

QUIP

a novel by
Lynn Yarris

Yesterday, upon the stair,
I saw a man who wasn't there.
He wasn't there again today,
I wish that man would go away.
(Nursery Rhyme)

Prologue

As always, it began with him standing on a small concrete landing, a muddy and mossy slab of cement supported by four mouldy wooden pillars, one at each corner. The landing was anchored between the swift-moving waters of a wide brown river and a short flight of wooden stairs that climbed a steep embankment. It was shortly after dawn, he somehow knew, and the cool early morning air fluttering in off the river carried with it a metallic stink, a sour smell that nibbled at his skin.

Halfway across the choppy brown water, a low thick curtain of steam fog prevented him from seeing the opposite bank, but it was clear enough on his own side to see he was standing at the start of a huge bend in the river. From somewhere beyond the bend, he could hear the wail of a siren. Looking upriver, he could see, anchored just off shore, a huge barge, easily more than a hundred feet long and nearly a fourth as wide. There was a sign on the port bow of the barge that read Gray's Iron Line and below it, painted in white letters, a name: The Bethlehem. He could also see that the port side of the barge had been damaged, a portion of it was stoved in as if from a collision.

Moored to the landing was a skiff. As always, there was nobody in it, but, as always, he stood on the landing and he stared inside. He could see a pair of oars, two canvas suitcases, a woman's coat with a fur collar and four cloth sacks filled with something to the point of bulging. He could also see a rifle, some kind of bolt-action model, resting against one of the two seats in the skiff. Next to the rifle was a narrow rectangular leather case, less than half the length of the weapon, which had been opened and was empty.

As always, while staring into the skiff, he heard a noise on the stairs behind him. As always, he turned towards the sound. Though he could clearly identify the shadowy silhouette of a person standing on the stairs, he could not make out the person's face or any other detail. He

could not even determine whether the person was a man or a woman.

All he could see was a shadow.

Nothing more.

As always, the shadow raised an arm and, as always, there was a flash of flame and the crack of gunfire echoing off the water at his back. Then a bright white light exploded inside his brain.

Always, in the past, he had awoken with a start, sitting up in bed, his body drenched in sweat, his brain on fire with pain.

Not this time.

Again he awoke with a start. Again his body was drenched in sweat and his brain was on fire with pain. But this time he was in a place other than his bed. And surging through his entire being, like the shockwave from an explosion, was a hatred, a cold, raw hatred from a place deep within his soul for the woman he loved with all his heart.

PART ONE
THE DREAM

CHAPTER ONE

"When did the dream begin to change?"

"About six months ago. And it wasn't the dream that changed. The dream has never changed. It was the aftermath that was different."

"Do you still get the headaches?"

"Yes, but not until later. First comes the anger. No, not anger, rage. First, I feel rage. And I'm pumped. Really pumped. Like before a big game back when I played lacrosse. I have to work myself into exhaustion."

"How?"

"I have punching bags in my basement. A heavy bag I bought for myself, and a speed bag my wife gave me for Christmas one year to improve my hand-eye coordination. It was sort of a joke. She says I'm clumsy. I hardly ever used the speed bag before. Mainly because I *was* too clumsy. I kept missing the bag. But now, after the dream, I put on my gloves and work out on the bag until my arms have no more strength. Funny thing is, in the aftermath of my dream, my hand-eye coordination is terrific. It's like the bag is moving in slow-motion and I can hit it at will."

"What happens after you wear yourself out on the punching bag?"

"Once the adrenaline rush has passed, the anger fades, along with my improved hand-eye coordination. I'm back to being my old mild-mannered and clumsy self. That's when the headaches come. Horrible headaches. Blinding. I take prescription pain killers and wash them down with wine. It helps but not much. Usually, by mid-morning the headache goes away. Then the sadness sets in."

"Describe the sadness."

"A terrible sense of despair and loss. Like when my parents and oldest brother were killed in a car wreck. But in many ways much worse. Because there's also the loneliness. Incredible loneliness. As if all of my family and friends were gone, as if everyone were gone. I

feel like I'm the only person on the planet. Come to think of it, maybe everyone else is still here. Maybe I'm the one who has gone off to someplace else, someplace where there is no light, only darkness."

"How long does this depression last?"

"It varies. Sometimes just a couple of days, sometimes a week, sometimes longer."

"Then you feel okay?"

"Yes. Until the next time."

"Do you ever become suicidal?"

"I suppose I thought about it when I was much younger. But not now. Never. Don't get me wrong. The depression is awful, incredibly awful. But I deal with it. Lots of people with far worse problems than mine manage to cope -- quadriplegics, paraplegics, the blind, the deaf. You can get used to anything."

"You're a brave individual."

"Not at all. Suicide just can't even be a consideration."

"And why is that?"

"I'm a father."

* * *

"Watch out, Dad!"

The warning cry came a split second too late. Simon Thomas was yanked from his reverie in time to see his size-14 white tennis shoe step down dead-center upon the yellow kite, crunching its fragile crosspiece and spine, collapsing its keel, and tearing the fierce black war bird painted on its sheet.

With an embarrassed yelp, Simon jumped back and stared down at the damage he had wrought. The kite was a delta. A serious kite for a serious flyer. The owner was going to be angry. Seriously angry. There would be a confrontation. Simon felt his knees weaken and his insides turn clammy. He hated confrontations. They were so embarrassing. Wiping his brow, he looked up and around as if to gather his bearings. He was standing on the rump of one of the grassy knolls that dimpled the lip of the Berkeley marina. He was facing west toward the San Francisco Bay. Directly across the water, which was green, ruffled and lightly capped, rose gloomy little Alcatraz Island with its abandoned blockhouse and still-functioning lighthouse.

Beyond Alcatraz was the Golden Gate Bridge, absent of its customary backdrop of smoke-colored fog.

No fog!

The thought struck and stuck. No smoke-colored, air-chilling fog! That explained why it was so unseasonably hot for so late in the afternoon of the first Saturday of June. Not only was there no air-chilling fog on the horizon, there was also no cool, moist ocean breeze blowing in through the Golden Gateway.

The grassy knolls in the Berkeley marina were first rate wind-catchers which made them a kite-flyers delight. Which was why Simon was there with his twin daughters, Louise and Elizabeth. The winds that the knolls usually caught came in off the water. After having been buffeted by strong gusts for almost two hours non-stop, Simon Thomas for the very first time realized that the wind was one of the hot dry kinds that occasionally swept in from the arid valley east of the Berkeley hills. It was the Bay Area equivalent of the Santa Ana wind that plagued Los Angeles and, like its southern California counterpart, it was notorious for the weirdness it carried.

Simon's satisfaction at having solved the mystery of how he could have been so wrapped up in thought as to have stepped on someone's kite was cut short by the angry voice of the someone who owned the kite.

"Jesus H. Christ, you asshole!" snarled a young man, no more than 20, who came running up to Simon, out-of-breath and sweating. He was wearing a Cal Bear tee-shirt just like Simon's and was lugging another delta kite with him, a very large delta kite with a huge keel and an even fiercer bird of prey painted on its sheet. "Why don't you watch where the fuck you're walking?" the young man growled as he carefully put down the kite he was carrying then knelt beside the one that Simon had destroyed.

"Sorry, sorry, sorry," stammered Simon.

The young man shook his head sadly. For a moment, Simon feared the young man was going to cry over his loss. Then the young man's anger returned and he rose with fire in his eyes and fists clenched. He looked ready to start a fistfight until he took note that Simon's six-foot-three height bested his own by a good five inches, and that Simon's 220-plus pounds were not only at least 50 pounds more than his, but that some of those 220-plus pounds were packed into impressively muscular arms and the rest were distributed in that special way that spells "athlete."

Although in Simon's case, at the age of 40, he was pretty much of a former athlete.

The young man was still angry but considerably less pugnacious. "You should pay me for it," he said.

"Of course, of course," agreed Simon. To have done something so stupid was bad enough, but to be scolded by someone half your age in front of your teenaged daughters who had by now arrived on the scene was unbearable. Simon wanted only to end this matter as swiftly as he could. Money would be no object. "How much to replace the kite? I have about \$40 in cash. If that's not enough, I could write you a...no, my wife has the checkbook. Maybe I could give you my name and phone number?"

"Forty will cover it," the young man said, eyeing Louise, the daughter who had sounded the too-late warning to Simon and who was kneeling and examining the destroyed kite herself. A head motion and her sister Elizabeth joined her. Together they held the kite in their hands, felt the material then exchanged knowing nods.

"He's full of shit, Dad," Louise pronounced.

"Watch your language, sweetheart," Simon admonished.

"No way this kite cost forty dollars," Louise continued, ignoring Simon. "The little dweeb (she glared up at the kite's owner) probably bought it at Target."

"Did not!" retorted the young man, turned instantly even younger by Louise's accusation. "I bought it at Kit and Caboodle. It's the Renegade Model. Check it out yourself."

"More like the Loser Model," said Louise, standing up. She was almost as tall as the kite's owner and looked far more eager for fisticuffs than he. "You know why it was on the ground don't you? He couldn't get it up."

Elizabeth giggled.

"That's enough, Louise!" Simon interjected, in his most stern fatherly voice. "The kite is ruined and I was responsible. This gentleman must now endure the inconvenience of replacing it. His loss of time and property, not to mention the deprivation of enjoyment on this fine afternoon, deserves compensation. If he sets that compensation at \$40, I will not trouble him further by quibbling."

"In other words, Louise, butt out!" said Elizabeth.

"Shut up, Lizardbreath," responded Louise.

"Shut up yourself, Luigi."

The twins walked away arguing, headed back towards their own kites. Simon quickly paid the young man who could not seem to take his eyes off the twins. Specifically, he could not take his eyes off their halter tops and their cutoffs or perhaps even more specifically, off their *gluteus maximus* muscles.

"They've just turned 15 and if you go anywhere near them I will throw you into the Bay," said Simon quietly. The young man glanced over at Simon, took note once again of his size, and nodded.

As Simon walked back across the knoll to where his daughters were in the process of relaunching their own kites, he furiously admonished himself for having issued his trite little macho warning to the young man. Where the hell did that come from? Some sort of testosterone rush? It had been an incredibly foolish thing to do for it might very well have roused the young man's own testosterone level to the point where he might have decided to take Simon on, despite Simon's size and muscular advantages. That would have brought Louise and Elizabeth back into the fray and god only knew what would have happened next. Simon had been in only three fistfights his entire life and had lost all three. Badly. Needlessly, too. The muscles in Simon's arms were no joke. He was quite strong. A natural athlete, too. The truth of the matter was, Simon could not bring himself to strike another human being. Whatever special something it took to punch your fellow man's lights out, Simon lacked. He didn't even like to hurt people's feelings. So what was he doing goading a young man whose pride had already been pricked by his sharp-tongued daughter? Where indeed had that come from?

Simon shook his head with disgust. Must be the easterly wind. It always made Bay Area residents act weird.

The twins' kites were again airborne. Simon eye's followed the flying lines skyward to see two long-tailed dragons simmer in the air currents. Rising, rising, slightly dipping, rising once more, like creatures of the air performing some ritual mating dance. Simon lowered his eyes and again fell to studying his daughters and marveling at how two persons could be so very much alike and yet so very different.

Physically, they were peas in a pod, a fairly even mix of parental heritage, Irish from Simon, and African-American from Jan. Zebra girls, they called

themselves. Their hair was the same as Simon's, thick, wavy and reddish-brown. Their big eyes were set wide and oval-shaped like Jan's, but the color was green like Simon's. They had their father's mouth and chin, their mother's nose and cheeks. Their skin was the color of extra rich *cafe au lait*, a true blend of mother and father, but the cinnamon freckles lightly sprinkling their faces and arms came courtesy of Simon, as did the shape of their hands and feet. Their slender and already curvaceous bodies came exclusively from Jan. In Simon's eyes, the total package could not have been more lovely. Though he could have done with fewer curves.

However, the genetic gods, as if tired of so carefully dividing the physical attributes of the girls between their parents, decided to concentrate Simon's personality traits on Elizabeth and Jan's on Louise. Which is why it was no surprise to Simon that the too-late warning had been issued by Louise. Just like her mother, she had an uncanny ability to remain aware of her surroundings and what was going on around her at all times, no matter how engaged she was in any one particular activity. Elizabeth, on the other hand, like Simon, could focus in on a single thing to the exclusion of all else. Simon called it concentration. Jan called it obsession.

"Hey, Dad!" called Louise, once again yanking Simon from his thoughts. "You should have pounded that dweeb. He had a serious `tude for a midget." Like her mother, Louise seemed to thrive on confrontation. Aggressive behavior was to be met in kind and she particularly bristled at bullies. Simon thought she would make an excellent lawyer. Just like her mother.

"The word is attitude, Louise, not `tude, and a serious attitude is not by definition a negative attribute," Simon replied. "However, using the term midget as a pejorative is and you demean yourself when you do so. As to your suggestion that I should have pounded that young gentleman, I cannot believe you meant to be taken seriously for it flies in the face of all you should know about your father. I am not a pounder, dear heart, as I have tried to make abundantly clear to you over the years."

"Remember your Ghandi, Louise," piped up Elizabeth. "Violence begins where thought breaks down."

Simon smiled. It must have been two years or more since he'd talked to the girls about Ghandi. In fact, it was Louise who had been assigned to do a paper on Ghandi for school. That it was Elizabeth, however, who remembered the discussion was no surprise. Such a memory that

girl had. Total recall. Simon had no doubt that she would make a crackerjack historian. Just like her dad.

"Shutup, Lizardbreath."

"Shutup yourself, Luigi!"

"Ladies, please," sighed Simon. "Go fly your kites."

Jan had been called into the office for a rare Saturday meeting of the partners -- she sought to reserve the weekends exclusively for her family and her partners in almost all cases wisely respected her wishes. Simon understood Jan's absence to mean he'd be cooking dinner for three tonight instead of four. Simon did most of the daily cooking for the family. Jan handled most of the company fare. This particular division of labor in their household had been decided by practicality. The schedule of a tenured history professor at Cal was far more flexible than that of a chief litigator for one of San Francisco's powerhouse firms. Plus, their house, an oversized grand old Tudor-style in the Berkeley hills, was only a short bike-ride from campus. Simon was always back by mid-afternoon, in time to welcome the girls home from school, drive them and their friends to any of a number of various activities, get dinner started, pick the girls up, get dinner finished and on the table and be ready to greet Jan at the door with a glass of wine. Sometimes it got pretty hectic around meal time, but Simon usually did not mind the scurry and he'd become a master at quick and easy meals that could be rewarmed several times in the course of an evening.

For a first Saturday of June when the temperature felt more like mid-summer in Maryland, Simon decided that quick and easy meant grilled hamburgers, a salad, and a pan of frozen french fries baked in the oven. He made an extra burger and enough fries for Jan just in case. The twins helped themselves to cokes on ice while Simon opened a bottle of Zinfandel wine. Just as they were about to eat, the phone rang. Even as Simon was telling the girls to let the answering machine take a message, Louise was up and running. Five minutes later, Simon sent Elizabeth to tell her sister to hang up the phone and return to her dinner. Approximately fifteen minutes after that, Simon, having finished his hamburger, portion of the fries and salad, and glass of Zinfandel, went to fetch both girls. They were in Louise's room, lying on her bed. Louise was talking.

"So he goes, you want to go out with me? And I'm like, um, sure, okay, where? Then he goes: Where? Like I'd just asked him a question about geography or something. So I'm like, yeah, where? You're the one asking me if I want to go out, so I think it's a fair question, really. And he's like, duh-uh, I don't know!"

Elizabeth howled as if she'd just been told history's all-time funniest joke. "For a brainoid, he's kind of dumb," she said. "You really want to go out with him?"

"Yeah, well, sure, why not? For a brainoid he's awfully buffed. And I think he's hella fine," Louise said.

"Yeah, he's hella fine," Elizabeth agreed.

Louise laughed. "Plus Monica says her brother says he's got the biggest dick on the soccer team."

A startled Simon stepped forward into the bedroom. "Louise Simone Thomas!" he barked.

"Dad!" Louise shrieked, sitting up quickly. "Don't you ever knock? What were you doing? Eavesdropping? Is there no such thing as privacy around here?"

"Fathers do not eavesdrop," Simon said. "Fathers listen. And this father listened to his daughter express inappropriate thoughts using inappropriate language." He turned on Elizabeth who was thoroughly enjoying the opportunity to see her twin on the hotseat. "You were sent up here to get your sister off the phone."

"I told her to come, Dad, but she wouldn't," Elizabeth said, defensively. "Don't displace your anger on me. Luigi's the one who was on the phone."

"And while we're on the subject," interrupted Louise, "Would you please inform Ms. Lizardbreath that when I am speaking on the phone she should not interrupt me. Does everybody in this entire family get to eavesdrop on me? Don't I have any rights?"

"She was talking to a boy named Steve, Dad," giggled Elizabeth.

"Oh-my-god, I was not!" protested Louise with spectacular sincerity, Simon thought, given the circumstances.

"Liar," Elizabeth glibly pronounced.

"He was talking to me, you butthead," Louise said with a sniff, sounding like a cardplayer who had just trumped her opponent.

"Watch your language, Louise, please," said Simon. "Who is Steve?"

"Steve Kim," answered Elizabeth. "He's Korean. He's a junior and he's on the soccer team. He's also like the smartest kid in the school. He's never gotten less than an A plus in anything."

"As usual, Lizardbreath doesn't know what she is talking about," said Louise. "His dad is from Korea. His mom is Mexican. Steve was born in Berkeley. And he got a B in P.E. because he forgot to clear out his locker. But it's okay, Dad. He's cool."

"That's what you said about the last one, Matt," replied Simon stiffly. "And he was a thug."

Elizabeth did her impersonation of Simon lecturing Louise on her previous boyfriend. "Why is it young girls consistently lavish their affections on thugs and showoffs? And social scientists ponder why boys carry on the way they do? It is because you girls reward them for it."

Other than she was making him the object of her humor, Simon thought it to be a credible rendition. However, he admonished her with a frown. "Do not mock your father, Elizabeth."

"Relax, Old Pa," Elizabeth said, smiling. "Luigi is right, Steve Kim is cool. Even you and Mom would like him."

"Are we going to be allowed to eat tonight?" interjected Louise. "I'm starving. Can't you interrogate me in the kitchen?"

"I'm hungry too, Dad," chimed in Elizabeth. She shot a quick glance towards her twin and grinned wickedly. "But one thing you should know about Steve Kim. Monica's brother says..."

Simon held up a hand to silence Elizabeth and told her he'd heard all he cared to about Master Kim's anatomy. He then sent both girls back downstairs and into the dining room to finish their dinner.

The hamburgers and french fries had gotten cold. Elizabeth was immediately up from the table and into the kitchen, putting her plate into the microwave oven.

"Hey Lizardbreath, could you heat mine up too?" Louise called, holding up her plate.

Elizabeth immediately closed the oven door, hit the timer and punched start. "Too late!" she crowed.

"Thanks a lot EST!" grumbled Louise, before biting into her cold hamburger.

Years ago, when the twins were around five, they were given to tattling frivolously on one another and then becoming upset if what they deemed to be proper justice was not immediately dispensed. To defuse tensions while at the same time providing some measure of comfort, Simon would soothe the tattler by telling her that the offender was not her real twin sister but her evil step twin. The sobriquet of "evil step twin" had become a running family joke and at some point during the ensuing years had been shortened to the initials "EST."

As the girls wolfed down their food, Simon decided the time had come for him to attempt to explain to them about Keith Joyner's experiment and why he would be participating in it. He'd been avoiding this conversation for weeks, but Jan had given him a deadline. If he didn't do it today, she was going to do it first thing tomorrow morning. And Simon knew that his wife did not make threats -- she made promises she kept. After two false starts, Simon began. He did not get far before they started questioning him.

"I don't understand, Dad, are you sick?" Elizabeth asked, after gulping down the last of the coke in her glass. She spoke around an ice cube that was lodged in her mouth.

"Not exactly and I've asked you not to talk while sucking on an ice cube. It's rude."

"No it isn't," said Elizabeth, spitting the cube back into the glass she'd been drinking from.

"That is so disgusting, Lizardbreath," said Louise, her own mouth filled with the last of her french fries. "If you are not exactly sick, Dad, then exactly why is Keith giving you a treatment?"

"I use the term treatment only in the sense that I am volunteering to be the subject of an experiment which, if successful, will, I believe, lead to a treatment for me."

"You're not in the classroom, Dad, this is your home and we're your brilliant daughters," said Louise.

"Yeah, cut to the chase, Dad," said Elizabeth. "We understand that you are going to the Brain Lab on Monday and Keith is going to give you some drug that Stinky made and you'll be put in a tank where you won't see or hear anything. Just like they did to Morris. But what we don't understand and what you're not telling us is why you want to do this. Are you sick? Is there a problem here? What's the sitch?"

Simon sighed. He'd told Jan this would be a mistake.

How could he possibly explain it to his daughters? How could he make them understand without scaring them or causing them to worry? He decided to start by telling them about the dream but again he did not get far before Louise rudely interrupted.

"Wait a second! This is all about that bad dream you've been having?" Louise wrinkled her face and shook her head. "Hello, Dad? Wake up and smell the coffee. Nobody does dreams anymore. That was an eighties thing. Is this how come you been seeing Dr. Nuts? We thought it was Mom who was wacko!"

The twins' awareness of the dream and knowledge of Dr. Nertz rattled Simon.

"His name is Dr. Nertz, Eugene Nertz, and yes, that is why I have been seeing him but it does not mean I am wacko. What do you know about my dream and how did you find out about Dr. Nuts ... Nertz? Did your mother tell you?"

"We hear you and Mom talk and we see the mail, Dad," explained Elizabeth, soothingly. "Dr. Nuts billed you, remember? He didn't send them in an unmarked brown envelop like the porno zines that Charyse King's dad gets. Dr. Nuts wants everyone on the planet to see his credentials. UC San Francisco Medical Center. Clinical psychologist. In big bold letters! The man is not subtle."

"So now we know it's you not Mom who's seeing a shrink even though it doesn't mean you're a wacko, just having a bad dream day," said Louise, examining her fingernails. "So tell us all about it Popsie. Inquiring minds want to know, you know."

Again Simon sighed. He gave it another try, limiting what he told them initially to just the dream itself and an edited version of the headaches and depression he suffered in the aftermath. He would tell them about the sleepwalking and the other stuff later.

"Cool dream, Dad," commented Louise after he'd finished.

"How often do you have it, Dad?" asked Elizabeth, focusing. "About once every six weeks. The periodicity has never made sense to me, but Dr. Nertz has seen it before and it fits the parameters of Keith's model."

"Whatever that means," said Louise, making a face.

"Is it always the same?" Elizabeth continued.

"The dream? Yes. The dream is always the same," Simon answered.

A thoughtful look crinkled Elizabeth's brow. "I have this dream where I am sitting in a classroom and I'm supposed to take a test but I didn't know about it and didn't study for it and I'm all freaking out and everything. I've had it several times."

Louise excitedly interjected. "I've had that same dream except I'm sitting in class in just my underwear and everybody's all staring at me and I'm freaking 'cause I don't know where to get some clothes to put on."

Simon smiled. "I've had those dreams, too. Dr. Nertz told me he's talked to people in their eighties, people who have not been anywhere near a classroom in more than sixty years, who still have those dreams. It relates to mild anxiety. There are also recurring dreams of being able to fly or unable to run, or dreams of being visited by people who have not been alive or you have not seen in years. Dr. Nertz and Keith have explanations for those dreams which are common to us all. This recurring dream of mine that I have just told you about is something entirely different. When I tell you that it is always the same, I mean that it is *exactly* the same every single time. It has never varied."

"How long have you been having it, Dad?" asked Elizabeth quietly. As Simon could have predicted, she was the one to pick up that the situation was more serious than he was letting on.

"Since I was twelve," he replied. "In fact, it started on the night of my twelfth birthday."

"Some birthday present," cracked Louise. "Who gave it to you?"

"Maybe my great-grandfather," Simon answered. "But that's a long story. Anyway, the dream began when I was 12 and it drove your grandparents and your aunt and uncles crazy. I would wake up screaming from the dream which, of course, woke all of them up. No one would get much sleep those nights and everybody was grumpy. For awhile, they were all mad at me. Then they all began to worry. Especially my mother. She took to calling it my little problem. She took me to see a doctor..." Simon had to swallow to banish the dead-leaf dryness that had suddenly seized his voice. "...several doctors, actually."

"That doesn't sound like such a little problem to me," observed Louise, making a face. "They didn't commit you or do anything bad to you, did they Dad?"

Simon made a face of his own. "No, nothing bad. It was just very frustrating for them and, well, let's just say various treatments and therapies were tried without success. In the end, I

taught myself to not wake up screaming. Then I told my family that the dream had stopped."

"Must not have stopped if you're seeing Dr. Nuts," Elizabeth observed.

"You're not the first children to lie to your parents," Simon remarked, his throat still raspy with memories.

There was an unusual silence at the table, broken finally by Louise, her voice having become every bit as concerned as Elizabeth's. "Does Dr. Nuts think this stuff Keith's gonna give you will make your dream stop, Dad?"

"Yes," answered Simon. "Dr. Nertz says it is the first step toward treating this particular form of mental disorder "

"You have a *mental disorder*, Dad?" cried Louise.

"It would ...ah... seem so ... yes ..."

"But you act so normal," whimpered Elizabeth.

"Mom's the one who acts crazy," said Louise.

Simon quickly explained to his daughters the statistics he'd learned from Dr. Nertz and Keith, how ten percent of all Americans experience some disability from a mental disorder each year, how less than one sixth of those cases ever progressed to the severe state.

"That still leaves us with about five million disturbed individuals in this country," said Louise, always quick with her math. "Most of them living here in the Bay Area, I'll bet."

"What about your case, Dad?" asked Elizabeth. "Is your case severe? What's wrong with you?"

Simon tried to explain, but the girls became too agitated, their confusion and worry kept mounting. He decided to let Jan handle it.

"My problem is still a little problem," he lied. "The good news is that Dr. Nertz thinks this drug Keith wants to give me can correct it."

"What does Keith think?" Louise continued.

In spite of himself, Simon smiled. Keith's own conviction that he was the ultimate expert on all matters of the brain had made believers of the Thomas twins. "Keith has no doubts."

Leave it to Elizabeth to ask the magic question. "Is this stuff safe?"

"Yes," said Simon with more certainty than was warranted. He did not want the girls to become upset again. Not without Jan there.

"Then go for it, Dad," said Louise. "We have enough disturbed individuals around here (she motioned toward her twin who responded with an exaggerated rolling of her eyes) without adding your name to the list." She rose up from her chair, came around the table and threw her arms around Simon's neck. Elizabeth did the same from his other side.

"We love you, Daddy!" they said in unison.

The phone rang and Louise kissed Simon on the cheek then ran off to answer it. Moments later, she returned, announced that the call was for her, that she would take it in her bedroom, and demanded that everybody please respect her right to privacy. No sooner had she left than Elizabeth said she was going to go listen in. But before leaving, she, too, kissed Simon on the cheek and then asked one last question.

"What did you say the name of this drug is?"

"Quip," said Simon.

"Funny name," Elizabeth said.

"It's a nickname," Simon said. He was going to tell her what it was short for but she'd already left the room.

He never did get a chance to tell them about the sleepwalking or the other stuff. But he wouldn't have done so even if they'd asked. Not without Jan there.

CHAPTER TWO

"Tell me about the sleepwalking."

"When I awoke from my dream I was in the basement of my house. I had no memory of having left my bed."

"Did you awake on your own or were you woken by someone else?"

"My wife, Jan, she woke me."

"Is that when you struck her?"

"No! That is to say, I swung at her but I didn't hit her."

"Were you still dreaming or were you actually trying to hit her?"

"I wasn't fully awake, but I was trying to hit her. At least a part of me seemed to be trying while a part of me was holding back. Jan took the wisest course of action under the circumstances and ducked. She is quite agile and quick. She was a star basketball player in college and is still a terrific athlete. Nonetheless, if a part of me had not resisted, I would have hit her."

"I see. What happened after you tried to strike her and failed?"

"She kneed me in the groin and by the time I got my breath back, I'd come to my senses."

"Kneed you in the groin?"

"Jan is nobody's punching bag."

"I see. Was it after that incident that you began your routine with the punching bag?"

"Yes. I woke up from my dream so incredibly angry, literally enraged, and for no reason. I mean, I'd been asleep for god's sake. Yes, there was the dream, but it was the same dream. Like I said, nothing different about the dream, only the aftermath. It scared the hell out of me because unlike the screaming, this was something I was afraid I couldn't control. It was too powerful. You know the expression - Out of your mind with anger? That's what I felt. Like I would go out of my mind with anger and maybe hurt Jan, or even my daughters. I had to do something, so, I put on the gloves and hit one of the punching bags. I guess I just felt like I needed to hit something. Eventually the anger left me and I was myself again."

"Interesting choice of terms. What do you mean you were yourself again?"

"I mean that I am not ordinarily an angry person. I don't have much of a temper. Even a rude driver honks at me while I'm riding my bike and flips me off, I don't get very mad. I figure

I was probably at fault, I did something to annoy him. Jan tells me I'm a wus."

"What does she mean?"

"She means I'm too easy-going, that other people, mainly my daughters and my students, never Jan, of course, take advantage of me. The point is, this anger, this terrible rage that boils up within me after the dream, I don't know where it's coming from but it doesn't feel like it's coming from me. It's like there's someone else inside me, a really pissed off someone else. Boy, that sure sounds stupid, doesn't it? Am I losing my mind?"

"What do you think of when you are hitting the punching bag?"

"Oh, boy, that's another thing. This is going to sound even more loony. I think of Jan. But it's not what you think. Or what you're probably thinking. See, she stays in the basement with me until the rage has passed. She doesn't say anything, mind you. She lets me work it off without interfering. She just keeps an eye on me. Watching over me, I guess. But I'm aware that she's there. And though there's a part of me that's grateful, I guess there's a part of me that must resent her presence."

"You sound hesitant. Why?"

"I guess I'm thinking that emotions such as *gratitude* and *resentment* are much too complicated for what I'm really feeling after my dream."

"How are you *really feeling* after your dream?"

"Fierce. Predatory. Like a wolf."

"Since neither of us knows what it is to feel like a wolf, that description is meaningless. I'll stick with gratitude and resentment and change the subject. Tell me about your wife. Do you love her?"

"With all my heart."

"Tell me about your marriage, then. Is it a good one?"

"At times it has been."

"And other times?"

"Other times, my marriage has been great!"

* * *

Simon was in the basement just starting his workout when he heard Elizabeth announce "Mom's home!" Over the years, Jan and he had managed to put together a mini-gymnasium that

took up almost half the room. It had begun with a 100 square-foot mat they'd purchased back when the twins thought they'd wanted to be gymnasts -- a period that lasted little more than a year for Elizabeth and less than a month for Louise. Later, they'd added a stationary bicycle, a Soloflex isometrics machine, and moved Simon's collection of barbells and free-standing weights down from the study. Despite Jan's arguments for the superiority of the Soloflex, Simon preferred to tone his muscles the old-fashioned way -- pumping iron. It was what he'd been taught by Coach Klooney at Bishop O'Hara High in Baltimore, and his coaches at the University of Maryland which was where he met Jan.

They both went to school on athletic scholarships. Simon played lacrosse. He was a goalie who set a school record for saves that stood for more than a decade. His teammates called him Ox. Jan was on the women's basketball team. She played point guard and led her team in scoring for three straight years. Her teammates called her Slash. As part of their scholarship packages, Slash and Ox were given part-time jobs at McKeldin, the school's main library. They shared the late night shift behind the book checkout and return desk. Conversation to pass the time led to cheering at each other's games, which led to study dates and then dinner and movie dates. Next came sex and the realization that they were mad about one another and would be far better off in a situation where finding places to do it would not be such a big distraction from their studies. They decided to get married rather than simply try living together since family on both sides were queasy about the racial issue.

Not exactly true. Simon's three older siblings (they came out a little more than a year apart, then five years passed before Simon arrived), brothers Kevin and Grant, and sister Maureen, accepted Jan quickly enough, especially Maureen. Eventually, Simon's siblings became the siblings Jan never had. Even the two dads came to terms with the idea of marriage between Simon and Jan in a relatively short period of time. It was the moms who had difficulties.

Both mothers argued that Simon and Jan were too young and should finish school first. Simon's mother raised the issue about his little problem.

"You may have fooled everyone else but don't think you fooled me, Simon, I know you're still having that dream," she'd said. "You're very smart, dear, but your brain must be wired funny (her favorite explanation for irrational behavior) for you to keep having that dream. You

owe it to yourself and to Jan to have it taken care of before you even think about getting married and starting a family."

But Simon would hear none of it. He'd made up his mind to marry Jan and he would. With or without his mother's blessing.

"You may get your looks from my side of the family, but your stubbornness comes from your father," Simon's mother had told him in admitting defeat. "You're just like Dad. Easy-going until you get something fixed in your head and then there's no arguing with you. This idea of marriage is a foolish choice that you and Jan are making, Simon, a very foolish choice."

In so many words, Jan's mother delivered the same message to Jan.

Both mothers were wrong. Marriage proved to have been a wise choice for Slash and Ox. As husband and wife, Simon and Jan took turns supporting each other through their respective advanced degrees. Drawing upon the benefits offered by a large university -- low-cost married student housing on campus and relatively cheap entertainment -- they lived a frugal but happy life. Simon finished his education first and got a job offer from Berkeley thanks to the limited number of new doctorates whose specialty was 19th Century United States history with emphasis on the labor movement. Anybody else would have jumped at the opportunity, but Simon was reluctant to switch coasts. Too many family ties. It was Jan who made him accept. She wanted to attend Cal's law school. Plus she was eager to have children and though the political climate of Maryland was highly liberal, its social climate veered toward the conservative mein of its Southern roots. Jan thought Berkeley would be a much better place to raise mixed children.

"I'll miss them dearly," Simon had said of his parents and siblings.

"There's this new thing out called the telephone," Jan had countered.

She was already pregnant with the twins by the time she got her law degree from Boalt Hall.

Three years would zip by before Jan took and passed the California bar with scores that surprised even her. She was almost 30 and just starting her career. Simon worried that she was in for a long and difficult struggle. He was wrong. A smart, cunning and aggressive black woman with a law degree from Cal, who also happened to be blessed with the looks and a figure that cameras loved, could write her own ticket in the Bay Area. Which is precisely what Jan had

done with an immodesty that Simon found delightfully shameless.

She quickly blossomed into a minor Bay Area celebrity. In addition to her job with the firm, she made spot appearances on a local television news show as an on-air legal analyst and was also seen on televised PSAs about free legal aid available to mothers seeking child-support from dead-beat dads. Her opinions were frequently sought by newspaper reporters and she herself had been the subject of a recent personality feature in the Sunday magazine section of the San Francisco Chronicle. Entitled "Straight Shooter," the article touted her skills on the firing range as much as in the courtroom. Because of her local fame and the fact that she frequently worked evenings during the week, which meant walking back to her car after dark, Jan carried a pistol in her handbag -- these days a .32 caliber Beretta Tomcat, a small semiautomatic with what she told Simon was big-stopping power. She spent many hours practicing to make sure that if she ever had cause, she could quickly draw that gun from her bag and use it with deadly accuracy.

Simon fully understood that some men might have been threatened by a wife whose earnings and accomplishments far exceeded their own. Most men, probably. He was aware of the eyebrows raised when he said that Jan's accomplishments, including her earnings, were a source of pride. What did his attitude say about his manhood? Simon did not know, nor did he care. For what he told no one, not even Keith, was that Jan's ability to take care of herself gave him the courage to be a father in spite of his little problem, just as it had given him the courage to participate in Keith's experiment. For Simon knew that if something were to go wrong, if the worst were to happen, whatever that worst might be, his children would always be provided for. No matter what happened to him, Jan could take care of their daughters as easily as she could take care of herself. Some people believed in themselves; Simon believed in Jan.

From his prone position on the weight bench, Simon, in mid-press, his bare chest glistening in sweat, his shorts drenched, heard footsteps descending the stairs and knew it was Jan. He set the barbell up on its rests just as she came through the doorway that separated the basement from the stairwell. She was wearing her red leotards, the ones that Simon loved best on her. Her long black hair was pulled back in a pony tail that was secured with a puffy white scrunchy. Red and white, the colors of the University of Maryland, and in Simon's eyes she did not look all that different from the college girl who had knocked him out with her fresh pretty

face, her dazzling smile, her fine full breasts and hips, and her incredibly long strong legs that seemed capable of carrying her up and down a basketball court as fast as she wanted to go for as long as she wanted to play.

But Janelle Lysette Brown, college girl-jock, was now Jan Thomas, working mom, and her long strong legs were carrying her across the room to the weight bench in a huff of disapproval that pushed right up on the envelop of middle-age intolerance.

"I came home to find those girls watching MTV again, Simon," Jan announced by way of greeting. Her voice, even when annoyed, was as moist as fog. "Can't they find better things to do with their time? Read a book? Play a game? How can they watch that stuff? All those fool images and that noisy music...boom..boom ..boom..non-stop? It gets on my last good nerve. And you know what made it even worse? They had the speaker phone on! Sounds like there was half a dozen kids linked on the other line. Conference calling while watching TV. What the hell is with this generation?"

Simon answered her in what Jan jokingly referred to as his professorial voice. "You are lumping together two independent phenomena. With regards to MTV, they have been sociologically conditioned to expect a change of image every 10 seconds and a new theme every 180 seconds. To sustain one thought or concept a moment longer would violate the protocol of their programming. As for the conference phone calls, theirs is also the generation of remote communications. Conference phone calls, e-mail, pagers, cell phones, theirs is a brave world where you might know the activities of your best friend every moment of the day without the two of you having ever laid eyes upon one another. And its only going to get worse with this Internet stuff. I will tell you what the kids would tell you -- deal with it."

Jan smiled and kissed Simon on the mouth. "In other words, take a chill pill, Mom, they're just being kids. Tell me, Saint Simon," she intoned, invoking the nickname that many of his students used (not always with reverence), "how can you who are so old know so much about those who are so young?"

"As a teacher, I must work among their kind," Simon replied, still being pedantic in tone. "As a part-time househusband, I must dwell amongst them, too." Then, in his normal voice, "Believe me, they could be doing far worse. I'd bet most of their friends smoke cigarettes, many have tried drugs and more than one is sexually active. To the best of my knowledge, they have

yet to sample any of those vices."

Jan nodded, gave him a friendly punch on the stomach, wolf-whistled at his firmness, then moved onto the mat and began her stretching routine. As she limbered up with alternating series of toe-touches, deep-knee bends and pelvic twists, Jan talked excitedly about her day. She was representing a woman who'd claimed to have been sexually harassed by an equity partner at a rival firm that was bigger and even more prominent than Jan's. The rival firm had made a settlement offer of \$250,000. An emergency meeting of Jan's partners had been called to discuss it. A majority of the partners felt she and her client should accept. The rest thought she should make a counter offer. Only Jan thought she should reject the offer, make no counter and demand a trial. Simon thought the rival firm's offer to be extremely reasonable in light of the fact that the woman had only worked for the alleged harasser a total of nine days.

"How much harassment could he have subjected her to in such a short period of time?" Simon had asked.

"Enough," Jan grunted. She'd fully extended her legs, opened them a full 180 degrees and then, keeping her torso rigidly straight, bent forward at the waist and began reaching for her toes, first one foot, then the other. "The truth of the matter is, the pig is their top rainmaker and they wanted to keep his bacon out the frying pan."

Simon was feeling more than a little piggy himself as he stared into the split between his wife's legs. Jan's thighs were well-developed, particularly her *adductor longus* and *gracilis* muscles, which were two of Simon's personal favorites and which just so happened to draw his eyes to the camel-toed crotch of her leotard. He felt a stir in his jockstrap, as if the material had suddenly begun to shrink.

Even though she appeared to have her own eyes fixed firmly upon whichever set of toes she was stretching for, Jan must have been aware of what Simon was looking at and what effect the view was having on him. Suddenly she stopped touching her toes and, keeping her legs wide open, lay back down on the mat. Slowly, very slowly and very deliberately, she closed her legs then spread them apart again. She repeated the process over and over, a languorous scissoring motion that caused the crotch of her leotard to pucker and pout.

The elastic band at the top of Simon's jockstrap began chaffing his now fully erect penis and he had to reach inside his shorts to make some necessary rearrangements. "What was the

outcome of the debate?" he asked, somewhat hoarsely.

She laughed. "Naturally, I prevailed," she said, continuing her scissoring routine. "Although the discussion did get rather intense as to my refusing to counter. Stubborn was one of the nicer names used. In the end, I elected to gamble. I called the other side's counsel at his home, told him I'd see his ass in court and hung up. We sent out for pizza and beer, talked business and waited. I'd just finished my second slice and most of a Corona when the opposing counsel got back to me. His clients doubled their offer."

"I presume you accepted," said Simon, his eyes locked on the opening and closing of Jan's legs, his voice again as raspy as the rustle of dead leaves.

"I countered. A million, plus they dump the pig and issue a letter of apology to my client."

"And?" prompted Simon.

"There were a lot of phone calls back and forth. We split the difference, no letter of apology but the ham, though not fired, has effectively been canned."

"Congratulations!" said Simon.

"Thanks, I guess," Jan said, with some diffidence. "The firm is thrilled. The money is much better than any of the partners thought I'd get, and a rival has just lost a rainmaker who might have taken business from us. He'll resign as a matter of principle and get snapped up immediately, of course, but not by any of our competitors in the Bay Area. He may even have to leave the state."

"How about your client?"

Jan laughed. "She's happy as a cat on a bed. She's just won the lottery."

Dutiful husband that he was, Simon asked the obvious. "So what is troubling you, my sweet?"

Jan halted her leg scissors and sat up. A sheen of perspiration made her face, arms and legs glisten. "Whew!" she exclaimed, swiping at her brow. "I'm getting old, baby. These stretches are getting tough on my gams. What's bothering me is my guess that I could have gotten more in punitive than settled out large. However, if quiet is kept, my client walks, talks, and acts like a bimbo. She'd have been a risk on the stand and you never know about juries. Damages alone would not have amounted to much. Plus, we'd have been months getting to trial,

so the odds are my client would have settled behind my back for a lot less."

"Then why were your opponents in such a hurry to settle with you?" Simon knew the answer to his question, but he also knew it would give Jan great pleasure in answering it.

"Because they knew if we did get to trial, I'd have torn them all new assholes," she said, flashing all her teeth in the grin the cameras loved.

"You are a terror," Simon laughed. Which was true. In ten years of practicing law, Jan had yet to lose a case.

"I'm a bitch!" Jan retorted proudly. She stood, walked over to the basement door and closed it. "A horny bitch," she purred as she turned back to face Simon. "Winning makes me wet!"

Sitting up on the bench, Simon wiped the perspiration from his own brow. "We're too sweaty," he said.

"We're nice and slippery," Jan corrected as she peeled the leotard off her shoulders.

"What about the children?" asked Simon as he rose from the bench and moved out onto the center of the mat.

"Trina's mom picked them up and took them all to a movie. Something with cute boys and a high body count," Jan said, walking towards him. "They'll be gone a couple of hours."

In a single motion, she slid the leotard down and off the sleek honey brown skin of her body. The years and the familiarity had done little to diminish the impressiveness of her nudity. Her fine full breasts continued to resist gravity and the plum-colored nipples that crowned them were still taut, high and proud. The furrow of her navel was perhaps a tad more fleshy and deep, and her stomach and hips had taken on some additional roundness since the twins, but those legs were as long and strong as when they'd carried her up and down the court, and that raven's nest between her legs remained the most mesmerizing sight in all the world for Simon.

In the midst of contemplating the wonderfulness of seeing Jan naked, Simon suddenly realized she was standing immediately in front of him.

"Still got your clothes on, boy?" she asked in an exaggerated dialect. "S'matter, Irish? You afraid of getting natural with an African-American woman?" Jan slapped Simon on the chest, playfully but still hard enough to make a smacking noise and to leave a crimson mark on his wet skin. "Want to wrestle?"

Simon tried to look annoyed. "Behave yourself," he said in his stern fatherly voice, as if he were talking to Louise or Elizabeth.

"Make me," Jan said, grinning. She started straight at him, gave a head fake that sent his hands upwards to block her, then, ducking low, reached out and tugged down his shorts and his jockstrap. "Look what we have here!" she said, stepping back to admire the erection that swayed between Simon's legs like a lost creature in search of its home. "Is that for me? Or does it have another place to go?"

"Alright, Jan," Simon grumbled as he awkwardly stooped over and balanced on one foot to finish removing his shorts and jock which were suspended around his knees. "You win."

Jan lashed out, shoving him hard while he still balancing on one leg. Simon fell over on his back and she was immediately astride him.

"You're damn right, I win!" she said with heat. "Tell me I am one tough bitch. Say it!"

"Go play with yourself," Simon rumbled. With a sudden arching of his back, he tossed Jan off him. He rolled and tried to grab her but the combination of her wet skin and his own sweaty hands made her too slippery to hold. She slid from his grasp with ease and met him on the rise. Jan was almost as tall as Simon but better balanced and much quicker on her feet. As they stood grappling for position, she was the one to gain the advantage, managing to pull him sufficiently forward so that she could drop to her knees and execute a perfect single-leg takedown. Simon hit the mat hard on his stomach and momentarily lost his breath. He tried to sit-out on her but he was again too slow. Jan timed her shoulder spin perfectly so that Simon once more found himself on his back with Jan on top, pinning his arms with her knees. She moved her pelvis so that he was looking up into the coral gash beneath the raven's nest.

"Take a good whiff," she commanded. "Better still, lick it." She pressed herself down upon him and Simon's nose was buried in the thick black hairs of her bush. The musky scent made his penis throb. He lightly ran his tongue between her opening and heard Jan suck in her breath. She tasted syrupy. Simon swallowed then licked the folds harder. Jan's entire body shuddered. She reached back, grabbed hold of his penis and squeezed. Simon could not stifle his own a soft moan of imploremment.

Jan immediately pulled away from Simon's mouth. "Oh?" she said, showing her teeth. "What's this, Irish? Now you want your African-American queen? Before you were telling me

to go play with myself. But, now that you've had a taste, you want some. Well, I think I will just go play with myself, but I'm going to borrow this (she jerked on his penis) if you don't mind."

Jan slid her loins over Simon's chest and across his abdomen. She then raised her hips up just enough to position her vagina over his penis and, ever so slowly, lowered herself upon him. Simon gasped with the penetration. Jan began to ride him and their sex organs fused, decoupled, and fused once again, the cycle repeating with an urgency that heightened with each pass through. Husband and wife began to sweat profusely as they labored fast and furious, gasping and moaning, to a deliverance. They came simultaneously in a tremendous rush with Jan grimacing in ecstasy and impaling herself upon the full length of Simon's penis as it sprayed its seminal load deep inside her. When their orgasms subsided, and the shuddering of their weary bodies ceased, Jan flattened herself on top of Simon.

"Baby, baby, baby, I love, love, love to love you," she murmured into his neck. "Hold me tight, lover. Hold me and don't ever let go."

Simon wrapped his arms around Jan, hugged her tightly, and buried his face in her hair. Some men might have been threatened by a wife who initiated kinky wrestling matches, liked to be on top during sex, and who wanted to control the lovemaking. Not Simon. He loved to watch Jan take pleasure from his body. What did this say about his manhood? Simon didn't know, didn't care. After all, what Jan did on top of him was not exactly torture. For the longest while Simon just held her and said nothing. She would have said he was spacing out, but he knew differently. He was concentrating; concentrating on how much he adored this woman on top of him; how much he admired her self-confidence and her assertiveness, her enormous energy, her ability to take on and master all challenges. He was grateful for her courage, proud of her grace and charm. Above all, he was thankful that she was a part of his life. Without Jan, Simon did not know who he would be.

CHAPTER THREE

"Tell me more about your interactions with your family."

"My wife and daughters family or my sister and brother family?"

"Let's take the latter first. You told me your sister and brother still reside in Maryland. Do you speak with them often?"

"Birthdays and Christmas. Actually, Jan talks a lot more with my sister than I do, she and Maureen are very close."

"When was the last time you saw your siblings?"

"Jan and I took the girls back East two years ago. Our three families rented a big house in Ocean City for the July 4th weekend. Everyone had a pretty good time, I think. My girls especially enjoyed hanging out with their cousins. Maureen and her husband, Paul, have four kids, three boys and a girl. Their two older boys, Nate and Bruce, are one and two years younger than Louise and Elizabeth. Their daughter, Harper, is four years younger. Their youngest, Clay, had just turned two. Nate and Bruce provided Louise and Elizabeth an excellent opportunity to practice their flirtation skills under risk-free circumstances."

"What about your brother? Does he have a family?"

"My brother Grant is working on his second family. He had two boys from his first marriage and they are now grown. He and his second wife, Alice, have one girl, Shannon, who is the same age as Harper. Elizabeth paid a lot of attention to Shannon and Harper. Consequently, Shannon and Harper think the sun rises and sets by the grace of Elizabeth, an idolization that turns Louise who mostly ignored both girls, green with envy though she'd swallow spiders before admitting it."

"Were there any tensions or difficulties because of your daughters' racial mix?"

"It has never been a problem. I've told you that Maureen and Jan are close. Paul is one of those men who just likes to play golf and watch television when he's on vacation. I doubt he noticed that Jan and my daughters aren't white. Grant is a bit of an oddball, he is loud and boisterous and often assumes a leadership role no one else is prepared to award him. He himself admits it, he jokes that he inherited the worst traits of our mother and father, while Maureen got all their good traits. I think that must be why his first marriage floundered. His first wife, Barbara, was a lot like him, whereas Alice is quiet and deferential. Alice's personality makes her a better marital partner for Grant but more difficult to socialize with. Nonetheless, Grant has never been anything but warm and friendly to Jan, and Alice is at least as friendly with Jan as she is with Maureen or me."

"How about with your wife's family?"

"Jan has no siblings. Her father is deceased. Her mother still lives in Washington, D.C. We visited her as well when we were back East. Initially, she was dubious of our marriage, I can't deny that. But Cora, that's my mother-in-law, has long since accepted me as a part of her

family and she adores her granddaughters. She always spends Christmas with us in California. I probably get along with her better than Jan does which I would guess is the case in many marriages."

"I think you may be right, but let's talk about your wife and daughters. You've already said you have a great marriage so perhaps we should focus on your relationship with your daughters. Do you get along well with them?"

"As well as any father can hope to get along with teenaged daughters."

"You imply then that there are strains?"

(Laughter) "Is that a serious question? They're teenagers. Does it not go without saying there are strains? (More laughter)."

"It is not my intention to be amusing. The symptoms you are experiencing, the recurring nightmare, the heavy sweating when you awake, the outbursts of rage followed by depression and

severe headaches, can be the manifestations of one of several disorders depending upon the nature of their source. We start with anger as one possibility since that is the easiest to treat."

"But I've already told you I don't have a bad temper."

"I'm not referring to a flash of bad temperament in the face of a frustration or disappointment, I'm talking about an anger deeply-rooted within your subconscious. Since you have discounted both your marriage and your job as potential seeds from which such a deep-rooted anger could sprout, and relationships with your siblings and mother-in-law are too remote to be the answer, we are left to search for other venues. As you yourself have wryly noted, children, especially teenaged children, can be an enormous source of anger for a parent, sometimes to an extent not consciously acknowledged by the parent."

"No way. Not the case with my daughters and me. Nosir."

"Some might interpret your certainty as a warning. Remember the old bromide about life's only two certainties being death and taxes?"

"Parents can add a third certainty: Never expect gratitude from your children." (Laughter)

"You persist in finding amusement where no amusement is intended. Perhaps this is not a good day for us to talk."

"I'm sorry. I don't mean to be contrary. The thing of it is, for me, my daughters are a

source of deep-rooted pride not anger. Maybe there is something gnawing at me, some terrible anger of which I am not consciously aware. If so, then yes, please, I want you to help me identify its source if that's what it takes to stop the dream. But, believe me, the place to look for this hidden anger is not within my relationships with any member of my family."

"Very well, then, I shall enter in my notebook that your interactions with your daughters, like your interactions with your wife are *great*."

(More Laughter) "I did say my marriage was great and I have told you that I love my daughters dearly. However, I would never characterize my interactions with either my wife or my daughters as great."

"At last we are getting some degree of candor. Tell me, how would you characterize these interactions? I am speaking in a general sense, of course."

"In general? In general, I'd characterize my interactions with my wife and daughters as ... well, let me put it this way, you are about my age so you no doubt grew up on the same television sit-com fare. Most times, I enter into conversations with my wife and daughters determined to emulate one of those wonderfully competent TV fathers, like Ward Cleaver or Steve Douglas, wise and fair and one step out in front of the rest of the family. More often than not, however, I end up feeling like Ozzie Nelson."

"I am not so conversant with popular culture. Exactly how would that be?"

"Befuddled, exasperated. Two steps down the wrong path and no idea how to get back."

* * *

It was a beautiful Sunday morning and Simon and Jan were having breakfast outside on the large deck off their kitchen. This deck, like the smaller deck off their bedroom, looked westward toward the San Francisco Bay. Unlike the smaller deck, however, which offered a spectacular view of the water and the city across it, the view from this deck was of the three Monterey pines in the backyard of Simon and Jan. Each tree was better than fifty feet tall and half-again as broad around the lower branches. Even at that all three were considerably shorter than a pair of redwoods belonging to their immediate downslope neighbor. The yards of Simon's neighbors on either side sported eucalyptus, and the air was strong with their camphor scent. The air was also filled with the

assorted sounds of the feathered and furred wildlife which resided in these trees though the song of one particular bird stood out. Simon was insufficiently studied to identify the species but Jan had guessed it to be a lark. Eventually, the sweet refrain of this one particular songbird was drowned out by the caws of ravens and the shrieks of jays. Every shrieking of a jay was invariably followed by the chattering response of a squirrel.

Simon and Jan were sitting at a weathered teak wood table. There was a hole in the center of the table top where an umbrella could be inserted but there was no need for shade this early in the morning. Though the sky was clear and the sun was up, if anything, Simon, thought, the air was still somewhat chilly, especially when the wind blew. He noted the fine hairs standing up on Jan's arms as if in agreement. On the table was a bag of fresh scones that Jan had purchased from their favorite bakery, and a pitcher of fresh-squeezed orange juice that Simon had made while she was gone. There was also the Sunday paper with its sections spread open and sifted. At the moment, Simon was reading the book reviews while Jan was finishing up with sports. She was commenting on the merits of the proposed interleague play in baseball and the intriguing possibilities of an A's versus Giants home and home series when an outbreak of vocal combat between a squirrel and a jay interrupted her.

"Why do they fight so much, jays and squirrels?" Simon wondered aloud. "God knows there's enough tree space here for all of them. They're like siblings."

"Speaking of squabbling siblings," Jan said, setting down the newspaper, "did you speak with the girls yesterday as you promised?"

When Simon assured her that he had, Jan wanted to know how much he had told them.

"Enough, I think for them to understand that I am going to participate in an experiment with Keith."

"Did you tell them about Dr. Nertz?"

"They already knew about him. They saw his bills in the mail. They call him Dr. Nuts. They thought you were the one seeing him."

Jan swallowed a bite of scone and made a face. "That's because you make me play the heavy. I'm the one who has to say no. I lay down the law and that makes me crazy. You're such a wus. Did you tell them about walking in your sleep and the punching bag routine?"

"No, I didn't get a chance. Besides, why scare them unnecessarily?"

Jan made another face, this one comical. "Oh, I don't know. Maybe one of them will wake up in the middle of the night, go to the bathroom and see her daddy walking through the house like a zombie. Might scare the pee right out of her and mess up the floor."

"That won't happen. You'll be there to explain."

"Yeah? Suppose they both hear the noise from the basement one of those nights and come downstairs to check it out. They see you growling and snarling like a werewolf or something while you punch the lights out of one of your bags. I think that might shake them up, don't you?"

"Which?" Simon asked, smiling at her. "My growling and snarling or my punching the lights out of a punching bag?"

"Too close to call," Jan said, smiling back at him.

"Again, you'll be there to keep our girls out of harm's way," Simon continued. "Besides, they didn't stir during that last earthquake. And even if they did hear me in the basement, they would not climb out of bed to investigate. Elizabeth would turn over and go back to sleep. Louise would holler from her bed that she was going to be very grouchy in the morning because of somebody's inconsideration."

Jan sighed with good humor and took a swallow of orange juice. "I'm glad I don't have to face you in court. So what about the dream? Did you at least tell them about that?"

"I discussed it, yes," Simon answered.

"What did you tell them?"

"I told them I've been having the dream since my twelfth birthday, that past attempts to end it were unsuccessful, but that Dr. Nertz thinks Keith has a possible solution. Given their limited attention spans and their proclivity for interruptions, I thought I did rather well."

"Did you tell them about the other stuff?"

"No."

"Nothing about the Seychelles-Joyner Fear Theory?"

"It's the fear-response theory and no."

"Did you happen to mention that Dr. Nertz and Keith Joyner don't think your dream is a dream?"

"No."

"For heaven's sake, Simon, why did you not try to explain at least some of it to them? They're old enough to understand."

"I don't think so," he answered, slowly. "MTV generation, remember?"

"I think you sell them short, Simon. They'll make as much sense of all this craziness as me or anyone else." Jan thought for a moment, while she took another bite from her scone, swallowed, then chuckled in spite of herself. "Just tell them that you, Keith, and Dr. Nertz believe you are being victimized by memories of things that never happened."

Simon felt his cheeks begin to flush. He drained his glass of juice and poured some more. "These things happened, Jan. They just did not happen to me."

"Right. I'm sorry. They're not your memories. They just happen to be stuck in your brain and Keith Joyner and his Brain Lab home-boys are going to get them out. That makes perfect sense. I understand. The girls will too."

Simon's cheeks glowed. "You see why I did not want to discuss this with the girls? They'll be just like you and think I am one of those reincarnation nuts."

Jan chuckled again. "Oh, they won't think that. They probably don't even know what reincarnation is. They'll think you're one of those channeling nuts, like Boopsie in the Doonesbury cartoons."

"I am not a nut, Jan," Simon harrumphed.

"Of course you're not," Jan said, baiting him in a courtroom voice. "Lots of folks go to bed with an electronic do-rag on their head, wires on their eyelids, and a itty-bitty tape recorder under their pillow. That doesn't mean they're nuts, mind you. Just a little weird is all."

"That was a Nightcap, a very delicate scientific device for monitoring dream activity as you know perfectly well," Simon snorted. "You would do well to read up on your Clarence Darrow. Not all attorneys have been Luddites. I am neither a nut nor am I weird."

"Simon ..." Jan began but he waved her off.

"Put a scone in it, Janelle."

Twin sets of giggles from one of the door leading out of the kitchen and onto the deck made known the presence of Louise and Elizabeth.

"Query: How long have you two been eavesdropping?" asked Jan.

"Answer: Long enough to know our daddy has been channeling," Louise smugly replied. "That is so kicking, Dad. How many past lives have you led? I think I've led a few past lives myself."

"Yeah and in each and everyone of them she's been a Princess," interrupted Elizabeth.

"Excuse you, Lizardbreath!" huffed Louise. "In each and everyone of them, I have been a *Queen!*"

"Talk to the hand, Queen Luigi, ruler of the buttheads," replied Elizabeth with a dismissive flick of her wrist. To Simon she said, "You're not going to do any of this channel tripping in front of our friends or anything, are you, Dad? It would be like, embarrassing, you know?"

"Your father has not been channeling, girls," said Jan, emphatically. She attempted to explain Keith's theory about memory, but both girls quickly lost interest.

"Whatever, Mom," said Louise. "What I want to know is when is Dad going to type my biology paper on the computer?"

The duty of helping the girls with their homework, particularly, the entering of essays and reports onto the family computer, had fallen to Simon. This had been an evolution that came about because Jan became too impatient with them and spent more time in silly arguments than in productive educational assistance. As a trained teacher, Simon was more aware of the pitfalls. He, too, would get into silly arguments with his daughters (that was an unavoidable consequence of the parent-child relationship, he believed), but not nearly so many as Jan and the resolutions were more quickly and peacefully achieved. As for typing their papers, Simon was even more of a softy with his daughters than with his students. Whereas Jan would make them correct their own spelling and grammar mistakes (frequently with an accompanying lecture and always with an ensuing argument), Simon tended to simply correct the errors himself and proceed with little more than an occasional whine about the failings of the public school system to inculcate its students with basic English language skills.

"Query: When is it due?" asked Jan of Louise about her biology paper.

"Answer: Tomorrow morning. First period."

"Query: Why do you not type it yourself? You have the entire day."

"Answer: I've got to spend my day writing the stupid thing, of course. But, okay, Mom,

if you want me to flunk my Spanish test tomorrow, I'll *write* and *type* my biology paper."

"You have a Spanish test tomorrow as well as a paper due in biology?" asked Simon.

"Si," replied Louise, reaching into the bag on the table and plucking out a scone for herself.

"Have you done any studying for it?" pursued Simon, already certain of her answer.

"Are you crazy? Of course not. How could I? Senor Debolt only told us about it Friday."

"Louise!" said Jan. "I have told you time and again I do not like that 'Are you crazy' stuff. Your father asked a question."

"Asked and answered," chirped Elizabeth. "Forget Luigi, Dad, you have to drive for the Green Club today. We're going to Point Richmond for a litter patrol of the beach. I signed us up to take six kids in the Volvo."

"I do not recall agreeing to drive you and your friends to Point Richmond," said Simon.

Elizabeth looked genuinely shocked. With a sad shake of her head, she said, "Yes, you did! Remember? I asked you at the beginning of the semester if you'd be a driver and you said you would. You promised."

"That was back in January, Elizabeth," Simon said. "Why did you not say something sooner about today?"

"Sooorry," Elizabeth said with much sarcasm, "I didn't know you were so busy. You'd better call Ms. Pardee and tell her you're blowing this off. Tell her she's going to have to find a parent who cares about the environment."

"That is not fair, Elizabeth, I care about the environment and I am willing to drive your group to Point Richmond, I just do not like the fact that you made commitments on my behalf without discussing it with me first."

"You make plans for us all the time and never discuss it first," argued Elizabeth, reaching into the scone bag. "How about the dinner with the Fosters when you made me babysit their little brats and Luigi didn't even have to go?"

Louise did not bother to swallow her mouthful of scone in her anxiety to respond. "Hello Lizardbreath? I had choir practice that night."

"Swallow first, Louise," said Jan.

Upon compliance, Louise continued. "Dad, if you drive her stupid Green Club to that dirty little beach when are you going to help me write my biology paper?"

"Now I am to *help* you with the writing of the paper as well as the typing?" asked Simon.

"Dad," said Louise. "When am I supposed to study for my Spanish test if I have to do a whole paper by myself?"

"You should have thought of that sooner," said Elizabeth. "My paper is already written. All Dad has to do is type it."

"Excuse me, Ms. Perfect, I've had other things going, like a life."

"If spending hours in front of a mirror fooling with your hair is a life, I'm happy for you. Me, I'm busy cleaning up the environment, taking care of Planet Earth."

"Oh puh-lease. Your stupid little beach sucks and nobody is gonna go there whether its dirty or clean."

"Talk to the hand," Elizabeth said, blithely flapping her fingers together as she chomped into a scone.

"Girls!" snapped Jan. "Enough! Both of you. Louise, you knew you had an exam and paper to do going into this weekend and you did nothing with regards to either yesterday. Today, you have your work cut out for you, young lady. Seems to me that the telephone will be off-limits until you've finished."

Louise opened her mouth to protest even as Elizabeth broke out into a big grin but a withering look from Jan immediately silenced Louise and straightened her sister's grin. Having captured the attention of both girls, Jan turned her focus on Elizabeth.

"As for you, it would have been wise to discuss with your father before committing him to chauffeur duty. If he has other plans it is *you* who will call Ms. Pardee and inform her that one: you erred and two: you will take responsibility for finding an alternative driver."

As her sister before her, Elizabeth opened her mouth to protest but immediately closed it without the need of a stern look from Jan who was not finished.

"I am disappointed in you both. Having eavesdropped on my conversation with your father you are now aware that he is about to undertake a risky experimental procedure."

"Excuse me, Jan," cut in Simon, sounding not at all unlike his daughters, "but it is not such a risky procedure."

The look Jan returned him was equally not unlike that which she had bestowed upon their daughters, prompting Simon to hurry on. "As Keith has told us both, (Simon emphasized "both" as he kept his eyes on Jan) Quip is a synthesized version of neuroquipazine, a natural substance that is in everybody's brain -- including yours and the girls. Mine just happens to have more of it than most. All Keith will be doing is to elevate my natural level for a short period of time. Once the level has returned to normal, I will be fine."

"You don't know that," Jan countered. "No one, not even Keith and his almighty science can say what will happen when you are injected with Quip. Otherwise they wouldn't have had to run it past the Human Use Committee. There is a possibility you could end up a vegetable."

"Daddy!" cried both girls.

"No bad dream is worth that, Dad, trust me," declared Louise. "Go with the channeling."

"For once Luigi is right," said Elizabeth. "We're not afraid of you sleepwalking. We know you'd never hurt us."

"Never," agreed Louise. Both girls nodded. To Simon they looked like a choreographed dance routine -- a routine with a pair of identically lovely young dancers.

"Thanks for your faith, girls," he said, shooting a quick look of reproof to Jan. "My problem is a bit more complicated than that."

Jan cleared her throat but Simon pled for silence with a shake of his head. Jan frowned but complied. He immediately proceeded to get back on her dark side.

"However, your mother exaggerates about the dangers of Quip. It has not harmed Morris."

"I beg your pardon," said Jan -- even annoyed, she refused to get into what she disparagingly called the 'excuse me thing'

-- "but I believe your brain is a bit more complex than that of a chimpanzee."

"Bonobo," Elizabeth corrected.

When Jan shot her daughter a look of irritation and puzzlement, Simon jumped in.

"*Pan paniscus*, not *Pan troglodytes*," he said. "Same genus, different species, though bonobos have been called pygmy chimpanzees."

Jan blew air through her lips, exasperated. "I swear, Simon, you're even starting to talk like Keith. Well, bonobo or chimpanzee, we are still talking ape and I still believe your brain is a

bit more complex than that of an ape."

Louise piped up. "This is Morris we're talking about, Mom."

Jan stopped, started to glare at the interruption, reflected, then giggled. "Point well-taken. With the possible exception of Morris, that is."

For the past two years, Keith and his colleagues had been testing Quip on four bonobos, an adult male named Sergio, two adult females, Zazu and Faye, and, most recently, on an eight-year-old adolescent male named Morris who was the son of Sergio and Zazu and a nephew to Faye. Of the four, Morris had been the first and only one to receive multiple treatments, but not without some debate for he was everybody's favorite, a born performer with a warm and comic personality, and remarkably clever, even by the lofty standards of a bonobo. During the past year, he'd spent several weekends at Simon's house and had taught the twins, whom he called honey girls, how to communicate with him through sign language. Even Jan, who'd steadfastly refused to get a dog or a cat, was fond of Morris.

Seeing an opportunity to make his case, Simon quickly forged ahead. "Well, Morris has received three doses and the rate of dosage was much higher for his size than what I am scheduled to receive. Nothing whatsoever has changed. He's healthy as he can be and he's still a loveable showoff. Now they've scheduled him for a fourth treatment and Keith says no one has expressed any concern."

"Did it ever occur to you that maybe Quip does not work?" Jan posited. "Scientists have been known to be wrong. Maybe Quip has no affect at all in which case there's no reason for you to take it."

"MRI and PET scans of each bonobo's brain following the injections showed that all of the desired neurons were activated in the appropriate sequence," responded Simon. "It therefore has been demonstrated that, from a neurochemical standpoint, Quip is performing exactly as intended."

"There you go, Dad, sounding like Keith again," Elizabeth said.

Simon ignored her. "What is not known is what effect, if any, an injection of Quip has on the subject's ability to recall memory."

"What? Morris didn't tell them?" Jan said, putting on a surprised voice. "Damn, the little monkey has always been so quick to sign his mind."

"Bonobo, Mom," interjected Louise, "not monkey."

"Shutup, Luigi," whispered Elizabeth.

Jan nodded, her eyes on Simon and her lips pressed tight.

"You know perfectly well what I am talking about, Jan," Simon replied. "For proof of memory activation, Keith has got to know what thoughts were induced by Quip. And for that, only a human subject will do."

"Why does that human subject have to be you?" asked Louise.

"Yeah, Dad," said Elizabeth, "how come?"

"Someone has got to be first," said Simon in his most reasonable voice. (To his own ears, he thought he sounded just like Ward Cleaver and the thought bolstered his confidence.) I was the unanimous choice of the selection committee. Ana Huff is envious as hell. She wishes it were her."

"Bully for Ana Huff, I wish it were her, too," countered Jan swiftly. Simon realized invoking the name of Ana Huff had been a mistake even as the words were slipping out of his mouth. "Better that sad sorry husband-coveting old-maid than you," continued Jan. "Let her or anyone else be the first human subject. If it doesn't hurt them then you can try it. Why are you so determined to be the guinea pig, Simon? Are you trying to prove your courage? Is this some kind of mid-life crisis or test of your manhood?"

Simon sighed. "If the first experiment is a failure, Keith and his colleagues may not get a second chance. And you know perfectly well why I want to do this. If Quip works, not just me, but millions of people stand to benefit. Maybe all of society. Even if it only works from a neurochemical standpoint and has no effect on memory, I might still benefit. And if it doesn't work, no harm done. Dr. Nertz calls it a no-lose proposition."

"As a psychologist, Dr. Nertz is a first cousin to Keith," said Jan, a sneer inflected in her voice. "He takes the safety assurances of Keith and the others as if he'd received God's own truth from Gabriel and his fellow archangels. Besides, he's got a stake in this. Or have you forgotten our hearing before the Human Use Committee?"

"Who could forget?" Simon replied, with another big sigh. "I'm lucky they allow me on campus anymore thanks to you."

"Just doing my job, baby, serving notice to the University that I will hold it accountable,"

said Jan. "Somebody has got to look out for the best interests of this family."

"Uh-oh," said Louise to her twin, with a wicked little laugh, "sounds like Mom's unloaded another can of whip-ass to some fools."

The two girls exchanged a loud high-five. Tales of their mother's assertiveness was always a source of pride and amusement to them both.

"We want details, Mom," said Elizabeth. "Give us the 4-1-1."

"Not now, girls," said Jan. Her attention was on Simon. "Suppose, my true-believer husband, just suppose, by some wild, remote, far-out, unforeseen possibility, that Keith is wrong about there being no adverse effects? Suppose you take this Quip and you do end up a vegetable? What would the girls and I do then?"

Simon decided the moment of truth had arrived, the moment when he would tell the girls exactly where things stood. His instincts had been to protect them from worry over events they could neither control nor influence. But he'd always known in his heart of hearts that this moment would arrive. The girls had to know what was at stake. After all, the four of them were all in it together. Despite the bickering, the annoyances, exasperations, and the frustrations, they were a family, a solid, close-knit family.

"Louise, Elizabeth, if I do not take this Quip, a vegetable is exactly what I might become. A vegetable or something much worse."

Jan was momentarily stunned. She looked from Simon to each of her daughters and then back to Simon. Her voice was sharp, lawyerly. "Your father does not know that, girls." She might as well have used the words "the witness" in place of "your father." Both girls looked stricken. They could plainly see that their mother was unhappy with a decision that their father had made and this was as unexpected a turn of events as any they could imagine. Teenagers have certain expectations from their parents that are cast in stone. They do not like surprises, not where those expectations are concerned. In the face of sudden uncertainty, they react with what Simon now recognized as anxiety born out of fear-response. Louise and Elizabeth turned to him and demanded that he tell them exactly what was going on.

Simon told the story slowly and with care. He stopped often to ask if they understood what he'd just said and when they had questions he answered them to the best of his ability.

When he was finished, the only sounds to be heard were the shrieks of the jays, the chattering of the squirrels, and the cawing of a single crow.

For the first time as long as Simon could remember, Elizabeth and Louise were both speechless.

As for Jan, maybe it was the lawyer in her or maybe it was the athlete, but some part of her refused to accept what she saw as rebuttal. She could no more accept Simon's explanation to the twins as the final word than a pit bull could stop fighting or the scorpion stay its sting. It simply was not her way.

"Keep in mind, girls, that all you have heard is theory. None of it may be true. Your father has been listening to Keith and he has been unduly influenced. Keith is a brilliant man and a family friend and everyone at this table respects him. However, what Keith has is a theory, girls. A theory is not a fact. It is an idea, one that could be right or wrong. The proof remains to be seen."

"What about Dr. Nertz?" Simon said. "What about Vijay Jain? Gibby Gibson? Ariel Jones? Are they all wrong, too? There has been ample proof these past two decades that the outcome of my illness, if untreated, is not good."

"But how you can have a Vietnam vet disability when you weren't even in the war?" Jan's voice was like a gathering storm and seemed to quiet even the jays and squirrels. Simon started to speak but she would not hear him. "No! Don't start with all that genetic memory stuff again. I heard you twice the first time and it's gotten no better since. You're still giving me theory. Where are the facts?"

Simon cleared his throat and waited until Jan, through a gesture, gave him permission to speak. "The facts are admittedly sketchy because the studies have been few. But Dr. Nertz has conducted a thorough search of the literature and though he has only come up with one fact, it is one I can't .. we can't .. ignore. There have been twelve documented cases similar to mine. None ended well."

"Simon. . ." Jan began, but he emphatically waved her off.

"No, Jan, you started this and the girls need to hear it. I don't want them thinking their father is acting in a rash manner. In each case, the problem escalated until the individual suffered a complete mental breakdown. Five of those cases ended in suicide. The other seven

died in institutions after committing unspeakable acts of violence. I am the thirteenth case, Jan, and if memory serves, I should not expect mine to be the lucky number."

"Your case is not identical to those other cases and unlike those other individuals, you have kept yours under control."

"But how long can I continue to control it? My situation is not improving."

"Yes, but it hasn't gotten much worse," Jan said, her voice a storm subsiding.

"Any worse and you'd have to put me away now," Simon said with a sigh. "I have been tested and re-tested, my situation has been analyzed and re-analyzed. The process has dragged on for more than eight months now. No one is doing anything in haste. Caution has been exercised to the point of exhaustion. In spite of their apprehensions of you and possible lawsuits, Keith and the others have voiced their strong belief that they can help me. I believe them and I want this. I *have* to do it."

Jan suddenly stood up, came around the table, took Simon's face in her hands and looked him directly in the eyes. To his surprise, hers were filled with tears.

"Okay, Simon, here it is, ready, set, go. I am frightened. This Quip thing scares me. The Brain Lab scares me. Keith Joyner scares me. Eugene Nertz, Vijay Jain and all of the others scare me. I'm especially frightened of Stinky. They are all too arrogant by a half. And Stinky is the most arrogant of all with the least cause. What they all think they know, they know with great certainty. They could not answer my questions and yet they still believe they have all the answers. If my years of practicing law have taught me anything, it is that nobody has all the answers. Nobody. And if truth be told, the folks that think they do are in for the most surprises. I know you have a problem, my darling. God knows it is more than a little problem and it is a matter of great concern to me. But I am afraid the treatment that Eugene Nertz and Keith Joyner are proposing may turn out worse. As a lawyer, Simon, I am skeptical of the unknown and no matter what Keith and Eugene Nertz say, this Quip is one big unknown."

Jan drifted off into a distant silence that neither Simon nor Louise nor Elizabeth dared disturb. When finally she returned, her voice was not much more than a whisper that Simon felt as much as heard.

"Look, I know you've got it in your head that the girls and I would be just fine if anything happened to you, but you are dead wrong."

Simon started to protest but the expression on her face told him to shut up.

"Oh, we'd survive," she said. "We would not be hurting for money and life does go on, but don't you dare tell yourself that we would be fine. These girls adore you, Simon, (both girls vigorously nodded their heads). If they were to lose you now they'd be devastated. As for me, I'm not nearly as tough as I pretend."

Simon was not used to seeing Jan cry. Neither were Louise and Elizabeth. Their eyes filled as well and both girls quickly moved to join their mother in surrounding Simon. He raised a hand and gently brushed away a tear from Jan's eye which had managed to trickle its way the entire length of her cheek. Then he smiled and tried to make a joke. "You'd still have your career and your winning streak in court. The girls will always have boys."

"Not funny, Dad," sniffed Louise.

"We love you, Dad," sniffed Elizabeth.

"Careers don't make a life and all winning streaks end one day, Simon," sniffed Jan. "I believe that you and I and our family are forever." With that, she leaned forward and kissed Simon on the mouth with a tenderness that was both sweet and sad. In that moment the girls closed tightly around him, forming a circle that would protect the embraced against any incursion from outside and beyond.

Simon was deeply touched and would himself have been moved to tears had experience not also braced him for the fact that moments of tenderness remain just that for teenaged girls -- moments, ephemeral, swiftly fleeting, like snapshots of life.

With her cheek pressed tightly against Simon's, Louise in a soft sweet voice asked: "So are you going to help me with my paper, Dad?"

Elizabeth recoiled as if bitten by a snake. "No way! He's driving my Green Club group to Point Richmond."

"Your father will do neither, girls!" said Jan, as she too pulled out of the circle.

In the end, of course, Simon did both. He helped Louise write her biology paper and typed it. He drove Elizabeth and her friends to and from Point Richmond. He also helped Louise review for Spanish and typed the biology paper Elizabeth had written. He cooked dinner, took a long walk with Jan around the neighborhood, and, after the girls were in bed, made love with his wife.

That's what a dad and husband is for, he reasoned.
Forget the other stuff.

CHAPTER FOUR

"I want to talk about the other stuff. Are you ready?"

"Yes. I think so. And I'm sorry if it seems like I've been stalling. Actually, I have been stalling, I know, and I'm sorry. I guess I needed to know you a bit before I could be comfortable discussing it."

"Are you comfortable now?"

"No, not really. In fact, before I start, I need to clarify something, namely, I do not believe in reincarnation."

"That is a most interesting clarification seeing as the word has not come up in our previous two sessions. I believe it now requires further clarification."

"I understand. Sure. It is a curious way to start a discussion, isn't it? Okay. Oh, geez.

This is not easy. Here. I brought this for you to look at. Please, tell me what you see."

"Very well. I see a black and white photograph of a man and a woman. She is seated in a chair and he is standing beside her. There is a kerosene lamp on a table next to the chair. All of the furniture items look to be antiques. What else? Oh! It's a photograph of you when you were younger. You have a mustache and your hair is cut differently. I'd say you were no more than 30 in this photo, yes? Who is the woman? She's pretty but her hairstyle and her clothes are so old-fashioned. Yours too, for that matter, as if the two of you were going to a costume party. Hmm. There is something odd here. What is it?"

"The photo has been digitally restored. The image in it is more than a hundred years old. Those people are my great-grandparents, on my maternal side, Payton and Rosaleen Adams."

"My god! The resemblance of you to your great-grandfather is ... astonishing. In fact, under other circumstances, I don't know that I would believe this is not a photograph of you."

"You still sound uncertain. Believe it. That is my great-grandfather. I wanted you to see the photograph for yourself so that you can understand why I have always felt a strong connection to him. In a sense, ever since I first laid eyes on his image, I have been chasing his ghost."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It is because of my great-grandfather that I became an American history professor and that my special expertise is the labor movement during the Gilded Age, the later part of the 19th century. You see, my great-grandfather died in 1892. He was killed at the age of 29 during a labor dispute in a steel mill town in western Pennsylvania, just outside of Pittsburgh. His body was never found and the crime was never solved. No one was ever punished. My mother and her mother have always believed that he was murdered by one of the Pinkerton guards who had been brought in by the management of the steel mill to strong-arm the workers into submission. They have always believed that his murder, like the murders of many other workers during the strike, was covered up with the full cooperation of local and state authorities. It has been my goal -- Jan would call it my obsession -- to prove this case. This endeavor has led to some ... umm ... incidents ... the other stuff of which I have hinted. Shall I tell you about them?"

"Yes, but first, I must ask you a question. What is the connection between this photo and the dream?"

"The night of the day I was given this photograph is when the dream began."

* * *

Simon's Grandma Mary Margaret gave him the photo as a present for his 12th birthday. It was shortly before 1 p.m. on December 27, 1964. Simon and the rest of his family were gathered around the television set in the living room preparing to watch their beloved Baltimore Colts battle the Cleveland Browns for the NFL championship. Up until that moment, Simon could think only of the game. He did not even care that it was his birthday. What was so mucking fuch about a stupid birthday? Johnny U was about to work his magic with his main men Raymond Berry and Lenny Moore! And the Colt defense was fixing to eat up Jim Think-He's-Mister-Fullback Brown, hit him so hard his whole family would die! Why then would daffy old Grandma Mary Margaret, all white haired and wrinkled and smelling of camphorated oil, even think to plop her big behind down in his lucky chair -- the one he always sat in for Colt games -- and wave an envelop at him? Had she forgotten to drink her Geritol?

The photograph changed everything.

His first thought when he looked at the couple in the old and faded image was that the woman sitting on the chair had big knockers. Her face wasn't too shabby either. Too bad she was wearing such a long dress so's he couldn't see her legs 'cause he was really a leg man at heart. Then he noticed the guy standing next to her and that is when everything changed.

The connection was immediate and stark. Simon-the-boy experienced an incredible jolt of recognition though he had never set eyes on the man before. Years later he would remember the feeling as similar to the recognition he experienced as a man upon seeing a photo of himself as a child. Only instead of unleashing a flood of memories, the photo of his great-grandfather unleashed in Simon an intense curiosity. Simon Thomas, devout Colt fan, abandoned his team, ignored the shouts and screams of his siblings and his father and began peppering his grandmother with questions about his great-grandfather. The old woman told him she could not hear herself think with all the noise and so the two of them went upstairs, into Simon's bedroom, and sat together on Simon's bed. There in the quiet of a wintry afternoon, Grandma Mary Margaret told Simon the story her mother had told her, the story he would never forget.

* * *

"Your great-grandparents, as you know, came to America from Ireland. They were

originally from Ballybunion, a small village along the southern coast in County Clare. Fishing and farming was all there was to do there but your great-grandfather got a job with the railroad company. He was taught to use dynamite and he and your great-grandmother followed the laying of track from town to town until they got to the port of Galway. From there they booked passage on a steamer named the Gerald Fitzgerald. They sailed to Philadelphia, then took a train to Pittsburgh."

"Why Pittsburgh?" Simon had inquired. Even at the age of 12, he had an interest in historical detail.

"Because your great-grandfather was looking to get a job in the steel mills. He wanted to use his skills with dynamite to be a tapper."

"What's a tapper?"

"That's the man who rigs the explosives that blow out the tap plug on an open hearth furnace."

Who'd have thought daffy old white haired, wrinkled, camphor-smelling Grandma Mary Margaret would have known the first thing about making steel? But young Simon would discover that his grandmother knew quite a lot. Patiently answering through a raft of interrupting questions from Simon, she explained how, at the turn of the century, steel in this country was made by melting iron in giant open hearth furnaces and cooking it until all the impurities had been boiled off. The finished product was molten steel that had to be drained through a hole in the front of the hearth. This hole was called the "tap hole" because the process of draining molten steel was called "tapping." While the steel was being cooked the tap hole was plugged with a big wad of clay.

"The only way to remove the tap plug," Grandma Mary Margaret said, "was to blow it to bits with dynamite. Tappers were men with cool heads and nerves as steely as the molten metal they tapped. Mother told me she watched from a distance once as Father did his job and she said it was like watching a man let loose a volcano. Tappers were considered to be the finest of the steel working men and were treated with the utmost respect. That's what your great-grandfather wanted to be and that's what he became. Father was the day-shift tapper for the Homestead Steel Works which was the biggest and grandest steel mill in the country. It's where

they made the armor plates for the Navy's best battleships, and all of the beams and girders for the skyscrapers that were going up in New York and Chicago. None but the best got jobs at the Homestead Works which meant your great-grandfather was the best of the best."

"But I thought you were born here in Baltimore, Grandma Mary Margaret," Simon had said.

His statement brought a smile to the old woman's face. "You've a good memory in your head, boy. That's exactly right. Mother was pregnant with me when she moved to Baltimore in the summer of 1892. She had me and raised me all by herself. Worked as a nurse at Johns Hopkins Hospital. Made good money and managed it well. We were always comfortable, Mother and me. We lived in a lovely little house with a pretty flower garden. I never wanted for food or clothes or nice things. All I ever wanted for was a father but that is the one thing I could never have."

"Where was my great-grandfather? What happened to him?" Simon broke in.

"Father died during the great Homestead steel strike," Grandma Mary Margaret said. She paused until she saw that she had her grandson's fullest attention then delivered the *coup de grace*. "He was murdered."

Young Simon could not contain himself. "Who did it? Who killed him? Why? How? And what's a strike? You mean like in baseball? I don't understand. "

Grandma Mary Margaret had patted Simon on the head and told him to hold his tongue. She explained that when workers feel they are not being paid the money their labor is worth, it is their God-given right to withhold their services.

"Owners don't like it when a working man speaks up for himself and his family," Grandma Mary Margaret said, "they call it a strike and do all they can to force the workers to yield. Always they start with the scabs, dirty men with no sense of shame who are willing to cross a picket line and help owners cheat honest men out of a decent wage. The Homestead Steel Works was owned by Andrew Carnegie. He was a wee man, not much bigger than a child, the son of a tablecloth maker who came to this country from Scotland when he was not much older than you. He came here with no money and no education, and he started as a telegraph messenger boy, but by the time of the Homestead strike in 1892, he was the richest man in all the world. He owned just about every single steel mill in the Pittsburgh area and he owned the iron

ore that came from the great Mesabi range by Lake Superior which was used to make his steel. He owned the barges that floated the ore down the rivers to Pittsburgh and he owned the railcars that brought it into the mills. There wasn't much about the steel-making business that he didn't own. The newspapers called him the Star Spangled Scot because he was living the dream of every immigrant. Like all Scots, he was tight-fisted and shrewd but he had a reputation for treating his workers fairly and they, in return, always gave their best efforts and there was no labor strife. But then Carnegie made a pact with a dark angel, a man the workers thought was the devil himself come to earth, a man who was called the Coke King ..."

"Coke like the drink?" Simon interrupted.

Grandma Mary Margaret frowned and snorted. "For heaven's sake, youngster, be still. Whatever would make you think I'd be talking about sodapop? No, I'm talking about a special coal they burn in Pittsburgh to melt the iron and steel. The biggest coke mines in the country were outside a town in Pennsylvania called Connellsville. Those mines were owned by Henry Clay Frick, another self-made millionaire but one who did not even pretend to be fair. Henry Clay Frick believed that all of his workers were cheats and scoundrels and he treated them terribly. He paid them poorly and worked them long hours and when they rebelled by striking, he brought in Pinkerton guards to beat them up and chase them away from the mines. Then he brought in the scabs, poor dumb ignorant greenhorns just off the boat who did not know better and he gave them the jobs that belonged to his workers. The miners had families to support, they had no choice but to come crawling back, begging for forgiveness. Frick cut their pay and raised their work hours so's they'd never forget who was their master. That's the man who Andrew Carnegie formed a partnership with so what does that tell you about Andrew Carnegie?"

"He was bad man, too!" Simon answered.

"Smart lad," the old woman said, nodding her approval. "Every wolf runs with his own kind, boy, that's what makes a pack and never forget it. Carnegie wanted Frick's coke. He also was about to marry a girl half his age and did not want to be bothered running his empire no more, but he did not want to lose it neither. So he made a deal with Frick. Carnegie bought Frick's coke company and put Frick in charge of his entire empire. Carnegie then married his child bride and took her back to Scotland for a honeymoon. While Carnegie was away, the contract for the workers at the Homestead Works ran out. The workers did not ask for more

money. They only wanted to keep the wages they had. Their offer might have been good enough for Andrew Carnegie but it was not good enough for Henry Clay Frick. With Carnegie out of the picture, Frick tried to bully the steel workers like he'd done his miners. The steel workers responded with a strike and Frick brought in the Pinkerton guards. He tried to sneak them into the mill at the crack of dawn two days after the Fourth of July, figuring nobody would expect him to act so soon after a patriotic holiday. The Pinkertons were stowed away in barges and brought up the Monongahela River which ran right past the Homestead Works. Frick's plan was to float the Pinkertons right on into the mill which he'd fixed up so's it was more like a fort than a steel mill. But Frick wasn't going up against no poor, dumb, disorganized coal miners. This time he was going up against the men of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, the strongest and proudest of all the labor unions. They were ready for Frick and his Pinkertons. When the barges got near the mill, an alarm was sounded. There was a great bloody battle. Men on both sides were killed, but the Pinkertons were forced to surrender and their barges were burned."

"The steel workers won!" Simon cheered.

The old woman shook her head with sadness. "Alas, it was a short-lived victory. Frick went to Harrisburg to meet with the governor, a handsome young man by the name of Bob Pattison who gave speeches saying he was for the working man but who was a lawyer and hence a dirty liar. Frick had no trouble persuading Governor Pattison to call up the state militia. A thousand soldiers marched into town under the command of General Snowden, a big hero of the Civil War and a man full of his own importance. The army seized control of the mill and with the soldiers there, Frick was able to bring in his scabs. He also brought in more Pinkertons, but this time they were kept undercover like dirty spies. They infiltrated the town, sewed dissension and discord amongst the workers with their lies and their trickery. While the authorities were persecuting the union leaders, the Pinkerton spies were beating and robbing folks, setting fires and destroying property. They even stooped to murder. Workers would suddenly vanish without a trace. When their families would go to the sheriff nothing would be done. They'd be told that the men had no doubt run off somewheres out of frustration and misery and would come back when the strike was settled. When Mother reported that Father had disappeared, the sheriff did not even take down her statement. His name was Bill McCleary and he was known throughout

the town as a coward and a bootlick to Bob Pattison, the man who had appointed him. Since McCleary took his orders from Governor Pattison who was taking orders from Frick, you might as well say that Sheriff McCleary was working for Henry Clay Frick. The dirty coward told your great-grandmother to come back when she found a body. Of course she never did. None of the wives who lost their husbands, or the mothers who lost their sons, or the girls who lost their sweethearts ever found bodies. But you can be sure that had the authorities bothered to dredge the river as they should have done they would have found plenty of those missing men."

"Including my great-grandfather?" asked Simon.

"To be sure they'd have found Father, bless his soul," the old woman snorted.

"I don't understand what happened to Andrew Carnegie, Grandma Mary Margaret. You said he was fair to his men. Why didn't he come back to save them from Frick?"

"No one knows," Grandma Mary Margaret replied. "The workers held out hope all summer long that the Little Boss, as they called him, would return and put things right, but he never did. He was off with his new bride in the highlands of Scotland, up north and far away from civilization where no one could get word to him. By the time he returned, it was all over and the damage had been done. Maybe he knew what was going in and maybe he didn't. I do know that the two men became bitter enemies in later years and many said it was because of what Frick done during the Homestead steel strike."

"How did the strike end, Grandma Mary Margaret?"

"It dragged on through the summer and into the fall but in the end, unable to shut the mill down because of the soldiers, the union was destroyed and the men were forced to return to work under Frick's terms. It would be many years before steel workers for the Carnegie Company were again paid a decent wage."

"What happened to Frick? Was he ever punished?"

"No, he never was. Mother told me that in Ireland they had a secret organization called the Brotherhood to deal with men like Henry Clay Frick. An enforcer for the Brotherhood would have shot him dead for his crimes and burned down his vile lair as a lesson to others. But there was no Brotherhood in this country and none of the workers raised a hand against Frick. Some crazy anarchist did try to kill Frick during the strike but all he did was wound him. He caused more harm to the workers because it gave the Pinkerton spies an excuse to step up their dirty

deeds. That was when your great-grandfather was murdered. Your great-grandmother said she never knew why your great-grandfather was singled out. It could have been because he was a tapper and was so highly respected by the other men. It could have been he happened on to some devilment that the Pinkerton spies were up to. Mother always said that Father was a brave and decent man and he would not have stood idly by and let the Pinkertons commit injustices upon his fellow workers and their families."

"So the bad guys won and got away with it, huh Grandma Mary Margaret?"

"That's right, boy. They got away with it and now Frick, Carnegie, Pattison, the whole dirty lot of them are dead and the truth is buried with them. No one will ever know who murdered your great-grandfather. Not in this lifetime. Maybe I'll find out when I go to the next world, which won't be long now, but for you, I am afraid, the mystery will never be solved."

* * *

That was the story that Grandma Mary Margaret told Simon and at the conclusion, when she said the mystery would never be solved, he made a vow to himself, a silent vow that he shared with no one else -- at least not that day. One day he would uncover the truth, he would learn who murdered his great-grandfather, Payton Adams. Grandma Mary Margaret was too tired to continue her story telling and Simon rejoined his family in the living room. So excited was he by the photograph, Grandma Mary Margaret's story, and his secret vow that Simon felt nothing when his Colts failed to score a single point and were slaughtered by the Browns.

That night he had the dream for the first time and woke the family with his screams. There was never any doubt in Simon's mind of the link between the dream and the photograph. Nor was there any doubt that both were a message from powers unknown that Simon had been chosen to see that justice for Payton Adams was finally served. But, like his vow to solve the mystery of his great-grandfather's murder, Simon kept his beliefs to himself.

Four days later on New Year's Eve, while the rest of his family was gathered at the dining table playing a game of Parchessi, Simon again sat in his bedroom with Grandma Mary Margaret who regaled him with more family chronicles. She told him of her childhood in Baltimore and how she came to marry Ellsworth St. Clair, a steel worker at the Bethlehem plant in Sparrows Point. Grandma Mary

Margaret bore Grandpa Ellsworth (who died when Simon was a baby) six children, including a daughter they named Molly who would grow up to marry George Thomas and bear four children, the youngest of which was a son named Simon. It would be Simon's last conversation with his grandmother. She died four days later of a heart attack. At the cemetery on the day she was buried, Simon renewed his secret vow, promised his grandmother he would never forget her and asked for any help she could give in what he saw as his quest.

Between the death of his grandmother and the advent of what in Simon's family would forever be known as his "little problem," the launching of Simon's quest went unnoticed. No one remarked upon the many hours he spent reading in his room because he'd always been a heavy reader. For the same reason, no one paid much attention to the books he carted home from the main library in the Baltimore city system. History books. Nothing but history books, dealing with the American labor movement and robber barons of the 19th century, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, and the iron and steel industry in western Pennsylvania. Quite a departure for a 12-year-old whose previous favorite author had been Clair Bee. Though he could not know it at the time, his newfound fascination with the Homestead steel strike of 1892 (Simon quickly discovered that there had been strikes at the Homestead Works before and after 1892) marked the beginning of what for Simon -- and later Jan -- would forever be known as the "other stuff" associated with his dream.

It started out innocently enough. Beneficial, too. From his initial plunge into historical research, Simon came to understand that Grandma Mary Margaret's knowledge was anecdotal and, as such, was fraught with half-truths and outright inaccuracies. For instance, he discovered that Andrew Carnegie had never been ignorant of Henry Clay Frick's actions against the steel workers. Far from it. Carnegie had made the decision to eliminate the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers from the Homestead Works months before the strike. On April 4, 1892, while on business in New York City, he'd sent a cable to Frick with instructions that the Homestead Works was to be non-union as of July 1, when the current contract with the workers expired.

Simon also learned that, like many men of wealth and power, what Carnegie said and what he did were often quite different. Despite his public proclamations of being a staunch supporter of the rights of his workers, Carnegie had fought unionism in the past and had used

much the same tactics of employing strikebreakers and Pinkertons as Henry Clay Frick. The difference between the two men, as far as Simon could see, was that Carnegie was a lot sneakier than Frick. In Simon's neighborhood, Frick would have been called a bully but Carnegie would have been labeled a rat. Of the two, bullies were held in much higher esteem.

As to the falling out between Carnegie and Frick, contrary to what Grandma Mary Margaret or great-grandmother Rosaleen Adams had heard, it apparently had little to do with the Homestead strike. The dispute was about money and it was settled in the traditional fashion: the richer man -- Carnegie -- bought off his less rich rival. With regards to the villainy of Governor Robert Pattison and the Pinkerton "spies" of whom Grandma Mary Margaret spoke with such venom, the authors of the books Simon read were ambiguous. Yes, Governor Pattison did intervene with the state militia but reluctantly and only after Sheriff McCleary sent word to Harrisburg that a state of lawlessness existed in Homestead and he was incapable of establishing his authority. By law, Pattison had no choice but to take action to restore order. As for the Pinkertons conducting a clandestine war of terrorism against the strikers, the detective agency denied all such allegations, as did the Carnegie company. The rate of crime in the town of Homestead in the summer of 1892 was abnormally high, but whether this was due to subterfuge on the part of Pinkerton agents, or the consequences of severe social turmoil, was a question that no one, not even, in later years, Professor Simon Thomas, could answer. Regardless of whether their subterfuge was widespread or isolated, Simon would always hold the Pinkertons responsible for the death of his great-grandfather and would never waver in his quest to prove it.

Looking back, Simon would make a vigorous argument that, all in all, his first fling with historical research had been a rousing success. Not only did he acquire a great deal of knowledge, but he also found, in the course of his readings, a philosophical approach that he adopted as his own and which would become the trademark of his career. In the course of his searches in the library for reference material, Simon came across a collection of essays written in 1874 by the Dutch historian Leopold von Ranke. In one essay, von Ranke rejected the notion that it was a historian's duty to judge the past and instruct the present for the benefit of the future. Instead, von Ranke argued, historians should seek only to show what actually happened. Fresh from having discovered the inaccuracies of his grandmother's personal version of history, Simon was in full agreement with von Ranke and swore fealty thereafter to the goal of uncovering *wie*

eigentlich gewesen -- the way it really was.

Everything would have been just fine, Simon believed, had the other stuff not so dramatically made itself known in the report card he received from school in the spring of 1965. It was his first report card since the death of his grandmother and the secret launching of his campaign. Simon Thomas, heretofore a mostly-A-with-the-occasional-B-but-never-anything-lower student, failed every single subject including history on account of, as he explained to his father, they were studying ancient civilizations and he had no interest in that time period.

Simon's teachers informed his parents in a flurry of conferences that he had not turned in any of his homework, nor had he even bothered to try to answer test questions. Simon might as well not have even bothered showing up for class they said and everyone was in agreement that there was something wrong with the boy. Simon's mother blamed it on his little problem -- "He's not getting the sleep he needs" -- and launched a quest of her own: one that involved doctors. Their family doctor examined Simon, declared him physically fit and sent him to a psychiatrist who, after a couple of sessions, gave him bad-tasting pills to make him sleep. The pills proved effective at narcotizing Simon into an unproductive stupor every evening that he did not have the dream, but utterly worthless at preventing the dream and its consequences. Simon was sent to a second and then a third psychiatrist. It was with this third psychiatrist, a relatively young, attractive and very much ahead of her time woman named Dr. Elaine Clevenger, upon whom Simon developed a minor crush, that he made the mistake of opening up. He told her everything and she, in turn, called his parents and, with him sitting there in the room, wriggling under the astonished stares of two sets of parental eyes, told them.

"In a nutshell, what we have here is a twelve-year-old boy born and raised in Baltimore who is in danger of flunking seventh grade but who knows more about 19th century labor strife in Pittsburgh than any other twelve-year-old in the state," Dr. Clevenger said. Then she sort of smiled. "I'd say Simon has been pre-occupied."

Preoccupation, as Jan would later point out, is a polite term for obsession. Dr. Nertz agreed when Simon relayed the story to him. Obsession? Simon was not so sure. His was not an obsessive personality, at least not with regards to any other aspect of life. Oh sure, he loved his bike, a weathered 18-speed Gitane he'd bought while a student at Maryland, and he rode it to work rain or shine. But that was because biking was such good exercise and he could shower

immediately after. Yes, he loved showers too -- even water-conserving quickies. "Is Dad in the shower again?" was the most frequently asked question in Simon's house, according to Jan. And he was certainly dedicated about his weight-lifting, his Friday afternoon swims in Spiker Pool, and his Saturday morning runs through Tilden Park. But he was not obsessive about anything. He preferred to think that he just got carried away sometimes, went a little overboard, overdid it, as his dad used to say. His father had let the matter of Simon's pre-occupation with the 19th century go with one lecture on not overdoing things in the future. His mother, of course, went off the deep end, threatening to throw away the photo of his great-grandparents and banning from the Thomas household any book with the word "Homestead" in it. She even went so far as to tear up his city library card and call the main library to tell the director that under no circumstances was Simon to be issued another.

Brothers Kevin and Grant, taking advantage of their mother's distress, chided Simon for being a lunatic moron and promised to beat the shit out him if they caught him reading any books about Homestead or upsetting Mom. Only his sister Maureen had understood that all Simon had been was a little pre-occupied and that he would not be pre-occupied in the future.

And he wasn't.

Simon loved his parents too much to be the cause of such distress. He focused in on his school work and became a much better student than ever before. From that period on until the time he finished high school, he never got below an A in any subject. For good measure he scored 1,590 on his college boards. In his sophomore year, when his dad became concerned that Simon was spending too much time studying and not getting enough exercise (his mother went off the deep-end with that one, too!), he went out for the lacrosse team. It was only a coincidence, he assured his parents, that the coach of Bishop O'Hara High's lacrosse team, Pete Klooney, was also the teacher for senior history which, again by coincidence, happened to be American history. Nonetheless, the suspicions of his parents forced Simon to put more effort into becoming a good player than he might otherwise have expended. It paid off. He was high school All-American in his senior year, captain of a team that won the state championship in its division, and, as a result of his diligence in the weight room (speed was never going to be his forte so early on he went for strength), winner of the coveted (amongst the senior boys of his school) Bishop O'Hara "Strongest Boy" title.

He also taught himself to stop screaming when he woke from the dream. Dr. Nertz seemed quite impressed when Simon told him of this but it had not been all that difficult. By the time he was 14, the dream was so familiar to Simon that even though he still awoke with a start and he still suffered from the sweating, the headaches and depression, the terror was not what it had been. At some level of his mind, he was able to anticipate the gunshot, the blinding white light and the pain. It still hurt like hell and the pain was more than enough to shock him out of his sleep, but he learned to keep his mouth shut.

Thus was he able to remove a considerable amount of worry from his mother and father. He also bought himself the time he needed.

With the help of Maureen, who secretly procured for him the books he requested from the library system, Simon managed to continue his quest under or in spite of the watchful eye of the other members of his family. Due to the quick exhaustion of books on Homestead and the steel workers strike of 1892, he was forced to greatly expand the net he cast. He started with the history of the Pittsburgh area and western Pennsylvania, concentrating almost exclusively on the period in the 19th century known as the "Gilded Age" for all of the personal financial wealth it generated. Eventually his research spread to the history of Ireland during that same time period. There he found himself drawn to the Brotherhood of which Grandma Mary Margaret had spoken with great admiration. Simon presumed that his grandmother was referring to the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a precursor to the Irish Republican Army in name, spirit, and methodology.

The IRB came into existence towards the end of 1858. Not so much an organization as a secret society, a loose confederation of underground cells, governed -- to the extent that there was governance -- by a Supreme Council. Irish nationalism, based on the xenophobic writings of James Stephens and John O'Leary, was its ideology. Anglophobic rhetoric and a zest for terrorism and assassination were its stocks in trade. Though the IRB officially repudiated violence in 1873, there remained cells within the Brotherhood, particularly on the U.S. side of the Atlantic, who continued to sporadically mount bloody campaigns of terrorism well into the 20th century.

These Brotherhood members called themselves Fenians, after the mythical Irish warriors

known as the *Fianna*. As dangerous as Fenian cells in Ireland were, it was the Irish-American Fenians who posed the gravest threat to those they perceived as enemies. Native Fenians suffered from a chronic shortage of funds. They did more drinking and boasting than actual killing, and when they did strike, their blows were for the most part aimed at rural targets. Irish-American Fenians, however, were full participants in the bounty of the Gilded Age. Many had the financial wherewithal to hire and train their own professional assassins. These "enforcers," as Grandma Mary Margaret had called them, carried out bombings and executions in Dublin, London, and other cities throughout the United Kingdom. Their reach occasionally even extended into the U.S. Dynamite was one of their favorite tools. Bullets were popular, too, as all of the top enforcers were skilled marksmen. However, the signature weapon of the best of the best, the truly elite enforcers, was the knife. Nothing sent home a more personal message than stabbing your victim to death.

In reading about the Irish Republican Brotherhood and its Fenian cells, Simon was again made aware of the debilities of anecdotal memory. In contrast to Grandma Mary Margaret's perception of the enforcers as vigilantes avenging the downtrodden for the egregious outrages of the rich and powerful, Simon saw them for what they were: hired killers.

Also in the course of his Irish studies, Simon found himself inexplicably drawn to the stories of Charles Stewart Parnell and Captain Willie O'Shea. Parnell was a Protestant landowner and a fierce Irish nationalist who became the driving political force for Home Rule, the concept whereby Ireland would remain a part of the British Empire but would govern its own domestic affairs. Autocratic and grim in disposition, but an electrifying speaker with enormous charisma, Parnell rose from an obscure member of the House of Commons to chairmanship of the Irish Party and the single most important politician in Ireland. There was a time when his position of leadership was so widely-accepted that his followers and even many of his opponents referred to Parnell as the Uncrowned King of Ireland.

Parnell's greatest success was his forging of a delicate political alliance with British Prime Minister William Gladstone, the head of England's Liberal Party. Gladstone needed the Irish votes controlled by Parnell to remain Prime Minister and the price for those votes was Home Rule. All political leaders must perform balancing acts between different factions within

their party, but few in history, Simon would always believe, faced a more difficult challenge than Parnell. First he had to maintain leadership over an Irish populace heavily influenced by its most radical elements while cooperating with the sworn enemy of those elements. That would have been tough enough, Simon thought, but at the same time Parnell also had to win the support of the Irish Catholic church for Home Rule without losing the support of Irish Protestants.

It was an astonishing achievement that he very nearly pulled off. In 1889, the Parnell-Gladstone alliance was on the verge of passing Home Rule for Ireland through the British Parliament. Had they been successful, 20th century Anglo-Irish history would undoubtedly have been quite different. On Christmas eve of 1889, however, Captain William Henry O'Shea, a member of Parliament and supposed ally of Parnell, filed a petition for divorce from his estranged wife Katherine on the grounds of adultery. Parnell was named as the correspondent.

The accusation could not be denied for the couple already had two children.

The scandal of Parnell's adultery did not sit well with the majority of the members of the Irish Party who were staunchly Catholic. The scandal did not sit well with English members of the Liberal Party, most of whom had never been too keen on Parnell. The scandal did sit well with Irish Protestants who disliked the idea of Home Rule even more than they disliked Parnell. In the end, Gladstone was forced to sever his ties with Parnell, the Liberal-Irish Party alliance was dissolved and the Home Rule bill went down to defeat. Subsequent Anglo-Irish history was drenched in blood. As for Charles Stewart Parnell, his political career was ruined and he died in 1891 an embittered failure. He was only 45.

The part of this story that Simon found most astonishing was that Parnell's genius had been his ability to keep the ferocious hatred and mutual mistrust of his powerful allies in check through the strength of his will. His undoing, however, came about because he was unable to impose his will on one venal, weak, cowardly and otherwise unremarkable individual.

Kitty O'Shea had been living apart from her husband Willie for more than five years when Parnell met her in 1880. Willie had refused a divorce because Kitty stood to inherit a large fortune from an elderly aunt and Willie expected, as Kitty's husband, to control it. Willie knew about his wife's love affair with Parnell and had used it to blackmail Parnell into appointing him to political positions he would otherwise never have attained. The situation changed when the aunt finally died. Her will had been carefully constructed to exclude Willie from receiving

anything.

After a futile court challenge, Willie offered a divorce to his wife in exchange for a payment of 20,000 pounds. A deal had apparently been struck, but someone convinced Willie that he could gain even more money if he filed for the divorce and presented himself as the aggrieved and cuckolded husband. Some supporters of Parnell believed the person behind this treachery was a cousin of O'Shea's by the name of George O'Casey. Circumstantial evidence made him a prime suspect. O'Casey was a wealthy Protestant landlord with ties to Ulster where Home Rule and Parnell were vigorously opposed. At least one Fenian cell found him guilty and the judgment was enforced with immediate and terrible swiftness.

On Christmas morning, O'Casey was savagely murdered in his own home. His body was found in his bedroom with his penis amputated and lodged up his rectum. The word "traitor" had been written in O'Casey's blood on a wall. O'Casey's wife was found dead in the adjoining bedroom. She had been shot. The bodies of O'Casey's two servants were discovered in the kitchen. They, too, had been shot, apparently through a window. One day after the murders, the O'Casey home was dynamited. No perpetrator was ever brought to justice.

Like any red-blooded teenaged-boy, Simon was fascinated by sensational crimes like the O'Casey murder, but unlike most, he researched them. When Simon Thomas posed the question -- What kind of sick bastard would do such a thing? -- he looked for an answer.

What he learned was that investigators into the O'Casey murders concluded the Brotherhood was responsible. Some thought it was the work of the same Irish-American Fenian cell that had been blamed for a series of dynamite attacks, shootings, and stabbings in London two years earlier. Simon immediately did more research and found out that at least thirteen people died in that campaign which took place between the months of March and June in 1887. All were wealthy Protestants with ties to Ulster. Details of the murders were kept secret, but newspapers reported that Scotland Yard believed the killings to be the work of one individual. No one was ever charged.

Simon saw a connection between the stories of Parnell and O'Shea and that of his great-grandparents in that the struggles in Ireland at that time certainly made socio-economic conditions extremely difficult for a young working class couple like Payton and Rosaleen.

Meanwhile, the Irish-Americans who returned to the homeland and involved themselves in its affairs were incredibly affluent by comparison. It was no wonder that Simon's great-grandparents would emigrate to America. They, too, wanted a share of the prosperity.

Something told Simon there was more to it than that, this feeling of a connection, but despite extensive archival searches as an adult, he never found one.

By the time he finished high school, Simon could have held his own with any college grad student on the subject of 19th century American and Irish history. At his commencement, Coach Klooney let the cat out of the bag as to Simon having continued his quest on the sly when he told Simon's parents that their boy knew as much about the fundamentals of lacrosse as himself and a hell of a lot more about history. Even Simon's mother took the news with equanimity -- after all, he'd graduated *magnum cum laude* of his class, how could she complain? Back at the house for a post-graduation family party, she made him fetch the old photograph of Payton and Rosaleen he'd been hiding.

Everyone was astonished to see that Simon had grown into the spitting image of his great-grandfather. When he later chose to study history at the University of Maryland and became a scholar of the Gilded Age, family members repeatedly joked amongst themselves and to others that Simon's choice had come as no surprise: It had been predestined.

CHAPTER FIVE

"Is that the extent of the other stuff? If it is, then I don't believe we need give it any further attention. This episode in your youth was marginally obsessive, but children in their early teens are prone to extreme behavior. I rather like the characterization of your Dr. Clevenger that you were pre-occupied. Certainly you managed to control it well enough ..."

"Not control it, Doctor, I dealt with it, much as I've learned to deal with my dream."

"As you wish, the salient fact is that you coped. And rather well, too, I might add. Your academic and athletic achievements are laudatory. It is unusual that a person so young could envision a long-range goal and remain so steadfast in its pursuit even into adulthood. Unusual but not extraordinary. The same could be said for many professional athletes and musicians.

Tell me about your adolescent socialization."

"My socialization?"

"Your social experiences. Particularly during the high school years. Did you have friends with whom you did things on weekends? Did you go out on dates?"

"Sure, I had friends and I did things. Mostly we played sports -- pickup games of basketball, baseball, touch-football, lacrosse, what have you. I did not date in high school. I was too shy with girls. I did date some in college. Movie dates. Dances. Nothing serious. Nothing too sexual either. I was a virgin when I met Jan. Does that mean anything?"

"Only in that, again, you see, your experiences are perhaps atypical but not extraordinary. If there is any problem it is that you seem to have been unduly worried about this so-called other stuff you associate with your dream."

"I wasn't finished."

"I beg your pardon?"

"I wasn't finished telling you about the other stuff. What I told you about my grandmother's tale and the photo of my great-grandfather was so you would know why, for my high school graduation, my parents gave me a trip to Pittsburgh."

"I'm sorry. Please continue."

"They wanted to give me a reward for doing so well and a trip to Pittsburgh is what I asked for. My folks made reservations for four nights at the Holiday Inn adjacent to the University of Pittsburgh. My sister, Maureen, drove me there and was going to stay and help me."

"I take it your plan was to do more research."

"Yes. I wanted to take a tour of the Homestead Works which was still operating in those days. Most of all, though, I wanted to try to find the scene of my dream. I believed then that it was a real location somewhere along the banks of the Monongahela River. I thought if I could find it I might learn something."

"Is that a supernatural connotation I am hearing? Has this trip to Pittsburgh something to do with the belief in reincarnation to which you have previously said you do not subscribe?"

"In my dream I've told you I see a damaged barge with the name Bethlehem painted on its bow and a sign that identifies it as property of Gray's Iron Line."

"Yes, I remember. It's in my notes. What about it?"

"What would you say if I told you that in the course of my research following the death of my grandmother, I learned that in the 1890s, Gray's Iron Line was one of the leading barge companies operating on the three rivers around Pittsburgh? Furthermore, Gray's Iron Line did own a barge named the Bethlehem and it was severely damaged in a collision with another barge on June 22, 1892. What do you say to that?"

"I'd say that is most curious, please tell me what you learned from your trip."

"Nothing. Something. I'm not sure."

"I don't understand your response."

"When we got to the exit for Pittsburgh off the Pennsylvania Turnpike, I made Maureen turn the car around."

"Why?"

"I was afraid."

"What do you mean by afraid? Were you nervous about going to where your great-grandfather had lived and died? Or were you apprehensive about what you might or might not learn?"

"I wasn't nervous or apprehensive. I was literally sick with fear. There was a Howard Johnson's restaurant at the exit. I was so ill, I went into the Men's Room there and vomited. Puked my guts out, as we used to say back then."

"What were you afraid of?"

"I was hoping you could tell me."

"As you said, you were still a boy. Boys, especially teenage boys, are excitable. That almost always entails a great outpouring of hormones. Perhaps your illness was a reaction to this body chemistry. Perhaps, too, you were struck by a virus and the disease manifested itself while you were on your way to Pittsburgh. Perhaps it was while on the road that you contracted the disease. There are many possible explanations with no spooky requirements as a precondition."

"I would certainly agree with you, doctor, except that the same thing happened again 12 years later."

* * *

At thirty years of age, Simon was one of the youngest tenured professors at Cal and

considered to be a burgeoning star in the history department. The undergraduate and graduate courses he taught on the labor movement in the United States were wildly popular. Male students responded to his jock background, and coeds came on to him. Also, as some of his colleagues pointed out, he was an easy grader. With regards to the all-important academic social scene, his strong pro-worker stance and his lovely African American law student wife were the ideal combination of politics and life-style for Berkeley.

Even in those heady days of academia when demand was high and class space limited, professors whose courses attracted large enrollments were greatly valued. This was particularly true for the history department where the ratio of demand to supply never favored the institute. Therefore Simon's department chair did not deny his request to attend a convention of historians that was being held in Atlanta even though he was not a scheduled speaker nor was he chairing any of the sessions. He wasn't even presenting a poster session.

Simon wanted to attend the convention for the express purpose of meeting Ana Huff. She was a professor of U.S. history at the University of Pittsburgh. Her expertise was the colonial period, the years between 1607 and 1776. It was a book she had written, however, that had impressed Simon. The book was entitled: "The Genealogical Historian."

It was the contention of Professor Huff that an accurate understanding of history not only required research into the Olympian perspectives of those individuals who made it, but studies as well of the worm's eye view from those who endured it. To the assertion that history is written by the big winners, Professor Huff countered that as traditionally studied, history has also been written by the big losers. But just as one had to dig a little deeper to get to the perspective of the big losers, one had to dig deeper still to get to the perspective of those who neither won nor lost on anything more than a personal scale. Though their individual stories were small, the accumulation of enough of these stories could take on substantial weight. The key to uncovering these small stories was genealogy. Not all historians agreed with her.

The convention was held at the Marriott Marquis hotel in downtown Atlanta. Ana Huff's talk was in the Savoy/Rhine meeting room. The room was set up to accommodate 50 people and Simon got there 30 minutes early to ensure himself a seat in the front row. His goal would have been accomplished had he shown up ten minutes late. He was one of eight people attending her session. Nonetheless, Ana Huff gamely proceeded to deliver what Simon thought to be a fine

talk on cluster genealogy -- searches that included not only direct line ancestors, but brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, and even neighbors for every generation.

"By branching out into many different sources and comparing your results, you maximize both the completeness and the accuracy of your information," said Ana Huff early in her talk.

"The rewards are not always obvious but they are very real."

Ana Huff proceeded to relate how she had undertaken a series of extensive genealogical studies of two dozen families in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area, each with anecdotal stories of ancestors who'd fought in the Revolutionary War. Most of the studies yielded little of interest to anyone other than members of the respective family trees, but in the case of three families, she did manage to uncover correspondences from individuals who'd served as foot soldiers in George Washington's army. These correspondences implied that Washington's success which had traditionally been credited to British incompetence and the loyalty of the Colonial army should also be credited at least in part to fear of Hessian mercenaries. To a man, each of the correspondents found by Ana Huff told tales of Hessian atrocities -- always involving the rape of mothers, wives, and daughters. To a man, none had himself heard this news directly from any of the victims, but all had been told the stories by their commanding officers who had themselves been told by their commanding officers.

"It was my conclusion that General Washington owed no little portion of his success to the skill of he and his lieutenants in the art of propaganda," said Ana Huff. She then went on to show how a more conventional search through the archives at Pitt and elsewhere seemed to be substantiating her genealogy-based findings.

"Apparently the General and his lieutenants did not consider this spreading of false tales about the Hessians worthy of inclusion in their own correspondence, but to their intended audience, the common foot soldiers, these tales were real enough and frightening enough to write home about," said Ana Huff. "In none of the letters I uncovered was there any mention of British soldiers. My letter writers appeared to harbor no particular ill-will towards their British opponents and might not have been counted on to battle them as fiercely as they did rage against these precursors to the dreaded Hun. I refer to the Hessians as precursors because, as I am sure you recall, a similar strategy was successfully deployed during World War I."

Simon was not only impressed with the content of Ana Huff's talk, he was also much

impressed with how undaunted she appeared to be by the diminutive size of her audience. It was the gutsy sort of thing that Jan could pull off. However, unlike Jan who was tall and imposing, Ana herself was diminutive, not much more than five feet tall and petite in build. In person she looked younger than she did in the small photo on the back cover of her book, about the same age as Simon. In person, she was also more attractive. She had a moon-shaped face with plain features but her copper hair, which was curly and cut short, was striking, as were her pale green eyes. Simon also liked that she was dressed in a simple white blouse and green skirt with matching jacket -- pleasant and professional -- rather than trying to look like either a blue-jeaned student or a power-suited C.E.O. as so many of the other speakers and attendees were doing. She seemed surprised by Simon's invitation to lunch and even more surprised by her own acceptance. Over sandwiches and cokes in a booth in a diner one block from the hotel, she dismissed the size of her audience as a matter of no consequence and Simon got the impression she was sincere. As he would come to learn, Ana was intensely sincere about everything she said and did.

"It is the quality of your audience that is important, not the quantity," she said after swallowing a sincerely chewed bite of sandwich. "I'm used to it. Most historians consider genealogy to be a hobby rather than a legitimate academic pursuit. Everyone is so intent on painting the big picture, they're seeing the forest but they're missing the trees. Hey, without those trees, there's no forest."

"Perhaps because there are so many trees, most of us feel the need to be selective in which ones we study," said Simon, feeling the guilt of being one of those who had studied only the big winners and losers of his time period.

"I don't mean to be critical," Ana immediately responded. Her apologetic tone, Simon noted, was not at all Janlike. "Certainly, given our limited resources, we in the community by all means must pick our spots. What I'm saying is that we should not entirely exclude the stories of those whose individual impact was negligible because, collectively, they can shed much light."

"I understand what you're saying and I agree," Simon replied, equally un-Janlike in his conciliation but not entirely as sincere as Ana Huff, who allowed herself some regret in response to his expression of empathy.

"Thanks, but as you saw in the size of my audience, you are the exception. This negative

attitude towards genealogy makes it very difficult for me to get grant money."

Sincerity with regards to funding was rare amongst academicians and it invited Simon to be honest with her. "Actually, I'm surprised you've gotten any grants at all for this line of research. It has been my experience that unless the subject of an historical investigation is one familiar to a majority of the members of a selection committee, the committee will be quite parsimonious."

"Familiarity breeds endowments?" Ana said, smiling into her coke. Simon noted that she had dimples. He'd always liked dimples. "Fortunately, the Carnegie people have been sympathetic." She looked up and a wrinkle of worry furrowed her reddish brow. "Did I say something wrong? You got a bad-taste expression on your face when I mentioned the Carnegie Foundation. Have you had trouble with them?"

It was the perfect opening for Simon and he seized it, telling her the story told to him by his Grandma Mary Margaret of his great-grandfather Payton Adams, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, and the Homestead steel strike of 1892. He concluded his story by showing Ana Huff the photo of Payton and Rosaleen Adams which he'd carefully packed in a padded manilla envelope.

"This is your great-grandfather? You look exactly like him. Does this strong resemblance run common in your family?"

"As far as I know, it is unique to my great-grandfather and myself. I would like to do a genealogical investigation of him. If possible, I would like to learn about his roots, where he was born, where he grew up, how was it he came to this country."

Simon stopped, took a deep breath and proceeded to tell Ana about his dream, the horrible headaches and depression that followed, and his long-held conviction that the solution to his problem lie in uncovering the truth about his great-grandfather's death. The enormity of revealing his secret to someone whom he had just met, a woman who was little more than a total stranger left him trembling and sweating at the conclusion.

"Some story you got there, Simon. Have you considered analysis? Ohmygod! Look at the time! Well, it's been fun. Sorry to hear about your little problem, but, hey, we've all got problems. You want help with your genealogy study? Call the National Genealogical Society

Hot-Line. They've got professionals there who are standing by, waiting to take your call. See you around!"

That is what Simon fully expected to hear Ana Huff say and had that been her reaction, he would have paid their bill, left the restaurant, grabbed his things at the Marriott Marquis, flown back to the Bay Area and would never again have shown his face at another historians' convention. Nor would he ever have spoken a single word to another living soul about his dream.

But that was not how Ana Huff reacted. Eyes shining with sympathy and excitement, she reached across the formica-topped table in the booth and, as best she could, wrapped her tiny hands around his big ones and squeezed tightly. She then proceeded to lay out a plan for "cracking this case," displaying, in Simon's grateful opinion, the masterfulness of a Sherlock Holmes and the calm cool gumshoe professionalism of a Philip Marlowe.

"First we discard that which is of no use to us. I can assume no compiler has ever worked up your family history or else you would not have come to me. It would help immensely if you had an address or even the name of the town in which your great-grandparents resided."

"I have no address and I really don't know which town they lived in," Simon told her. "I did obtain a copy of my grandmother's birth certificate from the Maryland Historical Society. However, it only listed a Baltimore address as the residence for Rosaleen Adams. Payton Adams was simply listed as deceased. There was nothing about Pennsylvania. All I know is that my great-grandfather was a tapper for the Carnegie Steel Company's Homestead Works and that he was a member of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers."

"Both organizations are now defunct and their personnel records are undoubtedly long gone. We can, however, check local newspapers of that time period which we can assume covered activities of the mill and the union. It is possible your great-grandfather was mentioned in connection with an event at one or the other in which case his address might have been listed. I will check the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society. They have the best collection of newspapers for that era."

Simon felt a need to let Ana know that he was not a helpless ninny nor did he expect her to do all the work. "I took a stab at this myself after I read your book," he said. "My grandmother told me my great-grandparents were from Ireland, from a town called Ballybunion.

I contacted an archival group in County Clare, which is where Ballybunion is located, but they were unable to provide me any information on Payton and Rosaleen Adams. They asked if I knew Rosaleen's maiden name, but I did not. In your book, you wrote that in any genealogical study, the Federal census is an excellent starting point so I tried the National Archives as you suggested. My great-grandfather died in 1892 and it is my impression that he and my great-grandmother had not been in this country for very long. I thought it quite possible they were included in the 1890 census. I wrote two letters and made one phone call but got no response."

Ana Huff smiled warmly. "Good start, Simon. I'm glad you weren't too discouraged by your initial setbacks to not contact me. First off, your setbacks are not unusual. As a historian, you certainly know the drawbacks of working from anecdotal information. Your grandmother might have gotten the name of your great-grandparents' hometown wrong, or maybe they were from a place of which she was never told. Maybe Adams is a variation of their name. Names were often shortened back then by bureaucrats or by the families themselves. As for your being ignored by the National Archives, like most Federal bureaucracies, it has a tiny staff for responding to public inquiries and a large volume of work. There are many compilers doing genealogical searches and everyone wants their answers yesterday. The reason you received no response is that a fire destroyed almost all of the records for that particular census. Providing data is quick and easy. Whoever answered your inquiry would have had to have been prepared to spend a lot of time in followup. I have contacts but I don't hold out much hope from NA."

"California has a state census," interjected Simon, again feeling a need to be a more active participant in the project.

"Pennsylvania does not," said Ana Huff. "However, I will check with the Pittsburgh City Archives which sometimes covers towns within the greater Pittsburgh area through old city directories. And I will check for census info with both PSA and PSL."

"Who?"

"The Pennsylvania State Archives and the Pennsylvania State Library. Again, I don't hold out much hope for census data but since they use the Miracode indexing system, we won't have to waste too much time. Both orgs however do maintain a fine collection of deed and other property records and that can be a wonderful source of information as can polling lists. You said your great-grandmother did go to the local authorities about your great-grandfather's

disappearance so there could also be some court records. It would be helpful if you could find out where your grandmother was baptized. Churches keep baptismal records for centuries."

"Do you really think a baptism certificate would show Rosaleen's previous address in Pennsylvania?" asked Simon, showing his skepticism.

"No, I don't expect it would," answered Ana Huff with patience. "But birth certificates do list the names and addresses of godparents. That is the virtue of cluster genealogy. By not limiting ourselves to direct line ancestors, we greatly expand our ability to net clues."

"Grandma Mary Margaret was a Roman Catholic. As were all my family members on both maternal and paternal sides," a chastened Simon quickly supplied. "I will contact her church and track down her baptismal certificate."

"Good. In the meantime, I will contact the Archives of the Roman Catholic Dioceses in Harrisburg. They keep records for all of the Pennsylvania Catholic churches. If that comes up empty, I'll contact the American Catholic Historical Society in Philadelphia. As a Roman Catholic Irish immigrant, the probability of your great-grandmother Rosaleen having been a parish member is along the lines of 100-percent. Not to worry, Simon. We are going to locate your great-grandparents, I have no doubt about it. We are also going to track them back to Ireland. I've got my own copy of Filby's PILI and I will get on it as soon as I return home."

"What is Filby's pilly?" asked Simon.

"P. William Filby's Passenger and Immigrations Lists Index. It is a listing of immigrants who arrived in this country during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. It's quite thorough so long as your interest is European immigrants, and I believe it is especially good for tracking Irish immigrants. The record keepers paid special attention to the Irish I think because they were such scamps."

A partially suppressed giggle burst through Ana's lips. It was a girlish sound that, in the face of Ana's otherwise stalwartly professional demeanor, Simon found endearing. Still, he was troubled.

"Won't we have the same problem I ran into with the Irish archivists? Suppose the spelling of Adams had been changed?"

"Filby uses the Soundex code which is based on the sounds of names rather than exact spellings. Adam is a distinct sound. It won't take too long to run through the A352's -- that

would be the code for the ADAM sound -- who entered this country through Philadelphia between, say, 1875 and 1882. In addition to ports of departure and arrival, Filby also includes extensive listings of points of origin and destination and naturalization records. Your great-grandparents might not have had time to complete the naturalization process, but there is a reasonably good chance they at least took the first step of declaring their intentions to become citizens. As a backup to Filby, I will also check the archives for Allegheny county. Sometimes, immigrants did not file their declarations of intent until they were settled in their destination. Once we've located the exact point of origin for your great-grandparents, I suspect we will have little trouble running down your ancestors. The British might have been tyrannical landlords, but they were a genealogist's dream -- they were such bloody damn good record keepers!"

Ana Huff smiled at her own joke. Her pale green eyes really shone to her advantage when she was being encouraging, Simon thought. Abruptly, she stopped smiling and gave Simon's hand another squeeze. Her palms were quite warm and even though he was sorry to see her smile fade, Simon was surprised at how happy it made him to feel the warm pressure of her touch. "Don't think I take this task lightly, Simon. I understand how important this is to you. Each of us carries within ourselves some part of each and everyone of our ancestors. To know our past, to know those from whom we came, is a precious luxury. I think the past calls out to all of us with the wisdom of experience but we must teach ourselves to understand its message. For most of us, messages from the past are delivered in the softest of whispers that we must strain to hear, but for you, this one aspect of your past is a shout. I take that to mean there is something terribly important for you to learn. For you, Simon, knowledge of this past is not a luxury, it is a necessity. That is the only way for you to find peace."

Ana Huff's smile returned. The pale green eyes once again glistened. "The clues to your past are out there, Simon, believe you me, and we shall find them."

Simon felt a lump inflate in his throat and his own eyes began to water. At that moment he believed Ana Huff with all of his heart and she had won in him a friend for life.

During the next six weeks, Simon had several long-distance phone conversations with Ana Huff. She would call him at home in the evening always between the hours of seven and eight o'clock, Pacific time, which meant between ten and eleven o'clock her time. She would ask

him a question or two about his grandmother's story or about the maternal side of his family (Simon knew only of his mother and Grandma Mary Margaret). They would then spend about an hour just talking. There was no particular focus or subject to their conversations. Had she been a male friend, Simon would have described their talks as "b-s-ing" with no negative connotation attached -- he enjoyed them. In answer to Jan, however, he described the talks with Ana Huff as "substantive."

If Ana's goal was to draw from Simon some subtle clue to his past that might otherwise have gone unmentioned and overlooked, Simon was certain her effort was a failure. In personal conversations, he had always been a much better listener than informer, and, if anything, during their phone calls he learned far more about Ana than she about him. He learned that she lived alone with a black tom cat named Ilya in a two-bedroom condominium in an area of Pittsburgh known as Squirrel Hill. She'd been born and raised in Greensburg, a small town about 30 miles east of Pittsburgh. Her father had been a steel worker at the Jones and Laughlin Works. She'd earned her undergraduate degree at Penn State and had then transferred to the University of Pittsburgh for her graduate work. An avid football and basketball fan, she'd always been a Panther at heart, even through her years as a Nitanny Lion. She knew nothing of lacrosse but she had remembered reading about Jan's exploits at Maryland. Talk of the basketball career of Simon's wife had led to a discussion of Ana's own love life. She'd never married but had once been engaged. There was no special man in her life, but there were three whom she dated on a regular basis.

Ana said she wanted to marry someday and have children but, for the time being, her career was her life and her biggest goal was to write a history of the Revolutionary War as told through the eyes of the common foot soldier. The term "common foot soldier" seemed to be a favorite of Ana's. That Simon was so partial to the plight of the "common steel worker" was a quality Ana took as a sign that the two of them had much in common. Simon did not particularly agree with this assessment, seeing as he was married and had children and his career was more of a means to an end rather than an end in and of itself. However, as he liked Ana very much and, if he was to be honest, desperately needed her, he kept this opinion to himself.

About the only substantive thing Ana learned from Simon was that Grandma Mary

Margaret's baptism record, like her birth certificate, listed only a Baltimore address for her parents, Payton and Rosaleen Adams.

The one phone call from Ana Huff that Simon would never forget started with Ana announcing that she'd completed the first phase of her compilation.

"I'm afraid we've had some disappointments," she said, and Simon could picture the unguarded look of sheer consternation that would have been on her small round face even had he been in the room with her. "I can tell you that your grandmother was right when she said your great-grandparents came to this country on a steamer called the Gerald Fitzgerald and that they entered through the port of Philadelphia. I can tell you that they arrived at approximately 3:30 pm on April 1, 1890. It was a Wednesday and the sky was overcast. Their names were listed as Payton and Rosaleen Addams -- that is with two d's in the surname. An immigration official shortened it to the single "d" perhaps by accident."

"So far it sounds great!" exclaimed Simon, unable to still the excitement rising up within him like a spring tide.

"Their point of origin was Galway, Ireland," continued Ana in a matter-of-fact tone. "They listed the city of Dublin as their residence and gave an address."

"Dublin?" interrupted Simon. "How could my grandmother have confused Dublin for Ballybunion?"

Ana cleared her throat. "I am sure she did not. With the help of some very cooperative archivists in Dublin, I did manage to locate the records for a family by the name of Addams at the residence listed by your great-grandparents."

Simon's excitement was now a flood overrunning his entire being. He had to clear his own throat before speaking. "You found my great-grandparents?"

"I think not, Simon. The Addams at the Dublin address were Tom and Kathryn. They were a prominent Protestant couple who died in a fire that destroyed their home on February 17, 1890. Tom was 42 and Kathryn was 37. I have done quite a bit of archival work on the town of Ballybunion. There are no records of any Payton and Rosaleen Addams."

Simon had to swallow hard to regain his voice. He was the victim of a sudden and ferocious onslaught of cotton mouth and in dire need of a glass of water. But he forced himself to continue the conversation. "You must have thoughts about this, Ana. What is your best

guess?"

"My best guess, Simon, is that your great-grandparents entered this country under an assumed identity."

"They were illegal aliens?"

"It was not uncommon," Ana said. "Many people immigrated to this country under assumed names. Usually it was because they owed money, either to the government or to a bank or a landlord. What is more curious to me is that once your great-grandparents landed in Philadelphia and filled out the paperwork for entering the United States, they seemed to have vanished. You have your family history to tell you about their stay in the Pittsburgh area, but I could find no records of their having owned property or paid rent in any town in Allegheny county. Nothing to indicate that your great-grandfather belonged to any union, nor that your great-grandmother had joined any parish. There are also no legal records to be found with the county courts vis-a-vis a missing persons report, or a death certificate."

"Bottom line, please," said Simon, dryly.

"The paper trail starts in Galway, ends for a time in Philadelphia, then resumes in Baltimore *sans* Payton."

"Have you then exhausted all avenues of search?"

"Not entirely," Ana replied. "First, I would like to see if we can pick up the trail again in Pittsburgh. To do that, it is essential for you to come here. Together, we can go through the records at PSA and PSL and through those kept at Pitt. So far, we've been working off a story told to you almost 20 years ago. There could be a wealth of crucial details buried in your memory. Things your grandmother told you that you've simply forgotten. By having you look through these same records I've gone through, there might be a name or date that triggers your powers of recollection. This could mean the difference for us between success and failure."

They made plans for Simon to fly to Pittsburgh and spend five days with Ana. To make the most use of their time, he would stay with her at her condo and sleep in her spare bedroom. Ana joked that the bedroom door could be locked from the inside so he would be safe from her. She closed by advising him to bring old clothes, comfortable shoes, and work gloves.

"I'll provide the dust masks and flashlights," Ana said. "We'll be rooting around some pretty musty places. By comparison, my place will look clean and tidy."

Simon knew Jan would be irritated. She was, at that time, in the midst of preparing for the bar exam and the twins, who were not yet three years old, were a handful. Even though they employed a wonderful Chinese woman to care for the girls during the day, Jan would be on her own at night. Simon was right about his wife being irritated but he was wrong as to why.

"You mean to fly across the country to spend five cozy days alone with a single woman who is hot to trot for you and you ask me if I am okay with this? Simon Thomas, have you taken leave of your senses?"

Simon was so caught off guard by Jan's comment that he actually sputtered his answer. "Ana Huff is not hot to trot for me!"

"How would you know? You did not realize I was hot to trot for you until I took you to bed for the third time!"

"I was inexperienced around women, okay?"

"Is that supposed to mean that you are much more experienced now?"

"This is a silly argument. The only place Ana Huff is taking me is to the library."

"A lot can happen in a library, Simon Thomas, or have you forgotten?"

Simon blushed hotly. His first non self-induced orgasm was brought about when he and Jan had dry-humped in a carrel at McKeldin Library.

"I've outgrown that sort of thing, Jan," he said with a sigh of disapproval.

"Maybe you have, but has Ana Huff?" was Jan's comeback.

Knowing how important the trip was to Simon, Jan, of course, did eventually give in. She even helped him pack and drove him to the airport. The night before Simon departed, however, Jan made certain that "his love tank was empty."

The flight was uneventful. It was a United Airlines 747 jumbo jet flying from San Francisco to Pittsburgh with one stop at O'Hara airport in Chicago. The stop was so brief, Simon did not get off the plane but continued reading the new Edmund Morris biography of Teddy Roosevelt which Jan had given him for the trip. He liked the book so much that even though he had a window seat, he seldom looked out during the flight, not even when the captain announced a scenic view on Simon's side of the aircraft. However, by the time the plane began its descent into the Pittsburgh area, Simon's eyelids had grown quite heavy. Finally, he closed his book, slouched down in his seat and turned his head so that he could look out the window. As the

plane made its final approach to the Pittsburgh Airport, it went into a long, banking turn over a wide brown river that Simon knew instantly was the Monongahela. The captain's voice came over the speaker system to announce that their plane had been cleared for landing, that the local time was ten minutes past the hour of four p.m., the current temperature was 62 degrees, and that they would be on the ground shortly.

"Welcome to Pittsburgh!" said the Captain.

Right then Simon felt an internal tightening, like his insides had been caught in a vise grip and pressure was being applied. The pressure intensified as the plane touched down. By the time the 747 had rolled to a complete stop at its assigned gate and the cabin lights had been switched on, the pressure inside Simon had ratcheted up well into the red-zone. He was barely able to grab an air-sickness bag before he began vomiting.

Long after all of the other passengers had disembarked, two male flight attendants were finally able to help Simon off the plane, one on each of his arms for support. Before leaving the plane, they'd brought him a second air-sickness bag. Though there was nothing else in his stomach to disgorge, the bag over his face helped muffle the sounds of his violent retching and hide his humiliation. They put him on a bed in a room at the airport which, from its strong medicinal smell, Simon presumed was some sort of infirmary. A male physician came to check on him. There were discussions amongst those in charge as to whether an ambulance should be called or could Simon be taken to a hospital in an airport sedan. Simon shook his head vigorously, grabbed someone by an arm and pulled them near enough so that he could croak out the name of Ana Huff. Shortly thereafter she appeared at his bedside.

"They paged me on the white courtesy phone, Simon, that's never happened to me before," said Ana, holding one of his hands in both of hers. "It scared me half to death. And then a girl at the desk told me there was a medical emergency concerning you and then (she snuffled and swiped at her eyes) a security officer brought me here. We've got to get you to a hospital right away!"

From the onslaught of vomiting and retching, Simon's throat felt as if it had been stuffed full of broken glass and his voice had the timbre of stale paste. Nonetheless, he managed to convey to Ana that he did not under any circumstances want to be taken any closer to the city of Pittsburgh than he already was, that he had to get on a plane out of the area, and that he did not

care where the plane took him. Even Jan was impressed that Ana Huff was somehow able to convince the airport officials to put Simon on a Delta airlines flight to Dallas-Fort Worth which was ready for departure but was only half-full. As Simon was being wheeled in a chair out of the infirmary room, he caught a glimpse of himself in a mirror. His skin looked bleached, his eyes and nose were red and raw, his mouth was smeared with a brackish crust, and his sweat-drenched hair was sticking out in an unkempt assortment of unflattering angles. The eyes of his fellow passengers scorched him as he was wheeled down the aisle to a row all by himself in the far rear of the plane.

