

55

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"Jeannie has talked to Hank King, and to Per Ericson's mother," Berisford said despondently. "I wasn't able to check any others but she'll track them all down before long."

Jim said: "Let's be realistic: exactly what can she do by this time tomorrow?"

Paul Barck was suicidal, "I'll tell you what I'd do in her place," he said. "I'd want to make a highly public demonstration of what I'd found, so if I could get hold of two or three of the boys I'd take them to New York and go on *Good Morning America*. Television loves twins."

"God forbid," Berisford said.

A car drew up outside. Jim looked out of the window and said: "Rusty old Datsun."

Paul said: "I'm beginning to like Jim's original idea. Make them all vanish."

Nice, but make more of this

Vanish? She might do this.

No reaction from Berisford?

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"I won't have any killing!" Berisford shouted.

"Don't yell, Berry," Jim said with surprising mildness. "To tell you the truth, I guess I was bragging a bit when I talked about making people vanish. Maybe there was a time when I had the power to order people killed, but I really don't any more. I've asked some favors of old friends in the last few days; and although they've come through, I've realised there are limits."

Berisford thought *Thank god for that.*

"But I have another idea," Jim said.

The other two stared at him.

"We approach each of the eight families discreetly. We confess that mistakes were made at the clinic in its early days. We say that no harm was done but we want to avoid sensational publicity. We offer them a million dollars each in compensation. We make it payable over ten years, and tell them the payments stop if they talk—to anyone: the press, Jeannie Ferrami, scientists, anyone."

Berisford nodded slowly. "My God, it might just work. Who's going to say no to a million dollars?"

Paul said: "Lorraine Logan might. She makes a lot of money, and she's proud."

"Offer her two million," Jim said, regaining some of his characteristic bluster. "Anyway, there isn't much she can do without the cooperation of one or two of the others."

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Does this ignore that hope?

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Let's enjoy the hope a moment
more before we hit the snag 572

Paul was nodding. Berisford, too, found he had new hope. But there was a major snag. "What if Jeannie goes public in the next twenty-four hours?" he said, "Landsmann would probably postpone the takeover while they investigate the allegations. And then we won't have any millions ~~of dollars~~ to throw around."

Jim said: "We *have* to know what her intentions are: how much she's discovered already and what she plans to do about it."

"I don't see any way to do that," Berisford said. *Down again*

"I do," said Jim. "We know one person who could easily win her confidence and find out exactly what's on her mind."

Berisford felt anger rise inside him. "I know what you're thinking—"

"Here he comes now," Jim said.

There was a footstep in the hall, and Berisford's son came in.

"Hi, Dad!" he said. "Hey, Uncle Jim, Uncle Paul, how are you?"

Berisford looked at him with a mixture of pride and sorrow. The boy looked adorable in navy blue corduroy pants and a sky-blue cotton sweater. He picked up my dress sense, anyway, Berisford thought. He said: "We have to talk, Harvey."

Jim stood up. "Want a beer, kid?"

"Sure," Harvey said.

Jim had an annoying tendency to encourage Harvey in bad habits. "Forget the beer," Berisford snapped. "Jim, why don't you and Paul go into the drawing room and

let us two talk." The drawing room was a stiffly formal place that Berisford never used.

Paul and Jim left. Berisford got up and hugged Harvey. "I love you, son," he said. "Even though you're wicked."

"Am I wicked?"

"What you did to that poor girl in the basement of the gym was one of the most wicked things a man can do."

Harvey shrugged.

Dear God, I failed to instil in him any sense of right and wrong, Berisford thought. But it was too late now for such regrets. "Sit down and listen for a minute," he said.

Harvey sat down.

"Your mother and I tried for years to have a baby but there were problems," he said. "At the time, Paul was working on *in vitro* fertilization, where the sperm and the egg are brought together in the laboratory and then the embryo is implanted in the womb."

"Are you saying I was a test-tube baby?"

"This is secret. You must never tell anyone, all your life. Not even your mother."

"She doesn't *know*?" he said in astonishment.

Condence what we already know

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I have something to tell you. You will...

[too abrupt]

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in a friend

"There's more to it than that. Paul took one live embryo and split it, forming twins."

"That's the guy who's been arrested for the rape?"

"He split it more than once."

Harvey nodded. All of them had the same quick intelligence. "How many?" he said.

"Eight."

"Wow. And I guess the sperm didn't come from you."

"No."

"Who?"

"An army lieutenant from Fort Bragg: tall, strong, fit, intelligent, aggressive, and good-looking."

"And the mother?"

"A civilian typist from West Point, similarly well-favoured."

A wounded grin twisted the boy's handsome face. "My real parents."

Berisford winced. "No, they're not," he said. "You grew in your mother's belly. She gave birth to you, and believe me it hurt. We watched you take your first unsteady steps, and struggle to manoeuvre a spoonful of mashed potato into your mouth, and lisp your first words."

Watching his son's face, Berisford could not tell whether Harvey believed him

or not.

"Hell, we loved you more and more as you became less lovable. Every damn year the same reports from school: *He is very aggressive, he has not yet learned to share, he hits other children, he has difficulty with team games, he disrupts the class, he must learn to respect members of the opposite sex.* Every time you got expelled from a school we trudged around begging and pleading to get you into another one. We tried cajoling you, beating you, withdrawing privileges. We took you to three different child psychologists. You made our lives miserable."

"Are you saying I ruined the marriage?"

?S/ "No, son, I did that all on my own. (I didn't need help from anyone) What I'm trying to tell you is that I love you *whatever you do*, just like any other parent."

Harvey was still troubled. "Why are you telling me now?"

"Steve Logan, one of your doubles, was a subject for study in my department. I had a hell of a shock when I saw him, as you may imagine. Then the police arrested him for the rape of Lisa Hoxton. But one of the professors, Jeannie Ferrami, got suspicious. To cut a long story short, she's tracked you down. She wants to prove Steve Logan's innocence. And she probably wants to expose the whole story of the clones and ruin me."

"She's the woman I met in Philadelphia."

Berisford was mystified. "You've met her?"

"Uncle Jim called me and told me to give her a scare."

Berisford was enraged. "The son of a bitch, I'm going to tear his fucking head off his shoulders—"

"Calm down, Dad, nothing happened. I went for a ride in her car. She's cute, in her way."

Berisford controlled himself with an effort. "Your Uncle Jim has always been ~~a little~~ irresponsible in his attitude to you. He likes your wildness, no doubt because he's such an uptight asshole himself."

"I like him."

"Let's talk about what we have to do. We need to know Jeannie Ferrami's intentions, especially over the next twenty-four hours. You need to know whether she has any evidence that links you to Lisa Hoxton. We can't think of any way to get to her—but one."

Harvey nodded. "You want me to go talk to her, pretending to be Steve Logan."

"Yes."

He grinned. "Sounds fun."

Berisford groaned. "Don't do anything foolish, please. Just talk to her."

"Want me to go right away?"

"Yes, please. I hate to ask you to do this—but it's for you as much as for me."

"Relax, Dad—what could happen?"

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"Yes, please. I hate to ask you to do this—but it's for you as much as for me."

"Relax, Dad—what could happen?" *Logan could be there or he could walk in. And wouldn't Harvey have to be briefed on her relationship with Logan?*

"Maybe I worry too much. I guess there's no danger in going to a girl's apartment."

"What if the real Steve is there?"

"Check the cars in the street. He has a Datsun like yours, that's another reason the police were so sure he was the perpetrator."

"No kidding!"

"You're like twins, you make the same choices. If his car is there, don't go in. Call me, and we'll try and think of some way to get him out."

"Suppose he walked there?"

"He lives in Washington."

"Okay." Harvey stood up. "What's ^{her} Jeannie's address?"

"She lives in Hampden." Berisford scribbled the street address on a card and handed it over. "Be careful, okay?"

"Sure. See you sooner, Montezuma."

Berisford smiled. "In a flash, succotash."

*It seems to go into the light
 suggest that he half wants to
 about the way and that it
 scares him shitless.*

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56

Harvey cruised up and down Jeannie's street, looking for a car just like his own. There were lots of elderly automobiles but no rusty light-coloured Datsuns. Steve Logan was not around.

He pulled into a slot near her house and turned off the engine. He sat thinking for a moment. He would need his wits about him. He was glad he had not drunk that beer Uncle Jim had offered him.

He knew she would take him for Steve, because she had done so once before, in Philadelphia. The two of them were obviously identical in appearance. But conversation would be more tricky. She would make references to all sorts of things he was supposed to know about. He would have to answer without betraying his

ignorance. He had to keep her confidence long enough to find out what evidence she had against him, and what she planned to do with her knowledge.

This is more difficult and tricky than anything he's ever done before. Needs at least some concern, some doubt that he'll fail. Uninteresting if he's totally cool.

But even while he thought soberly about the challenge of impersonating Steve, he could hardly contain his excitement at the prospect of seeing her again. What he had done in her car had been the most thrilling sexual encounter he had ever had. It was even better than being in the women's locker room when they were all panicking.

He got aroused every time he thought about ripping her clothes while the car swerved

What damned evidence in particular is he looking for?

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all over the expressway.

He knew he should concentrate on his task now. But he could not help thinking of her face contorted in fear and her strong legs writhing. In his own best interest, he ought to get the information from her and leave. But all his life he had never been able to do the sensible thing.

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Jeannie called police headquarters as soon as she got home. She knew Mish would not be there, but she left a message asking her to call urgently. "Didn't you leave an urgent message for her earlier today?" she was asked.

"Yes, but this is another one, just as important."

"I'll do my best to pass it on," the voice said sceptically.

Next she called Steve's house, but there was no reply. She guessed he and Lorraine were with their lawyer, trying to get Charles freed, and he would call when he could.

She was disappointed: she wanted to tell someone the good news.

The thrill of having found Harvey's apartment wore off, and her thoughts returned to her own depressing future, with no money, no job and a ruined reputation. *No way now too to help her mother.*

To cheer herself up she made brunch. She scrambled three eggs and grilled the Canadian bacon she had bought yesterday for Steve, and ate it with toast and coffee.

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As she was putting the dishes in the dishwasher, the doorbell rang.

She lifted the handset. "Hello?"

"Jeannie? It's Steve."

"Come on in!" she said happily.

He was wearing a cotton sweater the color of his eyes, and he looked good enough to eat. She kissed him and hugged him hard, letting him feel her breasts against his chest. His hand slid down her back to his ass and pressed her to him. Today he smelled different again: he had used some kind of aftershave with a herbal fragrance. He tasted different, too, sort of like he had been drinking tea.

After a while she broke away. "Let's not go too fast," she panted. She wanted to savor this. "Come in and sit down. I have so much to tell you!"

He sat on the couch and she went to the refrigerator. "Wine, beer, coffee?"

"Wine sounds good."

"Do you think it will be okay?"

*

What the hell did she mean by that? *Do you think it will be okay?* "I don't know," he said.

"How long ago did we open it?"

Okay, they shared a bottle of wine but didn't finish it, so she replaced the cork and put the bottle in the refrigerator, and now she's wondering whether it has oxidised. But she wants me

to decide. "Let's see, what day was it?"

"It was Wednesday, that's four days."

"What kind of wine is it?"

"Don't you remember? You bought it!"

He could not even see whether it was red or white. *Shit.* "Hell, just pour a glass and we'll try it."

"What a smart idea." She poured some wine into a glass and handed it to him. He tasted it. "It's drinkable," he said.

