing.

As her spirits sank from despondency to black despair, she remembered the disk with the FBI data. She rummaged through the contents of the plastic sack, but there were no floppy disks. Her results, the backbone of her defence, were locked inside the room.

She pounded futilely on the door with her fist. A passing student who took her statistics class gave her a startled look and said: "Can I help you, professor?"

She recalled his name. "Hi, Ben. You could kick down this goddamn door."

He studied the door, looking dubious.

"I didn't mean it," she said. "I'm fine, thanks."

He shrugged and walked on.

There was no point in standing and staring at the locked door. She picked up

of her life. This is my *room*, she thought; how can they shut me out? "You fucking creeps," she said aloud.

It must have been done by security while she was in Bell's office. Of course they had not warned her: that would have given her the chance to take anything she really needed. Once again she had been surprised by their ruthlessness.

It was like an amputation. They had taken away her science, her work. She did not know what to do with herself, where to go. For eleven years she had been a scientist—as an undergraduate, graduate student, doctoral student, postdoctoral, and assistant professor. Now, suddenly, she was nothing.

As her spirits sank from despondency to black despair, she remembered the disk with the FBI data. She rummaged through the contents of the plastic sack, but there were no floppy disks. Her results, the backbone of her defence, were locked inside the room.

She pounded futilely on the door with her fist. A passing student who took her statistics class gave her a startled look and said: "Can I help you, professor?"

She recalled his name. "Hi, Ben. You could kick down this goddamn door."

He studied the door, looking dubious.

"I didn't mean it," she said. "I'm fine, thanks."

He shrugged and walked on.

There was no point in standing and staring at the locked door. She picked up

the plastic bag and walked into the lab. Lisa was at her desk, keying data into a computer. "I've been fired," Jeannie said.

Lisa stared at her. "*What?*"

"They locked me out of my office and dumped my stuff in this fucking garbage bag."

"I don't believe it!"

Jeannie took her briefcase out of the bag and extracted the *New York Times*. "It's on account of this."

Lisa read the first two paragraphs and said: "But this is bullshit."

Jeannie sat down. "I know. So why is Berisford pretending to take it seriously?"

"You think he's pretending?"

"I'm sure of it. He's too smart to let himself be rattled by this kind of crap. He has some other agenda." Jeannie drummed her feet on the floor, helpless with frustration. "He's ready to do anything, he's really going out on a limb with this...there must be something big at stake for him." Perhaps she would find the answer in the medical records of the Cotswold Clinic in Philadelphia. She checked her watch. She was due there at two p.m.: she had to leave soon.

Lisa still could not take in the news. "They can't just *fire* you," she said indignantly.

"There's a disciplinary hearing tomorrow morning."

"My God, they're serious."

"They sure are."

"Is there anything I can do?"

There was, but Jeannie was afraid to ask. She looked appraisingly at Lisa. Lisa was wearing a high-neck blouse with a loose sweater over it, despite the hot weather: she was covering up her body, a reaction to the rape, no doubt. She still looked solemn, like someone recently bereaved.

(Would her friendship prove as fragile as Ghita's? Jeannie was terrified of the answer. If Lisa let her down who would she have left? But ^{Jeannie} she had to ^{put} her ^{into} (to the test,) even though this was the worst possible time. "You could try to get into my office," she said hesitantly. "The results from the FBI are in there."

Lisa did not answer right away. "Did they change your lock, or something?"

"It's easier than that. They alter the code electronically so that your card no longer works. I won't be able to get into the building after hours either, I'll bet."

"It's hard to take this in, it's happened so quickly."

Jeannie hated pressuring Lisa to take risks. She racked her brains for a let-out. "Maybe I could get in myself. A cleaner might let me in, but my guess is that the lock will no longer respond to their cards either. If I'm not using the room it won't need cleaning anyway. But security must be able to get in."

"They won't help you. They'll know you've been locked out deliberately."

"That's true," Jeannie said. "They might let you in, though. You could say you needed something from my room."

Lisa looked thoughtful.

"I hate to ask you," Jeannie said.

Then Lisa's expression changed. "Hell, yes," she said at last. "Of course I'll try it."

Jeannie felt choked up. "Thanks," she said. She bit her lip. "You're a friend." She reached across the desk and squeezed Lisa's hand.

Lisa was embarrassed by Jeannie's emotion. "Where in your room is the FBI list?" she said practically.

"The information is on a floppy disk labelled SHOPPING.LST, in a box of floppies in my desk drawer."

"Got it." Lisa frowned "I can't understand why they're so against you."

"It all started with Steve Logan," Jeannie said. "Ever since Berisford saw him here there has been trouble. But I think I may be on the way to understanding why." She stood up.

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The threat is good, but we need more despair, desperation and more soothing relief and wild hope. I think the roller-coaster is a good image.

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Berisford stared out of the window of his office. No one was using the tennis court this morning. His imagination pictured Jeannie there (He had seen her on the first or second day of the semester, racing across the court in her short skirt, brown legs pumping, white shoes flashing....He had fallen for her then, although it was another month before he had got around to asking her for a date. He frowned, wondering why he had been so struck by her athleticism. Seeing women play sports was not a special turn-on for him. He never watched *American Gladiators*, unlike Professor Gormley in Egyptology, who had every show on videotapes and reran them, according to rumor, late at night in his den at home. But when Jeannie played tennis she achieved a special grace. It was like watching a lion break into a sprint in a nature film: the muscles flowed beneath the skin, the hair flew in the slipstream, and the body moved, stopped, turned and moved again with astonishing, supernatural suddenness. It was mesmerising to watch and he had been captivated. Now she was threatening everything he had worked for all his life, yet he still wished he could watch her play tennis one more time.)

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It was maddening that he could not simply dismiss her, even though her salary was essentially paid by him. Jones Falls University was her employer, and Genetico

had already given them the money. A college could not fire faculty the way a restaurant could fire an incompetent waiter. That was why he had to go through this rigmarole.

"The hell with her," he said aloud, and he went back to his desk.

This morning's interview had proceeded smoothly, until the revelation about Jack Budgen. Berisford had got Maurice good and riled in advance, and had neatly prevented any rapprochement. But it was bad news that the chair of the discipline committee was to be Jeannie's tennis partner. Berisford had not checked this out in advance: he had assumed he would have some influence over the choice of chair, and he had been startled to learn that the appointment was a done thing.

There was a grave danger Jack would see Jeannie's side of the story.

He scratched his head worriedly. Berisford never socialised with his academic colleagues—he preferred the more glamorous company of political and media types. But he knew Jack Budgen's background. Jack had retired from professional tennis at the age of thirty and returned to college to get his doctorate. Already too old to begin a career in chemistry, his subject, he had become an administrator. Running the university's complex of libraries, and balancing the conflicting demands of rival departments, required a tactful and obliging nature, and Jack did it well.

How could Jack be ^{swayed?} manipulated? He was not a devious man: quite the reverse—his easygoing nature went along with a kind of naivety. He would be

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How could Jack be manipulated? He was not a devious man: quite the reverse—his easygoing nature went along with a kind of naivety. He would be

offended if Berisford openly lobbied him, or blatantly offered some kind of bribe. But it might be possible to influence him discreetly.

Berisford himself had accepted a bribe once. He still felt knots in his guts whenever he thought of it. It had happened early in his career, before he became a full professor. A woman undergraduate had been caught cheating—paying another student to write her term paper. Her name was Judy Gilmore and she was really cute. She ought to have been expelled from the university, but the head of the department had the power to impose a lesser punishment. Judy had come to Berisford's office to "talk about the problem". She had crossed and uncrossed her legs, and gazed mournfully into his eyes, and bent forward so that he could look down the front of her buttoned shirt and glimpse a lacy brassiere. He had been sympathetic and had promised to intercede on her behalf. She cried and thanked him, then took his hand, then kissed him on the lips, and finally she unzipped his fly. They ended up in a half-dressed frenzy on the floor of his office.

She never suggested a deal. She did not offer him sex before he agreed to help her, and after they had screwed on the floor she calmly dressed and combed her hair and kissed him and left. But the next day he had persuaded the department head to let her off with a warning.

He had taken the bribe because he had been able to tell himself it was not a bribe. Judy asked him for help, he agreed, she fell for his charms, and they made love.

As time went by he came to see this as pure sophistry. The offer of sex had been implicit in her manner, and when he promised her what she asked she had wisely sealed the bargain. He liked to think of himself as a principled man, and he had done something absolutely shameful. *Any pain, remove?*

He had no scruples about bribing others. If people were corrupt it was their responsibility. He would bribe Jack Budgen if possible. But he would do it the way Judy had: by giving him the opportunity to kid himself about it.