No sooner was the Delta 727 in the air than the vise-grip on Simon's insides disappeared. He was weak and dehydrated but otherwise fine. In fact, it was fortunate for him in more ways than one that the flight was so empty -- he ate two entire meals and drank five cans of soft drinks in the four hours it took to reach Dallas-Fort Worth. He returned home late at night, taking a cab from San Francisco airport.

A medical exam the next day by their family physician, which Jan insisted upon, found nothing physically wrong with Simon. "Just a bug," was his doctor's best guess. "You were sick with guilt," was Jan's opinion. "I was afraid," said Simon who had been there before.

"I know this sounds insane," he later told a worried Ana Huff over the phone, "but your city is off-limits to me. I can never travel there. I can never see it with my own eyes. And I know exactly why. It is too close to Homestead. You said that the past calls to us with words of wisdom. Mine calls with words of warning: Simon Thomas, stay out of Homestead! If I go there, I will die."

Good friend that she had become, Ana Huff understood and without any prompting or help from Simon she continued her investigation on her own, working through her entire summer break. In the end, however, she was forced to admit that she was stymied.

"It is a mystery to me, Simon," she said on the phone, "but I can find no evidence that your great-grandparents ever lived in the Pittsburgh area. Had they deliberately been trying to keep their presence a secret they could not have been more effective.

Even after she arrived in Baltimore, your great-grandmother remained somewhat of a mystery woman. I found the deed of purchase to her house on Woodlawn Avenue for which Rosaleen paid \$2,247.50 in cash. There is no indication of any bank note. That was a considerable

amount of money for a woman of her time to have available. Another oddity. An obituary notice for Rosaleen appeared in the November 7, 1931 edition of the Baltimore Sun. It gave her age as 66, which was probably provided by your grandmother, Mary Margaret, and it mentioned her 30 years of service as a nurse at Johns Hopkins between the years of 1898 and 1928. That is information which is likely to have been verified by the newspaper. However, checking with the hospital's archivist I could find no record of Rosaleen Adams as an employee there. My guess is that she was a volunteer, which means she went more than 30 years with no ascertainable source of revenue. Was your great-grandmother a woman of independent means?"

Simon answered that his grandmother had often spoken of being well-provided for as a child but had never given any indication that she was of wealthy upbringing.

"That is what I mean when I say your great-grandmother is a mystery, worthy of research in her own right," said Ana Huff. "As for your great-grandfather, I am afraid he remains more enigmatic than ever. I will continue to keep my antennae up for clues, but I do not hold out much hope."

That had been twelve years ago. Since that time, Jan passed the bar exam and went on to exceed even her own great expectations. Ana Huff wrote her Revolutionary War book, based on the correspondences of common foot soldiers, and called it "From the Ground Up." It was published by the University of Pittsburgh Press and she sent Simon an autographed copy. They kept in touch through letters, an occasional phone call and -- more recently -- through e-mail. Ana never married and when Ilya died, she replaced him with another black tom cat whom she named Simon.

As for the human Simon, his burgeoning star in the Cal history department failed to ignite. The incident at the Pittsburgh airport left him more shaken than he would ever admit. There was some secret part of him that was beyond his control, some aspect of his being that could apparently seize command and leave him helpless. How could anyone have self-confidence in the face of such demonstrable inadequacy? Shortly after his return, Simon quietly pulled back from the academic social scene and campus politics, preferring -- or taking refuge in -- the security of his marriage, his children and his home. When he was on campus, if he was not in the classroom, Simon mostly kept to his office, the furnishing of which became another "pre-occupation" of his that some might have mistook for an obsession. Though he remained popular

with the students, he became much too passive to advance up the career ladder.

Jan, her own career soaring, tried nudging then pushing and ultimately bullying him but this led to their first serious fights. She finally gave up trying, telling him she did not want to destroy their love for one another. He took that to mean she feared they would both end up being disgusted with him. Her last words on the subject: "It's all in your head."

To which Simon replied: "I know."

CHAPTER SIX

"Stepping into your office is like entering a museum."

"You're not the first to make that observation. Others have said it's like stepping into a time warp."

"I love your wood furniture. It's so dark and the curves are so elegant."

"The wood is mahogany, the style is art nouveau."

"Interesting. Are these pieces authentic?"

"Yes, they're all from the late 19th century. I'm not comfortable with reproductions."

"How about the window shade? It's a nice departure from the venetian blinds one usually sees in a building."

"It's a Holland, originally sold by Wanamaker's of Philadelphia in 1891."

"Who is the woman in the poster?"

"The Jersey Lily, British actress Lillie Langtry"

"She looks glamorous. I take it she was popular in the 1890s?"

"A superstar. Like Barbra Streisand."

"What's that on the floor underneath it? I'd guess it to be Ms. Langtry's costume trunk but it's somewhat on the small side for clothing I would think."

"It's a strong box. It belonged to the Wells Fargo company back in 1889."

"Then I would think it rather large. Do you have a lot of valuables to store under lock and key?"

"It's not locked and there's nothing inside. I just liked the looks of it, I guess."

"Interesting. I see the map of the United States on that other wall is missing several states."

"At the time it was printed, it was quite up to date. It even included Wyoming which was then the 44th and newest admission to the union."

"What year was that?"

"1890."

"Why does that not surprise me? One might say you are obsessed with the Gay

Nineties."

"The Nineties were anything but gay and I am not obsessed, simply . . . pre-occupied."

"I'm glad you can laugh at yourself. That's a positive sign. I also see that you do make some concessions to the 20th century. That *is* a computer on that old table is it not?"

"That is an oak writing table from 1892 and it happens to be one of my favorite pieces. As to your question, yes, I confess to being a proto-hacker, a Web surfer and an e-mail junkie. I also watch sports on television and collect jazz CDs. I am not obsessed with life in the 19th century. I just happen to like the decor. It makes me feel comfortable."

"That's not unusual. I find the majority of my male patients are more comfortable in their offices than in their own homes. Which is why I requested that we meet here. I've taken the liberty of asking another faculty member on this campus to join us. He should be arriving shortly. Are you familiar with the Santiago Ramon Cajal Center for Cognitive Neurosciences?"

"The Brain Lab."

"Is that what it's called?"

"The official short name is Cajal Hall, but here on campus we usually call it the Brain Lab."

"How far is it from here?"

"If you look out that window you can see it uphill and immediately north of the Campanile. It's the big putty-colored building that looks like a giant egg. Students who take classes there on a regular basis are called Egg Heads. Who is coming here and why?"

"May we sit down?"

"Of course. Take either guest chair."

"Thank you. These are interesting rockers. Wrought-iron from the 1890's?"

"1891. I find that students coming to see me are usually nervous. The rocking chairs help them relax. It's hard to be nervous when you're sitting in a rocking chair. Why are we meeting someone from the Brain Lab? There *is* something wrong with me, isn't there?"

"Maybe you're the one who should be sitting in a rocker. If you did not have a problem, you would not have come to me. I called you because I have received the results of your blood panels. In the days following an occurrence of your dream, the chemistry of your brain is significantly altered. Brain chemistry plays a big role in your moods and feelings. It can even

alter your fundamental personality. From the results of your blood panel, it's no wonder you feel lousy after your dream.

You show high level counts of endorphorphine, which would cause anger, and low level counts of dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin, which would account for your feelings of depression. There were also neuroendocrine elevations, and hormonal changes in cortisol, ACTH and other indicators of mental stress."

"You've told me *what* is happening, how about telling me *why* it is happening."

"The symptoms you've described, the blood panel results, even the panic disorder you experienced on being proximate to Pittsburgh are consistent with the mental illness known as PTSD -- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder."

"Post traumatic stress? Isn't that what they used to call battle fatigue? That can't apply to me, I was never a soldier."

"PTSD was brought to public attention by war veterans, but has probably been with us since the days when our Cro-magnon ancestors were attacked by sabre-toothed tigers. The American Psychiatric Association defines it as a debilitating condition that follows a catastrophic stressor, a terrifying event that is beyond the range of usual human experience."

"I've had no such experience."

"I'd say that your brain experiencing what it perceives as its own death certainly qualifies as a catastrophic stressor."

"Are you saying a dream is enough to cause post traumatic stress?"

"No. Your recurring dream is what we call an abreaction in which you are reliving the traumatic event. It is a common symptom for victims of PTSD and usually requires a trigger. In your case, the trigger was the photo of your great-grandfather."

"I'm sorry but I seem to be missing something here. You say my brain is reliving its own death but that obviously cannot be."

"I said your brain is reliving what it *perceives* to be its own death. Normally I would not ask this question but you keep surprising me. Are you familiar with the Seychelles-Joyner Fear-Response Theory?"

"I never heard of that theory but I know the name Jerome Seychelles. He was a psychology professor on this campus who was murdered a couple of years ago in Salt Lake City.

The killer was a teenaged boy as I recall. A patient of his or something."

"You have a good memory."

"We don't hear of many of our faculty being robbed and murdered by throat-slashing juvenile delinquent Mormons. It tends to make an impression."

"I can see that. Would it impress you to learn that the boy was not the first killer in his family? His grandfather and his great-great grandfather both ended up being hung for crimes that included murder. The boy was already in a correctional facility. Seychelles had gone to Salt Lake to interview him. He signed the boy out, took him to lunch, then attempted an interview in a friend's office at the University of Utah. The boy killed Seychelles with a home-made dagger, stole his wallet and the keys to his rental car. He was captured three days later at the Circus Circus Hotel in Las Vegas where he was staying with a prostitute. He admitted to killing Seychelles to use his ATM and credit cards for some fun."

"Sounds like an excitable boy. What does Seychelles' murder have to do with a fear theory?"

"Fear-response theory. Important difference. Fear is an emotion, the strongest. It arises from the brain's detection of danger. In response, the brain immediately prepares the body for fight or flight. The heart rate increases, there's a rush of hormones, the senses are sharpened. This area of the brain is quite primitive. Fear-response has probably been a part of Nature's evolutionary equipment since the age of reptiles, but it came into its own with mammals."

"When you say mammals are you including humans?"

"Most definitely. Charles Darwin, a man renowned for having a will of iron, once approached a poisonous puff adder which was safely enclosed behind a thick glass plate. He was determined he would not flinch should the snake strike at him and he willed himself to stand steady, repeating out loud that there was no danger. However, when the snake struck, Darwin immediately jumped backward. His iron will, like his ability to reason, were no match for fear-response. Using other people, Darwin repeated this experiment many times, always with the same results."

"Chalk one up for instinct, I suppose."

"Precisely. But here's an interesting footnote. Various iterations of Darwin's experiment have been performed through the years, but the results are still classically presented in terms of

the snake behind the glass. Those who flinch constitute better than 99-percent of the responses. A tiny percentage of the subjects, mostly female, won't even approach the glass, their fear is so overwhelming. What intrigued Jerome Seychelles were the few instances reported in which a subject, always male, not only did not flinch, but instead struck back at the glass. An attack met with an attack. These individuals are quite rare, their number too small to show up in the statistics. Most psychologists dismissed them as freaks of Nature. Seychelles, however, saw them as important in terms of what they can tell us about aggressive behavior. As a psychologist with neurological training, he understood that most of what we know about the brain has come from studying the abnormal."

"Abnormal is not a politically correct word."

"No, but it is scientifically valid."

"Fair enough, but how did we get onto aggressive behavior?"

I thought we were talking about responses to fear."

"Aggression is a fear-response. As I said before, fear-response prepares us for fight as well as flight. For most of us, there is a rough balance between the two responses depending upon the degree of danger perceived. Most of those who flinched at the poisonous snake would have stood steady had it been a rabbit leaping at the glass. For some, however, the urge to flinch is overwhelming in all situations, no matter how small the threat. For a tiny percentage of others, the instinctive response is aggression, no matter how great the danger. I must emphasize that human behavior is not governed by fear-response or any other instinctive reaction, only influenced. We are a complex species with a highly developed brain. Nevertheless, the instinctive reactions can push us down a path from which some of us cannot seem to break away. For example, there have been studies showing that approximately five to eight percent of all boys, across all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic population groups, display acute aggression as a persistent personality characteristic. By the age of eight, this acute aggressiveness is a reliable forecast of violent criminal behavior in adulthood."

"Sounds like more of that Bell curve racial IQ blather."

"No. There is no such thing as a stupid race, but there is such a thing as a bad boy. These studies have not been very well publicized because of the nature of their findings, but the numbers have been thoroughly documented and reviewed."

"But those figures don't seem to jibe with the statistics I've read that say something like 80-percent of all boys from inner-city neighborhoods are arrested for a crime by the age of 18."

"We are talking about something entirely different from the statistics for a single socioeconomic population group. This is an innate aggressive behavior that knows no boundaries other than gender and even that may only be because of insufficient observation. These kids were born bad and what is more, their innate aggressiveness appears to run in families."

"It is inherited? Like a gene?"

"Not in the pattern of classic hereditary, where a physical characteristic is passed from one generation to the next or from alternating generations. We can discount the notion of an evil gene. However, studies of Mormon families indicate that this aggressive behavior does appear at random in certain lineages. That is what took Jerry Seychelles to Salt Lake City."

"I find this interesting but I'm still not sure what it all has to do with my case."

"Seychelles' work has been carried on by the man whom I've invited to your office. His name is Keith Joyner."

* * *

Simon was surprised that Keith Joyner was a tall, athletic-looking black man, with neatly trimmed hair, a mustache and a short goatee. When Dr. Nertz had first mentioned Joyner's name, Simon had immediately sat down at his computer and logged onto Cal's intranet site. He learned that Keith Rolando Joyner was a year younger than himself; that he was from Portland and that he'd gotten his bachelor's and master's degrees in chemistry at Oregon State University; that he'd been both a Searle and a Fulbright Scholar and that he had obtained a medical degree from Stanford University in neurology and a Ph.D. in molecular biophysics from UC San Francisco; that he'd been at Cal for six years; and that he'd won something called the Lasker Award for his research on the neural pathways of memory.

"I was expecting a bald caucasian male with thick glasses," Simon said when Dr. Nertz introduced them.

Keith nodded and smiled. "Me, too. I looked you up on the intranet."

"It would seem you both have something to learn about stereotyping," Dr. Nertz said. "Please, Professor Joyner, sit and let us get started."

As Simon stepped around his desk to take his seat, Keith Joyner exclaimed: "Zebras!"

"I beg your pardon?" said Simon, glancing over to ascertain that Dr. Nertz, too, was surprised.

Keith Joyner pointed to the photograph of Louise and Elizabeth on Simon's desk. "My sons are also mixed. Their mother, Sandra, my wife, is white. They call themselves zebras. My sons that is."

"Ah," nodded Simon. "I believe my girls have used that term themselves."

Keith laughed and turned to Dr. Nertz. "Only in Berkeley, right?" A thought came to him and he promptly returned his attention to Simon. "Do your girls go to Berkeley High?" When Simon replied in the affirmative, Keith grinned. "The TNT twins! Thomas 'n Thomas! Those must be your girls. My oldest boy is in the same math and English classes with them. He has mentioned in passing how hellafine he thinks they are."

Simon raised an eyebrow.

"Hellafine as in pretty. In passing as in a few hundred times," Keith replied with another grin. "Did your girls ever mention my son?"

"What's his name?"

"Walt Joyner."

"I don't think so," replied Simon, honestly. The answer seemed to sadden Keith, as if it were a personal rebuke. Simon felt he should apologize for the oversight.

"No, don't be silly," said Keith, holding up a hand, "it's just that, well, Walt is at an awkward stage right now. He hasn't quite grown into his body. It's like he doesn't know where to put everything whether he's sitting down or standing up. All of his strong suits are not the attributes that draw attention from girls his age. Your daughters probably got dozens of boyfriends, right?"

"I think not," Simon replied, stiffly. Too stiffly, he realized and again felt compelled to apologize.

Keith again held up a hand. "No, please, I'm the one who should be apologizing, Professor Thomas . . ."

"Call me Simon, please."

"Thanks. And you call me Keith. What I was about to say is that I'm the one who should

be apologizing for going on about teenaged children and wasting the time of you and Dr. Nertz."

"Thank you," said Dr. Nertz.

"I never consider discussions about children to be a waste of time," said Simon with a pointed side glance to Nertz. "The more I try to understand my own the less I think I know them. Hearing the experiences of others reassures me that I am not alone in my bewilderment."

"Amen to that," replied Keith.

"Gentlemen, please," coaxed Dr. Nertz, conspicuously looking at his watch.

Somewhere in between their opening exchange about bald caucasian male professors and their exchange about zebra offspring, Simon knew that he and Keith were going to be friends. What he could not have guessed at the time was that they were going to become best friends.

Other than the opening exchange, Simon's first meeting with Keith turned out to be an intense educational course on the human brain and the Seychelles-Joyner Fear-Response Theory. It was important, Dr. Nertz said, for Simon to understand Keith's research in order for him to provide the informed consent that the University's Human Use Committee would require before allowing any experimental attempts at treatment.

That Simon required treatment had been made abundantly clear by Dr. Nertz before Keith's arrival. He'd explained that, if left untreated, post traumatic stress disorder leads to progressively deteriorating cognitive distortions, a cycle of repeated victimization, and, ultimately, permanent brain damage. The pace of decline would vary, but eventual disintegration was almost always inevitable. From the results of clinical and epidemiological studies, the American Psychiatric Association had concluded that PTSD, more than any other mental disorder, requires a uniquely identifiable causative agent before an effective treatment can begin. In English, this meant that the essential first step in treating PTSD is to uncover the entire memory of the traumatic event. Only then can the brain deal with recovery. Simon had immediately protested that there had been no such traumatic event for him personally, only a dream. In response, Dr. Nertz had told Simon about his search through the literature.

"I found twelve cases similar to your's in that all of the apparent stressor events arose from a recurring abreactive dream rather than an actual experience," Dr. Nertz had replied. The results, he informed Simon, had been grim. Five suicides and seven full-blown psychotic episodes that culminated in violent crimes and institutionalization. Simon had been so alarmed

by this information that Dr. Nertz had hastened to add that in all twelve cases, the recurring stressor dream did not appear until the victims were in their mid- to late twenties. Furthermore, in all cases, the complete mental breakdown occurred within three years of the dream's occurrence.

"That you have been able to control your problem stems perhaps from your dream having begun at a much younger age and your own strong will," Dr. Nertz had said.

To which Simon had replied, "Tell Jan I have a strong will. She thinks I'm a wus."

Dr. Nertz said that it was possible there had been many other cases in which PTSD had arisen from a stressor dream but the disorder had been misdiagnosed or else had deteriorated too quickly for the victim to seek help. Based on the twelve documented cases, however, deterioration for this form of PTSD appeared to be as inevitable as it was in the conventional variety.

"You, alone, have somehow managed to maintain an equilibrium through all these years," Dr. Nertz said, "and I think that is a credit to yourself and the support you've received from your family. However, it would seem that your condition has begun to deteriorate. I do not think we can expect this decline to arrest itself. I don't know how much time we have before your situation goes critical, but in my opinion that we would be unwise to do nothing more than wait."

Simon did not see what could possibly be done if treatment required his total recall of a memory that did not exist. To this concern, Dr. Nertz had cryptically responded that he believed the memory did exist. However, the only method by which it could be found and retrieved came under the category of "experimental" which meant Human Use Committee approval was required. Mention of the committee had immediately conjured images of human guinea pigs in Simon's mind and Dr. Nertz was quick to disabuse him of this notion.

"I am your doctor, Simon. I want to help you, as does Professor Joyner. We are responsible men of science not the descendants of Josef Mengele. The involvement of the Human Use Committee is a matter of university bureaucracy, nothing more."

Keith Joyner took the involvement of the Human Use Committee far more seriously than Dr. Nertz. He explained to Simon that the HUC had already reviewed the experimental work of his group and found it in full compliance with the regulations for the protection of human

subjects set by HEW and NIH.

"The protocols of our experiment have also been found to be in full compliance with UC's own Institutional Review Board whose standards, I should tell you, are even more rigorous than those of NIH," Keith said.

But Simon by then had heard enough about experimental reviews and approvals. He still did not even know what was wrong with him and he expressed this frustration to Keith.

"Well, based what Dr. Nertz has told me told me about your physical resemblance and emotional identification with your great-grandfather," Keith replied, "I'd say you could be the reincarnated spirit of Payton Adams, or you could be receiving messages from beyond the grave."

If Keith's joke was intended to put Simon at ease, it failed miserably. Recognizing his error, Keith was quick to recover.

"But I have a much more complicated alternative, one that carries therapeutic hope. Tell me, what do you know about the human brain?"

"I know that it is separate from the mind and that it bears a strong resemblance to the chewing gum stuck under the desks and chairs of my less brainy students," Simon answered. "I believe Patricia Churchland once called it three pounds of glorious meat. I guess I think of it as my personal laptop computer."

"First off, with all due respect to Monsieur Descartes, the brain and the mind are not inseparable," Keith said. "At the Brain Lab we say the mind is what the brain does. As for Professor Churchland, she also called it wonder tissue. I would not argue with either of her assessments. If it's okay with you and Eugene, I would like to take the two of you to my office. I have some images on my computer I'd like to show you, Simon."

On the way to the Brain Lab, Simon learned that Keith's boys had been named for Walt Frazier and Earl Monroe, the star guards for the New York Knicks when they won the NBA championship in 1970. Walt, the older by a year, was musical like his mother, Sandra, an accomplished pianist. Earl was an athlete, like Keith, who had played football at OSU. (Simon would later learn that Keith had been a ferocious cornerback for one of coach Dee Andros' best teams.) Both boys were gifted: Earl had been named a starting guard for Berkeley High's basketball team as a freshman, and Walt, only a sophomore, had won the role of Tevya in the

school's production of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

"I love both my sons, okay? But I cheer at Earl's events and applaud at Walt's," Keith had said. "They glean that as an inequity and both use it against me."

Simon knew exactly what he meant. "My daughters also have very different skills and each thinks the other is my favorite," he'd told Keith, further strengthening the bond between them.

Keith's office was on the eighth floor of the Brain Lab. It was about three times the size of Simon's office and featured only two walls connected by a huge curved floor-to-ceiling window that faced south and offered a fantastic view of the Campanile clock tower. Against the long wall opposite this window was a black leather sofa fronted by a glass and chrome coffee table. To the left of the sofa was Keith's desk, also fashioned from chrome and glass, and a high-backed armchair, also upholstered in black leather. The two guest chairs in front of the desk were upholstered in cloth, but they, too, were modern-looking, with their swivel-mounting and adjustment controls. The office had come with wall-to-wall carpeting, a tufted synthetic in a neutral beige that was plush to walk on despite its relatively short pile. But Keith had added a couple of thick-piled throw rugs with an African look that warmed the room with their bright colors and made walking across the floor almost like walking across someone's bed.

The short wall was dominated by a white board. It took up most of the space between the door and his desk area. Half of the board was covered with marker pen scrawls of messages, notations, formulas and odd sketches. Simon guessed that Keith would begin by going to the board and taking up a marker pen which is exactly what he did after first having Simon and Dr. Nertz take seats in the guest chairs. He drew quick sketches while he talked, as if the illustrations, despite their crudeness, helped him focus.

"The brain is made up of three basic parts, the stem, the cerebellum, and the cerebrum. My drawing isn't exactly to scale, of course, but you can see that the cerebrum is by far the largest part -- 85-percent of the 1.4 kilograms or so of weight."

Keith stepped back as if to admire his handiwork, then stepped forward and began pointing to each of the three parts he'd drawn. "The stem, which is the most primitive part of the brain, controls the autonomic nervous system. The cerebellum handles motor skills. The cerebrum is where complex thought takes place, where permanent memories are created and

stored. (Keith rapped sharply on his final sketch) From a research standpoint, this is my house."

Keith stepped back once again, beamed, then moved further down the board and resumed his sketching. This time he drew what looked like a fried egg. "You mentioned a moment ago about your brain being like a personal computer. Like most analogies, the one between the brain and a computer will crash and burn under close scrutiny, but we can use it as a starting point."

He pointed to his fried egg. "This is the brain's equivalent of a computer's Central Processing Unit -- the cell body of a neuron. Attached to it are dendrites (Keith drew what looked like plant roots flowing out of one end of his egg), which receive input signals, and an axon (from the other end of his egg, Keith drew a long thin line) which transmits an output signal to the cell bodies of other neurons. Dendrites tend to be short and thick. Axons can be incredibly long, say several centimeters or more if you were to stretch them out to their full length. You know that the neurons generate electrical impulses?"

"Yes," replied Simon. "And I know that one neuron will transmit an impulse to another neuron like an electrical current moving through wires from one chip to another."

Simon expected Keith to be impressed.

Keith was not and he shook his head vigorously.

"That's the common wisdom and one of the main areas where the analogy between computers and the brain collapses. Nature is much more imaginative than we humans and hence, in the long run, much more effective. We say that the axon of each neuron, which by the way, is usually bifurcated at the end into dozens of collateral branches (he forked the end of his axon to look like deer antlers), connects mostly but not exclusively with the dendrites of other neurons. The point of connection between two neurons is called a synapse. It is important to know, however, that the axon of one neuron never physically touches the dendrite of another. Separating the two is a tiny gap called the synaptic cleft. When an electrical nerve impulse reaches the end of an axon it does not cross the synaptic cleft. (Keith drew little knobs at the tips of his axon antlers). Instead, it triggers the release of chemicals inside the terminal buttons of the axon. These chemicals are called neurotransmitters and there are a number of different kinds, nobody knows for certain just how many, but each has its own specific purpose. There are, however, two basic varieties, those that excite and those that inhibit. For our purposes, we'll just talk about the excitatory variety.

"Molecules of a neurotransmitter cross the synaptic cleft and attach themselves to receptors in the dendrite. If the connection is sufficiently strong, then the receiving neuron's dendrite will collect enough neurotransmitter to exceed a critical threshold that will make its cell body fire off an electrical impulse of its own."

Keith quickly added to his sketch to show a swarm of dots crossing from the knobs of his first axon to the dendrites of a second cell and then the second cell shooting out an electrical signal (which he represented with a lightning bolt) through its axon.

"A binary decision!" Simon exclaimed.

This time Keith was impressed.

"Classic dilemma throughout history," explained Simon. "The all or nothing decision to a yes or no question. She loves me, she loves me not?"

Keith smiled. "Exactly. Computer folks call it a logic gate. A computer memory chip is simply an array of electronic logic gates that make binary -- yes or no -- responses."

"So the analogy of the human brain to a computer is correct."

Again Keith smiled. "To a certain extent, yes, that part of the computer analogy *is* correct. Neurons transmit data on the same basis of an all or nothing signal as the logic gates on computer chips. But, keep in mind, each logic gate on a chip is wired for only a few connections to other logic gates. Each neuron in the brain can have tens of thousands of connections to other neurons."

Simon blinked his surprise.

"What's more, there are approximately 100 billion neurons in the human brain."

Simon smiled. "So we've still got the edge over our machines?"

"Not in terms of processing speed, of course," said Keith. "Neurons, at top speed, can fire about 1,000 times per second which makes them about a million times slower than a computer chip. And unlike the precise wiring of a computer's circuitry, the synaptic connections of neurons are so full of R and R -- redundancy and randomness -- it's like they were wired by a drunk. But, as I said before, a neuron is not a memory chip. It is more the equivalent of a CPU, which means we are talking about 100 billion individual computers wired together through trillions upon trillions of connections so that they operate as one incredibly vast thinking

machine. It has been said that there are more synaptic connections in one human brain than there are atoms in the known universe. I don't know whether that figure is correct or not but I do know that in terms of brute storage, the human brain far outstrips the combined memory storage capacity of every supercomputer on earth."

"Good lord," said Simon, again blinking in surprise. "In the future, I shall treat my headaches with more reverence."

"This is fascinating for Simon, I am sure" interrupted Dr. Nertz, "but I think he would be better served if you explained what your work has to do with his problem and how it might help him."

"Understood," said Keith, taking no offense at what Simon thought was rudeness on the part of Dr. Nertz. He returned to his marker board and erased everything he had drawn. "Eugene has discussed with me your post traumatic stress disorder symptoms. As he, I'm sure, has told you, the causative agent of PTSD is long-term memory, specifically explicit memory, which is memory of facts or events, as opposed to implicit memory, which is instinctive knowledge. The primary mission of my group at the Brain Lab is to identify and locate long-term explicit human memory maps, which is how I became involved with the late Jerry Seychelles."

As Keith talked, he drew a huge cerebellum. To the left and below this sketch, he added a crudely rendered pair of eyeballs. He then drew a cluster of dots inside the far right end of his cerebellum and began drawing lines to connect them.

"In the neurosciences, a map is a network of synaptically connected neurons -- and here we are talking about thousands and thousands of neurons per map -- that are dedicated to a specific task. For example, Simon, the mere act of you watching me right now calls into play approximately 30 different maps in your brain that are associated with the process of vision. One map computes and identifies my color, another my shape, several combine to measure my size and texture, another detects any movement I make, and so on. Most of these visual maps are located in the rear of the cerebrum, an area called the visual cortex."

Keith moved toward the center of his cerebrum and sketched what looked like the silhouette of a seahorse. He added some dots, put down his first marker pen, which had black ink, and picked up a second that had red ink. He drew red lines from the visual cortex dots to the

seahorse. "But some visual maps connect to the hippocampus which then connects them to the cerebral cortex, the gray matter that forms the surface of the cerebrum (he drew a red line from the seahorse to the upper edge of the cerebrum). This is where the brain's processing takes place, the actual *thinking*, if you will. In this case, it is where images received from the visual cortex are matched to the memory maps that enable you to recognize me."

Keith set his marker down and faced Simon and Dr. Nertz. "Each and every time your eyes record an image, all of the millions of neurons in the networks of visual and associated memory maps fire in a prescribed sequence. That's how neuronal maps work. And each time those neurons fire, their synaptic connections become strengthened. That's how memory works. Am I going too fast, here, Simon?"

"No," answered Simon with annoyance. "And tomorrow, we can meet in my office and discuss what you know about the Wagner Act."

"*Touche!*" said Keith with good humor. "Sorry. What happens, you know, is we get so engrossed in our own fields of expertise and those fields are becoming so damn specialized that we end up communicating only with other members of our profession."

"I understand," replied Simon, no longer annoyed. "It is why jargon develops and why so many of us end up speaking an arcane shorthand rather than our native tongue. Please continue, my maps are open and taking calls, ready to receive input."

Keith smiled. "That's exactly how it works. While you are awake, your brain is receiving a non-stop flow of input data from external stimuli such as sight, sound, smell, touch. This input data, which we collectively call experience, is processed, combined where appropriate and encoded into clusters of temporary maps, each representing a single data event, or, if you will, an explicit memory. These temporary maps are stored in the frontal lobes as short-term or working memory. After a period of time, ranging from less than a second to as much as 30 minutes, the neurons that make up these temporary maps are reconnected in a different pattern to represent a new memory, much like writing a new file over an existing file in a computer's memory."

"Obviously the brain must have a more permanent storage system for memories," Simon observed. "Otherwise, we'd all act like victims of Alzheimer's disease."

"Exactly. Permanent storage is called long-term memory and it is located throughout the white matter of the cerebrum, the neocortex. What happens is that a copy of a short-term memory map is delivered to the hippocampus with the help of adrenergics, the chemicals that dominate the brain when a person is awake and alert. The hippocampus sorts through the data in the short-term map, consolidates it into a long-term map and then routes it up to one or more of the lobes that make up the neocortex. This generally involves the creation of new synapses between neurons. Remember what I said about a map's synapses being strengthened each time its connected neurons fire? When the cerebral cortex recalls a memory from long-term storage in the neocortex, the neurons in the memory's map fire in their assigned sequence to recreate the encoded event. This act strengthens the memory's synaptic connections so that it's easier for the cerebral cortex to recall the map another time. Each time a memory is recalled, the map's neural data is reassembled into an image that is presented to the cerebral cortex for interpretation. That's why you can have a different reaction or a different perspective about a certain memory each time you recall it."

"Like re-reading a favorite book or watching a certain movie over and over again?" Simon asked. Jan had been teasing him for years about his fondness for a select list of books and films of which he never seemed to tire.

"Yes," interjected Dr. Nertz. "Recalling a memory is like like rewinding the tape on your VCR and replaying a scene. Sometimes you react to the memory in an entirely different way and sometimes you catch something you missed the first time. Now, Professor Joyner, please tell Simon how you find memory maps."

With a nod, Keith wrote the letters G E M on his board, stacking them vertically. He then wrote:

With a nod, Keith wrote the letters G E M on his board, stacking them vertically. He then wrote:

Gigaflopped Electromagnetic Microtubulography

"GEM is a combination of scanning laser photostimulation, infrared spectroscopy and patch clamp recording, linked to a Cray supercomputer," Keith said. He looked at the board and shook his head. "Actually, when we began to build the scanning apparatus, the Cray could do about 30 billion floating-point operations per second. By the time we finished with all the

testing, we'd hooked the scanners to a Cray that could do better than 50 terraflops, that's 50 trillion calculations per second. But we liked the name GEM so we kept it."

Keith shrugged his shoulders then turned to Simon and beamed expectantly. Simon understood that he was supposed to be terribly impressed. He gave a head shake of acknowledgement and Keith continued. "With GEM, not only can we map all of the neurons connected to form a single memory, we can also determine when the memory was created. It was with GEM that we discovered the memory hum."

"What's the memory hum?" asked Simon.

Dr. Nertz spoke up. His tone was brusque and hurried. "Professor Joyner and his colleagues used GEM to ascertain that the vibrational frequency of an active memory is 40 Hertz. Subsequently they discovered that all stored explicit memories can be made to vibrate at a constant two cycles per second. They dubbed this frequency the memory hum. It has enabled them to determine the approximate date that an explicit memory was formed."

Simon looked confused.

Dr. Nertz said to Keith, "I think it's time you show Simon some of the GEM images you showed me."

Keith obligingly sat down in front of his computer and a very large monitor. Linking to a password-protected Brain Lab site on the campus intranet, he called up an image of a brain inside the skull of what looked to Simon to be an ape. There was a large smear of light spread across the upper region of this brain, like a cirrus cloud. Faint threads of light formed an almost translucent veil that connected the large smear with a much smaller smear of light near the brain's lower rim. What drew the most attention from Simon, however, was a dash of light as distinct as the two smears, located not far from the smaller smear. It was the isolation of that dash that grabbed Simon's attention. It was just a tiny island of light surrounded by a chalky sea of gray, an island off a continental mainland, like Britain off the coast of Europe or Japan off the body of Asia.

"This is a composite of several hundred GEM memory map images taken of Morris, our prize bonobo," Keith said.

"Your prize what?" Simon asked.

"A pygmy chimp. Almost identical to humans in terms of brain anatomy and known for

the strength of genetic traits that run in each family."

Simon leaned in to more closely inspect the image. He pointed to the dash of light and asked, "What is this and why is it not connected to the others?"

"It's a memory map and I will get back to it shortly," said Keith. He pointed to the larger smear of light in the upper region of the brain. "First, you need to know that this is the neocortex." He next pointed to the smaller smear in the lower portion of the brain. "This is the hippocampus which is in an area of the cerebrum known as the limbic system. If you picture the brain as a baseball with the cerebral cortex as the rawhide cover and the brain stem as the cork in the center, then the neocortex would be the yarn beneath the cover and the limbic system would be the rubber around the cork.

"Back in the days when scientists believed that all dinosaurs were cold-blooded, the brain stem was sometimes referred to as our reptilian brain, because it controls the functions that are vital to life like breathing, eating, sleeping, and staying alert. The limbic system was called our animal brain because it is where implicit memories are stored, where our primal emotions originate." Keith grinned and lightly rapped on the computer screen. "Anger. Lust. Desire. Fear. All live in the amygdala, right here in the limbic system. This is their house."

"You sound like a proud father," Simon said.

"Must be my cingulate gyrus," Keith responded. "Regulates social behavior, like parental care. It, too, is part of the limbic system. So is loyalty and faithfulness. All the instinctive behaviors."

"What about sex and violence?"

Keith nodded enthusiastically. "You bet. Sex and violence are primal drives, so is greed. They're tied to reproduction and derived from all the emotions."

"Even fear?" asked Simon, skeptical.

"Of course. Fear underlies everything. It's the big one."

Simon interrupted. "If short-term memory serves me well, not long ago Dr. Nertz told me that fear was the strongest emotion. Now you call it the big one and say it underlies everything. I don't understand. What does being afraid have to do with sex and violence or greed?"

"When I say fear, I'm not talking about the feeling of being frightened or scared. I'm

talking about a primal emotion. In the world of cognitive neurosciences, we define fear as the detection of danger. Fear is first among the primal emotions for it launches a response to danger. Fear-response is the most powerful of all instinctive behaviors because the beast within you depends upon it."

Simon searched Keith's face for humor and found none. "What do you mean by the beast within me?"

"Self-preservation," Keith replied. "The beast within you is your most basic instinct. For better or worse, it is the most powerful force within the limbic system. In cognitive neuroscience, the terms limbic system and beast are sometimes used interchangeably because every activity in the limbic system is ultimately aimed at self-preservation. In the case of fear-response, if the beast senses sufficient danger, it can seize control of the psyche, your mind, and command the soma, your body, to do whatever is necessary. The stronger your beast the broader the interpretation of whatever is necessary."

A sudden sneeze momentarily interrupted Keith. He excused himself, cleared his sinuses into a handkerchief and continued.

"Speaking of the nose, you'll also sometimes hear neuroscientists jokingly refer to the limbic system as your smell brain because the olfactory maps, unlike the visual, tactile and other sensory maps, are directly wired to it. Again, it's all a part of that beast within you. There is ample evidence to support that animals really can smell danger. We're learning now that the same holds true for humans only to a lesser degree. Human or animal, makes no difference, when great danger is sensed, the beast takes charge. The limbic system and its beastly fixation on self-preservation rules."

Simon considered Keith's words before speaking. "I would think self-preservation to be a biologically good thing. Survival of the fittest, evolution of the species and all that Darwinian stuff. Why then do you say the beast rules the limbic system for better or worse?"

"I say for better or worse because, as we all know, we may be creatures governed by thought, but there are moments when we act off emotions. Fear-response is the most powerful, but also the most short-lived. The effects of fear-response linger on, however, reverberating throughout our neocortex like the aftershock of an explosion. This lingering influence is usually for the better when the beast influences us to be cautious. Young children instinctively know not

to put their hands in fire or to stay back from high ledges despite the curiosity of their neocortex. Has Dr. Nertz told you about Darwin's experiment with the snake?"

Simon nodded.

"That was Darwin's beast jumping back out of harm's way. Had Darwin stopped to think about what he was doing and had there been no glass cage, he would have been killed. There have been many documented and many more anecdotal examples of people who found themselves jumping back out of harm's way, so to speak, even before the cognitive parts of their brain -- the neocortex and the cerebral cortex -- were aware of a danger. Surely there have been times when you were ... say... driving and came to an intersection just as your light turned green. Instead of continuing on through at normal speed maybe you slowed for just an instant only to suddenly see another car running the light. Without that hesitancy, you might have been killed. Where did that hesitancy come from? What made you slow down? That was your beast operating for the better. Likewise, when you swerve to avoid hitting someone. The action is automatic, without conscious thought. That, too, is your beast detecting and responding to a danger. All for the better."

"What about those in Darwin's experiments who attacked the snake?" Simon asked. "Is that the beast acting for the worse?"

Keith was dismissive. "That is certainly a case of the beast acting at its very worst. However, I'm sure Eugene told you those individuals are rare. A fearless beast, one whose anger, lust, and desire is unfettered, is an evolutionary dead-end. Terrifically successful in the short-run, maybe, but unlikely to survive for very long."

"Jerome Seychelles apparently did not share your disinterest in such a beast," Simon commented.

Keith shook his head and spoke with sad disapproval. "Jerry was a valued colleague and mentor to me but in his search for clues to fear-response disorders, he put too much emphasis on freaks. Darwin's snake would have struck at a bear, a wolf, or even a much bigger snake. If they weren't such reclusive creatures, puff adders would not have lasted long in the evolutionary food chain of life. No, Jerry Seychelles had a good idea but he should have been looking at the other end of the spectrum. Anxiety is the ticket. There's where you find far more significant examples of the beast operating for worse."

The tone of Keith's voice immediately shifted. Clearly, he was now escorting Simon into territory that had commandeered his own interest. "Severe mental illness directly affects some five million American adults. Millions more -- the families and friends of these victims -- are affected indirectly. One in ten Americans will experience some disability from a mental illness this year. The annual cost to our economy, if you include treatments, social services and disability payments is about \$150 billion."

Simon knew he was supposed to be impressed and was. "That's a considerable expenditure."

Keith almost beamed. "It sure as hell is. But try this one on for size. About half the mental problems in the U.S. are emotional disorders related to fear-response. Most of these are anxiety disorders."

"Like PTSD," interjected Dr. Nertz.

Simon leaned forward in response, feeling a sudden spasm of nervousness uncoil. His own fear-response?

Keith talked on as if he'd not heard Nertz speak. He was like a man possessed and the words came as a downpour with no let-up for explanation or questions.

"Historically, mental disorders have been distinguished from other medical illnesses because they were believed to affect only the psyche, specifically the neocortex, rather than the soma. Also, aside from dementias such as Alzheimer's disease, we've identified no genetic markers to define mental disorders. Yet we are discovering that mental disorders do affect the soma through neurochemical alterations, and some mental disorders do run in families, particularly those linked to fear-response. The manifestation of many of these disorders surface from generation to generation in no discernible pattern but there must be some form of heredity at work. So where do we stand? The emerging paradigm is that the etiology of mental disorders is similar to the new models of cancer. That is, genetic factors appear to establish a predisposed vulnerability but additional factors also seem to be needed to trigger a full-blown illness. If you can control or eliminate the additional factors, you've got a real shot at controlling or eliminating the illness.

"In the case of cancer, the additional factors that have already been identified include ultraviolet radiation and carcinogenic chemicals, such as those produced in the combustion of

tobacco. Wear sun-screen and don't smoke and you're unlikely to develop melanoma or lung cancer. My goal is to do the same thing for mental disorders linked to fear-response. What do I need? For openers, I need something external to the neocortex but still within the brain because the brain is so good at filtering out foreign agents from the blood stream. That puts me in the limbic system where implicit memories and the primal emotions reside. Implicit memories are enduring but their impact on the neocortex is too weak. Primal emotions are powerful enough to jolt the neocortex but the effects aren't lasting -- people flinch from the striking snake, they don't run and hide. What I need is so obvious I don't know why no one saw it sooner."

Simon stared expectantly. Keith returned his stare, the teacher waiting for an answer. When none was forthcoming, he supplied it himself.

"Explicit memory."

There was a short silence, a precious, all-embracing stillness like the moments after sex early in one's love life.

Dr. Nertz shattered it. "Like Ernest Hilgard once said, sometimes psychological laws are discovered and sometimes they're enforced."

Simon gave his therapist a puzzled look.

In response, Dr. Nertz cleared his throat and said, "The Seychelles-Joyner Fear-Response Theory holds that explicit memories which can give rise to anxiety and aggression disorders reside in the limbic system."

Keith broke in, excitedly rapping the knuckle of his index finger on the glass of the computer monitor. Pointing directly to the isolated dash of light in the brain of Morris the bonobo that had first caught Simon's eye, he said, "Even though I was looking for it, the first time I found this cluster of explicit memory maps in the limbic system I thought it might be a glitch in the program. It was so damn clear, you know, just too good to be true. Then we found similar clusters, though much fainter, in the composite GEM images taken of our other bonobos and I knew I'd nailed the sucker."

Again there was an extended pause, one in which Simon understood it was his turn to ask an intelligent question. Again none was forthcoming. Simon had been nodding his head as if he fully understood all that Keith had been saying. In truth, he wasn't certain he understood any of it. He again looked to his therapist for help.

"Show him the human images," Dr. Nertz said.

"Good idea," said Keith. He clicked his computer mouse and linked to another brain image, one inside a human skull. There were the same patterns of light in approximately the same regions of the brain, but the two smears of light were considerably brighter and the isolated dash far more faint.

"This good-looking hunk of wonder meat is my brain," said Keith. "It's a composite of only a dozen GEM images but it's been computationally adjusted for comparisons to the bonobos. Note how much bigger and more active my neocortex is than that of Morris? It's the large size of the neocortex that makes us humans unique. Interestingly enough, the relative mass of the limbic system is fairly uniform amongst all mammals, including humans. When neuroscientists say that human beings are capable of rising above their basic instincts, we mean that literally."

Dr. Nertz interrupted Keith again, sounding exasperated, like the parent who has told his child to go to bed for the upteenth time. "The maps, Professor Joyner, tell him about the memory maps."

Keith's brown skin darkened in a blush. With a sheepish nod, he pointed to the faint isolated dash of light. "As you can see, there are memory maps in my limbic system too. I could show you similar images from other staff members, but take my word for it, you'd just be seeing more of the same. The only difference is map intensity and, in most cases, the light scale renders the differences too faint to be distinguishable.

"Remember my analogy of the brain to a baseball? Well, just as to make a baseball, you start with the cork, then add the rubber, the yarn and finally the cover, so the brain grows in layers outward from the stem. The chemical instructions for building a brain are contained within a person's DNA. When an embryo starts to develop, mass quantities of general-purpose cells are produced and directed to certain areas in the body by the instructions encoded in the genes. Somewhere between two to eight weeks after conception, these embryonic cells begin to differentiate, take on distinct characteristics that make them specific types of cells. Some become blood cells, some become skin cells, muscle cells, and so on, including, of course, neurons. At about the eighth week, electrical activity switches on in the cells that have become neurons and the embryo becomes a fetus."

Simon interrupted. "Is that the official line of demarcation between embryo and fetus?"

"It is for neuroscientists," asserted Keith, "and should be for all other biologists. Prior to electrical activation, you can't eyeball an embryo and know whether it is going to be a human, a chimp, a dog, or a cat."

"Once again it's our brain that makes us humans special," remarked Dr. Nertz.

"Yes," said Keith. "And electrical activation is also the first step in making the brain of each and every one of us unique. See, before electrical activity begins, even a cell that is to become a neuron can only influence or be influenced by adjoining cells or by a chemical gradient that passes over it. This means that during this time the formation of axons and dendrites are controlled exclusively by genetics. We call it the hardwired stage. Once electrical activity begins, we say the brain is in its plasticity stage. At this time, a neuron can, through the formation of new synaptic connections, influence other neurons over great distances. Development of the brain from then on is no longer dictated by the genes, but becomes an interaction between genetics and experience, both external and internal."

Keith stopped talking. Simon looked up from the screen and saw that Keith was waiting expectantly. A glance over at Dr. Nertz showed the same. Obviously, Simon was still missing the point.

"I'm not quite following you," he confessed. "What does this have to do with your finding explicit memory maps in the limbic system?"

Keith looked genuinely surprised. "Explicit memory maps are plastic, they belong in the neocortex, that's where the hippocampus sends them. Not in the limbic system. When we dated the formation of these explicit limbic memory maps, we confirmed it." Keith flashed a big smile and waited.

Simon felt himself blushing. "I still don't get it."

"These explicit memory maps were hardwired," said Dr. Nertz. "They were formed prior to the onset of electrical activity," Keith said. "These memories were genetically driven."

"He still does not understand," said Dr. Nertz.

"They were inherited, Simon," Keith replied. "These memories were inherited."

CHAPTER SEVEN

"Let the record show that this conversation is being recorded. You have in front of you a consent form. Do you understand what signing this form means?"

"Yes. I am agreeing to participate in a biomedical procedure that is classified as safe but experimental."

"Do you understand the procedure?"

"Yes. The GEM device will be attached to my skull, I will be enclosed inside the MNEME. I will then be injected with Quip and the results will be monitored through the GEM device."

"Explain what the MNEME is."

"The Modulated Natal Emulation and Memory Enhancer. It is a sensory deprivation apparatus designed to isolate an individual from visual, auditory, tactile and all other external patterned stimulation."

"Excellent. Now tell me what is Quip."

"Quip is a synthesized form of neuroquipazine, a neurotransmitter exclusive to explicit memory maps in the limbic system."

"You've been spending too much time with Professor Joyner. In English, what does Quip do?"

"A neurotransmitter is a molecule that carries a signal from one brain cell to another. The greater the quantity of neurotransmitter molecules, the stronger the signal. Neuroquipazine carries the signals of brain cells in the limbic system that are connected together to form memories of past events. Quip was designed to do exactly the same."

"Why do you want to be treated with Quip?"

"After nearly eight months of testing and talking and talking and testing, I am ready to be treated with motor oil if we could just please get on with it."

"I understand your frustrations but the scientific process is not swift, especially when human subjects are concerned.

Please continue."

"I want to know who killed my great-grandfather."

"That will not play well with the Human Use Committee. Should I stop the tape or are you going to cooperate?"

"I have been diagnosed by my therapist, Dr. Eugene Nertz, to be suffering from a rare form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The memory that is the cause of my post-traumatic stress is originating from my limbic system rather than from the neocortex

where memories of past events are usually stored. There are therapies that have proven effective at treating post-traumatic stress but these therapies are applicable only to the neocortex.

Furthermore, a pre-condition for success is that the patient must recall the complete set of memory maps associated with the stressor event. In my case, only a portion of the stressor memory maps reaches my neocortex."

"And how does this memory come to you?"

"In the form of a recurring dream in which I relive the most traumatic moments of the event. This partial recall not only precludes hope for successful treatment, it also greatly adds to the stress. Each time I have the dream, the foundation of my mental health is further weakened.

If this steady pattern of erosion continues, one day the foundation will collapse."

"Excellent. How can Quip help you?"

"The reason my neocortex receives only a portion of the stressor memory maps from my limbic system is an inadequate production of neuroquipazine. The purpose of Quip would be to enable the complete set of maps related to this traumatic memory to be received. It is like turning up the volume of a radio so that the sound can be heard even from across a large room."

"And what would this accomplish?"

"Once these memory maps from my limbic system have been received and properly processed and stored in the neocortex, my brain can then employ its own cognitive resources to deal with them. That alone may be enough to cure my problem, but if it is not, my therapist will certainly be positioned to help me. My prospects for a successful treatment should be excellent."

"What was the basis for suspecting that the portion of the stressor memory you have been reliving is coming from your limbic system rather than your neocortex?"

"The traumatic event I relive in my dream is not a personal experience."

"Explain that please."

"Explicit memory maps in the neocortex are plastic-wired, meaning they were created and are continually being altered by the interaction of accumulated knowledge and new experiences.

Explicit memory maps in the limbic system are hardwired, meaning they were created by the messages in my genes. That is why, to distinguish the two forms of explicit memory maps, Professor Joyner has labeled maps in the limbic system as genetic memory."

"You are again starting to sound like Professor Joyner. What does this mean in English?"

"It means that the memory that comes to me in my recurring dream is not my own. It is a memory that I have inherited from one of my ancestors, almost certainly from my great-grandfather Payton Adams."

"Is it not more likely that your recurring dream is merely a fantasy concocted in your neocortex rather than a memory from your limbic system?"

"No, it is not."

"How do you know this?"

"By the GEM images recorded of my brain while I was in the MNEME."

* * *

The Modulated Natal Emulation and Memory Enhancer was housed in the basement of the Brain Lab in a large white room that was wall-to-wall electronics and buzzed with the hum of conditioned air and fluorescent lighting. Upon seeing the MNEME for the first time, Simon thought it looked like a large glass coffin with a screw-in plate at the head. The tube sat atop a gurney that was swivel-mounted and, like the room around it, packed with electronic equipment. According to Keith, the tube was not made of glass but of a transparent ceramic whose inner surface was coated with a polarized thin film that allowed light to pass through but not escape. The optical effect was similar to that of a one-way mirror: those on the outside could see into the MNEME, but the subject inside the MNEME could not see out.

The interior of the tube was filled with a clear, jelly-like substance that Keith called an amorphous aerogel. Because the aerogel was 95-percent air in composition, Keith said it imparted virtually no tactile sensations upon the skin.

"You can't see it and you can't feel it so you forget it's there."

He went on to explain that since the aerogel's amorphous physical state enabled it to conform to the shape of any subject placed inside, the overall effect was to create the sensation of floating in a liquid medium. Furthermore, the aerogel was also the world's best insulator, which meant that once warmed to a desired temperature, it maintained that temperature for hours with no change even if the tube were left open.

"All the physical sensations of warm water but a hell of a lot easier to sterilize and maintain," Keith had boasted. "Plus, we can wire our sensors into the aerogel at the bottom of tube and monitor your physiology without having to turn your body into a pin cushion."

For Simon, Keith said the aerogel would be warmed to about 37 degrees Celsius, the temperature of the amniotic fluids surrounding an in-utero human fetus.

"The objective is to fine-tune the ratio of adrenergic to cholinergic chemical systems in your brain in order to attain what we call the alpha prime state. Think of it as the twilight zone between dreams and awareness."

Simon had felt more than a little apprehensive the first time he'd walked around the MNEME. From time to time he would pause to tap on the tube's exterior surface or press his face up close to peer inside at its nearly invisible aerogel stuffing. From that vantage point, he could just barely make out the seam that separated the top from the bottom sections of the tube. The hinges connecting the two sections were made of the same ceramic material as the tube and were connected by wires and cables to the electronics underneath the gurney.

While Simon inspected the MNEME, Keith discussed the awake-sleep-dream cycle in the brain and explained how it tied into the Quip experiment. The cycle is controlled by two types of neurons located in the brain stem near the neurons that control eye muscles, he'd said, which is why drowsiness causes the eyelids to close while the wide-eyed look is associated with alertness.

"When you are awake, your brain is dominated by adrenergic chemicals which are released at a constant rate, like a metronome, for several hours each day, depending upon individual physiological variables. The adrenergic chemical system enhances your attention span, primes your motor activity, and coordinates the interactions between your long-term and short-term memory. They are the chemicals that enable you to be self-aware. What is self-awareness you ask?"

From the other side of the MNEME and looking over the top, Simon had flickered with annoyance. "I'm aware of self-awareness," he'd said, sarcastically.

"Ease up, my man, I'm talking from a neurological point of view, of course," Keith had responded, flashing a grin. By then, he knew Simon well enough to know that "annoyed" was about as mad as Simon ever got. "Awake, your brain is fed a steady diet of external data. Photon signals, phonon signals, chemical and electronic signals -- otherwise known as sight, sound, smell and touch. All these incoming signals are processed in your neural networks to form short-term maps that represent your immediate environment and the real-time transpiration of events. These short-term representation maps are then coordinated with long-term explicit memory, cognition and emotional behavior maps in the neocortex through a mechanism called binding which no one really understands. What matters for our purposes is the result -- self-awareness."

"No wonder I get so tired at the end of the day," Simon had remarked, as he turned his attention back to the MNEME. "Apparently my brain can use the rest."

"Yeah, well, your brain gets no rest during sleep," Keith had continued. "As you become drowsy and drift into the first stage of sleep, which is called non-rapid eye movement or NREM, the production of adrenergics declines while the production of the cholinergic chemicals increases. Cholinergics decouple the neural networks responsible for coordinating the prime components of self-awareness. By the time you move into rapid eye movement or REM sleep, the adrenergic neurons are no longer firing. Your brain is controlled by the cholinergics and self-awareness disappears altogether. Cholinergics are released in erratic short-lived pulses, say maybe several hundred a second for several seconds at a time. They're active during waking hours but their signals are too weak to be heard above all the noise from the external and adrenergic signals. Once the adrenergic system shuts down, the cholinergics start generating powerfully intense signals called PGO waves that shoot into the cerebral cortex to the same areas where signal processing during the awake state takes place. This is why dreams have that surreal quality, you know, where persons and places that you're familiar with appear at random or completely out of context. You see, your neural networks are always processing signals whether you're awake or asleep. The difference is that during REM sleep, all the signals being received are internal, they all come from within the brain itself."

Simon had finally dropped all pretense of continuing to examine the MNEME and had returned his full attention to Keith who was off and running full tilt with his lecture.

"PGO waves also bombard the brain's emotional circuits and the motor cortex. That's why so many dreams involve feelings, especially anxiety or fear, or sexual arousal. It is also why in those same dreams, you are often running, fighting, flying, or doing the nasty thing."

Simon had raised an eyebrow.

"Fucking," was Keith's bemused response. "Fortunately, at the same time the PGO waves are hitting the motor cortex, the cholinergics are also sending out a signal to the spinal cord that paralyzes all of the muscles in the body except for the eyes. In your mind, you may run all night long but your body never goes anywhere."

"What about people who walk in their sleep?" Simon had asked.

"Strictly a phenomenon of NREM sleep. It occurs before the cholinergics paralyze the muscles. Before you dream. Once REM sleep commences, your body does little more than twitch. Then come the PGO waves and you're immobilized in dreamland. An interesting note

about PGO waves, because they are produced in such intense rapid-fire bursts, the intensity of whatever you are experiencing in a dream is also greatly enhanced. Think about the porno dreams you've had. The arousal was pretty incredible was it not? Felt just like the first time, I'll bet."

"So where does this alpha prime state you mentioned fit in?" Simon had asked, pointedly ignoring Keith's comments about sex dreams, though acknowledging to himself the truth in what he'd said. "How is that different from NREM sleep?"

"You know how dreams are often fragmentary, leaping from one narrative to another and back? It's because of the decoupling by cholinergics of the cognition maps in the neocortex from the coordinating networks in the cerebral cortex that are responsible for your attention span. Furthermore, many people have difficulty recalling the details of their dreams upon waking because of a similar decoupling of memory coordination. By monitoring a subject through the MNEME and watching for the first movement of the eyelids, we can detect the onset of REM sleep. At that point, we stimulate the production of adrenergics. This not only dilutes the cholinergic balance and halts the production of PGO waves, it also ensures that there will be enough cognition coordination to process the dominant signals and enough memory coordination to ensure recall when the subject wakes. The subject should experience the processing of internal signals with all the temporal coherence of the awake state. Not unlike daydreaming, actually, except that instead of the subject choosing the internal signals to be processed from his or her own collection of explicit memory maps, my colleagues and I make the choice. And we, of course, choose to select signals released by the genetic memory maps in the limbic system."

"How can you and your colleagues make that choice?" Simon had wanted to know.
"How can you be so sure what the dominant signals will be?"

"That's where Quip comes in. As a neurotransmitter, it is a chemical cousin to serotonin in molecular structure but with a double-bonded hydrogen tail that makes it far less reactive. Quip will only bind to the receptors of one specific type of neuron, the type located exclusively in the limbic system where we found the genetic memory maps. The greater the presence of Quip, the greater the firing of the neurons connecting those maps and the stronger the signals produced for processing. With no competing noise from external stimuli and all other internal signals dampened, the dominant signal available for processing will be that which originates

from the limbic system."

Simon would never forget what Keith had said to him next. The words had been processed by the neural networks in the neocortex of his brain and stored as an explicit memory map that would never be overwritten nor erased for lack of use.

"Computer analysis of the GEM image shows that with an injection of Quip at the start of alpha prime sleep, we have amplified the vibrational frequency of limbic system memory map signals to 40 Hertz."

Simon felt as if his throat had been filled with sand and he had to grope for his voice. "Did you not once tell me that is the frequency of an active memory?"

Keith had smiled and nodded his head. "Uh-huh. The frequency of an active memory. The frequency of awareness."

Since that conversation, Simon had seen GEM images of Morris and the other bonobos taken after they'd been administered Quip. Even Simon's untrained eye could clearly see that the isolated island of light that Keith and his colleagues believed were the neural networks of inherited explicit memories had substantially brightened while the smears of light that represented active memories had been dulled as if under the control of a dimmer switch set on low.

Simon had shown up for his inaugural voyage into the MNEME in a state of highest anxiety. Though he struggled to maintain an outward cool, inside, he felt as if someone were setting off strings of firecrackers in his liver. His heart pounded. He kept thinking he had to pee and his mouth was as gummy as stamp glue. Being pointed to a small dressing room by a female nurse half his age and told to take off his clothes and put on a pair of plastic booties and a piece of cloth that looked like an adult diaper did little to calm him. That same young nurse was waiting for him when he emerged from the dressing room to escort him to the MNEME. Keith was there with a dozen men and women gathered around him, all so young Simon presumed they were grad students or post-docs, the worker bees of any university research hive. Introductions were made, but Simon, who by that time felt as if there was a furnace blazing inside his stomach, heard nothing.

"At least you didn't have to shave your head," Keith cheerfully told him, sensing Simon's discomfort.

"I'm surprised," Simon responded, "since you've seemed to have gone out of your way to do everything else to embarrass me."

"You're too sensitive, my man," Keith said, throwing an arm around Simon's shoulder and leading him toward the MNEME. "Especially seeing how buffed you are. You ought to dress like this more often. Show off those finely chiseled biceps of yours. And for the record, we only do what is necessary. It is necessary for you to not be distracted by clothing. It is necessary for you and the aerogel to be protected from any -- how shall I put this delicately? -- accidental voiding. It is not necessary to shave your head for the GEM images. Everything is done for a reason. That's the beauty of science."

Keith's cheerfulness succeeded in calming Simon a bit, but the fire in his stomach flared up instantly when Keith pressed a button on the instrumentation panel below the gurney and caused the top half of the MNEME to swing open with a soft pneumatic sneeze. Keith flashed Simon a quick grin and a wink of reassurance, then invited him to climb inside.

Simon expected that sliding into the amorphous aerogel would be like slipping into a mud bath, so he was much surprised to discover that it was more like lying down upon a water bed. The aerogel swelled up to embrace him like a possessive lover and he could see that his body was suspended in a substance that had all the consistency of jelly. But he felt nothing. There was no discernible texture or weight to the aerogel. He saw that he could create a wave across the aerogel's surface when he moved an arm or leg, but it was not like a wave created in a bathtub or pool. It was instead a wave that rolled at the slow-motion speed of thick syrup. The resistance he felt when he moved an arm or a leg, however, was not the resistance of moving through either syrup or water. Rather, it was like the resistance of moving through the air on a hot and humid day.

Simon was allowed a few minutes to acclimate himself to floating on the aerogel while Keith and the students with him went about making their final preparations. With the top half of the MNEME open, Simon felt like he was lying inside a boat. Looking off port side he saw a dark-haired woman, closer to his age than that of the students. She was holding something that looked like a hairnet with a dense thicket of fibers sprouting out of its backside like the quills of a porcupine. When he heard the dark-haired woman refer to what she was holding as the GEM head-gear, he studied it more carefully and realized that the fibers sprouting from the backside of

the net were actually about three meters long. They all fed into a single green cable that was about the thickness of a dime. The green cable ran across the floor, rose up to the tabletop of a huge metal bench and fed into a black rectangular box. The black box was about a half-meter high and two meters long. Wires dropped from behind it like a nest of vines, connecting the box to a bank of electronics that were stacked almost to the ceiling. There were enough LED's flashing and blinking to cast a crimson glow on the Asian face of the male student standing in front of it. There were other student types hovered around the black box and they were issuing instructions to a white male with a shaved head who was seated in front of a computer at a table adjacent to the bench.

Simon heard movement behind him and looked up. Another male student, also of Asian ancestry, with thick glasses and buck teeth, wearing a "Nirvana Rules" tee-shirt, was carefully passing the GEM head-gear through the opening at the top of the MNEME which had been created by the removal of the screw-in plate. Keith received the gear and began to fit the netting onto Simon's skull.

"You're got such thick hair," Keith said, "you probably don't feel this at all."

"How come I didn't have to be shaved?" Simon asked. "Why doesn't my hair interfere?"

"The optic fibers don't need to make contact with your skin and our photon beams are quite narrow, it's like squirting a water pistol in between redwood trees. Finished. I believe we're just about ready to get started. Are you ready to return to the womb?"

Another ten minutes would pass before the MNEME was closed. Simon lie with his head back, cradled in the feather-light folds of the amorphous aerogel, staring at the ceiling and listening to the activity outside the MNEME. He heard voices, several of them heavily accented, calling back and forth across the room in the nonchalant tones Professor Thomas knew to be the youthful cover-up for excitement. Perish the thought that anyone should be so un-cool as to appear interested. No such feigned lack of interest in the voice of Keith who was shouting out instructions with the pumped gusto of a football player psyching himself up before the game. He also heard a brief but heated argument between two older voices, one belonging to a woman, the other to a man. The discussion was too technical and jargonized for Simon to make any sense of it, but the tones in the two voices were unmistakably hostile, like the face-off between two cats atop the same fence.

Keith made one final appearance over the lid of the MNEME to give Simon the thumb's up sign. Then there was the pneumatic sneeze and the top half of the MNEME closed, smothering Simon instantly in complete darkness. His first thoughts were of a visit he and his family had taken when he was a little boy to the Luray Caverns in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. They were standing with a group of fellow tourists in the center of one of the underground chambers. Their tour guide, a woman in a Ranger uniform, had given a speech about how people on the surface of the planet did not truly appreciate what it was to be in complete darkness as there was always a tiny bit of light seeping in from somewhere. To demonstrate the difference, the guide had thrown a switch that turned off the chamber's artificial lighting. Simon had never forgotten the overwhelming blackness. Eyes wide open: eyes shut tight. No difference.

Same with the MNEME.

Thinking of the Luray Caverns reminded Simon that when he was growing up, he and his family usually took one big trip every summer to a place they'd never been. The big trip always involved packing the family station wagon, which was always a Ford as Simon's dad did not trust anything made by GM or Chrysler, driving out of state and staying for a week in a motel with a swimming pool. It was supposed to be the highlight of the summer for the Thomas family, but Simon's favorite times had been the many day trips they took -- always on a Saturday -- to Ocean City, a Maryland resort that was only a couple of hours from Baltimore. He remembered walks along the great boardwalk that shadowed the shoreline and how the reflected heat from its sunbaked planks burned through the spongy soles of his cheap sandals. He remembered sand caked on his feet and ankles and the fiery prickly feel of his bare skin after a day in the sun. He remembered passing through throngs of people in various degrees of nakedness, exposed skins shimmering and throwing off a thick smell of musk and coconut oil. He remembered the restaurants and food-stands that competed with the arcade booths and merchandise stores for space on the boardwalk and the pungent scents they cooked up through the frying, boiling or steaming of crab, shrimp, rockfish, oysters and lobsters. These scents would swirl out onto the boardwalk and join with the musk and the coconut oil and the omnipresent saltwater breezes in a waltz of smells that filled a young boy's nose and made his mouth water and his belly gripe.

Of all the food you could get on the boardwalk, crabcakes were far and away Simon's favorite. His mother made them for him a couple of times a month and hers were okay, sure, but

not like what you could get at Ocean City. Nothing could touch eating a crabcake out of a paper boat with a wooden spoon while standing on the boardwalk, leaning against the safety rail, and looking out across the sprawling white sand beach at the vast green ocean. The Atlantic Ocean would always be the top of the chart as far as Simon was concerned. Sure the Pacific was bigger and unmatched for panoramic coastal scenery, but oceans were about beaches and swimming in the surf. With the Pacific, at least in northern California, where Simon lived, even on the hottest day of summer you needed a wetsuit to stave off hypothermia and Olympic Gold Medal swimming skills to stave off the riptide. With the Atlantic, all you needed was a swimsuit and your dad to pull you out by the arms when you were too young to brace the breakers on your own.

Simon's dad was not a big man. All of his sons grew up taller and heavier and Maureen, Simon's sister, was as tall. But Simon's dad was tenacious. Low-key and quiet, but a no-quitter through and through. He was not a man who would ever let his child be swept out to sea. No way. Even as a very young boy, Simon had understood that. For though he may have gotten his looks and his size from his great-grandfather, he always felt he'd inherited his dad's personality. George Thomas had been a technical editor. He spent most of his career with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, working in a small office at the Plant Industry Station, a federal campus for agricultural research. The Station was located in the town of Beltsville, about 40 miles down the Baltimore-Washington Parkway from the brick house off Liberty Heights Avenue where Simon and his siblings grew up. On work days, Simon remembered hearing his dad up and about before the rest of the household, being quiet so as not to wake anyone else. Then from the garage would come the roar of the car engine and everyone would be up and complaining. Monday through Friday the car roared at 7:00 am. Monday through Friday everybody else in the house woke up complaining.

Molly Thomas, Simon's mother, had been a high school English teacher, working in the Baltimore public school system until she began having babies and became a full-time homemaker. She was taller than Simon's dad, a striking redhead possessing all the fiery temperament associated with that hair color. She was the one who would ferociously cuff the ears of Kevin and Grant when they tossed their little brother into the surf. She was the one who would scream at Maureen to swim after Simon. But there was never really a need for his mother

to get angry or to send Maureen after him. Dad was always nearby, ready to snatch Simon from the ocean's grasp. If truth be told, Simon was the one who would pester his older brothers no end until they did as he wished and threw him into the water. He thought it the most wonderful fun imaginable and was never fearful. He knew his father would be looking out for him.

That's what dads do.

Simon's parents had died four summers ago, killed when their Ford wagon was struck by the GM car of a teenaged boy who ran a traffic light. Simon's brother, Kevin, had been driving them and he, too, was killed. Simon and Jan and the twins flew back for the funerals and spent a few days with Maureen and her family who lived in the Baltimore suburb of Towson. That first Saturday after the funeral, Simon rented a car and drove Jan and the twins to Ocean City for the day. The weather had not been promising but

Simon was standing on a small concrete landing and looking out across the choppy waters of a wide brown river. There was a terrible smell in the air and a curtain of fog coming off the river about half-way across. A huge barge with a stoved-in port side was anchored just upriver and from somewhere beyond the barge, he could hear the wail of a siren. Moored to the landing upon which Simon stood was a skiff. Simon was staring at what was inside the skiff when he heard a noise from behind that made him turn. He saw a short flight of wooden stairs going up the steep embankment of the river. Someone was standing at the head of the stairs. He saw the movement of an arm then heard a gunshot and an echo. There was an explosion of bright white light

"Are you okay?"

Simon blinked in the glare of the bright white light. The lid of the MNEME was open and as his eyes adjusted Simon found himself looking up into the concerned face of Keith Joyner.

"I had the dream," Simon said. "I was on the landing, there was a skiff, one of those small flat-bottomed boats, on a river and wooden stairs behind me. Someone was at the top of the stairs. I heard a shot. It was my dream, Keith. I had my dream."

Keith smiled. He opened his mouth and began to speak in a voice that seemed to come from some place far away. "That was no dream, my friend. You never reached REM sleep. There were no PGO waves. What you experienced in the MNEME was an abreaction, a flash-

back, the recalled images of memory maps. Whatever you saw in your mind was the product of memory."

"But I've never been on that landing," Simon said. "I've never seen that river or those stairs."

"Maybe you haven't," replied Keith, "but I'll bet Payton Adams did."

It was several moments before Simon could speak. Part of his silence was to let the implication of Keith's words fully sink in. Part of it was his deciding whether or not to be honest with Keith. In the end, he chose honesty. It was how his brain was wired.

"Keith, there's something I must tell you. The dream was different. It changed."

An odd look seized Keith's face. "How's that, Simon? In what way was the dream different?"

"The concrete landing, the brown river, the damaged barge, the siren in the distance, the wooden stairs going up the embankment, that was the same. There was someone at the top of the steps and there was a skiff in the river. But .."

"But what?" A quick nervous grin from Keith. "Talk to me."

"Inside the skiff," Simon said, slowly, as if struggling to remember something that had happened a long time ago, "there was a pair of oars, two canvas suitcases, four cloth sacks and a woman's coat with a fur collar. That was the same. And the rifle, it was the exact same bolt-action rifle."

"So what was different? What changed?"

"There was someone sitting in the skiff, Keith. I can't tell you if the person was a man or a woman. All I could see was a shape, just like all I can see at the top of the stairs is a shape, but I do know there was someone in that skiff. And there's something else, too."

"What's that, Simon?"

"There was a gunshot. Just like before. I always thought it came from the stairs and echoed off the river. But now I'm not sure. The gunshot might have come from the stairs or it might have come from the skiff. If I am seeing that scene through the memories of my great-grandfather then Payton Adams knew his killer and, even in his moment of death, he remembered." Simon paused as a sudden chill shuddered through his body. He then swallowed, cleared his throat, reached for Keith who caught and held his hand. Simon squeezed so tightly

Keith winced.

"You were right, Keith. My great-grandfather did stand on that landing. It was located at the head of the great bend in the Monongahela River in western Pennsylvania where the water starts to run past the town of Homestead. Payton Adams stood there shortly after dawn on July 24, 1892 and was murdered. I know this now as surely as I know myself. I am so close, Keith. After all these years, I am so very close. I have to know who was on the stairs and who was in the skiff." Simon felt his eyes burn. "And I have to know which one fired the shot and why."

CHAPTER EIGHT

The whap-pap sound echoed loudly inside the enclosed court as the racquetball caromed off the front wall and sped like a tiny blue missile straight towards Simon who never had to move his feet. His racket was already in mid-swing as the hollow rubber ball hit the hardwood floor and bounced upward. Racket and ball met at the optimal moment and ball was instantly transformed into a blue blur flying back to the front wall. Keith charged forward to meet and hit it with a slicing motion that imparted a nasty backspin on the return. The spinning sphere flew past Simon just slightly over his head. He allowed it to pass and waited for the ricochet off the glass wall behind him. But the backspin caused the ball to curve away from him as it came off the glass, forcing him to scramble after it and swing from his left side. Simon's backswing was the worst part of his game and once again failed him. The ball weakly struck the right wall and died. Point to Keith.

Simon and Keith were evenly matched as athletes. Keith had an edge in quickness, but Simon was stronger. In their racquetball games, Keith could chase down and return shots that Simon would miss by half a step. Simon on the other hand, hit with more power. Their games had evolved into a general script that was routinely followed. Keith would sprint to a quick lead as Simon overpowered his way into unforced errors. Simon would finally settle down and make up lost ground by rocketing half a dozen aces. Keith would then bear down, grab back the serve and begin another run of points. This alternating flurry of scoring surges would continue until they were within two or three points of the 21 needed to win. That was usually about the time when fatigue would begin to sap Simon's power and slow Keith's legs. The final outcome would then usually hinge upon what Keith called "want-to," as in "You got to want to win!"

Far more often than not, victory went to Keith.

This match would be no exception. With the score notched at twenty, Keith was serving game point. Too eager to win with a flourish, he tried for a knee-high screamer and muffed it big-time. The ball struck the dead-man's corner of the front wall and floated lazily up toward Simon like something wounded or sick. Simon cocked his racket and moved in for the easy overhead smash that would give him the chance to serve for the win. But Keith took one step to

the right and partially blocked Simon's path. Not enough, maybe, for Simon to call interference, but enough to make him alter his shot for fear of catching Keith's head with his racket. The alteration was a mistake and Simon knew it even as his racket connected with the ball. Instead of a non-returnable bullet, Simon's shot was a laugh right back at Keith who put it away.

Both men collapsed onto the floor, utterly exhausted. Sweat poured from their faces and their chests heaved. The echoes of their labored breathing sounded like dueling bellows.

"Not enough want-to, my man," Keith chided Simon, laughing in between gasps for breath. "That last point? You should have knocked me on my ass."

"That was interference, you know," Simon panted.

"You didn't call it," Keith retorted.

"I thought cheaters never win," Simon said.

"It's only cheating if you're caught," Keith cackled. "Otherwise, it's called winning."

"Congratulations your smugness," said Simon as he rose to his feet. "You just won yourself a much more expensive lunch. Your treat, remember?"

Keith stood up slowly and nodded his head. "Next time I say lunch is on me, remind me not to gloat until after we eat."

"What makes you think you'll win next time?" asked Simon.

Keith grinned and punched Simon lightly on the arm. "Like I been saying, my man, you don't have enough want-to!"

Simon and Keith had begun meeting at the Recreational Sports Facility for a noontime game of racquetball shortly after Dr. Nertz had introduced them the previous fall. They tried to play every weekday and seldom ever missed. Keith said he looked forward to the games as an outlet for relieving the mental stress of his work. Most of the time, mental stress was not a major facet of Simon's professional life: he looked forward to the game because it was good exercise. Today, however, was an exception. Today, Simon was stressed.

The trouble had begun 24 hours earlier on the Memorial Day holiday when Simon had hosted an end-of-the-school-year barbecue at his home for his five doctoral students and their respective significant others. It was something he'd been doing every summer for the past seven years. His doctoral students did the lion's share of the paper-grading for Simon's two

undergraduate courses, a considerable undertaking seeing as his examinations were heavily weighted toward lengthy essay questions. For this they were paid a paltry stipend from the University. Simon felt a dinner was the least he could do. In the past these dinners had been an occasion of marked bonhomie. Simon knew his way around a Weber kettle and would grill his own surf and turf combinations, like yesterday's flank steak and salmon. Jan always contributed her shrimp romoulade (from an old family recipe) for an hors d'oeuvre. The students brought salads and veggies and Simon made sure that the beer was cold and plentiful. When you factored in that his students had either finished the program or were returning the following year (Simon had never failed any of his doctoral students), you had what should have been a guaranteed successful party. In past years it had been because in past years he'd never had a student like Danny Bosworth.

Right from the start, Simon had pegged Danny as a boy with a massive chip on his shoulders. He was physically imposing, tall and heavy set, but his weight was fat rather than muscle. He had an overly large, plain round face, bad skin and greasy hair. He dressed like a slob, not in the deliberately grungy style that was fashionable, but in a sloppy manner that managed to be both unkempt and uncool. He was terribly bright, no one disputed that, but he was also loud, boastful, and stupendously insensitive. With his imposing size, he'd grown up with the ability to intimidate people. From all that Simon had observed, Danny Bosworth routinely abused this power. Never was there a youth so desperately in need of a patient and understanding mentor and Simon had done his best to fill the role.

Danny Bosworth shit all over him.

The problem, Simon told his colleagues in the department, was one of ideology. Danny was the scion of Howard Bosworth, a Sacramento man who had gotten very rich mostly by building urban shopping malls in areas that had previously provided the working poor of California with low-cost housing. Howard Bosworth, like his father, and his father's father, was a Republican. Howard Bosworth had been the single largest financial contributor to the political campaigns of Patrick Law, who was now "Governor Pat" of California. Danny Bosworth had not only inherited the political beliefs of his father, grandfather and great-grandfather, he might have been the truest believer of all. That he had been assigned to a professor with a passion for the American labor movement was, in Simon's often expressed public opinion, a cruel twist of

fate.

Simon's private opinion, expressed only to Jan, was that Danny Bosworth was a spoiled rotten jerk, a behavioral carbon copy of his cold-hearted prick of a father and destined for a life even more vicious and disheartening. On what should have been a festive occasion in Simon's backyard, Danny Bosworth lived down to Simon's worst expectations.

It began with Bosworth challenging Simon for redoing the set of final exams he had graded for Simon's undergraduate course on U.S. history between the end of the Civil War and the start of the 20th century. At first, Simon, who at the time was absorbed in the delicate task of grilling salmon filets, thought Danny was merely showing off in front of his latest girlfriend, a skinny blonde who scarcely looked much older than the twins. But Danny continued to push the matter in his loud braying voice and eventually drew the other students and their companions around the Weber kettle. Finally, Simon could no longer ignore him, despite the need to keep a watchful eye on the salmon.

"Daniel, we have had this discussion before and if anyone has a reason to be angry it is me." Simon said to Bosworth. Then to the rest of his audience, he explained. "The question that Daniel is referring to is one in which students were asked to explain the significance of trust certificates. As those of you who worked on that particular exam know, the question was worth 25 points. As per my written instructions (Simon emphasized the word "written"), students were to be credited with 20 points if they identified the trust as a means of circumventing anti-monopoly laws and explained how it was used by the robber barons to seize control of the American economy. An extra five points went to those who correctly identified Samuel Dodd, an attorney for Standard Oil, as the conniving fiend who invented the trust. I don't know how I could have been more clear in stating what I wanted. And yet, (Simon turned to look directly at Danny Bosworth, noting with irritation that the young man was smirking), in reviewing the papers Daniel graded, I saw that he had consistently failed to credit students the points they had earned with their correct answers."

Bosworth spoke up immediately. "That is because I disagreed with your version of the correct answer, Professor Thomas. The trust was a means of circumventing anti-entrepreneurialism laws. It marked the golden era of American capitalism, a time when prices were stabilized at their true market level and unemployment was at an all time low. Correct me

if I'm wrong, but is that period not called the Gilded Age?"

"Golden era of capitalism? Are you speaking of a parallel universe, Daniel?" laughed Simon with little mirth. "For in this country, on our world, the late 1800's was the golden era of corruption, a period in which the robber barons charged extortion prices and virtually enslaved this country's working class. Yes it is called the Gilded Age, but in that period, not all that glittered was golden."

"I object to your use of the term robber barons," Bosworth snapped. Numerous first-hand observations had taught Simon the signs of Danny Bosworth losing his temper. First the boy's large head would begin to bob up and down as if it were attached to a loose-spring. Then flecks of foam would appear at the corners of his mouth. His head was now bobbing and his mouth was beginning to foam. "Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jay Gould, J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, and John David Rockefeller were visionaries who transformed a loose confederation of farm states into the most powerful industrial nation the world has ever known."

Simon should have been paying attention to the flames leaping up through the grill, the ugly sizzling sound that accompanied those flames and the oily gray smoke that followed, but he was too dismayed by the words of Danny Bosworth.

"Daniel, you are talking about the greatest collection of thieves in the history of western civilization. J.P. Morgan, for heaven's sake, once played loan shark to the Federal government. Jay Gould made a fortune off a national economic depression he created."

Bosworth with bobbing head and foaming mouth responded.

"You are attempting to impose your value judgments on the history of my country, professor. As a free-thinker, I reject your narrow interpretation of these events. As a citizen of the United States, I am entitled to hold and express my own opinion. In grading those examinations, I chose to exercise that right."

"Not in my classroom, Daniel," said Simon, swallowing his own anger, determined to neither bob nor foam. "As my graduate-assistant, it is your responsibility to follow my instructions. It is in fact almost irrelevant whether an answer I provide is right or wrong. In my class, a student in response to my question, must provide my answer. We are not in a court of law, here, Daniel, we are in a school and that is how a school works. Please do not forget, I am the teacher and you, like it or not, are my student."

"Don't look now, teacher," sneered Danny Bosworth, "but you just burned your fish!"

A chagrined Simon had scrambled to salvage what he could, but the cause, save for a few bits and pieces, was lost. Danny Bosworth enjoyed Simon's distress with his customary sardonic relish. While the other students falsely assured Simon that no damage had been done, Bosworth repeatedly and with unnecessary volume inquired as to the availability of steak, holding his empty plate out as proof of Simon's failure with the fish. It fell to Jan who arrived late upon the scene to silence him.

"Do you not know your bible, young Daniel?" Jan said, immediately seizing the youth's attention in her steely-eyed gaze. "Your namesake survived a visit to the lion's den by being respectful, not by challenging the lion."

She snatched the spatula out of Simon's hand, scooped up a charred piece of salmon that looked more like a piece of mesquite charcoal and dumped it onto Danny Bosworth's plate.

"Enjoy your meal, son," Jan said. "And I strongly advise you not to show further disrespect by throwing your food away. Eat as if your doctoral candidacy depended on it."

Bosworth said little the rest of the party.

And, under Jan's watchful eye, ate all of the burned salmon she had given him.

Later in bed, Simon fretted that he, not Jan, should have been the one to put Bosworth in his place.

"All year long, Bosworth has interrupted my weekly discussion seminars to vent his antilabor spleen. I sorely wanted to tell him to shut up but I knew he would only become louder and more obnoxious. His type never discusses or debates an issue, they simply try to out-yell the opposition. I thought it unseemly and inappropriate to engage in a shouting contest in front of the other students."

"Besides, you'd have been too embarrassed," said Jan, snuggling back into him (they were lying together like spoons).

"Yes," Simon admitted with a breathy sigh. "I would have been embarrassed. I've just never been the shouting type. How ironic I found your biblical reference this afternoon in which you alluded to my being a lion. For a lion, I'm afraid I don't have much of a roar. Not even in my own den."

Jan laughed and tousled Simon's hair. "Oh, my baby, you've no need to roar in your own

den. Like all good lions, you just let your lioness do your killing for you."

The next morning, however, on his way to his office, Simon came across the department dean, Masanori Morito, and decided it was high time he at least did some growling about Bosworth.

"He deliberately disobeyed my instructions on the final for my 410 class," Simon complained. "I had to redo all of the exams he graded. Then he carried on at my house, made a ridiculous scene about the incident and caused me to burn several expensive pounds of salmon."

"Is there a point, here, Simon?" asked Dean Morito, checking his watch. "I'm in somewhat of a hurry."

"Yes," replied Simon, taken aback by his dean's obvious desire to move on. "I think Bosworth would be better off finding another faculty adviser."

"But you're his faculty adviser, Simon. He's getting his doctoral degree in U.S. history with an emphasis on the 19th century. That's your dominion, Simon."

"I don't want him."

"Are you suggesting we dismiss him from our program?"

Simon opened his mouth then stopped. "No, I didn't say that. I am only suggesting that he be transferred to another faculty member."

"One with less seniority than yourself?" asked Morito, knowing full well that is the only way Simon could unload Danny Bosworth.

After a moment of hesitation, Simon gave the dean a quick nod. He felt unclean in doing so.

"That is not fair to your junior colleagues."

Simon wished he could have said to hell with fairness -- after all, it was his prerogative and such actions were an accepted fact of academic life -- but it just wasn't in him.

Dean Morito quickly took advantage of Simon's silence. "Bosworth has earned a reputation in this department as a troublemaker. No one would volunteer to take him and it is unfortunate you must shoulder the burden alone. However, we have had other troublesome students in the past and will no doubt have more in the future. You must learn to deal with his kind, Simon. Your problem is that you are toast and every student quickly learns that. You accept every hard-luck story you hear, you give too many second chances, you forgive too many

sins. Saint Simon may be a term of endearment but it is not necessarily a term of respect. You would be better off if you instilled a little fear once in awhile. Fear teaches students respect. Fear is the beginning of wisdom."

"Isn't it better to be loved than feared?" posited Simon.

"When forced to choose between the two, it is safer to be feared than loved," Morito said. "And I would love to stand here and debate the merits of Machiavelli with you, but I really do have a bigger fish to fry than your difficulties with the junior Mr. Bosworth. There is, as you may recall, the matter of the University Reform Bill."

Simon took note of the sudden grim expression on Dean Morito's face and nodded. The governor was pushing legislation that would overhaul the University of California system by designating specific courses of study at each of its nine campuses. Instead of every campus offering a broad range of instructional programs, each would concentrate on its designated field of disciplines. Under this proposal, Berkeley would give up all of its liberal arts programs and concentrate on science and technology. History had been assigned to the campus in Irvine. Duncan MacBryde, the current chancellor of UC Berkeley, was all for the idea. Being a designated campus for science and technology would mean bigger bucks for Cal -- the dollars for scientific research being far more plentiful than the dollars for studies in history.

Understandably, Masanori Morito was upset.

He was not alone. The talk in the department was that unless MacBryde and Governor Pat agreed to retain the academic status quo, the history faculty would strike. Other liberal arts faculty were expected to do the same. Students would probably join in, making for a potentially volatile situation. This was, after all, Berkeley.

"I need hardly remind you, Simon, that Daniel Bosworth's father is a personal friend and major financial backer of the Governor. Howard Bosworth has never been known to suffer displeasure in silence and our combative Governor Pat has never been known to use quiet persuasion when a loud threat would work just as well. I am having a difficult time as it is gaining the ear of our Chancellor who at the moment is hearing only the siren call of cash. Please do not make things more difficult for me. Neither I nor any of your colleagues will be happy."

Dean Morito scuttled off to do battle for the department and Simon retreated into his

office. In checking his e-mail, he found a message from Keith saying he'd be late for racquetball and would meet Simon at the gym. Keith also wanted them to have lunch together afterward and offered to pay provided that Simon kept in mind the current skimpiness of academic salaries.

Rather than drive anywhere, Simon and Keith elected to eat at Strada's, a bistro across Bancroft Street from campus. They sat at one of the outdoor tables to enjoy the lovely June weather and take in the unusual quiet of the street. Despite all of his years on campus, it never failed to amaze Simon how quickly the students vanished from school for the summer following the end of final exams. It also never failed to amaze him how quiet things got once the kids were gone. Absent was the bumper-to-bumper traffic that was always being made worse by the double- and sometimes even triple-parking of delivery trucks. Absent, too, was the relentless verbal tub-thumping of sidewalk orators and self-anointed preachers as each proclaimed through an amplified microphone the righteousness of his own (never a *her* own) particular vision. And to Simon's greatest relief, also absent was the incessant beating of panhandlers with cheap drum sets or bongos who always, it seemed, set up the instruments they pounded with such loud but inept glee wherever Simon happened to be.

Keith announced he was paying for lunch to assuage his guilt over his wanting to bend Simon's ear with more whining about his marriage to Sandra. Simon thought Sandra to be very bright and sensitive and certainly attractive enough if you liked blondes with big bosoms. However, he knew that the relationship between Keith and Sandra had always been troubled. They'd met in Corvallis while both were undergrads at Oregon State and Sandra had followed Keith to California. Before she became pregnant with Walt, she'd moved in and out on Keith several times. When they weren't living together, Sandra lived alone. Keith always had someone and that someone was always female, which was the root of most of their troubles. As Keith was the first to admit, he had roving eyes and where his eyes roved, the rest of him usually followed. Even after the boys were born, it was seven years before he finally gave in to Sandra's demands for marriage. Yet through it all, their couplehood had somehow endured and seemed to have stabilized.

But not without an occasional rough spot.

Simon himself had been dragged into one of those rough spots two months earlier. Berkeley High was putting on a production of the musical *Grease* and Walt Joyner had a major

role. The premier was on a Friday night. Jan had to work, but Simon was taking the twins. At the last moment, Keith claimed illness and Simon agreed to also take Earl and Sandra who did not like to drive after dark. That was the night a freak electrical storm knocked out the power throughout most of the Berkeley flatlands, including the high school, less than a third of the way into the performance. After an hour had passed with power still not restored, the performance had been canceled. When Simon pulled his Volvo stationwagon into the Joyner driveway, loaded down with the twins, both Joyner boys, and Sandra, Keith came running out of his house to intercept them. His face was ashen and he told everyone to remain in the car while he had a word in private with Simon.

"You got to help me out, man," Keith whispered when Simon was outside.

"What's wrong? You look awful," Simon had said.

"I've got a woman inside. I need time to get her out. Don't give me that look, Simon, please. I know you disapprove. I know you *strongly* disapprove. I fucked up. Okay? This was stupid. I'm ashamed. You just don't know how badly I feel. But please, I am begging you as my best friend, man, please help me. Think of the kids, Simon. They don't need this. Take my family away from here for awhile. Take everyone to Fenton's, let the kids pig out on ice cream. That will give me enough time."

"What shall I tell Sandra?"

"Tell her ... tell her I didn't make it to the john in time. Tell her I threw up in the living room and want to clean up the mess before the kids come in."

"Will she believe that?"

Keith allowed himself a sad smile. "She knows my vanity. She'll understand. Besides, from you, she'd believe anything. Sandra calls you Saint Simon, too."

Forcing him to participate in Keith's deception would have been bad enough for Simon, but when he turned to head back to his car, he saw what he saw and it was like a bomb going off in his insides. But it was not the time or place to react and with an effort worthy of his Ox nickname, Simon swallowed his feelings and returned to his car. Forcing a cheery smile, he announced a change in plans; they were all going to the Fenton's in Piedmont for sundaes. The cheers from the kids drowned out his whispered promise to explain later to Sandra.

Keith had been right about Sandra's accepting the story that he would not want his boys

to see he'd been sick. While Elizabeth and Louise and Walt and Earl stuffed themselves on ice cream concoctions so slathered in toppings they made Simon ill to see, Sandra drank a cherry coke and expounded on the subject of Keith's false pride.

"He can't ever admit any weaknesses or failings to his sons," she said, at one point, half-complaining, half-laughing. "I bet he'd rather be caught fucking another woman by me than be caught farting by the boys."

Simon said nothing and, as far as he knew, Sandra never discovered the deception. When he told Jan about the incident that night she said little beyond agreeing that Simon had made the correct decision.

"There are times when the truth serves no one," Jan had remarked with sadness.

Simon never told Jan what else he had seen and the incident was never again discussed between the two of them. Nor was the matter ever again discussed between Simon and Keith.

As Jan had said, there were times when the truth served no one.

Nonetheless, Simon had made it emphatically clear to Keith he would never again cover up for him to Sandra. Still, he had remained Keith's confidante and on this day, over a lunch of salads and a shared antipasto platter, Keith was telling him what had happened during a party on Saturday night at Chancellor MacBryde's house. Keith and Sandra were frequent guests to the Chancellor's social functions in no small part because Sandra was first cousin and close friend to Kathy Webb, the Chancellor's personal secretary (and top confidante). On this particular occasion, Sandra had taken exception to the attention Keith had paid a female assistant provost, attention that Keith swore was innocent. After a noisy confrontation, Sandra had stormed out. Keith had been forced to make apologies to the witnesses, especially to the assistant provost and to Chancellor MacBryde. He had then gone after his wife. By Sunday night the crisis had subsided, and Sandra was again speaking to him. Nonetheless, Keith was still gloomy about the matter and wanted to talk about it.

"Don't you ever look at other women?" he asked in response to Simon's suggestion that he curtail his flirtations, especially when Sandra was nearby.

"Of course, I look, I just don't touch, which is what gets you into trouble," Simon had replied.

"Why not? Afraid of what Jan might do?"

"I would be if I gave the matter any thought. The truth is, I don't touch because I have no interest. Not to sound maudlin, but I love my wife."

"I love Sandra, too," Keith said, "but is not variety the spice of life?"

"Spice is added to improve something. In your case, I don't think your so-called spice has improved your marriage, do you?"

"No, I can't say it has, but I also can't say I might not at some future time try it again. If Jan's enough woman for you then you're a lucky man. Maybe my next project will be a study to see how the brains of you monogamous types are wired. I don't understand it myself. I really don't."

Simon allowed himself some reflection on this and then he laughed. "If truth be told, at this point in life I would be too embarrassed to take off my clothes in front of any woman other than Jan."

Keith smiled but did not laugh. Instead, he looked thoughtful. "I hear that. I'm comfortable with Sandra, too. And I'm sure she's comfortable with me. Maybe that's the secret to staying together. Two people become comfortable with one another."

Simon had not meant that he was merely "comfortable" with Jan, nor would he be comfortable with such a statement about his marriage. But he kept this thought to himself. Keith might love Sandra, but it was not at all the same as Simon's love for Jan. Simon *was* a lucky man. He and Keith both knew it. Why rub it in?

Keith talked more about his problems with Sandra, interrupting his complaints with assurances that despite the rough spots, he was not unhappy with his marriage. Later, while they sipped on cheap chianti, Keith took out two leaves of letter-sized paper from the leather shoulder bag he never went anywhere without.

"These will be published next week," he said as he slid the two leaves across the table. They were the title pages to two articles that had been submitted to the journal *Science*.

The first paper was entitled: Neurogenesis in the Limbic System: Identification of Prenatal Explicit Memory Maps. The second paper was entitled: Neuroquipazine: A Localized Limbic Cortical Neurotransmitter. Following each title was a list of names, at least thirty by Simon's estimation, enough to fill the rest of the page and leave no room for an abstract. After the first three names, which were listed in full, the rest were in alphabetical order and listed with

first and middle initials and last name only. Vijay N. Jain was the first name on both papers. Keith's was the second name on the first paper and the third name on the second. Completing the trio of full names was Gavin J. Gibson.

"Do you think you included enough names?" asked Simon. "These look like the title pages from a Physics Department study."

Keith gave a dismissive shrug. "Biology has moved into the big science era too. Everything is multidisciplinary teams and multi-institutional collaborations. Freeman Dyson calls it the Napoleonic approach to science. The important thing is the three names up front. The Nobel prize can only be shared by the first three authors."

"How come Jain got top billing on both papers?"

Another dismissive shrug. "He's Napoleon. Our funding comes mainly from the National Institutes of Health. Gibby and I wrote the NIH grant proposals and oversaw the research, but the money was awarded in Jain's name because, as head of the Brain Lab, he's the official project leader. I don't like it. Neither does Gibby. But we won't say anything because in our line of work, money rules and NIH is God. Those who piss God off are consigned to pink sheet hell."

Simon raised an eyebrow.

"The pink copies of letters explaining why your proposals have been rejected," Keith explained, "and why your future chances of receiving any research money are slightly lower than your chances of winning the California lottery. Hey, but I'm not complaining. If anyone has a legitimate grievance, it's the Little Mermaid. GEM was mostly her idea. She made it work."

By now Simon knew all the key players in the Quip project.

The Little Mermaid was the nickname for Ariel Jones, the head of Medical Imaging for the Brain Lab. She was a short, sprite, 48-year-old woman with curly dark hair and a Middle Eastern look. Her grad students called her the Little Mermaid because she was a mezzo soprano in a San Francisco choir and frequently sang to herself in the lab. She'd overseen the MRI and PET work on Simon's brain and told him he had a lovely corpus callosum.

"Nice anterior commissure, too," Ariel had said. "I bet you have great interhemispheric communication -- a real together guy. Do you sing?"

When Simon told her he did not, she pressed her lips and shook her head. "Pity," she said. "You should have an ear for music."

Ariel had been the woman Simon had seen holding the GEM headgear on the day he first climbed into the MNEME. She was the woman he'd heard heatedly arguing with a man who Simon later learned was Gavin Gibson.

Gibson, who insisted on being called "Gibby" by everyone at the Brain Lab, even the students, was the bald caucasian with thick glasses that Simon had thought Keith was going to be. He was 47-years-old and everything about him reminded Simon of a ferret. Short and slight, quick and predatory. He even had a peculiar smell that he was not quite successful in masking with a copious amount of cologne. Jan and the twins called him Stinky.

Simon's introduction to Gibby followed his first session in the MNEME. Simon had returned to the dressing room when Gibby, without the courtesy of a knock, barged in. Oblivious to the fact that Simon was standing in his socks and underwear, holding his pants in his hands, Gibby introduced himself and began talking.

"If this experiment is a success, we have a real shot at the Nobel Prize. At the very least, we'll get continued funding for additional experiments. In science, success begets money which in turn begets more success. Failure begets pink sheets. This project costs a bundle. The apparatus is expensive. So are the people. Research does not pay practitioner salaries but what we make ain't chopped liver. Even with cheap student labor to compensate, our overhead burden is staggering. Realistically, we've got one shot at proving Quip works. We can't afford to fail. To be more precise, *I* cannot afford for us to fail. In time, Keith could find indirect means of proving his fear-response theory, probably working with the Little Mermaid and those damn chimps. All well and fine for Keith but that leaves me, the chemist, out of the picture. I synthesized Quip. It is my ticket to fame and a human subject is my only means of proof that a fully-functioning memory-linked neurotransmitter can be synthesized. Keith says you're my best bet but I won't know that until I see the GEM images. I know about your PTSD problem. I know Keith very much wants to help you. So does Ariel. But, understand, if I see the GEM images and have any doubts, I'm going to demand we find someone else. And I will prevail. No bout-a-doubt it. Vijay's got concerns about your PTSD. Indemnity. If you don't get better or if you get worse, you'll blame us and sue. I hear your wife is a ball-buster. The Counsel's Office is

pissing all over itself with fear. As far as I am concerned, I just want you to know, nothing personal. It's just science."

Fortunately for all concerned, the GEM images taken of Simon in the MNEME confirmed that he was indeed Gibby's best bet for success. Even without a boost from Quip, the glow of the explicit memory maps in his limbic system approached that of the active maps in his hippocampus and neocortex. As Keith later reported, all of the collaborators agreed that for genetic memory, Simon Thomas was in a class by himself.

As to the occurrence of Simon's "dream" during the NREM stage of sleep, it confirmed the suspicions of Keith and Dr. Nertz that the so-called dream had always been an abreaction, a recalled image from one of the genetic memory maps in his limbic system. The state of anxiety in which Simon entered the MNEME contributed to a build-up of neuroquipazine in his system that was enough to exceed the critical threshold required for neuronal firing in the map. When the neurons in the map fired, Simon experienced the memory as a dream. Keith postulated that this critical build-up in Simon's brain normally required approximately 45 days which would explain the dream's periodicity. As with all memories, each time the map's neurons were fired, the sequence was strengthened. Keith and Dr. Nertz were already collaborating on a paper offering the hypothesis that genetic memories could explain the phenomena of reincarnation and feelings of having lived past lives.

Simon knew, too, that Dr. Nertz had acquired an agent for a possible book on the subject.

Simon's attention returned to the Strada bistro when Keith said that Ariel Jones was threatening to pull out of the Quip experiment and write her own paper on GEM.

"Without Ariel's cooperation, your walk down Memory Lane may have to wait, and Chancellor MacBryde will have to delay his plans for a Nobel Prize party," Keith said.

Even the mere mention of a possible delay of his rendezvous with the memories of Payton Adams was cause for alarm in Simon and Keith apparently recognized that for he was instantly reassuring.

"Not to worry. The Little Mermaid may be pissed but she's not about to pull out of the Quip experiment. Presuming it is successful, it will be the irrefutable proof she needs that GEM can do all she claims and that's where her fortune lies. The reality is, she was never going to be a

contender for the Prize because nobody wins for apparatus. But she can win a place in scientific history, not to mention fat consultant fees from the biotech companies." Keith grinned. "And even if she didn't stand to gain a dime, she wouldn't pull out. Ariel is a true scientist. Curiosity will keep her in the game no matter what. She's come too far to stop now. Besides, after that HUC hearing last week, Vijay is not about to let anyone at the Brain Lab back off. No offense, but your wife is a bitch!"

* * *

The HUC's hearing on the Quip experiment took place on a Wednesday afternoon in the auditorium of the Brain Lab. It was open to the public and the outcome should have been a mere formality: the real vote had actually been taken behind closed doors the previous day and the experiment had been approved 16-0. Following a presentation by Vijay Jain there was to be a question and answer period and the HUC members would then announce their decision. Public approval should have been forthcoming with no more suspense than the direction of the sunrise. There was, however, one caveat: during the question and answer period, the floor was opened to anyone in attendance.

Anyone included Jan.

The auditorium of the Brain Lab was designed to hold 250 people and Simon judged it to be about a quarter full with members of the Quip experimental team. He saw Ariel Jones, toward the back of the auditorium, wearing a dark blue dress, and Gibby Gibson, across the way, wearing a plaid sports coat and a string tie. Up in the front row he spotted Vijay Jain, a little brown square of a man in a pale blue suit, a white shirt and a bright red tie. Seated next to Vijay was the University's legal counsel Jack Lapage, a big white square of a man in a gray herringbone suit, white shirt, and bright red tie. Lapage was whispering something to Vijay who was vigorously nodding his head. Suddenly Keith was at Simon's side, looking natty in a white linen suit and a bright red tie. After a quick exchange of palm slaps with Simon, Keith leaned over to greet Jan with a kiss on the cheek. The look he received from her made him sit down in a hurry.

Up on a stage, the sixteen HUC members were seated behind a table. They were all white males, middle-aged and upward, dressed in dark suits and darker ties. All but two of them wore glasses. A microphone was stationed in front of the HUC chairman who occupied the

center spot. His name was David Spiers. It said so on the placard in front of him. Simon would have known him without the placard for he was also the Dean of the Graduate Division and the principal administrator for scientific research on campus. That Spiers was personally chairing this meeting and that the full HUC membership was in attendance rather than the quorum required to conduct business, was a pretty good indication of the importance with which the University held the Quip experiment.

At precisely 2 p.m., Spiers convened the meeting. After opening remarks, he turned the floor over to Vijay Jain. Vijay left his seat and went to a podium in front of the stage to make his presentation. To read from his notes, he donned a pair of glasses that rode low over his nose. His presentation was delivered in crisp academic tones with an accent that Simon felt enhanced the weight of his pronouncements. Vijay not only came loaded with view graphs and slides, he also tossed in a five-minute video that showed Morris performing at a lexigram machine in the aftermath of his treatment with Quip. Morris was using the lexigram machine to make demands of one of the grad students. He asked for a banana, a ball, another banana, his stuffed lion toy, a banana, his bunny puppet, and another banana.

"As you can see, Quip did nothing to stifle Morris' freedom of expression or his appetite," joked Vijay Jain. His remark drew overdone laughter from the HUC. Simon imagined Vijay had felt pretty good upon the conclusion of his presentation. Several HUC members asked him questions but, as baseball fan Keith Joyner would later note, they were all batting practice softies that Jain knocked out of the ballpark. Then the floor was open to questions from the audience and Janelle Thomas took the mound. Batting practice was over. Nothing but heat. Big heat. High hard ones right down the middle. Looking back later, Simon reflected that two exchanges in particular pretty much told the story of what she did to Vijay Jain before the members of the HUC and his Brain Lab subordinates.

First there was:

Jan: When you say that quip is a synthetic analogue to neuroquipazine, does that not mean that it is an artificial substance?

Vijay: Quip is identical in chemical composition to neuroquipazine. The only difference is that Nature produced one and we produced the other.

Jan: Then you admit that Quip is unnatural.

Vijay: In a literal sense yes. But ...

Jan: Thank you.

The second telling exchange came minutes later:

Jan: You have testified, excuse me, you have stated that tests on Morris showed no harmful physiological effects resulting from the administration of Quip.

Vijay: That is correct.

Jan: No measurable effects, correct?

Vijay: None that we could measure, correct. But -- and this time you must let me finish, Mrs. Thomas (laughter from the HUC members, none from Counselor Lapage) -- our measurements are quantifiable and therefore I can tell you that I know with a 99.9 percent certainty that Morris suffered no physiological damage from Quip.

Jan: What about psychological damage?

Vijay: I beg your pardon?

Jan: Did Morris suffer any psychological damage as a result of Quip?

Vijay: None that we have observed.

Jan: Did you measure for psychological effects?

Vijay: Forgive me, Mrs. Thomas, but your question is meaningless. Psychology is not an empirical science. It is impossible to measure for such effects. As I have stated, our studies of Morris and the other primates revealed no physiological damage. With the introduction of Quip, there is a surge in the GEM signal from the appropriate memory maps. As the effects of Quip wear off, the surge subsides. The neural system is restored to its previous operational norm. Your question should be: Is there any basis for psychological damage? My answer would be no."

Jan: Excuse me, but I did not ask you to ask me a question, sir. I asked: Did you measure for psychological damage? Please answer my question.

Vijay: No.

Jan: Can you measure for psychological damage?

Vijay: As I have tried to explain, no, of course not.

Jan: Then you cannot say with any certainty that there was no psychological damage, correct? (Vijay nods) In other words, you don't know.

Vijay: (blushing) I would not say that, Mrs. Thomas.

Jan: You just did, sir.

In the end, the HUC approved the Quip experiment by a public vote of 12-4, with Vijay Jain as pale as a Viking in winter, David Spiers pulling at his collar, and Jack Lapage eyeing Jan with his jaws visibly tight. However, Jan accepted the decision without a word of protest. As she later explained, she was not satisfied with Vijay's answers and she was not happy that Simon would be the first human to receive Quip. But she knew that something had to be done about his problem and she had no alternative. Her message to Simon, however, continued to be: "I worry that the treatment might be worse than the problem."

To which, Simon knew, Keith and Dr. Nertz, along with Vijay Jain, Gibby Gibson and Ariel Jones would respond:

"We know what we are doing."

PART TWO

THE TREATMENT

CHAPTER NINE

On Sunday evening, one night before the Quip experiment, Simon Thomas sat on the deck outside his bedroom drinking Chardonnay and enjoying the sunset. There was a pinkish cast to

the flattened waters of the San Francisco Bay and the magenta silhouette of Mount Tamalpias was fast evolving to purple. If the Quip experiment were to render him a mental vegetable, as Jan so worried, and this was to be his final sunset with his faculties intact, he could not have asked for one finer. In fact, his entire day could not have been finer.

To celebrate the end of the school year for Berkeley High as well as to take everyone's mind off the experiment, Simon and Keith had taken their families to the Great America

amusement park. For Simon and the twins this meant riding roller coasters. Simon had been an enthusiast since his ninth summer when his parents took the family to Six Flags in Georgia and he rode the largest coaster in the park. He had never forgot the agonizingly slow climb up that immense first hill, his heart pounding, his fingers wrapped in a death-grip around the safety bar. Then came the momentary pause at the crest followed by the heart-in-throat plunge down, wind screaming in his face, knees turning to slush, and the neck-snapping, speed-crazed race through the remainder of the course. Years later, Simon would describe it as his introduction to sex.

His mother thought his brain was wired funny to love roller coasters so. Nobody would ever get her on one, she vowed, and, to the best of Simon's knowledge, nobody ever did. His dad rode them on occasion with Simon, but mostly Simon rode with Maureen and, later, by himself. Louise and Elizabeth had inherited his passion. When they were too young to ride without a parent, a nervous Jan had been forced to ride too. So brave in all other matters, she was, in the beginning, less-than-stout-hearted about roller coasters. Though she would never be the superfan that Simon and the twins were, she'd progressed to where she could share in the family fun. This put her light years ahead of Sandra Joyner, who would not ride even the small roller coasters designed for young children. Since Keith and his boys, Walt and Earl, were of similar mind to Simon and the twins where roller coasters were concerned, Jan graciously spent the day with Sandra watching everyone else have fun.

In between rides on the traditional wooden-framed Grizzly, the cork-screwing loops of the Vortex and the Demon, the 360-degree Tidal Wave and the overhead suspension coaster called Top Gun, the two families stuffed themselves on churros, red-rope candy, and popcorn. They also ate a lunch of hot dogs and soft drinks which prompted a debate amongst the adults about the merits of amusement park dogs versus ballpark franks.

"Nothing tastes better than the hot dogs you get at a baseball game," asserted Keith who adored baseball like Simon adored roller coasters. "The hot dog is a food that was intended to be enjoyed while you are sitting under the sun and watching a pitcher face off against a batter."

"Nonsense," countered Simon who liked hot dogs but disliked baseball. "A hot dog was indeed intended to be devoured outdoors, but, noteworthy for its mobility, was designed to be eaten while standing in line at an amusement park waiting to ride a roller coaster."

"A hot dog is a hot dog," shrugged Jan who liked baseball and hot dogs and was content to call a fact a fact.

Sandra, who liked neither baseball nor hotdogs, had no comment and ate her yoghurt ice cream in silence.

Yes, it had indeed been a fine day. One of his finest, Simon thought. It had been a day in which Louise and Elizabeth behaved like loving sisters who enjoyed each other's company, arguing only while in the stationwagon. It had been a day in which Keith's boys did not made themselves look too foolish showing off for the twins, and Sandra had not been excessively whiny.

Simon's remembrances were interrupted by the sound of the screen door to the deck sliding open. Jan emerged wearing a kimono that a Japanese client had given her. It was pink with yellow flowers and it hugged her contours in the most beguiling manner. Simon took note that his wife was holding an empty wine glass in her hand. Taking note of his notice, Jan gestured toward the bottle of wine and he dutifully filled her glass.

"Come here often?" she asked, sitting down.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, I do," Simon replied. "Lovely view. Good wine cellar. Plus, I've found it to be a terrific place to score with women."

"Do tell?" asked Jan, smiling as she sipped from her glass. "Are the women that easy or are you that good?"

"I'll be honest, the women are that easy. Particularly this one colored girl. A single glass of wine and I'm usually in like Flynn."

"Who was Flynn anyway?" Jan asked. "Is that an ethnic thing, Irish?"

"Some say the expression originated with Errol Flynn, a movie actor reputed to have been quite the swordsman, both on and off the set. Of course, it could have originated with Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the first woman to head the Communist Party in the United States, but I don't think I would bet the farm on it."

"Then tell me something you do know. What's she look like, this colored girl of yours?"

"A lot like you, oddly enough."

"And how is that?"

"The most incredible legs, long, strong and stretching all the way to the ground. A

charming sweet face that can light up the night when she smiles. Breasts sweet and tasty like ripe persimmons."

"Ooh, I like that!" Jan bubbled. "What about the booty?"

"Ah, well, the booty. Yes. There was a time when the back of her jeans formed the most perfect imitation of a lower case w. Truly an inspirational sight."

"There was a time, you say? I think you'd better elaborate on that one, mister."

"She recently turned 40. Historically, African-American women have tended to gain weight in the posterior quarters during their later years."

Jan sat up, bridling. "Later years? Forty hardly qualifies as one's later years."

"Yes, but this particular woman did give birth to twins."

"What's that got to do with the woman on the moon?"

"It was told that by the time Alexander the Great had conquered the Phoenician city of Tyre, one could not place a hand upon his back without touching a battle scar."

"Your point?"

"It's not the age, my dear, it's the mileage."

"No more lower case w?" Jan sounded wistful.

"More like the omega in the Greek alphabet, I would say."

Simon thought this comment quite funny. No one else on the deck, however, shared that opinion and he stopped laughing.

"Aren't you supposed to be fasting from alcohol before the experiment?" Jan grumped.

"Nothing but water after nine o'clock," Simon said. "What's with the attitude? I thought we were being playful. If you're going to switch to a serious mode you are going to have to give me better cues."

"What's playful about having a big butt?" Jan said.

"You don't have a big butt."

"I am going to have one. You said so yourself. History is working against me."

"History is littered with exceptions and you have always been exceptional," Simon said, reaching for her.

Jan drew back and thrust her empty wine glass at him. "You're going to have to ante up more of this wine if you want to so much as cop a feel off this colored girl, Irish."

Simon refilled Jan's glass and poured some more for himself.

Together they sat and watched the sky grow dark and talked about their day at Great America. They wondered with sadness as to how many more such family outings they would have before Louise and Elizabeth went off on their own respective ways. They laughed about the flirtatious friendship between their girls and the Joyner boys which, to their relief, was much more like the kinship of cousins rather than the sparks between teens of the opposite sex. And speaking of sparks, what about the tension between Keith and Sandra? Too many eyes-to-the-sky looks from Keith, too many twisted-lip frowns from Sandra. There had been and probably would always be a few too many strained moments between the two.

"Their marriage will survive, though, because they need each other," Jan declared as she started on her third glass of wine. "They love their life style and they forged it as a team. Look at Sandra, she loves being Mom. She likes driving her boys to their activities and serving on the PTA and all those other Joyner-boy organizations she busies herself with. She loves taking care of her big house. She thinks of herself as a domestic manager and she's a pro. The best I know. She also relishes the role of a professor's wife. She actually looks forward to hosting dinner parties and attending faculty social events and she is enthralled with campus politics."

"She just doesn't seem too fond of Keith at times," Simon interjected.

"Oh, she's always fond of him," Jan said, "deeply so. But it's her life she loves. Same with Keith. He loves his sons and he loves his big house and he gets off on the faculty parties, too. But Keith is a competitor, a ferocious competitor, even worse than me. He wants to be the best at what he does. And he wants everybody else to know he's the best. To do that, he needs to focus on his science. Sandra makes that possible. You better believe he is grateful."

"So Sandra is fond of Keith and he is grateful for her. Not exactly troubadour material is it?"

"It works for them."

"That's not us, is it? Have we become two people dependent upon one another to maintain our lifestyle?"

Jan stretched her long brown legs out straight so they extended well beyond the hem of the kimona. She held them steady that way with seemingly little strain. Still lean and muscular, Simon thought, as if impervious to the mileage.

"No, that's not us and that's never going to be us," Jan replied, lowering her legs. "Not that we're any less of a team than Sandra and Keith. The difference is that if Sandra could change Keith's personality, replace the man he is with someone else, I suspect she would. I don't want someone else. Like the song says: Baby, it's you."

Simon knew a you-may-kiss-me-now cue when he heard it. At least he knew a you-may-kiss-me-now cue from Jan. He reached for her and this time she did not draw back. At one point he thought how incredible it was for two people, soon to celebrate their twentieth wedding anniversary, to still get so turned on by necking, but he did not dwell on that thought for long because by then his hand had slipped inside the kimono and was fondling her breasts and he was reminded that, actually, they were somewhat larger than persimmons and a hell of a lot more fun to squeeze. But he did not dwell on that thought for too long either for by then she had unzipped his trousers and had moved from her chair to sit in his lap and she was not wearing any panties and he discovered the advantage of kimonos and oh, Jesus, God, yes, no wonder the Japanese had such a high birthrate and he would have grit his teeth and held onto that thought for a hell of a lot longer had there not come the loud voices of arguing teenage girls in the hallway outside his bedroom. Simon discovered yet another advantage of kimonos: a fully-robed Jan was able to intercept Louise and Elizabeth while Dad was still fumbling to get his shrinking, slippery, and disappointed member back inside his trousers.

Much later that night, Simon and Jan finished what they'd started, in bed, with the lights out, kids safely tucked away. Jan, legs hooked over his, furiously riding him with her head thrown back, mouth sucking air. Simon, sitting up, licking her plum-colored nipples, his strong hands grasping the bouncing booty he'd earlier disparaged. He came as if for the first and final time, emptying everything he was inside her and when she finally pulled herself off it was as if she'd uncorked a bottle whose fumes filled the room with a loamy greenhouse smell. A younger Simon might have been inspired to immediately make love to her again and a younger Jan might have welcomed him in. Instead, they curled up together and went to sleep.

For Simon it was a restless night, his slumber punctuated by fitful periods of awakenings, when his mind raced with thoughts of Jan and the twins, Grandma Mary Margaret and the story of Payton Adams. All such vital, integral parts of his life. Would anything still be the same after the experiment with Quip? At some point during the night, for

the very first time since he'd learned of genetic memory and Quip, Simon Thomas experienced doubts. And with those doubts came the first appearance of fear.

At 9 am the next morning, Simon and Jan entered the Brain Lab with Louise and Elizabeth. Their first stop was the office of Dana Plowman, the veterinarian-zoologist in charge of the Brain Lab's Primate Center. The Quip experiment was scheduled to begin at 10 and Keith said it would be over well before noon. The Quip signal, he explained, was emitted at such a high frequency that, much like the high-speed playback mode on a tape recorder, it compressed time. As a result, days of real-time memories could be relived in a single hour, which is how long the dosage Simon would be administered was projected to last. Jan had been emphatic about not leaving the twins at home.

"If they even bother to drag their butts out of bed, they'll spend the time watching that damn MTV," she said.

Arrangements had been made for them to be dropped off at the Primate Center which was in the basement of the Brain Lab, just down the hall from the room that housed the Modulated Natal Emulation and Memory Enhancer. Jan felt time spent in the Primate Center was educational even though the girls mostly just played with Morris. "At least they have to use their brains," Jan said.

Dana Plowman was thirty-something, even taller than Jan and slim, with a pleasant long face and light brown hair that hung down the length of her back. Simon found her sexy and had once mentioned this to Jan who told him it was because Dana had a musky smell from working with the apes and monkeys.

"She makes you feel like Tarzan," Jan said.

When Simon and his family entered Dana's office, she was sitting in front of a computer, feet up on her desk, plugged into a Walkman and nodding her head to the beat of the music she was hearing. She was dressed in Gap jeans and a Hard Rock Cafe tee-shirt from Atlanta, and was wearing Birkenstock sandals with no socks.

"Yo, Dana!" said the twins in unison.

"Hey, girls, what's up?" responded Dana, pulling her Walkman off but not removing her feet from the desk. She greeted Simon and Jan with a simple: "Howdy!"

After expressing her envy of Simon's being able to participate in the Quip experiment -- "It's like time travel, you know? Cool!" -- Dana took Simon and his family into the animal area which, in addition to the bonobos, also held half-a-dozen rhesus macaque monkeys, and a changing number of squirrel monkeys. The bonobos were housed communally in a large cage with plexiglass walls. An immense climbing structure was its dominant feature -- bonobos being tree-dwellers by nature -- but it also had a sandbox and a tire swing, a water trough and doors that provided access to an outdoor run and two adjoining lab spaces.

One of the adjoining lab spaces was usually empty and reserved for bringing in special equipment. The other space was the game room. It contained tables, chairs, a lexigram machine and a computer. The lexigram machine was basically a large keyboard with symbols representing objects, verbs, and expressions that the bonobos could use to communicate. The computer had a joystick and a terminal that, when the computer was not in use, showed a pair of pictograms: a square and a leopard. Double-clicking the cursor on the square called up a version of the game "Tetris" that had been modified specifically for the bonobos to play. Double-clicking on the leopard called up another game designed for the bonobos called "Targets," in which the bonobos had to shoot down incoming targets that were shaped like leopards.

When Simon and his family entered the bonobo cage with Dana Plowman, Morris, who had been playing on the climbing structure, let out a string of excited barks. He followed this with a series of funny faces, pulling his red lips back from his teeth in a goofy grin, and rubbing a hand through the fine long black hair on his head to ruffle its natural part down the middle. After making faces, he dropped to the floor and ran to his mother, Zazu, who was on a blanket, grooming his Aunt Faye. The three bonobos began exchanging yips and pointing to the humans. Morris suddenly broke off the dialogue, gave his mother a kiss and scampered over to where the humans stood. He began gesturing in signs to Dana. Elizabeth, who excelled at understanding Morris' signs, translated for her parents.

Morris: *Honey girls play game Morris?*

Dana: *Morris say hello guests.*

Morris (to Elizabeth and Louise): *Hello honey girls.*

Elizabeth: *Hello Morris.*

Louise: *Hello Morris.*

Morris (to Dana): *Morris good. Honey girls play game Morris?*

Dana: *Morris bad. Morris say hello all guests.*

Morris (to Jan): *Morris sorry. Hello honey girls mom.*

Dana: *Morris say hello man.*

Morris (to Simon half-heartedly): *Hello man.*

Simon knew that Morris referred to every human male, even those whom he knew well, as man. Like all bonobo males, he was very attached to his mother and respectful of all females. However, while he seemed to fully understand the concept of "mom," he had no understanding nor word for "dad."

Morris (to Dana): *Morris good. Honey girls play game Morris?*

Dana: *Morris good. Honey girls play game Morris. What game Morris play honey girls?*

Morris: *Honey girls play targets Morris.*

Dana: *No targets. Honey girls play tetris Morris.*

Morris (makes faces and barks): *No tetris. No. No. Honey girls play targets.*

Yes. Yes.

Dana (laughing at Morris who had pressed his red lips together in a pout): *Yes. Yes. Honey girls play targets.*

Morris let out a sharp bark and leaped up into the arms of Dana. She must have been expecting it, Simon thought, as she had braced her legs and was not knocked off balance when all sixty pounds of Morris landed on her. Morris wrapped his long arms around Dana's shoulders and gave her a hug. Then he was back on the floor, racing back to his mother and aunt, and again exchanging yips and facial gestures.

"Is he asking for his mother's permission?" wondered Jan.

"Something like that, I'm sure," Dana replied. "Bonobos are dutiful offspring. They stay close to their mothers their entire lives and are very obedient."

"I know a couple of human offspring who could learn from that," said Jan, shooting her

daughters a motherly look.

"Bonobo moms probably beat their children," Louise said with derision. "Zazu better watch out. One day, Morris might decide its payback time."

"No way," said Dana, laughing. "Bonobos are the most non-violent of all the primates. They're lovers not fighters and I mean that literally. Especially the males. At the first sign of aggression, they are more likely to engage in sexual activity than battle. We think their pacifism is the result of being a female-centered society rather than male-dominant. I like to think so, anyway. Cool, huh?"

Morris returned to the humans, took Elizabeth and Louise each by the hand and led them to the door that opened to the game room. Dana said she would check on the twins from time to time.

"To make sure Morris hasn't bored them to tears with targets and tetris," Dana said. "Sooner or later he'll take them to the outdoor run and play chase. Then he'll want to be tickled half a hundred times. You know the routine, I'm sure."

"Morris was an exemplary houseguest," Jan said. "Much better behaved than some of the children that have come for sleep-overs."

"Cool! Score another point for bonobo matriarchy," Dana joked.

Jan laughed politely then abruptly got serious. "I know I have asked this before, Dana, but I'm asking again: Have you noticed any changes in Morris' personality or behavior since his Quip treatments?"

Dana shook her head. "Still the same Morris." Then Dana laughed. "That's not quite true. He has learned to shriek and that's a little unusual not to mention wearing on the ears."

"What do you mean?" asked Jan, not smiling. "I've heard apes shriek at the zoo."

"You've heard chimpanzees," said Dana. "They love to shriek and hoot. Bonobos have evolved their own distinct woof-woof sound. I think they sound more like dogs than apes. But, it's cool, don't worry. Bonobos are terrific mimics and fast studies. Morris has been listening to the macaques. He's learned to shriek from them. No cause for alarm, I assure you."

* * *

Simon Thomas was back inside the Modulated Natal Emulation and Memory Enhancer, suspended in the amorphous aerogel, and once again Keith Joyner was fitting the fibrous net of

the GEM headgear around his scalp.

"I think I feel some prickling," Simon complained, "but it seems to be scattered around in a few spots. Is that right? Or is there something amiss with headgear?"

Keith paused to laugh at Simon's concern, then continued to pat the netting into place. "No, there's nothing amiss. And I promise any discomfort will be gone in a couple of minutes. Some of these fibers are tipped with electrodes that do have to make contact with the skin. We use them to administer the Quip."

Simon wanted to know how a drug could be administered through wires. He must have sounded more alarmed than he intended for Keith again laughed and gave him a squeeze on the shoulder.

"Relax, would you? Keep in mind that the dosage of Quip we administer is measured in terms of molecules. For a man of your size, it will be in the neighborhood of about a hundred thousand. I've never seen a spoon that small, have you?"

"I wouldn't know the volume of a hundred thousand molecules," Simon grumped, realizing that he no longer felt the prickling on his skull. "That sounds excessive."

"It's nothing you could see with the naked eye." Keith reassured him.

Minutes later, Keith was barking final instructions to his colleagues. Then he was back poking his head over the edge of the MNEME and asking if Simon was ready to start remembering. Simon gave Keith the thumb's up sign in response.

"I'm here for you. Don't forget that," Keith said. "And remember, if for any reason whatsoever, you want to bail out, any pressure on the inside surface of the lid will spring it open."

The lid to the MNEME swung shut. Once again, Simon Thomas was in total darkness.

As with his previous venture into the MNEME, Simon began to think about Ocean City, Maryland. Only this time, he remembered his first trip there with Jan. It was their first overnight journey together. They went after final exams of their sophomore year. It seemed as if every single student from the University of Maryland had gone to Ocean City that particular weekend. You could scarcely see the sand on the beach for all the towels and blankets.

Simon remembered a walk with Jan along the boardwalk. It was a brilliant sun-blazed

day, the sky was a vast bowl of the purest blue without so much as a whisper of cloud to smudge its pristine surface. Jan was resplendent in a pink two-piece bathing suit, not brief enough to be a bikini, but brief enough to command the ogling stares of every male of leering age. She strode the boardwalk like a goddess, passing the shops and restaurants and arcades and moving through the young crowd on her long strong legs as if her divinity was recognized by all who crossed her path and the opportunity to see her was a blessing she bestowed. The stares of other guys filled Simon with immense pride. It reminded him of the times as a young boy he walked with his brothers and watched them openly gawk at every teenaged girl they saw, making the appropriately inappropriate comments that teenaged boys are wont to make. He remembered too the time when his sister Maureen started to fill her own suit with authority and began drawing more than a few stares and inappropriate comments from the boys who passed by her. Such stares and comments did not sit well with Grant and Kevin. When Simon asked them why they were made angry by boys who were acting exactly as they themselves had been acting, he was told to shutup.

Jan drew only stares. Whatever comments she may have solicited were kept out of earshot of Simon. He was a pussycat even then, but he was a big pussycat and nobody would have risked pissing him off. But there was little danger of that happening. Simon was feeling far too good to be made angry by anyone. For walking that day on the boardwalk with Jan, looking over at her lithe tawny figure, his only thought was that of all the guys in all the world, she chose to be with him. And in the midst of his being filled with pride and love and a longing to be alone with her something caused him to look up.

The blue bowl of sky was suddenly filled with falling beads of flashing light, like a downpour of raindrops, diamond raindrops, sparkling in the sun. And then the blue itself was falling, falling away fast, as if it were being washed down with the drops of flashing light. And behind the blue was a whiteness, a whiteness tinged with yellow, like the color of buttermilk. It filled Simon's vision and then the buttermilk whiteness became the sky and the ocean and the beach were gone and all of the shops and restaurants and arcades and all of the people on the boardwalk were gone, and even Jan, she was gone. Simon was standing alone on the boardwalk only it was no longer the boardwalk but a wooden foot-bridge leading down

to a huge wrought iron gate. On the other side of the gate he could see a mighty expanse of dark structures rising up through a thick shroud of yellow and reddish black dust. Above the gate was a steel archway and hanging by a heavy chain from the keystone center of the archway was an iron sign. There was writing etched on the sign in high black ornamented letters. It read: Homestead Steel Works.

CHAPTER TEN

Simon's Journal

Dr. Nertz said that memories are like scenes from a movie or a video cassette: they can be replayed over and over again simply by rewinding the tape of our neural network maps. Apparently, he was right. When the dosage of Quip that I received in the MNEME took effect, images unsummoned by me began appearing in my mind, images I somehow knew to be the memories of Payton Adams, as immediately and assuredly as I would have known those that were my very own. In one sense, I did experience these memories as scenes captured by the cam-corder of my great-grandfather's eyes and ears. However, the viewing experience was not at all the same as if I were sitting in a darkened cinema or in front of my television set. For I was at once both watching events transpire and an active participant, the sole member of the audience as

well as the actor with the lead role.

In the debriefing that followed my Quip treatment, Keith said none of this was a surprise to him, which in itself was no surprise to me seeing as Keith would have me believe he knows all there is to know about the human brain. As my particular brain, thanks to the environment inside the MNEME, was in the NREM state while under the influence of Quip, Keith said it was only natural that it would sort and process the images it received exactly as if I myself were living through these events in real time.

"Your brain was just doing its job," was how he put it.

Far be it from me to second guess my friend on his own playing field, especially since Vijay Jain, Gibby Gibson, and Ariel Jones, the other members of my debriefing team, unanimously concurred, an event of almost transcendental rarity. What this humble humanities professor can offer on the subject is the following: I could perceive my surroundings and what transpired in these memories through all of five of my senses, that is to say, I could experience with vivid clarity the sights and sounds, the feel, the smell, and even the tastes. I could also sense the emotional responses of my great-grandfather to these memories and could, to some degree and with practice, discriminate between the emotions that were his and those that were mine. However, my thoughts were my own and I was not privy to his. Nor did I exercise any control over what took place, not in the events that I witnessed nor in the order in which I witnessed them. Had I in fact been able to exercise any control, I hope I would have presented a more cohesive, evenly-detailed narrative with much smoother transitions.

For the truth of the matter is, Keith was not entirely correct when he said my brain would process the memories as if it were experiencing them in real life. Instead, one memory might play out at some length and then abruptly shift to another detailed memory or to a series of memory snatches, like the quick cuts of a budget-minded and not altogether competent film editor. All in all it made for a rather sloppy narrative flow, one that, in the beginning, left me with a hazy sense of disorientation, like a traveler disembarking from a long plane flight in which more than one time zone has been crossed. I soon learned, however, that if I focused my attention on a new memory rather than expend much thought trying to comprehend its predecessor, the overall picture made sense.

My greatest fear now is that the memories of my great-grandfather will not be retained

for very long in my mind, that they will vanish as abruptly as they appeared when the residual effects of the Quip have worn off. Vijay believes I have some cause for concern. However, he also believes that the resonance of the memory hum set off by the Quip will take several days to subside, much as, over the course of time, the sympathetic vibrations set off in a tuning fork gradually fade. Keith disagrees on both counts and thinks there is no need to worry. He cites the recurrence of my dream (or what I had always believed was a dream) as evidence that once genetic memory signals trigger my awareness, they will automatically be processed and stored in the neocortex, available for recall at any time. Keith may not understand as much about the brain as he pretends, but I must grant him his due: he is usually right. Also, Gibby and Ariel concurred and Vijay thought it plausible. Far be it from me to second-guess the collective wisdom of a group of scientists. Nonetheless, I have decided to record my experiences in this journal while the memories are still fresh in my mind. Besides, in the writing, I can give myself over to digesting the meaning of what it was that I remembered. Sorry, Keith, my friend, but this is how I personally prefer to process my long-term explicit memory maps.

* * *

The initial image of the wooden foot bridge leading down to the steel archway at the entrance into the Homestead Works lingered in my mind for what seemed like a very long while before suddenly dissolving into a successive flurry of new images that flashed across my consciousness in an enormous rush. The images came much too fast for me to process and I found myself becoming dizzy and nauseous. Then, suddenly, the images stopped and I was in a one-room, enclosed shed, not much bigger than a kitchen pantry, with clapboard walls and ceiling, and a stone floor.

The shed was lit by a single electric light bulb, housed inside a protective metal cage. The bulb was attached to a thick cloth-covered electrical cord which dropped down through a hole in the cracked and spider-webbed ceiling. The shed had no windows and a single door which was closed. Shelves lined two of the shed's walls. They were stocked with an assortment of sacks and boxes, jars and cans -- again what one might expect to see in a pantry except that I was quite certain these were not kitchen supplies. The remaining wall was bare save for a large nail, more like a spike actually, from which hung a heavy coat. On the floor beneath the coat, resting against the wall were a pair

of heavy leather boots with thick wooden soles. These boots were placed upside down and the stone floor beneath them was stained with wetness.

In this tiny pantry-like shed I was alone, seated at a small table cluttered with items I had never before seen: a mound of black clay so oily it glistened under the light from the overhead bulb; a small box containing dozens of wax capsules; a roll of heavy paper that was red like the color of holly berries; a ball of cord that was thick and gritty-looking; and a small jar filled with a strong-smelling gummy substance. Though I had never seen any of these items before, all were quite familiar to me. The black clay was dynamite, the capsules in the box were blasting caps filled with mercury fulminate powder, the cord was a fuse of gunpowder entwined in jute, and the gummy substance was a type of glue. I knew what these items were because I recognized them as the tools of a steel mill tapper. I also knew that I was inside the tapper's shed at the Carnegie Steel Company's Homestead Works. For as surely as I knew myself to be Simon Thomas, husband, father, professor of history, so, too, did I know myself to be Payton Adams, the day-shift tapper for the open hearth furnaces of the Homestead Works.

I was dressed in a collarless gray pullover shirt and dun pants that were held up with suspenders. The material was the same for both and was coarse and scratchy. I believe it was some type of wool, maybe serge. My feet were bare and heavily calloused. The sleeves of my shirt had been torn away. My exposed arms bristled with strength though they were not as visibly muscular as what I am accustomed to seeing when I look at my arms. There was, however, something odd about the appearance of my bare arms: patches of hair were missing and what hairs did remain had been badly singed. I should note, too, that my hands bore numerous scars. Some were small and incidental, like the scars you would expect to see on a man who works with his hands. Others were more significant. My obvious guess is that these more pronounced scars came from working with the large knife that I held in my right hand. This knife had an oak grip, a brass guard, and a curved and jagged-edged blade of steel that looked dangerously sharp.

As I sat at the table, I used my knife to slice off a chunk of the dynamite which I then proceeded to work with my bare hands. The dynamite had the texture and consistency of the Velveeta that Louise and Elizabeth are so fond of eating with their Wheatsworth crackers except that its oiliness made it somewhat slippery. Despite the slipperiness, however, my hands

-- that is, Payton's hands -- seemed to have little problem shaping the dynamite into a stick the size of a cigar. In working with the dynamite, I was again made acutely aware of the power carried in these hand. I detected a sense of pride on the part of my great-grandfather. He was, I am certain, very much aware of his enormous physical strength.

A quick slash of the jagged-edged knife and I was holding a swatch of the red paper which I then tightly rolled around my dynamite stick. From the box I plucked one of the blasting caps and, again using the steel blade of the knife, poked a channel through its wax-coating into the mercury fulminate powder within. Next I cut a length of jute fuse and inserted this into the channel, pressed the blasting cap onto one end of my dynamite stick and sealed the completed cartridge with the glue. Apparently I was quite confident in myself for I did not bother to inspect the cartridge, but instead, set it down on the table next to several other completed cartridges, and began to work on the next. I could not help but think of how I, as Simon Thomas, will often re-read the papers of my students two or three times to make sure I have made no mistakes in their grading. It is the first of many differences I was to find between my great-grandfather and myself. It is also my first true awareness that objects and actions which I perceived in the personal sense -- i.e., my hands, my arms, my legs and feet, my doing this or my doing that -- were the objects and actions of my great-grandfather. I was merely an invisible passenger along, so to speak, for the ride. From here on out in the journal, I shall try to be clear on this point and shall make a conscientious effort to delineate between my great-grandfather's actions and my own reactions.

The air inside the tiny shed was cool, a coolness so pronounced it returned my concentration to my memories. I could see where two holes had been punched into the stone floor so that a draft of cold subterranean air was continually being drawn up and out through the ceiling cracks. I knew those holes in the floor to have been deliberate, an attempt to cool the tapper's shed for the safe preparation of the dynamite. This was not necessary for heat alone would not detonate the dynamite. Only the shock wave from the ignition of the blasting cap could cause the dynamite to explode. My knowledge was a surprise to me. I, as Simon Thomas, would not allow firecrackers for my daughters Elizabeth and Louise, fearing they would be injured in the explosions. Only under duress from Jan did I agree to purchase sparklers. And yet I suddenly found myself fully aware of the dangers posed by dynamite and the techniques by

which it may be safely handled. This knowledge of explosives obviously resided within Payton and I sensed that he would never share this knowledge with his bosses. My first thought was that he enjoyed the coolness of the shed and wished to preserve it. I soon discovered however, that my great-grandfather also enjoyed the privacy of his shed and for reasons beyond a preference for solitude.

On the floor beside the chair was a metal lunch pail, unpainted, banged up, and dirty. When my great-grandfather finished the next cartridge, he did not place it with the others on the table but instead opened the lunch pail and placed it inside, next to two that were already there. The pail also contained an apple, a badly bruised apple that I, as Simon Thomas, would never dream of eating, and a chunk of bread. A fleeting image of the pail containing three apples, the chunk of bread and one potato appeared in my mind. It vanished as my great-grandfather removed the bread from the pail and began to chew on it. The bread was gritty and carried with it an ashy aftertaste. As he continued his work, I saw that for every three cartridges he prepared for the Homestead Works, Payton Adams prepared one for his lunch pail. What does my great-grandfather do with these cartridges, I wondered. Does he sell them on some sort of black market? And who would want them?

There was a knock on the door to the shed and a man poked his head inside and shouted: "Heat's up on One!" By this I knew he meant it was time to tap the steel out of Open Hearth Furnace Number One. I also knew the year to be 1892 and that there were 16 open hearth furnaces and one Bessemer furnace in the Homestead Works.

The face of the man who shouted at me was black with grime, like burnt toast. Despite this, I recognized him as Mike O'Toole, a heater's assistant, barely out of boyhood, who was very popular amongst the other workers and was known throughout the Irish community of Homestead as "Tooley." His job, except for when Payton Adams was on the floor, was to work the furnaces in the soaking pits that produced the hot air used to soften steel ingots for rolling. When my great-grandfather was on the floor, however, Tooley became the tapper's helper.

Tooley left, closing the door behind him. Payton Adams reached down and latched shut his lunch pail. This action, I sensed, was enough to insure no one would disturb it. In a steel mill, few men would be so foolish as to be caught with their hands inside another man's lunch pail. I got the feeling that this fact of mill life held especially true for the lunch pail of my great-

grandfather, owner of a large oak-handled knife with a curved and incredibly sharp jagged-edged steel blade.