She leaned over the back of the sofa. "Let me taste." She kissed his lips. "Open your mouth," she said. "I want to taste the wine." He chuckled and did as she said. She put the tip of her tongue into his mouth. *My God, this woman is sexy.* "You're right," she said. "It's drinkable." Laughing, she filled his glass and poured some for herself.

The phone rang.

"Damn," she said. She looked at it for a moment, then pulled out the plug. "No interruptions." *Isn't she eager for a call back from
Mish?*

He was beginning to enjoy himself. "Put some music on," he suggested.

"On what?"

He had no idea what she was talking about. *Oh, shit, another mistake.* He looked around the apartment: no stereo. *Dumb.*

✓
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She said: "Daddy stole my stereo, remember? I don't have anything to play music on. Wait a minute, I do." She went into the next room—bedroom, presumably—and came back with one of those waterproof radios for hanging in the shower. "It's a silly thing, Mom gave it to me one Christmas, before she started to go crazy."

Daddy stole her stereo, Mom's crazy—quite a family, Jeannie.

"The sound is terrible, but it's all I've got." She turned it on. "I keep it tuned to 92Q."

"Twenty jams in a row," he said automatically.

"How do you know about that?"

Oh, shit, Steve wouldn't know Baltimore radio stations. "I picked it up in the car on the way here."

"What sort of music do you like?"

I have no idea what Steve likes, but I guess you don't either, so the truth will do. "I'm into gangsta rap—Snoop Doggy Dog, Ice Cube, that kind of stuff."

Jeannie groaned

(Oh, fuck) you make me feel middle-aged."

"What do you like?"

"The Ramones, the Sex Pistols, the Damned. I mean, when I was a kid, like *really* a kid, punk was it, you know? My Mom would listen to all this cheesy music from the sixties that never did anything for me, then, when I was about eleven,

suddenly, bang! Talking Heads. Remember *Psycho Killer*?"

"I sure don't!"

"Okay, your mother was right, I'm too old for you." She sat beside him. She put her head on his shoulder and slipped her hand under the sky-blue sweater. She rubbed his chest, brushing his nipples with her fingertips. It felt good. "I'm so glad you're here," she said.

He wanted to touch her nipples too, but he had more important things to do. With a huge effort of will he said: "We need to talk seriously."

"You're right." She sat up and took a sip of the wine. "You first. Is your father still under arrest?"

Jesus, what do I say to that? "No, you first," he said. "You said you had so much to tell me."

"Okay. Number one, I know who raped Lisa. His name is Harvey Jones and he lives in Philadelphia."

~~Shit!~~ Harvey struggled to keep his expression impassive. *Thank God I came here.*

"Is there proof he did it?"

"I went to his apartment. The neighbour let me in with a duplicate key."

That fucking old homo, I'll break his scraggy neck.

"I found the baseball cap he was wearing last Sunday. It was hanging on a hook behind the door."

Jesus! I should have thrown it away. But I never thought anyone would track me down!

"You've done amazingly well," he said. *Steve would be thrilled by this news, it lets him off the hook.* "I don't know how to thank you." ✓

"I'll think of something," she said with a sexy grin.

Can I get back to Philadelphia in time to get rid of that hat before police get there?

"You've told the police all this, have you?"

"No. I've left a message for Mish but she hasn't called yet."

Hallelujah! ~~That means~~ I still have a chance.

Jeannie went on: "Don't worry. He has no idea we're on to him. But you haven't heard the best part. Who else do we know called Jones?"

Do I say "Berisford"? Would Steve think of that? "It's a common name...."

"Berisford, of course! I think Harvey has been brought up as Berisford's son!"

I'm supposed to be amazed. "Incredible!" he said. What the hell do I do next? Maybe Dad would have some ideas. I have to tell him about all this. I need an excuse to make a phone call.

She took his hand. "Hey, look at your nails!"

Oh, fuck, what now? "What about them?"

"They grow so fast! When you came out of jail they were all jagged and broken.

Now they look great!"

"I always heal fast."

*

She turned his hand over and licked his palm.

"You're hot today," he said.

"Oh, God, I've come on too strong, haven't I?" She had been told this by other men. Steve had been kind of reticent ever since he came in, and now she understood why. "I know what you're saying. All last week I was pushing you away, and now you feel like I'm about to eat you for supper."

He nodded. "Yeah, sort of."

"That's just the way I am. Once I decide for a guy, that's it." She bounced up out of the couch. "Okay, I'm backing off." She went into the kitchen nook and took out an omelette pan. It was so heavy she needed both hands to lift it. "I bought food for you yesterday. Are you hungry?" The pan was dusty—she did not cook much—so she wiped it with a dishcloth. "Want some eggs?"

"Not really. So tell me, were you a punk?"

She put down the pan. "Yeah, for a while. Ripped clothes, green hair."

"Drugs?"

"I used to do speed at school whenever I had the money."

"Which parts of your body did you pierce?"

She suddenly remembered the centerfold on Harvey Jones's wall, of the shaved woman with a ring through the lips of her cunt, and she shuddered. "Only my nose,"

she said. "I gave up punk for tennis when I was fifteen."

"I knew a girl who had a nipple ring."

~~Jeannie felt~~ jealous. "Did you sleep with her?"

"Sure."

"Bastard."

"Hey, did you think I was a virgin?"

"Don't ask me to be rational!"

He held up his hands in a defensive gesture. "Okay, I won't."

"You still haven't told me what happened to your Dad. Did you get him released?"

"Why don't I phone home and get the latest news?"

*

If she heard him dialling a seven-digit number, she would know he was making a local call, whereas his father had mentioned that Steve Logan lived in Washington DC. He held the cradle down with a finger while he tapped three random digits, to represent an area code, then he released it and dialled his father's home. ✓

Dad answered, and Harvey said: "Hi, Mom."

He understood immediately. "You're with Jeannie?"

"Yes. I called to find out whether Dad got out of jail yet."

"Colonel Logan is still under arrest, but he's not in jail. The military police have

him."

"That's too bad, I was hoping he might have been released by now."

Hesitantly, Dad said: "Can you tell me...anything?"

"Jeannie has worked wonders, Mom. She's discovered the real rapist. His name's Harvey Jones. We're just waiting for the detective to return her call so she can break the news."

"Jesus, that's bad. At least we're forewarned. Can you stop her talking to the police?"

"I think I have to."

"What about Genetico? Does she have any plans to publicise what she's found out about us?"

"I don't know yet."

"Make sure you find out. That's important too."

"Okay. Well, I hope Dad gets out soon. Call me here if you get any news, okay?"

"Is it safe?"

"Just ask for Steve." He laughed, as if he had made a joke.

"Jeannie might recognise my voice. But I could get Paul to make the call."

"Exactly."

"Okay."

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"Exactly."

"Okay."

*Unclear how Harvey is feeling though
this - - - - - tense, having fun, afraid of her
catching on?*

"Bye." Harvey hung up.

Jeannie said: "I ought to call police headquarters again. Maybe they didn't understand how urgent this is." She picked up the phone.

He realised he was going to have to kill her.

"Kiss me again first," he said.

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She slid into his arms, leaning against the kitchen counter. She opened her mouth to his kiss. He stroked her side. "Nice sweater," he murmured, then he grasped her breast with his big hand.

Her nipple stiffened in response, but somehow she did not feel as good as she expected to. She tried to relax and enjoy the moment she had been looking forward to. He slipped his hands under her sweater, and she arched her back slightly as he held both her breasts. As always, she suffered a moment of embarrassment, fearful that he would be disappointed with them. Every man she had ever slept with had loved her breasts, but she still harbored the notion that they were too small. Like the others, Steve showed no sign of dissatisfaction. He pushed up her sweater, bent his head to her chest, and started sucking her nipples.

She looked down at him. The first time a boy did this to her she thought it was absurd, a reversion to childhood. But she soon came to like it, and even enjoyed doing it to a man. Now, however, nothing was working. Her body responded, but

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some doubt nagged at the back of her mind and she could not concentrate on pleasure. She was annoyed with herself. *I messed everything up yesterday, being paranoid, I'm not going to do it again today.*

He sensed her unease. Straightening up, he said: "You're not comfortable. Let's sit on the couch." Taking her agreement for granted, he sat down. She followed. He smoothed his eyebrows with the tip of his index finger and reached for her.

She flinched away.

"What?" he said.

No! It can't be!

"You...you...did that thing, with your eyebrow."

"What thing?"

She sprang up from the couch. "You creep!" she screamed. "How dare you!"

"What the fuck is going on?" he said, but the pretence was thin: she could tell from his face that he knew exactly what was happening.

"Get out of my place!" she screamed.

He tried to keep up the façade. "First you're all over me, then you pull this!"

"I know who you are, you bastard, you're Harvey!"

He gave up his act. "How did you know?"

"You touched your eyebrow with your fingertip, just like Berisford."

"Well, what does it matter?" he said, standing up. "If we're so alike, you could

pretend I'm Steve."

? / "Get (the fuck) out of here!"

He touched the front of his pants, showing her his erection. "Now that we've got this far, I'm not leaving here with blue balls."

Oh, Jesus, I'm in bad trouble now. This guy is an animal. "Keep away from me!"

He stepped towards her, smiling. "I'm going to take off those tight jeans and see what's underneath."

She remembered Mish saying that rapists enjoy the victim's fear. "I'm not afraid of you," she said, trying to make her voice calm. "But if you touch me, I swear I'll kill you."

He moved dreadfully quickly. In a flash he grabbed her, lifted her and threw her on the floor.

The phone rang.

(?) ^{yelled}
She screamed: "Help! Mr Oliver! Help!"

Harvey snatched up the dishcloth from the kitchen counter and stuffed it roughly into her mouth, bruising her lips. She gagged and began to cough. He held her wrists so that she could not use her hands to pull the cloth out of her mouth. She tried to push it out with her tongue but she could not, it was too big. Had Mr Oliver heard her scream? He was old and he turned up the volume of his TV very loud.

The phone kept on ringing.

Harvey grabbed the waist of her jeans. She wriggled away from him. He slapped her face so hard she saw stars. While she was dazed he let go of her wrists and pulled off her jeans and her panties. "Wow, what a hairy one," he said.

Jeannie snatched the cloth out of her mouth and screamed: "Help me, help!"

Harvey covered her mouth with his big hand, muffling her yells, and fell on her, knocking the wind out of her. For a few moments she was helpless, struggling to breathe. His knuckles bruised her thighs as he fumbled one-handed with his fly. Then he was pushing against her, looking for the way in. She wriggled desperately, trying to throw him off, but he was too heavy.

The phone was still ringing. Then the doorbell rang too.

Harvey did not stop.

Jeannie opened her mouth. Harvey's fingers slid between her teeth. She bit down hard, as hard as she could, thinking that she did not care if she broke her teeth on his bones. Warm blood spurted into her mouth and she heard him cry out in anguish as he jerked his hand away.

The doorbell rang again, long and insistently.

Jeannie spat out Harvey's blood and yelled again. "Help!" she screamed. "Help, help, help!"

There was a loud bang from downstairs, then another, then a crash and the sound of wood splintering.

Harvey scrambled to his feet, clutching his wounded hand.

Jeannie rolled over, stood up, and took three steps away from him.

The door flew open. Harvey swung around, turning his back on Jeannie.

Steve burst in.

Steve and Harvey stared at one another in astonishment for a frozen moment.

They were exactly the same. What would happen if they fought? They were equal in height, weight, strength and fitness. A fight could go on forever.

On impulse, Jeannie picked up the omelette pan with both hands. Imagining that she was hitting a cross-court ground shot with her famous double-handed backhand, she shifted her weight to her front foot, locked her wrists and swung the heavy pan with all her might.