Berisford thought for a few minutes more, then he picked up the phone and called Jack.

"Thanks for sending me a copy of your memo about the biophysics library extension," he began.

There was a startled pause. "Oh, yes. That was a while ago—but I'm glad you found time to read it."

Berisford had barely glanced at the document. "I think your proposal has a lot of merit. I'm just calling to say that I'll back you when it comes before the appropriations board."

"Thank you. I appreciate that."

"In fact I might be able to persuade Genetico to put up part of the funding."

Jack seized on that idea eagerly. "We could call it the Genetico Biophysics Library."

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"Good idea. I'll speak to them about it." Berisford needed to discuss Jeannie, of course, but he wanted Jack to raise the subject. Maybe they could get to her via tennis. "How was your summer?" he said. "Did you get to Wimbledon?"

"Not this year. Too much work."

"That's too bad." With some trepidation, he pretended he was about to hang up. "Talk to you later."

As he had hoped, Jack forestalled him. "Uh, Berry, what do you think about this crap in the newspapers? About Jeannie?"

"Oh, that," Berisford said dismissively. "Storm in a teacup."

"I've been trying to call her but she's not in her office."

"Don't worry about Genetico," Berisford said, although Jack had not mentioned the company. "They're relaxed about the whole thing. Fortunately, Maurice Bell has acted quickly and decisively."

"You mean the disciplinary hearing."

"I imagine that will be a formality. She's embarrassing the university, she's refused to stop, and she's gone to the press. I doubt she'll even trouble to defend herself. I've told the people at Genetico that we have the situation under control. At present there's no threat to the college's relationship with them."

"That's good."

"Of course, if the committee should take Jeannie's side against Maurice, for

some reason, we'd be in trouble. But I don't think that's very likely—do you?"

"You know I'm chair of the committee?"

Berisford was irritated that Jack had evaded the question. "Yes, and I'm very pleased there's such a cool head in charge of the proceedings." He mentioned a shaven-headed professor of philosophy. "If Malcolm Barnet had been chair, God knows what might have happened."

Jack laughed. "The senate has more sense. They wouldn't put Malcolm in charge of the parking committee—he'd try to use it as an instrument of social change."

"But with you in charge I assume the committee will support the president."

Once again Jack's reply was tantalizingly ambivalent. "Not all the committee members are predictable."

You bastard, you're really making me sweat, Berisford thought. "But the chair is not a loose cannon, I'm sure of that."

There was a pause. "Berry, it would be wrong for me to prejudge the issue, but I think I can say that Genetico need not worry about this."

"Thank you, Jack. I appreciate it."

"Strictly between the two of us, of course."

"Naturally."

"Then I'll see you tomorrow."

"Bye." Berisford hung up.

Did Jack really not know he had just been bribed? Did he kid himself about it? Or did he understand perfectly well, but simply pretend not to?

It did not matter, so long as he steered the committee the right way.

That might not be the end of it, of course. The committee's decision had to be ratified by a meeting of the full senate. At some point Jeannie might well hire a hotshot lawyer and start to sue the university for all kinds of compensation. The case could drag on for years. But her investigations would be halted, and that was all that mattered.

However, the committee's decision was not yet in the bag. If things went wrong tomorrow morning, Jeannie could be back at her desk by midday, hot on the trail of Genetico's guilty secrets. Berisford shuddered: God forbid. He pulled a scratchpad to him and wrote down the names of the committee members.

Jack Budgen—Library

Tenniel Biddenham—History of Art

Milton Powers—Mathematics

Mark Trader—Anthropology

Jane Edelsborough—Physics

Biddenham, Powers and Trader were conventional men, longstanding professors whose careers were bound up with Jones Falls and its continued prestige and prosperity. They could be relied upon to support the university president, Berisford felt sure. The dark horse was the woman, Jane Edelsborough.

He would deal with her next.

Okay, but better if he's more
vulnerable, more distressed at
Budget's evasions. Better too, I
think, if Budget leaves him
hanging -- or suggests that B.
may be trying to influence
him.

Maybe a fantasy of what'll
happen if B. if T prevails
and B's secret is uncovered.

33

Driving to Philadelphia on I-95, Jeannie found herself thinking about Steve Logan again.

She had kissed him goodbye last night, in the visitors' car park on the Jones Falls campus. She found herself regretting that the kiss had been so fleeting. His lips were full and dry, his skin warm. She quite liked the idea of doing it again.

Why was she prejudiced against him because of his age? What was so great about older men? Will Temple, aged thirty-nine, had dropped her for an empty-headed heiress. So much for maturity.

She pressed the Seek button on her radio, looking for a good station, and got Nirvana playing *Come as You Are*. Whenever she thought about dating a man her own age, or younger, she got a scared feeling, a bit like the frisson of danger that went with a Nirvana track. Older men were reassuring, they knew what to do.

Is this me? she thought. Jeannie Ferrami, the woman who does as she pleases and tells the world to go screw? I need reassurance? Get out of here!

It was true, though. Perhaps it was because of her father. After him, she never wanted another irresponsible man in her life. On the other hand, her father was living proof that older men could be just as irresponsible as young.

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She guessed Daddy was sleeping in cheap hotels somewhere in Baltimore. When he had drunk and gambled whatever money he got for her computer and her TV—which would not take him long—he would either steal something else or throw himself on the mercy of his other daughter, Patty. She hated him for stealing her stuff. However, the incident had served to bring out the best in Steve Logan. He had been a prince. What the hell, she thought; when next I see Steve Logan I'm going to kiss him again, and this time I'll kiss him good.

She became tense as she threaded the Mercedes through the crowded center of Philadelphia. This could be the big breakthrough. She might be about to find the solution to the puzzle of Steve and Dennis.

The Cotswold Clinic was in University City, west of the Shuylkill River, a neighbourhood of college buildings and student apartments. The clinic itself was a pleasant low-rise fifties building surrounded by trees. Jeannie parked at a meter on the street and went inside.

There were four people in the waiting area: a young couple, the woman looking strained and the man nervous, plus two other women of about Jeannie's age, all sitting in a square of low couches, looking at magazines. A chirpy receptionist asked Jeannie to take a seat, and she picked up a glossy brochure about Genetico, Inc. She held it open on her lap without reading it: instead she stared at the soothingly meaningless abstract art on the lobby walls, and tapped her feet impatiently on the

carpeted floor.

She hated hospitals. She had only once been a patient. At the age of twenty-three she had had an abortion. The father was an aspiring film director. She stopped taking the contraceptive pill because they split up, but he came back after a few days, there was a ~~loving~~ reconciliation, and they had unprotected sex and she got pregnant. The operation proceeded without complications, but Jeannie cried for days, and she lost all affection for the film director, even though he was ~~loving~~ and supportive throughout.

He had just made his first Hollywood movie, an action picture. Jeannie had gone alone to see it at the Charles cinema in Baltimore. The only touch of humanity in an otherwise mechanical story of men shooting at one another was when the hero's girlfriend became depressed after an abortion and threw him out. The man, a police detective, had been bewildered and heartbroken. Jeannie had cried.

The memory still hurt. She stood up and paced the floor. A minute later a man emerged from the back of the lobby and said: "Doctor Ferrami!" in a loud voice. He was an anxiously jolly man of about fifty, with a bald pate and a monkish fringe of ginger hair. "Hello, hello, good to meet you," he said with unwarranted enthusiasm.

Jeannie shook his hand. "Last night I spoke to a Mr Ringwood."

"Yes, yes! I'm a colleague of his, my name's Dick Minsky. How do you do?"

Dick had a nervous tic that made him blink violently every few seconds: ~~Jeannie felt~~

sorry for him.

He led her up a staircase. "What's led to your inquiry, may I ask?"

"A medical mystery," she explained. "The two women have sons who appear to be identical twins, yet they seem to be unrelated. The only connection I've been able to find is that both women were treated here before getting pregnant."

"Is that so?" he said as if he were not really listening. Jeannie was surprised: she had expected him to be intrigued.

They entered a corner office. "All our records can be accessed by computer, provided you have the right code," he said. He sat at a screen. "Now, the patients we're interested in are...?"

"Charlotte Pinker and Lorraine Logan."

"This won't take a minute." He began to key in the names.

Jeannie contained her impatience. These records might reveal nothing at all. She looked around the room. It was too grand an office for a mere filing clerk. Dick must be more than just a "colleague" of Mr Ringwood's, she thought. "What's your role here at the clinic, Dick?" she said.