My great-grandfather rose from the table, took up his boots and pulled them on. They were damp and clammy inside. Then he slipped into the heavy coat. Like his boots, the inside of my great-grandfather's coat was also damp and clammy. The outside was covered with a layer of reddish-gray dust that puffed into the air with every movement of the material. I kept expecting my great-grandfather to sneeze but he did not. He must have been inured to the dust. Into one of his coat pockets, my great-grandfather stuffed two of the dynamite cartridges he had made. Then, from one of the wall shelves he retrieved a pair of dark goggles. The removal of the goggles startled a big black spider who skittered off the shelf and began to climb the wall. My great-grandfather stared at the fleeing spider for a moment, then pressed the ball of his thumb on top of it, crushing it to death against the wall in a squirt of yellow liquid that splashed over his thumbnail. As Simon Thomas, I was so squeamish at the sight, I expected my great-grandfather's body to recoil in a shudder of disgust. But Payton Adams wiped the liquid off his thumb and calmly proceeded to inspect his goggles. They too were covered with the reddish-gray dust and he wiped the lenses off on his shirt before slipping them over his neck. He did not yet pull the glasses on over his face for they were so darkly tinted that wearing them would have rendered him blind.

Payton Adams crossed the room, opened the door and stepped outside. The first thing that hit me was the noise, a cacophonous blend of metallic screeches, hydraulic hisses, and the tympanic thrum of exploding gases. Then there was the smell, the rotten egg stench that boils off from the burning of sulphur and limestone. My great-grandfather was standing in the midst of a vast dirt yard that looked as if it had been busted open and leveled by a bombardment of steel beams and plates, then stitched back together with railroad tracks. Many of the steel beams and plates had been stacked into house-sized pyramids. And the railroad tracks were arranged in a gridiron fashion, like the yardline markers on a football field. Nowhere did I see so much as a single blade of grass.

There were, in all directions, things I, as Simon Thomas, would have liked to study at length, but the eyes of my great-grandfather had trained on a massive rust-colored shed that looked somewhat like a barn but was about the size of an airplane hanger. This giant shed,

which lie directly across a set of railroad tracks from the tapper's shed, was at least three stories high for at each level there was a partial roof that overshadowed a row of long narrow openings, like an awning over glassless windows. Through these openings I could see the purple glow of arc lights shining through a smokey haze.

Atop the shed was a vaulted roof which rose to a steep peak from which smokestacks sprouted like tall and limbless tree trunks. Pouring steadily out of each stack was a thick plume of pink and black smoke that billowed upward to feed the shroud of pollution which painted the sky in the buttermilk hue I've described before. Following the rise of the plumes, I could see that this buttermilk-colored haze was so thick and ubiquitous it quenched the light of the sun. As a result, the blinding ball of fire to which I am accustomed had been diminished to a pale yellow disk that could be gazed upon at length with no discomfort.

My great-grandfather's eyes turned southward (based on the position of the sun) and I saw a town climbing the side of an immense steep hill that rose up from the flat plain upon which the Works had been built. A surge of emotion swept over me as my eyes moved up the hillside. My great-grandfather lived in a house somewhere in the upper half of that hill where the construction began to thin out. Was he thinking of his wife, Rosaleen, my great-grandmother? I pondered this question until I realized that it was not my great-grandfather's emotions that I was experiencing but those generated from within me.

It was all so confusing. I find it difficult enough being me. Simultaneously being someone else is daunting.

The sharp blast of a nautical whistle drew my great-grandfather's eyes around to the north where I saw a tugboat hauling a pair of coal-laden barges through the waters of a wide, brown, swift-running river. It was the river from my dream, curving past me on its way to completing a huge horseshoe bend.

Unlike in my dream, there was no fog to block my view and, after the tugboat and its barges moved past, I could see, on the opposite bank, more buildings and more smokestacks spewing more billowy plumes of pink and black smoke. An iron bridge spanned the river about mid-way through the bend, connecting this other village of smoke-belching buildings with the Homestead Works. There were other bridges crossing the brown river but this one particular bridge stood out because of the steady procession of cigar-shaped rail cars that were rolling

across it one after another. These rail cars were open at the top, exposing their contents which were hot enough to steam the air.

I knew that the town I saw on the side of the hill was Homestead. I knew that the swift-running brown river was the Monongahela, the only major river in the United States that flows in a northerly direction, and I knew that it was eight hundred feet wide at the horseshoe bend. I knew that the buildings and smokestacks I saw on the other side of the river were those of the Carrie blast furnaces. I knew that it was in the Carrie furnaces where iron ore shipped in from the Mesabi range was melted down and purged of its oxygen and impurities in the withering heat of burning coke and limestone. I knew that the bridge spanning the river mid-way through the horseshoe bend was called the hot-metal bridge and that the cigar-shaped rail cars, which were called torpedo cars, were delivering pig iron, extracted from the Carrie furnaces, to the Homestead Works where it would be cooked into steel. But did I know these things from my readings and research as Simon Thomas or did I know these things from my memories as Payton Adams? It was a question I would ask myself many times. It is a question that Keith and Vijay and Gibby and Ariel would ask of me many times as well.

I also knew that housed inside the massive shed I saw before me were three open hearth furnaces, including Open Hearth Number One. Before my great-grandfather could cross over the railroad tracks to enter it, however, I heard a warning whistle followed by the shrill shush of air brakes. A large steam locomotive appeared from behind the north side of the shed and rolled to a metal-grinding halt in front of my great-grandfather. The locomotive had been pulling two flatbed cars, each of which held four trapezoidal objects that were about ten feet in height. I recognized these objects as molds for shaping steel ingots. An enormous crane, mounted on wheels appeared from the south side of the barnlike building, pushed by a crew of a dozen men. They were pushing the crane toward the flatbed rail cars. Before I could see what was to be done with the molds, my great-grandfather turned and headed toward another building, a brick rotunda, on the same side of the tracks as the tapper's shed. This rotunda, which was right along the bank of the river, looked more like the residence of a well-to-do family than a building located in a steel mill. It had a shingled roof and windows that had been kept reasonably clean. I knew that this rotunda held office space for John Potter, the superintendent of the Homestead Works, and his corp of clerks, engineers and draftsmen. But, again, I had no way of knowing

whether this knowledge came from me or from my great-grandfather.

Adjacent to the rotunda I could see a flight of wooden steps that connected to a pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks. Suddenly there was one of those abrupt image shifts that I discussed earlier. This was my first occasion to experience the shift and, as I have said, it was disorienting to say the least. One moment my great-grandfather was standing outside in the open yard and the next he was inside the furnace shed.

Once more, it was the noise that hit me first -- a cacophonous blend like before only amplified many times over. The sulphurous smell was much stronger too, strong enough to burn the nostrils of my great-grandfather. Even he was momentarily halted by the stupendous heat and light. It was as if he had stepped out onto the surface of the sun and he had to squint to protect his eyes from the glairy yellow haze. The heat was so intense that within moments sweat was bubbling up from every pore on my great-grandfather's body, soaking his coat, his shirt, and his trousers, and filling his boots so that it felt as if his feet were in a puddle of water.

My great-grandfather donned his dark goggles and I could see that he was standing atop a giant bluish-black cauldron-like structure some one hundred feet in length and maybe thirty feet in width. Before me was a scene that could have come straight out of Dante Alighieri's seventh circle of Hell.

The hearth was filled with a lake of fire, a blood-red boiling body of liquid metal from which great golden tongues of flame shot upward like the exhalations of dragons. These flames would climb some fifteen feet to scorch the bowl of a huge ladle which hung by chains from an overhead crane. Upon reaching their apex, these curling tongues of dragon's breath plummeted back toward the hearth in a heavy shower of fiery flakes. Brigades of dirty-faced, bare-chested men were lined up a short distance from the hearth, handing off large sacks of what I knew to be coke, bituminous coal that had been processed into small but very hard gray stones that would give off tremendous heat when burned. The men at the end of each line slung the sacks of coke over their shoulders, raced to the hearth's edge and heaved their bundles into the fiery brew. With each impact there was a splash of flames that seemed to reach out for the man who hurled the sack. As the men returned to take their places at the head of their respective lines, I could see that the bare wet skin of their chests was incredibly white, like the skin of creatures that live underground. But this collective of pale white skin was also striped with burn scars, as if the

owners had crossed through a jungle of poisoned vines and had been marked to look like zebras. There were other dirty-faced, bare-chested men who were lined up directly in front of the hearth with shovels in their hands. Unlike the men who hurled the sacks of coke, a few of these men with shovels were black, African-Americans we would call them today, coloreds or worse they were called back then. Race is not easy to distinguish when men are working the heat, for all have been so heavily dusted with ash and grime as to look like minstrel singers. But these were men who worked in silence and there was no trace of song in their hearts or merriment on their faces. They looked more like galley slaves on a Roman barge that was heading for nowhere at a fast clip.

Each of the men with shovels stood in front of a mound of sand-like material that I knew was manganese. After a sack of coke had been tossed into the hearth and the flames had died down, the men with shovels would quickly scoop in a load of manganese then flee. Moments later, the lake of fire would spit out huge bubbles of sulfur and oxygen. These bubbles would rise up like big balloons then burst in explosive red and yellow sprays that sizzled through the air with the hiss of angry snakes.

There was a man coming towards my great-grandfather. It was Tooley. He was so wet with sweat he might have just come in from out of a storm. Turning away from him, my great-grandfather walked to a metal ladder at the edge of the open hearth furnace. The ladder dropped all the way to the floor some fifty feet below, but midway down, its descent was interrupted by a fenced-in catwalk which wrapped around the furnace's brick-lined outer walls.

Before climbing down the ladder, my great-grandfather reached into the pockets of his coat and withdrew a pair of rawhide gloves that were scorched black. He slipped the gloves over his hands and then took hold of the ladder. Even through the protective hide, I could feel the heat coming off the metal. As Simon Thomas, I proceed down ladders with utmost caution. Payton Adams apparently harbored no such concerns. He was down the ladder with breathtaking (in my own mind) swiftness and alighting on the catwalk. He spit and his spit danced on the metal floor of the catwalk like water on a hot skillet.

My great-grandfather looked down the length of the catwalk and I saw more bare-chested, dirty-faced and perspiration-soaked workers. Again, the men were mostly white but there were a few black men. White or black, the glistening chests and arms of the men were

knotted with muscles and seared with scars, and they were wearing huge gloves and holding long rods that were thrust through openings in the hearth. These, I knew, were the puddlers, the men who worked the heat, stirring the liquid so that oxygen and carbon impurities rise to the surface. Despite the ministrations of puddlers, it still took about eight hours to convert iron into steel. The work, I know from my studies, is as hideous as any that could be imagined. The temperature of the molten steel inside the hearth is about 3,000 degrees and the temperature on the catwalk by the openings in the furnace will rise to 130 degrees or more. A puddler might stir the charge for maybe 15 minutes before heat and exhaustion force him to back off. A second puddler will take the place of the first, work his 15 minutes then switch places again with the first. No wonder one of the puddlers who looked up to see my great grandfather's arrival on the catwalk broke into a wide grin. He knew his work was done. His grin was abruptly cut short when his trousers began to smoke. He had lingered too long in front of the furnace opening and his pants were smoldering. My great-grandfather looked away after the puddler jumped back from the furnace and started slapping at the embers on his trousers.

Tooley joined my great-grandfather on the catwalk and followed him away from the puddlers and around a corner. We immediately had to duck under a trough that was positioned directly underneath the tap-plug. The trough was quite long, extending all the way down to a steel ladle on the floor below. My great-grandfather looked over the catwalk's fence which enabled me to see that the ladle was about two-stories high and was notched at the top. This notch fed into a second, much smaller steel ladle that sat atop a rail car. This small ladle was the slag thimble. I knew this fact just as I knew that when the tap-plug was blown, the molten liquid would flow through the trough and into the large ladle. The liquid steel would settle at the bottom of the ladle and the impurities -- the slag -- would rise to the top and be siphoned off into the thimble. From his vantage point above, my great-grandfather inspected the ladle's bowl. I knew that he was making sure it was dry. If there is standing water inside the ladle it will cause an explosion when the molten metal hits it, like the eruption of a volcano. But again, I had to wonder, did this knowledge come from my great-grandfather or did it come from my own research?

I did note that the trough, ladle, and thimble were all rust-colored, the consequence, I knew, of continual exposure to corrosive heat. This knowledge, I was sure, came from within me

but I could not dwell on it for my great-grandfather was preparing to tap the heat.

The plug that corks an open hearth furnace's tap hole is a six-inch wide chunk of clay. With his oak-handled knife, my great-grandfather cleaved a slot in the center of this clay and wedged in one of his dynamite cartridges.

Tooley, from behind, took up a hammer that was attached by a hook to the fence and banged it hard against the top of the fence. He struck the fence four times. This, I knew, was the signal for the puddlers to close the openings to the furnace and take cover. Tooley waited ten seconds then struck the fence four more times, dropped his hammer and began to run. My great-grandfather struck a match, lit the fuse of the emplaced dynamite and swiftly moved away. The fuse was short and the explosion came quickly, blowing the plug to bits.

A crimson rill of man-made magma spewed out of the tapping hole, shimmering the air with its heat and spitting up great flakes of flame as it steamed across the trough and slithered down into the waiting ladle like a fiery crimson serpent. When the molten steel splashed into the ladle it unleashed a sound like the roaring of lions and launched a shower of sparks and jagged sheets of fire that licked the catwalk's fence and caused Tooley to cower. I do not know what my great-grandfather was thinking but he must not have been afraid of the fire for as his helper cowered, he calmly removed one of his boots and poured out the perspiration. Steam rose up from the catwalk floor where his sweat struck.

Tooley was trying to speak with me. His mouth was open wide and he was shouting, yet the roar of the molten steel filling the ladle was so deafening I had to move immediately next to him in order to hear what he was saying. He wanted to know if I would meet him at Muldoon's, a saloon on Eight Avenue in Homestead that was favored by the Irish steel workers. I nodded my head and Tooley grinned. He spoke again but I had stepped back and could no longer hear him. I think, however, he said something derogatory about Henry Clay Frick for the last word I could see forming on his lips was "prick." Tooley grinned again. With sooty ash ground into his entire face except around his eyes where his goggles had been, he looked like a raccoon in reverse. Though raccoons, I would guess, probably have cleaner, better teeth. For some reason, however, the image of soot-faced Mike O'Toole, standing there in his wooden-heeled boots with his broken-toothed grin and his glistening bare white chest and its striped burn scars, lingered solidly in my mind like the exclamation point at the end of a sentence.

When the image of Tooley finally disappeared, it was replaced by a second flurry of images that flickered across my awareness in a manner similar to but not so swiftly as those that led to the image of the Homestead Works entrance. Rather than a sensation of falling, this was more like viewing a collage in which the pieces of the picture swirl about as if they were so many detached leaves caught up in an autumn wind. Enough of an impression was imparted, however, to provide me with recognizable details. The images were of other furnaces, identical to the first and other explosions blowing other tap-plugs to bits, and other crimson serpents slithering into other huge rust-colored ladles. I saw more ladles with smoke curling off their rims hoisted by cranes, swung through the air and tipped so their molten brew teemed into the ingots that rode the rail cars to the soaking pits. There the heaters and their helpers re-softened them and sent them to the roughing mill where the rollers and their helpers rolled them into billets, blooms and slabs. Through the course of a day, my great-grandfather apparently crossed from one end of the Works to the other for I also caught glimpses of finishing mills where billets and blooms were rolled into beams that shearmen cut with huge saws that shrieked and spit sparks when steel ripped steel. The flurry concluded with images of my great-grandfather standing in the midst of a long line of men washing their faces and hands in the cold black water of a bosh, a huge trough into which tools that had become too hot to handle were dropped; and my great-grandfather standing with another long line of men in a tunnel running under the river, its roof and walls damp and its cool wet air stinking of sewage. And then my great-grandfather was emerging from that tunnel and in his hand was an envelop and inside that envelop were greenback dollars and coins. Payton Adams counted his money which totaled \$53.34. It was his pay for two weeks of work.

I sensed my great-grandfather was pleased and proud for he must have known that out of all the men emerging from the tunnel, he was one of the highest paid. Not only was he a union man, a member of the exclusive Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers (only one in ten steel workers was allowed into the union) but he was also a highly-skilled technician occupying one of the most critical positions in the mill. A sloppy tapper could get himself and other workers killed or injured. More importantly, from the perspective of the Carnegie Steel Company, a sloppy tapper could cost an entire heat.

As could an angry tapper.

There were not more than half-a-dozen skilled tappers in all the Pittsburgh area. In the hierarchy of mill workers, they were the elite of the elite. Mr. Carnegie and Mr. Frick were not fools. They were smart enough to know that tappers should not be insulted nor made angry in any way toward the company.

And from what I was to learn in subsequent Quip-induced remembrances, Payton Adams was the last man anyone would wish to make angry.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Simon's Journal

A curious thing happened today. I defeated Keith in racquetball. My winning is not so curious. Though it does not happen often, I do, on occasion defeat him. On those occasions, however, my margin of victory has always been substantial, the result of either Keith playing an exceptionally poor game or me playing an exceptionally good one. That is what made today so curious. My margin of victory was a single point. Keith always wins the close ones. He always says he has more want-to than me. And, until now, he always did.

* * *

On Friday, June 17, 1892, at a little after six o'clock in the evening, Payton Adams walked along Eighth Avenue in the town of Homestead, Pennsylvania, on his way to meeting a fellow steelworker, an apprentice heater by the name of Mike O'Toole, for a drink at the saloon of Denis Muldoon.

Eighth Avenue was at that time the major boulevard of Homestead. It originated at the main entrance to the steel works and ran west, parallel to the Monongahela river, through Homestead's downtown area and on into the city of Pittsburgh. My great-grandfather walked along that street on that day with no emotional reaction that I could discern. As Simon Thomas, however, I was at once both mesmerized and repulsed.

What passed for a sidewalk was a series of broken and cracked stones, equally divided between those that were raised and those that were sunken. If one did not watch carefully where one was walking, one was sure to stumble. Not that the view was all that much of a distraction. Though this street was the main thoroughfare, it was an unpaved, packed-down mixture of dirt and mud that bore a distinct yellow color, the result, no doubt, of the sulphurous rain that fell from the polluted clouds. In appearance, it could have been a street from a John Wayne western save for the double column of iron tracks bisecting it. A steady procession of colorful horse-drawn streetcars rolled along these tracks like a parade of fat lady bugs, their metal wheels screeching and squealing, their bells clanging and clanging. Passengers packed these horsecars to the point where a number of riders -- always men -- were forced to cling precariously to the sides. I say "precariously" because I saw a number of these riders lose their grip and fall into the street, a truly dangerous proposition for the traffic was considerable. There were horse- and mule-drawn trucks and wagons and buggies and carriages, plus a few mounted individuals. It was no wonder that the yellow mud of the street was liberally dotted with the brown clods of horse manure. And unlike the orderly procession of the horsecars along their tracks, the congestion of this other horse-borne traffic, plus a surprisingly large number of bicycle riders, was pell-mell with no obvious rules of the road in force. Pedestrians crossed at their own risk. The clang-clang warning of the horsecars joined the ring-ring warning of bicycles and the vocal cursings of the truck and wagon drivers to create an incessant din. At one point I saw a woman knocked down by an ice truck. However, my great-grandfather looked away before I could see what happened to her.

Even if the sidewalk had been smoothly paved, walking on it would have been treacherous for piled high along the cobblestone curb and spilling onto the sidewalk and street in equal measure were mounds of garbage and trash, and heaps of the aforementioned horse manure. I should add that mixed in with the horse wastes were more than a few lumps of what I suspect was human manure. Needless to say, the stench was eye-watering, or at least it would have been to me, like the smell of an old commode in a run-down gas station on a lonely highway in the middle of nowhere.

Traffic on the sidewalk was far heavier than on the street. All manner of mill workers mingled with the other residents of town and a wide assortment of peddlers with their pushcarts

selling a wide assortment of wares. One that caught my great-grandfather's eye was a man and a pretty teenaged girl who were selling baked potatoes hot out of a large tin box. There were also the "sandwich men," vendors who walked up and down the sidewalk wearing signs strapped to their front and back. And there were a great many children. A few of the youngest of these children were working -- boys hawking newspapers, girls hawking matchbooks. The majority, the older ones were not. Incredibly filthy and dressed in rags, these non-working children squatted in the middle of the woebegone sidewalk and played marbles or smoked pipes until they caught the attention of an adult. It only took a single word of adult recognition -- even if it were a curse word -- for the children to be up and begging off anyone in the immediate area. Payton Adams walked past or through such children as if they were not there.

The two- and three-story wooden buildings along the street were as densely packed as the shops on the Ocean City boardwalk and even more ramshackle in construction. I passed bakeries, grocery stores, and butcher shops, including one that advertised second-hand meat. Of the grocery stores one in particular caught my eye for it was where Rosaleen and many of the other wives of union members did most of their food shopping. The owner of this grocery was generous about extending credit to the women until payday and for good reason: on the floor above this store were the two rooms that constituted the combined offices of the eight lodges of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers in Homestead.

Again, it was not clear to me how much of this knowledge came from my great-grandfather and how much from my own research.

I also passed quite a few merchandise stores offering a variety of dry goods, furnishings and housewares, some of which were on display in windows with signs that read:

Cash or Credit

There were also a great many advertisements on display. My great-grandfather's eye lingered on the woman whose picture appeared in the advertisement for Dr. Strong's Tricora corsets. Another poster that caught his eye was for an operetta coming to Pittsburgh which would star Lillian Russell who was billed as "The American Beauty." For the record, I thought she looked overweight.

As my great-grandfather continued his walk, I passed banks and apothecaries, a few

shabby hotels and a couple of particularly seedy-looking establishments with signs proclaiming that they were boarding houses with clean rooms to let. I also passed a broad white building with a sign declaring it to be "Homestead's Department Store." I even passed a public school.

But what I mostly passed were saloons.

Some of these saloon were as I have seen in old photos and period-piece films: large buildings with decorated picture windows and grand facades. Passing by their swinging doors, I could hear the din of voices and the sounds of piano music. The majority, however, were little more than shacks. There were doorways but no doors to enter and as I moved past the entrances to these shacks I could hear nothing even though I could see that there were men packed inside. These, I knew, were places for the dinkey men and hunkies, the Slavs and other unskilled laborers who came to drink, not talk, and who were not particular about the quality of their alcohol so long as it was strong.

Muldoon's was not a shack: it had swinging doors and a shingle out front that bore its name. But it was not fancy, either. There were windows, but they were undecorated, there was no grand facade, and no piano. Muldoon's was a saloon for steel workers who came to drink and talk. I also knew, even before I pushed through the doors, that the regular customers of Muldoon's, of which Payton Adams was one, were almost all union men. Many, like Tooley O'Toole, were members of the heaters' lodge. As a tapper, Payton Adams was welcome in any lodge or any lodge's favorite saloon. His was the one job upon which the workers of all lodges depended. His was the one job they all were afraid to do which made it the one job no one else claimed they could do better.

The inside of Muldoon's was no fancier than the outside. It consisted of a single room with sawdust on the floor but no tables or chairs. The bar ran the length of one wall. Behind it were the sole decorative objects in Muldoon's, a large poster of Lillie Langtry on the wall, and a small photo of John L. Sullivan on a shelf that otherwise held only bottles of liquor. There were no stools but there was a brass rail running along the base of the bar upon which many of the customers set their lunch pails. The exclusive customers of Muldoon's seemed to be sweat-stained steel workers and the air inside was sour with their stink and cloudy from their tobacco smoke. Most of the men had pipes or stubs of cigars which they parked in the corners of their mouths and kept there even while drinking.

Peering through the smoke, my great-grandfather saw O'Toole at the bar. He shouldered his way through the crowd to join his young friend and, after setting his own lunch pail down on the brass rail, ordered from the weary-looking bartender a hooker of rye and a dram of beer. It was the first time I heard the sound of my great-grandfather's voice and I can no more describe it than I could describe my own just from hearing myself speak. I cannot say if his voice is high or low, loud or soft. But what I can say is that his accent is pronounced: Payton Adams had more than a touch of the harp in his voice, as they used to say, meaning his was a just-off-the-boat Irish brogue.

The bartender brought my great-grandfather's order. It was five cents for the rye and five cents for the beer. O'Toole put coins on the counter. On payday, I knew, men were eager to buy drinks for their mates. Were it not payday, they'd all be buying their own. Payton Adams raised the shot glass towards Tooley and nodded. The rye tasted like pure alcohol and the beer was flat and not very cold. My great-grandfather drank both quickly. Then he put coins on the counter and ordered another round for himself and for Tooley who, I knew, like most of the Irish steel workers, was drinking malt whiskey.

At this point, I experienced my first genetic memory conversation and it took some getting used to. It is disturbing enough to hear yourself speak words expressing thoughts you never had. But it is much worse when you exercise no control over what is said. You are nothing more than a ventriloquist's dummy. Fortunately, my great grandfather was not much of a talker.

He was, however, a good listener, apparently, for people seemed eager to speak to him. In my first genetic memory conversation, most of the talking was done by O'Toole and a man who joined us whose name, I knew, was Doolan. Although I was a participant in the conversation, as I have just explained, the experience was initially so peculiar it took me awhile to get my bearings and pick up the flow of what was being said. Looking back, I realize that O'Toole and Doolan were talking about the union meeting that was scheduled for Sunday morning at the Homestead Opera House. They were expressing their unshakable belief that when Andrew Carnegie (whom they with much affection called the Little Boss) found out what Henry Clay Frick (whom they with much rancor called Mr. Prick) had been up to, he would return from his Scottish retreat, where he was honeymooning, and put things right.

"Hully gee, it's not like we're asking for a king's ransom," Tooley said. "We want our old wages. Ain't that right, Payton?"

My great-grandfather was silent.

"Sure it is," Tooley continued. "What could be more fair than that? The Little Boss can't complain. We made him the richest man in the world. And he up and takes his new bride to Scotland and leaves us workers in the hands of that damned liar Frick. It's him what's pushing for a strike. Ain't that right, Payton? (Again, there was no response.) Sure it is. Hully, gee! We don't want no strike. The Giant Puddler has said so hisself. He's coming to the meeting on Sunday, he is, to set the record straight."

(O'Toole was referring to Bill Weihe, the president of the Amalgamated Steel Workers' Association who stood six feet seven inches tall.)

Doolan drained his shot of whiskey and ordered another round for himself and for O'Toole and me. He was, I knew, a heater for the Bessemer operations. A large portion of his face was scarred and discolored, like old papier-mache, the result of an exploding ingot. It gave him the look of being a rough customer. As he spoke, the heat in his voice rose until it was as hot as the ingots he melted on his job.

"Big Bill may be a giant but he ain't no puddler. He was a boiler when he worked the heat and he's Welsh which means he hain't got no balls. Yins can see it y'selves in the way he caves to the likes of dirty sons-of-bitches like John Potter and Henry Clay Prick. Big Bill don't object to no technical improvements, he says, not even those what costs good union men their jobs. Big Bill don't want to cramp no American genius, he says. And Big Bill, he don't want no strike, don't want to interfere with another man's property rights. That's what Big Bill says. The hell I says! (His fist smacks the top of the bar with the sound of a thunderclap.) Mr. Prick thinks he can do us like he did those poor bastards what dig his coke for him. Mr. Prick thinks he can just bring in all the scabs he pleases and protect them with Pinkertons. I says Mr. Prick has another think coming. I says that limey bastard can go roll in his own shit! He may be the Coke King, but this here's a steel mill and we'ins is steel workers. Without us, there ain't no heat. No scabs can do our jobs. And we'll plunk the tar out of any Pinks or any other sons-of-bitches what dares show their ugly faggot-kissing mugs in Homestead. I says we shut the damn mill down! (There is another thunderclap off the top of the bar.) Then the Little

Boss will have no choice but to come home and tend to his business. Mr. Carnegie takes no man's job. He's said so hisself. I says let him prove it. He ain't fooling nobody with that honeymoon truck. He's too damned old to be fucking no young bride. I says put your old peter back in your pants, Little Boss, and get yerself home. Meet with us working men and get this contract done."

More than a dozen men had gathered around to listen to Doolan and one of them shouted, "Yeah! Put yer pecker away and come home Little Boss, sit down with Big Bill!"

"Says you!" Doolan sneered. "I says we heaters of the Homestead Works don't need no piss-pot faggot Welsh boiler to speak for us. No sir! Not when we've got our Hugh."

Doolan was referring to Hugh O'Donnell, one of the leaders of the local heaters' lodge. Upon his invocation of the name Hugh, the men who were listening let out three cheers and a loud yell that people of the time called a "tiger." Steins of beer and shot glasses of liquor were thrust into the air. In the smoke-wreathed faces of the gathered workers, I could see their eyes ablaze with excitement and their grins fierce with fight. All seemed swept up in the thrill of pending battle save, curiously enough, my great-grandfather who, I was beginning to realize, was a man as reserved of emotion as he was of words. Though I should also note that when he does choose to say something, his words reveal a sarcastic sense of humor.

At the height of the tiger yell, Tooley leaned into my great-grandfather's face and said with a growl of enthusiasm, "The boys are ready for a scrap, Payton! We're all tigers we are, and we're ready for a scrap!"

To which my great-grandfather quietly responded, "Every man's a tiger ready for a scrap until he starts to bleed."

When the cheering subsided, Tooley toasted Doolan with the whiskey that the latter bought and said, "No offense to handsome young Hugh, but I think our friend Doolan here is forgetting about Billy Roberts (another heater and local lodge leader), the smartest man in the steel valley."

There were more cheers and more drinks hoisted.

"And what about John McLuckie?" Tooley continued. "The burgess of Homestead, no less, and he's one of us. That's something to drink to ain't it?"

"McLuckie's a roller not a heater," said Doolan with irritation. But his good humor

quickly returned and he raised his shot glass of whiskey. "But I'll drink to Honest John just the same. He's a damn sight finer a man than Mr. Prick or any of those sons-of-bitches who serve John Potter. And right your are Tooley, that I should not be forgetting about Billy Roberts, but you're wrong if you think he's any smarter than Hugh."

Tooley dismissed Doolan with a wave of his grimy hand. "Ah, you're just swayed by the charms of Hugh's sweet wife is all."

Doolan grins and nods his head. "Aye. You might have yerself a point. I say there's none prettier around these parts than her." Doolan then looked over at my great-grandfather and smiled woozily. "Except maybe the lovely Rosaleen Adams. Wouldn't we all like a poke at that?"

My great-grandfather returned Doolan's look and I saw his tough features instantly freeze, like a dog fearing punishment from its master. My great-grandfather's eyes shot over to O'Toole and I saw that my young friend was wide-eyed and holding his breath. The other workers who had gathered around us all took quick and quiet steps back. Apparently, however, they all saw something in my great-grandfather's face that allowed everyone, especially Doolan and O'Toole, to relax with laughter.

The scene in the bar lingered, but my own thoughts were off course, wandering away from memories, genetic or otherwise, to ponder whether it is the large jagged-edged knife that is holstered to a belt around his waist or something else about my great-grandfather that makes those around him so cautious.

There was another of those disorienting memory shifts and my great-grandfather was no longer in Muldoon's saloon, but was instead heading away from the river, walking up the steep hill on what I knew to be West Street. The trolley ran up this street which was another main artery through town and I knew my great-grandfather could ride it practically to his house. So why did he choose to walk? My guess is he did not like to spend money on the fare which I believe was, at the time, five cents.

At Twelfth Avenue he came to a three-story brick tenement building and was forced to step out into the street to avoid the kitchen slop that had been tossed onto the sidewalk from the windows above. The yellow mud of the street was quite sticky and tugged at the wood heels of his boots. A man on a bicycle wobbled by so closely there was almost a collision. I sensed my

great-grandfather's flash of anger but he said nothing to the rider.

Beyond Twelfth Avenue, Payton Adams passed block after block of wooden row houses, nondescript save for the black soot that smudged their paintless walls and the shower of black ash that wafted off their roofs every time the wind kicked up. I felt like an insect taking a walk through my barbecue kettle. Gray was the predominant color. Gray from the dust that fell non-stop from the buttermilk sky. The only interruption of this monotony was a Russian Orthodox mosque. Its walls had been painted mint green and its onion-shaped dome a glittery gold. Swatches of paint, however, had peeled off both walls and dome leaving bare spots that were the same gray color as everything else.

West Street turned into Main Street and my great-grandfather was in the town of Munhall. Traffic was much lighter here and most of it appeared to be non-commercial, though I did see quite a few ice trucks. Payton Adams passed an athletic field where I saw men playing baseball. There was a modest grandstand and it was filled with spectators. I knew the home team was the Homestead Library Athletic Club and, from my studies, I also knew the team at that time had a promising young pitcher by the name of Rube Waddell who routinely struck out 20 men a game. I believe they also had a promising young shortstop, a kid named Honus Wagner. Both would go on to become Hall-of-Fame performers in the major leagues. But my great-grandfather must not have been a fan for he did not give the game more than a passing glance and I sensed no excitement whatsoever on his part.

Past the athletic field, Main Street again rose in a steep incline and my great-grandfather soon came to a large cemetery. Two large cemeteries, actually. One on each side of the road. I knew that one was the Catholic cemetery, the other was for Protestants. But I did not know which was which nor did my great-grandfather seem any more interested in the cemeteries than he was in the baseball game. Once past the cemeteries, however, I sensed that emotions within my great-grandfather were beginning to stir. I was certain we were getting closer to his home.

The houses had become distinctly better in quality -- nothing, mind you, in which I would want my family to live, but nonetheless, much nicer than those I saw in Homestead. For example, while there was not much space between each domicile, the A-frame structures were no longer attached to one another like the row houses in Homestead. These houses even had small yards with grass and trees. So pervasive was the ash from the mill, however, that this greenery

had a grayish pallor.

My great-grandfather's ascent continued though the incline was no longer quite so steep. From his starting point at Eighth Avenue, he had walked a couple of miles and had made his way up about three quarters of the hill. When he came to the corner of Main and California streets, he turned north on California and, half a block later, was standing in front of a two-story frame house. It, too, was unpainted and as gray as any of the other houses I'd seen, but it had been kept up well and there was not only grass in the front yard, but even a rose bush. The address was 112 California Street. It was my great-grandfather's house.

How can I describe the emotions that I, as Simon Thomas, felt when in my mind's eye I stood before that house and realized that I was about to meet my great-grandmother, Rosaleen? The closest experience I can think of was the first time I went on a date with Jan. And how can I describe the emotions I personally felt when, again in my mind's eyes, I was standing inside a parlor and coming toward me with open arms was Rosaleen herself? The old photo I had of my great-grandmother did not do her justice. In the photo I thought her pretty. In the image extracted from genetic memory, I found her thrilling -- a big, strong, lusty woman with coppery red hair that tumbled nearly to her hips, sparkly green eyes, and a wide mouth with curved full lips. The red of her hair was especially striking in contrast to her skin which was white as white, colored only by a faint sprinkle of freckles on her cheeks and nose. She was wearing a green dress and a white apron and though her hair was down, it had been carefully brushed. I could smell perfume as her mouth pressed hard against my own and her arms wrapped around my back and pulled me tightly into her. I can say the physical effect she had was enormous though I cannot say to what degree the effect was on my great-grandfather and to what degree the effect was on me. I can say, however, that my great-grandfather was in a state of erection.

"I've been waiting for you and you've been drinking without me," Rosaleen said while our mouths were still together. Even though our locked lips muffled the sound, I could hear her thick Irish accent. Before she pulled away, Rosaleen slid her tongue over my lips. This elicited an erection of even greater urgency from my great-grandfather and I think that I myself must have squirmed inside the BLT.

"Rye and beer is it?" asked Rosaleen. "Shame on you. I ought to just feed you your supper and send you off to bed by yourself." My great-grandfather must have had expressive

eyes for something that Rosaleen saw in them made her laugh. Her laughter was bold and loud, not at all what I consider feminine. "Don't worry, husband, I've plenty of hunger in me. And seeing as it is payday I best be extra good to you. Got to earn my keep."

She let out another loud laugh then told me to wash up while she warmed our supper. She said she had much to tell me including a surprise. At the word surprise, she again laughed but not so roisterously. In fact, her laugh this time was almost coquettish.

Rosaleen took me by the hand and lead me out of the front room. Before leaving, I took mental note that the room was pleasantly furnished with a couch, two chairs, a low coffee-like table, and a sewing machine. On the floor was a Smyrna rug, similar to the one in my office but worn from foot traffic. A small window facing the street was covered with white lace curtains that were shockingly clean. There was also a fireplace and a mantle. Sitting on the mantle were knickknacks and the photograph of Payton and Rosaleen that now resides in my office. The knickknacks looked old, the photograph looked brand new.

From the front room, we passed through a narrow hall which was taken up completely by stairs leading to a second floor. We then entered the kitchen where the temperature took a sharp climb. I have no doubt it was at least 15 degrees warmer in the kitchen than anywhere else in the house thanks, I am sure, to a wood-burning iron stove which took up half the room. Simmering on the stove were three pots from which emanated smells that elicited a powerful hunger within my great-grandfather. However, he did not sit down at the table which was against the only wall with a window, but merely set his lunch pail down upon it. He then went outside through a back door, crossed a tiny dirt yard and entered a small privy which stood next to a brick water well. Inside the privy, it was pitch-black, hot and stuffy. Simon Thomas was nervous but all I sensed in my great-grandfather was his immense relief as he dropped his trousers, sat on the bench and voided his bladder and his bowels. The sheer physicality of the experience was so intensely real to me that I feared at that time I may have voided my own bladder and bowels. My fears proved correct as the subsequent removal of my diaper revealed but I said nothing about the incident to Keith and his colleagues. I suspect that through their elaborate monitoring system they not only were aware that I urinated and defecated, but probably had recorded precise measurements as to the quantity of waste expelled. Frankly, I did not wish to discuss it. After all, other than my

personal mortification, it was of no importance. In science, we only do what is necessary. Keith's own words.

I don't know if this next item is of any scientific importance but it was interesting to me. My experiencing Payton Adams' memories of the Homestead Works and the walk across Eighth Avenue and up the hill must have desensitized my own reaction to horrid smells. For the terrible odor inside the privy -- and it was truly terrible -- had no more effect on me than it did on my great-grandfather. It would seem that I, too, had become acclimated to life in 1892.

Before returning to the kitchen my great-grandfather stopped at the brick water well. Next to the well was an empty tub with a washboard. Hanging off the washboard were a bar of soap and a towel. Payton Adams drew water from the well and poured it into the tub. He then removed his shirt. For the first time I was made aware that around his neck my great-grandfather wore a rawhide thong to which was knotted a small key. Without removing this key thong, he proceeded to wash. The soap had an odd feel to it and a bad odor, but it cleaned well. The thoroughness with which my great-grandfather scrubbed himself was a surprise. I would never have guessed that cleanliness would be so important to a worker in a steel mill.

Another surprise was the meal that Rosaleen prepared. Dinner consisted of lamb stew with potatoes, red beets, pickles, bread and butter. For desert she served slices of baked apples with cinnamon powder sprinkled over the top. After dinner, we drank chicory-flavored coffee. Other than the bread, which had the same gritty quality as what I'd eaten from my lunch box, and the butter, which tasted like it had been made from lard, the food was far superior to what I would have guessed. Rosaleen was a good cook and I sensed that my great-grandfather appreciated her culinary skill.

Perhaps he also appreciated her conversation for Rosaleen was as chatty as Payton was reticent. And apparently quite popular with the wives of other mill workers, especially Mrs. O'Donnell, Mrs. Roberts, and Mrs. McLuckie. She was also good friends with Mrs. Coley O'Brien, a newspaper reporter for the Pittsburgh Evening Leader who had been following the labor negotiations between the Amalgamated Steel Workers' Association and the Carnegie Steel Company.

Rosaleen told me that she had taken the horsecar into Homestead to pick up the day's groceries and a bottle of laudanum, a medicine she used for headaches. At the grocery store she

had met the aforementioned wives whom she always identified by their married surnames, even though she knew them quite well.

"Mrs. O'Donnell says her mister has been meeting with the strike committee every night for the past three weeks," Rosaleen said, still chewing on a bite of bread. (As Simon Thomas I can't help but notice that table manners in 1892 would have suited my daughters just fine.) "She says they're laying out plans like military generals. They're even talking about hiring a steamboat to patrol the river should Mr. Frick try to sneak Pinkertons in by water. But Mrs. Roberts says her husband don't think Mr. Carnegie is going to sit tight somewheres in Scotland and allow the blood of his workers to be spilled. Mr. Roberts has been going over the books and he says it makes no sense for Mr. Carnegie to allow Mr. Frick to instigate a strike. The Homestead Works has never been more profitable, he says. And seeing as Mr. Carnegie just signed a grand contract with the Navy why would he jeopardize his business? It's no way to run a railroad, her Billy says, says Mrs. Roberts. But Mrs. McLuckie says her husband is preparing the speech of his life for Sunday's meeting at the Opera House. It seems Burgess McLuckie sides with Mr. Roberts that Mr. Carnegie will return. But he don't think it will happen unless Mr. Carnegie is certain that the men are united and that they're not going to bow and scrape before Mr. Frick."

"There'll be no bowing and scraping before Henry Clay Prick," my great-grandfather mumbled through a mouth full of stew. "Too many tigers on the loose, looking for a fight."

I sensed a low anger within him, a feeling of irritation and frustration rather than the rage I would have expected. Once again I am struck by how emotionally reserved he is. Rosaleen, on the other hand, was fiery-tempered as befitted her coloring.

"I should hope there won't be no bowing and scraping at all!" she exploded. "The little Scotch pirate had better put himself onto the swiftest ship that sails the sea and get back here sooner rather than later. We've not much time for this, Payton. It must be done before the spring."

I asked her why *it* must be done before the spring. Payton Adams apparently knew what *it* was, but Simon Thomas did not. This illustrates the difficulty of engaging in a conversation when all of the participants have knowledge you do not possess.

In response to my great-grandfather's question, Rosaleen shook her head vigorously. "All

in good time, my husband. All in good time. Let me first tell you about Mrs. O'Brien who had the best news of all. She asked that this be kept in highest confidence. Her mister, she said, has it on a good source that Mr. Carnegie is already on his way home. He's aboard a ship that set sail from Glasgow a fortnight ago. He's coming home, Payton, the Little Boss is coming home."

Rosaleen's eyes blazed and her teeth flashed with the same excitement as the steel workers in Muldoon's saloon. Why was my great-grandfather not caught up in the excitement? It suddenly struck me that perhaps he was excited but whatever emotions he might have felt that I, in turn, could have sensed, were being masked by my own responses. To see the looks on the sweet face of Rosaleen, and the grime-creased faces of the steel workers in Muldoon's, and to hear the hopeful confidence in all of their voices when they spoke of the return of Andrew Carnegie, was enough to break my heart. I wished I could have told each and every one of them what I knew: that Carnegie would not save them, that he had in fact orchestrated the labor crisis and had commanded Henry Clay Frick to crush the steel workers and end the power of their union. And I do not think that anyone can possibly imagine the full depths of the sadness into which I sank when, in my mind's eye, I saw my great-grandmother sitting across the table, as real to me as anyone in my own life, and I knew that she would soon be a widow, pregnant with child, forced to flee her home.

Horace was right. *Quid sit futrum cras fuge quaerere*. Do not seek to find out what the morrow will bring.

After our dinner, Rosaleen tended to the dishes, washing them in a basin with water that was drawn from the well and heated on the stove. Payton, meanwhile, fetched his lunch pail and adjourned to the upstairs of the house. There were two bedrooms at the top of the stairway in the hall. The larger of the two had a window that faced California Street (again with clean white lace curtains) and was where Rosaleen and Payton slept. It had a brass bed, a nightstand, a chest of drawers, a dressing table with a large mirror and a single kerosene lamp. The second room had a small window (no curtains) that faced the back yard, a bed, a nightstand, a chair, and an oak writing desk that was quite similar to the one in my office on campus. This room also contained a single kerosene lamp. At one end of the room was a closet that Payton walked to and opened. I was hit by a strong smell of mothballs. The interior was filled with women's

clothing -- surprisingly fancy and expensive-looking dresses, silk petticoats, chemises and drawers, plus a tree full of silk stockings including one particularly provocative pair that was striped. I also saw two steel corsets, shining like the armor of a knight. The pole off which these clothes hung sagged from the weight.

Payton created a space between the clothes to reveal a cedar chest snuggled against the back of the closet. To open the chest he had to first remove a nail that was hidden under the lid. Inside the chest was a metal strong box, a large revolver, a small wood box, a burlap sack and a rectangular leather case that was about the length of a yardstick.

I was curious about everything in that closet but I was especially curious about the leather case which I recognized from my dream. However, my great-grandfather first took up the sack instead and pulled on a draw string to open it. Inside were many sticks of dynamite, to which my great-grandfather added the sticks he smuggled home in his lunch pail. He then closed the burlap sack and set it back inside the cedar chest. He began to close the cedar chest but then stopped and reached down to run his hand along the length of the leather case. Whatever was inside apparently was quite special to him. I began sending mental wishes for my great-grandfather to open the case, realized how absurd that was, and began silently cursing in frustration. But my frustration lasted only a couple of moments because, to my great joy, Payton Adams reached down to undo the bindings that sealed the case shut. When the bindings were undone, the case came open to reveal a rifle that had been segmented into three separate pieces -- the stock, the breech, and the barrel. This sight caused me to catch my breath inside the BLT, for I immediately recognized that the joining of the three pieces would produce the rifle I have seen so many times in my dream, the bolt-action rifle in the skiff.

There was something else in the leather case. It was a cylindrical-shaped object about six inches in length. I had never seen this object in my dream but I could identify it upon first sight just as I had instantly known about the dynamite in the tapper's shack. It was a device for muffling the sound of gunfire. Even then I believe it was called a silencer and even then it was a tool for assassins.

What was Payton Adams doing with such a thing, I wondered, as my great-grandfather did nothing more than look at the contents of the leather case as if to reassure himself everything was still in order. I sensed within him a large measure of pride, much the same as I felt during

my lacrosse days when I, too, would sometimes take my stick out just to look at it. My great-grandfather finally resealed the leather case, closed the lid of the cedar chest and inserted the hidden nail that locked it.

There was another memory shift and I was back in the bedroom where Payton and Rosaleen slept. The time was much later for the kerosene lamp was lit, bathing the room in a dull orange light. Through the window I could see a black sky and a distant red glow low in the horizon. The glow, I knew was from the dumping of slag along the riverbank outside the Homestead Works. My great-grandfather was lying on the bed, naked save for the key thong. In his hand was a glass half-filled with brandy. The brandy smelled strongly of alcohol and left an oily film on the glass.

Rosaleen sat at the dressing table, brushing her hair and humming a tune I recognized as "Nearer My God to Thee." She was wearing a chemise that was clingy enough to reveal that even sans corset, her figure was the classic hourglass -- wide shoulders, narrow waist, wide hips.

Rosaleen finished with her hair, stood and turned to face my great-grandfather. Her hands came up to unbutton the shoulder fastenings of her chemise. The garment dropped silently to the floor and my great-grandmother was naked. The sight left Simon Thomas breathless. She had spectacular breasts, plump yet firm and crowned with enormous crimson nipples. The russet locks between her legs formed a luxuriant triangle that drew the eyes of my great-grandfather and jabbed both of our loins with an ache of carnal yearning. Payton Adams was enormously aroused. So was Simon Thomas. Rosaleen made a comment about the hardened state of my grandfather's sex organ, causing him to look down. It is a disconcerting sight for me. Unlike myself, my great-grandfather has not been circumcised and the foreskin, to my eyes, is like a fleshy collar around the base of his erect penis. Also, I note that his penis is larger than mine, longer and thicker, but not by so much, I think. It probably would not be noticeable to Jan. The size, that is.

While I was comparing sex organs with my great-grandfather, Rosaleen bent to extinguish the lamp. She then came to bed.

Did I say that my great-grandmother had spectacular breasts? When her breasts hung inches from Payton's face I could see how the white flesh in the upper regions of her *Pectoralis major* muscles was dusted with the same faint powder of freckles that colored her cheeks and

nose. But the breasts themselves, so help me God, were as pure in their whiteness as fresh snow and her crimson nipples were blushed and taut. When a movement swung her breasts into contact with Payton's waiting lips, sweet memory, how could I even begin to describe what happened next?

I think it best that I allow my great-grandparents some degree of privacy but I will go so far as to say that Payton Adams' approach to lovemaking is quite different from my own. At the risk of sounding like a wimp, I am far less aggressive. Whereas I like to think that my own technique could be characterized with words such as tender, gentle, and considerate (I'm afraid I not only sound like a wimp, I sound like a conceited wimp), no one would ever ascribe those characteristics to my great-grandfather. That said, I must in fairness point out that my great-grandmother did not seem to mind. In point of truth, if Payton's lovemaking were to be characterized by any single word, that word would be "ferocious." And that same word would best summarize Rosaleen's response. The physical experience was so intensely real, so incredibly strong, that I believe I ejaculated into the diaper when Payton ejaculated into Rosaleen.

As Simon Thomas, I am left much shaken by this genetic memory. I now know what it is to be the lion who has possessed his lioness and taken her with him to a savage ecstasy. This my great-grandfather did through the strength and power in his body and the force of his will. And my great-grandmother, who was no shrinking violet, met his strength with her strength and seemed thrilled to be vanquished. My beloved Jan, though I have no complaints in the satisfying nature of our love-making, I think I have been much too passive and my passivity has denied us both a world of possibilities. I wish that I could somehow tap into that assertive quality of my great-grandfather's nature, or at least borrow from it for one night. Jan, wouldn't you be surprised?

Again, none of this was discussed by me with Keith and his associates.

After Payton and Rosaleen made love, my great-grandmother told her husband she was pregnant. Again, I was struck by his aloofness. Perhaps he had learned to discipline himself so as to never get excited over life's possibilities in the face of the disappointment that was the working man's customary lot. If so, I should probably commend rather than criticize him, especially as I know the disappointment that does indeed await him. Nonetheless, I was left

saddened by Payton's inability to share in Rosaleen's joy. She was, it seemed to me, a bountifully optimistic individual, all laughter and merriment and bursting with excitement enough for the both of them. She was a bawdy woman, too, my great-grandmother. At one point, she joked that Payton would have to soon go easy on her in their lovemaking. To which my great-grandfather replied that maybe he would have to take his business elsewhere.

His comment gave momentary pause to my great-grandmother who took his face into her hands and looked deep into his eyes as if to determine whether or not he was joking. But the eyes of my great-grandfather, I am coming to understand, can, if he chooses, reveal all or nothing of his thoughts. In this case, I suspect his eyes revealed nothing but it was of no importance to Rosaleen, her good humor could not be contained and she was suddenly smiling brightly enough to light up the darkened room.

"Oh, husband, don't you worry yourself about that. My cousin Nancy Kathleen was a man-fisher (a prostitute) in Ballybunion. She taught me a trick I will show you when I can no longer tend to your needs in a natural way."

Rosaleen placed her index finger in her mouth and slowly pulled it out. It glistened with her spit. She winked at my great-grandfather then roared with laughter and her laughter rang in my ears as the image of her body next to mine in that small bedroom with the window through which I could still see the red glow against the black sky, gradually faded away.

* * *

These then were the memories that I relived in the BLT under the influence of Quip and described to Keith, Vijay, Gibby and Ariel in the debriefing session. Keith and Ariel both concluded that the experiment had been a success. The explicit memories I relived were those of my great-grandfather which had been repositied in the limbic system of my brain and liberated by a dosage of Quip. Keith further postulated that the encoded genetic memories had been released in a single burst and that this explosive output had been the source of the onslaught of images that I'd initially experienced. Following this burst of electrochemical activity, my brain had proceeded to sort through and process the signals it had received, beginning with the scene inside the tapper's shed. This, he said, could explain the jumpy flow and rough-cut quality of the narrative. Ariel's preliminary inspection of the GEM data supported Keith's theory.

Gibby Gibson was unconvinced. All that I had described in my debriefing, he argued,

could have been the product of my own explicit memories, drawn from my studies of history. Arguing (but not too strenuously) that the memories had been genetic, I countered by telling him that it was my understanding that the Dupont chemical company made all of the dynamite sticks used in the Carnegie Steel Company. I did not know that my great-grandfather or any other tapper made his own cartridges. Gibby dismissed this by saying I was merely elaborating on history with fantasies of my own invention. No verifiable information had been revealed that I could not have learned from historical records and anecdotes.

Significantly, Vijay Jain would not commit himself to either side of the dispute. The GEM images looked good, he agreed, but were, in and of themselves, no more or less convincing than the images recorded from Morris.

As for myself, I have no doubt that the memories I relived in the BLT were those of Payton Adams. Gibby's argument was not without merit and would have carried much more weight with me had I not known what he could not.

In my debriefing, I was not completely forthcoming.

I did not exactly lie to Keith and his colleagues, but I did not tell them everything that I had experienced. And the odd thing is, I'm not entirely sure why I withheld this information. Maybe it was fear that the scientists would decide to do no more experiments or that Jan would declare future attempts an unwarranted risk. Maybe it was shame. What I do know is that the memories I relived could not possibly have been my own for they revealed to me that my great-grandfather was not at all the man I thought him to be.

These then are the rest of the memories I relived in the BLT under the influence of Quip. I have told no one about them.

Not even Jan.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Simon's Journal

One of the things I did not tell Keith and his colleagues was that when I stood in front of the house on California Street, the emotions I felt within my great-grandfather, though faint, were unmistakably the feelings of being home. However, it was "home" in the same sense as having arrived back at one's apartment. In other words, it may have been the house in which my great-grandfather lived, but it was not a house he owned. This was not so surprising since it was customary for many of the working class families of that time period to rent their homes -- often from the Carnegie Steel Company. What was surprising, however, was that I had much the same feeling about most of the contents inside the house.

Leasing a house in the 1890s in Pittsburgh and its surrounding towns and boroughs was common, but leasing a "furnished" house, particularly one that was so pleasantly furnished, was not. Nonetheless, I believe that the only items inside the house at California Street belonging to my great-grandparents were the clothes, the photograph and nick-knacks on the mantle, and the contents of the cedar chest. And with the exception of the stuff inside the cedar chest, everything else really belonged to Rosaleen. The truth of the matter is that it was only when my great-grandfather opened the cedar chest that

I felt any emotional sense of ownership in the genetic memories I experienced.

I sensed he was especially possessive of the segmented rifle inside the leather case.

As for Rosaleen's clothes, though my great-grandfather paid them too little attention for me to draw much of an impression, it did strike me that, even more so than the furniture, they were much fancier than I would have expected to see in the closet of the wife of a steel worker. Much more plentiful in number, too.

My initial suspicion was that my great-grandfather had a profitable business on the side, selling sticks of dynamite that he'd stolen from the Carnegie Steel Company. I acknowledge this would make him a thief. But times were tough for working men and a man did what he could to support himself and his family. It was a risky enterprise on the part of my great-grandfather for had he been caught he would certainly have been immediately fired. The Carnegie Steel Company had zero tolerance for theft of company property. Furthermore, the Carnegie Company would have put the word out and it is not likely Payton Adams would have ever been able to get a job with another steel company in the Pittsburgh area. Frankly, I admired my great-grandfather's willingness to take risks and thought him to be a much braver man than me. I would soon come to know that his courage and his willingness to take risks and do what he thought necessary far exceeded my wildest speculations. In other words: I had not seen anything yet.

* * *

Immediately following the lovemaking with Rosaleen, I underwent a major memory shift and found myself instantly transported to another time and place: the Homestead Opera House on the morning of June 19, 1892.

Union men from the Homestead Works, dressed in their Sunday suits, filled the rows of wooden chairs on the orchestra level and in the gallery and loges above, and all the aisles in between. I was on the orchestra level, standing in the back of the hall. Up on the stage, towering above a podium, was a speaker I recognized as Bill Weihe, the president of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers. He was so much taller than anyone else around him he looked as if he might be standing on stilts. I could not hear what he was saying and suspect few others could either. He mumbled and, despite his great height, was anything but a commanding presence. Most of the men in the audience were ignoring him and carrying on their own

conversations.

Surprisingly enough, despite the presence of pipes and cigars in the mouths of many of the men, no one was actually smoking.

Standing next to my great-grandfather was a short, pudgy, sandy-haired man with mutton-chop sideburns and intense green eyes behind a pair of silver wire-framed spectacles. He looked to be in his late forties and was too soft to be a steel worker. His striped suit and high stiff-collared white shirt also looked much too new and fine for him to have been a clerk with the Carnegie Company. Other men taking note of him might have guessed him to be an engineer or a draftsman, but I instantly knew that he was neither. I knew he was not in any way employed by the Carnegie Steel Company. He was my landlord and all of the furniture inside the house belonged to him. His name was Collin Garraty.

* * *

It would have interested Gibby Gibson to know I had never before been told the address of my great-grandparents' house. It would have interested him quite a bit more to learn that until receiving Quip, I had never heard the name Collin Garraty. However, in the aftermath of my experience in the MNME under Quip, I contacted Ana Huff and asked her to do some archival detective work. It did not take long for her to learn that the house at 112 California Street, on the outskirts of Homestead, Pennsylvania, in the summer of 1892, was owned by Henry Clay Frick and managed by Devin Swayne, Frick's personal secretary. It had been leased for the sum of \$25 a month to Collin Garraty who listed as his local address the Penn-Schenley Hotel on Fifth Avenue in Pittsburgh. The records also showed Garraty's occupation as import/export merchant.

Further checking by Ana revealed that Garraty held dual citizenship with the United States and Ireland. His father was from Boston where Collin was born and his mother was from Dublin. For his permanent address in the United States, he listed the Saint Nicholas Hotel on Broadway and Spring Streets in New York City. Ana also learned that starting in 1880, Garraty began traveling to Ireland two or three times a year, at first to Dublin and later -- from 1890 on -- to Galway as well. In the years 1885 to 1887, his trips to Ireland would include short stays (never more than six days) in London. For his address in Ireland, he listed the Imperial Hotel in Dublin. History identified this hotel as a popular rendezvous spot for Irish Nationalists and Irish-American Fenians.

In between trips across the Atlantic, Garraty traveled frequently back and forth from New York to New Orleans where he maintained a local address at one of the Pontalba Building apartments on the corner of Decatur and St. Peter's Streets. He added the city of Pittsburgh to his itinerary in the spring of 1891 where he took up immediate residence at the Penn-Schenley. He began leasing the house on California Street that summer. Ana could find no listing of any tenants nor records of any rents received.

Collin Garraty was found dead at that California street address on August 2, 1892. The body was badly decomposed, according to the death certificate, indicating that the time of death had actually been several days earlier. The cause of death was listed as a gunshot wound to the head. There was a notation that a police inquiry would be undertaken but there was no followup. Further research by Ana uncovered a story in the August 3, 1892 edition of the Pittsburgh Evening Leader, written by Coley O'Brien, reporting that two bodies had been found at the California Street address: that of Collin Garraty, age 52, whom O'Brien described as an eminent merchant from New York, known throughout Pittsburgh for his strong support of the striking union men at the Homestead Works; and that of Jimmy Collins, age 24, a puddler at the Homestead Works who was out of work because of the strike. Collins had died of a gunshot wound to the heart. There would be an investigation, according to Sheriff Bill McCleary, O'Brien wrote, but the reporter expressed skepticism that anyone would be apprehended for the crime. O'Brien went on to accuse McCleary and Governor Bob Pattison of looking the other way when striking steel workers and their sympathizers fell victim to foul play. He also stopped just short of accusing Pinkerton saboteurs employed by the Carnegie Steel Company of doing the deed.

Ana has promised to continue her investigation.

* * *

The Opera House became immediately quiet when Hugh O'Donnell approached the podium. He was a tall, skinny young man, with stiff black hair that stood straight up and a thick bushy mustache that entirely covered his lower as well as his upper lip. He was an excellent speaker and he lectured the men as to the true meaning of Henry Clay Frick's proposals for a new sliding pay scale. What the company through Frick was calling for would fix the minimum basis of wages at \$22 per ton of steel billets rather than the current minimum of \$25 per ton. As the

billet market was now depressed, O'Donnell said the men would see their pay cut by better than 25-percent. He then charged Frick and the Carnegie Steel Company with deliberately depressing the market so the company would have an excuse to reduce wages. (History proved that O'Donnell was correct in this claim.) O'Donnell took note that in the past few days a solid board fence had been constructed around the Homestead Works. This fence was twelve feet high and was topped with strands of barbed wire. O'Donnell said the wire was electrified (it was not). Platforms bearing electric search-lights had been erected at various points to overlook the fence. Most ominously, the fence was perforated with holes that were the perfect size and location for sharpshooter rifles. Already the steel workers had coined the nick-name "Fort Frick" and O'Donnell recited a derisive poem that was making the rounds.

"There stands today with great pretense,
enclosed within a whitewashed fence,
a wondrous change of great import,
the mills transformed into a fort."

At the conclusion of this poem, O'Donnell told his fired-up listeners that Frick had no intention of rational discussion or bargaining. He was cracking the whip from behind the safety of his new fort.

"Are we to be lashed into Mr. Frick's way of thinking, just like those poor devils at Connellsville?" O'Donnell shouted, referring to the workers in the coke fields owned by Frick.

The hall rocked with the thunderous rejoinder of "No!"

O'Donnell yielded the podium to John McLuckie, a big, brawny, bespectacled man of quiet but forceful dignity.

"What brings you here this morning? Is it idle curiosity or is there a tangible reason?" McLuckie asked his audience. With all ears in the room fully belonging to him, Honest John proceeded to remind the men that four years earlier they had been persuaded to vote for the Republican presidential candidate Benjamin Harrison. From the front porch of his home, where he did much of his campaigning, Harrison had called for high tariffs in order to protect the wages of the working man. After defeating Grover Cleveland, thanks in large part to the votes of steel workers, President Harrison, two years later, signed into law the infamous McKinley Tariff Act which raised the tariff on imported farm products but reduced the tariff on billets. The result was

that wages in the steel industry plummeted at the same time the cost of food soared.

"It is Sunday morning and we ought to be in church," McLuckie said, "but here we are today to see how we are going to live in the future. You men who voted the Republican ticket voted for high tariff and you get high fences, Pinkerton detectives, thugs, and militia!"

The men who filled the Opera House responded with three cheers and a tiger so throaty and heartfelt it could come straight from the deepest jungles of India. Fists were raised, feet were stomped, invectives shouted, loyalties sworn, the din was deafening and contagious. Even my companion, Collin Garraty, had a grin on his face, but still, my great-grandfather seemed to be aloof. I was beginning to suspect that my own emotions were masking my ability to detect his for I have no doubt that at that moment in the MNME my face was streaming with tears.

I was soon to learn how wrong I was about my great-grandfather's lack of emotion.

Many of the workers' wives were waiting outside of the Opera House. Rosaleen was among them, standing there with the wives of Hugh O'Donnell and the reporter Coley O'Brien. She and I walked with Collin along Amity Street to the Homestead depot where he was to catch the train into Pittsburgh. As we waited for the train, the sun beating hotly upon our layers of outer and undergarments (someday I mean to learn why people of that time period insisted upon wearing such heavy clothing and so much of it even in the summer), Rosaleen wanted to know all about the meeting.

"The tigers carried the day," my great-grandfather remarked. Collin Garraty laughed. "I saw Devin Swayne standing in the back. He looked ready to swoon like a virgin on her wedding night when McLuckie finished his speech. You can wager a leprechaun's gold he's moving his pink arse as fast he can to tell his master Mr. Frick everything. I'd like to see the look on old Stone Face's mug when he hears how ready for a scrap these steeler boys are."

Rosaleen repeated Mrs. O'Brien's reportage that Carnegie was already bound for America and Mrs. O'Donnell's assertion that her Hugh and the leaders of the other Homestead lodges strongly believed that a show of force on their part would bring the Little Boss around quickly to a peaceful settlement.

Collin Garraty spoke. His accent was even thicker than that of Payton and Rosaleen. "Ach, my friends, I woont put too much faith in the immediate return of Uncle Pee Wee. Nor

should the union leaders men get any too smug in their posturing. I've learnt that last spring, whilst Carnegie was still in New York, he sent a wire to Frick saying he wants the Homestead Works to be non-union. There's to be no settlement. The Scotch Pirate means to hole up in his lair like the rat he is and give Frick a free-rein to handle the workers as he sees fit."

"You saying that Carnegie wants a strike?" my great-grandfather asked. For the first time, I sense emotions roiling within him. His anger was on the rise.

But Payton's anger was nothing compared to Rosaleen's. Her voice erupted in a hot fury that was turned full force upon poor Collin.

"Don't you dare be telling us that, Collin Garraty!" she seethed. Her fists were clenched and I thought she would strike the chubby little man. Rosaleen looked capable of doing him severe harm. "I am with child!"

Collin was greatly surprised. "No! You don't say woman? I thought you were taking measures so's that woon't happen."

"I have been," Rosaleen said. "That makes this child a gift of the Lord and I have no intention of bearing such a blessed baby in this dirty stinking place. Every single day for the past year I've had to wash the Irish lace my dear mother gave me else it turn gray with the filth that falls from this sky. Every single day I have to wash my hair and our clothing to rid the smell of this air. I tell you I hate it so bad it makes my blood boil! We're getting out of here. I don't care if its New York or New Orleans that we go to, but we're not staying in this place. Our baby will not be born here. I promise you that. And another thing, our baby will have its real name. I'm sick of always having to give it another think as to who we are this time. You tell me where Uncle Pee Wee is hiding, Collin Garraty, and send me to Scotland. I'll kill the little bastard meself!"

Collin laughed, but only after taking a couple of prudent steps back from harm's way. "Hold your fire, woman! We din't send Payton here to work in no steel mill the rest of his life. Ach! Saints preserve our sanity if we were to waste the special talents of man with his training. Besides, Carnegie is up in the highlands somewheres so remote the devil could not find him. But don't fret, darlin'. We've a few tricks of our own to lure the pirate from his lair.

"Carnegie told Frick he means to end the union on account of he don't think it wise to have a work force divided between union and non-union men. Therefore, he says, tis best that

the workers be non-union. But even though twas Carnegie who sent the wire, twas Frick doing the talking. Tis no secret that Frick hates unions and would rid the Earth of them. He's the one spoiling for a scrap, not Carnegie who has no taste for battle. At heart, Uncle Pee Wee is a coward. Should there be a strike and should there be bloodshed, Pee Wee will be the first to cry uncle."

"Well, then, there's no problem is there?" said Rosaleen. "Payton has told us the men are just as ready for a fight as Frick. There's bound to be bloodshed."

"But will there be enough?" posed my great-grandfather, more involved, I sensed, than in any of the memories I'd previously experienced. "Carnegie may be a coward but he's still a Scot. It will take more than the blood spilled in a scuffle to bring a tightwad like him back. We'll need a war with corpses and widows and orphans."

"Payton's right about that," Collin Garraty said. "We will need a great effusion of blood. Carnegie is keen on how the public thinks of him. He likes being called the Little Boss and he likes it that the men think of him as their good old Uncle Andy. If some of those boys were to be killed in the course of a strike, people around here won't be calling him the Little Boss. They'll be calling him the Scotch Pirate and worse and he won't stand for it. A war is what we need and a war is what we'll have."

"Maybe not," my great-grandfather responded. "The workers still talk about the strike three years ago. They made Sheriff McCleary and his deputies turn tail and run by threatening them with a beating. Personally, I fancy the notion of the local law being cowards. But for our purposes, this is not good. It takes two armies to fight a war. Frick can't do it by himself."

"Aye, nor does he intend to," Garraty said. "You heard McLuckie say that he and Hugh O'Donnell are meeting on Thursday with Frick and John Potter to negotiate? Take it from me, tis all a sham. Frick has already prepared a letter he plans to send out tomorrow to Robert Pinkerton in New York. He's requesting 300 guards be sent for action on July 6. They are to be taken by train to McKees Rocks and transported by boat to the Homestead Works. Frick is also going to ask Sheriff McCleary to deputize the Pinks so's they have a legal right to use force. We'll have our armies, my friends. You shunt worry about that."

There was a sharp memory shift and I was plunged into a blackness from which I heard the sharp blast of a steam whistle. An image flashed across my mind of my great-grandfather

sitting up in bed with Rosaleen stirring beside him. In that moment I knew that the whistle was coming from the Electric Light Works, that it had been yanked by Hugh O'Donnell, and that the invasion of the Homestead Works by the Pinkertons had begun.

There was another abrupt memory shift and Payton and Rosaleen Adams were working their way through an enormous mob of people along the south bank of the Monongahela. Men, women, children, even babies in the arms of their mothers, it was if the entire population of Homestead had turned out to watch the sunrise. But as the crest of the sun peeked above the top of the big hill to the east, stroking the sky with brilliant streaks of red and gold, it was obvious this was no ceremony to welcome the dawn. These citizens were angry and they were armed.

Most of the men carried some form of firearm, either a pistol, a shotgun, or a rifle. For the most part, the rifles were Henrys and Sharps, carbines leftover from the Civil War. A few lucky or prosperous souls carried Winchesters, the new lever-action repeating rifles that had superior range and were far more accurate. Many of the women were armed with kitchen knives. Others carried sticks or rocks, as did the young boys in the mob. Rosaleen was armed with the large pistol from the cedar chest in the closet of our house. I knew it to be a Colt .45 and my great-grandmother held it with comfortable familiarity. My great-grandfather was armed with the segmented rifle which had been removed from its leather case and made whole. The silencer, I should point out, was not attached.

My great-grandfather's strong sense of pride and ownership towards this rifle was now unmistakable. Just as genetic memory had given me instant knowledge of the rifles wielded by my fellow steel workers, so, too, did I instantly know my own weapon to be a Lee-Metford bolt action repeater, .303 calibre with eight cartridges in a box magazine below the breech. It was the model issued to marksmen and snipers in the British Army and its range and accuracy were far superior to any of the rifles that the other workers had, including the Winchesters. What is more, my great-grandfather's rifle had been altered so that its barrel was notched with a series of shallow grooves to make an already small bore even more deadly. His rifle, I also knew, was loaded with special hollow-nosed, lead-hardened Pritchett bullets, designed to be self-expanding when fired so as to make enormous exit wounds.

What genetic memory did not tell me was how my great-grandfather, an immigrant steel worker, came to possess such a weapon. Nor did I understand why he would want it. It was

certainly not a sporting rifle; one would never use it to hunt animals or to shoot at targets, especially with its hollow-point bullets. This was a very expensive, sophisticated high-powered rifle that had been designed for one specific purpose: the taking of human life.

And then, of course, there was the matter of the silencer, sitting in that leather cases inside the locked cedar chest, a final and irrefutable testament to the fact that my great-grandfather was no ordinary steel worker.

The crowd was growing more agitated by the moment, spurred on perhaps by the shrieking steam whistles that yowled back and forth across the river. Moving slowly through the water, pushing against the strong current, was a tugboat. It was towing two barges and headed for the tiny gravel beach inside the Homestead Works near the giant shed that housed Open Hearth number one. I could see words painted on the hull of the tugboat that read: "Tide Coal Company," and, in bigger letters, a name, "Little Bill." The barges had been modified so that they were enclosed under a makeshift roof with openings for air through which I could see the silhouettes of men and the barrels of rifles. Through the windows of the Little Bill's pilothouse, I could see another dozen or so men including one I recognized as John Potter, the superintendent of the Homestead Works. I also saw that one of the windows had been shattered.

By what I sensed was a pre-arranged agreement, Rosaleen and my great-grandfather were to meet Collin Garraty near the shore-side pier of the Pemickey railroad bridge which was the bridge nearest the Homestead Works beach. Garraty obviously had known beforehand about Frick's plans for bringing the Pinkertons into the mill and I wondered who his source of information was. The going for Rosaleen and my great-grandfather was tough, not only because the mass of townspeople through which we had to pass became increasingly thicker as we got closer to the bridge, but also because we made to make our way around and through breastworks of scrap iron and other materials taken from the mill and thrown up along the river bank by the workers. Furthermore, the path along which we were forced to walk was steeped high in slag pebbles that gave way under our footsteps. By the time we were able to join Collin, who was standing immediately behind a barricade of shiny new rails, the Little Bill had reached the beach and a gang-plank had been shoved ashore. Standing on the bow of the Little Bill were John Potter and three men I whom did not recognize but were apparently the leaders of the expedition. All three were dressed in the brass-buttoned blue coats of Pinkerton guards. Standing at

attention along the deck behind these leaders were about 20 other uniformed Pinkertons, all armed with Winchesters which were pointed at the workers.

Potter and one of the Pinkerton leaders standing beside him were shouting to Hugh O'Donnell and several other workers who were on the gravel beach. O'Donnell and the workers were insistent that the Pinkertons would not be permitted to land. They voiced their fears that the barges contained scabs who were being brought in to re-open the mills. Potter and the Pinkerton

assured the workers that the men on the barges were Pinkerton guards brought in to protect the property rights of the Carnegie Steel Company.

The situation was enormously tense. The steel workers and their families were shaking fists and brandishing weapons at the Pinkertons. In return, the Pinkertons were stone-faced but nonetheless aiming their rifles back at the workers.

"Ach! I'm fearful that those Pinks on the Little Bill are too disciplined to start shooting," Collin Garraty said to my great-grandparents. "They must be keeping the riff-raff hidden in those damned barges."

"Maybe those Pinks on the tugboat are too scared," said Rosaleen. "If shooting were to start, they'd for certain take the worst of it so long as they're out there on the water. They've got no place to hide. No place to scatter."

"Tis the very point I'm fearing," said Garraty, studying the scene with wrinkled brow. "There'll be no shooting today, I'm afraid. Too disciplined or too scared, the Pinks won't shoot first. And I don't believe the steel workers have the stomach for murder."

"They look plenty full of spit and anger to me," interjected Rosaleen, surveying the scene with her own fierce frown.

"Oh they'll hoot and holler loud enough," agreed Garraty, "and they'll make their boasts and threats, but only fear for their own lives will cause them to shoot at another human being. These steel workers are all god-fearing family men. They're rough and tumble and some are as brave as any could want, but they are not cold-blooded killers. If the Pinks don't fire on them, they won't fire on the Pinks and that is no good for our purposes, my friends, I can tell you that for certain. No good for our purposes at all. We need blood."

"That's no worry then," said my great-grandfather. With astonishment, I watched, in my

mind, as he worked the bolt on the Lee-Metford to chamber a Pritchett bullet. He then lifted and tucked the stock under his chin and sighted down the barrel at one of the Pinkertons who was standing on the bow of the Little Bill. He was the youngest man there and he was armed with a Winchester but it was held loosely at his side. His eyes were on the Pemickey bridge, watching as the men and women who were gathered there shouted down at him and his colleagues. He looked as if he were afraid but determined to stand and do his job, which, I think, is the highest form of bravery. Payton Adams squinted his eyes and took careful aim at the young's man profile, just beneath the slouch hat he wore on his head. Then, to my horror, my great-grandfather squeezed the trigger. The sound of the shot reverberated off the surface of the river like the crack of a bat perfectly hitting a fastball. A small red hole appeared just above the young Pinkerton's ear. He underwent a slow motion collapse onto the deck and as he fell, his body twisted around so that the other side of his face became visible to my great-grandfather.

Except the other side of his face was gone.

The exit wound of the Pritchett bullet had obliterated most of the young Pinkerton's skull. Nothing could be seen from where I stood but bright red meat.

All hell broke loose. So much gunfire erupted it sounded like a combination of Chinese New Year's in San Francisco and the Fourth of July in Baltimore. The Pinkertons on the Little Bill fired their Winchesters upon command in the general direction of the crowd nearest the landing site. Steel workers returned fire from both sides of the river and from the Pemickey bridge. Collin, Rosaleen and I crouched low behind the barricade as .44 calibre Winchester bullets whizzed over our heads and clanged off the steel rails with flashing sparks.

"I believe Payton has given you a war, Collin," shouted Rosaleen. Despite the danger, she seemed almost giddy in her excitement.

Collin Garraty was not so sure. He kept popping his head up above the barricade to take quick looks. Each time, however, his looks lingered longer. I, too, noted that the gunfire was already beginning to slacken, even though my great-grandfather did not venture above the barricade for his own look.

Finally, Collin stuck his head above the barricade and did not duck down. "I don't believe that the Pinks are shooting to kill," he said. "They are aiming high, I think maybe they've been given orders not to create martyrs."

When Collin made this statement, I was trying to rationalize the action of my great-grandfather. I could understand how, from his perspective, he would view the arrival of the Pinkertons as a threat to his livelihood. I could understand that he and Rosaleen and the mysterious Collin Garraty felt the key to reaching a favorable settlement in the labor dispute was to force the return of Andrew Carnegie. Frick's attitude towards the workers was well known to all of the steel worker community, and my great-grandfather was furthermore privy to Garraty's inside information. Collin, I thought, had made it clear that unless drastic events were to unfold, Carnegie would give Frick free-rein and that would be disastrous for my great-grandfather and all the rest of the steel men at the Homestead Works.

This rationalization would have been complete had I gotten a sense of rage or even strong anger from my great-grandfather's memories. However, what I sensed at the time he took aim and pulled the trigger was a chilling calm, an eerie serenity so detached from the surrounding action it sent a chill up my own spine. Collin had said the steel workers weren't cold-blooded killers. I thought I knew what he meant but I was wrong. Only now do I truly appreciate what "cold-blooded" is.

After he fired the shot and saw that his aim had been true, what I sensed in my great-grandfather was satisfaction.

At that point in my genetic recollections, Collin spoke his words on the need for martyrs and then I heard, through the now sporadic gunfire and the cries of the crowd, a familiar voice calling the name of Payton Adams from the Pemickey bridge. My great-grandfather looked up and I saw the face of Mike O'Toole, waving down. Tooley was armed only with a club which he waved in my great-grandfather's direction like a boy waving a pennant at a sports event.

"A war needs casualties on both sides," my great-grandfather remarked to Collin Garraty.

"That's a fact," Collin concurred. "It's necessary."

My great-grandfather stood up. Once again I sensed that detached serenity in him as he chambered a Pritchett round into the Lee-Metford and raised the rifle's stock to his chin. I can't imagine what Tooley must have thought. Perhaps he thought my great-grandfather was playing. Perhaps he did not believe what he was seeing. It is even possible that what my great-grandfather was doing was so beyond Tooley's concept of reality that the young man simply took no notice of it whatsoever. But what my great-grandfather was doing was all too real. For as

casually as if he were returning Tooley's greeting, my great-grandfather once again squeezed the trigger of his Lee-Remington rifle and sent a Pritchett bullet through his co-worker's heart.

Tooley did not even scream when he died. There was a look of immense surprise on his face and then he fell over backwards. Moments later, a dozen enraged steel workers, armed with carbines, shotguns, and pistols, appeared on the Pemickey bridge where O'Toole had been standing, and began pouring a steady fusillade of gunfire into the Little Bill. Every last window in the pilothouse exploded. I saw John Potter lying flat on the bow with his hands over his head. He was covered with broken glass and was screaming like a baby. I saw the leader of the Pinkertons go down from a shot in the leg. The other Pinkertons aboard the Little Bill hit the decks and began pumping their Winchesters. This time they were not aiming high. They were firing point-blank into the crowd on shore.

"Now we've got a war," said Payton Adams as he slid down next to his wife. Again I sensed his satisfaction.

"Who was that you killed?" she asked.

"No one of importance to us," my great-grandfather answered. "He knew you did he?"

"He thought so."

Rosaleen nervously smiled through her clenched jaws, grabbed Payton's arm and gave it a tight squeeze. "You did what you had to do, husband. Collin has his war now, you'll be able to take care of business soon, and we'll be on our way out of here."

As Rosaleen hugged her husband I could hear through Payton's ears the cries of the struck and wounded which cut through the blistering crackle of gunfire like discordant notes in a satanic symphony. How my great-grandfather could have killed a young man who I thought was his friend is difficult for me to understand. But, like poor Tooley, I guess I did not really know Payton Adams either. That was the thought with which I was left as the genetic memory faded away and I found myself in the total darkness of the MNME.

* * *

These then were the memories of which I told no one and in writing this journal I have come to understand why I am keeping them secret. With the help of Ana Huff, I have already verified the existence of Collin Garraty, and the deaths on July 6, 1892 of the men my great-

grandfather shot, Joseph W. Kline and Mike O'Toole. Other union men were unsuccessfully tried for the death of Kline (including Hugh O'Donnell). O'Toole was listed as having been murdered by an unknown assassin.

Knowing that the information I learned through my genetic memories is true, I am more firmly than ever resolved to not share my knowledge with anyone. My reasoning is simple, if considerably more calculated than is my normal wont.

Were Keith and his colleagues to learn that their experiment has been a success and should the condition of my post traumatic stress disorder show sufficient improvement, there will be no reason to give me a second dosage of Quip. The latter is a very real possibility as I am, at the moment, feeling far better than I have in a great many years. It is as if I have been set free after an imprisonment that had gone on for so long I had forgotten what it is to be unshackled. I do not know whether or not my dream is going to return, but it is my suspicion that it will not. That is a measure of how supremely better I feel. The downside to this is that I am convinced a second dosage of Quip is the only one way for me to learn more about my great-grandfather. Therefore, I must give Keith and his colleagues evidence that their experiment was successful but, at the same time, leave room for doubt. As scientists, they too must have answers. In their world, there is no place for doubt. I am sorry I must deceive Keith, but it is necessary to get what I want. Keith has chided me in the past for not having enough want-to and perhaps he was right.

But things are different now.

I've changed.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"They're not going for it."

Jan Thomas took another swallow from her gin and tonic and crunched ice between her teeth to chase the liquid. She paused to savor the biting chill and stinging taste, then set her glass down and stared across the table at Keith Joyner. She took note of the sheen of perspiration on his forehead and considered the weight in his voice. For him to ask her to meet for drinks, whatever was bothering him it must be major serious. She decided to let him set the pace and modulated her voice to express sympathy.

"Who are *they* and what aren't they going for?"

"*They* are the anonymous members of a mock peer review panel and *they* are not going for the Quip experiment on Simon," Keith answered. "Had this been a real peer review we'd have been flamed, pink-slipped." He threw down the rest of his scotch and soda and ordered another from a passing waitress. "Our paper proclaiming success for the Quip experiment would have been rejected. The mock peer review team said the same thing as Gibby: Nothing was revealed that Simon could not have known before. Nothing verifiable that is."

"What about the GEM images? You said they were beautiful. You said they lit up exactly where they were supposed to."

Keith's drink arrived and he immediately drained half of it. "The GEM images could not

have been finer," he said, "but, it was just as Vijay Jain predicted, the peer review team ruled that the images reveal no more than what we already reported from the experiments on Morris.

Introducing Quip into the brain will result in intense neural activity in the limbic system and a high volume of traffic to the neocortex. But we still have no proof that this activity involves any memories, genetic or otherwise. For all we know, Quip could be inducing pain. Maybe it's a brand new source of headaches."

"Quip does seem to have helped Simon," Jan pointed out, after taking another sip from her drink. "So far, he's not had his dream and it's been over two months. He keeps joking that his post traumatic stress is a thing of the past. Dr. Nertz is more cautious, but he did say that breaking the cycle of the stress-related dream is significant. Is that not testimony enough for the merits of Quip?"

"Not to any peer review team for us. Our peers are neuroscientists, not psychologists. They have no interest in therapy. Besides, one experiment is not a clinical trial. Eugene Nertz wants to believe it works. He's eager to recruit more cases like Simon so he can establish Quip's therapeutic credentials and make a big name for himself. However, new experiments would require serious funding. Frankly, there may not be any more Quip experiments. Leastwise, no more human experiments."

Jan could see where Keith was heading but she was not yet ready to deal with it. She wanted more info. "What makes you say that?" she asked.

Keith looked away from her and out the huge window near their table. They were sitting in the lounge of Skate's, a bar and restaurant in the Berkeley marina that offered a post-card view of the San Francisco Bay and the city that was its namesake. It was mid-afternoon on a Wednesday, the fog was out and the sun cast a golden veneer across the city's skyline. Despite it being a weekday, there were plenty of sailboats bouncing on the white-capped jade-colored water, and plenty of people fishing off the city pier adjacent to Skate's.

"We wanted to make as big a publicity splash as we could with this project," Keith said, his voice tense as a child walking through a dark and unfamiliar room. "Big publicity means big funding."

"Big prizes, too?" prodded Jan, softly.

"Big prizes, too," Keith conceded with a sigh. "Instead of submitting our paper to

JAMA, this time we were going for the journal *Science*. They've got their own team of science writers and terrific outreach to the mass media. Chancellor MacBryde geared up the Cal publicity machine, too. He and Governor Pat are anxious to prove that making Cal a predominantly science and technology campus will mean great things for the state. The Public Information Office was told to prepare a press release and plan for a formal press conference to be held when the paper is published. Maris Cavanaugh, the PIO handling us thinks we'll get an invitation from Ted Koppel to appear on *Nightline*.

"But all of us on the project knew this strategy could backfire big time if our paper were to be rejected. Word would leak out as to what we were trying to do and our experiment would be discussed in terms of what it failed to prove. Vijay did not want to gamble. He lined up a mock peer review panel, one that could easily have been selected by *Science* to judge our paper. The results were exactly what Gibby predicted and Vijay feared."

"What will this mean for you?" Jan asked, as if she had not guessed.

Keith continued to stare out the window. The tension in his voice rose even though the volume stayed low. "To prove Seychelles-Joyner Fear-Response Theory, I need to prove that genetic memory exists. To prove genetic memory exists, I need to prove that Quip works."

"So? Find more subjects and do some more experiments," Jan said. "If you know you're right, then time's on your side."

Keith shook his head. "An experiment like Quip involving a human subject costs a great deal of time and money. It is also, as you of all people should know, nerve-racking with regards to indemnity. Vijay put a lot of personal prestige on the line to get approval from the Human Use Committee for the testing on Simon. It would take us awhile to find another subject with as much promise and there's no guarantee that Vijay would go forward with it."

Keith turned to face Jan and allowed himself a tiny smile.

Even wearied and worried, he looked good and she knew he knew she knew it. "We scientists may not be lawyers, but we are not without our vanity. The reputations of Vijay, Ariel, Gibby, and above all, myself are on the line here with Simon and Quip. Chancellor MacBryde has told us to make it work soon or drop it. He's facing a potential strike by the liberal arts faculty when the fall term starts next month and he doesn't want to come out of the summer with a scientific failure. We've got to act now."

Enough was enough, Jan thought. Time to push the ball up the court. "What are you saying, Keith?"

She'd pushed too strong too soon because Keith immediately switched his own tactics. His eyes softened as he settled them on Jan. The tension in his voice disappeared. In a flash he was a concerned friend. Jan admired his skill.

"How do *you* think Simon is doing? Do you think he's okay?"

In spite of herself, Jan laughed. "I think he's doing great! Just great! No dream. No sleepwalking. No headaches and depression. No middle-of-the-night anger. No more hitting the punching bag. He's even planning a research trip to Pittsburgh before school starts." Jan reached for her drink. "The girls and I are going with him. I won't have him staying alone in that city with Ana Huff. You know that hussy named her damn cat after Simon?"

"I don't think you have anything to worry about," Keith chuckled, maintaining the tone of friendship. "Simon has told me all about Ana Huff. They're just friends. And even if the woman wanted more, Simon would never do you like that." Keith stopped, reconsidered: "Least he wouldn't have before."

Jan shot Keith a look. "What do you mean by that?"

Keith leaned toward her. "Have you noticed any other changes in Simon since the experiment? I mean, besides, the apparent disappearance of his abreactive dream."

Jan relaxed, laughed again. "Well, as you know, he's become a fool for science, leastwise for science of the brain. He's read all those books you gave him and seems to be making some sense of them. At least, he sounds like he knows what he's talking about."

Keith smiled and leaned back. "Oh, he knows all right. He told me the other day that if the history department does get transferred to Irvine, he might go back to school, get his Ph.D. in neuroscience and come work with me at the Brain Lab. He says he has a few ideas of his own he'd like to try with regards to fear-response. Says he's envisioning a Seychelles-Joyner-Thomas Theory. I think he's kidding but ..." Keith shrugged, smiled. "You know Simon when he gets obsessed."

Jan smiled back. "Simon would tell you he's not obsessed, merely pre-occupied. As for what he'll do if his department gets sent to another campus, he's talked about writing the definitive book on the Homestead steel strike of 1892." She smiled again, more to herself.

"These days with Simon, I just don't know. Anything seems possible."

Suddenly Keith was again leaning toward Jan, staring intently into her eyes. "There! That's what I'm talking about! When I asked if you've noticed any change in Simon since the experiment? I'm talking about attitude. Have you noticed a different attitude in Simon?"

Jan returned Keith's stare with a steady gaze. "I don't believe I know what you are talking about, Keith Joyner," she coolly responded. "If you are referring to his new expertise in science or sudden interest in writing a book, I would remind you Simon has always been a man of immense intellectual curiosity and splendid mind. He immerses himself in subjects that strike his fancy and he learns very fast. On the other hand, if you're referring to something else then I suggest you explain yourself and don't be slow about it."

Keith held up a hand. "No need for tight jaws, Counselor. I'm not talking about anything bad."

"But you are talking about something so tell me what it is you are talking about."

"Okay," Keith said, measuring her with his eyes. "Since the Quip experiment, Simon and I have played 17 games of racquetball."

"You two play racquetball damn near every day. Why is that supposed to impress me?"

"Simon has won 16 of those games. He almost never won before."

Jan erupted with a surprised laugh and took another swallow from her drink. "Keith Joyner, I swear, for a minute there you had alarms going off in my head. My suggestion is you either practice more or find another game to play if losing is going to bother you so."

"Tell that to your husband. Today I finally beat him cause he blew a shot he should have made. He slammed his racquet on the floor."

Jan renewed eye contact with Keith. "Even Saint Simon is allowed to lose his temper once in awhile." Abruptly, she shifted her tone. "Look, Keith, I know I gave you and your people at the Brain Lab a hard time about Quip. I admit it looks like I was wrong. Simon really does seem to be doing great, better than ever just as he promised. And I have you to thank."

Keith smiled warmly, accepted Jan's thanks and expressed his own happiness that Quip had been able to benefit Simon just as he'd predicted. But then he asked another question and Jan heard a return of the tension in his voice.

"Has Simon said anything to you in private about the memories he recalled under Quip? Gibby has suggested that perhaps Simon is holding out on us for some reason."

Jan was surprised. "Is he accusing Simon of lying? More to the point, are *you* accusing Simon of lying?"

"No, not lying. I know Simon wouldn't lie to me. More like not telling everything he remembered."

"Why would he do that?"

"Maybe it was too personal. Maybe he was embarrassed. Did you know he pissed and shit in the BLT? Shot his load, too. Must of been some powerful memories cause there was a hell of a lot of semen. (Keith watched for her reaction: Jan showed him nothing.) None of that surprised us because we were extracting memories from the limbic system where passion and eroticism run high. And it doesn't surprise me that Simon did not mention those details in his debriefing, especially with Ariel present. What did surprise me though, is that Simon said nothing about it to me in private. I've discussed this with Nertz and, though he wouldn't be specific, he did say that he too, suspects Simon is leaving out some of the details. He thinks these might be personal details about Payton and Rosaleen Adams, details too personal for Simon to talk about. Sex stuff. But these details could be important. My guess is that if Simon did have other memories he would tell you. He tells you everything. How about it?"

"How about what?" asked Jan, her voice dead-calm.

"What did Simon tell you about his experiences with Quip? Not the stuff he discussed in my presence, but what did he tell you in private?"

Jan felt her jaws tighten and she silently counted to ten before responding. "Why would you think I would share with you something my husband told me in confidence? Especially since you've as much as said you'd take it right back to your colleagues."

Keith dropped his eyes from Jan's. "Because this is very important for me. Because I'm asking you as a favor. And if you want me to say it I will. *Because you owe me.* That's right. Don't be eyeing me like that. Have you forgotten that night?"

Jan drew back and looked away. Forgotten that night? Not too goddamned likely. No matter how much she wanted to purge it from her memory. That night there had been no power failure in the upper hills of Berkeley where the Joyner's house was. That night, she and Keith did not

know that Walt Joyner's play had been canceled and that Simon, Sandra, and the kids were on their way home.

That night, Jan had gone to Keith to either dissuade him from using Simon in the Quip experiment or be persuaded that Simon's participation was the right thing to do. But Keith had poured them both some wine, listened to her concerns and then, rather than argue his case, had begun talking about his boys, his marriage, and his own concerns. He talked about feeling the need to always be strong, the family decision-maker, the one upon whom everyone else, especially Sandra, depended. As an athlete, he'd always thrived on being the go-to guy for his teammates, the player who wanted the ball in his own hands. But now, as head of the family, there were times, he said, when he grew tired of the responsibility and sometimes he would even resent Sandra for not being a stronger person.

"Head of the family, captain of the team, leader of the pack, what you're really talking about is the one who carries the weight," he'd said. Then, in a voice much subdued, he'd added, "After awhile, the weight gets heavy. Some nights, I'm lying in bed, can't sleep cause the worries are gnawing at my guts, and I'm thinking that the weight ain't nothing but a load."

Jan had known all too well what he was talking about and she'd opened up about her own weariness from always having to be strong and her own occasional resentment towards the security Simon seemed to derive from her strength. She, too, found herself awake some nights, her insides churning over worries from which she sheltered Simon. At some point, while she was talking, Keith had stood up and walked around behind her to get some more wine for himself. Suddenly, he was standing in back of her chair and his hands were massaging her shoulders.

It had felt so incredibly good to give herself over to the strong pressure exerted by his fingers, to allow the tension to be kneaded out of her trapezius muscles. Her eyes closed, her mind drifted off to a distant place, she let out a loud sigh of contentment. At some point, her own hands reached up to clasp his wrists and guide his hands in closer to her neck and then, somehow, with her hands still holding his wrists, Keith's hands slid down to cup and fondle her breasts. Had he done this on his own? Or had she steered him? It was a question she would ask of herself later but that night there were no questions asked. That night, her nipples stiffened in response to his suddenly soft touch and sent an erotic jolt through her body. That night, she felt

the wetness between her legs even as she tilted her face upwards for the kiss that started off gentle sweet and then quickly heated into something hungry and fierce. More wetness between her legs and another sigh, an ooohhh noise that prompted his tongue to demand and gain entrance into her mouth. His hands began to fondle her breasts in earnest. Her nipples got harder, her blood hummed, she squeezed her thighs together and squirmed upward into him.

Then her mind returned, snapping back into command with a vengeance. This was wrong! Bad wrong! It must stop now! The erotic urges vanished instantly, a beast frightened away by her mind's stern presence. Just as she was about to pull her mouth away from Keith's, just as she was about to tell him they must stop, he pulled away from her.

"This ain't right, Jan, we gotta stop," he said, breathing fast.

"I know," had been her immediate reply. But she knew her words came too late. It was an instant of difference with an eternity of implication. Their embrace had lasted less than a minute, but she did not know if the memory and the guilt that went with it would ever go away. Keith stopped, not her. That she had been about to stop meant nothing and everything. Keith spoke first. What she did was after the fact.

As feelings of shame and failure sank in, submerging her in a misery so cold it chilled her to the bone and made her entire body tremble, the Joyner family's living room was suddenly set ablaze by the headlights of the Thomas family Volvo pulling into the Joyner's driveway. For the first and only time in her life that she could remember, Jan choked. Big time. She froze like a whore caught in the act. And in her moment of utter paralysis, Keith came through. Like the thoroughbred athlete he was -- and she was supposed to be -- he was instantly out the door. Cool as could be, he intercepted Simon and fast-talked him into leaving with Sandra and the children.

By the time he'd returned to the house, Jan had put on her coat and was ready to leave. But her legs were unsteady and she was still trembling. To his credit, Keith did not even try to say something that would make everything all right. Instead, he silently walked with her outside to her car. Just as she was about to get in, Keith put a hand on her arm to stop her. Leaning in, he gently kissed her on the forehead and said: "Tonight never happened."

Outside the window at Skate's, a huge gull hove into view, its black eyes seemingly fixed on Jan, as if it too were awaiting her response. She cleared her throat. "You want Simon to

undergo another treatment with Quip?"

"So does Nertz. The abreactive dream and the other PTSD symptoms may have abated but this could well be a temporary state of affairs. Simon has yet to relive the traumatic memory that triggered his stress disorder. Until he does, he remains very much at risk. That's the reason Nertz is so cautious when discussing Simon's apparent recovery."

"And what about Simon?" Jan asked. "What does he want?"

"Simon wants another treatment, too," Keith replied. "He knows there are more of his great-grandfather's memories lodged in his limbic system. We've proven his so-called dream to be a genetic memory. He knows the rest of those memory maps are still there, waiting for him to recall them." Keith reached out and touched her hand, locked eyes with her. "We humans are a narrative species, Jan, we think along story lines and that is how we collect and keep our memories. Right now, Simon is a man who has only recalled part of the story. He wants to know all of it. He wants to know who murdered his great-grandfather."

"What about the risks?"

Keith got mad, dropped her hand, then got furious. "As I have told you time and time and fucking time again, Jan, there are no motherfucking risks. The first treatment did no harm to Simon's health and a second won't either. Quip is perfectly safe and we could give it to anyone were it not for you lawyers fucking things up. Goddamn it, woman, Simon is my best friend, how dare you keep accusing me of putting him at risk?"

Jan would not back off. "A minute ago you were asking about changes in his personality."

"My point was that Quip has helped Simon. Not having that dream, not having to live with headaches and depression, not having to repress his anger to where he dare not even allow his temper to show, has already made Simon a healthier person. Stronger, more confident, more assertive. Don't you see? Simon has been afflicted with a powerful but insidious anxiety, he's gone through life at half-speed, crippled by hidden genetic memories that have been pulling on his fear-response system, dragging him down like quicksand. The beast within Simon overreacts to perceived dangers, flinches in the face of threats only it can see. This has been the handicap Simon's had to live with since he was 12-years-old."

"Don't you think you're overstating your case just a bit?" Jan countered. "So Simon has

not been as aggressive as he might have been. Is that so terrible? He is, after all, a very good and moral person, a highly intelligent, kind and decent human being, a wonderful father, a loyal friend, and a damn fine husband. Would you discount all of that simply because he is perhaps more mild-mannered or timid than you think he should be? You're not convincing me. The way I see it, Simon has done all right for himself."

"Yeah, but he's doing lots better now," Keith fired back. "I won't argue with a thing you've just said about Simon, the students don't call him Saint Simon for nothing. And I'm not arguing for turning him into some sort of junk-yard dog, going through the rest of his life with his teeth bared and his hackles up. But what I am saying is that Simon has been denied his full potential, he has been stopped from being all that he can be. What I am saying is that you and I, two people who deeply care for him, owe him that chance. Quip has brought forth some of the memories that have limited him, exposed Simon to the beast within himself, made it possible for him to understand and quell its fears. In doing so, Quip has helped pull Simon at least partially out of the quicksand of his abnormal fear-response. Given another dose, it could bring forth that entire set of genetic memory maps, including the main stressor event. This would resolve Simon's unanswered questions and permanently free him from the quicksand. Yes, he's a good man but who knows much better a man he could be.

Then again, maybe you don't want that."

Jan's eyes narrowed.

"Yeah," continued Keith, his face and voice intense, "maybe you like having your husband less than what he could be. Maybe you like him handicapped, dependent on you, acquiescent to you. That night you said you get tired of always having to be the strong one, always carrying the major weight, but maybe that was just talk. Maybe you like being on top all by yourself. Maybe you don't want Simon to be your equal partner. Maybe you don't want him to be whole."

Now it was Jan who had to lower her eyes. "Keith, I'm sorry, but ..."

Keith loudly cut her off. "No no no no no, baby, it don't work that way!" Jan looked up to see that his eyes were ablaze. "The halls of science are littered with the corpses of researchers who got for their efforts an *I'm sorry but*. I will not join their ranks. Don't give me none of your *I'm sorry but* cause this homey won't play that shit. Simon wants another go at Quip. Vijay,

Ariel, Gibby and I want to give it to him. His own therapist, Eugene Nertz, wants us to give it to him. You can do the right thing here and support Simon, let him do what he wants to do. Or you can be a bitch, pressure Simon to honor your wishes, and force me to do what I don't want to do."

"Meaning," said Jan, who once more locked eyes with Keith.

"I tell Simon about that night. The changed Simon will be pissed. Big time. You know what I'm talking about. He might even hate you for awhile. Long enough to do the experiment."

"But nothing happened that night," Jan said.

"Because I stopped it."

Jan did not flinch.

Keith continued. "Whose to say what would have happened had I not broken away from you? You called me. You came to my house. You took my hands and you put them on your tits and you lifted up your face and you kissed me. As a man I reacted, but then, as Simon's friend, I stopped. Who do you think Simon is going to trust?"

This time, Jan flinched. Then she tried to rally. "It takes two to kiss. What makes you think the changed Simon won't hate you for your part of the betrayal. What makes you think the changed Simon will still think you're all that as a friend?"

Keith closed in for the kill. "It ain't about Simon's and my friendship. It ain't even about post-traumatic stress, fear-response and mental health. I told you we're a narrative species. Simon has to know the rest of the story. He has to know who killed his great-grandfather. Love me or hate me, won't make no difference if I'm the one who can give him the answer. But for him and you it's a whole other thing. When he hears about that night, your feelings on Quip won't mean shit."

Jan was quiet for a few moments, staring down at the table, seeing nothing, then she looked up at him and asked, "Was it loyalty to Simon that made you stop? Or weren't you man enough to fuck me?"

Keith held her gaze. "We'll never know will we because I stopped and you didn't," he answered, his voice even. "I'll be sure to tell Simon that."

Jan pushed her chair back and stood up. Reaching into her purse, she found her wallet, extracted a twenty dollar bill and tossed it toward the table. She said nothing until the bill had fluttered to a stop in front of Keith's empty glass.

"Don't bother, I'll tell him myself."

Janelle Thomas turned and walked out of Skate's.

She found herself walking through the area of the Berkeley Marina where Simon and the girls went to fly kites. There were a handful of kite fliers out on this day and it saddened Jan to think that she'd only been once or twice to this place with her family. So what about that night with Keith? Why had that happened? Was it just a spur of the moment, spontaneous act of craziness, a spark ignited out of nowhere by the intimacy of their shared revelations? Or had she subconsciously gone there looking to get laid? Deep down in a place whose existence she did not want acknowledge, was her true motivation for going to the Joyner house that night to have sex with Keith? Maybe there had been a few too many luncheons with her sister careerists, women her own age, listening to their ribald tales of pretty boys with big sticks. Maybe it was the fear that time was passing her by and taking along with it her looks and desirability. Maybe she just wanted someone different. Just once. There'd been two before Simon, both of them black, but they were boys. She'd never been with a black *man* before. Her friend in accounts, Tanisha Robinson, like herself an ex-college hoopster, told her she'd been missing out.

"Chocolate on chocolate, girlfriend, that's how God set the original team," was what Tanisha had said.

Maybe Janelle Thomas wanted to try it while she still could. Keith would have been a perfect choice. He was a strong, handsome black man with plenty of experience and apparently all the right moves. Sandra had said more than once that sex was what kept her with him.

"Keith's too vain not to be a good lay," was what Sandra had said.

Most importantly, Jan would know she could trust Keith to keep quiet about it. So maybe, without ever owning up to it, she had been hot-to-trot that night. Maybe, without being consciously aware of it, she had been sending out signals, signals she knew a cock-hound like Keith would be bound to pick up on. In other words, maybe she had been asking for it, maybe what happened that night had been entirely her fault. She'd been over this territory a great many times and the answer to that question remained as elusive as ever. If she had gone looking for sex with Keith that night, it had been subconscious act and a terribly mistaken one at that. Even as her mind was telling her to stop, to break off her embrace with Keith, the truth as to why it

was wrong, why she must stop it had become crystal clear. She did not want a pretty boy with a big stick.

She wanted Simon.

The irony was that she got her pretty boy with a big stick after all and again she owed it all to Keith. He was right-on about Simon's having come out of the Quip experiment a changed man. But she wasn't about to share that information with Keith. How could she have told him about going into the basement to exercise two night after the Quip experiment and stopping to watch Simon lift his weights. It always made her wet to see the muscles and tendons on Simon's hard body bulge as he pressed the barbells up and down. And on this particular night, she found herself getting exceptionally hot as Simon grunted through an extra-strenuous workout. When finally he set aside the barbells and lay down on the mat to do his situps, Jan slid her leotard off, snuck across the mat and snatched off his trunks and jock strap while he was in the prone position. She then challenged him to a wrestling match and sprang forward to straddle his sweaty chest.

In a single motion, Simon hoisted her straight up in the air as if he were still bench pressing his barbell. He held her up there as if to make her watch his penis turn hard and let her see for herself that it was large enough to do the job. Then he set her down on the mat, moved in between her open legs, entered and began pounding her. Endless hard pounding, as if they were once again a couple of 20-year-olds at the University of Maryland. Jan had forgotten just how overpowering Simon could be when the hot blood of passion drove to him to ignore her preferences. She'd forgotten, too, how infectious such hot-blooded passion could be, but the pounding brought it all back and she found herself responding full throttle. Twice she let out loud jungle-cat groans. Her orgasmic shriek resounded off the basement walls and even had the twins been home, Jan could not have kept quiet. Her very own pretty boy with a big stick and the desire to fiercely use it was back and his name was Simon Thomas.

Janelle Lysette Thomas, attorney-at-law, sat on a rock in the Berkeley marina at the edge of the San Francisco Bay, her shoes in her lap and her bare legs dangling in the cold water. For nearly one solid hour, she sat and she wept and she regretted her foolishness, cursed her misfortune, and mourned that which she might very well lose. Then she wiped her eyes and

blew her nose, arose and walked to the nearby grass where she dried her feet and slipped back into her shoes. Straightening her dress, she threw back her shoulders and started for home, determined to face whatever was to come with one goal in mind:

Her marriage would survive.

Six hours later the telephone rang in the Thomas house and Louise Thomas answered from the line in her bedroom. Without moving from her bed where she'd been reading, she shouted that

the call was for her mother. Jan Thomas, who was in the kitchen emptying the dishwasher, heard her daughter and picked up on a downstairs line. The caller was Keith.

"I know Simon's in the shower because he was just over here after his run to apologize to me for losing his temper at racquetball. He was his old Simon self again, ashamed for his outburst. I guess he hasn't changed so much after all. But I'm the one who should be and is ashamed. I know you haven't said anything yet to him about our discussion today. I've listened to you enough in the past to know you lawyers are never forthcoming about anything until you're pushed to the wall. And I hadn't done nearly enough pushing cause I think you know me well enough to know I wasn't ever going to say anything to Simon either. He's my best friend. I don't want to lose him anymore than you do. What I'm saying here is *that night* never happened and *this afternoon* never happened. We're even now, Jan."

There was silence on the other end of the line. Jan knew it was for her to either say something or hang up the phone. Her deliberation lasted all of three seconds. Keith was right on all counts. She hadn't told Simon because she knew, when push came to shove, Keith wouldn't either. And there was no use holding a grudge. She and Keith were bonded together in deception: It would be easier to keep it friendly.

"When Simon finishes his shower he is going to call you and tell you to set him up for a second treatment of Quip," Jan said.

"How do *you* feel about that? Do you approve?" Keith asked. Over the phone he sounded sincere, and Jan suspected that he probably was. It was easy to be sincere when you're the winner.

"He did not ask for my approval. He was very sweet in his explanation -- and, by the way, you called it dead-on, he does want to know the rest of the story -- but he was not asking

me anything. He was *telling* me."

"That doesn't sound like Simon," Keith said.

"You were right the first time about him," Jan replied. "Simon *has* changed."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Simon's Journal

In the summer of my seventh year, my parents took my brothers, Kevin and Grant, my sister, Maureen, and me to Ocean City one weekend for a rare overnight stay. They booked adjoining rooms at a Travel Lodge which was only a couple of blocks away from the boardwalk. Each room had two double beds.

The older kids slept in one room, I stayed in the second with my parents. The excitement of having spent a day at the beach with the prospects of another to follow kept me from getting much sleep. Consequently, I discovered that my mother did on occasion snore. Up until that moment of discovery I suppose I had thought her flawless. That my father snored much more often and much more loudly was of no importance. Snoring seemed a manly thing to do, hence, was quite appropriate for my dad.

My siblings awoke before dawn and managed to get me up and out without disturbing our parents. With the last remnants of night clinging to the sky like shredded lavender, Kevin,

Grant, Maureen and I walked to the boardwalk and down to the water so that we could watch the sunrise.

We sat just beyond the water's reach on the white sand which was cold and damp. Grant asked the others if they remembered the time the three of them had seen a dead shark wash up on the shore. Kevin remembered the dead creature as having been a dolphin. Maureen said they were both crazy, that the dead thing had been a gull. While the three of them argued over the genus of the dead creature they'd seen, I sat silently with my eyes glued to the horizon. Beyond the foamy white blast of the breakers, the ocean had the look and texture of corrugated steel. This silvery sea was separated at its outermost edge from the lavender sky by a thin glowing line of crimson. The sun popped through the line of crimson with much of the fierce suddenness as I imagine an embolus bursts out of an artery. In its emergence, the sun bloodied the sky with fanning rays, colored the white clouds pink and turned the silver ocean green. I sat and watched in silence until these colors of dawn faded into the bleached colors of the day. Then I thought to comment on the beauty of it all to my brothers and sister but when I looked around they were nowhere to be seen. I stood and looked up and down the beach but saw only birds and empty wire trash baskets. I called out and got no answer. Panic invaded my stomach like an army of biting ants. I raced across the beach, clambered up the stairs to the boardwalk, looked up and down and again saw more birds and more empty wire trash baskets but no brothers and sister. Once more I cupped my hands to my mouth and shouted for my siblings as loud as I could. Again I was answered with silence. This time, I could not stop my lower lip from trembling. This time, I could not hold back the tears that welled up in my eyes. I was seven years old, I was all alone on the boardwalk in Ocean City, Maryland, and I did not know the way back to my family.

Then I heard giggling and laughter from somewhere behind me. I turned and a thousand fireflies filled the sky with their flashing lights. These thousand fireflies began to plummet toward me, blinking out as they fell, and when the last of the lights had vanished I was again alone on the boardwalk. Only it was no longer the boardwalk but the wooden foot-bridge leading down to the huge gate with the hanging iron sign that read: Homestead Steel Works.

* * *

As before, the initial image of the wooden foot bridge leading down to the entrance into

the Homestead Works lingered at length in my mind. As before, this image dissolved into a jumbled rush of new images that again came much too fast to process and again left me unsettled, though not nearly so unsettled as the first time. However, unlike my first experience with Quip, the flurry of images on this second experience did not end inside the tapper's shed, nor did it end with a focus on any one image. Instead there followed a sequence of scenes that slid past me as if swept along in a steady but languid current. Despite the brevity and continual shifting, these images left impressions that were most distinct. Keith and Vijay Jain hypothesize that this could be the result of my neocortex learning to process these memories more efficiently.

Whatever the explanation, my first recollection was that of witnessing disarmed Pinkertons being herded out of the two barges that brought them to the Homestead Works by a posse of armed steel workers. These Pinkertons were then led through a gauntlet of other steel workers who had been joined by their wives and children. The Pinkertons were exhausted, bedraggled, and scared, but though it seemed that every man, woman, and child in the two lines through which the captives had to pass was holding a club or a stick, or even a rock or a bottle, no one was harmed. No one that is, until Collin Garraty, who was standing in one of the lines with Rosaleen and my great-grandfather, pointed toward the Pinkertons and shouted: "He did it! That's the one what shot Tooley! It was him! Murderer! Murderer!"

No one could have known to whom, if anyone, Collin was pointing. No one must have cared. The two lines of armed citizens immediately fell upon the Pinkertons in a rage and beat them without mercy, clubbing and stoning them and tearing off their hated uniforms. The women were every bit as vicious in the assault as the men, maybe even more so, and it is my guess, from what little I could see of the fallen Pinkertons through the swarm of their attackers, that many were left crippled for life. The screams and cries for pity from the Pinkertons reached the conscience of Simon Thomas but did not seem to touch Payton Adams. Nor should it have. Upon reflection I realize that those Pinkertons were nothing but common mercenaries who had been paid a modest sum of money to come to Homestead and break the steel workers' strike. That their actions would inflict grievous harm upon the workers and their families meant nothing to the Pinkertons. They got all the pity they deserved. My great-grandfather instinctively understood this whereas I did not. I believe that neither Payton, Rosaleen, nor Collin Garraty joined the bloody assault on the Pinkertons but I cannot say for certain because the scene

shifted and Payton was lighting the fuses to two sticks of dynamite. He tossed one into each of the Pinkerton barges, then scrambled down a landing plank to join his wife and friend and what surely must have been the entire populations of Homestead and Munhall along the riverbank near the Pemickey bridge. The stringent smell of the oil that had been generously sloshed on the decks and roofs of the two barges was strong in his nostrils as he ran.

Honest John McLuckie was standing next to Collin and I heard the Burgess express his thanks to my great-grandfather, like any mayor might thank a citizen who'd performed his civic duty. Then two explosions rocked the riverbank and everyone turned to watch the barges go up in crackling balls of black-stained flame. A huge cheer arose from the crowd and a brass band struck up a rousing chorus of "Ta Ra Ra Boom De Ay." Many of the steel workers linked arms with their wives or sweethearts and began to dance. Collin Garraty clapped his hands and nodded his head in time to the music. Rosaleen was laughing and squeezing my hand tightly. I sensed that she, too, wanted to dance but whether Payton complied I will never know for again the scene shifted and it was night and Payton was in bed with Rosaleen. They were both naked and she was beneath him, her legs entwined high up on his back. They were humping with savage joy (I know of no better term to describe the vigor of their lusty lovemaking) and Rosaleen was filling my ears with her loud moans. I had not much time to savor the memory or the sensation for once again there was a shift and it was morning, I know, because the sunlight was pouring in through a window facing east. My great-grandfather was seated at the table in the kitchen, drinking chicory coffee. In front of him was a plate that was grease-smearred with the remains of bacon and eggs. The door to the backyard was open and Rosaleen was standing just outside. I could hear the sounds of her violent retching and the morning breeze carried the odor of her vomit inside. I remember when Jan went through morning sickness with the twins. She, too, suffered violent upheavals such as those which seized my poor great-grandmother, and I was greatly worried even though I knew it was a natural sequence of events. There was no worry on the part of my great-grandfather. I sensed in him disinterest and, I suspect, more than a little repulsion. He was not a man, I believe, who had much tolerance of weakness for any reason. Good thing he never knew his great- grandson.

On the table was a newspaper, the Daily Leader and I saw on it a date: Monday, July 11, 1892. Since the Leader was an afternoon paper, I knew this edition must have been at least one

day old. It was open to an article by Coley O'Brien which reported that Governor Robert Pattison had issued an executive order to Major-General George R. Snowden, commander of the Pennsylvania National Guard. The Leader had reprinted the order and my great-grandfather studied it while my great-grandmother continued to vomit noisily.

"Put the division under arms and move at once, with ammunition, to the support of the sheriff of Allegheny County, at Homestead. Maintain the peace, protect all persons in their rights under the constitution and laws of the state. Communicate with me."

There arose within my great-grandfather an anger such as I, Simon Thomas, have never known. Good thing for Governor Pat and the General that they never knew my great-grandfather either. For I have no doubt that he would have killed both men on the spot that morning. His anger left me at once both shaken and thrilled. It was a scary thing to feel such heat. But it was also exciting. Like the time when I was twelve and I accidentally caught a glimpse of my sister Maureen coming out of the shower.

At that moment Rosaleen appeared at the kitchen doorway, looking as pale as a corpse. She was gasping for breath and each exhalation stunk the air with the feral stench of her sickness. She tried to tell my great-grandfather something but he was already on his feet and moving out of the kitchen. I think he may have bumped her, perhaps hard enough to knock her backwards towards the big stove. She may even have cried out, I think.

But my great-grandfather's anger toward the governor was so intense he scarcely heard her and paid her no heed.

There was another memory shift and my great-grandfather was back in Muldoon's. Just as before, the place was packed with steel workers, but there were differences and it took me a moment to realize what those differences were. There was still much drinking and smoking, the language was still rough and crude and heat-tinged with anger, but the men themselves were conspicuously free of grime and soot and there was no row of lunch pails on the brass rail at the base of the bar.

There was also no Tooley standing next to me. Only Doolan with a hooker of malt whiskey in his hand. He'd been drinking heavily, I surmised from the slur of his words and the smell of his breath.

"D'ya hear, Payton? Governor Pat is sending in his soldiers," said Doolan. "Hugh O'Donnell and Billy Roberts went to Harrisburg last week and begged him not to do it. But he gone and done it anyway. Governor Pat is bowing to Carnegie money and taking his orders from Frick the Prick. And d'ya know what Burgess McLuckie says? He says we must welcome the militia. That's what he says! He says we don't want no Pinkertons, we want the militia. He says we should greet the soldiers with a brass band and a town parade. He says we got to show General Snowden that us workers is law-abiding citizens. That's what Honest John says! I say fuck Honest John! He can go roll in his own shit just like that cocksucker John Potter. Burgess McLuckie says those soldiers is only coming here to protect Carnegie's property. They'll take no sides in the strike. Hell, I say! I say those soldiers is coming to break our strike. They'll occupy Fort Frick and let Mr. Prick bring in his fucking scabs. That's what I say! What say you, Payton?"

My great-grandfather sipped from his dram of beer, eyed the other workers in the saloon who all seemed to be watching him, then gave his answer. "What says Hugh O'Donnell? He's your leader."

Doolan's badly scarred face twisted into the pathetic mix of anger and disappointment that is the unmistakable acknowledgement of betrayal. "Hugh O'Donnell is siding with Honest John. So's Billy Roberts. What will this mean for our strike, Payton? You're a smart fellow. You tell me, you tell us all, what will this mean?"

Again all of the workers seemed to be looking at my great-grandfather, waiting expectantly. Some men lead by rank or title and others lead by deed, but there are some men who lead for the simple reason that they are the toughest sons-of-bitches in the valley. That is my own observation based on personal experience and historical readings and that is all I can think to explain the workers' concern for the opinion of Payton Adams. I never got to hear what his opinion was for the memories again shifted and my great-grandfather was standing alone at the end of a weedy path atop a treeless ridge. The sun was low in the eastern sky and I sensed the date to be several days after my conversation with Doolan in Muldoon's.

From the path, I could see in one direction a long steep slope directly overlooking the town of Homestead. This slope I knew was called Shanty Hill and it was densely populated with tents -- Army tents. And everywhere throughout this encampment I could see blue-uniformed

soldiers. There must have been thousands of them was my first thought. There were also, I noted, a shockingly large number of artillery pieces and Gatling guns. I say "shockingly large" because this was, after all, a civilian peace-keeping mission for the militia and not a battle with another military force. These weapons were all trained on the town and even at such an early hour were manned by batteries of soldiers. Apparently the strategy of destroying a town in order to save it was one of long-standing with the U.S. military, even during a peace-keeping mission.

Payton Adams seemed less interested in the encampment on Shanty Hill and more concerned with studying the Homestead Works. Walled inside the whitewashed fence, the works truly did resemble a military fort, especially when the soldiers came into view, patrolling the perimeter of the property in groups of six, their rifles fixed with bayonets. However, the coils of barbed wire running across the top of the fence and the search-light towers at every corner, also made Fort Frick look like a penitentiary. But the works were neither fort nor penitentiary, a fact of life bitterly apparent to my great-grandfather, myself, and, I've no doubt, every other worker or citizen in the area. For although the works were blocked from view, the noise, the smoke, and the rotten egg smell of burning sulfur, told all of us that there was industrial activity taking place inside. You need not have been a historian to know that the strike had effectively been broken. As we sports fans say today, all that was left was to mail in the stats.

Once again the memory faded from my awareness like the dematerialization of a lazy ghost and again I found myself in bed at night in the house on California Street. Rosaleen was there, too, sitting on the edge of the bed. My great-grandfather was naked and his penis was erect, but Rosaleen was in a muslin nightgown of a style known then as a "Mother Hubbard." Even in the murky orange light from the kerosene lamp, I could see that her coloring was as ghastly pale as it had been the other morning. I could also see that the rims of her eyes and nostrils were inflamed. Speaking to my great-grandfather, she sounded even worse than she looked and her breath was foul from sickness.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, husband. I expected to be down with the sickness in the morning but not in the night as well. Fye, for that matter all the live long day. This baby is a Furey for certain. I'd wager a new frock tis a boy. Like his father, he's inconsiderate. Ach, spare

me your death eyes, husband, I'm just making sport. Bear with me, I will get better." She reached out, placed her hand on Payton's and squeezed it affectionately. He did not respond but my great-grandmother kept talking. Her husband's lack of warmth was obviously a state of affairs to which she had long ago resigned herself. "I know you don't mind eating your supper alone, darlin', or spending your entire evening alone. Fye, you don't mind being alone ever, tis your preference, I know. You only tolerate me cause travelling with a wife is good cover. And up until my being with child, I've never disappointed you in the sack. Aye, I love it too. You know I do. A lady's not supposed to admit that, but you and the Lord both know I'm no lady. That's alright. I'm going to be good mother. You'll see, husband. And you'll see that our baby is going to suit your purposes just fine. Who'd think a man in your line of calling would be moving about with a wife and a child? Who'd ever be on the lookout for you? No one. That's for damn sure."

My great-grandfather looked away from her, out the window at the blackness of the night. Hands were laid gently on his cheek, pulling him around to face Rosaleen.

"Nay, don't look away. I've followed you across Ireland. I've followed you across the ocean and into this dirty filthy place. I'll follow you to our next home. And when we're through with this life, I'll be following you straight into hell for the sins I've committed on your behalf. You need me more than you know, Payton Furey, but I love you in spite of it and there's the pity of me."

Tears shone in her eyes and the heart of Simon Thomas went out to her. Had it been in my power, I would have commanded Payton Adams to put his arms around his wife, hold her tightly and kiss those tears away. But it was not in my power to change the past. Payton Adams responded to his wife's sadness with a yawn. At least he had the decency to look away from her first. For all the feeling I sensed within him, he could have been Dean Morito dismissing my complaints against Danny Bosworth. He was a hard man, my great-grandfather, and with hard men you either take them as they are or you don't. If there is to be any give, it will come from you, not from them.

Rosaleen must have understood this for in spite of her husband's "I don't need this" attitude, she seemed to rally her spirits. "Ach! Listen to me babble on. Must be the sickness. Hey? Did I tell you I spoke with Mrs. McLuckie and Mrs. O'Donnell at the grocery market

today? They were crying and carrying on and do you know want to know why? Their husbands were arrested this morning."

That got my great-grandfather's attention. Rosaleen knew it too, and the satisfaction brought a weak smile to her face.

"Sure enough. General Snowden sent soldiers to their homes along with that spineless Sheriff McCleary and that cowardly lawyer for the Carnegie Company, Mr. Knox. Honest John and Hugh are both locked up in the hoosegow, charged with the murder of that Pinkerton you shot. What do you think about that, husband?"

"McLuckie and O'Donnell should have laid low. Somebody was going to have to pay for that killing and they were the easiest targets. Law officers always aims at the easiest target to hit. It makes them look good for their bosses."

"What's this going to mean for us, husband?" my great-grandmother asked.

My great-grandfather's considered reply was: "It means Collin's going to have to think of something different to make Carnegie come back."

There was another memory shift and it was early in the morning of what I knew was the following day. My great-grandfather was walking through his kitchen, headed, I was quite certain, for the outhouse in his backyard. He wore a muslin nightshirt and he was carrying in one hand a small chunk of bread. The moment Payton Adams stepped outside his eyes went straight to a bird roost which I, as Simon Thomas, had not noticed before. On this roost there sat a pigeon and I instantly saw that it had a white band attached to one of its legs. My great-grandfather extended his arm and the bird, with a flutter of its wings, immediately came to him. Payton Adams gave the bread chunk to the bird and while it feasted he removed the band from its leg. He then snapped his extended arm skyward in a northerly direction and the bird with bread still in its beak flew off.

My great-grandfather pocketed the band, went to the outhouse to relieve himself (again the physical feeling was so intense that I presumed -- correctly -- Simon Thomas relieved himself as well). When Payton returned to his kitchen he sat at the table, took out the band and felt along its outer edge with his thumbnail until he found a tiny cleft. His index finger came up to meet his thumb in a pincers movement and the band split open to reveal a scrap of paper tucked inside. The paper bore an unsigned message which my great-grandfather knew (and I

guessed) was from Collin Garraty. The message read as follows:

July 19, 1892

5

The message faded before my eyes and I found myself on a horsecar, jammed in between so many bodies that holding onto a ceiling straphanger was superfluous. The air inside that car was so hot and stifling it felt like I was back at the furnaces in the Homestead Works. And the smell was even worse. The body odor of my fellow passengers in their heavy clothing was frightful enough, but many of the men also sported the worst imaginable halitosis from drinking beer and chewing tobacco. There was also a stink emanating from, as I finally discovered, open wounds on the backs of the four horses that pulled the car only under fearsome flogging from the driver. It is my opinion that were I, through the reliving of genetic memories, to visit the 19th century a hundred times, I would not ever get completely acclimated to the ambient stench.

The noxious odor did not seem to disturb my great-grandfather. He was, however, sweating like a pork roast and I realized then that he was wearing clothes I had never seen before. Unlike the plain, rough-sewn steel worker garments he'd always worn in previous memories, he was now dressed as a gentleman, complete with a fancy white shirt and high starched collar, fine trousers and even a topcoat. He still, however, had the oak-handled jagged-edged knife strapped to his waist. This was not surprising. I don't think I have mentioned it before, but my great-grandfather slept with that knife under his pillow. It is, I understand, seldom ever more than arm's reach away from him.

As Simon Thomas pondered how and why his great-grandfather came to be dressed in such a dandy manner, the horsecar lurched and someone was jostled against Payton Adams. Again, I found this in no way surprising, given the crush of over-heated passengers aboard. What was surprising, however -- make that astonishing -- was that somehow my great-grandfather realized his billfold had been lifted. Payton Adams twisted around and saw the thief push past a woman in a headscarf and jump off the horsecar. My great-grandfather was after him at once, knocking aside the poor woman in the scarf.

We were in a poor and very rough section of Homestead known to the locals of that time as Hunky Hollow. The term "hunky" was a derogatory name for the Slavic people. I believe I

have already mentioned that most of the Slavic men then worked as unskilled laborers in the mill. They were paid about \$10 for 90 hours of work each week and many of them lived with their families in dreary little shacks which they rented from the Carnegie Steel Company for \$2 a week. As the most recent group of immigrants, Slavs had been relegated to the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy by the other Europeans, particularly those from Great Britain. Perhaps none were more harsh in their treatment of the Slavs than the Irish, the group that benefitted most from their arrival. Do unto others as others did unto you has been history's version of the Golden Rule. The consequences of language-barriers, wretched working conditions, and inadequate wages were exactly what anyone would expect: Life in Hunky Hollow and other Slavic pockets in the 1890s was as bad if not worse than life in the ghettos of America's inner cities some one hundred years later.

The thief who picked my great-grandfather's pocket was a blonde-haired teenaged boy who immediately ducked into a tangle of alleys scattering off in many different directions. The boy obviously knew his way around these alleys for he made straight for one that cut through a settlement of company shacks which had been built around a number of circular dirt courtyards. He was a swift runner, this boy, much faster than Payton Adams. However, my great-grandfather was relentless in his pursuit and kept shifting his vision back and forth from the fleeing boy to the sight of his own pounding feet. It took me a moment to realize the wisdom in this strategy: The alley through which we ran was by no means flat and smooth. It followed the lift and dip of inclines and ravines and was furthermore disfigured with treacherous craters. Sure enough, the boy who kept looking back at my great-grandfather took his own eyes off the ground once too often and paid the price with a painful tumble. He managed to get back up on his feet, but he was hobbled.

He was also tiring.

Steadily, my great-grandfather closed the distance between them until I could hear the boy's labored breathing. In desperation, he veered off into one of the dirt courtyards. Strung across this courtyard were several clotheslines, each drooping from the weight of bed sheets and white curtains. I suspect the boy thought he could escape under the cover of this laundry, but my great-grandfather simply took out his jagged-edged knife and began slashing his way through the clotheslines like a man with a machete hacks his way through jungle vines. The boy looked

back, saw that his tactic had failed, and once again did not watch his step. There was a clearing in the center of the courtyard where four toddlers sat playing amidst some rubbish. The boy tripped over one of these toddlers and sprawled through the rubbish. That is where my great-grandfather caught him.

The boy's blue eyes were opened wide and wet with tears. In English but with a heavy Slavic accent, he begged my great-grandfather through mighty gasps for air.

"Have mercy...(pant)...(pant)...good sir! Please ...(pant)...to...(pant)...(pant)...show mercy with me!"

With trembling hand, the boy held out the billfold. In some ways, he reminded me of the young man whose kite I accidently destroyed at the Berkeley marina. Had it been within my power, I would have taken the billfold and let the poor lad go with a stern warning. But there is no changing the past. Payton Adams took back his billfold, checked its contents (there were several greenback dollars, again a surprisingly large sum for a steel worker to be carrying, especially one who is on strike), then slipped it back into his coat pocket. Without warning, his hand shot out and grabbed the boy's wrist. The boy's eyes opened even wider, the blood drained from his face, and he struggled mightily to escape. But my great-grandfather had him in an iron grip from which the boy had no hope of breaking free.

"This the hand that stole from me?" my great-grandfather asked.

The boy nodded, terrified. Payton Adams raised his knife and the terrible jagged-edged blade glinted ominously in the steamy sunlight.

"It should have practiced more," my great-grandfather said. The blade came down swiftly, slicing through the boy's fingers. There was a small spray of blood and a scream so loud and awful it scared the toddlers and made them cry. Payton Adams released the boy's wounded hand, turned, and began walking out of the courtyard. He stopped to take up one of the fallen sheets and used it to wipe the boy's blood from the blade of his knife. As he did so, there came the sound of a male voice, shouting in a heavy Slavic accent.

"Somanabitch! Somanabitch!"

My great-grandfather looked back down the alley and saw the man coming toward him. His hair and mustache were gray, he was heavy set and he lumbered with a slight limp, but the old Slav was feisty and ready to wreak vengeance. In his hands he held a hoe which he was

positioning to swing upon my great-grandfather. I could see the muscles on the Slav's bare arms flex for battle. Those muscles looked dangerously ample, despite the man's age, and Simon Thomas had no doubt those muscles had carried the Slav to victory in many a fist-fight. But this was no fist-fight and Simon Thomas desperately wished he could warn the Slav off, could tell the old man that he had no idea of what he was going up against. But, of course, Simon Thomas was not really there and could not say anything.

The old Slav charged close-enough to swing his hoe, shouting a steady stream of what I presume were curses in his native tongue. Within my great-grandfather I felt that chilling calm take over. He easily ducked under the arc of the hoe and in a smooth, rising back-handed motion slashed the Slav's throat with the jagged-edged knife. The old man froze in his tracks as a second mouth in the form of a vivid red smile appeared under his chin. The shouted Slavic curses became a wet wheezing noise, like the sound that bagpipes make when they are being deflated. Aeroembolism, I believe is the medical term, the rapid expulsion of air from the lungs through a mortal wound to the throat. The red smile became a crimson beard, then a bib and then a full length apron unfurling out over the Slav's chest. The man dropped his hoe and reached for the cut, but he seemed to have lost all sense of himself. His head flopped to the side, the supporting neck muscles and tissue having been severed, and his legs began to fail him. He staggered about the alley with his arms flailing helplessly at his throat which continued to make wet wheezy bagpipe noises.

Payton Adams turned away from the Slav's death throes. Once again he wiped clean the blade of his knife, inspected his clothing for blood -- there was none -- and proceeded to walk back up the alley down which he'd come.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Simon's Journal

Following the unfortunate incident in Hunky Hollow, my great-grandfather boarded another horsecar and proceeded on his journey. Throughout his ride, he was always moving parallel to the Monongahela River whose swift brown waters were never far from sight. The

horsecars had been built mainly for the transportation of steel workers to the mills which were concentrated along the river's banks. Industrialists such as Carnegie and Frick believed that the main purpose of rivers was for the transportation of the raw materials that went into the manufacturing of iron and steel. Using space adjacent to river banks for anything other than an iron or steel works was a waste of land.

Where there were iron and steel works, there were railroad tracks and towns just like Homestead.

Consequently, the views for my great-grandfather as the horse-drawn car slowly made its way towards Pittsburgh never much varied. To the south was an uninterrupted jumble of towering stoves and sprawling sheds with forests of smokestacks endlessly spewing columns upon columns of thick billowing pollution into the buttermilk sky. To the north were more of the same squat, tightly packed wood-frame buildings, unpaved streets and filthy, garbage-strewn sidewalks as he saw on Eighth Avenue in Homestead. The only things for my great-grandfather or any other passenger to look at during the journey were the billboards.

Some small, some large, some freshly painted and some faded to various degrees of visibility, the billboards crammed the rooftops of building as tightly as passengers packed the horsecars. The competition for attention was overwhelming and my great-grandfather paid far too little heed for me to grasp details, but there were a couple that caught his eye and each featured a pretty woman. In the first, which was for Durkee's Spices and Mustards, a young woman walking under an umbrella smiled sweetly at an admiring gentleman. In the second, another young woman had lifted her leg to button a shoe as a way of demonstrating the elasticity of her pivot corset from the Madam Foy Corset Company. My great-grandfather was also drawn to a particularly large advertisement for the United States Express Company, with its hard-charging steeds pulling their wagonload of merchandise out of the train station. The advertisement boasted transportation of any size parcels or trunks in the quickest times and at the lowest rates to any city or town in the country. The wheels of the United States Express Company never stopped rolling -- day or night! Something about that advertisement struck a nerve with me personally as well. The image of that freight wagon with its United States Express Company logo painted on the side stuck in my mind long after my great-grandfather's eyes had moved on.

Once the horsecar crossed over the Liberty Bridge into Pittsburgh and we began to move away from the river, the billboards soon vanished and the unpaved streets gave way to cobblestoned boulevards. As the clip-clop of the chuffing horses pulled us deeper into the city, the squat, tightly-packed wood buildings also yielded to buildings of stone and brick. With each passing block, these buildings grew taller and more ornate until those that were as much as a dozen stories high with elaborate cornices and other architectural embellishments became the rule rather than the exception. Even the sky changed. When my great-grandfather disembarked from the horsecar near the corner of Forbes Avenue and Smithfield Street, he happened to look up and I saw that the sky, while still somewhat hazy, was most definitely blue.

Through my great-grandfather's eyes and ears I also saw and heard, coming down Forbes Avenue, my first electric-powered streetcar. The trolley was noticeably larger than the horsecar but otherwise looked similar except, of course, for the absence of horses and the presence of a long pole poking up from its rear like the tail of an angry dog. This long pole was connected to electrical lines which hung over the street like threads of cobwebs. As the trolley swayed past us, its motor emitted a loud humming noise and there was a smell of burning rubber that was pungent but no worse than the stench of sweaty horseflesh. The clanging bell of the electric streetcar sounded exactly like that of the horsecar. Once the trolley had gone by, my great-grandfather crossed Forbes Avenue, walked a block up Smithfield Street and turned down Fifth Avenue.

* * *

I think it's important I note at this point in my journal that while I cannot be certain, I believe my great-grandfather completed his trip to Pittsburgh following the incident in Hunky Hollow with a clear conscience. Despite his having just permanently maimed a teenaged boy and killed an elderly man, I got no sense of any strong emotions on the part of Payton Adams. He did look at his pocket watch several times during his ride but paid little attention to any of his fellow passengers. From this I surmise that his only concern was arriving on time for what I'd guessed -- from the cryptic message carried by the pigeon -- to be an appointment at five o'clock with Collin Garraty. He obviously had no worry of being called to account for his actions, nor was there any apparent re-enactment of the "Tell-Tale Heart" in the way of guilt. By that, I mean, no obvious sign of self-recrimination. My own immediate reaction of course was one of

shock and horror, but even while still in the BLT and under the influence of Quip, I realized that I should not be so quick to judge Payton.

To begin with, the Slavic boy stole from a man who was out of work on strike and whose wife was pregnant. As I have said, I had already guessed that my great-grandfather had sources of revenue other than his job at the Homestead Works but I did not, at that time, know how substantial this additional revenue was. I did see several dollars in my great-grandfather's billfold and that might well have been a difficult loss for him to endure. Furthermore, given the state of economic conditions in general for the residents of Homestead in the summer of 1892, anyone stealing from a man who'd boarded a horsecar in Homestead was taking an enormous risk and had better be prepared to pay dire consequences. In some respects, Payton Adams showed the Slavic boy a certain degree of mercy and may have even done him a kindness by putting an end to his days as a pickpocket. Thieves were vigorously prosecuted by the law in those days, especially Slavic thieves. And given the boy's incompetence, perhaps the next time he might have been caught by a worker who would have claimed the lad's life as recompense.

As for the man my great-grandfather killed, to my eyes, he looked to be about 60-years old. However, a few years of working in a steel mill made men look much older than they actually were. This was especially true for unskilled dinky men. That Slav who charged my great-grandfather might have been no more than 50 years old, which even then was not so old as to be harmless. Certainly there was nothing feeble about the muscles in his arms and I have no doubt as to what his intentions were with that hoe which looked to have quite a sharp blade. A strong case can be made that the Slav would have killed Payton Adams had he been able, in which case, for my great-grandfather, it was a kill or be killed situation. Again, I must keep in mind the time and setting. An Irishman caught in a hostile confrontation in a Slavic ghetto had little choice but to escape as quickly as possible. Certainly Payton Adams could have simply outrun the Slav who threatened him. That is what Simon Thomas would have done. But my great-grandfather was not a man to run away from confrontations. That is a major difference between us and while I cannot, I suppose, condone any of the actions of my great-grandfather, I confess that I do admire his courage and envy his clarity of purpose. I wish that I could be as direct and forthright as him. I wish that I had his balls.

* * *

On Tuesday afternoon, July 19, 1892, Payton Adams walked along Fifth Avenue in the city of Pittsburgh. It was to be my first genetic memory glimpse of why the time period has been dubbed the Gilded Age. Prosperity was very much in evidence.

The sidewalk was wide, smoothly paved and relatively clean of debris thanks to the vigilance of uniformed street sweepers. It was also pleasantly shaded by a mix of maple and buckeye trees along the curbside and, at every corner as far down the street as I could see, there was a cast-iron gas lamppost crowned with a big glass globe. The avenue had been paved in asphalt and though the traffic was no less heavy than that in Homestead, it was much quieter. It was also different in that it consisted primarily of horse-drawn carriage cabs, something I never saw in Homestead.

Pedestrian traffic was also heavy but absent of the peddlers and sandwich men I'd seen in Homestead. The men were dressed in suits, much like those worn today save for the high stiff collars. Nearly all of them sported beards and mustaches and many of them carried walking canes and pot bellies. The women wore elaborate ground-sweeping dresses, many with bustles so prominent it gave the wearer the appearance of being mounted on hidden Shetland pony. Practically everyone wore a hat -- felt derbies and straw boaters for the men, big gaudy velvet things with feathers, ribbons and poufs of lace for the ladies. Other than the occasional baby in a perambulator or toddler in a stroller, usually being pushed by what most likely was a nanny, the only children I saw were newspaper boys.