She hit the back of Harvey's head right on the sweet spot.

There was a sickening thud. Harvey's legs seemed to go soft. He sank to his knees, swaying.

As if she had run to the net for the volley, Jeannie lifted the pan high with her right hand and brought it down as hard as she could on top of his head.

His eyes rolled up and he went limp and crashed to the floor.

Let this sink in, adjust, before Steve can speak.

Steve said: "Boy, am I glad you didn't hit the wrong twin."

Jeannie started to shake. She dropped the pan and sat on a kitchen stool. Steve put his arms around her. "It's over," he said.

Harvey scrambled to his feet, clutching his wounded hand.

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"No, it's not," she replied. "It's only just begun."

The phone was still ringing.

57

"You laid him out, the bastard. Who is he, anyway?"

"Harvey Jones. Berisford Jones's son."

"Oh, my God!"

"What are we going to do?"

"You could answer the damn phone," Steve said.

Automatically, Jeannie picked it up. It was Lisa. "It almost happened to me," Jeannie said without preamble.

"Oh, no!"

"The same guy."

"I can't believe it! Shall I come right over?"

"Thanks, I'd like that."

Jeannie hung up. "We're in such a dangerous place, Steve. The people we're up against have powerful friends."

"I know."

"They might try to kill us."

"Tell me about it."

The notion made it hard for Jeannie to think. I must not become paralysed by

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*Why wouldn't he
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*Need to feel her turmoil, pain.
Any bruises?*

fear, she thought. "Do you think if I promise never to tell what I know, they might leave me alone?"

Steve considered that for a moment, then he said: "No, I don't."

"Nor do I. So I've got no choice but to fight."

There was a footstep on the stairs and Mr Oliver put his head around the door. "What ~~the hell~~ happened here?" he said. He looked from the unconscious Harvey on the floor to Steve and back again. "Well, I'll be."

Steve picked up Jeannie's black Levi's and handed them to her, and she slipped them on quickly, covering her nakedness. If Mr Oliver noticed, he was too tactful to say anything. Pointing at Harvey he said: "This must be that guy in Philadelphia. No wonder you thought it was your boyfriend. They got to be twins!"

Steve said: "I'm going to tie him up before he comes round. Do you have any ~~string~~ ^{MR} string, Jeannie?"

Mr Oliver said: "I have some electric cable. I'll get my toolbox." He went out.

Jeannie hugged Steve gratefully. She felt as if she had awakened from a nightmare. "I thought he was you," she said. "It was just like yesterday, but this time I wasn't being paranoid, I was right."

"We said we should make up a code, then we didn't get around to it."

"Let's do it now. When you approached me on the tennis court last Sunday, you said *I play a little tennis myself.*"

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"And you modestly said *If you only play a little tennis, you're probably not in my league.*"

"That's the code. If one of us says the first line, the other has to say the second."

"Done."

Mr Oliver came back with his toolbox. He rolled Harvey over and started to tie his hands in front, binding the palms flat against one another but leaving the pinkie fingers free.

Steve said: "Why not tie his hands behind his back?"

Mr Oliver looked bashful. "If you'll excuse me for mentioning it, this way he can hold his own dick when he has to take a piss. I learned that in Europe during the war." He started to bind Harvey's feet.

Mr Oliver said: "This guy won't cause you no more trouble. Now what are you planning to do about the front door?"

Jeannie looked at Steve, who said: "I bust it pretty bad."

"I'd better call a carpenter," Jeannie said.

Mr Oliver said: "I got some loose timber in the yard. I could fix it so we can lock the door tonight. Then we could get someone to make a good job of it tomorrow."

Jeannie felt profoundly grateful to him. "Thank you, that's so kind."

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"Don't mention it. This is the most interesting thing that's happened to me since World War Two."

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Mr Oliver shook his head. "You two have a lot to discuss, I can see that. Like whether you're going to call the cops on this guy you have trussed up on your carpet." Without waiting for an answer he picked up his toolbox and went downstairs.

Jeannie collected her thoughts. "Tomorrow, Genetico will be sold for a hundred and eighty million dollars and Proust will be on the presidential trail. Meanwhile I've got no job and my reputation is shot. I'll never work as a scientist again. But I could turn both situations around, with what I know."

"How are you going to do that?"

"I could issue a press release about the experiments."

"Proof?"

"You and Harvey together make pretty dramatic evidence. Especially if we could get you on TV."

"~~Like on *Sixty Minutes* or something.~~ But Harvey wouldn't cooperate."

"They can film him tied up. Then we call the cops, and they can film that too."

Steve nodded. "The trouble is, you probably have to act before they finalise the takeover. Once they have the money, they may be able to ride out any bad publicity we generate. But I don't see how you can get on TV in the next few hours. And their

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"Maybe we should hold our own press conference."

Steve snapped his fingers. "I've got it! We gatecrash *their* press conference."

"~~Hell~~, yes. Then maybe the people from Landsmann will decide not to sign the papers, and the takeover will be cancelled."

"And Berisford won't make all those millions of dollars."

"And Jim Proust won't run for president."

"We must be crazy," Steve said. "These are some of the most powerful people in America, and we're talking about spoiling their party."

The sound of hammering came from below as Mr Oliver began to mend the door. Jeannie said: "They hate black people, you know. All this bullshit about good genes and second-rate Americans is just code. They're white supremacists all dressed up with modern science. They want to make Mr Oliver a second-class citizen. The hell with them, I'm not going to stand by and watch."

"We need a plan," Steve said practically.

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"They'll shut you up."

"I should have a press release ready to give out. But then you'll come in with Harvey. Twins are so photogenic, all the cameras will be on you."

Steve frowned. "What do you prove by having me and Harvey there?"

"Because you're identical you'll have the kind of dramatic impact that should cause the press to start asking questions. It won't take them long to check that you have different mothers. Once they learn that, they'll know there's a mystery to be uncovered, just as I did. And you know how they investigate presidential candidates."

"Three would be better than two, though," Steve said. "Do you think we could get one of the other ~~clones~~ there?"

"We could try. We could invite them all and hope that at least one will show up."

On the floor, Harvey opened his eyes and groaned.

Jeannie had almost forgotten about him. Looking at him now, she hoped his head hurt. Then she felt guilty about being so vengeful. "After the way I hit him, he probably should see a doctor."

Harvey came round fast. "Untie me, you fucking bitch," he said.

"Forget the doctor," Jeannie said.

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"I should have a press release ready to give out. But then you'll come in with Harvey. Twins are so photogenic, all the cameras will be on you."

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"Because you're identical you'll have the kind of dramatic impact that should cause the press to start asking questions. It won't take them long to check that you have different mothers. Once they learn that, they'll know there's a mystery to be uncovered, just as I did. And you know how they investigate presidential candidates."

"Three would be better than two, though," Steve said. "Do you think we could get one of the other clones there?"

"We could try. We could invite them all and hope that at least one will show up."

On the floor, Harvey opened his eyes and groaned.

Jeannie had almost forgotten about him. Looking at him now, she hoped his head hurt (Then she felt guilty about being so vengeful.) "After the way I hit him, he probably should see a doctor."

Harvey came round fast. "Untie me, you fucking bitch," he said.

"Forget the doctor," Jeannie said.

"Untie me now, or I swear I'll slash your tits with a razor as soon as I'm free."
Shouldn't this have some impact even if it does

Jeannie stuffed the dishcloth in his mouth. "Shut up, Harvey," she said.
slung it off?

Steve said thoughtfully: "It's going to be interesting trying to sneak him into a hotel tied up."

Lisa's voice came from downstairs, greeting Mr Oliver. A moment later she came in, wearing bluejeans and heavy Doc Marten boots. She looked at Steve and Harvey and said: "My God, it's true."

Steve stood up. "I'm the one you picked out of the lineup," he said. "But he's the one who attacked you."

Jeannie explained: "Harvey tried to do to me what he did to you. Steve came by just in time and broke the door down."

Lisa went over to where Harvey lay. She stared at him for a long moment, then thoughtfully drew back her foot and kicked him in the ribs as hard as she could with a Doc Marten toecap. He groaned and writhed in pain.
No cure or threat?

She did it it again. "Boy," she said, shaking her head, "that feels good."

Jeannie *feeling how now?* swiftly brought Lisa up to date with the day's developments. "A lot happened while I was sleeping," Lisa said in amazement.

Steve said: "You've been at JFU a year, Lisa—I'm surprised you never met Berisford's son."

"Berisford never socialises with academic colleagues," she said. "He's much too

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"Berisford never socialises with academic colleagues," she said. "He's much too

much of a celebrity. It's quite possible nobody at JFU has ever met Harvey."

Jeannie outlined the plan for disrupting the press conference. "We were just saying we could feel more confident if one of the other clones was going to be there."

"Well, Per Ericson is dead, and Dennis Pinker and Murray Claud are in jail, but that still leaves three possibilities: Henry King in Boston, Wayne Stattner in New York, and George Dassault—he could be in Buffalo, Sacramento or Houston, we don't know which, but we could try them all again. I kept all the phone numbers."

"So did I," Jeannie said.

Steve said: "Could they get here on time?"

"We could check flights on CompuServe," Lisa said. "Where's your computer, Jeannie?"

"Stolen."

"I have my powerbook in the trunk, I'll get it."

While she was out, Jeannie said: "We're going to have to think very hard about how to persuade ^{them} ~~the clones~~ to fly to Baltimore ^{on} ~~at~~ short notice. And we'll have to offer to pay their fares. I'm not sure my credit card will stand it."

"I have an American Express card my Mom gave me for emergencies. I know she'll consider this an emergency."

"What a great mom," Jeannie said enviously.

"That's the truth."

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"That's the truth."

Could this possibly work? None,
but also missing doubt.

Lisa came back in and plugged her computer into Jeannie's modem line.

"Wait a minute," Jeannie said. "Let's get organised."

Is she flying now?

to go where? 58

Jeannie wrote the press release, Lisa accessed WorldSpan Travelshopper and checked

flights and Steve got the Yellow Pages and started calling all the major hotels to say:

"Do you have a press conference scheduled tomorrow for Genetico, Inc., or Landsmann?"

After six tries it occurred to him that the press conference did not have to take place in a hotel. It could be held in a restaurant, or even a more exotic location such as on board a ship; or they might have a big enough room at Genetico headquarters, just north of the city. But on his seventh call a helpful desk clerk said: "Yes, that's in the Regency Room at noon, sir."

"Great!" Steve said. Jeannie looked an inquiry at him and Steve grinned and made a thumbs-up sign. "Could I reserve a room for tonight, please?"

"I'll connect you with reservations, please hold on for one moment."

He booked a room, paying with his mother's American Express card. As he hung up, Lisa said: "There are three flights that would get Henry King here on time, all USAir. They leave at six-twenty, seven-forty and nine-forty-five. Seats are available on all of them."

"Book a seat on the nine-forty-five," Jeannie said.

We've lost track of Steve's bail dilemma.
 At some earlier point we need to know
 the next step in his legal process.
 A hearing, hiring a defense lawyer, meeting
 with him, filing a motion, a trial date --
 with these things, I'll be in ?

Steve passed Lisa the credit card and she tapped in the details.

Jeannie said: "I still don't know how to persuade him to come."

"Did you say he's a student, working in a bar?" Steve said.

"Yeah."

"He needs money. Let me try something. What's his number?"

Jeannie gave it to him. "He's called Hank," she said. Steve dialed the number.

No one answered the phone. Steve shook his head ~~dis~~ disappointedly. "Nobody home," he said.