"I'm the general manager."

She raised her eyebrows, but he did not look up from the keyboard. Why was her inquiry being dealt with by such a senior person? she wondered, and a sense of unease crept into her mood like a wisp of smoke.

He frowned. "That's odd. The computer says we have no record of either name."

Jeannie's unease gelled. *a stronger reaction, I think* I believe I'm about to be lied to, she thought. The prospect of a solution to the puzzle receded into the far distance again. A sense of anticlimax washed over her and depressed her.

He spun his screen around so that she could see it. "Do I have the correct spellings?"

"Yes."

"When do you think these patients attended the clinic?"

"Approximately twenty-three years ago."

He looked at her. "Oh, dear," he said, and he blinked hard. "Then I'm afraid you've made a wasted journey."

"Why?"

"We don't keep records from that far back. It's our corporate document management strategy."

Jeannie narrowed her eyes at him. "You throw away old records?"

"We shred the cards, yes, after twenty years, unless of course the patient has been readmitted, in which case the record is transferred to the computer."

It was a sickening disappointment, and a waste of precious hours that she needed to prepare her defence for tomorrow. She said bitterly: "How strange that Mr

Keep her part going through the following pages

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Ringwood didn't tell me this when I talked to him last night."

"He really should have. Perhaps you didn't mention the dates."

"I'm quite sure I told him the two woman were treated here twenty-three years ago." Jeannie remembered adding a year to Steve's age to get the right period.

"Then it's hard to understand."

Somehow Jeannie was not completely surprised at the way this had turned out. Dick Minsky, with his exaggerated friendliness and nervous blink, was the caricature of a man with a guilty conscience.

He turned his screen back to its original position. Seeming regretful, he said: "I'm afraid there's no more I can do for you."

"Could we talk to Mr Ringwood, and ask him why he didn't tell me about the cards being shredded?"

"I'm afraid Peter's off sick today."

"What a remarkable coincidence."

He tried to look offended, but the result was a parody. "I hope you're not implying that we're trying to keep something from you."

"Why would I think that?"

"I have no idea." He stood up. "And now, I'm afraid, I've run out of time."

Jeannie got up and preceded him to the door. He followed her down the stairs to the lobby. "Good day to you," he said stiffly.

"Goodbye," she said.

Outside the door she hesitated. She felt combative. She was tempted to do something provocative, to show them they could not manipulate her totally. She decided to snoop around a bit.

The car park was full of doctors' cars, late-model Cadillacs and BMWs. To one side of the building, a black man with a white beard was sweeping up litter with a noisy blower. There was nothing remarkable or even interesting there. She came up against a blank wall and retraced her steps.

Through the glass door at the front she saw Dick Minsky, still in the lobby, talking to the chirpy secretary. He watched anxiously as Jeannie walked by.

Circling the building in the other direction, she came to the garbage dump. Three men wearing heavyweight gloves were loading trash on to a truck. This was stupid, Jeannie decided. She was acting like the detective in a hard-boiled mystery. She was about to turn back when something struck her. The men were lifting huge brown plastic sacks of trash effortlessly, as if they weighed very little. What would a clinic be throwing away that was bulky but light?

Shredded paper?

She heard Dick Minsky's voice. He sounded scared. "Would you please leave now, Dr Ferrami?"

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She turned. He was coming around the corner of the building, accompanied

by a man in the police-style uniform used by security guards.

She walked quickly to a stack of sacks.

Dick Minsky shouted: "Hey!"

The garbage men stared at her but she ignored them. She ripped a hole in one sack, reached inside, and pulled out a handful of the contents.

She was holding a sheaf of strips of thin brown card. When she looked closely at the strips she could see they had been written on, some in pen and some with a typewriter. These were shredded hospital record cards.

There could be only one reason why so many sacks were being taken away today.

They had destroyed their records *this morning*—only hours after she had called.

She dropped the shreds on the ground and walked away. One of the garbage men indignantly shouted at her, but she ignored him.

Now there was no doubt.

She stood in front of Dick Minsky, hands on hips. He had been lying to her, and that was why he was a nervous wreck. "You've got a shameful secret here, haven't you?" she yelled. "Something you're trying to hide by destroying these records?"

He was completely terrified. "Of course not," he managed. "And, by the way, the suggestion is offensive."

"Of course it is," she said. Her temper got the better of her. She pointed at him

by a man in the police-style uniform used by security guards.

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with the rolled-up Genetico brochure she was still carrying. "But this investigation is very important to me, and you'd better believe that anyone who *lies* to me about it is going to be fucked over, but good, before I'm finished."

"Please leave," he said.

The security guard took her by the left elbow.

"I'm leaving," she said. "No need to hold me."

He did not release her. "This way, please," he said.

He was a middle-aged man with gray hair and a pot belly. In this mood Jeannie was not going to be mauled by him. With her right hand she grasped the arm he was holding her with. The muscles of his upper arm were flabby. "Let go, please," she said, and she squeezed. Her hands were strong and her grip was more powerful than most men's. The guard tried to retain his grasp on her elbow but the pain was too much for him, and after a moment he released her. "Thank you," she said.

She walked away.

She felt better. She had been right to think there was a clue in this clinic. Their efforts to keep her from learning anything were the best possible confirmation that they had a guilty secret. The solution to the mystery was connected with this place. But where did that get her?

She went to her car but did not get in. It was two-thirty and she had had no lunch. She was too excited to eat much but she needed a cup of coffee. Across the

street was a cafeteria next to a gospel hall. It looked cheap and clean. She crossed the road and went inside.

Her threat to Dick Minsky had been empty: there was nothing she could do to harm him. She had achieved nothing by getting mad at him. In fact she had tipped her hand, making it clear that she knew she was being lied to. Now they were on their guard.

The cafe was quiet but for a few students finishing lunch. She ordered coffee and a salad. While she was waiting, she opened the brochure she had picked up in the lobby of the clinic. She read:

The Cotswold Clinic was founded in 1972 by Genetico, Inc., as a pioneering center for research and development of human in vitro fertilization—the creation of what the newspapers call "test-tube babies".

And suddenly it was all clear.

34

Jane Edelsborough was a widow in her early fifties. A statuesque but untidy woman, she normally dressed in loose ethnic clothes and sandals. She had a brilliant mind, but no one would have guessed it to look at her. Berisford found such people baffling. If you were clever, he thought, why disguise yourself as an idiot by dressing badly? Yet universities were full of such people—in fact he was exceptional in taking care over his appearance.

Today he was looking especially natty in a navy linen jacket and matching vest with lightweight houndstooth-check pants. He inspected his image in the mirror behind the door before leaving his office on his way to see Jane.

He headed for the Student Union. Faculty rarely ate there—Berisford had never entered the place—but Jane had gone there for a late lunch, according to the chatty secretary in Physics.

The lobby of the union was full of kids in shorts queueing to get money out of the bank teller machines. He stepped into the cafeteria and looked around. She was in a far corner, reading a journal and eating french fries with her fingers.

The place was a food court, such as Berisford had seen in airports and shopping malls, with a Pizza Hut, an ice-cream counter and a Burger King as well as

a regular cafeteria. Berisford picked up a tray and went into the cafeteria section. Inside a glass-fronted case were a few tired sandwiches and some doleful cakes. He shuddered: in normal circumstances he would drive to the next state rather than eat here.

This was going to be difficult. Jane was not his kind of woman. That made it even more likely that she would lean the wrong way at the discipline hearing. He had to make a friend of her in a short time. It would call for all his powers of charm.

Let her be j. Healy

He bought a piece of cheesecake and a cup of coffee and carried them to Jane's table. "Jane," he said. "This is a pleasant surprise. May I join you?"

"Sure," she said amiably, putting her journal aside. She took off her glasses, revealing deep brown eyes with wrinkles of amusement at the corners, but she looked a mess: her long gray hair was tied in some kind of colourless rag and she wore a shapeless grey-green blouse with sweat marks at the armpits. "I don't think I've ever seen you in here," she said.

"I've never been here. But at our age it's important not to get set in our ways—don't you agree?"

"I'm younger than you," she said mildly. "Although I guess no one would think so."

"Sure they would." He took a bite of his cheesecake. The base was as tough as cardboard and the filling tasted like lemon-flavored shaving cream. He swallowed

with an effort. "What do you think of Jack Budgen's proposed biophysics library?"

"Is that why you came to see me?"

"I didn't come here to see you, I came to try the food, and I wish I hadn't. It's awful. How can you eat here?"