There was one small group of young women walking together who stood out because they were dressed in simple skirts and shirtwaists, and high-buttoned shoes. Their hats were small and prim and their hair was cut relatively short for the times. Most of them carried parasols and hand baskets. In appearance and demeanor they could easily have been young Homestead women on their way to a church picnic, but I presume they were "working girls," single women in their early twenties who lived at home with their parents and performed clerical duties for companies. Maybe they had been trained to work those new machines called typewriters which were being introduced into the more prosperous and modern offices. Several of these young ladies eyed my great-grandfather as he passed by them. He was still in his own fancy clothes and must have looked quite the attractive catch. Had he been dressed in his working attire, I am sure he would have drawn far more stares for I am certain this was not a part

of Pittsburgh that saw too many Irish steel workers. Nonetheless, the stares he did draw were stimulating to me. I myself do not command such attention. Why is that, I wonder? Why does Payton Adams draw more attention from women than me? After all, we are virtually identical in appearance. I think it is the self-confidence he exudes. Say what you will about his moral choices, my great-grandfather is a man without fear. Others see that quality in him -- men and women alike -- and are drawn to it. In short, he is a dashing man of action, whereas I am a dull academician.

Payton Adams came to a stop in front of an especially tall and stately brownstone building which I recognized from old photos I had seen as the Penn-Schenley Hotel. Without the need of my great-grandfather's eyes, I knew that directly across Fifth Avenue from the Penn-Schenley Hotel, was a smaller but no less stately graystone building. This would be the Chronicle-Telegraph Building.

Why would I know this? Because on the second floor of the Chronicle-Telegraph Building in the year 1892 in the city of Pittsburgh were the offices of Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick of the Carnegie Steel Company.

There was a memory shift and I was inside the Penn-Schenley walking through its cavernous lobby. What immediately came to mind were the words of the historian Oliver Larkin who described Victorian decor as "ponderous plush gloom." Blue velvet draperies with gold tasseled valences -- the state colors of Pennsylvania -- smothered every one of the lobby's tall windows and blocked any natural light from entering. Though gaslit chandeliers and wall lamps blazed away with a steady hissing noise, like a nest of snakes, a substantial portion of the light emitted was swallowed by the lobby's ebonied woodwork, the fresco-painted ceiling and the textured floral wall paper whose coloring was dark and muted. The ambient gloom was made all the gloomier by the heavy wraiths of tobacco smoke that hung in the air like a Bay Area fog. The lobby was populated with a great many easy chairs, huge, high-backed velvet things in either purple or emerald green, arranged in pairs around marble-topped mahogany tables. It was mostly men who sat in these chairs and everyone of these men that I saw was puffing away on some form of tobacco -- mostly cigars, but also a substantial number of pipes and cigarettes.

The stench of all that tobacco was strong enough to make my own stomach react adversely but, fortunately, Payton Adams knew exactly where he was going and did not linger.

Moving with his customary quickness, he went straight from the lobby to a large dining room that featured oval tables and armchairs upholstered in the ubiquitous velvet. It was a little less smokey in the dining room, though not much. The ponderous gloom persisted, however, due to an even greater preponderance of dark wood and wallpaper yet fewer gas lamps. Delicious cooking odors, however, made the room far more inviting than the lobby.

The headwaiter, a handsome mustached young man in a tuxedo came forward to meet my great-grandfather. He eyed Payton's clothes like an appraiser eyes merchandise. Apparently my great-grandfather passed the inspection.

"Will the gentleman be joining us for dinner? the headwaiter inquired, bestowing a warm smile from behind his mustache.

"Table 21," my great-grandfather replied. "I'm expected."

The headwaiter produced a leather-bound menu which he handed my great-grandfather then turned and led him to a table that was towards the back of the room and situated in a corner so as to afford it considerable privacy. Collin Garraty was already there with a drink in his hand.

"Ever had a cocktail before, Payton?" Collin asked, motioning to the liquor in his glass. "This is called a Manhattan. Tis very fashionable in New York. A mixture of whiskey and sweet vermouth. Woon't you have one with me?"

"I drink my whiskey straight. Thanks just the same," Payton Adams replied.

"Straight it is, lad," replied Collin. He flagged down our waiter, another handsome young man, and ordered himself a Manhattan and a straight Irish whiskey for my great-grandfather. He also gave the waiter back the menus and ordered dinner for us both. He said we would start with the turtle soup and a plate of smoked sausages for an appetizer. Then, for himself, Collin ordered pan-fried rabbit with gingersnap gravy, candied yams, and eggplant. For my great-grandfather, he ordered a 16-ounce steak and mashed potatoes, telling the waiter: "Make sure that steak is so bloody you can damned near hear it moo!"

When the waiter left, Collin said to my great-grandfather, "You're an easy man to take supper with, Payton. Raw steak and mashed potatoes every time."

"I never have to send it back," my great-grandfather said.

Our waiter brought the drinks and while we drank and waited for our meal, Collin talked about a trip to New York City from which he'd just returned. Apparently Payton had been aware

of it. From what Ana Huff had reported to me about Collin Garraty I knew that he traveled back and forth between Pittsburgh and New York quite frequently in the weeks leading up to his death.

Now I was hearing that the purpose of his latest trip had been to make arrangements for a load of rum to be delivered to a freighter ship coming in from New Orleans. Collin also had a load of tobacco aboard that same ship which was bound for Galway.

"What's buried in that tobacco?" my great-grandfather inquired. "Guns or gold?"

"Springfield rifles," Collin answered with a wink of his eye behind his wire-framed spectacles. "U.S. army issued. Never been fired."

"Ammunition, too?" asked Payton.

Collin Garraty laughed. "Enough to outlast a siege. That ought to give the lads something to do besides steal my rum."

Our waiter appeared with a tray upon which were two bowls and a soup tureen. He set a bowl in front of each of us, then ladled out a generous portion of a soup so thin it looked to me like consume. But it turned out to be quite tasty and was a splendid introduction to the spicy heat of the plate full of sausages that were brought to our table. At some point, while we were eating the sausages, Collin ordered a bottle of French wine. I never did see the label but it was, I believe, a Languedoc that turned out to be exceptional. Even my great-grandfather commented on its quality.

"The French make great wine and beautiful women," Collin Garraty agreed. "But they are poor fighters and do you want to know why? Because a French man will kiss a woman's cunt. Aye! Tis God's truth. Don't look at me that way. I know what I am talking about. I trade with those bastards. They brag about it, they do. A frog will put his mouth down there and stick his tongue in a woman's hole and that is what makes him a Nancy boy in a scrap. Frenchmen fight like sissies."

"Somebody should have told Napoleon about that," Payton Adams observed. "Maybe he'd of done better in his battles."

"Ach! Who'd Napoleon's army ever lick square up? Nobody but the English, the Spaniards and the Italians. Limeys, Spics, and Dagos. What's that tell you? The Russians and Germans were too tough for his lads. After they softened the frogs up even the Limey's could

whip them. That's a fact of history, Payton."

Collin Garraty it seemed held a strong opinion about the characteristic traits of every nationality. To get his tobacco he'd had to deal with Germans whom he held to be smart and tough but lacking imagination. To get his rum, he'd dealt with Italians whom he said displayed the cleverness of born thieves but were easy to fool because they were liars and assumed everyone else to be lying too.

"Tell them what you want them to know and they won't believe a word of it," Collin said. "You're lucky we brought you here before Ellis Island opened. Every new passenger ship seems to be nothing but the Gold Teeth now. The place is crawling with Guineas."

To get the rifles he dealt with his fellow Americans. Unless they were Irish-Americans, Collin referred to his countrymen as Yanks and spoke as if he were not one of them. He said Yanks were easy to figure out: Everything was about money.

"They're as greedy as Jews but not near as smart," Collin said about the Yanks. "Make them think they're getting something for nothing and you can cheat them blind."

In negotiating import passage for his shipments, Collin also had to deal with the English whom he held in highest contempt. "A dirty and disgusting nation of cowardly buggers who aren't worth a hoot in a scrap," he said.

"If that's so then how'd they manage to conquer Ireland?" my great-grandfather asked as he drained his wine glass and motioned to the now empty bottle. He was, as I would soon learn, much more talkative after several glasses of alcohol.

Collin glared through his spectacles as he called out loud to our waiter to bring us another bottle of the same. "We were betrayed by filthy heathen cocksuckers amongst our own kind. St. Patrick did not rid Ireland of all its snakes. He left behind the Protestants."

My great-grandfather simply nodded in response.

Collin continued to rave on about the English. Just as the dinners arrived he muttered something about wishing "we'd blown up all of London when we'd the chance." Simon Thomas was intrigued but the conversation stopped as both men tore hungrily into their food. The smells were so real to me that my own mouth began to water and inside the BLT I could sense the rumbling growls of my stomach. The sights and smells of Payton's meal served to fire my hunger but his consumption of that meal did nothing to satisfy it.

During dinner, Collin talked more about his latest trip to New York City. He made no bones about his preference for that city over Pittsburgh. Everything about New York was splendid, in Collin's opinion. He raved about the splendid new steel-framed buildings that were going up. They were called "skyscrapers" he said and there was no limit to how high they might rise. The splendid phone directory there, he said, was an entire book, rather than a couple of sheets of paper like it was in Pittsburgh. He thought Joseph Pulitzer's *World* was the most splendid newspaper in Christendom and Delmonico's the most splendid restaurant. The splendid bar at the Hoffman House was the biggest in the nation and Broadway was the country's most splendid street. The people were splendid, too, Collin said. He'd seen a performance of *Taming of the Shrew* in which John Drew played Petruchio and Ada Rehan played Kate and, of course, they were both splendid. And while he did not adjudge the government at Tammany Hall to be "splendid," he nonetheless found virtue in its ability to get things done for those who paid.

But Collin Garraty heaped his highest praises on a huge new indoor arena that had recently opened. It was called Madison Square Garden and it had been designed by the famous architect Stanford White. Not only did this arena hold 10,000 seats, Collin said, but the building's roof was adorned with a statue of the Greek goddess Diana and she was naked from the waist up.

"Her tits is out there for all the world to see," gushed Collin. It was not the baring of female breasts per se that Collin found so exciting, after all, he'd seen much racier in the statues of Europe. What impressed Collin so much was that local officials were opposed to Diana's nudity but J.P Morgan, the financier who put up the money for the project insisted they be revealed.

"Some say Morgan was defending White's integrity as an architect," Collin said, "others say he just wanted to see Diana's tits. I say he wanted to show the power of his money. In America, it don't matter who or what you are, when money talks, you listen. That's the way of the Yanks."

"You don't think that's the way of the Irish?" my great-grandfather asked. "Or the English, or the French, Italians, Germans, or anywhere else in the civilized world?"

Collin started to shake his head, thought better of it, and laughed. "You're right, lad. Money is the way all over the world. Let's drink to money!"

Collin raised his glass but did not wait for my great-grandfather to join him in his toast. Instead, he drained his glass and poured himself an immediate refill. I realized then that at some point during our meal, he'd ordered a third bottle of wine, most of which, he drank himself. Collin took a couple of more swallows from his wine then insisted, rather loudly, that Payton join him in having a piece of key lime pie for dessert.

While Collin devoured his pie, which looked to be a wedge of meringue dolloped onto a slice of crust, and my great-grandfather picked at his, Collin spoke of his last night in New York. Early in the evening he had attended a supper-theater on Broadway. While feasting on lobster, he saw a splendid production of Uncle Tom's Cabin in which the role of Simon Legree was played by John L. Sullivan, the splendid heavyweight boxing champion of the world.

At that time, it was, I know, somewhat common for famous boxers to tour with mediocre theater companies and of all the boxers in the world none was more famous than the great John L. Sullivan, the media-monikered Boston Strong Boy who, according to legend, would enter the roughest of bars in every city to which he traveled and deliver the boast: "I can lick any man in the house!"

Collin was a huge fan of Sullivan's but later that evening, after the play, he had attended an exhibition boxing match that featured the next contender for Sullivan's crown, a young man named James Corbett. It was Collin's considered opinion that there was trouble in store for Sullivan.

"John L.'s been spending too much time on the stage and not enough in the ring," said Collin. "He's got a pot belly as big as mine. But this young scrapper Corbett, ahh, that's another story. They call him Gentleman Jim but he fights like the devil's spawn. You've never seen nothing like it, Payton. He's a slender lad but he's a will-o'-the-wisp, all the time dancing around, making the other man wear himself out in the chase. Then he slips in for the kill. Make no mistake, he's not a whopper like John L. but he can plunk hard enough to hurt."

"You saying this Corbett can take Sullivan?" my great-grandfather asked.

"They'll be fighting soon and when they do I'll put my money on Corbett to win," said Collin.

"When that time comes, you can put some money down for me," my great-grandfather said.

"You know I've got a good eye for scrappers, don't you Payton?" Collin said, laughing. "I picked you out of the rabble."

"I know you've a knack for making money," my great-grandfather responded. "And yeah, you did pick me."

Collin laughed, drank more wine, finished his pie and my great-grandfather's too, then invited my great-grandfather to come up to his room for cigars and brandy. I sensed that the true nature of Payton Adams' business with Collin Garraty was about to be revealed.

(For the record, John L. Sullivan and James J. Corbett did fight later that year in New Orleans for the heavyweight championship and Corbett did win by a knockout in the 21st round. But neither Collin Garraty nor Payton Adams made any money off the victory. By then, both men were dead.)

We crossed through the lobby, walked past an elegant billiards room, next to which was a caged elevator that we boarded. Collin Garraty informed the operator that we wanted the fourth floor. From the loud hissing noise let out during the car's slow climb and the moistness of the air inside the cage, I guessed the elevator was steam-powered. Then I was jolted by an abrupt memory shift and suddenly I was sitting in an over-stuffed easy chair of the type that I'd seen in the Penn-Schenley lobby. Collin was in an identical chair on the other side of a marble-topped table. A green bottle with a label that read *General's Brandy* and two partially empty glasses sat on the table. Collin and my great-grandfather were both smoking cigars and Collin was talking about the situation in Homestead. He looked grim, but there was a melodramatic exaggeration to his grimness, no doubt the product of artifice mixed with alcohol.

"Tomorrow, a tugboat called the *Tide* is going to deliver a barge full of Hunky scabs from Braddock into the Homestead Works. They've even got a Kraut tapper they're bringing in from Clairton to replace you. There'll be more tugs and more barges and more Hunky scabs coming in. Frick's recruiting niggers, too, I hear."

"The strike is over then," my great-grandfather said.

"Technically, it ain't, but so long as the Works is open and making Carnegie money, there's no reason for him to come home. Frick's won. The workers just don't know it yet."

"So where's that leave us?" my great-grandfather replied, puffing slowly on his cigar. "Do you mean to stay on here?"

"Damn me if I do!" Collin exclaimed. Then he laughed. "That hellbitch of yours would kill me if the two of you was to still be here by fall."

"It's a possibility," replied my great-grandfather.

I do not think he was joking.

Collin Garraty did not take the remark as a joke and reacted angrily. "I don't want to be here anymore than she does," he snapped. "You think I don't want to return to New York City? You think I want to stay in this stinking ugly shithole? Going to hell when I die don't worry me. I've lived much of this past year in worse."

"You calling it off?" my great-grandfather asked.

Collin shook his head. "I've got a duty. Never let it be said that Collin Garraty is man without principle. I vowed to see this through and I will. For the crime of giving monies to the Protestants in Ulster, the Supreme Council has judged Andrew Carnegie to be our enemy and sentenced him to death. It is my responsibility to see that the sentence is carried out. It is your duty to enforce it."

"How the hell am I supposed to kill Carnegie when he's on the other side of the ocean? I'm a good shot but the target is little too far away, don't you reckon?"

"The plan has always been to force Carnegie to return to Pittsburgh. I say we stick to the plan."

"I'd say the plan has failed," Payton Adams answered.

"No, the strike has failed. The plan is still good. We just need another way to bring Carnegie home."

"Any thoughts you'd care to share?"

"What kind of question is that? Hain't I always got thoughts? Who's the brains behind this operation, huh? Course I got thoughts. Everything is set. You are to kill Henry Clay Frick. Once Frick is dead, Uncle Pee Wee's got to come home. When he does. You kill him. Then we all go to New York. I was thinking we should settle you and Rosaleen in a part of the city called Brooklyn. She'd like that, Payton. It's more Irish these days than Dublin, especially seeing as there ain't no English overlords to stink it up."

My great-grandfather's response was immediate. "We'll talk about where Rosaleen and I settle later. I'll kill Frick but it

will cost you more money."

Collin looked startled. "The hell, you say. We've already paid you \$4,000 in gold."

"That was for Carnegie."

"You hain't killed him yet."

"That's right. And when I do you will pay me the other \$4,000. Half in advance, half when the job is completed. That has always been the plan." He modified his voice to imitate Collin's. "Hain't we sticking to the plan?"

Collin Garraty looked to be in pain. Behind the wired spectacles, his eyes narrowed. "Be reasonable, Payton. This venture has been expensive for the Brotherhood. Aside from the advance we paid you, there's the money we paid to bring you here and the bribes we paid Amory O'Shaughnessy to get you the tapper's job. Hell, there was also the matter of your predecessor, who was Irish and not particularly anxious to step aside for you. That didn't come cheap. (Collin quickly made the sign of the cross.) What I'm asking you to do is for the cause. It's for your country."

My great-grandfather held up a hand. "Call me a Yankee Doodle Dandy. Money's all I want."

"Don't joke with me, lad, not about the cause."

My great-grandfather laughed. It was not particularly friendly. "Save your breath. I can't ever go back to Ireland whether the English are there or not so the cause matters not to me. And don't give me your bullshit about the Brotherhood. The Council has already paid you for this enforcement. You just want to keep as much money as you can for yourself."

Collin Garraty's face flushed. "Hold your tongue, Payton Adams. My first loyalty is to the cause. Ireland will be free and we, the Fenian Brothers, are the ones who will deliver her from the English."

"That may be true, but you and some of the other Fenian Brothers have made quite a lot of money off the cause," my great-grandfather replied.

"There's no sin in that so long as we do our duty. You've nothing to complain about. The Brotherhood has done right by you."

"For services rendered. Never forget that. But don't worry, you've been square with me so I won't cheat you. I figure that Frick's fortune is about a quarter that of Carnegie's so he ought

to be worth a fourth as much. On the other hand, from all you and everybody else has said, Frick's twice the man Carnegie is, a mean tough son-of-a-bitch who won't die easy, so maybe he ought to be worth twice as much."

The eyes of Collin Garraty behind his wire spectacles bulged wildly, causing my great-grandfather to laugh.

"So let's split the difference," Payton Adams said. "I'll kill him for \$4,000."

Collin poured himself some more brandy, gave the matter some thought then relaxed in his chair, drew on his cigar and blew smoke rings.

"In gold?" he asked my great-grandfather as he watched his rings rise toward the ceiling.

"Always," Payton answered. "Half now, half when the job is done."

"I've done all the leg work for you, lad. I've set Frick up so's all you got to do is pull the trigger. Hain't that worth a discount? I'll give you \$3,000."

"Pulling the trigger is the difference between those who plan the killings and those who do the killings," my great-grandfather replied, blowing smoke rings of his own. "It's also the difference between those who get thrown into prison if they're caught and those who get hung."

"Rotting away in a prison is worse than being hung," said Collin in an even voice as he continued to puff away.

"Men have been known to bribe their way out of prison. Nobody comes back from hell. I'll accept \$3,500. Take it or leave it."

"Done," said Collin Garraty. He leaned forward, stretched his arm across the table and sealed the deal with a handshake. Then he sat back, blew more smoke rings and laughed. "You got more than a wee bit of Scotch in ya, lad. You know I couldn't replace you now. But if I didn't love you like me own flesh and blood I'd have held your feet to the fire on this one. You couldn't get out of this place without my help. We need each other."

"I don't work cheap, Collin, you've always known that," my great-grandfather said. Then he looked around at Collin's suite and shook his head. I believe he smiled. "Neither do you."

It was true. That suite, which consisted of two rooms, one large main room, and a second, smaller room which, though it was darkened, I guessed to be the bathroom, was truly a product of the Gilded Age. It was not so opulent as would have been commanded by the front ranks of American wealth, the multimillionaires such as Andrew Carnegie or Henry Clay Frick.

However, a member of the second tier of wealth, mere millionaires which were becoming an increasingly common phenomenon of the Gilded Age, would have been right at home. Everywhere the eyes went, there was a showy statement of luxury and expense. In addition to the two stuffed chairs at the table, there was also a small sofa, what was then called a courting chair for it was only wide enough for two adults. It, too, was richly upholstered and invited one to sink down into its plump cushions. This arrangement of table and chairs formed a sitting area in the main room, distinct from the sleeping area. The main room was large enough to accommodate two sets of windows along its exterior wall and the velvet drapes that covered these windows were sufficiently profuse in length and thickness so as to keep out all light when drawn shut as they were. Despite the absence of natural light, the room was well lit by gas lamps on the wall and two electric lamps with colorful Tiffany shades. Wall space not taken up by windows or gas lamps was occupied with paintings, sporting scenes of boxers and wrestlers of the type that Thomas Eakins made famous, which I presumed had been supplied by the proprietors of the Penn-Schenley. There was one that I am certain was the personal property of Collin Garraty. It was a painting of nude women frolicking with satyrs in a meadow. I do not know if it was a Bouguereau, but it could have been.

The rest of the room also spoke of wealth if not always taste, especially the furniture. On the windowed side, there was a vanity with a wide gilt-edged mirror, a chest of drawers, a small buffet and a tall but narrow armoire, all made from the deepest, darkest mahogany. On the other side, directly across from the mirrored vanity, was a four poster bed steeped in layers of blankets. A paperback novel, popularly known then as a "dime novel," had been left open on the bed and I could read its title, *Mark and the Match Boy*. It was written by Horatio Alger, Jr., and was, I believe, one of his immensely popular *Ragged Dick* series. I saw a second book on the floor. I could not see the title but I did see the author's name which had been prominently printed across the spine. The author was Erastus F. Beadle, who was even more popular in the time of Payton Adams than Stephen King is my own. Both authors consistently wrote tales in which the downtrodden ascended to the heights of wealth. That Collin Garraty would find such stories appealing did not surprise me. I've no doubt the man was a millionaire, and no doubt that he was not born to that wealth. The characters in the books of Alger and Beadle acquired their wealth through the most admirable of means. Those characters were, however, fictional.

Payton Adams excused himself to use the bathroom which proved to be quite a contrast from the backyard privy of my great-grandparent's house. It was lit with an electric lamp that was turned on by a wall switch (though there was also a gas wall lamp as a backup) and was equipped with a porcelain-enamelled toilet, sink and bathtub. The toilet had an overhead pull-chain for flushing, and the sink and tub had running water fixtures. My great-grandfather urinated a good long time, no doubt voiding the alcohol he'd consumed, but this time, I myself did not urinate in the diaper. While he stood at the toilet, my great-grandfather's eyes focused on a brown bottle of medicine which sat on the floor next to the bowl. The label read: *Dr. Hostetter's Celebrated Stomach Bitters*. To Simon Thomas, this implied that Collin spent more than few evenings drinking heavily.

When my great-grandfather returned to the sitting area, he asked Collin when the job was to be done.

"Saturday," said Collin.

"Three days from now?" was Payton's response. I could sense his enormous surprise.

"Time's a-wasting," said Collin. "We've doodled long enough waiting on Uncle Pee Wee. I want it done and be-done."

"You said everything's been set. What've you got in mind?" my great-grandfather asked.

Collin poured himself some more brandy and offered a refill to my great-grandfather who declined. "It's time I let you in a little secret, lad. You've been onto the fact that I've got me a spy in the Frick organization."

"You got spies everywhere. But yeah, I've wondered who it is you got reporting on what Frick's up to. Whoever it is, he must be close. Every time Frick farts, you seem to know about it."

"What would you say if I told you it was Devin Swayne?"

My great-grandfather's surprise was even more intense than it had been moments earlier when Collin said he wanted Frick killed on Friday. "I'd say that I would never have figured Devin Swayne to have the sand to spy on Frick. If Frick caught him, he'd eat Swayne's liver."

"You're right on all counts. Swayne hain't got the sand. He don't know he's been spying on Frick."

My great-grandfather reached for the brandy and poured himself a couple of fingers.

"This I got to hear. Explain."

"I met Devin Swayne at the Duquesne Club. All Frick's boys go there cause Frick goes there every day for lunch. Swayne likes to play chess and he likes to drink his brandy during the game. His chess game stinks like shit and he can't hold his liquor or his tongue."

My great-grandfather's amazement soared to such heights I swear my own body fidgeted in the MNEME, sending, I am sure, silent waves of liquid aerogel sloshing weightlessly against the chamber's inner surface. "Devin Swayne told you secrets about Frick while soused at the Duquesne Club?"

Collin Garraty shook his head vigorously. "Course not. There ain't enough alcohol in Christendom to loosen that Nancy boy's tongue like that. What he told me of was his fondness for the black pussywillow. Course, it is possible I might have slipped the idea into his head, but once it got put there, he cottoned to it quick enough and it became his very own burning desire. Now, it just so happens I have at my disposal a quadron from New Orleans. She's the most beautiful quadron you ever laid eyes on. Her skin is high yellow, that's what they call it where she comes from, and she speaks in a French accent. Her tits are good and she can do things no white woman has ever imagined."

"What happened?" Payton Adams asked.

"What do you think? I introduced my quadron to Swayne and the rest you can figure out for yourself."

"So you and your quadron have used Swayne to set up Frick?"

"That's the plan," Collin Garraty said with a nod of his head and a loud laugh. "It's not the first time that pussy has been the downfall of a man. Too bad for Frick, it will be his downfall and he didn't even get to poke the pussy. I almost feel sorry for the man."

"I'm sure you almost do," my great-grandfather replied. "Tell me what you and your quadron have got planned."

Certainly, lad," said Collin, finishing off his brandy with a flourish, tossing it straight back into his throat and swallowing it in a single gulp. "But first, I think it's time you met her."

"Where is she?" Payton Adams asked, finishing off his own brandy.

Collin stood up. He was definitely unsteady. "Two floors up. She's in room 626. Do you know what that room is?"

My great-grandfather shook his head.

Collin Garraty's face broke into a big sloppy alcoholic smile. "That's the room from where you'll kill Henry Clay Frick."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Simon's Journal

I recognized her the moment I saw her. That is to say, of course, that my great-grandfather recognized her. I am quite certain of this, so strong was the sense of intimate familiarity that jolted through my entire being like an electrical shock and left me trembling in the embryonic ambience of the MNEME.

I am equally certain that she recognized my great-grandfather and yet there was no hint of recognition on the part of either.

"Payton meet Cat," Collin Garraty said by way of introduction when she greeted us at the door to her suite.

She was every bit as lovely as Collin had insinuated. Her skin was about the same shade of brown as Jan's and in appearance she might have passed as first kin. She was an inch or two shorter than Jan, which still made her tall, and maybe a little broader, which still left her lean, but she had that same athletic look of wide shoulders and narrow waist, combined with a full figure that made Jan so desirable. She also had the same wide brown eyes and thin eyelashes. Her long black hair was straight like Jan's and had been wrapped high in that turbanesque style made popular then by the drawings of Charles Dana Gibson. She was wearing a blue silk dress that was not nearly so cumbersome as the garments I'd seen earlier on my walk up Fifth Avenue. It was cut low in the front to offer a bold display of décolletage. Incongruously, centered in her cleavage was a tiny silver cross on a chain.

Immediately following his perfunctory introduction, Collin, without further discourse, walked right past Cat and went inside. "*Enchance, monsieur,*" said the woman introduced

to me as Cat

in the exaggerated French accent that I think is typical of the Louisiana Creole. She motioned for my great-grandfather to

enter, closed the door behind him and locked it.

Cat's suite was almost identical to Collin's. It had the same layout, with the same table, chairs and courting sofa in one area, and the same vanity, chest of drawers, buffet, and four-poster bed in the other. She, too, had several paintings adorning the walls, all of them the Bouguereau-like nymphs and satyrs. She, too, had thick velvet drapes over her windows. Unlike Collin, however, Cat kept her drapes tied back so that shafts of receding daylight poured through, illuminating the dust in the air with a golden tint that banished the gloom and bestowed a magical quality upon the room.

Cat offered my great-grandfather a seat in one of the chairs at the table upon which, in a neat stack, sat magazines and a book. Her reading tastes, which were quite different from Collin's, could have been a metaphor, I thought, of the two worlds between which she was forced to reside. The magazines were issues of *Harpers Monthly* and *Century*, which were the favorites of the intellectuals of that time. The book was *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell, a story about a horse that had captured the hearts of the reading masses. To Ms. Sewell's credit, her equine tear-jerker has endured: I read it to Louise and Elizabeth a hundred years later and they adored it. There was also on the table another green bottle of the *General's Brandy* that Collin and I had been drinking in his room.

Upon entering Cat's room, Collin had gone straight to the buffet and procured a glass. He was now back at the table pouring himself a drink.

Cat eyed him coolly. "Don't be shy, Monsieur Collin," she said, "take anything you like."

"And why the hell shouldn't I?" growled Collin as he sat down heavily on the sofa. "I paid for it, didn't I?"

"If truth be told, I believe that particular bottle was paid for by Monsieur Devin."

"Fuck Devin Swayne," said Collin with a nasty laugh before

he drained the glass in a single swallow and immediately poured another.

"That is what you pay me to do," responded Cat matter-of-factly. I could detect no acrimony in her voice or manner. She went to the buffet and procured two more glasses. My eyes followed her. She walked with feline grace and her buttocks, the outline of which could be seen beneath the blue material of her dress, swung provocatively. I do not believe she was wearing a corset.

Returning to the table, she politely offered to pour me -- my great-grandfather, I mean -- some brandy. Payton Adams accepted. Again, I am certain beyond all doubt that the two of them knew each other but still there was not the slightest sign of recognition, not in their voices, not in their eyes, not in their body language.

Cat started to take the second chair but Collin patted the courting sofa and without protest she sat down next to him.

Collin opened his mouth as if to speak but Cat got her words out first.

"Monsieur Collin told me you would be the most dangerous man I have ever met and that I should be most careful of what I say. I pictured someone different. I thought you would be ferociously ugly, like a bulldog."

Before my great-grandfather could reply, Collin weighed in. His words, framed in raucous laughter, came too fast and too loud and were slurred by the alcohol he continued to consume.

"Oh, lassie, you've no idea how stupid ya are for saying what yer saying!" Collin brayed, his nose and cheeks flushed. "Listen to me. When Payton came to the Homestead Works, he wanted no trouble from the local knockers. So you know what he did? His first day on the job he asks around for the toughest bar in town. Then he inquires as to who is the toughest scrapper. After his shift was done, he and I go to this bucket of spit called Muldoon's and he inquires as to who might be a

feller by the name of Mike McGinty, also known as Iron Mike. A man the size of a gorilla steps forward and says he's Iron Mike, what of it?

"Our boy Payton here, walks up to Iron Mike and calls for the attention of every man in

the bar. He shouts out as loud as you please, 'Listen up all you sons-of-bitches, especially any of you what thinks he's a scrapper. My name is Payton Adams. I am the new tapper at the Homestead Works. Mark these words, I won't be hacked on.' Then Payton turns to Iron Mike and says, 'Put up your dukes you faggot son-of-a-bitch, I fucked your mother and she owes me money.'

"Iron Mike let out a ferocious roar and swung on Payton with a punch that would have killed a bear. Payton ducks the blow then plunks Iron Mike square on the chin and knocks him out cold as a mackerel. They say Iron Mike was still spitting teeth three days later. But here's the best part. While Iron Mike was on the floor, Payton pulls his knife, as wicked and sharp a blade as ever you saw. With all eyes in the house watching, he cuts off the top of Iron Mike's ear, puts it in his mouth and swallows it."

Cat made a noise of revulsion. Collin laughed.

"By jingoes, as god is my witness, that's just what he done. Then he addresses the rest of those men who were all staring with their eyes and mouths wide open. 'Tell your friends what you saw,' Payton says. 'Tell `em next time somebody swings on me, I'll eat their liver.' No one has challenged Payton since."

Collin collapsed into loud unbroken, alcohol-fueled laughter, but the pained look of distaste on Cat's face was enough to provoke even my great-grandfather to give an explanation.

"A steel works is full of strong, tough men, proud of their ability to fight," Payton said. "When a greenhorn comes on the job, they have to know where he stands in the pissing order. They'll keep challenging him and he'll have to keep fighting

until he loses. I just wanted to save myself a lot of time."

Collin finally managed to get a grip on his laughter. "Tis true, lass," he said. "Payton's a natural-born scrapper. I saw that when I found him as a boy on the streets of Dublin. He'd have been a tough enough knocker all on his own, but we had him trained. Good god almighty, but we had him trained. In our enemy's own special school no less." Collin looked over to my great-grandfather and beamed. "Now look at him. He's a true professional, he is. One of the best in the business. None of those steel workers would have stood a chance against him. Payton can take a man with his bare hands as quick as you please. Knock him out or send the sorry son-of-

a-bitch to his Maker. With a rifle, he can pick off your ear from a hundred yards away. And you never want to see what he can do with his knife."

My great-grandfather apparently felt the need to interrupt Collin and explain himself further. "I move around alot. I need to hear things. I need to know what's going on and sometimes I need people to do me favors. It's my experience that people make friends quick when they're scared of you."

Cat raised one of her thin black eyebrows. "There's other ways to make friends with people, monsieur. Have you ever tried conversation?"

Payton shrugged. "Guess I'm too shy."

Cat smiled but Collin laughed uproariously. "That's what I love about Payton. He's got a sense of humor about his work. Did I tell you how he sent George Casey to hell fucking himself?"

"Collin talks too much," my great-grandfather said.

Collin Garraty was not so drunk as to not immediately make amends. "Don't worry, lad, anything I say to Cat stays with Cat. I own this lovely quadroon, lock, stock, and barrel, or should I say tits, ass, and pussywillow!" He lurched across the sofa and pawed at Cat who laughed but nonetheless brushed his hands away with more than adequate force. Her eyes darkened momentarily, like a shadow passing quickly. Both my great-grandfather and I

caught that look and both of us knew that this woman was more dangerous than Collin realized. But her voice, when she spoke, was the epitome of subservience.

"Monsieur Collin is correct when he says I know how to hold my tongue," she said. Then she shot my great-grandfather a brazen look. "I also know how to use it."

Again Collin laughed too loudly. He made for a convincing argument that becoming a millionaire in the U.S. during the Gilded Age was no measure of intelligence.

Outwardly, Payton Adams seemed nothing more than annoyed and impatient. I alone in that room, however, knew that beneath the muslin cloth of his drawers, his penis was erect and throbbing with desire for Cat.

What he told Collin and Cat, however, was that he was sick of hearing about his past deeds and wanted to know more about the plan for killing Frick."

Collin threw his head back on the sofa, his mouth open and breathing wetly. "You tell him, Cat," he said in the midst of an extended yawn. "I've need of a wee rest."

Cat eyed him like Jan might eye one of the slugs that occasionally invade our basement. Then she stood, walked to the nearest window and motioned for my great-grandfather to join her.

The sun had set and it had grown dark enough for the gas lamps on the street to be lit. In the dusk I could see young boys shinnying up the lampposts on Fifth Avenue to activate the fuel lines that would ignite the glass globes into dull yellow balls of light. This process was going on all over the city and I could see the rows of street lamps flaring up like dots on a domino. Lights were also coming on inside buildings. Most of these shined in the distinct yellow of gas lamps, but there were some that were noticeably white, a sign of the increasing shift to electricity. Off towards the river, plumes of fire belched out of the furnace stacks at regular intervals like the snoring breathes of slumbering dragons. The immense clouds of smoke that

followed the flames were riddled with enough burning embers to glow pink against the gathering darkness of the night.

Cat was pointing across Fifth Avenue to the Chronicle-Telegraph Building. There was a short flight of graystone steps leading up to an arched double doorway. The sight line from Cat's window to those steps was direct and unimpeded.

"The office of Monsieur Frick is on the second floor of that building. He works there every day except on Sunday. Every day except on Saturday, he leaves his office at noon, walks down Fifth Avenue to the Duquesne Club where he has lunch. On Saturday, he leaves his office at 11:30 am because he makes a visit to his bank. On all days, he returns promptly at one o'clock. He is very punctual. On his return, he is greeted on those steps by Monsieur Devin. If Monsieur Devin is not there, Monsieur Frick must stand outside and wait for him."

"Why is that?" my great-grandfather asked.

"There are many important documents with a great many secrets in the office of Monsieur Frick. While the strike at the Homestead Works is taking place, Monsieur Frick is concerned that he could be a target of the workers. He is afraid that he might be attacked and his keys hijacked by persons who would love to get their hands on those documents. He therefore does not carry his office keys with him when he goes out for lunch. Monsieur Devin is charged

with the duty of carrying Monsieur Frick's keys."

"Frick is not afraid that somebody might attack Devin Swayne?" my great-grandfather inquired.

Cat smiled. "Monsieur Devin is young and swift. Monsieur Frick is confident that fear of what would happen to him should those keys be removed from his person will ensure that no one in Pittsburgh would catch Monsieur Devin."

"Has Swayne ever been late?"

"Only once that I know of. Monsieur Frick stood on those steps for about ten minutes. I watched him the whole time. He

would pull his watch from his pocket every minute and he would scowl at it. Then he would look up and down the street, his scowl still on his face. But he never left those steps. Poor Monsieur Devin. He caught a terrible tongue-lashing from Monsieur Frick before the two of them went into the building."

"Doesn't anyone else have keys?" my great-grandfather asked.

"No. There is only one set of keys to that office and they are the property of Monsieur Frick. He is not a trusting man."

"How was it that you happened to be looking out the window when Swayne was late?"

"Monsieur Collin had arranged for Monsieur Devin to be late on that particular day."

"Doesn't sound like Swayne will be late again."

"Monsieur Devin will be late this Saturday."

I sensed the smile on my great-grandfather's face as he turned to look at Cat. "How can you be so sure?"

Cat returned his smile. "On Saturdays, when Monsieur Frick takes his long break for lunch, Monsieur Devin comes here to visit me. We drink a glass of brandy and then we undress and we make love. After, he talks a little, mostly about how much he despises Monsieur Frick, then he gets dressed and goes down to wait for his boss."

"But that is not going to happen this Saturday, is it?"

"No. Monsieur Devin will miss his appointment. I have a potion that Monsieur Collin obtained for me. I will put it into Monsieur Devin's brandy and he will fall fast and deeply to

sleep. When he does, you will come into this room with the silent rifle that Monsieur Collin has told me about. When Monsieur Frick arrives at the steps, it will be you who greets him from this window."

"What happens after that?" my great-grandfather asked.

From the courting sofa, Collin called out in a heavy voice. "After that, you make your way back to your house and wait to hear from me."

"What about Devin Swayne? You want him killed?"

Collin laughed through his nose. "Nah. Let him piss on himself when he wakes up and finds out what happened."

"You're not worried Swayne will tell the law about Cat and this enforcement gets traced back to you?" Payton asked.

Collin's smug laughter snorted across the floor like a runaway piglet. "Devin Swayne is not going to be telling nobody but his priest that he was trysting with a nigger whore when his boss got killed. My quadroon is going to be the only soul for Swayne to talk to and he'll be telling her everything. What's more, Carnegie's going to be relying on him plenty to make the arrangements that will bring the Little Boss back. As a source of information, Devin Swayne is going to be more valuable than ever."

Collin got off the sofa and staggered into the bathroom. He did not close the door behind him and the sound of his urine streaming into the toilet water was loud and clear. While he was so occupied, Cat and Payton stared into each other's eyes. Now the recognition was evident, even though no words were exchanged. Evident too was the enormous heat that each generated for the other. As Collin's stream of urine tinkled to a stop, Cat moved a brown hand down her blue dress to the area above her *mons veneris* and rubbed it in a slow circular motion. She then smiled wickedly. We heard Collin come into the room and Cat's hand was instantly at her side and on her face was an expression of boredom.

"So here's how it is, lad," said Collin, still buttoning up his trousers. "Ten minutes after Frick leaves the office, Swayne will be here. Cat slips him the Mickey Finn and he'll be on his ass counting sheep before noon. You be here shortly after. Kill Frick and get out. Go home, put your steelworker clothes on and wait. I expect this will give new life to the strike. Uncle Pee

Wee might soon be canceling his orders for scabs and begging the union for a settlement. You never know, but you could honest to

God be doing your new mates a good turn."

"Fuck my new mates," said Payton. "You bring me half the gold tomorrow and the other half on Saturday."

"You'll get your gold, Payton, don't you worry. But if I was you, I wouldn't be talking about fucking my mates." He reached for Cat, grabbed her shoulder, worked his hand across onto her bare skin. "I'd be home slipping my hickory wood to that hell-bitch wife of yours just like I'm about to do to my quadroon."

Collin was laughing when he said it and did not see the cold twitch in Cat's face.

"Rosaleen's pregnancy has her out of commission," Payton said. "But I am in need of a woman and I've taken a fancy to your quadroon. I never been with one before."

Behind the wire spectacles, Collin's narrowed with the calculation of a greedy drunk. "Well, it's a treat you should experience, to be sure, lad, but I have my own plans for her tonight."

Without looking once at Cat, my great-grandfather said to Collin Garraty, "I'll tell you what. I'll cut my price by \$100 if you put your quadroon at my disposal until Saturday."

"Two hundred dollars and she'll do your bidding the rest of the night," Collin countered.

"Two hundred dollars is a lot of money for pussy," my great-grandfather said.

Cat suddenly spoke up. "In the house on Basin Street where I worked, my pussy commanded a hundred dollars a night." She paused until both men looked her way. "I'm better now."

"The quadroon speaks the truth, Payton," added Collin with a leer and a wink.

"Done," said my great-grandfather, making a show of irritation that he'd been snookered for too much money. His irritation seemed to delight Collin Garraty, but I knew it was false. I suspect my great-grandfather would have paid almost any

price Collin had asked for time alone with Cat. I'm not certain he would not have simply taken her over Collin's objection if it came down to that.

"Now if you will leave us," my great-grandfather continued, "I will start getting my money's worth."

Collin laughed, slapped my great-grandfather on the back and within minutes was gone. Payton was alone in the room with Cat and I found myself fervently praying the Quip would not wear off anytime soon, nor would there be another memory shift. Inside the MNEME, I focused my mind to hold onto the thoughts, determined I would not relinquish the narrative.

Whether it was my own determination or the fact that my brain was increasing its receptivity as it became more familiar with the Quip-induced signals, this second session in the MNEME would continue much longer than the first and with no disruptive memory shifts.

Looking back, on the one hand I can see where it might have been better had the session ended sooner. On the other, I think the session did not last long enough. One brick shy of the load is how the men at the Homestead Works might have characterized my situation. History is full of such scenarios. Few ended happily as a result.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Simon's Journal

We sat facing each other across the oval table, Cat in the courting chair, me in one of the armchairs. More of my great-grandfather's memories came pouring in, memories from a time and place many years removed from the hotel room in Pittsburgh. But there was not quite the same feel to these memories as those I'd previously experienced and I realized why. These were memories within memories, the memories that Payton Adams recalled as he sat across the table from Cat. What made them different from the others is that I experienced them as if they were my very own.

* * *

It was early in the evening of June 18, 1879, the day of my sixteenth birthday and I was walking through Phoenix Park in the city of Dublin. I was dressed in a simple shirt and trousers that were ragged and quite filthy. My boots did not match, both were too large for my feet, and one was worn through at the toes. I was alone but that did not distress me for I had been alone for most of my young life. I had just polished off a small ham I'd filched from a butcher's smoke house and an almost full bottle of beer I'd stolen from a man who was passed out behind the smoke house. It had rained earlier in the day and the park was lush with the smell of damp vegetation. I was on my way to one particular tree, a tall old elm tucked away in one of the park's many secluded nooks. Midway up its mighty trunk was a trio of sturdy thick branches that curled into a natural cradle hidden from view by a canopy of leaves. It was my favored place for sleeping.

As I drew near to my tree, I heard voices, coming from behind a circle of bushes. As this was not an area of the park much accustomed to visitors, my immediate suspicion was either a tryst or foul play. The thought of spying on either sport was an opportunity for entertainment too grand to pass up. With the stealth of an accomplished pickpocket and thief, I crept towards the source of the voices and silently made a space in the bushes so that I might watch.

It was the best of both possibilities -- a rape that was about to commence. Two lads, a couple of years older than myself, one fat and one lean, both ugly with bad teeth and bad skin, were preparing to have their way with a young girl maybe two years my junior. They'd bound her to a tree with a rope about her waist. Her skirt was pushed up over her hips and her drawers had been ripped open. It was my first view ever between a girl's legs, my very first look at the female sex. It was an exciting scene made all the more spicy by the brown color of the girl's

skin. I'd heard of dark-skinned women but had never myself laid eyes on one before.

There were tears in the girl's eyes as she pleaded with the boys to set her free. She said she was a virgin and would be ruined. She begged them to untie her and she would give them the pleasure they sought by other means. But the two boys were deaf to her entreaties. They were too busy arguing over who would go first. Both had their trousers undone and their peckers out. The debate was ended when the fat boy finally shoved the lean boy hard enough to knock him to the ground.

Maybe it was the tears and the keening desperation in the girl's voice or maybe it was her pretty young face. Maybe it was the sight of those two white peckers poking up like over-sized maggots and the grassy black triangle atop the girl's legs. Maybe it was merely my sense of fair play. Maybe it was all of the above or none of the above, whatever the reason, I found myself growing more angry with each passing moment.

The anger expanded like a fireball through my insides. This part of the park was my territory, I told myself. If somebody were going to do something to any girl here it would be me. Those two boys were intruders. They did not belong here. They would have to be driven away. There were two of them and both were bigger than me. A challenge would be risky, it was not out of the question that they might tie me to a tree and bugger me as well. Rather than temper the heat within me, the thought that I might not be able to drive the intruders away, the thought that they could come here and do as they please to this girl or do what they wished to me intensified my inner heat, like the dinky men at Open Hearth Number One tossing manganese into the lake of fire.

The need to act roared in my blood. Casting about I spied a fallen branch that was large and thick enough to serve as a cudgel. Stick in hand, I charged into the clearing and struck the fat boy a sharp blow to the skull. Even as he was falling I struck him a second and third blow. His big body twitched and quivered but was otherwise still. Blood seeped from his mouth and from his nose along with tiny pink bubbles that burst in the air. Those bubbles told me I was not yet a killer. But I was ready to assume the mantle if necessary.

I turned to face the lean boy who had drawn back but was holding his ground with his large bony fists raised. He was much taller than I had thought -- he had me by a couple of heads.

"Put down yer stick and fight me like a man yer bloody coward," the tall boy said. He

tried to sneer but his cracking voice belied his fear.

Me, I felt no fear at all. My blood was howling. A voice within me growled that I should beat the boy with the stick, beat him until he was down and be done with it. But I hesitated for a moment, and remembered that the girl was watching me. I did not want her to think me a coward, a boy who needed a weapon to fight. It was matter of pride. I wanted her to see that I was a mighty rough customer, a scrapper who could handle a situation with the power of his own dukes. With a great show of disdain, I tossed the stick aside and charged forward.

My opponent immediately pulled a knife.

There was no chance to retrieve the stick, I was committed into battle at a severe disadvantage. Acting on a whim, or out of panic, or maybe driven by instinct, I stopped thinking and gave myself over to that inner voice whose counsel I'd ignored to my present peril. In commending myself to this inner voice, more of a feeling really, or, to put an even finer point on it, a spirit, there settled over me a great calm. The fires of my anger were stilled, I no longer felt hatred toward my opponent. More importantly, I no longer felt any fear. The result was a most incredible phenomenon. Time seemed to slow to a near crawl. The boy advanced forward and swung his knife for my eyes but it was as if he were moving in an almost leisurely manner. I followed the arc of his attack and easily ducked under it. If his motions had been rendered sluggish, my own actions appeared to have been greatly speeded up. In an instant, I had come in up close on him and kneed him in the balls. As he doubled over, I gouged his eyes with my fingers then grasped the wrist of the hand that held the knife and bit down as hard as I could. The salty taste of blood filled my mouth and the boy's painful scream hurt my ears but I saw that the knife was dropped.

I released his wrist and tore into him with both fists flying. It was, in actuality, no easy fight. The boy hit me hard and often but I felt no pain from his blows, only a great and divine joy in the feel of his bones cracking under the force of my knuckles. A thin stream of blood trickled from the corner of his mouth, followed by another from his nostril. The sight made me much excited. A brutal song pulsed hotly through my own blood and I did revel in it and stepped up the pace and fury of my assault. I did not stop my beating of the lean boy until he had finally joined his fat friend in stillness on the ground. Blood from his broken nose and smashed mouth spread a dark stain across the ground beneath his face like water from a spilled canteen.

It was a most satisfying sight.

I gave both lads a few last kicks to their heads for good measure. Only then did that mysterious spirit within me return to its lair. The calmness left me, normal time was restored and I found myself stiff and sore and trembling.

The girl had been silent throughout the fight. When I turned my attention upon her, I could see in her brown eyes the concern she had as to whether a bad situation had just been exchanged for one much worse. When I picked up the lean boy's knife and moved towards her those brown eyes widened in fear. However, when I cut the rope that bound her then tossed the knife, which was cheap and unworthy of a warrior of my caliber, the look of fear turned to one of astonishment.

"Do you mean to set me free, then?" she asked. Her accent was working class English.

"I do," I replied. "I'll walk you out of the park. There's more of their kind lurking about."

Making no attempt to go anywhere, the girl stood and rubbed her arms to restore circulation, all the while staring at me. "How come you don't want to fuck me?" she finally said. "Is it you don't like girls or is it you don't like girls of color?"

I stared back at her then answered her with a question of my own.

"Is it true what you told them about you being a virgin?"

She nodded.

"Well then," I told her, trying hard to inject a cocky air of wisdom in my voice, "iffen I was to do you I'd be stealing your beauty, wouldn't I? An old geezer who was smart as paint told me that when a bloke steals a girl's beauty, a part of her is with him forever. I don't want the likes of you with me forever. Nor anyone else for that matter. I come and go as I please and I aim to keep it that way."

The girl tilted her head with a quizzical look, as if she were appraising me or my honesty. Then she smiled, came forward, and put her arm through mine as if she were a lady and I were her gent.

"My name is Mary Catherine Hope," she said, "but my friends call me Cat."

"My name is Payton Furey," I replied, "and I don't have any friends."

"You do now," the girl named Cat replied.

* * *

"It's been a long time, Mary Catherine Hope," Payton Adams said.

"On about ten years, Payton Furey," Cat said. Her French accent was gone, replaced with one that was quite English. "You're a long ways from Dublin."

"As are you. The last I saw you was at the Castleknock Gate in Phoenix Park. You were being lead away by nabs with the Royal Constabulary. I'd heard later you'd been turned over to the Queen's soldiers and killed trying to escape. Guess I heard wrong."

"I was turned over to those soldiers and they in turn handed me over to an agent with Her Majesty's Secret Service. He said I was pretty enough and if I could convince him I was smart enough he would have great use of me. I must have passed his test for he took me to London where I was given special training. (A hardening in her voice when she pronounced the words "special training" left no doubt in my mind as to what she meant. I am certain my great-grandfather also knew what she was talking about.) When my training was complete, the agent took me to Paris and arranged for me to meet a certain man in the French government. My charge was to learn things from him which I did."

"You were a spy," my great-grandfather said. His tone of voice was disapproving."

"I was an *agent*," Cat corrected him. "A very good one, I might add. The English got their money's worth from me, but they let me off my leash once too often and I ran away. I got on a boat and went to New Orleans. Started a new life for myself."

"A new life?" I could sense my great-grandfather smiling. "You're still a spy."

Cat smiled. "I can't cook, can't sew, and I don't sing or dance. But I live good. What about you? The last I saw you, you were in the process of being taken into the park by a couple of nabs with that same Royal Constabulary. It was their announced intention, as I recall, to drub some sense of decency into your hard Catholic skull. What happened?"

"One of those nabs dropped his billy club in the process of educating me. I got to it first. By the time I'd finished off him and his mate and made my back to the gate, you were long gone."

Cat's face softened. "I made some inquiries but Payton Furey seemed to have disappeared from Dublin. I presumed those nabs had killed you and done away with the body."

"I had to go into hiding. That's when I met Collin. He was in a pub near Cork Hill buying drinks and making plans with a couple of blokes I knew. They belonged to a secret

society that called themselves the Invincibles. I convinced Collin those two weren't so damned invincible and he began buying drinks and making plans with me. Since then, I've been many Paytons, but never Payton Furey."

"Is Collin telling the truth when he says you were trained by Her Majesty's Secret Service?" Cat asked. I sensed the question was important to her but I don't think Payton picked up on this. I sensed he was amused by his own recollections.

"Aye, that I was," he answered. "Pugilism, marksmanship, explosives, where to stick a man with a knife to make him die silently and fast. Tis a long story about a lot of money that changed hands. You know it could well be that I was trained by some of the same agents that trained you. Wouldn't that be a kick?"

The smile on Cat's face was fleeting and weighted down with memories. "From what Collin has told me, I daresay we were sent to different schools."

"Collin talks too much," Payton said.

Another shadow passed over Cat's eyes. "Yes, he does. But he never told me your name. He said you are the Brotherhood's best enforcer. He said your identity is known only to him but you are a hero to your organization."

My great-grandfather laughed. It was the first I ever heard him do so. His laughter, however, was not so much borne of mirth as it was of bitterness.

"If that is so then hows come I can never go back to Ireland?" he asked, rhetorically. "My true name is not known, but my face would be recognized by many in the Brotherhood and they would not give me a hero's welcome. They turned on Parnell for taking a woman Willie O'Shea didn't want. What do you think they'd do with the likes of me?"

"But still the Brotherhood sent you here?"

Again I felt my great-grandfather smile. Again there was little mirth. "As Collin says, there's plenty of enforcements to be done in this country. England has many friends here and any friend of England's is an enemy of the Brotherhood. They want me to kill they just don't want me to kill at home anymore. It upsets too many good Irish citizens. Gets them distracted."

Vexation rumbled Cat's forehead and she frowned. "It seems to me the Brotherhood has treated you unfairly. How can you remain beholden to them?"

"I am not beholden to the Brotherhood, I am paid by the Brotherhood," Payton explained.

"Besides, after this business with Frick and Carnegie, there is but one more for me to do and then I'll be set for life and quits forever with the Brotherhood and the Fenians and with Collin Garraty."

Cat poured us both some more brandy. "And what might that one more enforcement be?" she asked, as she raised her glass.

Payton raised his glass to her and drank. Then he said, "There's an exposition in the city of Chicago next year, what they call a World's Fair. Collin says it will be quite the extravaganza. The Prince of Wales and his family are planning to attend."

Cat's frown deepened. "I read newspapers and magazines, Payton. Prince Edward has been a friend to the Irish."

My great-grandfather shrugged. "It depends on what your objective is, I reckon. Personally, I don't care whether he is or is not a friend to the Irish. He's no friend to me and even if he was, I do what Collin pays me to do. My only haggle is over the price." I sensed another cold smile from Payton. "And the price for Edward is going to be high. You have my word on it."

Cat's frown relaxed into her own mirthless smile. "So I became Collin's spy and you became his killer. That's not a particularly grand ending to either of our stories, is it?"

"You said you live good. Well, I live good, too," my great-grandfather responded. "Things could have turned out worse."

Cat tossed down the rest of the brandy in her glass and immediately poured another. "Least I'm not married. Why does Collin refer to your wife as a hell-bitch?"

Payton Adams smiled and this time there was mirth behind his grin. "I met her in a tavern in Ballybunion. She was serving drinks and we took a fancy to one another. She paid me too much attention to suit the whore who was with me at the time. There was a fight and Rosaleen bit off one of the whore's fingers and a piece of her nose. We been together ever since."

Again I saw Cat's eyes darken. "Do you love her?"

"She loves me," my great-grandfather said. "And she's come in handy. I've no complaints."

Cat stared lifted her brandy toward the light and stared into the amber liquid as if

admiring its color. But I think what she was really seeing was a time and place far removed from that suite in the Penn-Schenley Hotel. On the outermost recesses of my awareness, there appeared a fleeting ghostlike image of two young people, teenagers, a white boy and a brown-skinned girl, dressed in rags and splashing through puddles on a black cobblestoned street in the dead of night. He was carrying a bottle of spirits, and she was carrying a loaf of bread and on their faces were looks of pure joy as can be seen only on those who are young and in love.

"Were you Rosaleen's first?" Cat asked Payton. "Did you steal her beauty?"

"I was her first and only as far as I am aware," Payton answered. "Rose was a good Catholic girl when she met me. Tough as nails, brave and strong, but a god-fearing Catholic girl just the same. Guess I stole that from her, too."

"You are not just a killer then, you are a most pernicious thief, sir," Cat replied, her voice as far away as her eyes. "For you stole my beauty, too, you know."

"I know that," my great-grandfather said quietly, his eyes fixed on her.

"They say a woman never forgets the man who takes her beauty. I know that I didn't. I have never forgotten you, Payton. Through all the years and all the men, you are the only one to have laid claim to my heart. Have you ever thought of me? You needn't lie about it. Tell me the truth. I promise you, I am every bit as tough as your hell-bitch wife."

My great-grandfather's reply was delivered in a quiet voice. But I could sense the intense emotions he was struggling to subdue. "You could say that you're the reason I joined up with Collin and became an enforcer," Payton said. "You could say that every enforcement I have carried out has been done with you on my mind."

Payton Adams' remark seemed to summon Cat's own mind back to her suite in the Penn-Schenley. Her teeth flashed in a broad smile. "How's that, you say?"

Payton set his glass down, rose from his chair, moved to the courting sofa and sat down next to her. "I thought the English had killed you. I wanted to settle the score. I reckoned you were worth dozens of them."

"And have you succeeded?" Cat asked, her smile bright. "Is the score settled? Are you square with the British Empire for taking me away from you?"

"I'm still working on it," said Payton as he leaned in to kiss her. Their lips met and melded like long-lost friends. Mouths quickly opened and tongues raced forth to dance with

delightful fervor. Would they had been able to devour one another I think there would have ensued a feeding frenzy. Scarcely breaking the kiss, they finally stood and started for the bed. But they could not keep their hands off one another nor could they stop their mouths from resuming the kiss in full heat. The two of them stood in the middle of the room with their mouths locked and their tongues wrestling like teenagers in their first exploration of lust. Only the need for oxygen finally separated them. Both were panting and sweating. They looked at one another and laughed simultaneously.

"For a professional killer, you're not much of a sporting man," Cat said.

"For a professional spy you're not much of a whore," Payton responded.

Cat's laugh died in her throat and she winced. "Please, Payton, don't ever call me a whore again. Not even in jest. I have played the part of a whore but I have never been a whore."

In response, Payton embraced and kissed her. But this time the kiss was gentle, almost tender, and my great-grandfather let it linger for several long moments before he finally broke it off and stepped back to give his hands room to maneuver. With more than a little effort, he unhooked the blue silk dress and let it drop to the floor. She was wearing a corset after all, but it was a dainty thing of silk rather than the metal contraptions I'd seen both in Rosaleen's closet and advertised on the billboards. Not only did this corset reveal her waist and much of her breasts, it also revealed the laces of her chemise and the shocking brevity of her satin drawers. Unlike the drawers commonly worn by women of that era which extended down practically to the knee, Cat's were cut high enough to expose several inches of bare flesh above the garters that supported her black silk stockings. The sight of that bare brown flesh excited me cruelly and I mentally ordered Payton to proceed with haste.

As if obeying my command, he undid the stays to her corset and peeled it off her. This he did with facility and ease, but the fingers that were so nimble when working with dynamite fumbled clumsily with the tapes to her drawers and even more wretchedly with the laces to her chemise. He might as well have been me, I thought, angrily, but all sutures were gradually undone and the remaining undergarments were at last shed. She stood before me entirely naked save for the garters and stockings which Payton made no effort to remove.

Her nudity was breathtaking.

Even without the support of the corset, her breasts stayed high and the plum-colored

nipples pointed upwards towards Payton's and my admiring eyes. Her belly was flat and hard and the black triangular patch of hair that spread from the junction of her thighs glistened visibly with beads of moisture, like dew on grass just after sun break. I did note the jagged scar to the left of her navel which was white against her brown skin and could have passed for a tattoo of a lightening bolt. Payton saw it too and Cat caught him staring. With a smile, she explained.

"Life in the Demi-Monde is no less rough than life in the steel mills. Whores have to prove themselves, too. At Miss Julia's house, I got into a row with a woman who went by the name of Snake-Eyes Sal. She was part Chinese and had the hooded eyes of the Oriental hence the sobriquet. She came after me with a stiletto which was her weapon of choice. This (Cat ran her finger down the scar) was the result."

Payton asked the obvious. "What happened to Snake Eyes?"

Cat grinned wickedly. "Nowadays, people call her One-Eyed Sal."

It was Cat's turn to undress Payton and her fingers proved much more accomplished at undoing the hooks and buttons that contained his clothing. He was naked in half the time it had taken him to undress her. As he stood there and allowed her to examine his body with as much attention as she cared to give, I could feel the throbbing extension of his penis as if it were my own and I knew that drops of seminal lubricant were seeping out of his glans even as they seeped from mine.

Cat, staring, pointed to a spot on Payton's body just above his right nipple. Payton's eyes automatically followed her finger and I saw a circular scar about the size of a quarter.

"Sometimes it comes when you least expect it," he said. "We were passing through Kilkenny and an English dragoon who'd just been stationed there recognized me from a scrape the two of us had in London. He did not know who I was or what I'd done and he wasn't out to serve justice. It was just personal revenge he was looking for. He came to our room while we were making ready to leave and shot me through the back with his pistol. He'd have finished me for sure, but Rosaleen came up behind him with a pistol of her own and blew his brains out. Saved my ass, she did. She even dressed my wound herself. In our time together, Rose has become quite the nurse. She's dressed many a wound for me."

"I will have to thank her for that someday," Cat said as she leaned forward and licked the scar with a delicate flick of her pink tongue. Payton returned the favor, kneeling before her and

licking the scar she had received from the woman she'd surgically transformed into One-Eyed Sal. Payton's mouth then roved upward across the flat plain of her stomach like a bold desert explorer, wetly moving under and around the hills of her breasts before finally making camp on her plum colored nipples which he proceeded to suckle until they were as hard and dark as buckeyes. With a breathy moan, Cat entwined her fingers in Payton's hair, held his head tightly against her chest and steered his mouth from one and then the other nipple until her excitement could no longer be contained. Near-to-sobbing, she yanked sharply on his hair as a signal for him to rise which he with some reluctance did. Still, neither made any immediate movement toward the bed, but, instead, embraced standing up. Cat's chest flattened out against Payton's and her loins pressed into his so that I could feel the stiffness of her nipples and the dampness of her bush. His hands came down to grasp the cheeks of her buttocks and pull her loins in even tighter. She responded by grinding her crotch against him in a slow rotational motion. The effect was to leave them both teetering on unsteady legs that were barely able to at last carry them over to the four-poster bed.

Cat was far-removed from maidenhood and Payton's penis slid easily into the springy flesh of her vagina. His strokes started off with a steady rhythm that she met with movements of her hips and buttocks. But as his stroking motions gained in speed, they soon lost their gliding regularity, becoming increasingly uneven thrusts that she met with hard returns. Moans of pleasure burst from Cat's lips and Payton began to grunt as his uneven thrusts took off to a higher and even faster level, regaining regularity and evolving into a steady pounding that continued to intensify. The sounds they made grew increasingly animalistic, uttered through gritted teeth as their musky sweat flowed freely, forming pools upon the bed sheets.

My own mind and body were caught up in the erotic swirl, merging and melding with Payton and Cat as if I were the spectral partner in a ghostly menage a trois. It was me who was inside of Cat, pounding her, my balls slapping against the cheeks of her ass, my sweat pouring down onto her tits. Into my back she dug her nails, around my waist she wrapped her thighs. With all apologies to Jan, it was the most intense sexual experience of my life. Suddenly I felt Payton's face contort in a grimace. He clasped Cat's hips in his powerful hands, held her tight and drove himself as deep inside her as physical laws of space and time allowed. And in that singular moment when he and she were joined as a single entity, so, too, did Payton and I

become one. Payton's discharge was like something torn from his body causing him to cry out. Cat, too, seemed mortally wounded as her hips quivered and she heaved herself up into him with an ear-piercing shriek. And even in the sterile swells of the liquid aerogel I could feel the heated splash of semen against my stomach as my penis twitched in spasmodic ejaculation.

As our sexual arousal subsided, Payton grew small and eventually slipped out of Cat. The two of them were again separate individuals, a man and a woman. But not Payton and me. For us there was no separation. We had been joined.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Simon's Journal

A curious thing about my second session with Quip in the Modulated Natal Emulation and Memory Enhancer: It continued an excessively long period of time. I use the word "curious" because it was not something that Keith nor any of the other members of his Brain Lab team anticipated. My first session lasted exactly 58:47 minutes, which almost precisely fit the 60-minute duration for which the Quip team had calibrated their dosage. I might still be experiencing the memories of Payton Adams had Keith not opened the MNEME himself after 96:37 minutes. The dose of Quip administered to me should have worn nearly 40 minutes earlier. I should no longer have been experiencing any genetic memories. Yet I was. Furthermore, I came out of the MNEME apparently quite disoriented. Something has raised much concern amongst Keith and his colleagues. Tomorrow they plan to run a full panel of tests on my brain. Keith is acting as if this is nothing more than a minor mystery, an "anomaly," he keeps calling it, but I see through his phoniness. He and the others are worried. So is Jan.

More than a little.

* * *

Remarkably enough, Payton and Cat made love two more times that evening. The second and third times were consummated with diminishing intensity, but were nonetheless thrilling to us all. The final time, Payton and I took her from behind and it is a good thing that the four-poster bed was made of solid mahogany.

In between our sexual bouts, there was much talk about

Collin Garraty and the planned assassinations of Frick and Carnegie. Andrew Carnegie was a philanthropist who was always quite generous to causes he endorsed. I know that he was a Protestant. I also know that as a native Scot he had little more use for the English than did Collin Garraty. However, I have at this time no knowledge as to whether his Protestant faith and dislike for the English translated into support for the Irish Protestants of Ulster. It does not seem likely to me that he would have involved himself in the tangled and bloody morass that was (and probably always shall be) Irish politics. That said, Collin Garraty and the Fenians with whom he did business, certainly believed this to be the case. They were determined that Carnegie was to be assassinated. To see the deed carried out, they raised and transferred to Collin a substantial sum of gold currency.

Cat did not hold a high opinion of Collin. She thought him to be a coward for paying Payton to do the killing then bragging about the acts as if they were a reflection of his own courage.

"You're his bollocks, you know," she said at one point to Payton. "Through you he is a brave and dangerous man, exacting vengeance upon the enemies of Ireland. You're all he's got. Without you, he's nothing."

Payton disagreed. "Don't underestimate Collin. He's a clever man with more connections than threads on a spider's web. To be sure, I'm his only enforcer, but he's got plenty of others working for him. He's especially partial to big dumb Irishmen, youngsters with brawn to spare but not much curiosity. They do what he pays them to do and they don't ask questions. He calls them operatives, I call them potato eaters. No offense, but he's got other whores, too, besides you. He collects them."

"I do not think of myself as a whore and I'll thank you to not use that term when speaking of me again," Cat said with heat. "But I do know all about Collin's predilections for whores. And I've heard about his connections. He's a bloody spider alright, with a web that stretches from Dublin to New Orleans. Trouble is, he drinks too much and his tongue gets loose when he's drunk. Add a tug or two on his willie and you can't shut him up. Him and his bragging. I can tell you, Payton, he is getting worse not better. And you don't know him as well as you think. One day down the road, he's going to blabbermouth to the wrong person and he'll sell you out to save his own hide."

Again, Payton disagreed. "He knows it would be his last act. I'd square it with him if I had to come back from hell to do it. I leave no debt unpaid. What ever is done to me I do back and worse. That's a promise I make and a promise I will keep even from beyond the grave."

His words seem to greatly upset Cat and she begged him not to continue on with Collin's plan. She said she would go away with him anywhere he wished. Between the money he'd already collected from Collin and the money she'd squirreled away, they had the means. But Payton would not be swayed. He wanted to collect the entire fee for Frick and the rest of his fee for Carnegie. He also intended to go on with Collin to Chicago and carry out the enforcement on the Prince of Wales. Again he alluded to the price of that killing as being quite dear.

"And after Chicago?" Cat wanted to know. "What then? Where will you go? What will you do? Has Collin more plans? Will it be the Queen herself you go after? Will he keep sending you out until one day it's you who doesn't come back?"

"No," Payton told her. "After Chicago and Prince Edward, Collin and me are quits. I'll do no more enforcements for him or anyone else."

"And what about Rosaleen?" Cat asked.

"I'm still thinking on it," was Payton's answer before he moved to take her for the third and final time that night.

There followed then a memory shift into another of those image flurries that I from time-to-time experienced under the Quip. Again I was thrust into the role of a remote viewer, an audience member observing these images from somewhere beyond the scene in which the action took place.

I saw Payton back at the house in Homestead with Rosaleen. I saw him in that second bedroom, removing the strong box from the cedar chest that was hidden in the closet, opening the strong box with the key he wore round his neck, and adding two sacks of what I knew to be gold coins from the U.S. treasury to half a dozen existing sacks. I saw Payton cleaning and oiling the sections of the segmented Lee-Remington rifle, assembling those sections, including the silencer, testing the rifle's action, working the trigger, unloading then carefully reloading the box magazine, and finally disassembling the weapon and returning it to its leather case. I saw him back in Cat's room in the Penn-Schenley making love with her, her long brown legs wrapped high around his

white back, and then I saw him in the bedroom he shared with Rosaleen and she was on her knees fellating him.

Before I could give much thought to this last image, it began to shimmer wildly like a spectral apparition and then another memory materialized and began to solidify into the image of a well-dressed Payton in the Penn-Schenley, striding through the sixth floor corridor, carrying under one arm the leather case that contained the segmented Lee-Remington rifle. He might easily have been a billiards player returning from the first floor of the hotel. The image fully jelled when Payton stood at the door to Cat's suite and raised a fist to knock. At that precise moment of solidification, Payton and I were again as a single person and the fist that delivered upon the door a single sharp rap felt as if it were my own.

Cat was wearing a purple silk chemise when she let us in. Payton and I looked over to the bed and saw a shirtless Devin Swayne fast asleep. We walked over and looked down. He was slender and devoid of muscle and body hair. He was also the whitest human being I've ever seen.

"He won't come round for a couple of hours," Cat said. "Not even if you set off dynamite in this room."

We nodded, leaned towards Cat and kissed her sweet lips, at first quickly, then a little longer. After the kiss, we went straight to work, using the marble-topped table. We undid the leather case and carefully, but with speed, assembled the stock and barrel to the breech of our Lee-Remington rifle. Cat seemed fascinated by the procedure and watched closely. She even asked a couple of technical questions as we screwed the silencer onto the end of the barrel. When we told her that the rifle was light in weight and offered little kick in the way of recoil despite its power, she asked if she could hold it. With great pride, we gave it over and showed her how to jack one of the special Pritchett hollowpoint bullets into the chamber. We then took back the rifle and took up our position at the window facing the Chronicle-Telegraph Building across Fifth Avenue. We knelt down and rested an elbow on the ledge. It was an excellent sight-line and we remarked to Cat that this was almost too easy.

"Don't be so cocksure of yourself, Payton Furey," she responded in a voice that showed surprising agitation. "Weren't you the one who told me that trouble comes when you least expect it?"

Turning, we watched her pull a long blue dress over her head, arrange it over her bosom and hips, and pat out the wrinkles. She then sat on the courting sofa to button her shoes. We asked what was eating her? We assured her that this would be over soon and suggested that we ought to go to Collin's room after.

"I know he's down there now, watching at the window, waiting for Frick to arrive," we said. "He'll want to see Frick die. He likes to watch me kill when it is safe for him to do so. Let's chase him out of the room for awhile and have another go at it when this is finished. What do you say?"

Cat glared at us. "I say you should have gone with me when I asked you to. We could have been half-way to San Francisco if you'd have listened to me. Why didn't we go, Payton? Why wouldn't you go away with me? Was it that wife of yours? Was it Rosaleen that kept you here?"

We chided Cat for being jealous and promised her that money and not Rosaleen was the reason we had not left with her.

Cat was not placated by our words, nor did she take kindly to our laughing at her jealousy. "I'll bet you had your way with her, didn't you? You didn't get enough between my legs that you had to run home and get some between hers? Did you? Did you, Payton? Did you?"

"And what of it if I did?" we answered. "She's my wife, ain't she?"

Cat choked on her words but managed to stammer out a question as to how it was Payton had come to marry Rosaleen.

"When she saved my life from the dragoon at Kilkenny," we said, "I told Rosaleen I owed her a debt and asked what she would have of me to square it. She's a good Catholic girl. I told you that. She wanted what all god-fearing Catholic girls want. She wanted us to be married. We roused the local Father and were wed that very night. Rosaleen with the smell of gunpowder on her hands and me bleeding like a stuck pig. I square my debts. I told you that."

Cat was still not satisfied. "And what about now, Payton? Are you squared with Rosaleen now? Do you love her or do you love me?"

We hold her eyes from our spot by the window. We burn with a rising anger and we tell her that we'll answer that question when the time comes. As of the moment, we've got business

at hand. We turn our back on Cat and devote our fullest attention to the front steps of the Chronicle-Telegraph Building.

In a short time, we see a tall, slender man in a dark blue suit approach the steps. My great-grandfather and I both recognize the man immediately as Henry Clay Frick. He is hatless and his thick white hair glistens under the glare of the harsh sunlight. His neatly trimmed beard is white, too, and his stern posture is so ram-rod straight he looks like a soldier standing at attention. In fact, he could easily pass for a taller version of the great Confederate general Robert E. Lee.

As Cat had predicted, Frick's first action when he arrived at the steps was to check his pocket watch. He then remained on those steps in his military stance and waited. Once again, I felt a chilling calm sweep over my great-grandfather. It was that same eerie serenity I remembered from the shooting of the Pinkerton guard. This time, however, I, too, truly felt it. This time, I, too, felt my blood cool to a trancelike state. I was totally absorbed in the moment, like a cat when it stalks a mouse. There was nothing else in existence save for the scope and barrel of the Lee-Metford rifle and the sight line to the target. Squinting, we aimed that barrel precisely at Frick's heart.

Henry Clay Frick was approximately two seconds from death when we heard an English-accented masculine voice boom from behind us.

"Drop your weapon in the name of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria!"

The voice carried a steely authority. My great-grandfather did not blink. Not a single molecule of panic or alarm erupted within his nervous system, nor did his blood temperature rise so much as one degree. Looking back on that glorious moment, I realize that I, too, remained every bit as cool. Truly, Payton and I were functioning under a single fear-response system, a system that had seized the both of us in an almost supernatural calm.

Still kneeling, we turned in the direction of the English voice, rifle in hand. With no hesitancy, no pause that might have broken the spell, and no sudden rush that might literally have triggered a response, we swung the barrel up and in a single fluid motion fired. The silencer spit flame and emitted a noise like the partially stifled cough of a guest at a dinner table. The Englishman holding a pistol on us was slammed backwards against the door to Cat's suite. A bright red spot appeared on his white shirt and immediately blossomed into a rose. As the corpse

slid down, it smeared the door with what looked like torn cherries.

For the first time we saw the second Englishman with a large black pistol that was also aimed at us. Our eyes locked on his and never left as we worked the bolt action of the Lee-Metford rifle. Our hope was that the second agent would be frozen momentarily, like the temporary paralysis of the bird caught in the stare of the snake. But this Englishman was as much a professional as ourselves and we knew even as we heard a Pritchett bullet being chambered that we were out of time.

The man's muscles tensed in prelude to squeezing the trigger of his pistol. Then there was a noise from behind him, a muffled noise scarcely louder than the cough of our own silenced rifle. A small hard bump instantly appeared in the forehead of the Englishman directly between his eyes. It was a knot no bigger in size than a pebble, or, more accurately, than the slug of a .22 caliber bullet. The Englishman's eyes crossed as if each eyeball were trying to see the thing that had sprouted between them. Then the man pitched forward, hitting the floor with a hideous thud. Blood seeped out of an unseen hole in the back of his head. Other than a slight quivering of his neck, his body was still.

Standing behind the fallen man was Cat, a miniature pistol in her hand, smoke pouring from one its two tiny silver barrels. The pistol, which I believe was called a Derringer, was aimed at us. We immediately centered the barrel of the Lee-Metford rifle on her.

"Even if you get the shot off, you're not likely to hurt me much with that pea-shooter," we said. "You know what my Pritchetts will do."

"I will get the bloody shot off, you can count on that," Cat replied, holding her Derringer with unflinching steadiness. "And it can kill at this distance." Cat allowed herself a smile and motioned her eyes toward the man she'd shot. "Ask him. Besides, the bullets have been dipped in cyanide. Alls I need do is nick you up and you are a dead man."

"You'll die, too," we said. "And your death will be damned quick."

"Yours won't," she said. "It will take a spot of time but you'll be ever so glad when it comes. Until then, I'm afraid you'll be choking on your own vomit."

We admired her bravery. It set an enormous charge of sexual arousal surging through our body. We lowered the barrel of the Lee-Metford rifle and smiled. "Let's talk, then," we said. "But we'd better be quick. I don't think we've much time."

"Let's you put that rifle down first. Then we can chat," Cat answered, Derringer still aimed at us. "And we have time. If anyone had heard anything there'd have already been a knock on the door."

"You want me to disarm myself while you're holding a gun on me?" we asked.

"Are you afraid?" Cat challenged.

We stood the rifle against the wall by the window and stepped away. "When did you rejoin Her Majesty's Secret Service?" we asked, sliding a hand inside our jacket to rest it on the oak grip of the jagged-edged knife.

"I never left," Cat said, lowering her Derringer but keeping it ready at her side. "The Service has been on to Collin Garraty and his Fenian cell since those awful dynamite attacks in London. After the O'Casey murders, we learned that the cell was planning to do something spectacular here in America as a means of raising enough stakes to make a move against the Royal family. We knew Collin was the money man for the cell and the one who arranged its murders, but we did not know who his enforcer was. (She eyed us pointedly.) That's why I was sent here. I was to get close to Collin, find out what he was up to, and learn the identity of his enforcer so the Service could take action."

"Lucky for Her Majesty's Secret Service that Collin likes whores," we said.

Cat's face tightened. She told us that Service intelligence, working on a tip from an American source, had informed her boss, whom she referred to as her controller, of Collin's predilection for prostitutes, particularly those of an exotic nature and that he favored the houses in New Orleans. At the time Cat was sent to connect with Collin, his paramour was one Snake Eyes Sal at the house of Julia Dean.

"No one warned me that Snake Eyes would react so violently over the prospect of losing Collin, but then, our intelligence did not know how generous Collin can be with his women. It worked out all the better for me. I managed to impress Collin in many ways."

"So you did all of this to set me up," we said, to which Cat vigorously shook her head.

"I did not know it was you until Wednesday night," she said. "Collin talks a great deal, drunk or sober, but the truth is, he never said much about his Fenian business. He said even less about you. Oh, he bragged about some of the murders and he certainly boasted of your skills as an enforcer. But he never gave up your name. Never gave up any name. He did say you were

employed at the Homestead Works but he didn't say what you were doing there. His comment was that as a steel worker, your killing Henry Clay Frick and Andrew Carnegie might be personal and therefore he was worried you might argue for using a knife. That would be too risky even for you, he said. But he never told me your name. He never said where you were living or what you were doing. He certainly never said you were married. Never said a word that could help us identify or even locate you. I had very little to go on until he brought you to my door."

We angrily noted that she nonetheless allowed us to walk into a trap even after she knew we were Collin's enforcer. Cat again vigorously shook her head.

"There was nothing I could do. By then it was too late for me to stop the operation. Not without throwing intolerable suspicion upon myself. You must understand, Payton, these past two days have been both agony and ecstasy for me. I have never felt so torn. You know how I feel about you, but the Service has been my life all of these past ten years."

My great-grandfather was no more fooled than myself. "The Service?" we asked. "The entire English Secret Service? I'd have thought you'd be more selective than that. What was his name?"

"John Tower," Cat replied. "*Sir* John Tower. He was the agent who recruited me. He has been my controller."

"Your lover, too," we prompted.

Cat's face darkened. "John has been very decent to me. He is a good and honorable man."

"He made you a whore for the English," we said with much disgust.

Cat's eyes blazed. Instantly the Derringer was raised and pointed at our heart. "I have told you not to call me a whore. I have never been a whore. I am an agent with Her Majesty's Secret Service."

We smiled, motioned to the two corpses that lay bleeding on the floor and said, "Seems to me you've just quit your job."

Cat's face relaxed and she lowered her miniature pistol. "It won't look good on my record," she agreed, allowing herself a forlorn sigh.

"What made you change your mind?" we asked.

Cat's eyes studied my great-grandfather's face as if upon it was written the answer to our question. "I lost you once. Having found you, I did not want to lose you again. I want to be with you. I always have."

"You took a hell of a chance," we said. "Damned stupid, too. What if I don't want you?"

Cat once more raised her gun. "In that case, I suppose I will have to shoot you. I haven't gone this far just to let you return to your wife."

"Maybe I don't think a woman who would risk so much to save my hide would shoot me," we said, prudently making no move for the rifle.

"Maybe I'd rather see you dead than in the arms of another woman," she responded. Our admiration for her grew. We again motioned to the leaking corpses.

"What about these two? You going try to tell your boss I did them both?"

Cat laughed. "Good lord! You certainly don't think much of us, do you? Our people may muck things up from time to time but they damn sure know the difference between a .22 calibre bullet and one of those bloody cannonballs you use! I will make up some lie and John will accept it. He will spirit me out of here and when we get back home, her Majesty's government will be so happy to have you dead, they'll reward us both. Last I heard, there was a three thousand pound bounty on your head. Dead, my darling, you pose me no problems. Alive, I've no choice but to throw in with you."

"I'm in the same boat you are," we said. "If you're dead, I got no trouble. But if you're alive, I got nothing but trouble. For openers, we need Collin to get us out of here. But if we go to his room now and tell him the truth, he's going to want you killed on the spot."

"Think he'll insist upon it, do you?" Cat asked.

"You know a great many of his secrets and Collin is not a man to take unnecessary risks," we said. "Besides, you deceived him. He might even want to do it himself."

"Then we don't tell Collin the truth," Cat said.

I felt a smile upon our face and Cat asked about it. We tell her it will be the first time we have ever lied to Collin Garraty about an enforcement.

"In your catalogue of sins, darling, I don't think lying to Collin Garraty is the one they'll hang you on."

We nodded our head in agreement. "Where is this John Tower of yours now?" we ask.

"Downstairs in the lobby. After these two apprehended you, we were supposed to bring you there. You were to be taken to the train station and transported to the British Embassy in Washington, D.C."

"What then?" we inquired.

Cat shrugged. "I presume you would have been tortured until you told your inquisitors everything they wished to know. Then they would have disposed of you. It was never insinuated to me that you would be returning with us to London."

We asked how many agents did Tower have with him in the lobby and she shook her head.

"I don't know. Maybe one, maybe two, maybe an entire army. John Tower doesn't tell me much. We've been together more than ten years, him and me, yet the only way I can ever reach him is to wear a blue dress. Then he contacts me. I do know that it was in deference to your notoriety that he sent two men after you. I don't know these men, but I know that John was frightfully keen on their abilities. In almost every other case, he would have only sent one of them. Less people, less fuss, you know. The English are such a civilized people, they're not prepared to deal with the likes of someone like you. Or me, for that matter. However, once John has learned his men have been killed, there will be bloody hell to pay. He has friends in this country, friends high up in the War Department and elsewhere. In fact," she paused momentarily to give us a bemused look followed by an ironic smile, "I've heard it said that the source of our information on Garraty was a wealthy American from Pittsburgh. It might have been Carnegie himself without even knowing it was himself you were after."

"I don't know as I believe that," we said.

"Well believe this. Sir John *will* come after all of us. He's got the resources and the will to see it through to the finish. We have got to get away from Pittsburgh and quickly."

I was so in tune with my great-grandfather's thoughts that the realization came to me at the same moment it came to him.

"Tower doesn't know what I look like, does he?" we exclaimed. A shake of Cat's head confirmed our guess. Payton Adams could safely walk through the lobby of the Penn-Schenley Hotel. Collin Garraty and Mary Cat Hope could not. By killing the English agent, Cat had truly committed herself to my great-grandfather. Her life was in his hands. Our hand had never

relinquished its grip on the jagged-edged knife. Now we removed the knife from its sheath and walked toward Cat. She raised the Derringer but my great-grandfather and I both believed that she would not pull the trigger. We stood in front of her and stared into her brown eyes. They were wide-opened and returning our stare with unblinking intensity. I have no doubt that she was terrified but she was not about to let us see her fear. She was, I thought, very much like my own Jan.

As if agreeing with me, Payton Adams said, "You've got a lot of sand, woman." He leaned forward to kiss her hard on the lips, then walked to the bed and slashed the throat of the unconscious Devin Swayne. The slender pale body went into spasms and blood bubbled noisily out of the wound but Devin Swayne did not awake from his stupor.

"How much time you think we got?" we asked Cat as we fetched the segmented rifle and began to disassemble it.

"By now, John might be feeling some concern," she said, slipping the Derringer into a hidden compartment that had been sewn into her dress. "I think it best we move on." She watched us take apart the rifle and place it back into its carrying case. Just before we left the suite, she paused to look over at Devin Swayne, whose heart continued to spurt blood through the gash in his throat. "Was that really necessary?"

"Now only two people know what went on here," we answered. "You and me."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Simon's Journal

The plan was formulated on the way to Collin's room. It consisted of half-truths and total lies for the purpose of enlisting Collin's aid so that Payton and Cat could get away to New York City. Once safely hidden in the Irish ghettos of Collin's beloved metropolis, Payton and Cat could make more permanent plans to settle somewhere else in the United States. Cat noted that she and Collin would have to go immediately into hiding for Sir John Tower and his English agents would soon be after them. Although Payton's face was not known to the English, he would have to pretend to go into hiding as well as part of the plan to deceive Collin Garraty. Payton would also have to separate from Cat long enough to go to his home to change his clothes and collect money and a few other things he said he would need (I presumed that to mean more ammunition for the segmented rifle and perhaps some dynamite). It was the conviction of Cat and Payton that Cat would be safe so long as she stayed with Collin for he had no doubt secured a number of comfortable hiding places throughout Pittsburgh. Cat seemed far more concerned over the thought of Payton returning to Rosaleen for any length of time.

"Promise me you will get your money and your things and you will go, Payton," Cat said, as we reached the door to Collin's suite. "Promise me you won't be intimate with her. I'm your woman now and you're my man. I won't share you with her or anyone else."

We answered her with a quick kiss and a promise. "You have my word on it." Then we rapped sharply on the door.

The look on Collin's face told us that as my great-grandfather had anticipated, he'd been watching Frick out his window and knew the assassination had not taken place.

"What the devil happened?" he demanded, pulling Payton and Cat inside and quickly shutting the door and locking it. On his bed was an open valise with clothes sticking partially out as if hastily thrown inside. Payton did the talking. He relayed the events of the past hour as they actually happened but with a few critical omissions. He told Collin of the intervention by the agents and how Cat had saved his life. He did not tell Collin that the agents were English, nor did he speak of Cat's association with them. Collin wanted to know how the agents got into

the suite. Cat said that one of them knocked and identified himself as Collin so she opened the door. Upon hearing that these agents knew his name, Collin blanched and began to perspire.

"So we don't know who these men were with," he muttered, wiping sweat away from his face with a soiled handkerchief he took from his pocket. "They could be Pinkertons. They could be from the War Department. Only two agents came for you so we know they wanted to keep things quiet. That makes me think they were government agents. The Pinkertons or the local nabs would have stormed the room with a dozen men, guns blazing. But sweet Jesus and Mary, for all we know the lobby could be crawling with more of these mystery agents. We don't know what we're up against. We need information. What about Devin Swayne? Where the hell is he?"

"Where do you think?" we (Payton and myself) replied.

Collin blanched again. "Ach! Don't tell me you killed him, you bloody fool! What the hell would you go and do a stupid thing like that for?"

"I thought he was onto us," we answered. "I thought he was the one who set me up. I squared things with him."

Collin was dumbstruck. "Have you lost your fucking mind, lad? Has the quadroom's pussy turned you into a blooming idiot? For god's sakes, if Devin Swayne had been onto us d'ya think he'd put his boss in danger? D'ya think he'd go to Cat's room and let her slip him a Mickey Finn? Oh damn it! Damn it! We could have interrogated him, found out if he knows anything, if anyone has approached him. Even if he knew nothing, we could have used him as a hostage. Now all we've got is another damned corpse, one that is going to bring the local nabs in on it. You've made things very difficult, Payton, very difficult indeed."

We snarled at him to stop wasting time with his belly-aching and start thinking of a plan to get us all out of there. Otherwise, we warned, we would take matters into our own hands. Collin must have known what such actions would entail and the consequences they might bring for he snapped out of his panic, went straight to the armoire and opened it with a key. Inside was a small safe. Collin worked the combination lock on the safe until its heavy door swung open to reveal bundles of cash neatly stacked. Collin took out two of the bundles and handed them to us -- United States Treasury greenbacks in denominations of ten dollars.

"Here's the two thousand I would have paid you had you carried out the enforcement on

Frick," he said. "It ain't gold, but it will have to do. I consider it a debt you now owe me."

As we slipped the cash into our jacket, we replied that Collin knew we always squared our debts. He grunted in acknowledgement and began stuffing the rest of the bundles into his valise. He said he had a pass key to the hotel's service stairway and we would take those stairs down to the street. We would then split up. He instructed Payton to meet him at five o'clock at the Pemickey Bridge where we'd met for the confrontation with the Pinkertons at the Homestead Steel Works.

"We can assume its safe for you to return to the house in Homestead," he said. "If these agents knew where you lived they'd have nabbed you before now. Put on your mill clothes and you can disappear inside the Homestead Works for as long as you please. It would take an army to find you in there. "

In the meantime, Collin said, he would make arrangements for our escape from Pittsburgh and try to learn more about our situation.

"Seeing as we've been left in the dark by your killing of everybody except the one damn person you were paid to kill!" he angrily grumbled. To my surprise, we let the remark pass without comment. But we did pull Collin aside and very quietly informed him that we wanted Cat kept safe and sound.

Collin shook his head. In a low voice, his eyes darting back to Cat who was standing by a window, studying the street below, he pointed out that traveling with a colored woman would make them conspicuous, a most undesirable state of affairs at a time when stealth was essential. He also noted that Cat was too knowledgeable about their affairs to be left behind.

"I know you, Collin Garraty, and I knew you'd be thinking along those lines." we responded. "And that is why I am telling you now that I will take it personally if any misfortune befalls her. Cat saved my life. I owe her a debt and so long as I am in her debt no harm had better come to her. I leave her in your care and hold you responsible for her safety. You know what that means."

Collin glumly nodded and muttered again about how difficult Payton was making things. Then he added, "You just remember that I am doing this as a favor to you. That makes two debts you owe me."

From the corner of our vision, Payton and I both noted that Cat appeared to have had

overheard Collin's last remark.

She appeared to be displeased.

After Collin had finished stuffing clothes and cash into his valise, he demanded that Cat turn over her Derringer to him. My great-grandfather pointed out that the weapon could probably be put to more effective use were it to remain in her possession but Collin was not to be dissuaded. He, being unarmed, would not travel anywhere with a quadron whore who had him at such a disadvantage.

"It is alright, Monsieur Collin," said Cat, her French accent fully restored. "I feel safer knowing you have it. I have never fired it before and I do not think I could ever do so again."

Collin accepted the gun, hid it away in his jacket, gathered his valise and led us out of his suite. Quickly, but with eyes on the alert, the three of us made our way down the hall to the door that led to the service stairs. Once inside the stairway, we listened carefully to make sure it was empty before proceeding. Minutes later we were standing outside in the rear of the Penn-Schenley Hotel. Unlike the clean well-maintained grounds in front of the building, the rear was a picture of urban blight, strewn with trash and garbage awaiting a pickup that seemed long overdue. The smell was no less frightful than the scene. Only a few moments in the hot afternoon sun were enough to wring the perspiration from all three of our faces. Collin repeated his plan for Payton to meet him at the Pemickey Bridge at five o'clock. He warned Payton not to be late.

"I'll not wait a minute for you, lad. If I get there and you're nowhere to be seen, I'll be on my way and you'll not be laying eyes on me again."

Then Collin and Cat were off, walking at a brisk pace down a side alley which I could see emptied out onto Fifth Avenue. Payton turned and went the opposite direction, headed, I could see, for more back alleys.

It might have been my imagination, but as Payton and I began walking, I thought I heard police whistles coming from Fifth Avenue.

My great-grandfather and I rode another overcrowded horsecar back to Homestead. A clock on the street showed the time to be 2:25 p.m. Cabs apparently were not impossible to find

on Eighth Avenue for my great-grandfather was able to hail one. He gave the driver a silver dollar and instructed him to make haste for the address in Homestead. (I would guess that is about four times what the driver could have expected to command as a fare.) When we got to the corner of Main and California Streets, my great-grandfather told the driver to stop. He gave the man another silver dollar and told him to be back at the corner in one hour.

Payton Adams studied the California Street approach to his house for several minutes before continuing. Although there appeared to be no unusual activity, my great-grandfather went around to the back of his house, cautiously peered through a window and saw Rosaleen sitting in the kitchen. She was at the table, peeling apples. Through the window we could hear her singing. She was startled when we walked in through the back door.

"I did not expect you back so soon," she said, a wide smile on her face. "I was going to bake a pie to surprise you."

The pregnancy sickness that had tormented Rosaleen appeared to have abated. Gone was the wane and haggard appearance and the rancid breath. Her color had been fully restored and she was radiant with health and energy. When she stood up I saw that she had on a loose green house dress over which she wore a large white apron that was stained in dozens of places. The effect was homey and inviting. In fact, Simon Thomas thought he'd never seen her look more beautiful. She came forward to kiss us. Her mouth tasted of apple.

We gave her an abbreviated version of what had happened, a shorter variation of the same story we'd told Collin with the added omission of acknowledging a debt to Cat. Rosaleen followed us upstairs to the spare room, listening as we went into the closet and opened the hidden cedar chest. As we removed the knapsack that was half-filled with sticks of dynamite, the two wood boxes, the Colt .45 revolver, and the metal strong box, we told her of our planned meeting with Collin at the Pemickey bridge. Our intention was to take what clothing we could carry in the knapsack, some money and the segmented rifle, and be prepared to flee at the first sign of trouble. We would send for Rosaleen as soon as we'd settled somewhere safe -- most likely New York City.

We used the key worn round our neck to open the strong box. Inside were nine cloth bags I knew to be filled with gold coins that carried the Royal Seal of England. My great-grandfather stuffed two of the coin bags into the knapsack along with the smaller of the two

wood boxes which I knew to be filled with Pritchett bullets. The other wood box contained shells for the Colt revolver. He gave it and the gun to Rosaleen. Then he closed and locked the strong box and set it back inside the cedar chest. All the while he was thus engaged, my great-grandmother had been arguing that she wanted to go with my great-grandfather. She did not want to be abandoned. Her sickness was gone and she was strong again. They'd always traveled together in the past, even in times of great danger. Why, she demanded to know, did he now intend for her to remain behind?

"Because you are now carrying our child," my great-grandfather said as he moved into the bedroom and gathered up his mill worker clothing. "Do you not think that I love you, woman? Do you not think it worried me in the past when I have known your life to be in danger with me? Do you think I could now risk your life and the life of our child as well? If you do, woman, then you don't know your own husband."

I'd never heard my great-grandfather speak such words, nor would I have adjudged him capable of such sentiments. From the stunned look on the face of my great-grandmother and her silence, I would say that she, too, was taken by surprise.

Payton Adams removed the fine clothes he'd worn to Pittsburgh to assassinate Henry Clay Frick and stuffed them into the knapsack. He turned to face his still-silent wife, naked save for his drawers. With a pretense of ceremony, he removed the key chain from around his neck and placed it over hers. On his face I sensed a big smile.

"If nothing else, Rose, don't you think I'd come back for the gold?"

A huge smile spread across Rosaleen's lovely face though her eyes were wet with tears. Laughing and crying at the same time, she threw herself into my great-grandfather's arms.

"Husband, I've never claimed to truly know you, or to think you might love me. All I've ever said with confidence is that I *love* you."

She pressed her lips hard against those of my great-grandfather and I felt the heat of her kiss as surely and deeply as if it were my own lips she was assaulting. It was *us* she was kissing, Payton and me, and we were responding to her. The burn in our loins became an aching fire and we pulled her tightly into us as if to quench it.

Rosaleen knew what we were feeling for she was suddenly sliding down to her knees and

her fingers were undoing the tapes to our drawers and then she had our penis out and was taking it into her mouth, sucking and licking until it glowed and glistened and quivered with want. She stood and led us to the bed where she, without once releasing us, managed to shed herself of the apron and house dress. Still working with only one hand, she released the stays and tapes to her own underthings which dropped with a flutter to her ankles. Stepping out and away from them, Rosaleen lay back upon the bed and guided us to her.

"I am over my sickness and I am in great need to feel you inside me, husband," she said. "Who knows how long before we're reunited? The next time you see me I could be big with our child. So give me something to remember you by," she whispered, "something better than gold."

Her knees came up and separated, her thighs spread open wide. She guided our penis into the silky red triangle of her pubic hair, pressed it into the gash so that the walls of her womanhood enveloped us in a caress that was slick and perfect.

* * *

There is a point I feel I must make at this time to my best friend, Keith Joyner. Within a 24-hour period, I had memories of making love first with Jan, then with Cat, and finally with Rosaleen. With each of the three the physiological mix of hormones, body fluids and muscle contractions was identical. Adrenergic chemicals in my brain unleashed a barrage of stimulants throughout my nervous system, making me alert and keenly sensitive to physical sensation. The tissue in the penis that belonged at once to both Payton and myself became engorged with blood, as did the clitoris of first Jan, then Cat, and finally Rosaleen. Glands in the vaginal canals of these women washed the satiny flesh with lubricant while adrenaline flooded clitoris and penis alike with testosterone and cortisone, making those organs the center of the universe for their respective nervous systems. When my blood-stiffened penis penetrated the hormone-moistened vaginas of the women and began gliding in and out with mounting urgency, I know that the muscles and blood vessels in our respective sexes began constricting until the point of climax was reached. At that precious instant of release, we each of us became dream-creatures of the limbic system and the adrenergic chemicals that had been pumping hormones through our bodies were replaced with the cholinergic chemicals that decoupled the neural networks in our brains responsible for self-awareness. In short, we exploded into serenity and in coming, we, for a few brief moments, lost our individuality.

You see, Keith? I read those books you loaned me and absorbed the knowledge contained within their pages. My cerebral cortex processed the words and sent them off to the hippocampus which consolidated them into long-term explicit memory maps then routed them to the neocortex for permanent storage. But there is something in my experiences that seems to elude scientific explanation. Each of my three acts of sexual intercourse followed identical neurophysiological dictates and yet, I tell you, each was as distinct as a fingerprint. With eyes blindfolded, with no sounds or smells to guide me, and with no physical point of contact other than penis and vagina, I could have identified the woman to whom I was conjoined.

In a myriad of subtle ways, I suppose, each was unique in the texture and feel of her vaginal canal and each was unique in the thrust, the lift, and the push of her response. But were these subtle differences obvious enough for me to make distinctions? Or could there be more to it than that? If you were to factor in my other senses so that you could take into consideration the multitude of distinct physical attributes, plus the considerable personality variances, I am certain, as a man, Keith, you would appreciate how I found myself full of love and desire for all three of my brave and resourceful women. Yet even without those senses being brought into play, I assure you that the act of love alone would have been enough for me to know each. The operative word here, Keith, is love. Trite as this sounds, my love for each woman would have enabled me to know her by her mere presence. No matter what, I would always know Jan from Rosaleen from Cat, I promise you. Yes, I understand that, from a cognitive neuroscientific standpoint, my conviction is groundless. My fervid wish is that it shall always be so. I, for one, find it reassuring, nee, necessary, to believe that not all aspects of humanity can be explained away through an appropriate mix of chemicals. I take comfort that there persists today some workings of the human mind that remain beyond the grasp of science. May it always be so.

Yes, Keith, I know what you are thinking: Love is a feeling, not a primal emotion, a plastic-wired artifact rather than a hard-wired component of the neural networks. Therefore, the question must be posed: Were these feelings of love for Cat and Rosaleen exclusively my own or were they felt by my great-grandfather as well? Again, to me, the answer is obvious: Most certainly he did. Since, through the genetic memories summoned by Quip, I experienced his feelings of anger and lust, it is inconceivable that I would not also have shared his feelings of love.

* * *

Rosaleen and the entity that was Payton/Simon rocked and swayed upon the bed with growls of lust punctuating their grunts and groans. They were not as vocal as Jan and Simon, nor as frenzied as Cat and Payton/Simon, but their brute physicality was unmatched by the others. Two large and strong bodies, pounding their way to orgasmic release. In their moment of mutual explosion, Rosaleen's hips rose up to meet Payton/Simon's final thrust, her back arched high, her thighs closed like a vise, and her vaginal muscles clenched our penis in a pulsating grip as if to siphon out the semen like a milking pump. We, Payton/Simon, spent until there could not possibly have been a drop of fluid left in our respective bodies. In that moment of sexual exhaustion, my own mind inside the MNEME fluttered lost and aimless like a moth in the sun. What was Payton to do, I wondered. What the hell was he going to do?

Payton Adams left his house through the front door with his wife, Rosaleen, standing in the doorway, crying as if her heart would burst. Our parting words to her were hardly romantic: "If anyone comes, it will be after dark and they'll try to sneak into the house like thieves. Identify yourself as a pregnant woman. Tell them you are alone but armed. That way they won't shoot you and there's a bonus: If any amongst them is stupid enough to keep coming, you're legally free to take his head off. It is your right by law here. And remember this: Somebody betrayed us, but we don't know who. Trust no one, my darling Rose, trust no one!"

The cab driver was waiting for us at the corner of Main and California as per the prior arrangement. He noted without comment the dramatic change in our appearance, but there was a perceptible shift in his attitude. I have never given much thought to the expression "clothes make the man," but having exchanged my fine clean gentleman's apparel that Payton wore to assassinate Frick, for the grimy and charred tapper's garments he wore to the Homestead Works, I now better appreciate the truth behind old bromides. When the driver, upon our instructions, stopped his cab near the entrance to the Homestead Works, we paid him yet another silver dollar. Instead of immediately pocketing the coin with a grateful smile and several "thank you, sirs" as he'd done before, the man this time inspected the coin carefully before rubbing it on his shirt and depositing it into a pocket. He then gave a curt nod of his head and with a clipped grunt, hurried his horse away.

I point this out as a reminder to myself that in the struggle between the working classes and the privileged, the working classes are always at a disadvantage even if they somehow match their protagonists dollar for dollar. The athletic equipment advertisers may be correct in asserting that image is everything.

The scene in my mind's eye was almost exactly as it was at the start of my treatments with Quip. Once again I found myself standing at the head of the wooden foot-bridge which led to the wrought iron gate that was the main entrance to the Homestead Steel Works. Once again on the other side of the gate I saw the dark structures of the works rising up through a thick shroud of yellow and reddish black dust.

Unlike before there now were soldiers posted at the entrance gate but they did not bother to stop and check me for any type of identification. Everyone in the town of Homestead knew that the strike had been broken and that the spirit of the steel workers had been entirely sapped. Henry Clay Frick had let it be widely known that the scabs were running the Homestead Works just fine and that productivity had returned to pre-strike levels. What was also widely known though not discussed in public was that many regulars, including union men, had already returned to their jobs. Whether Payton Adams was a scab or a regular sneaking back to his job, made no difference to the soldiers. That he was wearing a knapsack on his back and carrying a rectangular leather case was not worthy of their attention either. It was late in the afternoon and they must have been near the end of their duty shift. All they were looking to see was their relief detachment so they could go back to their encampment and no doubt duck themselves into some cold water.

Payton and I crossed through the works, taking note that the activity was not nearly so vigorous nor intense as when it was fully staffed with its regular crews. Even from what could be seen on a quick walk across the ground told Simon Thomas that Frick was lying when he said that full productivity had been restored. Most obvious was the greatly depleted stacks of steel plates and beams in the open yard. Once those stacks were shiny pyramids as high as a house and so numerous they transformed the yard into an obstacle course. Now there only a few stacks dotted the yard and none were so high they could not have been stepped over with little more difficulty than walking across railroad tracks.

We entered the giant shed that housed Open Hearth Furnace Number One and were once

again blasted by the stupendous heat and light and noise. Once again the stench of sulfur burned our nostrils. As we made our way into the hazy glare and around the familiar blue-black cauldron, we again passed through laboring brigades of bare-chested men, their grimy, scarred and toasted skin drenched in sweat. Once more we saw the splash of flames and shower of sparks and once more we heard the deafening roar of fiery magma being transferred from one rusty ladle to another. Once more our ears were rocked by the discord of metallic screeches, hydraulic hisses, and the thrum of exploding gases.

It was a blessing to emerge from the shed and breathe the sweet cool air wafting in off the Monongahela River. Simon Thomas hoped that he would never have to experience the memories of being inside the Homestead Works again. My great-grandfather and I crossed the small gravel beach upon which those unfortunate Pinkertons aboard the barges of the Little Bill had tried to land. From the shore-side pier of the Pemickey railroad bridge, we climbed a ladder up to the roadway. Checking our pocket watch, we noted the time to be 4:36 pm. We sat down on the roadway and waited. At precisely five o'clock, a truck wagon approached the bridge. As it drew up along side of my great-grandfather and I, we could see that it belonged to the United States Express Company. Two men were aboard, a driver and an armed guard. The driver was small, had a long and bushy black beard, and was wearing a big western style hat that was pulled down over his ears. The guard was a large man, much younger than the driver. Across his broad lap was a double-barreled shotgun. He was casting a very suspicious eye toward my great-grandfather. "We're in a helluva stew, Payton," said the driver, Collin Garraty in disguise. "Minutes after you were *supposed* to shoot Henry Clay Frick, some crazy Jew anarchist *did* shoot him!"

I do not know how Payton Adams reacted to Collin Garraty's announcement because inside the MNEME, Simon Thomas was dumbfounded.

Of course! The date of this genetic memory was Saturday, July 23, 1892. On that day, at shortly before two o'clock in the afternoon, Alexander Berkman, consort of the radical feminist Emma Goldman, did attempt to assassinate Henry Clay Frick for crimes against the workers of the Carnegie Steel Company, Limited. Berkman walked into the private office of Frick, who was at that time in conference with one of the company officers, John Leishman, and fired three shots from a cheap pistol. Two shots found their mark, one in the shoulder and one in the neck

of Henry Clay Frick. The third shot was buried in the ceiling. Leishman immediately began to grapple with Berkman and was able to wrestle away the gun. A badly wounded and heavily bleeding Frick joined the battle. In the struggle, Berkman managed to stab Frick at least three times with a sharpened file. Passersby, drawn to the office by the noise of the fight, intervened on Frick's behalf. A carpenter struck Berkman on the head with a hammer, others punched and kicked him. Finally, police officers arrived and subdued him.

As has just been shown in this journal, I was quite familiar with the assassination attempt by Alexander Berkman on Henry Clay Frick. However, caught up in the experiencing of my great-grandfather's memories, the unthinkable had occurred: I'd forgotten my history!

The realization left me so disoriented that I lost my grip on the memories of Payton Adams and had to focus intently in order to retrieve them. Everything in my mind was momentarily out of focus, like the fuzziness of a radio station that has not been optimally tuned in. Nonetheless, through the haze I gathered that Collin Garraty did not know the name of Frick's would-be assassin, nor did he know any of the details of the assassination attempt. However there was one point upon which he was crystal clear.

"The local nabs think I was in on it!" Collin exclaimed, the whites of his eyes widely exposed and shining with fear. "They've got men at the train stations and the docks circulating drawings of me and Cat. The likeness of Cat is none too accurate. It could be any colored woman, even an Injun. But the one of me is too close for comfort. And it gets worse! Those agents you killed were English! It's being made into some sort of international incident now for Governor Pat himself is in town. He came to meet with that Scotch mutt Bill McCleary and an Englishman named Sir John something. Now Governor Pat's gone and ordered Sheriff McCleary and General Snowden to cooperate with Sir John. It's just an excuse to turn all the dogs loose on us. Governor Pat doesn't give a shit about the English. And he don't give a damn about Frick neither. He's been on Carnegie's payroll for years. It's for certain that Uncle Pee Wee has sent word to Governor Pat to get rid of us. Now that political piece of cocksucker shit has gone and sent soldiers to my hotel room, Payton! Soldiers! Soldiers with those same damn drawings of me and Cat. The jig is up for us around these parts, lad, that's for certain. The hounds are on our trail."

If my great-grandfather was much concerned, I could not sense it. Nor did he show it

outwardly. Of all things, he asked Collin where he had obtained the United States Express Company truck. In spite of his dire circumstances, Collin could not resist a smirk.

"You might say I borrowed it from the company's principal office in New York," he said. "Have you never read their advertisements? They claim their wheels roll 24 hours a day, delivering goods to all manner of locales, each precious cargo under armed protection. Did you know that the company has made arrangements with local constabularies to not interfere with their business? Tis true. Even in a shithole like Pittsburgh."

Payton Adams shook his head and I could hear his laughter which was surprisingly soft for such a large and otherwise harsh man. "I told Cat you were smart. That's why I'm not worried. You'll get us out here, Collin. English agents, Snowden's soldiers, Governor Pat and Sheriff McCleary -- it don't matter. You'll outsmart `em all."

Payton's faith seemed to fortify Collin Garraty and restore his cockiness.

"We'll see about that, lad, but you're right, I'll not let them catch us without giving them a run for their money. If Governor Pat and his Scot bastard sheriff think they've got us trapped, they've got another think coming. This here's Jimmy (Collin motioned to the guard with the shotgun). Take a good look at his mug. He's got a brother named Ryan who looks just like him. Twelve hours from now, Ryan will be bringing a skiff to the old Homestead ferry landing. Do you know the one I mean?"

"That slab of cement on the east side of the Homestead Works?" my great-grandfather asked. "At the head of the bend?"

"Aye. That's it, or what's left of it," Collin said. "The current is strong there, strong enough so's it should carry you past Pittsburgh well before the river traffic gets heavy. Between the early morning fog and the parked barges you'll have plenty of cover. Take the skiff to the ferry landing at the town of Aliquippa. Ryan knows the place. You should get there by mid-day. Jimmy and I will drive this truck. We'll meet at the train station. Again, Ryan knows the way but there's only one in Aliquippa and it's in the center of town. A train leaves for New York City at three o'clock. Once we get to New York, we'll go to Brooklyn where a Fenian cell is prepared to hide us for as long as we need."

My great-grandfather had been carefully listening to Collin but his eyes kept going back to Jimmy. Perhaps unintentionally or perhaps not, as Collin had been talking, the barrel of the

shotgun on Jimmy's lap had slowly shifted so that it was now pointing at Payton and me. My great-grandfather was not pleased with this development and he suddenly interrupted Collin.

"Tell your potato eater he best stop pointing that scattergun in my direction or else I'll gut him like a fish."

Collin pushed the barrel of Jimmy's shotgun away from our direction. "Ain't you the suspicion one? Jimmy meant no harm by it, Payton. He's a good lad and he's a Fenian just like his father. But speaking of guns, you'd best leave yours with me."

I felt Payton's grip on the leather case tighten. "And why the hell would I want to do that?"

Collin Garraty rolled his eyes. He reminded me of the twins when I'd said something to really exasperate them, usually in regards to MTV or some other pop culture icon.

"Because, as I was about to tell you before you interrupted me with your unwarranted suspicions of young Jimmy here," Collin said, "in addition to the drawing of Cat and me, Sheriff McCleary and General Snowden have their men circulating a flier advising folks to be on the lookout for a large man carrying a suspicious leather case, a leather case much like the one you've got in your hands. They don't know your name nor your face, but they're onto your rifle. I think you'd best not be seen wandering around these parts with it."

With much reluctance we passed the leather case up to Collin. To Jimmy we said, "If that rifle is not with your brother on the skiff tomorrow, I'll cut his balls off and wear them as a charm."

"I'm gettin' tired a yer noise," Jimmy shot back. "If it's a scrap yer lookin' fer, I'm yer man."

"Shut your trap Jimmy! You'd be dead before your feet hit the ground." Collin growled. Then he laughed. "And don't you dare kill him, Payton, he's my body guard. (Collin gave Jimmy a hearty slap on his broad back.) "Ach, we Irish will lick the world if we ever stop scrapping with one another. You, Payton, go make yourself scarce for the next 12 hours. Come dawn, you be at the landing."

Collin gave us a big grin and made a shooin' motion with his hand. "And don't you be worrying about your precious rifle. I promise it will be there on that skiff. Now off with you. I've still got things to do."

"What about Cat?" we asked. "Will she be coming with you?"

Collin's grin instantly disappeared. Looking about to make sure we were alone, he climbed down off the truck, took us by the arm, and walked down the footpath of the bridge until we were out of Jimmy's earshot.

"I can't travel with Cat, Payton. McCleary and General Snowden have their men on the watch for a white man traveling with a colored woman. The drawing of Cat is a poor likeness, but the drawing they've got of me is a good one. Anyone scrutinizing it and then her and me would see right through my disguise. Sorry, Payton. It is just too risky."

"Then she'll have to come with me," we said. Collin winced. He cast an eye back toward the truck, perhaps wishing Jimmy and his shotgun were closer at hand.

"What about Rosaleen?" Collin asked.

"I already told her I was leaving her behind for the time being," we answered. "She'll be safe enough. The authorities don't know about me. I'll decide what to do with her later."

Another pained expression wrinkled the face of Collin Garraty and he again looked longingly back toward the truck. He started off with flattery, telling us that the killing of Devin Swayne had proven a smart move after all for it would now take the authorities much longer to pick up Collin's trail. Nonetheless, it was still only a matter of time before they found Collin's name listed as the renter of the house in Homestead and went to investigate. When they did, it would not be wise for Rosaleen to be at the house.

"We've a few days, maybe a week, maybe less," Collin said. "Sooner or later, however, McCleary or one of his deputies is going to be knocking at the door. Rosaleen can't be there. She knows too much about the both of us."

"So be it, I'll take her and Cat," we answered.

Collin's eyes widened and his entire face burned. "Merciful Mother Mary I don't believe what I am hearing. Have you completely lost your mind? You try a fool stunt like that and you'll not be getting on no skiff, I can tell you that for certain. Those two hellcats will be at each other's throat in a thrice. You can't take two women. A smart man wouldn't take neither of them." Collin stopped, drew a breath, steadied himself. He didn't want an argument, he wanted compliance. "But if you are bound and determined to have a woman with you then you are going to have to make a choice, lad. One or the other. Rosaleen or Cat. Which will it be?"

Simon Thomas froze. My breathe stopped. My heart began to pound. Collin might just as well have asked me to choose between Louise and Elizabeth. Despite the controlled environment inside the MNEME, I felt a film of sweat break out on my forehead, underarms and in my loins.

Payton Adams, on the other hand, did not flinch. Cold as ice he gave his answer with no hesitation. "A pregnant woman is a liability. I'll take Cat."

"Suit yourself," said Collin. "But you'll have to take care of Rosaleen."

"What do you mean?" we asked him.

"You know what I mean. Rosaleen knows too much. It's too dangerous to leave her behind. And if she ever got wind that you'd abandoned her for another woman " Collin could not even finish the thought, it was far too unnerving for him. His eyes narrowed shrewdly.

"Consider it self-preservation, lad. Other than Cat and myself, Rosaleen is the only person who knows your name and your involvement in this business with Frick. A scorned Rosaleen could and would send you to the gallows for sure."

Payton Adams nodded.

Collin spoke the words to which he'd been leading. "You will have to kill her."

Payton Adams immediately shook his head. "I can't kill her. Rosaleen is carrying my child. It could be a boy." Payton's eyes fell on Collin. "You'll have to do it."

The words were like a shove, sending Collin back a step. He started to protest but Payton waved him off. Furthermore, my great-grandfather said, Collin must be present when the job got done. He told Collin about the strong box hidden in the closet.

"There's damn near \$10,000 in gold coins in that box.

You send one of your potato eaters after her and tell him where the money is hidden and that's the last we'll see of it or him. It's a hell of a price to pay a potato eater to kill a pregnant woman."

Collin was nodding his head. He seemed to be gathering his courage. Payton turned the screws even tighter.

"Of course we could leave the gold behind for McCleary and his nabs to divvy up."

"I don't like either of those alternatives," Collin muttered.

"No, I didn't think you would. But if you were to go and retrieve the money I would agree to your keeping half of it."

There was a brightening in Collin's eyes, like the sun poking out from behind a large dark cloud. A greedy smile creased the glue at the corners of his phony beard.

"How can I refuse a deal like that? As you yourself said, tis a hell of lot of money just to kill a pregnant woman."

"Don't take Rosaleen too lightly," Payton warned. "She's a good shot with that pistol. You best have the job done after dark."

Inside the MNEME, I felt myself cringe with horror and shame over the memories that had just transpired. First I discover my great-grandfather to be a cold-blooded killer. Now I discover him to be an inhuman monster. And if we were so genetically bound, then his monstrosity must surely reside within me as well. Disgust and despair scorched my soul like the fires of an open hearth in the Homestead Works. But as I thrashed about inside the MNEME, clawing at my own arms in painful self-loathing, I suddenly remembered that it was Collin and his potato eater who were killed, not Rosaleen. This remembrance, at first a flicker, grew strength until it brought forth the realization of what my great-grandfather must have instinctively gleaned at the outset. Had he chosen Rosaleen instead of Cat, he would never have laid eyes on Cat again. For Collin would surely have had Cat killed as soon as he was away from Payton. My great-grandfather's only chance of saving Cat was to choose her. With that realization, the rest of the events tumbled into place so that everything at last made sense. Once again, I found myself filled with admiration over my great-grandfather's coolness in the face of adversity, his ability to think and act fast in desperate situations. It was Cat whose life was in immediate danger and he did what he had to do in order to save her.

As for Rosaleen, since it was she and not Collin who survived I know that somehow my great-grandfather must have found a way to save her. But how? Again, once I'd reigned in my own panic and forced myself to think with the cool-headed logic of my great-grandfather, things became clear. Payton had gone to such lengths to ensure that Collin be present when the deed was attempted and to encourage that the attempt be made under the cover of darkness, I think it fair to assume he was buying time upon which to act. Obviously, during the last few hours of his life, my great-grandfather had formulated a plan by which to rescue both Rosaleen and Cat. That he was unable to save himself as well meant that something had gone wrong. Terribly wrong. But what? From my dream, I know that my great-grandfather kept the dawn rendezvous with the

skiff at the Homestead landing. There he met his death. But by whose hand? I don't believe the authorities could have been on to him without assistance from one of the three persons who knew of his involvement. Therefore, I must surmise that he was betrayed and the question is: By whom?

At that point my thoughts were violently shattered by an explosion of light. The infinite gout of brightness concentrated into a ball of white light, a blazing supernova that incinerated the universe of my genetic memories before dimming sufficiently for me to see the worried face of Keith Joyner peering over the open lid of the MNEME.

* * *

At the writing of this entry into my journal I have been out of the MNEME for several hours. It is well past midnight. Jan and the girls are fast asleep. My house is quiet save for the creaks and rattles common to all homes late at night when the residents are still. I should be exhausted but I am wired with energy.

My mind should be drowsy sludge, yet I find myself clear of thought and purpose. I am like a wolf or lion on the hunt, all senses sharply tuned and primed for action.

It is a foregone conclusion on my part that within the next few days, Vijay Jain is going to declare Quip experiments on humans to be indefinitely suspended. The senior staff at the Brain Lab do not suffer lightly any so-called anomalies. Their collective fear-response system would flinch at the suggestion of a snake behind the glass. Certainly, the instinctive response of Vijay Jain to a perceived danger is caution in the extreme. In making a decision to suspend all further human experiments with Quip, he will most certainly be supported by Keith and Ariel.

Gibby Gibson will oppose such a decision. His is a most unique fear-response system, I think. In his curiosity to see what the snake looks like, he would be the one to poke his head around on the other side of the glass.

Regardless of what decision the Brain Lab scientists make, Jan will certainly take action to prevent any further administrations of Quip to me. I know my wife. I know how worried she is. I suppose she has legitimate reasons to be concerned. Frankly, I am not remembering too clearly all that has happened in the hours since I was brought out of the MNEME. There have been moments during this time, when I felt as if I were back inside the MNEME, once more conjoined in mind and body with my great-grandfather. I am hopeful that a good night's sleep

will correct the problem. In the meantime, I suppose I understand why I shall not be allowed to receive any more Quip.

Part of me even agrees with that decision.

But part of me does not.

PART THREE
THE NIGHTMARE

CHAPTER TWENTY

Inside the large white room in the basement of the Brain Lab where the Modulated Natal Emulation and Memory Enhancer and GEM imaging instrumentation were housed, Keith Joyner was rapidly flexing his knees as he stood in place. Teammates from his football days at Oregon State would have seen this and known that Keith was anxious. The knee-flexing was what he always did in the waning moments of a game when the score was close and Keith was not on the field. It was a sign that he was very much worried and wanting to do something about the situation.

The source of his concern now was Simon. He had been inside the MNEME, reposing in alpha prime sleep under the influence of Quip for more than an hour. It was time to get him out of there, Keith thought. But it was not his call to make.

Near the center of the room, five grad students and two post-docs were seated at computer monitors, their eyes supposedly fixed at all times on the screens in front of them. But as Keith studied these students -- three Asian-Americans, three Caucasians, and one African-American, all males in their early 20s -- he could see them sneaking glances at the large naked man floating inside the glass coffin.

Keith understood the fascination for it was a curious sight. With the snake-like tangle of wires attached to his head and the diaper wrapped around his loins, Simon looked like a cross between Medusa, the monster of Greek mythology, and a muscular Jesus of Nazareth. From time to time, there would be a sudden slight movement of one of Simon's arms or an occasional tremor of his body. Otherwise, Simon was still save for the rise and fall of his chest as his lungs drew and expelled air. Keith knew, however, that if one were to step up to the transparent exterior of the MNEME and peer closely inside, one would see a continual twitching of ocular muscles behind Simon's closed eyelids. That is, if everything was cool.

Ariel Jones, the head of the Brain Lab's medical imaging group, suddenly hove into view. Moving briskly as always, she went up behind each of the students at the computers, looked over

his shoulder to examine the monitor, then moved on, like a bee visiting different blooms on a flower. When she'd inspected the last of the monitors, she crossed the room to where Keith and Gavin Gibson stood. Keith immediately noticed the two pens nesting in her dark curly hair, one above each ear. Ariel was ambidextrous and would, on occasion, write with both hands simultaneously.

"All vital signs are excellent, all signals are good, the subject remains in AP sleep," Ariel declared. She had such an Arabic look to her, Keith always expected an accent when she talked, hence was always surprised to hear none. Once, out of curiosity, he'd checked her CV to see where she'd been born and raised. Other than a birth date (she was now 48), there'd been no biographical information prior to her starting her undergraduate studies at Sarah Lawrence. Ariel Jones was a woman of mystery and worked hard to stay that way.

Despite Ariel's report, Keith continued to argue that the Quip experiment should be stopped and that Simon should be pulled out of the MNEME. Gibby Gibson, the man who'd been left in charge of the experiment by Brain Lab director Vijay Jain, continued to disagree.

"The dosage was calibrated for the Quip effect to last 60 minutes, Simon has now been under nearly fifteen minutes beyond that," Keith said. "I say we pop the top and get him out of there."

Gibby passed a hand over his bald scalp, as if he were rubbing his hair. Then he pushed at his glasses as if they had slid down his nose. As there was no more obvious need for the second gesture than there had been for the first, Keith suspected the little man with the peculiar smell was more nervous than he was admitting.

"Keith, I wish you could stop worrying and appreciate the bonus data we're getting here. The subject's brain is becoming acclimated to the effects of Quip, it's learning to process the genetic memory maps more efficiently. We discussed this possibility beforehand. No doubt the chemical effect of Quip has worn off, but the subject's brain has retrieved data that it's still in the process of storing. This is a natural phenomenon. The man's asleep, for god's sake. Where's the harm?"

Keith wrinkled his nose. "An artificial sleep. Unnatural as Mrs. Thomas would say."

Gibby sighed. "Thank god she had to leave. We'd have lost these extra minutes for certain. The woman makes me nervous. She's like a mongoose."

Keith wished Jan were still there. Gibby was right. She'd have insisted on Simon's being woken from his AP sleep and removed from the MNEME. However, thirty minutes into the experiment, a female student from the Primate Center came into the MNEME/GEM room and informed Jan that Elizabeth had been nipped on the arm by Morris while they were playing on the climbing structure. The bite was not severe but had broken her skin and Dana Plowman had already treated it. However, Elizabeth had been so startled by the nip, she'd fallen off the structure. The arm that had been bitten was still hurting her and beginning to swell. Dana suspected a greenstick fracture.

Jan had immediately left for the Primate Center and had not returned. Keith presumed she'd taken her daughter to Alta Bates, the nearest hospital. Funny, he'd never heard of a bonobo biting anyone before, not even in play. Probably Morris was trying to give Elizabeth a kiss and got too rough in his excitement. The little guy loved his honey girls.

Ariel Jones spoke up. "Keith, on this one I tend to agree with Gibby. The instrumentation shows no sign of distress. To the contrary, we may induce significant stress if we were to not allow him to emerge from AP sleep on his own. I think we should proceed."

Keith shook his head, his worry wrinkles deepening. "I don't care what your instruments are showing. My gut tells me that we should end this now."

Gibby exploded. "For god's sake, Keith, get a grip! This is not a sci-fi movie where a scientist's intuitive feeling prevails over data. This is reality, mister, and the reality is that the subject is doing fine. The data says so. You wouldn't be thinking this way if the subject wasn't a personal friend of yours. That's why Vijay left me in charge."

Keith felt his jaws begin to tighten. "Fine then, Gibby. I'll take this up with Vijay." Turning to Ariel and thereby putting his backside into Gibby's face, Keith said, "Be back in five minutes to pop the top."

* * *

Keith Joyner knew exactly where to find Vijay Jain. The Brain Lab director was in the *Drosophila* Lab, where another major experiment was underway. *Drosophila melanogaster*, the fruit fly that served as the workhorse of basic genetic research, had proven equally useful for studying the relationship between genes and neural development. Wiring fruit flies with tiny electrodes enabled Brain Lab scientists to monitor a variety of neural activities. For this

particular experiment, they were evaluating the effects of a new synthetic compound created by another Brain Lab team. This new compound was being called "Memmex." It was designed to serve as a neurohormone, a chemical that promotes the growth and development of synaptic connections. If all went according to plan, Memmex would be far more effective than any neurohormone made by Nature, so effective that it could be used to enhance memory, or perhaps even repair memory that had been damaged as a result of injury or disease. The potential of Memmex as a treatment for Alzheimer's and other dementia made this experiment in the Drosophila Lab a priority for Vijay Jain.

"I recognize the importance of the Quip experiment but the Memmex experiment must be my first concern," Vijay had explained to Keith in response to the former's criticism of the latter's plans to be at the Drosophila Lab. "It's unfortunate that both must take place at the same time, but we're almost at the end of the summer break, the days remaining for major experiments are dwindling fast. We need data to support our grant proposals. Times are tough for science, as you well know. When we go to NIH and NSF for money, we are going up against AIDs, cancer and heart disease. We need some diseases of our own. Alzheimer's is a proven winner. Everybody gets old sometime. Memmex will not only help this Laboratory in the grant wars, it could be a big licensing winner. That will make Chancellor MacBryde happy and keep us on the University's front burner."

"Quip has therapeutic and licensing potential, too," Keith had argued, somewhat petulantly, he could now admit.

But Vijay had only shaken his head with sad authority. "Mental illness. Not the same thing. NIMH grants are small and the market for psycho-pharmaceutical drugs is an iffy one. No, Quip could be our Nobel prize in biological research which will guarantee healthy funding prospects for you and me and Gibby, but that is at least five years down the road. Memmex is the best prospect for the Laboratory right here and now. Just think of the possibilities. A neurohormone that outperforms Nature's best on the order of five magnitudes. We are talking about a memory enhancer like nothing that has ever been available before. Good stuff, my friend. Good stuff, I tell you. I look forward to telling it to Chancellor MacBryde, the Board of Regents, even Governor Pat. Who is to say? Maybe I will be telling it to the U.S. Congress. Someday, should you ever be the director of a big lab like this, you will better understand my

position."

Keith had not prevailed then, but he expected to prevail now. The mere suggestion that there could be a problem with the experiment involving the husband of Jan Thomas should send Vijay running.

"Where is Mrs. Thomas?" was Vijay's first question. Keith had cornered him next to a plexiglass box inside of which about a dozen fruit flies were buzzing about. The *Drosophila* Lab always had a sickeningly sweet smell about it, Keith thought. Some of it he knew was its perpetual supply of rotted fruit, and some of it was the alcohol-based chemicals used in the process of attaching and wiring electrodes onto the heads of flies. But Keith also thought the smell came from the flies themselves, the trays of eggs and maggots in the rearing bins, and maybe even from the entomologists who handled the insects. No amount of scientific evidence to the contrary could convince him the odor was mostly in his head.

When Keith had explained about how Jan rushed off to attend to her daughter Elizabeth after she was bitten by Morris, Vijay became even more concerned.

"Morris bit her, you say?" he asked, skeptically.

"Nipped her, I believe is what the girl said," Keith answered.

Vijay rubbed his chin. "I've never heard of a bonobo laying teeth on anyone before. This sounds most unusual. Is the girl hurt? Has she been vaccinated for tetanus?"

"As I understand, the wound was superficial and Dana treated it. Unfortunately, the girl lost her balance on the climbing structure and fell. She may have fractured her arm."

"That is just great!" snapped Vijay. "Just great! Why could those girls not be kept in the game room? Why weren't they playing Tetris? Why would Dana allow any girls to be out on the climbing structure? It was built for apes not humans. Very dangerous. Bad decision on Dana's part. I will have to reprimand her. She needs to be more diligent."

Keith glanced at his watch. "Meanwhile, Vijay, Simon has now been in the MNEME pushing 80 minutes. Don't you think we'd better bring him out of it."

From over his silver wire-framed glasses, Vijay shot Keith a quizzical look. "Does the instrumentation say there is a problem?"

"No," Keith said, "but ... "

Vijay cut him off. "But nothing. If the instrumentation tells me there is no need for

alarm then I will not be alarmed. Come, I have seen all I need to see here. Let us go to your experimental room and see if the instrumentation has anything new to tell us. Keep in mind, Keith, as men of science we must put our trust in technology and methodology. Those are our shibboleths. If our technology and our methodology are sound -- and I have no reason to suspicion otherwise -- then all will be well."

"I envy your confidence," Keith muttered as he led the way out of the *Drosophila* Lab.

"It is my Bhuddist training," replied Vijay with a smile.

Out in the hallway they were waylaid by Dana Plowman. She was carrying a clipboard with some documents attached. Dana was only about a couple of inches shorter than Keith which made her about six inches taller than Vijay. From her stature and her posture, Keith suspected that should she receive any reprimand at all from Vijay, she would not be intimidated. At the moment, she showed no concern of possible criticism but a lot of concern for her animals.

"I need your signature authorizing the installation of a video surveillance system in the bonobo outdoor yard," Dana Plowman said, handing her clipboard and a pen to Vijay.

The small brown-skinned man in the white lab coat glanced up at the slender pale-skinned woman in blue jeans before he skimmed through the paperwork. "What is this I hear about Morris having bit one of the Thomas girls?" he asked.

"An accident," Dana said. "Morris was playing with Elizabeth and I think he was trying to give her a kiss. But, you know, sometimes teeth and skin collide. Happens with my lovers all the time. (Dana grinned.) No biggie. Had she not fallen and hurt herself I wouldn't have bothered sending for her mom. Nonetheless, we have had some signs that one of the bonobos, maybe Morris, more likely one of the females, has been playing too rough at night. We want to put up some cameras and take a look."

"How many cameras are you asking for?"

"Three ought to do it. We'll only need them for a few days. This is nothing, I'm sure, but we want to be safe."

"I agree," Vijay said, scratching his signature across the appropriate line. "We must be safe."

* * *

In the MNEME\GEM room, Vijay was receiving an update on the data from Ariel Jones in one ear, and a steady stream of carping from Gavin Gibson in the other. Gibby was annoyed that Keith had sought to go over his head by fetching Vijay to the experiment and doubly irritated that Vijay had responded.

"The next time I disagree with Joyner's analysis of an image are you going to investigate his decision too, or is it PC just to double check the white guy?" Gibby complained.

"Please, Gibby, one person at a time," Vijay said, holding a hand to the ear Gibby was assaulting. "I am not disagreeing with you, I am only wanting to hear what Ariel has to say about the instrumentation. The experiment has not been stopped."

According to Ariel, Simon's status in the MNEME remained unchanged. He was in alpha prime sleep and his vital signs were good. Keith had moved away from his three colleagues and drifted over to the MNEME. Simon continued to look like nothing more than a man in a deep sleep, a practically naked man, floating on an invisible gel with a hairnet of wires attached to his head.

Behind the MNEME, a green cable fed into the black box that was the central processing unit for the GEM imaging system. This CPU in turn fed data to a bank of electronics which were attended to by the grad students of Ariel Jones. Readouts were in the form of red LEDs. Although the data being collected had nothing to do with Simon's physical well-being, it was critical for the subsequent processing of GEM images which meant that the attending students had to pay as close attention to their assignment as those who followed Simon's vital signs. There was one personal computer in this back area and it was being watched by the only African-American member of Ariel's research group. His name was Boyd Crenshaw and when Keith looked over at him he was rubbing his eyes. The boy -- young man, Keith immediately corrected -- returned his eyes to his monitor, stared for a few more moments, then called for his friend, an Asian-American student named Xiao Xiang. BC and Double X, as they were known around the Brain Lab, were both hunched over the monitor and talking when Keith approached them.

"What's up fellows? Trouble from SMEG?" Keith inquired.

"Not exactly," answered Boyd Crenshaw.

"BC is seeing things," declared Xiao Xiang.

"We'll see about that," said Crenshaw, starting to type commands on his keyboard.

"See about what?" from Keith.

"He thinks there's been a shift in the SMEG mindprint," said Double X with a loud laugh.

"That's impossible," said Keith.

"That's what I just told him," said Xiang. "His eyes are playing tricks on him. It happens on SMEG patrol."

Double X was right about that, Keith knew. SMEG, which stood for SQUID-based magnetoencephalogram, was an extraordinarily sensitive device for detecting the magnetic field gradients produced by the brain's electrical activity. The signal was tiny, only a few femtoteslas, but SMEG's high-Tc SQUID could read this signal loud and clear so long as background noise from the electrical equipment in the Brain Lab, outside power cables, solar wind fallout from the ionosphere, and even planet Earth itself were shielded out. SMEG patrol went to the member of Ariel's group who drew the short-straw. It was considered a pain-in-the-ass assignment because SMEG was merely a quality-control system in the GEM process, implemented to warn of a failure in one of the data-gathering electrode fibers.

The SMEG signal being recorded was actually a composite of the magnetic fields generated by the subject's brain and the GEM electrodes -- all other fields were shielded out. The peaks and valleys in the SMEG signal from a given subject rose and fell within a narrow bandwidth that was as characteristic of that subject -- be it human or bonobo -- as a thumbprint. Therefore Ariel Jones had dubbed this signature bandwidth a "mindprint." Many humans and bonobos had identical mindprints, but the signature SMEG bandwidth never changed for a given subject. Should there appear a spike in the SMEG signal breaching the upper or lower thresholds of a subject's mindprint, it meant that one of the GEM electrodes had failed. However, since the GEM electrodes were essentially hollow fibre tubes, they never failed. It usually required a trained observer only about 30 seconds of signal recording to establish a subject's SMEG mindprint. After that, SMEG patrol was about as exciting as watching plants grow.

"Would you check this out please, Keith?" asked Crenshaw.

Keith leaned forward and looked at the monitor. There were two SMEG patterns on the screen with two distinct bandwidths. Against a blue background, one bandwidth was highlighted in green and the other in red. Where the bandwidths overlapped, which covered about three-

fourths the span of both, the screen was gray.

"The green (which was the slightly higher of the two) is the SMEG mindprint for the past hour. The red is the shift that has occurred, I'd say, within the past five minutes. I can run a profile when we're through and tell you exactly when it happened, but you can see how close they are. That's why I wasn't sure at first that I was really seeing this. Besides, it's not supposed to happen is it?"

"No, it's not," Keith said, staring at what could not have been but was.

"Did someone else climb in the tank with Professor Thomas?" asked Double X. He laughed. Nervously, this time. "Or should we call him the Man with Two Brains?"

"The Man with Two Minds is more like it," said BC. "What the hell does this mean, Keith?"

Keith took one more hard look at the monitor. "It means," he said, "you two come with me. We're getting Simon the fuck out of that tank."

Vijay was still standing with Ariel and Gibby when Keith stopped long enough to tell him about the bandwidth shift in the SMEG signal. Equipment failure, Ariel immediately pronounced.

Terminate the experiment, she said. Gibby instantly protested that they were observing an unprecedented neurological phenomenon that should be allowed to continue so long as the subject's vital signs remained good. Keith did not wait for Vijay to make the call. He went straight to the MNEME. He did, however, quickly glance back to see Vijay nod his approval before punching the release to open the lid.

Ariel had been correct when she said that yanking Simon out of alpha prime sleep could be stressful. Simon was quite disoriented when Keith helped him off of his aerogel bed and out of the tank. He kept blinking his eyes against the room's bright lights and jerking his head back and forth between Keith and the two grad students who stood ready to walk with him. He was muttering something about betrayal, finding out who betrayed him. The words or their meaning were not so important to Keith, he was too taken aback by the heavy Irish accent in which they were spoken.

Boyd Crenshaw and Xiao Xiang got on either side of Simon, hooked their arms through

his and began to escort him away from the MNEME. They'd only take a few steps when Simon suddenly flung them off.

Simon shouted something that to Keith's ears sounded like, "Unhand me ya fooking nabs, eave got to goo bock!"

The thick brogue sent a shiver through Keith. Meanwhile, BC and Double X went at Simon from either side and tried to take his arms. But Simon, in a flash, seized each by the back of the head and cracked their skulls together. As the two students went down, Simon broke for the MNEME. Keith Joyner's football training took over. Lowering his head, he charged forward and layed a perfect tackle on Simon, hitting him at the knees and driving a shoulder up into Simon's gut. Keith's tackle left Simon lying on his back with the wind knocked out him. The few moments it took for Simon to recover were enough, it seemed, for him to get his bearings. With Keith's help, he rose on shaky legs. He was calm and seemingly under control as he mumbled his apologies to all.

His Irish accent was barely noticeable.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

When the water was as hot as she could stand it, Jan Thomas stepped into the shower and closed the glass door behind her. It felt incredibly good to shut her eyes, lift her face into the strong spray, and allow the water to massage her sore muscles. These late evening workouts were getting tougher to finish. Since she would not admit to slowing down, she made a mental note to have Simon lubricate the Solo-Flex machine. He would no doubt take a hint and quietly adjust the machine's tension downward. Jan opened her eyes and stepped away from the spray so she could fetch her shampoos. As she did so, she remembered that she could no longer presume anything where Simon was concerned. The thought filled her with an untempered mix of anger and sadness. Not unlike, she realized, how Simon said he felt after awakening from his dream.