Jeannie looked downcast for a moment, then she snapped her fingers. "Maybe he's working at that bar." She gave Steve the number and he dialed it.

The phone was answered by a man with a Hispanic accent. "The Blue Note."

"May I speak to Hank?"

"He's supposed to be working, you know?" the man said irritably.

Steve grinned at Jeannie and mouthed *He's there!* "It's very important, I won't keep him long."

A minute later a voice just like Steve's own came down the line. "Yeah, who's this?"

"Hi, Hank, my name is Steve Logan, and we have something in common."

"Are you selling something?"

"Your mother and mine both received treatment at a place called The Cotswold

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"Hi, Hank, my name is Steve Logan, and we have something in common."

"Are you selling something?"

"Your mother and mine both received treatment at a place called The Cotswold

Clinic before we were born. You can check that with her."

"Yeah, so?"

"To cut a long story short, I'm suing the clinic for ten million dollars and I'd like you to join in the suit with me."

There was a thoughtful pause. "I don't know if you're for real or not, buddy, but either way I don't have the money for a lawsuit."

"I'll pay all the legal costs. I don't want your money."

"So why are you calling me?"

"Because my case would be strengthened by having you on board."

"You better write me with the details—"

"That's the problem. I need you to be here in Baltimore, at the Stouffer Hotel, tomorrow at noon. I'm holding a press conference ahead of my lawsuit and I want you to appear."

"Who wants to go to Baltimore? Like, it's not Honolulu."

Get serious, asshole. "You have a reservation on the USAir flight out of Logan at nine-forty-five. Your ticket is paid for, you can check with the airline. Just pick it up at the airport."

"You're offering to split ten million dollars with me?"

"Oh, no. You get your own ten million."

"What are you suing them for?"

Steve here at 1000 some of the
time should feel he's hanging
by a thread.

"Breach of implied contract by fraud."

"I'm a business student, isn't there a statute of limitations on that? Anything that happened twenty-three years ago—"

"There is a statute of limitations, but it runs from the time of discovery of the fraud. Which in this case was last week."

In the background, a Hispanic voice shouted: "Hey, Hank, you got about a hundred customers waiting!"

Hank said into the phone: "You're beginning to sound a little more convincing."

"Does that mean you'll come?"

"Hell, no. It means I'll think about it after I get off work tonight. Now I have to serve drinks."

"You can reach me at the hotel," Steve said, but he was too late: Hank had hung up.

Jeannie and Lisa were staring at him.

He shrugged. "I don't know," he said frustratedly. "I don't know if I convinced him or not." *More worry and gloom.*

Lisa said: "We'll just have to wait and see if he shows up."

"What does Wayne Stattner do for a living?"

"He owns nightclubs. He probably already has ten million dollars."

"Then we'll have to pique his curiosity. Do you have a number?"

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"Then we'll have to pique his curiosity. Do you have a number?"

"No."

Steve called information.

"If he's a celebrity he might not be listed."

"There may be an office number." He got through and gave the name. A few moments later he got the number. He dialed it, and got an answering machine. "Hi, Wayne, my name is Steve Logan and you may notice that my voice sounds exactly like yours. That's because, believe it or not, we are identical. I'm six foot two, a hundred and ninety pounds, and I look exactly like you except for hair color. Some other things we probably have in common: I'm allergic to macadamia nuts, I have no nails on my little toes, and when I'm thinking I scratch the back of my left hand with the fingers of my right. Now here's the kicker: we're not twins. There are several of us. One committed a crime at Jones Falls University last Sunday—that's why you got a visit from the Baltimore police yesterday. And we're meeting tomorrow at the Stouffer Hotel in Baltimore at twelve noon. This is weird, Wayne, but I swear to you it's all true. Call me or Dr Jean Ferrami at the hotel, or just show up. It will be interesting." He hung up and looked at Jeannie. "What do you think?"

She shrugged. "He's a man who can afford to follow his whims. He may be intrigued. And a nightclub owner probably doesn't have anything pressing to do on a Monday morning. On the other hand, I wouldn't take a plane on the strength of a phone message like that."

*Need more of a sense of how
badly they both want and
need this.*

The phone rang and Steve picked it up automatically. "Hello?"

"Can I speak to Steve?" The voice was unfamiliar.

"This is Steve."

"This is Uncle Paul. I'm putting your Dad on."

Steve did not have an Uncle Paul. He frowned, mystified. A moment later another voice came on the line. "Is anyone with you, is she listening?"

"Hold on a moment." Steve covered the mouthpiece with his hand and said:

More shock, semi-panic. He's a s.o.b.

"I think this is Berisford Jones. And he thinks I'm Harvey. What the hell do I do?"

Jeannie spread her hands in a gesture of bewilderment. "Improvise," she said.

Steve put the phone to his ear. "Uh, yeah, this is Steve," he said.

"What's going on? You've been there hours!"

"I guess so...."

"Have you found out what Jeannie's planning to do?"

"Uh...yes, I have."

"Then get back here and tell us!"

"Okay."

"You're not trapped in any way, are you?"

"No."

"I suppose you've been fucking her."

"You could say that."

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"Okay."

"You're not trapped in any way, are you?"

"No."

"I suppose you've been fucking her."

"You could say that."

*Uncle Paul and
Uncle Jim are here
I will be here!*

"Get your goddamn pants on and come home! ~~We're all in bad trouble!~~"

"Okay."

"Now, when you hang up, you're going to say it was someone who works for your parents' lawyer, calling to say you're needed in DC as soon as possible. That's your cover story, and it gives you a reason to hurry. Okay?"

"Okay. I'll be there as fast as I can."

Berisford hung up and Steve did likewise. "Well, that was interesting," he said.

"I think I fooled him."

Jeannie said: "What did he say?"

"It seems Harvey was sent here to find out what your intentions are. Berisford got fed up with waiting. I guess he and his cronies are waiting to find out so they can figure out how to respond. He told me to pretend I have to go to Washington to see the lawyer, then get back to his house as fast as I can."

Jeannie looked worried. "This is very bad. When Harvey doesn't show up, Berisford will know something's wrong. The Genetico people will be forewarned. There's no telling what they might do: move the press conference to another location, step up security so we can't get in, even cancel the event altogether and sign the papers in a lawyer's office."

"Then Harvey must go home," Steve said.

"But he's been lying there on the floor listening to us. He'll tell them

everything."

"Not if I take his place."

Jeannie and Lisa stared at him.

He had not worked it out, he was just thinking aloud. "I'll go to Berisford's home and pretend to be Harvey. I'll reassure them."

"Can you do it?"

"If Harvey could fool you, I guess I could fool Berisford."

"Harvey didn't fool me. I found him out."

"He did for a while."

Jeannie was aghast. "Steve, it's so hazardous. You don't know anything about their life. You wouldn't ^{EVEN} know where the bathroom was."

He knew she was right. "Do you have a better idea?"

Jeannie thought for a long moment, then she said: "No."

"Get your goddamn pants on and come home! We're all in bad trouble!"

"Okay."

"Now, when you hang up, you're going to say it was someone who works for your parents' lawyer, calling to say you're needed in DC as soon as possible. That's your cover story, and it gives you a reason to hurry. Okay?"

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*Does he feel belived?
Pleased with himself?
Furious at Berisford?*

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Think you need a transition here. It's too quick.

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everything."

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He had not worked it out, he was just thinking aloud. "I'll go to Berisford's home and pretend to be Harvey. I'll reassure them."

"Can you do it?"

He says this. But the prospect would scare him.

"If Harvey could fool you, I guess I could fool Berisford."

"Harvey didn't fool me. I found him out."

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Jeannie thought for a long moment, then she said: "No."

This is known impossible stuff. You Steve must do it but he should be inwardly severely worried.

What if first he off-stage had interrogated Harvey's ^{softer} ^{at least} some into from him?

611

59

Steve put on Harvey's blue corduroy pants and light-blue sweater and drove Harvey's Datsun to Roland Park. It was dark by the time he reached Berisford's house. He parked behind a silver-grey Lincoln Town Car and sat for a moment, summoning his courage.

what about himself?

He had to get this right. If he was found out, Jeannie was finished. But he had nothing to go on, no information to work with. He would have to be alert to every hint, sensitive to expectations, relaxed about errors. He wished he was an actor.

What mood is Harvey in? he asked himself. He's been summoned rather peremptorily by his father. He might have been enjoying himself with Jeannie. I think he's in a bad mood.

Not clear that he did postpone

He sighed. He could not postpone the dread moment any longer. He got out of the car and went to the front door.

There were several keys on Harvey's key ring. He peered at the lock on Berisford's front door. He thought he could make out the word *Yale*. He looked for a Yale key. Before he could find one, Berisford opened the door. "What are you standing there for?" he said irritably. "Get in here."

Steve stepped inside.

"Go in the den," Berisford said.

Where the fuck is the den? Steve fought down a wave of panic. The house was a standard suburban ranch-style split-level built in the seventies. To his left, through an arch, he could see a living room with formal furniture and no one in it. Straight ahead was a passage with several doors off it which, he guessed, led to bedrooms. On his right were two closed doors. One of them was probably the den—but which?

"Go in the den," Berisford repeated, as if he might not have heard the first time.

Steve picked a door at random.

He had chosen the wrong door. This was a toilet.—

Panic. Terror.

Berisford looked at him with an irritated frown.

Steve hesitated for a moment, then remembered he was supposed to be in a bad temper. "I can take a piss first, can't I?" he snapped. Without waiting for an answer he went in and closed the door.

It was a guest bathroom, with just a toilet and a hand basin. He leaned on the edge of the basin and looked in the mirror. "You have to be crazy," he said to his reflection.

He flushed the toilet, washed his hands and went out.

He could hear male voices from farther inside the house. Presumably Proust and Barck were still here. He opened the door next to the bathroom: this was the den. He stepped inside, closed the door behind him and took a swift look around.

There was a desk, a wood file cabinet, lots of bookshelves, a TV and some couches. On the desk was a photograph of an attractive blond woman of about forty, wearing clothes that looked about twenty years out of date. *Berisford's ex-wife? My "mother"?* He opened the desk drawers one after the other, glancing inside, then he looked in the file cabinet. There was a bottle of Springbank malt whisky and some crystal glasses in the bottom drawer, almost as if they were meant to be concealed. Perhaps it was a whim of Berisford's. As he closed the drawer, the room door opened and Berisford came in, followed by two men. Steve recognised Senator Proust, whose large bald head and big nose were a gift to cartoonists. He presumed the quiet, black-haired man was "Uncle" Paul Barck, the president of Genetico.

"You needn't have dragged me back here in such a goddamn hurry," Steve said.

Berisford adopted a conciliatory tone. "We just finished supper," he said. "You want something? Marianne can make up a tray."

Steve's stomach was knotted with tension, but Harvey would surely have wanted supper, and Steve needed to appear as natural as possible, so he pretended to soften and said: "Sure, I'll have something."

Berisford shouted: "Marianne!" After a moment a pretty, nervous-looking black girl appeared at the door. "Bring Steve some supper on a tray," Berisford said.

"Right away, monsieur," she said quietly.

Steve watched her go, noting that she went through the living room on her way

Would he be so familiar about her --
using her first name so comfortably?
Maybe her whole name, or the young woman,
or your protégé, or Doctor Facetti.

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to the kitchen. Presumably the dining room was also that way, unless they ate in the kitchen.

Proust leaned forward and said: "Well, my boy, what did you learn?"