She dug a spoon into some kind of dessert. "I don't notice what I eat, Berry, I think about my particle accelerator. Tell me about the new library."

Berisford had been like her, obsessed by work, once upon a time. He had never allowed himself to look like a hobo on account of it, but nevertheless as a young scientist he had lived for the thrill of discovery. However, his life had taken a different direction. His books were popularisations of other people's work: he had not written an original paper in fifteen or twenty years. For a moment he wondered whether he might have been happier if he had made a different choice. Slovenly Jane, eating cheap food while she ruminated over problems in nuclear physics, had an air of calm and contentment that Berisford had never known.

And he was not managing to charm her. She was too wise. Perhaps he should flatter her intellectually. "I just think you should have a bigger input. You're the senior physicist on campus, one of the most distinguished scientists JFU has—you ought to be involved in this library."

"Is it even going to happen?"

"I think Genetico is going to finance it."

"Well, that's a piece of good news. But what's your interest?"

"Thirty years ago I made my name when I started asking which human characteristics are inherited and which are learned. Because of my work, and the work of others like me, we now know that a human being's genetic inheritance is more important than his upbringing and environment in determining a whole range of psychological traits."

"Nature, not nurture."

"Exactly. I proved that a human being *is* his DNA. The young generation is interested in how this process works. What is the mechanism by which a combination of chemicals gives me blue eyes and another combination gives you eyes which are a deep, dark shade of brown, almost chocolate-coloured, I guess."

"Berry!" she said with a wry smile. "If I were a thirty-year-old secretary with perky breasts I might imagine you were flirting with me."

That was better, he thought. She had softened at last. "Perky?" he said, grinning. He deliberately looked at her bust, then back up at her face. "I believe you're as perky as you feel."

She laughed, but he could tell she was pleased. At last he was getting somewhere with her. Then she said: "I have to go."

Damn. He could not keep control of this interaction. He had to get her attention in a hurry. He stood up to leave with her. "There will probably be a

committee to oversee the creation of the new library," he said as they walked out of the cafeteria. "I'd like your opinion on who should be on it."

"Gosh, I'll need to think about that. Right now I have to give a lecture on anti-matter."

Goddamn it, I'm losing her, Berisford thought.

Then she said: "Can we talk again?"

Berisford grasped at a straw. "How about over dinner?"

~~She looked startled.~~ "All right," she said after a moment.

"Tonight?"

~~A bemused look came over her face.~~ "Why not?"

That would give him another chance, at least. Relieved, he said: "I'll pick you up at eight."

"Okay." She gave him her address and he made a note in a pocket pad.

"What kind of food do you like?" he said. "Oh, don't answer that, I remember, you think about your particle accelerator." They emerged into the hot sun. He squeezed her arm lightly. "See you tonight."

"Berry," she said. "You're not *after* something, are you?"

He winked at her. "What have you got?"

She laughed and walked away.

35

Test-tube babies. *In vitro* fertilization. That was the link. Jeannie saw it all.

Charlotte Pinker and Lorraine Logan had both been treated for subfertility at the Cotswold Clinic. The clinic had pioneered *in vitro* fertilization: the process by which sperm from the father and an egg from the mother are brought together in the laboratory, and the resulting embryo is then implanted in the woman's womb.

Identical twins occur when an embryo splits in half, in the womb, and becomes two individuals. That might have happened in the test tube. Then the twins from the test tube could have been implanted in two different women. That was how identical twins could be born to two unrelated mothers. Bingo.

The waitress brought Jeannie's salad but she was too excited to eat it.

Test-tube babies were no more than a theory in the early seventies, she was sure. But Genetico had obviously been years ahead in its research.

Both Lorraine and Charlotte said they had been given hormone therapy. It seemed the clinic had lied to them about their treatment.

That was bad enough, but as Jeannie thought through the implications she realised something worse. The embryo that split might have been the biological child of Lorraine and Charles, or of Charlotte and the major—but not both. One of them

had been implanted with another couple's child.

Jeannie's heart filled with horror and loathing as she realised they could *both* have been given the babies of total strangers.

She wondered why Genetico had deceived its patients in this appalling way. The technique was untried: perhaps they needed human guinea-pigs. Maybe they had applied for permission and had been refused. Or they could have had some other reason for secrecy.

Whatever their motive for lying to the women, Jeannie now understood why her investigation scared Genetico so badly. Impregnating a woman with an alien embryo, without her knowledge, was about as unethical as could be imagined. It was no wonder they were desperate to cover it up. If Lorraine Logan ever found out what had been done to her, there would be hell to pay.

She took a sip of coffee. The drive to Philadelphia had not been wasted after all. She did not yet have all the answers but she had solved the central puzzle. It was deeply satisfying.

Looking up, she was astonished to see Steve walk in.

She blinked and stared. He was wearing khakis and a blue button-down, and as he came in he closed the door behind him with his heel.

She smiled broadly and stood up to greet him. "Steve!" she said delightedly. Remembering her resolution, she threw her arms around him and kissed him on the

lips. He smelled different today, less tobacco and more spice. He hugged her to him and kissed her back. She heard the voice of an older woman saying: "My God, I remember when I felt like that," and several people laughed.

She released him. "Sit here. Do you want something to eat? Share my salad. What are you doing here? I can't believe it. You must have followed me. No, no, you knew the name of the clinic and you decided to meet me."

"I just felt like talking to you." He smoothed his eyebrows with the tip of his index finger. Something about the action bothered her—*Who else have I seen do that?*—but she pushed it to the back of her mind.

"You go in for big gestures."

Suddenly he seemed edgy. "I do?"

"You like to show up unexpectedly, don't you?"

"I guess so."

She smiled at him. "You're a little strange today. What's on your mind?"

"Listen, you got me all hot and bothered," he said. "Can we get out of here?"

"Sure." She put a five-dollar bill on the table and stood up.

"Where's your car?" she said as they stepped outside.

"Let's take yours."

They got into the red Mercedes. She fastened her seat belt, but he did not. As soon as she pulled away he edged close to her on the bench seat, lifted her hair, and

started kissing her neck. She liked it, but she felt embarrassed, and she said: "I think we may be a little too old to do this in a car."

"Okay," he said. He stopped and turned to face forward, but he left his arm draped around her shoulders. She was heading east on Chestnut. As they came to the bridge he said: "Take the expressway—there's something I want to show you." Following the signs, she turned right on to Shuylkill Avenue and pulled up at a stop light.

The hand over her shoulder dropped lower and he started fondling her breast. She felt her nipple stiffen in response to his touch, but all the same she felt uncomfortable. It was strangely like being felt up on a subway train. She said: "Steve, I like you, but you're going a little too fast for me."

He made no reply, but his fingers found her nipple and pinched it hard.

"Ow!" she said. "That hurt! For Pete's sake, what's got into you?" She shoved him away with her right hand. The light went green and she drove down the on ramp for the Shuylkill Expressway.

"I don't know where I am with you," he complained. "First you kiss me like a nymphomaniac, then you freeze."

And I imagined this boy was mature! she thought. "Listen, a girl kisses you because she wants to kiss you. It's not a licence for you to do anything ~~the hell~~ you want to her. And you should *never* hurt." She eased on to the southbound two-lane

of the expressway

"Some girls like to be hurt," he said, putting a hand on her knee.

She moved his hand. "What do you want to show me, anyway?" she said, trying to distract him.

"This," he said, taking her right hand. A moment later she felt his naked penis, stiff and hot.

"Jesus Christ!" She snatched her hand away. Boy, had she misjudged this one! "Put it away, Steve, and stop acting like a goddamned adolescent!"

The next thing she knew, something struck her a mighyy blow on the side of the face.

She screamed and jerked sideways. An air-horn blared as her car swung across the next lane of the expressway in front of a Mack truck. The bones of her face burned with agony and she tasted blood. Fighting to ignore the pain, she regained control of the car.

She realised with astonishment that he had punched her.

No one had ever done that.

"You son of a bitch!" she screamed.

"Now give me a hand job," he said. "Otherwise I'll beat the shit out of you."

(*"Fuck you!" she yelled.*)

Out of the corner of her eye she saw him draw back his fist for another blow.

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Without thinking, she trod on the brake.

He was thrown forward and his punch missed her. His head banged the windscreen. Tires screeched in protest as a stretch limousine swerved to avoid the Mercedes.

As he recovered his balance she released the brake. The car coasted forward. If she stopped in the fast lane of the expressway for a few seconds, she thought, he would be so terrified he would plead with her to drive on. She trod on the brake again, throwing him forward again.