Jan let out a loud, deep sigh. It had been one hell of a day, she thought, as she poured out a dollop of hair shampoo and began vigorously working the gel into her scalp. Especially seeing as the she'd gotten no closer to her office than to phone in for messages. First there had been Elizabeth getting bit by that damn chimpanzee and falling off those monkey bars. Dana Plowman had been right about the injury being a greenstick fracture. There'd been no need of a cast but Elizabeth's arm had been wrapped in an elastic bandage. Plowman had been wrong, however, in her assurance that Morris had merely been playing. Elizabeth said -- and Louise backed her up -- that she fell when she yanked her arm away in fear. Had she not pulled back

quickly, Elizabeth said, the bite would have been much worse.

"Mama, he didn't even look like Morris," Elizabeth had said. "He was showing his teeth. He scared me."

To which Louise had added, "I saw it, too, Mama. Morris was snarling."

Both girls swore they'd done nothing to hurt Morris and there had been no warning of aggression. If anything, they both agreed, Morris had been acting too affectionate, especially toward Elizabeth.

"I thought he wanted to hump Lizardbreath," Louise had said, giggling. "I guess `cause she acts so easy."

"Shutup, Luigi," had been Elizabeth's immediate response but, under questioning from Jan, she'd admitted, with much embarrassment, that Morris had been grabbing at her crotch just before he bit her, probably because she was having her period. Jan planned to have a few words with Dana Plowman. At the very least, she wanted Morris checked for rabies.

Jan switched from hair shampoo to body gel and began lathering the rest of herself, working the suds into her face and neck, under her arms, around her breasts and belly, and finally between her legs. Her skin took on a tingly feel as the gel soaked into her pores. She closed her eyes again and allowed the feeling to take hold and spread.

Yeah, Elizabeth getting hurt had been bad enough, but then there was Simon and that fuck-ass Quip experiment. For so many reasons she wished her husband had never met Keith Joyner. And she wished no one in her family had ever had anything to do with any of those other Brain Lab folk. Not Dana Plowman and her nasty chimpanzees. Not that smug little know-it-all Vijay Jain, nor that weird little Arabic woman, Ariel Jones. Jan especially disliked that whitebread asshole Gavin Gibson who she called Stinky. Keith had told her about having to pull Simon out of that glass tank in spite of Stinky's protests. She'd feed that smelly little bastard his own balls on a spoon if Simon did not start acting right.

Thoughts of Simon's strange behavior again filled Jan with a mixture of sadness and anger. She stepped forward into the spray and once more let the water wash the bad feelings away, along with all the lather in her hair and on her body. The Irish accent was a barometer. It seemed to come and go, but when it came, watch out, because it meant Simon was commencing to act weird. When Keith brought him home from the Brain Lab, Simon had seemed alright

other than being sleepy. He had gone to lay down for awhile and Keith had filled her in on what had taken place after Simon had been pulled from the experiment. Keith said something about an anomalous mindprint shift -- whatever that was -- and said Ariel Jones would be checking for equipment malfunction. He had no immediate explanation for the Irish accent other than the genetic memories which Simon had experienced must have been quite vivid. Meanwhile, Vijay Jain wanted Simon to return to the Brain Lab as soon as possible for a complete neurological evaluation. This had aroused Jan's suspicions but Keith reassured her that everything was okay, it was a routine precaution.

Simon had slept until dinner. At the table, the girls had been eager to tell him all about Elizabeth's mishap with Morris and the trip to the hospital where they'd run into a boy they knew from school who'd gotten sick off some bad marijuana. Normally Simon would be all ears and peppering his daughters with questions to keep them talking. Instead, he made it obvious that his mind was elsewhere. Jan had begun asking him -- okay, grilling him -- about the genetic memories he'd experienced under the Quip. He was non-responsive, she got pissed and pressed him. Too hard, apparently. Simon's response had stunned her.

"It's my business now ain't it?"

The words were spoken softly and with no hint of heat -- if anything, they were delivered in a tone so cold it would have been scary coming from anyone other than her husband. They were also delivered in a thick Irish accent.

Louise was the first to recover and her response was typically inappropriate.

"Ain't ain't a word, Dad," she'd said, flippantly. The look in Simon's eyes however not only silenced the usually unflappable Louise, it actually caused her to shrink back.

Jan had seen that look before. She'd seen it in the eyes of certain individuals she'd occasionally pass by in the Hall of Justice. Those individuals were always in steel manacles and they were usually being taken to the jail on the sixth floor by two or more armed police officers.

Jan had given Simon a hard look of her own. "Is that you speaking, Simon? Practicing for Saint Patrick's Day? Or does this family have the pleasure of being addressed by Mr. Payton Adams?"

It was Simon's turn to be stunned. Redfaced, he mumbled an apology that bore no trace of an accent, then excused himself from the table. Minutes later he returned, seemingly himself

again. He explained that the memories he'd experienced had obviously affected him quite a bit. He proceeded to tell his family of the terrible deprivations suffered by his great-grandparents because of the strike at the Homestead Works. He spoke at length and with convincing admiration of Payton Adams, a natural leader and outspoken union member, a man who had not been afraid to speak up in protest over the unfair treatment of the workers by Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick. Simon said that Keith pulled him from the experiment just as he was about to learn the identity of Payton's killer, but he had no doubt that the killer was somehow linked to Carnegie and Frick.

"It might even have been Sheriff McCleary himself that Scotch mutt," Simon had said, with chilling vehemence. "He did what Governor Pat told him to do and the governor did whatever Carnegie wanted. My poor great-grandfather suffered the consequences."

It was quite a tale and Elizabeth and Louise had rushed to their father's side to hug and reassure him that he was back in his own time and safe in his own home. They'd ardently swore -- with the self-righteous passion that only teens could muster -- their love and allegiance for their great-great-grandfather and their own outrage over his murder. Simon had returned their hugs with hugs of his own, and thanked them for their understanding, promising he would be much better after he'd committed his retrieved memories into the report he would turn over to the Brain Lab.

Quite a tale indeed, Jan thought, as she reluctantly turned off the shower water. Too bad it was bullshit. Did Simon truly believe she would not remember that phone call from 12 years ago? The phone call he'd received from that old-maid hussy Ana Huff. The phone call following his aborted trip to Pittsburgh. The phone call in which Ana made it clear that there was no record of Payton Adams having ever been in the steel workers union, nor was there any story in any newspaper mentioning Payton Adams as any sort of strike leader. The phone call that had left Simon in a terrible funk for weeks and marked the start of his decline at Cal.

Still standing in the shower stall, dripping wet, Jan gave her entire body a vigorous shake. Ana Huff had been at a loss to find any connection at all between Payton Adams and the Homestead steel strike, despite her best efforts, yet Simon had just regaled his family with a heroic tale of Payton's solidarity with his fellow workers. Jan's trial-sharp ears knew when a witness was lying and she'd bet a month's draw that Simon was lying. But why? Whatever was

going on inside his brain, he'd spent the evening alone in his study, working on his report. Jan wondered if his report to the Brain Lab was as phony as the tale he'd told his family. Probably. But the historian in Simon could never have resisted not recording the truth for posterity. Hidden somewhere was another version of his experiences with genetic memories. Jan was certain of it and she would love to have a look at that other version to find out just exactly what was what.

A shiver reminded Jan that she still needed to dry off. She pushed on the glass shower door which was fogged up with steam. It swung open and Jan caught herself just in time to stop from shrieking. A naked Simon was standing on the other side.

"You about scared me half-to-death, Simon," Jan said, angrily grabbing for a towel. "Did you want to take a shower or have you come to tell me more stories about your wonderful great-grandfather?"

Simon took the towel from her hands, wrapped it around her upper body and began to gently dry her down.

"I came to do neither," he said. "I came to tell the woman I love with all my heart and soul that I'm sorry if I gave her cause for alarm at the supper table. I'm sorry, too, if I alarmed our daughters who are my greatest joys. I just needed some time to myself, I needed to write down my experiences and think things through. The memories of Payton Adams that I saw made me realize more than ever how precious rich I am in the things that matter most. I find it terribly sad that Payton never got to know his child, never got to see her grow and blossom into a young woman as I have been able to do with our girls. I find it terribly sad that an assassin's bullet denied Payton the simple but exquisite joy of being able to take his wife into his arms and hold her just like this."

The words came out soothing and reassuring and were spoken with maybe just a slight trace of an Irish accent, Jan decided. But she enjoyed hearing them and she enjoyed being wrapped in the strong embrace of her husband too much. No more questions at this time, your honor, Jan thought to herself as she closed her eyes and savored the feelings. The towel dropped to the floor and Simon's powerful arms replaced it around her body. Jan felt Simon's erection prod the cheeks of her buttocks and she leaned back into him. His hands slid down across her stomach and his fingers fanned out over the delta of her pubic hair, seeking

and finding the wet core. A low soft moan crept out from Jan's parted lips. She tilted her face upward and turned enough so his mouth could reach hers. Simon's fingers curled around her inner thighs, spreading them then using them as handles to lift her entire weight. He entered her from behind and Jan came almost immediately.

But Simon did not.

Not then.

Not for awhile.

Not for a long while.

Later, when she was absolutely certain that Simon was asleep. Jan slipped out of bed, put on her robe, and quietly went downstairs. She took the phone into the study and closed the door. Then she dialed the number of Keith Joyner. He picked up just as the answering machine had clicked on. Jan wasted no time with apologies.

"Keith, it's Jan. I will bring Simon to the Brain Lab the first thing tomorrow morning and I want you to run every diagnostic you have."

"Yeah, Jan, sure, of course, I said we would," Keith foggily answered though a yawn. Then, becoming more awake, hence more alarmed: "What's wrong?"

Jan swallowed. Took a breath. Swallowed again. "He and I made love tonight. It was incredible sex."

"Uh-huh...yeah...so you and Simon made love and you had incredible sex. That's ..uh.. really great Jan, but ... you know ... I really don't see what....."

"No!" she whispered sharply. "I did not say Simon and I made love. I said *he* and I made love. That man looks like Simon Thomas, he talks like Simon Thomas, he tastes like Simon Thomas, his semen even smells like the semen of Simon Thomas. But I have made love with Simon Thomas more than a thousand times and I can tell you that as surely as God made little green apples"

Keith let the silence go for awhile before finally, quietly, fearfully and with great uncertainty, breaking it.

"What Jan? What is it you can tell me?"

It was so difficult for her to say the words. So difficult for so many reasons. But she steeled her nerves, willed the trembling in her hands to stop, and forced herself to speak, to say

the words that sounded so alien to her own ears.

"That man with whom I made love tonight is not my husband."

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

An entire wall of the main conference room of the Brain Lab was nothing but glass. It looked out across the UC Berkeley campus at the tall clock tower of the Campanile which showed the time to be one minute until the hour of two o'clock. Keith Joyner braced himself for the loud toll of the clock's carillons and the start of the meeting that Vijay Jain had convened. Seated with him at the huge ovular redwood table were ten other individuals and Keith felt the eyes of each and every one steal glances in his direction. He was particularly aware of the looks he was getting from Vijay, and from Maris Cavanaugh, a stunning young blonde from the Public Information Office whom Keith just happened to have sat next to. As if reacting on its own accord, Keith's right hand went up to his ear and brushed at the bandage that swaddled it.

Seven days had passed since Simon's second treatment with Quip. Two days after the treatment, Simon, with the endorsement of his therapist, Eugene Nertz, had petitioned for a third treatment. A decision had been deferred while Simon underwent an extensive physical and psychological evaluation. Keith had not seen the results. Nor had he heard any rumors. Since the anomalous SMEG mindprint and the violent aftermath of Simon's second session in the MNEME, Vijay had been keeping a tight lid on all information pertaining to the Quip experiment. Even those Brain Lab staff scientists directly involved with the project knew only about their own areas of responsibility. Compartmentalization was okay with Keith; he had his secrets, too. Again, his hand involuntarily touched the bandage on his ear. As far as Vijay or any of the other Brain Lab staff members knew, there had been no further episodes of acute aggression and attendant Irish accent. None of them knew about the episodes at Simon's home either. There had been no repeat of those episodes and Jan had finally quieted down.

Of course, not even Jan knew what Keith knew; he was being compartmental.

The clock in the Campanile chimed twice, causing the glass wall of the Brain Lab conference room to vibrate. Keith, however, scarcely heard it. His mind was lost in the memory of a small blue ball caroming off the front wall of a racquetball court and his ears were filled with the wha-pop sound it made. It was the first time he and Simon had played since the second Quip treatment. Simon's game was the rustier of the two, but he was playing with such intense determination that Keith had at one point made like a sports broadcaster and loudly pronounced: "The presence of will is off-setting the absence of skill."

The score had see-sawed back and forth until the game stood tied at twenty, with Keith serving to win. Keith recalled experiencing a touch of *deja vu* before reaching back and blasting a perfect knee-high bullet that ricocheted off the wall towards Simon's backhand. Simon should not have been able to return Keith's serve. Not in this lifetime. The ball was moving away from him and his backhand was the weakest part of his game -- he could never get his big body properly turned in time to put muscle in his return. Yet somehow, somehow, Simon seemed to have found a quickness he'd never before displayed. Not only did he get to the ball, he got there in time to set himself for a power stroke that was awesome.

Now it was Keith who was too slow; quick enough to reach Simon's return but not quick enough to do much with it. As Keith's return shot softly bounced off the wall, he knew Simon would put it away for the victory. Again a feeling of *deja vu* swept over Keith as he took a small side step that would partially block Simon's path to the ball. The next instant, Keith was on the floor, screaming in agony; the hand he'd placed on his wounded ear was filling up with a sticky wetness. Having assured himself that his ear was still attached to his skull, Keith examined his wet hand. Fury at the sight of his own blood temporarily drove away the pain. Keith had sprung to his feet with his fists clenched.

"The fuck you doing man?" he screamed at Simon. "You could have sliced my ear off you crazy motherfucker!"

Simon's response was the exact opposite of heated. In fact, it was the utter coldness in his words that brought Keith up short.

"Don't ever get in my way again."

These simple words, delivered so matter-of-factly under the circumstances, they

immediately caused Keith to look into Simon's eyes. What he saw was a steel-cold brutality that tripped the danger wire in his fear-response system, sending Keith back a step. Keith's response in turn seemed to provoke a response from Simon. An enormous shudder swept up and down his body. Slowly, arm trembling as if pressing an enormous weight, he raised his racquet above Keith's skull. Keith involuntarily flinched, bringing his arms up for protection. Simon gritted his teeth, spun from Keith like something being torn and slammed the racquet on the hardwood floor of the court. The racquet's fiberglass handle snapped at the throat with a loud crack that echoed off the four walls of the court.

Silently, the two men watched the decapitated frame of the racquet slide across the floor, strike the front wall and stop.

It had been Keith who spoke first. "I didn't think you could break them like that," he'd said, pointing to the jagged-edged stub of what was left of the racquet in Simon's gloved hand.

A suddenly mortified Simon had tossed the racquet away and rushed to Keith's aid, heaping apology upon apology. He fetched a towel for Keith to hold to his ear and then escorted him directly over to the infirmary where seven stitches had been required to close the torn cartilage of the auricle. Had Simon's racquet struck a few millimeters lower, the ear might have been severed.

As Keith looked back on the incident, in the cool clear light of hindsight, he knew that his instincts had been correct. He'd neither misjudged nor overreacted to the situation. That hard mean look in Simon's eyes told Keith then and now that if he had thrown a punch the fight would not have ended until one of them was either unconscious or dead. But hindsight did force him to admit to himself that it was not the look in Simon's eyes that had triggered a fear-response. Nor was it the coldness in Simon's directive to never interfere with him again. Both were real and both were eminently disturbing, but, if truth be told, what had really alerted Keith to the danger he faced was the accent in Simon's voice: It was as Irish as a shamrock.

Keith's memories were interrupted by a gentle nudge to the ribs from Maris Cavanagh who was seated to his left. He glanced over at her. Smiling at him, she motioned to Vijay who had stood up and was calling the meeting to order. Whatever perfume Maris was wearing, Keith decided he really liked it. He also liked her smile, her blue eyes, and the way she filled her blouse. Reluctantly, he turned his attention to Vijay. Having never himself been too fond of

chairing meetings, it amazed Keith how much Vijay Jain seemed to relish the task, regardless of the circumstances. Even now, he was smiling away, his prominent white teeth bright against his dark brown skin (he was at least two shades darker than Keith), his little shoulders thrown back in pride, his mannerisms and delivery the picture of crisp professionalism. In pronouncing the purpose of this meeting to be a discussion of the results to date of the Quip experiment on its first human subject, Vijay stated that he would be seeking a consensus as to whether or not Simon's request for a third treatment would be fulfilled.

"Most of you here know one another," Vijay said, but as there may be some unfamiliar faces, let us take a minute to go clockwise around the table and introduce ourselves. I'm Vijay Jain, director of this laboratory."

"Jack Lapage, legal counsel."

"Gavin Gibson, I'm in charge of the chemistry group."

"Ariel Jones, I'm the leader of the imaging group."

"Maris Cavanaugh, public information."

"Keith Joyner, neurobiophysics."

"Eugene Nertz, I am an associate clinical psychologist at UCSF, and have my own practice in psychotherapy. Simon Thomas is my patient."

"Sasha Kravitz-Goldman, I am a physician and I am responsible for the neuropsychology research here at the Brain Lab."

"Dana Plowman, primate center."

"David Spiers, Dean of the Graduate Division and principal administrator for scientific research on campus. I also chair the Human Use Committee."

"Daphne Klein, administrative assistant to Professor Jain."

Vijay smiled again and thanked every one for taking time from their busy schedules to attend. He then went to a viewgraph projector which was on a stand adjacent to the head of the conference. Asking Daphne to please dim the light, (she hit a control switch hidden from view under the conference table that within seconds caused the chromo-sensitive glass wall to darken), he activated the projector, then extracted a thick set of transparencies from his brief case. Placing the first transparency down on the projector -- it was the logo of the Brain Lab, a swarm of butterflies inside a line drawn skull of a gender non-specific human being -- he launched into

a recantation of the events that had brought them all here on this day. With viewgraphs that alternated from bulleted-talking points to photos and scientific images, Vijay showed and told it all: the early tests of Quip on the bonobos; the followup trials with Morris; the diagnosis of Simon as a victim of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder caused by genetic memories; the first treatment of Simon with its encouraging but inconclusive results; and the second treatment with its anomalous SMEG mindprint and perplexing aftermath. The final viewgraph was a large black question mark on a white background.

"We want to make the best decision we can regarding a third Quip treatment for Professor Thomas," Vijay said. "Therefore, it should be our goal today to assess our facts and resolve as many questions as we are able." Vijay looked at around at each member of his audience, then flashed an exceptionally big smile. Brain Lab staffers recognized this as a prelude to Vijay's making what he thought would be a tension-relieving joke. "As my children would say, the truth is out here, so let us proceed to find it."

Everyone at the table laughed at Vijay's joke, though Keith was quite sure most did not understand it. Nonetheless, Vijay beamed over the response. He then asked Sasha Kravitz-Goldman to give the first report on the results of her group's physical and neurological evaluation of Simon.

Sasha was a perky Russian Jew who'd come to America to study at Cal and had stayed on. She'd married a U.S. citizen, one of her former ESL instructors, and had rapidly climbed up the ladder of success. Keith did not know her well, but he was impressed with her reputation and he admired her swarthy good looks and curvy body. In her mid-thirties, she gave the impression of being in her prime in more ways than one: She gave off a lot of musk is how Gibby characterized it.

Sasha started off by asking Daphne for light (another press of the hidden control restored the glass wall to full transparency). She then passed out a packet of material.

"Inside on pages one through three you'll find details on the results of the comprehensive physical we conducted," Sasha said, her accent noticeable but mild. "I'll just say that the subject is in exceptionally fine shape, his physical condition is across the board excellent. Such a hard body, (Sasha flicked her eyebrows in an exaggerated leer), what I would do if I weren't married.

(She raised her fingertips to her lips and blew off a loud kiss.) Yummy!"

Again everyone at the table laughed, except Keith who was thinking that if he'd said something similar about a female subject, Lapage and Spiers would have him brought up on charges of sexual harassment.

When the laughter died down, Sasha moved on to what she characterized as the "good stuff" in her report; the neurological exam. Dispensing with viewgraphs or any other props, Sasha backed her talk with vigorous hand gestures.

"The results of the neuropsych cluster tests are contained in section B of my report. Those of you knowledgeable enough should read through them at your earliest convenience. You will see a splendid example of the devil residing in the details. To summarize what we did, memory cluster was tested with the California Verbal Learning Test. Subsets included an evaluation of the frontal cluster using both the Controlled Oral Word Association Test and the Delayed Recognition Span Test. The subject scored exceptionally high on both. He also scored very high on other cluster subsets including visuoconstruction and perseveration. These cluster scores were aimed at measuring specific cognitive functions and were grouped together *a priori*.

"We followed the memory cluster tests with a Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale and compared this WAIS performance with that which we conducted prior to the Quip experiment. The subject was far above average in the first and showed a slight improvement in the second. We then ran a Wechsler Memory Scale, and supported it with standards such as the Purdue Pegboard, the Boston Parietal Lobe Battery, and the Benton Visual Retention. In all cases, the subject performed magnificently. His pre-Quip memory was superb, his post-Quip memory is even better.

We also ran a series of neuropharmacological tests, looking specifically to assess the integrity of the central cholinergic systems given the subject's extensive time spent in alpha prime state. As an extra precautionary measure, we even did an intravenous scopolamine infusion to determine there was no deterioration of verbal memory as measured by the Buschke Selective Reminding test. In all cases, the results could not have been more favorable and we have adjudged his neurological condition to be the equal of his physical condition. There is no cause for alarm as to the subject's health; Simon Thomas, is of sound mind and body."

Sasha paused to look around the table at her audience, making sure, Keith presumed, that

she had their attention.

"So why then, you are no doubt saying to yourselves, does Sasha Kravitz-Goldman tell us to read her report and why does she say the devil is in the detail?" The smile that spread across Sasha's face was induced by nerves not humor. "Because when you study our test results some of you will recognize that the spikes in the various post-treatment scores are not where they had been in the pre-treatment scores. For example, in the pre-Quip tests, the subject's cholecystokinin levels were elevated, indicative of heightened anxiety, due, no doubt, to our testing. In the post-Quip tests, however, CCK levels have dipped precipitously, and there is a corresponding rise in catecholamine, indicative of an aggressive energy surge. For the non-neuroscientists here, what this means is that our tests scared the pre-Quip subject and pissed the post-Quip subject off.

We then turn to the Thematic Apperception Test and again we raise more questions. The TAT, as most of you know, is a projective test, designed to reveal unconscious patterns of thought by asking the subject to create stories from a series of drawings and photographs depicting real-life situations. The results of the subject's TATs are in section B of my report and I again urge my colleagues to read through them carefully at their earliest convenience. To summarize, however, we again find subtle but significant differences between the subject's pre- and post-Quip responses. What does this mean?" Sasha shrugged and gave another mirthless smile. "Unprecedented. There is no basis upon which to make even an educated guess. There is (she again shrugged and smiled) no history."

Vijay was quick to make a clarification.

"No history in terms of standardized neuropsychological testing," he said, not looking at Sasha but letting his eye sweep around the table. "However, would you not say, Sasha, that your results are consistent with the anomalous SMEG mindprint?"

"Yes," Sasha answered, nodding her head and also looking around the table. "The results are consistent with the SMEG mindprint."

"For the benefit of our non-scientific guests at this meeting, would you please, Sasha, explain in lay terms what that consistency implies."

"I am not comfortable doing that."

"Sasha, please, indulge me."

With a theatrical sigh, Sasha complied. "It implies that the person we evaluated post-Quip treatments is not the same person we evaluated before the treatments." Having said that, Sasha immediately turned on Vijay. "But an implication is not an explanation and this situation certainly requires additional study. I have included in my report a proposal to"

"Fine," Vijay said, cutting her off. "But for now I will call upon Ariel to discuss the results of the imaging evaluations."

Ariel stood and she too immediately handed out packets around the table. As she passed out copies of her report, Ariel explained that the imaging group had evaluated the neuropathology of Simon's brain. Using both PET and SPECT techniques, they monitored cerebral glucose metabolism in search of alterations or signs of dementia. With the room once again darkened, she showed a viewgraph that featured a single row of five PET images in which a human brain appeared in glowing shades of red, blue, and green.

"These are serial tomographic levels of the subject's brain after the second Quip treatment, starting with the bottom of the brain on the left and progressing to the top as we move right." Ariel used a red-laser pointer to guide her audience. "Bright colors represent the highest glucose metabolism. The good news is that we found no signs of dementia. The not-so-good news is that we did find altered glucose utilization in the frontal and temporal lobes."

Ariel's next viewgraph showed the same row of PET images as in the first viewgraph but this time joined by a second row in which the patterns of glowing colors were different.

"The lower series of images is the subject's brain before the second Quip treatment. Comparing the two, you can see by the expanse of green in the upper image that glucose activity in the frontal lobes has decreased after the second Quip treatment, specifically in the ventral and medial sectors." The red dot of Ariel's pointer was skipping back and forth between the two sets of images, tightening the knot in Keith's gut with each skip.

"We do not believe there has been any frontal-lobe damage to account for this decrease, but we cannot interpret our data with any certainty because frontal-lobe activity has always been an such enigma." Ariel allowed herself a quick, tiny smile. "Our understanding has, unfortunately, not improved much since the days of poor Mr. Phineas Gage."

Ariel's pointer moved inward to the temporal lobes where the red glow in the upper image was brighter and wider than in the lower image, like the hot spot in a spreading grassfire.

"In the temporal lobes, we find that glucose utilization has been substantially enhanced following the second treatment with Quip. Subsequent GEM images helped us identify the source of this increased glucose uptake."

Ariel replaced the PET image viewgraph with a viewgraph showing a pair of GEM brain images. Keith knew at a glance what had happened. Again, his gut recoiled at the information his eyes had delivered.

"As you can see," Ariel intoned, her pointer jumping from one image to the next, "the source of the increased glucose uptake is the formation of a great many new synaptic connections between the subject's limbic system and his neocortex. GEM has enabled us to identify these new synaptic connections as explicit memory maps."

There were loud gasps from both Sasha Kravitz-Goldman and Eugene Nertz, causing alarmed-though-puzzled looks from David Spiers and Maris Cavanagh. Clearly, Keith thought, they did not understand the significance of what Ariel Jones had just revealed but they grasped that the simultaneous outbursts from two who did was not good. There were no such audible gasps from Gibby Gibson or Dana Plowman but Ariel's announcement had left both their faces scrunched in concentration, their minds obviously racing. Gibby looked thrilled; Dana looked angry. There was no expression on the face of University counsel Jack Lepage; Vijay must have told him what was going to be revealed at the meeting. As for Keith himself, his gut was beginning to loosen up. At least now he had some understanding as to what was happening to his friend. It was always best to know the score, he thought -- no matter how bad.

Ariel's voice, as she continued her presentation, was controlled, but a slight tremulous quality exposed her own excitement. "Based on this and other data, which, at the request of Vijay, (she shot Vijay Jain a quick look) I will share with you later, we can say that Quip is functioning both as a neurotransmitter and a neurohormone. As a neurotransmitter, we have yet to determine its full value. However, as a neurohormone, we are seeing that it can act over a great distance from its point of release, promoting axon growth and regeneration. Already, Quip has eclipsed the performance of Memmex, an artificial neurohormone for which many here in the Brain Lab have harbored such great hopes."

Gibby interrupted Ariel, his voice quaking with excitement. "Do you really know that Quip is a stronger neurohormone than Memmex or are you just guessing?"

Ariel directed a smile that bordered on a sneer at Gibby.

"Knowing that you would be here today would I have dared to guess? Yes, of course, we have quantified our data. *All* of our data. (Again, she gave a look toward Vijay) Quip wins by a wide margin. Already an order of magnitude and the gap is increasing. I've searched the literature, no one has ever reported anything like it."

Gibby grinned.

Keith grimaced.

Eugene Nertz and Sasha Kravitz-Goldman just stared at the GEM images with their mouths and eyes wide open. Spiers and Cavanagh were confused. Dana Plowman's anger was growing darker by the second. Lapage and Vijay remained stone-faced.

"We do not at this time know whether the number of new limbic-neocortex synaptic connections will continue to increase, stabilize, or decline," Ariel continued. "We also do not know whether the new connections are temporary or whether they will endure as permanent memory maps. We also, quite obviously, can make no guess as to whether the alterations in the temporal lobes are related to the alterations we are seeing in the frontal lobes. Nor can we predict what effects either of these alterations will have on the psychological profile of the subject, in particular, his personality. As my friend Sasha told you earlier, there is no precedence for what we are observing."

Hands from Nertz and Kravitz-Goldman immediately shot up and both verbally asked, begged, for recognition. Keith and Maris raised their hands as well, but Vijay waved them all off.

"Let us hold questions until we hear Gibby's chemistry report," Vijay said. "I think he will have some answers for you."

When Vijay said the word "you" he was looking directly at Keith.

Gibby rose from his chair so unsteadily he nearly lost his balance. He fumbled badly with his handouts and even worse with his viewgraphs. The peculiar odor that had caused Jan to dub him "Stinky" was even more pronounced than usual. His voice cracked like that of a nerdy school boy in the presence of the homecoming queen.

"Ladies and gentlemen....we..uh..uh..we..uhm...." Gibby stopped, got a grip on himself, started over. "Sorry. This is just...so...wow...fantastic! It's been said that serendipity is the father of most scientific discoveries and we appear to have been the beneficiaries of this axiom." Gibby projected his first viewgraph which Keith recognized as the structural formula of a Quip molecule.

"This is how we designed Quip. As most of you know, it is a synthetic analogue to neuroquipazine, a neurotransmitter similar to serotonin but with a double-bonded hydrogen tail attached to a nitrogen ion. This hydrogen tail makes neuroquipazine and Quip more stable but less reactive than serotonin. Now take a look at this next viewgraph," Gibby put up a second image that, at first inspection, struck Keith as identical to the first. "In response to the concerns of Vijay, we ran a new round of structural tests on the Quip we've synthesized. As before, we analyzed the molecular architecture through a combination of x-ray and electron crystallography and NMR spectroscopy, only this time we quadrupled the size of our random population sample. What we found was that some of the molecules we produced are an isomer. Observe the hydrogen tail here. Its position has been rotated 90-degrees from that on the original Quip. Another axiom of science is that function follows form. Based on the reports of Ariel and Sasha, it would seem that in this isomeric form, Quip functions as a neurohormone."

Gibby, unable to hold his own form in check, chuckled. "And rather well, too, I might add. In fact, spectacularly well."

"What's the rate of isomerism?" Keith shot out, not bothering to raise his hand.

"We have no estimate at this time," Gibby replied through an obstinate grin. "We'll need a much broader sampling base. Obviously, the higher the dosage of Quip received, the greater the intake of the isomer. We may have unintentionally synthesized this isomer in the laboratory, but it is reasonable to assume it occurs in Nature as well. My guess is that this isomer is as natural a substance as neuroquipazine. As in the case of the original Quip, we're simply making it in much higher concentrations than Mother Nature."

Dana Plowman exploded. "Simply? Excuse me but, like, did you just say simply? As in we said we were making one thing but we *simply* made another." Dana's usually laid-back eyes flashed hatred.

"What in heaven's name is the matter with you, Dana?" asked Gibby, recoiling from her

despite the conference table separating them. "We've just discovered the most powerful neurohormone ever made, a memory promoter of unparalleled vigor. Do you realize the enormity of this statement? I know you won't be sharing in the prizes or profits, but you have shared in the adventure and you'll probably get some fallout publicity for your little primate park. After all, Morris got extra doses of Quip too. By the way, how's his memory doing?"

Dana uncorked her lanky body from her seat and stood with her fists clenched. For a moment, Keith had the distinct impression she was preparing to spit on Gibby. Again, Vijay intervened.

"Dana, please!" he said.

"Fuck that asshole," Dana cried, turning to Vijay. "He and his chemistry clowns screw up and he's rejoicing?"

"He does not know what you know, Dana," Vijay said, his voice consoling. "Perhaps now would be a good time for you to share your information. Daphne, could we please have the VCR and screen?"

Daphne again worked hidden controls and a viewing screen descended the wall at one end of the conference table. Next, a section in the center of the table dropped down and, in its place, there rose up a new section upon which was a VCR projection deck. Dana pulled a video tape out of her shoulder bag and inserted it into the deck. Before playing the tape, she explained how evidence of rough nocturnal play had prompted her to have a video surveillance system installed in the bonobo outdoor yard. There were three areas of interest in the yard; a Joshua tree, which was great for climbing, Dana said; a water hole; and a bonobo "latrine," a clump of leaves and duff where the fastidious animals relieved themselves. A video camera equipped with night-vision had been trained on each area.

What she was about to show was an edited tape that been recorded three nights ago.

"As you may or may not know, bonobos are the most non-aggressive of all primates," Dana said. "Disputes even amongst males are settled non-violently. They are also a matriarchal society. Females are deferred to by males in all social situations. Therefore, when we saw signs of aggression, two of my colleagues suspected one of our females, Faye. She's overly large, has yet to spawn and this is the bonobo mating season. My colleagues were wrong."

Dana played the tape.

It opened with a quick panning of the entire yard. The night-vision of the video cameras cast a greenish pallor on the recorded images. The pan revealed only one bonobo outside, sitting up on a tree branch. A zoom-in shot of the animal showed that it was watching something off-camera with keen interest.

"This is Faye," Dana said. "She has frequently gone off by herself since the beginning of August, which is another reason she was our prime suspect. Bonobos are intensely social creatures and going off by yourself is about as anti-social an act as most bonobos ever commit."

A second, smaller, bonobo appeared on camera and Faye immediately greeted it with a hug.

"This is Morris," Dana said. There was a clutch in her voice. "We call him the baby of our group but he's a growing adolescent. As Gibson mentioned earlier, Morris was the only bonobo to received multiple dosages of Quip." Again, there was a clutch in Dana's voice. "He has been the pride and joy of the center, human and bonobo alike, because he's always been such a loveable guy."

On the screen as Dana was talking, Faye had begun grooming Morris, plucking at the long black hair on his back, patting the top of his head where the hair was parted. It was evident to Keith that she was being quite gentle in her ministrations even as Morris began sideling around until he was almost directly behind her, making it difficult for Faye to reach him, despite her elongated arms. That is why the attack took Keith and everyone else at the table by such surprise. It came swiftly, without warning, and was shockingly vicious in its execution. Suddenly Morris was on Faye's back, his hands around her neck, shoving her head down against the branch of the tree and holding it there. Then he was mounting her and copulating. His motions took on a frenzied then savage quality, a brutal pounding. Though the video had been recorded without sound, Keith, in his mind, could hear the terrified screams of Faye. And even if he could not hear her cries, he could see the fear on the animal's face, pinned down against the branch of the tree. She squirmed her body and thrashed her arms behind her but there was no escape from Morris and the pounding sex continued.

"Bonobo intercourse is generally of short duration," Dana said, after clearing her throat. "A few seconds of thrusting is all it takes for the male to ejaculate. As you can see, Morris is lasting much longer. We don't know if he was unable to ejaculate, hence his continued

intercourse, or if he was continuing on through ejaculation."

Vijay spoke up, his voice gentle. "You would categorize this behavior then as atypical, Dana, yes?"

Dana swallowed before replying. "Unheard of amongst bonobos. Impossible of the Morris I have known."

"Oh come on, Dana," scoffed Gibby, his eyes on the screen. "This is an act of sex. So what? I've heard your talks before. Bonobos are the most sexually active creatures on this planet. They have sex to settle disputes. You yourself told us before the Quip experiments began that making love is the bonobo way of saying hello."

"He's not making love to her you ignorant fucking dope!" Dana screamed. "He's raping her! Morris is raping Faye!"

"Dana, please calm down," admonished Vijay. "Let us not engage in shouting or name calling today. We have administrators present."

Sasha spoke up. "I'm sorry, Dana, I understand your concern for the well-being of these animals, but I think you might be anthropomorphasizing their behavior. Yes, this appears to us to be an act of forced sexual intercourse, and yes, it does appear unnecessarily violent. But Gibby is correct to point out that bonobos are notoriously promiscuous, and, as you noted, Morris is an adolescent and Faye is in heat. Maybe he is just over-excited."

Dana looked grim. She reached down to the VCR deck and fast-forwarded her tape. "Watch this," she said, through clenched jaws. Morris was still mounted on Faye, but his copulation had slowed and she appeared to be comatose. Another bonobo appeared on camera.

"This is Sergio, the father of Morris," said Dana. "He was drawn here by Faye's screams. You can't see her because she has not yet climbed up the tree, but Zazu, Morris' mother has also come out into the yard. I think she was afraid to get near Morris."

Sergio began tugging at Morris from behind, trying to pull him off Faye. This time the attack did not take Keith by quite so much surprise, but it was still shocking in its speed and ferocity. Morris was a dark blur as he abandoned Faye, whirled on his father and began cuffing his ears with wide hard swings of his powerful arms. Sergio immediately cowered, turned and tried to escape. But Morris was on his back in a flash, biting down on his father's neck and shoulders. Sergio's response was to freeze, curl up in a ball, his backside up and exposed to

Morris. Sergio did little more than flinch when Morris first penetrated his rectum. Throughout his sodomization by his son, Sergio did not attempt flight.

"Why doesn't he try to get away?" asked Maris Cavanagh, turning away from the screen.

"He's too scared," Dana answered as she brushed away a tear. "You know the expression paralyzed with fear? That's what we are witnessing here. I've seen footage of bonobos in the wild being attacked by baboons and reacting the same way. Once you get past their initial fear-response of flight, most bonobos aren't wired to handle aggression. I like to think they've evolved beyond that stage."

Dana again fast-forwarded the tape. Morris was in the tree by himself. A shadow appeared in the corner of the screen. Morris cocked his head, his expression quizzical.

"You can't quite see her, but Morris' mother, Zazu, has finally gotten up the courage to approach him," Dana said. "She's woofing at him, trying to communicate. Check out this reaction. Remember this is a son responding to his adored mother."

Suddenly, Morris' large rubbery lips rolled back to show his teeth. Keith had seen bonobo's grin before. Morris, it seemed, was always grinning about something. But even to his untrained eye, Keith could see this was no grin: It was a snarl.

Dana stopped the tape. "Morris left the tree right after threatening his mother, ran indoors and hid away from the others for the rest of the night. He apparently has not devolved so much that he will attack his mother -- yet. And he obviously is confused by his own actions. However, the fact that he displayed such raw hostility towards his mother and the other bonobos is unbelievable. We isolated Morris for two days after this incident. He seems to have settled down and today we let him rejoin the group. We're monitoring the situation closely and so far so good. But the others, including Zazu, are treating him warily. If you ask me what has happened to Morris, as a scientist I can't answer. Insufficient data. I only know two things for a fact. One: Morris, like Professor Thomas, received repeated dosages of Quip. Two: Morris has changed."

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

Nearly three hours after Dana Plowman showed her tape of Morris' abnormal aggression, Vijay Jain declared the meeting in the Brain Lab's main conference room to be over. As the attendees made ready to leave, Vijay asked that Keith remain behind. While waiting for the room to clear, Keith pretended to be reading through the report of Sasha Kravitz-Goldman. In actuality, he was taking the opportunity to collect his thoughts before facing Vijay.

The discussion following Dana's presentation had been marked with a rancor excessive even by the high-octane standards of scientific debate. Bad feelings would linger well beyond the end of the day. Heated words had passed between Sasha Kravitz-Goldman and Dana Plowman, Sasha and Ariel, and Gibby and every other Brain Lab staff member at the table, including Daphne Klein. None of those clashes were front-page news for Keith. They had happened before and would no doubt occur again. What had been unexpected were the harsh words exchanged by Dana and Ariel. The exchange took place after Ariel revealed the results of the GEM images which Vijay had asked her to withhold earlier -- the most recent images collected from Morris.

* * *

"You can see that the growth of new synaptic connections between the limbic system and the neocortex is quite advanced," Ariel intoned, her pointer showing GEM images of Morris' brain pre- and post-Quip treatment that might well have been images of the brains of two different creatures. In the first image, the glow of explicit memories in the limbic system was the familiar isolated island of light, clearly detached from the much brighter glow of memories in the neocortex mainland. In the second image, the glow from the two sets of memories blurred together, a bridge connecting the island to the mainland that was being heavily traveled.

"Why are we only now beginning to see a response in Morris to these new synaptic connections?" asked Gibby. "Behavioral changes in Professor Thomas manifested themselves immediately. In Morris, there were apparently no psychological effects until months after his treatment with Quip despite extensive synaptic growth."

"Sasha can you field this one?" asked Ariel.

Sasha Kravitz-Goldman nodded her head slowly, distracted, her eyes glued to the GEM

images. "Language, I would think. The behavior of humans and bonobos is enormously different even though their brains are anatomically similar. Language is the key. Thanks to the power of language, internal as well as external, humans learn from their memories much faster than animals. A task that would take a bonobo many weeks to master, a human can learn in minutes. Each new thing we learn in some way modifies our behavior. I would say that Professor Thomas is an extremely fast learner. Perhaps...."

Sasha was interrupted by a loud outburst from Dana Plowman directed toward Ariel Jones. "How dare you not show me those GEM images? How dare you? I could have helped Morris! Shame on you, Ariel! Shame! Shame! Shame! I expect this behavior from Gibby or Sasha, but not from you."

Sasha blinked indignantly. Gibby grinned like a wolf.

Ariel fired a hot look toward Dana but her reply was ice-cold. "Stop acting like Sheena of the Jungle and start acting like a scientist, Dana. By the time we took these GEM images, it was already too late for Morris. The Quip-induced synaptic connections grow like kudzu. There was nothing you could have done."

Dana was not about to back off. "Then why the hell weren't you taking GEM images of his brain all along? If you had we would have caught the growth of new synapses at the onset."

"In answer to your first question, recording a GEM image is very expensive procedure, not to be wasted unless there is a perceived need which, in this case, I will remind you, there was none." The temperature of Ariel's voice had gone from ice to liquid nitrogen and was growing more frigid by the second. "And again, even had we observed these connections, what would you have done? Isolated Morris? We had no way of knowing that the linkage of genetic memory maps to active memory maps would result in hyper-aggression."

"Can anyone explain this aggressiveness?" interjected Maris Cavanaugh, as much, Keith guessed, to interrupt the exchange as to gain information. "I gather Professor Thomas also displayed unusual violence when he emerged from his last Quip treatment."

Sasha Kravitz-Goldman spoke up. "If I may. In the case of Professor Thomas, I would think he was responding to the genetic memories he experienced in the MNEME. Clearly, he believed himself to be somewhere other than in the Brain Lab. As for Morris, under the growing influence of genetic memories, I would imagine in his mind, he no longer sees himself as a

bonobo and a member of the Primate Center's small clan. When he raped his aunt, I'd say he was a much more primitive creature, one that did not subscribe to modern bonobo social customs."

It was at this point that Eugene Nertz had weighed in. "Pardon me if I am out of line to speak up at this point, but, as a practicing psychotherapist, I have to tell you that I, personally, am enthralled by what we are seeing here."

All eyes immediately swung to the small man with the too-neat beard and haircut. His voice was gentle but somehow captivating, and his stare was mesmerizing in its sincerity without being threatening, Keith thought. It struck Keith that he himself might want to schedule some therapy sessions with the man.

"The idea that memories can be carried from one generation to the next within the limbic system is remarkable in and of itself," Nertz continued. "For such memories could certainly serve as the basis for behavior which we have labeled instinctive, especially with regards to fear-response. This would go a long way toward resolving the paradox of fear-response being instinctive as opposed to all other forms of fear being learned. What we are now seeing suggests that all fear is learned, even fear-response. That a mechanism exists by which the learned behavior stored in our genetic memories can be linked to our active memory could spell a paradigm shift in the field of neuropsychology."

Nertz's declaration brought an enthusiastic nod of agreement from Sasha Kravitz-Goldman and an excited murmur from Gibby Gibson.

Vijay Jain also nodded his head, understanding the point that Nertz had made. However, he then raised a question that made it clear he was not yet convinced.

"But how can we know that such a mechanism exists in Nature? The argument could be made that we are seeing an artifact created by the introduction of a synthetic form of neuroquipazine, namely Quip."

Sasha seized the floor, perhaps not wanting to be shown up by Nertz. "Gibby said it himself, we have to assume that the isomer of Quip which is functioning as a neurohormone also occurs in Nature. We have merely amplified that mechanism which Nature has provided us and in doing so have gained new insight."

Nertz broke in, voice quaking. "Precisely! I believe this experiment has provided strong supporting evidence for Seychelles-Joyner Fear-Response Theory. Furthermore, it has shown

that the mechanism behind the theory can give rise to aggression as well as anxiety disorders. It is, as I have said, a paradigm shift."

"I concur," said Sasha.

Vijay Jain pursed his lips, exchanged a quick look with David Spiers, nodded his head. "What do you say, Keith?" he finally asked. "As the co-author of Seychelles-Joyner Fear-Response Theory I presume you have an opinion?"

Keith rubbed his chin for a moment, giving careful consideration of his words. He felt the stares of all eyes at the table.

"While I would very much like to believe that my theory has been substantiated, as a scientist I have to acknowledge that there is no proof -- none! -- that Quip has generated any memory recall whatsoever."

Gibby immediately cut loose with a loud groan. "For God's sake, Keith, you've seen the GEM images."

"Yes!" Keith responded, half-shouting. "And I accept that Quip has stimulated the growth of synaptic connections between the limbic system and the neocortex in both Morris and Simon. I also accept that these connections resonate at the frequency of explicit memories. But have these maps conveyed to Simon the same recall of a past experience, the same re-creation of a past reality that a memory map from his neocortex would? We relive our past experiences through our active long-term memory maps. Has Simon relived the past of his great-grandfather? That is the absolute crucial question and for that we have no proof. For all we know, Simon's neocortex could have made no sense at all of the memories it was receiving and confabulated its own stories just to fill the blank screen."

"Excuse me, but what do you mean by confabulate?" interjected Maris Cavanaugh.

"False memory," explained Keith. "A fictional invention of the mind that gets stored away for recall as if it were an actual memory."

Again from Gibby, with what Keith thought was a sneer. "Oh yeah? And what about the Irish accent when he came out of the MNEME? Did Professor Thomas' brain confabulate that, too?"

Dr. Nertz spoke up. "Professor Thomas has manifested an Irish accent before under hypnosis."

David Spiers spoke for what Keith thought was the first time during the meeting. Peering through the thick lenses of his glasses, tufts of dark hair jutting out above his ears, the Dean of the Graduate Division reminded Keith of an owl. "What about the debriefing reports that Professor Thomas provided following both Quip treatments? I read the transcripts. The details he gave with regards to life in the 1890s seemed quite convincing."

"Yes, they did," Keith conceded, "but in both cases, there were no historical facts mentioned that Simon could not have known beforehand. That's the kind of independently verifiable proof that is missing."

Keith took a moment to look around the table. Everyone was still watching him. Ariel Jones, Vijay Jain, Maris Cavanaugh, and Daphne Klein seemed to be fully attentive and waiting to hear what else he had to say. Gibby Gibson was obviously exasperated and ready for Keith to sit down and shut up. The others seemed, to varying degrees, preoccupied with their own thoughts. Keith had to decide on how forthcoming he would be. He opted to compartmentalize.

"Jan Thomas thinks Simon is not being truthful in his report to us." Keith took a breath. "I agree with her."

For the first time that afternoon, Vijay seemed surprised by something he'd heard. "Why do you say that, Keith?"

Keith nervously licked his lips. "The report is too unbalanced. As detailed as Simon's memories of historical events and places are, his memories of his great-grandfather are sketchy. Remember, Payton Adams is supposedly the source of those memories and yet there's nothing there to tell us who the man was. With regards to the personal, the intimate, the insider's knowledge, the 411 as my kids would say, we got nothing. Just some cheap platitudes and vague descriptions of an altruistic steel worker who was a leader in his community. I'm not going for it. Neither is Jan and we're the ones who know Simon best."

"Why would Professor Thomas lie about his genetic memories?" pressed Vijay.

"Why does anyone lie?" Keith responded. "Because there is something he does not want us to know. Despite my concern for Simon, I understand the excitement here. As a scientist, I can't help myself. However, I am concerned that we protect our scientific integrity. I won't want us to end up being in the same chapter as Bridey Murphy."

Counselor Lapage sat up with a start. "Who was Bridey Murphy?"

Keith smiled, prodded his memory and began reciting. "In 1952, a woman named Virginia Tighe was hypnotized and began speaking in an Irish brogue. She said her name was Bridey Murphy and she lived in Cork, Ireland. The year, she said, was 1892. During subsequent sessions, Tighe told a great many stories about life in Cork, all of which were filled with authentic details. The hypnotist, a guy named Morey Bernstein, wrote a best-selling book about her. There were recordings made of his hypnosis sessions with Bridey and they were translated into several different languages and sold worldwide. Reincarnation became an international rage, but it was short-lived. Some newspaper reporters in Chicago found the real Bridey Murphy. Her full name was Bridey Murphy Corkell and she lived in the house across the street from where Tighe grew up. Under hypnosis, Tighe was not recalling memories of a past life but memories of her childhood. Since then, the scientific community has not taken kindly to reports of reincarnation. Hear what I'm saying? We have to be very careful with this."

Vijay was quick to jump in. "I hear what you are saying Keith, and I think we should all heed your words. But, I would like to return, for the moment, to behavioral patterns. Has Professor Thomas displayed uncharacteristic aggressive behavior, comparable to that of Morris?"

Keith felt a tingle in his bandaged ear but he refrained from touching it. "There were a couple of incidents within a 62-hour period after the second Quip treatment. But nothing since."

"Nothing of which you are aware," corrected Vijay. "My concern here is that in the case of Morris, we are seeing a continuing increase in the synaptic connections between his limbic system and neocortex and an escalation in aggressive behavior, even without any further Quip injections. It is as if Morris' neocortex has taken its cue from Quip and is in the process of re-wiring itself. In other words, we have launched Morris' brain in a direction towards which it is now steering of its own accord. This is a road upon which Nature never meant for Morris to travel. The consequences, as we have seen, are not good. What then of Professor Thomas?"

There was a prolonged silence around the table. Keith, his insides in turmoil, found himself looking across the table at Jack Lapage. The big lawyer also seemed uncomfortable.

His

eyes were fixed on Vijay and his jaw muscles were tight. It suddenly struck Keith that perhaps

Vijay had been trying to tell him that there had been an incident with Simon of which he himself was unaware. It was possible because when it came to compartmentalization, no one did it better than Vijay Jain.

Keith's thoughts were interrupted when Eugene Nertz broke the silence.

"Again, I think I can offer some insight here. Assuming for the sake of argument that both Professor Thomas and Morris have been reliving genetic memories -- and I strongly believe that they have -- we can begin to understand their new-found aggression. Both of their neocortexes, their working minds, have taken ownership of a large influx of new memories. In the case of Professor Thomas, these genetic memories were inherited from his great-grandfather, Payton Adams, a man who, we can assume again for the sake of argument, had a somewhat more aggressive response to threat than Simon. In the case of Morris, we can likewise assume the memories came from an ancestor that was prone to violence. Neither Professor Thomas or Morris have ever before had to control an aggressive temperament. Their brains are now undergoing a learning process. For Morris, I would guess the strain is too much and his mind is experiencing enormous trauma.

"However, as Professor Kravitz-Goldman pointed out earlier, human brains are substantially more complex than the brains of chimpanzees and much better equipped to absorb and process new experiences. Furthermore, with all due modesty, Professor Thomas has me to help him. I believe that Professor Jain is correct when he suggests that Quip has launched Professor Thomas' brain down a road it should not be traveling and that is why he is displaying some erratic and uncharacteristic behavior. However, I am fully confident that with my help, Professor Thomas will be able to get off that road. In fact, I predict this aggression shall soon be under control."

Before Keith or anyone else in the room could use Nertz's confidence as an excuse to relax, the psychotherapist injected a warning. He said that his own greatest worry was the fact that despite two sessions in the MNEME under Quip, Simon had yet to relive the traumatic stress event that triggered his anxiety disorder symptoms. This was the reason why he endorsed and, despite all he had heard today, continued to endorse Simon's request for a third treatment.

"Remember that the root of Professor Thomas' anxiety disorder is the partially recalled

genetic memory of the death of Payton Adams, a memory that came to Professor Thomas in the form of a recurring dream," Nertz said. "The Quip experiments have succeeded in disrupting the periodicity of Professor Thomas' dream, but it is unclear whether this is a good or bad thing. It is also unknown whether the dream will remain permanently dormant. I suspect it will not. Because the death of Payton Adams has not been fully recalled, I think it very possible that the dream will return in a worse form than ever."

"What would happen then?" Vijay quietly asked.

Eugene Nertz gave the answer no scientist or physician ever likes to give. "I don't know."

Nertz then quickly added, "But Simon has told me he was on the brink of re-living the moment of his great-grandfather's death before being prematurely pulled from the MNEME. He fervently believes the recall of that traumatic event to be the key to his mental health and he is equally committed to the belief that a third treatment of Quip will provide him the cure he needs. If you deny him this treatment, it is my strong professional opinion that you will do him enormous harm."

For Keith it was like adding another few hundred pounds per cubic centimeter of pressure to that which was already crushing him.

Again a prolonged silence settled around the conference table, broken finally by Dean Spiers. "Well I can tell you one thing, Dr. Nertz: anxiety disorder or no anxiety disorder, there will be no further administration of Quip to Professor Thomas or any other human being."

"Nor to any of my bonobos," said Dana Plowman.

And the meeting exploded.

A furious Gibby Gibson bitterly argued that continuing the tests on Simon was the only rational course of action. Quip had done him no harm. Yes, there had been some changes in his neural wiring, but change is natural. Had they all forgotten about evolution? There was no evidence from Sasha's physiological data that these minor wiring changes had caused any damage. The minor behavioral anomalies displayed by Simon were the result of the second experiment having been prematurely terminated (he sent a frosty look toward Keith who blushed in response). Simon's own therapist had gone on record that a third test was imperative for Simon's mental well-being. Where, Gibby demanded of his colleagues, was their compassion?

That further testing could also quite possibly change the course of neuropsychology made it all the more important that they not let this golden opportunity pass. Where, Gibby demanded of his colleagues, was their scientific curiosity?

To which Dean Spiers had snippily retorted. "You wouldn't think of placing your dreams of a Nobel prize above your concern for the well-being of a human subject would you Professor Gibson?"

Sasha Kravitz-Goldman immediately protested that the Dean's jibe was unwarranted. It was true, she asserted, what Gibby said about there having been no physical harm done to Simon. It was also true that Eugene Nertz, Simon's own therapist, had stated that there had been no permanent psychological harm either.

Given those facts, Sasha sided with Gibby and saw no reason not to continue with at least one more Quip treatment for Simon.

Sasha's argument served only to make Dean Spiers angry and even more adamant in his opposition to further Quip testing.

"Thank God no harm has been done to Professor Thomas. Are we to keep trying until we succeed in doing permanent damage?"

The glare of the Dean's big round eyes behind his glasses reminded Keith that owls are fierce predators. This particular owl looked ready to feed on both Sasha and Gibby.

But Sasha was no field mouse. It would take more than the fierce looks of an academic bureaucrat to cower her.

"You're being melodramatic and overly cautious," she sniffed. "And your timidity may be the biggest threat posed to Professor Thomas' well-being. Were you not paying attention when his therapist told us the biggest danger lies in denying Simon a third treatment?"

"Pure speculation," Dean Spiers sniffed, dismissively. "I would want, at the very least, another opinion from another psychotherapist: One from our campus."

Gibby spoke up. "You are arguing facts with personal opinions," he said to Dean Spiers. "All the facts point to another Quip treatment for Professor Thomas."

Daphne Klein spoke up. "I wouldn't want anyone injecting me with that stuff. I think it's too dangerous."

Gibby shot her a look of annoyance. "Thank you for sharing your opinion, Daphne," he

said, as if to a child who'd spoke out of place. "But this is a science discussion and we have yet to hear a persuasive word of opposition."

Lapage immediately provided Gibby with one. "Indemnity. Granted, it's a legal term, not a science term, but I think it's damn persuasive against any further tests on Professor Thomas. Or have you not met Mrs. Thomas?"

The invoking of Jan's name made Gibby clam up. But not for long.

"Fine. Let's not rush into another test on Professor Thomas (he glanced over at the still glowering Dean Spiers) or any other human for the time being. How about the damn chimps?"

Instantly from Dana Plowman, again rising from her chair, "How about your own damn self?"

This time Gibby did not shrink from her threat. "Do sit down and calm yourself, Dana," he said. "Is it that time of the month for you or what?"

Gibby found himself with an unexpected ally when Ariel Jones suddenly spoke up.

"There is another consideration here. We've been talking about Quip as a neurotransmitter, but let us not forget that in its isomeric form, it is a neurohormone, the most powerful ever reported. If we can learn to control and maximize Quip's neurohormonal effects, we could have the first true pharmaceutical therapy for memory loss."

Ariel sought, found and held the eyes of Dana Plowman. "We are talking about something far more important than mere scientific curiosity, or even the iffy possibility of treating one individual's post-traumatic stress disorder. We are talking about a chance to reverse the tragic curse of Alzheimer's disease. We are talking about a treatment for the creeping senescence that can make aging so mentally and emotionally debilitating. I believe that justifies continued testing on the bonobos."

Dana did not blink. "If you think there are no health risks, then Simon Thomas is the better candidate for further testing. As Keith pointed out, only Simon can verify whether Quip in any form is actually resulting in the recall of hidden memories."

Without breaking eye contact with Dana, Ariel slowly shook her head. "I did not say there are no health risks. Of particular concern to me is the decreased glucose utilization in Simon's frontal lobes. As I stated in my report, there is no indication of any frontal lobe damage, but any unusual activity in this area of the brain is cause for concern. We don't know if the

altered glucose activity is being directly caused by Quip, or if it is an artifact of Quip's effect on the limbic system. However, just as Keith invoked the name of Bridey Murphy, I would invoke the name of Phineas Gage. If we do not want to create another Bridey Murphy, we certainly do not want to create another Phineas Gage. The former would be embarrassing. The later would be disastrous."

Maris Cavanaugh and Jack Lapage exchanged looks and Maris laughed. "Okay," she said, to Ariel, "this time it's my turn. Who is Phineas Gage? Another false memory story?"

Ariel's smile was thin. "Phineas Gage was a railroad worker in the mid-19th century who handled the dynamite. There was an accident, a premature explosion and a steel rod was driven into Gage's left eye, through the frontal lobe of his brain and out the top of his skull. Miraculously, he walked away from this injury and lived another 13 years. However, his personality was completely altered. Before the accident, Gage had been an exemplary citizen, hardworking, responsible, and loyal to his friends. After the accident, he was a disreputable scoundrel, a liar and a cheat, prone to violence. His friends said it was like a different man had emerged from the accident. Gage's skull was preserved in a medical museum in Harvard. In 1994, two neurobiologists from the University of Iowa, studied the skull and determined that the steel rod had pierced the ventromedial region of Gage's frontal lobe. Follow-up studies on modern patients who suffered damage in the same frontal lobe region corroborated the linkage to personality change."

Ariel shifted her gaze away from Maris Cavanaugh and back to Dana Plowman. "Though I think the health risk is probably small, given the indemnity issue, until we know the reason why the glucose uptake in Simon's frontal lobes has dropped, I don't think we should give him any more Quip. I do think, however, that any risk to the bonobos is justified by the potential benefits to humanity."

Gibby and Sasha vigorously nodded their agreement. Dana Plowman shook her head with equal vigor and murmured: "Not my animals. Uh-uh. No fucking way. No fucking way." Spiers and Lapage said nothing, but their body language bespoke volumes of interest. Vijay kept his thoughts to himself, but his eyes were on Keith.

Eugene Nertz offered up a compromise. "Could you not continue to develop Quip with *Drosophila*?"

Sasha shook her head. "Too time-consuming. Besides, any effects on fruit fly neural systems would have to be confirmed in a mammalian brain. We could use mice, but the apes are best."

"Lick me, you Russian douche!" Dana Plowman shouted. "I'm out of here." She gathered her things and told Vijay to call her with the final decision. At the doorway to the conference room, she turned to face her colleagues, gulping for air.

"You all make me ashamed to be human." Then, speaking directly to Keith, she added. "Bobby Sutton goes to the RSF every day at noon to work out. He saw you and Simon coming off the racquetball court. What happened? Did Simon find out how ready you were to betray him?"

Keith felt his cheeks burn with guilt. Did she know about what almost happened between he and Jan that night? How could she? And if Dana knew, who also knew? Through the withering heat of guilt, Keith also felt a shiver of fear. How *would* the new Simon take such news?

"You're supposed to be his friend," Dana continued, "and here you sit, going along with these assholes (she motioned toward Gibby, Sasha and Ariel) who are willing to experiment with his brain."

Keith felt compelled to defend himself. "I haven't said I agree with them. I haven't said anything." He knew it was weak and so did Dana.

"Silence is acquiescence," she retorted. "And I call that a betrayal."

So that's what Dana was talking about. Keith was so relieved that his and Jan's secret was still safe he did not flinch when Dana slammed the conference room door behind her. He was further relieved to hear Dean Spiers declare the testing of Quip on any primate, human or bonobo, a closed subject until the full Human Use Committee could hold another review which, he promised, would not be any time soon. The gleam in Gibby's eyes was murderous but he held his tongue. Ariel and Sasha looked at one another and then Sasha spoke. Ignoring Dean Spiers, she directly addressed Vijay.

"The Dean here is not the final word. We can go directly to Chancellor MacBryde on this. As a neurohormone, with its vast therapeutic potential, Quip could be worth millions of dollars in patent rights and licensing fees. Ariel and I have industrial contacts as do you. Let us

take our case to the Chancellor and see what he has to say."

Dean Spiers, his face florid with indignation, answered her. "On whose authority do you think I am speaking, Professor Goldman? Tell her, Vijay."

Vijay swallowed once. "Chancellor MacBryde has already been informed, Sasha. And he has made the decision to halt all further testing of Quip. It had been my hope that we here would reach a consensus to either support or oppose that decision but since we cannot, the Chancellor's decision will stand without comment from our Laboratory. The issue may be revisited at a later date, after another HUC review, but for now, it is exactly as Dean Spiers has said, a closed subject."

Hearing that the decision to stop any more testing of Quip was Chancellor MacBryde's, silenced Keith's scientific colleagues. But their silence would not last long, he knew. Once outside the conference room, all three would be talking big-time smack against the Chancellor and Vijay for not making a stronger case.

Despite the pronouncement of Dean Spiers, and the followup warning to everyone in the room from Counselor Lapage for utter confidentiality, Keith knew that the subject of further Quip tests was not closed.

Not by a damn sight.

* * *

The conference room had emptied of everyone save for Keith and Vijay, Jack Lapage and Maris Cavanaugh. Lapage moved around the table until he could put his back to the door. Clearly, he wanted no interruptions.

"As you know, the students will be returning to campus next week," he said, his voice cool and flat, his eyes slowly sweeping the room to bring in all three of his listeners. "What you might not have heard is that the ad hoc steering committee for the Academic Senate intends to put pickets on the line protesting the University Reform Bill."

"Oh Christ," muttered Maris.

"Sacrilegious but accurate and it gets worse," said Lapage.

"Governor Pat knows about this plan and he is not happy. This means that Chancellor MacBryde is not happy. The pickets are a prelude to the steering committee's call for a campus-wide strike against classes. The Chancellor expects the humanities faculty to overwhelmingly vote in favor

of the strike. He also fears a high-percentage of strike votes amongst the science and engineering faculty. (Lapage sent a hard look right at Keith). He has shared his concerns directly with the governor. I was there to witness the response. Our governor, Patrick Law, is not a man given to walking softly and carrying a big stick. He proceeded to ream out our chancellor, launching into a horrifyingly loud and shockingly profane tirade against Berkeley crazies, pampered academic pussies, and lick-spittle chancellors unable to control same." Lapage now trained his gaze exclusively on Maris Cavanaugh. "His message was received: Cal will be transformed into a large and underfunded day-care center if events on this campus derail the Governor's bill."

"Even the governor could not do that," said Vijay Jain.

"No, but he could try very hard," responded Lapage. "And big expensive centers like this would be the first to feel the budget cuts."

"I take it that, public informationwise, our goal is to make Cal the stealth university for the next few weeks," said Maris quietly.

"You take it correctly, madam," answered Lapage. "Look, we expect heavy media coverage of the protestors next week. We know there will be critical stories about the impact of the University Reform Bill and the pending faculty strike. There's going to be a lot of heat but we believe we can tough out the firestorm providing there is no other news to fan the flames. Need I say that any report of a human experiment gone wrong would be tossing gasoline on the fire?"

"Mums the word on Quip," agreed Maris.

"An impregnable cone of silence," reiterated Lapage. "Nothing on Quip or Professor Thomas, not even a word on the chimp." His eyes again swept the room before he gave each of them their marching orders.

To Vijay: "Do whatever you must to keep this research quiet. A few stern words ought to be enough for Gibson but Kravitz-Goldman will never keep quiet. Send her out of town on a secret mission or something. Russian academics love that stuff. Professor Jones bothers me, too. She looks Arabic. Watch her."

For Maris: "If you get any questions from the press, stall, stonewall, whatever. Nothing until Governor Pat's reform bill has been passed."

For Keith: "You keep close tabs on Professor Thomas. Any signs of craziness, you call me first. Daphne Klein was right. That chimpanzee stuff was scary. We don't need a history professor doing the same thing."

"Simon's not a rapist," Keith replied with irritation.

"Neither was the chimp," Lapage shot back.

Lapage had one more order for Vijay Jain, one that took Keith by surprise.

"I'm going to have my secretary set up a meeting for us with the patents people first thing in the morning. I'll have her call Daphne with the specifics."

"I'm not sure I follow you," said Vijay. "Why are the two of us to meet with the patents people?"

"Sasha Kravitz-Goldman was right about Quip being potentially worth millions. We're proceeding full-speed ahead on the patent."

"How will Chancellor MacBryde feel about that?"

Lapage smiled. "I can assure you the Chancellor will green-light this project once the reform bill is passed. Our campus is going to be the flag ship of the UC fleet." Lapage paused, shared another smile with his audience. "The Chancellor thinks a memory drug invented at the Brain Lab would be a splendid way to launch it."

Keith expected Maris to depart with the legal council but she held back. When the door to the conference room had clicked shut, she spoke.

"I spent three years at the Bay Guardian and another four at Mother Jones before deciding I wanted a decent lifestyle. But I have not yet lost my journalistic instincts. Something is up here. Neither of you has any idea as to what this Quip stuff is going to do to Professor Thomas, do you?"

Vijay answered her but his eyes were trained on Keith. "I have an idea but I need a second opinion. I kept Keith in the dark about the GEM images and Morris' behavior until this afternoon because I did not want him to react before he could be presented with all the available data. The others, they are... they are exceptionally competent wet-brain scientists but their viewpoints are limited. Each understands the chemistry of the paint but none understands the art the paint is used to make. Keith is the exception. He has the ability to find the hidden truths.

Do you see what I am thinking I see, Keith? Or am I wrong?"

Maris was impatient. She could not keep still. "See what? Wrong about what? I'll tell you what I see, Professor Jain. You are afraid. But why? Tell me!"

Keith, sorting through his own thoughts, answered Maris but his eyes were locked with Vijay's. "No one has ever activated genetic memories before and we certainly did not activate them with the idea that they would be wired into Simon's neocortex.

As a neurotransmitter, Quip's function was to provide a sort of window between Simon's neocortex and his limbic system, a window through which his mind could have a look at his genetic memories. As a neurohormone, however, Quip suddenly becomes a provider of bridges, across which genetic memories can pass from the limbic system into the neocortex. The neocortex is the home of consciousness. If Simon has indeed been experiencing the memories of his great-grandfather and if his neocortex has permanently incorporated those genetic memories into its network...."

The answer came to Keith like a perfect punch to the jaw.

"The SMEG mindprint wasn't an anomaly."

"No..." Vijay softly whispered in agreement.

"And the altered glucose utilization in Simon's frontal lobes, it's an artifact."

Vijay nodded.

"Simon's neocortex is rewiring itself."

"Yes..." Vijay whispered.

"Jesus motherfucking christ...."

Keith went silent.

The bad news seemed to crush Vijay's facial features under its weight. "It is as I feared," he declared. "You see it, too."

"See what?" demanded Maris, angry. Ignored by Keith, she turned to Vijay. "What the hell is going on? What are you two talking about?"

Moments passed before he answered. "We are talking about personality, the most poorly understood phenomenon in all neuroscience. About the only thing upon which everyone agrees is that the word comes from the Latin root "persona" which means mask. Sorry, I take that back. There is one other thing about personality on which we all agree: Everybody's got at least one."

Vijay smiled. "Old psychology joke," he explained.

Maris Cavanaugh did not even crack a smile.

"At the Brain Lab," Vijay said, quickly moving on, "we pretty much adhere to current scientific dogma and define personality as the patterns of thought, both conscious and unconscious, that collectively yield a distinct profile of behavioral traits. Whatever the exact mechanism for wiring these patterns may be, it is heavily influenced by the chemistry that takes place within the nervous and endocrine systems. The chemical composition in these systems is determined by the genes, but the distribution, the balance between those chemicals that promote one type of behavioral trait and those that promote another, are largely determined by an individual's remembered experiences with his or her environment."

Keith interjected. "We have a saying at the Brain Lab, genes provide the raw materials for an individual's personality, but the mask itself is shaped by memories."

"Exactly," said Vijay, excited in spite of himself. "In the case of the Quip experiments, it would seem that we have flooded the neocortex of Simon Thomas with the remembered experiences of Payton Adams. The assimilation of Payton's memories into Simon's neocortex appears to be affecting the chemistry of his brain. Theoretically speaking, this could lead to a competition."

Maris frowned. "A competition? Between who and for what?"

Vijay pursed his lips before he spoke, searching, Keith presumed, for the best way to express his thoughts. "A chemical competition between the personality traits of Simon and those of his great-grandfather for control of Simon's behavior," he finally answered.

Maris frowned again. "Is that possible?"

Vijay sighed. "We are already seeing evidence that suggests this in the SMEG mind print and the altered frontal lobe activity. That could well be explained as the chemical influence of Payton Adams' personality traits."

"Is this process reversible?" Maris asked.

Vijay shrugged. "We don't know. We don't know that the altered brain chemistry is a transitional effect. We don't know that the altered chemistry is actually strong enough to have any long-term impact on Simon's behavioral patterns. We don't even know if any of what I have just said is true. This is all speculation."

Keith slowly shook his head, his hands moving up to the bandage on his ear. He spoke at once to both of them and to neither of them. His voice came from a place far from where he wanted to be. "If it is true, then we had better all brace ourselves. From what I've seen so far, I don't think that Payton Adams was a very nice person." Seeing that both Vijay and Maris were giving him hard, quizzical stares, Keith added another sentence that seemed to hang in the air like the sword of Damocles.

"His mask was all fucked up."

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

Myong Chai had been the private secretary to Jan Thomas for nearly four years. She would never interrupt a meeting between Jan and a major client like Jasper Lanier unless the matter was urgent. Nonetheless, given Lanier's exalted opinion of his importance and his notorious

impatience, Jan had to ask Myong if it could possibly wait. The simple "No" in response was enough for Jan to excuse herself from Lanier, making twice the number of apologies she would to anyone else.

"This better be good," Jan said to Myong when they were outside her office. "I have maybe 90 seconds before he's on his cell phone and tying my office up for as long as he pleases."

"It's about your husband," Myong said, lowering her eyes and voice. "He's been arrested."

Jan took the call at Myong's desk. Keith Joyner was on the other end of the line, calling from the Berkeley Municipal Courthouse.

"You better get over here quickly. Simon is not handling this well," he said. "The longer he's here, the worse things are going to get, I'm afraid."

"Why has Simon been arrested?" Jan demanded.

"I'll explain when you get here. Just hurry."

"Oh, I will hurry alright, but first you give me the 30-second soundbyte, Keith. Why has my husband been arrested?"

"He attacked a student."

"What?"

"Danny Bosworth. Son of Howard Bosworth. Fat cat contributor to the coffers of Governor Pat Law."

"I know who he is," Jan interrupted. "Where did this take place?"

"On Telegraph Ave, outside of Noah's bagels. Danny provoked Simon and Simon went off on him. It happened too quickly for me to stop him."

"What has Simon been charged with?"

"Wait, I wrote it down. Section 240 and 242."

"Assault and battery." Jan took a big breath to clear her head. "How badly did Simon go off on young Bosworth?"

"Probably broke his jaw, took out some teeth."

"Was Bosworth knocked unconscious?"

"Yeah, but not for too long. He got into the ambulance on his own."

Jan cursed into the phone. "That's serious bodily injury."

A year in county jail, maybe even a state prison if the Bosworth family makes a big enough stink. I'm on my way."

Jan hung up the phone and stopped in her office only long enough to inform Jasper Lanier "We're done for today."

Some thirty minutes later, Jan was sitting in her Lexus on the Bay Bridge, behind a green Bronco with a vanity license plate that read: BUCKIN. She'd just passed the exit for Treasure and Mare Islands, which meant she was facing at least another thirty minutes just to get off the bridge unless traffic were to suddenly open up. And this was mid-afternoon, pre-rush-hour. With an exasperated snort, Jan replaced Ella Fitzgerald with Sarah Vaughn on her CD-player -- a little more soothing on the nerves, she thought.

Simon in jail: What next? Under normal circumstances, she would have put her money on Louise as the most likely member of her family to one day be in need of bail. But these were hardly normal circumstances. Jan's mind drifted back to the Friday night two weeks earlier when Keith had come to the Thomas house to tell them Chancellor MacBryde's decision that Simon would be denied any further Quip treatments.

* * *

At dinner, prior to Keith's arrival, Jan announced that since the university's decision on Quip would affect the entire family the twins should be included. They were old enough, she said, to know what was going on. The girls immediately agreed and there was little Simon could say. Jan kept to herself the fact that Keith had already informed her by phone of the Chancellor's decision and that she wanted Louise and Elizabeth there as a calming influence on Simon. She knew he was going to be disappointed upon hearing the decision but she did not know what to expect in the way of a reaction. Certainly the new version of Simon could become abusive, possibly even violent, if only Jan and Keith were present. But with their daughters in the room, the former was less likely and the latter simply would not happen.

As expected, Simon was quite unhappy with the Chancellor's decision. Initially, he delivered one of the oddest diatribes Jan had ever listened to, a shifting mix of the old Simon's reflectiveness and the new Simon's volatility, a blend of contemplation and cunning, thoughtful reasoning and rash insight. His language, too, was a mix, one moment contemporary, the next, archaic. And then there was his voice: sentences, measured out in the neo-Southern drawl of a

Baltimore native, would suddenly be interrupted by a dark outpouring in the brogue of an immigrant just-off-the-boat from Ireland. Just as suddenly, the brogue would vanish and the Baltimore drawl would return without Simon's having missed so much as a beat in his speech. If she'd closed her eyes, Jan would have thought that Simon was two different men.

"That Scotch mutt," was how the diatribe had begun. Simon's lip was curled in a contemptuous sneer and his Irish accent was in full-swing. "His decision my ass. He's nothing but a boot-lick for Governor Pat. You can bet your bottom dollar that's who's calling the tune here. Governor Pat wants things quiet so his university reform bill will go through. Bosworth and them other rich WASP bastards what back the governor and his party want to turn the UC system into a technology patent farm. You can be sure they'll be the ones who reap the rewards. If they could, they'd eliminate the humanities altogether but they can't so they round them up onto a few scattered campuses. (The Irish accent was abruptly replaced by the Baltimore drawl.) It's one of the oldest tricks in history. The English did it to the Irish. In this country, we did it to the Indians. No one should be surprised as to which campuses receive the lion's share of funding in the future and which die a slow death of starvation."

"There's probably a lot of truth in what you're saying, Simon " Keith started, but Simon could not keep still.

"I don't give a fuck about Governor Pat and his university reform bill and I don't give a fuck about Bosworth and his WASP schemes." It was Simon's normal voice but the swearing was not like him at all. Jan seldom ever heard Simon cuss and certainly never in front of the girls. The brogue was back when Simon added, "But I must have that third treatment of Quip and the Governor and his Scotch mutt are standing in my way. Look, alls they're worried about is something going wrong and the public finding out about it. What if I sign an agreement that swears me to secrecy and releases the university from any responsibility should there be complications?"

It took a few moments for Jan to realize that Keith was waiting for her to respond. Embarrassed, she decided to stop trying to follow the changes in Simon's speech patterns and just concentrate on what he was saying.

"Easier said than done," she answered. "There would be some complicated legal issues to address but the discussion is moot. I would not permit you to sign such an agreement."

Simon glared at her. "What concern is it of yours?"

Jan felt her own blood heat up, but instead of speaking from her heart as his wife, she went lawyerly on him. "You are the father of my children. They are entitled to a certain measure of support from you. As their mother, it is my responsibility to protect their entitlement. That is my concern, mister."

Keith tried playing peacemaker. "Whoa, chill my friends. No need for a domestic spat here. Simon, it does not matter what you would be willing to sign, Chancellor MacBryde has heard enough from Counselor LaPage about indemnity to be righteously scared. Besides, even if you could release the university from any legal responsibility and even if Jan let you, there is still the danger that something might go wrong and the media would find out. The political fallout could be even worse than indemnity. Anyway you cut it, to let you have a third treatment of Quip is a risk and the Chancellor is not in a risk mode. It's his history: When in doubt, do nothing."

"Then perhaps I shall have to do something to resolve his doubts," Simon replied, his voice Irish and cold.

"What is that supposed to mean?" Jan interjected. "Do I detect a threat in your voice, Simon Thomas?"

The icy look he gave her sent a small shiver up Jan's spine. "What of it?" he asked.

Elizabeth piped up. "Remember your Ghandi, Dad. Violence begins where thought breaks down."

Not to be outdone by her sister, Louise added, "You're not a pounder, Dad, as you've made abundantly clear all these years."

The girls had been sitting so quietly, just listening, (an event almost without precedence, Jan reflected), that the sound of their voices appeared to startle Simon. It was as if he'd forgotten about them (another unprecedented event). Having been reminded of their presence, however, the effect was a calming one on Simon, just as Jan had predicted. Unfortunately, their calming influence had not lasted long before the ugliness began. And the thing with ugliness, once begun, it quickly gains momentum, like a rock rolling down a slope.

It started when Keith tried to explain to Simon the reason for the university's concern. He'd talked about something called a mindprint, and some new connections that had formed

between the part of Simon's brain where genetic memories were stored and the part of his brain that held his own long-term memories. Then he'd told them about the violent activities of Morris. That had gotten the twins upset and had set off Jan as well.

"Are you saying that Quip has somehow transformed sweet, gentle Morris into a vicious beast?" she demanded of Keith. "This is the same stuff that you have twice injected into Simon's brain? And there was even a discussion about a possible third treatment? Tell me my hearing has gone bad-wrong, Keith Joyner, tell me that now before I come out of this chair and slap you upside the head."

Keith held up his hands. "Hold on, now, Jan. I did not say that Quip was directly responsible for the personality change in Morris. We believe the personality change to be an artifact of the genetic memories that Morris' recalled. These memories of one of his ancestors are now a part of Morris' consciousness and as such they are impacting how he perceives and reacts to the world around him. But Morris is a bonobo, an ape, not a man. He does not know what has happened to him and has no means of reasoning his way through it. What it all comes down to is he's scared and he's reverted to his most basic instinct: fear-response. He must choose between fight or flight."

"Interesting that he has chosen to fight," Jan observed.

Keith agreed. "Yes, it is. And we might be able to help him if we knew the exact nature of the memories he recalled under Quip. But we don't know because Morris can't tell us."

Keith had been sitting back on a chair across a coffee table from the sofa on which Simon and Jan sat. Suddenly he leaned so far forward he had to brace his hands on the table for support. He then locked eyes with Simon. Even from the side, Jan could see that Keith's gaze was as intense as sunlight on a mirror.

"That's why it's so critical for you to be honest with us about the memories you recalled, my friend," Keith said, his voice matching his stare. "You're a highly intelligent, well-educated man with a keen appreciation for learning. You're the antithesis of the beast. This need not be about fear-response. It is well within you to assimilate these genetic memories that have entered into your consciousness, to draw strength from the knowledge they bring. Those same memories have for years been hiding in the shadows of your subconscious, sapping your will. Quip has exposed them, forced them out into the light where

you can see them for what they are and they can no longer hurt you. You've gone through life dragging a hidden weight and this is your chance to be free, Simon. We can help you. Myself, Vijay, Eugene Nertz, we can work with you so that you come up big and everyone walks away from this a winner. But we need a game plan, my man, a solid game plan. And that depends on you stepping up. Help us help you. Tell me the truth, Simon, the whole truth. What did you recall under the Quip?"

Simon's eyes were like green marbles as he returned Keith's gaze. To Keith's impassioned plea, his response was as cold and uninviting as frozen meat. "Are you asking if I've been lying to you, lad? Are you asking if I've been lying to my wife and my children?"

Keith swallowed and slowly sank back into his chair, the tension in the room as thick as oil smoke. Licking his lips, he frowned, then tried again. "Nah, man, I'm not asking if you been lying to us. Not lying. No. Withholding, maybe. Holding back on some memory that could be useful...could explain. Like, for example, the Irish accent. That's a no-brainer as to where it's coming from. So maybe there's an explanation for the ...you know...the aggression. See, from your debriefings there's no explanation for it. Nothing in Payton Adams' past -- from what you've told us -- would account for ... the ...um ... recent incidents. That puts us at a loss. So what I'm suggesting here is that ... perhaps you remember more than what you've admitted to in your reports."

Louise, who had been sitting quietly on the floor next to her twin at Simon's end of the sofa, was unable to hold her peace any longer. "What are you talking about, Keith? What are you saying?"

Keith again licked his lips, then shifted his body in the chair. Everyone watched as he drew a breath, nodded quickly to himself and let it go. "I'm saying that your Daddy's been holding out on us."

"And why would I do that?" Simon asked.

Keith shrugged. "Maybe you're protecting the reputation of your great-grandfather."

When Simon said nothing, Keith continued. "Your entire academic life has in a sense been a shrine to Payton Adams. The books you read, the courses you teach, the papers you have written -- all of it has been directed towards honoring the memory of your great-grandfather. But until Quip, it has been a memory you did not have. Now you have it and maybe it doesn't look

so good to you anymore. It's like that old saying: Be careful of what you wish for, you just might get it. So how about it? Is that what it is? You're withholding the truth because you are protecting the memory of Payton Adams?"

A silence hung ominously in the air like a harvest moon on the horizon's cusp until Simon gave his reply in a voice of menace, like wind across a graveyard. "What it is, I think, is that you are calling me a liar in front of my wife and my daughters. And I think that honor bounds me to square it with you."

Keith turned to Jan. His eyes caught and held hers. "Can you help me, here?"

Up until that point, Jan had been doing a slow burn toward Keith, her anger building steadily like a charcoal fire. But when his eyes found hers, a connection was made, a brief shared intimacy, lasting no more than a heartbeat or two, that reached deep into the core of Jan's being and stabbed her with sharp pangs of sadness. Keith was Simon's friend and he wanted to help him: She knew that. He was her friend, too: She knew that. And she had feelings for Keith: There was no denying it. Now, this man, a friend to her and her family, was hurting, perhaps, for the moment at least, even more than Simon. Certainly more than this new version of Simon. Jan used her eyes to convey a message to Keith that yes, they were in this together and yes, she would help. If he was the man she thought him to be, he would receive the message and understand.

Jan then turned to Simon and froze. Simon's eyes were slowly moving back and forth between her and Keith, watchful, knowing. Was he suspicious? Jan was uncertain. Of this new version of Simon, she could be sure of little. The old version of Simon was so trusting he could have walked into a room with she and Keith naked and accepted her word that nothing was going on. But this new version of Simon was another matter and the fact that she was so clueless clutched at Jan's throat like the fingers of a strangler. She coughed, bringing up moisture in order to speak, then steeled herself and addressed her husband in her courtroom voice.

"I know exactly what Keith is talking about, Simon, and so do you. Since receiving the second treatment of Quip you have not been yourself. The purpose of Quip was to allow you to recall the memories of your great-grandfather, which, if we are to believe you, is exactly what has happened. Therefore, to understand your recent behavior it is logical to look first to those memories. The profile you have given us of Payton Adams is that of a devoted husband and

loyal friend, a man who was happily awaiting the birth of his child, a pacifistic labor sympathizer who refused to be cowered by militant bullies but stayed non-violent in his protests. In other words, Simon, you have given us a version of Payton Adams that is almost identical to yourself. So why these recent displays of uncharacteristic aggression? It is inexplicable unless you have not been candid with us. Perhaps you have been protecting the reputation of your great-grandfather. Perhaps Payton Adams was less like Mohandas Ghandi and more like Phillip of Macedonia."

Simon did not reply immediately. Instead, he allowed his stare to shift back and forth between Jan and Keith. Jan knew the look. She'd seen it at the Hall of Justice in the eyes of men wearing orange jumpsuits and manacles on their wrists. She called it the stare of the wolf. Seeing it unsettled her. Then Simon did something completely unexpected: He smiled.

Jan had seen smiles like that, too. It's appearance had made her feel worse.

"Interesting that you chose Phillip of Macedonia to illustrate your point," Simon said. "He was murdered by his wife."

Jan blushed. She'd been thinking about Alexander the Great, Phillip's son. Simon took note of her discomfort and showed his teeth. "But you and Keith are both right about one thing. I have not been forthcoming with all that I have remembered. I have been protecting someone. My great-grandmother, Rosaleen Adams."

Simon's revelation took Jan by complete surprise. Keith, too, looked stunned. Even the twins were drop-jawed. Simon's eyes continued to move back and forth between Jan and Keith, gauging the effects of his words. There was a lot for him to take in for what he had to say cut Jan to the quick. He told them Payton had discovered that Rosaleen Adams had been unfaithful, she'd been having an affair with a man named Collin Garraty who was Payton's closest friend.

"Payton was devastated," Simon said. "He'd loved Rosaleen and trusted her with all his heart and soul and she betrayed him. Can you imagine how painful it was for him when he discovered her deceit?"

Each word was like a loop of razor wire pulled tight around Jan's heart. A sharp-edged clot of guilt, like a chunk of broken glass, rose in her throat, threatening to make her gag right there in her living room, in front of her children. She did not dare look in the direction of Keith for fear that even the girls would see through her. She reached out her hand for Simon, desperate

to make contact, but he ignored her entreaty and turned his attention solely on Keith.

"I don't have to imagine my great-grandfather's pain, Keith, I experienced it. You and the others at the Brain Lab continue to question whether or not Quip works. Trust me, it works. I shared Payton Adams' thoughts and emotions when he discovered that the woman he loved and the friend he trusted had betrayed him. He cried, Keith. This proud, strong steel man wept like a child. I felt as if my own heart had been torn out, just as if I had discovered that you and Jan had betrayed me. (Again, Jan felt the guilt, like bile, rise in her throat and again she had to fight from gagging.) Not only was Payton heartbroken, he was humiliated. His spirits were crushed, his pride shattered. And so he cried, blubbered like a baby, and then wanted to die but as a Catholic he could not take his own life. So he kept his shame to himself, his discovery became his deepest secret."

All the while that Simon had been talking, Jan had been unable to look at Keith. Like Simon with his great-grandfather, however, she had no need of imagining what was going on Keith's mind. But Simon was not finished. Not by a long-shot. He had turned his attention to Louise and Elizabeth.

"Girls, do you think it would have been right for me to tell your mother or Keith your great-great-grandfather's secret?"

Elizabeth answered immediately. "No, Dad, it was Payton Adams' secret and you were right to respect that."

Louise agreed with her twin and then to Jan said in the snotty tone of a teenager filled with self-righteousness: "Mom, you and Keith need to be more sensitive. Dad has a right to some privacy, too. You should respect that."

Normally, Jan would have scolded her daughter for her tone of voice and her attitude, but she dared not say a word for fear that a confession would escape her lips. Maybe it was the effort to hold her tongue, maybe it was hearing the sad story of Payton Adams and his unfaithful wife, maybe it was her own guilt, or a combination of all of those things, but the tears suddenly came in a silent flood, running down Jan's cheeks in long rivulets and falling off in big drops. She looked over at her husband who watched the tears with no reaction.

But something seemed to restore Keith's voice, perhaps it had been the sight of Jan's tears, for he was suddenly defending himself and Jan. "We had no way of knowing, Louise.

Simon, I am sorry, really and truly and deeply sorry. But how could any of us have known? There were indications that you were at times undergoing strong emotional experiences while under the Quip, but we could not quantify those emotions nor could we possibly comprehend the reasons behind them. You must understand that, Simon, please."

Simon appeared to be fully himself again, as he was before the Quip treatments. In his normal voice, he quietly accepted Keith's apology and had then proceeded to drop another bombshell -- he had good reasons to suspect that Rosaleen had been responsible for the murder of Payton. From his recovered genetic memories, Simon knew that Payton had moved out of the house he shared with Rosaleen after discovering her unfaithfulness, and had taken a room at a boarding house near the Homestead steel mill. Thanks to historical detective work by Ana Huff (hearing Ana's name made Jan involuntarily flinch), Simon now knew that the day before Payton's death, Collin Garraty had been murdered at the house where Rosaleen was staying. That very same night, Rosaleen had gotten word to Payton that she wanted him to meet her the next day at sunrise at the old ferry landing in Munhall, which was the place where Payton was murdered. Payton was to come alone.

"Collin Garraty was a rich man," Simon had said. "I suspect that Rosaleen somehow got hold of his fortune, killed him and then either murdered my great-grandfather or else arranged to have him killed. That is how she ended up an independently wealthy widow. Payton went to the landing alone that morning because Rosaleen had promised to tell him the truth about her pregnancy. He did not know whether the child was his or Collin Garraty's."

Simon's own eyes suddenly became moist and there appeared to be a lump in his throat. With his attention still on Keith, he said: "I am living testimony to the fact that Rosaleen was carrying Payton's child. But my great-grandfather died never knowing. He did know his killer, however, and that memory was somehow preserved and passed onto me. Call it a new paradigm in neuroscience or call it a simple act of fate, but it is through me that Payton Adams will at last identify his killer and I must help him do this, Keith. I must. It is a sacred covenant between my great-grandfather and me. I cannot explain how or why, but I know in my heart of hearts that the strife within me, the strife that sometimes feels like my mind is being torn in half, will not be stilled until my covenant with Payton Adams has been honored. Give me that third treatment of Quip, Keith. If you are my friend and you truly want to help me, give me that third treatment,

allow me to fulfill my covenant, and grant peace to my great-grandfather and me."

All the while Simon had been talking, Jan had not taken her eyes off him. But when he gave his plea for a third treatment of Quip, she immediately looked over at Keith. She'd already guessed that Keith was going to relent, was going to agree to somehow get Simon the treatment he sought. Simon sounded like himself and Keith was his best friend. If Simon needed him, Keith would be there and damn the potential repercussions from the university. One look at Keith confirmed her suspicions. As he opened his mouth to speak, Jan shot him a look that stopped him cold. Then she turned back to her husband.

"No, Simon, we cannot permit that to happen. There will be no more treatments with Quip."

The moisture in Simon's green eyes evaporated instantly, replaced by the wolf-like stare. The cold hardness of that stare was like a jagged steel blade slicing into Jan's chest but she did not waver or show any signs of fear.

"Covenant or no covenant with the memories of your great-grandfather, the risks of a third treatment of Quip are unacceptable. By your own admission, you are experiencing considerable internal strife, much more strife than you ever felt before the treatments of Quip began. By your own admission, you have been selective in what you have told us about the genetic memories you experienced. Therefore, all we have to go on are the words of a distraught man who has demonstrated he is not to be trusted. Even our girls ought to be able to see that is no justification for reversing a decision which was based on the best available scientific evidence. The university has ruled out any further experimentation with Quip in the immediate future. I rule out any further experimentation with Quip on you ever. No, baby, what we should do is set up another appointment with Dr. Nertz, immediately, the three of us, you, myself, and Keith, and work together to determine the best course of action. Do you agree, Keith?"

Jan was not at all certain Keith would go along with her and so she turned, convened another meeting of their eyes, and conveyed the message: Please trust me on this and I will explain later.

Keith filled his cheeks with air, expelled it slowly but noisily, then made his decision. "Yes, I agree. Simon, we cannot let you have any more Quip. If those memories are still in there, we will have to find another way to retrieve them."

Simon had been observing the non-verbal signals being sent back and forth between Jan and Keith but what he read into them would, for the time being, remain a mystery to Jan. From his response, she could not say if he was suspicious or just furious. But it clearly was the new Simon talking because the words were hateful and the accent was Irish.

"So this is what it has come to then has it? My decisions are to be made for me by niggers?"

That Simon's use of the word "nigger" came as a total shock to Louise and Elizabeth was graphically evident. Elizabeth, always the more sensitive of the two, said nothing at first. Her eyes filled with tears, she gnawed on her lower lip, and her head moved from side to side in an off-kilter motion like that of a broken doll. Louise said nothing either. Not at first. Her lips trembled but she did not cry. After a few moments, her lips stopped trembling and her mouth began opening and closing as if she wanted to speak but could not summon the right words. When both girls finally did find the right word, they uttered it simultaneously:

"Dad!"

Simon's entire body became the epicenter of its own seismic event. The wolf-like stare in his eyes melted as the green marbles took on heat, became shiny. At the same time, Simon's facial features softened like heated tallow. Through cracking voice he apologized to his daughters who in response threw themselves at him, wrapping their arms around him and hugging him tightly, as if in hope that the power of their love could expel whatever demon had possessed him. When Keith tried to add his own words of assuagement, Louise treated him with scorn, letting him know that he was an unwanted intruder.

"You are a nigger you motherfucker," she'd snapped. "Look what you've done to my dad!"

Jan instantly came down on her, it was an automatic reaction to her child's being way out of line. "That's enough, Louise!" she said before thinking. "Don't be disrespectful of Keith."

It was a terrible mistake and Jan recognized her error even as she spoke. Elizabeth was quick to join her sister in an alliance, backing their dad, united against the common enemy -- Mom!

"Fuck Keith to hell!" were the words that came from gentle Elizabeth's mouth, putting all the hatred her sweet-natured, overly-sensitive, non-hating soul could muster into the words.

"Look what that asshole has done to Dad. My dad would never say that word. My dad would never think that word."

But it was serpent-tongued Louise who thrust a verbal dagger through Keith's heart. "You ought to be paying attention to your own home," she said, with a curl of her lip. "Your oldest son is a cake-boy, you know, and he makes his little brother want to puke."

Keith blinked. He then put his fists to his temples and squeezed them. Then he rose from his chair, apologized to all of the Thomas family for the grief he had caused and excused himself. Jan ran outside after him but before she had a chance to say anything, he exploded.

"What did you tell Simon? Did you tell him about that night? Huh? You must have told him something because he damn sure thinks something happened, Jan, he damn sure does. What does he think happened and what the hell's he going to do about it, huh?"

Jan was so taken aback her response was again automatic: She struck back.

"Oh, so now you're worried, huh? Now you're thinking about your friend, Simon? You weren't thinking about Simon that night when you put your hands on my tits, were you? You weren't so worried about his feelings your dick couldn't get hard. Well, you needn't worry about me telling him our dirty little secret. If Payton Adams can carry memories to the grave, I can carry a secret. I don't know what you're so scared about. After all, as you've so bluntly reminded me before, you're the one who said stop. I'm the amoral ho-bag. You're just a coward. But you best make sure your cowardice doesn't start your mouth yapping. If my marriage goes down, yours goes with it."

Keith's eyes blazed and his hand made a fist. For a moment, Jan seriously thought he was going to hit her and she braced herself for the blow. But the fist opened, the hand dropped to Keith's side, and the fire in his eyes died down. "It's not what you think," he said, staring at his feet. "I'm not afraid, I'm ashamed. I'm ashamed for what I thought about doing with you that night and I'm ashamed for what I've put Simon and you and your daughters through with the Quip experiments. I'm willing to make it right by him, whatever it takes. If that ultimately means giving him a third dose of the Quip then I will do it even if it costs me my career at Cal. I owe it to Simon." Keith lifted his eyes. "I owe it to all of you."

Jan almost burst out crying again, got furious with herself for being so weak, recovered enough to look at Keith in a state of frazzled bewilderment. "I'm sorry, Keith. None of this is

your fault alone, the responsibility is shared by many starting with myself for never acknowledging the seriousness of Simon's original problem in the first place. As for that night, nothing happened between us and we've got to stop beating ourselves up over it. Yeah, we got a little carried away, caught up in the moment, and that was mistake on both our parts. But God only made one perfect being and you got to be a Christian to accept even that. As mistakes go, ours wasn't much of a big deal but if either of us were to tell Simon or Sandra it might upset them and there's no need for that. I promise you I will never talk about that night with anyone. Will you do the same?"

Keith nodded, swore the same vow, offered Jan his hand to shake on it and she did. Keith had then looked over Jan's shoulder at the light shining from her living room where Simon and the twins could still be seen.

"That story Simon told tonight," Keith remarked, shaking his head, "can you believe that stuff about Payton and Rosaleen? It was so...god ... I don't any other way to say this, but it was so close to home it was scary."

Jan reached out to take Keith by the chin and gently turn his face to her. "Yes, it was scary, but I don't believe it," she told him. "That may have been Simon's voice doing the talking but it was Payton Adams doing the thinking when he told us that story about Rosaleen."

Keith's eyes narrowed. "What makes you say that?"

"Did you see what Simon did when I began to cry?"

Keith closed his eyes, searched his memory, then opened them. "I don't recall that he did anything."

"Exactly," Jan said. "My Simon would have reached out and taken my hand. My Simon would have stopped whatever he was doing and sought to give me comfort. That man had no more reaction than a deaf man in a music shop. That man was Payton Adams, not Simon Thomas, and I don't trust anything he says. He told us that story about Rosaleen as much to hurt the two of us as to get what he wants."

Keith looked confused. "The two of us? What are you saying? You think Payton Adams suspects you and me of messing around behind Simon's back?"

Jan nodded. "He saw us passing looks and I'm guessing he figures there's something going on between us. Something sexual. The idea of any sort of emotional connection between a

woman and a man is probably alien to him. He took our exchange of looks as a sign of a sexual relationship. He sees that as a weakness, a vulnerability on both our parts and he went after it."

Keith clicked his teeth thoughtfully and nodded. "I think maybe you're right."

"I know I'm right," said Jan, herself now looking across the yard at the rest of her family in the living room. "And that's why there will be no third dose of Quip for Simon, not now, not ever. Whoever Payton Adams was, I hate that bastard with all my heart. He's never getting into my Simon's head again."

* * *

There had been no further "appearances" of Payton Adams in the two weeks since and Jan had found herself daring to think the worst had passed. She and Simon along with Keith had met with Dr. Nertz on the following Monday. Keith had come clean with the speculation he shared with Vijay Jain. Because of the presence of the Quip isomer that functioned as neurohormone, the genetic memories of Payton Adams were being synaptically wired into Simon's neocortex. As a consequence, imprints of Payton Adams' personality were intruding on Simon's consciousness, affecting his behavior. Before Jan could lose it over this news, Dr. Nertz had rushed in to say that, while the isomer of Quip and its hormonal effects were indeed surprising developments, this turn of events could be viewed as a reason for optimism rather than alarm for it presented a basis for therapy. He expressed great confidence that Simon's new condition could be successfully treated as a mild aggression disorder. After all, he explained, Simon's recent behavioral problems essentially stemmed from his inexperience at having to control aggressive thoughts.

"We must keep in mind that Payton Adams was a new immigrant working and living in a rough environment. By necessity he would have to have had a more aggressive nature than Simon in order to survive," Dr. Nertz had said. "Still, we are dealing with a man who held down a steady job in a steel mill to support himself and his wife. I am positive I can help Simon learn to cope with this level of aggression." Dr. Nertz had given them all a reassuring smile. "After all, it's not like we're dealing with a murderer."

Simon had started meeting with Dr. Nertz three times a week for one hour sessions. He'd also taken to jogging a couple of hours every night. He said running after dark helped him get in touch with his new feelings and that Dr. Nertz encouraged it. Way too touchy-feely for Jan's

tastes but if Simon thought it was helpful she was all for it. And Simon had seemed to be doing better -- a lot better. Certainly he had seemed to be doing a lot better than she was. After learning that Simon had called on Ana Huff for help, Jan had decided to do some private investigating of her own. With a big swallow of pride and a resolution to be cordial, she phoned Ana Huff. The conversation had started off somewhat awkward -- Ana had understandably been surprised to hear from Jan. And not altogether comfortable talking about Simon behind his back. She had been polite enough in the beginning -- her voice was much softer than Jan had expected but not as mouseish as Jan had hoped. She confirmed for Jan that yes, Simon had told her about Collin Garraty and she had done some investigative work. Garraty had apparently been Payton Adams' landlord and yes, he had been shot to death at the house where Payton and Rosaleen had lived.

Hearing it confirmed that Simon had shared secrets with Ana that he'd kept from Jan had been a mind-numbing blow, like an elbow to the head, even though Jan had known it was coming. Jan was so stunned she'd failed to immediately ask Ana whether Simon had told her the story about Rosaleen's adultery with Collin Garraty and his suspicions that Rosaleen might have been responsible for the murder of Payton Adams. Before Jan had a chance to regroup her thoughts, Ana asked her to relay a message to Simon and in doing so scored a clean knockdown that had sent the conversation to hell in a handbasket as Jan's mama used to say.

"Mrs. Thomas, would you please tell Simon I've found no records of the Furey name in Ballybunion yet, but I'm still looking."

Jan did not recognize the name "Furey" but was damned if she'd admit it on the phone to Ana Huff. Still, finding out that Simon had shared even more secrets with Ana was so jarring that Jan was about to end the call right then and there. She needed time to absorb this. Then Ana brought up a second unfamiliar name: A female one at that -- Mary Catherine Hope.

"Tell him I have not been able to track her down either but I did come up with something he should find highly interesting," Ana said.

"And what might that be?" Jan responded. "I'm sure Simon will ask."

"In the March 12, 1892 edition of the Storeyville Newspaper, there was a report of a fight at the House of Julia Dean between a quadroon, new to the Quarter, who went by the name of Cat, and a local Chinese half-breed known as Snake Eyes Sal. They were fighting over a well-

heeled Irish customer from New York City whose name was not revealed."

"I'm afraid I'm not following this," Jan said, irritably. "What is Storeyville?"

Ana had explained that Storeyville was the infamous red-light district in the French Quarter of New Orleans during the previous century and that Julia Dean was one of its most notorious and successful madames. Jan had then asked about Cat and Snake Eyes Sal and why would Simon be interested in their fight. Suddenly Ana Huff got quiet. Jan finally had to inquire if Ana was still on the line.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Thomas, I had just presumed that Simon would have told you about Cat," Ana said, obviously uncomfortable, or at least, Jan thought, making a big show of being so. Even at that point, Jan might have backed off and tried to get the information out of Simon, had not Ana added: "She meant so much to him."

A frosty wind blew through Jan's insides, chilling her heart, and she could hear her own teeth scrape against the phone's mouthpiece. The mysterious woman named Cat became for the moment the sole focus of Jan Thomas' life. Everything else was forgotten.

"No," Jan replied, her voice clipped, "he did not mention her. Perhaps you can fill me in."

"I don't think I should do that," Ana said.

"Excuse me?" said Jan.

"I said I don't think that I should say anything more to you about Simon's recalled memories, Mrs. Thomas. That is for Simon to tell you, not me. In fact, if you don't mind, I think I should end this conversation right now."

"I do mind," retorted Jan. "This conversation will end when I end it. My husband has been treated with an experimental drug and it has adversely affected his brain. I am trying to help him but in order to help him I need all the information I can obtain. You apparently are in possession of knowledge that could be helpful and I insist that you share it with me."

An edge crept into Ana's voice, a signal to Jan that, despite the soft voice she would not be easily bullied. "If Simon had wanted you to know about Cat he would have told you."

"Ms. Huff, as I have already explained, Simon is not of sound mind."

"So you said."

"Excuse me?" Jan could not believe her ears.

"Mrs. Thomas, I don't wish to upset you but Simon has alluded to the marital problems you and he are going through..."

"Marital problems?" Jan told herself to count to ten and she did try but only made it to five. "What are you talking about?"

Ana Huff was rapidly evolving out of a state of discomfort and into a new state, one that made Jan uncomfortable.

"I can understand how this has been a strain on you. With Simon learning so much about his past, he was bound to undergo personal growth and that is always difficult for those who fear being left behind."

Jan tried to cut her off. "I don't think you understand ..."

But Ana just talked over her, the soft voice becoming distinctively and conveniently louder. "Oh, but I do understand, Mrs. Thomas. What you should understand is that my first loyalty must be to Simon. He has perhaps told me more than he should about the problems between the two of you so I am not without sympathy."

"You're feeling sorry for me..." Jan started, but Ana continued to talk over her.

"Therefore, against my better judgment, I will share some of what I know. Payton Adams was in love with a woman other than his wife, a black woman by the name of Mary Catherine Hope, also known as Cat. She was Payton's soul mate, the true love of his life."

"I thought you said she was a whore," Jan slipped in, more testily than she'd intended.

"Not by choice," Ana replied, not missing a beat. "Payton was going to leave his wife, Rosaleen, for her. They were planning to move away from Pittsburgh and start new lives together."

"How touching," Jan said.

"I thought so," replied Ana. "So did Simon. I'm sure that is why he chose not to share those memories with you. I'm not so sure I've done you any favors telling you a little of what I know."

"There's more?" Jan asked.

"Mmmm...I've already said more than I should."

"Why are you holding out on me?" Jan demanded, definitely over the top of testiness and into the realm of flat-out anger.

"We don't want to hurt you."

"We?" asked Jan, unable to bottle her contempt.

"I mean no disrespect Mrs. Thomas, but this conversation is over. Goodbye."

"Hussy," Jan spit into the phone.

"Bitch," Ana replied sweetly before hanging up.

With the receiver still in her hand, Jan bitterly admitted to herself that she had just made an enemy out of a woman she very much needed as a friend. And she'd been left more confused than ever. Simon had told her and Keith that Rosaleen was unfaithful. He had told Ana that Payton was unfaithful. What was the truth?

Two days later she'd met with Keith Joyner, once again at Skates, with the intent of telling him what she had learned over cocktails. But sitting in Skates had conjured up too many bad memories for both of them so they had immediately left and instead walked along the Berkeley pier which stretched about a quarter of a mile out into the San Francisco Bay. The late afternoon wind was gusty and they had to walk close together to hear one another speak. Across the water, the city was partially shrouded in fog, fingers of which were blowing in towards the pier. The gloominess matched Jan's mood as she relayed to Keith what she'd learned from Ana Huff about the woman named Cat, and the mysterious reference Ana had made to the name Furey. Keith had responded by cupping his hands behind his neck and blowing air through his lips.

"Maybe all of it is true," he said, his eyes on the incoming fog. "Even if Payton Adams had been unfaithful to his wife, that doesn't preclude him from being upset at finding out she'd been unfaithful to him. And we already know for a fact that Simon is selective about what he tells us with regards to Payton Adams."

"Yes, but Simon told Ana Huff that Payton was planning to leave Rosaleen for Cat. He told us that Simon had already moved out and was upset enough to contemplate suicide. Then there is the matter of Rosaleen being pregnant and Payton's wanting to know whether or not he was the father. Does any of that make sense to you?"

Keith blew more air out his cheeks. "Not really. And God knows what else there is that Simon has not told us about Payton Adams."

"Ana Huff knows more, I'm sure," remarked Jan, "but I don't expect she'll be sharing that

information with me anytime soon."

Keith looked at her and shook his head. "Definitely not you at the top of your game."

Another gust of wind blew in, colder than ever, and Jan moved in under Keith's arm for warmth. "You're right about that. My game seems to have gone south for the winter. I knew it was big-time stupid to get up on that woman but I could not stop myself. You know, we've all been carrying on about Simon's uncharacteristic behavior, but I've not been myself either."

Keith tightened his arm around her. "You're not alone," he said. Then he told her of a terrible scene the preceding night between he and his oldest son, Walt. Keith had jumped all over the boy about some trivial mishap. Walt had responded with the heartfelt and exaggerated indignity typical of a teenager and the rhetoric has quickly escalated beyond all sense of proportion.

"I ended up calling him a damn sissy," Keith said. They'd reached the end of the pier. The smoky fingers of fog that had been racing in from the sea had consolidated into a solid gray wall no more than five hundred yards away. Keith stared into the fog wall, his eyes shiny and miserable. "I love my son and yet I insulted him, hurt him like that. The look in his eyes...damn. He just walked away from me, shut himself up in his room, and hasn't spoken to me since."

"He'll forgive you," Jan said, putting a hand on Keith's bicep. "They always do."

"Yeah," Keith said, "but he won't forget. I know a little something about memory, remember? And I can tell you that Walt Joyner won't ever forget the time his dad called him a damn sissy. See? I knew better, too, and I could not stop myself. You and I are both trained athletes. We've been coached to stay within ourselves in order to perform at our best but neither of us is doing that right now. This thing with Simon is pulling all three of us down."

Anxiety rushed through Jan, the clammy fearfulness that was becoming increasingly familiar to her. She turned and took Keith's face in her hands, held his eyes in hers. "You're right. It is pulling the three of us down. And Simon can't be strong right now so it is up to you and me. We have to pull together on this, Keith. Simon needs the both us at our best. Can we do this? Are we a team?"

Keith studied her face. "Yes, we're a team and we can do this. Teammates should not have secrets. I promise there'll be no secrets between us. Whatever I learn, I will share with

you."

Jan vowed the same and Keith smiled.

"Are we going to shake hands again?"

Jan returned his smile then threw her arms around him. The two of them stood at the end of the pier for a long time, holding one another tightly -- as friends. Before parting for their cars, they had made another vow: Payton Adams was going to be driven out of their lives for good.

Now, as Jan sat in her Lexus, creeping along inch-by-inch across the Bay Bridge behind a green Bronco with a vanity plate, she realized that expunging Payton Adams from their lives and the mind of Simon Thomas was going to be a lot more difficult than she or even Keith and Dr. Nertz had thought. But the one question she would not entertain even for a moment was: What if they failed?

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

The waiting room at the Berkeley Municipal Courthouse reminded Keith Joyner of the time he spent in the lost baggage area at San Francisco airport on the night before Thanksgiving. It was packed with people whose faces bore anxious I-have-other-places-to-be looks. Like Keith, these people were here waiting for someone who had been brought to the courthouse by police officers and taken upstairs for processing. Like Keith, they would all rather be elsewhere.

Keith had only been at the Berkeley courthouse once before to pay a speeding ticket so he was no authority as to what a normal crowd in this waiting room was. Nonetheless, he'd have

bet a yard this one was atypical: almost all white and largely college age. Keith presumed it had to do with the unrest on campus. There'd been rumors that the students were planning to occupy Chancellor MacBryde's office to show solidarity with the faculty in opposition to the governor's University Reform Bill. By now, the chancellor had become a full accomplice in the governor's scheme, a member of the "them" against whom the "us" of the rest of the Cal community could rally. Keith had not been listening to the radio that day. Prior to Simon's run-in with Danny Bosworth, he'd spent the morning in his office working at his computer. However, judging from the steady influx of student types jamming into the waiting room, Keith assumed that the occupation of the Chancellor's office had taken place and that the number of arrests there must have overwhelmed the police facilities on campus.

The waiting room had reached the standing-only capacity shortly after Keith's arrival. The crowded condition made pushing and jostling unavoidable with some of it spilling over Keith's way even though he'd secured himself a chair. To discourage such spillovers, Keith slipped on his Ray Bans, reasoning that a large African-American male in dark glasses, sitting in a police station, was likely to be left to his own space by a bunch of upper-middle class white kids. His theory had held so far and, as a bonus, his hidden eyes were free to observe at will.

New arrivals to the waiting room had to fill out paperwork which they obtained from one of the three women who were working behind a counter: a couple of skinny, flat-chested Asians, and an overweight sister with an enormous booty and breasts like medicine balls. The sister was clearly in charge. Every five minutes or so, in a loud voice that crackled with bossiness, she would remind the young crowd to form an orderly line and maintain it. When one young man noisily shoved his way out-of-turn to the front and angrily demanded information from one of the Asian clerks, the sister intervened.

"Young sir, you can just turn around and take yourself to the back of the line," she intoned. "And if you try a stunt like that again, you will find yourself waiting outside on the street."

The young man brazenly stared intently at one the sister's big tits. No, he was reading the name on her ID badge.

"Hey, Alice, what's up with you?" the young man said, in pseudo-street dialect, "I just need the 411 on what's up with my homeboy. They brought him in here two hours ago. That

ain't right. He's got..."

The sister named Alice cut the young man off. "Do your mother and father know you talk like street trash?" she said. "And who gave you permission to use my Christian name? In the future, you shall address me as Ms. Jones, but for the here and now, go to the end of the line. Elsewise, I am going to pick up a phone and in two shakes of a jiff some officers will be down to take you upstairs to join your homeboy."

There was a brief pause, then the young man turned, rolled his eyes for the rest of the crowd, but silently moved to the back of the line. Alice Jones and her Asian colleagues went back to work as if nothing had happened, but five minutes later, Alice was once again reminding people to form and maintain an orderly line. Alice's size and the way she had handled the unruly young man brought back memories to Keith of his sole brush with the law.

* * *

It was in Portland during the summer of his fifteenth year. He and some buds were hanging out one evening at the Lloyd Center, watching girls ice-skate on the indoor rink. The girls were not good skaters, nor were they especially pretty, so Keith and his buds were soon bored. Someone got the idea to steal record albums out of the Fred Myers store. Keith had initially declined, insisting he'd rather stay and try to hit on one of the girl skaters. But another boy, a tubby kid named LeRoy, had a big mouth. He began taunting Keith, calling him a mama's boy. This was a direct shot to Keith's manhood and it stung big-time. He had just finished his freshman year at Jesuit High School and was already a star athlete, having lettered in football, basketball, and baseball. Star athletes could not allow themselves to be put-down by big-mouthed tubby boys, not if they wanted to continue to walk like a man. His only choice here was to either kick the tubby boy's ass or go steal a goddamn record from Fred Myers. And since there was no glory in a star athlete lowering himself to beat on a tubby boy, Keith had only one option and that posed a serious problem. If quiet was kept, he was a mama's boy. His mama, Valerie, with help from his Aunt Sharmaye, had raised him, doted on him, and he adored her. She gave him everything she could and asked only that he make her proud and not cause her no grief. The 15-year-old Keith Joyner was no expert on the subject, but he was fairly certain that if he got caught stealing a record from Fred Myers, it would cause his mother grief.

Of course Keith did go into Fred Myers that night and he did attempt to steal a record --

an eight-track tape, actually, even though he did not have an eight-track tape player -- and he did get caught. He was turned over to a uniformed security guard, a large, pillow-breasted black woman much like Alice Jones, with the same bossy, self-righteous attitude. She'd taken Keith to a small room, had him sit on a stool, like little Miss Muffett, had taken down his name, address, and phone number, like he was a POW. He acted tough, asked if she wanted his serial number or something. She got mad, cuffed him upside the head, called him a punk, gave him a stern lecture on what happened to Negro boys who robbed stores, how they got put into prison with nasty white men with tatoos who would do things to them so awful she could not say those things by name. He was scared but he didn't show it. Said he could take care of himself. Then the security woman said she was going to call his parents.

That's when Keith had lost it.

His eyes flooded with tears as he begged the woman not to call his mama. "Please please please don't call my mama, don't call her it would kill her, I'll never do this again, never, never, never, only please please don't call my mama," he'd said. When he started it was just tears in his eyes. By the time he finished, he was blubbering. The sight of this big, strapping kid, already close to six feet tall and beautifully muscled, crying like a frightened toddler must have moved the woman because she started shedding tears of her own. She crossed the room to where Keith sat on the stool and before too long had clasped him into the cushy expanse of her bosom.

Shortly thereafter, Keith walked arm-in-arm with the uniformed security woman out of the Fred Myers. She'd given him a quick hug then another sharp rap to the skull and told him to get along and to never steal nothing from Fred Myers again or she would personally take him to his mama. With relief in his heart, and fresh tears of gratitude wetting his eyes, Keith had turned and walked right into his mother and Aunt Sharmaye who'd seen and heard everything. His mama had then got the story from the security guard and had made him sleep in the basement that night. Before turning out the light and plunging Keith into a cold, creaky squeaky darkness that kept him up the entire night, she expressed her disappointment in words Keith would never forget.

"It's bad enough that you stole, that you broke the law and committed a sin," Keith's mama said, "but you let yourself be goaded into doing it by someone else. That marks you as a criminal, a sinner, and a fool. Of the three, it's the fool

in you that shames me the most. Criminals and sinners bring grief to others. Fools bring grief to themselves."

The next time the tubby boy, LeRoy, tried to goad Keith into doing something by calling him a mama's boy, Keith called him a bitch, blackened his eye and bloodied his nose. No one would ever play Keith Joyner for a fool again.

* * *

Keith shook his head at the memory. Thoughts of the night he spent in the basement still gave him the shivers. He did not like being in a police station. He did not like hearing the voice of Alice Jones. Chalk it up to fear-response. Better still, a combination of fear-response and memories. Not so much memories of his childhood in Portland, but memories of a more recent vintage; specifically, memories of the past two weeks, memories of events which had swiftly progressed from bad to worse. First there had been that horrible Friday night at Simon's house when Keith had informed him of Chancellor MacBryde's decision regarding Quip. Keith no longer knew what to believe as to the memories Simon had relived in the MNEME, but he did know that the mind of his friend was being visited with thoughts that came from an alien place. The look that had flashed in Simon's eyes in the Thomas' living room when Keith had sided with Jan in opposition to further Quip treatments had been the same look that Keith had seen on the racquetball court. Cold and mean, like the most brutal of the linebackers with whom Keith had played ball, the ones who lived to hit and hurt, not for the athletic joy of a physically violent game (Keith himself would have been found guilty if that were a crime), but strictly as a matter of taking care of business. Whoever was on the other side of those eyes, Simon Thomas or Payton Adams, he was not Keith Joyner's friend.

Following the ugly scene at the Thomas' house, Keith had decided to log some serious computer time at his office. He wanted to review once more in detail the data that been accumulated thus far on all the Quip experiments, those involving Morris and the other bonobos as well as those involving Simon. It was nearly ten o'clock when he stood before the massive wooden doors that sealed the main entrance to the Brain Lab, fruitlessly searching his wallet for the cardkey that would open their electronic lock. He never took that card out of his wallet except to enter the Brain Lab after-hours. Nevertheless it was gone. Maybe it fell out when Sandra or one of the boys was snatching money out his wallet. Maybe it fell out when he was

fumbling for a laundry receipt earlier in the day. Maybe, so what, whatever and who the fuck cared? All he knew was that the motherfucker was not in his fucking wallet and he could not get into the goddamn fucking laboratory and he was standing there like some motherfucking mad man pounding on the cardkey slot shouting his thoughts against the Brain Lab's putty-colored concrete walls and listening to those idiotic words mockingly echo out into the chilly black stillness of the campus at night.

Lungs heaving, forehead sweating, knuckles bleeding, Keith had finally managed to bring himself back under control. Shaken but more or less calm, he reached for the phone above the cardkey slot and dialed the extension of Gibby Gibson who answered on the third ring.

Gibby was a lab-rat. You could find him holed up there at all hours, day or night. Science was his life. He never went home except to sleep. And sometimes, Keith knew, Gibby didn't even bother to go home for that.

"Where's your key?" Gibby asked upon opening one of the wooden doors. "And did you know your hand is dripping blood?"

"The answers to both questions are obvious," Keith said, walking past him. "Thanks for letting me in."

Gibby's office was on the eighth floor, the same as Keith's. As they rode the elevator up, Gibby commenced to agitating about the Quip experiments.

"So? Are we going to talk about you-know-what?" was how Gibby had begun.

"What?" asked Keith, playing dumb while his eyes followed the skip of the floor directory light.

"You know: That which we're not supposed to talk about?" Gibby persisted.

"You heard what Lapage said," Keith replied, wondering why the Brain Lab's brand new elevator which usually raced from floor to floor had all of a sudden slowed its pace to a crawl.

"Uh, yes, I did, Professor Joyner, but I choose to exercise my constitutional right to free-speech," Gibby answered back with exaggerated somberness. Then, in his normal voice, "You can't possibly be serious about obeying that paper-pushing prick. He's a lawyer for chrissake, Keith. Know what you do when you come across a lawyer buried up to his neck? You get more dirt."

The elevator doors opened and Gibby followed Keith down the hall, even though their

offices were in opposite directions.

"We're scientists, Keith. We have to talk about things. That's how science gets done. You give me your opinion. I give you my opinion. You see that I'm right and we proceed onto discovery."

Keith stopped at the door to his office and turned to face Gibby. "Are you going to follow me inside?"

Gibby smiled. "I was going to let you in. You don't have your key, remember?"

Keith sighed, disguised it as a yawn of disinterest. "Okay, so let us both in and we'll talk."

Gibby inserted his cardkey and Keith heard the click of the electronically controlled latch being released. Keith pushed open the door and made no effort to stop Gibby from coming in, walking right past the guest chairs, and plopping down on Keith's black leather sofa.

"So!" Gibby said, locking his hands behind his head. "Let's see what we got. You will concede that your friend, Simon, is lying to us about the genetic memories he has recalled?"

Keith frowned. "I concede nothing of the sort. What makes you so certain?"

Gibby's laughter was smug and haughty. "C'mon, you've seen the same data I have. Simon Thomas in the MNEME under the influence of Quip. Enormous chemical activity. Alpha prime NREM readings top of the chart. Genetic memory map GEM images lit up like a rock concert. Where there's so much smoke, there simply has to be a fire."

"No argument about a fire. But what is the nature of this fire?" Keith responded, sitting down on the edge of his desk. "I do not dispute that Simon's mind has been active under the Quip. I do not dispute that there has been a heavy volume of traffic between his genetic memory maps and his neocortex. Simon himself claims as much. But why do you think he's lying? Shouldn't we be discussing whether he is indeed experiencing true recall or if the signals are garbled beyond comprehension?"

Gibby brought his hands in front of his face and sighted down the double-barrel of his index fingers. "The answer to your second question is obvious. Had he not experienced recall we'd have known it and there would have been no second treatment. Hell, he experienced recall that first time in the MNEME even without Quip. The answer to your first question is not quite as obvious but only slightly less so. That warm-fuzzy story about Payton Adams the happy steel

worker who met a tragic demise at the hands of Andrew Carnegie's big mean Pinkertons might snow Oprah Winfrey but it shouldn't pull the wool over the eyes of a hot-shot neurologist like you."

Keith raised an eyebrow. "Say what?"

"Don't tell Jack Lapage but Sasha and I have been talking about you-know-what. The physiological data reveals a great deal about Simon's emotional state in the MNEME. Based on his debriefings, Sasha says the data should have been consistent with a pattern of initial anxiety followed by excitement during the first session. During the second session, if Simon's debriefing reports are to be believed, there should have been slightly less anxiety followed by an extended period of excitement with anxiety at the end when he was, apparently, on the verge of reliving his great-grandfather's death. That is what we should have seen in our data but that is not what the data showed us, is it? Instead we saw, in the first session, anxiety followed by excitement, followed by extended and relentless anxiety, capped by fear and depression. In the second session, the anxiety and fear continued to elevate throughout until three-quarters of the way through the session when he calmed down considerably."

Gibby paused, cocked his head to listen, as if his words were being replayed, then laughed. "To say he calmed down is an understatement. There were moments towards the end of that second session, when he displayed all the emotional readings of a corpse. What do you suppose that was about? And let's not even start with the erections and the ejaculations, or the tears, or the anomalous SMEG mindprint, or the Irish accent. No, Keith, let us simply concede that there was a hell of a lot going on inside Simon's mind under the Quip that he has not shared with us."

Keith had been about to lie then thought better of it. Why continue the pretense? The data was there for all to see. He conceded Gibby's point and was immediately asked why he thought Simon was lying.

"Most likely, there were things about his great-grandfather he did not want anyone else to know," Keith answered.

"Obviously," snickered Gibby. "But what? Sasha is guessing he found out his great-grandfather was loyal to the capitalists rather than the workers. She said his subsequent peculiar behavior could stem from his Berkeley liberal-leftist brain undergoing major denial."

Keith smiled. "That's a pretty good guess and pretty much the way I see it, too. Earlier this evening, Simon alluded to marital problems between his great-grandfather and great-grandmother. This would account in part at least for the indicators of anxiety and depression." Keith stopped. Should he go on? Should he open up and tell Gibby exactly what he thought? Yeah, go for it. He was tired of playing dumb for Simon's sake. And there was no harm here. It was only he and Gibby sharing private speculations.

"My guess," Keith continued, "is that Simon also discovered his great-grandfather was some kind of spy for Andrew Carnegie's people. I suspect that his union brothers got hip to the fact that Payton Adams had ratted them out and were about to take their revenge when I pulled the plug on the experiment."

Gibby vigorously nodded, intrigued and excited. "How about the flat spells, those moments where his physiology seems to have descended into emotional deep-freeze?"

Keith responded with a makes-no-never-mind shrug. "Maybe the revelations of the genetic memories finally left him numb. It happens." A thought hit Keith and he voiced it out loud. "Maybe his brain is confabulating. Or at least trying to."

"Can we prove any of this?" Gibby questioned.

Keith stared out his window at the lit up face of the Campanile clock as he spoke. "Simon's a historian, he has been trained to get his facts correct. Even if a part of his brain wanted to re-write those memories, another part would want to record them accurately. Jan is certain that Simon has a journal he's keeping secret. She's been looking around the house but has not found it. If truth be told, I'm thinking about going through his office sometime when I know he won't be around."

Gibby's eyes narrowed. "Assuming such a journal exists, if we find it we would have our proof that genetic memory is real and that Quip can be used to recover it."

"Yes," Keith cautiously said, watching as the hands on the Campanile's clock progressed to the ten-thirty mark.

"That should mean major new funding grants, enough to do more genetic memory experiments as well as explore the Quip isomer as a neurohormone."

"No doubt it would," Keith agreed, turning his eyes back on his colleague.

Gibby sucked on his lower lip. "You won't find Simon's journal in his office, you know,

he's much too clever to leave it out for anyone to find."

"No doubt about that either," Keith said. He knew where Gibby was going and elected not to cut him off.

"But if we were to offer Simon that third Quip treatment he wants in exchange for his journal, everyone wins."

"If the Chancellor MacBryde or Jack Lapage or Vijay were to find out, we'd be history at this place," Keith said.

"No one need ever know. I won't tell if you won't tell. And I'm sure we can count on Simon's silence. How would anyone know? The MNEME is fully automated, either one of us could run the experiment by ourselves."

"Suppose something went wrong, suppose there were complications or Simon was to be injured?"

Gibby rolled his eyes then frowned. "The procedure is simple and with computer backup nothing would go wrong. And how is Simon going to be injured? The most dangerous part of the experiment is getting in and out of the MNEME. He might slip and hurt himself. That's about the extent of danger. The Quip is certainly not going to harm him. We have the data to prove it. Simon Thomas has suffered no physiological damage as the result of being treated with Quip. That is a scientific fact."

"I don't know"

Gibby stretched forward in his seat, perching his elbows on his knees and creasing his brow, his eyes lasering in on Keith. "Don't say you don't know. You do know," Gibby said. "Say what it really is: You're afraid."

Keith felt his jaws clamp. Once upon a time, for such effrontery he might have bitch-slapped a fool like Gibby. But that was another lifetime and in this lifetime, he was not a star athlete forgiven for his indiscretions, but a tenured professor, married with children. He needed his faculty position; he did not need a lawsuit from Gibby. He needed to know if Quip truly worked; but he was afraid.

"Your mouth ought not to be selling woof tickets your body can't cash," he replied just to be spiteful.

Gibby was neither intimidated nor fooled. "No guts, no glory. But I'm not worried.

You'll come around. You want answers as much as I do. The only difference between us is that I'm a true believer in science. You let personal feelings get in the way."

Keith raised an eyebrow. "What makes you so sure I'll come round to your way of thinking?"

Gibby rose from the sofa and moved to the door. He paused at the transit, looked back at Keith and grinned. "Cause this situation is far from a grounded state. Everything is still up in the air which means the situation has nowhere to go but down. When things get bad enough, you'll realize that my way is the only way out."

The door closed behind Gibby and automatically clicked into a locked state. But as he stared at the closed door, Keith realized the symbolism was a malapropism. Gibby had been quite correct. If he, Keith Joyner, had the guts to go through it, the Quip door was still very much open. And, had Gibby lingered in the hallway outside the door, he might have heard what would have sounded like a gunshot. It was the crack of Keith's big fist smacking down upon the surface of his desk, venting his frustration.

Gibby was right, of course Keith wanted answers as much as Gibby. More so, even, because his stake was so much higher. A third treatment of Quip for Simon could prove Seychelles-Joyner Fear-Response theory and that could very well mean the Nobel Prize in Medicine for Keith. As the first African-American Nobel laureate in medicine, he would not only make a fortune, he would make history. Simon was not the only one who appreciated the importance of history.

Simon. There was the rub. A third treatment of Quip could also spell big trouble for Simon and Keith would not risk it. No matter how great the temptation, he would do right by his friend.

Keith's neocortex sent a signal to his hippocampus to retrieve a specific memory map, one that had not been retrieved recently, but one whose synaptic connections were as permanently etched as the memory of the stolen tape incident at Fred Myers.

* * *

As a sophomore at Oregon State, Keith roomed with a freshman running back named Dexter Samuels. Dexter had also played and starred at Jesuit High. He and Keith had been teammates there for three years, and best friends for two. Keith was the reason that Dexter came

to OSU. They dreamed of leading the Beavers together into the Rose Bowl. On a Saturday night, one week before the season began, Keith was at his fraternity's French Party, the traditional first party of the school year, so-named because the guys were to come dressed as French pimps, and their dates as French prostitutes.

Keith's date was a sophomore named Serafina, a fine young thing with a superb body. Serafina wore black satin hot pants, shorts so short they barely covered the crack in her ass, and a see-through white blouse that showed precisely how well her upthrusting breasts filled her black bra. The basement of the fraternity house was lit in red lights, and humid from the packed bodies. Brother Keno had whipped up a punch bowl of his famed "Purple Death," a concoction of grape juice and grain alcohol, from which Keith and the rest of the brotherhood knew to dip sparingly for themselves and liberally for their dates. Keith had nursed a single cup through the first hour of the party and was still tipsy. Serafina had downed three cups and was feeling no pain or modesty. A hot local band, called The Needles, had been blasting their way through a cavalcade of Motown and Atlantic Record hits. Following a pulse-pounding, sweat-wringing triple-header of Knock On Wood, Midnight Hour, and Respect, they slowed things down with When a Man Loves a Woman. Serafina's blouse and hair were both damp as she allowed Keith to pull her in tight. Perfume and hairspray merged with the musky scent of perspiration as Keith and Serafina swayed to the music. She giggled into his ear and mumbled something about feeling "soooo goood." Then she stuck the tip of her tongue into Keith's ear and ground her loins against his. Keith's dick turned to concrete and he could feel the lust liquid begin to drip. His balls started to ache and his knees turned rubbery. By their own accord, his big hands moved down over the tight hard globe of her ass, his fingers splayed across the back of her hot pants and brought her into him even tighter. There was no resistance from Serafina, only a slight clutch of her breath and a whispered "Ummmmmm."

It was precisely at that instant -- Keith would never forget -- when a fraternity brother named Mike whispered into his free ear that he had a phone call from Dexter Samuels and that it was an emergency. Keith waited for the song to end before steering Serafina over to the punch bowl and fetching her another cup of Purple Death. He told her to have another drink and when he got back he'd take her upstairs to his room and show her something special.

"What the fuck you want, Dexter?" was how Keith had answered the call. There was no

denying the fear in the voice of Keith's friend on the other end of the line. He was calling from a pay phone at a gas station on Highway 20, just outside of Albany. Four upperclassmen on the football team, offensive lineman, of course, the fat fuckheads, Keith bitterly thought, had kidnapped Dexter and set him out on the highway. Dexter wanted Keith to get in his car and come pick him up right away.

Harassing the freshmen was a rite of passage on most sports teams, but especially on football teams. Keith, himself, as a freshman, had been escorted to a whorehouse in Eugene on the night after a game with the University of Oregon by three linebackers who, after Keith had been sent into a room with the priciest whore in the house, then stole his wallet and abandoned him. It had taken some fast talking on Keith's part to avoid a fight with the house security. Still, having survived that ordeal, Keith did not understand why Dexter was making such a fuss. Besides, his dick was twitching like a divining rod and he was anxious to get back to Serafina. After ascertaining that Dexter had been left his clothes, his wallet, and his shoes -- his tennis shoes at that -- Keith lost all sympathy.

"Shit man, try hitchhiking and if that don't work, walk home," he told Dexter. "It ain't but twenty miles. Your dogs can hang."

But Dexter Samuels was scared, scared to death. He was a city boy and being out in the country after dark was terrifying to him. He was afraid of predatory animals, he was afraid of poisonous snakes. He was especially afraid of rednecks in pickup trucks, out looking for nigger boys to lynch. That one had really pissed off Keith.

"Shyeet, you ain't in Mississippi. This is Oregon. Stop being such a pussy. Hang the fucking phone up and start walking down the road. Maybe the highway patrol will spot you and pick you up. Just tell them what happened."

Dexter persisted, begging Keith to come get him. Keith explained that his date, Serafina, whom Dexter knew as a stone fox, was drunk and practically begging for Keith's dick. No way could Keith leave. Either one of his fraternity brothers would hound his action or Serafina would keep drinking, get sick and pass out.

Dexter Samuels, all 6 feet 2 inches and 195 pounds of him began to cry. "You my friend, Keith, I need you bro," he sniffed. "Be there for me, man."

"All right man, I'll come get you. But I don't want to spend a second more than I have to

doing it. So you start walking your ass down the highway now and I'll see you when I see you."

"How you gonna see me in the dark?" had been Dexter's last question.

"Smile a lot, nigger, I'll see the whites of your teeth," had been Keith's flippant reply.

But Keith had not driven to meet Dexter Samuel on Highway 20 that night. He'd gone back down to the party in the basement, told Serafina what was going on and asked her to go for a ride with him to fetch Dexter. But Serafina did not want to go for a ride in Keith's car, she did not want to go out into the cold night at all. She wanted to go upstairs to Keith's room, she wanted him to show her something special. Then she had put her tongue in his ear once again and pressed her loins against his and that had been that as far as Dexter Samuel was concerned.

About an hour later, some 15 miles outside of Corvallis, a pickup truck full of white teenage boys had driven past Dexter Samuel who was walking along Highway 20. The truck had honked its horn and pulled over about 10 yards down the road. The teenage boys later swore they were not intending to do any harm to Dexter Samuel, that they were only planning to give him a ride into town. Probably no one outside their immediate family believed the boys but what anyone else believed was irrelevant. What counted was what Dexter Samuel believed. He believed the worst of those white boys and he took off across a field. Dexter Samuel could run like a deer, and on a football field he was every bit as sure-footed and agile. But a rural field in the dead of night is another matter and Dexter had not gone far before stepping into a hole and tearing both the anterior cruciate and the medial collateral ligaments on his right knee beyond what could then be repaired. Dexter's football career was effectively ended. The university was good about allowing him to keep his scholarship and he even suited up his sophomore year. But a man who walks with a limp, even after reconstructive surgery, does not make much of a running back and the truth of it was, Dexter was never big on academics, his only reason for being in college was to play football. Without football, there was no reason for him to stay in school. The last Keith had heard, he was working as a janitor at some elementary school in Portland. The two men had not exchanged a dozen words with one another since the accident.

Twenty years ago, Keith had wronged a friend for the sake of pussy. A few months ago, he came very close to wronging his friend Simon, again for the sake of pussy. Keith Joyner would never again do wrong by a friend, not even for the sake of scientific immortality. The price, he knew, was too high. A fool, like his mama once said, brings grief to himself; a fool

who betrays his friends brings shame.

* * *

Keith had not seen Simon's speech before the demonstrators at Sproul Plaza but he heard about it almost immediately afterward from Maris Cavanaugh. As Lapage had foretold, on the heels of three days of picketing, the ad hoc steering committee for the Academic Senate called for a campus-wide strike against classes and won overwhelming support in the subsequent vote by the full faculty. The strike had begun on a Monday, one week after the start of fall session. That morning there had been a massive rally in Sproul Plaza. From atop the Mario Savio steps, where the Free Speech Movement had once captured a sleepy nation's attention and launched the political upheaval of the sixties, the dean of each department in the humanities had been invited to give a speech in defense of their curriculum being continued on the Berkeley campus.

Masanori Morito, dean of history, had gone last. It was well into the noon hour by the time he started and, according to Maris, he'd mumbled through some packaged rhetoric that had gone largely ignored by the demonstrators, many of whom had retreated to the shade of the student union building to sit and eat their lunches. Dean Morito had just finished quoting George Santayana, when Simon, appearing out of nowhere, boldly marched up to the podium and snatched away the microphone.

"He immediately got the students' attention by talking about football, the Cal Bears and the San Francisco 49ers," Maris had told Keith, smiling with fetching admiration. "He told them that the coaches and players for both teams would be studying game films of their opponents this week. He said it was just like scientists, before embarking on a new experiment, study the results of previous related experiments, or investors study market trends and performances before committing their money. They are learning from the past, he said. Whether we choose to play sports, do science, or invest money, making history is not an elective. We do not have a choice. We, ourselves, by our very existence, become a part of history. The lives of each and everyone of us is history in the making. Our words and deeds will affect the future. Their impact may be felt by only a few, or it may be felt by many. Only history will tell. He took note of Dean Morito's invoking of Santayana's famous admonition that those who do not learn from the past are condemned to repeat it. Then he told the students of a corollary to that warning: Every time history repeats itself, the price goes up."

Maris had looked up into Keith's eyes and grinned like a religious zealot who'd just experienced an epiphany. "The TV cameras were there, tape was rolling, and he gave them a magnificent soundbyte. There was a loud, enthusiastic response from the demonstrators and Professor Thomas vanished into the crowds before reporters could get to him for a followup. A star was born today. Watch your evenings news."

Keith did and Maris had been right. All the local stations carried Simon's appearance at the podium during their six o'clock news broadcasts. The crowd of demonstrators, hollering and waving signs, their numbers mightily bolstered by the lunch-hour foot-traffic through Sproul Plaza, and Simon Thomas at the podium, proclaiming that the price of history would rise for those who foolishly repeat it.

"He's a big man and his voice, with that Irish lilt, seizes your attention," Maris had said. "From what I'd been told about Professor Thomas, I could not believe how commanding a presence he was."