Steve had thought about what he would say. "I guess you can relax, for the moment at least," he said. "Jeannie plans to take legal action against Jones Falls University for wrongful dismissal. She thinks she will be able to cite the existence of the clones during that proceeding. Until then she has no plans for publicity. She has an appointment with a lawyer on Wednesday."

The three older men looked relieved. Proust said: "A wrongful dismissal suit. That will take at least a year. We have plenty of time to do what we need to do."

Fooled you, you malevolent old bastards.

Berisford said: "What about the Lisa Hoxton case?"

"She knows who I am, and she thinks I did it, but she has no proof. She will probably accuse me, but I believe it will be seen as a wild accusation by a vengeful former employee."

He nodded. "That's good, but you still need a lawyer. You know what we'll do. You'll stay here tonight—it's too late to drive back to Philadelphia anyway."

I don't want to spend the night here! "I don't know...."

"You'll come to the press conference with me in the morning, and right afterwards we'll go see Henry Quinn."

It's too risky! But I would know exactly what these three creeps are up to at any moment. Maybe I should stay. I guess nothing much can happen while I'm asleep. I could sneak a call to Jeannie, to let her know what's going on. He made a split-second decision. "Okay," he said.

Proust said: "Well, we've been sitting here worrying ourselves to death for nothing."

Barck was not quite so quick to accept the good news. He said suspiciously: "It didn't *occur* to the girl to try and sabotage the takeover of Genetico?"

"She's smart, but I don't think she's business-minded," Steve said.

Proust winked and said: "What's she like in the sack, eh?"

"Feisty," Steve said with a grin, and Proust roared with laughter.

Marianne came in with a tray: sliced chicken, a salad with onions, bread and a bottle of beer. Steve smiled at her. "Thank you," he said. "This looks great."

She gave him a startled look, and Steve realised Harvey probably did not say thankyou too much. He caught the eye of Paul Barck, who was frowning. *Careful, careful! Don't spoil it now, you've got them where you want them, all you have to do is get through the next hour or so until bedtime.*

He started to eat. Barck said: "Do you remember me taking you to the Plaza Hotel in New York for lunch when you were ten years old?"

Steve was about to say *Yes* when he caught the trace of a puzzled frown on

Berisford's face. *It's a test. Barck is suspicious.* "The Plaza?" he said with a frown. "Gee, Uncle Paul, I don't remember that."

"Maybe it was my sister's boy," Barck said.

Whew.

Berisford got up. "All that beer is making me piss like a horse," he said. He went out.

"I need a scotch," Proust said.

Steve said: "Try the bottom drawer of the file cabinet. That's where Dad usually keeps it."

Proust went to the cabinet and opened the drawer. "Well done, boy!" he said. He took out the bottle and some glasses.

"I've known about that hiding-place since I was twelve years old," Steve said. "That was when I started stealing it."

Proust roared with laughter. Steve stole a glance at Barck. The suspicious look had gone from his face, and he was smiling.

60

Mr Oliver produced an enormous pistol he had kept from World War Two. "Took it off a German prisoner," he said. "Coloured soldiers weren't allowed to carry firearms in those days." He sat on Jeannie's couch, pointing the gun at Harvey.

Lisa was on the phone, trying to find George Dassault.

Jeannie said: "I'm going to check myself into the hotel and reconnoitre." She put a few things into a suitcase and drove to the Stouffer hotel, thinking about how they would get Harvey to a room without attracting the attention of hotel security.

The Stouffer had an underground car park: that was a good start. She left her car there and took the elevator. It went only to the lobby, not to the rooms, she observed. To get to the rooms you had to take another elevator. But all elevators were grouped together in a passageway off the main lobby, not visible from the reception desk, and it would take only a few seconds to cross the passage from the car park elevator to the room elevator. It was not an ideal layout but she thought they could live with it.

She checked in, went to her room, put down her case, then left immediately and drove back to her apartment.

"I reached George Dassault!" Lisa said excitedly as soon as she walked in.

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Mr Oliver produced an enormous pistol he had kept from World War Two. "Took it off a German prisoner," he said. "Coloured soldiers weren't allowed to carry firearms in those days." He sat on Jeannie's couch, pointing the gun at Harvey.

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"I reached George Dassault!" Lisa said excitedly as soon as she walked in.

"That's great! Where?"

"I found his mother in Buffalo, and she gave me his number in New York. He's an actor in a play off-off-off Broadway."

"Will he come tomorrow?"

"Yes. 'I'll do anything for publicity,' he said. I fixed up his flight and I said I'd meet him at the airport."

"That's wonderful!"

"We'll have three ^{twins} ~~clones~~: it will look incredible on TV."

"If we can get Harvey into the hotel." Jeannie turned to Mr Oliver. "We can avoid the hotel doorman by driving into the underground car park. The car park elevator goes only as far as the ground floor of the hotel. You have to get out there and get another elevator to the rooms. But the elevator bank is kind of concealed."

Mr Oliver said dubiously: "All the same, we're going to have to keep him quiet for a good five, maybe ten minutes while we get him from the car to the room. And what if some of the hotel guests see him all tied up? They might ask questions, or call security."

"I have some ideas," Jeannie said. "Can you re-tie his feet so he can walk, but not very fast?"

"Sure."

While Mr Oliver was doing that, Jeannie went into her bedroom. From her

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Not so fast. Let her search a bit first.

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*To Harvey in this room or elsewhere?
Gagged? If here, we should see what
condition he's in.*

closet she took a colorful sarong she had bought for the beach, a big wraparound shawl, a handkerchief and a Nancy Reagan mask she had been given at a party and had forgotten to throw away.

Mr Oliver was getting Harvey to his feet. As soon as he was upright, Harvey took a swing at Mr Oliver with his bound hands. Jeannie gasped and Lisa screamed. But Mr Oliver seemed to have been expecting it. He dodged the blow easily, then hit Harvey in the stomach with the butt of the gun. Harvey grunted and bent double, and Mr Oliver hit him with the gun butt again, this time on his head. Harvey sank to his knees. Mr Oliver hauled him up again. Now he seemed docile.

"I want to dress him up," Jeannie said.

"You go ahead," Mr Oliver said. "I'll just stand by and hurt him now and again to keep him cooperative."

Nervously, Jeannie wrapped the sarong around Harvey's waist and tied it like a skirt. Her hands were unsteady: she hated being this close to him. The skirt was long, and covered Harvey's ankles, concealing the length of electrical cable that hobbled him. She draped the shawl over his shoulders and fastened it with a safety pin to the bonds on Harvey's wrists, so that he looked as if he was clutching the corners of the shawl like an old lady. Next she rolled the handkerchief and tied it across his open mouth, securing it with a knot behind his neck, so that the dishcloth could not fall out. Finally she put on the Nancy Reagan mask to hide the gag. "He's

been to a costume party, dressed as Nancy Reagan, and he's drunk," she said.

"That's pretty good," Mr Oliver said.

The phone rang. Jeannie picked it up. "Hello?"

"This is Mish Delaware."

Jeannie had forgotten about her. It was fourteen or fifteen hours since she had been desperate to contact her. "Hi," she said.

"You were right. Harvey Jones did it."

"How do you know?"

"The Philadelphia police were quick off the mark. They went to his apartment. He wasn't there, but a neighbour let them in. They found the hat and realised it was the one in the description."

"That's great!"

"I'm ready to arrest him, but I don't know where he is. Do you?"

Jeannie looked at him, dressed like a six-foot-two Nancy Reagan. "No idea," she said. "But I can tell you where he'll be at noon tomorrow."

"Go on."

"Regency Room, Stouffer Hotel, at a press conference."

"Thanks."

"Mish, do me a favor?"

"What?"

"Don't arrest him until the press conference is over. It's really important to me that he's there."

She hesitated, then said: "Okay."

Relief, pleasure
 "Bye." Jeannie hung up. "Okay, let's get him in the car."

Mr Oliver said: "You go ahead and open the doors. I'll bring him."

Jeannie picked up her keys and ran downstairs into the street, leaving the doors open. She unlocked her car and opened a rear door. Night had fallen but there was bright starlight as well as the shadowy illumination of the street lights.

Harvey and Mr Oliver came out of the house, very close together, Mr Oliver pushing his prisoner forward, Harvey stumbling. Lisa followed, closing the door of the house. Harvey reached the car and Mr Oliver gave a final shove. Harvey half-fell into the back seat. Mr Oliver slammed the door.

"I'll get in the back with him," Mr Oliver said.

"Okay."

Lisa got in the front passenger seat and Jeannie drove.

Downtown was quiet on Sunday night. She parked closed to the elevator shaft in the car park. They waited in the car while a dressed-up couple got out of a Lexus and went up to the hotel. Then, when there was no one to see, they got Harvey out of the car and walked him to the elevator.

It took a long time to arrive.

What if someone sees them in the street, or there's someone waiting at the elevator? All staff she should be tense about.

When it came they bundled him in and Jeannie pressed the button for the lobby.

As they went up, Mr Oliver punched Harvey in the stomach again.

?s/ (Jeannie was shocked: there had been no provocation).

Harvey groaned and doubled over just the doors were opening. Two men waiting for the elevator stared at Harvey. Mr Oliver led him stumbling out, saying: "Excuse me, gentlemen, this young man has had one drink too many." They got out of the way smartly.

Another elevator stood waiting. They got Harvey into it and Jeannie pressed the button for the eighth floor. She sighed with relief as the doors closed.

They rode to their floor without incident. Jeannie led the way to the room she had taken. As they got there she saw that the door was open, and hanging on the doorknob was a card saying *Room being serviced*. The maid must be turning down the bed, or something. Jeannie groaned.

Suddenly Harvey began to thrash around, making noises of protest in his throat, swinging wildly with his bound hands. Mr Oliver tried to hit him but he dodged and took three steps along the corridor.

Jeannie stooped in front of him, grabbed the cord binding his ankles with both hands, and heaved. Harvey stumbled. Jeannie tugged again, this time with no effect. *God, he's heavy*. He raised his hands to strike her. She braced herself and pulled with

all her might. His feet flew from under him and he went down with a crash.

"My goodness, what in heaven's name is going on?" said a prim voice. The maid, a black woman of about sixty in an immaculate uniform, had stepped out of the room.

Mr Oliver knelt at Harvey's head and lifted his shoulders. "This young man been partying too hard," he said. "Threw up all over the hood of my limousine."

I get it, he's our driver, just for the maid's benefit.

"Partying?" said the maid. "Look more like fighting to me."

Speaking to Jeannie, Mr Oliver said: "Could you lift his feet, mam?"

Jeannie did so.

They lifted Harvey. He wriggled. Mr Olivier appeared to drop him, but put his knee in the way so that Harvey fell on it and was winded.

"Be careful, you'll hurt him!" the maid said.

"Once more, mam," Mr Oliver said.

They picked him up and carried him into the room. They dumped him on the nearer of the two beds.

The maid followed them in. "I hope he ain't going to throw up in here."

Mr Oliver smiled at her. "Now how come I've never seen you around here before? I have an eye for a pretty girl but I don't recall noticing you."

"Don't be fresh," she said, but she was smiling. "I ain't no girl."

"I'm seventy-one, and you can't be a day over forty-five."

"I'm fifty-nine, too old to listen to your jive."

He took her arm and gently led her out of the room, saying: "Hey, I'm almost through with these folks. Do you want to go for a ride in my limousine?"

"With puke all over it? No way!" She cackled.

"I could get it cleaned up."

"I have a husband waiting for me at home, and if he could hear you talking now there'd be worse than puke on your hood, Mister Limmo."