This time he recovered more quickly. The car came to a halt. Cars and trucks swerved around it, horns blaring. Jeannie was terrified: at any moment another vehicle could slam into the back of the Mercedes. But her plan did not work: he seemed to have no fear. He put his hand up her skirt, grasped the waist of her pantihose, and pulled. There was a tearing sound as her tights ripped open.

She tried to push him away but he was all over her. Surely he would not try to rape her right there on the expressway? In despair she opened her door but she could not get out because she had her seat belt fastened. She tried to undo it but she could not get at the buckle because of Steve.

To her left, traffic was joining the expressway from another ramp, coming directly into the fast lane at sixty miles an hour and flashing by. (Was there not a single driver who would stop and help a woman who was being attacked?)

at 60mph they would be rear-ended?

As she struggled to push him away, her foot came off the brake and the car crept forward. Maybe she could keep him off balance, she thought. She had control of the car, it was her only advantage. In desperation she put her foot on the accelerator pedal and floored it.

The car took off with a lurch. Brakes squealed as a Greyhound bus narrowly missed her fender. Steve was thrown back in his seat, and distracted briefly, but a few seconds later his hands were all over her again, pulling her breasts out of her brassiere and thrusting inside her panties as she tried to drive. She was frantic. He did not seem to care if he killed both of them. What the hell could she do to stop him?

She swung the car hard across to the left, throwing him up against the passenger door. She almost hit a garbage truck, and for a cliffhanging instant she looked into the petrified face of the driver, an elderly man with a gray moustache; then she swung the wheel the other way and the Mercedes lurched out of danger.

Steve grabbed her again. She braked hard, then floored the accelerator, but he laughed as he was thrown around, just as if he were on a joyride at a funfair; and then he came back at her.

She hit him with her right elbow and her fist but she could not put any power into the blows while she was at the wheel, and she succeeded only in distracting him for a few more seconds.

How long could this go on? Were there no cop cars in this town?

Over his shoulder she saw that she was passing an off-ramp. There was an ancient sky-blue Cadillac on her nearside a few yards behind her. At the last moment she swung the steering wheel. Her tires screeched, the Mercedes went up on two wheels, and Steve fell against her helplessly. The blue Cadillac swerved to avoid her, there was a fanfare of outraged car horns, then she heard the thud of cars crashing and the xylophone sound of breaking glass. Her nearside wheels came down again and hit the tarmac with a bone-shuddering thump. She was on the ramp. The car fishtailed, threatening to hit the concrete parapet on either side,, but she got it straight.

She accelerated down a long off-ramp. As soon as the car was stable, Steve thrust his hand between her legs and attempted to get his fingers inside her panties. She wriggled, trying to stop him. She glanced at his face. He was smiling, his eyes wide, panting and sweating with sexual excitement. He was having fun. This was *crazy*.

There were no cars ahead or behind her. The ramp ended in a stop light which was green. To her left was a cemetery. She saw a sign pointing right that read *Civic Center Blvd* and she swung that way, hoping to see a busy town hall with crowds of people on the sidewalk. To her dismay the street was a bleak desert of disused halls and concrete plazas. Ahead of her, a light turned red. If she stopped, she was done for.

Steve got his hand inside her panties and said: "Stop the car!" Like her, he had realised that if he raped her here there was a good chance no one would interfere.

He was hurting her now, pinching and thrusting with his fingers, but worse than the pain was the fear of what was to come. She accelerated wildly toward the red light.

An ambulance came from the left, swinging in front of her. She braked hard and swerved to miss it, thinking crazily *If I crash now, at least help is at hand.*

Suddenly Steve withdrew his hands from her body. She had a moment of blessed relief. Then he grabbed the transmission lever and pushed it into neutral. The car suddenly lost momentum. She yanked it back into drive and floored the pedal, passing the ambulance.

How long can this go on? Jeannie thought. She had to get to a neighbourhood where there were some people before the car stopped or crashed. But Philadelphia had turned into a moonscape.

He grabbed the steering wheel and tried to pull the car over on to the sidewalk. Jeannie jerked it back quickly: she was stronger than he imagined. The rear wheels skidded and the ambulance honked indignantly.

He tried again. This time he was cleverer. He knocked the transmission into neutral with his left hand and grabbed the wheel with his right. The car slowed down and mounted the curb.

Jeannie took both hands off the wheel, put them on Steve's chest and shoved him away with all her might. Her strength surprised him and he was flung backwards. She put the car in drive and stamped on the accelerator pedal. The car rocketed forward yet again, but Jeannie knew that she could not fight him off much longer. Any second now he would succeed in stopping the car, and she would be trapped in here with him. He recovered his balance as she turned into a left-hand bend. He got both hands on the steering wheel, and she thought *This is the end, I can't do any more.* Then the car rounded the bend and the cityscape changed abruptly.

There was a busy street, a hospital with people standing outside, a line of taxicabs, and a sidewalk stall selling Chinese food. "Yes!" Jeannie shouted triumphantly. She stamped on the brake. Steve jerked the wheel and she pulled it back. Fishtailing, the car screeched to a halt in the middle of the road. A dozen cab drivers at the food stand turned to look.

Steve opened his door, got out and ran.

"Thank God," Jeannie breathed.

A moment later he had disappeared.

Jeannie sat there, panting. He was gone. The nightmare was over.

One of the drivers came over and put his head inside the passenger door. Hastily Jeannie rearranged her clothing. "Are you okay, lady?" he said.

"I guess so," she replied breathlessly.

"What the heck was that all about?"

She shook her head. "I sure wish I knew," she said.

36

Steve sat on a low wall near Jeannie's house, waiting for her. It was hot, but he took advantage of the shade of a big elm tree. She lived in a nice working-class neighbourhood. Teenagers from a nearby school were walking home, laughing and quarrelling and eating candy. It was not long since he had been like that: eight or nine years.

But now he was worried and desperate. This afternoon his lawyer had talked to Sergeant Delaware of the Sex Crimes Unit in Baltimore. She had told him she had the results of the DNA test. The DNA from traces of sperm in Lisa Hoxton's vagina exactly matched the DNA in Steve's blood.

He was devastated. He had been sure the DNA test would end this agony.

He could tell that his lawyer no longer believed in his innocence. Mom and Dad did, but they were baffled: they both knew enough to realise that DNA testing was extremely reliable.

In his worst moments he wondered if he had some kind of split personality. Maybe there was another Steve who took over and raped women and gave him his body back afterwards. That way he would not know what he had done. He recalled, ominously, that there were a few seconds of his fight with Tip Hendricks that he had

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never been able to bring to mind. Was it his alter ego who had almost killed that boy? But he did not really believe it. There had to be another explanation.

The ray of hope was the mystery surrounding him and Dennis Pinker. Dennis had the same DNA as Steve. Something was wrong here. And the only person who could figure it out was Jeannie Ferrami.

The kids disappeared into their homes, and the sun dipped behind the row of houses on the other side of the street. Towards six o'clock the red Mercedes eased into a parking slot fifty yards away. Jeannie got out. At first she did not see Steve. She opened the trunk and took out a large black plastic garbage bag. Then she locked the car and came along the sidewalk towards him. She was dressed formally, in a black skirted suit, but she looked dishevelled, and there was a weariness in her walk that touched his heart. He wondered what had happened to give her this battle-worn look. She was still beautiful, though, and he watched her with longing in his heart.

As she got near him he stood up, smiling, and took a step towards her.

She glanced at him, met his eye and recognised him. A look of horror came over her face.

She opened her mouth and screamed.

He stopped dead. Aghast, he said: "Jeannie, what is it?"

"Get away from me!" she yelled. "Don't you touch me! I'm calling the cops right now!"

?S/ (Nonplussed,) Steve held his hands up in a defensive gesture. "Sure, sure, anything you say. I'm not touching you, okay? What the hell has gotten into you?"

A neighbour came out of the front door Jeannie shared. He must be the occupant of the apartment beneath hers, Steve figured. He was an old black man wearing a check shirt and a tie. "Is everything all right, Jeannie?" he said. "I thought I heard someone cry out."

"It was me, Mr Oliver," she said in a shaky voice. "This jerk attacked me in my car in Philadelphia this afternoon."

"Attacked you?" Steve said incredulously. "I wouldn't do that!"

"You bastard, you did it two hours ago."

Steve was stung. He was sick of being accused of brutality. "Fuck you, I haven't been to Philadelphia for years," he said angrily.

Mr Oliver intervened. "This young gentleman been sitting on that wall for nigh on two hours, Jeannie. He ain't been to no Philadelphia this afternoon."