Neither could Keith. Simon had always been the sort of man who said please when placing his order in a restaurant. Yet there he was on television, before several hundred cheering people, coming on like a latter-day Michael Collins. Sitting in his home, watching Simon on TV, the newest media star for the opposition to the Governor Law's University Reform Bill, Keith Joyner had begun to give serious thought to giving his friend that third treatment of Quip. For all of his and Jan's concerns about the negative effects of Quip on Simon's personality, there'd damn sure been some positive effects, too. The post-Quip Simon Thomas truly was a stronger, more self-confident and assertive person than the pre-Quip version. Gibby had been right about Quip not having harmed Simon. Maybe Eugene Nertz was right as well when he argued that Simon would soon come to grips with his new-found feelings of aggression. At the same time, Nertz had warned that Simon would always be handicapped until he relived the event behind his post-traumatic stress disorder. In Keith's mind, the arguments for giving Simon a third treatment of Quip were beginning to sound pretty damn convincing.

Then came the incident with Danny Bosworth earlier in the day that had brought Keith and Simon to the Berkeley Municipal Courthouse. They'd finished their noontime run at the track (having agreed to stop playing racquetball for awhile), showered, and were walking along Telegraph Avenue, headed for Noah's Bagels. The plan was to grab a bag of bagels, a container

of cream cheese, a plastic knife, and a handful of napkins, and walk up to Memorial Stadium and watch the Bears football team scrimmage. With classes being struck, they had time enough on their hands.

Just as they reached Noah's, they ran into Danny Bosworth in the company of two friends. Simon had said Danny was a big kid, but that had been an understatement. The boy was huge, offensive lineman size, a good three inches taller than Keith and probably close to 300 pounds. Upon seeing Simon, Bosworth had immediately got up into Simon's face and, with his head bobbing up and down like a toy hippo, had begun spraying words of insult and disparagement.

"Well, well, if it isn't my teacher, my faculty advisor who would rather suck face with the leftist media than do the job the taxpayers of this state hired him to do. Nice example you're setting there, teach. I hope you're a better role model to your kids than you are to your students."

"This is neither the time nor place for discourse, Daniel," Simon had politely replied, after taking a step backwards. "I will be in my office after three o'clock today. Come by and we can discuss your feelings."

Danny Bosworth again stepped forward to crowd Simon. As usual, Telegraph Avenue was thick with foot-traffic and Simon had nowhere further to back away. "My father and Governor Pat saw your performance on the tube. They were not impressed. You want to know what history teaches us, man? There are men who are visionaries and would lead us into the future. And there are men who impede progress and would lead us into the past. The governor is obviously in the first camp and you are clearly in the other. Tenure protects you from being fired which is what Chancellor MacBryde would dearly love to do to you and what you sorely deserve. Tenure is to academics what the unions are to labor, courage for the sheep. It royally pisses me that you can mouth off like that and get away with it. Like you said yourself, there should be consequences for our words and deeds and I'd like nothing better than to punch you in the face for what you did. But I can't do that because I'm just a student and you're my teacher."

"Leave now, lad," replied Simon in a thick Irish brogue.

Danny's head bobbed furiously and his spittle-slick lips spread into a malicious grin across his wide face. He exchanged looks with his two friends who had suddenly gotten interested, then turned back to Simon. "Am I hearing a threat? You want a piece of me,

Professor?"

At the sound of the Irish accent, Keith's ears perked up but someone jostled him from behind trying to squeeze past. The attack came during that momentary distraction. It began and ended so quickly that Keith doubted he could have reacted in time to stop it even had he not been bumped. One moment Danny Bosworth was jutting his jaw towards Simon with comic belligerence, quite likely thinking the situation funny and certainly unaware of any possible danger. The next moment there was a flash of Simon's fist, a picture-perfect left-hook, like a white Joe Frazier, and Danny Bosworth's huge body was stretched out on the sidewalk, his eyeballs rolled up into his skull, his nose and mouth gushing blood, and his jaw forming an obtuse angle with the rest of his face. The boy's two friends, recovered more quickly from their shock than did Keith. They came forward and locked their arms around Simon, as if to pull him away from their fallen comrade. They were both boys of impressive size, not immense like Danny Bosworth, but each over two hundred pounds. Simon threw them aside as easily as a grizzly bear might throw off a couple of beagles. A circle immediately cleared on the sidewalk and no one dared try to pass by. Simon was free to do whatever he wished. He could have walked away. He could have placed his foot on Danny Bosworth's throat and choked the life out of him, or he could have simply stomped Danny Bosworth to death.

That he did none of the above was because Keith stepped around in front of him. Gently but firmly placing his hands on his friend's broad shoulders, and locking eyes with him, Keith had told Simon: "It will go better with the police if you don't leave the scene."

The ice-cold frost that had seeped in to cast an opaque glaze over Simon's green eyes suddenly puddled. When Simon quietly nodded that he understood, those green eyes bore the frightened confusion of a lost soul caught in the glare of light from an unknown world.

Keith's ruminations were interrupted by the arrival of Jan at the courthouse. She stormed into the crowded waiting area like a one-woman calvary, eager for battle. The students and even the handful of rougher-looking individuals for whom the courthouse waiting room was in all likelihood a regular part of their habitat, instantly made a path for Jan who came straight to Keith. A male student who had been sitting next to Keith, coughing up a storm while he filled out the forms he'd been given, immediately offered up his seat to her. Eager for battle but

apparently unwilling to ride blindly into an ambush, Jan sat down and spent about ten minutes with Keith getting a full accounting of everything that Danny Bosworth and Simon said and did before the blow was struck. She then walked over toward the counter, excused her way to the front of the line, and asked to speak with the sister named Alice. Whatever words were exchanged between them, the two women began laughing. Alice's laughter was a big, bouncy cackle. To Keith's surprise, Jan's laughter also took on a cackling quality. It did not sound the laugh of the Jan that Keith knew, but it served its intended purpose. Moments later Jan was back next to Keith, studying a copy of the incidence report she'd obtained from Alice. Keith read over her shoulder that Simon had been apprehended by patrol officers Perry and Ling from the Violence Suppression Unit. They wrote in alpha/numeric jargon that Jan appeared to understand but left Keith at a loss. He went back to people-watching and settled his gaze on an Asian girl. By the time Jan wanted his attention again, his mind had undressed the girl and prepped her for some Far East sexual action. Jan's rhetorical "Why the hell was Simon brought here?" chased away the image.

"He should have been asked to produce ID, been cited and released at the scene," Jan said of Simon's arrest. "This is bullshit and these officers have some explaining to do."

After first instructing Keith to wait in case she needed further information, Jan went back to her new friend Alice and minutes later went through the door that led upstairs. Nearly an hour went by before she returned, appearing none too worried. She explained that Chancellor MacBryde's office had been occupied. There'd also been a number of incidents elsewhere on campus and along Telegraph Avenue. As a result, everyone caught causing a public disturbance was being hauled in. Simon would not be booked, however. He would be required to sign a citation promising to appear in court, and would be released on his own recognizance. She expected him to be brought down shortly. Taking a seat next to Keith, Jan said she had gone to see the DA directly, and they both agreed that there was no requisite criminal intent here.

"I can show cause and probably win an outright dismissal of the charges," she said, arching her back in a cat-like stretch. "If push comes to shove, we'll reimburse the Bosworth family for costs and settle out on a suspended sentence."

Of much greater concern to Jan was the university's reaction. She asked what Keith

thought Chancellor MacBryde was going to do. In studying her face, it struck Keith that for the first time since he'd known her, Jan's smooth skin was showing lines. The march of time or worry wrinkles? He also noticed that she had taken to biting her nails. What was next, he wondered, cigarette smoking? In answer to her question, he offered up the guess that Chancellor MacBryde, already pissed because of what happened to his office, would go through the ceiling when he learned about Simon and Danny Bosworth. He'd for certain take some kind of action. Either he'd suspend Simon or put him on administrative leave. Jan seemed her old self when she snickered. "I'd like to see him try," she said. "I'll get a TRO so fast his winky will shrivel."

"What's a TRO?" asked Keith.

"Temporary restraining order," Jan answered, her eyes elsewhere. "I'll file affidavits alleging immediate and irreparable damage to Simon's academic reputation. And then I will create a publicity shitstorm for the university. Human experimentation run amok, resulting in disability and discrimination from the irresponsible administration that permitted the experiments in the first place. I'll go network as well as local news with this. Before I'm through, they'll be padlocking the Brain Lab...."

Jan stopped, looked over at Keith, and sheepishly smiled. "Sorry about that. Don't worry, my threat alone will stop Chancellor MacBryde from doing anything stupid."

"What if Governor Pat puts the squeeze on him?"

"That is exactly who my threat would be aimed at. As Simon would say, MacBryde is nothing more than a Scotch mutt. Governor Pat holds his leash."

More time passed and still no Simon. Jan finally returned to the counter to speak with Alice, who, in response, picked up the phone, dialed an extension, made an inquiry. When she hung up, Alice told Jan that Simon would be brought down any minute. But when a person finally did arrive from upstairs it was not Simon but a husky Hispanic man in an inexpensive blue suit, probably off the sale rack at the Men's Wearhouse, Keith thought, with a white shirt and striped tie of similar pedigree. Clipped prominently on the pen pocket of his coat was a shiny BPD badge. Ignoring the students who continued to jam the waiting room and, by now, spilled out onto the street, he came straight for Jan and Keith. He introduced himself as Jose DeLeon, a detective with homicide, and asked if they were the people waiting for Simon Thomas.

Jan was up on her feet so swiftly it was as if she had created a suctioning wake that swept Keith up to his feet as well. She had enough height to look Detective DeLeon directly in the eyes. In fact, he had to raise his a bit to meet hers.

"I am Mrs. Thomas. What business does a homicide dick have with my husband?"

Detective DeLeon grinned and held up his hands defensively. He wore heavy rings on four of his ten fingers. "Nothing like that ma'am. Actually, I've come to apologize for the delay. As you can see, it's a mess here today with all the ruckus on campus. Almost like the old days, isn't it? Anyway, it's pretty crowded upstairs and there was a problem ..."

"What kind of a problem?" Jan interrupted. "Is Simon alright?"

Again Detective DeLeon held up his hands, showing his rings. "Yes, ma'am, he's fine. And I promise, we'll bring him to you shortly. But I did want to ask you a couple of questions. Maybe we should go up to my office? It will be a lot less noisy."

Jan cut him off again. "No. First you answer my question: What happened?"

Detective DeLeon gave her an "it's been a long day" smile, then looked away with a shake of his head, as if to call to the attention of the Fates the unfairness to which he was being subjected. When he returned his eyes to Jan's, they bore a look of renewed faith in humanity. "Civilians don't generally interrupt cops. My guess is you're an attorney. Am I right? Yeah, I knew it." He repeated his look-away head-shake trick once more, before continuing. "We got 30 or 40 people upstairs awaiting citation release. All our rooms are full. There's people standing in the hallways like they're waiting to buy tickets to a Rolling Stones concert or something. It's a mess, what can I say? Anyhow, through a misunderstanding your husband got shuffled into a holding cell."

Jan's eyes flashed heat. "A holding cell? For an A&B? No priors?"

"A mistake, Mrs. Thomas, I promise you," Detective DeLeon said, opening his eyes wide to show her the depths of his sincerity. The dude was smooth, Keith thought, a real pussy hound. No doubt at night that cheap white shirt and tie were replaced with expensive silk and chains of gold. Keith liked him. But for athletic scholarships and affirmative action, he and Detective DeLeon might have been partners on the job. "Someone mistook your husband for an EDP who was picked up around the same time. Big guy, like your husband."

"Someone mistook my husband for an emotionally disturbed person?" Jan asked, blinking her eyes rapidly as if that would somehow make sense of the stupidity her ears were hearing.

Detective DeLeon shrugged his wide shoulders. "What can I say, Mrs. Thomas? Shit happens, pardon my French. Your husband had been acting somewhat dazed and confused. It was a mistake and I was walking with an officer who'd been sent to get him out. That's when the fight started."

"Fight?" said Jan, temporarily startled out her blinking. "My husband was in another fight?"

"Yes and no, Mrs. Thomas, which is what I wanted to ask you about. In presenting his ID, your husband claimed to be a professor of history at Cal. Is that correct?"

The detective's abrupt shift from answering Jan's question to asking a question of his own seemed to throw her off. With no protest but much suspicion, she nodded and answered yes. Then, remembering herself, she came back at him. "However, if you're asking that means you've already checked and know it is so."

Detective DeLeon grinned, looked past Jan to Keith, and flexed his facial muscles in a what-are-you-gonna-do? mein.

"You're right, I did," he said. "I called the history dean's office and spoke with a secretary there, a woman named Melody?"

"Melanie," Jan corrected.

"That's it. She confirmed your husband's position there. I talked with her some. She was very complimentary of your husband, described him as mild-mannered, a real sweetheart, gentle, sensitive."

Jan interrupted him yet again. "What is the point to this, Detective? What has happened to Simon? Why has he not been brought down here?"

Detective DeLeon coolly eyed her up and down, appraising with neither artifice nor apology, and obviously liking what he saw. "Okay, Mrs. Thomas, no more dicking around, pardon my French. Your husband got mistakenly placed in a holding cell with a man named Moise Sapola. Folks who know him call him Big Moosh. He's a muscle-bound headknocker the size of a bear. Done some serious hard time. I had him brought in for questioning on a 187, guy

got himself beat to death outside a bar in an alley. Kinda looked like Moosh's style. Wouldn't have been the first time."

Jan began to tremble. Keith did not know if it was from rage or fear. "Are you telling me you fools put my husband in a holding cell next to some dirt bag with snakes for brains?"

Detective DeLeon eyed her again, approvingly. "Unfortunately, that is what happened." Jan started to speak but Detective DeLeon held up a hand to stop her. "Hear me out, please, Mrs. Thomas. Moosh Sapola did attempt an assault upon your husband. As a result, Moosh Sapola has been taken to Alta Bates Hospital. The report is he suffered two cracked ribs, a fractured jaw, and severe bruises around both his eyes. But you needn't worry. We won't be pressing any charges against your husband and Moosh is not likely to sue."

Detective DeLeon took advantage of Jan's shocked silence to press forward. "I saw the fight, such as it were, with my own eyes, Mrs. Thomas. Your husband took out a brute, a real deal bad guy in a matter of seconds. Gave him a beating no two cops in this building could have done. What I would like to know is where a history professor learned to fight like that? I spent some time in the ring myself and I know a pro when I see one. But when I asked your husband where he trained he denied having ever had a lesson. That's a mystery to me and I got this thing about mysteries. They kinda bother me and I kinda like to resolve them. I'm thinking, it is one thing to clock some fat over-stuffed college brat on Telegraph Avenue, it is altogether something else to clock a mook like Big Moosh. I'm thinking maybe the day's events have left your husband rattled. Like I said, his acting dazed and confused is what got him put in the holding cell in the first place. He was still acting that way when I spoke with him even though Big Moosh never laid a finger on him. So I thought I'd come talk to you and ask you about it."

Jan sat back in her chair, stared off into space for a moment, then tiredly rubbed her eyes. She appeared to Keith to be a woman coming under attack by a killer migraine. But she did another eye-blink thing which seemed to compose her. Then she turned and coolly gave Detective DeLeon the same unvarnished look of appraisal he'd given her. She, too, seemed to like what she saw. "My husband lifts weights and exercises daily. He is in extremely good condition and is quite strong. He does work out on punching bags, both heavy and speed bags. But he has never had any formal training as a boxer if that is what you are asking me."

"Was he in the military?" Detective DeLeon asked.

"No, he was not."

The detective scratched at his chin, it sounded like an emery board rubbing across sandpaper. "That makes the mystery all the more mysterious," he finally said. "You see, I believe you, Mrs. Thomas. Nonetheless, I know when I see a man who has been professionally trained to hurt others in hand-to-hand combat. There was no wasted motion when your husband took down Big Moosh. Every blow landed right where it would inflict maximum damage. Big Moosh lost his breath, vision, and consciousness in that order. Efficient and quick. We were no more than ten feet away when the fight started and by the time we got the cell door open, Big Moosh was one click from the big sleep. Had your husband wanted to punch his ticket, he could have done so. Does that sound like a mild-mannered, gentle, sensitive history professor to you, Mrs. Thomas?"

The tears came despite Jan's gritty determination to suppress them. She was remembering, Keith knew, remembering a time not so long ago when Simon Thomas did fit that description, fit it to a tee, and wouldn't anybody have questioned it. Lips pressed together to hold back any words, she silently shook her head.

Detective DeLeon accepted her need for silence and turned to his attention Keith. "You must be the brain doctor who brought Professor Thomas in," he said. Keith introduced himself and the two men shook hands. The detective's grip was strong, as strong as Keith's. He gave Keith a visual once-over similar to what he'd given Jan but much shorter-lived. "Can you shed any light on this mystery?" he asked.

Keith had already made up his mind to not even bother to try to play this man. He would see through any artifice and that would only make things even more difficult for Simon and Jan.

"Professor Thomas has been suffering from a rare form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He has been receiving an experimental treatment. There have been some unexpected complications and he has not exactly been himself as of late. However, there is nothing that I know of which could account for his new expertise in physical combat. I am afraid that the mystery will, for the time being, have to remain unsolved."

Detective DeLeon gave Keith another once-over, more extended than before. He reached inside his coat and extracted a couple of business cards. He gave one to Keith and offered the

second to Jan who hesitated before accepting.

"That's got my work and home phone numbers and my pager number. Either of you get any ideas that might clarify this mystery I'd appreciate a call." He paused, waited until both of them looked his way. "To be perfectly honest, I don't expect either of you to call me about this matter. And if all is well for the professor, I probably won't ever hear from you again. That would be the best resolution for all concerned. However, I saw what the professor did in that cell and, to be perfectly honest, I think one day you're going to need my number."

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

"And have you had need to call Detective DeLeon?"

Jan Thomas looked across the desk at Dr. Nertz and was suddenly struck by the question of his age. There was a sprinkle of gray in his black hair and beard, but his face was youthful, with fewer lines than her own. That, or he did a better job of covering them up. She thought she detected makeup at the corners of his eyes. He also appeared relaxed and confident around her, which she found somewhat of a surprise given his relatively small stature and trim physique. Jan was used to men being intimidated by her size, even large husky men. Dr. Nertz was at least half-a-foot shorter than she and probably weighed less. No question, she'd kick his ass in a tussle and yet he did not seem in the least bit intimidated by her presence. Was he that sure of himself? Or were her recent battles with uncertainty and doubt taking their toll? Reducing her to

someone less than who she'd once been?

When Dr. Nertz politely cleared his throat, Jan realized she'd taken too long to answer his question. "No," she hurriedly said. "Your latest anger management sessions seem to be helping. At least there have been no further acts of violence."

"Excellent," Dr. Nertz said with a vigorous nod. "I feel we're making progress."

"But it's only been two weeks since he beat up Danny Bosworth," Jan quickly pointed out. "There's been little occasion for him to lose it. Other than to meet with you, he has scarcely had human contact. Certainly he has not gone near Danny Bosworth or probably any other student for that matter."

"I understand from Simon that the university has suspended him. Is that correct?"

"We have agreed for Simon to be placed on administrative leave. He can use his office, but he has been relieved of his teaching duties."

"A compromise?"

Jan snickered. "More like a Mexican standoff. The Bosworth family is pressuring the DA to prosecute, and Governor Law wrote an angry public letter demanding that Simon be fired. When Chancellor MacBryde and University Council Jack Lapage met with us, MacBryde said to Simon, 'If you insist on behaving like a character out of the Wild West, then think of me as the sheriff who aims to run you out of town.' It was his intent to suspend Simon pending a hearing of the disciplinary committee. I countered with a threat to go public about the Quip experiments. I told them I would sue the university for damages suffered by Simon as a result of his treatments at the Brain Lab. Lapage argued that, based on physiological evidence, there is no proof that Simon's aggressive actions are in any way connected to the Quip treatments. He'd obviously been talking with Vijay Jain."

"What was your response to that?"

"I told him Keith Joyner's belief that the change in Simon's personality is being caused by the genetic memories that Quip introduced into his neocortex. Lapage suggested that Keith might now be alone in that opinion among his Brain Lab colleagues. He says the physiological evidence is inconclusive. All that anyone can state for a fact is that Quip caused the creation of new synaptic connections between Simon's neocortex and limbic system.

Whether or not those new connections are responsible for his recent activities is mere

speculation. That's why I'm here today."

"You want to know what I think?"

"Yes."

"But you already know, Mrs. Thomas, that I do, to an extent, share Professor Joyner's opinion."

"Would you be willing to state your opinions in a court of law?"

"Yes, of course."

"Good. Then I need elaboration on what you mean when you say you share Keith's opinion to a certain extent."

A smile appeared on the boyish face of Dr. Nertz, lingered momentarily, like a childish thought, then fanned out into a full grin. He had straight white teeth, she noted, and his cheeks were framed by endearing smile crinkles. His eyes sought and held hers; they were wide and brown, and carried an inviting warmth that beckoned her to come in and visit.

He would make a great witness.

So long as he gave the right answers.

"Professor Joyner and I are in full agreement as to the source of Simon's new aggression," Dr. Nertz began. "Quip has created synaptic connections in his mind to genetic memories that have been heretofore been isolated, locked away in the limbic system of his brain. Where Professor Joyner and I disagree is on the question of whether or not Simon should receive a third treatment with Quip." He paused, slightly cocked his head. "Why do you look so surprised, Mrs. Thomas? I told of you my feelings at our last meeting."

"A lot has happened since then," Jan replied. "I just assumed you had changed your mind."

"Perhaps I would change my opinion on the matter were I to view Simon's personality change as either permanent or necessarily bad."

Jan felt her jaw drop. "Forgive me, Dr. Nertz, but I cannot believe what I am hearing from you. One week ago, my husband brutally assaulted a student. He also beat a hardened criminal into unconsciousness. Explain to me, please, how you extract something positive from these events."

Again there came the smile and the warm inviting embrace of the eyes. "Mrs. Thomas, you have been listening a great deal to what your friend Professor Joyner has to say. Allow me, please, to present you with another viewpoint."

He was so earnest in his sincerity that Jan had to fight off an urge to return his smile. Lips pressed tightly shut, she merely nodded for him to proceed.

"Like all neurologists, Professor Joyner tends to think in terms of chemicals, that the human mind can be understood simply by identifying whether synapse A connects with synapse B or C or both. Neurologists therefore worship at the altar of the genes for if your faith is in the power of chemistry, genes become your god. Genes make the proteins that make cells and chemicals, which for the brain means neurons, neurotransmitters, and the like.

"But do genes make a mind? Do genes create a personality? Those who worship at the altar of the genes will answer in the affirmative. As evidence, they will offer up astonishing but true stories of identical twins separated at birth, raised in far-flung locales under totally different socio-economic circumstances, who, as adults, hate broccoli, love the Beatles, and are married to red-haired, overweight spouses."

This time Jan could not avoid smiling. "I've read or heard about some of those stories."

Dr. Nertz returned her smile with another grin. "Yes, but those stories draw attention because they are the man that bites the dog, the exception to the rule. For every one of those reports, you can find hundreds more on identical twins who, outside of their appearance, have nothing in common even when raised in the same environment. Furthermore, to borrow a page from the neurologists' own book, MRI studies have shown that the brains of identical twins are never identical. In fact, every single physiochemical measurement differs."

Jan's smile faded. "But surely, Keith must know this."

"Of course Professor Joyner is aware of these facts, but, as a believer in the power of chemistry, anything that is genetically driven will, in his opinion, take precedence over anything that isn't. Therefore, when he sees memories that have been genetically hardwired into the brain come into conflict with softwired memories, those accrued through external experiences, he automatically assumes that the genetic memories will dominate. In that assumption, he is wrong."

Jan's hands were at rest on her lap and her fingers, unconsciously, had been interlaced.

Suddenly, she became aware of the pressure arising from the tightening of those fingers.

"That is your opinion, Dr. Nertz," she replied, then studied his eyes as he responded. His eyes did not for an instant lose their confidence.

"Of course it is, Mrs. Thomas," he answered, "but grant me a few more minutes that I might make it your opinion as well."

In spite of herself, Jan again smiled. She unlocked her fingers and made a gesture with her hand. "You have the floor, doctor."

"Thank you, madam," he said with a gentlemanly bow of his head. "Genes do not in and of themselves create either a mind or a personality. Genes predispose us at birth, through physiological and hormonal configurations, to certain behavioral patterns, but these tendencies are not carved in stone. Genetic predisposition may be a fact of life, but genetic inevitability is a myth. In the realm of the mind, genes are not gods issuing orders that must be obeyed, they are merely constituents offering suggestions. As our minds develop with age, memories become the dominant factor in guiding our behavior. A personality is forged from experiences and memories of experiences past. It is the degree to which we humans, as a species, learn from our memories and adjust our behavior accordingly that makes us unique. Genes may produce neurons and neurotransmitters, but the all-important wiring patterns come from memories."

"Memories," Jan repeated, thinking out loud.

Dr. Nertz gave her a full blast of his reassuring smile.

"Yes, memories," he said, with a nod of excitement. "Where Professor Joyner errs is in his assumption that genetic memories will take precedence over conventional memories. He greatly underestimates the strength of Simon's own will and his amazing reservoir of determination."

Jan blinked. Although she'd always known Simon's physical strength to be worthy of his "Ox" nickname, she'd never thought of him as being strong-willed. Her skepticism must have been obvious because Dr. Nertz hastened onto his next point.

"When your husband first began his sessions with me, he was suffering from a degenerative case of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a condition he's endured since the age of 12. Most persons would have succumbed to the accumulated anxiety, would, in all likelihood, have been debilitated to the point of non-functionality by the time they were half Simon's age. That he was able to persevere even when his symptoms substantially worsened is a testament to

his inner strength. It is also, I believe, a measurement of his powerful commitment to you and to his children. Simon's love for you and his daughters is a mighty ally in our efforts to manage the effects of Quip."

Dr. Nertz's words and his winning personality brought forth a question Jan had been meaning to ask of Keith. "But why must these genetic memories Simon inherited from his great-grandfather come into conflict with his own memories?"

His answer was too immediate and well-organized to have been off-the cuff. As she listened, Jan could not help wondering whether he directly entered his own thoughts on a computer or whether he dictated them for a secretary to transcribe.

"The neocortex is bicameral, divided exactly down the middle into a left and right hemisphere, between which there exists a steady state of contention. The split-brain experiments of Roger Sperry and others have shown that these two hemispheres exist independent of one another, each with its own cognitive strengths and weaknesses. These differences are often summarized by saying the left hemisphere is the seat of rational thought while the right hemisphere is the seat of intuitive thought. The differences are, of course, much more intriguing but what is important is that the two contentious hemispheres are able to maintain a synergistic truce. Out of this truce emerges a single consciousness, that is to say, one mind!"

Dr. Nertz stopped for a breath and to give Jan a pleased smile that she would have taken for smugness had it been attached to the face of Keith Joyner.

"But the fragile nature of this truce can be seen in a simple experience of *deja vu*," he continued. "When an object is viewed in our right visual field, the image is processed in the left hemisphere, and vice-versa. Once the image has been processed in one hemisphere, the information is transferred to the other hemisphere. Normally, the transferal is instantaneous and our mind takes no notice of it. Once in a rare while, however, there is a neuroelectrical glitch that causes a slight delay in the exchange. When this happens, our mind becomes aware of having processed the exact same image before. The same holds true for a sound or other physical stimuli. Because of a slight breakdown in communication between the two hemispheres of its neocortex, a mind can be thrown into a panic-stricken state of confusion. It remembers that it has seen this sight before, it has heard this speech before. But where? When? How could this be? What's going on? Where did this memory come from?"

Jan wanted to insert a question but Dr. Nertz stayed her by holding up his hand and giving her a pleafull look. When she settled back in her chair, he resumed his lecture.

"Imagine then the turmoil a mind would undergo if it were suddenly invaded not by a sense of deja vu but by an entire rash of alien memories. Memories of sights it never saw, sounds it never heard, odors it never smelled. Events and actions in which it never participated. This is the dilemma confronting Simon's mind. Those genetic memories inherited from Payton Adams have now been wired into the neocortex of his brain, they are now as much a part of his mind as any of his own memories and he must deal with them. It has been said that even the healthiest human mind is a battleground, a site for never-ending debates and occasional skirmishes between the two contentious halves of a single personality. In Simon's case, his mind is now the site of a full-fledged war between two individual personalities. That he has not suffered a complete breakdown is again a testament to the strength of his will."

Once more Dr. Nertz paused. Now he was looking directly and deeply into Jan's eyes. "With my help and a third treatment of Quip, the personality that is Simon Thomas will emerge the victor of this war, stronger and healthier than he has ever been."

Jan held steady before the heart-felt gaze of Dr. Eugene Nertz and her voice was curt when she replied. "That which does not kill us only makes us stronger. Is that your contention, doctor?"

Dr. Nertz remained calm. "I would not put it in such Nietzschean terms," he answered, "but there is something to be said for the sentiment."

Jan frowned. "Setting aside for the moment, the question of a third treatment, I still do not see how you are able to maintain that these memories have anything of value to teach Simon. Or do you consider the acquisition of a violent temper a positive learning experience?"

Dr. Nertz smiled politely in the face of Jan's deliberate sarcasm, a good sign that he would not rattle on the witness stand. "Pardon me, Mrs. Thomas, but your husband has not displayed a violent temper. Unless there have been incidents of which I have not been told, his acts of aggression to date have been in response to perceived threats. Is this not correct?"

Again Jan frowned, but, after considering his question, she was forced to agree. "Yes, I suppose that is true. Although, in each case, the response was way out of line with the threat."

The confidence of Dr. Nertz continued unabated, as did the smile he put forth. "I think

we are seeing in Simon a demonstration that the Seychelles-Joyner Fear-Response Theory is valid."

Jan blinked her surprise. "Come again, doctor?" she said in the form of a question.

Dr. Nertz leaned forward in his chair. In his eyes was the urgent-sincere look of a salesman about to close a major deal. She half expected him to ask what it would take for her to sign on the dotted line. But what he actually said was: "Just as madness is thought to be the other side of the coin from genius, so, in terms of fear-response, is acute aggression the flip side of acute anxiety. When your mind decides you are in a threatening situation you cannot control, it allows the beast within you to come forth and take charge of your actions. The beast will either flee or fight. That is, of course, not literal. It means that you will retreat or attack, become overtly anxious or overtly aggressive. By virtue of his genetic makeup, Simon is far more sensitive to potential threats than most of us; he views himself as being vulnerable to environmental stressors, even when, to the rest of us, he is not. Under the present circumstances, with his mind in such turmoil, it is understandable that Simon would be even more prone to summon his beast. But the beast resides in the limbic system, that very same part of the brain where genetic memories reside. I would say that the Quip isomer which paved the way for the memories of Payton Adams to become a part of Simon's personality have also opened the door for the beast of Payton Adams to come through. Obviously, it is a much more aggressive beast than the beast of Simon Thomas. But this, too, can be viewed as a gain for Simon, because it can help balance out the acute anxiety fostered by his own beast. Again, with my help, the net result should be a healthier Simon."

Jan wasn't buying it and shook her head with skepticism. "But what about Simon's lying? He told Keith and I that his great-grandmother was cheating on his great-grandfather, but he told Ana Huff that his great-grandfather was having an affair with a prostitute."

"Simon has shared both stories with me and I see no contradiction," Dr. Nertz replied. "His great-grandmother had a dalliance with her landlord, and his great-grandfather consorted with a prostitute. Given the socio-economic realities of that particular time and place, neither event, I am sure, was particularly unique. I would not pass moral judgment on either great-grandparent. She did it to pay the rent; he did it for reasons that have made prostitution one of the oldest forms of

commerce."

Jan was aghast. So here was someone else with whom Simon had shared personal stories he had not shared with her. Until this moment she had not given thought to the possibility that Dr. Nertz might know things about Simon which had been kept secret from her. The realization was like a blow to her stomach. Even though she was seated in a chair, Jan felt her knees weaken. Dr. Nertz was sensitive to her distress.

"Mrs. Thomas, please, you should not upset yourself..."

Jan flashed her old fire. "I am **not** upsetting myself; Simon is upsetting me. He told Ana Huff about the mistress. He told you about her. Maybe he told Keith as well. Why is it he did not tell me? Why did he only tell me that he suspected his great-grandmother of murdering his great-grandfather?"

Dr. Nertz had his answer ready. "Consider, Mrs. Thomas. Simon's mind has been now taken, or, more accurately, been given, possession of some of the memories of Payton Adams, including the memories of his consorting with a prostitute. For Simon to tell you that his great-grandmother was unfaithful to his great-grandfather is one thing, but it is quite another matter for him to admit the adultery of his great-grandfather. He feels guilty, as if it were he who had cheated on you. I should also tell you that he now feels terrible over having told you about his great-grandmother. He feels as if he has accused you and worries that you think he mistrusts you. Obviously, his fears were justified. I appreciate that this is confusing for you, but again, consider the extraordinary circumstances."

Jan felt as if she'd been reproached and became defensive in spite of herself. "What about turning my own children against me, doctor? Was that the beast of Payton Adams at work and does Simon feel terrible about that as well?"

The patience of Dr. Nertz was becoming infuriating. "Teenaged daughters are only too quick to side with their father over their mother for reasons I doubt I need explain to you. None of which, however, involve the beast of Payton Adams or any other fear-response mechanism. In answer to your second question, however, yes, Simon does feel terrible about the incident. You see, Mrs. Thomas, he has a much firmer grasp on his situation than you give him credit for."

Left unsaid by Dr. Nertz, Jan recognized, was that Simon also had a much firmer grasp on his situation than did she. The implication left her badly shaken. For several minutes, she sat

in silence, taking in what she had been told, questioning her own thoughts and perceptions about Simon. As for the potential of Dr. Nertz as a witness in a negligence suit against the University, her assessment was complete. He would be excellent. He clearly held the Quip treatments to be responsible for Simon's behavior and no attorney would shake him on that. Under the law, his opinion that Simon's altered behavioral pattern was a positive development was irrelevant. Still.

"Let's say for the moment you've convinced me that Simon's new aggressiveness can help balance his old anxiety and that he can learn to manage it," Jan said. "But why do you insist he requires a third treatment of Quip? Why not quit while we're ahead?"

For the first time that morning, Dr. Nertz's smile faded. For the first time, he could not look directly into Jan's eyes and his voice was not upbeat.

"Mrs. Thomas, our problem goes far beyond these new-found feelings of aggression and anger-management."

Even as her fingers tightened their grip, Jan raised an eyebrow. "I am all ears to hear just how far our problem goes," she remarked.

Again, Dr. Nertz did not respond to her sarcasm. His worried tone marched forth as obviously as his earlier tones of optimism. "The PTSD that originally sent your husband to me is still there, eroding at his psychological foundation, because the crucial memory, the stressor memory that triggered his recurring dream, has yet to be recalled. If the standard model of PTSD applies here, then until that memory is fully recalled, until he relives the experience, healing cannot occur. Yes, Quip has brought forth many of the genetic memories that had been hidden in Simon's limbic system, and, yes, this has helped relieve some of the pressure that had been building up. However, until the crucial memory is brought forth, the memory of his great-grandfather's death, the standard PTSD model predicts more stormy seas in Simon's future. He was on the verge of recalling that memory when the second Quip experiment was prematurely terminated. I believe that one more treatment should do the trick."

"And what then, doctor?" asked Jan.

Dr. Nertz's eyes once again found and locked onto hers. "Then I can help Simon heal. I can help him to regain himself, the person he was intended to be, free at last from the insidious memories of a long-dead ancestor. There is an opportunity for change here, a change for the better. I am positive I can help Simon effect that change."

Once again, Jan absorbed the words of Simon's psychotherapist in silence. And as she considered what he had to say, there arose within her an engulfing, suffocating sadness, like rising water cutting off her air. Dr. Nertz, on the other side of his desk, appeared to her as if through a mist and she fought back an urge to cry by forcing her face into a smile.

"You tell me you can help Simon change. I can't help but think of the old joke. How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb? One, but only if the light bulb wants to change."

That smile of warmth and encouragement again appeared on the face of Dr. Nertz, but Jan was not buying what was up for sale.

"How can any of us be sure that Simon wants to regain himself? Maybe he prefers this new self. Or maybe Simon is no longer calling the shots in there. Maybe it is Payton Adams."

Dr. Nertz's smile beamed brighter. "Even if such were the case, a dubious if, I must say, but even if it were true and Payton Adams is the dominant influence in Simon's brain, it is at best a temporary state of events. With the third treatment of Quip to retrieve the traumatic stress and my help, the influence of Payton Adams will soon, forgive the expression, be a distant memory."

Dr. Nertz chuckled at his own joke. Jan did not share his amusement. And his beaming smile now smacked of condescension which made her angry. Nothing beats anger for chasing away the blues.

"I've noticed that whenever someone tells me what is best for Simon, it always turns out that what is best for Simon is also good for the person doing the telling. Why do you suppose that is? Coincidence?"

The smile left Dr. Nertz's face. "I beg your pardon?"

Jan fixed him in her huntress stare. "One of the advantages of being a lawyer working at a firm such as mine is information access. I'm aware of your book contract. Figures like that aren't given for books with inconclusive endings. You have a contingency deal: no cure, no book. But, right now, you have no cure. A third treatment of Quip looks to be your only chance to cash in. Keith, on the other hand, has managed to neither kill nor completely incapacitate my husband with the first two treatments of Quip. He is quite ready to stop now and cut his losses. His university bosses concur. What I am left with are two experts offering me diametrically opposite advice. Who do I trust?"

Dr. Nertz opened his mouth to speak but a scowl from Jan dissuaded him. Having vented her anger, she felt the sadness return, even more engulfing and suffocating than before, crashing over and submerging her like an oceanic wave. The mist in her eyes became genuine moisture, warm tears that scalded her skin as they rolled down her cheeks for Jan despised her weakness even as she succumbed to it. She looked down at her lap where her fingers were once again interlaced. When she was able to speak, her voice was little more than a croak.

"Not so long ago the answer to my question, Who do I trust? was Simon," she said, "and now I can't trust him. Do you know what it is to go from being one-half of a couple to being on your own? This is worse than death, it is like a divorce because the man I love is still around but he is not available to me." Jan looked up from her entwined fingers and across the desk at Dr. Nertz. "The truth is, it is even worse than divorce because I cannot even try to put Simon behind me and move on. I want my husband back. But I don't know where to find him."

Dr. Nertz said nothing. Not at first. Instead, his own hands came together and his fingers interlocked so that his arms formed a pyramid upon which he placed his forehead. He then stared down at his desk for several long moments. When whatever internal dialogue taking place inside his mind had at last concluded, he let out a weary sigh, then lifted his eyes to Jan and spoke.

"Two things you should know. You can believe what you will but both are true. The first thing is that I have given you my best advice, based on my professional assessment of your husband's situation. The book contract was not a factor. The second thing is that you are right to question the advice you receive from any of us so-called experts. In the case of Simon Thomas and Quip, we have sailed into uncharted territory. No one can tell you what will happen, all anyone can do is guess. I certainly do not know that a third treatment of Quip will help Simon. Nor does Professor Joyner know that it will harm him. What I can tell you is this: Because the stressor event, the murder of Payton Adams, has not been recalled, Simon's abreaction, his recurring dream will return. That's not a guess, it's a certainty. It's only a matter of time. And when the dream does return, I suspect it will reappear in a new and worse form because of the genetic memories that Simon has already recalled."

Jan had to swallow twice before speaking. "What happens then, doctor? What happens when Simon's dream returns?"

Dr. Nertz looked away. "If the course of his disorder follows the conventional PTSD model, he shall either recall the stressor event or else suffer a complete breakdown."

Jan heard more than felt the sharp intake of her own breath. Feeling no longer seemed to be an option for her, numbness seemed to be the rule.

"If I understand you correctly, Dr. Nertz, you are telling me that without the third treatment of Quip, which the university has forbidden, Simon will be revisited by a new recurring dream. When this happens, he shall then either receive that forbidden third treatment or he shall lose his mind."

Dr. Nertz, still avoiding eye contact, nodded.

"In basketball and in the practice of law, that is called a no-win situation," said Jan. "In basketball and in the practice of law, I have fought no-win situations until the final buzzer."

Jan left the office of Dr. Eugene Nertz without saying another word.

When she was locked inside her car, seat belt strapped into place, key in the ignition, ready to start the engine, Jan remembered her own twelfth birthday. Her daddy was still alive then and on the first Saturday after her birthday he had driven her to the local animal shelter so that she could pick out a kitten to bring home. Her choice was a solid gray male with yellow eyes whom she immediately named Smokey. From the shelter, Jan and her daddy had gone to a pet store where they purchased a litter box and a cat bed, bags of kitty litter and food, a toy mouse, and a packet of catnip. Jan set up Smokey's bed on the floor next to her own and she had spent the entire afternoon in her bedroom playing with him. For Jan, it had been love at first sight. Smokey was her first pet, a meowing bundle of wide-eyed innocent energy, insatiably curious and lightning quick to pounce, with springs for paws and a twitching-motor in his tail. He was also ordained to be her companion.

Jan was a tall girl. She'd been the tallest in her class since kindergarten. As she entered her twelfth year, she was already approaching the six-foot height she would eventually reach, though even as an adult she emphatically maintained she was only five-foot eleven because of what her daddy had once told her about six-foot tall women being freaks. Jan's height had served to isolate her from kids her own age, girls as well as boys. Her burgeoning athleticism worked against her as well: amongst her peers it was a source of intimidation and jealousy rather than a lure. As a loner not by choice, Jan was lonely. Her daddy did not understand: He was a

loner by choice. But her mama understood. No surprise there: Her mama almost always understood when something was ailing Jan. Smokey was to be the cure and for about four hours he was just what the doctor ordered. But then, Jan was told to wash up for supper. She left Smokey in her bedroom, went into the bathroom and closed the door. Even though she was only washing her hands, her daddy insisted she keep the bathroom door closed anytime she was in there. "Get in the habit so you don't forget," was what her daddy used to say about doors, lights, and a lengthy list of other things she was to always do.

But her daddy forgot. He'd been outside in the driveway, working on his car, something he seemed to always be doing on Saturdays, and when he came inside to wash up for supper, he left the front door open. Jan's daddy didn't like screen doors, just one more thing to fix, he said. So when he left the front door open, he made it possible for the insatiably curious Smokey to wander out. Jan had just come out of the bathroom when she heard the blare of the horn and the screeching protest of tires being braked to stop on too short of notice.

The driver didn't bother to ring the doorbell, he just stood on the front porch of Jan's house and hollered inside. Jan's daddy went to see what was going on. He and Jan's mama did not tell Jan that Smokey was killed. They just said he'd run away. What even Jan's mama did not understand was that it would have been better had Jan been told the truth. Maybe then she would not have spent so many nights, sneaking outside of her house after her parents had gone to sleep, sitting on her front porch and softly calling Smokey's name, in the hopes that he would come home. Knowing can be bad, but, sometimes, not knowing is worse.

Locked inside her car outside of the office of Dr. Eugene Nertz, seat belt strapped into place, key in the ignition, ready to start the engine, Jan Thomas put her face in her hands and began to cry.

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

As always, it began with him standing on a small concrete landing entrenched between the swift-moving waters of a wide brown river and a short flight of wooden stairs that climbed a steep embankment. As always, it was shortly after dawn, there was a low thick curtain of steam fog mid-way across the river, and the air carried with it a metallic stink, a sour smell that nibbled at his skin. As always, there was a skiff moored to the landing and as always, it contained only

cargo -- a pair of oars, two canvas suitcases, a woman's coat with a fur collar, four cloth sacks and what he had come to recognize as the segmented rifle of Payton Adams.

As always, while staring into the skiff, he heard a noise on the stairs behind him. As always, he turned to see who it was. That is when the dream changed.

Standing on the landing at the bottom of the steps was Rosaleen. She was naked. Her face was twisted in pain. Her hands clutched at her belly. Her legs were splayed and blood poured out from between them; dark, almost black, blood cascading down on top of something on the landing, something red and irregular in shape, something that moved. The something was a fetus and as Simon watched, it opened its mouth and let out a deafening shriek. Rosaleen, too, began to wail, a shrill, high-pitched noise that merged with the shriek of the fetus. The keening pain behind the sound was like a giant needle jabbed into Simon's ears. He was forced to look away, turn his back on Rosaleen and the fetus and when he did he saw that Cat was sitting inside the skiff, her blue dress drenched in blood, her face, like Rosaleen's, also twisted with pain. And when Cat saw that Simon's eyes were upon her, she, too, opened her mouth and let out a shriek that joined the wailing cries of the fetus and Rosaleen.

Again Simon looked away, out across the brown water where he now saw silhouettes behind the curtain of steam fog. As he watched, the silhouettes emerged out of the fog as people standing on the water's surface, coming towards the landing as if being carried in with the current. These people had the hollow-eyed stares of corpses and as they drew closer Simon could see their flesh to be in various stages of decay and that some were missing limbs, and some had holes in their heads or chests, and some had huge tears across their throats. There was no blood from any of these torn and wounded souls, but on the faces of each and everyone were expressions of unspeakable pain.

And Simon felt, of all things, his penis become erect and begin to throb with a demanding erotic hunger that compelled him, despite his self-disgust, to reach down to throttle it. And when he did so, he found the segmented rifle rising out from between his legs. And when he wrapped his fingers around the rifle, holding it as he would his cock, he looked out across the river and saw that the flotilla of corpses was suddenly being led by Jan and the twins. And then, to Simon's stark horror, he fired the segmented rifle from between his legs and bullet holes ripped the foreheads of Louise and Elizabeth. Again Simon fired, again and again, and more bullet

holes punctured the faces and chests of his daughters and though they neither bled nor faltered in their advance upon him, both girls began to cry. A sickening ball of dread inflated inside of Simon and his eyes found Jan who opened her mouth and began to shriek. And then Jan's shrieks were joined by shrieks from Louise and Elizabeth and then from each and every one of the corpses on the river. And these shrieks merged with the shrieks of Cat, and Rosaleen and her fetus, to become a single deafening howl of pain and loss and betrayal that at once terrified and infuriated Simon and left him trembling and soaked in sweat that smelled of blood and burnt meat. He awoke with a fire in his brain, a fierce conflagration of hurt that he knew in his heart of hearts could only be quenched by one thing and one thing only -- the truth.

* * *

Keith was on his computer at home playing the latest, goriest version of the 3-D shooter game Quake with his son Earl when Sandra came into the room. There was worry on her face and in her voice as she announced that Jan was on the phone. Keith glanced at his watch. The time was 10:05 pm.

"Hurry Keith, she's very upset," Sandra said.

When Keith took up the phone, Jan's voice sounded as if it were coming from the distant end of a long tunnel.

"Simon's dream came back, Keith," she said. "It must have been worse than ever, just as Dr. Nertz predicted. We were reading in bed and Simon fell asleep. Only for a little while. Then he awoke with a scream and he began sweating and shaking something awful. Then he started muttering about having to learn the truth. The Irish accent was as thick as I've ever heard it. He started to leave the bed, I tried to hold him back but he swung his arm and caught me on the side of the head. Guess I lost consciousness."

Keith interrupted. "He hit you? Simon knocked you out?"

"Yes," she replied, after a pause, "but I don't think it was intentional. It was more of a panic thing. He needed to be up and going somewhere and was just knocking away anything that might be trying to restrain him. When I came to, he was gone. He can't have gone too far, though. This all happened less than twenty minutes ago and he's on foot. I checked the garage and both cars and his bike are still here. I was hoping, maybe he might have gone to your house but Sandra says he hasn't been there."

"Not yet, anyway," Keith said, wondering if all the doors to his house were locked. "Do you think he could be dangerous?"

Jan's voice was a squawk. "Do **I** think he could be dangerous? You're the scientist, the expert neurologist who knows all there is to know about the human brain. **You** tell me. Is my husband dangerous?"

Keith allowed too much time to pass before he gave her his answer. Anything less than the truth now would sound like the lie it was. "He could be, Jan. I saw what he did to Danny Bosworth and we both heard what he did to that Samoan fellow in the jail." Keith touched the scar on his ear. "Unless you want me to come stay with you and the twins, I think I should stay here in case Simon does show up. In the meantime, however, I think you'd better call detective DeLeon."

Jan's voice was again soft, plaintive. "And tell him what, Keith? That my husband has left the house thinking he's a 19th Century steel worker in the midst of a labor strike? What is Simon likely to do? Go to the nearest tavern and start a brawl with the scabs? Organize a picket line around that little steel mill in Emeryville?"

Again Keith allowed more time to pass than he should have before giving his response. Again, the delay forced him into candor. "Jan, Simon **is** in the midst of a labor strike. He doesn't have to go to Emeryville to organize a picket line, there are picket lines in place already on campus which he can certainly get to on foot."

It was Jan's turn to be silent for too long.

Keith filled the void. "Payton Adams had a grudge against Andrew Carnegie. I don't know if he referred to him as a Scotch mutt, but he might have."

Jan found her voice, such as it were. "Does Chancellor MacBryde reside on campus?"

"Yes," said Keith, his own voice suddenly dry.

"I'm going to call Detective DeLeon," Jan said. "He's the only law enforcement office I know who won't think I'm nuts."

Keith did not hesitate for his final response. "I think that's a good idea."

* * *

Gavin Gibson typed in his alias and password and waited while the security bot checked the validity of his membership. Seconds later, the hot pink banner welcoming him into the Pussy

Galore website flashed across his terminal to the sounds of a woman experiencing a stupendous orgasm. Gibby used to turn off the speakers on his computer before logging onto a pornographic Internet site from his office on the off-chance that someone might still be around at that time of night. No more. First, no one other than Gibby was ever in the Brain Lab at night after nine o'clock, except for maybe that weirdo Dana Plowman but she never left her ape pit. Second, even if someone were to hear those sounds coming from behind the closed door to Gibby's office, so what? They'd think that Gibby was fucking some woman and doing a damn fine job of it. Nothing wrong with that. Might even stir up some interest if the eavesdropper happened to be female. There was at least one woman janitor that he wouldn't mind banging. Actually, he wouldn't mind banging any of the women janitors who worked in the Brain Lab. But he knew the janitorial crew was always done and out before eight. The time on his computer monitor read 10:25 pm.

Gibby went straight for the Voyeur menu from the choices being offered to him on his monitor, clicking his mouse through a subset until he was linking to a selection called "Caught in the Act." The porn was softer here than the links to XXX sites, but the women were real and looked it -- flabby mid-sections and imperfect hips, flat-chests or droopy breasts, saggy rear-ends. Those professionals and so-called amateurs with their perfect young hard-bodies intimidated Gibby. They were far beyond his reach and always would be. He was a realist and knew that no girl or woman ever got wet thinking of Gavin Gibson. Yeah, people could talk about the lure of brains, that a high IQ and a PhD were aphrodisiacs to some women, but Gibby hadn't met any of them and he was pretty certain that if he ever did, they wouldn't turn out to be the sort of women he thought about when he was pounding his pud.

He'd grown up in Twin Falls, Idaho, where his father worked as a soils scientist for the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

From grades K-12, most of Gibby's classmates had been the sons and daughters of farm families, which meant they almost all had several siblings and plenty of cousins in the area. They also tended to favor outdoor physical activities, including hunting and fishing, and were evenly divided between the Mormon and the Protestant faiths, with a handful of Roman Catholics tossed in. As the only child of academic atheists, a small, frail boy who preferred reading and playing board games to anything that made him go outside where his allergies could be exposed to any of

a hundred varieties of pollen, Gibby had not fit in. Being the smartest kid in his class for each of those 12 years had not helped him in the least little bit. Worst of all was the incident in seventh grade that earned him a nickname he would carry the remainder of his Twin Falls school career: Peepers.

He had pulled litter-patrol duty one afternoon for getting caught reading a James Bond novel in his history class. As he walked around the school yard, dispiritedly collecting the detritus of teenager civilization, he took note that someone had sent either a baseball or rock through a window into the girl's locker room. Checking carefully to make certain no one else was near, Gibby had scurried over for a quick peek. What he saw were members of the girl's soccer team suiting up for practice. More specifically, he saw flashes of pink skin, white brassieres and panties, and maybe, just maybe, one bare tit. An insignificant reward for the humongous price he would pay when Danny Carr and Mouse Redpath came around the corner of the school building and caught him peeping. Other boys might have been smart enough to keep their mouths shut and come join him. No telling what they all might have seen. But instead, the two dumb-ass farmboys began shouting "Jeepers-creepers, we got ourselves a Peepers."

Explaining that their stupid rhyme was grammatically incorrect had proven pointless. Calling them dumb-ass farmboys garnered for himself a beating and the spreading of the story throughout what seemed to be the entire town. The incident would prove to be the closest he would ever get to female flesh while a resident of Twin Falls. His four years at nearby Boise State for his undergrad degree had not been much of an improvement. Nor, for that matter, his masters and doctoral years at the University of Washington. There'd been a few women that he'd dated, three to be exact, but the relationships never went anywhere. All three had proven to be utter disappointments -- too self-absorbed, always interrupting, unable to follow the simplest of instructions, and incredibly hung-up about sex.

Gibby felt his insides glow as the AVI he'd summoned finished downloading. Flicking the cursor to "play," Gibby double-clicked his mouse and sat back in his chair. On the monitor there appeared in a desktop window a video of a young, dark haired woman seated in a chair, shot from behind and over the shoulder. She was naked except for pink satin panties, and she was masturbating. As her hand wiggled underneath the crotch of her panties, the material would lift up enough for Gibby to catch a glimpse of pubic hair. A snatch of snatch, he thought, and

got so hard his testicles ached. Within moments, the young woman had pushed her panties down so that her hand had unencumbered access. When she dug in with her middle finger and began to work it around, Gibby unzipped his fly, set free his erection and began to stroke it. God, he loved to watch women finger themselves and this one was a favorite of his. You couldn't see her face, but you got the impression she wasn't very pretty. Her breasts were somewhat thin and flat with long, pointy nipples that glowed red like garish lipstick, and her hips were bony and too large for her upper torso. Gibby was sure her odor was strong and the thought elicited a groan from the back of his throat. As if in response, the young woman on the video let out a deep throat groan of her own.

God, cybersex was so superior to sex in the meat world, Gibby thought, the women did what they were told and when you were through, you could get rid of them with the click of your mouse. No boring conversation, no having to sleep next to someone and listen to their gross nocturnal noises. Just pure sex, masturbation with a partner, the perfect someone with which to share the moment. Gibby was so caught up in his cybersexual encounter he never heard the door to his office being unlocked and opened. Nor did he hear the footsteps of someone approaching him from behind. He never even took note of the large shadow that fell across his computer screen. Which is why he screeched and nearly jumped out of his chair when the male voice spoke.

"Aren't you afraid of messing up your keyboard?"

Gibby was so startled it took him a moment to recognize the intruder.

"Professor Thomas?" he said, in disbelief. "What are you doing here?"

Simon Thomas motioned towards Gibby's penis which was rapidly shriveling, as if retreating on its own accord toward the shelter of his trousers. "You want to put that away first? I don't want it going off."

Gibby felt his cheeks burn as he hastily reassembled himself. "How did you get in?" he muttered, half-to-himself. "All the doors are locked."

"Keith Joyner loaned me his cardkey."

Gibby looked up quizzically.

"He doesn't know he loaned it to me. Maybe I should say I borrowed it from him."

"You stole it?" Gibby asked, stunned.

Simon Thomas shrugged and Gibby, for the first time, became cognizant of just how big the man was. Standing in front of Gibby, dressed in black sweats and sporting a backpack style gym bag, he looked every bit the powerful weight-lifting jock Gibby knew him to be. Gibby had seen Simon naked. He knew there were slabs of concrete muscles packed underneath those baggy sweats. Gibby glanced down at his own scrawny arms and the pot belly that pushed at the buttons on his size-medium shirt. A memory map recalling the story about what Simon did to the whalelike Danny Bosworth flared in Gibby's neocortex. This, he acknowledged, was a dangerous situation.

"What do you want, Simon?" Gibby asked, one part of his mind calculating that the use of Simon's first name would strike a note of both familiarity and assertiveness. It was important, he knew, to convey the impression that he, Gibby, held the upper hand here in his own office.

"I've come to make a trade with you," Simon answered.

"What kind of a trade?" Gibby asked, as another part of his mind considered whether he should make a move to get to his feet so he would be in a position to make a run for it.

Simon smiled and Gibby felt perspiration tickle one of his arm pits. "Keith tells me you think I've been lying about my experiences under Quip."

Perspiration began to tickle Gibby's other arm pit. "Less than candid, is...um...what I said...actually," he replied.

Simon set the gym bag down on Gibby's desk, unzipped one of the bag's side pockets, reached inside and extracted a computer disk. "You were right. I have been lying. This disk contains my journal, the truth about my experiences."

Gibby felt his heart flutter. "The...the... truth?" he stammered.

Again Simon smiled. Again, Gibby felt his underarms leak. "Quip works. Beyond your wildest expectations. This journal is the proof. Names and events that I had no possible way of knowing but which have been independently verified by a reputable history professor from the University of Pittsburgh. It's all here and the files are dated as further verification. Quip has enabled me to recall the memories of my great-grandfather Payton Adams. You've done it, Professor Gibson. Quip works. Congratulations."

Gibby's voice was raspy. "Why are you telling me this? What do you want from me?"

Again the smile that made Gibby nervous. "The same thing you want. A third treatment

of Quip."

Gibby quickly shook his head. "Impossible. The Chancellor has forbidden it. I'd lose my job."

Simon's smile was replaced with a sneer. "What does MacBryde know? He's a Scotch mutt, not a scientist. With this journal, you're untouchable. You have proof that Quip works. Even before the Nobel prize, you'll be able to write your own ticket with NIH and the private pharmaceuticals."

It was Gibby's turn to smile.

Simon motioned with his eyes towards Gibby's groin and added, "You might even find a woman who will do that for you."

It was not embarrassment over Simon's words that removed the smile from Gibby's face; it was the trace of Irish accent in Simon's voice. Time to reassert himself: if he could.

"Who the hell do you think you're talking to?" Gibby demanded in as big and indignant a voice as he could muster, which, under the circumstances, he worried, was probably not sufficient. Still, he pushed on with it, having no better alternative at the moment. Besides, he really was pissed. "You're waving your disk in front of me like you might wave a stick in front of a dog. What's next? You toss it and I go fetch? What do you take me for, Simon? Huh? What do you take me for?"

Simon did not appear to be intimidated by Gibby's anger. Not in the least. His response was delivered in an even tone of voice, unrushed, unheated, and with an Irish accent that strengthened with each word uttered.

"What I take you for, Gibby, is a brainy, little guy with ordinary looks who is sick and tired of big, handsome jocks like Keith Joyner getting all the attention and applause," Simon said. Gibby looked up and blinked.

"What I take you for, Gibby, is a hard-working white boy who is sick and tired of taking orders off immigrant towel-heads like Vijay Jain who keep getting handed university laboratories like this for the sake of cultural diversity."

Gibby blinked again.

"What I take you for, Gibby, is a learned man with vision who is sick and tired of ignorant slits like Dana Plowman breaking his balls over issues they could not in two lifetimes

hope to understand."

Gibby stopped blinking and began nodding his head.

"What I take you for, Gibby, is a man who knows that *carpus diem* is the Latin form of go for it." Simon smiled. "Have I misjudged you?"

Gibby stared up at the large man for a moment, then felt his own facial muscles curl into a grin. No, you blarney-spinning sonuvabitch, he thought, you have not misjudged me one single bit. Gibby shook his head once, in admiration over Simon's naked ploy -- it was something he might have tried himself. Then he cleared his throat and spoke. "My scientific hero has always been a Berkeley man by the name of Joseph Hamilton. He had a medical degree but he was a chemist at heart. He was one of Ernest Lawrence's boys at the Rad Lab here, his role was to study the effects of radiation on the human body. He became a pioneer in the use of radioactive isotopes as tracers to study metabolism. To demonstrate the value of his radiotracers to his students, he used to drink an americium cocktail, then run a Geiger counter down his body so they could all hear and follow the descent of the liquid into his stomach. He was his own guinea pig in most of his experiments." Gibby shook his head once more, and chuckled. "He died of cancer at age 46. Probably as a result of his experimentation. He gave his life for his science and we have all been the beneficiaries of his contributions to medical research. That took guts. General Patton, one of my non-scientific heroes once said no guts, no glory. He was speaking of the military of course but he could just as well have been speaking about science. Practitioners of science and the arts of war have much in common which is why the two fields have always been so closely allied. You did not misjudge me, Simon. I want the glory. And I have the guts. But I am not certain as to why I need to give you the third treatment of Quip. If what you have just told me is true, I already know that the stuff works."

"I am not yet cured of my post traumatic stress disorder," Simon replied evenly. "As you know, I have for most of my life wanted to know who murdered my great-grandfather. I was on the verge of recalling his death when I was pulled from the MNEME. My therapist says that reliving the trauma of that event will cure me of my anxiety disorder. I know he is right. What that will mean for you is proof of Quip's therapeutic value in the psychopharmacological arena. You tell me how much that will further enhance the monetary worth of Quip. You tell me whether you would leave academia for the private sector."

Another smile creased Gibby's face. "I am afraid economic considerations would dictate such a move."

"You would be a rich man, then?" Simon asked, smiling.

"I would be a very rich man," Gibby said, returning Simon's smile.

"Then I have not misjudged you at all," said Simon.

* * *

Gibby heard the voices the moment he used his cardkey to open the doors to the MNEME lab. He could guess instantly that the voices belonged to the students Boyd Crenshaw and Xiao Xiang. BC and Double X had been the ones who spotted the SMEG mindprint anomaly. Their scientific curiosity had been piqued by the mystery. Despite the clamp of secrecy that been imposed on the Quip project, the two students had been surreptitiously pursuing their curiosity. Gibby had no idea where their work had led them, but he was certain they were a thousand kilometers afar from the truth. Silly bastards. Nonetheless, they were good in the lab and could save him some work. Gibby made a quick decision. Stepping back out into the hall, he quietly closed the door.

"What's wrong?" asked Simon.

"Some students are in there. Go back to my office and wait for me to get rid of them. I'll phone you to come down when I've got everything set up. I can do this experiment myself. Better that only you and I know about this."

"Less people to share the credit with?" Simon asked, smiling.

"Something like that," Gibby acknowledged. He waited until Simon had disappeared into the elevator before once again opening the door to the MNEME lab. Actually, he'd been thinking there would be fewer people to share the blame. He was pretty certain that giving Simon a third treatment of Quip would be safe. But there were no guarantees.

That's why they called it an "experiment."

Resourceful and clever fellow that he was, Gibby had been able to enlist the aid of BC and Double X to set up the Quip run and then get rid of them. He told them he had nearly convinced Vijay to consent to another experiment on a bonobo. Not Morris, but one of the females, probably his mother, so they could have a better gender baseline for evaluating Quip's

chemical effects. If it were to be done, it would have to be done early in the morning and as quickly as possible before the daily protest activities got underway. The threat of students occupying the Brain Lab ruled out sensitive experimentation later in the day. If Gibby did get the go-ahead, he said he would call them and the three of them would make the run. In return for their assistance, they would have first rights to the SMEG mindprint data. He even let them set the necessary computer programs up in their own names as proof of their participation and proprietary claims. The plastic gloves, he said, were to protect everyone else in the Lab from the poison oak he'd picked up walking through Tilden Park.

While they readied the computers and other instrumentation, the students freely discussed what they'd learned so far from their analysis of the SMEG data on Simon Thomas. Gibby was impressed. Culling from nearly fifty other neurological experiments in which SMEG mindprints had been recorded, they had assembled a convincing body of evidence that the SMEG mindprint shift observed in Simon Thomas was consistent with mindprints taken from two distinct individuals. Their work had ruled out the possibility of error on the part of the equipment as well as on the parts of BC and Double X.

"We don't know if what we've seen is physiological proof of multiple personality disorder in Professor Thomas or what," BC told Gibby. "But we did find one thing that should blow everyone's mind. Can you keep a secret?"

Gibby had assured the young man that he could.

"If you eliminate the allowable margin of error in the SMEG mindprint of Morris, you see a similar shift. No one paid any attention to it before because the shift is so slight for Morris, it was not considered statistically significant. Double X and I simply assumed a zero-error margin and then it leaps out plain as day. Can bonobos have multiple personality disorder, too?"

"You'll have to ask Dana Plowman," Gibby had replied. "But I'd be careful there. She's suffering from a major personality disorder of her own."

The students had left shortly thereafter and Gibby was alone in the lab and all set for Simon and the making of history. Patience had never been his strong suit and having to sit and watch while Simon meticulously folded his sweat clothes before placing them in his gym bag had been enormously vexing. He took note that the gym bag featured a lock which Simon closed with a key worn on a small chain around his neck. But he did not say anything about Simon's

lack of trust, nor did he make an issue of Simon's keeping the chain around his neck as he put on the adult diaper. For a scary moment or two, Gibby thought he might have to help the man into it. But finally Simon was ready. Before entering the MNEME, he again went to the side pocket on his gym bag and extracted the computer disk which he handed over to Gibby.

"The file is password protected," said Simon. "Type the letters f u r e y."

Gibby felt his pulse quicken. After watching Simon climb inside the MNEME and settle down into its amorphous aerogel, he crossed the room to a table upon which was a computer and large monitor and carefully set the disk down on it. He then returned to the MNEME and, with some difficulty, proceeded to fit the netting of the GEM head-gear into place around Simon's skull. After final a check to make sure that everything was where it should be, he made ready to close the MNEME's lid. Before he did so, however, he had some last words for Simon.

"You know that you can open this lid from inside. Nothing should go wrong but if it does, you will have to extricate yourself from the trouble. I will be out of here, my reputation and employment intact."

Simon raised an eyebrow. "Not that it matters, since nothing is going to go wrong, but aren't we in this together?"

Gibby could feel his face beaming. "You got into this building with Keith Joyner's cardkey, the computer programs initiating this treatment were set up on the login registry of Boyd Crenshaw and Xiao Xiang. I don't know whether or not fingerprints can be lifted from a body but if they can be..." Gibby waggled his plastic glove encased fingers."

"Thanks for the warning," Simon dryly said, shifting his body deeper into the embrace of the aerogel.

"Not a warning," Gibby responded. "In case these are the last moments in which your neural wiring resembles that of a sentient human, I just wanted you to be cognizant of who it is you're dealing with. You're not using me, Simon, I'm using you. And for the record, I don't resent Keith Joyner at all. When this is over and you are cured of your problem, Quip is the new superstar in the psychopharmacological firmament, and the Seychelles-Joyner Fear-Response Theory has been proven, Keith will be welcome to come work for me."

Gibby swung the lid down onto the MNEME, closing off any possible retort from Simon. It was well past midnight and Gibby found himself on the cusp of exhaustion. His eyes were

burning and a headache was starting to throb in his temples. But his being tired was not a problem. The computers could take over now. He went to the nearest workstation and activated the programming that BC and Double X had set up. He watched for a few minutes to make certain that the treatment was successfully launched, then hurried off to the rest room to pee, wash his face in cold water, and swallow some ibuprophen. When he returned, he checked the monitors and saw that everything was running according to plan. He then looked inside the MNEME and saw that Simon appeared to be sound asleep, just as he should be. Satisfied, Gibby walked over to the table where he'd left the disk, pulled up a chair, and sat down in front of the computer and monitor. He inserted the disk and called up its file directory. There was only one file on the disk. It was named DWABDO. Gibby attempted to access the file and was asked for a password. He typed "f u r e y" and, after a moment, the file was opened. Peering closely at the monitor, Gibby began to read.

* * *

Gavin Gibson was midway through his second reading of the journal of Simon Thomas. His pulse was hammering, blood roared in his ears, and he hardly could catch his breathe. Yes, Quip worked. Simon had been right in his boast that it worked beyond their wildest dreams. Gibby was thrilled over what he had read. But scared, too. Very scared. He could not stop thinking about what Simon's therapist, Nertz, had been saying in arguing for Simon's receiving a third treatment of Quip. Nertz had dismissed any possibility of danger from the further introduction of Payton Adams' personality into Simon's consciousness on the grounds that the man had only been a steel mill worker. On those same grounds, he had scoffed at the hints of Payton Adams having been a violent man and thereby posing a threat. It was not as if they were unleashing the personality of a psychopath, Dr. Nertz had said. Who was it who'd said that the land of hypotheticals is the province of fools? Hypothetically, what exactly qualified as a psychopath? How about a professional assassin? A cold-blooded killer with a penchant for holding grudges, whose idea of evening the score ran along the lines of "You forgot to send me a Christmas card so I will slit your throat." Would anger-management sessions work to pacify such an individual or would frontal lobotomy be required? The SMEG mindprint findings of BC and Double X loomed large in Gibby's concerns. And now he had given this Payton Adams, this

murderous, vengeance-minded creature, a third shot at Simon's neocortex. What had he done? What had he and his Brain Lab colleagues started? What had Quip created?

As if in answer, the lid to the MNEME flew open and Simon Thomas stumbled out, bellowing at the top of his lungs like a huge wounded beast. His hands were clutched to the front and back of his skull, as he blindly thrashed about the room, banging into benches and equipment. One table was completely knocked over. The table had been chock full of glassware that shattered upon hitting the floor, creating a lake of glittery shards whose silvery color quickly reddened from being stomped on by Simon's naked feet. Gibby did not know whether to try to help Simon or to run away. He was about to opt for flight when Simon abruptly calmed down. As Gibby watched, Simon's hands came away from his head and he inspected them with a quizzical look, as if he were expecting to see something on them and was quite surprised to see nothing out of the ordinary. He then looked up, blinking his eyes in obvious confusion. Moments passed with Simon standing there, blinking. Finally, his eyes sought and found Gibby and fixed him in a stare as cold and deadly as those of a notorious serial killer whose picture Gibby had seen once on television.

"You best clean up this mess while I get dressed," Simon said: His Irish accent had never been more thick.

"What happened in there?" Gibby asked. "Are you alright? Why did you come out?"

"All in good time," Simon answered, still in his Irish accent. "I want us quickly out of here and I don't want anyone to know what we've done tonight. So step-lively, man. There's much work to be done."

Gibby decided it would, for the moment, be best if he said nothing further and obeyed. As he was sweeping up the broken glass, his nose was suddenly hit with a rank odor. His eyes followed his nose and saw that Simon had stepped out of the adult diaper and that it was soaked in urine and filled with excrement. Gibby knew that people lost control of their bladder and bowels when they died. Had Simon experienced his great-grandfather's death? Before Gibby could say anything, Simon balled the diaper up and tossed it toward him.

"Take this and lose it somewhere," Simon said.

The diaper skidded to a stop at Gibby's feet. Looking down at it, the scientist felt certain that Simon Thomas had at last found the answer to his question about the death of his great-

grandfather. Gibby was also certain this was not a good time to ask Simon any questions.

It took nearly an hour, but Gibby was finally satisfied that the MNEME lab had been restored to its condition before he and Simon had begun the third Quip treatment. His final act had been to dispose of the befouled diaper in a dumpster outside of the chemistry building, where bad odors were a daily fact of life. When Gibby returned to the MNEME room, Simon had showered, dressed and was sitting at the computer where Gibby had read the journal on the disk. On the table next to the computer was Simon's open gym bag. Seeing Gibby enter the lab room, Simon beckoned for him. Gibby gave a thought to flight, but a look from Simon froze him in his tracks. Almost against his own will, he found himself moving towards those icy eyes.

"I'll be taking my disk back," Simon said when Gibby stood beside him.

"I suspected you would," Gibby said. "Thank you for allowing me to read it. Fascinating stuff."

"Are you convinced?"

"Yes. What happened in the MNEME this time? Do you know how Payton Adams died?"

"Yes. I presume you copied my journal file onto this computer's hard drive."

"No," Gibby lied. "You can check the file directory yourself."

"No need," Simon replied. He held up what looked like a teabag made of plastic instead of paper, with a string tab at the end but a clear gel rather than leaves contained within its bag.

"What's that?" asked Gibby.

Simon did not answer him. Instead, he slid the bag into the slot for the computer's disk drive so that only the string tab was showing. A cold hard look held Gibby at bay, then Simon tugged at the string. There was a muffled crump and a puff of smoke wafted out from the disk drive's slot.

"I believe your system just crashed," Simon said. He then rose up from his chair and placed a hand inside the gym bag. Before taking his hand out of the bag, Simon turned to Gibby.

"I have some unfinished business to attend to before you are permitted to say anything about this night to anyone. Yes, I know how my great-grandfather died, he was murdered. And yes, I know who did it. Now there are debts in my ledger that I must square. You've read my

journal so you must certainly appreciate that I mean what I say when I tell you I have to square these debts and you must give me the time to do it."

Though the words and sentence construction seemed to be that of Professor Simon Thomas, the sentiments and the Irish accent were unquestionably that of Payton Adams. Gibby calculated that he could test the waters here to see how much maneuvering room he had. "In spite of your wanton and completely pointless destruction of university property, I will do my best to accommodate you, Simon. However, I think it's in your own best interests if we at least bring Keith Joyner in on this. He is a neurologist who could prescribe tests to ascertain that no physiological damage has been done to your brain. He is also, your close friend. He can be trusted with our secret. He should be told. It's for the best. After all, Chancellor MacBryde is bound to be upset when he learns what we have done. Despite our mutual disdain for the man, he does have the support of the Governor. We can't ignore the politics here. Trust me, Simon, letting Keith in on this is for the best."

Gibby smiled, pleased with himself. Let Keith assume responsibility for Simon the wacko while he assumed the lead on Quip the wonder drug. The sooner Keith put Simon under wraps, the sooner the University would be able to go public with Quip, and the sooner Professor Gavin Gibson would be on the road to riches.

But Simon was not in a cooperative mood. "I will tell you what is for the best and you will do what I say," he rudely snapped. "As for that Scotch mutt and his owner, Governor Pat, you pay them no mind. They'll not be interfering with our plans again. Leave that to me. You just do as you're told."

In spite of the goosebumps on his arms, Gibby tried to assert himself as he had before.

"Now see here, Simon, again you seem to forget who you're talking to. When you start issuing orders to me, again, I have to ask, what do you take me for?"

Simon's eyes narrowed and the chill in his Irish voice dropped a dozen more degrees, sending an actual shiver down Gibby's spine. "I take you for a pathetic little fuckbag who beats his tiny meat in front of a toy woman."

Simon pulled his hand out of the bag and Gibby once again felt his pulse hammer and the blood roar in his ears. Once again, his breath was difficult to catch. Then he experienced an entirely new sensation; his bladder releasing a warm stream of urine that ran down the inside of

his leg.

And all because when Simon pulled his hand out the gym bag, he was holding a knife with a large jagged-edged blade.

Even as the urine ran down Gibby's leg, Simon's free hand snaked forward to coil around Gibby's windpipe. Simon squeezed until Gibby was forced to kneel down in the puddle he'd made. The hand at Gibby's throat was replaced with the jagged-edged blade. Gibby felt the coldness of the steel, then pain, as the razor-sharp edge was lightly pressed against his flesh. Tears clouded Gibby's vision but his ears heard Simon's words loudly and clearly.

"If you tell Keith or anyone else about my journal or anything that happened here tonight before I've finished my business, I will find you and kill you. I will cut you up, piece by piece. Your death will take time, a lot of time, and every second of it will hurt. But you will only scream once, because the first piece I cut out of you will be your little cock which I will stuff in your mouth to keep you quiet. You have read my journal, you know I will do what I say. So be smart, keep your mouth shut, and you just might live to be a rich and famous man." Simon slowly withdrew the knife blade from Gibby's throat. He gave Gibby one more icy look, then with a contemptuous smile added: "But no matter how rich you become, you better learn to bathe more often or you will never get into the good parties, you stinky son-of-a-bitch."

Simon put the knife and the computer disk back inside the gym bag, zipped the bag shut, locked it, slipped the bag over his shoulder and, without another word, was gone.

As Gibby watched Simon leave, still kneeling in his own urine, afraid to budge for fear of bringing Simon back to say something else, he thought of the irony. Despite Simon's efforts to thwart him, he now had proof that Quip worked. However, he harbored no doubt that if he were to make his proof known, the Nobel prize would be awarded to him posthumously.

The door to the MNEME lab clicked shut and Gibby at last rose to his feet. He wiped the tears out of his eyes and blew his nose onto his shirt sleeve. Then, looking down at the dark wet stains on the knees of his pants, he was struck by the thought that, like the mad scientist Victor Frankenstein, he too, had helped create a monster. And, like poor Victor, there would probably be no safe place for him to hide should he be so foolish as to cross that monster.

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

Keith Joyner was relaxed on the black leather sofa that faced the floor-to-ceiling curved glass window in his office. His shoes were off, his legs were stretched out, his arms were folded behind his head, and he was looking out the huge window at the 307-foot granite obelisk that was the Campanile clock tower. Little Ben, is what Keith's son Walt had dubbed the Campanile, after seeing a picture of Big Ben in an encyclopedia. Though Sather Tower, the Campanile's official name, was modeled after a water tower in Venice, the name Little Ben had stuck in Keith's family. Right now, Little Ben was showing the time to be 11:15 which meant that Sandra would shortly be showing up at the door with their lunch. When Keith had first started at Cal, Sandra used to bring lunch to him every Friday. She prepared the meals herself, elaborate culinary delights she worked the entire morning on; Keith supplied the wine. As a new arrival to California, he was a blushing oenophile in the making. He would visit a one of the local wine merchants the preceding night and, after some discussion and tasting, make his varietal selection. Sandra would then match her food to his purchase. They dined inside his office, even when the weather was good. They would sit on the leather sofa, eat their meal and drink their wine, looking out the window at the Campanile, and they would talk about the events of the week. Opportunities for talking at home were scarce then. As a young scientist seeking to establish himself with his principal funding agencies, NIH and NSF, Keith was putting in long hours at the laboratory. Even more hours got piled on by virtue of his being a new professor and assigned the freshman biology class. Enrollment at Cal for freshman biology was usually about 900 students. This meant reams of papers to grade. Even with the help of the ten graduate students assigned to him, the load was enormous. Sandra was rather busy herself in those days, being a single parent as she used to say, jokingly, sort of.

For those first two years of Keith's professorship at Cal, Sandra and he were all-too-often like roommates who did not see much of one another; adults living under the same roof with shared expenses and domestic duties but different schedules. The Friday lunch at Keith's office was their special time together. Some married-with-children couples had date nights, Keith and Sandra had their Friday "nooners" as they called them. When Sandra would arrive, Keith would put his phone on DO NOT DISTURB. His standing order to the secretary he shared with two

other professors, was that he would be in a closed session and no one was to even think about knocking unless there was an emergency regarding his sons. In the privacy of his office, he and Sandra would catch up on what each had been doing during the week. Following that, Keith would hit the wall switch that darkened the chromo-sensitive glass of the window until no one could see in. Then he and Sandra would make love on the leather sofa.

Yeah, they were like roommates, but roommates who were hot for one another and loved to fuck each other silly.

Sex had always been a major part of their relationship, but back then, under the double onslaught of the new position and young children, their Friday nooners were like an oasis in the middle of an exceptionally parched and barren desert. They took their time over lunch, savored the food, the wine, and the conversation, but when the food and wine were gone, the talking immediately stopped and the two of them got it on.

Sandra Joyner was a sexy lady; always had been. Her blonde hair and round freckled face with big blue eyes and biscuit cheeks gave her a corn-fed prettiness, perhaps a bit too bland and conventional to draw many looks, but good enough to hold the attention of eyes once caught. Just what you'd expect from your basic All-American farm-girl cheerleader from Medford, Oregon. But this was the blonde All-American farm-girl cheerleader from Medford who went to college in Corvallis and became the lover of an African-American scholar athlete from Portland. So maybe she wasn't so All-American after all. Maybe beneath that bland white-bread exterior, there'd always been a darker, more exotic interior, one that pulsed to a sensuous beat. God knows, her body was built for it. "Renaissance voluptuary," was how Keith described her figure; large breasts, child-bearing hips, and a booty with enough flesh for a man to grab hold and hang on to. Her nipples were large, with silver-dollar-sized aureoles that invited to be sucked, and the straw-colored down between her legs was sufficiently fine to expose in full the thick pink lips that pouted underneath.

But that was all raw materials. It was how she put those raw materials to use that made Sandra so special. And it started with her attitude: when aroused, Sandra did not get moist, she got sopping wet. And when she came, she got drenched.

God, how he missed those Friday nooners. Their lovemaking had been so hot. Back then, Sandra had a favorite routine. They would undress, kiss for awhile, then lay side-by-side.

Sandra would take him in one hand while she touched herself with the other. His hands were free to fondle her breasts and stroke her nipples, but she insisted upon handling both their genitalia herself. She liked having the control, she said. Keith did not complain. It not only felt great but it allowed her to communicate to him her own level of arousal. When she was getting close, she would go down on him, while still touching herself. She would suck him to the brink, lathering him with her saliva, all the while working herself right up to the very edge. Then she would tell him to take her, and she would turn so he could enter her from behind. At that point, she no longer wanted control, she wanted him to give it to her hard, to slam her until she flattened out. She would brace herself with locked arms and he would grab hold of her ass and drive into her as hard he could. As parents, they'd long-since mastered the art of the silent orgasm, but Keith suspected that the rasping breathes being torn from their lungs could be heard outside the closed door of his office as he gushed in her and she soaked on him.

Neither of them passed out, exactly, not *Le petite mort* of French lore, but, upon climaxing, they would both immediately fall asleep, Sandra flat on her stomach, Keith atop and still inside her. They would not be asleep for very long, maybe ten minutes, fifteen tops, but it was the most deeply satisfying sleep Keith had ever known. He missed that sleep and he damn sure missed the sex, even thinking about it brought on Nature's most critical phase-transition, as Gibby called tumescence. But, most of all, he missed the intimacy of those Friday nooners. In many respects, those times were the closest he and his wife had ever been, and, for many reasons, he would dearly love to have them back.

The truth of the matter was, for all of his cheating, for all of his flirting and seductive play with other women, Keith loved Sandra. There had never been any doubt in his own mind about that fact, though he knew he'd given her plenty of reasons to question it. He also acknowledged that the questions he had raised in Sandra's mind had been the gravity pulling down on their marriage. There had been no talk of divorce or separation, she had not requested they see a counselor, in fact, she seldom expressed unhappiness or discontent anymore. But the gravity was there and the effort to resist its tug was tiring both of them. Keith wished he could make things right again. He wished there was something he could say or do to convince Sandra that she was the only woman that he loved. And that his love, despite what she believed, went far beyond sex. He loved her enthusiasm for parenting, from the way she dogged the boys'

educations and extracurricular activities, to the way she kept them well-nourished, well-groomed, respectful of their elders and out of mischief. He loved her competency at managing their household, from the way she handled their finances (Keith did not know a thing about his retirement plan or the boys' college fund portfolio except that both were solid thanks to Sandra), to the way she made their home look good, kept their cars, appliances, and other amenities running, and household supplies well-stocked. Keith loved Sandra because she made it possible for him to love his life. He was free to devote himself to his career and to do the things he enjoyed doing because Sandra took care of everything else that mattered. But if he told her all of this, if he laid it out just like that, he knew what she would ask. Why then would he cheat on her? Why would he risk a relationship he claims is so important, so invaluable to him? Was he self-destructive? Was he compulsively reckless? Was he simply a selfish asshole? All-of-the-above? None-of-the-above? Other reasons not shown? As a scientist, Keith subscribed to Occam's Razor: when faced with multiple choice answers, the best solution is usually the simplest. With regards to his infidelities, Keith knew in his heart of hearts the answer as to why and it was simple, but it was not an answer he could give to Sandra.

He did it for the sex.

He enjoyed watching the expression on a woman's face when he gave her pleasure.

He enjoyed doing the things he did to give women pleasure.

He enjoyed the things that women did to give him pleasure.

He enjoyed the differences in what each woman thought to do and the skills with which she did it.

He especially enjoyed watching women come, and all the different nuances and variations of the orgasm that was unique to each and every one of them.

He enjoyed his own orgasms and having women watch him come.

And when the sex was over, what made the act just perfect for Keith, was if he never had to deal with any of those women again.

Sharing thoughts with one another was a part of married sex, a crucial part, Keith himself would not want it otherwise. But it was also one of the requirements that made married sex so completely different and separate from one-night-stand sex. Some married women understood that; they were the ideal choices with whom to share an afternoon or night of physical pleasure.

Keith had thought Jan Thomas was such a woman. Simon, upon occasion, in moments of deep "guy talk" between best friends, had alluded to Jan having a "somewhat kinky attitude" with regards to the act of making love. Unable to extract any further details from his obviously embarrassed friend, Keith had interpreted Simon to mean she fooled around on the side. Big-time mistake. Jan's guilt had been so enormous she'd made him feel guilty, too. So guilty, he'd only strayed once since then and it had not been at all what it should have been. Maybe age was diminishing his sex drive. Maybe he was losing his touch, no longer able to attract his choice of women like he once did. If he again applied Occam's Razor, he might even conclude that maybe, he was at last, growing up. From observing the behavior of his own boys, and listening to the tales told by Simon and Jan, Keith knew teenagers were, by and large, so completely self-absorbed that it was next to impossible for them to consider the feelings of others. Even as they marginalized the feelings of everyone else, especially their parents, teenagers magnified the importance of their own thoughts, actions, and experiences.

For the better part of two decades, Keith Joyner had conducted his personal life as if he were still a teenager. It was looking like he was finally moving beyond this arrested development. In either case, the choice had not consciously been made. He simply was who he was: blame it on the genes.

With an enormous sigh, Keith rose up from the sofa and stretched, feeling every bit his age and then some. He crossed the room to stand in front of the window through which he'd been staring. Looking down across the way, he could see the immense crowd that was gathering on the ellipse around the base of the Campanile. There was a rally scheduled to begin there at noon, another protest against Governor Patrick Law's University Reform Bill. But today's rally would be different because Governor Pat was on campus. He was scheduled to meet with Chancellor MacBryde, members of his staff, and officers of the faculty senate in the morning, and with the deans, department chairs and other key faculty leaders early in the afternoon. A campus-wide address was scheduled to take place at 2:00 pm in Sproul Plaza. Keith presumed the goal of the protest organizers was to spend a couple of hours whipping militant spirits up to a frothing at the Campanile then turn everyone loose for a dash across campus to Sproul Plaza -- another adrenaline boost -- where protestors could then greet the Governor in frothingly high dudgeon.

A strategically sound plan, Keith thought. What the protest organizers did not know is that Governor Pat and Chancellor MacBryde would be personally attending at least the first part of their rally. Sandra's cousin, Kathy Webb, had told Sandra that, weather permitting, the Chancellor and the Governor would be taking their lunch on the observation deck of the Campanile, which was just above the tower's four clock faces and some two hundred feet above the ellipse. Depending on the attendance and how the rally unfolded, there was even some thought being given to having the governor and the chancellor take the elevator down to the base of the tower and make a surprise appearance. The idea was that such a bold action would deflate a sizeable volume of wind from out of the opposition's sails.

Looking out the window at the sun-drenched sky that monopolized much of the horizon beyond the Campanile's green-weathered copper peak, Keith concluded that the day's climate did indeed permit an outdoor lunch for Governor Pat and his Scotch mutt, as Simon might have said. A stiff breeze periodically rattled the window's glass but, coming from the south, it was no doubt warm.

Squinting, he could see tiny figures moving about behind the balustrade of the Campanile's observation deck. Possibly security staff doing whatever it is they might do up there, or maybe a janitorial crew making sure the place was swept clean. Staring up at the pointed crown that gave Little Ben the distinctive arrow shape that had made it such a campus landmark, Keith again found himself thinking about Sandra and their Friday nooners, and in thinking about those good times, he could not help but to think also of the bad times, all those mistakes of the past that haunted his marriage like so many ghosts. Keith found himself letting out another enormous sigh, as if in the expulsion of air, he could remove the weight of all those ghosts.

This was no time to be sad, no time to let the guilt of past sins rain on his parade. If his personal life was not what it should have been, his professional life more than made up for it. After a rocky few weeks, when things had been looking pretty damn grim, Keith Joyner's scientific career suddenly looked to be riding the express elevator to the top. Quip had proven to be the most potent memory enhancer ever reported. Vijay Jain and Sasha Kravitz-Goldman were eager to co-author a paper declaring that the results of the Quip experiment validated the

Seychelles-Joyner Fear Response theory. Eugene Nertz had begged to be included. With a paper on his fear-response theory, plus the publication of a paper on the Quip experiment itself, Keith was almost certain to be nominated for a Nobel. Both Dean Spiers and Chancellor MacBryde had already sent him personal letters of congratulations, along with their assurances that the ban on further Quip experimentation with humans was sure to be lifted at the next meeting of the Human Use Committee. Everything was coming up roses and he was eager to get happy with his wife, to celebrate with the woman he loved, and to fuck her sweet pussy until she screamed out her gratitude.

There was an electronic chirp followed by the sound of metal scraping metal, and the door to Keith's office swung open. Sandra entered with a picnic basket on her arm. Seeing Keith watching her from the window, she smiled and raised up the basket.

"Seems like old times," she said.

Keith returned her smile, an erection of sheer joy pushing against his zipper. Then he went to help his wife with her load.

* * *

Keith took another sip from his wine, one of his favorites, a Zinfandel from the Russian River Valley vineyard of the DeLoach winery. Swallowing, he savored the delicious cherry undercurrent and hints of raspberries and allspice. Sandra had stopped at Keith's preferred retailer to pick up the bottle which Keith had specified. His appetite for familiar wines, like his appetite for a familiar woman, was most definitely on the rise, he thought, smacking his lips appreciatively and allowing his eyes to linger hungrily on Sandra. She was looking exceptionally fine, today. Rather than spend the morning preparing a lunch, she'd obviously put in some time in front of a mirror. Her blonde hair, which she usually pulled back in a bun or short ponytail, had been brushed out full and allowed to fall over her shoulders the way Keith liked it. She seldom wore much makeup and especially eschewed lipstick with much color, preferring instead the clear lip gloss, but today, her plump cheeks had been rouged and her lips were painted a glistening ruby red. She'd worn an amber sweater dress that clung tightly enough to accentuate her bosom and hips, but hid any traces of the tummy that Keith knew was there. Deceptive? Yes, but Keith was not complaining. How could he when his pulse raced each time his eyes lingered on her? Or, when she moved, his ears detected the rustle of a silk slip

underneath her dress? Keith would have bet a hundred dollars that it was her black silk slip and that underneath it were her black silk panties and bra. The mere notion of the garments brought on tumescence and the deep ache of yearning. Complaints? None. Not even that she had purchased lunch rather than prepare it herself, for she'd gone to Keith's favorite deli. Sandwiches of smoked turkey breast topped with arugula, cherry tomatoes, black olives and Monterey Jack cheese on a foccacia roll, followed by chocolate-dipped almond biscottis for dessert were nothing for any civilized man to sneeze at. No, the food, the drink, his desirable wife, and his confidence that he would soon gain superstar status within the scientific community made for a highly contented Keith Joyner, a man who could not be happier with his life.

Even the conversation had been a delightful surprise.

Sandra had mentioned earlier in the morning she wanted to discuss something about one of the boys over lunch and Keith had presumed she wanted to talk about Earl's lackadaisical study habits. Earl Joyner lived for playing basketball. He was a baller who had game, as the kids said these days, but his goal was to be a baller with supreme game and he was getting there. Already, he regularly beat Keith one-on-one, and the day was drawing near when he'd even be able to take Jan. Right now, she used a three-inch height advantage to bury him with treys, but Earl had just begun another growth spurt. He'd soon be her equal in height and he already could sky. He'd been able to dunk since seventh grade -- given a running start. Unfortunately, working on his game was all Earl wanted to do. School was something he grudgingly put up with. Berkeley High required a C average for kids to participate in school athletics. Earl could do that in his sleep -- the boy was damned smart. However, the Joyner family required a B average. Earl was going to fall short if he did not start hitting the books harder and that, Keith kept telling his son, did not mean sitting at the desk in your room for an hour with your book open and your mind reliving a highlight film of Michael Jordan taking an opponent to the hoop.

But Earl was not the subject of discussion Sandra had in mind.

"Walt's in love," Sandra announced just prior to biting into her sandwich. Impatiently, Keith waited for her to chew, swallow, and continue. Impatiently and with much anxiety for he was dreading to hear that the object of Walt's affection was male.

"I was putting socks away and found love letters in his dresser drawer," Sandra said, then took another bite.

"Woman, empty your goddamn mouth a second and tell me who he wrote the letters to!" is what Keith wanted to scream. But he knew Sandra would not be rushed and any attempt to hurry her would work to the opposite effect. So he smiled to show his interest and took a bite from his own sandwich.

"There were printouts of five letters he wrote on the computer, and three responses. No question, the feelings between them are mutual," Sandra resumed, "but I get the impression they've not done much beyond kissing. Still, this could pose problems, especially for you."

Keith could stand it no longer. Trying hard to conceal his mounting fears, he said, "Exactly who is it we are talking about and why would this pose problems? Do I know hi..this person?"

Sandra's eyes went blank. Recognition jerked them back. "You think your son is gay?" she said. It was not really a question.

"Um...." replied Keith: It was not really an answer.

"How little you know us, Keith," Sandra said, a statement of fact worse than any rebuke. She folded her arms protectively across her chest, as if to hide from Keith's view the normal focus of his eyes when he looked at her. "You think you know most of what there is to know about Earl because he is so much like you. But you are so clueless when it comes to Walt. Is that because you think of him as being like me?"

Keith felt a constriction at his throat. Guilt? Anger? He wanted to tell her not to start. He wanted to plead with her not to ruin what could still be a beautiful resumption of their Friday nooners. But, fortune was with him in that she spoke before he had a chance to commit any of a dozen potential marital blunders.

"Elizabeth Thomas," Sandra said. "Walt is in love with Elizabeth."

Keith was speechless. Louise had called Walt a cakeboy.

"We all know how tenuous teen-aged love affairs can be," Sandra continued, ignoring the dazed expression Keith felt sure was written all over his face. "Had Romeo and Juliet not gone out the way they did, odds are one would have dumped the other inside of a month and joined the family feud. Jan and I discussed this last night. (Keith winced. Sandra and Jan had gone out together, just the two of them, for sushi. Seemed like everytime the two of them got together for a girls' night out lately, it spelled trouble for him.) We can handle it but we worry about you.

Men are such boys when it comes to relationships."

Keith finally managed to find his voice. He was thrilled to hear that Walt's affections were directed toward a girl, nervous to know it was Elizabeth Thomas, who obviously did not share her sister's opinion of Walt, and indignant that Sandra and Jan seemed only concerned about his ability to handle this development. "What about Simon?" he asked, and immediately felt stupid for the question.

Sandra's look did not help matters. "I guess that depends upon which Simon you are talking about. The old Simon probably would have handled it fairly well. He was a lot more sensitive than most men and would have taken his cues from Jan. The new Simon? The version that Quip has given us? Who can say? I don't know the man. More importantly, neither does Jan."

Keith frowned at the implied criticism of Quip, but he let it pass because he was anxious to steer the conversation back to Walt and Elizabeth. He wanted to hear more about the two of them and Sandra was amenable; in fact, she seemed quite eager to share with Keith what she had learned. Throughout the rest of their lunch, she dished out the details she'd gathered from reading Walt's and Elizabeth's letters. Their relationship had begun towards the end of the previous school year, when they had the same English class and had studied for their final exam together. It was carried on throughout the summer, but cautiously, with tenuous progress, like the tendrils of climbing plants reaching out into new territory. They had even kept a secret from their siblings, something neither had ever done before. Then came the start of the school year when the two found themselves again in the same English class. They saw it as a sign their love was meant to be. Keith interrupted to point out that the pairing should have come as no surprise, it was an honors course for A students in English which both Walt and Elizabeth were. Sandra lifted her eyes at the interruption. "Kids find omens in the dropping of a eucalyptus leaf," she said, like she were explaining something to one of the boys. "For Walt and Elizabeth, it was a sign from above. Elizabeth finally shared her secret with Louise who immediately proclaimed the love affair as God's will. Earl thought so too, when he was told. And don't even think about pointing out that neither the Thomas twins or our boys are religious or I will take my biscottis and go home."

Sandra went on to tell Keith that Walt had written a song for Elizabeth. She did not

know the lyrics, but she had brought along a copy of the words which she proceeded to read.

*Everything I've wanted is everything I get,
when I'm in the presence of my sweet Elizabeth,
You can take your hip-hop ladies and your hard-nosed rockers too,
your goths and your skaters and your clueless ingenues,
they all have one thing lacking,
not a one of them is you.
It may seem quite old-fashioned but as I know my name,
time spent with someone else just could not be the same,
it's been said a million times before in a million different ways,
but never by me and never to you so be it known today,
for all in life you will ever doubt, here is one thing hold as true,
my dearest sweet Elizabeth, I'm in with love you.*

"Somewhat corny, wouldn't you say?" Keith commented when she'd finished.

Sandra poked him in the side. "Trust me, this is the equivalent of Earl lighting them up for 50 in the state championship game."

Keith was impressed.

"Jan thinks she's heard the melody. Elizabeth was playing a tune on their piano the other day that Jan is sure she's never heard before. She said it sounded like something John Lennon might have done."

Again, Keith was impressed. "Fast company," he said.

Sandra cocked an eyebrow. "You would not sound so surprised if you knew him better. He's a helluva musician with a poet's heart. He's tough, too. We got one of those recorded messages from the school the other night that says your son or daughter missed one or more classes today. Earl tried to snow me, swore up and down it wasn't him and that his teachers have been screwing up some new attendance sheet. Walt overheard and came down hard on him, told Earl to stop lying and own up to his mistake."

"Did Earl cut class?" Keith demanded, his temper flaring. He'd been through this before with his youngest son and if he had to go through it again there would be some kind of hell for the boy to pay.

Sandra nodded. "His last two periods, math and science."

"Playing ball?" asked Keith.

"What else?" Sandra answered. "He got angry about Walt ratting him out, but Walt would not stand for it. He got right back into Earl's face and told him if he wanted to be The Man on the court, he'd better start showing something in the classroom. Nike did not come swooshing up to door of playground ballers, and if he didn't get his skinny butt behind the grade thing a no-name playground baller is all he ever would be."

Keith exploded with a gleeful cackle. "My boy is tough! That's something like Jan Thomas would have said!" Still cackling, Keith snatched up a biscotti and emphatically bit down on it.

Sandra took up a biscotti for herself, but then she paused, holding the slender cookie in front of her face as if she were studying it. Her thoughts, however, were not on dessert.

"Jan's not so tough anymore."

Keith could barely hear his wife over the crunching of the biscotti in his mouth. "Whyzat, you say?" he mumbled, while swallowing, his mind still aglow with the idea of Walt putting his little brother in his place.

"We've been talking so much about the new Simon, we seem to have lost sight of the fact that Jan is no longer Jan. There's a new version of her as well. And it, too, is no improvement, in my opinion."

Keith felt himself tensing up, but he kept his voice calm. "I haven't noticed anything different. She say something to you?"

Sandra's eyes narrowed. She set the biscotti down untouched and stared out the window at the Campanile. "She said a lot of things last night. Mostly about Simon."

"What about Simon?" Keith asked, watching her closely. "He's doing great. Couldn't be better."

Sandra turned to give him a look of disappointment, like he were a dog who'd just wet on her favorite rug, then shook her head sadly and returned her eyes to the Campanile. "You're more clueless than I thought," she muttered. "The Simon Thomas we've all known has ceased to exist."

"Bullshit!" Keith heard his own voice rise. He immediately lowered it. "Listen, honey, I admit I was really worried there for awhile. Everything seemed to be going straight to hell with the Quip experiment, from the anomalous SMEG mindprint to the Danny Bosworth episode. I thought that the memories of Payton Adams had enabled Payton's personality to assume dominance over Simon's mind. As you know, I was deeply afraid that the damage was irrevocable."

"I know," Sandra said, nodding, "I was afraid for you."

"Yes, but then Simon's abreactive dream returned and everything has changed. What none of us anticipated, what none of us could have possibly foreseen was that when his dream returned, the stressor event itself would finally be recalled. Simon at last has the answer to the question that has weighed him down all these years."

"Does he?" Sandra asked, pointedly.

Keith tossed her a quizzical look. "Yes, he does. His great-grandfather was murdered by a Pinkerton man, just as his grandmother told him when he was twelve."

"Sounds like a regular miracle to me," Sandra said, unbridling her sarcasm. Keith bristled, but swallowed his anger. "It was a miracle," he said, calmly, "the miracle of Quip. What we had no way of foreseeing was the power of Quip as a memory enhancer. We had identified and quantified the neurotransmitter properties of the original Quip and the neurohormonal effects of the Quip isomer, but that did not tell us to what degree any genetic memories were being recalled. Then there was Simon with his stories that initially seemed so contradictory. In retrospect, of course, it is easy to see now that there were no contradictions. Once we had the full picture, everything that Simon had told us came together."

"Did it?" asked Sandra. The obvious challenge in her voice again made the hairs on the back of Keith's neck stand, but again, he fought to control his anger.

"Yes, it did," he responded, his voice betraying his irritation. "Simon's grandmother told Simon the story that her mother, Rosaleen, told her: Payton Adams disappeared and she believed he'd been murdered by a Pinkerton agent. The story was true except that Rosaleen knew what had happened to Payton because she witnessed his death with her own eyes. She and Payton were planning to run away together but before they could leave town, Rosaleen shot and killed their landlord, a man named Collin Garraty. Simon now feels she was acting in self-defense."

Rosaleen then stole Garraty's gold because she was pregnant with Payton's child. She and Payton met at an abandoned ferry landing at dawn where Payton had arranged for a boat to be waiting for them. But when they got to the landing, there was a Pinkerton agent in the boat. He shot and killed Payton. Somehow, Rosaleen managed to escape with the gold and start a new life for herself and her child in Baltimore."

"Simon got all of that in his latest dream?" Sandra snorted.

"No, of course not," Keith replied. "This last dream was almost identical to his recurring nightmare except that, for the first time, he saw the Pinkerton agent in the boat, he watched the man raise his gun and heard the man tell Payton and Rosaleen to surrender. This time he saw Payton turn to warn Rosaleen to run, then turn back again to charge the man in the boat. That's probably why his earlier recovered memories were so hazy as to which direction the shot came from; Payton was essentially trying to look two ways at once. But this recovered memory of the stressor event, the murder of Payton Adams, fits with Simon's recovered memories in the MNEME and what his friend Ana Huff learned from searching historical archives."

"Almost too good to be true, isn't it?" Sandra said just before retrieving the biscotti she'd set down moments earlier and loudly biting into it.

"Obviously you have your doubts, honey, but Vijay, Ariel, Sasha, and I are all satisfied that Simon's recovered memories are real and that his PTSD has been cured. We've put him through all the testing hoops we can, psychological as well as physiological, and his responses have been everything we wanted to see. Yes, he has explicit memory maps between his limbic system and neocortex that exist in no other human being known to science, but those memory maps have been his salvation. I talk with him every day, he's in good spirits, feeling more and more like himself again and he speaks without a trace of an Irish accent. My friend is doing fine thanks to Quip so forgive me if I sound a bit proud."

Keith realized he'd again raised his voice. Too bad. He was pissed. Royally pissed. This should have been a fabulous afternoon for he and Sandra. He was happy and ready to get even happier and here she was fucking it up. Wasn't that just like her? Always bitching about something. Nothing ever good enough for her. What was her fucking problem? He never ever should have allowed her to spend an evening with Jan Thomas. He could have told Sandra what was bugging Jan; she couldn't handle the sudden emergence of a mentally strong and self-

confident Simon. She preferred ruling over a physically powerful but emotionally weak husband. Better to rule in hell than serve in heaven. That could have been Jan's motto, the ball-busting bitch.

Oblivious to Keith's internal rantings and ignoring his raised voice, Sandra swallowed her bite of biscotti and quietly asked, "How about that shrink Simon's been seeing? What does he say?"

Keith took a swallow of wine to cool down his anger, then flashed his teeth in a show of smugness. "Nertz says Simon's anger-management sessions are all that he hoped for. The key, he says, was the recalling of the stressor event in the return of Simon's abreactive dream. Nertz had thought a third Quip treatment would be required to pull that memory out of Simon's neocortex. Like the rest of us, Nertz underestimated the power of Quip. Here at the Brain Lab, the words miracle and Quip are being deployed in the same sentence quite a bit these days. Now, are you going sit there and tell me that we are all wrong?"

Sandra finished her biscotti and casually patted her lips with a napkin. "What about Stinky Gibson?" she asked, the napkin still to her mouth. "What does he have to say?"

The smug grin vanished and Keith shook his head. "I don't know what's up with Gibby. He's been keeping an unusually low profile. My guess is, he was such a loud advocate for Quip before, he's decided that for the time being, the best thing he can do is keep his mouth shut, especially seeing as how the rest of us have come around to his viewpoint. Maybe he's afraid to say anything that would rock the miracle."

Sandra perked up at the word "miracle." She stared at Keith for a long moment, then asked: "What about Dana Plowman? How does she feel about the Quip miracle?"

Keith rolled his eyes and groaned. "Dana remains upset about Morris. She can't get past it. Up until yesterday she was still keeping the poor little fellow isolated from the other bonobos. Her colleagues at the Primate Center finally had enough of her overwrought bullshit. They signed a petition to Vijay saying that Dana was doing Morris more harm than good by continuing to isolate him. Vijay agreed and ordered Morris to be re-instated back into bonobo society. Dana protested, of course, but Vijay over-ruled her and threatened to remove her supervisory responsibilities if she refused to comply. Morris is back with his tribe and so far so good. Frankly, if you ask me, what Dana needs is a good stiff punch in the pants. The woman is

suffering from dick deprivation."

Sandra gave Keith another look of disappointment, this one even more pronounced than the first, as if he were a pet who had just wet a second time in the same spot.

"How can people so knowledgeable about the brain be so ignorant about human nature? Is it your egos that get in the way? Do you and the others really think your chemical concoction, Quip, is that good? Did it never occur to any of you that Simon has been playing all of you for fools, telling you exactly what you want to hear?"

"What are you talki..."

Sandra cut him off. "According to Jan, ever since the night Simon's dream returned, he has all but ceased to function as a member of their family."

"Oh, please..." Keith derided, but Sandra was not about to be dismissed.

"Remember how Simon used to handle most of the domestic duties in their home? He did the cooking and cleaning, he bought the groceries, took care of laundry? Well, not anymore. Either Jan prepares the meals the night before and the girls heat them up the next day, or else Jan stops for take-out on her way home from work. She and the girls have divided the rest of the chores between them. Simon does nothing."

"Is that supposed to upset me?" Keith snorted. "I'd say it's high time Jan started acting more like a wife and mother and less like a goddamned career woman."

Sandra creased her brow in disapproval. "I'll ignore that bit of swinery. My point is that Simon suddenly abandoned a routine that had been in place for years. Are you going to sit there and tell me that is normal behavior? And remember, we are talking about Simon Thomas, a creature of habit."

Keith fell silent. Sandra was eager to fill the void.

"Would it tax your memory too much to recall that Simon was also quite the chatterbox, especially around Jan and the girls? Remember how Jan used to complain that the girls were always late getting to their homework because Simon kept them talking so long at the dinner table? Now, she says, he scarcely has a word to say to any of them, other than to ask occasional questions. And when he asks questions, Jan says he is not doing it to make idle small talk. He asks specific questions to get specific information. I know exactly what she means. I spoke with him the other day and it was like

talking to a police detective investigating a crime. What was that character's name on the old TV show Dragnet? The guy who wanted nothing but the facts? Joe Friday?"

Keith nodded, listening, thinking, and trying to ignore the trickle of doubt that was beginning to seep into his confidence.

"Well, that's what my conversation with Simon felt like," Sandra continued. "What's more, Jan says Simon has taken to disappearing for hours at a time, supposedly off running or swimming at the pool."

Keith frowned. "Simon has taken up swimming? He never mentioned it."

Sandra nodded. Her eyes left Keith and drifted to the window and the Campanile. "I guess that is not something you or Vijay or Dr. Nertz or anyone else needed to know. Jan says he leaves the house with his gym bag and then, at some point, he's back. She also says he's quiet as a cat in his movements so that she is constantly being startled by him. Kind of unnerving to say the least, but Jan says there is no talking with Simon about that or anything else."

"Why not? Does he become angry with her?" Keith asked, his doubts becoming more serious by the second.

Sandra shook her head. "I don't think so. From what Jan said, any attempt on her part at engaging him in a dialogue is met with his Joe Friday -- nothing but the facts, ma'am -- thing. Except that she doesn't believe him. She says she'd smell the chlorine if he were really swimming, or the sweat if he were running. And she can never find his gym bag to see if he's hiding anything inside it which makes her think that he does have something to hide."

It was Keith's turn to shake his head. "That sounds crazy," he said, softly, as his mind frantically flipped through a mental rolodex of possible explanations.

Sandra surveyed him like she were studying someone she had just met. "What have I been telling you? And Jan is hurting because of it. She loves Simon. She is willing to endure his erratic behavior because she keeps telling herself he will snap out of it. But with each passing day, she says, he is becoming more and more remote."

"Why has she not told any of this to Nertz?" Keith demanded. "More significantly, why has she said nothing to me?"

Sandra again turned away from him. "She says she's tried, Keith. She says she's tried talking to both of you and neither of you want to listen. Neither of you want to hear anything

negative about Quip. You are all so eager to declare it a big success. Simon's gone, Keith, whether you want to face the truth or not. Jan knows it and it is destroying her. We've always thought of Jan as such a fierce, strong woman. But what none of us ever realized, what maybe even Jan herself never quite realized, was that Simon's love for her and her complete trust and faith in his love were a big part of why she could be who she was. Without that love, she's like a master pianist who has suddenly lost one of her hands. Notes she once played in her sleep now seem beyond her ability. Decisions she made, actions she took, all with little thought before, she now struggles with. Jan, who never seemed bothered by any self-doubts, Jan, whose self-confidence rivaled yours, is running scared. The first person to whom she would normally turn in a time of personal crisis is Simon. And he now shows no interest in her other than sex."

Keith reached out a hand to Sandra, causing her to start, as if his touch had burned her. He apologized for startling her but her last comment had taken him by surprise, given what had been said prior. He needed clarification. It was important. "Did Jan tell you that she and Simon are still sexually active?"

Sandra lifted her eyes at Keith, then turned away from him. "It's probably not what you're thinking. Jan said Simon's sexual appetite is stronger than it has ever been. He grabs for her every night and she says she is afraid to deny him. She does not know how he would respond to her refusal and she does not want any more scenes that would upset the girls. If she even hints that there is something wrong, if she raises her voice around Simon or gives him a cross look in the presence of the girls, they jump down her throat and then give her the big freeze-out. They are out to protect their daddy at all costs and Jan is just not strong enough to deal with them and with Simon. And he knows it, she says. Simon sees her weakness with the twins and he exploits it whenever he needs to."

"That's not right," Keith said, showing sympathy, "but tell me more about the sex thing." When this brought an immediate cross look from Sandra, he added. "Please. I'll explain in a minute."

Sandra sighed. "Jan says it's like dream sex, intensely physical but with no emotional substance. There is the act and then Simon is gone, as if she had woken to find herself alone in bed. Simon does not give her his love, Jan says, he gives her his sperm."

Again Keith reached out to touch Sandra, but this time he was so gentle she did not start

but accepted his touch by placing her hand over his. "The reason I asked is because our physiological tests do show subnormal glucose activity in Simon's frontal lobes. This would be in keeping with a man with a high libido and a low moral restraint."

Sandra gave Keith a questioning look.

"It would fit the pattern of a serial rapist," Keith explained. "That does not make Simon a serial rapist, mind you, it just says that the activity in his brain is not incompatible with such a profile. What I find especially interesting, is that I asked Simon about this in private and he swore to me that there has been nothing out of the ordinary in his and Jan's physical relationship. Nothing."

"He's lying," Sandra responded in a flat voice.

"So it would seem," Keith replied, thinking. "I don't know what to tell you other than I will investigate the matter. How long can she hang in there?"

"What?" asked Sandra.

"I need some time to think about what you've told me and to come up with a plans for finding out what is really going on with Simon. I think it is crucial that Jan stay with him, but the situation sounds terrible for her. How long do you think she can endure it?"

Sandra instantly pulled away from Keith and gave him a pained look. "As long as it takes to bring Simon back, that is how long I think Jan will endure the situation. Have you heard nothing of what I've been saying? Jan loves Simon. She wants him back. She needs him back. She would descend into hell itself and retrieve him if she could. She would go anywhere to bring him back but she doesn't know where to find him and it is destroying her."

Sandra fell into a miserable silence and Keith could think of no words to say that would help. In retrospect, he realized he and the others should have been strongly suspicious of Simon's apparent recovery. Like Jan always said, anything too good to be true usually wasn't. But if Simon had taken a turn for the worse it was especially troublesome to Keith for he could think of nothing that would account for the deterioration. Maybe that is why he and Nertz and the others had been so quick to accept Simon's improvement. A return to health following the recall of the stressor event that had triggered Simon's PTSD is what psychiatric dogma predicted; a period of acclimation to the Quip-induced memories, followed by assimilation and a steady

improvement to restoration is what Simon's psychotherapist had predicted. Simon was well aware of these predictions and could have easily tailored his responses to deceive Keith, Nertz and the others. But why would he do that? Why would Simon deliberately deceive them into believing his condition was good and getting better? If it was an act, it was a shrewd one, something that the pre-Quip Simon would never have thought of, let alone been able to pull off. Were the Payton Adams' memories still at work on Simon's mind? And if so, then what was the Payton personality up to?

Keith suddenly became aware that Sandra was no longer beside him. Looking up, he saw her standing by the window. He could also see that she was quietly sobbing. Quickly, he was up and by her side. He put a hand upon her shoulder and she immediately held it in place with both of hers, firmly, as if determined to not let him go no matter what.

"I'll be alright, just give me a minute, okay?" she said, sniffing to draw back the mucous in her sinuses. "We can still fool around."

"Honey, that's okay," Keith said, studying her profile. The corners of her lips sneaked upward into the start of a smile.

"I want to. That's what I came here for. This is my seductive look, can't you tell?"

Keith gave her shoulder a squeeze. "Works for me," he said.

Then, hand still held on her shoulder, he, too, turned his gaze out the window at the Campanile across the way. Just inside the tall rounded archways of the tower's observation deck, he could see maybe half-a-dozen individuals. Narrowing his eyes, Keith could make out a patch of red on one of them. That would be Maris Cavanaugh, the pretty blonde public information officer who'd caught his eye at the last big Quip de-briefing. He'd run into Maris on campus a couple of days ago and she'd told him she would be escorting the governor on his visit. She said she'd be wearing a bright red jacket to "outpower" Governor Pat's signature necktie. If Maris was on the observation deck, then the governor and Chancellor MacBryde must be up there, too. Keith glanced at the huge spruce hands on the clock dial facing him which showed two minutes before the noon hour. No doubt Maris was busy making sure that the governor and the chancellor and the other VIPs on the deck had put in the ear-plugs they'd been issued before entering the tower's elevator. Keith knew from personal experience that the noise was deafening on the observation deck when the Campanile's massive three-ton carillons tolled the hour. But if the

sound was somewhat muffled by the use of ear-plugs, it was a real thrill to stand on the deck, hear the powerful chimes and feel the mighty vibrations they unleashed throughout the steel and granite structure of the tower.

Keith's eyes drifted downward. The gathering of protestors had spilled over the paved area of the ellipse and onto the surrounding grass. He knew nothing about crowd estimations but guessed there must have been several hundred people in attendance. The crowd was thickest around a platform which had been set up at the base of the Campanile. There were a great many signs being hoisted by those nearest the platform which itself was occupied by maybe a dozen or more persons, one of whom held a megaphone. Keith could not make out the gender of the megaphone-holder, nor could he hear any of the words being said, but the message must have been stirring because the signs kept getting shoved skyward in unison and Keith could hear an accompanying roar of voices being raised as one. His eyes rose once more to the clock dial and the observation deck above it. He could now plainly see the red jacket of Maris who was standing at the balustrade sandwiched in between two persons -- the governor and the chancellor? They appeared to be studying the assembly gathered on the ellipse below.

With his eyes on the Campanile, watching the hands on the clock, Keith began to talk to his wife.

"You'd already gone out with Jan by the time I got home last night so I didn't get a chance to tell you what happened yesterday. Some protestors tried to barricade the Brain Lab. It was part of a call to seize all the science facilities on campus before Governor Pat showed up. Sasha assaulted one of the protestors, beat him over the head with his own sign." Keith smiled. "Nobody better blame that on Quip."

There came a soft chuckle from Sandra. "It's like the sixties again, isn't it?"

Keith nodded. "Retro is in for music and fashion, why not for student activism? You know, this campus has become so mellow over the past few years, we seemed to have forgotten about its radical past. But the past is something we never put behind us is it? No matter how fast we run, the chains of our past are hauled along with us. That's what Nietzsche said. Why should the collective consciousness of an institution be any different? After all, does not every nation, every branch of the military, every corporation, every sports team -- even the worst losers -- brag about a fine tradition and proud past? It just so happens that Berkeley's fine tradition and proud

past is campus unrest, upheaval and turmoil. Students occupying buildings, police in riot gear lobbing teargas and making mass arrests. Did you know that Governor Pat is threatening to call up the California national guard in response? Vijay thinks he is going to use the demonstration today as an excuse and make the announcement at his speech this afternoon. Governor Pat is through fucking around with the students and faculty at Cal. He doesn't carry many votes in this area so why should he care what the constituency thinks? According to Vijay, who I think got his info from Jack LaPage, MacBryde is going to make a formal request for the state to maintain the peace and protect the university's property. Supposedly, the governor is going to respond by sending in the troops. I hate it. All of it. Yesterday was so weird, having to make my way around huge groups of demonstrators, then having to sneak in through a side door to the Brain Lab. I tell you, I feel like a stranger here on my own campus."

Keith heard Sandra's breath softly clutch. The start of another chuckle, he thought, then realized, no, it was the start of more sobs. He looked at her and saw the tears, leaving trails down her cheeks, shimmery in the sunlight.

"I feel that way about my life," she said, her voice breaking. "I've felt estranged from you for so long, and from Earl for the past couple of years. It is not easy and not what I want but I've come to accept it. This summer Walt found Elizabeth and he, too, began putting distance between us. Again, not what I want but what I expected. That is the natural cycle, isn't it? Children have to separate from their parents so they are able to one day be on their own. My husband has to keep me at a distance because that is who he is. I've known that and have come to terms with it. But now I am becoming estranged from Jan and that I did not expect, that I am finding hard to accept. She has been my best friend, the best friend I ever had. I have known that my children would one day leave home, and I have learned to live with the fact that my marriage could dissolve. What I have believed though is that Jan and I would be forever. That has been my truth and my salvation. But Jan is changing now. And, just as surely as the Simon we all knew no longer exists, so, too, is the Jan I knew becoming a memory." Sandra turned to face Keith, her tearful eyes were wide with sadness. "I want you to give me back my friend."

"How?" Keith whispered, forcing the word through the choke of guilt and shame that tightened in his throat.

Sandra closed her eyes. Her entire body began to tremble. "By giving Jan back her

husband," she sobbed.

Keith wrapped his arms around his wife and pulled her tightly into him. He held and hugged her as if his strength could exorcise the loneliness that engulfed her. There was no resistance on the part of Sandra. She was quite willing to be held and hugged, desperate for it, and she allowed her weight to fall into Keith, delivered her body and soul to whatever succor he could give. In the closeness of the moment, Keith felt Sandra's arms slip around behind his waist, felt her actively pulling herself even more tightly into him. The sharp clear chimes of the carillon bells beginning their toll of the noon hour brought Keith's face around to look out the window at the Campanile. And as he stood there before the window, embracing his wife, the peal of the bells was interrupted by an even louder sound, an explosive boom that shook the Brain Lab building and rattled the glass window. A split-second later, the observation deck of the Campanile disappeared behind the orange and red petals of an enormous fireball. Sandra screamed even as Keith threw her down on the floor and shielded her body with his own. The shockwave was right behind him, its concussive force shattering the large window with a loud cracking sound like the snap of a giant bone. Keith's back was showered with fragmented glass. One jagged-edge shard, the size of a dagger, pierced his hand, slicing into the extensor muscle directly above the tarsus bone and summoning forth a spreading pool of blood. He also felt a sharp stabbing pain in the nape of his neck. Air rushed through the new opening into Keith's office, hot and reeking like the wake of an ancient subway train passing through a dank underground station. Moments later, the smoke poured in, a thick gray acrid cloud that burnt Keith's eyes, nose, and throat, and triggered a severe coughing fit in Sandra.

Keith and his wife rose unsteadily to their feet, exchanging frightened looks of bewilderment. When Sandra saw the jagged shard of glass protruding from Keith's hand, she screamed once more. Keith went to his desk, grabbed a handful of paper, wadded it up and used it for protection so he could take hold of and extract the shard. More blood bubbled out of the entrance wound, but Sandra by then had calmed herself enough to retrieve the napkins from lunch. She used them to fashion a compress with which she stanchd the bleeding in Keith's hand. Looking up from her ministrations, she saw what was sticking out of the back of Keith's neck. Her own hand came up to her mouth and Keith thought she was about to scream yet again.

Instead, she merely grimaced and asked him, in a shaky but somewhat calm voice, if he had scissors. While he was fetching a pair from his desk, Sandra reached up under her dress and yanked her silk slip down and off. Keith saw he'd been right; it was her black one. She took the scissors from him and cut several long strips of the gossamer material. She then wrapped the rest of the slip around her hand like a glove.

"Bend down and hold still," she told her husband. Her hands were as shaky as her voice, but Keith nonetheless did as he was told. He felt a tug on something at the nape of his neck, then a sharp pain that quickly subsided into a throbbing ache. With his head still down, he also felt a tickling sensation run down along the side of his neck, then saw drops of blood spatter the floor like a red rain beneath his still-stockinged feet. Sandra, meanwhile, used the strips of slip material to make another bandage which she applied to his neck wound.

It was becoming increasingly difficult to breathe because of the smoke. Keith's eyes were watering and he had to rub them dry. He also had to hold his hand over his nose and mouth. Sandra did likewise, but her coughing continued to worsen by the second. They had to vacate the office right away. Keith found his shoes which he'd left under the sofa and slipped them on while Sandra got her purse. Before leaving his office, Keith took one more look out the opening where minutes earlier a window had been. For a brief moment, a clearing appeared through the smoke. What Keith saw made him gasp.

Little Ben was no more. The upper half of the Campanile's clock face, above the numerals 3 and 9, was gone. The tower's observation deck with its tall rounded archways and balustrade was gone. The green copper peak was gone. Berkeley's most prominent landmark no longer resembled either a famous clock tower in London or an obscure water tower in Venice. The arrow had been broken.

As he left his office with his wife locked onto his arm, Keith Joyner remembered the admonition of the old baseball player Satchel Paige to never look back because the past might catch up to you.

CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

Keith Joyner used his new electronic cardkey to admit himself into the empty office of Vijay Jain. He went straight for the television Vijay kept there, took up the remote, hit the power-on button and keyed in a channel whose camera crew he'd seen at the Campanile. As the set came

on to a commercial for a cholesterol-free butter substitute, Keith flopped down into one of Vijay's guest chairs, exhausted to the bone. He was so tired he did not even bother to call the commercial's narrator a bad-name and admonish him that fat-content, not cholesterol-content, mattered for heart disease. Instead, Keith muted the sound, closed his eyes, then wrinkled his nose at the foul stink of his own odor. P.U.! His clothes were stained in sweat and blood, perspiration continued to seep out of his pores in small surges, like the flushing of a toilet through leaky pipes. Though his skin was wet, there was a gritty feel to it, like he'd been lying down on a beach with no towel or blanket between his body and the sand. Keith thought he must look like one of the steel-workers Simon had described in his post-MNEME debriefings. He was sore, too, as if he'd just gotten off a twelve hour-shift in a steel mill. Each and every muscle in his body ached, and the wounds on his hands and neck that he'd received from his shattered office window stung anew, as if he were being stabbed all over again. At least the bandages were relatively clean as a paramedic had replaced Sandra's makeshift dressings.

After escorting his still distraught wife to her car, Keith had returned to the Campanile to do what he could to help. By the time he got there, the police and the paramedics were on the scene. Still, it was the immense good fortune of Danny Bosworth that Keith had gone back. The ellipse at the base of the Campanile was heavily populated with head-wound victims, those who'd been struck by falling rubble, chunks of concrete and granite, and bits and pieces of the Campanile's carillon bells.

The larger bells weighed several tons apiece and had not been displaced by the explosion. But one of the smaller bells, which still probably weighed a good three or four hundred pounds, had been blown clear of the tower. By the mercy of God, it did not hit anyone when it landed in a nearby parking lot, but it did strike and flatten a small black car that Keith guessed to have been a Miata. As for the head-wound victims, they looked ghastly, with rivulets of blood webbing their faces, but no one appeared to have been seriously injured. The paramedic who treated Keith said he'd seen nothing that a dozen stitches wouldn't close.

Serious or not, many of the victims had been shocked into a catatonic quiet. Those who had not been shocked into silence moaned and groaned in voices that seemed to rise anytime someone's eye was caught, as if the victims were foolish enough to believe that treatment would be administered on the basis of who made the loudest and most pitiable sounds of suffering.

Keith had watched and listened with contempt. College kids knew so little about anything in the real world. The majority of the paramedics at the scene were men and they elected to attend first to the wounds of coeds, with the most attractive females receiving the most immediate attention. As for those who, like Keith, had shown up to help, they, too, were mostly males and they, too, concentrated their rescue efforts on females. Injured males did manage to receive needed medical attention, as Keith himself could attest, if they got themselves to the triage center that had been set up in front of the Brain Lab to take advantage of the medical supplies which were kept on hand inside. But medical attention there, too, was prioritized: those old enough to be faculty members got first-call over those young enough to be students.

At the bottom of the rescue-effort food chain was a huge male student with a medical collar around his neck and lower jaw who howled like a distressed loon. Even worse for Danny Bosworth, one his legs was crushed underneath a large slice of a bell that apparently had been split asunder by the explosion. The slice probably weighed better than a hundred pounds, Keith guessed. Given the height from which it had fallen, the force of the impact on Bosworth's leg would undoubtedly be sufficient to splinter both the fibula and tibia bones. Certainly, the weight was enough to pin the young man down so that he was unable to exert any leverage that might free himself. Even had he been able to push the bell slice off, he would essentially still have been immobilized. Someone would have to find Bosworth, push the bell slice off his broken leg, then help him hobble to the triage center.

That someone turned out to be Keith, who, to his discredit, spent several minutes watching Bosworth suffer, hoping others might come along and help the fat bastard. To his credit, however, he did finally take action when it became apparent that no one else was willing to heed Bosworth's head-splittingly loud call. It was probably no more than the length of a football field from where Bosworth had been injured to the triage center, but it was the longest hundred yards Keith had ever walked. Bosworth did not rise to the occasion, he leaned all of his massive weight on Keith, kept his damaged leg aloft, and hopped so clumsily that twice he brought the both of them crashing to the ground. On both occasions, the fall solicited even louder howls of pain from Bosworth, along with half-under-the-breath curses and racial invectives directed at Keith. On both occasions, Keith had wanted to tell the crippled slob to fuck off and leave him to his fate, but he swallowed his anger, did the right thing and was finally

able to turn Bosworth over to the paramedics at the triage center. Not only did Bosworth fail to thank Keith, he muttered a warning about finding out whether or not Keith's aid had aggravated his condition and if it had, urging his parents to take legal action. Keith pretended to not have heard the warning and "accidentally" bumped Bosworth's injured leg while leaving the center. The bump was hard enough that with any luck, he extended the boy's recovery time an extra two weeks.

It was at the triage center when Keith first heard the talk that Governor Law and Chancellor MacBryde had been killed in the explosion and that was when the realization sunk in. Of course, the Governor and Chancellor had been killed. Surely Maris Cavanaugh as well. And possibly others, too. Anyone who'd been on the observation deck at the time of the blast. Keith had rushed straight up to Vijay's office to get what details he could.

On the television screen, some inane commercial for a denture adhesive had just ended and the face of a popular local newscaster, Sarah Kim, appeared, looking somber as she spoke from the station's newsroom. Keith released the mute control.

".....have confirmed that Governor Patrick Law is dead. The governor was killed in the explosion that rocked the UC Berkeley campus today at noon. Also killed in that explosion were UC

chancellor Duncan MacBryde, Maris Cavanaugh, a UC public information officer, two state police officers, Charles Caldwell and Frank Tipton, and the captain of the UC campus police force, Roy Hartsough. The victims were all on the observation deck of Sather Tower, the UC landmark where the blast was centered. Officials suspect the explosion to have been caused by a bomb hidden between the tower's bells which are located directly above the observation deck. A large demonstration was taking place around the base of the tower when the explosion occurred. Numerous injuries among the demonstrators have been reported but so far no fatalities. We are now going to switch you live to the UC Berkeley campus where our own Ben Timmel is on hand. Ben? What have you got for us?"

The image shifted to the triage center in front of the Brain Lab, where the reporter, a tanned white man in his early thirties wearing blue jeans and white shirt with the sleeves rolled up, was standing with a man in a uniform.

"Sarah, I'm here with UC Berkeley fire chief Dave Vancy. What about it, Chief? Was it a bomb?"

Chief Vancy looked straight into the camera and delivered his answer in a stiff manner as if he were reading from a teleprompter. "Yes, we believe it was a bomb. A powerful explosive that released immense heat. It is doubtful the victims on the observation deck felt a thing. They had to have been killed instantly."

Someone off-camera called for the Chief and he immediately turned his back on the reporter and moved out of the picture with no word of explanation. Ben Timmel took the abrupt departure in stride. Facing the camera, he said, "If we can have a shot of Sather Tower, I'll explain what Chief Vancy was talking about."

A camera panned over to the Campanile then zoomed in on the upper portion of its tower. With the shroud of smoke and dust dissipated, Keith could see that the blast had completely destroyed the roof and observation deck but that the carillon bells were largely still in place, though they'd been severely damaged. Most of the outer bells looked as if they'd been gnawed on by some metal-devouring creature; that same creature had also taken giant bites out of several of them. The bells in the middle of the carillon had been partially melted, they were misshapen and in some places fused together. The TV reporter, Ben Timmel was saying that this central area was believed to have been where the bomb had been hidden. The voice of newscaster Sarah Kim cut in to say that there would be an address coming up shortly from Lieutenant Governor Barbara Schlosser. Kimmel acknowledged this and then, as if graciously bestowing a favor, said he would send viewers back to Sarah Kim in the studio. Keith thought he heard a special emphasis the word "studio," as if Kimmel were reminding viewers that while Sarah Kim was safe and sound in San Francisco, he, Bruce Kimmel was out on the frontlines in Berkeley. Before cutting back to the studio, however, the station's camera crew gave viewers a few more seconds of panning shots, showing the bandaged head-wound victims in the triage center, some shots of students who had yet to be treated and were still bleeding -- all males, Keith noted -- and finally a lingering shot of the truncated Campanile tower followed by a zoom-in on what was left of a smoke-blackened clock face. Just as the image of Sarah Kim in the studio appeared on the TV screen, the phone in Vijay's office rang. After a short debate, Keith answered it. On the other line was Dana Plowman, upset as hell.

"Keith?" she said. "What are you doing there? Where's Vijay?"

Keith took it for granted that Dana was upset about the explosion. He asked if she or anyone else at the Primate Center had been hurt.

"Huh? What are you talking about?" Dana sounded as if one the blasted off chunks of carillon bells had struck on her the head.

Keith was more impatient than he would have been under normal circumstances. He heard himself speak slowly, enunciating each word precisely. His homeboys would have asked if he thought he was talking to some kind of a fool. "I am trying to ascertain whether or not you or any of your people are in need of medical attention as a result of the bomb."

"I don't know anything about a bomb," Dana said, her voice strained. "Where the hell is Vijay?"

Keith's blood began to simmer. He really was in no mood to put up with Dana's self-absorbed crap. He was too tired and too hurting. "Dana, a bomb went off in the Campanile," he said, through clenched jaws. "Chancellor MacBryde and Governor Law were killed. So were other people. There've been injuries to students. I'm injured myself. I don't know where Vijay is. Maybe he was injured as well. That's the story from upstairs, okay? Now what is your problem?"

"Morris murdered his mother! That's my problem!" Dana shrieked. She stopped, took a breath, exhaled loudly, started again, no longer shrieking, but still upset. "Zazu is dead. Morris killed her. I blame you, Keith. You and Vijay and the rest of you bastards with your fucking Quip!"

At the word Quip, a wave of fear rose up within Keith, crashed and left him trembling as if cold and wet. Forcing his own voice to remain steady, he pleaded with Dana to calm down. She responded with a steady stream of hot curses that gradually tapered off into silence. When Keith sensed she was finished, he continued. "I'm sorry to hear that Zazu is dead. I know how much you love your animals. But what makes you think that Morris killed her? I mean, I'm no expert on bonobo behavior, but that just doesn't sound at all right."

The silence on the other end of the line stretched on. Seconds passed. They seemed like minutes. But Keith knew enough to wait her out. Anything he said at this point would be counterproductive to extracting information from her. When Dana finally did break the silence,

her words were spoken quietly, but packed more heat and bitterness than when she'd been cursing. "What makes me think that Morris killed his own mother, Keith? What makes me think that a young bonobo male committed matricide, an act unheard of amongst any bonobo community ever observed? Do you really want to know, Keith? Hmmm? Do you?"

"Yes, Dana, I really want to know."

"I found Morris eating her heart."

He had to have misheard her. He asked her to repeat what she'd just said.

Dana's voice began to break. "I went into the bonobo cage and there he was in the sandbox sitting on top of his mother's corpse, his face red with blood, pieces of gore dripping from his chin. I caught him scooping up her heart with his hands and sinking his teeth into it. I screamed and tried to drive him off her. Morris attacked me. You say you are injured, Keith. Well, my face and arms are not a pretty sight now either." Dana Plowman's voice completely dissolved into sobs. An eternity seemed to pass before she was again able to speak, but only in between sobs. Keith was not astute enough to know whether she was crying from physical pain or emotional grief. He supposed it did not much matter.

"We've sent for a police officer to come and shoot Morris with a tranquilizer dart," Dana said. "No one down here is a good enough aim."

"I'll try to reach Vijay on his pager, Dana," Keith said, "then I'll come down. I don't know what I can do to help but if there is anything..." He ran out of words.

Dana was not disposed to make things easier for him. "I think you've already done enough, Keith. But if you reach Vijay, tell him....." There was an eruption of shouts from Dana's end of the phone, raised voices, filled with fear. "Stop...what?" Dana was talking to someone else, not Keith. She must have put her hand over the receiver for Keith could not hear what was said. Obviously, however, there was another problem in the Primate Center. A big problem. Dana confirmed it moments later.

"Keith, I have to go. Morris is attacking Sergio. If you really want to help, please call the campus police again. Do your male thing. Mau-mau them. Whatever. Just tell them to get a fucking sharp-shooter out here immediately!"

The woman at the phone desk for the campus police warned Keith to not expect any immediate help. Since the explosion at the Campanile, emergencies were breaking out over

campus like acne on the faces of the younger students, the woman said. Every available officer already had his or her hands full. She promised to do what she could do, but a rampaging monkey was not likely to get a priority assignment from the CO. Keith thanked her and hung up. After leaving both voice mail and a written message for Vijay, he hurried down to the Primate Center where the scene was worse than he had imagined. Dana Plowman was on the floor by the door to the bonobo's plexiglass cage. Even though she was surrounded by a gaggle of students, Keith could see that there were bandages on her left cheek and forearm, and she was bleeding from fresh wounds on her neck and shoulder which had been laid bare by a huge tear in her tee-shirt. She appeared to be hovering on the brink of hysteria. Her sobbing was so violent she was having difficulty breathing, and her body was racked with a frenzy of shuddering that was beyond her control. The effects must have been contagious for the students surrounding her did not seem much better off even though they bore no obvious physical wounds. One girl was off to the side, crying even more hysterically than Dana. A young man had his arms around her and was trying to calm her down. Lying on the floor next to Dana, Keith saw the rifle used to fire tranquilizer darts. It was no challenge to figure out what had happened. Dana had become desperate enough to enter the cage and try to take out Morris herself. Keith would bet a hundred bucks she'd never fired a gun of any sort in her life. Hell, she'd probably tried to scare Morris off by waving it like a stick rather than pull the trigger.

More students and a couple of Dana's assistants hovered in front of the bonobo's cage. They were pointing and jabbering in great agitation. Keith pushed his way in, peered through the plexiglass walls and immediately saw the two black bodies lying still, the smaller one inside the sandbox and the larger one next to the water trough. He could see the ripped open chest of Zazu, Morris' mother, and the torn throat of Sergio, Morris' father. He could not, however, see either Morris or Faye, the other female. But even through the plexiglass, he could hear fierce barking and terrified hoots. The noise from the bonobo cage had set off the macaques in the adjoining cage. They were shrieking at the tops of their lungs which was pretty damn loud, Keith thought, as he strained to locate Morris and Faye.

"He's gone after Faye now," said a male student standing next to Keith. "She just fled to the outdoor run but they'll be back any second now. She'll head for the climbing structure, try to go aerial on him. That's what bonobos do." The student snickered softly, then added, "Course,

whatever has happened to Morris, he's not a bonobo anymore."

"No? What is he, then?" asked Keith, his eyes glued to the swinging door that provided access to and from the outdoor run.

"A savage beast, something primitive and vicious," the student answered. "I say we waste him."

Keith gave the young man an angry look then shoved his way across the room to Dana's side. When he saw there was no point in even trying to speak with her, he snatched up the rifle and checked to see that it was loaded with a dart and ready to be fired.

Another male student who was applying a bandage to Dana's neck wound glanced up at him. "Do you know how to use that?"

"Does a bear shit in the woods?" Keith asked, glowering.

As he went through the door into the cage, Keith's baleful glower became a smile. Actually, if truth be told, he probably couldn't hit the broad side of a barn unless he walked right up to it which is exactly what he planned to do with Morris.

Easier said than done, Keith realized, once he was inside the cage and had spotted Morris and Faye high up in the climbing structure. Morris was on top of Faye, his fingers and toes gripping the black fur on her back, his broad flat teeth clamped down on her ear. Faye was screeching non-stop but did not seem to be trying to get out from under Morris. The poor thing was probably paralyzed with fear and confusion, Keith surmised. It was as if someone had let a leopard into the sheltered and formerly safe world of the bonobo cage. Faye and the others had somehow lost their survival instinct, their fear-response mechanism had evidently been tamed to the point where it no longer functioned in the split-second manner Nature intended. The student had been right. A savage beast had been set loose in the bonobo cage and three animals had paid the price for being too civilized to fight or flee before it was too late.

The tranquilizer rifle had a shoulder strap that Keith slung over his back before beginning his climb up the structure. He felt like a black version of Frank Buck, the Bring `Em Back Alive big game hunter whose exploits he'd read about as a kid in a Classics comic book. Well, he intended to bring Morris back alive if for no other reason than to do extensive GEM and MRI studies of his brain. Morris was undergoing a psychotic episode and Quip was the most apparent cause. But appearances were not facts and given Simon's situation, it was critical to precisely

ascertain the extent of Quip's role in Morris' breakdown.