"Oh-oh." Mr Oliver put up his hands in a defensive gesture. "I never meant no harm." Miming fear, he backed into the room and closed the door.

Jeannie fell into a chair. "God almighty, we did it," she said.

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As soon as Steve had finished eating he stood up and said: "I need to turn in."

The party broke up. Proust swallowed the rest of his whisky, and Berisford walked the two guests to their cars.

Steve snatched up the phone and called information. They took a long time to answer. *Come on, come on!* At last he got through and asked for the number of the Stouffer. He misdialled the first time and got some restaurant. Frantically, he dialled again and at last reached the hotel. "I'd like to speak to Dr Jean Ferrami," he said.

Berisford came back into the den just as Steve heard her voice. "Hello?"

"Hi, Linda, this is Harvey," he said.

"Steve, is that you?"

"Yeah, I've decided to stay over at my Dad's place, it's a little late for a long drive."

"For God's sake, Steve, are you okay?"

"Some business to take care of, but nothing I can't handle. How was your day, honey?"

"We've got him into the hotel room. It wasn't easy, but we did it. Lisa contacted George Dassault. He promised to come, so we should have three, at least."

"Good. I'm going to bed now. I'm still hoping to see you tomorrow, honey, okay?"

"Hey, good luck."

"You too. Good night."

Berisford winked. "Hot babe?"

"Warm."

Berisford took out some pills and washed one down with whisky. Catching Steve's glance at the bottle, he explained: "I'll need something to help me sleep, after all this."

"Good night, Dad."

Berisford put his arm around Steve's shoulders. "Good night, son," he said. "Don't worry, we'll come through all this."

He really loves his rotten son, Steve thought; and for a moment he felt irrationally guilty for deceiving a fond father.

Then he realised he did not know where his bedroom was.

He left the den and took a few steps along the passage that he guessed led to the bedrooms. He had no idea which door led to Harvey's room. Looking back, he saw that Berisford could not watch him from the den. Quickly, he opened the nearest door, trying desperately to do so silently.

It led to a full bathroom, with shower and tub.

He closed it gently.

Next to it was a closet full of towels and linen.

He tried the door opposite. It opened into a big bedroom with a double bed and lots of closets. A pinstriped suit in a dry-cleaner's bag hung from a doorknob. He did not think Harvey had a pinstriped suit. He was about to close the door softly when he was shocked to hear Berisford's voice, right behind him. "You need something from my room?"

He gave a guilty start. For a moment he was struck dumb. *What the hell can I say?* Then words came to him. "I don't have anything to sleep in."

"Since when have you taken to wearing pajamas?" Berisford's voice could have been suspicious, or merely puzzled: Steve could not tell.

Improvising wildly, he said: "I thought you might have an oversize T-shirt."

"Nothing that will fit those shoulders, my boy," Berisford said, and to Steve's relief he laughed.

Steve shrugged. "It doesn't matter." He moved on.

At the end of the passage were two doors, on opposite sides: Harvey's room, and the maid's, presumably.

But which is which?

Steve loitered, hoping that Berisford would disappear into his own room before Steve had to make the choice.

When he reached the end of the passage he glanced back. Berisford was watching him.

"Night, Dad," he said.

"Goodnight."

Left or right? No way to tell. Pick one at random.

Steve opened the door on his right.

Rugby shirt on the back of a chair, Snoop Doggy Dog CD on the bed, *Playboy* on the desk.

A boy's room. Thank God.

He stepped inside and closed the door behind him with his heel.

He slumped against the door, weak with relief.

After a moment he undressed and got into bed, feeling very weird in Harvey's bed in Harvey's room in Harvey's father's home. He turned out the light and lay awake, listening to the sounds of the strange house. For a while he heard footsteps, doors closing and taps running, then the place was quiet.

He dozed lightly and woke suddenly. *There's someone else in the room.*

He caught a distinctive smell of some flowery perfume mixed with garlic and spices, then he saw the outline of Marianne's small form cross the window.

Before he could say anything she was getting into bed with him.

He whispered: "Hey!"

"I'm going to blow you just the way you like," she said, but he could hear fear in her voice.

"No," he said, pushing her away as she burrowed under the bedclothes toward his groin. She was naked.

"Please don't hurt me tonight, please, Arvey," she said. She had a French accent.

Steve figured it out. Marianne was an immigrant, and Harvey had her so terrified she not only did anything he asked but also anticipated his demands. How did he get away with beating the poor girl, when his father was in the next room? Didn't she make a noise? Then Steve remembered the sleeping pill. Berisford slept so heavily that Marianne's cries did not wake him.

"I'm not going to hurt you, Marianne," he said. "Relax."

She started kissing his face. "Be nice, please be nice, I'll do everything you like, but don't hurt me."

"Marianne," he said sternly. "Be still."

She froze.

He put his arm around her thin shoulders. Her skin was soft and warm. "Just lie there a moment and calm down," he said, stroking her back. "Nobody is going to hurt you any more, I promise."

She was tense, expecting blows, but gradually she relaxed. She moved closer

to him.

He had an erection, he could not help it. He knew he could make love to her easily. Lying there, holding her small, trembling body, he was powerfully tempted. No one would ever know. How delightful it would be to stroke her and arouse her. She would be so surprised and pleased to be loved gently and considerately. They would kiss and touch all night.

He sighed. But it would be wrong. She was not a volunteer. Insecurity and fear had brought her to this bed, not desire. *Yes, Steve, you can fuck her—and you will be exploiting a frightened immigrant who believes she has no choice. And that would be contemptible. You would despise a man who could do that.*

"Do you feel better now?" he said.

"Yes...."

"Then go back to your own bed."

She touched his face, then kissed his mouth softly. He kept his lips firmly shut, but patted her hair in a friendly way.

She stared at him in the half-dark. "You're not him, are you," she said.

"No," Steve said. "I'm not him."

A moment later she was gone.

He still had an erection.

Why am I not him? Because of the way I was brought up?

Hell, no.

I could have fucked her. I could be Harvey. I'm not him because I choose not to be. My parents didn't make that decision just now: I did. Thanks for your help, Mom and Dad, but it was me, not you, who sent her back to her room.

Berisford didn't make me, and you didn't make me.

I did.

Monday

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Steve woke up with a start.

Where am I?

Someone was shaking his shoulder, a man in striped pajamas. It was Berisford Jones. He suffered a moment of disorientation, then everything came back to him.

"Bathroom's free," Berisford said. "Dress smart for the press conference, please.

In the closet you'll find a shirt you left here a couple of weeks ago. Marianne laundered it. Come to my room and pick out a tie to borrow." He went out.

Berisford talked to his son as if to a difficult, disobedient child, Steve reflected as he got out of bed. The unspoken sentence *Don't argue, just do it* was attached to every utterance. But his abrupt manner made conversation easier for Steve. He could get away with monosyllabic responses that did not risk betraying his ignorance.

It was eight a.m. Wearing his undershorts, he went along the passage to the bathroom. He took a shower then shaved with a disposable razor he found in the bathroom cabinet.

Wrapping a towel around his waist, he went to Berisford's room, in accordance with his orders. Berisford was not there. Steve opened the closet. Berisford's ties were cheesy: stripes and small dots and foulards, all in shiny silk, nothing up-to-date. He

How relaxed was how tense is he at this point? How long does he intend to go along with this charade?

This house would have more than one bathroom. At least one for the master bedroom and one for the two others.

picked one with broad horizontal stripes. He needed underwear, too. He looked at Berisford's boxer shorts. Although he was much taller than Berisford, they had the same waist size. He took a plain blue pair.

When he was dressed he braced himself for another ordeal of deception. Just a few more hours and it would be all over. He had to allay Berisford's suspicions until a few minutes after twelve noon, when Jeannie would interrupt the press conference.

He took a deep breath and went out.

He followed the smell of frying bacon to the kitchen. Marianne was at the stove. She stared wide-eyed at Steve. Steve had a momentary panic: if Berisford noticed her expression he might ask her what was wrong—and the poor girl was so terrified she would probably tell him. But Berisford was watching CNN on a small TV set and he was not the type to take an interest in the help.

Steve sat down and Marianne poured him coffee and juice. He gave her a reassuring smile to calm her down.

Berisford held up a hand for silence—unnecessarily, for Steve had no intention of making small talk—and the anchor read an item about the takeover of Genetico. "Michael Madigan, CEO of Landsmann North America, said last night that the disclosure phase had been satisfactorily completed, and the deal will be signed in public at a press conference in Baltimore today. Shares in Landsmann rose fifty pfennigs on the Frankfurt exchange in early trading today. General Motors third-

quarter figures—"

There was a ring at the doorbell and Berisford hit the mute button. He looked out of the kitchen window and said: "There's a police car outside."

Steve was struck by a terrible thought. If Jeannie had reached Mish Delaware, and told her what she had learned about Harvey, the police could have decided to arrest Harvey. And he was going to have trouble denying that he was Harvey Jones, when he was wearing Harvey's clothes and sitting in Harvey's father's kitchen eating blueberry muffins made by Harvey's father's cook.

He did not want to go back to jail.

But that was not the worst of it. If he should be arrested now, he would miss the press conference. If none of the other clones showed up, Jeannie would only have Harvey. And one twin did not prove anything.

Berisford got up to go to the door.

Steve said: "What if they're after me?"

Marianne looked as if she was going to die.

Berisford said: "I'll tell them you're not here." He left the room.

Steve could not hear the conversation on the doorstep. He sat frozen to his seat, neither eating nor drinking. Marianne stood like a statue at the stove with a kitchen spatula in her hand.

Eventually Berisford came back in. "Three of our neighbours were robbed last

night," he said. "I guess we got lucky."

*

Through the night Jeannie and Mr Oliver had taken shifts, one guarding Harvey while the other lay down, but neither of them got much rest. Only Harvey slept, snoring behind his gag.

In the morning they took turns in the bathroom. Jeannie dressed in the clothes she had brought in her suitcase, a white blouse and black skirt, so that she could be taken for a waitress.

They ordered breakfast from room service. They could not let the waiter into the room, for then he would see Harvey trussed up on the bed, so Mr Oliver signed the check at the door, saying: "My wife's undressed, I'll take the trolley from here."

He let Harvey drink a glass of orange juice, holding it to his mouth while Jeannie stood behind him ready to hit him with the gun if he tried anything.

Jeannie waited for Steve to call. What had happened to him? He had spent the night at Berisford's house. Was he keeping up the pretence?

Lisa arrived at nine o'clock with a pile of copies of the press release, then left for the airport, to meet George Dassault and any other clones who might show. None of the three had called.

Steve called at nine-thirty. "I have to be quick," he said. "~~Berisford's in the bathroom.~~ Everything's all right, I'm coming to the press conference with him."

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think you need to restate their names here

Steve called at nine-thirty. "I have to be quick," he said. "Berisford's in the bathroom. Everything's all right, I'm coming to the press conference with him."

"He doesn't suspect anything?"

"No—although I've had some tense moments. How's my double?"

"Subdued."

"Gotta go."

"Steve?"

"Make it fast!"

She is a straight girl!

28 | "I love you." She hung up. *(I shouldn't have said that, a girl is supposed to play hard to get. Well, to hell with it.)*

At ten she went on a scouting expedition to check out the Regency Room. It was a corner room with a little lobby and a door to an anteroom. A publicist was already there, assembling a backdrop with the Genetico logo for the benefit of the TV cameras.

Jeannie took a swift look around then returned to her room.

Lisa called from the airport. "Bad news," she said. "The New York flight is late."

"Oh, Christ!" Jeannie said. "Any sign of the others, Wayne or Hank?"