Jean looked indignant, and seemed ready to accuse her good-natured neighbour of lying.

Steve noticed that she was wearing no stockings: her bare legs looked odd with such a formal outfit. One side of her face was slightly swollen and reddish. His fury evaporated. *Someone* had attacked her. He yearned to put his arms around her and comfort her. It made her fear of him even more distressing. "He hurt you," he said.

"The bastard."

Her face changed. The look of terror went. She spoke to the neighbour. "He got here two hours ago?"

The man shrugged. "Hour and forty, maybe fifty minutes."

"You're sure?"

"Jeannie, if he was in Philadelphia two hours ago he must have come here on the Concorde."

She looked at Steve. "It must have been Dennis."

He walked towards her. She did not step back. He reached out and touched her swollen cheek with his fingertips. "Poor Jeannie," he said.

"I thought it was you," she said, and tears came to her eyes.

He folded her in his arms. Slowly he felt her body lose its stiffness, and she leaned on him trustingly. He stroked her head and twined his fingers in the heavy waves of her dark hair. He closed his eyes, thinking how lean and strong her body was. I'll bet Dennis has some bruises too, he thought. I hope so.

Mr Oliver coughed. "Would you youngsters like a cup of coffee?"

Jeannie detached herself from Steve. "No, thanks," she said. "I just want to get out of these clothes."

Tension was written on her face, but she just looked even more bewitching. I'm falling in love with this woman, he thought. It's not just that I want to sleep with

her—though it's that too. I want her to be my friend. I want to watch TV with her, and go to the supermarket with her, and give her Night Nurse on a spoon when she has a cold. I want to see how she brushes her teeth and pulls on her jeans and butters her toast. I want her to ask me does the orange lipstick suit her and should she buy razors and what time will I be home.

He wondered if he had the nerve to tell her that.

She crossed the row porch to her door. Steve hesitated. He wanted to follow her, but he needed an invitation.

She turned on the doorstep. "Come on," she said.

He followed her up the stairs and entered the living room behind her. She dropped the black plastic bag on the rug. She went into the kitchen nook and kicked off her shoes then, to his astonishment, she dropped them in the kitchen bin. "I'll never wear these goddamn clothes again," she said angrily. She took off her jacket and threw that away. Then, as Steve stared in disbelief, she unbuttoned her blouse and took it off and put that in the bin too.

She was wearing a plain black cotton brassiere. Surely, Steve thought, she was not going to take that off right in front of him. But she reached behind her back, unfastened it, and tossed it into the trash. She had firm, shallow breasts with prominent brown nipples. There was a faint red mark on her shoulder where the strap had been too tight. Steve's throat went dry.

She unzipped her skirt and let it fall to the floor. She wore simple black bikini panties. Steve gazed at her open-mouthed. Her body was perfect: the strong shoulders, the neat breasts, the flat belly, and the long, sculptured legs. She pushed her panties down, swept them up in a bundle with the skirt, and shoved the bundle into the bin. Her pubic hair was a dense mass of black curls.

She looked blankly at Steve for a moment, almost as if she were not sure what he was doing there. Then she said: "I have to take a shower." Naked, she walked past him. He looked hungrily at her back, drinking in the details of her shoulder blades, her narrow waist, the swelling curves of her hips, and the muscles of her legs. She was so beautiful it hurt.

She left the room. A moment later he heard water running.

"Jesus," he breathed. He sat down on her black couch. What did it mean? Was that some kind of test? What was she trying to say to him? ~~He was bemused.~~ He smiled as he brought the picture to mind. What a wonderful body, so slim and strong and perfectly proportioned. No matter what else happened, he would never forget the way she looked.

She showered for a long time. He realised that in the drama of her accusation he had not told her his mystifying news. At last the water stopped. A minute later she returned to the room in a big fuschia pink towelling robe, wet hair plastered to her head. She sat on the couch beside him and said: "Did I dream it, or did I just strip off

in front of you."

"No dream," he said. "You dumped your clothes in the trash."

"My God, I don't know what came over me."

"You don't have anything to apologise for. I'm glad you trust me so much. I can't tell you how much that means to me."

"You must think I'm out of my mind."

"No, but I think you're probably shocked after what happened to you in Philadelphia."

"Maybe that's it. I just remember feeling I had to get rid of the clothes I was wearing when it happened."

"This may be the moment to open that bottle of vodka you keep in the freezer."

She shook her head. "What I really want is some jasmine tea."

"Let me make it." He got up and went behind the kitchen counter. "Why are you carrying a garbage bag around?"

"I was fired today. They put all my personal stuff in that bag and locked me out of my room."

"What?" He was ^{incredulous} shocked. "How come?"

"There was an article in the *New York Times* today saying that my use of databases violates people's privacy. But I think Berisford Jones was just using that as

in front of you."

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385

an excuse to get rid of me."

He was personally affronted. He wanted to protest, to spring to her defence, to save her from this malicious persecution. "Can they dismiss you just like that?"

"No, there's a hearing tomorrow morning in the front of the discipline committee of the university senate."

"You and I are both having an unbelievably bad week," he said. He was going to tell her about the DNA test when she picked up the phone. "I need the number of Greenwood Penitentiary, it's near Richmond, Virginia." As Steve filled the kettle, she scribbled a number and dialled again. "May I speak to Warden Temoigne? My name is Dr Ferrami. Yes, I'll hold. Thank you....Good evening, Warden, how are you? I'm fine. This may sound like a silly question, but is Dennis Pinker still in jail? You're sure? You saw him with your own eyes? Thank you. And you take care of yourself too. Bye." She looked up at Steve. "Dennis is still in jail. The warden spoke to him an hour ago."

Steve put a spoonful of jasmine tea into the pot and found two cups. "Jeannie, the cops have the result of their DNA test."

She went very still. "And...?"

"The DNA from Lisa's vagina matches the DNA from my blood."

In a bemused voice she said: "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

"Someone who looks like me and has my DNA raped Lisa Hoxton on Sunday."

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"The DNA from Lisa's vagina matches the DNA from my blood."

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"Someone who looks like me and has my DNA raped Lisa Hoxton on Sunday.

The same guy attacked you in Philadelphia today. *And it wasn't Dennis Pinker.*"

Their eyes locked, and Jeannie said: "There are three of you."

"Jesus Christ." He felt despairing ^{More} "But this is even more unlikely. The cops will never believe it. How could something like this happen?"

"Wait," she said excitedly. "You don't know what I discovered this afternoon, before I ran into your double. I have the explanation."

"Dear God, let this be true."

She looked concerned. "Steve, you're going to find it shocking."

"I don't care, I just want to understand."

She reached into the black plastic garbage bag and retrieved a canvas briefcase.

"Look at this." She took out a glossy brochure folded open to the first page. She handed it to Steve and he read the opening paragraph:

The Cotswold Clinic was founded in 1972 by Genetico, Inc., as a pioneering center for research and development of human in vitro fertilization—the creation of what the newspapers call "test-tube babies".

Steve said: "You think Dennis and I are test-tube babies?"

"Yes."

The same guy attacked you in Philadelphia today. *And it wasn't Dennis Pinker.*"

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"Yes."

He had a strange, nauseous feeling in the pit of his stomach. "That's weird. But what does it explain?"

"I think identical twins were conceived in the laboratory and then implanted in the wombs of two different women."

Steve's sick feeling got worse. "But did the sperm and egg come from Mom and Dad—or from the Pinkers?"

"I don't know."

"So the Pinkers could be my real parents. God."

"There's another possibility."

Steve could see from the worried look on Jeannie's face that she was afraid this would shock him too. His mind leaped ahead and he guessed what she was going to say. "Maybe the sperm and egg didn't come from my parent *or* the Pinkers. I could be the child of total strangers."

She did not reply, but her solemn look told him he was right.

He felt disoriented. It was like a dream in which he suddenly found himself falling through the air. "It's hard to take in," he said. The kettle switched itself off. For something to do with his hands, Steve poured boiling water into the teapot. "I've never much resembled either Mom or Dad. Do I look like one of the Pinkers?"

"No."

"Then it's most probably strangers."

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3 (?)

"Steve, none of this takes away the fact that your Mom and Dad loved you and raised you and would still give their lives for you."

With a shaky hand he poured tea into two cups. He gave one to Jeannie and sat beside her on the couch. "How does all this explain the third twin?"

"If there were twins in the test tube, there could have been triplets. It's the same process: one of the embryos split again. It happens in nature, so I guess it can happen in the laboratory."