The climb up the structure was relatively easy for Keith who was still a good enough athlete to ascend with speed. He was feeling pretty good about his residual nimbleness and dexterity as he swiftly moved to within ten feet of the bonobos. Morris had been too involved in chewing off Faye's ear to take note of Keith until then. Suddenly, however, bonobo and human eyes met and locked. Their stares were held, only for an instant, but from that brief encounter, Keith knew he was in for it. For he had gazed not into the quizzical, good-natured stare of a bonobo, but into the eyes of a stone-cold killer, a beast that would most certainly fight to the death. Keith had no time at all to ponder the ramifications of this revelation. Morris' reaction to his approach transpired at a terrifying speed that destroyed all pretensions Keith might have held about his own nimbleness and dexterity. One moment, Morris was atop Faye with her torn ear clenched between his teeth; the next he was dropping straight down through the rungs of the climbing structure. He caught himself with one hand about four rungs below Keith, swung his body and flew upward. Within a heartbeat, Keith felt a viselike grip around his ankle followed by an immensely strong tug downward. Teeth pierced his trousers and sunk into the flesh of his calf muscles. Meanwhile, Morris' other hand reached up and clawed at his testicles. Lightening bolts of searing pain flared out from Keith's crotch and penetrated every nerve-ending in his body. The hurt was so excruciatingly intense, he almost blacked out. Then fear-response took over. A flood of endorphins blunted the pain. A tide of adrenaline twisted his body so violently that Morris was forced to release his testicles and grab instead at the inside of Keith's thigh. Within an instant, however, Keith could feel the bonobo's steely fingers creeping back up towards his throbbing scrotum. Frantically, he tried to cling to the rung of the climbing structure with one hand while slipping the rifle over his shoulder with the other.

No good.

Morris was too strong.

Keith would have to commit to one or the other activity. As he was about twenty feet above the floor of the cage, he opted to remain on the climbing structure. That is, he opted to fight to remain on the climbing structure. Morris seemed determined to pull him off and Morris was every bit as insistent as he was strong. Plus, he was using his teeth to good effect on Keith's leg. Those teeth weren't sharp but the jaw muscles powering them were strong; the bite hurt like

hell.

With both hands gripping the rung, Keith was able to chin himself up high enough where he could use his free foot to kick Morris in the face. Keith kicked the little ape as hard as he could. Once. Twice. A third time. Each kick drew a loud yelp from Morris but he wrapped both his arms around Keith's other leg and hung on tight. The fourth kick, however, drew a fount of blood from Morris' squashed nose and Keith heard the crackling sound of cartilage being broken. That loosened Morris' grip just enough for Keith to pull his ankle free. Immediately, he swung around so that his back was against the structure's rung and his arms were threaded around the rung to support his full weight. He raised both his feet and drove them hard into Morris' chest. The bonobo gripped a lower rung in both hands and tried to hold on, but Keith's legs were the source of his power as an athlete. "You're going down, motherfucker! Down! Down!" Keith snarled. Then he grit his teeth and put everything he had behind his leg push. Morris defiantly howled back, gritted his own teeth and brought his legs up to join his arms in resistance.

Keith outweighed Morris by about a hundred and fifty pounds, but Morris' strength was disproportionate to his size: if he were a human he'd weigh more than Keith -- a lot more. However, years of squats in the weight room with three hundred pounds on his back paid off. Straining away, Keith pushed and pushed and kept on pushing until finally Morris let go of the rung and instantly fell away. The bonobo caught himself about halfway to the floor and was immediately streaking back up the structure toward Keith. This time, however, Keith did not need to slip the rifle over his shoulder, he had only to point the barrel downward and allow Morris to come get it. The bonobo had no experience with rifles. For all he knew, Keith was pointing a stick at him and Morris had no fear of sticks. He was the picture of malevolence as he reached for the barrel of the rifle. His pronated jaw was thrust even more forward than normal, his red lips were drawn back in a snarl, exposing his blood-stained front teeth. The long black hair on his head stood straight up, his ears were flat against his skull, and his eyes were narrowed with the concentrated focus of a predator. With the rotten meat smell of Morris' breath hot in his face, Keith squeezed the trigger. The dart struck Morris right above the heart. The bonobo's eyes opened wide in surprise. He stared down at the object poking out of his chest, blinked as if in disbelief and started to reach for it. In doing so, Morris lost his balance and fell, shrieking all

the way down until he crashed to the floor. He was out cold but Keith was not sure whether the tranquilizer had worked that quickly or whether Morris had been knocked out by the fall.

It did not matter. The beast had been stilled and Faye, who was hooting hysterically as she raced back and forth across the top of the structure, her torn ear flapping loosely like the ear of a spaniel, was still alive. Keith felt he had atoned at least a little for his sins. It would not be enough he knew, but at least it was a start.

The descent down the structure was a much slower procedure than the climb up because every single motion on his part sent sparks of pain shooting out from his bruised groin and mangled ankle. By the time he reached the floor, Dana Plowman and a male and female student were in the cage, kneeling down and attending to Morris. Dana appeared to have fully recovered her composure, but both students were still trembling as they bundled Morris up in a strapped cloth in preparation for loading him onto a stretcher.

"So he's still alive," Keith commented, with relief.

"Yes, and so is Faye," replied Dana, standing. "Thanks, Keith. You saved both their lives. A cop would have shot Morris to death. Probably would have shot and killed Faye in the process as well."

"You do know that we're going to have to run tests on Morris to see what we can learn," Keith said. "There's still a lot of science to be done here."

"I understand," said Dana. "I'm a scientist, too. If this is of any help, you should know that just before he seemed to lose his ability to sign, Morris had begun telling me about a leopard."

"A leopard?" Keith asked while rolling up his pant leg to see whether or not Morris had broken the skin with his bite. He had. There was not much blood, but the wound was raw and rimmed with two moist semicircles of tiny square indentations, an outline of Morris' teeth. Judging from the crooked dental pattern, the little fucker needed braces, Keith cursed, knowing the he himself would need a tetanus shot.

Dana took a quick look at the wound, shook her head, then continued with what she was saying. "Yeah, you know how Morris associates all bad things with leopards. They're like his personal bogeyman, even though he's never actually seen a real leopard. It's an instinctive fear, I suppose. Seychelles-Joyner FTR, you know?" On her face, a quick smile flickered. Then she

shook her head again. "Anyway, Morris told me there was a leopard inside him."

Keith rolled down his pant leg, stood up, faced her and frowned. "Inside him?"

"Yeah. He said this many times in the days leading up to when he stopped signing altogether. There was a leopard inside him, an angry and hungry leopard, and he was frightened. Until today, I was never sure about what he was trying to communicate.

Dana suddenly reached out and with her fingers, gently touched the side of Keith's face. "There is not another man in this building who would have done what you just did. You're better than the others, Keith. You don't deserve what is probably going to happen to you."

Keith smiled at her. "What do you think I should do?"

Dana smiled back. "If I were you, I'd go find Simon and ask what or who is inside of him."

Keith nodded, told her to stay well, left the bonobo cage and headed back to his own office.

The damage was not nearly as bad as he feared. There was broken glass on the floor, of course, and the photos on his desk of Sandra and the boys had been toppled over. Also, a smoky smell continued to hang in the air, though there was no visible trace of smoke. As for the gaping hole where a floor-to-ceiling window had once been, well, he'd always wanted the kind of window you could open and let the fresh air come through. There was fresh air coming through now, baby. Glass crunched beneath his shoes as Keith walked across the room to stand in front of where all that fresh air was coming through. He stared at the charred stump which now topped Little Ben and reflected upon how strange it was to think that only a few hours earlier, he'd stood at this very same spot and fantasized about making love to his wife. He lived in a time of rapid change, he knew, from scads of essays and a plethora of reports on TV, but this was ridiculous. Turning to his desk, Keith saw that the red message light on his phone was flashing. As he went to check it out, he saw that the message alert on his computer monitor was blinking as well. He decided to pick up his voice mail first. He picked up the receiver and punched in the message-retrieval code.

["Keith, Vijay here. I got your page. Is this about Gibby? Have you heard from

him? I am in Jack Lapage's office. Please call me as soon as you receive this message but if you should happen to know of Gibby's current whereabouts and can reach him, please tell him to call me, yes? Thank you and goodbye."]

A digitized voice informed Keith that Vijay's call had come in eighteen minutes earlier, about the time Morris was trying to rip his balls off. What was up with Gibby? Keith's immediate thought was that he must have been hurt in the explosion but why, then, would Vijay be calling about that from Lapage's office? No, it must have been something else. He started to call Vijay back at Lapage's office then remembered he also had new e-mail. Cradling the phone, Keith turned to his computer and called up his new messages. There was one. From ggibson@brain.berkeley.edu. Subject: Nemesis

Keith,

By the time you read this message I will be gone. I have informed Vijay by a hand-written and signed note which I dropped on the desk of Jack Lapage that I am taking a sabbatical of indeterminate length effective immediately. FYI, as you read this I hope to have already fled the country in possession of every personal asset I can liquidate. I would urge you to do the same but I know my recommendation would fall on deaf ears. Do I have your attention now? Good. Where shall I begin? How about I tell you I have good reasons to believe it was a bomb that killed Governor Law and Chancellor MacBryde? How about I tell you that I have equally good reasons to believe that the bomb was planted by Simon? That it was his intention to assassinate the Governor and the Chancellor. No doubt you are at this very moment shaking your head and telling yourself this cannot be, Gibson does not know what he's talking about. That is because you have not read Simon's journal. Mrs. Thomas had it right all along, Simon was keeping a journal about the memories he recalled under Quip. And we were right to suspect he'd been lying to us about those memories. Where Mrs. Thomas went wrong was in her assumption that he recorded his journal the old fashioned way with pen and paper. I'm surprised she did not search their house for a quill and parchment. No, Simon is a modern historian, he recorded his journal in a digital

format. Where we went wrong was in our hubris. I guess it is in our nature as scientists. We hypothesize that $a+b=c$ and when experiments show that $a+b=d$, either we declare d to be a subset of c , or we simply redefine the value of c . What we seldom do is admit to error and what we never do is confess to ignorance. That is why, I think, we are easily misled. Take for example, our ridiculous guesses as to the nature and the extent of Simon's deceptions. Simon lied to us repeatedly. His great-grandfather was not a steel worker, he was some kind of assassin for an Irish terrorist group, smuggled into this country to murder Andrew Carnegie. The details are in the journal. I presume Simon lied out of fear that if we knew the truth about Payton Adams, we would have immediately terminated the Quip experiment. Know what? I think Simon was wrong. I think even knowing the true nature of Payton Adams, we would have continued the experiment. Scientific curiosity would have demanded no less. Judge for yourself. Attached to this message is a file named DWABDO which I finally deciphered as Devil With A Blue Dress On. The name is taken from an old rock and roll song and you will understand its significance when you read the file. BTW, the file is password protected. Type [furey] for admittance. Once you have read Simon's journal you will better appreciate the gravity of what I must tell you next. About three weeks ago, I administered to Simon a third treatment of Quip. Simon came to my office late at night and offered me a chance to read his journal if I gave him the treatment. I could tell you he also threatened me if I did not comply with his wishes. That would not be a lie, but it also would not be the truth as to why I did what I did and I am committed at this point in time to being truthful with you. The truth of the matter is that I could have given Simon a sedative, read his journal while he was asleep in the MNEME, then notified the authorities to come restrain him. Instead, I gave him the treatment. What is more, I doubled the dosage. Yes, that is correct. I injected Simon with approximately 200,000 molecules of Quip. I wanted to thoroughly test its effectiveness as a neurohormone and this could well have been my final opportunity to do so. By doubling the dosage, I ensured an ample presence of the

Quip isomer. In my defense, I thought at the time that the most serious consequence of my actions would have been to facilitate Simon's taking on the personality of an adulterous Irish immigrant steelworker. Even if this new persona were to be made indelible by the third dose of Quip, I thought Simon would at worst be turned into a major bore at faculty parties until the University could contrive to move him into some sort of administrative position. Only after reading Simon's journal was I to realize the folly of my actions, of all our actions. I was then afraid to leave Simon in the MNEME unattended. I was also afraid to notify you or anyone else about what I had done. When Simon emerged from the MNEME, it was immediately clear that his psychological condition was dangerously unstable. It shortly became equally clear that my worst fears had been realized: the brain of Simon Thomas was totally under the thrall of his great-grandfather's memories. Simon thinks he is Payton Adams and this belief is nothing so mundane as your ordinary nutcase delusion. This belief is grounded in neurochemical balances that can be empirically tested and confirmed. Yessir! Simon thinks he is Payton because his brain is telling him so. You'll know what I mean if you have Ariel take a long hard look at my BFS and BIF data. Eyeballing the readouts I got after the first and second treatments, I saw that something was amiss, but investigating the matter would be time-intensive so I gave it a low priority. Frankly, I saw it as backburner stuff, a mistake in data processing to be dealt with some other time. In retrospect, this was a serious mistake. Hindsight makes us all infallible, does it not? I'm not often so sloppy as evidenced by the file copy I've attached to this e-mail. Anticipating that Simon might want to keep the contents of his journal a secret after he'd received his third Quip treatment, I made a copy of his file and e-mailed it to myself. The file would therefore be stored on the University's mail server rather than on my own machine and therefore be beyond the reach of Simon. After reading this journal you will understand why I considered the possibility that Simon, in his Payton mode, might murder me here in the Lab to ensure his privacy. In this eventuality, I wanted the evidence of his guilt to be on file for the authorities to find. By now you should be

*chomping at the bit to read Simon's journal. I realize that I have wasted far too much time on this message but I guess I am reluctant to leave. Allow me a moment of sentimentality. It may surprise you to know that this laboratory will always hold a special place in my heart. For better and worse, it has been my home and you and the others (except for the insufferable Dana Plowman) have been my family. Nevertheless, I am getting out of Dodge for I am afraid. When you read Simon's journal you will understand why. I am afraid of Mrs. Thomas. It is a given that she will use the courts to close down the Brain Lab and destroy the careers of each and every member of the Quip research team. I am afraid that she will also use the courts to strip each and every one of us of our personal wealth. I do not want to be unemployed and destitute. I do not see myself roaming the streets, collecting empty bottles and cans in a stolen grocery cart. I am also afraid of Simon. He does not need the courts to hurt us. Hands-on violence will do quite nicely for him. Please believe me when I say that Simon has become a creature with no conscience. Mary Shelley would have been proud. We have summoned forth memories that Mother Nature in her wisdom chose to hide in the darkest recesses of our brains and in so doing we have resurrected the spirit of a monster who should have remained dead and forgotten. The price for our vanity will be high and payback has already begun. I stated earlier that Simon Thomas killed Governor Law and Chancellor MacBryde. That is not accurate. It was the monster we created, Payton Adams, who killed Governor Pat and his Scotch Mutt as payback for their having killed him a century ago. Read Simon's journal Keith and keep in mind that the final entry had yet to be written, the entry containing the memories of his third session with Quip. That entry must certainly be stored on a computer somewhere. You and Mrs. Thomas must find it and read it. From what I have gleaned, I surmise there is more payback due from Payton Adams and I fear that a big debt is owed to his wife and his closest male associate. Good luck, Keith, you are going to need it. And please tell Mrs. Thomas, for what it is worth, I am sorry. Your friend,
Gibby*

P.S. Tell Dana that even though I did not like her, I still wanted to fuck her ;)

Keith's first call was to Sandra, who was at home and still upset from the explosion. She began babbling about the experience, he brusquely cut her off, apologized, then explained that he had a question for her and needed the answer in a hurry.

"You told me you spoke with Simon the other day. Did you happen to mention to him what your cousin Kathy told you about the governor and chancellor planning to have lunch on the observation deck of the Campanile?"

"What..." Sandra said, confused.

Keith repeated his question. "Think, baby, it is very important."

"No..I don't..um..wait...yeah, that's right, I did. Actually, now that I think about it, it was Simon who asked me if I'd heard anything from my cousin about the governor's visit. Why do you ask? What's going on?"

"I'll tell you when I get home," Keith said and hung up.

Moments later, he had Jan on the phone. She was still at her office and had only heard about the bombing of the Campanile a short while ago. She was frantic with worry. No, she had not heard from Simon. She'd called home and the twins were there but they had not heard from their father either. Jan was just on her way out. Keith told her he had something to tell her and he wanted her to sit down. He immediately cursed his poor choice of words which Jan mistook to mean that Simon had been hurt in the explosion. For the first time, it occurred to Keith that if Simon had planted the bomb, there was a possibility that he, too, had been killed when it went off. Keith set that worry aside for the time being. He assured Jan he had no knowledge that Simon had been harmed in the Campanile blast. But he did have bad news to convey. Taking a deep breath, Keith rushed through a synopsis of Gibby's message to him. He then told Jan he was going to e-mail her the file. He gave her the password and asked that she read the file before going home. He also told her that, having read the file himself, he agreed with Gibby that there would be yet another entry.

"He must keep at least one copy of the journal on his home computer," Keith said. "You need to get into that file, Jan. You need to read it and make a copy for me. You need to do it right away and Simon can't know that you've seen it."

Keith had worried that Jan would fall apart or go crazy when he told her about Gibby's message but she seemed to have, for the moment at least, regained some of her old strength.

With remarkable calm, she asked, "How bad is this, Keith?"

Keith swallowed. "Are you still packing your pistol?"

"That sounds very bad."

"Read the journal, Jan. Read the journal and be careful. Be very careful."

CHAPTER THIRTY

Jan Thomas wanted to scream. She wanted to tear her hair out by the roots. She wanted to kick down the door to her office, put her fists through the walls. Mostly, she wanted to rip the eyes

out of Keith, Stinky, Vijay, and every other son of a bitch at the Brain Lab who had helped destroy her life. She felt as if she were coming undone, nerve by nerve, and the only way she could hold herself together was to bite down hard on her lip which she did until the taste of her own blood invaded her mouth. As she savored the warm, saltiness, the distant voice of a woman asked her a question about hang-ups. Glancing down, she saw that she had twisted the phone cord in her fingers so tightly she'd pulled the receiver off the hook. Nothing like the spilling of your own blood and a lecture from one of Pac Bell's robots to help a girl get a grip on herself, Jan thought. She released the phone cord, replaced the receiver, then took a deep breath and gave herself a vigorous shake to clear out the fire-needles that were stinging her body from the neck on down.

Keith was right, things did look bad. Real bad. Terrible, in truth. But still, he had cautioned her to try not to panic.

"When you read the journal you'll see that Payton Adams was not who Simon said he was. Bear in mind, however, all we really know at this point is that Payton's memories are influencing Simon's behavior. We don't know the magnitude of that influence so don't do anything rash."

Yeah, right, Keith, it's okay for scientists to rush into an experiment with a genetic memory drug that sets loose a monster inside her husband's brain. But please let's not rush into a judgment that would be critical of this experiment. He could have saved his breath. She of all people knew that what looked to be was not always what actually was. The words in Simon's journal were enough to cast suspicion on him, but nowhere near conclusive enough to convict him of anything in a court of law. And if Simon could not be convicted in the court of law, how could she convict him in the court of her heart? Courts. If the unthinkable were true and Simon was responsible for the bomb and if he should be charged with the crime, she'd probably shoot for diminished capacity. No question about it. Clearly, Simon was under the influence of the genetic memories unleashed by Quip. She was not too worried about criminal prosecution. If a city supervisor could get away with murdering the mayor of San Francisco and a fellow supervisor by claiming he'd eaten one too many Hostess Twinkies, she had no doubt, not a one, that she'd get Simon off once she'd made known the insidious power of Quip. Better hold off on tearing out Keith's eyes, she'd need him as an expert witness. She'd also need to find the rest of

Simon's journal and find out what happened after the third treatment with Quip. How to do that? She could just ask him for it at dinner.

"Simon, I have read the first two parts of your journal about how your great-grandfather was a hit man for Irish terrorists. Fascinating stuff. I'd love to read more. Is it on your computer in the den? No, don't get up. I'll just go in and browse through it. Why? Well, what it is, Stinky thinks you killed Governor Law and Chancellor MacBryde and Keith and I, we think he might be right. So we're just kind of curious, you know? By the way, girls, while I'm reading your father's secret journal, I'd like you to go to the Joyners and wait for me there. Just in case, you know, Dad's brain has been possessed by his psycho-killer great-grandfather and he's thinking about murdering all of us just to keep on his game."

Somehow, she did not think that would fly with Simon. Or maybe it would fly with Simon, who was such a trusting soul, but Payton might have a problem with it. No, her best strategy was to go home and carry on as if she had never read the earlier entries in the journal. If she gave Simon no cause for alarm, he would in all likelihood continue his recent routine of leaving the house for several hours after dinner. He'd go off to do whatever it was he did and return to the house around midnight. Payton or Simon, no matter who was in control of that big body, he was still very much a creature of habit, a man who stuck to his established patterns. Which was good for her, because his absence from the house give her the time she needed to get into his computer and search for the DWABDO file.

Thinking of that code name made Jan shudder. What Stinky did not know, and what Keith had probably forgotten, was that she owned a blue dress and that it had always been one of Simon's favorites. From the way Simon described it in his journal, the blue dress worn by Cat was not all that dissimilar from Jan's. Was that just an odd coincidence, or was Simon's own brain playing tricks on him, interspersing his personal memories with those of Payton Adams? The sex scenes that Simon had described between Payton and both Rosalyn and Cat rung familiar as well.

She and Simon had once spent the night and made love at a Mendocino bed&breakfast in which their room was lit by a kerosene lantern. And they'd also spent a weekend in a hotel in Victoria, Canada, that could have passed for the hotel in Pittsburgh where Payton and Cat trysted. Again, was Simon's brain mixing genetic and active memories, or was her own brain playing tricks on

her? It was all so confusing, which is why she felt herself coming apart, one nerve at a time. She and Simon had enjoyed a good life together. Sure, maybe they'd fallen into ruts at times, and maybe there was some truth to what Keith had said about her taking advantage of Simon's somewhat passive nature. But she was sure there were times in which Simon took advantage of her as well. In her mind, that was how marriage worked, a good marriage, that is. Take some, give some. She had not needed to read Simon's journal to know that the man she loved had undergone a terrible change, but now that she had read the journal, she had a better understanding of why he had changed the way he did. And that was an improvement. It would have been the same had Simon come down with a severe illness. Knowing the cause might not have helped her find a cure, but it would have helped her cope. When you found yourself on treacherous ground, you had to know where you stood before you could take that first step out. She now had some idea of where she stood, but she needed to get into Simon's journal and read its latest entries before she could even begin to look for a way out. One thing she did know, when she found it, and she would find it, she and Simon would get out of this mess together.

On her way home from the office, Jan stopped at Rustica, the girls' favorite takeout restaurant that was not pizza, Chinese or Mexican. She picked up Jamaican Jerk chicken, garlic mashed potatoes, Texas-style barbecue beans, and a loaf of cornbread. By the time she arrived at the house, Simon was there. Elizabeth had already made a salad and Louise had set the table, so the family had immediately sat down to dinner. The girls were eager to talk about the explosion at the Campanile and each saw herself as an expert on what happened for each had insider information obtained from sources identified only by the code name "Word," as in "Word is that...."

Despite their inside information from "Word," both girls were eager to pry whatever details they could from their father but Simon was as tight-lipped as a man with something to hide. "Come on, Dad," Louise whined, "you must have seen or heard something."

"Yeah, Dad," Elizabeth joined in, "like you must have at least heard the bomb go off. Did your building shake? Some guy on TV said that a lot of windows were broken. Tell us what you heard. Inquiring minds want to know."

"We're hungry for knowledge, Dad, feed our minds!" Louise said, laughing.

Then from Elizabeth, "We're concerned citizens, insatiably curious, inform us, oh great and most wise Dad who was actually there."

Through the food in his mouth, Simon muttered, "I wasn't there, I was in my office and I heard nothing."

"But other people around you must have heard things," Louise persisted. "They said on TV that all the buildings on campus were evacuated for an hour and that non-essential personnel were told to go home."

"I heard nothing," Simon repeated. "No one told me a thing. Guess I'm one of those essential personnel."

"You're a history professor, Dad," Elizabeth said, "Dwinelle Hall is like the first building they'd send home."

"That sounds disrespectful," Jan commented, more out of habit than anything else. Simon certainly did not seem to care, he continued to wolf down his food with no apparent interest in what either of his daughters had to say. His reticence was beginning to get on Jan's last good nerve. She'd been around more than her share of guilty assholes, and he was giving a damn fine impersonation of being one. Of course, it could be that he was innocent and her brain was again playing tricks on her. She decided to give him a little push, just to see what would happen.

In a casual tone, the same she used in soliciting testimony from a witness who was in store for a nasty surprise, she said, "You say you were in your office when the bomb went off, Simon, eating your lunch I suppose?"

Simon nodded as he took a big swallow of beer, his new beverage of choice for dinner.

Jan cocked her head and wrinkled her brow as if in thought. "That's funny," she said, "because I called you at noon today but you did not answer the phone."

Simon's eyes flashed annoyance. "You must have dialed the wrong number. I was there."

Jan acted as if she were giving the matter some more thought, then replied, "No, I dialed the right number, I got your voice mail message."

Simon stared at her, his eyes going cold. "I must have put the phone on Do Not Disturb. I don't like being bothered when I'm eating," he added pointedly.

"I don't think so," Jan replied, smiling, keeping her tone light. "If your phone is on Do Not Disturb, the voice mail message comes on immediately. Your phone rang six times before the answering service kicked in. I'm certain of it. You must have been away from your desk."

Jan watched Simon's eyes. Everything she had just told him was a lie. She'd never called him, she just wanted to see his reaction. Had she pushed him too far? Would he lose his temper? She braced for an explosion.

It did not come.

Instead, Simon flashed her a cold smile and said, "I must have been in the crapper taking a very long shit."

Louise and Elizabeth who had been suspiciously watching their mother like guard dogs, ready to tear into her should she upset their father, thought this comment extraordinarily funny; they practically choked on their food in their exuberant laughter. Jan kept her lips pressed tight in a smile while thinking that she'd like to toss the plate of chicken bones at him. But she wouldn't dare. Forget Simon's reaction, the girls would be on her in a flash. The more remote he acted toward them, the more protective of him they became. Jan was the intruder in this household as Louise and Elizabeth would all too quick to demonstrate should she need reminding. But the laughter over Simon's crude comment was a palliative and the tension at the table was diffused. The girls quickly got bored talking about something that did not personally involve them and moved onto more familiar self-centered ground. Simon displayed as much interest in their new topics as he'd shown in the Campanile bombing. He left the table without a word while Louise was in mid-sentence with yet another complaint against her new math teacher. Louise took no note of her father's abrupt departure other than a glance and eye-roll that said "How rude!" and continued on with her story.

"I mean it's like he's dissing the entire class, like nobody understands what he's talking about, everybody's got their hand up and he just keeps going on all blah blah blah. You know like he says we got to respect him but it's like a two-way street, you know?"

Jan had heard it twice the first time from Louise and normally would have cut her off with a warning that students must adapt to their teachers, not the other way around. But for the moment she was content to let her chatterbox daughter rattle on, so happy was she that Simon had left the table, and so very much relieved that her baiting him had not resulted in a scene that

would have instantly brought the girls' wrath down upon her and isolated her from them for the rest of the evening. Minutes later, however, she was wishing Simon had staid. Somehow, Elizabeth had veered back onto the campus bombing and mentioned that she'd seen one news report on television which said the bomb had been an old fashioned-device, made from dynamite.

"Don't bombers use something called plastic these days?" Elizabeth asked, throwing the question out for anyone at the table who might answer.

"I wouldn't know," Jan replied, thinking to herself that whatever they used, it sure as hell wasn't dynamite.

"Who cares what the bomber used, Lizardbreath?" Louise weighed in. "The point is that he killed innocent people with his bomb."

"Why do you assume that the bomber was a he, Luigi?" Elizabeth shot back. "The bomber might have been a pro-choice woman who was angry over Governor Law's stance against abortion rights."

"Bombing is a guy thing," Louise snorted, amused at her own wit. "It was probably some humanities professor who is mad at the Governor for messing with the UC system. You know, someone who doesn't want to be shipped off to butt-wipe U in southern California."

Elizabeth giggled. "Maybe it was Dad. He certainly doesn't want to be sent away to butt-wipe U and he hates southern California."

Jan stared openly at her daughter, then whipped her head around to her other child when she heard her retort.

"Maybe it was Mom," Louise cackled. "She hates southern California more than Dad. And besides, blowing up the governor is more of a Mom thing than a Dad thing."

"I thought you said bombing is a guy thing," Elizabeth cracked. "God, you're stupid."

"You're the stupid one," Louise responded, smirking, "you forget that Mom is a guy kinda gal."

"Oh yeah and what is Dad then?" demanded Elizabeth.

The two girls stared across the table at one another for a moment, then announced simultaneously: "Weird."

Above the raucous laughter of twin teenagers who had once again broken themselves up

with their own wit, Jan reminded them to clear the table and wash whatever could not be put in the dishwasher. She then left the dining room and went upstairs to her bedroom to change out of her work dress. As she climbed the stairs and made her way down the hall, mental note-taking of smudge marks on the walls, particularly around the light switches, and the appearance of a new crack in the ceiling, competed with thoughts of how an old-fashioned bomb constructed out of dynamite just happened to have blown up the Governor and his Scotch mutt of a Chancellor. Simon was sitting on the bed, dressed in his black sweats with his mysterious gym bag at his side. Apparently, he'd been waiting to have a word with her before going out.

"What was that little charade at the supper table?" he asked as she came into the room.

"What are you talking about?" Jan asked back, walking past him to open the door to her side of the closet. With her back to Simon, she began to undress. The fire-needles had returned, once again setting her nerves atingle, but she forced herself to go on about her business as if nothing out of the ordinary had or was about to transpire. If she acted innocent enough, ignored him, maybe he'd lose interest and leave. Then what? Then she would be free to ransack his computer in secrecy. Find out whether or not he had just murdered half-a-dozen people, including the governor of the state. God, her marriage had taken a wrong turn. God, she hated Quip. God, this was all insane. Godfucking damn but she wished Simon would go away.

But Simon did not appear to be going anywhere anytime soon. He had risen from the bed and now stood beside her. For a moment he said nothing, then he began stroking her shoulder with a feathery touch that somehow felt all the more sinister in its seductive lightness. Jan almost jumped out of her skin.

"I was in my office at noon today, when the bomb went off," he said. "My phone never rang so you never called me and you sure as hell didn't get my voice mail. I played along with the gag to see how far you'd go. Now I'm wondering why you did it. What rubbish are you plotting against me? Has Keith put you up to something? Are you two in cahoots again?"

Down to bra and panties and feeling rather vulnerable with Simon so close, Jan turned to face him and casually took a couple of steps back to put some distance between them. Her mind immediately demanded to know whether or not it was merely a coincidence that she now had the bed behind her Simon standing between her and the door out of the room. As if in response to her mind's demand, the fire-needles resumed their attack on her nerves. With only a split-second

to strategize, Jan opted to continue with her own lies.

"You're the one who is lying," she said. "I did call you. Twice in fact. Between noon and 12:30. Both times I got your voice mail. The only rubbish here is what's coming out of your mouth. Now you've got me curious. Where were you when the bomb went off? And why are you making such a big deal out of your whereabouts? Were you somewhere you weren't supposed to be? Are you having an affair? What?"

His eyes became so glacial Jan felt goosebumps.

"I was out doing what you should be doing," he finally said.

"And that would be?" she retorted, feeling foolish. It was something Louise or Elizabeth might have said.

"Minding my own business," he answered.

"Fuck off, Simon, you've become such an insufferable asshole." Jan started to push past him to get to her dresser. He hit her on the side of her face with an open hand. A bright white light, like a photographer's flashbulb, went off behind her eyes. The force of the blow spun her completely around and sent her body flying. She landed face down on the bed. For a few moments, every circuit in her brain seemed to be going haywire. Pinpoints of light, intense like tiny halogen lamps, rapidly flickered on and off through the billowy layers of blackness that pulsed through her mind in a sweep of concentric waves. The bed spun round and round and she had to tightly grip its velvet duvet in order not to be thrown off. Furiously she blinked her eyes to bring some order to her world. When at last the blackness cleared and the spinning sensation slowed enough for her to take stock of what had just transpired, Jan was seething. Her fingers relaxed their grip on the duvet but remained hooked like flesh-tearing talons. She dare not turn around and look up from the bed for fear that he would see how much at that moment she hated him, so she kept her eyes riveted on the claws of her fingers and through gritted teeth said, "I could kill you for what you just did."

"You could try," he replied, evenly, "but we both know that would be suicidal and you've always been a good Catholic girl at heart. You wouldn't want to be going straight to hell when you die, would you?"

"I'll see you there if I do," she said, her teeth still gritted.

"You get no argument from me on that score. But you won't be making any fuss, not

while those girls of yours are around. You're much too smart to start a row that would fetch them here to see what they would see."

Jan's mind was racing. Simon would never in a million years have referred to the twins as those girls of hers. Nor would he ever in a million years would have struck her. The pain that stung the side of her face was a vivid reminder that either tonight was that one in a million years rarity, or else the man standing behind her in her bedroom was not her husband, but a professional killer from a time when all women were considered property, and black women were considered property that was readily dispensable. She was still afraid to turn around and look up, afraid that he could read the truth in her eyes, that she knew who he was, so from her prone position on the bed, she told him in a calm voice that she would not make a fuss but that she wanted him to please leave, that she needed time to compose herself and to fix her face before either of the girls saw her. Then she said a little prayer asking God to make Simon go away.

God must have been busy elsewhere for she suddenly felt his incredibly strong fingers wrapped around the back of her neck and pressing her face down onto the mattress with a force that let her know resistance would be futile. Was he going to suffocate her? Murder her with the girls downstairs? From countless wrestling matches with him, she knew she had to first get to her knees if she were to have any chance at all of survival. But before she could swing into action, his breathe was hot in her ear and he was whispering words that made her freeze.

"Stay calm my lovely black bitch and listen carefully. You're a good mum to those two pretty girls. Keep them and yourself out of my way and there'll be no trouble. But stick your nose into my affairs and I'll not only cut it off, I'll fix it so those girls aren't so pretty anymore. Do you get my drift? Have we an understanding here?"

Jan would have nodded her head had he not been holding it firmly against the mattress. Forced to give him a verbal response, she was grateful that the mattress muffled the sarcasm she could not keep out of her voice.

"Yes, massah, I understands," is what she said.

"Good," he whispered, "we'll get along just fine then, you and me." His lips moved close enough to touch her ear and his whisper got even softer. "You're a beautiful woman, you know. It'd be a pity to do you harm. But you're so wild and feisty. You need taming. That's what you

need. Taming."

Jan couldn't stop herself from saying it. "Fuck you."

"No, my proud black bitch," he whispered so softly she could just barely hear, "with me that's not how it works."

Jan felt the sudden sharp tug on her panties, heard the snap of the elastic band and the rip of the material, felt the sudden draft on her buttocks. Instinctively, she tried to twist free of his grip, but he merely pushed her face down harder into the mattress and moved his large body in between her legs. Moments later, she felt his erection probing down the seam of her butt. Was he going to sodomize her? No, at least he was pushing into her vagina. Still, she was bone-dry, but that did not seem to matter to him for he promptly began pumping away, fucking her in hard, vicious, pistoning motions. Since it hurt the hell out of her it must have been rubbing him raw, but whatever pain he was feeling did not slow him down one damn bit. He kept banging into her like a wild beast and she was forced to grit her teeth even tighter until an eternity later she heard his voice from behind. Though he was still speaking in a whisper, the triumphant crow in his words was distinct.

"You're getting right lathered up now, aren't you? You must like it this way."

To her astonishment and horror, he was right. She had become wet and was getting wetter by the second. At first she thought her body was producing lubricant out of self-defense, a fear-response mechanism to ease the pain. But the familiar tinglings fanning out across her loins told a different story.

Her body was responding to his. In spite of the thoughts running through her mind and the emotions racing through her system, her body was responding to his. She chalked it up to years of lovemaking which must have made their bodies simpatico. His mind may have been under the influence if not the control of his great-grandfather, but the body with its feel, its smell, its familiarity, was Simon all the way and the body of Jan responded accordingly. Jan told herself she was being raped, violated, taken against her wishes, and she willed her body to shut down. But her body ignored her, much as Simon's brain apparently ignored him and she came in spite of herself; a sharp, joltingly intense orgasm that wrenched from her lips a cry of "Unnnh!" before she could even think to swallow it. Her body's orgasm took Simon's body with it. He, too, made a grunting noise, like a weight-lifter clean-jerking an immense load, and copiously spurted inside

her. The old Simon would have collapsed on top of her in a post-coital languor that she would have welcomed. This version uncorked his penis so fast an air-bubble popped in her vagina, emitting a loud flatulent-sounding noise. Several large warm drops of ejaculate splashed onto the cheeks of her butt

and Jan could well-imagine the smug look of satisfaction on Simon's face behind her as he viewed his own erection swaying and dripping over the landscape of its conquest, a conquest she herself had abetted. Jan experienced a feeling of shame and humiliation more deep and gut-wrenching than any she had ever known before. Her daughters had turned against her, her husband had assaulted her, and now even her own body had betrayed her.

Jan wished she were dead.

But a defeatist attitude was not the stuff of champion basketball players nor star litigators and Jan was both, she reminded herself. An adrenaline rush of determination flowed through her so that she did not so much as flinch when she once again felt Simon's lips brush her ear.

"Governor Pat and his Scotch mutt were on my list," he whispered. "They got what was coming to them. I've a couple more debts on my ledger then I'll be on my way. Keep your nose clean and you'll live to tell your grandchildren my story."

So there she had it. A confession of murder.

Jan did not answer, in fact, she did not move from the bed until she heard Simon go downstairs. As she stood up, the torn panties fell away to the floor. Jan gathered them up and stuffed them in her back pants pocket. One never knew when DNA evidence might be useful. She then removed her bra, tossed it on the bed, put on a robe, went out into the hallway where she stood and listened until she heard the front door shut. Her first order of business she decided was take a long hot shower to wash the stink of her shame away. She had time, Simon would not be back before midnight; he would not depart from his set routine just because of a little thing like raping his wife. Moving into the bathroom and turning on the shower water, the realization struck Jan like another slap to her face: for Payton Adams, raping his wife would have meant nothing. It would have been an act to which he gave no more thought than her Simon would have given to telling her goodnight. As she stepped inside the shower stall and felt the mini-jets of hot water pelt her backside, Jan thought about Keith's admonition to her that despite the contents of Simon's journal, there was no proof that the personality of Payton Adams now

dominated Simon's mind. It had been almost a plea from Keith. Well, his hopes had been dashed. She could tell him now, with no reservations and even without having read the rest of the journal, that the personality in full control of Simon's powerhouse body was that of Payton Adams. She could also tell Keith a thing or two about just how dangerous a development this was. Despite coming in at midnight or so tonight, she could guarantee that Simon would up tomorrow morning, promptly at five, and down into the basement for a workout that would last about ninety minutes. He would roughly divide the time between lifting weights and punching the heavy bag. On three separate occasions, she'd snuck down to watch him and the routine did not vary. What had fascinated her then -- okay, be honest -- what had sexually aroused her then but chilled her in retrospect was the sight of Simon on the heavy punching bag. His body was really cut, as they said in the gym, rippling with muscles and sinewy tendons, a six-pack in his abdomen. He looked like a professional boxer, a heavyweight raining down a barrage of thunderous blows that loudly drove the bulky canvas-bound sack of sand back and around in loopy wide circles on its chain mount. Jan had tried hitting that bag herself a couple of times. Even smacking it with all her strength, her feet firmly planted and getting her weight behind her punch like her daddy had taught her, the bag had not stirred. Once she even rammed it with her shoulder and barely managed to nudge it. And she was no creampuff. She had once cold-cocked a sailor who got fresh with her in a D.C. bar. The spirit of Payton Adams and the body of Simon Thomas. It was a dangerous combination, no question about it. But could it be a deadly combination as well?

No question about it.

Even had Simon not so much as confessed to the crime, Jan knew this to be true. She had looked into his eyes enough to be convinced and if she had any doubts about what she saw looking back at her, between her legs was a sore, raw pussy that would serve as a painful reminder the rest of the night. But for all of that, the truth was she did not think that she herself or the girls were in immediate danger. Payton Adams was a man who squared his debts, she needed no more convincing of that; the point had been made in Simon's journal. However, based on the journal, it seemed clear to her that Payton Adams did not kill wantonly. He always had some sort of reason for his murders. Either he killed in the course of conducting his business, or he killed in the course of defending himself, or he killed as a matter of revenge, to

even the score for a wrong he thought someone had done to him. Since she had taken no action against him, or done him any sort of wrong, and so long as she continued to do as he said and stay out of his way, Jan was certain that she had nothing to fear from him.

Nothing other than an occasional rape or slap in the face.

Jan cursed at herself, snatched up soap and a washcloth and began to furiously scrub her body. Was this how women allowed themselves to become victims of spousal abuse? After every incidence of abuse, was she to again lower the bar on just how much she would take before doing anything about it? You go, girl, she told herself, keep it up and you'll be lowering the bar until the time comes when someone else is lowering the casket that holds your corpse.

After her shower, Jan put on fresh underwear and changed into baggy jeans and an oversized University of Maryland sweatshirt. She made a trip to each girl's bedroom where she found Elizabeth doing homework and Louise with a school book open but talking on the telephone. Elizabeth she praised, Louise she scolded, then she went into the small bedroom that served as a study for Simon. Switching on the wall light, Jan was surprised to realize that it had been months since she'd last set foot in this room. There was no particular reason for this other than there'd been no particular reason for her to be there prior to tonight. Looking around, she saw that nothing appeared to have changed since her last visit; the bookshelves that lined three of the room's four walls were overflowing, there was a reading lamp with a big cloth shade on a mahogany stand next to a stuffed chair and ottoman, all circa late 19th century, and an old wood captain's chair at a small desk upon which sat Simon's Macintosh computer. Simon was one of Apple's staunchest supporters because the Mac operating system was so much easier to use than even the newest versions of Windows. At least that was the reason Simon gave for his loyalty to Macs, but Jan had always suspected that as a labor movement history scholar with definite pro-union sympathies, Simon must have harbored some bias against Bill Gates, arguably a 20th century robber baron cut from the same mold as Andrew Carnegie. What would Payton Adams think about Mr. Gates and his Microsoft empire? Jan wondered as she sat down at the desk and booted up Simon's computer.

The folder named DWABDO was sitting right out on the desktop and when Jan invoked the FUREY password, the folder opened to reveal three separate files marked journal one, two, and three. Getting info on journal three, she saw that the file had last been modified five days

earlier. Clearly, Simon had entered it after his third treatment with Quip. With a great deal of nervousness, Jan opened the file and began to read.

About an hour later, she closed the file, having read it through and copied it and the rest of the journal files onto a floppy disk. She turned the computer off, pocketed the floppy disk, stood up from the desk, made sure the chair had been returned to the position in which she'd found it, went to the wall switch and turned off the overhead light. She then left the room, closing the door behind her, and proceeded straight back to her own bedroom. She immediately went into the bathroom and vomited her dinner into the toilet. When the worst of her sickness had subsided, she cleaned herself up, brushed her teeth, went back out into the bedroom and fetched from the closet her all-weather jacket, the one she'd got from Banana Republic, the one with the extra deep pockets. After slipping into the jacket, she went downstairs to the foyer where she'd left her handbag hanging on the inside doorknob of the coat closet. From the handbag she removed the .32 caliber Beretta Tomcat she carried for protection, worked the slide to chamber a round, reset the safety, then dropped the pistol into one of the deep pockets in her jacket. Checking first to make sure her wallet and keys were still inside, she shouldered her bag then went back upstairs and from the hallway called to her girls. They emerged from their respective bedrooms after her third and most forceful shout.

"What's up, Mom?" demanded Louise. "I'm doing my homework. This disruption is not a help I hope you know."

Elizabeth shot darts at her twin. "Chill, Luigi, let's get this over with. I still have things to do tonight."

Jan ordered them both to be quiet. She told them to gather up their schoolwork and put it in their backpacks, then go get their coats and come with her. They wanted to know where they were going and she answered the Joyners' house. She then glanced at her watch. It was almost ten o'clock. There should be plenty of time before Simon returned, but, still, her anxiety level was high and getting higher by the second. She and the girls had to be out of that house. The sooner the better. She told her daughters to hurry. Elizabeth grumbled but dutifully headed back into her room to comply. Louise, as usual, wanted to argue.

"Mom, I'm not doing anything or going anywhere until I get an explanation. First you're all over my case to get off the phone and start doing my homework and now it's like stop what

I'm and go with you to the Joyners. Are you PMS? Stop tweaking and tell me what this is all about."

Jan took a long hard look at her daughter then said. "Louise Cora Thomas do what you were told and do it now."

"But Mom...."

"Move your ass now, Louise, or I will snatch you bald!" Jan screamed, spraying the air with the spit of her rage. Her fists were clenched and she could feel flames shooting out of her eyeballs.

Louise got the message. Ditto Elizabeth. In less than five minutes both girls were out of the house and in the driveway, waiting while Jan unlocked the doors to her Lexus.

"What about, Dad?" Elizabeth timidly ventured, before getting inside. "Shouldn't we leave him a note to tell him where we've gone?"

Jan could not answer her daughter. All she could do was quickly shake her head and hope that under the cover of darkness neither girl would see her tears.

CHAPTER THIRTY ONE

Simon's Journal

The birth of my daughters began around eight o'clock on a Sunday evening on the fifth day of October, on the beach at Ocean City, Maryland. Jan and I had flown back east to attend the wedding of my sister Maureen. I was strongly opposed to Jan's making the trip but it was something she was determined to do. Maureen had welcomed Jan into my family with open arms and the two had been close ever since. Maureen wanted Jan to be her maid-of-honor. She'd offered to postpone her wedding but it had been postponed twice before for reasons an agonized Maureen later confessed -- over the course of many long-distance phone calls with Jan -- were foolish. Jan did not want her sister-in-law to undergo any further ordeals of doubt. The baby was not due until November (we believed there was only one baby in her womb) and Jan had secured the approval of her doctor.

The wedding took place on Saturday -- it was great fun and both the bride and her very pregnant maid-of-honor looked lovely. Jan had insisted on an extra night in Maryland at Ocean City. It would be a last hurrah for us, she said, a farewell to our heady days as carefree lovers and students before we took on the grinding demands and responsibilities of parenthood and careers.

I did not take much convincing.

We stayed at the Damascus House, a B and B at the corner of Wicomico and the Boardwalk. The Damascus was a modest place, a two-story white clapboard with a shingled roof and only four guest bedrooms, but it featured a large porch with a magnificent view of the ocean. As it was so late in the season, there was only one other couple staying at the inn, an elderly husband and wife from the D.C. suburb of Bethesda. This other couple retired early so that Jan and I had the porch to ourselves. We'd planned to sit there until bedtime, just talking and listening to the rhythmic crash of the breakers. Jan, however, decided that staying seated for too long was cramping her muscles. She needed to walk. I suggested a stroll along the boardwalk but Jan wanted to take off her shoes and walk along the edge of the water so she could feel the wet sand and smell the briny surf. The night air was pleasantly cool and an enormous harvest moon lit our way.

Walking and talking, we lost track of the time and how far we had gone. Jan was deeply concerned about preparing our home for the baby. We were at the time living in the Berkeley flatlands in a stucco bungalow that had only two bedrooms, the second a small room we'd intended to use as a study but had in reality made into a repository for junk. Jan had been so busy finishing up her law degree that she had not done a thing to convert this room into a nursery. Yet she had been adamant about doing it herself. "You'd turn it into another museum!" was her stock answer to my offers of help. Now, she was worried that so much remained to be done and she only had about three weeks, maybe a month at the most before giving birth. She had just cautioned me that she wanted to be out of the Damascus House and on our way to the airport -- we were scheduled to leave out of Friendship -- by seven o'clock the next morning, as she did not want any anxiety over whether or not we'd make our 10:30 flight. I responded to the effect that it was she who generally ran late for plane trips and she started to argue when her words stopped in mid-sentence. I glanced over and could see in the platinum moonlight an odd look of surprise on Jan's face. She said she thought she'd felt a contraction, but she dismissed this as an impossibility. Must be gas, Jan decided. However, there almost immediately followed a second and then a third of whatever it was she was experiencing. The third time was a charm for Jan in the sense that she at last concluded she was feeling contractions and that perhaps it would be best if we were to turn around and head back for the inn.

We'd gone too far up the beach and the contractions began coming too swiftly for Jan to walk very far on her own. That we were forced to travel across beach sand and a rising surf did not make the journey any easier. I was forced to carry her in my arms like an immense sack of brown sugar that hiccuped, giggled and gasped, and shouted "Hurry, Simon!" in my ear with a soft breast pushing into my eye. Weight-lifting had made my arms quite strong but nonetheless, a pain began to gnaw at my biceps like an irritating itch beyond my reach. Had I been thinking clearly I would have quickly made my way across the beach and up onto the boardwalk where forward progress would have been easier and swifter. But I pressed on, my barefeet splashing through the foamy sheets of water in a lumbering jog. Twice I stumbled and almost dropped her, and once a gust of wind blew sand in my eye and blinded me for a few steps so that, for at least a moment or two, I was pointed out to sea. The annoying itch in my arms became a bothersome ache and eventually a shrieking pain. But I did not stop, nor did I set Jan down until we were

back on the porch at the inn. Later, I estimated that we'd walked about three-quarters of a mile up the beach from the inn when the contractions began. That night, the return trip felt like a hundred miles.

From the couple who owned the inn, we learned that the nearest hospital was Atlantic General in Berlin, a town about seven miles west of Ocean City on Highway 50. There was a medical center on the outskirts of Ocean City but it was mainly for the treatment of minor injuries from water sports. Most certainly it was not equipped to handle the complications that might arise from a premature delivery. Despite the increasing sharpness of the contractions, Jan wanted to be taken to the hospital. I decided to drive her there myself in our rental car. The owners of the inn said they would alert the local ambulance service and send them out to follow us.

Jan's water broke just as we passed a sign announcing the next exit would be Berlin. Jan's spirits were high enough that she could joke about losing our cleaning deposit. The ambulance from Ocean City, which had caught and passed us, led us directly to the front of Atlantic General's emergency entrance. The paramedics were out quickly with a wheelchair but I carried Jan out of the rental car and into the hospital myself. The staff at Atlantic General could not have been more professional. Within minutes Jan was prepped and in the delivery room, but even that was not a moment too soon. An OB/GYN had just come through the door when Louise's head appeared. Labor was officially timed out at 11 minutes, 35 seconds. Jan and I had undergone several weeks worth of Lamaze training apparently for naught, we joked, as I daubed sweat off Jan's forehead with a towel. The nursing staff had taken Louise off to be cleaned and examined. Jan was in the midst of telling me who I should call to tell about the birth of our daughter and in what order these people were to be called. Suddenly, her words again stopped and again an enormous look of surprise appeared on her face.

The contractions had started again, she announced.

Elizabeth was not nearly as eager to enter our world as her sister. For the next three hours, Jan and I were able to put the entire litany of Lamaze breathing and relaxation exercises we'd practiced to a thorough test. All the while, the OB/GYN and the nursing staff assured us that the situation -- while not routine -- was under control. At one point, the OB/GYN, a white man in his early fifties, a Dr. Decker or Docker, I think, offered me an explanation as to why the

medical people back home had not realized that Jan was pregnant with twins, but I did not understand. Frankly, I was scarcely paying attention to him. I could not take my eyes off the face of Jan which was locked in a fierce grimace as she strained to bring forth our second child.

I did not arrive back at the Damascus House until around 2 AM. Both girls were small, about five pounds each, but otherwise healthy. Jan was physically drained and dehydrated, but she, too, was fine. I was exhausted, physically and emotionally, but I was also as happy as I have ever been before or since. There was no question about sleeping. My nerves were wound tight and my mind was racing with a thousand thoughts. I decided to take another walk along the beach, to retrace the path of my earlier stroll with Jan.

The vanilla glow of the moon illuminated several rows of whitecaps advancing on the beach. Beyond the whitecaps I could see the silhouettes of fishing boats that had dropped anchor for the night. A soft but insistent wind tugged at my hair and tickled my ears which echoed with the crashing of the waves. I ventured just far enough into the surf for the salty spray to dampen my face while water and sand pebbles rushed to and fro round my ankles as my toes sank into the sand. Lifting my eyes to the sky, I marveled at the vast netting of stars, a million billion pinpoints of light, twinkling in arabesque intricacies against the boundless pitch-black void. As I stared in wonder, feeling very much like a young boy again, a streak of light flashed across the heavens. A shooting star! Quickly, I made a wish for the health and happiness of my new daughters. Then, another shooting star. And another. And another after that. Suddenly, the night sky was full of shooting stars, bolting pell-mell across my line of vision and, like erasures passing across a field of charcoal, rubbing out the blackness, leaving behind a whiteness that crystallized and became an industrial sky at dawn.

I was once again standing at the head of the wooden foot bridge that led into the main entrance of the Homestead Steel Works. Once again my senses were assaulted by the sights, sounds, and overpowering smells of a steel mill in operation 24 hours a day. I'd spent the night at the house of Doolan and his wife. I'd convinced them to toss out one of their boarders for the evening by offering them a gold coin worth two dollars which was double what the boarder paid for an entire week's worth of lodging and food. Doolan and his missus had four boarders, three Irishmen and a Welshman. It was, of course, the Welshman they displaced. Mrs. Doolan sent him to her sister's for the night. They also moved all of the Irishmen into a single room so I

could have a room to myself with an alarm clock. There was grumbling as was to be expected but the Doolan's missus, a plain but quick-witted woman, told the men that I was her cousin. Every Irishman understood the primacy of kin. Doolan and his wife took my gold coin and asked me no questions. I left another for them when I slipped out of their house in the pre-dawn darkness while the rest of the household was still sound asleep. No one would ever know from the Doolans that Payton Adams had spent the night in their home.

One last time I walked down that foot bridge and through the opened wrought iron gate, passing under the steel archway and hanging iron sign. There was a large group of soldiers gathered inside the works near the entrance. Some were standing, some were sitting, all had their rifles with bayonets fixed close at hand, but none actually held their weapons, and none paid me any notice at all. I was dressed in my tapper's garb, including my heavy dust-coated jacket, my wooden-heeled boots, and even my goggles which I wore around my neck. The only thing different from my first genetic memory experience was the knapsack on my back.

I made my way directly across the yard to the vast shed that housed Open Hearth Furnace Number One, climbing the outdoor wooden steps up to the pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks, crossing the bridge and entering the shed through the door that led out onto the roof of the furnace. Once more I was confronted with the stupendous heat and light, the noise of exploding gases, and the nose-burning, eye-watering sulfurous stink. I quickly donned my goggles and the rawhide gloves from the pocket of my coat and crossed the roof to the ladder that would take me down to the tap plug catwalk. For all intents and purposes I was invisible to the lines of bare-chested, dirty-faced men tossing sacks of coke into the lake of fire. They toiled like mechanical devices, expressionlessly stepping forward from the head of the line to drop their bundle, and returning to the end of the line to be handed another bundle. The same held true for the men who shoveled the manganese. No one took any note of my presence. Whatever thought that was given to their surroundings was fully focused on the lake of fire, the great splash of flames and the rising bubbles of sulfur and oxygen that burst in sparkling showers.

Likewise for the puddlers stirring the heat after I'd made my descent to the catwalk. No one took their eyes off the flames shooting out the holes in the hearth through which the long

poles of the puddlers worked the molten brew. Unchallenged, I went straight for the tap-plug. Just as before, I took out my jagged-edged knife and cleaved a slot in the center of the clay plug. From my knapsack I removed a stick of dynamite and just as before, I wedged it into the slot. Even Simon Thomas could see, however, that this stick of dynamite was different from the ones I'd used before. The fuse on this cartridge was much longer.

Another difference from before: this time there was no Tooley or anyone else to hammer a warning on the catwalk fence that the tap-plug was about to be blown.

Still another difference. This time there was no trough positioned under the tap-plug to catch the contents of the hearth as it came rushing out. Nor, I suspect, was there any waiting ladle on the floor below.

I lit the fuse, quickly returned to the metal ladder and climbed back up to the roof of the furnace. I was already at the exit door when the dynamite exploded. Above the great hissing of the escaping steel magma, I could hear the screams of the puddlers as the runaway molten metal spread across the catwalk. I could also hear smaller explosions, the sounds no doubt of the molten metal making contact with the standing pockets of water that could always be found on the floor beneath the catwalk. I did not tarry more than a moment at the exit door, however, for the lines of the laborers atop the furnace had dissolved and there was wall of frightened humanity coming toward me.

I closed the door behind me knowing that no one would be paying any attention to activity on the river for the next couple of hours: There had been a terrible accident at the Homestead Works.

I swiftly made my way to the Munhall side of the mill where the sawing and shearing took place. The keening screech of metal cutting into metal replaced the booms of fiery explosions, and the purple glow of arc lights replaced the outpour of smoke. Even as I went through this area I could hear the alarm bells being sounded throughout the Works. But then I was past the whitewashed fence, which marked the easternmost boundary of the Works and the sounds of the mill were behind me. About a hundred yards beyond the fence was a dirt lane making a gentle run up a barren grassless slope to a small stand of maple trees which had somehow managed to withstand years of pollution assault, though their stunted height, scraggly branches and mottled foliage bespoke a battle hard met. This isolated copse of damaged trees

fronted the bank of the river whose rushing brown waters could be seen on the other side. Walking up the lane, I observed that its surface was pocked with patches of weeds and scarred with the ruts of wagon tracks left long ago. Obviously, the lane had not seen much use in recent times. Within the stand of trees, the lane became a path partially obscured by an overgrowth of wild shrubs and weeds that scratched at my arms as I pushed my way through. Emerging from this shrubbery, I found myself standing at the raised edge of the river bank, overlooking a short but near vertical drop to the water. Wooden steps led down onto a slab of cement that jutted out maybe six feet into the river. The cement was muddy and mossy and supported by four mouldy wooden pillars, one at each corner. It was, of course, the landing from my dream and though I knew the fate that would soon befall me I was powerless to avoid it. In accordance with the imperatives of Payton Adams' personal history, I sat down at the top steps and awaited my destiny.

There was not much of a view as a low but thick curtain of fog was steaming off the river's surface, not far from the shore. But the fog was to my advantage for it allowed me to see any boat that approached the landing before anyone aboard that boat was likely to see me. From my knapsack I took out the package of dried sausages that Rosaleen had wrapped in butcher's paper for me. There were enough to last three days which would be enough time for me to get far away from Pittsburgh. The sausages were tough and stringy and gave off a strong odor when I bit into them, but the taste was acceptable and the meat filled my stomach. Though I could not see the sun for the clouds of industrial smoke from the Homestead Works, the lightening of the sky above told me that dawn must have broken and I could expect to see a skiff approaching the old ferry landing at any time. I had just finished polishing off a second sausages, my full allotment until evening, when the skiff appeared. Quickly I wrapped the rest of my sausages and put them back in my knapsack. Cat was the only one aboard. The river's current was so swift she did not need to paddle but instead used the oars just to steer. I was surprised at her skill in maneuvering the skiff to the landing. I was even more surprised that my segmented Lee-Metford rifle was fully assembled and sitting on her lap. Most surprising of all, the silencer was attached.

Once I was certain that hers was the only boat on the water, I descended the steps and walked out onto the landing. She guided the skiff in close enough to toss me a line which I

secured to the one of the pillars. Inside the skiff, it was almost exactly like my dream with the two canvas suitcases, the woman's coat with a fur collar, the four cloth sacks and my rifle. The only difference, of course, was the presence of Cat in her blue dress, the one I so much admired.

I greeted her with a question. "Where's the Potato Eater?"

Cat gave me a slight shake of her head. She looked tired and sad and there was a tremble to her voice. "He ought to be on shore about half a mile up river by now. Wet. Angry. Embarrassed, but alive. It never ceases to amaze me how dumb the Irish can be. I told that potato eater as you call him that you'd want your rifle ready in case there was any trouble with the law. He watched me assemble it while he rowed. He didn't say a word even when I put on this thing that stifles the noise. Then I told him he'd rowed enough, that the current would carry the skiff to the rendezvous, his services were no longer required. I instructed him to please get out of the skiff. He asked me why would he want to do a thing like that. I told him I would shoot him if he did not. He would never have doubted you, Payton. Had you given him the exact same instructions he would have jumped overboard and struck out for the shore. Why in God's name would he think he could simply reach over and take the rifle out of my hand? Why would he laugh while attempting to do so? Why would he call me a dumb nigger whore and shake his head like that? I will tell you why. He thought so little of me. That is why. He ought not to have called me a whore. I told him that."

"You killed him?" I asked.

Another head shake and a quick nod. "He gave me no choice. One way or the other, the man was not going to accompany us."

"Why is that, Cat?"

"Because Collin was never going to let you go, Payton. I heard him say you were in his debt. He would have had you proceed with an assassination attempt of Prince William. And if you were to be successful, there would have been another enforcement after that and then another still. Collin would have kept you going until you were killed."

"Prince William was to be my last enforcement," I said. "I told Collin that and I told you as well."

"Your say would not make it so. Collin does not take no for an answer. And if you were to quit, what then? If you are not an asset to Collin Garraty then you are a liability and you know

how Collin treats his liabilities."

She must have wounded my pride. "I would not be an easy liability to cancel," I said, narrowing my eyes.

Cat checked me off with a motion of her hand. "There's no point to arguing now," she said. "Besides, I don't think Collin is going to escape. They're on to him, Payton, they know who Collin is and they will soon have him. He is a fish in their net. They just haven't hauled him in yet. When they do, he is going to bargain for his life. Who do you think is his biggest chip? He will sell you out along with every last one of his Fenian brothers if that is what is needed to save himself. Why do you think he agreed to let you take me with you? He wanted to know exactly where you were so he could serve you up to Sir John Tower and the Yanks if necessary. If he did manage to escape, he'd have had me killed at the first opportunity and paid you in gold for forgiveness. You are a devil, Payton Furey, but Collin Garraty is a devil's keeper."

"Sir John knows your identity as well," I said. "The only name they don't have at this point is mine."

"Then it is to your advantage to either kill me or stay with me," she replied, trying to suppress the start of a smile. Confidence emanated off her like heat from a furnace. "Were I you, I'd choose to come with me seeing as I've got your rifle (one quick movement and the barrel was aimed dead-center for my heart, Cat's finger on the trigger). Another consideration is the money. Collin did not want to put all his cash in the U.S. Express wagon. (She motioned to the four cloth sacks in the skiff.) I don't know exactly how much is here but I suspect it is in the neighborhood of forty thousand dollars. We could live quite nicely for as long as we need to on this money."

"Where did you have in mind for us to go?" I asked.

Cat's smile burst on her face with the exhilaration of a sunrise. "I would love to take you to New Orleans," she said. "It is a beautiful city with the most wonderful food and music the likes of which I'm sure you've not heard. But we will have enough money to go anywhere you choose and I am not especially particular so long as we go to a place where there are no steel works. I must tell you that wherever it is we are going, I am especially eager to get there. I want to lie down with you on a soft bed with both of us as naked as the day we were born. Please do

come with me, Payton. Oh please do say you will."

"Under the circumstances, I hardly see how I could refuse," I said, offering her a slight bow and a tight smile of my own. Another sunburst of a smile lit up her face and held even as the moments of my remaining on the landing rather than joining her in the skiff stretched well beyond any reasonable expectation. Inevitably, the curve of her lips drooped and her smile surrendered to perplexity.

"Why are you still standing there, my love?" she asked. "Should we not be off before the entire town of Homestead is awake?"

"Soon enough," I replied, "soon enough."

Two, perhaps three more minutes passed, the time of course seeming much longer, with no movement on my part. Finally, Cat could bear it no longer.

"Are you expecting a visitor?" she asked, the sarcasm as thick as fresh honey. Almost as if in answer to her remark, we both heard the rustle of vegetation and the creaking of weight upon the wooden steps behind me.

"It's a woman," whispered Cat.

"Hello, Rosaleen," I shouted, without turning around. "Where's Collin?"

Rosaleen's voice called out from the stairs. She sounded hoarse and winded.

"I've sent that villain to hell, same place I ought to send you."

"How is that my Rosaleen?" I replied, at last turning to face her.

She was wearing the green dress that was a favorite of mine, and wrapped around her wide shoulders was a brown lace shawl. Her red hair was undone and windblown save for a few wild strands that were plastered onto her face which was moist with perspiration. Her breathing was greatly labored and in her tear-drenched eyes was a look that bespoke deep hurt and disappointment. In her right hand, which was dropped to her side, was the .45 caliber Colt pistol.

"You betrayed me, Payton," Rose intoned through a clutched voice, "you left me and your own baby to run off with Collin's whore."

"I've done no such thing, Rose," I said.

"Don't you dare deny it, you villain, or I'll shoot you dead right now," said Rose, swiping her left hand across her nose. "Collin told me everything. You sent him to kill me and take the gold so's you could be with that whore."

"Stop calling me a whore," warned Cat in a loud and angry voice. From the corner of my eye I could see that the barrel of the Lee-Medford rifle had shifted slightly so that it was pointed not at me but at Rosaleen.

Rosaleen straightened at the sound of Cat's voice. "What else would I call a woman who'd steal another woman's husband while she was carrying his child?" she said, her eyes still fixed on me and her words still wrapped around a sobbing breath.

"I didn't steal nobody," Cat retorted. "He come of his own free will."

There was more than a whiff of disdain in Cat's tone and the smell of it transformed Rosaleen's sadness into instant rage. A crimson glow heated her cheeks and her eyes, which she turned full onto Cat, blazed. "And which purse did you use to get him, dearie? I doubt the likes of you has much in the way of money so it must have been the purse between your legs!"

"Nothing between your legs seems to hold interest to Payton any longer," Cat fired back, punctuating her insult with a nasty laugh. "As for the likes of me having money, I suspect I've more aboard this boat than you'll ever see in your wretched life."

Rosaleen's return laughter was like hurling spit in the face of Cat. "Don't flatter yourself on either count. Payton found plenty between my legs to interest him yesterday. And if it is money you're in need of, husband, there's plenty of it in that wagon of Collin's that I left tied up to one of those trees back yonder."

Now it was I who laughed. "Tell me, Rose," I said, looking directly at her on the steps, "did Collin come after you himself or did he send that potato eater into the house?"

Rosaleen's eyes shifted back to me and the rage shifted to a fierce shining pride. "He sent in the potato eater. A clumsy oaf if ever there was one. I thought it might be the nabs but I had my doubts. I told him I was armed and would shoot. But he came towards me anyway. From the light of the moon I could see him plain as day. He had a pistol but he'd not even drawn it. I let him get close enough so I could look into his eyes. The blackheart was going to kill me with his bare hands but first he was going to have his way with me."

"You saw that in his eyes did you?" I asked.

Rose cackled with laughter. "Indeed not. He had his pecker out of his pants. That was the gun he was holding." She shook her head so that her wild red hair swished back and forth across her face. "I swear to the heavens that God never put a more stupid creature on the Earth

than an Irishman."

Behind me, from the skiff, I heard Cat mutter an "Amen."

"Even though he saw the pistol pointing at him he walked right up to me, pecker in his hand, and said 'Give me the gun darlin and I'll do you a right good twist.' I put a bullet through his stupid heart. Good riddance, I say. No man so disrespectful of a woman deserves to live. After I shot him, I peeked out the window and saw the wagon parked in front of our house. There was a wee bearded man holding the reins and staring towards the house as if to see inside. I went out through the back and came around from behind. Collin was so intent on seeing into our house he never heard me until I had the drop on him. Then he started his blabbering and he did not stop until I'd walked him into our house and upstairs into the room where the gold was hid. He told me of your foul treachery and then he offered to share the loot he had in the back of his truck. Him and me could go off together, he said. He'd always had a fancy towards me and he'd be a father to my child, a better one that you'd ever make, he said. He swore it on the grave of his own sainted mother. I let him go on with his words and I let him take the gold out of the closet and I let him look at it once. Then I told him if he thought he could play me for such a fool he had another think coming to him and he could do his thinking in hell. He turned and made for to run from the room but I shot him in the back of the head. So you see, husband, I've riches aplenty and a horse and wagon to take us far away from this dirty filthy place. You've no need to run off in that wee boat with no whore."

"If that pregnant cow calls me a whore again I will shoot her dead," shrieked Cat, "tell her to shut her trap, Payton, or I will shut it for her."

"Oh, is it a shootout she wants? Well I'm game for it!" Rose shouted. "Stand aside, husband, and I will send that hussy off to join Collin. She'll have a new hole for him to poke when I've done with her." Rose raised the pistol and aimed it at Cat.

Cat responded instantly, cradling the stock of rifle into the crook of her arm and swinging the barrel straight towards Rosaleen.

"She's right, Payton!" Cat snarled. "Stand aside and we'll settle this matter straight out."

I held up my hands as if to separate them. "Hold your tongues the both of you," I said. "Collin said you'd be at each other's throats and you're proving him right. Lower your pieces now and hear what I have to say."

The two women glared at each other through clenched jaws but each lowered her weapon at the same time as her rival. My words were directed to both of them but it was Rosaleen upon whom I kept closest watch -- her being the more volatile of the two.

"I did not want to take either of you with me because of the risk. But I knew if I left Cat behind with Collin he would have had her killed. Rose, she saved my life. I am in her debt. I could not allow Collin to kill her. It would not have been right."

Rosaleen's anger went out of her like breath from the dead and her eyes became wet. "But what about me, husband?" she asked, hoarsely. "I've saved your life, too. Are you not in my debt? Was it right to put me at the mercy of Collin?"

A thin smile creased my face. "Oh, my Rose, I was not at all certain that Collin would come after you, I thought he might choose the more prudent path of flight. But I knew that Collin and his potato eater were no match for you. Not after I'd warned you to be on your guard. I knew you'd be ready with your pistol and I knew if it came to a showdown you'd be the winner. Why do you think I've been stalling Cat on our getaway? I had to be certain you weren't coming before I skipped this place."

Rosaleen's voice softened so that I could hardly hear her. Tears ran openly down her face. "And had I not shown up, husband, what then? Would you have sent for me and your child? Or would you have fled with her and not ever think twice of me and the baby again?"

It could have been my own Jan to whom I was speaking when I promised Rosaleen that I would indeed have eventually sent for her. But no sooner had those words left my lips than the response of Cat jerked my head towards the skiff.

"So it is me then that you would have disposed of?" she said, and her eyes, too, were filled with tears. "Were you going to kill me or were you just going to put me ashore and consider your debt to be squared?"

Again I might have been speaking to my own Jan when I promised Cat that I would not have abandoned her either.

Rosaleen cried out, "Then which of us were you going to choose?"

"Yes, she's right," cried Cat. "You can't have us both. You have to decide."

My feelings for both women ran so deep, feelings of love and desire, feelings of need so great my blood burned. I could not make a choice and I told them so. "We can't have the three of us

travel together on the wagon until we are safely away from this place," I said. "The two of you hide in the back and I will drive. No one will stop us. By nightfall, we will be out of harm's way. Then we can see what's what." I shrugged my shoulders and allowed myself a mirthless laugh. "Maybe we'll just divide the money in three and go our separate ways."

Neither woman laughed. Both had returned to glaring at one another with hate.

"It's no good," said Rose. "I'm your woman and I won't share you with that whore."

"I'm your woman and I won't share you with that pregnant cow," responded Cat.

Rose raised the pistol. "There's only one way to settle this. Husband, stand aside!"

Cat brought up the rifle. "Yes. Stand aside, Payton!"

I held up my hands. "Stop it the both of you right now! There is to be no killing. Put the guns down!"

"Too late for that!" shrieked Rose. "Stand aside, husband! Now!"

"Stand aside!" echoed Cat.

"No!" I shouted.

Both women ignored me. In their eyes, I had ceased to exist. Their words were spat at one another with a red-hot fury.

"Go to hell, you dirty black bitch!" snarled Rosaleen.

"You go to hell, you dirty white bitch!" hissed Cat.

"No!" I once again shouted, jerking my head frantically from first Cat and then Rosaleen. But as I turned toward Rosaleen, I saw the flash of flame spurt from the barrel of her pistol and heard two cracks of gunfire, one of which came at me from the direction of Rose and one from behind me, the direction of Cat, like an echo off the water. The two bullets must have struck my skull simultaneously for there was a bright white light that exploded inside my head, followed by an indescribable pain and then a bleak and desolate darkness of bottomless depth. I must have let out a terrible scream as I threw open the lid of the MNEME judging by the horrified look on the face of Gibby Gibson. Before leaving the Brain Lab that night, I warned Gibby to keep mum about my receiving a third treatment of Quip if he valued his life. Cowardly little maggot that he is, I don't expect he will defy me. Nor do I expect to ever return to the Brain Lab. I've no more need of Quip.

On my twelfth birthday, the day I'd first laid eyes on the photograph of Payton Adams and the night I'd first had my dream about his death along the banks of the Monongahela River, I'd vowed to solve the mystery of his murder. At long last I have achieved my goal. He was murdered by two women, the only two persons he had trusted perhaps in his entire life. My great-grandfather saved the lives of Rosaleen and Cat, something the beast within him would never have done. For once in his adult life, he restrained his beast and for this failure he paid a fatal price. Of all things, I am brought to mind a line from the film *King Kong*, a fantasy-adventure epic from Hollywood produced during the Great Depression to make an audience forget their hard times. The film tells the story of Kong, a giant gorilla who rules a mythical island in the Pacific populated with ferocious dinosaurs. A beautiful young woman is used by a team of adventurers to lure Kong into captivity. He is taken back to New York City for exhibition but escapes trying to protect the woman and is eventually killed atop the Empire State Building by machine gun fire from combat planes. Bystanders surround the corpse of the great beast and someone comments that the planes got him. This person is immediately corrected by the lead actor, Robert Armstrong, who says: "It wasn't planes that got him (Kong), it was beauty that killed the beast."

Beauty killed the beast.

Woman was the downfall of man.

Love conquers all.

The conquered die first.

Those who do not remember their history are doomed to repeat it.

There was a second part to the vow I made to myself and at the grave of Grandma Mary Margaret. After uncovering the truth about the death of my great-grandfather, I vowed that I would see justice served. Ever since I saw his photograph, ever since I had the dream, I have understood that there existed between my great-grandfather and me a special bond. From beyond the grave he found a way to reach out to me and make me see and understand what needs to be done. He chose me to be his surrogate and I now understand why.

Payton Adams died more than one hundred years ago, unjustly murdered by his wife and his black lover.

Today, those two women exist as a single incarnation. She is my wife and my black

lover.

Payton Adams owes Jan a debt.

I will be the one who squares it.

PART FOUR
THE RECKONING

CHAPTER THIRTY TWO

Keith and Sandra Joyner were alone with Jan Thomas in the Joyner living room, after having sent their respective offspring to watch television -- an unprecedented act on a school night in either household. Jan had given the Joyners a somewhat hasty rundown on the final entry into Simon's journal. When she concluded with Simon's horrible vow to take revenge on her for the murder of Payton Adams by Cat and Rosaleen, Sandra had left Keith's side and joined Jan on the sofa to take her hand. Then Jan told them about Simon's confession to her earlier and how he had raped her. Remembrance of the attack overwhelmed Jan with emotion and she at last broke down, a torrential release so heart-breaking to behold that Sandra lost it as well. The two women tightly clung to one another, both crying the hot-splash tears of profound personal loss. Keith sat in silence, not knowing what to say or do. In the jumble of confused thoughts and emotions that roiled through his brain like atmospheric turbulence, he half-wished he could join the kids in the television room, could set his mind aimlessly adrift in couch-potato bliss.

It was Jan who brought him around.

"I want to have Simon arrested."

Keith blinked, then stared hard at her. Sandra was staring, too. Jan's eyes were still wet, but she was no longer crying. And even though her body continued to quiver, her voice was rock steady.

"Do you really think that's wise?" Keith asked. "I mean, it seems clear at this point that the Payton personality has assumed a commanding role in Simon's brain. If we call the cops, you know this Payton personality is going to be extremely pissed off."

Sandra asked, "Is this a permanent thing, this business of the Payton Adams personality controlling Simon's brain?"

"I don't know," Keith admitted. "That's why I think I'd like to maybe call Vijay first, Eugene Nertz, too, and get their input before we bring the police into it."

Jan shot him a dark look. "Keith, no matter what we do, by tomorrow morning the police are going to be on Simon like flies on shit. In their book, as of a month ago, he became a man with a history of violence and an arrest record. Detective DeLeon for one has heard Simon express his disdain for the governor and the chancellor. If Simon is not already on the list of people the police want to question, he sure as hell soon will be. Shit, I'll bet the Bosworth family was calling in a tip moments after the bomb went off."

From Sandra again, asking of Jan, "How do you think Simon will respond when the police come for him?"

"Keith's right, he'll be pissed. And that won't be good. Payton Adams has taught him how to fight. Simon hits like a bigger Mike Tyson. I have to assume that he will forcefully resist arrest and the police will respond accordingly. Maybe they'll do a Rodney King on him, beat him down with clubs to subdue him. Maybe they'll just stun-gun him into unconsciousness. But that's probably the least of my worries. For all I know, there could be another segmented rifle in that back pack Simon carries around. Given that Payton has taught Simon how to fight and apparently how to make a bomb, it's not much of a stretch to think that Simon knows how to fire a gun now, too. Unless we act pre-emptively, there's no telling how deadly any encounter between him and the police might become."

Keith spoke up. "All that may be true, Jan, but I still think we should at least call Vijay first."

Jan looked puzzled. Sandra asked the question for her. "Why Vijay? He hasn't read Simon's journal. He doesn't know about any of this, does he?"

Keith felt the heat in his cheeks. "I e-mailed him a copy of the file with the first two entries and we talked on the phone earlier this evening. I had to, Vijay's my director."

Jan nodded. "I understand Keith, I really do. And you can call Vijay and e-mail him the final journal entry, too. I have a disk with the file that contains the entire journal. You can make copies and send it to whomever you need. But first I want to call Detective DeLeon and tell him what has happened. He knows about Simon and Quip and I trust his judgment. He can use Simon's assault on me as an excuse to go to our house and arrest Simon as he is returning from wherever it is he goes at night. DeLeon and his men will have the element of surprise working for them. Simon won't be expecting the police to be waiting for him. With DeLeon there to

make sure things don't get out of hand, they might be able to take him in without incident. It's my best hope, I think, to get Simon safely confined where he can't hurt anyone or get into any more trouble. Then, we can deal with how to make him well and how to get him out of the trouble he's already in."

Keith's cheeks were burning and he felt his body squirm in his chair. "What's the rush with calling DeLeon? The police won't be doing any investigating this late at night. We've got some time. Let me call Vijay."

Jan started to lose it. She didn't quite shout, but her voice suddenly got quite a bit louder with an edge on it that could cut glass. "Who the fuck are you, mister, and what have you done with Keith Joyner?"

Keith felt his mouth drop open, started to speak, saw the dagger glare he was getting from Sandra and decided to keep his mouth shut.

Not Jan though. She went on talking, her voice loud and hot. "Any minute now, Simon is going to come home. What do you think is going to happen when he discovers that I have left and taken the girls with me? He is going to put two and two together, lickety-split. He'll check his computer and I'll bet he'll either know or guess I've been into it. Then what? A forewarned Simon is not going to sit at home and wait for the police to come for him. He's going to disappear, something that Payton Adams is quite experienced at. And then the police are going to put out an APB on him and he's going to be listed as armed and dangerous and I don't believe I am wasting precious seconds here explaining this to you." She stood up from the sofa. "I'm calling Detective DeLeon now," she said and strode out of the room to use the phone, the stridency in her step an open warning for Keith to not even dare try to interfere.

No sooner had Jan left than Keith felt Sandra's eyes on him. Reluctantly, he looked her way. "What the hell is wrong you?" she asked, her face dark with anger.

"What?" he asked, defiantly, knowing full well what she meant.

"What's with this terrible urgency to call Vijay? And since when did the opinion of Dr. Nertz mean anything at all to you?"

Keith sighed. No point stonewalling. This was Sandra. She'd have the truth out of him sooner or later.

"In part I wanted to bring Nertz in for Jan's sake. For some reason, he seems able to calm

her down, comfort her. I know this is a nightmare for her and it is far from being over. As for Vijay, like I said, he's my boss, I have to keep him informed."

"So? You call him tomorrow morning. Give him a full report, then. Why were you pushing Jan to let you call Vijay now?"

Here it goes, Keith thought. "Because Vijay insisted on being immediately informed of any new developments. Because if Jan goes to the cops, Vijay would want to know before not after the fact."

"And why is that?"

"Because what we have here, wife of mine, is not a made-for-TV movie where the plucky Jan and her two friends, Keith and Sandra, band together to save the day. What we have here is the ugly, tangled, complexities of real life, where my employer, the University of California at Berkeley, is threatened with potentially enormous liability suit. Gibby was right to be terrified of Jan. Before this thing is over, she is going to come down on the Brain Lab like Godzilla on Manhattan. But that's not even the worst of it. The governor of the state of California has been assassinated. The killer is going to be punished. And I am not just talking about the criminal justice system. The governor has a wife, grown children; they'll line up right behind Jan with civil suits of their own. Wrongful death. Gross negligence. Medical malpractice. Pick a grounds for monetary claims and there will be lawyers filing for it. And we haven't even begun to discuss the families of Chancellor MacBryde, or Maris Cavanagh or any of those other people who were killed in the blast. They can all hire lawyers, too. I'd be especially mindful of the Chancellor's widow. Your cousin Kathy called her money-grubbing, and she even liked the bitch."

Nodding her head, Sandra muttered, "I've heard others call her worse."

"Yeah, that's what I'm talking about," Keith said. "As you might imagine, my employer is displeased and is holding me culpable. I am at this moment out on the end of a very long limb so high up I can't even see the ground. If I do not cooperate to the max, the university will cut off that limb and I will fall down hard, taking you and our sons with me. Baby, believe me, I am sorry from the bottom of my heart for what has happened to Simon. I want to make things right for him but at the moment, I seem unable to get air to go into my lungs."

Sandra was up from the sofa and over onto Keith's lap, slipping her arms around his

neck, pulling his forehead in until it was touching her own.

"At least you didn't run, like Gibby," she said. "You're still here."

"Yeah, but I don't blame Gibby. If I was in his position, I might have run, too."

"No," Sandra said, without hesitation. "You might have considered it, but you'd have still been here. Even if Simon weren't your best friend, you would have stayed. You don't run from your responsibilities. Never have."

"Speaking of responsibilities," Keith said, "Vijay's raising new questions about how much responsibility the Brain Lab has for Simon's problems."

Sandra pulled back far enough to look him in the eyes. "What is that supposed to mean? You all gave him the Quip that activated the genetic memories of his great-grandfather. That sounds like responsibility to me."

"Yes, but Vijay questions whether or not those genetic memories are responsible for Simon's personality change."

Sandra looked truly puzzled. "What else could it be?"

Keith tightened his grip on his wife to preclude her jumping out his lap when he gave his response. "DID."

"What's that?"

"Dissociative Identity Disorder."

Sandra gave him a blank look and a shrug.

Keith gave her a hint. "Prior to 1994, it was known as Multiple Personality Disorder."

Sandra's face brightened. "Like that Sally Field movie? Sybil?"

"Yup."

"Do you believe that?"

"It's possible. DID, as currently defined by the American Psychiatric Association, is the existence of two or more personalities within one individual. From a legal standpoint, that certainly fits Simon."

Sandra's eyes narrowed. "Yes, but do you believe it?"

Keith wryly smiled and shook his head. "No, of course not. Under DID, there's usually a host personality that's clearly dominant. All of the personalities get some time on center stage but one is the boss. That doesn't fit Simon's case. There's a knock-down, drag-out battle for

control going on inside his head. There are a number of other discrepancies between Simon's case and classic DID which Vijay acknowledges, too. But Vijay's arguing that Simon's DID could be the exceptional case. That's another reason I wanted to bring Nertz in on this. He'll support me, I know."

Sandra's eyes narrowed. "Support you or take the lead in opposing Vijay and the university?"

Keith grinned. He never could fool Sandra. "Look, Vijay doesn't believe in the DID option anymore than I do. He's just echoing a trial balloon being floated up by Jack Lapage. It's Vijay's way of letting the University know, through Lapage, that he's on-board as a team player. Vijay covets his position as head of the Brain Lab and wants to keep it if he can. If there's opposition to the party line, he wants it to come from someone else."

"Namely you?" Sandra asked, even though she knew the answer. "Namely me. And I will if I can't get someone else to lead the charge."

"Someone outside the university?"

"You got it. If Eugene Nertz speaks out against Lapage's scheme, it will be a hell of a lot less onerous for me to be in agreement with him than for me to be seen as the leading spokesperson for a position that could spell financial disaster for the university. Besides, if truth be told, I'm open to conflict of interest charges."

"What?" asked a stunned Sandra.

"Sure enough," Keith replied. "Quip works, even if it did turn Simon into a monster. Ironically enough, setting aside the tragic consequences for Simon and his family and everyone else who has been hurt, from strictly a scientific viewpoint, it is good news for me. The activation of the Payton Adams genetic memories and their apparent role in altering the personality of Simon Thomas not only validates the effectiveness of Quip, the resulting hyper-aggressive behavior also validates Seychelles-Joyner Fear-Response Theory. You could argue it is a win-win situation for me."

"That's obscene!" Sandra snapped.

Keith sighed. "No, that's science. When experimental results are published, there's no appendix in which the moral ramifications of the experiment are discussed. Science does not ask moral questions, nor does it render moral judgments. In science, there's only one question to be

asked and answered: What is true?"

Sandra shook her head with disgust. "But Quip has gone beyond the ivy towered walls of science, don't you think?"

Keith nodded. "Like I've been saying. On the one hand, I -- our family -- stand to make lots of money from Quip. On the other hand, I -- our family -- stand to lose lots of money because of Quip."

"Not exactly win-win then, is it?" Sandra asked, her attitude as sour as the look on her face.

"Win-win from a scientific point of view, but from a legal and personal standpoint, what has happened with Quip is a loser all the way."

Sandra sighed. "So you need Dr. Nertz?"

"Big-time. Having Eugene Nertz lead the charge makes my own opposition more credible and, I admit, takes some of the pressure off me, personally. It would also give Vijay wiggle room as well, enough perhaps for him to convince the university to abandon the legal maneuvering and simply do the right thing."

"Sounds optimistic on your part," Sandra observed.

Keith allowed himself a slight smile. "Yeah, in the end it might well be that you, Jan, and I, and whoever else we can recruit to our plucky little band will have to save the day, but I'd like to first see if I can possibly save my career."

Sandra did not say a word, nor did she have to. Her act of slipping her head down to rest in the nook of Keith's shoulder and snuggling her body in close said all that needed to be said. The two of them remained in that position until Jan re-appeared in the room a few years, or perhaps it was a few minutes, later. Then Sandra abruptly left Keith's lap, returned to the sofa and motioned for Jan to come sit next to her which she did.

"I woke the poor man up," Jan said of Detective DeLeon, as she sagged into the welcoming arms of Sandra. "But he was remarkably understanding. I told him Simon assaulted and raped me. I also told him about the journal, the three entries I'd read, and told him that we (she stared pointedly at Keith) believe the personality of Payton Adams has taken control of Simon's brain."

"Did you tell him about Simon's confession?" Keith asked.

Jan's face turned even more sad as she shook her head. "No, I need time to sort through my thoughts on that. If Simon planted that bomb in the Campanile, the police will find out soon enough. That's how the criminal justice system is supposed to work. Besides, so long as this remains a domestic assault and battery, it falls under local jurisdiction. The Campanile bombing is an act of terrorism, that's a federal offense. The FBI will be handling the investigation, probably with help from ATF. That's who'll be after Simon if he's linked to the Campanile bombing. No thanks. I'll take my chances with Detective DeLeon and the Berkeley Police Department. I did warn the detective that I considered Simon to be quite dangerous at this point. To which, he reminded me, that he'd already seen for himself what Simon is capable of doing with his fists."

Sandra asked: "So what is the detective going to do?"

Jan wiped away a single tear which had appeared in the corner of one eye. "He's going to put in a call to the station for a squad car to be sent out to our house. He said he would tell the uniforms that there had been a domestic dispute and that they are to hold Simon until he can get there. Then he said he would personally see to it that Simon is brought in under minimal force and put in a holding cell pending on whether or not I choose to press charges. The police can hold Simon for 72 hours. That will give us enough time, Keith, to meet with Dr. Nertz, and Vijay Jain, and see what options we have, if there's anything that can be done. My thoughts at the moment are that Dr. Nertz might be able to have Simon hospitalized...."

Sandra interrupted. "Hospitalized?"

Keith supplied an answer. "Committed."

Jan nodded, looking directly at Keith. "Yes, committed into a mental institute unless you can tell me something else to do." Another tear appeared in her eye. More quickly followed it. "I guess that's what I want from you, isn't it, Keith? I want you to tell me what to do. But I know you can't, probably no one can. So I just need time to think. I need to know that Simon is safe and sound and not in a position to hurt anyone."

Sandra asked, "Are you going to call Simon's sister and brother?"

Jan took a few moments to think, then shook her head. "There's nothing they can do. If I call, Maureen is going to worry herself sick and Grant will be on the next plane to San Francisco

to take charge of things. I'm just not up to dealing with either of them right now. But I do think I need to tell the girls what's going on. Simon is their father and what affects him affects them."

Sandra asked if Walt and Earl could be present, too. "Whatever is going to happen in these next few days is going to affect both our families," Sandra said.

Jan agreed and Keith went into the television room at the other end of the house to summon the teenagers. For once, every kid sat quietly and listened as first Jan, then Keith explained what had apparently gone wrong with the Quip experiment. Keith expected to be interrupted often but he was not. He also expected Louise to go a little nuts, she being the more intense of the two girls and the more prone to react spontaneously and loudly. But she remained calm throughout. Elizabeth sat quietly next to Walt and Keith could not help but notice that at one point, while he was explaining how Simon's genetic memories had become integrated into his active memory, Walt had taken hold of Elizabeth's hand. Still, there was something up with Elizabeth. At first, Keith just assumed it was worry for the health and safety of her father. But when he was finished and Jan took over again to talk about what she had read in Simon's journal earlier in the evening, Keith could study Elizabeth's face more closely. What he saw in her eyes was not worry; what he saw was guilt.

When Jan invited the kids to ask questions, Louise kept her busy, although many of her questions were thinly veiled excuses to expound upon her own theories as to what was happening to her father, the degree to which his personality was being subsumed by that of Payton Adams, and the nature of the threat posed to the remaining members of the Thomas family by this appropriation from the past. All in all, it was a rather impressive display, Keith thought, considering that Louise had read none of Simon's journal. But he was even more impressed by the continued silence of Elizabeth, who seemed to be attempting to shrink from everyone's sight. Small chance of that happening with Walt at her side. Keith saw that not only did his eldest son never once relinquish the captured hand of his best friend's daughter, but never once did his eyes stray from their intent scrutiny of the girl's profile. Whether it was love or infatuation, Walt had it bad. Keith almost envied the boy's youthful fervor. Certainly, he, himself, had known such longings, and thoughts of those times made him sad for the days when life seemed ever so much simpler. But even as he ruefully contemplated his lost youth and innocence, Keith continued to study the mannerisms of his son's new girlfriend and there could

be no mistaking what he was seeing: the girl was about to jump out of her skin.

"Excuse me Louise," Keith broke in, but I think Elizabeth has something to say." All eyes turned on the girl who blanched.

Jan immediately saw what Keith had been observing. "What is it, Elizabeth?" she said.

The girl shot her mother a miserable look of fear and sorrow. "Dad's home," she said, her voice breaking. "I spoke with him on the phone."

Jan did not shout or express any anger. She merely asked when.

"A few minutes ago," Elizabeth confessed. "I didn't want him to worry about us."

"What did you tell your father?" Jan asked, her voice so calm it seemed to intimidate Elizabeth even more than a shout might have.

Elizabeth took a small breath. "I told him that you had gotten all weird and had given us five minutes to get our stuff and get in the car. He asked me if you had told us why and I said no, but you were acting like you were scared of something, that you said we had to get out of the house right away. I told him that we're here at the Joyners and that we're okay."

Jan asked, "Did he say anything?"

Elizabeth shook her head. "He thanked me, said he'd be in touch and hung up. I'm sorry, Mom. I just didn't want Dad to worry about us." With that, she dropped her head and began to sob. Walt immediately put a protective arm around her. A step behind him was Louise who bolted from her chair to be at her twin's side. "It's okay, sister, I got your back," Louise said, lifting an eye to her mother as a warning to not even think about chastising Elizabeth for what she had done. The withering look Louise received back from her mother made even Keith nervous. But when Jan spoke it was with soothing kindness.

"Your phone call came from a good place, Elizabeth, and you had no way of knowing that in making it, you might have placed your father in danger. We shall just have to wait until we hear from Detective DeLeon. That is all we can do, now. Just wait."

It was half-past the hour of one, when the Joyners' doorbell rang. All of the kids had been sent to bed and the last time Keith had checked, all of them were asleep, even Elizabeth, who had shared a bed in the guest room with her sister, and had still been crying after the light in the room had been doused. When Keith went to answer the door, he looked out a window first

on the off-chance that the late-night caller might be Simon. Had it been so, Keith did not know whether or not he would have opened the door. As it was, the caller was Detective DeLeon.

He looked grim.

"The officers arrived at your house just as your husband was returning home," Detective DeLeon told Jan, reading from a notepad. Keith and Sandra were in the room too, but the detective clearly was talking only to Jan; he made no effort to include anyone else in what he had to say. "They approached him as he was unlocking the door. He was surprised and expressed concern over the well-being of his family, but offered no resistance to the officers accompanying him inside the house. As they entered the house, the telephone rang. Having received no instructions to the contrary, the officers permitted Professor Thomas to answer it. They remained in the foyer, but could see him on the phone in another room. They could not hear what was said but Professor Thomas was on the phone no more than a minute. He returned to the foyer, remarked about the inconsideration of his teenaged daughters' friends, and again expressed concern over the well-being of his family. As per instructions, the officers assured him that his family was safe and told him that I would be along soon to explain. Professor Thomas acknowledged that he knew me and seemed to accept the officers' assurances about his family. He invited the officers to make themselves comfortable in his living room, then asked if he could be excused to use the bathroom. The officers said that his behavior was impeccable, he was calm but understandably concerned, every bit the university history professor who had been startled by an unexpected visit from the police. Both officers contend that they were on their guard, but there was nothing about the professor's speech or mannerisms that would warrant any sort of restraint."

Detective DeLeon paused from his narrative, looked up from his notepad and gave Jan a look that was a mixture of apology and sadness, and maybe even a dash of reproach. Then he returned his eyes to his notebook and continued.

"Both officers knew of Mrs. Thomas through the news media and had agreed in the squad car on the ride to the Thomas' house that the Professor had probably been taking guff from her for years and had finally lost it. Neither of the officers faulted him and both said they entered the Thomas' house feeling sympathy for the Professor, despite my warnings that he be treated with

extreme caution. When Professor returned from the bathroom, he invited the officers to accompany him into the kitchen where he would make coffee for the three of them."

Detective DeLeon again paused briefly from his narrative to look up at Jan, but this time he seemed genuinely embarrassed over what he had to report next.

"The attack took place in the kitchen and came without warning," the detective read. "It was carried out with premeditated efficiency and effectiveness. From under his sweatshirt, Professor Thomas produced a large knife with a jagged-edged blade. Both officers were stabbed in the leg above the knee. According to the medical report, in each case, the initial incision was made in the *Vastus medialis* muscle and a slash was executed across the *Sartorius* muscle. Such a wound is unlikely to be fatal, but is consistent with an intent to immediately incapacitate a target. The implication is that the attacker is highly knowledgeable in the use of edged-weapons. Following the attack, which left both officers down, Professor Thomas proceeded to disarm the officers and secure them with their own handcuffs. He also gagged them and bound their wounds with duct tape which he produced from a backpack. At the interview in the hospital, one officer recalled that the professor had been wearing the backpack when he first arrived at his home, but that he did not have it when he returned from answering the phone."

Again Detective DeLeon looked up from his notepad. This time he allowed his eyes to take in everyone in the Joyner living room. "This was one of many errors made by the officers who were sent to the Thomas house. In their defense, other than being a large man, Professor Thomas gave no impression of being a threat to anyone. Of course, by the time I arrived at the house, Professor Thomas was gone."

There was a lengthy silence in the living room before Jan finally spoke up. "What is the condition of the officers?"

"Other than physical scars and professional embarrassment, they are going to be fine," Detective DeLeon answered. "They are almost fortunate to have been wounded and to be recuperating in a hospital. Otherwise, they would have to answer to their Commanding Officer for their sloppy work. You should know, Mrs. Thomas, both officers agreed that if your husband had wanted to kill them, they would be dead. He was that quick and his technique was that good. Both officers swear on whatever professional reputation remains to them that your husband has had some form of combat training and that his training has been extensive. Be that as it may, it

would appear that the goal of Professor Thomas was to escape, not to kill, and that is exactly what he did. Of course, he is very much a wanted man, now. We've got a stakeout team watching your house. The campus police have Dwinelle Hall under surveillance as well. Mrs. Thomas, if you know of any other place your husband might go, it would be better for him if you tell us. There's an APB out on the state system now, listing him as armed and dangerous. This is still a local affair, but the rubber is about to hit the road. Some jurisdictions here in the Bay Area are a lot more trigger happy than the Berkeley PD. You know which ones, I'm talking about, so if you can help us bring your husband in, now is the time to speak up."

Before Jan could reply, the Joyner phone rang. Keith went to answer it.

"Hello, Keith. I understand my wife is once again with you. Isn't that a cozy coincidence?" The Irish accent was so strong, Keith barely recognized the voice as that of Simon.

"Simon, where are you?" Keith asked.

"I think we can drop all pretenses now," the Irish voice answered. "Simon Thomas is gone and he won't be coming back. You've read the journal, you know who I am: My name is Payton."

Keith's mind raced. He felt the veins in his temples fill with blood and begin to boom like tympanic drums. "Alright, I'll call you Payton, if that pleases you. Are you so certain that Simon is not coming back?"

"Aye, I'm certain. Simon is a weak man. He has no sand for what I'm about."

"And what exactly are you about?"

"You know what I am about, boy. I am about squaring some debts that have been owed me for a very long time. Now let me talk to that nigger whore Simon called a wife."

Keith's own temper began to rise in spite of what his intellect counseled. "I think you need to watch your mouth, Payton. I'm not about to put Jan on to listen to bullshit like that from you or anyone else. You hear what I'm saying, *boy*?"

"All I hear is a nigger with a big brain and a bigger mouth pretending he is brave. Stay out of my way, pussywillow, or I will cut you into tiny bits of dark meat and feed you to your sons. Now put that bitch on the phone. I've something to tell her, something that she and you and Detective DeLeon will want to know."

"Detective DeLeon?" Keith asked, putting all the innocence he could muster into his tone.

"Go on with you, boy, stop pulling on my pud, I know that spic cop has got to be at your house by now. I want him and you to hear what I have to say to that whore."

Keith hesitated, thought some more. "I don't think so, Payton. Jan's had more than enough to deal with already tonight. Why don't you give me the message? Or, you could just come over to my house now and give us all the message in person."

On the other end of the line there came an evil laughter, cold, bloodless, and menacing. "Aren't you the clever one? For the last time, boy, put my nigger whore wife on the phone, or I swear by Mother Ireland, I will put a bullet through the head of your wife Sandra before the sun sets tomorrow."

Bile rose within Keith's throat and he pulled his mouth away from the receiver to forcefully swallow it back to where it came from. He hesitated only a moment before deciding to take the phone to Jan. Yes, he was afraid of Payton's threat. But he also thought it important that he and the other people in his living room hear what Payton had to say. When he handed the cordless to Jan, he said, "It's Payton. Brace yourself. This is going to be ugly."

Jan took the phone, said hello, then just listened and did not say another word until she had clicked the phone off and set it down. Her face was pale, her mouth sounded dry, and her eyes were full of hurt and pain, but there were no tears and her voice was steady when she spoke.

"He said that this is the second time I have betrayed him. He said the next time I see him, I will die."

CHAPTER THIRTY THREE

Jan Thomas awoke in the middle of the night, sitting up with a start. Something woke her but she didn't know what. A noise? A light? A dream? She felt disoriented. Must have been the strange surroundings. She was in the upstairs guest bedroom of Keith and Sandra Joyner. In all the years of their friendship, she'd never spent the night in their house. She lay back down on the mattress, closed her eyes. They snapped back open. It had been a noise!

She'd heard something! That's what had awoken her!

Jan slipped out of the bed and went barefoot out into hall without even putting on a robe. Standing in the hallway, she became aware of two things. One: Without the robe, she was wearing only a tee-shirt and panties. Two: The house was perfectly still. None of the creaks and squeaks common to all houses in the dead of night, especially older homes in Berkeley near the stability-challenged Hayward fault.

And yet, something had awoken her. She listened. There it was again: A noise from downstairs. Quietly, she made her way down the stairs to the first floor. Now she could definitely hear something. Looking around, she saw a light coming from behind a partially closed door. It was the door to the Joyners' den. Television! Those kids were up watching television. Angry, but still cautious, Jan crept forward, careful not to make any sound of her own. The noise became more distinctive, it was the sound of whispering voices. She paused and

then there came a a breathy giggle. Jan moved closer still. Stopped once more and listened. Something else now. Jan stuffed a fist in her mouth to enforce her own silence. For what she could now hear were soft feminine moans and low masculine grunts.

Her first thought: Elizabeth and Walter! Having sex. Of the all the times to pull this bullshit. Jan set her jaw, squared her shoulders, marched forward and threw open the door.

It wasn't Elizabeth and Walter.

It was Sandra and Simon!

Sandra was on top of Simon, her broad back to Jan, her wide buttocks riding up and down his dick like a pear being cored on a pole. Jan's first thought: Sandra needs to lose weight! Her second thought: This is insane!

Through clenched teeth, Jan hissed: "How dare you?"

For reasons Jan could not fathom, she was speaking only to Sandra and completely ignoring Simon.

Sandra looked back over her shoulder at Jan but made no move to stop what she was doing. Still bouncing her too-fleshy-butt up and down on Simon's dick, she grunted in reply. "Why shouldn't I? You had sex with Keith. I'm squaring the debt."

Jan was less stunned by Sandra's false accusation than she was by hearing Sandra say she was squaring the debt.

"I did not have sex with Keith," she defensively protested.

"Payton said you did," Sandra answered in between grunts.

"Payton's a liar," Jan said.

"Payton said you'd say that. He said you're a lying nigger whore and I should pay you no heed. Ohmygod! Jan! This .. is .. uhnnh .. great! Was Simon .. this good? Excuse me .. Jan, I want to concentrate on my orgasm. You might want to hold your ears. I can be .. very loud .. when I come."

Jan's immediate thought was that Sandra's noisy orgasm would wake Louise and Elizabeth. Not wanting her daughters to come downstairs and see their father having sex with Sandra Joyner, Jan crossed the room to the head of the bed where she saw that the eyes of Simon/Payton were watching her. Why wasn't he staring at Sandra's large breasts which were wildly flopping up and down in time with her increasingly frenetic bouncing? Jan herself could

barely take her eyes off those tits or the glazed look of erotic pleasure plastered across Sandra's fat farm-girl face.

"Stop it, Simon!" Jan angrily whispered. "Stop it now or she'll wake Louise and Elizabeth!"

"You can call me Payton and there's no need to trouble yourself over the girls," Simon/Payton said with a sly grin. "For as you can see, I've taken measures."

Jan suddenly became aware that there was a large lump under the covers at the feet of Simon/Payton, a lump large enough to encompass one or more girls. With her heart in her throat, she threw back the covers and saw the bodies of Louise and Elizabeth in their nightgowns. The throats of both girls had been slashed from ear-to-ear. The sheet beneath their bodies was drenched in blood and as Jan stared in horror, the blood began to drip down onto her bare feet.

"Oh wife?" came the voice of Simon/Payton in a soothing Irish lilt. Jan, silent in her state of shock, slowly turned her head. Sandra was gone and Simon/Payton was alone on the bed, still naked, holding his erection in one hand and a large knife with a jagged-edged blade in the other.

"It's your turn," Simon/Payton said.

She screamed at the top of her lungs.

Jan Thomas awoke in the middle of the night, sitting up with a start. Only this time she knew what woke her. This time, she knew she was in the upstairs guest bedroom of Keith and Sandra Joyner and was not disoriented. This time, when she left the bedroom, she first put on her robe and slippers. After checking to see that her girls were safe and sound asleep in another bedroom, Jan went downstairs and proceeded directly into the living room. Detective DeLeon was there, asleep on a sofa. The threatening phone-call from Payton Adams on the heels of his earlier attack on the police officers had prompted the detective to announce he would spend the night in the Joyners' home. There were two officers parked out on the street in front of the house, but DeLeon insisted on staying inside himself. It was, he argued, a big house with three entry doors that stood back from the street on a large wooded lot adjacent to other large wooded lots. Under the cloak of night, any fool could break in unobserved from the street.

DeLeon said he would not even begin to pretend he understood this Payton Adams stuff, but he was damn certain that, under any name, Simon Thomas was nobody's fool. He thought the possibility that Professor Thomas might show up looking for Mrs. Thomas to be a very real one.

"And since I'd very much like to speak with him, here is where I oughtta be," the detective had remarked. That he'd said

it so matter-of-factly, with none of the typical cop machismo, had impressed Jan immensely.

Jan was not aware of having made a sound as she approached the sofa, planning to gently shake the detective awake. She was therefore so startled she actually gasped when, with his eyes still closed, he'd asked: "What can I do for you, Mrs. Thomas?"

"I thought you were asleep," Jan said.

"This is how Latinos pull guard duty," DeLeon said from behind closed eyes. He'd then smiled and opened his eyes, then sat up to face her. Immediately, his eyes dropped and his cheeks colored. His obvious physical reaction to her neither surprised nor displeased Jan. Years of experience had made her quite aware of the effect she had on males, an effect she'd learned to use as a tool or a weapon when it suited her purpose. Still, she could not help but find the detective's reaction touching -- surprisingly boyish, given his large physique and rugged looks. Ordinarily her noticing his taking notice of her would have caused her to draw her bathrobe tighter even though she wasn't showing anything. But she refrained, knowing the unnecessary action would only cause the poor man further embarrassment.

Right then, Jan did not want Detective DeLeon to be worried about embarrassing himself in her presence, she wanted him to listen carefully to what she had to say. Sitting down on the sofa next to him, Jan proceeded to tell the detective all about Payton Adams, the entire story, from Simon's recurring dream to the Quip experiments at the Brain Lab. She told him about Morris and how the gentle young chimp had turned homicidal. She then told him about Payton Adams' confession after he'd raped her. To tell her story, Jan imagined herself in a courtroom, making an opening statement. In this case, she was not presenting her statement to a jury, she was delivering it to a single judge. Instead of selling her point of view to twelve individuals, she was able to put everything she had into convincing one person. That made her job much easier -- at least in theory.

"I gotta tell you, that is some story," DeLeon said when she'd finished.

Jan studied his face and knew she hadn't done enough. "But you don't believe me," she said.

In response, the detective's hand disappeared momentarily behind one of the sofa's cushions and reappeared holding his service revolver.

"I didn't know if I could take your husband in a straight-up fight and really didn't care to put it to a test," DeLeon said. "Just so you know, I had the safety on. Yeah, I believe your story. I mean, it's seriously weird, let's not pretend otherwise, but I've seen Professor Thomas in action with my own eyes, and I'm damn certain -- pardon my French -- that no history professor coulda put Big Moosh to sleep like that. But what bothers me, what I gotta wonder is, how come you're telling your story to me? You gotta know that first thing tomorrow morning, I'm gonna get court-signed warrants to search your home, your husband's office, Professor Joyner's lab, and any place else I can think of. You also gotta know that within the next few hours I'm gonna have to pass the information about your husband's possible involvement in the Campanile bombing onto the Feds. When that happens, the search for Professor Thomas is gonna go nationwide."

Jan settled back into the sofa and closed her eyes. She knew he'd take the opportunity to study her profile and she thought about what he would see. She knew the skin on her face was still smooth and taut, but age lines had begun edging out from the corners of her eyelids. She could also sense that the vein in her temple was pronounced and throbbing. Would he think her nose too big or her jawline too pronounced? The detective was attracted to her, she was certain, and she wanted him to stay that way.

She would need him.

"Of course I know those things," she said, after a few moments, her eyes still closed. "I'm a lawyer, remember? What's your point, detective?"

"My point is that the last time we met, you were quite protective of your husband. Now you're sitting here giving him up to me. Is this because he raped and threatened you? Are you frightened and want him put away? Or are you angry and want revenge? Either way, it's not beyond the realm of possibilities that by tomorrow or the next day, you'll reconsider and recant all that you've just told me. What is also not beyond the realm of possibilities is that you, being by all accounts one very shrewd lawyer, have got some legal trick up your sleeve whereas you

use an unsuspecting local law enforcement dumbo such as myself, to maybe try and shield your husband from the Feds. You see my problem, here, Mrs. Thomas? Even without me being treated by this Quip stuff, I gotta voice inside my own brain that is whispering: DeLeon, watch your ass!"

With her eyes still closed, Jan smiled, held her arms out at an incline, then gave them a shake so the sleeves of her robe fell back to expose her arms all the way up to her elbows.

"Nothing up my sleeves as you can see," she told him, "but I understand your concerns."

Jan opened her eyes but did not look at DeLeon, instead she stared off across the room at no fixed point, seeing not the furniture of the Joyner family, but the future of the Thomas family.

"Yes, I am frightened and yes, I am very angry," she said, "Do you realize what this man, Payton Adams, has done to my daughters?"

DeLeon said, "Huh?"

"Detective, when you spoke of alerting the Feds and the search for Simon going nationwide, you neglected to mention the media. A huge omission. The moment the media gets wind of Simon's involvement in the Campanile bombing, it will only be a short time before the Quip story breaks. What will follow then will be a shitstorm of publicity and the lives of my two girls will be forever altered. Just as surely as Simon's life was embedded with the curse of Payton Adams' memories, so, too, will the lives of Louise and Elizabeth be cursed with the memories of what their father did. This man has condemned them to a life of infamy should either ever dare to be successful. From here on out, each will forever be known as the daughter of Simon Thomas, the man who murdered the governor of California and a half-dozen other people with a bomb he planted while believing himself to be his great-grandfather. There will be no escape out from under that stain for my girls unless they live their lives in complete obscurity. And the curse will be passed on to their children and to their children's children. That is what that man has done to me and my family."

Words of protest sputtered out of DeLeon's mouth in what Jan took to be an attempt to ease her worries. Jan was again touched by his need to comfort her. Nonetheless, she waved him off.

"What you must understand, however, is that the man who did this terrible thing to my daughters is not my husband. The body is that of Simon Thomas, but the personality controlling

the mind controlling that body is that of Payton Adams. I know it is difficult to believe, but from your line of work, you know how perception becomes reality: Simon perceives he is Payton and that's the way it is. When you and I last met, I thought that I could get Simon back, I thought there was a chance his personality could be saved and my husband could be returned to me. I was wrong, detective. Even then, it was probably too late. Now, there is no doubt. My husband, Simon Thomas, is no more. The man who attacked me, the man who threatened me and my daughters, the man who boasted about having killed Governor Law and the others is a terrorist, a professional assassin who answers to the name Payton Adams. I want him stopped from doing any more harm to me or my daughters. I want him stopped from harming anyone else. And it doesn't matter to me whether you put him away or blow him away. Do what you have to do."

Jan stole a glance at DeLeon and saw that the man was stunned. But he managed to rally with admirable quickness.

"Why me, Mrs. Thomas? Why come to me? Why not take your story immediately to the Feds? They've got far more resources to protect you and your girls, if it's safety you want."

Jan's eyes became wet and at last she turned to face him. "Because I trust you," she said. "No one outside of the Brain Lab would believe my story and everyone in the Brain Lab, including Keith, has a stake in the Quip experiment. A stake in the Quip experiment means a stake in what happens to Payton Adams. You're the one person I can confide in. You're the only one who will believe me and who has no personal stake in this."

Detective DeLeon studied her face for several long moments before finally speaking.

"Mrs. Thomas, my name is Jose DeLeon, I am a detective first-class, homicide division, Berkeley Police Department, and I am at your service."

* * *

Though the sky overhead was cloudless and the unimpeded sunlight wove a shimmering embroidery of gold over the choppy blue-green surface of the bay, the westerly wind was gathering strength. Cottonballs of fog had begun to piece off and were now puffing in from a thick gray bank that loomed menacingly just out to sea. Already, the foggy cottonballs had reduced the Golden Gate Bridge to a narrow purple line spanning the strait and tinted the San Francisco skyline to a reddish shade of magenta. Jan Thomas divided her attention between the

horizon and a fisherman, an elderly Vietnamese man wearing an Oakland Raiders sweatshirt and cap. Two large gulls, wheeling overhead in lazy wide circles, also seemed to find the fisherman a source of keen interest. A quick glance towards the man's feet revealed why: several silverbacks weakly flopping on the cement walkway, gasping for oxygen. Jan returned her full attention to the incoming cottonballs of fog.

It had been her idea to meet Detective DeLeon on the pier which she and Simon had walked together on countless evenings. Also, from the pier, she could see the grassy knolls along the marina where Simon and the girls had so many times flown their kites. She needed this connection to the past as she made ready to deal with the future. DeLeon's call had come in just before lunch and had taken her somewhat by surprise. She had not believed he would have new information within hours after their conversation in the Joyner living room. He had agreed to meet her on the pier and their meeting was scheduled to take place at two o'clock. Jan was forty minutes early. DeLeon appeared right at two. As the detective approached her, Jan tried reading his face and was immediately sorry. Latinos were not in the least bit inscrutable and from what she saw in his face, the news did not look to be good.

"He definitely had the capacity to make the Campanile bomb," DeLeon told her as they walked together along the pier, heading back towards the shore. "We found the stuff in his office, locked away in a steel box."

"Simon's strong box? Locked?" Jan asked. "He never had a lock for it before. No need. There was never anything in it."

"Yeah, well, looks like he got a need. One that required a really a good lock. We had a hell of time cutting through it."

"What was inside?"

"A chunk of raw dynamite, enough to blow up half-a-dozen Campaniles. Also some blasting caps, timers, fuses, even several bags of plastique. Just what you might expect to find inside the steel box of your typical IRA member. We also found, in his desk, a schedule of airline flights to Ireland from SFO. Looks like Dublin was his choice. I presume Professor Thomas has a valid passport?"

Jan nodded as she stared off in the distance at the rolling contours of the Berkeley hills and began wondering if it might not be wise for her to take the girls away from the Bay Area.

DeLeon cleared his throat to get her attention. Jan looked his way.

"Your husband also has some \$30,000 in cash."

Jan stopped walking. "What?"

DeLeon blushed. "Are you aware that your husband cleaned out your joint savings account one day before the bombing?"

Pursing her lips, she shook her head, feeling her cheeks heat from her feeling of incredible stupidity. "I have money automatically taken from my draw and electronically deposited. It's a pre-set allotment. I seldom ever look at the account." She shrugged. "No need."

She started forward again and he fell in step by her side. They walked in silence for a short while before she asked him when would he be passing his information onto the Feds.

"As soon as you and I are done here," he told her. "I just wanted to let you know that while we found nothing that positively links your husband to the bombing, what we did find, coupled with what he said to you, well..... you know what can I say? He's a strong suspect. You can be sure the Feds are going to want to find him and talk to him as soon as possible. They're also certainly going to want to talk with you and your daughters, Professor Joyner, too. How are your daughters holding up?"

In spite of herself, Jan smiled. "The girls were just beginning to stir when I left. Teenagers are generally nocturnal creatures. I've already told them that Federal investigators will probably be wanting to question them today. They'll stay at the Joyners with Sandra. Keith will be at the Brain Lab when he's not at home, so we'll all be readily accessible. Of course, I will be present during any interview with my daughters."

"And Professor Joyner?"

"Him, too," she answered. "I'm his attorney."

DeLeon smiled. "I'll be sure to let the Feds know. I'm going to insist on being there myself."

Jan gave him a quick look then smiled once more. "You already know what I have to say," she said. "You're not thinking of being there to protect me are you?"

DeLeon chuckled. Definitely amused. "No, Mrs. Thomas, I don't think you need protecting from the Fibbies or any other Federales you go up against. I'd just like to see how you handle those arrogant bastards, pardon my French."

Jan again looked straight ahead at the shoreline and the rise of the Berkeley hills. "I'll take that as a compliment, but you should be warned that I'm not exactly at the top of my game."

"You got plenty of game, Mrs. Thomas," DeLeon said. "Plenty."

Still walking, still looking straight ahead, Jane said, "Detective, everything you have told me here could have been said over the phone. Why did you ask that we meet in person?"

Jan felt a gentle tug on her arm and she turned to see DeLeon abruptly stop walking. His eyes studying her, he replied,

"Because I wanted to see you, I wanted to see for myself how you're doing, how you're holding up."

Jan was touched and again she smiled, not much of a smile, she knew, but under the circumstances, it represented quite an achievement on the part of the detective.

"So now that you've seen me, what do you think? How am I holding up?"

After a lengthy pause, DeLeon's broad shoulders rose in a slight shrug. "I haven't a clue," he said. "You look great, but on your worst day ever you probably still looked great. So, Mrs. Thomas, I guess I just gotta come right out and ask: How you doing? Really?"

She turned away from him, looked out across the water at the San Francisco skyline which, with the continued encroachment of the fog bank, had taken on the appearance of an apparition.

"You were right this morning. About me changing my mind."

DeLeon's voice was stiff. "You don't want to cooperate no more, help us bring in Payton Adams?"

Jan was impressed that the detective had had the presence of mind and the quickness of wit to invoke the name of the evil personality rather than refer to Simon as Professor Thomas.

"No, I'll do all I can to help you bring him in," Jan answered. "What's changed is that I implore you to find him and bring him in safe and sound. I should have listened to what I was saying to you last night. Payton Adams raped me. Payton Adams blew up the Campanile and killed all those people. Not Simon. My husband would never have done those things. My

husband would never have threatened his daughters. Last night I told you that I didn't care if you blew Payton Adams away. That isn't true. That wasn't me talking, that was some poor exhausted woman who was half-sick with fear for the lives of her daughters, the other half sick with despair over what the future would hold for them."

"You feel a little differently now, do you?"

Jan felt her jaw jut forward. "So long as Payton Adams is drawing breath, then Simon is alive, too, and that means there's a chance I can get him back. I have to hold onto that thought and never again let it go. It's the hope that will keep me going." She turned to face DeLeon, tears coming to her eyes. "But I need your help, Detective. Promise me you'll do all that is in your power to keep Payton Adams alive. I believe in you. I trust you. Will you give me your word?"

DeLeon slowly nodded his head and even though he said nothing, Jan knew that his word to her had just been given. The silence between them stretched on too long and became awkward. It was time, Jan decided, to end their meeting, but just then, DeLeon's pager went off. He checked it and immediately excused himself but asked her to please wait for him. He then walked far enough back up the pier to be out of her ear-shot before taking out his cell phone.

Jan remained where she stood and contented herself with watching the fog which was now pouring in through the Golden Gate. From the expression on DeLeon's face when he returned, it was obvious he had some important news about Simon. Jan involuntarily flinched, then bit down on her lower lip and braced herself for whatever it was he had to say.

"It wasn't your husband."

For a second or two she said nothing. Then: "What?"

"They got the guy who blew up the Campanile. It wasn't your husband."

"But...Simon said...."

"Yeah, well, whatever he was trying to tell you, it wasn't him. We got the guy. He's confessed. There's no mistake. He did it. Some guy named Lewis something. He used to be a chemistry major then he switched to American literature. He blew up the Campanile to protest the Governor's making Cal a science-only campus. But you gotta hear this. He wasn't intending to kill anybody with his bomb. He thought he'd set the timer to go off at midnight, not at noon." DeLeon shook his head in wonderment. "The stupidity of the criminal mind never ceases to

amaze me. You can send a psycho-scumbag to college, but you can't teach him anything."

Jan's cheeks collapsed inward as if being sucked down into her throat. "So the Campanile bombing had nothing to do with Simon or the Quip experiment?" she asked.

DeLeon grinned. "We don't need science to make kooks for us in Berkeley, Mrs. Thomas, we grow our own."

"Then Simon will not be wanted by the Federal authorities?"

DeLeon stopped grinning. He knew what she wanted to hear.

"Professor Thomas is off the hook. Given the extenuating circumstances, I think it's safe to say that charges for his assault on the two officers in your home will eventually be dropped. As for the officers themselves, they're recuperating just fine and collecting fat disability checks. My guess is they don't even bear a grudge."

For a tense moment, Jan thought she was going to faint. As she wobbled, DeLeon reached out and caught her by the shoulders. Their eyes met.

"If we can find Professor Thomas and bring him back before there are any more incidents," DeLeon said, "there will be no criminal charges filed against him. You'll have your chance to get your life back."

Jan crumbled. Totally crumbled. She fell forward in a great torrent of tears and body-racking sobs and DeLeon was there to catch her, catch her in arms whose bristling power she could feel and draw upon, arms not unlike those of her Simon. For a time, she hugged herself in tightly against him and let all her pent up emotions spill out until she had no more tears to cry. She stepped out and away from the detective's arms, thanked him once, then turned her back on him so that she might take a tissue from a pocket in her jacket, blow her nose and wipe dry her face. When she once again turned to face him, she was composed and she made sure to keep a respectable distance between them.

"Payton Adams lied to me," she said.

DeLeon was slightly confused. "What? About being responsible for blowing up the Campanile?"

She shook her head. "No, when he said that Simon was gone for good. Simon's still very much alive and fighting back. That wasn't the Payton Adams personality who told me about the Campanile bombing. Even if he'd been responsible, he would never have said a word to me

about it. That was Simon doing the talking. He wanted me to go to the authorities, he wanted to be captured before Payton seriously hurt someone."

DeLeon's face flashed irritation. "So where was your husband when Payton Adams raped you?"

The hostility in his tone surprised Jan but she chose to ignore it. "I suspect that the rape would have been much worse if Payton had free reign," she replied. "If I'd been thinking more clearly, I'd have seen the signs of Simon's presence sooner. Even the phone call to Keith's house last night, with Payton telling me he was coming after me and was going to kill me. I read Simon's journal. Payton Adams did not warn his victims. If he wanted to kill someone, he killed them. That's part of what made him so dangerous. He struck without warning. The warning to me came from Simon which means that the Payton personality does not have total control of Simon's brain. Not just yet he doesn't. Simon's hanging in there and I'm going to help him make a comeback. You know what they say in sports, it's never over until it's over. This is not over."

DeLeon's hostility vanished and he was once again in his mode of concerned law enforcement officer.

"My department will do its part. We've already got the neighboring departments and the CHP cooperating on a Bay Area-wide grid. Presuming that Payton Adams has hung around to make good on his threat, I'd say we've got an excellent chance of grabbing him when he surfaces. Thanks to your husband, we know that you're Payton's prime target. Maybe Professor Thomas will be able to help us again. Of course, we'll have to continue to keep an eye on you, at least through the rest of today."

Jan nodded in response, then added, "I'm going back to my house and I'll stay put for awhile. I'd like to play a few hunches of my own to nail down what Payton Adams' next move might be."

DeLeon raised an inquiring eyebrow. There was a fine line between touching solicitation and annoying condescension and he was definitely crossing over into the latter category. Still, she needed his help so instead of snapping his head off, Jan explained herself.

"Look, I played basketball in college. My school, Maryland, was in the Atlantic Coast Conference. If you know anything about college hoops, you know that the ACC is a hotbed, the competition is ferocious. We played the other teams in our conference twice a year during the

regular season, and sometimes a third and fourth time in tournaments. In those days, there was no professional league for women so the best players staid in school for four years. In that time, I got to know my opposite numbers pretty damn well. Still, before every conference game, I'd study game tapes, even those of opponents I'd played against a dozen times. I figured the better I knew my opponent the fewer times I'd be surprised. In any contest, every surprise is a step toward defeat. I took that philosophy with me when I became a lawyer. I kicked ass on the basketball court and I kick ass in the courtroom. Know why? 'Cause I minimize surprises. There's nobody alive who knows Simon better than me, but with Payton Adams, it has been one surprise after another. All I know about the man is what I have learned from reading Simon's journal and there's something about it that just doesn't ring true. I can't quite put my finger on what it is, but something in that journal is bad-wrong. My gut feeling is that Simon may not be the most reliable narrator. If I want to truly know my opponent, I need to know more about him. Since I can't study his game films, I'll have to rely on a scout."

"You lost me," DeLeon confessed. "What do you mean by a scout?"

"I mean the best way to anticipate what a person will do is study what they've done. I'm an expert on Simon. I need an expert on Payton Adams."

Again DeLeon raised an eyebrow. "You have anyone in mind?"

Jan set her jaw and nodded her head. For one heady moment, she was once again the fierce competitor, the confident, aggressive woman warrior. But the moment passed all too quickly and once again she faltered. Once again the tears appeared.

As before, DeLeon reached out to gently touch her arm.

"What is it?" he prodded.

"I know I sound like a broken record, but Simon and I had a good life together, we really and truly did. Oh, sure, maybe we'd settled into patterns that weren't ideal, and maybe we didn't always do what we could or should have done to keep each other at our best. Every marriage coasts from time to time, goes into neutral and just rolls along on its own momentum. It has too, I think, out of necessity. There's the demands of the job, the demands of parenthood, the demands of homemaking, and so on and so on and so on. I think that maybe an occasional shakeup can even be good for a marriage, maybe help recharge the batteries or something, make the two of you think and remind you of why it was you got together in the first place."

Jan could feel the onrush of another emotional flood, but this time she fought back, secured the gates and held back the tide. A reactive surge of anger fortified her resolve.

"But this is no marital shakeup," she said, making no effort to conceal the great bitterness she felt as she stared at her own feet. "This is Quip, a force of science, and it's like an ocean tidal wave, rolling in, overwhelming the life that Simon and I shared. And there's no holding it back. I've no choice but to roll with this force of science and hope that somehow Simon and I and our daughters can all end up safe on the beach."

She lifted her eyes to DeLeon. They might have been shiny with wetness but there were no tears dropping from them nor would there be; her pride was not going to let that happen.

"Where I come from, when there's a bad tide rising, we're taught to take to the high-ground," she said. "For better than twenty years now, Simon has been my high-ground. I'm going to find him. That's what I'm going to do. Count on it."

DeLeon nodded. His own eyes seemed shiny. "I'm going to do everything I possibly can to help you," he said. "If Professor Thomas is here in the Bay Area, I'm going to find him and personally bring him to you safe and sound. Count on it."

Jan thanked him, leaned forward and kissed him on the cheek. Then she turned and walked away. Even without looking back, she knew that the detective's eyes were on her every step of the way. Watching her back, watching the sway of her hips, and, yes, the sweep of her butt. He'd like what he saw, she was certain of it, and he would do his best to help her. This she knew. Would his help be enough? That she did not know.

CHAPTER THIRY FOUR

Keith Joyner stared out the glass wall of the Brain Lab's main conference room at the Campanile. He should have been looking at the huge clock face, watching as the minute hand clicked past the 59th and final notch to signal that the afternoon had entered its second hour. But tarps had been draped over the upper portion of the tower, forming a giant tent that hid from sight the damaged clock, as well as the observation platform and bell chamber. Repair work had been scheduled to begin that week but the university's involvement in yet another labor dispute had

delayed the start. The more things changed, the more they staid the same, Keith thought, turning away at the sound of someone knocking on the door. Before answering it, he glanced over to the far end of the conference table where Jan Thomas was seated. She was dressed in a stylish beige business suit, with a white blouse and a gold scarf that looked good against the brown of her skin. Her black hair was pulled back in a tightly wrapped bun and her face had been skillfully made up. On the table in front of her was a leather-bound attache case with shiny brass snaps. To the casual observer, she no doubt looked every bit the high-powered attorney about to take a meeting. But Keith was not a casual observer. To him she looked about ten years older than she'd looked before the Quip experiments on Simon had begun. The hair, the makeup, the clothes, had all been done by rote, the mechanical acts of a woman doing what years on the job had conditioned her to do. But Keith could see it. Plain as the nose on his face.

Jan had changed.

Big-time.

Gone was the huntress' dazzle in her eyes and the electricity of alertness that energized her demeanor. In its stead, was the wary look of the hunted in her eyes, and the wearied stoop of the prey in her posture. When she took note of Keith's scrutiny, their eyes locked and Keith offered her a smile, one that he hoped was reassuring. He had to hope it was reassuring to her, because it was not reassuring to him. Not after the long discussion he'd had with Eugene Nertz that morning. He had not yet told Jan about that discussion. She'd be hearing about it soon enough. No need to worry her further, if that was even possible. Jan's attempt to return his feeble offering with a reassuring smile of her own missed the mark by so a wide margin, it caused his own sagging spirits to sink even deeper. Suddenly feeling very much older himself, he turned away from Jan and stiffly moved toward the door.

One by one they filed into the room. First Vijay, looking grim, then Ariel, looking grimmer, and, finally, Eugene Nertz, looking thrilled about having been invited back to the Brain Lab to participate in this meeting. Appearing behind Nertz was University counsel Jack Lapage, looking displeased about having not been invited. Keith stepped in front of him, blocking his entrance at the doorway.

"Sorry Jack, this meeting is for scientists only. No lawyers."

Lapage peered over Keith's shoulder and motioned towards Jan. "What about her? She's

a lawyer."

"She's not here as a lawyer, she's here as a woman who needs our help, the wife of the man we used as an experimental subject. It's our responsibility to help her and we're going to try our best to do so. End of story."

Lapage shook his head. "No, that is not the end of the story, Keith. I'm afraid I have to insist on being present at this meeting and any other in which the Quip experiment on Simon Thomas is the subject of discussion."

Suddenly Keith's spirits began to rise. More likely, what began to rise was his temper. As Lapage started forward, Keith raised a hand and gently placed it on the legal counselor's chest. He wasn't pushing on Lapage's chest. Not yet. Just applying enough pressure to let the man know that the hand was there.

"And I'm afraid that I'm going to have to insist that you stay out," Keith told him. Then, lowering his voice. "You're a big man, Jack, and it looks like you're in pretty good shape, but I got game you can't match and I promise you my insistence is going to prevail."

To back up his words, Keith increased the hand pressure on Lapage's chest. The lawyer's eyes opened in a wide stare, looked down at Keith's hand, then began once more searching around Keith's shoulder. Keith knew exactly who those eyes were seeking and when Lapage found who he was looking for, Keith issued a quiet warning.

"You can call to Vijay for help and maybe he will tell me to stand aside and let you in. But if that happens, I will first shove you out into the hall. I will shove your big ass hard enough to make you fall down. Think how foolish you're going to look getting dumped on your butt. Think how Ariel and Jan will pity you. There's no more sorry a sight than a big man being humiliated. Your pride is going to take a beating, sure enough, and won't be nothing you can do about it. Is it worth it to you, Jack? Is it? Ain't nothing going to happen here that will harm the University, you got my word on that."

Lapage glared. "If that's the case, then why can't I sit in?"

"Because folks need to be able to speak their minds. Jan needs to hear our best scientific assessments." Keith shook his head. "That won't happen if you're present. You know that."

Lapage frowned while he considered his options. Finally, his eyes ablaze with anger and frustration, he looked Keith in the eye and said, "Have it your way. But I promise you this,

asshole, if anything said in this meeting today should in any way compromise the university's legal position on the Quip experiment, you'll be teaching freshman biology the rest of your career here."

"Thanks, Jack," Keith said, removing his hand from Lapage's chest.

"Fuck you, Joyner!" snapped Lapage, before turning and storming off.

The successful intimidation of Jack Lapage served to rejuvenate Keith. He closed the conference room door and moved with coltish briskness to his place at the table. Convening the meeting, he immediately referred everyone to the packets he'd sent them in advance, packets that contained copies of the complete set of entries to Simon's journal, the confessional message from Gibby Gibson as to how Simon acquired the third treatment of Quip, and a summary of what had transpired since the bombing of the Campanile, including the homicidal actions of Morris, and the attacks and threats made on Jan by Simon. Before turning the meeting over to Jan, Keith admonished his colleagues with what he hoped was at least some of his old confidence.

"Presuming that you've all read the packets, you can now appreciate the gravity of the threat that Jan -- Mrs. Thomas -- faces. For the sake of today's discussion, let's not have any further debates as to whether Simon's behavior is truly the result of genetic memories brought forth by Quip, or whether there is some other unknown neuropsychological phenomenon at work. Jan has come to us for help. Let's try to solve the problem as scientists (his eyes circled hawklike around the table) and not defendants in a civil law suit."

Vijay spoke up. "Keith, excuse the interruption but there is a new development that you and Mrs. Thomas should hear. The cause and effect debate has been resolved. But first, there is something I must say to Mrs. Thomas." Vijay's appointment as director of the Brain Lab directorship had as much to do with the expressiveness of his big brown eyes as with his scientific accomplishments, Keith had always thought, and at that moment, the full power of those expressive brown eyes had been turned upon Jan Thomas. "It is the essential nature of scientists to question everything, especially those answers which appear most obvious. It may have seemed to you that I and my colleagues have been deliberately refusing to see the truth in the matter of your husband. But that has not been the case, I assure you. We have been doing precisely what Keith has charged us with; we have been dealing with the problem as scientists.

In science, the truth cannot be reached until all reasonable doubts have been minimized. This, I believe, we have now done. Ariel, if you please?"

Ariel Jones held up a manilla folder, which she did not bother to open. Her eyes, like those of Vijay, were on Jan. "After the anomalous mindprint we got from SMEG during the second Quip treatment of Professor Thomas, two of the graduate students here, Boyd Crenshaw and Xiao Xiang, ran an analysis which revealed that a similar SMEG anomaly took place in the brain of Morris when he was treated with Quip. Independently, Vijay and Keith approached me with a hypothesis that could explain the anomalies and the altered behaviors seen in Professor Thomas and Morris.

"In response to these developments, I contacted the supercomputer folks up at the Lawrence Berkeley Lab. I gave them all the GEM readings I had on Professor Thomas, as well as the entire data set for the bonobos. I also fed them the neuropsych data compiled by Sasha Kravitz-Goldman. Working together, we arrived at a set of parameters and from there, they were able to construct a predictive model for me. I've now used this model to project the GEM readings for Professor Thomas after a third Quip treatment. Anyone wishing to have a look at the projected data sets (she waved the manilla folder) can do so later but I will tell you this: The projection shows the GEM signals from the genetic memory maps in Simon's limbic system to be as strong as those from working memory maps in his neocortex."

Keith winced. He and Vijay had been right, for all the good it would do them now.

Jan had been unmoved by Ariel's words -- their implications meant nothing to her yet -- but Keith's reaction got her immediate attention. She looked him a question. His eyes miserably motioned her to hear Ariel out.

"With this information," Ariel was saying, "I then turned my attention on the BSF and BIS data as Gibby suggested in his final e-mail to Keith." Ariel set her manilla folder down on the conference table and again focused her attention on Jan. "Mrs. Thomas, the BSF and BIS are thought to be the two major brain chemistry systems that affect personality. BFS stands for Behavioral Facilitation System, it acts like an on-switch, releasing chemicals that activate certain behavioral traits. BIS stands for Behavioral Inhibition System, it's an off-switch, a counterbalance to the BFS. Aggressive personalities are characterized by higher levels of BFS chemicals and lower-levels of BIS. Individuals with the reverse profile tend to be far more

cautious and display much higher levels of anxiety.

"It was, as Gibby foresaw, extremely difficult to sort through all the data and put together a comprehensive profile of Simon's BFS/BIS profile before and after his first two treatments with Quip. Again thanks to the supercomputer folks at Lawrence Berkeley and some of the wonderful chemists there, I was able to do this. Furthermore, I was able to project a BFS/BIS profile curve for Simon following a third treatment. The news, I am afraid, is not good."

Ariel had to pause to clear her throat. When she resumed, Keith noted there was a hoarse quality to her voice. The sound of contrition or doubt? All Keith knew was that he'd never heard her voice waiver like that before. This was clearly new and disturbing territory for her as well.

"After about 12 years of age, the normal the BFS/BIS profile is a steady-state curve," Ariel said. "Even in a person suffering from dissociative identities, or multiple personality states, as they used to say, there will appear only a minor variance from that person's established BFS/BIS profile. A person may change the appearance of the mask they present to the world, but the mask's shape doesn't change because the face underneath remains the same. This is not the case with Simon. His BFS/BIS profile after the second Quip treatment was not a steady-state curve, but more like that of system undergoing a series of phase-transitions. There were so many dramatic and wildly irregular variances as to make no sense at all, that is, until we plotted the data points as two separate curves. Then everything fell beautifully into place. What we had been seeing were two distinctly different profiles, one that would be characteristic of a rather gentle natured individual, someone who in a movie might be portrayed by the actor Tom Hanks. The other profile would be characteristic of an individual much prone to violence and aggression, someone I would cast the actor Robert DeNiro to play."

Vijay hastily interrupted. "Mrs. Thomas, there is a bright spot here. Even though the news is most distressing at least it is understandable. BFS and BIS chemical compositions are genetically determined, but the dispersion of those chemicals from which behavioral actions arise is largely shaped by memories. So we can at least comprehend what has happened, no?"

Keith could see that Jan was confused by Vijay's interruption and he interceded. "Simon and his great-grandfather look like identical twins, which means they share essentially the same

gene pool. That means Simon and Payton were most likely born with the exact same composition of neurochemicals. Different memories resulted in different distribution patterns and obviously quite different personalities. We changed all that when we introduced Payton's memories into Simon's neocortex."

Jan stared open-mouthed at Keith. "You're telling me that Stinky was right?" she finally said. "You and your Quip resurrected the spirit of Payton?"

"That would be one way of putting it," Keith replied before retreating into a miserable silence.

Ariel filled the void. "As Gibby said, Simon thinks he is Payton Adams because his brain tells him he is. A person suffering from multiple personality states can only go so far in transforming words into deeds. Non-murderers don't suddenly become killers because they simply aren't wired that way. This is not the case with Simon taking on the Payton personality. Because of Quip, he is now wired to be Payton Adams, whoever Payton Adams was. Because he is blessed with an enormously intelligent mind, Simon is quite capable of quickly learning all the skills he needs to act like Payton, to do the things that Payton once did. If it is the inclination of the Payton personality to master the use of explosives, guns, knives, whatever, Simon will be a fast study."

Jan opened her mouth to speak, but Ariel held up a finger, bidding her to wait. Her eyes were sorrowful and she spoke slowly. "Though these two separate personalities share the same mind, there can be only one personality in control. Therefore, what we are seeing is a competition between the two. I shared my findings with Sasha Kravitz-Goldman. There is, of course, no existing literature on Simon's situation, but, from what she has read of multiple personality states and related dissociative syndromes, Sasha believes that Simon's brain will not be able to indefinitely sustain this competition. One or the other personality shall lose the competition, go dormant, and literally cease to exist. I regret to say, Mrs. Thomas, based on recent physical and behavioral evidence, it is apparent that the Payton personality is prevailing."

Jan's eyes filled and Ariel could not longer look at her. It fell to Vijay to make the declaration.

"Mrs. Thomas, on behalf of myself and everyone at this laboratory associated with the Quip experiment, I am sorry for what has happened. Whatever we can do to help, we are all at

your service."

Jan turned away from the table until she was able to bring her emotions under control. It broke Keith's heart to watch this proud woman wrestle with tears and the sobs she could not hold back. Everyone else at the table must have felt the same way, for there was much uncomfortable shifting in chairs and all eyes were averted from that end of the table where Jan fought her personal battle.

Just when Keith thought he was going to have to ask his colleagues to leave and reconvene at another time, Jan returned to face her audience. Her eyes were red but dry, and her voice, once she'd swallowed, was almost normal.