"No."

"How late is George's plane?"

"It's expected at eleven-thirty."

"You might still get here."

"If I drive like the wind."

*

At eleven o'clock Berisford emerged from his bedroom pulling on his suit coat. He was wearing a blue chalk stripe with a vest over a white shirt with french cuffs, old-fashioned but effective. "Let's get going," he said.

Steve put on Harvey's tweed sportcoat. It fitted perfectly, of course, and it looked a lot like one Steve himself owned.

They went outside. They were both overdressed for this weather. They got into the silver Lincoln and turned on the air-conditioning. Berisford drove fast, heading downtown. He parked in the garage underneath the hotel.

"Genetico hired a public-relations outfit to run this event," he said as they went up in the elevator. "Our in-house publicity department has never handled anything this big."

As they headed for the Regency Room, a smartly coiffed woman in a black suit intercepted them. "I'm Caren Beamish from Total Communications," she said brightly. "Would you like to come to the VIP room?" She showed them into a small room where snacks and drinks were laid out.

Steve was mildly bothered: he would have liked to take a look at the layout of the conference room. But perhaps it made no difference. As long as Berisford continued to believe he was Harvey right up until the appearance of Jeannie, nothing else mattered.

There were six or seven people in the VIP room already, including Proust and Barck. With Barck was a muscular young man in a black suit who looked like a bodyguard. Berisford introduced Steve to Michael Madigan, the head of Landsmann's North American operation.

Berisford nervously gulped a glass of white wine. Steve could have used a martini—he had much more reason to be scared than Berisford—but he had to keep his wits about him and he could not afford to relax for an instant. He looked at the watch he had taken from Harvey's wrist. It was five to twelve. *Just a few more minutes. And when this is over, then I'll have a martini.*

Caren Beamish clapped her hands for attention and said: "Gentlemen, are we ready?" There were muttered replies and nods. "Then everyone but the platform party should take their seats now, please."

That's it, I've done it.

Berisford turned to Steve and said: "See you sooner, Montezuma." He looked expectant.

"Sure," Steve said.

Berisford grinned. "What do you mean, *sure?* Give me the rest of it!"

Steve had no idea what he was talking about. It seemed to be a catchphrase, like *See you later, alligator*, but a private one. Obviously there was a reply, but it wasn't *In a while, crocodile*. What the hell could it be? Steve cursed inwardly. The press

conference was about to open—he needed to keep up the pretence for just a few more seconds!

Berisford frowned in puzzlement, staring at him.

Steve felt perspiration break out on his forehead.

"You can't have forgotten it," Berisford said, and Steve saw suspicion dawn in his eyes.

"Of course I haven't," Steve replied quickly—too quickly, for then he realised that he had committed himself.

Senator Proust was listening now. Berisford said: "So give me the rest of it." Steve saw him cut his eyes to Proust's bodyguard, and the man tensed visibly.

In desperation, Steve said: "In an hour, Eisenhower."

There was a moment's silence.

Then Berisford said: "That's a good one!" and laughed.

Steve relaxed. That must be the game: you had to make up a new response every time. He thanked his stars. To hide his relief, he turned away.

"Showtime, everybody," said the publicist.

"This way," Proust said to Steve. "You don't want to walk out on to the stage." He opened a door and Steve stepped through.

He found himself in a bathroom. Turning around, he said: "No, this is—"

Proust's bodyguard was right behind him. Before Steve knew what was

happening, the man had him in a painful half-nelson. "Make a noise and I'll break your fucking arms," he said.

*

Berisford stepped into the bathroom behind the bodyguard. Jim Proust followed him and closed the door.

The bodyguard held the boy tightly.

"You young punk," Berisford hissed. "Which one are you? Steve Logan, I suppose."

The boy tried to keep up the pretence. "Dad, what are you doing?"

"Forget it, the game's up—now where is my son?"

The boy did not answer.

Proust said: "Berry, what the hell is going on?"

"He must have been impersonating Harvey since yesterday evening at least. That means that what he told us about Jeannie Ferrami's intentions was a blind. She must have kidnapped Harvey. She's probably planning some kind of protest at the press conference."

Proust said: "Shit, not in front of all the cameras!"

"That's what I'd do in her place—wouldn't you?"

Proust thought for a moment. "Will Madigan keep his nerve?"

Berisford shook his head. "I couldn't say. He'd look pretty foolish, cancelling

B's blood is boiling, and also he's terrified, fearful for himself and his son. Suggest he be frenzied and not appear so

the takeover at the last minute. On the other hand, he'd look even more foolish paying a hundred and eighty million dollars for a company that's about to be sued for every penny it's got. He could go either way."

Point to now must be and sound panicked.

"Then we've got to find Jeannie Ferrami and stop her." "She might have checked into the hotel." Berisford picked up the phone beside the toilet. "This is Professor Jones at the Genetico press conference in the Regency Room," he said in his most authoritative voice. "We're waiting for Dr Ferrami—what room is she in?"

"I'm sorry, we're not allowed to give out room numbers, sir." Berisford was about to explode when she added: "Would you like me to connect you?"

"Yes, sure." He heard the ringing tone. After a wait, it was answered by a man who sounded elderly. Improvising, Berisford said: "Your laundry is ready, Mr Blenkinsop."

"I didn't give out no laundry."

"Oh, I'm sorry, sir—what room are you in?"

"Eight twenty-one."

"I wanted eight twelve. My apologies."

"No problem."

Berisford hung up. "They're in room eight twenty-one," he said. "I bet Harvey's there."

Excited, somewhat relieved.

Proust said: "The press conference is about to start."

"We may be too late." Berisford hesitated. "Why don't you go on stage with Madigan and Paul? I'll find Harvey and try to stop Jeannie Ferrami."

"Okay."

What gives him such confidence? He's hardly a man of action.

Berisford looked at Steve. "I'd be happier if I could take your security man with me. But we can't let Steve loose."

The bodyguard said: "No problem, sir. I can handcuff him to a pipe."

"Do it."

Berisford and Proust returned to the VIP room. Madigan looked curiously at them. "Something wrong, gentlemen?"

Proust said: "A minor security question, Mike. Berisford is going to handle it while we go ahead with our announcement."

Madigan was not quite satisfied. "Security?"

Berisford said: "A woman I fired last week, Jean Ferrami, is in the room. She may pull some kind of stunt. I'm going to head her off at the pass."

That was enough for him. "Okay, let's get on with it."

Madigan, Barck and Proust went into the conference room. The bodyguard came out of the bathroom. Berisford and he hurried out into the corridor and pressed the button to summon the elevator.

They went to the eighth floor and ran to room eight-twenty-one. Berisford

feels how here?

rapped on the door. A man's voice called: "Who is it?"

Berisford said: "Housekeeping."

"We're okay, thank you, sir."

"I need to check your bathroom, please."

"Come back later."

"There's a problem, sir."

"I'm busy right now. Come back in an hour."

Berisford looked at the bodyguard. "Can you kick this door down?"

The man looked pleased. Then he looked over Berisford's shoulder and hesitated. Following the direction of his glance, Berisford saw an elderly couple with shopping bags emerge from the elevator. They walked slowly along the corridor towards eight-twenty-one. Berisford waited while they passed. They stopped outside eight-thirty. The husband put down his shopping, searched for his key, fumbled it into the lock, and opened the door. At last the couple disappeared into the room.

The bodyguard kicked the door.

It flew open first time. — Hotel doors are usually solid.

He rushed inside and Berisford followed.

They were brought up short by the sight of an elderly black man pointing a huge antiquated pistol at them.

"Stick up your hands, shut that door, get in here and lie face down, or I'll shoot

you both dead," the man said. "After the way you bust in here, ain't no jury in Baltimore going to convict me for killing you."

Berisford raised his hands.

Suddenly a figure catapulted off the bed. Berisford just had time to see that it was Harvey, with his wrists tied together and some kind of gag over his mouth. The old man swung the gun towards him. Berisford cried out: "No!"

The old man moved a fraction of a second too late. Harvey's bound arms knocked the pistol out of his hands. The bodyguard leaped for it and snatched it up from the carpet. Standing up, he pointed it at the old man.

The old man raised his arms in the air.

The bodyguard picked up the room phone. "Hotel security to room eight-twenty-one," he said. "There's a guest here with a gun."

Berisford looked around the room. There was no sign of Jeannie.

Keep B and his reactions at the center.

*

Jeannie emerged from the elevator, wearing her white blouse and black skirt and carrying a tray of tea she had ordered from room service. Her heart was beating like a bass drum. Walking at a brisk, waitressty pace, she entered the Regency Room.

In the little lobby, two women with checklists sat behind tables. A hotel security guard stood near, chatting to them. Presumably no one was supposed to get in without an invitation, but Jeannie was betting they would not question a waitress

with a tray. She forced herself to smile at the guard as she headed for the inner door.

"Hey!" he said.

She turned at the door.

"They have plenty of coffee and beverages in there."

"This is jasmine tea, a special request."

"Who for?"

She thought fast. "Senator Proust." She prayed he was there.

"Okay, go ahead."

She smiled again, opened the door and walked into the conference room.

At the far end, three men in suits were sitting behind a table on a raised dais. In front of them was a pile of legal documents. One of the men was making a stiffly formal speech. The audience consisted of about forty people with notebooks, miniature cassette tape recorders and hand-held television cameras.

Jeannie walked to the front. Standing beside the dais was a woman in a black suit and designer spectacles. She wore a badge saying

Caren Beamish

Total Communications!

She was the publicist Jeannie had seen earlier, assembling the backdrop. She

looked curiously at Jeannie but did not try to stop her, assuming—as Jeannie had intended—that someone had ordered something from room service.

The men on the dais had name cards in front of them. She recognised Senator Proust on the right. On the left was Paul Barck. The one in the middle, who was speaking, was Michael Madigan. "Genetico is not just an exciting biotechnology company," he was saying in a boring tone.

Jeannie smiled and put down the tray in front of him. He looked mildly surprised, and stopped in his speech for a moment.

Jeannie turned to the audience. "I have a very special announcement," she said.

*

Steve was sitting on the bathroom floor with his left hand handcuffed to the waste pipe of the bathroom washbasin. *He feels how?* The pipe was attached at its top end to the drain of the basin. It turned in an S-bend then disappeared into the wall.

Contorting his body, Steve got his foot on the pipe, drew it back, and kicked. The entire sanitary fitting shuddered. He kicked again. The mortar around the pipe where it entered the wall began to crumble. He kicked several more times. The mortar fell away, but the pipe was strong.

He peered up to where the pipe joined the washbasin. Maybe that join was weaker. He grasped the pipe with both hands and shook it. Once again everything trembled but nothing broke.

Is he exhausted, in any way?

He looked at the S-bend. There was a knurled collar around the pipe just above the bend. Plumbers unscrewed it when they had to clean out the bend, he knew, but they used a tool. He got his left hand to the collar, gripped it as hard as he could, and tried to turn it. His fingers slipped and he grazed his knuckles painfully.

He tapped the underside of the sink. It was made of some kind of artificial marble, quite strong. He looked again at the place where the pipe connected with the drain. If he could break that seal, he might be able to pull the pipe out. Then he could easily slip the handcuff over the end and be free.

He changed his position, drew back his foot and started kicking again.

*

Jeannie said: "Twenty-three years ago, Genetico carried out illegal and irresponsible experiments on the unsuspecting wives of eight American women." Her breath was coming fast and she struggled to speak normally and project her voice. "All the women were wives of army officers." She searched the audience for Steve but could not see him. Where ~~the hell~~ was he? He was supposed to be here—he was the proof!