Steve still felt as if he were spinning through the air, but now he began to get another sensation: relief. It was a bizarre story that Jeannie told, but at least it provided a rational explanation of why he had been accused of two brutal crimes.

"Do Mom and Dad know any of this?"

"I don't believe they do. Your mother and Charlotte Pinker told me they went into the clinic for hormone treatment. *In vitro* fertilization was not practised in those days. Genetico must have been years ahead of everyone else with the technique. And I think they tried it without telling their patients what they were doing."

"No wonder Genetico is scared," Steve said. "Now I understand why Berisford is so desperate to discredit you."

"Yeah. What they did was *really* unethical. It makes invasion of privacy look petty."

"It wasn't just unethical. It could ruin Genetico, financially."

She looked excited. "That would explain a lot. But how could it ruin them?"

"It's a tort—a civil wrong. ~~We covered this last year in law school.~~" In the back of his mind he was thinking *Why the hell am I talking to her about torts—I want to tell her how much I love her.* "If Genetico offered a woman hormone treatment, then deliberately impregnated her with someone else's foetus without telling her, that's a breach of implied contract by fraud."

"But it happened so long ago. Isn't there a statute of limitations?"

"Yes, but it runs from the time of *discovery* of the fraud."

"I still don't see how it would ruin the company."

"This is an ideal case for punitive damages. That means the money is not just to compensate the victim, say for the cost of bringing up someone else's child. It's also to punish the people who did it, and make sure they and others are scared to commit the same wrong again."

"How much?"

"Genetico knowingly abused a woman's body for their own secret purposes—I'm sure any lawyer worth his salt would ask for a hundred million dollars."

"According to that piece in the *Wall Street Journal* yesterday, the entire company is only worth a hundred and eighty million."

"So they would be ruined."

"It might take years to come to trial."

"But don't you see? Just the *threat* would sabotage the takeover!"

"How so?"

"The danger that Genetico may have to pay a fortune in damages reduces the value of the shares. The takeover would at least be postponed until Landsmann could assess the amount of the liability."

"Wow. So it's not just their reputations that are on the line. They could lose all that money, too."

"Exactly." Steve's mind came back to his own problems. "None of that helps me," he said, suddenly feeling gloomy again. "I need to be able to prove your theory of the third twin. The only way of doing that is to find him." A thought struck him. "Could your computer search engine be used? Do you see what I mean?"

"Sure."

He grew excited. "If one search threw up me and Dennis, another search might throw up me and the third, or Dennis and the third, or all three of us."

"Yes."

She was not as thrilled as she ought to be. "Can you do it?"

"After this bad publicity I'm going to have trouble getting anyone to let me use their database."

"Damn!"

"But there is one possibility. I've already run a sweep of the FBI fingerprint

file."

Steve's spirits rocketed again. "Dennis is sure to be on their files. If the third one has ever had his prints taken the sweep will have picked him up! This is great!"

"But the results are on a floppy disk in my office."

"Oh, no! And you've been locked out!"

"Yes."

"Hell, I'll bust down the door, let's go there now, what are we waiting for?"

"You could end up back in jail. And there may be an easier way."

With an effort Steve calmed down. "You're right. There has to be another way of getting that disk."

Jeannie picked up the phone. "I asked Lisa Hoxton to try to get into my room. Let's see if she succeeded." She dialed a number. "Hey, Lisa, how are you...Me? Not too good. Listen, this is going to sound incredible to you, but Dennis and Steve aren't twins. They're triplets. I'm sure of it. I was attacked by the third one yesterday in Philadelphia. I know, the world is going fucking crazy. I'm sure it wasn't Steve, because my neighbour told me he was here all afternoon; and Dennis is still in jail in Richmond, I checked....I know it's hard to believe, but I can prove it if I can get my hands on that floppy disk....You couldn't? Shit." Jeannie's face fell. "Well, thanks for trying. I know you took a chance. I really appreciate it. Yeah. Bye."

She hung up and said: "Lisa tried to persuade a security guard to let her in. She

skip over and summarize, since we already know all this

file."

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She hung up and said: "Lisa tried to persuade a security guard to let her in. She

almost succeeded, then he checked with his superior and almost got fired."

"What do we try next?"

"If I get my job back tomorrow morning at the hearing I can just walk into my office."

"Who's your lawyer?"

"I don't have a lawyer, I've never needed one."

"You can bet the college will have the most expensive lawyer in town."

"Shit.) I can't afford a lawyer."

Steve hardly dared to say what was in his mind. "Well...I'm a lawyer."

She looked (speculatively) at him.

"I've only done a year of law school, but in our advocacy exercises I scored highest of my year." He was thrilled by the idea of defending her against the might of Jones Falls University. But would she think him too young and inexperienced? He tried to read her mind and failed. She ^{just} kept looking at him. He stared right back, gazing into her dark eyes. (I could do this indefinitely, he thought).

Then she leaned over and kissed him on the lips, lightly and fleetingly. "Hell, Steve, you're the real thing," she said.

It was a very quick kiss but it was electric. He felt great. He was not sure what she meant by *the real thing* but it must be good.

He would have to justify her faith in him. He began to worry about the

hearing. "Do you have any idea of the rules of the committee, the procedure for the hearing?"

She reached into her canvas briefcase and handed him a cardboard wallet.

He scanned the contents. The rules were a mixture of college tradition and modern legal jargon. Offences for which faculty could be dismissed included blasphemy and sodomy, but the one that seemed most relevant to Jeannie was traditional: bringing the university into infamy and disrepute.

The discipline committee did not in fact have the final say: it merely made a recommendation to the senate, the governing body of the university. That was worth knowing. If Jeannie lost tomorrow, the senate might serve as a court of appeal.

"Do you have a copy of your contract?" Steve asked.

"Sure." Jeannie went to a small desk in the corner and opened a file drawer.

"Here it is."

Steve read it quickly. In clause 12 she agreed to be bound by the decisions of the university's senate. That would make it difficult for her to legally challenge the final decision.

He returned to the discipline committee rules. "It says you have to notify the chair in advance if you wish to be represented by a lawyer or other person," he said.

"I'll call Jack Budgen right away," Jeannie said. "It's eight o'clock—he'll be at home." She picked up the phone.

"Wait," Steve said. "Let's think about the conversation first."

"You're so right. You're thinking strategically, and I'm not."

③
grinned
Steve felt pleased. The first piece of advice he had given as her lawyer had been good. "This man holds your fate in his hands. What's he like?"

"He's chief librarian, and my tennis opponent."

"The guy you were playing on Sunday?"

"Yes. An administrator rather than an academic. A good tactical player, but my guess is he never had the killer instinct to make it to the top in tennis."

"Okay, so he has a somewhat competitive relationship with you."

"I guess so."

"Now, what impression do we want to give him?" He ticked points on his fingers. "One: we want to appear upbeat and confident of success. You're looking forward eagerly to the hearing. You're innocent, you're glad of the opportunity to prove it, and you have faith that the committee will see the truth of the matter, under Budgen's wise direction."

"Okay."

"Two: You're the underdog. You're a weak, helpless girl—"

"Are you kidding?"

He grinned. "Scratch that. You're a very junior academic and you're up against Berisford and Bell, two wily old operators who are used to getting their own way at

JFU. Hell, you can't even afford a real lawyer. Is Budgen Jewish?"

"I don't know. He might be."

"I hope so. Minorities are more likely to turn against the establishment. Three: the story of why Berisford is persecuting you like this has to come out. It's a shocking story, but it must be told."

"How does it help me to say that?"

"It plants the idea that Berisford might have something to hide."

"Good. Anything else?"

"I don't think so."

Jeannie dialled the number and handed him the phone.

Steve took it with trepidation. This was the first call he had ever made as someone's lawyer. ~~Pray God I don't screw up, he thought.~~

As he listened to the ringing tone, he tried to recall how Jack Budgen played tennis. Steve had been concentrating on Jeannie, of course, but he remembered a fit, bald man of about fifty, playing a well-paced, wily game. Budgen had defeated Jeannie even though she was younger and stronger. ~~Steve vowed not to underestimate~~
~~him.~~

The phone was answered in a quiet, cultured voice. "Hello?"

"Professor Budgen, my name is Steven Logan."

There was a short pause. "Do I know you, Mr Logan?"

"No, sir. I'm calling you in your capacity as chair of the discipline committee of Jones Falls University, to let you know that I'll be accompanying Dr Ferrami tomorrow. She's looking forward to the hearing and she's eager to lay these charges to rest."

Budgen's tone was cool. "Are you a lawyer?"