"Thank you for your candor. I want you all to know that nothing said here today will be used by me in a court of law. At this point, I am not interested in assessing blame or seeking legal restitution. My sole concern is for the safety and well-being of my husband. I, too, have new developments which I would like to share with all of you."

Jan stopped talking long enough to open the attache case in front of her and extract from it a typed-sheet of paper. "Having read my husband's journal, you are familiar with his assertion that his great-grandfather, Payton Adams, was killed when he attempted to prevent a gunfight between two women; his wife, Rosaleen Adams, and his mistress, Mary Catherine Hope, also known as Cat. According to the genetic memories that Simon recalled under Quip, Payton Adams died at the hands of his wife and his African-American lover. Therefore the Payton personality believes he owes a debt of vengeance against the reincarnation of their respective spirits, the wife and African-American lover of his great-grandson, which would be me."

Still obviously shaken, Jan had to pause to once again collect herself, before continuing. "It has been made painfully clear to me the degree of bitterness felt by Simon over what he remembers as the murder of his great-grandfather. For most of his life, Simon has believed in a special covenant between himself and his great-grandfather to see that justice is served. He has shown, in his journal, a bewildering capacity to rationalize the most abominable behavior on the part of Payton. The genetic memories he recalled under Quip may well have convinced him that I am the embodiment of Rosaleen and Cat and that I deserve whatever punishment the Payton personality chooses to dispense. Maybe that's why the Simon personality has not put up much of a fight. In any case, Dr. Nertz and Keith, and at least one homicide detective in the Berkeley

Police Department believe that my life is in grave danger. I would welcome any dissent on this point."

Jan smiled pensively and looked around the table, first at Vijay, then at Ariel, then at Eugene Nertz, and finally at Keith. When none of them spoke, she closed down her smile -- it wasn't worth saving anyhow, Keith thought -- and pressed on, her voice seeming to have uncovered a hidden reserve of strength.

"But you know, something about those genetic memories reported in Simon's final journal entry really bothered me. Those memories hold that Payton Adams died because he tried to prevent Rosaleen and Cat from hurting one another. And yet, there is nothing in any of the previous recalled memories to indicate that Payton Adams would have done anything more than get out of the line of fire. As a lawyer who has represented the guilty as well as the innocent, it has been my experience that leopards do not change their spots."

Jan's voice got even stronger.

"There's another thing that bothered me. Simon's own research failed to turn up any records of Mary Catherine Hope following the murder of Payton Adams. Simon himself concluded that after helping to kill Payton, Rosaleen must have shot and killed Cat then taken all of the money for herself. Her financial independence throughout her subsequent life in Baltimore would seem to bear out this scenario, but I still had problems with it. For example, it is one thing to dispose of a single body in the river, but two is a stretch. Also, what happened to the skiff? Did a pregnant Rosaleen somehow manage to anchor down two bodies and sink a skiff before making her escape? Sounds fishy to me."

There was a rustle of movement around the table. Moments before, all eyes had been averted from Jan. Now, all eyes were intently fixed upon her.

"Throughout the Quip experiments," she continued, "Simon has been in touch with a historian in Pittsburgh by the name of Ana Huff. It was Ana who searched for and found no records of Cat or Mary Catherine Hope following Payton's death. I suspected, however, that Simon had asked Ana to search for records of an alive Cat, not a dead one. I phoned her and told her everything."

There was a sudden catch in Jan's breath. She once again had to stop and get a grip on the emotions that threatened to bring her down. "Ana and I have our own history and it has not

been pleasant. Our last exchange could accurately have been characterized as a telephone catfight. I would have understood if she'd hung up the phone on me, but, to her immense credit, she listened. If I were in her shoes, I'm not sure I would have been so kind. After we talked, I e-mailed her a copy of Simon's journal and she subsequently undertook a new search. Maybe she was hoping to discredit my suspicions. Maybe she was...." Jan shook her head. "It doesn't matter." She held up the typed sheet of paper she'd taken out of her attache case earlier. "This is Ana's response. Allow me to read it."

Jan scanned through the paper, mumbling about the introduction being extremely personal and irrelevant. When she found the appropriate section, she began to read.

"You were, of course, correct, in your guess that Simon never said it was a corpse he was looking for. My search for him was for records that revealed any activities on the part of a living, breathing, African-American woman named Mary Catherine Hope. In my search for you, I sought records of a death certificate. Although I found none in Ms. Hope's name, acting on a hunch, I may have struck gold. On Monday, July 25, 1892, one day after the death of Payton Adams, a small article in the Pittsburgh Daily Leader reported that a skiff bearing the corpse of a young Negro woman had run ashore and been found in the town of Baldwin, which is about four miles north of the ferry landing at Munhall. There was no identification on the woman but she was wearing a blue dress and in the skiff next to her were two canvas bags, a woman's coat with a fur collar and a bolt-action rifle of a type unknown to local authorities. As the Monongahela is a north-flowing river, there is no question in my mind that the body was that of Mary Catherine Hope. What is most peculiar however is that the woman had not been shot, as I would have expected from reading Simon's journal. Instead, her throat had been slashed. Samuel Butler once noted that God cannot re-write history, but historians can. I don't know about you, but I conclude either Simon or his great-grandfather has done exactly that, one of them has rewritten history."

Jan set the letter down and looked around the table. "I agree with Ana, Simon's genetic memory regarding the death of his great-grandfather is false. Would anyone care to explain to me how this is possible?"

Keith was stunned. A quick look around the table confirmed that he was not alone. It was Vijay who broke a silence that went on much too long for anyone's comfort.

"Confabulation," Vijay said. "The brain writes its own story and calls it a memory. Sometimes it happens when there is insufficient data and the brain fills in the blanks. But sometimes it happens when a real memory is too horrible to bear and the brain alters the memory into something more to its liking."

Jan frowned. "I still don't understand. Simon told me that Dr. Nertz had explained memories as sort of home videos in the brain, a recording of events that can be shown over and over. How could this be altered?"

Vijay shot Dr. Nertz a look. The psychotherapist blushed. Vijay then turned to Jan. "Sometimes when scientists try to give lay explanations, they introduce technical inaccuracies. Memories are not like video recordings or movies that can be rewound and replayed over and over again. Memories are more like a play in which the same actors are reassembled with the same costumes and on the same set and given the same lines to recite. The play may be the same, but each performance is unique. Sometimes, the actors forget their lines. Sometimes they ad-lib, say something completely new and different. In most instances this probably has no real impact on the overall memory. But once in awhile, it can completely change everything. This is especially true, if the brain doesn't like the outcome of the play and decides to rewrite the script. That is confabulation and no one really knows how often it happens but when it does a false memory is introduced. Each and every time that false version of the memory is recalled, it becomes strengthened until to the brain it becomes the truth, an immutable fact, the way things really were."

"So what did happen on that landing in Munhall on July 24, 1892?" Jan asked.

Vijay shrugged. "If Payton Adams knew, it was a truth he was determined to keep secret, even in his final moments of life."

Eugene Nertz jumped in. "I respectfully disagree, Professor Jain."

Vijay looked surprised. So did Keith and Ariel. In the Brain Lab, Vijay's opinions were seldom challenged.

"I think it is Simon who has rewritten the script. It was Simon, not Payton, who refused to face the truth."

All eyes around the table were now on Eugene Nertz, who seemed to be taken aback by the sudden attention.

Vijay immediately reclaimed his leadership role. "Please tell us more, Dr. Nertz. This is, after all, your field of expertise."

Nertz gave a small nod, acknowledging the raise in status at the table that Vijay had just conferred upon him.

"Mrs. Thomas is quite correct both in her assessment of the strength of the special covenant that Simon believes he shares with Payton and of his capacity to rationalize or justify his great-grandfather's actions. I believe she is also quite correct in her belief that the Simon Thomas personality is not fighting for control, at least not anywhere near to the degree with which it could. Simon, as you all know, has been my patient for more than a year. I can tell you that he has enormous strength of will. If the Payton Adams personality has gained the upper hand in this competition, as would certainly seem to be the case, it is because the Simon personality has ceded that control. There is no competition as Professors Jones and Kravitz-Goldman maintain; the Simon personality has essentially given up and given the Payton personality the freedom to do as he will."

Ariel Jones impatiently interrupted. "But why? Why would a man of such strong will power such as you claim give up?"

"Guilt," Nertz answered. "Demoralization. Despair. Depression. It all goes back to that special covenant Simon believes he shares with Payton. That covenant was the reason why Simon had to rationalize Payton's actions. When confronted with evidence that a belief you hold to be a fundamental truth in your life is in actuality a lie, your immediate reaction is to interpret the evidence in a way that enables you to preserve at least some degree of truth in your belief. If the contrary evidence continues to mount, you continue trying to spin your interpretation of it, expending more and more energy in an increasingly desperate attempt to hold your truth together. Inevitably, the spirit tires and begins to weaken. Simon had reached his limit in his ability to explain away the contradictions between the idealized great-grandfather of his beliefs, and the great-grandfather he was shown through his Quip-induced genetic memories. The truth of what happened on that landing in Munhall on July 24, 1892, must have been the final straw, a truth so awful he could not handle it. Simon's personality rewrote the script, confabulated a truth it could live with, then, out of guilt and shame, retired from the competition and let the Payton personality take control."

Vijay cut in, his square brown face troubled. "Your assertion sounds credible but it is predicated on ascribing the confabulation to the personality of Simon Thomas. I still do not see the basis upon which you make this determination."

Nertz shot a questioning look at Keith who, in response, gave Ariel Jones a quick study. Surmising that she shared Vijay's concern, Keith took a breath and looked down the table at Jan. Tension gripped her face as if it were being squeezed in the talons of a large bird of prey. Her color had drained to an ocher hue. With considerable trepidation, Keith nonetheless decided the time was right for Nertz to deliver the bad news. News his colleagues needed to hear, news from which he wished Jan could be spared, even though she, more than the others, had a critical need to hear it.

Raising his voice to command their attention, Keith said, "Throughout this entire ordeal, starting with the first Quip treatment of Simon when the personality of Payton made its debut in Simon's brain, we have been operating at a disadvantage that has only gotten progressively worse. Namely, the Payton personality has been privy to all of Simon's knowledge of and insight into the personalities of everyone here in this room. In the particular cases of Jan and myself, Simon knows the both of us as well as we know ourselves. We, on the other hand, up until now, have had no true knowledge or insight into the personality of Payton. Know your opponent, right Jan? Our opponent had us well-scouted, we had dick. Well, now that we have some true knowledge about Payton's personality, I thought it was time we sought insight. I asked Eugene to do a personality-psychology analysis of Payton based on Simon's journal entries." Keith turned his eyes on the psychotherapist. "Tell them, Eugene. Tell them exactly what we're dealing with."

Nodding, Nertz reached down under the table and came up with a black shoulder bag, worn and old-looking, like something he might have had in college. Rooting through the bag for several seconds longer than an impatient Keith thought should have been necessary, he finally produced three sheets of paper which were filled on both sides with hand-writing, some in pencil and some of it in ink.

Looking up at his audience, Nertz sheepishly motioned towards his handwriting and explained that it took him too long to type his notes on a computer and his secretary, of course, did not work on Saturdays. He then sat up straight up in his chair, cleared his throat and

proceeded.

"As per Professor Joyner's request, I revisited Simon's journal for the express purpose of diagnosing the personality of the individual identified as Payton Adams nee Furey. Based on the genetic memories that were reported, my diagnosis is as follows. The individual suffers from acute empathy-deficiency, an inability to relate to the feelings of others, especially to the feelings of his victims. This has resulted in a complete lack of pity or shame, no sense of remorse or conscience. In pursuit of his goals, he is emotionally blunted and ruthlessly brutal. He exhibits attitudes of superiority and total fearlessness. Security and gratification are achieved by exclusively attending to his own wants and needs with utter disregard for the wants and needs of any one else."

Dr. Nertz stopped and asked if it were possible for him to get some water. Keith went to get him a cup from one of the fountains in the hall. By the time he returned, Nertz was talking to Vijay with Jan and Ariel intently listening to the exchange.

"My guess is, it stems from a childhood in which he was denied any normal socialization through his parents or peers," Nertz was saying. "There are suggestions of that in some of Simon's genetic memories of Payton's life in Dublin. Whenever you find an absence of parental presence and no peer attachments through the developmental stages of childhood, you generally find adults who suffer from a deep sense of deprivation. If you delve behind this sense of deprivation, you often uncover a subconscious fear that should he or she allow themselves to be perceived as weak, they will immediately be exploited or abused. Consequently, any hint of empathy is immediately suppressed. The world is viewed as a habitat for predators, one in which one only gets that which one can take."

Vijay nodded his head. "To be a successful predator you must be strong and ruthlessly aggressive. Yes?"

Nertz nodded excitedly. "Yes! And you must also be callous and be willing to dispense retribution for every perceived slight. There must be no questioning of your alpha stature amongst the other predators. Otherwise, you will suffer. This syndrome is called reputation-defending. When Payton Adams-Furey talks about squaring his debts, we can view this as reputation-defending, carried to an extreme. Payton Adams-Furey insists that others recognize him as inviolable, a man of substance who is not, under any circumstances, to be trifled with. It

is not too farfetched, I think, to view the man's entire adult life as an act of revenge or payback to a society that did him either real or imagined injustices as a child."

Keith gave Nertz the cup of water. After taking a sip, the psychotherapist returned to his notes. "I've gotten somewhat ahead of myself here," he muttered, scanning through his papers.

Keith had enough. "Cut to the chase, Eugene. Give them the bottom line," he snapped.

Nertz stared up, blinking. With another sheepish look, he set his papers down, took another sip of water, then folded his hands together in front of him, like a polite and smart school boy about to recite the correct answer.

"When you take into account the acute empathy-deficiency, the blunted emotions, the self-aggrandizement, the extreme reputation-defending syndrome, the ruthless aggression on behalf of self-interest, the violent impulses and the complete lack of restraint on acting out those impulses, the diagnosis is classical. Payton Adams-Furey has a malevolent antisocial personality disorder."

Keith looked down the table at Jan, saw her pained look of confusion. "We used to call them psychopaths," he told her, at once making it both easier and harder for her.

"Antisocial personality disorder is the preferred terminology in DSM-IV," Nertz quickly said. He, too, looked at Jan. "The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders version IV," he explained. "The APD characterization embraces a latitude of psychopathologies."

Keith interjected, "The malevolent antisocial is universally considered the most dangerous form. In DSM-III, it was characterized as moral insanity."

Nertz looked surprised. "That's true, but there has been a schism within the community as reflected in DSM-IV's departure from that promulgation."

Keith ignored him. "Jan, I know you have it in your mind and believe in your heart that if only you could just find Simon and talk to him, you could reason with him, convince him to come in to get help. But listen to what Eugene is saying. You have got to stay away from Simon."

It was now clear to Nertz why Keith had been pressing the issue and he was more than willing to cooperate. "Yes, that is quite so. Any appeals from you, Mrs. Thomas, would be emotional and tender. Payton Adams-Furey would be deeply suspicious. Most likely he'd

perceive it as yet another ploy to deceive him. The malevolent antisocial is driven by hostility and vindictiveness.

Payton Adams-Furey's response would be a fierce determination to punish you for your audacity. His rigid code of retribution demands nothing less. And as an alpha predator, he would show no mercy. Remember, he experiences no empathy, therefore he knows no guilt."

Eugene Nertz turned his eyes to Vijay Jain and Ariel Jones. "That is why the confabulation which we know has occurred could only have come from the personality of Simon Thomas. Whatever happened on that river landing in Munhall on July 24, 1892, no matter how despicable his actions might have been, Payton Adams-Furey, as Mrs. Thomas herself surmised, would have felt no shame. His brain would never confabulate a fictional coverup, it would have no need. However, now that the personalities of Payton and Simon are sharing the same memories, the Payton personality can and will react to the confabulation as if it were the stone-cold truth. If the mind of Simon Thomas remembers that Payton Adams-Furey was murdered by two women who it believes are now embodied in the single being that is Jan Thomas, then the Payton personality will avenge that wrong. A death for a death. It is the only way to square the debt, as Payton would see it."

Eugene Nertz looked Jan Thomas straight in the eye. "If Simon were to be captured and restrained, any attempt on your part to appeal to him or reason with him would be futile, probably a detriment to your own mental health. If you were to approach Simon while he is still on the loose, he will certainly attempt to kill you."

A long quiet settled over the table, a collective spell of depression as thick and spirit-oppressing as a Tule fog. It was as if every person at the table were suddenly taking stock of his or her own sense of guilt and shame. Empathy must have abounded and no one there was feeling any too good about it. Not Vijay, who stared straight ahead with the blank look of a mannequin. Not Ariel, who fiddled with a hairstick while making a faint musical sound under her breath. Not Eugene Nertz, whose eyes scurried up and down the top sheet of the collection of papers he continued to clutch as if there might in the midst of his pencil and ink scrawls be some additional revelation he'd overlooked. Not the tight-lipped Jan, whose eyes overflowed with her grief, and certainly not Keith, himself, who felt like the final gun had sounded and his team had lost.

It was Jan who broke the silence this time. "Keith's right," she sniffed, blinking the last of her tears away, "I had thought that if Simon could be brought in, the girls and I could face him together, explain to him what was going on. It was my hope that knowing what was happening to him might give Simon the extra strength he needs to ... to ... reach down and fight this thing."

"Where are your daughters now, Mrs. Thomas?" asked Nertz, his voice soothing.

"Safely out of the way, thank god," Jan said. "I sent them off to spend the day at Great America with Sandra, Keith's wife, and their boys."

Keith spoke up. "My sons know what the situation is. They won't let those girls out of their sight."

Jan sent Keith a smile of thanks across the table. "Knowing that my girls are safe is my one comfort here. It also allows me to concentrate on the paramount issue here. What can we do about Simon?"

Nertz answered first. "As I explained the last time I was invited to this facility, Simon's problems began with a recurring nightmare. That is why he came to me. I diagnosed him as suffering from a post traumatic stress disorder. The most effective cure known for PTSD is to enable the patient to confront the traumatic memory that is the source of the stress. In Simon's case, the trauma was the death of his great-grandfather, a genetic memory, a memory that resided in his limbic system and not in his neocortex, which is why I brought him to you to be treated with Quip. For all of the genetic memories that Quip enabled Simon to recall, however, the one that he has yet to confront, is that of the murder of his great-grandfather. I am convinced that the cure for Simon Thomas is exactly what it has always been, what I told you the first time I was here. His brain must be forced to recall and confront the true memory of his great-grandfather's death."

There was another extended silence around the table before Vijay offered a thought. "What about hypnosis? This was not an option before when the traumatic memory resided in Simon's limbic system, but now that it is in his neocortex is that avenue not open to us?"

Nertz quickly shook his head. "At the moment, Simon's neocortex appears to be servicing two separate personalities. It is highly doubtful that hypnosis is even possible under such circumstances. And even if it is, which personality would we hypnotize? The Simon personality? Not likely while the Payton personality remains dominant."

"Why not hypnotize Payton?" inquired Ariel.

Keith answered. "Psychotic personalities are resistant to hypnosis. It's that empathy-deficiency thing."

"Plus one so distrusting as Payton Adams-Furey, the odds against success are insurmountable," added Nertz.

"So is there anything we can do?" Jan asked, the desperation in her voice cutting like the blade of a jagged-edged knife.

Nertz looked over at Keith.

"You're not going to like this," Keith said to Jan.

A spark of the old Jan flared. "Try me," she said.

"Quip," Keith replied, holding her eyes. "We want to give Simon a fourth dose of Quip."

Jan's eyes opened wide in disbelief. Vijay started to protest, but Keith waved him off and directed his words to Jan.

"Gibby's a chemist not a neurologist. He doubled the dosage rate for Simon's last session with Quip in the belief that it would strengthen the effect. But when the brain experiences an input overload, its performance deteriorates. Too much of good thing is a bad thing. Too much light, the eyes can't see. Too much noise, the ears can't hear. Remember your old college days, when you toked the ganja? After an initial heightened sensitivity, your brain started to close down, you got sleepy, turned stupid. What happened was, in response to a chemical surge way above the norm, your brain executed emergency procedures, shut down the affected sections, like sealing off flooded bulkheads when a ship takes on water."

Keith stood up and went to Jan. Kneeling so his face was almost touching hers, he said, "Eugene and I believe that because Gibby injected Simon with a double shot of Quip, the ultimate effect of the final Quip signal, the one that carried the genetic memory of his great-grandfather's death, was actually weaker than it should have been. It was a fully recalled memory, we're sure, but so hazy it may have forced Simon's brain to confabulate. It's no surprise that the Simon personality would put the best spin possible on those details, that's what he had been doing all along with the genetic memories he recalled under Quip."

Eugene Nertz spoke up from where he was seated. "Another treatment with Quip, at the proper single dosage rate, will finally present Simon's brain with the truth about his great-

grandfather's death. This should release the Simon personality from the handicap of post-traumatic stress, which in turn should give him the strength to take back control of his brain from the Payton Adams-Furey personality. Quip created this problem and Quip can end it. With another dose of Quip, the Payton Adams-Furey personality will become nothing more than a bad memory."

From Keith, his voice so soft it was almost a whisper, "Jan, trust me, Quip is Simon's last best hope."

A wavering expression appeared on Jan's face as she studied first Keith and then the others around the table. She looked like a little girl who had just emerged from a deep dark forest where she'd been lost for a very long time. The question was, would she re-enter civilization or would she turn and flee back into the forest? Keith held out his hand and motioned for Jan to take it. He would lead her back into civilization, he would bring her home and make all things right once more. Time, in Keith's mind, slowed to a crawl as Jan's hand inched towards his. But just before their flesh made contact, Jan drew back. Her entire body stiffened as she looked away from Keith and down the table to Nertz and Vijay.

"Why more Quip?" she demanded, her eyes flashing in sudden anger. "Why must Simon's salvation depend upon your pumping more chemicals into his brain? Why do you rule out the possibility that I can reason with him? Simon is a good man. Payton is a bad man. Isn't good supposed to prevail over evil? Is that not the premise upon which the moral foundation of human civilization is built? Don't scientists believe in God?"

Keith was startled into silence. His emotions, on the thinnest of tethers going into this meeting, seemed to have come completely unmoored and were free-floating somewhere off in space. Not knowing what he felt, he could think of nothing to say. Eugene Nertz and Ariel Jones were likewise quiet, their eyes seeking refuge from the accusational glare emanating with laserlike intensity from the eyes of Jan. Once more, it fell to Vijay, as the leader of the Brain Lab, to meet Jan's challenge.

"We believe in entropy," he answered, quietly but without apology. When Jan, in response, arched an eyebrow, he continued.

"Unless there is external intervention, systems move to a state of disorder, the lowest state of energy possible. It is a law of physics that governs everything in the universe, from the infinite

to the infinitesimal. Moral behavior is no exception."

"I don't understand," Jan admitted, the challenge draining from her eyes.

"The violent primal instincts of anger and aggression, fear, hatred and jealousy, the drive to fulfill sexual desires or satisfy carnal hungers are extremely strong forces," Vijay explained. "Countless scientific studies over the past hundred years, supported by anecdotal records dating back thousands of years, have established this to be so. To act with restraint, to govern our actions, to hold back and control the beast that dwells within all of us requires more energy than to let that beast run wild. The stark and simple truth is that being evil is easy, the path of least resistance. It requires more energy to lead an orderly life than a disorderly life. If all other things were equal in this competition between the personalities of Simon and Payton, then entropy alone would tip the balance in favor of disorder."

Ariel at last found her voice. "Mrs. Thomas," she said, leaning forward in her chair towards Jan, "you asked if evil can win. What we are telling you now is, without the external intervention of Quip, evil will win."

"She's right," asserted Nertz.

Jan's eyes frantically shifted back and forth from Vijay to Ariel to Eugene Nertz. Once again, she was the lost little girl unsure of whether or not she should come in from the forest. Finally, her eyes turned once more onto Keith.

"What about love?" she asked him. "Simon loves me. Doesn't that count for anything? Isn't love a strong force, too?"

Keith felt like a dead man, void of feeling. In a flat voice, he told her that love is merely an emotion, not a primal instinct like hatred or rage. But Jan would not let it go. Her hand reached out and at last did take hold of Keith's, take hold and tightly squeezed. In her eyes was a private plea, a message from Jan to Keith, beseeching him to lead her in from the forest. Softly, she said, "Keith, tell me that love matters. Tell me that love counts as much as hatred or rage."

Keith's feelings suddenly came home, at least all the sad ones. With a heart so heavy, it felt as if it had dropped through his body like a chunk of lead, he looked deep into Jan's sorrow-laden eyes, sighed and surrendered with a shake of his head. "I don't know. Science has only studied the effects of hatred and rage."

A black silence enveloped the room for what seemed an eternity to Keith. He was

immensely grateful when there came a knock on the conference room door. He was the first out of his chair to answer it. On the other side was Vijay's secretary, Daphne Klein, who immediately motioned for Keith to come out into the hall with her.

"Sorry to interrupt, Keith," she said, in a careful voice, "but your wife is on the phone and she sounds quite upset."

Keith frowned. "Did she say what's wrong?"

Daphne shook her head. "The call came in on the Brain Lab's emergency number for staff. I transferred it over to the line in your office."

Keith left it to Daphne to explain what was going on to the others in the conference room. He was so happy to be away from the oppressive gloom in there that he did not start worrying about why Sandra was calling him until he was half-way up the flight of stairs that would take him to his office. By the time he got his door open and was reaching for the phone on his desk, he'd fully convinced himself that either Earl or Walt had been hurt showing off for the twins.

Snatching up the receiver, he, in his panic, practically shouted, "I'm here, babe, speak to me."

"Keith...." sobs, a gasping for breathe, then ... "Simon's got the girls! He took them away!"

Keith's blood froze. He'd braced himself for news that one of his boys had been hurt. If anything he should have felt a touch of relief. Instead, irrational as it was, he felt anger. Enormous anger.

"How the hell did that happen?" he roared. "Where were you? Where were the boys for chrissake? They were told to not let those girls out of their sight! Goddamnit! Goddamnit! Godfuckingdamnit! Where the hell are you now?"

"I'm still at Great America. The boys were in on it. At least Walt was. He made Earl go along."

"What?" Keith thought he was losing his mind.

More sobs. Then, "Elizabeth asked for his help. Simon has been communicating with her and Louise. I don't know what he's been telling them, but ... they were convinced he needed them. The plan was for the kids to get me to ride on the wooden roller coaster with Earl. You know the one I mean?"

"The Grizzly," Keith impatiently snapped. "How'd they get you to do that? You hate roller coasters."

"I know that," Sandra snapped back. "The four of them were on my case, badgering me about it all day long. Earl kept begging, please mama, please ride it just once with me, like it was something really important to him. Walt kept encouraging me, promising me he would stay with the twins. Elizabeth and Louise were relentless. Finally I agreed, just to shut them up. As the car got to the top of that first big hill, it suddenly stopped. I looked down ... " another sob "... and ... and ... I saw ... smoke coming up from somewhere below ... and people were running ... around .. shouting .. and then people in the other cars on our train began screaming ... and ... and ... I turned to say something to Earl and...I saw he was looking the other way ... watching something down below...so ... I leaned across him and looked ..." more sobs "... and there was Simon with the twins and Walt. I started shouting but with all the other noise no one could hear me ... and then Elizabeth was hugging Walt and then the girls went off with Simon...."

Keith cut in. "When did this happen, Sandra? How long ago?"

Several moments of silence from Sandra's end before she was back on the line. "An hour or so. We were stuck up there in that damn roller coaster, Keith. They had to send Park people up to let us out of the cars and walk us back down the tracks. Walt was waiting down below. He confessed immediately."

Again, Keith cut in. "Did he know where Simon was taking the girls?"

"No. All Walt knew was that Elizabeth said her dad needed her and if Walt loved her he would help her."

"That dumb little fuck!" Keith seethed. "I'm going to whup his ass for this."

"It's not his fault, Keith. He didn't know what to do. The girl he loves asked for his help. What boy wouldn't have done the same? He feels just awful about it now and he's scared for Elizabeth."

Ironic, Keith thought, a short while earlier all of his emotions seemed to have taken a permanent hike. Now they were back with a vengeance. Within the past five minutes, he'd gone from fear to anger to sadness, sadness for his son, Walt, sadness for his wife, sadness for the Thomas twins. For the moment, the only one to whom he could give comfort was Sandra.

"You're right, babe. I'm sorry. Bring the boys home, now. I'll call Detective DeLeon

and see where we go from here."

Sandra was not ready to hang up the phone. "Why did he do it, Keith?" she asked. "Why did Simon take the girls? What does he want with them? Do you know?"

"Yeah, I think so," answered Keith, aware that Jan would know, too. "He wants to use them."

"Use them? How? For what?" Sandra demanded. "What does he want to use his daughters for?"

"Bait," Keith replied.

CHAPTER THIRTY FIVE

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are beginning our final approach to the Greater Pittsburgh International Airport, please bring all seats and trays to a full upright and locked position, make sure any carry-on bags are safely stowed under the seat in front of you, all overhead bins are closed, and that your seatbelts are securely fastened."

Jan Thomas felt her pulse-rate quicken. She was not normally a nervous air traveler but her nerves had been on edge the entire five-hour flight. It was her custom to use time in flight to catch up on personal correspondence, pleasure reading, or simply to close her eyes and sleep. This trip, she could do none of those things and had found herself frequently staring out the window at the cloud cover below as if solutions to her problems might be found in their pillowy plumes.

Her eyes had not left the window since the plane had begun its descent. Cloud banks had given way to rugged, heavily wooded foothills, bushy with foliage far into the fall transition from shades of green to tones of rust, amber and gold. The trees and their colors of autumn had abruptly given way to urban congestion with its preponderance of grays and browns. The monotony had lulled her mind into an idle state until a sudden, blinding flash of sunlight, mirrored off the surface of a broad river, had caused her to blink, bringing her attention back on-line. Moments later, a male voice from the cockpit cheerfully identified the river as the Ohio. Shortly after, the plane had launched into a wide sweeping turn that took it straight over the

downtown area of Pittsburgh, a confluence of gleaming skyscrapers on a triangular point of land where two brown rivers came together to form a third, the Ohio River over which they had just flown.

From watching Pittsburgh Steeler games on Monday Night Football, Jan knew one of those two merging rivers was the Allegheny and the other was the Monongahela, the river from Simon's dream. High arched bridges spanned each of the two rivers just above the point of the triangle. Craning her neck, Jan could see more bridges, a great many more bridges. More bridges, in fact, than she could ever remember seeing in one city before, bridges of all shapes and sizes aligned like sutures across two long and winding wounds.

Conspicuously absent was the industrial pollution so prominently mentioned in Simon's journal. If steel-production continued to be an economic mainstay for Pittsburgh and its neighboring towns, then modern means of air pollution abatement and control had served the residents well. The mid-day sky between the cloud banks was blue and so crisply clear, the city below her, with its hills and rivers, could have passed for a larger, more densely populated version of Portland, Oregon.

The plane had passed over a flat kidney-shaped island in the middle of the Ohio River and suddenly they were out of the rumpled urban sprawl and back over the tree-shrouded foothills.

Now, looking down at the terrain that was rapidly rising up to meet her, Jan spotted the airport up ahead, sitting atop a low but alarmingly narrow table-top mountain. From her vantage point, it seemed the plane on which she was flying was much too large to set down on so tiny a plateau. Surely, the plane's forward momentum would send it skittering off the plateau's edge to a fiery doom. A sudden roar of wind followed by vibrations in the cabin, set off by the opening of the wing flaps, sent a shiver through Jan. The loud grinding whir of the landing gear being engaged caused her to tightly grip the arm rests of her seat. A warm palm settled down atop her passenger side hand, causing her to glance over at Keith Joyner who smiled.

"Relax," he said, "we'll be down in two shakes of a jiff and this will all be over soon."

Jan closed her eyes and let her head fall back against her seat. From behind, she could hear the voice of a woman who'd been bending the ear of poor Jose DeLeon ever since they'd left San Francisco. Jan wondered if the Berkeley detective was not having severe second

thoughts about having accompanied her. Her eyes snapped open again moments later when the plane thumped down on the runway. Once again there was a roar of wind and a shudder throughout the cabin as the air brakes went to work. Again, Jan's hands gripped the armrests -- reflex white-knuckling? she wondered -- and again, Keith placed his hand over hers to comfort her. Once more she glanced over at her friend, and returned his concerned look with a smile.

"Am I wound too tightly, you think?"

Keith grinned. "You're wound just right, girl," he said, giving her hand a playful squeeze. Dressed in jeans and a baggy white sweater, he looked so damn good, she thought. For all the grief he had brought her, there was still a warm spot in her heart for the man. After all, for all the grief she'd brought him, here he was, by her side. Her thoughts brought her eyes to the black medical bag beneath the seat in front of Keith. Therein could lie the answer to both their problems. Inside the bag, along with the standard medical paraphernalia were two syringes and two carefully packed vials. One vial contained a clear liquid that harbored measured dosages of Quip. The other vial contained a very special general anesthetic. Jan could not hope to recall or pronounce the chemical name, but she understood that an injection of it would instantly plunge Simon into something called an alpha prime level of unconsciousness.

"It won't be quite the same as putting him into a sensory deprivation tank," Keith had explained, "but if we sedate him with this first, then administer the Quip, the effects should be approximate enough for our purposes. Remember, this is a genetic memory he has already recalled. What we want is to reinforce it, strengthen the signal so that Simon's mind is forced to confront the truth."

"You think it will work?" Jan had asked him.

"I think it's Simon's best chance," Keith had told her. "Maybe his only chance."

It was the unanimous conclusion of Keith, Eugene Nertz and Vijay Jain that if the next dose of Quip did not work, the personality of Payton Adams would most likely be in full and permanent control of Simon's brain. For that reason, Jan had asked DeLeon to come with her and Keith. DeLeon was not carrying chemicals, he was carrying a gun. And unlike Jan's Beretta, which had been packed away in her suitcase and checked with baggage, DeLeon's gun was holstered within his immediate reach, just inside his sports coat. Everyone agreed that Jan was being lured to Pittsburgh by the Payton personality, but DeLeon was far and away the most

suspicious. He believed the pending attack could take place even as Jan was debarking from her flight.

The phone call had come into her home at approximately 5:30 that morning, which made it 8:30, Pittsburgh time. Ana Huff was on the other end, and she was speaking in a low voice.

"Simon is in the shower now," Ana said, "so I don't have much time. The girls are fine. Simon is taking good care of them. They actually seem rather excited. I guess this is somewhat of an adventure for them. We're going to Kennywood today. It's an amusement park. Your girls said they like rollercoasters."

"Yes...yes, they do," Jan replied through the haze of sleepiness that clung to her weary mind despite its desire to come fully alert.

"Well, we've got one of the best here, the Steel Phantom," Ana Huff said, continuing along as if this were some sort of call from the new wife to the insecure divorced mom to reassure the matrimonial loser that her daughters were in good hands.

"Thanks for calling, Ana," Jan said, fully awake. "I've been out of my mind with worry." She explained how Simon had threatened to kill her and had then stolen the girls away from Sandra.

"Simon is acting quite normal, I have to tell you," Ana interrupted. "He told me that the marital problems between the two of you have escalated. He said you called the police on him and made false accusations. Horrible accusations. He said he needed to get away from you for awhile, needed some time to think. The girls don't seem at all disturbed or upset and certainly not frightened. If they have been taken against their will, they show no sign of it."

Jan's temper flared, burning off the last of the cobwebs from her mind, but she kept her voice even. "If that's the case, then, Ana, why are you calling me?"

There was a short silence, before Ana answered. "I followed up on the new material from the third part of Simon's journal. On April 12, 1886, in the Church of Saint Theresa in the town of Kilkenny, Ireland, Father Justin O'Neal joined in marriage Rosaleen Katherine Doyle of Ballybunion and Payton Daniel Furey of Dublin. Every historical event reported in Simon's journal has now been validated. Simon's great-grandfather Payton Adams was in fact Payton Furey, an enforcer for the Irish Republican Brotherhood, smuggled into the United States by a

Fenian named Collin Garraty, to assassinate Andrew Carnegie." Ana was again silent. Jan gave her time. Finally, Ana continued. "My brain tells me to trust history and believe the journal. But my heart, Jan, my heart tells me to believe Simon. My heart, frankly, wants to believe him. I might have listened to my heart were it not for your girls." There was another prolonged silence before Ana could resume. "I can see it in their eyes, in the looks they exchange when Simon is not watching. They are worried about their father. They came willingly with Simon because they want to protect him. He might fool me but he isn't fooling them. They know their dad and they know he needs help. That's why I'm calling you. As someone who also cares for Simon, I want to help, too."

Jan told Ana she intended to catch the next flight she could into Pittsburgh. She said would probably be accompanied by Keith Joyner, and possibly Detective DeLeon.

Ana Huff was immediately alarmed. "A police officer? Are you sure that's necessary?"

"His name is DeLeon and he's a good man," Jan said. "He won't do anything to harm Simon unless...."

"Unless?" Ana tensely repeated. "Meaning what?"

Jan knew exactly where Ana was coming from. She'd been there.

"Ana, understand something. It's critical both for your own sake and for the sake of my daughters. No matter how differently it may appear to you, no matter how bizarre this sounds, that man in your house is not Simon. As I explained the last time we spoke, the personality in control of that body is that of Payton Adams. You've read Simon's journal, you know all you need to know about the personality of Payton to appreciate the danger he poses. And therefore, you know why I'm going to ask Detective DeLeon to come to Pittsburgh with me, and you know exactly what I mean by unless."

Jan would not have been surprised if Ana Huff had hung up the phone on her and gone straight to Simon to tell him about the call. She also would not have been surprised if Ana Huff had demanded that Jan say nothing to Detective DeLeon as the price for Ana's cooperation. But Ana, after some silent reflection, seemed to accept what Jan had told her. Without another word about police or the threat posed by Payton, she suggested that Jan and whoever accompanied her get rooms at the Kaufold Towers.

"The rooms are overpriced so there's always a vacancy, but it's ten minutes from my

house," Ana said. "Assuming you get in while we're still at Kennywood, you can leave a message for me on my answering machine."

"Isn't that risky?" asked Jan. "Simon might overhear."

"My message machine is on a night stand in my bedroom," Ana replied. Jan could hear the embarrassment in her voice when she said, "In case you were concerned, Simon is sleeping on the sofa in the living room. I wouldn't do that sort of thing with your girls here. I don't think I would do it even if they weren't here. I don't fool around with married men. I'm not that kind of girl."

"No, Ana, I wouldn't have thought you were," Jan said. "In fact, I think you're pretty damn terrific and you've been a true friend to me, even though we've never met. I look forward to seeing you in person."

"And I, you," Ana replied. "I'll call you sometime in the middle of the night, after I'm sure Simon is asleep. I'd like to know, though, once you get here, what do you intend to do?"

Jan had explained the belief amongst the scientists that a fourth treatment of Quip would force Simon's mind to confront the truth of his great-grandfather's death.

"The genetic memory of Payton's death was the source of Simon's post traumatic stress disorder. In turn, that stress disorder is what has weakened Simon's will, the reason his brain succumbed so readily to the influence of Payton's memories," Jan said. "Simon's mind must recall and deal with the actual genetic memory of Payton's death, not some fictionalized version, in order to heal itself of the stress disorder. Once that happens, the scientists believe Simon's personality will be immediately restored."

Ana asked. "What will happen to the Payton personality?"

"Hopefully, it will become just another memory in the mind of Simon Thomas," Jan answered. "Both Keith Joyner and Eugene Nertz say it will. I believe them. I have to."

Ana asked the obvious question. "So how do you intend to get Simon out to the Brain Lab for another treatment of Quip? I'm guessing Payton would oppose such a move."

"You're right, it's not too likely that I can get Simon to come to the Brain Lab," Jan agreed, "which means, I shall have to bring the Brain Lab to him."

* * *

Ana Huff stood naked in front of her bathroom mirror and attempted to examine her

freshly showered body with the critical eye of a male who might be contemplating making love with her. Her breasts were small but reasonably proportionate to her small frame, and they had a very nice shape. She especially liked her nipples, which were also small, perhaps even tiny, some might say, but cute and delicate in their pale pinkness. Her stomach was another matter. Definitely some trimming was in order. She wouldn't go so far as to call it a pot-belly, but there was a pouch that did not belong, given her small frame. Her hips went the opposite direction, too much bone and not enough meat, for most men probably, but, again, they were in keeping with the rest of her. And her legs had always been her best asset, she thought. Slim and slender enough to give the impression of being much longer than they actually were. Overall, perhaps not as good as she would have liked, but certainly competitive with most women her age, normal women that is, not those actresses like Meryl Streep or Jessica Lang who never seemed to show their age, at least not in their faces.

Ah, the face. What was it Mark Twain had once said? Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been. If that were the case, then her life had been far more fun than she'd ever realized. Still, her wrinkles were not so severe they could not be covered up with a modest amount of makeup and with that touch of help, her face was still competitive. Nonetheless, there were enough lines on it to remind her that she remained unmarried, a status she'd never expected to hold past her thirty-eighth birthday. Half-turning, she checked out her backside. Were flat butts *in* these days or had there been a return to fashion of the more fleshy variety? Turning to again face the mirror frontally, she wondered if men preferred women with a lot of hair down there. Personally, she preferred a trim little patch like her own and she was quite certain most men would agree.

Most men?

Ana Huff sighed and watched as her shoulders sagged. She had not been consciously aware of holding them up, but now that they'd resumed their normal posture, the rest of her body seemed somewhat less competitive. Would most men still find her attractive? Maybe, but so what? She did not care about most men; she wanted Simon. That was the terrible truth of it and had been since she'd first met him in Atlanta all those years ago. An even more terrible truth, given the circumstances, was that she'd had a wonderful time with him today. Simon could not have been more gracious and charming. They spent the entire day at Kennywood, sampling just

about every ride in the amusement park for the first part of the day before settling in on the roller coasters the entire afternoon. As Ana predicted, The Steel Phantom was the big favorite for the girls with its 90 mile-per-hour rush through a giant loop. But they were also partial to the ancient Jack Rabbit, saying it reminded them of a smaller but similar wood-framed roller coaster along the boardwalk of a beach town called Santa Cruz. The girls for the most part rode together which meant Simon rode with Ana whose own amusement park experiences were quite limited. The truth was, Ana had only been to Kennywood twice herself in the past decade, on each occasion as a member of Pitt's history department attending some faculty-student festivity, and on each occasion a reluctant attendee and the first to leave. The truth was, Ana had never understood the fascination amusement parks held for some adults. She especially did not understand why anyone would pay good money to ride a roller coaster.

But all that had changed today. Today, she had fun. Today she had laughed as hard as she could ever remember laughing. Today she had thrown her arms up in the air and screamed at the top of her lungs as the Steel Phantom coaster slammed her back into its padded harness. Today her knees had felt rubbery and her sides had ached and she could not remember having ever enjoyed herself so much. Whatever was to happen later this night and afterwards, the memories of today would be with her always and she would cherish them forever.

Memories.

Surfacing up through her memories of the day was the remembrance of how Simon never seemed to miss an opportunity to put his arm around her shoulders or waist, ostensibly an innocent offer of support to help her maintain her balance, but always, it seemed, with an extra squeeze, one that maybe was not so innocent. Memories of those extra squeezes, gave Ana goose-bumps of a decidedly erotic nature as evident in the sudden stiffening of her tiny pink nipples and the warm flush down there underneath her trim little patch.

Ana sighed once again, closed her eyes and shook her head. On any other night, she'd be headed straight for bed and a date with her vibrator. But not tonight. After seeing the girls to bed in the spare room, Ana had said her goodnights to Simon and told him she would shower before turning in so that the bathroom would be free for the girls and him in the morning. It was her thought that her time in the shower would not only wake her up, but would also give Simon and the twins plenty of time to fall asleep. As soon as they'd returned from Kennywood, Ana

had gone upstairs into her bedroom and closed the door. The green LED message-indicator on her digital answer-phone showed one message waiting. After turning the volume down to low, Ana had pressed the "play-message" button and the voice of Jan came on the speaker. She said she and the others had arrived and taken rooms at the Kaufold Towers as instructed. The phone extension in Jan's room was 7207. She would be anxiously awaiting Ana's call. After which, she and her companions would come to Ana's home and administer to Simon a final dose of Quip.

"We're going to get our Simon back," Jan had said before the message clicked off.

Our Simon? Ana had thought to herself, none too graciously, she admitted. *Your* Simon is what you mean. But Ana had dutifully erased the message and returned downstairs to her living room where she greeted Simon and his daughters in high spirits. Keep it light and lively, Ana girl, she told herself, and give Simon no reason to be suspicious. Now, naked in her bathroom, tingling with the memories of her wonderful day with Simon and the promise conveyed each and every time he touched her, Ana longed to say the hell with it, to ignore what she had read in the journal and the claims being made by a woman she had never met. More than anything, Ana wanted to sneak downstairs into her living room, throw her naked body on top of Simon or Payton or whoever that delicious man on her sofa was, and make wildly passionate love with him. Wildly passionate, but utterly silent love, of course: Wouldn't want to wake the twins.

A wicked image flashed across Ana's mind, an image of her being vigorously pummeled into a state of delirious ecstasy by an equally ecstatic Simon. The image, though fleeting, caused Ana's face to blush hotly. She was not that kind of girl, she reminded herself. She would do the right and necessary thing. If all went well, Simon's wife and her entourage would come soon and by morning Simon Thomas would be reunited with his family and headed back to the San Francisco Bay Area. Of course, if he should decide, after a few weeks back home, that genetic memories notwithstanding, Ana, not Jan, was really the right woman for him, well, no one could blame a girl for dreaming.

Ana Huff slipped into her white terry cloth bathrobe, drew its belt tight, knotted it, and tip-toed out of the bathroom. She paused by the spare bedroom, which was across the hallway from her room, cracked open the door and listened. She could hear the rhythmic breathing of the

two girls, their breathes synchronized even in deep sleep. Ana smiled to herself and pulled the door closed. She then went into her own room and, without turning on the wall light, closed the door behind her. In darkness, she crossed over to her bed and reached for the lamp on the night stand next to it. The lamp switch was awkwardly located under an overly large shade and Ana had to bend forward slightly and stretch her arm out to reach it. As the light came on and Ana began to straighten up, a heavy hand was suddenly clamped tightly across her mouth with a thumb pressing firmly down on the bridge of her nose, flattening her nostrils so she could not breath. At the same moment, a thick and powerful arm gripped her across her chest, pinioning both her arms against her sides, crushing her breasts and constricting her rib cage. Ana did not know if she would black out from fright or from a lack of air.

A voice whispered in her ear, a male voice, pitched high to mimic that of a woman. But even while whispering in his mocking falsetto, he could not keep out the Irish brogue, which, Ana, despite her fear, realized had been absent from his speech throughout the day.

"I don't fool around with married men," the brogue-laden falsetto voice hissed. "I'm not that kind of girl."

Ana's heart raced. A thick black cloud embraced her mind, blinding her thoughts to everything save for flashes of light which flickered through the blackness like heat lightning. Then the thumb came off her nose, allowing her air. The blackness quickly cleared away, but her relief was momentary, for the hand across her mouth and the arm across her chest remained in place, unyielding, like the grip of an iron statue. Still whispering, but in his normal pitch, he continued, "I was standing outside your door listening when you told that treacherous black bitch I was here. Don't be surprised, I'm a very quiet fellow when I've the need to be. But you shouldn't concern yourself, you've been a good girl. You've done just as I wanted and for that you'll get a reward. But first, I have some questions for you. It is my intention to take my hand off your mouth. I trust you know not to scream or cry out in any way. Otherwise...."

The arm around Ana's chest came away and rising up into her vision was the jagged-edged blade of a very large knife.

"Otherwise..." the voice continued, "...I will slice you open from your cunt to your throat. Not a pretty a sight to greet my daughters when they come running in to see what the fuss is about. It won't feel none to good for you, neither. Nod your head if you understand what I'm

telling you Ana Huff."

Ana was so terrified she feared she could not move a muscle, but, somehow, she managed to nudge her head up and down sufficiently to let him know that she would be silent.

The hand over her mouth dropped away and Ana was free to turn around and face Simon. One look into the green eyes that unblinkingly stared back at her, told Ana the truth that her heart had yearned to deny. They were not the gentle, caring, soulful eyes of Simon, they were the cold, hard, cruel eyes of Payton.

Ana focused on the name Payton. That was how she would think of this man in her room. That was the only way she could allow herself to think of him if she were to retain the fear she would need to survive. Fear, her beloved friend Simon had once explained, could be an ally, a strong ally, the edge that decided the outcome in a life and death situation. History showed this to be true, the history of nature, the history of beasts. Remember your history, Simon always said. Ana Huff would heed Simon's advice and remember. She swore to herself she would remember for her sake, for Simon's sake, and for the sake of those two girls sleeping in her spare bedroom. She swore her vow as she lifted her eyes up into those of a killer.

"Did she come alone?" Payton growled.

When Ana made no response, he said, "Answer me Ana Huff, or I will hurt you severely. Did that black bitch come alone?"

Ana shook her head.

"I thought as much. Who'd she bring with her? Keith?"

Ana nodded.

"What about that cop? DeLeon?"

Ana nodded again.

"Anyone else?"

Ana shook her head.

Payton showed his teeth. "Aye, that's what I expected. Keith and DeLeon want to fuck her so they follow her like dogs sniffing after a bitch in heat. Speaking of which, it's high time you got your reward for being such a good girl, Ana."

With that, his right arm shot out and gave Ana a forceful shove, sending her backwards onto the bed. A frightened gasp of surprise burst from her lips, but Ana did not cry out, not even

when Payton moved in between her legs.

Again, Payton showed his teeth. "You've been wanting this, Ana, don't be denying it, I could smell it on you every time you rubbed up against me today."

Was that true? Ana wondered. Had it been she who had taken advantage of every opportunity to touch him?

There was no time for her to think on that or any other question; no time for her to do anything other than watch, wait, and be afraid. A flick of the wrist transferred the jagged-edged knife from Payton's left to right hand. Slowly, the blade was lowered until it was poised just below her knees at the hemline of her bathrobe. Ana became acutely aware of her nakedness under the robe. A twist of his wrist and the cutting edge of the blade rotated towards the ceiling. The blade was then tipped lower and brought up through the part in the bathrobe. So sharp was the blade's jagged-edge that it severed the robe's belt just behind the knot with little exertion on the part of Payton. The bathrobe fell open, exposing Ana's nakedness to Payton's cold unblinking stare.

Her eyes rose to meet his and she saw heat break the surface of those green carnivorous pools, but it was not a welcome change for the heat carried with it a raw sexual hunger. As she stared into that growing heat, Ana broke out in an enormous sweat. Perspiration soaked her forehead, leaked from under her arms and across her chest, and drenched the insides of her thighs. Within moments, Ana felt the bedspread beneath her become damp and a deep sense of shame was added to her fear. Then she felt the flat part of the jagged-edged blade press up against her vagina. The metal was painfully cold on her sweat-heated flesh, but it was pressed gently against her for only a moment and then it was gone, like the fleeting touch of an icy kiss.

Through the pounding of her heart and the rasping of her breath, Ana heard the sound of a descending zipper and the snap of a button being undone. Payton's eyes made a quick downward motion and Ana's eyes automatically followed. There came from her yet another frightened gasp. Payton's penis reared like a thick red root sprouting out from a dark brown thicket. A strong feral odor assailed the room, like the smell of wet fur. Was it her or him, she grimaced as she brought her eyes pleadingly back up to Payton's face. On that face was a wolfish grin, a curling of lips and a spread of teeth that struck terror throughout Ana's entire being. Payton set the jagged-edged knife down on the nightstand, reached out with his hand and

turned off the light.

"All the better to see you with, my dear," he whispered as he moved over top of her and smothered her body with his.

* * *

The ringing yanked the reluctant mind of Jan Thomas from the sound sleep of exhaustion. Her grogginess so disoriented her she could not find the clock beside her bed to silence it. As the ringing continued, her mind began to collect itself and she realized with a start that the night-darkened room was not her own bedroom but a room in a hotel. With the explanation as to why her alarm clock was not where it was supposed to be came the realization that the ringing was not from a clock at all, but from a telephone. With that realization, Jan Thomas came fully awake. She sprang from the bed and raced for the phone which inexplicably was located not next to the bed but on a dresser across the room. In the unfamiliar darkness and her great haste, she stumbled over her own shoes which she had foolishly left in the middle of the carpet. This brought from Jan a loud curse as she fumbled for the receiver.

"Hello?" she said, half-shouting.

The voice of Ana Huff was preceded by sobbing so Jan knew even before the first word was spoken that something was terribly wrong and a fire ignited in her nervous system.

"Simon and the girls are gone," Ana said. There was an odd quality in her voice, as if she were talking through a damaged mouth and a dazed brain. "Payton heard me talking to you. He knows you and the others are here. He took the girls."

Jan felt like she'd been kicked in the stomach. She had to sit down. Had to catch her breath. No! Forget that, nonsense, girl. There's no time. You got to be strong here. Get the facts. Find out what happened. "Are you okay, Ana?" she asked. "Did he harm you?"

"Raped." The voice sounded small and faraway.

Get the facts, Jan told herself. Be sure of them. DeLeon will want to know. "Simon raped you?" she asked.

"No," Ana answered, sounding smaller and even further away. "Payton raped me. Payton Adams raped me."

"I'm sorry, Ana," Jan said, soothing. "I am so sorry."

"It's my own fault," Ana said, weeping. "Really it is. You warned me. I read the journal. But I came on to him. Really, I did. I told you I wasn't that kind of girl, but I am that kind of girl and Payton held me accountable. He squares his debts. That's his way."

"Are you hurt, Ana?" Jan asked, quietly. "Do you require immediate medical attention? Should I call 911?"

"No...I'm....could you come over? Please?"

Jan got the directions from Ana and promised she would be there shortly.

"He means to kill you," were Ana's final words. "He means to kill you."

* * *

Ana Huff lived in a sprawling complex of split-level condominium apartments. There was a ground-level garage for tenants immediately underneath the units but it was enclosed behind the metal grillwork of an electronically-controlled security gate. It took DeLeon, who was driving their rental car, almost ten minutes to find the visitor's parking area, which was located in the center of the complex, adjacent to the community pool and recreation center.

"They need better signs," DeLeon grumbled as he shut off the car's engine.

"You should have asked for directions at the entrance," Jan said.

DeLeon flashed her a look of annoyance and Jan gave it right back to him.

"You two sound like my wife and me," Keith observed from the back seat. "Must be a universal gender-based phenomenon."

"Let's just concentrate on finding Ana's place before sunrise," Jan said.

Despite a more than adequate lighting system, it still took them another ten minutes to solve the complex's bizarre numerical scheme and arrive at the address Ana had given her. Jan looked at her watch and noted that more than a half-hour had passed since they'd pulled out of the parking garage at the Kaufold Towers. If there was to be a car chase through the city of Pittsburgh this evening, she and her companions would need the assistance of Ana Huff. One more reason to pray that Ana was not too badly injured.

Jan's first thought when Ana Huff opened the door was that God must have anticipated her prayer. For a woman who said she had been raped, Ana did not show any visible signs of having struggled. Once inside and settled, Jan regretted her somewhat catty and decidedly

uncharitable first impression. Though Ana's face bore no marks, there was in her eyes an unfocused vagueness, as if she had just received some very bad news, and when she spoke, her words were delivered in a reaching manner, like an actress who had not fully memorized her lines. As Ana began describing her ordeal, and Jan took in the woman and her surroundings, she realized how truly amiss things were. Ana's living room was small but stuffed with furniture -- a small sofa that could barely accommodate both herself and Jan; a low, Japanese-style table; a pair of stuffed chairs; a television in one corner, audio equipment in another, and book shelves along two walls, their shelves holding almost as many decorative objects and photographs as books. Yet everything was so carefully arranged and so tidily emplaced, that there was no cramped or over-crowded feel to the layout. Obviously, Ana was a neat and orderly woman, yet there she sat in a white terrycloth robe with a black vinyl belt drawn tightly around her waist. Staring closely through the part in Ana's robe, Jan could see bruises running up along the inside of Ana's thighs. Having herself been the recipient of Payton's fierce approach to copulation, Jan well knew the source of those bruises.

A loud snuffling sound as Ana blew her nose into a tissue she'd fetched from a pocket in her robe brought Jan's attention back on what she was saying. "After he'd finished with me," Ana said, "he got dressed and told me not to move until he returned. I ..." she glanced over at Jan, blushed, and went on, "... his semen was dripping out of me ... I worried ... I know its crazy but ... I was worried it would stain my bedspread. I .. I asked him if I could wipe myself ... clean myself off ... He got angry. His eyes...were blazing. He told me no! He ... he told me ... he said ... every last drop of his seed had better still be in me when he returned or he'd do it to me again only this time ... this time ... he'd do it with the knife."

Ana Huff stopped talking and began to softly weep. Jan wrapped her in a protective hug, then looked over at the two men. Keith was staring down at his fingers which were interlaced and held down between his legs, pointing towards his shoes. Guilt-stricken. Pure and simple. DeLeon's his eyes were on Ana Huff. His lips were pressed tightly together, suppressing anger, Jan supposed. When he saw that Jan was watching him, he shook his head slightly. Jan didn't know if he was conveying his disgust with the actions of Payton or expressing his pessimism that there would be any alternative but to hunt the animal down and put a swift end to him.

In a gentle voice, DeLeon addressed Ana. "What happened after that? Did he return to

your room?"

Ana pulled out of Jan's hug and nodded. She then took a moment to again blow her nose before continuing. "It seemed like he was gone for quite some time, I even thought maybe he'd already left, but then he came back to tell me that he and the girls were leaving and that he was taking my car. He seemed in high spirits, he even made a joke. He said I was not to worry about my car, he'd let Simon drive. He then told me that I was free to clean myself up if I wanted, but I ought to give it a second thought. It might be my last best chance to bear a child and he was due for a son, he said. He also told me to call Jan. He said..." Ana looked over at Jan ... "he said to tell her he'd taken the girls and that he'd be waiting for her. He said to tell her it was time his debt to her was squared."

DeLeon asked, "Did he say where he'd be?"

Ana, still looking at Jan, shook her head. "I'm sorry," she said.

"That's all right," Jan answered, exchanging a knowing look with Keith.

Ana started to say something else to Jan but DeLeon interrupted. "Mind if I take a look around?" Without waiting for an answer, he stood and left the room. Jan heard him climb the stairs to the second floor.

Jan asked Ana if she could get her something to drink. When Ana answered that she would love some tea, Keith surprised Jan by saying he would make it. Ana gratefully directed him to its location in the kitchen and as soon as he left the room, she turned once more to Jan. Again her speech was halting, still the actress trying to master her lines.

"I'm sure it's...no secret to you that I've .. ah .. had ..a..um...crush on your husband. I have...um...fantasized about him ... thought about the...ah... possibilities of a relationship with him and what that might be like."

Tears again welled up in Ana's eyes and she had to wipe them away. "I don't know that I should say that Payton raped me. I don't know that it was ... against my will."

Jan reached out and took hold of one of Ana's hands; her basketballer hands swallowed that of the smaller woman's like two large brown leaves enfolded over a tiny white flower. "He threatened you with a knife," Jan said. "He threatened to harm my children if you did not cooperate. That is not a consensual act of sex. Payton raped you. You did nothing wrong."

Ana used her free hand to wipe away more tears. "No ... Jan ... it's not so simple. Even

though I told myself ... that ... it was Payton not Simon ... I was...deep down... hoping that some part of Simon was there, watching me, aware of what was happening. That hope was...in a way...a consent. I wanted Simon to see me naked, to touch my body and be inside me. I know that's a terrible thing to tell you but it was that hope that gave me the courage to stay quiet ... to get through it. Simon would protect me from Payton. That was my thought ... I'm sorry ...oh god, I'm really sorry...but that was my thought."

"I understand, Ana," Jan said, giving her hand a squeeze.

Ana, her lips losing their color from being pressed together so hard, nodded. Then, looking Jan straight in the eye, she took a big swallow of air and said, "I was wrong."

Jan was confused. "Wrong about what?"

"There was no part of Simon there or if there was, he could do nothing," Ana said. "Nothing whatsoever. Payton had sex with me and Simon could do nothing to stop him or to protect me. Payton did not kill me because he needed me to call you. Had he not needed me, I would not be alive. Stay away from him, Jan, he'll kill you and your daughters, too, if that is his choosing. The man's an animal."

Ana Huff dissolved into tears and allowed Jan to again envelop her in a comforting hug. While gently rocking her erstwhile rival, Jan had time to consider Ana's words. Whatever fear she'd felt before, paled to the fear she now felt. The fear was as broken glass inside her gut and she could almost taste the blood it drew welling up into her mouth.

* * *

Keith Joyner could not recall having ever made tea in his life but he knew the basics – boil some water, put it in the pot and add a tea bag. A quick search of Ana Huff's kitchen turned up cups and saucers, napkins and even a teakwood serving tray, an added touch that would, Keith knew, have made Sandra proud. When he returned to the living room and set out his offering, he took note that Ana Huff seemed reluctant to withdraw from the comfort of Jan's arms. He also noted that before pouring herself some tea, Ana tugged on the hem of her robe to make certain it covered her knees and tested the incongruous vinyl belt to make certain it was still drawn tight. Keith predicted that it would be a great long time before Ana Huff slept soundly through the night.

But he kept this prediction to himself.

Detective DeLeon returned to the living room. “Nothing,” he said in answer to the unspoken question of Jan before taking up a cup of tea and settling into a chair. No one said anything as the four of them just sat and sipped at tea. Keith’s mind should have been racing with thoughts but was coming up empty. Maybe he was too sleepy. He usually was not awake at this hour. In any case, he found the silence quite pleasant and was content to take a break from thinking. His enjoyment was suddenly interrupted by the ring of a phone.

All eyes went first to a stand in the room on which sat the ringing phone, then three pairs of those eyes turned on Ana.

“I believe I will let my answering machine do its job,” she said. “No one I know would be calling me at this time of night.”

Keith’s mind came back online. He sprang to his feet and caught the phone just as the answering machine clicked on.

“Hello?” Keith said.

“Keith? Is that you?” The voice on the other end sounded extremely tired and worn but there was no trace of an Irish brogue.

“Yeah, Simon, it’s me. Where are you?”

“I’m in the garage underneath Ana’s apartment building. Listen, I don’t know how much time I have before he comes back.”

There was no need for Keith to ask who *he* was but he did not understand where *he* had gone and he had to ask.

“What happened to Payton?”

“I don’t know, Keith, he’s just gone.” Simon’s weary voice took on a decidedly panicky edge. “There’s no time for discussion. The girls are locked in the trunk of Ana’s car. I don’t know what he’s got planned for them but I don’t want to find out. I’m going to leave here, I’m going put as much distance as I can possibly can between Payton and my girls before he comes back. In the meantime, you come down here and get them and then I want you to take them and Jan the hell out of here. Take them back to the Bay Area. Just do it, Keith.”

“What about you, Simon? What are you going to do?”

There was anger in Simon’s voice, anger and determination, but not enough to hide the underlying weariness and fear.

“I’m going to try to hold him in check and if he goes away again, I’m going to do what I have to do to make sure he never comes back.”

“Simon . . .”

“Save it, Keith, I’m leaving. Just be my friend and get down here. And do tell Jan and the girls that I loved them all dearly.”

Sim hung up the phone and Keith was left to explain to the others what had been said.

DeLeon was the first to speak when Keith had finished.

“Do you believe him?”

Keith could not look at Jan when he answered.

“No, I don’t. Why would the personality of Payton simply go away? It makes no sense when things make no sense, scientists get suspicious.”

DeLeon nodded. “So do cops.”

Keith looked over to Ana. “What kind of car do you have and where in the garage is it parked?”

"It's a green Camry," Ana replied. "It's parked in space number seven."

"Keys?" DeLeon asked.

"Simon took them."

"You don't have a spare set?"

"Simon took those, too."

DeLeon shook his head. "How about a cardkey to open the security gate?"

"Simon took that as well," Ana said.

DeLeon scowled. "Did he think to ask for all that, or did you volunteer it?"

"I..." Ana Huff looked stunned, as if DeLeon had slapped her across the face. There was genuine hurt in her eyes. Keith stepped in to rescue her.

"Take it, easy big fellow," he said to DeLeon. "This hasn't been her best night, either."

The detective blushed. "I'm sorry, ma'am. It's just a bit frustrating. This Payton fellow just seems to be a pretty cool customer. Hard to believe someone could be so cool to think of everything under the circumstances."

"Believe it," said Keith. "The Payton personality is as cool a customer as you are ever likely to meet."

A recovered Ana spoke up. "He took the car keys and the garage cardkey out of my purse. The spare keys were in the nightstand next to my bed. I volunteered nothing, detective, but I gave him everything he asked for. I did not dare deny him for fear of what he might do to me with the girls in the next room. But it doesn't matter. There's a door in the kitchen that opens up to a stairwell leads down to the garage."

"Is it a private entrance or is it shared with another unit?" DeLeon asked.

"It's a private entrance," Ana answered.

"Well that's one piece of good news," Keith said. He turned to DeLeon "I think it's best you wait here. Guard the fort?"

DeLeon shook his head. "I think that's what Payton might want. If you and I were to both leave and that kitchen door were to somehow get locked behind us, there's no way for us to get back in."

DeLeon did not look directly at Ana when he said it, but Keith caught the implication and began to wonder if he, too, should be suspicious. After all, she'd admitted to having feelings for Simon and the Payton personality was a master at manipulating and exploiting weaknesses in others. He again studied the small, somewhat frail-looking woman on the sofa next to Jan. No, he decided, anyone could see she was deeply frightened. If her fear was an act, then Ana Huff the history professor has missed her theatrical calling.

"Let's you and me talk about it in the kitchen," he said to DeLeon. Jan opened her mouth as if to speak then fell silent. Keith was much relieved. For one awful moment, he worried that she would insist on going down after the twins herself.

Alone in the kitchen with DeLeon, Keith talked fast.

"You're probably right, Payton's trying to separate the two of us from Jan. That means one of us needs to stay here. I think you're the best man for that job. You're armed and you can make one phone call and the local cops will be here within minutes to back you up. Me, I'll call 9-1-1 and be put on hold for an hour. Besides, if Payton is down there waiting, I might be able to reason with him, or at least I have a better chance of reaching the Simon personality."

DeLeon shook his head. "Let's just suppose for a second that the car is down there and those girls are locked inside the trunk but that Payton is somewhere in that garage waiting to

take out whoever comes looking for them. He won't give you or anyone else a chance to reason dick. No offense, professor, but I think I'll present a bigger problem for him."

Keith bristled. "Don't let the academic title fool you none, I can handle myself."

DeLeon raised up a hand. In it was a large black pistol. "I'm sure you can, but like you said, I'm armed. We both agree that what we most likely got here is a wolf in sheep's clothing. The best way to scare a wolf away is to convince him he'll come out second best in a fight. I think this (he made a motion with his pistol) will convince him."

The presence of DeLeon's gun made Keith uneasy. "You do realize that if the Payton personality is down there, waiting, he make take a lot of convincing."

DeLeon's voice was cold and hard, a side to the man's personality that he'd apparently concealed from Jan. "This Payton character does not want to test me. Cause if he does, I will cancel all his debts."

"Maybe that was Simon on the phone," Keith said, anxious to defuse some of DeLeon's tension as well as his own. "Maybe the girls are locked in the trunk of that car and maybe Simon will have taken Payton far from here."

"Maybe," DeLeon said with a nod. "But in the meantime, I'm going to lock this kitchen door behind me. Don't open it or the front door for anybody but me. And don't leave here until I get back."

Keith eyed him coolly. "Suppose you don't come back?"

DeLeon's initial glare of a response faded into a half-smile.

"I'll be back, don't you worry about that. And if those two girls are down in that trunk, I'll get them and bring them back. You can count on it."

* * *

The gun that Detective Jose DeLeon held up in front of Keith Joyner was not his service revolver, a .38 caliber Smith & Wesson Chief's Special, but his personal 9 millimeter Glock17. DeLeon had no intentions of going into any potential battle of this magnitude with a mere five rounds at his disposal. His Glock had been modified to accommodate a double clip, giving him 34 rounds before reloading. If he couldn't take out a target with 34 rounds, he didn't deserve to survive. Nonetheless, he carried two extra double clips in his pocket as backup. Better to be an undeserving survivor than to be dead.

DeLeon turned the doorknob to the door at the back of Ana Huff's kitchen, took a deep breath, then violently threw the door open. In the same motion, he slid out into the stairwell, his back pressed hard to the door, the barrel of the Glock pointed down the flight of concrete steps. It took a moment for his eyes to adjust to the darkness. Why was it so dark? Where was the light? Glancing up, he saw a light fixture above and to the right of the door through which he'd just come. The bulb had been removed.

DeLeon presumed this had been a fairly recent development.

Half-turning, he stepped back from the door, allowing it to close and assuring himself that there was no one was behind him. Cautiously, he proceeded down the stairway which was encaged in a mesh of black metal, reached the bottom and pushed open the solid metal door. The garage was full but well lit and Ana's green Camry, which was parked nearby, was easy to spot. As he approached the car, DeLeon's eyes darted constantly back and forth, watching for any movement, anything at all out of place or suspicious. But he saw nothing. Eyes still on the alert for movement in the garage, he checked the front and back seats of the Camry to be sure they were empty. Then he went around to the trunk. In a loud voice, he called out the names Louise and Elizabeth then he pounded twice on the top of the trunk. There were immediate answering thumps from within.

DeLeon's heart pumped exultantly. He was about to make become a hero in the eyes of Mrs. Thomas. Quickly he identified himself and told the girls to stay cool, he'd have them out shortly. Looking about the garage, he spied a pile of bricks off to one corner. Still keeping a sharp lookout for Simon, he walked over to the pile, hefted a brick in his left-hand, his shooting-hand still holding the Glock, and returned to the Camry.

"I'm going to smash the lock girls!" he shouted. "Try to squeeze back as far as you can. On the count of three. One. Two. Three!"

DeLeon smashed the brick directly against the trunk latch with all his might. He struck it a second and a third time. On the fourth smash, the trunk door popped open. Simultaneously the Camry's car alarm went off in that obnoxious sequence of ear-splitting, brain-jarring sounds that had become a major nuisance of modern life. Being so close to the alarm and in a garage that functioned as one big echo-chamber, the noise was exceptionally deafening. Through his teeth-clenched grimace, DeLeon saw the two girls huddled together toward the rear of the trunk, their

long lanky bodies pretzeled around one another to fit in the tight quarters. They were staring up at him wide-eyed with fear. In that instant, DeLeon saw, or maybe sensed, a shadow coming up swiftly from behind. Before he could react, there was an explosion of bright lights inside his head.

Then the lights went out.

* * *

Jose DeLeon's eyes fluttered open. After some lengthy blinking, his eyes came into focus and he looked up into the face of Keith Joyner. His voice came out as a stony growl: "The fuck you doing in my bedroom?"

Keith smiled. "I'm not in your bedroom and neither are you. We're in Pittsburgh, in the home of Ana Huff. You're in her bed cause you got your bell rung by Payton Adams."

DeLeon sat up. Slowly. A soft groan slipped through his lips. "My head hurts like hell," he said. Casting his eyes down at his chest he took note that his shirt was stained with dried blood. "Whose is that?" he asked, motioning with his chin to the blood stains.

"Yours," answered Keith. "You got a nasty cut on your forehead. It's going to take stitches to close it."

DeLeon reached up with his fingers and gingerly felt out the big bandage plastered in the center of his forehead just below the scalp.

"He hit me from the front?" DeLeon asked, sounding stunned by the suggestion that he'd been successfully attacked with a frontal assault.

"No," said Keith, shaking his head. "From the welt on the back of her your neck at the base of the skull, I'd say he rabbit punched you from behind. You must have struck your head on Ana's car when you went down. What do you remember?"

DeLeon closed his eyes and concentrated. "I remember finding the green Camry, busting open the trunk door, seeing the girls inside and then.... pow!" DeLeon's eyes suddenly opened. "What about the girls? Are they here? Are they alright?"

"They're gone," Keith answered. "So's the car. We presume Payton took them. You left to go looking for them and were gone about a half hour. I got antsy and went looking for you. I found you stretched out cold next to Ana's empty parking space."

DeLeon winced. Keith was sure the man's head was pounding like a drum and that what

he'd most like to do at that moment was close his eyes and sleep it off. Nonetheless, he forced his eyes open and kept talking. "Don't I remember telling you not to come after me?"

Keith responded with a slight grin. "Lucky for you, we alpha males don't play that follow-my-orders game. You know, when I first spotted you down in the garage, I was afraid you might be dead."

"It's kinda interesting that I'm not, don't you think?"

Keith nodded. "Yeah, I do. Very interesting, though I'm not quite sure what to make of that fact."

DeLeon again glanced down at his chest. "Where's my piece? Did Simon take it?"

Keith shook his head. "Negative. You were still holding it when I found you. Once I'd verified that you were still alive if not exactly kicking, I carried you up here. Jan thought you'd be more comfortable if she removed your holster and your jacket. When she took your coat off she found a note from Payton stuck in the liner pocket."

Once again, DeLeon winced, but still, he kept on. "What did it say? The note?"

"Sunrise."

DeLeon raised his eyebrows as if to send Keith a questioning look, but the motion caused the cut on his forehead to begin bleeding again; a red trickle seeped out from behind the big white bandage.

Keith was immediately concerned. "We've got to get you to a hospital, have them stitch up that cut and check you out for any collateral trauma. I called 9-1-1. Didn't take but 20 minutes to get through. Paramedics are on the way. They'll take you and Ana. I think it's a good idea to have someone look at her as well. She says she's all right, but she's walking so stiffly, I think a physical exam of her pelvic region is in order. Can't hurt."

DeLeon became suspicious. "Yeah, and while we're at the hospital, what will you and Mrs. Thomas be doing?"

Keith hesitated. Should he be honest? Yeah, what the hell, DeLeon wasn't in any position to make a fuss.

"We're taking the rental car for a drive across something called the High Level Bridge. We're going over the Monongahela River and into a town called Homestead. From there, we'll head south along the river to a place where Ana tells us there still exists the remains of a ferry

landing from the 19th century. I've heard it's a good spot to watch the sunrise."

DeLeon closed his eyes and sighed. "You know that's exactly what Payton wants you to do," he said.

"Of course," Keith replied.

"Mrs. Thomas knows it too, I assume."

"Better than you or me."

"So then I don't need to tell either of you in-the-know people that this is a setup."

Keith nodded to himself. "The safety of her daughters is Jan's first and foremost consideration. Until she sees them safe and sound nothing else matters."

The red trickle of blood seeping out from under DeLeon's bandage had reached the bridge of his nose and dribbled down into the corner of his eye. The detective angrily wiped it away. "For all we know, he's already killed them. He doesn't need those girls alive to lure Jan to that landing."

Keith answered as he reached down to pull back DeLeon's bandage so he could inspect the wound. "No, he won't kill those girls, at least not until Jan has a chance to see them."

"What makes you so sure?" DeLeon grumped.

"The fact that Payton did not kill you tells me that the personality of Simon has not been entirely silenced. It may no longer be calling the shots, but Simon's personality is expressing itself and its voice is being heard. There's not a doubt in my mind that the Payton personality knows from the Simon personality that if Jan shows up at the landing and those girls aren't there, she'll shoot him on the spot."

"Does she really know how to use that piece of hers?"

"A regular Annie Oakley," Keith answered, patting the bandage back in place.

"Shooting at targets is one thing, shooting at a human being is something else," DeLeon snorted, "especially if that human being happens to be a husband you love."

"That human being happens to be a man who looks like the husband she loves," Keith corrected. "And if those girls aren't on that landing at sunrise, whatever he may have done to them, she won't give him another chance to do anything else."

DeLeon closed his eyes once more. His energy seemed to be waning and his speech took on a slurred quality. He hurried to get the words out, perhaps afraid he was going to slip into

unconsciousness. "Have it your way, the girls will be alive when you get there. But for how long? And what happens to Mrs. Thomas? This Payton personality may be recreating the scene of his death, but you know he plans to change the ending. I don't care how good a shot Mrs. Thomas is, Payton is a cold manipulative bastard and he could take it her out in a heartbeat with a single swipe of his paw. All he needs is to create the tiniest doubt in her mind, a single moment of hesitancy, and she's dead meat. Payton will have squared his debt. And once Mrs. Thomas is dead, what does he need two eyewitnesses for? If Payton has his way, those girls won't be orphans for long, I promise you that."

Had DeLeon's eyes been open, he would have seen Keith giving him the hard look of an alpha male whose manhood has been impugned. Had he seen this look, he might even have become more than a little bit nervous.

"You forget that I'll be there," Keith said, voice cool. "I told you I can handle myself. I plan to stick on Jan like stink on shit. You don't know me well enough to believe me when I tell you that I won't permit Payton to harm either Jan or her daughters. But whether or not you believe me doesn't matter. What matters is that to hurt Jan or the twins, Payton's going to have to go through me and that's not going to happen."

Just then, Jan popped her head in the doorway and announced that the cab had arrived. "How's our patient?" she asked Keith of DeLeon.

"He's a bit punchy, but he'll live," Keith answered.

"Do you need help getting him up and out?"

Keith gave Jan a smile. "I can manage. He doesn't know that, but you do, don't you?"

Jan returned a quizzical look. "I know that if you say you'll manage, you will."

Jan left and Keith moved to help DeLeon up from the bed. The big detective was fading fast, but he clutched at Keith's arm and pulled his ear in close.

"I believe you," he whispered. "How does it go down?"

"The way it goes down is," Keith said, "we meet Payton at the landing and get him to release the girls. We will then administer the sedative which will instantly knock him out, after which, I will then give him one more dose of Quip. That ought to put an end to the Payton personality."

"How...how..you..." DeLeon had to stop to lick his lips, before he could complete his

sentence. "How you gonna get him to take the sedative?"

"He can do it voluntarily or be forced at gunpoint. Payton's not going to see Quip as much of a threat, certainly not something worth getting shot over."

DeLeon nodded. His breathing was becoming more ragged and his eyes were growing increasingly rheumy. Keith figured he'd sleep through the ride to the hospital. But DeLeon had one more thing to say and he was determined to spit it out.

"We ... know ... Payton's packing a ... large knife. You...you'd better take my piece. It'll ...help you live up to your boast. But..." DeLeon pulled Keith in even closer, "you may have to shoot first and ask questions later. Can you do that?"

Keith pulled back and looked down at DeLeon whose eyes were open and gazing up at him, rheumy but aware. "Simon would want me to stop Payton, whatever the cost. I owe my best friend that. Payton's not the only one who squares his debts."

CHAPTER THIRTY SIX

The sky, on the cusp of dawn, was a pastiche of pink and orange as Jan and Keith sped across the High Level bridge in their rental car, far above the wide, brown, swift-flowing waters of the Monongahela River. Keith was driving well over the posted speed limit but, as there were no other cars on the bridge and small likelihood they'd be stopped by the police at that hour, Jan ordered him to go even faster. Keith obliged and they accelerated their descent into Homestead, a town that grew up the steep side of a massive hill. "Steep" was an understatement, Jan thought. Looming straight ahead at the end of the bridge was a street that appeared to rise at a ninety degree incline; Jan could recall seeing none worse in the Bay Area. Thankfully, they would not be climbing that hill and she turned to look out Keith's window. Separating the town from the waterfront was a broad, desolate field that extended as far as her eyes could see around a huge horseshoe bend in the river. This large barren plain, Ana Huff had told her, had been the site of the Homestead Steel Works.

The irony was too much, Jan thought. From Simon's journal, she knew that once upon a time, not so many years ago, she would have been gazing out an immense crucible of glowing sheds, fiery ovens, blazing furnaces, and towering chimney stacks; a giant man-made dragon that filled the air with its sound and fury, and blackened the sky with a non-stop barrage of flame and smoke and ash. Now, this once mighty dragon, this sweatbox forge of iron and steel, was what the developers called a brownfield site, sorry-assed property that would lie fallow and unexploited until real estate prices and the largess of local and state governments made its value worth the cost of environmental remediation.

As instructed by Ana Huff, when they came off the bridge, Keith hung a left on Eighth Avenue and proceeded south. Again from Simon's journal, Jan knew that once this street and the buildings that lined it on either side had teemed with the bustle of life and activity. Yes, it might have reeked with the stench of filth and garbage and excrement, and yes, its structures were no doubt flimsy and slapdash in the hastiness of their construction, but Jan had taken from Simon's impressions that the town had pulsed with excitement. Beneath the dirt and perpetual coat of grime, the town had displayed an exhilarating optimism, the muscle-flexing strength and enthusiasm that comes with youth and vigor and the collective dreams of better times ahead in the minds of its citizenry. But the town had lost its fire-spewing, smoke-belching dragon and now it could serve as a poster icon for industrial decrepitude. Every other storefront looked boarded up, abandoned, or otherwise impoverished, and the street itself was in a state of severe disrepair, pocked with potholes and creased and blemished with the cracks and decay stains of age. Block after repetitious block was permeated with a weary tawdriness like an infestation that had sapped the vitality of all its structures. There were no residents to be seen at that hour, but Jan was quite certain that Homestead was a town where the death certificates far outnumbered the announcements of birth by a margin that increased with each passing year.

"Bet this place turns out some kick-ass athletes," Keith said, rubbernecking while he drove.

"What makes you say that?" Jan asked. She saw a small shadowy something skitter through a hole in one of the building fronts and wondered whether it was a cat or a rat.

"Cause this is the kind of shithole athletes strive to escape from," Keith answered. "Shouldn't we be talking more about what we're going to do when we get there? Cause we're just about to get there."

"You sound like a man with a plan," Jan remarked, her eyes still taking in the sad sorry sights of the street as she watched closely for their turnoff. She felt Keith's eyes upon her but she did not turn her head to look at him. After a short silence, Keith started up again.

"Since you asked, yeah, as a matter of fact, I do have a plan," he said. "It starts with the assumption, a reasonable one I think, that Simon is armed only with a knife and not a gun."

"Why's that so reasonable?" Jan interrupted, still watching for the turnoff. Her voice

must have carried a stronger message than she intended to deliver, for she could sense his rising anger.

"Two reasons. First, the Payton personality is attempting to recreate the scene of Payton's death. Since we know that Cat's throat was slashed, Payton must have had his knife with him back in 1892, and we know that Simon had a knife with him when he left Ana Huff's place."

"So what? Maybe Simon also had a gun with him when he left Ana's. And how do we know that Payton didn't have a gun with him on the morning he was killed?"

Definitely too sarcastic. Keith exploded. "Cause he'd have shot both those bitches dead, taken all the gold for himself and maybe neither of us would be here!"

Jan kept silent to give him time to recover.

"I'm sorry," he finally said. "I guess I'm nervous."

Jan was conciliatory. "Well, you got me beat, I'm flat-out scared. You said there were two reasons to assume Simon only has a knife. What's the second?"

Keith's cheeks darkened. "A knife is personal. Payton's debt with you is as personal as it gets."

"Here's the turn," Jan said, pointing to a corner on which sat a dilapidated warehouse with a partially destroyed roof from a fire that had apparently burned a long time ago. She was grateful for the opportunity to avoid giving a response to Keith's second reason. Keith himself seemed happy to drop the subject. Silently he hung a left and headed for the river. The street they were on dead-ended at the edge of the barren plain. Parked at the end on the street was a green Toyota Camry with no one inside. Keith pulled up next to it and stopped the car. On the other side of the plain, across a couple hundred yards of dirt, patchy wildgrass and weeds, was the Monongahela River. From where they were stopped, the river was just beginning to enter its horseshoe bend which was to their left. To their right, across the almost to the water's edge stood a scruffy grove of trees, the only objects in sight that blocked their view of the water. Jan felt a sharp tremor run the length of her body. On the other side of those trees, protruding out into the water, there was an ancient concrete landing upon which she believed, hoped, and prayed, her daughters and her husband awaited.

Try as she might, she could not ignore a tiny voice in the back of her mind which insisted

on reminding her that also waiting on the other side of those trees was a personality back from a century-long hiatus who intended to kill her.

Keith and Jan exited the car together. Before closing his door, Keith removed from the back seat his medical bag and slung it over his shoulder opposite the holster of Detective DeLeon. It was the first time Jan had ever seen Keith strapped. Unlike the baggy jeans and 49er sweatshirt she wore, Keith's black tee-shirt and tan khaki trousers were form-fitting. His Air Jordans, again unlike her well-worn Converse All-Stars, were new. He looked slick and dangerous, like the star of one of those TV cop shows. Jan wondered if he could hit anything with the pistol, anything smaller than the broad side of a barn.

She had serious doubts.

Jan withdrew from her purse her Beretta Tomcat, then tossed the purse back into the car and closed the door. When she looked up, she saw that Keith had been watching her.

"Let's do it," she said.

Side-by-side, Jan and Keith started walking towards the grove of trees. The sun had arisen, changing the sky from a mix of pink and orange into a series of red and gold slashes across a pale blue background. In the quiet of the dawn, the only sound to be heard was the occasional slap of a river wavelet against the shore. There was none of the metallic stink to the air of which Simon had written in his journal, but the smell of the water was strong and sour.

"So we make the reasonable assumption that Payton is armed with a knife," Jan said, as they walked. "What's the rest of your plan?"

"I want you to wait on this side of the trees, out of sight of Payton," he told her, his voice keen with nervous excitement. "I'll go down to the landing myself. DeLeon's gun drawn, of course."

"Gun drawn?" Jan interrupted.

Keith gave her a solemn look and nodded. "The best way to avoid a fight with a beast is to convince him he's going to lose. As a lawyer, you ought to appreciate that."

"As a lawyer, I do," Jan said. "So what happens after you go in with gun drawn?"

"I tell Payton that you're up here, watching, and that you'll come down once you see he's released the girls."

"What if he refuses to let the girls go?"

"He won't do that. You're the one he wants. He doesn't give a damn about those Louise and Elizabeth. They're not part of the original scene."

"Neither are you."

"Exactly. He won't want me around either. My guess is he'll bargain. He'll offer to let the girls go with me in exchange for the promise that I send you down."

"Why should he trust you? Why wouldn't he expect you take the girls and leave with me?"

"You forget he still has one hostage left."

Jan nodded and said it: "Simon."

"That's right," said Keith. "Payton knows you want Simon. He knows you won't leave without trying to do something that will put Simon's personality back in control. He knows I won't walk away either. He'll let the girls go cause he's still got Simon."

"Let's say you're right, what do we do after he gives up the girls?"

"You come down..."

"Gun drawn," interjected Jan with more sarcasm than her circumstances warranted.

Keith nodded, seemingly taking no notice of Jan's tone. "That's right. Gun drawn. We can't be stupid about this. We're facing a psychotic personality, a trained killer who will do us both the first chance he gets. You come down and together we'll try to get through to the Simon personality which we know is still in there somewhere. We'll try to reach that personality and reason with him."

"And if that doesn't work? If Payton won't let us through?"

"If truth be told, that's just about a given, and the moment you come to terms with that fact, you shoot him in the leg. When he goes down I'll stick him with the sedative." Keith gave his medical bag a confident pat for Jan's apparent benefit. "The hypos are locked and loaded. The sedative will have him out in two shakes of a jiff and Quip will take him down Memory Lane."

"Even with him suffering from a gunshot wound to the leg?" "Even if you were to cut off both his legs. This sedative is powerful stuff."

Jan scowled. "Are we to let Simon bleed to death while he revisits the memory of

Payton's demise?"

Keith was becoming visibly exasperated. "Of course not, I'll treat his wound." He again patted his medical bag for Jan's benefit.

"So, under your plan, Simon could be wounded, in pain, and undergoing medical treatment while under the influence of Quip. That's a far cry from sensory deprivation in the MNEME. How's it going to affect Quip?"

"That remains to be seen, of course," he answered, "but it's a chance we'll have to take."

They had reached the edge of the grove. The slap of the water had grown louder and Jan was sure she could hear the voice of one her daughters from the other side of the trees. She thought it was Louise. Lowering her own voice, she said to Keith, "You're asking me to risk an awful lot on your hypothesis. There's so many questions."

The sound of a second voice could be heard from the other side of the trees, a girl posing a question that was answered by a man with an Irish brogue. Keith cast an anxious glance in the direction of the voices then turned to Jan.

"There's only two questions. If it comes down to it, are you willing to shoot Simon?"

Jan flamed him with a look she hoped would melt glass. "Yes. What's the other question?"

With another nervous glance at the trees, Keith replied, "The second question is whether or not another dose of Quip will work. It could be that science has taken us as far as it can. But (he shrugged) as they say in sports, you dance with who brung you."

That was all Jan needed to hear to make her decision.

"I'm a modern woman, Keith. I don't *have* to dance with who brung me if I choose not to. And for this next dance, I choose to let you sit it out. Here," she said, handing her pistol to him, "take this and let me have DeLeon's Glock."

Keith actually took a step backwards and frowned. "That's a lady's gun," he said, so concerned over the small size and delicate appearance of the Beretta that he seemed not to have heard what she'd just said.

"Yeah but it will kill a man," responded Jan, shaking her head in disbelief of his macho foolishness.

Keith was still dubious about the Beretta. "It's awfully small."

Jan made an impatient motion with the pistol. "Trust me, it packs a mean wallop."

Reluctantly, Keith accepted her gun and gave her DeLeon's in exchange. "Yeah, maybe it is a better idea if you take that gun," he said, eyeing the small black pistol with concern.

"I think so," Jan said, taking a few moments to get a feel for her new weapon. Though much bigger than her Beretta, the Glock, with its plastic frame, was not noticeably heavier. Sighting down the barrel, she took note of its excellent pointability -- she was bound to hit precisely where she was aiming. She also liked the gun's grip angle. With an admiring smile, she worked the action and chambered a round.

"You apparently did not hear me before, but I had another good idea, too," she remarked, again sighting down the barrel of the Glock.

"Yeah?" Keith asked, still looking with suspicion at the Beretta which seemed to almost disappear in the grip of his large hand. "What was that?"

"I told you I don't *have* to dance with who brung me if I choose not to. I think it's best if you sit this next dance out. Wait here and I'll send the girls to you."

Keith blinked. "Ummm, I don't think that's a good idea. When Si...Payton sees you, there's no telling what he'll do. If he sees me, he's more likely to bargain, you know, give up the girls."

"He'll give up the girls to me," Jan said, admiring the double clip affixed to DeLeon's Glock. "I'll make him."

They heard voices again from the other side of the trees, drawing another nervous look from Keith but he knew from his own memories to not waste time arguing with Jan.

"Okay. You send the girls to me, I'll send them to the car then come join you and we'll give Simon the Quip."

"No," Jan said quietly but emphatically. "Take the girls to the car yourself and wait there with them. If Simon comes through that grove without me you get the hell out of here. You get those girls to safety and you contact the police."

"But...but...how are you going to give Simon the Quip?"

Jan looked him straight in the eyes and delivered the news. "Simon's not getting any more Quip. He's done with that."

Keith swallowed. "Listen Jan...."

She fiercely shook her head. "No, I've been listening. It's your turn to listen, Keith. You and your fellow scientists say that the Payton personality took control of Simon's mind through the power of violent instincts such as anger and aggression. You say that without Quip, Simon's own personality has no chance of successfully fighting back. Well, I don't agree. I can't agree. Simon loves me and that's got to mean something. If all the universe is a story of checks and balances, if for every push there's a pull, for every minus, a plus, then if the power of violence counts, the power of love has got to count too."

Keith shook his head back at Jan. In his voice was a desperation that pierced her like a sharp blade. "No, Jan, I'm sorry, but neurobiology doesn't work that way. Love may sell lots of cards, candy, flowers, CD music and Hollywood movies, but it's just a feeling, a chemical high not all that different from eating a big ole chunk of chocolate. Love doesn't count, nowhere near enough to overcome the primal instincts driving Payton's violence. What we're talking about here is fear-response, the beast within. Without fear-response, you can't survive, but you can survive without love. That's the unvarnished absolute cold sad truth and you need to accept it because this ain't no Hollywood movie, girl. In this story, you can and will be killed. On the other side of those trees is a man with a knife. Inside the brain of that man, a thousand million neurons are doing their chemistry thing, and the outcome of that chemistry thing is this: That man believes he is the resurrected spirit of Payton Adams. Back from the grave but not to forgive the sins of those who trespassed against him. No, this ain't Jesus, it's the Anti-Christ and he's back for revenge. When he sees you coming out of those trees, he won't be seeing no Jan Thomas, beloved wife of Simon, he'll be seeing the spirit of a woman who killed him and he will do unto her what she did unto him. It's payback time and he will square his debt."

Again Jan fiercely shook her head. Then she posed a question. "Why are you here with me now, Keith?"

The question threw him. "What?"

"Why are you here?" she repeated. Then she pointed to the grove of trees. "There's the glass barrier and on the other side of that barrier is the poisonous snake waiting to strike. You're scared shitless and rightly so, yet here you are, ready to approach the snake, even though you're jeopardizing your own survival. Why? Why are you here?"

Jan did not need an answer from Keith, she supplied her own. "Love. That's why you're here. Your love for Simon and your love for me brought you here despite the danger. Your love for us trumped your fear of Payton. So don't tell me that love doesn't matter much, don't tell me that love can't overcome primal instincts. Your very presence belies that. When I go through those trees and step down onto that landing, all those neurons that are still doing the chemistry for Simon Thomas are going to recognize me as the woman he loves. And I don't need a degree in neuroscience to tell you that love is not something to be dismissed. You can label it a feeling, a chemical high, or anything else you want but love counts and love counts big. That's my hypothesis, Keith, and Simon is going to have to prove otherwise. Love counts big."

She leaned forward and kissed him quickly on the lips. "I told you I was willing to shoot Simon, so you know I'm willing to shoot you if you try to stop me. Be my friend and do as I ask."

Keith took one more look at the grove of trees. Then, with a reluctant sigh, he nodded. "I pray that you're right," he said.

Jan gave him a quick hug and whispered into his ear, "If I'm wrong, then I don't know that I want to survive."

With that she turned and headed up a small path that cut through the trees. The grove stood on a small rise in the land and a recent rain had left the path somewhat muddy and slippery, making the climb more difficult than she'd anticipated. Even with her Converse All-Stars, traction was tough. Furthermore, the undergrowth on either side of the path was thick and unruly, and she was collecting a growing number of thistles and foxtails on her jeans, not a one of which felt comfortable. Having to make her way with the Glock in one hand did not help matters. As she pressed forward, it struck Jan that a century ago, Rosaleen Adams had walked this same path. Rosaleen also was on a mission to find her husband. She also was carrying a loaded gun and she, too, faced the fear that she might have to kill the father of her child. Tears of shared emotion surfaced in Jan's eyes, the sudden bond she felt with this long dead woman was strong, but Jan wiped them away and put the emotion aside. She'd feel for Rosaleen some other time and knew that Rosaleen would understand.

Jan did not know what she expected to see when she emerged from out of the grove of trees. Something along the lines of the twins bound back-to-back on the concrete landing, a

frothing-at-the-mouth Payton standing over them with his knife poised and ready to strike. Which might explain why the scene that did greet her was such a shock.

The small concrete landing was just as Simon had described it in his dream; a muddy and mossy slab of cement supported by four moldy wooden pillars, one at each corner. The river was indeed wide and brown with a very fast current, and there was even a wispy steam fog rising off its surface about mid-way across. There was no skiff, of course, and the wooden stairs leading down to the landing had long since rotted away. Jan would have no choice but to jump down. For the moment, however, she could not move or make a sound; she could only stare down at the landing.

Simon was there with the girls all right. The three of them were sitting together on the edge of the landing, their backs to Jan, with Simon in the middle and all with their feet dangling in the water. The sight could not have been more ordinary looking. Both girls were dressed similar to Jan, jeans and their baggy Cal sweatshirts but they'd made a curious switch. Louise was wearing Elizabeth's, which was gray, and Elizabeth was wearing Louise's, which was blue. Their long manes of reddish-brown hair had been done in matching pony-tails that hung down almost the full length of their backs. They so loved that long hair, Jan thought, and she felt the threat of more tears from the sheer domesticity of the scene. Simon Thomas, professor of history, out with his beautiful teenaged twin daughters, Louise and Elizabeth, watching the sunrise down by the riverfront. Even their conversation sounded like typical Thomas girl chatting. Louise's voice carried its customary know-it-all flippancy, Elizabeth's its usual sardonic undertones. The only difference was the voice of Simon which was one-hundred percent, right-off-the-boat Irish.

Fighting off the emotions, Jan took a breath and dropped down the embankment. It wasn't much of a drop, but still Jan stumbled and fell to her knees. The noise caused the trio on the landing to look her way. Together they stood to confront her as she stepped up onto the slab. Only when Simon was fully facing her did Jan see that he was holding a knife with a large, jagged-edged blade. In response, Jan raised the barrel of the Glock and, holding the pistol rock steady in a two-handed grip, aimed it dead-center between Simon's eyes. A headshot would mean instant brain-death should Payton make any move to harm the girls.

"Step away from your father, girls, and go back up through the trees," Jan said, putting

with as much authority as she could into her voice. "Keith's waiting on the other side. He'll take you away from here."

"No!" cried Louise and Elizabeth in unison.

Both girls moved to stand in front of their father, shielding him from their mother.

"Mama, you can't do this," Louise said, voice trembling. "Dad needs our help. He's not right, you know that. Quip has messed him up. He thinks he's his great-grandfather. Don't hurt him."

Elizabeth took a step toward Jan. Her eyes wide with fear. "Listen to Louise, Mama, she's right. Dad's in trouble. His little problem is a big problem, Mama, a very big problem. He locked us in the trunk of a car, he hit that police detective on the head. Quip has made him crazy but you don't treat crazy people by shooting them. Go away. Louise and I can handle this. We'll get Dad to come in for help."

"That's right, Mama," Louise beseeched. "Go away before you hurt Dad or he hurts you."

Jan swallowed. "Right now he is not your dad. He is exactly who he thinks he is, Payton not Simon. He will destroy our family unless I stop him and I can't do that until the two of you are out of the way. I'm your mother and I'm ordering you both to step aside. Leave us. Now!"

Jan barked the word "Now!" like a drill sergeant issuing a command, but it fell on deaf ears. Both girls were choking back the tears as they stubbornly refused to move away from their father.

"Mama, you don't understand," cried Louise, "you aren't helping things."

"He's our daddy, we can convince him to get help, just give us more time," pleaded Elizabeth.

As a frustrated Jan pondered her next move, help came from Payton. In his ice cold Irish voice, he instructed both girls to do as they were told and leave.

"I've no debts to square with you so be off," he said.

Elizabeth turned to face her father. "Daddy, you've got to drop that knife. Don't force Mama to shoot you. She doesn't miss. You'll be killed."

A smile spread across his face. It was a smile of amusement but it was also a showing of teeth, the disdainful sneering display of a predator. "She doesn't miss targets, you mean. Could be a different story when her life is on the line. Every man's a tiger until he starts leaking his own

blood."

Louise spoke up, she too had turned to face her father. "Daddy, please, we're begging you, please put the knife down."

Payton laughed. "What's your mother going to do? Kill me? I'm already dead you daft pussywillows. The bitch killed me many years ago. It's time to pay her back in kind. Now leave us or I'll for sure kill the both of you as you stand and feed your bodies to the fish."

"Dad!" cried Louise.

"Daddy!" exhorted Elizabeth.

Both girls started towards him. Payton stepped back and menacingly held up the knife.

"Whether you live or die, makes no never-mind to me," he snarled. "Just so long as you're out of my way."

Each girl stopped in her tracks, exchanged looks with her twin and then turned back to their mother. Fear and confusion brought stark expressions of agony to their young faces. Jan could not remember either ever seeming so vulnerable and lost. Swallowing her own fear, she lifted her eyes from her daughters and trained them on Payton. Attempting to match the ice cold tone of Payton's voice, she issued him a challenge.

"Are you so sure you can deliver a killing blow to those girls? Are you so sure you can make Simon strike down his own daughters?"

To Jan's surprise, a fleeting look of uncertainty passed through his eyes. It was the first hesitancy Jan had ever observed in Payton. She was stunned by a second surprise a moment later.

"I don't know," he admitted. "Maybe I can, maybe I can't." Another moment passed. Then Payton counterattacked.

With a vengeance.

"Are you so sure you can kill Simon? Look at me, woman. Simon is here, inside of me. We are one and the same. I am Simon."

Jan's response was immediate, it came without thinking. "I know Simon and you're not him. Touch my babies and I'll send you back to hell."

There was another pause and Jan's mind raced to put it altogether. She'd just witnessed something significant, she knew that, a chink in Payton's glacial armor. Now if she could just

figure out exactly what it was she'd seen. Meanwhile, Payton had regained his stride; he was back in cold taunting form.

"Tis a fair question as to whether or not Simon will permit me to kill his girls and I can't rightly say for sure. It'd be a helluva an interesting contest. But I can tell you for certain that he will permit me to kill you."

Jan was stunned. Seeing her reaction, he struck again.

"Don't be so surprised, darlin', I saw those looks between you and Simon's nigger friend. I know what the two of you have been up to behind his back you. Now Simon knows too. Simon knows what a treacherous black whore you are. You fucked Keith behind Simon's back. You fucked his best friend you heartless cunt. And Simon is pissed, he is. Rightfully, royally pissed. I've never felt him so angry before. Aye, Simon, think about those two niggers fucking, his big black snake rutting deep in her black hole. Ooohhh, yah, aye, allow those fires to burn, burn red hot, my great-grandson, blood of my blood, keeper of my spirit." His cold eyes seized Jan's in their icy clutches, pierced her as if they were radiating frozen shivs that sliced straight through to her heart. "In killing you, I'll be squaring a debt for the both of us. Simon is pleased."

Payton flashed his teeth like a snarl.

Jan felt her breath leave her. The world went into a spin and the Glock almost dropped out of her hands.

Almost.

With a loud grunt, an unngh! sound that was almost a growl, Jan shook it off. The world came back into focus and she trained her eyes on the girls, both of whom were sobbing, both of whom looked utterly terrified. Louise seemed completely paralyzed by what she had heard, but Elizabeth, though shaking like a leaf in a windstorm, spoke up, her voice a rasping, faltering squeak as she tried so hard to be brave and defiant despite her terror.

"Run, Mama, run while you still can," she cried. "I don't care what Payton says, Dad loves us, Dad will never let him harm us."

"Never!" echoed Louise.

"Girls," Jan said, in a calm, clear voice that belied the current of emotion raging inside her. "I am telling you for the last time to leave. Go to Keith, get in the car, and wait for me. Do

it now or I will ask your great-grandfather to throw you both into the river."

Two mouths opened in shock.

Jan's eyes shifted back to Payton who was paying keen attention. "This is not about your father's love for you, this is about my husband's love for me. Go and remember forever that your mother and father loved you both very much." Jan's voice suddenly hardened and she tried to burn holes through Payton's eyes with her glare. "And remember that they loved one another. Remember that always!"

Payton moved so suddenly Jan had no chance to react. His left hand darted out, caught both girls by their ponytails, snapped their heads back and, with a flick of the knife in his right, severed the ponytails at their respective bases. It was over in a heart-beat, Jan barely had time to draw a single breath before Payton was casually tossing the twin ropes of hair into the river. There was a combined splash and, as the girls watched in stunned horror, the shorn locks were instantly carried away by the current.

"It could just as easily have been your heads," Payton said. "Makes no nevermind to me."

Without another word, Louise and Elizabeth came to Jan. Each kissed her on the cheek and, through the sobbing, and non-stop trembling, begged her to come with them.

"No," Jan told her daughters, softly but emphatically, her eyes never leaving Payton. "We finish this now."

With the girls safely out of harm's way, Jan lowered the barrel of the Glock so that it was pointing dead-center onto Payton's abdomen. Gut shots incapacitated, but were seldom fatal.

"Are they up the embankment yet?" Jan asked Payton.

It was amazing how that Irish voice could be so emotionally flat yet still so infuriating. "Yes, they're up by the trees. They're looking back down at us. The one in the blue shirt is pulling on the arm of the one in the gray shirt. They're going into the trees now...no, wait, they're coming back out."

Payton smiled and shook his head. "Well if that don't take the cake."

"What?" demanded Jan, anxious that the girls were returning but afraid to take her eyes off Payton for even an instant.

"Looks like there was a coon hiding in the trees. It's your boy, Nigger Keith, he's come

out to join the party."

"They're coming back down?" Jan asked, trying not to reveal in her voice the fact that a panic bomb had gone off inside her and was spreading flames of fear that threatened her courage.

Payton shook his head, cool as a man who'd just stepped outside to grab a breath of fresh air. "Naw. The three of them are standing at the edge of the trees, watching us. Listening. The girls are weeping like babies and holding each other's hand."

Jan did not need Payton to tell her that her daughters were crying and her heart ached for her to be able to turn around and offer some words of comfort but she dare not even speak to them.

"Jesus, Mary and Joseph!" Payton suddenly exclaimed. He then let out a hearty laugh. Jan had never seen him so evidently amused and the thought of him finding any humor in the situation tore off a shiver of fear from her mind and sent it rippling through her body.

"Keith's got himself a wee pistol!" Payton chuckled. "Now what the hell is he thinking? Surely the fool doesn't mean to save your life from up there with the likes of that toy?"

Jan tightened her two-handed grip on the Glock. "Maybe he's thinking that if anything happens to me, he'll square the debt with you."

Payton laughed again, this time with disdain. "Not too bloody likely, but it won't make no never-mind to you." Then he called out to Keith. "Hey there boy! You best take those two young girlies away from here if you don't want them to see their mum die."

The panic within Jan had become a roaring inferno that was on the verge of incinerating her courage. Was it fear-response? No, she was miles beyond flinching, this was sheer terror, the overwhelming sense of fright that caused paralysis, froze tiny birds so that they stood stock-still and allowed themselves to be swallowed whole by a snake. She had to do something, take some sort of action. A line from an old movie popped into her head: She was better when she moved.

"Go Keith!" she shouted. "Take Louise and Elizabeth back to the car! Do it now!"

Once more Payton surprised her. "Better listen to your woman, boy!" he said, his voice loud but murderously calm. "Get while the gettin's good. Otherwise, after I kill her, I'll kill you with your own wee gun and do as I please with the young pussywillows."

Keith's voice called out from behind Jan. It was every bit as murderously calm as

Payton's. "She's not my woman, but if you harm her, I will settle it with you."

Payton's laughter seemed to bounce off the water like shards of glass. "Think you can handle me all by yourself do you, boy?"

Keith shot back his answer with a cold finality. "Not by myself. My friend Simon will be with me. Together, we will end your monkey-ass."

Jan heard movement. She kept her eyes on Payton's which were tracking the movement. He announced that Keith and the girls had gone back into the trees and were no longer in sight, though he'd wager they were probably still near enough to see what was going on. Nonetheless, Payton's eyes left the trees and met hers. Once more he showed his teeth in an insolent smile. His voice was hard as iron.

"Are you ready to die, whore?"

Again the movement was too quick for Jan to react. Another flick of Payton's wrist and the blade of the jagged-edged knife was resting between his fingertips, poised to be thrown.

Jan sucked up her courage and threw the words at him with all the cold-hearted venom she could muster.

"You were told to never call your black woman a whore," she spat, pulling back on the Glock's hammer until it reached its firing position with a loud CLICK! that seemed to echo off the water. "Don't you ever learn, you dumb mick bastard?"

Again Jan saw a flicker of hesitancy cross his eyes, just a brief glint of doubt that flared and died almost as soon as it was born.

Almost.

Suddenly, it all came together for Jan. Of course! Whether physical or psychological, Payton Adams was always on the attack. In every situation, he was the aggressor, the one who struck first, forcing others to react to him. That's why he always seemed to be one step ahead of everyone else. Well she was through with that bullshit. This homegirl would no longer play his game. She was done with reacting to his moves, this time she would be the aggressor, she would seize the initiative by moving onto the attack. Let's see how Payton handled a woman who came right at him. No need to look for me, baby, she said to herself, I'm gonna be right here, up in your face.

Payton had opened his mouth to speak but Jan beat him to the punch.

"Cat loved you and Rosaleen loved you," she said, her words coming at him like sharp bites. "They loved you just as I love Simon. But you know what the difference is? Simon loves me back. Yeah, that's right, Simon loves me back. You never loved Cat or Rosaleen. Simon thought you did because he himself cared so much for both of them. But now he knows. Now he knows the truth. Only I'm not going to discuss it any further with you because you won't understand what I'm talking about. You have no idea of what love is, you have no comprehension of the power that love holds. But you're about to find out for I'm going to show you what love is. I'm going to prove to you how strong my Simon's love is for me." Jan lowered the Glock and took a step towards Payton. In a flash, he flicked his wrist and was suddenly holding the knife by its hilt.

Jan laughed and took another step towards him. "You think you're going to do something with that? Think again, chump. It's not going to happen. Simon won't let you. Die you son-of-a-bitch! Go back to hell or wherever it is you came from. You wanted me here, you got me here. But I'm not here for you to square your debt. I'm here to take back my man."

With that Jan dropped the Glock and listened to it bounce off the cement. She then stepped right up into Payton. It was a moment of stark naked fear for Jan. Her insides were a hand-grenade with the pin pulled out, any instant she expected to explode into a thousand pieces. He was like a wall of ice.

The green eyes staring down at her were cold as death and she could do nothing as he raised the jagged-edged blade so that it was poised just above her exposed throat. But Jan refused to flinch. Her brain commanded her body to move in even closer and ordered her eyes to look right back up into his.

Her act of defiance gave life to her voice.

"Ana Huff found the death report on Cat. She died of a slashed throat. What happened? Did you forget you killed her?"

The cruel, stone-cold eyes blinked. Encouraged, Jan rushed on. "It took a lot of something awful to make Rosaleen pull that trigger. She loved you and yet she killed you. Why? What did she see? What did she see in you to make her shoot?" The answer came to Jan like a whispered hint from God. "Love. That's it! She killed you for love, for the love of her unborn child! You were going to take the life of her child, your own flesh and blood. That's

why she killed you. She killed you to save your child. Remember?"

He turned his head away from her. She reached up, seized him by the jaw and whipped his face around so that their eyes once more were locked. Now Jan was roaring at him.

"Remember! Remember what you did to those women! Remember you motherfucking animal! You despicable killer beast! Remember, you fucker! Remember! Remember!"

Again his motions were a blur. He struck first with the left hand, catching her under the throat and jerking her straight up into the air. Helplessly she dangled, her feet several inches off the ground, her eyes staring wide at the jagged-edged knife which was held so tightly in his right hand that the veins on his massive forearm were bulging.

Through the crushing squeeze of the steely fingers that held her by the throat, Jan forced the words out in a hiss, her last desperate gasp, directed to the man she loved.

"Simon! You promised in your journal you would always know me! You promised! Well I'm Jan, goddamn it! Not Rosaleen! Not Cat! I'm Jan! As you love me, Simon, remember! Remember! As you love me!"

The right arm, bearing the knife with the jagged-edged blade swept upward in a sharp terrible arc. The brutally powerful force propelling the blow coupled with the razor-sharp tearing cut of the jagged-edged blade would surely have disemboweled her had his left arm not first hurled her out of harm's way. She landed hard on the edge of the concrete slab, bounced once, then landed a second time in a heap against the dirt and stones of the embankment. She felt pain in a dozen places on her body and Jan knew she was bleeding along the side of her face and from her arms and elbows. From behind, she heard the cries of Louise and Elizabeth and then her back was pelted with an avalanche of pebbles as both girls scrambled down the embankment to be at her side. Protectively, they threw arms around her when they arrived.

For once, Jan could give no thought to her daughters as all her attention was riveted on Simon who stood out there on the concrete landing, holding the knife up high and staring at it as if transfixed, but otherwise completely motionless, as if he were a figure frozen in time. What, she wondered, was going on inside his brain. She considered calling out to him but suddenly things began to happen and Jan could not believe what she was seeing and she let out a cry of anguish and started to rise to her feet, intent upon going to him and doing what she did not know. But a strong hand from above pressed down upon her shoulder

and forced her stay where she was. Looking up, Jan saw that Keith was standing behind her, shaking his head.

"I don't know either, some kind of cataleptic hysteria, psychosomatic trauma, stigmata? Beats me, I'll have to research the literature," Keith said, speaking softly. "But you asked him to remember. "Give him that chance."

* * *

Simon Thomas could not believe his eyes. Standing directly in front of him on the concrete pier was his great-grandfather, Payton Adams.

"This is impossible," Simon said.

"Apparently not," said Payton.

Simon cast a quick glance towards the embankment. He saw Jan there with Louise and Elizabeth, but they were silent and still, as if he were seeing an image of his family, a holograph projected against the steep embankment.

"They're of no concern to you now," said Payton. "This is between you and me. We can't both exist. One of us must end. I'm of the mind that it should be you."

Simon faced his great-grandfather. "Not surprisingly, I strongly disagree. Can we discuss it?"

"You know your history, there's always only been one way to settle a dispute," said Payton. "We fight until one of us has no fight left in him."

"What happened to the knife?" asked Simon.

"If it had been a snake it would have bit you," answered Payton, making an upward motion with his head. Simon followed the motion and saw that the jagged-edged knife was suspended in the air above and between them, just out of their reach.

"That's a bit too poetic, isn't it?" Simon said. "Still, I suppose it's only fair. Whose thought was that, mine or yours?"

"Whose d'ya think?" said Payton and with that he delivered a tremendous blow to Simon's midsection. The excruciating reality of the pain from the punch was such a shock to Simon that his reaction was delayed. The delay was no more than a fraction of a fraction of a second but there was nonetheless an incremental lag between Payton's connecting with the punch

and the buckling of Simon's knees as the air in his lungs wooshed out from his open mouth. The delay is probably what saved Simon from being knocked into senselessness by the followup blow that Payton threw to his jaw. Payton had anticipated that Simon would immediately double over from the punch to his solar plexus and had accordingly lowered the aim of his second punch. As a result, instead of landing flush on Simon's jaw, it connected with his cheek and nose. A starburst of light exploded in Simon's mind and the sweet salty taste of blood flooded the inside of his mouth.

But he did not lose consciousness.

As his brain was too scrambled to give any serious or even coherent thought as to what he should do next, instinct took over and forced his arms up to shield his face and body from the impending barrage. In a dim far corner of his mind, he did question the origin of the instinct that curled his body into a shell and positioned his arms to absorb the multitude of tremendous blows that began raining down on him. Payton was a brutally strong man of ferocious energy who had been professionally trained to destroy other men with his fists. The punches came slamming into Simon from all angles with so much force they broke blood vessels on impact. Most of these blows he caught on his arms but the few that got through did severe damage. Simon could feel the skin above his left eye split open and begin spurting blood, even as his right eye began to close. His kidney reverberated from one whallop and unleashed a lancing pain that was hot-wired straight to his testicles. More starbursts exploded within Simon's mind and he knew that in spite of his defenses, he was going down. Down to where? What would happen to him? Would his mind simply go dark? Would he simply cease to exist? Or would he become a silent and utterly helpless witness to Payton's future crimes? He was about to find out.

Unable to stand another second or hold his arms up any longer, Simon sank down to one knee, dropped his guard and awaited the final blow that would answer all his questions. But the blow did not come. Through the misty pink veil of his one functioning eye, Simon looked up to see that Payton, though standing above him with his fists clenched, was utterly exhausted and unable to close out the fight. His chest heaved mightily as he gulped for air but this did not keep him from gloating.

"You've more sand than I would have thought, I'll give you that," he panted. "Yer truly a chip off the old block. But I am the old block hisself. I don't know what's going to happen to

you, either, but if yer around to watch, I'll make it interesting for you." Simon followed his eyes moved to the still figures of Jan, Louise, and Elizabeth, who'd somehow been joined by the equally statue-like figure of Keith.

"I'm going to fuck your nigger whore one more time before I square my debt. God love it she's got a mighty fine pussywillow on her. Squeezed the squirt right out of me, it did. Shame to waste such a mighty good snatch, but a debt must be squared. Of course I'll have to kill those two bitch pups of yours and your nigger friend as well but you knew that. Don't worry, I'll do those three right quick. But your whore will have to suffer. It's a big price that's got to be paid for what her predecessors done to me and she's the one who will pay it."

"No," Simon said, forcing himself to speak through a badly swollen upper lip as he kept his eyes on his wife, his daughters, and his friend. "Forgive and forget, please."

From above, Payton's voice was a cold pronouncement made even colder by its finality. "I don't forgive and I never forget. My debt will be paid. The nigger whore is dead."

What remained of Simon's visual focus fell full upon Jan and the rage was suddenly upon him. Great burning sheets of anger spitting fiery flames that drove away the pain and cleared his mind. Who was this asshole standing over him? Who was this crude and ignorant fool who kept using the word nigger? White people had no business speaking that word. It did not belong to them. Simon had told his daughters this many times. Did this braying moron, this lick-spittle ignoramus not know his history? And how dare this braggart utter his obscene threats in Simon's presence? Did he think Simon would do nothing to stop him? Did he think Simon could nothing to stop him? Had he never heard of The Ox? The immovable object, the irresistible force? Did this sorry wolf not know better than to enrage an ox? Simon looked up into the icy eyes of Payton Adams.

"Goodbye, son," Payton said, cocking his fist.

"Fuck you!" Simon answered as he charged.

Simon's head caught Payton squarely in the gut, driving the man backwards and eliciting a pained grunt that was music to Simon's ears. Simon joined his fists and brought them up hard under Payton's chin, snapping Payton's head back. Simon sprang forward, pressing his advantage. He landed a thunderous left-hook into Payton's rib cage and crashed a straight right into Payton's face. The crunching sound of bone and cartilage brought a fierce but joyous smile

to Simon's face and he waded in with more punches; straight, powerful punches, thrown with all his weight behind them, as if he were back in his basement gym, pounding on the heavy bag. Payton would not go down easily. He fought back, throwing punches of his own, but they lacked the force of his earlier assault and steadily weakened. Simon shrugged off Payton's retaliatory blows. He would have shrugged off the punches of a fresh Payton. He was The Ox, the immovable object, the irresistible force, a powerhouse of a human shield, defending his family from the wolf at their door and he knew his history: the best defense was always an overwhelming offense.

And so he poured it on, despite the screaming ache of protest from his weary muscles, despite the beating he himself had absorbed, he slammed home punch after punch after punch, lefts to the body, rights to the head, working, working, working, enduring the pain and lifting the weight. And Simon's blood began to sing and there was from within him a roaring, howling joy. Was it the unleashing of his own inner beast? Not Payton's beast, but the very own beast of Simon Thomas, free at last, to pound and smash and fight its way to triumph. Whatever it was, it was better than sex, Simon thought, as he gave into the euphoric high and let it all hang out, giving everything he had and reveling in the thrill of victory.

Simon's relentless storm of punches grudgingly drove Payton backwards until he stood at the edge of the concrete landing, bloodied and badly battered. Years of play-wrestling with Jan had taught Simon a little something about the sport. With Payton helpless to resist, Simon shot one arm under his great-grandfather's crotch and hooked the other behind his neck. Simon then threw Payton over his shoulders like he would hoist a sack of coal, bent his knees for added leverage, and, with a loud growl, clean-jerked Payton Adams up into the air. Payton's voice, sounding very much frightened, called out with a plea, "Forgive and forget?"

It had been Simon's intent to slam his great-grandfather down head-first upon the concrete surface, but Payton's plea, with its undertone of fear, reached that part of his mind still capable of compassion. With compassion came a higher, more rational level of thought which broke through Simon's ferocious anger and carried with it insight into what must be done.

"I've spent too much of my life dwelling on the past, Jan's right, it's time to send you back where you belong!"

With that, Simon hurled Payton into the swift brown water of the Monongahela River.

Payton's body hit the water and disappeared without making a splash. The anomaly somehow prompted Simon to look up. He saw the jagged-edged knife still poised above him, only now the light of the rising sun was reflecting off its cruel blade, coloring the metal a bright red as if it had been dipped in blood. As Simon watched, the bloody-looking knife suddenly dropped from the sky and landed at Simon's feet with a loud clang. From out of nowhere came a swirl of fog that wrapped itself around Simon for a few brief moments before moving out across the river where it formed a curtain. A smell of rotten eggs tainted the air and as the last of the fog moved away from him, Simon could now see the skiff tied to the landing. Inside the skiff, in her blue dress and fur-collared coat with the Lee-Metford rifle on her lap was Cat.

* * *

Behind me I heard a rustle of vegetation and a weight upon a flight of wooden steps. Cat was whispering that the new arrival was a woman and I heard a male voice, my own, ask Rosaleen where Collin was.

"I've sent that villain to hell, same place I ought to send you," the hoarse and winded voice of Rosaleen Adams answered. Turning, I saw that Jan and the girls and Keith were gone and that everything was as it had been before in the MNEME. Rosaleen was wearing the green dress and brown lace shawl, her red hair was undone and windblown, her eyes were filled with tears and in her right hand which was dropped to her side was the .45 caliber Colt pistol.

Again Rosaleen accused me of betraying her and again I denied it. Again a furious argument ensued between Rosaleen and Cat, an argument roiling with the same heated accusations and insults, escalating until the two were challenging one another to a shootout to the death. Just as before, in the memories which I relived under the influence of Quip inside the MNEME, I held my hands up as if to separate them. Just as before I bade them to hold their tongues and lower their weapons. But instead of addressing my remarks to both of them in an effort to defuse the situation, I sensed the onset of that eerie calm which preceded the emergence of my great-grandfather's beast. And with the onset of that peculiar state of detachment there came a separation between Payton Adams and myself. As in the beginning of my experiences with Quip, I was once more the unseen witness to the events that took place. Only this time, I was privy to the thoughts, feelings and emotions of my great-grandfather.

Having been made aware that Rosaleen had brought Collin's wagon and inside that

wagon there was not only the gold he'd left behind but the rest of Collin's money as well, Payton Adams was feeling desire, a desire that surged through his being like the current of the Monongahela. But mixed with the desire was a rising frustration. All of that money in the wagon and all of that money in the skiff, so close at hand and yet still beyond his grasp. It was clear to me that my great-grandfather did not like being forced to deal with these two women before he could claim the money and make his escape. His anger was rising so hot that even his beastly calm could not control it.

"I did not want to take either of you with me," he said through gritted teeth, his gaze shifting from one to the other.

"I need to move fast and a woman would slow me down. But I owe you both a debt and I always square my debts. That's the bargain I've made and kept."

Facing Rosaleen he said with great irritation, "I don't know what you've got to complain about. I left you with damn near all the gold. Maybe I did know that Collin would come after you but I warned you to be on your guard and here you are. I'd say we're square."

"What about her?" Rosaleen demanded, motioning with her weapon toward Cat.

"The quadroon?" Payton Adams shook his head contemptuously. "Listen to yourself, you jealous fool. She's Collin's whore. That's all. She belongs to him but he was afraid to be seen traveling with her. He paid me to take her with me. She killed the potato eater who brought the boat and now I'm stuck with her."

Rosaleen telegraphed her disbelief and uncertainty with rapid blinking of her eyes and a slight shake of her head. "Collin said you two are lovers and that you was intending to leave me for her."

"Yeah, I fucked her. You were indisposed!" he sneered. "Twist me bob, you dumb bitch, it was just fucking. What else would a man do with a woman? Now put the damn gun down, Rose. Be a good girl and bring it to me before I get pissed enough to come up there and take it."

Rosaleen stayed where she was, the gun still raised. "I wasn't indisposed to you yesterday now was I?"

Payton Adams would as soon as killed her on the spot as continue the conversation, but he recognized that she was extremely dangerous so long as she had that gun. The man knew when it was time to back off and try a more gentle approach.

"No, Rose," he said, his delivery suddenly soothing and concessionary. "You weren't indisposed to me."

"I gave you all the fucking you could want, didn't I?"

"Aye, Rose, you did. You left me fit to kill. Now bring me the gun, darlin, please."

From behind me came the voice of Cat, soft as a whisper but loud enough to reach the ears of Rosaleen. "You were intimate with her, Payton? You promised me you would not be intimate with her."

Payton whirled on her, his anger again on the rise. "Would you shut your mouth? I am having a conversation with Rosaleen. If she will bring me the gun we can be out of here." Inviting Cat to join with him in conspiracy, Payton gave her a sharp quick wink, and then a second, but she would not acknowledge the gestures.

"You said you loved me. You said you would not be intimate with her," Cat repeated.

"Well why the hell should I not be?" Payton cried, throwing up his arms in yet another uncharacteristic flash of temper. "She's my wife, ain't she? I can fuck me own wife without the permission of no whore."

Cat's eyes left Payton and wandered off down the river, beyond the Homestead Works and towards the city of Pittsburgh. "Sir John never called me a whore," she said in her whispery voice. "Ten years with him and he never called me a whore."

Rosaleen's voice rang out with a hard edge. "I won't share my husband with another woman. Stand aside Payton. She and I will settle the issue ourselves once and for all."

Payton's eyes moved first to Rosaleen and then back to Cat who was watching him with her brown eyes open wide. Finally, he nodded his head and announced in a loud voice. "Okay, Rose, I don't have no more time for this. I will count to three and step out of the line of fire. The two of you can fight it out fair and square and I will take the winner with me."

In a whisper, he said to Cat, "You've got the rifle, that's an advantage over the pistol and I'll step aside on the count of two. That's another advantage I'm giving you. As I see it, I've squared my debt."

Cat's look was hard and unforgiving.

Without taking his eyes off Cat, Payton began his count. "One...."

"Stop!" said Cat. Her eyes narrowed and bore straight into Payton as if in search of his

soul. "You're not worth killing for," she said to him, her voice flat. "I won't make that mistake ever again." Looking past him toward Rosaleen, Cat shouted, "If you want him so badly you can have him. He's all yours. I'm leaving now and the two of you will never see nor hear from me again. You have my word on it, woman to woman. But I will give you some free advice, also woman to woman. You should take the money and leave by yourself. This man is no better than a beast."

"How do I know you won't go straight to Sir John?" Payton asked.

Cat chewed on her cheeks for a moment then shook her head sadly. "That life is all done for me now. I will have to find a new life. Thanks to Collin, I'll have the money for it." She set the Lee-Enfield rifle down, leaning it against the seat just as in my dream. "Tell me one final thing, though, Payton," she said, as she stretched forward to untie the line that connected the skiff to one of the landing's mouldy pillars. "You said you always square your debts because that's the bargain you've made. With who, Payton? With who did you make your vile bargain?"

As Cat wrapped her fingers around the knot in the line, the skiff rocked in the water and she had to grab the sides to steady herself. In that brief window of vulnerability, Payton pulled the jagged-edged knife out from under his coat and in one swift cut opened her throat. The terrible sharp blade must have sliced through her carotid artery for the blood spurted out through the wide gash across her larynx in rhythmic pulsations, splashing Payton in the face. Cat was staring up at him, her expression one of surprise more than pain.

"The devil," Payton told her quietly. "My bargain is with the devil."

Cat slumped forward, her head and neck hanging over the edge of the skiff so that her blood emptied into the brown waters of the Monongahela which swiftly flushed it away.

Rosaleen screamed and Payton Adams turned to her. Rosaleen's face was white as death, as if it had been drained of all its blood.

"You murdered her, you villain," she croaked through a hand she'd brought up to her mouth. "You murdered that woman in cold blood."

Rosaleen could never have known the truth in what she'd said for Payton's beast was fully

out. He was as calm as a religious man in prayer. Without once taking his eyes off Rosaleen, he reached into the skiff for his rifle.

"Stop!" Rosaleen shouted. "Touch that rifle and I will shoot!" She raised the pistol and aimed it at Payton. Her hand was slightly unsteady, but the aim still looked true.

Payton's hand kept moving until it touched the rifle.

"I swear on the life of my baby!"

Payton Adams froze. His eyes were still locked on Rosaleen's. "I had to do it, Rose. She would have given us up to the nabs. It was the only way. I did it for us, for you and me and our baby."

Tears sprang to Rosaleen's eyes. "I don't believe you. She would not have turned you in. That woman loved you, Payton. She believed that you loved her and you killed her." Angrily, she blinked away the tears to clear her vision. With a snuffle, she continued, "You'll kill me, too. I know this and the sad thing is, I'm fool enough to let you do it. I'd stand here and watch you pick up that rifle, aim it at me and put a bullet through my heart. Why not? You've broken my heart already, you might as well finish the job."

Without a word, Payton Adams again moved his hand, closed the last tiny distance between it and the rifle, wrapped his fingers around the grip save for one which he inserted inside the trigger guard.

Rosaleen cocked her pistol. The sound of the bullet entering the chamber bounced off the surface of the water with a familiar CLICK and again Payton Adams momentarily froze.

"Yes, I'd stand here like a helpless fool and let you kill me, but I won't allow you to shoot our child," said Rosaleen. Her voice had become as deadly dry as her eyes. "Drop that rifle and step away from the skiff now or I will shoot."

As was the case in all the previous killings I'd been through with Payton Adams, he kept his cool. In a voice that was the very definition of reason, a voice I might use to explain to my daughters a point of history, he told Rosaleen that Cat had been an agent with the English secret service, that she had set Payton and Collin up to be captured, that he had played along only to escape.

"Now she is out of the way, Rose, as is Collin and we've got all the money. We're rich enough to go anywhere you want, Rose, even back to Ireland if you please. We'll be a family

Rose. You and me and our baby. I would never harm you, Rose, nor would I harm our baby. I love you, Rose, you know that to be true. I love you and I love our baby. Trust me, Rose. Trust me, girl. Trust me."

All the while he was talking, Payton's fingers were tightening their grip on the rifle. Suddenly, I remembered that Cat had worked the rifle's action earlier. A Pritchett bullet had been chambered. All that was needed was for Payton to swing the rifle around and pull its trigger. And I knew he would pull the trigger. I knew that he was going to kill Rosaleen and take all of the money for himself. He did not want a baby. He did not want a wife.

The beast does not recognize family.

The beast does not know love.

The beast knows only kill or be killed.

Rosaleen looked deep into Payton's eyes and saw the beast.

It was over in an instant. Payton swung the rifle up with breathtaking speed but Rosaleen's bullet got there first.

This time I did not experience the blinding white light.

This time I did not feel the indescribable pain.

This time I watched Payton Adams die and I was thankful.

The beast was dead.

* * *

The eyes of the man Jan wanted to be Simon fluttered and one of them opened. Jan felt her breath catch. She did not release that breath until her eyes were able to lock onto that one good eye of his and see it brim with the warm recognition of love. Even before he spoke, she knew that Simon was back.

"Jan, are you alright?" he asked.

She nodded and he made a motion to sit up. Only then did he show awareness of his injuries. His hand came up to gingerly explore the wreck of his facial features. His one good eye sought hers.

"What happened?" he asked.

Jan shook her head. How could she explain it? Should she even try? No, not now. There'd be plenty of time later. "You had to have been there," she finally answered. "Let's just

say it was a helluva fight and I would love to have seen the other guy cause you won, baby. You won!"

Simon nodded as if he understood. "Payton's gone. It's just me, myself, and I."

Jan smiled. "I can deal with that. We need some time alone, you and me."

Simon smiled which made beads of blood bulge from his upper lip. Jan gently wiped the blood away with her fingertips, then allowed her fingers to return and linger on his lips. He kissed her fingers then made an effort to stand. Jan quickly moved in to help him. His legs were unsteady and he wobbled momentarily until he had to use his arms to maintain his balance. In doing so he looked down and saw first his swollen, scrapped-raw knuckles, and then the jagged-edged knife lying at his feet. With a look of revulsion Simon scooped up the knife and hurled it far out across the surface of the Monongahela River. A flash of sunlight glinted off the jagged-edged blade before the knife hit the water with a loud KERPLOP and immediately sank out of sight.

After watching the knife disappear into the water, Simon turned once again to face Jan. As she looked up into his bruised and bloodied face, his jaws started to motion as if there were a great many things that he wanted to say, but for several moments no words emerged. When at last he found his voice he uttered only one:

"Thanks."

"You're welcome," Jan said back.

Once again the motion of Simon's hands were much too quick for Jan to have counteracted their intentions even had that been her desire. In the blink of an eye, those hands reached out and gathered her into a tight embrace.

For a brief time, a few sweet moments made all the more precious by their brevity, Jan and Simon were the only two people in the universe. Then Louise and Elizabeth joined them and the four of them were, for another brief time, the only family in the universe. Then Keith approached the circle and Jan gladly made room for him because, hey, what's a family without friends?

Jan Thomas smiled at her own silliness, happy beyond words. It was a lovely interlude, the five of them standing there on that slab of cement by the rushing brown water, one that she would never forget. And with that, the thought was sent from her cerebral cortex to her

hippocampus, formatted into a memory, then routed into her neocortex where it would be permanently stored, ready for recall at some future date.

EPILOGUE

"My god! You've certainly been a busy fellow."

"Come again?"

"Your office. All the changes you made to it. No more of that ... that feeling of stepping into a museum. You've updated it!"

"Yes, well, as Ovid said, change can be good for the soul. Under the circumstances, the timing seemed right for me to enter a new age."

"That's an understatement. What happened to all that mahogany furniture? You got rid of it?"

"Yes. It was too gloomy."

"And that poster of the woman singer? Jersey somebody?"

"Lillie Langtry, the Jersey Lily."

"Right. You took her down and put a new one up in its place. A woman basketball player. My god, is that..?"

"Jan. From her days at Maryland. Afro hairstyles were in then, remember? My sister had the poster made for me from an old newspaper photo. Sort of a welcome home present."

"Out with the old, in with the new?"

"I'd say it was exchanging someone else's superstar for one of my own."

"Fair enough. What about that golf bag over in the corner? That looks new."

"Yeah, Keith, Jose and I have taken up the sport. We've been playing every Saturday at the Tilden Park course for the past few months. We're strictly duffers but we're getting better."

"Do you enjoy it?"

"Sure. It's good exercise, the park course is pretty to walk around, I love smacking the ball, outdriving Keith and Jose. Of course, they both murder me on the putting green."

"Interesting. Are the three of you competitive?"

"Each of us likes to win but no one loses an ear over a game, if that's what you're asking me."

"No need to be so sensitive, it was just a question."

"You never seem to be just asking a question."

"Yes, I do. For instance, who's the best player among the three of you?"

"Right now it's not a question of who's the best, it's more a question of who sucks least. But, like I said, we are getting better. Do you play? You're welcome to join us. We need another person for a foursome."

"Maybe I will. Say, I see you still have the rocking chair. Some things don't change, do they?"

"Change for the mere sake of change is not really changing. That's what Heraclitus said."

"I suppose he and you would know. By the way, congratulations!"

"Thanks, I guess, but I didn't really do anything. Jan handled the matter and she said all along the Bosworth family never had much of a case against me. If they had any grounds for suit, it was towards the university and Jan said even that would have been tough for their lawyers to win."

"I'm sorry, what are you talking about?"

"The legal actions the Bosworth family threatened to bring on behalf of their son Danny. Funny thing is, it was Danny who convinced his parents to drop it."

"Really? That's a surprise isn't it?"

"Yes and no. He always was a bright young man. It was his attitude that left a lot to be desired. But, after he learned the details about the Quip experiment, he became intrigued -- stoked as he put it -- with Ana Huff's genealogical approach to historical research. We had several talks and he asked me to recommend him for a post-doc position with Ana at the University of Pittsburgh. I was reluctant at first, to say the least, but then decided that I'm the last person who should doubt someone's undergoing a personality change. I discussed the matter at length with Ana and she consented. He starts in the spring. Believe it or not, she actually likes him."

"Has his personality changed that much?"

"I think walking with a limp has given him some needed humility. He wears it well."

"Is the limp a permanent condition?"

"You know better than I that medical technology rewrites the rules every month. I don't know that any biomedical condition can be classified as permanent any more. Not even death."

"Yes, well, we can pursue the issue of immortality some other time. I didn't know that the lawsuit had been dropped. What I was congratulating you for is your new appointment as Dean."

"Oh. Sorry. Thanks, I guess. Again, I didn't have all that much to do with it. It was more a matter of good-timing and someone else's undergoing a major change. After the University Reform Bill got crushed at the polls, Masanori Morito was named to be Cal's new Chancellor. The Regents were eager to climb aboard the train of public opinion before it left the station without them. They appointed Masanori to show that they, too, prefer educationally diverse university campuses. Masanori, in his eagerness to stop feeling guilty over what happened to me, and with some prodding from Jack Lapage who's still afraid of what Jan might do with a liability suit, named me to succeed him as Dean. It's not something I thought I would ever have considered, but..like Ovid said"

"That's not quite the version I heard from Keith."

"Really? What did Keith say?"

"He said you went after the job and pretty damned aggressively, too. He said it was one of those rare occasions here at this school where someone who actually deserved an appointment received it. But he did not think it would have happened had you not been so forceful in your interview with the selection committee."

"Keith exaggerates. I was just speaking my mind."

"According to Keith, these days when you speak, people listen."

"They have to, I'm the Dean. I'll cut off their research funds and assign them freshmen classes to teach."

"You're smiling, but I have to wonder if you're really joking."

"I'm joking. Look, I'm sorry, but I don't have time to be psychoanalyzed this afternoon. I've got two more memorandums to get out and then I've got to get home to cook dinner. I have two teenaged girls who will pig out on junk food if supper is late and a wife who gets cranky if they don't eat right. As you pointed out, some things have not changed."

"How are the girls? The last time I saw them they seemed normal enough, are they still doing well?"

"I think so but what would I know? I'm just their father. Elizabeth and Keith's son, Walt, are still together to the relief of their parents. That's going to be a strain when one of them tires of the other, but I think we'll learn from the Hatfields and the McCoys and manage to stay friends. Louise, in the meantime, has gone through two, maybe three, different guys, none of whom Jan or I approved of, so, all-in-all, I'd say my daughters are par for the course.

"Keith and Sandra seem to have come out of everything that happened well enough, in fact, as I'm sure you're aware, their relationship would seem to have been strengthened. Do you mind if I ask about you and Jan?"

"You're right about Keith and Sandra, of course, but, being a Nietzsche man, that shouldn't be a surprise to you and you should know the answer to your question."

"How so?"

"That which does not destroy the marriage or cause us to sleep in separate beds makes us a stronger couple. In other words, Jan and I have never been better. We look forward to being grandparents – a long ways down the road. So? You brought a release form for me to sign?"

"Yes, I have it right here. Sorry. No more shrink questions. Well, one, I suppose. You're not having any second thoughts about my doing this paper are you?"

"No. As long as you promise to keep it academic and leave out the lurid personal stuff."

"You have my word on it. Is that acceptable?"

"Sure. I know where you live."

"You're smiling but again I have to wonder whether or not you're joking."

"This time I will let you wonder. There. Signed."

"Thanks. You know, look, I'm sorry, I promised no more shrink questions, but I simply must ask about the biggest change of all in your office."

"What's that?"

"The photo of your great-grandfather. It's gone."

"Oh, yeah. I took it down."

"What did you do with it?"

"Put it in an old steamer trunk where I keep personal memorabilia. High school and college

yearbooks. Old lacrosse uniforms. Other junk. Nothing I ever look at but always there if I have a sudden nostalgic urge."

"I trust then that you are no longer obsessed with your great-grandfather."

"I was never obsessed, just pre-occupied."

"Stop being evasive, Simon, I'm serious. Is your great-grandfather no longer a subject of active interest for you? Or did it bring back too many unpleasant memories? For professional and personal reasons, I would really like to know why you removed that photograph of Payton Adams?"

"To be honest, Dr. Nertz, I took the photo down because I spent too many years of my life thinking about Payton Adams. Frankly, it was a waste of time. The man was not worth remembering."