Caren Beamish said in a shaky voice: "This is a private function, please leave immediately."

Jeannie ignored her. "The women went to Genetico's clinic in Philadelphia to have hormone treatment for subfertility." She let her anger show. "Without permission they were impregnated with embryos from total strangers."

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Better if we can feel his agony and desperation.

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Why aren't you and Brock trying to stop her and force her out?

There was a buzz of comment from the assembled journalists. They were interested, Jeannie could tell.

She raised her voice: "Paul Barck, supposedly a responsible scientist, was so obsessed with his pioneering work in cloning that he divided an embryo seven times, producing eight identical embryos, and implanted them in eight unsuspecting women."

Jeannie spotted Mish Delaware sitting at the back, watching with an expression of faint amusement. But Berisford was not in the room. That was surprising—and worrying.

On the platform, Paul Barck stood up and spoke. "Ladies and gentlemen, I apologise for this. We were warned there might be a disturbance."

Jeannie ploughed on. "This outrage has been kept secret for twenty-three years. The three perpetrators—Paul Barck, ^{Senator James} ~~Jim~~ Proust and Berisford Jones—have been prepared to go to any lengths to cover it up, as I know from bitter experience."

Caren Beamish was speaking into a hotel phone. Jeannie heard her say: "Get some goddamn security in here right away, please."

Under the tray, Jeannie had been carrying a sheaf of copies of the press release that she had written and Lisa had photocopied. "All the details are in this handout," she said, and she began to pass them around as she carried on speaking. "Those eight alien embryos grew and were born, and seven of them are alive today. You'll know

them, because they all look alike."

She could tell from the journalists' expressions that she had them where she wanted them. A glance at the platform showed Proust with a face like thunder and Paul Barck looking as if he wanted to die.

About now, Mr Oliver was supposed to walk in with Harvey, so that everyone could see he looked just like Steve, and possibly George Dassault as well. But there was no sign of any of them. *How does this upset J.?*

Jeannie carried on speaking. "You would think they were identical twins—and in fact they have identical DNA—but they were born to eight different mothers. I study twins, and the puzzle of the twins who had different mothers was what first started me investigating this shameful story."

The door at the back of the room burst open. Jeannie looked up, hoping to see one of the clones. But it was Berisford who rushed in. Breathlessly, as if he had been running, Berisford said: "Ladies and gentlemen, this lady is suffering from a nervous breakdown and has lately been dismissed from her job. She was a researcher on a project funded by Genetico and now bears the company a grudge. Hotel security has just arrested an accomplice of hers on another floor. Please bear with us while they escort this person from the building, then our press conference can resume."

J. I think, should feel knocked for a loop here.

Where were Mr Oliver and Harvey? And what had happened to Steve? Jeannie knew her speech and her handout meant nothing without evidence. She had only a

few seconds left. Something had gone terribly wrong. Berisford had somehow foiled her plan.

*Uniform, plain clothes?
Let's see, h.m.*

A security guard strode into the room and spoke to Berisford.

In desperation, Jeannie turned to Michael Madigan. He had a frosty look on his face, and she guessed he was the kind of man who hated interruptions to his smoothly-organised routine. All the same she tried. "I see you have the legal papers in front of you, Mr Madigan," she said. "Don't you think you should check out this story before you sign? Just suppose I'm right—imagine how much money those eight women could sue you for!"

Madigan said mildly: "I'm not in the habit of making business decisions based on tipoffs from nutcases."

The journalists laughed, and Berisford began to look more confident. The security guard approached Jeannie.

She said to the audience: "I was hoping to show you two or three of the clones, by way of proof. But...they haven't showed up."

How hard is this for her to do? Is she choked up?

The reporters laughed again, and Jeannie realised she had become a joke. It was all over, and she had lost.

The guard took her firmly by the arm and pushed her towards the door. She could have fought him off, but there was no point.

She passed Berisford and saw him smile. She felt tears come to her eyes, but

she swallowed them and held her head high. To hell with you all, she thought; one day you'll find out I was right.

Behind her, she heard Caren Beamish say: "Mr Madigan, if you would care to resume your remarks?"

As Jeannie and the guard reached the door it opened and Lisa came in.

Jeannie gasped when she saw that right behind her was one of the clones.

It must be George Dassault. He had come! But one was not enough—she needed two to make her point. If only Steve would show up, or Mr Oliver with Harvey!

Then, with blinding joy, she saw a second clone walk in. It must be Henry King. She shook off the security guard. "Look!" she yelled. "Look here!"

As she spoke, a third clone walked in. The black hair told her it was Wayne Stattner.

"See!" Jeannie yelled. "Here they are! They're identical!"

All the cameras swung away from the platform and pointed at the newcomers.

Lights flashed as photographers began to snap the incident.

"I told you!" Jeannie said triumphantly to the journalists. "Now ask them about their parents. They're not triplets—their mothers have never met! Ask them. Go on, ask them!"

She realised she was sounding too excited, and she made an effort to calm

Set up earlier that the place is full of them.

she swallowed them and held her head high. To hell with you all, she thought; one day you'll find out I was right.

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down, but it was difficult, she felt so happy. Several reporters leaped up and approached the three clones, eager to question them. The guard took Jeannie's arm again, but she was now at the center of a crowd and could not move anyway.

In the background she heard Berisford raise his voice over the buzz of the reporters. "Ladies and gentlemen, if we could have your attention please!" He began by sounding angry but soon became petulant. "We *would* like to continue with the press conference!" It was no good. The pack had scented a real story, and they had lost interest in speeches.

Out of the corner of her eye, Jeannie saw Senator Proust slip quietly out of the room.

A young man thrust a microphone at her and said: "How did you find out about these experiments?"

Jeannie said into the microphone: "My name is Dr Jean Ferrami and I'm a scientist at Jones Falls University, in the psychology department. In the course of my work I came across this group of people who seem to be identical twins but aren't related. I investigated. Berisford Jones attempted to have me fired to prevent my finding out the truth. Despite that I discovered the clones were the result of a military experiment conducted by Genetico." She looked around the room.

Where was Steve? — Since the others all look just like him, is she looking for him in certain clothes that she would recognize? Or is it just that these men give her no sign of personal recognition? And should we know what's become of them?

Steve gave one more kick, and the waste pipe sprang away from the underside of the washbasin in a shower of mortar and marble chips. Heaving on the pipe, he pulled it away from the sink and slipped the handcuff through the gap. Freed, he got to his feet.

He put his left hand in his pocket to conceal the handcuff that dangled from his wrist, then he left the bathroom.

The VIP room was empty.

Not sure what he might find in the conference room, he stepped out into the corridor.

Next to the VIP room was a door marked *Regency Room*.

Standing beside the door was one of ^{his old friends} ~~the clones~~.

Who was it? The man was rubbing his wrists, as if they were sore; and he had a red mark across both cheeks that looked as if it might have been made by a tight gag. This was Harvey, who had spent the night tied up.

He looked up and caught Steve's eye.

They stared at one another for a long moment. It was like looking into a mirror. Steve tried to see beyond Harvey's appearance, read his face and look into his heart, and see the ^{flaw} ~~cancer~~ that made him evil. But he could not. All he saw was a man just like himself, who had walked down the same road and taken a different turning.

He tore his eyes away from Harvey and went into the Regency Room.

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He tore his eyes away from Harvey and went into the Regency Room.

I would like some sort of exchange
between these two. Not much, but a
line

It was pandemonium. Jeannie and Lisa were in the center of a crowd of cameramen. He saw one, no two, *three* clones with them. He pushed through to her. "Jeannie!" he said.

She looked up at him, her face blank.

"It's Steve!" he said.

Mish Delaware was beside her.

Steve said to Mish: "If you're looking for Harvey, he's outside in the corridor."

Mish said to Jeannie: "Can you tell which one this is?"

"Sure." Jeannie looked at him and said: "I play a little tennis myself."

He grinned. "If you only play a *little* tennis, you're probably not in my league."

"Thank God!" she said. She threw her arms around him. He smiled and bent to her face, and they kissed.

The cameras swung around to them, a sea of flashguns glittered, and that was the picture on the front page of newspapers all over the world the following morning.

Nice

Next June

Change this name. It's the
most famous N.Y. cemetery.

657

62

Forest Lawns was like a genteel old-fashioned hotel. It had flowered wallpaper, and china ornaments in glass cases, and occasional tables with spindly legs. It smelled of potpourri, not disinfectant, and the staff called Jeannie's mother *Mrs Ferrami*, not *Maria* or *dear*. Mom had a little suite, with a small parlour where visitors could sit and have tea.

"This is my husband, Mom," Jeannie said, and Steve gave his most charming smile and shook her hand.

"What a nice-looking boy," Mom said. "What work do you do, Steve?"

"I'm studying law."

"Law. That's a good career."

She had flashes of rationality interspersed with longer periods of confusion.

Jeannie said: "Daddy came to our wedding."

"How is your father?"

"He's good. He's too old to rob people any more so he protects them instead.

He started his own security firm. It's doing well."

"I haven't seen him for twenty years."

"Yes, you have, Mom. He visits you. But you forget." Jeannie changed the

~~62~~ 63

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"Yes, you have, Mom. He visits you. (But you forget)" Jeannie changed the

20
 context to
 remind her?

subject. "You look nice." Her mother was wearing a pretty cotton shirtwaist with a candy stripe. Her hair was permed and her nails were manicured. "Do you like it here? It's nicer than Bella Vista, don't you think?"

Mom began to look worried. "How are we going to pay for it, Jeannie? I don't have any money."

"I have a new job, Mom. I can afford it."

"What job is that?"

Jeannie knew she would not understand, but she told her anyway. "I'm Director of Genetics Research for a big company called Landsmann." Michael Madigan had offered her the job after someone explained her search engine to him. The salary was three times what she had been making at Jones Falls. Even more exciting was the work, which was at the leading edge of genetics research. *doing what?*

"That's nice," Mom said. "Oh! Before I forget—there was a picture of you in the newspaper. I saved it." She delved into her handbag and brought out a folded clipping. She straightened it out and gave it to Jeannie.

Jeannie had seen it before, but she studied it as if it was new to her. It showed her at the congressional inquiry into the experiments at the Cotswold Clinic. The inquiry had not yet produced its report, but there was not much doubt what it would say. The questioning of Jim Proust, televised nationwide, had been a public humiliation ~~such as had never been seen before~~. Proust had blustered and shouted

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and lied, and with every word his guilt had become plainer. When it was over he had resigned as a Senator.

Berisford Jones had not been allowed to resign, but had been dismissed from Jones Falls by the discipline committee. Jeannie had heard he had moved to California, where he was living on a small allowance from his ex-wife.

Paul Barck had resigned as president of Genetico, which had been liquidated to pay agreed compensation to the eight mothers of the clones. A small sum had been set aside to pay for counselling to help each of the clones deal with their troubled history.

And Harvey Jones was serving five years for arson and rape.

Mom said: "The paper says you had to *testify*. You weren't in any kind of trouble, were you?"

Jeannie exchanged a smile with Steve. "For a week, back in September, I was kind of in trouble, Mom. But it worked out all right in the end."

"That's good."

Jeannie stood up. "We have to go now. It's our honeymoon. We have a plane to catch."

"Where are you going?"

"A little resort in the Caribbean. People say it's the nicest place in the whole world."

Steve shook Mom's hand, and Jeannie kissed her goodbye.

"Have a good rest, honey," Mom said as they left. "You deserve it."

The end.