Steve found his breath coming fast, as if he had been running, and he made an effort to stay calm. "I'm at law school. Dr Ferrami can't afford a lawyer. However, I'm going to do my best to help her present her case clearly, and if I go wrong I'll have to throw myself on your mercy." He paused, giving Budgen the chance to make a friendly remark, or even just a sympathetic grunt; but there was a cold silence. Steve ploughed on. "May I ask who will be representing the college?"

"I understand they've hired Henry Quinn, from Harvey Horrocks Quinn."

Steve was awestruck. It was one of the oldest firms in Washington. He tried to sound relaxed. "A deeply respectable Wasp law firm," he remarked with a small chuckle.

"Indeed?"

Steve's charm was not working on this man. It was time to sound tough. "One thing I should perhaps mention. We must now tell the true story of why Berisford Jones has acted against Dr Ferrami in this way. We will not accept any cancellation of the hearing, on any terms. That would leave a cloud over her head. The truth must

come out, I'm afraid."

"I know of no proposal to cancel the hearing."

~~Of course not. There was no such proposal.~~ Steve carried on with his bravado.

"But if there should be one, please be advised that it would be unacceptable to Dr Ferrami." He decided to wind this up before he got himself in too deep. "Professor, I thank you for your courtesy and I look forward to seeing you in the morning."

"Goodbye."

Steve hung up. "Wow, what an iceberg."

Jeannie looked puzzled. "He's not normally like that. Maybe he was just being formal."

Steve was pretty sure Budgen had already made up his mind, and was hostile to Jeannie, but he did not tell her that. "Anyway, I got our three points across. And I discovered that JFU has hired Henry Quinn."

"Is he good?"

He was legendary. It made Steve go cold to think he was going to go up against Henry Quinn. ~~But he did not want to depress Jeannie.~~ "Quinn used to be very good, but he may be past his best."

She accepted that. "What should we do now?"

Steve looked at her. The pink bathrobe had gaped open at the front, and he could see one neat breast nestling in the folds of soft towelling. "We should go over

the questions you'll be asked at the hearing," he said regretfully. "We've got a lot of work to do tonight."

37

Jane Edelsborough looked a lot better naked than she did dressed.

She lay on a pale pink sheet, lit by the flame of a scented candle. Her clear, soft skin was more attractive than the muddy earth colours she always wore. The loose clothes she favoured tended to hide her body: she was something of an amazon, with a deep bosom and broad hips. She was heavy, but it suited her.

Lying on the bed, she smiled languidly at Berisford as he pulled on his blue boxer shorts. "~~Wow~~, that was better than I expected," she said.

Berisford felt the same, although he was not crass enough to say so. Jane knew things that he normally had to teach to the younger women he usually took to bed. He wondered idly where she had learned to be such a good lay. She had been married once: her husband, a cigarette smoker, had died of lung cancer ten years ago. They must have had a great sex life together.

He had enjoyed it so much that he had not needed his usual fantasy, in which had just made love to a famous beauty, Demi Moore or Hilary Clinton or Princess Diana, and she was lying beside him, murmuring in his ear *Thank you, Berry, that was the best it's ever been for me, you're so great, thank you.*

"I feel so guilty," Jane said. "I haven't done anything this wicked for a long

time."

"Wicked?" he said, tying his shoelaces. "I don't see why. You're free, white and twenty-one, as we used to say." He noticed her wince: the phrase *free, white and twenty-one* was now politically incorrect. "You're single, anyway," he added hastily.

"Oh, it's not the fucking that was wicked," she said languorously. "It's just that I know you only did it because I'm on the committee for tomorrow's hearing."

He froze in the act of putting on his striped necktie.

She went on: "AM I ~~I~~ supposed to think you saw me across the student cafeteria and became entranced by my sexual magnetism?" She smiled ruefully at him. "I don't have any sexual magnetism, Berry, not for someone as superficial as you. You had to have an ulterior motive and it took me about five seconds to figure out what it could be."

Berisford felt a fool. He did not know what to say.

"Now in your case, you *do* have sexual magnetism. Buckets. You've got charm and a nice body, you dress well and you smell good. Most of all, anyone can see that you really like women. You may manipulate them and use them and exploit them, but you love them too. You are the perfect one-night stand, and I thank you."

With that she pulled the sheet over her naked body, rolled on to her side and closed her eyes.

Berisford finished dressing as quickly as he could.

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Before he left he sat on the edge of the bed. She opened her eyes. He said: "Will you support me, tomorrow?"

She sat upright and kissed him fondly. "I'll have to listen to the evidence before I make up my mind," she said.

He ground his teeth. "It's terribly important to me, more than you know."

She nodded sympathetically, but her reply was implacable. "I guess it's just as important to Jeannie Ferrami."

He squeezed her left breast, soft and heavy. "But who is more important to you—Jeannie or me?"

"I know what it's like to be a young woman academic in a male-dominated university. I'll never forget that."

"Shit." He took his hand away.

"You could stay the night, you know. Then we could do it again in the morning."

He stood up. "I've got too much on my mind."

She closed her eyes. "That's too bad."

He went out.

His car was parked in the driveway of her suburban house, next to her Jaguar. That Jaguar should have been a warning to me, he thought; a sign that there was more to her than meets the eye. He had been used, but he had enjoyed it. He

wondered if women sometimes felt that way after he seduced them.

As he drove home he worried about tomorrow's hearing. He had the four men on the committee on his side, but he had failed to win a promise of support from Jane. Was there anything else he could do? At this late stage there did not seem to be.

When he got home there was a message from Jim Proust on his answering machine. Not more bad news, please, he thought. He sat at the desk in his den and dialled Jim's home. "This is Berry."

"The FBI fucked up," Jim said without preamble.

Berisford's spirits sank farther. "Tell me."

"They were told to cancel that search, but the order didn't get through in time."

"Goddamn."

"The results were sent to her by e-mail."

~~He felt afraid.~~ "Who was on the list?"

"We don't know. The Bureau didn't keep a copy."

This was insupportable. "We have to know!"

"Maybe you can find out. The list could be in her office."

"She's locked out of her office." Berisford was struck by a hopeful thought. "She might not have retrieved her mail." His mood lifted a little.

"Can you do that?"

"Sure." Berisford looked at his gold Rolex. "I'll go in to the college right now."

"Call me as soon as you know."

"You bet."

He got back in his car and drove to Jones Falls University. The campus was dark and deserted. He parked outside Nut House and went in. He felt less embarrassed about sneaking into Jeannie's room the second time. What the hell, there was too much at stake for him to worry about his dignity.

He turned on her computer and accessed her mailbox. She had one piece of mail. *Please, God, let this be the FBI list.* He downloaded it. To his disappointment, it was another message from her friend at the University of Minnesota:

Did you get my e-mail yesterday? I'll be in Baltimore tomorrow and would really like to see you again, even if only for a few minutes. Please call me.
Love, Will.

She had not got yesterday's message because Berisford had downloaded it then wiped it. She would not get this one, either. But where was the FBI list? She must have downloaded it yesterday morning, before security locked her out.

Where had she saved it? Berisford searched her hard disk for the words *FBI*, *F.B.I.* with dots, and *Federal Bureau of Investigation*. He found nothing. He searched through a box of diskettes in her drawer, but they were just backups of the files on

her computer. "~~This woman even keeps a backup copy of her fucking shopping list,~~" he muttered.

He used Jeannie's phone to call Jim again. "Nothing," he said abruptly.

"We have to know who is on that list!" Jim barked.

Berisford said sarcastically: "What shall I do, Jim—kidnap and torture her?"

"She must have the list, right?"

"It's not in her mailbox, so she must have downloaded it."

"So if it's not in her office, she must have it at home."

"Logical." Berisford saw where he was heading. "Can you have her place...." He was reluctant to say *searched by the FBI* on the phone. "Can you have it checked out?"

"I guess so. David Creane failed to deliver, so I guess he still owes me a favor. I'll call him."

"Tomorrow morning would be a good time. The hearing is at ten, she'll be there for a couple of hours."

"Gotcha. I'll get it done. But what if she keeps it in her goddamn handbag? What do we do then?"

"I don't know. Goodnight, Jim."

"Night."

After hanging up, Berisford sat there for a while, looking at the photograph of her parents. If things went wrong tomorrow, Jeannie could be back at this desk by

lunch time, with her FBI list, charging ahead with her investigation, all set to ruin three good men.

It can't happen, Berisford thought desperately; it must not happen.

He picked up the picture of her parents. "You have no idea what you did," he told them. "You have no idea."